

20. DISCUSS KUNA MATERIALS (4/22/04)

Interpreting Father Gassó & Miss Coope

As with all documents, must interpret with care; nothing self-evident.

E.g. Coope left out any mention of a man who accompanied her on first trip.

Sometimes need information to connect different sources: Coope mentions Chief Joe Harding, how would you know that same as man Gassó called Soo?

“Ignacio” really named Inatoikinya

As with Jesuit relations, have to think about goals of what missionaries wrote: both were trying to get support back at home. But Coope had a less restricted audience, so more discrete. Gassó very frank, because he thought only priests etc. would see his diary.

What were differences in their core methods? Gassó catechism, oral drill. Suspicion of writing.

Was there event for her like catechism? Sunday school.

Why was her attitude towards school and literacy so different? Protestant need for unmediated relationship with Bible.

What was Gassó’s stance towards adults versus children?

What were differences in their attitudes towards how different Indians were? Towards questions of hierarchy and equality? Gassó much stronger feelings of Indian alterity; much more hierarchical.

What attitudes towards Kuna culture? Gassó said he was tolerant, but in practice drove him crazy. Coope more patient, except concerning one thing.

What baggage did they bring with themselves from home? Gassó anti-Liberal, Masons, struggles in Spain concerning the Church. For Coope prohibition, alcohol.

How did Indians use sense of difference to defend themselves? They claimed separate dispensations, different creations, different rules etc. for Indians and whites.

What was significance of story of Noah to Gassó?

What counted as becoming Christian? For Gassó, knowing prayers, catechism; supporting mission, coming to services. For Coope, ending drinking, personal conversion, accept Jesus.

For Coope and Gassó, what was the significance of names? Of religious images?

How did Gassó think God supported him?

What think Kuna motivations were to cooperate with the two missionaries? Can’t take documents too literally, e.g. remark about gold.

The Panamanian government versus the Indians

Much that happened in both missionary and secular period in one village, Nargana, though only one of 30-odd villages. Chief Charly Robinson involved throughout.

What was going on in terms of economics? Documents mention intrusive poor Blacks coming into forest. Same extractive economy as already discussed in previous lecture. Also plantations sponsored by government, but documents have less to say on them.

Why was dancing so important for police? Multiple answers: To meet women. Dance, esp. folkloric dance was important national symbol. Carnival was key national symbol, as much as for Rio or New Orleans. Also, dancing drove older generation crazy. Finally, there was an international dance craze, represented modernism.

How did police try to control villages? Punishments, eventually cut off from outside. How did Kuna resist? What weapons, weaknesses? Weapons of weak. Dogged refusal to comply. Spies, plotting.

How did leaders resist, e.g. Chief Colman? (Look at some letters of complaint.) What was the importance of writing? of chanting? Colman would complain constantly, visit islands to whip up resistance when police away. Limited violence. Then eventually gave up, concluded that violence only way.

What weaknesses of police and government? Why couldn't conquer faster? Very limited budget, arms, ammunition. Also not very bloodthirsty or ruthless.

What happened with burning of Niatupu? How do we reconcile statements by police and Indians? Documents more accurate on dating, but seems that police reports lied, Indians more on mark. Not necessarily true in other cases.

Why were Panamanian leaders so intolerant of Indian custom? So eager to make them over immediately? Why did Kuna speaking English, having American names bother them so much? Frustrated nationalism, U.S. dominance, history of Kuna alliances with English-speakers.

What was the nature of the US involvement? Why did they sucked into this conflict? Different interpretations: conspiracy, plotting. I think worried about involvement of American adventurer, eventually Minister became sympathetic to Indians.

What was role of William Markham? Impresario, managed Kuna testimony.