

# 'They are Taking our Culture Away'

## Tourism and Culture Commodification in the Garifuna Community of Roatan

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*Abstract* ■ This article is concerned with the efforts of a Garifuna community in Honduras to claim a space in the growing local tourist economy. Its inhabitants maintain that they suffer a form of culture loss because they do not control the commodification of their culture through tourism. By examining the local perspective, we argue that cultural performances could be treated as cultural property and consumed by tourists in a context of mutual exchange as opposed to a hegemonic one. We suggest that every cultural performance entails a statement about collective identity and thus the local battle for cultural ownership relates to the politics of self-representation and the position of the community in the wider world. The members of the community we studied articulate their desire to become an *attraction*, which can fully satisfy the tourist quest for authenticity and difference. Only this has to take place on their own terms, to serve their interests and to promote the image they have about themselves and their culture.

*Keywords* ■ anthropology of tourism ■ Black Caribs ■ cultural performance ■ culture property rights ■ Lower Central America

Roatan is the largest of the Bay Islands, a few miles off the northern coast of Honduras. It is one of the primary tourist destinations in the country, mainly because of its coral reef, which draws numerous divers, mostly from the USA, as well as cruise ships and organized holiday-makers. The island is currently inhabited by an indigenous English-speaking Creole population and an increasing number of Spanish-speaking migrant workers from mainland Honduras. The Garifuna<sup>1</sup> inhabitants of Roatan are only a minority concentrated largely in the town of Punta Gorda, the fieldsite of the research upon which this article is based. It is positioned in a

picturesque but off-the-tourist-track location, deprived of the necessary tourism-related infrastructure. Its inhabitants receive a disproportionately small share of the benefits of tourism.

The Garifuna of Punta Gorda feel that their culture can and is being used as a tourist attraction. They express their concerns about the fact that this valuable resource – which is seen as rightfully belonging to the Garifuna and should thus be controlled solely by them – is currently managed by other agents, either indigenous to Roatan or from elsewhere. The idea of ‘having’ a culture and ‘cherishing it as a collective property’ (Clifford, 1988: 217) is certainly not new in academic discourse (see Clifford, 1997: 218; Handler, 1985, 1993). A growing anthropological sensitivity towards indigenous rights has recently expanded to encompass a genuine concern for indigenous ‘exploitable knowledge’ (Strathern et al., 1998) and intellectual property rights (Benthall, 1999, 2001; Harrison, 1991, 1995). In the context of tourism, anthropological attention has been drawn to the notion of the commoditization of culture (Boissevain, 1996a, 1996b; Greenwood, 1989; Macleod, 1999; Tilley, 1997). In his paper ‘Culture by the Pound’, Greenwood argues that although tourism is an agent of change that occasionally ‘engenders creative responses in local cultures’ (1989: 184), the commodification of culture ‘in effect robs people of the very meanings by which they organise their lives’ (1989: 179). While some see tourist development as a necessary evil, others argue that it has also helped various communities to survive and to maintain local traditions (Boissevain, 1996a: 13–14, 1996b: 114; Macleod, 1999; Tilley, 1997). ‘Ethnic tourism’, that is ‘the marketing of tourist attractions based on an indigenous population’s way of life’, can often be intimately related to cultural survival itself, as in the case of the Kuna Indians in Panama (Swain, 1989: 85, 104).

The Garifuna of Roatan believe in the power and value of ethnic or indigenous tourism, and they identify a space in the local tourist market for both their cultural tradition and their own cultural selves which, nevertheless, are currently being exploited not by themselves but by others. Seen in this light, their battle for the development of some form of indigenous tourism controlled by the community acquires a particular interest from an academic as well as a political point of view. The willingness of the Garifuna to treat their culture as a feature for tourist consumption cannot be analysed solely in terms of ‘utility-maximising individuals’ (Urry, 1995: 131). As Urry has suggested, tourist services are related to ‘the production and consumption of a particular *social* experience’ (1995: 131, original emphasis). The Garifuna of Roatan are thus in search not only of economic development but also, and perhaps primarily, for recognition of their cultural ownership and the authority to present themselves to the tourists instead of merely *being* presented by other agents.

It has been argued that the Garifuna are people ‘created by the process of colonialism and the world economy’ (England, 2000: 7; see also

Gonzalez, 1988; Taylor, 1951). Either in the context of colonialism in the past, or migration in the present, the Other has played a vital role in the construction of Garifuna communities (Gonzalez, 1988). Hybridity, bifocality and migration have been an integral part of the Garifuna lifestyle for centuries (England, 2000: 83), and the apparent multiplicity of Garifuna identity does not allow one to consider the Garifuna simply as a minority within the Honduran state; rather, they should be seen as a transnational community that exists across Central American nation states (Gonzalez, 1988: 8). The fragmented character of Garifuna existence results in self-conscious and highly differentiated subjects whose identities are informed by global discourses related to the African Diaspora (Anderson, 2000; England, 2000). As Anderson argues, the Garifuna identify with blackness and Black culture, but also perceive themselves as more authentic in comparison to other groups since they have managed to preserve their language and unique customs (2000: 38).

With reference to the Honduran state, the Garifuna promote a rhetoric of Black autochthony and demand recognition as a distinct group, advocating the value of their culture by appealing to its unique origins and traditions (Anderson, 2000: 46, 56, 187). The claim that Garifuna culture, because of its exceptionality and originality, is one of the most interesting aspects of Roatan was often heard in Punta Gorda. Through such statements, the Garifuna simultaneously recognized and constructed the importance of their cultural capital and its distinctiveness vis-a-vis the Spanish-speaking majority in Honduras, as well as the communities of Black Creoles in the Bay Islands. The Honduran state, in turn, treats the Garifuna as 'an ethnic Black population that adds flavour to the multiculturalism of the nation', that is, when they are not simply represented as the Other within (England, 2000: 366). Since the 1970s, Garifuna culture has acquired a prominent place in the matrix of national Honduran folklore and is being promoted as a tourist attraction. The living Garifuna acquired an exoticized status that implied national recognition, but always on the basis of a stereotypical, commodified and visual representation of their customs (Anderson, 2000: 194–5). Seen in this light, the Garifuna of Punta Gorda are probably not alone in their claims that their 'culture is being taken away'. Garifuna folklore in general is used for tourist consumption, but direct participation is denied to the agents who are still viewed by the state as too 'primitive' and thus 'incapable of full participation in the modern world' (2000: 241–2).

It is important to stress, at this point, that the Bay Islanders in general view themselves as a distinctive collectivity within the nation. Hence, the protagonists of this article call for attention to the preservation and self-management of their culture not only as Garifuna but also as inhabitants of the Bay Islands, who refuse total integration with the Spanish-speaking Other. Therefore the notion of Garifuna culture – like the Garifuna themselves – is better dealt with not as an essentially homogeneous or

homogenized entity. Rather, it can be seen as a concept which inhabits multiple ideological and physical spaces, producing a number of subjective experiences constituted in relation to more than one community which, at one time or another, stands as the Other.

The sections that follow examine the Garifuna perspective with respect to the collective representation of cultural ownership and the commodification of tourist spaces, and authentic or relatively inauthentic performances. One of our central arguments is that forms of cultural performance obey the rules of ownership and are comparable to cultural artefacts, despite their intangibility and fluid character. Performances can be consumed and thus 'sold', managed, produced and owned in ways comparable to material objects. The Garifuna of Roatan claim that their culture is being taken away; or rather sold to the western cultural collector-cum-tourist who, in her desire to consume Otherness and to find 'authentic' experiences (Selwyn, 1996: 2-7), bypasses the indigenous people whose resources are thus being managed by more skilful and better-equipped local and other entrepreneurs.

Focusing on the Garifuna demand for active participation in tourism development, we start by introducing, first, Roatan as a tourist destination and, second, the Garifuna inhabitants of the particular community and the political and historical context within which they articulate their claims. Our informants strive to enter the realm of tourist services, engaging in creative but largely unsuccessful attempts which result in the assertion that their 'culture is being taken away'. In order to explicate this statement, we devote a section to the presentation and discussion of their rhetoric on cultural ownership and objectification. We further explore the Garifuna wish that the tourist gaze, instead of remaining concentrated on a visualized and decontextualized version of their customs, should be redirected on to them, their narrative and their perception of culture. Finally, in the last ethnographic section we analyse the practice of dancing for tourists, the 'staging of a cultural spectacle' (Clifford, 1997: 199) that is suggestive of both the Garifuna aspiration to promote their culture and the actual circumstances. As it currently stands, 'impresarios and intermediaries' (1997: 199) prevent the indigenous self from fully controlling and contextualizing the image presented to and consumed by the tourists. The Garifuna want to take a stand vis-a-vis the multiple ethnic Other, and to transform the spectators into audiences in order effectively to shape national and transnational imaginaries by communicating to the exogenous actor something of the Garifuna experience.

### **Paradise inhabited**

Connected to the USA by weekly charter flights, Roatan is probably the most successful tourist destination in Honduras because of its coral reef, a

natural formation that surrounds the island and is its main tourist attraction. Foreign currency generated by tourism supports not only the economy of the Bay Islands in general but also, and particularly after the devastating effects of Hurricane Mitch, the Honduran economy as a whole. This particular hurricane hit Honduras in October 1998 leaving 6,600 dead, approximately 2 million people homeless and most of the country's infrastructure destroyed, while financial losses were estimated to have reached US\$4 billion dollars (Oliver-Smith, 1999: 39). As the economic domain least affected by the hurricane, tourism acquired enormous importance for the Honduran recovery project (Stonich, 2000: x). The country started to compete as an international tourism destination as early as the 1960s and, since the late 1980s, tourism has shown signs of potentially becoming one of Honduras's most viable means of economic development (Stonich, 1993).

At present, nearly 100,000 people visit the Bay Islands every year; most of them stay on Roatan, landing at its renovated airport or approaching the area in large cruise ships. Unsurprisingly, tourist advertising and brochures emphasize the beauty of the natural environment. Following the popular fashion of metaphorical commentary, several inhabitants of Roatan refer to their land as a 'paradise'. This metaphor, however, when translated into tourist expectations, becomes a crude overstatement. The cost of services is surprisingly expensive by Honduran standards, and the expectations of some local individuals who try to make a living out of tourism are highly inflated. The island's tourist infrastructure is minimal, and life outside the organized resorts can be particularly uncomfortable for western travellers who attempt to explore the area and mingle with the islanders.<sup>2</sup> As such, tourist development remains largely uneven, excluding parts of the local population like the Garifuna. The need for community participation has been brought to our attention not only by the Garifuna, but also by other local communities. In this respect, the notion of participatory tourist development continues to be more of an abstract goal rather than a standard practice in Roatan.

Punta Gorda in particular, in comparison with the rest of the island, remains extremely undeveloped in tourist terms. Like most Garifuna towns, the settlement stretches along the coastline (cf. Davidson, 1976: 90; Gonzalez, 1969: 24; Kerns, 1983: 63), adjacent to the major dirt road which connects the town's seven neighbourhoods (*barrios*).<sup>3</sup> Driving along the road the visitor sees an idyllic picture: women wash their clothes on the beach, while groups of children play under the coconut trees nearby filling the sea breeze with their voices. All of this makes Punta Gorda appear quite attractive at first sight. However, those passing tourists who – lured by the exotic setting – attempt to stay in Punta Gorda tend to be instantly disappointed. The beach is dirty and a barrier of seaweed and muddy shallow water undermines any swimmer's ambitions. To the frustration of the tourists, there are no major visible tourist amenities – hotels or restaurants

organized according to western standards – while the several mini-bars (*pulperias*), empty or visited solely by local men, appear too small and too personal to entice non-local customers. Those tourists who do reach Punta Gorda accidentally, in the course of an exploratory trip around the island, will most probably continue their journey after making a short stop to take a couple of photos. As Urry has suggested, it is in fact the presence of tourists that creates the ambience of a tourist destination and thus brings more tourists to a given place (1995: 138). The absence of tourists and tourist amenities makes Punta Gorda not ‘*the place to be*’ (1995: 138) and thus guidebooks devote only a couple of lines to the ‘Carib’ origin of its inhabitants.

### **The inhabitants of paradise**

The population of the Bay Islands is diverse in ethnic and cultural terms, and any absolute categorization would undoubtedly fail to reflect the intricate complexity of its internal diversity. According to indigenous categories, the present-day inhabitants of Roatan are the English Creoles (or simply ‘English’), the Spanish-speaking migrants from the mainland, the Garifuna and a small number of ‘gringos’ from the United States. The ‘English’ – internally subdivided into ‘Black’ and ‘White’ Creoles (Evans, 1966; Stonich, 2000) – and the Garifuna were present on the island prior to the arrival of the mainlanders. Davidson maintains that in 1970 the Garifuna were around 4 percent and the Spanish-speaking mainlanders around 7 percent of the local population (1974: 130). With the advent of tourism over the last 30 years, increasing numbers of ‘desperately poor Ladinos<sup>4</sup> from the mainland’ arrived ‘in search for work in the tourist sector’ (Stonich, 2000: 3), significantly altering the demographic composition of Roatan.

Echoing both a Garifuna and a distinctively Bay Islands perception of the Spanish Other, the Garifuna of Punta Gorda are proud of the ‘purity’ of their community. It is indeed this Garifuna quality of Punta Gorda that differentiates the town from other communities in the Bay Islands. ‘The people here are Garifuna’, the inhabitants of Punta Gorda maintain and further explain, ‘the Garifuna are Black Carib, the first people who came on this island’, formulating different versions of the Garifuna ethnohistory, most of which show similarities to the accounts of anthropologists and other scholars (Conzemius, 1928: 186–9; Davidson, 1976: 86–8; 1980: 33; England, 2000: 95–9; Gonzalez, 1969: 17–22; 1988: 15–34; Kerns, 1982: 25, 1983: 20–7; Taylor, 1951: 15–27). According to these accounts, the Garifuna originated from the intermarriage of African Blacks and Carib Indians on the island of Saint Vincent in the Lesser Antilles. After long struggles against the French and English colonial powers, the surviving Garifuna (or Black Caribs; see note 1) were deported by the English to

Roatan in 1797. From there they dispersed along the eastern coast of Central America, spreading from Honduras to Guatemala and Belize in the north, and towards the Miskitu littoral on the Atlantic coastline in the east (Davidson, 1976).<sup>5</sup> Roatan having been the location of their 1797 deportation is always mentioned in scholarly or indigenous accounts. The Garifuna of Punta Gorda, Roatan, conscious of the unique role of their island in Garifuna ethnohistory often – although not always – trace the origins of their ethnic identity to the Caribbean island of Saint Vincent, and almost invariably portray the Garifuna settlement on Roatan as among the earliest of the current settlements on the island.<sup>6</sup>

Bay Islanders have traditionally insisted on perceiving themselves as quite distinct from mainland Hondurans, manifesting an apparent Anglo-affinity that serves to highlight their linguistic and other differences from the Spanish-speaking internal immigrants (Stonich, 2000: 27–8, 52–3). Despite their seemingly united front, however, differences exist between 'Black' and 'White' anglophone islanders as well as between Black Creoles and Garifuna, all distinctions being used strategically in everyday conversation. Although the Garifuna community of Punta Gorda identify themselves as blacks, they maintain that they are more 'authentic' than the Black Creoles, who are locally referred to by the generalizing term 'English'. The latter are generally considered by the Garifuna to be offspring of slaves as opposed to themselves, who – according to the local narrative – were always free, descendants of great warriors (cf. Anderson, 2000: 38, 114–15, 172–3).<sup>7</sup> Like the 'English', most Garifuna men and women of the older generation can freely communicate in English: they understand North American English spoken by tourists, but are more likely to reply in the local Creole English idiom. In addition to English, Garifuna men and women in Roatan understand, and most of them frequently use, both Spanish and their own Garifuna language (cf. Conzemius, 1928: 185).

Nowadays, Spanish – the official language of the Bay Islands since 1872 (Evans, 1970: 110; Stonich, 2000: 41) – has become increasingly popular with the younger people at the expense of both English and Garifuna. One reason for this apparent 'decline' of English in Punta Gorda might be that its inhabitants are not in daily contact with the English-speaking world, like, for instance, the Miskitu people of Pearl Lagoon in Nicaragua, who continue to speak English and constantly introduce English words into their own Miskitu language (Jamieson, 1998: 720, 725). As it stands nowadays, Garifuna children in Punta Gorda understand very little English, much to the dismay of elders who, reflecting their identity as Bay Islanders as well as Garifuna, see the English language not only as part of their heritage but also as an asset for the community's involvement in tourism.

Despite their frequent complaints about culture loss – some of which will be further discussed in the following sections – the inhabitants of Punta Gorda can justifiably claim that their community is unique on Roatan. While the rest of the island's towns are overwhelmed by a dramatic influx

of Spanish-speaking migrant labourers from the Honduran mainland (cf. Evans, 1970; Stonich, 2000), Punta Gorda has retained a relatively homogeneous ethnic composition, thus being 'an organic site for the reproduction of Garifuna culture and identity' (Anderson, 2000: 72–3). Living in dignified poverty, its inhabitants have escaped the 'ills of the Spaniard migration' and the uncontrolled effects of tourist development on the social and physical environment (cf. Stonich, 2000). Men and women residing in Punta Gorda understand their town as a safe place to live, where everyday contact is not deprived of its personal human character. Resonating to the widespread 'perception of the islanders that . . . drug-related problems stem from the influx of Honduran Ladinos' (Stonich, 2000: 97), the Garifuna of Punta Gorda describe other parts of their island (Coxen Hole, West End) as places occupied by 'people who take drugs, dangerous people'. 'Crazy people live there', they add, 'many Spanish people and those who carry knives.'

The Spanish-speaking Honduran citizens figure most prominently as villains in local comparisons of the indigenous self with the proximate ethnic Other. 'The Spanish people are other kind of people', some Garifuna women of Punta Gorda maintain. And the word 'other' here carries the connotations of 'danger' – another frequently repeated term. The Garifuna negative attitude towards the Spanish-speaking population undoubtedly reflects a feeling popular among the Bay Islanders (cf. Stonich, 2000: 97), while it can also be seen as characteristic of other minority ethnic groups in the wider region. Jamieson has observed a similar attitude among the Miskitu people of Pearl Lagoon, who tend 'to hold the "Spaniards" (Spanish speakers) . . . [as] historically strangers' (2001: 4). Similarly, young Garifuna men often declare that: 'We don't want the Spanish here' and 'We don't want Punta Gorda to become like Coxen Hole.' Coxen Hole, the capital of Roatan, has been transformed within the last 20 years from a Caribbean Creole town into a predominantly Spanish Central American one. Public services, restaurants and commercial activities are taken over by mainlanders, who are motivated to work for lower wages, and are more closely related to the power structures of the state. The Garifuna of Roatan, like their Creole neighbours, complain that the newcomers do not speak or understand English, alienate the tourists and deprive them of employment opportunities (cf. Stonich, 2000: 97).

Despite the increasing scarcity of employment, men from Punta Gorda frequently find well-paid jobs as crew members on fishing boats owned by the 'English' inhabitants of Roatan. They proudly maintain that the 'Spanish' are afraid of the water and cannot compete with good sailors like themselves. During the fishing season, several of them embark on long fishing voyages and their absence becomes apparent in Punta Gorda. Some women maintain that the community is 'better' without the men, since when some of the latter are home – the women argue – they quickly spend their newly acquired money drinking continuously until they are broke again.<sup>8</sup>

An important source of income for Punta Gorda, as well as other Garifuna communities elsewhere, comes from remittances sent by Garifuna men and women who migrate to the USA (cf. Anderson, 2000; England, 2000). It has been argued that Garifuna migration patterns date back to the 1800s and serve to establish 'transnational networks of kinship and exchange that are crucial to the formation and performance of Garifuna identities' (Anderson, 2000: 6; cf. England, 2000: 8, 138). Most Garifuna people in Punta Gorda are involved – apart from fishing – in manual trades, but men and women are also to be found in 'white-collar' jobs (cf. Anderson, 2000: 94).

Women and children compose the greater part of the visible population of Punta Gorda. They live in small wooden houses with corrugated iron roofs recently built after Hurricane Mitch destroyed or damaged most of the earlier dwellings in 1998.<sup>9</sup> On the ruins left by the hurricane, large groups of young children roam, play together in uninterrupted enjoyment. The emphasis on the importance of maternal ties is strong (cf. England, 2000: 145; Gonzalez, 1988; Kerns, 1983), and is practically enacted on a daily basis when groups of related women – mothers, daughters and sisters with their children – join forces to manage the daily grind of laundry and childcare.

### **'They are taking our culture away' – are they?**

After spending some time in Punta Gorda we soon realized that the sight of strangers walking around the community was met by some Garifuna individuals with suspicion. For example, in one particular instance, only two weeks after our arrival, we were stopped by a confident middle-aged local man who very straightforwardly laid out his position: 'I can tell you about the Garifuna culture. I can tell anything you want, but, to be honest, you must give me something.'

His voice was clear and firm and his delivery rather cautionary. He forewarned us that another westerner, a woman who wanted to know about Garifuna language, visited Punta Gorda to take some 'measurements'. 'To be honest', he stated, 'the people here are dissatisfied with what she wrote.' Then, after a brief uncomfortable pause, he added:

I saw you coming here all the time. I want to check what you are doing here and I might get something from it. I can be your guide for example. Many people come here and write about this place. They make films and make money. They make money with Garifuna culture, but they give us nothing.

Soon after our interlocutor realized that we already knew several people in the community, he relaxed and became very friendly. His honest and direct exposition, however, became the starting point of our search as to how and when people could 'take' the Garifuna 'culture away'.

An elderly woman, reflecting on the same topic, was among those who argued that, irrespective of any other consideration, what was most important was that the world learned about the Garifuna. 'Despite what my fellow villagers say', she said, 'I feel proud and happy when people give attention to my culture.' A younger formally educated Garifuna man, who has secured a steady office job in the island's capital, expressed a similarly dispassionate point of view. 'Some people in Punta Gorda', he concluded, 'believe that when others take photos of them or tape them with tape recorders they make profit out of them.' On the other hand, several other members of the community express a more critical position regarding the availability of Garifuna culture to outsiders. A young relative of the woman whom we quoted above maintains that the people of Punta Gorda are very protective of their culture. She argued that when strangers put tape recorders in their faces, they either said nothing or lied. Being well educated in English herself, she shared the anger she felt when she read 'things' written about the Garifuna by other people. 'They are irresponsible and lie about peculiar beliefs, such as magic and superstition', she added, and concluded by pointing out that 'the Garifuna people do not want to be known for those matters'.<sup>10</sup>

Having honestly acknowledged that those aspects of the indigenous culture that some Garifuna individuals did not want to 'be known for' were indeed irresistible to our anthropological curiosity, we immediately embarked upon a project of uncovering the perceptions of other residents of Punta Gorda on the issue. After some encouragement, at least a dozen local men admitted on different occasions that they feel 'exposed' when they hear how others talk and write about the Garifuna way of life. 'They all come here and take Garifuna culture away', we were told on more than one occasion.

Quite often we argued with our interlocutors, making the point that we could not exactly see how this process of cultural appropriation was supposed to occur. One man in his early 40s, who runs his own *pulperia*, gave me a couple of examples: 'They make money with Garifuna culture', he repeated when in a reflective mood: 'they come and see and take photos and make films.' When we asked him, with some disbelief, who is really so willing to buy these images, he insisted with a persuasive tone:

They sell them and people buy. . . . I have seen this: somebody came and took photos and made a book. Now they sell the book at Fantasy Island [an organised tourist resort] for US\$70–80. You can go and see it. They have a photo of mine inside. The man who made the book makes money from Garifuna culture.

And, almost without break, he continued:

They came and made a film. Here in the village and the rest of the island. They shot pictures of people killing one another and many other things. . . . The Garifuna took nothing for this film. . . . Everybody comes and makes money with Garifuna culture . . .

A friend of his who had been listening to the discussion silently so far decided to make his own meaningful intervention. 'Yes, they all come and take Garifuna culture without giving anything back . . .', he said, with an expression full of insight. He paused for a moment and then he clarified: 'I mean . . . they don't give back to the Garifuna people. . . .'

A few days after this conversation we were enjoying a relaxed afternoon, drinking with a Garifuna man we knew well. When he mentioned the stereotypical point that 'some people make money with Garifuna culture', we confronted him with a series of counter-arguments. Taking advantage of our friendly relationship we related to him the hard truth that, in Europe for instance, not many people know and care about Garifuna culture. We described the effort and money required on our side to come from Britain to his village, explaining that perhaps not many other people were determined to undergo the same journey for the sake of the Garifuna. He listened to us carefully, paying special attention to our point that anthropologists record and make known to the world relatively unknown cultures and ways of living. 'Some Garifuna people', he replied, 'want to keep some of their ways of life for themselves.' On the other hand, he appeared excited about the prospect of instigating other people's interest in Punta Gorda. 'We have to bring people here in Punta Gorda', he underlined.

We soon realized that the overwhelming majority of people in Punta Gorda, including those who feel that their culture is being appropriated, pinpoint the necessity of making their village known to the outside world, with the ultimate purpose of attracting tourists and improving their standard of life. The wish of a community to attract some of the tourists who visit the island (cf. Harrison, 1992: 23; Tilley, 1997; Urry, 1995: 169), indicates that for the Garifuna of Punta Gorda the main issue of concern is not the exposure of their culture, but *where* this exposure takes place, *why* and *who* is making a profit out of it. Our informants are happy to 'commoditise their culture for gain' (Boissevain, 1996b: 105) but they wish this commoditization to remain under their own control, and they are adamant that whatever profits come from it – according to their perception of cultural ownership – they should be enjoyed primarily by them. It is, in fact, for this reason that some individuals, primarily men, argue that the Garifuna culture should not be 'sold away'. 'Those who want to know about the Garifuna ways should come here to Punta Gorda', they maintain. This is how the local inhabitants feel that they may directly or indirectly gain some benefits.

At this point it is important to stress once again what we stated at the beginning of this article, namely, that the Garifuna gained visibility vis-a-vis the Honduran state with the advent of tourism. Within this specific context, Garifuna communities started being advertised as a potentially rich addition to a multicultural *ethnos* attractive to tourists (cf. Anderson, 2000: 187–194). The transformation of a living culture into a tourist *attraction*,

however, meant that the Garifuna never quite could escape the stereotypical image of the exotic Other within a predominantly Spanish-speaking state and, more importantly, it did not fully allow them to participate in the tourist industry as agents.

The inhabitants of Punta Gorda, with their identifications both as Garifuna and, to an extent, as Bay Islanders, are aware of their distinctiveness as well as the weight it carries in the socioeconomic sphere of tourism. They demand that the tourists visit Punta Gorda not simply because they hope to gain material profit but, most significantly, because they envisage participation in the tourist industry as a means of promoting a personalized culture. Our Garifuna informants feel that their culture is being taken away because what is being offered for tourist consumption at present are lifeless *images* of a culture whose actors are denied participation in its representation, that is, the very ability to control the shape that their identities take in the consciousness of the tourist Other. As has been argued, the Garifuna are 'a transnational modern ethnic group' (Gonzalez, 1988: 8), 'aware of their place within the global economy' (England, 2000: 368) and, as we would claim, are fully appreciative of the consequences of misrepresentation. They wish to shift the tourist spotlight on to themselves and on to their discourses instead of simply selling a visualized or printed commodified version of their customs and language. Their criticisms regarding the commodification of the *punta* dance, which we will examine in the following section, will clarify their position further.

### Dancing *punta* for tourists

*Punta* rhythm is part of a distinctive Garifuna musical tradition<sup>11</sup> of which the residents of Punta Gorda feel especially proud. Several young men and women own tapes and CDs with *punta* music recorded in La Ceiba and Belize, while on festival days and Sunday mornings, the sound of this music spreads a very jovial enthusiastic ambience through the community. Small boys, but primarily small girls, dance barefoot on the earth roads and dusty yards and receive abundant reinforcement from their parents and other relatives (cf. Taylor, 1951: 100).<sup>12</sup> At local festivals, girls – adolescent and pre-adolescent – compete and compare their *punta* skills, a joyful kind of competition which has lately become an indispensable part of neighbourhood beauty contests. In fact, most of the inhabitants of Punta Gorda look forward to any given or appropriate opportunity to indulge in their favourite dance.

But the Garifuna inhabitants of Punta Gorda do not merely dance popularized versions of the *punta* rhythm for their own pleasure. The dance 'has become a popular diversion among tourists' (Gonzalez, 1988: 95) and some Garifuna in Roatan participate in organized groups, which perform for tourists in private resorts and bars situated on various parts of the island.

In June and July 1999 we noted that a *punta* performance 'for tourists' was taking place on Roatan almost every day of the week, always in places other than Punta Gorda. The tourist resorts or bars in which those events were organized were always carefully controlled spaces: the entrance and security of the audience, as well as the profits from drinks and other objects sold, were carefully monitored. The Garifuna dancers and musicians received a fee according to a predetermined arrangement with the owners of the establishment, or they were merely confined to collecting tips in US dollars, a generally respectable reward by Honduran wage standards.

All the dancers and musicians we have met through observing the dancing, but also those Garifuna men and women who have participated in similar dancing groups in the past, are agreed that the monetary reward from this kind of employment has never been satisfactory. The practice of dancing 'for tourists' started approximately 20 years ago and since then the group composition and other details have been significantly standardized. Each group is ideally composed of the conch-shell-man (*yantabou*), the maracas-man (*sizira*), two or three drummers (in plural: *afaruti*) and the dancers, three or four young men and three or four young women.

The commercial performances of the *punta* dancing groups include the traditional dance of 'John Canoe',<sup>13</sup> which is performed by men wearing masks and dressed colourfully in women's clothes. According to some Garifuna performers on Roatan, this rather peculiar cross-dressing is part of an old Garifuna tradition of deliberately confusing the viewer about the actual gender of the dancers. 'John Canoe' is locally referred to as 'an African dance' or 'an African tradition' (cf. Kerns, 1983: 188) and it was danced in Punta Gorda at Christmas and other festivals, long before its recent commercialization by groups of young people who collect money and other gifts from their neighbours (cf. Conzemius, 1928: 193; Gonzalez, 1988: 164).

Before discussing the critical points raised by men and women in Punta Gorda regarding the practice of 'dancing for tourists', we will present a short extract from our notes, which highlights several parameters of the Garifuna-tourist interaction and may help the reader obtain a better impression of such an occasion:

When we arrived at Distant View, an outdoor bar situated in an idyllic location on the summit of a hill in the middle of the island, the musicians and dancers from Punta Gorda were already there. They greeted us in a friendly and direct way, making us feel that, unlike tourists and other visitors, we were already recognized as intimates. The name of the group was 'Grupo Espedritu de Garifuna', and it was composed of two middle-aged men who were playing the drums (*garawung*) and six dancers, men and women in their early 20s. The latter, when not dancing, contributed to the performance in a wide variety of ways such as singing, blowing the conch shell or playing the maracas.

The audience arrived in a bus guided by Creole women from the island's capital. The passengers were US citizens on a Caribbean cruise.<sup>14</sup> They were seated in wooden armchairs when the *punta* performance began. With their

voices and body movements the members of the *punta* group recreated for a while the warm joyful atmosphere with which we were familiar in Punta Gorda. They encouraged the tourists to take photos and dance for a while with them, before the audience finally dispersed towards the bar in search of refreshments. Before their departure, the tourists left \$1 each in a little basket with the modest label, 'Thank you for your tip'. The exact procedure was repeated three more times with three successive groups of tourists, all passengers from the same cruise ship.

We were surprised to realize that, during all three performances, nobody explained to the tourists the cultural background of the Garifuna people. Likewise, there was no mention of Punta Gorda and the long presence of its Garifuna inhabitants in the region. 'They do not need to know much', explained the Creole guide of the tour. Several tourists, however, appeared willing to learn about both the ethnic origin of the dancers and the history of the island and, in fact, some of them started bombarding us with questions. Others appeared tired, unenthusiastic and annoyed with the frequent requests to contribute small amounts of money.<sup>15</sup>

The greater profit from the occasion was made by the bar. The average price of a drink was \$3 to \$4 (an amount that equals an average day's wages in a local factory). All customers paid in US dollars and appeared unaware of the local Honduran currency. In the area proximate to the bar, one Creole woman was advertising her display of jewels made of coral, while a drunk Creole man was selling fake cultural artefacts (*yaba-ding-ding*) at exceptionally high prices. A white Bay islander from the neighbouring island of Guanaja was the most successful of all the vendors: her stock was T-shirts with bright illustrations of Roatan.

Having observed the same performance several times, we felt that it focused on a stereotypical and sterilized representation of the 'exotic': drums, singing shells, beautiful young men and women dancing to the rhythmic sound of the *punta*. The audience was confronted by 'something that sounded African', but never had the opportunity to speak to the musicians or the performers. Having realized with disappointment that the Garifuna dancers received only a small portion of the profits generated, we couldn't help recollecting the words we heard so often in Punta Gorda: 'They are taking our culture away.'

In an account that bears several similarities to the case above, Chris Tilley (1997) describes a process of culture commodification on Wala Island, Vanuatu. The local dance troupe performs for a tourist audience in a reconstructed arena – a setting and a performance divorced from most aspects of native culture. The whole show looks like 'an empty vessel of tradition', Tilley explains, 'form without sentiment' (1997: 81). Like some local critics in Vanuatu, most residents of Punta Gorda are conscious of the commercial aspect of *punta* performances and recognize that these shows are 'geared to Western tastes' (Gonzalez, 1988: 184). They also highlight what they perceive as a lack of authenticity in them, and contrast them to performances in Punta Gorda, when a festive spirit is generated by the sound of the *punta* rhythm. For example, a couple of men in their 50s, who were among the first to dance 'for tourists' 20 years ago, paralleled the counterfeit and repetitive element of the tourist–dancer interaction with

fake *yaba-ding-ding*, those cultural imitations, which go unappreciated by both tourists and locals alike.

Leaving the issue of authenticity aside, most indigenous critics of the tourist-oriented *punta* performances are concerned with the fact that those events are organized by non-Garifuna individuals in places other than the Garifuna community. *Punta* dancing, in this respect, is locally perceived as a cultural asset, a uniquely Garifuna practice, that could potentially attract more tourists to Punta Gorda, the only Garifuna community on Roatan. 'If the tourists want to see *punta* dance', numerous men and women in Punta Gorda maintain, 'they should come here.' In this way, they further explain, local people will benefit from their visit: those who run small bars or restaurants, those who specialize in cooking traditional Garifuna dishes, or those who sell and manufacture 'things [artefacts] of all kinds'.

The indigenous focus on the potential material gains of the community, however, should not be mistaken for a profit-oriented rhetoric. The Garifuna want to control the meaning of *punta* by actively directing its 'form, use and trajectory' (Appadurai, 1986: 5). What they essentially claim is that they have ownership rights over the performance of their traditional dance precisely because it is a feature of their own culture. Ownership and cultural property are certainly not novel concepts in academic discourse and the politics of cultural exchange. Nevertheless, they have so far been explicated and explored mainly in relation to material culture and art with reference to museum collections (see Clifford, 1991, 1997: 209). Clifford, inspired by Mary Louise Pratt (1992), talks of transforming museums from *collections* to contact zones (1997: 192). A contact zone is a space where cultural exchange is taking place instead of mere 'visual consumption' (Urry, 1995: 148) of the exotic, of what the periphery has to offer the centre (Clifford, 1997: 193; Tilley, 1997: 74). If, as we argue, one accepts that performance can be treated as cultural property despite its intangibility, then the Garifuna wish that tourists would come to their community, instead of merely being presented with a *punta* performance elsewhere, acquires a different political substance.

*Punta* at the Distant View is an instance of the 'spectacularization' of some locals (Clifford, 1997: 197) whose performance is offered as visual consumption in the same way that an object belonging in a museum *collection* is taken out of its context and exhibited in a highly hegemonic fashion. If the tourists went to Punta Gorda, the performance of this particular dance would take place in a symbolic contact zone, where two or more cultures would enter a game of exchange, interrelation and interaction. The visitors would then potentially become a real audience not only to a Garifuna image but perhaps also to Garifuna discourses and narratives. Thus the inhabitants of Punta Gorda would have the opportunity to present *themselves* to the wider world, instead of merely offering a decontextualized, de-textualized and hence essentialist version of a particular performance that aims to stand for Garifuna culture as a whole. This would still involve

the commodification of Garifuna culture, but – according to the suggestions of the community – it would also generate the sense of ‘empowerment and participation in a wider public sphere’ (Clifford, 1997: 200).

But as we have already highlighted in the previous sections, the community lacks the necessary infrastructure to sustain tourism. Its residents are conscious of this fact, articulated in the following way by a man in his late 20s:

If the Americans come here in Punta Gorda, at the main road, they will be scared. Many Garifuna will be gathered and they will not leave them [the tourists] alone.

The Americans do not take out their wallet to pay in front of people they don’t know. They want to be protected, somewhere with people they know.

Competition between neighbours and friends is one of the locally perceived reasons put forward in order to explain the failure to attract significant number of tourists to the community. With a self-reproaching attitude, the Garifuna of Punta Gorda often blame themselves for their relative inability to join the world of affluence that tourism can generate. ‘This place is the most rich in culture on the island’, they argue, ‘and yet it is so poor!’

On the other hand, positive and optimistic statements, propositions and ideas are frequently put forward. Sometimes the business aspirations of some local individuals are unrealistic or heavily dependent upon the shadowy capital of imaginary American partners or patrons. A small but increasing number of young Garifuna men and women, however, appear convinced that prosperity for Punta Gorda will only come slowly, with steady and persistent efforts. They organize festivals held in and for the community and try to raise some money for communal purposes. Pinpointing their community centre, a building damaged by the hurricane a year ago, they argue: ‘We should get organized and bring the tourists here.’ Instead of ‘going to dance elsewhere, where others make the money’, ‘We must find a way to bring the tourists in Punta Gorda. . . .’

## Conclusion

The quest for the Other, the authentic, the culturally different, the exotic, are indispensable features of tourism (Boissevain, 1996a; MacCannell, 1976; Selwyn, 1996; Urry, 1990). The tourist’s quest for authenticity, first discussed by MacCannell (1976) and by a significant number of scholars since, is often combined with a need from the tourist to ‘locate the Other’ (Selwyn, 1996: 2; see also, Harkin, 1995). The tourist gaze is substantiated by the collection of signs of difference in the context of ‘pseudo-events’ where the ‘authentic’ and the traditional are staged and open to appropriation by the visitor (Urry, 1990: 1–8). The indigenous people are not the only subjects likely to be mythicized, mystified or even objectified,

however. The 'mythical' visitor, the stereotype of the affluent and possibly culturally or educationally superior stranger, has also been identified and widely acknowledged as subject to similar processes of mystification (Bois-sevain, 1996a: 3).

In the previous section we examined the performance of *punta* dancing, a traditional feature of Garifuna culture that exists today as a practice in constant 'tension between the lived and the aesthetic' (Clifford, 1988: 247). The performance of *punta* offers the tourists an opportunity to consume Otherness in an otherwise 'front region' of Roatan, that is nevertheless organized in such a way as to create for the visitor the impression of an experience of the local backstage (MacCannell, 1976: 105). However, Punta Gorda's lack of infrastructure allows for the control of tourist services by non-indigenous agents. Unlike the Kuna Indians of Panama described by Swain (1989) and Tice (1995), the Garifuna of Roatan have not been successful so far in developing a sustainable form of ethnic tourism. Thus, the Garifuna of Punta Gorda repeatedly articulate the need to 'increase the opportunity for expenditure to be made directly to local residents' (Butler and Hinch, 1996: 25). They are willing to present themselves as the Other that can be consumed and commodified, but not to be represented as such by exogenous agents (Odermatt, 1996: 106). Their demand relates not only to material gains expected by participation in tourism, but also and perhaps more importantly to the fact that the 'commercialisation of native people's arts' can be a site where 'ethnicity is manipulated' (Tice, 1995: 8). The Garifuna regard tourism as an opportunity to re-enact and communicate their cultural uniqueness and identity simultaneously to more than one ethnic Other and resist the fact that, at present, the potential for such an intercultural dialogue is lost.

The Garifuna of Punta Gorda, employing their local skills and knowledge, strive to be directly involved in the development of tourism and allow their culture to become 'the essence of attraction' (Butler and Hinch, 1996: 9; cf. Abbink, 2000; Swain, 1989). Estimating the consequences – negative and positive – that the western 'practice of culture collecting' can have on their community, they engage in an elaborate process of cultural objectification for the sake of the visitor (Clifford, 1988: 232, 222). They highlight the need for the development of indigenous tourism, realizing that places can be consumed (Urry, 1995: 1) as well as cultures. Thus they seek to maximize their own benefits from the commodification of their own culture (Butler and Hinch, 1996), and cut out the middlemen who are perceived as taking it away without giving anything back 'to the Garifuna people'.

*Punta* dancing resembles in many ways a personal jewel that is being made public with every performance given outside Punta Gorda (Clifford, 1988: 219). Its fluidity and temporality 'is reified and salvaged as origin beauty and knowledge', putting *punta* into an idiosyncratic art culture system where 'cultural or artistic authenticity has as much to do with an inventive present as with a past, its objectification, preservation and revival'

(1988: 222). The Garifuna of Roatan discover and rediscover continuously the depth and potential of their culture through tourism (Boissevain, 1996a: 7; Tilley, 1997: 78, 86). Garifuna culture, however, caught in the tourist ethos of mass and rapid consumption, never quite succeeds in fully becoming an 'art' or an 'artefact'. The 'traditional' performances, the local knowledge, like 'objects cut out of specific contexts, stand for abstract wholes and become metonyms' (Clifford, 1988: 220) for a culture that 'sells' but cannot 'sell' itself. It is a culture caught in the 'chronotope' (spatio-temporal context) of the Distant View bar or any local tourist resort, that functions as an escape for elderly cruisers or young and adventurous divers and sometimes for ambitious anthropologists and passing journalists.

The Garifuna want to manage their culture as much as contemporary Egyptians and Greeks want to control the aesthetic objects currently exhibited in the British Museum. Not only because it is profitable to do so, but mostly because they realize that the *punta* dancing taken out of its lived context and put directly into a mass consumption environment loses the 'magic' and authentic character that could fully establish it in the art-culture system (cf. Tilley, 1997). Decontextualized reproductions of *punta* might eventually 'dispel its charisma' and thus '[t]he original previously considered a powerful weapon in its owner's armoury would lose its power and become virtually valueless' (Jamieson, 1999: 3).<sup>16</sup> From this perspective, the Garifuna of Punta Gorda want to develop indigenous tourism, not only because this would be a financially profitable investment, but also because they regard themselves as the owners of their collective image and presentation. If we consider that 'a constellation of property rights' exists in the Garifuna 'system of ideas and representations' (Harrison, 1991: 241),<sup>17</sup> we better understand the motivation of the inhabitants of Punta Gorda to seek 'a centralised process of allocating opportunities' (Srivastava, 1992: 17), a process that better acknowledges 'the collective' character of their intellectual property rights (Benthall, 1992, 2001). As Carlos Alberto Alfonso has argued in an EASA debate on 'exploitable knowledge', 'the struggle of disfranchised populations for an empowered identity resides in their capacity to dictate the terms of their own commodification' (Strathern, et al., 1998: 122).

Since the 1970s, the inhabitants of Punta Gorda, much like the Garifuna elsewhere in Honduras, have been lending decontextualized images of their culture to the national project of economic advancement. As a result, they remain unable to challenge the stereotype of the exotic and perhaps primitive group, which adds to the national folklore but is excluded from direct participation in tourist development. The local demand that the tourists come to Punta Gorda is symbolic of the Garifuna wish to create a truly intimate site of intercultural exchange. By achieving this, they hope to promote their own understandings of Garifuna culture and identity, and thus to shape directly national and transnational imaginaries. By seeking to transform what is today the display of an image into an expression of culture, they aspire to convert the tourist spectators into

audiences of travellers and to address themselves to these multiple ethnic others. The Garifuna want to become guides to the richness and uniqueness of their culture as they see it, as they want to present and represent it, ensuring that the visitors return home with Garifuna narratives, discourses and versions of the past and the present that contain something of the Garifuna experience, identity and perception of the Self, the Other and the wider world.

Punta Gorda wants to redirect the tourist gaze upon itself and thereby control it, enjoying not only the material benefits but also, and perhaps primarily, the sense of empowerment that characterizes agency and ownership itself. Whenever the community engages in some form of cultural performance or display, it articulates a statement about its identity both to the audience and to its own members (Abram and Waldren, 1997: 10; Clifford, 1997: 218). The phrase 'they are taking our culture away', repeated so often by the inhabitants of Punta Gorda, relates to a lack of control over what these people feel is their rightful cultural property, and over the very statements that each performance entails about Garifuna culture and its living subjects.

## Notes

- 1 It is important to note that throughout the paper we adopt the term Garifuna (plural, Garinagu) instead of Black Carib, prioritizing our informants' preferred self-ascription. The denomination 'Black Carib' has been conventionally used in the anthropological literature and it is a European term intended to denote the Afro-American heritage of the Garifuna (Gonzalez, 1988: 6). In turn, it has been suggested that the use of the term Garifuna relates to the people's wish to identify themselves with blackness (Anderson, 2000: 173). For more information on the subject see Gonzalez (1988); Helms (1981); Taylor (1951).
- 2 As Stonich pointedly observes: 'There is minimal interaction between members of the community and guests who generally remain on the resort grounds, which have been transformed into a fenced and guarded enclave that excludes the local population' (2000: 84).
- 3 The community has a Catholic Church, a school, a community centre damaged by the hurricane, an Adventist Mission with medical facilities and a satellite dish for every neighbourhood. Most of the local residents are Catholic (cf. Taylor, 1951: 92) and educated in Spanish.
- 4 The term 'Ladinos' is used here to refer to the Spanish-speaking migrants that arrived in the Bay Islands from mainland Honduras, who are also called in Roatan 'Spaniards' or 'Hondurans' (Stonich, 2000: 49).
- 5 Reaching as far as Nicaragua, where they established two small communities near Bluefields.
- 6 Gonzalez (1988: 48–9) questions the continuity of the Garifuna settlement on Roatan. It might have been the case that all Garifuna left the island soon after their initial deportation in 1797. According to this version, which is not very popular among the present-day inhabitants of the community, Roatan was resettled by a small number of Garifuna at a later stage.

- 7 Similarly, Black Creoles are said to view the Garifuna as being 'inferior' or 'primitive' (cf. Anderson, 2000: 173). It has also been suggested by England (2000: 332) that the term autochthonous as opposed to indigenous is used by the Garifuna in order to differentiate themselves from the Creole.
- 8 For more information on regional patterns of domestic organization see Helms (1976). Male drinking parties are also to be found among the Miskitu community of Pearl Lagoon in the form of 'rum-drinking rituals' (Jamieson, 2000: 316).
- 9 In the past, most houses in Punta Gorda were palm thatched (cf. Kerns, 1983: 64; Taylor, 1951: 70–1). Nowadays, there exists only one or two of those houses, built recently and primarily for the purpose of revitalizing Garifuna culture and tourism. The people of Punta Gorda refer to them with admiration and consider them representative of the 'Black Carib' tradition (cf. Cosminsky, 1976: 102–3).
- 10 This view might be related to the fact that reportedly the Garifuna were stereotyped as 'backward and primitive', because of their involvement in ancestor worship (cf. Anderson, 2000).
- 11 It must be stressed here that there is a difference between the *punta* rhythm and the dance traditionally performed at wakes by older women. As Anderson argues, 'in the present era traditional *punta* has become hypersexualized and commodified, achieving popularity throughout the nation as an expression of tropical merriment' (2000: 249). In the present article, we concentrate on *punta* as a tourist attraction that is different from both what is performed at wakes and what is danced locally. This particular performance is not a 'commodity by *diversion*', an object that becomes commodified despite the fact that it is supposed to be specifically protected from commodification, but rather a 'commodity by *metamorphosis*'; something which enters the commodity state, though originally intended for other uses (Appadurai, 1986: 16). The *punta* rhythm is used in order to advertise the 'cultural richness' of Honduras to the tourists and, as such, it is yet another example of the *image* of Garifuna culture which is currently being promoted as part of the hegemonic narrative of Honduran multi-ethnicity.
- 12 Taylor provides us with a colourful description of *punta* dancing which essentially represents the 'evolution of a courtship' between a man and a woman (1951: 100). *Punta*, as described by Taylor, also entails the element of competition since the dancer who tires first admits defeat and gives his/her place to a new dancer (1951: 100).
- 13 'John Canoe' or *wanaragua* (see Gonzalez, 1988: 164; Kerns, 1983: 187) is referred to by Conzemius as the dance of the Black Carib carnival (1928: 192) celebrated at Christmas and New Year. It is worth quoting Kerns on the subject, who claims that '*wanaragua* is distinctively male in its emphasis on *individual* prowess, *direct and immediate profit* and *movement from place to place*' (1983: 188, original emphasis).
- 14 The cruise ship with which all these US tourists had arrived on the island stops for a day at Roatan on its weekly Caribbean voyage. Numerous individuals involved with tourism on Roatan look forward to this event with great anticipation.
- 15 Indeed the Distant View setting strongly reminds one of Abbink's point that tourists seek genuine and authentic experiences (see also Harkin, 1995; MacCannell, 1976), clearly marked cultural difference provided in a 'minimal semiotic frame' (2000: 3)
- 16 Jamieson has examined the status of 'counterfeits', copies of original records

of Northern Soul, Jump Blues, Rockabilly and Doo Wop music. His conclusions on why certain objects are considered valuable and others not apparently fit the Garifuna predicament. As Jamieson notes, 'subjects need an axiomatic knowledge of the primordial character of particular categories of object if the values ascribed to objects (or persons) [and we would add performances] in those categories are to be fundamentally stable' (1999: 9). The *punta* dance offered to the tourists, with virtually no myth to complement it, might eventually lose its very power and originality.

17 Note that Harrison does not refer here specifically to the Garifuna.

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