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THE FIESTA OF SANTIAGO APOSTOL (ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE) IN LOÍZA, PUERTO RICO

BY RICARDO E. ALEGRÍA

IN any attempt to study the structure of present Puerto Rican society, problems which are always present in societies integrated by different cultural traditions are encountered. The basic origin of Puerto Rican society can be found in the transplanting of sixteenth century Spanish culture to the tropics. In the process of adaptation to their new environment, the colonizers absorbed, culturally and racially, the aboriginal population of the island, borrowing from this population those traits which were indispensable to their Antillean life. But in Puerto Rico, in contrast to what happened in other areas of America, the influence of the Indian culture was slight due to the rapid disintegration of the aboriginal society after contact with the Spaniards.

A new component in the integration of Puerto Rican society was brought by the African Negroes, who during more than four centuries have been incorporated into the original society, enriching it with their cultural and racial contributions. In some regions of the island the Negroes, because of their numerical superiority, were able to maintain more features of their African culture which was continually renewed with the arrival of new cargoes of African slaves. The influence of the Negroes on Puerto Rican society is evident not only in the ethnic formation of the population, but also in its cultural integration. However, the process of acculturation was not uniform; in some regions Negro influence was slight while in others, especially in the coastal area, African culture got a strong grip.

By the nineteenth century Puerto Rican culture was a complex mosaic where, on a Hispanic base, characteristic features of the aboriginal and African cultures fused in varying degrees. Before the end of the century these different cultural components were harmoniously articulated, forming in Puerto Rico a culture of definite characteristics.

This society received the impact of a new and strange culture when the island was invaded and occupied by the North American forces during the Spanish American War. Political domination by the United States during the last fifty years is in great part responsible for the cultural change characteristic of present-day Puerto Rican society. Continually we observe the disappearance of old institutions whose existence was incompatible with the norms of life which North American culture imposes. In the same way, we see the ever-increasing incorporation of North American institutions into Puerto Rican society.

Significantly, this culture change has not occurred simultaneously, or with the same force, in all the communities of the island. As might be expected, those which

are more isolated from the cities have been the ones which have felt the cultural change later and to a lesser degree.

In our attempt to study the integration of Puerto Rican culture and, specifically, the contribution of African culture, we wanted to initiate our research in a rather isolated Negro community. Considering the geographical smallness of Puerto Rico and its extreme density of population, the old village of Loíza and its environs offered us the best example of that type of community. In Loíza the ethno-social homogeneity of its inhabitants and the relative isolation in which they have lived has allowed the conservation and the articulation of a body of beliefs and customs which today characterize the village. These conditions, together with the antiquity of the village, make it possible to find the survival of old Hispano-Catholic practices as well as the persistence of African beliefs and customs, which have already disappeared from other communities of the island.

In the course of our research in Loíza we have emphasized the study of its traditional fiesta—the Fiesta of Santiago Apostol (St. James the Apostle).¹ in Loíza, as in other folk cultures, the celebration of the traditional fiesta results in a spontaneous and vigorous expression of its culture. In the village there is such a strong tie between the cult of Santiago and the community life that the study of its fiesta offers us valuable data on the cultural integration of Loíza and the changes its culture has experienced. It is the purpose of this paper to describe and analyze this fiesta as an example of the cultural life and culture change which is taking place in Loíza.

I. THE VILLAGE

The history of Loíza goes back to the first years of the Spanish conquest, when the colonizers found the region densely populated by Indians living on the banks of the Loíza river. The sudden discovery of gold in that river was responsible for the establishment of several colonies in the region. While the Indian population existed as a force of labor, the principal occupation of the Spanish colonizers was the extraction of gold. But, when the Indian population greatly decreased at the end of the sixteenth century, a new ethnic group—the African Negro—was brought into the region. With the arrival of the Negroes, who adapted better to agricultural work than to the work of mining the already scarce gold, sugar cane production was initiated in Loíza. Soon, the sugar plantations became very important, and numerous Negro slaves were concentrated in the large haciendas of the region. In spite of the frequent attacks which Loíza suffered from Carib Indians and European pirates, the plantations continued to grow in importance. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the concentration of Negro slaves in the sugar plantations was so great that Loíza ranked at the top of the island in percentage of Negro population. During the following centuries, although the region continued to be important in sugar production, the village lost prominence while other towns grew rapidly and established new industries. In Loíza, life continued without great changes and the population grew very little. Only a few government officials and soldiers were living in the village, the majority of the population consisting of free Mulattoes and Negroes. In the nineteenth century the only two stone buildings were the church and the government or "King's House." The wealthy plantation owners lived with their numerous slaves on their haciendas near the village. All the economic and social life was still centered around these haciendas.

With the abolition of slavery in 1873, little change was manifested in the village. The free Negroes established themselves on the sandy lands of the coast, in the region known as the Medianías, while others remained as free laborers on the plantations. With the establishment of a central road system which did not connect with Loíza, the town was relatively isolated and communication was restricted to those who expressly wanted to go to the village. During the early years of the present century, the municipal government was transferred to a new town founded near the main central road, and Loíza was reduced to a *barrio* with very little political importance.

The population of Loíza and its neighboring *barrios* totaled in the 1950 census 7,740 inhabitants. More than eighty-seven per cent of these belong to the Negro race, and the great majority of them are descendants of the Negro slaves concentrated in the region. There is a remarkable stability of population in the village. Many families can easily trace their ancestry for several generations back, and the names of some of the early and powerful *hacendados* are still found in the descendants of their slaves, who, according to the custom, adopted their master's name. This stability in the population, together with the relative isolation in which the village has lived, are in part responsible for the greater purity of old customs and beliefs in Loíza than in other regions of the island.

The economy of the region is still dependent on the sugar plantations, which to-day are mostly owned by the government. More than ninety per cent of the people derive their income by working in the sugar fields. Since the work in these is limited to less than six months of the year, the economic condition of the people is very poor. Some complement their earnings by fishing or working on the coconut plantations. In general, the people lead very poor and drab lives.

The slow and monotonous life of the inhabitants of Loíza and its environs undergoes a violent change during one week of each year when the people, with an indescribable overflowing of spontaneous joy and popular enthusiasm, celebrate their traditional festival, the Fiesta of Santiago Apostol (St. James the Apostle). This fiesta traces its origin to Spain, where the cult of Santiago Apostol became tremendously popular during the war against the Moors. The Spanish conquerors brought the cult with them to America. Santiago was considered by the Spaniards as a divine warrior who helped them on earth to fight the infidels. In America "Santiago!" became the cry of the conquistadores when they led a charge against the Indians, just as it had been the battle cry against the Moors.

2. ORIGIN OF THE FIESTA IN LOÍZA

The origin of the Fiesta of Santiago in Loíza is uncertain. The celebration is so old that its beginnings have been forgotten. Some of the elderly residents, in their desire to express the antiquity of the festival, place its beginnings in "the days when God walked on earth." Since Loíza was one of the early settlements which most frequently suffered the attacks of the Carib Indians and European corsairs, we may surmise that the devotion to the warrior Saint of the Spaniards took root among the villagers, who continually found themselves obliged to take arms to defend themselves against these attacks. The faith which the inhabitants placed in the Saint and in his divine aid may have made it possible for them to remain in the district and to resist the continuous attacks of Indians and corsairs.

In Loíza, Santiago found his most faithful devotees among the Negro population,

which was concentrated in the sugar plantations of the district. This makes it natural to consider the possibility that in Loíza, and about the figure of Santiago, a fusion of Hispano-Christian and African beliefs took place. We know that the arrival of the African Negroes in America, where they were initiated into Christianity, often gave rise to interesting phenomena of religious syncretism.² The Negroes, when they were converted to Christianity, identified the Christian saints with the gods of their respective religions. Examples of this curious process are still to be observed in those regions of America where a large Negro population is established.³ Nevertheless, the process has not been the same in every region, but rather has followed different lines among each of the several peoples of the New World.

It would be natural to suppose that the Negroes who, together with a handful of Spaniards, took arms in Loíza to defend themselves against the invaders who threatened to sack and destroy their town, identified the warrior Saint, whom the Spaniards invoked for his aid in combat, with the African war gods.

Of the African cultures represented among the Negroes who were brought to Puerto Rico, the Yoruba culture appears to have predominated. In the Yoruba religion, Shangó, a god whose attributes are very similar to those of *Santiago Matamoros* (killer of Moors) is an important figure. Shangó is the god of war and thunderbolt. In Yoruba sculpture he is represented as a warrior on horseback. *Santiago Matamoros* was not only the warrior Saint who protected the Spaniards in battle, but was also the Saint possessed of the power to call down the fire of heaven to annihilate the infidel. The similarity between the attributes of the African god and the Christian Saint is such that it could well have led to a fusion of the two conceptions among the Negro population of Loíza.

But if such a process of syncretism took place in Loíza about the figure of Santiago, the only affirmative evidence which remains is the devotion of the present Negro population to the Saint and the fact that he is sometimes referred to by the residents as "the god of wars."⁴

The Fiesta of Santiago in Loíza has several well-marked characteristics of its own. The Apostle is represented in three images, each one of which is associated with a different division of the population. Thus we find three distinct Santiagos, one for the men, one for the women, and one for the children. During the festival each of the three versions of the Saint is shown special honor on a day of his own.

The three images are each the property of a different person. The three proprietors are known as the *mantenedoras* (maintainers) of the Saint. Each of the images remains in the house of his *mantenedora* throughout the year, being removed only during the festival. The persons who keep these images are usually women, although many men have been *mantenedores*. If the proprietor of an image finds himself unable to continue to take active part in the celebration, he surrenders the image to someone else who has distinguished himself for his devotion to the Saint and who has actively participated in the planning of the Fiesta.

The oral tradition of the people of the town preserves interesting accounts of the origin of the three images. Although this tradition is sometimes self-contradictory, all versions agree that one of the images, that of *Santiago de los Muchachos* (St. James of the Children), or *Santiaguito*, as he is commonly called, appeared miraculously many years ago.

The festival was celebrated with the miraculous image alone until, according to

the tradition, two families of the town ordered two new images from Spain, one, that of *Santiago de los Hombres* (St. James of the Men), and the other, that of *Santiago de las Mujeres* (St. James of the Women).

3. THE IMAGES AND THEIR MANTENEDORAS

3.1. *Santiago de los Muchachos* (St. James of the Children). Apart from the story of its miraculous origin, a number of miracles is customarily attributed to the virtue of this image. One of these is said to have taken place many years ago. The elderly inhabitants relate that the river Loíza had risen alarmingly and was threatening to destroy the sown fields. The devotees of the Saint carried the image in procession through the streets of the town and immediately the water began to recede and the river returned to its former course.

The wooden image of *Santiago de los Muchachos* is an example of the popular art of a bygone era. *Santiago Matamoros* is represented mounted upon a white horse; beneath the raised forefeet of the animal is the head of a Moor.

3.2. *Santiago de los Hombres* (St. James of the Men). The inhabitants give contradictory accounts of the origin of the image, some declaring that it was brought from Spain a very long time ago, others that it began to be used in the celebration only some fifty years ago.

The paste image of *Santiago de los Hombres* is undoubtedly of Spanish origin. Its style seems to indicate that it was made during the last century. It has several times been repaired and painted by local artists. This image is a representation of the traditional *Santiago Matamoros*, who appears in warrior dress, riding a white horse over the heads of fallen Moors.

Santiago de los Hombres is borne in procession upon a simple wooden litter which is painted green.

3.3. *Santiago de las Mujeres* (St. James of the Women). Local tradition seems to show that the image of *Santiago de las Mujeres* was brought to Loíza at more or less the same time as that of *Santiago de los Hombres*. The two images are very similar, although they are painted different colors.

4. PREPARING FOR THE FIESTA

Beginning at the end of June, evening meetings of devout residents are held in each of the houses where an image is kept. In these meetings ways of obtaining funds to meet the expenses of the festival and plans aimed at making it as successful a celebration as possible are discussed.

The meetings, which are frequent affairs and subsidiarily a social activity, are conducted very informally. The *mantenedora* of the Saint and persons who have especially distinguished themselves in previous celebrations draw up the plans to be followed to make the festival as brilliant as possible. In general the men keep away from these meetings, although they congregate near the houses where they are being carried on to await the exit of the women. Two groups are distinguishable among those who take part, one made up of women well along in life and another of young girls. The chief theme is the collection of funds. There are, in general, three ways of collecting the money required: raffles, benefit performances in the theater of the town, and donations. Of the three, the first two are the most effective. The sum spent by each of these *Hermandades* (Sodalities) varies between one hundred and fifty and

two hundred dollars, almost half of it being used for the purchase of rockets and other fireworks. The expenditure which follows this in importance is the sum paid to the musicians who take part in the procession of each Saint on his day. Another expense is that of the masses which are said by the priest on the days dedicated to each of the Saints.

It is plain that there has long existed a rivalry among the three *Hermandades*. This rivalry manifests itself in a desire on the part of the members of each that the day dedicated to their Saint be the most successful of the whole festival, and in the belief that their image is the one that has performed the most miracles.

Early in the morning of the first of July the inhabitants of Loíza and the surrounding district awaken to the report of a rocket which is fired to remind them that the month in which the Fiesta of Santiago is to be celebrated has begun. It is at this point that the direct preparations for the celebration begin, and from this time on the celebration is the favorite topic of conversation.

Such males as desire to have new masquerade costumes now begin to approach their sisters and wives for help in this regard. The young men begin to give thought to the attire which they intend to wear during the festival, and not a few of the young girls of the town hope to get a husband during the same period.

5. THE FIESTA

On the twenty-fifth of July, the day on which the Roman Catholic Church celebrates the miraculous discovery of the remains of St. James the Apostle, the fiesta begins in Loíza Aldea and environs. The town has taken on suitable gala dress for the occasion. At the entrance to the town signs are placed announcing the celebration and welcoming the strangers who always visit it during the festival. The Plaza is decorated with wreaths and small red and yellow cloth or paper flags. In the center of the Plaza platforms are constructed for the dances and spectacles which are to be celebrated during the evenings.

Early in the morning the image of *Santiago de los Hombres* is carried from the house of the woman who has it in her keeping to the town Church. In the afternoon hours there is great activity in the streets of the village and its environs, and in the evening of the same day a dance is held to the music of a small local orchestra.

On the next day, which is dedicated to the image of *Santiago de los Hombres*, the gay and showy masks so characteristic of the festival are seen for the first time. In the morning mass is celebrated in honor of the Saint, whose image has remained in the church since the preceding day. At five in the afternoon several rockets are fired to announce to the inhabitants that the procession, which is to terminate in a place called Las Carreras (where, according to tradition, the image of *Santiago de los Muchachos* was miraculously discovered), has begun.

The privilege of carrying the litter is granted to a number of the devout by the *mantenedora* of the image. The procession begins amid the pealing of bells and is led by the *mantenedora*, who carries a flag which is the Saint's emblem. She is followed by four of the faithful carrying the litter and by the rest of the devout. Later on the masqueraders, who by order of the parish priest are forbidden to enter the church, have joined the procession outside. They pass along the principal streets of the town before turning off toward Las Carreras, the rear drawn up by a group of musicians who ride in a truck and play on the way.



*Caballeros and
Vejigantes dancing
in front of the
church.*

Vejigante mask
made of coconut.





Vejigantes and chorus of children.



Prayers and singing before images of the Saint.

Before reaching its destination the procession passes by the house in which the image of *Santiago de los Muchachos* is kept. The encounter is marked by the firing of several rockets by the devotees of both images. Sometimes there is a contest to see which of the *Hermandades* can fire the greatest number.

When the procession passes in front of the house where another Saint is kept, it is the custom that the other Saint come forth accompanied by several faithful to salute the Saint of the day. The bearers of the litters of the two Saints, following the instructions of a person who acts as master of ceremonies, lower the litters three times in sign of salutation. After this, the Saint of the day moves on in procession with the second Saint, in this case *Santiago de los Muchachos*, following.

Shortly before turning off the highway onto the sandy road which leads to Las Carreras, the Saint of the day passes before a small chapel where the image of *Santiago de las Mujeres* is kept during the festival. Once more several rockets are fired and the same ritual of salutation is performed with the three images taking part. The image of *Santiago de las Mujeres* accompanied by his devotees joins the procession, which now continues toward Las Carreras.

At Las Carreras, which is near the seashore, the procession halts near a rubber tree where, according to one of the legends, the image of *Santiago de los Muchachos* was discovered many years ago. The traditional ceremony of racing with the flags of the Saints is performed. Masqueraders mounted on horseback and dressed as caballeros request of the *mantenedora* of their favorite image the privilege of racing with his banner. Each rider, upon reaching the end of the eight hundred meter course, returns with the banner to the *mantenedora*, who then delivers it to another rider who has requested the same privilege.

In the meantime there are dances in which some of the masqueraders take part, while others celebrate the occasion at the stands where food and drink are sold.

After remaining at Las Carreras for approximately half an hour, the procession returns to the town. On the following days similar processions are held in honor of the other images.

6. THE MASQUERADERS

During the Fiesta of Santiago, laborers who during the year have been engaged in hard and dangerous work in the sugar cane fields, on the coconut plantations, and in the fishing industry, forget their tasks and daily cares to participate in the various phases of the celebration. Hundreds of these laborers dress in traditional costumes and sing and dance in the streets of the village and its environs, asking for gifts of money. The numerous and striking costumes constitute one of the most colorful aspects of the fiesta.

These costumes are made by the women but worn only by the men. There is a connection between the kind of costume worn and the social position of the wearer. The masqueraders begin to appear on the streets of the town on the twenty-sixth of July, the day on which the first of the three processions is held. Among the many different varieties of costumes four types can be distinguished, which, being of traditional design, at the same time impose upon the wearers a particular part in the celebration.

One of these four types is the *caballero*, who attempts to imitate the dress of the old-time Spanish gentleman seen in the images. The *caballeros* represent the Saint.

They stand for good in conflict with evil, for Christianity in conflict with paganism. Their costume includes a jacket and trousers made of lustrous materials such as cheap satins and rayons. Each piece is particolored: red, yellow, and green are the common colors. *Caballeros* wear masks made of screen wire and painted to represent what are taken to be the features of a typical Spanish gentleman. In addition, a hat is worn which is generally decorated with small mirrors, bells, ribbons of various colors, and sometimes with paper flowers and birds. Owing to the expense of this costume and to the custom that the *caballero* appear at the festival upon horseback, those who adopt this dress are always townsmen of superior means. The behavior of the *caballeros* is always more grave and circumspect than that of the other masqueraders.

It would appear that formerly the *caballeros* were the Saint's escort and performed certain pantomimes representing battles between themselves and Santiago Apostol on the one hand and the Moors on the other.

The *vejigantes* are the counterpart of the *caballeros* and represent evil, the devil, the Moors whom the Santiago Apostol and the *caballeros* combat. The traditional costume of the *vejigante* is a kind of jumper, the broad sleeves of which are connected with the body of the garment in such a way that when the wearer raises his arms a bat or devil effect is produced. The costume is made of a showy, brilliantly colored but cheap fabric which in some cases bears printed patterns. The characteristic feature of a *vejigante* is his mask, which is a grotesque horned face made of pasteboard, coconut, gourd, or tin plate. The coconut masks are the most popular and showy of the whole celebration. Several weeks before the beginning of the festival, the fishermen who have decided to make these masks select a number of dry coconuts, halve them lengthwise, and extract the nut. Upon the outer surface, and as the form of each specimen permits, they carve a grotesque face the nose and lips of which are always prominent. The mouth is generally provided with teeth carved of wood and covered with silver or gilt paper. In the upper part of the mask holes are bored for the horns, which are made of coconut shell or wood and are sometimes simple and sometimes compound like the horns of a stag. The masks usually bear two or three horns and are painted several colors with ordinary paints. The colors most used are red, black, blue, and gray. Sometimes a moustache and beard made of horsehair are added.

Although it is not possible to determine the existence of an artistic tradition in Loíza derived from the vigorous African art, the fact that the masks of the *vejigantes* show certain similarities with the Yoruba sculpture is significant. Like the Yoruba masks, those from Loíza represent grotesque faces showing extreme expressions, are polychrome, and the details are painted with great elaboration. The facial traits are exaggerated, especially the mouth and the eyes, which are generally ovoid in shape. It is possible to believe that in Loíza Aldea the influence of the African sculpture was maintained in the slave descendants and manifested itself in the artistic opportunities which the fiesta offered. If we assume that African influence is demonstrated in its music, beliefs, witchcraft and folk literature, it would be improbable that the similarities which we observe today in the masks of the *vejigantes* of Loíza and those of the Yoruba would only be casual.

The *vejigantes* have a special affected way of speaking and frequently emit howls or screams. They roam the streets of the town on foot and are generally accompanied by a group of small children who serve as chorus to their traditional chants. The

air-filled bladder (*vejiga*) tied to the end of a slender rod, which the *vejigante* formerly carried to strike passers-by, has disappeared. A paper bag has replaced the bladder. Some of this class have the custom of carrying certain small manikins which they show to the public when soliciting gifts.

In third place come the so-called *viejos* (old men). The part of *viejo* is chosen by those of the inhabitants who for lack of money or time have not prepared a costume of one of the other kinds. The *viejos* dress in torn and frayed cast-off garments and wear masks made of shoe-boxes or pasteboard. This is the role most closely connected with the music of the festival, during which groups of *viejos* are commonly seen playing in the streets and soliciting gifts.

The music and dances which the masqueraders perform are of African origin. Important among the musical instruments used are the *bombas*, wooden drums about three feet high with a goatskin parchment. The *bongó*, pairs of small drums likewise made of wood and provided with a goatskin parchment, are also used, as well as tambourines (*panderetas*, simple iron hoops covered with goatskin), the *guiro* or *guicharo*,⁵ the *palillos*, (wooden sticks), the *maracas* or rattle, and the guitar. The dances which are performed to the music of these instruments are versions of the *bomba* and the *plena*.

The *viejos* are associated with a fourth traditional type of mask, that of the *locas* (mad women). These are men who dress as women and pretend to be mad. The *locas* pass along the streets of the town with brooms and cans, sweeping and cleaning the streets and porches of the houses and asking a recompense for their "work." They wear costumes of clashing colors and fit themselves with artificial busts. They do not customarily wear masks, but usually paint their faces black. In the lively street-dancing characteristic of the celebration, the *locas* and the *viejos* take the principal part.

In recent years outside influences have led to the introduction of several new kinds of costumes. One of these represents the role of the "Mexican." Here the influence of Mexican films is seen. Some appear in reasonably accurate copies of typical Mexican dress, while others wear adaptations. The war, too, has led to an innovation. Some of the former soldiers have made certain changes in their uniforms and use them as costumes. Others wear old police uniforms and take the part of policemen, directing traffic and levying fines upon the passers-by. Still others appear as photographers, physicians, fishermen, and in similar roles.

7. FUNCTION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIESTA

Although there is more than one aspect to the Fiesta of Santiago in Loíza, it is clear that the religious side is still the most important. The devout find the festival the most satisfactory way of expressing their devotion and respect for the Saint. The festival is also the occasion when those who have asked favors of the Saint fulfil their vows. The vows which are made to the Saint are of many different kinds and there are two ways of fulfilling them: by giving gifts to the image or by performing "services" (*servicios*) to the Saint. Gifts may consist of donations of money to be used in the festival, candles which are lighted before the Saint, colored ribbons to adorn the image, or of *ex-votos* which give testimony of miracles. The *ex-votos*, which are usually called *mandas*, are gold, silver, or tin plate. They are small representations of the organ or part of the body which has been healed by the Saint's intercession.

The *mandas* are made by popular artists and are bought from wandering vendors or in the market-places of the neighboring towns. The services which are promised to the Saint are of several different kinds. Sometimes the service consists of accompanying the image of the Saint in the long and frequent processions. Frequently, too, a devotee promises to assist in the carrying of the litter which supports the image of the Saint or to race on horseback with the Saint's banner in the ceremony which takes place at Las Carreras.

The religious function of the festival is also seen in the numerous activities of a more conventionally sacred character. There are prayers and singing for nine nights before each of the images of the Saint, and four masses are celebrated during the festival which are undoubtedly the best-attended of all those said in the old church of the town. In addition, St. James day is considered in the district to be the time for the performance of certain other religious acts: baptisms and marriages are frequent on this day. In sum, the festival is the time and the cause of the most important manifestation of religious activity of the year.

It is also very evident that the festival has its social function. Many of the inhabitants look upon the festival only as an opportunity for diversion. The celebration undoubtedly offers the inhabitants of the district the best chance of the year to meet and enjoy themselves. A man is able to meet old friends from other parts of the district, recollect old times, and compare the present festival with those of the past. Not a few of the inhabitants abandon their work and employment during the days of the festival to be able to enjoy the entertainments with more freedom. Members of the younger generation who have found employment in other towns return to Loíza to visit their friends and enjoy themselves.

The spirit of merry-making which prevails in the town tends to facilitate relations among the young people. Some of the young men are better able while wearing a mask and costume to overcome their timidity and court the girls of their choice. The frequent dances give the young people their best opportunity to make new friends and improve acquaintanceships.

Apart from its religious and social aspects, the festival also has an economic function. Months before the celebration, the *mantenedoras* of the three images begin to give thought to the obtaining of the necessary funds. Delegations representing the three *Hermandades* visit business establishments and the houses of the more prosperous to ask for donations and to sell lottery tickets and tickets for the benefit performances which are to be given in the theater of the town. The business people cooperate with the organizers of the festivities in the knowledge that they will bring greater profits. The custom of wearing new clothes during the festival is the cause of brisker business in the small shops of the town.

Many of the masqueraders drink continually during the festival and spend all the money which they collect from the public for alcoholic drinks and cigarettes. A considerable number of small stands made of wood and branches of palm, and intended for the sale of food, cooling drinks, and alcoholic beverages, are built to meet this demand.

The Fiesta of Santiago in Loíza is today an isolated phenomenon in the dynamic media in which the social structure of the Puerto Rican communities is developing. The reason for its survival is explained by the great ethnic and social homogeneity of the vicinity and the relative isolation in which it has lived. This situation, to-

gether with the antiquity of the village, explains the presence of old customs and beliefs of Hispano-Catholic origin, as well as African, which are not present in any other village of the island.

The cult of the Santiago of the conquistadores, stimulated by historical circumstances and re-interpreted by a Negro population which made it its own, has given rise in Loíza to an interesting ritual wherein old Spanish Catholic practices are joined together with the folk culture of the village. The Fiesta is today not only the most Hispano-Catholic of all the ones celebrated in Puerto Rico, but it is also the one in which more pagan elements show. Nevertheless, the fusion is such that it forms a harmonic body of beliefs which is common to the whole village.

Many of the cultural elements that today are manifested in Loíza were common to other towns of the island during the last century. The society of Loíza, which is today the most peripheral, has retained those elements, guarding them against the rapid and progressive acculturation which the island is experiencing from the impact of North American culture. Nevertheless, in Loíza, although to a lesser degree, this cultural change is also felt and specifically observed in its fiesta. The people of Loíza try every day to imitate more and more the way of life of the cities. The fact that many persons, especially tourists, "came to see the fiesta" has made the people conscious that their fiesta is different, unusual. Some villagers began to worry, thinking that the fiesta was "something of savages." The Protestant churches, by frequent attacks on the celebration, are in great part responsible for this growing concern. Many villagers have abandoned the custom of masquerading, although they continue to enjoy the more secular aspects of the fiesta. The attitude of the men toward the organization of the fiesta is another indication of the changes which are taking place. Some time ago, most of the *mantenedores* of the Saints were men, who were leading organizers of the fiesta. Today the function of *mantener* (maintaining) an image is considered as a "thing for women," and only old men help the present *mantenedoras* in the organization of the fiesta. The role of the men in the fiesta has been reduced to masquerading and, on some occasions, to carry the Saint during the processions.

The publicity which recently has been given the fiesta for its tourist trade value has caused the municipal government to show its interest in the fiesta and, through its agents in the village, to express its desire of taking part in it. The recent participation of the government tends to stress the more secular aspect of the fiesta.

In summary, the study of the fiesta makes it possible to observe the acculturation which Loíza has experienced under the influence of different cultural traditions which, to a greater or lesser degree, have become integrated into a definite cultural expression. In the fiesta the cultural change is clearly expressed in the tendency to give more emphasis to the secular aspect of it, while the traditional ritual is gradually disappearing or becoming adulterated.

NOTES

¹ A more detailed and illustrated study written by the author is presently being printed in Spain. A documentary film on the 1949 fiesta was prepared by the University of Puerto Rico Museum.

² M. Herskovits, "African Gods and Catholic Saints in New World Negro Beliefs," *American Anthropologist*, XXXIX (1937), 635-643.

³ Fernando Ortiz points out that in Cuba the African god Shangó is identified with Santa Bárbara (Ortiz, *Hampa Afrocubana; Los Negros Brujos* [Madrid, 1917], p. 50); according to Arthur Ramos, in Bahía the cult of St. Anthony has been identified with that of the African god Ogún, while in Río de Janeiro the same god is associated with St. George (Ramos, *Las Culturas Negras en el Nuevo Mundo* [Mexico, 1943], p. 250); Price Mars informs us that in Haiti a god of war, Ongon Balindjo, is identified with the Apostle Santiago (J. Price Mars, *Ainsi Parla L'Oncle* [Compiègne, n.d.], p. 181).

⁴ In Loíza and other towns of the coast, wizard-quacks make use of images or pictures of the Apostle St. James to invoke his aid in certain special tasks.

⁵ Instrument made of the cleaned, dried shell of an elongated gourd or calabash, on which a number of grooves are cut crosswise along part of its length. The player holds the *guiro* in one hand and scrapes the grooved portion lengthwise with bits of wire set into the end of a short stick.

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