

THE LANGUAGE HERITAGE OF THE CARIBBEAN:
LINGUISTIC GENOCIDE AND RESISTANCE

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ABSTRACT

The tactics may have changed. However the end results remain the same. Linguistic Genocide is no newcomer to the Caribbean. In the early stages of European colonization of the Caribbean, many indigenous languages disappeared due to widespread physical elimination of the populations speaking these languages. Today the danger is either one of hostile language policies or just plain indifference. New generations are no longer transmitting the language(s) of the communities into which they were born and more than ever community languages are disappearing on a large scale. A language will not survive if the older generation does not use it with the younger generation. With the disappearance of domains within which indigenous languages would naturally be used, opportunities for cross-generational transmission disappear. This paper will discuss the process by which Caribbean indigenous languages disappear and the forces favouring language preservation.

Keywords: European, colonization, indigenous, community, transmission, disappearance, cross - generational, preservation

RESUMEN ABSTRACTO

La tácticas pueden haber cambiado, sin embargo, el resultado final permanece igual. El Genocidio Lingüístico no es nuevo al Caribe. En las primeras etapas de la colonización europea del Caribe muchas lenguas indígenas desaparecieron debido a la amplia eliminación física de la población lingüística. Hoy día el peligro es uno de políticas lingüísticas hostiles o mera indiferencia. Las nuevas generaciones ya no están transmitiendo el lenguaje(s) de la comunidad en la cual nacieron y más que nunca los lenguajes comunitarios están desapareciendo a gran escala. La conexión entre cada nueva generación y la transmisión y sobrevivencia del lenguaje es una de dependencia. Este trabajo discutirá la resistencia y el proceso de desaparición del lenguaje. La discusión se llevará a cabo a través de un análisis profundo de la situación del lenguaje a lo largo de la región y un estudio de las características internas de uno de los lenguajes que sobrevive en el Caribe isleño: Garifuna.

Palabras clave: *europea, colonización, indígena, comunidad, transmisión, desaparición,*

Garifuna

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Introduction

Every new generation is a link in the transmission of the language(s) of the community into which they are born. Each generation does this by naturally acquiring, through exposure, the knowledge and use of language(s) of the community within which they live. Language transmission in the Caribbean was a problem, as we shall see, even before the arrival of the Europeans in the late 15th century. However, this has been transformed into a crisis in the post-Columbus Caribbean. There has been a massive disappearance of languages previously in use. In effect, the European presence produced a huge deterioration in the conditions that existed for

transmitting these languages to new generations of children. There has, of course, been resistance to this process. Evidence of this resistance survives in the language situation and the languages which currently exist within the Caribbean. We shall, in the course of this paper, trace this process of language disappearance and the resistance to it which emerged. This will be carried out through an examination of the language situation across the region and via a study of the internal features of the one surviving language of the island Caribbean, Garifuna.

The Slaughter of Languages

In the earliest stages of European colonisation of the Caribbean, indigenous Caribbean languages disappeared as a result of the widespread physical elimination of these languages. In such cases, no adults survived to transmit the languages and there were no children around to acquire them. Many languages destroyed in this way have left behind sometimes just a language name and a word list recorded by some curious literate European. According to Taylor (1977), the dead languages include the probably Cariban languages, Nepuyo and Yao, spoken in Trinidad as well as the Arawakan language Shebayo. Igneri, an Arawakan language spoken in the Lesser Antilles and the language now labeled by scholars Taino, spoken in the Greater Antilles, also disappeared early in the colonisation process.

In the present day Caribbean, the physical extermination of members of indigenous people is no longer fashionable. However, the surviving indigenous language speaking communities are still faced with prospect of ongoing language loss. This can be attributed to the language policies and practices of the Caribbean states within which these communities live. Colonial and post-colonial states of the Caribbean are hostile or, at best, indifferent to the use of indigenous languages within communities and the transmission of these

languages to new generations. Current official language policies originate in the colonial conquest of the region. These seek to replace indigenous languages with the dominant, official European languages of the colonially created states of the Caribbean. The results of these policies can be seen in the statistics which follow.

Table 1.1 shows data on the indigenous languages associated with Belize, Dominica, Guyana, St. Vincent and Suriname. It has been relatively easy to obtain statistics about the numbers of people who are members of the ethnic group linked to these languages. The figures for these have, in the main, been derived from *Ethnologue* (Grimes, 1997). It is much more difficult to discover how many people actually speak the language, with what level of competence, and to what extent the language is being passed on to children. *Ethnologue* (Grimes, 1997) is sometimes helpful, but has had to be supplemented using several other sources, including the UNESCO Redbook on Endangered Languages (2003), as well as Forte (2003) and Melville (2003) for Guyana, Carlin (2002), Carlin and Boven (2003), and Taylor (1977) for Dominica and St. Vincent, and Langworthy (n.d.) for Belize.

In all cases of indigenous languages still in use listed in Table 1.1, the number of persons identifying themselves as members of an ethnic group is significantly larger than those who speak the language of that group. A glaring example is that of the Arawaks, the largest indigenous ethnic group in Guyana. They make up 33% of the indigenous population of that country. However, no more than 10% of the group is reported to be speakers of the Arawak (Lokono) language.

Some languages in Table 1.1 appear as being transmitted to children. However, almost invariably the proportion of children within the particular indigenous community acquiring the language is falling with each passing generation. This has important implications

for the preservation of the linguistic heritage of the region. With the exception of the relatively large population of speakers of Yucatán Mayan and Kekchi in Mexico, all of the languages listed in Table 1.1 can be considered to some degree endangered.

One explanation for the endangerment of indigenous languages is the need felt by members of the indigenous communities to engage with the wider society. They have to do so via either the official languages of the respective countries, English, Dutch, Portuguese or Spanish, and / or the Creole vernacular language widely used in the country. At first, this leads to transitional bilingualism at the community level. Almost inevitably, in two or three generations, however, the external language replaces the indigenous language as the medium of communication within the community.

Again excluding Yucatán Mayan and Kekchi for the moment, Garifuna, spoken now only in Central America, would appear to be the healthiest of the indigenous languages. However, some estimates suggest that only about half of the ethnic Garinagu speak the language. Also, even though the language is reportedly being transmitted to children, this appears in the case of Belize, to be happening in only one of the five Belizean ethnic Garinagu communities (Langworthy, n.d.). In Hopkins, the one community where transmission is claimed to be taking place, children are bilingual in Belizean Creole and Garifuna. However, my observation on two field trip visits to Hopkins in 2001 and 2002 is that Belizean Creole is the language of choice of the playground and in the community primary school. This is true even though the vast majority of the children are ethnically Garinagu.

If we move along the scale of levels of endangerment, there is the case of Arawak in which only 10% of the ethnic Arawak (Lokono) community is estimated to be able to speak the language. As with Garifuna, however, the level of endangerment varies from community to

community. In Tapakuma, on the West Coast of the Essequibo in Guyana, for example, out of a population of several hundred, only 5 persons, all over 65, could speak the language. In another community up the Wakapau Creek on the Pomeroon River, much more remote than Tapakuma, most persons over the age of 50 were speakers of the language in 2003 (Robertson, p.c.).

There are finally those cases of endangered languages where speakers number in the tens or fewer, rather than hundreds and are all over 60. Three languages, Tunayuna, Akurio and Sikiiyana, have fewer than a hundred speakers. One of the languages above, Karifuna of Dominica, is listed as extinct, its last remaining speaker having died in the early decades of the 20th century.

The Implications of Linguistic Genocide in the Caribbean

Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) points to Article II(e) of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This forbids acts which lead to “forcibly transferring children of the group to another group” (p. 652). She suggests that such acts need not be physical but may be interpreted to include practices employed in the education system. She singles out in particular the subtractive approach to language education. According to this approach, the language of dominance and of wider communication comes to replace local community languages. Thus, within the Caribbean, efforts to impose imperial languages such as English, Dutch, French and Spanish, to the exclusion of indigenous languages of communities, may be deemed genocidal within this interpretation. Children are, according to this view, psychologically and structurally prohibited from continuing or wanting to continue to speak the language of their parents. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) uses Article II(b) of this same convention to support her case. The article includes within the definition of genocide acts “Causing serious

bodily or mental harm to members of the group” (p. xxxiii). States involved in the education of speakers of vernacular and indigenous languages exclusively in a second language have come to be stigmatised in the international literature on the subject. They are dubbed as being engaged in ‘linguistic genocide’ as is the title of a major book on this subject, *Linguistic Genocide in Education – Or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights?* (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). The statistics already presented establish that, in fact, within the wider Caribbean, linguistic genocide as defined here is indeed taking place.

Geographically, the Caribbean is merely an extension of the South American tropical lowlands and in particular that portion described as ‘Tropical Wet and Dry’. These latter conditions are met on the Caribbean coasts of Colombia and Venezuela, in the Orinoco Basin, parts of Amazonia, and the Greater Antilles. As one might expect, therefore, there is a historical connection between the people who occupied this region of mainland South America and those who lived in its island extension, the Caribbean. The Orinoco Basin was the centre of pre-Columbian plant domestication in this area, involving the cultivation of starch-rich root crops and tubers, in particular cassava. This innovation is believed to have spread with the migration 2000 years ago of Arawakan speaking peoples from this base across the entire ‘Tropical Wet and Dry’ ecological area. It specifically spread to the Caribbean coast of South America, to Trinidad and then into the Caribbean islands, as well as across the northern coast of South America to the Guianas (Boomert, 2003).

Pre-Columbian Caribbean island societies represented a human adaptation to the specific environment presented by the geographic region they occupied. The language situation of the pre-Columbian Caribbean was, therefore, an extension of that existing in the adjoining areas of South America. The dead or endangered indigenous languages of the Caribbean,

therefore, have to be seen as part of the linguistic diversity of tropical South America, itself under threat.

New Languages for Old

The peculiarity of the linguistic history of the Caribbean, not noted by Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) and other similar works on linguistic genocide, is the reality of language birth. European conquest in the Caribbean did not simply involve the introduction of European languages and the destruction of indigenous ones. Simultaneously with these two processes, a third was taking place. New languages, Creole languages, were being created. These produced a new linguistic diversity, partly coexisting with the old, partly replacing it. With the introduction of plantation agriculture by the European conquerors, new communities were assembled to produce plantation crops. The bulk of the plantation labour force was constituted from Africans, mainly West Africans, imported as slaves from their countries of origin. New languages, fit for the new communities assembled to operate in this new environment, were created.

The fascinating issue of language creation is what lies at the centre of the discipline of Creole Linguistics. The Caribbean, inclusive of the adjoining mainland regions, has produced over 35 recognizably distinct Creole languages (SIL ref, Creole language map of the Caribbean). Creole linguists over two centuries, but more particularly over the past 60 years, have studied the formation of Creole languages. Explanations have varied considerably from one theoretician to another.

At one extreme is the Language Bioprogram Hypothesis of Bickerton (1981). According to this, Creole languages originate from a process by which syntax is reinvented from scratch by children who are born into conditions of extreme linguistic diversity. Such is

presumed to have been the case on early Caribbean plantations, manned by African slave labour assembled from various parts of West Africa and without a common language. The European language of the dominant group provides the vocabulary for these new languages. The syntax, however, comes from the built in predisposition of children to learn language. When exposed to coherent forms of language, they will simply learn the language(s) used in the environment. When the language of the environment is incoherent as a result of the use of a rudimentary and unstructured pidgin as a lingua franca, these children will create a new one, based on innate biologically conditioned models of what constitutes the syntax of language.

At the other extreme is the sub-stratum hypothesis of Alleyne (1980). He argues that, in the case of the Caribbean, all the African languages present were members of the Niger-Congo language family. These languages supposedly have a set of common underlying phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexico-semantic features which are masked by the vocabulary differences across these languages. According to this reconstruction of language history, European vocabulary to which all African language speakers in the New World would have had some limited and shared exposure, came to be grafted on to the morphological and syntactic features held in common across all the language groups. This is supposed to produce a contact language which was African in every way except its vocabulary. This is, according to Alleyne (1980), how Creole languages in the Caribbean were formed.

Other approaches to Creole language origins, such as those of McWhorter (1997), have been more eclectic. These propose aspects of the Language Bioprogram Hypothesis for particular areas of Caribbean Creole syntax, some element of African substrate influence for other aspects of syntax, and innovation for others. With specific exception of Berbice Dutch Creole (Kouwenberg, 1991; Robertson, et al., 1987) which shows a significant input from a

single West African language, Eastern Ijo, into its vocabulary, there is consensus that the bulk of the vocabulary comes from the dominant European language. However, Mufwene (2001) goes further. He argues that the morphology and syntax of these languages originate in regional variations of the European language providing the vocabulary. This is the result of a process of dialectal levelling and regularisation of the European language which took place in the plantation societies of the Caribbean.

What can be agreed on is that these languages, in the first instance, were the linguistic expressions of a European dominated plantation society culture. They were created and spoken by people who were part of that culture. However, the major participants in the process of culture and language creation were West African slaves and their immediate descendants. They would have imported into the newly developing language, linguistic and cultural features from West Africa. The debate has focused on exactly how much and how it might have been transmitted. Much less discussed has been the issue of the impact of linguistic and associated cultural influences from indigenous languages in the development of Caribbean Creole languages.

At the beginning of plantation slavery in the Caribbean, it was commonplace for indigenous people to share servile positions with imported Africans. The pattern began in the 16th century during the period of Spanish dominance when indigenous people and Africans were made to serve alongside each other as slaves. Sued-Badillo (2003) argues that racial mixing between these groups occurred at this time and proceeds to suggest that "... it fell to blacks to keep alive for posterity much of the culture of the indigene peoples" (p. 286).

Identifying the presence of this influence can be somewhat tricky. However, Watlington (2003) observes that "Throughout the Greater Antilles, aboriginal plant names and

ethnobotanical knowledge has survived for much of the native flora, from herbaceous to arboreal” (p. 73). This is reflected at the level of agricultural knowledge and practices, as when Boomert (2003) states that “... Antillean gardens form syncretic adaptations by African slaves, incorporating African and European elements into aboriginal systems already existing in the islands” (p. 137). In the case of Jamaica, excavations of early maroon settlements, associated with runaway Africans, suggest that these were sites shared, in earliest period, with indigenous people (Agorsah, 1993). Price (1983) notes that the maroons of Suriname, notably the Saramaccan, represent another such group where there is evidence of significant early contact with the indigenous populations. In the case of Berbice Dutch Creole, spoken along the banks of rivers inland from the coast, in areas traditionally occupied by Arawaks, the opportunity for further adaptation existed. This can be seen in the large number of Arawak loans into Berbice Dutch Creole (Kouwenberg, 1991).

As it is, however, Berbice Dutch Creole, this most adapting of Creole languages, is on the verge of extinction with perhaps no more than two speakers believed to be still alive in 2008 (Robertson, p.c.). Language death has, therefore, not just been a threat to the old languages of the Caribbean but to the new born Creole languages as well. A second and distinct Dutch Creole spoken in Guyana, Essequibo Dutch Creole, expired with its last known speaker in the late 1970s. In addition, a third Dutch lexicon Creole, Negerhollands of the Danish, now U.S., Virgin Islands, died in the course of the 20th century. Gone with these were the various continuities, linguistic and cultural, from the indigenous, African and European languages which contributed to their formation. With their disappearance, important aspects of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Caribbean have been lost.

The Last One Spoken: The Stories It Has To Tell

In the previous section, the focus was on how indigenous linguistic and cultural elements have become integrated into the emerging Creole languages of the West African newcomers. There was, as well, however, another option for contact between these two oppressed groups. This involved West African importees and their descendants adopting indigenous languages and cultures. The strongest example of this integration took place in St. Vincent where runaway slaves from neighbouring territories such as Barbados intermarried with members of the indigenous community on that island. The resulting population, known as the Garinagu, reside in part in St. Vincent but in more significant numbers in Central America, including Honduras, Guatemala and Belize. The Central American Garinagu have retained their language, Garifuna. The Vincentian variety of Garifuna became extinct in the 1920s. It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that the only people who preserve and speak an indigenous language originally used within the islands of Caribbean is a group of people of predominantly African descent, living not in the islands but in continental Central America.

But what does Garifuna represent historically? What exactly was the relationship between the various Arawakan language varieties previously spoken in the Lesser Antilles, dubbed by Taylor (1977) 'Island Carib'. The two varieties of Island Carib for which we have some basis of comparison are Dominican and Vincentian, the two forms of the language which survived into the 20th century. These two varieties are themselves likely to have been dialectal amalgams of dialects spoken in other islands. This is the case since Dominica and St. Vincent were the two last islands controlled by the indigenous populations and became a refuge for Island Caribs driven out from other islands as a result of European conquest. Modern Garifuna,

spoken in Belize, is an offshoot of the variety spoken in St Vincent. Modern Garifuna landed on the shores of Central America after the vast majority of Vincentian Garinagu, labeled ‘Black Caribs’, were deported from St. Vincent to Central America in 1796 after they rose up against British occupation and were militarily defeated by the British.

A comparison of Modern Garifuna with the 17th century Dominican variety, as presented in Table 1.2 from Taylor (1977), points to a pattern of shared idiosyncrasies in the adaptation of loanwords. In some words beginning with /p/ in the language of origin, the reflexes in 17th century Karifuna and Modern Garifuna are /p/ and /f/ respectively. In other loanwords with /p/ in the language of origin, the reflex is /b/ in both 17th century Karifuna and Modern Garifuna.

In the examples, knowledge of the form of the loanword in one variety predicts the form which will appear in the other. However, the form of the item in the lending language cannot predict the form of the reflex in either of the two borrowing languages. The relationship between /p/ in the lending language and /b/ and /f/ or /b/ and /p/ in the borrowing languages is idiosyncratic. This suggests that the borrowing of these loanwords took place once, whether into the Dominican variety, the Vincentian one, or some other, and then spreading through the other variety or varieties, rather than occurring more than once. The reason for this conclusion is that exactly the same idiosyncracies associated with the exactly the same items are unlikely to have occurred more than once. In the meagre record of the 20th century Dominican variety which Taylor (1977) was able to unearth, he finds eighteen Old World loanwords unknown to Breton (p.79). In this list, (see Table 1.3), loanwords with a voiceless unaspirated alveolar stop in the Dominican variety systematically corresponds to the Garifuna voiced alveolar stop.

Voiceless aspirated stops in the Dominican variety systematically correspond to the voiceless stop in Garifuna. This is in spite of the fact that the input forms from the Old World varieties involves [θ] in one case, [t] in three cases, and [d] in one case. The shape of the loanwords in the languages of origin do not predict the [t] / [d] versus [th] in these two languages. However, knowing the form in one variety allows one to accurately predict the form in the other. The conclusion here is that whatever idiosyncracies operated at the time these words were borrowed, applied equally to the two language varieties. This suggests that a plausible explanation is that the words were borrowed once and then spread across the other varieties of the language, idiosyncracies and all. It further reinforces a similar conclusion arrived at when a comparison was done between Modern Garifuna and 17th century Karifuna.

Taylor (1977) argues that Karifuna, as spoken by the so-called Yellow Caribs of Dominica, and Garifuna, as spoken by the so-called Black Caribs of St. Vincent and Central America, remained mutually intelligible until the former became extinct early in the 20th century. If we combine this with the fact of the shared idiosyncracies in loanword forms and we have, at a minimum, evidence for sufficiently close contact between the two language communities for loanwords absorbed into one to become spread to the other community. It is particularly significant, for example, that the one item of undoubted African provenance in the basic vocabulary of these two languages, i.e., /mútu/ or /múthu/ ‘person’, is shared by both dialects, including that of the ‘Yellow Caribs’ of Dominica who were arguably less exposed to African influence than the ‘Black Caribs’ of St. Vincent.

There is some element of differentiation, however. One aspect of African / Creole influence which has affected at least Central American Garifuna but not Dominican Karifuna, is the word order of demonstrative adjective and noun. In Dominican, the form of such

a construction would involve the demonstrative followed by the noun, as in *thukúra hiáru* ‘that woman’, whereas the Garifuna equivalent would involve the opposite word order, *hiáru tugura*. Taylor (1977) suggests that this might be the result of French Creole influence on Garifuna.

Having established the relative internal unity of Garifuna / Karifuna, the Arawakan varieties spoken in the Lesser Antilles, we have to address the question of its linguistic origins. Why would people who speak an Arawakan language identify themselves as ‘Carib’ or Karina? As part of dealing with this seeming anomaly, Taylor (1977) uses the term ‘Island-Carib’ to describe a language variety or cluster of language varieties in use in the islands of the Lesser Antilles, from Antigua to Grenada at the time of the arrival of the Europeans. Taylor (1977) refers to Breton, a mid 17th century source on the variety spoken in Dominica. This source reports that the names these people used to describe themselves were *Calliponam* in the women’s speech and *Callinaga* in the speech of the men. These have reflexes in the speech of the Garinago or ‘Black Caribs’ of Central America, the only speech community currently using a language variety which can be traced back to these earlier speech varieties. For the modern Garinagu of Central America, the reflex, *Garinago* is used for the ethnic group, and *Garifuna* for the language.

The pre-Columbian inhabitants of the islands, before the coming of the Carib or Karina, were speakers of a language which Taylor (1977) reconstructs as an Arawakan language. This language is sometimes referred to in the literature as Igneri. At an as yet unspecified time prior to the arrival of the Europeans, but often estimated at around 1200 A.D, contact seems to have developed between the resident Arawakan speakers and Carib or Karina speaking peoples migrating into the Caribbean from the South American mainland. According to the most common historical version of this contact, male invaders conquered the Igneri, massacring the

men and seizing the women as wives. The outcome is supposed to have been, in the first generation, a society consisting of women speaking an Arawakan language and men speaking a Cariban language, Karina.

By the time of the first European attestations of language within the community, in the mid-1600s, the bilingual situation involving the pre-existing Arawakan language, on one hand, and the imported Karina, on the other, had already broken down. It had been replaced by a single language, an Arawakan one, with gender based diglossia, involving partial bilinguism. Taylor (1977) suggests that the language, based on evidence from modern Garifuna, has not entirely been outgrown three centuries later. Taylor (1977) refers to Breton (1665; 1666; 1667). His works describe the language of speakers in Dominica in the mid-17th century and, from his description, considers himself to be describing just one language. This, he divides into (i) forms characteristic of men's speech, (ii) forms common to both men and women, and (iii) forms characteristic of women (and of children) which he disparagingly refers to as 'the children's jargon and the women's dialects'. What differentiated the language forms described by Breton as men's speech was a higher level of lexical and sometimes structural influence from Karina than that which characterised the forms common to men and women or those which were restricted to "the children's jargon and the women's dialects" (p. 96).

Did Breton indeed observe three different speech forms coexisting in mid-17th century Dominica and by extension similar other speech communities in the Eastern Caribbean? Let us examine the following observations made by Taylor (1977) of Breton's work. For men's speech, Breton gives us four pronoun prefixes, i- 'first person singular', a- ~ e- 'second person singular', and k- 'first person plural'. These are all lexemes of Karina origin. At the same time, Breton gives, as 'common to the speech of men and women alike' four forms, l- 'third person

singular, masculine’, th- ‘third person singular, feminine’, h- ‘second person plural’ and nh- ‘third person plural’. These latter are all lexemes of Arawakan origin. On the very next page, however, in presenting a word of Karina origin, uhémbou ‘belly’, he presents this word with the four pronouns of common speech, as well as the three pronouns, n- ‘first person singular’, b- ‘second person singular’ and ua- ‘first person singular’. These were, by virtue of not being listed with the men’s pronouns, considered by Breton to be part of women’s speech. The conclusion from the above, supported by other aspects of Breton’s description, is that there were, in fact, only two varieties. One was restricted to males. The other was common to all members of the community, males, females and children.

A sample of the 17th century relationship between male and common speech, can be seen as follows. In the two sentences, *nebouiátina tibónam* and *chileàtina tone*, the first is characteristic of male speech, the second of common speech. In the former sentence, the roots, /nemboui-/ and /-ibónam/ mean ‘come’ and ‘go’ in Karina. This contrasts with the female speech, which would take the Arawakan roots, /chile-/ and /-óne/, also meaning ‘go’ and ‘come’ respectively. What both sentences share is a single set of grammatical affixes, /a-ti-na/ (perfective aspect, 1st person singular) and /t-/ 3rd person singular female (Taylor, 1977). The Arawakan affiliation of even the men’s speech in Breton’s time can be seen, with grammatical morphemes of Arawakan ancestry being used with Karina lexemes.

The relatively superficial impact of Karina can be seen with reference to some Karina loanwords which survive in modern Garifuna. The evidence as supplied by Taylor (1977) suggests that where Karina grammatical morphemes did occur, there is clear evidence that the users had no sense of the significance or original use of these morphemes. These simply were swallowed whole along with the lexical morpheme to which they were attached. Thus, in a

Garifuna sentence *ka siuámaɪ bubáu hádageɛ* ‘Which one of them do you like?’, the interrogative *ka* ‘who, what, which’ is Arawakan. The lexical item, *siuámaɪ* ‘like’ is Karina in origin. The auxiliary verb, *bubáu* ‘you do her’ is inherited, and the functional *ha-da-geɛ* ‘them-among-from’, has a Karina base, **-da** (Karina *ta* ‘in’), with Arawakan affixes. However, the lexeme, *siuámaɪ* ‘like’, though treated as a verb which requires the auxiliary *bubáu*, is itself an inflected verb in Karina, complete with subject and object, i.e., *si-wama-e* ‘I please him/her/it’.

Arguably, there were three trends already in existence in 17th century Dominican. There was firstly that involving the use of Karina lexical linguistic features to differentiate exclusively male speech from common speech. There was secondly that involving the erosion of Karina influence within the speech community and thirdly the trend towards the reduction in the level of difference between male speech and common speech. This latter involved both the loss of Karina features in male speech and the absorption of some Karina features into common speech.

We can see these trends in historical perspective with reference to modern Garifuna as spoken in Central America. There has been maintained, in modern Garifuna, certain relics of Karina influence that serve to distinguish between male speech and common speech. Thus, there are emphatic personal pronoun forms, *au* ‘I, me’ and *amɪrɪ* ‘you’, items of Karina origin in exclusively male speech now as in the mid-17th century, in opposition to *nuguya* ‘I, me’ and *buguya* ‘you’ which are Arawakan in origin and which now occur in common speech. However, the trends towards the erosion of Karina influence and towards the reduction in the difference between male speech and common speech have also been maintained. In modern Garifuna, the three Karina personal pronoun prefix forms of men’s speech in the 17th century

which we have already referred to, i.e., i-, a- ~ e- and k-, have died out, leaving in place only their common speech equivalents, i.e., n-, bu-, and ua-, all of Arawakan origin.

Lexical statistics support these observations. In Breton's time, in the mid-17th century, there was 56 synonymous pairs of 'non-cultural' words, i.e. items from the 100 word Swadesh word list, whose individual members were used respectively in men's speech and common speech. In the 20th century Garifuna, the differentiation between exclusively male speech and common speech has survived. However, the number of pairs of items differentiating between exclusively male speech and common speech, had shrunk from 56 to 6. The male speech item in each of these 6 pairs continues to be of Karina origin, with the common speech equivalent being of Arawakan origin. In the meantime, the number of Arawakan words on the Swadesh word list without a male speech competitor of Karina origin, has increased from 33 to 77. This provides supporting evidence for the other two trends, i.e., the erosion of Karina influence and the narrowing of the difference between exclusively male speech and female speech. The presence of 1 African and 16 Karina words which have no specialised male speech competitor, points to the trend towards a narrowing of the gap between exclusively male and common speech, but via a route which does not simultaneously involve the erosion of Karina linguistic influence (Taylor, 1977).

What all of this represents is, on one hand, the persistence over several centuries of the need for the marking of difference between incoming males from the Karina group and women speaking an Arawakan language. Even when the ethnic element of the need for differentiation has long disappeared, the gender element in this need for differentiation has persisted. At the same time, however, the trend towards the erosion of differences between the incoming male conquering group and the female conquered group has been inexorable. The

historical reality of being different is pulling in one direction, and the present reality of belonging to the same society is pulling in the other. The latter is winning over the former but only over a very protracted period of time.

Conclusion: An Historical Blueprint?

I would suggest that the historical process outlined above is characteristic not just of the pre-Columbian era but the period since then. The process is one which can be characterised as involving different stages of what may be called conquest diglossia, i.e., diglossia imposed by the military conquest of one language group by another. The H language in a situation of conquest type diglossia, is imposed on a population rather than by choice adopted by that population, as is the case of German-speaking Switzerland.

Ferguson (1959) notes that:

... H can succeed in establishing itself as a standard only if it is already serving as a standard language in some other community and the diglossia community, for reasons linguistic and non-linguistic, tends to merge with the other community. Otherwise, H fades away and becomes a learned or liturgical language studied only by scholars or specialists and not used actively in the community. Some form of L or a mixed variety becomes standard (Ferguson 1959, p. p.437).

The earlier Arawakan / Karina relationship represents the 'conquest type' diglossia of the Fishman (1972) type involving distinct and unrelated language varieties. Later, as links with the mainland Karina became more attenuated, there is a shift towards a diglossia of the Ferguson type, one in which the language varieties are related and can be viewed as varieties of the same

language. Then, with the passing of the centuries, this has further softened into gender based stylistic variations involving a few lexical items and grammatical morphemes.

The Arawakan / Karina originating diglossia has served as a template for the diglossias created by the European invasion of the region and the emergence of conquest diglossias involving the European language as the H and Creole languages as the H. As with the earlier conquest, the issue of the continued autonomy and viability of the H is being eroded, or at least brought into question, in many parts of the Caribbean. This is becoming so as the links between the region and the original colonisers become weaker and the countries of the Caribbean more centred around a national identity. In countries as different as Haiti and Jamaica, questions arise about the continued viability of the respective colonial languages, French and English, as they seemingly become marginalised by Creole languages which are rapidly rising in status and spreading in function.

Epilogue

The approach which sees language as part of heritage is one which has been adopted by UNESCO (2003a) which, at its General Conference adopted the International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage, the performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, as well as knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe and traditional craftsmanship, now benefit from an international legal instrument to safeguard intangible heritage through cooperation. (UNESCO, 2003b)

The convention proposes to create national inventories of cultural property that should be protected, and to set up an Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. It also proposes to have drawn up a Representative List of the Intangible

Heritage of Humanity and another list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

To the first list would be added the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity named by UNESCO. One of these is “the Garifuna Language, Dance and Music” (UNESCO, 2003). As we have seen, nearly all of the other indigenous languages of the region are eligible to be put on the second of the two lists, i.e., that of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. Some Creole languages such as Berbice Dutch Creole would also be deserving of inclusion in such a list.

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TABLES

Table 1.1: *Data on the indigenous languages associated with Belize, Dominica, Guyana, St. Vincent and Suriname*

Language	Country	Family	Ethnic Nos.	Speaker Nos.	5+	40+	60+
Akawaio	Guy/Ven	CRB	4,300	4,300	+	+	+
Akurio Sur.		CRB	40	40	-	-	+
Arawak	Guy., Sur.	ARK	15,000	1,500	-	-/+	+
Garifuna	G/H/Bze/SV	ARK	98,000				
	Bze		20,000				
	SV		6,000	0			
Kalihna	Guy/Sur/Ven	CRB	10,000	?	+	+	+
	Guy		2,700	475	?	?	?
	Sur		2,390	?	?		
Karifuna	Dom	ARK	3,400	0	-	-	-
Kekchí	Gua/ES/Bze	MYA	421,300	421,300	+	+	+
	Bze		9,000	9,000	?	?	?
Macushi	Guy/Bra/Ven	CRB	13,000	13,000	+	+	+
	Guy		7,000	7,000	+	+	+
Mopán Maya	Bze/Gua	MYA	10,350	?	?		
	Bze		7,750	?	?		
Patamona	Guy	CRB	4,700	4,700	+	+	+
Pemon	Ven/Bra/Guy	CRB	5,930	5,930	+	+	+
	Guy (Arecuna)		475	475	+	+	+
Sikïyana	Suriname	CRB	40	40	-	-	-

Trio	Sur/Bra/Guy	CRB	1,130	1,130	+	+	+
Tunayana	Sur	CRB	40	40	-	-	+
Wai-wai	Bra/Guy	CRB	7,000	7,000	+	+	+
	Guy		200	200	+	+	+
Wapishana	Guy/Bra	ARK	10,500	10,500	+	+	+
	Guy		9,000	9,000	+	+	+
Warao	Ven/Guy/Sur	-	19,700				
	Guy		4,700	100	-	-	+
Wayana	Sur/Bra	CRB	600	?	-		
Yucatán	Mex/Bze	MYA	700,000	?			
	Bze		5,000	2,000	-	+	+

Countries Key: Bze = Belize, Dom = Dominica, ES = El Salvador, Guy = Guyana, Gua = Guatemala, Hon = Honduras, SV = St Vincent, Ven = Venezuela,

Language Family Key: ARK = Arawakan, CRB = Cariban, MYA = Mayan.

Table 1.2: *Patterns of Shared Idiosyncrasies in the Adaptation of Loanwords*

Modern Garifuna	17 th Century Karifuna	Presumed Source
buírihu	bouírocou	puerco (Span.)
búroburo	boúrbrê	pólvora (Span.)
fádiri	pátri	padre (Span.)
fáluma	pálma	palma (Span.)
sabádu	sabátto	zapato (Span.)
isíbuse	(i)chibouíchi	espejo (Span.)
gaburána	cabouíranê	caparona (?)
fanídira	pántir	bandera (Span.)

Table 1.3: *Loanwords and Correspondences in Language Varieties*

Modern Garifuna	Recent Karifuna	Presumed Source
muládu	mulátu	mulato (Span.)
dábula	tábula	table (Fr.)
sáuderu	sáuteru	chaudière (Fr.)
fúdu	pútu	pote (Span.), pot (Eng.)
e-tegi-ra	e-thek-ra	thank 'ee (Eng.)
tásu	thásu	tasse (Fr.)
mútu	múthu	múntu (Bantu)