

The Garifuna, A Nation Across Borders: Essays in Social Anthropology. Joseph A. Palacio (ed.), Belize: Cubola Books, 2005. 270 pp.

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The Garifuna have received increased attention from anthropologists in recent years as a paradigmatic hybrid and trans-statal Caribbean society. Descended from Africans and Amerindians on the island of St. Vincent, they resisted British colonialism and eventually extended their residence across Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and, more recently, the United States. This volume makes original contributions to existing analyses of Garifuna transnationalism and offers suggestive theoretical leads for comparison. It is comprised of 11 separate essays edited and assembled by a professional anthropologist who is also Garifuna. As such, it bridges “outsider” and “insider” description and analysis, to good effect.

The chapters range from translations of new 18th-century sources describing ethnogenesis on St. Vincent (Hulme), to techniques on the use of oral history (Palacio), to assessments of local authority under colonial rule in Central America (Moberg); and from interests in ritual (Arrivillaga, Foster) to gender (Gargallo, Foster) to music (Green) and the politics of cultural recognition (Izard, Cayetano, and Cayetano). Yet the variety of places (both written-from and written-about), historical periods, methods, and interests succeeds at showing “The Garifuna” thickly and complexly; or as a long and still-unfolding trajectory rather than an easily bounded thing. The book thus sug-

gests by its own example that “a culture” is less a thoroughgoing concord of thought, speech, and action than a modest consensus about what subjects to disagree about, and where, and how.

Palacio shepherds the unruly chapters into two sections, one on “Charting New Grounds in Garifuna History,” the other on “Topics on Contemporary Garifuna Society.” The division is less stark than it sounds; the first section discusses the various “presents” of the past, while the second engages various “pasts” of the present. For example, Alfonso Arrivillaga’s chapter on the Garifuna establishment of Livingston, Guatemala by Marcos Sánchez Díaz in 1802 (or alternatively, 1804) recounts both a history of the founding and a history of that history. Díaz was memorialized first as “hero” and rallying point for contemporary cultural activists and then as a *hiuraha*, a living ancestral spirit who returns in ritual practice. Here we see that “Garifuna history” is a kind of active consciousness—a *practical* history that uses multiple sources and integrated media (or “interart,” as Green calls it). Garifuna history is physically engaged—danced, sung, eaten, and drummed into existence. Yet, as chapters by Foster and Gargallo make clear for gender relations, even ritual contexts of practical history-making cannot enforce consensus so much as afford a shared grammar, scene, and repertoire for conflict. Garifuna-ness, this book makes clear, may be not so much a characteristic people as a group of people engaged in a characteristic set of debates. Those debates are about Garifuna religion and “tradition,” gender relations, the relation of the Garifuna nation to host states, and the need (or not) for official cultural recognition. These comprise the volume’s unifying vectors.

Consider religion. “The ‘gift’ of religion is double-edged,” Foster puts it (136), because it carries “tradition” but also gives transcendent status to nonegalitarian ideas about gender: men are viewed as associated with the spiritual domain of the individual, women with the physical creation. This reproduces the familiar structure, men: culture :: women: nature. Even more, gendered values learned through religious participation extend into other domains as well, namely *respectability* for women, and *reputation* for men. Foster’s essay on gender and religion is the most rigorously argued, showing how indigenous cosmologies are also ideological statements. Other essays lead the reader into additional debates central to Garifuna self-fashioning.

One of these is the hybrid African–Amerindian history, a story crucial to know but unfortunately repeated in almost all this book’s chapters. This hybrid identity is typically described as “looking” African but speaking an Amerindian (Arawak-based) language. But which origin should receive priority? Garifuna hybridity is both a source of distinction and a tensile prod to political debate. Izard’s article, “Patrimonial activation and construction of Garifuna identity in contemporary Belize” shows this forcefully. Certain institutions, notably the National Garifuna Organization of Belize, defend the hybrid identification and even occasionally elevate Indianness, while others, such as the more recent World Garifuna Organization, place greater stress on an emergent African diasporic identity. This has strong implications for how Garifuna history is understood, narrated, and monumentalized.

Another recurring issue is nowhere explicit, but omnipresent between the

lines. It derives from the trans-statal character of the Garifuna nation as differently manifested in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, St. Vincent, and the United States, and the consequences of those contexts for the making and maintaining—or in the cases of St. Vincent and Nicaragua, *recovering*—Garifuna-ness. As is usually the case in the anthropological literature on the Garifuna, Belize is far and away most represented here. This is in part because the editor and press are Belizean. But it also indexes that “Garifuna culture” is most defined, defended, and institutionalized in Belize, even though the majority of Garifuna dwell in Honduras. There is a fascinating paradox in play. On the one hand, as many Belizean Garifuna themselves declare, as legatees of the British colonial education system they are “better educated” than their Honduran and Guatemalan conationals. There are more Garifuna in the professional classes than elsewhere. Thus the proposal leading to the 2001 recognition of Garifuna language, music, and dance as a UNESCO “masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity” as documented in the fascinating chapter by Marion and Roy Cayetano—themselves the architects of the Garifuna application—could *only* have been orchestrated from Belize. On the other hand, the volume suggests that Belizean Garifuna are especially *at risk* for exactly the same reasons as “Garifuna culture” is especially developed: Belize-educated Garifuna are aware of and in touch with the many other global “cultures” available to them. Rastafari affiliation, for example, pushes young men’s memories and historical practice toward Jamaica, English, and pan-African affiliations, and away from the hybrid African–Amerindian origins on St. Vincent,

as does the generic “Creole” association available to all Belizean Garifuna.

In sum, this is a wonderfully useful volume for readers able to bring their own theoretical issues to the table rather than receiving them spoon fed. One promising line of research that could be developed from these chapters is the analysis of how *cultural risk* is defined and how it and revivalism go hand in hand. What are the effects on everyday quotidian practices of rationally defining culture through the prisms of *risk* or *viability*? In their concluding chapter, Cayetano and Cayetano are less-than-sanguine about the long-term effects of the UNESCO award in terms of its ability to stimulate cultural defense. Why? The comparison of Belizean- with Honduran-, Nicaraguan-, and Guatemalan-Garifuna contexts of culture-making may provide an ideal workshop for better understanding such pressing comparative concerns.

A Discontented Diaspora: Japanese Brazilians and the Meanings of Ethnic Militancy, 1960–1980. Jeffrey Lesser, Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. 219 pp.

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Decades ago, an undergraduate history course made a durable impression on me. “The first thing to keep in mind,” the professor told us, referring to the Great War, “is that nobody living then knew how it would turn out.” Good history, like good anthropology, respects the contingencies and uncertainties in human affairs and the possibilities for people to

intervene, for better or worse, in their own destinies.

Jeffrey Lesser’s *A Discontented Diaspora* is outstanding history. He dedicates his book in part to his mentor Warren Dean, who, he notes, “demand(ed) that his students look for the agency among historical actors” (xi). Lesser has taken the counsel to heart. The Japanese Brazilians (Nikkei) he writes about grapple seriously with themselves and with the constraints and immediacies of their times.

The book leads us into a hall of mirrors. Lesser does not reference the philosopher Ian Hacking, but he offers a beautiful case study of what Hacking (1999) calls “looping effects.” The term refers to the open-ended dynamics of categorization. Labels such as “Japanese,” the term commonly applied to Nikkei, never stay put or fully capture their designees: the people so labeled respond, altering the meanings of the labels themselves, which then get recirculated, ready for another loop. Far from being interpellated by “Brazilians” (as Nikkei called and stereotyped their non-Nikkei compatriots, returning the favor), Lesser’s Japanese Brazilians sought to identify themselves in their own terms, even if they could never fully escape the shifting categories within which others tried to corral them.

The period Lesser examines, 1960–1980, was troubled in Brazil, as was the city under his lens, gigantic, polyglot São Paulo. During most of the two decades, a military dictatorship ruled the country. Yet the era was also, in Brazil as in much of the world, a time of political and cultural ferment. Lesser takes an unusual angle into this roiling scene. His principal foci might seem incongruous: the appearances of Nikkei actors and actresses in porno-