Renewed Indigeneity in the Local-Global Continuum and the Political Economy of Tradition: The Case of Trinidad's Caribs and The Caribbean Organization of Indigenous People.

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ABSTRACT

Cultural and economic globalization processes have positive features for select indigenous peoples, ironic as it may seem. In this paper I examine how global processes act as restraints, parameters and motivations that both condition and inspire, constrain and enable the revitalization of Carib identification in Trinidad and Tobago. This is a special case of a people emerging out of a modern capitalist society and who rethink and rediscover themselves as "indigenous" and who revive, but especially develop, indigenous traditions in a self-conscious and planned manner for both affective and profit-oriented reasons. Globalized terms, images, practices and motifs of indigeneity act as a fund of materials which are engaged and sifted through by Caribbean Amerindians to define who they were, are, and hope to be. To an extent, the materials for this indigenous identity come from and are negotiated out of a globalized aboriginality and a globally organized political economy of tradition. The context is that of a local-global continuum: the construction, organization and transmission of material and symbolic resources, legitimizing and supporting indigeneity, flowing bi-directionally between the local and the global, albeit an unequal flow. The context is also that of the crisis ensuing from neoliberal structural adjustment with the withdrawal of the Trinidadian State from development and the resultant emphasis placed on community development and self-reliance. Increased ethnic segmentation and the global valorization of "all things indigenous" also prove to be vital ingredients. In the process, the Carib Community emerges, formally organized as a limited liability company, with a plan to form a cultural tourism site. Indeed, the Carib Community's development of traditions for placement in the market is revealed as a multilateral enterprise, a joint venture of powerful non-indigenous institutions and interests. The formation of Caribbean Amerindian organizations are revealed as serving as symbolic capital, acting also as potential depositories of funds, and as vehicles in the commercialization of traditions, ostensibly done with the purpose of preserving traditions.

Introduction

Ironic as it may seem to those who view "globalization" as synonymous with neoliberalism or homogenization, economic and cultural globalization processes possess certain "positive" features for select indigenous peoples and their activities. This proposition is enforced when we consider the current globalization of aboriginality: the embryonic creation of a worldwide indigenous macro-community seemingly with its own indigenous meta-
Many cultural events of indigenous groups in various parts of the globe are today increasingly marked by the presence of aboriginal guests from various countries, which may represent something more meaningful than even a simple show of solidarity. Globalization can be studied ethnographically in terms of a "redoing of the local" and in terms of novel forms of producing locality, as Arjun Appadurai terms it. This is relevant in revealing the extent to which the symbols and discourse of indigenous groups in one part of the world can and do impact the symbols and discourse of indigenous groups in another part of the world. We are thus faced with the possibility of the global "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) of indigenous peoples aiding the formation of more "real" local indigenous communities, where the latter are called upon to prove their indigenous identity. The case at the centre of this study is beginning to show increased adherence to the terms and practices of internationalized indigeneity in order to advance itself locally within a context of social transformation.

My field research concentrates on the re-creation and development of Trinidad’s Carib Community, in the city of Arima, in conjunction with the recent establishment of the Caribbean Organization of Indigenous People (COIP) (see Forte 1996b). The research looks at these two bodies not just in relation to each other, but in relation also to a wide variety of external actors and partners, both locally and globally, both indigenous and not. The perspective adopted here is that we are looking at what is part reconstruction and part re-acquisition of indigeneity. By indigeneity I mean feeling, believing and perceiving oneself as indigenous, the act of making such claims and of acting on those claims. I see these processes of re-indigenization as occurring within what I call the local-global continuum (see Forte 1998).

The context we are also dealing with is that of socio-economic crisis ensuing from the transformations occasioned by neoliberal structural adjustment with the withdrawal of the Trinidadian state from a central and leading role in development and the state’s resulting emphasis on people’s own community development and self-reliance. Increased racial antagonisms and ethnic segmentation in Trinidad are two further factors leading many to define themselves according to prearranged oppositional categories and to retreat to separate corners of the society (see Forte 1995). The increased global valorization of "all things indigenous" also proves to be a vital ingredient in this resurgent indigeneity (see Friedman 1994). In the process, the Carib Community emerges in Trinidad, formally organized as a limited liability company, with a plan to form a cultural tourism site. The Carib Community’s development of its traditions for placement in the market is revealed as a multilateral enterprise, a joint venture of various powerful non-indigenous institutions and interests. Caribbean Amerindian regional organizations serve as symbolic capital, as potential depositories of funds, and as vehicles in the commercialization of traditions, done ostensibly with the purpose of preserving them.

**Revising Paradigms of Indigeneity**

Trinidad’s Carib Community constitutes a special case in the analysis of the history of indigenous peoples worldwide. First, it is a very small community, mostly a grouping of families and specialist individuals, numbering 75 "registered members" (in a country of 1.4 million, and out of a potential total of 500 Carib individuals), organized as a formal business enterprise. The Santa Rosa Carib Community (or SRCC) began its current phase of formalized, bureaucratic, commercial and political organization in 1976, with a marked increase in its organization and public presence in Trinidad and the region occurring in the late 1980s/early 1990s. This formalized corporate organization began once the leader of the community sought some land to build a fixed meeting space for himself, the elders and others. At that point, the Catholic Church in Trinidad and the State (from which the Carib leader also sought lands for a communal residential site for Caribs) pressed the leader to register the community and, indeed, the Ministry of Culture aided the process by paying the registration fees and guiding the leader through the process.

One may argue that rather than the conventional depictions of oppressed and obliterated indigenous peoples
(see Bodley 1990; Weyler 1982), or models depicting stalwart indigenous societies adapting world capitalism to their own cultural ends (i.e., Sahlins 1994, 1987). Trinidad's Caribs belong to a somewhat different experience. In this case, we are speaking of individuals who emerge from within a Creole, modernized, outward-oriented and capitalist society, who have learned the language of indigeneity, come to believe, feel and identify themselves as indigenous, and revive and/or develop (rather than merely "preserve") indigenous practices for both emotional well-being and economic gain. The special case involved here is neither the "typical" one of indigenous people resisting assimilation nor the other "typical" one of having lost everything of their indigenous past. The issue is substantially more complicated.

What I do not wish to suggest is that the SRCC is based merely on a thin fiction, a type of hoax or cultural falsehood. The novelty of the organization highlighted here is not intended to obscure the experiential, affective and historical past underlying the formation of this organization. There are known families of Carib descent, each knowing each other as such, with known historical and familial relations. Certain Carib traditions have been maintained: the cultivation and processing of cassava, using implements to strain and sift the ground cassava that are woven only by Caribs; hunting of wild game; special knowledge of herbs and forest plants; the construction of mud and grass huts known as "tapia houses"; and, traditions that are of Spanish Catholic origin but that used to be practiced exclusively by Caribs, such as Parang music (Spanish folkloric religious music) and the Santa Rosa Festival in honour of their patron saint, St. Rose of Lima.

The Santa Rosa Carib Community (SRCC) of Arima, Trinidad

For the purposes of this paper, I can only provide a very brief synopsis of the ethnohistory of Trinidad's Caribs. Numerous factors, both local and global, can account for this recent Amerindian resurgence in the Caribbean. One of these is colonial racialism: behind the almost mythological lore of the of the "relentless resistance" of "noble warriors" who fought for survival, lies the colonial construction of "Carib" as a racial category, one later adopted by select Amerindian groups who used the term "Carib" as a self-ascription because it suggested military prowess, an "Amerindian trait" as much feared as desired by European invaders in the process of fighting rivals and seeking allies (see Hulme 1990, 1986 and Whitehead 1990). "Arawak" was instead the polar opposite: the peaceful, unthreatening Amerindian. At the time of conquest no group used either term as a self-ascription. Capital, geopolitics and racism served to institutionalize these terms. Spanish slave raiders, for example, had only to say that those they captured were Cannibals (used synonymously with Carib, its former cognate) to legalize their human plunder in the Crown's eyes, since Caribs/Cannibals were officially proclaimed irredeemable savages beyond the saving grace of Christian teaching (Newson 1976). Beginning in the 1600s however, when self-ascribing "Caribs" appeared and became military allies of competing European interests, and when African slavery became regularized and expanded, "Carib" became a privileged category: "not nigger." After the importation of East Indian indentured labourers, one could also add "not coolie." Censuses of the 1800s in Trinidad included Amerindians in the "White" category (Leahy 1980). In the French West Indies, if "coloured people" wished to marry into "better" (i.e., "lighter") families, and thus needed to offset the stigma of their apparent colouration, they could purchase officially falsified birth certificates stating they were of Carib birth (Lowenthal 1972: 48). As Drummond (1977) elaborates, one reason for the "survival" of Caribs is due to stereotyping via racial colonial categories of tribalism that have become very popular in places such as Guyana.

Incorporation and colonial race preservation schemes can also account for the persistence of Caribs. Whitehead (1990, and with Hulme [1992]) shows incorporation in: 1. Amerindian Chiefs' involvement with, and profiting by, supporting colonial powers with food, troops and information; 2. dissension and rebellion in native societies, subsequent "splitting of ranks" with ensuing groups joining European conquerors in the hope of thus obtaining outside allies to help them settle their scores; 3. legends of indigenous betrayal; 4. adoption of the cultural categories, languages and practices of the colonizers as their own; 5. formation of trade, alliance and kinship networks between indigenous groups and European settlers, traders and conquerors. Subsequently, in places such as Dominica and Arima in Trinidad, colonial governors, appalled by miscegenation sought to preserve the "remnants of a fine, noble race" from the extinction threatened by the "rising black tide," and segregated Amerindians by confining them to reservations/Mission towns. To this day such Carib communities still speak of themselves in terms of "pure bloods," "half bloods," "quarter bloods," etc.
A sketchy and hasty outline as this cannot provide all the answers. We would also need to know how and why Carib traditions became suppressed and masked as family traditions by individuals eager to leave their heritage behind in favour of the modern/Christian/Western. Families still continued certain basic practices, but it is only with the recent resurgence that we see a transformation of traditional practices of the household into indigenous traditions in the public realm. In understanding how a category comes to be preserved, thus opening the way for individuals to feel safe in assuming that category, we should examine how far the symbol of the "Amerindian ancestor" has been incorporated into the construction of Caribbean national identities and histories by nationalist intellectuals seeking long, European-like national histories. We would also need to take into account the current challenges to the dominant creole nationalist ideology in Trinidad, the revelation of its outward-oriented cosmopolitanism and inward-oriented racialism and provincialism, and how this has helped to open the door for "older" and "original" identities to be developed (Segal 1993, Yelvington 1993, Forte 1995, Forte 1996a). In addition, we could also note the current upsurge in politically organized racialism in Trinidad as a whole, given the decline of patron-client relationships in the wake of the post-oil boom financial crisis of the Trinidadian state, therefore leading political entrepreneurs to "buy" votes with race appeals (Premdas 1993). On top of all these trends, increased world-wide attention devoted to the situations of indigenous peoples, endorsed by the international non-indigenous community, and the involvement of international indigenous organizations, have all helped to encourage and sustain the regional Carib resurgence and to reawaken interest in Carib identity and traditions and to underline their value.

While a variety of Amerindian "tribes" existed in Trinidad at the time of Spanish settlement beginning in 1592 and thereafter, the foundation of the Carib Community in Arima is a relatively modern phenomenon, emerging in 1785 as the body of a Capuchin mission consolidating various Amerindian communities from around Trinidad and only later generally labeled Carib. The city of Arima became a centre for relocated Amerindians in order to make way for the influx of French Caribbean planters and slaves, invited to Trinidad by the Spanish governor with the hope of transforming Trinidad's economy into a sugar exporter. The only condition was that the immigrants be Catholic. Prior to 1783, when this "invitation" was made into law, Trinidad's economy relied on cocoa exports. Most of the labourers had been semi-coerced, Amerindian wage labourers. In 1725 a major cocoa crop epidemic erupted from which Trinidad was not to recover. Arima, while popularly cast as Trinidad's remaining seat of Amerindians, was primarily a Church-run ghetto, segregating Amerindians racially, displacing them economically, and thus furthering their social and cultural transformation under the aegis of European rule.

The current Carib leadership points out that many of their traditions had been lost, along with their language and even their physical distinctiveness given "racial mixing" (which they lament as not of their doing, a somewhat puzzling proposition), and that the Community and its premiere tradition, the Santa Rosa Festival (a Catholic feast of their patron saint, held every August in Arima), had gone into disrepair and dissolution by the 1960s.

In 1973, with the return of Ricardo Bharath Hernandez from Detroit where he resided, the Community entered a new stage. Bharath instituted the position of president and became their cultural broker, encouraging the revitalization of remaining traditions and the "retrieval" of lost traditions. He forged partnerships with local government in Arima, of which he eventually became an elected member, and the reigning People’s National Movement of which he also became a member; he obtained land from the Catholic Church upon which he erected a Community Centre, and his residence, and which were built with public funds which he, in part, was responsible for obtaining. He also obtained funding for their cultural activities some of which involve bringing in Amerindians from elsewhere in the Caribbean to share their traditions. Therefore, intimate ties with the state, church, local businesses, and even academic institutions and international organizations were eventually developed. Of the SRCC’s three main activities - preservation, revival and reclamation of traditions - the second involves basically importing Carib and other indigenous traditions from elsewhere, as well as scouring colonial documents in search of descriptions of the way of life of Trinidad's Amerindians.

Another feature of their endeavours involves boosting their identifiability and legitimacy as "Amerindian" both within the society and abroad. In the process they have begun calling themselves the "First Nations" claiming that this is a name conferred on them by the United Nations (which also symbolically ties them to their Canadian friends, the Assembly of First Nations). At stake also is their current creation of a "First Nations Botanical Park," a tourism facility in Arima, designed to showcase and literally market the Amerindian way of life.
The Burden of Proof

In a climate as racialized as is currently the case in Trinidad, added to a history of pervasive racial stereotyping, segregation and discrimination, it is not surprising to find so many in the society who expect to see culture in the face of a person, i.e., one claiming to uphold Carib culture must physically conform to some image of the "pure" Amerindian.

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Indeed, the members of the SRCC are regularly confronted with virtual accusations that they do not look Amerindian, that they are no longer "pure" and so forth. Moreover, given the definition of indigeneity outlined at the outset, when individuals or institutions disagree with the claims arising from an assertion and defense of individuals' Carib identity and heritage, they are often tempted to see the experiential, affective and historical backdrop of this Carib indigeneity as being merely a fiction, a hoax. My view is that while claims do stem from this resurgent identification, one should not confuse the claims with the sense of being Carib that members of the SRCC certainly feel. On the other hand, one cannot draw too bold a line between the affectivity behind the adoption of an identifying label and the strategic efficacy of asserting what that label entails; indeed, the strategic efficacy could even further the affectivity. This may be what is happening when the SRCC consciously deploys a number of identifying labels, for different audiences, at different times and in different fora, sometimes choosing "Carib," other times "First Nations," and opting for just "Amerindian" in some cases. "Carib" certainly connotes local, specific indigenous history, a label now heavily marked and almost synonymous with a character of being few in number and almost extinct. This can attract sympathy and interest. "First Nations," on the other hand, sounds more global and connotes connections with large and well organized North American indigenous bodies; while aboriginal, it underlines a global and metropolitan position of importance. "Amerindian" represents a more neutral identifying label, somewhere in between the last two.

A major activity of the SRCC concentrates on demonstrating knowledge of Carib traditions, practices and history. SRCC leaders feel called upon to present the core "cultural stuff" that authenticates their self-ascription as Carib. An audience that presumes the Caribs had gone extinct, or had been miscegenated and thus culturally diminished -- following racialist (if not just plain racist and purist) conceptions of culture -- can be a very harsh and demanding one. The situation is further complicated by widespread adherence of people in Trinidad to images of Amerindians as utterly primitive and backward, so that even when one has gained recognition as Amerindian, one still has to demonstrate the potential for making an advanced and modern contribution to the development of the society in order to be treated seriously by the state and society. In such a climate, believing oneself to be Carib is not enough: individuals feel called upon to give an account of their identification, in fact, they are burdened with the need to prove that their identity is true and justifiable according to certain traits, an inevitably essentialist proposition.

SRCC leaders claim that two main reasons for the manner in which they were routinely dismissed by state authorities and members of the wider society were: a) the economic irrelevance of their Community, most members being moderately poor and owning no enterprises, in a society where prestige flows from financial prowess; and, b) their "credibility problem" in establishing their identity as Carib and being recognized as such. Added to their search for lands, and the demands placed on Caribs (not formally organized prior to 1976), by the Church and the State, this placed a tremendous burden on the small community to mobilize itself in tackling these problems in order to establish the minimal basis for an identifiable community that could pursue its own interests. The response of the SRCC, insofar as it was manoeuvred from the centres of political power, was to be a predictable one. They have sought to develop income-generating activities and have actively pursued regional and more broadly international indigenous connections. Interestingly, as soon as they succeed toward these goals in some measure, the state has acted to further the achievement of their goals (I shall explain), often with the seeming intent of further altering the Carib resurgence along lines palatable to state interests and projects.
The SRCC formally announced the three main demands accompanying their intent to revive, preserve and reclaim Amerindian traditions (the three demands, listed in the following, and the three activities listed above, work to reinforce each other). The first, a request for official recognition of the Carib Community as a "legitimate cultural sector" of the country. Second, a demand for research support, so that the Carib Community can better establish the nature and extent of its historical contributions to the building of the Trinidian nation, and research to also "clarify their cultural traditions." Third, a request for some measure of funding and material assistance -- "institutional support" for their perceived "need areas." After twenty years of organizational efforts and networking, the SRCC was to achieve some measure of success in having these demands satisfied.

In May of 1990, the National Alliance for Reconstruction government of Prime Minister A. N. R. Robinson, on the advice of the Minister of Culture, officially recognized the SRCC as, "the only legitimate representative of the indigenous people of Trinidad and Tobago." The same government had announced its intentions to organize a Caribbean Festival of the Arts to be held in Trinidad in 1992, the year of the Columbian Quincentenary. This festival involved a region-wide gathering of artists and intellectuals and has been held in the past in Cuba, Guyana, Jamaica, amongst others. The Robinson government saw this festival as a type of "Cultural Expo" whereby countries such as Trinidad could "market the cultural product." By the time of the event, the People's National Movement had come to power. The SRCC leader, recall, is a member of that party. This could not but help to ensure that all the Caribbean Amerindian events, involving indigenous participants from across the Caribbean (hailed as "The First Gathering" of the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean), be held in Arima, at a time when the SRCC leader also successfully ran for a position on the Arima Borough Council. Now the SRCC leader was to become part of the state apparatus itself, with responsibility for a large constituency of non-Caribs. Having been elected, the SRCC leader was instrumental (in the words of his colleagues on the Council) in highlighting the Carib Community's cultural importance and its need for assistance. As the Councillor responsible for Culture in the Borough, the SRCC leader ensured that the Council's annual subventions to the SRCC, for its role in preparing and conducting the Santa Rosa Festival, were dramatically increased from $200TT to $5,000TT.

In 1993, the United Nations' International Year for the World's Indigenous People, the Director of Culture in the Ministry of Culture chaired a government-SRCC committee (as was urged by the UN organizers of the Year) that oversaw "The Second Gathering" of indigenous people from around the Caribbean, with Arima as the centre of the event. The SRCC was officially praised and honoured with an award, underlining the SRCC's "commitment and support to indigenous peoples worldwide." The event was also funded by the national airline, British West Indian Airways (BWIA). In the same month as the Gathering (on Independence Day in August 1993), the SRCC was bestowed with the National Award of the Chaconia Silver Medal, of the Order of the Trinity, by the President of the Republic, for the SRCC's work in "Culture and Community Service." A second CARIFESTA was hosted in Trinidad in 1995, but his time with a little less of a Caribbean Amerindian presence. The SRCC's Research Officer had also been invited to speak at a regional conference on Indigenous Peoples of the Caribbean Basin, organized by the Organization of American States, which would later appear in published form (Harris and Reyes 1990).

While the SRCC was never successful in obtaining lands of its choice from the State, close to its current location in Arima, the SRCC was in fact granted a building in the centre of Arima for its general use. The SRCC turned down the gift finding that it would have cost them too much to renovate the structure. Local business people have also sought out the SRCC for possible joint ventures in promoting events in Arima with a Carib focus. Local politicians, with their own commercial interests, also looked for ways of joining the SRCC in developing a cultural tourism facility, with one local political celebrity in Arima going as far as offering them 100 acres of her own land -- however, the problem has arisen of how to get public funds to build a road on private property for a private enterprise.

In recent years the Ministry of Culture has also undertaken to fund the SRCC with an annual payment of $30,000TT. The funds are to cover general administration; costs accrued for the Santa Rosa Festival, research, and a Cassava Project intended to bring the SRCC a more regular income. In return, the state demands annual audited reports and a clear indication on the part of the SRCC that it will try to lessen its "dependency" on the state by developing commercial ventures. Once more, we see the state decisively acting to shape and recast the role and character of the Carib community, pushing them more into profit-gaining activities and heightening its degree of formalization and internal bureaucratization by requiring annual reports, audited statements, etc. This
facilitates state control and surveillance in a climate of cultural-political ferment.

A few more Caribbean-wide Amerindian gatherings were held by the SRCC in Arima, with a more specialized purpose of engaging in "cultural interchange." The purposes were to share knowledge and techniques pertaining to Amerindian traditional practices. Regular contact between the groups has also resulted from these exchanges, with plans for new ones in the future. In November of 1997, a private local foundation called "Harmony in Diversity" aided the SRCC in staging an impressive inter-continental gathering of indigenous peoples, again with a focus on the Caribbean, but with guests from as far away as the United States and Australia. This seems to have had a deep impact on the pride, confidence, self-awareness and public visibility of the SRCC. The SRCC is now regularly featured in various news articles in the different national dailies. Local secondary school history texts speak of the current SRCC and urge children to visit. Indeed, there are regular visits by groups of schoolteachers and children to the SRCC Centre, as well as groups of Girl Guides seeking to learn Amerindian weaving techniques.

Recently, the Tourism and Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO), with funding from the InterAmerican Development Bank, has established a Tourism Support Program which seeks to heighten awareness locally, amongst citizens, of the value and need for tourism (Trinidad traditionally receiving relatively few tourists outside of the Carnival season), via the formation of local Tourism Action Committees. The aim is to build community-based integrated tourism packages that can attract visitors to various locales in order to sample local cultural festivals, scenic beauty and so forth. Arima, though not yet formally incorporated into this plan, has been actively targeted by TIDCO officials for its tourist potential. At the heart of envisioned tourism plans lies the Santa Rosa Festival and the planned Carib cultural tourism facility: a proposed recreation of a traditional Amerindian settlement, with Carib families living there, also providing guest accommodation. The intent is to "showcase the Amerindian way of life." An added attraction would be the SRCC's involvement in the Santa Rosa Festival. The local Chamber of Commerce has been active behind the scenes in trying to wrest space from the Church in order to highlight Carib sales events during the festival period, marketing items of likely interest to tourists (baskets, handicrafts) and local visitors (Carib foods such as cassava bread and much prized wild meat). The Church has also held its own sales events and on a piece of land central to the events of the festival day. This has led to some conflict between the SRCC, which seeks the same space for the same purpose, and the Church, somewhat exacerbated by local business potentates who have "sided" with the SRCC realizing their items may be more attractive to tourists especially. The SRCC is the "beneficiary" of a heightened profile. On the other hand, all of these plans are still being ironed out and nothing definitive has happened at the time of writing.

I believe that it would be misleading to cast the SRCC of today as a minor, scorned, neglected group suffering from a lack of recognition.

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Yet this claim still surfaces in the speeches of SRCC leaders, possibly as a means of seeking further recognition or support. It is also arguable, on the other hand, that the SRCC finds itself caught between two unpleasant extremes: one, those who simply disbelieve their identity as Carib and find their resurgence foolish or suspicious -- a case of non-ascription or non-recognition; two, those who over-ascribe Caribness, believe in the identity but expect more dramatically Amerindian cultural features to be produced. The poles consist of those who disbelieve the SRCC consists of real Caribs, for the wrong reasons (i.e., race), and those who believe the SRCC consists of real Caribs, for the wrong reasons (i.e., business opportunities, tourism potential, etc.).

**Entering the Political Economy of Tradition: From Credibility to Viability, From Value to Credit**

A common view of what defines a tradition usually involves a conception of some ritualized practice, a cultural institution, adhered to by a group of people and practiced over some long-term historical period. Built
into that view, which again I feel is possibly the most commonplace, is that there must be someone responsible for conducting the tradition and for teaching it to younger generations; that the tradition must somehow be meaningful or useful to those who uphold it, or else it may fade away; that the practice be recognized as being a special one that merits repetition over time. In summary, tradition demands continuity, identifiability, leadership and value.

All of these elements of what makes for a tradition and its continuance can become charged with new meanings and even latent conflict in a context of antagonism and competition between groups, and in a situation where there has been a significant loss of traditions, or where a tradition becomes important to a much larger group or groups of people than those who initially produced the tradition, possibly for different reasons than envisioned by the original creators of the tradition. Anthropologists, and others, have developed a number of concepts for coming to grips with the various dimensions and implications of traditions and their uses.

Eric Hobsbawm's (1983) "invention of tradition" approach is one that gained considerable currency in anthropology. The essence of the concept is that where there is a rapid institution of traditions, a formal institution of novelties that have just been invented outright, then we have a case of "invented traditions." Hobsbawm notes that invented traditions are usually linked with some "suitable historic past": "'invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (Hobsbawm 1983: 1). Hobsbawm's work not only focuses on states as the agents of inventing traditions, but also places limits on the general applicability of his concept in cases where, "the old ways are still alive," and where, "traditions need be neither revived nor invented" (Hobsbawm 1983: 8). Hobsbawm's conceptualization makes no comment on whether the revival of traditions is to be treated on par with the invention of traditions.

Some anthropologists have transformed Hobsbawm's concept, arguing that even "traditional culture" is recognizable as more of an invention constructed for contemporary purposes (i.e., Hanson 1989). This approach, however, does not seem to differentiate invention from innovation nor does it easily account for the survival of traditions. Anthropologists who go a step further and speak in terms of the "ongoing reinvention of traditions" (Handler and Linnekin 1984) address some of these weaknesses. They also introduce new problems, implying that there are "authentic" traditions somewhere.

Nicholas Thomas has developed a cluster of concepts dealing with the uses of tradition. The "reform and reformulation of tradition" involves an "immediate strategy" for dealing "both with what is inadequate in intersocial relations and with what seems unsatisfactory or backward in one's own situation" (Thomas 1992: 228). The "objectification of tradition" entails the organization of a "neotraditional culture," organized in novel and oppositional terms: reifying practices and characteristics of an "emblematic way of life" marking the distinctiveness of a community, where identity and tradition are part of a "broader field of oppositional naming and categorization" (Thomas 1992: 215-216). The "articulation" of tradition occurs when, "something already present becomes explicit or is made explicit in new terms that alter its content, valorization and ramifications" (Thomas 1992: 220). The "inversion of tradition" refers to a rejection of what is customary in favour of its antithesis: modern, capitalist, cosmopolitan affluence (Thomas 1992: 223).

Almost all of Thomas' definitions seem to have some measure of applicability to the SRCC. Whereas it is arguably the case that Caribs between the early 1800s and before the 1970s had "inverted" their tradition, to use Thomas's term, to an extent that current SRCC leaders are mindful of and try to avoid being repeated by demonstrating the potential public appeal and financial benefits of preserving Carib traditions, one could say the SRCC's current resurgence represents an "articulation" of those traditions. This involves recasting Carib traditions as offering an alternative to large-scale development, as being respectful of the natural environment, as significant in the eyes of a plethora of international organizations that value indigenous knowledge, and as building blocks of what has come to be known as Trinidadian identity. Without wanting to criticize this portrait, one can at least agree that Caribs of the past would not have used such arguments to defend their traditions. The traditions are also objectified: they become emblems of a distinctively Carib way of life. Indeed, the logo of the SRCC features a cassava strainer and a cassava flour sifter, intended to indicate survival, Amerindian knowledge of special weaving techniques, and are also instruments seen as uniquely pertaining to Caribs across the Caribbean -- "you cannot get more Amerindian than that," says the SRCC.
leader. Reform and reformulation are present insofar as the original motivation of the Carib resurgence was unhappiness with the loss of communal rituals, festivals and knowledge -- of the intimate and personal familial bonds that attended those practices -- in a society racing toward individualism and hyper-consumerism where the past and all "old things" stood condemned as inferior, irrelevant and trivial.

What these perspectives, adapted from Thomas in dialogue with my field data, do not assert is that the SRCC's traditions are invented or false. Nothing presented as traditional has been a mere recent fabrication. Hobsbawm's approach is not applicable here. Where "reinvention" might be seen, if we adopt Immanuel Wallerstein's notion (1984: 63) that when groups seek to establish their particularities, "they invent their histories...[t]hey look for 'continuities' which at that moment in time will be congenial," lies in how the SRCC tries to underscore the value of Carib traditions, their congeniality, on levels reaching from the personal and emotional to the social, economic and global.

Traditions achieve value if they are properly brokered and reinterpreted for varying clienteles. *Traditions achieve value if they are properly brokered and reinterpreted for varying clienteles*

In the case of the SRCC, its leader functions as a "culture broker," one who interprets a tradition and its meaning, "for a particular clientele...at the same time that [he deals]...with political and religious hierarchies [amongst others] whose norms and aims differ from those of both the culture broker and his audience" (Antoun 1989: 4-5). This "reinterpretation of tradition" perspective sees such brokers as responsible for accepting, rejecting, reinterpreting or accommodating traditions within a framework of what is called the "social organization of tradition": "a universal process found among all societies at all times once particular hinterland communities become linked to overarching political, economic and religious structures and implicated in the concomitant processes of debt, politics, social control, and the quest for salvation" (Antoun 1989: 17).

Bridging this perspective with the definitions elaborated by Thomas above leads us to the view of culture brokers as responsible especially for the "articulation" of traditions.

In the case of the SRCC, and perhaps in most other cases, the role of the broker is to develop the credibility and value potential of the traditions they present for public consumption. I say public because if this were a simple case of people just wanting to enjoy each other's company and memories there would be no need for a formal ethnic association. I say consumption because if people just wanted to assert their ethnic selves that in itself would not necessitate a formal business organization. The SRCC is both: an ethnic group that is a company at the same time. The purpose of such organization and brokerage is to establish "cultural property" - - things that are uniquely Carib and of unique value therefore -- and to underline the symbolic value of a repertoire of cultural items. In seeking to "showcase" the Carib lifestyle, especially through the vehicle of a recreated Amerindian settlement qua tourist resort, the SRCC demonstrate a form of "neo-traditional development," of "harnessing custom to commerce" (Sahlins 1994: 415). Then we are speaking of an "ethnic road to development," no longer about traditions practiced for their own sake, but of traditions für sich.

Brokers such as the SRCC leader trade in the symbolic and material products of identity and tradition respectively. The first step is to accumulate cultural capital: this involves reworking, reviving and renewing traditional practices; researching their historical authenticity; and, seeking publicity for their efforts in (re) producing cultural products. Having international supporters vouching for the authenticity of the group's identity is a clear asset, and in the SRCC's case has served to lessen their dismissability by authorities. The SRCC covers all aspects of this first step. The second step is to use this cultural capital in a symbolic mode of accumulation: i.e., having established the boundaries that mark their distinctive identity they simultaneously mark the ownership of cultural products and the symbolic significance they have for the nation, showing their contribution in laying the foundations of the nation (Williams 1989: 412). The third step, deriving from and building upon the first two, involves entering the political economy of tradition, where cultural capital is literally transformed into the more routine capital that economists are familiar with.

The political economy of tradition is based on two factors. The first involves the phenomenon of even the most inane symbol and practice taking on a practical and material value. The second factor is that of cultural entrepreneurs/brokers consciously and purposefully wielding such symbols and practices in the marketplace. The general process is that of transforming "value" into commercial capital. Value can be rooted in "long-standing family traditions, practiced since time immemorial," and/or "practices of self-reliance that respect the
ecological balance," and/or "traditions widely adopted especially by rural Trinidadians, the backbone of the nation," and/or "the fragile material culture of an endangered minority that requires active preservation by all," and/or "exotic products that eager tourists will buy, helping the nation to solve its balance-of-payments problem." The SRCC leaders underline all of these elements, though not usually in such clear and crisp formulations. Having established value one can accumulate capital either directly, through sales in the marketplace (but this can be too much of a task for a small and still unsteady organization), or indirectly through "credit": that is, being compensated and funded by the state, using public funds, on the basis that the group is important and needs help to be put back on its feet.

Money is not considered a vulgar contaminant where the SRCC's efforts and aims are concerned. The SRCC leader explains that money is needed to show those who remain at the skeptical margins of the SRCC that "something is happening." The Research Officer adds that an improved economic status would afford the SRCC a higher, more respectable status in the society. Money, and the building of physical infrastructure that money would bring, may generate further commitment and determination among those hovering outside the core of "doers" in the SRCC, according to the President. Yet, economic success is also a source of worry for the leaders, suspecting and expecting that many opportunistic latecomers would vie for the leadership position once the SRCC takes off financially. To deal with that possibility, the SRCC is currently redrafting its constitution in order to specify what type of member could seek leadership.

What lurks in the background here is that this political economy of tradition, though played out locally, is in fact a global phenomenon. The United Nations, for example, through its International Year (1993), International Decade (1994-2004) and annual International Day (9 August) for the World's Indigenous People and the attendant activities, helps to establish what should be of value internationally; as a result, one should not be surprised to find local groups "reinventing" (in the Wallersteinian sense) their histories in order to stress that which is "congenial" and is globally defined as such by powerful agencies. Also, a local indigenous group receiving the advice, assistance, support and public vouching of other, recognized, indigenous groups from outside the locality in question, is an invaluable asset in heightening the authentic indigenous trademark of the traditions being traded in the cultural and economic marketplaces; such public endorsement serves as a type of "inspector's stamp of approval." In order to make locality viable, as Robertson (1992) argues, it has to be acted and thought out globally.

**Networks of Interchange: Regional and Global Connections**

Caribbean indigenous people have begun in recent times to form their own organizations as with the Carib Peoples Organization and the Carib Independent Organization in Dominica. The Caribbean Organization of Indigenous People (COIP), of which the SRCC is a member, came into being in January 1988, as a result of a conference held 13-17 August, 1987, titled "Caribbean Indigenous Revival: Towards Greater Recognition and Development" (Palacio 1992). The conference was attended by leaders of the Garifuna from St. Vincent and Belize, Caribs from Dominica and Guyana and Arawaks from Guyana also. The first COIP Coordinator, Dr. Joseph Palacio, is an anthropologist based at the university in Belize. The COIP has helped to lead a regional Pan-Carib revival, offering a regional network for the various groups to support each other. One Dominican Carib offered this assertion:

"We have a right to fight for our Indian culture. We have the right to recover even the things we have lost. Even our language. In our region and all over the Americas, we should seek each other as Indian peoples, just like the Jewish people do, or the Irish or the Italians or the Galicians or the Arabs." (Quoted in Barreiro 1992)

In this light, one of the COIP’s objectives was to "seek out" all Caribbean Amerindian communities and to have each of them recognize each other. Amongst COIP’s proposals is the plan for "exchange visits during which indigenous peoples would learn skills from each other that would broaden their own self-discovery [emphasis added]" (Palacio 1992: 70).

In the view of the leader of the SRCC, this formation of a regional network offering the basis for cultural "interchange," as he instructively designates it, allows groups such as the SRCC a much greater measure of not just self-confidence but also for acquiring more Amerindian "cultural stuff" that would make it more difficult
for their neighbours and authorities in Trinidadian society to dismiss them. The leader of the SRCC states that he is in regular contact with his counterparts in the Carib communities of Dominica and Guyana and he is continuing to work on further exchange visits. There are also those in the SRCC, inevitably impacted by the entrenched racial ideologies of the society they inhabit, who feel that it would be ideal to have permanent settlements in Trinidad of Dominica and Guyana Caribs, since "they look more Amerindian," with the ultimate aim of "interbreeding" thus increasing the numbers and physical distinctiveness of Trinidad's Caribs.

Non-Caribbean actors also played an important role in helping to form the COIP. In 1984 two leaders of Canada’s Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), traveled to the Eastern Caribbean and Belize to "initiate dialogue with indigenous peoples" and on their return to Canada they encouraged the Canadian University Services Overseas (CUSO) and Oxfam Canada, USA and UK to help support the 1987 regional conference I mentioned. The same FSIN offered the SRCC’s Youth Representative a scholarship to study "administration and development of Amerindian communities" at the Federated Indian College in Regina, Saskatchewan. In addition, Canada’s Assembly of First Nations hosted a hemispheric indigenous conference in 1991 for which the President and Youth representative of the SRCC were provided with full funding in order to participate. Bharath identified this experience as one of great sharing, exposure and inspiration. He saw the SRCC as fitting in with other indigenous communities. Endorsement of the conference by various international organizations was seen by the Carib participants as part of "the overall emphasis that the world community has given to the struggle of the indigenous peoples throughout the Americas within the past few years," according to Palacio (1992: 71).

The SRCC emphasizes that it is "in constant contact" with the World Council of Indigenous Peoples of which the COIP is a member body. Moreover, they add that the "environmentally friendly" practices they maintain are deemed as "worthy of emulation" by such "esteemed" and "reputable" international authorities as UNESCO, the World Wildlife Fund, Survival International, Greenpeace and so forth. The Organization of American States also took an interest in the SRCC and helped to fund and organize another hemispheric gathering of indigenous peoples held in Arima in 1993. The OAS also hosted a conference on Amerindian peoples of the Caribbean in which the SRCC participated. This, unfortunately, is as far as I can go given the constraints of time and space.

Aboriginality in the Local-Global Continuum

Certain theoretical extrapolations can be made, however tentative and preliminary. I view this articulation, organization and reconstruction of indigeneity as occurring within a local-global continuum. This involves the construction and transmission of material and symbolic resources that legitimize and support renewed indigeneity, flowing bi-directionally along that continuum. However, there is little evidence to suggest that the flow is balanced and, indeed, one may detect a certain centre-periphery structure in the relationship between North American and Caribbean indigenous groups in addition to a homogenizing of such diverse groups under a generic, ideal-type "Amerindian" category. At present I feel that ties to Canadian indigenous movements are more important to the Caribs than vice versa.

One may also begin to see how local and global levels or arenas each acts as restraints, parameters and motivations that both condition and inspire, constrain and enable the revitalization of Carib identification. Globalized terms, images, motifs and practices of indigeneity act as fund of materials which are engaged and sifted through by Caribbean Amerindians to define who they were, are, and who they are to be (see Robertson 1992). Mere association with and invocation of the names of large international indigenous bodies can serve as symbolic capital for these groups. To a certain extent, the material for a reformulated and revived indigenous identity comes from and is negotiated out of a globalized aboriginality and a globally organized political economy of tradition where even the most seemingly inane or trivial traditional practices take on large, global significance as an alternative to the evils of modernization.

I see these trends as adding, paradoxically, to the Caribs’ own authenticity claims paradoxical because they emphasize the icons and language of local continuity (despite the various global indigenous elements drafted
into the process of recreating the meaning of those elements said to be locally continuous, and yet, in the "public eye" in Trinidad their indigenous qualities may be enforced insofar as they are endorsed by "foreign" trends and institutions, thus rendering them more serious, more "real." I see the Caribs' self-understanding of indigeneity as very much a "work-in-progress," an indigenous "site under (re)construction," within a growing global network. We might even tentatively begin to posit that this global network is the indigene, that is, adaptable to and derivative of a variety of local platforms.

A central process in the reconstruction of Carib indigeneity is the organization, reproduction and display of "Carib culture" for a national audience and for the tourist market (for a similar case, see Friedman 1990). Presentation itself thus becomes an instrument in the constitution of selfhood.

Processes of globalization help to "lift" the discourse of local aboriginal issues and struggles to a global plane. Aboriginal global organization helps in itself to further define aboriginality. International organizations, whether inter-statal or indigenous, assist in the creation of an "international personality" of indigenous peoples. The Caribs increasingly come to define themselves, in part, within and through the international network of indigenous organizations.

**Conclusion: Caribs and the Globalization of Aboriginality**

The interpretation offered in this paper, however preliminary, is in agreement with the perspectives of Jonathan Friedman (1994) and Roland Robertson (1992) in suggesting that the current "heightened representability of Fourth World peoples" forms an important foundation and parameter of the current revival of indigeneity. Moreover, it becomes more apparent that locality is "globally institutionalized" and that "worldwide indigenization" is "globally orchestrated" by both international organizations and by transnational indigenous alliances. In the process of this globally organized renewal of indigeneity, we find as with the Caribs that the past acts as a resource, the future is a project and the present is a platform.

Features such as internal shareholders, external stakeholders, multilaterality, internationalization, marketing and commerce have been shown as key characteristics of this special case of indigeneity, that is, of re-born or resurgent indigeneity. This obviates the possibility of studying a community such as the SRCC in isolation from larger actors and institutions.

The SRCC however is not just on the receiving end of influences and concerns pertaining to actors and agencies external to the group. For its part, the SRCC has helped to expand the concerns, issues and discourse of indigenous movements world-wide into the Caribbean, significantly altering the post-slavery cultural-political landscape. I have also observed that if the SRCC did not have the regional and international indigenous contacts that it currently possesses, the nature and course of their development path would have been significantly altered or diminished.

Many questions have simply not been addressed in this paper. I am conscious of that. In fact, what I present here is almost a type of "notes toward..." essay. Some answers might be inferred from a careful reading however. One main question -- why is there this resurgent indigeneity in Trinidad, at this time, that is, how do we explain the fact there are still Caribs today? -- can be answered in part by noting that it is due to at least two motivations: one, that there are those who still wish to be seen and to see themselves as Caribs; and, two, there are those who want Caribs to exist, who want to see Caribs. Without the two, often working hand-in-hand, I personally doubt that this Carib resurgence could have occurred. Moreover, without a history that preserved a categorical place for "Carib" there could be none willing to rise and fill or activate that sometimes vacant category.

Lastly, while some itch to ask, "are they really Caribs?"

"Are they really Caribs?"

I must refrain from engaging such questions. I do not believe there is any hard and fast, clear cut definition of
"Carib" that would satisfy either researchers or the people who so call themselves Carib. Ultimately, they are Carib if they feel so and if they are confident that they possess some special long-term bond to a place and their ancestors, going beyond that of their neighbours in the society. "Indigenous" is a time-space concept: here before others, first to be here. It is relational and comparative -- it necessitates a post-indigenous/post-conquest social context. They are Carib because they in fact ignore descent, they erase descent: they are like their ancestors in terms of being indigenous, not like their neighbours (whether East Indian or African) even though, in fact, as individuals they were all born in the same time and place. Indeed, many Trinidadians use the term "indigenous" as a mere synonym for local, not Amerindian. The ultimate test, I suppose, of feeling or knowing oneself to be indigenous is not in the ornaments one can produce, but in the fact of not knowing how far back one's roots extend in a place.

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