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"Decolonizing Our Spirits": Music as Resistance in the Garifuna Catholic Church

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Resumen

Las comunidades afroindígenas garífunas de toda América Central llevan mucho tiempo resistiendo a la hegemonía y la homogeneidad cultural mediante prácticas musicales y espirituales. Desde el advenimiento del movimiento garífuna por los derechos civiles en la década de 1940, se ha desarrollado un rico repertorio musical dentro de la iglesia católica garífuna. Estas canciones han ayudado a las comunidades a articular el Garifunaduáü, o "el camino garifuna", a cultivar la solidaridad más allá de las fronteras nacionales y a resistir la dominación cultural de las instituciones religiosas europeas y los gobiernos (neo)coloniales. La música católica garífuna está poco estudiada dentro del campo de la etnomusicología y, en general, el mundo académico carece de publicaciones sobre la historia del catolicismo garífuna. Este artículo, basado en una investigación etnográfica y de archivo llevada a cabo en Belice entre 2010 y 2015, pretende llenar esas lagunas en la erudición examinando la evolución de la composición e interpretación musical dentro de la iglesia católica garífuna. Se centra en el papel central de la música en el surgimiento de una subcultura católica garifuna a partir de la década de 1970, y analiza las diferentes formas en que esta música encarna y expresa el Garifunaduáü. A medida que la cultura garífuna se ve cada vez más moldeada por una multitud de influencias globales, los católicos garífunas de toda Centroamérica siguen utilizando la práctica musical para resistir la globalización cultural y mantener las formas tradicionales de ser y creer.

Palabras clave
Garifuna, catolicismo popular, música sagrada, Belice

Abstract

Afro-Indigenous Garifuna communities throughout Central America have long resisted cultural hegemony and homogeneity through musical and spiritual practices. Since the advent of the Garifuna civil rights movement in the 1940s, a rich musical repertoire has developed within the Garifuna Catholic church. These songs have helped communities articulate *Garifunaduáü*, or "the Garifuna Way," cultivate solidarity across national borders, and resist cultural domination by European religious institutions and (neo-)colonial governments.
Garifuna Catholic music is understudied within the field of ethnomusicology, and in general, academia is lacking publications on the history of Garifuna Catholicism. This article, based on ethnographic and archival research conducted in Belize from 2010 to 2015, seeks to fill those gaps in scholarship by examining the evolution of musical composition and performance within the Garifuna Catholic church. It focuses on the central role of music in the emergence of a Garifuna Catholic subculture beginning in the 1970s, and analyzes the different ways that this music embodies and expresses *Garifunaduáü*. As Garifuna culture is increasingly shaped by a multitude of global influences, Garifuna Catholics throughout Central America are continuing to use musical practice to resist cultural globalization and uphold traditional ways of being and believing.

Keywords
Garifuna, Folk Catholicism, Sacred Music, Belize

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"Decolonizing Our Spirits": Music as Resistance in the Garifuna Catholic Church

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For generations, Afro-Indigenous Garifuna communities throughout Central America have used musical and spiritual practices to resist cultural hegemony. Indigenous music, dance, and spiritual practices are not only crucial to the continued vitality of traditional Garifuna lifeways, but, along with syncretic forms of Garifuna Catholicism, Indigenous cultural elements have often been employed to help Garifuna communities resist colonial oppression and sociopolitical marginalization. In particular, musical practice in the Garifuna Catholic church has played a central role in resisting cultural hegemony and homogeneity and in articulating *Garifunaduáü* (Garifunaness, or "the Garifuna Way"). Anthropologist Malcolm Servio-Mariano asserts that *Garifunaduáü* "provides a way forward, as well as a forum and cultural space for the culture, language, and spirituality to be cultivated" (2010: 3). *Garifunaduáü* is a multi-directional flow of cultural expressions, beliefs, and values rooted in Garifuna history and tradition. It encompasses Indigenous and African heritages, as well as local (traditional, Garifuna, Indigenous) and cosmopolitan (pan-Caribbean, African Diasporic, North American, Catholic) associations.

This article explores the central role of Garifuna Catholic music in the advancement of the Garifuna Rights movement and in ongoing articulations of *Garifunaduáü*. The Garifuna Rights movement, which began in Belize during the 1940s, sought to celebrate, articulate, and revitalize Garifuna identity and culture. The 1970s saw the emergence of a distinct Garifuna Catholic subculture that encompassed distinctly Garifuna identity politics, rhetoric, worldviews, and religious practices; musical practice played a crucial role in the defining of this subculture. After looking to the past, the article discusses the continued relevance of Garifuna Catholic music within the evolving Garifuna Catholic church and in the Garifuna cultural renaissance that has been underway for the past two decades. As *Garifunaduáü* in Central America is increasingly shaped by a multitude of global influences, the Garifuna Catholic church is experimenting with new ways to use music, drumming, and dance to mediate globalization, uphold traditions, and promote community solidarity in Garifuna communities.

This article is adapted from my doctoral dissertation and is based on ethnographic and archival research conducted in Belize, Central America, between 2010 and 2015. My primary field site was Holy Family Catholic Church in Hopkins, Belize, where I worked closely with a group of lay ministers, elders, and musicians whose perspectives are foregrounded in this article. Garifuna Catholicism, and Garifuna Catholic music specifically, is understudied within academia. Because so few publications on the topic exist, the majority of the historical narratives, anecdotes, and perspectives presented here are culled from oral histories I recorded in Belize and supplemented by sources housed in the Belize National Archive.

The first section of this article outlines key concepts and analytic frameworks and then discusses the breadth of the Garifuna Catholic musical repertoire using a classification system I developed during the course of my research. Following, the article offers a brief history of Garifuna Catholicism in Belize, focusing on the complex—and often contradictory—relationship between foreign Catholic clergy and Garinagu. Next, it traces the evolution of musical practice in the Garifuna Catholic church through the last half of 20th century. Finally, the article analyzes specific songs and musical performances that illustrate how, in the past and present, Garifuna Catholic music empowers Garinagu to resist cultural domination and globalization.

Concepts & Analytical Frameworks

When speaking of Garifuna religious and musical practices that have existed for multiple generations, I use the terms "tradition" and "traditional" to refer to beliefs, information, and customs passed from one generation to the next. Tradition is not static and unchanging, but rather a "process of cultural construction" (Glassie 1995: 396) that naturally evolves and develops over time. "Its opposite," Glassie writes, "is not change but oppression, the intrusion of a power that thwarts the course of development" (1995: 396). Ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino asserts that "tradition" can refer to "the various indigenous alternatives to modernity and capitalism" (2004: 7). This definition of tradition is complemented by James Clifford's theory of articulation, an analytical framework in which culture is perceived to be a process through which elements "will always be made, unmade, and remade" (2001: 479). The concept of articulation conveys the extent to which cultures can change and bend without breaking. Clifford explains:

> Articulation offers a nonreductive way to think about cultural transformation and the apparent coming and going of "traditional" forms. All-or-nothing, fatal-impact notions of change tend to assume that cultures are living bodies with organic structures. So, for example, indigenous languages, traditional religions or kinship arrangements, may appear to be critical organs, which if lost, transformed, or combined in novel structures should logically imply the organism's death. . . . But indigenous societies have persisted with few, or no, native language speakers, as fervent Christians, and with "modern" family structures, involvement in capitalist economies, and new social roles for women and men. (Clifford 2001: 478)

The musical repertoire, religious preferences, and modes of identity formation explored in this article reflect the flexibility with which Garifuna communities adapt to meet changing circumstances in rapidly globalizing communities. Embodying Stuart Hall's idea of Caribbean identity formation as a dual process of "being and becoming" (1990: 225), Garifuna Catholic churches today are engaging with longstanding notions of what it means to be Garifuna while simultaneously developing innovative expressions of individual and group identities. Music plays a central role in both these processes of "being" (in its power to reinforce individual and collective identity) and "becoming" (music's ability to help construct identity) (Poluha 2015). In his introduction to the edited volume *Identity and the Arts in Diaspora Communities*, ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino discusses music's role in articulating established identities:

> Group performance experiences tend to have very powerful somatic and emotional affects precisely because they are the experience of a special kind of physical bond with others. Participatory music, dance, chanting, and marching offer this potential for creating a concrete sense of identity more than all other art forms. (Turino 2004: 18)

Turino posits that collective musical experience helps communities articulate who they are and who they have been. Singing songs and dancing to the rhythms taught by one's ancestors evokes the unchanging core identity of a person, family, or community. At the same time, Turino writes, musical practice plays an important role in ongoing processes of identity formation:

> Whether for a new nation, a new sub-culture, or an emerging diasporic cultural position, artistic forms can be used to make the imaginings of what the new subject position might look like, sound like, and feel like through a concrete, *coherently constituted* perceivable form. . . art can make the possible and imaginary actual within an artistic frame, and by so doing help actualize the idea in daily life. (Ibid.: 11, italics in original)

Indeed, musical practice plays an active role in helping Garifuna communities define themselves as Belize's tourism industry booms and foreign investors stream in with unprecedented spending power. In the midst of rapidly changing sociocultural landscapes, Belizean Garinagu are being

prompted to rearticulate their identity and redefine themselves economically, ethnically and spiritually. The teachings, community events, and musical choices of Garifuna Catholic parishes in villages like Hopkins are crucial to this cultural (re)evaluation.

Sociologist Christian Smith's subcultural identity theory underpins my analysis of Garifuna Catholicism as a subculture. Smith posits that within any given subculture, there exist both positive reference groups (in-groups)—people whose perspectives are taken into account when making a decision or choosing a course of action—as well as negative reference groups (out-groups): "categories of people who are unlike them, who actively serve in their minds as models for what they do *not* believe, what they do *not* want to become, and how they do *not* want to act" (Smith 1998: 105, italics in original). In- and out-groups are defined, in part, through the use of what Smith calls "cultural tools," which "are needed to create both clear distinction from and significant engagement and tension with relevant outgroups" (Ibid.: 120).

Cultural tools help members of a subculture identify and define themselves. They can be intangible (such as beliefs, vocabulary, or attitudes) or concrete, including such things as fashion, lifestyle choices, or music.

Although this article analyzes Garifuna Catholicism as a cohesive subculture, it must be noted that significant doctrinal divides have always existed within the Garifuna Catholic church. Two main "versions" of Garifuna Catholicism exist in Central America today: orthodox and folk. While orthodox Catholicism strives to be in the fullest possible alignment with the doctrines and practices handed down by the Vatican, folk Catholicism refers to a creolized religion that blends values, aesthetics, and customs of Indigenous belief systems with Catholicism. For practitioners of Garifuna folk Catholicism, there is a clear logic to the relationships between the living, the ancestor spirits (*áhari*), the Catholic saints, and the Biblical God. As Hopkins elder Francis Lewis explains, the ancestor spirits "are messengers of God. They have been sent to cure, to help and assist. They're angels, guardian angels" (2010). Anthropologist Virginia Kerns commented on the link between Catholicism and traditional Garifuna spirituality in early 1970s Belize; her observations are still relevant today:

> Non-Caribs [non-Garinagu] might distinguish between "traditional" or "indigenous" death rites, such as *amuidahani* [bathing of the dead], and "Christian" ceremonies, such as burials and novenas. From the Black Carib perspective, however, this distinction is spurious. The rituals form a whole, all intended to satisfy the dead, protect the living, and express the "gratitude" of living kin to the deceased. Shamans, who conduct some of the rites, are pious, usually practicing Roman Catholics, as are the older women who organize most rituals. (Kerns 1983: 148)

As Kerns explains, the "official" stance of the Catholic Church toward non-Catholic ritual never held much sway for Garifuna religious actors, many of whom perceive(d) little or no conflict between the two world views.

In an article on religious creolization in Guatemalan Q'eqchi' communities where people practice multiple versions of Catholicism, Hans Siebers suggests that fragmentation of the Catholic faith has occurred in rural Central American communities because of congregants' scant contact with Catholic leaders. In theory, local church leaders are supposed to learn from priests and bishops, then pass along their knowledge to the rest of the congregation. However, along the way, doctrines and ideas get filtered through multiple minds, worldviews, and motivations, and as a result, "religious discourses become fragmented and lose a large part of their systematized and rationalized coherence" (Siebers 1999: 266). Despite the fact that doctrinal divides and conflicting ideologies have always existed in the Garifuna Catholic church, I argue that a distinct, transnational

Garifuna Catholic subculture has existed in Central America since the 1970s.[1]

As the burgeoning Garifuna Catholic subculture crossed national borders and bolstered Garifuna alliances throughout Central America, it effectively subverted colonial-era policies that had worked to divide, marginalize, and alienate Garinagu from mainstream Central American society. Songs were a crucial way for geographically distant parishes to communicate Garifuna-centric ideologies, assertions of identity, and calls to action. Many of the songs composed in the 1970s and '80s still form the core musical repertoire of Garifuna Catholic parishes throughout Central America. The emergence of this subculture—and its music—empowered and united Central American Garinagu by offering a transnational forum in which to express ethnic solidarity and resist social marginalization and cultural domination.

Catholicism in Central American Garifuna Communities

In Central America during the 19th and early 20th centuries, a few Jesuit missionaries went to great lengths to learn the Garifuna language so they could more effectively minister to their parishes. However, most were intolerant of Garifuna cultural and spiritual practices. By and large, Catholic missionaries hoped that "with the spread of education, the Mafia and its kindred practices would to a great extent be given up" (The Daily Clarion 1904; quoted in Flores 2001: 62). *Mafia* is the word for "devil" or "evil spirit" in Garifuna, and "Mafia dance" was a derogatory name given to *dügü*, or "feeding of the dead," the central ritual in traditional Garifuna spirituality. Jesuit missionaries made little effort to understand the worldview or spiritual practices of the Garinagu, and instead simply tried to supplant local culture with European religion, customs and social norms.

While some Garinagu became loyal to the Roman Catholic church (at least outwardly), most Garinagu did not take kindly to missionary efforts to exterminate their cultural traditions, and therefore kept Catholic rituals and beliefs at arm's length. Barbara Flores explains how missionaries' dominating presence at once united and divided Garifuna communities as they worked to resist colonial authority:

> The missioners' attitude of open condemnation of the Caribs' religious rituals created a sense of solidarity and defiance among the Caribs, with an unspoken commitment to conceal knowledge from missionaries about the existence of ritual practices. Strategies for subverting missionary authority were created. Furthermore, individuals who attempted to report the performance of ritual practices to the missioners were punished. . . In the face of ongoing criticism and open confrontation from the missionaries, cultural practitioners were coerced into choosing between their indigenous religious values and Roman Catholic Christianity. Any association with temple practices was condemned and forbidden. Individuals were forced into making public pledges that would completely disengage them from involvement in ritual practices. (Flores 2001: 63-64)

Throughout most of the colonial period in Central America, Garifuna acts of resistance to cultural and religious hegemony were secretive. But beginning in the 1940s, Thomas Vincent (T.V.) Ramos (1887-1955), a Garifuna civil rights activist, sparked a cultural revolution for Belizean Garinagu. In what came to be known as the Garifuna Civil Rights movement, Ramos empowered Garifuna artists, educators, intellectuals and politicians to stand up and take pride in their people and their culture. This movement coincided with two important sociopolitical situations in Belize during the 1940s and 50s: a border conflict between the British Empire and Guatemala, Belize's neighbor to the west, and the nationalist movement in Belize, which began in 1950.[2] During this

[1] For a detailed discussion of inter- and intra-church dynamics in Belizean Garifuna society, see Poluha (2015).

[2] For a discussion of military conflict and foreign policy between Belize, the British Empire, and Guatemala during the

exciting period, Belizean Garifuna men and women composed Garifuna-language lyrics for pre-existing European or American Catholic songs. These songs were performed in informal settings outside the walls of the Catholic church, while Catholic Mass and other official services were still conducted entirely in Latin.

A second phase of Garifuna Catholic musical composition began in the 1960s in response to changes brought by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The Vatican II marked a global shift in the Catholic Church's tolerance for Indigenous practices. As ethnomusicologist Oliver Greene points out, Vatican II was "simply the Church's official response to the creolised Christianity that had been practised for years in Africa, Latin America and other parts of the world" (2014: 97). The emphasis of the Church shifted away from fixed rituals toward greater understanding of particular societies' needs. In Central America, the Roman Catholic Church became more accepting of the inevitable link between Catholic and traditional Garifuna ritual practices. Local parishes were allowed greater freedom to incorporate Indigenous linguistic, musical, and ritual elements into the Mass, services, and life outside the walls of the church. These changes advanced the Garifuna quest for equality and acceptance: by the late 1960s, the Garifuna drums (of which there are two sizes, called *primero* and *segunda*) were being played within the walls of churches, while Catholic hymns were sung in both Latin and English. Garifuna-language hymns continued to be performed only outside the church.

In 1971-1972, Mass was first translated into the Garifuna language by a group in Dangriga, Belize, and in 1983, the National Garifuna Council (NGC) and Belize City Garifuna Settlement Day Committee published a booklet that contained a Garifuna language version of Mass (Norales 2011: 81). Entitled *Lemesi Lidan Garifuna* (*The Mass in Garifuna*), this book enabled priests and leaders throughout Central America to begin conducting Mass in Garifuna. This gave the language greater legitimacy within the church and fostered deeper connections between parishioners and the Bible, Catholic clergy, and the sacraments.

The acceptance of the Garifuna language by the Catholic Church coincided with a second wave of civil rights activism and a burgeoning cultural identity movement among Belizean Garinagu. During the 1980s, the name "Carib" or "Black Carib" was replaced with "Garifuna" throughout Central America, the National Garifuna Council of Belize (NGC) was founded with the goals of advocating for Garifuna culture and communities, and local cultural preservation groups sprang up. Additionally, Belize's eco-cultural tourism industry prompted a change of heart towards Garifuna culture, as the nation's tourism philosophy emphasized cultural preservation and pride in its rich multicultural landscape.

The 1980s was a pivotal decade for the vitality of musical performance in Garifuna Catholic churches. Osmund P. Martin was ordained as the first native Belizean bishop; he also happened to be Garifuna. In the mid-1980s, Martin sent Garifuna priest Jerris Valentine to Honduras in order to familiarize Garifuna parishes with the Mass in Garifuna and encourage them to compose hymns in their language (Cayetano 2002: i). This project was inspired, in part, by the work of Father Richard Holong of Jamaica, who encouraged Catholics throughout the Caribbean to compose church music according to local musical norms. One lay minister from Holy Family Catholic Church explains Holong's effect on Garifuna Catholic music:

> He was the one who brought to our attention the fact that we were translating the songs into Garifuna, but we were not singing Garifuna, if you can understand. I actually paid attention when I went to Honduras and noticed how the Hondurans were composing and singing and it was *Garifuna*.

1940s, see Estrada (2020).

(Nunez 2013)

Honduran Garifuna men and women produced an entire repertoire of songs using the Garifuna language, drum rhythms, and melodic structures. Many of the most popular Garifuna Catholic songs were composed by Honduran Garinagu during the formative period of the early 1980s.

Today, *Lemesi Garifuna* (Garifuna Mass) is not simply a translation of the Roman Catholic Mass into the Garifuna language as it was in the 1970s; it includes a number of culturally specific elements (subcultural tools) that make it a powerful performance of community solidarity and Garifuna cultural pride. The basic format of *Lemesi Garifuna* follows that of a standard Catholic Mass, but it includes a Garifuna-centric homily that speaks to themes such as Garifuna history, current issues in Garifuna communities, or Garifuna pride. Depending on where, when and why the Mass is being held, *Lemesi Garifuna* can vary in length, focus of the homily, and number of songs, but it is always conducted entirely in the Garifuna language.

As Garifuna historian and activist Roy Cayetano explains, *Lemesi Garifuna* "is a community event that involves a vibrant uplifting of the Garifuna spirit to the Great Spirit utilizing our voices and our bodies as only we can" (2002: ii). In his analysis of *Lemesi* Garifuna, ethnomusicologist Oliver Greene draws parallels between the healing and social functions of *dügü* and *Lemesi Garifuna*, analyzing the ways in which both rituals emphasize the core Garifuna values of reciprocity, solidarity, remembrance, and love (2014: 88). Adding to these perspectives, I argue that *Lemesi Garifuna* articulates Garifuna cultural politics by simultaneously enacting devotion to Catholicism and *Garifunaduáü*. Along with Greene, I assert that, "The use of rhythms and movements of ancestor rituals, semi-sacred gestured songs and social commentary songs in Lemesi Garifuna revitalise and empower participants not only as Christians but also as Garifuna Christians" (Greene 2014: 88). The music performed during *Lemesi Garifuna* includes Garifuna instruments such as drums (*garawoun)* and gourd shakers (*sísira*); Garifuna dance movements; songs composed by Garifuna Catholics, poets, and popular musicians; and melodies borrowed from North American popular songs. All of these subcultural tools—language, instruments, dance, music, fashion, content of the homily—combine to create something deeply creolized, a Roman Catholic ritual that is also a powerful expression of *Garifunaduáü*.

Types of Garifuna Catholic Song

Throughout the course of my fieldwork, I became intrigued by the diversity of lyrics, language, melody, and rhythm performed at Holy Family Catholic Church. Not only were different kinds of hymns performed depending on the type of service and time of year, but different songs prompted varied responses in Garifuna parishioners. By the end of my time in Belize, I had begun to outline a typology of Garifuna Catholic songs, which I later found echoed in the writings of Roy Cayetano (2002) and Oliver Greene (2014). My classification system takes into account a variety of factors including place and date of origin, musical elements (melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre), lyrical content, and function/context. It consists of three categories of Garifuna Catholic songs: 1) imported Songs; 2) western-style Garifuna songs; and 3) Garifuna Catholic songs.

My typology for the Garifuna Catholic church music parallels a schema proposed by Catherine Gray, whose 1995 article analyzes the Roman Catholic hymnody of Kiganda churches in Uganda. She explains that songs embody different levels of indigenization, meaning they contain more or fewer distinctly Ugandan musical characteristics. Gray's three broad categories of Catholic church songs in Uganda are 1) "music imported from the West"; 2) "music adapted in some way to suit local

taste"; and 3) "traditional style compositions" (Gray 1995: 137). Desmangles (1992), Cohen (1994), Kaplan (1994), and Barz (2005) report similar processes of musical indigenization in Haiti, Thailand, West Africa, and Tanzania, respectively.

The following analysis of Garifuna Catholic music makes clear the extent to which European colonial policies and religious instruction affected Garifuna processes of identity formation throughout the twentieth century, as different types of songs communicate different sociopolitical identities (anti-colonial, pan-African, Indigenous, Belizean). It also reveals the dynamic, multi-faceted nature of Garifuna identity formation and religious expression. Due to the limited scope of this article, I focus here on two groups of songs that have served as powerful markers of Garifuna identity: "Western-style Garifuna songs" and "Garifuna Catholic songs."[3]

Western-Style Garifuna Songs

"Western-style Garifuna songs" refer to imported songs that have been modified by adding or incorporating Garifuna musical elements. In most cases, this means that Garifuna-language lyrics are set to pre-existing European or North American melodies. These songs can be divided into two sub-groups: pre-existing hymns with the lyrics translated directly from English to Garifuna, and pre-existing melodies with newly-composed Garifuna lyrics. As early as the 1940s, Latin and English hymns were translated into Garifuna by Belizean Garifuna civil rights activists T.V. Ramos and teacher S.B. Daniels. Celebrated Garifuna poet and hymnodist Marcelina Lambey (1920-2008) further indigenized Garifuna Catholic music by composing new lyrics in the Garifuna language, which were set to newly-composed, European-style rhythms and melodies (Cayetano 2002: i).

When the first western-style Garifuna songs were composed in the 1940s and 1950s, all official Catholic services were still conducted in Latin. By singing these songs at community-led rosary services and other unofficial Catholic gatherings, parishioners began intertwining *Garifunaduáü* and Catholicism. The works of Lambey, Daniels, and other early Garifuna Catholic composers were self-directed musical innovations that contributed to the indigenization of Catholic faith and music, thus anchoring the religion within Garifuna society in new and significant ways.

Garifuna Catholic Songs

Garifuna Catholic songs, which I consider "Indigenous hymns," contain important signifiers of ethnicity; these compositions are not only written in the Garifuna language, but use Garifuna instruments, rhythms, and melodies. These songs possess a distinct Garifuna *feel* which comes from elements of traditional song, including minor-key melodies with terraced, descending melodic lines (Jenkins & Jenkins 1982: 22); overlapping call-and-response phrases; declamatory, syllabic singing with nasal vocal timbres; and rhythmic structures based on *garawoun* (Garifuna drum) patterns. The texts of Garifuna Catholic songs are original compositions, not translations from pre-existing English hymns, and are always in the Garifuna language. They encompass a variety of themes ranging from thanksgiving and praise; quotations or summaries of scripture; or Garifuna history, cultural elements, and ethnic solidarity.[4] Adding another layer of Garifunaness to the performance of certain songs are bodily movements that are performed during the *dügü* ceremony. In these

[3] More detailed discussions on the other types of music performed in Garifuna Catholic rituals can be found in Poluha (2015) and Greene (2014).

[4] Garifuna hymnals note the origins of many songs, giving credit to individual composers or the hymn's place of origin (i.e.: Marcelina Lambey, Thomas Vincent Ramos, or *Huliligatigien* [Honduras]).

instances, *Garifunaduáü* is enacted both sonically and physically.

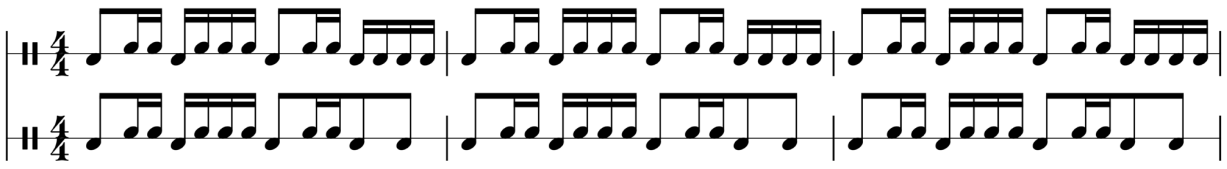
I have been told countless times that Garifuna Catholic songs are the ones Garifuna parishioners most deeply connect with and enjoy singing because they most strongly express elements of *Garifunaduáü*. Garifuna Catholics' love for these songs is immediately audible whenever they are performed: the increase in energy and passion within the church is palpable. Elderly women, in particular, begin to clap and sway their hips as their strident, exuberant voices soar above the chorus. When asked about this difference in energy, most Garifuna Catholics attribute it to the lively rhythmic structure of Garifuna hymns and the depth of feeling that comes from singing in one's native language. As Sarita Martinez, an elder and lay minister in Holy Family Catholic Church explains, "I feel the spirit more when the Mass is in Garifuna. I understand English, but I *feel* it more in Garifuna" (2012). In the past, the performance of these songs during Mass was a powerful way for Garifuna parishes to assert their identity in the face of repressive European Catholic mandates that disparaged Indigenous cultural practices. Today, their performance celebrates and reaffirms *Garifunaduáü.*

Expressing Garifuna Catholic Identities through Music

The following musical analysis looks at three songs whose texts are grounded in Catholic ideology, but whose melodies, rhythms, and/or instrumentation reveal strong assertions of Garifuna identity. First, I discuss a Western-style Garifuna song that became part of the repertoire during the 1970s, followed by two Garifuna Catholic songs—one composed in Belize and one from Honduras in the 1980s.

The popular Western-style Garifuna song "*Wáguchi Bungiu"* is a prime example of what Oliver Greene calls the "creolization of the Mass" (2014: 101). "*Wáguchi Bungiu"* contains original Garifuna lyrics and uses the melody from "When a Child is Born," a Christmas-themed song popularized by U.S. singer Johnny Mathis in the mid-1970s. According to the lay ministers at Holy Family Church in Hopkins, this hymn is often sung in lieu of reciting the Lord's Prayer during services:

Wáguchi Bungiu, lidan sun fulasu	*Our Father God, in all places*
Ñübi lan barúeihan woun	*May your kingdom come to us*
Adügüwa lan le babuserun	*May what pleases you be done*
Lidan múa, lidan sun fulasu	*On this earth, in all places*
Lidan múa, lidan sun fulasu	*On this earth, in all places*



Musical Example 1: Basic *chumba* rhythms for primero (top line) and segunda (bottom line).

Vocalists are often accompanied by men playing the *sísira* (a gourd shaker filled with pebbles or beans that is traditionally used during *dügü*) and a pair of *garawoun* on which the *chumba* rhythm is usually played (see Musical Example 1). The performance of "*Wáguchi Bungiu*" also features bodily movements associated with the semi-sacred *abeimahani* songs of *dügü*. Singers link pinky fingers and step side-to-side in unison, gently swaying their hips. During the two repetitions of the words *lidan mua* ("on this earth") singers bow forward together, straightening and lifting their arms at the words, *lidan sun fulasu* ("in all places"). This one beloved hymn encompasses melodic connections to the international popular music industry; rhythmic, linguistic and physical expressions of *Garifunaduáü*; and a conception of God grounded in Catholic theology. The performance of "*Wáguchi Bungiu*" embodies the grace with which Garifuna communities blend and mix elements from a variety of cultural sources to create something indigenized yet cosmopolitan, Catholic yet decidedly Garifuna.

The Garifuna Catholic song "*Aníhan Wanügün Bun"* was composed in Belize during the 1980s. It is set to *hüngühüngü*, a drum pattern that is arguably the most meaningful and distinctive rhythm in the Garifuna repertoire. The *hüngühüngü* rhythm has a triple or compound duple meter; the basic segunda rhythm, when conceptualized in 6/8, consists of two eighth notes followed by two sixteenth-notes (see Musical Example 2). The *hüngühüngü* dance is performed by shuffling the feet along the floor, while arms circle close to the body in double time to the movement of the feet. Dancers take two steps to every three beats on the *garawoun*, creating a 2:3 cross-rhythm between dancers' steps and drum rhythm.

The minor-key *"Aníhan Wanügün Bun"* begins with two repetitions of a descending melody (measures 1-4 in Musical Example 2). The song's second melodic motif (starting on the last beat of measure five in Musical Example 2) begins a perfect fourth above the first motif. This melodic structure, commonly heard in music of Indigenous North and Central American communities, is called a "rise." It is a musical feature in which "melodies of narrow range jump a few half-tones higher for one or to phrases, then return to the original, slightly lower melodic line" (Bierhorst 1985: 81). *"Aníhan Wanügün Bun"* has a simple call-and-response structure. When sung at *Lemesi Garifuna* or communion services, one person (almost always an elder woman) leads the hymn by singing the first four beats alone before the congregation joins for the rest of the phrase.[5] This song's lyrics ask God to accept the offerings of the congregation:

Aníhan wanügün bun,Wáguchilin, úati amu
Aníhan wanügün bun,Wáguchilin, úati amu

Aníhan wanügübei, gahabu ban, gahabu ban lun, gahabu ban
Ligiyarügü ñei waman, gahabu ban lun

Warahüñü añahan buei, gahabu ban, gahabu ban houn, gahabu ban
Hagiyarügü yanu waman, gahabu ban houn

Here is what we brought you, Our Father, there is nothing else
Here is what we brought you, Our Father, there is nothing else

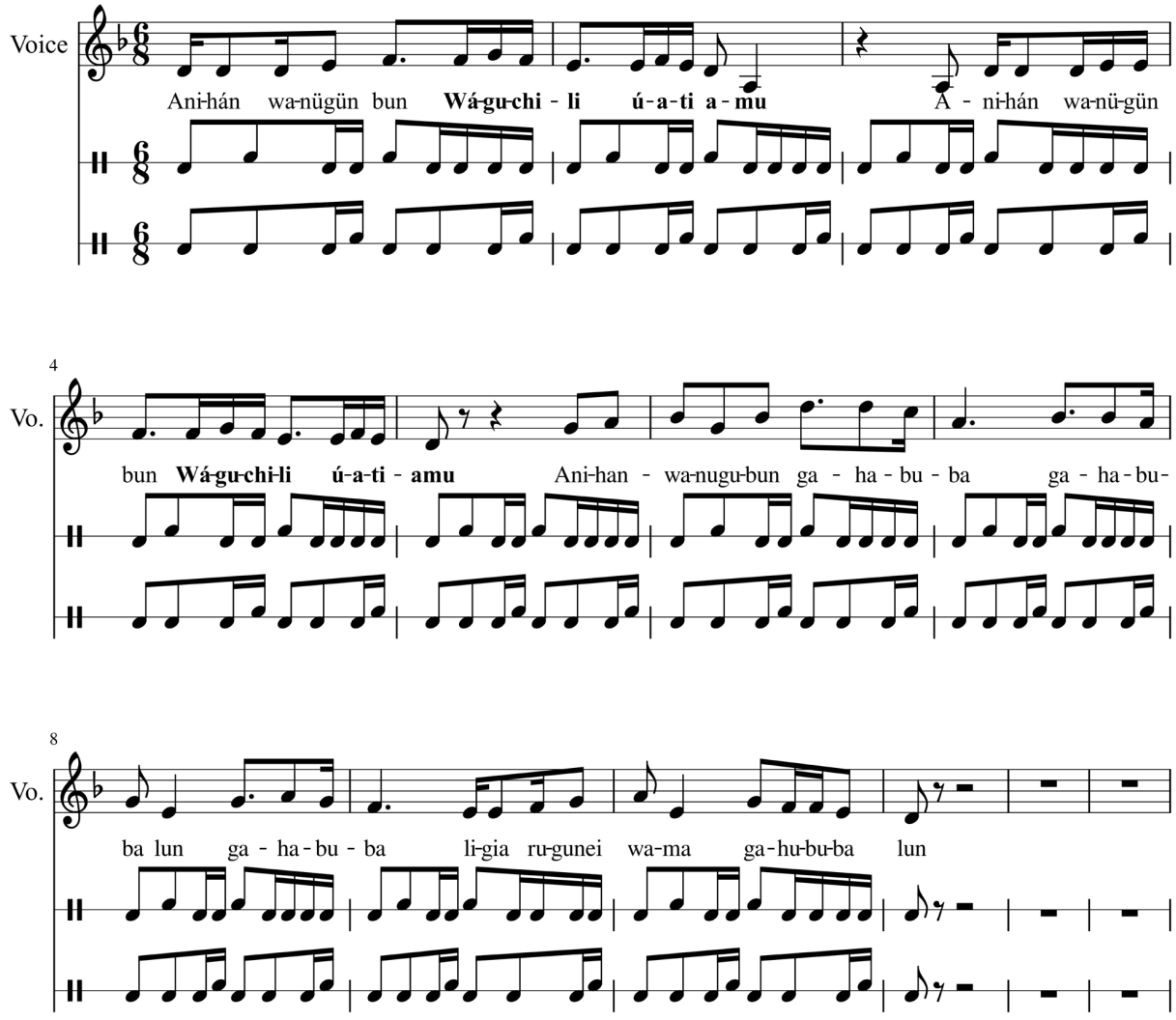
Here is what we brought, accept, accept it, accept
This all we have, accept it

Here are our children, accept, accept them, accept

[5] In Musical Example 2, the congregation's entrance is indicated by the lyrics in bold type.

They are all we have, accept them

Sometimes "*Aníhan Wanügün Bun*" is performed during the opening processional of *Lemesi Garifuna*, but more often it is performed during the offertory while parishioners offer tithes and women dance toward the church's altar carrying babies, woven baskets, or flower bouquets. This is an example of a creolized expressive moment in Garifuna Catholic services, as it draws equally from Garifuna and Catholic religious practices. The lyrics of this song (variations of the sentiment, "this is all we have, accept it") are derived from similar phrases spoken and sung during *dügü*. In that context, participants gather food and rum for the Garifuna ancestor spirits (*áhari*) and place their sacrifices on tables within the *dabuyaba* (temple). During that offering, participants implore the ancestors to be pleased with their efforts by singing, "*ligiyarügü ñei waman, gahabu ban lun*" ("this



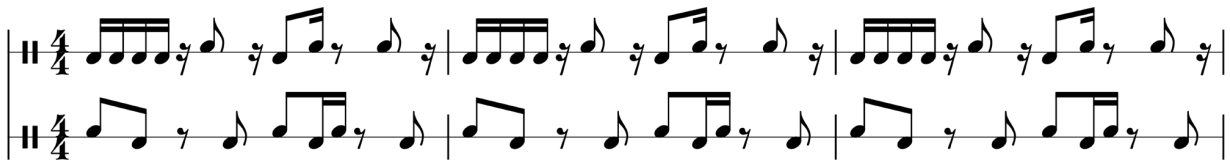
Musical Example 2: From top to bottom staff: vocal line, primero and segunda *hüngühüngü* patterns of Garifuna hymn "*Aníhan Wanügün Bun*."

is all we have, accept it"). Hopkins elder Francis Lewis explains, "When you're giving to the spirits of our ancestors, that's an offering. And when you're doing that in the church, we are offering

whatever we have to God and his angels" (2010). Through song and movement, this moment in *Lemesi Garifuna* melds together Catholic practice with a central act of traditional Garifuna spirituality.

The Gospel Acclamation, known in Garifuna Catholic churches as "*Aganba Waméi*" or "*Aleluya,*" offers a third example of Garifunaness expressed in Catholic services. In Catholic Mass, the Gospel Acclamation, or Alleluia, is sung or chanted so that parishioners may profess their faith and welcome the Lord as they anticipate the gospel reading (usccb.org). In Garifuna Catholic services, the Gospel Acclamation contains the following lyrics:

Aganba waméi, aganba waméi	*Let us hear Him, let us hear Him*
Lerurun Bungiu, keimou aganbei	*The words of God, let's go and hear*
Lerurun Hesu Küristu	*The words of Jesus Christ*
An Hesusu, awahan ya	*Jesus, we are here*
An Hesusu, lun waremuhan bun	*Jesus, to sing to You*
An Hesusu, awahan ya	*Jesus, we are here*
An Hesusu, lun warisarun bun	*Jesus, to pray to You*
An Hesusu, awahan ya	*Jesus, we are here*
An Hesusu, lun wabegirun bun	*Jesus, we are asking You for mercy*



Musical Example 3: Basic *bérusu*/*paranda* rhythms for primero (top line) and segunda (bottom line).

"*Aganba Waméi*" is a Garifuna Catholic song composed in Honduras as a result of the collaborations between Belizean and Honduran Garifuna Catholic communities during the 1980s. It features a melody that echoes traditional Garifuna song structures: repetitive, descending phrases in a natural minor tonality with the narrow range of a fifth. As with many types of Garifuna song, congregations almost always perform this piece in unison. The song is set to a celebratory *bérusu* rhythm on the *garawoun*, while shakas play a 2-3 clave rhythm (see Musical Example 3). Additional rhythmic energy is created by the clapping of a syncopated counter-rhythm that, within the Garifuna Catholic church, only accompanies Garifuna Catholic songs.

All three of these songs are now regular parts of Garifuna Catholic services, but when they were first composed in the 1970s and '80s, they were revolutionary. Because they are laden with significations of *Garifunaduáü*, their initial inclusion in services required much thought and debate

by church leaders, some of whom were hesitant to so boldly bring elements of traditional Garifuna spirituality into the church. These songs effectively defined the in-groups and out-groups of the burgeoning Garifuna Catholic subculture; in other words, they helped Garifuna Catholics articulate who they were and what they believed, as well as who and what they were not. These songs empowered many Garifuna Catholics to resist pressures to abandon their traditional beliefs, and inspired many Garinagu to embrace a positive cultural identity.

Garifuna Masses, as they are currently celebrated in Belize, strike a balance between tradition and cultural innovation. Music is used to articulate longstanding values as well as currently evolving conceptions of *Garifunaduáü*. Like the rites of remembrance enacted in *dügü*, songs by Marcelina Lambey, S.B. Daniels, and other early Garifuna Catholic hymnodists symbolically calls forth these ancestors during *Lemesi Garifuna*. The deep emotional associations of Garifuna rhythms and dances connect congregations to a shared sense of Garifunaness. At the same time, the music of *Lemesi Garifuna* can also engage with current negotiations of community and ethnicity. This is usually accomplished by integrating new types of music into the service or the involvement of Garifuna youth in programming.

To illustrate these dynamics at work, I analyze a particular event that took place in Dangriga's Catholic church in the early 2000s. During a regular Sunday Mass, drummers suddenly launched into the semi-sacred *hüngühüngü* rhythm while a well-known *buyei* (Garifuna spiritual leader) began dancing down the church's main aisle, shaking her *sísira* and singing a song for the ancestors. In this instance, the church members employed their subcultural tools in order to make a bold statement of identity—both in terms of who they are, and who they are not. Roy Cayetano told me the story during an interview at his home office in Dangriga:

> One 19th of November, Jerris [Valentine] and I approached Sarah, the *buyei*, because we had this idea that it would be good if—at the time of the offertory—a song from the *dabuyaba* [Garifuna temple] would be sung. And the three drums that are utilized in the *dabuyaba* would be played and then after the song and the drumming starts, the *buyei* would come with her *sísira*. The congregation had not been prepared for that. They were not told that would happen. And so when that moment came, the signal was given, the song was intoned and the drummers with their three large drums played—they really filled the church. And the *gayusa*, the singers, were ready. It was a beautiful experience. I think the congregation was taken aback. For them it was a deep spiritual moment. Everybody felt it, you could see the shock, the surprise, the awe, all in one. Even the ultra-Catholics, if you will, felt the moment. There was no getting away from it. In spite of all that, even in the midst of all that sound, that loudness, there was silence because of the spiritual connection. (Cayetano 2015)

There are several reasons why this event was a statement of subcultural identity and an act of resistance to cultural homogenization in Belize. First, songs performed during *dügü* are not usually heard outside of that sacred context. In the past, European Catholic leadership absolutely would not have allowed any songs for the ancestors to be performed within the church. Second, the song was led by a *buyei* supported by *gayusa* (a group of female vocalists). Although they may identify as Catholic, *buyeis* are not usually granted any leadership or authority within the Catholic church. Third, as Cayetano notes, the "three drums that are utilized in the *dabuyaba*" were played during this event. *Dügü* features a configuration of drums that is not used in secular or Christian settings; instead of a *primero* and *segunda*, drummers play two *segunda* and a third, larger drum called the *lanigi garawoun* that is reserved for sacred settings. This particular event employed the full range of subcultural tools available to Garifuna Catholics in Dangriga—Sarah the *buyei*, the *garawoun*, *gayusa*, *sísira*, rhythms, songs, and dancing—in order to delineate the "in-groups" and "out-groups" associated with the Garifuna Catholic subculture. For its participants, the event unequivocally stated

"We are Garifuna, we are not European; we are Indigenous; we are not (neo)colonial subjects; we believe in the *áhari*, we do not practice orthodox Roman Catholicism." This performance was thus a subversive act, a clear assertion of Garifuna pride that stood in contrast to Western Catholic practice.

"Decolonizing Our Spirits": Garifuna Catholicism and Cultural Vitality

Garifuna Catholic leaders and cultural activists continually draw on their subcultural tools in order to express *Garifunaduáü*. Across the Garifuna Nation, cultural initiatives such as the burgeoning "*Garifuna tidan Lemesi Katolika*" ("Garifuna in the Catholic Mass") movement, with which Roy Cayetano is involved, are continuing to experiment with ways to more fully integrate Catholicism and *Garifunaduáü* through music, programming, and special events. These are all ways in which Garifuna Catholic leaders and laity are continuing the process of, as Cayetano phrased it, "decolonizing the minds and spirits of Garinagu" (2015).

Some communities are successfully celebrating Mass in Garifuna on a regular basis, while other parishes are still discussing ways to incorporate more Garifuna elements into Catholic services. In efforts to create worship experiences that are relevant to Garinagu of all generations, others are incorporating popular songs (such as "*Baba"* by Adrian "Doc" Martinez and "*Ámuñegü*" by Andy Palacio, both of which appear on the popular album *Wátina*), songs from other parts of the Caribbean and North America, and North American Evangelical worship music. In Belizean Garifuna parishes, song selection is one subcultural tool that can be controlled by local leaders rather than the non-Garifuna priests who drop in intermittently.

The international Garifuna Catholic church recognizes that, in order to survive, it must expand its cultural expressions to engage the full range of identities being cultivated by Garinagu. Cultural isolation and clinging to an imaginary past will not keep Indigenous lifeways and belief systems alive; rather, cultural vitality requires creolizing traditional practices with global culture. As circumstances, sources of inspiration, points of cultural connection, and modes of identity formation change, so too does Garifuna Catholic church music. Adaptation and creolization are central to the Garifuna experience. The prevalence of these processes in the performance of Garifuna Catholic church music demonstrates that this music tradition is an expression of *Garifunaduáü* in all its fullness and complexity.

The reasons and ways in which Catholicism, *Garifunaduáü,* and North American cultural elements are being creolized vary throughout Central America. For some Garinagu, the Catholic church is a space in which family and community interdependence are valued. For others, the Garifuna Catholic church is a space in which Garinagu can individually and collectively express their faith and ethnicity. For more politically-minded Garifuna Catholics, the Church offers a physical and sonic space in which cultural homogenization can be resisted and local identities enacted. For Garifuna Catholics throughout Central America, musical practice is a unifying force; it brings congregations together in order to worship, celebrate, and continue the process of "decolonizing their spirits."

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Cita recomendada

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