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READING HISTORY, PERFORMING CARIB: THE SANTA ROSA FESTIVAL AND AMERINDIAN IDENTITY IN TRINIDAD

Amelia K. Ingram

ABSTRACT

In most social science discourse on the Caribbean, there seems to be a consensus that pre-colonial indigenous culture has been absent or severely diminished. The myth of the total decimation of Amerindians in Trinidad has been countered by the organization and revival of a group called the Santa Rosa Carib Community (or SRCC), located in the central town of Arima. Without any attempts to claim racial purity, the SRCC have utilized the existing community cultural and ethnic paradigms to re-imagine an indigenous Amerindian identity. The Santa Rosa Festival, produced jointly by the Santa Rosa Carib Community (SRCC) and the Santa Rosa Catholic Church, is held in honor of the former mission's patron saint, St. Rose of Lima, the first saint of the New World. *Parang*, a Venezuelan-influenced string band music, is a central part of festival performances. Performed by members of the SRCC and other members of the community, *parang* is re-appropriated as an Amerindian music within the context of the festival, and considered a common cultural thread. In this paper, I will discuss the polemics of performing *parang* in the Santa Rosa Festival as a dialectical means to engage a renewed sense of Amerindian identity in Trinidad today.

Keywords: *parang*, Amerindian Caribbean, ethnicity, Santa Rosa Carib Community, Spanish Creole identity, Trinidad music

RESUMEN

En la mayor parte del discurso de las ciencias sociales en el Caribe parece haber un consenso en que la cultura indígena pre-colonial ha estado ausente o muy disminuida. El mito de la total destrucción de la cultura amerindia en Trinidad ha sido contrarrestado por la organización y la reactivación de un grupo llamado Comunidad Caribeña Santa Rosa (o CCSR), ubicado en el céntrico pueblo de Arima. Sin intentar reclamar la pureza racial, la CCSR ha utilizado la actual comunidad cultural y los paradigmas étnicos para re-imaginar una identidad amerindia indígena. El Festival de Santa Rosa, producido conjuntamente por la CCSR y la Iglesia Católica de Santa Rosa, se celebra en honor de la antigua misión de la patrona, Santa Rosa de Lima, la primera

Santa del Nuevo Mundo. *Parang*, una música para banda de cuerdas con influencia venezolana, es una parte central de las interpretaciones del festival. Interpretada por los miembros de la CCSR y otros miembros de la comunidad, *parang* es re-apropiada como una música amerindia en el marco del festival, y considerada un hilo cultural común. En este trabajo, discutiré la polémica de interpretar *parang* en el Festival de Santa Rosa como un medio dialéctico para comprometer un renovado sentido de la identidad amerindia en Trinidad actualmente.

Palabras clave: *parang*, Caribe amerindio, etnicidad, Comunidad Caribeña de Santa Rosa, identidad criolla española, música de Trinidad

RÉSUMÉ

Dans la plupart des travaux des sciences sociales sur la Caraïbe, il semble y avoir un consensus sur le fait que, la culture pré-coloniale autochtone a été absente ou sévèrement diminuée. Le mythe de la destruction totale des Amérindiens à Trinidad a été bloqué grâce à l'organisation et la renaissance d'un groupe appelé la Communauté des Caraïbes de Santa Rosa (ou SRCC), situé au centre de la ville de Arima. Sans aucune tentative de revendication de la pureté raciale, le SRCC a utilisé les paradigmes culturels et ethniques de la communauté pour ré-inventer une identité autochtone amérindienne. Le Festival de Santa Rosa, organisé par la Communauté des Caraïbes de Santa Rosa (SRCC) et l'Eglise catholique de Santa Rosa, est tenu en l'honneur du Saint patron de l'ancienne mission, Sainte-Rose de Lima, le premier saint du Nouveau Monde. «Parang», une musique d'origine vénézuélienne, est un élément central des spectacles du festival. Interprétée par les membres de la SRCC et d'autres membres de la communauté dans le cadre du festival, le *Parang* retrouve sa voie dans l'espace musical amérindien et est désormais perçu comme un fil culturel commun. Cet article se propose d'analyser la polémique de l'interprétation du *Parang* dans le Festival de Santa Rosa comme un moyen dialectique d'engager une nouvelle orientation de l'identité amérindienne actuelle de Trinidad.

Mots-clés: *Parang*, culture Amérindiens, ethnicité, Communauté des Caraïbes de Santa Rosa, Créole espagnol, musique Trinidadienne

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In most social science discourse on the Caribbean, there seems to be a consensus that pre-colonial indigenous culture has been absent or severely diminished. Anthropologists such as Kevin Yelvington have stated that Trinidad “remained largely a deserted island until the last years of Spanish colonial rule, when in 1783 French planters and their slaves came and set up plantations” (Yelvington 1995:37). The

myth of the total decimation of Amerindian culture in Trinidad has been countered by the organization and revival of a group called the Santa Rosa Carib Community (or SRCC), located in the central town of Arima. Without any attempts to claim racial purity, the SRCC have utilized the existing community cultural and ethnic paradigms to re-imagine an Amerindian identity.

The Santa Rosa Festival, produced jointly by the Santa Rosa Carib Community (SRCC) and the Santa Rosa Catholic Church, is held in honor of the former mission's patron saint, St. Rose of Lima, the first saint of the New World. *Parang*, a Venezuelan-influenced string band music, is a central part of festival performances held at the Santa Rosa Carib Community Center. Engaged by members of the SRCC and other members of the community, *parang* is re-appropriated as an Amerindian music within the context of the festival, and considered a common cultural thread. This paper discusses the Santa Rosa Festival as a dialectical means to engage a renewed sense of Amerindian identity in Trinidad today.

Background/Challenges

The absence of Amerindian literature in the Caribbean is telling. For one, little is known about the cultures of pre-contact Amerindian communities and their "continuity" with those in the present. Earliest colonial literature took the form of correspondence (Father Bartolomé de las Casas was the first) or in the form of travelogues (Franck 1920). By the mid-19th century, colonial historians were keen to romanticize the Amerindian as either the savage, defiant warrior (Borde 1876) or in the form of romanticized narrative encounter (Cudjoe 2003:276). Archeological studies have been difficult at best, due to the nature of a vast archipelago (spanning 2,000 miles) and migrational traffic with several tribal groups and mainland peoples which occurred even after European contact (Wilson 1997:2). Thus, the absence of tangible scholarship has reinforced the notion of extinction or marginality (Forte 2006:4) in the contemporary Caribbean, some going to the point of asserting "the history of the Caribbean has been the history of imported peoples" (Lieber 1981:1).

The Caribbean Amerindian communities that exist today (including the *Tainos* of Puerto Rico and Cuba, the Caribs of St. Vincent, Dominica, and Trinidad), have used "revival," "survival" and "resurgence" to characterize their cultural presence and persistence. According to Barreiro (2006), the Cuban *Taino* "survival" was accomplished through "stretches of isolation and very slow intermarriage" (26). For those in the Dominican Republic, "survival" has occurred through cultural preservation and confirmed with DNA tests (Guitar et al. 2006:63). In St. Vincent,

“survival” and “revival” has meant the recognition and ownership of Carib lands, while in Dominica the “resurgence” of cultural performance and the development of a “Carib economy” is key (Twinn 2006:93-94; Smith 2006:80-81). It becomes clear that an Amerindian presence in the Caribbean has meant different things to each community.

Unfortunately, the scant discussions of these contemporary communities have been problematic. One such volume, *Taíno Revival* (Haslip-Viera 1999) included contributions with questionable titles such as “Making Indians Out of Blacks” or “The Indians Are Coming! The Indians Are Coming!,” suggesting the authors themselves question the authenticity of such contemporary revivals. Another collection of archeology, colonial history and contemporary accounts by Samuel Wilson (1997) emphasized archeological prehistory and only devoted one chapter to contemporary communities. A recent survey of Caribbean Amerindian revival (Forte, ed. 2006), however commendable, excludes the Puerto Rican *Taíno* community, potentially reinforcing the political discourse of authenticity in that community. Each of these works demonstrates the difficult task of description and research in Caribbean Amerindian communities. Most significant, however, is that existing scholarship has made little effort to connect these “revivals” to the ethnic frameworks within which they reconstruct themselves.

Another challenge is the “indigenous” rhetoric that has been used as a vehicle for validating both national and political agendas. Maximilian Forte (2001:3) asserts that contemporary attempts to re-imagine a native Amerindian “indigenous” identity in Trinidad have been part of “nation-building efforts in seizing upon the proclaimed Carib ‘contribution to the national foundation’.” Hobsbawm’s “invention of tradition” process has been invoked by many scholars to explain the way modern post-colonial nations “imply continuity with the past” and legitimate the authenticity of national culture (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983:263). However, despite nationalist support, many would question the existence of the Carib as a legitimate ethnic category in Trinidad. After all, Afro-Creole culture was (and still is) perceived as the dominant “indigenous” heritage of Trinidad, with Carnival and its associated musical genres as iconic cultural practices of national identity.

In the late 1950s, Dr. Eric Williams and the People’s National Movement (PNM) profoundly inspired the nationalization of Afro-Creole identity in Trinidad.¹ However, this process relied on the perception of a “vacuum of indigenouness” (Lieber 1981:1). Early historians described a “virtual extinction” of Amerindians in Trinidad, which reinforced the perceived “vacuum” (e.g. De Verteuil 1858; Joseph 1838; Kingsley 1877). One theory assumed that a diminished Amerindian population was equivalent to extinction in terms of labor:

the native population, the Amerindians, were to be compelled to work for their Spanish masters, preferably in mines. When the Amerindians were decimated by colonial exploitation, their place was taken by imported African slaves who had the same obligation to work as their Amerindian predecessors. (Williams 1962:10)

At the time of independence, local scholars (such as Ryan 1972) wrote narratives of Trinidadian history (ironically under the pretext of “creolization”) (Yelvington 1993:13) that emphasized the rise of a black Afro-Creole culture and disregarded the remaining mixture of Amerindian, Spanish, and French Creole peasantry (or “peons”) which persisted in rural villages and towns. Consequently, the continued existence of Amerindian culture in Trinidad was perceived as minimal and they were able to successfully rearticulate “indigenous” discourse as the domain of an Afro-Creole majority.

The contemporary focus on a “fundamental dualism” in Trinidadian society and politics formed around the two main ethnic groups: African and East Indian (they waver between app. 37% and 40% respectively). A small number of elite white Europeans were subsumed into an upper-class “French Creole” group (approx. 0.8%) and a remaining “mixed” Creole (20%), Chinese, Portuguese and Lebanese (approx. 1.2%) population made up the remaining minority which more or less incorporated subsequent influxes of foreign immigrant labourers.² Corresponding to the two main populations are two political parties, the People’s National Movement, or PNM, (pro-African), and the United National Congress, or UNC (pro-Indian). According to Daniel Miller (1994) this “fundamental duality” between Africans and East Indians has affected many aspects of Trinidadian society which depend upon political patronage to support local agendas. In spite of post-colonial strategies to negate previous class and social structures, the problem of legitimizing fluid and malleable ethnic and racial identities has been evident for some time. As the political party in power has control over government resources, a struggle for patronage has framed communities within ethnic parameters as they fight for recognition and patronage (Hintzen 1989:11). While national mantras of “unity in diversity” and “all o’ we is one” were used to promote multiculturalism, ethnic divisions continue to play a substantial role in Trinidad as the “callaloo” (literally, a multiple ingredient stew, considered a national dish) or mixed migration of peoples struggle for recognition and support.

Amerindians and the Problem of “Mixed” Creole

The problem of locating Amerindian identity in Trinidad (and much of the Caribbean) thus lies within this ambiguous category of “mixed” Creole. Khan argues (1993) that “‘mixed’ ethnicities are fluid in the sense of consisting of a dialectic between boundary and content rather than as shifting boundaries that encompass interchangeable attributes” (182), which focuses on the process rather than static formations (viz. Barth 1969). However, this fluidity does not account for large-scale social change (such as slavery, wars, and colonialism) that also determined how ethnicity (as a social and political structure) considered who was “mixed” and who was not. Creolization represented a ‘miscegenation’ process of mixing European peoples and African slaves in the Americas, but did not intend to be used as a distinct racial or color term (not strictly “black-plus-white,” “brown,” “red,” etc.) (Khan 1993:181). On its way to nationalist associations, the term “Creole” in 19th century West Indian society mostly referred to those locally born rather than foreign Europeans, according to plantation society’s functional purposes:

A ‘white Creole’ was a person born in the island of European descent; a ‘Creole Indian’ was born in Trinidad of East Indian descent; a ‘Creole Spaniard’ was an individual of Spanish (and often African and Amerindian) descent born in the island. The phrase ‘foreign Creole’ was often applied to coloured and black persons born in one of the other West Indian islands and settled in Trinidad. And ‘Afro-Creole’ is used to describe cultural practices which fused African and European elements, and were kept up by black Creoles in Trinidad. (Brereton 1979:2-3)

While aspects of this ethnic structure have persisted, they preceded a discourse of creolization in the early 20th century, which was defined by nationalism. This form of creolization would later be distinguished from the process of “mixing” (Khan 1993:189). According to Khan, the fear of assimilation and acculturation (cultural change or demise) would lead to a socially pluralist philosophy: “a ‘callaloo’ [or mix] that remains unamalgamated; it is synchronously mixed and distinctive” (ibid.). As a national strategy of multiculturalism, the idea of mixing became more favorable than creolization, which accompanied worries of cultural “brown out” (culture = ethnicity) (Yelvington 1993:10). Nevertheless, amidst these complicated and inadequate descriptions, a “culture of ethnicity” and atmosphere of ethnic politics developed which both situates and obscures the “mixed” Creole (and Amerindian) as an ethnic category.

In historical terms, the “mixed” Creole included a small Spanish Creole community, which combined rural descendants of Spanish settlers, the remaining Amerindian community, and descendants of

migrants who arrived in Trinidad from other parts of the Caribbean and the Venezuelan mainland.³ They were variously called Spanish Creole, “cocoa panyol” or “Venezuelan peon,” depending on their familial roots and historical context. “Cocoa panyol” or “panyol” (a corruption of “cocoa español” or “cocoa Spanish”) referred to the Spanish-speaking peasantry which worked on Trinidad’s cocoa plantations that thrived between 1870 and 1920. The extant Spanish colonial peasantry (from the period 1498-1797) combined with “Venezuelan peons” who migrated to Trinidad from the 18th century and 19th century as seasonal agricultural labourers and engaged in petty trade (Moodie 1994:2).⁴ The Venezuelans mostly came from Eastern Venezuela (Oriente) and the nearby island of Margarita as *mestizos* (Amerindian/Spanish) or *pardos* (African/Spanish), and were assimilated into a rural peasantry that included emancipated slaves and “a larger but increasingly diminishing group of aboriginals” (ibid.). The dynamics of regional politics and migrations together combined the “cocoa panyol” and Venezuelan peons into a larger subgroup of “mixed” Creole: the “Spanish” or as they are known today “Spanish Creole,” unified by common language, cultural background and racial origin (Moodie 1994:5).

Three Amerindian groups (Carib, Arawak and Warao) may have intersected with the “Spanish Creole” community at various times. The Caribs (known locally as the subgroup Nepuyo) were found in the northeastern mountainous regions of Trinidad (as well as Tobago), while the Arawaks (the earliest inhabitants) were found in the northwestern areas and Warao in the central and southern areas of the island (Forte 2005:52-53). Additionally, the Venezuelan Warao (or “Warahoon”) were known to make frequent trips to Trinidad until the 1970s, either for trade or religious pilgrimages to Naparima Hill (Chauharjasingh 2003; Forte 2005:60; Goldwasser 1996:3). The former missionized Amerindians were quietly maintained and inspired by Venezuelan communities, since it was an easy trip across the Gulf of Paria. The current Amerindian community in Trinidad identifies itself solely as “Carib” since the consolidation of former Amerindian missions brought the remaining mission Indians together in the predominately Carib (or Nepuyo) town of Arima.

In 1976, Ricardo Bharath Hernandez formally organized the Santa Rosa Carib Community in order to preserve the local Amerindian community. He was motivated:

to “restore the traditions and community spirit of my people” after reading [former Arima mayor] F.E.M. Hosein’s play, *Hyarima and the Saints...* “Why me? Why am I in this? I am just doing it because I like doing it, I feel I need to do it. And then reading, reading history,... I saw that the last [Trinidad Carib] Chief Hyarima said that...the remnants of his people that are scattered far and wide will in the end come back

again, and that sounded so mysterious. So I said, 'Well probably what I am doing I have to do. I am motivated by some other force to do.'
(Forte 2005:8)

With inspiration from Hosein's play, Hernandez achieved formal incorporation that year and the group gained international recognition from bodies such as UNESCO, the Organization of American States, and the United Nations' World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) as well as land grants from the Trinidad government (Forte 2006:9). His central platform was the Santa Rosa Festival, in which he claimed the historical authority of the Carib community in preparing the festivities in the Church and their own community.

The Santa Rosa Festival and the Catholic Church

Arima was designated as a Capuchin mission settlement by Governor Chacon in 1784 in order to gather the remaining Amerindians from the neighboring missions of Arouca, Caura and Tacarigua which were closed. The festival of Santa Rosa carries historic significance as the oldest continuous island festival since its beginning in 1786, the year of the Arima church's dedication. According to Arima church historian Patricia Elie,

In 1786, the Spanish church celebrated the bicentenary of the feast of Santa Rosa of Lima, who was the first saint of the New World. Because the celebration of this mission coincided with the bicentenary, the mission was dedicated to Saint Rose of Lima, and that's why it was called Santa Rosa de Arima. And therefore, every time the feast was celebrated—and the feast was originally August the 30—it would be the big holiday in the town. It was a big church celebration followed by a big secular celebration. (Elie 2002)

The orthographic change from "Santa Rosa de Lima" to "Santa Rosa de Arima" reflected the process of local adoption. Elie states that the Santa Rosa festival began in this year.

The Santa Rosa Festival, produced jointly by the Santa Rosa Carib Community (SRCC) and the Santa Rosa Catholic Church, is held in honor of the former mission's patron saint, St. Rose of Lima. It was meant to celebrate "the end of hostilities between the Church and their ancestors and their acceptance of Christianity as it was taught by the Capuchin missionaries" (Khan 1992:6). However, the primary focus of both the Church and the Amerindian community was patronage of Santa Rosa.

The mythology surrounding Rose of Lima's life has undergone local transformations. Standard Catholic biographies tell the story of a South American girl born to Spanish parents and forced into poverty due to

unsuccessful speculation in the mines. She chose not to marry and lived as a virginal recluse in a hut in her family's garden, inflicting upon herself extreme forms of penance. Her self-inflicted isolation, illness and death are "best understood as an attempt to make reparation for the widespread sin and corruption in contemporary society" (Farmer 1978:349) referring to societal corruption in the newly Spanish America. Rose was canonized in 1671 and became the first saint of the Americas, named patron saint of South America (*ibid.*). Her officially recognized feast day on the Roman Catholic religious calendar is August 23rd. In Trinidad, however, ceremonies and preparations for the Santa Rosa festival begin on August 1st, with the festival celebrations on the last weekend of August. The church mass and festival is held on the last Sunday in August at the Santa Rosa Roman Catholic Church in Arima.

In Arima, the story was transformed to incorporate the local Amerindian population. According to former Trinidadian priest John Haricharan, the first documentation of the transition from "Santa Rosa de Lima" to "Santa Rosa de Arima" appeared in the official baptismal register of the Arima church with an entry dated January 15, 1780 (1975:31). The local interpretation (as told by Jacqueline Khan, secretary of the SRCC) of the saintly encounter blended Amerindian elements of local nature, persons and symbology with Catholic faith. The story depicted the "miraculous" encounters of a native Spanish girl by local Amerindian hunters and their subsequent patronage:

Rose as she was called was born in Arima and was taken to live "down the Main" (South American Mainland) by her parents when she was still a child. It was revealed that Rosa had been born in Arima during the time her parents stayed in Trinidad on their way from Spain, while preparing to go to South America, where they eventually settled in Peru. However, had it not been for the older folks, none of us would have known that three Carib hunters belonging to the Carinepogoto Tribe were hunting in the highwoods, that is where Pinto Road or "Santa Rosa Heights" is now. Their names were Raimundo, Punya and Punyon. They followed the river and there, where the white river lilies grow, near to a beautiful spring they saw a girl who seemed to be dumb, they thought she must be lost so they took her back to their village. When the men brought this girl back to the village, they carried her to the Priest. Three times she disappeared, and three times they brought her back. The third time the Priest told them that when she disappeared next time it will be forever because she was not of this world. She was "Rose of Lima"—meaning that she was canonized in Lima (the capital of Peru). When she grew up her father wanted her to marry but she had pledged her life to God and to helping the poor. The priest said that the person found in the highwoods was really her spirit, which the Saint had willed to come back to Arima where she was born. He told them that

they must make an image of her while she was still among them and this they did. It was said, as soon as the statue (the same statue that the Caribs of Arima cherish to this day) was completed, the “girl” found in the highwoods disappeared forever. The hunters, on going to the forest where they first met her, found a necklace and a crown of roses in the colours of pink, yellow, red, and white. The necklace was said to have miraculous powers and was worn by the Queen of the Tribe—as a sign of the sovereignty that has been lost. (Khan 1992:6-8)

The story, recounted as a colonial encounter from the Carib perspective, describes the beginning of religious patronage and conversion among the Amerindians to the Catholic faith. It is also understood as a story that sanctioned the encounter between Amerindian and Spanish, Catholic and native spirituality. I found numerous versions of this story both in print (reprinted in newspapers annually before the festival) and orally repeated amongst the local community. Elma Reyes, a former newspaper journalist and Arima historian, also published an identical story in a 1978 booklet for the Santa Rosa Carib community. The story was told by Drucilla ‘Ma’ Galera, who died in 1977 shortly after celebrating her 107 birthday. Galera was fond of “telling her descendants and other young members of the tribe the story that was told to her by her grandmother when she was a child” (Reyes 1978:18). Jacqueline Khan also passionately repeated the story during an interview. This was a legend with a living oral tradition.

Santa Rosa Festival and the Carib Community

One 19th century historian speculated that the early festival was an opportunity for the Amerindian community to perform indigenous music inside the church:

On that day the Indians elected their king and queen—in general a young man and a young girl—and all appeared in their best apparel and most gaudy ornaments. The interior of the church was hung with the produce of their industry—bunches of plantains, cassava, cakes, and the fruits of this season; game of various descriptions, coconos, lapas, parrots, etc., and draped with the graceful leaves of the palm tree. After Mass, they performed ceremonial dances in the church, then proceeded to the Casa Real, or royal house, to pay their compliments to the *corregidor*,⁵ who gave the signal for dancing and various sport...Santa Rosa’s day was really a gay anniversary at which the poor Indians, simple children of yore, were for the time, the principal actors, and during which they forgot both the loss of their heritage and their own individual serfdom. (De Verteuil 1858, as qtd. in Harricharan 1975:32)

In a contemporary reference to De Verteuil’s description, a booklet

dedicated to the Arima centennial celebration added “the accompaniment of the *cuatro* [*cuatro*] and the *chac chac* [*maracas*]” (“Centennial Celebration” 1988:10). Alternatively, church priest John Harricharan believed the assimilation of multiple Amerindian groups into the Arima mission potentially led to an increased emphasis in Amerindian culture in the festival.

In the early mission days at Arima, the feast was celebrated modestly with a novena of prayers and a Mass conducted in a small thatched roof chapel. With the agglomeration of Indians by 1784 into Arima, now displaced from the neighboring areas by the new settlers, the festival assumed new dimensions with the incorporation of Amerindian cultural traits. (Harricharan 1975:31)

Nevertheless, De Verteuil’s version was continually repeated by local Arimians, and is still part of local folklore; I heard it numerous times during my interviews in 2002-2003. Without proof that dancing ever occurred inside the church, it is likely that the dance could have been a misinterpreted part of smoke ceremonies which continue to be performed as part of the Santa Rosa statue preparations inside the church. Consequently, Amerindian rituals could have been integrated into the Church rituals much earlier than some have speculated.

Sir Ralph Woodford, who became governor of the island (under the British) in 1813 was a strong supporter of the Carib community and encouraged the expansion of ceremonial and Amerindian aspects of the Santa Rosa Festival (Forte 2005:81). By most accounts, the festival quickly grew to become a large celebration of the local Amerindian population. Local historian C.R. Ottley (1955) believes the Trinidadian government used the Santa Rosa festival as an opportunity to address the needs of a consolidated Amerindian community:

We also owe to the efforts of the missionaries one of our most loved festivals, that of Santa Rosa. This was in days gone by a highly religious feast celebrated by the Indians even after their numbers had dwindled and the few remaining tribes had been shepherded by the government in 1768 on the outskirts of Arima. It became the custom much later, for the Governor to attend at Lord Harris Square in Arima after the celebration of High Mass to listen to the complaints of the Indian settlers, and to help them to adjust their social affairs.⁶ (Ottley 1971:38)

The British governor would make the most efficient use of his time in Arima by attending to legal matters during the festival, since he would not visit the rural towns often.

By 1900, a *Port of Spain Gazette* reference to “Arima fete” reflected that the event acquired the status of a town festival, beyond the status of a mere church event:

We learn that a petition is going the round amongst the Dry goods and provision merchants of the City to try and induce them to grant the privilege of a whole day's holiday to their employees on Saturday in honour of the Arima fete of Santa Rosa...we cordially support the request for a generous half holiday, say all places of business closing by 12 or 12:30; so as to enable clerks to go to Arima by the 1:15 pm train, if so minded.⁷ And we would once again take the opportunity of pressing on the merchants that they should institute the *regular* custom of Saturday early closing. (7)

As a regional event, the event generated enough popularity to create early business closures. By 1965, the Arima Borough council became involved in the festival's production by hosting a beauty pageant entitled "Queen of Santa Rosa" as well as an "open-air talent show featuring some of the nation's top artistes and show personalities" ("Arima Council" 1966). The Santa Rosa beauty pageant continued until sometime in the late 1980s.⁸ During the 1966 preparations, the conflicts between business owners and festival organizers were recognized by the town mayor, Felix Bellamy:

Contacted at his home yesterday, Mr. Bellamy said as far as the Council was concerned, the Santa Rosa celebrations had become a money-making affair, and although it was the policy of the Council to render service to the community, 'we shall not close our eyes on any form of exploitation.' (Ibid.)

While conflicts reflected the growing town development, efforts were now made to formally recognize the community's performances.

Parang, a Venezuelan-influenced string band music, was soon considered to be a central part of the festivities held at the Santa Rosa Carib Community center. The musical genre was grounded primarily in an older "cocoa panyol" tradition of "parranda," (literally "to parade") or house-to-house caroling in the rural towns and villages.⁹ The ritual of "parranda" caroling involved string bands (primarily *maracas*, *cuatro* (a small 4-string guitar), guitar, mandolin and violin) which performed a repertoire of secular and religious-themed music including: the *serenal*, "aguinaldos" (related to the Spanish *villancico*), *guarapo*, *manzanares*, castillian waltz and *pasillo*. The transformation of "parranda" into "parang" reflected the formal organization of bands into a staged competitive genre, the incorporation of modern instrumentation (such as congas, electric guitar, etc.) and the consolidation of repertoire to include local Spanish Creole music not traditional to *parranda* (such as *galerón*). The "parang fiesta" format now incorporated elements of the *parranda* traditions (food, dance and music) with a faster, dance-oriented aesthetic that was more accessible to a non-Spanish Creole audience.

The connection between the Carib community and the developing

genre of “parang” was a natural extension of Arima and its Spanish Creole community. In 1966, newspapers documented “Carib displays, folk dancing, and performances by a *parang* musical group” as an official part of the festival program (“These Are” 1966). This was one of the first public acknowledgements of *parang* as a local folk music and as a part of the Santa Rosa festival. Although the music is sung in Spanish and typically associated with Christmas in Trinidad, in the context of the festival *parang* was (and still is) considered an Amerindian music, and a local community tradition. This was attributed to several reasons. First, Arima’s history as a center of “cocoa panyol” culture (with several cocoa plantations in the area and a Spanish Creole community which grew with the consolidation of Amerindian missions in the 19th century) emphasized the connection of Amerindians to Spanish Creole culture through the Santa Rosa festival and its devotions to the saint. Additionally, some of the song genres incorporated into *parang* repertoire (such as the *galerón*) were not traditional to Christmas *parranda* (the *galerón* was more associated with the cross wake (“*velorio de cruz*”) tradition). Finally, there was some overlap between the Carib community and the *parang* bands, with several bands including Carib musicians and incorporating symbology of Santa Rosa into their lyrics and performance (to be discussed later in the article). The resulting confluence between community history and musical performance was reflected in the associations between “Spanish” and “Carib” in the context of the festival.

Other activities were attractions to the Santa Rosa festival. Beginning in 1909, horse races were popular during the festival weekend, but after the track’s migration to the eastern outskirts of Arima, the sport lost its tie to the festival (“Centennial Celebration”).

In Arima there was the additional attraction of the Santa Rosa races and lavish house parties so that people from Venezuela and other Caribbean countries would come for this celebration as well. (Reyes 1987:23)

These ancillary events generated the most regional notoriety. Handicrafts and exhibitions have been a constant feature (some years being more active than others), mostly featuring local work such as basket weaving (such as the *coulève* or *sebucan*)¹⁰ and indigenous foods such as cassava bread, a staple of the Amerindian community. In earlier times, *warap* (or *guarap* as the local Spanish spelling) was an indigenous alcoholic beverage produced by the Carib community for the Santa Rosa festival. In the period before the festival, large jars of sugar cane (along with herbs and spices) were buried in the mission square and unearthed on the festival day to produce an alcoholic beverage. Valentina Medina describes the impact of the *warap* on the festival:

A: What are some more differences between the Santa Rosa festival, the way it used to be, and now?

M: You see in the park? Those Carib used to squeeze cane.

A: Right there in the park?

M: And bury it in big jars. Bury it in the park. Nobody would interfere with it. And the time for the feast, they would dig it up, and that is their drink. It would get them drunk, you know. Cane, what you call "warap." But you know, you had to preserve it. So they used to have that buried in the park. And it's in the park that everything used to take place. But now they [the church] take over the park. (Medina 2003)

The alcoholic *warap* led to local stigmatization of the Carib Indian as drunk and hostile and pushed the Amerindian festival celebrations further away from the Santa Rosa Church. Now, the Carib community's celebrations are held after the Mass in the SRCC Centre, situated on the northwestern outskirts of town.¹¹ *Warap* still remains to be a traditional drink during the festival, although surreptitiously prepared in the privacy of individual homes. Other activities (such as sports competitions) were once considered traditional in the Carib celebrations, but dissipated in recent years (De Verteuil 1858, as qtd. in Harricharan 1975:32). This could be due to changing demographics and lack of interest among Arima's youth in Santa Rosa.

Contemporary developments in the Santa Rosa Carib Community leadership have led to a division of labor between the Santa Rosa Festival and the greater community. Before Hernandez and his formal organization of the community in the 1970s, the Carib Queen held a more vital role in the community as a culture bearer and leader. Based upon earlier documentation (de Verteuil 1858:301), Forte believes the Carib Queen tradition began in the mid- to late-1800s, first as a "King and Queen of the Festival Day," then as a matriarch for the community. As a leading elder, the Carib Queen was selected based on her knowledge and ability to teach the Carib traditions of food preparation (cassava bread), weaving, history and leadership of the Carib preparations for the festival (Forte 1999; Medina 2003). However in recent years, with Hernandez's rise to leadership in the community, the Carib Queen's role became limited mostly to a titular role during the festival (Forte 2001a). Although Hernandez brought about much-needed financial contributions, he has supposedly fueled political struggles between those involved in producing the Santa Rosa festival (both internally and externally) (Adonis 2002). Valentina Medina (the current Carib Queen) has dutifully obliged in her reduced role, while others continue to question her role as figurehead in the community (ibid.). Nevertheless, the Santa Rosa

Festival has benefited from the community's formal organization, and Medina continues to fulfill her ritual duties and pass on her knowledge of traditional ways to the community.

Although the number of pilgrims to the Santa Rosa Festival mass has steadily declined in proportion to diminishing numbers of the country's Catholics, the Carib portion of the festival has been a popular annual event ever since its inception. The rites and celebration of the festival have evolved and transformed over time from a missionary activity to a large community celebration. While *parang* is not the main attraction to the festival, it is an integral component of evening festivities held at the Santa Rosa Carib Community Centre. The Santa Rosa Carib Queen and Hernandez take a leading role in what is viewed as Arima's festival of Carib identity. Nevertheless, the political and ethnic struggles that emerge during the festival demonstrate the continuing role of performance (and possibly re-enactment) in the negotiations of Amerindian identity in Trinidad.

An Amerindian Musical Past and Present

Only a few iconic remains are considered connections to Trinidad's Amerindian musical past. Archeologists have found crude flutes and whistles,¹² although *maracas*, or gourd shakers (known locally as "shac-shac" or "shak-shak") are also considered an aboriginal musical instrument. An early description of Trinidad's Caribs by Père Labat (a French Catholic priest) from around 1700 describes the use of flutes:

After they have eaten, the women bring the drink, and then some go to their hammocks, others go around the fire crouched on their heels like monkeys, their jowls in the palms of their hands and remain for whole hours in this posture and in silence as though they were in profound meditation; or they whistle with their mouth on a kind of flute and always on the same tone. (qtd. in De Verteuil 1995:32)

Labat's crude portrayal of Carib flute-playing reflects the colonial primitivist description found in other European narratives from the period. His description coincidentally corresponds to instruments once found in Venezuela's Warao community:

A ductless vertical flute, *daokohota* (*daukoho semoi*), also said by the Warao to be used for entertainment, is similar to the *muhusemoi* and *hekunokabe* [bone flutes] because of its saddle-shaped mouthpiece. But virtually nothing is known about this instrument except that it is made from the pincers of the blue crab (*congrejo*) and can produce only one tone. If the *daokohota* was indeed used for entertainment, it would be a most unusual instrument for that context because of its limited melodic capabilities. Usually one-toned instruments are used

for signaling. (Olsen 1996:81-82; see also Aretz 1991:276-278)

Since Warao were known to regularly travel and to have settled in central Trinidad, it is not impossible to imagine a connection to Labat's narrative. Although his incorporation of music performance in Amerindian description was useful as a means of "othering" the encounter, it also offered glimpses into local culture with instruments that are rarely found today (even by archeologists).¹³ While scholars agree that a regional Amerindian culture exists, the presence of local narrative reinforces the evidence of regional cultural traffic in Trinidad.

In contemporary performance, *parang* music may have been a part of the festival since the 1950s or even earlier, with news media calling it a "traditional performance," a "folk performance" or as part of the "festival dance" held at the adjoining church boys or girls' primary school. Most of my local informants remember hearing *parang* music in the festival at least since the formal election of Ricardo Bharath Hernandez (in 1973).¹⁴ The Mausica Folk Performing Group, once led by Melan Garcia (bandleader of *Rebuscar* *parang* group), would regularly include *parang* as part of their repertoire and frequently performed during the festival.¹⁵ According to Valentina Medina (b. 1934), *parang* is the earliest music she remembers in the festival:

A: How about music in the festival?

M: Well, they have *parang*, they have all kinds of music. You know? The Lara Brothers does come.

A: I know that they have all of this stuff now, but as a child, when you were going, did they have it?

M: It was only *parang*. Only *parang*.

A: Were there specific groups that would come?

M: Different groups who want to come. Whoever wanted to come, you come and play. It was for everybody. But now you have to pay a *parang*-side to come. They don't come for free. Now you have to pay. You have to pay the steel band; you have to pay the *parang* [band], and everything deejayed. (Medina 2003)

Her concerns about the fee compensation for performers reflected to changes in the festival that occurred under Ricardo Bharath Hernandez's leadership in the Carib community from the 1970s. While Hernandez made substantial inroads by soliciting government sponsorship of the Carib community, funding for the SRCC portion of the Santa Rosa festivities still diminished (since it is primarily funded through donations and luncheon sales) and the trend towards professionalization of local bands put an additional strain on their efforts (Forte 2001d). Nonetheless, certain *parang* bands (such as the Lara Brothers, one of

the first professionally organized bands) have pledged an annual performance at the festival.

In more recent times, two of Arima's *parang* groups incorporated Santa Rosa in their name: *Los Niños de Santa Rosa* and Carib Santa Rosa. According to Jacqueline Khan, Carib community secretary and former bandleader of *Los Niños de Santa Rosa* (or "Los Niños" as they are known locally), the group received its name and mission from one of the band's founding members, Lawrence Augustus, who dedicated the group to the Santa Rosa Carib Community and its patron saint (Khan 2002). The band's first song was also dedicated to Santa Rosa. Many of the original members of the group were also part of the SRCC, although there is no one left from the community. According to Cristo Adonis, most of the Carib community members left the band due to Khan's leadership (Adonis 2003). Adonis accused Khan of attempting to ethnically "cleanse" the band of Afro-Creole members, and the band lost favor in the Carib community. Jacqueline Khan chose an East Indian (Brian Gulab) as her successor, reflecting her personal racial tastes (she is married to an East Indian herself). For many years, "Los Niños" (as the band is locally called) was introduced as "the Parang band of the Carib Community" and received endorsement from SRCC president Ricardo Bharath Hernandez (Forte 2001c). However, since Mrs. Khan's departure from the group, the band's ties to the Carib community are mostly historic. The ethnic divide between Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians has affected the Carib community, who historically aligned with the local Afro-Venezuelan "cocoa panyol" (Forte 2005:91). According to Brian Gulab, the current bandleader, "Los Niños" continues to perform annually at the Santa Rosa festival as well as take part in other local city events during the year.

Other local *parang* groups also have relationships with the Carib community and participate in the festival. Cristo Adonis, SRCC shaman and *parang* singer, regularly performs *parang*, and for the past decade in a formal capacity. He started his own *parang* group, *Los Niños del Mundo*, which was exclusively composed of members of the SRCC. The group disbanded in 2001, however, due to personal conflicts among certain members (Adonis 2003). *Los Niños del Mundo* received much appreciation from the SRCC who asked them to perform at the Santa Rosa festival. Adonis complained, however, that the band did not receive compensation from the SRCC because it was assumed that they would perform for the festival for free as fellow community members (Adonis 2002). After his group disbanded in 2002, he joined neighbor Melan Garcia's band, *Rebuscar*. Melan Garcia was also a member of the SRCC and former Arima city council member. The band was formed in 2002 by Garcia as he left another Arima group, *Los Tocadores*. *Rebuscar* was

composed of several Garcia family members and Calvary Hill neighbors. They regularly perform at the Santa Rosa festival. According to Garcia, the Carib community is appreciative:

Yes, well the community appreciates *parang* a great deal. This area, really, is a *parang* area. And even from growing up as a kid, we had our own little band. As a boy, we had our own little band and the folks who are with the Santa Rosa community, we would play with them as young boys. So it is one and the same thing. They came out of the *parang* and we were into the *parang*, so they appreciate it a lot. Because it's their own thing. (Garcia 2004)

Although these are two recent "formalized" bands with SRCC members, many informal *parang* gatherings occur in the community at various times of year, including funerals, birthdays, visits by Venezuelan Amerindians to the community, and at Christmas. *Parang* is the accepted musical expression of the SRCC community and a way of life on Calvary Hill.

Festival Ethnography

The first day of August in Trinidad is Emancipation Day, however in Arima it is also the first day of the Santa Rosa festivities. Anthropologist Maximilian Forte confirms the development of a formal month of ritual and festivities:

In past years, perhaps as late as the mid-1990s, the festival traditionally began on 15 August, with a special ceremony by the Caribs which involved the blowing of a conch shell, or the firing of a rocket, to call members of the community together to begin the many work duties and preparations for the festival. Now, in conjunction with African Emancipation Day and Arima Borough Day which are also celebrated on the same day, 01 August has become a major item on Arima's cultural calendar, and both the conch shell and the rockets of the past have been replaced with powerful simulated cannon blasts (the cannon atop Calvary Hill can no longer be fired, hence a contingent of Defense Force personnel install charges in the hillside which they detonate). (Forte 2002)

Many of the current preparations for the festival have been maintained at least since the 1900s, according to available records. At the beginning of August, a smoke ceremony led by SRCC president Ricardo Bharath Hernandez is held inside the church to bless the statue of Santa Rosa. It is followed by meetings and negotiations on the preparations to be made between the Carib community and the Santa Rosa RC Church. In 2002, the previous year's conflicts during the festival were still fresh in the community's memory as they prepared for the year's festival:

Last year's happenings were reported in the press and on radio, and

essentially revolved around Ricardo Bharath's protest over not being consulted by the then parish priest over the day's proceedings. As a result, Ricardo Bharath led members of his community in a smoke ceremony inside of the church building itself, while the rest of the congregation celebrated mass in the open air in the the adjacent Arima Boys RC School. Then the Carib Community conducted its own procession with the statue, which they brought back with them to the Carib Centre afterwards. Usually the statue of Santa Rosa, though claimed by the Carib Community, has been held inside the church. (Ibid.)

After 2002, the statue was (and continues to be) held by the community president in the Carib centre. This was not the first dispute to occur over possession of the statue, so it was taken in stride by church and community members.

Many non-locals and non-Catholics attend the service—it is a religious pilgrimage that attracts the wider Catholic community at large. The service itself contains some special elements: an opening prayer led by Cristo Adonis, the Carib shaman, several songs traditional to the festival, as well as special sermons from the Archbishop of the diocese and the parish priest. The mass was held in the parking lot next to the church, with the side doors of the church open for attendees to pass easily inside to pay homage to the statue, kept on the “stage right” side of the altar. Adonis expressed his reluctance to be there—only persuaded to attend by a promise made to the ladies of the Carib community. He was not a devout Catholic (although religious), and only attended church for special occasions, this being one of them.

At the end of the service, the festival attendees slowly migrated to the street for a procession of the Santa Rosa statue, placed on the back of a pickup truck. The Carib queen was a special focus in the procession, as she was led by her “court” of young Carib girls in pink dresses, wearing little multi-colored crowns of roses, and followed by the rest of the Amerindian community, including Carib leader Ricardo Bharath Hernandez. The statue of Santa Rosa immediately followed, on the back of a truck with strands of pink, yellow, red and white flowers attached—these were her dedicated colors. The statue was followed by the priests and attending altar boys and finally a “megaphone car” with ladies inside leading the procession in prayers, songs and recitation of the rosary. This was considered to be the last day of the Santa Rosa Novena, which included nine days of prayer and devotions to the saint leading up to the festival. A special prayer for Santa Rosa was distributed in the weekly church bulletin:

Oh our most Glorious Patroness, Saint Rose of Lima, the most pure flower of sanctity and innocence, living spouse of Jesus! For the bursting of divine love felt in your heart to Our Sovereign Lord, for the very

great fervor to the glory of God and the salvation of souls, for the love that you always felt for your people, and for your Country, we implore you, to get from our Lord, all kind of favors and blessings for us: the propagation of the Faith and conversion of Sinners, we ask for peace and prosperity for our Country, and especially the favour that we ask on this day for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Amen.

St. Rose of Lima, Patroness of Arima, Protect our Parish. (Novena Booklet 11)

It was a very somber procession. They followed a traditional route down the hill into the town, past the central clock tower, around the roundabout and back up to the park square and into the church. A benediction followed in the park, with participants forming a large circle around the priests and altar boys dispersing incense and somber prayers. This was the most solemn portion of the festival. An informal reception was held at the church afterwards with the "Family and Friends" Church Steel Band performing calypso standards outside. Many attendees returned into the church to continue their devotions to the statue, while members of the Carib community congregated in the back, socializing.

After a few minutes socializing, everyone walked to the Santa Rosa Carib Community Centre where another, more joyful reception began. The elder Carib ladies began serving lunch to the slowly expanding group of participants. Large speakers were strategically placed both inside and outside the hall, and a deejay began to play a mix of *parang*, calypso, and American R&B music.

The livelier portion of the festival began around 5:30 p.m. on Calvary Hill with the ritual cannon "blast." It was a tradition to sound the cannon at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday of the festival weekend. Nowadays, the cannon on the hill is inoperable, so the community enlists the Army to use powder shot to re-create the effect of the cannon "blast." A crowd of men and children follow the officers up the hill to observe the ritual, and inevitably, one or two distressed neighbors run out of their house in surprise to the shaking blast. Afterwards, the crowd returned to the Carib center, where the bands were arriving and setting up the stage.

The first band to perform was *Rebuscar*, the *parang* group of Cristo Adonis. The Carib ladies rushed to the dance floor, swirling their pink and white dresses in front of the stage—they adored *Rebuscar*. Cristo strutted up to the microphone and began to sing his dedication to the patron saint, the "Galerón de Santa Rosa":

Acordándose la historia
Tres hombres indios
Llamada Raymundo, Poonyan y Poonya
Se va en las montañas

En una puebla llamada agua santa
 Cerca de un río
 Encontraron a una muchachita más bonita
 Y a sacerdote en la iglesia
 Le dice como la muchacha
 Es Santa Rosa de Lima

Chorus:
 Santa Rosa de Lima
 La patrona de Arima
 La madre de mi casa
 La madre de mi corazón
 [repeat]

Y en la otra día
 Él encontró la muchachita
 Cerca del río
 Y la muchachita tiene tres coronas
 Coronas de rosas diferentes colores
 Ay, Santa Rosa de Lima
 La patrona de Arima
 La madre de los indios
 Los caribes de Arima

[Chorus]

Ay, un hombre de Santa María
 Madre de dios
 Madre de nuestros
 Y todas personas en el mundo
 [repeat]

[Chorus]

Hay un hombre de mi padre
 Que en los cielos
 El hombre es Jesús Cristo el hijo
 Y el Espíritu Santo
 [repeat]

[Chorus]¹⁶

In the *galerón* Adonis narrated the “Arima version” of Santa Rosa’s fabled encounter, similar to the oral re-telling of the story by SRCC secretary Jacqueline Khan. The band also performed a couple more secular tunes (a castillian waltz, and a *guarapo*)¹⁷ before leaving the now-packed cultural center. Several other *parang* groups would perform during the evening, including the Lara Brothers and *Los Niños de Santa Rosa*.

For the *parang* groups, this was the first major performance of their season (which extends to January). Adonis and his band's performance was the climax to a long day of festivities.

Adonis is known for the *galerón*, due to his prowess in improvising Spanish lyrics and the operatic sustains. One of the last remaining (and practicing) Trinidadian *galerón* singers, Adonis is respected among the *parang* community for his efforts. While the *galerón* is traditionally improvised, the "Galerón de Santa Rosa" was composed by Adonis. The *galerón* was previously associated with the rituals of the cross wake (also known as the *velorio de la cruz*) which is a private home prayer ritual asking a favor or giving thanks at the end of a nine-day *novena* (rosary devotion common esp. in Latin America). A more public version of the ceremony is called the "Cruz de Mayo". The *galerón* is not as widely performed as in the past, since it requires lyrics to be improvised in Spanish, and it lost favor in the Spanish Creole community. Venezuelan historian Pedro Grases traced the origins of the *galerón* to the "galleon," one of the smaller sailing ships used by Spanish explorers traveling from Spain to the South America. In 1625 King Phillip IV of Spain dedicated a festival to honor these ships in their service to the empire, and the music composed for the festival was thus called *galerón* (García 1998: 636). In Venezuela, particularly the eastern region (Oriente), the *galerón* is also performed for the *velorio de la cruz* and *Cruz de Mayo* rituals.

The *galerón* is distinguished musically by improvised *stanzas* on a chosen biblical story that are sung by one or two vocalists. The accompaniment is a rhythmic and harmonic *ostinato* (or repetitive chord sequence) on the *cuatro* and guitar. Cristo Adonis is one of the youngest and leading proponents of the *galerón*, which he now performs regularly for the *parang fiesta*, a seasonal village Christmas festival series performed from early September to January 6th (or Three Kings Day/*Día de Los Reyes*). Traditionally the *galerón* does not include a repeating refrain (*estribillo*), however, Adonis adopted this practice for the purposes of *parang fiesta* performance. In his *galerón* on Santa Rosa, the *rubato* (or ritmically loose) quality of the vocals also do not precisely follow the *ostinato*. I found the standardization of lyrics to be typical in many *parang* song genres performed during the *fiestas*, which generally reflected the demands of staged competitions where the judges required a preview of song lyrics before the performance.

Occasionally Adonis indulges in improvised performances of the *galerón*, for personal family gatherings or when Venezuelan singers visit the island, since the improvisation requires an advanced poetic fluency in Spanish. He regularly complains of a lack of interest among younger Trinidadians for the genre, and the elder *parranderos* who once sung the *galerón* are not as fluent anymore. Two elder singers once known

for the *galerón* are Tito and Willie Lara, the remaining Lara Brothers. I asked them about the *galerón* one evening at their home in Santa Cruz on a visit with Adonis, hoping to encourage an impromptu performance, but they were both reluctant. Unfortunately they said they had lost the competitive spirit. Adonis' active promotion of the *galerón* through both improvised and composed performances has kept the genre alive, due to its uniqueness in the *parang* repertoire. Recently he has inspired other bands such as *Los Buenos Parranderos* to perform some of his songs and the Venezuelan Embassy regularly organizes visits of Venezuelan *galerón* singers to perform with Adonis. The sponsorship and preservation efforts of performers and organizations reinforced Adonis' role as both *parrandero* and Amerindian culture broker.

The *parang* bands have provided a common cultural performance that connects the Carib community to the Santa Rosa Festival and its Spanish Creole roots. While music in Trinidad is generally recognized as a national discourse (Roehlehr 1990; Manuel 2000), *parang* suffers from the barriers of "incomprehensible" local Spanish and a dwindling native-speaking population (Birth 2008). However, critics falsely assume that music must lyrically engage a national audience in order to be culturally relevant to the local community. In many ways, the act of performing music, especially within the Santa Rosa Festival, reaffirms the ties to history and community. Members of the SRCC (and Arimians in general) strongly identify *parang* as part of their inherited culture, in a town with a once-large Spanish Creole community. "Revival" and "preservation" are regularly considered motivators for *parang* performance. Not coincidentally, these are also part of the annual descriptions of the Santa Rosa Festival. Despite racial mixing, fewer Spanish speakers and reduced numbers, many performers and *aficionados* choose to identify themselves as Spanish Creole, Amerindian or "cocoa panyol." The successful "revival" of Spanish Creole and Amerindian culture is what drives *parang* to its current role as a nationalized cultural tradition, and motivates performers like Adonis who participate in the Santa Rosa Festival.

Conclusion/Postscript

The "revival" of an Amerindian presence in the Santa Rosa Festival was one of the primary motives for Hernandez to organize the Santa Rosa Carib Community. Not coincidentally, both the church and festival have also benefitted from the community's formal organization and government sponsorship. Every year, the festival is announced as a "Santa Rosa revival," with complaints about "dwindling" turnout and a new program unlike the previous years (Jones 1965). These sentiments persist

despite few signs of reduced interest in the community or the festival. I believe that “revival” discourse is partly used to organize the community, and also to preserve interest in the festival. Revival has therefore become an essential component of the festival performance.

Every year, a struggle occurs between the Santa Rosa Church and SRCC elders as they negotiate their rights to be the primary culture bearers of the Santa Rosa festival. These annual struggles have especially characterized the festival since the organization of the SRCC. One could argue that they represent the divide between secular and sacred interests; however the community does not see the conflict in these terms. Hernandez and many members of the Amerindian community are also devout members of the Santa Rosa Church (I saw Hernandez regularly at church services); indeed, the community is known for its proud patronage of the church. It is only within the context of the festival that these struggles emerge.

In spite of the essentializing tendencies of Trinidad’s ethnic politics, Cudjoe (2003) suggests the Amerindian revival in 19th century Trinidad was achieved through the mobilization of Amerindian “nostalgia” in local history and narrative (276). Ironically, the nostalgia was initially an attempt “to connect that dimension of Trinidad’s history with the nationalist evolution of the society and an attempt to collapse the Amerindian presence into a Trinidad imaginary” (ibid.). The Carib community has benefitted from the country’s nostalgia (through the increased attention of media and scholars) and strive to achieve an “authentic” heritage for the sake of cultural patrimony. One could also argue that nostalgia plays a significant part in the popularity of the SRCC celebrations during the Santa Rosa festival, since the festival is traditionally viewed as a symbolic merging of Amerindian and Spanish Catholic cultures, motivated by historians’ “documentation” of this unification.

Part of the problem of locating Amerindian identity in the Carib-bean is the need to unpack complex categories like “mixed” Creole and “Spanish” which have acquired an assortment of theoretical processes (i.e., hybridity, *métissage*, creolization, acculturation, syncretism, and transnationalism) to explain post-colonial change. While these theoretical models have largely depended on social and economic contexts, they have rarely taken into account the cleavage between historical particulars and the lived realities of the communities in question. In Trinidad, the Santa Rosa Carib Community has utilized existing cultural paradigms to re-assert an Amerindian presence. Many formerly Amerindian cultural traditions (such as handicrafts, natural medicine and smoke ceremonies) were preserved however understood as “Spanish Creole”, “cocoa panyol” or “Venezuelan peon” culture (Moodie 1994). The Amerindian community thus attempted to reclaim these traditions, since much of

their indigenous culture was considered “lost.” Challenges to this Carib presence have lessened thanks (at least partly) to a rapidly disappearing “cocoa panyol” community and a nostalgia for the Amerindian past. “Carib consciousness” in Trinidad has instead elevated certain traditions within this “mixed” Creole nexus to a national level.

Notes

- ¹ According to Hintzen (1989), the trend of racial mobilization in Trinidadian politics began with the nationalist movement.
- ² Population statistics cited in *CIA World Factbook 2003*.
- ³ Historically, there has been no census documentation of this group. While early colonial governments documented white “Spanish” population numbers, the numbers of creolized peoples remained undocumented. This was aided by the continuous numbers of undocumented Venezuelan migrants and/or exiles. Based upon my work in the communities, I speculate approx. 25% of the mixed Creole population might consider themselves “Spanish.” See A. Khan’s (1993) insightful analysis of “Spanish.” Also see K.O. Laurence (1971) *Immigration into the West Indies in the 19th Century*. Barbados: Caribbean Universities Press.
- ⁴ According to Brereton (1979:8), some of the Venezuelans who fled civil war (from 1810) were mostly upper-class and blended into the upper-class Creole society of Trinidad (particularly Port of Spain).
- ⁵ The *corregidor* was the Spanish equivalent of today’s town mayor.
- ⁶ Lord Harris was the Governor of Trinidad from 1846-1854, and his legacy included the standardization of English in public schools and East Indian immigration (Brereton 1981:86, 122). There are several parks and common areas dedicated to him in Trinidad.
- ⁷ The term “fete” is used interchangeably with festival or “fiesta” in local parlance. This is a custom from the French Creole population who dominated Trinidad society in the 18th century. It still remains in local vocabulary today, especially in reference to Carnival celebrations. The train line opened in 1876 as a mode of transporting goods and passengers from the agricultural estates into Port of Spain (“Centennial Celebration” 1988).

- ⁸ The festival (or “Fiesta”) queen should not be confused with the Santa Rosa Carib Queen, who was an appointed leader of the Carib community. Based upon earlier historians (de Verteuil 1858:301), Forte presumes the tradition began in the mid- to late-1800s, first as a “King and Queen of the Festival Day,” then as a maternal patriarch for the community. Today the Carib Queen (Valentina “Mavis” Medina) serves mostly as a “role model” for youth in the community (see Forte 1999).
- ⁹ In other parts of the Caribbean and Venezuela it is more popularly known as “parranda” or “parranda de Aguinaldo” in which the *aguinaldo* song form is the prominent musical genre of a Christmas caroling ritual. The *aguinaldo* (or “gift”) has been musically traced to the Spanish *villancico* (Bettelheim 2001). Consequently, I make the distinction (and regional connection) between house-to-house “parranda” and Trinidad’s staged competitive “parang,” both of which continue to exist today. This is a correction of Birth (2008: 123) who makes no distinction between the two types of performance or repertoire.
- ¹⁰ The *coulève* or *sebucan* is a cylindrical woven tube used for straining toxic juices from the cassava root (used to create a bread). It is also found among the Warao in Venezuela. The *sebucan* is also used as local term for the maypole dance, performed by local children in a springtime festival.
- ¹¹ The location of the modern Santa Rosa Carib Community Centre is 7A Paul Mitchell Street in Arima, Trinidad.
- ¹² According to Archibald Chauharjasingh (2003), there are a number of crude whistles and one extant bone flute found within the archeological collection at the University of the West Indies at St. Augustine, in Trinidad. However, I was not able to access the specimen to confirm its characteristics.
- ¹³ According to Chauharjasingh (2003), a single example of bone duct flute can be found in the archeological collection at the University of West Indies in St. Augustine, Trinidad.
- ¹⁴ Based on interviews by author (Khan 2002; Adonis 2003; Garcia 2004; Forte 2001).
- ¹⁵ The Mausica Folk Performing Group (also known as Mausica Folk Performing Theatre) began as a group participating in Trinidad’s annual Best Village Competition. Best Village began in 1963 as a program for national cultural revival under Trinidad’s first Prime Minister, Eric Williams. It includes handicrafts, dancing, music and

theatre competitions in a year-round cycle of events.

- ¹⁶ During the performance, Adonis recited lyrics that were much less grammatically correct. I have made some corrections here for clarity. Others accuse him of singing in “cocoa panyol Spanish”, which the younger *parranderos* complain of the lack of clarity (since many of the younger performers learned Spanish in school, instead of in the household). For further gloss on the “cocoa panyol” dialect, see Moodie (1994).
- ¹⁷ The *guarapo* is a song form characterized by its description of the *guarapo* drink and general merriment in drinking *guarapo*. The song is an *estribillo* style (strophic) with a fast 6x8 tempo and an instrumental melodic counterpoint.

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