

# 京都外国語大学 ラテンアメリカ研究所 紀要

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## <論文>

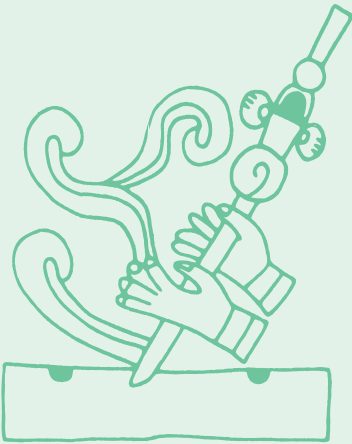
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〈調査研究報告〉

## Positioning the Creoles within the “American-Mediterranean Regions”: Racial Identity and Land Demarcation in Bluefields, Nicaragua

Kay Aoki

### Introduction

The landscape appeared dry and sandy, but the tepid wind carried the region’s humidity as it touched my cheek. The contradiction struck me immediately upon my arrival in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua (see Fig. 1). Before the sun rose the next day, March 2nd, I was on my way to Bluefields. Bluefields is Nicaragua’s principal eastern port and is located in the wet, extremely humid (especially after a sudden shower during the rainy season) tropical zone in Caribbean Nicaragua. *Costeño(s)* is often used to designate the people of the Caribbean Coast to distinguish them from the people of the west.

It is not uncommon for countries to be divided into two principal regions based on various geographic, linguistic, cultural, and historical elements. For example, Italy is divided into north and south (Milano and Napoli), as is Cabo Verde in West Africa (São Vicente and



Fig. 1 Map of Nicaragua.  
(Made by the author)

Santiago). In the case of Japan, the two regions are the east and the west (Tokyo and Osaka). Similarly, Nicaragua is divided in the eastern and western regions (Bluefields and Managua).

These social, cultural and historical differences between the two regions are critical issues for Nicaraguans, especially those from the east. The eastern region is characterized by rich resources, immense land, and several ethnic groups who co-exist in Bluefields. In contrast, the west has limited resources and less diversity. Most of the people are *mestizos* and speak Spanish.

Chapter 1 explains the background of the *Mestizo* and explores the reasons why the demarcation of lands in the eastern region— the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN<sup>1</sup>) and the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAS<sup>2</sup>) (hereinafter, RAAN and RAAS, respectively) —has become a serious social matter.

Chapter 2 focuses on Creoles and its culture. It shows the significance of Creoles in Bluefields. This chapter also discusses the social problem of demarcation of the lands using interviews data.

### Objective and Methods

The present report aims to provide a socio-historical and language-related perspective and shed light on the major issues for the people of RAAS, especially those living in Bluefields.

I conducted field research from March 1 through March 15, 2017 in Nicaragua. One week (March 2 through March 9) was spent in the eastern region (mainly in Bluefields, with one day in El Bluff). The principle research methods were interviews and participant observation.

The total interview time was 352 hours. The list of interviewees is shown below:

- Interviewee D. M.: member of the Creole government
- Interviewee N. N.: member of the Creole government
- Interviewee F. J.: ex-soldier. Currently working in tourism.
- Interviewee R. L.: former member of the *Ulwa* government
- Interviewee G. J. P.: member of the government of *Mestizo*
- Interviewee A. T.: member of the government of *Rama-Kriol*
- Interviewee M. B. A.: rapper. Director of Bluefields Sound System
- Interviewee W. J.: high school teacher of English

The dialogues in the interviews primarily related to social matters. Most of the interviewees talked about the land demarcation.

I stayed in the western region (mainly in Managua) for several days (March 10-13). The purpose of staying in Managua was to collect documents and books which I found difficult to find in Bluefields (BICU-CIDCA<sup>3</sup>). The list of books and documents appears below:

- CONZEMIUS, Eduard (2004). *Miskitos y Sumus de Honduras y Nicaragua*, Managua: Fundación Vida.
- CUNNINGHAM, Mirna (2012). *Riqueza Cultural de la Costa Caribe: Cuaderno Cultural Introductorio 1*, Managua: CRAAN.
- GOBIERNO TERRITORIAL RAMA Y KRIOL (2013). *Guía de Convivencia Social y Económica del Territorio Rama y Kriol*, GTR-K.
- GOBIERNO TERRITORIAL RAMA Y KRIOL (2013?). *Lineamientos para Realizar Proceso de Consulta en el Territorio Rama y Kriol*, IBIS.
- GOBIERNO TERRITORIAL RAMA Y KRIOL (2016). *¡Sanear para el Buen Vivir!: Sistematización de la Experiencia del Gobierno Territorial Rama y Kriol en el Proceso de Saniamiento de tu Territorio*, IBIS.
- GODFREY, Glenda (2012). *Tambor, Tierra, Sangre...Soy Garífuna: Cuaderno Cultural Garífuna 3*, Managua: CRAAN.
- HOOKE KAIN, Stephan Dexter (2016). *El Ocaso de un Pueblo Sunset Bluefields*, Managua: Dispubly.
- JOHNSON, Anita (2012). *La Memoria de Nuestros Ancestros es Sagrada: Cuaderno Cultural Creole 2*, Managua: CRAAN.
- KAUFFMANN, Maricela (2012). *Arte Culinario Tradicional: Identidad y Patrimonio de las Culturas de la Costa Caribe de Nicaragua*, Managua: CRAAN.
- LINO, Taymond Robins (2012). *La Naturaleza Está Poblada de Espíritus: Cuaderno Cultural Sumu Mayangna 6*, Managua: CRAAN.
- MCCOY, Anotnia (2012). *Debajo de Cada Piedra Vive un Espíritu Cuaderno Cultural*, Managua: CRAAN.
- MELVIN, James (2012). *El Idioma de los Ulwa Duerme, No Esta Muerto Ni Olvidado: Cuaderno Cultural Ulwa 7*, Managua: CRAAN.
- PEÑA HERNÁNDEZ, Enrique (1968). *Folklore de Nicaragua*, Masaya: Editorial Unión.
- RIVERSTONE, Gerald (2008). *La Tierra de Nuestros Ancestros: Territorio Rama y Creole en el Caribe Nicaragüense*, Managua: IBIS.
- ROBB TAYLOR, Deborah (2005). *The Times & Life of Bluefields: An Intergenerational Dialogue*, Managua: Academia de Geografía e Historia de Nicaragua.
- WHITE, Ceferino Wilson (2012). *Sari Laka Apu Kan Piwara: Antes de los Días Tristes Cuaderno Cultural Miskitu 4*, Managua: CRAAN.
- WILSON, Hugo Sujo (1998). *Oral History of Bluefields História Oral de Bluefields*, CIDCA-UCA.

In the course of this field research, I visited various radio stations and district governments. Visiting these places and communicating with the people were extremely important in the short period allotted to field research.

An important objective of this study was to understand the geographical concept of

“American-Mediterranean Regions,” (Fig. 2) (Tsuji and Minami, 2014), which connects to my basic research in the *crioulo* cultures of Cabo Verde in West Africa. In Cabo Verde, creole is expressed in Portuguese as *crioulo*, which is different from the case of Bluefields, where residents normally use the term creole. *Crioulo* is related to Portuguese imperialism, while creole has been influenced by British imperialism. Thus, in this report, I use the two terms separately.

## 1. Overview of Ethnic Groups and Their Community<sup>4)</sup>

In this chapter, the focus is on ethnic groups related closely to creole, as is the main theme of this report.

### 1-1. *Mestizos*

*Mestizos* are a mixture of indigenous (*Indio*<sup>5)</sup>) and European (mostly Spanish in the case of Nicaragua) ancestry. However, according to Taylor, “the word Mestizo, a person of mixed ancestry, is equivalent to the term ‘Creole’ in English (...) [and the] Nicaraguan Mestizo also has a heavy dose of African blood” (Taylor, 2005: 16). This description is quite confusing to anyone seeking to understand its meaning and characteristics. On the



Fig. 2 Geographical Position of Nicaragua in the “American-Mediterranean Regions.”  
(Made by the author)

same page, Taylor describes *Mestizo* who are mixed with African (Taylor, 2005: 16) using the term *Afromestizo*, citing the example of Rubén Darío, one of the great poets of Latin America. Apparently, Rubén Darío was of mixed *Indio*, African and European ancestry. Holm, an American creolist, uses the word *Ladinos* to mean “Spanish-speaking Mestizos” (Holm, 1989: 473). This definition is better than that of Taylor (2005) as it does not limit its nuance; regardless of whether some *Mestizos* have African ancestry, it seems that *Mestizo* is a person who has European and native (*Indios* and/or African) traces and who speaks Spanish.

Although the term *Mestizo(s)* is similar to Creole(s), I distinguish the two groups in this report, as the two ethnic groups have different meanings and backgrounds. My assumption is that Taylor’s explanation is unclear because of the great amalgamation of Nicaraguan society. In Bluefields, for instance, I spoke with a person whose mother is *Mestizo* and whose father is Creole. This is quite common in Bluefields, and very often it is left to the individual to decide which designation he/she prefers, *Mestizo* or Creole. Thus, one’s race depends more on self-identification than on skin color.

I should mention here that in Bluefields, many people apply the term *Mestizo* to people whose mother tongue is Spanish or Castilian (many of them belong to the Roman Catholic Church) and are of mixed *Indio* and European background. Many *Mestizos* live in the western region of the country and are farmers or peasants.

Taylor’s description below is helpful in understanding the land demarcation issues in Nicaragua.

“The first references to the Mestizos as an ethnic group on the Caribbean Coast go back to 1865. They came looking for jobs especially in rubber production. In 1880, the banana crops and gold mining increased and this brought more Mestizos to the Coast who settled around Bluefields. In 1886, Mestizos from Granada founded the community of El Rama that soon became a very important port linking the Caribbean zone with the pacific zone” (Taylor, 2005: 17)

Holm explains that in Bluefields the “proportion of Spanish speakers was increased by refugees fleeing the violence in the west during the 1979 revolution” (Holm, 1989: 474). The harsh revolution in Nicaragua was one of the key factors in the displacement of large numbers of people. Taylor mentions the demographic change in the region:

“(…) In the 1950’s and 60’s, when many small farmers from the Western and Central Regions of Nicaragua were forced to abandon their lands (...), they relocated to the Caribbean Coast where there was still plenty of land available. Today approximately 58% of the coast population are Mestizos” (Taylor, 2005: 17)

The *Mestizos* have essentially moved from the Pacific region to the Caribbean Coast. This fact is a major factor in the social background of the land demarcation occurring today in Bluefields. Inhabitants are concerned about their security and are strongly against to the *Mestizos* of the Pacific who have ‘invaded’ their land. Hugo Sujo Wilson’s famous book, “*Oral History of Bluefields*,” provides a clear vision of the hatred felt by Creoles towards the *Mestizos*.

“(…) it was clearly to be seen that there was a feeling of dislike on the part of the Creoles towards the *Mestizos* or «Spaniards» as they were called” (Wilson, 1998: 64 - 65).

In fact, some in Bluefields told me that the word “Spaniards” continues to be used in Bluefields to insult *Mestizos* from the west (as opposed to *Mestizos* who were born and raised in the east). On the other side, ‘negro’ is used by *Mestizos* to curse Creoles.

## 1-2. Creoles

Creoles<sup>6)</sup> represent 9% of the population of the Caribbean Coast. Like “*Mestizo*,” the term “Creole” has a complex meaning. In this paper, I address only Nicaraguan Creole(s). In the case of Nicaragua, because the Creole<sup>7)</sup> people were influenced by the British, their language is categorized as an English-based Creole. However, Taylor states that “Nicaraguan Creole speak a variety of English called Caribbean Creole, a dialect closely related to Jamaican Creole” (Taylor, 2005: 11). I should emphasize that the Creoles (the Nicaraguan Creoles, as Taylor identifies them) have their own language—“Creole English”—or, more descriptively, “Nicaraguan Creole” or the “Creole of Nicaragua.”

Creole was used to distinguish the people born in the Americas from those of Europe during colonization. For instance, Holm describes the language of the *Moskito*, the largest indigenous group in Nicaragua:

“In 1707, it was observed that ‘the Muskitos<sup>8)</sup> (...) will not permit any other nation to settle among them but the English (...) The Men generally speak broken English” (Holm, 1989: 473)<sup>9)</sup>

Holm’s words in the above citation, “The Men generally speak broken English” are thus appropriate. However, many creolists<sup>10)</sup> assert that Creole is a language and not a dialect. This is the conclusion of linguists who have had a significant impact on creolistics<sup>11)</sup> since 1960 (e.g., Hall, 1966), and it is critically important to correctly understanding the linguistic situation of the Creole.

The Creole language on the Mosquito Coast includes “hundreds of words borrowed from



Miskito, especially terms for flora and fauna, and even more from Spanish, particularly terms connected with government, education and modern life” (Holm, 1989: 474). Below is an example of Creole English cited by Holm.

*when i pik it op naw i no kom we a de*  
when he starts up (drinking) now he doesn't come where I am  
(Holm, 1989: 475)

This example of Creole shows the strong influence of English, which is why the language is identified as “lexically English-based.” The language is not a dialect (perhaps a variety of Jamaican Creole, Patois) nor broken English, but rather it is a Creole language.

Because their ancestors were Africans, most of the Creoles are black. The Creoles (who were slaves during that early period) established their communities in Bluefields and Bilwi when they arrived in Nicaragua in the seventeenth century with the British and Dutch. In fact, large numbers of slaves escaped from Jamaica or San André to the Mosquito Coast<sup>12)</sup> (northeast coast of Honduras and the eastern coast of Nicaragua) from the slave hunters. In this sense, the Creoles are among the oldest habitants of Nicaragua, similar to the indigenous peoples. However, many Creoles were intermixed with their masters rather than with the *Indios*, which explains why the Creole community is situated in the RAAS region.

### 1-3. *Garífunas*

*Garífunas*<sup>13)</sup> are very similar to Creoles in many ways; they are also referred to as Black Caribs. In 1635, “two Spanish ships carrying Nigerian slaves shipwrecked (...). At first, the Spanish, Nigerians and *Kalipuna* fought one another but eventually (...) intermarried” (Taylor, 2005: 13).

The largest community of *Garífunas* has been situated in the Orinoco area since 1907. The community has a distinct culture of music, dance and story-telling, which can likely be traced to the Yoruba people in Nigeria. In certain religious aspects, the *Garífunas* show a similarity to the Creole, practicing a religion that is a mix of Catholic, African and Indian beliefs. This syncretism is quite prominent in Latin America.

The language of the *Garífunas* is a mixture of African, Indian and European languages, specifically, Arawaka, Yoruba, Swahili, Bantu, Spanish, English and French. Finally, Taylor explains that the *Garífunas* “like their Creole neighbors, speak Creole English” (Taylor, 2005: 15).

The fact that “creole” designates a language and not an ethnic group should be noted here. Thus, just as there are Creole who speak Creole English (language), there are *Garífunas* who speak it as well.



#### 1-4. *Rama-Kriol (Ramas and Kriols)*

The *Ramas* are an indigenous group living in the southern region of RAAS. However, because the “Creoles” have a small community in the same region, the *Ramas* are commonly called *Rama-Kriol*. These “Creoles” appear to be distinguished from those of Bluefields in that, although the difference cannot be recognized phonologically, the two terms, *Kriol* and Creole, are written in a different way.

The *Rama* population consists of approximately 1200 people who live in the region of Rama Cay. According to Taylor, the linguistic group of the *Ramas* is different from the other indigenous peoples (*Mosquito* and *Mayangna*) who live in the north. It is in the Chibcha language group. Linguistically, the language would be part of “the Paya of Honduras, the Guatuso and Talamanca of Costa Rica, the Kuna and Waimi of Panama, and other related groups in Colombia” (Taylor, 2005: 6). Notably, the Rama language has become very much a minority language as the population of *Rama* has diminished. In fact, Taylor indicates that only 58 people know the language in the Rama Cay region (Taylor, 2005: 6). Today, many *Ramas* speak a language that is a kind of English called Rama-Kriol that has been “adapted over centuries of contact with English pirates, Moravian missionaries, and black Creoles living in the Bluefields area” (Taylor, 2005: 6).

## 2. Cultural Landscape in Bluefields: Insights from Creole Features

The significance and position of creole as a phenomenon and as an ethnic group is important to recognize.

Caribbean Nicaragua is in the eastern region of the country. Because it had been ruled by the British, it has a totally different landscape from that of the western region, which has been heavily influenced by the Spanish. “Landscape” here does not mean simply the appearance of the land, but rather it includes the smell of the land, the architecture, the people’s expressions, the animals, and virtually all of what constitutes everyday life.

### 2-1. Cultural Landscape

Many of the houses are made of wood, giving the impression that they are more cabin than house (Pic. 1). In fact, Bluefields was once a prolific producer of mahogany, which was, and still is, very expensive. However, today, unfortunately, the production of mahogany is declining.

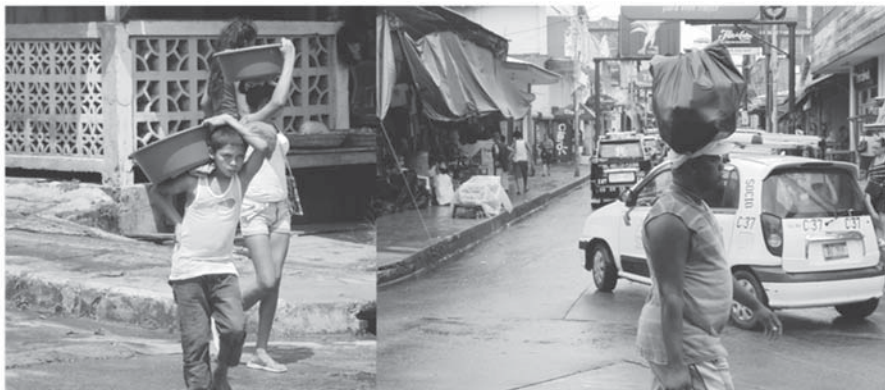
Because the city faces the sea, fish are one of the most important products of Bluefields (Pic. 2). The people here often carry fish or other objects in various containers that they place on their head, showing a definite African influence (Pic. 3). However, it seems that this sort of African influence can be seen in many different ethnic groups.



Pic. 1 Traditional house in Bluefields.



Pic. 2 A boy showing the fish he caught.



Pic. 3 People carrying containers on their head.

(All pictures were taken by the author: 2017, March 2-9)

### Food Culture

The food culture in the east is also different from that of the western region. One of the traditional cuisines in Bluefields is a stew called *rondón* (Pic. 4). Its name derives from the English word “run down” because it has to be mixed until the fish fall apart. Actually, *rondón* is a typical dish in Jamaica, where it is called *run down* in Patois. It seems that in the Caribbean, one can find many common or similar cultures that have been influenced reciprocally.

Apart from fish, bananas, meats, and cassavas are frequently used as *rondón* ingredients. I mention ‘fish’ and ‘meats’ in a rather general way because no particular kind of fish or meat is used for *rondón*. This traditional dish cannot be easily found as it is typically cooked at home for a special day. Luckily, I had the opportunity to eat *rondón* twice in a single week—once in a restaurant when I asked for the traditional local dish and a second time when I happened to be in the Canal district (*barrio canal*) and was invited by two Creole

men to join them in eating the *rondón* that they were preparing outside. On that day, there was a bit of crab included as an ingredient.

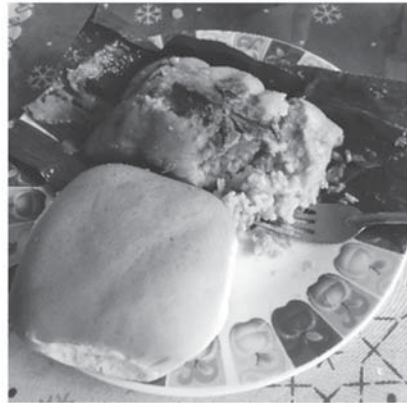
*Nacatamal* (Pic. 5) is also among the traditional foods eaten by the people of Bluefields. This dish includes rice, steamed tomatoes, olives, and potatoes. Another popular food is *gallo pinto* (Pic. 6), a chicken dish with banana chips, rice with black beans, and cheese.

### Music and “Caribbean” Identity

During my stay in Bluefields, I felt the strong influence of Jamaica. When I visited a local radio station, I had a chance to talk to a young man who explained the widespread influence of Jamaica in their city. My interview is reported below:



Pic. 4 *Rondón*.



Pic. 5 *Nacatamal*.



Pic. 6 *Gallo pinto*.

(All pictures were taken by the author: 2017, March 2-9)

Interview 1 (March 9, 2017)

Occupation: high school English teacher (J. W.); Sex: male; Age: 25

Author)

There is traditional music played in May called may pole (*pallo de mayo* in Spanish), which is one of the British influences. However, I did not hear people talking about may pole. It seems that it is not music that the people of Bluefields listen to very often, and may pole is played only once a year. Do you listen to any of Bluefields' traditional music? If you do, could you explain what kind of music it is?

J. W.)

What I should make clear is that Bluefields hasn't been influenced only by the British. Bluefields has also been influenced by Jamaicans. It is true that I identify myself as *Mestizo*, but I feel more Caribbean than *Mestizo*. Reggae is the most famous Jamaican popular music, and in this city many people listen to it. You can hear it everywhere in the city. Reggae is a part of our history and it's important for us. There is also a musical genre called calypso, which is Caribbean music that has also taken root in this region.

Author)

Could you tell me if there is anything else you think is important in regard to reggae?

J. W.)

What we put value on is not only the history of reggae. It is also the message in the lyrics. For instance, you can hear it in the songs of the musician from South Africa, Lucky Dube's "Political Games" and "Reggae Strong".

Interviewee J. W. also referred to Bob Marley, but he underlined that the most important thing is the lyrics because of the message they convey; it is a message about politics, the state of a nation, the history of reggae, and the destiny of the musical genre. Below is a part of the lyrics of "Reggae Strong," that interviewee J. W. mentioned.

"Reggae Strong"  
You can change the style  
of playing reggae  
You can change the  
rhythm of playing reggae  
But never ever  
change the message  
(Lucky Dube, 1996)

The song expresses the power and presence of reggae and the chorus shows the importance of its message.

Reggae is a musical genre born in the second half of the twentieth century and is listened to worldwide. Rastafarianism, a movement to return to Africa, exists in its socio-political context. Reggae has a strong message and a clear meaning. Its powerful words have great significance. Regarding the lyrics, it should be noted that the words are written in Patois, the Jamaican Creole.

Another interesting point is the fact that the interviewee identified himself as a “Caribbean” although he might well be called a *Mestizo*. The interviewee’s parents are *Mestizo* and Creole, and so I asked him how he identifies himself:

J. W.)

I identify myself as a *Mestizo* as my mother is so. However, personally, I believe that I am Caribbean more than *Mestizo* or Creole.

The case of interviewee J. W. shows that he does not identify himself as a determined ethnicity (in this case, *Mestizo*), but he gives importance to the region where he was born (Caribbean / Bluefields). He is a person born in Bluefields who feels that he is Caribbean. At the end of the interview, he acknowledged that this situation is complex but that he depends strongly on reggae for his identity.

In the case of R. L., a former member of the *Ulwa* government and an *Ulwa*, the mother’s race is the determinant of one’s racial identity.

Interview 2 (March 7, 2017)

Occupation: former member of the *Ulwa* government, an *Ulwa* (R.L.); Sex: male; Age: 42

Author)

You are *Ulwa*. Are you mixed with other races as well?

R. L.)

Yes. I’m mixed with black blood. My father is black [it is possible that he meant Black, as a Creole]<sup>14)</sup> and my mother is *Ulwa*. But I identify as an *Ulwa* because my mother is.

Author)

Why do you identify as *Ulwa* if your father is black?

R. L.)

Because in my case, we, indigenous people, believe in *La Madre Tierra*. So, we give a lot of value to our mother. Also, I know that the *Ulwa* is a group that needs more help. The blacks are more organized. The *Ulwa* are a small indigenous community. Practically, I identify myself as black and *Ulwa*.

*Ulwa* is one of the smallest groups of the Caribbean. I think is important to support the *Ulwa* so I identify myself as *Ulwa*. My mother is *Ulwa* and I love my community. I believe that it is important to support all [ethnic groups] because we live all on the Atlantic coast. We are mixed with one another. We have the liberty to decide which group we identify ourselves with. I identify as *Ulwa* because they need more help.

Author)

Don't you also belong to the black people or Creoles?

R. L.)

No. Well, practically, I do support [the indigenous people] with the black people. I work with the Creole government. I help the Miskito. I work with all. But I identify myself as an *Ulwa*. I identify with both ethnic groups because I have black blood, Miskito blood. So, I am a mix. Therefore, I identify as *Ulwa* and black, but I identify myself directly as an *Ulwa*.

Interviewee R. L. gave his point of view that the race of one's mother is important in deciding one's own racial identity. Yet, he seemed to connect his racial identity to protecting the indigenous people.

These data can be useful in elucidating patterns of the creole phenomenon in the movements of cultures across the “American-Mediterranean Regions.” However, because data on the subject are scarce, studies on creole need to continue.

## 2-2. Significance and Position of ‘Creole’

Creole languages are spoken worldwide. In fact, today, eighty-four (Cohen and Toninato, 2010: 5) to one hundred or more (Holm, 1989) Creole languages are spoken. Creole languages are based on European languages and are a product of colonization during the Age of Discovery. It is for this reason that Creole languages are ubiquitous. Holm's study (Holm, 1989) shows that these languages are especially concentrated in South East Asia, West Africa and the Caribbean, and very often along coasts. It is possible that the creole phenomenon emerged along various coasts because contact and mixing could more easily occur there, in ports, or on islands, where people converge and spatial limits exist. There are twenty-eight types of Creole languages within the “American-Mediterranean Regions,”



most of which are based on English or French, as the area was colonized mostly by these two countries (Fig. 3).

Although Creole languages are spoken in several regions, as shown in the map below (Fig. 3), the perception of creole differs by country and region. For example, the people of Guadeloupe, in the Lesser Antilles, speak a French-based Creole (*créole*). However, creole appears to be a concept perceived by intellectuals rather than the citizens themselves. There are certainly people, as in the case of Cabo Verde, that establish their *crioulo* identity. Additionally, people in some regions use creole to refer only to a race or a language. Thus, it is important to note that there are different levels and various perceptions of creole, depending on history and the conventions used to establish one's identity.

An understanding of the concept of creole is necessary in a socio-historical sense in order to gain a deeper comprehension of the idea of the “American-Mediterranean Regions.”

### 2-3. Demarcation of the Lands

There is a social and political matter that must be resolved in RAAS: many of the *Rama* people cannot speak the Rama language, and, as a result, it is almost extinct. The *Rama* people's concerns include not only their language, but their land ownership. I quickly



Fig. 3 Map of Creole Languages in the Geographical Concept of “American-Mediterranean Regions.”  
(Made by the author)



understood that land demarcation is a serious problem as I listened to the voices of the villagers.

The demarcation problem can be seen as a conflict between the *Mestizos*, who have come from western Nicaragua to the Rama-Kriol territory, where they are viewed as invaders who have deforested the land for business reasons, and the *Ramas*, who fear losing their land and their language. In order to prevent this, the *Ramas* have demanded that the *Mestizos* fill out an immigration application form (Pic. 7). The forms allow for a count of the exact number of *Mestizos* and have the potential to keep the number from increasing.

A. T., a member of the government of *Rama-Kriol* in Bluefields, explained this demarcation issue (Pic. 8)<sup>15</sup>. She used the word *tercera persona*, “third person,” which means *Mestizos* or Spaniards, to indicate how the indigenous people provoke the *Mestizos*.

What is important to address here is how several ethnic groups can co-exist and share their cultures.

How racial identity and the demarcation of land are related (see Interview 2) is explored in the interview below. Interviewee R. L., the former member of the *Ulwa* government, describes his case:

**SOLICITUD:**

**I. DATOS DE LA SOLICITANTE**

Nombre y apellidos del solicitante o cabeza de familia \_\_\_\_\_  
Conocido como: \_\_\_\_\_ No. de Cédula \_\_\_\_\_  
Ocupación u oficio: \_\_\_\_\_ Territorio Indígena \_\_\_\_\_  
Comunidad: \_\_\_\_\_ Sector: \_\_\_\_\_  
Estado Civil y Estereotipo Familiar:  
Soltero  Casado  Unión Libre  Viudo(a)  \_\_\_\_\_  
Número de Hijos: Varones  Mujeres   
Mayor de Edad? \_\_\_\_\_ Mayor de Edad? \_\_\_\_\_

**II. DATOS GENERALES DE LA PARCELA**

Código de la Parcela: \_\_\_\_\_ Nombre de la parcela o finca: \_\_\_\_\_  
Área (M<sup>2</sup>): \_\_\_\_\_  
Límites actuales de la parcela o lote:  
Coordenadas X: \_\_\_\_\_ Coordenadas Y: \_\_\_\_\_  
Colindantes:  
Al Norte: \_\_\_\_\_ Al Sur: \_\_\_\_\_ Al Este: \_\_\_\_\_  
Al Oeste: \_\_\_\_\_  
Comunidad Indígena o Creole + Aproximada: \_\_\_\_\_  
Observaciones: \_\_\_\_\_

Cropale de la Parcela: Datos Zona 14: \_\_\_\_\_ o 17: \_\_\_\_\_

1) X: _____	Y: _____
2) X: _____	Y: _____
3) X: _____	Y: _____
4) X: _____	Y: _____

Pic. 7 Part of the immigration application for the “Spaniards” who enter the territory of Rama-Kriol.  
(Taken by the author: 2017, March 8)



Pic. 8 Explaining the territory of the *Rama-Kriol*.  
(Taken by the author: 2017, March 8)

Interview 3 (March 7, 2017)

Identical to the person in Interview 2

Author)

To what group does your wife belong?

R. L.)

My wife is a Creole from Bluefields.

Author)

Were you born here in Bluefields?

R. L.)

No, I was born in *Karawala*, in the *Ulwa* community. Normally each person chooses what ethnic group he belongs to by where he was born. That is an important element.

Author)

So that is *tierra madre*...

R. L.)

Yes. So, those who were born in Bluefields are black, and a few *mestizos*. Those who were born in Rama Cay, they are *Rama*. But the people are free to decide what ethnic group they want to belong to, or how to identify themselves.

Given the dialogues in Interviews 1 and 2, shared space and land are crucial to racial and cultural identity. However, in order to illustrate the relationship between the land and racial identity, I will need to conduct interviews not only with the *Ramas*, but also with the *Mestizos*.

### 3. Results

This report described the current socio-situation in Bluefields by connecting the racial identity of the people of Bluefields, *Costeños*, with land demarcation. It also sought to position the Creoles within the concept of “American-Mediterranean Regions.”

The presence of the Creoles was extremely strong and further anthropological research based on field work needs to be undertaken. To position the Creoles in the regions of the “American-Mediterranean Regions,” it would be useful to look at cultural aspects of both the Creoles and the *Garifunas*, as they have similar roots.

It follows that the Creole people of Bluefields have been as greatly impacted by external

elements as any ethnic group in the world; in their case, they show clear indications of being Caribbean. Caribbean does not mean strictly Jamaican or Nicaraguan, but refers to the entire Caribbean area. Curiously, this way of thinking resembles the geographical concept of “American-Mediterranean Regions.”

This report has also described the problem of land demarcation as it relates to the Creoles. Land demarcation causes huge problems in various regions and at various levels (e.g., neighbors, country, prefectures, lands, villages, rooms). While these “border lines” are being created, there is also interaction and contact between people. In this context, it is the people who establish the culture. The Creole people were born into this socio-historical situation. There is a broad question to be asked here: how do the Creoles preserve their community and their “lands”? Furthermore, where was the land of the Creoles, if they were brought to the area from the outside world and were mixed with various other groups? In truth, in answering these questions, the concept of “mixing” is key, as Creoles are essentially a “mixture” of whites and blacks.

The current study should lead to a deeper understanding of how people establish their identity by protecting their territory and drawing borders. In my future research, I intend to determine just where the cultural “border line” of the Caribbeans and the Creoles of Bluefields (including the *Garífunas*) is by defining the cultural heritage of these African descendants. I believe that this will be an important contribution to our understanding of the cross-cultural movements within the “American-Mediterranean Regions.”

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## Notes

- 1) Abbreviation of its Spanish name: Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte.
- 2) Abbreviation of its Spanish name: Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur.
- 3) Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University - Center of Research and Documentation of the Atlantic Coast. BICU-SIDCA is the only institute where I could find documents about Bluefields.
- 4) I depended on Taylor’s (2005) *Times and Life of Bluefields* to explain the ethnic groups.
- 5) Instead of using the word “Indian,” I use *Indio* because it is related to the Indians of Latin America, whereas “Indian” is commonly understood to refer to the American Indian (or Native American) or those persons from the country of India.

- 6) The term 'creole' derives from the Portuguese *crioulo* or Spanish *criollo* that etymologically means *criar* (create, raise).
- 7) In this report, "Creoles" designates a people or an ethnic group. In other cases, I use "creole" as an adjective (creole phenomenon, creole language, creole culture, etc.).
- 8) Moskito and Muskito, Miskito are different spellings of the same term.
- 9) Cited from Sloane (1707: 1xxvi).
- 10) A linguist who studies creole languages.
- 11) Studies in Creole languages.
- 12) It is also known as the Miskito Coast.
- 13) According to Taylor, the word *Garífuna* means "cassava eating people" and derives from *Kalipuna*, the name of a tribe (Taylor, 2005: 13).
- 14) Brackets show additional information by the author.
- 15) The interview was held in the office of Ms. A. T. of the government of *Rama-Kriol* on March 8, 2017. The language used in the interview was English.

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## Discography

Lucky Dube

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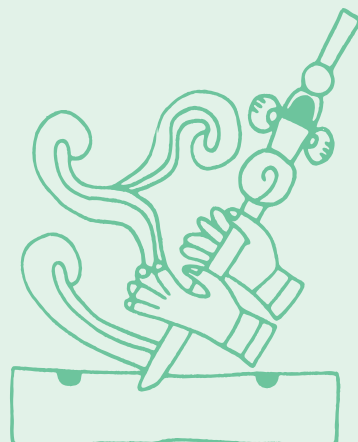
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