

## ABSTRACT

### **From Traditional to ‘Community’ – Chronicling Kumina in the Modernizing Bath Dead-yard Space**

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Dead-yard Kumina in St Thomas is one of the few traditional forms in Jamaica that have maintained some relevance as a wake ritual within a highly contested and changing dead-yard space. From the arrival of the Kikongo speakers of Central Africa between 1840 and 1865, the culture of “Kumina” has impacted that of the Jamaican Creole and has furthered the creolization process in St Thomas in general and the district of Bath in particular.

This thesis examines the journey of Kumina, especially dead-yard Kumina, mostly in the very eastern parts of St Thomas from the late 1970s to 2009. It focuses on the popularity of dead-yard Kumina and has sought to explain the factors that have resulted in the way Kumina has fared in the Bath dead-yard space.

The thesis asserts that Kumina in the Bath dead-yard space has moved from ‘traditional’ – defined as a very African-oriented form, to ‘commercial’ – a form dressed up solely to provide entertainment for financial gains, to ‘community’ – a creolized version of Kumina shaped and performed by locals. It contends further that the reasons Kumina changed and the ways it changed were contingent on the role it played in the creolization process and the tactics it used to negotiate notions of prestige and stigmatization in confronting, subordinating or hybridizing in its struggles to maintain dead-yard relevance.

In conclusion, the thesis claims that the creolization of Kumina was largely effected because its “owners” became creoles. It suggests that, without an intervention, the creolization of Kumina is likely to continue but proposes steps that may restore and preserve Bath dead-yard Kumina.

**Keywords:** Norman Westmoreland Pottinger, bongo, Congolese, creolization, dance hall, dead-yard, death ritual, duppy, Kikongo, Kongolese, Kumina, nine-night, myal, myalism, obeah, set up, Sound System.