

**INHABITING ISLA NENA, 1514-2003: ISLAND NARRATIONS, IMPERIAL
DRAMAS AND VIEQUES, PUERTO RICO**

by

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“Isla Nena”
by
Silverio Pérez

...Hay miles de pedazos de esta tierra
Con miles de ocasiones de injusticia
Hay una isla chica en que la guerra
Roba tiempo al amor y a la caricia.

Un día que mi canción se hizo oleaje
Un día que reposé en la blanca arena
Le dí mi corazón y mi coraje
Al pueblo y al sentir de la Isla Nena.

Hay una Isla Nena en lontananza.

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2008

To *Abuela* Paca,
who endured displacement, abandonment, hunger...
and expressed her political claims through the pro-statehood party.
Her stories silenced by cancer are not written in history books.
Yet they survive in the memory of those she touched and nurtured.

To my father and my mother,
for keeping the stories alive while weaving new,
and for believing in the infinite possibilities of the *real-maravilloso*,
even when it might be less painful not to believe.

To their combined memories,
which I have made mine or that have made me theirs,
that I hope to incorporate into
my histories.

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List of Abbreviations

AFL	American Federation of Labor
AFWTA	Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility
AGPR	<i>Archivo General de Puerto Rico</i>
CIH	<i>Centro de Investigaciones Históricas</i>
CPR	<i>Colección Puertorriqueña</i>
DOD	Department of Defense
ELA	<i>Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico</i>
FCM	<i>Fortín Conde de Mirasol</i>
FLMM	<i>Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín</i>
FLT	<i>Federación Libre de Trabajadores</i>
FO	Foreign Office
GATP	<i>Grupo de Apoyo Técnico y Profesional para el Desarrollo Sustentable de Vieques</i>
GE	General Electric Company
GPO	Government Printing Office
MP	Military Police
NASD	Naval Ammunition Support Detachment
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NARA	U.S. National Archives and Records Administration
PIP	<i>Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño</i>
PPD	<i>Partido Popular Democrático</i>
PRACO	Puerto Rico Agricultural Corporation
PRIDCO	Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company
JPPR	<i>Junta de Planificación de Puerto Rico</i>
PSP	<i>Partido Socialista Puertorriqueño</i>
ROTHR	Relocatable Over the Horizon Radar

Abstract

The dissertation follows the five-century struggle of peoples to inhabit the Caribbean island of Vieques and of empires to control it. This is a history of displacement and militarized imperialism, and an examination of the power of historical narrations in the struggle of colonized peoples to claim a place of their own. It is therefore also a study of memory, and of the symbolic and material practices that inscribe with local meaning spaces from where to negotiate collective identities. As a history of *longue durée*, this dissertation is structured through foundational conjunctures central to the late 20th century Viequense collective memory of themselves as an island-community. I trace this history through the imagining of Vieques as Isla Nena (Girl Island), the gendered and infantile representation of the island-community. The dissertation, in turn, delves into colonial-imperial negotiations surrounding Vieques through an organic account of Isla Nena's life starting with the conception of an island-community worth dying for in 1514 with the Spanish massacre of the indigenous population, going through its birth and baptism as Isla Nena at the turn to the 20th century when the prosperous sugar colony was incorporated to Puerto Rico, and culminating with the Nena's near extinction brought about by the U.S. Navy's activities in the island since the mid 20th century.

Historicizing Isla Nena, as an island-community inseparable from the multiple representations of its history, exposes intersections of gender and empires, of colonial

fringes and imperial centers, of memories and histories, and of the historical making of Vieques and the inner contradictions of Puerto Rico's colonial history. I explore these intersections through an interdisciplinary lens merging historical and autobiographical genres meshed through the lives of four Viequense women, of which I am the last generation. The tracing of my own Viequense genealogy allows an approach to Vieques through multiple narratives, including personal memories and postmemories. This interlacing of narratives also acknowledges my role as a weaver of historical narratives that bridge the abstract character of a long history with the intimacy of its ongoing significance for those, like me, who are part of this history.

Chapter 1:

Introduction

But many forget, as they disguise themselves as cheap magicians, that the marvelous begins to be in an unequivocal manner when it surges from an unexpected alteration of reality (the miracle), from a privileged revelation of reality, from a non-habitual or singularly becoming illumination of the unnoticed riches of reality, from an amplification of scales and categories of reality, perceived with particular intensity in light of an exaltation of the spirit that leads it to a kind of “extreme state.” To begin, the sensation of the marvelous presupposes a faith. The ones who do not believe in saints cannot be healed by miracles from saints, neither can the ones who are not Quixotes submerge themselves, in body, soul and wealth, in the world of *Amadis de Gaula* or *Tirante el Blanco*... Yet what is the history of all America but a chronicle of the real-marvelous?

Alejo Carpentier, Prologue to El reino de este mundo (1949)¹

Sometimes, what appears real seems so marvelous as to defy any clear distinctions between what we understand as fiction and reality, as natural and supernatural, as memories and stories, or as myths and histories.² Sometimes, one is faced with histories that are difficult to understand or even believe. Yet, as in any good episode of the X-Files, reality reveals itself only to those with the will to believe in the

¹ “Pero es que muchos se olvidan, con disfrazarse de magos a poco costo, que lo maravilloso comienza a serlo de manera inequívoca cuando surge de una inesperada alteración de la realidad (el milagro), de una revelación privilegiada de la realidad, de una iluminación inhabitual o singularmente favorecedora de las inadvertidas riquezas de la realidad, de una ampliación de las escalas y categorías de la realidad, percibidas con particular intensidad en virtud de una exaltación del espíritu que lo conduce a un modo de ‘estado límite’. Para empezar, la sensación de lo maravilloso presupone una fe. Los que no creen en santos no pueden curarse con milagros de santos, ni los que no son Quijotes pueden meterse, en cuerpo, alma y bienes, en el mundo de *Amadis de Gaula* o *Tirante el Blanco*...¿Pero qué es la historia de América toda sino una crónica de lo real-maravilloso?” [Translations, unless noted, are mine.] Alejo Carpentier, “Prólogo,” El reino de este mundo (San Juan: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1998) 1-8.

² My use of the term history throughout the text refers to stories and legitimated historical accounts. These two historical narratives cannot be completely separated. The separation of histories from stories implies a problematical hierarchization of sources that empowers some voices to the detriment of others. It, furthermore, can silence the narrative character of all historical accounts. For a study of the narrative quality and literary tropes of historical thinking see Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1973).

fantastic, the nightmarish, the serious and the ludicrous of the everyday. As for myself, growing up between San Juan and Vieques has made me a believer in the everyday workings of the magical and the real.³ My grandmother, perhaps the greatest of storytellers, introduced me early on to such a world where the dead transfigure into butterflies to keep company to the living. Indeed, I remember the nights spent as a child with my grandmother in Vieques, when a small butterfly used to flutter around us until finally settling in front of the television screen. Despite the interruption to her soap operas, my grandmother happily welcomed the visits and would always tell my brothers and me, “Greet your Aunt Aleja, who has just come to visit us.” The ceremonial greeting granted refuge to the butterfly, to our *Tía* Aleja, one of my grandmother’s 11 siblings, who had died when my mother was still very young. *Tía* Aleja, however, had then not renounced to the realm of the living and came back every night to take over my grandmother’s television in the *caserío* (public housing project). Her reincarnation as a butterfly was only one of the many miracles my grandmother unveiled for me from a world populated by such characters and histories that defied and melded with my middle-class and San Juan-based education.

My grandmother, *Abuela* Paca, tuned my perception to those “unnoticed riches of reality” Alejo Carpentier once identified in northern Haiti. As the Cuban scholar was a firm believer in the intertwinement of the marvelous and the real in America, I am a believer in the real-marvelous of the San Juan-Viequense world.⁴ Engaging the real-marvelous, Carpentier wrote, presupposes a faith. The real-marvelous, he further argued, is not accessible through the artificial wielding of reality. On the contrary, it comes forth

³ See Appendices 1-5.

⁴ The word America, as employed by the Cuban scholar Alejo Carpentier, refers to the hemisphere as opposed to the United States of America.

to those willing and able to perceive particularities, or miracles.⁵ These miracles may not be readily identifiable or logical, and, I would add, are certainly not exclusive to America. Thus, the real-marvelous, more than a description of America in all its historical richness and contradictions, is ultimately about the perception of particularities. In my case, what miracles am I willing and does my *San Juanera*–Viequense identity allows me to perceive about the world I grew up in? The following historical narrative is the result of a very personal exploration delving into 500 years of miracles surrounding the island of Vieques.⁶



Vieques, an 18 by 3.5 mile island, has been for thousands of years a steppingstone for human crossing through the Caribbean. In the midst of the crossings, different peoples have attempted to establish themselves in the small island. Forging a community in this heart of the West Indian island-arc, however, has been for the would-be settlers an equally long-term process. For varied reasons in different contexts, the act of establishing a stable community in this remote speck of the Caribbean has met with resistance from the part of powerful historical actors, including the rulers and bureaucracy of the Spanish and the U.S. empires.⁷ Such empires have, through invasions,

⁵ Carpentier, “Prólogo,” *El reino de este mundo* 1-2.

⁶ My usage of the term narration refers to the telling of a history through verbal as well as other material and symbolic practices. My employment of the term is further intended to suggest the literary character of historical accounts.

⁷ The term U.S. Empire, at least before the events of September 11, 2001, has been cause for discomfort within the U.S. academia perhaps more accustomed to thinking of empires in terms of, northwestern, Europe. The discomfort almost mandates that the usage of the term be accompanied with some sort of theoretical explanation that justifies the usage and makes the disclaimer about the

diplomatic arguments and even massacres, made evident that colonial fringes like Vieques can be the stage for imperial dramas of global scope.⁸ Vieques, in fact, rose to prominence at different moments posing both challenges and opportunities to metropolises. Spain's early 16th century crusade against the Caribs, for example, was redefined through Vieques. The 17th-19th century rivalry between Spain and Great Britain for the control of the Caribbean was fought in Vieques. Even the United States' 1960s pan-American campaign was rethought through Vieques. Thus, Vieques has been

exceptionality of the U.S. Empire. While the term U.S. Empire might not raise eyebrows in other academias around the world, it is still a worthwhile intellectual exercise to defamiliarize from the familiar, and perhaps vice versa for the U.S. academia, by thinking about the particularities of the U.S. Empire as it has been built through, for example, discourses of democracy and freedom, the naturalization and hierarchization of difference, the creative exercise of hard and soft power, the employment of colonial subjects in the exercise of violence and domination, and indirect modes of control not dependent on outright possession. Yet, these particularities can only reinforce the argument that the U.S. Empire does not differ significantly from the articulations and discourses surrounding other empires like the British Empire that, for example, also appropriated notions of citizenship and freedom to legitimate imperial endeavors across the globe. Such was the case in the mid 19th century when British officials repeatedly intervened in Vieques saying to act in the name of the black British citizens whose freedom was being infringed by the Spanish Government. The motives for the interventions, however, were more complex and cannot be separated from the territorial pretensions of the British Empire over the island of Vieques. Therefore, I understand that the U.S. Empire resembles, more than differs, from other empires, even though it must be studied in its historical specificities. For an argument about the discomfort within the U.S. academia with the term U.S. Empire see Amy Kaplan, "'Left Alone with America: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture,'" Cultures of United States Imperialism, eds. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) 3-21. For a study of the academic debates surrounding the "American Empire" after September 11, 2001 see also Amy Kaplan, "Violent Belongings and the Question of Empire Today Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, October 17, 2003," American Quarterly 56.1 (March 2004): 1-18. For an assessment of the categories empire and imperialism and their relevance to think about the U.S. in its long imperialist relationship with Latin America and in the post-September 11, 2001 context see Fernando Coronil, "After Empire: Reflections on Imperialism from the Américas," Imperial Formations, eds. Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan and Peter C. Perdue (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007) 241-274. For a study of the U.S.' "new imperialism," as it was first implemented in Latin America, specifically in Central America, during the Cold War and has evolved to the post-9/11 period, see Greg Grandin, Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006). For a study of contested meanings of freedom in the U.S., and its roots in Great Britain, see Eric Foner, "The Meaning of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation," The Journal of American History 81.2 (September 1994): 435-460. For the discussion of British officials regarding the treatment of black British citizens in Vieques see President of the Virgin Islands Isidore Dyett, letter to Governor in Chief of the Leeward Island B. Hamilton, 7 October 1861, Sovereignty over Vieque or Crab Island and Culebra or Pasaje Island, vol. 1 1846-1862, FO 72/1119, National Archives, London, 174-175.

⁸ My usage of the term empire refers to the rulers and bureaucracies of empires. The usage does not acknowledge historical agency to an abstract empire or assumes the internal coherency of empires. On the contrary, I understand that people make empires and that these peoples making up empire clash as well as coincide upon the enactment of imperial policies. The term imperial dramas refers to the schemes, challenges and projects of empires.

a space where imperial dramas have been acted out. What happened in the island manifested as well as affected the global narratives these empires were weaving.

The present dissertation follows the five-century struggle of peoples to inhabit the Caribbean island of Vieques and of empires to control it. This is a history of displacement and militarized imperialism, and an examination of the power of historical narrations in the struggle of colonized peoples to claim a place of their own. The inhabitants of Vieques have engaged the struggle to survive as a community through histories that tie their people to the island. They have geographically imagined, especially over the last two centuries, the island as an enclosed space inscribed with local meaning.⁹ These historical narrations needed to inscribe, or perhaps scar, the island and its map so as to convince empires that Vieques was not just a void representation of land produced by imperial cartographers. Contrary to places like Thailand where imperial cartography had a central role in classifying the people into a community, the map of the island preceded by 300 years the inhabitants who arrived in the 19th century to formally colonize the island.¹⁰ The community, in fact, grew by trying to appropriate that island-

⁹ Geographical imaginings, as formulated by Pat Jess and Doreen Massey, are: “frequently based on interpretations not just of the present character of a place but also –and often more importantly– of its past. The implication is that the character of this history (or, more precisely, this particular interpretation of the history) should be used as a guide for, indeed is the justification for, what should happen in the future. In this sense, what is being named, or interpreted, is not just space or place, but a space as it has existed through time: what one might think of as an *envelope of space-time*.” Thus, geographical imaginings refer to interpretations of the past and present and character of a place that can guide or justify the future of the same place. Pat Jess and Doreen Massey, “The Contestation of Place,” *A Place in the World?: Places, Culture and Globalization*, eds. Doreen Massey and Pat Jess (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 134.

¹⁰ While at times denying humans of the agency endowed to technology, Thongchai Winichakul argues that the Siamese nation, or geo-body, was initially brought about by modern geography. He defines geo-body as a territory inhabited by “nationals” and delimited by “non-nationals.” Winichakul’s interdisciplinary work, which led to the formulation of my dissertation topic, recognizes the role of empires in the creation of national communities because, as shown in the case of Siam, empires established categories and boundaries that were later appropriated by nationals or nationalists in the forging of new nations. Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994). For a discussion of the 300 years prior to the official foundation of the Spanish colony of Vieques in the 19th century see “Chapter 3: Claims to the Labyrinthine Island, 16th-19th Centuries.”

map disputed until 1864 by Spain, England and Denmark. I use the term island-map because from the 16th to the 18th century no alternative representations of Vieques circulated within the aforementioned empires. With the exception of some isolated cases, Vieques was just a silhouette on a map to imperial officials contented with representing a void space.¹¹ As long as the space was officially void of people, different empires could claim the island-map. The representational void, however, facilitated the invisibility of peoples who actually inhabited the island from the 16th to the 18th century. The void also made easier the endeavor of would-be Viequenses to fill the space with their own narratives.¹² The 19th century endeavor to claim the space, in turn, resulted in the privileging of the geographical representation of Vieques as an island-community.

The narratives of the island as distinctively Viequense have been articulated through specific gendered discourses. These discourses, built through kinship metaphors, transfigured Vieques into an island child and gave life to Isla Nena (Girl Island): the daughter of the Puerto Rican main island. Isla Nena is the gendered and infantile representation of the Viequense island-community. In the following chapters, I trace the life of Isla Nena starting with the conception of an island-community worth dying for in 1514 with the Spanish massacre of the indigenous population, going through its birth and baptism as Isla Nena in the late 19th and early 20th century as the prosperous sugar colony was incorporated to Puerto Rico, and culminating with the Nena's near extinction brought about by the U.S. Navy's activities in the island since the mid 20th century. The

¹¹ The space, however, had been occupied before the European arrival to the Caribbean and continued to be so well into the 19th century before, for example, the Spanish Empire recognized it was not an empty space. See "Chapter 2: Myths of Origin and Foundational Figures, 1514" and "Chapter 3: Claims to the Labyrinthine Island, 16th-19th Centuries."

¹² I define Viequenses as the people who identify with the category and/or inhabit the island of Vieques, and are potentially recognized by others as Viequenses.

capacity to be conceived and born, evolve, and several times almost die portrays Isla Nena as a living being. The life I acknowledge in the representation, however, has been endowed by generations of both Viequenses and non-Viequenses. Their narrations have established an organic relationship between the island and the community Isla Nena embodies. In this sense, Viequenses and Isla Nena are thought to have lived together as one throughout the last five centuries in the northeastern Caribbean. The temporal and spatial character of Isla Nena has legitimated the islanders' claims over the history and landscape of Vieques. To the extent that Isla Nena occupies and is the island as it has evolved over the past centuries, so Viequenses have too come to inhabit that time and space.¹³ Thus, in the long struggle to inhabit Isla Nena, Viequenses have met imperial dramas with historical narrations of the island as distinctively Viequense.

The present study is a *longue durée* history structured chronologically from the 1514 massacre of indigenous population in Vieques to the 2003 closing down of the U.S. Navy facilities in the island.¹⁴ Two of the recurring themes are the strategic importance different empires have assigned to Vieques in regards to European maritime voyages to the Caribbean, and the subordination of Vieques to the Puerto Rican main island. Yet,

¹³ The separation of time from space and vice versa, as Manuel Castells, David Harvey and many others argue, while sometimes analytically useful, is a theoretical illusion. The one is implied in the existence and comprehension of the other. Borrowing Castells' definition, "space is a material product, in relationship to other material products –including people– who engage in [historically] determined social relationships that provide space with a form, a function, and a social meaning...*space is the material support of time-sharing social practices.*" The argument that time-based practices depend on space for support and spaces in turn are shaped by the same time-based practices favors Harvey's usage of the concept of time-space as a single analytical category. Manuel Castells, *The Castells Reader on Cities and Social Theory*, ed. Ida Susser (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2002) 343-344. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1990).

¹⁴ The French historian Fernand Braudel pioneered the concept of *longue durée* as a history of long chronological extent divided between geographical, social and individual times in his 1949 work *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*. My own use of the concept *longue durée* refers to a long chronological history mindful to the influence of geography on such a history. Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris: Colin, 1949). See Appendix 4.

even though the island and its Caribbean-ness have dictated a particular brand of colonialism, this is really not the history of a place. It is the history of peoples and of their imagining of an island-community, and by imagining I mean both the long socio-historical process marked by violent displacements and uneasy mergings of peoples in the island and the 20th century historical narratives that have structured and given sense to the process. As such, this is also a study of memory, or of the collective memories of 500 years. This history of *longue durée*, in turn, is structured through foundational conjunctures central to the late 20th century Viequense collective memory of themselves as an island-community.

The historical agency in the following narrative is not lost in structures, geography and long historical processes, but can be found in those ephemeral and everyday struggles of individuals to survive. Individuals, I argue, are not lost in their milieu. On the contrary, Viequenses are users who, following French historian Michel de Certeau, have creatively woven Isla Nena through walking and other everyday practices.¹⁵ They actively adapted and molded an island otherwise claimed by empires. People, in the process of imagining a community, establish organic relationships with places and their histories that allow them to create a sense of belonging. It was, after all, people in their everyday practices who gave life to their milieu through the imagining of Isla Nena. I, as a historian, have just written down my interpretation of the real-marvelous miracle that brought life to an island-community.

¹⁵ Michel de Certeau argued that users, people who lack a place for empowerment, engage in tactics like walking and other everyday practices to creatively weave spaces they are otherwise disempowered to claim. The tactics of the disempowered, in turn, are characterized by a sense of spontaneous mobility that creatively disrupts and redefines spaces users are nonetheless unable to possess. Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

My intertwining of long historical processes and everyday practices is meant to shed light on the intimate workings of empires in Vieques. Following the cultural turn, historians have portrayed empires as articulated and experienced intimately by people. The change has entailed a redefinition of the relationship between the micro and the macro and between the metropole and the colony, and a more nuanced understanding of the everyday workings of power.¹⁶ I am precisely interested in the everyday workings and challenges to imperial projects because it is in those everyday struggles that empires manifest their most intimate hegemonic pretensions and vulnerabilities. The convergence in Vieques of global imperial dramas with the everyday narratives of inhabitants allows for such an exploration. In Vieques, for example, a walk through the town of Isabel II during the 1950s could not be separated from the Cold War that the U.S. Empire waged on a global scale.¹⁷ The U.S. Cold War initiatives encouraged spatial geographies users had to navigate in order to survive. Mistakes in judgment had concrete consequences on the bodies of colonial subjects, and of servicemen.¹⁸ Empires and their schemes, in fact, bridge the 500 years of this history. Their imperial designs in Vieques have been exceedingly militaristic and have subordinated the welfare of the island's inhabitants to

¹⁶ For an assessment of the historical writing of Latin American-U.S. Empire encounters see, for example, Gilbert Joseph, Catherine Legrand and Ricardo Salvatore, eds., Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998). For a discussion of metropolitan-colonial connections see Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 1-56.

¹⁷ See Appendices 1 and 2.

¹⁸ I define colonial subjects in this context as the inhabitants of Vieques and Viequenses who were not part of the U.S. Armed Forces or representatives of the federal government in the island. By the usage of the term colonial subjects, however, I do not wish to imply that these people shared a stable identity based on colonial subalternity. On the contrary, I understand that subalternity, not reduced to the category of proletariat, depends on context based positionalities, and that colonialism does not necessarily define every aspect of the lives of colonial subjects. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988). 271-313. For a discussion of the effects of the onset of the Cold War in Vieques see "Chapter 7: Isla Nena, Island of Memories and the Dead, 1953-2003."

the needs of distant and not so distant metropolises.¹⁹ Imperial designs, in turn, also reveal the other side of the coin, people's struggle to survive. Empires may have come and gone from Vieques over the last five centuries, but the narrative thread of this history remains the same: imperialism and survival.

Imperial narratives cannot be separated from the everyday practices of Viequeses. Their intimate connection makes evident that the seemingly marginal can be global in scale. My delving into the miracles surrounding the island of Vieques illuminates the particularities of the Puerto Rican archipelago and the Caribbean region in general. The militarized imperialism exercised in Vieques has been but an acute manifestation of Spanish and U.S. imperial designs towards Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. As the Jamaican-born sociologist Stuart Hall has argued, the Caribbean is a diasporic space historically constructed through violent ruptures, constant movement and interchange.²⁰ The 1514 massacre of the indigenous population and the late 19th and early 21st century migratory waves between Vieques and neighboring islands attest to a Caribbean history marked by violent displacements and the clashing and mergings of peoples. These events further attest to a Caribbean history where surviving is many times an act of defiance. The miracles surrounding Vieques, therefore, tell something about Puerto Rico, the Caribbean and other seemingly marginal and very much colonized communities across the globe such as Guam.

The particularities of Vieques, however, are global in different ways. These do not only have echoes in other parts of the world, but have affected the global narratives of

¹⁹ In the last 500 years San Juan has also functioned as a metropolitan center for Vieques, and the government of the Puerto Rican colony and later commonwealth has often formulated adverse measures for the island-community.

²⁰ Stuart Hall, "Negotiating Caribbean Identities," *New Left Review* 209 (January-February 1995): 6.

empires. The Operation Portex carried out in Vieques during February of 1950, for example, shaped the actions of U.S. troops in Korea.²¹ Or perhaps, the opposition from the part of the Puerto Rican government and the Viequense people to the 1958-1964 plans to expropriate the complete island of Vieques made the Department of Defense (DOD), and specifically the Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in office from 1961-1968, to think twice before attempting another complete expropriation of a community of U.S. citizens.²² The opposition may have encouraged the DOD to rest its gaze upon non-U.S. territories like the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean. The British citizens of the Diego García atoll may have then borne the brunt of military expropriations, carried out during the years 1967-1971 by the British Empire for the U.S. The British Empire, through this gesture of transatlantic imperial solidarity, quietly moved the Chagossians to Mauritius and saved the U.S. from the problem of having to face colonial citizens of the empire appropriating discourses of freedom and democracy to demand the return to their home island. The Director of the Center for Defense Information, Rear Admiral (Retired) Gene La Rocque, in fact, testified to Congress in 1974 about the transfer of the Diego García atoll that, “the British lent their name to the project as a cover for actual U.S. control and dominance. This was perhaps due to bashfulness on the part of the United States about hanging on to some remnants of the crumbled British colonial empire.”²³ The U.S., whether embarrassed by taking spoils or by acting like an empire,

²¹ William Warner Harris, Puerto Rico’s Fighting 65th Infantry: From San Juan to Chorwan (San Rafael: Presidio Press, 1980).

²² Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was in office from 1961 to 1968. He headed part of the confidential talks between the White House, the DOD and the government of Puerto Rico during the years 1958-1964 on the DOD’s plans to expropriate the complete islands of Vieques and Culebra. For a discussion of the 1958-1964 expropriation plans see “Chapter 7: Isla Nena, Island of Memories and the Dead, 1953-2003.”

²³ “Diego Garcia: New Imperialist Roost in the Indian Ocean,” Arabs in Israel, spec. issue of MERIP Reports 41 (October 1975): 19.

could definitely be imperial through the British Empire. Although as the ex-Mayor of Vieques Radamés Tirado argues, it may just be the custom of the U.S. Navy, and DOD in general, to get somebody else do its dirty work.²⁴ In return for taking care of the dirty work, the U.S. assumed part of the British millionaire share of research and development costs of the Polaris missile system.²⁵ The transaction paid off for the U.S. that has since then denied responsibility over the welfare of the Chagossians by claiming, among other things, lack of jurisdiction in foreign soil.²⁶ Such a washing of imperial hands of the problem of colonial subjects, as evidenced in the 2003 closing down of the naval bases in Vieques, would have been impossible for the U.S. in the case of the Viequeses. Particularities surrounding Vieques, therefore, have marked shifts in imperial policies. The shifts suggest the intricate relationship between metropolis and colony and the vulnerability of empires to the actions of colonial fringes.²⁷

²⁴ Radamés Tirado, personal interview, 28 February 2001.

²⁵ The British Empire, some say secretly and with the compliance of the U.S. DOD, expropriated the approximately 1,000 to 2,000 inhabitants of the Diego García atoll during 1967-1971 in order to lease the island to the U.S. For a comparison of the history of Vieques with that of the atoll Diego García of the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean see “Chapter 7: Isla Nena, Island of Memories and the Dead, 1953-2003” and “Chapter 8: Conclusion.” “Diego Garcia: New Imperialist Roost in the Indian Ocean,” Arabs in Israel. Jack Fuller, “Dateline Diego Garcia: Paved-Over Paradise,” Foreign Policy 28 (Autumn 1977): 183.

²⁶ Chagossians filed suit in 2001 against the ex-Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and the United States for their expropriation from Diego García, and the effects that the expropriation have had on the displaced population. U.S. courts have repeatedly dismissed the case claiming, among other things, no sovereignty over the foreign territory of Diego García. Bancoult, et al. v. McNamara, et al, no. 05-5049, Court of Appeals District of Columbia of the U.S., 21 April 2006, Georgetown Law Library, 2008, Georgetown University, 24 January 2008 <<http://www.ll.georgetown.edu/federal/judicial/dc/opinions/05opinions/05-5049a.pdf>>.

²⁷ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri propose that competing imperialist powers are being replaced with a single unitary power that overdetermines and structures them all. The result is the creation of a transnational Empire that has no definite center. Since the new Empire has no true center, Hardt and Negri argue, any margin, like Vieques, can be used to deal a fatal blow to the Imperial heart. The lack of a center, in turn, implies a corresponding lack of fringes. The global is in the local and vice versa. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Empire (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

Empires, especially in the late 20th and 21st century, have proven very vulnerable to the power of histories.²⁸ It is ultimately histories, in their verbal, physical and symbolic forms, which create and legitimize the organic relationship of people to places. histories then have the power to portray empires, no matter how central their role in the community, as foreign aggressors and in the process transform the identities of groups and individuals from imperial subjects into colonized ones.²⁹ In other words, historical interpretations have the power to transform, for example, Spanish subjects into colonized people under the Spanish empire. People in general wield the power of histories in their everyday narrations. Yet, historians claim a privileged access to legitimated, as opposed to everyday, histories. These are the verbal narratives approved by dissertation committees, published in books and read by communities of scholars. These are the narratives people in colonial contexts like Vieques have limited opportunities to either consume or produce. The problem, in turn, is one of representation and power. How can colonial subjects access legitimated spaces of representation from which to narrate their community? This precise question, bringing to the forefront the political divide between history and memories and stories, led to the formulation of this dissertation.

This research project has its roots in 1978, when I was born to Viequense emigrants in San Juan. My parents were also marked by displacements, but perhaps less violently so than my grandparents, who were expropriated by the U.S. Navy in the

²⁸ For a discussion of the late 20th century proliferation of representational spaces where to narrate alternative histories see “Chapter 7: Isla Nena, Island of Memories and the Dead, 1953-2003.”

²⁹ Even though I argue that for centuries different empires have opposed the establishment of a stable community in Vieques, the Viequense island-community cannot be separated from imperial narratives. The island-community was established in relation to these imperial narratives. Therefore, empires are not foreign entities to the Viequense community, but an integral part of it.

1940s.³⁰ My parents, nonetheless, wove for me such compelling histories about life in Vieques, U.S. imperialism and violent displacement that I inherited their histories as my own. I could not escape them. Following Marianne Hirsch, I understand memory as an act in the present negotiated with collective histories. Memory, she argues, does not need to be based on lived experiences because time and space can conflate as through a superimposition of disparate images. The conflation, however, requires acts of identification and affiliation with, in this case, the traumatic histories my parents narrated. My identification with my parents' histories transformed their memories into my own postmemories. Postmemory, as formulated by Marianne Hirsch, describes:

the relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experiences of their parents, experiences that they “remember” only as the stories and images with which they grew up, but that are so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own right. The term is meant to convey its temporal and qualitative difference from survivor memory, its secondary or second-generation memory quality, its basis in displacement, its belatedness. Postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through projection, investment and creation. That is not to say that the survivor memory itself is unmediated, but that it is more directly connected to the past. Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that they can neither understand nor re-create.³¹

Postmemories are therefore powerful non-witness or second-generation memories that inform personal and collective identities. I then informed my *San Juanera*-Viequense identity with postmemories of street brawls, extreme poverty and killings that I never witnessed but that I clearly identified as integral to life in Vieques with the U.S. Navy.

³⁰ For a discussion of the 1940s expropriations carried out by the U.S. Navy in Vieques see “Chapter 6: The Arrival of the U.S. Navy, 1930-1950.”

³¹ Marianne Hirsch, “Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy,” *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999) 8.

The present research project started to take shape during a 2001 conversation with the community activist and personal friend of my parents, Ismael Guadalupe. I was writing a paper about the 1953 murder of an old man, and he told me not only about the murder but also about what he thought was the importance of my work for the Viequense community. He emphasized to me how urgently they needed the text I was going to write in order to contradict the “lies” the U.S. Navy told about their 60-year presence in Vieques. It was clear to me then that the Viequense community needed the work of a historian, not to tell them their history, but to legitimate it to the U.S. Navy and other interested parties.³² Perhaps they needed the written text of a *San Juanera*-Viequense historian from the University of Michigan who was not exactly a member of, but also was not foreign to, the Viequense community, and who was working in the midst of the U.S. Empire. The borders of imperial-colonial encounters were therefore diffused in me as I embodied the U.S. trained Viequense-Puerto Rican historian who could narrate histories melded with postmemories, or perhaps wield the power to transform Viequense memories into legitimated histories. The practice of history in colonial contexts, I further understood then, can involve the very urgent telling of narratives upon which people rely for survival. Histories can be weapons and back in 2001 I was about to write one.³³ I decided to explore the tensions of the historical discipline and engage my own personal task in a self-reflexive manner. Thus, I set out to write a study both of Vieques and of the narration of its history.

³² Ismael Guadalupe, for example, did not need me to tell him that in 1953 an old Viequense man had been murdered by U.S. servicemen. He was convinced of the factuality of the event. He did not even need me to interpret the murder for him because he contextualized it very well within the larger relationship of the Viequense community with the U.S. Navy. He needed only the written text of a historian that could validate his claims. Ismael Guadalupe, personal interview, 28 February 2001.

³³ For a discussion of histories as weapons of the Spanish Empire see “Chapter 4: The Spanish Colony of Vieques, 19th Century.”

One of the first challenges I encountered in the writing of a history of Vieques was where to find it. I soon realized that to find the history of my seemingly marginal colony I had to visit the imperial archives and engage 500 years of imperial knowledge production surrounding the island of Vieques.³⁴ I therefore conducted research in San Juan, Puerto Rico; Washington, D.C.; London, United Kingdom; and Nantes in France. In San Juan I frequented the General Archive of Puerto Rico, the Luis Muñoz Marín Foundation, the Center for Historical Researches and diverse collections of the José Lázaro Library. The Center, part of the University of Puerto Rico along with the Lázaro Library, held documentation from the National Historical Archive, Overseas Section in Madrid and the National Library of Madrid. In Washington, London and Nantes I researched in the respective U.S. and U.K. National Archives and in the Center of the Diplomatic Archives. In the end, I had constructed my own trans-imperial archive that portrayed competing visions of Vieques. The Foreign Office of the British Empire, for example, suspected that the 19th century “Founder of Vieques” Teophile Le Guillou was a deserter from the French Navy, while the Spanish Overseas Ministry embraced him as a refugee from post-revolutionary Haiti.³⁵ In Vieques I visited the Museum and Archive *Fortín Conde de Mirasol* and the Office of the Special Sub-Commissioner for Vieques. While imperial archives safeguarded, for the most part, abundant documentation

³⁴ For a discussion of the problem with the production of knowledge and imperial archives see, for example, Cooper and Stoler, “Between Metropole and Colony,” *Tensions of Empire*. See also Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

³⁵ The Spanish Overseas Ministry was created by the Royal Decree of May 20, 1863. Its creation took place 20 years after Teophile Le Guillou’s death. Nonetheless, the Ministry safeguarded and commented on documents related to the passing of Le Guillou through Vieques. The British Foreign Office also safeguarded and commented upon documents produced, in this case by the British Empire, of Le Guillou’s passing through Vieques. Agustín Sánchez Andrés, “El Ministerio de Ultramar en España: estructura administrativa y política colonial (1863-1899),” *Historia y Sociedad* VIII (1995-1996): 52. For a discussion of Teophile Le Guillou’s role in the foundation of the Spanish colony of Vieques see “Chapter 4: The Spanish Colony of Vieques, 19th Century.”

produced by their officials, the *Fortín* offered a variety of texts produced by colonial subjects.³⁶ I wanted to recover and respectfully convey the texts produced by the inhabitants of Vieques, not to rescue expressions of pure subaltern voice, but to find subaltern histories embedded within imperial narratives.³⁷ In turn, I conducted 34 interviews that I combined with a wide array of sources ranging from maps, newspapers, journals and government-produced documents to Internet sites, murals, monuments, novels, songs and sayings.³⁸ The extended archive I created, perhaps guided by the ideal of an ever-elusive total history, bridges five centuries, different imperial archives and traditional divides between historical and ethnographic research.

The diversity of sources, while central to the interdisciplinary and trans-imperial project, still lacked the intimacy I wanted to convey about imperialism and survival. I therefore decided to expose myself, and my family, to the reader and engage this history

³⁶ I define colonial subjects in this context as the inhabitants of Vieques and Viequenses who were not imperial officials or those persons directly employed in the imperial bureaucracy. In terms of archives and the representation of colonial subjects, the Luis Muñoz Marín Foundation in Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico, has safeguarded a variety of texts produced by the inhabitants of Vieques and Viequenses in general. I think the populist stance of the Puerto Rican Governor Luis Muñoz Marín favored the surfacing of these voices appealing directly to him for help. In addition, the archive with the documents pertaining to Luis Muñoz Marín's political career is not exactly an imperial archive to Vieques. Part of the problem with finding texts produced by Viequense colonial subjects, especially before the 20th century, is the reigning illiteracy of the population when imperial archives have privileged the written text, and therefore the writings of imperial bureaucrats.

³⁷ My search for texts produced by colonial subjects is ultimately a search for subaltern histories embedded within imperial narratives. The search for such texts and histories should not imply the belief that I can give voice to the subaltern. My purpose is rather to strategically essentialize, and in the process be guilty of epistemic violence (violence exercised through the production of knowledge), so as to write a narrative about the effects of imperialism in Vieques. As the Indian literary critic and theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has argued, the category subaltern is situational and elusive, especially for intellectuals seeking to represent the subaltern who cannot speak, or be heard, because there is no shared language. The impossibility of representing the subaltern, further following Spivak, should not lead to the renunciation of intellectual endeavors and political projects, but rather lead to conscious and strategic essentializing and alliances that do not naturalize identity positionalities. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York: Routledge, 1990) 140-142. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism*.

³⁸ Not all of the people I interviewed can be classified as Viequenses. There were some Puerto Rican main islanders and U.S. North Americans that had made Vieques their home or their vacation getaway. These persons, for the most part, had no desire nor were they identified by other people with the category of Viequense.

through my memories and postmemories. My insertion into the narrative, I hope, accomplishes different objectives I am committed to in the practice of history. First, the insertion makes my presence felt and opens up my role as a weaver of histories for the reader to question. Second, my acknowledgement as a knitter of histories makes evident that the imagining of Isla Nena has been a transnational collective effort. My parents and thousands of Viequenses have for years imagined Isla Nena from San Juan, St. Croix, New York and other spaces, as I have been imagining Isla Nena from Michigan. Thirdly, my privileging of postmemories as primary sources in their own right, to be avowed and questioned, problematizes the divides between legitimated versus non-legitimated sources, written versus oral texts and between history versus memory.³⁹ Lastly, my postmemories allow me to write a history about *Abuela Paca*.

My grandmother endured displacement, extreme poverty and finally succumbed to cancer. The English historian Carolyn Steedman once wrote about the death of her mother that, “to have cancer was the final unfairness in a life measured out by it.”⁴⁰ So was it for my grandmother. Yet, while Steedman was concerned with the exclusions that

³⁹ The debate about the relationship of history and memory is a long and heated one. Peter Burke, for example, argues that historical writing, like memory, is the product of social groups who determine what is to be remembered and how. He, in turn, characterizes memory as historical but, due to its non-written character, particularly malleable and selective. For Burke, history is achieved when memory is performed or maybe transformed by the act of writing. Writing is central for him because it is the main instrument to assist memory in the resistance of manipulation. In the end, both are understood by Burke as political forms of collective remembrance. Yet, history is privileged over a supposedly weak memory. Peter Burke, “History as Social Memory,” *Varieties of Cultural History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) 43-59. The debate on the Western privileging of the written word is extensive. For an example of an argument against the artificial divide between text and image see W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, and Ideology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986). For a problematization of the divide between written and oral languages of cultures see Gordon Brotherston, “Towards a grammatology of America: Lévi-Strauss, Derrida and the native New World text,” *Literature, Politics and Theory: Papers from the Essex Conference, 1976-84*, ed. Francis Baker (London: Methuen, 1986) 190-209. Or see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976).

⁴⁰ Carolyn Kay Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1997) 1.

gender and class had inflicted on her mother's life, my grandmother endured the exclusions of class, gender, race and colonialism. Her experiences with displacement, poverty and cancer were arguably results of the U.S. Navy's presence in Vieques. Still, my grandmother expressed her political claims through the pro-statehood party. Her allegiance to the United States, not unlike the allegiance of Steedman's mother to the conservative party, perhaps revealed a desire to move out of the fringes, or borderlands as Steedman calls it, and into the center of the imperial community.⁴¹ This was a center that she identified in Hollywood, for my grandmother never spoke of Washington or politics. Yet, she was fixed on visiting Hollywood, and take a peek of lives lived out far away from apartments in *caseríos*.

The everyday struggles of my grandmother to inhabit Vieques are not recorded in history books. Yet, she was my most marvelous, intimate and contradictory historical trace of the past I seek to capture. It is traces, following Michel-Rolph Trouillot, that separate the socio-historical processes from the historical narratives that differ and overlap with the processes. He argues that in particular contexts, often spurred by controversy, communities experience the need for a different kind of credibility that leads to the evaluation of historical facts from fictions. The passing of these very context-based tests is what separates, for Trouillot, historical narratives from fictional ones. The separation, furthermore, depends on those traces that he argues socio-historical processes always leave behind, some of which are quite concrete and delimit the possibilities of future historical narratives.⁴² *Abuela* Paca is thus the inspiration of this historical

⁴¹ In the first line of Part One of *Landscape for a Good Woman*, Steedman wrote that the book was about "lives lived out in the borderlands." These were the lives of her English working-class mother and grandmother, and perhaps her own. Steedman, *Landscape*. 5.

⁴² Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* 1-30.

narrative, for her narratives tuned my perception and her body bore the scars of the history that follows. With those scars, I negotiate this history.

The present narrative is spun through the histories of four generations of Viequenses, of which I am, for now, the last one. I hope to convey to the reader the multiple forms of a long struggle of peoples to claim a place of their own. The right to inhabit Vieques, after all, has been fought for on a daily basis over the past 500 years.

The following text is divided into eight chapters. The second chapter, titled “Myths of Origin and Foundation Figures, 1514,” provides a brief introduction to the geography of Vieques and to the aboriginal cultures that passed through and inhabited the Caribbean island. The emphasis, however, is on the Carib group that clashed with the Spanish Empire in the early 16th century. This group had a profound impact not only in shaping European fantasies of the region, but also in later negotiations surrounding Viequense identity. The 1514 massacre of the indigenous people in the island, I argue, is alive in the collective memory of Viequenses who interpret it as a foundational conjuncture for their island-community. Viequenses, in turn, credit the Caribs with the original imagining of the island-community of Bieke. The imagining was carried out through daily rituals and, more importantly for Viequenses, through extraordinary acts like those of the tragic-heroic figures Cacimar and Yaureibo who died in the struggle against the Spanish conquistadors. The introduction to the indigenous populations also facilitates the assessment of the role of archeology in the study of pre-Columbian Vieques and in the writing of the history of Puerto Rico.

The third chapter “Claims to the Labyrinthine Island, 16th-19th Centuries” examines how, for the three centuries following the 1514 massacre of the indigenous

population, Spain did not exercise control over Vieques. Even though the Spanish government identified Vieques as a deserted imperial possession, the island was the gathering place of people representing a synthesis of the fringes and enemies of the Spanish Empire. Spain's inability to populate and unwillingness to give up its claims to the small island, I argue, favored Vieques' evolution into a contact zone of European empires. Subjects of different empires coincided in Vieques for illicit dealings and for the extraction of the island's natural resources. The access of these subjects to the island encouraged a proliferation of non-Spanish geographical representations and colonization ventures. These representations and ventures combined to propose alternate identities for the island that the Spanish Empire could not control. In turn, some Spanish officials and chroniclers characterized Vieques as a savage island. The writings portrayed how the Carib savagery Spain hoped to erase in 1514 could not be easily vanquished. While Vieques' status remained ambiguous, Puerto Rico was rapidly militarized and transformed into a sugar colony dependent on slavery. These important changes in the main island affected the status of Vieques during the 16th to the 19th century. In this chapter I analyze 16th-18th century maps, 18th century chronicles and diverse 19th century Spanish imperial documentation.

Chapter four "The Founding of the Spanish Colony of Vieques" focuses on the gradual processes throughout the 19th century of establishing the Spanish colony of Vieques, and of annexing it to the nearby colony of Puerto Rico. I argue that these processes, begun in 1811 and sealed by 1873, were full of contradictions and tensions that changed characterizations of the island from a void and untamable space into a feminized and infantile island-community. These processes, I also argue, have come to

represent for Viequenses a second and definite foundational conjuncture. If the Caribs had imagined an island-community worth dying for, the Spanish Empire succeeded in establishing one that managed to survive. In this chapter I examine 19th century British Foreign Office and French diplomatic records and varied documentation produced in Madrid, San Juan and Vieques.

The fifth chapter “The Sugar Baptism of Isla Nena, Late 1800s-1930” addresses the 1898 change of Spanish to U.S. sovereignty over the Puerto Rican archipelago and the continuities and disruptions the change meant to the Viequense sugar world. The cultivation of sugar dictated the demographic, socio-economic and land-tenure patterns prevalent on the island. The prosperous sugar economy, I argue, made possible Luis Lloréns Torres’ poem “Isla Nena.” The poem written by the Puerto Rican main islander both named an island already characterized as a female child and discursively sealed its subordinate relationship to Puerto Rico. The island child, after all, was the daughter of the Puerto Rico main island. The sugar world, in addition, made possible the gradual coming together of Viequenses, Caribbean immigrants and main islanders and the uneasy entrance of Puerto Rican nationalism into the small island. The chapter, in this sense, is not about sugar, but about the people brought together by sugar. In this chapter I employ diverse early 20th century U.S. government documentation, Vieques’ municipal records, newspapers, photographs, maps and interviews.

The sixth chapter, titled “The Arrival of the U.S. Navy, 1930-1950,” discusses the entrance of the Navy into Vieques in relation to the changes it brought on the land-tenure patterns and the socio-economic and urban composition of the island. The 1940s expropriations enclosed Viequenses in a civilian land stretch representing one fourth of

the island. The expropriations, I argue, destroyed the island's agricultural activities and broke people's attachments to the land and barrios. The entrance of the Navy redefined the relationship of Viequenses to the island and among themselves. It marked the rise of Viequense regional pride and the acknowledgement of a Viequense transnational community. In other words, the entrance of the U.S. Navy into the island made possible the imagining of a Viequense collective identity which was closely related to the experience of displacement. The entrance, furthermore, altered the municipality's relationship to the Puerto Rican main island and government. Viequenses, after the 1940s, were simultaneously more dependent upon and more suspicious of the Puerto Rican government. In this chapter I use Navy and Puerto Rican government documentation, literary works, interviews, photographs and other cultural texts.

The seventh chapter "Isla Nena, Island of Memories and the Dead, 1953-2003" delves into 50 years of tense Viequense-Navy coexistence by tracing the history of the 1953 murder of a Viequense old man. Viequenses, I argue, have infused the murder with a victimization-resistance motif and assigned its memory a central role in the negotiation of a late 20th century collective identity. I trace the negotiation of such a collective identity, defined in relation to the U.S. Navy, from the 1953 murder to the 1999-2003 civil disobedient movements. I further argue that through these social movements people imagined Vieques as a polluted island and Isla Nena as a moribund child. In this chapter I analyze Washington and San Juan-based documentation, municipal records, interviews, photographs, maps, newspapers, legal cases, Internet sites and other texts.

The conclusion, functioning like an epilogue, focuses on the 2003 closing down of the Navy bases in Vieques and the transfer of lands to the Municipality, the Puerto

Rican government and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Vieques in the 21st century, I argue, is being rapidly gentrified. The gentrification process has resurrected the 19th century virginity debate constructing the island of Vieques as a pristine environment. While community activists denounce the inefficiencies of the post-2003 cleanup process, Isla Nena is being cosmetically revived by real estate agents and federal agencies invested in covering up the scars of five centuries of imperial dominion.

Chapter 2: Myths of Origin and Foundational Figures, 1514

The worst of all was the memory and the feeling of being so insignificant, hungry and scarred in an island among so many that God must have made one of those nights when he argued with the Devil. Angry would have been God that night, maybe angrier than ever at the evil stubbornness of Satan. Listening to him while entertaining himself with that handful of mud he fondled; engaging him with his soft and sweet and bland words, without noticing that the exasperation he kept from his voice filtered through his fingers into the mud. Without noticing that the sensed defeat before that stubborn and misled angel, took shape in that he molded...the small island that God did not wish to make.

Pedro Juan Soto, Usmaíl (1959)¹

The novelist Pedro Juan Soto narrated in Usmaíl how a carelessly molded handful of mud fell from God's hands and created an island.² This island, Soto proposed, was not planned or even wanted. Instead, it was a curse resulting from the clash between evil stubbornness and divine exasperation. The somber origin Pedro Juan Soto imagined in the 1950s context contrasts with the island's natural landscape. Its diverse landscape, far from appearing carelessly designed, encompasses a bioluminescent bay, mangroves, green mountains and plains and an abundance of sunshine, tropical fruits and white sand

¹ “Lo peor de todo era la memoria y el sentirse tan insignificante, hambriento y llagado en una isla de tantas que Dios debió de hacer una de esas noches en que discutía con el diablo. Molesto estaría Dios esa noche, quizás más molesto que nunca ante la terquedad malévola de Satanás. Escuchándolo mientras se entretenía con aquel puñado de barro que manoseaba; rebatiéndolo con sus palabras suaves y dulces y blandas, sin darse cuenta de que la desesperación que no permitía en su voz goteaba de sus dedos al barro. Sin percatarse de que el fracaso presentado ante aquel ángel testarudo y descarriado, tomaba forma en aquel pedrusco que moldeaba...la islita que Dios no deseó hacer.” Pedro Juan Soto, Usmaíl (Río Piedras: Editorial Cultural, 1973) 15-16.

² In the novel Usmaíl Pedro Juan Soto tells the story of a Viequense young man named Usmaíl. He is the illicit son of a black Viequense woman and a white American. Usmaíl, once abandoned by the father and orphaned of the mother, must grow up in and eventually leave the Navy-occupied Vieques of the 1950s. Soto, Usmaíl.

and crystal water beaches.³ This island, furthermore, rests in the middle of the West Indian island-arc as a steppingstone between the Greater and the Lesser Antilles. Cradled by the Atlantic Ocean to the north and the Caribbean Sea to the south, it lies 6 miles from the southeastern coast of Puerto Rico's main island. There it reigns over the waters of the Vieques Sound that touch the eastern shores of Puerto Rico and the southwestern ones of the smaller island municipality of Culebra.⁴ The second largest island of the Puerto Rican archipelago, at approximately 18 miles in length and 3 ½ in width, received the name Bieke (Small Island) from the indigenous inhabitants around the arrival of Christopher Columbus. The name was ignored by the Genoese explorer when he baptized the island as the *Graciosa* (Graceful). Yet, it survived and by 1514, according to the Puerto Rican historian Salvador Brau, was already embraced by the Spanish. The name, nonetheless, was gradually transformed and by the 18th century had been standardized to the present-day Vieques.⁵

Long before Columbus' November 14, 1493 arrival in Vieques multiple aboriginal cultures had already passed through the island then densely wooded and filled with bodies of water. Since these pre-Columbian peoples left no written records archaeology has taken on the difficult challenge to dig out other historical traces left by these cultures. In Puerto Rico the traces were initially gathered and displayed by José

³ A mountain range divides the island of Vieques in the middle. The highest peak called Monte Pirata and located in the southwestern tip of the island reaches 301 meters above sea level. United States, Department of the Interior, Geological Survey, *Isla de Vieques Quadrangle, Puerto Rico, 7.5 Minute Series (Topographic)*, map, photorevised from 1951 ed. (Denver: U.S. Geological Survey, 1982).

⁴ See Appendices 1, 2 and 4. The present-day Puerto Rico is an archipelago encompassing 78 municipalities. The majority of the municipalities are located in the main island. Yet, two of these, Vieques and Culebra, are separate smaller islands lying east of the main island.

⁵ Salvador Brau stated the word "Bieke" can be found in Spanish archives dating back to 1514. Meanwhile, the pamphlet *Vieques La Isla Nena* maintains that the word "Vieques" (probably spelled differently) appeared in maps for the first time in 1527. Also, the pamphlet points out that upon arrival Christopher Columbus might have named Vieques as the "Graciosa." Salvador Brau, *La isla de Vieques: Bosquejos históricos* (San Juan: Gráfico, 1912) 3. "Vieques La Isla Nena," unpublished essay.

Julián Acosta and George Latimer in an 1854 San Juan exhibition allowing the public, probably for the first time, to fantasize about an indigenous past. The exhibition closely followed Manuel Alonso's 1849 publication of El Gíbaro. The book has been identified by literary scholars as the earliest written text typifying a Puerto Rican national character that Alonso envisioned as embodied in the figure of the *jíbaro* (Puerto Rican peasant).⁶ The 1854 exhibition and 1849 publication proposed to a wide audience the cultural past and present of a Puerto Rican nation beginning to be imagined in the mid 19th century. These coetaneous events were symptomatic of a burgeoning intellectual and political atmosphere.

Archaeological studies about Puerto Rico, according to archaeologist and historian Sebastián Robiou Lamarche, timidly took off with Enrique Dumont's 1876 Investigación acerca de las antigüedades de la isla de Puerto Rico (Research about the antiquities of the island of Puerto Rico), Leopold Krug's analysis of a petroglyph in Gurabo, Agustín Stahl's 1889 Los indios borinqueños (The Borinquen Indians) and Cayetano Coll y Toste 1897s Prehistoria de Puerto Rico (Prehistory of Puerto Rico). In a matter of 20 years, as evidenced in the above titles, studies shifted from understanding archeological artifacts as attached to a prehistoric space unconnected to 19th century people to suggesting a spatial and temporal continuum between the prehistoric and historic inhabitants of Puerto Rico.⁷ To the extent that Coll y Toste's Prehistoria de Puerto Rico linked pre-Columbian populations to the island and to Puerto Ricans, it collapsed island and people in a historical relationship. The shift by the doctor, historian and public servant to endow the island and people of Puerto Rico with a longer history

⁶ Manuel A. Alonso, El jíbaro (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, Inc., 1983).

⁷ For a reference to the Western privileging of the written word, as it applies to categorizations like prehistory and history see "Chapter 1: Introduction."

must be contextualized within the emerging nationalist narratives and with Coll y Toste's personal participation in the affairs of the colonial state which at the time was moving towards more autonomy.⁸

Archaeologists Luis Chanlatte Baik and Yvonne Narganes Storde argue that, notwithstanding the earlier approaches, scientific interest for Antillean archaeology had to wait until the 20th century. During the first half of the century the New York Science Academy sponsored the works of J. Alden Mason, Froelich G. Rainey and Irving Rouse who, among other North American anthropologists, presented the first cultural schemes and systematic studies encompassing the known totality of Antillean prehistory. In terms of local production there is the work of José Montalvo Guenard, Pablo Morales Cabrera's 1932 Puerto Rico indígena (Indigenous Puerto Rico) and Adolfo de Hostos' compilation of 35 years of ethnographical and archeological articles into his 1944 Anthropological Papers. In the mid 20th century appeared the works of Ricardo E. Alegría, founder of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture in 1955. Alegría has been followed during the last couple of decades by others like Jalil Sued Badillo with his 1978 Los Caribes: Realidad o Fábula (The Caribs: Reality of Fable) and Labor Gómez and Manuel Ballesteros with their 1980 Vida y cultura precolombina de Puerto Rico (Pre-Columbian Life and Culture of Puerto Rico).⁹

One hundred twenty years after the Acosta-Latimer exhibit, intellectuals contesting the archipelago's colonial situation reformulated the role of indigenous

⁸ I define nationalism as the appropriation and the political and cultural use of national symbols in the creation of discourses, not necessarily related to the state, and the feeling that makes people respond to the uses of the symbols.

⁹ Luis A. Chanlatte Baik and Yvonne M. Narganes Storde, La nueva arqueología de Puerto Rico (su proyección en las Antillas) (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, C. por A., 1990) 10. Sebastián Robiou Lamarche, Táinos y Caribes: Las culturas aborígenes antillanas (San Juan: Editorial Punto y Coma, 2005) XIV-XV, 60-64.

artifacts and the discipline of archaeology in general. Concerning the role of archaeology in Puerto Rico Diana López Sotomayor wrote in 1975 that the discipline had to:

reach a historical reconstruction through the analysis of archaeological materials...[For] in Puerto Rico, to the extent that archaeology could explain a part of our history and make accessible these knowledges to any person then it will serve for something...It is, thus, part of a reappraisal and affirmation of our historical roots. This that some can consider a remnant of anachronistic nationalist positions, is in Puerto Rico a pressing necessity due to the current political situation and to the deformation and mutilation of our history that it has provoked. To exemplify, it is enough to point out what it means in our country to talk of economic formations in which there did not exist the private property of the means of production, or demand the protection of the national patrimony. In this sense archaeology has, in Puerto Rico, many tasks to accomplish.¹⁰

López Sotomayor, reacting to the repression of nationalism and communism in Puerto Rico, argued for an openly political archaeology that recuperated traces of the past in order to propose a national identity.¹¹ Following López Sotomayor's arguments, the historical knowledge produced by archaeologists had to respond to the needs for national definition of the Puerto Rican people. In this sense, indigenous artifacts evolved into urgent traces of national origins that might uncover truly autochthonous nationals long

¹⁰ "Llegar a una reconstrucción histórica a través del análisis de materiales arqueológicos...en Puerto Rico, en la medida en que la arqueología pueda explicar una parte de nuestra historia y haga accesibles estos conocimientos para cualquier persona entonces servirá para algo...Es, pues, parte de una revaloración y afirmación de nuestras raíces históricas. Esto que algunos pueden considerar como un residuo de posiciones nacionalistas anacrónicas, es en Puerto Rico una necesidad imperante debido a la situación política actual y a la deformación y mutilación de nuestra historia que ella ha provocado. Para ejemplificar, baste señalar lo que significa en nuestro país hablar de formaciones económicas en las que no existía la propiedad privada de los medios de producción, o exigir la protección del patrimonio nacional. En este sentido la arqueología tiene, en Puerto Rico, muchas tareas que cumplir." Diana López Sotomayor, Vieques: un momento de su historia, diss., Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1975, (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma, 1975) 1-2.

¹¹ Throughout most of the 20th century expressions of Puerto Rican nationalism were violently repressed by the archipelago's colonial government. During the 1960s and 1970s places like the University of Puerto Rico became locus of resistance through political mobilization and intellectual production. After the 1960s the political mobilization and intellectual production were greatly influenced by Marxism and Marxist analytical frameworks. The influence, inside the Cold War context, was also frowned upon by the Puerto Rican government and more conservative sectors. However, by the 1990s Puerto Rican nationalism lost the contestatory edge as it was appropriated by the archipelago's three political parties, pro independence, commonwealth and statehood, as a central discourse in their agendas. See "Chapter 7: Isla Nena, Island of Memories and the Dead, 1953-2003."

dead but uncorrupted by U.S. capitalist imperialism. The favoring of an archaeology that geographically imagines the beginnings of the Puerto Rican nation and thus plays an important role in national myths of origin is prevalent in sectors of the Puerto Rican academia today.¹² In his 1999 presentation to the Special Committee on Vieques about the need to safeguard the national archaeological patrimony, Miguel Rodríguez, then President of The International Association for Caribbean Archaeology, argued that archaeology must strive for a better knowledge of the Puerto Rican “collective being” in order to “permit a legitimate affirmation of nationality.”¹³ While López Sotomayor and Rodríguez do not represent an entire academic field spanning over at least a century, they do exemplify strands of an archaeological tradition in Puerto Rico engaging the archipelago’s long colonial history through academic narratives infused with a nationalist and anti-imperialist motif.

Archaeologists studying Vieques, dating back to Irving Rouse’s 1938 work with four *concheros*, have undertaken the task to imagine the indigenous roots of the Puerto Rican and more broadly the Caribbean community.¹⁴ The island, archaeologists have theorized, was densely populated during parts of its pre-Columbian history and scarcely or selectively populated afterwards. The demographic pattern has helped the preservation of very important archaeological sites for the study not only of the aboriginal cultures in

¹² I, borrowing from Peter Novick’s definition, define the term myth not in relationship to truth or falsity, but rather as a narrative that contains certain unquestioned and defended statements. Myths of origin, in turn, are narratives that hold an important or sacred place in discourses surrounding the creation and evolution of a community-nation. Peter Novick, That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 1-17.

¹³ Miguel Rodríguez, La Marina y el patrimonio arqueológico de Vieques (Ponencia presentada ante la Hon. Comisión Especial de Vieques 15 de junio de 1999 Vieques, Puerto Rico) (Caguas: Universidad del Turabo; San Juan: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, n.d.) 2.

¹⁴ López Sotomayor, Vieques: un momento de su historia. The term *concheros* refers to sites full of shells that could have served the indigenous populations as a place for waste disposal or that portray disposal patterns providing information like the nutritional habits of the populations. Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde, La nueva arqueología.

Vieques and Puerto Rico, but also of their migratory patterns throughout the Caribbean. The archaeological richness of Vieques is evidenced in the 1984 survey performed by Ecology & Environment. The survey, although controversial, identified 218 sites in the small island pertaining, according to Miguel Rodríguez, to all the indigenous cultures known in the Caribbean.¹⁵ Due to its archeological richness, Vieques has been given the title of the pre-Columbian “cultural and geographic bridge between the Lesser and the Greater Antilles.”¹⁶

The discovery and study of well preserved sites like Puerto Ferro in 1990 and Luján in 1994 have provided archaeologists such as Luis Chanlatte Baik and Yvonne Narganes Storde, from the Center for Archaeological Investigation of the University of Puerto Rico, and Virginia Rivera and Sixto Pérez, from the Center of Archaeological Investigations Bieques, with material traces of the presence and practices of human

¹⁵ In 1981 the federal court ordered the U.S. Navy to care for the archaeological patrimony of Vieques. Accordingly the Navy sponsored the 1984 “Ecology & Environment” study that located 218 (or 226 according to Cecilia Enjuto Rangel) sites. Of the 218 sites, they argued that only 33 held the characteristics to be considered for the National Register of Historic Places. In the end only 20 (or 19 according again to Enjuto Rangel) sites were included in the Register. More than a decade later, a separate 1996 study by “Goodwin & Associates, Inc.” denounced the 1984 study as a careless one that mainly adapted itself to the interest of the U.S. Navy. These denunciations coincide with the opinion of many Puerto Rican archaeologists like Sixto Pérez deeming the 1984 study as deficient. On the other hand, in 1999 Miguel Rodríguez claimed that the 1984 “Ecology & Environment” survey identified sites pertaining to all the aboriginal periods and cultures known in the Caribbean. It is highly improbable that traces from all aboriginal periods are found in Vieques because, among other things, some archeologists propose a first wave of human migration to the Caribbean 3,860 years before the first recorded human presence in the island. However, models like Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde’s allow the possibility that all indigenous cultures might be represented in Vieques. Cecilia Enjuto Rangel, “La Historia tras la verja,” El nuevo día (Revista Domingo) [San Juan] 1 August 1999: 8-10. Rodríguez, La Marina y el patrimonio arqueológico de Vieques. Robiou Lamarche, Táinos y Caribes. Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde, La nueva arqueología. See Appendices 6 and 7.

¹⁶ See, for example, Enjuto Rangel, “La Historia tras la verja,” El nuevo día 8. For detailed studies of the indigenous cultures in pre-Columbian Vieques see the late 20th century works of archaeologists Virginia Rivera, Sixto Pérez, Luis Chanlatte Baik, Yvonne Narganes Storde, Alfredo Figueroa, Miguel Rodríguez, Diana López Sotomayor, Jalil Sued Badillo, amongst others. For post-1932 studies about the indigenous cultures in Puerto Rico see for example the works of Ricardo E. Alegría, Ovidio Dávila, Pablo Morales Cabrera, Labor Gómez, Manuel Ballesteros and Irving Rouse.

cultures dating as far back as 2140 B.C.¹⁷ Archaeologists believe that these indigenous cultures in the Greater Antilles started migrating northward from South America around the year 4000 B.C. The theory is sustained, for example, by the small carvings found in the southern Viequense coast of Andean condors holding human heads (Figure 2.1).¹⁸ The representation of the South American bird, not native to the Caribbean islands, pinpoints to the movement of peoples from the southern continent to Vieques. These peoples, predating the times of global leisure tourism, airplanes, motor boats and West Indian federations, were probably the first to island hop across the Antillean-arc in canoes that swiftly interweaved the Caribbean Sea. Yet, although classified under the common category of pre-Columbian, these cultures were very different among themselves.



Figure 2.1: Indigenous amulet of condor holding a human head, La Hueca, Vieques¹⁹

Archeologists have broadly divided the Caribbean indigenous cultures into Archaic and Agro-ceramist. There are two main differences that archeologists have

¹⁷ Archaeological studies formulate theories based on educated guesses and technologies like Carbon 14 tests to establish chronologies. While these methods might lead to close approximations, they do not provide exact answers and depend on the discovery and study of new archaeological traces. For example, different sources offer different dates as to the first human presence in Vieques. In the early 1970s Ovidio Dávila suggested the year 30 B.C. The discovery and study of the “Man of Puerto Ferro” has, arguably, pushed back the date to 2140 B.C. Ovidio Dávila, “La cultura igneri de Puerto Rico,” *Antología de lecturas de historia de Puerto Rico (Siglos XV-XVIII)*, ed. Aida R. Caro Costas (San Juan: Editorial Corripio, C. por A., 1991) 71-85. Enjuto Rangel, “La Historia tras la verja,” *El nuevo día*.

¹⁸ The small carvings or amulets of a condor holding a human head are the most recognizable icon of the indigenous cultures exhibit in the Museum and Archive *Fortín Conde de Mirasol*. See Appendix 6.

¹⁹ “Pendant (Condor) jadeite,” *Indigenous Cultures of Puerto Rico*, 2008, Universia Puerto Rico, 26 January 2008 <http://www.universia.pr/culturaindigena/tema02_ing.html>.

identified between the two groups. On one hand, there is a 5500 years lapse between the first Archaic migration to the Antilles in 6000 B.C. and the Agro-ceramist one in 500 B.C. On the other hand, the Agro-ceramists employed agricultural and pottery-making techniques. It has also been argued that the initial Agro-ceramists were more politically developed than the Archaic.²⁰ Nonetheless, there is no consensus about this dichotomous division of the Antillean indigenous cultures or about the migratory patterns to and inside the Caribbean.²¹ There is also an ongoing debate about whether the Agro-ceramists replaced the Archaic population or they mixed together in a long process of transculturation.

Since the 1980s Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde have been proposing that the Archaic assimilated culturally to the Agro-ceramists who arrived in two successive migrations: Huecoides (AGRO I) and Saladoides-Igneris (AGRO II). The Huecoides, as evidenced in La Hueca's 5 B.C. settlement in Vieques, established themselves along the coasts in small communities of 4 to 5 *bohíos* (familial dwellings usually made of stubble). The *bohíos* were arranged in a semicircle surrounding a central plaza that faced a river.²² The Saladoides-Igneri established along the same coastal areas and provided, by their temporal and spatial proximity to the Huecoides, continuity to the early Agro-

²⁰ According to Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde the Archaic organized themselves in bands and the Agro-ceramists into tribes and *cacicazgos*. While bands were usually nomad groups of 15 to 40 persons, the tribes and *cacicazgos* were both sedentary groups. Tribes were composed of 20 to 200 people and *cacicazgos* of several population nucleuses. Tribes and *cacicazgos* were mostly dependent on agriculture and portrayed more stratified social and more centralized political systems. Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde, *La nueva arqueología* 29-31.

²¹ For an example of a study that argues for the coexistence of three great cultural groups (Archaic, Arawak and Carib) at the time of the Spanish arrival see Ricardo E. Alegría, "La población aborigen antillana y su relación con otras áreas de America," *Antología de lecturas de historia de Puerto Rico (Siglos XV-XVIII)*, ed. Aida R. Caro Costas (San Juan: Editorial Corripio, C. por A., 1991) 53-70.

²² Luis Chanlatte Baik and Yvonne Narganes Storde, exhibit "Cultura La Hueca," Museo de Historia, Antropología y Arte and Centro de Investigaciones Arqueológicas, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, 25 August 2005.

ceramist communities.²³ The interaction of these communities with previous Archaic ones bred the initial and late Taino culture (AGRO III and IV). The Taino culture, in turn, is understood by Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde as a cultural moment instead of as a separate indigenous group.²⁴ The Chanlatte-Narganes model is based on their excavations of the Sorcé farm in La Hueca for the Huecoides and Saladoides-Igneris theories, and on sites like Playa Chica and Yanuel for the arguments about the Tainos.²⁵ All these places are located in Vieques.

Sebastián Robiou Lamarche provides a different synthesis of the Caribbean aboriginal cultures. In his model, the 2140 B.C. “Man of Puerto Ferro” places the first human presence in Vieques inside the second Archaic period (4000 B.C. to 500 B.C.). The second Archaic people, mainly fishermen and gatherers from South America, were the first inhabitants of the Lesser Antilles and Puerto Rico. Following their footsteps were the Agro-ceramists Saladoides of Arawak origin (500 B.C. to 600 A.D.) that evolved into the Ostionoides (600 A.D. to 1200 A.D.) and later into the Tainos (1200 A.D. to 1500 A.D.). The Caribs, for Robiou Lamarche, represent the last migratory wave (1000 A.D. to 1500 A.D.) northward. They were Kalinagos or simply South American Caribs that, Robiou Lamarche argues, invaded the Lesser Antilles and halted just east of Puerto Rico. In their path north they killed the Arawak men. Yet, they kept the Arawak women along with their language and pottery-making skills.²⁶ While Chanlatte-Narganes and Robiou Lamarche’s syntheses differ in essential elements like the existence of a

²³ Luis A. Chanlatte Baik and Yvonne M. Narganes Storde, Vieques, Puerto Rico: Asiento de una Nueva Cultura Aborigen Antillana (Santo Domingo: Impresora Corporán, C. por A., 1983) 74.

²⁴ Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde, La nueva arqueología 23.

²⁵ See Appendix 7.

²⁶ Sebastián Robiou Lamarche agrees with the arguments of the ethnologist Douglas Taylor who proposed during the mid 20th century that the Carib language was fundamentally that of its captive Arawak women and therefore had a Taino origin. Robiou Lamarche, Táinos y Caribes 17, 36-37. See also Appendix 4.

Carib culture, both still coincide in the passing through and possibly coexistence in the Puerto Rican archipelago of different aboriginal cultural groups during the 3,633 years previous to the Indigenous-Spanish encounter in 1493 A.D.

The most known about indigenous group, inside and outside the Puerto Rican academia, is the Tainos. Their popularity is probably due to the fact that the Spanish recorded their encounter in the Greater Antilles and the Bahamas and thus the Tainos have survived, however distortedly, in the archives of their victimizers. However, as suggested before, there is an ensuing debate among scholars about the aboriginal cultures and the differences, if any, between the Taino and the Carib groups. Some scholars such as Juan Ignacio de Armas back in 1884 and Jalil Sued Badillo since 1978 have been proposing that there was actually no significant difference between Tainos and Caribs to justify their separation into two cultural groups.²⁷ Sued Badillo, for example, proposes that the dualistic version of the indigenous Antillean culture resulted from the widespread European appropriation of Christopher Columbus' fantastic stories of idolatrous Taino and Carib Indians. These stories, Sued Badillo argues, were part of a publicity campaign designed to keep alive an economically disastrous first American journey. The indigenous idolatry facilitated the religious justification for the colonization venture and the fierceness attributed to the Caribs created a potential slave pool that secured the labor force for the early colonial enterprise. The debate surrounding Taino-Carib histories is even more complex taking into account David Henige's reading of friar Bartolomé de las Casas' (1474-1566) Diario de a bordo. Henige, African studies and anthropology

²⁷ Jalil Sued Badillo, Los Caribes: Realidad o Fábula (San Juan: Editorial Antillana, 1978). References to Juan Ignacio de Armas' 1884 La fábula de los caribes can be found in Jalil Sued Badillo, The Caribs: A Proper Perspective (Puerto Rico: Fundación Arqueológica Antropológica e Historia de P.R., Inc., 1986) 5. And in Robiou Lamarche, Táinos y Caribes 152.

bibliographer, argues that the factual knowledge historians can extract from Casas' 1520s or 1530s translation of the diary kept by Christopher Columbus of his first American voyage is minimal. David Henige instead proposes that the transcription of the lost Columbus diary is a palimpsest detailing more Casas' assumptions and agenda regarding Spanish imperial policies towards the indigenous populations. The problem then lies on how to treat an unreliable source that has for centuries influenced academic and non-academic imaginings, and writings, of the indigenous populations of the Caribbean.²⁸

Whether two different groups or just one, the Tainos have shared some of their popularity in the Puerto Rican collective imaginary with the Caribs. The influential archaeologist and historian Ricardo E. Alegría has argued over the years for the separation of the Caribs from the Tainos. He states that amidst plenty of contradictions different historical sources still agree on the following particular Carib characteristics: their late arrival to the Lesser Antilles from South America, their displacement and/or massacre of the previous indigenous populations in these islands, their sparing of captive women, their performance of anthropophagic rituals, and their belligerent culture that survived by raiding nearby Arawak settlements.²⁹ Sebastián Robiou Lamarche, disciple of Alegría in the Center for the Advanced Studies of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean,

²⁸ Following David Henige and Margarita Zamora, Christopher Columbus' original log of his first American voyage was lost at some point after 1504. The copy or copies made by Spanish authorities were also lost soon thereafter so that the only surviving version of Columbus' log is Bartolomé de las Casas rather liberal transcription made sometime between 1520s and the 1530s. The transcription made by Casas was also lost for many years and only found in 1790. Scholars, however, are uncertain whether Casas transcribed his text from the original log or from later copies which in itself raises many other questions about the problems of copies made from copies. David Henige, "In the Wake of 'In the Wake of Columbus': Why the Polemic over Columbus' First Landfall is of Interest to Africanist Historians," *History in Africa* 14 (1987): 349-357. David Henige, *In Search of Columbus: the Sources for the First Voyage* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991). David Henige and Margarita Zamora, "Text, Context, Intertext: Columbus' Diario de abordo as a Palimpsest," *The Americas* 46:1 (July 1989): 17-40.

²⁹ Alegría, *Antología de lecturas de historia de Puerto Rico* 68. Alegría sometimes used the terms historical or ethnohistorical sources to refer to early European written accounts about the indigenous populations in the Americas. See, for example, Ricardo Alegría, H. B. Nicholson and Gordon R. Willey, "The Archaic Tradition in Puerto Rico," *American Antiquity* 21:2 (October 1965): 113-121.

further states that the debate surrounding the Caribs responds to various factors.³⁰ If the Caribs were a fierce warfaring culture that massacred the men of conquered Arawak peoples and incorporated the captive women essentially as a coerced labor force, the archeological traces left behind by this hybrid union would resemble the Arawak culture and silence the presence of the Carib group. This would be especially true in the case of pottery, central to Caribbean archeological studies, given that its making was an activity assigned to women. Thus, Robiou Lamarche argues that the lack of clear archeological evidence of a distinct Carib culture should not lead to interpretations that construe the Caribs as Arawaks. Instead, he exhorts archeologists to analyze other historical traces like the 1619 account of Martinique and Dominica's flora, fauna and indigenous population attributed to the Anonymous of Carpentras. This account, he continues, is the oldest known chronicle about the Caribs who as inhabitants of the non-Spanish Lesser Antilles were seldom mentioned in the Spanish imperial texts more preoccupied with the Tainos inhabiting the Greater Antilles. The production of detailed European narratives about the indigenous populations of the Lesser Antilles, Robiou Lamarche concludes, had to wait for French chroniclers involved in their metropolis' 17th century colonization ventures in the area. This historical conjuncture of non-Spanish colonization ventures would have then heralded the Caribs' narration, colonization and eventual disappearance in a process similar to what the Tainos had experienced a century earlier. In other words, the European production of knowledge had dire consequences for the Caribbean indigenous populations.

³⁰ Sebastián Robiou Lamarche both completed his master's degree in Puerto Rican and Caribbean Studies and is currently working on his doctoral degree in the Center for the Advanced Studies of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean directed by Ricardo E. Alegría.

Sebastián Robiou Lamarche's call to incorporate the analysis of European written texts to archaeological research in the Caribbean is not new. In fact, such written accounts were an integral part of Alegría's work, which must have influenced Robiou Lamarche's own intellectual production heavily based on the analysis of written texts.³¹ More so, written accounts have sustained by themselves, according to Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde, the traditional divide between Tainos and Caribs. In this, Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde argue that there is no material evidence suggesting the divide. So that texts like Columbus-Casas' Diario de a bordo, however problematic, have for decades played a central role in Caribbean archaeology and in the perpetuation of the Taino-Carib divide. The debate, in turn, becomes centered on the privileging of material versus written sources, or maybe between privileging the analysis of material traces left behind by indigenous cultures or the written traces left behind by the European cultures of the indigenous cultures.³²

Ricardo Alegría, Sebastián Robiou Lamarche, Luis Chanlatte Baik and Yvonne Narganes Storde's arguments represent only a few of the many academic and non-academic versions circulating about the Tainos-Caribs. It is unlikely, if not impossible, that a historically accurate version will surface any time soon to settle the debates about the Caribbean's indigenous past. In the following pages I will leave behind the debates within the archaeological discipline to focus instead on influential narratives circulating

³¹ Sebastián Robiou Lamarche's Tainos y Caribes, in fact, is based on the analysis of European written accounts and of the published work of other archaeologists and scholars. Robiou Lamarche's call for the analysis of written texts has a very practical side to archaeological studies within the Caribbean. Archaeological digs are collective and expensive enterprises that usually depend on teamwork and on the financial support of institutions. The analysis of written accounts allows, on the other hand, for an individual and more democratic research experience to the extent books are less expensive and difficult to obtain than archaeological artifacts and allow for a more private handling.

³² The case of Jalil Sued Badillo is quite particular to the extent he analyzed European written accounts to argue against the existence of the Carib cultural group.

inside and outside the academia that have been very influential in the imagining of Viequense myths of origin and foundational figures. These narratives respond to archeological and historical studies as well as to European first impressions of the aboriginal populations and to romantic histories circulating thereafter.

For starters, it has long been believed by many Viequenses and Puerto Ricans that Tainos and Caribs were indeed two different cultural groups at war with each other when the Spanish arrived in the Caribbean. The belief, defended by numerous archeologists throughout the last couple of centuries, can be traced back to Christopher Columbus' writings about his first American voyage.³³ These were mostly texts he wrote for the Spanish monarchy, but that still circulated widely throughout Europe. In the 1493 letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer Luis De Sant Angel, for example, the Genoese explorer detailed stories supposedly told by natives from La Hispaniola about the existence of, "a people considered in all the isles as most ferocious, who eat human flesh."³⁴ The question arises of how could Columbus and his European travel companions effectively communicate with the Caribbean populations during that first encounter, and how much of the observations concerning the indigenous populations and of the conversations about anthropophagic practices actually responded to European fantasies.³⁵ Columbus, after all, considered the possibility of meeting with "dog-headed people that ate men" during his first voyage. Yet, in the 1493 letter Columbus

³³ For a critique of Christopher Columbus' *Diario de abordo* see Henige, *In Search of Columbus*.

³⁴ Christopher Columbus, "The Letter of Columbus to Luis De Sant Angel Announcing his Discovery," ushistory.org, 2006, Independence Hall Association in Philadelphia, 15 October 2006 <<http://ushistory.org/documents/columbus.htm>>.

³⁵ During the first American voyage, Columbus and his crew spent approximately 5 months in the Caribbean, or from October 12, 1493 to January 16, 1493. It is difficult to ascertain how effectively Columbus and the other European travelers could have communicated with the indigenous populations. The Europeans and the Americans, after all, did not share words or signs that might have served as common grounds for communication.

confidently contrasted the “extremely cowardly” races he had met with this new “ferocious” people who would later be known as Caribs.³⁶

During the second American voyage, Spaniards literally translated the word *tayno* as good.³⁷ The translation might have pushed forth the characterization of Tainos as natural men. Following historian Anthony Pagden, the idea of natural men, living in an uncorrupted natural state outside civilization, was a central motif in European intellectual history brought to the forefront of European imaginaries by the early encounter with the American indigenous populations.³⁸ The motif, in fact, was recurrent in Columbus’ writings and emphasized in Casas transcription of the Diario.³⁹ The translation of *tayno* as good, in addition, might have further helped cement the idea that the Tainos were the peace-loving Indians defending the Puerto Rican main island from the Caribs who were voraciously making their way north from the Windward Islands.⁴⁰ The intra-indigenous

³⁶ The Casas-Columbus’ Diario is full of references to the divide between the peaceful Indians Columbus met and the savage ones that Columbus had not met but that these Indians supposedly described. Bartolomé de las Casas, Diario de a bordo de Cristóbal Colón (Barcelona: Editorial Arcadia, 1957) 60. Alegría, Antología de lecturas de historia de Puerto Rico 67-70. Robiou Lamarche, Tainos y Caribes 153, 167. Sued Badillo, Los Caribes 33-40.

³⁷ For the literal translation of *tayno* as good see Diego Álvarez Chanca, Carta al Cabildo de Sevilla in Aurelio Tió, Dr. Diego Álvarez Chanca (Estudio Biográfico) (Barcelona: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña and Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico, 1966) 52.

³⁸ Anthony Pagden writes that the notion of the natural man was closely linked to Aristotelian notions of natural slaves. These were people who could not uplift themselves alone, for which they needed the help of masters. Pagden argues, however, that the concept of natural man was challenged early on in the 16th century for a more nuanced approach to indigenous cultures. Anthony Pagden, The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

³⁹ Bartolomé de las Casas, in his transcription of Columbus’ diary, narrated the following passage about the first European-indigenous encounter in the island of Guanahani or San Salvador. “The Christians also wondered at how the Indians came near and walked so freely among them, as fearless and unsuspecting as if they had been fathers and sons; at how they all went naked, just as their mothers bore them...so that they seemed not to have lost, or to have had restored, the state of innocence in which, for a tiny space of time, said not to have exceeded six hours, our father Adam lived.” Bartolomé de Las Casas, Witness: Writings of Bartolomé de las Casas, trans. and ed. George Sanderlin (New York: Orbis Books, 1992). 43. For the Spanish unabridged text see Casas, Diario 27-33.

⁴⁰ The Caribs were usually referred to by the Spanish as *barloventeños* (from the Windward Islands). The terms *Barlovento* (Windward) and *Sotavento* (Leeward) given to the Lesser Antilles and part of the northern South American coast originally referred to navigational winds employed by Spanish sailors. *Barlovento* referred to navigating with the wind or the part of the vessel where the wind hit and *sotavento*

conflict, appealing to noble savage versus savage dichotomies also central to European intellectual history, is thought to have been permanently interrupted by the coming of the Spanish. The interruption, in turn, left Vieques as the last Carib conquest.

Some scholars debate whether Vieques was the temporary hideout or permanent settlement of these indigenous warriors.⁴¹ Nonetheless, histories that have circulated for at least 500 years inside and outside the Puerto Rican archipelago tell of Carib raids on the *Isla Grande* (Big Island or the Puerto Rican main island) and of the booty of defeated men and women brought back to Vieques to be raped, enslaved and/or eaten. The strong popular belief in these histories, neither proved or disproved by academic studies, and their centrality in Viequense myths of origin mandates that, at least for the purpose of this work, the Carib existence as a separate cultural group is not discarded.⁴² In addition, following Stuart Hall, identities always involve representations negotiated with others that recognize or not a given identity. Identities, Hall emphasizes:

actually come from the outside, they are the way in which we are recognized and then come to step into the place of the recognition which others give us. Without the others there is no self, there is no self-recognition.⁴³

referred to the opposite of *barlovento*. Navigating *sotavento* implied a swifter trip. The Windward Islands are those found in the southern half of the Lesser Antilles, while those of the northern half are referred to as the Leeward Islands. The classification of what islands belong to which island group depends on the sources consulted, but the islands of Guadeloupe and Dominica are generally acknowledged as border islands. Guadeloupe would be the southernmost Leeward Island and Dominica the northernmost Windward Island. For a definition of the Windward and Leeward Islands see Irving Rouse, *The Tainos: Rise and Decline of the People Who Greeted Columbus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) 3-5.

⁴¹ Irving Rouse argues that while Caribs only lived in the Windward Island, Vieques was still inhabited by “Eastern Tainos.” Rouse creates the category “Eastern Tainos” to make a distinction in the degree of cultural evolution between the more advanced Tainos in Puerto Rico and La Hispaniola and the less advanced populations in Vieques and the Windward Islands. Rouse, *The Tainos*.

⁴² Many of the archaeologists against the existence of a Carib cultural group argue that there is a lack of material evidence, and not that there is evidence to rule out the Carib presence documented in early Spanish texts. Thus, the possibility remains of finding Carib material traces, outside archives, in the future. See, for example, Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde, *La nueva arqueología* 28-29.

⁴³ According to Stuart Hall, “questions of identity are always questions about representation. They are always questions about the invention, not simply the discovery of tradition. They are always exercises in selective memory and they almost always involve the silencing of something in order to allow something else to speak...identities actually come from the outside, they are the way in which we are recognized and

Thus, real flesh and blood bodies outside academic debates endured the Carib identity whether embraced or violently imposed by the Spanish colonizers. In other words, even if the Caribs had not been a separate culture before Columbus' arrival, the group was bred into existence afterwards.

Many of the stories about savage Caribs accustomed to anthropophagi can be traced back to Spanish sources like the writings of the medical doctor Diego Álvarez Chanca. As a passenger in Christopher Columbus' second voyage to the Americas in 1493, Dr. Álvarez Chanca recorded his impressions on everything from the flora and fauna of the New World to the crew's encounters with the Caribbean human populations. About their first exploration of the Leeward Islands and its inhabitants, he wrote to the Municipal Council of Seville that:

After we arrived near [Guadalupe] the Admiral sent one light vessel that would keep close to the coast looking for a port, the one which went ahead and reaching land saw some houses, and with the bark jumped the Captain on land and reached the houses, inside which he found their people, and after they saw him they fled, and he entered in them, where he found the things they have, they had not carried anything, where he took two very big and very different from what had been seen macaws. He found much cotton woven and for weaving, and things for their maintenance, and of everything he brought something; especially he brought four or five bones of arms and legs of men. After we saw that we suspected that those islands [were] the Carib ones, that are inhabited by people that eat human flesh, because the Admiral, by the signs he had been given about the site of these islands, the other route, the Indians of the islands that had been previously discovered, had set the route to discover them.⁴⁴

then come to step into the place of the recognition which others give us. Without the others there is no self, there is no self-recognition." Stuart Hall, "Negotiating Caribbean Identities," *New Left Review* 209 (January-February 1995): 5, 8. See also Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?", *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (London: Sage Publications, 1996) 1-17.

⁴⁴ "Luego que llegamos cerca [de Guadalupe] mando el Almirante a una carabela ligera que fuese costeando a buscar puerto, la cual se adelanto y llegando a la tierra vido unas casas, e con la barca salto el Capitan en tierra e llego a las casas, en las cuales hallo su gente, y luego que los vieron fueron huyendo, e entro en ellas, donde hallo las cosas que ellos tienen, que no habian llevado nada, donde tomo dos papagayos muy grandes y muy diferenciados de cuantos se habian visto. Hallo mucho algodón hilado e por hilar, e cosas de sus mantenimientos, e de todo trajo un poco; en especial trajo cuatro o cinco huesos de

The above passage narrates the Europeans' initial encounter with the Canibe or Carib Indians. Apparently, the Admiral had been so fascinated during the previous voyage with the stories about the human flesh-eating Indians that, Dr. Álvarez Chanca wrote, he had set the navigational route with the intention of finding them. The idea of anthropophagic Indians in need of religious conversion was alluring. Yet, it never replaced, but rather harmonized with, the central place of gold in the explorer's fantasies. According to Jalil Sued Badillo, the late 13th century writings of Marco Polo diffused throughout Europe the notion that the Cannibals from the courts of the Great Khan possessed plenty of gold. Columbus himself, fervent reader of Marco Polo, directly referenced the promising trade with the "great Khan" in his 1492-93 writings.⁴⁵ In turn, Sued Badillo continues, the Spanish mistook the inhabitants of the Leeward Islands for these Canibes.⁴⁶ Thus, Columbus probably set the course hoping to meet anthropophagus, but very wealthy Indians.

The anthropophagi quickly multiplied. Soon after the supposed discovery of human bones in the indigenous dwellings of the Leeward Island, the Caribs got the chance to throw back the man-eating description against the Tainos. Further following the writings of Dr. Álvarez Chanca:

to this one [Burenquen] come those of Carib to conquer, from which they took many people; these do not have any whips nor know travel by sea; but, according to what these Caribs that we took say, they use bows like

brazos e piernas de hombres. Luego que aquello vimos sospechamos que aquellas islas [eran] las de Caribe, que son habitadas de gente que comen carne humana, porque el Almirante, por las señas que le habian dado del sitio destas islas, el otro camino, los indios de las islas que antes habian descubierto, habian enderezado el camino por descubrirlas." Álvarez Chanca, Carta al Cabildo de Sevilla, in Tió, Dr. Diego Álvarez Chanca 56.

⁴⁵ Casas, Diario 55. "The Letter of Columbus to Luis De Sant Angel," ushistory.org.

⁴⁶ Jalil Sued Badillo argues that the Spanish, in their anxious greed for gold, misinterpreted the symbolic references of the orient and the sun made by different indigenous populations. Sued Badillo, Los Caribes. 33, 36-38.

them, and if by chance when [Caribs] come to raid they [from Burenquen] can take [Caribs] they [from Burenquen] also eat them as the Caribs eat them.⁴⁷

Thus, Dr. Álvarez Chanca was left wondering if the Tainos from Burenquen (Puerto Rican main island), apparently at war with the Caribs, also ate their captives.⁴⁸ If the translations Columbus and Dr. Álvarez Chanca made of their indigenous encounters were more or less accurate, it would appear that the Tainos and the Caribs had engaged in a storytelling war with the newly arrived Spanish contingent as their audience-witness. The Tainos, having told their story first and with no hidden bones found in their closet, had the upper hand.

The evidence of “four or five bones of arms and legs of men” combined to Taino stories might not be enough evidence to confirm the anthropophagic description. In fact, soon thereafter Bartolomé de las Casas and much later Ricardo Alegría have interpreted the human bones supposedly found in the Carib dwellings as linked to the honorary rites for deceased ancestors that were common throughout the Antilles.⁴⁹ Peter E. Siegel further argues that throughout the ceramist age, referred above with the term Agro-ceramist and identified as spanning approximately from 500 B.C. to 1500 A.D., ancestral

⁴⁷ “a esta [Burenquen] vienen los de Caribe a conquistar, de la cual llevaban mucha gente; estos no tienen fustas ningunas nin saben andar por mar; pero, segun dicen estos Caribes que tomamos, usan arcos como ellos, e si por caso cuando los vienen a saltar los pueden prender tambien se los comen como los Caribes a ellos.” Álvarez Chanca, Carta al Cabildo de Sevilla, in Tió, Dr. Diego Álvarez Chanca 56. According to Robiou Lamarche Columbus originally thought that the Caribs were from the island of Carib east of La Hispaniola. Robiou Lamarche, Tainos y Caribes 153.

⁴⁸ Burenquen was the indigenous name given to the Puerto Rican main island that later evolved into Borinquen. Cayetano Coll y Toste, however, disagreed with the anthropophagic description of the Borinquen inhabitants stating that he could find no other source to confirm such description. Diego Álvarez Chanca, “Carta del fisco Diego Álvarez Chanca al Cabildo de Sevilla dandole cuenta del segundo viaje de Cristóbal Colón, en el cual descubrió la isla de San Juan,” Antología de lecturas de historia de Puerto Rico (Siglos XV-XVIII), ed. Aida R. Caro Costas (San Juan: Editorial Corripio, C. por A., 1991) 25-27. For the multiplying descriptions of different indigenous groups as the cannibals see Sued Badillo, Los Caribes 36-37.

⁴⁹ Ricardo E. Alegría does not question Carib anthropophagi, only the extent of the practice. Alegría, Antología de lecturas de historia de Puerto Rico 67-70.

remains or cemeteries were displaced from the village's center to the individual *bohíos* as power shifted from the tribal collectivity to the caciques and the shamans.⁵⁰ The displacement of bones to the *bohío* suggests that the ancestral cult had become a more private matter. Yet, the linkage of the bones to ancestral cults did not and has not quelled the allure of the Carib cannibal myth.

The writings of Columbus mentioning the existence of human eating Indians and Dr. Álvarez Chanca's letter to the Municipal Council of Seville further fueling such suspicions worked to equate from early on Canibe/Carib to anthropophagic. Such an equation had different effects. First, the word Canibe evolved to cannibal and cannibal became synonymous of anthropophagi. The basis for the dichotomy Taino=good vs. Carib=bad was, in turn, established and the term Carib became indiscriminately applied to rebellious Indians whether or not they belonged to the Carib cultural group. The identification of Caribs as bad or rebellious served as justification for their pseudo enslavement in *repartimientos* or *encomiendas*.⁵¹ The Spanish Crown, after all, had the precedent of enslaving rebellious Muslims during the Reconquest.⁵² Finally, if an undisciplined Carib could be found anywhere in the new colonial scenario, then the also

⁵⁰ Peter E. Siegel, "Contested Places and Places of Contest: The Evolution of Social Power and Ceremonial Space in Prehistoric Puerto Rico," *Latin American Antiquity* 10:3 (September 1999): 209-238.

⁵¹ As one of the measures resulting from the long debate about how to treat the newly encountered aboriginal populations of the Americas, the Spanish monarchy decided that, contrary to the Africans, the Indians were not to be taken as slaves. Instead, Indians would be considered special subjects of the Crown. Nonetheless, they were forced to form part of *repartimientos* (later, or also, known as *encomiendas*) that allotted them to Spanish settlers. *Repartimientos* and *encomiendas* facilitated the congregation of the indigenous populations in manageable spaces that allowed the Spanish to catechize, pacify and extract their labor more efficiently. In theory, though not necessarily in practice, this was supposed to be a more benign treatment for the nonrebellious Indians (poor childish souls that had not been previously exposed to the Catholic religion). Rebellious Indians lost the theoretical privileges. For a further discussion of *repartimientos* and *encomiendas* see Francisco Scarano, *Puerto Rico: Cinco siglos de historia* (San Juan: McGraw-Hill, 1993). And Peter Bakewell, *A History of Latin America: Empires and Sequels 1450-1930* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1997).

⁵² Richard Konetzke, *América Latina*, vol. II (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1997) 153.

difficult to tame islands and waters were *Caribe* (Carib) territory.⁵³ Thus, the archipelago and encompassed sea eventually named *Caribe/Caraïbes/Caraïben/Caribien/Caribbean* began to be geographically imagined as a savage space to be conquered. The naming in dubious honor of the Caribs could almost attest that upon the Spanish arrival and first attempts of colonization the Caribs, whether a cultural group or rebellious Indians, dominated the region, or at least were eating their way north.

The writings of Christopher Columbus and Diego Álvarez Chanca were not alone in supporting the Carib=cannibal equation. The Anonymous of Carpentras' 1619 chronicle mentioned above contains a description of a Carib anthropophagic ceremony. A similar narrative was produced in 1578 by Jean De Léry detailing his experiences with the Tupinamba in Brazil.⁵⁴ Such narratives incited European fantasies of the Americas and with the aid of the printing press the stories multiplied infinitely. Such was the case with Michel de Montaigne's 1580 "Des Cannibales."⁵⁵ Yet, one of the most known examples can be found in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611).⁵⁶ The story of the shipwrecked Prospero and his spirit Ariel and wretched slave Caliban has been passionate debated by Latin American intellectuals throughout the 20th century. The Uruguayan scholar José Enrique Rodó appropriated the character of Ariel in 1900 as a symbol for the supposedly spiritual character of Latin America. He, in turn, juxtaposed Ariel to Caliban which came to represent for Rodó the brutish materialism of the United States of America. With the rise of indigenismo in the 1910s and 1920s, fostering the imagining

⁵³ In the Spanish language, the word *Caribe* refers both to the disappeared indigenous population of the Lesser Antilles as well as to the Caribbean geographical region.

⁵⁴ Jean De Léry, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil, Otherwise Called America*, trans. Janet Whatley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

⁵⁵ Michel de Montaigne, "Des cannibales," *Les Essais*, ed. Pierre Villey, 2nd ed., vol. I (Paris: Quadrige, 1992) 202-214.

⁵⁶ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Robert Langbaum, rev. ed. (New York: A Signet Classic, 1998).

of the indigenous populations in terms of natural men, Ariel was further collapsed with the disappeared Tainos. Since the mid 20th century, however, Caribbean intellectuals have been rereading the story of Prospero and Caliban as an allegory of the colonial encounter between Europe and the Caribbean, or the Americas in general. The allegory of the European conquest, they argue, constructs Prospero, the imperial agent, as civilization and Caliban, the indigenous cannibal, as a savage without language or remedy.⁵⁷ For example, the sociologist and Africanist scholar Paget Henry argues that Caliban is the embodiment of the native construed as without language. The linguistic lack implies the further lack of reason and humanity that justifies the native's colonization and enslavement by those with the gift of civilization. Others like the literary critic Roberto Fernández Retamar have responded to the allegory by choosing to embrace the mixed-race and oppressed Caliban as an anticolonial figure capable of pushing forth a local and above all non-Eurocentric understanding of the history and cultural identity of José Martí's "*nuestra America mestiza*" (our mixed-race America). In all, Columbus, Léry, Montaigne, Shakespeare's and other such histories are in their own way surviving echoes of the now disappeared Antillean indigenous cultures. Many of

⁵⁷ William Shakespeare's The Tempest has provoked intense debates amongst Caribbean and Latin American intellectuals. José Enrique Rodó was the first to engage the play by using in a 1900 essay the character of Ariel as a symbol of the spiritual yet rational Latin American cultural identity. Sixty nine years later Martinique's Aimé Césaire posed questions of colonialism and racism through the play by making an "adaptation to the Black Theatre." In 1971 the Cuban Roberto Fernández Retamar challenged Rodó's Ariel by appropriating the mixed-race and colonized but potentially revolutionary figure of Calibán. In recent years Consuelo López Springfield and others like Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert have brought gender to the debate by identifying themselves as "Daughters of Caliban" and Paget Henry has pondered on how the representation of Caliban constructs colonized subjects as devoid of reason. Roberto Fernández Retamar, "Calibán," Casa de las Américas 68:XII (septiembre-octubre 1971) 124-151. Aimé Césaire, Une Tempête: D'après "La tempête" de Shakespeare: Adaptation pour un théâtre nègre (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969). Consuelo López Springfield, ed., Daughters of Caliban: Caribbean Women in the Twentieth Century (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). Paget Henry, Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy (New York: Routledge, 2000).

these echoes have become historical traces in the narratives historians weave and have woven about the Caribbean.

Friar Agustín Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra (1745-1813), the precursor of historians of Puerto Rico, inherited such circulating historical traces produced by Columbus, Chanca and many other chroniclers and historians. In the midst of Bourbon reformism he put forth his 1788 Historia de Puerto Rico in which he provided a detailed secondhand account of the indigenous dwellers of the Puerto Rican archipelago that had reportedly disappeared almost 244 to 274 years before.⁵⁸ In the Chapter XVI, dedicated to the “Character, Practices and Customs of the Caribs,” he described these “principal devastators of the island of Puerto Rico” as of good stature and well-built. He went on writing:

Their eyes big, black, and so muddy-confused, that their gaze manifested their stupidity, their appearance would not be disagreeable, if they did not voluntarily make it ugly by disfiguring their heads, noses and other features for a pretended gallantry, that they made stand out with the liveliest of colors, with which they painted their whole body, and this was the only clothing that covered them.⁵⁹

The Carib physique, according to Abbad y Lasierra, was disfigured but colorful. The color, Robiou Lamarche suggests, could have been predominantly red due to daily baths with surúkuli (substance based on Annatto seeds).⁶⁰ The colorfulness and, following

⁵⁸ According to Sebastián Robiou Lamarche, in Puerto Rico there were 5,500 Tainos originally registered as *encomendados* (the entrustment of native workers to supposedly deserving Spanish settlers). The 1530 census recorded only 1,000 *encomendados* and finally the 1544 census identified 60. Robiou Lamarche, Táinos y Caribes 244.

⁵⁹ “Sus ojos grandes, negros, y tan turbios, que en su mirar manifestaban su estupidez; su aspecto no sería desagradable, si voluntariamente no le afeasen desfigurando su cabeza, narices y demás facciones por una pretendida galantería, que hacían resaltar con los colores más vivos, con que pintaban todo su cuerpo, y era el único vestido que los cubría.” Fray Agustín Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra, Historia geográfica, civil y natural de la isla de San Juan Bautista de Puerto Rico (San Juan: Ediciones de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1959) 79. For Columbus physical description of Caribs based on the stories of La Hispaniola natives see “The Letter of Columbus to Luis De Sant Angel,” ushistory.org.

⁶⁰ Sebastián Robiou Lamarche’s argument about the Carib daily usage of surúkuli is based on the writings of the Jesuit priest Jacques Bouton. Robiou Lamarche, Táinos y Caribes 168.

Diego Álvarez Chanca, the long hair wore by men and the cotton woven rings wore by women around their knees and ankles distinguished physically the Caribs from the Tainos.⁶¹ These distinctions, although refuted by Jalil Sued Badillo as common throughout the Antilles, are repeated in texts like Father Charles Plumier's 1693 sketch of a Carib woman (Figure 2.2).⁶² Abbad y Lasierra's assessment of these sources, however, remains unclear. The absence of bibliographical reference in his Historia de Puerto Rico makes it difficult to identify exactly what historical traces Abbad y Lasierra appropriated. What is certain, however, is the strong influence his depiction of the disappeared indigenous subjects exerted in later historical narratives circulating in Puerto Rico.

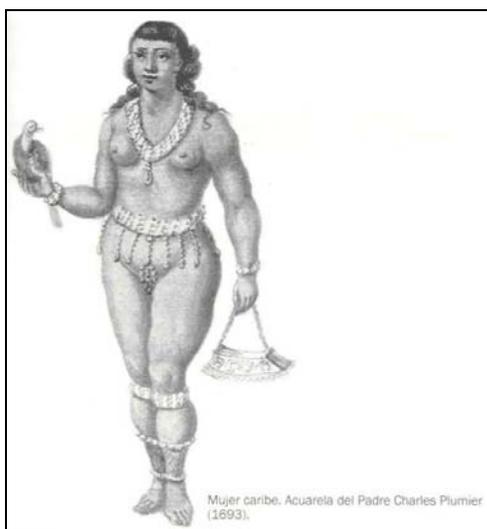


Figure 2.2: Charles Plumier's 1693 sketch of a Carib woman⁶³

Friar Abbad y Lasierra complemented his contemptuous physical description of the Caribs by adding that these “barbarians” had almost no religion except for a belief in two beings: a good one and an evil one. Neither did they, to Abbad y Lasierra's amazement, appear to have any form of government although they still lived peacefully

⁶¹ Álvarez Chanca, Carta al Cabildo de Sevilla, in Tió, Dr. Diego Álvarez Chanca, 53, 55.

⁶² Robiou Lamarche, Tainos y Caribes, 17, 169. Sued Badillo, Los Caribes 52-57, 169.

⁶³ Robiou Lamarche, Tainos y Caribes 169.

united in a manner resembling more the “irrationals” (beasts). Equally surprising to him, they portrayed no class distinctions between men. Women, on the other hand, were treated like slaves. Their language, he wrote, was thought to be totally different to that of the men, which led to speculations alive today that these were actually the women of already conquered Arawak tribes.⁶⁴

The families composed by these men and women, according to Abbad y Lasierra, formed little republics separate from the rest of the Carib nation, or it could be inferred that the Carib nation was actually fragmented along family lines. Abbad y Lasierra’s description of a fragmented but still centralized political arrangement coincides with archeological theories on the development of complex trans-tribal chiefdoms that allowed for caciques to exercise control over several population nucleuses.⁶⁵ Each nucleus, further following Abbad y Lasierra, was a village composed of an extended family. These family villages, in turn, were named *carbets*. In the center were the patriarchs’ houses inhabited by their wife and smaller children. Around were the houses of their married descendents. The houses were all made of sticks or canes covered with stubble and slightly elevated from the ground. The interiors were described by Abbad y Lasierra as extremely simple consisting only of cotton hammocks and of drinking cups made with the skulls of devoured captives. As such, the Caribs had no stored provisions and rather lived on a subsistence basis dependent on the activities of hunting, fishing, and raiding.

Although Abbad y Lasierra made a distinction between the lifestyles of the forest dwellers versus those that inhabited open plains, the fact that there did not exist big game

⁶⁴ Abbad y Lasierra, *Historia* 80.

⁶⁵ These theories on the development of transtribal chiefdoms or *cacicazgos*, however, were not devised in the case of Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde to describe Carib settlements but rather referred to the Agro-ceramists.

in Vieques must have oriented the Caribs towards the ocean either to fish or to cross for raids.⁶⁶ The raids, which supposedly provided among the booty plenty of human flesh, were the only times when, according to Abbad y Lasierra, the Caribs showered themselves in abundance. He described how the Caribs culminated raids as if a morbid Hollywood-like scene, “letting themselves be reigned by their bloodthirsty spirit, they killed and ate their captives and whatever else found; swallowing the meats dripping with blood, manifesting in everything their brutality and savagery.” Then, in drunken stupor, they revived the fury against their enemy by swearing, “we will eat this nation.”⁶⁷

Friar Agustín Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra’s foundational Historia de Puerto Rico does not provide a sympathetic view of the Caribs he identified as simple bloodthirsty barbarians. Robiou Lamarche, while defending the Carib anthropophagi thesis, refutes such bloodthirsty and above all simple characterizations. Influenced by anthropological works on other supposedly anthropophagic cultures like the Tupinamba and Aztec, he argues that the Caribs only captured women and later Europeans and Africans to increase the coerced labor force. Cannibalism, on the other hand, represented a transcendental social and religious ritual that simultaneously performed myths of origin, honored ancestors, avenged enemy insults and vindicated Caribs killed in battles. Thus, the would-be sacrificed had to be worthy of the ceremony. The sacrificed had to be a brave enemy warrior that could embody the affronts suffered by the Caribs. Only then could revenge be obtained by the destruction and consumption of his body.⁶⁸ Such a

⁶⁶ Archaeologists like Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde agree that the indigenous populations in Vieques were oriented towards the ocean in terms of the building of villages and alimentary habits. See for example Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde, La nueva arqueología. Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde, Vieques, Puerto Rico.

⁶⁷ Abbad y Lasierra, Historia 81.

⁶⁸ Robiou Lamarche, Tainos y Caribes 158, 199.

meaningful anthropophagic ritual defies Abbad y Lasierra's assumptions about the Caribs' lack of religious and cultural complexity. Instead, Robiou Lamarche borrows from the 17th century writings of French chroniclers like César de Rochefort to portray an animist Carib ideology populated by flora and fauna that either sheltered spirits like the Supreme Tree Spirit living in the silk-cotton trees or inspired them like the foundational conch-head serpent named Bakámo from whom the Caribs sprung.⁶⁹ The mythical flora and fauna interacted with two main seasons defined through rain and constellations. Constellations, Robiou Lamarche further argues, divided the Carib year into nine months and dictated the proper activities to undertake at different times. For example, the month of Mariru-bana that lasted from approximately the end of July to the beginning of August was reserved for the start of raiding expeditions and Iábura that coincided with most of August was for anthropophagi. The month of Uráu concurring with November heralded the definite return of the warriors to their villages.

The Carib villages described by Robiou Lamarche resemble Abbad y Lasierra's *carbets* insofar as the two refer to an isolated small-scale community revolving around a central straw structure and spun together by familial relationships. In the words of Robiou Lamarche:

The Carib village – separated one from the other by approximately half a league – consisted of one carbet (tabui), the communal house of approximately 30 by 100 feet in length, whose only entrance was oriented

⁶⁹ While Robiou Lamarche's discussion of Carib culture is influenced by the writings of French chroniclers like Friar Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre, his discussion of Taino culture is influenced by Friar Ramón Pané's writings. Pané was commissioned by Christopher Columbus to gather information about the indigenous inhabitants of La Hispaniola. Pané, in turn, lived among the indigenous populations for approximately 4 to 5 years. During this time he learnt their language and recorded ethnographic observations that he finally compiled in his 1498 manuscript titled Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios. The manuscript, like Columbus' diary, was lost at some point in the 16th century. Therefore, Robiou Lamarche has access to traces of the manuscript through a translation of an incomplete Italian translation of the original text. Pané's Relación, in turn, is as problematic as Columbus' Diario. Robiou Lamarche, Tainos y Caribes 80.

towards the east and whose straw roof descended almost to the ground. Around it were usually constructed “up to 50 straw houses” oval (muena) for the married couples, relatives of the family or houses “captain,” called Tiubutuli Hothe according to Rochefort. Contrary to the Taino cacique, this Carib chief did not occupy any special dwelling and his authority, based on familial relationships, was limited to his village.⁷⁰

Robiou Lamarche suggests a somewhat larger village with a less powerful patriarch-captain than those proposed in 1788 by Abbad y Lasierra. His argument that the *carbet* was not the Carib village in itself but rather the central structure serving as a communal house reserved for men redefines local power relations. Even if in both Abbad y Lasierra and Robiou Lamarche’s narratives the Caribs were fragmented politically along family-community lines, Robiou Lamarche’s displacement of the patriarch-captain’s dwelling from the central structure to a surrounding one symbolically disperses unified power in favor of the village men who collectively occupied the centralized space.

The identification of a Carib communal space could be understood within Peter E. Siegel’s theoretical framework for the Saladoid-Ostionoid-Taino evolution in the Puerto Rican archipelago. According to Siegel the indigenous cultural evolution paralleled the shift from a communal plaza-central burial ground to a central ceremonial space epitomized in the ball court. Based on the *Destino* excavations, he identifies the changes in Vieques as occurring during 1200 A.D. to 1500 A.D.⁷¹ Yet, Siegel argues that, “these

⁷⁰ “La aldea caribe – separada una de otra alrededor de media legua – constaba de un carbet (tabui), la casa comunal de unos treinta por cien pies de largo, cuya única entrada estaba orientada hacia el este y cuyo techo de paja bajaba casi hasta la tierra. A su alrededor se construían “hasta 50 casas de pajas” ovaladas (muena) para las parejas casadas, familiares del “capitán” de familia o de casas, llamado Tiubutuli Hothe de acuerdo a Rochefort. Contrario al cacique Taino, este jefe caribe no ocupaba ninguna vivienda especial y su autoridad, basada en relaciones de parentesco, estaba limitada a su aldea.” Robiou Lamarche, *Tainos y Caribes* 185.

⁷¹ See Appendix 6. Peter E. Siegel focuses on the Saladoid-Ostionoid-Taino evolution in the Puerto Rican archipelago which includes the island of Vieques. He does not assertively state his position on the debate about the existence or nonexistence of the Carib cultural group in Vieques, but still places the small island inside the same indigenous evolutionary chronology as the Puerto Rican main island and refers to the Caribs in question as the “so-called island-Caribs of the Lesser Antilles.” Thus, it can be assumed that he

architectural changes are physical manifestations or materializations of the consolidation of power into increasingly narrower social segments.”⁷² Thus, the ceremonial space responded to the centralization, and not the collectivization, of power in those few figures that controlled the central space through increasingly elaborate political and religious performances. These newly empowered figures, as suggested above, were the caciques and the shamans. In other words, if the village layout represented an organizing principle of the indigenous community, as Siegel argues, the chiefs and shamans’ consolidation of power over the religious and political realms had spatial consequences reflected in more elaborate and centralized communal spaces like ball courts and ceremonial plazas. Yet, such a cacique-shaman consolidation of power could question Abbad y Lasierra and Robiou Lamarche’s assumptions about the strong familial ties knitting together the Carib community because for Siegel the members’ allegiances were ultimately due to politico-religious figures. Although, Jalil Sued Badillo argues that *cacicazgos* did harmonize with geographies of kinship that defied Greater versus Lesser Antilles’ imaginary borders.⁷³

In all, Friar Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra’s Historia de Puerto Rico represents an influential history that allows for a unique peek into Bourbon Spanish perceptions of the American enterprise and of its aboriginal settlers. In addition, Abbad y Lasierra’s historical interpretations provides, on the one hand, some insight into a possible lax Carib lifestyle acted out in a decentralized politico-spatial arrangement that nonetheless revolved around the patriarchal familial unit and, on the other hand, evidence of

considers the late Viequense indigenous population as Taino. Siegel, “Contested Places and Places of Contest,” Latin American Antiquity 215, 221.

⁷² Siegel, “Contested Places and Places of Contest,” Latin American Antiquity 221.

⁷³ Jalil Sued Badillo argues that for the most part the caciques of southern Puerto Rico shared kinship and closer ties to those of the islands of Vieques and Saint Croix than to the caciques of northern Puerto Rico. Sued Badillo, Los Caribes 63-64, 148-149.

indigenous rebelliousness and resistance against Spanish colonization. His narration of Carib rebelliousness and resistance has been crucial in the establishment of Viequense myths of origin and foundational figures.

In Historia de Puerto Rico Abbad y Lasierra provided a brief account of the tragic heroes Jaureyvo and Cazímes. According to the history, since 1511 ‘the Caribs, that took war as a lifestyle and lived off cruelties and piracies,’ started responding to a call for help from the neighboring Tainos. The response took the form of raids against Spanish settlements in the main island. If the Tainos and the Caribs had been at war in pre-Columbian times, the arrival of the Spanish served as a catalyst facilitating an indigenous union against the common European enemy. Then, in 1514 the Viequense caciques Cazímes and his brother Jaureyvo made an incursion into the northeastern town of Loíza. During one of the raids Cazímes was killed.⁷⁴ Infuriated, Jaureyvo returned a few days later to avenge his brother’s death. This time the Caribs prevailed over the Spanish who even with the help of Becerillo, infamous dog instrumental in the disciplining of unruly indigenous subjects, could not prevent the capture of settlers.⁷⁵ Once news of the event

⁷⁴ Salvador Brau narrated that Cacimar, locked in combat with Pedro López de Angulo, was killed by Francisco de Quindós through a blow from behind, a “golpe que, entrando por la espalda del indio el hierro, llegó a asomar por la parte opuesta” (“blow that, the iron entering the Indian’s back, reached to show on the opposite side”). In Vieques, as in other places, a blow from behind is interpreted as “un golpe a traición” (a treacherous blow), a cowardly act without honor. Thus, Cacimar’s valiant death while locked in battle contrasts with Quindós cowardly act, perhaps suggesting that the Spanish violent victory over the Caribs lacked honor. Salvador Brau, La colonización de Puerto Rico: Desde el descubrimiento de la Isla hasta la reversion a la corona española de los privilegios de Colón (San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1981) 236.

⁷⁵ Becerillo, following Salvador Brau, has been considered by many chroniclers as an “arma oficial de la conquista” (official weapon of the conquest) initially employed in La Hispaniola and then after 1511 in Puerto Rico. Becerillo, owned by Captain Sancho de Aragón, was one of the precursor tracker-killer dogs used by the Spanish in the American colonial enterprise. In the Caribbean dogs like Becerillo were originally used against undisciplined indigenous subjects like the Caribs. The dogs usually helped the colonizers in the conducting or in the fending off of attacks and in the tracking down of those Indians escaped from *encomiendas*. Later when the indigenous populations died and African slaves were introduced to the Caribbean, these animals, also employed by creoles, served as fierce trackers of runaway and rebellious slaves. For a representation of these tracker-killer dogs in action see the Cuban film La última cena, dir. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, videocassette, Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria de

reached Governor Cristóbal de Mendoza, he pursued the Caribs to the island of Vieques. In the ensuing battle Jaureyvo along with many other Caribs were killed. While Abbad y Lasierra did not provide numbers, according to Salvador Brau, Mendoza's raid left a total of 120 Indians dead and approximately 80 captives. The captives, following Brau, were taken to San Juan and sold as slaves to the Spanish settlers by royal officials. Their sale, nonetheless, was eventually invalidated by the courts that allowed instead for the captives to be *repartidos*.⁷⁶ In all, whether responding to deaths or virtual slavery, Abbad y Lasierra and Brau's narratives coincided in marking 1514 as the year Vieques was left for deserted.⁷⁷

The massacre and the forced resettlement resulting from Governor Mendoza's incursion in Vieques did not eliminate the Carib threat. The Viequense Caribs, further following Salvador Brau, had long been allied with those of Ayay (indigenous name for Saint Croix).⁷⁸ The Spanish thought that after the Viequense incursion these Caribs had also fled from Saint Croix to other Virgin Islands. Thus, embarking in an anti-Carib crusade, the Spanish killed and enslaved the indigenous populations taking refuge in

Cinematógrafos, 1978. Reference to Becerrillo's "particular help" in the taming or colonizing of Puerto Rico and in the defense against the 1514 Carib attack can be found in Juan Bautista Muñoz, "Libro 10.-Capítulo 10.-Año de 1514," *Biblioteca histórica de Puerto Rico*, ed. Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, 2nd ed. (San Juan: Instituto de Literatura Puertorriqueña, 1945) 118-119. And in Brau, *La colonización de Puerto Rico* 234-235.

⁷⁶ Salvador Brau wrote that in 1514 the provisional *repartidor* (distributor of *encomiendas*) Sancho Velázquez had to redistribute the *encomiendas* in the Puerto Rican main island. The first *repartimiento* of 5,500 Indians had been performed by Juan Ponce de León in 1511. Three years later Velázquez dealt with a diminished number of approximately less than 4,000 Indians *repartibles* (able to be distributed in *encomiendas*), not including the Indians distributed to the Crown, Church and officials. Brau listed that Sancho Velázquez distributed 50 Indians to each of the 70 settlers in San Juan and San Germán (3,500 Indians), 200 to the two Councils, 200 for hospitals, 500 to the Crown, 150 to the Bishop, 600 to four Royal Officials; all for a total of 5,150 Indians *repartidos*. Brau, *La colonización de Puerto Rico* 239-240.

⁷⁷ Abbad y Lasierra, *Historia* 58-60.

⁷⁸ Salvador Brau suggests that the Viequense Caribs were probably allied from the start with those of Saint Croix in the raids perpetrated against the Puerto Rican main island. Brau, *La isla de Vieques* 4. Peter E. Siegel also suggests there might have been some cultural Taino affinities, as evidenced in the construction of ball courts, between the late indigenous populations of the Puerto Rican archipelago and those of Saint Croix. Siegel, "Contested Places and Places of Contest," *Latin American Antiquity* 221.

islands like Virgin Gorda.⁷⁹ Yet, according to Brau, the neighboring island of Saint Croix along with others like Guadeloupe and Dominica in the Lesser Antilles provided temporary refuge to the fleeing Caribs who, faced with extermination, were forced to island hop and align themselves across the eastern Antilles.

In the quest to exterminate the Carib threat, the Spanish colonizers made a distinction between the Caribs as a collective indigenous population that could not be successfully colonized and the Carib individual who could, once displaced from its cultural group and familiar geographical surroundings, be *repartido* and thus made part of a larger indigenous work force. Perhaps the separation of the Carib individual from the Carib group could reintroduce him or her into the category of noble savage, or of natural man. Going back to Anthony Pagden, Europeans believed the indigenous populations to be outside civilization and culture. Such a natural state, ruled by passion as opposed to reason, resembled Aristotelian notions of natural slaves. Natural slaves for Aristotle were individuals unable to uplift themselves from their lack of reason and civilization, for which they needed the guidance of masters. Since the late 15th century, Europeans, according to Pagden, debated just how much guidance the indigenous populations of the Americas needed and whether they fitted better the category of natural slaves or of natural men.⁸⁰ Both groups needed guidance, but natural men were thought to deserve a more benign treatment because they could potentially be civilized. In the year 1500, the Spanish Crown leaned towards a natural men's approach by prohibiting the enslavement of the indigenous populations in the Americas and the Iberian Peninsula. Indians, who did not rebel, were to be treated as subjects of the

⁷⁹ Brau, *La colonización de Puerto Rico* 239-257.

⁸⁰ Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*.

Crown. Those who rebelled, however, could be taken as slaves. Still, the Caribs blurred the fine line between natural slaves and natural men for early 16th century Spaniards, or perhaps the Caribs made it evident that the two theoretical categories were not treated too differently in practice. Queen Isabel, in fact, had allowed in 1503 for the specific enslavement of the Carib group due to their supposed anthropophagic practices. The Caribs, in turn, might have just been considered fallen natural men by the queen. Yet, these natural men could be legally enslaved until the 1530 complete prohibition of indigenous slavery passed by the Spanish monarch Carlos V.⁸¹ Whatever the practical or ideological reasons for sparing some Caribs during the incursion in Vieques, different sources coincide in that indeed some Caribs escaped and others were taken as prisoners. Thus, the Viequense Caribs were not all exterminated in 1514. In other words, the indigenous community might have not survived, but individuals did.

The islands of Guadeloupe and Dominica have been central to the perpetuation of Carib histories. After the early 16th century, the hostilities between the Spanish and the Caribs resulted in an indigenous southward retracting movement. The two islands, in turn, surfaced to prominence in what could be considered a myth of ends. Guadeloupe and Dominica were identified as the remaining Carib strongholds.⁸² These strongholds, according to Jalil Sued Badillo, drew the attention of Spanish colonizers stationed in Puerto Rico. Incited by random incidents like the 1553 assault of a Spanish boat in the coasts of Vieques, these colonizers persistently reminded the Crown as late as 1583 of the

⁸¹ Richard Konezke argues that, although in practice rebellious and non-rebellious Indians were enslaved by Spanish colonizers, in theory only Indians who opposed Spanish just wars could be legally enslaved. Just wars referred to righteous war waged by the Spanish Empire. Konezke, *América Latina* 153-157.

⁸² An example of the identification of Guadeloupe as a Carib stronghold can be found in the 1515 failed raid of the island carried out, shortly after Governor Mendoza's 1514 incursion in Vieques, by Juan Ponce de León. Brau, *La colonización de Puerto Rico* 258-261.

Carib threat. In the process, the Caribs became the *barloventeños* (from the Windward Islands) and Guadeloupe and Dominica, at least until the 1542 Royal decree against any form of indigenous slavery, evolved into preferred locus of Spanish slave raids.⁸³ The term *barloventeños*, as employed by the Spanish inhabitants of the Greater Antilles, had a foreign quality. The term implied the southern otherness of the Caribs that, eventually forced out of Guadeloupe, were cornered into settling in Dominica and Saint Vincent under the auspices of the 1660 Franco-Anglo-Carib Treaty. The sedentary phase, according to Robiou Lamarche, lasted until 1797 when the English finally drove them off Saint Vincent and then until the early 20th century when they ethnically mixed themselves out of Dominica. The process of miscegenation, however, had begun centuries earlier with their gradual intermarriage with other African fringe populations throughout the eastern Antilles.⁸⁴ Thus, the 20th century witnessed for some the official end, heralded four centuries earlier, of the supposedly Carib Caribbean. Although the Garifúñas in Central America claim the Carib heritage, and the indigenous populations in the Caribbean have a tendency to resuscitate unexpectedly.⁸⁵

The Puerto Rican aboriginal population, basically massacred in the record time of 40 years, left no clear traces on the processes of racial and cultural mixing in the archipelago. Perhaps the clearest traces are a few scattered words that have survived to name towns like Bayamón and Vieques. Nonetheless, the ambivalent indigenous heritage has had a great impact on national myths of origin attempting to identify the

⁸³ Sued Badillo, *Los Caribes* 138-140, 160-161.

⁸⁴ Robiou Lamarche states that while the French colonizers of the Lesser Antilles did not mix themselves with the local indigenous population like their Spanish counterpart, the *cimarrones* (runaway slaves) and captive Africans did. The product of the exogamy was an increasingly hybrid society composed of Carib men, Arawak women and Blacks that Robiou Lamarche identifies as the Black-Carib culture. Robiou Lamarche, *Táinos y Caribes* 246-249.

⁸⁵ The descendants of the Carib and African miscegenation are thought to have evolved into the Garifúñas nowadays settled around the Bay of Honduras.

autochthonous subjects of an archipelago mostly composed of an uprooted and mixed-race population. The appropriations of a Taino heritage, however, have differed between Puerto Rican populations in the archipelago and in the United States. While few islanders would privilege a Taino identity that subordinates Puerto Rican-ness, during the 1990s different groups surfaced in the United States claiming Taino ethno-racial identities. Such is the case of the self-proclaimed descendant of the Puerto Rican cacique Agüeybaná, Juan Ramón Nadal Jr. According to journalist Rosita Marrero of the newspaper Primera hora, Nadal Jr. sued the federal government during the summer of 2007 for \$515 thousand million for the U.S. usage of “the island of Borinquen.”⁸⁶ As Arlene Dávila argues:

in the United States, interest in the Taíno has not been limited to its use as a symbol of assertion but rather was concomitantly developed into an organized movement of ethnic revival intent on rescuing and restoring the Taíno language, culture and religion. That is, while there are a variety of groups and individuals who identify themselves as Taíno on the island, it has nevertheless been in the United States, particularly in New York City, from which the revival of Taíno identity has been most boisterously assertive since the 1990s.⁸⁷

Taino revival in the United States, Dávila continues, must be contextualized within the discourses of multiculturalism in the mainland. The U.S.-based Taino identity, furthermore, defies national boundaries to the extent it incorporates Tainos from different Caribbean islands. Thus, Taino definitions in the United States ultimately have a pan-Caribbean character not necessarily shared by Puerto Rican islanders.

⁸⁶ Rosita Marrero, “Reclamo taino de ‘Aguëybaná III,’” Primera hora [San Juan] 11 July 2007, 26 January 2008
<http://www.primerahora.com/noticia/otras_panorama/noticias/reclamo_taino_de_agueybana_iii/87347>.

⁸⁷ Arlene Dávila, “Local/Diasporic Taínos: Towards a Cultural Politics of Memory, Reality and Imagery,” Taíno Revival: Critical Perspectives on Puerto Rican Identity and Cultural Politics, ed. Gabriel Haslip-Viera (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001) 41.

The appropriation of a Taino heritage by Puerto Rican islanders cannot be separated from national myths of origin. The fact that Puerto Rico changed imperial hands in 1898, when most of the Americas were divided into nation-states, has helped infuse myths of origin with a colonial motif. The continuance of the colonial status has been for many Puerto Ricans, regardless of political affiliations, a source of embarrassment.⁸⁸ The embarrassment has fostered the constructions of teleological histories attempting to identify the colonial problem of the Puerto Rican national character. These histories, in tone with 19th century romantic narrations of the indigenous origins of the nation, trace back the roots of the problem of why Puerto Rico has not been able to cast off the imperial yoke to the Taino heritage. In turn, the rebellious actions of figures like the famous cacique Agüeybaná have been characterized as exceptions and infused with a sense of futility.⁸⁹ In all, the Taino heritage in general has been interpreted as non-heroically peaceful. Thus, many Puerto Ricans, understanding that the problem indeed started with the submissive or impotent Tainos, summarize the history of their archipelago with the word colonial and define their national myths and foundational figures in terms of anticolonial struggles.

Puerto Rican main islanders might read the Taino heritage with a nationalist pride infused with futility. Yet, Viequenses in general have appropriated a quite different Carib past. While there is a sense of embarrassment about Carib savageness, closely

⁸⁸ The three major political parties in Puerto Rico today defined by their pro-independence, pro-statehood and pro-commonwealth stance roughly coincide in their emphasis on Puerto Rican cultural nationalism and on the need to better define the archipelago's political status.

⁸⁹ Agüeybaná is the most popular Taino cacique in Puerto Rican nationalist myths. He has been the theme of numerous cultural productions narrating his courageous resistance against the Spanish conquistadores. Yet, I argue that Taino narratives in Puerto Rico are simultaneously read with nationalist pride of the origins of the nation and with a sense of futility due to the Taino's ultimate inability to resist or at least survive the Spanish invasion. The continued colonial situation, openly denounced by at least two of the three major Puerto Rican political parties, has not permitted a kinder revision of the island's indigenous past.

linked to the anthropophagic accusations, Viequenses still boast of an anti-imperialist motif denied to other Puerto Ricans. The motif is based on the uncompromising struggle the Caribs supposedly waged against the Spanish colonizers. The Viequense caciques Cazímes and Jaureyvo, better known today as Cacimar and Yaureibo, have become the emblematic figures in such a “till the death” anticolonial struggle. Their feats have been echoed in multiple texts with different undertones.⁹⁰ The caciques, for example, have been acknowledged through the 1991 naming of the “The Prehispanic Cultures in Vieques” room as the “Sala Cacimar-Yaureibo.” The caciques have also been paid homage through the 1967 naming of the Yaureibo Cultural Center after the avenging cacique brother. The Center, honored in 1991 with a permanent space next to the archive and the *Patronato del Fuerte* in the newly restored *Fortín Conde de Mirasol*, is a local Viequense organization ascribed to the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. Its purpose is to promote educational cultural activities through different mediums of representation like the theater. The organization, in turn, has undertaken the task to represent to the larger Viequense community an aboriginal heritage that, the members believe, should make the islanders particularly proud.

The activities of the Yaureibo Cultural Center have helped push the naming rites even further. Not only do tourism and car rental companies bear the names of the caciques, but Viequenses have conjured their indigenous foundational figures through the naming of their sons. The fisherman and anti-Navy activist Carlos Zenón, for example, named his sons Cacimar and Yabureibo. They both had an active role in the 1999-2003 civil disobedient campaigns against the presence of the U.S. Navy in Vieques, and were

⁹⁰ For different narrations of the Cacimar and Yaureibo history see, for example, Bautista Muñoz, “Libro 10.-Capítulo 10.-Año de 1514,” *Biblioteca histórica de Puerto Rico* 118-119. And Brau, *La colonización de Puerto Rico* 233-239.

imprisoned as a consequence of their participation. In his allocution delivered on January 15, 2002 before the federal court, Yabureibo stated:

we are, Mr. Judge, the rebels of this Puerto Rican archipelago...who do not accept submissively the inferior role that the privileged of this society want to impose upon us in the name of their [U.S.] federal masters... There are Viequenses, Mr. Judge who have achieved our liberty in the struggle against military tyranny, and who prefer to welcome death before accepting being forced to wear the shameful chains of surrender.⁹¹

As such, modern day Cacimars and Yaureibos, when interpellated, feel the burden of great anticolonial expectations because if Puerto Ricans from the *Isla Grande* suffered from weak blood, Viequenses could still infuse the national character with their Caribbean anti-imperialist heritage.⁹²

Perhaps the clearest narration of Cacimar and Yaureibo's feats with an anti-colonial motif was done not by a Viequense, but by a historian from Massachusetts that arrived in Vieques in 1980 searching to understand the effect of the military presence in Puerto Rican society.⁹³ Approximately 20 years after his arrival in the island, the director of the Museum and Archive *Fortín Conde de Mirasol*, Robert Rabin has written that:

The inhabitants of Vieques, brothers of the Tainos of the Puerto Rican *Isla Grande*, resisted the Spanish plans of colonization and enslavement. In 1514, under the leadership of the Viequense caciques Cacimar and his brother Yaureibo, the Viequense Tainos attacked the Spanish bases in the east coast of Puerto Rico, near the town of Loíza. During one of these

⁹¹ "somos nosotros, señor juez, los rebeldes de este archipiélago puertorriqueño...que no aceptamos sumisamente el papel de inferioridad que los privilegiados de esta sociedad quieren imponernos a nombre de sus amos federales...Hemos viequenses, señor juez que hemos alcanzado nuestra libertad en la lucha en contra de la tiranía militar, y que mejor le daremos la bienvenida a la muerte antes que aceptar que se nos impongan las cadenas vergonzosas de la claudicación." Yabureibo Zenón, "Alocución de Yabureibo Zenón ante la corte federal," *Vieques Libre*, 2003, Vieques Libre, 26 January 2008 <http://www.viequeslibre.addr.com/espanol/articulos/alocucion_de_yabureibo.htm>.

⁹² Following Louis Althusser's formulation of the term, I understand the concept of interpellation as a calling or naming that defines and creates what is being called or named to the extent that what is being called upon or named responds and thus acknowledges the given name or identity. The concept implies a negotiation for an identity cannot be solely imposed. An identity must also be accepted and recognized. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971) 127-186.

⁹³ Robert Rabin, personal interview, 7 and 8 November 2003.

battles Cacimar died. Later, Yaureibo leads an anticolonial expedition against the Spanish in the Vacía Talega zone, Piñones sector in Loíza. After defeating the Spanish they returned to Vieques with several prisoners. A little later, a strong Spanish military expedition attacked the Viequense town destroying the settlement, enslaving the survivors and leaving the island basically uninhabited...[Still,] many elements of indigenous life and culture are present on Vieques today-names of places, foods, use of medicinal plants, in the faces of the people and in the spirit of struggle against foreign domination that has become an important part of the collective mentality of our population.⁹⁴

Robert Rabin, in the midst of anti-Navy protests in Vieques, revised the small island's indigenous history through a bilingual Internet article devised to reach and inspire to action a wide national and international audience. In the article he underlined, as if trying to call again into existence, the kinship bond between Puerto Rico and Vieques' aboriginal inhabitants he identified as Tainos. Such a kinship bond, after all, had once translated into a political allegiance against "the Spanish plans of colonization and enslavement."⁹⁵

Robert Rabin coincides with Jalil Sued Badillo in reading Cacimar and Yaureibo's 1514 raid of Loíza as part of a Taino punitive strike against Spanish enslavement schemes. Yet, Sued Badillo identifies the *cacica* (female cacique) Doña

⁹⁴ "Los habitantes de Vieques, hermanos de los Tainos de la Isla Grande de Puerto Rico, resistieron los planes de colonización e esclavitud de los españoles. En 1514, bajo el liderato de los caciques viequenses Cacimar y su hermano Yaureibo, los Tainos viequenses atacaron las bases españolas en la costa este de Puerto Rico, cerca del pueblo de Loíza. Durante una de estas batallas murió Cacimar. Más tarde, Yaureibo dirige una expedición anti-colonial contra los españoles en la zona de Vacía Talega, sector Piñones en Loíza. Después de derrotar a los españoles volvieron a Vieques con varios prisioneros. Poco después, una fuerte expedición militar española atacó al pueblo viequense destrozando a la población, esclavizando a los sobrevivientes y dejando a la Isla básicamente despoblada." The rest of the quote is originally in English. Robert Rabin, "Historia de Vieques: Cinco Siglos de Lucha de un Pueblo Puertorriqueño," Historic Archives-Vieques Information, 2005, Fortín Conde de Mirasol, 10 July 2005 <<http://www.enchanted-isle.com/elfortin/history.htm>>.

⁹⁵ The "Libro 10.-Capítulo 10.-Año de 1514" in Alejandro Tapia y Rivera's Biblioteca histórica de Puerto Rico details how after the 1514 raid against Vieques the Spanish colonizers asked the Crown for permission to take the surviving Caribs as slaves, request the king supposedly denied partly due to the fear that potential but still unidentified Carib populations in the American mainland might strike back against the Spanish with vengeance. Bautista Muñoz, "Libro 10.-Capítulo 10.-Año de 1514," Biblioteca histórica de Puerto Rico 119.

Luisa, slain in combat, as the raiders' main target.⁹⁶ The *cacica*, whose indigenous name is currently unknown to scholars, was the widow of a cacique. Once baptized as Luisa, she remarried to the mulatto Pedro Mexía. The marriage to the outsider, however, did not seal her fate with the other Tainos. According to Sued Badillo, Tainos branded Luisa as a traitor following her denunciations to the Spanish colonizers of the indigenous warriors hiding in her domains. The characterization of *cacica* Luisa as assimilated and treacherous further allows Puerto Ricans to question the allegiance and resolution of Tainos, or maybe of Taino women. Even Robert Rabin questions the main islanders' resolution when he invokes the anticolonial spirit of Viequenses. This is a spirit traceable from the 16th century Cacimar and Yaureibo to the late 20th century anti-Navy Viequenses. Puerto Rican main islanders, in Rabin's narrative, are ultimately the assenting witnesses of Viequenses long anticolonial struggle.

If the Puerto Rican Tainos were indeed docile or compliant with the Spanish conquistadores, the history of Cacimar and Yaureibo has endowed Viequenses with two indigenous heroes that people, regardless of academic theories, identify as Carib.⁹⁷ For many Viequenses Cacimar and Yaureibo are more than heroes. They are considered revolutionary foundational figures. After all, these are the first figures known by scholars and Viequenses, or provided by Spanish archives, to fight for their permanence in Vieques. More so, historical interpretations like the one pushed forth by Rabin in the passage above have fostered the appropriation, by the mostly Catholic Viequense

⁹⁶ Jalil Sued Badillo's reinterpretation of Cacimar and Yaureibo's 1514 incursions into the Puerto Rican main island as part of a collective Taino plan directed against the Loíza *cacica* Luisa are based on his reading of Salvador Brau's *La colonización de Puerto Rico*. Sued Badillo, *Los Caribes* 152.

⁹⁷ My argument about the general Viequense belief in their Carib past, as opposed to a Taino past, is based on numerous conversations with Viequenses and on my own personal Viequense-*San Juanera* experience that made me grow up with Carib-Taino histories.

audience, of the cacique brothers as Christ-like figures martyred by a foreign imperialist power. Yet, their blood, potentially as redemptory as Christ's, carries across time the Carib hereditary traits of fierceness and tenacity in the face of foreign colonizers and enslavers. The belief in the power of these traits, considered unique in the Puerto Rican archipelago, has been for too long a part of the collective Viequense identity to be successfully displaced by rather recent academic theories.⁹⁸ If indeed Carib histories will one day disappear from the islanders' collective memory, the narratives will probably be substituted by the growing belief, supported by historians like Robert Rabin, in the exceptional unruliness of Viequense Tainos.

Cacimar and Yaureibo's feats, as safeguarded by the imperial archive and narrated by Rabin, have acquired the symbolic significance of conjuring into existence a small island community worth fighting for. Paradoxically, the imperial archive has been a very guilty accomplice of historians throughout the conjuring process. Working inside the metropolis, archives like the *Real y General Archivo de Simancas e Indias* have protected the surviving historical traces of Cacimar and Yaureibo's history.⁹⁹ These traces were once part of the bureaucratic writings interweaving the Spanish empire, and were gathered by bureaucrats and preserved by archivist to document perhaps the end of

⁹⁸ The appropriation of a Carib past in Vieques began in the early 18th century with the writings of the colony's founder Teophile Le Guillou. See "Chapter 3: Claims to the Labyrinthine Island, 16th-19th Centuries" and "Chapter 4: The Spanish Colony of Vieques, 19th Century."

⁹⁹ The now called *Archivo General de Simancas* holds documents dating from the late 15th century to 1800. According to the Spanish Subdirección General de Archivos Estatales, this archive, started by Carlos V and created by Felipe II, was the first one ever constructed as well as the first one with an archival guide. The *Archivo General de Indias* located in Seville was not founded until 1785. [Archivo General de Simancas. Archivos Estatales](http://www.mcu.es/archivos/MC/AGS/index.html), 2008, Ministerio de Cultura, Spain, 27 January 2008 <<http://www.mcu.es/archivos/MC/AGS/index.html>>.

rebellious Indians.¹⁰⁰ Still, these traces have been read and narrated by historians like Friar Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra and his contemporary Juan Bautista Muñoz (1745-1799).¹⁰¹ Bautista Muñoz, appointed “Cosmógrafo Mayor de las Indias” (Main Cosmographer of the Indies) in 1770 by Charles III, was authorized through a 1781 *Real Cédula* (Royal Decree) to visit and thus employ the archival memories of Simancas, Cádiz, Seville and other cities. These archives informed his History of the New World published in 1794.¹⁰² In this History, focused on the vast Spanish American empire, Cacimar and Yaureibo were only secondary characters in a chapter dedicated to the Spanish Empire’s effort to discipline the Caribs. Later, in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, Cacimar and Yaureibo would be brought to the forefront of local histories with the help of historians like Salvador Brau, Jalil Sued Badillo and especially Robert Rabin. These scholars have rescued, revised and further imagined for future Viequense generations the drama of anticolonial foundational figures embedded in indigenous myth of origins.¹⁰³



¹⁰⁰ While archives may sometimes seem to have a life of their own, it is mostly archivists who pass judgement on the historical value of documents, and who are the people that physically preserve the documentation.

¹⁰¹ For an analysis of the centrality of writing, especially bureaucratic writing, in the imagining of the Spanish American Empire see Ángel Rama, The Lettered City, trans. and ed. John Charles Chasteen (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

¹⁰² Juan Bautista Muñoz was able to publish only the first volume of his History of the New World. He died in 1799 leaving behind him 166 volumes of annotated manuscripts gathered from different archives throughout Spain. The volumes, of which some are missing, are currently known as the “Muñoz Collection.” Vicente Murga Sanz, ed., “Introducción,” Biblioteca histórica de Puerto Rico: Puerto Rico en los Manuscritos de Don Juan Bautista Muñoz (Río Piedras: Ediciones de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1960) IX-XVII.

¹⁰³ Spanish archives may have been more willing accomplices, as exemplified in the offering of research grants to Latin American history scholars, in the imagining of Viequense foundational figures and myths of origin during the 20th and 21st centuries because these institutions are no longer part of the imperial power being contended. Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, however, worked with the “Muñoz Collection” back in 1851. Murga Sanz, Biblioteca histórica de Puerto Rico: Puerto Rico XII.

Contrary to Cacimar and Yaureibo's histories and to tales about the Taino *cacica* Luisa, there were no Carib *cacicas* recorded in the Spanish archives for Viequense women to emulate. There were no heroic or even tragic tales starring Carib women. Yet, living flesh and blood traces of Carib women survived the Spanish empire, however few and scattered, for I had my own private model. Born in 1886, before local history books, archives and museums detailing with nationalist nostalgia the disappearance of the Viequense Caribs, my great-grandmother had made the Carib heritage her own. It could have also been the other way around for she inherited the tragic-heroic island, the tragic-heroic *carbet*, the tragic-heroic destiny, and the fierceness and tenacity to meet them face-to-face even when she lost her eyesight and even when life got hard, very hard. Nonetheless, scholars assert, perhaps as part of a myth of ends, that the Caribs were massacred and Vieques was surely deserted by 1582 with only sheep left to roam the island.¹⁰⁴ Still, my great-grandmother, living outside books, dusty primary documents and written communication in general, claimed proudly that she was a pureblood Carib woman. Her strong auburn features, even when weathered and wrinkled, silently stood as assenting witnesses to her indigenous claims. Having grown up in a time marked by low literacy and scholastic rates, some sort of oral tradition must have helped my great-grandmother appropriate her Carib identity.¹⁰⁵ Some oral tradition or network outside the

¹⁰⁴ López Sotomayor, *Vieques: un momento de su historia*.

¹⁰⁵ Cayetano Coll y Toste wrote that there were 6 schools in Vieques by 1898 with a total of 288 students and 6 teachers. The schools were located in the town of Isabel II and in the districts of Puerto Real and Mosquitos. Each place had two schools since they were divided by gender. Girls outnumbered boys in all three localities. According to Juan Bonnet Benítez, by the year 1899 Vieques had 5,938 inhabitants. Thus, combining Coll y Toste with Bonnet Benítez numbers it can be stated that by the end of the 19th century approximately 5% of the population was attending school. Cayetano Coll y Toste, *Historia de la instrucción pública en Puerto Rico hasta el año 1898* (Bilbao: Editorial Vasco Americana, S.A., 1970) 196.

disciplining reach of the few *letrados* (primarily those that mastered written communication) in Vieques, so invested in narrating how they disinfested the island of savages and brought civilization, must have fostered Carib imaginings.¹⁰⁶ These collective imaginings could have been passed down through generations that, after 1514, traveled around the Lesser Antilles for a while before returning, or establishing themselves for the first time, to Vieques. Yet, even if *Abuela's* family was the only one openly claiming a Carib identity in the late 18th century Vieques, I do not think she was the only one. I do not think she was the last one left of a now officially disappeared indigenous race, even when history books deny such claims.

My great-grandmother is now to me but a vague old memory of a diminished blind old lady that died when she was 98 years old. I was only eight at the time. Still, I remember her, *Abuela Cocoroco*, nicknamed by my immediate family after the affectionate rooster callings she made to lure to her bedside the small grandson she could not see. To others she was known by Doña Basilia, a more appropriate Spanish name for public spaces. Yet, the Spanish honorary title Doña, backed in my great-grandmother not by wealth but rather by dignity and pride, could not successfully silence her onomatopoeic name or conquer her indigenous claims. Both continued to be performed in the more private domestic sphere of her apartment in the *caserío*. The Carib presence,

Juan A. Bonnet Benítez, *Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: F. Ortiz Nieves, 1976) 118. See Appendix 18.

¹⁰⁶ As proposed by Ángel Rama, the *letrados* in Latin America were originally those that mastered written communication. During the colonial period the *letrados* wielded the almost sacred power that writing had acquired to perform and legitimize themselves in their roles as bureaucrats and ideologues of the Spanish empire. Concentrated in urban centers, the *letrados* had an important role in the imagining of Latin American cities, ideal cities that many times diverged from the “real cities” inhabited primarily by non-*letrados*. Thus, Rama identified the *letrado* collectivity as an urban elite he named “The Lettered City.” The “Lettered City,” according to Rama, commanded over the “order of signs,” a more spiritual-cultural realm that differed and many times contrasted with the materiality of the “real city.” Rama, *The Lettered City* 17-28.

as the Spanish soon found out with Vieques after 1514, could be hidden but was very difficult to erase.

Chapter 3:

Claims to the Labyrinthine Island, 16th-19th Centuries

The island of Puerto Rico, attacked the most by the Caribs, could not fend them off, neither by the number of its inhabitants, nor with the advantage of firearms; until in 1625 the English, by orders of Warnes, and the French, by those of Danambuc, disembarked at the same time in San Cristóbal, not with the intention of cultivating the land, but with that of enriching themselves, through theft and piracy, which from this island [San Cristóbal] they planned to perpetrate over the Spanish ones...The French, English and Dutch that replaced the Caribs in their islands, adopted their ferocity and savagery; spreading terror and fright to all the Spanish colonies, carrying everything in blood and fire.

Friar Agustín Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra, Historia de Puerto Rico (1788)¹

The island of Puerto Rico, as Friar Agustín Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra suggested in his Historia de Puerto Rico, was a frontier colony to the Spanish Empire. The island was located in a privileged geographical position to provide harbor to vessels arriving from Europe. Puerto Rico, in addition, was the easternmost colony of the Spanish Empire in the Greater Antilles. As such, the settlers of the island had to deal with the non-Spanish populations of the Lesser Antilles. The linkages established between Puerto Rico and the Lesser Antilles were very complex. Abbad y Lasierra, in the midst of Bourbon reformism, stressed the porosity of the Spanish imperial boundary and the violent nature

¹ “La isla de Puerto Rico, que fué en todos tiempos la más combatida de los Caribes, no pudo contenerles, ni por la multitud de sus habitantes, ni con la ventaja de las armas de fuego; hasta que en 1625 los ingleses, a las órdenes de Warnes y los franceses, a las de Danambuc, desembarcaron a un mismo tiempo en San Cristóbal, no con el objeto de cultivar sus tierras, sino con el de enriquecerse, mediante los robos y las piraterías, que desde esta isla [San Cristóbal] pensaban hacer sobre las españolas...Los franceses, ingleses y holandeses que sucedieron a los caribes en sus islas, adoptaron su ferocidad y barbarie; esparcieron el terror y espanto por todas las colonias españolas, llevándolo todo a sangre y fuego.” Fray Agustín Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra, Historia geográfica, civil y natural de la isla de San Juan Bautista de Puerto Rico (San Juan: Ediciones de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1959) 82-83.

of the relationship. The southern neighbors, he argued, waged a continuous war against Puerto Rico. Out of these neighbors, he singled out the Caribs. Their savagery, it seems, could not be erased from the islands the European sought to claim.

For some time after the 1514 massacre of the indigenous population in Vieques, the Spanish colonizers in Puerto Rico rejoiced with the cleansing of the bothersome Carib presence from the small island.² The survival of anything Carib, then equaled to savagery and rebelliousness, had become a threat to the Spanish plans for the northeastern sector of the Caribbean archipelago. Spanish colonizers, in fact, did not assign to the Caribs the value given early on to the Tainos and later on to the Africans. On the contrary, the colonizers pushed the Crown to recognize the Caribs as a warfaring group and to therefore favor their disbandment through massacre and forced resettlement.³ The Caribs, after all, represented to the colonizers a surplus indigenous population from whom collective labor could not be easily extracted and who openly challenged Spanish control over the area. Thus, the Governor of Puerto Rico, Cristóbal de Mendoza, must have hoped in 1514 to end the Carib threat in Vieques and its surrounding waters. Almost 500 years later, most scholars coincide that Mendoza's party was quite successful in driving out the Caribs from Vieques. Diana López Sotomayor, for example, states that by 1522 Vieques was deserted, while Elizabeth Langhorne writes

² As stated in Chapter 2, back in 1514 the Spanish colonizers embarked throughout different Virgin Islands in an anti-Carib crusade. The indigenous populations found in these islands were either killed or taken as slaves, which made the Spanish colonizers from the Puerto Rican main island momentarily think the problem with the Caribs in the nearby islands was over. Salvador Brau, La colonización de Puerto Rico: Desde el descubrimiento de la Isla hasta la reversion a la corona española de los privilegios de Colón (San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1981) 239-257.

³ For a discussion of indigenous slavery see "Chapter 2: Myths of Origin and Foundational Figures, 1514."

that 1582 is the last year in which there is any report of indigenous presence in Vieques.⁴ Leaving aside the 60-year difference, both scholars coincide that by the close of the 16th century the Caribs in Vieques were history. Still, following Friar Agustín Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra's 1788 brief description of the long reign of "savagery" that surrounded the Puerto Rican archipelago, the Spanish colonizers might have celebrated too soon for more than the name Carib survived in the region to haunt the Crown's imperial designs.

The Spanish Crown's struggle to claim Vieques was a long and complicated one expanding over four centuries. The Caribs might have been officially driven out of Vieques during the early 16th century, but even at the height of Spain's overseas dominion the small island could not be successfully conquered, deserted or managed. According to Abbad y Lasierra, Spain was unable to control the Caribs in the Lesser Antilles, and the 1622-23 arrival in San Cristóbal (later named St. Kitts) of Pierre Bélain d'Esnambuc for France and of Thomas Warner for England only heralded the continued reign of "ferocity and savagery" over the islands where the French, English and Dutch succeeded the Caribs. By the 1788 publication of Abbad's Historia de Puerto Rico, Vieques was part of the islands frequented and sometimes inhabited by these non-Iberian Europeans that supposedly continued to spread "terror and fright" to nearby Spanish colonies.⁵ Thus, long after the 1514 massacre of the indigenous population, Spain still considered the island of Vieques as a savage territory.

⁴ Diana López Sotomayor, Vieques: un momento de su historia, diss., Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1975, (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma, 1975). Elizabeth Langhorne, Vieques: History of a Small Island (Vieques: The Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust, 1987) 1.

⁵ Vieques, by the year 1788 when Friar Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra published his Historia de Puerto Rico, was still not assertively claimed by Spain. For this and for other reasons I explain further on in the chapter, Vieques must have been on Abbad y Lasierra's mind when he mentioned the existence of islands that even after the expulsion of the Caribs had remained the locus of "ferocity and savagery." For an example of such a description explicitly referring to Vieques see Teophile Le Guillou's descriptions of pre-1828 Vieques later in this chapter.

The establishment of Pierre D'Esnambuc and Thomas Warner in San Cristóbal represented the first permanent settlement of European competitors to the Spanish Empire in the Caribbean.⁶ San Cristóbal and the nearby islands had not been inhabited by Spain. By 1655, however, the English had taken over Jamaica. By 1697 the French had official possession of Saint-Domingue, and by 1733 the Danes had purchased and occupied part of the Virgin Islands. All these post-1650s acquisitions gave control to other European empires over territories that had been either populated by Spain or that were close to established Spanish colonies. Thus, like the succession of biblical plagues suffered by the ancient Egyptians, the Spanish colonizers endured the Caribs who were followed by the French, the English, the Dutch and the Danes. In this procession of New World plagues, Abbad y Lasierra's categories employed to understand the American reality were easily transferable. To the Benedictine monk from Aragón, the challenge to Spanish colonial possessions, in this case Puerto Rico, transmuted these other Europeans into savages. As such, the Caribs were transfigured into the French, the Dutch, the English and, although not explicitly mentioned, into the Danes and the Brandenburgers. The transfigured shared, according to Abbad y Lasierra, the category of ferocious savages. The category, previously employed on the African Moors during the Reconquest, continued to be recycled after its usage on the Caribs to designate both Catholic and Protestant populations threatening Spanish dominion overseas.⁷

⁶ Sebastián Robiou Lamarche, Táinos y Caribes: Las culturas aborígenes antillanas (San Juan: Editorial Punto y Coma, 2005) 246.

⁷ The Spanish usage of categories like savages to identify the American indigenous populations can be traced back to the Reconquest (711-1492) and the long struggle with African Moors for the control of the Iberian Peninsula. See, for example, Richard Konezke, América Latina, vol. II (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1997). And Anthony Pagden, The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

The 17th century marked the full onset of a representational warfare between European empires competing for American dominion and accusing each other of brutal savagery.⁸ The representation warfare, nonetheless, had firm roots in the 16th century with, for example, the 1578 Dutch and the 1583 English translations of Bartolomé de las Casas' 1552 Brevisima relación de la destrucción de las Indias (Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies). The text was written by the Dominican priest as a critique of the Spanish treatment of the indigenous populations in the Americas. The appropriation of the text by Protestant empires, in turn, helped the creation of the Black Legend characterizing the Catholic Spanish Empire as exceptionally cruel and savage. Thus, the same characterizations the Spanish had used on the Caribs were being returned to them by other Europeans. These characterizations also responded to geopolitical tensions, but between Spain and other European empires. The Dutch, after all, waged between the years 1568 and 1648 a war of independence with Spain, and had founded the Dutch West India Company in 1621 to establish trade monopolies with the Americas. Meanwhile, the English defeated the Spanish Invincible Armada in 1588 and was challenging the Spanish navy at sea.⁹

Abbad y Lasierra's Historia de Puerto Rico was very much part of the representational warfare waged between European empires since the 16th century. Yet, the Brandenburgers and the Danes did not feature prominently in Abbad y Lasierra's

⁸ The representation warfare between European empires had definitely begun in the 16th century with, for example, the 1578 Dutch and the 1583 English translations of Bartolomé de las Casas' 1552 Brevisima relación de la destrucción de las Indias (Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies). The text was written by the Dominican priest as a critique of the treatment of the indigenous populations in the Americas. The appropriation of the text by Protestant European empires, in turn, helped give rise to the Black Legend characterizing the Catholic Spanish Empire as exceptionally cruel and savage. Benjamin Keen, "The Black Legend Revisited: Assumptions and Realities," The Hispanic American Historical Review 49:4 (November 1969): 703-719.

⁹ The Dutch declared their independence from Spain in 1581, but Spain did not recognize it officially until 1648 with the end of the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648).

narration. In the case of Brandenburgers, I have found their presence in the Caribbean mentioned only once. In the *Documentación sobre Vieques* transcriptions from the *Archivo Histórico Nacional, Sección de Ultramar*, in Madrid, Brandenburg is briefly alluded to as having unsuccessfully attempted to establish in Vieques during the year 1692.¹⁰ Given the short one-time stay in Vieques, it is unlikely that Spanish officials or Abbad y Lasierra regarded Brandenburg as a serious threat to Spanish interests in the northeastern Caribbean. The Danes, on the other hand, had settled the neighboring islands of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix between 1672 and 1734. The Danes had also been supposedly responsible, through the protests of Captain Hanjen from St. Thomas, of driving out the Brandenburgers from Vieques. Captain Hanjen's protests suggest that Denmark did not want its European neighbor as its American neighbor. The protests also suggest that as early as 1692, 26 years before settling St. John and 41 years before acquiring St. Croix, Danish officials considered Vieques to be a territory of Denmark. Even if Spain ignored Denmark's pretensions over Vieques, by 1765 St. Thomas and St. Croix were contraband havens for Puerto Rico's surplus food staples and coffee.¹¹ There were also diplomatic tensions between Danish West Indies and Puerto Rico's officials over runaway slaves from the Danish territories who were given refuge in

¹⁰ For the 1692 colonization attempt by Brandenburg, now Germany, in Vieques see, for example, José de la Higuera y Lara, "Yndice de los documentos que se encuentran en este Real Archivo General de Yndias que tienen relación con la isla de Vieque, inmediata a Puerto Rico," *Documentación sobre Vieques: Transcripciones de documentos procedentes del AHN/U Madrid, CIH, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras*, 322-330. The *Documentación sobre Vieques* transcriptions in the Centro de Investigaciones Históricas of the University of Puerto Rico were brought from the *Archivo Histórico Nacional, Sección de Ultramar*, in Madrid. These are transcriptions of 19th century imperial documents, like correspondence between the Governor of Vieques and the Governor of Puerto Rico, related to the exercise of Spanish authority in Vieques.

¹¹ Alexandro O'Reylly, "Memoria de D. Alexandro O'Reylly sobre la isla de Puerto Rico," *Antología de lecturas de historia de Puerto Rico (Siglos XV-XVIII)*, ed. Aida R. Caro Costas (San Juan: Editorial Corripio, C. por A., 1991) 474.

Puerto Rico.¹² Notwithstanding Denmark's nearby presence, pretensions over Vieques, fostering of contraband and demands for the return of slaves, Friar Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra in his Historia de Puerto Rico still made reference to the Dutch presence in the Caribbean while completely ignoring the Danes.

Friar Abbad y Lasierra was not alone in his disregard of Denmark. The Spanish monarch Fernando VI, for example, passed the September 24, 1750 *Real Cédula* only 16 years after the Danish purchase of St. Croix. The *Cédula* guaranteed the freedom of runaway slaves from English and Dutch colonies that reached Spanish domains and wished to embrace the Catholic faith. Yet, the Spanish Crown ignored the Danish colonies, at least until Carlos IV passed the April 14, 1789 *Real Cédula* stipulating that all runaway slaves that reached Spanish territories would be free.¹³ The omission of Denmark in texts like the 1750 *Real Cédula* and the 1788 Historia de Puerto Rico could have responded to Denmark's rather late entrance into the Caribbean colonial scenario, to its limited territorial extension, to its neutrality during many of the European conflicts of the time, and to the fact that, contrary to France, England and the Netherlands, Denmark did not employ corsairs to attack Puerto Rico. Yet, my analysis of a wide range of Spanish documentation dealing with the subject of European nations settling in and around Vieques has led me to conclude that some of the authors of these documents could have confused the *daneses* with the *holandeses* (the Danes with the Dutch). The

¹² Girjanauth Boodraj writes that early on the Danish West Indies had a problem with runaway slaves. In St. Croix, for example, the slaves would hide in the island's forests. However, after the cutting down of woods to make way for sugar plantations, slaves sailed to Vieques and Puerto Rico. Amidst protest from Danish officials, Puerto Rico, scarcely populated, gave refuge to these runaway slaves. G[irjanauth] Boodraj, Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix (Mona: University Press of the West Indies, 2000) 130.

¹³ "1750," Biblioteca histórica de Puerto Rico, ed. Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, 2nd ed. (San Juan: Instituto de Literatura Puertorriqueña, 1945) 510. "Cédula General-1789," Biblioteca histórica de Puerto Rico 557-559.

confusion of the Danes with the Dutch can help explain why the nearby Danish presence appears to have not attracted as much attention from Spanish *letrados* stationed in Puerto Rico as the Dutch did, even though the Netherlands, contrary to Denmark, England, France and Brandenburg, did not attempt to colonize Vieques.¹⁴ Friar Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra, particularly, could have simply inherited some of this documentation safeguarded by imperial archives and thus been inclined to interpret Denmark's presence as unthreatening to Spanish affairs. Such silences concerning the Danes, however, quickly changed during the early 19th century when both Denmark and Spain's pretensions over Vieques became clearer. In the early 1800s Denmark became the focus of bureaucratic concern and of *letrados'* correspondence in Puerto Rico and Madrid.

Even though non-Iberian empires established themselves in the Caribbean after 1622, they had taken an interest in the wealth-producing Americas by the late 15th century.¹⁵ Names like Puerto Rico (Rich Port) given to the capital of San Juan Bautista (St. John the Baptist, and name given to the Puerto Rican main island) helped feed greedy European imaginations.¹⁶ The naming of Puerto Rico was an obvious allusion to the conquistadores' expectations of finding plenty of gold. The capital's pretentious name painted a more concrete picture of the colonial enterprise that overshadowed the

¹⁴ Spanish colonial officials like Field Marshall Alexandro O'Reylly did notice the Danish possessions dangerously close to the Puerto Rican archipelago. During his 1765 visit to Puerto Rico he noted that St. Croix and St. Thomas had become contraband havens where most of Puerto Rico's surplus food supplies and coffee ended but that this illicit activity had helped survive Puerto Rican towns like Fajardo in the island's eastern tip. O'Reylly, "Memoria," Antología de lecturas de historia de Puerto Rico 458-462.

¹⁵ During the late 15th century non-Iberian European interest in the lands explored by Christopher Columbus went farther than simple fascination with the circulating stories. England's King Henry VII, for example, sponsored in 1497 the exploration of the northeastern coasts of North America performed by the Genovese Henry Cabot.

¹⁶ The name Puerto Rico was originally given to the capital of the Puerto Rican archipelago's main island. The main island itself was named San Juan Bautista by Christopher Columbus during his 1493 American voyage. However, as early as the 16th century the names were confused and as centuries passed the identification of the island through its capital reversed the original names so that the colony of San Juan Bautista became Puerto Rico and the city of Puerto Rico became San Juan.

evangelizing aspirations Christopher Columbus had made reference to when he named the island after St. John the Baptist. Indeed, during the first 30 years of occupation, the Spanish settlers dedicated themselves and their *encomendados* (allotted Indians) to the extraction of gold from the island's rivers. Yet, the great expectations led to equally great disillusionments as the gold quickly dried out and the *encomendados* died out. Apparently Puerto Rico was not so rich after all, or at least not so rich in gold.

The decrease of Puerto Rico's indigenous population led to the shortage of a cheap work force. The problem was addressed in 1519 with the introduction of African slaves. The Emperor Carlos V (1517-1556) authorized in 1518 the establishment of a direct and stable slave commerce between the African coasts and the Americas. For such a purpose, the Emperor granted slave-trading licenses to distinguished figures of the nobility.¹⁷ While Christian and European-cultured slaves known as *ladinos* had accompanied the conquistadores to Puerto Rico as early as 1509, it took until the 1518 commercial impulse for the number of Africans to exponentially increase.¹⁸ According to historian Aida Caro Costas, between 1519 and 1530 the African slaves brought to Puerto Rico exceeded by far the 500-figure the Crown had authorized the Fleming Lorenzo de Garrewood to introduce to the island. Instead, Caro Costas estimates that a total of 1,047 were actually introduced which was more than twice the authorized figure. The importation of slaves, the decrease of the indigenous population and the emigration

¹⁷ The Portuguese, having first explored the African coasts, would later come to dominate the slave trade in the Americas. They would continue to run the profitable Atlantic human traffic until the 19th century international bans on the trade and the later abolitions of slavery. Brazil, in turn, was the last country to abolish slavery in 1888.

¹⁸ Between 1509 and 1518 the introduction of slaves to Puerto Rico initially paid 2 *ducados* (Spanish monetary unit) per slave and later an *almojarifazgo* (import tax) of 7% of the slave's total estimated price. Estados Unidos, Departamento de la Guerra, Dirección del Censo de Puerto Rico, *Informe sobre el Censo de Puerto Rico 1899* (Colombia: Ediciones Puerto, 2003) 30. Aida R. Caro Costas, "Esclavos y esclavistas en Puerto Rico en el primer tercio del siglo XVI (1531)," *Revista del Museo de Antropología, Historia y Arte de la Universidad de Puerto Rico* 1 (julio-diciembre 1979): 16-17.

of Spanish settlers to other newly conquered territories changed dramatically the racial configuration of the Puerto Rican main island. So drastic was the change that the 1530-1531 census performed by Governor Francisco Manuel de Lando portrayed demographic figures where the 2,284 African slaves outnumbered the 332 Spanish settlers by almost six to one.¹⁹ For the next 21 years, following Abbad y Lasierra, a total of 1,300 more slaves were introduced, although the number did not include slaves brought through contraband.²⁰ Thus, during the mid 16th century, slaves filled the demographic void and need of working hands left in Puerto Rico by the decreasing indigenous population and Spanish colonizers.

The African slaves were initially brought to work in the extraction of gold. The enterprise was short-lived because by 1540 there was no more gold left to harvest from the rivers. The island's main economic activity had to rapidly shift gears if the colony was to survive. Farming, in turn, replaced the harvest of gold. During the next four centuries farming, following Francisco Scarano, shaped Puerto Rico's landscape with *estancias*, *hatos* and *ingenios azucareros*. The *estancias* (roughly translated as farms), established in the main island since the early 16th century, were a midway compromise between gold mining and subsistence and export agriculture. *Estancias* were farms

¹⁹ Of the 2,264 slaves in Puerto Rico for the year 1531, 1,931 resided under the jurisdiction of the city of San Juan and 333 in the town of San Germán. Of these 2,264 slaves, 406 were women and 1,803 were men. Caro Costas, "Esclavos," *Revista* 17. There is a discrepancy of 20 slaves in the total slaves figures provided by Aida Caro Costas and by Francisco Moscoso. Francisco Moscoso writes that there were a total of 2,284 slaves accounted for in the 1530-1531 Lando census, along with 510 Indians *encomendados*, 1,043 Indian slaves and 332 Spanish settlers for a total population of 4,169. However, Moscoso states that the Lando census was performed only in the two Spanish settlements of San Juan and San Germán and that children were not accounted for in the census. Thus, an unknown number of children and non-village settlers were not included in the official census figures. Francisco Moscoso, "Presentación," *Cuaderno de Investigación Histórica* 1 (1994) V. For a list of the total slave population in Puerto Rico from the years 1531 to 1873 see Appendix 9.

²⁰ Fray Agustín Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra, as cited in the 1899 Puerto Rican Census, estimated that in the year 1530 200 slaves were introduced to the island, in 1536 200, in 1540 300, in 1550 250, in 1551 150 and in 1553 400 for a total of 1,500 slaves in a period of 23 years. Dirección del Censo de Puerto Rico. *Informe sobre el Censo de Puerto Rico 1899* 30.

located near riverbanks for the cultivation of crops like cassava and sweet potatoes while simultaneously serving as mining facilities. After the 1540s the mining activities were discarded and agriculture became more diversified. The *hatos* (cattle ranches) were circular land tenures literally centered on the raising of livestock. *Hatos* comprised great extensions of grass lands that circumscribed stables. In the beginning, *hatos* could easily encompass a two miles radius in all directions, but the gradual increase of settlers restricted such expansive land distributions. Although cattle raising and leather tanning were profitable enterprises for Puerto Rican settlers from the 16th to the mid 20th century, the *ingenios azucareros* (sugar mills) represented the spark that initially brought the biggest revenues to the island's economy and that jumpstarted the slave traffic after the 1520s.²¹

The first attempt to establish a sugar mill in the island was made in the western town of Añasco during the early 1520s by Tomás de Castellón and his son-in-law Blas de Villasante, the Royal Treasurer. The enterprise had the economic support of Carlos V, but the Crown's support was not enough. By 1529, when the monarch made a decree protecting mills from being embargoed for debts, the Añasco initiative was already dead. The risky sugar enterprise was capital, technology, land and labor intensive. Yet, the first failure did not deter other settlers from taking an interest in the crop that was revitalizing the economy of the neighboring La Hispaniola. With the support of the Dominican clergy, crown approved loans and a massive influx of slaves, the sugar industry in Puerto

²¹ The owners of cattle did not necessarily own the land to raise their animals. If this was the case, the cattle were usually left free to roam nearby wild or unclaimed areas until needed by their owners. Thus, cattle raising represented a more democratic economic activity than the production of sugar that demanded the ownership of great extensions of land. Francisco Scarano, *Puerto Rico: Cinco siglos de historia* (San Juan: McGraw-Hill, 1993) 201-210. Fernando Picó, *Historia general de Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1988) 58-79.

Rico got the needed impulse. In the case of Rodrigo Franquez and his son, the support of a Dominican friar's technical assistance, a municipal loan and the intensive labor of 19 slaves, one of which was a "*maestro de azúcar*" ("master of sugar") probably from the Portuguese colony of São Tome, allowed them to finish establishing a mill near the Loíza riverbanks in 1540.²² The Franquez's sugar mill, in turn, was a hybrid mixture that incorporated such diverse elements as Taino utensils and diet, African labor, Portuguese technology and Spanish capital and management. This Atlantic World yet local sugar enterprise, adapting different variables to the particular Puerto Rican situation, subsequently served as an example to other settlers and paved the way for the sugar mills that arose near the northern Toa, Bayamón and Loíza rivers and later spread throughout the Puerto Rican archipelago.

For the next 300 years after the establishment of the first sugar mills in the island, the sugar cane flowered all over the Puerto Rican coastal plains and valleys. Indeed, during 1550 to 1650 sugar was the most profitable commodity exchanged through official commerce with the metropolitan port city of Seville. For example, in the year 1568 alone Puerto Rico exported 277.5 tons of sugar to the metropolis. Yet, sugar production did not monopolize Puerto Rico's early colonial economy as in other Caribbean colonies like Barbados.²³ The initial impulse was rather tumbling by 1589 when Puerto Rico shipped to Seville only 14.625 tons of sugar, a 262.875 tons or 95% decrease compared to 21 years earlier, and had definitely subsided by 1670 when only 1.65 tons were exported to

²² Scarano, *Puerto Rico* 207.

²³ The British island-colony of Barbados, before evolving into a sugar producer, briefly exported tobacco during the 1630s. Picó, *Historia general* 93-94.

Spain.²⁴ So by the late 18th century, as recorded by Field Marshall Alexandro O'Reylly, the production hardly sufficed to fulfill the local demand.²⁵

Since the early 16th century the sugar cane shared the island's cultivated soil with subsistence agriculture and with exportable crops like ginger, tobacco and coffee. One century later, these exportable crops along with lumber and livestock were increasingly exchanged through contraband with non-Iberian Europeans from islands like Curaçao and St. Thomas.²⁶ In return, Puerto Rico's settlers received handkerchiefs, hats, silk stockings, machetes, gunpowder, flour, wine and rum, among other things.²⁷ This commercial exchange was emphatically proscribed by the closed mercantilist policies of the Spanish Empire. Yet, in 1546 Spain established a fleet system to conduct the maritime transportation between its metropolitan shores and the Caribbean. The fleet system eventually left Puerto Rico, and other colonies like La Hispaniola, outside the lucrative imperial trade routes because few ships dared to wander outside the protective range of the imperial escorts that anchored in specific Caribbean ports. Given the difficulty to engage in legal trade, Puerto Rican colonists in general turned to contraband. This proscribed activity, as identified by O'Reylly in 1765, benefited Puerto Rico to the extent it fostered economic activity in a colony otherwise lacking legitimate commercial opportunities inside the Spanish empire, an efficient circulating monetary currency, and local commerce in general. Such combination of imperial neglect and lack of

²⁴ See Appendix 12.

²⁵ Alexandro O'Reylly, also spelled O'Reilly, wrote in 1765 that Puerto Rico's mills provided enough sugar and molasses to satisfy local consumption, but that most of the rum, alcoholic beverage derived from sugar, was brought through contraband from neighboring islands that produced the beverage cheaper. O'Reylly, "Memoria," Antología de lecturas de historia de Puerto Rico 474-475.

²⁶ For a chart of the commercial traffic between Puerto Rico and Seville between the years 1512 and 1699 see Appendix 11.

²⁷ For a list of articles introduced and extracted by foreigners through illicit commerce in Puerto Rico in 1765 see O'Reylly, "Memoria," Antología de lecturas de historia de Puerto Rico 469-470.

commercial infrastructure prevented the sugar cane from monopolizing the island's landscape during the early colonial enterprise.

Spanish maritime commerce with the Americas decreased during the span of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). The reduction worsened Puerto Rico's status as a neglected Spanish imperial possession.²⁸ The island, according to Francisco Scarano, evolved into a colony of independent and mixed-raced peasants living off subsistence agriculture and contraband.²⁹ Each peasant cultivated the same bananas, corn, rice, sweet potatoes and yams as its neighbor did, and for which there was no local demand. With commercial ties to the metropolitan markets severed, only foreign Caribbean colonies like St. Croix and Barbados absorbed Puerto Rican surplus produces. These small islands with an intense sugar industry suffered from deforestation and from the lack of resources for subsistence agriculture and the raising of cattle. Thus, despite Spain's pretensions of closed imperial borders and markets, contraband united Puerto Rico with other non-Spanish Caribbean colonies in mutually profitable ties of dependency. Still, Puerto Rico's export economy did not take off until international events coincided with imperial reforms to foster an early 19th century sugar boom.³⁰ The boom that turned Puerto Rico into a world producer of sugar came almost 300 years after the pioneering Franquez sugar

²⁸ Francisco Scarano states that the Puerto Rico-Seville commerce markedly decreased after the 1610s and collapsed after 1625. Meanwhile, Fernando Picó provides a chart of yearly commerce marking 1625 as the beginning of the commercial decrease. Yet, Picó identifies the period 1630-1650 as one of lessened commerce, period that starts only two years after the Dutch captured most of the Spanish fleet returning to the peninsula. Scarano, Puerto Rico 215, 244. Picó, Historia general 79, 92. See Appendix 11 and 12.

²⁹ The situation of the capital city of San Juan differed from that of the rest of the island. San Juan, as will be discussed below, remained an important military bastion of the Spanish empire that after 1583 received the Mexican *situado* and after 1646 harbored naval organs like the *Armada de Barlovento*.

³⁰ Francisco Scarano roughly outlines Puerto Rico's economic stages from the 16th to the 19th century as follows: early 16th century to the 1540s mining of gold; approximately 1550s to 1610s commercial production of sugar, ginger and leather; 1650s to early 19th century subsistence agriculture and contraband performed by an independent peasant society; and approximately 1820s to 1870s sugar boom. Francisco Scarano, Haciendas y barracones: azúcar y esclavitud en Ponce, Puerto Rico, 1800-1850, trans. Mercedes Solís (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1992).

mill. Even if the 19th century eventually overshadowed earlier enterprises, Francisco Scarano states that during the 1540-1550 sugar fever Puerto Rico's economic outlook appeared favorable to the colony's emerging dominant sectors that thought they had found the replacement of gold.³¹

The promise of land and wealth was not the only New World allure. As the colonizers of the western Puerto Rican town of San Germán found out in 1528 and again in 1538, the tensions and hostilities amongst European monarchs were sometimes played out in the American scenario. In the particular case of San Germán, the quarrel between France's François I and Spain's Carlos V translated into the pillaging and burning of the town by French corsairs. The 1528 assault was the first corsair attack against Puerto Rico. It was a presage of things to come. The 1588 English defeat of the Spanish Armada broke Spain's hegemonic pretensions over the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. In turn, European empires began challenging more openly Spain's dominions in the Americas. For example, in 1595 and 1598 respectively the English corsairs Sir Francis Drake and George Clifford, Count of Cumberland, attacked the city of San Juan. Such employment of corsairs represented, before the proliferation of non-Iberian colonies in the region, the main challenge to Spanish settlements and constant flow of people, information and commodities in the Caribbean. These mercenaries shared profits with the different European monarchs that endorsed the pillaging of adversaries overseas. Spain, however, was not simply the victim of the piracy warfare between European empires. The Spanish Crown, for example, employed in 1718 the services of the Puerto Rican corsair Miguel Henríquez for the expulsion of an English settlement from Vieques.

³¹ Scarano, *Puerto Rico* 206-210. See Appendix 12. For a further discussion of the sugar economy in Puerto Rico and especially Vieques see "Chapter 5: The Sugar Baptism of Isla Nena, Late 1800s-1930."

The spoils gained by the mulatto corsair included 71 African slaves worth 9,775 *pesos* (Spanish monetary unit) along with ‘one big Black woman missing the fingers in her left hand’ worth 40 *pesos*.³² Even if forced to share the spoils with Henríquez and the rest of the expulsion party, Spain still gained some extra royal revenue and a deserted Vieques. Yet, the engagement of piracy through piracy between European empires did not translate into an open war. Instead, what ensued in the Caribbean after the defeat of the Spanish Armada and arguably until the 1898 Spanish-Cuban-American War was a permanent state of cold war interweaved by periods of open warfare.³³

The Caribbean was undoubtedly the center of the American world. The region lost much of its economic appeal to the Spanish Crown after the mid-1500s discovery of gold and silver deposits in the American mainland. Yet, the convergence in the area of the trading routes between Spain and the viceroyalties of New Spain (Mexico) and of Peru (most of Spanish South America) facilitated its evolution into an imperial superhighway.³⁴ The region further evolved into an important geopolitical unit with the post-1622 establishments of European colonies in the area.³⁵ These settlements gradually transformed the Caribbean into a microcosm of global empires. The presence of rival

³² Documentación sobre Vieques 771, 893-900. Salvador Brau, La isla de Vieques: Bosquejos históricos (San Juan: Gráfico, 1912) 7-8.

³³ The long cold war was interweaved by numerous periods of open war like the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648), the Second and the Third Dutch Wars (1665-1667 and 1672-1678), the War of the League of Augsburg (1689-1697), the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763), the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713) and the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815).

³⁴ The Viceroyalty of Peru, founded in 1542, was later divided and the present-day Columbia, Ecuador, Panamá and Venezuela came to roughly form part after 1717 of the Viceroyalty of New Granada.

³⁵ While Spain might have been more attracted with the American mainland, other European empires concentrated their efforts in making their Caribbean colonies highly profitable. An example of an extremely profitable Caribbean colony can be found in the pre-1791 St. Domingue. This French sugar colony was a world producer of sugar that helped France during much of the 17th century to dominate the European sugar trade, and during the 19th century fiercely compete for the control with England. Another example can be found in the Danish colony of St. Croix that according to Alexandro O’Reyly was profitable to its metropolis after only 30 years of being settled. Sidney W. Mintz, Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History (New York: Penguin Books, 1986) 188. O’Reyly, “Memoria,” Antología de lecturas de historia de Puerto Rico 459-462.

colonies, corsairs, contraband and unconquered indigenous populations gave vivid testimony to the frailty of Spanish hegemonic pretensions over a space that had become critical for its imperial communication system. Such regional fragmentation threatened the stability of the Spanish overseas empire. Spain, in turn, assigned a strategic-military importance to the Caribbean while other European empires strove to make their West Indian colonies into profitable trading posts and producers of tropical commodities. To the extent that these other European empires transformed islands into profitable colonies, their position inside the Caribbean was strengthened and contraband in the region flourished.

The shift in the role of the Caribbean inside the Spanish empire was suggested as early as 1545 with the establishment of a circular transportation system between Spain and America called the *Carrera de Indias* (Indies Run). The *Carreras* were ostentatious biannual convoys designed to escort valued commodities across the Atlantic. These Spanish galleons and fleets linked Seville and later Cadiz with New Spain, Peru and Cuba. To ease the traverse through Caribbean waters, military strategists argued for the defense of the region's main ports and commercial routes. Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, for example, proposed to King Felipe II (1556-1598) that strategically important Caribbean ports needed to be fortified and that corsairs had to be actively pursued in open sea.³⁶ The city of San Juan held such a critical port to the proper functioning of the empire's transportation system. The Crown, in turn, allotted funds for the 1530 to 1570 fortification of La Fortaleza (The Fortress) and later for the 1630 to 1780 walling of the

³⁶ José F. Cruz de Arrigoitia, *El Situado Mexicano: Origen y Desarrollo en Puerto Rico durante los años de 1582 a 1599*, diss. Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1984, (Río Piedras: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1984) 30. Scarano, *Puerto Rico* 222-223.

city-islet.³⁷ As evidenced in these fortification works spanning over three centuries, the organization of Spanish trade through the *Carreras* assigned strategic importance to Puerto Rico. The importance was based on the island's location as the easternmost Spanish colony in the Caribbean. From the port of San Juan, for example, vessels could take advantage of the North Equatorial current for a swift travel west to the Gulf of Mexico. Yet, the strategic role also relegated the colony to a secondary plane to the extent it made Puerto Rico a guardian of the *Carreras* but not an integral part of the imperial trading route. The circuit, instead, officially included the ports of Cuba, Mexico and Colombia. Commercial vessels traveling to Puerto Rico had to be chartered. Without imperial protection these risky voyages paid high insurance fees to cover cargo lost to corsairs. These fees raised the price of commodities and made legal trade even less desirable for Puerto Rican settlers. Thus, Spain's attempt to limit foreign interference in the flow of commodities through the articulation of a fleet system had just the opposite effect in Puerto Rico where contraband flourished.

One century after the establishment of the *Carrera de Indias* the Spanish Crown further pushed forth the principle of the Caribbean as Spain's *mare clausum* (closed sea).³⁸ Through the *Real Cédula* of May 4, 1635 the Crown ordered the creation of a local naval organ to be named the *Armada de Barlovento* (Windward Armada). The *Cédula*, written 13 years after the French and English settlement of San Cristóbal, ordered the viceroy of New Spain to secure funds for the construction of a naval organ

³⁷ The capital city of San Juan, now the Old San Juan, was built in an islet just off the northern coast of Puerto Rico. La Fortaleza is one of the oldest structures in the city that once housed the local government and held the royal revenues. During the 17th and 18th centuries the city was fortified through a wall that circumscribed the islet. This wall had only four doors as access to the outside. These doors were closed during the night. Picó, *Historia general* 83, 91.

³⁸ The Latin term *mare clausum* refers here to the strategic imagining of the Caribbean as a closed sea dominated by Spain. The term as applied to the Caribbean echoed Spain's previous experiences in the Mediterranean Sea.

that would safeguard the American heart of the imperial navigational routes.³⁹ Once the funding had been secured the Crown issued the “Royal Decree and Instruction concerning the creation of the *Armada de Barlovento*, given on May 2, 1646 to General Juan de Urbina.” According to the document:

The principal purpose had [by the Crown] to form this Armada has been to want to have in her a Portable Garrison for the aid, defend and shelter of all the coasts of the Windward Islands and *Seno Mexicano*, their Presidios and Ports and avoid with this the harms that the Pirates and enemies cause to the commerce and contracting of the Indies so that my Vassals can freely navigate those seas, since with the warnings that you will have from the Governors you will easily be able to clean those coasts when the enemy tries to infest them.⁴⁰

The Armada, although coined with the term Windward, had as its space of movement the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico. Its purpose was to accompany the *Carreras* while in the Caribbean. In addition, the Armada had to proactively “clean” this space prone to enemy ‘infestation’ so that the Crown’s vassals could move freely in its midst and, more importantly, the *plata* (both silver and money) could flow.⁴¹ In other words, the Armada was responsible for protecting the *Carreras* while in the Caribbean and the Spanish colonies in general from pirates and enemies.

The *Armada de Barlovento* was initially stationed in Puerto Rico. The posting further confirmed the island’s strategic role inside the Spanish Empire. Puerto Rico, as

³⁹ “Real Cédula del 4 de mayo de 1635 sobre la fundación de la Armada,” in Manuel Alvarado Morales, *La ciudad de México ante la fundación de la Armada de Barlovento: historia de una encrucijada, 1635-1643* (México: El Colegio de México and Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1983) 247-249.

⁴⁰ “El intento principal que se ha tendido para formar esta Armada ha sido querer tener en ella un Presidio Portátil para socorro, defensa y abrigo de todas las costas de las Islas de Barlovento y Seno Mexicano, Presidios y Puertos dellos y escusar con esto los daños que los Piratas y enemigos causan al comercio y contratación de las Indias para que libremente mis Vasallos puedan navegar aquellos mares, pues con los avisos que tendreis de los Gobernadores facilmente podreis limpiar aquellas costas cuando el enemigo intentare infestarlas.” “Orden e instrucción real para el funcionamiento de la Armada de Barlovento, dada el 2 de mayo de 1646 al general Juan de Urbina,” in Alvarado, *La ciudad de México* 255.

⁴¹ The Spanish word *plata* means silver but is also used to refer to money in general. In fact, throughout the colonial period the New World shipments of silver to Spain outweighed by far those of gold.

the easternmost colony, had indeed become the “key to the Indies.”⁴² Yet, the strategic-based identity pushed forth by the island settlers since 1529 was not understood in the same terms by the Spanish Crown. Colonist had employed epithets like “another Rhodes of Christianity” for Puerto Rico in order to justify concrete economic and military demands to the Crown.⁴³ Baltasar de Castro, for example, described Puerto Rico as the “key to the Indies” in a 1529 letter to Carlos V in order to request the monarch’s endorsement for the construction of La Fortaleza and for the local sugar industry. Still, the Crown privileged the rapid militarization of the strategic bulwark while assigning economic development a secondary place.

The militarization of Puerto Rico had royal approval at least since 1564 when military men such as Francisco de Bahamonde were appointed as Governors of the colony. The position of Governor was further militarized when in 1580 it was collapsed with that of Captain General, and the colony became a *capitanía general* (captaincy-

⁴² Puerto Rico was first described as “the key to the Indies” by Baltasar de Castro and others in a 1529 letter to Carlos V seeking, among other things, that the Emperor would endorse the fortification of the island. The description was picked up and echoed by different local *letrados* so that, for example, in 1647 Diego de Torres Vargas described “la isla de Puerto Rico como primera de las pobladas y principal custodia y llave de todas” (the island of Puerto Rico as the first of those settled and principal custodian and key to all) in referral to the 1643 *Reales Cédulas* identifying Puerto Rico as “Siendo frente y vanguardia de todas mis Indias Occidentales y respecto de sus consecuencias la más importante de ellas y codiciada de los enemigos” (Being the front and vanguard of all my West Indies and in regards to its consequences the most important of them and coveted by the enemies). “Al Emperador: Licenciado Gama, Ramírez de Vargas, Baltasar de Castro, García Troche. Puerto-Rico 15 de Junio de 1529,” *Biblioteca histórica de Puerto Rico* 300. Diego de Torres Vargas, “Descripción de la Isla y Ciudad de Puerto Rico, y de su vecindad y poblaciones, presidio, gobernadores y obispos; frutos y minerales,” *Antología de lecturas de historia de Puerto Rico (Siglos XV-XVIII)*, ed. Aida R. Caro Costas (San Juan: Editorial Corripio, C. por A., 1991) 322-323.

⁴³ In 1542 Alonso de Molina wrote to Carlos V that “esta isla [Puerto Rico] en estas partes del Oceano es otra Rodas de la cristianidad” (this island [Puerto Rico] in these parts of the Ocean is another Rhodes of Christianity). The comparison to Rhodes made by Alonso de Molina was meant to suggest that Puerto Rico was at the strategic forefront of Christianity in the Caribbean and for this reason should be zealously guarded and cared for by the Spanish Crown. “Al Emperador: Alonso de Molina. Procurador de la Ciudad de Puerto Rico 12 de Febrero de 1542,” *Biblioteca histórica de Puerto Rico* 335-336.

general).⁴⁴ The transformation of Puerto Rico into a strategic-military colony was expedited, both administratively and financially, in the year 1583 through the creation of the Junta de Puerto Rico in Madrid and through the establishment of the Mexican *situado*.⁴⁵ These measures were designed to fortify and secure Puerto Rico. In return, the colony was responsible for protecting the constant flow of people, information and commodities through its waters. Puerto Rico, initially imagined by Spain as a rich port, evolved into the easternmost part of the offensive-defensive system of fortified Caribbean ports that included Santo Domingo, Santiago de Cuba, La Havana, Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) and others. In the process, the easternmost Caribbean colony became an imperial frontier valuable to the metropolis as long as it remained Spanish and helped station naval organs like the *Armada de Barlovento*.

The Armada's presence in Puerto Rico facilitated its deployment to Vieques. In the year 1693, for example, the Armada was ordered to eject English, French and Danish settlers from the island and to frequently patrol its coasts thereafter. These settlers, having the unofficial endorsement of their respective governments, had been gradually establishing themselves in Vieques since 1685. The English arrived first, then the French

⁴⁴ In 1514 Juan Ponce de León was appointed by the king Fernando Captain General of San Juan Bautista. Yet, a *capitanía general* (captaincy-general) to be occupied by the Governor was not created in Puerto Rico until 1580 with the designation of Juan de Céspedes as Captain General one week after having been appointed Governor. Cruz, *El Situado Mexicano* 3, 13. There was a brief interlude to the appointment of military men as Governors during the early 1820s. Picó, *Historia general* 56.

⁴⁵ The *situado*, established in 1583 after the 1582 stationing of a permanent garrison in San Juan, consisted of a yearly subsidy sent from Mexico meant to cover military expenses incurred in Puerto Rico. Eventually the *situado* covered military and administrative expenses because, as suggested above with the 1564 joining of the positions of Governor and Captain General, military and administrative functions in Puerto Rico were intertwined. For an analysis of the *situado* in Puerto Rico see Alvarado, *La ciudad de México*. For a brief analysis of the relationship between Mexico, Puerto Rico, the *Armada de Barlovento* and the Spanish imperial schemes for the Caribbean region see the paper by Manuel Alvarado Morales, "México y Puerto Rico en el proceso formativo del Caribe Hispano. Historia de una relación," unpublished essay.

and the Danes by 1689, and later the Brandenburgers in 1692.⁴⁶ Sharing a small Caribbean island was not a new practice to, for example, English and French colonizers who co-inhabited at the time islands like Saint Kitts. Thus, by 1693 Vieques had a diverse European population that worried Spanish officials. These reconnaissance trips were then meant to discourage further enemy presence and settlements in the small island. The trips, however, were seldom carried out. Meanwhile enemy presence and settlements became common occurrences in Vieques after 1685. Thus, the Armada's trips, besides helping brand Vieques as a Spanish-claimed area, were unsuccessful in curing the frequently 'infested' imperial limb. As the Governor of Vieques Teophile Le Guillou wrote in 1839:

From the year 1493 when discovered by the Admiral Columbus to 1828, that island [Vieques] was inhabited by the Carib Indians, filibusters, pirates, deserters, evildoers, thieves, corsairs and contraband dealers. Sometimes these have played their part together. This enchanting island has been witness to scenes capable of being exalted by a great poet, above all if some episodes of the good neighbors from Tortola and St. Thomas were added, then it would be a complete work that would cause fury in Paris...Of all these qualities of individuals, the Indians were the less savages; and surely the Caribs were not the most barbarous. The Excy, Mr. Governor of Puerto Rico, Don Salvador Meléndez, tired of the depredations these vandals committed sent a company of *granaderos* commanded by Don Luis Lart in pursuit. But this troop could do nothing; the filibusters and the pirates knew all the escape routes from the woods, these were labyrinths to Don Luis. Some filibusters and others hid in Culebra, St. Croix and St. Thomas.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ The dates above are those provided by José de la Higuera y Lara's 1685-1735 "Yndice." Yet, the exact dates of the first settlement attempts in Vieques could be debatable for Salvador Brau wrote that in 1647 an English expedition led by John Pinard invaded the island. The expedition was supposedly massacred by the Spanish. Brau placed another colonization attempt in 1672 by a combined English and French force of approximately 300 persons under the English Governor of Antigua. These were supposedly driven out on January 1673. While Brau stated nobody was killed, 100 slaves were still captured for the Royal Treasury. de la Higuera y Lara, "Yndice," Documentación sobre Vieques 322-330. Brau, *La isla de Vieques* 5-6.

⁴⁷ "Desde el año 1493 que fué descubierta por el Almirante Colón hasta 1828, aquella Isla fue habitada por los Indios Caribes, filibusteros, piratas, desertores, malhechores, ladrones, corsarios y contrabandistas. Estos han representado su papel algunas veces juntos...De todas estas calidades de individuos, los indios eran los menos salvajes, y seguramente no eran los Caribes los más bárbaros. El Excmo. Sr. Gobernador de Puerto Rico, Don Salvador Meléndez, cansado de las depredaciones que estos

Vieques, as Le Guillou wrote, was for centuries an unconquerable labyrinth for Spanish officials who could not rival the knowledge of the landscape possessed by “Carib Indians, filibusters, pirates, deserters, evildoers, thieves, corsairs and contraband dealers.” These individuals were the unwanted others of the Spanish empire that frequented and dwelled in the small island since 1493. They were, following Michel de Certeau, the users of the island that through everyday practices like walking creatively spun the space otherwise claimed by the Spanish Empire.⁴⁸ Their escape routes, as identified by Le Guillou, led not only through the woods but also to islands like St. Croix. In turn, these unwanted others retraced the paths trodden by the Caribs in 1514, perhaps suggesting a historical continuity in the knowledge of the land and nearby waters that Spanish officials such as Luis Lart did not possess.

The control of Vieques and of the Caribbean region in general depended on more than random incursions and a display of big boats. To possess the Caribbean all the aspiring empires struggled to know and decode the region while simultaneously imagining it in their own terms. Identities, following Stuart Hall, are negotiated through representations. Representations, in turn, produce knowledges that must be recognized into existence by others that did not necessarily partake in their productions.⁴⁹ European empires, then, were in a race to know and authoritatively represent the Caribbean region

vándalos cometían en envió una compañía de granaderos en su persecución al mando de Don Luis Lart. Pero esta tropa no pudo hacer nada; los filibusteros y los piratas conocían todas las salidas de los bosques, que eran laberintos para Don Luis. Algunos filibusteros y otros se ocultaron en la Culebra, Santa Cruz y San Tomas.” Teophile Jacques Josephe Marie Le Guillou, “Compendio topográfico, estadístico e histórico de la Isla Española de Vieques,” Documentación sobre Vieques 747-748.

⁴⁸ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

⁴⁹ Stuart Hall, “Negotiating Caribbean Identities,” *New Left Review* 209 (January-February 1995): 3-15. For a discussion about the close relationship between knowledge and representation see “Chapter 2: Myths of Origin and Foundational Figures, 1514.”

to, in the extent, possible fix and control its identity. A stable Caribbean identity dictated in particular European terms and known to particular European communities could be more easily wielded to harmonize with particular European imperial schemes. Spain, for example, strove through the *Armada de Barlovento* and officials like Luis Lart to simultaneously know Vieques and dictate for the island a Spanish identity. If such an identity would have been recognized by other empires, Spain would have exercised better control over the Puerto Rican archipelago. The problem for the Spanish Empire with fixing Vieques' identity was, as evidenced in the Lart incident, that while its officials attempted to sporadically represent a Spanish Vieques from Madrid and San Juan, unwanted others were getting to know Vieques from within the small island. Their knowledge, in turn, rivaled not only Spanish representations but also Spanish control over Vieques.

In the European imperial race to appropriate the Caribbean, different forms of geographical imaginings surfaced. Monarchs like Felipe II commissioned cartographers like Abraham Ortelius to generate and compile detailed geographical representations of the region.⁵⁰ As exemplified in Ortelius' "Hispaniolae, Cubae, Aliarumque Insularum Circumiacentium, Delinetio. [on sheet with] Culicanae, Americae Regionis, Descriptio." ("Sketch of La Hispaniola, Cuba, Antilles [on sheet with] Sketch of Culiacan, America") included in the 1588 Spanish edition of his Theatrum Orbis Terrarum (Theater of the Earth's Globe), cartographers created and gathered maps that

⁵⁰ During the 16th and, especially in, the 17th centuries Dutch cartographers dominated the map making practice in Europe. Considering that by 1543 the Netherlands were under Carlos V, king of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor, and then under the kings of Spain until 1648, some Spanish monarchs commissioned Dutch cartographers like Gerardus Mercator and Abraham Ortelius to portray their empire. Antiquariat Reinhold Berg, 2007, Antiquariat Reinhold Berg, 27 January 2008 <<http://www.bergbook.com>>.

were in themselves beautiful pieces of art (Figure 3.1).⁵¹ Yet, the artistry should not hide the fact that these maps were imperial instruments meant to decode and simplify the geographical region to monarchs, bureaucrats, settlers, merchants and corsairs alike. Like Frank H. Netter's detailed drawings of the human body, cartographers such as Gerardus Mercator with his 1538 global map for Carlos V were illustrating and in the process revealing the increasingly complex imperial bodies.⁵² These were extensive bodies that monarchs ruled, but were unlikely to travel to or ever see for themselves. Thus, cartographers were visualizing empires. More so, cartographers were actually making the empires come to life by delineating frontiers and by helping establish vital organs and arteries like Mexico and the trade winds. The envisioning of organs, arteries and frontiers made possible the formulation of large-scale imperial policies over areas where the reach of monarchs extended, or hoped to extend. The frontiers, in particular, divided imperial territories in administrative units and negotiated territorial borders with foreign neighbors.

⁵¹ While the word "atlas" to refer to a systematic collection of maps was first used by Gerardus Mercator in 1585-95, Abraham Ortelius' 1570 Theatrum Orbis Terrarum represents the first modern atlas produced. Antiquariat Reinhold Berg.

⁵² For an example of Frank Netter's detailed drawing of the human body see Frank H. Netter, Atlas of Human Anatomy, 3rd ed. (New Jersey: Icon Learning Systems, 2003). MapHist.com: Open Information Project for Map History, 2005, MapHist.com: Open Information Project for Map History, 10 November 2005 <<http://www.maphist.com>>.



Figure 3.1: Abraham Ortelius' 1588 "Hispaniolae, Cuba, Aliarumque Insularum Circumiacentium, Delinetio. [on sheet with] Culicanae, Americae Regionis, Descriptio."⁵³

European imperial cartography, indeed, helped imagine the Caribbean as a geopolitical region.⁵⁴ Those "others" that according to Hall validate identities were, in this case, those who proceeded to adopt certain cartographic representations of the Caribbean as valid. These "others" consisted of monarchs and bureaucrats who favored certain names instead of others when creating policies for certain regions, of diplomats and Armadas who defended their countries' claims over certain territories, of trading companies that sponsored certain cartographers, and even of corsairs who used certain maps to carry out their pillaging and trace their escape routes. Nonetheless, the imaginative process that brought to life the Caribbean as a geopolitical region was a long

⁵³ The map was included in later editions of the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*. The map in Figure 3.1 is from the 1612 Italian edition. Abraham Ortelius, "Hispaniolae, Cuba, Aliarumque Insularum Circumiacentium, Delinetio. [on sheet with] Culicanae, Americae Regionis, Descriptio.," *Theatro del Mondo di Abrahamo Ortelio* (Antwerpen: Plantin Press, J.&B. Moretus, 1612) n.p., Sanderus Antiquariat, 2008, Sanderusmaps.com, 26 January 2008 <http://www.sanderusmaps.com/antique-maps/america/culiacan--mexico--antilles_12868.cfm>.

⁵⁴ I define a geopolitical region as a region imagined through political, geographic, economic and demographic considerations.

and gradual one. As evidenced in the *Archivo Algemeen Rijksarchief, Sección Cartográfica* of the Center for Historical Investigations of the University of Puerto Rico, representations nowadays taken for granted had to be negotiated.⁵⁵ For example, in the Dutch authored Map 15 produced around the 17th century, Puerto Rico's horizontal elongation was inversed so that Europe laid west of the island instead of east.⁵⁶ While the inversion of cardinal points was not common in Caribbean cartographic representations, Map 15 suggests that as late as the 17th century basic geographical conventions were still not settled, and the colonial space was very much open for interpretation.

Not only were north-south orientations debatable in cartographic representations, but also what the region per se could encompass and how should monarchical gazes apprehend it. Similarly to the 1569 Mercator versus the 1855/1967 James Gall-Arno Peters' global projections, the scales of representations frequently shifted, as did the lands and waters portrayed.⁵⁷ As a result of these shifts some areas were emphasized while

⁵⁵ The Dutch words *Algemeen Rijksarchief* can be roughly translated as national or imperial archives. The *Algemeen Rijksarchief* Collection in the Center for Historical Investigations of the University of Puerto Rico was named *Algemeen Rijksarchief* because the documents were brought from the Dutch *Algemeen Rijksarchief*.

⁵⁶ The *Algemeen Rijksarchief* Collection does not include any Caribbean map dated prior to the 19th century. Yet, I argue that Map 15 was produced in the late 17th century like other Dutch maps in the Collection. The usage of the name San Juan de Puerto Rico suggests a pre-19th century making because by the 1800s San Juan had for the most part been dropped out of the island's name. The omission of San Juan is evidenced in other 19th century dated maps of the Collection. In addition, there are other 17th century Dutch maps inside, like Map 8, and outside the Collection with the cardinal points similarly inverted. For example, the inversion of the cardinal points was a relatively common practice in Johannes Van Keulen's Caribbean maps published in Amsterdam in 1684. In addition, Van Keulen authored Map 2 and 14 of the *Algemeen Rijksarchief* Collection and there is the possibility that Map 15 could even be one his firm's maps. Map 15, *Archivo Algemeen Rijksarchief, Sección Cartográfica, CIH, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras*. For another collection of early maps of Vieques see the map exhibit in the Museum and Archive *Fortín Conde de Mirasol* in Vieques. For a collection of 16th to 19th century maps of the Caribbean, including maps by Johannes Van Keulen, see [Antiquariat Reinhold Berg](#).

⁵⁷ Both the Mercator and the Gall-Peters' global projections offer distorted representations of the world characteristic of portraying a circular object through a flat squared grid. The Mercator projection distorts the size of the lands and waters portrayed in favor of shape, while the Gall-Peters projection distorts shape in favor of size.

others were rendered invisible. For example, in the most likely 17th century Map 6 of Dutch origin the emphasis lies on the Puerto Rican archipelago and the Lesser Antilles. Yet, the Virgin Islands marking the transition between the two island groups were pushed northeast, distorted in size and shape, and gathered together in a cluster of island-specks collectively labeled as “Virgines.”⁵⁸ Considering that by the 17th century Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the Lesser Antilles in general were being divided by European empires and receding indigenous populations, the non-Spanish author of Map 6 might not have conceived or wanted to portray the islands as one organic whole.

Each map represented a new perspective that, similar to microhistory, experimented with the different realities revealed by different scales. The surfacing of these different realities had important consequences for cartographers were producing texts that resembled radiographies insofar as they could not only illustrate organs and arteries but also pinpoint the ails of the imperial bodies. In this sense, the Dutch cartographer Johannes Van Keulen’s 17th century look at the “Eyland S. Iuan de Porto Rico met d Eylanden daar Beosten” (“Island of San Juan of Puerto Rico with the Islands there Eastward”) revealed what Ortelius’ representation of the Caribbean did not. Van Keulen revealed through Map 2 an array of smaller islands situated very close to the Spanish colony of Puerto Rico.⁵⁹ One of them, labeled by Van Keulen as Borequem and known in Puerto Rico as Vieques, was extremely close. In fact, Vieques was conveniently close to Puerto Rico for the possible non-Hispanic readers of Van Keulen’s map and uncomfortably so for the Spanish empire that handled similar representations

⁵⁸ Map 6, Archivo Algemeen Rijksarchief.

⁵⁹ In 1680 Johannes Van Keulen founded the Van Keulen Cartography firm in Amsterdam. The firm, in business until 1885, became a main supplier of navigational instruments and manuals for the Dutch East-India Company, and even Van Keulen’s grandson and great-grandson became the Company’s official chart maker. MapHist.com. Map 2, Archivo Algemeen Rijksarchief.

like Don Francisco Fernandez Valdelomar's "Carta Geografyca de la Ysla de San Juan de Puerto Rico con las mas procsymas de Barlovento" ("Geographic Chart of the Island of San Juan of Puerto Rico with the nearest Windward ones").⁶⁰ The legend of Valdelomar's 18th century Map 11 stating that "The three islands in the yellow color are settled by the Danes" decodes a map that through the use of yellow color emphasized on the existence of three Danish Virgin Islands in the uncomfortable vicinity of Puerto Rico.⁶¹ As if leading a blind man or more precisely a blind monarch through a journey of corporal recognition, cartographers had the power to bring out to the monarch those small anomalous masses that stood out in their geographical radiographies. Vieques, following Pedro Juan Soto's handful of mud narrative, was such an anomalous mass stuck in the heart of the Spanish empire. It was almost invisible but for cartographers' conjuring fantasies.

The small masses could appear to be nothing more than insignificant peripheries, but peripheral Vieques posed problems that were emblematic of both the colonial enterprise and imperial cartography. In terms of the early colonial enterprise, Spain would or could not settle Vieques even though the 1514 incursion led by Governor Mendoza left the island officially deserted. During the mid 16th century, Caribbean and Puerto Rico's demographics were changing. The indigenous populations were

⁶⁰ For Don Francisco Fernandez Valdelomar map of Puerto Rico and its nearby islands see Map 11, Archivo Algemeen Rijksarchief.

⁶¹ "Las tres Yslas con el color Amarillo estan pobladas por los Dinamarqueses." The islands in question are St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John. While the exact date of the map is not known, it can be inferred that it must have been produced in the 18th century. Following Salvador Brau, the use in the map of the word "Vieque" indicates that the artifact must have been produced no earlier than the 18th century. Also, the Danes settled St. Thomas in 1672, St. John in 1718 and officially acquired St. Croix from France in 1733-34. As such, a map representing the three Danish islands could not predate the mid-1730s. The usage of the name San Juan de Puerto Rico, instead of simply Puerto Rico, suggests that the map predates the 19th century when San Juan was employed only to refer to the colony's capital. Map 11, Archivo Algemeen Rijksarchief. Brau, *La isla de Vieques* 3.

dramatically decreasing to the point of extinction, African slaves were beginning to come in and the European settlers searching for the easy gold were immigrating to the American mainland. Puerto Rico, Vieques' closest Spanish colony, was so scarcely populated that at the end of the 16th century it did not even have 2,500 settlers.⁶² If Spain did not readily possess the manpower to boost Puerto Rico's crashing demography, much less did it have the human resources to colonize Vieques. As such, Spain could not own Vieques through the everyday practices of a stable colony that inhabited, manipulated and defended the island. Instead, as described by Teophile Le Guillou and implied by Friar Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra, for the next three centuries Vieques was inhabited by the remnants of the Caribs, the French, the Dutch, the English, the Danes, corsairs, thieves, contraband dealers, runaway slaves, deserted soldiers and many other groups and individuals that together nicely synthesized both the fringes and the enemies of the Spanish Empire. This synthesis had no reserved place inside the ordered city, the ordered colony, envisioned by *letrados* for America.⁶³ If anything, these peoples were the antitheses of the imperial designs for what the colonial society should be: Spanish, Catholic, loyal, law-abiding and productive. These peoples, not the island as Pedro Juan Soto suggested in Usmaíl, were the cells that together made up one of the small anomalous masses shown in Spain's Caribbean radiographies. More precisely, they were

⁶² The Puerto Rican's main island population began to increase during the later 17th century but really took off after 1765. José L. Vázquez Calzada, La población de Puerto Rico y su trayectoria histórica (San Juan: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1988). For more information about Puerto Rico's population during the 16th to the 20th centuries see Appendices 8-10.

⁶³ Ángel Rama's proposed that the *letrados*' ordered city was an ideal city rationally planned to embody a desired order in terms of administrations, commerce, religion, defense and colonization. Yet, the ordered city many times contrasted with the real city. Ángel Rama, The Lettered City, trans. and ed. John Charles Chasteen (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996) 1. For a reference to Rama's work see "Chapter 2: Myths of Origin and Foundational Figures, 1514."

the sick cells that made the mass a malignant one.⁶⁴ Their presence was considered by Spanish imperial bureaucrats as corrupting to the organic functioning of the colonial enterprise. Yet, the unwanted others could not be efficiently extirpated from the Spanish imperial body.

The Spanish Crown, embodied after 1646 as far as Vieques was concerned through the *Armada of Barlovento*, possessed sophisticated maps of the region and island. Still, as Teophile Le Guillou recounted, the Crown could not rival the users' knowledge of the landscape and their improvised escape routes. Nor could the Armada, as an ostentatious displacement of Spanish imperial power, cope with the mobility and inconspicuous practices of these unwanted users.⁶⁵ If something united corsairs, thieves, contraband dealers, runaway slaves and deserted soldiers, for example, it was their uprootedness and desire to evade imperial attention. This might explain why Spain had more success dealing with settlements from rival empires than with other users. Settlers from rival empires, for starters, placed an emphasis on the claiming of space. Nor were they uprooted in the same way a runaway slave was. These settlers had a place they could return. If Spain's success against European settlements was moderate, its handling of the other unwanted users was negligible. Spain could neither colonize Vieques nor assertively claim it armed only with the knowledge produced by Spanish imperial cartography. Vieques was, following Le Guillou, a labyrinth that even sophisticated imperial maps could not decipher.

⁶⁴ Another such small malignant mass was the island of Tortuga, just north of Port-de-Paix in the Haitian northern coast, from where during the early 17th century the French settlers schemed and carried out the take over of the western third of La Hispaniola, takeover finally recognized by Spain in 1697 through the Treaty of Ryswick.

⁶⁵ For Michel de Certeau's definition of users see "Chapter 1: Introduction."

In terms of the problems Vieques posed to imperial cartography, Spain's inability to populate or physically claim the island went hand in hand with its inability to control authoritatively its geographical representations. As stated above, the Spanish Crown possessed sophisticated maps of the northeastern section of the Antillean arc. The Crown also performed reconnaissance trips every certain number of years to maintain the status of Vieques as officially deserted. Nonetheless, as evidenced in the French, Dutch and English authored maps of the *Algemeen Rijksarchief* Collection, different European nations also produced their own maps of the area. These maps were concrete contestations to Spanish hegemony. On the one hand, maps worked like keys to the area for they facilitated entrance to their readers. On the other hand, maps could establish a representational ownership of the lands and water portrayed. For example, the French authored Map 25 measured the distance to "Porto Rico et des Iles Voisines" ("Puerto Rico and the Neighboring Islands") from Paris. The measurement established a representational ownership to the extent that the islands were an extension of the imperial capital.⁶⁶ Whether deciphering or establishing claims to that represented, the proliferation of maps defied Spain's exclusivist claims to the region and closed mercantilist policies.

The geographical representations produced by different European nations sometimes even named the lands and waters portrayed with new non-Spanish names. For example, by the 16th century the English and the Danes had named Vieques Crab Island or Krabben Eyland, while the Dutch had labeled it Borequem.⁶⁷ These namings were either equally or more dangerous to Spain than the uncontrolled proliferation of maps

⁶⁶ Map 25, Archivo Algemeen Rijksarchief.

⁶⁷ See the map exhibit at the *Fortín Conde de Mirasol* in Vieques.

because the action represented an outright refusal to recognize Spanish sovereignty over Vieques. Spain had, in fact, engaged in a similar practice when in November 14, 1493 Christopher Columbus named Bieke as La Graciosa. As he had done during his first American voyage, Columbus named the island in order to claim it.⁶⁸ Thus, through the name “Graciosa” he established the precedent of ignoring indigenous rights to the island. Understanding the act of naming as refusals to acknowledged Spanish sovereignty over Vieques can help explain why England, later joined by Denmark, France and Brandenburg, was the first European empire to seriously attempt to colonize Vieques during the years 1685 to 1693. The refusal can also explain why Spain’s 1693 eviction of English, Danish and French colonists from Vieques, and the subsequent *Armada de Barlovento*’s reconnaissance trips to the island, did not discourage England from future colonization attempts.⁶⁹ From the year 1685 to mid 19th century, England and Denmark simply continued to use and claim sovereignty over Vieques. Thus, in the specific case of Vieques, European empires were not attempting to usurp a Spanish colony as when the English took Jamaica in 1655. They, on the contrary, were attempting to settle a supposedly uninhabited island without an internationally recognized colonial identity. In other words, European empires did not recognize the existence of a Spanish colony of Vieques. Their acts rather stressed on the existence of a non-Spanish colony of Vieques.

⁶⁸ “I discovered a great many islands, inhabited by numberless people; and of all I have taken possession for their Highnesses by proclamation and display of the Royal Standard without opposition. To the first island I discovered I gave the name of San Salvador, in commemoration of His Divine Majesty, who has wonderfully granted all this. The Indians call it Guanaham. The second I named the Island of Santa Maria de Concepcion; the third, Fernandina; the fourth, Isabella; the fifth, Juana; and thus to each one I gave a new name.” Christopher Columbus, “The Letter of Columbus to Luis De Sant Angel Announcing his Discovery,” ushistory.org, 2006, Independence Hall Association in Philadelphia, 15 October 2006 <<http://ushistory.org/documents/columbus.htm>>.

⁶⁹ The Brandenburguer colonists are not included in the list of those evicted by Spain in 1693 because, as stated above, Danish complaints supposedly drove them out of Vieques in 1692.

The acts of naming ultimately implied the proposition of a new identity. European monarchs through their cartographers were trying to name and thus dictate the island's identity in order to have it recognized by the other empires. Spain, unable to colonize or otherwise assertively claim the island, could not impose a Spanish name. La Graciosa, even though endowed by Columbus as early as 1493, could not erase a couple thousand years of indigenous presence because others inside as well as outside the Spanish Empire would not validate the identity. On the contrary, these others pushed forth their own names for the island. Spain, in turn, negotiated the name Vieques. This name recognized, to the extent it recalled an indigenous past, that the island was not a typical Spanish colony imagined by *letrados*. Still, this version of Bieke opened space for the inscription of Spanish meaning. Accordingly, Vieques, from 1514 to the early 19th century, evolved into a Spanish claimed island-*común* where transnational activities were unofficially tolerated. *Comunes*, following the pervading agrarian philosophy in Castile, were the scarce natural resources like water or grassing lands that belonged to community members. Thus, the Vieques Spain pushed forth was an officially deserted island reserved for the exploitation of resources like lumber.⁷⁰ To rival Spain's Vieques the Dutch proposed an up for grabs Borequem. Meanwhile the English and the Danes proposed the inhabited colony, supported by slave labor, of Crab Island or Krabben Eyland. The Dutch's Borequem was probably a mix up between the indigenous names of the main and the smaller Puerto Rican islands, or between Borinquen and Bieke. If so, the Dutch joined the Spanish in appropriating the island through its indigenous name and in, coincidentally, not attempting to settle in the island during the early colonial enterprise. The fact that the two empires that appropriated an indigenous name were the

⁷⁰ Scarano, Puerto Rico 205.

only two that did not attempt to settle Vieques suggests a possible link between the acts of naming and of colonizing. Maybe, those who named strove to symbolically erase the island's past in order to possess it, while those who appropriated Bieke acknowledged the Caribs' power over the labyrinthine island. One way or the other, the Caribs were still engaged.

For approximately three centuries Spain's imaginings had to contend with alternate proposals for the small island's identity. Spain claimed sovereignty over but did not readily possess the resources or commitment to colonize Vieques. The Spanish Crown, instead, limited itself to random policing actions designed to maintain the island uninhabited. In the meantime, Vieques' ambiguous deserted status facilitated its conversion into a *común* for the extraction of lumber. The Spanish, however, were not the only ones to use and frequent the island-*común*. From the year 1514 to the early 19th century, the official Vieques was deserted but the unofficial small island was periodically and permanently inhabited and used by all kinds of unwanted others of the Spanish Empire. These others exploited the small island's natural resources and established illicit commercial relationships with the settlers of Puerto Rico. As such, Vieques remained for at least three centuries a small malignant mass in the global map of the Spanish Empire, almost invisible but still threatening to spread its cancer to the nearby colony of Puerto Rico.

The creation of a stable settlement that could translate into physical reality the delusions of Spain's cartographers and bureaucrats about the existence of a Spanish Vieques had to wait until a change in demographics occurred in Puerto Rico and until the Latin American independence movements in the early 19th century changed the American

and the metropolitan scenario. The independence movements begun around 1810 in far apart regions like Buenos Aires and Querétaro-Dolores had, in a period of 15 years, thrown off the Spanish empire from most of the Americas. Only Cuba and Puerto Rico remained as Spanish possessions.⁷¹ In those 15 years the feats of Simón Bolívar, José de San Martín, Bernardo O'Higgins, José María Morelos y Pavón and other less known and anonymous figures created, for example, the Greater Colombia and Mexico. These newly independent republics, in turn, further fragmented into smaller nation-states like those of Central America and Ecuador. As the nation-states multiplied, the maps of the Americas and the Caribbean became compartmentalized, or maybe scarred, by national and colonial lines. Many of the new national frontiers were traced over late administrative colonial lines that had divided the American territory into viceroalties, intendancies, provinces and others. In other words, in the independence process intendancies like that of León became the republic of Nicaragua and captaincies-general like that of Venezuela became the republic of Venezuela.⁷² Thus, the imperial boundaries drawn early on by cartographers to delineate and subdivide the empire have been a long lasting colonial legacy that the independence movements inherited and naturalized as national frontiers.⁷³

⁷¹ Peter Bakewell roughly outlines Latin American independence in the following chronology: Rio de la Plata (later Argentina) on May 1810, Paraguay on May 1811, Chile on February 1818, Colombia (colonial New Granada) on August 1819, Venezuela on June 1821, Mexico on August 1821, Central America (originally part of Mexico) on August 1821, Ecuador (colonial Quito) on May 1822, Peru on December 1824, Bolivia on January 1825. Brazil also gained its independence from Portugal in the year 1822. Peter Bakewell, *A History of Latin America: Empires and Sequels 1450-1930* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1997) 360-384. For further discussions of the 1810-1825 Latin American independence movements see Edwin Williamson, *The Penguin History of Latin America* (London: Penguin Books, 1992).

⁷² The national frontiers did not necessarily follow the exact administrative borders of colonial times as evidenced in the annexation of the region of Guanacaste, southwestern tip of the Intendency of León, to Costa Rica during the late 19th century.

⁷³ I take the idea of European empires drawing the future national frontiers of former colonies from Thongchai Winichakul's analysis of how imperial cartography helped imagine the national boundaries of



The standardization of imperial, and later national, cartographic representations has been guided by the obsession to demarcate impermeable borders. These lines traced over papers are powerful inventions that can render invisible the population flows and cultural and economic intermingling that have been characteristic of the Caribbean since pre-Columbian times.⁷⁴ Yet, Caribbean boundaries, notwithstanding how rigid lines appear in maps, have been quite porous. In this, Vieques represents a perfect example. For at least three centuries the island that was claimed by many users, but it was permanently occupied by none. Instead, all sorts of people from different nationalities, races and occupations came and went because Vieques, if anything, was movement. The small island had no settlements, only escape routes. The labyrinthine island that Teophile Le Guillou once described did not invite to permanence. So people in Vieques moved. Among these people in movement were my *Abuela Cocoroco* and, most probably, her ancestors.

Very early in her long life *Abuela Cocoroco* challenged the boundaries of her tragic-heroic island, and maybe destiny, through a journey that took her as far as

Siam, later Thailand. Siam's case, however, is different from that of Latin America because it was never a European colony. Nonetheless, to the extent that Siam's colonized neighbors were charted by their respective imperial cartographic bodies, Siam was also charted. In addition to cartography, Winichakul identifies other mechanisms of establishing national borders, like census. Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

⁷⁴ By standardization I refer to the long process through which rivaling bodies of cartography and their patron nations struggled to legitimize their representations of the Caribbean over other such cartographic representations. For example, I refer to the process through which an international community gradually acknowledged the existence of a non-Spanish Caribbean, and later of colonies lying next to independent nations, territories, commonwealths and others.

Venezuela, La Hispaniola and Cuba. Through the journey she symbolically retraced the Caribbean journey of her Carib ancestors and claimed islands they had been unable to. Yet, her travels did not respond to some nostalgic identity quest or to the more modern trends of leisure tourism. She was not preoccupied with discovering the Caribbean's indigenous soul that worried nationalist intellectuals. Nor did any Royal cruise line offered to unravel for her the exotic Caribbean in seven days. My *abuela* could not be pampered by the locals because she briefly formed part of an itinerant labor force that united the fragmented Caribbean through population flows searching for ways of sustenance. In many ways, *Abuela* herself was the typical Caribbean local when she boldly crisscrossed old imperial and newer national borders compartmentalizing the Caribbean. Her incursion as a racialized, or simply non-white, itinerant worker made her share a pan-Caribbean identity centered on displaced colonial subjects. These subjects in the early colonization period could have been summed up by indigenous and African populations but later included their descendants and many others that could not be disciplined into clear racial categories or into colonial and national frontiers.

Chapter 4:

The Spanish Colony of Vieques, 19th Century

[Vieques] by itself it would not be very desirable if it were situated farther from Puerto Rico, but the position that it occupies, so close, separated only by a canal that even the smallest coastal boats cross in half an hour, would allow foreigners to bring ruin to the agriculture and commerce of this one [Puerto Rico]; they could furtively introduce all the manufactures of their factories; and triggering a slave revolt they would find so near and with very little risk the site where they find freedom leaving for the same thing Puerto Rico destitute of arms for the cultivation and elaboration of the articles that it has formed without agricultural riches, and lost the immense capital invested in this object.
Governor Miguel López de Baños, Documentación sobre Vieques (1840)¹

A geopolitical map of the 21st century Caribbean can present the viewer quite an array of colors, as if tempting the adventurous traveler to island hop as the Caribs once did across a rainbow of nations, territories, commonwealths, departments and colonies. Yet the establishment of the Caribbean as a geopolitical region was the result of a fiercely negotiated process between rivaling monarchs, bodies of cartography, legions of bureaucrats and diplomats, Armadas, armies of settlers and many other interested communities. After the 16th century, diverging geographical imaginations gradually converged to acknowledge the existence of a non-Spanish and more complex Caribbean.

¹ “[Vieques] que si bien por sí misma sería poco apetecible si estuviese situada en una mayor distancia de Puerto Rico, la posición que ocupa tan inmediata y separada sólo por un canal que atraviesan en media hora hasta los botes más pequeños de cabotaje, sería bastante en manos de extranjeros para arruinar en poco tiempo la agricultura y comercio de esta [Puerto Rico]; introduciendo furtivamente todas las manufacturas de sus fábricas; y sublevando la esclavitud que encontrarían tan cerca y con poquísimos riesgo el punto donde consiguen la libertad quedando por lo mismo Puerto Rico destituido de brazos para el cultivo y elaboración de los artículos que han formado sin riqueza agrícola, y perdidos los inmensos capitales invertidos en este objeto.” Documentación sobre Vieques: Transcripciones de documentos procedentes del AHN/U Madrid, CIH, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, 635.

Spain never represented a hegemonic power that could unify the fragmented region. On the contrary, heterogeneous and undisciplined populations thrived throughout diverse imperial margins where non-Iberian European empires made their presence in the Caribbean recognized. It was not until the 18th and 19th centuries, however, that Spain faced the Caribbean as the microcosm of global empires it had become and accordingly revised its policies for frontier colonies like Puerto Rico. One such imperial stance the Governor of Puerto Rico Miguel López de Baños (1837-1840) wanted revised was the ambiguous colonization of Vieques. With the strengthening of British-led abolitionism, a fragmented Caribbean threatened the survival of Puerto Rico's burgeoning sugar economy that depended on slave labor.² Vieques, with its geographical proximity, could either help to protect or open to ruin the larger colony of Puerto Rico.

Almost since the establishment of the colony in 1508, Spain had neglected the economy of Puerto Rico while still pretending to impose closed mercantilist policies throughout the Empire. The neglect coupled with the restrictive economic policies fostered the rise in Puerto Rico of illegal activities like contraband. In fact, contraband helped the island survive when years passed and Spanish merchant ships from the *Carreras* did not dock in San Juan.³ The precarious situation prevailed until Bourbon reformism proposed in the second half of the 18th century that with proper attention Puerto Rico could be a prosperous colony. The reigns of Fernando VI (1746-1759) and Carlos III (1759-1788) aimed quite successfully to transform the island into a producer of

² Great Britain had outlawed the slave trade within the British Empire with the passing of the Slave Trade Act in 1807, and completely abolished slavery within the Empire with the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833. Yet, the British government pressured countries like Portugal, Spain, Brazil and the United States into also abolishing the slave trade during the early 19th century. For a study of the effects of the British abolitionist push and the end of the slave trade in Cuba see David R. Murray, Odious Commerce: Britain, Spain, and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

³ For a discussion of the *Carrera de Indias* see "Chapter 3: Claims to the Labyrinthine Island, 16th-19th Centuries."

tropical commodities, specifically into a sugar colony. The purpose behind the reforms was to foster a stable and if possible prosperous Spanish colony that would not only be strategically important but also profitable to the metropolis. To such ends the Crown ordered the *visitas generales* (general visits) of high-ranking Spanish officials like Alexandro O'Reylly (1765) and issued pieces of legislation like the *Reales Cédulas* of 1778 and 1789. The visit of Field Marshal O'Reylly to Puerto Rico, recorded in his Memorias, resulted in the restructuring of the army, militias and fortifications.⁴ He also argued for better land distribution to harmonize with a slave-run sugar society as well as criticized the rampant contraband pervading throughout the island. The *Real Cédula* of 1778, designed to boost agricultural production, conceded lands to the dispossessed and to those who could exploit them. To stimulate the sugar industry, the *Cédula* authorized hacendados to import sugar-related technology. The document also allowed for the immigration of skilled Catholic workers who came to the archipelago mostly from neighboring French colonies.⁵ The decree also created the towns of Arecibo, Aguada and Coamo to accompany the already established San Juan and San Germán. The *Real Cédula* of 1789, on the other hand, completely liberalized slave trade in the Spanish Caribbean and Caracas by authorizing the entrance of any merchant ship importing slaves and exempting them from taxes related to the human commerce.⁶ These Bourbon

⁴ Alexandro O'Reylly, "Memoria de D. Alexandro O'Reylly sobre la isla de Puerto Rico," Antología de lecturas de historia de Puerto Rico (Siglos XV-XVIII), ed. Aida R. Caro Costas (San Juan: Editorial Corripio, C. por A., 1991) 453-484.

⁵ Scholars like Jorge Chinae argue that the *Real Cédula* of 1778 did not represent a significant turning point in non-Hispanic immigration to Puerto Rico, since the trend was already established earlier in the 18th century, and that the *Cédula* was aimed at attracting white immigrants with knowledge in the sugar industry and capital to invest in the archipelago. See, for example, Jorge Chinae, Race and Labor in the Hispanic Caribbean: The West Indian Immigrant Worker Experience in Puerto Rico, 1800-1850 (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005).

⁶ The *Real Cédula* of 1780, a preamble to the *Real Cédula* of 1789, allowed Puerto Ricans to buy slaves from the nearby French colonies.

reforms, embodied in O'Reilly's *visita* and in the 1778 and 1789 *Real Cédulas*, remained unsuccessful in the fight against contraband but succeeded in boosting Puerto Rico's economy and demography at the turn of the 19th century. Such a boost, however modest, helped Puerto Rico survive when Latin American independence movements ended the Mexican *situado* that had sustained the colony since 1583.⁷

In the early 19th century various historical processes converged to push Spain towards the formal colonization of Vieques. For starters, revolutionary movements and ideas were spreading throughout Europe, North and South America and the Caribbean. The Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) and the onset of the Latin American independence movements (1810-1825), in fact, directly threatened the control of Spain over its territories in the Americas.⁸ Spanish officials, in turn, attempted to establish a firmer grip on its colonies, particularly on those that risked being engulfed by old and new rival nations like Puerto Rico. In terms of Puerto Rico, the colony was experiencing a demographic growth and a boom of its sugar economy that helped push imperial bureaucrats to affirm the strategic importance of Vieques to the Empire. Colonizing Vieques after three centuries of neglect, however, would not be an easy task. Spain had never been able to colonize, control geographical representations or even formulate non-ambiguous policies concerning Vieques prior to the 19th century. The island-*común* that evolved into an island-boundary had long been an unofficial neutral zone of international activity. If Spain had never attempted to colonize Vieques, it did forcefully terminate

⁷ See Appendix 8 and Francisco Scarano, *Puerto Rico: Cinco siglos de historia* (San Juan: McGraw-Hill, 1993) 315-322.

⁸ Some of the revolutions haunting Spanish imperial bureaucrats were the French Revolution (1789-1799), the independence wars of the United States of America (1775-1783) and of Latin America (1810-1825) and the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). The Haitian Revolution probably provoked the most fear among Spanish officials and Puerto Rican hacendados. Besides from having sprung from inside the Caribbean, the Haitian Revolution brought to the surface the fear of the potential power and violence of revolted slaves.

colonization ventures on the part of England, Denmark and France. Thus, while Spain had defended ever since the 15th century its self-proclaimed rights as “*la primera inventora y descubridora*” (the first inventor and discoverer), both England and Denmark credited themselves with more and longer-lasting settlements across the 17th and 18th centuries.⁹ In turn, at the beginning of the 19th century three European empires regarded themselves as Vieques’ rightful owners. Even as it disputed ownership of the island with England and Denmark, Spain approved a first colonization plan on July 31, 1811.

The Spanish colonization plan, devised by the Governor of Puerto Rico Salvador Meléndez, included a military detachment under Juan Roselló with orders to tame Vieques. Establishing authority over unwanted locals, while fostering the foundations of a modest but stable colony, turned out to be more than Roselló could handle. By 1811 there were strongmen well established in the island like the mulatto Guebardo, otherwise known as the “King of Vieques.” The mock title revealed the power he might have wielded in the island, and the little relevance the men from the House of Bourbon and Joseph Bonaparte had in the life of locals in Vieques. The exercise of authority in the island, according to the first Governor of Vieques Teophile Le Guillou, depended on the rule of the strong, and in the particular case of Guebardo not much was recorded about him except that he was a, “feared man and very skilled in the handling of the machete and the dagger.”¹⁰ Apparently the island had changed in 300 years from a haven of rebellious Caribs, to one of strong willed mulattos. That a mulatto man had risen to, notorious,

⁹ According to Spanish documents Christopher Columbus reached Vieques on November 14, 1493 during his second American voyage. Thus, Spanish diplomats based their claims over the Vieques on Columbus’ “discovery” of the island. See Documentación sobre Vieques 590.

¹⁰ “hombre temible y sumamente diestro en el manejo del machete y puñal.” Teophile Jacques Josephe Marie Le Guillou, “Compendio topográfico, estadístico e histórico de la Isla Española de Vieques,” Documentación sobre Vieques 750.

prominence in the island is testimony to the importance of runaway slaves and of mixed-raced populations in Vieques. The mixed-raced population, I would argue, most likely incorporated remnants of indigenous populations displaced during the last three centuries throughout the northeastern Caribbean. There are, however, little archival historical traces about these peoples inhabiting Vieques just before the 19th century Spanish colonization. Yet, this mixed-raced people were precisely the unwanted locals that had established themselves in the island and that Roselló had to bring into the realm of the Spanish Empire. Yet, there rumors circulated that the first Military Commander of Vieques was not successful in facing Spain's unwanted others. In fact, it was apparently common knowledge throughout the island that whenever pirates or smugglers appeared Roselló would hide in the forests for as long as the visits lasted.¹¹

If the stories about the cowardice of Juan Roselló were true, then the Military Commander must have been well hidden during the brief 1816 visit made by the *Libertador de América* (Liberator of America) Simón Bolívar.¹² News of the event, however, did reach Governor Meléndez who ordered in 1817 the construction of a small fort on the southern Viequense key of Puerto Real.¹³ Bolívar's visit, later imagined as a quasi-mystical baptism with anticolonial pan-Latin Americanism, fueled Spanish fears of

¹¹ Le Guillou, "Compendio," Documentación sobre Vieques 745-755.

¹² Simón Bolívar, according to Juan A. Bonnet Benítez, decided to gather fresh supplies in Vieques during an 1817 trip through the Caribbean. Reaching Vieques during a storm, the two ships traveling together, the Mariño and the Brión, were briefly separated. The Mariño, where Bolívar was traveling, got stuck on a reef. A Spanish ship sighted the Mariño. Against all odds, Bolívar's crew supposedly forced the Spanish party to help the Mariño off the reef. When the crew finally reached the Viequense shore, they engaged in a bloody crossfire with the men of the Brión before both parties recognized each other. Juan A. Bonnet Benítez, *Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: F. Ortiz Nieves, 1976) 30-31. Juan Augusto and Salvador Perea wrote that Vieques' military commander indeed did not confront Simón Bolívar. Juan Augusto and Salvador Perea, *Bolívar en Vieques* (Puerto Rico: Ateneo Puertorriqueño and Sociedad Bolivariana de Puerto Rico, 1970).

¹³ Salvador Brau, *La isla de Vieques: Bosquejos históricos* (San Juan: Gráfico, 1912) 9.

rebellious subjects.¹⁴ Vieques, the imperial limb prone to infection, had come into contact with the embodiment of the dangerous virus of independence, Simón Bolívar. Roselló, as the embodiment of Spanish law in Vieques, had not stepped up to the challenge. He was probably hidden in the woods. Juan Roselló, even if unsuccessful in establishing Spanish authority in the island, at least could be credited with learning the island's landscape, which was until then an unaccomplished feat by Spanish officials.

Even though Juan Roselló's did not succeed during his 17 years (1811-1828) as Military Commander to impose Spanish authority in Vieques, the Spanish settlement in the island grew and mildly prospered.¹⁵ According to the March 14, 1824 census performed by Roselló, there were 103 *vecinos* (residents) in the island, 30 women and 73 men. These were divided between 34 heads of households, 33 family members, 18 *alquilados*, 17 *agregados* and 1 steward.¹⁶ *Alquilados* and *agregados*, according to historian Fernando Picó, were generally landless people who lived under another household that hired them or let them use the land.¹⁷ As such, in 1824 there were 34 landowning households composed of 67 family members with 36 landless people. The majority of the population, however, was either classified as *pardo* (brown) or *moreno*

¹⁴ Following Viequense interpretations in the 20th century, Bolívar's anticolonial pan-Latin Americanism, vigilant of the northern neighbor, was denied to the rest of the Puerto Rican archipelago, which the "*Libertador*" never visited.

¹⁵ According to Juan Roselló, during the years 1812-1821 he unofficially shared the position of Military Commander with his brother Antonio Roselló. There were, however, many intrigues in the island with different people briefly taking over at different times. Vieques 1825 Naufragio, Capitanía General, Vieques, 602, AGPR, San Juan. By the term Spanish settlement I refer to the settlement encouraged by the Spanish Empire and not necessarily to the settlement of Spanish subjects.

¹⁶ For the March 14, 1824 Census see Vieques 1824, Capitanía General, Vieques, 602, AGPR.

¹⁷ Fernando Picó points out that the definitions of *agregado* diverged depending on the context to which they were employed. César Ayala and Viviana Carro define *agregados* as, "rural workers who lived on the plantations and exchanged labor services for usufruct rights over the land." Fernando Picó, *Libertad y servidumbre en el Puerto Rico del siglo XIX* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1983) 45-82. César J. Ayala and Viviana Carro-Figueroa, "Expropriation and Displacement of Civilians in Vieques, 1940-1950," *Puerto Rico under Colonial Rule: Political Persecution and the Quest for Human Rights*, eds. Ramón Bosque-Pérez and José Javier Colón Morera (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006) 177-178.

(black). These two groups representing 68% of the total population comprised 56% of the landowners.¹⁸ Although there is not enough archival evidence to confirm the assertion, this relatively high percentage of mixed-raced persons owning land could suggest that at least part of these *pardos* and *morenos* had been locals inhabiting the island prior to 1811, and that Roselló included in the census as heads of household. Such an inclusion in the census might not have meant a compliance with Spanish authority since, as Roselló wrote on July 2, 1820, most of the *vecinos* in Vieques lived scattered around the island, living off subsistence agriculture, and some of them just refusing to be governed.¹⁹ This was a situation that hardly changed in the four years leading to the 1824 census.

The Vieques that Juan Roselló's brother and successor, Francisco Roselló, inherited (1828-1832) had, according to the September 14, 1828 census ordered by Colonel Ramón Aboy, 25 heads of households, 27 women family members, 32 sons, 73 peons and 38 slaves for a total of 195 inhabitants.²⁰ Of the 25 heads of households surveyed in 1828, two were women and possibly eight were non-Hispanic in origin. Such numbers suggest that the multicultural population of Vieques could have been composed of 32% foreigners.²¹ This would represent an increase from the 7 French and English foreigners identified in the 1824 census and comprising then only 7% of the total

¹⁸ According to the 1824 census, there were 2 *morenos*, 17 *pardos*, 11 white persons, 4 French foreigners and 3 English foreigners settled in Vieques as heads of households. Vieques 1824, Capitanía General, Vieques, 602, AGPR.

¹⁹ Juan Roselló wrote that some 6 or 8 *vecinos* refused to be governed. These *vecinos* preferred to aid the pirates by telling them, for example, the location of other *vecinos* in the island. Vieques 1820, Capitanía General, Vieques, 602, AGPR.

²⁰ Among the 25 heads of households were two women, María Hernández and Madam Bequer. Documentación sobre Vieques 462-463. For the 1828 Census see Appendix 13.

²¹ Except for Madam Bequer and Don José M^a Guillot, all the other six non-Hispanic names started with the title Mr. The 32% foreigner figure depends on many factors like the nationality of the 73 field workers and the origin of the 38 slaves.

population. The wealthiest settlers in 1828 were the *pardo* Guillermo Opio with 35 people/225 animals and the French foreigner Teophile Le Guillou with 43 people/219 animals under their households. These two settlers hired 40% of the peons, owned 71% of the slaves and 60% of the island's cultivated land. This land totaled 75 *cuerdas* destined for bananas, sugar cane and grass.²² In addition, three of the eight boats in the island's port were recorded under the names of Opio and of Le Guillou. On the other hand, the poorest settlers were Mr. Mofret and Madam Bequer who did not have persons or possessions under their names. Perhaps they both were, along with Teophile Le Guillou, refugees from the 1822 Haitian invasion of Spanish Haiti.²³ Mofret and Bequer, however, must have arrived in a dispossessed state in Vieques after the 1824 census. While the resources were unequally distributed, at least most of the 25 heads of households had chickens and/or bananas which suggest that the basic Viequense diet could have consisted of combining the two with other abundant fruits scattered throughout the island.²⁴

While only four years elapsed between the 1824 and 1828 censuses, there are identifiable trends altering population totals and landholding patterns. During the four

²² A *cuerda* is a measurement unit in Puerto Rico equaled approximately to .97 acres and to 3,929 square meters. Thus, 70 *cuerdas* are about 67.9 acres or 275,030 square meters. Opio and Le Guillou, in turn, cultivated only 75 *cuerdas* or 0.2 percent of the total 36,032 *cuerdas* in the island. I take the number of the island's total *cuerdas* from César Ayala and Viviana Carro. Ayala and Carro, "Expropriation and Displacement," Puerto Rico under Colonial Rule 176.

²³ Through the 1795 Treaty of Basel, Spain ceded the eastern part of La Hispaniola, today the Dominican Republic, to France. French citizens, therefore, settled themselves under the auspices of the treaty in the Spanish Santo Domingo. France, nonetheless, lost the colony back to Spain in 1809. The change in sovereignty still allowed French citizens to remain in the colony and to keep their properties. The 1822 Haitian invasion of Spanish Haiti, however, threatened the social and economic order of the eastern part of La Hispaniola. The occupation brought about the abolition of slavery and the disruption of racial hierarchies along with the seizing of private property. Thus, the year 1822 sparked the migration of, for example, white French citizens like Teophile Le Guillou. Franklin Franco Pichardo, Historia del pueblo dominicano (Dominican Republic: Editora Universitaria – UASD, 2005) 141-162, 176-182.

²⁴ The centrality of bananas in the Viequense diet is evidenced as early as 1834 when, following a lack caused by unknown reasons, bananas had to be imported from Puerto Rico in order to fulfill the demand in the small island. Documentación sobre Vieques 801.

years in question, 92 more settlers seem to have arrived or been born in the island. These newcomers comprised an 89% population increase. Yet, there was a marked 26% decrease in the number of landowning households. This percentage is even more significant when comparing the 35% landless population of 1824 to the 57% one of 1828. In four years there were 22% more people without land in Vieques. This rise of the dispossessed and the population in general follows the appearance of slaves and the growth of the peon population. These two ranks, I would argue, grew as a result of the emerging farm and sugar economy fostered by landowners like Le Guillou. Le Guillou's household, for example, augmented from one *agregado*, two *alquilados* and one steward to 17 peons and 26 slaves in four years. In addition, by himself he owned 68% of the slaves and 57% of the island's cultivated land. Such a change in household and land tenure patterns indicates the inception of the slave-peon run sugar economy, which became firmly established by 1839, and that perhaps began displacing the pre-1811 locals of Vieques and pulling them into wage labor.²⁵

The January 1, 1824 and September 14, 1828 censuses were the first population surveys conducted in Vieques. These censuses provided for the first time a detailed profile of the island's settlers to the Spanish government. The profile identified what Thongchai Winichakul might call an early Viequense geo-body. The concept of geo-body, as formulated by Winichakul, refers to a nation or community defined and brought into existence through geographical technologies like mapping. These technologies of territoriality, based on the tracing of boundaries through practices like the imposition of

²⁵

For the land usage in 1839 Vieques see Appendix 15.

custom duties, create communities spatially and help equate a people to a map.²⁶ Winichakul, taking the example of Siam where people coexisted and then came to harmonize under a national map, proposes that mapping can define the geo-body.²⁷ Yet, in the case of Vieques, the map of the island existed to the Spanish Empire centuries before the people that came to populate it in the 1820s. Thus, these censuses in the 1820s represent the first official imaginings that filled the map of Vieques with an identifiable people.

The people emerging in the 1820s as the Viequense community were racially diverse. Although slavery had been present in the island at least since the 1685 English colonization attempt, the 1824 census did not identify a slave population. The census, however, did separate the settlers into the categories of white, foreign, *pardo* and *moreno*. As stated above, these last two groups comprised 68% of the population. Four years later slaves, totaling in number 38, would comprise 19%. This percentage remained constant until 1845 when the presence of 369 slaves increased it to 36%.²⁸ These changes in the slave population can be traced back to the 1778, 1789 and 1815 *Real Cédulas* that fostered the legal importation of slaves and the slave traffic increase to the Puerto Rican islands during the years 1815 to 1845.²⁹ The Haitian Revolution, in addition, had left a void in the global production of sugar. Unfulfilled demand raised prices and opened a promising market for producers in both Cuba and Puerto Rico. The new sugar

²⁶ Although in the case of Vieques, a community was traced through the suppression of custom duties imposed on the rest Puerto Rican main island.

²⁷ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

²⁸ The figures above do not include the population categorized as “free blacks.” The category was not included in the 1828 census, suggesting that there were either no “free blacks” or they were included under the 73 “peons.” The 1845 census identified eight “free blacks.” For the 1828 to 1845 censuses conducted in Vieques see Appendices 13-16.

²⁹ For a discussion of slave traffic in Puerto Rico and Vieques see “Chapter 3: Claims to the Labyrinthine Island, 16th-19th Centuries.”

commerce, increasingly carried out with the U.S., facilitated the replacement of coffee in 1828 by the more labor-intensive sugar as the colony's main crop.³⁰ In turn, a vital relationship between slavery and the booming sugar economy evolved. While Spain signed in 1817 an agreement with England to cease after 1820 the slave traffic to the Americas, the accord was never enforced by Spanish officials.³¹ Instead, bureaucrats like the Governor of Puerto Rico Miguel de la Torre ignored the rising slave contraband. The contraband was further increased after England's 1833 abolition of slavery because some owners, in the hope of making last-minute profits, sold their captives in Spanish territories like Vieques. Such contraband fueled during the 1830s the diplomatic tensions between Spain and Great Britain over the control of Vieques and its slave and runaway population.³² The 1835 and 1840 treaties with England and the 1840s decrease in world sugar prices, as places like Cuba rose to meet the international demand, slowed down the human traffic.³³ Yet, between 1815 and 1845 the traffic multiplied tenfold the enslaved population in Vieques.³⁴

The rise of the slave population in Vieques was accompanied by the immigration of a refugee population displaced by the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution and Latin American wars of independence. Both trends, as suggested by the 1828 census, fostered

³⁰ See Appendix 13.

³¹ For a study of the effects and contradictions of British abolitionist pressure, the end of the slave trade, contraband and the sugar economy in Cuba see Murray, Odious Commerce.

³² The debate between Spain and England about sold, captive or runaway slaves driven to Vieques can be traced back to the 1811 accusations against the Governor of Puerto Rico Salvador Meléndez for supposedly promoting such prejudicial practices to the British subjects in the Leeward Islands. For a discussion of the post-1833 diplomatic problem with Great Britain over slaves in Vieques see the June 5, 1840 "Instructions" by the Council of Ministers. Documentación sobre Vieques 426-428, 614.

³³ For a study of the rise of Cuba to a world producer of sugar during the 19th century see Manuel Moreno Fraginals, The Sugarmill: The Socioeconomic Complex of Sugar in Cuba, 1760-1860, trans. Cedric Belfrage (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976).

³⁴ Francisco Scarano suggests that approximately 60,000 to 80,000 African slaves were brought to Puerto Rico during the years 1815 to 1845. Scarano, Puerto Rico 405. Slavery was abolished in Puerto Rico in the year 1873.

Vieques' demographic growth and ensured the diversity of the population. The 1822 Haitian invasion of Spanish Haiti, for example, most likely encouraged the immigration of the would-be first Governor of Vieques, Teophile Le Guillou, and of dispossessed people like Madam Bequer, Mr. Mofret and Mr. Duple.³⁵ The island was, as suggested before, an unofficial neutral zone of international activity. Some of these immigrants, as the Governor of Puerto Rico Santiago Méndez Vigo confirmed in an official 1841 visit to Vieques, took advantage of the 1815 *Cédula* while others remained in the island without the government's authorization.³⁶

The 1815 *Real Cédula de Gracias* continued the late 18th century trend of liberalizing Spain's economic and migration policies.³⁷ The *Cédula* opened for 15 years all the island's ports to international commerce with friendly nations willing to pay the high taxes imposed on the traded merchandise. The *Cédula* substituted the *alcabala* taxes on merchandise and ecclesiastical tithe for the new *subsidio* that equaled or surpassed the abolished contributions. In terms of importation the text allowed the free entrance of farming machinery, utensils and tools, as well as slaves from neighboring foreign colonies. As for immigration the *Cédula* authorized the entrance of Catholic

³⁵ Earlier events, like the 1795 Spanish cession of the Dominican Republic to France through the Treaty of Basel, combined in the creation of migratory waves to the Puerto Rican archipelago.

³⁶ Documentación sobre Vieques 127-145.

³⁷ The formulation of the 1815 *Real Cédula* was the result of power shifts in Madrid, and in America, leaning at times the political balance to the more radical left. Napoleon Bonaparte's 1808 invasion of Spain and subsequent usurpation of the Spanish Crown from Fernando VII (1808, 1814-1833) led to a rebellion in the name of the exiled King. The rebellion created alternative political structures like Seville's *Junta Suprema* (Supreme Council) and the *Cortes* (Parliament) of Cádiz. These structures culminated in a constitutionalist government under the liberal Constitution of 1812. The legitimacy crisis in the heart of the Spanish Empire facilitated the start of the Latin American independence movements in 1810. In 1814, once Napoleon was defeated, King Fernando VII returned. The reversion to absolutism, however, had to be negotiated with sectors demanding more democratic and liberal reforms and independence. In Puerto Rico, the 1812 Constitution limited the Governor's power through the creation of a Provincial Deputation. This organ included the Governor, an *Intendente*, seven elected citizens and constitutional municipal governments. Scarano, *Puerto Rico* 366-386. Peter Bakewell, *A History of Latin America: Empires and Sequels 1450-1930* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1997) 356-384.

foreigners from friendly nations. To further promote the settlement of white immigrants with the capital and knowledge to invest in the island's economy, the document promised them unoccupied and/or uncultivated lands.

One such white Catholic foreigner with capital and knowledge to invest in Vieques was Teophile Jacques Josephe Marie Le Guillou. The man, controversial to this day, is identified in British Foreign Office records as a member of the French Navy once suspected of committing piratical acts, who hid himself among the criminals in Vieques. Yet, Spanish government records, many of which Le Guillou produced or directly influenced, painted a different picture. Following the Documentación sobre Vieques transcription, Le Guillou was indeed a French refugee from the 1822 Haitian invasion of the Spanish Santo Domingo.³⁸ According to his own 1839 “Compendio topográfico, estadístico e histórico de la Isla Española de Vieques,” Captain Le Guillou of the Brigantine Cadelán arrived in Vieques on May 1, 1823 with the intention of buying lumber.³⁹ Once in the island, the “Compendio” continues, Le Guillou invited Juan Roselló aboard who proceeded to seduce his host with tales of pirates, thieves, murderers and rampant contraband. In all, Roselló told Le Guillou his experiences of life in Vieques.

³⁸ There is plenty of archival documentation preserved, for example, in Puerto Rico and England, which was written both by Teophile Le Guillou and about his stay in Vieques. However, there is not much documentation available about Le Guillou's life prior to his 1823 arrival in Vieques. Since, according to historian Antonio Rivera, Le Guillou was never naturalized as a Spanish citizen, it is even difficult to know exactly where he was born. The life of Teophile Le Guillou before his arrival in Vieques has therefore been surrounded by speculations. Antonio Rivera Martínez, *Así empezó Vieques* (San Juan: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1963) 49-50.

³⁹ The “Compendio topográfico, estadístico e histórico de la Isla Española de Vieques” recorded in Documentación sobre Vieques does not directly credit the author of the text. Antonio Rivera Martínez proposes that the document is Teophile Le Guillou's autobiography. The text, nonetheless, refers to the figure of Le Guillou in third person. Le Guillou, “Compendio,” Documentación sobre Vieques 745-755. Rivera Martínez, *Así empezó Vieques* 49.

The Commander [Roselló] gave him news of the thieves of beasts from Puerto Rico, the smugglers, the suspects of all sorts of robberies, above all those that were made in St. Thomas, among others, of the little black and mulatto female slaves that they took under pretext of transporting them to Santo Domingo, and later they deposited in Vieques to bring them from there to Puerto Rico; about the pirates from Vieques among which one of the Captains was a pretty little negress called María la Mota.⁴⁰

Right then, as if already envisioning himself to be the hero of the story, Teophile Le Guillou supposedly decided to establish himself in Vieques and “make war against these pirates, purging the island from all the evildoers that infest it.”⁴¹ Thus, right then he appropriated the taming of the island as his own personal quest. Whatever the reasons might have been for Le Guillou’s establishment in Vieques, the English and Spanish archives coincide that he gradually “established a sort of irregular authority over the lawless horde by which he was surrounded.”⁴² Such a feat made him the island’s first appointed political and military governor (1832-1843) and later earned him the title of “Founder of Vieques.”

Teophile Le Guillou was quite a literary man given to the production of written texts while in an island described as, “governed without written precepts that give the one in charge and the one obeying the norms of their respective conduct.”⁴³ He could have been the typical *letrado* except for the fact that he was French, and Vieques could have been the typical Spanish colony with rampant illiteracy except for the fact that it was

⁴⁰ “El Comandante [Roselló] le dió conocimiento de los ladrones de bestias de Puerto Rico, los contrabandistas, los receladores de toda suerte de robos, sobre los que se hacían en San Thomas, entre otros, los de esclavas negritas y mulatitas que se llevaban bajo pretexto de transportarlas a Santo Domingo, y luego las depositaban en Vieques para de allí traerlas a Puerto Rico; sobre los piratas de Vieques de los cuales uno de los Capitanes era una linda negrita llamada María la Mota.” Documentación sobre Vieques 751-752.

⁴¹ “hacer la guerra a estos piratas, purgando la isla de todos los malhechores que la infestaban.” Documentación sobre Vieques 752.

⁴² President of the Virgin Islands Isidore Dyett, letter to Governor in Chief of the Leeward Island B. Hamilton, 14 March 1862, Sovereignty over Vieque or Crab Island and Culebra or Pasaje Island, vol. 1 1846-1862, FO 72/1119, National Archives, London, 216.

⁴³ “gobernada a discreción sin preceptos escritos que den al que manda y al que obedece la pauta de su conducta respectiva.” Documentación sobre Vieques 210.

being colonized in the 19th century. Writing was not a central part of the everyday life of 19th century Viequenses. In turn, Teophile Le Guillou's written voice stands out as a historical trace of this oral culture.⁴⁴ He wrote down his thoughts, actions and histories in trilingual records that have been guarded by imperial archives like the Archivo Público General del Reino, later the Archivo Histórico Nacional, in Madrid.⁴⁵ These texts coded in Spanish, French and English have been able to travel across time with more clarity and urgency than those of his predecessors, contemporaries and close successors. The trilingual character of the records, a necessity for commanding a multicultural island, widened the audience.⁴⁶ In turn, time travelers, mostly historians like Antonio Rivera Martínez playing their part in the imagining of Vieques, have been better inclined to apprehend Le Guillou's historical interpretations over those of historical actors like Francisco Roselló who could not read or write well and depended on Le Guillou's services as judge and translator. The "Memoria del Gobernador de Vieques sobre el fomento de Ila. Ysla," for example, the most important document produced in Vieques until then, was signed by the French man on December 10, 1828.⁴⁷

Teophile Le Guillou's historical interpretations of the early foundation years of Vieques are synthesized in his "Compendio." The text could be an abridged antecedent

⁴⁴ My use of historical traces follows Michel Trouillot's arguments about the traces left by socio-historical processes. See "Chapter 1: Introduction."

⁴⁵ For information about the Archivo Histórico Nacional, in Madrid, visit [Archivo Histórico Nacional. Archivos Estatales](http://www.mcu.es/archivos/MC/AHN/index.html), 2007, Ministerio de Cultura, Spain, 27 January 2008 <<http://www.mcu.es/archivos/MC/AHN/index.html>>.

⁴⁶ While some official correspondence and documents authored by Teophile Le Guillou like the "Compendio" and "Plan para la organización de la Colonia" are recorded in Documentación sobre Vieques, other writings pertaining to his position as Political and Military Governor of Vieques are kept under Gobierno de la Isla Española de Vieques, Correspondencia: 1 agosto de 1838 a septiembre 1845, CPR, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. And Manuscritos. Registros. vol II, CPR, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. For the "Plan para la organización de la Colonia" see Documentación sobre Vieques 475.

⁴⁷ Vieques 1828, Capitanía General, Vieques, 602, AGPR. Records written by Juan, Antonio and Francisco Roselló can be found in the Archivo General de Puerto Rico. See, for example, the box Capitanía General, Vieques, 602, AGPR.

of Rómulo Gallego's Doña Bárbara where the cultured white man single-handedly succeeds in taming the savage wildness of, in this case, Vieques.⁴⁸ Just like the feminized yet terrible Venezuelan plains encountered by Santos Luzardo, Vieques was also accustomed to devouring men like Juan Roselló. This sad figure was described by Le Guillou as "not energetic enough to tame those men so ferocious that they committed all sorts of cruelties."⁴⁹ The remark was, as if to quell any doubts, illustrated through the story of a civil war between settler families over "four dulcineas." These women were brought from the eastern Puerto Rican town of Fajardo to accompany three old women residing in Vieques. The "dulcineas," however, were dishonored by corsairs.⁵⁰ As Roselló was incapable of facing the enemy, he was also incapable of protecting the women under his territory. The message of this history might have been that Vieques was a no man's island under an emasculated man. The Juan Roselló that Le Guillou recorded for posterity was naturally good but cowardly. He was, in addition, prone to gossip and to corruption. Indeed, Juan Roselló had all the expected qualities of a woman. Furthermore, he was but the specter of a man who having arrived to conquer Vieques during his 45th year of life, already an old man for the time, died poor, an alcoholic and

⁴⁸ According to Doris Sommer Doña Bárbara is a perfect example of a Latin American foundational fiction where the romantic triangle of Doña Bárbara, Santos Luzardo and Marisela embody Venezuelan national qualities and geographies. These characters, when confronted, violently purge and incorporate qualities in themselves and others in an attempt to synthesize a harmonious national balance that, following Julie Skurski, emphasizes on the national struggle between civilization and barbarism. Doris Sommer, Foundational Fictions (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). Rómulo Gallegos, Doña Bárbara (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, S.A., 1997). For a further discussion of Doña Bárbara see also Julie Skurski, "The Ambiguities of Authenticity in Latin America," Becoming National: A Reader, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 371-402.

⁴⁹ "no sería lo suficientemente enérgico para domar aquellos hombres tan feroces que cometían toda suerte de crueldades" Documentación sobre Vieques 749.

⁵⁰ The usage of "dulcineas" by Teophile Le Guillou made a reference to Miguel de Cervantes' Don Quixote. Dulcinea was Don Quixote's object of desire. She was, furthermore, his idyllic love of supposedly irreproachable virtue and for whose honor he undertook his foolish knightly quests. Yet, Dulcinea was but a villager of questionable reputation. Thus, through the reference Le Guillou might have been making fun of Vieques' settlers as well as criticizing them by suggesting that the honor of the Fajardo ladies' was already questionable and that the civil war was but a quixotic affair.

defeated. So emasculated was Juan Roselló that he even suffered from weak blood. His own brother Francisco Roselló was unable to redeem the tarnished family name through an inconsequential four-year passage through Vieques as Military Commander. The Rosellós, in what has become a Viequense myth of origin, have functioned as the antithesis to the “Founder” hero. Inside this foundational narrative Teophile Le Guillou, would-be richest man in the island, arrived and against all odds, “order started to be established.”⁵¹

Teophile Le Guillou proposes a particular periodization of Vieques’ history in the “Compendio.” He juxtaposed an untamable 1493-1828 era to a more civilized post-1828 Vieques.⁵² The chronological break, adopted by numerous historians like Antonio Rivera Martínez, marked 1828 as the foundational conjuncture when the Spanish colony of Vieques started to take shape.⁵³ While Le Guillou had been involved in the colonization drama since his 1823 arrival, in the year 1828 his role as a prominent actor evolved. Further following the “Compendio,” he devoted the 1823-1828 period to purging Vieques from all evildoers. These were supposedly dealt a final blow during Le Guillou’s brief 1827-1828 interval as Acting Commanding Officer. Once the island’s most violent unwanted others had been disciplined, Le Guillou shifted his attention to more administrative concerns. The year 1828, in turn, marked the more official entrance of Le Guillou and Vieques to the Spanish Empire.

⁵¹ “El orden principiaba a establecerse” Le Guillou, “Compendio,” Documentación sobre Vieques 752.

⁵² For Le Guillou’s quote see pages 92-93 of “Chapter 3: Claims to the Labyrinthine Island, 16th-19th Centuries.”

⁵³ Antonio Rivera Martínez understanding of the early 19th century as a foundational context is evidenced throughout his book devoted to the 19th century Vieques and titled Así empezó Vieques, roughly translated as “this is how Vieques began.” Rivera Martínez, Así empezó Vieques.

In the year 1828 Teophile Le Guillou performed as Acting Commanding Officer, Francisco Roselló's judge and translator, and as a wealthy hacendado.⁵⁴ That year he also formally asked Governor de la Torre "au nom de toute la petite population de Bieques" for the titles to the cultivated lands.⁵⁵ The title request, grounded on the land promises encompassed in the 1815 *Real Cédula*, portrayed his and other settlers' intent to tie their capital, knowledge and future to the island's soil.⁵⁶ The request was part of the December "Memoria" mentioned above pushing forth a plan for the administrative, religious and military organization of the colony. The plan proposed the creation of a self-sufficient government organized through a Colonial Council and financed through taxes imposed on merchant ships.⁵⁷ The administrative plan and land petition validated Le Guillou's position inside the emerging colony. More importantly, the text combined with the September 14, 1828 census sent a clear message to San Juan and Madrid-based bureaucrats urging them to seriously engage the colonization of Vieques, especially considering sugar's replacement of coffee as Puerto Rico's main crop.

By the late 1820s different imperial officials agreed with Le Guillou's stance that the Spanish Empire should move towards a more serious colonization of Vieques. The end in 1825 of the Latin American independence wars had left Puerto Rico and Cuba as

⁵⁴ Having previously appointed him as Acting Commanding Officer, Colonel Ramón Aboy made Teophile Le Guillou Captain of the Urban Militias during Francisco Roselló's administration. Le Guillou's important administrative and military role in the young colony can also be evidenced in his exchanged correspondence with both the Governor of Puerto Rico and Fajardo's War Lieutenant commenting on Vieques' welfare.

⁵⁵ "In the name of all the small population of Vieques." Vieques 1828, Capitanía General, Vieques, 602, AGPR.

⁵⁶ As discussed earlier in the chapter the 1815 *Real Cédula de Gracias* promised unoccupied and/or uncultivated lands to wealthy and knowledgeable immigrants willing to exploit them.

⁵⁷ The Colonial Council proposed was presided by a First Commander followed by a priest as Vice-President, a Second Commander as Counselor and seven reputable settlers as Captain, First Lieutenant of the Militias and juries. For the "Memoria" see "Plan para la organización de la Colonia," Documentación sobre Vieques 475. And Vieques 1828, Capitanía General, Vieques, 602, AGPR.

the last Spanish colonies in the Americas.⁵⁸ The diminished situation of the Spanish Empire rekindled metropolitan interest in Puerto Rico. The island remained identified as the key to the Caribbean to the extent that it could serve as an outpost securing the commercial lines with Cuba. Yet, after 1825 and with its transformation into a sugar colony, Puerto Rico lost some of its relational identity and gained value to the metropolis as a profitable colony in its own right. The value assigned to Puerto Rico, in turn, changed the role of Vieques inside the empire, for if Puerto Rico had been the key to the Caribbean, Vieques was the key to Puerto Rico. Or, in the words of Teophile Le Guillou in 1839, “Vieques must be considered the key to Puerto Rico, from whom it is inseparable.”⁵⁹

In a matter of 10 years Vieques evolved into a focal point of discussion among certain circles of the diminished Spanish Empire. George Dawson Flinter, an Irishman enrolled in the Spanish army under the Knight Commander of the Royal Order of Isabel the Catholic, published in 1834 An Account of the Present State of the Island of Puerto Rico. In the book the Colonel proposed that:

The importance of this island [Vieques] must be obvious to whoever considers its position relative to Puerto Rico. It lies to windward of the coast: consequently it must always form a part of the government of Puerto Rico...I would pronounce decidedly, that the island of Bieques in the hands of any other nation would be a source of incalculable injury to Puerto Rico. In time of peace it would be a refuge of malefactors, and a nest for contraband traffic, which, from its position, could be carried on with impunity: boats during the nights could run down on the coasts, and, in the numerous creeks by which it is indented, find a safe place of deposit for their goods. I make these observations, because I am convinced that the occupation of Bieques by a foreign power would be incompatible with

⁵⁸ By 1825 Spain had already ceded the territory of Louisiana to France through the San Idelfonso Treaty of 1800 and sold the territory of Florida to the United States through the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819. Alan Brinkley, Historia de Estados Unidos, trans. Pilar Mascaró Sacristán (México: McGraw Hill, 1996) 151, 173-175.

⁵⁹ Le Guillou, “Compendio,” Documentación sobre Vieques 747.

the security and prosperity of this island, and that the nation that governs Puerto Rico must also waive its flag over its natural and inalienable dependencies. I trust that this question may terminate soon, as it ought in regard to justice, in favour of Spain, and that its colonization may not suffer any further interruption from the delay of diplomatic forms.⁶⁰

Colonel Flinter's account comprised, according to Isabel Gutiérrez del Arroyo, an instructional manual on the policies the Spanish metropolis should follow to maintain sovereignty over Puerto Rico.⁶¹ This manual, based on his 1829-1832 stay in the island and influenced by his prior expulsion from Venezuela, recognized that in the making of the Caribbean mosaic of nation-states, colonies and other political entities, Puerto Rico was left surrounded by old and new rival nations to the Spanish Empire. In the years after the Latin American independence wars, marked by British commercial expansion over the region and the growth of U.S. hemispheric pretensions, Flinter argued that the security and prosperity of Puerto Rico depended on the stability of Vieques under the Spanish flag.⁶² The short distance dividing the two islands made impossible the establishment of a clear imperial border. If taken, bureaucrats like Governor López de Baños concurred, Vieques could be turned into a nest of "foreigners" facilitating contraband, slave desertion and the spread into Puerto Rico of revolutionary doctrines.⁶³ The urgency assigned by people like Flinter and López de Baños to the maintenance of the imperial line east of Vieques redefined the island's role inside the Spanish Empire. It

⁶⁰ George Dawson Flinter, An Account of the Present State of the Island of Puerto Rico (San Juan: Academia Puertorriqueña de la Historia, 2002) 37-38.

⁶¹ Flinter, An Account X-XI.

⁶² Colonel George Dawson Flinter originally published his Account in 1834. This was only 11 years after the proclamation in 1823 of the Monroe Doctrine by the President of the United States. The proclamation, in retrospect, established U.S. pretensions over the Western Hemisphere. For President James Monroe's seventh annual message to Congress, December 2, 1823, encompassing the Monroe Doctrine see Dexter Perkins, Hands off: A History of the Monroe Doctrine (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1941) 390-392.

⁶³ See López de Baños' 1840 quote at the beginning of the chapter.

was not a small malignant mass stuck in the heart of the Spanish Empire anymore.⁶⁴ Neither was it simply an island-*común* for the extraction of raw materials.⁶⁵ As a result of revolutionary times, and opportunistic rivals, Vieques evolved into an island-boundary. This island-boundary had to separate the last vestiges of Spanish America from a proliferating array of rival nations.

Seven years after the end of the Latin American wars of independence and four years the collective petition for land titles to Governor de la Torre, Teophile Le Guillou became Vieques' first appointed Political and Military Governor (1832-1843). During his 11 years as Governor he excelled as a diplomat, established intricate networks of intelligence gathering across the neighboring islands, made decrees against contraband, oversaw the distribution of land for cultivation, looked out for the security of the island, and embodied the law when there were still no clear judicial texts or organized government structures to follow.⁶⁶ Le Guillou, for example, responding to local denunciations of contraband and to intelligence reports about the illegal traffic of persons and objects carried out by schooners crisscrossing between islands like Antigua, St. Thomas and Vieques, decreed that all dockings should be done in the Puerto Mulas.⁶⁷ He additionally proscribed settlers from providing lumber or trading with a ship without proper permits. In terms of land issues, Le Guillou arranged the division of inheritances, functioned as witness and transcriber of property transfers, conceded cultivable land to petitioners deemed worthy, donated 100 *cuerdas* for the establishment of the town and

⁶⁴ For a discussion of the representation of Vieques as a malignant mass see "Chapter 3: Claims to the Labyrinthine Island, 16th-19th Centuries."

⁶⁵ For a discussion of Vieques as an island-*común* see "Chapter 3: Claims to the Labyrinthine Island, 16th-19th Centuries."

⁶⁶ For Teophile Le Guillou's administrative records see Gobierno de la Isla Española de Vieques, Correspondencia: 1 agosto de 1838 a septiembre 1845. And Gobierno de la Isla Española de Vieques, Manuscritos. Registros. vol II.

⁶⁷ For a map of Vieques see Appendix 1.

cemetery of Isabel II, owned the most prosperous sugar hacienda named La Patience and worked with investors in the establishment of sugar haciendas.⁶⁸ In all he helped stimulate and reinforce the rising sugar industry in the island. These measures helped establish the land distribution patterns and administrative basis for the colony of Vieques. In turn, Viequenses have come to appropriate, with the aid of historians, the figure of Teophile Le Guillou and the years 1832 to 1843 as a foundational figure and context. If the Caribs had consecrated the earth, and Simón Bolívar had added a little anticolonial spice to the mixture, this second foundational conjuncture established the basis for the future Vieques. Although as fate would have it, the colony was only officially founded in 1844, one year after the “Founder’s” death.

Leaving aside the histories detailing the Rosellós’ lack of gumption or Le Guillou’s foundational heroics, Spain still spent the first 50 years of the colony’s life assuming ambiguous imperial stances that would not attract either England or Denmark’s complaints. Acting upon a May 5, 1831 Royal Order, Governor de la Torre instructed Military Commander Francisco Roselló to refrain from exercising any kind of authority over English and Danish citizens in Vieques. This included the charging of taxes for docking and commerce conducted in the island. The measure placed the Military Commanders of Vieques in a difficult position for the next 33 to 38 years with respect to exercising authority over the less *subordonée* (subdued) groups in the island. The

⁶⁸ Juan Bonnet Benítez states that Teophile Le Guillou reportedly had 2,650 *cuerdas* under his name in the year 1839. However, in Correspondencia: 1 agosto de 1838 a septiembre 1845 is recorded that on April 2, 1839 La Patience encompassed a total of 1,200 *cuerdas* (800 of forests, 180 for sugar, 70 for food supplies, and 150 of savannah). Bonnet, Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico 46. Gobierno de la Isla Española de Vieques, Correspondencia: 1 agosto de 1838 a septiembre 1845. For a discussion of Le Guillou’s donation of 100 *cuerdas* for the establishment of the town and cemetery of Isabel II see Justo Pastor Ruiz, Vieques antiguo y moderno: 1493-1946 (Santurce: JAY-CE Printing, 1987).

measure also proved the original 1811 colonization plan to be but a vague mandate.⁶⁹

The colonization enterprise was, instead, ruled by the following imperial maxim:

questionable properties, the ones litigated between the Nations, are affirmed and consolidated either by repeated and continued acts of possession that lose or considerably remove the origin of the issue, or by acquiring the security of the dominion through compensations or other onerous titles common in the treaties.⁷⁰

The Crown, treating the case of Vieques like one of a *rapto* (elopement) to be decided through the act of possession, chose option number one.⁷¹

The imperial maxim facilitated cycles of proposals for the colony's administrative organization followed by counterproposals to reduce the colonization impulse to the minimum. While the proposals originated mainly from Vieques and sometimes from San Juan, the counterproposals usually arrived from Madrid with the professed intent to make the Spanish hold on the island appear more the consequence rather than the cause of the colony's natural development and prosperity. The policy was aptly synthesized in a September 17, 1847 correspondence from the Royal Palace to the Minister of the Kingdom's Governance.

⁶⁹ Teophile Le Guillou denounced in June of 1840 that the English settlers were the less respectful to Spanish authority and that they treated "Crab Island" as an English territory. See the June 11, 1840 entry of Gobierno de la Isla Española de Vieques, Manuscritos. Registros. vol II.

⁷⁰ "Las propiedades dudosas, las que se litigan entre las Naciones se afirman y consolidan o bien por repetidos y continuos actos posesorios hasta perder o alejar considerablemente el origen de la cuestión, o bien adquiriendo la seguridad del dominio por compensaciones u otros títulos onerosos que son comunes en los tratados." Documentación sobre Vieques 31-32.

⁷¹ The *raptos* were a fairly popular practice in colonial Latin America. These were usually a measure last resort employed by young couples whose families, particularly the woman's family, did not allowed them to marry. In a *rapto* the man usually took the woman away from her father's house for a few days. Once the couple returned the father was basically forced to accept the union since the daughter could no longer lay claims to virginity. The practice of *raptos* sought the a posteriori recognition of an act of possession. In the case of Vieques, Spain could not run away with the island, but it sought to gradually possess it until other empires could not lay claims to the island. For a study of the practice of elopement in 19th century Cuba see, for example, Verena Martínez-Alier, Marriage, Class and Colour in Nineteenth Century Cuba: A Study of Racial Attitudes and Sexual Values in a Slave Society (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1989) 103-119.

About the convenience of activating the colonization and development of the island of Vieques; and notified H.M. has warned me manifest to Y.E. that in these last times the English government has protested against the fortifications that were being built in Vieques and the rise in the island's garrisoned force: that in the last days the Minister of England has reproduced this protest: and that if currently adopted ostensible measures to formally formulate in the island a complete administrative systems it would probably provoke a conflict that is advisable to avoid, because no matter how much for the government of H.M. is not doubtful the right of Spain to the property of Vieques, this issue is still not definitely finished with the English government. It is thus the will of H.M. that as soon as possible efficient measures be adopted for the development of the agriculture and industry in the island, authorizing to the effect the Captain General of Puerto Rico; but that these measures be of such nature that can be justified with the natural advancement of the colony's interests; without awaking the suspicion that its object is to secure in her Spanish dominion: abstaining for the same from establishing Courts of Justice or authorities of any kind outside from military Chiefs that command the detachments garrisoned in the island, and which force is not inconvenient to be somewhat incremented, as a guarantee to the settlers.⁷²

Faced with England's protests the Spanish Crown ordered the fostering of an organic development of the island characterized by undefined administrative structures and an increased military presence. Such undefined political structures led to general confusion and serious public debates. For example, on December 1837 questions revolved around the specific role of different imperial ministries like *Hacienda*, *Instrucción Pública*, and

⁷² “acerca de la conveniencia de activar la colonización y fomento de la isla de Vieques; y enterada S.M. se ha servido prevenirme manifieste a V.E. que en estos últimos tiempos ha reclamado el Gob^o inglés contra las fortificaciones que se construían en Vieques y el aumento de la fuerza que guarnece en la isla: que en los últimos días ha reproducido al Ministro de Inglaterra esta reclamación: y que si se adoptasen actualmente medidas ostensibles para plantear formalmente en la isla un sistema completo de administración se provocaría probablemente un conflicto que conviene evitar, pues por mas que para el Gobierno de S.M. no sea dudoso el derecho de la España a la propiedad de Vieques, esta cuestión no se halla aún terminada con el Gobierno inglés. Es por tanto la voluntad de S.M. que se adopten en cuanto sea posible medidas eficaces para el desarrollo de la agricultura y la industria en la isla, autorizando al efecto al Capitán General de Puerto Rico; pero que en dichas medidas sean de tal naturaleza que puedan justificarse con el natural adelanto de los intereses de la Colonia; sin que despierten sospecha de que su objeto sea asegurar en ella la dominación de la España: absteniéndose por lo mismo de establecer Tribunales ni autoridades de ninguna especie fuera de los Gefes militares que manden los destacamentos que guarnezcan la isla, y cuya fuerza no hay inconveniente en que tenga algún aumento, como garantía de los moradores.” Documentación sobre Vieques 66.

the Ministry of Overseas Governance.⁷³ Although a detailed list of the range and function of these ministries was shortly produced, only time and the “repeated and continued acts of possession” resolved the debate over the sovereignty of Vieques.⁷⁴ Meanwhile Spain, not risking an openly hostile confrontation or willing to assume “onerous titles” entailing obligations that outweighed advantages, continued to act under the only consistent imperial policy: inconspicuously populating and militarizing Vieques.

While fostering the demographic growth and militarization of Vieques, Spain engaged the challenging suitors in a diplomatic warfare over what had previously been an island-fringe. Through the consular and government correspondence exchanged during the 1810s to the 1860s a new Vieques was imagined. Such geographical imaginings depended on prolific pens like Teophile Le Guillou’s as well as on the wittiness and feistiness of the battling interlocutors. Once the battle started, England proved to be the main contender, while Denmark remained a present but distant second. On January 16, 1816 England’s Lord Castlereagh insisted that, notwithstanding void titles like “first discoverer,” Vieques was a Virgin Island.⁷⁵ Lord Castlereagh, honoring a Shakespearean tradition of playing with puns, established the basis of an enduring virginity debate. At stake here was not honor, but the very concrete drawing of imperial demarcating lines to the west or east of Vieques. If the small island was indeed part of the neighboring Virgin Islands, as Lord Castlereagh argued, it had to be either a Danish or English possession.⁷⁶

⁷³ The Spanish institution of *Hacienda* dealt with the handling of government finances or with the recollection and distribution of taxes. *Instrucción Pública*, on the other hand, dealt with public education. Both institutions, at least in names, have been inherited by many postcolonial Latin American countries.

⁷⁴ Documentación sobre Vieques 127.

⁷⁵ Documentación sobre Vieques 8.

⁷⁶ The Virgin Islands are located to the east of Vieques. The Danish Virgin Islands, after 1917 the U.S. Virgin Islands, were composed by the islands of St. John, St. Croix and St. Thomas and other numerous islets. The British Virgin Islands, east of the Danish-U.S. ones, are composed of 86 keys and islands like Tortola and Virgin Gorda.

Yet, eleven days after the British diplomat's remarks Conde de Fernán Núñez emphatically denied such Virgin allegations. He responded that, "the island of Vieques was not included in the number of the Virgins" since Spain was in, "indisputable possession of her."⁷⁷ Spain's ownership, Núñez further argued, was evidenced in the repeated dismissals of would-be possessors and in ancient maps, like the 17th century Map 6 of the *Algemeen Rijksarchief* Collection, separating Vieques from the Virgin Islands.⁷⁸ Whether Vieques was or was not a Virgin Island, Spain was definitely a jealous lover.

The virginity debate was a very ingenious and less confrontational way of discussing the island's status. The discussion climaxed in an encounter between the Governor of Vieques Teophile Le Guillou and the President of Tortola and Governor of the Virgin Islands Isaac Hay. Le Guillou recounted the event in a June 26, 1840 letter to the Governor López de Baños.

the conversation fell on the richness of Vieques' soil, and on the poverty of the Virgin Islands. Mr. President Hay, only one who spoke French told me that those Virgins were very decrepit young ladies and full of sicknesses, that Goat Island (Vieques), was the most beautiful, youngest and richest of the virgins. I told him that Vieques was not a virgin after her marriage with Spain.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ "la isla de Vieques no estaba comprendida en el número de las Vírgenes...indisputable posesión de ella." Documentación sobre Vieques 9.

⁷⁸ Map 6 of the *Algemeen Rijksarchief* Collection portrays the Virgin Islands as a group of small islands labeled by "Virgines." Yet, the islands of Bieke and St. Croix were portrayed separately and labeled. Map 6, Archivo Algemeen Rijksarchief, Sección Cartográfica, CIH, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. Documentación sobre Vieques 9. For a discussion of Map 6 and other maps from the Archivo Algemeen Rijksarchief also see "Chapter 3: Claims to the Labyrinthine Island, 16th-19th Centuries."

⁷⁹ "recayó la conversación sobre las riquezas de los terrenos de Vieques, y sobre la pobreza de las Islas Vírgenes. El Sr. Presidente Hay, único que habló francés me dijo que esas Vírgenes eran señoritas muy decrepitas y llenas de enfermedades, que la Isla de Cabra (Vieques), era la más bella, más joven y más rica de las vírgenes. Yo le conté que Vieques no era virgen después de su matrimonio con la España." Documentación sobre Vieques 641-642. According to the Compendio" some foreigners identified Vieques as "Isla de Cabra" (Goat Island) given the abundance of such animals, along with pigs, chickens, rabbits and others, in Vieques. Le Guillou, "Compendio," Documentación sobre Vieques 747.

Both officials assumed sexual metaphors to assign gendered qualities to the island-colonies. According to President Hay, the Virgin Islands were hardly virginal. Already possessed for a couple of centuries by the English and Danish empires, not to mention previous indigenous presences, they were worn down and decrepit. Vieques, on the other hand, smelled like new with its 34,585 *cuerdas* of unexploited territory after a promising 1830s decade of sugar bloom.⁸⁰ Yet, Le Guillou argued that Vieques' lushness and fertility already had an owner. The small island was married to Spain. In the process the young bride's body became a private domesticated sphere accessible only to the polygamous husband, or so the husband would try to establish. Whether Vieques was a luscious virgin or a married lady could not be decided. However, conversations like the Hay-Le Guillou's one fostered a new and more feminized way of imagining Vieques. If the post-1514 island had remained an unconquerable and savage space, a more manageable post-1828 Spanish Vieques was emerging.⁸¹

The geographical imaginings of a Spanish Vieques responded to diplomatic arguments, to coming from savageness to civilization histories, and to other narratives. Yet, all these imaginings depended for substance and legitimation on the memory of imperial archives like the *Real y General Archivo de Simancas e Indias*.⁸² In fact, as soon as the possession controversy started, after the 1811 colonization plan, Spain armed

⁸⁰ The island's space devoted to the growth of sugar went from Teophile Le Guillou's 10 *cuerdas* in 1828 to a total of 196 *cuerdas* in 1839. The difference represents an almost 1860% increase in 11 years. The 34,585 figure above is based on the subtraction of the 1,447 *cuerdas* of cultivated land identified by Government Statistics in 1839 to the 36,032 *cuerdas* in the island provided by César Ayala and Viviana Carro. Ayala and Carro, "Expropriation and Displacement," *Puerto Rico under Colonial Rule* 176. See Appendices 13-15.

⁸¹ For Teophile Le Guillou and Fray Iñigo Abbad y Lasierra's comments about post-1514 Vieques see "Chapter 3: Claims to the Labyrinthine Island, 16th-19th Centuries."

⁸² For a reference to the *Real y General Archivo de Simancas e Indias* see "Chapter 2: Myths of Origin and Foundational Figures, 1514."

itself with as many geographical and historical facts as the archivists could muster.⁸³ The purpose was to create an arsenal of dusty documental references to Vieques that could prove beyond any doubt that Spain was indeed the first inventor and possessor of the island. After all, to know and to represent convincingly was to own.⁸⁴ In the midst of this archival battle, one of the most powerful weapons produced in the metropolis was a history of Vieques written in September 1829 by José de la Higuera y Lara. The history was a 1685-1735 chronology weaved through the colonization attempts on the part of England, Denmark, Brandenburg and France, and their subsequent expulsions by Spain.⁸⁵ This historical instrument wielded by the Spanish Empire against Denmark and England could have been the first Viequense chronology and archival history ever written. The historical narratives produced by de la Higuera and Le Guillou coincided in their concern with the presence of unwanted others in Vieques. Yet, it was de la Higuera y Lara's history that established the precedent of narrating Vieques' history in order to articulate ownership claims over the island. Yet, even with Spain's archival arsenal the dispute was not settled for another 35 years. In the meantime, Vieques gravitated towards Spanish dominion.

⁸³ Documentación sobre Vieques 8-10.

⁸⁴ For a discussion about the close relationship between knowledge and representation see "Chapter 2: Myths of Origin and Foundational Figures, 1514."

⁸⁵ José de la Higuera y Lara's sometimes used the name "Bekia," another Caribbean island, to refer to Vieques. Apparently some early Spanish documents confused Vieques' name with Bekia. It can be inferred that the use of Bekia in Documentación sobre Vieques referred to Vieques through the outright acknowledgement of the confusion like in page 319 and through the physical placing of Bekia between Puerto Rico and Saint Croix in page 334. De la Higuera y Lara's referral to Vieques can also be evidenced in the document's heading "Yndice de los documentos que se encuentran en este Real Archivo General de Yndias que tienen relación con la isla de Vieque, inmediata a Puerto Rico" ("Index of the documents found in this Real Archivo General de Indias that are related to the island of Vieque, next to Puerto Rico"). José de la Higuera y Lara, "Yndice de los documentos que se encuentran en este Real Archivo General de Yndias que tienen relación con la isla de Vieque, inmediata a Puerto Rico," Documentación sobre Vieques 319, 322-330, 334.

The Spanish colony of Vieques, dependent on but not integrated into Puerto Rico, was officially founded in 1844. The event, however, expressed more a project than a reality. The small island, composed of a 40% non-Puerto Rican population, was a disparate mosaic of languages, religions, races and cultures.⁸⁶ Spain's dilemma was to subtly impose a design. Spain had to establish a disciplined identity that could harmonize a colony of foreigners dispersed throughout the island with the aim of a secured and, if possible, profitable Spanish dependency. To such an end, the Governor of Puerto Rico Santiago Méndez de Vigo, acting on the Crown's orders, formed a commission in 1841 responsible for suggesting appropriate measures to further develop Vieques without attracting international attention. Out of the numerous recommendations came the 1844 establishment of the parish-capital of Isabel II in the northern coast of Vieques. This took place in the 100 *cuerdas* Teophile Le Guillou had previously donated for such a purpose. In accordance with Spanish urban traditions, the town's plaza was gradually surrounded by the most important religious, governmental and social structures. These structures included the Casa del Rey, Church and cemetery. The building of these three, although ordered since 1843, took years of planning, fund-raising and construction. Nonetheless, their eventual gathering together near the Port Mulas led settlers into the island's capital and made Isabel II the center of urban life.⁸⁷

One of the most controversial measures in the transformation of Vieques into a stable Spanish dependency actually started as an 1831 solution to Spain's inability to properly claim the island. The May 5, 1831 Royal Order discussed above, originally devised to avoid confrontations with the British and Danish governments, set the

⁸⁶ See Appendix 16.

⁸⁷ "1843," *Obras Públicas, Obras Municipales*, 355, AGPR, San Juan.

precedent for subsequent fiscal policies favoring less governmental intervention and fewer economic impositions. The 1841 Commission supported the Order by proposing that for a period of 15 years Vieques would not be charged the territorial and commercial taxes imposed in Puerto Rico. The entrance of foreign merchandise without the added 6% tax officially gave Vieques the free port status that had been its de facto status since 1831. Even if originally designed to appease Danish and English complaints, the free port status and other fiscal privileges allowed local commerce to flourish and spurred the young colony's economic growth. The most assertive step taken by the Spanish empire in Vieques, however, was the 1845-1855 construction of the *Fortín Conde de Mirasol*.

The fort, named Conde de Mirasol after the Governor of Puerto Rico Rafael de Aristegui y Vélez, embodied many things at once. Even though the diplomatic war over Vieques had not ended, the military building evidenced Spain's pretensions to physically possess the island through exclusivist claims over the use of violence. Spain, aiming for imposition of Spanish authority, had begun to flex its muscles. The investment in the fort, the last one constructed by Spain in the Americas, also evidenced the strategic intentions behind the island's colonization. These intentions, so defended by Colonel Flinter, made Vieques' identity relational to Puerto Rico insofar as the first colony was truly intended as an outpost to the second. Vieques, as discussed above, needed to be secured in order for Spain to secure Puerto Rico. The fort came to form part of the defense system of both the Puerto Rican archipelago and the weakened Spanish Empire in the Americas. Still, the *Fortín* was never finished. Nor did its now rusted cannons ever fire a single shot to defend Vieques from an enemy attack, not even when the U.S. besieged the island in 1898. Yet, if it was not employed for defense, it did play an

important part in disciplining the heterogeneous local population. The violence that was not directed towards foreign aggressors was nonetheless focused on the enemies within. According to Robert Rabin, the military structure became early on a prison frequented by marginal sectors. Among the list of prisoners were peons, *vagos* (unemployed or person without a steady labor contract) from Vieques and Puerto Rico and even political prisoners from the Dominican Republic.⁸⁸ The *Fortín*, however, played one more and very important role in the consolidation of the Spanish colony of Vieques. During the years 1862-1863 British diplomats in London and the Caribbean discussed intelligence reports gathered by Virgin Island officials that revealed the growth of the Spanish colony and the establishment of the garrison fort (Figure 4.1).⁸⁹ These discussions and the ineffective diplomatic negotiations with Spanish officials led to the formal renunciation of the British Empire's claims over Vieques in the year 1864.⁹⁰ Thus, the *Fortín* was indeed instrumental in establishing Spanish dominion in Vieques.

⁸⁸ Among the prisoners taken to the *Fortín* were field hands, descendants of Teophile Le Guillou, *vagos* (unemployed or person without a steady labor contract) from Vieques and Puerto Rico, and even political prisoner from the Dominican Republic. Ignacio Olazagasti and Robert Rabin, Notas para la historia del Fortín Conde de Mirasol y la isla de Vieques, 2nd ed. (San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1991) 15-42.

⁸⁹ Among the intelligence information gathered by British officials was a sketch of Isabel II. The sketch portrayed buildings already established, like the *Fortín* and the Governor's house, and indications of military barracks to be established. These barracks were never established. This sketch, however, is likely to be the first sketch of Isabel II ever made. Perhaps the British Empire acknowledged the existence of Isabel II before the Spanish Empire did. "Bird's Eye View of Crab Island and Town," *Sovereignty over Vieque*, vol. 1, FO 72/1119, 23.

⁹⁰ See, for example, *Sovereignty over Vieque or Crab Island and Culebra or Pasaje Island*, vol. 2 1863-1865, FO 72/1120, National Archives, London, 122-139.

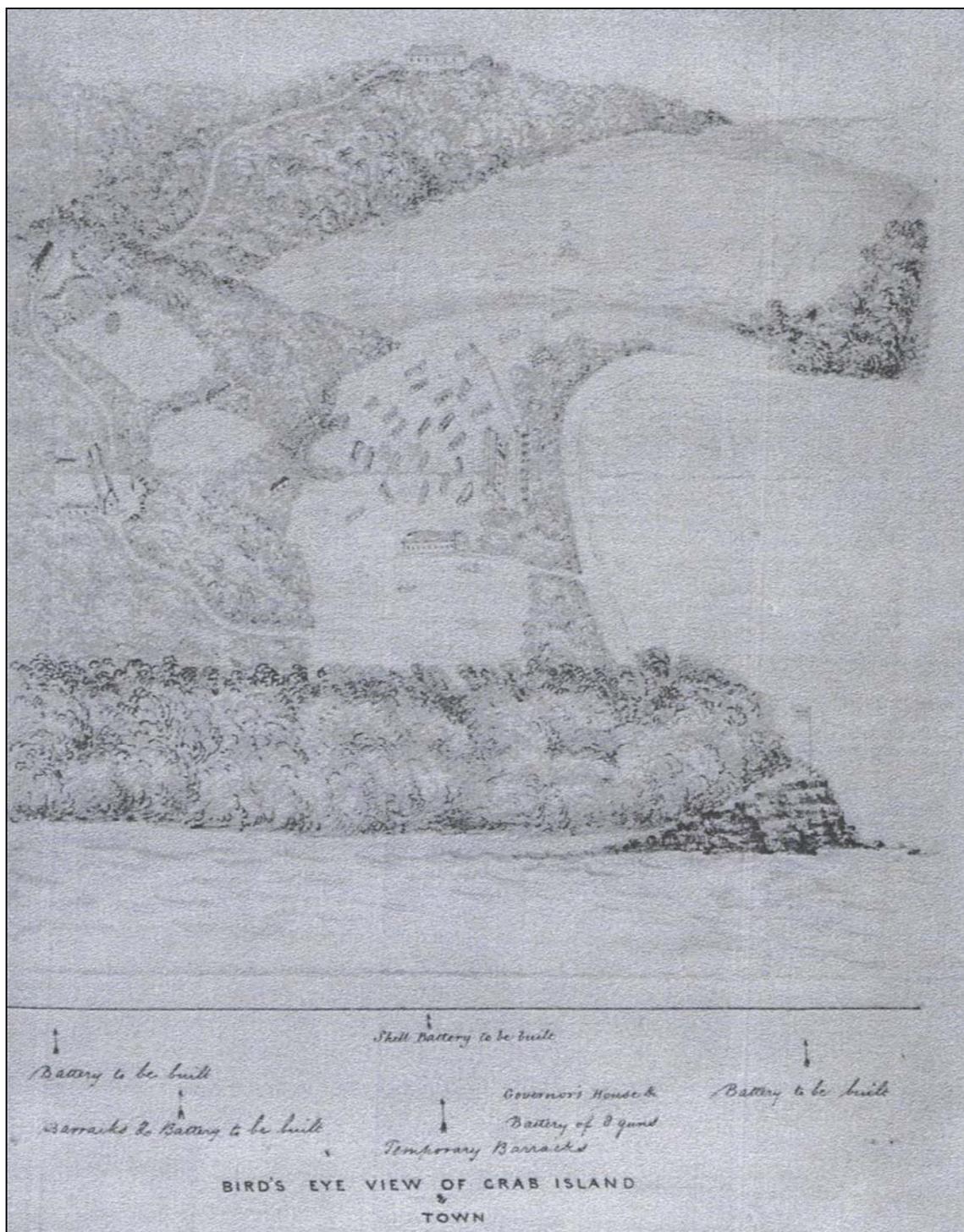


Figure 4.1: British mid 19th century sketch of Isabel II, Vieques⁹¹

⁹¹ "Bird's Eye View of Crab Island and Town," Sovereignty over Vieque, vol. 1, FO 72/1119, 23.

The year 1864 was a crucial one for Vieques. After Denmark's pretension over Vieques had died away and England had formally renounced Crab Island, the Spanish colony of Vieques was officially incorporated as the 8th Military Department of Puerto Rico.⁹² As could be suggested by the indigenous naming of the second largest island east of Puerto Rico as "Small Island," Vieques' identity had for centuries been conceived as relational to Puerto Rico. In fact, most Spanish officials in the archipelago, especially throughout the early 19th century, considered it only a matter of time before the smaller island became integrated into the neighboring colony. In the 1850s, the population of Vieques reached the 2,000 mark and was further subject to the migratory influx of itinerant workers from neighboring colonies. In addition, the island's annual exportation total exceeded 60,000 *pesos*. Thus, many thought that the progress of Vieques was such that it should be assimilated politically and economically as it already was judicially.⁹³ The inhabitants of Vieques probably had the same expectations. Yet, the incorporation process undertaken after 1864, typical of a colonial relationship, was far from democratic and both the Madrid and the San Juan based governments dictated what the Viequense ruling sector considered adverse policies. These measures, about which the local population was not consulted, ultimately brought new responsibilities that still sparked passionate debates in the late 19th century.

Vieques' fiscal privileges and free port status caused heated controversy and the passionate taking of sides from their very inception. As exemplified in the 1840s clash between the Governors of Puerto Rico and the *Intendente de Hacienda* Manuel José Cerero over the restriction versus the fostering of Vieques' commerce, opinions diverged

⁹² Puerto Rico's other Military Departments were Bayamón, Arecibo, Aguadilla, Mayaguez, Ponce, Guayama and Humacao.

⁹³ Documentación sobre Vieques 209.

on whether the defense of Puerto Rico should be ensured through the implementation of exceptional fiscal policies.⁹⁴ Aguadilla's Customs Administrator Antonio Calderón argued to the central government against such exceptions in July 25, 1846 by stating that, "the wanting to encourage Vieques at such great expenses to Puerto Rico and the Nation is the wanting to kill a mother in the midst of delivery to save the life of a fetus that still has not been seen."⁹⁵ The problem, as identified by people like Calderón, was that the exceptional fiscal policies endowed to Vieques burdened the main island with the younger colony's administrative costs and facilitated both contraband and competition to local and Spanish produces by allowing the introduction of tax-exempt foreign commodities through Vieques. Yet, Antonio Calderón's words are more than simply representative of those opposed to Vieques' privileges for his quote might actually be the first metaphorical construction of the Puerto Rico-Vieques relationship as that of mother and child. Still, the child, as acknowledged by both Calderón and the Crown that endorsed the fiscal privileges, was not fully born in 1846. What Vieques would become was yet to be seen, but the delivery, according to some in Puerto Rico, was already taking a heavy toll on the mother.

Twenty-four years after the foundation of the Spanish colony of Vieques and with at least nine sugar haciendas and two *estancias* established in the island, opinions or,

⁹⁴ The *Intendencia*, established in much of Hispanic America during the 1780s, was an administrative organ in charge of the orderly functioning of fiscal institutions and the fostering of the colonial economies. In Puerto Rico, the *Intendencia* was officially created in 1803 but came to be occupied, as an independent administrative entity from that of the Governor, in 1811-1812. Fernando Picó, *Historia general de Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1988) 130-131. During the 1840s the *Intendente* Cerero opposed the expenditure plans proposed by the Governors of Puerto Rico from Santiago Méndez de Vigo to Juan Prim y Prats designed to foster and defend Vieques. Bonnet, *Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico*.

⁹⁵ "el querer que se fomente Vieques a tan grandes expensas de Puerto Rico y la Nación es querer matar a una madre que se halla de parto por salvar la vida de un feto que aún no se ha visto." Documentación sobre Vieques 704.

more specifically, the Crown's opinions shifted. Spain ordered the people of Vieques through the May 13, 1868 Royal Decree to start paying subsidiary contributions to the Royal Treasury which amounted to the 6% of the island's registered wealth, or to 3,701 *escudos* in 1868-69.⁹⁶ As an October 14, 1873 *Hacienda* report argued, the tributary exceptions had become an unjustified privilege favoring a portion of Puerto Rican inhabitants to the detriment of the others.⁹⁷ The report detailed the characteristic posture of *Hacienda* since the 1840s of supporting a "no privileges" policy. The stance, however, had more ample support in San Juan by the 1870s. By 1873 the *Diputación Provincial*, acting under the 1870 *Ley de Ayuntamientos*, incorporated Vieques to Puerto Rico as another municipality. In turn, the island's last privilege, its free port status, was taken away seven years later.⁹⁸ Vieques, by 1880, had been integrated to the colony of Puerto Rico.

Vieques' wealthiest residents or "major contributors," well represented in the Municipal Council, were in dismay at the prospect of such a tax burden.⁹⁹ While the island had been dependent on Puerto Rico throughout the 19th century, the imposed integration process commenced after 1864 made very clear the residents' subordinated bargaining position with respect to Madrid and San Juan. Probably sensing that a new language had to be used in order to appeal to their two metropolises, the Governor of

⁹⁶ "21 de junio de 1868," 6, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 1, AGPR, San Juan.

⁹⁷ Documentación sobre Vieques 847.

⁹⁸ Antonio Rivera Martínez argued in Así empezó Vieques that Vieques lost its free port status in 1868. The date is unlikely given the July 21, 1871 petition signed by the Governor of Vieques Tomás Font and other Vieques residents in defense of the continuation, as opposed to reinstallation, of the free port status. For this reason, Justo Pastor Ruiz's proposal of 1880 as the year when Vieques lost its free port status is more feasible. Pastor Ruiz, Vieques antiguo y moderno. Rivera, Así empezó Vieques.

⁹⁹ The *Junta Municipal* or Municipal Council was not a democratic body. Instead, it was presided by a Governor or, after 1873, a Mayor appointed by the Governor of Puerto Rico. The rest of the board was composed of members of Vieques' "*mayores contribuyentes*" (major contributors) or wealthiest residents which included mostly merchants and hacendados.

Vieques Tomás Font and a group of merchants, hacendados and other land owners signed a collective petition in July 21, 1871 stating that:

To save itself Vieques needs a paternal and economic government that instead of imposing new burdens, sets it free if possible of the ones that today oppress it; it needs its port to remain frankly open to foreigners, because from abroad, it receives the elements of its sustenance...Puerto Rico is a virile nation that counts with centuries of existence, Vieques, Sir, that hardly counts with some years, cannot be compared with Puerto Rico in the political or in the administrative. No country in the world, Sir, has been able to produce benefits to its Metropolitan Government at its 28th year of being settled. Vieques is a fragile child from whom cannot be expected the work of an adult; its strengths would be exhausted and it would die by consumption.¹⁰⁰

The petitioners, arguing against Vieques' further incorporation to Puerto Rico and in favor of repealing the recently established subsidy contributions and maintaining the free port status, employed the child-parent metaphor previously articulated by Antonio Calderón. Yet, in 1871 the metaphor was designed to appeal to the sense of paternal responsibility over a frail offspring. If Puerto Rico had indeed conceived Vieques, it could not leave the fragile infant to die. Instead, the virile father had to make sacrifices for the newborn if it ever hoped to reap the rewards of successful child rearing in the future. The irony was that to save the child the parent had to intrude as little as possible while assenting to foreign intervention. Apparently, the parent could not provide all the nourishing its newborn needed. One thing is evident though. By the 1870s the child had definitely been born.

¹⁰⁰ “Vieques necesita para salvarse un gobierno paternal y económico que en vez de imponerle nuevas cargas, lo libre si es posible de las que hoy le oprimen; necesita que su puerto continúe francamente abierto al extranjero, porque del extranjero, recibe los elementos que lo sostienen...Puerto Rico es un pueblo viril que cuenta siglos de existencia, Vieques, Señor, que apenas cuenta algunos años, no puede ser comparado con Puerto Rico ni en lo político ni en lo administrativo. Ningún país en el mundo, Señor, ha podido producir beneficios al Gobierno de su Metrópolis a los 28 años de ser poblado. Vieques es un débil niño del que no puede exigirse el trabajo de un adulto; sus fuerzas se agotarían y moriría por consunción.” Documentación sobre Vieques 830.

After England's formal renunciation, the argument that Vieques, as a young island-community, was an exceptional case in need of special attention fell on deaf ears among colonial officials. Subsequently, for many Viequenses the years 1864-1880 evolved into a historical turning point for the worst. If by the mid 19th century Vieques had been a prospering sugar colony, the post-1868 policies imposed from Madrid and San Juan bred an air of pessimism among the Viequense society. The island's upper sectors faced the mounting municipal deficit, the heavier tax burden and the more expensive imports. Meanwhile the lower strata faced unemployment and, if non-Spanish citizens, deportation and the forfeiture of work contracts.¹⁰¹ In the words of the member of the Municipal Council José García Marín, "It is also said that Vieques heads to its ruin, that it is decaying especially since it was assimilated to the other towns of this Province [Puerto Rico], imposing the payment of the subsidy that had not satisfied before."¹⁰² For García Marín as for many of his colleagues the May 1868 Royal Decree had been collapsed with the 1873 incorporation of Vieques to Puerto Rico. The collapse made both equally suspicious and detrimental to the welfare of Vieques. The belief led to support of the separation from Puerto Rico in order to continue under a more direct Spanish colonial

¹⁰¹ Slavery, first recorded as existing in Vieques during the 1685-1693 non-Hispanic colonization ventures, was abolished in Puerto Rico on March 22, 1873. Although Vieques was a haven for both fugitive slaves from the British colonies and slave traffickers heading to the Puerto Rican main island, the abolition of slavery had little impact in Vieques for the island's economy depended more on a free and immigrant labor force than on the work of slaves numbered at 33 in 1873. The immigrant labor force was contacted in and subsequently attracted from the neighboring non-Spanish colonies through the offering of generous work contracts. Although the contract stipulations were not always followed, during the mid 19th century workers in Vieques enjoyed comparatively higher wages than in islands like Tortola. Robert Rabin-Siegel, "Esclavitud africana en Vieques," *Historias vivas: Historiografía puertorriqueña contemporánea*, eds. Antonio Gaztambide Géigel and Silvia Álvarez Curbelo (San Juan: Editorial Postdata, 1996) 60-64. "18 de junio de 1873," *Actas celebradas por la Junta Municipal y Ayuntamiento de esta Ysla desde el 18 de junio al 28 de Diciembre de 1873*, 6-B, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 1, AGPR. See "Chapter 5: The Sugar Baptism of Isla Nena, Late 1800s-1930."

¹⁰² "Dícese también que Vieques camina a su ruina, que va decayendo sobre todo desde que se le asimiló a los demás pueblos de esta Provincia [Puerto Rico], imponiéndole el pago del subsidio que antes no satisfacía." Documentación sobre Vieques 838.

regime. The late 19th century separatist sentiment in Vieques arose from the island's Municipal Council, which was in turn composed of hacendados, merchants and appointed officials from Puerto Rico hardly representative of Vieques' population. The diversity of the local population combined with the limited communication venues with Puerto Rico had not provided fertile ground in Vieques for the sense of Puerto Rican-ness developing across parts of the main island.¹⁰³ Thus, the incorporation to the colony of Puerto Rico was hardly a celebrated event in Vieques. The debate about the Puerto Rico-Vieques relationship, however, was about to be redefined by a new historical conjuncture that drastically altered the colonial scenario.



The life story of *Abuela Cocoroco* represents in itself a foundational fiction that parallels Vieques' romanticized history. Foundational fictions, following Doris Sommer's formulation of the term, are historical narratives based on allegorical love stories. These narratives allude to national histories through the many times romantic interaction of characters representing broad sectors of society. Through the outcome of these interactions, authors make proposals about the future of nations.¹⁰⁴ As such, foundational fictions can be spaces of representation from where to negotiate national identities. While the concept was formulated by Sommer to describe a Latin American literary tradition, the non-written life story of my great-grandmother still travels through

¹⁰³ In the Puerto Rican main island there were large sectors of the population, especially Caribbean migrants settled in the south and blacks in the northeast of the island who did not identify with the cultural nationalist discourses being fashioned by San Juan based intellectuals in the late 19th century.

¹⁰⁴ Sommer, Foundational Fictions 5-6.

time as if it was written by the famous pen of Rómulo Gallegos. My Carib great-grandmother, as if to allegorically amend the blood spilled almost four centuries earlier, romantically conjoined in her 15th year of life with the blond and blue-eyed Spaniard Manuel Santiago, known as Manuel Felicidad or simply as Filá since there was probably a Félix somewhere in the name. It is not clear to me who conquered and tamed whom, if this is indeed what happened, but if this foundational fiction is to follow the romanticized plot of Vieques' history, my great-grandfather Manuel succeeded in taming the savage Carib Vieques my great-grandmother Basilia embodied. On the other hand, *Abuela Cocoroco* ingeniously kept my Spanish great-grandfather by her side as her life partner and made him adopt along with the island the remnants of Carib lifestyle well alive in 19th and early 20th century Vieques.

Spain's long ambiguous relationship with Vieques, made official only at the end of the romantic liaison, resembles my great-grandparents' foundational fiction. My great-grandfather Manuel married my great-grandmother Basilia on his deathbed on January 11, 1955. The marital ceremony sealed approximately fifty-five years of living together. The outcome of the long interaction between my two real-life but still allegorical great-grandparents resulted in the engendering of 12 children with Carib and Spanish ancestry, that I also claim as my own. These children were living symbols of a fusion where the foreign imperial power became intimate with the evanescent Carib race. Still, their bronze faces betrayed no Iberian roots.

Chapter 5:

The Sugar Baptism of Isla Nena, Late 1800s-1930

They came here from the island [of Puerto Rico] looking for work. The [central] hired them because of the sugar cane. They came every year and worked here and sent sustenance to their homes over there. You could earn money...[and the] day lasted from 6 till 6. A terrible thing. You had to work. Yes...I worked carving wood, because we had to make carts to carry the cane, one had to do wagons and I did all that work [in the workshop]. That was in the still time, in the harvest I worked in the central. Then I would cut five *llaves* in the *tachos* during the nights. The night shift was complete because I got home, after a half a mile walk, by midnight.

Gabriel Carambot, Personal interview (2003)¹

During the 1800s the sugar cane had reigned over the Puerto Rican archipelago, but had been in decline during the last two decades of that century. According to historian Andrés Ramos Mattei, the economic system based on the hacienda collapsed in Puerto Rico after 1873. He argued that the hacienda, relatively small socio-economic unit usually managed by plantation owner, was a precapitalist enterprise dependent on the coerced labour of slaves and free workers. The free workers were forced into plantations by the 1849 law known as the *Reglamento de jornaleros* (Regulation of day labourers). The law decreed by Governor Juan de la Pezuela stipulated that persons without the

¹ “Venían de la isla aquí en busca de trabajo. Los cogían [la central] porque estaba la caña. Ellos venían todos los años y trabajaban aquí y mandaban el sustento para las casas allá. Con [mana-inteligible] se ganaba dinero...día pues era de 6 a 6. Una cosa terrible. Había que trabajar. Sí...Yo trabajaba labrando madera, acerando porque había que hacer los carros para cargar la caña, había que hacer vagones y todo eso pues yo trabajaba allí [en el taller]...Eso era en la bruja, en el cosecho trabajaba en la central. Entonces yo mapuleaba cinco llaves en los tachos y ahí pues trabajaba ahí por la noche. La noche era completa porque era yo llegaba a mi casa media milla a pie a medianoche.” Gabriel Carambot, personal interview, 5 November 2003.

means to sustain themselves, even if they were landowners, had to hire themselves out or become *jornaleros* (day labourers).² Although *jornaleros* received modest wages for their work, Ramos Mattei argued that the relationship between *jornaleros* and *hacendados* was not based on the exchange of labour for money. Instead, he proposed that feudal relationships, ruled by allegiances and responsibilities, defined the hacienda economic system.³ The abolition of slavery and overturn of the *Reglamento de jornaleros* in 1873 helped, for Ramos Mattei, precipitate the downfall of the haciendas in Puerto Rico by putting an end to the two important sources of coerced labor.⁴

The feudal character Andres Ramos Mattei assigned to haciendas is a debated point among scholars. In fact, late 19th century sugar haciendas in Vieques were hardly feudal. These haciendas depended less on slavery and more on salaried free and immigrant workers. At the time of the March 22, 1873 abolition only 33 slaves were

² The 1849 law that brought about the *Régimen de la libreta* (notebook regime) was a vagrancy law. Similar types of vagrancy laws designed to create a cheap labor force were implemented during the 19th and early 20th centuries throughout Latin America. Governor Pezuela's 1849 law stipulated that any person between 16 and 60 years of age without a known occupation was considered a *jornalero*. *Jornaleros*, then, had the obligation to be employed at all times and to prove their employment through a notebook bearing the markings of their boss. *Jornaleros*, furthermore, were required to move to towns so that officials could watch over them better. The 1849 law also dictated the end of *agregados*. Francisco Scarano, *Puerto Rico: Cinco siglos de historia* (San Juan: McGraw-Hill, 1993) 417-418. See also Fernando Picó's discussion of the 19th century rural workforce in Puerto Rico in Fernando Picó, *Libertad y servidumbre en el Puerto Rico del siglo XIX* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1983) 45-82. For a definition of *agregados* see "Chapter 4: The Spanish Colony of Vieques, 19th Century."

³ Andrés Ramos Mattei defines feudal relationships in the hacienda context as a socio-economic regime sustained through servile extra-economic ties between the owners of the means of production and the direct producers. I, therefore, understand the concept to mean relationships of production based more on allegiances and responsibilities than on wages and salaries. Andrés A. Ramos Mattei, *La sociedad del azúcar en Puerto Rico: 1870-1910* (Río Piedras: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1988) 13-16.

⁴ Andrés Ramos Mattei also identified the lack of capital to invest in modern technology and infrastructure as a problem in the transition from haciendas to a capitalist and more competitive system of sugar mills in 19th century Puerto Rico. Technology and infrastructure were central to meet the demands of global market for refined sugar. Andrés Ramos Mattei, *La hacienda azucarera: Su crecimiento y crisis en Puerto Rico (Siglo XIX)* (San Juan: CEREP, 1986) 11-39.

emancipated in the island.⁵ The President of the Virgin Islands Isidore Dyett, in addition, visited Vieques in 1862 to assess the status of British citizens and had then written to the Governor in Chief of the Leeward Islands B. Hamilton that a few slaves worked in most, if not all, of the haciendas, but that most of the laborers were free immigrants from the British colonies.⁶ Four years later the Municipal Council declared that slaves comprised only 2% of the population and that these 80 persons in bondage were devoted to domestic service.⁷ By June 1868 the Council complained that the labor force in Vieques was essentially free and in shortage.⁸ Therefore, Vieques' sugar industry was run at least since the early 1860s by the hands of immigrant workers.⁹ This immigrant labor force was enticed with generous work contracts from neighboring non-Spanish colonies. Although contract stipulations were not always enforced, during the 1850s and 1860s workers in Vieques did enjoy comparatively higher wages than in islands like Tortola. If hacendados broke contracts stipulations, immigrant workers had the option to leave.¹⁰

⁵ "18 de junio de 1873," Actas celebradas por la Junta Municipal y Ayuntamiento de esta Ysla desde el 18 de junio al 28 de Diciembre de 1873, 6-B, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 1, AGPR, San Juan.

⁶ The President of the Virgin Islands Isidore Dyett wrote on March 14, 1862 to the Governor in Chief of the Leeward Islands B. Hamilton about the status of British subjects in Vieques. His letter included a detailed account of the political, economic and social situation of Vieques as Dyett witnessed it during an 1862 visit. Isidore Dyett, letter to B. Hamilton, 14 March 1862, Sovereignty over Vieque or Crab Island and Culebra or Pasaje Island, vol. 1 1846-1862, FO 72/1119, National Archives, London, 225.

⁷ Even though slavery in Vieques declined during the 1850s and 1860s, slaves represented 19% of the population in 1839 and 36% in 1845. According to the Municipal Council, by 1866 there were only 80 slaves in the island of approximate 4,300 residents. In other words, slaves comprised only 2% of the population in 1866. "29 de enero de 1866," 5, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 1, AGPR. See Appendices 13, 15 and 16 and "Chapter 4: The Spanish Colony of Vieques, 19th Century."

⁸ "22 de junio de 1868," Isla de Vieques año de 1868 Junta Municipal, 6, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 1, AGPR.

⁹ The number of British subjects working in Vieques by January 1864 was so significant that by themselves they were able to put up an uprising to which the Spanish authorities had to call on troops from the Puerto Rican main island. Captain of HMS *Inmortalité* Hancock, letter, 23 January 1864, Sovereignty over Vieque or Crab Island and Culebra or Pasaje Island, vol. 2 1863-1865, FO 72/1120, National Archives, London, 147. Ignacio Olazagasti and Robert Rabin, Notas para la historia del Fortín Conde de Mirasol y la isla de Vieques, 2nd ed. (San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1991) 41.

¹⁰ The British Government received complaints over the years from their subjects stating that, "much deceit and fraud is practiced upon these laborers to entice them to that Island [Vieques] and to detain them

Thus, the relationship between hacendados and the immigrant workers depended on the actual exchange of labor for money, or at least on the expectation of the exchange.

The labor force in Vieques, however, was still coerced to the extent immigrant and local workers had been submitted until 1873 to the *Reglamento de jornaleros*. The immigrant *jornaleros*, furthermore, were not allowed to leave the island if the hacendados accused them of a breach of contract (Figure 5.1).¹¹ With the overturn of the *Reglamento*, the Municipal Council passed in October of 1873 an ordinance regulating the movement of these immigrant workers around the island. The intention behind such an ordinance was to discourage workers who “wander without a contract” and to “extirpate the idleness, demoralization and excess to which these foreign workers succumb.”¹² The ordinance, therefore, was basically a reinstatement of the vagrancy law overturned four months earlier ultimately making such an overturn irrelevant in the island. The Council’s insistence on controlling the immigrant workers further suggests the importance of such workers to the island’s economy.

there against their will in essentially a state of Slavery.” Isidore Dyett, letter to B. Hamilton, 7 October 1861, *Sovereignty over Vieque*, vol. 1, FO 72/1119, 174-175.

¹¹ The Governor, and later Mayor, of Vieques was the only official in the island authorized to process passports. During the later 19th century, the Governor usually required the approval of employers before processing passport to *jornaleros*. If employers did not approve, *jornaleros* could make a direct appeal to the Governor to leave the island. The fact that the direct appeal was a recourse undertaken by different *jornaleros* throughout the late 19th century suggests that employers’ authorization was not always easy to get were. Yet, the Governors usually sided with the hacendados. In this sense, when hacendados claimed in the early 1870s that they could no longer employ their *jornaleros* because of a widespread economic crisis, the Mayor allowed the one-sided termination of the contracts and the deportation of immigrant *jornaleros*. See, for example, 59, *Documentos Municipales, Vieques*, 8, AGPR.

¹² “vagan sin contrato...extirpar la vagancia, desmoralización y exceso a que se va entregando el peonaje extranjero.” “1 de octubre 1873,” *Actas celebradas por la Junta Municipal y Ayuntamiento de esta Ysla desde el 18 de junio al 28 de Diciembre de 1873*, 6-B, *Documentos Municipales, Vieques*, 1, AGPR.

Don José Miró
ALCALDE MUNICIPAL DE LA ISLA DE VIEQUES

CONCEDO libre y seguro pasaporte á *Luis Charles* natural de *Guadalupe* vecino de *esta isla* de estado *casado* y profesión *Agricultor* para que pueda trasladarse á *Guadalupe* embarcándose por este puerto.

Las autoridades se servirán no ponerle impedimento en su marcha; quedando advertido el interesado del deber en que está de presentarse á ellas, á su llegada y salida.

Vieques, 14 de *Abril* de 1888.

J. Miró

St Thomas Politchammer
april 26th 1888
Politchammer

ST THOMAS
POLITI

Registrado al folio 12.º núm. 235.

EL SECRETARIO,
P. Miró

FILIACION

Estatura *regular*
Edad *30 años*
Color *blanco*
Frente *redondo*
Cejas *alguna*
Ojos *oscuros*
Nariz
Boca
Barba

SEÑAS PARTICULARES

[Signature]

Fig. "El Comercio" - F. H.

Figure 5.1: Passport belonging to Luis Charles, dated April 14, 1888, authorizing passage to Guadeloupe¹³

¹³

59, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 8, AGPR.

The haciendas in Vieques were dependent on salaried immigrant laborers. Yet, the island experienced, along with the rest of the Puerto Rican archipelago, the decline of the haciendas during the late 19th century. Vieques' sugar industry, in fact, was already facing problems by the late 1860s, and sugar was the cash crop that moved the island's economy and government. The link between the sugar industry and the municipality was so strong that by 1871, when hacendados were having marked cycles of financial instability, the Municipal Council was operating its budget on a deficit.¹⁴ The Council, after all, depended on the income received from its "major contributors" like the brothers Eugenio and Manuel Benítez from the respective Haciendas of Resolución and of Santa Elena respectively who were declaring themselves unable to pay the salary of to their immigrant workers.¹⁵ Eventually, the Municipality assumed responsibility for the breach of contracts.¹⁶

Most of the council members, like the Benítez family, were personally invested in the sugar industry or in the related commercial sector.¹⁷ According to these members of the Viequense elite, the economic downfall of the island had less to do with the manageability of cheap labor, technology, the yield of the soil and the global fluctuations of sugar prices than with the forced incorporation into the Puerto Rican main island. In the late 19th century Puerto Rican nationalist sentiment was not widespread among the Viequense upper sector, and much less so with the lower classes and the immigrant population.

¹⁴ Due to its fiscal deficit, in January of 1873 the Municipality could not even pay its own employees. "25 de abril de 1873," Año de 1873 Ysla de Vieques Actas, 6-A, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 1, AGPR.

¹⁵ Vieques 1870, Capitanía General, Vieques, 605, AGPR, San Juan.

¹⁶ 98, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 9, AGPR.

¹⁷ Año de 1873 Ysla de Vieques Actas, 6-A, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 1, AGPR.

The world that sugar created in the 19th century Vieques was marked by contrasts.

The President of the Virgin Islands Isidore Dyett keenly observed during his visit in 1862 that:

The population is heterogeneous in the extreme, consisting of whites of almost all the European Nations, of Americans, of slaves of African descent, and of free black and colored immigrants from the other West Indian Colonies, of whom about 300 are reported to be from the British Virgin Islands, and of “Gibaros”, a peculiar class of people of mixed blood, the descendants of the early inhabitants of Puerto Rico, chiefly by Spanish Convicts, sent to that Island before its colonization, who intermarried or cohabited with Caribs and Africans. These people the “Jibaros” are reported to be a mild and orderly, but exceedingly indolent race, they live in small palm built huts or ranchos and maintain themselves by grazing stock and by small cultivations of fruits and vegetables, and latterly of tobacco.¹⁸

Two decades after the Spanish colony of Vieques was officially founded, the population of the island was still “heterogeneous in the extreme.” The 19th century sugar industry had attracted to Vieques clusters of people that did not see themselves as an island-community. Yet, it was the sugar industry and European imperialism that made possible their encounter in Vieques.

Caribbean immigrants were among the clusters of people sharing 19th century Vieques. The 1899 Census, in fact, identified Vieques as the Puerto Rican town with the fourth largest concentration of immigrants.¹⁹ This group of people, so central to the Viequense economy, were considered foreign to the island by local officials. The group, nonetheless, had achieved a certain social standing by 1870 when the Spanish Crown authorized the opening of a Protestant school in Vieques where the children of

¹⁸ Isidore Dyett, letter to B. Hamilton, 14 March 1862, Sovereignty over Vieque, vol. 1, FO 72/1119, 223-224.

¹⁹ The 1899 Census identified 656 foreigners established in Vieques in 1899. The number represented 10% of the population. San Juan and Ponce, the two largest Puerto Rican cities, had 1,645 and 973 immigrants respectively. Yet, the immigrant population in San Juan, for example, represented only 5% of the city’s population. Estados Unidos, Departamento de la Guerra, Dirección del Censo de Puerto Rico, Informe sobre el Censo de Puerto Rico 1899 (Colombia: Ediciones Puerto, 2003) 189-190.

immigrants could learn in their language and about their faith. The school, according to Reverend Justo Pastor Ruiz, represented the first instance of Spanish religious tolerance in the Puerto Rican archipelago. Twelve years later an Anglican Church was established in Vieques.²⁰

In the late 19th century, Caribbean immigrants might have achieved a similar status in Vieques to, for example, that of non-rebellious indigenous populations under the Spanish Empire in the early 16th century. These immigrants had certain rights and obligations before the state that assured and reinforced their difference as a group. Immigrant *jornaleros* had, for example, the “Reglamento Especial para el Peonaje Extranjero” (“Special Regulation for the Foreign Laborers”) approved in 1871 that, among other measures, forced foreign *jornaleros* to live in the haciendas that employed them.²¹ The Caribbean immigrants had, in addition, a defined space within the larger society. Such a space had very concrete physical manifestations like the Anglican Church located in the corner of San José and Luis Muñoz Rivera streets in Isabel II. The Church reflected the existence as well as the peripheral status of the Caribbean immigrant population. Although situated in the capital town, the building was located three blocks west of the Municipal Plaza and its Catholic Church. In Isabel II, right until the mid 20th century, three blocks could mean the difference between social respectability and marginality. Thus, the rights and space of the Caribbean immigrant community did not imply the outright integration into the broader Viequense society.

²⁰ Justo Pastor Ruiz, Vieques antiguo y moderno: 1493-1946 (Santurce: JAY-CE Printing, 1987) 41, 89.

²¹ To the extent that it forced immigrant *jornaleros* to obey their employers and live in the haciendas, the “Reglamento Especial” stipulated conditions that resembled slavery. Olazagasti and Rabin, Notas 41.

The “Jibaros” that President Dyett identified as a separate ethnic group would later be described as the native Viequense population.²² This people of mixed ancestry who shared a certain history with the island were as much a part as much excluded from the Vieques that sugar was weaving. They were subsistence farmers spread throughout the island, as Dyett affirmed, but they were also *jornaleros* in haciendas. Dyett’s characterization of the “jíbaros” could attest to the local population’s dislike of the *jornalero* life and preference for a more independent lifestyle through subsistence agriculture. After all, this people, if indeed the descendants of Caribs, runaway slaves and other fringe populations of the Caribbean, had a long tradition of living outside the grasp of states and empires.²³ The small plots of land cultivated by these subsistence farmers claimed the landscape not taken over by sugar. The potential inaccessibility of the plots, however, isolated their dwellers. The roads, with the possible exception of the one connecting Isabel II to Punta Arenas, were not easy to traverse.²⁴ Nor were there reasons for a subsistence farmer or a *jornalero* to continuously travel through them. The difficulties in transportation forced barrios and haciendas to form self-sufficient units. Thus, people from different haciendas and barrios all over the island did not encounter each other on a regular basis. Nor did they read or handle other texts that might have led them to imagine a collective Viequense identity, much less a Puerto Rican one.

In the late 19th century the category of Viequense as it is understood today did not exist. European imperialism and the sugar industry had thrown and attracted peoples into

²² For a discussion of the centrality of “jíbaros” in Puerto Rican nationalist imaginary see “Chapter 6: The Arrival of the U.S. Navy, 1930-1950.”

²³ See “Chapter 3: Claims to the Labyrinthine Island, 16th-19th Centuries”

²⁴ The state of the roads in the island was a constant source of concern for the Municipal Council. The road connecting Isabel II to the district of Punta Arenas usually received more attention since it connected the capital town to the sugar producing region. The coasts of Punta Arenas were also the nearest to the Puerto Rican main island. See, for example, “12 de abril de 1878,” 5, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 1, AGPR. And “13 de julio de 1879,” 5, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 1, AGPR.

the island, but these peoples did not engage in activities that fostered the imagining of a Viequense community. According to Cayetano Coll y Toste, there were only six schools in Vieques by 1898 servicing a total of 288 students.²⁵ If the population of Vieques was 5,938 in 1899, public education was reaching approximately 5% of the population at the end of the 19th century.²⁶ Therefore, public education did not play a decisive role in shaping the Viequense population. The people in Vieques, however, did engage from time to time in ceremonies ultimately designed to swear allegiance to Spain and reinforce a disciplined work ethic. In the 1860s, for example, it was customary for Spanish officials to award money to the two best-behaved *jornaleros*, one native and one foreign-born, during the commemorations of Queen Isabel II's day. Yet, even in these public ceremonies the groups of people in Vieques were kept in separate spaces. Such was the case during the 1866 celebrations when the municipality offered one dance for native *jornaleros* and another one for the foreign *jornaleros*.²⁷ Native and foreign-born were also separated in death. At least since 1874 there were two cemeteries in Isabel II, one for Catholics and one for Protestants. The Protestant Cemetery, adjacent to the larger Catholic cemetery, held the dead of the Caribbean immigrant population (Figure 5.2).²⁸

In death, as in life, the native and foreign born were kept separate but somewhat equal.

²⁵ The schools Cayetano Coll y Toste identified were located in the town of Isabel II and in the districts of Puerto Real and Mosquitos. Each place had two schools since they were divided by gender. Girls outnumbered boys in all three localities. Cayetano Coll y Toste, Historia de la instrucción pública en Puerto Rico hasta el año 1898 (Bilbao: Editorial Vasco Americana, S.A., 1970) 196.

²⁶ The 1899 census conducted by the U.S. War Department placed the number of people attending school in Vieques at 312. The percentage of the population reached by public education remained at 5%. This figure, however, included the island of Culebra incorporated to the municipality of Vieques from 1902 to 1917. Dirección del Censo de Puerto Rico, Informe sobre el Censo de Puerto Rico 1899 159, 248.

²⁷ "29 de octubre de 1866," 5, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 1, AGPR. "7 de noviembre de 1866," 5, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 1, AGPR. "10 de noviembre de 1864," 4, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 1, AGPR.

²⁸ At least since May 1866 there were discussions in the Municipal Council about a Protestant Cemetery in Isabel II. "26 de septiembre de 1874," Actas del Ayuntamiento de 1874, 6-C, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 1, AGPR.



Figure 5.2: Catholic and Protestant cemeteries in the outskirts of Isabel II, Vieques²⁹

The different dances and cemeteries that the Municipal Council sponsored evidenced that the administrative organ conceived the population of Vieques as distinctive groups of people who were far from comprising a harmonious community. Furthermore, the financing of separate spheres indicates that the Council was not invested in unifying the Viequense society. The currency that term Viequense had then, in fact, is unknown since the word itself is difficult to find in 19th century documentation. The absence of the precise word or any other word representing the collectivity suggests that people in 19th century Vieques were indeed not imagining themselves in terms of a Viequense collective identity. More precisely, given that the majority of the late 19th century documentation available was produced by the Municipal Council, the upper social sectors were not envisioning themselves as Viequenses. Since such identity projects related to the convergence of a community with political units are usually constructed from above, it is doubtful that that the term Viequense had much currency in

²⁹ “26 de septiembre de 1874,” Actas del Ayuntamiento de 1874, 6-C, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 1, AGPR.

19th century Vieques.³⁰ The lack of investment in imagining a Viequense identity however changed in the early years of the 20th century with the arrival of the U.S. in Vieques.

During the months of May to September 1898 the U.S. Navy encircled the Puerto Rican archipelago and more specifically the island of Vieques as part of the Spanish-Cuban-American War. These were months, according to Justo Pastor Ruiz, of great uncertainty and distress for the Viequense population, which was isolated both from the world and from the Puerto Rican main island.

The opinion held of the American soldiers (then called Yankees) was so bad that very few people dared to be near when they landed. They were characterized as bloodthirsty, criminals, murderers and cannibals...[The] blockade made things very critical in Vieques. There was hunger, suffering and need. In Playa Grande plantains were cut and spread in the sugar mill's plaza for the people to use...Vieques suffered a psychological warfare as it is called now, during the Hispanic-American war. These were hours of breakdown and suffering. The Register Book of the Anglican Church states that "the rumour spread that the soldiers were going to burn the town". There was generalized fear and [according to the Register Book,] "the commander had ordered to kill the population without consideration for women and children".³¹

People believed, according to Pastor Ruiz, that the American soldiers were, "bloodthirsty, criminals, murderers and cannibals...ordered to kill the population without consideration for women and children." Such was the fear prevalent among the local population that

³⁰ I could not find the word Viequense in the 19th century documentation safeguarded by the Archivo General de Puerto Rico. The type of documentation held in the Archivo General, with the predominance of municipal records, portrays voices from the upper class of the Viequense society. It, thus, remains uncertain how other sectors used, if at all, the word Viequense.

³¹ "La opinión que había de los soldados americanos (entonces yanquis) era tan mala que muy pocas personas se atrevieron a estar cerca cuando la entrada. Se les anunciaba como sanguinarios, criminales, asesinos y caníbales...[El] bloqueo puso las cosas muy serias en Vieques. Había hambre, angustia y necesidad. En Playa Grande se cortaban los plátanos y se derramaban en la plaza de la Central para que el pueblo se sirviese...Vieques sufrió una guerra de nervios como se dice ahora, durante la guerra Hispano-americana. Fueron horas de quebranto y angustia. El libro de Registro de la Iglesia Anglicana consigna que "se corría el rumor de que los soldados iban a quemar el pueblo." Había el temor general y [siguiendo el libro de Registro,] "el comandante había ordenado matar la población sin perdonar mujeres y niños." Pasto Ruiz, *Vieques antiguo y moderno* 77-81.

when U.S. troops finally entered the island on September 10, 1898, the people hid.³² The “Yankees,” however, had brought a music band that played waltzes and pasodobles, and possibly the national anthem, for the surrendering parties. The music, Pastor Ruiz wrote, lured people out of their hiding places and made them begin to shed their fears. Thus, music worked in 1898 as a universal language capable of breaking the ice between the colonized and the new colonizers.

The first encounter of the Viequenses with the U.S. Empire, according to Justo Pastor Ruiz, was ruled by fear and mistrust. Categories like bloodthirsty cannibals, used to justify imperial endeavours and to distinguish the colonizer from the colonized, were inverted. In Pastor Ruiz’s account, the American soldiers were the ones perceived as savages. Yet, Justo Pastor Ruiz narrated the entrance of U.S. troops into Vieques almost 50 years after the actual event. He, in fact, wrote his Vieques antiguo y moderno in the 1940s context of great distrust towards the actions of the U.S. Navy’s in Vieques.³³ The context influenced his narrative and those of the people he interviewed who, Pastor Ruiz acknowledged, had different memories of the encounter. Vieques antiguo y moderno is then a good source to approach not only the 1898 entrance of the U.S. into Vieques, but people’s memories of the events 50 years later. While the presence of the 1940s cannot be extricated from Pastor Ruiz’s narrative, the text offers a unique glimpse of some of the contradictions of this first Viequenses-U.S. Empire encounter. For example, while Pastor Ruiz insisted that the encounter was initially ruled by fear and suspicion, he nonetheless wrote that Viequenses quickly turned on the Spanish authorities. The characterization of

³² Justo Pastor Ruiz’s account of the entrance of U.S. troops into Vieques is contradictory. He wrote that the U.S. flag was first raised in Vieques on September 10, 1898. Yet, one page later he situated the event on September 21, 1898. Pasto Ruiz, Vieques antiguo y moderno 78-79.

³³ See “Chapter 6: The Arrival of the U.S. Navy, 1930-1950.”

the U.S. soldier as a bloodthirsty cannibal, Pastor Ruiz clarified, did not discourage Viequenses from openly expressing their disdain for the retreating Spanish soldiers and, especially, the Civil Guard.³⁴ Such public expressions of hostility were only possible because, Pastor Ruiz argued, people thought the U.S. soldiers would protect them from retaliation.³⁵ The expectation of protection evidences an early sign of trust.

On December 10, 1898, three months after the first Viequense-U.S. Empire encounter, the Treaty of Paris officially ended the Spanish-Cuban-American War. While Article 16 of the treaty specified that the United States' occupation of Cuba was temporary, Article 2 of the treaty sealed the fate of Puerto Rico with the line, "Spain cedes to the United States the island of Puerto Rico and the others that are now under its sovereignty in the West Indies."³⁶ In other words, the treaty ensured Cuba's independence, but assured U.S. sovereignty over the Puerto Rican archipelago. The United States, as Spain had previously done, coveted the islands for military and strategic reasons.³⁷ Both the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations were influenced by the writings of historian and naval strategist Alfred T. Mahan. In his famous 1890 book The

³⁴ Nor did the characterization of the U.S. soldiers as bloodthirsty cannibals discourage Viequenses from later consuming the U.S. nationalist and imperialist discourse of progress, modernity and democracy. The Civil Guard, group equivalent to the police, had been in charge of disciplining the Viequense population, especially the lower classes and immigrants. Their use, or rather abuse, of violence and authority did not make them a popular group among the marginal sectors of Viequense society. People were therefore glad to see the Civil Guard leave and to have an occasion to publicly vent their discontent without the fear of reprisal.

³⁵ Pastor Ruiz, Vieques antiguo y moderno 77-81.

³⁶ "España cede a los Estados Unidos la Isla de Puerto Rico y las demás que están ahora bajo su soberanía en las Indias Occidentales." "Tratado de París," Puerto Rico: Leyes Fundamentales (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, Inc., 1973) 113-119.

³⁷ For a study of late 19th century U.S. military interests in Puerto Rico see María Eugenia Estades Font, La presencia militar de Estados Unidos en Puerto Rico 1898-1918: Intereses estratégicos y dominación colonial (San Juan: Ediciones Huracán, 1988) 23-58. For a study of more recent U.S. military interests in Vieques and Puerto Rico see the collection of essays in Humberto García Muñiz and Jorge Rodríguez Beruff, coords., Fronteras en conflicto: Guerra contra las drogas, militarización y democracia en el Caribe, Puerto Rico y Vieques (San Juan: Red Caribeña de Geopolítica, Seguridad Regional y Relaciones Internacionales afiliada al Proyecto ATLANTEA, 1999).

Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783, Captain Mahan argued for the need to control the sea through strong navies.³⁸ The control of the sea would then allow the U.S. to shape history. The ability to shape history was a euphemism for becoming a naval empire. Such an empire depended on battleships, coal stations and open waterways. These were things that President William McKinley and President Theodore Roosevelt assured for the U.S. with the 1898 Spanish-Cuban-American War and the 1904-1914 construction of the Panama Canal. The Canal ensured Puerto Rico's strategic importance. The empires might have changed in 1898 for Puerto Rico, but the archipelago still remained the key to the Caribbean. Only this time the island of Culebra, located just north of Vieques, was considered the key to Puerto Rico.³⁹

On December 19, 1901 President Roosevelt issued an executive order stating that, "Such public lands as may exist on Culebra Island between the parallels of 18°15' and 18°23' north latitude, and between the meridians of 65° 10' and 65° 25' west longitude, are hereby placed under the jurisdiction of the Navy Department."⁴⁰ Two years later he created the Culebra Naval Reservation. In the process of establishing the naval base in Culebra, the local people from the town of San Idelfonso and other expropriated areas were resettled in a town the U.S. founded.⁴¹ The new town was named Dewey by U.S.

³⁸ Alfred T. Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1890).

³⁹ See "Chapter 4: The Spanish Colony of Vieques, 19th Century."

⁴⁰ The Culebra Naval Reservation was conceived primarily as a coaling station for U.S. ships. The onset of World War II marked the start of gunnery and bombing practices in Culebra. The naval base continued operating until 1975 when civilians' protests forced its close down. The activities were then relocated to Vieques. Theodore Roosevelt, "Executive Order: December 19th, 1901," The American Presidency Project, 2007, American Presidency Project, 15 June 2007 <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=69696>>.

⁴¹ The total population of Culebra in 1899, according to the November 10, 1899 census carried out by the U.S. War Department, was 704. The total population residing in "Culebra village," probably the town of San Idelfonso, was 206. "Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 – V 3 Population," U.S. Census Bureau, 2006, U.S. Census Bureau, 17 June 2007 <<http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/36894832v3ch9.pdf>>.

authorities in honor of Admiral George Dewey. The Admiral was famous at the time for taking the Manila Bay in the Philippines on May 1, 1898 without the loss of one U.S. soldier. He was also the president of the newly created General Board of the Navy from March 1900 until his death in January 1917. This was an influential organ in the shaping of early 20th century U.S. foreign policies. The Board, in fact, recommended to President Roosevelt in September 1901 the establishment of the naval base in Culebra.⁴² Therefore, Admiral Dewey was directly responsible for the creation of the town that bore his name. The name Dewey, in turn, linked U.S. imperial endeavors in the Pacific and the Caribbean.

While Culebra with its coal station appeared in the foreground of U.S. military and strategic considerations, Vieques slipped temporarily into the background of the new imperial drama. Vieques did not come close to experiencing the burden imposed on Culebra and other Puerto Rican municipalities like San Juan that underwent significant territorial expropriations and an increased military presence. During the early years of the 20th century the U.S. government only expropriated the *Fortín Conde de Mirasol* in 1903 for the establishment of the first Caribbean Magnetic and Seismologic Observatory.⁴³ The expropriation, in turn, was not related to military concerns or even too disruptive to the local population. On the contrary, the first 30 years of U.S. sovereignty in the island were characterized by more continuities than breaks with the previous Spanish rule.

⁴² For a study of U.S. military interests and entrance into Puerto Rico and Culebra see Estades, La presencia militar 23-58.

⁴³ The Caribbean Magnetic and Seismologic Observatory was situated in the *Fortín Conde de Mirasol* from 1903 to 1907. In 1907 it was moved to the Barrio Cofi less than one mile west of the *Fortín*. The Observatory was finally transferred to the Puerto Rican main island in 1926. Juan A. Bonnet Benítez, Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico (San Juan: F. Ortiz Nieves, 1976) 175.

After a brief period of adjustment following the Spanish-Cuban-American War, Vieques and Puerto Rico in general were able and very much encouraged by U.S. capital to revive the stagnant sugar industry.⁴⁴ The Foraker Act of 1900 established a quota of Puerto Rican sugar that could enter the United States.⁴⁵ The sugar, increasingly backed by capitalists from northeastern states like New York and Massachusetts, had an added 15% tax creditable to the Puerto Rican treasury.⁴⁶ Thus, Puerto Rico gained not only privileged access to the U.S. market, but an added 15% of revenues through the exportation of sugar. Meanwhile, the U.S. corporations took advantage of the access to fertile land at very low prices, the promise of a stable colonial government assured by the Foraker Act, the free entrance of Puerto Rican products to the U.S. after 1902 and the cheap labor force. U.S. capital, in turn, quickly took over the sugar industry in Puerto Rico, replacing hacendados with corporations like United Puerto Rico Sugar Company. Sugar, in fact, attracted most of the \$120 million of U.S. investment in Puerto Rico during 1900 to 1930. The sum is comparable to U.S. investments during the same 30 years in the oil producing nations of Venezuela and Peru and was greater than the U.S.

⁴⁴ According to César Ayala, the United States transformed the economies of the Spanish Caribbean in the early 20th century by giving rise to the corporate plantation. He stresses that U.S. imperialism brought ruptures and a path of capitalist development that ultimately bred underdevelopment. Yet, even if, as Ayala argues, the economic integration of the area to the U.S. brought ruptures in the economy, these ruptures perpetuated poverty in the region. Thus, the ruptures translated into continuities for the people directly affected with the rise of the “corporate-owned plantation” in the Spanish Caribbean. César Ayala, American Sugar Kingdom: The Economy of the Spanish Caribbean, 1898-1934 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

⁴⁵ The 1900 Foraker Act established the basis of the Puerto Rican colonial government under the U.S. Empire. The Act defined the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the Puerto Rican government. The Governor, the members of the Executive Council and the Supreme Court were appointed by the U.S. President. The Executive Council was an organ roughly equivalent to the Senate. The Foraker Act also created the ambiguous juridical category of “Puerto Rican citizenship.” This was a citizenship without clear rights or obligations assigned to it except for “the right to be protected by the U.S.” The Act is an epitome of U.S. imperialism to the extent it articulated the mechanisms of U.S. Presidential and Congressional control over a territory deemed as non-incorporable. In other words, it established control over a territory that was not intended to become a state in the union. Scarano, Puerto Rico 571-574.

⁴⁶ Fernando Picó, Historia general de Puerto Rico (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1988) 233-236.

investments in many larger Latin American countries.⁴⁷ Comparing the size of the Puerto Rican archipelago to the level of U.S. investment suggests that Puerto Rico became a very attractive colony to the U.S. investors during the early 20th century.

Puerto Rico became more than a strategic colony to the U.S. It also evolved into a sugar enclave ruled by absentee corporations that established sugar mills and fields around the archipelago, provided low-paid jobs to the Puerto Rican population and never reinvested in the local economy. One difference between U.S. intervention in Puerto Rico and in other Latin American countries during the early 20th century was that U.S. actions in Puerto Rico were outright colonial in the most traditional sense of the word. U.S. dominion over the archipelago was imposed through economic, political and military presence. The U.S. assumed control over the Puerto Rican colonial state, economy and people while claiming the exclusive use of violence.

The heavy U.S. investment assured the return of sugar as the primary Puerto Rican export by the year 1910.⁴⁸ Indeed, Andrés Ramos Mattei argued that the year 1910 marked the triumph of agrarian capitalism in Puerto Rico. The infusion of U.S. capital allowed the Puerto Rican sugar industry to fulfill a portion of the global demand for refined sugar dependent on modern technology.⁴⁹ The change entailed the final move from haciendas to centralized sugar mills. In Vieques, the nine haciendas established in the island by 1866 were consolidated by 1910 into four *centrales* (sugar mill grinding cane from multiple suppliers) named Arcadia, Santa María, Puerto Real and Playa

⁴⁷ Scarano, *Puerto Rico* 584-585.

⁴⁸ Following the crisis of the sugar haciendas in the late 19th century, coffee replaced sugar as the primary Puerto Rican export. Coffee, however, never replaced sugar in Vieques.

⁴⁹ Ramos Mattei, *La sociedad del azúcar* 14-16.

Grande.⁵⁰ While Arcadia had ceased operations by 1912, the other three *centrales* reached their peak during the early 1920s.⁵¹ Playa Grande, Puerto Real and Santa María produced a total of 17,276 tons of sugar in 1920 and a total of 15,531 tons in 1922. Playa Grande, however, reached its maximum production of 13,088 tons of sugar in 1928.⁵² Sugar cane, then, claimed the Viequense landscape in a way it had not done during the 19th century. The increased efficiency of the sugar mills fostered the cultivation of more expansive plots of land so that by 1910 sugar fields occupied 7,005 acres or 19% of the island.⁵³ The western coasts of Vieques came to be enveloped by the sugar cane almost all the way from Santa María to Bahía de la Chiva (Figure 5.3).

⁵⁰ The Municipal Council identified nine sugar haciendas in 1866. Three haciendas were operated by steam and another three by “*fuera de sangre*” (strength of blood). The term “*fuera de sangre*” must have referred to haciendas run through the sweat and toil of animals and slaves. Juan Bonnet Benítez wrote 110 year later that the nine haciendas La Patience, La Sucrerie Marquisat de St. Jacques, Pistolet, Resolución, Santa Elena, Arcadia, Campaña, Esperanza and Playa Grande became the sugar mills Puerto Real, Arcadia, Playa Grande and Santa María. “29 de enero de 1866,” 5, Documentos Municipales, Vieques, 1, AGPR. Bonnet, Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico 125-127.

⁵¹ César J. Ayala and Viviana Carro-Figueroa, “Expropriation and Displacement of Civilians in Vieques, 1940-1950,” Puerto Rico under Colonial Rule: Political Persecution and the Quest for Human Rights, eds. Ramón Bosque-Pérez and José Javier Colón Morera (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006) 175.

⁵² Bonnet, Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico 125-129. See Appendix 20.

⁵³ “Report of the Committee for the Investigation of Conditions in the Island of Vieques,” Folder Vieques C40-20—Vi-5 #337 Roosevelt Roads Puerto Rico 40PR, Box 1109, Bureau of Yards and Docks, Naval Property Case Files, 1941-1958, RG 71, NARA, College Park, MD, 9.

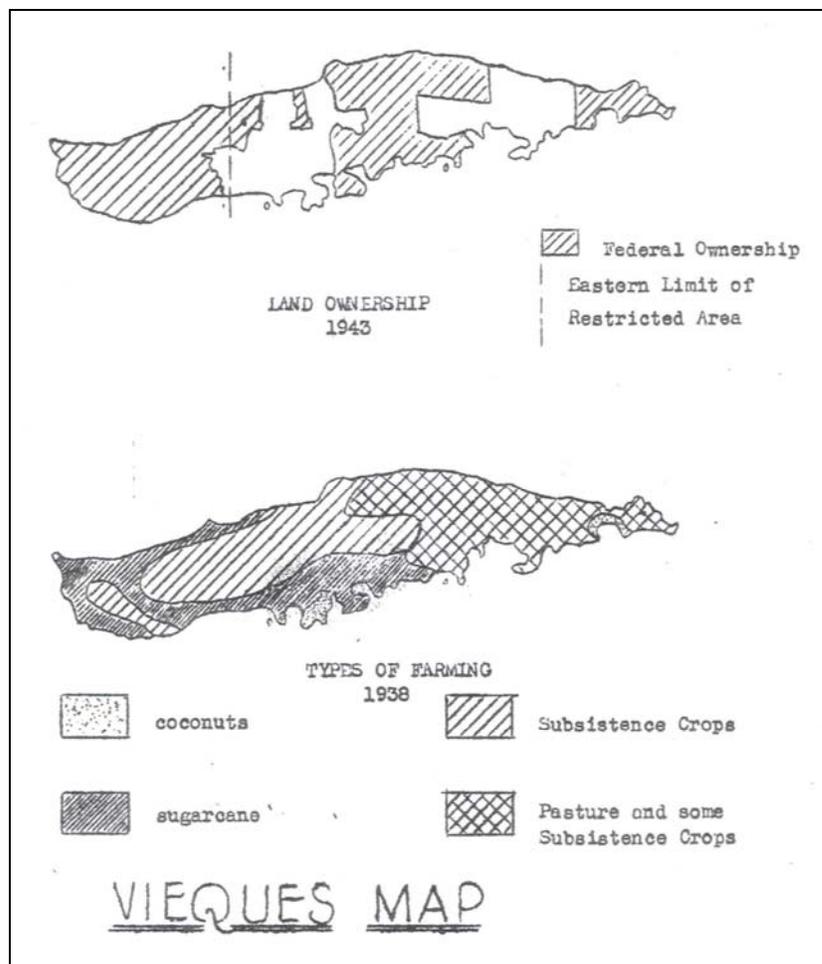


Figure 5.3: Map of Vieques produced in 1943 by the Committee for the Investigation of the Conditions in the Island of Vieques⁵⁴

The economic prosperity Vieques experienced during the early decades of the 20th century earned the island the title of *tacita de oro* (gold cup).⁵⁵ The *tacita de oro* captured people's imaginations. Just as in the 19th century Caribbean immigrants had arrived in Vieques searching for a better life, during the early 1900s Puerto Rican main

⁵⁴ "Report of the Committee for the Investigation of Conditions in the Island of Vieques," Folder Vieques C40-20—Vi-5 #337 Roosevelt Roads Puerto Rico 40PR, Box 1109, Bureau of Yards and Docks, Naval Property Case Files, 1941-1958, RG 71, NARA.

⁵⁵ Juan Bonnet Benítez identified the Central Arcadia as one of the four major sugar mills in 20th century Vieques. Yet, he did not provide detailed information about the workings of the Central. It is, thus, difficult to compare Central Arcadia's production with the other three *centrales* Bonnet discussed. Bonnet, Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico.

islanders flocked to Vieques to try out their fortunes.⁵⁶ The population of the island subsequently swelled from 5,938 in 1899 to 11,651 in 1920.⁵⁷ This was a 49% increase or the doubling of the island's population in a 20-year period. The island was thus filled with dreamers. There were also dreamers who remained in the main island. Sometime in the midst of this sugar world a Puerto Rican named Luis Lloréns Torres from the municipality of Jayuya on the main island dreamt of Vieques. His dream, however, took the shape of a poem he titled "La Isla Nena" ("The Girl Island").

Vieques: don Pepe Benítez,
 Cayita, (cane and song);
 lowlands of sun and of sugar
 beaches of coconuts and of sun!...
 The mother island, the pregnant island,
 broke into the sea her pain;
 the mother island opened her entrails
 and the daughter island was born:
 Vieques, Isabel Segunda,
 Cayita, cane and song.
 The cane sings in the plain,
 and in the mountain the nightingale...
 The mother island opened her entrails
 and the daughter island was born:
 of the heraldic lamb
 escaped to the sea a tuft of wool:
 chick that from beneath
 the wings escaped;
 little calf, little calf,
 little running calf,
 that the milk all foam
 of the sea lost...
 The daughter island belongs to the mother
 that painfully gave birth to her;
 to the mother that in giving her birth
 lost her heart.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ According to Gabriel Carambot, Puerto Rican main islanders were mostly seasonal immigrants in Vieques. They came to work the sugar fields during the times of harvest when the demand for labor was great. During the still times between the harvests, however, these workers returned to the main island. Carambot, personal interview.

⁵⁷ See Appendix 21.

⁵⁸ "¡Vieques: don Pepe Benítez,/Cayita, (caña y canción),/vegas del sol y de azúcar,/playas de coco y de sol!.../La isla madre, la isla encinta,/rompió en el mar su dolor;/la isla madre abrió su entraña/y la isla

Through a stroke of the pen Luis Lloréns Torres baptized the child conceived back in the 16th century and born in 1868.⁵⁹ She was a girl and her name was Isla Nena. The name, roughly translatable to Girl Child or Daughter Island, would be a constant reminder of the familial bond shared between daughter and mother. While the daughter was “a tuft of wool,” the mother was “the heraldic lamb.” The mother of Isla Nena was therefore the island of Puerto Rico that had been granted in the year 1511 a coat of arms by the Spanish Crown with the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) in its center.⁶⁰ Yet, Isla Nena, according to Lloréns Torres, was no longer the fragile child of 1871 whose future seemed uncertain.⁶¹ Her identity was better defined by the early 20th century. She was sunshine, coconuts, and songs, but above all she was sugar. Not only were her lowlands and plains inscribed with sugar cane, but her name could be collapsed with that of the hacendado Don Pepe Benítez whose family by 1940 owned almost half of the island.

In Vieques the influx of U.S. capital did not necessarily displace the island’s landowning elite. It could, on the contrary, back their sugar enterprises. The Benítez family provides a perfect example through which to trace the continuities of the late 19th

nena nació:/Vieques, Isabel Segunda,/Cayita, caña y canción./La caña canta en el llano,/y en el monte el ruiseñor.../La isla madre abrió su entraña/y la isla nena nació:/del heráldico cordero/se fue a la mar un vellón:/polluelo que de debajo/de las alas se salió;/becerrito, becerrito,/becerrito corredor,/que la leche toda espuma/de la mar desgarró.../La isla nena es de la madre/que la parió con dolor;/de la madre que al parirla/se salió del corazón.” Luis Lloréns Torres, “La Isla Nena,” *Obras Completas*, vol. I (Barcelona: Editorial Cordillera, 1967) 488-489. Lloréns Torres published his poem “La Isla Nena” in his 1940 *Alturas de América*. He must have written the poem much earlier since the book was a selection of his life’s work.

⁵⁹ For the May 13, 1868 Royal Decree see “Chapter 4: The Spanish Colony of Vieques, 19th Century.”

⁶⁰ Puerto Rico’s coat of arms has a lamb sitting on top of a book. The lamb and book represent the Agnus Dei, St. John the Baptist and the Book of Revelations. Symbols of St. John the Baptist had a central place in the coat of arms since the colony of Puerto Rico was first named San Juan Bautista. Luis Lloréns Torres’ use of the term “of heraldic lamb” implied belonging to San Juan Bautista. He furthermore played with the word “heraldic” that could refer both to St. John the Baptist through the word herald and to the coat of arms through the word heraldry. “Escudo de Puerto Rico,” Secretaría Auxiliar de Protocolo, 2007, Departamento de Estado del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico, 24 June 2007 <<http://www.estado.gobierno.pr/escudopr.htm>>.

⁶¹ For the July 21, 1871 petition signed by the Governor of Vieques Tomás Font and the frail offspring metaphor see “Chapter 4: The Spanish Colony of Vieques, 19th Century.”

and early 20th century sugar elite in Vieques. The history of this family also provides an insight into the transition from haciendas to *centrales* in Vieques. In the late 19th century two Danish citizens unified the three haciendas Marquisat de St. Jacques, Pistolet and Resolución under the name Resolución. José Benítez Guzmán then bought the consolidated Hacienda Resolución from these two Danish citizens. In 1889 Benítez Guzmán further bought Playa Grande from another Danish citizen named Matías Hjardemal. He also acquired from his brother Regalado Benítez the Hacienda Santa Elena adjacent to Resolución.⁶² Benítez then strove to modernize the machinery and increase the yield of his *central*. His efforts brought the initial 4,000 sacks of sugar per year to the 12,000 sacks figure. The economic and social standing of José Benítez, or Don Pepe Benítez as Lloréns Torres called him, was such that the reorganization of the municipal government right after the U.S. invasion was carried out in Resolución. By 1898 José Benítez had formed his own sugar empire within Vieques. That the reconstitution of government authority took place in his hacienda suggests that incoming imperial officials knew that he was a force to be reckoned with in Vieques.

The death of José Benítez also symbolized the death of the last great hacendado and of the hacienda system in Vieques. He had, after all, integrated the major haciendas in the island. In turn, his heirs, in order to maintain the integrity of the property, formed the Benítez Sugar Company with the second Don Pepe in command. The family-owned company still gave rise to a corporate-owned style of plantation with shares divided among the Benítez family. José J. Benítez Diaz advanced the modernization efforts commenced by his predecessor. By 1920 the Central Playa Grande produced 80,000

⁶² Juan Bonnet Benítez, descendant of the Benítez family, first identified the Hacienda Santa Elena as belonging to Eugenio Benítez and later to Regalado Benítez. It is unclear whether Eugenio and Regalado were either the same or two different persons. Bonnet, *Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico* 125.

sacks of processed sugar. If in 1889 34 carts and 127 oxen moved the Benítez sugar, by the 1920s there were 17 miles of narrow gauge track, 7 locomotives and cars running the Central Playa Grande. By 1936 the Central Playa Grande boasted a total of 15,943 acres of land with more than 6,000 acres cultivated in sugar cane.⁶³ The Benítez family, indeed, came to own 44% of Vieques.

The problem of land concentration was one of the many results of the sugar prosperity. As Rafael Picó, Chairman of the *Junta de Planificación de Puerto Rico* (Puerto Rico Planning Board or JPPR), noted in 1950:

Twelve years ago, out of a total number of 73 farms, two large sugar cane enterprises, the Benítez Sugar Co. -owner of the Playa Grande Central- and the Eastern Sugar Associates, controlled about 75 per cent of the total and cultivated area of the Island. Thus, the evils of land concentration and absentee-ownership, prevailing in most sugar cane lands in Puerto Rico, were deeply intensified in Vieques. The bulk of the population was landless, a part of the “peon” class.⁶⁴

In the late 1930s the Benítez Sugar Company owned 15,943 acres and the Eastern Sugar Associates owned 10,343 acres for a total of 26,286 acres.⁶⁵ The fact that in the 1930s two landowners possessed 73% of the island’s 36,032 acres placed Vieques as the third most extreme case of land concentration in Puerto Rico. Vieques was only surpassed by the municipalities of Santa Isabel and Guánica respectively controlled by the Aguirre

⁶³ While Elizabeth Langhorne wrote that the Central Playa Grande encompassed 15,943 acres of land in 1936, César Ayala and Viviana Carro have written that the Benitez family owned 15,735 acres in 1940. Ayala and Carro, “Expropriation and Displacement,” *Puerto Rico under Colonial Rule* 176. Elizabeth Langhorne, *Vieques: History of a Small Island* (Vieques: The Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust, 1987) 53.

⁶⁴ Rafael Picó, *The Geographic Regions of Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: University of Puerto Rico Press, 1950) 209.

⁶⁵ Ayala and Carro, “Expropriation and Displacement,” *Puerto Rico under Colonial Rule* 178.

Sugar Company and the South Porto Rico Sugar Company.⁶⁶ Both of these companies were U.S. corporations established shortly after 1898.⁶⁷

The majority of the land in Vieques, given that it was mostly owned by the Benítez family, was in Viequense hands. Yet, the land in Vieques was not just owned by Viequenses. In the year 1915 a long and violent strike took place in Vieques and, most specifically, in the Central Puerto Real. The owner Gustavo Mouraille, scared by the events, sold the Central to the successors of Enrique Bird Arias who later lost it in a lawsuit filed against them in 1921 by L.W.G.P. Armstrong for the unpaid mortgage of \$1,730,000. The Central Puerto Real, temporarily managed by a judicial receivership, was sold to the United Puerto Rico Sugar Company. This company, founded in 1926, subsequently reorganized itself into the Eastern Sugar Associates.⁶⁸ The Eastern Sugar Associates, a U.S. trust established in Baltimore, then owned 29% of Vieques.⁶⁹ In turn, the history of the Central Puerto Real evidences that U.S. capital, if not directly owning the *centrales* in Vieques, was backing up their activities and, when possible, taking them over. Such was also the case with the Central Playa Grande when in 1936 the Bank of Nova Scotia took over the bankrupted *central*. Three years later, and even though the

⁶⁶ Ayala and Carro, "Expropriation and Displacement," Puerto Rico under Colonial Rule 176.

⁶⁷ César Ayala and Laird Bergad, "Rural Puerto Rico in the Early Twentieth Century Reconsidered: Land and Society, 1899-1915," Latin American Research Review 37:2 (2002): 71.

⁶⁸ Bonnet, Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico 126. Ayala and Laird, "Rural Puerto Rico," Latin American Research Review 71.

⁶⁹ In 1941 the Puerto Rican government, aware of the problem of land concentration and absentee corporations, created the Puerto Rico Land Authority to carry out an agrarian reform. The Land Authority was charged with seizing land from "non-natural persons" holding more than 500 acres. In 1944 the Land Authority was further instructed to acquire lands from Eastern Sugar Associates in Vieques for the development of sugar and liquor industries in the island. These industries, however, were never established. "Eminent Domain. For What Purposes Property May Be Taken. Condemnation of Corporate Land Holdings for Redistribution in Puerto Rican Agrarian Reform Program Upheld," Harvard Law Review 59:7 (September 1946): 1162-1165. Folder Vieques X40-20-Vi Permit from Eastern Sugar Assoc. to Navy Dept. to occupy certain land 125 ac. Puerto Rico 40 PR, Box 1110, Bureau of Yards and Docks, Naval Property Case Files, 1941-1958, RG 71, NARA.

Benítez family was still litigating in courts, the Central Playa Grande was sold to Juan Ángel Tió.⁷⁰

The displacement of hacendados by U.S. companies gave rise to a pessimist sentiment among the Puerto Rican elite. During the early 20th century, in fact, the Puerto Rican elite was for the most part economically displaced and politically ignored. Sugar hacendados were replaced by U.S. companies, coffee growers were run out of business by a diminished market and the Puerto Rican elite in general was not taken into account by the new imperial officials.⁷¹ The situation resulted in the fashioning of a nostalgic discourse about the good old days of the Spanish Empire.⁷² The situation, furthermore, gave rise to a militant nationalist movement on the main island. Since hacendados in Vieques were not initially displaced by U.S. capital, the island did not provide a fertile ground for such nostalgic discourses. The Viequense upper class, moreover, had remained vocally loyal to Spain during the late 19th century.⁷³ The relative isolation of Vieques from the main island hindered the spread of nationalist ideals. Puerto Rican nationalism, however, did make its entrance to Vieques during the early decades of the 20th century. It made such an entrance that in November 1930 Pedro Albizu Campos and

⁷⁰ Bonnet, *Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico* 127.

⁷¹ The decline during the late 19th century of the hacienda system in Puerto Rico led to the rise of coffee and tobacco as the main island's primary exports. These commodities were shipped mainly to Spain and Cuba which were the last vestiges of the Spanish Empire in the Atlantic. Puerto Rican exports, therefore, had privileged access to these markets in terms of tariffs. With the coming of the U.S., Puerto Rico lost these trading privileges. While the U.S. established a sugar quota under the Foraker Act for the entrance of Puerto Rican sugar to the U.S. market, coffee did not enjoy the same protection. Puerto Rican coffee planters, in turn, saw their markets shrink during the early years of the 20th century. See Scarano, *Puerto Rico* 459-508, 547-617.

⁷² For a critique of U.S. imperialism and praise of the supposed Spanish heritage of Puerto Rico see, for example, Luis Lloréns Torres, "El patito feo," *Obras completas* 309-313.

⁷³ After the 1868 Grito de Lares, for example, the members of the Municipal Council denounced the insurgents as a few "evildoers" in one of the Puerto Rican towns. The statement portrayed an ignorance of the Puerto Rican main island's geography. "2 de octubre de 1868," *Isla de Vieques año de 1868 Junta Municipal*, 6, *Documentos Municipales, Vieques*, 1, AGPR.

Juan Antonio Corretjer visited the Local Committee of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party and were then able to establish the first Section of nationalist women in Puerto Rico.⁷⁴

The rise of Puerto Rican nationalism in Vieques is not easy to trace. One thing is for certain, it was definitely the product of the entrance of the U.S. Empire in the archipelago and the subsequent growth of the sugar industry. The growth of the sugar industry, for starters, attracted immigrants who had to abide to U.S. immigration laws. The situation favored the arrival in Vieques of Puerto Rican main islanders, who after 1917 were U.S. citizens, as opposed to the arrival of other Caribbean immigrants.⁷⁵ The influx of main islanders facilitated the establishment in 1919 of the first commercial transport service between Vieques and the municipality of Fajardo. Before this service, Viequenses who wished to travel to the main island had to arrange the trip with a local fisherman.⁷⁶ Thus, after 1919 the main island became more accessible to Viequenses. The physical accessibility and influx of main islanders resulted in an increased exposure to the Puerto Rican main island. The exposure, in turn, transformed the labor relations in Vieques. While in the 19th century immigrant *jornaleros* had on repeated occasions rebelled against their employers, the 20th century witnessed the birth of organized labor movements both in Vieques and in the Puerto Rican archipelago.⁷⁷

During the late 19th century a day's work in Vieques' sugar fields lasted from dawn till sunset. Justo Pastor Ruiz described the life of the sugar workers as a hard one

⁷⁴ Olazagasti and Rabin, Notas 42.

⁷⁵ The Foraker Act of 1900 was replaced in 1917 by the Jones Act which made the colonial government somewhat more democratic to the extent that the legislative branch became elective. Yet, the Governor of Puerto Rico and other key officials were still appointed by the U.S. President. The Jones Act, in addition, made Puerto Ricans into U.S. citizens. This U.S. citizenship has been, however, an ambiguous category endowed to the local population of a colonial and non-incorporable territory. Scarano, Puerto Rico 616, 645-649.

⁷⁶ "Vieques: Isla Nena," unpublished essay.

⁷⁷ In the years 1864 and 1874, for example, English workers rebelled against their employers and the Civil Guard in the haciendas Resolución and Playa Grande. Olazagasti and Rabin, Notas 41.

with scarce rewards. He wrote that British West Indian *jornaleros*, called *negradas* (black hordes), worked at times from 2am till 8pm.⁷⁸ These men and women, regarded by the locals as “*muy fuertes al trabajo*” (good workers), made and transported bundles of cane. Their diet consisted of bread, fried fish and coffee. It was a simple diet for a hard day’s work. Their pay, if not confiscated by their employers, was minimal.⁷⁹ Yet, Pastor Ruiz wrote, “That is how the worker lived. There was not any labor movement and nobody knew they could aspire to better their bleak situation.”⁸⁰ The Spanish word Pastor Ruiz used for bleak was “*negra*” (black). His word choice is important because, indeed, the conditions in Vieques, especially those of the “*negradas*,” resembled those of slavery. In this sense, a day in Vieques’ sugar fields must not have differed much from a day spent in the sugar field of any other Caribbean island. The descendants of slaves could not shake off the shackles even when working for wages. In the 20th century the situation changed. The changes, however, would take some time.

Gabriel Carambot was born in December 23, 1902 in the southern coast of Vieques. In 2003 the 101 years old Carambot reminisced about his life as a *jornalero* in the Central Puerto Real. He remembered living in a small hut, probably similar to the indigenous *bohíos*, made of wood and hay stubble.⁸¹ The work day lasted from 6am till

⁷⁸ Most of the Caribbean immigrants that arrived in Vieques during the 19th century were British citizens from neighboring islands like Tortola. Thus, Viequenses and Justo Pastor Ruiz refer to these immigrants as “English” even though they might have not been English in origin. Pastor Ruiz, *Vieques antiguo y moderno* 172.

⁷⁹ Justo Pastor Ruiz recounted, for example, that the hacendados Gustavo Mouraille used to take the law into his own hands. He would punish his workers either by suspending them from work or confiscating their wages. He would furthermore bring the judge and policemen to his estate whenever he wanted. Pastor Ruiz thus suggested that Mouraille could wield the law however he wanted to in Vieques. Pastor Ruiz, *Vieques antiguo y moderno* 174-175.

⁸⁰ “Así vivía el obrero. No había movimiento obrero ninguno y nadie sabía que podía aspirar a mejorar su negra situación.” Pastor Ruiz, *Vieques antiguo y moderno* 173.

⁸¹ For a discussion of the construction of indigenous dwellings in Vieques see “Chapter 2: Myths of Origin and Foundational Figures, 1514.”

6pm. “It was a terrible thing,” he said. Yet, “you had to work.”⁸² So he worked as a carpenter in the Central during the “*bruja*” (still time). He made the carts that transported the sugar cane. Yet, during the time of harvest he worked the night shifts in the fields. During the time of harvest, he emphasized, the work never stopped. The intense working hours and demand for laborers continued even with the influx of Puerto Rican main islanders that seasonally migrated to Vieques in search of work. Thus, in the harvest Carambot would leave for home at midnight. It was a tough life, he admitted. People were never free because even in their own time they thought about work. Their lives revolved around sugar.⁸³ The life the sugar *jornalero* Gabriel Carambot narrated resembled, more than differed, Justo Pastor Ruiz’s account of the 19th century. These continuities question, as Andrés Ramos Mattei argued, the relevance of chronologies that pinpoint 1898 as a definite turning point in Puerto Rican history.⁸⁴ The coming of the U.S. Empire, however, did eventually affect the situation of workers in Puerto Rico’s sugar industry.

The coming of the U.S. Empire opened the door to U.S. capital, but also to the American Federation of Labor (AFL). As early as 1905 Santiago Iglesias, the labor organizer for the Federación Libre de Trabajadores (Free Federation of Labor or FLT) and the AFL, visited Vieques.⁸⁵ After his visit two unions formed in Isabel II and the

⁸² “una cosa terrible. Había que trabajar.” Carambot, personal interview.

⁸³ Carambot, personal interview. For the life of a sugar worker in the Puerto Rican main island see Sidney W. Mintz, *Taso: Trabajador de la caña* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1988).

⁸⁴ Andrés Ramos Mattei argued that the sugar industry in Puerto Rico underwent a period of transition from 1873 to 1910. The U.S. Empire was then one of the actors, but not the determinant agent in the transformation from the hacienda to the *central* economic system in Puerto Rico. Ramos Mattei, *La sociedad de azúcar* 18-19.

⁸⁵ In 1899 Santiago Iglesias helped found the Federación Libre de Trabajadores in Puerto Rico. In 1901 the FLT was affiliated to the AFL. Santiago Iglesias then became the general organizer for the AFL in Puerto Rico and Cuba. It is said he maintained a close relationship with the President of the AFL Samuel Gompers. Carlos Pérez Morales and Félix Báez Neris, “El encendido del jacho: El Centro de

Central Puerto Real. According to Pastor Ruiz, these two unions had 1,000 members registered in a relatively short time. If the hacendados in Puerto Rico resented the entrance of the U.S. and reminisced about the bygone days of the Spanish Empire, the Puerto Rican workers embraced the new spaces available for labor organization under the U.S. Sugar workers quickly mobilized to demand higher wages and fewer hours of work for in the 20th century people still worked 12-hour shifts in the fields. Higher wages and fewer hours of work were, in fact, their demands during the 1915 strike that took hold of Vieques and the Puerto Rican archipelago. In Vieques the clash between the striking workers and the police turned violent. Policemen and four strikers were killed when the workers attempted to march through the fields of the Central Puerto Real. Once news of the incident reached Isabel II, a riot ensued in front of the police headquarters.⁸⁶ The riot confirmed that some people in Isabel II were sympathetic to the workers' demands. The town was, after all, also a union's headquarters. The police in Isabel II, however, did not open fire on the people and the 1915 strike stopped then and there. Some of the strikers, however, were prosecuted. According to Pastor Ruiz, the situation for workers in Vieques improved after the 1915 strike. Their salary was augmented and their hours of work shortened. Regardless of the outcome, the relationship forged through working class solidarity between main islanders and Viequenses helped imagine, maybe for the first time, a community that crossed the Vieques Sound. The 1915 strike, after all, was backed by workers and labor leaders from the main island like Santiago Iglesias and

Documentación Obrera Santiago Iglesias Pantín," Biblioteca de la Universidad de Puerto Rico en Humacao, 2007, Universidad de Puerto Rico en Humacao, 26 June 2007 <http://biblioteca.uprh.edu/articulos_fondo.asp?ID=55>.

⁸⁶ Pastor Ruiz, Vieques antiguo y moderno 171-179.

Luisa Capetillo as well as by the FLT and the AFL.⁸⁷ In the antagonism not against the U.S. but against the hacendados, Vieques' workers might have started to envision themselves as a people within a larger group of people. In other words, the experience of labor mobilization made possible the imagining of Viequense and Puerto Rican identities in Vieques.

The strength of the labor movement in Vieques must have unsettled the hacendados like Gustavo Mouraille who could no longer rely on vagrancy laws to coerce the labor force. The solidarity of main islanders and people in Vieques with the sugar workers during the 1915 strike must have made the hacendados' discomfort worst. Yet, it might have been the open manifestation of the underlying violence of the sugar world that made Gustavo Mouraille sell in haste his Central Playa Grande.⁸⁸ Apparently, by 1915 workers in Vieques started to believe their "*negra*" situation could improve. The threat of such a belief must have scared hacendados and thus played a part in their appropriation of Puerto Rican nationalist discourses. The Viequense upper class, traditionally opposed to the annexation to Puerto Rico, had in Puerto Rican nationalism a discourse that could unify the people of Vieques under their leadership. Puerto Rican nationalism could replace the cohesion that the term subjects of the Spanish Empire might have given to the people of Vieques during the 19th century. The networks of solidarity, in turn, could be reworked under a collective Puerto Rican identity to which both the upper and lower sectors of Viequense society belonged. The fostering of such

⁸⁷ Santiago Iglesias, later the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico in Washington, was actually born in Galicia, Spain. Luisa Capetillo, the famous feminist, anarchist and labor organizer, came to Vieques during the 1915 strike as a member of the American Federation of Labor. Olazagasti and Rabin, *Notas* 42.

⁸⁸ If, as Justo Pastor argued, Gustavo Mouraille used to take the law into his own hands, he might have been uncomfortable with the attention the 1915 strike brought upon his *central*. Pastor Ruiz, *Vieques antiguo y moderno* 174-175.

an identity was less threatening than one based on working class experiences. Puerto Rican nationalism, moreover, afforded the Viequense elite a position of leadership. For starters, the Viequense elite was the only sector with the means to engage in such an identity project. The imagining of communities is, after all, an expensive enterprise dependent, for example, on the control of spaces of representation like newspapers.⁸⁹ Their control of the Municipal Council, moreover, facilitated claims to represent the people of Vieques.⁹⁰ If there was indeed a people, the Municipal Council was the organism charged with their welfare. The role played by the Municipal Council could compensate for the more distanced relationship between hacendados and *jornaleros* within the *central* system of production.⁹¹ Thus, even though unlikely, Puerto Rican nationalism legitimized the already privileged position of the Viequense upper class.

With the rise of the sugar industry the people governed by the Municipal Council increased in numbers. The population increase, in turn, augmented the demand on municipal services and exerted pressure on the island's infrastructure. Since the economic prosperity swelled the municipal revenues, the Municipal Council relied on a more generous budget to engage in the modernization efforts that had preoccupied the Council since the 1860s. The Municipality undertook, for example, the building of the

⁸⁹ Identity projects are expensive enterprises. In the forging of a working class identity, the workers in Vieques had the support of the labor movement in the main island and of the American Federation of Labor. The main islanders and the AFL, for example, helped the workers prosecuted during the 1915 strike with their legal counsels and fees. Pastor Ruiz, *Vieques antiguo y moderno* 178-179.

⁹⁰ Under the U.S. Empire, the Mayor of Vieques and the Municipal Council became elective positions. The change, although democratic, ultimately legitimized the power of the Viequense elite over the people of Vieques. The "major contributors" and their descendants still controlled the island's political sphere. This oligarchy was, as in the late 19th century, personally invested in the sugar industry. Various members of the Benitez family, for example, occupied the position of Mayor of Vieques during the first three decades of the 20th century. See Appendix 19.

⁹¹ The sugar *central* could distance hacendados and *jornaleros* to a different degree than in haciendas. Compared to the hacienda, the *central* was a complex and extensive production unit involving more land and workers. The hacendado, then, could become a more distant authority figure to the average worker in the *central*.

City Hall in 1903, of the butcher shop and slaughterhouse in 1904, and of the Municipal Hospital in 1912.⁹² These buildings represented the very concrete concerns of the Municipal Council with problems of hygiene, health, poverty and urban renewal, amongst others. The concerns marked a shift in the conceptions about the government's role in the island. At the turn of the 20th century the Municipal Council was evolving from a group of "major contributors" who acted on behalf of the Spanish Empire to a group of public administrators who responded, at least theoretically, to the people.⁹³ The change, therefore, entailed a closer look at the people being governed so as to decipher their needs. The imagining of a people, and their needs, required resources. In this sense, the Municipality invested \$22,000 in 1912 to build a two-story hospital with a 40-person capacity (Figure 5.4). These 40 imaginary patients the Council envisioned would have belonged to the humble sectors of Viequense society since the upper class took care of their sick in the privacy of their homes.



Figure 5.4: Municipal Hospital José Benítez Guzmán built in 1912 in the outskirts of Isabel II, Vieques⁹⁴

⁹² "23 de agosto de 1919," 72, *Obras Públicas, Obras Municipales*, 355, AGPR, San Juan.

⁹³ For a discussion of the "major contributors" see "Chapter 4: The Spanish Colony of Vieques, 19th Century."

⁹⁴ "1," 72-B, 6, *Obras Públicas, Obras Municipales*, 356B, AGPR.

The appropriation of Puerto Rican nationalist discourses went hand in hand with the imagining of a Viequense identity. The Municipal Council might have envisioned a people in Vieques through public administration. Yet, the people being administered imagined a collective identity in a different way. These people forged a community through politics of survival. The entrance into a labor movement might have been one of its manifestations, but on a daily level the people relied on each other to survive. Gabriel Carambot remembered that people back then led a simple but tough life that afforded them no luxuries. However, when somebody in the community had something it was shared. In this sense, when a community member killed a pig, everybody ate meat. In the meantime, nobody did.⁹⁵ Such everyday rites of sharing food, and poverty, created the community. Yet, the sense of community developed among the most humble sectors of Viequense society did not involve an island-community. Except for instances like the 1915 strike, conceptions of community in Vieques were more fragmentary among the lower strata of the population. The island was divided into seven districts: Punta Arenas, Mosquito, Florida, Puerto Diablo, Puerto Ferro and Puerto Real.⁹⁶ Each district had its own characteristics and could even have its own schools, cemeteries and patron saint festivities. These institutions, sites and festivities involved public rituals where people could physically coincide and learn to imagine themselves as members of a separate community. The schools, however, connected students to the broader Viequense and Puerto Rican community through history lessons about Puerto Rico and its indigenous cultural heritage.⁹⁷ Yet, the attendance levels at these schools, as well as the literacy rate among the general population, were low. For these reasons, the Municipal Council might

⁹⁵ Carambot, personal interview.

⁹⁶ See Appendix 1.

⁹⁷ Carambot, personal interview.

have been more invested in Puerto Rican and Viequense nationalist discourses than members of the lower sectors of Viequense society.

The Viequense elite had important allies in the imagining of a Viequense identity that was compatible with a Puerto Rican one. Main island politicians and intellectuals like Luis Lloréns Torres and Pedro Albizu Campos were imagining through poems, speeches and others representations a Puerto Rican national community that did not renounce the *tacita de oro*.⁹⁸ If Vieques had been annexed to Puerto Rico during the 19th century for its strategic value, in the 20th century the island had achieved an economic significance within the Puerto Rican archipelago. The sugar boom not only attracted seasonal workers from the main island, but the nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos. While Albizu Campos visited Vieques to organize the Nationalist Party, Lloréns Torres wrote the poem “La Isla Nena” about the inalienable relationship between the islands of Vieques and Puerto Rico. Pedro Albizu Campos gave inflamed speeches in the Municipal Plaza about Puerto Rico’s right to independence and Luis Lloréns Torres praised from the comfort of his desk Vieques’ sugar world.⁹⁹ The message of both men, however, was the same: Vieques belonged to Puerto Rico.

The sugar baptism Luis Lloréns Torres gave to Vieques could not conjure a sweet future for the island. Vieques’ sugar economy had rapidly decelerated after the mid 1920s when sugar prices globally plummeted. The deceleration created an economic vacuum for the 1930s in an island with resources already unequally distributed. The

⁹⁸ Both Luis Llórens Torres and Pedro Albizu Campos believed in the independence of Puerto Rico from the United States. They differed, however, on the means to achieve independence. Luis Llórens Torres was a politician, lawyer and literary man invested in party politics and negotiating for independence while Pedro Albizu Campos, trained as a lawyer at Harvard University, believed in the Puerto Ricans’ right to an armed struggle.

⁹⁹ Olazagasti and Rabin, *Notas* 42.

Central Santa María, in turn, had its last grinding in 1922 and Puerto Real followed in 1927. The Central Playa Grande, outlasting all the other *centrales* in Vieques, closed down in 1942 when it was expropriated by the U.S. Navy. From the year 1946 until 1967 the Puerto Rico Agricultural Corporation (PRACO) handled Puerto Real and Playa Grande's sugar cane plantations. Since all the *centrales* in the island had closed, PRACO shipped the sugar canes harvested in Vieques to mills in Humacao and after 1950 in Fajardo. The government agency, however, could not revive Vieques' sugar economy.¹⁰⁰ Still, Isla Nena's misfortunes would not end any time soon. If anything, during the 1940s they got worse.



The rise of the sugar industry and the efforts for urban renewal in Vieques during the early 20th century suggest a growth in urban living and perhaps even an increase in commerce and consumption within the island. Yet, there were people in Vieques who managed to maintain a life outside the sugar industry. Even though by the year 1910 sugar fields occupied 20% of the Viequense landscape, these people still lived off subsistence agriculture. This was particularly the case in the eastern half of the island. According to stories I have heard over the years my great-grandparents, grandmother and her eleven older siblings were part of the people living on the margins of the sugar world. They lived in the southeastern coast of Vieques in the district of Puerto Ferro. In their

¹⁰⁰ For the workings of PRACO in Vieques during the 1940s see Bonnet, *Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico* 130-135. And César Ayala and José Bolívar Fresneda, "The Cold War and the Second Expropriations of the Navy in Vieques," *CENTRO Journal* XVIII:I (Spring 2006): 10-35.

modest plot of land right in front of the Caribbean Sea they cultivated cassava, sweet potatoes and other subsistence crops. These crops did not require so much labor to sow or cook and, it was said, my great-grandmother usually found ways to prepare them so as to feed all the hungry mouths. Nonetheless, there were days when the food was not enough and everyone went to sleep hungry. My grandmother's family also raised domesticated animals that they washed in the ocean and grazed on a nearby key. These activities defined their everyday lives. My grandmother, in fact, did not attend school. Neither did she work in a sugar field. Her social life during her early years revolved around her immediate family. The memories that seemed to define her youth, those she repeated over and over, usually involved her siblings, their household animals and the open Viequense fields. In that time neither hacendados nor even the government had a place in her life.

My great-grandfather Manuel was a subsistence farmer and a *curandero* (healer). He worked hard, but did not abide to the strict work hours of the sugar plantations. He rather worked on his own time without a schedule or wages. His economic activities with the larger Viequense community depended on the bartering of goods and services. He, in fact, received lots of plantains and mangos in exchange for his healing services. These services depended on concoctions made with plants grown in my great-grandfather's backyard. Thus, he depended doubly on the soil for sustenance. The land provided him both with food and with the instruments to perform his craft. Such dependence fostered a special bond between the man and land he labored. More so, it is said that he took great pride in what he grew. The bond between the man and the land proved long-lasting so that the plot of land my grandmother's family inhabited came to be known as Manuelquí.

Manuel was for my great-grandfather and quí for the key where they grazed their animals.

Chapter 6:

The Arrival of the U.S. Navy, 1930-1950

He turned the handle and felt the overturn of memory. He suddenly remembered, as in a silent film, the arrival of the Nephilim.

Carmelo Rodríguez Torres, Veinte siglos después del homicidio (1971)¹

In some versions of The Bible the Nephilim are identified as a race of giants inhabiting Canaan at the time of the Israelites' arrival.² Translatable from the Hebrew as "Fallen Ones," the Nephilim are further characterized as crossbreeds between fallen angels and the daughters of men.³ It is to these crossbreeds, thought to be wicked and violent, that the Viequense writer Carmelo Rodríguez Torres compared the U.S. Navy in 1971. While in the biblical account the Israelites physically arrived in Canaan, in the novel Veinte siglos después del homicidio the Nephilim were the ones making an entrance into an inhabited territory. Despite the difference in the group doing the arriving, the metaphor worked for Rodríguez Torres because both the Nephilim and the Navy tried to possess a land that was not promised to them. They were both, in this

¹ "Giró la manivela y sintió el vuelco en la memoria. De momento recordó, como en una película muda, la llegada de los nefilim." Carmelo Rodríguez Torres, Veinte siglos después del homicidio (Río Piedras: Editorial Antillano, 1980) 31.

² The Nephilim are translated as "giants" in the King James' version of the Bible. BibleGateway.com, 2007, Gospel Communications, 19 January 2007 <<http://www.biblegateway.com>>.

³ According to Bernard Bamberger, the word Nephilim comes from the Hebrew words נְפִילִים and לַפַּז meaning "fallen." Bamberger also states that some biblical interpretations propose that God was so displeased with the Nephilim's sins that he sent the great flood to kill them and later condemned the survivors to murder each other. Bernard Bamberger, "Nephilim," Encyclopaedia Judaica, eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, vol. 15, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007) 86-87.

sense, invaders of great prowess but no moral right. The metaphor, in addition, allowed Rodríguez Torres to frame the Navy's entrance to Vieques in biblical terms and the Navy-Viequense relationship as the struggle of unequal contenders. The invaders, in turn, were great in size and power, but evil. The framing would carry into the 21st century.

The arrival of the U.S. Navy in Vieques predates its official establishment in the island. According to Carlos Ventura, Viequense fisherman and community activist, in the beginning:

they [the U.S. Navy] came to Vieques to do their exercises and then they left. There were not any established camps as such and what they did then was to place the persons in corrals. They did their exercises and later those people returned to their houses. But later when the type of practices in the island grew, they made themselves space.⁴

Following Ventura, the Navy sporadically performed exercises in Vieques before the establishment of formal bases in the island. During these exercises, the local people were confined to restricted spaces Ventura compares to “corrals.” As the exercises grew in intensity and length, Ventura continues, the Navy took for itself a permanent space in the island.

The Navy carefully surveyed the space it planned to make for itself. As the Spanish Empire through its imperial cartographers had previously tried to know and represent the island, the U.S. Empire, with more advanced technology, produced a variety of texts about the late 1930s and early 1940s Vieques. In 1941, for example, the Navy commissioned C.F. Castro and Pfc. Bradt to take aerial photographs as part of the

⁴ “ellos [la Marina de los Estados Unidos] venían a Vieques a hacer sus maniobras y luego se iban. No habían campamentos establecidos como tal y lo que hacían eran pues que a las personas las recogían en unos corralones. Hacían las maniobras y luego regresaban por las tardes a las casas esas personas. Pero luego cuando se siguió incrementado el tipo de práctica en la isla se fueron “haciendo” espacio.” Carlos Ventura, personal interview, 28 February 2001.

documentation gathered for the acquisition of approximately 10,130 acres belonging to Juan Ángel Tió (Figure 6.1).⁵ Tió was the owner since 1939 of the Playa Grande sugar mill located in the western part of Vieques. The photographs of his property and surrounding areas depicted a landscape compartmentalized by sugar cane fields and spotted with sugar mills and communities. The communities appeared scattered and insignificant from the air. The Navy spectator, if indeed concerned about the colonized subjects about to be evicted, could delude itself into thinking that the land was uninhabited. The view from above could facilitate the imperial bureaucrats' imagining of an island void of local communal meaning and ready for the taking. From the air Vieques was, as it had been during the 16th to the 18th centuries for the Spanish Empire, the map of a space to be taken.

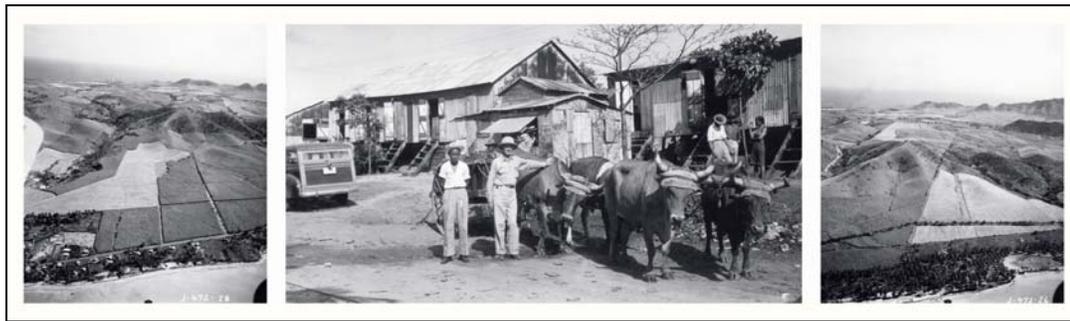


Figure 6.1: Navy aerial photograph of western Vieques taken in March 18, 1941, framing photograph of the Arkadia Colony⁶

⁵ The exhibition “Vieques, A Long Way Home” opened in March 18, 2006 in the Museum and Archive *Fortín Conde de Mirasol*. The exhibition contained documentary photographs of Vieques’ western part taken after 2001 by the Professor of Photography at the School of the Museum of Boston Bonnie Donohue. These photographs of dense woods and military bunkers were contrasted in the exhibition with the March 18, 1941 aerial photographs taken by C.F. Castro and Pfc. Bradt. The aerial photographs portrayed the same western section of the island compartmentalized by sugar plantations and the Playa Grande sugar mill working at full capacity. The 1941 photographs were found by the sociologist César Ayala during the summer of 2005 in the Seabees Archive in Port Hueneme, California. Bonnie Donohue, César Ayala and Lauren Weinger, exhibit “Vieques, A Long Way Home,” Museum and Archive Fortín Conde de Mirasol, Fortín Conde de Mirasol, Vieques, 18 March 2006. For some of the photographs see *Vieques: A Long Way Home*, eds. César Ayala and Bonnie Donohue, 2006, Casa de la Cultura/Center for Latino Arts, 21 January 2007 <<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/ayala/vieques/bdonohue/index.htm>>.

⁶ “Colonia Arkadia. Vieques, 1941,” *Vieques: A Long Way Home*.

The map of Vieques could not be voided of local meaning because to control the space the Navy needed to decipher its minute intricacies. Just like the Spanish Empire needed to map out the “escape routes” that doomed Luis Lart’s expedition in the early 19th century, the Navy needed to take a closer look at local inscriptions on the landscape.⁷ That look was provided by the local hacendado and engineer Aurelio Tió. In a 1979 interview with sociologist Viviana Carro, Aurelio Tió reminisced that:

Commander Johnson, chief of the base came to talk with Tió [me]. He already had in place several study brigades to measure the island of Vieques. He asked Tió [me] to draw for him a landholding map, as best as he [I] could, and to have it ready in 30 days. The only way to accomplish this task was to take some measurements, and by putting into a bigger map all of the already existing maps of the island. Tió [I] replied to Johnson that, how was he going to do this if they were going to use this map to expropriate him [me]? The Commander told him [me] that if he [I] didn’t do it he was going to recruit him [me], make him [me] lieutenant and then order him [me] to do it. This was said half jokingly and half seriously, but more seriously than jokingly. This was a few days before Pearl Harbor and when the attack occurred, he [I] went to the federal court, settled the case and finished with everything. He [I] did the map, as best as he [I] could, exactly enough.⁸

Tió translated the Viequense map for the understanding of the U.S. Navy, as embodied by Commander Johnson, through the inscriptions titled private property left on the landscape. Titled private property provided a common language between the hacendado and naval officials. The *agregado* relationship, so central to the everyday life and economy in the island, was made invisible by the emphasis on inscribing the map through the boundaries of titled private property.⁹ The *agregado* was an inscription, or maybe a

⁷ For Teophile Le Guillou’s 1839 text about the colonization of Vieques see “Chapter 3: Claims to the Labyrinthine Island, 16th-19th Centuries.”

⁸ The interview and translation from Spanish to English were performed by Viviana Carro. César J. Ayala and Viviana Carro-Figueroa, “Expropriation and Displacement of Civilians in Vieques, 1940-1950,” *Puerto Rico under Colonial Rule: Political Persecution and the Quest for Human Rights*, eds. Ramón Bosque-Pérez and José Javier Colón Morera (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006) 181.

⁹ I employ the term titled private property, as opposed to private property, because although an *agregado* did not have the legal ownership to land, it did have usufruct rights. These rights allowed for the

population, on the Viequense map that the Navy was unwilling to recognize as it made space for itself in the island.

Carlos Ventura inherited the memory of naval exercises and Viequenses locked up in corrals from stories made by previous generations. These stories pinpoint a shift in the Navy's interests in Vieques, and in the Puerto Rican politicians' fostering of such interests. The Navy had shown interest in Vieques since at least 1898. Yet, back in 1934 the President of Puerto Rico's Chamber of Commerce Filipo L. de Hostos offered President Franklin D. Roosevelt lands in the Puerto Rican southeastern municipality of Ceiba for the establishment of a military base.¹⁰ Militarization, however much a Faustian deal, appeared to Puerto Rican politicians at the time as an alternative for regional development.¹¹ It was also a way to address political tensions between the colony and the metropolis. As the Retired Navy Lieutenant Commander Virgil Baker noted in an August 21, 1933 letter to the Secretary of the Navy Claude A. Swanson:

The Governor is being actively opposed by native politicians who are unfriendly to our Government and to American interests in Puerto Rico, and he expressed the opinion, with which I agree, that the establishment and operation of such a base in Puerto Rico would add greatly to our prestige here and in other Latin-American countries, and would assist in

exclusive use of the land an *agregado* lived and worked. In other words, the land of an *agregado*, however modest, was for private use. It was not communal, nor controlled or surveilled on a daily basis by the legal owner. In this sense, as I argue later on, the *agregado* relationship could lead to feelings of ownership over land that *agregados* did not legally own.

¹⁰ Jorge Rodríguez Beruff identifies Adolfo de Hostos as the President of the Chamber of Commerce that offered Puerto Rican lands in 1934 to the U.S. military. Yet, Filipo L. de Hostos is identified in documentation of the U.S. National Archives and Administration Records as the President of Puerto Rico's Chamber of Commerce offering the land. Jorge Rodríguez Beruff, "Luis Muñoz Marín y el problema de Vieques: fuentes para su investigación en el Archivo Luis Muñoz Marín," *Luis Muñoz Marín: Una ventana para el estudio de la historia de Puerto Rico* (Puerto Rico: Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín, 2000) 81. Folder NB/EG55 TO END OFEG, Box 3109, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence, 1926-1940, RG 80, NARA, Washington, D.C.

¹¹ The Mayor of Ponce José Tormos Diego, for example, wrote to the U.S. Senate in March 2, 1939 asking for Ponce to be considered for development in the national defense plans. Acting Secretary of the Navy William Leahy responded that besides San Juan, no other place in Puerto Rico was being considered for the establishment of bases. Folder EG55/N1-13 TO 381281, Box 126, Forrestal Papers 1940-47, RG 80, NARA, College Park, MD.

Americanizing the population of the Island, and would tend to discourage the unfriendly political influences who oppose and obstruct and spread seditious propaganda against every American governor appointed to Puerto Rico.¹²

The imperial rule of the U.S. in Puerto Rico, according to Baker, was being actively challenged by the natives. The proposed base, in turn, could perform a similar function in the Puerto Rican archipelago as the *Fortín Conde de Mirasol* had performed in Vieques a century earlier. The military facility could assert the authority of the newly established Empire. More so, Baker added, the base could influence U.S. public relations with Latin America in an advantageous way for the U.S.

Virgil Baker and Filipino L. de Hostos had exchanged ideas about the mutual benefits of establishing a naval base in Puerto Rico. In fact, in the 1930s the project was openly discussed and endorsed by upper sectors of the Puerto Rican political sphere. Such discussions led the Puerto Rican legislature to approve in 1938 a resolution insisting on the construction of the naval base in the east of Puerto Rico.¹³ The resolution offered Ceiba and Vieques. Since in 1898 President Theodore Roosevelt expropriated lands in the island municipality of Culebra, the establishment of naval facilities in Ceiba and Vieques would create a triangle around the Vieques Sound.¹⁴ This was an area that the Navy had already shown interest in earlier that year. It was, indeed, during the early months of 1938 when the *Nephilim* arrived in Vieques. The naval exercises in 1938 did not include air-to-land or sea-to-land target practice. Yet, these must have left Navy

¹² NB/EG55 (330821), Folder NB/EG55 TO END OFEG, Box 3109, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence, 1926-1940, RG 80, NARA, Washington, D.C.

¹³ To make the offer more appealing to the United States government, the Puerto Rican Senate, in the "P. del S. 724" of March, 25, 1938, authorized the Governor of Puerto Rico to, "acquire and transfer to the United States, without cost, title to and jurisdiction over all such land and water areas and necessary rithst-of-way thereto." "P. del S. 724," NB/EG55 (330821), Folder NB/EG55 TO END OFEG, Box 3109, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence, 1926-1940, RG 80, NARA, Washington, D.C.

¹⁴ The Vieques Sound is the ocean water within Puerto Rico's east coast and the islands of Culebra and Vieques.

officials with a favorable impression of the area because one year later they were back. During January and February of 1939 the Navy participated in the Fleet Problem XX exercises in the Vieques Sound. As in the 1938 exercises, Admiral William D. Leahy performed the role of Chief of Naval Operations while President Franklin D. Roosevelt watched from Culebra.¹⁵

In Sept 11, 1939, only 10 days after Germany invaded Poland, President Roosevelt appointed Admiral Leahy as Governor of Puerto Rico. The Admiral was then instructed to anticipate the U.S. entrance to war. In accordance with the December 1938 recommendations of the Hepburn Board to Congress, the construction of the Roosevelt Roads naval base started in Ceiba in 1940.¹⁶ Two years later construction started in Vieques. The formal establishment of the Navy in Vieques gave rise to two expropriation waves. The first wave hit Viequense shores when Congress approved “Public Law” #13 in March 17, 1941. The law assigned \$35,000,000 for a military base in Vieques. It was followed by the “Public Law” #22 of March 23, 1941 defining the base in Vieques as a facility for the U.S. Naval fleet. The Puerto Rican legislature backed the Congress initiatives through their signing of Law #54 of April 26, 1941 ceding part of the desired territory in eastern Puerto Rico. The Congress then responded with the “Public Law” #247 of August 25, 1941 authorizing the immediate entrance of the U.S. Navy into Vieques. The law further specified that the base in Vieques was to be

¹⁵ While Jorge Rodríguez Beruff dates Navy exercises in the Vieques Sound in the year 1939, Arturo Meléndez López, César Ayala and José Bolívar Fresneda date such exercises in the early months of 1938 and 1939. Meléndez López, in addition, emphasizes on the Navy’s interests in Vieques well before the late 1930s exercises. Rodríguez Beruff, “Luis Muñoz Marín,” Luis Muñoz Marín 79-81. Arturo Meléndez López, La batalla de Vieques (México: COPEC-CECOPE) 25. César Ayala and José Bolívar Fresneda, “The Cold War and the Second Expropriations of the Navy in Vieques,” CENTRO Journal XVIII:I (Spring 2006) 31.

¹⁶ In December 27, 1938 the Hepburn Board headed by Admiral Hepburn recommended to Congress the establishment and improvement of naval installations in the Puerto Rican archipelago and the Virgin Islands. Rodríguez Beruff, “Luis Muñoz Marín,” Luis Muñoz Marín 81.

part of Roosevelt Roads.¹⁷ The Navy expropriated 21,013 of the 33,649 acres of land in Vieques.¹⁸ The expropriation entailed the closing down of the Playa Grande sugar mill, largest employer in the island, and the forced relocation of 700 families from the west of Vieques to what became the civilian middle section.¹⁹

The U.S. government undertook the building of Roosevelt Roads with earnest. The naval facility, U.S. military strategist thought, could provide shelter to the British Fleet in case Great Britain fell to the Axis Powers. Thus, in 1942 construction started in Vieques creating 2,950 jobs out of which 1,700 went to the local population.²⁰ The war scenario, however, moved towards northern Africa and southern Europe. D-Day later secured Allied control over the U.K. and the war shifted towards the Pacific. The importance of Roosevelt Roads, in turn, subsided and construction in Vieques halted during the summer of 1943. The end of the construction boom combined with the closing down of Playa Grande to create an economic void in Vieques. Viequesenses took to the streets to protest the island's dire socio-economic situation and demand the return of the sugar mill. Puerto Rican politicians then came face to face with the consequences of their Faustian deal. The Navy, aware of the island's situation, made it clear early on that it was not about to assume responsibility for the social and economic well-being of

¹⁷ Meléndez López, La batalla de Vieques 40-42.

¹⁸ I take the number of acres expropriated by the Navy from Ayala and Carro, "Expropriation and Displacement," Puerto Rico under Colonial Rule 180. I take the total number of acres in Vieques by converting the 32,640 *cuerdas* figure in Rodríguez Beruff, "Luis Muñoz Marín," Luis Muñoz Marín 81.

¹⁹ See Appendices 1-3. The actual number of families displaced by the 1941-1942 diverges. César Ayala and José Bolívar offer a 700 figure. Yet, in an August 12, 1943 letter to the Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, the Secretary of Interior Harold L. Ickes identified 825 families displaced. Ickes' letter described in some detail the "serious socio-economic problems exist[ing] in the Island of Vieques, due in part to the fact that the Navy purchased large portions of the Island." César Ayala and José Bolívar, "Entre dos aguas: economía, sociedad, e intervención estatal en Vieques, 1942-1948," Revista de Ciencias Sociales 13 (invierno 2004): 57. Folder Vieques C40-20-VI-5, #337 Roosevelt Roads Puerto Rico 40 PR, Box 1109, Bureau of Yards and Docks, Naval Property Case Files, 1941-1958, RG 71, NARA, College Park, MD.

²⁰ Ayala and Bolívar, "The Cold War," CENTRO Journal 13.

Viequenses. With the local economy destroyed, Viequenses would come to rely on subsidies from the Puerto Rican government. The dependency on government subsidies represents a trend that has continued well into the 21st century.

The Puerto Rican government, following political scientist Jorge Rodríguez Beruff, spent the years 1943-1947 devising alternate economic activities for Vieques. Its most important initiative was the creation in April of 1945 of PRACO assigned to the economic rehabilitation of Vieques. The corporation, described by sociologist César Ayala and José Bolívar as a New Deal organ, undertook the island's socio-economic rehabilitation through heavy government subvention. The General Manager of PRACO Thomas A. Fennell wrote in February 1948 that from 1945 to 1948 the corporation invested \$1,887,795.14 in Vieques. The money went primarily towards the acquisition of cattle and of grazing lands, edifications and agricultural research. The activities of PRACO in the island helped change land tenure and usage patterns. The government agency became the island's largest landowner and employer. By 1947 it employed 1,113 workers, or 40% of the island's labor force, and administered 16,680 acres, or 50% of the land. According to Fennell by 1947 PRACO had 1,734 acres of sugar cane, 100 acres of pineapple, 100 acres of corn, 200 acres of grain sorghum, 30 acres of mango and avocado orchards and 10 acres of vegetables.²¹ While sugar cane was still the island's main crop, PRACO's programs diversified the agricultural production. Yet, the 2,174 total acres of cultivated land took the island's agricultural production back to early 19th century standards.

²¹ 2, Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares, Cartapacio 55, 1962-1958, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM, Trujillo Alto.

Most of the PRACO land was devoted to cattle-raising. This was an activity better suited to Vieques' land tenure patterns as it did not demand heavy investments or long term attachments to lands leased from the Navy. The activity also fostered as well as responded to the emergence of an important cattle rancher interest group in Vieques. This was a trend begun with the decline of the sugar industry in the early 1940s. So in a way, the sugar hacendados were replaced by the cattle ranchers. The founding father and sugar hacendado Theophile Le Guillou, for example, was replaced by Leoncio T. Davis, Mayor of Vieques during the 1940s and Spokesperson and President of the Minor Cattle Owners' Association of Vieques during the 1940s-1950s. PRACO, however, subleased 13,000 out of its 16,680 acres in Vieques from the Navy.²² Between 1946 and 1947 the Navy fenced off only 8,000 of its 21,013 acres in the island. The land it kept from civilian use incidentally coincided with the western part of Vieques, the sugar land. Yet, PRACO was not able to secure title to the land it leased in the eastern part of the island. Thus, there was little the corporation could do, or the Minor Cattle Owner's Association in Vieques for that matter, when the Navy announced in 1947 that it was going to take back its leased lands and further expropriate Viequense lands.

The second expropriation wave hit Vieques in 1947-1948. The wave coincided with the onset of the Cold War. Under a discourse of the sacrifices to be made in the fight against communism, the Navy took back the 13,000 acres from PRACO and expropriated 4,340 acres more. Added to the 8,000 acres it already controlled, the Navy came to possess in 1948 25,353 acres of the total 33,649 acres in Vieques, or 75% of the

²² The Navy, through the Department of Interior, subleased 13,000 acres of Vieques' land to the government of Puerto Rico. These lands, although employed by PRACO, remained the property of the Navy. Ayala and Bolívar, "Entre dos aguas," Revista de Ciencias Sociales 60-69.

land.²³ Viequenses, in turn, were squeezed into the civilian middle stretch representing 25% of the island that recalled the times of the corrals, but on a larger scale. The west became the Naval Ammunition Support Detachment (NASD) and the east the Inner Range of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility (AFWTA).²⁴ The AFWTA, later known as Camp García, was divided into the Eastern Maneuver Area and the Live Impact Area.²⁵ As their names suggest, NASD was designed to store ammunition and AFWTA to practice with it. AFWTA, in fact, operated as a target range since January 16, 1948 when, according to Arturo Meléndez López, 60 ships, 350 airplanes and thousands of sailors, pilots and soldiers from the four branches of the armed forces met on the island.²⁶ The storage and training facilities in Vieques were conceived as an integral part of the Roosevelt Roads Naval Base.²⁷ More so, the facilities in Vieques were considered a valuable piece of real estate the Navy rented to ally countries willing to pay a substantial amount to practice their troops outside their national soil.²⁸

²³ There are 13 acres missing from the 8,000 acres and/or 13,000 acres figures.

²⁴ Some maps produced by and for the Navy portray the Inner Range of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility as divided between the Eastern Maneuver Area and the AFWTA in the eastern half of the base. See, for example, United States, Department of the Navy, Final Work Plan for Community Relations Plan: Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility and Eastern Maneuver Area Vieques, Puerto Rico, by CH2MHILL (March 2002) 1-2, 1-3.

²⁵ The AFWTA was renamed in February 1959 Camp García in honor of the Private First Class Fernando Luis García, USMC. Fernando Luis García was the first Puerto Rican to win the Medal of Honor. United States, Department of the Navy, A Chronology of the United States Marine Corps, 1947-1964, by Ralph W. Donnelly, Gabrielle M. Neufeld and Carolyn A. Tyson, vol. III (Washington, DC: Historical Division, U.S. Marine Corps, 1971) 40.

²⁶ Meléndez López, La batalla de Vieques 78. César Ayala and José Bolívar identify February 1948 as the date when the U.S. Navy's bombing of Vieques officially began. These target practices consisted of sea-to-land and/or air-to-land maneuvers. Ayala and Bolívar, "The Cold War," CENTRO Journal 29-31.

²⁷ United States, Special Panel on Military Operations on Vieques, Report to the Secretary of Defense of the Special Panel on Military Operations on Vieques (N.p.: n.p., October 1999).

²⁸ The second expropriation wave in Vieques coincided with the early years of Cold War panamericanism. In this context, U.S. military strategist like Vice Admiral Daniel E. Barbey, supported by Puerto Rican politicians, imagined the island of Vieques as a conciliatory space where the American hemisphere came together for naval practices. In turn, ally countries like Canada started practising their armed forces on Viequense soil as early as March 2, 1949. Of this exercise Ralph Donnelly, Gabrielle Neufeld and Carolyn Tyson of the Historical Division of the U.S. Marine Corps wrote that, "U.S. Marines, soldiers, and three Canadian platoons made a landing on Vieques Island in the Caribbean as part of the

Some sectors of the Viequense population and Puerto Rican politicians welcomed the second wave of expropriations with pro-American Cold War discourses and renewed arguments that increased military activity would bring economic benefits to Vieques. A part of Puerto Rican politicians and society even argued that if sacrifices had to be made for the American nation, Vieques was expendable. Other sectors disagreed. This time around the Navy encountered resistance, however short-lived, from the Puerto Rican government and the Viequense population. Puerto Rican politicians under Governor Jesús T. Piñero, first Puerto Rican appointed to the office, protested the Navy plans to deal another fatal blow to the island's economic activity and to displace another 150 families. Between June and November 1947, César Ayala and José Bolívar write, Piñero's arguments were overcome. Ayala and Bolívar argue that the Navy stressed its influence on federal policies and thus pressured the Governor on the issue of Puerto Rico's sugar quotas to the U.S. Arturo Meléndez López, on the other hand, argues that Puerto Rican politicians in general and the President of the Senate Luis Muñoz Marín in particular secretly traded Vieques in return for the Elective Governor Law. The project made the position of Governor of Puerto Rico an elective one, position Luis Muñoz Marín was elected for in 1948.²⁹ Whatever the reasons, Puerto Rican politicians finally assented to the new expropriations and to losing most of PRACO's \$1.9 million investment in Vieques.

largest postwar amphibious exercise." Other ally countries willing to pay the U.S. Navy to practice their troops in Vieques were the Netherlands and the neighboring Venezuela and the Dominican Republic. Department of the Navy, *A Chronology* 9. Meléndez López, *La batalla de Vieques* 80-99.

²⁹ Ayala and Bolívar, "The Cold War," *CENTRO Journal* 16. Meléndez López, *La Batalla de Vieques* 57-63.

The second wave of expropriations were publicly announced and carried out within the months of December 1947 and January 1948.³⁰ It was difficult for the local population to oppose in any organized manner the expropriations. As César Ayala and Viviana Carro state, the majority of the people expropriated were *agregados* with no legal rights binding them to the land they occupied. Secondly, translators were supposedly present when the *agregados* were ordered to vacate their dwellings. Yet, the expropriated were unable to engage the Navy personnel in a common language or in person for that matter. There was only the translator, a marine and the eviction letter mediating between the Navy and the expropriated Spanish-speaking and illiterate population. Perhaps the most important factor that prevented an organized resistance was fear. People were scared of what could happen if they opposed the Navy and the federal government.³¹ Vieques' cattle ranchers, however, faced both the Navy and PRACO with some degree of success. The Navy still expropriated within less than two months the 13,000 acres administered by PRACO, forcing cattle ranchers to hastily sell cattle below market prices. Yet, the cattle ranchers, organized under the Minor Cattle Owner's Association in Vieques, openly criticized PRACO for what they considered monopolistic practices. Coaxed by Vice Admiral Daniel E. Barbey on January 1948, they further defied the corporation's liquidating terms and proceeded to negotiate grazing stipulations directly with the Navy. PRACO lost \$70,000 in the process.³² The corporation

³⁰ Some expropriations were actually carried out as late as 1950. The majority of the expropriations, however, were carried out between 1947 and 1948. See Ayala and Carro, "Expropriation and Displacement," *Puerto Rico under Colonial Rule* 173-205.

³¹ Ayala and Carro, "Expropriation and Displacement," *Puerto Rico under Colonial Rule* 186-187.

³² "Barbey Promete Ayudar a Ganaderos si Abandonan La Compañía agrícola," *El Imparcial* [San Juan] 6 January 1948: 16. Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares, Cartapacio 57, 1948, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM. 2, Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares, Cartapacio 55, 1962-1958, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM. 3, Serie 8,

continued operating in Vieques, but after 1948 its role was greatly diminished. The Navy dealt with the cattle ranchers and their cattle roaming through Navy-land, but in their own terms and without the intervention of Puerto Rican government agencies like PRACO. To the extent the cattle ranchers' livelihood depended on Navy policies, naval officials like Barbey gained power over an important social sector that became, according to Jorge Rodríguez Beruff, pro-Navy.³³

By the late 1940s Viequenses were trapped between weapons and bombardments. Sugar was still sown in fields around the island and in Navy lands, but without local mills the canes were shipped to the municipalities of Humacao and Fajardo.³⁴ This was an expensive enterprise the Puerto Rican government subsidized until 1967.³⁵ Yet, the jobs these government subsidized assured could not revive the sugar industry in Vieques. The sugar industry had been staggering during the 1930s and was for all purposes dead by 1943. The Navy-base construction boom had ended in the summer of that same year, and the future of alternative economic activities like cattle-raising was uncertain. The municipality, in addition, lost 40% of its revenues after the first wave of expropriations. In a December 22, 1941 letter, Mayor Leoncio Davis recounted to the Puerto Rican Legislator Vicente Geigel about the dire fiscal situation of the Viequense municipality. He wrote that during the fiscal year 1941-1942 the municipality received \$18,672.54 out

Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares, Cartapacio 55, 1962-1958, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM.

³³ Rodríguez Beruff, "Luis Muñoz Marín," Luis Muñoz Marín 85.

³⁴ According to the May 12, 1948 "Memorandum sobre rehabilitación de Vieques" written by a group of Viequenses seeking agricultural alternatives for the island's economy, there were 3,061 acres of sugar cane fields in Vieques. The group estimated that these acres, worked by 69 planters, could yield approximately 60,000 tons of cane for the 1948 harvest. Among the planters was PRACO. 14, Serie 6, Partidos Políticos, Comités Municipales/Pueblos, Vieques, Cartapacio 862, 1948, Sección IV, LMM, Presidente del Senado, FLMM.

³⁵ Juan A. Bonnet Benítez, Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico (San Juan: F. Ortiz Nieves, 1976) 128.

of its \$46,244.54 total income from property taxes. These were collected, for the most part, from the sugar companies and landowners expropriated in late 1941.³⁶ The expropriation wave at the onset of the 1940s thus decimated the municipal budget. By the end of the decade Vieques' economy had collapsed.

During the socio-economic upheavals of the 1940s a total of 1,134 persons, or 10.9% of the local population, left Vieques. This meant that by 1950 only 9,228 people came to inhabit the 8,296-acre civilian strip. Despite the overall population decrease, the population density rose from 3.25 acres per person in 1940 to .9 acre per person in 1950. The changes in population density might not seem radical if compared to modern metropolises. However, in the mid 20th century Viequense context the changes were drastic. The access to land was significantly reduced by three-fourths. The reduction dealt a fatal blow to subsistence agriculture, activity that complemented the meager salaries of wage laborers in the island and that formed part of their idiosyncrasy.

The 1940s had marked the rise of the Partido Popular Democrático (Popular Democratic Party or PPD) and its founding leader Luis Muñoz Marín. The PPD, with its slogan "*pan, tierra y libertad*" (bread, land and liberty), focused on Puerto Rico's problems with poverty, land concentration, dispossessed populations and the colonial status.³⁷ While the colonial status was soon subordinated to socio-economic concerns, the access to land and the right to earn a decent living were made central to the platform.

The PPD and its populist leader thus promoted in 1941 an agrarian reform designed to

³⁶ 1, Serie 7, Pueblos, Cartapacio 2669, 1941, Sección IV, LMM, Presidente del Senado, FLMM.

³⁷ Luis Muñoz Marín coined the PPD's slogan "*pan, tierra y libertad*" in a July 17, 1938 speech delivered in honor of his father Luis Muñoz Rivera. That was the same year the Party was officially registered. Although the PPD originally favored independence as a solution to Puerto Rico's colonial status, the stance was soon discarded in favor of socio-economic programs. Luis Muñoz Marín, "Palabras de Luis Muñoz Marín ante la tumba de su padre-17 de julio de 1938," Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín, 2006, Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín, 10 February 2007 <http://www.flmm.com/pags_nuevas_folder/discursos_folder/discursos_h.html>.

limit corporate landholding to 500 acres and to give land to *agregados* and small and medium-sized farmers.³⁸ Such measures secured the support of the peasantry and facilitated the PPD's overwhelming victories in 1944 and 1948, and maybe well into the 1960s. The appeal of "*pan, tierra y libertad*," however, also fed from work-the-land ethics and discourses of Puerto Rican nationhood and masculinity.

In Puerto Rico, like in other places in Latin America, rural dwellers were despised for their supposed backwardness and simultaneously celebrated as embodiments of national culture in its purest manifestation. These dwellers called *jibaros* were idealized as the national subjects untouched by foreign civilizations and technological advances.³⁹ Their uncorrupted state was assured by the, inaccessible, national spaces *jibaros* were thought to inhabit. These national spaces were foremost the mountain ranges where the big sugar companies did not penetrate. There the *jibaros* could establish both a pseudo-mystical bond with the land they worked and an independent way of life. Through the bond with the land a man was thought to make himself a man. His self-worth was linked

³⁸ According to Francisco Scarano, the agrarian reform was more successful in giving small plots of land to former *agregados* than in expropriating corporate land and distributing land among small and medium-sized farmers. Francisco Scarano, *Puerto Rico: Cinco siglos de historia* (San Juan: McGraw-Hill, 1993) 717-718.

³⁹ The *jibaros* in Puerto Rico can be understood through Partha Chatterjee's arguments about nationalist thought in the colonial world. Chatterjee argues that the construction of the nation responded to the necessities of an industrial or industrializing society in need of a kind of homogenized culture that converged with a political unit. Thus, nations are historical constructs imagined by the intelligentsia and appropriated by the masses. Chatterjee then distinguishes between "western" and "eastern" nationalisms. He argues that in both nationalisms there is an implied common set of standards by which the state of development of a particular national culture is measured. In other words, there is an acceptance of a universal standard of progress. It is also tacitly agreed that nationalism is primarily a cultural phenomenon that often takes a political form. In western nationalism, however, there is a feeling that the nation is at disadvantage with respect to others but is still culturally equipped. Thus, the universal standard is not seen as alien to the national culture. In eastern nationalism, on the other hand, there is an awareness that the universal standard comes from an alien culture and that the inherited culture of the nation is not equipped to reach the standard by itself. Therefore, eastern nationalism is a search for the regeneration of the national culture. The regeneration is adapted to the requirements of progress but not by simple imitation of the alien culture because the nation would lose its identity and distinctiveness. The *jibaros*, in turn, represented the cultural-spiritual domain of the Puerto Rican nation that needed to be safeguarded as the archipelago underwent a rapid process of industrialization. Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

to the fruits such a bond yielded. The land, after all, was the means to provide sustenance for a family and to achieve an independent life where the man felt like a “patriarchal cacique.”⁴⁰

The *jibaros* were ultimately Puerto Rican peasants toiling the land. The PPD, ironically, severed peasants’ ties to the land with its aggressive industrialization and immigration policies of the 1940s-1960s. The tie, however, continued to be coveted in the Puerto Rican imaginary well into the 21st century. As evidenced in Juan Morales Ramos’ (Moralito) 1950s song “Allá en la altura” (“There in the Mountain”), the bond was hard to break even when technological advances threatened to alienate the *jibaro* from the land.

I have in the mountains
 a well sowed farm
 from purple malanga,
 yam, plantain and *yautía*.
 After the day has come out
 I immediately take the plow
 once the soil is ready
 gentlemen I farm it
 and that is how happy I live
 better off than a rich man.

One torch made with *tabonuco*
 I have to give me light,
 to guard my farm
 I also have a tail-less dog.
 If I don’t know the trick
 of air conditioning
 because nature has given me
 that fresh and pure breeze
 and I live here in the mountain
 better than a rich man.

⁴⁰ I take the term “patriarchal cacique” from Felipe Rosario Goyco’s (Don Felo) late 1940s song “Mi jaragual” (“My Plot of Land”). The term in the song is used to identify an ideal masculine role where the man is the owner and head of a plot of land, wife and dog. The song has been interpreted by artists like Tony Croatto. Tony Croatto, “Mi jaragual,” *Para cantarle a mi gente*, LP, Discos Sur Records, 1980.

...

And in my wood house
 luxuries I don't possess
 because I live according to my will,
 far from the road.
 And my wife and companion
 provides me all the care,
 what does it matter if
 Petroleum and gasoline are all used up
 if I live here in the mountaintop
 better than a rich man.⁴¹

Moralito praised the *jíbaro* life, isolated from commodities and civilization, as the ideal state of the Puerto Rican man. It was a life very much grounded on known everyday spaces and routines. In the 1950s context of rapid industrialization and rural-to-urban and Puerto Rico-to-U.S. migrations, Morales' song testified to the continued currency of land in Puerto Rican nationalist and gender discourses.⁴²

The PPD's Operation Bootstrap, launched in late 1940s with the Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company (PRIDCO) and the Industrial Incentives Law, sought to turn peasants into industrial workers. The fiscal incentives to U.S. industrial companies, and the attractive pool of cheap labor, helped replace sugar landscapes with

⁴¹ "Yo tengo en la serranía/una finca bien sembrada/desde malanga morada,/ñame, plátano y yautía./Después de salir el día/seguida cojo el arado/ya el terreno preparado/señores yo lo cultivo/y así de feliz yo vivo/mejor que un adinerado./Un jacho de tabonuco/yo tengo para alumbrarme,/para mi finca cuidarme/también tengo un perro tuco./Si yo no conozco el truco/del aire acondicionado/pues la natura me ha dado/esa brisa fresca y pura/y yo vivo aquí en la altura/mejor que un adinerado./.../Y en mi casa de madera/los lujos yo no poseo/porque vivo a mi deseo/lejos de la carretera./Y mi esposa y compañera/me brinda todo el cuidado./qué importa si se ha acabado/el petróleo o gasolina/si yo vivo aquí en la cima/mejor que un adinerado." Juan Morales, "Allá en la altura," [Cancioneros.com](http://www.cancioneros.com), 2008, Cancioneros de Trovadores, 28 January 2008 <<http://www.trovadores.net/nc.php?NM=5005>>.

⁴² Later songs like Catalino "Tite" Curet Alonso and Tony Croatto's 1980 "*A pico y pala*" ("By pickaxe and shovel") reemphasized on the centrality of land and work ethics in the makings of the Puerto Rican man. Yet, in the 1970s and 1980s these celebrations of men, work and land represented a nostalgic nationalist discourse. By the 1980s the Puerto Rican population was overwhelmingly urban and agriculture, as a viable large-scale economic activity, was long dead. Catalino Curet Alonso and Tony Croatto, "A pico y palo," [Para cantarle a mi gente](#).

factories.⁴³ In Vieques companies like General Electric would be one of the few constant sources of employment during the Navy years. The company, however, established itself in the island in 1969, closing its doors in 2003.⁴⁴ As could be suggested by GE's trajectory, the initial effects of Operation Bootstrap in the island were minimal. In the late 1940s and 1950s Vieques' peasants were not turned into industrial workers, but into migrants and into slum dwellers. As Nemencio Regalado López wrote in March 20, 1944 to the then President of the Senate Luis Muñoz Marín, "today we small and large farmers see ourselves with the only hope of abandoning our lands and venturing where luck takes us."⁴⁵ "Luck" led many Viequense "small farmers" to slums. The 1940s expropriations channeled displaced people into Navy-owned tracts of land near Isabel II. These tracts, previously used for cattle grazing, lacked basic infrastructure to support a human community. Thus, even when the communities bore the tragically wistful names of Santa María (Saint Mary) and Monte Santo (Holy Mount), they might not have had appeared too blessed in the post-expropriation period.

⁴³ The Compañía de Fomento Económico, today the Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company, was created in 1942 under the auspices of the PPD. Five years later the Puerto Rican government passed the Industrial Incentives Law designed to attract U.S. industrial companies. The Puerto Rican government offered these companies fiscal incentives, available infrastructure and a cheap and disciplined labor force without leaving U.S. sovereignty. The passing of the Industrial Incentives Law in 1947 marked the official launching of Operation Bootstrap. Scarano, Puerto Rico 740-749.

⁴⁴ The General Electric Company established itself in Vieques during the second stage of Operation Bootstrap. This second stage involved a transition from labor intensive to more capital intensive industries. Perhaps the first stage of Operation Bootstrap had such a limited reach in Vieques because the labor pool was more restricted than in the main island. Although James Dietz argued that most of the factories established during the first stage remained in the archipelago's urban centers due to the convenience of accessible infrastructure. James L. Dietz, Historia Económica de Puerto Rico (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1997) 265-275.

⁴⁵ "hoy nos vemos los pequeños y grandes agricultores con la única esperanza de abandonar nuestras tierras e irnos aventurar donde la suerte nos lleve." 19, Serie 6, Partidos Políticos, Comités Municipales/Pueblos, Vieques, Cartapacio 865, 1944, abril-enero, Sección IV, LMM, Presidente del Senado, FLMM.

In these grassy plains the expropriated Viequenses hastily reassembled their zinc and wood houses.⁴⁶ Others not so fortunate dwelled under the skies for a long time.⁴⁷ Many were unemployed, or became so in the expropriation process, and many others were single women heads of households.⁴⁸ The people expropriated to Monte Santo and Santa María, nonetheless, shared many experiences in common. They were assigned a lot for which they were not given an ownership title. They were further warned in writing that they occupied Navy lands that could be taken away at any given moment. The lots, in addition, did not provide space for subsistence agriculture making the expropriated totally dependent on wage labor or charity. With communities dispersed along numbered lots, everyday communal networks were broken. Neighbors did not necessarily know each other and new relationships of solidarity had to be established. Therefore, there were little incentives or leeway to improve the conditions of these improvised slums. These were, after all, places where people lacked jobs, property titles to ask for loans and the security and support to invest themselves in long-term communal projects. The Navy, making clear again that its role in the island was far from that of a social benefactor, paid no heed to the needs of the expropriated population. The Puerto

⁴⁶ Given the frequency of hurricanes that hit the island, the majority of Viequenses were fairly accustomed to the assembling and reassembling of zinc and wood houses. Every time these houses were reassembled, however, their already fragile structural integrity weakened.

⁴⁷ The local committee of the Red Cross signed a resolution on August 23, 1943 asking government and federal agencies for aid to the displaced people in Monte Santo who were living without a roof over their heads. The committee described the situation as “chaotic” because, among other things, people could not find work to finish their houses and neither could the municipality, with its diminished revenues, help them. 31, Serie 6, Partidos Políticos, Comités Municipales/Pueblos, Vieques, Cartapacio 866, 1943, Sección IV, LMM, Presidente del Senado, FLMM.

⁴⁸ For an account of the expropriation process of a single woman household see Tere Villegas Pagán, Taso: Un pedazo de Vieques, Puerto Rico (Caguas: Impresos Taino, 2001).

Rican government, with its new emphasis on living standards, was forced to assume the task and costs of providing these Navy-owned slums with the basic infrastructure.⁴⁹

Monte Santo and Santa María were not the only slums that surfaced in Vieques after the Navy expropriations. On the southern coast of the civilian sector was the Esperanza (Hope). Its name seemed to bear witness to the population's hope in the coming of better days. The proliferation of slums, in fact, altered the modest but orderly urban landscape Spanish officials and other members of the municipal council had envisioned in the 19th century. Slums were by definition the antitheses of an "ordered city."⁵⁰ These were spaces that defied not only the grid city model inherited from the Roman Empire but effective state surveillance and regulation. Slums helped concentrate a local population accustomed since early colonial times to live dispersed throughout the island. The disorderliness of the space, however, made it difficult for the state to exercise authority over its population.⁵¹ This population, in turn, represented Vieques' working class. Whatever was left of the local economy depended on the, cheap, labor of this sector. Slums were thus a major source of concern to the Viequense government and elites. Such was the concern that in the May 12, 1948 "Memorandum about the Rehabilitation of Vieques" a committee headed by the Mayor and President of the Local Association of Cane Farmers and Planters Antonio Rivera collectively wrote that the majority of PRACO workers lived in a "slum that is one focus of diseases, in addition the misery and promiscuity that these workers live in is the cause and origin of ugly vices

⁴⁹ 15, Serie 6, Partidos Políticos, Comités Municipales/Pueblos, Vieques, Cartapacio 864, 1944, diciembre-mayo, Sección IV, LMM, Presidente del Senado, FLMM.

⁵⁰ Ángel Rama, *The Lettered City*, trans. and ed. John Charles Chasteen (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

⁵¹ The state, for example, could not even impose taxes on these populations.

and crimes.”⁵² The committee was referring here to La Esperanza. Yet, their ideas about La Esperanza were probably similar to those of other slums that had surfaced in the civilian sector. They interpreted that the lack and disorderliness of the space led to diseases, promiscuity and crime. Therefore, slums were unsanitary spaces of sexual and moral deviance. These spaces could not breed a healthy and disciplined working class capable of being molded to the industrial work ethics brought by Operation Bootstrap.

The Navy expropriations broke communities, altered communal ties, severed peasants’ relationship to the land, closed down the island’s main source of employment and squeezed Viequenses into a middle civilian sector. These changes bred in the island a feeling of enclosure and desolation for neither Isabel II nor the slums could sustain the population influx. The pessimism prevalent among the population is portrayed in Juan Antonio Figueroa’s 1944 poem to Luis Muñoz Marín titled “Vieques and its Situation.”

I

Here nobody notices
 This fatal crisis
 That we have come to pass
 Strong as a storm
 The situation presents itself
 Like migratory birds
 We will leave this corner
 To seek life in another place
 Because it has never been seen
 Vieques turned into ruin.

II

What grief it gives me
 To have to leave Vieques.
 Men what do you think
 This is the need.
 In Vieques there is no charity.

⁵² “arrabal que es un foco de enfermedades, amén de que en la miseria y promiscuidad en que viven estos trabajadores es causa y origen de feos vicios y delitos.” “Memorando sobre rehabilitación de Vieques,” 14, Serie 6, Partidos Políticos, Comités Municipales/Pueblos, Vieques, Cartapacio 862, 1948, Sección IV, LMM, Presidente del Senado, FLMM.

And the government nothing assigns
 We will forget our slogans
 With great pain
 Always from worse to worst.
 Vieques turned into ruins.⁵³

Figueroa wrote to the populist leader that the situation was so desperate in Vieques people were forced to leave the island. These were people that became known as *Hijos* or *Viequenses Ausentes* (Absent Sons and Daughters or Absent Viequenses). They were physically absent from the island but still part of the Viequense community. Indeed, in the mid 20th century those who the island's middle stretch could not sustain were free and very much encouraged to emigrate. Between 1940 and 1960 3,152 Viequenses emigrated. This number represents a 30% population decrease in two decades.

The most common destinations of Viequense emigrants were the Puerto Rican main island, St. Croix and the United States mainland, especially New York City. Viequenses' migration to St. Croix began with the deceleration of Vieques' sugar economy in the late 1920s.⁵⁴ Clarence Senior argued that Viequenses migrated specifically to St. Croix because in that neighboring island sugar cane continued to demand seasonal workers. The island was, in addition, under the U.S. sovereignty since the year 1917.⁵⁵ So that by 1946, according to Senior, there were 3,108 Puerto Ricans in an island of 12,200 inhabitants. In other words, by 1946 25% of St. Croix's population

⁵³ "I/Aquí nadie se da cuenta/De esta crisis tan fatal/Que hemos venido a pasar/Fuerte como una tormenta/La situación se presenta/Como aves peregrinas/Pues saliremos de esquina/A buscar vida a otro sitio/Porque nunca se había visto/A Vieques convertido en ruina./II/Que mucha pena me da/Tener que salir de Vieques./Señores que le parece/Esto es la necesidad./En Vieques no hay caridad./Y el gobierno nada asigna/Olvidaremos nuestras consignas/Con grandísimo dolor/Siempre de peor en peor./Vieques convertido en ruinas." 4, Serie 7, Pueblos, Sub-Serie Vieques, Cartapacio 2664, abril-enero 1944, Sección IV, LMM, Presidente del Senado, FLMM.

⁵⁴ For Viequense population figures see Appendix 18.

⁵⁵ Viequenses never left U.S. sovereignty as St. Croix was part of the U.S. Virgin Islands since the U.S. purchased the archipelago in 1917.

was Puerto Rican. The great majority of this 25% were Viequenses.⁵⁶ Viequense emigrants to the U.S. mainland, on the other hand, formed part of a larger post-World War II trend of Puerto Rican migration. The decline of agricultural activity with the onset of Operation Bootstrap and the rapid industrialization of Puerto Rican society created a dispossessed sector that migrated to urban centers in the archipelago and the U.S. mainland. These Puerto Ricans were attracted to the U.S. postwar economic boom made accessible by the lowered costs of air transportation. Yet, they were also enticed by the government's policy to encourage migration as a means to alleviate the problems of unemployment and overpopulation in the archipelago. The Puerto Rican government, in fact, created the Bureau of Employment and Emigration ascribed to the Department of Labor. The Bureau was assigned to oversee the flow of people between Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland and the working conditions of these immigrants in the U.S. Viequenses were thus part of a mid 20th century Puerto Rican exodus to U.S. metropolises like New York City.⁵⁷

Viequense emigrants formed exiled communities that kept in touch with the island left behind through civic organizations like New York City's *Club Viequense* (Viequense Club) and San Juan's *Asociación Hijos de Vieques* (Sons and Daughters of Vieques Association). Through these organizations exiled Viequenses helped re-imagine Vieques, and made it difficult for the island community to forget its *Ausentes*. These organs not only provided a space for the nostalgic reminiscence of past Viequense days, but

⁵⁶ According to Clarence Senior, the Danes had employed free labor from neighboring British colonies after their 1848 abolition of slavery. Once the U.S. bought the Danish Virgin Islands in 1917, the immigration laws enforced after 1927 made sugar cane growers seek U.S. citizen workers. Viequenses, with their depressed sugar economy, came to fill in the work force void in St. Croix. Clarence Senior, The Puerto Rican Migrant in St. Croix (Río Piedras: Social Science Research Center, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1947).

⁵⁷ Fernando Picó, Historia general de Puerto Rico (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1988) 263-267. Scarano, Puerto Rico 749-764. Appendix 21.

also played a role in the future of the island. The *Asociación Hijos de Vieques*, for example, constituted themselves early on as a lobbying group in San Juan. The *Asociación*, in fact, was constituted in November 1946 in the Carnegie Library. The Library, located just east of the Puerto Rican Capitol building, had a history of accommodating within its walls such groups like the *Liga Femenina Puertorriqueña* (Puerto Rican Feminist League).⁵⁸ The *Asociación*, like the Puerto Rican suffragists had done two decades earlier, lobbied in San Juan and in Washington. The *Asociación*, however, had better luck engaging San Juan politicians. Its spokesperson Germán Rieckehoff communicated with Luis Muñoz Marín and other Puerto Rican politicians.⁵⁹ Among the measures Rieckehoff and the *Asociación* lobbied for were the construction of a port in Isabel II's Puerto Mulas, the establishment of telephone lines between Vieques and Puerto Rico, the remodeling of City Hall, the building of a library, and the setting up of a more efficient power plant.⁶⁰

The *Asociación* may have gotten its best opportunity to voice its opinion during an April 1, 1947 presentation to the Puerto Rican Legislature. The presentation, made in conjunction with other Viequense organizations and leaders, emphasized on the rehabilitation of Vieques. It, in turn, critiqued and proposed solutions to the workings of PRACO and the land problem in the island.⁶¹ The discontent the presenters portrayed

⁵⁸ The *Liga Femenina Puertorriqueña*, association from which the most important Puerto Rican women suffragist groups surfaced, held its first meeting in August 13, 1917 in the Carnegie Library. Marie Cruz Soto, "Ciudadanas puertorriqueñas/ciudadanas americanas: el nacionalismo cultural en el discurso sobre la femeneidad y la ciudadanía de la Liga Social Sufragista," diss., Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2000, 41.

⁵⁹ Germán Rieckehoff served in the Puerto Rican House of Representatives for the District of Vieques, Fajardo and Culebra from 1925 to 1928. Bonnet, *Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico* 105.

⁶⁰ Justo Pastor Ruiz, *Vieques antiguo y moderno: 1493-1946* (Santurce: JAY-CE Printing, 1987) 213.

⁶¹ 6, Serie 7, Pueblos, Sub-Serie Vieques, Cartapacio 2656, abril-enero 1947, Sección IV, LMM, Presidente del Senado, FLMM.

against PRACO's "monopolistic" practices foreshadowed the January 1948 separation of the cattle ranchers from the corporation. However, the influence the presentation had on Puerto Rican policy makers is unclear. As previously stated, during the months of December 1947 and January 1948 the Navy took back the 13,000 acres of PRACO-leased lands and expropriated another 4,340 acres. In the process PRACO lost its prominent role in the island without any other government-sponsored plan for agricultural production or land intensive economic activity to take its place. The sugar mill and distillery offered by the Puerto Rican Legislature and lobbied for by the *Asociación*, for example, were never established.⁶²

The *Asociación Hijos de Vieques* publicized their struggle and further pushed their agenda through the publication titled El Eco de Vieques. This publication displayed in the first page the group's slogan: "Defender of an effective rehabilitation program – The rehabilitation of our island, will be the work of the sons of Vieques."⁶³ The slogan announced the political intentions of the *Asociación* as well as its identity based activism.⁶⁴ The main membership requisite, whether in San Juan, New York or wherever, was the claiming of a Viequense identity. More precisely, the members had to be "sons of Vieques." To the extent the *Asociación's* crusade was identified as a masculine struggle, the object to be saved was coded feminine. In other words, the island

⁶² The sugar mill and distillery had been part of the March 1944 Laws 89 and 90 designed by the Puerto Rican Legislature to offset the economic problems of Vieques. The establishment and workings of the mill and distillery were originally assigned to PRIDCO and the Land Authority. The Corporation and Authority, although assigned with \$2,000,000 for the project, did not develop it. Pastor Ruiz, Vieques antiguo y moderno 214. 6, Serie 7, Pueblos, Sub-Serie Vieques, Cartapacio 2656, abril-enero 1947, Sección IV, LMM, Presidente del Senado, FLMM, 10-12. Ayala and Bolívar, "The Cold War," CENTRO Journal 14.

⁶³ "Defensora de un programa de rehabilitación efectiva - La rehabilitación de nuestra isla, habrá de ser obra de los hijos de Vieques." 8, Serie 7, Pueblos, Sub-serie Vieques, Cartapacio 2657, julio-diciembre 1946, Sección IV, LMM, Presidente del Senado, FLMM. 11, Serie 7, Pueblos, Sub-serie Vieques, Cartapacio 2657, julio-diciembre 1946, Sección IV, LMM, Presidente del Senado, FLMM.

⁶⁴ I use the term political in this context to refer to activities related to government policies and officials. I am opposing the term here to civic or cultural activism.

was again imagined in gendered terms. Yet, if Luis Lloréns Torres had written about an island daughter, the *Asociación* defended an island mother. The Isla Nena Lloréns Torres had baptized a few years earlier was not a child anymore, but a mother. The *Asociación*, in fact, did not employ the name Isla Nena when referring to Vieques. The name Isla Nena, as conceived by the main island poet and politician, metaphorically characterized Vieques as a Puerto Rican dependency. This was a characterization the *Asociación* did not embrace. The “*Hijos de Vieques*,” on the contrary, endowed agency to the smaller island and its community through the appropriation of motherhood. Vieques, in this context, had nurtured children who were being impoverished and forced into exile. These children, nonetheless, could defend the welfare of their mother island, even if to do so they had to face the U.S. Navy and Puerto Rican politicians. In this sense, the *Asociación* and its publication El Eco helped both empower and redefine the Viequense community as one unbounded by territorial boundaries. If in the 19th century the island of Vieques had encompassed a transnational community within its shores, by the late 1940s the Viequense community itself was transnational.⁶⁵

The *Asociación* and its San Juan-based publication helped imagine a Viequense community that inhabited and surpassed Vieques’ civilian stretch. Following Benedict Anderson’s arguments about the centrality of print-capitalism in the imagining of communities, El Eco de Vieques helped establish a bond across people who did not necessarily know each other or share spaces on a regular basis.⁶⁶ El Eco, though, bonded Viequenses through historical narratives linking the people to the island. Thus, even if

⁶⁵ Even though I use the term transnational to refer to the post-1930s Viequense community, Viequenses technically remained within U.S. territorial boundaries when they migrated to St. Croix, the Puerto Rican main island and the U.S. mainland.

⁶⁶ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, revised ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

the publication united a Viequense community across territorial boundaries, it still constructed the collective identity in terms of its historical relationship to the island. In 1947, for example, the *Asociación* published in *El Eco* an article titled “From the history of Vieques.” The article narrated the colony’s January 1, 1844 foundational ceremonies. It recounted the placing of the cross where the Catholic parish would be located and the settler’s oaths of allegiance to the Spanish Empire. The colonists, according to the article, took the oath:

Swear by God our lord and by the holy scripts to be faithful and loyal to the queen D. Isabel the Second (A.D.G.) defend the nation to the point of loosing your lives to keep it in everyone’s enjoyment. And maintain with courage and perseverance the possession of this island as an integral part of the Spanish territory, against any foreign aggressor that might present itself... Yes, we swear.⁶⁷

The Viequense readers were thus reminded that their ancestors had once sworn not only allegiance to Spain, but to defend, with their lives if necessary, the island against foreign aggressors. This may have been an oath the *Asociación* wished to revive in the late 1940s critical context when the island’s population faced unfavorable policies dictated from Washington and San Juan. The formulation of such policies outside Vieques may have influenced Germán Rieckehoff and others cultural and political nationalists members of the *Asociación* to appropriate the early 20th century Puerto Rican’s elite nostalgic discourse about the good old days under the Spanish Empire.⁶⁸ Spanish

⁶⁷ “Juráis por Dios nuestro señor y por los santos evangelios ser fieles y leales a la reina D. Isabel Segunda (A.D.G.) defender la nación hasta perder vuestras vidas para sostenerla en el goce de todos. Y mantener con valor y constancia la posesión de esta isla como parte integrante del territorio español, contra cualquiera agresión extranjera que pueda presentarse... Si juramos.” “De la Historia de Vieques,” *El Eco de Vieques* II:5 (1947): 8-9. 2, Serie 7, Pueblos, Sub-serie Vieques, Cartapacio 2656, abril-enero 1947, Sección IV, LMM, Presidente del Senado, FLMM.

⁶⁸ I define political nationalism as the defense of the equation nation=state=people. The nation becomes attached to a particular territory, but not circumscribed to it. I define cultural nationalism as the affirmation of the identity of a certain national community in a cultural plane. It can and usually does accompany political nationalism.

colonialism, in turn, was normalized at the expense of U.S. colonialism that was coded as foreign.

The year 1947 when “From the History of Vieques” was published is incidentally the same year that Justo Pastor Ruiz published his Vieques antiguo y moderno.⁶⁹ This book, first one ever written about the history of Vieques, presents a rather folkloric interpretation of the island’s past and culture as seen through the eyes of the Ponce-born Episcopalian priest. Pastor Ruiz nonetheless portrayed in the book a critical attitude towards the U.S. presence in the island, Puerto Rican policy makers and Vieques’ future. He applauded instead the *Asociación’s* efforts and Rieckehoff’s leadership. The launching of Vieques antiguo y moderno, in fact, had been announced in El Eco. That these two publications surfaced around the same time evidences that in the late 1940s there was indeed an audience willing to consume Vieques’ history. Perhaps in this context of crisis there was an audience curious to know more about Vieques or demanding narratives that instilled pride to the dispossessed population. The question to ask would be what portions of this audience considered themselves Viequense or actually lived in the island. Yet, even if a significant part of the mostly illiterate and poor Viequense audience did not have direct access to these texts, by the 1970s the editor F. Ortiz Nieves reminisced that Vieques antiguo y moderno:

filled a void in the evolution of the inhabitants of that small island that even though part of Puerto Rico...it still has an undecipherable something, that makes it a little different from the other municipalities.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Pastor Ruiz, Vieques antiguo y moderno.

⁷⁰ “llenó un hueco en el devenir de los habitantes de aquella isleta que aunque parte de Puerto Rico...aún tiene un no sé que, que la hace un poco diferente de los otros municipios.” Pastor Ruiz, Vieques antiguo y moderno 3.

Even if the effect was not immediate, Ortiz Nieves argued that the book acquired a central place in Viequense narratives.

“From the History of Vieques” and Vieques antiguo y moderno were potentially empowering texts for the Viequense community to the extent they identified and celebrated Viequenses’ cultural uniqueness. More so, the texts gave visibility to this uniqueness through the legitimized space of representation of print media. Print, in this 1940s context, safeguarded a culture perceived to be threatened. The written word provide Viequense culture and history a more perdurable and static form. The static quality normalized certain narratives, like the 1844 oath of allegiance, as central to the Viequense identity. It made these narratives readily identifiable to the Viequense community. In this sense, the written word was also able to transform memories and other oral stories into history. After all, the main difference between memory and history lies, following Peter Burke, in writing. It is the act of writing, he argues, that endows memories with a more perdurable and selective character.⁷¹ Thus, these late 1940s texts validated, for example, people’s claims about the bygone times of sugar-driven prosperity. This was a prosperity that they contrasted to the 1940s.⁷²

By the late 1940s Vieques had become an island of voids, forbidden spaces and absences. The *Plaza Hijos Ausentes* (Plaza of the Absent Sons) has come to embody collective longings for such lost spaces and people (Figure 6.2).⁷³ The pale obelisk-like lighthouse in the middle of the small plaza stands next to the Isabel II port, as if to guide

⁷¹ Peter Burke, “History as Social Memory,” Varieties of Cultural History (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) 43-59.

⁷² Pastor Ruiz, Vieques antiguo y moderno 33-36. 6, Serie 7, Pueblos, Sub-Serie Vieques, Cartapacio 2656, abril-enero 1947, Sección IV, LMM, Presidente del Senado, FLMM, 2-4.

⁷³ The Plaza Hijos Ausentes is one of the “*placitas*” (small plazas) constructed under the Administration of Mayor Manuela Santiago. Mayor Santiago was famous among Viequenses for the construction of such small plazas throughout the island.

those who left back to the island. Yet, this place of remembrance is more likely to shelter the dreams of a local drunk taking a midday nap than to guide the return of *Viequenses Ausentes*. The memorial to the absent sons has instead materialized the scar migration imprinted on the local population. It further symbolizes the broken promises of returns, like those my parents made to my grandparents and themselves when they left the island in the 1960s. The Plaza Hijos Ausentes, however, may give the occasional *Viequense Ausente*-turned-visitor the feeling of not being completely forgotten. The stroll from the port to the town may furthermore remind such *Ausentes* that they still belong to the Viequense community. The Plaza may remind them that they are still the sons and daughters of Vieques.



Figure 6.2: Plaza Hijos Ausentes, Isabel II, Vieques⁷⁴



I had barely opened the first folder of documents in the Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín when I met my paternal grandfather Flor. I encountered him in letters and

⁷⁴

Plaza de Hijos Ausentes, Vieques, personal photograph by author, February 2001.

telegrams he had sent to Muñoz Marín 60 years earlier. As I handled the yellowish documents in the privacy of my research cubicle I fantasized about my grandfather's life after the U.S. Navy made its entrance into Vieques. I knew *Abuelo* Flor had been a taxi driver, merchant, owner of a small sloop, cattle rancher and even the president of the PPD's municipal committee. So I envisioned him writing down his frustration with partisan politics, with PRIDCO and PRACO's practices and with everyday life in Vieques. All this he wrote down with the hope Luis Muñoz Marín helped remedy the situation. Apparently, my grandfather had been a *muñocista*. He had been a believer in the Puerto Rican populist leader and the PPD. So much I could tell from the historical traces I handled. Yet, there were other traces that could not be so easily grasped, but that had accompanied me all my life. One such trace involved my father. My father was born in November 1944 amidst the commotion surrounding the PPD's overwhelming victory across the archipelago, and amidst Vieques' worst socio-economic crisis. My grandfather, who I never suspected as the optimist type, named my father Luis for the populist leader. This is a name that my older brother inherited. Thus, my family can still hear the echoes of the 1940s promises of development and social justice.

My maternal great-grandfather Manuel did not share my *Abuelo* Flor's optimism in the 1940s. Still, I have never found him or any of my mother's family members in the dusty documents of an archive. My great-grandparents and my grandmother Paca were illiterate, *agregados* and very poor. These are three powerful reasons why historical archives forgot them. They did not produce written texts nor were they, for the most part, recorded in legal paperwork. Yet, I have found them in those historical traces that are not so easily grasped and handled. They have indeed survived in unexpected places. My

great-grandfather's name, in fact, has been inscribed in the Viequense landscape he was expropriated from in the late 1940s. He did not have a legal title to the land he occupied. The Navy, however, after 60 years of practicing amphibious landing through the same waters and land, could not erase Manuelquí through the more neutral English name Blue Beach (Figures 6.3 and 6.4). Viequenses, even if most do not remember my great-grandfather Manuel, have clung to Manuelquí. The name, moreover, has gained currency in post-Navy days and maps perhaps because to some people it is an invitation to imagine pre-Navy days.



Figure 6.3: Contemporary photograph of Manuelquí, Vieques⁷⁵



Figure 6.4: Photograph of Manuelquí during 1950s military maneuvers⁷⁶

⁷⁵ “Manuelquí (also known as Playa de la Chiva or Blue Beach),” St. John Beach Guide. St. John Beach Guide, 21 November 2007 <http://www.stjohnbeachguide.com/Vieques_HTML/Manuelqui.htm>.

⁷⁶ William Warner Harris, Puerto Rico's Fighting 65th Infantry: From San Juan to Chorwan (San Rafael: Presidio Press, 1980) 38-39.

For my mother's family there was no turning back time. They were expropriated during the second 1947-1948 wave. Most of *Abuela* Paca's siblings migrated to St. Croix, others went to the U.S. and another one, Uncle or *Tío* Isá, quickly left for the Korean War. *Abuela*, as the youngest of the group, followed my great-grandparents to the barrio of Pueblo Nuevo in the eastern outskirts of Isabel II. It was there, in the year 1950, that my mother María was born. She did not live the actual expropriation, but was still very much trapped in its ripples. Her childhood, for example, was marked by displacement. Once my great-grandfather died in 1955, she moved with *Abuela* Cocoroco and *Abuela* Paca from place to place until finally reaching the *caserío* in 1965. The public housing project, an epitome of *muñocista* development, would be my *abuelas'* final dwelling.⁷⁷ It was in that two bedroom apartment in the *caserío* where I spent most of my childhood summers, running past the mural of the PRIDCO man moving the wheel of industrialization and picking at my grandmother's plants all around the apartment. *Abuela* Paca, as if not accepting that the *batey* days were long gone, grew whatever she could put her hands on. The front lawn of her apartment, then facing the PRIDCO

⁷⁷ The sociologist Zaire Dinzey-Flores argues that public housing projects in Puerto Rico were initially designed, under the auspices of the Puerto Rico Housing Authority created in 1938, to be temporary dwellings in the transition of indigent people to home owners. The projects, however, ended up being the permanent residence of many of its dwellers and their descendants due, among other things, to the establishment of strong communal bonds among the residents and to the difficulty of making the transition to home ownership. In the case of my grandmother's stay in the only *caserío* in the island, named *Jardines de Vieques* (Gardens of Vieques), I do not think it had anything to do with establishing communal bonds with her neighbors. On the contrary, she lived a rather isolated life and most of her friends were not from the *caserío*. I think that she did not move out because she had nowhere else to go, and simply did not aspire to be anywhere else. She had roamed the island, and as much as she loved to visit us in San Juan, she could not stand to be more than two weeks in the *Isla Grande*. For my grandmother, her arrival at the *caserío* never represented an echelon in the ladder for self-improvement that urban planners envisioned. She arrived there with my mother and great-grandmother after years of being continuously displaced and destituted. I therefore think she understood the *caserío* as a consolation price for places she had lost. Zaire Z. Dinzey-Flores, "Temporary Housing, Permanent Communities: Public Housing Policy and Design in Puerto Rico," *Journal of Urban History* 33.3 (March 2007): 467-492.

factory, was full of marigolds, herbs and palm trees. I think she tried to make herself at home, but not my mother. She kept on moving. In 1966 my mother left Vieques to finish high school in Fajardo. She never moved back and by 1973 had settled to live in San Juan with my father. After 23 years of constantly moving, she finally made herself a home in San Juan.

My mother was not only caught in the inertia of displacement, but in the power of stories that predated her birth. Most of these stories were woven through the memories of my *abuelas*. These women, who could not read or write, were great storytellers. They told my mother about pre-Navy days in Manuelquí and about the expropriation process. My mother, seduced by such powerful narratives, inserted herself in them. She was, after all, their outcome and rightful owner and in such terms she has shared the memories with me. So I hear my own postmemories through my mother's voice.⁷⁸

I was born in 1950 in Pueblo Nuevo where they moved the people, but mom [*Abuela Paca*] was born in 1924...She, Cocoroco and Papá [great-grandfather Manuel] lived in Manuelquí to the southeast of the island. Papá had growing there cassava, sweet potatoes, yam...It must have been around the late 1940s when they expropriated them. They never received any money...Papá did not want to leave. He resisted, so one day they [the Navy] came with tractors and destroyed the house and burnt it with his plants so he would never return...He never understood that was no more his. I remember he would put me inside the baskets in the horse and take me up through Bastimento [to Manuelquí].⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Marianne Hirsch, "Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy," *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds., Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999) 3-24. For a discussion of the term postmemory as a powerful nonwitness or second-generation memory in the negotiation of personal and collective identities see "Chapter 1: Introduction" and "Chapter 7: Isla Nena, Island of Memories and the Dead, 1953-2003."

⁷⁹ "Yo nací en el cincuenta en Pueblo Nuevo donde reubicaban a la gente, pero mami nació en el 1924...Ella, Cocoroco y Papá [Abuelo Manuel] vivían en Manuelquí al sureste de la isla. Papá tenía allí una tala de yuca, batatas, ñame...Tiene que haber sido alrededor del cuarenta y tanto cuando los expropiaron. Ellos nunca recibieron el dinero...Papá no se quería ir. El se resistía, así que un día vinieron [de la Marina] con tractores y le tumbaron la casa y luego se la quemaron con la tala para que no volviera...El nunca entendió que eso no era de él. Me acuerdo que me montaba en las banastas de la yegua y me llevaba por Bastimento pa'riba [hacia Manuelquí]." María Soto, personal interview, 3 March 2001.

I will not inherit a beachfront property from my mother's family. I have, nonetheless, been given by these extraordinary women something more valuable: memories. These memories, intimately handed down from generation to generation, have allowed me to decipher as well as to inscribe myself in the Viequense landscape and history...and to claim an *ausente* identity.

Chapter 7:

Isla Nena, Island of Memories and the Dead, 1953-2003

In a small place, people cultivate small events. The small event is isolated, blown up, turned over and over, and then absorbed into the everyday, so that at any moment it can and will roll off the inhabitants of the small place's tongues.

Jamaica Kincaid, A Small Place (1988)¹

On the night of April 4, 1953 approximately eight U.S. sailors and marines were involved in the death of Julián Felipe Francis and the beating of Julio Bermúdez. The 68 years old Julián, known as Pepé Christian or simply as Mapepe, was found unconscious that Holy Saturday in his bar in the barrio *Destino* (Destiny). He had, “multiple fractures in the skull –caused by external beatings- in the two areas parietal and occipital.”² Mapepe died of a cerebral hemorrhage the following Easter Sunday. The death, prosecutor Lieutenant Robert E. Dunne later argued, was caused by the beating Mapepe received at the hands of U.S. marines armed with mango tree branches from the back of his bar *El Bosque* (The Forest).³ The killing, people in Vieques whispered, was caused by Mapepe's defense of a woman.

The death of an old man in a small place could have been a small event. Yet, as the Antiguan-born Jamaica Kincaid has so keenly noted, “in a small place, people

¹ Jamaica Kincaid, A Small Place (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988) 52.

² Eddie Vázquez Otero, “Consejo de Guerra: Militar dice vió compañero acusado arrancar ramas con que alegan mataron anciano Vieques,” El mundo [San Juan] 20 May 1953: 12.

³ “Van a Acusar Dos Marinos Caso Vieques: Acusación Será por Homicidio,” El mundo [San Juan] 2 May 1953: 1.

cultivate small events.” Indeed, in a small place like Vieques people cultivate small events until they are not small anymore. The killing of Mapepe is the perfect example of such a small event that people in Vieques did not let go. They isolated it, turned it over and over and blew it up until the killing of Mapepe became part of their everyday lives, ready to roll off their tongues at any moment. In turn, the small event, or more accurately, the memory of the small event became emblematic of the Viequense-U.S. Navy relationship in the late 20th century.

The killing of Mapepe is a formative postmemory in the Viequense collective memory negotiated over the last 65 years with the presence and practices of their once Navy neighbor.⁴ In these collective yet very personal negotiations the Navy has served as an oppositional masculine text. This has been a contradictory text despised for its violent and lustful demeanor, but also admired for its military and technological might. Around and despite this oppositional text, Viequenses have imagined memories and identities of resistance. The imagining has often taken the form of cultural productions and social movements narrating the killing of Mapepe as an empowering postmemory of a brave man that, although old and outnumbered, stood up to defend “his” woman against sailors and marines. In this sense, the postmemory of the killing of Mapepe is as an act of resistance grounded in the present that, nonetheless, shapes a past where Mapepe’s physical death takes a secondary place to the continuous intergenerational performance of the gerund killing. The gerund killing, after all, is a noun made of the verb “kill” and the ending “ing” that invokes an action that has not ended. In this light, Mapepe is not really

⁴ For a discussion of the term postmemory as a powerful nonwitness or second-generation memory in the negotiation of personal and collective identities see “Chapter 1: Introduction” and Marianne Hirsch, “Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy,” *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999) 3-24.

dead but incessantly revived, only to be killed again and again by those who appropriate the memory of his killing to narrate, like me, their own histories.

The Killing of Mapepe was, in many ways, set to happen since the year 1948. The event even had the poetic qualities of a tragic destiny at work. As if guided by a carefully planned script: during the Catholic Holy Week in *Destino* the man known as Pepé Christian was killed with branches from the back of *El Bosque*. Yet, what happened to Mapepe could have taken place anywhere in Vieques' civilian sector after 1948. The second expropriation wave of 1947-1948 both squeezed Viequenses into an 8,296-acre land strip between two naval bases and marked the beginning of massive military practices in the island.⁵ The first exercise, according to Arturo Meléndez López, brought in January 16, 1948 approximately 60 warships, 350 airplanes and thousands of sailors, marines, pilots and soldiers to Vieques.⁶ By February 25, 1950, 160 ships, 700 planes and 80,000 Army, Navy, Marine and Air Force personnel coincided in Vieques for, “the nation’s biggest peacetime amphibious maneuver.”⁷ In time, the sound of explosions, the sight of warships and jets and the overwhelming presence of servicemen became part of everyday life for Viequenses. The military practices, in fact, were never really confined to NASD and AFWTA. The Navy, for example, used civilian roads to transport their personnel and equipment between the bases. The Navy also reserved the right to use Vieques’ airspace and surrounding waters.⁸ Viequenses, therefore, were accustomed to

⁵ See “Chapter 6: The Arrival of the U.S. Navy, 1930-1950.”

⁶ Arturo Meléndez López, *La batalla de Vieques* (México: COPEC-CECOPE) 78.

⁷ The exercise commenced on February 25, 1950 lasted until March 11, 1950. It was such a huge event that seven lives were lost due to accidents during the military maneuvers. United States, Department of the Navy, *A Chronology of the United States Marine Corps, 1947-1964*, by Ralph W. Donnelly, Gabrielle M. Neufeld and Carolyn A. Tyson, vol. III (Washington, DC: Historical Division, U.S. Marine Corps, 1971) 11.

⁸ The Navy not only reserved for itself the right to use Vieques’ airspace and surrounding waters, but the right to restrict others’ access to the same airspace and waters.

seeing military convoys drive through their roads, warships navigate through their shores and jets fly through their skies. The military personnel, in addition, were given leaves to recreate themselves in the island's civilian sector.

The leaves of absence Navy officers granted to servicemen was, according to Vice Admiral Daniel Barbey, "the most important contribution [the Navy made] to the economy of the Island."⁹ He estimated that during the 1948-1949 exercises military personnel spent approximately \$4,000,000 in the local economy. Thus, the Navy, following Barbey, was actually doing local residents a favor when after January 16, 1948 thousands of sailors, marines, pilots and soldiers roamed the streets of civilian Vieques. However, the social cost of dropping off men from all over the United States by the truckloads in the middle of Isabel II was silenced.¹⁰ Placed in a colonial context where the majority of the local population, including Mapepe, was colored according to U.S. standards, these men swelled the streets of Isabel II and surrounding barrios in their search for amusement.¹¹ This was, as high-ranking Navy officials were well aware, a

⁹ "C40-6-VI-1," Folder Vieques C40-6-VI, Puerto Rico 40PR, Box 1106, Bureau of Yards and Docks, Naval Property Case Files, 1941-1958, RG 71, NARA, College Park, MD, 3.

¹⁰ Military personnel usually flocked to Isabel II because the town of Esperanza in the island's southern coast was much smaller. In 1964, for example, only 75 families were established in Esperanza. Asamblea Municipal de Vieques, "Resolución Núm. 62. Serie 1963-1964," 36, Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares en Puerto Rico, Cartapacio 54, 1964-1963, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM, San Juan, 1.

¹¹ According to Arturo Meléndez López, the January 16, 1948 exercise brought thousands of servicemen to Vieques among which were 2,000 Puerto Ricans. Considering that Puerto Ricans were a minority in the armed forces and, in fact, not allowed to officially enroll in the Navy, the exercise must have brought at least 4,000 men to Vieques. If the February 21, 1950 exercise brought 80,000 men to Vieques, it could be argued that the average exercise during the late 1940s and 1950s must have brought at least 3,000 men to Vieques. Considering that the population of Isabel II in 1950 was approximately 3,100, it can furthermore be argued that the urban population grew exponentially during the times of exercises in the 1950s. Meléndez López, La batalla de Vieques 78. Puerto Rico, Junta de Planificación, Plano regulador de Vieques: Informe preliminar agosto 1973 (N.p: n.p., August 1973) 20. See Appendix 18.

potentially dangerous situation.¹² Yet, in April of 1953 4,000 to 32,000 of military men traversed civilian Vieques.¹³ The stage was then set for the killing of Mapepe.

In the 1950s Vieques, spaces like the Ocean View Hotel and Mapepe's bar *El Bosque* allowed for a mixed civilian-military coexistence. This was a tense, if not outright hostile, coexistence in which the consumption of alcohol set the tone (Figure 7.1). The nights, therefore, usually ended in these places with some degree of violence, or, as Viequenses say, like the *rosario de la aurora*. (dawn's rosary).¹⁴ The brawls many times took to the streets and ended only when the local and the Military Police (MP) appeared to separate the combatants. The Municipal Police dealt with Viequenses and the MP with the servicemen (Figure 7.2). Inside such a volatile atmosphere, the death of Mapepe was neither the first nor last fatal incident between U.S. servicemen and Viequenses. According to the Mayor of Vieques Dámaso Serrano, Mapepe forms part of

¹² The Navy was well aware of the tensions that arose in colonial contexts where white military men, especially from the U.S. south, encountered a "colored population." On March 31, 1919 the then Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote about racial incidents in St. Thomas to the Maryland lawyer James C. Waters Jr. In order to address Waters concerns about the transplantation of U.S. racism in St. Thomas, Roosevelt cited a report from the Governor of the Virgin Islands Rear Admiral J.H. Oliver of the U.S. Navy. Roosevelt cited that: "The worst element of the colored population is always out [in Christmas] and the Policemaster reports that on Christmas Eve each year there are several, more or less, serious fights...During last Christmas Eve street fights took place between some of the marines stationed at St. Thomas with sailors from the U.S.S. Baltimore on one side and some of the colored population on the other...stones were thrown by both enlisted personnel and natives...Statements have been made that the marines and sailors planned the assault upon the negroes." 352, Folder 28759 (350) to (402), Box 2742, Secretary of the Navy, General Correspondence, 1916-1926, RG 80, NARA, Washington, D.C.

¹³ Viequense merchants informally cited the 4,000 figure during an April 9, 1953 conversation with Colonel F.B. Loomis of the Marine Corps. Confidential Navy records, however, recorded that 32,000 men coincided in Vieques between February 15 and May 7, 1953 for the PHIBEX 2-53 and TRAEX III exercises. "Comerciantes De Vieques Repudian Actitud Alcalde," *El Imparcial* [San Juan] 10 April 1953: 29. "C40-6-VI-1," Folder Vieques C40-6-VI #2 Puerto Rico 40PR, Box 1106, Bureau of Yards and Docks, Naval Property Case Files, 1941-1958, RG 71, NARA, College Park, MD, Enclosure (1).

¹⁴ The *rosarios de la aurora* were religious as well as social events in Vieques where people gathered to pray until until the early dawn. The host of the event usually provided the prayers with alcoholic drinks and even children, if lucky, could have a sip. It was supposedly a common occurrence for people to show up not only to pray but for the free alcohol and for the *rosarios* to end with a brawl between intoxicated prayers. Therefore, sealing the night with a brawl came to be known in Vieques as "like the *rosario de la aurora*."

an extensive list of deaths that tie the 1940s to the present.¹⁵ The Mayor himself remembers how in 1963 the stationed officer at Camp García's entrance gate, when dared by a third person, shot 12 years old Aníbal Correa.¹⁶ He recalls that Aníbal was playing around, begging for money, when the young black man shot him and how, as if by a tragic twist of fate, the Navy gave his family approximately \$10,000 to settle the matter.¹⁷ Yet, the fisherman Carlos Ventura goes back to the times predating the military bases to tell the story of how one day father and son Domingo and Anastacio Acosta, while riding back home from the "corrals" the Navy had kept them in during the day, stepped on a land mine that killed them both.¹⁸ Then one day in July 1940 Juan Martínez and Johnny Maisonet were run over by a military truck.¹⁹ One day Urbano Rosario was stabbed, and one day in 1953 Mapepe was beaten to death.



Figure 7.1: Military personnel drinking outside the Ocean View Hotel in 1942, Isabel II, Vieques²⁰

¹⁵ For an actual list of Viequenses whose deaths were reportedly related to the Navy presence in the island see 1, *Agresiones Físicas-Marina*, Archivo Vertical, FCM, Vieques.

¹⁶ Dámaso Serrano, personal interview, 27 February 2001.

¹⁷ According to my father Luis Cruz, the Navy buried expired rations inside their bases. Viequense youth, poor, hungry and maybe a little bored, used to trespass into Navy property in search of these rations. The enterprise of gathering the food the Navy had deemed unfit for its personnel was very risky. Apparently military personnel did not have a problem with shooting at these young scavengers. María Soto and Luis Cruz, personal interview, 25 February 2001.

¹⁸ Carlos Ventura, personal interview, 28 February 2001. For a discussion of the "corrals" and the Navy practices in Vieques before the formal establishment of bases see "Chapter 6: The Arrival of the U.S. Navy, 1930-1950."

¹⁹ The U.S. House of Representatives discussed in May 5, 1953 a project to award \$15,000 to each of the families of Juan Martínez and Johnny Maisonet for the loss of their sons on July 14, 1940. "Piden Indemnición Familias Vieques," *El mundo* [San Juan] 6 May 1953: 20.

²⁰ Cantazaro: Vieques 1942 (N.p.: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1995) 52.



Figure 7.2: Military Policeman, young lady and Municipal Policeman in the Ocean View Hotel in 1942, Isabel II, Vieques²¹

The way Mapepe died is not clear. Following what could be considered the official version posted in the Museum and Archive *Fortín Conde de Mirasol*, Julián Felipe Francis and 73 years old Julio Bermúdez were beaten because of the first's refusal to sell beer to some U.S. marines in his bar *El Bosque*. The *Fortín*, managed by historian and community activist Robert Rabin, might be the legitimized space for the narration of Vieques' history.²² Yet, the undisciplined versions that circulate outside the *Fortín* deny such an official story. It is common belief among Viequenses that Mapepe was killed because he refused the U.S. sailors sexual access to a Viequense woman. The woman was a famous prostitute renowned throughout the island for being incredibly beautiful, so beautiful that clients asked for her by name. She was also racially white, which might have been rare among the island's prostitute population and which might also explain her popularity with the local and U.S. clients. As the rumours go, the night of April 4, 1953 marines and sailors came to *El Bosque* asking for the *señorita*. Yet, Mapepe had fallen in

²¹ Cantazaro 54.

²² In 1991 the *Fortín Conde de Mirasol* was refurbished with the aid of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture and transformed into a museum and archive. The efforts of its director Robert Rabin have transformed the *Fortín* into an important site for historical research about Vieques. The *Fortín's* archive, however, is a community project without hired personnel or official funding. Ignacio Olazagasti and Robert Rabin, Notas para la historia del Fortín Conde de Mirasol y la isla de Vieques, 2nd ed. (San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1991).

love with the prostitute and planned to honor her through marriage. Echoing the story of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene, that night Mapepe stood up to approximately eight military men and saved the young woman hiding behind the wooden door of the only room in the bar.²³

If the *Fortín* posted the sexually cleansed version, the whispers of Viequenses circulated the romantic one.²⁴ What happened that night might be lost to the inquisitive historian so fascinated with the world of the dead. Some conclusions, however, can be made about the killing of Mapepe by navigating the different versions surrounding the event. For example, these diverging narratives coincide that Mapepe owned a bar that sold alcohol in the barrio *Destino*. Its location near the entrance gate of Camp García made it a likely spot for military personnel to stop by on their way to and from Isabel II, more so considering that the bar was one third up the road to Isabel II. The bar, furthermore, was apparently open the night of the Holy Saturday. This was a special night that Viequenses celebrated with music and dancing. Mapepe, therefore, opened his establishment and Julio Bermúdez and Zenón Camacho Morales came in, as well as at least another eight sailors and marines.²⁵ The rest of what transpired that night between Mapepe and the sailors is up to pure speculation. Yet, I can envision a hardened old man used to the tension of managing a place where Viequenses and sailors converged. He was probably accustomed to infuse his voice with a harshness that could cover up his age.

²³ Antonio, Flor Hiram Cruz, María Soto and Luis Cruz, personal interview, 25 February 2001.

²⁴ The whispered versions, for example, tend to omit that Mapepe was a married man. Manuel Pérez, Pedro Delorme and Mari Jo Gutiérrez, personal interview, 28 February 2001.

²⁵ Zenón Camacho Morales is usually not mentioned in relation to the killing of Mapepe. Yet, he was present at the time and later testified in the court-martial. Vázquez Otero, "Consejo de Guerra," *El mundo* 12.

For when the tough act did not work, he must have kept a machete hidden but handy.²⁶ I also envision drunken sailors and marines, on their way back from Isabel II, stopping at *El Bosque* for a last drink or maybe for the white *señorita*.²⁷ They found, however, “dark skinned” Mapepe poised with, “his arms crossed and a machete in his hand.”²⁸ It was the 68 years old and dark skinned Mapepe standing between them and the *señorita*. Calling on Mapepe’s bluff, their intoxicated minds must have flown back home to access racial registers that would not tolerate any attitude from a black man, much less from a Puerto Rican black man.²⁹ Perhaps their minds went back to the long tradition of lynching unruly subjects in the U.S.³⁰ Sergeant Merl F. Bennett’s mind, in fact, could have easily travelled back to the famous 1930 lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith in Marion, Indiana, because Mapepe that night embodied both an unruly colonized and

²⁶ During the court-martial the defense attorneys produced a machete that the Police supposedly found in El Bosque. The ownership of a machete was a fairly common practice among the owners of establishment in mid 20th century Vieques. Eddie Vázquez Otero, “Bennett Admite Golpeó a Civil: Acusado en el Crimen Vieques Dió Testimonio,” *El mundo* [San Juan] 22 May 1953: 21.

²⁷ During an ensuing court-martial, the Private First Class John A. Bailey of the Marine Corps testified that six marines, including him, were dropped off at El Bosque the night of the killing of Mapepe. He further admitted to being very drunk that night. Private First Class Edward G. Whitbeck, part of Bailey’s group that night, also admitted during the court-martial to being very drunk. Presumably, the other marines were drunk too since they were all returning from an outing in Isabel II. Private First Class Neil R. Jenkins of the Marine Corps, part of the six-marines group, later testified that he went into El Bosque, bought some whiskey and fell asleep. Vázquez Otero, “Consejo de Guerra,” *El mundo* 1. Vázquez Otero, “Bennett Admite,” *El mundo* 1, 21. Eddie Vázquez Otero, “Caso de Vieques: Juez Reprende Fiscal Que Hizo Corrección a Plano Presentado,” *El mundo* [San Juan] 21 May 1953: 22.

²⁸ “de tez oscura que tenía los brazos cruzados y un machete en la mano.” Vázquez Otero, “Caso de Vieques,” *El mundo* 22.

²⁹ According to Pedro Delorme and Manuel Perez, the U.S. sailors and marines attempted to interpellate Viequenses through terms like “blacks” and “Puerto Rican Fuket.” These terms must have echoed previous experiences with other African American and Puerto Rican groups in the U.S. mainland. Thus, the usage of such terms represented a transplantation of racial and ethnic registers into the Viequense colonial context. Pedro Delorme further remembers that the derogative terms were soon appropriated and made readily available by Viequenses as responses in future encounters with military personnel. Pérez, Delorme and Gutiérrez, personal interview.

³⁰ During the 1950s the practice of lynching black people was still commonplace in some states of the U.S. The practice, more than a crime of hate, was usually designed as a violent spectacle that could impart fear to the surviving black population. Such was the case, according to the journalist William Bradford Huie, in the August 1955 murder of the 14 years old black boy Emmett Till in the state of Mississippi. Bradford Huie published an article based on the confession of the acquitted killers. William Bradford Huie, “The Shocking Story of Approved Killing in Mississippi,” *American Experience*, 2003, PBS, 1 July 2007 <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/sfeature/sf_look_confession.html>.

racialized subject.³¹ Private First Class Edward G. Whitbeck might have travelled back to experiences with Puerto Ricans in Brooklyn, New York.³² The killing of Mapepe was indeed a crime of hate. If the sailors and marines sought either beer or a woman, they could have forced the old man into submission to take what they wanted. Still, the marines smashed Mapepe's brain, in the process trashed his bar, and then fled the establishment.³³ The violent act, thus, had the qualities of a lesson imparted on an insolent black man that dared to curtail sexual access to a colonized yet white woman.

People in Vieques might have believed and whispered that Mapepe was a procurer of prostitutes and *El Bosque* a bar-brothel. Five days after his death, however, Mapepe's reputation was officially wiped clean by the Municipal Council. The Council endowed the victim with a posthumous eulogy in the form of the April 10, 1953 *Resolución Núm. 12* (Resolution No. 12).

To strengthen more our demand for justice and our Protest, [the U.S. marines] criminally kill an honest man, a working man, of irreproachable conduct, noble heart and a man of good, they take his precious life through blows and kicks, and not satisfied with this, they wreck his business and badly assault, also, another old man from our town (very respectable), by

³¹ Sergeant Merl F. Bennett of the Marine Corps, who later during a court-martial admitted to beating Mapepe with the branch from a mango tree, was a native of Allen, Indiana. Born in 1932, he was only two years and less than 50 miles north from the August 7, 1930 lynching in Marion, Indiana. Vázquez Otero, "Bennett Admite," *El mundo* 1. "Jurado Exonera Los 2 Marineros Caso de Vieques," *El mundo* [San Juan] 25 May 1953: 23.

³² Private First Class Edward G. Whitbeck of the Marine Corps, involved in the beating of Mapepe, was a native of Brooklyn, New York. According to Kal Wagenheim in the year 1950 there were 301,375 Puerto Ricans in the United States. The overwhelming majority of this Puerto Rican migrant population of the late 1940s and early 1950s settled in New York, especially in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Harlem. Mapepe's nephew and foster child, in fact, lived in New York since 1927. The immigration trend to New York was so strong that among the May 2, 1953 front-page articles of the newspaper *El mundo* was one titled "New York Tiene Más Boricuas Que San Juan" ("New York Has More Puerto Ricans than San Juan"). The article cited 375,000 Puerto Ricans living in New York by 1953. Therefore, Whitbeck must have had previous experiences with Puerto Ricans in New York prior to his arrival in Vieques. "Jurado Exonera," *El mundo* 23. Benjamín Santana, "Lamentan Civiles Isla Vieques No Cooperen Aclaración Crimen." *El mundo* [San Juan] 15 April 1953: 2. "Van a Acusar Dos Marineros," *El mundo* 1. See Appendix 21.

³³ Dr. Edgardo Ortiz that attended Mapepe on the day he died and later performed his autopsy stated that the multiple fractures in Mapepe's skull must have resulted from repeated blows. He noted that a single blow could not have caused Mapepe's death. Vázquez Otero, "Consejo de Guerra," *El mundo* 12.

beating him in the head and other parts of the body, saved miraculously from the criminal hands of the assailants.³⁴

The resolution publicly stated that Mapepe, an innocent victim of U.S. marines, died an honest and working man of irreproachable conduct. The Municipal Council did not attempt through the document to explain the actual killing of Mapepe, but instead concentrated on the unacceptable collective behavior of drunken marines in the civilian sector. Such a sanitized version voided the killing of its particularities and made it emblematic of the violent relationship between Viequenses and the U.S. marines and sailors. The document, furthermore, opened the door for the *Fortín's* version emphasizing on the general drunkenness of the military in Vieques. Although, it is unlikely that Mapepe was killed for refusing to sell beer since Private First Class Neil R. Jenkins later testified in a court-martial that he bought whiskey in *El Bosque* just prior to the violent events of April 4, 1953.³⁵

Mapepe was not the first Viequense to die at the hands of U.S. military personnel. His death was, nonetheless, the first to be brought to justice. Justice, however, is a problematical concept when applied to the U.S. military's actions in a colonial context. The Navy, as personally approved by Rear Admiral Austin K. Doyle, indicted two marines for the voluntary homicide of Mapepe: Sergeant Merl F. Bennett and Private First Class Edward G. Whitbeck. Rear Admiral Doyle, in fact, appointed the judge, prosecutor and defenders for the public court-martial that took place between May 19th

³⁴ "Para robustecer más nuestra demanda de justicia y nuestra Protesta, [los marinos estadounidenses] matan criminalmente a un hombre honrado, trabajador, de conducta intachable, corazón noble y hombre de bien, tronchan su preciosa vida a palos y patadas, y no conforme con esto, le destrozan su negocio y atropellan, además, malamente a otro anciano de nuestro pueblo (muy respetable), dándole golpes por la cabeza y otras partes del cuerpo, salvándose milagrosamente de las manos criminales de sus asaltantes." Asamblea Municipal de Vieques, "Resolución Núm. 12. Serie 1952-1953," April 10, 1953, 14, Agresiones Físicas-Marina, Archivo Vertical, FCM, 2.

³⁵ Vázquez Otero, "Caso de Vieques," El mundo 22.

and May 23rd of 1953 in the San Juan Naval Base.³⁶ In the trial that ensued two marines testified to witnessing how Sergeant Bennett took down two branches from a mango tree behind *El Bosque*. One of them, who happened to be Puerto Rican, further stated that a group of marines had tried to force their entrance to the bedroom adjoined to the bar, but that Mapepe, unarmed, confronted them. Then, the Puerto Rican continued, Bennett and another marine named John A. Bailey took down two branches from the mango tree and returned to the bar. Still, a third marine testified to having seen Bennett and Whitbeck argue with Mapepe and to later seeing two marines beat the old man with sticks. Sergeant Bennett himself confessed to beating Mapepe with the branch of a mango tree and to watching Whitbeck hit Mapepe with the other branch. It even came up in the trial that he had previously confessed to making a pass that night to the aforementioned *señorita*. Private First Class Whitbeck, for his part, testified that he had been too drunk to remember much.³⁷ Notwithstanding the witnesses, possible motive and confessions, both Bennett and Whitbeck were declared not guilty on May 23, 1953. The court-martial, therefore, put forth another version of the killing of Mapepe. In this version, the marines were not guilty. On the contrary, the defense attorneys argued, the outcome proved that while the marines accused never had malicious intentions and could not be connected to the crime, civilians with machetes had portrayed a hostile attitude towards the servicemen.³⁸ Whatever the divergent versions surrounding the killing of Mapepe, Viequesenses have remembered that for the first time in approximately 15 years of tense military-civilian coexistence suspects appeared from behind the fences of the Navy bases

³⁶ “Van a Acusar Dos Marineros,” *El mundo* 1.

³⁷ Vázquez Otero, “Consejo de Guerra,” *El mundo* 1. Vázquez Otero, “Caso de Vieques,” *El mundo* 22. Vázquez Otero, “Bennett Admite,” *El mundo* 1, 21.

³⁸ “Jurado Exonera,” *El mundo* 23.

to be publicly court-martial.³⁹ More importantly, Viequenses have remembered that the suspects were later acquitted. Without probably knowing it, the U.S. Navy created in 1953 the first Viequense martyr. Later, other martyrs would come to accompany Mapepe's memory; and transform Isla Nena into an island of martyrs or an island-martyr. The transformation, however, took some decades in the making.

The outcome of the 1953 trial did not stir Viequenses into a cohesive social movement that could critique and challenge Navy practices in the island, especially not in the magnitude of the movement that followed the 1999 death of David Sanes. If people resented the court-martial verdict, they did so quietly. Their whispers of alternative versions of the killing vented their silenced rebelliousness. Those 50 years wedged between the two deaths made all the difference. The killing of Mapepe, just like the second expropriation wave of 1947-1948, took place within a larger Cold War context that made difficult the surfacing of vocal dissenting stances against U.S. policies. Stemming from the capitalism vs. communism dichotomy, Cold War discourses constructed binary oppositions that marginalized those considered on the wrong side of a black-and-white world. These hegemonic discourses, in turn, combined with a particular brand of Puerto Rican cultural nationalism to both redefine the archipelago's relationship to the American hemisphere and to cast suspicion at the enemy within the colonial borders.⁴⁰

³⁹ According to Manuel Pérez, Pedro Delorme, Carlos Ventura and others, when a civilian filed charges against a sailor or marine, which was not that common, Navy officials hid the accused person and brought out instead a handful of similar looking men for the civilian to identify. Pérez, Delorme and Gutiérrez, personal interview. Ventura, personal interview.

⁴⁰ For an analysis of the early Cold War context, memory and the Puerto Rican national imaginary see Arcadio Díaz Quiñones, *La memoria rota* (San Juan: Ediciones Huracán, 1996).

The 1950s was a pivotal decade in Puerto Rican history. Luis Muñoz Marín, Governor of Puerto Rico from 1949 to 1964, surrounded by a group of idealist public servants like Teodoro Moscoso formulated the three big government projects of the time: Operation Bootstrap, the Estado Libre Asociado (Associated Free State or ELA) and Operation Serenity.⁴¹ The ELA, formally inaugurated on July 25, 1952, transformed the archipelago into the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.⁴² To the extent the commonwealth status implied a voluntary association to the U.S., the ELA ideologues had to refashion political and nationalist discourses surrounding Puerto Rico. The institutionalization of the ELA, in other words, required the redefinition of Puerto Rican cultural nationalism while discouraging, or outrightly repressing, expressions of its political version.⁴³ Cultural and political nationalism had been inseparable in the Puerto Rican imaginary until then, especially during the 1930s heyday of the Nationalist Party and its leader Pedro Albizu Campos. In the 1950s, however, ELA ideologues were engaged in a nation-building project within a colonial context that did not support the nation=state=people equation. Instead, they pushed forth a new political identity for Puerto Rico under the commonwealth status and a new cultural one under Operation

⁴¹ The Operation Bootstrap under Teodoro Moscoso was put into place in the late 1940s. For a discussion of Operation Bootstrap see “Chapter 6: The Arrival of the U.S. Navy, 1930-1950.”

⁴² Luis Muñoz Marín help found the PPD on separatist ideals. These, however, were soon abandoned in order to privilege socio-economic reforms for Puerto Rico. Historians like Francisco Scarano have argued that Muñoz was deeply influenced by what he considered the unfavorable economic terms of the 1946 independence of the Philippines from the U.S. In turn, once Governor of Puerto Rico, Muñoz lobbied for a Puerto Rican-made constitution that would rule the internal workings of the Puerto Rican government. In 1950 the U.S. Congress approved Law 600 allowing for such a Constitutional Assembly. The creation of the Assembly was approved by a 1951 referendum and the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico that the Assembly drafted was subsequently approved through a 1952 referendum. The Constitution was put into effect on July 25, 1952, exactly 54 years after the U.S. invasion of Puerto Rico. Francisco Scarano, *Puerto Rico: Cinco siglos de historia* (San Juan: McGraw-Hill, 1993) 772-733.

⁴³ The Nationalist Party, for example, opposed the creation of a Constitutional Assembly. They regarded the Assembly as a colonial farce. In turn, members of the Nationalist Party staged an armed revolt in October of 1950. The revolt, however, was put down through an impressive show of force and did not prevent the eventual approval of the Commonwealth Constitution. Scarano, *Puerto Rico* 729-733.

Serenity.⁴⁴ The nation-building project was adapted to the early panamericanism of the Cold War context. Puerto Rico, these men argued, came to embody in the 1950s “the best of two worlds.” It boasted the Spanish heritage and Latin American culture while upholding, once the ELA was approved and the archipelago was supposedly no longer a colony, the democratic and economic principles of the U.S.⁴⁵ The privileged position, these ideologues continued, dictated that Puerto Rico assume a leadership role in establishing an intra-hemispheric dialogue.⁴⁶ While this was mostly a self-appointed role, U.S. politicians saw the opportunity of advancing their regional interests. A stable, capitalist and prosperous Puerto Rico could, after all, showcase the benefits of U.S. influence. Such a showcase became more convenient, and even mandatory, after 1959 when the Cuban Revolution threatened to spread its revolutionary influence to other Latin American nations.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Operation Serenity was a cultural nationalist initiative designed to accompany the economic and political changes the Puerto Rican society was undergoing in the mid 20th century. It was a cultural nationalist project defined in opposition to political nationalism. Luis Muñoz Marín and his aides wanted to foster Puerto Rican cultural expressions and pride, without inspiring secessionist ideals. Operation Serenity, in fact, was carried out without the word nation. Puerto Ricans, instead, were referred to by Operation Serenity ideologues as a “people.” This is an important distinction, because the word nation carry certain territorial and sovereignty expectations. See, for example, Lenny A. Ureña Valerio, “Arturo Morales Carrión: el intelectual autonomista y la construcción del imaginario nacional puertorriqueño en los años de la posguerra (1945-1965),” diss., Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2000.

⁴⁵ The ELA ideologues must have been influenced by intellectuals like José Enrique Rodó who argued for the superiority of Latin American culture over U.S. materialism. These ideologues also responded to Puerto Rican nationalist discourses, as expressed by Pedro Albizu Campos, that emphasized on the Spanish and to a lesser degree the mixed-race heritage to the expense of an African one. See, for example, José Enrique Rodó, *Ariel* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2000). And Pedro Albizu Campos, *La conciencia nacional puertorriqueña* (México: Siglo veintiuno editores, sa., 1972).

⁴⁶ Governor Luis Muñoz Marín, for example, met in the White House during May of 1953 with President Dwight D. Eisenhower and other staff members like the Director of the Psychological Strategy Board C.D. Jackson to emphasize the prominent role Puerto Rico could play in U.S. foreign policies towards Latin America. Henry Raymond, “Muñoz Discute Con Asesor de Ike Papel Isla en Latinoamérica,” *El mundo* [San Juan] 9 May 1953: 1.

⁴⁷ Puerto Rico was a double-edged sword to the U.S. It could showcase the benefits of U.S. influence or be a weak point through which to criticize U.S. imperialism. Luis Muñoz Marín, aware of this duality, navigated between the two extremes when negotiating measures for Puerto Rico with U.S. politicians.

The 1950s nation-building project, as carried out within the colonial and Cold War context, depended on disciplined subjects that did not challenge the Puerto Rican or U.S. governments.⁴⁸ There could be no dissenters within the commonwealth borders. The Government of Puerto Rico thus employed the *ley de la mordaza* (Gag Law) that made it illegal to plan or attempt to overthrow the government.⁴⁹ Given the militancy of the Nationalist Party, the Gag Law was expanded to proscribe nationalist expressions or any type of critique towards the Puerto Rican or U.S. governments. Puerto Rican nationalists and critics of the status quo were therefore quickly casted on the wrong side of Cold War, and colonial, dichotomies. Caught inside such Manichean oppositions, Puerto Ricans were simultaneously victims and perpetrators. The pleas of Viequenses, in this sense, were many times silenced in the main island as well as in Vieques under a discourse of the sacrifices to be made for the free world. This was a world ELA ideologues hoped Puerto Rico would belong to. Thus, Viequenses in the 1950s, already lacking physical space, lacked spaces for political maneuvering. The limited spaces available were full of contradictions. On the one hand, the island was defined as central to the Puerto Rican-

⁴⁸ The establishment of the ELA was a clear “from above” nation-building project. The ELA ideologues, working within the restrictions of a colonial state, still had the state apparatus at their disposal with its resources and monopolistic claims to violence. Among the resources was the public education system.

⁴⁹ The Government of Puerto Rico passed on June 10, 1948 Law #43, otherwise known as the Gag Law. It was also known as the Little Smith Act since it was modeled after the U.S. Smith Act of 1940. The Gag Law made it illegal to plan or attempt to overthrow the government in the island. Given the colonial context in Puerto Rico, nationalist expressions like raising the Puerto Rican flag were also made illegal. The Law, in fact, curtailed the freedom of expression and was therefore revoked in 1957. Nonetheless, scholars like Ivonne Acosta have argued that the Gag Law was an instrument of Luis Muñoz Marín and the ELA designed to silence opposition, especially in the form of the Nationalist Party and its leader Pedro Albizu Campos. The Gag Law, in fact, allowed the government to imprison Albizu Campos in 1950. The Gag Law made clear it that in the 1950s Puerto Rican nationalists, not on board with ELA ideologues, were on the wrong side of Cold War dichotomies. The Gag Law had long-lasting consequences that carried into the 1980s and the problem with profiling “subversives.” Ivonne Acosta-Lespier, “The Smith Act Goes to San Juan: La Mordaza, 1948-1957,” *Puerto Rico under Colonial Rule: Political Persecution and the Quest for Human Rights*, eds. Ramón Bosque-Pérez and José Javier Colón Morera (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006) 59-65. Also see Ramón Bosque Pérez and José Javier Colón Morera, eds., *Las Carpetas: Persecución política y derechos civiles en Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Centro para la Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Civiles (CIPDC), Inc., 1997).

U.S. relationship due to the obvious military interests of the U.S. On the other hand, those same interests rendered invisible Viequenses' pleas about lack of lands, unemployment, ghettoization of Viequense communities and civilian-military tensions. There simply could not exist dissenting voices against the embodiment of the free world, which was, of course, the U.S. military. Such discursive transfiguration of the U.S. serviceman into the embodiment of the free world must discouraged public condemnation of the outcome of the Bennett-Whitbeck court-martial.

The U.S. military was not the only transfigured entity in the 1950s Viequense scenario. Decades earlier Luis Lloréns Torres had transfigured Vieques into Isla Nena through a poem of the same name.⁵⁰ The poem, subsequently echoed by different cultural texts, originated an enduring myth of origins about mother and daughter islands that by the 1950s had captured Viequense' imaginations.⁵¹ The myth, in turn, translated into a concrete political project establishing a feminine familial bond between Vieques and Puerto Rico. Vieques was the infant and Puerto Rico the protective parent. Yet, after the 1940s the mother island could not deny having sacrificed Isla Nena to the free world. If martyrdom, however, implies suffering for some greater and nobler cause, the embodiments of the greater and nobler cause could not be deemed as unruly. Thus, when the U.S. sailors and marines became violent and disrespectful in the 1950s Vieques, there

⁵⁰ Luis Lloréns Torres, "La Isla Nena," Obras Completas, vol. I (Barcelona: Editorial Cordillera, 1967) 488-489.

⁵¹ The programs handed out for the patron saint festivities were perhaps the single most important text for imagining a mid 20th century Viequense identity. It was an accessible pamphlet meant to interpellate a Viequense community through readily identifiable poems like Isla Nena and other narratives about the island's history and idiosyncrasy. The programs, in fact, helped to make texts readily identifiable. In this sense, the act of reading the programs represented a collective ritual uniting a community that, as Benedict Anderson argues, did not necessarily know each other or physically coincide. See, for example, Municipio de Vieques, "Programa de las Solemnes Fiestas en honor a nuestra santísima virgen del Carmen," (Puerto Rico: n.p., 1956). And Municipio de Vieques, "Fiestas Patronales de Vieques En Honor A La Virgen del Carmen Julio 19 al 28 1974," (Puerto Rico: n.p., 1974). Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, revised ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

was an uncomfortable silence. Only whispers like those surrounding the killing of Mapepe were allowed to stir.

Amidst the intolerant Cold War and colonial context arose the rather solitary but still strong voices of the main islanders Pedro Albizu Campos and Pedro Juan Soto. Albizu Campos denounced in a 1948 article that:

In Vieques the government of the United States is carrying out the vivisection of our nation. The Viequense society is dying, extinguishing itself before the cold, deliberated and intentional attack of the government of the United States [that] have chosen Vieques in the plain light of contemporary civilization the crime of genocide.⁵²

In his critique of the Navy's actions in Vieques, Albizu Campos made the small island a synecdoche of the Puerto Rican nation. Puerto Ricans, he added, should not be indifferent to what happened in Vieques because it was a warning as well as a manifestation of U.S. imperialism in the archipelago. One decade later Pedro Juan Soto picked up the critique of the man who spent most of the 1950s in jail. Yet, Soto added a cynical edge. Through his 1959 novel Usmaíl Pedro Juan Soto made famous the characterization of Vieques as the "colony of the colony."⁵³ Vieques, in the novel, was a militarized island that mirrored the main island. The reflection was so unpleasant that main islanders looked uncomfortably away.⁵⁴

⁵² "En Vieques lleva a cabo el gobierno de los Estados Unidos la vivisección de nuestra nación. La sociedad de Vieques va muriendo, extinguiéndose ante el ataque frío, deliberado e intencionado del gobierno de los Estados Unidos [que] han escogido a Vieques para repetir a plena luz de la civilización contemporánea el crimen del genocidio." Albizu Campos, "Colaboradores del despotismo yanqui asienten tácitamente al crimen de Estados Unidos en Vieques," La conciencia nacional puertorriqueña 50-51.

⁵³ Pedro Juan Soto, Usmaíl (Río Piedras: Editorial Cultural, 1973).

⁵⁴ Pedro Albizu Campos and Pedro Juan Soto paid the critiques they made to the Puerto Rican and U.S. governments with their own flesh. Albizu Campos was imprisoned for most of the 1950s. While in jail he was supposedly tortured and experimented upon. Soto, on the other hand, lost his son Carlos Soto Arriví in the July 25, 1978 Cerro Maravilla Killings when policemen ambushed and executed two pro-independence sympathizers.

Pedro Albizu Campos' employed the word genocide to describe the Navy's actions in Vieques during the 1940s. His choice of word might not be justified when comparing 1940s Vieques to Nazi Germany. Yet, by the 1950s the term genocide definitely had some relevance. While the Navy did not systematically kill Viequenses, it did meticulously conspire to break up the community and eliminate the population from the island. Contrary to the outright massacre the Spanish Empire carried out in the year 1514, the U.S. Navy imaginatively plotted to rid the island of inhabitants.⁵⁵ It wielded, under a public good neighbor discourse, unquestioned authority in the island to the detriment of the local population. Perhaps the most serious plot undertaken by the Navy to the detriment of Viequenses came during the late 1950s in the form of Project V-C.⁵⁶

During 1958-1964 the Department of Defense and the White House secretly pushed forth plans to expropriate the complete islands of Vieques and Culebra. The plans came to be known as Project V-C. The negotiations of Project V-C were conducted confidentially between the Washington-based group headed by the Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and the San Juan-based committee led by the Governor Luis Muñoz Marín. In these negotiations the Puerto Rican Governor, careful not to appear uncooperative or anti-American but obliged to look after the welfare of Viequenses, skillfully argued against the expropriations. In a December 28, 1961 letter to President John F. Kennedy Governor Marín wrote that among the many adverse political, social and human repercussions of expropriating Vieques was the fact that:

⁵⁵ See "Chapter 2: Myths of Origin and Foundational Figures, 1514."

⁵⁶ For an analysis of Project V-C see Evelyn Vélez Rodríguez, Proyecto V-C Negociaciones Secretas entre Luis Muñoz Marín y La Marina: Plan Drácula (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, Inc, 2002). See also Meléndez López, La batalla de Vieques 130-136. Documents relating to the Project V-C negotiations can be found in the Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín in Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico.

There are about 8,000 people in Vieques. They and their ancestors have lived there for many generations. Their roots have grown around family, neighbors, schools, churches, houses, land and jobs. The project involves forcible uprooting of these people -- even removal of the bodies from the cemeteries because, we are told, the people of Vieques will not be allowed to return to visit the graves.⁵⁷

The Governor's letter had the purpose of recapitulating his concerns about Project V-C as he had expressed them to the President in a December 16th conversation. In these occasions Muñoz Marín emphasized to President Kennedy that Viequenses had inhabited the island for many generations. This people, Muñoz added, were very serious about paying tribute to their dead, especially in All Saints' Day. If removed from the island Viequenses would have to be allowed back at least once every year, or their dead would have to be unearthed and expropriated with them. The prospect of expropriating dead bodies, Muñoz noted in his letter, had not deterred the DOD's plans. On the contrary, the DOD seemed willing to unearth the dead. This was the reason why the San Juan committee mockingly renamed the project as the Dracula Plan.⁵⁸ The Governor's

⁵⁷ Luis Muñoz Marín, "December 28, 1961 letter to President John F. Kennedy," 7, Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares en Puerto Rico, Cartapacio 55, 1962-1958, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM.

⁵⁸ The atoll of Diego García in the Chagos Islands provides an example through which to compare U.S. policies towards Vieques. The local population of this Indian Ocean atoll, known as the Ilois, was completely expropriated in 1967-1971 by the British Empire. The British Government owns the archipelago but leased part of it to the U.S. until the year 2016. The British Empire, therefore, expropriated the Ilois for the U.S. Empire. The expropriation of the Ilois people provides a perfect example of imperial cooperation. In addition, it evidences that while the U.S. stayed clear of expropriating U.S. citizens in Vieques, it had no qualms with the British Empire's expropriation of British citizens in a very similar situation across the globe. Perhaps the expropriations in Diego García also suggest that the U.S. Empire, as embodied in the DOD, had no problems with engaging intermediaries to do their dirty work. In fact, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy Kenneth Belieu had proposed to the San Juan committee on October 12, 1961 that the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico should be in charge of the public relations of Project V-C. The request portrayed a reluctance of the DOD to undergo public scrutiny and offered the Commonwealth instead as a buffer. In this sense, the 1977-1980 Mayor of Vieques Radamés Tirado states that, "the Navy never shows its face. The Navy always uses other persons and other agencies to do what they want." It should be noted, however, that the British Empire did not unearth cemeteries in Diego García. The locals, nonetheless, were only allowed to return in 2006 to tend their family graves. "Emotional Return for Chagossians," BBC News, 2006, BBC, 4 July 2007 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4909264.stm>. 30, Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares en Puerto Rico, Cartapacio 55, 1962-1958, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM. "la Marina nunca da la cara. La Marina siempre se vale de

arguments, however, did convince President Kennedy. The President, weighing in the negative international attention that such an expropriation would entail, decided to stay clear of the dead.⁵⁹

Governor Luis Muñoz Marín's play with the centrality of the dead for Viequenses might have saved the island community in 1962. Yet, the DOD revived the project when President Kennedy died in 1963. Puerto Rican politicians then found out that the DOD had, in fact, never discarded the project. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy Kenneth Belieu, ignoring the President's decision, went directly to Congress for funds and authorization. In 1964 the Armed Services Committee secretly approved \$4,000,000 for the acquisition of Culebra and 1,400 acres in Vieques.⁶⁰ The project thus evolved into the expropriation of Vieques southern coast as opposed to the whole civilian stretch. The Puerto Rican politicians again engaged DOD officials on the matter. Yet, this time the expropriation plans were leaked to the Mayor and people of Vieques. Viequenses frantically organized to impede the project through picketing, lobbying in Washington and general stirring of the transnational Viequense community.⁶¹ The project was

otras personas o de otras agencias para que hagan lo que ellos quieren." Radamés Tirado, personal interview, 4 November 2003.

⁵⁹ Governor Muñoz Marín argued to President Kennedy in his December 28, 1961 letter that Project V-C would provide an instrument for "our enemies" and "Castro-Cubans" to critique the Puerto Rico-U.S. relationship as "vassalage." President Kennedy must have been concerned about negative international attention considering the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion in April of that year and the possible presence in Vieques of paramilitary groups. Luis Muñoz Marín, "December 28, 1961 letter to President John F. Kennedy," 7, Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares en Puerto Rico, Cartapacio 55, 1962-1958, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM. John F. Kennedy, "January 16, 1962 letter to Governor Luis Muñoz Marín," 6, Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares en Puerto Rico, Cartapacio 55, 1962-1958, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM. 39, Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares en Puerto Rico, Cartapacio 55, 1962-1958, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM.

⁶⁰ 58, Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares en Puerto Rico, Cartapacio 54, 1964-1963, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM.

⁶¹ The Municipal Assembly and Mayor Antonio Rivera drafted documents specifically calling for the help of the Viequense populations in New York, Spain, St. Croix, St. Thomas, the main island and any other part of the world. The call recognized a Viequense transnational community and the political importance of the exiled Viequenses to those that remained in the island. Asamblea Municipal de

nonetheless dropped on May of 1964 when the San Juan committee unilaterally struck a secret bargain with the DOD. The accord stipulated that the DOD renounced to future expropriation plans if the Commonwealth deferred from sponsoring touristic development in Vieques. If the 1960s Puerto Rico at the pinnacle of Operation Bootstrap could be showcased by U.S. officials and ELA supporters, Vieques with its rampant unemployment and below poverty level population could not.⁶² Viequenses, not aware of the San Juan-DOD bargain, celebrated the success of their mobilization. They might have celebrated too soon. The Navy thereafter continued to formulate unfriendly measures designed to strangle the Viequense population.⁶³ As the Mayor of Vieques Antonio Rivera publicly denounced in 1964, the Navy wished the “SAVAGE MURDER” of the Viequense community and to force Viequenses to leave their island without openly kicking them out themselves.⁶⁴ By the 1960s the Mayor of Vieques and Pedro Albizu Campos coincided, the Navy sought the genocide of the Viequense people.

Vieques, “Resolución Núm. 62. Serie 1963-1964,” 36, Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares en Puerto Rico, Cartapacio 54, 1964-1963, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM, 2.

⁶² James Dietz wrote that during the 1950s-1960s heyday of Operation Bootstrap people from all over the world came to Puerto Rico to witness and study the economic miracle. In roughly 20 years of the Operation Bootstrap’s implementation in Puerto Rico: unemployment decreased, agriculture was abandoned as a viable economic activity and the socio-economic landscape became highly industrialized, urban and inextricable from the U.S. Perhaps the biggest accomplishment that the ideologues of Operation Bootstrap boasted was that the exponential growth of the Gross National Product (GNP) and per capita incomes. These results, however, either did not apply to Vieques or reached the island’s shores belatedly. In fact, Arturo Meléndez López wrote that Mayor Antonio Rivera complained to Teodoro Moscoso in August of 1953 about the exclusion of Vieques from all the maps in the PRIDCO “I am Puerto Rico” brochure. James L. Dietz, Historia Económica de Puerto Rico (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1997) 258-329. Meléndez López, La batalla de Vieques 121.

⁶³ In accordance with the no touristic development stance, the Navy consistently hindered improvements to the civilian airport. The only civilian airport in Vieques was located in Navy-owned land. The Navy, nonetheless, had its own airport in which jets could land. The Navy, in addition, controlled and thus restricted access to the civilian airspace, especially over the island’s southern strip.

⁶⁴ “SALVAJE ASESINATO.” Antonio Rivera, “Carta 31 de marzo de 1964 Al PUEBLO DE VIEQUES,” 54, Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares en Puerto Rico, Cartapacio 54, 1964-1963, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM, 1. 9, Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares en Puerto Rico, Cartapacio 54, 1964-1963, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico FLMM.

Mayor Antonio Rivera took office with the start of massive military practices in 1948 and left the position in 1972 just prior to a marked Navy withdrawal from civilian Vieques.⁶⁵ His 24-year incumbency thus marked a very controversial period in Viequense history. In the Vieques of Mayor Don Toño, for example, social order was maintained by the Municipal and the Military Police. These organs, echoing the late 19th century Vieques divided between foreigner and native workers, catered to two separate but somewhat equal populations.⁶⁶ Officially at least, the local Police only exercised authority over civilians and vice versa. In practice, however, their jurisdictions might not have been so clear-cut, and their reliability highly questionable.⁶⁷ Government institutions under Mayor Rivera were embodied by local individuals like Pepe *el juez* (the judge) and *Teniente* (Lieutenant) Guardiola. The personalistic way in which these individuals wielded state power was resented by Viequenses who understood that these persons complied with the U.S. military in detriment of the local population. In turn, many Viequenses came to regard these institutions as biased and generally inaccessible to them. Civilians' inaccessibility, real or perceived, to official spaces of dissent such as the courts and the police facilitated an everyday grassroots politics based on violence. To the unanswered claims of public insults, beatings, murders, undignified conduct, drunkenness, disrespectful conduct against women, forced entries, rapes and others,

⁶⁵ Pedro Delerme remembers that the Navy stopped giving hordes of servicemen passes to civilian Vieques around the year 1976. It might, however, have been sooner since in 1973 civilian protests forced the Navy to withdraw from the *fiestas patronales* and subsequently from the Viequense cultural sphere. A more limited numbers of military personnel still received passes during the 1980s and 1990s and fights continued to erupt between Viequenses and the military in civilian Vieques. Pérez, Delerme and Gutiérrez, personal interview. Ismael Guadalupe, personal interview, 28 February 2001. Joscan Ramos, "Marinos borrachos atacan viequenses," *Claridad* [San Juan] 19-25 August 1983: 1-3.

⁶⁶ See "Chapter 5: The Sugar Baptism of Isla Nena, Late 1800s-1930."

⁶⁷ The MP and the local Police shared headquarters in an Isabel II building. Although the MP was not allowed to exercise authority over civilians unless in military territory, Carlos Ventura claims to having witnessed the MP chasing civilians in civilian territory. Ventura, personal interview.

Manuel Pérez remembers that, “we [Viequense men] had to hit hard because we knew we would loose in court.”⁶⁸ This might have been a belief that the Bennet-Whitbeck court-martial created and everyday life in post-Mapepe Vieques confirmed.⁶⁹ “People,” Ismael Guadalupe recalls, “gained their respect by fighting on the streets.”⁷⁰ There was no real expectation for justice or vindication from the part of the local law enforcement organs. So for more than two decades Viequense men went to courts as the accused, rather than as the accuser.⁷¹

If Viequense men avoided official spaces of dissent, Viequense women were discouraged to even leave their houses. Antonio Rivera, son of Mayor Rivera, recalls that after 5pm men sent women to their rooms.⁷² They then remained, as in a spatial compromise between the inside and outside, circumscribed to their balconies. While an official curfew was enforced by the local government during the 1950s, the unofficial curfew Rivera remembers was self-imposed.⁷³ People understood that in the nights the town belonged to the sailors and marines and that no respectable person was to be seen outside. According to Antonio, complex networks of prostitution ruled the nights. Kids, called *mulas* (mules), led servicemen to prostitutes waiting for them in the outskirts of Isabel II. There were unofficial brothels, but the sexual acts were many times

⁶⁸ Pérez, Delorme and Gutiérrez, personal interview.

⁶⁹ While murder represented the worst type of aggression, making it almost impossible for the authorities to not engage in an investigation, the most earnest followers of the Bennet-Whitbeck trial was Mapepe’s nephew and foster child who lived in New York. Perhaps his ignorance of the Viequense context made him hope for justice. Santana, “Lamentan Civiles Isla Vieques,” *El mundo* 2.

⁷⁰ “La gente peleando en las calles se dió a respetar.” Ismael Guadalupe, personal interview.

⁷¹ Antonio, Cruz, Soto and Cruz, personal interview.

⁷² Rafael Antonio Rivera, personal interview, 27 February 2001.

⁷³ According to my mother María Soto, in the 1950s civilians were forced to return to their homes every night to the sound of sirens. The origin of the curfew is unclear, but my mother María Soto speculates that the local government enforced the curfew at 8 or 9pm every night to protect the population from the military personnel. If this was the case, the curfew was an outright acknowledgement by the local government of its impotency to resolve civilian-military tensions and impose order on civilian Vieques. María Soto, personal interview, 3 March 2001.

consummated under the Viequense sky. Still, people generally understood that prostitution was somehow circumscribed to the *Cañon* (Cannon). This was a poor neighborhood of humble houses and crooked streets wedged in the southwestern outskirts of Isabel II between the municipal cemetery and the *Cerro Tamarindo* (Tamarind Hill).⁷⁴ The local population thus stigmatized the neighborhood and its inhabitants as if the rules of the ordered city applied to post-1940s Isabel II. The farther a dwelling was from the town's plaza, the less respectable were its dwellers, and the less reputable its passer-by. Navigating Isabel II, in turn, was complex exercise guided by temporal and spatial considerations that dictated reputations and potentially life threatening situations.⁷⁵ Yet, shrewdness took travellers only so far because, as Pedro Delorme states, the servicemen did not know how nor cared to distinguish between "decent" people and "happy" women.⁷⁶

Pedro Juan Soto portrayed the tense situation lived in civilian Vieques through his novel *Usmaíl*. In a moment of desperation, Cisa, the archetypical Viequense woman, breaks the silent code of spatial dominion. She wanders at night into the streets of Isabel II searching for her lover Usmaíl. As if responding to her transgression, two marines sexually assault her. Yet, Usmaíl, who happened to walk by, stops them and diverts their wrath upon himself. Unwillingly, Cisa and Usmaíl take up the assault to the proper authorities. The deed, nonetheless, goes unpunished. It is even suggested that the assault would not be investigated. They are both unavenged and publicly humiliated. Cisa, then,

⁷⁴ The *Cerro Tamarindo* has long been a landmark in Isabel II. It is a grassy hill that used to have a lonely tamarind tree in the top. Viequenses arriving from Fajardo, for example, knew they were reaching home once they saw the tree from the sea. Hurricane Hugo, however, knocked down the tree in 1989. Since then there have been various attempts to substitute the fallen tree, as if the fate of Viequenses depended on the stubbornness of a tree.

⁷⁵ Antonio, personal interview, 26 February 2001. Ismael Guadalupe, personal interview.

⁷⁶ Pérez, Delorme and Gutiérrez, personal interview.

is left to endure Usmaíl's recriminations for the consequences of her spatial transgression. In fact, once they reach Cisa's house Usmaíl beats her until the woman is reduced to a kneeling position. The wrath of the marines, completing a circle of violence, makes it back to Cisa. The beating, furthermore, is Usmaíl's assertion that he, even if only in the private space of her house, still controls her body.⁷⁷ If, as Michel Foucault argued, power is ultimately expressed and wielded over very material bodies, the civilian-military tension was being worked out on the bodies of Viequense women.⁷⁸

Vieques' intricate geography of civilian-military spatial dominions set into collision conflicting notions of masculinity. These were notions influenced by colonial as well as racial considerations. In this sense, U.S. sailors and marines, assuming the role of imperial agents, claimed authority over colonized subjects and especially targeted, perhaps as the most disciplining spectacle of violence, the bodies of colonized women. Viequense men, in turn, assuming the role of fathers, husbands and significant others bound to the honor of their women, claimed an obligation to defend Viequense women. Caught in the complex geography of gendered performances, the narrator of Carmelo Rodríguez Torres' Veinte siglos después del homicidio desperately searched for *la nena* (the girl).

That night I looked for *la nena*, and did not see her. "An attack has taken her again, and misled her". -I thought. That is why I looked for her. I could not find her. It is not difficult to look for a person in a small handful of earth like this one...A fear that ran through my bones. You know, there are no houses from Monte Santo to Luján. And it is here where the Nephilim have made their camp. I could no longer live with the idea of *la nena* in the arms of a man...When I got to the gate I asked one of them for *la nena*. There were three with guns. Ah, and now I remember, with some

⁷⁷ Soto, Usmaíl 270-280.

⁷⁸ See, for example, Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

letters like M.P. in their arms. “Where is my *nena*”? –I asked them again. Since they laughed, I got angry.⁷⁹

In many ways, Rodríguez Torres’ 1971 novel portrays the anxieties of an emasculated man. This is a man affronted by the Nephilim that took *la nena*, as in Isla Nena, and then laughed at him.⁸⁰ This narrator, offered by Rodríguez Torres as a synecdoche of Viequense men, is angry and fearful for *la nena*’s fate. Yet, he does not rise to the situation because, “Again my old age. These weak testicles, one cramped over the other –as if hiding- are capable of nothing, even less of making a new life.”⁸¹ This is a Viequense man that simply felt impotent to fight the U.S. Navy imagined as the biblical Nephilim, a wicked race of giants.

When Carmelo Rodríguez Torres wrote his novel almost two decades had passed since the killing of Mapepe. The Navy, however, continued to own 75% of Vieques, marines and sailors still roamed the civilian stretch and no major touristic establishment had been developed in the island that had instead decreased its population by 16%.⁸² It is thus understandable that Rodríguez Torres, the most renowned Viequense author, painted a bleak Viequense world.⁸³ Yet, something very fundamental within the people of Vieques had changed and it was brought up by Project V-C. Once news of the

⁷⁹ Carmelo Rodríguez Torres, Veinte siglos después del homicidio (Río Piedras: Editorial Antillano, 1980) 270-276.

⁸⁰ For a discussion of the Nephilim see “Chapter 6: The Arrival of the U.S. Navy, 1930-1950.”

⁸¹ Rodríguez Torres, Veinte siglos 112.

⁸² See Appendix 18.

⁸³ Carmelo Rodríguez Torres recalls that some literary critics deemed his novel Veinte siglos después del homicidio too dark and difficult to understand. Rodríguez Torres, however, ties the criticism to the prevalent ignorance about Vieques. He says, “hubos muchos momentos en que ellos decían que mi obra era muy Quevediana, muy oscura y que nadie la entendía. Y yo dije, pero si aquí nadie tampoco ha entendido del mundo Viequense. Este era un mundo tan oscuro y tan difícil, con tan ausencias de luces, y de necesidades, que yo los llevé a mi natal isla.” “There were many instances in which they said that my work was very Quevedian, very dark and that nobody understood it. And I said, but if here nobody understands either about the Viequense world. This was a world so dark and so difficult, with so many absences of lights, and of necessities, that I brought them to my native island.” Carmelo Rodríguez Torres, personal interview, 5 November 2003.

expropriation plans leaked to the people in 1964, Viequenses mobilized and decided to circumvent San Juan in order to lobby for their interests directly in Washington. It was a bold statement casting doubt upon how well the Puerto Rican government defended the community's interests.⁸⁴ Perhaps Viequenses realized at the time that their very survival depended upon their collective actions. So in 1964, faced with the Navy's claims over the island, Viequenses organized under the cross partisan *Comité de la Defensa de Vieques* (Vieques' Defense Committee) and collectively denounced the Navy's schemes as contrary to the community's progress.⁸⁵ In turn, Viequenses celebrated what they thought were the rewards of their own actions. The social mobilization against the 1964 expropriation plan was therefore an empowering experience for the Viequense community.

Nine years after the final demise of Project V-C, Viequenses again mobilized to denounce the Navy's actions in the island. This time they forced the Navy to withdraw from the municipality's patron saint festivities and, subsequently, from the island's cultural activities.⁸⁶ This 1973 mobilization differed from the 1964 one insofar as the group had a strong presence of the Viequense youth and the political left. The left, in this context, mostly included members of the Puerto Rican socialist (PSP) and independence

⁸⁴ When visited by the Vieques' Defense Committee, Governor Luis Muñoz Marín told them to look into the constitution for guidance on citizenship rights. He either wanted to quickly dismiss them with a quest or expected them to mobilize and maybe directly challenge the U.S. Navy and government in ways Muñoz felt he could not. 12, Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares en Puerto Rico, Cartapacio 54, 1964-1963, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM.

⁸⁵ 9, Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares en Puerto Rico, Cartapacio 54, 1964-1963, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM. Individuals like Mayor Antonio Rivera and members of the Municipal Assembly had been criticizing the Navy's actions in Vieques and the indifferent stance of the Puerto Rican government since the 1940s. However, Viequenses did not collectively mobilize against the Navy until 1964. For the critiques made by Mayor Antonio Rivera, the Municipal Council and others see, for example, *El mundo* during the months of April and May 1953.

⁸⁶ The Navy had until then publicly maintained a good neighbor discourse that included its presence in Viequense cultural activities. The Navy, for example, usually put forth a contingent for the carnivals that concluded the yearly patron saint festivities.

(PIP) parties. It was the left, in fact, that had kept on denouncing the Navy's presence in the island. In those 10 years that elapsed between the 1964 mobilization and the 1973 one, center and right sectors refrained from making and publicly disavowed denunciations against the Navy's activities in the island. In a political context that had become more polarized center stances disappeared. Perhaps the most critical members of the center were disillusioned by the inability of the PPD to address the community's problems and therefore moved to the left. One thing was for sure. By the 1970s, as the PPD had become institutionalized, the optimism of the 1940s was definitely lost.⁸⁷ Thus, my uncle, part of the *Comité* in 1964 as a representative of the *Juventud Popular* (PPD Youth) in the 1964 *Comité*, identified himself as a non-affiliated independence supporter in 1973.⁸⁸ The left, marginalized from the state apparatus, allowed for critical stances against both the U.S. and Puerto Rican governments. So the left dominated the 1973 anti-Navy mobilization and the right, with one very vocal U.S. resident in the island, responded by attacking, mocking and dismissing the protesters as communists.⁸⁹ Maybe 20 years had passed since the killing of Mapepe, but the Cold War context still weighed heavily over the island's population.

In 1977 the left ceded way to another cross-partisan mobilization. Viequenses, under pro-statehood Mayor Radamés Tirado, fought to prevent the approval by the Puerto Rican government of a Navy aviation easement over Vieques' southern coast. The Puerto Rican government headed by the PPD Governor Rafael Hernández Colón

⁸⁷ The PPD was definitely institutionalized in Vieques under Mayor Antonio Rivera (1948-1972) who was followed by another PPD Mayor Carlos Castaño (1973-1976). See Appendix 19.

⁸⁸ "En Fiestas de Vieques Comité combatirá presencia Marina," *Claridad* [San Juan] 8 July 1973: 8.

⁸⁹ "En festejos patronales Viequenses protestan presencia Marina," *Claridad* [San Juan] 31 July 1973: 3.

conducted secret negotiations with the Navy.⁹⁰ This time the Navy offered the land titles for the *Monte Santo* and *Santa María* tracts in exchange for the aviation easement over the same civilian stretch that was going to be expropriated in 1964.⁹¹ Again the people of Vieques were not consulted and again rose the question of just how well the Puerto Rican government defended the community's interests.⁹²

In the 1970s opposition to the Navy presence and practices in Vieques grew increasingly vocal and militant. In 1971 and again in 1976, for example, people took back Navy-owned tracts of land in Camp García. These two squatter movements founded the communities of *Bravos de Boston* (Braves from Boston) and *Villa Borínquen* (Borinquen Villa).⁹³ The communities became very material and permanent challenges to the Navy's authority in the island. Such open challenges facilitated the growth of opposition. So by the late 1970s the Viequense sectors openly critical of the Navy, although marked by the left, defied allegiances to political parties. The presence of Mayor Tirado in the 1977 mobilization, for example, challenged some of the presumptions about protesters being a group of communists.⁹⁴ His actions, in addition, made it thinkable that pro-statehood sympathizers, associated with the political right,

⁹⁰ The negotiations regarding the aviation easements were actually conducted between the Puerto Rican government and the General Services Administration (GSA). The absence of the Navy from the negotiations, according to Mayor Tirado, followed its general trend to use other persons and agencies to get what it wants. Interview with Tirado.

⁹¹ The Navy had been offering the return of those same tracts of land to the Puerto Rican government at least since the 1960s but was asked to do so since the 1940s. The late 1970s offer evidenced that for almost three decades the Navy had kept ownership, but not care, of a land that it did not use. The Puerto Rican government had cared for those lands and provided the dwellers with adequate infrastructure since the 1940s. The transfer of the lands was finally begun in 1978-1979. Yet, the Municipality of Vieques did not receive titles to the land until under the Administration of Mayor Manuela Santiago. Interview with Tirado. See "Chapter 6: The Arrival of the U.S. Navy, 1930-1950."

⁹² Tirado, personal interview. See Appendix 19.

⁹³ Victor Emeric, "Algunas fechas significativas en la historia de Vieques," 2.

⁹⁴ The anti-Navy stance that Mayor Radamés Tirado assumed created tensions in the island. He recalls being called a "*comunista enmascarado*" (undercover communist) and being asked how a PPD or pro-statehood sympathizer could want the Navy to leave Vieques. Tirado, personal interview.

could openly denounce the U.S. Navy. The Navy, after all, was the embodiment of the U.S. government in Vieques. Yet, opposition to the Navy slowly became more visible and widespread.

Then, one day in February 1978, David decided it was time to face up to Goliath and respond to Isla Nena's pleas. As if to refute Rodríguez Torres' claims of impotency, Viequense fishermen decided to tell the U.S. Navy and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies that there was indeed going to be a fight. So, facing a three week-long fishing prohibition due to NATO exercises in the island, the fishermen took to the sea on February 6, 1978 with slingshots literally in hand. For hours their small boats outmaneuvered the NATO ships and interposed themselves as human barriers between the military vessels and Isla Nena. Their grassroots and very desperate act of civil disobedience was successful in stopping, if only momentarily, the live ammunition practice.⁹⁵ For a couple of hours Isla Nena breathed more easily.

From 1978 to 1983, fishermen retook the community activism ignited in 1964 and revived in the 1970s. Their activism was not framed in partisan or outright anti-imperial terms. Instead, they justified their grassroots acts of civil disobedience as the defense of

⁹⁵ The February 1978 events have been immortalized through narrations like those published in the Internet by the organization Vieques Libre. In their website they published that: "Vieques' fishermen are extremely courageous. They have confronted the warships at sea several times. In February 1978, U.S. admiral Robert Fanagan told the fisherman that they would not be allowed to fish during 3 weeks. All NATO countries had planned an intensive military maneuver along all of Vieques' coastline. Carlos Zenón informed him that they would protest. "Imagine me, a Puerto Rican fisherman, telling a US Navy admiral that we're going to cause problems for them" he said. On 6 February 1978, fed-up with the Navy's arrogance, the fishermen of Vieques took a desperate gamble. Forty fishing boats "invaded" waters where target practice with live ammunition were about to begin. They were carrying out a struggle with the slingshot of David against the Goliath of NATO. They were successful detaining the maneuvers and awakening the support of the entire Puerto Rican nation. This activism at sea has won important victories for the people of Vieques during their struggle against the U.S. Navy." "Struggle and Resistance: The Struggle between David and Goliath," Vieques Libre, 2003, Vieques Libre, 8 July 2007 <<http://www.viequeslibre.addr.com/oldviequeslibre/legacy.htm>>. For an analysis of the fishermen's movement and of civilian mobilizations against the U.S. Navy in Vieques see Katherine T. McCaffrey, Military Power and Popular Protest: The U.S. Navy in Vieques, Puerto Rico (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002) 75-79.

their right to perform a craft and make an honest living. The ability to fish, the fishermen concretely argued, depended on access to Navy-restricted waters and the upkeep of those same waters in an unpolluted state. So there was indeed an environmental edge to the fishermen's movement.⁹⁶ The fishermen's arguments represented a very concrete and broad enough cause that Viequenses could relate to. It further helped that the leadership of the *Asociación de Pescadores de Vieques* (Vieques Fishermen's Association) was markedly pro-statehood as was Mayor Radamés Tirado and the Governor of Puerto Rico Carlos Romero Barceló.⁹⁷ The left had already been involved in anti-Navy activities. The 1977-1978 mobilizations opened the door to the political right. That the most intense anti-Navy mobilization yet was led by pro-statehood sympathizers suggests that political inclinations were not clear-cut so as to avoid left and rightist sectors from

⁹⁶ Katherine McCaffrey writes that the fishermen framed their concerns in very specific material terms. She argues that environmental concerns occupied a more emblematic, as opposed to vital, role in the fishermen's protest. In this sense, she proposes that fishermen used environmental arguments like the destruction of marine life to really address the destruction of the Viequense community. While there is indeed a discursive connection between the destruction of the environment and the destruction of the Viequense community, I would argue that environmental concerns in themselves were a central part of the fishermen's movement to the extent that these fishermen made the connection between a healthy environment and the availability of healthy fish. Therefore, environmental concerns were vital to the protest and could not be detached from their ability to perform their craft and make a living. Viequense fishermen Cecilio Camacho, for example, stated in March of 1978 that, "the Navy shelling is poisoning the fish catches." Poisoned fish, Camacho acknowledged, meant sick people and the boycotting of Viequense fishermen's craft. In addition, fishermen and Viequenses in general must have been aware of the surfacing of environmentalist concerns in Puerto Rico with the rise, for example, of Misión Industrial in the 1970s. The environmental edge of the late 1970s and early 1980s mobilizations is also evidenced in the 1983 Memorandum of Understanding between the Puerto Rican government and the Navy. The section IV of the accord is in fact titled "Environmental Matters." McCaffrey, Military Power 78-81. Jane R. Baird, "Viequenses tell CRB panel of Navy 'tentacles,'" The San Juan Star [San Juan] 7 March 1978: 3. Memorandum of Understanding Regarding the Island of Vieques in Puerto Rico, Commonwealth and Conservation Trust, United States, Department of the Interior, Management Plan for the Western Vieques Conservation Areas. Vieques, Puerto Rico (N.p.: n.p., November 2002) 70-76.

⁹⁷ Governor Romero Barceló, although involved in right-winged scandals like those of the Cerro Maravilla, expressed support early on to the Viequense fishermen. He even filed suit against Navy practices in the island as early as 1978. Grupo de Apoyo Técnico y Profesional para el Desarrollo Sustentable de Vieques, Guías para el Desarrollo Sustentable de Vieques (Colombia: Publicaciones Gaviota, 2005) 15.

coming together in pro-democratic and ultimately anti-imperial stances.⁹⁸ Although not stated outright, the pro-statehood sympathizers were criticizing the colonial conditions of U.S. citizenship under the ELA and as applied specifically in Vieques.⁹⁹ Their mobilization, in fact, helped rethink what U.S. citizenship meant in the island. As the now Special Sub commissioner for Vieques Radamés Tirado recalls, “the people understood that being an American citizen was to be a slave to the Americans...and they do not know that the American over there [in the mainland] demands his rights.”¹⁰⁰ The change in understanding might have been hard to come in such a militarized colonial context. Yet, Viequenses slowly conceived that U.S. citizenship implied not only going to war but also engaging the U.S. government in all its ramifications. This meant engaging head-on the Navy.¹⁰¹ Thus, the fishermen’s mobilization successfully interpellated a significant portion of Viequense society into action. Out of this context arose the *Cruzada Pro Rescate de Vieques* (Crusade to Rescue Vieques) that worked

⁹⁸ The PPD supporters in this context came to embody the most conservative sector that for the most part refrained from critiques to the U.S. government and was the most invested in the status quo. The pro-independence and pro-statehood sectors assumed an anti-imperial stance that had divergent meanings. The independence supporters defined anti-imperial in terms of creating a Puerto Rican nation-states. Statehood supporters’ anti-imperial stance, on the other hand, implied the integration of Puerto Rico as an equal state in the union and the endowment to Puerto Ricans of a U.S. citizenship with equal rights as those enjoyed by citizens in the U.S. mainland.

⁹⁹ The colonial conditions of the U.S. citizenship in Vieques had been part of the debate during the Viequense mobilizations against Project V-C. The Municipal Council stated in 1964 that the Navy wished to, “take to the people of Vieques, the hunger and the misery, to the extreme poverty, exterminating EIGHT THOUSAND (8,000) American citizens and citizens of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.” “llevar al pueblo de Vieques, el hambre y la miseria, a la extrema pobreza, exterminando OCHO MIL (8,000) ciudadanos americanos y ciudadanos del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico.” Asamblea Municipal de Vieques, “Resolución Núm. 62. Serie 1963-1964,” 36, Serie 8, Status, Sub-Serie 13, Propiedades Militares en Puerto Rico, Cartapacio 54, 1964-1963, Sección V, LMM, Gobernador de Puerto Rico, FLMM, 2.

¹⁰⁰ “la gente entendía que ser ciudadano americano es ser esclavo de los americanos...y ellos no saben que el americano alla reclama sus derechos.” Tirado, personal interview.

¹⁰¹ The Korean veteran Pablo Hernández López, for example, stated to the San Juan Star in March of 1978 that, “We have said no...The Navy is our Navy, but is has come to the point that the Navy has to leave so that our children can have progress on the island.” Baird, “Viequenses tell CRB panel of Navy ‘tentacles,’” [The San Juan Star](#) 3.

alongside with the Fishermen's Association.¹⁰² People, according to Mayor Dámaso Serrano, began to shed their fears and react to the Navy's abuse.¹⁰³ By the side of Viequense women, these men, constructed as old, weak and impotent, started to believe they could put up a fight (Figure 7.3).¹⁰⁴ In turn, the fishermen's fight against the Navy practices in Vieques became known as "the struggle between David and Goliath."¹⁰⁵



Figure 7.3: Viequense fisherman and woman at sea¹⁰⁶

The coinage of the fishermen's movement as David versus Goliath continued to articulate the Viequense-Navy relationship in biblical terms. The emphasis of the metaphor, as with Carmelo Rodríguez Torres' Nephilim, was on the unequal standing of the contenders. Goliath and the Nephilim were ultimately giants crossbred between fallen angels and women. These narratives that, while acknowledging the difficulties of the endeavour, encouraged the disadvantaged could not but echo the story of a brave man that, old and outnumbered, stood up against the servicemen to defend "his" woman. Yet,

¹⁰² GATP, *Guías* 14-15.

¹⁰³ Serrano, personal interview.

¹⁰⁴ Viequense women were an important part of the late 1970s and early 1980s anti-Navy mobilization. However, the discourse surrounding their participation emphasized on their subordinated role to the daring activism of the Viequense men. Therefore, women were constructed more as the support, in land, making possible the men's civil disobedience, at sea. However, women also performed acts of civil disobedience and took to the sea. Yet, they were again conceived as men's support and not necessarily active participants. "ni pa' cojer impulso:" Testimonios de mujeres de Vieques," spec. issue of *Los Triunfos del Pueblo* 1 (enero 1984): 18 (Puerto Rico: PRISA, 1984).

¹⁰⁵ "Struggle and Resistance," *Vieques Libre*.

¹⁰⁶ "ni pa' cojer impulso" 18.

Mapepe, although not destined to vanquish his enemies, presented Viequenses with a more attractive empowering figure. His victimizers were their victimizers and his story was their own postmemory. In addition, even though Mapepe died and his killers escaped justice, the woman was saved and his mission was accomplished. The death, if anything, made Mapepe's actions even more laudable and his transfiguration into the first local martyr possible. The appeal of the killing of Mapepe assured its postmemory a foundational place in future Viequense narratives related to local acts of resistance against the U.S. Navy. Thus, once David took on Goliath in 1978, the killing of Mapepe came forcefully to life.

The resurfacing of the killing of Mapepe depended on the availability of representational spaces through which to perform the killing. By the late 1970s the Navy had restricted physical access to Viequense land for almost four decades. Yet, technological developments were multiplying and making more democratic the access to spaces of representation the Navy could not efficiently control. The proliferation and accessibility of representational spaces favored the production of counter narratives challenging the Navy's good neighbor discourse. This was a discourse Navy officials grounded on the supposedly peaceful and amicable relationship established over the years with the local population.¹⁰⁷ Navy officials, furthermore, argued about the economic benefits their presence had brought to the island.¹⁰⁸ Acting as public historians, Navy

¹⁰⁷ Special Subcommissioner Radamés Tirados recalls that during his time as Mayor of Vieques the Rear Admiral Arthur Knoizen asked him if Tirado knew who his friends were. The question, as interpreted by Tirado, was meant to dissuade him from antagonizing the Navy for Knoizen suggested that the Navy was his powerful friend. Tirado recalls answering Knoizen with, "I might not know who my friends are, but you are not one. I am sure that you are not one." "Yo quizás no sepa quiénes son mis amigos, pero tú no eres uno. Yo estoy seguro que tú no eres uno." Tirado, personal interview.

¹⁰⁸ Vice Admiral Daniel E. Barbey, for example, responded to the concerns about the Navy's disregard for the welfare of Viequenses of Senator John J. Williams of Delaware with a four-page letter. The letter was an interpretation of the island's history narrated as the coming from extreme poverty to

officials had publicized such historical interpretations through letters, press conferences, articles and other mediums that the average Viequense could not as easily manipulate.¹⁰⁹ The proliferation and accessibility of representational spaces, in turn, threatened Navy-sponsored histories by, for example, expanding the places where the killing of Mapepe could be performed and the audience that could witness the postmemory. Thus, the role of technology, especially after 1978, has been central in defining the Viequense-Navy relationship and in assuring the foundational place of the killing of Mapepe inside it.

Documentary photography assumed a central role in the fishermen's movement and the general re-imagining of late 1970s and 1980s Vieques.¹¹⁰ The representational spaces the Navy wielded when referring to Vieques were usually not of a visual character. If anything, the Navy kept away from visual texts, perhaps because it had things to hide. This was a representational field that the fishermen exploited. Documentary photographs like those that appeared in El mundo newspaper between 1979 and 1980 visually portray the fishermen in confrontation (Figures 7.4 and 7.5).¹¹¹ These photographs depict the President of the Fishermen's Association Carlos Zenón and other

mediated poverty due to the Navy's help. Barbey wrote that, "the Island of Vieques...has presented an economic problem ever since its early discovery by the Spaniards in the fifteen hundreds. It is interesting to note that history records that the Carib Indians abandoned the Island because they faced starvation previous to its discovery by the Spaniards." Barbey thus reinterpreted the Carib myth of origins by stating that the island had always been a problem and that indigenous groups did not want to inhabit it. "C40-6-VI-1," Folder Vieques C40-6-VI, Puerto Rico 40PR, Box 1106, Bureau of Yards and Docks, Naval Property Case Files, 1941-1958, RG 71, NARA, College Park, MD.

¹⁰⁹ The average Viequense, if able to read and write, could hardly get an article published in a local newspaper or convoke a press conference as easily as Navy officials could. Local newspapers and television programs offer more legitimated spaces of representation than, for example, light post in some street.

¹¹⁰ I define documentary photography as the practice of taking photographs with the intention of capturing an accurate visual representation of reality.

¹¹¹ For documentary photographs taken for El mundo by Lou Alers and Mauricio Pascual see "Otro Desafío en Aguas de Vieques," El mundo [San Juan] 20 January 1980: 16C. For Lou Alers photographs see "La Confrontación: Pescadores Interrumpen Maniobras Marina en Vieques," El mundo [San Juan] 18 May 1979: 1A.

more anonymous fishermen outmaneuvering warships with their small boats.¹¹² One of these photographs is particularly revealing in the way it portrays the struggle of David against Goliath. In this 1980 photograph, one Viequense fisherman daringly stands in a small boat to face anonymous sailors hiding their faces behind binoculars, helmets and water hoses. These sailors represent an enemy the fisherman taunts. This is an enemy that seems to compensate its lack of manhood with artifacts, with a water hose, with a bigger boat. This is an enemy that seems uncomfortable in the surroundings and unable to fend for himself and master the sea. This is an enemy that we, the witnessing audience, are encouraged to face through the positioning of our gaze behind the upright fisherman. We are witnesses trusted, as through a gesture of intimacy, with the fisherman's turned back, witnesses invited to not transgress the outnumbered fishermen's trust and to join their brave, although somewhat futile, struggle against the military that wants to rape Isla Nena with bombs and prostitute her to NATO and other countries. In this sense, the postmemory of Mapepe was re-enacted in 1980 as it is being re-enacted now through the reading of this page and handling of the documentary photograph.



Figure 7.4: Fisherman Carlos Zenón at sea, Vieques¹¹³

¹¹² Carlos Zenón cannot be considered an anonymous fisherman to the late 1970s and 1980s Puerto Rican public since he was the very vocal spokesperson of the Fishermen's Association. The combination of known and anonymous subjects makes it possible for the viewer to be somewhat familiar with the context but still have the opportunity to project itself into that context. "Otro Desafío en Aguas de Vieques," *El mundo* 16C.

¹¹³ "Vieques: A Visual Journey," Vieques Libre, 2003, Vieques Libre, 8 July 2007 <<http://www.viequeslibre.addr.com/>>.



Figure 7.5: Viequense fishermen at sea, Vieques¹¹⁴

In the militant context of the late 1970 and 1980s, anti-Navy sectors of Viequense society were collectively imagining a different Isla Nena from the one Luis Lloréns Torres described. This was a new Isla Nena with an Albizu-Soto twist. For Pedro Albizu Campos, the Navy's activities in Vieques were a vivisection of the Puerto Rican nation carried out with the consent of the archipelago's colonial government. Pedro Juan Soto echoed the critique and further emphasized the role of Puerto Ricans as victimizers through his term "colony of a colony." Viequenses thus embraced Vieques as an island child, an island daughter. The daughter, however, had been abandoned by its mother who handed over the child to a foreigner. The 1980s poem "Vieques, Visión de Isla" ("Vieques, Vision of an Island") exemplifies the new imagining.

Vieques: You are no longer the Isla Nena
 that Eden-like described
 the great poet Lloréns.
 You are no longer the cane song
 of don Pepe Benítez
 neither the Santa María of Carlos Lebrún.
 You are now the enraged scream of fishermen
 that throw to the wind their clamor
 for your return to the people

¹¹⁴ "Vieques: A Visual Journey," *Vieques Libre*. "Otro Desafío en Aguas de Vieques," *El mundo* 16C.

whole and pure
as your mother gave birth to you.

...

Island of the Carib cacique:
avenger of Cacimar.
Your sons, today, imitate your feats;
tanned in the struggle by seaweeds.

And, before the northern eagle,
are their emblems the swordfish,
the song of conch
and the Viequense ringdove.¹¹⁵

Isla Nena had been handed over to the “northern eagle” that threatened her wholeness and purity. Perhaps it was more than a threat because Isla Nena had lost her innocence. Perhaps the foreigner had already raped her since Isla Nena was no longer Eden-like. She was no longer productive, and she definitely was no longer sweet. Gradually, the Isla Nena sacrificed by the mother island for a nobler good became the martyr abandoned to face a masculine military evil that had made her a captive. As the Viequense poet Ángel Rigau wrote:

With its sea circumscribed, as her land;
fenced her best lands
by the **“U.S.A. Property”** and the **“No Trespassing”**
Vieques for the native is enemy soil
and even her own pastures relegated,
with her island and sea, no more kinship,
and driven to not finding any given day
sepulchral earth for her dead
since the land, in its maximum existence
belongs to the Naval Base and her
empire.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ “Vieques: Ya no eres la Isla Nena/que edénicamente nombrara/el gran poeta Lloréns./Ya no eres canción de caña/de don Pepe Benítez/ni la Santa María de Carlos Lebrún./Eres ahora grito iracundo de pescadores/que lanzan al viento el clamor/de que se te devuelva a tu pueblo/integra y pura/cual tu madre te parió./.../Isla del cacique caribe:/vengador de Cacimar./Tus hijos, hoy, imitan sus proezas;/curtidos en la lucha por algas de mar./Y, frente al águila nortea, /son sus enseñas el pez espada,/el canto de caracola/y la viequera paloma torcaz.” “Vieques, Visión de Isla,” *Agresiones Físicas-Marina*, Archivo Vertical, FCM, 5-6.

Isla Nena's body, raped, prostituted and scarred with barbwire, then read "U.S.A Property" and "No Trespassing."¹¹⁷ These were both inscriptions on Isla Nena's body and very concrete prohibitions to Viequense land and waters (Figure 7.6). In a culture like so many others where honor and manhood depend on the worth and protection of women, the Navy's abuse of Isla Nena was emasculating Viequense man. Isla Nena, dissected and enclosed, represented the most injurious affront Viequense men could receive since the feminized island was the epitome of all Viequense women. So the fishermen, with their very masculine feats, had finally responded in 1978 to Isla Nena's pleas.



Figure 7.6: "Warning" sign in former Navy-owned lands in Vieques¹¹⁸

The fishermen's feats, as ingenious as they were rebellious, attracted the attention of the Puerto Rican media and audience in a way that previous Viequense mobilizations against Navy practices had not. The charisma of their spokesperson Carlos Zenón and the theatricality of the fishermen's feats so well recorded by mediums like documentary

¹¹⁶ "Con su mar circunscrito, ídem sus campos;/alambrados sus óptimos terrenos/por el "U.S.A Property" y el "No Trespassing"/Vieques para el nativo es suelo adverso/y hasta en sus propios lares, relegado,/ya con su isla y su mar, ni el parentesco,/y abocado a no hallar un día cualquiera/ni un terrón sepulcral para sus muertos/pues la tierra, en su máxima existencia/es de la Base Naval y de su imperio." Ángel Rigau, "II," *Isla y mar de Vieques* (San Juan: Editorial Laurel, 1984).

¹¹⁷ The Navy employed phrases like "U.S.A. Property" and "No Trespassing" to demarcate their territory. Subsequently, Viequenses like Ángel Rigau appropriated the phrases to denounce the island's militarization and the alienation of the local people. Such Navy signs were also photographed and incorporated into protest art for the same denunciatory purpose.

¹¹⁸ "Vieques: A Visual Journey," *Vieques Libre*.

photography drew the Puerto Rican public, whether approving or disapproving of the events, into the drama of a small island many had never visited. This public, in turn, took an active part in the re-imagining of Isla Nena. The Puerto Rican left appeared at the forefront of the initiative. This sector encompassed different groups like the PSP and PIP that had come together during the early 1970s to protest the Navy's presence in Culebra. Through mobilizations and cultural productions these groups infused the historical conjuncture with a nationalist and anti-imperialist motif not provided by the fishermen. It was, furthermore, as if these groups were trying to prove Isla Nena had never been orphaned. In the words of the Vega Alta-born activist Nilda Medina, former PIP and PSP partisan, Vieques, "was an island that like Culebra was totally ignored by us the Puerto Ricans from the *Isla Grande*."¹¹⁹ This was a situation she personally addressed when she moved to Vieques in 1981 with the clear intention of joining the struggle against the Navy. Out of this context arose Silverio Pérez's 1978 song "Isla Nena."

There is an Isla Nena in the horizon,
 that is like the Isla Grande in flesh.
 There are bird songs in Esperanza
 and desires to love and give life.
 Tranquility interrupted at every instant,
 children woken up at dawn,
 the sun is surfacing in the east
 and in the warm morning there's a lullaby.
 There are a thousand pieces of this earth
 with a thousand occasions of injustices.
 There is a little island in which war
 steals time from love and for a caress.
 One day my song made itself into waves
 one day that I rested on its white sands
 I gave my heart and my courage
 to the people and the feeling of Isla Nena.

¹¹⁹ "fue una isla que como Culebra fue totalmente ignorada por nosotros los puertorriqueños de la Isla Grande." Nilda Medina, personal interview, 9 November 2003.

There is an Isla Nena in the horizon.¹²⁰

Written by the Guaynabo-born Silverio Pérez, “Isla Nena” evidences the uncomfortable apprehension of the distance separating Puerto Rico from Vieques and main islanders from Viequenses. Pérez, as the main island viewer, acknowledges that he looks at Isla Nena from a distance. Yet, his gaze brings the island closer and him to the realization that the militarized Isla Nena is one of the “thousand pieces of this earth.” If Vieques was indeed an integral part of Puerto Rico, then Pérez, as a fellow Puerto Rican, could not but become one with the Viequenses. Still, the song ends with Isla Nena again watched from a distance. To the extent that Pérez vindicates the Isla Nena-*Isla Grande* relationship, Viequenses remain trapped between the categories of “us” and “others.” The relationship, in turn, distances as well as subordinates Vieques to Puerto Rico. The separation expressed between the narrator and Isla Nena, however, did not deter Viequenses from appropriating the song as their municipal hymn. Isla Nena was again imagined by a main islander.

Even though Viequenses in the early 1980s had the vocal support of the Puerto Rican left, a significant portion of Puerto Rican society considered the fishermen’s protest anti-American and regarded the events unfolding in Vieques with disapproving eyes. Yet, neither the internal division of Viequenses nor the disapproval of a considerable sector of Puerto Rican society provoked the grassroots movement’s demise.

The movement finally receded in 1983 with the signing of the Memorandum of

¹²⁰ “Hay una Isla Nena en lontananza,/que es como la Isla Grande en carne viva./Hay cantos de pitirre en la Esperanza/y hay deseos de amar y dar la vida./Quietud interrumpida a cada instante,/niños despiertos en la madrugada,/el sol va despuntando por el este/y en la tibia mañana se oye una nana./Hay miles de pedazos de esta tierra,/con miles de ocasiones de injusticia./Hay una isla chica en que la guerra,/roba tiempo al amor y a la caricia./Un día que mi canción se hizo oleaje,/un día, que reposé en la blanca arena,/le dí mi corazón y mi coraje,/al pueblo y al sentir de la Isla Nena. Hay una Isla Nena en lontananza.” Silverio Pérez, “Isla Nena” in *Haciendo Punto en Otro Son*, Haciendo Punto en Otro Son, LP, Disco Hit Productions, 1978.

Understanding Regarding the Island of Vieques between Governor Carlos Romero Barceló and the Navy.¹²¹ The accord, ending the legal battle between the signing parties, basically stipulated that the Navy would cooperate with the civilian population and help protect the local environment if allowed to continue their military practices in Vieques. The Navy, however, did not abide to what it had signed and the Puerto Rican government did not oversee or enforce the agreement.¹²² The Memorandum, thus, resulted in the perpetuation of the status quo. The expectation surrounding the conciliatory pact undercut the impulse of the fishermen's movement.

During the 1980s and 1990s civil resistance to the Navy's presence and practices in Vieques resurfaced. The mobilizations, however, were not as widely followed inside and outside the island as the fishermen's movement. The renewed protests against the installation of the Relocatable Over the Horizon Radar (ROTHR) in the Naval Ammunition Facility, nonetheless, marked a shift in the way Isla Nena was imagined.¹²³ Environmentalist sensibilities took center stage as community activists denounced the ROTHR as toxic to human beings and the Viequense environment in general. Isla Nena, dissected, enclosed and bombarded was rapidly becoming unrecognizable to Viequenses, and not only because they were unable to roam two thirds of the island as Ángel Rigau had complained during the early 1980s. What had been a highly sexualized island constructed through a feminized discourse of bright lushness and fertility continued to be

¹²¹ For the October 11, 1983 Memorandum of Understanding Regarding the Island of Vieques see Commonwealth, Conservation Trust and Department of the Interior, Management Plan for the Western Vieques 65-76.

¹²² Humberto García Muñiz, "Goliat contra David: La batalla de Vieques en la encrucijada final." Anuario Social y Político de América Latina y El Caribe 4 (2001): 102.

¹²³ Although community activists denounced the ROTHR as highly toxic to the environment and humans, the Navy justified its establishment in Vieques by arguing it was an important weapon in the war on drugs. Rafael A. Rivera Castaño, "March 20, 1998 Letter to Jeffrey Farrow," On the Navy Presence, 2005, Fortín Conde de Mirasol, 10 July 2005 <<http://www.enchanted-isle.com/elfortin/navy.htm>>.

so only in tourist brochures (Figure 7.7). In the second half of the 20th century Isla Nena's springs had dried up and the thorny *bayahonda* (mesquite) slowly replaced the island's fruit trees. The environmental changes were accompanied by a sharp growth, especially noticeable by the mid 1980s, of cancer and heart and cerebral vascular diseases among Viequesenses. These were diseases that people like Rafael A. Rivera Castaño, M.D., and Rafael Cruz Pérez, environmental engineer, had been linking to the polluting practices of the Navy in the island.¹²⁴ The Isla Nena that had been sunshine, sugar cane and coconuts was evolving at the close of the 20th century into a barren and polluted landscape, into one big graveyard unable to reproduce anything that was not death. Isla Nena, orphaned and moribund, agonized as the cancer-stricken bodies multiplied.



Figure 7.7: Tourist brochure produced by the Vieques Chamber of Commerce¹²⁵

Cancer, however devastating an illness, represents a silent and somewhat gradual process of loss endured by individuals and families who usually confine their suffering to domestic spaces. The confinement can render invisible the sickness and its effects. In

¹²⁴ Rivera, personal interview. Rafael Cruz Pérez, "Contaminación producida por explosivos y residuos de explosivos en Vieques, Puerto Rico." *Dimensión* 2:8 (1988): 37-42. For the death rates related to cancer and heart and cerebral vascular diseases in Vieques and for a comparison with the rest of Puerto Rico see, for example, Puerto Rico, Junta de Planificación, *Indicadores económicos y sociales por Municipios*. (Puerto Rico: n.p., April and December 1988) 3, 453. For an overview of socio-economic and health-related problems in Vieques also see GATP, *Guías*.

¹²⁵ *Vieques Island: The Hidden Treasure* (N.p: Vieques Chamber of Commerce, n.d.).

Vieques, the deadly invisibility of cancer did not provide the stimulus needed for the community to collectively engage in Isla Nena's revival process. The engagement followed the April 19, 1999 death of David Sanes. The erroneous bombing of the Viequense's watch post inside Camp García ignited four years of civil disobedience against the Navy's activities in Vieques. The unprecedented union of Viequenses and Puerto Ricans cemented a strong network of civil disobedience groups that with ample international support established camps in Navy-restricted territory. If the Viequense fishermen had been human barriers in the sea, the civil disobedience camps were community barriers in the shores.

The civil disobedience groups were not centrally organized. Yet, they collectively accomplished one very important feat: the inscription with Viequense-Puerto Rican meaning of the two thirds of Vieques that had been voided of such geographical imaginings. The ceremonial placing of a white wooden cross where David Sanes died and the subsequently re-baptizing of the site as Mount David began the ingenious appropriation of a space that had been sealed for more than 60 years (Figure 7.8). The symbolic white crosses proliferated along the island claiming places like Mount David and the entrance of Camp García (Figure 7.9). The crosses were not the sole landscape markers with a religious motif. Deep in restricted territory the civil disobedients built a rustic chapel (Figure 7.10). The crosses and chapel had the effect of consecrating Navy land. This was a strategy previously employed in Culebra. The chapel, in addition, provided to witnesses of the unfolding drama a contrast of land usage: the Navy destroyed while Viequenses communed. Civil disobedients made the contrast a central part of their anti-Navy campaign. They published through mediums like the Internet

documentary videos and photographs of a polluted landscape filled with missile craters, rusted airplanes and dead wildlife (Figure 7.11).¹²⁶ These visual texts portrayed a clear intention to expose the affected landscape and wildlife that the Navy had agreed to protect in the 1983 Memorandum and whose conditions were unacceptable for contemporary environmental sensibilities. Civil disobedients further appropriated Navy sites through subversions. Disobedients, for example, inserted the Puerto Rican flag and hanged hammocks from the cannon of abandoned tanks (Figure 7.12). The transformation added a sense of tense domesticity and Puerto Rican-ness to the site. These visual subversions captured in photographs and videos were posted, for example, in the webpage of Vieques Libre. To the extent they were made public, these texts helped a wider community physically absent from the island still be able to claim the Viequense landscape. The claiming was done through particular visual representations of what the Navy had tried so hard to conceal for so many years: a craterous landscape filled with military junk.

¹²⁶ If, as Benedict Anderson suggests, national communities have been imagined through print capitalism, technological advances in the last couple of decades collapsing time and space constraints through rapidly travelling images have made possible the imag-ining of transnational communities. In Vieques, these communities, positioned against and in favor of the Navy presence, both fought and resulted from an image war waged through a complex interplay of revealing and concealing. In the midst of this politics of visual seduction, anti-Navy communities performed the pseudo-evangelical role of revealers of hidden truths. The visuality assigned to these truths responded to the privileged employment of documentary photography. According to Susan Sontag, documentary photographs are generally perceived as images or copies of the world these artefacts are meant to record, diagnose and inform. The belief in an unmediated relationship between the object represented and the text produced has the effect of legitimizing documentary photographs as depositories of fragments of reality or as traces of the past. Anderson, Imagined Communities. Susan Sontag, On Photography (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977) 133.



Figure 7.8: Mount David in the former Camp García, Vieques¹²⁷



Figure 7.9: Viequense landscape inscribed with white crosses¹²⁸

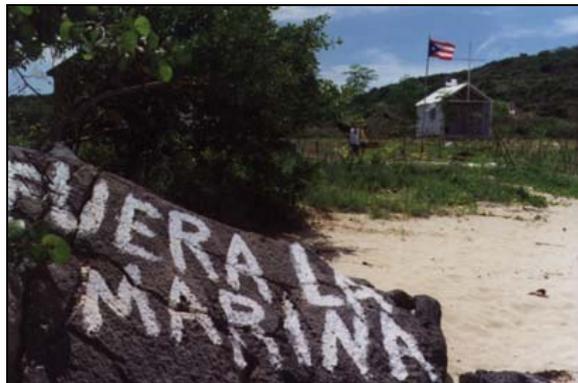


Figure 7.10: Rustic chapel in former Navy-owned land in Vieques¹²⁹

¹²⁷ “Vieques: A Visual Journey,” [Vieques Libre](#).

¹²⁸ “Vieques: A Visual Journey,” [Vieques Libre](#).

¹²⁹ “Vieques: A Visual Journey,” [Vieques Libre](#).



Figure 7.11: Rusted military junk in former Navy-owned land in Vieques¹³⁰



Figure 7.12: Civil disobedients hanging in hammocks from an abandoned tank¹³¹

If Isla Nena had indeed evolved into a big graveyard, no site conveyed better the idea than the cemetery in the entrance gate of Camp García. The cemetery is composed of symbolic white crosses bearing the names of those Viequenses dead due to military accidents. The cemetery, in fact, was established and dedicated on February 24, 2001 “To the memory of the Viequenses that have been victims of the military accidents and the environmental pollution” (Figure 7.13). Yet, Camp García’s cemetery was made really in honor of the Viequense girl named Milivy. A large poster with the words “Peace and Health for Vieques” portrayed her bald little head and cancer-stricken countenance (Figure 7.14). Looming near the numerous crosses, her face looked forward, somewhat defiantly and somewhat pleading, as if asking the transient viewer to make sure she did not literally make the cross over. Milivy was the only living person

¹³⁰ “Vieques: A Visual Journey,” [Vieques Libre](#).

¹³¹ “Vieques: A Visual Journey,” [Vieques Libre](#).

represented in the cemetery. Her centrality in the consecration of the military base's entrance was not random. She embodied the unrecognizable Isla Nena. She was the young daughter who had not had the chance to fully live, but was already agonizing. In fact, Milivy and Isla Nena were united by the sickness they shared. The same pollutants that lodged in Isla Nena's mango trees, not readily visible but imagined in all their pervasiveness, circulated through Milivy's veins. Thus, Milivy's pleas could not but appeal to Viequenses in general, especially to parents. Sadly, the five year old died on November 17, 2002. Meanwhile Vieques, some say, still convalesces. The Navy formally left Vieques in 2003 with the closing of the ammunition depot in May of 2001 and of the live fire range in May of 2003. Traces of their presence, however, remain.¹³²



Figure 7.13: Symbolic cemetery established in the entrance of Camp García¹³³



Figure 7.14: Poster with drawing of Milivy's face in the entrance of Camp García¹³⁴

¹³² See Appendix 5 and "Chapter 8: Conclusion."

¹³³ Cemetery at entrance of Camp García, Vieques, personal photograph by author, February 2001.

Throughout the last six centuries the inhabitants of Vieques have engaged in a long and violent process to forge a stable island community. From the times of the Caribs to those of the U.S. Navy, with the possible exception of the late 19th and early 20th century, different empires have opposed such plans for very different reasons. The two recurring themes in this colonial history have been the strategic importance assigned to Vieques with respect to European maritime voyages to the Caribbean and the definition of Vieques' identity as subordinated to the Puerto Rican main island. In this sense, the attempts to colonize Vieques have been exceedingly militaristic and the welfare of its inhabitants has come in second place to the needs of distant and not so distant metropolises. To meet such challenges and survive would-be Viequenses have had to define and redefine themselves and their community in close dialogue with definitions from outside the island. In the midst of the ingenious maneuvering Isla Nena was conceived and born, evolved, and several times almost died. Such a capacity to be born, to react and adapt to the environment and to possibly perish, presents Isla Nena as a living being. The life endowed by Viequenses and non-Viequenses to the representation has established an organic relationship between the island and the community Isla Nena embodies. Viequenses and Isla Nena are thought to have lived together as one throughout the last six to three centuries in the northeastern Caribbean. The temporal and spatial character of Isla Nena, an island-community imagined through an infantile and feminine metaphor, have legitimated the islanders' claims on Vieques' history and landscape. To the extent that Isla Nena occupies and is the island as it has evolved over the past centuries, so Viequenses have too come to inhabit that space and time. These

¹³⁴ Poster at entrance of Camp García, Vieques, personal photograph by author, February 2001.

claims to inhabiting Isla Nena have translated into concrete political projects designed to face challenges like those posed by the U.S. Navy, coercive arm of the U.S. global empire, at the closing of the 20th century.



I grew up with the words, “Behave yourselves. I don’t want to call the MP!” It was one of my father’s disciplining pleas that came with a smile. Little did I know or wondered then what memories the words revived for him. Did he remember the times when the words were used as a conjure against the U.S. servicemen? Was the conjure, that naming of the Military Police, expected to be answered or was it more of a desperate and hopeless plea for some other ulterior power? I have never asked him. Still, I have appropriated the conjure as my own and proceeded to encrypt it with my own memories.

I have, however, asked my father about Mapepe and in long conversations we have undertaken the Viequense rite of killing Mapepe. I might not have been born in Vieques. No, I was displaced like so many others, if not physically expropriated at least emotionally so. I could, nonetheless, kill Mapepe in San Juan, and kill him again and again in Michigan while undertaking the long and lonely process of writing this dissertation. As a historian I remain a necrophiliac populating my world with memories of the dead.

The killing of Mapepe can come forcefully to life in Michigan decades after the event physically occurred because, following Marianne Hirsch, memory does not need to be based on lived experiences. On the contrary, she argues that time and space can

conflate as if through a superimposition of disparate images. The conflation makes it possible for people to share experiences across temporal and physical boundaries and for certain traumas to be collectively experienced. Postmemories, as developed by Hirsch, are memories of collective traumas. They address the experiences of people who grow up dominated by narratives that predated their birth and whose own stories are displaced by the traumatic stories of preceding generations. Postmemories, furthermore, are remembered only as images and stories people grew up with, but that are so powerful they constitute memories in their own right. Their power lies precisely in the mediated connection between the person who remembers and the source of the memory. Thus, postmemories are not so much about recollection, as they are about projection, investment and creation.¹³⁵

The killing of Mapepe is precisely a postmemory for Viequenses. Most of them did not live the 1953 event, but those witnesses that did wove such compelling narratives that subsequent generations like myself have appropriated the history of the brave old man as a personal memory that defines them to the extent that they define themselves as Viequenses. The power, centrality and elusiveness of Mapepe's postmemory are captured in a February 2001 conversation with community activist and personal friend of my parents Ismael Guadalupe. His words, moving back and forth in time and bridging generations as he spoke to me and invoked my father Luis, made me understand how embedded I was in the history I was trying to narrate. In the words of Guadalupe:

Mapepe only one generation has knowledge of him and maybe my generation because we learned it from the preceding generation. I did not know him...I was born in 1944. I have 56 years. I have very little memory of the death of Mapepe. But, for example, I have always known about the death of Mapepe. My generation, that generation, I think Luis

¹³⁵ Hirsch, "Projected Memory," *Acts of Memory* 3-24.

must remember that, not of the moment when they killed him, but of the way he had died. Mapepe has been something in history that the Navy has tried to erase and the accomplices of the Navy have tried to erase and they have not been able to...And I think it is important because we cannot permit its erasure...we have a responsibility that it does not die. Mapepe died physically, but the fact cannot die. And it must be placed inside the reality of that military presence...I do not know how much Luis has talked to you about the riots that happened here. Here there were many many riots. Fights with civilians, the streets, one had to run for one's life, the tensions that people lived. In other words, Mapepe marks a period of the aggressiveness of the Navy with the people of Vieques. From Mapepe on people lived a state of insecurity. From Mapepe on if you were on the streets and if you were alone and you saw five, six soldiers, you knew that you had to take another route. The fear, the preoccupation, will they kill me? will they beat me up? was enormous.¹³⁶

As Guadalupe states, the generation that could have lived the traumatic experience passed it on to subsequent generations who became owners in their own terms of the killing of Mapepe. In this manner, my grandmother passed the memory on to my father Luis, and my father passed it on to me. The details might have been lost along the way, but it does not matter anymore, if it ever did, the year of the murder, the murder weapons or the name of the murderers, or at least of the two sailors acquitted by the court-martial. Sergeant Major Merl Bennett and the Private First Class Edward Whitbeck could have been and became any U.S. serviceman at any given point in the past 54 years because in

¹³⁶ “Mapepe solamente una generación tiene conocimiento de él y quizás mi generación porque la aprendimos de la anterior generación. Yo mismo no lo conocía...Yo nací en el 1944. Tengo 56 años. Yo tengo muy poca memoria de la muerte de Mapepe. Pero, por ejemplo, yo sí siempre he sabido de la muerte de Mapepe. Mi generación, esa generación de, yo creo que Luis debe recordarse de eso, no del momento cuando lo mataron, sino de que así había muerto...Mapepe ha sido algo en la historia que la Marina ha tratado de borrar y los cómplices de la Marina han tratado de borrar y no han podido...Y yo creo que es importante porque no podemos permitir que se borre...nosotros tenemos una responsabilidad de que eso no muera. Murió Mapepe físicamente pero el hecho no puede morir. Y es que hay que ubicarlo dentro de lo que es la realidad de esa presencia militar, de los motines. Yo creo que este pueblo tuvo suerte que no hubo más muertes pero era para haber más muertes. Yo no sé cuánto Luis te ha hablado de los motines que se daban aquí. Aquí se daban muchos pero que muchos motines. Peleas con civiles, las calles eso era un corre y corre, las tensiones que vivía la gente. O sea, Mapepe marca un periodo de la agresividad de la Marina con la gente de Vieques. De Mapepe para acá se vivía un estado de inseguridad. De Mapepe para acá tú te tirabas por las calles y si tu ibas solo y tu veías por ejemplo si yo venía por aquí por esta calle y por ahí venían cinco, seis soldados, ya yo sabía que me tenía que ir por otro lado. El temor, la preocupación, ¿me mataran? ¿me darán un pela? era enorme.” Ismael Guadalupe, personal interview.

the performance of the postmemory details like the names of Mapepe's murderers have been rendered unimportant.¹³⁷ The "when," like Ismael Guadalupe suggests, became secondary to "the way he died" and the postmemory came to define a pre and post Mapepe Viequense history based on violence and fear.

The postmemory of the killing of Mapepe has survived because Viequenses have wanted it to survive. They have appropriated it and passed it on because something in the memory spoke to them. That something is and at the same time is more than the tragic story of an old man killed while defending the beautiful prostitute he wanted to honor; than the charismatic appeal of a first local martyr whose victimizers, the first to appear from behind Navy fences, escaped justice. To really delve into the postmemory of Mapepe, it should be read through the broader history of Vieques. Isla Nena is then revealed as the prostitute hiding behind the door of the bar *El Bosque*, as the one fearfully listening to the blows directed at her defender, as the one that although beautiful, has been mistreated. Viequense men, in turn, are revealed as the ones standing up against all odds to face the powerful U.S. Navy. The postmemory of the killing of Mapepe is then a narrative about the possibility of heroism in everyday people.

¹³⁷ Mapepe's postmemory has survived through great silences. Such silences have fostered the collective forgetting that soon after Mapepe's death his bar was looted twice and, more importantly, that Viequenses were supposedly unwilling to cooperate with the police investigation. Such unwillingness, of course, could have responded to people's fear of the U.S. Navy. Santana, "Lamentan Civiles Isla Vieques," *El mundo* 2.

Chapter 8:

Conclusion

Arriving in the Isla Nena is like crossing the veil that covers civilization and suddenly entering a magical world, where everything is clearer, brighter, purer...We distinguish easily where everything starts and ends, except fantasy. In the Isla Nena we are never sure of being completely awake, since dreams and reality playfully intertwine to introduce us, like in few occasions, to the perfect order of the Universe.

High School Students, "Isla Nena: Municipio de Vieques" (1990s)¹

Vieques is a small island among so many other small islands in the Caribbean Sea. It boasts the sunny landscapes, crystal water beaches and, some would say, somnolent atmosphere. Viequense high school students, in fact, wrote in the 1990s that people in Isla Nena, "are never sure of being completely awake." These students, that could have very well been followers of Alejo Carpentier, argued that in Vieques the intertwining of dreams and reality allows for the perception of a magical world. In Vieques, they further implied, people could get a glimpse of the perfect universal order

¹ "Llegar a la Isla Nena es como traspasar el velo que cubre la civilización y entrar de repente en un mundo mágico, donde todo es más claro, más brillante, más puro...Distinguimos con facilidad donde comienza y termina todo, excepto la fantasía. En la Isla Nena nunca estamos seguros de estar completamente despiertos, pues el sueño y la realidad se entrelazan juguetonamente para compenetrarnos, como pocas veces, en el perfecto orden del Universo." "Isla Nena: Municipio de Vieques," (Biblioteca Pública José Gautier Benítez, Vieques, Puerto Rico). The cited text was taken from a twenty-page anonymous and untitled pamphlet representing the only source of information about Vieques in the Municipal Library. The employee who lent me the pamphlet did not know anything about the origins of the text. Nonetheless, I found information about its makings by pure coincidence. While searching for a photocopier in the Cooperative Bank across the street, a young lady recognized a two-page essay on typical Viequense food. She told me she had written the text as an assignment for a high school Spanish class. As to the rest of the pamphlet she could not tell me more. Neither did she know how her essay ended up in the Municipal Library. Notwithstanding the many uncertainties, I have assumed that the rest of the pamphlet I have named "Isla Nena: Municipio de Vieques" was written by Vieques' high school students. "Isla Nena: Municipio de Vieques," unpublished essay.

because the island was “clearer, brighter, purer.” The words employed to describe Isla Nena portrayed an uncorrupted paradise. This paradise was juxtaposed to an unidentified elsewhere otherwise less perfect, magical and pure. The comparison suggested that Isla Nena was an exceptional place and, perhaps, not just another small island among many. Isla Nena was, furthermore, not the cursed island Pedro Juan Soto imagined in his 1959 novel Usmail.² One of the guiding assumptions behind such a portrayal was the idea that Vieques has been immune to change and thus remains in an uncorrupted state. Probably without knowing it, these high school students were engaging a debate that has surrounded Vieques for at least 200 years. The question all this time has been just how pure and uncorrupted has Vieques remained after thousands of years of human presence and at least 500 years of imperial claims.

Throughout the last six centuries, and maybe more, the inhabitants of Vieques have engaged in a long and violent process to forge a stable island community. From the times of the Caribs to those of the U.S. Navy various empires opposed such plans for very different reasons. The only possible exceptions to this historical trend have occurred soon after the foundation of the Spanish colony of Vieques in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and in the post-Navy years of the early 21st century. Coincidentally, both of these periods have been marked by what I term the virginity debate.

While most Caribbean islands were European colonies by the 17th century, Vieques remained a contested space disputed by the French, Danish, British and Spanish empires until well into the 19th century. The Spanish Empire discouraged further French colonization attempts through the late 17th century violent expulsions of European settlements from Vieques. The claims of the Danish and British empires, however,

² Pedro Juan Soto, Usmail (Río Piedras: Editorial Cultural, 1973).

carried into the 1800s. Once Spain devised a colonization plan for Vieques in 1811, first one in 300 years, the three imperial powers locked in a diplomatic war. The issue at stake was whether Vieques was an integral part of the Puerto Rican archipelago or of the neighboring Virgin Islands controlled by Denmark and Great Britain. The Danish Empire succumbed early on to the Spanish intransigent stance. British diplomats, nonetheless, continued to debate with their Spanish counterparts until the year 1864 when the British Empire formally renounced to its claims over the island. The withdrawal of British claims allowed the inhabitants of the island, for the first time in 450 years, to concentrate on the community's development without the fear of an imperial attack or intervention. It also allowed the Spanish colonial government in San Juan to formally incorporate the island to the Puerto Rican archipelago, and thus dispel any doubts about Vieques being a Virgin Island. Spain's confidence, however, was unfounded. Only 34 years after the British withdrawal the U.S. invaded the island. The Hispanic American War of 1898 changed imperial sovereignties in the Puerto Rican archipelago. Yet, the U.S. allowed, after a period of adjustment, the Viequense community to prosper under the auspices of an early 20th century sugar boom.³ The situation changed in 1941 when the Navy officially entered the island and quickly became the largest landowner, always wanting more.

The 19th century imperial struggle to control Vieques depended on violence and coercion as well as on wit. The diplomatic war between the Spanish, Danish and British empires, in fact, was waged through sexual puns and metaphors. These discursive

³ The prosperity allowed under the early 20th century sugar boom benefited, for the most part, certain sectors of Viequense society. The trickle down effect, even during the 1920s climax of the sugar industry, was minimal in Vieques. While *agregados* lived in precarious conditions, families like the Benítez of the Benítez Sugar Company reaped the rewards of the sugar industry. See Juan A. Bonnet Benítez, Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico (San Juan: F. Ortiz Nieves, 1976) 125-129.

strategies were meant to characterize the island as pure and virginal or as possessed and married. Such dichotomous characterizations, always emphasizing on the desirability of the feminized space, were designed to make the island fit into the schemes of empires. The Governor of Vieques Teophile Le Guillou, for example, attested to the Governor of the British Virgin Islands Isaac Hay in 1840 that, “Vieques was not a virgin after her marriage with Spain.”⁴ Virginity, in this context, implied not only a state of purity and of being uncorrupted, but also the condition of not having an owner. The feminization of the space, in addition, ensured that the island could be considered capable of being disciplined, made docile and domesticated. The Spanish Empire, in turn, played the part of the owning husband. Thus, the virginity debate surrounding Vieques was ultimately about imperial possession.

The Le Guillou-Hay’s conversation further exemplifies how the virginity debate was premised on erasures. The Spanish Empire, as much as the British and Danish empires, was invested in erasing the indigenous cultures that had previously occupied the island. Even if Le Guillou thought in 1840 that the island was no longer virginal, the loss of purity happened according to him only after the marriage with Spain. Before the union with the Spanish Empire, he had argued in other texts, the island was a savage labyrinthine space.⁵ This was, for Le Guillou and other Spanish officials, an untamed space waiting to be conquered. This refusal to recognize the passing of human cultures through the island was ultimately an erasure of historical and environmental change. The

⁴ “Vieques no era virgen después de su matrimonio con la España.” Documentación sobre Vieques: Transcripciones de documentos procedentes del AHN/U Madrid, CIH, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, 642. For a discussion of the origins of the virginity debate see “Chapter 4: The Spanish Colony of Vieques, 19th Century.”

⁵ For a discussion of Vieques as a labyrinthine space see “Chapter 3: Claims to the Labyrinthine Island, 16th-19th Centuries.”

virginal characterization erased, for example, thousands of years of human interaction with the local environment as well as approximately 300 years of indigenous, African and European coexistence in the island prior to the 1811 Spanish colonization attempt. In those 300 years of coexistence the island's natural resources had been exploited. Its woods, in particular, were deforested for coal by both dwellers and passersby. The coexistence, moreover, created a heterogeneous population that officials like Governor Le Guillou tried to ignore in the process of founding and affirming the basis of the Spanish colony of Vieques.⁶

At the opening of the 21st century, the Navy has formally left Vieques. The political lobbying, social mobilization and civil disobedience following the death of David Sanes in April 19, 1999 forced President William J. Clinton to order the cease, if the people of Vieques agreed, of all naval trainings in the island by May 1, 2003.⁷ President George W. Bush further expressed in June 14, 2001 its support for the shut down of the naval facilities in Vieques.⁸ In turn, the ammunition depot closed in May 2001 and the live fire range followed in May 2003. Yet, the struggle to inhabit Isla Nena,

⁶ The Spanish colony of Vieques was officially founded in the year 1844. See "Chapter 4: The Spanish Colony of Vieques, 19th Century."

⁷ For a detailed chronology of the events leading to President Clinton's January 31, 2000 Directive see History of the Navy in Vieques, 2006, Vieques Island Travel Guide, 12 May 2007 <<http://www.vieques-island.com/navy/>>. For the Presidential Directive, which included the transfer of the western Navy lands to the Government of Puerto Rico by December 31, 2000, see William J. Clinton, "January 31, 2000 Directive to the Secretary of Defense, Office of Management and Budget," Federation of American Scientists, 2005, Federation of American Scientists, 12 May 2007 <<http://fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd/000131-vieques.htm>>.

⁸ The support of the Bush Administration for the close down of the naval facilities by May 2003 rendered null the need for a referendum as stipulated by President Clinton's Directive. The Governor of Puerto Rico Sila María Calderón (2001-2004), nonetheless, favored the immediate withdrawal of the Navy from Vieques and sponsored a non-binding referendum in July 29, 2001. In this referendum the option of immediate cease of naval activities in Vieques, not offered in the original Clinton referendum, won by 68%. Another 2% voted for the cease of activities by May 2003. Ronald O'Rourke, "Vieques, Puerto Rico Naval Training Range: Background and Issues for Congress," Naval Historical Center, 2005, U.S. Navy, 12 May 2007 <<http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/vieques.htm>>.

as noted by community activists, is far from over.⁹ The effects of 60 years of military presence are widely felt today. A significant portion of the former Navy land, for example, is currently too polluted for human use and the cancer rate in Vieques remains the highest in Puerto Rico.

While the Navy is undertaking the long process of decontamination, Viequenses still have no control over most of the island. It is unlikely the situation will change any time soon. As stipulated by President Clinton in 1999, the Navy has maintained ownership of the 100 acres encompassing the ROTHR and Monte Pirata telecommunications facilities.¹⁰ Between 2001 and 2003, in addition, the U.S. Congress transferred 800 acres of ex-Navy land to the Puerto Rico Conservation Trust and another 17,673 acres to the Department of the Interior.¹¹ The federal agency, with a long history of dealing with non-incorporable populations and territories, assigned the land to its Fish and Wildlife Bureau.¹² The Bureau, in turn, has been managing 53% of the island as a

⁹ See the Spring 2006 volume dedicated to Vieques of the CENTRO Journal. The volume has articles by Sherrie L. Bayer, Déborah Berman Santana and Katherine T. McCaffrey dedicated to the problems faced by Viequense residents in the post-Navy years. CENTRO Journal XVIII:I (Spring 2006). See also Liv Gold, "In Vieques, Puerto Rico, La Lucha Continua," NACLA News, 2007, NACLA, 14 May 2007 <<http://news.nacla.org/2007/01/15/in-vieques-puerto-rico-la-lucha-continua/>>. And Sherrie L. Bayer, "Peace Is More Than the End of Bombing: The Second Stage of the Vieques Struggle," Latin American Perspectives 146:33:1 (January 2006): 102-115.

¹⁰ The Navy has, in addition to the 100 acres encompassing the ROTHR (98.5 acres) and Monte Pirata (1.5 acres) facilities, retained restrictive easement rights and usage agreements over 719.4 acres of land surrounding these sites. These easements posed permanent restrictions to the kinds of land usage and development permitted in these areas conveyed to the Municipality of Vieques, the Puerto Rico Conservation Trust and the Department of Interior. United States, Department of the Navy, Environmental Assessment for Transfer of the Naval Ammunition Support Detachment Property, Vieques, Puerto Rico. (GPO, November 2000) 1-7, 2-2.

¹¹ See Commonwealth, Conservation Trust and Department of the Interior, Management Plan for the Western Vieques.

¹² See Appendix 5. The Department of Interior, created in 1849, has been in charge of insular territories like Guam through the Office of Insular Affairs and of Native American lands and populations through the Native American Lands and Needs Bureau. U.S. Department of the Interior, 2007, U.S. Department of the Interior, 14 May 2007 <www.doi.gov>. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife, created in 1940, assumed control of 3,100 acres in the western part of Vieques in May 1, 2001 and of 14,573 acres in the east in May 1, 2003. "Vieques National Wildlife Refuge," U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2007, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 14 May 2007 <<http://www.fws.gov/caribbean/vieques/>>.

National Wildlife Refuge since 2003. The rest of the ex-Navy land is either sealed off until the decontamination process is completed or under study by the Municipal government so as to decide its best use. The decontamination process, according to Navy cost estimates, could extend well beyond 2012.¹³ The Municipality, on the other hand, has three land use plans available and a very limited municipal budget to act upon them.

The different land use plans were produced by the JPPR, the Municipality of Vieques, the *Grupo de Apoyo Técnico y Profesional para el Desarrollo Sustentable de Vieques* (Technical and Professional Support Group for the Sustainable Development of Vieques, or GATP) and the *Estudios Técnicos, Inc.* (Technical Studies, Inc.). The Municipality in collaboration with the JPPR drafted the Plan de Ordenación Territorial de Vieques approved in 2000.¹⁴ The emphasis of the document lies on the strategic planning of land usage for an orderly municipal development. In 2002 the GATP finished their Guías para el Desarrollo Sustentable de Vieques.¹⁵ The GATP is composed of an

¹³ For an assessment of the costs and duration of the current decontamination process in Vieques see the March 26, 2007 letter from the Government Accountability Office to the Representative Charles B. Rangel. Brian Lepore, “GAO-07-552R Defense Infrastructure: Environmental Cleanup of Former Naval Facilities on Vieques,” U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2007, Government Accountability Office, 14 May 2007 <<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07552r.pdf>>.

¹⁴ The Municipality of Vieques under Mayor Manuela Santiago began drafting the Plan de Ordenación in 1993 as a requisite to Law #81 of August 30, 1991 otherwise known as the Autonomous Municipalities Law. The Law, representing a decentralization effort from the part of the Puerto Rican government, authorized municipalities to establish land usage plans that facilitate the municipalities’ involvement in their own development. The original drafting process was finished in 1999, but the return of Navy lands to the municipality made it necessary to revise the Plan in 2000. Mayor Dámaso Serrano, elected to office in November 2000, promised to revise the document during his administration. The Plan was again revisited in 2004 for the approval of the Master Plan for Sustainable Development of Vieques and Culebra for the Special Economic Development Zone. Puerto Rico, Municipio de Vieques, Plan Final - Plan de Ordenación Territorial de Vieques (Documento para Vista Pública) (Vieques: n.p., 2000) 2-3. Déborah Berman Santana, “La lucha continúa: Challenges for a post-Navy Vieques” CENTRO Journal XVIII:I (Spring 2006): 117-118.

¹⁵ The GATP argue that they propose guidelines instead of a plan in order to make the document more flexible and capable of being adapted to future situations. The Plan de Ordenación Territorial, however, was drafted with similar intentions of being adapted to changing situations. For such a reason, it was written into the Plan that it should be revised every 5 years. See Grupo de Apoyo Técnico y Profesional para el Desarrollo Sustentable de Vieques, Guías para el Desarrollo Sustentable de Vieques. (Colombia: Publicaciones Gaviota, 2005).

independent group of scholars and professionals, mostly from the Puerto Rican main island, that came together after 1999 to propose alternatives for the sustainable development of Vieques. Their guidelines are based on:

a development that integrates the economic development, the social equity, and the conservation and protection of the natural environment. It seeks to elevate people's quality of life without compromising the future of coming generations.¹⁶

Finally, in 2004 Technical Studies, Inc. drafted the Master Plan for Sustainable Development of Vieques and Culebra approved by the Puerto Rican government for the Special Economic Development Zone. The Zone, encompassing the municipalities of Vieques and Culebra, was created by Law #153 of August 10, 2002 to facilitate the area's integrated, sustainable and community-oriented development. The Zone's Master Plan was influenced by the GATP's Guías. One of the associates of the San Juan-based firm Estudios Técnicos, Inc., in fact, had formed part of the GATP initiative. Furthermore, the Guías were established as the basis for the Master Plan in a 2003 meeting between the licensed planner José Rivera Santana and the Chief of Staff to the Sila Maria Calderón Administration César Miranda.¹⁷ Still, the 2004 Master Plan was a government-sponsored document that had to harmonize with the 2000 municipal Plan.¹⁸ The existence of these different land use plans with diverging aims and proposals led to conflicts among Viequense residents and the Municipal and Puerto Rican governments. In this, local activists originally favored the GATP's guidelines as being compatible with

¹⁶ “un desarrollo que integra el desarrollo económico, la equidad social y la conservación y protección del ambiente natural. Persigue elevar la calidad de vida de la gente sin comprometer el futuro de las generaciones venideras.” GATP, Guías XII.

¹⁷ GATP, Guías. Prólogo 2005 2.

¹⁸ Berman, “La lucha,” CENTRO 117.

the vision of, “an island developed for the Viequenses and by the Viequenses.”¹⁹ This is a vision of development community activist Nilda Medina summarizes as ecologically friendly, culturally conscious and locally run. Nonetheless, local organizations like the *Comité Pro Rescate y Desarrollo de Vieques* (Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques), of which Medina is a member, later backed the approval of the Master Plan.²⁰ The Master Plan, after all, provides Viequenses with a legal instrument guided by the vision of sustainable development. The establishment of a land use plan is thus inextricably linked to the definition of a developmental path for the island. Both are means through which to imagine the future of Vieques.

Imagining Isla Nena’s future has not become an easier task for Viequenses even though the Navy, coercive arm of the U.S. Empire, renounced its attempts to remove the island community.²¹ While Viequenses discuss land usages and developmental paths and the Navy undertakes the decontamination process, the island’s civilian stretch has become the object of an unrestrained land grab by U.S. capitalists looking to invest in the

¹⁹ “una isla desarrollada para los Viequenses y por los Viequenses.” Nilda Medina, personal interview, 9 November 2003. The GATP was initially formed by request of the CPRDV. The CPRDV asked in May of 1999 a group of Puerto Rican professionals for help in devising alternatives for the socio-economic development of Vieques. The GATP and community activists worked from then on together in drafting the Guías. GATP, Guías, II. Berman, “La lucha,” CENTRO 117.

²⁰ The *Comité Pro Rescate y Desarrollo de Vieques* evolved from the *Cruzada Pro Rescate de Vieques* that had surfaced out of the late 1970s and early 1980s fishermen’s movement. Although the name and some members established continuities between the organizations, Katherine McCaffrey argues that the organizations responded to two very different contexts. She argues that the *Cruzada*’s demise was partly due to the Cold War context that made the members vulnerable to communist accusations. The *Comité*’s success, on the other hand, was due to the less polarized political climate after the end of the Cold War in 1991. The *Comité* can be considered a successful organization since it has survived until the present day and had a central role in the protests and civil disobedience campaigns that led to the close down of the Navy bases in Vieques. Katherine T. McCaffrey, Military Power and Popular Protest: The U.S. Navy in Vieques, Puerto Rico (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002) 125-130. See “Chapter 7: Isla Nena, Island of Memories and the Dead, 1953-2003.”

²¹ I use the word “remove” in this context to refer to the Navy’s attempts to both physically expropriate the local population and to drive them out through immigration.

“undiscovered Spanish Virgin Island.”²² Their search proves that the virginity debate first engaged in 1816 by Lord Castlereagh and Conde de Fernán Núñez on behalf of the British and Spanish empires is far from settled. In the 21st century the virginity debate might be more about speculators and global trends of leisure tourism than about imperial claims. Yet, like in the 19th century the debate is ultimately about possession, more precisely about the possession of space through the erasure of human cultures and related historical and environmental change. The construction of Vieques as the “undiscovered Spanish Virgin Island” erases 500 years of post-Columbian history with the word “undiscovered,” 100 years of U.S. rule with the word “Spanish” and 140 years of Viequense-Puerto Rican relationship with the words “Virgin Island.” The “virgin” pun, furthermore, plays with the visibility of 200 years of imperial rule, 100 years of sugar production and 60 years of continuous bombings. All these activities, nonetheless, have left unlikely historical traces along the Viequense landscape such as the thorn scrub that has replaced the sugar fields the Navy expropriated in the 1940s.²³ Some of these traces, like the 73% poverty level and the lack of adequate housing, could instead be considered

²² Charlie Connelly, personal interview, 5 November 2003. For references to Vieques as the “undiscovered Spanish Virgin Island” see, for example, Internet tourism sites like the Vieques Travel Guide site. Such sites are usually managed by U.S. North Americans with business interests in Vieques. [Vieques Travel Guide.com](http://www.viequestravelguide.com), 2007, Vieques Travel Guide.com, 10 May 2007 <<http://www.viequestravelguide.com/vieques-and-culebra.html>>.

²³ The study of vegetation in the western third of Vieques reveals 200 years of human interactions. Recent environmental studies propose that a subtropical moist coastal forest once covered much of Vieques. Most of the forest, however, was taken down during the 19th and early 20th centuries to make way for sugar cane fields. The sugar industry was particularly intensive in the west of the island. Once the Navy expropriated these sugar fields in 1941-1942 agricultural activities were abandoned. The Navy then allowed for limited cattle grazing in these lands. As a result of these two centuries of interaction, a thick thorn scrub has grown in the area. The scrub has thrived to such an extent that it currently covers almost in its entirety the lands of the former Naval Ammunition Support Detachment. The Navy acknowledged both the environmental changes and the contamination of sites in the western area in its 2000 [Environmental Assessment](#). Yet, it still employs the word “pristine” to describe the area. Department of the Navy, [Environmental Assessment](#) 3-6, 3-20-3-21.

scars in the Viequense landscape.²⁴ Thus, in the midst of the resuscitated virginity debate, Vieques is being submitted to cosmetic surgeries designed to make Isla Nena appear the part. Contaminated sites, for example, are fenced off as fish and wildlife refuges while the civilian stretch is gentrified.²⁵ In the last four to seven years, Viequenses have been witnessing the rapid gentrification of the mostly untitled land of that same civilian one third they have now occupied for generations.²⁶ If they were uncomfortably squeezed for the last 60 years between two military bases, they are now being pushed out of the civilian one third they can hardly afford to inhabit. In terms of imagining Isla Nena's future after the closing of the Navy bases, community activist Robert Rabin notes that the struggle for Vieques has not ended and that the battlefield has become fragmented. The local population, in turn, has to fight nowadays not only the Navy for an adequate cleanup process, but the Fish and Wildlife Service for land usage rights as well as speculators, real estate agents, foreign investors and the Puerto Rican government for access to adequate housing and sustainable development.²⁷

The challenges faced by the Viequense community at the start of the 21st century are informed by the rather particular history that, in many ways, has set the community apart from other island communities in the region. The European colonization of Vieques, for example, was a long process that spanned over three centuries. The Spanish Empire claimed to have discovered the island in 1493, but different empires and fringe

²⁴ The 73% poverty level for the year 1990 is provided by the Navy and is based on figures from the U.S. Census Bureau. Department of the Navy, Environmental Assessment 3-37. For an analysis of the lack of adequate housing units see GATP, Guías 89.

²⁵ See Katherine T. McCaffrey, "The battle for Vieques' future," CENTRO Journal XVIII:I (Spring 2006): 124-147.

²⁶ Berman, "La lucha," CENTRO 117-120.

²⁷ Coqui Santaliz, "Juntos su corazón y Vieques," Nuevo día [San Juan] n.d.: n.p. Robert Rabin, "[CPRDV] FW: [ViequesLibre] Juntos su corazón y Vieques: Robert Rabin (El Nuevo Dia)," e-mail to author, 10 October 2007.

populations disputed the space until 1864. So that while neighboring island colonies sought ways to maximize the yield of exhausted soils, settlers in 19th century Vieques debated over where to establish the colony's town. Vieques, in addition, has experienced an extreme militarization not shared by other islands. Still, Vieques is in so many ways a small island among so many other small islands in the Caribbean Sea.

Even though defining the region has long been the obsession of intellectuals, the Caribbean defies easy categorizations. Alejo Carpentier might have exoticized the region through magical narrations, but he understood that to approach America and its history there was the need to believe in alternate realities. In my own approach to Vieques, I have come to believe in the fantastic, the dreamlike, the nightmarish, the serious and the ludicrous of the everyday. I have, furthermore, come to believe that the particularities of Vieques have resonance elsewhere. In this sense, I take Vieques to be very Caribbean, if not an epitome of the Caribbean. Following Stuart Hall, the Caribbean is a diasporic space historically constructed through violent ruptures, constant movement and interchange.²⁸ The Caribbean, I would add, is a non-continuous space of violence, displacements and *mélange* where surviving is many times an act of defiance.²⁹ In this reduced space different empires have clashed and cultures, races and languages have uneasily merged. At the turn of the 21st century, moreover, the Caribbean has been transformed into a space for global leisure tourism. The process facilitates a two-ways migratory pattern characterized by the emigration of local communities forged through centuries of colonialism to their imperial metropolises and the immigration of European

²⁸ Stuart Hall, "Negotiating Caribbean Identities," *New Left Review* 209 (January-February 1995): 6. See "Chapter 1: Introduction."

²⁹ By the usage of "non-continuous" I refer to the Caribbean space as a transnational one that can be found in San Juan and in Isabel II as well as in New York and London.

and U.S. citizens seeking to discover the Caribbean. In the case of Vieques, the local youth is being replaced by an English-speaking enclave of, according to the geographer Déborah Berman, “ex-Marines, aging hippies and entrepreneurs who dominate the island’s tourism and real estate economic sectors, as well as part-time resident vacation homeowners.”³⁰ In many ways, this new global scenario is a re-colonization of the Caribbean in which qualities like virginal, unspoiled and pure, even if only cosmetic, are valuable assets. The virginity debate has consequently taken a hold of the burgeoning real estate market in Vieques.

My delving into Vieques’ past and present has also led me to believe that this small Caribbean island has a global resonance that extends beyond current trends of leisure tourism. Vieques’ extreme militarization might be unmatched in the Caribbean. Yet, on the other side of the globe the atoll of Diego García in the Chagos Islands attests to the fact that Vieques has not been alone. The marginal, once worded, can be shown to be global. The atoll of Diego García, with its Iberian name, bore witness to a similar encounter of Portuguese, French, British and U.S. empires. Yet, this time the imperial encounter occurred in a small speck of land in the Indian Ocean. Probably no other place in the world provides a better example through which to view U.S. policies towards Vieques. The local population of the atoll, known as Ilois, was completely expropriated in 1967-1971 by the British Government. The British Empire owns the Chagos archipelago but leased part of it to the U.S. until the year 2016. The U.S., in turn, has established in Diego García a naval facility.³¹ The expropriation of the Ilois, who were

³⁰ Déborah Berman proposes that there are currently 1,000 to 2,000 U.S. North Americans living in Vieques. Berman, “La lucha,” *CENTRO* 118.

³¹ U.S. Navy Support Facility Diego García, U.S. Navy, 20 May 2007 <<http://www.dg.navy.mil/web/>>.

only allowed back in 2006 to visit their family graves, makes me think that my family and my own displaced experiences resulting from militarized colonialism might also be global in reach.³² As such, I wonder about other people across the world dominated by postmemories of militarized lands their predecessors were forced to leave behind.

³² “Emotional Return for Chagossians,” BBC News, 2006, BBC, 4 July 2007 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4909264.stm>.

Appendices

Appendix 1

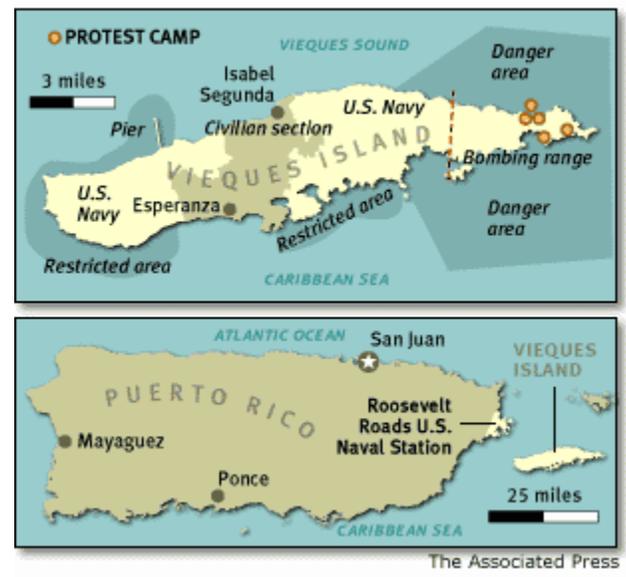
Map of Vieques 1941¹



Mapa de la Isla de Vieques.
(Cortesía del Departamento de Instrucción - - Distrito escolar de Vieques)

Appendix 2

Map of Vieques 1940s-2003²

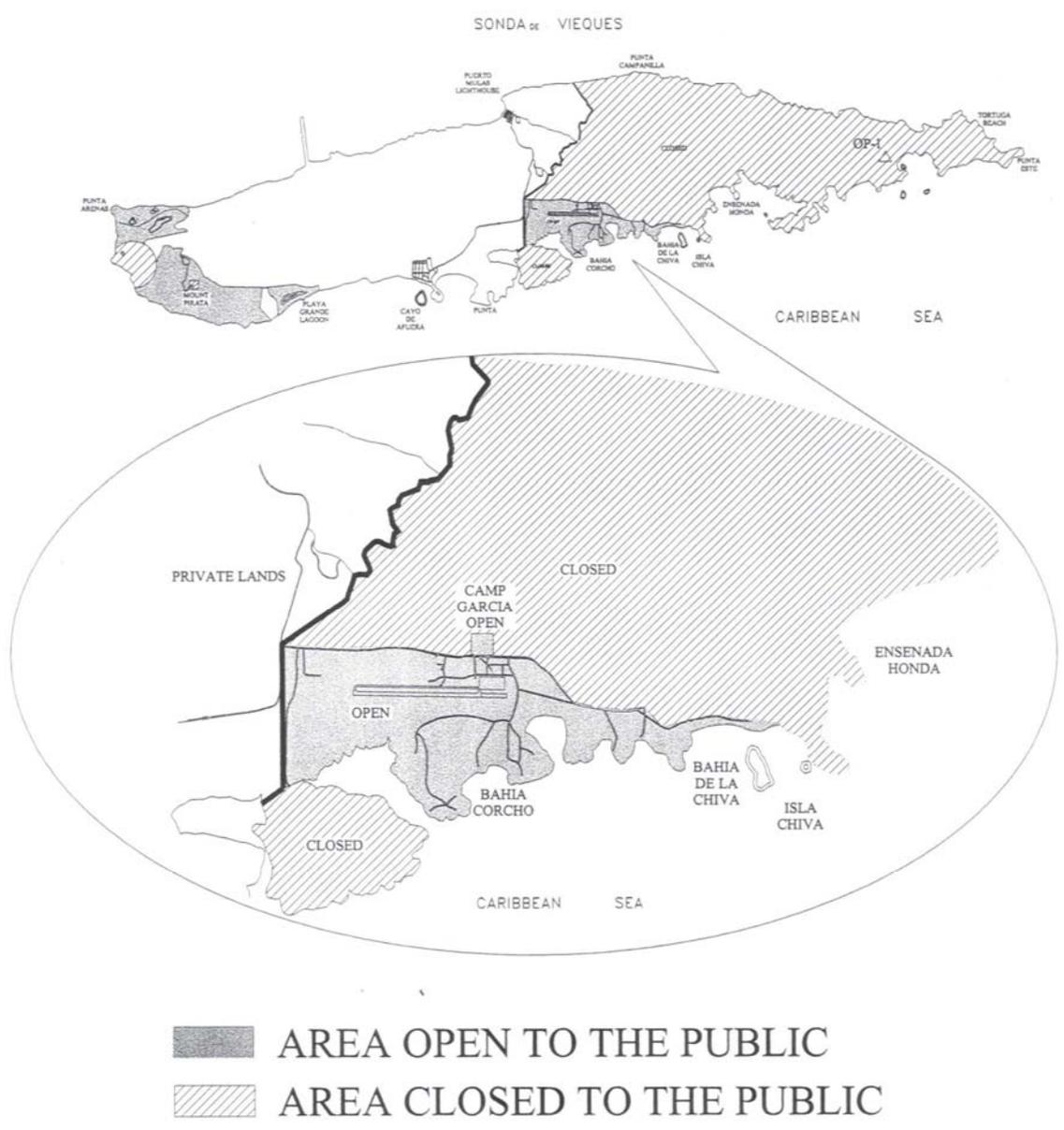


¹ Justo Pastor Ruiz, *Vieques antiguo y moderno: 1493-1946* (Santurce: JAY-CE Printing, 1987) 19.
² *Latin American Studies*, 2006, Indiana University, 25 November 2006
 <<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/puertorico/vieques-map.htm>>.

Appendix 5

Map of Vieques since 2003⁵

VIEQUES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



⁵ United States, Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, "Vieques National Wildlife Refuge," map (N.p.: n.p., n.d.).

Appendix 6

Outline of the Indigenous Caribbean Cultures,
as proposed by Sebastián Robiou Lamarche⁶

Cultures	Time Span	Characteristics
First Settlers (Archaic)	6000 B.C.	Originally from Central America, they settled in Cuba and La Hispaniola while dedicating to hunting and the handling of stones.
Fishermen & Gatherers (Archaic)	4000 B.C.	Originally from South America, they settled in the Lesser Antilles and Puerto Rico while dedicating to fishing and the gathering of food. They also worked with polished stones.
Agro- ceramists (Arawak & Saladoides)	500 B.C. - 600 A.D.	Originally from South America, they introduced pottery making and the cultivation of cassava throughout the Antillean arc until the eastern coast of La Hispaniola.
Precursors of the Tainos (Ostionoides)	600 A.D. - 1200 A.D.	A mixture of the previous agro-ceramists with new South American migratory waves adapt to the Antillean ecosystem while were developing new techniques in agriculture and pottery making. They extend throughout the Greater Antilles and the Bahamas.
Flourishing of the Tainos	1200 A.D. - 1500 A.D.	The societies became more complex, especially in La Hispaniola and Puerto Rico, developing characteristics like <i>cacicazgos</i> (tribal chiefdoms).
Carib Immigrants	1000 A.D. - 1500 A.D.	Originally from the South American coasts, they invaded the Lesser Antilles taking Arawak women captive while adopting their language and pottery making.

⁶ Sebastián Robiou Lamarche, Tainos y Caribes: Las culturas aborígenes antillanas (San Juan: Editorial Punto y Coma, 2005) 36-37.

Appendix 7

Outline of the Indigenous Caribbean Cultures,
as proposed by Luis Chanlatte Baik and Yvonne Narganes Storde⁷

Outline of the Caribbean Indigenous Cultures (6000 B.C.-1492 A.D.)		
Archaic Period	Pre-pottery (6000 B.C.)	
	A-pottery (500 B.C.-460 A.D.)	
Agro- ceramist Period	Agro-ceramist I and II (500 B.C.-?) This period is composed of two successive migratory waves of the Huecoides and the Saladoides-Igneris.	
	Formative Antillean	Agro-ceramist III (460 A.D.) Through the transculturation of all the cultures above an indigenous Antillean culture and ceramic is born.
		Agro-ceramist IV (1025 A.D.-1492 A.D.) The indigenous society further evolves and is denominated as <i>Taína</i> .

⁷ Luis A. Chanlatte Baik and Yvonne M. Narganes Storde, La nueva arqueología de Puerto Rico (su proyección en las Antillas) (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, C. por A., 1990). Luis A. Chanlatte Baik and Yvonne M. Narganes Storde, Vieques, Puerto Rico: Asiento de una Nueva Cultura Aborigen Antillana (Santo Domingo: Impresora Corporán, C. por A., 1983). Robiou Lamarche, Taínos y Caribes 32-33.

Appendix 8

Population of Puerto Rico 1765-1897,
as proposed by José L. Vázquez Calzada⁸

Year	Whites	Blacks & Mulattos	Total Free Population	Black Slaves	Total Population
1765	*	*	39,846	5,037	44,833
1776	30,709	31,909	62,618	7,592	70,210
1800	*	*	*	*	155,426
1812	85,662	79,806	165,468	17,536	183,004
1815	*	*	*	*	220,892
1820	102,432	106,460	208,892	21,730	230,622
1827	150,311	120,487	270,798	31,874	302,672
1830	162,311	127,287	289,598	34,240	323,838
1834	188,869	128,149	317,018	41,818	358,836
1846	216,083	175,791	391,874	51,265	443,139
1860	300,406	241,037	541,443	41,738	583,308***
1877	411,712	319,936	731,648	**	731,648
1887	474,933	323,632	798,565	**	798,565
1897	570,187	315,632	885,819	**	894,302***

* No information available

** Slavery abolished in 1873

*** Includes persons not classified by color

⁸ While Vázquez Calzada writes that the total population (Total Free Population + Black Slaves) of the year 1765 was 44,833, my calculations place the figure at 44,883. There is a difference of 50 between the two figures. José L. Vázquez Calzada, *La población de Puerto Rico y su trayectoria histórica* (San Juan: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1988). 8.

Appendix 9

Slave Population in Puerto Rico 1531-1873,
as proposed by Francisco Moscoso, José L. Vázquez Calzada and the 1899 Census⁹

Year	Number of Slaves	Percentage of the Total Population
1531	2,284	54.8
1765	5,037	11.2
1776	7,592	10.8
1794	17,500	*
1802	13,333	8.2
1812	17,536	9.6
1820	21,730	9.4
1827	31,874	10.5
1830	34,240	10.5
1834	41,818	11.7
1846	51,265	11.6
1854	46,918	9.5
1860	41,738	7.2
1873	29,229	4.2

* No information available

⁹ The information for the year 1531 is offered by Francisco Moscoso based on the 1530-1531 census performed by the Governor Francisco Manuel de Lando. Moscoso, "Presentación," Cuaderno de Investigación Histórica. V. Vázquez Calzada, La población de Puerto Rico. 12. The information for the year 1794 appears on the Informe sobre el censo de Puerto Rico, 1899. Estados Unidos, Departamento de la Guerra, Dirección del Censo de Puerto Rico, Informe sobre el Censo de Puerto Rico 1899 (Colombia: Ediciones Puerto, 2003) 31.

Appendix 10

Population of Puerto Rico 1899-2000,
as proposed by José L. Vázquez Calzada and the U.S. Census Bureau¹⁰

Date	Population	Annual Growth Percentage
November 10, 1899	953,243	---
April 15, 1910	1,118,012	1.54%
January 1, 1920	1,299,809	1.57%
April 1, 1930	1,543,913	1.69%
April 1, 1940	1,869,255	1.94%
April 1, 1950	2,210,703	1.69%
April 1, 1960	2,349,544	0.61%
April 1, 1970	2,712,033	1.45%
April 1, 1980	3,196,520	1.66%
1990	3,522,037	
2000	3,808,610	

¹⁰ Vázquez Calzada, *La población de Puerto Rico* 13. The population information for the year 1990 is from *Censo de población de 1990*, and for the year 2000 is from the Internet site of the U.S. Census Bureau. Estados Unidos, Departamento de Comercio, Negociado del Censo, *Censo de población de 1990: Características Generales de la Población Puerto Rico* (Washington: GPO, 1992) 2. United States, Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Puerto Rico: 2000. Summary Population and Housing Characteristics. 2000 Census of Population and Housing* (Washington, D.C.: GOP, 2002) 2.

Appendix 11

Commercial Traffic between Puerto Rico and Seville 1512-1699,
as proposed by Fernando Picó¹¹

Period	Departures to Puerto Rico		Arrivals from Puerto Rico	
	Number of Ships	Total Tonnage	Number of Ships	Total Tonnage
Until 1525	18	1710	9	930
1526-1550	17 ¹	2100	28	3440
1551-1575	19 ²	2230	105	13190
1576-1600	35	3645	105	13605
1601-1625	50 ³	5715	136 ⁴	16363
1626-1650	18 ⁵	2462	25	2965
1651-1675	8	Not Indicated	15	Not Indicated
1676-1699	8	Not Indicated	4	Not Indicated

- 1 Includes 1 ship through Puerto Real and 1 with Puerto Plata as its final destiny
- 2 Includes 1 ship to Puerto Plata through Puerto Rico
- 3 Includes 13 ships in route to La Havana with a total tonnage of 1020
- 4 Includes 1 ship from the Orinoco through Puerto Rico
- 5 Includes 1 ship in route to Saint Martin

Appendix 12

Puerto Rican Sugar Exported to Seville 1568-1594 and 1650-1670,
as proposed by Fernando Picó¹²

Year	Boxes	Arrobas/Tons	Year	Arrobas/Tons
1568	740	22,200/277.5	1650	333/4.1625
1569	379	11,370/142.125	1651	534/6.675
1570	267	8,010/100.125	1652	230/2.875
1571	284	8,520/106.5	1654	308/3.85
1583	79	2,370/29.625	1660	1,100/13.75
1584	186	5,580/69.75	1663	216/2.7
1589	---	1,170/14.625	1670	132/1.65
1593	---	5,640/70.5		
1594	---	9,105/113.8125		

¹¹ Fernando Picó's chart is based on figures provided by separate studies from Huguette and Pierre Chaunu and Lutgardo García Fuentes. Fernando Picó, *Historia general de Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1988) 79.

¹² Fernando Picó's chart is based on figures provided by separate studies from Huguette and Pierre Chaunu and Lutgardo García Fuentes. Picó used Chaunu for the years 1568 to 1594 and García Fuentes for the years 1650 to 1670. The figures provided by Chaunu are based on an estimate of 30 *arrobas* per box. The original charts provided by Picó used the measurement unit *arroba* instead of tons. Using the formula provided by Picó equating 1 *arroba* to 25 pounds, I converted the *arrobas* to tons by multiplying the original *arroba* figure by 25 and then dividing the number by 2,000. Picó, *Historia general* 9, 60, 63.

Appendix 13

Vieques' Population Census of September 14, 1828¹³

Name	W o m e n	S o n s	P e o n s	S l a v e s	O x	C o w s	C a l v e s	H o r s e s	T u r k e y s	L a m b s	G o a t s	P i g s	C h i c k e n s	* B a n a s	* S u g a r c a n e	* G r a s s
1. Nicolás Viera	1		3		2								20			
2. Patricio Ramos			5										24	3		
3. Mr. Mofret																
4. Antonio Romero													30			
5. Don Francisco Roselló	1		3	1	4			1				50	24			
6. Pantaleón Hernández	1	2	2		2			1					50	2		2
7. Juan Antonio	2		1										20	2		
8. Antonio Montalvo	3	6	3										40	6		
9. Hijo de Mr. Mofret			1											2		3
10. Esteban de Torres	1	2	1			1							24	1		
11. Juan Opio														2		
12. Mr. Duple			1										12	2		
13. Manuel Sánchez	1							1					18	1		
14. Antonio Troche	2		2								25		24	1		

¹³ According to my calculations there were a total of 72 Field Workers, 12 Calves, 14 Horses, 647 Chickens and 45 *cuerdas* of grass in 1828. These figures represent a difference of -1, +2, -2, +1 and -1 with the respective figures of the 1828 Census. Documentación sobre Vieques: Transcripciones de documentos procedentes del AHN/U Madrid, CIH, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, 462-463.

15. Gabriel Torres			12		2	5	5	1					36	4		4
16. Antonio Torres	3	2											24	1		
17. Faustino Alvarez	1	4	2					1					20	2		
18. Mr. Esmit				4									13			3
19. María Hernández			3		2			1					24			
20. Mr. Cadelán	1	1	2	5	2		2						24	3		3
21. Mr. Reynal			2													
22. Juan Carlos			2	1	4	2		1			4	100	20	1		
23. Madam Bequer																
24. Guillermo Opio	9	15	10	1	8	2	2	1		50	12	100	50	5		
25. Don José M ^a Guillot**	1		17	26	20	3	3	6	12		25		150	30	10	30
Totals (25)	27	32	73	38	46	13	10	16	12	50	66	250	646	68	10	46

* *Cuerdas*

** Teophile Jacques Josephe Marie Le Guillou

Vieques' Marina

	Name	Marina
1.	Mr. Esmit	40 tons schooner
2.	Don Guillot	41 tons <i>pailebot</i> (small steam boat) and small boat
3.	G. Opio	small boat
4.	A. Montalvo	small boat
5.	F. Alvarez	small boat
6.	G. Torres	2 small boats

Appendix 14

Haciendas, Crops and Breeds in Vieques 1834,
Government Statistics¹⁴

Heads of Households	Ox	Cows	Calves	Horses	Mares	Colts	Mules	Donkeys
33	82	38	37	27	13	5	2	1

Appendix 15

Population of Vieques 1839,
Government Statistics¹⁵

Whites	Blacks	People of Color	Slaves	Total Population	
				Spaniards (2/3 of Population)	English, Danes & Frenchmen (1/3 of Population)
				533 or 432*	267 or 216*
38	42	568	152	800	

* These figures do not include the 152 slave population.

Land Distribution by *Cuerdas*

Sugar cane	Tobacco	Cotton	Coffee	Food Supplies	Grass	Total
196	50	10	5	386	800	1,447

¹⁴ Documentación sobre Vieques 803-804.

¹⁵ Documentación sobre Vieques 721.

Appendix 16

Vieques' Population Census of August 4, 1845¹⁶

Of Families	Whites	Free Mulattos	Blacks	Slaves	Totals
Fathers	62	80	3	0	145
Mothers	45	91	1	0	137
Sons	82	130	3	0	215
Daughters	60	110	1	0	171
Singles	0	0	0	369	369
Totals	249	411	8	369	1,036

Divided by Labor

Farmers	Merchants	Carpenters	Masons	Blacksmith, Shoemaker & Tailor	Seamstresses, Laundresses & Children	Total
563	6	6	4	3	454	1,036

Divided by Nationalities

Puerto Rico & Vieques	Spain (Europe)	France	England	Denmark	Philippines	Different Nations	Total
617	3	361	18	18	1	18	1,036

¹⁶ According to my calculations the grand population total for the 1845 Census should be 1,037. The figure represents a difference of +1 compared with the 1828 Census grand total. Documentación sobre Vieques 733.

Appendix 17

Vieques' Population and Finances around the Year 1851,
as proposed by Marqués de España¹⁷

Population	Urban & Rural Wealth (Pesos)	Annual Product (Pesos)	Sugar Haciendas	Administrative Costs (Pesos)	1849 Exportations (Pesos)	Customs & Subsidio Taxes* (Pesos)
1,676	518,806	73,479	14	8,000	57,947	17,000

* The customs and *subsidio* taxes for Puerto Rico represented 30% of its total annual exportations. Vieques, as a freeport, did not have to pay these taxes. However, the Marqués de España proposed in November 1851 that the 30% of Vieques' annual exportations (17,000 *pesos*) would more than double its administrative costs (8,000 *pesos*) paid at the time with Puerto Rico's finances.

Appendix 18

Population of Vieques 1838-2000,
as proposed by Juan Bonnet Benítez and the U.S. Census Bureau¹⁸

Year	Population	Increase %	Decrease %	Density m²*
1838	120	-	-	2.1
1845	1,036	763.3	-	19.9
1899	5,938	473.1	-	114.2
1900	6,642	11.9	-	127.0
1910	10,425	57.0	-	200.5
1920	11,651	11.8	-	224.0
1930	10,582	-	9.2	203.5
1940**	10,362	-	.2	199.3
1950	9,228	-	10.9	181.3
1960	7,210	-	21.9	138.7
1970	7,762	7.7	-	149.4
1980	7,662		1.4	
1990	8,602			
2000	9,106			

* The total surface of Vieques is 52 square miles.

** The distribution of the 1940 is in the town and neighborhoods.

¹⁷ Documentación sobre Vieques 209.

¹⁸ I could not find any records about the 1838 population total. Yet, if there were 195 inhabitants in 1828 and 1,036 in 1945, it is unlikely that the 1838 population was 120. The 1900 figure includes Culebra, incorporated to Vieques during 1902-1917. Bonnet, *Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico* 118. The 1980 figures are from United States, Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: GOP, 1983) 53B-11. The 1990 total is from *Negociado del Censo, Censo de población de 1990* 2. The 2000 figure is from Bureau of the Census. *Puerto Rico: 2000* 34.

Appendix 19

Governors and Mayors of Vieques 1811-2003¹⁹

Years in Office	Governors and Mayors under the Spanish Empire	Years in Office	Mayors under the U.S. Empire
1811-	Juan Roselló	1898-1899	José A. Díaz
1828-32	Francisco Roselló	1899-1902	Leopoldo Venegas
1832-43	Teophile J. J. Le Guillou	1902-1910	Luis Amedée Bonnet
1844-51	Francisco Sainz	1910-	Victor Dúteíl (died)
1851-	José Astorga	-1914	Carlos Benítez
1856-	Gregorio Tenorio	1914-1920	Luis Amedée Bonnet
1857-	Luis de Oñativia	1920-1928	Zoilo Benítez Castaño
1860-	Francisco Gómez de Mercado	1928-1932	Miguel Simons
1862-	Manuel Iturriaga	1932-1933	Diego Meléndez
1864-66	Francisco Gómez de Mercado	1933-	Juan Bermúdez (resigned)
1867-	Luis de Riego y Pica	1933-1936	Aureo Díaz
1870-	Manuel Iturriaga & Luis Prats	1936-1943	Leoncio T. Davis (resigned)
1871-	Tomás Font, Juan Campos & Federico Marangues y Chavar	1943-1948	Antonio Avila
1872-	Cayetano Bola y Carbonell	1948-1972	Antonio Rivera
1873	Benigno Alvarez & Félix Nieto	1972-1976	Carlos Luis Castaño
1873-74	Manuel E. Benítez	1976-1980	Radamés Tirado
1874-	Juan Luján, Francisco Sánchez & Lucas Jiménez Mestre	1980-1984	Carlos Luis Castaño
1874-78	Alejandro Montestruque	1984-2000	Manuela Santiago
1879-82	Anselmo Aragón	2000-2008	Dámaso Serrano
1883-	José Marina		
1884-	Andrés Teruel Gallardo		
1885-	José Valensuela		
1886-	Valiente & Laureano Sierra		
1887-	Lorenzo Garbo		
1888-	José Miró		
1891-	Enrique Gallardo y Fragoso		
1892-	Manuel Vázquez Alayón		
1894-	Arturo García Villanueva		
1895-	Molinari & Antonio Llabrés		
1897-	Santiago Paz & Laureano Sierra		
1898	Luis García Alpuente, Idelfonso Leguillou & Laureano Sierra		

¹⁹ Carmelo McFaline y Cintrón, *Vieques pintoresco* (Bayamón: Bayamón Offset, 1980) 21. *La Página WEB de ALOG*, 2007, ALOG, 5 February 2007 <<http://www.ortizal.com/puertorico.htm>>. The list of Governors and Mayors under the Spanish Empire provided in *Vieques pintoresco* and in The Ángel L. Ortiz González webpage differ substantially. I fashioned the list by combining both sources and information gathered from the Archivo General de Puerto Rico.

Appendix 20

Tons of sugar produced by three *centrales* in Vieques 1913-1922,
as proposed by Juan Bonnet Benítez²⁰

Harvest Year	Santa María	Puerto Real	Playa Grande
1913	762	2,920	3,689
1914	---	5,225	5,738
1915	600	4,627	5,655
1916	638	4,941	6,702
1917	850	5,693	7,375
1918	285	2,964	5,328
1919	959	6,000	8,209
1920	1,300	6,073	9,903
1921	1,031	5,250	9,774
1922	1,030	6,000	8,501

Appendix 21

Puerto Ricans living in the United States 1910-1970,
as proposed by Kal Wagenheim²¹

Year	Number of Puerto Ricans in the U.S.	Year	Number of Puerto Ricans in the U.S.
1910	1,513	1950	301,375
1920	11,811	1960	887,662
1930	52,774	1970	1,429,396
1940	69,967		

²⁰ Bonnet, *Vieques en la historia de Puerto Rico* 128.

²¹ Kal Wagenheim in Picó, *Historia general* 266.

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