

Hay Moros en la Costa: The Imprint and Legacy of Islam in Puerto Rico  
and the Fiestas De Santiago Apostol

by

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## ABSTRACT

Historically, colonizers, immigrants, and enslaved Africans served as carriers of Islamic culture to Puerto Rico, and today, that Islamic element is often unassumingly intertwined with the Puerto Rican culture. Using Bourdieu's concept of habitus as the framework, this dissertation engages customs and mannerisms of Puerto Ricans to reveal the imprint and legacy of Muslim Spain and the Islamic heritage of West Africa in Puerto Rico. It makes a study of the Spanish language to include vocabulary, proverbs, songs, and games that carry vestiges of Arabic language and culture. Most importantly, it also addresses an inherited religious and cultural tradition rooted in the history and legacy of Islam and Christianity and the human experience of cultural and religious phenomena of conflicts within Medieval Spain. Of particular focus, Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Loíza, Puerto Rico (a Moor and Christian celebration in honor of St. James, the Moor Slayer) offer a uniquely different expression. The celebration not only displays remnants of cultural and religious practices influenced by several world traditions such as folk Catholicism, Santería, Espiritismo, and Islam, but embraces the Vejigantes character which symbolizes the Muslim. The implications of these celebrations attest to a historically covert Muslim presence or at least a less biased conceptualization by the Puerto Rican people regarding Muslims. Unlike Medieval Spain, where Muslims were deemed invaders from 711-1600's, the religious, cultural, and political history of Puerto Rico does not suggest a deeper legacy of conflict that includes Islam as an adverse religious and cultural tradition.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the people from Loíza, Puerto Rico, because they were the inspiration for this dissertation, and to professors Dr. Abdullahi Gallab, Dr. Moses Moore, and Dr. Souad Ali for believing in me!

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## PREFACE

The story of pre-Islamic Spain is extensive and beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it suffices to comment on the Spanish folkloric myth that concludes that Spain was easily invaded in the year 711 by the infidel Muslims as a punishment from God. Spain was rebuked because of the immorality and debauchment of Visigoth King Rodrigo, who violated the daughter of his political advisor, a girl nicknamed *La Cava*. The story is a rather complicated and fascinating one that culminates with a tragic dénouement in which King Rodrigo emasculates himself as a self-immolation punishment. Authors such as Hugh Kennedy (1996) rejected such fantastic tales as detrimental to history. Kennedy argued against any evidence of this wickedness and decadence on behalf of Spain's leader, Roderick (King Rodrigo). Nonetheless, the Spaniards, informed by this myth, believed their defeat was a result of having succumbed to debauchery.

In April 711, the Muslim Berbers and Arabs from North Africa (present day Morocco) led by Tariq b. Ziyad crossed the Strait of Gibraltar into Southern Spain (al-Ándalus). The Visigoths who inhabited the area were defeated and Berbers and Arabs settled in. Assimilation on the part of the Christians and religious toleration on behalf of the Muslim newcomers, however, did not mean that Muslim Spain (711-1492)<sup>1</sup> was an optimal locale for *convivencia* (coexistence) as some scholars, such as María Rosa Menocal (2002), believed. She contended that what thrived in al-Ándalus was a culture of

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<sup>1</sup> The period of 711-1492 is what historians label the Muslim Spain period, but the last Muslims to leave Spain proper did so around 1610, when they could no longer be tolerated in Spain because of their Islamic faith Spain so adamantly prohibited.

tolerance and coexistence where Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived side-by-side in peace and prosperity. Author Richard Fletcher (2006) disagreed with Menocal: “But Moorish Spain was not a tolerant and enlightened society even in its most cultivated epoch.”<sup>2</sup> Christians and Muslims were, in Spanish vernacular *juntos pero no revueltos* (together but not mixed in).

Non-Muslim inhabitants in Muslim lands were required to pay a special tax. These people “of the book”<sup>3</sup> (Jewish and Christians) were known as *dhimmi*, or ذمي in Arabic, which meant “protected community”<sup>4</sup> The Muslims, in exchange for this tax, made themselves responsible for their welfare. Rather than being second-class citizens, these people continued to worship in their own religions since Muslims believed in no compulsion in religion<sup>5</sup> as the Qur’an endorses. Nevertheless, many locals converted to Islam and started speaking Arabic. Arabic was the language of the arts and letters. The Muslim sojourn unquestionably left a huge impression upon Spanish culture<sup>6</sup> and theological beliefs.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Fletcher. *Moorish Spain*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. P. 173.

<sup>3</sup> Monotheistic Abrahamic faiths (like Islam). Surah 2, Verse 62 in the Qur’an reads: “Those who believe (in the Qur’an), and those who follow the Jewish (Scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians, any who believe in Allah and the last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.” *The Qur’an*- Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. NY: ASIR Media, 2012. Pp. 9-10.

<sup>4</sup> L. P. Harvey. *Islamic Spain, 1250 to 1500*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990. P. 14. Author Kennedy defines it as: “*dhimmi*: a protected person, a term used for Christians or Jews living under Muslim rule.” Hugh Kennedy. *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of al-Ándalus*. London: Longman, 1996. P. xii.

<sup>5</sup> See: *The Qur’an*- Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. NY: ASIR Media, 2012. (Surah 2: 256), P. 29.

<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this paper, Melville J. Herskovits’ definition of culture is engaged. “A culture is the way of life of a people; while society is an organized, interacting aggregate of individuals who follow a given way of life. In still simpler terms a society is composed of people; the way they behave is their culture.” Melville J. Herskovits. *Cultural Dynamics*. NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964. P. 14.

The presence of Muslims in Spain from 711 to 1610 was the epitome of interaction of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim-saturated cultures and religions<sup>7</sup> that created a unique environment. This mingling of diverse people was a significant human experience that stimulated relationships and the creation of a distinctive civilization. Nevertheless, Muslims were perceived as foes during their sojourn in Spain and Reconquista Spain thrived on the ardor of defining nationality based on one religion (Catholicism), one language (Spanish), and one race (Spaniards). Unsurmountable differences between Muslims and Christians were the primary reason for the imperial decision to expulse the Muslims from Medieval Spain once they were crushed by the Christians. After the 1492 defeat, Spain originally agreed to allow the Muslims to remain and practice their Islamic faith, but the treaty was subsequently forfeited:

According to the terms of the treaty drawn up in 1492, the new subjects of the Crown were to be allowed to preserve their mosques and religious institutions, to retain the use of their language and to continue to abide by their own laws and customs. But within seven years these terms had been broken.<sup>8</sup>

The Muslims were exiled in masses from 1609 to 1614. Zealous Christians imposed a rigorous plan based on *pureza de sangre* or blood cleansing.

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<sup>7</sup> For the purpose of this dissertation, Charles H. Long's definition of religion is useful: "...religion will mean orientation- orientation in the ultimate sense, that is, how one comes in terms with the ultimate significance of one's place in the world." Charles H. Long. *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. P. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Roger Boase. "The Muslim Expulsion from Spain." *History Today*, Apr. 2002. P. 21.



The Christians defeat of Muslims in Spain has been remembered by the iconography and rituals associated with the national patron saint, St. James the Moor Slayer<sup>9</sup> (Santiago Matamoros). Today, one can still observe these battle reenactments throughout Spain, and most of Latin America to include the island of Puerto Rico. In Spain, in these elaborate mock battles, the Moors are usually defeated by the Christians and thrown into the sea.

Lately, Spain has been forced to re-think the Matamoros statue at the Compostela Cathedral in Galicia, Spain as a staple of material culture. Many immigrants from Morocco cross to Spain and are aghast to see such as an imagery of decapitated Moors under the feet of St. James's horse. However, in a news article from Spain dated July 22, 2004, it is clear that the Spaniards do not vacillate about the depictions of a saint trampling a Moor in the name of religion. They were not willing to remove the statue even when talks helped identify the perceived Mauro-phobia (hatred of all things Islam/Arab) Spain exhibits. The talks centered on the negative depiction of St. James as a Moor Slayer and the possible repercussions, such as the Madrid Bombing attack in March 2004. The news article elucidates the reader as to how annoyed Catholics became when it was suggested that the statue be covered at the base so the defeated Moors were not so obvious to the observer: "The plan was to put the statue in a museum and replace it with a less provocative effigy, one of St. James the Pilgrim. The decision outraged Roman

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<sup>9</sup> Javier Domínguez García (2009) succinctly argues that the iconography of a Matamoros at the Compostela Cathedral serves as a means to assert Spain's superiority and dismissal of other cultures that left an imprint and legacy in Medieval Spain. Javier Domínguez García. "St. James the Moor-Slayer, a new Challenge to Spanish National Discourse in the Twenty-First Century." *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, Volume 22, Number 1, 2009. P. 77.

Catholics. One newspaper commentator dubbed it ‘political correctness gone mad.’<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Spain has currently been criticized by other world nations as Spanish soldiers fighting in Operation Iraqi Freedom wore a recognizable Moor Slayer patch on their uniforms. “It would be difficult to find a more offensive symbol.”<sup>11</sup> *El Mundo* newspaper observed.

Recently, Spain has made efforts to amend the atrocities of forced exile and announced that immigration procedures for descendants of Muslims and Jewish from Muslim Spain were being facilitated in order to demonstrate goodwill. Likewise, an optimistic report dated 2011 by the Observatorio Andalusi,<sup>12</sup> an autonomous agency from the Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España (Union of Islamic Communities of Spain), noted the positive relationship of the Spaniard society towards Muslims. Despite the optimism of the report, it was also noted that many Islam and Muslim stereotypes are still prevalent in Spain. Stereotypes such as men depicted as despots and violent, and women depicted as submissive and manipulated by men. The Spaniards repudiate the veil because it is deemed as initial evidence of girls accepting and submitting to a specific creed or religion. Muslims are still feared in Spain even today because they come as immigrants from mostly Morocco<sup>13</sup>, and in the dire economic situation Spain faces, these immigrants fill the few job vacancies, or at least that is the perception.

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<sup>10</sup> Isambard Wilkinson. “Public Outcry Forces Church to Keep Moor Slayer’s Statue.” *Telegraph* [Madrid, Spain] Web. 22 July 2004. P. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Spanish Crusader Emblem ‘Offensive’: Iraq Mission Uniform Patch Features Mark of Saint Who Drove Muslims from Spain.” *Ottawa Citizen* [Ottawa, Canada] 29 July 2003.

<sup>12</sup> “La Sociedad Española Muestra una Mayor Aceptación Pública a los Musulmanes.” *ABC*. 2012. Web. 21 Sept. 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Two excellent fiction books on the Moroccan immigration situation in Spain are:

Nevertheless, the iconography and rituals associated with the national patron saint, St. James the Moor Slayer (Santiago Matamoros and also known as the Greater, son of Zebedee), are significant because St. James is also the subject of the Compostela's Pilgrimage since his grave is located in Compostela, Spain. "The Road generated, and continues to generate, a great spiritual, cultural and economic vitality,"<sup>14</sup> explains a tourism brochure from Castile and León. Every year since the 9<sup>th</sup> century, millions of pious pilgrims the world over go to St. James Compostela. The world-wide pilgrimage to St. James Compostela in Galicia (Northwest Spain) is proof that the veneration of the saint is very alive today and not isolated to Spain. According to Edward Stanton (1999), approximately three million people visited the tomb of St. James in 1993.

Historically, St. James the Apostle was one of Jesus' twelve disciples. Common belief places him in Spain spreading the fledgling belief of Christianity. He was decapitated<sup>15</sup> by King Herod Agrippa I in 44 and his body was said to be found in Compostela, Spain. Legend has it that St. James was known by the epithet Matamoros or Moor Slayer because he allegedly appeared on the battlefield of Clavijo (in the area of La Rioja, Spain) in 844 to defeat the Muslims on behalf of the Spaniard Christians. No historical data has ever supported St. James' divine intervention on the Clavijo battlefield

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Lorman, Josep. *La Aventura de Said*. Madrid: Gran Angular: Alerta Roja Ediciones SM, 2008.  
Ortiz, Lourdes. *Fátima de los Naufragios*. Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, S.A., 1998.

<sup>14</sup> "Castilla y León- A Different Kind of Tourism. Junta de Castilla y León." Valladolid: *SOTUR. Department of Industry, Commerce and Tourism of the Junta de Castilla y León*, 1998.

<sup>15</sup> St. James is not to be confused with apostle St. John the Baptist, who was also decapitated and his head was offered by Herod on a silver plate as a gift to Salome, a dancing girl, upon her request. St. James the Greater (the subject matter of this dissertation) was associated with the Church in Jerusalem and his body is buried in Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain. Apostles Peter and Paul were associated with the Church in Rome.

in 844. Regardless of whether this is a true or fictitious occurrence, St. James as a “Matamoros” becomes a significant character in the forging of a Spaniard national identity. He is even lauded by Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra (1505 and 1615) in his book *Don Quixote*: “This one is called Don Saint James the Moorslayer, one of the bravest saints and knights the world ever had or heaven has now.”<sup>16</sup> He will also be used as a tool to bring Christianity into the New World.

The reenactment and commemoration of Medieval Spain’s original conflict is manifested in the demotic rendering of *Moros y Cristianos* (Moor and Christian) celebrations in Spain and many Latin America locales where Spanish colonizers carried their religious and cultural expressions. In 1492, Italian navigator and explorer Christopher Columbus made his way to the New World and discovered lands for the Spanish crown. Medieval Spain’s victory in crushing the Muslims translated into zealous religious fervor to spread the Christian faith to the New World. The iconography of St. James the Moor Slayer became a venue to bring Christianity to the New World. Reminiscent of this history on the Iberian Peninsula, Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol (Feast of St. James Apostle) continue to be celebrated today in Loíza, Puerto Rico where this representation of an inherited religious and cultural tradition takes a different expression. The celebration is very prevalent and significant among the people of Loíza who celebrate it annually during the week of July 25 in honor of St. James Apostle, the Moor Slayer. The overall celebration has changed little over the decades but its original meaning has been modified. There is a very significant religious component in these

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<sup>16</sup> Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra. *Don Quixote*. Translated by John Ormsby. Kansas: Digireads.com Publishing, 2009. P. 544.

fiestas which stresses syncretism<sup>17</sup>. The main characters that comprise the celebrations in Puerto Rico are the *caballeros*, or Spaniard knights (symbols of Christianity), the *Vejigantes* (representing the evil Muslims), the *locas* (transvestites), and the *viejos* (old men dressed in tattered clothes.) These four represented characters walk through the procession of people headed by the statue of St. James depicted on horseback trampling a Moor or turbaned Muslim. The Moor Slayer, in turn, has three renditions: St. James of the men, St. James of the women, and St. James of the children. Each version is paraded through the streets of Loíza as the main attraction during its assigned day in the multi-day celebration.

Significantly, the Muslim element (*Vejigantes*) in this celebration is not perceived as a foe of the Christians. This *Vejigantes* icon that represents a (supposedly) evil Muslim is the character that the people in Puerto Rico have embraced. In Puerto Rico, with the absence of an overt Muslim adversary, this inherited tradition has been modified based on the island's unique environment. The mixture of many ethnicities, cultures, and a very significant religious component in these fiestas which stresses syncretism create a uniqueness that has redefined Spain's *Moros y Cristianos* into Puerto Rico's Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol. While Spain thrived on defining itself in a homogenized standard (a unique Spaniard identity) and expelled all Jews and Muslims from the country by early 1600's, Puerto Rico received many racially-diverse immigrants to include Spaniard colonizers, enslaved Africans, and others. This vibrant *mélange* of people converging in Puerto Rico has allowed for all-embracing syncretism.

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<sup>17</sup> Webster's NewWorld Dictionary defines syncretism as: "The combination or reconciliation of differing beliefs or practices in religion, philosophy, etc., or an attempt to effect such compromise." *Webster's NewWorld Dictionary. Second College Edition.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982. P. 1443.

# CHAPTER 1

## THE GROUNDWORKS

### Thesis Statement

The imprint and legacy of Islam through Iberian and African Muslims in Puerto Rico is palpable and profound although Islam is not exceedingly obvious on the island today.

### Research Question

Is there an Islamic influence in Puerto Rico, and if so, how is it manifested?

### Methodology

Ontologically-speaking, the underpinning framework for this dissertation includes both relativism (meaning filtered through a social platform) and nominalism (no objective way to look at things as meaning is not set in stone but rather is driven by nomenclature) with a conceivable intersection in many aspects.

Epistemologically-speaking, the social constructionist approach was favored because it complements the relativism/nominalism underpinning framework by emphasizing the way people construct their own reality. This research involved many conversations with people rather than passive observations and it concluded that there was no single common meaning of Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol due to the mixture of many ethnicities, cultures, and a very significant religious component in these fiestas which stresses syncretism. The celebrations meant different things to different people. Some perceived them as staunch Catholic celebrations, while others saw them as an opportunity to engage in Santería rituals, and still others perceived them as mere secular merriments. People gave meaning subjectively. Thus, framing this work within the

methodological principle of cultural relativism first expounded on by German Anthropologist Franz Boas (C. 1887), in which significance is based on a particular local social context, the essential question asked to the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol participants and spectators was: What is the significance of the celebration and what does it mean to you? Multiple interpretations<sup>18</sup> by the partakers of the festivities were documented. There is not a set denotation yet the meaning derived comes from a nominalism claim and socio-cultural construction. The people in Loíza have a personal interpretation that is informed by the particular socio-cultural background of the town. So, although everyone has his/her own subjective interpretation, it is still defined within Loíza's socio-cultural framework. This is significant because nowhere else does this celebration take place the way it does in Loíza, Puerto Rico.

This dissertation is also guided by scholar Sultana Afroz's (2012) "new research methodology" rather than by reconstructing social and cultural history of enslaved Africans through their narratives, which are practically non-existent in Puerto Rico. Afroz's new research methodology proposes:

...the study of the dominant culture and religious beliefs of their [enslaved] places of origin, their common habits and attitudes as displayed on plantations, their actions and responses towards the established quarters, their governing institutions and family practices, their common

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<sup>18</sup> James Lorand Matory (2005) engages Clifford's theory to address the reason for any multiple readings: "Such historical stagism [that all classes and races experience the material conditions of any give historical period in the same way and therefore imagine time and space in the same way] is not sufficient to explain the sorts of communities that people can and do choose to imagine. As Clifford shows, any given space can host multiple readings of its social geography and history (1977:299-347)." James Lorand Matory. *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005. P. 111.

words or usage of certain terms and names, the musical instruments and the musical sessions, the games played by the offspring of the slaves, the nature and form of slave resistance, and even slave burial grounds.<sup>19</sup>

Afroz's suggestion of looking at Islamic heritage legacies through socio-cultural practices motivated a look at the legacy of Muslim Spain and enslaved Muslim Africans in Puerto Rico through Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (a social tendency towards a particular behavior based on historical backgrounds). Communal practices and behaviors in traits such as hospitality, female honor and adulation, male-oriented mores, spirituality, superstitions, agriculture, architecture, music and dance, and the Spanish language were examined. But above all, the greatest contribution is in the African belief systems and the conceptualization of St. James in Loíza, Puerto Rico. This exchange is relevant and matters because of its socio-cultural impact. As anthropologist Sidney W. Mintz (1974) reminds us: "...the cultures of nonslaves also assimilated important materials from the African heritage."<sup>20</sup> He specifically highlights elements in folklore, dance, and music. This is certainly the case in Puerto Rico where the African heritage left a great imprint on other non-African people.

I argue that Mintz's observations are also germane to Islam vestiges, which became an undetected influence in informing the way people did things. They became

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<sup>19</sup> Sultana Afroz. *Invisible yet Invincible. The Islamic Heritage of the Maroons and the Enslaved Africans in Jamaica*. London: Austin & Macauley Publishers Ltd., 2012. Pp. 50-51, 53.

<sup>20</sup> Sidney W. Mintz. *Caribbean Transformations*. Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974. P. 12.  
There is also great assimilation between African heritage and Islam according to Kenyan political scientist Ali Mazrui (2009). In his work, he also elaborates on the issue of African diaspora's deprivation of identity. *Africa's Islamic Experience: History, Culture and Politics*. Edited by Ali Mazrui and Patrick M. Dikirr, et al. London: Sterling Publishers Pvt.Ltd., 2009. Also refer to: Mazrui, Ali. *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*. NY: Little Brown & Co., 1986.



part of the people's *habitus* or socio-cultural propensities based on a particular set of circumstances and required no validation because they were subjective claims. In other words, locally, things were done socially and culturally, in a certain subjectively-informed way and required no explanation or justification. Author Peter L. Berger (1967) suggests "...understanding religion as a historical product."<sup>21</sup> In Puerto Rico, there are elements indicative of Muslim undertones within a culture that supposedly had no access to Islam.

This project is also indebted to scholar Kevin A. Yelvington's (2006) theoretical methodology. A social anthropologist professor at Tampa's University of South Florida, he advocates "...an active re-engagement with Afro-American peoples and cultures through an understanding of the historical-contextual and political basis of anthropological endeavors."<sup>22</sup> Scholar Yelvington has a keen eye when researching the African diaspora in the Caribbean and its culture as a historical process. He argues that gender, class, and race inequalities are deeply intertwined within the culture "[that] is made and remade (and occasionally transformed) under certain conditions characterized by structures of domination, power relations, and inequality."<sup>23</sup>

As I conducted fieldwork in Loíza, I had the opportunity to visit the church where the statue of St. James the Moor Slayer, depicted on horseback trampling a Moor or turbaned Muslim, was located. As I exited the locale I visited with a group of local

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<sup>21</sup> Peter L. Berger. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. NY: Anchor, 1990. P. vi.

<sup>22</sup> *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora*. Edited by Kevin A. Yelvington. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2006. P. 79.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 7.

residents who were practicing in the choir for the upcoming festivities. A lady there explained the need for children growing up in Loíza to understand that the malignant epithets given to the people in Loíza come from the outside. Concisely she argued that the Loíza people are good-natured, humble people who are trying very hard to get ahead in society but they have been shunned and stigmatized by the rest of the population due to their racial background and low social standing. These people in Loíza are mostly descendants of enslaved Africans who chose to remain in the area once slavery was abolished.<sup>24</sup> They survived as domestic servants and worked in the fishing sector. Loíza has always been an isolated locale where external people seldom attempt to enter. This was my clear observation as I participated in the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol as I spotted few outsiders. Yelvington's remarks, made while working with the people in Trinidad, are also relevant to the people in Loíza, where gender, class, and race inequalities are deeply intertwined and thus transforming of the culture of the locale.

This work also benefits from primary and secondary sources such as books and articles written by ethnographers, sociologists, and historians, film, journal articles, newspaper articles, church records, brochures, and other related documents.

However, as African-American History Scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (2012) succinctly argued, "slavery poses enormous challenges to any scholar seeking to reconstruct its features."<sup>25</sup> He also concisely maintains that blacks were robbed of their

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<sup>24</sup> Roger Smith (2003) reminds us: "...all ethically constitutive stories, biological, religious, historical, cultural, can be read to imply that those who share a common heritage cannot properly choose to belong to any other political community, at least for the foreseeable future." Roger Smith. *Stories of Peoplehood: The Politics and Morals of Political Membership* (Contemporary Political Theory). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. P. 65.

<sup>25</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Reader*. Edited by Abby Wolf. New York: Basic Civitas, 2012. P. 144.

humanity upon entering the New World's slavery system as they were stripped of their true identity to include ancestors' surnames. Gates continues:

We will never know even a tiny fraction of the names of our ancestors who were taken from Africa. We will never see their faces, never read their words. They are lost to us forever, because of the devastatingly effective way the slave trade worked in its attempt to erase the past from the present of a slave.<sup>26</sup>

Hence, showing an enslaved African presence in Loíza, Puerto Rico has been challenging because not many documents exist. The enslaved African presence in Loíza is suggested through extensive documentary analysis research of San Patricio Catholic Church baptism records in Loíza, Puerto Rico, 1792 to 1845.<sup>27</sup> I reviewed and transcribed 3,737 Spanish and calligraphy-written baptism entries. I also reviewed and transcribed 1,745 Spanish and calligraphy-written death entries from the years 1823 to 1851.<sup>28</sup> These records were vital to the project as formal documentation of enslaved Africans as individuals is essentially non-existent in Puerto Rico. These records were very helpful in specifically documenting Muslim vestiges among enslaved Africans, such as instances where they were surnamed Infiel (infidel) because they practiced a religion other than

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<sup>26</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Reader*. Edited by Abby Wolf. New York: Basic Civitas, 2012. P. 147.

<sup>27</sup> "San Patricio Catholic Church Baptism Records in Loíza Puerto Rico, 1792 to 1845." *Family Search- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. 2014. Web. 28 Aug. 2014.

<sup>28</sup> "San Patricio Catholic Church Death Records in Loíza Puerto Rico, 1823 to 1851." *Family Search- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. 2014. Web. 28 Aug. 2014.

Christianity. Surnames such as Mandingo, Fulani, and Mina, all of which refer to Muslim-enslaved African ancestry, also helped document my claims.

The most engaging resources, however, were found during fieldwork<sup>29</sup> conducted in July 2013 in Loíza, Puerto Rico, when the annual Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol was observed. To understand the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol and its significance, specifically to African-Puerto Ricans, an on-site ethnological research was conducted. Observation as a research method was invaluable as it provided most of the qualitative data for this dissertation.

Fieldwork engaged a random, broad audience of local participants to include workers and patrons of the public library, the Loíza Cultural Center, and the general population of the locale. Other random people outside the Loíza area, such as Bayamón, Puerto Rico were also involved. Besides observation, other qualitative-centered research methods included Spanish/English questionnaires (see Appendix I for questionnaire) that collected specific information and were distributed and answered anonymously. One-on-one informal interviews in Spanish were also conducted, although they were time-consuming. These Spanish/English questionnaires and informal interviews followed a strict format which had been previously reviewed and approved by Arizona State University's Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (see Appendix II for approval document). They also required me to get an independent Spanish translator for the questionnaire although I am fully bilingual and Spanish is my native language (see Appendix III for translation certification form). While in Puerto Rico, I spoke only

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<sup>29</sup> This project was possible thanks to the Summer Research Award I received from the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies at Arizona State University in the summer of 2013 to complete fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico.

Spanish. All statements compiled in Spanish were translated by me. In addition, all Spanish passage translations in this dissertation are my own translations.

I achieved my goal of 15 to a 100 subjects' participation in this study – roughly 35 participated formally. Another dozen or so contributed by uttering their opinions informally. These were all people that have participated in the festivities as performers and/or spectators. All these volunteers were adults over 18 years of age. I collected information prior, during, and after the celebrations in the Loíza area as well as outside Loíza, in Bayamón, Puerto Rico. This was beneficial as I was also able to gear the perception of the celebrations outside the town that celebrates them. I was also able to engage several generations in the conversation such as grandparents, children and grandchildren. This was priceless when discussing subjects such as the prevalent belief in the evil eye. The overall consensus was that the elderly people still cling to superstitions. The younger generations claimed people used superstitions in order to explain the unexplainable. This was a subject of great debate when the *mal de ojo* or evil eye was addressed. The ages of the participants ranged from ages 18 to 105. They came from all social walks. They also engaged a wide range of races, although black was the prevalent race due to the location. Loíza is mostly comprised of black-enslaved African descendants. I was pleased with the breadth and depth of the people who chose to participate. Several religious worldviews were also represented in the answers.

All efforts were made to keep responses anonymous. Answers reflected the amount of information people were willing to divulge. In instances where the subject matter included Santería and witchcraft, a certain reluctance on the part of the participants was perceived, probably because the general consensus was that people

involved in such endeavors were backwards and evil-followers. This reluctance is perhaps entwined with the notion of severe differences between several religious practices. Regarding this imbalance between beliefs, as a distinguished African American scholar, Charles H. Long's (1986) observations on cargo cult are noteworthy and engaging here:

The phenomenon referred to as the cargo cult constitutes a specific type of religious experience. It is specific in its manifestations and beliefs- possession, dreams, ecstasy, and so on- specific in its precise definition of salvation and cargo, and it is again, specific because it occurs at a point of cultural contact, such contact defining disequilibrium between the cultures involved.<sup>30</sup>

These qualitative-centered research methods (observation, questionnaires, interviews) were an excellent approach because they allowed for modifications as the research advanced. For example, I was able to elaborate on particular prevalent themes (Santa Bárbara) as they were addressed by the participants. They also helped understand the level of awareness the people possessed regarding the celebrations' cultural and historical background. The overall validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of the materials compiled were excellent. No ulterior motives to taint the information were sensed. Interviewees were sincere in their responses and proud to have a scholar visiting their small community to research and study the local festivities. One man clearly

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<sup>30</sup> Charles H. Long. *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. P. 116. In fact, Long's work was a significant resource for this project, especially in his conceptualization of religion, and on how cargo cults allow the oppressed to seek some sort of validation and humanity.

articulated the need for Loíza's history to be documented for future generations. This dissertation documents unique Puerto Rican mannerisms and particularities associated with Fiestas de Santiago in Loíza in writing as it answers the research question.

Methodologically-speaking, using a constructionist approach within a relativist ontology supports why this dissertation does not tabulate nor present the multiple interpretations by the partakers in charts that list people as mere numbers. This dissertation presents the valuable responses as quotes scattered throughout the chapters and others under a section labeled partakers' observations towards the end of this dissertation. A qualitative approach rather than a quantitative approach has been preferred as this dissertation is concerned with people's feelings and not merely presenting numbers. A narrative approach to the qualitative data gathered helped compile and understand the stories told by people about their subjective meanings of the festivities.

One can argue that if all is relative, how do we know we have the right answer? What is the right answer, anyhow? One may argue flaws in a relativistic approach such as the accuracy of subjective information gathered since everything being relative does not allow for an objective reality. Meaning is based on a person's opinion or definition of it. Nominalism does not allow for an objective way to look at anything at all. Nevertheless, objectivity may be irrelevant if one's reality is what one perceives reality to be regardless of the "true" state of things. In the instance of Islam being a subtle influence in Puerto Rico, objectivity crushes that claim. However, a nominalist approach helps one understand why people may wear rosary-like Islamic beads (*tasbihs*), speak with many Islamic-peppered proverbs, and even carry on with old superstitions from Islamic Spain

such as evil-eye amulets and other talismans. There are elements indicative of Muslim undertones within a culture that supposedly had no memory of Islam.

Epistemologically-speaking, how does one weigh the facts and information gathered within the socio-cultural context? Credence and reliability of information is vital but it still must be decided whose words are taken to be correct. This flaw can be addressed by the fact that it is all subjectively created, and as such, the value is the same to each individual regardless of their subjective socio-cultural perspective. These have larger collective social implications. As a participant reasoned with me: “In Loíza we do not see the evil Muslim *Vejigantes* as our enemy.”<sup>31</sup> Such statements have convinced me that the overall advantages of the constructionist approach for this dissertation far outweigh the flaws. The chosen method has allowed for a discourse analysis in which participants’ responses are looked through the lens of the socio-cultural context in which they took place. This is particularly important in a place like Loíza. In other words, the subjective reading of the people in Loíza is still filtered through a socio-cultural lens which gives it a relevant particular meaning. As such, we are able to understand the unique aspects pertaining to the particular group being examined and understand why they differ from others. The fiestas in Loíza take a different reading than other fiestas elsewhere. The characters within the celebration itself attest to a cultural tradition that shows there is no animosity towards Islam. Inductively, we can look at cultural, political, and racial dynamics that may lead to the peculiar end result in Loíza. Syncretism also plays an enormous role in these celebrations.

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<sup>31</sup> This statement was compiled during fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in July 2013.



In working within a subjective/nominalist framework, one must recognize that people's socio-cultural backgrounds and how these are understood help shape the way they perceive their reality. There also exists, however, an objective historical credence to it because Muslim Spain did exist from 711 – 1600's. There are historic trends that inductively show socio-cultural influences behind it. Historic accounts are strongly reliable and practical things from material culture, i.e. objects that hold a cultural value such as the statue of a saint stepping on a Muslim man at the Santiago Apóstol church altar in Loíza (see Appendix IV for photograph), are latent evidence of an observable socio-cultural connection: "This field of study [material culture] centers on the idea that materiality is an integral dimension of culture, and that there are dimensions of social existence that cannot be fully understood without it."<sup>32</sup> What is significant is that St. James is strictly associated with Loíza, Puerto Rico.

In Loíza, it is believed that the saint statue either arrived with Spaniard colonizers to the area or perhaps it was a miraculous appearance. In any case, it is well documented that the same material culture in the form of a Matamoros (the Moor Slayer) statue existed (and still exists) in Spain as a remnant of the Muslim Spain period. One must ask

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<sup>32</sup> *Handbook of Material Culture*. Edited by Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane et al. London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2013. P. 1.

On material culture, the following authors are also salient literature:

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. NY: Verso; New Edition, 2006.

Berger, Peter L. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. NY: Anchor, 1990.

Burke, Peter. *Cultural Hybridity*. NY: Polity, 2009.

Douglas, Mary. *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. NY: Routledge, 1996.

Geertz, Clifford. *Interpretation of Cultures*. NY: Basic Books Classics, 1977.

*The Invention of Tradition*. Edited by Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Gilmore, David D. *Carnival and Culture: Sex, Symbol, and Status in Spain*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

why there are some specific interpretations of the same material culture within large cultural groups of mixed backgrounds. Socio-cultural trends tend to certain propensities to help give material culture a localized meaning. As anthropologist Mary Douglas (1996) reminds us: “A cross-cultural, pan-human pattern of symbols must be an impossibility.”<sup>33</sup>

To an extent, objectivity can be found within the historical accounts as documentation does exist, although at times, historical validity may be debatable. Linguistic patterns, i.e. vernacular speech, proverbs, and children’s songs and games infused with Muslim-vestiges, can also be tied to a socio-cultural influence even if not predominant. Socio-cultural remnants can be used as indicators of historical markers. A clear example of these are surnames such as Mandingo, Fulani, and Mina, all of which refer to enslaved Muslim ancestry and could be found within the Catholic Church records of Loíza. There may not be causations, but certainly correlations do exist. They show interplay between the two cultures. Interpretative claims such as looking at *habitus* or socio-cultural means which people follow show that thinking becomes reality. People will embrace the attitude of ‘we do it because this is the way we have always done it.’<sup>34</sup> These cultural elements influence the external environment and socio-cultural norms become part of the ingrained behavior. They create a model of reality within people’s own worlds. People think about “it” and act according to “it.” Thus, there is a Muslim

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<sup>33</sup> Mary Douglas. *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. NY: Routledge, 1996. P. xxxii.

<sup>34</sup> Ruth Benedict (1959) asserts: “The life-story of the individual is first and foremost an accommodation to the patterns and standards traditionally handed down in his community. From the moment of his birth the customs into which he is born shape his experience and behavior.” Ruth Benedict. *Patterns of Culture*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959. P. 3.

influence within the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol because as people celebrate they perceive the interaction of Christianity and Islam as portrayed by the Spaniard *caballeros* symbolizing Christianity, and the evil *Vejigantes*, the epitome of the Muslims, even if today this iconography has a suggestively diverse meaning.

In sum, methodologically-speaking, using a social constructionist approach within a relativist slant was the best course of action, as quantifying socio-cultural ingrained behaviors is challenging. The method best helped answer the main question this dissertation sought to answer of whether there is an Islamic influence in Puerto Rico, and if so, how is it manifested?

### Theoretical Framework

The unique circumstances of the people of Loíza, where Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol are celebrated, necessitate the assistance of the work of Erving Goffman (1965) on stigma.<sup>35</sup> The concept of stigma and its repercussions are closely followed in order to understand why the people who participate in these Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol are often deemed by society to be an eccentric lot. This eccentric lot congregates and allies in the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol. It also engages Goffman's idea that people play different roles in everyday life based on social interactions, adapting to prevent embarrassment.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> "While the stranger is present before us, evidence can arise of his possessing an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind- in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak. He is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such an attribute is a stigma, especially when its discrediting effect is very extensive; sometimes it is also called a failing, a shortcoming, and a handicap. It constitutes a special discrepancy between virtual and actual social identity...not all undesirable attributes are at issue, but only those which are incongruous with our stereotype of what a given type of individual should be." Erving Goffman. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965. P. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Erving Goffman. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. NY: Anchor, 1959.

In Puerto Rico, many enslaved Africans and their descendants formed secular fraternities or communities called *cofradías* or *hermandades* to alleviate their woes. These communities brought a sense of belonging for these people; they helped with the preservation of culture and provided financial assistance to its members such as for funeral expenses. These *cofradías* or *hermandades* were also sponsors of celebrations such as the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol.

Fernando Ortíz (1947)<sup>37</sup>, a Cuban sociologist trained in Madrid, Spain, in the early 1900s, wrote extensively about these *cofradías* gatherings by black people in Cuba. He originally blamed these gatherings as the culprits of all social maladies in Cuba such as the mafia or underground criminal activities in Nigerian Abakua practices. Ortíz retracted these thoughts once he concluded that blacks had given more constructive legacies to the Cuban culture than negative ones. He eventually became a voice for the same people he had once debased. These enslaved Africans creating a rich culture were deemed inferior by mainstream society. In fact, Ortíz has been faulted for studying blacks in Cuba as the “other,” something Cuban intellectual Lydia Cabrera (2004) attempted to remedy in her work: “Her rewriting of these categories [ethnic groups, race, and gender] deviates from a long tradition of defining the center in terms of a cultural elite in power, in order to forge an alternative national identity.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortíz introduces the idea of transculturation in 1947, and very germane to the legacy of Muslims to Puerto Rico’s insinuation. Ortíz’s transculturation theory can be conceptualized as a “cultural exchange” among all members that converged in the New World. It also allows exchanges from all involved. Ortíz used the metaphor of *ajiaco* (a typical Cuban soup made with many ingredients). *Cuban Counterpoints: The Legacy of Fernando Ortíz*. Edited by Mauricio A. Font and Alfonso W. Quiróz. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2005. P. 106.

<sup>38</sup> Edna M. Rodríguez-Mangual. *Lydia Cabrera and the Construction of an Afro-Cuban Cultural Identity*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. P. 22.

Long speaks of cargo cults<sup>39</sup> as a means for creating a sense of belonging and humanity for the oppressed in the same way these *cofradías* or *hermandades* offered. In Puerto Rico, this is exactly what *cofradías* or *hermandades*-sponsored events such as the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol and *baquinés* or black children funeral rites provided: an opportunity for blacks to gather and seek some validation as human beings. Mainstream societies shunned these groups of stigmatized people so they often went underground. *Baquinés* perished but Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol survived and continue to thrive in Puerto Rico.

Long's work on significations is also critical to 'the eccentric other': "In other words, what leads one to locate the differences within what is the common? In this manner, the cultures of non-Western peoples were created as products of a complex signification."<sup>40</sup> A noteworthy element about stigma is that it defines the people that are debased. Long's work on significations is to the point: "If one is oppressed, unable to mold a meaning about oneself that can become cultural coin one must nevertheless deal critically with the language about oneself."<sup>41</sup> Many people in Loíza explained that their stigmatization originated from outside their community.

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<sup>39</sup> Long explains: "I interpret the cargo cult as a religious phenomenon that describes the situation of cultural contact from the point of view of those who had to undergo conquest. I emphasize the new language of the cult and the desire on the part of the cult leader to create a new form of humanity. The situation of cultural contact places the cultures in question under severe tension; the hegemonic and authoritative orders of both cultures are threatened, and in the case of the conquered culture these orders are, more often than not, destroyed." Charles H. Long. *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. P. 64.

<sup>40</sup> Charles H. Long. *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. P. 5.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 8.

James C. Scott, in his book *Domination of the Arts of Resistance: The Hidden Transcript of Subordinate Group* (1990) also provides an appropriate theoretical framework. There is an atmosphere of cohabitation in the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Puerto Rico, but the celebrants have a hidden transcript as Scott defined: “Every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a ‘hidden transcript’ that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant.”<sup>42</sup> According to Scott, the hidden transcript is the concealed way in which victims express themselves to alleviate the abuse of their subordination. To understand their plight, one must go underneath the surface; one must go underneath the façade they portray in society. These marginalized people are denied any meaningful existence and are forced to make their predicament known in some alternative way. A hidden transcript, as defined by Scott, is suggested in the Loíza celebrations. The arduous manifestation of these celebrations is two-fold because the celebrants dare to speak of oppression<sup>43</sup> in a hostile world and they do it from an African-Puerto Rican perspective.

These Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol and the fact that the oppressed chose relegated characters such as *Vejigantes* for their self-depictions are, in a manner of a hidden transcript, a cry of defiance against their perceived ostracism. The chains of slavery

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<sup>42</sup> James C. Scott. *Domination of the Arts of Resistance: The Hidden Transcript of Subordinate Groups*. New Haven: Yale University, 1990. xii.

<sup>43</sup> On oppression, Charles H. Long comments: “This hardness of life was not the oppressor; the oppressor was the occasion for the experience but not the datum of the experience itself. The hardness of life or of reality was the experience of the meaning of the oppressed’s own identity as opaque. Reality itself was opaque and seemed opposed to them.” Charles H. Long. *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. P. 197.

snatched away their human dignity. Although the abolition of slavery<sup>44</sup> was accomplished in Puerto Rico in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, these enslaved African descendants are still ostracized. The celebrations are a radical cry and an assertion of their existence as humans. Carlos Romero Barceló (governor of Puerto Rico from 1977 to 1985) explained that “the 10-day celebration is an expression of an alienated, sometimes clandestine, culture, rooted in centuries’ old mistreatment of blacks that have lived in the area.”<sup>45</sup>

These *loiceños* celebrating the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol tell the world: “We, as a diverse community cemented by certain essence, celebrate with Matamoros (the Moor Slayer) but we do not necessarily endorse Spain’s original intention.” They have managed to modify their social elements by creating an annual fiesta that puts most differences aside. They celebrate in peaceful coexistence and embrace the evil Muslim *Veji-gantes*. They come together with an understanding and by embracing of each other’s differences, yet all amalgamated by the commonality of such dissimilarities as a

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<sup>44</sup> Puerto Rico celebrated the 139th anniversary of the abolition of slavery by having the Bar Association direct a program of conferences, music, poems, and typical Afro-Puerto Rican dances: “...para propiciar la igualdad racial...expresaron que “hablamos de la abolición formal de la esclavitud porque, mientras en la sociedad puertorriqueña los que lleven la peor parte en el acceso a la educación, la salud, la vivienda, la justicia y los empleos, entre otros derechos y servicios, sean las personas negras, se hace manifiesto que aún persisten la segregación y el discrimen por raza en Puerto Rico.” “Conmemoran el 139 Aniversario de la Abolición de la Esclavitud en la Isla: El Colegio de Abogados Realiza Actividad con Conferencias, Música, Poemas y Bailes.” *El Nuevo Día* [San Juan, PR] 19 Mar. 2012 (...to promote racial equality...expressed that “we speak of the formal abolition of slavery, because, as long as in the Puerto Rican society the ones that carry the worst burden of lack of access to education, health benefits, living quarters, justice and employment, among other rights and services, are the people of the black race, which manifests the fact that even today segregation and discrimination of race persists in Puerto Rico.)

<sup>45</sup> Carlos Romero Barceló. “Festivities of St. James, the Apostle, Held at the Town of Loíza in Puerto Rico.” Washington DC: *The Library of Congress*, 2000. P. 1.

collective or imagined community.<sup>46</sup> Samuel Lind, a local artist of Loíza, suggested that “the *Vejigantes* stand for the free spirit of Loíza’s African roots.”<sup>47</sup>

When accenting the legacy of the enslaved Africans, I take into consideration the words of James Lorand Matory, a Duke University anthropologist and former colleague of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Matory, who suggests a dialogue:

...[that] highlights the ways in which cultural artifacts, images, and practices do not simply “survive” or endure through “memory”; rather, they are interpreted and reproduced for diverse contemporary purposes by actors with culturally diverse repertoires, diverse interests, and diverse degrees of power to assert them.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> People came together as a group to seek some solidarity and humanity (in the case of enslaved Africans) in an inhospitable environment. I locate my own understanding of this coming together of people in relation to the idea of an ‘imagined community’ Benedict Anderson speaks of in his book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Anderson’s notion –although originally coined to address the formation of nations- can broadly describe the creation of any groups that come together based on certain compatibilities. People come together however displaced they may have been originally, because of a common cause that brings about loyal sentiments of belonging even if in an allegorical sense. Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. NY: Verso; New Edition, 2006.

Roger Smith (2003) also elucidated: “There cannot be ‘imagined communities’ without mental images of what those communities should be and who should be in them.” Roger Smith. *Stories of Peoplehood: The Politics and Morals of Political Membership* (Contemporary Political Theory). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. P. 48.

People in the New World perceived that belonging to these ‘imagined community’ was the best course of action. Each group knew where it belonged and thus accommodated accordingly.

<sup>47</sup> Samíri Hernández Hiraldo. “If God Were Black and from Loíza: Managing Identities in a Puerto Rican Seaside Town.” *Latin American Perspective*, Vol. 33, (2006), Pp. 66-82. P. 74.

“In Loíza’s interpretation of the Saint’s life, devils- *Vejigantes*- figure prominently, representing the enemy Moors. Samuel Lind, an artist who lives in Loíza, says their symbolism is now reversed, making them a benevolent demon, emblem of the liberated African spirit.” “Loíza’s Spirited Festival of Fun and Tradition- The Puerto Rican Town Honors St. James with a Lively and Culturally Rich Celebration of the Patron Saint.” *The Orlando Sentinel*. [Orlando, Florida] 7 July 1996.

<sup>48</sup> *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora*. Edited by Kevin A. Yelvington. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2006. [Chapter 5: The “New World” Surrounds an Ocean- Theorizing the Live Dialogue between African and African American Cultures, J. Lorand Matory.] P. 171.



This reinterpretation and reproduction by the people is best understood through the syncretism that plays a major role in these Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol.

Anthropologist Mintz observes:

In Hispanic Afro-America, St. James is sometimes called Santiago Matamoros- St. James the Moor-killer- since he is supposed to have appeared miraculously during the Reconquest, fighting on the side of the Catholic Spain. It would be difficult, one supposes, to convince those who believe Santiago Matamoros and Ogun to be one and the same god that he should be expunged from their religion because his presence dilutes or “contaminates” the African past.<sup>49</sup>

This dissertation is also indebted to Migene González-Wippler’s (1999) conceptualization of syncretism<sup>50</sup> as a merging of different religions. This syncretism is best served by using a parallel idea introduced by Islamic scholar Frank J. Korom (2003) who used the terms cultural creolization or accommodation (which allowed for human

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<sup>49</sup> Sidney W. Mintz. *Caribbean Transformations*. Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974. P. 18.

<sup>50</sup> Migene González-Wippler. *Santería: la Religión*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Español, 1999. P. x. Syncretism makes it possible in the New World for items of material culture, such as St. James as a Moor Slayer to be equated to Changó, from the Yoruban African-belief system. Relevant literature on syncretism for this project also included a course on tapes entitled: *Conquests of the Americas*. Marshall C. Eakin, narrator. VA: Chantilly: The Teaching Company, 2007. P. 17 (script). Also refer to: *Caribbean Religions History. An Introduction*. Edited by Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. González. NY: New York University Press, 2010. *Dialogue and Syncretism*. Edited by Jerald D. Gort and Hendrik M. Vroom, et al. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989, and Diouf, Sylviane A. “Sadaqa among African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas.” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10 1 (1999), pp. 22-32. In this scholarly article, the author observes the possibility that “Muslims exchanged orthodoxy for syncretism” (P. 30) in speaking about the use of Arabic words to refer to non-Muslim celebrations.

agency) rather than syncretism to explain Hosay celebrations on the island of Trinidad. These Muslim celebrations in Trinidad (in remembrance of the Karbala martyrdom of Hussein, the son of Ali and Fatima, and grandson of Prophet Muhammad) are very analogous to Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Puerto Rico. Korom argued: “Hosay is one such metonym, an emblem of identity that is reworked constantly in different contexts.”<sup>51</sup> In the case of Puerto Rico, Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol also exist in a metonym or substitution fashion as its emblem is utilized to represent something else. St. James and the *Vejigantes* character have been relentlessly revised by the people of Loíza. Both are subtler and subversive. This is in part due to the ability of a secondary cultural influence that has allowed for it to modify certain practices. Although many of these cultural practices throughout the locales that celebrate them are supported without being challenged, the vast syncretism in Puerto Rico has allowed them to transform. They became issues that were challenged and helped create a Puerto Rican identity. The Puerto Ricans understood a Spaniard root but not a solely Spaniard identity. This instance is an example of how humanity is able to create an archetypal event that holds significance regardless of cultural background. Nevertheless, scholar Yelvington warns us when speaking about syncretism and creolization:

...creolization and cultural syncretism and synthesis are often camouflaged as such, depicted by participants and outsider analysts as “pure” or “native.” Further, we should remember that creolization and syncretism occur not only between colonizer and colonized but also

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<sup>51</sup> Frank J. Korom. *Hosay Trinidad. Muharram Performances in an Indo-Caribbean Diaspora*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. P. 6.

between ex-colonized people. This approach would leave room for a consideration of “anti-syncretism” too.<sup>52</sup>

This dissertation also engages Raquel Romberg (2003) as she addresses the Caribbean religion of Brujería (witchcraft) in a manner that parallels the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol. She reasons that Brujería espouses the actual symbols used to downgrade it. This is precisely what the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol do. The celebrants have embraced the downtrodden (*Vejigantes* character as evil Muslims). Romberg engages Michael Taussig’s (1993) understanding of mimesis (as the imitation of human action) in her work. This is also germane to the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Puerto Rico because the celebrants embraced a Spanish tradition while simultaneously separating themselves from Spain in an alterity (or distinct) fashion. They have modified or adapted certain icons of the material culture, while mimicking the vital notion, in order to have them fit the circumstances particular to the island without losing authenticity.

In analyzing the festivities through Geertz’s “religion as a cultural system” theoretical framework, scholar Edward C. Zaragoza (1995) succinctly explained: “For Geertz, cultures contain within themselves the interpretation. The problem for the anthropologist is gaining access to the hidden interpretation. One entrance is through the system of religious symbols.”<sup>53</sup> As one observes and participates in the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol it is clearly intuited that the hidden interpretation includes multi-

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<sup>52</sup> *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora*. Edited by Kevin A. Yelvington. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2006. P. 8.

<sup>53</sup> Edward C. Zaragoza. *St. James in the Streets. The Religious Processions of Loíza Aldea, Puerto Rico*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1995. P. 9.

vocality that encompasses all. In Puerto Rico, with the absence of a Muslim enemy and no need to claim a Spaniard national identity, this inherited tradition has modified itself based on the island's specific circumstances. As such, St. James is exemplified as a Christian martyr/abuser/hero. He is also understood as an African orisha or spiritual guide/Ogún Baleyndo/St. Bárbara, etc. He becomes "whatever" for "whomever." This ambivalence and suppleness gives him a universal appeal. This is mostly due to the very significant religious component in these fiestas which stresses syncretism.

Numerous theories<sup>54</sup> are examined to address the multi-vocal Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol. This project examines the different readings of the festivities and addresses why they differ from the original source and continue to gain popularity among the celebrants.

Even given the historic, racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity in Puerto Rico, it is evident that the celebrations allow people to amalgamate despite differences. For example, *Moros y Cristianos* in Spain and Mexico are a battle enactment of good against evil in which the Christians conquer, defeat, convert, and then annihilate the Muslims at the conclusion of the celebration. Contrariwise, in Puerto Rico the mock Christian and Moor characters walk peacefully side-by-side in a parade and there is never a simulated conversion to Christianity as depicted in the celebrations in Spain and Mexico. The implications of this is that in Puerto Rico they do not carry the original proselytizing intent which stressed the battle of good (Christianity) against evil (Islam) and the subsequent defeat of the Muslims. The celebrations in Puerto Rico embrace, rather than

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<sup>54</sup> "Theory can serve to mystify what strike some readers as fairly straightforward matters of taste and application, of representation and reference, of denotation and meaning." Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. P. XX. Regardless of the struggle some encounter with theory, in his work, author Gates engages theory to show the richness of black literary work.

separate. This insinuates a socio-cultural difference that allows for such an interpretation on the island of Puerto Rico.

### Proposed Study and its Contribution

The work of Ricardo Alegría (1949), the most prominent cultural anthropologist and archeologist from Puerto Rico, who investigated and wrote about the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Loíza, Puerto Rico, was deeply influenced by the American folklorists and anthropologists William R. Bascom and Melville J. Herskovits. Like Herskovits, Alegría believed that traces of African culture were preserved rather than completely lost within the New World. In the 1949 film about the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Loíza, Alegría clearly articulated this idea. At the time, Alegría attributed the African remnants to the Yoruba. Many decades later, in 2006, he changed his mind and stated that Congolese influence<sup>55</sup> appears to have been more dominant. Unfortunately, Alegría died in 2011, before he could elaborate on his latest findings. The Yoruba versus Congolese implications for Puerto Rico are that Congolese enslaved Africans were already familiar with St. James as a proselytizing icon on behalf of Christianity. In fact, church records in Loíza attest to a noticeable Congolese presence. Furthermore, Alegría never indicated any history of Islam in Puerto Rico nor attributed any remnants of Islam

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<sup>55</sup> “...los que conocíamos un poco de la herencia africana en Puerto Rico estábamos bajo la influencia de la cultura yoruba, ya que la cultura yoruba era muy importante aquí en el siglo XIX, igual que en Cuba. Vimos la fiesta un poco en base de los festivales medievales españoles y la influencia africana yoruba. Hoy día se está reconsiderando también la influencia Congo.” (...the ones [among us] who knew a bit about African influences in Puerto Rico were under the influence of Yoruban culture, because the Yoruban culture was very important during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, similar to Cuba. We saw the feasts a bit like Medieval Spanish festivals and the African Yoruban influence. Today we are also reconsidering the Congo influence.) “Re/Visions of Santiago Apóstol: Art, History, and Cultural Criticism.” Issue Editor: Lowell Fiet. San Juan, Puerto Rico: University of Puerto Rico, *Sargasso 2006-07*, II. P. xxii. Note that throughout this dissertation the words Congo/Kongo and Congolese/Kongolese will be alternatively used as different scholars spell them differently. Thus, an effort was made to stay faithful to the author’s spellings.

to Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Loíza. The implications of this is that these Islamic elements that were unassumingly intertwined within the Puerto Rican culture have stayed dormant or at least unnoticed. This is where I wish to make my contribution, as many have spoken and written about the fiestas but no scholar has acknowledged an Islamic element within the Puerto Rican culture.

There is a Congolese influence, as well as Santería, Espiritismo, and Islamic vestiges to a much lesser extent, and an amalgamation and coexistence rather than a dichotomy of good versus evil. This dichotomy may have been the original meaning of the fiestas as Alegría first conceptualized them, but today that is no longer the case.

Islamic scholar Afroz protested: "...many of the Islamic cultural vestiges present in the New World remain largely unexplored...recent scholarship continues to perpetuate this indifferent attitude towards the Islamic heritage of West Africa."<sup>56</sup> The perpetuation of this indifference towards Islam, as Afroz argues, is perhaps not deliberately done in Puerto Rico. I argue that this disdain may rise from a lack of familiarity with Islam. My personal experience asserts to this. As a student of the Arabic language I came to realize how many words in Spanish (my native language) are actually a legacy from the Arabic language. Also, as I studied Islam as a cultural and religious tradition, I realized many similarities among cultures that apparently had no connection. My interest to explore these Islamic cultural vestiges grew stronger and I chose it as the subject matter for my project. In this manner, this dissertation reveals and highlights the legacy of Muslim

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<sup>56</sup> Sultana Afroz. *Invisible yet Invincible. The Islamic Heritage of the Maroons and the Enslaved Africans in Jamaica*. London: Austin & Macauley Publishers Ltd., 2012. P. 49 and P. 100.

Spain and the Islamic heritage of West Africa in Puerto Rico as it explores the contemporary Puerto Rican Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Loíza.

### Literature Reviews of Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol and the Legacy of Muslims in the Americas

The most pertinent resources on Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol and the legacy of Muslims in the Americas include works written by cultural anthropologists, ethnographers, and cultural performance scholars. A chronological thematic publication listing is provided in order to appreciate the intellectual progression on the field and some disputes on the subject. The current trend still continues to mirror Ricardo Alegría's Yoruban syncretic mixture and a battle between good and evil, with the exception of Max Harris who debates Alegría's position. As time progresses, there has been an insinuation to a Congolese syncretic mixture. There is also a general consensus that the West Africa Islamic legacy in the diaspora has often been unnoticed by scholars. These authors were the pillar foundation for my dissertation as I situated my project within their literature, although none have addressed the Muslim legacy in Puerto Rico's *habitus* nor within the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol at all. This dissertation explored and documented the connection between the early-modern Muslim-Spanish encounter and the contemporary Puerto Rican Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol and brought to light and revealed the legacy of Muslim Spain and the Islamic heritage of West Africa in Puerto Rico. It is within these authors' scholarly conversation that I aspire to be located.

Ricardo Alegría (1949, 1956, 2006-07)

Alegría, Ricardo E. "Las Fiestas de Loíza Santiago Apóstol. A Documentary Film." *San*

*Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña*, 1949. Web. 17 Mar. 2012.

\_\_\_\_. "The Fiesta of Santiago Apóstol (St. James the Apostle) in Loíza, Puerto Rico."

*Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 69, no. 272 (Apr.-June, 1956), pp. 123-134.

*Loíza: "todavía hay un caudal de información muy rica e interesante, que se puede devolver a la sociedad contemporánea,"* pp. xix-xxiii opening comments in

"Re/Visions of Santiago Apóstol: Art, History, and Cultural Criticism." Issue

Editor: Lowell Fiet. San Juan, Puerto Rico: University of Puerto Rico, *Sargasso*

2006-07, II.

Ricardo Alegría (1921-2011), an anthropologist and archeologist from Puerto Rico, made an exceptional Fiestas de Loíza Santiago Apóstol documentary film<sup>57</sup> in 1949. He also wrote several articles arguing the celebrations are a Spaniard and African (Yoruba) syncretic mixture. A *Vejigantes* celebration's social function is evident and seen by him as a pause from the hard work typically accomplished at sugarcane plantations. Alegría's theory is that Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol is mostly an African-European tradition. Many decades later, in 2006, Alegría changed his mind and stated that Kongolese influence appears to have been more dominant than the Yoruban influence.

Alegría has been the major spokesperson for these celebrations in Loíza. To him, they signified the encounter of good and evil, of all that is Christian against paganism, and of Christians against Muslims. The storyline of good against evil first enunciated by

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<sup>57</sup> Ricardo E. Alegría. "Las Fiestas de Loíza Santiago Apóstol. A Documentary Film." *San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña*, 1949. Web. 17 Mar. 2012.



Alegría has been the main storyline. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, scholar Max Harris, refuted Alegría by stating that these celebrations have nothing to do with Moors and Christians.

I agree with Alegría in that the fiestas have syncretic elements. However, after observing a celebration in July 2013, I have concluded that these festivities are not the clash of good against evil although the Christian and Muslim elements are well recognized by the partakers. They embody the idea of peaceful coexistence and are the *mélange* of all the elements that make up the Puerto Rican people: Taíno, Spaniard, and blacks, all bonded by vestiges of Islam and other religious worldviews.

Carlos Méndez Santos (1973)

Méndez Santos, Carlos. *Por Tierras de Loíza Aldea- Fiesta de Santiago- Loíza Aldea- Estudio de Antropología Cultural*. Ponce: Producciones Ceiba, 1973.

This mere 45-page pamphlet is a cultural anthropology study by an anthropology scholar dedicated to the study of folklore. In it he compiles a series of essays about Loíza and the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol. It is mostly based on his own fieldwork. He looks at the town as an isolated, marginalized community. Nevertheless, he gives credit to the legacy of its black population such as the music and dances, typical *baquiné* children's wakes, and the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol. The historical background relating to the influx of enslaved Africans to Puerto Rico is valuable. He also collects poems and songs in this pamphlet. After Alegría's work, this cultural anthropology study is by far the most useful to this dissertation as it compiles original sources.

Edward C. Zaragoza (1995)

Zaragoza, Edward C. *St. James in the Streets. The Religious Processions of Loíza Aldea, Puerto Rico*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1995.

Liturgist and ethnographer Edward C. Zaragoza witnessed the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol annually from 1985 to 1988 and then in 1991. His book about the celebrations was published in 1995. He looked at the celebrations with an eye to the sociopolitical situation in the area and attempted to interpret them based on the celebrants' worldviews. Zaragoza's greatest contribution is his insinuation of Taíno<sup>58</sup> influences in the celebrations, something Alegría adamantly denied. Zaragoza conceptualizes St. James as "one who turns social structure upside down."<sup>59</sup> He recognizes the notion that St. James becomes a friend for the people of Loíza, rather than the fierce defender of Christianity so accentuated in the Spain and Mexican celebrations.<sup>60</sup> I concur with Zaragoza's reading that the Loíza people are not following the tradition as it was inherited from Spain.

Sylviane A. Diouf (1998, 2013)

Diouf, Sylviane A. *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. New York: New York University Press, 1998.

*Ibid.*, 2013.

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<sup>58</sup> The Taíno influence in Puerto Rico is best appreciated through the culinary specialties of the island. In Puerto Rican cuisine Taíno-influenced staples include yucca or cassava root, for example. The Puerto Rican Spanish has Taíno words such as *hamaca* (hammock), *batey* (hut-house), *Orocovix* (a town in the center of the island), etc. Baseball was a ritual game among the Taínos in Puerto Rico. Taínos also venerated their ancestors. Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. González, quote authors Donald J. Cosentino, Selden Rodman and Carole Cleaver to remind us that the concept of zombies is also attributed to the Taínos: "Though the Taínos did not survive colonialism as a distinct ethnic group, traces of their culture survive in the world of vodou...and the belief in zombies or the living dead to Taíno origins." *Caribbean Religions History. An Introduction*. Edited by Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. González. NY: New York University Press, 2010. P. 111.

<sup>59</sup> Edward C Zaragoza. St. James in the Streets. *The Religious Processions of Loíza Aldea, Puerto Rico*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1995. P. 2.

<sup>60</sup> "...there is no dramatic portrayal of the victory of the Spanish over the Moors as in the Santiago traditions of Spain or Mexico. The focus in Loíza Aldea is on the localized Santiago Apóstol and not on rehearsing the Spanish experience of him." Edward C. Zaragoza. *St. James in the Streets. The Religious Processions of Loíza Aldea, Puerto Rico*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1995. P. 68.

A historian focused in the African diaspora, Diouf presents an extraordinary thesis: Islam as a diasporic religion in the New World not only survived but thrived among the enslaved Muslim practitioners. Diouf's observations are made possible based on a collage of enslaved narratives and documents she meticulously gathered. Although enslaved Muslims in Puerto Rico are not specifically addressed by Diouf, her book is still an invaluable tool for my own dissertation research. The chapter dedicated to the Muslim legacy offers a wealth of information. Islam as a significant religion did not survive but many remnants endure. Practices such as giving rice cakes as charity (*sadaqa*), consulting marabouts for amulets, and shouting dances are among the most prevalent practices reminiscent of Islam. By far the most important information this book contributed to my own research is the discussion on the *figa* hand. This is a small hand amulet used to ward off evil. As a small child growing up on the island of Puerto Rico, I wore one of these *manitas de azabaches* or figa hands! Diouf's daring suggestion is that the five fingers on the hand imply the five pillars of Islam and the five holy people of Islam.

David Ungerleider Kepler (2000, 2006-07)

Ungerleider Kepler, David. *Las Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol en Loíza*. San Juan: Isla Negra Editores, 2000.

*Las Fiestas de Loíza, entre la Tradición y los Cambios: el Espejo del Puerto Rico de Hoy*. essay in "Re/Visions of Santiago Apóstol: Art, History, and Cultural Criticism." Issue Editor: Lowell Fiet. San Juan, Puerto Rico: University of Puerto Rico, *Sargasso* 2006-07, II, pp. 97-99.

David Ungerleider Kepler, a Mexican anthropologist and professor at the Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico D.F., read subaltern-resistance in these

celebrations.<sup>61</sup> He also claimed that the people of Loíza have held their cultural identity through the celebration of Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol. He regrets that modernity and insatiable consumerism have degraded the celebrations to some degree. When I observed the celebrations in 2013 I did not sense a strong sense of modernity and insatiable consumerism as he claims. The celebration as the epitome of hybridity<sup>62</sup>, he argues,

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<sup>61</sup> "...las fiestas tienen muchas y variadas instancias de resistencia y acomodación, e incluso unas refuerzan a las otras..." David Ungerleider Kepler. *Las Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol en Loíza*. San Juan: Isla Negra Editores, 2000. P. 31 (...the celebrations have many and varied instances of resistance and accommodation, and they even reinforce each other...).

<sup>62</sup> Hybridity plays an important role in Puerto Rico. Charles Stewart (2007) cleverly summarizes Bhabha's idea of hybridity: "The importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace the two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. (1990:211)" *Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory*. Edited by Charles Stewart. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, Inc. 2007. P. 17.

Author García Canclini (1995) advocates for an inter-disciplinary approach in studying and understanding hybridization: "It is necessary to deconstruct that division into three levels- that layered conception using the tools of disciplines that are studied separately: art history and literature, which are concerned with the "cultured"; folklore and anthropology, which consecrate the popular; works on communication, which specialize in mass culture." Néstor García Canclini. *Hybrid Cultures. Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. C. Chiappari and S. López, trans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995. P. 2. Another excellent reading on this hybridity integration in Puerto Rico is author María Teresa Babín (1999). She observes: "De igual manera se manifiesta esa armónica integración cultural en nuestra variada gastronomía, la expresión artesanal, la literatura popular, los bailes, las costumbres que se dan en nuestra vida cotidiana, las creencias y muchas otras manifestaciones culturales." María Teresa Babín. *La Cultura en Puerto Rico*. San Juan: Centros de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 1999. P. 11. (In the same manner, this harmonious cultural integration is manifested in our varied gastronomy, our art expression, our popular literature, the dances, the daily customs, beliefs, and many other cultural manifestations.)

Relating to the circumstances in Puerto Rico, author Peter Berger (1967) comes to mind when he stated: "Man produces himself." Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman. *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. NY: Anchor Books, 1967. P. 49.

Other salient references on hybridity are:

*Cultural Identity and Creolization in National Unity. The Multiethnic Caribbean*. Edited by Prem Misir. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2006.

*Cultures of Globalization. Coherence, Hybridity, Contestation*. Edited by Kevin Archer, and Martin Bosman et al. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Kawash, Samira. *Dislocating the Color Line. Identity, Hybridity, and Singularity in African-American Literature*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Puri, Shalini. *The Caribbean Postcolonial. Social Equity, Post-Nationalism, and Cultural Hybridity*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004.

Rey, Terry. "Habitus et Hybridité: une Interpretation du Syncretisme dans la Religion Afro-Catholique d'apres Bourdieu." *Social Compass* 2005 52: 453.

“creates cultural space.”<sup>63</sup> Hybridity helps transform St. James from the zealous defender of Christianity in Spain to an endorser of cultural mixture in the Puerto Rican context according to him. Ungerleider Kepler’s observations of the fiestas as a space to keep cultural identity is accurate. I detected the same during fieldwork.

I agree with Ungerleider Kepler’s observation that one cannot think of Loíza without thinking of Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol as they go hand-in-hand. But I do not see them as a means to fill an existentialism void as he argues in his essay (2006-7) nor that the Matamoros St. James has been subjected to some Africanization, except for his syncretic renderings.

Max Harris (2001, 2006-07)

Harris, Max. “Masking the Site: The Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Loíza, Puerto Rico.”

*Journal of American Folklore*. Volume 114, Number 453, Summer 2001.

*El lugar enmascarado: las fiestas de Santiago Apóstol en Loíza, Puerto Rico*. essay in

“Re/Visions of Santiago Apóstol: Art, History, and Cultural Criticism.” Issue

Editor: Lowell Fiet. San Juan, Puerto Rico: University of Puerto Rico, *Sargasso*

2006-07, II, pp. 57-79.

Max Harris, an ethnographer at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, observed the festivities in the 1990s and concluded that, in opposition to Alegría’s argument, these were mere carnival celebrations that had nothing to do with Moor and Christian celebrations or syncretism of St. James with African deities. Harris saw them as joyful celebrations to break life’s tedium. He refuted Alegría by stating Fiestas de Santiago

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<sup>63</sup> David Ungerleider Kepler. *Las Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol en Loíza*. San Juan: Isla Negra Editores, 2000. P. 28.

Apóstol “are rooted in the mixed soil of local tensions, Carnival, and Christianity.”<sup>64</sup> He also contended that these are not celebrations deeply influenced by Yoruban traditions, as Alegría contended.

I agree with Harris that the fiestas are (in part) a pretext to break the monotony of everyday life in Loíza; they offer a break in life’s tedium. I however disagree with him because after having observed the fiestas, I sensed a deep religiosity on behalf of most of the participants. There is also a very significant religious component in these fiestas which stresses syncretism. In other words, these are not mere carnival merriments. They do have a correlation with the Moor and Christian revelries originating in Medieval Spain, although in Puerto Rico a strong syncretism has transformed the celebrations.

Samuel Cruz (2005)

Cruz, Samuel. *Masked Africanisms- Puerto Rican Pentecostalism*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2005.

Cruz, a sociologist of religion and a pastor explores the African roots within Pentecostalism among Puerto Rican practitioners. His almost controversial, yet precise thesis argues that speaking in tongues, possessions, and shouting are among the practices common to both Pentecostalism and African-influenced religious traditions. In my opinion, these observations are blatantly obvious to any observant of both traditions. This marked affinity helps understand why the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Loíza, Puerto Rico are so fluid and subjective- everyone interprets it according to a nominalism approach. He makes a strong case as to why non-Christian, non-Muslim enslaved

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<sup>64</sup> Max Harris. “Masking the Site: The Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Loíza, Puerto Rico.” *Journal of American Folklore*. Volume 114, Number 453, Summer 2001, p.x.

Africans had a better chance adapting and living in Puerto Rico. Their contribution to the music and dance still permeates Christian traditions such as Pentecostalism. He equates St. James to the Yoruban orisha Shango in alignment with anthropologist Ricardo Alegría. I believe a Congolese influence is more adept. His work is particularly pertinent to this project since during fieldwork in Loíza many pointed out that, oddly enough, the Pentecostals are against the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol and condemn them as being for evil-followers because they borderline Santería and other African religious worldviews.

Michael Angelo Gómez (2005)

Gómez, Michael Angelo. *Black Crescent: the Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

A history scholar specializing in the African diaspora, Gómez strongly and rightfully argues that Muslim enslaved Africans made their passage to the New World through the Atlantic trade. And even when forced conversion to Christianity, vestiges of Islam remained within them. The extensive historical background of African Muslims in the Americas helps bring some objectivity to this dissertation that otherwise aims to look through a subjective lens. Gomez's extensive history account helps validate claims made in this dissertation such as the influx of Muslim enslaved Africans from West Africa as well as Moors (Muslims from Spain). Linguistic vestiges such as the term *Fulano* also help solidify the contention that Muslims were indeed arriving to the New World and left a legacy. This author does not address Puerto Rico in particular as he devotes most of his work to Brazil, and the Americas. He succinctly argues that Islam as a religion did not survive, yet many traits of its legacy are still palpable today.

Lowell Fiet (2006, 2007)

Fiet, Lowell. *Caballeros, Vejigantes, Locas y Viejos: Santiago Apóstol y los Performeros Afropuertorriqueños*. San Juan: Terranova Editores, 2007.

*Re/Visions: Why Re-examine the Fiestas of Santiago Apóstol?* Editorial note, pp. ix-xviii, and essay “The *Vejigante[s]* [trickster/diablo] is painted/Green, yellow, and red...” (El *Vejigantes* esta pintao/Verde, amarillo y colorao...), pp. 81-99 essay in on “Re/Visions of Santiago Apóstol: Art, History, and Cultural Criticism.” Issue Editor: Lowell Fiet. San Juan, Puerto Rico: University of Puerto Rico, *Sargasso* 2006-07, II.

Lowell Fiet<sup>65</sup> (2007), a graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a literature and theater professor at the University of Puerto Rico, saw Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol as a cultural performance flanking syncretism.<sup>66</sup> Fiet conceptualized Puerto Rico’s Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol as popular protest and rebellion. While attending Loíza’s 2013 celebrations, I had the opportunity to share the experience with Fiet and was fascinated by the enthusiasm of this scholar who has witnessed and participated in these annual celebrations for many years. His examination of the celebrations is an immense legacy to the residents of Loíza because he is recording these celebrations in

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<sup>65</sup> My appreciation goes to Dr. Lowell Fiet who has done exquisite work regarding the fiestas. I had the opportunity to meet him in person in Loíza, Puerto Rico during the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in July 2013. He graciously provided me with a copy of “Re/Visions of Santiago Apóstol: Art, History, and Cultural Criticism.” Issue Editor: Lowell Fiet. San Juan, Puerto Rico: University of Puerto Rico, *Sargasso* 2006-07, II. This pamphlet proved to be invaluable to my project.

<sup>66</sup> Lowell Fiet. *Caballeros, Vejigantes, Locas y Viejos: Santiago Apóstol y los Performeros Afropuertorriqueños*. San Juan: Terranova Editores, 2007.



writing and photographs for future generations. Fiet was correct when he sensed the deep syncretism in the fiestas.

To Fiet the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol would be impossible without the *Vejigantes* character; I wholeheartedly agree with him. He also reminds us (in opposition to Alegría) that this character is not equated with the devil in Loíza.

Sultana Afroz (2012)

Afroz, Sultana. *Invisible yet Invincible. The Islamic Heritage of the Maroons and the Enslaved Africans in Jamaica*. London: Austin & Macauley Publishers Ltd., 2012.

Her “new research” methodology guided this dissertation. She suggests looking at the *habitus* of people in order to find traces of the legacy of Islam. Since history is written by the hegemonic power, she advocates that distortions must be dispelled. Scholars must start with Islamic Spain in order to properly get a glimpse of the legacy of Islam in the New World. I situate myself with Afroz as this is the stance of this dissertation as well. The Muslim legacy, it is argued in this dissertation, is two-fold: Muslims from Islamic Spain and West African Muslims. They came to Puerto Rico at different intervals but nevertheless their contributions added significant layers to the culture they encountered locally. Afroz’s observes: “...the authenticity of Islamic heritage can be established from the analytical study of the prevailing cultural practices within the greater society, which fall within the framework of Islam.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Sultana Afroz. *Invisible yet Invincible. The Islamic Heritage of the Maroons and the Enslaved Africans in Jamaica*. London: Austin & Macauley Publishers Ltd., 2012. P. 53.

In the absence of Muslim enslaved Africans narratives, mosques, or Qur'ans in Puerto Rico, this dissertation solely relies on prevailing cultural practices and material culture in order to answer the main question: Is there an Islamic influence in Puerto Rico, and if so, how is it manifested? This prevailing cultural practice approach further helps demonstrate the thesis statement: The imprint and legacy of Islam through Iberian and African Muslims in Puerto Rico is palpable and profound although Islam is not exceedingly obvious on the island today. Afroz's work is astounding and a required source for my project.

## CHAPTER 2

### LEGACY OF MUSLIM SPAIN TO PUERTO RICO

The demise of Muslim Spain is attributed to weakness among Muslims to unite against a common enemy, the Christians. “Both sides believed they had God and right on their side.”<sup>68</sup> However, it was the Christians who ultimately won the struggle in Spain. By 1492, inspired with a newfound religious zeal and aided by St. James’ historical interventions, Christianity achieved sovereignty and religious domination over Judaism and Islam in Spain. The same year, 1492, witnesses Columbus arriving in the New World with an entourage of male colonizers (Spaniards, some with mixed Arabic/Moorish blood). Many of the Spaniards that arrived in the New World were steeped with Muslim culture and religious beliefs and often, these people were expelled from Spain because their conversions to Christianity were deemed a sham.<sup>69</sup> By the early 1600s, all remaining Muslims were either expelled from Spain or sold into slavery with a destination to the New World. These men came to the New World with vestiges of Islam and without consorts. Some mixed with the native inhabitants of Puerto Rico (the Taíno).

The people from Muslim Spain who came to the New World introduced the Spanish language, beliefs, and customs to the native societies. They were also vessels of Muslim/Arabic traditions. Specifically, in Puerto Rico, the two major groups were from predominantly Muslim-background areas: Southern Spain Andalusia (Andalucía) and the

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<sup>68</sup> Hugh Kennedy. *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of al-Ándalus*. London: Longman, 1996. P. 130.

<sup>69</sup> “For the most part, conversion was nominal: The Moors paid lip-service to Christianity, but continued to practice Islam in secret.” Roger Boase. “The Muslim Expulsion from Spain.” *History Today*, Apr. 2002. P. 22.

Canary Islands.<sup>70</sup> This cultural exchange is relevant and matters because of its social impact.

Today, an Islamic element is inconspicuously entwined with the Puerto Rican culture. Using Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*<sup>71</sup> this dissertation engages customs and mannerisms of both Puerto Rican and Muslim counterparts to reveal the imprint and legacy of Muslim Spain and the Islamic heritage of West Africa in Puerto Rico. It addresses the Spanish language to include vocabulary, proverbs, songs, and games that carry vestiges of Arabic language and culture. Customs and mannerisms were engaged to explore this hypothesis since a more traditional, historical methodology of examining archives, newspapers, journal, etc., would not have provided additional evidence of a Muslim presence and influence. Overall, such presence was often hidden under the veil of Christianity because Muslims were prohibited from entering the New World according to the decrees Spain imposed once it crushed the Muslims in 1492. In Puerto Rico, in particular, in an agreement dated 1505, Vicente Yáñez Pinzón, a colonizer, agreed not to bring Moors, Jews, converts or condemned prisoners:

En el asiento o convenio celebrado por la Corona de España con Vicente Yáñez Pinzón en 24 de abril de 1505, por el cual Pinzón se comprometía a poblar la isla, los Reyes prohibieron terminantemente a Pinzón, según la

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<sup>70</sup> Ethnological research conducted by Puerto Rican linguist Manuel Álvarez Nazario (1972) observed: "...lo andaluz predominante nos llega traducido y tamizado a través de la experiencia del habla canaria..." Manuel Álvarez Nazario. *La Herencia Lingüística de Canarias en Puerto Rico: Estudio Histórico-Dialectal*. San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1972. P. 283. (...the predominant Andalusia speech comes to us translated and sifted through the experience of the Canary [Island] speech...)

<sup>71</sup> "[*habitus*] a system of dispositions based on social space..." Pierre Bourdieu. "Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field." *Comparative Social Research*, Vol. 13, Pages 1-44. P. 12. Also see Pierre Bourdieu. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1984.

clausura 12 de dicho convenio, que trajese vecinos de Santo Domingo a San Juan, y se le ordenó que en modo alguno admitiese en la isla a moros, judíos, conversos e individuos que hubiesen sufrido condena infamante.<sup>72</sup> (In the seat or convention celebrated by the Crown of Spain with Vicente Yáñez Pinzón on April 24, 1505, in which Pinzón compromised to populate the island, the King and Queen strictly prohibited Pinzón, according to clause 12 of said covenant, that he would bring neighbors from Dominican Republic to San Juan, and he was ordered that in no way Moors, Jews, converts, nor individuals who had suffered infamous condemnations be admitted on the island.)

This prohibition did not necessarily mean that such illegal passages were not occurring. Dissimulation and syncretism were employed when engaging in religious and cultural manifestations in these particular exceptional cases. This explains the absence of concrete evidence of a Muslim presence and influence as their religious and cultural manifestations were often disguised under the veil of Christianity.

Islam vestiges became an undetected influence in informing the way people did things. Thus, there are many cultural similarities in traits such as hospitality, female honor and adulation, male-oriented mores, spirituality, superstitions, agriculture, architecture, music and dance, and above all the Spanish language. A brief look at these diverse areas is necessary.

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<sup>72</sup> Augusto Malaret. *Vocabulario de Puerto Rico*. NY: Las Americas Publishing Co., 1955. P. 18.

In most of today's Hispanic locales, life revolves around entertaining and hospitality. There is always an open-house mentality (*mi casa es su casa*, or my house is your house or *بيتي هو بيتك* in Arabic) and whenever meals are prepared, there is enough food prepared to feed a possible uninvited visitor. Muslims were renowned for their extreme hospitality. There is a Hadith (actions and sayings of Prophet Muhammad) that encourages hospitality: "The Prophet said, Food for two suffices three; and food for three suffices four."<sup>73</sup> There is a Hispanic proverb that reads almost identically: *donde comen dos, comen tres*<sup>74</sup> (Where two eat, three eat). These hospitality expressions appear to have some correlation originating from cultural exchanges.

Regarding culinary aspects, the Muslim Spain legacy is not as strong, but certain elements are still evident. The ever-so popular Puerto Rican *limber* (frozen fruit treat) and/or the *piraguas* (shaved ice with heavy fruit syrup such as tamarind) are reminiscent of the Arabic-style sherbets. Saffron (*azafrán*) and red roasted-peppers (*pimientos morrones*) used to make yellow rice, orange blossom water (*agua de azahár*) to soothe nerves, rose-petal for baking pastries and also for facial beauty treatments, olives (*aceitunas*) and capers (*alcaparras*) are staples in Puerto Rican cuisine. Coconut rice pudding (*majarete*), cheese pastries (*almojábanas*) and egg custard (*flan*) are also common items among both culinary cultures. Puerto Rican cuisine also uses many Middle-Eastern staples such as sesame seed (*ajonjolí*), eggplants (*berenjenas*), chickpeas (*garbanzos*), okra (*quimbombó*-an African word), and the spice cumin (*comino*). Puerto

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<sup>73</sup> *The Wisdom of the Prophet. Sayings of Muhammad. Selections from the Hadith.* Translated by Thomas Cleary. Boston: Shambhala Classics, 2001. P. 49.

<sup>74</sup> "Refranes, Dichos y Proverbios de Todos los Tiempos." *Refrán-es*. 2009. Web. 27 Aug. 2013.

Ricans also eat dates (*dátiles*) and nougat (*turrón de Alicante*), a Muslim Spain delicacy almond candy. The pickled-style vegetables such as pickled green bananas or fish (*escabeche*) has also been attributed to Muslim Spain according to author Webster.<sup>75</sup> The Puerto Rican ground beef dish (*picadillo*) uses meat with sweet raisins and sour pickled olives and capers in a manner that resembles the Moroccan dishes that incorporate dried fruits, pickled lemons, capers, and olives. The coconut was brought to the island of Puerto Rico by Arabs and Canary Island immigrants. Coconut is abundant on the island, and thus, one of the major ingredients for many desserts and drinks. It is also the preferred raw material to make the elaborated Vejigantes masks.

In Puerto Rico, family honor falls in the hands of the women. This is similar to the Muslim/Arab society: “The women of his family- mother and sisters, wives and daughters- were under his protection, but what they did could affect his honour: a lack of modesty, or behaviour which would arouse in men who had no claims over them strong feelings that may challenge the social order.”<sup>76</sup>

A visit to Puerto Rico or any Hispanic country also attests to the constant adulation in the form of *piropos* (niceties) from men to women. The plethora of phrases (at times, vulgarities) to adulate women seems to be ingrained within Hispanic men’s mindset and contribute to their praising-habits or *zalamería*. The word *zalamería* is closely related to the Arabic word *salam*, or peace. In Arabic countries, saluting (or saying their “salams”) becomes an act of courtesies exchanged for a few minutes, in the

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<sup>75</sup> “...all the *escabeche* sauces in the Algarve [Portugal] made from vinegar. There were similar dishes in Spain, where anything from rabbit to sardines could be prepared in thick onion and vinegar gravy.” Jason Webster. *Andalus. Unlocking the Secrets of Moorish Spain*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2004. P. 198.

<sup>76</sup> Albert Hourani. *A History of the Arab Peoples*. New York: Warner Books Edition, 1991. P. 105.

manner of the Hispanic sweet talking or *zalamería*. Men in Latin countries stare and shower women with (sometimes unwanted) compliments. Because women tend to dress modestly, men attempt to stare more insistently. In many Muslims countries, it is advisable, for a single, female tourist to veil or dress as modestly as possible in order to avoid the constant staring and unwanted comments of men. This also holds true for many Hispanic countries where a woman is advised to dress modestly to avoid the unwanted male gaze. Nevertheless, many women in Hispanic countries do appreciate the constant compliments or *piropos* they are showered with by Latin men:

Spanish women may not appreciate the Moorish custom of being kept pretty much under lock and key, but they certainly do appreciate another custom the Moors introduce into Europe: the concept of woman as a divinely wonderful, delicate creature who needs to be constantly reminded in poetic ways of her breathtaking beauty.<sup>77</sup>

Once again, although no causation is implied among cultures, these expressions are similar enough to suggest cultural exchanges.

Women seclusion is a distinctive trait throughout the Arab world although not an exclusive Muslim habit. In Latin culture, women belong to the house and while they may not be veiled, like Muslim women, they are often voluntarily secluded at home. A commonly quoted proverb in Puerto Rico asserts: “*El hombre es de la calle y la mujer de*

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<sup>77</sup> Lynn M. Hilton. Editor-in-Chief. *Spain: Comparative Culture and Government*. Skokie, IL: National Textbook Company, 1971. P. 44.



*la casa.*”<sup>78</sup> (The man belongs to the street and the woman belongs to the house). Even when outside the home, Hispanic women have a tendency to gather together in social settings and remain separated from the men, just like their Muslim counterparts’ customary segregation:

...una característica social de toda familia islámica: las mujeres no debían aparecer a la vista de los demás si no era imprescindible (en mercados, baños separados, galerías superiores en las mezquitas, etc.), y las casas tenían una zona privada reservada para ellas.<sup>79</sup> (...a social trait among all Islamic families: the women were not supposed to appear in public to be seen by others unless it was a necessity (in the markets, segregated public baths, upper areas of the mosque, etc.), and the house had private areas reserved for them).

Author Lynn Hilton (1971) affirmed: “The custom of overprotecting wives and daughters is something the Spaniards learned from the Moors during centuries of occupation. Many of the Moors to this day keep their womenfolk in long robes and veils. The Spaniards do not go that far, but it is sometimes very difficult to get a date with a teenager girl.”<sup>80</sup>

These seclusion expressions are similar enough to suggest a possible causation because they informed the way things were done.

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<sup>78</sup> Anthony L LaRuffa elaborates on the dichotomy of woman: home and man: street in his book *San Cipriano Life in Puerto Rican Community*. NY: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1971.

<sup>79</sup> José Luis Martínez Sández. *Al-Ándalus: Los Árabes en España*. Madrid: Edimat Libros, S.A., 2007. P. 139.

<sup>80</sup> Lynn M. Hilton. Editor-in-Chief. *Spain: Comparative Culture and Government*. Skokie, IL: National Textbook Company, 1971. P. 43.

Historically, Muslim/Arab societies have been male-oriented. Proud families had many male children and a family's male members were the guardians of their women and property:

By widespread custom, although not by Islamic law, landed property belonged to men and was passed by them to their male children; sons are the wealth of the house. It was part of a man's honor to defend what was his and to respond to demands upon him from members of his family, or of a tribe or larger group of which he was part; honour belonged to an individual through his membership of a larger whole.<sup>81</sup>

Today's Hispanic society also has prevalent male-oriented norms. A man is considered *el rey de la casa* (the king of the house) in Latin countries. Some norms were undoubtedly passed from the Romans and Greeks, but the Hispanic male-oriented trait seems to have been made stronger in Spain by the Arabs and, in turn, the New World Hispanic people adopted this from the Spanish colonizers. Causation is possible.

Many Arabic names are prevalent in Puerto Rico. Among common female Arabic names are: "Aisha, Alma, Amapola, Azucena, Fatima, Guadalupe, Jazmín, Karimi, Leila, Lulú [a nickname for Lourdes], Lydia, Maritza, Sarah, Salma, Suleika, Thania, Zaida, Zoraida, Zoraya, Zulma, and Yesenia."<sup>82</sup> Common male Arabic names are: "Aaron, Caleb, Hussein, Ibrahim, Ismail, Omar, Ra(h)ul, and Xavier."<sup>83</sup> Ferrán is a common last name that means baker. Also, Medina (city) is a popular name in Puerto Rico along with

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<sup>81</sup> Albert Hourani. *A History of the Arab Peoples*. New York: Warner Books Edition, 1991. P. 105.

<sup>82</sup> "Arabic Girl Baby Names." *BabyNamesCountry.com*. 2006-2012. Web. 5 Aug. 2013.

<sup>83</sup> "Arabic Boy Baby Names." *BabyNamesCountry.com*. 2006-2012. Web. 5 Aug. 2013.

Almeida (table) and Vega (a star). Even the name Carmen is attributed to the Arabic *karm*, or vineyard.<sup>84</sup>

Mysticism was incorporated into Islam through Sufism. In Muslim Spain, Sufism thrived. Spain was the birthplace to some of the world's greatest Sufis, like Ibn 'Arabi (1165 – 1240) and Averroes (1126 – 1198). Many Spaniard Christian mystics such as St. John of The Cross (1542 – 1591)<sup>85</sup> and St. Teresa de Ávila (1515 – 1582) were influenced by Sufism as well. Sufism was also widely spread throughout West Africa during the time enslaved Africans were being brought to the New World, and these enslaved Africans would have been carriers of such practices to new locales.

Spaniards brought Catholicism to the New World so this religion is highly visible among people throughout Latin America. Some Catholic rituals, such as the passion plays performed during Holy Week, resemble Shia's passion plays done in Karbala, Iraq, during Muharram in memory of Hussein, the Prophet Muhammad's grandson through his daughter Fatima and her husband Ali. Author Jason Webster (2004) elaborates:

...the similarities between Holy Week and Ashura were striking: the death of a holy man- Imam Hussein, in the case of the Shi'ites-was marked by massive processions and public displays of weeping and self-flagellation.

Another Muslim echo in the Spanish Easter festivities was the organization of the participants into brotherhoods, *cofradías* or

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<sup>84</sup> Jason Webster. *Andalus. Unlocking the Secrets of Moorish Spain*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2004. P. 114.

<sup>85</sup> Author Webster explains that St. John of the Cross writings in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Spain resemble Muslim mystic Rabia al-Adawiya- a woman that lived in Iraq during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Jason Webster. *Andalus. Unlocking the Secrets of Moorish Spain*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2004. P. 89. An excellent book on St. John of the Cross and Islam is: López-Baralt, Luce. *San Juan de la Cruz y el Islam*. Madrid: Ediciones Hiperión, S.L., 1990.

*hermandades*. These cloaked figures with pointed hoods that masked their faces were the inspiration for the garb of the Ku Klux Klan, but originated in semi-secret religious societies in al-Ándalus. They still exist in Morocco today, taking part in processions of worship on feast days to local holy sites.<sup>86</sup>

In both instances, the faithful perform self-flagellations in order to commemorate the sufferings of either Jesus (in Catholicism) or Hussein (in Shia tradition).

In Sufism or mysticism of Islam, people that have a certain gift are carriers of blessings or *baraka* (برکات). They are able to infuse people of such divine benediction. In Puerto Rico, it is customary and obligatory to ask for a blessing (*bendición*) from the elderly. For example, when a child enters the house of a parent, aunt, uncle, or grandparent the child requests *bendición* before any other social interaction. The elder's customary response is, “*que Dios te bendiga*” (may God bless you). Upon leaving the house, the person requests such a blessing again. This custom is culturally ingrained, because regardless of the religious background of the people, a blessing must always be requested. The blessing is always asked of someone older and more hierarchal in the family tree than the person asking. Equals, such as siblings, do not ask for blessings from each other. Like the Puerto Rican practice, Sufism is also very concerned with special blessings people can give others.

The Qur'an and Hadith speak of hospitality but it is also clear that one must ask permission to enter a home and then not stay so long as to be a burden to the host:

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<sup>86</sup> Jason Webster. *Andalus. Unlocking the Secrets of Moorish Spain*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2004. P. 160.

O you who believe! Enter not the Prophet's houses, until leave is given you, for a meal, (and then) not (so early as) to wait for its preparation, but when you are invited, enter; and when you have taken your meal, disperse, without seeking familiar talk. Such (behavior) annoys the Prophet. He is ashamed to dismiss you, but Allah is not ashamed (to tell you) the truth... (Surah 33:53)<sup>87</sup>

Similarly, in Spanish culture when entering someone's house (even if invited and expected) one must ask permission. In Puerto Rico, when someone enters a house, permission is requested by uttering *con permiso* (grant me permission). Permission is also sought when one attempts to interrupt a conversation. Good manners, or *adab*, in Muslim cultures, are also very important within the Puerto Rican society. For example, the expression *buen provecho* (may it benefit you) is uttered when one encounters someone in the process of eating. Vestiges of Islam permeate the *habitus* of people in a disguised fashion.

Fatalism is a very important trait of Islam as well as of the *habitus* of Latin America. Often, Puerto Ricans have been accused of slackness (*dejadez*) because they tend to be fatalistic people. Many firmly believe that everything is predestined and one is unable to change one's destiny. This sometimes leads to inaction and resignation to one's lot. The Qur'an is clear on predestination: "Say: 'Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us. He is our Protector,' and on Allah let the Believers put their trust." (Surah 9:51)<sup>88</sup> This predetermination, so ingrained within the culture, is also the

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<sup>87</sup> *The Qur'an*. Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. NY: ASIR Media, 2012. P. 279.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 122.

main reason why many people in Puerto Rico have relied on resignation in the face of adversity... “*sólo Dios lo sabe*,” God only knows, is the common attitude. The same expression occurs in Arabic regarding the Islam creed: God only knows, or *allahu alam*:  
الله اعلم.

There is a widespread Spanish proverb relating to resignation that admonishes: “*No hay mal que dure cien años ni cuerpo que lo resista*.” (No malady lasts a hundred years not a body could resist it). Moroccans use a similar utterance.<sup>89</sup>

Islam and Sufism place great emphasis on angels; after all, it was angel Gabriel who brought the Qur’an to Prophet Muhammad. The Qur’an introduces the angels as messengers: “Praise be to Allah, Who created (out of nothing) the heavens and the earth, who made the angels messengers with wings, two or three, or four (pairs). He adds to Creation as He pleases, for Allah has power over all things.” (Surah 35:1)<sup>90</sup>

Angels have been an important part of the spirituality of both Islamic and Puerto Rican society. An ingrained belief in Puerto Rico that speaks of angels interfering, causing lively conversation to stop for a brief period without any apparent reason, has been attributed to Islamic Spain:

Around the same time [the 9<sup>th</sup> century], a host of Persian superstitions gained currency in Islamic Spain, subsequently making their way into Europe- among them were the ideas that angels passing overhead stopped

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<sup>89</sup> Jason Webster. *Andalus. Unlocking the Secrets of Moorish Spain*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2004. P. 273.

<sup>90</sup> *The Qur’an*. Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. NY: ASIR Media, 2012. P. 285.

conversations in mid-flow, that breaking mirrors was generally a bad thing, and that the number thirteen was unlucky.<sup>91</sup>

Superstitions abound in Muslim society and many relate to warding off the evil eye with a Fatima<sup>92</sup> hand. Hispanic people also believe in the evil eye (*mal de ojo*) and ward it off with amulets similar to Fatima's hand. Puerto Rican babies are made to wear a jet-black stone (called *azabache*) in the form of a black person's hand, usually with some coral stone as well. This amulet is known as *manita de azabache*.

It is believed in both Arabic and Hispanic cultures that someone with evil intentions may praise a baby with an envious compliment and the baby may become ill and die because of the evil eye. To prevent this, babies are protected by using an amulet which guards against the evil eye. This evil eye amulet is also prevalent throughout the Mediterranean. Spain, Turkey, Greece, and Italy have a respective evil eye amulet. Because of this evil eye belief, in Arabic culture, a baby should be praised with a phrase like *mashallah*, *ما شاء الله*, (by/with God) which is similar to a Hispanic praise that may just entail the blessing *Dios lo bendiga y lo proteja* (May God bless him and protect him) rather than saying a compliment.

In Puerto Rico, one is able to capture the determined idea of the evil eye through people's stories. An elderly woman (age 80) from Ciales, Puerto Rico, but living in Bayamón, Puerto Rico, for the last 60 years told me (during fieldwork in Puerto Rico in July 2013) that when her first male child was born, a woman came to see him and the

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<sup>91</sup> Jason Webster. *Andalus. Unlocking the Secrets of Moorish Spain*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2004. P. 245.

<sup>92</sup> Fatima is Prophet Muhammad's daughter. In Portugal, Our Virgin of Fatima is the Patron Saint of the country. This is an interesting coincidence since Muslims ruled Portugal from 711 until 1249.

child became very upset and would not stop crying. When the ill-intentioned woman left, she realized that the boy had lost the evil eye hand amulet (*manita de azabache*) and she found the gold chain broken and the black-hand split into two pieces, as if the evil eye was caught by the hand, thus preventing the child from dying. This woman explained that this child was exceptionally beautiful and white as porcelain. This woman's other son, a 43-year-old male nurse born and raised in Bayamón, Puerto Rico, stated that he had been afflicted by the evil eye when he suffered a horrendous motorcycle accident that almost cost him his life. He was told during a Spiritism séance (where spirits of deceased people manifest through a living person acting as a medium) that people envied his soul. As he spoke passionately about this, his nephew (a 15-year-old boy born and raised in Bayamón, Puerto Rico) interrupted to add that he was skeptical of the evil eye because ignorant people use it to explain the unexplainable. The conversation was then joined by another elderly woman, (age 78) who was born in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico but lived in Bayamón, Puerto Rico, for the last 60 years, who refuted the young boy and added that the easiest way to spot an evil eye carrier is to observe whether the person has one eye slightly smaller than the other and she specifically offered the example of a famous television personality who had that physical impairment who was considered to be a malevolent person. She also added her own story of how her youngest brother, a very intelligent, white with blue eyes, and gifted child, died under the influence of the evil eye. His family had gathered for a reunion at the seashore in Rincón, Puerto Rico, and as people chatted, the boy was washed out into the ocean by the waves and drowned. This child succumbed to the evil eye because at age three he was so precocious, people used to call him Don Eduardo (Mr. Edward). The lady concluded the heated conversation by



asserting the necessity to add *que Dios lo bendiga* (may God bless him) anytime one refers to a child in a complimentary way. This parallels the prevalent *mashallah* in Arabic tradition against the evil eye.

Catholics in Hispanic countries also have many ritual prayers (such as a prayer litany resembling Sufism's *dhikrs*) and praying beads (rosaries in Catholicism and *tasbihs* in Islam) that are used to guard against misfortunes and in a sense, resemble Islamic traditional customs: "In both Cuba and Brazil, black and white Catholics influenced by the Muslims write prayers on pieces of paper that they glue to their windows or doors to protect their house from thieves."<sup>93</sup>

Using *si Dios quiere* (if God wills it) when referring to the future resembles the Muslim phrase *inshallah* (God willing). The purpose for this interjection becomes clear when reading the Qur'an:

Nor say of anything 'I shall be sure to do so and so tomorrow.' Without adding, 'So please Allah!' and call your Lord to mind when you forget, and say, 'I hope that my Lord will guide me ever closer (even) than this to the right road. (Surah 18:23-24)<sup>94</sup>

*Inshallah* (إن شاء الله) and the Spanish phrase *ojalá* (hopefully) resemble a condensed version of *ojos a Alá* (eyes to God) from the Arabic *law sa llah* (if God pleases). Muslims and Hispanics use these common expressions when talking about the future because it is believed that if they do not add the "if God wills it" phrase, things

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<sup>93</sup> Sylviane A Diouf. *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. New York: New York University Press, 1998. P. 194.

<sup>94</sup> *The Qur'an*. Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. NY : ASIR Media, 2012. P. 189.

will not happen. For Puerto Ricans, this goes to the extreme of putting the abbreviation *S.D.Q.* (*si Dios quiere* meaning if God pleases) in written correspondence anytime a future tense verb is used. For example, *este próximo verano voy a ir a Puerto Rico, S.D.Q.* (this summer I am going to go to Puerto Rico, if God wills it). *Ojalá* is also a talisman word used by practitioners of Santería.

Regarding the legacy of Muslim Spain in agriculture, author Lea expounds:

The wonderful system of irrigation by which they converted Valencia into the garden of Europe still exists, with its elaborate and equitable allotments of the waters. They introduced the culture of sugar, silk, cotton, rice and many other valuable products and not a spot of available ground was left untilled by their infatigable industry. The Mahometan law which prescribed labor as a religious duty was fully obeyed and every member of a family contributed his share of work to the common support.<sup>95</sup>

Throughout the Hispanic world, agriculture has been influenced by Muslim Spain in the form of *acequias* (irrigation channels). These irrigation channels are named from the Arabic-Andalusian word *assáqya*,<sup>96</sup> which has its origin in the Arabic water sprinkling systems made so popular by Arabs in Muslim Spain:

En al-Ándalus se utilizaron para agricultura hortícola tres sistemas de riego, similares a los que existían en otros lugares del islam: el primero era

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<sup>95</sup> Henry Charles Lea. *The Moriscos of Spain: Their Conversion and Expulsion*. New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2001. P. 7.

<sup>96</sup> Federico Corriente. *Diccionario de Arabismos y Voces Afines en Iberorromance*. Madrid: Gredos, 2003. P. 85.

el sistema de acequias (*al-saqiya*) para desviar el agua a las huertas...<sup>97</sup> (In al-Ándalus, three irrigation systems for horticultural agriculture were used, similar to those already existing in other areas of the Islamic world: the first one was the system of irrigation channels (*al-saqiya*) to detour the water to the fields...).

The architectural adobe style of many Hispanic-world dwellings is similar to that of the Middle East and North Africa in that clay is mixed with straw to make structures. The word adobe comes from Arabic-Andalusian *túba*<sup>98</sup> (raw brick). The style of houses with courtyards, fountains, and tiles are very similar to those in Moorish Spain: “Other Moorish survivals in present-day Andalucía are the whitewashed walls, banded with glazed tiles at the base, the so-called *azulejos* (from the Arab *azzallij*), and above all, the fountain in the center of the courtyard.”<sup>99</sup>

When the colonizers first arrived in the New World and saw the local places of worship, they denominated them by the name *mezquitas*, or mosques. For the Christians, religious buildings that were not Christian-like were considered mosques. This notion also reflects the tendency of nominating anything non-Christian as Moorish. When the Spaniards arrived in America’s Southwest, for example, many locals were described as Moors or Berbers. The etymology of the Spanish word *mezquita* is originally from the Arabic word *masjid* (a place for Muslims to pray, the mosque). Philologist Federico

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<sup>97</sup> José Luis Martínez Sández. *Al-Ándalus: Los Árabes en España*. Madrid: Edimat Libros, S.A., 2007. P. 156.

<sup>98</sup> Federico Corriente. *Diccionario de Arabismos y Voces Afines en Iberorromance*. Madrid: Gredos, 2003. P. 96.

<sup>99</sup> Titus Burckhardt. *Moorish Culture in Spain*. Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1999. P. 53.

Corriente (2003) expressed the word may have been tainted and converted into *ma/usqita* (what makes you fall into error) by the Mozarabs:

Tampoco se ha sospechado que los mozárabes pudieran haber alterado jocosamente esta voz convirtiéndola por mofa en *ma/usqita*, “la que hace caer (en el error)”, lo que podría, además, explicar las formas europeas con *mos* - de fr., ing. y alemán, incluso el it. *moschea*, pues hay todo tipo de indicios para suponer que los cristianos que visitaban Alándalus entraban en contacto, predominantemente, con sus correligionarios locales.<sup>100</sup> (Nor has anyone suspected that the Mozarabs could have jokingly altered this word converting it as a satire into *ma/usqita*, “the one that makes you fall (in error)”, which could, also, explain the European words with *mos* - of the French, English and German, even the Italian *moschea*, because all indicates that the Christians that visited al-Ándalus came into contact, predominantly, with their local people.)

Per Sánchez Cantón, dances and songs are sometimes saturated with Orientalism.<sup>101</sup> The flamenco dance of Spain, so popular among the southern Spanish gypsies and very visible throughout the Hispanic world, is attributed to the Arabs:

But this is probably only one aspect of Moorish dancing, for it is very likely that various features that have been preserved in Andalusian folk dancing, the flamenco, are survivals of Moorish times. The spiritual mood

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<sup>100</sup> Federico Corriente. *Diccionario de Arabismos y Voces Afines en Iberorromance*. Madrid: Gredos, 2003. P. 389.

<sup>101</sup> F. J. Sánchez Cantón. *España*. Madrid: Patronato Nacional del Turismo, 1930. P. 99.

underlying this dance, which links passion with the nearness of death, and makes the woman a kind of unapproachable goddess, may have both Castilian and Arabic roots.<sup>102</sup>

Christmas music or *villancicos* is often attributed to a Moorish Spain root:

Alfonso [El Sabio] was also responsible for a great collection of poetry known as the *Cántigas de Santa María*. Although written in Galician dialect, the poetic forms used were almost entirely *zajals* and *muwashshahs* - styles unique to Moorish Spain, having been developed centuries earlier by the poet Ibn Quzman. Both these forms later developed into the Spanish *villancico* used for all kinds of Christmas poetry, particularly Christmas carols.<sup>103</sup>

*¡Ay, lelolai – lelolai!* is a very common phrase that repeats in typical Puerto Rican songs. While the phrase has no meaning at all, it is just an interjection that reflects the natives of the island. Author Webster believes it is not a stretch to trace its origin to the Spanish flamenco dance and in turn, to Muslim Spain. Webster, who speaks Arabic and also plays the flamenco guitar, explains his daring idea:

A flamenco equivalent of the lyric filler “yeah, yeah, yeah,” was *lolailo or lelele*. Might it have come from the Muslim proclamation of faith *La illaha illa-llah?* The meaning had been lost, but the words sounded almost exactly the same. You could easily imagine some medieval Christian or

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<sup>102</sup> Titus Burckhardt. *Moorish Culture in Spain*. Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1999. P. 91.

<sup>103</sup> Jason Webster. *Andalus. Unlocking the Secrets of Moorish Spain*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2004. P. 95.

Gypsy hearing Muslims chanting this phrase, the copying it, much as Europeans with no interest or knowledge of baseball today walk around wearing Yankee caps.<sup>104</sup>

Philologist Corriente lists the word: “le/ilili” as a “griterio festivo o guerrero de los musulmanes.”<sup>105</sup> (festive or warrior utterances of the Muslims) and possibly related to the Islamic profession of faith.

The Muslim Spain legacy is by far most visible in the Spanish language which is moderately influenced by Arabic and Berber. In fact, some Berber words such as *vestido* (dress), *bombilla* (light bulb), and *sello* (stamp) are identical words in the Spanish language.<sup>106</sup> This is an interesting area for further research. Berber was the language of some of the North African newcomers to Spain in 711. Others spoke Arabic. Many words dealing with business and trade, clothing and accessories, fauna, foods, flora, people, places, and things all derive from Arabic. Many words starting with *-al* (the definite pronoun “the” in Arabic) in the Spanish vernacular are also derived from Arabic. Modern speech in Puerto Rico, for example, is heavily influenced by Muslim Spain’s language. The presence in Puerto Rico of Spaniards with Muslim Spain backgrounds is well documented by author Mauleón Benítez (1974), especially through linguistic research. She corroborates that Spaniards came to the island from Andalusia (region considered as

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<sup>104</sup> Jason Webster. *Andalus. Unlocking the Secrets of Moorish Spain*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2004. P. 159.

<sup>105</sup> Federico Corriente. *Diccionario de Arabismos y Voces Afines en Iberorromance*. Madrid: Gredos, 2003. P. 363.

<sup>106</sup> *Learn Tamazight. Talk No! Beginners*. London: EuroTalk Interactive CD-Rom, 2003.

Muslim Spain until 1600's) and Canary Islands (with aboriginal Berber inhabitants called *Guanches*):

“Queda comprobado que la lengua de Loíza Aldea se eslabona con el español puertorriqueño, el hispanoamericano, el español canario y el andaluz.”<sup>107</sup> (It has been proven that the language of Loíza Aldea is linked with the Puerto Rican Spanish, the Hispanic world Spanish, the Spanish language of Canary Islands and Andalusia.)

When the Spaniards arrived in the New World, they brought Catholicism and Spanish with them. The Spanish in Spain had developed from inception from Latin (the language of the Romans). It had been exposed to 800 years of Arabic, a language co-used in Spain with Latin and then Spanish. The Arabic language was very prestigious among the learned in Spain. Spain's Muslims were highly intellectual and exerted a lot of effort to properly translate books. Many people in Muslim Spain were trilingual and spoke Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew. Vulgar Latin eventually became Spanish in Spain. Many words entered the Spanish language from Arabic and these words passed to the New World through the colonizers. Today, Spanish remains the official language of Puerto Rico (although a commonwealth of the United States) and the vernacular tongue of the population at large.

The Medieval Spain Muslim-Christian adverse encounter left an enormous legacy that still reverberates throughout Latin America today. Demonstrating an actual Muslim presence in Puerto Rico is challenging. It cannot be traced through archeology

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<sup>107</sup> Carmen Cecilia Mauleón Benítez. *El Español de Loíza Aldea*. Madrid: Ediciones Partenón, 1974. P. 37.

remains or through the significant presence of Islam on the island today, but its manifestation is present within Puerto Rican cultural *habitus*. DNA evidence,<sup>108</sup> although often dismissed, clearly shows that Puerto Ricans have elements of indigenous natives of Puerto Rico called Taíno, West Africans, white Europeans (i.e. Spaniards), and North Africa Berbers. Muslim remnants are plausible among Andalusian Spaniards and Canary Island *Guanches*, as well as West Africans and North African Berbers, and other pseudo-Christian Europeans arriving in the New World after the Muslim expulsion<sup>109</sup> in the 1610s. It is also clear that Muslim enslaved Africans came to the island of Puerto Rico during the slave trade. DNA has also been lauded by scholar Gates who recommends it as a way to reconstruct family trees of enslaved African ancestors: “Nevertheless, we can now, after all of these centuries, begin to get a sense of who our ancestors were, by analyzing the DNA of their descendants- and by re-creating the lines of the families they started in slavery, the families that against all odds now thrive in such great numbers

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<sup>108</sup> Juan Martínez-Cruzado et al. “Reconstructing the Population of Puerto Rico by Means of mtDNA Phylogeographic Analysis.” *American Journal of Anthropology* 128:131-155 (2005).

“The Origins of Puerto Ricans have been traced to Taínos, Spaniards and Blacks- these groups further broken down to include Visigoths and Arabs under the Spaniards and *Ladinos*, Berbers, Infidels, etc. among the Blacks.” “The Origins of Puerto Ricans.” *Ancestry.com*. 2014. Web. 28 Aug. 2014.

<sup>109</sup> Author Israel Burshatin (1985) explains: “It has been estimated that between 275,000 to 300,000 Moriscos [Moors] were forced into exile in the years between 1609 and 1614.” Israel Burshatin. “The Moor in the Text: Metaphor, Emblem and Silence”. *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Autumn 1985), P. 113.

Author Anouar Majid reminds us that the expulsion of Muslims from Spain in 1609 has been called “the biggest ethnic cleansing to have been carried out in the western history” by historian Henry Kamen. Anouar Majid. *We Are All Moors: Ending Centuries of Crusades against Muslims and Other Minorities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2009. P. 9.

Two excellent books on the atrocities of the Spanish Inquisition written by author Kamen are: Kamen, Henry. *Inquisition and Society in Spain in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Disinherited. Exile and the Making of Spanish Culture 1492-1975*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007.



today.”<sup>110</sup> The implications of this is that DNA testing available today is able to trace fragments of the diverse races that lived and thrived in Puerto Rico.

Besides using DNA findings, this legacy insinuation can also be traced through the rich linguistic legacy of Islam to the Spanish language. This claim cannot be scholarly supported without the exquisite work of linguists Federico Corriente and Juan Corominas. Some of the words of Arabic descent used in Puerto Rican Spanish<sup>111</sup> are very common in everyday speech. Conversant with Federico Corriente’s dictionary<sup>112</sup> as the main resource, this section is also indebted to the Corominas dictionary.<sup>113</sup> Both resources have served to verify actual Arabic roots of these Spanish words. If a word was not undeniably confirmed as a derived word from Arabic, it was not presented in this section. An example of an omitted word is *Olé*<sup>114</sup> because some have suggested it derives from *wallah* (والله by God) and others from *yallah* (يا الله Oh, God!), so it is considered a false Arabism by Corriente for semantic reasons.

Some words in vernacular Puerto Rican Spanish that were derived from Andalusian/Arabic words are:

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<sup>110</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Reader*. Edited by Abby Wolf. New York: Basic Civitas, 2012. P. 148.

<sup>111</sup> The Spanish language is consistent throughout the Hispanic world: Mexico, Central America, South America and the Caribbean. Of course, many regionalisms exist, and Caribbean Spanish is spoken at a much faster rate.

<sup>112</sup> Federico Corriente. *Diccionario de Arabismos y Voces Afines en Iberorromance*. Madrid: Gredos, 2003.

<sup>113</sup> Juan Corominas. *Breve Diccionario Etimológico de la Lengua Castellana*. Editorial Gredos, Tercera Edición. 1973.

<sup>114</sup> Federico Corriente. *Diccionario de Arabismos y Voces Afines en Iberorromance*. Madrid: Gredos, 2003. P. 493.

*Alcahueta* (القواد, *alqawwad- qawwad*, go-betweener):<sup>115</sup> In Hispanic culture, this is the name given to a person (usually a woman) who acts as a mediator and has the job of finding suitable mates for men looking for brides. She knows everyone in the local neighborhood and everything about them. She has been a staple character throughout Hispanic literature as well. She can be seen in works such as *La Celestina*, a late-medieval (15<sup>th</sup> century) work from Spain written by Fernando de Rojas. An *alcahueta*-like character can still be found in any Hispanic neighborhood today.

*Algarabía* (العربي, *al'arabiyya/ 'arabiyyah*, confused/loud voices):<sup>116</sup> In Arabic, it means the Arabic language. In Spanish, the same word means a gathering of people having a great time and uttering loud and confusing sounds. This may have come to the Spanish language by Spaniards who heard the Arabic language and were not familiar with it and perceived the language to sound like confusing utterances. This word in Spanish is almost always accompanied with the feeling that the confusion is a happy event rather than a sad one.

*Cafre* (كافر, *kafir*, an infidel/a Black pagan/a low-class person):<sup>117</sup> In Arabic, the word *kafir* relates to an unbeliever or a non-Muslim. In Puerto Rican Spanish, the word is an epithet that means the person is a low-class, good-for-nothing loser.

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<sup>115</sup> Federico Corriente. *Diccionario de Arabismos y Voces Afines en Iberorromance*. Madrid: Gredos, 2003. P. 130.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 168.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 268.

*Marrano* (حرام, *haram*, something declared prohibited):<sup>118</sup> This word, meaning something prohibited in Islam, in Medieval Spain becomes the epithet for a Jew that has changed his faith from Judaism to Christianity. It is also another name for pig, which is a prohibited animal to consume in Islam and Judaism. In Puerto Rican Spanish, it is often used to insult someone because they are filthy.

*Matraca* (المطرقة, *al mitraqah*, a hammer):<sup>119</sup> The word in Arabic means a hammer. In Puerto Rican Spanish, this word as a noun means a hard blow on the head and it is usually used in a vulgar context. The verb means to give such a blow, most likely with a *matraca*, literally the word for hammer in Arabic.

*Mequetrefe* (المتطفل, *mug/xatrif*, or “*qatras*,” an arrogant/stuck-up person):<sup>120</sup> It also refers to a low-life, good-for-nothing person. In Puerto Rican Spanish, it is used to speak of someone who is a low-life, just as *cafre*, described earlier.

*¡Ojalá!* (إن شاء الله, *inshallah*, if God wills it):<sup>121</sup> The term in Spanish almost sounds like “*Ojos a Alá*” (eyes to God), but it is used in Spanish to imply a wish that something occurs in the future, hopefully if God wills it.

*Rincón* (ركن, *rukn*, a corner):<sup>122</sup> Just like in Arabic, this word in Spanish means corner. It has often been used to denominate a geographical place that has a corner location

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<sup>118</sup> Federico Corriente. *Diccionario de Arabismos y Voces Afines en Iberorromance*. Madrid: Gredos, 2003. P. 381.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 384.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 388.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 408.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 417.

within a map. In Puerto Rico, there is a town nested in the northwest corner of the island named Rincón.

*Tamarindo* (تمر هندي, *tamr hindi*, a Hindu date):<sup>123</sup> This is the name given to the fruit of a tamarind tree. As in the Middle East, this fruit is very popular in Latin countries and is home-grown in those Latin countries favored with tropical weather.

*Zahorí* (ساحر, *zuhari* or *sahhar*, a geomantic, a witch, a person who sees and tells the future):<sup>124</sup> Also, as Corriente explains, “possibly from *sahb assahur*- the person that awakes the Muslims during Ramadan for the *zahorar*- or to eat something before daylight.”<sup>125</sup> This name in Arabic has to do with a person involved in omens and divination and it is used to mean the person who wakes up the Muslims during Ramadan. In Puerto Rican Spanish, the word has a completely different meaning- it is said of a child that is very evil-like in his conduct. A very energetic child that does not behave is often called *zahorí* in Puerto Rico. However, any Spanish dictionary defines *zahorí* as a clairvoyant.

*Zalamería*: (سلام, *salam* or *assalamu alayk*, a fake courtesy or a flirt with words):<sup>126</sup> This word in Spanish comes from the Muslim greeting of “peace be upon you” which is translated as hello. In Spanish, a person with *zalamería* is one that uses his/her speech to make people attracted to him/her. He/She is a “sweet talker” and usually has all the girls/boys fall in love in with him/her because of his/her pleasing manner of speech.

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<sup>123</sup> Federico Corriente. *Diccionario de Arabismos y Voces Afines en Iberorromance*. Madrid: Gredos, 2003. P. 451.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 437.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 432.

Other common words in vernacular Puerto Rican Spanish that were derived from Andalusian/Arabic words include a broad range of words taken from business and trade, clothing and accessories, fauna, food, flora, people, places, and things. Note how the Spanish and Arabic pronunciation are almost identical for each word. The number in parentheses next to the Spanish word is the page number for reference in the Federico Corriente's *Diccionario de Arabismos y Voces Afines en Iberorromance*. Madrid: Editorial Gredos, S.A., 2003. These are merely a sampling, and not an all-inclusive list.

<u>Spanish</u>	<u>Arabic</u>	<u>Arabic pronunciation</u>	<u>English</u>
aceite (83)	زيت	zayta	oil
aceituna (83)	الزيتون	azzaytuna	olives
ajedrez (83)	الشطرنج	assitránj	chess
alacena (107)	خزانة	alxazána	food storage
alacrán (108)	العقرب	al 'aqráb	scorpion
albarcoque (75)	البرقوق	albarqúq	plum or apricot
alberca (122)	بركة	albírka	pool
alcachofa (128)	خرشوف	alxarsúfa	artichoke
Alcalde (130)	القاض	alqádi	mayor
alcanfor (134)	كافور	(al) kafur	camphor
alcaparro (134)	الكبر	alkapára	capers
alcázar (128)	الكازار	alqásr	castle
alcohol (140)	الكحول	al kuhúl	alcohol
algarroba (158)	الخروب	alxarruba	carob
Algebra (170)	الجبر	aljabr	algebra

<u>Spanish</u>	<u>Arabic</u>	<u>Arabic pronunciation</u>	<u>English</u>
algodón (144)	القطن	al qutn	cotton
alicates (175)	ملقط	milqat	pliers
almacén (181)	مخزن	almaxzán	storage
almohada (195)	مخدة	almuxádda	pillow
alquimia (208)	كيمياء	alkímya	alchemy
añil (217)	أنيل	annil	blue color
Árabe (219)	العرب	‘arabi	Arab
arroz (230)	الأرز	arruz	rice
arsenal (231)	الترسانة	dar assina’ah	arsenal
atambor (451)	الطبال	tunbur	drum
ataúd (235)	التابوت	attabút	coffin
auge (244)	الأوج	awj	popularity
azafrán (80)	الزعفران	azza’faran	saffron
azahar (247)	زهرة	azzahár	orange blossom
azúcar (91)	السكر	as sukkar	sugar
bellota (260)	بلوط	ballúta	pod
berenjena (119)	الباذنجان	badinjána	eggplant
café (268)	القهوة	qahwah	coffee
candil (273)	كانديلا	qandil	flame
espinaca (310)	السبانخ	isb/fanax	spinach
estragón (311)	الطرخون	tarxun	estragon
fonda (163)	الفندق	al fúndaq	hotel

<u>Spanish</u>	<u>Arabic</u>	<u>Arabic pronunciation</u>	<u>English</u>
gabán (325)	غبين	qaba'	jacket
gacela (325)	الغزال	al gazal	gazelle
guitarra (337)	قيثارة	qitarah	guitar
jarábe (353)	شراب	sharáb	syrup
jasmín (355)	ياسمين	yasmín	jasmine
jeque (356)	الشيخ	sháyx	sheikh
jirafa (249)	زرافة	zaráfa	giraffe
laúd (362)	العود	al'úd	lute
limón (364)	الليمون	laymun	lemon
máscara (383)	المسكرة	masxarah	mask
momia (395)	المومياء	mumiyyah	mommy
pato (412)	بط	batt	duck
rehén (424)	رهينة	rihán	hostage
talco (449)	الطلق	tálq	talc
tarifa (454)	طريف	ta'rifah	tariff

Spanish utterances in the form of aphorisms are clearly a reflection of the legacy of the Arabic language and culture on Spanish semantics. A great example of a Moorish legacy in language is the proverb *media naranja* (half orange) to mean one's soul mate.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> "Many Spaniards today still refer to their partner or lover as their 'half orange', a legacy from the Moors, for whom an orange was a symbol of perfect love, the idea having been developed in Baghdad from Platonic concepts about sister-souls uniting to form a sphere." Jason Webster. *Andalus. Unlocking the Secrets of Moorish Spain*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2004. P. 135.

Literature has always been an important medium to carry messages across cultures. Palestinian intellectual Edward Said (1993) argued: “[literature is] immensely important in the formation of imperial attitudes, references, and experiences.”<sup>128</sup> Among this literature, many proverbs relating to Muslim Spain survive. Several of these proverbs relating to *moros*<sup>129</sup> (Moors/Muslims) are used on the island of Puerto Rico but they are devoid of negative undertones. For example, when speaking in Spanish of a very handsome man, one calls him *tremendo musulmán* (tremendous Muslim). This is a sarcastic allusion as a Puerto Rican person should not expect to see a handsome man in one’s homeland, and if such a rarity appears, it must be a Muslim. Nevertheless, it equates beauty to Muslim-ness. When suggesting that there are enemies nearby, such as people listening in, one says *hay moros en la costa* (There are Moors or Muslims on the coast to mean “the enemy is listening in.”). This is probably one of the most common utterances among Spanish-speaking people when addressing an enemy.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Edward Said. *Culture and Imperialism*. NY: Knopf, 1993. P. vii.

<sup>129</sup> The problematic term *moro* is addressed by author L. P. Harvey (1990): “The difficulties arise in part because the geographical and ethnic terms available to us themselves arose in the course of nine long centuries of contact and conflict, and while reflecting that conflict, they do not always help to throw much light on it. Moor (*moro*), for example, is a historical term which is authentic in the sense that it occurs in source materials of the period, but it is a term we can rarely use nowadays. It is not merely geographically imprecise, leaving us uncertain whether the person it describes is of North African origin or simply a Muslim, it is ambiguous with regard to the value judgment it implies. Often Moor conveys hostility, but there are contexts where Muslims refer to themselves as Moors with evident pride.” L. P. Harvey. *Islamic Spain, 1250 to 1500*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990. P. 1.

Also, Tim Mc Girk (1990) expounds: “The word Moor in itself is degrading. The Moroccans and Algerians [today] do not like being called Moors. Out of a Spaniard mouth, the word Moor sounds decidedly racist, and it has many vulgar meanings. Call someone a Moor, and you are calling him a dangerous, conniving savage.” Tim Mc Girk. “‘El Moro’ still Haunts Spaniards.” *The Toronto Star* [Toronto, Canada] 22 July 1990. P. H2.

<sup>130</sup> “Thus, all three of the events of 1492 combined to make the Christian victory at Granada a final and conclusive one. The Mediterranean seacoast might be open and vulnerable to pirate raids from the far Islamic shore, so that at times there was almost a Spanish psychosis related to the cry ‘*hay moros en la costa*’ (the Moors have landed), but in fact there was no landing in strength on Spanish territory by troops



To express marked, irreconcilable differences, one says *moros y cristianos* (Moors and Christians). The pair also means black beans (Moors) over a bed of white rice (Christians). Any Puerto Rican or Cuban restaurant establishment will list *Moors and Christians* on the menu to signify the staple delicacy of black beans and white rice. In a sense, it breaks down the pair's irreconcilable differences in Latin countries and is considered a cherished dish.

In a mocking way, one expresses "nothing is impossible" in the saying *si la montaña no va a Mahoma, Mahoma va a la montaña* (If the mountain does not go to Muhammad, Muhammad goes to the mountain). The possibility of a mountain coming to Muhammad is as impossible as it can get, yet it is uttered as a way to express the contrary idea that nothing is impossible. The idea that Muhammad walks to the mountain, if the mountain does not come to him, makes the impossibility attainable because of man's will to act.

Another common proverb is *de la Seca a la Meca*<sup>131</sup> (from Seca to Mecca), which implies that a person has traveled or experienced a great or far-reaching journey. Mecca is the holy site of Islam to where Muslims travel for pilgrimage.

*Quien tiene Moro tiene oro* is a more positive phrase, according to author Webster: "In the past, when the *moriscos* were still working on the land after the Reconquest, the Christian landowner's saying was *quien tiene moro tiene oro*, (Moors are

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from any Muslim power, no attempt to regain what had been lost." L. P. Harvey. *Islamic Spain, 1250 to 1500*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990. P. 325.

<sup>131</sup> A child's game in Puerto Rico includes this *De la Seca a la Meca* proverb: "Pico, Pico, Mandorico ¿Quién le dió tamaño pico? La seca, la meca, la tuntoneca. (Beak, Beak, Big Beak. Who gave him [the bird] such a big beak? It is as large as [the distance from] Seca to Meca). Calixta Vélez Adorno. *Juegos Infantiles de Puerto Rico*. San Juan: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1991. P. 59.

worth their weight in gold). The new Christian arrivals from the north had relied on them for their agricultural nous, at least until the final expulsion. Nowadays the stereotype was of North Africans being lazy and untrustworthy.”<sup>132</sup>

The glory achieved by accomplishing a difficult task is expressed in the proverb: *a más Moros, más ganancias* (the more Moors [killed], the greater the earnings) and is intended to imply that one is exalted by destroying the other. Alternatively, author Lea explains:

The ruling classes set a high value on their Moorish vassals who cultivated the land and paid heavy imposts, while loans to their *aljamas* [self-governing community] were a favorite investment for prelates and ecclesiastical foundations. It had passed into a proverb that “*mientras más moros más ganancias*”- “the more Moors the more profit.”<sup>133</sup>

When there is chaos one utters *haber moros y cristianos* (there are Moors and Christians). Basically, there is an insurmountable incompatibility. Having a plethora of problems is expressed as *Las mil y una noche* (*The Thousand and One Night*- a well-known piece of Arabic literature). Being borderline drunk is expressed by the saying *moros van, moros vienen* (Moors come, Moors go). Moors are no longer in plain sight (at least in Christian Spain post 1610), so to see one come and go one must be in an altered state, such as being intoxicated.

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<sup>132</sup> Jason Webster. *Andalus. Unlocking the Secrets of Moorish Spain*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2004. P. 69.

<sup>133</sup> Henry Charles Lea. *The Moriscos of Spain: Their Conversion and Expulsion*. New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2001. P. 57.

To express an unruly or disorderly meeting is to say *como moros sin señor* (like Moors without a Lord). Moors are conceptualized as unable to seek some sort of order unless they are guided by a leader. Near the end of the Moorish rule in Spain, Muslim leaders broke into *taifas*<sup>134</sup> or small groups of governors. This proverb probably alludes to such an unfortunate event, which practically caused the demise of Muslim Spain by weakening it since Muslims were fighting against each other rather than against the real threat to their dominion in Muslim Spain, the Christians.

To attack a non-existing foe is *lanzada a moro muerto* (attempting to strike a dead Moor). It implies wasting time on things that no longer matter because they have long been resolved. Greediness is uttered by: *oro y moro* (gold and Moor), as in wanting to gain both in victory. When the Muslims were defeated by the Christians, they were often stripped of their valuable belongings like gold, and often they were taken as captives to be sold as enslaved Muslims in Christian markets.

Inconsistency is expressed through the proverb *está como la reina mora, que a veces canta y a veces llora* (she is like a Moorish queen, sometimes she sings and sometimes she cries). An unbaptized child is referred to as a *moro* (a Moor). Spain forged a new identity as a nation based on Christianity, specifically Catholicism, after the Reconquista. Any person who was not a Catholic Spaniard was deemed to be an “other” (Moor). Even at times when Muslims and Jews sincerely converted to Christianity, they

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<sup>134</sup> “In the years between the death of al-Muzaffar in 1008 and the final abolition of the caliphate of Cordoba in 1008, al-Ándalus disintegrated into a variety of small states, each independent from the other and often in direct competition. The rulers of these small kingdoms were known to the Arabic historians of al-Ándalus as the *muluk al-tawa'if* (kings of factions or groups). The term was Hispanised into *Reyes de Taifas* (from *ta'ifa*, singular of *tawa'if*), hence *Taifa* kingdoms.” Hugh Kennedy. *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of al-Ándalus*. London: Longman, 1996. P. 130.

were deemed crypto-converts and often doomed to the horrors of the Inquisition and forced to confess to actions they did not commit. The simple act of performing a culturally-ingrained behavior, such as bathing, was sufficient grounds for an Inquisitional accusation. Related to this idea of impossibility of true conversion, *al revés de los cristianos* (opposite of Christians) implies insurmountable differences; someone who deviates from the true path of Christianity.

To indicate that someone is either one or the other, *o todos moros, o todos cristianos* (we are all Moors, or we are all Christians), is used. Once again, this denotes discordance that is insuperable. To express that words are not the same as acts, *no es lo mismo decir: moros vienen, que verlos venir* (It is not the same to say: Moors are coming than seeing them actually arriving) is used. The threat of the Moor as an enemy is clearly expressed in the proverb *ver moros con tranchetes* (seeing Moors armed with weapons) and signifies seeing imagined danger or a non-existent enemy. *Nacarile del Oriente* (Nacre or Mother-of-Pearl from Orient) implies impossibility or denial. *Trabajar como un moro*<sup>135</sup> (to work [hard] like a Moor) is used to imply hard-working efforts.

And lastly, an utterance that summarizes the irreconcilability between Moors and Christians and was the main reason Muslims were unconditionally and ultimately expelled in the early 1600s from Spain is *moro viejo, mal cristiano* (an old Moor is a bad Christian). This is used to express the English idea that you cannot teach an old dog a new trick. Many of these expelled old Moors/bad Christians made their way to Latin America.

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<sup>135</sup> Eugenio Fernández Méndez. *Historia Cultural de Puerto Rico 1493-1968*. San Juan: Ediciones El CEMI, 1971. P. 60.

Children growing up in Puerto Rico and other Latin American countries in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century played games that involved songs relating to the Moors and Christians. The following songs are examples, and again, the English translation has been added for the sake of the reader's understanding:

¿Quién es esta gente? (Who are those people?)  
¿Quién es esta gente (Who are those people)<sup>136</sup>  
que pasa por aquí? (that are passing through here?)  
Ni de día ni de noche (Neither day or night)  
me deja dormir. (do they allow me to sleep.)  
Son las hijas del rey moro (They are the daughters of the Moorish King)  
que vienen por doña Ana. (coming to see Doña Ana.)  
Doña Ana no está en casa, (Doña Ana is not at home.)  
que está en el jardín (She is in her garden)  
abriendo la rosa, (opening the rose)  
cerrando el jazmín. (and closing the jasmine.)

The following song was told to me by an elderly woman who was born in Cataño, Puerto Rico in 1928. She related that as a child she would hear the ladies hired to iron clothes singing this song about Moorish Spain:

En el campo moro y entre las ortigas (In the Moorish countryside and  
among bushes)

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<sup>136</sup> “¿Quién es esta Gente?” *Junta de Andalucía- Portal de Averroes*. 2013. Web. 15 July 2013.

Allí cautivaron, tres lindas cautivas (there they took hostage, three pretty captives.)

El pícaro moro que las cautivó (The trickster Moor who took them)

A la reina mora se las entregó (gave them to the Moorish Queen.)

Toma reina mora estas tres cautivas (Take these three captives, Moorish Queen)

Para que te laven para que te sirvan (so they can wash for you, and serve you.)

La mayor lavaba, la menor tendía (The oldest washed, the youngest hung up clothes)

Y la más pequeña el agua subía (and the smallest brought in the water.)

Spanish-speaking children the world-over play Moors and Christians in the same fashion as American children play Cowboys and Indians. An outside game called *Hilo*, *Hilo Verde*<sup>137</sup> (thread, green thread) has one group of players ask another group: “Can the knight marry the daughters of the Moorish King?”, and the adamant Moorish king refuses the offer. Once again, the idea is that Moors and Christians do not mix. The most common verse this song uses in Puerto Rico is: *que las hijas del rey moro no me las dan por mujer...* (That the daughters of the Moorish King are not being given to me as wives) instead of with: *a decirle a mi señor, lo que vos me respondéis...* (to tell my Lord, what you are answering me). Here are the words to the game:

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<sup>137</sup> “Hilo Verde.” *Mis Canciones Infantiles Selección de Canciones Infantiles. Letras, Música y Vídeos de Canciones para Niños*. 2013. Web. 15 July 2013. Also see: Calixta Vélez Adorno. *Juegos Infantiles de Puerto Rico*. San Juan: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1991. P. 135-136.

Hilo, hilo verde, (Thread, green thread)  
que hilando lo hilé, (sewing, I sewed)  
por el camino me han dicho (someone told me in the way)  
lindas hijas tiene el rey. (what beautiful daughters the king has.)

Téngalas o no las tenga, (If I have them, or do not have them)  
yo las sabré mantener, (I will know how to take care of them)  
que el pan que yo comiere (because from the bread I shall eat)  
comerán ellas también. (they will also eat.)

Yo me voy muy enojado, (I am leaving, very upset)  
a los palacios del rey, (towards the king's palace)  
a decirle a mi señor, (to tell my Lord)  
lo que vos me respondéis. (what you will answer to me.)

Vuelva, vuelva caballero, (Come back, come back, sir,)  
no sea usted tan descortés, (do not be so impolite,)  
que de tres hijas que tengo (that from the three daughters that I have)  
la mejor será de usted. (the best one is for you.)

Esta cojo por hermosa, (I choose this one because she is gorgeous)  
por bonita y por mujer, (because her beauty and femininity)  
que parece una Rosita (that she looked like a little rose)

acabada de nacer. (just born.)

Lo que tengo que rogarle, (What I have to beg you)

es que me la cuide bien, (is that you take good care of her,)

sentadita en silla de oro, (sitting in a gold chair,)

bordando paños al rey, (embroidering handkerchiefs for the king,)

y una perita en la boca, (and a little pear in the mouth,)

a las horas de comer (at time to eat)

y azotitos con correa (and little strikes with a belt)

cuando sea menester. (when it is needed.)

The last two lines are interesting in that they address lightly striking a woman with a belt as needed, something the Qur'an clearly proposes as well: "beat them (lightly)..." (Surah 4:34).<sup>138</sup>

Reiterating the idea that Moors and Christians do not mix, another game in Puerto Rico called *Los Moros* asserts:

Allá vienen los moros. (There come the Moors)

A matarnos vienen. (They come to kill us)

Con cuchillos y palos. (With knives and sticks)

Déjenlos venir. (Let them come)<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *The Qur'an*. Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. NY: ASIR Media, 2012. P. 54.

<sup>139</sup> Calixta Vélez Adorno. *Juegos Infantiles de Puerto Rico*. San Juan: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1991. P. 160.



In this game listed above, some children close their eyes and are given a Christian sign of the cross on their forehead. They are to go to the glory (of God). The children that choose to leave their eyes open are warned that they belong in hell.

Another game attributed to the Muslim Spain legacy is *al alimón*<sup>140</sup> (jointly, together).

Al alimón, al alimón, (jointly, together,)  
la fuente se ha caído. (the fountain fell down.)  
Al alimón, al alimón, (jointly, together,)  
mandarla componer. (order it to be fixed.)  
Al alimón, al alimón, (jointly, together,)  
no tenemos dinero. (we do not have money.)  
Al alimón, al alimón, (jointly, together,)  
nosotros lo tenemos. (we do have it.)  
Al alimón, al alimón, (jointly, together,)  
pasen los caballeros. (knights go through.)  
Al alimón, al alimón, (jointly, together,)  
nosotros pasaremos. (we shall go.)

This very common children's game in Puerto Rico has a rather interesting background. According to Corriente, this is a children's game in which the children are divided into two bands and they sing the phrase *al alimón* which the author explained had

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<sup>140</sup> "Al Alimón." *Junta de Andalucía- Portal de Averroes*. 2013. Web. 15 July 2013. Also see: Calixta Vélez Adorno. *Juegos Infantiles de Puerto Rico*. San Juan: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1991. (P.115-116). As a child growing up in Puerto Rico, I played this game with different wording: "*que se rompió la fuente...mandenla a componer...uri, uri, ura, la reina va a pasar...*" (the fountain broke.... send someone to fix it... uri, uri, ura, the queen is going to go through it).

to do with a phrase Moorish performers and acrobats used to utter when performing dangerous acts. He gives the Arabic phrase “*Allah la yimun*” as the Spanish “*Dios no lo reproche*” (May God not reproach it), because according to Islamic law such risky endeavors for mere diversion were not permitted by orthodox Islam, and thus, the performers asked for God’s help when carrying out such dangerous performances.<sup>141</sup>

How many happy memories do children have playing this *Al alimón* game growing up in Puerto Rico, yet they never understood its cultural background and significance!

Muslim Spain patrimony is deeply ingrained within the Hispanic culture, and the Spanish language and cultural practices perpetuate this heritage. This legacy remains richly alive. Nowhere is this more vividly materialized than in the Moor and Christian celebrations throughout the Hispanic New World today. An idea of the dichotomy of good/evil and Muslim/Christian, the native Spaniard with the foreign Muslim as a potent culprit so prevalent in Spain, made its way to its colonized societies. Moor and Christian celebrations imported to the Hispanic New World from Spain attest to the clash between the cross and the crescent.

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<sup>141</sup> Federico Corriente. *Diccionario de Arabismos y Voces Afines en Iberorromance*. Madrid: Gredos, 2003. P. 110.

## CHAPTER 3

### LEGACY OF WEST AFRICANS TO PUERTO RICO

The Hispano-Islamic identity also made its way to the New World through Muslim enslaved West Africans who were brought to Spain from Africa and Christianized prior to their assignment to the New World. Records from the local church in Loíza, Puerto Rico show how the population of the area was very diverse and included colonizers, immigrants, and enslaved Africans although their understated practices were not formally documented. The first colonizers, which included *moriscos* or new converts to Christianity from Islam and enslaved Africans (some of them Islamized), contributed to a historical and cultural presence of Islamic ideology on the island. The *moriscos* and enslaved Africans were under pressure to hide their former beliefs and conceivably resorted to dissimulation of their religious and cultural practices.

Author Brent Singleton (2002) observes: “The precise estimates of enslaved Africans of the Islamic faith vary greatly, but the notion that a significant percentage was Muslim is unquestioned.”<sup>142</sup> Nevertheless, there is little official documentation of an early enslaved Muslim Africans presence in Puerto Rico. Enslaved Africans were inconsequential to the ruling class who perceived them as chattel. Also, enslaved Africans were assigned Christian names upon entering a plantation. What Afroz observed about Jamaica is applicable to Puerto Rico also: “Even the records of slave baptism fail to

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<sup>142</sup> Brent Singleton. “The Ummah Slowly Bled: A Select Bibliography of Enslaved African Muslims in the Americas and the Caribbean.” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 2002. P. 401.

indicate the previous faith or African names of the slaves from which ethnicity or religious beliefs could be inferred.”<sup>143</sup>

The enslaved Africans presence in Loíza is suggested through extensive documentary analysis research of San Patricio Catholic Church records<sup>144</sup> in Loíza, Puerto Rico. These local church baptism records (1792-1845) and death records (1823-1851) documented a few surnames that indicated African ethnicities such as Mandingo, Congo, Ganga, and Mina. The baptism records for example, verified adult newcomers to the island and baptized them as follows: Africa (location not specified) 63 enslaved Africans, 29 Congo enslaved Africans, 21 Guinea enslaved Africans, 3 Mandingo enslaved Africans, 2 Angola enslaved Africans and 1 Mina enslaved African.<sup>145</sup> In some instances, records were found of enslaved Africans surnamed Infiel to mean infidel because they practiced a religion other than Christianity. Analysis of the baptism records revealed the following Infiel surnames as being the mothers of the children being baptized from 1794 to 1802: Catalina Infiel (enslaved by Antonio LeClet, reference 176, 702, and 838), Ysabel Infiel (enslaved by Sabastián Monge, reference 199), Barbara Infiel (enslaved by Fernando Casado, reference 204), Cathalina Infiel (enslaved by Jayme Guilán, reference 208), Beti Infiel (enslaved by Jayme Xilant, reference 220), Juana Infiel (enslaved by Defendino Rubaldo, reference 723), María Infiel (enslaved by Francisca

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<sup>143</sup> Sultana Afroz. *Invisible yet Invincible. The Islamic Heritage of the Maroons and the Enslaved Africans in Jamaica*. London: Austin & Macauley Publishers Ltd., 2012. P. 34.

<sup>144</sup> “San Patricio Catholic Church Baptism Records in Loíza Puerto Rico, 1792 to 1845.” *Family Search- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. 2014. Web. 28 Aug. 2014.  
“San Patricio Catholic Church Death Records in Loíza Puerto Rico, 1823 to 1851.” *Family Search- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. 2014. Web. 28 Aug. 2014.

<sup>145</sup> “San Patricio Catholic Church Baptism Records in Loíza Puerto Rico, 1792 to 1845.” *Family Search- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. 2014. Web. 28 Aug. 2014.

Correa, reference 724), Belén Infiel (enslaved by Antonio Ichenet [sp.?], reference 807), Josefa Infiel (enslaved by Antonio Le Clet, reference 965), María Infiel (enslaved by Balerio Rodríguez, reference 971), and Ysabel Infiel (enslaved by Vicente Ferrer, reference 1019), and so forth.

These people surnamed Infiel were even buried in a different part of the cemetery denominated for non-Christian faiths. The enslaved Africans, some with their own expressions of an indigenized Islam, availed themselves to syncretized ways of religious and cultural practices. The Mandingos (from areas between Senegal and Gambia), Wolof (from Occidental Sudan to the margins of the Senegal River) and Fula or Fulani (from Senegambia) were mostly Muslim.<sup>146</sup>

The Iberian people were involved in slave trade and by 1500, enslaved Africans (black Africans and white Arabs/Berbers or Moors) made their way to the New World with the colonizers. As authors Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. González (2010) argued, the slavery system was originally based on religion and not race and it permitted the enslavement of prisoners of war:

Religion was the initial justification for the transatlantic-slave trade, not race, although, as that trade grew, slavery became associated with blacks. Thus, a religious and a not a racial justification was the basis for the rejection, vilification, and persecution of practitioners of African religions by the Spanish.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Héctor A. García and Luis M. Iriarte R. “Breve Historia de la Esclavitud.” *La Gran Enciclopedia Ilustrada del Proyecto Salón Hogar*. 2014. Web. 15 Dec. 2014.

<sup>147</sup> *Caribbean Religions History. An Introduction*. Edited by Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. González. NY: New York University Press, 2010. P. 181.

In this manner, enslaved Africans, as well as the colonizers and immigrants, brought Muslim Spain customs, beliefs, and the Spanish language saturated with Arabic to the New World. Many *ladino* enslaved Africans originally from Western Africa were brought to Spain (Seville was a main hub) and ostensibly converted to Christianity prior to being shipped to the New World. These were among the first to arrive in Puerto Rico:

These *Ladinos* were the first Africans to be introduced into the New World, as early as 1501. Direct trade with the African coast was forbidden for fear that with Africans coming straight from Africa, Islam would find its way into the new colonies. In the context of the period, the Spanish concern was wholly natural. Moorish control over Granada had ended only in 1492, and hostility toward the occupying Muslims and Islam ran deep. Spain was cautious because it knew firsthand the danger that Islam and the Muslims could represent.<sup>148</sup>

*Ladino* enslaved Africans had been exposed to Muslim Spain and by 1492, aided by Portuguese slave-traders, they reached an enormous population in Spain.<sup>149</sup> Most *ladino* enslaved Africans were of Wolof ethnicity and predominantly Muslims.<sup>150</sup> Some

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<sup>148</sup> Sylviane A Diouf. *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. New York: New York University Press, 1998. P. 17.

<sup>149</sup> Héctor A. García and Luis M. Iriarte R. "Breve Historia de la Esclavitud." *La Gran Enciclopedia Ilustrada del Proyecto Salón Hogar*. 2014. Web. 15 Dec. 2014.

<sup>150</sup> "Senegambians brought to Spain by the Arabs had been known in Europe since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but by 1447 they were coming directly from Africa to the Iberian markets. Between 1489 and 1497, 2,003 African slaves- they were a minority- were sold in Valencia, Spain, and the majority were said to be Wolof. Many more were offered on the Portuguese markets. A simulacrum of Christian conversion, coupled with nominal religious instruction, was deemed sufficient to turn the 'idolaters,' and the 'zealots of the sect of Mahomet,' into Christians called *ladinos*. These *ladinos* were the first Africans to be introduced into the New World, as early as 1501." Sylviane A. Diouf. *Servants of Allah- African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. NY: New York University Press, 1998. P. 17.

enslaved *ladinos* were Berber/Arab according to author Sylvia Zavala Trías (2011).<sup>151</sup> This makes sense because of the preponderance of religion versus race in the enslavement system. But regardless of their native African origins (Islamic or other worldview religious traditions backgrounds) these *ladinos* had been exposed to Islam in Spain prior to being baptized Christians in preparation for their shipment to the Americas. As Michael A. Gómez (2005) briefly explained, some *ladinos* were possibly Muslims practicing dissimulation: “The so-called *ladino*, therefore, was in some instances an undercover Muslim practicing the delicate art of dissimulation, permissible under certain circumstances in Islam.”<sup>152</sup> Many enslaved Africans in Puerto Rico came from Islam-ruled regions such as Wolof, Mandingos and Fula.<sup>153</sup> It may well be that the amalgamation of this Islam element, even in its weakest manifestation, made possible a different enactment of the Puerto Rican Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol.

Many enslaved *ladinos* arrived in the New World already knowing the Christian faith, but in the case of non-Christian imported enslaved Africans, masters and the church were responsible for overseeing their Christian conversions. Non-Christian enslaved Africans from Western Africa were also imported directly to the island of Puerto Rico to work the sugarcane plantations. These were called *bozales*. The main difference between

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<sup>151</sup> Sylvia Zavala Trías. “Orígenes Étnicos de los Esclavos en Puerto Rico.” *Ancestry.com*. 1997-2017. Web. 6 Jan. 2011.

<sup>152</sup> Michael Angelo Gómez. *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. P. 12.

<sup>153</sup> “San Patricio Catholic Church Baptism Records in Loíza Puerto Rico, 1792 to 1845.” *Family Search-The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. 2014. Web. 28 Aug. 2014 list some surnames as: Canga, Mandinga, and Miná.

the *ladinos* and the *bozales* is that the former was Christianized by the time they reached the New World. The latter were still carrying their unique religious views upon their arrival into the New World such as the Islamic Wolof from the margins of the Senegal River.

Remarkably, the San Patricio Catholic Church baptism records in Loíza, Puerto Rico, 1792 to 1845, indicate that enslaved Africans were also owned by the religious entities such as the Madres Monjas, Monjas Carmelitas (Carmelite Nuns) and the Padres Dominicanos (Dominican Priests) and even the Cura Prebistero Don Juan Nepomuceno Jiménez, the priest in charge of baptismal records. San Patricio Catholic Church death records in Loíza, Puerto Rico, 1823 to 1851, also corroborate ownership of enslaved Africans by the Padres Dominicanos, (Dominican Priests) and the Reverendos Padres Predicadores (Reverend Preaching Fathers).

Masters were responsible to convert their non-Christian enslaved Africans to Catholicism. This however, was no guarantee that they were true converts. Many enslaved Africans syncretized their traditional African deities with Catholic saints. This is how, for example, Santería, a religion with Yoruba roots and based on the worship of Catholic saints as embodiments to Yoruba orishas or spiritual guides, was born in the New World.

Zavala Trías asserts that the most common documented ethnicities in Puerto Rico were as follows:

Sudanese *bozales*: Wolof (Islamic from Senegal River/Gambia regions),  
Mandingo (Islamic but continued to practice local religions), Fula/Fulani (Islamic from Senegambia), Biafada (from Cabo Verde Islands/Portuguese Guinea),



Mende or Kanga (from Sierra Leone/Liberia), Yoruba (Dahomey/Nigeria), Fanti/Ashanti (known as Minas in Puerto Rico from the Gold Coast), and Carabali (from Calabar/Cameroon). Bantu origin *bozales*: Congo/Manicongo (Congo River), Angola (Angola), and Mozambique (from Mozambique).<sup>154</sup>

Luis M. Díaz Soler (1965) estimated there were approximately 30,000 enslaved Africans in Puerto Rico at the time of the abolition of slavery on March 22, 1873. Once slavery was abolished, blacks melded within the Puerto Rican society and mixed with the indigenous Taínos and with various Spaniard descendants. According to him:

La abolición decretada en 1873 ratificaba la voluntad general de los habitantes de Puerto Rico. Dentro de la clase de libres se hizo evidente el deseo de absorber rápidamente la pequeña población esclava recién liberada.<sup>155</sup> (The abolition, decreed in 1873 ratified the general will of the Puerto Rico inhabitants. Among the free class of people, it was evident the desire to quickly absorb the recently liberated small slavery population.)

Former enslaved Africans agglomerated in several island locations, but especially in the coastal town of Loíza, a town today with one of the highest percentage of black population on the island. Anthropologist Samíri Hernández Hiraldo (2006) accomplished fieldwork in Loíza and specifically studied the identity issues of the inhabitants of Loíza: “Identity is a very significant factor and that its management, whether conscious or not,

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<sup>154</sup> Sylvia Zavala Trías. “Orígenes Étnicos de los Esclavos en Puerto Rico.” *Ancestry.com*. 1997-2017. Web. 6 Jan. 2011.

<sup>155</sup> Luis M. Díaz Soler. *Historia de la Esclavitud Negra en Puerto Rico*. Rio Piedras: Editorial Universitaria Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1965. P. 375.

strategically employs an intricate net of relations between diverse identities and competing socioeconomic, political, and religious agendas.”<sup>156</sup>

Díaz Soler’s classic work, *Historia de la Esclavitud Negra en Puerto Rico*,<sup>157</sup> (*History of Black Slavery in Puerto Rico*) introduces the general idea of what the institution of slavery meant to the people that endured it. According to state and religious institutions, it was a way to liberate savages and civilize them by introducing them to gainful labor and Christianity. The slave trade in Puerto Rico was authorized in 1493 but, for unknown reasons, it was not until 1510 (17 years later) that it was officially documented that two enslaved Africans accompanied by a foreign man, Jerónimo de Bruselas, arrived on the island.

Voluminous numbers of enslaved Africans came to Puerto Rico from predominantly Muslim societies like the Wolof, Mandingos, and Fulani. Carlos Méndez Santos (1973) explains:

Se ha señalado por distintos investigadores de la cultura africana que las primeras importaciones se hicieron de las tribus jelofes del Senegal, los mandingos del Sudán, los mendé, de Sierra Leone, los yorubas, dahomeyes, ashantis, ibos, fantes y baules, de Guinea. Además de los Kongos de la zona del río Kongo.<sup>158</sup> (Several investigators have signaled

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<sup>156</sup> Samíri Hernández Hiraldo. “If God were Black and from Loíza”: Managing Identities in a Puerto Rican Seaside Town.” *Latin American Perspective*, Vol. 33, (2006), P. 67.

<sup>157</sup> Luis M. Díaz Soler. *Historia de la Esclavitud Negra en Puerto Rico*. Río Piedras: Editorial Universitaria Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1965.

<sup>158</sup> Carlos Méndez Santos. *Por Tierras de Loíza Aldea- Fiesta de Santiago- Loíza Aldea- Estudio de Antropología Cultural*. Ponce: Producciones Ceiba, 1973. P. 12.

that the imported African culture came through Senegal's Wolof tribes, Sudan's Mandingos, Sierra Leone's Mendes, Yoruba, Dahomeys, Ashanti, Ibos, Fantes and Baules from Guinea. Also through the Congolese from the zone of the Kongo River.)

Spain feared that Muslim enslaved Africans introduced into the New World would spread Islam, the religion it so obstinately fought to exterminate on Spaniard soil. In fact, the 1493 authorization prohibited the importation of Muslims, Jews, and infidels:

...no estaban autorizados a conducir Moros nin xudios, nin erexes, nin reconcyliados, nin personas nuevamente convertidas a Nuestra Feé, salvo si fueren esclavos negros u otros esclavos que fayan nacydo en poder de crystianos, nuestros súbditos é naturales.<sup>159</sup> (They were not authorized to transport Moors nor Jews, nor infidels, nor reconciled, nor people newly converted to our faith, except for enslaved blacks or other enslaved people that had been born in the hands of Christians, our followers and natural from Spain.)

This is further enforced in 1505: “no habría de consentir que pasara a la Española ningún esclavo negro levantisco ni criado con morisco.”<sup>160</sup> (It was not acceptable for a Levant black enslaved nor one raised with a Moorish person to come to Hispaniola.) It is plausible that the same rule applied to Puerto Rico, an island near Hispaniola, the present-

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<sup>159</sup> As quoted (from: “Instrucción al Comendador de Lares, Fray Nicolás Devando, de la Órden de Alcántara) by Luis M. Díaz Soler. *Historia de la Esclavitud Negra en Puerto Rico*. Río Piedras: Editorial Universitaria Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1965. P. 20.

<sup>160</sup> Luis M. Díaz Soler. *Historia de la Esclavitud Negra en Puerto Rico*. Río Piedras: Editorial Universitaria Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1965. P. 21.

day island that makes up Dominican Republic and Haiti. The obsession of Spain with the Muslim infidel brings into question the true conversion of former Muslims and Jews. Spaniards advocated for *pureza de sangre* (purity of blood) and valued old Christians over new converts to Christianity. By attempting to limit the access of Muslims into the New World, and specifically the Caribbean<sup>161</sup> (such as Puerto Rico), it is likely that such passages were occurring, if not legally, then through the black market: “Now, however, Spain not only became, at least in theory, an entirely Christian nation but purity of faith came to be identified with purity of blood so that all New Christians or *conversos*, whether of Jewish or Muslim origin, were branded as potential heretics.”<sup>162</sup>

Although history has not concerned itself with finding ancestries of Muslims within the New World, it is reasonable to accept that a significant number of Muslims or Crypto-Muslims (Muslims that hid their true religious beliefs) came to the New World, either through the slave trade or through Islamic practitioners that emigrated from Muslim Spain, and amalgamated with the natives. Semantics and cultural traditions clearly attest to this Muslim presence within the Hispanic New World, and specifically, as this dissertation argues, in Puerto Rico.

Many non-Christian, non-*ladino* enslaved Africans entered the New World through illegal slave trafficking. Díaz Soler speaks of a document showing Diego Colón

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<sup>161</sup> According to Afroz, Caribbean is a word derived from the Arabic ‘*carib*’ to mean ‘nearby’ or ‘neighboring.’ Sultana Afroz. *Invisible yet Invincible. The Islamic Heritage of the Maroons and the Enslaved Africans in Jamaica*. London: Austin & Macauley Publishers Ltd., 2012. P. 23.

<sup>162</sup> Roger Boase. “The Muslim Expulsion from Spain.” *History Today*, Apr. 2002. P. 22.

purchased in 1510 some 100 enslaved Africans from Lisbon, Portugal, a hub for illegal slave trafficking. Díaz Soler explained:

Esta adquisición de esclavos en suelo extranjero comprueba que, para 1510, la Corona acometía la empresa colonizadora, relegando al olvido las clausuras de órdenes anteriores, que requerían la cristianización de los negros antes de su exportación, para América.<sup>163</sup> (His acquisition of enslaved Africans from foreign soil proves that, by 1510, the Crown undertook the colonizing business, forgetting the prior orders that required that enslaved Africans be Christianized before their exportation to America.)

At the time, several African religious worldviews thrived, such as the Yoruba traditions, but nevertheless, Islam was also prominent. As newly-converted former Muslim enslaved Africans, most likely arriving on the island through illegal trade due to the sanctions, it is highly probable that they practiced *taqiyyah*, or dissimulation. Dissimulation, accompanied by the subtle recreation of rites to celebrate their faith in Islam allowed Muslim enslaved Africans to find meaning out the iniquities of captivity. Evidence of this thesis might be found in even the hardest requirement- the pilgrimage to Mecca- which was able to be re-enacted within the Americas context from old Muslim collective memories. Sylviane A. Diouf (2013) explains:

Another American reference to the pilgrimage may lie in one of the religious traditions of the American South, Trinidad, and Jamaica: the

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<sup>163</sup> Luis M. Díaz Soler. *Historia de la Esclavitud Negra en Puerto Rico*. Río Piedras: Editorial Universitaria Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1965. P. 30.

shout or ring shout, during which men and women turn in a circle while clapping their hands and shuffling their feet. The common explanation of the shout is that it was originally an African dance. But there is another, very intriguing explanation...Actually, the circumambulation of the Kaaba is called *tawaf* and is made up of seven tours. To accomplish one tour is called *sha'wt*; it is pronounced in Arabic as shout is in English.<sup>164</sup>

These dance performances today manifest themselves in the congregations of Revivalist Baptists, the Shouters. This is a clear example of how Islam, even though it did not survive slavery in the Americas as a distinct religion, nevertheless appears to have left a strong imprint in the collective memory of many that incorporated bits and pieces of its rituals into their own religious worldviews. Brazilian, Cuban, and Haitian African-based religions, to name a few, all have vestiges of Islam. Islam left a legacy while it attempted to help Muslim enslaved Africans cope with the brutality of the system and find something to cling to in the New World by promoting communication and maintaining group solidarity. As Evans-Pritchard contended: "Religion is valuable in that it makes for social cohesion and continuity."<sup>165</sup>

It was easy for them to simulate practicing Christianity while truly remaining a Muslim. In reality, they were deemed Crypto-Muslims by the Old Christians. This exact coping method was a prime reason many new Christians were expelled from Spain.

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<sup>164</sup> Sylviane A. Diouf. *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. NY: New York University Press, 2013. P. 97.

<sup>165</sup> E. E. Evans-Pritchard. *Theories of Primitive Religion*. Oxford: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1982. P. 48.

These enslaved West Africans (to include enslaved Muslims) left a significant legacy in Puerto Rico's overall *habitus*. This inheritance is profound and significant because Africans inhabited the island for almost 400 years during the slavery period and continued to do so even as freed descendants. Author Isar P. Godreau observes:

“...the history- not just of men and women in bondage but also of the large and vibrant communities that were formed by free people of color during the slave period- challenges nationalist renditions of history that belittle the impact of African heritage in Puerto Rico and elsewhere.”<sup>166</sup>

The most prominent anthropologist on the island asserts this fact: “Ricardo Alegría considera que ‘su huella en la sociedad puertorriqueña es profunda y evidente.’”<sup>167</sup> (Ricardo Alegría considers that his mark [the African] in the Puerto Rican society is profound and evident.)

Similarly, one of the most important scholars on slavery in Puerto Rico, Díaz Soler, asserts that not only is the black's contribution enormous but it began when they first arrived on the island as enslaved Africans. The Spaniards amalgamated easily with blacks and native Taínos and from these liaisons a new element was created, the mestizo<sup>168</sup>. José L. González (2013) presents a provocative thesis: the black mestizos are the foremost contributors racially, socially, and culturally to the making of the new

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<sup>166</sup> Isar P. Godreau et al. “The Lessons of Slavery: Discourses of Slavery, Mestizaje, and Blanqueamiento in an Elementary School in Puerto Rico.” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 35, No. 1, P. 116.

<sup>167</sup> María Teresa Babín. *La Cultura en Puerto Rico*. San Juan: Centros de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 1999. P. 36.

<sup>168</sup> Charles Stewart elucidated: “Increased intermarriage among blacks, whites, and Indians created a temporary situation in which the putative pure ‘creole’ became a contrast category with the mixed ‘mestizo’.” *Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory*. Edited by Charles Stewart. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, Inc. 2007. P. 7.

people called the Puerto Rican. He states: “the first Puerto Ricans were in fact black Puerto Ricans...”<sup>169</sup> I agree with J. González. This is significant because actual records of Muslim versus Christian Africans are practically non-existent on the island but overall black heritage is ingrained within the *habitus* of the population. The mestizo embodies the amalgamation of the blacks (enslaved and free, Christian, Muslim, and of other religious worldviews). Nevertheless, although the legacy of Africans to Puerto Rican culture is immense, there is still a certain denial. An article titled “Puerto Rico Sufre 500 Años de Racismo.” (Puerto Rico suffers 500 years of racism) published by *El Nuevo Día* on February 2, 2014<sup>170</sup> states: “...en Puerto Rico, la herencia africana y la negritud aún se ven como algo negativo...” (...in Puerto Rico, the African heritage and negritude are still seen as something negative...). The tendency on the island is to speak of Taíno (native indigenous) and Spaniard/European immigrants’ legacies as culture and African legacies as folklore.

Scholar Matory, in studying *Candomblé* religious practices in Brazil concludes:

Many cultural historians of the African diaspora have assumed that African culture endures in the Americas, if it endures at all, only among the poorest and most isolated of black populations. What I have seen in quite the opposite- that African culture has most flourished in urban areas and among prosperous populations that, through travel, commerce, and

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<sup>169</sup> José L. González. *Puerto Rico the Four-Storyed Country*. NY: Markus Wiener Publications, 2013. P. 10.

<sup>170</sup> “Puerto Rico Sufre 500 Años de Racismo.” *El Nuevo Día* [San Juan, PR] 2 Feb. 2014.



literacy, were well exposed to cultural Others. And they chose to embrace African culture in full knowledge of numerous alternatives.<sup>171</sup>

This has certainly been the case in Puerto Rico as well. Many Puerto Ricans have chosen to fully embrace their African traditions such as *bomba* dances and the *Vejigantes* character. The implications of this is that although the African legacy may be deemed mere folklore, the incessant preservation of the dances, vernacular language, cuisine of enslaved Africans by Puerto Ricans attest to a deeper legacy within the *habitus* of the people. For example, the national dish of the island is *arroz con gandules* or rice with a bean called pigeon pea which came to the island from Congo. Many fried-dishes and root-vegetables are also an African legacy. Many Puerto Ricans attest to the fact that the black element is carried within the blood (*lo lleva en la sangre*) such as the ability to pick up an African dance rhythm.

By 1510 Puerto Rico was receiving enslaved Africans. At this point, Juan Ponce de León was assigned as the first governor of the island to start the process of colonization. These enslaved Africans arrived with de León's entourage of colonizers. They continued to arrive for the next 364 or so years. Puerto Rico abolished slavery in the year 1873. This did not mean, however, that the black enslaved Africans presence on the island diminished or diluted. On the contrary, these newly liberated people became employed on their own, many as artisans or hired servants for their former masters. Many former enslaved Africans chose to remain in the coastal area of Loíza. The legacy of blacks on the island of Puerto Rico is immense. They, like the people from Muslim

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<sup>171</sup> James Lorand Matory. *Black Atlantic Religion. Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005. P. 267.

Spain, were also vessels of Muslim/Arabic traditions. Once again, this cultural exchange is relevant and matters because of its social impact. Islam vestiges became an undetected influence in informing the way people did things. Thus, we find many cultural similarities in traits such as female honor and adulation, male-oriented mores, spirituality, superstitions, Spanish language, music and dance, African mask-making, and above all the deeply ingrained African belief systems and the conceptualization of St. James in Loíza, Puerto Rico. A brief look at these diverse areas is enlightening.

Scholar Anthony L. LaRuffa, during fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in 1963, clearly saw and commented on the importance of modesty and safeguarding virginity among the people in Loíza: “During interview, he [the physician in Pueblo Colobo] stated that after the ‘Fiesta Tradicional’ [Santiago Apóstol] some 20 to 30 girls between the ages of 13-16 are brought in for vaginal examinations to verify non-loss of virginity.”<sup>172</sup>

Regarding fatalism and predetermination, although there were instances of enslaved rebellions, enslaved Africans in Puerto Rico typically avoided uprisings. A few issues of conflict have been succinctly addressed by authors writing on enslaved revolts. According to Zaragoza, some major enslaved uprisings were: Bayamón (1821), Ponce (1841 and 1848), and Toa Baja (1843).<sup>173</sup>

Revolts of enslaved Africans were often associated with enslaved Muslims, because they had the tendency of being rebellious and not resigned to their inferior state

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<sup>172</sup> Anthony L LaRuffa. *San Cipriano Life in Puerto Rican Community*. NY: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1971. P. 31.

<sup>173</sup> Edward C. Zaragoza. *St. James in the Streets. The Religious Processions of Loíza Aldea*, Puerto Rico. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1995. P. 40.

as enslaved Africans. In fact, the Haitian Revolution that claimed Haiti as an independent island was aided by the leadership of enslaved Muslims:

Plantation slaves in the Caribbean and elsewhere during the region's almost four centuries of slavery developed a wide variety of forms of resistance and accommodation to colonial enslavement and racism: collective and individual violent confrontations with planters, overseers, colonial police, and military forces within and beyond their plantations or localities; individual and group escapes, from the status of slaves, as in the forms of *grande* or *petite marronage*; and sabotage of cane fields, livestock, buildings and machinery.<sup>174</sup>

Areas in Brazil around Bahía, where the largest concentration of enslaved Muslims resided, were also often afflicted by enslaved revolts and rebellions.<sup>175</sup> Marcos Xiorro led one of such revolts in Puerto Rico in 1821. However, many enslaved Africans on the island of Puerto Rico were not as radical as other enslaved Africans in the neighboring islands such as Haiti, who led revolutions. In Puerto Rico, it seems that the enslaved Africans were more passive. But as scholar Long explained: “But passive power is still power. It is the power to be, to understand, to know even in the worst historical

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<sup>174</sup> Luis A. Figueroa. *Sugar, Slavery, and Freedom in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005. P. 82.

<sup>175</sup> “These captives, and especially the Muslims among them, were prominently involved in a series of insurrections and conspiracies in Bahía between 1807 and 1835.” James Lorand Matory. *Black Atlantic Religion. Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005. P. 52.

circumstances, and it may often reveal a clearer insight into significant meaning of the human venture than the power possessed by the oppressors.”<sup>176</sup>

In Puerto Rico, enslaved Africans typically avoided uprisings and it is possible that they used resignation to alleviate their woes. For enslaved Africans of Muslim backgrounds, that resignation was aided by syncretic methods as well as *taqiyyah* (تقية), or dissimulation, in practicing their native customs and faith.

In Cuba, the influence of Arabic/Islam in the local spirituality practices is recognized. For example, according to Islamic scholar Diouf (1998), although a Yoruban-root religious world view, Santería<sup>177</sup> practitioners still greet each other with the Arabic salutations of *salam ualeikum*, (peace be with you) and *mualeikum salam* (and peace be with you too).<sup>178</sup> It is pertinent that there were Muslims among the Yoruba that arrived in the New World: “Muslims were also among the one million Yoruba who were transported to the New World. Islam played a factor in constructing Yoruba identity, most notable in the fact that Yoruba is a term with Muslim origins.”<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Charles H. Long. *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. P. 195.

<sup>177</sup> Santería is succinctly conceptualized in a book written by González-Wippler: “Hace siglos, a los esclavos africanos llevados al nuevo mundo se les prohibía practicar su religión nativa y fueron forzados a aprender el cristianismo. Ellos se resistieron, y el resultado fue la creación de la Santería, repleta de identificaciones sincréticas entre las deidades africanas y los santos católicos y un secreto necesario, en el momento, para su supervivencia. Sin embargo, hoy este secreto tiene como resultado la desconfianza y la mala interpretación de la Santería por parte del público en general.” (Many centuries ago, it was prohibited for enslaved Africans arriving in the New World to practice their native religion and they were forced to learn Christianity. They resisted, and the result was Santería, full of syncretism among African deities and Catholic saints and a necessary secret, at the moment, for their surviving. Nevertheless, today that secret has created the untrusting and the ill-interpretation of Santería by the public in general.) Quoted by Charles Wetli on Mígene González-Wippler. *Santería: la Religión*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Español, 1999. P. X.

<sup>178</sup> Sylviane A Diouf. *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. New York: New York University Press, 1998. P. 188.

<sup>179</sup> *Caribbean Religions History. An Introduction*. Edited by Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. González. NY: New York University Press, 2010. P. 181.

Scholar Yelvington argues:

In resistance to hegemonic colonial authority and culture, many Latin American and Caribbean people of African descent avowedly sought, and seek, to “Africanize” religious practices and personal identity, “investing” Africa with positive connotations.<sup>180</sup>

The implications of this thesis are that enslaved Africans sought a way to practice the new imposed religious worldview of Christianity while avowing to remain close to their own personal religious worldviews. The Catholic masters were to Christianize their household of enslaved Africans and were happy to have them attend masses and religious processions and other church-related events although the enslaved Africans were doing so while still referring back to their own personal views. This is why religious worldviews such as Santería and Espiritismo are still today so amalgamated with folk Catholicism.

*Baquinés*,<sup>181</sup> or black children funeral rites celebrated with song, drumming, and dancing disappeared in the late 1950s from Puerto Rico but remnants are present in the new exotic funerals conducted on the island today, in which the dead is exposed to the public as a participant of his/her own funeral. It was a belief among the enslaved Africans that when a child died he was still an angel and would return back to Africa, thus the reason for celebration instead of mourning. At one point, in the year 1862, these

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<sup>180</sup> *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora*. Edited by Kevin A. Yelvington. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2006. P. 36.

<sup>181</sup> *Baquiné* was a black child’s funeral rite that celebrated with song, drumming, and dancing. My M.A. thesis was dedicated to the *baquiné* funeral rites: Lourdes Enid Sáez. *El Baquiné: Tradición Afro-Boricua*. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Dec. 1989. (Unpublished Thesis for M.A.).

celebrations were banned by authorities.<sup>182</sup> In Loíza, during fieldwork, some recalled celebrating these funerals called *baquinés* until the early 1950s: “I saw and sang in a *baquinés* [a black child’s wake] as a child. Unfortunately, they disappeared from Loíza around 1950, but they used to be a lot of fun.”<sup>183</sup>

The celebrations were targets for persecution from Catholic orthodoxy. The *baquiné*, as depicted through Puerto Rican literature shows:

Los elementos religiosos se ven sumamente mezclados. El sincretismo [es] claramente visto en los rezos [d]el negro brujo y las supersticiones africanas con los tonos cristianos del velorio y rezos de la novena. Hay rosario católico hecho de camándulas al estilo africano. Los nueve días durante los cuales se reza por el muerto representan la popular novena católica.<sup>184</sup> (The religious elements are seen extremely mixed. The syncretism is clearly seen in the prayers of the black witch-man and the African superstitions with undertones of the Christian wake and prayers of the *novena*. There is a Catholic rosary made of *camandula* beads in an African-style. The nine days in which they pray for the dead child represent the popular Catholic *novena*.)

The *baquinés* incorporated elements of African spiritualism and were not solely a manifestation of Catholic religious fervor. The blacks in the *baquiné* presented by Puerto

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<sup>182</sup> Raquel Romberg. *Witchcraft and Welfare: Spiritual Capital and the Business of Magic in Modern Puerto Rico*. Austin: University of Texas, 2003. P. 45.

<sup>183</sup> This statement was compiled during fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in July 2013.

<sup>184</sup> Lourdes Enid Sáez. *El Baquiné: Tradición Afro-Boricua*. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Dec. 1989. (Unpublished Thesis for M.A.) P. 39.

Rican poet Luis Palés Matos (1967) make allusion to Papá Ogún, a warrior god from the Yoruba pantheon. *Baquiné* celebrations gave the practitioners an opportunity to exert their African beliefs within a Catholic framework.

Clearly, the enslaved descendants in Puerto Rico had certain vestiges of Islam within their regressed collective memories since many came from locales in Africa where Islam was practiced. During a typical *baquiné*, women would sweep with a broom to get rid of evil spirits. The *baquiné* also had a character, in Palés Matos'<sup>185</sup> work named *El Gran Ciempiés* (The Great Centipede), who was an African witch who came to preside over the prayers at the wake although a Catholic priest would conclude the *baquiné* at the burial. Both African Spiritism and Catholicism were evident at a *baquiné* celebration. In his novel *Litoral*,<sup>186</sup> Luis Palés Matos described it as “*el mundo de los negros*” (the world of the blacks). He also wrote that the blacks had *baquiné* flowing in their blood. In describing the female attendee, she was portrayed as wearing a head scarf. Women were segregated from the men at the celebration, sitting opposite of the men, to the left side of the room. The non-blacks were not allowed to come in and partake in the celebrations according to the narrator describing the festivities. The master celebrant of the wake was an elder black man renowned for this story telling abilities. He caressed a wooden bead necklace as he recited prayers. The evil spirits were blamed for having attacked and killed the innocent child. Palés Matos commented on the monotony of the practice,

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<sup>185</sup> Luis Palés Matos (1898-1959) was a white-skinned Puerto Rican poet born and raised in Guayama, a town predominantly of black inhabitants. He dedicated his life to write poetry about blacks in Puerto Rico. His best-known work, dated 1937, was *Tuntún de pasa y grifería* (Drumbeats of Kinkiness and Blackness).

<sup>186</sup> Luis Palés Matos. *Litoral*. New York: Folium; First Edition (2013).

possibly like the *dhikr* or prayer litany of the Islamic Sufis. These details have a flavor of Islamic beliefs and practices in them. There was segregation of women, headscarf-wearing, a belief in an after-life where the child returned to Africa and became another child in the family, the *abiku* or *djinn*-like spirit, praying beads, and the monotonous prayer of the master leading prayers, all of which have uncanny resemblances to Islam. The social issues of prejudice and disdain for the stigmatized blacks on the island were also perceived in *baquinés*. Abelardo Díaz Alfaro (1967) clearly encapsulated this notion: “Era el lamento de una raza explotada.”<sup>187</sup> (It was the lament of an exploited race.)

The *baquiné* was a very distinct feature among the black population on the island. Many traits resembled the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol celebrations in Loíza, also a very distinct feature among the black population on the island. The *baquiné* was an attempt on behalf of the descendants of enslaved Africans on the island to preserve certain traditions that ethnically tied the enslaved Africans to their roots in Africa. These festivities of *baquiné* allowed the stigmatized blacks to contemplate their origins and permitted them to express their heritage through song and dance. It was also a venue for some social intercourse under the guise of Catholic practices such as saint veneration and *novena* prayers. As part of their African religiosity, the dances and joy, in addition to the spiritual powers that possessed their participants, were exercised. Both *baquiné* and Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol celebrations rejoiced death in order to celebrate life. In the case of a black child’s death, he was liberated from the chains of slavery and his soul went back to Africa and reappeared in another child within the family.

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<sup>187</sup> Abelardo Díaz Alfaro. *Terrazo*. Serie Biblioteca Popular. San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1967. P. 58.



Lowell Fiet (2007) also accurately speculated that the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol celebrations in Loíza parallel *baquiné* celebrations:

Pero, también existen “efigies performadas”— ‘las que se fabrican de cuerpos humanos y las asociaciones que evocan—[que] proveen comunidades con un método de perpetuarse a través de medios o sustitutos: entre ellos, actores, danzantes, curas, enmascarados’ y aún paradójicamente, cadáveres, mientras que performan sus papeles dentro de rituales de entierro y de luto. Por eso, existe una posible interpretación basada en las tradiciones fúnebres afroamericanas—al entrelazar las procesiones, la música, los actos hablados y performados y la posesión espiritual—en donde las procesiones anuales de Santiago Apóstol son ritos fúnebres simbólicos—tal vez como una ceremonia de *baquiné*—en los cuales el santo sustituye el lugar del muerto. Por otro lado, las procesiones anuales de Santiago Apóstol también podrían imitar los ritos de entierro de los conquistadores, militares o hacendados españoles para así mostrar devoción católica mientras que encubren creencias y prácticas africanas.”<sup>188</sup> (But there also exist “performed effigies”— those that are fabricated of human bodies and evoked associations that provide communities with a method of perpetuating themselves through them or other substitutes, such as actors, dancers, priests, masked people, and paradoxically, cadavers, while they perform their role inside the burial and

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<sup>188</sup> Lowell Fiet. *Caballeros, Vejigantes, Locas y Viejos: Santiago Apóstol y los Performeros Afropuertorriqueños*. San Juan: Terranova Editores, 2007. P. 68.

mourning ritual. As such, there exists a possible interpretation based on Afro-American funeral traditions- in the intertwining of processions, music, spoken acts, performances and spiritual possessions- in which the annual St. James processions are symbolic funeral rites- such as the *baquiné* ceremony- in which the saint substitutes the dead person. On the other hand, the annual procession of St. James could be imitating burial rites of the conquerors, the military, or Spanish land-owners, and as such, demonstrate Catholic devotion while they hide African creeds and devotions.)

The *baquiné* celebrations were very analogous to funeral celebrations in Congo. Among the Congolese there was a belief that when a person died, his “vital force” joined other ancestors. “At death, the principle of life leaves the body, becomes a pure spirit and joins the spirits of departed relatives to become an ancestor.”<sup>189</sup> Dancing, as well as drumming were part of the funeral rites among the Congolese: “On the day after the wake, there was intensive dancing and singing of Kasala and other songs.”<sup>190</sup> The Congolese enslaved presence in Puerto Rico is suggested as a transmitter of such customs from Africa to Puerto Rico. David M. Guss, in his book *The Festive State* (2000) reminds us that: “Cultural performances are important dramatizations that enable participants to understand, criticize, and even change the worlds in which they live.”<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Tshilemalema Mukenge. *Culture and Customs of the Congo*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002. P. 36.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 166.

<sup>191</sup> David M. Guss. *The Festive State. Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism as Cultural Performance*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. P. 9.

Celebrations of *baquiné* in Puerto Rico, although similar to funeral celebrations in Congo, also resembled Islamic customs since they had an air of happiness and festivity, instead of suffering and mourning. The Qur'an sees death as something to be accepted: "We have decreed Death to be your common lot, and We are not to be frustrated." (Surah 56:60)<sup>192</sup> Similarly, there is a Hadith in which the Prophet admonishes people not to wail and excessively grieve at funerals.

In 2008, a Puerto Rican named Angel Luis Pantojas Medina attended his own wake as a *muerto parao* or a standing dead person. He was embalmed and presented as he typically dressed (jeans, tee shirt, hat and sunglasses). His lifeless body was reclined over a wall in the location where people attended his wake. He wanted to have a unique wake by attending his own funeral. This created a new trend for wakes on the island and eventually travelled abroad. The Marín Funeral Home took the credit for this type of eccentric funeral. This unique trend has been emulated in other places and circumstances.

For his wake, David Morales Colón, 22 years old at the time of his death in 2010, was the first *muerto en motora* or first deceased to be embalmed on a motorcycle. He wore sports clothes, a hat, and sunglasses. This embalming was also credited to the Marín Funeral Home. This unique trend was copied in Philadelphia in 2010, where a Puerto Rican was also embalmed on a motorcycle. The deceased's name was Julio López and he was 29 years old at the time of his death. He was embalmed on a motorcycle dressed in jeans, and a jacket and wearing a hat and dark eyeglasses.

A third eccentric wake in Puerto Rico was the *muerto en ambulancia* or embalmed in an ambulance. The victim of a fatal accident, paramedic Edgardo Velazquez

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<sup>192</sup> *The Qur'an*. Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. NY: ASIR Media, 2012. P. 361.

attended his own wake in 2010 sitting in the driver's seat of his ambulance, as he usually did when he drove it during the course of his paramedic work. He wore his uniform, hat, and sunglasses.<sup>193</sup> Others have follow, to include an 80-year-old woman, Georgina Cervoni,<sup>194</sup> presented sitting on her rocking chair in May 2014, for example.

An inquiry regarding this new trend of mourning a body outside the casket revealed that the new practice is not illegal as long as proper embalming procedures were followed. While these eccentric wakes exposed the body of the deceased to the attendees of his/her wake, at burial time they were actually placed inside a coffin to be buried underground, like any other traditional burial. This recent trend in funeral wakes in Puerto Rico resembles the *baquiné*. The deceased are being posed as spectators of their own funeral. There is an air of celebration, rather than mourning.

There is rich material that comes out of this new perception of death as a celebration of life and as a denial of sadness, as *baquinés* once did. These new trendy ways to celebrate death among Puerto Ricans appear to fall between the now extinguished *baquiné* funeral rite celebrations and the ever-blooming Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol celebrations of life. The desired outcome is to present the dead as living. In the *baquiné*, the deceased child was made up to appear to still be alive and celebrated. In the new trend of posing the dead as if partaking in an activity, the intent is to make it more of a celebration of life as opposed to mourning for the dead. In Congolese worldview, death

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<sup>193</sup> "Nueva Moda en Puerto Rico, Funerales Exóticos." *Dominicana- con Sabor a Pueblo- una Vaina Bien Hecha a Mano*. 17 July 2010. Web. 28 Sept. 2011.

<sup>194</sup> Arys L. Rodríguez Andino. "Velan a Anciana en su Meceadora en Río Piedras." *Primera Hora.com*. 26 May 2014. Web. 9 Aug. 2016.

is conceptualized as a positive, blissful event because the Congolese worship the dead. The *baquiné*, as well as the new exotic funerals as a celebration of death, have a hint of Congolese influence. The idea is that the dead reincarnated in another being- such as the *baquinés* that understood that the child's soul became another child in the family. Vega Moreno advances this idea of reincarnated souls by adding Spiritism: "Similar to its Kongo origins, Espiritismo [Spiritism] acknowledges that one never dies, that the spirit continues and will return reincarnated."<sup>195</sup>

Religious and social convergences can be appreciated starting with colonial times when the Catholic Church approved *cofradías* or *hermandades*, associations where enslaved Africans could gather socially and have dances, converse, and merely engage with one another. It was a common practice to mix enslaved Africans in the plantations so that no particular group was influential enough to revolt. As such, these social gatherings provided a space for blacks to meet other compatriots and preserve their native traditions. Many church-sponsored saint devotions and street processions took place through the sponsorship of these associations. This also created a connection between Catholics and enslaved Africans: "A common response to an encounter with another culture, or item from another culture is adaptation or borrowing piecemeal in order to incorporate the pieces into a traditional structure."<sup>196</sup>

These *cofradías* could also be seen as political because the Catholic Church sought to control the gathering of people socializing and celebrating, but instead

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<sup>195</sup> Marta Moreno Vega. "Espiritismo in the Puerto Rican Community: a New World Recreation with the Elements of Kongo Ancestor Worship." *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Jan, 1999), P. 349.

<sup>196</sup> Peter Burke. *Cultural Hybridity*. NY: Polity, 2009. P. 93.

*cofradías* were used as venues to plan rebellions against enslaved owners. The Catholic Church gave much attention to *cofradías* and at one period of time (1885) they were outlawed.<sup>197</sup>

Catholicism derived from Spain was already folk in nature because of the long coexistence of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. These folk manifestations, involving saint feast processions, street celebrations, *novena* (nine days) masses and saint veneration were also infused with remnants of African worldviews. For example, Espiritismo was an adaptation of an intellectual-metaphysics movement brought to the island in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by European-educated intellectuals from the teachings of French philosopher Allan Kardec, whose actual name was Hippolyte León Denizard Rivail. In Puerto Rico, Espiritismo morphed and involved African-imbued rites as well, such as ancestor veneration and recalling spirits for aid. People could communicate with the dead through another person called a *medium*. As scholars Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert explained, this particular kind of practice in Puerto Rico, which included faith and massage healers (*curanderos/sobadores*) and midwives (*comadronas*), has been called “indigenous Spiritism.”<sup>198</sup> Also, Pentecostalism<sup>199</sup> has been attracting mostly black practitioners because of its emphasis on emotional services,

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<sup>197</sup> Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert. *Creole Religions of the Caribbean. An Introduction from Vodou and Santería to Obeah and Espiritismo*. NY: New York University Press, 2003. P. 29.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 187.

<sup>199</sup> For further information, please refer to: Samuel Cruz. *Masked Africanisms- Puerto Rican Pentecostalism*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2005.

drumming, music, singing, speaking in tongues, and spirit possessions, all of which are traits of animist African-based worldviews. Undeniably, the African legacy<sup>200</sup> is robust.

LaRuffa, during fieldwork in Loíza in 1963, clearly saw and commented on the evil eye:

It is often suspected that maladies result from evil spirits which are either deliberately or unintentionally sent to afflict the person. *Envidia* (envy) can be harmful even though the covetous individual may not wish to injure his more fortunate neighbor. Babies are especially susceptible to witchcraft and mothers feel secure only when their infants are adequately protected by *azabaches*.<sup>201</sup>

This black stone (called *azabache*) in the form of a black person's hand is also prevalent in Brazil. There it is known as a *figa*. Brazil received a large number of enslaved Muslims during the slave trade, especially around the Bahía area. Sylviane Diouf, in her book *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* elaborates on this:

The Brazilian *figa* may also be linked to Islam. It is a small hand, worn around the neck to protect against evil spells. In Islamic numerology, the

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<sup>200</sup> While the African legacy is undeniable, Arlene Torres succinctly explained that although in Puerto Rico credit is given to the contribution of Spaniards, Taínos, and Africans, the prejudiced tendency has been to identify "culture" as related to the whitest people in the echelons and notice as "popular" the African contribution: "In the Puerto Rican context, by defining black cultural contributions within the context of slavery and the expressive realm, naturalized stigmata that set black people apart from the rest of Puerto Rican society are continually reproduced (Torres and Whittle 1998)." *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora*. Edited by Kevin A. Yelvington. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2006. [Chapter 10: Collecting Puerto Ricans by Arlene Torres] P. 344.

<sup>201</sup> Anthony L LaRuffa. *San Cipriano Life in Puerto Rican Community*. NY: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1971. P. 82.

number 5 is of particular significance: it refers to the Five Pillars, the five prayers, and the five holy persons (Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Useyn). Their names are often written on a talisman shaped like a hand with its five fingers, to protect the bearer from the evil eye.<sup>202</sup>

Author Pedro Arroyo Vivas explains that many people from Barros (Orocovis, Puerto Rico) used to go to Loíza and Guayama to get amulets against the evil eye and to perform Brujería or witchcraft as these places were known for housing practitioners of Afro-Caribbean traditions such as Santería, Brujería, and Espiritismo. “...de tiempo en tiempo, se daban sus escapadas hacia Loíza y Guayama, donde se procuraban material para confección de guardacuerpos, filtros y otros productos de las artes de magia negra.” (...from time to time [people], escaped towards Loíza and Guayama, where they requested materials for the confection of body guards, filters and other products of the arts of black magic.)<sup>203</sup>

During fieldwork in Loíza, the idea of the evil eye affecting children was extensively discussed. Several women explained that “usually the cutest of the children” is the one to die because of the evil eye. People maliciously adulate the children and they die from this ill-intentioned compliment. A specific example was given of a local Loíza child that burned to death in a house explosion. He was the only person to perish in the tragedy and he was also the cutest child and described as “the whitest and the one with straight hair, resembling the hair of a Chinese person.” This comment is not only

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<sup>202</sup> Sylviane A. Diouf. *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. New York: New York University Press, 2013. P. 270.

<sup>203</sup> Pedro Arroyo Vivas. *Crónicas de Barros (Orocovis) Años de 1825-1900*. San Juan, PR: 1945. P. 165.



germane to the evil eye projection onto unprotected children, but also a reflection of the concept of beauty among the black community in Loíza. The black women described the child as the most beautiful because he was also the whitest and the one with white features such as straight hair. Nonchalantly, in Puerto Rico a lighter-skinned black person refers to others darker than him/her, by using the pejorative term *prieto* (black). These lighter-skinned black people also speak pejoratively of darker-shade blacks as *molletos*, another pejorative word for dark-blacks.

The talismans of *ojalá*, as well as the concept of an Arab entity as a protection against evil, are clearly manifested in Spiritism and Santería, religious creeds based on Yoruba pantheon's orishas and Catholic saint representations and practiced throughout the Hispanic world in locations such as Cuba and Puerto Rico. The talisman within the practice of Santería consists of a rendering of the word *ojalá* written many times, each time eliminating a letter or so until the word becomes only one letter. "It [*ojalá*] is used in many talismans and amulets as a way of bringing [forth] one's desires and wishes."<sup>204</sup>

Also, one can seek protection from various spirits and spiritual guides, such as an Arab protector statue. In Santería and Spiritism, the altar for this Arab (Turks in *Candomblé*)<sup>205</sup> protector is usually adorned by an oil lamp. Rather than an enemy, the Arab statue is conceptualized as a positive influence that a person can adopt and be brought to a higher level spiritually. Djinns or demons, so prevalent in Islam, are also associated with the Arabs in Santería and Spiritism. When one chooses an Arabian

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<sup>204</sup> "El Morya" *Sociedad de Sance-Rio Tempestuoso*. 2 Aug. 2012. Web. 30 May 2013.

<sup>205</sup> James Lorand Matony. *Black Atlantic Religion. Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005. P. 30.

spiritual guide, the guide is often accompanied by Djinn. It is also interesting to note that one of the orishas is called Oxalá, which is very similar to *ojalá* in Spanish. In many instances spirituality and superstition converge.

Michael Angelo Gómez (2005) suggested a presence of Islamic influences in religious worldviews such as Cuba's Lucumí religion as observed by Ortíz, whom Gómez quoted: "The Islamic religion left indelible marks upon the theology of the blacks from the African regions...Plenty of Muslim slaves (Mandingos, Wolof, Fula, Macuás, etc.) entered Cuba, and those who probably referred to the god Olorun as Alá were from the Yoruba."<sup>206</sup> Many enslaved Africans in the Caribbean wore *gris-gris* amulets, which consisted of Qur'an verses written and placed in small leather pouches and worn on the body for protection against evil. These amulets were prepared by Muslim spiritual practitioners called marabouts (مربوط). Today, these *gris-gris* amulets are still used in voodoo, a religious tradition widespread in Haiti. These amulets resemble the ever-present *escapularios*, or stamps of saints/prayers in small plastic pouches worn by some Catholic people in Puerto Rico as a form of promise in exchange for a special petition to a particular saint. Santería practitioners are also keen on carrying stamps of orishas which are used for protection. French sociologist and anthropologist Roger Bastide (1978), in speaking about enslaved Muslims in Brazil, elaborated:

"The Mussulmans were notorious among the other Negroes for their powerful magic. They had all kinds of amulets, talismans, and charms, most commonly in the form of Solomon's seals, and papers on which

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<sup>206</sup> Michael Angelo Gómez. *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. P. 36.

verses from the Koran were inscribed and which they carried in little bags hung around their necks.”<sup>207</sup>

Augusto Malaret, a Puerto Rican linguist, in his book *Vocabulario de Puerto Rico* (1955) asserted that the contribution of the blacks to the vocabulary of Puerto Rico is almost non-existent except for a few words:

...en Puerto Rico pueden contarse con los dedos los vocablos negros que han pasado a la conversación general: *calalú*, *guingambó*, *macandá*, *malanga*, *mandinga*, *ñame*, y, en alguna que otra parte de la isla, *baquiné*, *cucalambé*, *mariandá*, o *mariyandá* y muy pocos más, avenidos a nuestra fonología.<sup>208</sup> (In Puerto Rico one is able to count with own’s fingers the black words that have passed to the general conversation: *calalú*, *guingambó*, *macandá*, *malanga*, *mandinga*, *ñame*, and in some parts of the island, *baquiné*, *cucalambé*, *mariandá*, or *mariyandá* and a very few more, that came to our phonology.)

The meanings of these black words are as follows: *Calalú*: a food offered in Santería to Changó;<sup>209</sup> *Guingambó*: okra; *Macandá*: witchcraft; *Malanga*: root vegetable; *Mandingo*:

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<sup>207</sup> *Latin American Religions. Histories and Documents in Context*. Edited with Introductions by Anna L. Peterson and Manuel A. Vazquez. NY: New York University Press, 2008. Chapter 4: “Black Islam in Brazil.” P. 109.

<sup>208</sup> Augusto Malaret. *Vocabulario de Puerto Rico*. NY: Las Americas Publishing Co., 1955. P. 20.

<sup>209</sup> Mígene González-Wippler. *Santería: la Religión*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Español, 1999. P. 267.

Mandingo; *Ñame*: root vegetable; *Baquiné*: child's wake; *Cucalambé*: a black people's dance;<sup>210</sup> and *Mariandá* o *mariyandá* a black people's dance.<sup>211</sup>

Mauleón Benítez, a Puerto Rican ethnologist, in her book *El Español de Loíza Aldea*, (1974), elaborated on the contribution to the Spanish language by the enslaved Africans. She dispelled the myth that many nasalized sounds (*ñoño*, *ñeñeñe*, and *ñoco*) are strictly pronunciation of the blacks on the island. She also elaborated on the attribution of the strong “rr” pronunciation strictly to blacks. Benítez also emphasized that most of the Spanish of Puerto Rico is unique to Canary Islands and Andalucía. During her visit to Loíza, she was able to verify a dozen words that were attributed to blacks and were very well-known by the residents in Loíza. Among these we find: “*carimbo* (iron to mark enslaved Africans), *gandul* (a bean), *guarapo* (a sugar-cane drink), *malagueta* (a medicinal plant), and *gongolí* (a worm).”<sup>212</sup>

The word *gandul* (known as pigeon pea in English) in particular is interesting because this bean is the national bean of Puerto Rico and apparently comes from Congo. Other words, such as *candungo* (a bowl or recipient), *funche* (a cornmeal dish), and *motete* (a piece of junk) are attributed to the enslaved Africans from Angola. Alternatively, the words *monga* (a cold), and *cachimbo* (a pipe) are all attributed to enslaved Africans from Mozambique according to a published article titled “La Gran

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<sup>210</sup> Augusto Malaret. *Vocabulario de Puerto Rico*. NY: Las Americas Publishing Co., 1955. P. 140.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 215, 216.

<sup>212</sup> Carmen Cecilia Mauleón Benítez. *El Español de Loíza Aldea*. Madrid: Ediciones Partenón, 1974. P. 117.

Enciclopedia Ilustrada del Proyecto Salón Hogar.”<sup>213</sup> *Chango* is an adjective used to describe “a show-off”, “una persona que es orgullosa, presuntuosa y ostentosa, características marcadas de Changó entre los Yorubas.”<sup>214</sup> (a person who is proud, presumptuous, and ostentatious, marked characteristics of Changó among the Yorubas). It is also used to name a crow bird in Puerto Rico.

The word *Fulano* is also of particular interest. *Fulano* (فولاني, *fulan*, a person whose name is unknown, i.e. “that man”): In Arabic, this word is a patronymic, or where a person comes from. It also has the connotation of ‘so and so.’ As Arabic-language scholar Faruk Abu-Chacra (2010) explains:

[Fulanun, fulanatum] ...nouns are frequently used in Arabic in the sense ‘so and so, such as such, somebody, a certain (person or thing)’. The idea is to substitute an unknown or unnamed, person, thing or source for a more general or less precise expression...<sup>215</sup>

In Spanish, it is also said of someone whose name is unknown- in other words, “a nobody.”” The closest thing to this in English is the expression “what’s his face.” African Fulani were among the enslaved Muslims that entered Puerto Rico via slavery. Michael Angelo Gómez (2005) observes: “*Fulano* should probably be read as “so-and-so,” but it is tempting to wonder if the term initially entered the language from interactions with the Fulbe and was somehow transformed into an idiom of nonspecific reference with a

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<sup>213</sup> Héctor A. García and Luis M. Iriarte R. “Breve Historia de la Esclavitud.” *La Gran Enciclopedia Ilustrada del Proyecto Salón Hogar*. 2014. Web. 15 Dec. 2014.

<sup>214</sup> Migene González-Wippler. *Santería: la Religión*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Español, 1999. P. 267.

<sup>215</sup> Faruk Abu-Chacra. *Arabic: An Essential Grammar*. New York: Routledge, 2010. P. 177.

connotation of disparagement, not inconsistent of the use of the term *mandinga*.”<sup>216</sup>

*Fulano* is also used in a proverb in Puerto Rico: “*Fulano o Mengano*” to mean “this one or that one.”

There are a few prominent proverbs in Puerto Rico relating to blacks. *El que no tiene dinga, tiene mandinga*, (if someone does not have *dinga*, he has *mandinga* [implying blood-ties] or alternatively, to mean the person is defective in some way or the other. In Brazil, according to historian Gómez, *mandinga* was used to mean “black magic.”<sup>217</sup> African Mandingos (from Mali/Ghana) were among the enslaved Muslims that entered Puerto Rico. *Fulano o Mengano* (*Fulani* or *Mengano* to imply unknown names in people, such as the English What’s his face? or Joe Blow).

*El negro siempre derrama el caldo*, (the black person always spills the soup), to mean that the black person always makes the mistake. *Negrito cepillado* (a brushed little black person), to mean a polished black person. *Una mosca en un vaso de leche*, (a fly inside a glass of milk), to mean a black person dressed all in white. *Tiene la raja*, (he/she has the ‘slice’), to mean that the person has some black blood based on physical traits. *Trabajar como un negro esclavo* (to work like a black enslaved) implies hard work. *Negrito porvenir*, (a little black one on its way), is a double-sense proverb: a little black [kid] on the way [said of an expecting pregnant black woman] or a little black future and it is usually a very pejorative utterance. *Pelo malo* or *la capota mala* to mean bad hair or

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<sup>216</sup> Michael Angelo Gómez. *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. P. 38.

<sup>217</sup> *Latin American Religions. Histories and Documents in Context*. Edited with Introductions by Anna L. Peterson and Manuel A. Vazquez. NY: New York University Press, 2008. Chapter 4: “Black Islam in Brazil.” P. 105.

a bad [car] hood to imply curly hair associated with black people. *¿Y tu abuela dónde está?* (Where is your grandmother?) to emphasize that all people have some black inheritance running through their veins. *Mejorar la raza* (to improve the race) is said of someone who marries a lighter skin person. A term of endearment, to mean “honey” is *negrito(a)* (little black boy/girl). Scholar Gates ponders on the question of who is considered a black person in Latin America. Gates quotes Matory, asking himself, in reference to this term of endearment: “In what contexts does the same word have a pejorative connotation, justifying the translation of nigger, and in another context, connote affection, such as the word *negrito*?”<sup>218</sup> This is not an all-inclusive list, as other proverbs relating to blacks on the island exist.

Music and dance are by far the greatest cultural contribution, specifically in the African sounds of *bomba* and *plena*. As author Luis A. Figueroa described: “The *bomba* was the foremost Afro-Puerto Rican musical genre in the nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries and had evolved in a process of syncretism of African, Spanish, and non-Spanish Caribbean cultures.”<sup>219</sup> Mauleón Benítez elaborated on this during fieldwork in Loíza: “se baila *bomba*, se toca *bomba*, se cantan *bombas*...”<sup>220</sup> (one dances *bomba*, one plays *bomba*, one sings *bomba*...). *Bomba* music and dance has come to epitomize Puerto Rico as a whole.

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<sup>218</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Reader*. Edited by Abby Wolf. New York: Basic Civitas, 2012. P. 466.

<sup>219</sup> Luis A. Figueroa. *Sugar, Slavery, and Freedom in the Nineteenth Century Puerto Rico*. University North Carolina Press, 2005. P. 181.

<sup>220</sup> Carmen Cecilia Mauleón Benítez. *El Español de Loíza Aldea*. Madrid: Ediciones Partenón, 1974. P. 9.

The birth of the Puerto Rican music is a *mélange* of many cultural backgrounds:

La música tradicional del jíbaro o campesino boricua (del monte adentro), evolucionó de la música de los soldados españoles, de los canarios, de los corsos, los africanos y luego los nacidos en Puerto Rico. Estos pobladores antiguos procedieron de las regiones sureñas de España de Andalucía y Extremadura; de las Islas Canarias; y de la región occidental de África. Muchos de estos sureños, trajeron consigo razas e influencias arábes, siendo estos los "moriscos" o musulmanes españoles.<sup>221</sup> (The traditional music of the Puerto Rican hillbilly [from inside the mountain zone,] evolved from the music of the Spanish soldiers, the men from Canary Islands, Corsica, Africans and then the ones born in Puerto Rico. These ancient inhabitants came from the southern areas of Spain in Andalusia and Extremadura; from the Canary Islands; and from the Occidental region of Africa. Many of these southern people, brought with them races and Arabic influences, these were the *moriscos* or Spanish Muslims.)

Loíza is well known for the *bomba*<sup>222</sup> rhythm. The sound appears near the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century on the island and it is believed to have been used among enslaved Africans as a system of communication and as a cohesive tool. Blacks used *bomba* during festivities such as weddings and baptisms. At one point, the Spaniard masters limited the

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<sup>221</sup> "Historia y Origen de la Música Boricua." *La Gran Enciclopedia Ilustrada del Proyecto Salón Hogar*. 2013. Web. 15 Oct. 2013.

<sup>222</sup> According to Tshilemalema Mukenge, *bomba* in the Bantu language means "slave." Tshilemalema Mukenge. *Culture and Customs of the Kongo*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002.



merriments to Sundays or to church celebrations because too often these gatherings became breeding sites for revolt. Enslaved owners disliked such endeavors as they represented inappropriate behavior. Accordingly:

Planter's concern that the libertos maintain "proper" conduct was not restricted to openly differential behavior in the workplace or toward colonial/local authorities. There was also an underlying sensitivity to the issue of people's "proper place" in society, a sense of place derived from slavery. Only from this perspective it is possible to understand why municipal council of Guayama, with one of the island's largest concentration of people of African descent, would prohibit the celebration *bailes de bomba* [*bomba* dances] inside the township. The *bomba* was the foremost Afro-Puerto Rican musical genre in the nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries and had evolved in a process of syncretism of African, Spanish, and non-Spanish Caribbean cultures.<sup>223</sup>

The African sounds of *bomba* and *plena* in Puerto Rico are significant because they express the island's emotions. Far from being mere folkloric sounds, these rhythms endure among the people as a living legacy. Young children learn the beats from their grandparents. A drum used to play *bomba*-type music is usually created from a rum barrel. The women typically sing while the men play the *bomba*-producing instruments. Don Rafael Cepeda is a renowned master musician of such *bomba* style in Loíza.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Luis A Figueroa. *Sugar, Slavery, and Freedom in the Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005. P. 181.

<sup>224</sup> "En las fiestas patronales de Santiago Apóstol de Loíza, se tocaba la bomba mientras los celebrantes usaban las máscaras típicas de los Vejigantes. Se suponía que la máscara podía espantar los espíritus

A typical Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol parade is accented by exorbitant African-style *bomba* music and dance.<sup>225</sup> Through the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol, the residents of a predominantly enslaved-descendant population have preserved their traditions from their native ancestors' land, Africa. "El negro es el que le da sabor a la vida del pueblo borincano."<sup>226</sup> (The black is the one that gives flavor to the Puerto Rican country.) The *bomba* music and dance are clear examples of this legacy: "El baile de la bomba que aún se mantiene vivo en Loíza Aldea, donde las familias Cepeda y Ayala, son exponentes de esta expresión folklórica."<sup>227</sup> (The dance of *bomba* that is still alive in Loíza Aldea, where the Cepeda and Ayala families are exponents of this folkloric expression.)

The *bomba* music and dance, according to the narrator of the film *Nenen de la Ruta Mora*, also served as a way for the habitants of Loíza to forget their sorrows. Black rhythms are also a part of the innate expression of religiosity among the people. Long

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perversos. La bomba emerge, así como uno de los géneros que, aunque hecho por manos africanas se vino a convertir con el paso de los años en uno típicamente puertorriqueño." (In the patron saint festivities of St. James in Loíza, *bomba* music was played while the revelers used typical *Vejigantes* masks. The *bomba* emerges as such as a genre that although handmade by African hands became over the years a typical Puerto Rican genre.) "Historia y Origen de la Música Boricua." *La Gran Enciclopedia Ilustrada del Proyecto Salón Hogar*. 2013. Web. 15 Oct. 2013.

<sup>225</sup> "The *bomba* is such a beautiful thing. The music gets inside my body because it is in my blood." "*Bomba* reinforces our sense of identity and maintains our African inheritance." "I love the *bomba* portion of the festival. The role of *bomba* was to be used by the enslaved Africans to communicate among each other and rebel against the masters." "The celebration helps perpetuate the heritage of the drums." (These statements were compiled during fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in July 2013).

<sup>226</sup> Carlos Méndez Santos. *Por Tierras de Loíza Aldea- Fiesta de Santiago- Loíza Aldea- Estudio de Antropología Cultural*. Ponce: Producciones Ceiba, 1973. P. 13. The word *borincano* or *boricua* refers to a Puerto Rican since the original name of the island was Borinquén, a Taíno name. The island was eventually re-named Puerto Rico by the colonizers. Today, the term *boricuas* is still used to mean Puerto Ricans.

<sup>227</sup> Carlos Méndez Santos. *Por Tierras de Loíza Aldea- Fiesta de Santiago- Loíza Aldea- Estudio de Antropología Cultural*. Ponce: Producciones Ceiba, 1973. P. 17. Ponce and Santa Isabel are also considered guardians of the *bomba* and *plena* tradition. Carlos Méndez Santos. *Por Tierras de Loíza Aldea- Fiesta de Santiago- Loíza Aldea- Estudio de Antropología Cultural*. Ponce: Producciones Ceiba, 1973. P. 17.

concisely contended: “The religion of any people is more than a structure of thought; it is experience, expression, motivations, intentions, behaviors, styles, and rhythms.”<sup>228</sup>

*Bomba* music is Loíza’s innate rhythm. Mauleón Benítez observed:

Las fiestas de San Juan que emanan de la capital de la isla y las fiestas de Santiago Apóstol que son la tradición loiceña por excelencia. Estas tienen un carácter extra-religioso mezcla de fetichismo y superstición.<sup>229</sup> (The celebrations of San Juan that come out of the island’s capital and the celebrations of St. James Apostle in Loíza are a tradition par excellence. They have a character of extra-religious, a mix of fetishism and superstition.)

According to Mauleón Benítez, the *bomba* song is only a vestige of what once was African. The enslaved Africans forgot their native tongues and thus infused the songs with Spanish lyrics. She attributes the survival of these songs to the constant playing of the *bomba* because these tunes were never written down and only transmitted orally. As such, many lyrics include vestiges of African languages that are incomprehensible; today, they are mere cacophony. Yet, they play a significant role to the people who continue to sing and dance to the beat of the *bomba* drums. It was a vehicle for preservation of culture.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Charles H. Long. *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. P. 7.

<sup>229</sup> Carmen Cecilia Mauleón Benítez. *El Español de Loíza Aldea*. Madrid: Ediciones Partenón, 1974. P. 91.

<sup>230</sup> On a side note, it is interesting to see how Moriscos in Medieval Spain resorted to preservation of culture through the use of *aljamiado*, which was merely Spanish written in Arabic script. An excellent reference on this interesting subject is: Barletta, Vincent. *Covert Gestures. Crypto-Islamic Literature as Cultural Practice in Early Modern Spain*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Even though the original African dialects did not survive through *bomba* music, they serve, nevertheless, to bring some coherence and sense of identity to people that are descendants of enslaved Africans brought to the island. Many people in Loíza told me, during fieldwork, that the *bomba* music was the glue that held the celebrations together and allowed them to be proud of their inheritance. People claimed that the *bomba* music and dance was innate because it was within the blood of the people in Loíza. As the parade went through the locality, many *bomba* players arranged their musical instruments on the sidewalk and commenced playing and dancing between typical Spanish pasodoble (double-step) intervals. The evenings were also filled with *bomba* performances.

Blacks have also left a huge legacy in the tradition of African mask-making. Castor Ayala is deemed as the greatest maker of these masks in Loíza, Puerto Rico. This mask-making tradition has been passed down from generation to generation. The *Vejigantes* character's masks, made with coconuts are colorful depictions of horned bat-like characters symbolizing the Muslims in the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol. These are certainly a very significant material culture sign.

Visual arts are also a great contribution of blacks. The works of the famous painter Samuel Lind, who tells the story of slavery in Puerto Rico, are exhibited in Paris, France. An article on African immigration to Puerto Rico summarizes well the legacy of enslaved Africans on the island: "Their contribution to music, art, language, and heritage have become instrumental to Puerto Rican culture."<sup>231</sup> But above all, the greatest contribution is in their African belief systems and the conceptualization of St. James in Loíza, Puerto Rico.

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<sup>231</sup> "African Immigration to Puerto Rico." *Wikipedia*. 2010. Web. 28 Nov. 2010.

## CHAPTER 4

### AFRICAN BELIEF SYSTEMS AND THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ST. JAMES IN LOÍZA, PUERTO RICO

Many black descendants of enslaved Africans in Puerto Rico have appropriated the Moor and Christian celebrations within their traditions. In fact, in Puerto Rico, these celebrations are rigidly tied to Loíza; a town populated almost 100 percent by African descendants. In a very distinct manner, the Moors in the Puerto Rico celebrations of Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol are not defeated, converted, or decapitated. This name of Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol is unique to the celebrations in Puerto Rico. While the Spaniards are represented as blue-eyed, well-dressed knights, the Moors take the embodiment of *Vejigantes*, an evil being with a multi-horned mask and unique costume flairs, that when lifted in the air, simulate bat wings.<sup>232</sup>

The inherited religious and cultural expression of Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol is a vivid imprint and legacy of Muslim Spain and the legacy of enslaved Africans and the Islamic heritage of West Africa in Puerto Rico. Concisely demarcated: “In the town of Loíza, Puerto Rico, the festival of Santiago Apóstol (Saint James) is not only the largest public festival but also the clearest expression of black Puerto Rican identity and religion.”<sup>233</sup> These celebrations in Puerto Rico are the main focus of this dissertation.

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<sup>232</sup> “A *Vejigantes* has bat wings because he is depicted as the *Cuco* or the bogeyman. He represents vengeance.” (This statement was compiled during fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in July 2013).

<sup>233</sup> *Caribbean Religions History. An Introduction*. Edited by Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. González. NY: New York University Press, 2010. P. 49.

African belief systems in Puerto Rico have been scantily documented as Martha Vega (1999) observed: “In Puerto Rico, due to the significantly smaller numbers (in the range of 80,000), scholars have shown little interest in documenting the African belief systems that have been maintained by African descendants.”<sup>234</sup>

Notwithstanding the lack of records, and irrespective of the religious backgrounds of the enslaved Africans, the icon of St. James, as material culture, became important in the lives of the people of Loíza. The residents used the festivity’s date as a marker for other happenings as scholar Carmen Cecilia Mauleón Benítez (1974), accomplishing research in Loíza, noticed:

Jóvenes y mayores señalan el ocurrir de los acontecimientos usando como punto de partida las Fiestas de Santiago y así oímos: “nació el día de los hombres” (se hace en referencia al día dedicado al santo de los hombres) o “el día de las mujeres recibí su carta” (aquí se refieren al santo de las mujeres).<sup>235</sup> (The young and elderly point at occurred events by using the St. James Festivities as a point of reference and thus we hear: “He was born the day of the men,” (making reference to the celebration day dedicated to St. James of the men) or “On the day of the women, I received your letter.” (Referring to the celebration day dedicated to St. James of the women.))

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<sup>234</sup> Marta Moreno Vega. “*Espiritismo* in the Puerto Rican Community: A New World Recreation with the Elements of Kongo Ancestor Worship.” *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Jan, 1999), P. 331.

<sup>235</sup> Carmen Cecilia Mauleón Benítez. *El Español de Loíza Aldea*. Madrid: Ediciones Partenón, 1974. P. 80.

The Kingdom of Kongo was in West-Central Africa and was comprised of present-day northern Angola, Cabinda, and the Republic of the Congo, western Democratic Republic of the Congo, and southern Gabon. Portuguese explorers brought Christianity to Kongo around 1491. Catholic missionaries found it profitable to engage in the slave trade, and as a direct result, many enslaved Africans of Kongolese provenance ended up in the New World. These enslaved Africans had knowledge of Christianity upon their arrival in the New World so they were aware of St. James the Moor Slayer as the Patron Saint of Spain. “Saint James had a special place in the Central African Kingdom of Kongo because of his association with the founding of Christianity in the country in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>236</sup> As St. James Apostle once made a miraculous appearance to aid the Christians against the Muslims at the Battle of Clavijo (844) in Spain, Kongo claims his assistance as well.<sup>237</sup> The Kongolese celebrated the miraculous event and victory for Christianity with a commemoration of the saint, a Christian feast celebrated on July 25<sup>th</sup> in honor to St. James.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> “St. James the Greater.” *St. James Church Organization*. 2013. Web. 30 May 2013.

<sup>237</sup> “Portuguese sailors and diplomats brought the saint to Kongo when they first reached the country in 1483. When King Afonso I of Kongo whose Kongo name was Mvemba a Nzinga, the second Christian king, was facing a rival, his brother Mpanzu a Kitma, in battle, he reported that a vision of Saint James and the Heavenly Host appeared in the sky, frightened Mpanzu a Kitma’s soldiers, and gave Afonso the victory.” “St. James the Greater.” *St. James Church Organization*. 2013. Web. 30 May 2013.

<sup>238</sup> “If Halloween was the primary religious holiday in Kongo, Saint James’ Day was a more secular and political holiday. Formally the day commemorated the patron saint of Spain and Portugal and brought to Kongo by the Portuguese in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Known as ‘Matamoro’ or ‘Killer of the Moors’ in Iberia, Saint James Major was a military saint, often seen in battle dress and on horseback leading the specifically Iberian version of the crusades. In Kongo, however, the saint was associated most specifically with King Afonso I (ruled 1509-43), who had overthrown his pagan brother in the name of the Catholic Church with the aid of Saint James.” John K. Thornton. *The Kongolese Saint Anthony. Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684-1706*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Over the years, Saint James day became the central holiday of Kongo. Taxes were collected on that day, and men eligible for military duty were required to appear armed. There were usually regional celebrations as well as one at the capital. In some cases, enslaved Africans of Kongolese provenance carried the celebration to the New World, and there are celebrations of Saint James Day in Haiti and Puerto Rico carried out by their descendants.<sup>239</sup>

St. James became an integral piece in the shaping of Congolese Catholicism: “K/Congolese Catholicism is marked by devotion to St. James the Greater and Mary, saint cults that also became dominant in Haiti. In Haiti, Saint James is associated with Ogun (the *loa* [spiritual guide] associated with war and iron), and his festival is one of the largest in the nation.”<sup>240</sup>

Prior to being Christianized by the Portuguese pioneers (c. 1491), the Kongolese practiced a religion that in the New World that became Palo Monte. At its core, Palo Monte involves the veneration of ancestors and is slightly analogous to Santería in the veneration of Catholic saints that take a syncretic embodiment. One of the major difference between Santería and Palo Monte is that the latter uses dead human body parts for their rituals. Many traits of Kongolese religious practice are deeply ingrained with Spiritism (Espiritismo) in Puerto Rico. Marta Moreno Vega (1999) explains that Spiritism in Puerto Rico involves a system of beliefs, including the worship of one’s ancestors. She acknowledges “the legacy of Espiritismo as one of the lasting cultural

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<sup>239</sup> “St. James the Greater.” *St. James Church Organization*. 2013. Web. 30 May 2013.

<sup>240</sup> *Caribbean Religions History. An Introduction*. Edited by Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. González. NY: New York University Press, 2010. P. 63.



contributions of the varied African ethnic groups brought to Puerto Rico.”<sup>241</sup> The native Taínos also believed in ancestor worship which made it easier to adapt to other similar worldviews.

As the Kongo leaders converted to Catholicism, the religion took a distinct flavor in Kongo. This means that when the enslaved Africans from Kongo arrived in the New World, they brought a particular kind of Catholic religiosity, as African historian John Thornton (1984) argued, that had remnants of their old traditions and worldviews: “Catholicism in the Congo maintained its Congolese cosmological foundation...many Congolese embraced Catholicism without changing many of their core Congolese religious values, and Catholic priests were accepting of these practices”<sup>242</sup> This is significant, because it explains why the folk Catholicism practiced on the island of Puerto Rico has multiple layers such as hints of other world traditions. The implications are that core religious values from many worldviews had a constant intercourse and each gained from each other. Puerto Rican religious worldviews are enriched by the different beliefs that entered with enslaved Africans and other immigrants. This helps support my thesis regarding why the fiestas are so different in Puerto Rico, since there was a lack of homogeneity regarding a particular staunch Catholic worldview as inherited from Spain.

Partly Christianized Kongolese enslaved Africans made their way to islands such as Puerto Rico and Hispaniola (Dominican Republic and Haiti). In Haiti, St. James

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<sup>241</sup> Marta Moreno Vega. “*Espiritismo* in the Puerto Rican Community: A New World Recreation with the Elements of Kongo Ancestor Worship.” *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Jan, 1999), P. 334.

<sup>242</sup> *Caribbean Religions History. An Introduction*. Edited by Ennis B. Edmonds and Michelle A. González. NY: New York University Press, 2010. P. 60-61.

celebrations occur on July 25, specifically in a location called Plaine-du-Nord. There St. James is also known as Père Jacques. A blog by modern day Christian missionaries on the island reads: “People from all over Haiti, the DR [Dominican Republic] and even the States come for this week-long experience, casting money and food into the mud of St. Jacques pool, bathing in it, sacrificing animals into the mud, and asking a major spirit for jobs or healing, for money or help.”<sup>243</sup>

Like the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol, these Haiti celebrations attract Haitians from the diaspora who have not given up their roots. Unlike Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Puerto Rico, where offerings and animal sacrifices do not take place, the offerings and sacrificing of animals in Haiti is based on African traditions or religious practices like *Candomblé*<sup>244</sup> (a Kongolese-based tradition). What is pertinent to both celebrations is the claim that they were conceivably brought to the islands by Kongolese enslaved Africans who were familiar with a St. James celebration in their native land. Alegría has maintained that in the Puerto Rican Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol, black celebrants look at the figure of St. James as a syncretic Ogún<sup>245</sup> or god of the Yorubas. The Haitian celebrants also appear to have combined St. James and Ogún, as the missionaries’ blog continues:

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<sup>243</sup> “Life in Haiti.” *The Ayars Affairs*. 2013. Web. 7 Aug. 2013.

<sup>244</sup> “*Candomblé* is an Afro-Brazilian religion of divination, sacrifice, healing, music, dance, and spirit possession.” James Lorand Matory. *Black Atlantic Religion. Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005. P. 1.

<sup>245</sup> In the preface of *Africa’s Ogún Old World New World*, edited by Sandra T. Barnes, we read: “In many places not only was Ogún a key figure in contemporary religious settings that had clear connections with the past, but he also was incorporated into new ideological systems and what might be called popular religions.” *Africa’s Ogún: Old World New World*. Edited by Sandra T. Barnes. Bloomington [Ind.]: Indiana University Press, 1989. P. IX, X.

St. Jacques is the Catholic personification of the African spirit Ogún. When slaves were brought to Haiti, they were baptized as Catholic and forbidden to practice their African religions. Yet they continued to do so in secret and incorporated Catholicism into their traditions. Most spirits are represented with both African and a Catholic name. Ogún, or St. Jacques, is the warrior spirit and is associated with fire, iron, politics and thunderbolts.<sup>246</sup>

Syncretism is best conceptualized by González-Wippler as “El sincretismo es la combinación o reconciliación de diferentes creencias religiosas o filosóficas.”<sup>247</sup> (Syncretism is the combination or reconciliation of different religious or philosophical creeds.) In the case of the advent of Islam into other religious worldview locales in West Africa, syncretism played a major role because a common factor between Islam and other traditions facilitated conversions as people could easily relate to practices already ingrained within their *habitus*:

These carriers of the [Islamic] faith were natives and therefore identified culturally and socially as well as ethnically with the potential converts. Some fundamental features of traditional religions and customs, such as the ritual immolation of animals, circumcision, polygamy, communal prayers, divination, and amulet making also were present in Islam. Such affinities facilitated conversion as well as accommodation and tolerance of

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<sup>246</sup> “Life in Haiti.” *The Ayars Affairs*. 2013. Web. 7 Aug. 2013.

<sup>247</sup> Migene González-Wippler. *Santería: la Religión*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Español, 1999. P. 9.

others' rituals and beliefs. Africans themselves considered Islam an African religion.<sup>248</sup>

Just as traditional religions in Africa had many affinities to Islam, Santería and Catholicism had much in common and practitioners of either tradition could easily crossover due to the similarities that encouraged an easy adaptation. Religious belief systems somewhat syncretized, yet kept distinct qualities. The combination that took place in Puerto Rico also gave birth to a rather distinct way of venerating St. James, a Catholic apostle, among a community comprised mainly of descendants of enslaved Africans that carried a vestige of their ancestors' beliefs completely unrelated to Catholicism.

González-Wippler noted: “Cuando los esclavos Yoruba identificaban a sus orishas con los santos de la fé católica, estos se investían con los mismos poderes sobrenaturales de las deidades africanas.”<sup>249</sup> (When the Yoruban enslaved Africans associated their saints with those of the Catholic faith, they were invested with the same supernatural powers of the African deities.)

Santería and Spiritism have syncretism as a common practice and they equate Yoruba pantheon deities to Catholic saints. The Nigerian enslaved Africans brought these practices to the New World. The success of syncretism was possible because the Catholic saints became the personification of Yoruba deities. Santería became a seamless tool for expression and the term literally means “saint worship.” The enslaved Africans accepted

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<sup>248</sup> Sylviane A Diouf. *Servants of Allah- African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. NY: New York University Press, 1998. P. 4.

<sup>249</sup> Migene González-Wippler. *Santería: la Religión*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Español, 1999. P. 12.

saints from Catholic iconography in order to adjust their own deities or orishas while minimizing religious conflicts with their proselytizing Catholic masters. Yoruban orisha tradition emphasized religious tolerance according to González-Wippler and this is perhaps the reason for Islam and Christianity to have been embraced in Nigeria upon their arrival. She also explained that today the majority of Yorubas are Muslim.<sup>250</sup>

As Long reminds us:

The slaves had to come to terms with the opaqueness of their condition and at the same time oppose it. They had to experience the truth of their negativity and at the same time transform and create *an-other* reality.

Given the limitations imposed upon them, they created on the level of the religious consciousness. Not only did this transformation produce new cultural forms but its significance must be understood from the point of view of the creativity of the transforming process itself.<sup>251</sup>

The syncretism of Catholicism and Santería is easily perceived today on the island of Puerto Rico. Upon a brief visit to a *botánica* (a shop that sells Santería articles), one can easily appreciate the amalgamation of many Catholic Saints into Yoruban orishas (Santería deities). For example, Santa Bárbara<sup>252</sup> has become the embodiment of

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<sup>250</sup> Migene González-Wippler. *Santería: la Religión*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Español, 1999. P. 8.

<sup>251</sup> Charles H. Long. *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. P. 177.

<sup>252</sup> “San Patricio Catholic Church Baptism Records in Loíza Puerto Rico, 1792 to 1845.” *Family Search- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. 2014. Web. 28 Aug. 2014 indicate that many women in Loíza, Puerto Rico were named Bárbara. In fact, the name Bárbara is more common than Santiago itself. “San Patricio Catholic Church Death Records in Loíza Puerto Rico, 1823 to 1851.” *Family Search- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. 2014. Web. 28 Aug. 2014 also corroborate the preponderance of the name Bárbara versus Santiago among the people in Loíza, Puerto Rico.

Changó.<sup>253</sup> As such, the Catholic Church has been a staunch rejecter of such practices. Santa Bárbara, for example, has been shunned by the Catholic Church because the *santeros* (Santería practitioners) have appropriated her in the form of Changó. Some scholars such as Alegría and González-Wippler emphasized that Changó's cult survives in Loíza as Santiago Matamoros.<sup>254</sup>

During fieldwork in Puerto Rico I visited a *botánica* and inquired about St. James Apostle. Immediately, the shop owner pulled out a picture of St. James mounted on a horse, trampling a Moor. He is known in the Santería lore as Ogún Balendyo<sup>255</sup> and is highly venerated in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, he explained. In Haiti, Ogún Balendyo is the voodoo (an African Syncretic religion) name given to St. James Apostle (also depicted in their lore as a horseman trampling on defeated Moors). The devotees who embrace him as one of their protectors offer him cigars and red wine on his altar.<sup>256</sup> In voodoo, Ogún Balendyo favors the color blue. He is considered a great protector and can be found on an altar prepared for him.<sup>257</sup>

St. James and St. George are sometimes interchanged. Although both saints are depicted as Christian warriors defeating evil, St. James is often shown on horseback trampling a Moor, while St. George is often illustrated on horseback spearing a dragon.

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<sup>253</sup> "Some followers of St. James of the Women make him out to be Santa Bárbara or Changó." (This statement was compiled during fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in July 2013).

<sup>254</sup> Migene González-Wippler. *Santería: la Religión*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Español, 1999. P. 267.

<sup>255</sup> "Ogún Balendyo." *International Vodou Society*. 2013. Web. 30 May 2013.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

For example, Alcoy, Spain celebrates the Moor and Christian festivities in honor of St. George<sup>258</sup>, rather than St. James. Most Latin American Moor and Christian celebrations honor St. James. This interchanging, in this sense, has allowed for some flexibility and often St. George becomes the embodiment of St. James. In Santería, Changó has often been syncretized with St. George, the saint venerated in some Moor and Christian celebrations in certain localities within Spain.<sup>259</sup> González-Wippler speaks of Changó's genesis and association with thunder:

La deidificación de Changó y su identificación con el trueno y el relámpago puede ser rastreada hasta una deidad solar Yoruba conocida como Jakuta (el arrojador de piedras), quien fuera un guardián de la moralidad y la bondad.<sup>260</sup> (The deification of Changó as his identification with thunder and lightning can be traced to the solar deity known as Jakuta [the Stone thrower], who was the guardian of morality and benevolence.)

Changó's archetype is seen as a double-edged sword.<sup>261</sup> In that sense, St. James is an idyllic symbol for syncretism with Changó. St. James aids in conquest, but in order to

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<sup>258</sup> In Palestine, St. George is important to both Christians and Muslims, who equate him to Khidr, also known as the green man in Sufism.

<sup>259</sup> "Se dice que Changó tiene doce caminos o aspectos. "Aunque su principal sincretismo es con Santa Bárbara, en algunos de sus otros aspectos ha sido sincretizado con San Patricio, San Expedito, San Marcos, San Daniel y San Jorge." (It is said that Changó has twelve paths or aspects. Even though his main syncretism is with Santa Bárbara, in some of his other aspects he has been syncretized with St. Patrick, Saint Expedito, Saint Mark, Saint Daniel and Saint George.) Migene González-Wippler. *Santería: la Religión*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Español, 1999. P. 39.

<sup>260</sup> Migene González-Wippler. *Santería: la Religión*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Español, 1999. P. 39.

<sup>261</sup> "Estas violentas acciones describen el poder de Changó, el cual puede ser liberado no sólo contra otros, sino también contra la persona misma. La lección es que el poder cuando se usa mal puede ir más allá de los límites racionales y orales, destruyendo lo bueno en lugar de lo malo. Este es el significado del *edun ara*, el hacha de doble filo que simboliza el poder de Changó, y que su devoto lleva suspendido sobre su cabeza toda la vida. Tener la capacidad de controlar ese poder es poder en sí." (These violent actions

gain victory for the winner, he must harm the loser. Good and evil materialize within St. James as he gets called in battle for succor by the Spaniards with the battle cry *Santiago y Cierra España*<sup>262</sup> (St. James, and close Spain). He must kill some (Muslims) in order to give life to others (Christians) or simultaneously, some live at the expense of others being killed. Author Samuel Cruz (2005) explains that Santería practitioners use the iconography of Santiago Apóstol in their rituals.<sup>263</sup> He further supports the idea that in Cuba, Santa Bárbara is identified with Changó, from the Yoruban pantheon.

When a *botánica* owner was asked about the possibility of Santa Bárbara/Changó embodying St. James Apostle in Loíza, he staunchly rejected that Santa Bárbara and/or Changó have anything to do with St. James Apostle, and instead, referred to Ogún Baleyrdo as the personification of St. James Apostle, especially in places such as Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

I interviewed a man (approximate age of 75) born and raised in Loíza and when asked about Santa Bárbara and Loíza he stated:

In 1630, there was an encounter in The Morro Castle with the Spaniards and Mr. Viva Acosta and it was asked that Puerto Rico give protection to Santa Bárbara

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describe the power of Changó, which can be liberated not only against others, but against oneself. The lesson is that power when utilized incorrectly can go further than rational and verbal limits, destroying what is good instead of evil. This was the meaning of the *edun ara*, the double-edged hatchet that symbolizes the power of Changó, which his devotees carry on top of their heads for all of their lifetime.) Migene González-Wippler. *Santería: la Religión*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Español, 1999. P. 39.

<sup>262</sup> "...would tell me what is the reason that the Spaniards, when they are about to give battle, in calling on that Saint James the Moor Slayer, say 'Santiago and close Spain!'" Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra. *Don Quixote*. Translated by John Ormsby. Kansas: Digireads.com Publishing, 2009. P. 545.

<sup>263</sup> Samuel Cruz. *Masked Africanisms- Puerto Rican Pentecostalism*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2005. P. 51.



and Santiago. I heard this in a program on Channel 6. Puerto Rico needed to give protection to these two figures.<sup>264</sup>

He also added that Changó and Santa Bárbara have become the embodiment of St. James Apostle in Loíza. He explained that there is a legend that tells that Santa Bárbara hates men because she was raped by her father, and that in July, she becomes a man. He continued:

There was a storm in San Cipriano [1932] and the town was inundated in the night and people were playing *bomba* music. The water receded and Santa Bárbara appeared. She is also known as Santa Ana. When the month of July approaches, she becomes a man because she hates men as she was violated by her own father. The St. James of the Women is her embodiment.<sup>265</sup>

This is how he explained that Santa Bárbara is Changó, and that in turn, Changó is St. James. “Ogún is syncretized with Saint Peter, who carries the keys of heaven; also with Santiago or Saint James the Elder.”<sup>266</sup> St. James and St. Peter (another of Jesus’ twelve disciples and a fisherman like St. James) and/or St. Michael (an Archangel) all have a common element in their depictions: they are defeating an enemy force. St. James is often shown on horseback trampling a Moor, while St. Michael is often illustrated crushing a devil, and St. Peter is often illustrated without any enemies at his feet. Frequently, St. Peter and/or St. Michael become the embodiment of St. James.

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<sup>264</sup> This statement was compiled during fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in July 2013.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert. *Creole Religions of the Caribbean. An Introduction from Vodou and Santería to Obeah and Espiritismo*. NY: New York University Press, 2003. P. 41.

Santería has embraced and syncretized St. Peter as Ogún, who is a thunder-deity in the Santería pantheon. Uncannily, St. James Apostle is also known for the epithet “thunder-voice.” If good and evil materialize within St. James as the embodiment of Changó, he is even more probable to embody Ogún because as a symbol of agony and repulsion caused by warfare, the Moor Slayer aspect of St. James could not be more undistinguishable:

Como símbolo de guerra, Ogún es muy temido y respetado en Santería. Algunos *santeros* dicen que él es el padre de la tragedia, un símbolo de todo el dolor y horror causado por la guerra y la violencia. El orisha es adorado y propiciado de modo que proteja a sus seguidores de las mismas cosas que él representa.<sup>267</sup> (As a symbol of war, Ogún is frightening and respected in Santería. Some *santeros* say that he is the father of tragedy, a symbol of all pain and horror caused by war and violence. The orisha is adored and cared for so that he grants protection to his devotees against the same [negative] attributes he represents.)

Engaging St. James as the embodiment of Ogún reinforces the assertion that the ostracized people of Loíza have embraced St. James as their protector. He helps protect the same people he is stepping on in his bodily materialization. It could be argued that this theory would necessitate the proof that Santería is widely practiced within Loíza, but it is feasible to believe that people engage in traditions that have lost their original meaning. For example, modern-day celebrations can easily reinforce the substitution even

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<sup>267</sup> Migene González-Wippler. *Santería: la Religión*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Español, 1999. P. 41.

if the Santería roots are not openly acknowledged or understood. In the case of Loíza, it is problematic to ascertain the Santería role within the community because of circumvention whenever the subject was brought up during fieldwork. It appeared that people were not comfortable speaking openly about Santería in either a constructive or negative way. Because of this handicap, it is fair to assert that even if Santería is predominant among the people of Loíza, no one is able to prove it.

Whenever it was inquired about vestiges of Islam within Puerto Rican customs, people would timidly state that the Muslims are in places such as Río Piedras, a large metropolitan area in the northeast of the island.<sup>268</sup> In the Luquillo area, the presence of a few Muslim men that wore knitted white caps was noticeable. There were also a few veiled Muslim women in the local supermarket.

A hint of Islam permeates the appropriation of saints, such as Changó or Ogún from within the pantheon, as protection against the evil eye or *envidia* (envy) as Santería practitioners call it. Sufism, as the mysticism of Islam, is often shunned by orthodox Muslims for its persistent belief in the veneration of saints (which goes against the strictly monotheistic precept of Islam) and the use of amulets to ward off the evil eye. These practices in an uncanny way resemble Santería practices of appropriating saints as talismans. Furthermore, the use of an Arab as a protector in the manner of a personal spiritual guide is a popular Santería practice that insinuates an ingrained Islam vestige. In

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<sup>268</sup> An article about Muslims in Puerto Rico dated December 2015 claims about 500 native Puerto Rican converts; the remaining 3000 are natives of Palestine, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, and Syria, according to Imam Zaid Abdelrahim. In the 1970s, he claims the Muslim population reached 10,000 but many immigrated to the United States. He explains that today many of the remaining 3,500 Muslims in Puerto Rico are business people. “Comunidad Musulmana en Puerto Rico es la más Grande del Caribe.” *El Nuevo Día* [San Juan, PR] 7 Dec. 2015.

Santería, the Arab is represented as an ally and not as an enemy. Rather than having enmity toward Islam, Santería has a sympathetic stance and the Arab statue as material culture is embraced. Relating vestiges of Islam in Puerto Rico, a resident of Luquillo assured me that he knew a Muslim practitioner in Fajardo, Puerto Rico who is also a *santero* and presented these two religions as complementary. Efforts to contact the Muslim *santero* to secure an interview for this project were unsuccessful.

Bastide noted that in Brazil, a deep religious syncretism existed among the Islamized enslaved Africans who persisted in clinging to their old, primitive paganism, as he calls it. This religious syncretism makes it very plausible for Islamized enslaved Africans to engage in Santería rituals, or at least to equate some of the rituals to their own original backgrounds. Bastide further explained:

The Pernambucan cult illustrates this syncretism. There the *alufa* or Moslem priest would foretell the future by pouring palm oil and blood over three purple stones. One of these was known as the “Saint Barbara stone,” and the others were meteorites. Now Saint Barbara is the Catholic equivalent of Xango, the thunder god, whose emblem is the thunderbolt or meteorite. Obviously the Islamic and Yoruba religions had intermixed...<sup>269</sup>

Bastide concluded: “In Brazil, however, Mohammedanism became, and remained, sorcery.”<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> *Latin American Religions. Histories and Documents in Context*. Edited with Introductions by Anna L. Peterson and Manuel A. Vazquez. NY: New York University Press, 2008. Chapter 4: “Black Islam in Brazil.” P. 107.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 112.

## CHAPTER 5

### FIESTAS DE SANTIAGO APOSTOL IN LOIZA, PUERTO RICO

Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Loíza, Puerto Rico, an inherited religious and cultural tradition, takes a different expression in Puerto Rico. The fiestas not only display remnants of cultural traditions and the religious influences<sup>271</sup> of folk Catholicism, Santería, and Espiritismo, and Islam, but embrace the *Vejigantes* character which symbolizes the Muslim. In fact, the *Vejigantes* character is so often portrayed in Loíza's celebrations, that the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol are commonly referred to as *Vejigantes* celebrations.

The religious traditions of enslaved Africans gave birth to syncretic practices such as Santería and Espiritismo, and thus, these religious worldviews have permeated the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol as well. These various religious and cultural traditions are embraced and often concealed within other expressions. Case in point is how Santiago Apóstol in Loíza is often conceptualized as Changó or Ogún, orishas or spiritual guides from the Santería tradition, or Santa Bárbara, an icon from folk Catholicism. But most significantly, rather than embracing the idea of evil, *Vejigantes* (the evil Muslim character in the celebration), are more iconic and embraced in Puerto Rico.

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<sup>271</sup> "It is noteworthy that until the 1980s the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña's interest in vernacular religions centered on popular Catholicism (excluding African and Afro-Caribbean influences). Vernacular religions were carefully packaged for nationalist purposes: any controversies as to their heretical (in Catholic terms) or irrational or superstitious practices (in modernist parlance) were muffled by reframing them as 'popular' or 'esoteric' expressions of the Puerto Rican 'religious soul.' Ritual objects were presented as 'folk art' and thereby cleansed of religious meaning." Raquel Romberg. *Witchcraft and Welfare: Spiritual Capital and the Business of Magic in Modern Puerto Rico*. Austin: University of Texas, 2003. P. 97.

Since the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol are strictly celebrated in Loíza, Puerto Rico among black descendants, a brief portrayal of the town is necessary in order to frame the celebrations.

“...Loíza, one of the most ‘African’ towns in Puerto Rico.”<sup>272</sup>

Geography, history, and ethno-social factors have influenced the people of Loíza and must be considered when analyzing Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol. Loíza takes its name from a local leader, Cacica Luysa,<sup>273</sup> who married a mulatto Spaniard named Pedro Mexía. This is a clear example of the *mélange* or pastiche-identity of the people in Puerto Rico. Loíza officially became a town in 1719 and is known for a few distinct characteristics.<sup>274</sup> Loíza is best known as Loíza Aldea. Remarkably, Aldea is a word with Arabic roots, originating from *al-day'a* in Arabic (ضَيْعَة), meaning village or farm.<sup>275</sup> The vicinity was known as San Cipriano or municipality of Santiago in the 1960s according to fieldwork conducted by Anthony LaRuffa (1971).

Loíza was one of the first towns in Puerto Rico founded by the colonizers from Spain. It has the largest concentration of black descents of enslaved Africans brought to

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<sup>272</sup> Raquel Romberg. *Witchcraft and Welfare: Spiritual Capital and the Business of Magic in Modern Puerto Rico*. Austin: University of Texas, 2003. P. 29.

<sup>273</sup> In a newspaper article dated 3 December 2014 Cacica Luysa is listed as the prototype of the near-perfect human being according to biologist Lior Pachter based on the analysis of human genes; his study points at the mixture of the best of three genotypes: European, African, and Amerindian as the reason why the Puerto Rican is the closest-to-perfect human. “Ser Humano Perfecto Sería Puertorriqueño.” *El Nuevo Día* [San Juan, PR] 3 Dec. 2014. Web. 3 Dec 2014. Also, Lior Pachter. “The Perfect Human is Puerto Rican.” *Bits of DNA: Reviews and Commentary on Computational Biology by Lior Pachter*. 2 Dec 2014. Web. 3 Dec. 2014.

<sup>274</sup> Carmen Cecilia Mauleón Benítez. *El Español de Loíza Aldea*. Madrid: Ediciones Partenón, 1974. P. 18.

<sup>275</sup> Jason Webster. *Andalus. Unlocking the Secrets of Moorish Spain*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2004. P. 76.

tend the sugarcane plantations. According to the 2010 census, 64 percent of Loíza's 30,000 inhabitants are black.<sup>276</sup> The census percentage is inaccurate and is much lower than reality due to the *Regla de Sacar* (rule of taking-off) definition regarding race (white versus black). It allows for someone with a minimal strain of white in their blood to qualify outside the definition of black. It is very obvious, visually, that the vast majority of Loíza residents are of black descent and the percentage is more accurately close to 100 percent. It is also interesting to note that in Puerto Rico there are many shades of color used to describe one's skin color.<sup>277</sup> It is very common to hear blacks call others by epithets if they happen to be a shade darker. Words such as *negro*, *retinto*, *negrito*, *prieto*, *molleto*, *cocolo*, *mulato*, *moreno*, *café con leche*, and *trigueño* are still often used to describe skin colors other than white. These wide range of adjectives cover the color spectrum from wheat to black. Scholar Gates understood the complexities of these colored-scales through his colleague Matory's clarification: "...words for various shades of African descent in Brazil, such as mulattoes, cafusos, pardos, morenos, pretos, negros., etc., types of 'black people,'..."<sup>278</sup> This color spectrum is very significant, as historian Gates observes when addressing blacks in Latin America:

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<sup>276</sup> "Loíza County, PR 2010 Census Data." *Zip-Codes.com*. 2003-2017. Web. 7 Aug. 2013.

<sup>277</sup> A table describing the different colors of enslaved Africans in San Juan, Puerto Rico in the year 1872 includes thirty-one varieties or shades: "negro colorado, colorado, colorado oscuro, negro claro, negro retinto, retinto, negro pasa, moreno, moreno oscuro, moreno claro, moreno colorado, oscuro, grifo, grifo colorado, pardo, pardo claro, trigueño, trigueño claro, mulato claro, mulato oscuro, colorado mulato, amulatado, achocolatado, chocolate, acanelado, blanco, blancuzco, claro, indio, sambo, y duro (sin definir) [without definition]." *Cadenas de Esclavitud y de Solaridad- Esclavos y Libertos en San Juan en el Siglo XIX*. Editores: Raúl Mayo Santana, Mariano Negrón Portillo, and Manuel Mayo López. Río Piedras: Centro de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1997. P. 186.

<sup>278</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Reader*. Edited by Abby Wolf. New York: Basic Civitas, 2012. P. 466.

What did all these societies ultimately share in common? The unfortunate fact that persons of the seemingly “purest” or “unadulterated” African descent disproportionately occupy the very bottom of the economic scale in each of these countries. In other words, the people with the darkest skin, the kinkiest hair, and the thickest lips tend to be overrepresented among the poorest members of society.”<sup>279</sup>

Gates’ observations hold true for the situation of blacks in Loíza, Puerto Rico.

LaRuffa, during fieldwork in Loíza in 1963, clearly saw and commented on Loíza’s maladies:

Future prospects of Ciprianeros are bleak. As black Puerto Ricans, they will continue to be exploited by their fellow Puerto Ricans and continentals alike. Tourists will continue to make brief stop-overs to buy masks and other souvenirs; or, perhaps, to see some of the “fiesta tradicional” and then drive on to El Yunque or Luquillo. And the many impoverished-Ciprianeros will continue “la lucha” [struggle] to survive.<sup>280</sup>

Today, Loíza remains one of the most impoverished places on the island and it notoriously holds the record for criminality due to drug trafficking and related society maladies. Loíza belongs to the blacks that have been stigmatized since its founding. Once slavery was abolished, many now free enslaved Africans remained in the depressed area

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<sup>279</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Reader*. Edited by Abby Wolf. New York: Basic Civitas, 2012. P. 473.

<sup>280</sup> Anthony L LaRuffa. *San Cipriano Life in Puerto Rican Community*. NY: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1971. P. 144.



of Loíza where they continued to live with other *loiceños* (inhabitants of Loíza) generation after generation.<sup>281</sup> Mauleón Benítez observes:

En 1873 al declararse la Abolición de la esclavitud, los nuevos libertos se quedan viviendo como agregados en las haciendas o se radican en las tierras de la costa. Son estas tierras las que se llaman Medianías, Medianía Alta y Medianía Baja. Termina el siglo XIX con el estancamiento de la región y un completo aislamiento del resto de la isla. Aislamiento que trae consigo la postración económica.<sup>282</sup> (In 1873 when the Abolition of slavery was declared, the newly freed enslaved African remained living as aggregate on the ranches or settled in the lands near the coast. These lands are named Medianías, Medianía Alta and Medianía Baja. The 19<sup>th</sup> century ends with the failure of the region and a complete isolation from the rest of the island. This isolation brings economic disaster.)

Loíza, although only 18 miles from San Juan (the capital of Puerto Rico), never enjoyed the economic and social growth experienced by the capital and surrounding metropolitan area. The people in Loíza, mostly enslaved Africans' descendants that made a living of cultivating coconuts or fishing, have been perceived to be relegated by the rest of the island population.

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<sup>281</sup> Very common Loíza surnames are Ayala, Carcaño, Cepeda, Correa, Mansó, Osorio, Pimentel, and Pizarro among others - these are all documented in the Loíza Parish Baptism Records as early as 1792. "San Patricio Catholic Church Death Records in Loíza Puerto Rico, 1823 to 1851." *Family Search- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. 2014. Web. 28 Aug. 2014.

<sup>282</sup> Carmen Cecilia Mauleón Benítez. *El Español de Loíza Aldea*. Madrid: Ediciones Partenón, 1974. P. 18.

Loíza was an isolated place that was only accessible by an *ancón* (ferry) until the mid-1980s, when new venues to enter and exit the area were created. Loíza is often affected by major flooding because it is a coastal city surrounded by two rivers. In July 2013, for example, the area received over six inches of rain in a 24-hour period and the dam was opened because the Rio Grande of Loíza had peaked. This caused a major flood in Loíza and people were stranded until the water subsided. The news media reported the general rains and floods as a large catastrophe in the history of the island regarding floods, yet it mentioned nothing about Loíza's inundations which I experienced as I was doing field research in Loíza at the time. Only when there are crimes in Loíza does the town make the headlines. Because Loíza is constantly subjected to stigmatization from outsiders, the ill-intended accusations become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Long's thoughts on significations are very germane to this outside stigmatization: "Signifying is worse than lying because it obscures and obfuscates a discourse without taking responsibility for doing so."<sup>283</sup> Outsiders tend not to visit or invest in the area, so the economy remains stagnant. The isolation creates scarcity of opportunities because few new economic prospects for growth occur and unemployment breeds crime. Lack of monetary assets also triggers petty crime and some residents turn to dealing drugs as an attractive way to make money. Drugs, in turn, bring other criminal activities to the area.

In the narration of the documental film created by Alegría in 1949, he justly describes Loíza as a tranquil, forgotten,<sup>284</sup> and isolated place. During fieldwork,

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<sup>283</sup> Charles H. Long. *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. P. 1.

<sup>284</sup> Ricardo E. Alegría. "Las Fiestas de Loíza Santiago Apóstol. A Documentary Film." *San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña*, 1949. Web. 17 Mar. 2012.

comments echoed this isolation: “Loíza is a marginalized town and forgotten because of its enslaved descendants. Loíza defended the coast from the enemy, yet people do not see nor acknowledge that.”<sup>285</sup> A college-educated Loíza man in his early 30s fittingly expanded on Loíza’s isolation: “Loíza es una isla dentro de una isla.”<sup>286</sup> (Loíza is an island within an island.) At the same time, and in a positive vein, the isolation has allowed the people to maintain a distinct character and preserve their African roots. Loíza is perhaps one of the most untainted towns regarding traditions and ethnicity on the island. This can be seen as an asset because the people continue to be proud of their origins and follow the tradition of their ancestors, regardless of epithets from outsiders. Any marginalization of Loíza’s residents comes from outside influences, so they make an effort to boost their self-esteem by perpetuating traditions that emphasize their African descent backgrounds. Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol are ideal events to celebrate their heritage. It is a unique and unifying social event that helps the people of Loíza boost their self-image even if it entails, as others see it, reveling in their own eccentricity. In effect, residents of Loíza have been and continue to be isolated, relegated, and ultimately overlooked.

Méndez Santos conceptualizes the celebration in Puerto Rico:

Las fiestas traen recuerdos legendarios. Se reviven anualmente las luchas entre moros y cristianos. Los vecinos usan disfraces y caretas para dar un tono más realista a la celebración. En estas fiestas se mezcla lo criollo con

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<sup>285</sup> This statement was compiled during fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in July 2013.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*

lo hispánico. Lo indígena con lo africano. El ayer con el presente. Y sobre todo cada día queda más arraigada la fé en Santiago Apóstol. El santo “Mata Moros”, que por estas tierras debiera llamarse “Mata Caribes” por ser invocado por los españoles contra aquellos terribles indios, es parte de la vida del poblado.<sup>287</sup> (The feasts bring legendary memories. Yearly the battles between Moors and Christians are re-enacted. The neighbors use costumes and masks to give reality flair to the celebration. These celebrations mix the native with the Spaniard, the indigenous with the African. The yesterday merges with the present. And every day even more the faith in St. James grows stronger. The Saint, The Moor Slayer, who in these lands should be called Caribe [Indians] Slayer because he was invoked by the Spaniards against those terrible Indians, is part of the life of the town.)

The statue of St. James the Moor Slayer, which is paraded through the streets of Loíza during the Fiestas, is represented as a fierce warrior mounted on a horse and trampling turbaned Moors, some of them decapitated. It is interesting that the people of Loíza do not emphasize, or in many cases, do not even see the Moors at St. James feet although they are in plain sight and very visible. That is because there is little distinction between the blacks that embrace St. James and the Moors that lay vanquished at his feet. Many of these blacks that embrace St. James see themselves reflected in the mirror of the

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<sup>287</sup> Carlos Méndez Santos. *Por Tierras de Loíza Aldea- Fiesta de Santiago- Loíza Aldea- Estudio de Antropología Cultural*. Ponce: Producciones Ceiba, 1973. P. 26.

defeated Moors at St. James' feet: "we do not see them, they are us." This is a rather empathetic view of the Moors on behalf of the people.

Fiet believed, that according to Alegría, the first celebrations in Loíza could have taken place anytime from the 17<sup>th</sup> century up until around 1830. In an effort to further expand on this, I researched the local parish records in search for some indications that indicated the prominence of the celebrations. An extensive search for Santiago Apóstol in the San Patricio Catholic Church death records of Loíza, Puerto Rico, 1823 to 1851, revealed an absence of references to the saint. This is probably because most of the affluent people who died and left money to the church or requested special masses were mostly dedicated to the numerous other saints: San Patricio, San Vicente, Nuestra Señora del Rosario, Nuestra Señora del Carmen, Nuestra Señora de Monserrate, Nuestra Señora de la Providencia, Nuestra Señora de Sopetrán, Cofradía del Santísimo Sacramento, Forzosas de Jerusalem y Manda Pía Religiosa. It is possible that Santiago Apóstol was unknowingly concealed in Cofradía del Santísimo Sacramento, Forzosas de Jerusalem, or the Manda Pía Religiosa. It could also be that Santiago Apóstol was recognized outside of the orthodox Catholic Church which would explain his popularity among the popular masses comprised of pseudo Catholics and the syncretism he often represents. The death records, nevertheless, hint to the existence of a cofradía in Loíza during the period of 1823 to 1851. It is also possible that Santiago Apóstol was unknowingly concealed within this cofradía.

A popular local legend has it that the celebrations of St. James started many centuries ago (1830s) when a statue of the saint miraculously appeared under a cork

tree.<sup>288</sup> The man who found the statue of Santiaguito (St. James of the Children) was Atilano Villanueva. He had been cultivating a parcel of land owned by Mrs. Juana Lanzó<sup>289</sup> and Mr. José María Villanueva in the area known as Las Carreras in Medianía Alta, Loíza. Another version of how Santiago Apóstol appeared in Puerto Rico, specifically in Loíza, is that the saint washed ashore.

Contrary to popular legends, and a more likely scenario is that conquistadores brought the icon of St. James Apostle as a talisman and it became part of the material culture of the locale. This saint supposedly saved them from the hands of the infidels in Muslim Spain. As early as 1686, documentation exists prohibiting these fiestas on the island which, at the time, were references as *la danza de los mulatos* (the dance of the mulattos).<sup>290</sup> Santiago Apóstol celebrations were also documented in the capital of San Juan, Puerto Rico during the 18<sup>th</sup> century among soldiers.<sup>291</sup> The saint represented

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<sup>288</sup> “Cuenta una vieja leyenda que ‘apareció en el sitio conocido como Las Carreras.’ [Ésta es una versión muy popular en Loíza Aldea, recogida por el autor Méndez Santos en sus visitas a esta municipalidad] La versión más conocida acerca de la aparición es la de que: ‘...un orador encontró al santo y fue donde los dueños de la finca a relatarles el hallazgo. La leyenda continúa diciendo que lo llevaron a la iglesia y al día siguiente, para sorpresa de todos los vecinos, el santo apareció nuevamente en Las Carreras.’ [versión recogida en Loíza Aldea por Méndez Santos]. Desde entonces se quedaron con él en ese barrio para celebrarle las fiestas.” (An old legend tells us that it appeared at the place known as Las Carreras. [This is a very popular version in Loíza Aldea, compiled by author Mendez Santos in his visits to this municipality]. The most known version in reference to the appearance is the one that states that...a praying person found the saint and he went to the owners of the land to let them know about the find. The legend continues to tell that they took him [the saint] to church and the next day, to the surprise of all the neighbors, he appeared again in the Las Carreras location [this is the compiled version by Méndez Santos in Loíza Aldea]. Ever since, they kept him in the town to celebrate his feast.) Carlos Méndez Santos. *Por Tierras de Loíza Aldea- Fiesta de Santiago- Loíza Aldea- Estudio de Antropología Cultural*. Ponce: Producciones Ceiba, 1973. P. 26.

<sup>289</sup> “San Patricio Catholic Church Baptism Records in Loíza Puerto Rico, 1792 to 1845.” *Family Search- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. 2014. Web. 28 Aug. 2014 verify a certain Juana Lanzó as an active religious woman who baptized many children; she is also listed as owner of enslaved people.

<sup>290</sup> Raquel Romberg. *Witchcraft and Welfare: Spiritual Capital and the Business of Magic in Modern Puerto Rico*. Austin: University of Texas, 2003. P. 44.

<sup>291</sup> Eugenio Fernández Méndez. *Historia Cultural de Puerto Rico 1493-1968*. San Juan: Ediciones El CEMI, 1971. P. 203.

someone who could aid Puerto Ricans in defeating their enemy, probably the marauding Caribbean Indians. Puerto Rico was at a vulnerable logistically location and often brutally attacked by Caribe Indians. Alternatively, it is the stance of this dissertation that the saint came to Loíza with Kongolese enslaved Africans who had already been exposed to his proselytizing capabilities. While difficult to prove, it is also very feasible that the saint entered the island with both Spaniards and enslaved Africans concurrently, and each group's conceptualization of the saint and their demotic manifestation of the St. James celebrations was based on their own subjective understanding and social interaction. Each group understood him and celebrated him differently. Evidencing this may be difficult, but at the celebrations I could observe a few staunch Catholic people celebrating the festivity and critiquing the African elements of the celebrations, while the enslaved African descendants reveled on the African elements of the festivity. The implications of this are evident: the festivity accommodates many. For example, during the celebrations Spaniard classical music such as *pasodobles* were intercalated with African *bomba* music as the saints were paraded through the streets. A Catholic nun happily danced her way through the parade with a bomba rhythm!

Many residents of Loíza combine the two stories: that the saint washed ashore (after a boat sank), and the saint was found under a cork tree<sup>292</sup>. The original tree has disappeared and efforts to replant it were unsuccessful. The miraculous apparition of St. James in Loíza is further sanctified as the image continued to return to the original place

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<sup>292</sup> During fieldwork, the procession went towards the cork tree location, where a salutation using flags was performed. On that particular occasion, the flag bearers came in bicycles, as the horses that are usually used for this performance did not show up. This reminded me of the flexibility and adaptability the Loíza people show.

regardless of how many times it was taken to the church. Many residents claim it was not until the local priest blessed the saint that the statue remained in one place. Local residents believe St. James chose them by his miraculous appearance in the locale.<sup>293</sup> The saint appears to have been immediately appropriated by the locals because of his demotic charm. The people in Loíza did not choose him, but instead he chose them.<sup>294</sup> As a national hero in Spain, he immediately became a local Puerto Rican demotic icon.

Many of the immigrants that came to Puerto Rico to oversee plantations were Irish, so it makes sense that the patron saint of Loíza was originally St. Patrick. Today, the most prominent church building in town is the Espíritu Santo Parish, which is still dedicated to him. This church is the oldest, in-use church in Puerto Rico. Its construction began in 1645 and concluded in 1776.<sup>295</sup> Compiled fieldwork statements regarding the Parish include: “It is the oldest church in Puerto Rico still in use and it is also the only church that faces the river rather than the town square.”

Loíza accommodates<sup>296</sup> and celebrates both St. James and St. Patrick. Celebrations in honor of St. James are traditional feasts in July, and celebrations in honor of St. Patrick patron saint feasts in March. The major difference between the two saints is

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<sup>293</sup> “St. James and *Vejigantes* are among blacks because it is a tradition not focused on anything else but the miraculous appearance of the saint in Loíza.” (This statement was compiled during fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in July 2013).

<sup>294</sup> “The origin of these celebrations involves the clandestine sale of enslaved Africans among pirates and Spaniards; the ship sinks and the saint appears and the people research information of the saint.” (This statement was compiled during fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in July 2013).

<sup>295</sup> “Una Parroquia Histórica en Loíza.” *El Nuevo Día* [San Juan, PR] 17 May 2009.

<sup>296</sup> A close look at first names among the Loíza people from 1819-1890 reveals an even number of people named Santiago (47) and Patricio/a (49). This suggests that both saints are equally important and no preference is perceived. (The name Bárbara occurs 30 times.) “San Patricio Catholic Church Death Records in Loíza Puerto Rico, 1823 to 1851.” *Family Search- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. 2014. Web. 28 Aug. 2014.



that St. James belongs to the people, and as such, his celebration includes dance, song, and libations, while St. Patrick belongs to the church so his celebration is strictly a religious celebration. That includes attending mass, prayer, and veneration. Patron Saint Feasts or *Fiestas Patronales* are church imposed celebrations to commemorate saints' birthdays. Traditional Feasts or *Fiestas Tradicionales* are more localized and are a homegrown rendering of customs and practices performed by the populace.

In July 2013, the Celebrations of St. James the Apostle, Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol, took place in the depressed and impoverished northeast town of Loíza, Puerto Rico as they have for centuries<sup>297</sup>. This celebration is a series of related celebrations because St. James the Apostle takes on three different depictions: St. James of the men, St. James of the women, and St. James of the children, each paraded through the streets on a different day. Each statue depicts St. James as a warrior holding a sword above his head while mounted on a white horse. St. James is symbolically defeating Muslims because his horse is stepping on a Moor's (a turbaned, dark-skinned man) head. These three statues are the embodiment of the same St. James from Spain that was known as the Moor Slayer. Each statue is maintained at the home of a respective saint-keeper (*mantenedor/a*)<sup>298</sup> until celebration time. The saint-keepers have inherited their

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<sup>297</sup> Throughout the centuries Loíza continues to tell its story of Saint James, the Moor Slayer. As Joseph Campbell (1991) reminds us: "Myths are stories of our search through the ages for truth, for meaning, for significance. We all need to tell our story and to understand our story." Joseph Campbell. *The Power of Myth*. NY: Anchor, 1991. P. 5.

<sup>298</sup> Although there are male *mantenedores*, women have always held a special and important place in keeping traditions alive. Women were mostly homemakers in charge of child rearing and this facilitated the transmission of cultural and religious mores, as they were mostly in charge of their children's education. This is also true, according to scholar Diouf, of the Muslim women in the diaspora. In speaking of alm's requirement in Islam, she observes: "The African women living in the harsh conditions of American slavery made a deliberate decision to continue fulfilling one of the precepts of their religion." Diouf, Sylviane A. "Sadaqa among African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10 1 (1999), pp. 22-32. P. 28.

guardianship tasks from their ancestors. Often, the statue/saint remains with the same family for generations. Only during the festivities are the saints removed from the home, paraded through the streets, then taken back to their keeper's residence where they remain until the next year's celebration. The saint-keepers not only have the important task of keeping the saint throughout the year, but they are to open their home and offer hospitality and refreshments during the celebrations to all the devotees who come to see and venerate the saint.<sup>299</sup> The 2013 saint-keepers (*mantenedores*) were: Ivan Matos for St. James of the Men, Sylvia Fuentes for St. James of the Women, and Rosa Julia Calcaño for St. James of the Children.

For three consecutive days, the act of parading the saints through the streets is repeated with only the typical characters changing. During the July 2013 celebrations, the spectators joined the procession and danced their way through the streets. The rest of the celebration week was dedicated to religious prayers, street-vending, street music, and dance, all of which provided an escape from the dreariness of everyday life. Long warned us on simply perceiving religion as escapism: "Though the worship and religious life of blacks have often been referred to as forms of escapism, one must always remember that there has always been an integral relationship between the "hardness" of life and the

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<sup>299</sup> During fieldwork performed in July 2013, I was able to enter the houses of the saint-keepers and look at the statues/saints up-close and take photographs. I was also afforded the opportunity to casually chat with a saint-keeper and other people visiting the saint. The ambiance and sense of hospitality from the saint-keeper was extraordinary. For example, as I entered the home of one of the saint-keepers for St. James, the host humbly continued her task of peeling plantains, which she explained, were to be used to make *alcapurrias* (a typical fritter made out of plantains and crab meat stuffing). She was preparing the food she was to offer to people during the evening celebration in her home. When asked about the future of the tradition, she explained that, to her chagrin, many young people are more interested in *Reggaetón* (urban hip-hop) music than in the St. James festivities. Nevertheless, it was interesting to me to observe that during the parading of the saint through the streets, four generations of a particular household were present: a devotee, a parent, a child (carrying the saint's flag), and a grand-child (a saint-bearer).

ecstasy of religious worship.”<sup>300</sup> During fieldwork, this hardness of life and ecstasy of religious worship Long described was sensed.

The 2013 celebrations were tainted with several crimes on the first day: two murders, two stabbings, and a domestic violence incident. These crimes, while highly sensationalized in the media, were isolated family disputes. The mayor of the city threatened to cancel the remaining festivities but was unable to because the municipality lacked the power to terminate the previously arranged musical events scheduled for each night of the celebration. The mayor, unable to cancel the remaining celebration events, nevertheless, issued a warning of zero tolerance for violence.<sup>301</sup>

The *Vejigantes* were originally the representation of the Moors in Spain. To the Spanish, the Moors were the infidel, perverse others. In the context of Loíza, the Moors become the blacks and the marginalized, colonized other. In the particular manifestation of Loíza, the dismal is black. In other towns on the island, such as Hatillo or Ponce, these less pompous *Vejigantes* character’s masks come out at carnival time. There, the masks used for the *Vejigantes* are not made of coconut but rather papier-mâché. Nevertheless, they probably represent the marginalized *jíbaro*,<sup>302</sup> the oppressed native of the island. Regardless of their differences in mask construction, they all share similar traits and are the character embraced by the celebrants. Their costumes are extremely colorful and

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<sup>300</sup> Charles H. Long. *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. P. 178.

<sup>301</sup> “Apunto de Cancelar las Fiestas de Loíza por la Ola Criminal.” *El Nuevo Día* [San Juan, PR] 26 July 2013. Web. 26 July 2013.

<sup>302</sup> The word *jíbaro* is possibly derived from the Arabic *jabr-* (جبر) to mean people of the mountains or peasant.

peculiar. They have devil-horns and bat wings. They used to carry an animal bladder attached to a stick which they used to playfully strike the spectators. Today, they no longer carry this bladder. In fact, the name *Vejigantes*<sup>303</sup> means a giant bladder in Spanish. A brochure from the municipality of Loíza, in introducing the *Vejigantes* character's masks explains:

En contraposición de los caballeros están los *Vejigantes*. Tradicionalmente representan el mal, al Diablo y a los moros que el Apóstol Santiago y los caballeros españoles combatieron, respectivamente.<sup>304</sup> (In opposition to the knights, there are the *Vejigantes*. Traditionally, they represent the bad, the Devil, and the Moors that St. James and the Spaniard Knights combated, respectively.)

Contrary to what legend and folklore want to impose on these evil-others, they are actually not negative delineations. The *Vejigantes* in today's celebrations in Loíza do not represent evil.<sup>305</sup> An elderly Loíza man succinctly elucidated: "The *Vejigantes* is supposed to be the evil Muslim, yet here in Loíza we treat him as the king." Another man observed that it is ironic that the brochure for the Feast of St. James festivities employed

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<sup>303</sup> In his book *Don Quixote*, Cervantes mentions street festival characters called *bojigangas* who bear similarities with the *Vejigantes* as they also represented little devils that scared children with their animal bladders on a stick.

<sup>304</sup> "Información de los disfraces de las Fiestas Tradicionales." *Municipio de Loíza*. 2013. Web. 8 Aug. 2013.

<sup>305</sup> "The *Vejigantes* are the counterpart of the *caballeros* and represent evil, the devil, the Moors whom St. James the Apostle and the *caballeros* combat." Ricardo E. Alegría. "The Fiesta of Santiago Apóstol (St. James the Apostle) in Loíza, Puerto Rico." *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 69, no. 272 (Apr.-June, 1956). P. 130.

a drawing of a *Vejigantes* instead of a depiction of St. James. This proves that the *Vejigantes* takes precedence in Loíza, he reasoned.

When Alegría first introduced the celebrations to the generic public, he addressed these *Vejigantes* as the epitome of evil, paganism, and all that is anti-Christian. That original delineation of the *Vejigantes* was accepted by most people, some who even today, continue to describe them using Alegría's conceptualization. Today's reading of *Vejigantes* is clearly not an evil, pagan, anti-Christian embodiment. As a matter of fact, the residents of Loíza have embraced the *Vejigantes* as their representation, but this amiable acceptance is broader. Puerto Rico as a whole has embraced it.

For example, in the Miss Universe pageant of 2011, which took place in Brazil, Viviana Ortíz Pastrana, Miss Puerto Rico 2011, represented the island with a native costume of *Vejigantes* to symbolize the island. The *Vejigantes* icon, as material culture, is embraced and used to proudly represent Puerto Rico. This is symbolically germane because it assumes a benign meaning to the character's mask, rather than the old-worn cliché that the *Vejigantes* represents evil, the infidel, or Muslims. It is doubtful that if these pejorative meanings are presently given to the *Vejigantes*, the pageant promoters would have chosen such a negative symbol to represent a beauty queen that aspires to win the contest at the same time she exalts her country by wearing a native costume. The pageant organizers explained: "We were so excited to collaborate on this project, because as a Puerto Rican company we want to support the ethnic richness of our culture, and the

figure of the *Vejigante[s]* has such an abundant rich and picturesque lore, its very presence reflects our complexity as Antillians."<sup>306</sup>

In the film *Nenen de la Ruta Mora* (1955), an elderly black woman hassles Nenen, the child protagonist of the film with *el Cuco*. *El Cuco* is the bogeyman and is embodied in the evil, horned, *Vejigantes*-like character that runs after the children. Throughout the film, the children are harassed by this *Vejigantes*. In Puerto Rico, a popular children's nursery song warns: "Duérmete nene, duérmete ya, que el Cuco viene y te comerá." (Sleep baby, sleep now, otherwise the Bogeyman will come to eat you up.) In popular Spanish culture, the *Cuco* is depicted as a dark-skinned, decrepit, old man that carries a sack on a stick over his shoulder and snatches children away. His sack on a stick is very similar to the bladder on a stick carried by *Vejigantes*. The etymology of the word *cuco*<sup>307</sup> can be traced to coconut as explained by Corominas. The word dates to India in the 1500s when the Portuguese used the word to describe its "scary masks made out of coconut to scare off children."<sup>308</sup> This definition is uncannily similar to *Vejigantes* character's masks made out of coconut and used strictly to scare children. Whether the masks were made of coconut because of the abundance of such tropical fruit in Loíza, or

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<sup>306</sup> "Forever Crystals Adds Sparkles of Light and Color to the Folkloric Attire of Miss Universe Puerto Rico. More than 6,000 Swarovski Crystals to Bedeck the Traditional Garb of a *Vejigante[s]*." *Puerto Rico Newswire*. 11 Aug. 2011. Web. 15 Oct. 2013.

<sup>307</sup> The term *Cuco* can possibly be attributed to the Bantu and their word *coco*. "Coco is a term that travels from Bantu languages, which covers the fearsome, from the fierce beasts, the flying birds, the extraordinary and powerful insects, the clinging arm, and the strong claw, to the ghost which imagination creates." "It all started in Madrid." By Octavio di Leo, chapter 3 of *Cuban Counterpoints: The Legacy of Fernando Ortíz*. Edited by Mauricio A. Font and Alfonso W. Quiróz. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2005. P. 47.

<sup>308</sup> Juan Corominas. *Breve Diccionario Etimológico de la Lengua Castellana*. Editorial Gredos, Tercera Edición. 1973.

they were made of coconut to symbolize the *Cuco* that haunts little children, the *Vejigantes* coconut masks became the *Cuco*, or bogeyman, an extremely significant material culture image. In Spain, there is a folkloric character called Cucuy, an evil, monster-like entity according to Xavier Garza<sup>309</sup> (2004). Author Webster in his book *Andalus Unlocking the Secrets of Moorish Spain* explains that Spanish children are often haunted by the “*moro Musa*” (Musa the Moor).<sup>310</sup>

Interviews conducted in July 2013 corroborated that a *Vejigantes* is the bogeyman. However, an elderly woman explained that children today “are born knowing” so they no longer fear *Vejigantes* as a bogeyman. In the film *Nenen de la Ruta Mora*, the black little boys are to find *Cumbé el de los cocales* (the *Vejigantes* character of the coconut grove) among the high weeds. If they succeed, St. James will reward them with *almojábanas*<sup>311</sup> and *ajonjolí*.<sup>312</sup> On a side note, the word *almojábana* in Puerto Rico has kept the name intact from Andalusian Arabic and the mere fact that the word is the same implies that these pastries date back to Muslim Spain. These pastries are a delicacy among the residents of Loíza, and the *ajonjolí* (sesame seed) candy is also considered a delicacy among Arabs and Puerto Ricans as well.

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<sup>309</sup> Xavier Garza. *Creepy Creatures and Other Cucuys*. Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2004. P. 1.

<sup>310</sup> Jason Webster. *Andalus. Unlocking the Secrets of Moorish Spain*. London: Transworld Publishers, 2004. P. 35.

<sup>311</sup> *Almujábbana* in Arabic is a Muslim Spain cheese pastry made with cheese. Federico Corriente. *Diccionario de Arabismos y Voces Afines en Iberorromance*. Madrid: Editorial Gredos, S.A., 2003. P. 200.

<sup>312</sup> *Juljulin* in Andalusian Arabic is sesame seed. Federico Corriente. *Diccionario de Arabismos y Voces Afines en Iberorromance*. Madrid: Editorial Gredos, S.A., 2003. P. 105.

Authentic *Vejigantes* character's masks in Loíza are made from coconuts. The Yoruban legend of the coconut (*obi*) related by González-Wippler, told how the coconut used to be a righteous, beloved, white deity who was driven by pride to reject others of lower status. As a punishment, the coconut was made to carry the color black as a symbol of evil. He was also punished to fall from the palm tree and be at the mercy of people to pick him up from the ground.<sup>313</sup>

Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol are a remnant of a cultural and religious celebration influenced by several world traditions. Méndez Santos retold that Silvia del Villard, a famous Puerto Rican artist, attributed the *Vejigantes*' character in the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol to African traditions. Her reading of the *Vejigantes* is likely the most accurate regarding this character's provenance. She assured the reader:

El Vejigante[s] nos llega a través de los esclavos africanos. Ellos trajeron consigo su cultura, y el vejigante[s] representa el brujo de la tribu, el espíritu de lo desconocido, lo temible y lo altamente respetado. El personaje que inicia a los varones entre los 9 y 12 años de edad en la hombría. El que se encarga de la ceremonia de la circuncisión, que en

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<sup>313</sup> “Pero Olofi se rehusó perdonar la ofensa y lo condenó a caerse del árbol de palma y rodar sobre el suelo a la misericordia de cualquiera que quisiera ayudarlo a levantarlo. El también cambió el color de Obi y, aunque su parte interior permaneció blanca, su concha se puso negra y su corteza exterior verde. El color negro simboliza el pecado del orgullo y la arrogancia de Obi y el color verde simboliza la esperanza de que algún día Obi cambiaría su manera de ser y se convertiría en puro de nuevo. Olofi también condenó a Obi a predecir el futuro. El coco seco es llamado *obi gui gui*. De esta leyenda surge la tradición de colocar un coco seco a los pies de la imagen de Elegguá.” (But Olofi refused to pardon the offense and condemned him to fall from the palm tree and to roll on the ground at the mercy of anyone who wanted to help him by picking him up from the ground. He also changed Obi's color, and even though his interior remained white, the shell became black and the outside skin green. The black color symbolizes the sin of pride and Obi's arrogance, and the green color symbolizes hope that one-day Obi will change his ways and would return to be a pure being. Olofi also condemned Obi to tell the future. A dried coconut is called *obi gui gui*. From this legend derives the tradition of placing a dried coconut at the feet of Elegguá.) Mígene González-Wippler. *Santería: la Religión*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Español, 1999. P. 112.



África es tan importante y complicada.<sup>314</sup> (*Vejigantes* came to us through the enslaved Africans. They brought with them their culture, and the *Vejigantes* represents the witch of their tribe, the spirit of the unknown, of fear, and that which is highly respected. The character initiates boys 9 to 12 years old into manhood. He is the one in charge of the circumcision rituals that are very important and complicated in Africa.)

These are not mere carnival celebrations as some scholars reasoned. Religion in the context of Christianity is supposed to be the primary significance of these celebrations. Rosary *novenas*<sup>315</sup> (rosaries prayed by the community for nine consecutive days) and special masses, as well as vows or promises are important parts of Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol. The St. James statue has many small silver charms at the pedestal that represent parts of the body the saint has healed in someone. These people come back to repay the favor by bringing these body part charms called *milagritos*.<sup>316</sup> Also, some people walked the processions barefooted as a vow or promise.

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<sup>314</sup> Carlos Méndez Santos. *Por Tierras de Loíza Aldea- Fiesta de Santiago- Loíza Aldea- Estudio de Antropología Cultural*. Ponce: Producciones Ceiba, 1973. P. 35.

<sup>315</sup> “Las novenas constituyen una costumbre de la religiosidad popular de la comunidad que las organiza a cada una de los Santos. Con ellas se da el verdadero inicio de las Fiestas en Honor a Santiago Apóstol.” (The *novenas* are a popular religious custom of the community which organizes them for each one of the Saints. With these [*novenas*] the true commencement of the Feasts in honor to St. James is accomplished.) *Novenas & Procesiones Fiestas en Honor a Santiago Apóstol*. (Programita) Centro Cultural Loíza, Inc. Promoción Cultural: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (undated, but possibly 2011) P. 2.

<sup>316</sup> “These are the *milagritos* or ‘little miracles,’ miniature charms depicting parts of the body such as the heart, hands, and legs. Placed at the shrine that is considered to have miraculous power, they are attached to the clothing of the saint’s statue responsible for the miracle. A similar custom was practiced in the ancient Mediterranean world, particularly among the Greeks who placed charms at the shrines of healing.” Ana María Pineda. “Imágenes de Dios en el Camino: Retablos, Ex-Votos, Milagritos, and Murals.” *Theological Studies* 65 (2004), P. 368.

The icons of St. James Apostle take priority among the religious community in the celebrations as they are paraded through the streets. The secular aspect is incorporated with people dressed as knights, *Vejigantes*, old men, and crazy women. African-originated dance and song permeates the festivity. Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol is a form of nonthreatening dissent through accommodation and dissimulation. This idea is best conceptualized from the Kongoleses' point of view crisply explained by author Tshilemalema Mukenge (2002), which parallels the actions of the people in Loíza during the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol: "In Kongo villages, during the colonial regime, songs of discontent toward the colonial authority contained coded messages inviting the population to secret locations (*ku nenga*), where they exposed and debated the causes of discontent and strategies for dealing with it."<sup>317</sup>

One ponders if these Kongoleses' enunciations relate to the *bomba* and *plena* so characteristic on the island of Puerto Rico and believed to be a legacy of the enslaved ancestry.

The Catholic Church's role in the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol is not only about keeping the Christian/Catholic faith viable, but also in promoting tradition and cultural values within the people from Loíza. Most importantly, the church helps people build self-esteem. Overall, the church also takes pride in the unique amalgamation and syncretism in which people are able to meld together without conflict. Alternatively, the Protestant Church's role in the celebration is one of disapproval. Many devout Catholics

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<sup>317</sup> Tshilemalema Mukenge. *Culture and Customs of the Congo*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002. P. 167.

also deem the celebrations as a syncretic-mix bordering on witchcraft.<sup>318</sup> LaRuffa commented on witchcraft: “Witchcraft continues to have an important influence on the lives of a substantial number of Ciprianeros.”<sup>319</sup>

Henrietta Yurchenco, in 1967, interviewed the local priest in Loíza and he made it clear that the celebrations are a *mélange* of the sacred and the profane:

The Spanish-born local priest sees the fiesta another way: “Loizans,” he says, “are half-Christian, half pagan. The Santiago festival is a carnival, not a religious celebration. It is an excuse for them to drink and dance and have a good time. Of course, I say Mass the opening day of the fiesta. Many priests in Puerto Rico close church doors during fiesta time, but I don’t think that’s right.”<sup>320</sup>

The church realizes that the practitioners are not always practicing true Catholicism and that they were syncretizing, and at times, opting to eliminate certain church-mandated festivities:

Apparently, these forms of religious merriment facilitated the inclusion of other than church-approved devotions (or, as often stated in ecclesiastical records, “less than purely Catholic forms of veneration”) in the lives of the people. Interestingly, this concern still haunts the church today. Several

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<sup>318</sup> “The Protestant Church is the only entity against the celebrations because they see them as witchcraft.” (This statement was compiled during fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in July 2013).

<sup>319</sup> Anthony L. LaRuffa. *San Cipriano Life in Puerto Rican Community*. NY: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1971. P. 82.

<sup>320</sup> Henrietta Yurchenco. “The Fiesta of Santiago in Loíza Aldea, Puerto Rico: A Caribbean Version of a 13th Century Spanish Pageant.” *Sonneck Society for American Music Bulletin*, Volume XXIV, no. 3 (Fall 1998) P. 4.

*loiceños* (inhabitants of Loíza) told me that the local celebrations of Santiago Apóstol (Saint James the Apostle), which include *Diablitos*, also called *Vejigantes* (people masquerading as devils), have changed over the years due to restrictions imposed by the church.<sup>321</sup>

Multiple *loiceños* asserted that the Catholic Church<sup>322</sup> is in agreement with the festivities, yet once in a while a priest appears that detests the celebrations, especially when elements such as the transvestites (*las locas*) are incorporated.

During fieldwork, I walked the parade with the community and observed a Catholic nun dressed in a habit parading with the people, at times clapping and dancing to the beat of the secular African music. People in Loíza stated that the festivity embraced all creeds except for the Pentecostal: “No one is opposed to Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol except for the Charismatic Christians. Not only do they believe the celebrants are doing evil things, but the Pentecostals fast and pray during the celebrations for a peaceful completion.”<sup>323</sup> Ironically, Pentecostalism in Puerto Rico embraces rituals that are uncannily similar to those practiced in Santería - dancing, shouting, possessions, and glossolalia (speaking in tongues). Samuel Cruz (2005) observed: “Condemnations and

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<sup>321</sup> Raquel Romberg. *Witchcraft and Welfare: Spiritual Capital and the Business of Magic in Modern Puerto Rico*. Austin: University of Texas, 2003. P. 44.

<sup>322</sup> “The priest loves to wait for the colorful masks that accompany the saint on his way to the church. No one is banned from participating. This celebration is more Catholics against Christians [Protestants].” (This statement was compiled during fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in July 2013).

<sup>323</sup> This statement was compiled during fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in July 2013.

denial of religious practices that are part of Afro-Caribbean religiosity are frequently espoused in Puerto Rico Pentecostal worship services.”<sup>324</sup> And he added:

Despite such negative assertions, my fieldwork experiences have demonstrated an incongruity between such statements and the actual practices among Puerto Rican Pentecostals. ...I have continuously witnessed manifestations of Afro-Caribbean religious practices in Puerto Rican Pentecostal churches. Spirit possession, divination, healing, shouting, dancing, and exorcism are common occurrences in the churches I attended within the tri-state area.<sup>325</sup>

During the days of the celebrations, these Protestant Christians fasted and prayed for a happy dénouement of the celebrations. During the height of the celebrations, a poster announcing an activity by the Protestant Church was offered as an alternative to the St. James celebrations. The poster read:

Liberación para Loíza, cancha del residencial Yuquiyú de Loíza

7:00pm Sáb 27 Julio 2013

Pastor Evangelista José Negrón y Evangelista Efraín Pizarro

(Liberation for Loíza, Basketball Court at Loíza’s Yuquiyú public housing

7:00pm Sat 27 July 2013

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<sup>324</sup> Samuel Cruz. *Masked Africanisms- Puerto Rican Pentecostalism*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2005. P. ix.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*

Evangelist Pastor José Negrón and Evangelist Efraín Pizarro)

The narrator of the film *Nenen de la Ruta Mora* tells the viewer that Spain gave Loíza St. James and its religiosity; Africa gave Loíza the *bomba*, the *baquiné*, and the *Vejigantes*. Native Taínos<sup>326</sup> were not mentioned. Islam was not brought up either. During fieldwork in Loíza (July 2013), no one ever mentioned the legacy of neither Taínos nor Muslims in Loíza.

When people of diverse ethnic or religious backgrounds are put together and forced to coexist, they often recur to syncretism and accommodation through adapting the things already familiar to them to the new things being introduced to them. Variances can be overcome by compromising. Nevertheless, many times variations would cause the celebrations to turn into secular merriments shunned by the authorities:

Three centuries ago vernacular forms of celebrating the feast days of Corpus Christi and St. James Apostle were also seen as dangerous. In 1686, for example, the bishop of Puerto Rico, Don Fray Francisco Padilla, prohibited on those two feast days what then was called “La danza de los mulatos” (the Dance of the Mulattoes) and ordered the priest not to give his sermon because he had failed to submit it to the censors ahead of time (Murga and Hueriga 1989:202-203).<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> Scholar Zaragoza, as previously mentioned, hints a Taíno influence in the Fiestas. See: Edward C Zaragoza. St. James in the Streets. *The Religious Processions of Loíza Aldea, Puerto Rico*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1995. P. 2.

<sup>327</sup> Raquel Romberg. *Witchcraft and Welfare: Spiritual Capital and the Business of Magic in Modern Puerto Rico*. Austin: University of Texas, 2003. P. 44.

Today, descendants of enslaved Africans in Loíza still believe that celebrations such as Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol allow the participants to get a respite from hard work and it is a special way to socialize. It was, in the past, also a way to spread the message of revolution among participants, especially through *bomba* music. The Fiestas are also a means to be free. As scholar Long expounded: “Those who have lived in the cultures of the oppressed know something about freedom that the oppressors will never know.”<sup>328</sup>

As we have seen in this section, Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Loíza, Puerto Rico, an inherited religious and cultural tradition, takes a different expression in Puerto Rico. In particular, they are not a dichotomy between good and evil/Christianity and Islam. Most importantly, the [Muslim evil] *Vejigantes* is embraced by the people that celebrate. A comment compiled during fieldwork cleverly encapsulates this idea: “Ironically, one has been indoctrinated to believe that the Spaniard mask represents good and the *Vejigantes* evil. This is not a cosmic battle of good against evil or Christians versus Muslims.”<sup>329</sup> The implications of such a comment is that Puerto Rico has a different take on the Muslim character of the fiestas. They do not perceive him as an enemy of Christianity but as someone to be embraced and celebrated. This is, after all, the character people chose to embrace and it even has become a national symbol of the island. Contrariwise, in Spain and other locales that celebrate the fiestas, such as Mexico, the Muslim character is defeated, converted to Christianity, and in some instances either decapitated (in Mexico), or thrown in the water (Spain). This different reading of the

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<sup>328</sup> Charles H. Long. *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. P. 196.

<sup>329</sup> This statement was compiled during fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in July 2013.

fiestas is thoroughly documented with the help of the many diverse comments I received during fieldwork. The most salient observations follow.

Fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in July 2013 produced the following observations:

- A majority of celebrants are unaware of a Moor being trampled under St. James' horse.
- The residents of Loíza have been stigmatized by outsiders.
- The celebration serves as a social event that bonds the community together.
- Many partakers expounded: "This is good against evil."
- Loíza's isolation helped preserve its cultural tradition.
- When speaking of other religions besides Catholicism, people were intimidated, especially when addressing Santería and Spiritism.
- Loíza prides itself on being the capital of tradition (but still needs its historical information to be properly documented).
- St. James celebrations come from a core root, but in Loíza, each person has their own version.
- There is plurality in the meaning of the celebration with each person having their own interpretation.
- This is not a cosmic battle of good against evil or Christians versus Muslims.
- It is an inclusive celebration except for the Pentecostals.



- The local media gave no constructive attention to the celebrations (no advertisement for the event and no after-event report appeared in the newspaper). Only a few bad news crimes perpetrated during the celebrations were reported by the local newspaper.
- Two recurring complaints were that the tradition is being lost among newer generations and the people of Loíza want to own the celebration.

Other comments included:

- “Ironically, one has been indoctrinated to believe that the Spaniard mask represents good and the *Vejigantes* evil.”
- “No one is opposed to *Vejigantes* celebrations except for the Charismatic Christians. Not only do they believe the celebrants are doing evil things, but the Pentecostals fast and pray during the celebrations for a peaceful completion.”
- “It is more a matter of self-esteem.”
- “We must speak to our children about these celebrations and be proud of our culture. Young people see them as mere folklore or antiquated celebrations.”
- “Our culture is being lost.”
- “These celebrations are not gaining new enthusiasts. They used to, but we need a new mayor. He limits the traditional feasts and that is incorrect. The feasts belong to the people and they should not be framed by political agendas.”

- “I did not see a Muslim crushed by St. James; how horrendous!”

The overall observations of the fiestas by the partakers led to the conclusion that in Puerto Rico, Matamoros (Moor Slayer) becomes merely an Apóstol (Apostle) which is his original state. This aligns with Long’s observation in his book *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*:

The oppressive element in the religions of the oppressed is the negation of the image of the oppressor and the discovery of the first creation. It is thus the negation that is found in community and seeks its expression in more authentic forms of community, those forms of commonality which are based upon the first creation; the original authenticity of all persons which precedes the master-slave dichotomy. There is thus a primordial structure to this consciousness, for in seeking a new beginning in the future, it must, perforce imagine an original beginning.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Charles H. Long. *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. P.170.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

In 1492, Spain battled and defeated the Moors who had continuously inhabited Spain since 711. Spain originally agreed to allow the Muslims to remain and practice their Islamic faith, but the treaty was subsequently forfeited. The Muslims were exiled in masses from 1609 to 1614. Zealous Christians imposed a rigorous plan based on *pureza de sangre* or blood cleansing. This entailed one Spain united by three common threads: one religion (Catholicism), one language (Spanish), and one race (Spaniards). The remaining Muslims were deemed too odd to become good Christians, as the common proverb states: *moro viejo mal cristiano*. (an old Moor [Muslim] is a bad Christian). Racial, cultural, and religious intolerance on the part of Spain led to a form of purging in which Muslims were eliminated through forced exile.

Recently, Spain has made efforts to amend the atrocities of forced exile and announced that immigration procedures for descendants of Muslims and Jewish from Muslim Spain were being facilitated in order to demonstrate goodwill. However, Spain continues to stress the dichotomy by celebrating the Moor and Christian festivities which emphasize the defeat of the infidel Muslims at the hands of the Christians, who were aided by St. James, the Moor Slayer. Accordingly, Spain keeps a strong stance regarding their former enemy, the invader Muslim.

In any case, many of the people exiled from Spain during the 1600s ended up in the New World as explorers, adventurers, and in some instances, as enslaved newcomers. Originally, enslavement was based solely on religious differences rather than racial differences. The demise of Muslims in Spain implied a gain to the new locales that

received these newcomers. Spain's forfeiture became a strength in the New World as these Muslims (mostly people from Andalusia and Canary Islands in Puerto Rico) were significant enough to leave an imprint and legacy as this dissertation argued. Although it is hard to ascertain the exact number of enslaved Africans of Muslim backgrounds, it is also certain that they too were significant enough to also leave an imprint and legacy. Islam as a religion did not survive in the New World, but many remnants still exist. Enslaved people with Fulani, Mandingo, and Wolof backgrounds brought Islam with them but eventually their Islamic practices did not endure. Instead, they found a way to syncretize or merge with other local practices and the emergence of new religious and cultural expressions occurred. After all, the Catholicism that thrived in Spain at the time of the 1492 Muslim defeat was already deemed a "folk" Catholicism due to its constant mingling with Judaism and Islam.

Cultural manifestations and literature were areas that left a stronger legacy in Spain because they were already ingrained within the fabric of Muslim Spain for almost 800 years. For example, during the Muslim sojourn, the language of intellectuals was Arabic, rather than vulgar Latin. The Hebrew language was also prevalent among scholars in Medieval Muslim Spain. The Arabic language also left a deep legacy on the Spanish language because of the 800 years of constant interaction with the not-yet Spanish language (vulgar Latin). This Arabic-infused Spanish language was the one brought to the New World by the colonizers. This is a mere twist of destiny, because Columbus was actually Italian but he claimed the newly found lands under the Spanish crown, since it was Spain who sponsored and financed his voyages.

Literature was an excellent vehicle for Spaniards to portray the Muslims that were leaving the country because of their unsurmountable differences. Many vestiges of these literature representations still exist today in children's songs, games, and proverbs relating to Moors. But harsh narratives do not appear to be emphasized within the Puerto Rican literature that contains remnants of Muslim Spain, perhaps because the island never experienced the Moor or Muslim as an enemy. During fieldwork, when I inquired about Muslims on the island, I was told that Muslims were good people that lived tranquil lives within their communities. In contrast, Spaniard children are still haunted by the Moorish bogeyman. A Canadian newspaper explained: "The bogeyman who terrifies Spanish children has always been *el moro*-the black-faced Moor with a scimitar who first arrived in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century and was finally chased out 700 years later in 1492."<sup>331</sup> It is interesting to observe that during fieldwork, some people told me that the *Vejigantes* (Muslim) character is the bogeyman but children are no longer scared of him because "they are born knowing."<sup>332</sup>

Particularly interesting was the fact that many people celebrating the Moor and Christian festivities in Puerto Rico did not perceive duality or conflict among the two constituencies. Furthermore, many of the proverbs used on the island do not stress an inferiority discourse. For example, *moros y cristianos* is the name given to a dish of white rice with black beans. The name of the dish does not stress the opposition, but rather the perfect match for a white rice dish with black beans. Also, while St. James is known and

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<sup>331</sup> Tim Mc Girk. "El Moro's still Haunts Spaniards." *The Toronto Star* [Toronto, Canada] 22 July 1990. P. H2.

<sup>332</sup> This statement was compiled during fieldwork in Loíza, Puerto Rico in July 2013.

depicted as a Moor Slayer because he is trampling a Moor with his horse, in Puerto Rico he is simply known as Santiago (St. James), and not as Matamoros (Moor Slayer).

Regardless of the derogatory implications given to Moors/Muslims, they nevertheless, introduced agricultural advancements such as water irrigation systems and the crops of sugar, to the New World. Architecture is also visibly influenced by Moorish-Islamic style. Courtyards, balconies, and the prevalent *azulejos* (Moorish-style tiles) are very prevalent in Latin America, to include Puerto Rico. Also, many words in Spanish are of Arabic provenance, i.e. *aceite* (oil), *aceituna* (olives), and *azúcar* (sugar).

Three very significant findings of this dissertation merit further consideration: the *figa* hand, the *al alimón* game, and the *¡Ay, lelolai - lelolai!* expression. First of all, Islamic scholar Diouf's daring suggestion is that the five fingers on the hand imply the five pillars of Islam and the five holy people of Islam. Secondly, philologist Corriente relates the children's game phrase *al alimón* to the Arabic phrase "*Allah la yimun*" (May God not reproach it). As he explained, this phrase was used by acrobats because, according to Islamic law, such risky endeavors for mere diversion were not permitted by orthodox Islam, and thus, the performers asked for God's help when carrying out such dangerous performances. Thirdly, the *¡Ay, lelolai - lelolai!* expression so ingrained within Puerto Rican culture is possibly associated with the Muslim proclamation of faith, *La illaha illa-llah* (there is no God but God), according to scholars Webster and Corriente. In Islam, a person becomes a Muslim by enunciating this proclamation of faith in the presence of a witness. Would that imply that unknowingly, people were Muslims and they did not even know it? Perhaps yes if it would not have been for another element that is lacking, the knowledge of having done so. Obviously, even if this is related but

people did not know it, it would not meet the requirement to become a true Muslim conversion!

Truly, the legacy of Muslim Spain still reverberates in what was the New World. It is immense but often hidden within the culture to the point that it almost goes unnoticeable. The preservation of customs and traditions as inculcated by the people who originally brought these remnants within themselves is profound in Puerto Rico. Today that preservation of culture is clear in Loíza, Puerto Rico. What is significant about this is that descendants of enslaved Africans have been able to continue for centuries with a tradition replicating the original celebrations. The isolation Loíza suffers has helped to preserve a long-standing tradition. They have also been able to gain some sort of meaning and humanity by being proud of their enslaved African ancestry and have done so by keeping tradition alive. In fact, many people from the Puerto Rican diaspora flock to the island to celebrate St. James. The festival even dedicates its first day to them, the *loiceños ausentes*. Also, many diaspora Puerto Ricans have been able to duplicate, at a much smaller-scale, the St. James celebrations in locales such as New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and New Jersey, cities with large Puerto Rican immigrants. St. James has remained within the collective memories of many people. St. James in the Puerto Rican diaspora is a thought-provoking open area for further scholarship.

What is also significant about this is that the people continue to celebrate the tradition and pass it on to their children. As long as the tradition continues to be taught and celebrated with the younger generations, it will continue to thrive and expand. Some people during fieldwork asserted that the tradition was being weakened by younger generations who pursued other avenues of music, for example urban hip-hop versus

*bomba*. This can be balanced by the fact that many children are being taught to play and dance *bomba* music at a young age. These children will continue the tradition. Also, city ordinances prohibit the introduction of foreign material culture to the celebrations such as Halloween masks, which were allowed at one point around the 1980s in Loíza. Today, the only characters allowed in the Loíza festivities are the material culture which represent St. James, the *Vejigantes* (Moor) character, the Spaniard *caballero* (Spanish knight), the *viejos* (old men), and *locas* (crazy-women, cross-dressers). Regardless of the steps that are being taken to preserve the tradition, many people expressed the tradition is alive and thriving but it needs to be documented.

As a cultural and religious studies scholar with a concentration in Islam in global context, I wanted to know if there is a legacy of Islam on the island, and if so, how is it manifested. Most importantly, I specifically chose to work the fiestas due to their significant religious component. I was mesmerized by the supple syncretism that understood St. James not just as a monolithic representation. I now understand syncretism as blurred delineations when it comes to diverse people's worldviews. It was clear to me during fieldwork that some Catholic celebrants were borderline practitioners of Santería, for example. Also, I was interested on how Santería and Islam crossed paths, if at all, as a follow-up project for further research.

During my sojourn on the island I was able to perceive remnants of Islamic Spain within a culture that supposedly had no access to Islam. It became obvious to me that while a Muslim presence in Puerto Rico is a difficult task to prove, one could sense remnants within the mannerism of the people, for example. People continue to do particular things because they have always done them that way. Their parents taught them



cultural mores that were carried down from their grandparents, and so forth. Many people do what they do without any idea as to why. For example, in Loíza, the Matamoros celebration has thrived for centuries, but many participants were at a loss regarding the presence of Moors/Muslims being crushed under the St. James statue that headed the church's altar. Also, the *Vejigantes* character is the one people embrace. As a matter of fact, the entire island embraces him as a tourist representation that symbolizes Puerto Rican-ness yet many ignore the Muslim provenance of the character at the St. James celebrations.

I was able to understand the lack of obvious Islamic influence because the people that brought Muslim remnants within their collective memories were quickly forced to put those aside as a requirement for a Christian conversion. In a hostile environment that only offered Christianity as a viable faith, many were able to use dissimulation as a coping tool. One could imagine what it would be like to attempt to even comply with one of the basic tenets of Islam, that of praying five times a day as this requires copious body movements (such as bending, kneeling, and touching the floor with your forehead) and other cleansing rituals and not just merely praying in silence. Or perhaps, trying to avoid eating pork products or drinking rum in a place like Puerto Rico, where pork is the preferred meat and rum is a common, inexpensive libation. Enslaved Africans were at the mercy of their masters as they had to profess Christianity as their religion and eat and drink whatever was given to them. Fortunately, Islam allows for accommodation and it is not demanding if the believer risks negative repercussions for attempting to practice Islam strictly. In fact, the Qur'an advocates no compulsion in Islam. It makes the religion easy for its followers. Markers of Islam as a religion would have been too difficult to find

because the people who professed it hid their true faith as they risked unacceptable consequences. Furthermore, enslaved Africans of Muslim backgrounds were stripped of their names and/or any references to their Muslim ancestries. They were vehemently baptized and given Christian names by their masters. The few instances in which I found documentation of these people were marked by surnames such as Infiel (infidel) and side notes that explained that these people were not buried within the confinements of the Christian cemetery. Also, at times I did find a few surnamed Mandingo, Fulani, Mina which gave a clear indication of an Islamic background.

Adding to this lack of visible Islamic markers, there are no archeological remains in Puerto Rico attesting to the presence of Islamic mosques at any given time of its history. There is no Arabic script in any written literature, no old Qur'ans, nor other literature that points toward an Islamic influence. Due to these less than favorable circumstances, I had to look for non-traditional ways to answer my research question.

Thus, as I embarked on this project, I sought to explore whether there were any Islamic influences specifically in Puerto Rico. In an effort to find out, I looked at the original three major contributors to Puerto Rican culture: colonizers, immigrants, and enslaved Africans. Each group came at a different interval and added layers of cultural and religious traditions to the already existing Taíno (native inhabitants) mores. I also looked at the Puerto Rican vernacular Spanish language, which included vocabulary, proverbs, songs, and games, and I detected a vivid Islamic imprint and legacy. I also observed a Puerto Rican celebration inherited from Muslim Spain which was the culminating point of this project. In Puerto Rico, this Muslim and Christian human experience of cultural and religious phenomena of conflict lacks the original

proselytizing lesson in which Christianity defeats Islam. Instead, the celebration in Puerto Rico highlights the *Vejigantes* character as material culture symbolizing the Muslims. This is significant because in other locales, such as Spain and Mexico, which celebrate this tradition differently, the ethnic make-up of the people differs from Puerto Rico's ethnic diversity. In Spain and Mexico, they highlight the adverse encounter of Christianity and Islam, as opposed to Puerto Rico, which embraces both world traditions.

In Puerto Rico, the celebration takes place strictly in Loíza, a small town located in the northeastern part of the island mostly inhabited by descendants of enslaved Africans. There were Muslims among the colonizers, immigrants, and enslaved Africans that came to this sugar-plantation town. Research of the local parish records attest to this multi-ethnicity presence in Loíza. The mixture and amalgamation of diverse ethnicities and cultures converged in Puerto Rico and created a unique individual...the Puerto Rican. All the constituents have richly contributed to the whole. Author Smith encapsulates this idea: "Each nation makes its own contribution to the world cultural treasury according to its particularities and richness of its talents and creative abilities."<sup>333</sup> Puerto Ricans have often been described as having *la mancha de plátano*, or the stain of the plantain<sup>334</sup> to define their uniqueness within the rest of Latin America and Caribbean due to their amalgamation of diverse ethnicities. Cultural manifestations such as language, dance, music and religious worldviews attest to this dynamic *mélange*.

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<sup>333</sup> Roger Smith. *Stories of Peoplehood: The Politics and Morals of Political Membership* (Contemporary Political Theory). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. P. 65.

<sup>334</sup> Puerto Ricans are usually associated with *la mancha del plátano* because plaintains are a staple food in Puerto Rico- they are usually eaten while green and are twice-fried- they are known *as tostones*. If eaten ripe, they are still fried (only once) and are known as *maduros* (ripped-ones) or *amarillos* (yellow ones). Peeling a green plaintain produces blood-like stains in the hands and clothing of the cook, thus *la mancha* (the stain).

Adaptation and accommodation have made it possible to create a Puerto Rican identity that includes rather than excludes. Everyone contributes to this medley, or *ajjaco* soup Cuban author Ortiz speaks of in his work. In Puerto Rico, a common saying summarizes this idea: *¿Y tu abuela dónde está?* to imply that no one is of one pure ethnicity but rather a *mélange* of all ethnicities that makes a Puerto Rican.

This celebration is also unique to Puerto Rico because many non-Muslim African enslaved came from Christian-majority areas such as Congo, as the parish records also prove. It is no coincidence that the St. James statue as material culture also existed in Congo, where he was used as a means to bring Christianity. In other words, the Congolese enslaved were familiar with St. James as a helper of the Christians, just as the tradition in Spain avowed. The implication is that it is feasible that St. James, as material culture, could have arrived to Loíza with the Congolese enslaved and/or concurrently with the Spanish colonizers and immigrants who were very familiar with this saint since Medieval times. In any case, Loíza embraced it as material culture but gave him a different denotation. It is well documented that the same material culture in the form of a Matamoros (the Moor Slayer) statue existed (and still exists) in Spain as a remnant of the Muslim Spain period. One must ask why there are some specific interpretations of the same material culture within large cultural groups of mixed backgrounds. Socio-cultural trends tend to certain propensities to help give material culture a localized meaning. The uniquely distinct expression of this celebration in Puerto Rico further supported my conclusion of a deeper positive connection and inheritance from Muslim Spain and West Africa to Puerto Rico.

In approaching this project, I used a methodology that leaned heavily on relativism, as the meaning of this celebration in Puerto Rico is filtered through a social platform although everyone has a diverse meaning for the celebrations. This encouraged me to also use a nominalist approach to understand the way people construct their own reality. Although everyone had a different interpretation of the celebration, they all suggested a deeper positive connection with the inheritance from Muslim Spain and West Africa. This is conceivable because Puerto Rico does not have a deep legacy of conflict with Islam as an adverse religious and cultural tradition, as opposed to Spain, in which Muslims were deemed invaders from 711 to the 1600's.

Theoretically-speaking, in his book *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*, Long is engaging because he speaks of cargo cults as a means for creating a sense of belonging and humanity for the oppressed. In Puerto Rico, this is exactly what *cofradías* or *hermandades*-sponsored events such as the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol and *baquinés* or black children funeral rites provided: an opportunity for blacks to gather and seek some validation as human beings. Mainstream society shunned these groups of stigmatized people so they often went underground. *Baquinés* perished but Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol survived and continue to thrive in Puerto Rico. This is very significant because the celebrations highlight a town that is often shunned by outsiders. In fact, many people in Loíza claimed their marginalization came from external sources.

Above all, this project is significant and it matters because insinuating a Muslim presence in Puerto Rico was a bold proposal. Author Singleton observed: “Despite an Islamic presence in the Western hemisphere for over half a millennium, the history of this

portion of the Muslim Diaspora is gravely under-researched.”<sup>335</sup> Islamic scholar Diouf also suggested: “A much-needed research in the retention of Islamic tenets and Arabic vocabulary will help form a broader as well as more detailed and comprehensive picture of the cultures of the African diaspora.”<sup>336</sup> The imprint and legacy of Islam in Puerto Rico is also a research area that is long overdue for serious scholarship. I have just begun to recognize this Islamic inheritance. With the understanding that there are limitations to this study mostly due to time constraints and the scarcity of records in Puerto Rico, I took the opportunity to investigate the Muslim diaspora’s contribution on the island of Puerto Rico. There are many opportunities for further research by other scholars interested in the subject matter. A specific area that merits further investigation is the extensive yet partly unexplored Arabic-Spanish vocabulary. This should be a fairly easy task to a scholar that has the language abilities to understand both Spanish and Arabic because common words become obvious as one studies one language having a grasp of the other language. For example, the word *cafre* to mean a low-life person and its roots from *kafir* or unbeliever in Arabic is an interesting etymology. Another area that has immense research potential regarding the Muslim diaspora’s contribution is in the *habitus* of the Puerto Rican people, since I only elaborated on a few areas such as modesty, hospitality, superstitions, etc.

The figa hand’s connection to the five pillars of Islam, the *iAy, lelolai - lelolai!* expression that insinuates the assertion of faith in Islam, and the God-willing utilization

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<sup>335</sup> Brent Singleton. “The *Ummah* Slowly Bled: A Select Bibliography of Enslaved African Muslims in the Americas and the Caribbean.” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 2002. P. 1.

<sup>336</sup> Sylviane A. Diouf. “*Sadaqa* among African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas.” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10 1 (1999), P. 22.

for future events are but a few subjects that beg to be expanded on by scholars investigating the imprint and legacy of Islam as it pertains to Puerto Rico. Even the Fiestas in Loíza deserve further investigation as they relate to the syncretic rendering and the Pentecostalism negative avowal. Lastly, a very significant research project would be the affinity of Islam to Santería as expressed to me during fieldwork. The idea was presented to me on the last day of my visit in Puerto Rico, but unfortunately my attempts to locate a *santero* who was apparently also a good Muslim were unsuccessful as I was unable to reach him for an interview. This affinity of Islam to Santería is my next research project. There is a gamut of possibilities for further research, as Islamic scholar Diouf reminds us: “Islam as brought by the West Africans has not survived in the Americas, but its impact has been deep and wide in a variety of ways.”<sup>337</sup> The Islamic impression has been a positive one, at least on the island of Puerto Rico, as this dissertation shows. This is why I chose *hay moros en la costa* as part of my dissertation title because I wanted to turn the harsh expression to actually impress the idea that, indeed, there are Moors on the coast, and that they left a deep legacy of positive effects that still resonate within the Puerto Rican fabric. Islam was a constructive energy in Puerto Rico.

My research suggests that no other scholar has worked the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol as well as Puerto Rican mannerisms and vocabulary through the lens of an Islamic imprint and legacy. Puerto Rican culture is not particularly known to have had any contact or access to Islam. This is where I wish to make my contribution, as many

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<sup>337</sup> Sylviane A. Diouf. “Sadaqa among African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas.” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10 1 (1999), P. 32.

have spoken and written about the fiestas but no scholar has acknowledged an Islamic element within the Puerto Rican culture. This is a long overdue recognition.

In sum, the main question this dissertation sought to answer was: Is there an Islamic influence in Puerto Rico, and if so, how is it manifested? Muslim remnants can be perceived and are manifested through the ingrained cultural *habitus* of the Puerto Ricans and material culture. Although these Islamic fragments may not be apparent to the casual observer, all research accomplished on the Muslim legacy in Puerto Rico suggests Islam is deeply rooted and even showcased within the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol. There are elements indicative of Muslim undertones within a culture that supposedly had no access to Islam. While this polyphony of voices may well be elements of cultural practices without any religious meaning, they nevertheless help redefine the Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Puerto Rico to embrace diversity and promote peaceful interaction.

Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol in Puerto Rico not only display remnants of cultural and religious practices influenced by several world traditions such as folk Catholicism, Santería, Espiritismo, and Islam, but embrace the depiction of the *Vejigantes* character which symbolizes the Muslim. As material culture, it even became a tourist symbol. The implications of these attest to a historically covert Muslim presence or at least a less biased conceptualization by the Puerto Rican people regarding Muslims. Unlike Medieval Spain, the religious, cultural, and political history of Puerto Rico does not suggest a deeper legacy of conflict that includes Islam as an adverse religious and cultural tradition. The historical cultural uniqueness of Puerto Ricans (Native Taínos, European immigrants, African) allow for a multi-faceted view of the celebrations as opposed to the standardized interpretations of the festivities in locales such as Spain and Mexico.



Relative to the African and Islamic influence, it also suggests a deeper positive connection and inheritance. The imprint and legacy of Muslim Spain and the Islamic heritage of West Africa in Puerto Rico is palpable and profound.

Today, the Muslim presence in Puerto Rico is more easily acknowledged and according to a December 2015 newspaper account, approximately 3,500 Muslims live on the island. The Muslim community in Puerto Rico has been recognized as the largest in the Caribbean.<sup>338</sup> Muslims on the island have and continue to thrive as Imam Zaid Abdelrahim observed: “Veo un futuro positivo para el Islam en Puerto Rico; un futuro de cooperación y hermandad.”<sup>339</sup> (I see a positive future for Islam in Puerto Rico; a future of cooperation and brotherhood.)

In dénouement, the broader significance of this dissertation’s findings is the conclusion that Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol celebrations create a space that demonstrates that the Spanish adage *hay moros en la costa* (there are Moors on the coast) to mean “the enemy is listening in” is not a pejorative expression, but an insinuation that within Puerto Rican cultural *habitus* manifestation, the legacy of the Muslim past is still reminiscent among the people.

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<sup>338</sup> “Comunidad Musulmana en Puerto Rico es la más Grande del Caribe.” *El Nuevo Día* [San Juan, PR] 7 Dec. 2015.

An article titled “Oración de Viernes en una Mezquita Puertorriqueña” describes a group of 60 Muslims-Palestinian Arabs, Puerto Ricans, and other nationalities arriving to a Mosque in San Juan to pray on Fridays. “Oración de Viernes en una Mezquita Puertorriqueña.” *El Nuevo Día* [San Juan, PR] 21 Sept. 2014.

More Hispanics are embracing Islam and many believe they are reverting back to the faith of their Muslim Spain ancestors. Others have embraced Islam as a result of multiracial marriages. For further readings, please refer to: “More Hispanics Embrace Islam.” *The Columbian* [Vancouver, WA] 17 June 2002 and Patrick D. Bowen. “U.S. Latina/o Muslims Since 1920: From ‘Moors’ to ‘Latino Muslims’.” *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 37, No. 2, June 2013.

<sup>339</sup> Imam Zaid Abdelrahim “Comunidad Musulmana en Puerto Rico es la más Grande del Caribe.” *El Nuevo Día* [San Juan, PR] 7 Dec. 2015.

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APPENDIX I

FIESTAS DE SANTIAGO APÓSTOL QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Por favor dígame cuanto tiempo ha usted participado en estas celebraciones y ¿en qué rol? [Please tell me how long have you participated in these celebrations and in what role?]
2. Por favor dígame que ha significado para usted personalmente el haber participado en estas celebraciones y ¿por qué? [Please tell me what has your participation in these celebrations meant to you and why?]
3. ¿Qué me puede usted decir sobre estas celebraciones? [What can you tell me about the celebrations?]
4. ¿Por qué esto importa? [Why does this matter?]
5. ¿Deben estas celebraciones perpetuarse en nombre de la tradición? ¿Por qué sí, por qué no? [Should these celebrations be perpetuated in the name of tradition? Why? Why not?]
6. ¿Deben ser alteradas o descontinuadas? [Should they be altered or discontinued?]
7. ¿Qué opina usted de los distintos participantes? ¿Y cuál es su favorito? ¿por qué? [What is your opinion of the different participants? Which one is your favorite? Why?]
8. La estatua de Santiago Matamoros es un religioso católico a caballo parado encima de un moro (árabe/musulmán) al que ha matado y subyugado. Su opinión: ¿Del Santiago Matamoros en general? [The statue of St. James the Moor Slayer is a Catholic religious person on a horse stepping on top of a Moor (Arab/Muslim) whom he has either killed or subjugated. What is your general opinion of St. James “The Moor-Slayer”?]
9. La estatua de Santiago Matamoros es un religioso católico a caballo parado encima de un moro (árabe/musulmán) al que ha matado y subyugado. Su opinión: ¿Se sabe en PR esto del moro o ese significado se ha perdido o no aplica a PR? [The statue of St. James the Moor Slayer is a Catholic religious person on a horse stepping on top of a Moor (Arab/Muslim) whom he has either killed or subjugated. In your opinion, do people in Puerto Rico know about the Moor or has this meaning been lost or is not applicable in Puerto Rico?]
10. Su opinión: ¿De los “caballeros españoles”? [What is your opinion of the “Spaniard Knights”?]
11. Su opinión: ¿Del Santiago de los Hombres? [What is your opinion of the “St. James of the Men”?]

12. Su opinión: ¿Del Santiago de las Mujeres? [What is your opinion of the “St. James of the Women”?]
13. Su opinión: ¿Del Santiago de los Niños? [What is your opinion of the “St. James of the Children”?]
14. Su opinión: ¿Del Santiago de los Negros: Quirindongo? [What is your opinion of the “St. James of the Blacks” Quirindongo?]
15. Su opinión: ¿Del Santiago de los Homosexuales: Pirindongo? [What is your opinion of the “St. James of the Homosexuals” Pirindongo?]
16. Su opinión: ¿De las “locas” travestís? [What is your opinion of the “Crazy Women” Transvestites?]
17. Su opinión: ¿De los viejos? [What is your opinion of the “Old Men”?]
18. Su opinión: ¿De los mantenedores que dan hospitalidad al santo? [What is your opinion of the “Saint Keepers” that offer hospitality to St. James?]
19. Su opinión: ¿De los feligreses católicos que llevan al santo? [What is your opinion of the Catholic followers that march in the parade with the Saints?]
20. Su opinión: ¿Del rol de la Iglesia Católica y su cura en la celebración? [What is your opinion of the role of the Catholic Church and the Priest in this celebration?]
21. Su opinión: ¿De los músicos y bailadores de bomba? [What is your opinion of the musicians and dancers of the bomba?]
22. Su opinión: ¿De los que hacen las máscaras y disfraces? [What is your opinion of the mask and costume makers?]
23. Su opinión: ¿De los “loiceños ausentes” que regresan a PR especialmente a participar? [What is your opinion of the “Absent natives from Loíza” who return to Puerto Rico specially to participate?]
24. Su opinión: ¿De los “turistas extranjeros” que vienen a “ver el show”? [What is your opinion of the “foreign tourists” that come to see the show?]
25. Su opinión: ¿De los vecinos de la comunidad que vienen a “compartir de las celebraciones”? [What is your opinion of the community neighbors that come to share in the celebrations?]
26. Su opinión: ¿Del rol de la alcaldía y gobierno municipal? [What is your opinion of the role of the Mayor’s office and the municipal government?]

27. Su opinión: ¿De la participación de policías y otro personal de seguridad? [What is your opinion of the participation of policemen and other security personnel?]
28. Su opinión: ¿De los “negociantes” que vienen aprovecharse para vender mercancía, comida, etc.? [What is your opinion of the business men/women that come to sell merchandise, food, etc.?]
29. Su opinión: ¿De otras gentes? Explíque. [What is your opinion of other people? Explain]
30. Si Santiago Matamoros representa xenophobia (odio por “el otro”)- ¿su imagen entonces debería ser transformada a lo que era antes, solo Santiago Apóstol? [If Santiago Matamoros embodies xenophobia, should his true image as only an apostle be reinstated?]
31. ¿Cómo podemos abrazar la coexistencia cuando le ponemos énfasis a las diferencias de “los otros” a través de tradiciones culturales y religiosas? [How can we embrace coexistence when we stress “otherness” through religious/cultural traditions?]
32. ¿Cómo ve usted la situación de Loíza en relación al resto de los pueblos de la isla? [How do you see Loíza’s situation in relation to the rest of the island’s cities and towns?]
33. ¿Cree usted que la gente de Loíza se encuentra marginalizada? [Do you believe that the people of Loíza are marginalized?]
34. Si es así, ¿Qué razón atribuye usted a la marginalización de Loíza? [If so, what is the reason you find for such marginalization?]
35. ¿Cree usted que las personas marginalizadas se ven ellos mismos de esa manera o cree usted que esas imposiciones y/o definiciones vienen de afuera? Explíque. [Do you believe that marginalized people see themselves as such or do you believe these impositions and/or definitions come from outsiders? Explain.]
36. ¿Existe prejuicio social en Puerto Rico referente a la orientación sexual? Explíque. [Is there social prejudice in Puerto Rico in reference to the sexual orientation of the person? Explain]
37. ¿Existe prejuicio social en Puerto Rico referente a la discapacidad de una persona? Explíque. [Is there social prejudice in Puerto Rico in reference to the disability of the person? Explain.]
38. ¿Existe prejuicio social en Puerto Rico referente a la orientación religiosa de una persona? Explíque. [Is there social prejudice in Puerto Rico in reference to the religious orientation of the person? Explain.]

39. ¿Existe prejuicio social en Puerto Rico referente al sexo: masculino versus femenino? Explique. [Is there social prejudice in Puerto Rico in reference to gender: masculine versus feminine? Explain.]
40. ¿Existe prejuicio social en Puerto Rico referente a la edad de la persona? Explique. [Is there social prejudice in Puerto Rico in reference to the age of a person? Explain.]
41. ¿Existe prejuicio social en Puerto Rico referente a la condición económica? Explique. [Is there social prejudice in Puerto Rico in reference to economic situation? Explain.]
42. ¿Hay problemas de crímenes y drogas en Puerto Rico? Explique. [Are there problems with criminality and drugs in Puerto Rico? Explain.]
43. ¿Es la situación de problemas de crímenes y drogas similar, más bajo o peor en Loíza en referencia al resto de la Isla? [Are the criminal and drug-related problems similar, lower, or worse in Loíza compared to the rest of the island?]
44. ¿A qué atribuye usted dicha similitud o desparejo? [What do you attribute this similarity or difference to?]
45. ¿Qué podemos aprender de estas celebraciones? [What can be learned from these celebrations?]
46. ¿Qué repercusiones (consecuencias) tienen las fiestas, por ejemplo, en música de bomba y tradición africana? [What repercussions (consequences) do these celebrations have, for example, in *bomba* music and African traditions?]
47. ¿Sería relevante (importaría) si en esta historia pudiéramos comprobar que las personas que la celebran vinieron de antecedentes musulmanes? [Would it be relevant if it can be proven that the people celebrants came from Muslim backgrounds?]
48. ¿Cree usted que puede que sea que la gente escondida “bajo anonimidad” de las máscaras estén creando “lo que de veras ellos mismos se sienten ser: “diablos” Vejigantes? [Can the people disguised “in their anonymity” of masks be creating “who they see themselves as” (evil) *Vejigantes*?]
49. ¿Por qué, en su opinión, en el siglo 21 tan “políticamente correcto” estas celebraciones que muestran a los musulmanes siendo vencidos por los cristianos, en honor a Santiago “Matamoros” no sólo continúan, sino que consiguen adquirir nuevos entusiastas a medida que pasa el tiempo en Puerto Rico? [In your opinion, why in a 21st century politically correct world do celebrations depicting the defeat of Muslims by Christians in honor of St. James the “Moor-Slayer” not only continue but even gain new enthusiasts in Puerto Rico?]

50. ¿Qué hay de positivo en estas fiestas? ¿Por qué? [What is positive about these festivities? Why?]
51. ¿Qué hay de negativo en estas fiestas? ¿Por qué? [What is negative about these festivities? Why?]
52. ¿Cómo interpreta usted estas celebraciones y por qué dicha interpretación? [How do you interpret these celebrations and why such an interpretation?]
53. ¿Cree usted que estas fiestas podrían ser interpretadas como simple tradición? O sea, “celebramos porque eso es siempre lo que hemos hecho.” [Do you believe that these festivities could be interpreted as merely tradition? In other words, “we celebrate because we have always done so?”]
54. ¿Cree usted que estas fiestas podrían ser interpretadas estrictamente como tradición religiosa? O sea, “celebramos porque somos católicos y veneramos a Santiago.” [Do you believe that these festivities could be interpreted strictly as religious tradition? In other words, “we celebrate because we are Catholic and we venerate St. James?”]
55. ¿Cree usted que estas fiestas podrían ser interpretadas como sincretismo o mezcla de distintas tradiciones, por ejemplo, la catolicidad del blanco y los elementos tradicionales africanos como Santería, deidad Ogún, Shangó, etc.? O sea, “celebramos la mezcla de la catolicidad con lo religioso negro-africano.” [Do you believe that these festivities could be interpreted as syncretism or a mix of different traditions, for example, the Catholic white and the traditional religious black elements from Africa such as Santería, the Ogun deity, Shangó, etc.? In other words, “the mixing of Catholicism with the Black-African religiosity?”]
56. ¿Cree usted que estas fiestas podrían ser interpretadas como grito de rebeldía por una comunidad harta de ser marginalizada? O sea, “celebramos porque queremos quejarnos de nuestra situación.” [Do you believe that these festivities could be interpreted as a scream of revolt by a community fed up with being marginalized? In other words, “we celebrate because we want to complain about our situation?”]
57. ¿Cree usted que estas fiestas podrían ser interpretadas como grito de compasión y pedido de “coexistencia” por una comunidad harta de las injusticias sociales contra homosexuales, discapacitados, ancianos, negros, etc.? O sea, “celebramos porque queremos promover “coexistencia” e igualdad racial, social, religiosa, sexual, etc.” [Do you believe that these festivities could be interpreted as a scream for compassion and a request to coexist by a community fed up with social injustice against homosexuals, the handicapped, the elderly, blacks, etc.? In other words, “we celebrate because we want to promote coexistence and equality in race, social status, religion, sexual preferences, etc.?”]

58. ¿Cree usted que estas fiestas podrían ser interpretadas como simple capitalismo o atracción de dinero a través del turismo en un área que necesita dicho empuje económico? O sea, “celebramos porque necesitamos atraer el dinero que traen los turistas.” [Do you believe that these festivities could be interpreted as merely capitalism or to attract money through tourism in an area in need of an economic boost? In other words, “we celebrate because we need to attract the money that tourists may bring?”]
59. ¿Por qué Vejigantes en Loíza y entre personas de color? [Why *Vejigantes* in Loíza and among colored-people?]
60. ¿Cómo entiende usted el origen y procedencia del santo a Loíza y de cómo empezaron a celebrarse estas fiestas en honor a Santiago Apóstol en Loíza? [How do you understand the origin and arrival of the saint to Loíza and how are these celebrations in honor to St. James Apostle in Loíza?]
61. ¿Por qué disfraz de murciélago? [Why a bat costume?]
62. ¿Por qué careta de diablo con cuernos? [Why a devil mask with horns?]
63. ¿Hay algo más que quiera usted añadir que yo no haya cubierto en esta entrevista? Por ejemplo, alguna canción, dicho, o cuento relacionado a Vejigantes o a los moros. [What would you like to add that I may not have covered? For example, a song, a proverb or saying, or story related to *Vejigantes* or the Moors.]

These questions were presented with the following introductory note:

Information Letter-Interviews

*Vejigantes* Festivities in Loíza, Puerto Rico

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Alexander Henn in the School of Historical, Philosophical & Religious Studies at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to interpret the *Vejigantes* festivities in Loíza, Puerto Rico.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve a study involving research of the interpretation of the *Vejigantes* festivities in Loíza, Puerto Rico. Your participation involves an interview with 63 questions about the festivities. You will be able to skip questions at your will; you are free to not answer whatever you do not wish to answer for whatever reason.

If you say YES, then your participation will last an hour or so –this depends on how long it takes you to answer the 63 questions. This will take place sometime during 15-28 July,



2013 at Loíza, and San Juan, Puerto Rico. You will be asked to give your opinion relating to the meaning of the *Vejigantes* celebrations in Loíza, Puerto Rico based on what you have observed as a participant in the festivities. As few as 15 and possibly as many as 100 subjects will be participating in this study – these are all people that have participated in the festivities themselves as performers and/or spectators. All these people will be adults over 18 years of age. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

The possible/main benefit of your participation in the research is that you are helping perpetuate a tradition from the island of Puerto Rico that has been celebrated for decades and as time goes by, new generations may abandon. The tradition also helps place the name of Puerto Rico in an international forum by allowing people from other places to read about it although they may never get a chance to physically participate in the festivities. Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefits of your participation in the research are the town of Loíza, the *Vejigantes* celebration vendors, and participants because the exposure of these celebrations through a dissertation may attract tourism and other residents of the island to partake in the celebrations. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will not identify you. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, Dr. Henn will assure that the names of the subjects are kept confidential by using alternative first names when addressing the subject's comments. Participants must be 18 and older.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team (Dr. Alexander Henn and/or Lourdes E. Sáez) at:

School of Historical, Philosophical & Religious Studies  
975 S. Myrtle Ave  
P. O. Box 874302  
Tempe, AZ 85287-4302  
480-965-5778  
[Alexander.henn@asu.edu](mailto:Alexander.henn@asu.edu)  
[Lourdes.saez@asu.edu](mailto:Lourdes.saez@asu.edu)

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

APPENDIX II

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY'S HUMAN SUBJECTS INSTITUTIONAL  
REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL DOCUMENT

**To:** Alexander Henn  
SHPRS

**From:** Mark Roosa, Chair *MR*  
Soc Beh IRB

**Date:** 04/08/2013

**Committee Action:** **Exemption Granted**

**IRB Action Date:** 04/08/2013

**IRB Protocol #:** 1304009023

**Study Title:** Vejigantes Festivities in Puerto Rico

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX III

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY'S TRANSLATION CERTIFICATION FORM  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

Arizona State University  
 Office of Research Integrity and  
 Assurance  
 660 S. Mill Avenue Suite 315  
 Arizona State University  
 Tempe AZ 85287-6111  
 (Mall Code 6111)  
 Phone: 480-965-6788  
 Fax: (480) 965-7772



For Office Use Only:  
 Date Received:

**Translation Certification Form  
 Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

**PROTOCOL TITLE:** Vejigantes Festivities in Loiza, Puerto Rico  
**HS NUMBER:** 1304009023  
**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Dr. Alexander Henn  
**LANGUAGE OF TRANSLATED DOCUMENTS:** Spanish

TYPE OF SUBMISSION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The initial submission of the following forms (Please list the forms).
<input type="checkbox"/>	The modification of the following forms that have been approved. (Please list forms)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Please describe and list forms)

**CERTIFICATION OF TRANSLATION**

I certify that I have performed the translation of the following documents: Interview for the referenced project.

Printed Name of Translator: Lourdes E. Saez  
 Signature of Translator: *Lourdes E. Saez* Date: 4 Apr 2013

**CERTIFICATION OF BACK-TRANSLATION**

I certify that I have performed the back-translation of the following documents: Interview for the referenced project. Please note that it is preferable if the back-translation is done by someone who is not part of the research team.

Printed Name of Back-Translator: CARMEN S. JAMES  
 Signature of Back-Translator: *Carmen S. James* Date: 4/7/13

IRB NOTE: The translation and back-translation should be done by two different people.

APPENDIX IV  
FIELDWORK PHOTOGRAPH

THE ALTAR AT ST. JAMES APOSTLE PARISH IN LOIZA, PUERTO RICO



Photograph 1