

Copyright
by
Chloe Louise Ireton
2013

**The Report committee for Chloe Louise Ireton
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:**

Royal Vassals: Old African Christians in the Atlantic World

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING
COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor _____

Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra

Susan Deans-Smith

**Royal Vassals: Old African Christians in the Atlantic
World**

by

Chloe Louise Ireton, B.A.

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of the University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2013

Acknowledgements

Ideas for this Masters Report first evolved from an undergraduate course on Africans in Renaissance Europe with Professor Kate Lowe in Queen Mary, University of London and subsequent supervision of my undergraduate thesis on black religious confraternities in the Iberian Peninsula in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by Mary Rubin. At The University of Texas at Austin, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra guided me through this project, helping me to frame my research questions and providing invaluable feedback and guidance throughout the process. I have also benefitted from the invaluable advice of Ann Twinam, Tom Tweed, Cory Reed, and Susan Deans-Smith on various versions of this project. Lastly various workshops with colleagues, in particular the fortnightly “Masters Club” provided a relaxed environment for feedback and collaboration on the writing process. Research Funding from the Conference of Latin American History through the James R. Scobie Award, a Summer Research Fellowship and Travel Grant from the History Department at the University of Texas at Austin, as well as a Churchill Scholarship from the British Studies Program at the University of Texas at Austin provided generous funds to complete research for this report.

Abstract

Royal Vassals: Old African Christians in the Atlantic World

by

Chloe Louise Ireton, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

Supervisor: Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra

In the sixteenth century, hundreds (if not thousands) of free blacks, some of them first generation Africans (manumitted slaves) acquired royal permits to embark in fleets to cross the ocean as vassals of the Castilian crown, that is, as Old Christians. Free *bozales* (recently arrived from Africa as slaves) and their descendants, *ladinos* (hispanized Iberian-born Africans), successfully argued in the House of the Trade in Seville that they should be given permission to travel to the New World because they were Old Christians from West Africa. While such applicants may be considered as hispanicised (*ladinos*) as they were fluent in Castilian and were well known in the Iberian cities where they lived, ultimately it was the colour of their skin and African heritage that enabled them to successfully argue that they were as Old a Christian as any white Iberian and that they should be given permission to travel to the New World. In my paper I explore this puzzle: how did free Sub-Saharan Africans manage to successfully claim an Old Christian status and travel in the Iberian Atlantic?

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Afro-Iberian Itinerancy in the Iberian Atlantic.....	6
Royal Vassals: Old African Christians.....	13
'Ethiopia' in the Black Atlantic.....	29
Conclusion: Re-evaluating Iberian Ideas about Purity of Blood & Skin Color.....	50
Bibliography.....	54

Introduction

Alonso and Maria Martinez are (xxx) blacks from Guinea... and although they are black, they are and were black Christians and not children or grandchildren of muslims, jews, they were not heretics, nor New Christians (conversos), nor penitential, nor of the newly converted.¹

Witness statements referring to Clara Martin's parents in her application for a Royal License to travel to the Indies 1601

Like many other Afro-Iberian petitioners in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, Clara Martin successfully argued in the House of the Trade in Seville that she should be granted a royal license to travel to the Indies based on her Old Christian heritage in Guinea and good standing in her native city of Palos (Huelva) on the south-western coast of Castille. In her application Clara Martin stated that her parents, Hernando Alonso and María Martínez were both “blacks from Guinea.” The character witnesses appended to the application linked her West African origins to an Old Christian heritage, stating that the numerous Royal decrees of the sixteenth century that sought to curtail the travel to the Indies of New Christians, criminals, heretics, and those who had been pursued by the Inquisition, did not pertain to her case. Instead, they argued that Clara Martin’s Old Christian status was guaranteed by her parents’ heritage from Guinea and that she was an exemplary Old Christian from West Africa with a

¹ Archivo General de Indias (henceforth AGI) Casa de la Contratacion Papers (henceforth Cont),5264,N.2,R.78, Year 1601, “Expediente de información y licencia de pasajero a indias de Clara Martín, negra, criada de Diego de Castro, natural de Palos, hija de Hernando Alonso y María Martínez (negros de Guinea), a Perú.”

good standing in the Palos community. While Clara Martin may be considered a *ladina* (hispanized Iberian-born African) as she was fluent in Castilian and had acquired a status in her hometown of Palos (as a *vecina*), ultimately it was the colour of her skin and her African heritage that enabled her to successfully argue that she was as Old a Christian as any white Iberian and that she should be given permission to travel to the New World.

In this paper I explore the Atlantic mobility of Afro-Iberians who possessed a free status in the eyes of royal officials and who successfully petitioned to embark on lengthy and dangerous journeys from Seville to the New World in the years between 1509-1640. Afro-Iberians who were *bozales* (recently arrived from Africa as slaves) and their descendants successfully argued in the House of the Trade that they were Old Christians from West Africa. Royal Officials accepted these religious lineages in granting Afro-Iberians licenses to travel. I hypothesise that African diasporas' ability to claim an Old Christian status was determined by sixteenth and early seventeenth century European conversations about African Christianity that took place through publications dotted around the Iberian Atlantic. I suggest that the Portuguese 'discovery' of the legendary lands of Prester John in Ethiopia, located in Central East Africa - while often rendered as marginal activities on the periphery of Iberian colonisation - shaped Iberians' acceptance of black Old Christians. As missionaries, royal officials, slave traders, and European artists fused biblical and legendary narratives to explain and debate the existence of Christianity in

Ethiopia, Europeans found themselves face to face with the existence of Old Christians who were also black. I argue that these debates on the meaning of African Christianity significantly shaped Iberian ideas about race, religion, and blood in the New and Old Worlds.

Hundreds of free blacks travelled to the Indies with Royal licenses in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The sheer volume suggests that Afro-Iberian travel was constant, lacking in patterns, and highly varied in terms of experiences. In between 1509 and 1640 I have found two hundred and eighty-one cases of black Africans traveling in the Iberian Atlantic in the records at the House of Trade in Seville. While these sources demonstrate that African mobility was significant, especially within Seville's free African population, the fact that the number of Africans in the passenger seat records far outweighs the number of travel license petitions, and given that many of the successful petition licenses and inheritance records (for those who lived in Spain but died in the New World) are not accounted for in the passenger records demonstrates that there are still a plethora of documents yet to be catalogued. This leads me to conclude that two hundred and eighty-one is a small estimate of the total number of free Africans traveling legitimately in the Iberian Atlantic between 1509 and 1640. Moreover this research only captures legitimate travel applications. Clandestine strategies that Afro-Iberians used to travel to the Indies rarely appear in the records of the House of the Trade.²

² For this quantitative overview, I draw on three key caches of documents held in the House of Trade archive in Seville. Firstly, I analysed the Passenger Lists (*Asientos de*

These examples of Afro-Iberians' Atlantic voyages are startling because scholarship usually underscores the forced nature of African mobility through the transatlantic slave trade. Historiographical foci on slavery in rural areas and in the Middle Passage has provided a rich picture of the violence that marked slave life, and the creative modes in which slaves attempted and sometimes succeeded in negotiating their enslaved status and experiences.³ However, research on the travels and movement of free Africans (either free born or freed later in life) in the early Iberian Atlantic remains undeveloped, with the exception of snippets of micro-histories that explore the remarkable travels of specific Afro individuals.⁴ Yet, as I demonstrate in this paper, free Afro-Iberians who were neither slaves nor fugitives were often highly mobile, embarking on numerous Atlantic voyages in their lifetime and passing through different locales in the Iberian Atlantic world. Much scholarship has explored urban experiences of slave and free Africans in the late colonial period from approximately 1700-1850, highlighting

Pasajeros); House of Trade officials compiled lists of the names of passengers on every ship. The second cache that I draw on is the royal travel licenses (*Licencias*); every passenger required a royal license which they had to acquire in the House of the Trade in Seville. Thirdly, I draw on Assets of the Deceased records (*Bienes de Difuntos*) investigations by the House of Trade into the heirs of Afro-Iberians who died in the Indies but who lived in the Iberian Peninsula.

³ Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*, (Harvard University Press: 2008); Rachel Sarah O'Toole, *Bound Lives, Africans, Indians, and the Making of Race in Colonial Peru*, (University of Pittsburgh Press: 2012); Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*, (Harvard University Press: 2010); Markus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, (Penguin Books: 2008).

⁴ Scholarship that explores free Afro-Iberians' mobility in the Iberian Atlantic: James Sweet, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World*, (University of North Carolina Press: 2011); Sherwin K. Bryant, Rachel Sarah O'Toole, & Ben Vinson III, eds., *Africans to Spanish America: Expanding the Diaspora*, (University of Illinois Press: 2012); Matthew Restall, *The Black Middle, Africans, Mayas, and Spaniards in Colonial Yucatan*, (Stanford University Press: 2009)

the varied nature of African diasporic experiences.⁵ In doing so, scholars have critically approached the meanings and categorisations of race, casta, and slavery in the Iberian world. However, due to a scarcity of sources on African diaspora in the earlier period both in the New World and in Iberia, relatively little historiography interrogates Afro-Iberian lives during the period of formative Iberian expansion.⁶ Yet, in the early period of conquest, there were significant populations of Afro-Iberians in key port cities and African men played important roles in the success of Iberian expansion through their work in maritime and military roles.⁷ The sources I explore demonstrate that Afro-Iberians - whether recently freed or descendants of those forcibly removed from West Africa through the slave trade - in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries developed Atlantic world views akin to European counterparts vis-a-vis the opportunities available through the Atlantic and in the New World.

⁵ Sample of rich historiography on African diaspora in Atlantic world between 1700-1850: Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Matt D. Childs, and James Sidbury, eds., *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade*, (University of Pennsylvania Press: 2013); Jane Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*, (Harvard University Press: 2011); Sweet, *Domingos Álvares*; Jon F. Sensbac, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World*, (Harvard University Press: 2006); Mariza de Carvalho Soares, *People of Faith: Slavery and African Catholics in Eighteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro*, (Duke University Press: 2011); Robert Adams Jr. ed., *Rewriting the African Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean: Beyond Disciplinary and National Boundaries*, (Routledge: 2013).

⁶ Scholarship that focuses on African diaspora in early period of Iberian expansion includes: Kathryn Joy McKnight & Leo J. Garofalo, eds., *Afro-Latino Voices: Narratives from the Early-Modern Ibero-Atlantic World, 1550-1812*, (Hackett: 2009); Nicole Von Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers: Confraternities and Social Mobility for Afro-Mexicans*, (University Press of Florida: 2006); Restall, *The Black Middle*; O'Toole, *Bound Lives*; Bryant, O'Toole, & Vinson III, eds., *Africans to Spanish America*.

⁷ Restall, *The Black Middle*; Pablo Emilio Perez Mallaina Bueno, *Spain's Men of the Sea. Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century*, Carla Rahn Phillips, trans., (Johns Hopkins University Press: 2005).

Afro-Iberian Itinerancy in the Iberian Atlantic

The destinations and places of provenance of Afro-Iberians travelling through the House of Trade in Seville were varied and do not necessarily represent a systematic travel from Old World to New or vice versa. One hundred and thirty-one cases involved Africans who were born in Spain, with ninety-eight originating from the Seville province, including those who were born elsewhere but later settled in Seville. Seville therefore acted as a magnet for Afro-Iberians from other parts of Iberia. This is not surprising given Seville's prominence as a port city in the Iberian world, and migration patterns within Castille to Seville in the sixteenth century. In addition to those already resident in Seville, thirty-three Afro-Iberians travelled directly from other towns in the Iberian Peninsula to request a license in Seville. There are no Afro-Iberian petitioners from Cadiz in spite of the city's significant free African population. This lacuna suggests that perhaps Africans wishing to travel to the Indies from Cadiz found it easier to embark on boats from that port without licenses from the House of the Trade. Forty of the travellers in the passenger seat records did not have a record for their place of origin. Sixty-eight of the applicants were making return journeys to the Indies, having argued in their petitions that they were native of a specific locale in the New World. Africans travelled to varied destinations in the Spanish empire, but the two most common regions were Peru with sixty-two travellers, on par with New Spain with sixty-three. Twenty-eight went to Santo Domingo and thirty-four to Tierra Firme. In total out of the two hundred and eighty-one cases,

two hundred and twenty-six had recorded destinations, while the others remain unknown. The less common destinations included Cuba, New Granada, Nicaragua, Philippines, Popayan, Quito, Rio de la Plata, San Juan de Puerto Rico, and Veragua.⁸

Family kinship ties played an important role in encouraging free blacks' mobility in the Atlantic world. For example, in 1536 Catalina Hernandez, a black woman from Seville travelled to Santo Domingo, only to return three years later to collect her daughter, Francisca de Castilla, and take her back to Santo Domingo.⁹ A significant proportion of Afro-Iberian license applications involved women who sought to join their husbands in the New World. In 1571, a recently freed black slave, Jeronima, successfully gained permission to join her black husband, Pablo, in Peru.¹⁰ In 1578, Sofia Hernandez, an Afro-Iberian born to two black parents travelled to New Spain with her son Pedro to live with her husband.¹¹ Similarly, in 1594 Felipa de Santiago an Afro-Iberian woman

⁸ These sources are drawn from analysing records pertaining to Africans in the House of the Trade records.

⁹ Catalina Hernandez: AGI Cont,5536,L.5,F.197R(5), Year 1536 "Catalina Hernández, de color negro, vecina de Sevilla, a Santo Domingo. Presentó dos cartas de ahorría que pasaron ante Jerónimo Pérez de Sahagún, escribano público de Sevilla, en 24 de Agosto y 2 de Septiembre de 1536"; AGI Cont, 5536,L.5,F.364R(2), Year 1539, "Catalina Hernández, de color negra, a Santo Domingo." Francisca de Castilla: AGI Cont,5536,L.5,F.197R(6), Year 1539, "Francisca de Castilla, hija de García de Castilla y de Catalina Hernández, vecina de Sevilla, a Santo Domingo"; AGI Cont,5536,L.5,F.197R(4), Year 1539, "Francisca de Castilla, hija de García de Castilla y de Catalina Hernández, vecina de Sevilla, a Santo Domingo."

¹⁰ AGI Indiferente,2084,N.84, Year 1571, "Jeronima, Expediente de concesión de licencia para pasar a Peru, a favor de Jeronima, negra, natural de Guinea."

¹¹ Sofia Hernández: AGI Indiferente,1969,L.22,F.130, Year 1578, "Real Cédula a los oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, para que den licencia a Sofia Hernández, negra, para pasar a Nueva España, con un hijo a reunirse con su marido (extracto)"; AGI Cont,5538,L.1,F.95V, Year 1578, "Asiento de Pasajeros: Sofia Hernández, natural de

embarked on an Atlantic journey with her three *mulato* sons, Juan, Jose, and Pedro to the island of San Juan de Ullua where her Spanish husband lived and worked as an *artillero* in the royal armies.¹² In 1564 royal officials gave Maria Hernandez, a blind black woman of unknown origin, permission to travel with her son Diego to San Cristobal in La Habana to reunite with her black husband, Fernando de Rojas.¹³

It is important to note, however, that marriage was not a precondition for women to travel to the Indies. In fact many single women embarked on Atlantic journeys. In 1569, Maria Ramos a black woman from Seville travelled to Tierra Firme with her daughter Juanica, as a single and free woman.¹⁴ In 1570 Elvira Martin and her daughter Ausencia, labelled as blacks from Guinea travelled as free women to Peru.¹⁵ Maria de Cota a black woman who had been brought to Spain as a slave but later freed in her master's will, gained a license in 1580 to

Sevilla, hija de Jorge y de Margarita, negros, con su hijo Pedro, a Nueva España donde esta su marido Pedro de Lunares - 16 de junio.”

¹² Felipa de Santiago: AGI Cont,5248,N.1,R.1, Year 1594, “Felipa de Santiago, Expediente de información y licencia de pasajero a Indias de Felipa de Santiago, negra tezada, vecina de Sevilla, casada con Pedro Hernández de Rivera, con sus hijos: Juan, José y Pedro, a la isla de San Juan de Ulúa. Fecha Final”; AGI Cont, 5538,L.40, & Cont,5248,N.1, R.1, Year 1594, “Asientos de Pasajeros, Felipa de Santiago, negra, vecina de Sevilla, con sus hijos, Juana, Jose y Pedro, a San Juan de Ullua donde esta su marido Pedro Hernandez de Ribera 22 junio.”

¹³ AGI Cont, 5.537, L.3,F.43V, Year 1564, “Asientos de Pasajeros, Maria Hernandez, negra, ciega, vecina de San Cristobal de La Habana, con su hijo Diego, de color negro, a dicha villa, donde esta su marido, Fernando de Rojas (negro) 20 abril.”

¹⁴ AGI Cont,5537,L.3,F.331R, Year 1569, “Asientos de Pasajeros, Maria Ramos, negra, natural de Sevilla, hija de Isabel, negra, a Tierra Firme, como soltera y horra, y lleva consigo a su hija Juanica - 26 de enero.”

¹⁵ AGI Cont,5537,L.3,F.424R, Year 1570, “Asientos de Pasajeros, Elvira Martin y Asensia su hija, negras de Guinea al Peru como horras - 10 de Octubre.”

travel to Santo Domingo with her daughter.¹⁶ In 1598, Ana de los Reyes a black Afro Iberian from Seville travelled to Santo Domingo as a *pobladora* (settler), as did Faustina, a free black woman from Santo Domingo, in 1599.¹⁷

Afro-Iberian travel applications reveal a myriad of economic experiences. Many of the petitioners at the House of the Trade possessed enough capital to pay for their own voyage. Juan de Sevilla appeared in the Passenger Seat records of 1513 described as ‘of black colour and neighbour of Seville.’¹⁸ In the same year, Juan de Sevilla agreed to pay a shipmaster, Diego Rodrigues Pepino, 3.000 *maradis* for his passage and upkeep on the ship until he reached Isla Española.¹⁹ Similarly in 1529, Juana Rodriguez and Elvira Prieta, both described as black, agreed to pay Fernando Gomez, a ship captain from Palos, forty gold coins (*castellanos*) for their passage and maintenance, and that of Juana Rodriguez’s son until they reached San Juan de Ullua.²⁰

¹⁶ AGI Indiferente, 2060, N.10, Year 1580, “Maria de Cota, Expediente de concesión de licencia para pasar a Santo Domingo (Isla Española) a favor de María de Cota, negra libre, natural de Santo Domingo (Isla Española), con su hija.”

¹⁷ Ana de los Reyes: AGI Cont, 5538, L.30, & 5256, N.1, R.50-52, Year 1598, “Asientos de Pasajeros, Ana de los Reyes, negra, natural de Sevilla, a Santo Domingo como pobladora - 4 de marzo.” Faustina: Cont, 5260B, N.1, R.44, Year 1599, “Expediente de información y licencia de pasajero a indias de Faustina, negra libre, natural de Santo Domingo (Isla Española), a Santo Domingo (Isla Española)”;

Cont, 5538, L.30 & 5256, N.1, R.50-3v & 5260, N.1, R.44, “Asientos de Pasajeros, Faustina (Pobladora), negra, natural de Santo Domingo, a Santo Domingo como pobladora, 29 enero”.

¹⁸ AGI Sevilla, Cont, 5536, L.1, F.284(5), Year 1513, “Asientos de Pasajeros, Juan de Sevilla, de color negro, vecino de Sevilla.”

¹⁹ Archivo Histórico Provincial de Sevilla (Henceforth AHPS), Libro del año: 1513, Oficio IV, L.3, Escribanía: Manuel Segura, F.451, Fecha: 16 de Agosto (signatura 2205), “Asunto: Juan de Sevilla, de color negro, vecino de Sevilla, se obliga a pagar a Diego Rodriguez Pepino, comitre de la Reina, vecino de Triana, maestre de la nao Santiago, 3.000 maradis por su pasaje y manumencion en la dicha nao hasta la isla espaniola.”

²⁰ AHPS, Libro del año 1529, Oficio V, Libro I, Escribanía de Francisco de Castellanos, Folio 604, Fecha 6 de Marzo. (Signatura 3276), “Asunto: Juana Rodriguez y Elvira

In contrast, approximately one quarter of the applicants who could not fund their Atlantic voyages contracted themselves as servants in order to complete their trip.²¹ For example three black men from Portugal, Juan de Acosta, Gaspar Gonzalez, and Cristobal Hernandez signed contracts in Seville's notary on 31st May 1535 with Alonso de Herrera, a merchant from Seville, agreeing to serve him in New Spain for three years commencing on the day that they arrived in the Port of San Juan de Ullua in order to recompense him for paying their expenses and upkeep on the Atlantic journey.²² Similarly, in 1536 Francisco Perez, a black man, agreed to accompany Diego Montesino, a small

Prieta, hermanas, de color negro, se obligan a pagar a Fernando Gomez, maestre de la nao Maria, vecino de Palos, 40 castellanos de oro, importe de sus pasajes y mantenimientos y el de Alonso, hijo de la dicha Juana Rodriguez, en la referida nao hasta el puerto de San Juan de Uluá.”

²¹ Approximately one quarter of all applications, seventy-nine of the two-hundred and eighty-one license applications, involved Africans traveling as criados (servants). The proportion of those travelling as servants increased significantly in the later part of the sixteenth century. Whereas in between 1509 and 1530 there are records of twenty-six Afro-Iberian travellers, only three appear to travel as criados, while in between 1530 and 1640 two hundred and forty-eight Afro-Iberians travelled through the House of Trade, sixty-seven of whom were servants. The proportion of those traveling as criados became more pronounced in the last four decades of the sixteenth century when one hundred and sixty-seven Afro-Iberians travelled and fifty-four were labelled as servants. Complicating these numbers, I have found that many of the passenger seat records did not necessarily label travellers as criados even though I have later located license applications that suggest that the individual in question was traveling as a criado. Thus, these numbers are suggestive of a base minority of the total possible Afro-Iberians who travelled as servants.

²² AHPS, Libro del año 1535, Oficio X, Escribanía de Pedro de Coronado, Folio 82vto, R.24-26, Fecha 31 de mayo. Signatura 5856, “Asunto: Escritura de concierto entre Juan de Acosta, Gaspar Gonzalez y Cristobal Hernandez, negros, portugueses, estantes en Sevilla de una Parta, y Alonso de Herrera, mercader, vecino de dicha ciudad en la colación de San Salvador, de otra parte, en virtud de la cual aquellos se obligan a servir a este en la Nueva España, durante tres años a contar desde el día que desembarcasen en el puerto de San Juan de Uluá, con arreglo a las condiciones que se mencionan.”

time slave merchant based in Seville, to the provinces of Peru as his servant.²³ Perez had been brought to Spain from the Indies as the slave of Garcia Perez twenty years earlier, but had managed to raise funds to pay for his manumission in Spain. The year before undertaking to become Diego Montesino's servant, Francisco Perez appeared at the House of the Trade armed with a Royal Decree that gave him a license to travel to the New World to serve the crown in royal armies.²⁴ Since Perez already possessed a travel license, it is likely that he contracted his services to Diego Montesino in order to fund his journey to the Indies.

Many Afro-Iberians travelled as servants for one leg of the journey and then completed return voyages independently. Isabel Ortiz, a black woman from Palos de los Angeles in New Spain embarked on a trip to Seville as the servant of the Judge (*Oidor*) of the Audience of Guatemala.²⁵ In 1612, Isabel gained permission at the House of the Trade to return to New Spain with her *mulato* son, Diego. It is unclear whether her son had also worked as a servant for the the Judge. In her license application, Isabel Ortiz presented three witnesses who

²³ AHPS, Libro del año 1536, Oficio I, Libro II, Escribanía de Alonso de la Barrera, Folio 908, Fecha 7 de Octubre. Signatura. 53. "Asunto: Francisco Perez, negro que fue criado de Garcia Perez, vecino de Sevilla, en la collación de San Juan, contrata sus servicios con Diego Montesino, mercador estante en este dicha ciudad y se obliga a acompañarle a la provincia de Peru."

²⁴ AGI Indiferente,1961,L.3,F.324R-324V, Year 1535, "Real Cedula a los oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación pare que den licencia para passar a Indias a Francisco Perez, negro libre."

²⁵ Isabel Ortiz: AGI Cont,5324,N.30, Year 1612, "Expediente de información y licencia de pasajero a indias de Isabel Ortiz, negra, y su hijo Diego, mulato, a Nueva España. España"; AGI Indiferente,2074,N.50, Year 1612, "Expediente de concesión de licencia para pasar a Puebla de los Angeles a favor de Isabel Ortiz, negra, natural y vecina de dicha ciudad, con su hijo Diego."

agreed that she was about forty years old and married to a black man in San Palos de los Angeles, with whom she had two children. While much remains enigmatic about this voyage, it is a stark example of a free, married black woman embarking on an Atlantic journey as a servant without her husband, either with her son, or to collect her son in Seville, and then returning independently, or at least not in the service of the same master.

Royal Vassals: Old African Christians

While free blacks' mobility is striking because it remains unacknowledged in scholarship, the most important element of Afro-Iberian travel records comes to light when exploring how free blacks circumvented the increasingly stringent sixteenth century Royal prohibitions that were designed to prevent 'undesirables' from travelling to the Indies.²⁶ Attempts to control migration to the Indies by the Spanish crown throughout the sixteenth century resulted in various royal decrees prohibiting the travel of criminals, newly converted Christians, those who had been investigated by the Holy Office of the Inquisition, and heretics.²⁷ The presence of New Christians in the Spanish Americas proved a constant source of concern for Royal Officials, seeing a potential for 'heretic practices' as a dangerous influence on both the indigenous populations yet to be converted to Christianity, and on the growing Spanish creole populations in the New World.²⁸

The regular Royal edicts addressing the problem of undesirables in the New

²⁶ Karoline Cook, "Forbidden Crossings: Morisco Emigration to Spanish America 1492-1650," PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2008.

²⁷ Cited in Cook, "Forbidden Crossings," p. 38: AGI, Indiferente 1961, L. 1, f. 38v., Year 1508, "...Asimismo vos mando q en ninguna manera deys lugar q agora ny aq adelante pasen a binyr a la dicha ysla ny contratar en ellas ny en otra qualquier manera hijos ny nietos de tornadizos de judios ny moros ny hijos de quemados ny reconciliados"; AGI, Indiferente 419, L. 5, f. 250r, Year 1514 "Ytem mando q no pueda yr a poblar ny estar en las dhas yslas xpianos nuevos de moros ny judios sopena de perdimiento de bienes e las personas a la nra md."

²⁸ These references were compiled by Cook in "Forbidden Crossings", p.37: Cedulaario Indiano, Recopilado por Diego de Encinas, Oficial Mayor de la Escribanía de Cámara del Consejo Supremo y Real de las Indias, 1501, (Madrid 1945), vol. 1, p. 455, "Yten, por quanto nos con mucho cuydado avemos de procurar la conversion de los Indios a nuestra sancta Fee Catholica: y si halla fuessen personas sospechosas en la Fee a la dicha conversion, podria ser algun impedimento, no consentireys ni dareys lugar que alla vayan Moros ni Iudios, ni hereges, ni reconciliados, ni personas nueuamente convertidos a nuestra Fee, salvo si fueren esclavos negros o otros esclavos negros, o que ayan nacido en poder de Christianos nuestros subditos y naturals."

World attests to both individuals without Old Christian status' successful circumvention of laws prohibiting their travel and also to the practical difficulties for officials in the Royal provinces in the New World to enforce such laws.²⁹ The regular investigations into individuals engaged in the forging of royal travel licenses and decrees in Seville also points towards the ever-growing demand for forged licenses and attempts to curtail the illicit trade.³⁰

Significantly, hundreds of Afro-Iberians gained permission to travel to the Indies not by passing as Iberians or hiding their non-European origins, but by arguing that they were also Old Christians. This is in stark contrast to *moriscos*

²⁹ Ibid. p.p. 452-453, "Por quanto por experiencia se ha visto el gran daño e inconveniente que se sigue de passar a las nuestras Indias hijos de quemados y reconciliados de Iudios y Moros, y nuevamente convertidos..."

³⁰ On the forgery of Old Christian genealogies see Ruth Pike, *Linajudos and Conversos in Seville: Greed and Prejudice in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Spain*, (Peter Lang, New York: 2000). Royal responses to forgeries of travel licences and royal decrees concerning Atlantic travel: AGI Indiferente,424,L.22,F.23R(1), Year 1549, "Real cédula a los corregidores, y otros justicias del reino, ordenándoles a petición del fiscal ejecutar la carta requisitoria expedida por la Casa de la Contratación, para apresar y confiscar los bienes de Francisco Díez, natural de Alcalá de Henares, condenado por falsificación de cédulas"; AGI, Justicia,1177,N.1, Year 1550, "El fiscal con Laberto de cuenca, preso, vecino de la ciudad de Zaragoza, sobre falsificar una licencia para pasar a Indias"; AGI Cont,5218,N.88, Year 1555, "Autos del fiscal contra Lorenzo Núñez, alias Pedro de Reinoso, por falsificación de la Real Cédula e información para pasar a Indias"; AGI Cont,5218,N.87, Year 1555, "Autos del fiscal contra Hernán Sánchez, mercader, por falsificación de la información para pasar a Indias"; AGI Indiferente,1965,L.13,F.432V, Year 1557, "Real Cédula a los oficiales de la Contratación, para que envíen relación, sacada de los procesos, sobre tres presos por falsificación de cédulas para pasar a Indias"; AGI Indiferente,1965,L.13,F.317V, Year 1557, "Real Cédula a los oficiales de la Casa de la Contratación, para que investiguen sobre la falsificación de ciertas cédulas para pasar a Indias y prendan a los culpables"; AGI Cont,5283,N.82BIS, Year 1605, "Expediente de información y licencia de pasajero a indias de Agustín Gutiérrez, con los criados Rodrigo Alvarez de Soto Mayor y Francisco Machado, a Perú. No pasaron por falsificar la información"; AGI Cont,5289,N.36, Year 1605, "Autos del fiscal contra Andrés de Mendoza, por falsificación de la Real Cédula para pasar a Indias"; AGI Cont,5280,N.11, Year 1605, "Autos de prisión contra Gonzalo de los Reyes, Jerónimo de Molina y Juan Bautista, expedido por la Casa de la Contratación, con motivo de la falsificación de Reales Cédulas. Acompaña: diez Reales Cédulas falsas conteniendo licencias de pasajeros con destino a Perú y Nuevo Reino de Granada."

(Christian converts from Islam) and *conversos* (Christian converts from Judaism) who often travelled to the Indies through clandestine means. Some successfully constructed Iberian identities and passed for Spanish Old Christians.³¹ Others forged royal licenses or purchased fake licenses. Due to the often-overwhelming demand for maritime workers, many travelled to the Indies working on ships with complicit captains who hid them from port authorities. A significant number also bypassed authorities by traveling from other ports in Spain, especially the Canary Islands.³²

One pertinent example of the Afro-Iberians travellers claiming Old Christian West African heritages is in the travel application of Francisco Gonzalez. In 1569 Francisco Gonzalez appeared in the House of the Trade in Seville to request a license for himself and his wife Juana Rodriguez to travel to the port of Veracruz in New Spain, where he wished to take up residence and ply his trade as a diver. Both were free blacks and residents in Seville.³³ Francisco Gonzalez's life had been marked by Atlantic travels. In the witness statements, a fellow seaman (*marinero*) explained that he worked alongside Francisco on a return journey from Veracruz and that Francisco was renowned for his diving skills, a trade requiring great skill. Francisco Gonzalez summarised his Atlantic mobility, maritime employment, and family life in his application:

³¹ On the purchasing of Old Christian Genealogies see Pike, *Linajudos and Conversos*.

³² Cook, "Forbidden Crossings."

³³ AGI Indiferente, 2052, N.14, Year 1569, "Expediente de concesión de licencia para pasar a Veracruz (Nueva España) a favor de Francisco Gonzales, negro libre, vecino de Sevilla, con su mujer Juana Rodriguez, de color prieta."

Francisco Gonzales of black colour and neighbour of the said city of Seville I say that I am legitimately married for many years with Juana Rodriguez of black colour and she and I are free of all captivity and I have come from the Indies as a *marinero* many times I am a diver and I use my trade (oficio) as such and I have had xxxx the said my trade (oficio)(of diver) in the New Spain and because I want to go and live with the said my wife to the New Spain to the port of Veracruz there to use my said trade (oficio) (of diver) because it is necessary there I ask and beg that you give me a license so that I and my wife can go to the said New Spain without imposing any impediments and for xxxx I present you with this information for the application.³⁴

In spite of Francisco Gonzalez's strongly worded statement, the couple's 1569 request for permission to live in Veracruz stalled and, in the meantime, Francisco continued to work on ships and in Veracruz as a diver.³⁵ In 1577, they successfully reapplied for a license. In the same year a royal decree arrived at the House of the Trade giving Francisco González and his wife, Juana, permission to move to Veracruz with the obligation that they remain there for eight years and

³⁴ *Ibid*: "Francisco Gonzales de color negro vecino de la dicha ciudad de Sevilla digo que yo soy casado legítimamente con muchos años con Juana Rodriguez de color negra y ella y yo somos libres de todo cautiverio y yo he venido de las yndias por marinero muchas veces soy buzo y uso mi oficio como tal y e tenido? xxx el dicho mi officio en la Nueva España y porque yo me quiero yr a vivir con la dicha mi mujer a la nueva España al puerto de la Veracruz della para usar al dicho mi oficio por q es necesarios para allí pido y suplico a usted me mande dar licencia para q y y la dicha mi mujer podamos yr a la dicha Nueva Espana sin nos poner ympedimiento alguno y para q xxx hago su presentación de este información para lo qual."

³⁵ In their 1577 application, Francisco stated that he had returned to Seville collect his wife and take her to his home in Veracruz. The witness statements also demonstrated that Francisco continued to work on Atlantic fleets as a *marinero* and as a diver in the years between 1569 and 1577.

that Francisco work as a diver.³⁶ The decree also permitted them to take a nephew and a criado (servant).³⁷

In the 1569 application Juana and Francisco Rodriguez argued that they were Old Christians and good neighbours in the community in Seville. Discussing their religious heritage, the first witness stated: “and he knows that the parents in law are black and of the Guinea and not *moriscos*”.³⁸ The second witness stated that he knew they were husband and wife and: “Both are black and of the caste of black and Christian and not moors, nor *moriscos*”.³⁹ A further witness reiterated the point: “and this witness knows that they are blacks of the caste of blacks and good Christians and not of the caste of moors”.⁴⁰ Another witness suggested that Juana and Francisco belonged to a ‘caste of black Christians’:

“the witness knows that they are husband and wife...
the witness knows that they are of the caste of black
Christians and not *moriscos* because they are black
atezados [common label to describe black West

³⁶ AGI Indiferente,1968,L.21,F.131V, Year 1577, “Real Cédula a los oficiales de la Casa de Contratación dando licencia a Francisco González para pasar con su esposa, siendo negros libres, a la ciudad de Veracruz, pudiendo llevar un sobrino y un criado, dando informaciones (extracto) y obligándose a residir ocho años y a usar su oficio de buzo.”

³⁷ *Ibid.* While in later periods in colonial history there are examples of free blacks owning slaves and employing servants, this is one of the earliest examples that I have seen and the only example in the records that I have surveyed in the House of the Trade of a free black Afro-Iberian traveling with a servant.

³⁸ AGI Indiferente,2052,N.14, Year 1569, “y que save que los suegros son negro y delas xxx de guinea y no moriscos.”

³⁹ *Ibid.* “dichos son negros de casta de negros y cristianos y no moros y no moriscos.”

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* “y este testigo sabe que son negros de casta de negros y buenos cristianos y no de casta de moro.”

Africans] and that always after this witness has known them they have lived christianly”⁴¹

The applicants and witnesses employed similar strategies to create a fusion of West African religious heritage and Iberian cultural identity, citing parents’ birth in West Africa and the applicants’ high standing in the local Iberian community. Reflecting Clara Martin’s case that I discussed in the introduction of this essay, the witnesses discussed the petitioners’ Old Christian statuses in reference to their West African heritages and stated that none of the prohibited categories of *moriscos*, *conversos*, New Christians, those persecuted by the Inquisition, heretics, or criminals applied to the applicants.

Similarly, in 1612, Juan de Castañeda Bustamante successfully applied to travel as the servant of Fadrique Cancer (corregidor de Trujillos) by claiming an African Old Christian heritage.⁴² Born as a free man in Seville to married Afro-Iberian parents, Juan Castañeda Bustamante argued that that he and his parents were Old Christians from Guinea and clean of “all bad race”:

Juan Castañeda Bustamante, neighbour of and born in this city I say xxx xx to pass to the Indies, it seems I need to prove and demonstrate that I am a legitimate son of Don Fernando del Bustamante and Maria Sanchez from Guinea, both deceased who were

⁴¹ *Ibid.* “el testigo sabe que son marido y mujer... el testigo sabe que son de casta de negros cristianos y no moriscos por que son negros atezados y que siempre después que este testigo los conose an vivido a cristianamente.”

⁴² AGI Cont,5327,N.22, Year 1612, “Expediente de información y licencia de pasajero a indias de Juan de Castañeda Bustamante, natural y vecino de Sevilla, criado de Fadrique Cancer (corregidor de Trujillos, hijo de Jeronimo de Bustamante y Maria Sanchez de Guinea, a Peru.”

neighbours of this city and in their marriage they gave birth to me and they brought me up as their legitimate son in this city and that is how I was born here and how I and my parents are Old Christians clean of all bad race and not descendants of moors or jews nor of the newly converted to our Saintly Catholic faith nor of the prohibited to pass to the Indies and nor I nor they have been pursued (penitenciados) by the Saintly Office of the Inquisition and in that way Juan el Bustamante y Doña Maria de Castañeda are parents of the said Don Fernando de Bustamante my father xxx of Guinea.⁴³

Travel records of Afro-Iberians demonstrate that recently freed slaves also gained permission to embark on Atlantic voyages by using similar strategies. These cases demonstrate that African slaves were sometimes able to gain freedom and successfully argue for the same privileges as white Iberians, in this case an Old Christian status. For example in 1570 Jeronima travelled independently to meet her husband, Pablo, who lived and worked in Peru.⁴⁴ Born a slave in Doña Maria de Cuñadez's(?) household, at an undefined point and for reasons not discussed in her application, Jeronima gained her freedom and married a fellow

⁴³ Ibid. "Juan Castañeda Bustamante vecino y natural de esta ciudad digo xx xxx pasar a las yndias y parece tengo necesidad de probar y averrignar que como soy hijo legitimo de Don Fernando del Bustamante y Maria Sanchez de Guinea difuntos vecinos que fueron de esta ciudad y como durante su matrimonio me tuvieron y procrearon? por su hijo legitimo en esta ciudad y así soy natural y del como yo y los dichos mis padres somos Cristianos viejos limpios de toda mala raza y no descendiente de moros ni judíos ni de los nuevamente convertidos nuestra santa fe católica ni de los prohibidos a pasar a las indias ni que yo ni ellos han sido penitenciados por el santo oficio de la Inquisición que como asimismo Juan el Bustamante y Doña Maria de Castañeda su mujer padres del dicho Don Fernando de Bustamante mi padre lope san chee de Guinea."

⁴⁴ AGI Indiferente, 2084, N.84, Year 1571, "Jeronima, Expediente de concesión de licencia para pasar a Peru, a favor de Jeronima, negra, natural de Guinea."

Afro-Iberian, Pablo, who she described as black.⁴⁵ Drawing on similar narratives of Old Christian heritage in order to argue her case, Jeronima's application was different to the majority of other Afro-Iberians' because she presented six black witnesses to attest to her Christian heritage. The House of the Trade officials recorded Guinean origins when describing these witnesses.⁴⁶ Likewise, in 1600 Juan de Buenaño from Palos (Huelva) successfully requested a license to travel to Peru on a pre-assigned seat as the *criado* (servant) of Gonzalo Hernandez by claiming an Old Christian heritage.⁴⁷ Born into slavery, Buenaño's owner freed him when he was twelve. Like many other Afro-Iberians' travel applications, Buenaño's witnesses stated that his parents were from Guinea, but good Christians and not descendants of Moors or Jews, or investigated by the Holy Office of the Inquisition, nor of the newly converted to Christianity.⁴⁸ Jeronima and Juan de Buenaño's cases illustrate that the adoption of African Old Christian identities did not solely represent the application strategies of free born Afro-Iberian *ladinos* or *criollos* (America born). Jeronima's rare use of black witnesses sheds light on the potential African communal appropriation and negotiation of ideas about African Old Christians.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* Witness statement: "es libre y casada y era esclava de Doña Maria de Cuñadez(?) este testigo la dicha Jeronima aviendo horro y xxxx de libertad era... ; Royal Officials: "Jeronima de color negra, natural de Guinea dize que ella es libre Y xx su marido Pablo de color negro... dicho su marido esta en los reynos del Piru - Y porque ella quiere pasar aquellas partes..."

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* "por esta información que presente seis negros naturales de Guinea personas libres u quienes..."

⁴⁷ AGI Cont,5261,N.1,R.59, Year 1600, "Expediente de información y licencia de pasajero a indias de Juan de Buenaño, negro, libre, criado de Gonzalo Hernandez, natural y vecino de Palos, hijo de Juan de Buenaño y Francisca Sanchez, a Peru."

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10-13

In light of the prohibitions of New Christians, converts and criminals from traveling to the New World, it is significant that Afro-Iberians embarked on Atlantic journeys to the Indies with Royal permissions. It raises important questions about the place that Afro-Iberians saw themselves occupying and, in turn where royal officials saw free Afro-Iberians within the political body of the empire. In order for Afro-Iberians' adoption of an Old Christian West African identity to be successful, the 'official mind' of the Iberian empire also had to implicitly accept the possibility of such an identity. The fact that so many of the applicants adopted Old Christian African identities and that officials at the House of Trade granted their petitions amidst the Royal zeal to prevent New Christians, *prohibidos*, and other 'undesirables' from going to the New World implies that royal officials saw it as acceptable for some Africans to claim an Old Christian West African heritage.

While many Afro-Iberians succeeded in gaining travel licenses based on their claims to a West African Old Christian lineage, royal officials also contested certain individual's access to this specific heritage. These cases of contestation demonstrate that Royal Officials did not disagree with the possibility of former slaves or slaves' descendants being Old Christians from West Africa. Instead the contestations highlight Royal officials' fears that other ethnic minorities in Iberia, including *moriscos* and *conversos*, might be posing as West African Old Christians. For example, in 1598 officials at the House of the Trade feared that a *mulata* (Iberian casta category for individuals whose parents were white and

black) resident of Seville, Magdalena de Tuesta, was in fact a *morisca*.⁴⁹ Magdalena had applied to travel to Tierra Firme as the servant of Luis de Morales. Her application stalled as officials questioned whether she was really black and accused her of either a Moorish or Jewish lineage. They requested further information from witnesses in her birthplace, Trigueroa. The second set of witnesses confirmed her West African heritage and clean Christian lineage and refuted that she could be Jewish or Moorish. Reflecting the anxiety about the religious heritage of mulattos, in 1594 Felipa de Santiago, an Afro-Iberian, not only reaffirmed her own status as an African Old Christian and her legitimate marriage to her Spanish husband, but also presented detailed information and witness statements about her three *mulato* children's baptismal records.⁵⁰ Unlike other Afro-Iberian petitioners who tended to present neighbours and fellow workers as their witnesses, Felipa enlisted priests from her local church in Seville to testify that they had baptised her children; they in turn described the dates and baptisms in detail for each child.⁵¹

Throughout the sixteenth century, officials at the House of Trade and in ports regarded *mulatos* and *mestizos* (Iberian casta category for children whose parents were black and 'indians') with particular suspicion, fearing that they

⁴⁹ AGI Cont,5257,N.10, Year 1598, "Expediente de información y licencia de pasajero a indias de Magdalena de Tuesta, mulata, criada de Luis de Morales, natural de Trigueros y vecina de Sevilla, hija de Alfonso de Mora y Maria de Tuesta (negra) a Tierra Firme."

⁵⁰ AGI Cont,5248,N.1,R.1, Year 1594, "Expediente de información y licencia de pasajero a Indias de Felipa de Santiago, negra tezada, vecina de Sevilla, casada con Pedro Hernández de Rivera, con sus hijos: Juan, José y Pedro, a la isla de San Juan de Ulúa. Fecha Final."

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

could be *moriscos* or *conversos* posing as *mulatos*. Slave owners across the Iberian Atlantic often formally requested that the King order the release of *mulato* slaves who port authorities had confiscated due to suspicions that the slave was in fact a *morisco* rather than a *mulato*.⁵² Magdalena de Tuesta and Felipa de Santiago's cases demonstrate how it could be problematic if the applicant claimed a West African Old Christian identity when he or she had lighter skin colour than other Afro-Iberian counterparts. It therefore appears that Africans who could unequivocally claim to be black from West Africa found it easier to convince officials that they should travel to the Indies, while Africans of mixed heritage faced more difficulties in explicitly proving their racial and religious origins.

The contested nature of *mulatos*' identities is not out of the ordinary in sixteenth century Iberian society. While the category of Old Christian was a fundamental mode of organising plural Iberian society, the term was also highly ambiguous. In some cases Old Christian meant three generations of Christians in the family, while at other times it required tracking a lineage back far further into the historical record. This ambiguity meant that different groups negotiated their

⁵² AGI Panama,235,L.7,F.61V-62.R, Year 1539, "Real Cedula a los oficiales reales de Tierra Firme, a petición de Hernan Perez de Sevilla, para que devuelvan a este un esclavo en la india de Portugal mulato, que le requisaron por ir registrado como negro, siempre que les conste ser así y no morisco, o le entreguen la cantidad en que lo hubieran vendido"; AGI Panama,235,L.7,F.184R-184V, Year 1541, "Real Cedula a los oficiales de Tierra Firme, a petición del licenciado Uzeda, para que le entreguen en producto de venta de un esclavo llamado Francisco, que envió con licencia consignado a Hernando de Motescada, en la nao de que fue por maestre Francisca Diaz Cavallero, que le fue requisado por ir registrado como negro, por inadvertencia siendo mulato, y fue vendido según consta por una fe de Martin Ruix de Marchena, teniente de contados en la ciudad de Nombre de Dios."

place in Iberian society by attempting to lay claim to this elusive title. After the Christian reconquest of Al-Andalus and later of Granada in 1492, a healthy trade in tracing Christian lineages and the production of certifications emerged, whereby wealthy converts could employ such services to buy a status and become an Old Christian.⁵³ Thus, financial means often meant an easier transition into sixteenth century Christian Castile. In a study of Inquisition records in the Spanish town of Guadalupe in the late fifteenth century, Gretchen D. Starr-LeBeau argues that definitions of hearsay and Judaic practices reflected localised conflicts, and were defined locally, by Old and New Christians who provided testimonies to the court.⁵⁴ Religious heritage was therefore elastic in the sense that financial means, reputation, and local circumstances could determine an individual's ability to claim an Old Christian title.

Often Afro-Iberians' claims to West African Old Christian heritages were called into question posthumously when disputes arose over property inheritance. Such conflicts are illustrated vividly in the case of Diego Suarez. As a *mulato* actor, soldier, alms collector, and itinerant Atlantic traveller, Suarez's life provides important insights into the construction and elasticity of identity in the late sixteenth century. Suarez spent most of his life traveling freely across the Spanish Atlantic, forging relationships with varied communities in different

⁵³ For lineage productions: Pike, *Linajudos and Conversos*; Katie Harris, *From Muslim to Christian Granada: Inventing a City's Past in Early Modern Spain* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); David Coleman, *Creating Christian Granada: Society and Religious Culture in an Old-World Frontier City, 1492–1600*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

⁵⁴ Gretchen D. Starr-LeBeau, *In the Shadow of the Virgin: Inquisitors, Friars, and "Conversos" in Guadalupe, Spain*, (Princeton University Press, 2008).

Atlantic sites. The son of Barbola Hernandez, a well-known free black woman who sold *turrón* (nougat sweets) in Seville, Suarez worked as a stage actor by trade and in the 1580s embarked on various Atlantic journeys to the Spanish Americas where he continued to perform in comedies on urban stages in different Atlantic locales. In Peru, he also forged strong ties with Catholic brotherhoods, which added to his repertoire of close relationships with religious confraternities in Seville. He died far from Seville, in the Vitor Valley of Peru in 1589.⁵⁵

After Suarez's death in the New World, a lengthy dispute over the inheritance of his belongings ensued between the monastery of San Francisco in Seville and a royal representative (Alguacil) named Anton Sanchez. On the one hand, the monastery of San Francisco and its associated convents argued that the House of the Trade should uphold the last testament that Suarez dictated while in Peru in which he requested that his possessions be distributed to the monastery of San Francisco in Seville and a number of confraternities in the Arequipa region of Peru. On the other hand, Anton Sanchez, the crown's representative claimed that Suarez's belongings should be seized by royal authorities because Suarez had travelled to the New World pretending to be a West African Old Christian when in fact he was a *morisco* whose mother was a *berberisca* (moor) born in North Africa (*tierras moras*). Sanchez argued that Suarez was a criminal for not obeying royal edicts that prohibited all New Christians, *moriscos*, *conversos*, and

⁵⁵ This narrative has been reconstructed from the conflict over Suarez's will in AGI, Cont,255,N.1,R.5, Year 1599, 'bienes de difuntos, Diego Suarez,' 373 pages; I also draw on Leo Garofalo's interpretation of the case in, "Defining Empire through Afro-Iberian Incorporation and Movement in the Early Ibero-American World," Conference presentation at Atlantic World Workshop at NYU, 2009.

criminals from traveling to the Indies. The King, Sanchez argued, should therefore confiscate Suarez's property and distribute it between royal coffers and the Mercederians in support of their efforts to retrieve Christian captives from North Africa.⁵⁶

The diverging witness statements presented by both parties to the House of the Trade reflect Starr Le Beau's conclusions that individuals' religious heritage was often defined and negotiated locally.⁵⁷ Witnesses presented by the monastery argued that Suarez and his mother enjoyed close ties with the monastery, often donating alms. In the Indies, Suarez had collected alms on behalf of the confraternities of San Buenaventura and Las Animas de Purgatorio in Seville. The witnesses agreed that both Suarez and his mother were well known in their neighbourhood in Seville as Old Christians. Further, they argued, Suarez was an Old Christian as no New Christian could be a *cofrade* (brother) in their confraternities, a position that Suarez held. They also pointed out that Suarez had worked in the service of the King as a soldier and that the House of the Trade had regarded him as an Old Christian (for they gave him a license to travel).⁵⁸ Suarez was always well dressed and owned a number of expensive costumes and jewellery pieces for his representations on stage. The witnesses emphasised that Suarez was honourable and always treated as a free man wherever he went.⁵⁹ Conversely, the Royal representative presented an array of witnesses who

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Starr-LeBeau, *In the Shadow of the Virgin*.

⁵⁸ AGI, Cont,255,N.1,R.5, Year 1599, 'bienes de difuntos, Diego Suarez.'

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

testified that Suarez and his family were in fact *moriscos*, arguing that his mother spoke Spanish with an accent, that the family had marks on their faces.

Moreover, they argued, everyone in the community knew of their *morisco* heritage.⁶⁰

The surprising aspect of the contestations over *mulatos*' identities and religious heritages discussed here is that Royal Officials did not question the possibility of former slaves and their descendants being Old Christians from West Africa and therefore eligible to enjoy the same privileges as white Iberians. Instead, they feared that *mulatos* were in fact *moriscos*. In Magdalena de Tuesta's application, the officials at the House of Trade explicitly stated that they feared that she was a *morisca* or *conversa* rather than a *mulata* as a reason for requesting the second set of witness statements. Similarly, in the conflict over Diego Suarez's property, the fact that Sanchez and his witnesses argued that a *morisco* could indeed successfully claim a West African Old Christian identity suggests that officials feared that *conversos* and *moriscos* posed as Old Christians from West Africa.

Debates over the authenticity of *mulatos*' Christianity therefore demonstrate that the 'official mind' of the Spanish empire in the sixteenth century accepted the possibility of Old Christian West African heritages. In Suarez' case representatives of the monastery of San Francisco (even if their strategy was just to cash in on Suarez's belongings), and Royal officials were

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

aware that claiming an Old Christian African status was a real possibility. After a decade long dispute, officials at the House of Trade sided with the monastery and their narrative of Suarez's identity; that he was a mulatto Old Christian and not a *morisco* as Sanchez had argued.⁶¹ Thus, the contestation over *mulatos*' identities demonstrates that while royal officials accepted the possibility of Old Christians from West Africa, they often feared that other ethnic minorities such as *moriscos* and *conversos* might tap into and forge this identity in order to access spaces that they were excluded from, in this case traveling to the New World.

⁶¹ AGI Cont,255,N.1,R.5, 1599, Year 1599, "Bienes de difuntos, Diego Suarez."

‘Ethiopia’ in the Black Atlantic

How should we interpret Afro-Iberians’ identifications as Old Christians from West Africa and Royal Officials’ acceptance of such lineages? One answer is that Royal Officials regarded Afro-Iberians as Old Christians because they originated from Christian regions in West Africa. John Thornton has written extensively on West African Catholicism, primarily in the Kongo, but also in other pockets where missionaries established themselves. Thornton argues that while scholarly attitudes to the conversion of the Kingdom of Kongo to Christianity generally depict Christian conversions as “superficial, diplomatically oriented, impure, dangerous to national sovereignty or rejected by the mass of the population,” in fact Christianity in the Kongo “took a distinctly African form that was widely accepted both in Kongo and in Europe as being the religion of the country.⁶² European priests, he argues, were “much more tolerant of syncretism in Kongo than in regions like Mexico, where colonial occupation accompanied the propagation of Christianity.” Thornton posits that because Kongo, had been a ‘voluntary convert’ to Catholicism, it “had considerable leeway to contribute to its particular form of Christianity.” In turn, as Kongolese rulers maintained control over the theological content, the religion gained mass acceptance in the Kongo.⁶³

When accepting the possibility that West Africans were indeed Old Christians, royal officials may have accepted that descendants of fifteenth century

⁶² John Thornton, “The Development of an African Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1491-1750,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (1984), p.p. 147-167.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

converts in West Africa could be considered Old Christians. As Thornton argues, Iberian missionaries and the Roman Church seemed to be far more tolerant of West African Christian syncretism than they were of converts in the New World. However, a number of problems arise when accepting this possibility. Firstly, throughout the two hundred and eighty one records that I have surveyed, not once is the Kongo mentioned as a place of origin. Instead House of the trade officials recorded the generic label of Guinea to the majority of the witness statements. Of course, it remains unknown whether the black applicants and witnesses themselves used the term Guinea to explain their place of origin or whether notaries interpreted specific African place names as Guinea. In any case, the lack of reference to the Kingdom of the Kongo is telling. If its existence was the main reason why Royal Officials accepted Old Christian African lineages we might expect them to use the term. Secondly, in the sixteenth century Iberian world, *moriscos* and *conversos* whose antecedents had converted to Catholicism generations earlier were still considered to carry stains in their blood lineage.⁶⁴ The Kingdom of Kongo adopted Catholicism in the mid fifteenth century, as did other pockets of West Africa. Why did Royal Officials not regard West African converts in the same light?

In reality, present day scholarship provides diverging opinions on the extent and success of Catholic Christian conversions in West Africa. When exploring sixteenth and early seventeenth century justifications or explanations

⁶⁴ Max S. Herring Torres, Maria Elena Martinez, and David Nirenberg eds., *Race and Blood in the Iberian World*, (Lit Verlag, Zurich: 2012).

for slavery by religious thinkers, scholars have often found that contemporaries did not regard African slaves as Christians. For example, Luiz Felipe de Alencastro has recently argued that Jesuits and the Catholic Church justified the need for slavery by arguing that Africans would be more easily converted to the teachings of the Church if removed from the dangers of Africa through slavery.⁶⁵ These conclusions imply that Jesuits remained unconvinced by the existence or success of Christian conversions in West Africa. Alencastro argues that the prolific Jesuit, Antônio Vieira (1608-1697), thought that Africans would only be successfully converted to Catholicism if removed from Africa to the New World.⁶⁶ Similarly, many sixteenth century accounts highlight the consistent failure of ship masters, slave traders, royal officials, and slave owners to baptize slaves and offer slaves ‘proper’ teaching of the Christian church both in Africa and the places where slaves were forcibly displaced.⁶⁷ While not disputing Thornton’s arguments of the importance of Catholicism in West Africa, I think that writers such as Vieira demonstrate that missionaries in the New World did not consider West African Catholicism in a successful light.

⁶⁵ Luiz Felipe de Alencastro “Portuguese Missionaries and Early Modern Antislavery and Proslavery Thought” in Josep M. Fradera & Christopher Schmidt-Nowara eds., *Slavery and Anti Slavery in Spain’s Atlantic Empire*, (Berghahn Books: 2013), p. 63.

⁶⁶ Father Antônio Vieira, “Sermão XIV,” *Sermões*, 5 vols. (Porto, 1993), V.4, p.p. 733–769. Cited in Alencastro “Portuguese Missionaries.”

⁶⁷ Alonso P. Sandoval, *Naturaleza, policia sagrada i profana, costumbres i ritos, disciplina i catechismo evangelico de todos Etiopes*, (En Sevilla, Por Francisco de Lira Impresor: 1622); Alonso P. Sandoval, *Treatise on slavery : selections from De instauranda Aethiopum salute*, ed., & trans., Nicole Von. Germeten, (Hacket Publishing: 2008).

My hypothesis is that Europeans' debates about Christian Ethiopia played a more important role in shaping royal officials' acceptance of African Old Christian identities than has previously been acknowledged. When debating the veracity of Ethiopian Christianity, sixteenth and early seventeenth century missionaries, dramatists, artists, and other Europeans often constructed narratives about Ethiopian Catholicism that linked the regions' religiosity to early Christianity by fusing longstanding European legends and biblical narratives. As such some Europeans depicted black Ethiopians as Old Christians with lineages traceable to biblical times.

The discovery of Christian Ethiopia in the sixteenth century was highly significant in the wider context of European fears of impending Islamic enemies. The fall of Constantinople in the mid fifteenth century induced a height of paranoia for combating Islam's dangerous advances, especially in Italy. In the post reconquest world of Iberia, the fight against Islam, while triumphant in terms of the conquest of the Kingdom of Granada, remained a serious concern both within the Peninsula in the form of *morisco* populations and from outside. The captivity of Christians on Iberian coasts by Muslim ships proved a constant source of anxiety within society, represented both by the Mercederians' regular fundraising to pay ransoms for Christians held captive in North Africa and depictions in literature and dramas of the traumas of Christians in captivity.⁶⁸ The late sixteenth century Hispanic naval victory at the Battle of Lepanto against

⁶⁸ Traumas of captivity in literature: Miguel de Cervantes, *El Trato de Argel*, (written between 1582-1587 and published in 1615).

the Turks seemingly eased the tensions in terms of the imminent threat, but also visualised the extent of the Eastern enemies.⁶⁹

Increased consternations about Islamic advances in the early sixteenth century marked a fervent search by religious scholars, Papal authorities, and Catholic monarchs for global partners to help the fight against Islamic enemies.⁷⁰ As a result of this desperate quest, powerful political and religious figures often welcomed dubious messengers, or as Miriam Eliav-Feldon coins them, creative and well informed impostors, who arrived in sixteenth century Europe with news of obscure communities ready to join Christian wars against Islam.⁷¹ In this context, the arrival of Mateus in Goa answered Iberians' calls for Christian allies; appearing in 1512, Mateus carried a letter written in Arabic and Persian from Queen Helena of Ethiopia requesting that the Roman Catholic Church unite forces with the Ethiopian Christian Church in order to fight off Islamic advances in Africa.⁷² While Portuguese in Goa treated Mateus' claims with caution, they eventually allowed him to travel to Portugal. Once Mateus arrived at the Royal Court in Lisbon in 1513, King Manoel I wrote to the Pope exclaiming that he had found the answer to a centuries long European legend - the whereabouts of Prester John's lost Christian Kingdom.

⁶⁹ Niccolo Capponi, *Victory of the West: The Great Christian-Muslim Clash at the Battle of Lepanto*, (Da Capo Press, Cambridge: 2007); Andrew C. Hess, "The battle of Lepanto and its place in Mediterranean history," *Past and Present*, 57, (1972), p.p. 53-73; John Elliott, "Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry: The European Perspective," in Halil İnalcık, and Cemal Kafadar eds., *Süleymân the Second and His Time*, (Isis Press, Istanbul: 1993).

⁷⁰ Miriam Eliav-Feldon, *Renaissance Imposters and Proofs of Identity*, (Palgrave, Mcmillan: 2012).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

King Manoel I was referring to a letter in the twelfth century purporting to be from Prester John that described a lost Christian kingdom. The discovery of the letter set off a centuries-long frenzy to find this mysterious king. By the early sixteenth century the letter had been copied hundreds of times and translated into many languages⁷³ While many questioned the veracity of the letter from its first appearance, the legend continued to grow, sparking expeditions to find the lost Christian Kingdom across the known world in India, China and Africa. Elaine Sanceu argued that the fervent search to find Prester John spearheaded Portuguese explorations of Africa in the early fifteenth century, which led to the conquest of India and the establishment of the Lusophone West African slave trade.⁷⁴ For the century following Mateus' arrival in Portugal, Europeans located the legendary lands of Prester John in Ethiopia, Central East Africa.

Mateus' arrival sparked a century and a half of Portuguese military and missionary activities in Ethiopia. In 1515, King Manoel I sent Mateus on a Portuguese expedition to locate the mysterious lands of Prester John. King Manoel's delegation to Ethiopia failed as all but one member died on route. The sole survivor, Father Francisco Alvarez (c.1490-c.1540) successfully set out on a new voyage from Goa in 1520. After spending six years traveling in Ethiopia, Alvarez returned to Lisbon and wrote the first detailed description of Ethiopian

⁷³ Elaine Sanceu, *The Land of Prester John: A Chronicle of Portuguese Exploration*, (Alfred A. Knopff, New York: 1944).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

lands.⁷⁵ In the 1540s a second Portuguese expedition arrived in Ethiopia; Jesuits and Dominicans established missions in the 1550s and remained there until the 1640s when Ethiopian rulers expelled the Jesuits and rejected Roman Catholicism.

During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, acute debates emerged in trans-national missionary networks in publications by writers in Spain, Portugal, Ethiopia, and the Indies regarding Christian Ethiopia. Significantly, writers drew on Ethiopians' Old Christian lineage that could be traced to biblical narratives. In 1610 Dominican friar Luis de Urreta (c. 1570-1636), created an idyllic vision of Ethiopian Catholicism whereby Dominican missionaries took centre stage.⁷⁶ Having never left Spain, Urreta accredited his history to an Ethiopian informant Iuan Baltasar, whose name fused European legends of Prester John and the biblical narratives of the third Magi, King Baltasar.⁷⁷ By depicting Baltasar as an Ethiopian, Urreta reflected wider sixteenth century European cultural trends, whereby artists began to represent King Balthasar as a black African in nativity scenes, replacing the more common depiction of an Asian Magi in the medieval period.¹ According to Urreta:

⁷⁵ In 1540 part of Alvarez's account was published in: Luis Rodriguez ed., *Verdadeira Informaçã das Terras do Preste João das Indias*. In 1550 other parts of Alvares' writings were included in an anthology of travel narratives, Giovanni Battista Ramusi, ed., *Navigazioni et Viaggi*.

⁷⁶ Luis de Urreta, *Historia eclesiastica, politica, natural y moral de los grandes y remotos reynos de la Etiopia, Monarchia del Emperador, llamado Preste Iuan de las Indias*, (1610); Luis de Urreta, *Historia de la sagrada orden de predicadores, en los remotos reynos de Etiopia, Trata de los prodigiosos Sãtos, Martyres, y Cõfessores, Inquisidores Apostolicos, de los Cõventos de plurimanos...* (1611).

⁷⁷ Paul Kaplan, *The Rise of the Black Magus in Western Art*, (UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor: 1985).

at this holy convent of Preachers, of the noble city of Valencia, an Ethiopian gentleman from the kingdom and city of Fatigar in Ethiopia called Iuan de Baltasar, a military knight of the Order of Saint Anthony the Abbot and of the guard of the king of Ethiopia called Prester John of the Indies, with some originals and papers, part in the Ethiopic language and part in Italian, poorly put together, but qualified and true.⁷⁸

Scholars have argued that Urreta's report of Iuan de Baltasar and similar sightings of the same figure by Dominican friars formed part of a "complex web of fables surrounding the imaginary kingdom of 'Prester John' whereby Ethiopian Christianity was highly praised and perfectly fit European legends of Prester John, the three kings, and black Ethiopian Christians."⁷⁹ In Urreta's text, black Ethiopians appear as holy Old Christians with lineages traceable to biblical times.

In 1622, Pedro Paez (1564-1622) a Jesuit missionary in Ethiopia refuted Urreta's descriptions of Ethiopia.⁸⁰ By the time that Paez arrived in Ethiopia in 1600, the Society of Jesus had abandoned almost all plans to convert the kingdom of 'Prester John' to Catholicism, regarding the region instead as "heretical, Judaistic and permeated with Islamic influences."⁸¹ Instead their main ambition was to support the "small Catholic community (of no more than 800–

⁷⁸ Cited in: "Introduction," *Pedro Páez's History of Ethiopia 1622*, Isabel Boavida, Hervé Pennec, and Manuel João Ramos eds., Christopher Tribe, trans., (Ashgate for the Hakluyt Society: 2011).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Pedro Paez, *Pedro Páez's History of Ethiopia*, Boavida, Pennec, and Ramos eds.

⁸¹ "Introduction," *Pedro Páez's History of Ethiopia*, Boavida, Pennec, and Ramos eds.

1,200 members) living in an Orthodox kingdom.”⁸² Even though the Society of Jesus had lost interest in the lands of ‘Prester John,’ Paez attempted to pacifically integrate into the local community, learning local languages and histories. He travelled throughout Ethiopia and eventually gained favour with the emperor Susinios, managing to convert him to the Holy Roman Catholic Church. Incensed by Urreta’s fanciful publication on Ethiopian history, Paez wrote about his Ethiopian experiences, presenting a far more historically contextualised view whereby he described the difficulties of converting Orthodox Ethiopians to the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, while Urreta presented Ethiopians as holy Old Christians with lineages traceable to biblical times, Paez did not equate Ethiopians as Old Christians. In his view Ethiopian Christianity was marred with heretical practices that he attempted to modify through his missionary activities.⁸³

Refutations and disagreements in trans-national missionary circles, such as those between Urreta and Paez, on the definitions and meanings of Christianity in Ethiopia had significant ramifications across the Iberian World. In 1627 Alonso de Sandoval a Jesuit missionary based in Cartagena de Indias published *De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute* in which he discussed the pressing need to place a greater importance on the proper conversion of African slaves. Significantly, Sandoval viewed the legend of Christian Ethiopians as encompassing all of ‘black’ Africa. He referred to African slaves in the New World

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

as lost Christian Ethiopians in need of reconversion.⁸⁴ For Sandoval, Christian Ethiopia may have occupied a geographical space in Central East Africa, but all black Africans and slaves removed from West Africa were in fact Ethiopians. Sandoval's publication therefore offers clues as to how the legend of black Christian Ethiopians dating from biblical times may have come to encompass all black Africans, regardless of place of provenance. Similarly, the Bahia based Portuguese Jesuit, Father António Vieira (1608 –1697), regarded the Portuguese discovery of Upper Guinea in the sixteenth century as the fulfilment of prophecies for the salvation of the Africans' souls, inscribed in psalms 71 and 77 of the Old Testament. In Vieira's reading Africans' souls would only be saved in the New World through slavery. But significantly, akin to Sandoval, Vieira referred to the place of provenance of African slaves as Ethiopia: "Oh, if the Black people taken from the dense woods of their Ethiopia, and brought to Brazil, knew how much they owe to God and to His Most Holy Mother for this which can seem like exile, captivity and disgrace, but is nothing but a miracle, and a great miracle!"⁸⁵

Jesuits in the early seventeenth century, when responding to local problems in the New World, such as the proper conversions of slaves arriving in Iberian Atlantic ports, therefore often engaged with and appropriated previous

⁸⁴ Alonso P. Sandoval, *Naturaleza, policia sagrada i profana, costumbres i ritos, disciplina i catechismo evangelico de todos Etiopes*, (Por Francisco de Lira Impresor, En Sevilla: 1622); Alonso P. Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery : selections from De instauranda Aethiopum salute*, ed., & trans., Nicole Von. Germeten, (Hacket Publishing: 2008).

⁸⁵ Father António Vieira, "Sermão XIV," *Sermões. 5 vols.* (Porto, 1993), V.4, p.p. 733–769. Cited in Alencastro "Portuguese Missionaries."

debates in missionary circles about the veracity of Christian Ethiopia. Given that the consensus in present day scholarship is that the Society of Jesus had lost interest in the conversion of Christian Ethiopia by the late sixteenth century, it is startling that two very prominent early-mid seventeenth century Jesuits continued to discuss Ethiopia in the New World and stretched its meaning to encompass all black Africans forcibly removed from Africa in the transatlantic slave trade.

Thus far, it remains hypothetical that royal officials of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, akin to Jesuit writers such as Sandoval and Vieira, conflated legends about Ethiopian Christianity dating to biblical times as pertinent to all black Africans, and as such, permitted West Africans to claim identities as Old Christians. It also remains hypothetical that Afro-Iberians petitioners at the House of the Trade engaged with similar narratives when claiming an Old Christian heritage. However, one Afro-Iberian intellectual writing in the late sixteenth century, who was in no way clearly connected to the cases of Afro-Iberian travellers at the House of the Trade, offers important clues as to how Afro-Iberians might have conflated their skin colour with an Ethiopian Christian identity that put them on equal footing with Old Christian Iberians.

One of the earliest Afro-Iberian intellectuals of the late sixteenth century, Juan Latino (Baena?/Ethiopia? 1518 - Granada, 1596), former African slave and later a Professor of Latin and Grammar at Granada Cathedral was well aware of the importance of Christian Ethiopia as he espoused an Old Christian African

identity rooted in an Ethiopian heritage. Writing in the late sixteenth century amid royal, ecclesiastic, and elite debates on how to solve the *morisco* problem and the increasingly repressive policies that were put in place in order to establish Granada as a Christian city, Juan Latino drew on biblical exegesis to play on his blackness as a legitimate Christian from Ethiopia; a place where he argued that Christianity had reigned since biblical times, as well as choosing to side with the most intolerant of views towards *moriscos* in Granada at the time.⁸⁶

In his Latin epic celebrating the Christian victories against the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto (1571), *La Austriada*, Juan Latino posited that Christian Ethiopia was a legitimate partner in the Hispanic Alliance against the eastern Islamic enemies of the late sixteenth century. He argued that when the fame of the Hispanic victory at Lepanto spread to the ancient cities of Egypt, the Ethiopians, (in a direct reference to Psalms 67:32) would begin banging their drums and burning incense in celebration of the victory.⁸⁷ Elizabeth Wright has argued that the construction of an Ethiopian Hispanic alliance enabled Juan Latino to protect his status as a legitimate Christian and differentiate himself from the *moriscos* of Granada.⁸⁸

In an address to King Phillip, Juan Latino defined himself as an Ethiopian and utilised biblical narratives to convince the King that he should listen to the

⁸⁶ Juan Latino, *La Austriada*, (1572), trans., and ed., Jose A. Sanchez Marin, (Instituto de Historia del Derecho, Universidad de Granada: 1981).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.173.

⁸⁸ Elizabeth R. Wright, "Narrating the Ineffable Lepanto: The Austrias Carmen of Joannes Latinus (Juan Latino)," *Hispanic Review*, V. 77, N. 1, Winter 2009, pp. 93-96.

advice of the black poet.⁸⁹ In reference to the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:25-40, where the apostle Phillip teaches the Ethiopian eunuch the meaning of a verse in the Bible, Juan Latino argued that Christ sent a disciple to the Ethiopians through the eunuch, thereby establishing the historical authority of early Christianity in Ethiopia and God's will in these events. Baltasar Fra Molinero argues that Juan Latino inverts the roles, presenting himself as the apostle Phillip bearing knowledge about the battle of Lepanto and King Phillip as the Ethiopian eunuch, needing to listen and take advice.⁹⁰

“King Phillip, do not deny by an accident this justice to an Ethiopian. Pay attention that even your Austriad brother, the expeller of the unjust race, had noticed that this his poet was from Granada.”⁹¹

By invoking the Ethiopian eunuch, Molinero argues and I agree, that Juan Latino was positing that Ethiopians were amongst the earliest Christians and therefore did not owe Europe anything in terms of a debt for spreading Christianity.⁹²

At present, there is little to connect Juan Latino to the petitioners at the House of the Trade, other than the fact that he was operating in the same time period as many of the cases that I have explored. Thus far, relatively little scholarship has addressed the potential reception and appropriation of Juan Latino's ideas amongst Afro-Iberians or other late sixteenth century literati. An early twentieth century Cadiz historian, Hipolito Sancho de Sopranis, found one

⁸⁹ Juan Latino, *La Austriada*.

⁹⁰ Baltasar Fra-Molinero, “Juan Latino and his racial difference,” in T. F. Earle and K. J. P. Lowe, eds., *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.p. 326-344.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

possible, albeit tenuous link between Juan Latino and Afro-Iberian communities.⁹³ In a late seventeenth century episcopal court case against an African confraternity in Cadiz, witnesses referred to previous black members from earlier generations as Luis and Juan Latino and another witness claimed that the black brothers venerated black images and Juan Latino.⁹⁴ Hipolito Sancho de Sopranis suggested that the African community of Gibraltar in the seventeenth century might have been referring to the Granadino intellectual, Juan Latino⁹⁵ While no new evidence has come to light, as I demonstrate in this paper Afro-Iberian mobility in the Iberian world was common and there is no reason to doubt that the legend of the black intellectual in Granada may not have circulated amongst other Afro-Iberian communities in subsequent years.

While I have established that numerous Afro-Iberians drew on an African Old Christian heritages and that Royal Officials accepted such narratives in granting travel licenses, further research is needed in order to explore whether the regular movement of Afro-Iberian individuals between specific locales in the Iberian Atlantic facilitated loose forms of African collective identities and shared knowledge of strategies regarding how to successfully embark on Atlantic

⁹³ Sancho de Sopranis, *Las Cofradias de los Morenos*, (Instituto de Estudios Africanos, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid: 1958).

⁹⁴ In providing testimony at the episcopal court in Cadiz, Blas Garcia, 1687, mentioned that the black Gibraltar confraternity celebrated Juan Latino and San Benito de Palermo: Archivo Histórico Diocesano de Cádiz, Sección Gibraltar, Año de 1685 (documents date from Audiencia in 1675 and another in 1687), 57 ff, 'Testimonios de Pleitos de precedencia de la curia episcopal de Cadiz 1688.' Both secciones are transcribed in Sopranis, *Las Cofradias de los Morenos*.

⁹⁵ Sancho de Sopranis, *Las Cofradias de los Morenos*.

travels.⁹⁶ In order to explore the possible interconnected nature of African diasporic communities across the Atlantic, we need far more research into the relationship between itinerant black travellers and the communities that they encountered on their journeys. One plausible place where such research might yield significant results is in black religious confraternities in Seville and those dotted around port cities in the Iberian world. Exploring both the construction of religious identities in such institutions and the relationship between these organisations and individuals who freely embarked on Atlantic journeys might help to solve the puzzle as to how Afro-Iberians came to adopt African Old Christian identities.

Many of the black brotherhoods in the Iberian World developed strong ethnic identities that members reaffirmed through the veneration of black cults, which often had biblical connections to Ethiopia. Exploring hagiographies and African brotherhoods' cults of these saints might shed light on whether and how Afro-Iberians who crossed the ocean learned to claim Old Christian identities at a local parish level. If Afro-Iberians learned in religious brotherhoods in the cities where they lived or those that they passed through that blacks saints were Old Christian Ethiopians and that Christianity in Africa was an ancient tradition that had been altered beyond recognition at some point in the past, then West African diaspora might have claimed that they were simply recovering their Old Christian

⁹⁶ I am influenced here by recent works into Atlantic travel networks, such as Jose Carlos de la Puente's research on indigenous intellectuals seeking representation in the royal court in Madrid, Jose Carlos de la Puente, "Into the Heart of the Empire. Indian Journeys to the Habsburg Royal Court," PhD Dissertation, Texas Christian University, 2010.

identity through slavery and conversion. In the following concluding section I highlight some of the known Ethiopian cults in black Iberian brotherhoods and I discuss various sites where further research might illustrate the potential connections between Afro-Iberian travellers and black religious organisations.

In the 1620s a conflict emerged in the confraternity of *Nuestra Señora de los Reyes* in Jaen that vividly illustrates how a black community actively debated its ethnic and religious identity, and the importance of itinerant Africans in sharing knowledge between different African communities. Founded in 1600, the brotherhood celebrated its main feast day on the sixth of January, the night of the Three Magi. In the 1950s Rafael Ortega Sagrista, working in the Cathedral archive in Jaen concluded that the black brothers chose to venerate the three kings because “one of them (the third Magi, Balthasar) was black, they were sought out as patrons, as was the Saintly Virgin... who the blacks felt a profound devotion to.”⁹⁷ Sagrista described how next to the confraternity’s image of the Virgin, lay a star with the “effigies of the three kings, all wearing dresses and their corresponding swords and golden *botes* that they held in their hands.”⁹⁸ In light of wider European depictions of the King Balthasar as black and from Ethiopia, it seems appropriate to agree with Sagrista’s conclusions that the black brothers associated the piety of their organisation with the biblical narratives of King Baltashar.

⁹⁷ Rafael Ortega Sagrista, “La Cofradia de los negros en el Jaen del siglo XVII,” *Boletin del Instituto de Estudios Giennenses*, N^o. 12, 1957, pp. 125-134.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* The image of the Virgin cost the confraternity 125 reales in 1601.

In any event, the religious identity of the brotherhood experienced a rupture in the 1620s. Juan Cobo, an Afro-Iberian slave, who had founded the confraternity at the turn of the seventeenth century, gained his manumission in approximately 1610 and subsequently abandoned the brotherhood in order to travel to Granada in search of better economic opportunities. Eleven years later he returned to Jaen to take his place as a *mayordomo* (leader) in the then defunct brotherhood that he had neglected through his absence. At the same time an elderly African slave named Cristobal Porras, who had been given a license by his master to travel through the Spanish countryside establishing African confraternities in the name of the famous African hermit, *San Benito de Palermo*, arrived in Jaen with the view to introducing the veneration of San Benito de Palermo in the existing African confraternity.⁹⁹ San Benito de Palermo, also known Saint Benedict the Moor, was born in San Fratello, Sicily in 1526. His parents were African slaves, but he acquired his liberty as a child. In his adult life, he was a hermit and later a Franciscan friar and earned a popular reputation for humility, kindness, asceticism, prayer and wonder working. His fame spread throughout Spain, Portugal, and the Atlantic world after his death in 1589.¹⁰⁰ In

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ For an overview of African confraternities' devotion to San Benito across the Atlantic world: Giovanna Fiume, "St. Benedict the Moor; From Sicily to the New World" in Margaret Cormack ed., *Saints and their cults in the Atlantic World*, (University of South Carolina Press: 2007), p.p. 16-43. On Black Saints in Colonial Spanish America: Fernando Ortiz, *Los Cabildos y las Fiestas Afrocubanas en el Día de Reyes*, (La Habana: 1921. 2nd ed., 1991); Rosello Soberon, "Iglesia y Religiosidad en las Colonias de la América Española y Portuguesa, Las Cofradías de San Benito de Palermo y de Nuestra Señora del Rosario," *México, Distrito Federal*, 3 (2008):14. The existing critical studies on the veneration of San Benito and Santa Efigenia in Spain: Gloria Centeno Carnero,

Jaen, both of these mobile Africans clashed when Cobo refused to permit that the brotherhood venerate San Benito instead of the three Magi. Eventually Jaen authorities arrested both individuals and the African population of Jaen chose by popular vote to adopt the veneration of San Benito de Palermo.

The conflict between the Cristobal Porras and Juan Cobo over whether to continue venerating Baltashar, the third Magi, or commence celebrating a newer African figure, that of San Benito de Palermo, demonstrates an African urban community actively debating their religious identity. San Benito, while representing Africans' piety, did not necessarily possess the biblical heritage of King Baltashar. Scholars exploring this episode have rarely examined the importance of the mobility of these two Afro-Iberians, one a slave and other a former slave. And yet, the itinerancy of the Cristobal Porras, a slave, seemingly introduced the Afro-Iberian Jaen community to the veneration of San Benito de Palermo.

While San Benito became one of the most venerated saints amongst African brotherhoods in the Iberian world, black brothers also often chose to celebrate a lesser well known Ethiopian image, that of Saint Iphigenia. This figure appears in biblical narratives as the daughter of King Egippus of Ethiopia whom the apostle

“San Benito de Palermo en Sevilla: en la Hermandad de los Negritos y en la Alegoría de Lucas Valdés,” in Manuel Peláez del Rosal ed., *El franciscanismo en Andalucía: Pasado y presente de las cofradías y hermandades franciscanas andaluzas: conferencias del XII curso de verano, Vol. 12*, (Asociación Hispánica de Estudios Franciscanos, Córdoba: 2007), 81-96; Vittorio Morabito, “San Benedetto il Moro da Palermo, Protettore degli Africani in Siviglia, della Pinisola Iberica e d’America Latina,” in Berta Ares Queija, and Alessandro Stella, eds., *Negros, Mulatos, Zambaigos, Derroteros Africanos en los Mundos Ibéricos*, (Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Sevilla: 2000), p.p. 223-273.

Saint Matthew dedicated to God and died as a martyr protecting.¹⁰¹ One pertinent example is in the 1650s, after a long and protracted conflict between the black and white brothers in the confraternity of *Our Lady of the Rosary* in Cadiz, the black brothers decided to abandon their brotherhood and establish another confraternity, without permission from the church. In the new brotherhood the members dedicated themselves to venerating San Benito and Santa Efigenia.¹⁰²⁴ In the last documented conflict between the two organisations, the black brothers attempted to retrieve the black images of Santa Efigenia and San Benito de Palermo from the old confraternity in order to dedicate themselves to their saints. A *cabildo* from Our Lady of the Rosary in 1666 outlined an agreement for the white members to return the image of San Benito to the former black brothers. The existence of this document suggests that the black brothers may have actually venerated the image prior to 1655, when they were still members of the original confraternity. ¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Fiume, “St. Benedict the Moor.”

¹⁰² Archivo General de los Notariales de Cádiz, Archivo de Protocolos de Cádiz, Oficio XXI, Escribano Rafael de Miranda, fol. 1, años 1557-60, ‘Información acerca de los derechos de propiedad de la cofradía de Nuestra Señora del Rosario de los Hermanos Morenos, sobre la ermita del mismo título.’ These files are transcribed in: Sopranis, *Las Cofradías de los Morenos*, p. 18; Hipolito Sancho de Sopranis, *La Cofradía de los Morenos*, (Instituto General Franco para la Investigacion Hispano Arabe, Tánger: 1940), Appendix 2, p.p. 27-8; Hipolito Sancho de Sopranis, *Ntra. Sra. del Rosario, Patrona de Cádiz y de la Carrera de Indias y su Convento de Padres Predicadores, Ensayo histórico documentado*, (Cadiz 1927), p. 36 & 47. ‘Información acerca de la Iglesia del Rosario y el traslado de la cofradía a Santo Domingo – 1630s – fundación de los dominicanos en Cádiz,’ Archivo de los Protocolos de Cadiz, Oficina XXI, 1556-60, fol. 183, transcribed in *La Cofradía de los Morenos*, Appendix 2 p.p. 27-8.

¹⁰³ ‘Cabildo de la cofradía en que se aprueba devolver San Benito de Palermo, (el dicho cabildo tuvo lugar el 9 de Octubre del referido año 1666),’ Pasajes del Libro Primero de Cabildos de la Cofradía del Rosario de Cádiz, transcribed in Sopranis, *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*, p.p. 65-66.

Scholars have noted the veneration of San Benito and Santa Efigenia, and the third Magi Baltasar, around the Iberian world during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, relatively little research exists into the ways in which African communities in the Iberian world decided to venerate these images and whether church authorities spearheaded these ethnic venerations or whether black communities chose the images of their own accord in an unsanctioned manner.¹⁰⁴ Yet, exploring the modes in which African communities decided to venerate these saints could lead to significant findings in terms of the potential ties between different African communities in the Iberian world.¹⁰⁵ At this stage the suggestion that Afro-Iberians and Royal Officials regarded Old Christian African identities as related to Christian Ethiopia remains a hypothesis. Further research needs to be conducted in the numerous and often difficult to access black confraternity archives dotted around the Iberian Peninsula, particularly those in Seville, Cadiz, Gibraltar, Granada and Jaen, all of which experienced protracted conflicts with authority figures and different brotherhoods.

It is also important to interrogate the role, if any, that black brotherhoods played in facilitating the movement of Afro-Iberians across the Atlantic. This is

¹⁰⁴ Fiume, “St. Benedict the Moor; From Sicily to the New World” in Margaret Cormack (ed.), *Saints and their cults in the Atlantic World*, (University of South Carolina Press, 2007). Paul Kaplan, *The Rise of the Black Magus in Western Art*, (Ann Arbor, 1985).

¹⁰⁵ In an episcopal court investigation of 1687 into a Gibraltar black brotherhood for the unsanctioned veneration of San Benito de Palermo, Francisco de Caraval, a black brother, testified that the brothers adopted the image of Saint Benedict because they wanted to “dedicate themselves to “their saint.” Testimony of “el Moreno” Francisco de Caravajal in ‘Testimonios de Pleitos de precedencia de la curia episcopal de Cadiz 1688,’ Archivo Histórico Diocesano de Cádiz, Sección Gibraltar, Año de 1685 (documents date from Audiencia in 1675 and another in 1687), 57 ff, sections of both are transcribed in Hipolito Sancho de Sopranis, *Las Cofradias de los Morenos*, (Madrid, 1958).

especially the case for Seville where there were three black brotherhoods in the sixteenth century. Did the travellers who passed through Seville from other places in the Iberian world interact with these institutions when they applied for licenses at the House of the Trade? Investigating this question will certainly shed further light on the meaning and significance of Afro-Iberians' adoptions of African Old Christian identities in their license applications at the House of the Trade and might further explain Royal Officials' acceptance of such narratives.

Conclusion: Re-evaluating Iberian Ideas about Purity of Blood & Skin Color

Throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries Afro-Iberian petitioners argued at The House of the Trade that they were Old Christians from West Africa and that they were therefore not ‘of the newly converted,’ but rather ‘of the caste of black Christians.’ These strategies are paralleled by important changes in Iberian perceptions about African Christianity (both in West Africa and Ethiopia) in the sixteenth century, alongside an ever-increasing slave trade that dispersed hundreds of thousands of Africans in to the Atlantic world. By 1650, the Slave Trade Database estimates that European slave trading had forcibly removed a million Africans from West Africa.¹⁰⁶ The suspicion by royal officials of *mulato* applicants’ claims to West African Old Christian heritage for fear that they might be *moriscos*, coupled with the fact that most of the Afro-Iberians who claimed Old Christian African identities were successful in their applications to travel to the New World, demonstrates that the ‘official mind’ of the Iberian global monarchy tacitly accepted the possibility that blacks could claim to be Old Christians from West Africa. I have suggested that one reason for the ‘Official Mind’ of the Iberian empire accepting the possibility of African Old Christians is due to wider debates on the nature of Ethiopian Christianity and later connotations of Ethiopia with black Africa as a whole by Jesuits.

¹⁰⁶ Voyages Database. 2010. *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*. <http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates.faces> (accessed July 1, 2013).

The paradox of officials at the House of the Trade permitting blacks to claim Old Christian West African identities challenges all that we know about how purity of blood (*limpieza de sangre*) or religious lineage worked in the Spanish Monarchy. Historians typically argue that Iberians perceived blacks to be “irredeemable” as they had stained or impure blood and therefore would never become true Christians. The pervasiveness of these perceptions supposedly rendered Iberians to permanently label blacks as “converts” or New Christians, rather than Old Christians.¹⁰⁷ Recently, for example, Max S. Herring Torres argued that “purity of blood was linked to skin color and had an impact on the majority of the population which was non white and lacked privileges.”¹⁰⁸ Discussing Iberian perceptions of black skin and purity of blood, Torres drew on the writings of Benedictine priest and Bishop of Pamplona, Prudencio Sandoval (1533-1620):

(Sandoval) traced a resemblance between impurity of blood, the race of New Christians and the black sin of Africans... the colour black acted not only as a metaphor for servitude but also as a signifier of immorality which enabled contagion, impurity and the vice of lineage to be grouped as hereditary factors.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Iberian perceptions of black skin color and religious lineage: Maria Elena Martinez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico*, (Stanford University Press: 2008); Max H. Torres, Maria Elena Martinez, and David Nirenberg eds., *Race and Blood in the Iberian World*, (Lit Verlag: 2012).

¹⁰⁸ Max S. Herring Torres, “Purity of Blood, Problems of Interpretation,” in Max S. Herring Torres, Maria Elena Martinez, and David Nirenberg eds., *Race and Blood in the Iberian World*, (Lit Verlag, Zurich: 2012), p. 24

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

However, such a uniform interpretation of Iberian ideas about religious lineage and skin color does not account for the plural ways that royal and ecclesiastical officials engaged with black individuals and communities across the Iberian world. My research demonstrates that black skin colour did not necessarily equate to a lower status in Iberian perceptions of blood lineage. In travel license applications at the House of the Trade, black West African diaspora argued that they were Old Christians from Africa, deserving of the same privileges as white, Iberian Old Christians. Royal Officials accepted such narratives by granting licenses.

Significantly, House of the Trade officials often questioned claims to a West African Christian heritage when the applicant had lighter skin color due to mixed European and African ancestry (*mulatos*).¹¹⁰ In these instances officials did not contest that blacks could be Old Christians from West Africa, but rather expressed a fear that North African Muslims or Christian converts from Islam (*moriscos*) were posing as black Old Christians. Thus, while black petitioners who succeeded in gaining a travel license may be considered “hispanicized” (*ladinos*), as they were well known in the Iberian cities where they lived, ultimately it was the color of their skin (black) and African origins that enabled them to successfully argue that they were as Old a Christian as any white Iberian Old Christian.

¹¹⁰ Contestations of mulatos’ Old Christian lineage: AGI Cont,5257,N.10, Year 1598; AGI, Cont,255,N.1,Year 1599.

In the final section of the essay I suggest the need to explore the existence of transatlantic ties that shared knowledge and culture between different black communities in order to explore the sites where epistemologies of African Old Christian identities emerged. By demonstrating the wide-scale mobility of free Afro-Iberians in the Atlantic world between the years 1504-1640 in the beginning of the essay, in conjunction with cursory discussions of the potential avenues for further research in black religious confraternities, I suggest that more research needs to be completed into this important aspect of African diasporic history in African brotherhoods in specific locales in the Iberian World.

Bibliography

Archives Consulted:

Archivo General de Indias (General Archive of the Indies). Abreviation: AGI
- Casa de la Contratacion (House of the Trade). Abreviation: AGI Cont
- Indiferente (Various). Abreviation: AGI Indiferente
- Justicia (Justice). Abreviation: AGI Justicia
- Panama: Abreviation: AGI Panama

Archivo Histórico Diocesano de Cádiz, Sección Gibraltar (Historical Diocesan Archive of Cadiz, Gibraltar Section). Abreviation: AHDC

Archivo Historico Provincial de Cadiz, Archivo de los Protocolos Notariales de Cádiz (Historical Prvincial Archive of Cadis, Archive of the Notaries of Cadiz). Abreviation: AHPC

Archivo Historico Provincial de Sevilla (Historical Provincial Archive of Seville). Abreviation: AHPS

Voyages Database. 2010. Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database. <http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates.faces> (accessed July 1, 2013).

Published Primary Sources Consulted:

Cedulario Indiano, Recopilado por Diego de Encinas, Oficial Mayor de la Escribanía de Cámara del Consejo Supremo y Real de las Indias, 1501, (Madrid 1945), vol. 1

Cervantes, Miguel de, El Trato de Argel, (written between 1582-1587 and published in 1615).

Latino, Juan, La Austriada.(1572), trans., and ed., Jose A. Sanchez Marin, (Instituto de Historia del Derecho, Universidad de Granada: 1981).

Rodriguez, Luis, ed., Verdadeira Informação das Terras do Preste João das Indias .1550

Ramusi, Giovanni Battista, ed., Navigazioni et Viaggi, 1550

Sandoval, Alonso P., Naturaleza, policia sagrada i profana, costumbres i ritos, disciplina i catechismo evangelico de todos Etiopes, En Sevilla, (Por Francisco de Lira Impresor: 1622)

Sandoval, Alonso P., *Naturaleza, policia sagrada i profana, costumbres i ritos, disciplina i catechismo evangelico de todos Etiopes*, (Por Francisco de Lira Impresor, En Sevilla: 1622)

Sandoval, Alonso P., *Treatise on Slavery : selections from De instauranda Aethiopum salute*, ed., & trans., Nicole Von. Germeten, (Hacket Publishing: 2008)

Urreta, Luis de, *Historia eclesiastica, politica, natural y moral de los grandes y remotos reynos de la Etiopia, Monarchia del Emperador, llamado Preste Iuan de las Indias*, (1610)

Urreta, Luis de, *Historia de la sagrada orden de predicadores, en los remotos reynos de Etiopia, Trata de los prodigiosos Sátos, Martyres, y Cófessores, Inquisidores Apostolicos, de los Cóventos de plurimanos...* (1611).

Vieira, Father Antônio, “Sermão XIV,” *Sermões*. 5 vols. (Porto, 1993), V.4

Secondary Sources

Adams Jr., Robert, ed., *Rewriting the African Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean: Beyond Disciplinary and National Boundaries*, (Routledge: 2013)

Alencastro, Luiz Felipe de, “Portuguese Missionaries and Early Modern Antislavery and Proslavery Thought” in Fradera, Josep M., and Schmidt-Nowara, Christopher, eds., *Slavery and Anti Slavery in Spain’s Atlantic Empire*, (Berghahn Books: 2013)

Boavida, Isabel, Pennec, Hervé and João Ramos, Manuel eds., *Pedro Páez's History of Ethiopia 1622*, Tribe, Christopher trans., (Ashgate for the Hakluyt Society: 2011)

Brown, Vincent, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*, (Harvard University Press: 2010)

Bryant, Sherwin K., O'Toole, Rachel Sarah, & Vinson III, Ben, eds., *Africans to Spanish America: Expanding the Diaspora*, (University of Illinois Press: 2012)

Cañizares-Esguerra, Jorge, Childs, Matt D., and Sidbury, James, eds., *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade*, (University of Pennsylvania Press: 2013)

- Capponi, Niccolo, *Victory of the West: The Great Christian-Muslim Clash at the Battle of Lepanto*, (Da Capo Press, Cambridge: 2007)
- Carnero, Gloria Centeno, "San Benito de Palermo en Sevilla: en la Hermandad de los Negritos y en la Alegoría de Lucas Valdés," in Manuel Peláez del Rosal ed., *El franciscanismo en Andalucía: Pasado y presente de las cofradías y hermandades franciscanas andaluzas: conferencias del XII curso de verano*, Vol. 12, (Asociación Hispánica de Estudios Franciscanos, Córdoba: 2007), 81-96;
- Carvalho Soares, Mariza de, *People of Faith: Slavery and African Catholics in Eighteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro*, (Duke University Press: 2011)
- Coleman, David, *Creating Christian Granada: Society and Religious Culture in an Old-World Frontier City, 1492–1600*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003)
- Cook, Karoline, "Forbidden Crossings: Morisco Emigration to Spanish America 1492-1650," PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2008
- Eliav-Feldon, Miriam, *Renaissance Imposters and Proofs of Identity*, (Palgrave, Mcmillan: 2012)
- Elliott, John, "Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry: The European Perspective", in İnalcık, Halil and Kafadar, Cemal, eds., *Süleymân the Second and His Time*, (Isis Press, Istanbul: 1993)
- Fiume, Giovanna, "St. Benedict the Moor; From Sicily to the New World" in Cormack, Margaret ed., *Saints and their cults in the Atlantic World*, (University of South Carolina Press: 2007), p.p. 16-43
- Fra-Molinero, Baltasar, "Juan Latino and his racial difference," in T. F. Earle and K. J. P. Lowe, eds., *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.p. 326-344.
- Fradera, Josep M., and Schmidt-Nowara, Christopher, eds., *Slavery and Anti Slavery in Spain's Atlantic Empire*, (Berghahn Books: 2013)
- Garofalo, Leo, "Defining Empire through Afro-Iberian Incorporation and Movement in the Early Ibero-American World," Conference presentation at Atlantic World Workshop at NYU, 2009
- Germeten, Nicole Von, *Black Blood Brothers: Confraternities and Social Mobility for Afro-Mexicans*, (University Press of Florida: 2006)

- ____ ed., & trans., "Introduction," in Sandoval, Alonso P., *Treatise on slavery: selections from De instauranda Aethiopia salute* (Hackett Publishing: 2008)
- Gomez, Pablo "The Circulation of Bodily Knowledge in the Seventeenth-century Black Spanish Caribbean," *Social History of Medicine*, Vol. 26, No. 3 pp. 383–402
- Gomez, Pablo F., "Bodies of Encounter: Health, Illness and Death in the Early Modern African-Spanish Caribbean," PhD Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, August 2010
- Harris, Katie, *From Muslim to Christian Granada: Inventing a City's Past in Early Modern Spain*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007)
- Hess, Andrew C., "The battle of Lepanto and its place in Mediterranean history," *Past and Present*, 57, (1972), p.p. 53-73
- Kaplan, Paul, *The Rise of the Black Magus in Western Art*, (UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor: 1985)
- Landers, Jane, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*, (Harvard University Press: 2011)
- McKnight, Kathryn Joy, and Garofalo, Leo J., eds., *Afro-Latino Voices: Narratives from the Early-Modern Ibero-Atlantic World, 1550-1812*, (Hackett: 2009)
- Ortiz, Fernando, *Los Cabildos y las Fiestas Afrocubanas en el Día de Reyes*, (La Habana: 1921. 2nd ed., 1991)
- Martinez, Maria Elena, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico*, (Stanford University Press: 2008)
- Morabito, Vittorio, "San Benedetto il Moro da Palermo, Protettore degli Africani in Siviglia, della Pinisola Iberica e d'America Latina," in Queija, Berta Ares and Stella, Alessandro eds., *Negros, Mulatos, Zambaigos, Derroteros Africanos en los Mundos Ibéricos*, (Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Sevilla: 2000), p.p. 223-273.
- O'Toole, Rachel Sarah, *Bound Lives, Africans, Indians, and the Making of Race in Colonial Peru*, (University of Pittsburgh Press: 2012)

- Perez Mallaina Bueno, Pablo Emilio, *Spain's Men of the Sea. Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century*, Carla Rahn Phillips, trans., (Johns Hopkins University Press: 2005)
- Pike, Ruth, *Linajudos and Conversos in Seville: Greed and Prejudice in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Spain*, (Peter Lang, New York: 2000)
- Puente, Jose Carlos de la, "Into the Heart of the Empire. Indian Journeys to the Habsburg Royal Court," PhD Dissertation, Texas Christian University, 2010
- Rediker, Markus, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, (Penguin Books: 2008)
- Restall, Matthew, *The Black Middle, Africans, Mayas, and Spaniards in Colonial Yucatan*, (Stanford University Press: 2009)
- Sagrasta, Rafael Ortega, "La Cofradia de los negros en el Jaen del siglo XVII," *Boletin del Instituto de Estudios Giennenses*, N^o. 12, 1957, pp. 125-134
- Sanceau, Elaine, *The Land of Prester John: A Chronicle of Portuguese Exploration*, (Alfred A. Knopff, New York: 1944)
- Sensbac, John F., *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World*, (Harvard University Press: 2006)
- Smallwood, Stephanie E., *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*, (Harvard University Press: 2008)
- Sopranis, Hipolito Sancho de, *Ntra. Sra. del Rosario, Patrona de Cádiz y de la Carrera de Indias y su Convento de Padres Predicadores. Ensayo histórico documentado*, (Cadiz 1927).
- _____*La Cofradía de los Morenos*, (Instituto General Franco para la Investigación Hispano Arabe, Tánger: 1940)
- _____*Las Cofradías de los Morenos*, (Instituto de Estudios Africanos, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid: 1958).
- Soberon, Rosello, "Iglesia y Religiosidad en las Colonias de la América Española y Portuguesa, Las Cofradías de San Benito de Palermo y de Nuestra Señora del Rosario," *México, Distrito Federal*, 3 (2008):14
- Starr-LeBeau, Gretchen D., *In the Shadow of the Virgin: Inquisitors, Friars, and "Conversos" in Guadalupe, Spain*, (Princeton University Press, 2008)
- Sweet, James, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World*, (University of North Carolina Press: 2011)

Thornton, John "The Development of an African Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1491-1750," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (1984), p.p. 147-167.

Torres, Max S. Herring, Martinez, Maria Elena, and Nirenberg, David eds., *Race and Blood in the Iberian World*, (Lit Verlagd, Zurich: 2012)

Wright, Elizabeth R., "Narrating the Ineffable Lepanto: The Austrias Carmen of Joannes Latinus (Juan Latino)," *Hispanic Review*, V. 77, N. 1, Winter 2009, pp. 93-96.