

Cirique and Zagaya: Notes on the Local Names for the Crabs *Callinectes* and *Grapsus*.

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The name "Cirique", for a crab, is noted by Taylor (1938) in his work on the Caribs on the island of Dominica. However, the "cirique" is described as a crab "disliking the sea" (p.111). Taylor quotes the Carib word for crabs from Father Raymond Breton's "Carib Dictionary" (1665) and notes that there are current Creole, patois, names of native origin for these crabs. Some of these names are as follows:

ba'khu (ba'khri)	is the cirique land crab.
yele'u	is the "soft shell" cirique.
agaya	a species of sea crab.

Breton, in fact, lists "araya" and not "agaya", though the description is apt-Cancre de Mer-Sea crab.

The Creole word "cirique" and the Carib word "agaya" (pluralized in the French Patois as "zagaya"), were mostly likely brought to Trinidad from the Lesser Antilles in the nineteenth century by French-speaking planters and their slaves following the Cedula of Population in Trinidad. In Trinidad today, "cirique" no longer refers to a land-dwelling crab, but specifically to the species of *Callinectes*.

Nine species of *Callinectes* are recorded from the Western Central Atlantic (FAO 1978), and of these six are found in the waters around Trinidad and Tobago, all distinguished from one another by various details of carapace, claw and thoracic shape. The six species are *C. sapidus*, *C. ornatus*, *C. danae*, *C. exasperatus*, *C. bourcourti* and *C. marginatus*. Stonley (1971), however, in her monograph on the crabs of Trinidad excluded *C. marginatus*. The largest of all the *Callinectes* is *C. sapidus* with a maximum width of 21 cm, which includes the lateral spines on the shell or carapace.

"Zagaya" is retained for the mottled, marine, rock-

dwelling crabs that are commonly seen on the sea coasts and off-shore islands and rocks where the sea - surge washes. These "zagaya" are *Grapsus grapsus*.

By way of interest, there is a strange retention of the name "zagaya" in Trinidad, it being applied to a mountain peak in the northeastern portion of the Northern Range, inland from the town of Sans Souci. This peak rises to a height of approximately 360 m. The Zagaya River is an upland tributary of the Grande Riviere, which flows out of the North Coast at a town of the same name, Grande Riviere.

Stonley (1971) reports only one species of the genus *Grapsus* for Trinidad, *Grapsus grapsus*, and notes it has been collected in the same habitats as another species of grapsid crab, *Plagusia depressa*, which is probably also referred to as a "zagaya".

The survival and use in Trinidad of "cirique" for the swimming crab has been by word-of-mouth for more than a century and a half. The earliest reference in print, which points to the fact that it was a well known name, even then, is in the work by Vincent (1910), on "The Sea Fish of Trinidad." He reported that on a menu for a meal of boiled grouper served on an estate in the Cocal, Manzanilla by the manager, one L.E.B. (Bovell?), Cirique sauce-the crab being identified as "The Blue Rock Crab"-was considered a suitable garnish for the fish.

A search through a considerable number of natural history and scientific books and papers turned up four references to the name "cirique". Two were in Innes (1986) and Innes and Taylor (1987). In the first it is given as the local name for the Swimming Crab, *Callinectes sapidus*. In the second, it is noted that the swimming crab or "cirique" is sometimes sold as food in Trinidad. Bacon *et al.* (1979) also referred to the swimming crab or "cirique", identified as *Callinectes*

spp. and *C. bourcourti*. They also list *C. danae*, *C. exasperatus* and *C. sapidus* from the mouth of the Nariva River. The same species, with the addition of *C. arcuratus* are listed as ciriques from the Caroni and Oropouche Swamps by Alkins-Koo and Soomai (1991).

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