BEADED APRONS OF THE COASTAL PEOPLES OF THE GUIANAS

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Although many beaded aprons from the coastal area of the Guianas are among the oldest preserved collected objects of the South American lowlands, there is still no general consensus as to who the manufacturers of these aprons were. The glass beads used differ from those typically employed at the end of the 19th century and can be dated between 1750 and 1850. In the literature and museums, these aprons are not frequently described in detail, and the author is not aware of any early object for which a collector has provided more detailed information. This article is intended to give an overview of the aprons collected in early times and now found in museum collections, examining their patterns and bead materials, and reconstructing their origins with the help of literary sources from the 16th to 20th centuries.

INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the 17th century, women in northern South America began producing an item of clothing that was both functional and decorative: the glass-beaded trapezoidal apron known as the *queyu*. This term comes from the Arawak language; the Carib-speaking Akawaio and Pemón also used the term *mosa* or *motsa*. These aprons were the women's only piece of clothing, their use possibly prompted by the arrival of Europeans. An indication of this is that the Spanish word *camisa* (shirt) was astonishingly used in the Guianas for the finely handwoven cotton aprons of the men (Gillin 1948:835; Koch-Grünberg 1923:31). The British navigator and explorer Sir Walter Raleigh (1751:194), on his travels in today's Venezuela, only met women who were "stark naked." Neither could other explorers of the 16th century suppress a slight shudder in their reports of so much shamelessness. Since there are no early reports about possible precursors of aprons using plant seeds instead of beads, the development remains speculative. While the aprons that originated in the interior of Guyana are often described in the literature, early works concerning the coastal peoples pay very little attention, and pieces are subsequently misclassified or even unclassified in many ethnological museums.

The Inhabitants and History of the Guiana Countries

In the early 17th century, English and Dutch trading companies settled on the Guyana coast and selectively established colonies there (Figure 1). The western region was inhabited by the Warao (Warrau) as well as Caribs and the Arawak. The most numerous were the Carib-speaking groups, also referred to as Galibi in sources, who called themselves the Kali'na. The Arawak lived closer to the coast than the Kali'na in western Guyana. When the Spaniards conquered the Caribbean islands in rapid succession after Columbus' arrival, part of the population of the Orinoco delta and coastal islands (especially Yao and Paragoto) fled, triggering extensive migration along the mainland coast (Carlin and Boven 2002:12; van den Bel 2015:648, 650). In the eastern part (later French Guiana), the Kali'na and Yao finally became the dominant groups. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Spanish, Portuguese, British, Dutch, and French fought bitterly for supremacy, relying on shifting indigenous allies. In 1677, the French were able to establish themselves permanently in Cayenne (van den Bel 2015:649), and after centuries of conflict, the Dutch colonies of Essequibo, Berbice, and Demerara changed hands once again in 1815, before being united as British Guiana in 1831. Only Surinam, with the exception of its early years, remained under Dutch administration until independence in 1975.

Aprons: The Initial Observation

Already in 1652, the Jesuit priest Antoine Biet observed the first beaded aprons among the female inhabitants of the island Cayenne. He describes the women of the "savages" of Cayenne: "*Les femmes vont nues comme les hommes, portant devant leur nature un camisa large de deux mains, tissu de grains de verre ou rassade*" (The women go naked like the men, carrying in front of their nature a *camisa* two hands wide, a fabric of grains of glass or beads) (Biet

Figure 1. The Guianas during the second half of the 18th century showing the location of the tribal groups (in red) discussed in the text (drawing: David Weisel).

1664:353). The young girls, unlike the adult women, did not wear aprons. Biet mentions the blue and red body painting and the piercing of ears and lips to accommodate gemstone jewelry. Bundles of up to 20 strings of glass beads were wrapped around arms and legs, as well as chains of bone rings or seashells. The women also wore jewelry made of green jade-like stones imported from the Amazon, to which they attributed a healing effect against epilepsy and bleeding. Particularly appreciated were crystals that the women wove into their hair. It is very probable that the descriptions refer to the Galibi, whom the French in French Guiana called the Caribs or Kali'na.

Biet was part of a group of French settlers who brought the first black slaves with them. Like others before them, their attempt to settle failed due to disease and the attacks of the locals. The survivors of the expedition were forced to retreat to the island of Barbados.

THE WESTERN GUIANA COUNTRIES AND THE ARAWAK

Early Mentions in the Literature

Aprons were also made on the western coast of Guyana. They first appear in the report of the Dutch government official Adriaan van Berkel who, in 1671, visited Fort Nassau, the capital of the Berbice colony, writing of the Arawak (or Lokono, as they called themselves) who lived there:

> From both sides under the arms, after the manner of bandoliers, they sling all kinds of [string] beads; the green and yellow ones are held in the highest esteem,... these bead ornaments are also wound around their arms in three places; to wit, on the

> wrists, above the elbows, and on the shoulders. A lap, artfully made of the same beads, covers their modesty. Below the knee one sees similar adornments (van den Bel, Hulsman, and Wagenaar 2014:88).

He thus describes not only aprons but also other extensive women's adornments. Further brief hints of the aprons of the Arawak can still be found in the 18th century in the writings of the British physician Edward Bancroft (1769:273) in the year 1766 and the Dutch physician Philip Fermin (1770:42ff.) in the year 1770. Surinam plantation owner Johannis Sneebeling from the 1770s also provides descriptions of aprons (Kloos 1973:6), which were considered interesting by van den Bel (2015:655) because they probably referred to the Paragoto.

All observers deal only with patterns in general. One exception is the author Aphra Behn who visited the then-English colony of Surinam, most probably in 1663-1664, and described flowers as patterns in her novella, *Oroonoko or the Royal Slave*:

> The beads they weave into Aprons about a quarter of an Ell [29 cm] long, and of the same breadth; working them very prettely in Flowers of several colours of beads; which Apron they wear just before'em, as Adam and Eve did the Fig-leaves; the men wearing a long strip of linen (Hughes 2007:125).

Further descriptions of body adornment and other details indicate more exact knowledge on the part of the author.

Christlieb Quandt, a German missionary of the Moravian Church who lived in the mission Hoop at the border river Corentijn in Surinam from 1769, reported ethnographically in greater detail about the members of different ethnic groups living there:

> The apron of the Arawackian women has the size of a large quarto leaf [23-26 cm], and is made of coral [beads]. The background is either white, yellow, red or blue, into which some flowers are knitted, which the women know how to make very skilfully, but on which they often spend a lot of time.... [Figure 2] The Warao have larger aprons, the size of a small sheet of paper, mostly of white corals larger than those used by the Arawacks. But such aprons are rare for them, because they are poorer than the Arawacks (Quandt 1807:244-245).

The Warao (Warrau, Guarauno) spoke an isolated language and lived in the coastal area of British Guiana and Surinam in the lower, swampy areas. Above all, Quandt clearly distinguishes the Arawak from the Caribs (Kali'na):

> The Carib women do not wear aprons of corals, but use the above-mentioned blue East Indian calico, called Salpuris, to make themselves a garment that is somewhat similar to the European leg garments; only they are much shorter, and hardly cover half the thigh (Quandt 1807:246) (Figure 3).

The lovely glass beadwork attracted the attention of Europeans quite early and they began to collect it, leading at times to bizarre encounters. In Berbice in 1797, the military doctor George Pinckard (1816:517) tells of a young girl who took off her apron, which he wanted to add to his collection, "without blushing" directly in front of his eyes and replaced it with a handkerchief which he handed to her. The illustration "*Een indiansse vrouw van de stam der Arowakken*" (An Indian woman of the Arawak tribe) also dates from this period. This was made between 1772 and 1777 and can be found in the book, *Reise naar Surinamen*, by the Scottish-Dutch officer John Gabriel Stedman; the reproduction of the apron, however, is not very realistic (Stedman, Gabriel, and van Lier 1974: Plate XXXIV). The same applies to the apron that he depicts among everyday Indian objects in his second work, *Narrative of a Five-Year Expedition* (Stedman 1796:406).

Very vivid are depictions of Arawak women with beaded aprons from the 19th century. In a diorama that can be seen today in the Museum Volkenkunde Leiden, Creole artist Gerrit Schouten shows an excerpt from the life of an Arawak group in 1827 (Figure 4). One of the women in the scene is busy making a beaded apron and all the women are wearing them. The frequently chosen lattice pattern and the triad of brownish-red, green, and yellow colors, typical for a common type of apron, can also be seen. For her work, the woman uses a board-like instrument, in contrast to the peoples in the interior who used a variation of a bow-loom. A colored lithograph from 1850, based on the drawing "Arawakken" by Théodore Bray, shows a woman with an apron patterned with floral rosettes (Figure 5).

Apron Patterns

Christlieb Quandt was a Protestant missionary whose principles were very different from those of the Catholic Jesuits in French Guiana and almost diametrically opposed to those of the Spanish conquerors. For the Spaniards, the Caribs in particular were cannibals condemned to Hell, who had to be killed or enslaved if they were not baptized. In contrast, the Moravian Brethren (who, of course, were also active a hundred years later) had respect for the ideas and idiosyncrasies of the native Arawak so that they did

Figure 2. Lokono apron, 38x14 cm, Surinam, 18th century, most likely collected by Christlieb Quandt (courtesy: Staatliche Kunstsammlung, Dresden / Völkerkundemuseum, Herrnhut, acc. no. 66831; photo: Eva Winkler).

not censure their very sparse "clothing" from the outset. These Moravians placed the life of Jesus at the center of their missionary activity, which was based on pietistic principles. This could have indirectly provided the inspiration for the depictions on an unusual and perhaps unique apron (Figure 6) in the Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich, which was acquired in 1857 from the old inventory of the University of Erlangen (acc. no. Erl-172). It shows an idiosyncratic composition of two large, naturalistically depicted white birds with red and blue drops hanging from their beaks, standing on church buildings, as well as stylized pomegranates, grapes, and other objects that are difficult to identify. The bottom of the apron is adorned with a border depiction of the same form as found on 18th-century Turkish carpets. Two naturalistically depicted rabbits are situated at the upper edge of the apron. The two birds are a simplified version of a motif known from heraldry, but which in Christian iconography also serves as a symbol for Jesus Christ: the pelican tears open its chest in order to bring its dead young back to life with its blood. The rabbits represent the resurrection of Christ, while the pomegranates and grapes represent immortality and Christ's connection with the faithful. It can be assumed that the motifs were copied from a template.

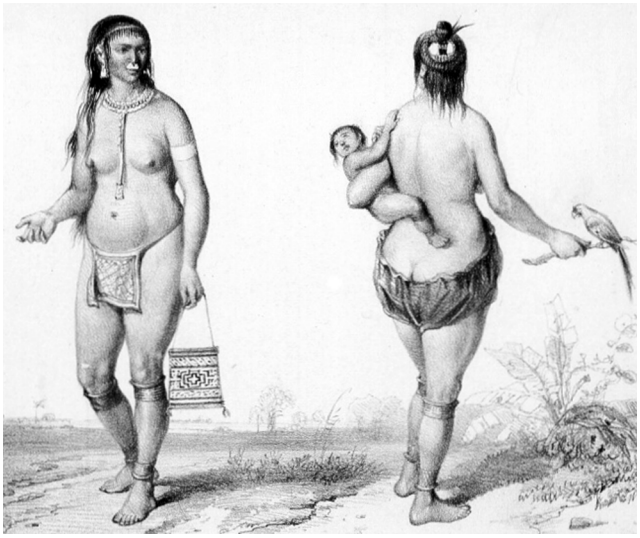

Figure 3. Representation of an Arawak woman (left) and a Carib woman (right). "*Femmes Indiennes*" by Pierre Jacques Benoît (1839: Figure 75).

Figure 4. Making an apron, in a diorama by Gerrit Schouten, 1827 (courtesy: Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden, acc. no. RV-360-5139d).

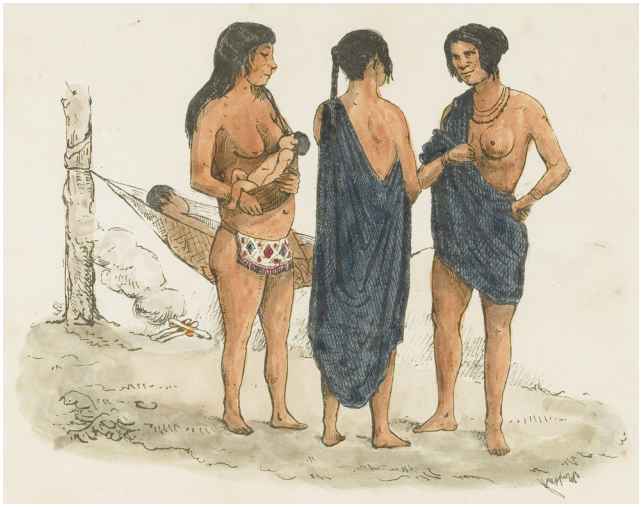

Figure 5. "Arawakken" (Bray 1850: Plate 23) (courtesy: Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, acc. no. TM-3444-17).

Some aprons in Dutch museums probably also originated in this early period. Two pieces from the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam are very archaic, showing stylized animal figures in addition to equally stylized floral rosettes (Figure 7) (acc. nos. TM-2118-23, TM-A-6131a). Contemporary reports relate that groups of natives visited the coastal settlements, inspiring women to design new patterns (Kirke 1898:48f.; Wood 1870:622). When such aprons are adorned with peacocks, fruit bowls, and floral palmettes, they call to the Western mind images from the Far East (Musée cantonal d'archéologie et d'histoire Lausanne, acc. no. I. D. 376; Musée du quai Branly, acc. no. 71.1878.32.113). The oft-described "blossoms" are also more reminiscent of the woven knots and depictions of blossoms on oriental carpets or fabrics than of realistic flowers (Figure 8, left) (Völkerkundemuseum, Herrnhut, acc. no. 66831). The ethnologist Claudia Schmitz (2016:241) suspects European needlework as a model and many of the motifs can be found on Dutch needlework samplers of the 18th century in exactly the same style; e.g., ships, peacocks, fruit baskets, and stylized animals. It is also likely that patterns that take up lattice forms as a design principle and are found in large numbers in museum collections were inspired by fabrics (Figure 8, top) (Herrnhut, acc. no. 66832). Apparently foreign influences were readily taken up by the women and translated into their own representations (Figure 9; *see* inside back cover for detail).

This prompted Schmitz (2016:242) to speculate that the aprons could have been "possibly made especially to European taste and for sale to Europeans" since the traditional patterns on wickerwork, for example, are often meandering. In that old pieces with traditional patterns

Figure 6. Lokono apron, 57x30 cm, Surinam or British Guiana, probably 18th century (courtesy: Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich, acc. no. Erl-172; photo: Nicolai Kästner).

Figure 7. Lokono apron, 39x22 cm, Surinam, probably 18th century (courtesy: Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, acc. no. TM-A-6131a).

are an absolute exception in the collections and are not sufficiently documented, this assumption cannot be verified. The statements of missionaries and other eyewitnesses on the patterns they observed also point in a different direction. Moreover, in the 18th century, hardly enough Europeans would have visited the remote mission stations in order to

Figure 8. Display of aprons most likely collected by Christlieb Quandt (courtesy Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden/ Völkerkundemuseum, Herrnhut; photo: Johanna Funke).

Figure 9. Depiction of a sailing ship on a Lokono apron, 45x29 cm, Surinam or British Guiana, probably 18th century, private collection (photo: author).

stimulate such production. Only the aprons produced during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the interior and those from French Guiana show meandering or wickerwork patterns.

Also in the 19th century, various authors such as the colonial official Henry Bolingbroke (1807:153) reported on the aprons of Arawak women, and the German baron Albert von Sack (1821:68) even observed young girls producing them. He relates that two young girls worked together and that when one of them had finished threading glass beads onto the wefts, handed them over to the other for incorporation into the apron, which is a necessity in this technique. In the second half of the 19th century, the aprons finally became a rarity, of which there are no photographic documents. Nevertheless, the German globetrotter and ethnologist Wilhelm Joest (1883:81) wrote of the "much more beautiful beaded aprons" of the Arawak, which were no longer preserved everywhere in Surinam, but only in Demerara. Officer Theodoor van Lelyveld (1919:24f.), stationed in Surinam from 1894 to 1898, said of the Arawak women that many who had not yet converted to Catholicism continued to wear their "Kwejoe" of beads, together with a cotton shirt.

Apron Collections

Various documented pieces from the late 18th century are in the holdings of the Moravian Mission, making comparisons with other, poorly documented pieces possible. Quandt brought with him an ethnographic collection that was registered in 1780 in the *Catalogus der Kunstsachen* of the Brethren Unity in Barby, Saxony-Anhalt, Germany (Nippa 2003:123). A precise tracing of individual objects is scarcely possible, however, because the archives were long neglected in the past. Further specimens originated from the estate of Bernard Kinne, a grandson of missionary Christlieb Quandt, and were also most likely collected on site by the latter between 1769 and 1780 (Figure 9, bottom) (acc. nos. 66832, 66788, 66789).

An apron collected (but not categorized) before 1839 by the German researcher Robert Schomburgk, who was in

British service, is also suitable for dating purposes (Figure 10) (Cuming Museum, London, acc. no. C09493). It is very similar to several objects in Dutch museums, which probably house the largest number of Arawak aprons (Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, acc. nos. TM-A-6131n, TM-1310-2; Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden, acc. nos. RV-1354-84, RV-2399-41). Unfortunately, the documentation of the oldest objects there only dates back to the 1880s. These pieces, which originate from the first third of the 19th century according to the glass beads used (e.g., red green hearts), are, however, clearly designated as "Arawak" and classified according to their collectors (Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden, acc. nos. RV-370-405, RV-370-406).

A large number of Arawak aprons can also be found in German ethnological museums, some of which come from the historical art chambers and curiosity cabinets of European aristocratic houses (Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig, acc. no. Ame9; Weltkulturenmuseum, Frankfurt am Main, acc. no. 04050; Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich, acc. nos. Hg-1046a, Hg-1046b; Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum, Hanover, acc. nos. 59, 352; GRASSI-Museum, Leipzig; acc. no. SAm650). The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford holds a specimen with a green background and stylized flower pattern, which was collected in 1812 by British Lieutenant Westwood in the Essequibo district and has the earliest documented collection date. A second specimen collected by Westwood, unfinished at the time of collection, exhibits diamonds on a green background (acc. nos. 1886.1.938, 1886.1.939). Further green-colored specimens in various European museums could be related to these pieces. Most of the aprons show simple patterns, are small to medium in size, and are rather roughly worked.

FRENCH GUIANA AND THE APRONS OF THE KALI'NA

References in Literature of the 17th and 18th Centuries

The situation in French Guiana differed considerably. There were Jesuits like Antoine Biet, mentioned previously, who first reported the wearing of beaded aprons by the Galibi. A few decades after Biet, the Jesuit Father Jean de la Mousse prepared the way for the foundation of the missions in Sinnamary and Kourou, both located near the coast to the west of Cayenne. Near Cayenne he came into contact with members of the "Arouages" and "Pariotes," whose *Capitaine* spoke Galibi and told him about his experiences on the coast between the Amazon and Orinoco rivers. Such encounters reveal the amazing mobility of many of the local tribes who were not nomads in the true sense of the word. In the town of Tullery, where De la Mousse founded a short-lived mission probably in 1686, he witnessed a large dance festival attended by many members of the Sinnamary people. He describes these without mentioning their ethnicity:

> *Les femmes outre les grandes tabliers de rassades ou de petite okayes qui vont jusqu'aux genoux, ont la nuque du col rehaussé d'un demi-pied par le grand nombre de tours de rassade et de petite okaye qui pendant sur la poitrine* [Besides the large aprons of glass beads or small *okayes* [snail-shell beads] which go up to the knees, the women have the nape of the neck raised half a foot by the large number of turns of glass beads and small *okaye* which hang on the chest] (Collomb 2006:193).

Figure 10. Lokono apron collected by Robert Schomburgk before 1839, British Guiana, (courtesy: Cuming Museum, London, acc. no. C09493; photo: Andreas Schlothauer).

De la Mousse and other authors do not always make it clear whether they also used the term "Galibi" as a collective term for other indigenous people, since different ethnic groups could be settled at the missions at the same time. For example, the mission in Kourou in 1714 consisted of 250 Kali'na, 30-40 Coussaris, about 30 Maraonnes, and 50-60 Arouas, as Father Aimé Lombard notes (Armanville 2012:27). The latter peoples no longer exist in French Guiana today, just as various other historical ethnonyms can only be assigned poorly or not at all. Many peoples merged into larger ones, such as the Kali'na and the Palikur.

An important witness is Jesuit Father Jean Chrétien who, in his 1725 "Letter from Cayenne," provides comparatively extensive ethnographic observations, especially on the Galibi. According to Chrétien, the women used an apron one square foot in size with a slightly longer lower edge. On festive occasions, they would often wear larger aprons, reaching down to their knees. These were made of glass beads, with larger beads at the lower edge to keep the apron balanced. In addition to the Galibi, he also mentions other ethnic groups such as the Palikur (Chrétien 1957:50).

The earliest illustration of a trapezoidal beaded apron can be found in the book of the French physician Pierre Barrère (1743:194), *Nouvelle relation de la France equinoxiale*. Unfortunately, the apron (Figure 11, left) does not show a pattern, but Barrère (1743:122) describes another glass bead apron in more detail: "*Le femmes se servent d'un coyou, ou tablier presque triangulaire, tissu de Rassade, ou de grains de cristal; & large, en bas, de près d'un pied*" (The women use a *coyou*, or almost triangular apron, a fabric of *Rassade*, or grains of crystal; & wide, at the bottom, close to one foot). "*On y voit les plus beaux compartimens du monde; & la plus fine Rassade n'y est pas épargnée*" (One sees there the most beautiful *compartimens* of the world; & the finest *Rassade* is not spared) (Barrère 1743:194). This description does not, however, make an interpretation any easier since the word *compartimens* can at best be freely translated as "pattern."

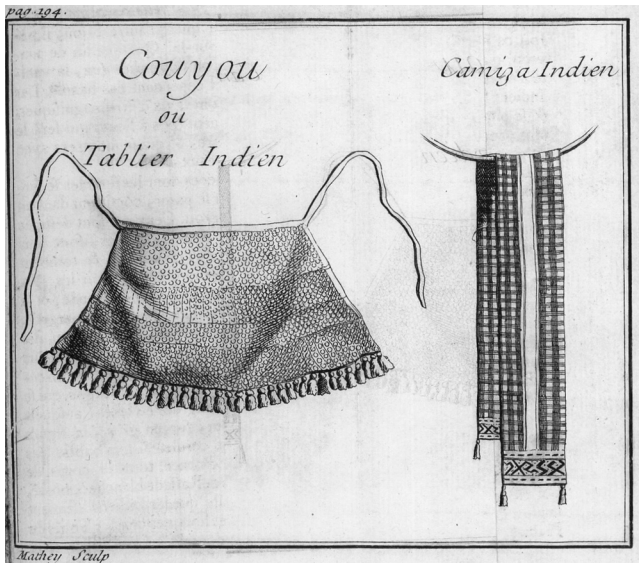

Figure 11. Indian *couyou* or apron (Barrère 1743:194, Plate 1).

There is also a depiction of an Indian couple in which the woman is wearing an apron (Barrère 1743:122). Small aprons reaching to the knees were worn in everyday life and larger aprons on festive occasions (Barrère 1743:194). Barrère stayed in the coastal area of French Guiana from 1722 to 1727, and describes the customs of the "main nation" of the Galibi (Barrère 1743:121). He also lists several other indigenous peoples along the many rivers and mentions that the missions brought together members of different peoples (Barrère 1743:235ff., 1751:16). He mentions the preference of all tribes for beads of white and blue (Barrère 1743:194). Women who could not afford beads decorated their couyou with seeds of the fruit of the Abouai tree (Barrère 1743:196). Barrère emphasises that the women of the Galibi and the Palikur, an Arawak-speaking people in eastern French Guiana, did not put on the "Cuyu" until after their unpleasant initiation rites and thus shortly before marriage (Barrère 1743:225, 226). Already in 1736, Jesuit Father Elzéar Fauque, the founder of the Palikur mission on the Oyapock River, had expressed himself negatively about the approximately one-foot-square apron made of small glass beads as the only clothing of the Palikur:

> *Elles ne portent que jusqu'au temps de leur mariage un espèce de tablier d'environ un pied en carré, fait d'un tissu de petits grains de verre, qu'on nomme rassade. Je ne sache point que dans tout ce continent il y ait aucune nation ou regne une pareille indécence* [They only wear, until the time of their marriage, a kind of apron about a foot square, made of a fabric of small grains of glass, which is called *rassade*. I do not know that across this continent there is another nation or kingdom of such indecency] (Fauque 1819:479).

Fauque's statement that the apron was put on only before marriage contradicts the observations of both Barrère and Biet. In this context the German-Brazilian ethnologist Curt Unkel (whose Indian name was Nimuendajú) wrote that the Palikur women had long since exchanged "the bead apron, which P. Fauque was still horrified about in 1736, for European costume" (Nimuendajú 1926:62).

Authors such as Dominican Father Jean-Baptiste Labat (1731:359), geographer Jacques-Nicolas Bellin (1763:229), Charter and Request Master of the Amsterdam Admiralty Jan Jacob Hartsinck (1770:6), and others used the travel

stories of third parties or material from public archives and therefore did not create any reports from their own experience.

In French Guiana – in complete contrast to the western Guyana coast – the women of the Caribs, as well as the Palikur, wore beaded aprons, whereas there are no eyewitness accounts of the Arawak living there. The trade that began not long after the discovery of the country, especially with Dutch merchants, had made glass beads generally available on the coast as early as 1680. Certainly a short time later other peoples in French Guiana also possessed this adornment, as noted in the report of Claude Tony. During an expedition in 1769, he accompanied French botanist and explorer Jean-Baptiste Patris, who was searching for minerals, to the hinterland of the Oyapock River. About 250 km from the coast, they met "Calcuchéen" – the Carib-speaking Kaikushiana (Carlin et al. 2014:27) – on the upper reaches of the Camopi River, whose women wore beaded aprons: "Et les femmes n'ont qu'un couyon de rassades pour cacher leur nudité" [And the women have only a *couyon* of *rassades* to hide their nakedness] (Tony 1835:280, 1843:217). Direct neighbors were the "Arramichaux" or Aramis(h)o (Lombard 1928:124), a subgroup of the Tiriyo in which the women wore the *couyou*: "Ils sont nus aussi, les hommes n'ayant qu'un calimbé et les femmes un couyou" [They are naked too, the men having only a *calimbé* and the women a *couyou* (Tony 1843:218).[1] A little later they came across Wayana who lived in a kind of war camp and whose women still did not use any clothes, as opposed to later, in the second half of the 19th century.

Apron Patterns

Beaded aprons already existed before the beginning of the missions and aroused the displeasure of the Jesuit missionaries in French Guiana. This may have contributed to the fact that the patterns did not absorb European influences. The baskets and presentation plates woven by the men of many groups were the model for the meandering patterns. What initially prompts the Western observer to automatically think of the Greek borders of antiquity is in reality of indigenous origin (Figure 12). Usually there are one or two meandering bands, but now and then they also cover the entire surface. In this they correspond to many later aprons of the interior which, however, deviate stylistically and in the unadorned fringes of the lower edge. It must remain speculative as to the extent to which the Wayana and Tiriyo in the interior of Surinam and French Guiana were directly influenced by the Kali'na, whose aprons were very similar in their production and design with meandering bands.

Aprons in Museums

After the abolition of the Jesuit mission in French Guiana in 1763, the Kali'na, already decimated by diseases, were without protection from the French settlers and the Maroons – the escaped slaves from Surinam – and retreated to more inaccessible areas. The country was ruled by anarchy for decades, even falling temporarily to the Portuguese from 1809 to 1817, during the Napoleonic wars. The number of Kali'na remaining in the country fell to a very low level and around 1840 it was estimated that only 250 individuals remained; the Palikur numbered 220 (Grenand 1979:363). It can be assumed that only a few aprons were produced. It is also hard to imagine that baptized women wore these scanty garments during the time of the mission stations. Thus, preserved aprons from French Guiana are true rarities. They are mainly found in the Musée du quai Branly in Paris. Of 15 specimens,[2] 11 are classified as belonging to the Kali'na and called *Couyou/Couiou* (Roux 2012:43). Two are not attributed to any ethnic group, and one to the Warao. Aprons of the Palikur ("Cuyu" after Barrère) or Kaikushiana do not seem to have survived, or at least cannot be identified. The complicated history of the collection is described by Benoît Roux in his essay *Les collections royales d'Amérique du sud*. In the 18th century, the sometimes quite precise information of the collectors was often not passed on, which is why the original collections were ethnographically insufficiently documented. Further information was lost during the items' progress through various museums (Roux 2012:13f.) The apron with accession number 71.1909.19.129Am(D) of the Musée du quai Branly represents an example that can be at least partially traced (Figure 13). It was moved from the old collection of the "Ècole de Santé de Brest" in about 1830 to the collection of the Musée d'Archéologie nationale, then to the Musée de Marine (acc. no. 1872-2898), and finally to the Musée du quai Branly where it now resides.

The majority of the collection of the Musée du quai Branly consists of aprons with collection numbers beginning with the digits 71.1878.32 and mostly from the old collection of the Dépôt de la Bibliothèque nationale (Muséum des Antiques). According to Benoît Roux (2012:4), all these objects were "pre-revolutionary," having entered collections before 1789, and have their origin in French Guiana (Figure 14). Nevertheless, in the list of ethnological objects collected by Dutch governor Wilhelm V, Prince of Orange, which were confiscated in 1795 in Holland, for example, one also finds "*Deux tabliers de femmes sauvages, d'un tissu particulier orné de verroterie*" (Two aprons of heathen women, of a particular fabric adorned with glassware) for which ethnic origin, place of collection, and whereabouts are unclear (Roux 2012:40).

Figure 12. Kali'na apron, 61x36 cm, French Guiana, probably 18th century, private collection (photo: author)

Four aprons in the collection of the Musée du quai Branly show the typical figurative Arawak style: depictions of flowers and peacocks. According to documents in the Bibliothèque nationale, two of them were collected in French Guiana (Roux 2012:47) and are classified as Kali'na (acc. nos. 71.1878.32.93, 71.1878.32.113). Another is attributed to the Warao (acc. no. 71.1881.107.3), and a fourth is not categorized at all (acc. no. 71.1957.0.6 X Am). The alleged "Warao" object (acc. no. 71.1881.107.3) also contains red white-heart beads in addition to the brown-red ones, so it was produced after 1830 and seems to be of a different origin.

Two unattributed specimens in the Kali'na style are owned by the Musée des Beaux Arts et d'Archéologie, Besançon (acc. no. 853.50.70, collected before 1853) (Figure 15), and the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle de Lille (acc. no. 990.02.3301) (Figure 16), obtained before 1849 by Alphonse Moillet. It is, however, uncertain whether he acquired the apron while traveling locally or not.

THE BEADS

The glass beads used as the main material for the design of the aprons provide valuable information about their origin and age. In addition to knives and axes, glass beads became an important commodity from the beginning of contact with Europeans. In 1671, Van Berkel reported on the preference among the Arawak along the western coast for yellow and green beads (van den Bel 2014:88). Cargo manifests and letters from the 17th century mention glass beads as part of ship cargoes bound for the New World, partly with exact quantities (Hulsman 2009:91). In 1642, the ship *Argus* loaded a total of 410 pounds of glass beads for Essequibo in the colors white, yellow, green, and violet (Hulsman 2009:337). The commander of Berbice, Mathaeus Bergenaer, ordered 300 pounds of white, blue, and green beads for his colony in 1668, and 400 pounds in 1669 (Hulsman 2009:339). In a letter to the West India Company in 1679, the governor of Essequibo, Abraham Beekman, requested a larger quantity of sky-blue beads for trade in his colony and with the Spaniards (Hulsman 2009:187; Odeen 2001:194).

The trade in glass beads on the eastern coast of Guyana is also documented, particularly in Dutch archives. The shiploads contained small, monochrome glass beads in quantities up to several hundred pounds, while the larger decorated beads were counted individually up to a thousand pieces (Hulsman 2009:336ff.). A total of several hundred kilos were imported annually, some of which were probably

Figure 13. Kali'na apron, 40x23 cm, French Guiana, probably 18th century (courtesy: Musée du quai Branly, acc. no. 71.1909.19.129Am[D]).

Figure 14. Kali'na apron, 40x21 cm, French Guiana, 18th century (courtesy: Musée du quai Branly, acc. no.71.1878.32.115).

Figure 15. Kali'na apron, 50x24 cm, French Guiana, probably 18th century (courtesy: Musée d'Histoire Naturelle de Lille, acc. no. 990.02.3301; photo: Philip Bernhard).

traded inland (Hulsman 2009:218). Lodewijk Hulsman mentions various sources with information on colors and varieties. In 1639, Captain Cornelis IJsbrantsz van der Sluijs loaded various grades of small beads of different colors as well as larger red and blue beads for Cayenne in his ship *St. Jan* (Hulsman 2009:336). Abraham Gerbier, on the occasion of a survey in Amsterdam in 1660, noted that red glass beads were delivered to Cayenne and the Approuague for the barter trade (Hulsman 2009:186f.). The governor of Cayenne, Joseph-Antoine Le Fèbvre de La Barre, wrote that beads "*de la Rassade blanche, et non d'autre couleur*" (white *Rassade*, not other colors) were in high demand among the locals (La Barre 1666:52).

Figure 16. Kali'na apron, 45x22 cm, French Guiana, probably 18th century (courtesy: Musée des Beaux Arts et d'Archaeologie, Besançon, acc. no. 853.50.70).

This information is consistent with the results of excavations in French Guiana, during which white, blue, and red beads were found in graves (*see* Oehrl 2019). In the coastal area of the west, however, no glass beads came to light (Hulsman 2009:218), in contrast to the interior of British Guiana where larger quantities of beads were found in graves on the Rupununi River dating from the first half of the 19th century (Evans and Meggers 1960:314-319, 322).

The aprons that survive today were created between about 1750 and 1850. In addition to the usual dating by comparing the style with documented pieces, the types of glass beads used provide particular clues. Special indicators are the red beads. Many specimens exhibit brown-red beads with a dark inner layer (called green hearts), an indication of production at the beginning of the 19th century or earlier. After 1830, ruby-red beads with a white core (white hearts) newly produced by Venetian glassmakers and much more brilliant in color, slowly replaced the brown-red ones (Billeck 2008:49; Harter 1992:87). Sometimes both varieties were used side by side in one piece, for example in the Schomburgk apron collected before 1839.

Blue beads often have a gray tint typical of early blue beads, and yellow tones are not very bright. The Arawak's preference for the four colors blue, green, yellow, and red, which are used together, is particularly striking. The women usually used small seed beads, about 1.75x2.5 mm in size, oblate and fairly uniform, which are almost always opaque. Other aprons contain slightly larger, less-round glass beads.

In the Dutch colonies, the beads used in 18th-century aprons likely came from the Netherlands, a major exporter of the products of Bavaria and Bohemia. It is unlikely that they were made in Holland since beadmaking there ceased ca. 1698 (Karklins 2012:82). Furthermore, prior to that date, they only produced drawn beads (e.g., seed beads), not those made by furnace winding. It is also possible that some of the beads may have originated in Venice, a major bead producer for several centuries, or France (from Rouen or Nevers).

The aprons of the Kali'na are much more reserved in their colors and often have only one or two main colors against a white background.

Many of the preserved pieces are conspicuous by the large, elaborately produced glass beads that are used along the lower edge. In the 18th century, the Arawak mostly used the colorless, transparent, round to oval "gooseberry" beads with fine white stripes (Figure 17). The large beads, which appear almost pristine, form the decoration of the fringes at the lower end of the Kali'na bead apron in Figure 12 and are varieties that were in use in the 17th and 18th centuries (Figure 18). Amber-colored beads with eight pressed pentagonal facets have been found at North American archaeological sites dating to 1650-1833, but are most common from 1700-1760 (Karklins et al. 2016:25, Figure 13). Similar pentagonal-faceted beads in blue and colorless glass were also found during excavations by Enrico Fernandes at an urn cemetery at site A-15, Vila Velha, in Brazil. They could be dated to the first half of the 18th century (Billeck and Luze 2019:107-108). These

Figure 17. Gooseberry beads (detail of Figure 9) (photo: author).

Figure 18. Pentagonal-faceted and "rattlesnake" beads (detail of Figure 12) (photo: author).

beads were produced in eastern Bavaria, Upper Austria, and neighboring areas of southern Bohemia (Karklins 2019). The same also applies to the so-called "rattlesnake" beads used here; round beads with wavy yellow lines applied as a thin glaze to a black background. Although it is impossible to say without chemical analysis, the beads may well be made of Proterobas, an easily melted stone used to make beads exclusively in the Bavarian Fichtelgebirge until the early 18th century (Karklins et al. 2016).

Sometimes beads at the bottom end were omitted and only the warp threads were left as fringe, which were then supplemented by the Arawak with natural or red-dyed cotton yarn. In the products of the Kali'na of French Guiana, fringe was often decorated with large seeds and/or natural-colored cotton tassels. In aprons from the interior, which often resemble those of French Guiana in the depiction of meandering forms, the generally unadorned bottom fringe represents a simple distinguishing feature. In addition, the long cotton threads of the upper and lower edges, as well as the side finishes, are usually left alone and sometimes additionally decorated.

APRON PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES

The technique of the beaded aprons is unmistakable and is the same for all pieces. It is not related to the preserved early Taíno objects of the Caribbean islands, which were produced using the technique of "brick-stitch" or "one-bead netting," which are both from the large family of beadwork net stitches. The history of the origin of the Guyana technique is unclear. North American native loose-

warp beadwork derives mainly from basketry techniques which have been performed by women for a long time. In the Guyana countries, however, it was the men who wove various types of baskets and presentation plates. Many of these objects show rectilinear patterns which can be described as fretwork or meander. Geometrically stylized representations of animals are also common. These patterns can also be found in a similar form on aprons. More likely is the derivation of the beaded apron from simple cotton fringe aprons which were still worn in the 20th century by the Carib-speaking Pémon in Venezuela, Brazil, Guyana, and Surinam. Richard Schomburgk (1847:402f.) saw women dressed in red painted fringe aprons among a Ye'kuana group ("Maiongkong") on the border between Guyana and Venezuela. It is not implausible that cotton fringes were connected as a warp with beads arranged on weft threads.

Cotton has been grown in Guyana for a long time; in Peru it goes back 5,000 years. Other fibers, such as those from the leaves of the Mauritius palm (*M. flexuosa*), were used to make hammocks, Kali'na and Arawak using different techniques (Nippa:127). From time to time literature mentions the use of "silkgrass," a pineapple fiber (*Bromeliaceae*), both for aprons and hammocks (for hammocks, *see* Barrère 1743:114, 115). The use of this fiber in aprons seems to have been limited to the Amazon region.

The weaving process on the South American bow-loom is described in detail by Orchard (1929:100-103, Figures 96-98). Walter Roth provides a very instructive diagram (Figure 19) but it is highly probable that the aprons of the Arawak and the Kali'na were not made on a bow-loom, as in the case of the inland ethnic groups, but on a board-like device. One such is shown in the hands of an Arawak woman in Gerrit Schouten's 1827 diorama (Figure 4). The Wayana in southern Surinam also had comparable frames until the 20th century. Photos taken by Claudius de Goeje in 1937 show these boards (Museum Volkenkunde Leiden, RV-A117-2-269, RV-A117-3-23). Here the two ends of the cotton thread bundles of the upper end are fastened in holes, and the lower ends are knotted at two projections. Sometimes the cotton threads are only fixed to the edges of the trapezoidal board. The weaving process then takes place on the upside-down object.

The basic material consists of hand-spun cotton thread which is s-spun in some cases and z-spun in others. The wefts are usually of doubled 1-ply (thin) thread, the single warps of thicker, 2-ply thread. The Arawak and Kali'na only used native-made fibers. A number of beads are strung on the doubled weft thread and the warps are pulled through the gap in the weft thread on either side of 2-3 (rarely one or four) beads. Edge and finishing techniques vary over time and by culture. Often the side finishes, as well as the upper edge, consist of several twined 2-ply warp threads.

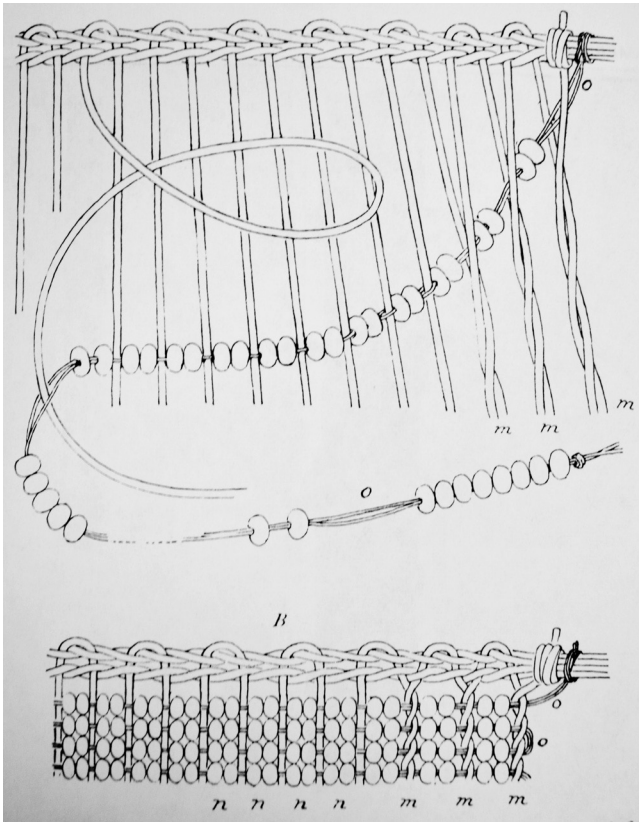

Figure 19. Apron weaving technique on a South American bow-loom (Roth 1924: Plate 18).

Sometimes several single strands at the upper edge are additionally wrapped with fine cotton. The aprons range from 10-70 cm in width (Wood 1870:621), but most are 20-45 cm wide.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from the preceding that the attribution of many early beaded aprons from the western Guiana countries to the Arawak/Lokono can be regarded as certain. The works of the Warao are described in a few sources only by their bead material, not by their patterns, and therefore remain in the dark. Among the Kali'na, only one instance of circumstantial proof is certain, since the women of the Palikur, Aramisho, Kaikushiana, and presumably also other peoples cannot be excluded as the manufacturers. There is no apron of this type with meandering stripes containing the red white-heart beads produced in Venice from about 1830, suggesting that their production was abandoned earlier. The aprons, which were widespread in the coastal areas of all Guiana countries for centuries, had become a thing of the past among the Arawak and the Kali'na, at least by the end of the 19th century. It was from this time that most of the

better-known works of the interior came from ethnic groups such as the Makushi, Wapishana, and WaiWai. The already small indigenous population continued to decline in the coastal area and the rapidly changing society expected its members to be fully clothed.

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ENDNOTES

1. The narrative of Claude Tony has appeared in various compendia and the versions differ in content.
2. Accession numbers: 71.1878.32.93; 71.1878.32.94; 71.1878.32.95; 71.1878.32.96; 7.1878.32.97; 71.1878.32.98; 71.1878.32.99; 71.1878.32.113; 71.1878.32.114; 7.1878.32.115; 71.1881.107.3; 71.1909.19.129Am(D); 71.1934.33.35D; 71.1934.33.62D; 71.1957.0.6XAm.

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