

Chatoyer 1773

Somewhere in St. Vincent's past, a group of African slaves were shipwrecked, maybe as early as 1635. They adopted the language and customs of the indigenous Carib people and would become known as the Garinagu.

Joseph Chatoyer was a leader of the Garinagu and signatory to the 1773 peace treaty that ended the First Carib War, reflected in the engraved silver collar of the ladle below, which is the only known artefact associated with him.

With such treaties, it was customary to exchange gifts. It is highly likely that Chatoyer gifted the drinking vessel to the British Army at the signing of the treaty.

The First Carib War (1772-73) began after several years of tension between the British colonists and the Garinagu. This was due to colonists encroaching on Garinagu lands and the Garinagu harassing colonial settlements.

The medal on the left was awarded to the British soldiers who fought in the war.

Today approximately 24,000 Garinagu live in Belize, 200,000 in Honduras, 130,000 across the USA, and an untold number in the UK. Chatoyer is recognised as the only National Hero of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.



The Ladle's Bowl

The graphic designs on the bowl of the ladle appear unique in the Caribbean, but are identical to some motifs found on the Benin bronzes, hinting that the ancestors of the Garinagu may have hailed from near the former Benin Kingdom in modern day Nigeria. The pronunciation of the Garifuna language supports this.

Joseph Chatoyer

Neither side was happy with the treaty of 1773, although for a number of years there was peace between the colonists and the Garinagu. However, the colonists were still trying to secure Garinagu lands, and the Garinagu reoccupied much of what had been ceded in the treaty.

This resulted in the Second Carib War (1795). Chatoyer was killed during the war, which ended with the defeat of the Garinagu and their exile from St. Vincent.

The St. Vincent's Black Corps Medal was awarded to the men of the St. Vincent Black Rangers, comprised of slaves, for services in the Second Carib War.



A Benin Bronze



A 'Red' or Yellow' Carib



The Carib War Medal



The St. Vincent Black Corps Medal