Historic Account of Saint Vincent the Indian Youroumaya the island of the Karaybes.
Cover - A depiction of Ioulouca - Youlouca - Joulouca, the Carib's "Spirit of the Rainbow" (Appendix One) painted by Ms. Donna (Lesia) Knights. It is from this "spirit" that St. Vincent Iouloumain - Youloumain - Youroumayn (pronounced EWE LOO - MAIN) gets its original Carib name.

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To the Memory of Father Divonne who, for over twelve years, ministered in true recluse fashion, lived and toiled in Mayreau, with the singleminded purpose of improving the way of life of his adopted people, endeavouring to give the children a better future through more educational and vocational opportunities.

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MAYREAU ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

(Appendix Four)

FOREWORD

The Caribbean Islands have been geographical stepping stones through the ages
for the many ancient peoples that have passed from the southern mainland of
America. St. Vincent and The Grenadine's first inhabitants, arriving sometime
around 3,000 BC were an unknown race of hunter-gatherers referred to as the
'Ciboney'. These (probably pre-ceramic) people lived mainly on fishing and
small game hunting supplemented by the gathering of wild plant foods. The
ancestors of these first Vincentian people - like those of all Amerindians -
crossed the Bering Strait from eastern Asia about 30,000 years ago and, in
doing so discovered the New World. In one of the most awesome migrations
since the origin of mankind, the people who eventually came here made their
way from Alaska reaching South America around 15,000 BC. It is not clear what
prompted these early Amerindian groups to migrate from the tropical forests
of the lower Orinoco in South America to our islands. Some scientists,
however, believe that one of the main muses may have been major climatic
changes (mega-Nino) which brought serious droughts and the subsequent and
periodic burning of the Amazon.
Beginning about 250 BC. (or possibly as early as 400 BC.), pottery-making agriculturists, now known to be Arawak-speaking Saladoids began travelling through our islands by canoe. There were probably four waves of Arawakan-speaking people to pass through St. Vincent and The Grenadines before the Kalinas (Caribs) came. Each of these groups of people was distinguished by its own unique pottery-making styles. These first agricultural people were also skilled seafarers and fishermen, excellent hunters, and well advanced in ceramics, basketry, and wood and stone carving technologies.

When Columbus set foot in the Caribbean for the first time, he found islands that were well populated, and had been so for thousands of years. Today, apart from the strong genetic facial characteristics as seen in the high cheek bones, almond shaped eyes and straight black hair of their descendants, very little remains of these once proud and resourceful people. As yet we have no adequate museum and their precious artifacts continue to be 'lost' or disbursed as 'souvenirs' throughout the globe. There is, however, some hope that through future archaeological 'salvage operations' and further historical research we can learn more about these largely unknown, "People of St. Vincent and The Grenadines".

Mark de Silva

PREFACE

It is truly remarkable that with the volume of material residing in the archives of Europe we continue to remain largely ignorant of the true nature of our Island Carib. The very fact of their generous welcome of the many dark-skinned shipwrecked African slaves and fugitives on their shores; the hospitality and care shown to the numerous light-skinned European missionaries that lived alone amongst them; and the records of the early explorers as to their gentle and child-like disposition, appears to be too unworthy for our consideration, because we continue to repeat the "Fierce and Hostile Savage" story. Also, the documented ritual of "sympathetic magic" (Appendix Two) that the Caribs practised seems to have been deliberately overlooked and in its place implanted the idea of Cannibalism which became the ideal albeit fabricated excuse for the genocide of this people.

The Caribs or Kalinas (Kalinagos), (Appendix Three) as they called themselves, were a peaceful, agricultural trim of Amerindians who spread through our islands from the Orinoco basin in northern South America around 1200 AD. The Caribs lived in complete control of these eastern Caribbean islands for over 400 years, continuing relatively undisturbed even through most of the early historical years of European "New World" conquest. Although vast quantities of "Carib history" exist, very little, however, has been objective, or even truthful and we are yet to learn their real story.

The Caribs cultivated cassava, their staple food, as well as yams, potatoes, peanuts, beans, cotton, tobacco, etc., and were expert divers and fishermen skilled in the use of hook and line, the spear, the net, plant poisons and of course the bow and arrow. They loved conch and manicou but by far their greatest delicacy was the crab which they caught in many different ways. The Caribs were highly skilled in predicting the weather; their religion taught
them about the spirits that inhabited the streams, the animals, the trees, the mountains, and the sea; they worked hard for long hours, but also for days at a time would simply do nothing; they took special care in instructing their children; and in this once bountiful land, without cares or worries, they lived to old age.

It must feel so strange and out-of-place to read such a description of the Caribs; to see them being described as 'agricultural' and 'peaceful' makes an explanation necessary here. From generation to generation, we in the Caribbean have been carefully instructed in the "Fierce, Warlike and Cannibalistic Savage" description of these people. It is today certain that this terrible description has now moved out of the realm of 'Established Myth' into the reality of a 'Deliberate Lie'. This highly successful series of lies was carefully and systematically propagated (possibly sub-consciously) by the then European powers to placate the collective conscience of a normally just and honourable European society as they stampeded for the quick and enormous wealth and power available in the Caribbean and the Americas. Simply put, the 'Carib history' that we have been taught was originally created primarily to justify possession of the gold that our Caribbean Amerindians were thought to have had, and later for the fertile lands that they actually occupied.

If it were possible to isolate one aspect of Carib culture as being its most important characteristic, it would have to be their love for; their total desire for, their obsessive craving for absolute freedom. One thing, however, is most certain of the Caribs and it is this: when faced with the horror of being enslaved and the almost certain dispossession of their homeland, they did in fact become hostile. Thus with the Carib nation united under the tactics of guerrilla warfare, they successfully held off the vastly superior European muskets and cannons with their bows and arrows for nearly 200 years.

About two years ago, Mrs. Agnes Cato gave me a document that she had kept in the safe of her barrister's office for many years. It had been left with her by Fr. Divonne for "safe-keeping". The document was in French, and because of its length and difficult type, was very troublesome to translate. Eventually my Bishop had it translated during a visit to Rome in December 1996. This document was discovered by Fr. Divonne in Paris in September 1981 during his time of historical research while living on the island of Mayreau, in St. Vincent & The Grenadines.

Here at last is a history that gives us a tiny peek at the true character of the Caribs, this once famous people. Fr. Adrien Le Breton's story of them is the first of its kind; it is a story that could only have been written by one who was truly a deeply spiritual and holy man. True holiness transcends time and culture, and Fr. Le Breton appears to have achieved this. His powers of observation and his accuracy appeals impeccable as seen, for example, by his estimation of the Caribs' arrival in the island around 1200 AD only very recently proved with 20th Century scientific Carbon-14 dating.

Fr. Adrien Le Breton was born in Biois, France on the 4th March 1662 to 'noble-man' Pierre Le Breton, sieur de Bardy, and Marie Petit, herself the daughter of a counselor and lawyer of the king at the "presidial" of Biois. He joined the Jesuits on the 6th of October 1679 and eventually set sail for the 'missions' in 1693. He arrived in Martinique and was immediately dispatched to St. Vincent where Friar Odot was alone amongst the Caribs there. After his short though significant years there (1693 - 1702), he was
requested to leave St. Vincent and he returned to Martinique where he began work primarily as the "Negroes' priest" there. Fr. Le Breton also ministered in other parishes in Martinique, as well as Haiti, Cayenne (French Guyana), and Dominica. Fr. Le Breton wrote many other manuscripts and had the pleasure of seeing his work on the botany of the area published before his death at St. Pierre on the 14th July 1736.

Both French Roman Catholic priests, Fr. Le Breton and Fr. de Divonne, gave up their aristocratic family and inheritance to work among the despised and 'poor of the land'. They both died in Martinique at the same age, and they both, although separated by two centuries in time, were indeed true disciples of Jesus, and very remarkable men, of whom our nation's history will always be proud.

Fr. Mark de Silva
INTRODUCTION
The Caribs of St. Vincent were not able to write their history, but they remembered it. In the presence of Father Adrien Le Breton, they were proud to tell their oral traditions climbing back to 500 years earlier. Sometime in the 11th century they freed themselves from the yoke of the Arawaks who had enslaved them on the continent. Their ancestors spread throughout the islands of the Caribbean, driving from them their hereditary enemies who had settled there. Today, Prof. Fred Olsen has confirmed their story through his archaeological findings. He has followed the trail of the Arawak, as well as their pursuers, from the basin of the Orinoco River to the farthest islands of the Caribbean Archipelago.

Fr. Le Breton, the 12th and last of the Jesuit missionaries to live amongst the Caribs of St. Vincent, resided there between 1693 and 1702. His Superior, Fr. Cornbaud, who had himself been a missionary in St. Vincent some 15 years previously, had asked him to return to Martinique to be responsible for a parish there. The times were fast changing and the Caribs were no longer a priority as before. Fr. Le Breton obeyed.

Fr. Le Breton now begins to write with love, his history of St. Vincent. He guides us himself inside the island of his time. He primarily invites us to follow his accurate, friendly and understanding view, and to consider these old-time Indians - the Caribs - as men, proud of that name. Certainly, he condemned their drunkenness, but he knew the goodness within them, and that gave him tremendous hope for the future. He shows that the numerous African slaves who adapted completely to the Carib way of life, had experienced their way of hospitality which was one of the valuable characteristics of this maritime island civilization. He had shared their friendship, and lie wanted others to share it as well and thus build a prejudice in their favour. If there were no more missionaries to protect these Caribs, who would protect them against the ambitions of the Europeans?

This history of Fr. Le Breton was written for an influential person at that time, hence its expression of circumstance. In this way he wanted to inspire again the French officials to be interested in the Caribs - these old Indians that they had so often wanted to destroy in the past. We, however, cannot be deceived by the style of his story. He does not repeat what his precursors had already written but we must keep in mind that from 1652 to 1702, of the 12 Jesuit missionaries sent to St. Vincent, six gave their lives for the Mission; the fevers, the war and the vengeance were all murderous. To open the way, to evangelize through peace and forgiveness, it was necessary for Fr. Le Breton to set an example in exposing his life. The St. Vincent mission had been able to start, and begin again, four times in succession during those past 50 years. It could only continue at the price of the heroic actions, extreme generosity and devoutness of those missionaries, because whenever the politics of territorial annexation was being administered, the subsequent reprisal wars of the Caribs or English created an impossible situation for those French missionaries.

The implacable resistance of the Caribs' guerrilla warfare appeared much more redoubtable than the lined war of the English. This, of course, was used by public opinion as a sign of their "revolting savagery", when in fact the Caribs were simply defending the freedom that they had come gradually to know in the Caribbean during the past five centuries, a freedom that was now unfairly being taken away - it was the only desperate way they knew. Fr. Le Breton writes with hope for the future reopening of the mission of St. Vincent, because he must have been aware of the experiences of his South
American brothers, and their well-known self-controlled Indian villages of the "Reductions". However, with the death of King Louis 14th in 1715, the Regent in power now put the emphasis only on the financial aspect.

Fr. Le Breton writes to his brother in 1722, sending him the last chapters. He asks him to make it whole; worthy to be presented to Mr. Raudot, the Navy "Intendant" and manager of the "Compagnie de la Louisiane". The situation had become critical since it was the time when the Martiniquan Company of Sieur Rotix Chapelle, after making a peace treaty with the Caribs, had asked the Regent permission to buy the island of St. Vincent from the Caribs. This business was embarrassing because the English had also laid claim to St. Vincent, and so the Regent asked for great circumspection. In fact, because of the heavy taxation system in Martinique, the French had already begun to settle individually in St. Vincent there being already 20 families living there.

This story of Fr. Le Breton seems never to have been published. It has, however, inspired a half-official report, - an anonymous manuscript - today found in the Department of Archives in Martinique. This report which we will call "History #2", must have been written much later, since it shows that the Black Caribs now greatly outnumbered the others. It was certainly written after the death of Fr. Le Breton, in Martinique in July 1736, because the "History #2" gives an account totally discordant with his own. It is obvious to see how the anonymous author removes the favourable prejudice of Fr. Le Breton and inserts from the old story of Mr. de Laborde the expressions and opinions very prejudiced and hard against the Caribs. Mr. de Laborde was of course writing about the original Caribs and our anonymous writer is writing about the Black Caribs. Mr. de Laborde was a pious layman who had been with Fr. Francois Simon, the missionary in St. Vincent during 1672 – 1674. Fr. Simon had been called back to Martinique by Fr. Le Mercier, the Apostolic visitor who was giving new guidelines for all their projects, and Mr. de Laborde had remained alone in St. Vincent "to watch the rags and writings of the Fathers'". When at last the boat came for him, he had witnessed many painful sights, and it appears that his judgment on the Caribs had been deeply marked.

Thirty years later, Fr. Le Breton certainly had set himself the task of correcting the harsh judgments of his precursors, and that is what he did. The anonymous writer of "History #2" returned to these harsh expressions with absolutely no doubt of purpose. During the second half of the 18th Century, St. Vincent's population had changed significantly. The Caribs, their numbers gradually dwindling with the numerous wars, and with the rapidly increasing strength and domination of the Black Caribs, are finally persuaded to sell to the French most of their land, and many now left for the island of Tobago and the mainland of South America. The Black Caribs, now becoming stronger and stronger, and being themselves firmly entrenched along the Atlantic coast of the island, took the war to the French, newly established along the west coast. We therefore believe that "History #2" which was probably written around 1750, reflects the public opinion against the Black Caribs of that time, that had culminated in the handing over of the island to the English at the end of the Seven Years War in 1765.

A little before, in 1753, a painting of Fr. Le Breton had been done by a Frenchman living in St. Vincent. This man was sued at the court of the Governor of Martinique, being accused of taking land in St. Vincent which was a gift to Fr. Le Breton by the Caribs. He defends himself vociferously,
stating in his plea: "The defendant has the honour to make you know, my Lords, that it is over 55 years that Fr. Le Breton had been in St. Vincent and left, as he had not been able to achieve his pious target of converting the savages. He was boarding with the people who were giving him shelter and he never even had slave at his service, and it is, your honour, an untruth that Fr. Le Breton ever received the land that we talk about, from the Caribs". And that was how Fr. Le Breton began to be part of the popular legend of St. Vincent. A second drawing was made by Fr. Labat in his history of the Antilles.

Fr. Le Breton was a brilliant mathematician and a botanist, and corresponded with the Academy of Sciences in Paris. When the Planters were thinking only of extending their monoculture, he had already recorded and classified the local plants, noting especially their pharmaceutical values. After beading Fr. Labat's "History" he became disturbed by the fantasy of his botanical descriptions, and decided to correct them one after the other. The "Annales de Trevoux", the Jesuit paper, published his work during the last years of his life. Later, Fr. Labat in his second publication changed nothing in his writings but added a new chapter where he reports about a journey, stopping at St. Vincent and meeting with Fr. Le Breton in 1702. Even if this story is legendary, it is a kind of posthumous reconciliation.

The Caribs themselves have their legends. It is a popular way to recall what one can't speak lousy of, to justify the innocent ones unfairly condemned, and to celebrate their indomitable courage in the protection of their freedom. Commandant Lacroix, in his study of the last transatlantic sailboats, witnesses to the popular sea songs of the Atlantic that had immortalized the Caribs of St. Vincent.

Fr. Robert Divonne O.S.B.

(See Appendix Five)
Historic account of Saint Vincent, The Indian Youroumaýn, the island of the Karajbes.

Before attempting to put into writing what is most worthy of note and record, about the island of St. Vincent, the "Island of Cannibals", as it is called, an unusual island among those which skirt part of the southern continent, it is certainly my duty, if I am not mistaken, briefly to explain its true
location lest it might tempt the too inexperienced to seek adventure by sailing to this sea, perhaps at considerable risk.

The position of St. Vincent

The island, which is today called St. Vincent, is a little over twelve degrees above the line of the equator. This, in my opinion at least, is its position.

To the north it is flanked, so to speak, by two islands. One, the nearer, is at most ten French leagues away, and is commonly called St. Lucia. The other, at least thirty common leagues away, is usually called Martinique.

As for the south-facing side, it overlooks either cliffs planted with trees of different species, or other islands I would prefer to call "little islands" - the islets. If you go anywhere near all these islands in this direction on a boat, one will soon appear that is bigger than the others, governed by the French, it is Grenada.

Furthermore to the east, the island of St. Vincent has a view over Barbados, one of the islands under British rule.

Lastly, to the west it has the free and open sea. That is what I had to explain briefly as a sort of preamble concerning the islands in the neighbourhood of St. Vincent. Let us now examine some more important points, and penetrate, as it were, if I may speak this way, into the island itself to examine it thoroughly in all its parts.

The size of the island of St. Vincent

Before we set foot on the island's soil, two considerations, in my opinion, should be examined to start with. Firstly, what size is the island? Secondly, how does it look to the eyes of those arriving there?

On the first point, I can confirm from my own experience that this island has a circumference of no less than 70,000 paces and no more than 80,000.

The shape and aspect of the island

One cannot omit to say at this point that it has a circular outline, not in the mathematical sense of the term, but in the sense that nowhere does it have any promontories seriously projecting into the sea, although it is abundantly provided with bays, which are currently referred to as "anses" - handles, this is clearly because nature has, to a certain extent, shaped the coastline in these places on the model and form of basket-handles.
I come to the second point. "So what would this previously acclaimed island look like?" you ask me frankly. "That's fine, listen! It is the very island itself which, as far as I am able, I am going to lay before your eyes". Well, there are two main ways of perceiving an object: from a distance or from close to, naturally. Therefore, if seen from afar, as if for example you were standing on the coast of St. Lucia and cast your eyes to the south, the St. Vincent island would certainly not escape you. However you would see nothing but slender mountains only just hiding their summits at mid-height or at the very heart of clouds. Perhaps you would like to know their height. That's normal, and from that position, if you have the slightest knowledge of mathematics, you can measure it, without my saying any more. But if you board a ship to come closer still, insensibly and more and more it will reveal itself to you. Oh, what a spectacle it will give you, you will hardly believe it! How ravishingly, how astonishingly, would one scene after another, as it were, strike your spirit While it is in fact entirely made up of these innumerable hills and mountains, which in a way seem to compete with each other to reach higher into the sky and seem gracefully sectioned in a thousand ways, they offer if I may graciously be allowed to use a banal and overused cliche the perfect image of beauty! Whereas in fact it is granted to no one to discover these mountains all at once, but only different places here and there, from minute to minute, you would easily understand how they unfold ever wider to the newcomers.

At last, after travelling a certain distance and after a certain lapse of time, as soon as the ship begins to sail very close along the island's shore, amazement suddenly fills the soul. Experience proves, in every season, that the island abounds with a profusion of leaves, flowers and fruit. What can one imagine that is more charming and pleasant? I absolutely don't know.

Yes, I have heard (answering an objection from his brother). Now that you have had enough of an arduous sea voyage you want us to put in over there... So be it, I see no problem in that, providing you exclude all the northern region and a very small part of the eastern one, bristling with a long succession of rocks, where under winds that blow in a sinister way, the island is thrashed by a raging and spectacularly rough sea, one can anchor firmly and without risk in any of the bays of the southern and northern regions. All these coasts in fact are free of shoals and reefs. Without delay then, let us moor.

The inhabitants of the island

As we speak and the sailors furl the sails with expert hands, suddenly entirely new human beings appear before us in closed ranks. I call them "new". It is not so long that they have come to our awareness as Europeans, unknown as they were during all the previous centuries. So if you ask me for their name, their race, their institutions, their customs, their nature, their work, their temperament, their tastes, their religious practices, their language, their way of life and of doing things, I can most willingly satisfy you in this domain and according to my means and as long as the help of divine grace is granted me, I will fulfill your wishes. Give me your attention, I shall begin:
The people who now live almost everywhere on the island are commonly called the "Karaÿbes". But this general name should not lead anyone into the serious error of concluding that only one race inhabits the whole island. It should be noted here that some fifty years ago at most, a fortuitous accident introduced on the island a certain number of slaves from the coasts of Africa. Now this is how, they say, the thing really happened. The ship that bore them, forced on by a violent storm, lamentably crashed into the rocks and was wrecked in the northern part of this island. Every last one, except a small number of "Ethiopians" who were very good swimmers, perished amidst the waves. The indigenous people, who had observed these details in safety from the coast with unusual compassion, welcomed them as they emerged from the waters to live among them after problem-free negotiations and, without them protesting, employed them as slaves. At that time they were just as bitter enemies of the Spaniards and the Batavians as of the English and the French, so that whatever grievous damage befell any of these was obviously to the satisfaction of the savages. In fact, rumour has it even today that the vessel shipwrecked on the rocks belonged to the Spanish nation alone. In any case, it is certain that by the greatest luck fortunately only one "Ethiopian" woman or perhaps two were found to have lost their lives in such a great danger. As a result, in a short time these Africans united themselves with the survivors (sibi invicem), some through the bond of individual marriage, others under the polygamous regime, which is allowed among these nations. They had children, whose numbers grew rapidly in the following years, to such an extent that without overtaking the Karaÿbes race, they at least equaled it. So apart from the simple name of slaves which they usually go by and which the islanders give them more to snub them than because they use them as such, there is absolutely nothing servile about them. Moreover, the islanders behave so little as masters that, as comes naturally to people who remember prior servitude and view it with horror, they are wary above all of any plot or violence that might reduce them to their primitive state. They live absolutely in the manner of the original islanders, use the same laws and have faults and qualities that differ very little. This is no surprise, I must say, since from their most tender years they find their greatest honour in assimilating these customs. Although they live in separate small dwellings we call "cases" - huts, colloquially, nevertheless this does not prevent them from having constant encounters among themselves. Indeed they entertain very easy relations with the Karaÿbes, with whom they frequently stay. They give each other sumptuous receptions on special days taking turns without any apparent discrimination, and they also organise at the same time and in the same way banquets - to be more precise I should say drinking parties, since not more than drinks are served in which all too often - Oh what a scandal! They tank up together to the point of nausea. We have, I think, dealt sufficiently, and perhaps more than sufficiently, with these slaves. It is towards the original inhabitants, who in their own way are the masters there, that any discourse hastens to turn.

So the name of which they are proud to the point of having it always on their lips and, what is more, publicizing it in every possible way, is well known according to what has been said above, they are called Karaÿbes. As soon as they meet a stranger who is surprised by their really astonishing nudity and their original behaviour, with their open faces, their bright eyes, they immediately indicate: "We are of the Karaÿbes nation", they say, "and come from the island of St. Vincent".
For me there is absolutely no reason to find it surprising that this word calls to mind courageous and warlike men. In fact they tell that their ancestors, with a considerably noble strength of spirit, overcome by the burden of servitude imposed on them by their enemies, shook off the yoke and brought war into the very midst of their opponents with such success that they finally retrieved their original independence: as a result of which they received this glorious name.

The origins of the Karaïbes people

Let us now turn to explaining the origins of the men we have thus described. It is absolutely certain, as the historians of South America have noted on the basis of both a variety of conjectures and complex reasoning which would be too long and useless to reproduce here in detail, that they originated among the people living not far off on the coast of the continent. It is not that easy, however, to determine in which period or century they reached this island. Since in fact there has never been a single human being among this people who was "expert" in writing or painting to record each of the most salient facts of this nation for posterity, it certainly happens that you can just collect a smattering of information from the elders after a while, and the rest, if there is anything at all, has been buried in eternal oblivion. We may, however, make use of a small number of clues thanks to which we can acquire some knowledge on this precise point.

First of all, it has been recognized, even through the personal testimony of the Karaïbes that we have not yet reached the tenth generation of islanders, but undoubtedly, and no one ignores this, their earliest ancestors only died at a very advanced age or rather, extremely old, by which we should understand that they generally lived to be a hundred or more. Well, lest there should be great stupefaction about this, I shall explain. They used to lead a life with very few needs, where they encountered no work or worries. And if you were now to pay the slightest attention to the material state of this island, you would soon discover this; you will realise that in a distant past it did not naturally support humans over its whole surface area, but only on the coast. The inhabitants felled all the wood suitable for the building of small craft "canots". The island is laden or rather clad with trees created there since the very beginning of the world, so if you wished to push on beyond in the direction of the very high mountains, it bristles with so many brambles and shrubs that you would find it absolutely impenetrable.

But here, in the third place, we must not pass over in silence what appears to me in this respect to be the most important thing, which is that everything, everywhere seems to breathe so much newness that nowhere is there even the slightest vestige of high antiquity. One might suppose, therefore, that were someone to declare that it was around the year 1200 AD, that the
Karaÿbes from the continent had access to this island, he would not be far from the truth.

But what on earth induced them to settle on this island rather than others less distant from the continent? One can find many reasons. The first is this. Tile land is extremely rich and fertile, so that it proliferates at all times with excellent fruits of all sorts which include the most widespread species in the whole of South America, - pineapples, bananas, barbary figs, palms of all kinds, potatoes, yams, five species of custard apple, white and yellow guava, Spanish or hog plums, cassava, etc ....

Then, because it has a marvelous climate, which is not only very clean, but also absolutely indispensable to preserve good health and also because it provides its inhabitants with a great abundance of fish, birds and quadrupeds added to which the fact that it is riddled with springs providing the most pleasant beverage to man who gets too thirsty in excessive heat. Finally, to finish in a few words, because it is devoid of two different species of bugs which in common language are called "maringoins", - mosquitoes, and the other poisonous creatures that elsewhere are such a bane to human beings by day and night.

The Karaÿbes institutions

This is now the place to speak of the Karaÿbes' institutions. Even from the very beginning of their communal living, they were filled with hatred of not just slavery, but any form of injunction, authority or submission, to the extent that these very words themselves are unbearable to them. Yielding to someone else and obeying an order is for them the ultimate indignity. Even today, this explains the virulence of their total freedom. All of them are perfectly equal, and they recognise absolutely no official, chief or magistrate. This said, anyone would understand that of the four different systems, of government: Monarchy, oligarchy, democracy and economy, only the latter can suit them.

Moreover, two factors have above all contributed, from the beginning, to establishing this extreme freedom of life. In the first place we should mention the peculiar nature of these men who are so incapable of being slaves that if any individual is constrained under any pressure to submit to work as a slave, in a few days he is overcome by such depression and affliction that he eventually fades away completely.

Then the fortunate complicity of the country astonishingly encourages the people's frenzy for total independence. In fact the island which "dips" at each step and is riddled with bays and hollows, offers each father of a family the opportunity to choose without difficulty his ideal site or
property, far from any foreign constraint and completely safe - because there
was only one entrance to his estate and only by sea - to lead his life
exactly as he pleases, with his wife, children and dear ones.

In these circumstances, it was quite plain to the wisest of the Karaÿbes that
if the whole nation were to remain so dispersed, split up here and there into
different properties, it would gradually be precipitated to its ruin and
finally reduced to nothing, unless this great evil could be effectively
remedied without delay. With their foresight, they could think of nothing
better than to visit one another as frequently as possible.

The decision was welcomed by all with both hands. This custom then of making
cordial visits to others effectively became so ingrained that it is still
intact today, and there is no danger that it will die out in the future. In
this regard I describe the indigenous as "stationary" rather than
"sedentary". Indeed the number and length of the journeys they undertake with
the sole intention of meeting their relatives is incredible; they stay with
them, I do not say whole days, but weeks and sometimes even months on end.

There is one thing I dare to put forward here, because it is true. By day, no
one will ever travel the length of the coast of this island without meeting a
large number of travelers of this kind. These continuous comings and goings
are usually a calls of laughter to those who do not reflect seriously about
the aim they pursue in doing this. In fact, nothing more important or useful
could be imagined in so dislocated a nation, bound by the only laws which
each individual has imposed on himself according to his will, in order to
unify it, strengthen it and lastly to prolong its existence.

It is first and foremost this custom which explains primarily that this daily
practice is capable of giving birth to and maintaining a very real communion
of spirit. It also offers an easy way of providing the necessary help at the
right moment. In fact, the natural law itself is not only well anchored in
all hearts, but further reinforced by daily practice: no one, to live
completely happily, is sufficient unto himself, but needs the help of others.
A very precious family spirit results from this, meetings of all kinds,
various arrangements, a single community of life and behaviour, mutual gifts,
similar tendencies, etc. In addition, even if any event, however new, should
take place somewhere on the island, it is nonetheless known by all that very
day. With regard to the importance of this fact for the common good, I can
say nothing, it speaks for itself. Indeed, my discourse on this topic would
be endless if I tried to list all the other forms of advantages there are in
such openness to dedication. I therefore leave them aside, to explain how the
islanders keep this tradition unscathed.

They have nothing more at heart than to give a perfect welcome to the newly
arrived of which we are speaking. One or two individuals are chosen by the
elders in each village or farm to fulfill the task of guiding the guests from
their canoe to the place destined for their reception. When the latter have
arrived, their guide arranges the seats properly and signals to them that
they should rest, tired as they are after their journey. It will not be out
of place, if I am not mistaken, to give a brief explanation of the very form
of the seats they use, which are so different from our own.
The seats

They mainly use two kinds of seats. The first kind is indeed a comical object, conceived by uncultivated people and so clumsy that it causes those from a refined civilization to burst out laughing. Image a piece of wood one or two feet long and about sin fingers thick and wide. Its upper part (the back), is also curved on both sides towards the center and the lower part, divided into four and hollowed out, either for stability (the four feet) or to be more easily transported from one place to another, through lightening this mass of wood. This is certainly what is said among the Karaÿbes and turns out to be their typical seat. So that indeed for this reason you would say they were lying on the ground rather than sitting.

A hala or seat

An artistically woven cloth of cotton thread, decorated on tee outside with various patterns, four or five feet long and eight or ten feet wide, the "hanging" seat, or why not use its own name, "hamac" - hammock, borrowed from the language of the Karaybes, is the second type of seat. It is certainly very pleasant and practical, day and night.

Thus without delay, as soon as the travelers have arrived, they are given these suspended seats on which they recline or sit as they like. In the meantime, in the nearest building the women prepare food for them. I say women, for the job of cooking is most unseemly for men in general, who are only in charge of the business of providing fresh supplies of food. The women then serve all that can be found on the spot at this moment at the feet of the newcomers on a table whose substance and form it is a pleasure to describe here; both are astonishing.

The matoutou or table

With regard to what it is made of remember this. The table is fashioned from the very fine bark of a kind of willow commonly known as "quaroman". As it is extremely easy to split, they painstakingly and with the greatest skill divide it into extremely narrow bands. They then soak these strips in two dyes, that is, red and black, so that they produce a variety of designs as preferred, according to the different weaves; they weave the strips like fabric, and as soon as this trellis is completed, in the form of a circle or
a square which they support on a rectangular frame with feet, but which is small and close to the ground since it is rarely higher than six fingers.

What a strange thing! Until now, not a single word has been spoken by the Karaybes, either to the newcomers or the inhabitants of the village. Moreover they have all kept so silent on purpose. They certainly realise that anyone who attracts the attention of persons tired out by the length and difficulty of their voyage is totally incongruous. For them, it would be the height of ridicule and also no less out of place, at the precise moment when someone arrives somewhere, to ask him about his state of health. "Isn't it clear as daylight?" they say, "that he suffers from at least two complaints (humour!); weariness, because of the journey he has made, and hunger and thirst because of his present state of exhaustion? So be careful not to add by your chatter a third annoyance to the other two, even more annoying since the exhaustion itself somehow endures. Let your guest rest in silence and satisfy himself with the food offered. Then the propitious moment for a mutual exchange will present itself in the normal way".

In fact, when they have eaten and rested to their heart's content, on a given sign the rest of the food is carried out to the kitchen; when the guests have stood up, all the people of the neighbourhood come to their friends to greet them and ask them whether they feel well or not. In fact, however rough the nation of the Karaybes may be on some points, they nevertheless strive to exercise with care the general tenets of respectful courtesy. The customary greetings are quickly given by the guests. As soon as they have been exchanged by both parties, a friendly conversation begins.

**What is the subject of the Karaybes' conversation**

Here, if I am not mistaken, I will do a very pleasant thing for you by telling you in detail the subjects they discuss especially when they debate communally among themselves. Alright, listen to me carefully: Everything that forms part of the Karaybes' conversation can be reduced to five different subjects. Indeed they most often speak either of their own internal affairs or of the cultivation of their gardens, or of hunting and fishing, or of journeys to be made to the closest allied islands, or finally, of the peace to be maintained with their friends and at the same time of the war to be waged against their enemies. These are all points I shall explain in somewhat greater detail for anyone here or there who does not have a perfect knowledge of our islanders.

1. **They speak of their internal affairs**

Since in fact there prevails the greatest spiritual union between the Karaybes, an accord that rarely leads to covetousness, they are extremely mindful of the need to discuss their projects together. They habitually go into the minutest detail, the better to discern through an exchange of ideas what is the best thing for the community to do. They therefore have no secrets from one another, everything is unveiled and open; it would be a crime for them either to keep silent about something, or to hide something
from the others. They are also used to informing each other, as I have already said, of the projects they have already achieved, as well as of those in other regions, which they have heard to be without a future. I naively admit that they conclude these matters with very few words, like things that are both banal and rare occurrences.

2. Gardens

I said that it does happen that they speak of their gardens at their community meetings. But beware! This pretty word (garden) must not delude one, for they abuse it. In fact, these fields planted without any order, here with strips of cassava, yams, potatoes, Karaybes cabbage, etc., there with banana trees, barbary figs, etc., there again with millet, pistachio, Angola peas, etc. - Plants about which I will give greater information, if God wills - these fields, I say, are called gardens. You press me with questions: what places are reserved for this use? - I shall tell you willingly, for there is something special I have to say.

Due to their customs, although they establish their centres or dwellings along the banks of watercourses and it would therefore seem much easier to cultivate especially the areas of soil spread around quite close to their buildings, they continue to do it in a different way. It is far from the sea, both on the slopes of hills and on flat ground, that they find it preferable to sow in the ground all the kinds of food crops, which I will list in a moment. They give two good reasons for this: "It is quite clear", they say, "that these places, on account of either the springs of running water they abound with, or the more abundant daily dew, or the proximity of the mountains from which the flow of the rains brings all fertility, provide harvests that are both more copious and pleasing to the palate".

As for the second reason, it pertains to the danger of destruction the community faces. "Catastrophes!" they cry, "Alas! We have known either the unbridled fury or the mortal hatred of our enemies all too often, to cultivate lands that are too close to our dwellings. As soon as we are able to escape from their hands, since all physical violence to persons is forbidden to them, in the first place they raze our homes to the ground and they completely ransack our fields to bring about our ruin, they sack and rampage over everything".

Whoever moors in these southern isles knows from the start that each month of the year offers the inhabitants a quite favourable time, be it for planting trees of all species or for sowing any seeds in the ground. However the great majority of the Karaybes abuse this most advantageous facility. It is only during the very last season of the year, winter, that they cultivate their
fields, spending the rest of the time in shameful inactivity. Of course, I have made a mistake in mentioning a winter season. A continuous spring, a constant summer, a perpetual autumn has banished the winter forever and ever. It would have been better and more in tune with reality to say that the Karaybes dedicate themselves entirely to agriculture as soon as the abundant rains stop, that is to say during the months of January, February and March. At that time, in fact, the dryer climate facilitates the felling of trees, the burning off of shrubs as well as the proper clearing of the fields, while it still warms the seeds placed in the ground to such an extent that these grow so many roots in the soil cleared of thorns and brambles that it can no longer stifle them because the shoots and grasses are so exuberant. This is the most important reason why the Karaybes change the location of their gardens nearly every year. They prefer, not without great efforts but over a few days, to cut the high forest rather than the shrubs, whose multiple shoots which grow incessantly, demand almost constant vigilance and labour on the inhabitants' part.

3. Fishing

Another subject of conversation which is more frequent than the first two is provided by fishing, bird-catching and hunting. From their earliest youth they dedicate themselves entirely to these practices about which they are passionate. Every single one of them excels in the art of fishing as well as hunting, so if the Karaybes deserve exceptional and privileged repute it is especially for the amazing ingenious activity they display in these disciplines.

So not a single day passes without the greatest number of them coming out of their hangars, which they call "carbets" in their mother tongue, going to work or along the sea shore, on the rivers or on the high seas to catch fish, or inland to catch land-crabs, birds or quadrupeds. Meanwhile, those who remain at home busy themselves with the manufacture of the tackle needed for these activities.

I see no difficulty in stopping here a while to explain the fishing techniques and their practice and then to describe, at the same time, in a few words the particular characteristics of their tackle itself. The hungry stomachs of the Karaybes - they in fact live from day to day and do not worry too much about amassing food for the future - have taught them not only this or that, but the thousands of existing methods to deceive and capture fish, both in rivers and in the sea.

For them it is a well established custom to get up very early in the morning, after a light breakfast, to bring in the small fry on the sea shore by means of a sort of rod about nine or ten feet long equipped with a thin tin fish-hook, but when the shore under the insistent presence of the sun becomes too hot, the fish return to the high sea, and the Karaybes go back home. What I have just said already shows you one of the types of fishing. Now comes the
second, which is quite different from the first. They in fact get into very short small boats, - "canots" in their language - carved with some skill from a single hollowed out tree. They then go along the foot of the cliffs in the shallows, in the midst of which they spear the fish with javelins as they swim in the water. And to avoid wounded prey escaping in its lightning flight from the hands of the fisherman, they have a very long thread tied to the end of the javelin which they pay out immediately until they feel the fish weaken in its dash as a result of the loss of blood, and they then wind back the line thus bringing the dying fish in. It is not uncommon for the weight of one fish to strain the Indian canoe and nearly sink it. This kind of fishing is called "line fishing".

But every time the small fry is lacking in the breakers of the sea, and that the javelin fishing, if we may call it thus, proves less successful, they adopt a third fishing method which I cannot admire enough. It is absolutely in vain that the fish constantly seek hiding places, even at the bottom of the sea. Thanks to a remarkably mounted line, five hundred feet long or more, the Karaybes excel in the art not only of exploring all the fish’s retreats, but also of pulling them out of the waves with the aid of a little bait. I will briefly explain how this is done. Experience teaches that a thin hemp thread, whatever its length, will get nowhere near the bottom of the sea by itself, unless one adds a weight to it. This is why they firmly tie to the end of the line both a stone and a seductive hook, with a knot that can undo itself. As soon as the line has sunk rapidly to the bottom thanks to the added weight, the stone is suddenly released and the line being lightened, is methodically drawn in little jerks by the fisherman. Meanwhile, the scaly host of these places, who is most greedy, has rushed at the bait, which for him is fatal. Indeed, as soon as he swallows the prey, he is caught. The deadly hook, of course, sinks deeply into him. He does try to flee, but all in vain. In fact, the more energy he puts into trying to return to his hideouts, the more he facilitates and accelerates his own capture. He facilitates it, I say, because his heavy procedure drives the spike of the hook more deeply into his throat. I also said "accelerates" because he tugs on the line, which in the bright morning the Karaybes are dangling here and there, the latter with a delicate and wise sense is aware that his prey is caught. He skillfully pulls the reluctant fish out of the water in one go and captures it, 'after which he starts to fish again in exactly the same way until he has caught enough fish and more. This kind of fishing is called "line fishing".

How piercing and bold hungry eyes become! Learn it from this fact alone. Among the almost infinite species of fish produced by the sea the most humble must surely be the one that always crawls on the ground, with a brick-coloured shell in a spiral ending in a point, which is culled lambis: the reason being, I imagine, that it licks the soil. Although it usually hides underwater in the hollows along the shore, it does not escape the keen attention of the Karaybes. Seeing it and capturing it represent one and the same danger of death for the fishermen, on the one hand because of the depth of their dives and on the other, because of the extreme voracity of the fish that swim up and down all around them. Nothing stops them however. Nowhere in the world would you see better divers! Their underwater swimming is of an incredible duration, they stay under until they have seized the fish I have described or another of this kind. I need not say the name of this type of fishing, as it is known by all, namely lambis diving.
How piercing and bold hungry eyes become! Learn from this fact alone. Among the almost infinite species of fish produced by the sea, one must certainly be classed with the most humble. Almost every day, in the morning or the evening, there is such a great quantity of fish in the waters to the south of the island that it is easy to pick up several with one hand alone. This daily spectacle stimulates the Karaÿbes' cunning, if only to the modest extent of their ingenuity. They made the instrument I sketch here, as it really looks, both its shape and instructions for use. It is a small net made of very short little links, slightly more than one foot long and wide, oval in shape in its upper part and tied to a stick, and which narrows in the shape of a hood at the bottom. Thus when the fish appear, they instantly put out the net and lift it up out of the rushing tide, loaded with booty. That is all as regards sea fishing; let me now turn to river fishing.

They have only three ways of catching fish in their rivers. Either they deviate the water course and then carefully retrieve the fish that have remained on the dry sand, or sometimes they fill the waters with a deadly substance so that fatally all that remains are lifeless fish on the surface and the fishermen gather them without difficulty into piles, or finally they fish with a seine net. But I refrain here from revealing the fish species they catch especially using the above procedures. I leave lengthier explanations to another occasion perhaps in the future, so as to pursue what is before us at present. I shall therefore now speak of the Karaÿbes' hunting.

**Hunting**

For a better understanding of this matter, in view of the triple species of living creatures, very different from each other, that they pursue, we must distinguish three types of hunting. The first concerns quadrupeds, the second aims at catching birds with bird techniques and finally the third is only concerned with the hunting of crabs.

In view of the opportunity I am given to speak about the capture of quadrupeds, I cannot refrain on the one hand from praising the foresight of the Spaniards and on the other, from criticizing the devastation perpetrated by the French. The former have nothing closer to their heart than to see that the islands very far from Europe and providentially located in the middle of the ocean for the survival of human beings are abundantly provided with animals of all kinds. This is why, if in the course of their passage in the midst of these islands they feel the need for what is most indispensable for their: subsistence, such as oxen, goats, pigs, sheep, chicken, ducks and other animals, they leave at least a male and a female free to roam the island in view of satisfactory reproduction for the future. But the French do quite the opposite. Far from concerning themselves simultaneously with the needs of those who will come after them, they seem to do everything in their power to achieve a complete and general extinction. This said in passing, I return to my subject.
If the inhabitants of St. Vincent can therefore capture either goats or pigs using either hunting dogs or javelins or on the run (there are no other ways of hunting them) they owe it solely to the Spaniards. But from time immemorial, the island has only nurtured two indigenous animals, one of which is called "agouti" and the other "manicou". As for their precise description, I owe it to a scrupulous observer to whom I give the credit.

**Pkouli or Agouti**

The agouti is a small easily tamed four-legged animal covered with spiky hair. It has split nails, is not very different from the hare in size, with flattened nostrils. In its mouth there are four sharp teeth that are longer than the others, two on the upper jaw and two on the lower one. Like the rabbit, it burrows underground or in the hollows of trees. Once it is caught, its flesh is rightly compared to that of the tastiest venison.

**The Manicou animal**

As for the manicou, this is a little fox with a very fine head, small eyes and hairless ears. With remarkable teeth, its voracity makes it the perfidious enemy of chickens, it is generally considered to be a lazy animal because it walks with such a slow gait that it is not difficult to approach, providing however that there is a forest in the area, because as soon as it climbs into a tree, using both its paws equipped with claws and, as an arm, its tail which ends in a point, you would think it was a bird, so rapidly does it race through the branches. Certain authors sometimes call it "le puant" - the stinker, as an epithet. Indeed, an absolutely revolting smell emanates from its body even though it is covered in soft fur. But my description of the manicou would be incomplete if I did not add yet another detail that absolutely distinguishes it from all the other animals. A most amazing thing! Although its female gives birth to multiple litters, she does not omit to carry them alt in a little pocket where her nipples are, which she can close or open at will. So that every time a hunter goes after the little ones who have strayed, they seek refuge in their mother's own pocket as in a safe shelter. The French are horrified at eating manicou because of its stench, but not so the Karaÿbes to whose palate its flesh is as tasty as that of the agouti. So day in day out the Indians indulge with equal passion in the hunting of these animals.
Bird catching

Hunting for quadrupeds is generally followed, or rather is always accompanied, by bird catching. I have little to say an this since there is almost nothing remarkable about it. First of all, although everywhere in the forests a gum of excellent quality and exquisite odour flows from the trees, they are ignorant of the art of catching birds, even as a game, with this gum, whereas other nations put it to considerable profit.

Another thing that escapes them as well is the use of either falcons or hawks or any similar kind of bird of prey, due to a precise law curiously instituted 'for the capture of birds, which reserves this activity to the decision of the land owner. Moreover, until our day, gunpowder, lead shot, long iron barrels and other contraptions fatal to mortals, were completely unknown to these people. If only Heaven had also forbidden such deadly instruments in any way from coming to their knowledge and into their very hands! It certainly would have provided salvation for many people. Indeed one can hardly express on the one hand the covetousness with which they search for them, and on file other the remarkable skill with which they handle them; the catapult, although it is quite rarely released by them, makes any hope of (future) hunting vain.

It is in another way, rather than as such or with deliberate intent, that they practice bird catching. If, for instance, as they wander through the forest, either to pick ripe fruits, or to take the air or finally to choose appropriate sites for their crops, some bird should appear, they instantly let fly a blunted arrow at it. Because of the effect of the thick foliage and the abundance of the creepers that grow to the tops of trees, a blunted point is infinitely preferable to a sharper one to reach a bird.

As one of the Karaÿbes' greatest pleasures is to tame a certain number of birds of some repute, it is for this precise reason the young men seek intensely for the young. If, therefore, a nest is spotted either on the end of the branches of a tall tree or in one of its hollows, they instantly fetch it, in one of two specific ways. Firstly, naturally, with their two hands suitably deployed, they hold tight to the trunk of the tree rather than hug it, whatever its height. Then, having at the same time drawn up their joined feet, which they fix, as it were, in the tree by means of their toes, they themselves stick closely to the tree. Their body freezes in the shape of a bow. Then, in turn, according to the laws of nature, they first reach up with their right hand, then with the left, and do the same with their feet in turn, until they have climbed to the top of the tree where the nest is. When at last they have trapped their prey, it is with the same effort, the same agility of limb and the same courage that they make the same very difficult and equally perilous journey down. You have heard the first method for bird catching; I will tell you the second.

The bird, which is circumspect for itself, so to speak flares with a sort of innate presentiment, the threat of its offspring being stolen. Due to the various nuances and on account of the extraordinary beauty of its plumage, it usually builds its nest in the middle of a sort of platform bristling with thorns. Not unjustifiably you would think that those baby birds were safe there; but most of the time they are not. It is easy for the hunter to find their hiding places due to the squeaking of the chicks, their shrill cries, their twittering, their croaking, their chirping or other beak noises. What
can he do? The thicket of thorns prevents his climbing onto the platform. So with repeated axe blows he fells the tree, carefully sets aside the little ones with no down and collects the birds. That is the second method of bird catching.

It now remains for me to outline the last of the Karaybes' types of hunting. This is how it proceeds. I mean the catching of landcrabs, commonly known as crabs in French. It is all too well known to the "chassieux et perruquiers", as we say, how appetizing this dish is to the palate of the Indians for me to speak of it at any greater length; it suffices for me to say that they resemble European crabs.

Therefore, while these animals, driven by hunger, by day or night venture forth out of tile hollows where tile)' most often live and wander around devouring leaves and roots, the Karaybes, inquisitors with a thousand eyes, leap on them hurriedly, grab them with their right hand and carefully tie them up to avoid being wounded by a bite from their double pincers. But if the sun's heat is too intense or the excessive aridity of the fields forces the crabs to burrow, this does not prevent the hunters from gathering a large quantity. Indeed they shoot an arrow with extreme force into the most recent holes where the crabs have retired, an arrow with an iron point. If, as a result of the irregularity of the hole, the shot is in vain, they dig up the soil here and there with their hands or a stick until they discover the little animal and capture it in the manner described above.

In truth I realise that so far we have dealt at some length with both the fishing and the hunting of the Karaybes, but this was intentional so as to highlight properly what are practically their only two subjects of conversation or activity. I will admit here naïvely that they are sometimes bored by their native land. This is why they plan to undertake journeys abroad, to other not far distant islands. This provides them on the occasion with a fourth subject of conversation. Such exchanges do not last just one or two days, but are prolonged from week to week, and even more often for entire months. You are astonished at such a long time? I shall proceed to give you the simple reasons for this.

4. The journeys

As soon as one of the elders has resolved to go on a journey, he has to reveal his personal plan to others, with a view to recruiting not only companions but also collaborators. If his plan happens to please the others, they instantly agree and commit themselves to be at the ready within the given time. If not, it is absolutely useless for him to try and gain their consent. It is easier for him to seek others for the journey who also of their own free will accept or refuse.

From then on, when the required and amply sufficient number of "matelots" - sailors, - that is the name they are given - has been found, a quest begins for a boat to cross the sea and it must be equipped. It would be criminal
here not to mention the exact type of vessel they use and their navigation techniques and procedures. These two points in fact brilliantly demonstrate their unprecedented ingeniousness. A simple description of the facts will make this obvious.

**Dugout pirogue or canoe**

The whole length of a single tree, 25, 30 or 40 feet long, 6 or 7 feet wide, is dug out so that its thickest part, on the bottom of the boat, is 2 or 3 fingers thick and the thinnest, along the upper edges, only one finger thick. In the front (the prow) the end is carved higher into a point to break the waves. Then at the same time, (in the middle section, between the prow and the poop, it is entirely hollowed out but reinforced by a rafter inserted along the edges), on either side, due to the occasionally inadequate state of the tree's marrow, it is appropriate to insert a rafter into the bark when the tree is completely stripped. At the back it is slightly wider so that the pilot can manoeuvre the rudder more easily. It is exactly trees such as this, equipped with a certain number of planks along the side to fend off the assaults of the sea, that are the typical vessels of the Karaybes. They call them "pyrogues", quite rightly because of the speed they travel at, which is reminiscent of fire.

As soon as a vessel of this kind has been completed, it must be equipped with the necessary gear. Which? Someone might ask. Certainly, not much is needed, but certain things are absolutely necessary.

I have said that there are joined planks along both sides of the vessel, but this multiplies the number of cracks that facilitate the penetration of water. It is therefore necessary to be constantly sure of blocking any hole it might penetrate with tow, and this requires all the more work since they have no tar. However, the skill with which they ensure that the boat is watertight against seepage and the waves is admirable. Another danger is due to the vulnerability excuse the metaphor! - of the craft, that of sinking. To avoid this as far as possible, they attach transversal crossbars at regular intervals, which have the dual function of providing a framework "ribs", and seats. Once this has been done, depending on the distance of the destination planned, this and that still remains to be prepared, according to the number of travelers, with regard to food supplies for the journey. But it is not hard to imagine the amount of time it takes for all these operations, especially if one takes into account the nonchalance of the Karaybes in performing each one.

Furthermore - and this often happens - because of the exceptionally rough seas with contrary winds, they are forced to stay where they are for several days, and it is absolutely impossible for them to embark on the sea for a crossing. When the calm finally returns and the gentle breath of the zephyrs, you will see that our natives with bare hands immediately push their craft, which they had drawn up into a safe place, into the sea; then without delay it is loaded, partly with stones and partly with provisions; but so that it does not list too far over to one side or another, everything is properly arranged in the bottom. After doing this, the sailors jump lightly in on both sides, each armed with a paddle... I describe this image to you verbally because of its extreme originality.
The paddle

From the hardest part of the tree comes the paddle, sometimes scarcely longer than five feet, sometimes a little less than four feet. Absolutely smooth up to the middle, from its handle, square and equipped with a horn-shaped grip so that it can be more easily grasped in the right hand, hardly wider and thicker than a finger; then, down as far as its end, it takes the shape of a rounded lozenge, but the blade is shaped like a crescent moon, to dip more quickly into the water. It is above all smooth, so that it does not injure the hand with its roughness. Furthermore, on both sides of this kind of board the Karaÿbes, for the pleasure of the eye, as in the habit of carving or sculpting (in relief) designs which they colour with vermilion cinnabar or hard-wearing chalk.

When the sign for departure is at last given by the man in charge of all navigation, the sailors manoeuvre the paddles all together, but in a manner that differs from that of our oarsmen. In fact the former, always facing the direction in which they are going, never take their eyes off it; the latter hit the water, their backs to the way they are going. Then altogether, they push the water in cadence, the Europeans backwards, their arms extended, the Karaÿbes forwards, bending their arms. The position of the oars is also different: Europeans, because of the large size of their triremes, are obliged to wield their longer oars obliquely, and take levelage against the gunwale, while the Americans manoeuvre their paddles very vigorously and move them vertically in the frothing water, one might say.

O how delightful to our eyes is the spectacle we are given today by daring men disdainful of a sea with frequent squalls! Do you see how the craft defies the water by skimming over it? Can you hear how the sides of the little canoe resound with the cadence of the rapidly repeated paddle strokes? How the echo in the distance exactly imitates the rhythmic sound floating over the reef? In the meantime when the boat meets gusts of wind or the tide, it follows its course clinging to the coast of the island, but the oarsmen have to paddle with all their might until they have at last reached the point of the island which allows them an easy passage to another; they then rest their paddles and hoist the sail. They only use two square sails: the larger sail is in the forecastle, the smaller one in the middle of the stern of the small boat. They reef the sail according either to whether the wind in full course is too week to dominate the waves face on, or more violent than normal to the point of causing the risk of it foundering. They make up the distance lost by paddling until the storm has subsided; they then hoist the sail again so that it fills with wind.

It should absolutely not be omitted here to say that most of the islands of South America are not so far apart that they are out of one another's sight, and it follows that the crossing from one to another can be made in less than 24 hours.

Consequently there is a double advantage; the first is that travelers land almost every night to rest on dry land; the second, that his removes all fear of straying far out into the open sea. It is truly with wisdom that God
decided thus to contribute to safeguarding the natives who would often find themselves in danger if the islands were distant from one another.

In fact, the navigator's compass, the masterpiece of the genius of man which by a natural law reveals to the eye, by a simple needle, the place where you are wandering or the region of the sky or sea where you find yourself at a given moment, the use of the compass. I say, this marvelous instrument, is completely unknown to the Karaÿbes even today.

As regards knowledge of the constellations, it is found to a certain extent, but indeed imperfect, only in old men; they have acquired it through long experience rather than by a rigorous process. The Karaÿbes, aware of their own ignorance, focus all their attention on never losing sight of the islands; for this purpose, they carefully choose the favourable moment for navigation; they have learned to forecast it by indisputable signs.

If very early in the morning thick clouds obscure the rays of the sun, they stay at home; and in fact heavy rain will fall shortly. If the radiant halo of the sun is tinged with a reddish hue its idleness guarantees them that winds will be unleashed. Each time that a really heavy mist hangs over the sea all around, it is always an obvious sign that in the absence of wind an immense flat calm prevails everywhere. Then if the new moon penetrates the water, it can be said, this never happens without a miracle of nature; like a torrent, the seething waves break sometimes over one and sometime another region of the globe. Finally, if in the morning or evening hours the whole span of the skies is serene, then this affords the most favourable opportunity for undertaking any voyage, as long, however, as a gently breeze is blowing. No other aspect of the sky is dearer than this to the heart of the Karaÿbes, and you will see them giving themselves wholeheartedly to the sea. In fact, if there is a good and favourable omen for a crossing, which corresponds to their wishes, it is quite rightly precisely this one; this hope has never deceived the Karaÿbes.

The following very ancient custom is deeply rooted in the islanders; when any man who navigates from one island to another reaches a cove where there is a farm, he alerts his friends to his arrival with the raucous and repeated sound of his trumpeting. The conch he uses is a spiral trumpet whose multiple chambers augment the sound passing through them and make it louder and more piercing. Other different roles are also attributed to this custom.

The first is to avoid the travelers arriving, should their vessels land in silence, from being taken by the peasants on the farm for enemies who always emerge surreptitiously by design to attack the natives unexpectedly. The inhabitants, who are scattered in different places according to their habit, must next be able at the sound of the trumpet to hurry immediately to the village to welcome the allies who are arriving. Lastly, they need sufficient time to prepare the feast.

As soon as the trumpet has ceased to sound, they cast anchor. I am mistaken! I should have said that really this is a very heavy stone, completely netted,
not without a certain ingenuity, in cords of bark, which they unroll until it reaches the sea bed. With the weight of this stone beneath it, the craft remains stationary. However, there is a risk if it stays there too long that it will be carried out to sea or to the shore, according to the different directions of the waves. To avoid this, they completely unload the canoe; then with a great strain on their arms, they drag it up out of the sea to the shore, with the help of rollers, and place it under the trees with vast and shady branches, sheltered from the scorching rays of the sun which generally cause its deterioration.

But do not imagine here that the Karaÿbes, at their first meeting, as happens with us, especially after a long separation between friends or relatives, offer their mutual greetings showing the joy of the moment either by expressing flattering compliments or by mutual embraces; they heartily mock such flattery, with an air of disgust and indignantly reject it. "Good God", they said, "is it in this way by such manifestly hypocritical manners that people like to make fun of friendship? What lover of true and authentic sincerity would put up with this foolishness without reacting? There are indeed other far more certain proofs of both friendship and devotion!" "What are they?", you would say - they reject this corrupt or false conduct.

"You have before your eyes a human being, an associate, someone familiar, of the same blood, who is suffering from a serious and dangerous illness. Be careful not to use the soothing words of the flatterer; rather prefer by far to employ all your efforts to restore the sick person's health; that, surely, is loving him sincerely. Someone else who is linked to you by closeness (or sympathy) is unjustly slandered; do not let his reputation be damaged without doing anything, but openly attack the one who is slandering him. I would then be certain you were his sincere friend. You know that your neighbour is crippled by unbelievable wretchedness; do not wait until he asks for your help, but spontaneously alleviate his distress as far as you can. What would I think of you except that you are one of his friends?" They recount thousands of such instances to confirm their thesis by examples. I am not presumptuous enough to answer by personal judgement the question of whether European behaviour is better or wiser than that of the Karaÿbes. It only matters to me, to fulfil my role as an historian, to place on record what is done, written in a simple style.

If I remember correctly, in the first few pages I related a certain number of details on this topic when I was describing their short voyages. Thus everything here is respected with equivalent ceremony. The person responsible for the guests leads the strangers in silence to a room equipped with a variety of hammocks or low seats; after that the guests, lying or seated, take refreshment and exchange their welcome greetings, but it is all done roughly, in other words, with simplicity. So it is thousands of leagues from our cosmetics, hypocrisy and mundane lies. Nature, together with an education without restraint, has as it were made them without sharp edges. Do you want further proof? It is to be expected; I will supply it to you without seeking very far, and first of all in what happens next.

When the man in charge of the recently made voyage has been sufficiently, or even more, refreshed with both food and drink by the proprietor of the farm as by a friend, he approaches hint and sitting at his feet, on his bottom - this is their most common position - he then chronologically explains in a long speech the time, muses and purpose of the voyage undertaken. His listener, to convince his conversation partner that he is listening to him
with both ears, precisely repeats his last words, like the Greeks, but through respect does not interrupt any part of his explanation. He calmly listens until it comes to an end. The speaker carefully mentions his plans and feels he should not hide the least detail from his host, his oration finally over, he remains seated. The other then stands, and likewise informs him thoroughly of all that has happened to the islanders.

If, at the approach of a ship, the horn is sounded, it is in order for the feast to be prepared in the farm. Good Lord! How easily we abuse words! It is easy to notice here that the Karaybes are welcomed by their allies with rather refined food seasoned with nothing less than many sauces; but since they not only live from day to day and so from "hour to hour", they are extremely unconcerned about the future; it often happens that the area is totally out of food. At the sound of the trumpet, people run from every direction, to pick fruit, to catch fish, or to hunt game; this food is so abundant that generally in a short time more than suffices is easily gathered to feed 60 men or more. For bread they use cassava root, finely grated with the rough grater and grilled as cakes. What is cassava? In the current tongue, "manioc". Although I think it would be superfluous to describe it at length since it is known to all, there I will add a few details for the benefit of those who have no precise knowledge of it.

Therefore I say that cassava is a rather shapeless bush with a certain number of branches which grow to a height of about six or seven feet and whose trunk is completely covered in innumerable protuberances which grow from the base of the leaves. The wood of this bush is soft and full of an abundant sap. Its bark is variegated in colour with tones of white, violet, red, gray and green. It is no less useful than it is dangerous. I say useful because the vast majority of the inhabitants of America make do with it as their daily bread. But I add that it is dangerous because of the poison it contains. Indeed, its sap when squeezed freshly from the root, is deadly if ingested immediately. However, after being treated, it is no longer so. In fact, the Karaybes carefully preserve it to season their dishes. Partly with time and partly with cooking, this toxin is eliminated to the point of becoming not only harmless, but indeed and above all pleasing to their palate.

As regards the Indians' food I shall give details of only the most usual dishes. They have only two ways or recipes for their preparation; either they simply place their food on a grill made of Keds and roast it over a slow fire - this process is called boucan, "boucanner des viandes" - or they simply boil it in clear water, not without adding lots of Indian pepper; they have no other seasoning for food. They rarely use salt because of its scarcity.
As for me, enchanted, I would sing the praises of such frugality, were it not contradicted in the opposite sense by a shameful drunkenness which even makes them undertake the longest journeys to satisfy this in a big way. But although the Karaybes' islands, due to their excessive heat, are so little suited to producing grapes, wheat and apples that one deplores the absence of wine, cider and beer, the local inhabitants who are nonetheless hardy drinkers have cleverly found a way of producing a certain kind of drink, called "ouicou" in their language. It is not inappropriate to describe in two words the method they use. But one should realise that there is an enormous difference between their daily drink and this brew, which is the most famous in the whole of America. In fact, their usual drink is easy to prepare. To tell the truth, it is extremely rare for them to drink just water, but to make their beverage more pleasing to the palate they are in the habit of adding to it cooked fruits whose juice is especially full of flavour, such as figs, bananas, sweet potatoes, yams, etc., crushing them either by hand or in a mortar with a pestle. When this mixture is properly made, they instantly have readily available a little drink which is not without flavour.

The process for the preparation of the more refined ouicou is quite different. In the first place, they take some freshly plucked mature roots of cassava, which they reduce to small pieces with a copper grater. Then they cook it all over a low fire. Subsequently they wrap it up to let it ferment in green leaves, tightly fastened with numerous willow stalks. Finally, when it is almost completely fermented (literally: "gone mouldy") they dilute it in warm water which, once it has been allowed to rest, provides the Karaybes with an amazingly pleasant drink. They are convinced, therefore, that they cannot welcome strangers with more munificence than by serving them this beverage until they have had their fill.

Nor do they have a surer way of manifesting their joy at the arrival of friends than that of inviting the largest number of people to drink together. The latter arrive from the different parts of the island on the day appointed by the priest. Moreover, every single one dresses up in their garments, which are not devoid of beauty, though frankly rustic, and which it is good to describe here simply and without any embellishments.

First of all, as headdress they wear a multi-coloured crown of feathers, whereas they are usually bare-headed. Then as adornments, they love a gold ring in each ear and also two little silver rings or gold lunules through the wings of their nostrils. In addition they stick two little needles in their lower lip near the chin or tie a dangling thread from them. Over their
shoulders they throw the spanned wings of birds of prey or spotted tiger-skins, not to forget a mass of ribbons. Round and round their necks they then coil a gold necklace which quite resembles the sun and which they call by the boastful name of "karacoly". As leggings, they tie below the knee and above each ankle large bands of woven cotton. There is a little bare knife on the left. Their left hand is armed with a bow and arrows, the tight in the past held a club, now a sword. They smear their bodies all over with different colours to show they are warriors, and to frighten the enemy, they paint their faces in a terrifying way with black, red lead and chalk.

I myself saw one day, in a village quite near my house, the arrival of at least five hundred - I actually counted them - got up in this way and come to dedicate three entire days without interruption to such feasting and drinking; the spectacle entertained me marvelously.

On the occasion of this most copious binge, where not only was thirst quenched, but heads were just a little heated, I heard with my own ears each one of the elders recount, in proportion to the number of years he had lived, his brilliant exploits, while all the others in exactly the same way expressed their approval either with their hand, or their head or with a long sigh.

At these sort of "rallies" of the Karajabe nation are discussed and reasons are given, for and against, different issues among which the two that follow are a priority.

The first is to decide whether or not to promote continued peace among the federated nations. The second concerns the way to make war with enemies. Is it better to invade their territory, or rather to stay at home?

It is hard to believe the passion with which these questions are debated, It is extremely rare for agreement to reign between them all, as the proverb says "the more heads, the more opinions". But if a decision is taken and it is ratified and made valid, each participant returns home after the 'assembly is dissolved and tells his friends what has been achieved "ab ovo".

This gives rise to a final and broad opportunity, as well as a subject for conversation. And it is not only the men, but also the women, although they are otherwise especially shy, who generally deal with matters of war.

Everywhere a lively enthusiasm springs up for what is at stake in the war as well as a no less mortal hatred for the enemy. All you see is soldiers running here and there, equipping themselves for the forthcoming combat and encouraging the others with provocative words.
But if they have opted to safeguard peace with the allies at all cost, as soon as each individual returns to his farm, everyone goes back to work as usual. One picks the tender leaves of pitta or karaguata to make nets; another after having appositely split the maraman cane and prepared it with a view to weaving different sorts of baskets, dyes it alternately black and scarlet; another fells a tree, strips it, hollows it out and there is a little canoe; then they carefully fashion the paddles; soon, from the biggest branches of the tree, another carves different wooden objects; little mortars, naturally provided with their small pestles, beams, forks, chairs and other pieces of domestic furniture; another finally decorates the weapons of war that they habitually carry with them; arrows of course, with bow and quiver. These are all details which I should be pleased to explain at greater length, for a better knowledge of the facts.

**Daily work of the Karaÿbes** - (this should have been mentioned earlier)

But although - as I have just said - absolutely all Karaÿbes are involved in the tasks listed above, they should nevertheless not be classed as hard workers, but as people who work for the love of it, given that they do it for their pleasure alone and as if it were not work, they are interested in it and apply themselves to the task. The result is that completing each one of these tasks with all its details demands almost unlimited time.

With regard to the former point, what distinguishes hemp from pitta or karaguata above all is that of these two kinds of plants, both with an abundance of very long leaves, the mots of the latter are productive and supply the cultivator with very silky threads. At this point, I omit the description of hemp, perfectly known in France, to explain in greater detail these exotic species of "chardons" as they are called.

**TO THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD** - (Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam)

As for the rest, which is still missing, I will finish it and I will send it to you in a little while, please God, and very willingly, my dearest brother. In the meantime use these pages and before it has been edited, correct carefully with your expert hand a work, as I am well aware, which is still very imperfect. My very best wishes and more, and keep your deep affection for me.

To you with all my heart,

your brother, Adrien Le Breton, S.J.

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**APPENDIX ONE**

Ioalouca - Youlouca - Joulouca, the "Rainbow Spirit", lives on fish, lizards, pigeons, and humming birds, and is covered with fine feathers of all colours especially on the head. He is the rainbow, which we see; the clouds prevent us from seeing the rest of the body. He makes the Caribs ill when he finds
nothing to eat above. If this fine iris appears when they are at sea, they
take it as a good omen of a prosperous journey. When it appears to them while
they are on land, they hide in their houses and think it is a strange and
masterless spirit, which seeks to kill somebody.

- From Carib mythology.

**APPENDIX TWO**

Sympathetic Magic - The Caribs had a belief that they could acquire increased
strength and courage by simply biting and chewing in ritual frenzy, on the
cured limb (hand, fool etc.) of an enemy killed in battle. This strange
though not unique custom referred to as "sympathetic magic", can be found in
varying forms among many of the early animistic peoples. There are many
Guyana Amerindians who, for example, put the scrapings of the bones of their
deceased chiefs and relatives in their food and drink. The carefully
preserved human appendages, which were usually to be found hanging from the
roof in the Carib meeting houses, were really trophies of war, very much like
the North American Apache scalp.

The only known historian to actually record a form of this ritual was Pete
Labat in his "Memoirs", and I quote, "... To arrange a war party, an old
woman enters the carbet and harangues the guests to excite them to vengeance.
She recounts the wrongs that they have suffered at the hands of their
enemies, and recites a long list of their friends and relations who have been
killed. When she sees that they are properly heated by drink and showing
signs of fury, she throws the boucanned limbs of some of their enemy into
their midst. The Indians thereupon fall on the limbs, cutting, tearing,
biting and gnawing them, with all rage..."

Can you imagine the story, and its subsequent embellishments, of a stranger
from another culture who happens to visit such a bedecked meeting house or
who witnesses such a scene as the one above? This practice of theirs seems
furthermore, to explain why some of the early recorders were bewildered at
the Caribs, who after a successful ambush, quickly lose the advantage and
suffer heavy casualties because of the extraordinary lengths they go to, even
in the heat of battle, to retrieve the body of a slain comrade.

- Fr. Mark de Silva.

**APPENDIX THREE**

Origin of the Word Carib - The Caribs called themselves Kalinas but they had
no written language. The world today therefore has to live with the result of
a complicated evolution of the spellings and misspellings of the Spanish,
French and English, as they recorded in their respective languages the words
and names of the Kalinas that they heard or thought they heard.
In the language of the Kalina the "L" and the "R" is pronounced almost the same (like the "K" and the "C", and the "Y" and the 'T') hence Youloumain - Youroumayn - Iouloumain (the name for St. Vincent which, incidentally, Fr. Breton in his Carib Dictionary made the mistake of separating into two words - Youlou main) and Kalina becomes Carina. Since the Europeans had already misunderstood the Kalinas "sympathetic magic" for cannibalism, Carina now becomes Cariba/Caniba a synonym for cannibal. The English later took the Spanish "Caribas" or "Caribes" and named the Kalinas of the Eastern Caribbean, Caribs.

- A simple form of a very complicated truth.

APPENDIX FOUR

Mayreau Environmental Development Organization.- The Mayreau Environmental Development Organization (M.E.D.O.) is a non-governmental, community-based organization from the island of Mayreau in the St. Vincent Grenadines. M.E.D.O. has been engaged in environmental and general community development work for the past three years, and is currently spearheading the islands most recent thrust into Eco-tourism. This booklet, the group's first publication, while being a welcome addition to the history of our Caribs, has the specific purpose of being both advertisement and fundraiser - hopefully providing some much needed recognition and finance for M.E.D.O.'s work in Mayreau.

APPENDIX FIVE

FR. DIVONNE IS DEAD. - Rev. Fr. Robert de Divonne de la Foret O.S.B. died in the company of his Benedictine brothers at their monastery at Tierre Ville, Martinique on Sunday 27th July, 1997. Fr. Divonne is fondly remembered by the entire Catholic community of St. Vincent and The Grenadines and in particular the island of Mayreau where he lived and worked for thirteen years. Fr. Divonne came to St. Vincent, from Carriacou where he was living as a hermit, to attend the installation of Bishop Dickson on January 31st 1971, and to explore the possibility of transferring his hermitage to Mayreau. Thus for almost 13 years he ministered in tree recluse fashion, lived and toiled m Mayreau with the single minded purpose of improving the way of life of his people, endeavoring to give their children a better future through more educational and vocational opportunities.

During the severe drought of the early seventies he experienced the suffering of the Grenadine people. He was later instrumental along with the St. Vincent Christian Council in building a large water cistern on Mayreau and numerous circular ferro-cement water tanks still in use by individual families throughout the Grenadines today. Over the years he was gently and systematically coaxed by Bishop Anthony Dickson to give up his solitary hermit's life and he eventually extended his ministry to include Canouan, Union Island and by 1979, Bequia. Legal problems with the building of the water tank in Mayreau eventually took Fr. Divonne into the area of historical research and he became the foremost historian on the Grenadines. He assisted the poor in building their houses; with boat engines and seines; in spiritual
and temporal matters; medical, educational and legal problems; and was even
counselor to the leaders of the 1979 Union Island "Rasta Uprising".

Fr. Divonne, easily recognized by his long beard and khaki gown (the only
clothes he owned), had grown over the years to be respected and deeply loved
by the people of the Grenadines. He was recalled to his Martinique monastery
in January 1984 where he remained in humble obedience to the very end. Fr.
Divonne, did briefly return for the ordination of Rev. Andrew Roach, his

During his last three months in Martinique, God gave him the great privilege
of experiencing the tremendous pain and suffering that was Jesus' Calvary. At
the age of 72 he was already 40 years a monk and 32 years a priest, and he
died in the company of his brother Fr. Jean de Divonne of his hometown Boyer,
France.


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Backside of Publication

I am delighted that this publication is now available. It makes a valuable addition to the history of the Caribs, and corrects some of the fallacies.

I am also pleased that this document is a tribute to Fr. Divonne with whom I worked on many issues in the Grenadines. I remember his grief for the innocent people in the Grenadines in the aftermath of the Union Island uprising. He was a great person.

Sir James Mitchell

Prime Minister- St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

'The importance of this narrative lies in the fact that, unusually, it is a first-hand account written of the interaction of real Caribs with a truly Christian person. Fortunately the document was secured for posterity by another truly Christian person, Fr. Divonne. And ultimately it is with this truly Christian spirit that it is being presented by the Mayreau Environmental Development Organization for the development of their island community.'

Dr. Earl Kirby

Archaeologist & Curator of the Archaeological Museum - St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

"An invaluable contribution to the continuing re-discovery of Carib history, Fr. Divonne's discovery of and original translation of Fr. Breton's work, and Mark de Silva's and the Mayreau Environmental Developmental Organization's efforts in having it published, must be applauded."

Dr. Adrian Fraser

Historian & Resident Tutor, University of the West Indies* St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

THE END