

Indigeneity and Latino Consciousness in the music of Catalino 'Tite' Curet Alonso

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Abstract

The importance of Catalino 'Tite' Curet Alonso's work in Salsa is something that cannot be overestimated. Curet Alonso began participating very early in the New York-based late 60s Salsa boom, and even at that stage, he aided in developing the consciousness of *salseros* by including socially conscious lyrical references that dealt with themes that diverted from the usual escapisms that were, and still are, so prevalent in popular Latin music. This paper investigates Curet Alonso's activist ideals, his presentation of indigenous issues within two of his compositions, and how these ideas combined function in larger conceptualizations of Latino ethnic consciousness.

With the rise of the civil rights movement, Salsa, following its initial movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and as the biggest flag music for Latinos at the time, needed to reflect on socially, ethnically, and racially engaged issues as these were facing both Latinos and Latin Americans. The music, as Latino urban folklore, and as an expression of the Latino context, asked composers not only to participate in social escapism, but also to develop a more cohesive discourse of the current realities facing their own people. One of these realities, alongside social and racial issues, was that of a search for a clearer definition of the Latino identity. Part of this identity is based around the ethnic mix of Latinos as a whole; Spanish, Native, and African. While the critical presentation of the African centered concerns had already been explored by artists such as Arsenio Rodriguez and Cortijo y Su Combo, in the 1950s and 1960s the Indigenous perspective as part of the Latino identity remained largely unexplored within popular Latin music. It is not until the appearance of Catalino "Tite" Curet Alonso, as one of the leading composers, with over 2000 works to his credit, of Spanish language popular music, and later with the appearance of singer, composer, actor, and lawyer Ruben Blades that this perspective begins to be discussed.

Analyzing the musical, poetic breadth of Curet Alonso's work and its impact in Salsa, as well as its impact on Puerto Ricans and Latinos, is something that to this day remains distant from academic endeavors, especially those in English. His name is often mentioned but his efforts as connected to the times are rarely analyzed in depth. Arguably the best, and perhaps only book thus far to deal with Curet Alonso's work is Norma Salazar's 2007 *Tite Curet Alonso: Lírica y canción*, where aside from a methodical, poetic and historical analysis of many of Curet Alonso's songs and poems, Salazar introduces a thematic classification system for Curet

Alonso's music, which helps enormously in navigating his impressive musical legacy. Salazar divided Curet Alonso's musical themes into the following categories:

- Indigenous
- Patriotic
- Social
- Romantic
- Blackness (negritude) in festive Salsa
- *Jíbaro*¹
- Santeria
- Movies
- Curet and the children
- Religious anthems in *bomba* rhythm
- Political
- Sport

For the scope of this paper, I do not find it necessary to delve into all of the themes analyzed by Salazar, as some of these do not express the ideas of Latino ethnic consciousness that I highlight in this paper. Salazar's system however does identify a series of subjects that are crucial for a thorough understanding of Latino consciousness in Curet Alonso's discourse. I have also analyzed elsewhere (Espinoza 2014) the topic of Latino ethnic consciousness in Salsa, including a larger subset of Curet Alonso's work including social and African centered concerns. In this paper however, I focus on Curet Alonso's work as related to indigenous issues.

Curet Alonso was a socially engaged man, and his music reflected his societal views. On the Fania records website, Aurora Flores' review of Curet Alonso's compilation CD entitled *Alma de Poeta* indicates "Curet helped father the nascent Salsa movement that was marking time in clave through the streets of Puerto Rico and the Latin New York. His words inspired hope and faith, solace and joy during a time of social upheaval ... He reflected the face of a community

¹ Referring to the Puerto Rican countryside peasants.

that was in dire need of answers.” Regarding Curet Alonso’s social conscience/consciousness

Rubén Blades points out that:

He [Curet Alonso] was a conscious person and that conscience was manifested in many ways ... Tite saw things clearly and because of that he expressed them: The Puerto Rican sense, condemning racism, the need for an expression of a much fairer reality than the one we are living in ... that was always very present in his music without Tite being an ideologist politician, he was not an ideologist. (In Coss, 2011 DVD) ²

Blades (in Shaw 2013,191) to a certain extent actually credits Curet Alonso as the original architect of a conscious Salsa movement, even though there are many antecedents to this effort (see Espinoza 2014), when in response to the question, “Is it true that you and Willie [Colón] in Siembra were the first to bring social consciousness to lyrics in Salsa?,” he declares:

No. Before that was Tite Catalino (Curet Alonso), Puerto Rican, he was a very important man. He sent me some songs and one was called “Plantación adentro.” It talked about what I consider to be an indigenous guy who was beaten to death by an overseer. I think the Willie Colón/Rubén Blades Album *Metiendo Mano*, as far as the Fania boom was considered, was the first one that made an emphasis with “Pablo Pueblo” and “Plantación Adentro” by Tite.

The historical context, upon which Curet Alonso began to develop his discourse, was that of the civil rights movements, Pan-Africanism and Black power, on the heels of the great Puerto Rican migration to New York, and of Latin American revolutions and dictatorships. Thus, the music of Curet Alonso reflects his views of the world as a place where social justice, awareness of social issues and consciousness is needed. In the aforementioned Fania website CD review, Flores points out “A seasoned man in a time of resistance to societal norms, Curet later witnessed the worldwide rage against Vietnam and the tsunami of civil and social change

² Él era un tipo consciente y esa conciencia se manifestaba de muchas formas... Tite tenía las cosas claras y las manifestaba por eso. El sentido puertorriqueño, la denuncia al racismo. La necesidad de expresión de una realidad mucho más justa que la que estamos viviendo... eso estaba siempre muy presente en su música sin que Tite fuera un político ideólogo, él no era un ideólogo.

heralded by the '60s and '70s. This intense, historical climate shaped Curet's life and work." Salazar (2007, 32) speaks of the social climate where Curet Alonso began to develop his work:

During the decade of the 1960s, when Curet Alonso initiated his musical discourse, the intellectual and artistic participants of the nationalist thirties generation and the populist generation of the forties had to face the materialist fifties generation. In that ideological and cultural scenario, the prevailing enormous reality of the social decomposition that resulted from the political and economic struggle that attempted to crystalize an exogenous hegemony to the Puerto Rican national reality became completely evident.³

Salsa scholar Quintero Rivera (in Coss 2011 DVD) adds to the panorama of the times

...something being lived very dramatically in those times is the moment of struggle in favor of civil rights in the United States, the student struggles on a world level, in Paris, in San Francisco, in Mexico. It is a moment where many things are being questioned, many ideas that until that moment were deemed immovable. There are important political movements at the level that [for example] Allende wins in Chile; there are guerrillas in many places of Latin America that were inspired by the Cuban example. So much of Tite Curet's song reflects that entire social world which is in a boiling state, in a challenge state, very important in a challenge state. Now, something special that this expression has in the case of Tite Curet is that that is not seen as something different from quotidian life, but many times is reflected through the closest moments that are found every day.⁴

Being a proud Puerto Rican, Curet Alonso's points of reference came primarily from his homeland, and since his work was primarily interpreted by Puerto Ricans or New York-based Puerto Ricans, the references quickly connected with this segment of the Latino population.

³ Durante la década del 1960, cuando Curet Alonso inició su discurso musical, los participantes intelectuales y artísticos de la nacionalista Generación de los Treinta y de la populista Generación de los Cuarenta tuvieron que enfrentarse a la materialista Generación del Cincuenta. En ese escenario ideológico y cultural se hizo evidente la inmensa realidad de la descomposición social prevaleciente como resultado de la pugna político-económica por cristalizar una hegemonía exógena a la realidad nacional puertorriqueña

⁴ ... algo que se está viviendo de manera muy dramática en ese momento, es el momento de la lucha a favor de los derechos civiles en los Estados Unidos son las luchas estudiantiles a nivel mundial, en Paris, en San Francisco, en México. Es un momento en el que se están cuestionando muchas cosas, muchas ideas hasta ese momento que se tenían como cosas inamovibles. Se están desarrollando movimientos importantes políticos a nivel de [que por ejemplo] gana Allende en Chile, hay guerrillas en muchos lugares de América Latina, inspirados en el ejemplo de Cuba. Entonces mucho de la canción de Tite Curet va a reflejar todo ese mundo social en ebullición y en desafío, muy importante en desafío. Ahora, algo especial que tiene esa expresión en el caso de Tite Curet, es que no se ve eso como algo distinto de la vida cotidiana, si no que muchas veces se refleja a través de los momentos más cercanos que tiene uno todos los días.

Eventually, with Salsa becoming a Latino and Latin American phenomenon, Curet Alonso's lyrics quickly began to literally and figuratively resonate beyond Puerto Rico and its sister population of *El Barrio*, making the –originally Puerto Rican centered- issues a totemic set of concerns that became intrinsically connected to Latinos and Latin Americans at large.

It is unclear whether Curet Alonso intentionally aimed at exploring and exploiting the commonalities of Latinos the way Ruben Blades did at a later stage, it is clear however that he was aware of the situations of the Latinos in New York as he actively participated in the New York Fania-based Salsa Boom of the 1970s. Tied to Curet's awareness of Latino and Latin American social issues, Curet and Blades maintained a good relationship for many years wherein they discussed these topics; Curet Alonso (in Waxer 2002) indicated that: "Salsa music and its many followers have come to accept the singer Rubén Blades without limits. Salsa with a social message has produced a string of hits, and also smoothed out the genre a little, making young people think about the issues of the moment, of the everyday path"

Curet Alonso's work although based in Puerto Rico, demonstrates the idea of utilizing Puerto Rico as a totem of Latino ethnic consciousness. The Puerto Rican aspect of Curet Alonso's work however, shines through; especially when interpreted by icons of the Island such as Héctor Lavoe and Ismael "Maelo" Rivera. The totem phenomenon however, can be seen in many of the lyrics to Curet Alonso's music where there is no specific mention of Puerto Rico, and the commonalities and quotidian aspects of the situations and characters included easily expand and apply to the rest of Latin America and The Latino population of New York. This is the case in both songs analyzed in this essay Venezuelan Singer Trina Medina (in Coss, 2011. DVD) elaborates:

Tite Curet's songs are successful and stay in the memory of the people because they speak of their own stories. I mean, there are poor people and spiteful women all over the world. John Laborers⁵ are everywhere or there would be no houses. So, when people hear one of these songs ... that touches your fiber, you begin to feel "Hey, that is not the life of La Tirana⁶; that is the life of Trina Medina." Mister John Laborer when [he says] "it's true look at all the houses I made" and walks around there and maybe goes in and says to his son with that pride: "You know, this shopping mall, I laid the bricks there." That is why, because if it gets to your soul and you identify with it, of course you make it yours. So Tite's songs stopped being his when people appropriated them saying: "this is my story, my own."⁷

Within the following analyses, I present 2 songs by Curet Alonso with full lyrics and *pregones* (lead singer ad-libs in the call and response sections) as performed in the original recording of the songs. Curet Alonso's involvement with social, ethnic and racial issues within the constraints of *Salsa* is undeniable, and his accounts hold a great deal of weight even for today's standards. In the following analyses, I present but a small sample of Curet Alonso's work relating to indigenous concerns that I have deemed as representative of the factors mentioned above.

"Plantación Adentro" as performed by Rubén Blades
From *Metiendo Mano*. Fania Records 1977

Included in the first major release of Rubén Blades with Fania 1977's *Metiendo Mano*, the song as performed in the record depicts how the Native Americans were treated by the

⁵ Literally John Construction Worker in reference to Curet Alonso's song.

⁶ In reference to Curet Alonso's song La Tirana popularized by La Lupe.

⁷ Las canciones de Tite Curet son exitosas y se quedan en la memoria de las personas porque hablan de su propia historia. O sea, Pobres hay en todo el mundo, mujeres despechadas hay en todo el mundo, Juan Albañiles hay por todos lados porque si no, no hubiese casas. Entonces, la gente cuando escucha una canción de estas ... que te toca en las fibras, tú te empiezas a sentir "oye, esa no es la vida de La Tirana, esa es la vida de Trina Medina" ... El señor Juan Albañil cuando [dice] "Es verdad, mira todas las casas que yo he hecho", y pasa por ahí y a lo mejor entra y le dirá al hijo con aquel orgullo: "Sabes que, este centro comercial, yo ponía los ladrillos ahí." Por eso, porque si te llega al alma y se identifica contigo, por supuesto la haces tuya. Entonces las canciones de Tite dejaron de ser de él cuando el mundo se apropió de ellas diciendo: "Esta es mi historia, esta es la mía"

colonialist foremen. This particularly poignant song fit perfectly within Blades progressive discourse, as it spoke of the often set aside Native past of Latinos.

It is interesting to juxtapose the performance and reading of the piece as recorded by Blades with how Curet Alonso (in Fritz 2004) describes it himself.

That is a song about rubber. "Plantación Adentro" paints the life that exists between Uruguay and Venezuela with the ones that work in the rubber farms. The one that works there does not get paid directly, the salary is sent to the family, but he is almost not paid, so there are many that are there and never leave the plantations and die of jungle diseases, many of them in many cases between Brazil and Venezuela. So I made this story wanting to show that really the criminal is not a criminal, it is the jungle that kills them, and that fight of the jungle between the animals and all that people; well that is where that song came from.⁸

Blades' reading of the song, and to a great extent almost everybody else's reading, on the other hand points to a colonialist past where the foremen brutally abused the natives. This reading is framed very clearly by the appearance of the spoken introduction as spoken in the recording by Willie Colón.

Lyrical Analysis

The initial spoken description places the subject in the colonial Latin America. This section was actually devised by Blades himself and not originally written by Curet Alonso.

Blades (In Coss 2011 DVD) describes: "...that first part where Willie Colón speaks "it is the year 1745 in Latin America..." I wrote that. That way we place the issue in the correct parameters."⁹

⁸ ... ese es un tema cauchero, Plantación Adentro pinta la vida que hay entre el Uruguay y Venezuela con los que trabajan en las haciendas de caucho. El que se mete a trabajar ahí, no le pagan sueldo directamente, le mandan el dinero a la familia, pero a él casi no le pagan entonces hay muchos que están ahí y nunca salen de las plantaciones y mueren de enfermedades de la selva, muchos de ellos, pasa eso, en muchos casos de esos, entre el Brasil y Venezuela. Entonces yo hice esa historia queriendo dar a entender lo que en verdad, el criminal no es un criminal, es la selva que los mata y entonces esa lucha que hay en la selva entre animales y todo el mundo de gente; pues de ahí salió esa canción

⁹ ...esa primera parte que dice Willie Colón "Es el año 1745, en la América Latina..." eso lo escribí yo. O sea que vamos situando la cuestión dentro del parámetro correcto

Hablado: Es el año 1745, en la América Latina el indio trabaja en las plantaciones bajo el palo implacable del mayoral.	Spoken: It is the year 1745, In Latin America the Indian works in the plantations under the relentless stick of the foreman.
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The first part where Curet Alonso's pen is shown opens the song with the poetical concept of people being shadows. In this Manner Curet Alonso makes a reference to the passing spirits of people, the transient state of being where death waits at any time

Sombras son la gente a la la la la la la.	Shadows are the people a la la la la la la.
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The verse situates the story deep inside the plantation. This place is where the truth shall be learned. This is not the place shown to the owner of the plantation; deep inside where the trip is bitter is where the truth of this story actually lies.

Plantación adentro camará es donde se sabe la verdad es donde se aprende la verdad.	Deep inside the plantation brother is where the truth is known is where you learn the truth
Dentro del follaje y de la espesura donde todo el viaje lleva la amargura es donde se sabe camará es donde se aprende la verdad.	Into the foliage and the thickness where the whole trip is bitter, that is where you know brother that is where you learn the truth

The main human character, as opposed to the plantation/jungle concept, is ultimately revealed. His name is Camilo Manríquez and he is dead after having received a beating by the foreman. The contrast in this phrase to what is actually described as the meaning of the song by Curet Alonso (in Fritz 2004) as natives dying from jungle diseases calls attention to the appearance of the foreman. In this case, it is possible that Blades' reading of the song is actually more accurate than Curet Alonso's. This part of the verse paints Camilo Manríquez as an unknown man where no one cried at his burial and only received a cross made of sticks, not even a name on his tomb.

Camilo Manríquez falleció por golpes que daba el mayoral y fue sepultado sin llorar una cruz de palo y nada más.	Camilo Manríquez died from the hits that the foreman gave and was buried without crying a cross of sticks and nothing else
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The chorus section highlights the truth of the song hidden in the place where Camilo Manríquez died: deep inside the plantation. The *pregones* in this section were actually developed by Blades. "...the song was written by Tite and I developed the *soneos*"¹⁰ And the doctor on-duty said: "Death by natural cause." Of course, since after a beating with a stick, it is normal that he died," You know you are speaking of the injustice against the natives"¹¹ (in Coss 2011)

Coro: Camilo Manríquez falleció, plantación adentro camará.	Chorus: Camilo Manríquez died Deep inside the plantation, brother.
Plantación adentro camará sombras son la gente y nada más.	Deep inside the plantation brother Shadows are the people
Se murió el indio Camilo por palos que daba el mayoral.	Camilo the Indian died from the hits that the foreman gave
Y el medico de turno dijo así: muerte por causa natural.	And the doctor on-duty said: Death by natural cause
Claro, si después de una tunda e' palos que se muera es normal.	Of course, since after a beating with a stick It is normal that he died
Acostarse tarde y de pie temprano rumbo pa'l cañaveral.	Lay down late and up early en route to the cane field
Tierra, selva, sol y viento indio, palo y mayoral.	Land, jungle, sun and wind Indian, stick and foreman
Interludio instrumental	Instrumental interlude

The reintroduction of the chorus after the instrumental interlude reinforces the main argument of the abuse perpetrated by the foremen towards the native, and that of Camilo

¹⁰ *Soneos* is a synonym of *pregones*

¹¹ ... La canción la escribe Tite y yo desarrollo los soneos "el medico de turno dijo así "muerte por causa natural" claro, si después de una tunda e' palos que se muera es normal." Tu sabes, tú estás hablando de la injusticia contra el indígena

Manríquez dying without anyone crying for him. This time however, the jungle character appears as one that swallows, and never says anything. This appearance points to either Curet Alonso’s original reading of jungle diseases or to the fact that the beating might have occurred deep inside the jungle with no one watching.

Coro: Camilo Manríquez falleció, plantación adentro camará.	Chorus: Camilo Manríquez died Deep inside the plantation, brother.
Plantación adentro camará sombras son la gente y nada más.	Deep inside the plantation brother Shadows are the people
Selva adentro, selva traga selva nunca dice na.	Deep inside the jungle, the jungle swallows the jungle never says anything
Recoge café y coge pa'lla si no te pega el mayoral.	pick coffee and move that way or the foreman hits you
Eh, Camilo Manríquez falleció y lo enterraron sin llorar.	Hey, Camilo Manríquez died, and they buried him without crying
Y es su triste monumento una cruz de palo y nada más.	And his sad monument is only a cross of stick and nothing else
Oye lo que digo es la verdad sombras son la gente y nada más.	Listen to what I say, it is the truth Shadows are the people and nothing else.

Overall analysis

“Plantación adentro” was a very important release for Blades, and the early collaboration Between Blades and Curet Alonso was very significant. The album marked the arrival of *Salsa consciente* to the mainstream of the Salsa world. While Curet Alonso had been pushing the idea for a while with songs such as “Anacaona,” or “Con los pobres estoy,” the fact that this song was a major hit gave both Blades and Curet Alonso a platform to further develop their ideas in a large scale.

Regarding the song, Blades (in Coss 2011) indicated that

Tite’s song was the hit from that album *Metiendo Mano*. When I chose “Plantación [adentro],” don’t you think that it was a song that right away people at Fania said: “oh, great this is going to be a hit,” because it had a political content that I developed further in the soneos ... and the soneos show the injustice and the hazing that existed. Inside that

there was also an anti-colonialist argument that is inside the song, and that refers specifically to a situation in Puerto Rico. So, it was not something that was openly 'pacata'¹² but it was there. That was in '76, so also Panama, because we had the canal zone that was a colony that the North Americans had in Panama disguised as something else.¹³

There is then a discrepancy between composer and performer relating to the reading of the song, Curet presented the song as relating to the jungle as the killer, while Blades elaborates about the song in regards to the brutality of the foremen. This fact pointed to the idea of Salsa as mainly being "composed in performance," but in reading the original verse, which was written by Curet Alonso, the section that indicates "Camilo Manríquez died from the hits that the foreman gave," actually contradicts Curet Alonso's 2002 reading of the song. Whether this was due to his recollections of the song being different, or whether he decided that the original version of the song did not convey the actual meaning intended, will remain a mystery. It should be noted that according to Blades' reading of the song, Curet Alonso showed a subtle hint to the colonialist case of Puerto Rico and the United States. While this might be a conjecture from the part of Blades, it is a definite possibility as Curet Alonso's work regarding *Salsa consciente* comes across as very subtle in comparison to Blades 'in your face' line.

Musically speaking it is interesting to note the appearance of a samba feel at the beginning of the song as well as during the interlude. The arrangement by Willie Colón features

¹² This is an often used in Spanish onomatopoeia denoting something falling in front of you. The expression denotes something that is imposible to miss.

¹³ El número de Tite en ese disco, *Metiendo Mano*, fue la canción que pegó. Cuando yo escojo Plantacion [adentro], no te vayas a creer que fue una canción que de una vez la gente dijo en la Fania "ah, que bueno esto va a ser un hit", porque tenía un contenido político, que yo desarrolle más allá en los soneos, los soneos los escribí yo...y los soneos van adelantando lo que era la injusticia y la vejación que existía. Dentro de eso también había un argumento anticolonial que está dentro de la canción, y que se refiere ya a una situación específica en Puerto Rico. Así que era una cuestión que no era abiertamente "pácata" pero estaba ahí. Eso fue en el '76, también Panamá, porque teníamos nosotros la zona del canal era un colonia que tenían los norteamericanos en Panamá, disfrazada de otra cosa.

an interlude that denotes the travelling of the jungle in Latin America as well as its connection to the Caribbean as the interlude moves between three distinct phases: An Andean feel (2:26-2:35) exemplified by the appearance of the hi-hat cymbal on the upbeats and a rolling snare drum, giving a marching band type of feel to the song that is very unusual for Salsa yet very common in places such as the Peruvian *huayno* and Colombian *porro*, two places that have a high concentration of native people. The second feel of the interlude (2:35-2:44) moves to a quasi-*son montuno* as exemplified by the I-IV-V-IV progression utilizing the anticipated bass of the *son* in the following manner

Figure 1 Quasi-*son montuno* as played in “Plantación adentro”

The image shows a musical score for Piano and Bass. The Piano part is written in treble clef and the Bass part in bass clef. Both are in 4/4 time and E-flat major (three flats). The Piano part features a melody with eighth and quarter notes, including a triplet of eighth notes. The Bass part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, often beamed together, with some notes tied across measures. The score consists of two systems of staves.

I call the section a quasi-*son montuno* as traditionally the *son montuno* would only utilize the primary diatonic I-IV-V-IV progression (Eb/Ab/ Bb/Ab). In this case, this holds true only for two bars whereas the second part of the section temporarily modulates a step down to Db and repeats the progression with a different tonal center (Db/Gb/Ab/Gb) only to quickly return to the original tonal center. This type of progression is very unusual in Cuban *son*, and by extension Salsa, yet this step wise type of movement is really common in Brazilian music. In this manner, Colón pays tribute not only to the music of Brazil via Cuba but places the sonic marker

in the Amazon Jungle. The sequence is then repeated (2:45-3:03) only to finish on a samba feel, and eventually return to the chorus section.

“Anacaona” As performed by Cheo Feliciano
From the album *Cheo* released by VAYA (a subsidiary of Fania) 1972

Anacaona is a song written specifically for Cheo Feliciano. The song was part of an album devised specially for Feliciano by Curet Alonso. Feliciano had been dealing with drug addiction and this recording marked his return to the stage. The album, and according to Salsa folklore, Cheo Feliciano the person as well, were produced by Curet Alonso. In that manner, the album marks Cheo Feliciano’s return as much as it marks Curet Alonso’s appearance in the Salsa elite. Anacaona was a major hit and became a true Salsa standard. Moreno Velazquez in his Fania website review of the Album indicated that “With the mythic “Anacaona,” also written by Curet Alonso, Feliciano made the top play lists at radio stations in New York as well as Puerto Rico.” Rondón (2008, 202) mentioned “... Cheo also recorded a song that became the first great hit or success of the Salsa explosion, “Anacaona.”” The song was originally recorded using the sextet sound that included the vibraphone as a link to the sound that made Cheo Feliciano originally in his early days with the Joe Cuba Sextet.

The lyrics of the song deal specifically with the Female Taíno (native Caribbean) chief Anacaona. Cadilla de Martinez (in Salazar 2007, 40) indicated that “Anacaona, was a celebrated Dominican poet, wife of the chief Caonabo... she was known for writing *areytos* [sic] or rhythms.” Merriam Webster online defines *areíto* as “a ceremonial dance among the indigenous peoples of Spanish America; also: the songs and masks associated with the dance” in this manner much like Curet Alonso, Anacaona is actually a composer. Salazar (2007 40-42)

describes that Anacaona was actually captured by Viceroy Nicolás de Ovando for whom she performed a majestic *areíto* only to be later assassinated.

Lyrical Analysis

The song is introduced by the first chorus where the lead character is placed after her capture. The chorus marks the primitive region as the native place of Anacaona i.e the Caribbean basin. The verse actually shows the suffering of Anacaona as her voice is heard and so is her anguished heart. There is an expectation of freedom, and in the totem image of Anacaona, the freedom can easily be understood in a larger colonial context.

Coro: Anacaona, india de raza cautiva Anacaona, de la región primitiva.	Chorus: Anacaona, Indian woman of a captured race, Anacaona of the primitive region
Anacaona, india de raza cautiva Anacaona, de la región primitiva.	Anacaona, Indian woman of a captured race, Anacaona of the primitive region
Anacaona oí tú voz, como lloró cuando gimió Anacaona oí la voz de tu angustiado corazón Tu libertad nunca llegó, Eh le le le le le la.	Anacaona I heard your voice, how it cried when it whined Anacaona I heard the voice of your anguished heart your freedom never arrived, Eh le le le le le la.
Coro: Anacaona, india de raza cautiva Anacaona, de la región primitiva.	Chorus: Anacaona, Indian woman of a captured race, Anacaona of the primitive region
Anacaona, india, india de raza cautiva Anacaona, de la región primitiva	Anacaona, Indian woman of a captured race, Anacaona of the primitive region

The introduction of the chorus begins the call and response section, and includes the word *areíto*, thus showing either the fact that Anacaona wrote *areítos*, or perhaps that Curet's composition is an *areíto* dedicated to Anacona. Feliciano's first *pregón* has a melancholic tone to it with the inclusion of the white dove symbolizing Anacaona's purity. The following *pregones* paint Anacaona as fierce since she does not forgive and was very brave. It is interesting to note the inclusion of the Black woman figure in this song as the song is dedicated to a native woman. This detail was likely included as a way to expand the sensibility of suffering to a larger racial

span or perhaps symbolizing the joint struggles of Black people next to the natives under the colonial rule. Since Curet Alonso was listed as the producer of the record, it seems very unlikely that this would be a mistake.

Segundo Coro: Anacaona, <i>areíto</i> de Anacaona.	Second Chorus: Anacaona, song and dance of Anacaona
India de raza cautiva, alma de blanca paloma, Anacaona.	Indian woman of a captured race soul of a white dove, Anacaona
Pero india que muere llorando, muere, pero no perdona, no perdona no.	But, an Indian woman that dies crying, dies but does not forgive, does not forgive, no
Esa negra que es de raza noble y abatida pero que fue valentona, ¡Anacaona!	That Black woman of a noble and taken down race but that was very brave, Anacaona!
Interludio instrumental	Instrumental interlude

Following the instrumental interlude, the second chorus is once again introduced, and in this occasion Feliciano's *pregones* include history and the fact that the tribe was furious. There is once again an African racial component to this set of *pregones*.

Segundo Coro: Anacaona, <i>areíto</i> de Anacaona.	Second Chorus: Anacaona, song and dance of Anacaona
Oye, según la historia lo cuenta dicen que fue a la cañona, Anacaona.	Listen according to history they say that it was full force, Anacaona
La tribu entera la llora porque fue buena negrona.	The whole tribe cries for her because she was a good Black woman.
Y recordando, recordando lo que pasó la tribu ya se enfogona.	And remembering, remembering what happened the tribe gets furious

Overall analysis

The song even though specifically dealing with the story of Anacaona, places once again the possibility of interpreting the case of Anacaona initially as a totem of the native roots of perhaps only Tainos. There is also the possibility of understanding the song as an anti-colonialist declamation. This is particularly plausible taking into consideration the fact that this song is written by a Puerto Rican composer describing the suffering of a Dominican chief, thus

expanding a pan-Caribbean sensibility against Spaniard oppression. Worthy of note is the fact that Curet Alonso later wrote a song titled “Caonabo” describing the suffering of Anacaona’s husband after her death. In joining and expanding these two songs, the anti-colonialist sentiment can be understood not only as the struggle between the native population and the Spaniards but as a reference to the colonial state of Puerto Rico with the United States., thus combining the contemporary with the historical. There is in this song and in “Plantación adentro” a historic sensibility that places Curet Alonso as a virtual ‘griot’ by telling the history of his people through song.

Musically speaking, the arrangement is fairly sophisticated yet does not appear to contain any specific ethnic markers in the manner of *Plantación Adentro*. Salazar (2007, 41) does however indicate that “in the musical arrangement stands out the jam or mambo, as it is called in the Salsa argot, a unirhythmic sound that possibly was utilized in the *areítos* according to what has been found by some researchers.” This point might be somewhat contentious as there is no source to add validity to the statement and since there is not much, if any information available regarding the actual musical arrangements of the *areítos*, it seems fairly implausible that arranger Bobby Valentin devised a way to imply the feel of an *areíto* during the instrumental interlude. I have nevertheless decided to transcribe the section in question and leave the ultimate decision for the reader.

Figure 2 “Anacaona” *areíto* motif as described by Salazar

(2:38-3:16)

The image displays a musical score for two instruments: Piano and Bass Guitar. The score is written in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature (C). The Piano part is written on a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The Bass Guitar part is written on a single staff with a bass clef. The music consists of a 16-measure phrase, with a repeat sign at the beginning and end. The melody in the piano's right hand features eighth and quarter notes, while the bass parts in both the piano's left hand and the bass guitar part provide a steady accompaniment with eighth and quarter notes.

The concept of Latino ethnic consciousness as a whole in Curet Alonso’s oeuvre however, is expressed ultimately in a very distinct manner that combines a number of elements with a very poetic language achieving a consistent concern and connection with being Puerto Rican, Black, Latin American, Latino, and in the case of this paper Indigenous. In the case of the two analyzed songs, Curet Alonso brings his indigenous centered perceptions from a socio-historical and perhaps anti- colonialist point of view, tying the historical into the contemporary and developing a timeless socio-historical discourse regarding indigenous issues.

This minimal sample of Curet Alonso’s work only does justice to a very small part of his effort. This paper can only serve as a mere approximation to the work of Curet Alonso as the sheer magnitude of his musical output makes it impossible for me to pay proper tribute to the composer within this essay. Curet Alonso’s work still remains a large pool to explore as his oeuvre is enormous in terms of quantity and extremely profound in terms of quality. It is hard - if not impossible to think of another musician/composer that has had such an enormous impact over the output of a whole genre.

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