

Barama River Carib

Data source: eHRAF

Secondary source

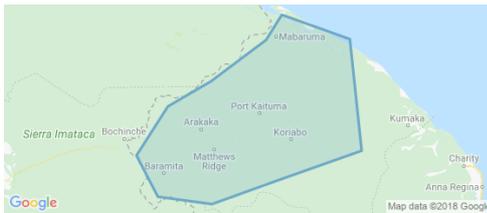
Entered by Emily Pitek, Human Relations Area Files

** Data Source entry, prepared based on data sourced from an external project.*

** Secondary Source entry, prepared from a literature review by a Ph.D. RA*

Entry tags: Religion, South American Religions

The Barama River Carib inhabit the tropical forest area along the Barama River waterway in Guyana. Contact with outside societies is limited, and the Barama Carib's religious beliefs do not appear to be greatly influenced by Christianity. Their religious beliefs include an otiose high god, present but distant and avoided spirits of the deceased, and a variety of other non-human spirits. The piayen is a priestly figure who, through training and experience, is able to communicate with the supernatural as well as act as a medical practitioner. There is no official political leadership office, but local headmen are present and chosen on the basis of personality, power, and strength. Because the activities of the religious group are tied up with the functions of the society at large, this entry considers the religious group to be coterminous with the society itself.



Date Range: 1907 CE - 1935 CE

Region: Barama River Region

Region tags: South America, Guyana

The upper Barama River region, Guyana ca. 1932

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Divale, W. 2004. Codebook of Variables for the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample. *World Cultures: The Journal of Cross-Cultural and Comparative Research*.
- Source 2: Tuden, A. & Marshall, C. (Oct., 1972). Political organization: Cross-cultural codes 4. *Ethnology*, 11(4), 436-464.

Online sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=sr09-001>
- Source 1 Description: Gillin, J. (1936). *Barama River Caribs Of British Guiana*. Papers Of The Peabody Museum Of American Archaeology And Ethnology. Cambridge, Mass: The Museum.
- Source 2 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=sr09-000>
- Source 2 Description: Adams, K. J. (2009). *Culture Summary: Barama River Carib*. New Haven, Conn.: Human Relations Area Files.

General Variables

Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

Notes: The Barama River Carib have had contact with Christian beliefs, but contact with outsiders appears to be limited at the time this entry focuses on. "The Barama River Carib are acquainted with major Christian beliefs, but retain their own minor spirits" (Adams, 2009). "The Barama River Carib have faced a series of Western influences. Discovery of gold in the rivers of the North West District ushered in an international gold rush from 1890 until well into the 1910s. "Pork-knockers," as the men were called who came from the coastal villages settled by freed African slaves, were joined by Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, North American, and British gold seekers. In the 1930s Wellesley Baird and his father, both Guyanese, commenced their gold-mining enterprises in the Barama River area and continued until 1969 (ibid). "They are aware that other Carib peoples live in Guyana and elsewhere, but have no contact with them" (ibid).

↳ Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

– No

Notes: According to SCCS Variable 1654, Pacification, the Barama River Carib were "pacified before the twenty-five-year ethnographic present", which includes the time this entry focuses on (Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

– No

Notes: According to SCCS Variable 1654, Pacification, the Barama River Carib were "pacified before the twenty-five-year ethnographic present", which includes the time this entry focuses on (Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Does the religious group have a general process/system for assigning religious affiliation:

– No

Notes: Because the religious sphere of life is coterminous with the society as a whole, there is not a conception of assigning religious affiliation. Additionally, there is no ethnographic evidence that the Barama River Carib would assign religious affiliation.

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– No

Notes: Because the religious sphere of life is coterminous with the society as a whole, there is not a conception of recruitment.

Does the religion have official political support

Answer 'yes' also in cases where the religious and political spheres are not distinguished from one

another, but the religious group's activities are tied up with, and supported by, the functioning of the society at large.

– No

Notes: The Barama River Carib do not have an official political office to provide support for the religion. In all other aspects, religious activities are tied up with the functioning of the society.

Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Estimated population, numeric: 600

Notes: "According to the best estimates, the total Carib population of the Barama country does not exceed six hundred souls" (Gillin, 1936:113).

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: "The piayen is the priest of the Carib religion, his functions being known as pai...a field including the subjects which in our own terminology would be designated as religion and medicine. For the Carib, however, medicine is merely one branch of religion. It is only the piayen who, because of knowledge and techniques acquired in the course of training and experience, can establish direct contact with the more important supernatural beings and forces. A second professional dealer in the supernatural is the aremi emu, whose activities, to be described later, are concerned with magic as distinguished from religion" (Gillin, 1936:169).

↳ Are leaders believed to possess supernatural powers or qualities:

– Yes

Notes: "It is only the piayen who, because of knowledge and techniques acquired in the course of training and experience, can establish direct contact with the more important supernatural beings and forces" (Gillin, 1936:169).

↳ Powers are culturally transmitted from another human (e.g. teacher):

– Yes

Notes: "It is only the piayen who, because of knowledge and techniques acquired in the course of training and experience, can establish direct contact with the more important supernatural beings and forces" (Gillin, 1936:169).

Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also "oral scriptures" (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of scripture.

Beliefs

Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer “no” only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Notes: "The Caribs have very vague ideas as to the eventual fate of the ghost. They believe, however, that for some time after it haunts the place of its death" (Gillin, 1936:166).



Spirit-mind is conceived of as non-material, ontologically distinct from body:

– Yes

Notes: "If a person dreams of a faraway place, he believes that his spirit is visiting that place while he sleeps. 'If I dream of Waini Saw Mill (a hundred miles away), it means that my spirit is out for a walk'" (Gillin, 1936:187).

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: "The Caribs have very vague ideas as to the eventual fate of the ghost. They believe, however, that for some time after it haunts the place of its death" (Gillin, 1936:166).



Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– No

Notes: "Carib ideas concerning the after life have not been carried to any logical conclusion. The ultimate disposition or location of the ghost has not been thought out. It is certain that there is no conception of a general place of meeting for all ghosts. No one expects after his own death to meet those who have died previously. There is no heaven, no happy hunting ground – nothing" (Gillin, 1936:167).

Reincarnation in this world:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of a belief in reincarnation.

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Yes

Notes: "When an individual has died the body is dressed in the person's best raiment and ornaments.

A coffin is made of wood...A grave three to four feet deep is dug in the floor of the house occupied by the deceased (grave: munano). Burial takes place usually within twenty-four hours after death, although in some cases it is postponed until the second day" (Gillin, 1936:164).

↳ Cremation:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of cremation.

↳ Mummification:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of mummification.

↳ Interment:

– Yes

Notes: "When an individual has died the body is dressed in the person's best raiment and ornaments. A coffin is made of wood...A grave three to four feet deep is dug in the floor of the house occupied by the deceased (grave: munano). Burial takes place usually within twenty-four hours after death, although in some cases it is postponed until the second day" (Gillin, 1936:164).

↳ Cannibalism:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of cannibalism.

↳ Exposure to elements (e.g. air drying):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for exposing corpses to the elements.

↳ Feeding to animals:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for feeding corpses to animals.

↳ Secondary burial:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1850, Secondary Bone/Body Treatment: Original Scale, indicates that "secondary contact with the body or bones of the deceased does not occur" (Schroeder, 2001; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Are grave goods present:

– Yes

Notes: "The only earthly possessions buried with the deceased are clothing and bodily ornaments. Bows, arrows, pottery, and so forth, are not buried with the dead, but are distributed among the relatives, sons taking precedence" (Gillin, 1936:164).



Personal effects:

– Yes

Notes: (Gillin, 1936:164)



Valuable items:

– No

Notes: (Gillin, 1936:164)

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below, as well as Gillin, 1936:164-165, for more detailed information on formal burials.



As cenotaphs:

– No

Notes: (Gillin, 1936:164-165)



In cemetery:

– No

Notes: (Gillin, 1936:164-165)



Family tomb-crypt:

– No

Notes: (Gillin, 1936:164-165)



Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):

– Yes

Notes: "A grave three to four feet deep is dug in the floor of the house occupied by the deceased (grave: munano). Burial takes place usually within twenty-four hours after death, although in some cases it is postponed until the second day" (Gillin, 1936:164). "The house of the deceased, in the floor of which the grave has been made, is deserted within two to three weeks following burial. The immediate clearing in which the house is located is also usually deserted" (Gillin, 1936:165).

Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

Notes: "The Carib world is jointly inhabited by human beings and a number of supernatural powers" (Gillin, 1936:154).

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– Yes

Notes: "In charge of the whole universe is a sort of literary diety, whose name is not known even to the paiyen [religious practitioner, i.e. priest]. This supreme being is so remote from the life of men that his characteristics are only indefinitely known and are little discussed. He is the supreme power or creator, the first cause, as it were" (Gillin, 1936:155).

↳ The supreme high god has deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– No

Notes: "The creator spirit is assisted by a chief lieutenant who is called Komanakoto...Komanakoto acts as the managing executive of the universe, devoting more attention to detail than does the supreme spirit. But he is also far removed from the affairs of men in these days" (Gillin, 1936:156).

↳ The supreme high god exhibits positive emotion:

– Yes

Notes: "On the whole he is beneficent, but he, like other spirits, is given to phases of anger..." (Gillin, 1936:156).

↳ The supreme high god exhibits negative emotion:

– Yes

Notes: "On the whole he is beneficent, but he, like other spirits, is given to phases of anger..." (Gillin, 1936:156).

↳ The supreme high god communicates with the living:

– No

Notes: "The priests do not pretend to be able to talk with this head spirit as they can with certain of the lesser supernatural beings; they have never seen him or had any personal dealings with him" (Gillin, 1936:155).

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– Yes

Notes: "There are two kinds of supernatural beings, spirits and ghosts. The former are independent beings or powers, the latter represent the souls of dead human beings. (Spirit,

akuru; ghost, yumbupa akasang.)" (Gillin, 1936:154).

↳ Human spirits can be seen:

– No

Notes: "Ghosts here, as among ourselves, are believed to be invisible under ordinary circumstances, although there are occasional individuals who, when passing near a house of death, claim to have seen the form of the dead person working about the house as in life" (Gillin, 1936:166).

↳ Human spirits can be physically felt:

– Yes

Notes: "Living persons often complain that ghosts are tickling them, pinching them, or causing other uncomfortable sensations" (Gillin, 1936:166).

↳ Previously human spirits have knowledge of this world:

– Yes

Notes: "Intercourse between ghosts and humans is seen to be entirely negative from the human point of view; the ghost minds its own business and contacts mortals only when they intrude upon its privacy. It keeps in touch with the affairs of mortals, but exerts no positive influence over them, either on its own initiative or on appeal from living persons. It haunts its last mortal abode and the minds of the survivors, but as time goes on its house tumbles down and its clearing is obliterated by the forest, while during the same time its memory gradually fades from the minds of mortals, until, both processes being complete, the luckless ghost disappears into limbo" (Gillin, 1936:167).

↳ Human spirits have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– No

Notes: "Intercourse between ghosts and humans is seen to be entirely negative from the human point of view; the ghost minds its own business and contacts mortals only when they intrude upon its privacy. It keeps in touch with the affairs of mortals, but exerts no positive influence over them, either on its own initiative or on appeal from living persons" (Gillin, 1936:167).

↳ Human spirits possess hunger:

– Yes

Notes: "Food is also regularly left in the house for the ghost. Food offerings of this sort are frequently discovered to have completely disappeared the next morning when the mourners visit the grave. Actually, the disappearance is doubtless due to the depredations of insects and animals, but it is regarded by the natives as a sign that the ghost has been hungry and made a good meal. Strictly speaking, food and fire are supposed to be kept in the house until it falls down, because theoretically the ghost lives in its former dwelling until it is no longer habitable. But in actual practice, it is said that the attentions to the grave seldom continue for more than a month or so" (Gillin,

1936:165).

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: "There are two kinds of supernatural beings, spirits and ghosts. The former are independent beings or powers, the latter represent the souls of dead human beings. (Spirit, akuru; ghost, yumbupa akasang.) The supernatural beings of the first class, which we will call spirits, inhabit the land, the water, the air, and at some time or another may be associated with practically every natural and man-made object in the universe" (Gillin, 1936:154).

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge of this world:

– Yes

Notes: "Masi is the spirit of the air, regarded as omnipresent, as a spirit which sees and knows everything..." (Gillin, 1936:157).

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "The affairs of the natural world are under the direct, although not comprehensive, charge of five classes of spirits, which are directly approachable by the medicine men" (Gillin, 1936:157).

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

"Indirect causal efficacy" refers to not being seen as consciously, directly and actively intervening in the human world, but their overall well being or general attitude has effects on, e.g., quality of harvest, success in war, health, etc.

– Yes

Notes: "Drowning and accidents on the river, as well as shortage of fish, are attributed to the displeasure of the river spirits, who may be propitiated by the paiyen [priest]" (Gillin, 1936:162).

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit negative emotion:

– Yes

Notes: "The akatombo are regarded as malevolent or mischievous beings who are forever present, waiting to make trouble" (Gillin, 1936:159).

↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:

– Yes

↳ Power of beings is domain specific:

Domain can refer to a general area of life or the environment (e.g., war, the ocean, child bearing, rivers, etc.), including multiple areas of specialization, or to specifically-defined

physical spaces or regions.

– Yes

Notes: The affairs of the natural world are under the direct, although not comprehensive, charge of five classes of spirits, which are directly approachable by the medicine men. Each of these five classes or orders of spirits is believed to be related to an original or major spirit in somewhat the same way that a human family is related to its major ancestor...Each of the five names mentioned is associated not only with an individual supernatural being, but also with a class or order of spirits. Thus Piyumari, for instance, is the name of the chief spirit of the order bearing the name of Piyumari, which has the land and forest under control. All the spirits in a given class are equal, all represent without distinction the power pertaining to the class of spirits to which they belong. Each is equally powerful in much the same way as we think of all the members of a monastic order, for instance, as theoretically possessing equal holiness" (Gillin, 1936:157-158).

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– Yes

Notes: "A distinction is present, in the native consciousness, however, between what we may call social and religious offenses, between offenses against human beings and offenses against spiritual powers. It is one thing to trespass on the rights of a fellow man and another thing to transgress a religious tabu. Breaking of a tabu is automatically punished only by the spiritual powers concerned, whereas the punishment of an offense against a human being involves the human factor" (Gillin, 1936:142). The information regarding supernatural monitoring is limited.

↳ There is supernatural monitoring of prosocial norm adherence in particular:

Prosocial norms are norms that enhance cooperation among members of the group, including obviously "moral" or "ethical" norms, but also extending to norms concerning honouring contracts and oaths, providing hospitality, coming to mutual aid in emergencies, etc.

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about taboos:

– Yes

Notes: "A distinction is present, in the native consciousness, however, between what we may call social and religious offenses, between offenses against human beings and offenses against spiritual powers. It is one thing to trespass on the rights of a fellow man and another thing to transgress a religious tabu. Breaking of a tabu is automatically punished only by the spiritual powers concerned, whereas the punishment of an offense against a human being involves the human factor" (Gillin, 1936:142).

↳ Food:

– I don't know

↳ Sacred space(s):

– I don't know

↳ Sacred object(s):

– I don't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of coreligionists:

– No

Notes: "It is one thing to trespass on the rights of a fellow man and another thing to transgress a religious tabu. Breaking of a tabu is automatically punished only by the spiritual powers concerned, whereas the punishment of an offense against a human being involves the human factor" (Gillin, 1936:142).

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other religions:

– No

Notes: "It is one thing to trespass on the rights of a fellow man and another thing to transgress a religious tabu. Breaking of a tabu is automatically punished only by the spiritual powers concerned, whereas the punishment of an offense against a human being involves the human factor" (Gillin, 1936:142).

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other polities:

– No

Notes: "It is one thing to trespass on the rights of a fellow man and another thing to transgress a religious tabu. Breaking of a tabu is automatically punished only by the spiritual powers concerned, whereas the punishment of an offense against a human being involves the human factor" (Gillin, 1936:142).

↳ Supernatural beings care about non-lethal fighting:

– No

Notes: "It is one thing to trespass on the rights of a fellow man and another thing to transgress a religious tabu. Breaking of a tabu is automatically punished only by the spiritual powers concerned, whereas the punishment of an offense against a human being involves the human factor" (Gillin, 1936:142).

↳ Supernatural beings care about disrespecting elders:

– No

Notes: "It is one thing to trespass on the rights of a fellow man and another thing to transgress a religious tabu. Breaking of a tabu is automatically punished only by the spiritual powers concerned, whereas the punishment of an offense against a human being involves the human factor" (Gillin, 1936:142).

factor" (Gillin, 1936:142).

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Yes

Notes: "A distinction is present, in the native consciousness, however, between what we may call social and religious offenses, between offenses against human beings and offenses against spiritual powers. It is one thing to trespass on the rights of a fellow man and another thing to transgress a religious tabu. Breaking of a tabu is automatically punished only by the spiritual powers concerned, whereas the punishment of an offense against a human being involves the human factor" (Gillin, 1936:142).

↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

Notes: The only agents of supernatural punishment, as discussed in Gillin, 1936, are non-human supernatural beings.

↳ Done only by high god:

– No

Notes: "In charge of the whole universe is a sort of literary diety, whose name is not known even to the piayen [religious practitioner, i.e. priest]. This supreme being is so remote from the life of men that his characteristics are only indefinitely known and are little discussed. He is the supreme power or creator, the first cause, as it were" (Gillin, 1936:155).

↳ Done by many supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: The only agents of supernatural punishment, as discussed in Gillin, 1936, are non-human supernatural beings.

↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

– Yes

Notes: "...each tree in the bush is believed to have a spirit of its own (wiwi akuru: tree spirit) which must be placated when the tree is cut. When cutting a field, care is taken to pour a mouthful of cassiri on each stump. In return for this mark of respect the spirit formerly inhabiting the tree may remain in the vicinity, exercising a benevolent supervision of its old location until it finds a young sapling in which to take up its residence, or it may leave immediately for a new residence. If an offering is not made, the spirit of the felled tree will lurk about in an angry mood and bring trouble to the crops" (Gillin, 1936:161).

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in the afterlife:

– No

Notes: "...there is no day of reckoning when those now living will meet the ancestors face to face for an accounting..." (Gillin, 1936:168).

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in this lifetime:

– Yes

Notes: The only concrete example of the type of supernatural punishment meted out in this lifetime is poor crop yield (Gillin, 1936:168).

↳ Supernatural punishments in this life are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– I don't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of bad luck:

– I don't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of political failure:

– I don't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of defeat in battle:

– I don't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of crop failure or bad weather:

– Yes

Notes: "...each tree in the bush is believed to have a spirit of its own (wiwi akuru: tree spirit) which must be placated when the tree is cut. When cutting a field, care is taken to pour a mouthful of cassiri on each stump. In return for this mark of respect the spirit formerly inhabiting the tree may remain in the vicinity, exercising a benevolent supervision of its old location until it finds a young sapling in which to take up its residence, or it may leave immediately for a new residence. If an offering is not made, the spirit of the felled tree will lurk about in an angry mood and bring trouble to the crops" (Gillin, 1936:161).

↳ Punishment in this life consists of disaster on journeys.

– I don't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of mild sensory displeasure:

– I don't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of extreme sensory displeasure:
– I don't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of sickness or illness:
– I don't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of impaired reproduction:
– I don't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of bad luck visited on descendants:
– I don't know

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– No

Notes: "A Carib must follow the rules of conduct which will keep him out of trouble with the spirits. When he wants positive responses from the supernatural powers, he consults a medicine man or *piaiyen*. It is practically impossible for a layman to attract the favorable attention of the spirits directly" (Gillin, 1936:143).

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of messianic beliefs.

Is an eschatology present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of an eschatology.

Practices

Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the requirement of celibacy.

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the requirement of castration.

Does membership in this religious group require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the requirement of any type of painful bodily alterations.

Does membership in this religious group require painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the requirement of painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of property/valuable items:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating that membership in the religious group requires the sacrifice of property or valuable items.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of time (e.g., attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence of a requirement for the sacrifice of time.

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:
I.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale “ceremonies” and “festivals.”

– No

Notes: The Barama River Carib have public rituals, such as that for a good cassava crop, which are led by the piayen (priest). However, it is not indicated that participation is required. (See Gillin, 1936:174).

Society and Institutions

Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

This question refers to the wider society in which the religious group is located.

– A band

Notes: "Within itself, however, the tribe as such has no political functions and little social importance, The political unit is the settlement, a group varying in size from fifteen to fifty individuals who live and cultivate fields in the same immediate vicinity. These groups are located at wide intervals, usually in the jungle back from the river, and contact between them is consequently not close. Over each settlement is a headman whose authority, however, is decidedly limited and without sanctions. The headman is generally chosen by acclaim for life, or for the term of the existence of the settlement, by the adult men of the group. Several factors enter into his choice: his personality, his economic power, his physical strength. Occasionally a son or other relative of a former headman may be chosen, although such a relationship is by no means the deciding factor. In so far as the headman's personality carries weight, his opinions are respected and in that sense might be construed as part of the law, but few sanctions pertain to him which are not included among the prerogatives of the other members of the group as well. In other words, the headman has no special power to enforce his orders, and in case they are violated, punishment of the offender follows the lines laid down for all personal offenses" (Gillin, 1936:141). Additionally, the Barama River Carib have no political authority beyond the local community, which is reflective of autonomous bands and villages (Ethnographic Atlas column 33, Murdock, 1967; retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of formal education.

Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with a formal bureaucracy within their group:

– No

Notes: "Within itself, however, the tribe as such has no political functions and little social importance, The political unit is the settlement, a group varying in size from fifteen to fifty individuals who live and cultivate fields in the same immediate vicinity. These groups are located at wide intervals, usually in

the jungle back from the river, and contact between them is consequently not close. Over each settlement is a headman whose authority, however, is decidedly limited and without sanctions. The headman is generally chosen by acclaim for life, or for the term of the existence of the settlement, by the adult men of the group. Several factors enter into his choice: his personality, his economic power, his physical strength. Occasionally a son or other relative of a former headman may be chosen, although such a relationship is by no means the deciding factor. In so far as the headman's personality carries weight, his opinions are respected and in that sense might be construed as part of the law, but few sanctions pertain to him which are not included among the prerogatives of the other members of the group as well. In other words, the headman has no special power to enforce his orders, and in case they are violated, punishment of the offender follows the lines laid down for all personal offenses" (Gillin, 1936:141).

Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 20, Food Storage, indicates that there is no food storage among the Barama River Carib (Murdock and Morrow, 1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Is public food storage provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 20, Food Storage, indicates that there is no food storage among the Barama River Carib (Murdock and Morrow, 1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Does the religious group in question provide water management (irrigation, flood control):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of water management.

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

– No

Notes: "The Caribs have no beasts of burden or wheeled vehicles, so that all transportation depends in the last analysis upon the strength and endurance of the human body...On land all goods to be transported must be carried on human backs. Radiating from each settlement are a number of trails leading off into the bush..." (Gillin, 1936:53).

Taxation

Does the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of taxation.

Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– No

Notes: Tuden and Marshall (1972) column 10, Police (note, equivalent to SCCS variable 90, Police) indicates that "police functions are not specialized or institutionalized at any level of political integration, the maintenance of law and order being left exclusively to informal mechanisms of social control, to private retaliation, or to sorcery."

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– No

Notes: "...there is also an absence of what might be called courts or judges" (Gillin, 1936:140).

Does the religious group in question enforce institutionalized punishment:

– No

Notes: "It is apparent that the great majority of punishments are handled by individuals" (Gillin, 1936:153).

Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code:

– No

Notes: "Among the Caribs, the publicized, formal aspects of the performance of the legal and judicial functions are minimized. There is in this society no formal enactment of rules of conduct, either by decree or by legislation, there is no constituted legislative assembly, nor is any individual endowed with the authority to make regulations for the other members of the group" (Gillin, 1936:140).

Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– No

Notes: "The [Carib] are, of course, without writing" (Gillin, 1936:140).

Calendar

Does the religious group in question possess a formal calendar:

– No

Notes: "No provision is made for reckoning the passing of the years, or for distinguishing one year from another, so that no one knows his exact age" (Gillin, 1936:70).

Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Yes

Notes: The Barama River Carib are agriculturalists (relying on shifting cultivation), with a secondary dependence on fishing, hunting, and gathering. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.



Please characterize the forms/level of food production [choose all that apply]:

- Gathering
- Hunting (including marine animals)
- Fishing
- Small-scale agriculture / horticultural gardens or orchards

Notes: The Barama River Carib are agriculturalists (relying on shifting cultivation), with a secondary dependence on fishing, hunting, and gathering. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.