FERNANDO ORTIZ

ON MUSIC

SELECTED WRITING ON AFRO-CUBAN CULTURE

EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

ROBIN D. MOORE

Fernando Ortiz on Music

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COVER IMAGES. Front: A photograph of Fernando Ortiz together with batá drummers Aguedo Morales (*left*) and Pablo Roche (*right*). Back: The full original photograph includes batá drummer Jesús Pérez (*far right*), who also was present at this event. The image was taken on May 30, 1937, as part of the first public lecture and demonstration of Afro-Cuban religious drumming and dance in the Campoamor Theater entitled "The Sacred Music of Black Yorubas in Cuba." (Images courtesy of María Fernanda Ortiz, representative of the Ortiz Successors, and edited by Judith Gutiérrez Ganzaraín.)

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Preface

This project originated in conversations with Peter Manuel more than a decade ago. Peter has edited a Temple University Press book series on Latin American and Caribbean music for many years and encouraged me to publish a selected anthology of writings by Fernando Ortiz as part of it. Several projects and life events took my attention away from his suggestion for a time, but, finally, in the summer of 2014, I began work on the book in earnest. Preparations involved reading or rereading Ortiz's voluminous writings on music and dance, noting pivotal moments in his academic career, looking through secondary literature on his life and legacy, considering the relationship of both to broader sociopolitical events in Cuba and the region, and so on. As part of the same process, I also began to dialogue with Cuban musicologists on the topic of Ortiz's legacy; to contact libraries and other research centers in Havana that contain materials related to Ortiz's academic career; and to correspond with the Ortiz family in order to obtain the rights to reproduce his work. The close attention to Ortiz's scholarship that the book required has deepened my appreciation of his legacy and the many lessons that can be learned from his publications.

It was difficult to decide which essays to include in this collection, as one might imagine. My initial idea was to focus exclusively on "the best" of Ortiz's work from the perspective of the present, and thus to consider writings only from the mid-1930s onward. But friends such as Alejandro Madrid suggested it would be useful to include a more comprehensive overview of his work, beginning with early publications, to demonstrate his intellectual development. In the end I chose one essay from Ortiz's "criminological" phase and one early historical-ethnographic study, devoting the remainder of the volume to his later publications. As a group, the essays provide a fairly comprehensive feel for Ortiz's academic publications, his initial interest in black heritage as pathology or atavism, and his increasing recognition of its importance and inherent aesthetic value. One can sense his enthusiasm for Afro-Cuban music in later years and the role he hoped his writings would have as a means of local valorization and in overcoming racial division.

Obviously this selection of Ortiz's essays has a great deal to offer individuals interested in Caribbean and Latin American music. But I hope that students and scholars of varying research specializations whose languages do not typically include Spanish (for instance, those in fields such as African studies, African American studies, dance, diaspora studies, folklore, musicology, subaltern studies) as well as readers beyond academia (those working in museums and other public programming, for instance) will find his work valuable. Africanist scholars may find much of interest in the volume, given Ortiz's fascination with the cultural and linguistic practices of African descendants. Ortiz's writings should also be relevant to those interested in the history of anthropology, as they expand our understanding of early twentieth-century research. The book allows for a more comprehensive assessment of ethnography as practiced in developing countries and thus makes an important contribution to mainstream literature dominated by North American and British perspectives. And it dialogues in important ways with research on African American history more broadly, for instance the publications of Lawrence Levine and Sterling Stuckey on slave culture in the United States, and provides similarly unique insights into the lived experiences of black people in the Americas.

David Garcia and Susan Thomas supported this initiative by serving as lead translators on three of the essays in the anthology; their help has been invaluable. Graduate students Sarah Lahasky and Cary Peñate also translated an essay each, and Sarah helped compile the Appendix. The project received a $5,000 book subvention award from the University of Texas Co-Op without which it never would have appeared. Emma Shoultz supported the project as a research assistant during the 2014–15 academic year, and Natalie Ruiz during the fall 2016 semester. Special thanks to Susana Arenas Pedroso, Alira Ashvo-Muñoz, Rodolfo de la Fuente, Lorraine Leu, Ivor Miller, and Elizabeth Sayre, all of whom provided key insights into the translation of difficult passages in various essays, and to David Font, John Santos, and Michael Spiro who helped identify percussionists in several photographs and suggested translations to a number of the religious chants reproduced by Ortiz. I extend my heartfelt thanks also to María Fernanda Ortiz, Fernando Ortiz's surviving daughter, for permission to reproduce his work in this volume and for providing additional photographs of her father and commentary on his work; to Sara Cohen and others at Temple University Press for their support of the project; to Stephan Palmié for his insightful comments on the volume, as well as those of a second, anonymous reviewer; and, of course, to Peter Manuel for helping conceive and impel the initiative from its outset.

Fernando Ortiz on Music

Introduction

Fernando Ortiz

Ideology and Praxis of the Founder of Afro-Cuban Studies

Robin D. Moore

Fernando Ortiz Fernández (1881–1969) is recognized today as one of the most influential Latin American authors of the twentieth century. Amazingly prolific, his roughly one dozen books and 600 total publications appearing between 1900 and the mid-1950s address a vast array of subjects and intersect with disciplines such as law, political science, history, ethnography, linguistics, sociology, folklore, geography, and musicology.[1] Poet and essayist Juan Marinello described Ortiz as the "third discoverer of Cuba" (after Columbus and the Prussian geographer Alexander Humboldt), a phrase that has been widely repeated (Coronil 1995, ix). He single-handedly founded the journals *Surco*, *Ultra*, *Revista bimestre cubana*, *Estudios afrocubanos*, and *Archivos del folklore cubano,* and contributed extensively to many others. He edited book collections on Cuban history and founded multiple societies dedicated to studying local culture. Ortiz corresponded with prominent anthropologists, folklorists, and other intellectuals throughout the Americas and beyond (Mário de Andrade, Roger Bastide, Ruth Benedict, Franz Boas, Melville Herskovits, Bronislaw Malinowski, Jean-Price Mars, Alfred Métraux, etc.). He mentored prominent international artists and academics (such as Katherine Dunham and Robert Farris Thompson in the

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[1] Many of these have been cataloged in García-Carranza 1970. See also the Appendix to this volume with a list of publications by year that focus specifically on black Cuban music and/or culture.

United States), read widely in at least five languages, and maintained an active academic exchange with regional Latin American intellectuals and international institutions.[2] His honorary doctorate from Columbia University in 1954 attests to this legacy and its recognition abroad (anon. 1954a). At the same time, Ortiz cultivated a role as an intellectual in Cuba by writing short, accessible essays on cultural history for lay audiences, offering public lectures in theaters, at the University of Havana, on the radio, speaking in private clubs, and in other ways stimulating interest in Caribbean heritage.[3]

Perhaps Fernando Ortiz's most significant accomplishments were creating the field of Afro-Cuban studies and helping establish a foundation for the emergence of Afro-diasporic studies. He is one of the first "modern" authors of the black diaspora, basing his work on an examination of cultural and historical phenomena rather than on craniology and other medical pseudoscience. And he was one of the first to conduct fieldwork and observe Afro-Cuban cultural forms himself as part of his investigations. Almost everyone else associated with the early stages of this field—William Bascom, Roger Bastide, Harold Courlander, Gilberto Freyre, Melville Herskovits, Ruth Landes, Pierre Verger, etc.—began their work decades after Ortiz and in dialogue with his publications (Le Riverend 1973, 325). The only antecedent figures to Ortiz such as Raimundo Nina Rodriguez (1862–1906) in Brazil or Henri Dumont (1824–78) in the Caribbean wrote works on black subjects intended to support commonly held notions of their inferiority. Ortiz was among the first authors to seriously examine black cultures of the Americas and to "break the taboo" (Le Riverend 1961, 38; Price-Mars 1965, 12) surrounding their study, albeit from a troubled ideological perspective for some years. Within Cuba, he taught and inspired generations of seminal scholars and artists interested in black heritage.[4]

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[2] See Bueno Menéndez 1954, anon 1954a, Arciniegas 1953, Campoamor 1956, Latcham 1952, and Sánchez 1952 for a discussion of Ortiz's interactions with prominent regional folklorists and anthropologists. Ortiz maintained especially active correspondence with Juan Liscano in Venezuela, Lauro Ayestarán in Uruguay, Vicente Rossi in Argentina, and Ricardo Alegría in Puerto Rico, but he communicated with scores of others. The recent publication of correspondence by Ortiz between 1920 and 1940 by the Fundación Fernando Ortiz (www.fundacionfernandoortiz.org/) testifies to the vast extent of his academic collaborations. (Ortiz 2014a, 2 vols).

[3] The Appendix to this book lists many of Ortiz's publications for the lay public in journals such as *Bohemia* beginning in the mid-1940s. His presentations in private clubs included lectures at the elite black Club Atenas in Havana (one example is "Por la integración cubana de blancos y negros," published in 1943) and at the elite white female Lyceum (see "El cocorícamo y otros conceptos teoplásmicos del folklore afrocubano," 1929). Examples of lectures Ortiz gave at the University of Havana include: "La música de los negros yoruba en Cuba," 1941; Chapter 8 of this volume, originally published as "La música religiosa de los yorubas entre los negros cubanos," 1945–46; "Las músicas africanas en Cuba," 1947; and "Curso sobre 'las culturas negras en Cuba' por el Dr. Fernando Ortiz," 1951. One of his radio broadcasts was published as "Los problemas raciales de nuestro tiempo," 1949.

In the mid-twentieth century when most ethnographers and anthropologists preferred to study "pristine primitives" in societies presumably untouched by external influences (Apter 1991, 242), Ortiz was one of the first to recognize the importance of studying diasporic influences in new contexts, cultures fragmented and eventually re-created in response to the coercive brutality of the slave trade, and the fusion of influences from multiple sources on collective national traditions. Themes of cultural exchange and fusion represent a fundamental part of virtually all his writings dating back to the earliest years of the twentieth century (Iznaga 1989, 5). In this sense they anticipate work on acculturation as later championed by Herskovits and others.[5] Ortiz's recognition that the constitution of the modern world has entailed both a process of violent conquest and the disintegration/rearticulation of cultural forms makes his work especially significant in anticipating postmodern scholarship and fields such as subaltern and postcolonial studies (Coronil 1995, xiii; Fernández Retamar 1989, 40).

Ortiz's work became central to new discourses surrounding African-derived expression in the mid-twentieth century that located it more centrally within notions of national expression; in this way too his publications were both groundbreaking and widely influential. He accomplished this primarily through public lectures, written work, the founding of the Society of Afro-Cuban Studies in the mid-1930s, and support of a critical mass of researchers devoted to bringing black histories and perspectives into public view. In the 1940s and 1950s, Ortiz challenged official silence on issues of racial prejudice and discrimination and assertions by some contemporaries that Cuban culture contained no African influence whatsoever.[6] The eventual recognition of Cuba as an "Afro-Latin" country in the decade following his death owes much to this legacy.

Postcolonial societies in the Americas have long struggled to overcome stark social divisions along lines of race and class, as well as the racial/evolutionist ideologies that justified colonial subjugation. Ortiz's work represents a prominent part of that struggle, even as some of his work manifests the same biases. His scholarship resonates with broader debates throughout the Americas over the meanings of racial pluralism and the legacy of slavery. Likewise, the changes in his views through the years correspond to the trajectory of modern Western thought in regard to Africa and race, specifically the reevaluation of Afro-diasporic peoples, histories, and cultures, and their contributions to New World societies. In effect, his work speaks to the genealogy of racial thought in Cuba and beyond. The United States' current period of political reengagement with Cuba represents an especially appropriate moment to consider the legacy of Fernando Ortiz, his contributions to the international academic community, and the ways in which his views on race intersect with broader discourses.

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[4] These include historians Pedro Deschamps Chapeaux and José Luciano Franco, ethnographer Lydia Cabrera (Ortiz's sister-in-law), folklorist Rogelio Martínez-Furé, novelists Alejo Carpentier and Miguel Barnet, choreographer Ramiro Guerra, painter Wifredo Lam, classical composers Alejandro García Caturla and Amadeo Roldán, and musicologists Argeliers León, Jesús Gómez Cairo, and María Teresa Linares.

[5] Ortiz and Herskovits engaged in direct discussion over the term acculturation and Ortiz's alternative concept of transculturation in the 1930s, as discussed below.

[6] The first chapter of *La africanía de la música folklórica de Cuba,* for instance, refuted the position of Eduardo Sánchez de Fuentes and other Cuban musicologists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that indigenous rather than Afro-descendant influences were responsible for the unique characteristics of Cuban music. See Ortiz (1950) 1965, 1–104.

Despite the extent of its influence, Ortiz's work is relatively unknown in the English-speaking world, especially his publications on music and dance. The book *Cuban Counterpoint* from 1940 is Ortiz's only book-length study ever to be translated, first in 1947 by A. A. Knopf and again in 1995 by Duke University Press. It focuses on the history of sugar and tobacco production and radical changes in their use and circulation as the result of appropriation by distinct social groups. A few of Ortiz's other independent essays have been translated into English as well.[7] But roughly half of all his work—the equivalent of ten 500-page books—focuses on music and dance and remains unknown to English-speaking readers. Most of these date from the 1940s and 1950s and are considered his most valuable contributions to humanistic literature (Le Riverend 1973, 44). Ortiz's later works on music and dance include *La africanía de la música folklórica de Cuba* ([1950] 1965) and *Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba* ([1951] 1981); the five-volume series *Los instrumentos de la música afrocubana* (1952–55); and other essays published independently as journal articles or booklets. This anthology represents an attempt to introduce his work on the arts to a new readership.

Ortiz's Early Scholarship

Born in Havana in 1881 into an affluent white family with a Cuban mother (Josefa Fernández González) and a Spanish father (Rosendo Ortiz Zorrilla) who ran a hardware supply company, Fernando Ortiz left Cuba at age two with his mother because of the Wars of Independence to spend his childhood in Menorca, Spain. He completed high school there and returned to Cuba to study law in 1895, but upheaval associated with the final War of Independence led to his departure again in 1898. Ortiz completed a *licenciatura* in law in Barcelona in 1900 and the following year a doctorate in Madrid at the newly founded Instituto Sociológico (Le Riverend 1973, 11). There he was first exposed to writings on criminology, a focus that would influence many of his publications over the next two decades. Ortiz returned to Cuba briefly in 1902, then accepted a job in the country's newly established consular service that took him to Genoa, Italy, as well as la Coruña, Spain, Marseille, and Paris (Pamies 1973, xx). In 1906, he resigned his post to accept a position as a public prosecutor in Havana, while simultaneously offering courses on law at the University of Havana. Thus, at the time of the publication of his first book (*Los negros brujos*), Ortiz was a relative stranger to Cuba, having just returned from abroad; he wrote it largely without recourse to firsthand information.[8] Ironically, Ortiz's lack of contact with Cuba may have contributed to his interest in Afro-Cuban subject matter, allowing him to view the island from the perspective of an outsider and suggesting topics of study that had received scant attention from elite Cuban society (Moore 1994, 35). Nevertheless, evolutionist views of race of the period strongly affected his research for some time.

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[7] For instance, Jane Rubin translated the essay "On the Relations between Blacks and Whites" from 1943 (Rubin 1998); Jean Stubbs translated his Kings' Day essay from the early 1920s in *Cuban Festivals* (Bettelheim 1993); and João Felipe Gonçalves and Duff Morton translated "Los factores humanos de la cubanidad," 1940 (see *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* vol. 4, no. 3 [Winter 2014], 445–80). Neither these nor the few other essays that have appeared in English (Ortiz [1954] 1980, [1935] 1992b) were released with the permission of the Ortiz family (María Fernanda Ortiz, personal communication).

Ortiz's early career coincided with the creation of the Cuban Republic, multiple U.S. occupations,[9] and also intense controversy over the role that Afro-Cubans, especially those who had fought in the insurgency against Spain, would have in the country. Black and mixed-race soldiers constituted a majority of former combatants and expected public recognition and support. Indeed, the plans of the insurgent leadership in the 1860s involved selling confiscated Spanish properties across the island and splitting the proceeds among Cuban soldiers, along with other progressive initiatives (Castellanos and Castellanos 1990, 298). Yet U.S. intervention in the war frustrated such plans, and bias among U.S. military officials and Cuban elites led to policies of ongoing racial segregation and marginalization. In the early twentieth century, most Afro-Cubans continued to be denied access to higher education and were barred from white-collar occupations, refused entry in many hotels, restaurants, and clubs, and given only partial access to parks and other public recreation areas (Le Riverend 1973, 17; Pérez 1986, 211). White intellectuals of the period still routinely described black Cubans as members of a "pernicious and degenerate race" (Helg 1995, 106), doomed to slowly die out because of their supposed mental and physical inferiority. Hypocritically, Cuban officials supported a myth of Cuban racial equality through evocation of the integrationist war rhetoric of José Martí, yet simultaneously disparaged black Cubans as inferior and uncivilized (ibid., 115–16). U.S. officials exacerbated such views with overtly discriminatory policies established during their first four-year occupation, including the exclusion of many blacks from voting and the lynching without trial of Afro-Cubans in the provinces who were suspected of wrongdoing (Castellanos and Castellanos 1990, 294–302). The fact that the newly created national army killed thousands of black farmers in Oriente in 1912 as they protested against the outlawing of black political parties provides further insight into the extent of racial tension surrounding the publication of Ortiz's early work. Ortiz never chose to comment publicly on the massacre, though the extremely tense nature of race relations in early twentieth-century Cuba makes his reticence to discuss such conflict understandable, if not laudable. In instigating studies of Afro-Cubans of any sort, even of a relatively nonpolitical nature, Ortiz touched on extremely sensitive subject matter.

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[8] Some of the data came from an examination of Afro-Cuban religious artifacts held in the Museo de Ultramar in Madrid (Guiteras Holmes 1965b, 5).

[9] The occupations took place from 1898 to 1902, 1906 to 1909, and 1917 to 1922.

As part of their campaign to attenuate the black racial/cultural presence in Cuba, the Estrada Palma government and subsequent administrations strongly promoted the demographic whitening of Cuba through subsidizing Spanish immigration. Between 1898 and 1916, roughly four hundred forty thousand settlers came to Cuba, either from Spain or its former colonies. By 1929 the figure had increased to nine hundred thousand (Moore 1997, 28). Such massive immigration glutted the job market and frequently led to racial conflict as black or mixed-race Cubans lost jobs to newly arrived immigrants. Ortiz himself encouraged the demographic whitening of Cuba in this manner for some time, as he believed it would "sow among [Cubans] the germs of energy, progress, [and] life" (Helg 1995, 104).[10] By the same token, he suggested that the immigration of any nonwhite races would increase criminality and uncivilized behavior.

Campaigns against African-derived religious and cultural forms in the early twentieth century served as an important means of justifying racial hierarchy to the white leadership and the marginalization of Afro-Cubans from governmental and other positions. The popular press and Cuban academics routinely conflated religious practices of African origin with savagery and criminality through the 1920s and 1930s (Moore 1997, 32–34), for instance, suggesting that they involved human sacrifice. Sensationalist trials, especially those of 1904 and 1906, resulted in the wrongful conviction and killing of black *brujos* ("sorcerers," "witches") and their reputed accomplices.[11] The frequency of such stories in the Cuban popular press at the time attests to the obsession of Cuban middle-class society with the topic. As a young prosecutor, Ortiz supported campaigns against African-derived religions by incarcerating devotees believed to be involved in them. Some of those jailed became his first ethnographic informants (Guiteras Holmes 1965, 5). Many of their instruments and other ritual objects eventually became part of Ortiz's personal artifact collection and supported his research as well; others were destroyed or donated to the newly established Museum of Ethnography in Havana (Helg 1995, 114).[12] This was still a period of "white" Cuban nationalism (León 1991), one in which black people might be rhetorically accepted in the lower strata of Cuban society if they "knew their place" and ascribed to Eurocentric notions of racial hierarchy.

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[10] The original quote comes from Ortiz's article "La inmigración desde el punto de vista criminológico," *Derecho y sociología* 1 (May 1906): 54–64.

[11] Pictures of some of these victims are found in Ortiz's *Los negros brujos* ([1906] 1973, 136–37), along with reproductions of newspaper coverage of the events (181–220).

While working abroad in the consular corps, Ortiz dedicated himself in his spare time to studying delinquents, with special focus on the relationship between one's racial background and criminal tendencies. He took inspiration primarily from the writings of Cesare Lombroso, an Italian physician of Jewish descent who studied populations in asylums and in prisons and who believed that the basis of most criminal inclinations could be found in the psychic atavisms of primitive peoples (Le Riverend 1973, 13). Lombroso's 1876 publication *L'Uomo Delinquente*, discussing among other things "the evolution of the human species until it arrives at the superior phase, that of the white race" had a strong influence on Ortiz (e.g., Ortiz 1906b, 13).[13] His first book, *Los negros brujos. Apuntes para un estudio de etnología criminal*, attempted to apply Lombroso's frame of analysis to the Cuban "underworld" (*hampa*) and specifically crimes associated with black sorcerers.[14] He conceived of the study in dialogue with the sensationalized trials mentioned above involving the murder of children, especially that of Zoila Díaz in 1904, in which brujos were believed to have abducted the girl in order to cut out her heart and use it in demonic rites. Ortiz seems to have accepted the validity of the press coverage and assumed the accused to be guilty (Ramírez Calzadilla 2005, 202).[15] His book was the first to disseminate the term "Afro-Cuban" among academics and is still used today despite some objections to it through the years (Castellanos and Castellanos 1994, 13–14; Fernández Robaina 2005).

As one might expect, Ortiz in *Los negros brujos* depicts practitioners of African-influenced religions as psychically and morally inferior and in need of mental liberation through the inculcation of bourgeois European norms and education. His position is spelled out in the concluding chapter: "Brujo cults are, in the end, a negative influence with respect to the betterment of our society, because given the primitiveness that characterizes them, total immorality, they contribute to keeping black minds uncultured, in the farthest depths of African barbarism" (Ortiz [1906] 1973, 227; see also Chapter 1 of this volume).[16] Ortiz was an agnostic, and, later in life, did not oppose religious beliefs in others, but during this period he characterized Afro-Cuban religions as especially egregious.[17] He called for the outlawing of all such practices as a means of "disinfecting" the country (Ortiz [1906] 1973, 232, 235), the incarceration of those unwilling to disavow their beliefs, and the destruction of their houses of worship (242). Castellanos (1955, 13) notes that Ortiz frequently employed the phrase "*primitividad moral*" when describing Cuban brujos. It is not entirely clear in the text whether Ortiz perceived this primitive morality or "lack of evolution" (ibid., 14) as derived from race and thus inherent or as learned behavior that could be changed. His dim view of all religion as a young man derives at least in part from adherence to positivism, a philosophy rejecting all belief in the supernatural. Even in this early stage of his career and despite the racist presuppositions of *Los negros brujos*, however, Ortiz's scholarship is impressive in many respects. He cites academic literature in multiple languages to support his arguments and provides detailed information about specific African deities, talismans associated with Kongo-derived rites, ritual altars, practices of divination, the origin of particular African-derived terminology like *bilongo* or *taita*, and includes visual representations of religious masks, costumes, and styles of dance. His scholarship in fact mutely attests to the complexity and aesthetic cohesiveness of the same forms of worship he ultimately condemns.

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[12] Pavez Ojeda (2016, 214) cites a specific police raid that provided instruments later used by Ortiz; it took place on May 20, 1914, in an Abakuá potencia named Eforí Muna Tanzé in the neighborhood of Pogolotti.

[13] "La evolución de la especie humana hasta llegar a la fase superior, cual es la raza blanca."

[14] Iznaga (1989, 7) notes that Constancio Bernaldo de Quirós's 1901 publication *La mala vida en Madrid* also served as an important source of inspiration for Ortiz.

[15] For further information on the Zoila Díaz case and similar prosecutions of the period, see Palmié 2002, 210ff.

Ortiz's publications in the years immediately following the publication of *Los negros brujos* suggest that his views of African-derived heritage remained unchanged for some time, even after returning to Havana. In 1907, his first article specifically on Afro-descendant music and dance, devoted to black carnival bands (*comparsas*), was published. The groups had generated considerable controversy, as their members aspired to take part in largely white, middle-class street processions even though dominant society consid-

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16. "El culto brujo es, en fin, socialmente negativo con relación al mejoramiento de nuestra sociedad, porque dada la primitividad que le es característica, totalmente amoral, contribuye a retener las conciencias de los negros incultos en los bajos fondos de la barbarie africana."

17. Note that even in Chapter 3, an essay published fifteen years after *Los negros brujos,* Ortiz continues to manifest considerable ambivalence toward the validity/utility of Afro-Cuban religious expression. And his cynicism toward religion was not limited to Afro-descendant forms; see, for instance, his amusing commentary in Chapter 9 about St. Peter, said to carry "the keys of heaven in his hands which appear to be made of iron, according to those who know about key making in heaven."

ered their drums and dances savage (Moore 1997, 62–86). Citing the conclusions of his contemporary Jesús Castellanos, Ortiz suggested that comparsa bands evoked "the spirit of the primates" and were representative of the "primitive and almost invariably African psyche of its members."[18] In 1909, he wrote a short essay on the *negro curro*, focusing on another famous character type associated with the nineteenth-century Cuban "underworld": a marauding black thug similar to the Brazilian *malandro* or the Argentine *compadrito*. Ortiz's curro essay appeared in the book *Entre cubanos* ([1913] 1987) as an extension of his criminological studies. He initially conceived of two additional book-length studies of a similar nature to accompany *Los negros brujos:* one on the curros and one on *ñáñigos,*[19] though neither appeared during his lifetime.[20] In the 1909 essay (97), Ortiz describes curros as "an open sore on society," part of the same "primitive and impulsive African psychology" associated with deviance.

Many essays in *Entre cubanos* focus on politics, which is unsurprising given the volatility of the period in Cuba, but others consider cultural phenomena. Several urge Cubans to read more, take note of contemporary events in other Latin American countries, and study their own history. Clearly, Ortiz sees education in a European mold as a way for the country to progress. In chapters such as "Fiestas populares" one finds a burgeoning interest in folklore as a means of understanding the character of the nation and the beliefs of the common people, black and white. Ortiz encourages the study of music associated with white/Hispanic peasants, the "voice of all the people, the common soul of generations" in order to inculcate a sense of national pride: "And finally, tell me, my compatriots, whether as you listen to a Cuban *zapateo,* or a few *guajiras,* or a *punto criollo*[21] the spirit of our history and the feelings of love for country and faith in the future are not evoked in you" (Ortiz [1913] 1987, 123–24). It is worth noting that Ortiz's first publication as an adolescent was on the local customs and dialect in Menorca, Spain (Ortiz 1895); his interest in Hispanic folklore, and eventually other forms of culture, can be viewed as an extension of this early interest.

Fernando Coronil (1995, xviii) suggests that as of 1914 Ortiz began to distance himself from biological essentialism and focused to a greater extent

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[18] "La psiquis primitiva y casi siempre africana de sus componentes" (Ortiz 1907, 137–38).

[19] A male secret society derived from groups based in the Calabar and southern Nigeria, and perpetuating many African-derived traditions. It also played an active role in the insurgency against Spain. See the entry for *Abakuá* in the glossary, and Chapter 9.

[20] In 1926, Ortiz published a series of essays on the negro curro in the *Archivos de folklore cubano* and late in life began to rework them with the intention of publishing them as a book. His manuscript appeared posthumously in 1986, edited by Diana Iznaga (Iznaga 1986). Ortiz also completed a text on the ñáñigos in 1916, but it remained in manuscript form at the time of his death (see Rubin 1998, 141).

[21] These are all string-based forms of music and dance native to Cuba but with stylistic roots in Spain and the Canary Islands.

on supporting culture and education as a means of spurring social progress. This is difficult to assess, as even in early works he advocates strongly for further education of the population, as mentioned. But through the 1910s and into the 1920s, Ortiz's advocacy of education and culture suggests a bias against many forms of African-derived heritage. In 1917, for instance, he published a second edition of *Los negros brujos* and in the new prologue included no disclaimers about its content, suggesting he still conceived of African-derived religions as pathologies. One can detect a shift in the emphasis of his work beginning with the publication of *Los negros esclavos* (1916), however. Certain segments of that book still depict Afro-Cubans as childlike, undeveloped, and intellectually deficient (Ortiz [1916] 1996, 13, 40–41). Yet others discuss black subjects more sympathetically through a focus on the horrific work conditions to which slaves were subjected, the forms of punishment they experienced, the ways in which they resisted or challenged authority through the years, and their ongoing struggles after attaining freedom. Interestingly, 1916 also marks the year that Ortiz resigned his position as public prosecutor in order to serve in the Cuban House of Representatives. Beginning in that year he made various attempts at social reform by drafting bills devoted to the prohibition of gambling, regulation of labor laws, and modification of the penal code. None of his initiatives ultimately proved successful, and, in 1922, he resigned from the legislature in frustration (Le Riverend 1973, 30; Castellanos 1955, 330). For years thereafter Ortiz worked as legal counsel to the fire insurance company El Iris, only resigning from that position after it was nationalized and later closed during the first years of the socialist revolution.[22]

The 1920s gave rise to a heightened sense of cultural nationalism within Cuba and a greater desire among advocates of the arts to promote local heritage, including certain Afro-diasporic forms. Various factors contributed to this shift including political and economic trends, artistic developments abroad, and changes in the commercial music industry. In regard to politics and the economy, the 1920s witnessed tremendous upheaval in Cuba, leading intellectuals to reflect upon the wisdom of the country's monocrop sugar industry and its close ties to U.S. businesses. The sharp deflation of sugar prices in 1920, subsequent tariff legislation passed in the United States, and the eventual stock market crash of 1929 led to high levels of unemployment in Cuba and to a constant series of strikes and activism. Eventually, such activity destabilized the unpopular Machado administration and led to all-out civil war. In this context, intellectuals questioned earlier perceptions of the United States as benevolent. Authors expressed a desire for greater sovereignty in both political and cultural spheres, one manifestation of the latter being a widespread movement known as *afrocubanismo* (Moore 1997).

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[22] María Fernanda Ortiz, personal communication, September 10, 2015.

Internationally, the widespread popularity of jazz in the United States and Europe, the rise of the Harlem Renaissance in New York, and the use of Afro-diasporic culture in the academic compositions of many high-profile composers (Krenek, Stravinsky, Ravel, etc.) also inspired a new appreciation of local black music among the white Cuban elite. At the same time, new forms of recording technology and the popularization of black Cuban dance bands on 78 records and newly established radio broadcasts made black popular music more accessible to middle-class white society than ever before. The mass media thus created new listening audiences for Afro-Cuban music and slowly contributed to changing attitudes about such expression.

Fernando Ortiz played a prominent role in helping to valorize Cuban culture and document its many manifestations during this period. He founded new organizations dedicated to such efforts including the Junta de Renovación Nacional (1923), the Sociedad de Folklore Cubano (1924), and the Sociedad Hispanocubana de Cultura (1926). Ortiz frequently emphasized the importance of lowering Cuba's illiteracy rate—roughly 50 percent in 1920—and combating what he perceived as declining interest in education among the population. As of the 1920s he gradually lost interest in criminology and instead published on topics related to Cuban culture and history. Other authors of Ortiz's generation such as musicologist Gaspar Agüero y Barreras and Eduardo Sánchez de Fuentes also began promoting local culture through the creation of music festivals and the publication of scholarly essays. In part, their efforts were inspired by a more radical generation of younger scholars known as the Grupo Minorista, founded in 1923. With such individuals in their ranks as novelist and music critic Alejo Carpentier, the Minoristas denounced U.S. imperialism and dictatorial regimes in Cuba and throughout Latin America. Artistically, they attempted to integrate elements of local Afro-Cuban heritage into avant-garde artistic works as manifest in the journals *Atuei*, *Musicalia,* and *Revista de avance.*

In the early 1920s, Ortiz wrote an influential series of essays on wide-ranging topics. They included documentation of nineteenth-century slave celebrations ("La fiesta afrocubana del 'Día de Reyes,'"; see Ortiz [1920] 1993); a publication on mutual aid societies for slaves and free blacks established under colonial rule, included in this volume ("Los cabildos afrocubanos," 1921; Chapter 2); an essay on indigenous Cuban heritage ("Historia de la arqueología cubana," 1922b); and the linguistically oriented works *Un catauro de cubanismos: apuntes lexicográficos* (1923b), and *Glosario de afronegrismos* ([1924] 1991).[23] Both the *Catauro* and the *Glosario* can be read as polemics against pan-Hispanic ideologies as propagated by Spanish intellectuals and politicians in the aftermath of 1898. Ortiz used such works to help define a vernacular voice for the Americas by subverting Spanish as the language of former colonial control and emphasizing new vocabularies that negated rather than underscored Cuba's ties to Europe (Palmié 2013, 89–90). Pérez Firmat discusses the haphazard methodologies and frequent leaps in logic employed in these works, leading to many instances of what he characterizes as "philological fictions" (Pérez Firmat 1985) in the service of an emergent creole nationalism.

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[23] Stephan Palmié suggested in a review of this manuscript that Ortiz's work on Afro-Cuban terminology is best described as lexographic or philological rather than linguistic, given that the author had no formal training in linguistics and never formulated any explicit theory underlying his work on language.

At the same time, Ortiz accelerated the editing and/or reissue of books devoted to Cuban history and culture by authors of the past. One of these book series, known as the Colección Cubana de Libros y Documentos Inéditos o Raros (Cuban Collection of Books and Unpublished or Rare Documents), included nineteenth-century memoirs, an early anthropological study of the slave population, reflections on the Wars of Independence, and unpublished essays by José Antonio Saco, José Martí, and other authors.[24] Another series dating from the same period was known simply as the Colección de Libros Cubanos (Cuban Book Collection) and included volumes on Cuban history and politics of the nineteenth century.[25] In a letter to Brazilian folklorist Jacques Raimundo in December 1927, Ortiz mentioned collecting the "religious chants of black Africans in Cuba" (Ortiz 2014a vol. 1, 181), suggesting that his research specifically on black music dates from this period as well as his organological studies of instruments.[26]

Close examination of essays from the early and mid-1920s suggests that Ortiz's earlier views of non-European cultures and peoples had not changed substantially relative to those in his earlier works. His primary goal at the time seems to have been careful documentation of cultural forms on the island in order to understand what their origins were, how they had changed over time, and how they might need to be further modified in the future in order to compare favorably with elite European culture. Documentation of Afro-Cuban expressive arts appears to have been undertaken with the eventual goal of raising the cultural standards of the nation, making it aware of its deficiencies, and charting a path toward a "civilized" future. The *cabildo*[27] essay, for instance, makes reference to what Ortiz considered the "monotonous music" and "ridiculous lyrics" of twentieth-century comparsa bands and suggests that the music and dance associated with earlier cabildos were considerably more distasteful, the "survivals of infantile African art" (Ortiz 1984, 31). Even harsher evaluations of such groups appear in the essay via the quotations of others without commentary.[28] The Día de Reyes essay similarly refers to the "infantile psyche of the black man" (1984, 53) and portrays street processions associated with the celebration as atavistic. Ortiz's linguistic studies of the 1920s, mentioned above, have a more neutral tone, as they focus on issues of etymology. Still, in the "Los afronegrismos" essay he notes that most of the language to be discussed comes from religious contexts, and that religious views, "especially the most primitive, perpetuate themselves over time" (1922, 321). It should be noted that Ortiz viewed many working-class cultural traditions derived from Europe as similarly primitive and inferior.

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[24] The series included *Lo que fuimos y lo que somos* by José María de la Torre (1913); *Efeméridas cubanas. Calendario histórico, con los hechos más notables sucedidos en cada día* by Francisco Cartas (1921); *Antropología y patología comparadas de los negros esclavos* by Henri Dumont (1922); Ortiz's own *Un catauro de cubanismos* (1923); *Libro de sangre, martirologio cubano de la guerra de los 10 años* by José Ignacio Rodríguez and Nestor Ponce de León (1926); *Aquellos tiempos. Memorias de Lola María* by Dolores María de Ximeno y Cruz (1928–30); "José Antonio Saco y sus ideas cubanas" by Ortiz (1929); *Artículos desconocidos de José Martí* by Félix Lizaso (1930); *Nicotina: Costumbres cubanas* by Wenceslao Gálvez y del Monte (1932); and *Bibliografía de Enrique José Varona* by Fermín Peraza Sarausa (1932).

[25] Ortiz 2014a vol. 1, 344. Works reprinted in this shorter series include *Cuentos cubanos* by Ramón de Palma (1928), *Historia de la isla de Cuba*, 3 vols., by Pedro J. Guiteras (1928), *Cuba a pluma y lápiz* by Samuel Hazard (1928), *Poesías* by José Martí (1928), *Dos amores* by Cirilio Villaverde (1930), *José de la Luz y Caballero como educador,* ed. Francisco González del Valle (1931), *Ensayo político sobre la isla de Cuba* by Alexander von Humboldt (1930), and *Artículos de costumbres* by José Victoriano Betancourt (1941).

[26] In a letter dated December 26, 1930, to Melville Herskovits, discovered by David Garcia in the Library of Congress, Ortiz mentions wrapping up a book-length study related to the study of black musical instruments. However, no publication of this kind was immediately forthcoming.

In the 1920s, Ortiz occasionally issues an open call for the "purification" of Afro-Cuban heritage, by which he apparently means their transformation into forms more acceptable to Eurocentric middle-class society. Toward the end of the cabildo essay, for instance, he defends comparsas in the face of more conservative critics who wish to ban such groups from all future carnival events. He notes that "even in comparsas of evident primitiveness we find something artistic . . . why should we eliminate them when we can transform, improve, and incorporate them, thus purifying our national folklore? Don't we maintain other traditions just as savage, impure and impossible to purify, of corrupting and antisocial transcendence [that we never discuss banning], such as the lottery and cock fighting?" (1984, 34).[29] Yet he simultaneously calls for an ongoing ban on "fetishistic" religious music and dance, and on rumba music/dance because of its "orgiastic" qualities. A few years later, in his essay discussing the founding of the Cuban Folklore Society, he states that the group's goals are to document local elements of popular culture with an aim toward national reconstruction. Ortiz calls for the study of (strongly Spanish-influenced) musical forms such as *décimas* and boleros, oral poetry, children's games, and so on. He also mentions the importance of "descriptive study, with a goal of true social therapy, of certain morbid practices such as acts of witchcraft and *ñañiguismo*" (1923a, 49).[30] Although the early 1920s gives rise to Ortiz's first substantive publications on Afro-Cuban drumming and dance, his views toward such expression remain highly ambivalent, to say the least.

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[27] The term for a council or social organization, in this case of Afro-Cubans. See Chapter 2 and the Glossary in this volume.

[28] See, for instance, the comments of Aurelio Pérez Zamora from 1866, quoted at length (Ortiz 1984, 48).

[29] "También en esas comparsas de evidente primitividad, encontramos su algo de arte . . . ¿porqué hemos de perderlo cuando podemos transformarlo, mejorarlo, e incorporarlo, purificándolo a nuestro folklore nacional? ¿Acaso no conservamos otras costrumbres tan salvajes, impuras e impurificables, de transcendentalismo corruptor y antisocial, como la lotería y los gallos?" Ramírez Calzadilla (2005, 204) suggests that this tendency toward a greater tolerance for non-Western cultural forms divorced from religious belief began even earlier, in the 1910s.

A number of publications from the late 1920s appear in the journal *Archivos del folklore cubano* that align with Ortiz's goal of scrutinizing Afro-Cuban cultural forms perceived as primitive or embarrassing. These include articles on ritual music instruments and ñáñigo costumes by Israel Castellanos (Castellanos 1926, 1927, 1928), two of which include editorial commentary by Ortiz (see also Ortiz's own publications in the journal, Ortiz 1924 and 1925). Despite the fact that Castellanos describes African-derived religions as superstition, ritual instruments and music as primitive and the culture of *hampones* (underworld thugs), etc., his publications do provide useful organological information and detailed drawings, much as in the case of *Los negros brujos*. In the ñáñigo article, Castellanos mentions that the outfits he examined for purposes of his investigation came from Havana's Criminology Museum, part of the School of Medicine at the university (Castellanos 1928, 30). Ortiz published a similar article on teeth filing practices among ñáñigos in 1929 (Ortiz 1929c), though with less inflammatory language. That same year he wrote another essay on the origin of the terms *cocorícamo*, *mereketén*, and bilongo[31] in Afro-Cuban religious ritual. While noting that all three were the products of primitive minds that tended to invent deities out of thin air (1929b, 308, 311), he concluded by emphasizing that such ideas were not terribly far removed from conceptions of the divine in the West, suggesting a greater degree of empathy with his object of study. Finally, the "Cultura, no raza" (1929a) article makes clear that Ortiz still accepted the validity of the notion of race but understood Hispanic culture to be the common element tying together much of the Americas. He argued against commonly held notions of the "Hispanic race" and made clear that individuals of non-European origin had a right to full citizenship in Hispanic society. He no longer accepted the idea that black and mixed-race people were mentally inferior but rather that they could aspire to full participation in modern society through education and the adoption of European norms.

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[30] "El estudio descriptivo encaminado a un fin de verdadera terapéutica social, de ciertas prácticas morbosas, como los actos de brujería y ñañiguismo."

[31] Cocorícamo and mereketén are African-derived terms that refer to wondrous, inexplicable, or extraordinary things or occurrences and, by extension, the supernatural. Bilongo is a local term for an Afro-Cuban spell or conjuring. All three have passed into the parlance of the general population.

Ortiz's Publications of the Mid-1930s and Beyond

The early 1930s represented a pivotal moment in Ortiz's career, one in which his views toward Afro-diasporic expression became markedly more favorable. Various factors undoubtedly contributed to the shift. First, it appears that ongoing political and economic turmoil in Cuba and clearer recognition of U.S. complicity in such problems led to even stronger support of national culture and sovereignty. Through 1926, for instance, most of Ortiz's publications on noncultural topics focused on reform of the Cuban penal code. After 1927, however, and continuing into the 1930s one finds a series of articles overtly critical of U.S. foreign policy. They include: "A Cuban Manifesto" in 1927 denouncing U.S. intervention in Nicaragua, as well as open letters published in Cuban and Spanish newspapers on the same topic;[32] "The Responsibilities of the United States" in 1929, discussing the need for its support of the Cuban economy;[33] and "Cuba Is Not Asking for New Intervention, but Rather the End to the One That Began in 1916" (1931), calling for the closing of U.S. military bases on Cuban soil and the abrogation of the Platt Amendment.[34] Second, Ortiz's exile to the United States between 1930 and 1933 seems to have led to a period of intense reflection about the value of Afro-Cuban culture as national heritage, as well as ongoing political involvement.[35] Forced to flee for his safety after writing an essay on the despotism of President Gerardo Machado (Rubin 1998, 31), Ortiz moved between New York and Washington, DC, in search of employment. He arrived during the peak of the "rhumba craze" and must have seen firsthand the enthusiasm black Cuban culture had generated in the United States, as well as the vitality and massive commercial popularity of jazz and other Afro-diasporic musical traditions. He must have noticed also the widespread racial strife in the United States at the time, perhaps leading to further introspection on that topic.

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[32] "Un manifiesto de los cubanos," *El Mundo*, January 15, 1927, 17, Havana.

[33] Ortiz 1929d. "La responsabilidad de los Estados Unidos; una circular cubanófila del 'First national Bank of Boston,'" *Revista bimestre cubana* 24, no. 4 (July–August 1929): 484–90.

[34] "Cuba no está pidiendo nueva intervención, sino que cese la existente allí desde 1916," *La Prensa,* 1, January 12, 1931, 1, 8, New York.

[35] The extent of his engagement with politics is documented in correspondence of the period; see, for instance, Ortiz 2014a vol. 2, 66–167.

The clearest turning point in the tone of Ortiz's scholarship can be seen in his 1934 essay "On Afro-Cuban Music. Stimulus for Its Study."[36] In it, Ortiz references the greater engagement on the part of Western society with "music that is not over-intellectualized" (112). He also makes clear that much of his own support for Afro-Cuban music has political overtones.

> In these times of national suffering and profound tragedy, in which Cubans must begin a reconquest of their own country, economically and politically, so that they survive in the face of the destructive force of foreign imperialism . . . it is absolutely necessary that all affirmations of the Cuban spirit of its own creation be supported. Ideological imperialism, if not as insidious as the economic imperialism that sucks the blood of our nation, is also deleterious . . . Let us try to better understand ourselves . . . And let us not forget that vernacular music represents one of a nation's most vital forms, and that Cuban music resonates throughout the world, among all people (113).[37]

It is instructive to compare this essay to a publication from 1929[38] with a similar title, in which Ortiz also calls for the study of Afro-Cuban music but more tentatively and by focusing primarily on determining the extent of African-derived retentions in traditional religious repertoire. The 1934 essay is one of Ortiz's first after returning to Cuba following the ouster of Machado. It, and subsequent academic work, foregrounds Afro-Cuban music and dance (including at least some popular music) more strongly, and his enthusiasm for both is overt. Ortiz's more pronounced interests in Afro-diasporic heritage and politics are also evident in the two new journals he established in the mid-1930s: *Ultra* (1936, vol. 1), dedicated to international events and intended to serve as a point of contact between all Spanish-speaking nations of the Americas; and *Estudios afrocubanos* (1937), a publication supported by a new society devoted to Afro-Cuban heritage. Writings in subsequent years stressed again that Cubans' sense of identity derived ultimately from commonly shared cultural forms rather than racial or even geographic ties.[39] And they made clear that Ortiz now viewed racial division within Cuba as a major obstacle to progress. He redoubled his efforts to support a project of national integration through scholarship focusing more heavily on Afro-diasporic themes.[40] Apparently recognizing the significance of the 1934 essay cited above, originally released in a university journal, he reprinted it in *Estudios afrocubanos* in 1946.[41] Even in the reprint, however, one finds an ambiguity in regard to Afro-Cuban music and Africans themselves, such as in the following quotation that perpetuates disturbing stereotypes.

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[36] Ortiz 1934a. "De la música afrocubana. Un estímulo para su estudio," *Universidad de la Habana* 1, no. 3 (May–June 1934): 111–25.

[37] "En estos tiempos de nacionales congojas y de honda tragicidad, cuando el cubano tiene para sobrevivir que comenzar por reconquistarse a sí mismo contra las aniquilantes presiones de los imperialismos foráneos, así en la economía como en la política; es indispensable que sean mantenidas todas las afirmaciones del espíritu cubano por el esfuerzo propio. Si no tan grave como el imperialismo económico, que succiona la sangre del pueblo cubano, es también disolvente el imperialismo ideológico que le sigue . . . Tratemos, pues, de conocernos a nosotros mismos . . . Y no olvidemos que la música vernácula es una de las más vigorosas afirmaciones de una nación, y que la cubana da al mundo resonancias que llegan a todos los pueblos."

[38] "El estudio de la música afrocubana," *Musicalia* 5 (January–February 1929): 169–74.

> [Blacks'] love of music is not, as is often assumed, the manifestation of a superficial character, a mere eruption of their infantile dynamism. It has been observed now that behind the undoubted childishness of their culture one finds a significant musical stratification, with [complex rhythmic elements] unsuspected from the people of other continents.[42]

Whereas Ortiz's work prior to 1930 focused on the origins of particular African-derived retentions in the Americas (frequently characterized as at least somewhat odd or risible), essays from the mid-1930s shift to overt praise of culturally hybrid or "mulatto" expression for the first time. In this sense they bear similarities to writings by influential authors such as José Vasconcelos in Mexico and Gilberto Freyre in Brazil at approximately the same time (e.g., Needell 1995, 69). An essay from 1934 on mulatto poetry[43] may be the first in which Ortiz strongly asserts that mixtures of African and European heritage best represent Cuba. In it, he describes poetry in Spanish with Afro-Cuban themes and interpreted by individuals such as *mulata* stage artist Eusebia Cosme as a metaphor for national integration and even Cuba itself, "the inextricable embrace of Africa and Castile in emotion" (210). An essay the following year (1935) dedicated to the history of the *claves* expounds upon the same theme. It represents Ortiz's first extended organological study, an area of investigation he devoted considerable time to in his final decades. Accolades for mulatto expression can be found in other publications such as "La cubanidad y los negros" ("Cubanness and Blacks," 1939): "The extraordinary vigor and the captivating originality of Cuban music is a mulatto creation. All original music is white-black music, its beauty a gift from the Americas to the rest of the world."[44] Similar sentiments appear in an essay from the late 1940s that became the first chapter of *La africanía de la música folklórica de Cuba* ([1950] 1965). Ortiz notes that the styles of Cuban music that have been most influential internationally are "forged in a creole crucible, thrust into the tropical heat, emitting streams of Africanness. It is the black-white product of transculturation, a process of fusion begun in the century-old times of the *zarabanda* and the *cumbé*."[45] Yet other essays of the period similarly describe Cuban culture as an *ajiaco* or complex stew with diverse ingredients.[46] At the same time, Ortiz denounced the cultural changes associated with cabaret music and dance as "grotesque deformations"[47] and generally chose to confine his studies to folkloric rather than mass-mediated or staged music. This aspect of his scholarship parallels the fields of musicology and ethnomusicology that demonstrated little interest in popular repertoire at the time.

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[39] For example, "La cubanidad y los negros," *Estudios afrocubanos* 3, no. 1–4 (1939b): 3.

[40] See, for instance, "Por la integración cubana de blancos y negros," *Revista bimestre cubana* 51, no. 2 (March–April 1943): 262.

[41] It appeared as "Estudiemos la música afrocubana," *Estudios afrocubanos* 5 (1945–46): 7–18.

[42] "Su amor por la música no era, como se quería suponer, la manifestación de una superficialidad de carácter, mera explosión de su dinamia infantil. Se ha observado ya que tras la indudable puericia de su cultura se halla una fuerte estratificación musical, con cristalizaciones rítmicas insospechadas en los pueblos de otros continentes" (Ortiz 1946, "Estudiemos la música afrocubana," 9). Note that very similar, though much less offensive, text appears in *La africanía de la música folklórica de Cuba* from 1950 (Ortiz 1965, 155–56), suggesting that the author continued to reflect on the bias of earlier writings late in life: "Su amor por la música no es, como se quería suponer, la manifestación de una superficialidad psíquica, mera explosión de un carácter infantil. Se ha observado ya que en su cultura se halla una fuerte estratificación musical, con cristalizaciones rítmicas superiores e insospechadas en los pueblos de otros continentes y con valor estético en otros aspectos."

[43] Ortiz 1934b. "La poesía mulata, presentación de Eusebia Cosme, la recitadora," *Revista bimestre cubana* 24, nos. 2–3 (September–December 1934): 205–13.

During the 1930s, Ortiz significantly revised his former views of the Cuban "underworld" or "bad life" (*la mala vida*), and the degenerate or self-destructive behaviors associated with them. As discussed, Ortiz's initial conception of the underworld was informed by Lombroso's theories of criminology, presuming that many if not all forms of social deviance derived in some way from irrational psychic tendencies innate to particular racial or other groups. Ortiz's understanding of crime or "deviance" in the black community as of the mid-1930s is decidedly more sympathetic and could be read as informed by Marxist views, as some in Cuba have maintained (Iznaga 1989, 38). For instance, in 1936, Ortiz writes:

> The black man, taken forcibly from Africa and introduced into a colonial society based on slavery and exploitation, and of course one

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[44] "La cubanidad y los negros," *Estudios afrocubanos* 3, no. 1–4 (1939): 12.

[45] "Fundida en el crisol criollo, puesto al fuego tropical, con raudales de africanía; producto de una transculturación blanquinegra, desde los multiseculares tiempos de la zarabanda y el cumbé," quoted in "Preludios étnicos de la música afrocubana," *Revista bimestre cubana* 59, nos. 1–3 (January–June 1947): 11. Also quoted in Iznaga 1989, 73. The zarabanda and cumbé are examples of early New World dances that developed among mixed-race populations. They gained widespread popularity in the Americas and also influenced European tastes.

[46] For example, "Los factores humanos de la cubanidad," *Revista bimestre cubana* 45, no. 2 (March–April 1940): 167.

[47] "Los últimos versos mulatos," *Revista bimestre cubana* 35, no. 3 (May–June 1935): 324. Ortiz blamed such deformations on the influence of tourists from the United States.

> with economic and psychological norms very different from his own, entered *en masse* into the "bad life"; that is, into a form of existence not viewed kindly by dominant society and marked by isolation and social inferiority. The ruling ideologues of every time period and nation define this sort of life from on high as "bad" because it is not the same as the dominant practices which they define for themselves as good and normative . . . The religion [of blacks] was thus perceived as ridiculous and diabolical, their language unintelligible, their art laughable, their morality abominable, their family disjunct, their habits incorrect, their ideology absurd.[48]

Ortiz rarely admits to his own early racist views, in this period or subsequently; on the contrary, he openly denies "any evidence of prejudice" in his writings on more than one occasion (e.g., Ortiz in Rubin 1998, 21). Many late essays criticize others for depicting Africa as a savage continent and with inhabitants who have elemental intellectual or rational abilities, etc.,[49] yet fail to note that the same critiques could be leveled at much of his own work. One example of Ortiz's recognition of bias in his early scholarship, however, can be found in the article "Brujos o santeros" ("Sorcerers or Santería Devotees") from 1939 (Ortiz 1939a). It responds to calls by Ortiz's protégé and fellow researcher Rómulo Lachatañeré for an end to the use of the pejorative term *brujo* when referring to practitioners of Santería (Lachatañeré 1938). Following their publication, Ortiz admits that the term *brujo* has negative, racialized connotations in Cuba and that his earlier use of it inadvertently suggested bias, especially against Santería.[50]

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[48] "Más acerca de la poesía mulata. Escorzos para su estudio," *Revista bimestre cubana* 37, no. 3 (May–June 1936): 439–40. "El negro al ser arrancado del África y precipitado en la sociedad colonial de esclavitud y explotación y, sobre todo, de psicológica y económica diferenciación a la de su originaria procedencia, había entrado en masa en 'la mala vida'; es decir, en una vida conceptuada como 'no buena' y marcada por el apartamiento y la inferioridad social, impuestos por los elementos dominadores; o sea, en esa 'mala vida' que la ideología imperante en cada época y pueblo define, desde lo alto de su posición ordenadora, como 'mala' porque no es la misma de los dominantes, quienes por sí definen la suya como la buena y normativa . . . La religión del dominado se tuvo por ridícula y diabólica; su lenguaje era 'un ruido, no una voz'; su arte, risible; su moral, abominable; su familia, desvinculada; su costumbre, sin derecho; su ideación, absurda."

[49] As examples of such critiques, see "De la música afrocubana. Un estímulo para su estudio" (1934):119; or "Los problemas raciales de nuestro tiempo" (1949):3.

[50] "Brujos o santeros," *Estudios afrocubanos* 3, no. 1–4 (1939): 85–90; see especially 88–89. See also Ortiz (1938) 1992 for Ortiz's recognition of Lachatañeré's research overall. Lachatañeré's original article critiquing Ortiz's use of the term brujo is reproduced in his *El sistema religioso de los afrocubanos* (1992, 196–204). Note that although Lachatañeré suggests the term is inappropriate when discussing practitioners of Santería, he also believes it should not be used in reference to most individuals involved in Kongo-derived religions or any other form of Afro-descendant religious practice, only those who truly attempt to harm others through recourse to the supernatural (1992, 198).

In addition to supporting mulatto cultural forms as of the mid-1930s, Ortiz became more supportive of traditional Afro-Cuban music and dance, especially forms associated with Yoruba heritage. On May 30, 1937, he famously organized the first-ever public lecture on the music and dance of Santería in the Campoamor Theater, with support (somewhat ironically, given its typical concern for Iberian heritage) from the Institución Hispanocubana de Cultura. Ortiz published the text of his lecture shortly thereafter as "La música sagrada de los negros yoruba de Cuba" (Ortiz 1937), which includes photos of the *batá* performers (Pablo Roche, Aguedo Morales, Jesús Pérez), singers, and dancers who accompanied him that evening.[51] Ortiz used variants of the same essay in future public lectures[52] and reproduced extended versions of it in journals. One of the iterations, "La música religiosa de los yorubas entre los negros cubanos" from 1946, is translated as Chapter 8 of this volume.[53]

The 1940s and 1950s represents the apex of Fernando Ortiz's academic career. During this time he published extensively on topics of Afro-Cuban music, dance, and related cultural expression, including his most highly acclaimed works. As mentioned, they include a series of long essays (many over two hundred pages) originally published in the *Revista bimestre cubana* between 1947 and 1949 that were later incorporated into the books *La africanía de la música folklórica de Cuba* ([1950] 1965) and *Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba* ([1951] 1981)[54] as well as in his monumental five-volume series *Los instrumentos de la música afrocubana* (1952–55). The first chapter of *La africanía* discusses indigenous musical influences in Cuba and what is known of their musical rites such as the *areíto* at the time of the conquest. Subsequent chapters discuss the nature of music making in sub-Saharan Africa in general terms as well as representative vocal, poetic, and instrumental forms unique to Afro-Cuban groups by means of example. *Los bailes* explores local music and dance events in more detail, both contemporary and historical, with emphasis on traditions derived from Kongo, Yoruba, and *Abakuá* heritage. The *Los instrumentos* series attempts to document all African-inspired instruments in Cuba and includes discussion of their possible origins in the traditions of various parts of Africa, a physical description of each, and notes on how they are constructed and performed. Nearly every entry is accompanied by photographs and drawings. This sort of work served as Ortiz's primary focus through the late 1950s, at which point he began having vision and other health problems.

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[51] One of the photos from the performance is reproduced on the cover of this book. A full list of the approximately twenty singers and dancers who participated can be found on p. 83 of Ortiz's essay.

[52] See, for instance, Ortiz 1941, "La música de los negros yoruba en Cuba," *Universidad de la Habana,* año 6, nos. 38–39 (September–October, November–December 1941): 110–33. Ortiz apparently repeated the same lecture-demo that year as part of summer offerings at the University of Havana.

[53] The essay originally appeared in *Estudios afrocubanos* 5 (1945–46): 19–60. Its content also informed discussion of Ortiz's Yoruba-derived sacred ritual in *Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas [1951] 1981), 294–380.

[54] Ortiz's "Preludios étnicos de la música afrocubana I" article in the *Revista bimestre cubana* 59, nos. 1–3 (1947): 5–194, corresponds to chapters 1–2 of *La africanía*. "Preludios étnicos de la música afrocubana II" appears in *Revista bimestre cubana* 60 (1947): 123–280, and corresponds to chapters 3–4. The first part of "Preludios étnicos de la música afrocubana III" in *Revista bimestre cubana* 61 nos. 1–3 (1948): 41–175, corresponds to chapter 5 of *La africanía,* and the second half of the same article (176–278) to Chapter 1 of *Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba*. "Preludios étnicos de la música afrocubana. IV," appearing in *Revista bimestre cubana* 62 nos. 4–6 (1948): 131–210, corresponds to chapter 2 of *Los bailes*. Preludios étnicos de la música afrocubana V," appearing in *Revista bimestre cubana* 63 nos. 1–3 (1949): 41–278, corresponds to chapter 3 of *Los bailes*, and the sixth and final "Preludios" article *Revista bimestre cubana* 64 nos. 4–6 (1949): 87–194, corresponds to chapter 4 of *Los bailes*.

Ortiz's publications from the mid-1930s onward frequently assert that Cubans of all racial backgrounds have the same inherent potential in an intellectual sense and that racism has no place in Cuba. The changing discourses within disciplines such as anthropology likely shaped his views on the subject, as well as global reappraisals of race that took place following the Nazi atrocities associated with World War II. Ortiz's new interest in notions of race and racism manifested themselves in numerous articles[55] and ultimately in the book *El engaño de las razas* ("The Deception of Races," 1946). In it, he contested the notion that pure races exist, that racial hierarchy has any basis in fact, that phenotype can be linked to inherent abilities or characteristics of other kinds, and so on. It represented forceful public commentary on the topic and aligned his scholarship with the progressive scientific consensus of the period.

Yet despite his rejection of race as a concept and disavowal of any links between musical style and race, one finds a range of racialized commentary even in Ortiz's later works on music and dance. Some of the views expressed align closely with those in *El engaño de las razas* (e.g., [1950] 1965, 157); others seem to contradict them, suggesting that Ortiz struggled to fully internalize a raceless view of music and/or that he continued to be influenced by the perspectives of other authors on the subject. In order to ensure that I represent his "mature" views, I include citations primarily from writings of the mid-1940s or later in this section. In chapter 2 of *La africanía,* for instance, Ortiz writes (quoting Dietrich Westermann), "The black African is more dominated than us [Europeans, whites?] by unconscious or semiconscious impulses; for him emotional factors weigh more heavily than logical reasoning."[56] On the previous page Ortiz states that "in the psyche of the black

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[55] For instance, "Los factores humanos de la cubanidad" (1940); the booklet *Martí y las razas* (1942); "Por la integración cubana de blancos y negros" (1943); and "¿Hay razas humanas?" (1945).

[56] See Ortiz (1950) 1965, 163. This essay was first published in 1947 and later appeared in *La africanía*: "el negro africano está más dominado que nosotros por los impulsos inconscientes

African, emotional, auditory, and kinetic factors tend to predominate over the reflexive, visual, and contemplative."[57] He includes similar commentary later in the same volume (252), quoting R. B. Marett, that characterizes black music as "rhythmic" as opposed to "rational," and continues with a psychoanalytical explanation of why children, primitive men, the insane, and others are so attracted to rhythm. Although denying the existence of race as a concept, Ortiz still suggests that the shape of blacks' heads, mouths, noses, and lips allow them to sing more resonantly and produce unique sounds ([1950] 1965, 162, 449). Other passages link black/African music, passion, and base instincts, as in this quotation from George T. Basden: "The more one hears African music, the more one is conscious of its vital power. It strikes the most intimate cords in human beings and stimulates their primary instincts . . . Even the white European who has the most basic affinity for music will feel the elemental forces of his nature shaken by the passionate fervor of black musicians, the purveyors of their art" (Ortiz [1950] 1965, 154).[58]

Elsewhere, Ortiz depicts blacks as hypersexual: "If music expresses love, none like African music offers us its carnal songs and steamy sensuality, sometimes accompanied by rhythmic, diabolical lasciviousness and culminating in orgasmic convulsion" (Ortiz [1950] 1965, 158).[59] Quoting the work of early psychoanalyst Charles Prudhomme, he notes that the frequent increases in tempo and volume in Afro-descendant musical events are "symbolically primitive and sexual" (Ortiz [1950] 1965, 292), reminiscent of intercourse. However, Ortiz's most extended statement on the subject of black music/dance and sexuality from the 1940s and 1950s asserts that African-influenced dance is not as sexual as it appears, that it must be understood aesthetically on its own terms, and that only as a result of commercial bastardization in cabarets and related contexts has it become obscene (Ortiz [1951] 1981, 238–58).

Ortiz's notions of race in the mid-twentieth century increasingly aligned with those of the modern social sciences, as noted, yet multiple statements

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o semiconscientes; para él lo emocional pesa más que el razonamiento lógico." The Westermann book cited is *The African To-Day and Tomorrow* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 40.

[57] Ortiz (1950) 1965, 162.

[58] "Cuando más oye uno la música africana, más adquiere uno la conciencia de su vital poder. Ella hiere las cuerdas más intimas del ser humano y estimula sus instintos primarios . . . Aun el blanco europeo, si tiene en él la más humilde susceptibilidad por la música, sentirá las elementales fuerzas de su naturaleza extrañamente sacudidas por el apasionado fervor de los músicos negros, posesos de su arte." The quote is taken from Basden's *Among the Ibos of Nigeria* (London: J. B. Lippincott [1921] 1938), 192–93.

[59] "Si la música brota del amor, ninguna como la de Africa le brindará sus sones carnales y sus cálidos sensualismos, a veces ritmados con la lascivia diabólica hasta el paroxismo orgásmico." This tendency was even more pronounced in the 1930s: see his defense of the prominence of images of buttocks (*nalgas*) in *afrocubanista* poetry as discussed in "Los últimos versos mulatos," *Revista bimestre cubana* 35, no. 3 (May–June 1935): 328; and references to black secular street music as "of the most repugnant salaciousness" (Ortiz 1934, "De la música afrocubana," 122).

suggest he continued to view *culture* through an evolutionist lens and believed it developed in a fairly unilinear fashion from savage to complex. Again, his statements on the topic are contradictory and thus difficult to evaluate definitively. He expressed interest in the ultimate origins of all music and the global history of its development since prehistoric times, a common theme in nineteenth-century literature. He conceived of such "primeval" music and dance as derived from imitation of the sounds of nature, with roots in religious-magical rites (León 1981, 13).[60] Consider the following quotation that suggests African/Afro-Cuban music is in an "initial phase" of development characterized by a heavy focus on rhythm and that it needs to be improved or further developed through a greater focus on rationality and intellect. This sort of argument links Ortiz's writing and that of many of his contemporaries to temporalized, hierarchical notions of culture with roots in colonial dominance, famously theorized by Johannes Fabian as a denial of coevalness (Fabian 1983, 31).

> These forms of black music and poetry basically derive from their emotionalism and magical essence. In order for a people to surpass this primary stage of strong rhythmic expression, it is necessary for them to intellectualize more and more, responding through expressions of reason more than affective impulses. African peoples are still profoundly submerged in a haze of magic and mythology. As their religion evolves, the wizard or priest who speaks with the divine will have more faith in compelling sentences [rather than short, frequently nonsensical phrases]. The rhythm of the music, the mimetic dance, and the repetitive ritual formulas will begin to shorten and become more direct forms of sentimental or persuasive prayer, "scientific" magic; that is, innovative and rational forms of expression. (Ortiz [1950] 1965, 299–300)[61]

On the other hand, Ortiz was aware of arguments against evolutionism as a model and endeavored to incorporate such views into his later work. "I am not unaware," he states, "that studies and analysis of the music of 'our historical contemporaries' must be undertaken with caution. So-called 'primitive' cultures cannot necessarily be considered antecedents of other more civilized ones that could be viewed as chronologically 'secondary' or 'subsequent'" (Ortiz [1950] 1965, 106).[62] The author continues with an extended quote by German musicologist Fritz Bose emphasizing that all cultures do not develop in a unilinear fashion from simple to complex and that the cultures of so-called primitives have their own histories that are just as intricate as our own.

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[60] The relevant passage from the León is as follows: "Ortiz se adscribió a las teorías ochocentistas que plantearon, no importa cuán lejano en la historia de la humanidad, el surgimiento de un hecho: música, que comenzaría como canto, como ritmo o golpeteos corporales, de imitación a sonidos y ruidos [de] la naturaleza."

[61] The original text: "Esos caracteres de la música y la poesía de los negros dependen básicamente de su emocionalismo y de su espíritu mágico. Para que los pueblos superen esa etapa primaria del fuerte ritmismo en sus expresiones, es necesario que se vayan intelectualizando más y más, dando sus respuestas por obra del raciocinio más que por impulso sentimental. Los pueblos negros de África todavía están profundamente sumergidos en las brumas de la magia y de la mitología. A medida que evoluciona la religión, y el mago o sacerdote que habla con el numen confía más en la oración convincente que en el conjuro coactivo, el ritmo de la música y la danza mimética y las formulas reiterativas de los ritos se van trocando en la deprecación directa, sentimental o persuasiva, y en la magia 'científica' o sea de formas experimentales y racionales."

Ortiz's struggle to reconcile relativistic views of culture (influenced by the writings of Franz Boas) with his more established frames of reference involving cultural evolutionism resulted in ongoing conceptual tensions. He states in *La africanía,* for instance, that black music is "much more 'backwards' than white music, if we consider it from an evolutionary perspective, but more 'advanced' than that of whites in particular aspects" ([1950] 1965, 107),[63] the latter an apparent reference to rhythm and percussion. Ortiz elsewhere describes black/African music as characterized by "rustic" scales (112) and "monotonous melodies" (322). Quoting Cyril Claridge, he offers the following backhanded compliment: "Considering what black Africans are and the environment in which they live, the value of their music is as impressive, relatively, as the creations of the great masters employing perfected instruments" (Ortiz [1950] 1965, 154–55).[64]

The difficulty Ortiz experienced reconciling his evolutionary views with cultural relativism helps explain how he can both call for the valorization and study of Afro-Cuban music, on the one hand, and associate it at times with almost infantile expression on the other. In stressing the close ties between music, dance, and poetry among Afro-Cubans, for instance, he noted in an essay from the mid-1930s: "That sort of linkage is typical of music as it first emerges, among savages and among children, and among black Africans. It is also typical of popular Cuban music, almost all of which has been profoundly influenced by descendants of the black continent."[65] As mentioned, an emphasis on rhythm rather than on European-style tonal harmony suggested music of an earlier developmental stage to Ortiz, a lack of sophistication. Similarly, he viewed much black religious music and dance as representative of an earlier phase of development in that it involved mimesis, what to him were primitive acts of replication (León 1981, 14). Ortiz believed that the influence of European religions would gradually "clear a path toward freer, superior forms of conceiving of and relating to the supernatural"[66] among Afro-Cubans, as well as their artistic means of expressing such beliefs. In *La africanía*, he is perhaps most overt in asserting that African cultural development lagged behind that of Europe by hundreds of years.

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[62] "No ignoramos que los estudios y aprovechamientos de la música de 'nuestros contemporáneos históricos' han de hacerse con cautela. No siempre pueden considerarse las culturas llamadas 'primitivas' como antecedentes necesarios de las que por más civilizadas se podrían tomar por cronológicamente 'secundarias' o 'ulteriores.'"

[63] "Mucho más 'atrasada' que la de los blancos, si la consideramos en las perspectivas de una evolución, pero más 'avanzada' que la de éstos en algunos de sus valores."

[64] "Considerando lo que el negro africano es y el ambiente en que vive, los méritos de su música son tan maravillosos, relativamente, como las producciones de los grandes maestros mediante los instrumentos muy perfeccionados." The quote comes from G. Cyril Claridge's *Black Bush Tribes of Africa* (London: Seeley, Service, & Co., 1922), 222–23.

[65] Ortiz 1934, "De la música afrocubana," 124. "Así sucede con la música en sus primeros progresos, con la de los salvajes y los niños, con la de los negros africanos, y también con la popular cubana, que ha sido casi toda influida hondamente por los hijos del continente etiópico."

> African music lacks the technical and instrumental possibilities that European music has today. Considering it from an evolutionist perspective, Kirby has said, referring to the music of certain Bantu peoples, that when they initiated their contact with occidental music it was comparable to European music as it existed in the tenth and eleventh centuries. They [African musics and their culture] are merely a few steps behind. And it is not deluded to say that white music, despite its sublime creations, still lacks certain possibilities achieved by blacks. European- and African-derived musics are at different levels, used for different social functions, and expressed in different vocabularies too. But both possess universal appeal and individual merits (Ortiz [1950] 1965, 154).[67]

Ortiz strove for a deeper appreciation and valorization of Afro-Cuban music as it existed, but ultimately hoped that conservatory-trained composers would transform it over time, using it as the raw material for a truly "universal" form of music based on European models. On various occasions he applauded the experiments of (primarily white) composers such as

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[66] Ortiz 1939, "La cubanidad y los negros," 13, "le abre paso más desembarazado hacia formas más superiores y libres de concebir y tratar lo sobrenatural."

[67] "Indudablemente, la música africana carece de las posibilidades técnicas, instrumentales, que hoy tiene la música europea. Considerándola de una perspectiva evolucionista, Kirby ha dicho, refiriéndose a la música de ciertos pueblos bantús, que cuando se inició su contacto con la música occidental, era comparable a la europea tal como ésta era en los siglos XI y X. No se trata en esto sino de pasos de distancia. Y no es iluso afirmar que la música blanca, a pesar de sus sublimes creaciones, aún carece de ciertas posibilidades logradas por los negros. Son músicas en niveles distintos, para funciones sociales distintas, y expresadas en lenguajes distintos también; pero todas poseen valores de captación universal y sus méritos particulares." Ortiz has various references to Kirby in his bibliography and does not specify a source for the quote; it apparently comes from Kirby 1934, 137. The original text reads: "They [the Bantus] were, so to speak, in the state of development in which the greater part of Europe appears to have been about the ninth or tenth centuries."

Alejandro García Caturla, Ernesto Lecuona, Amadeo Roldán, Moisés Simons, and Gilberto Valdés to produce "modern Afro-Cuban music" toward that end.[68] Citing the writings of African American philosopher Alain Locke, Ortiz suggested that what Cuba needed was to produce formally trained black musicians who were both familiar with traditional/popular music and capable of incorporating its influences into symphonic works, much as William Grant Still had done in the United States. He believed that the "mestizo genius" of local Cuban composers would allow them to infuse their music "with classical resonances by means of technical mastery, daring feats of novelty, and the embrace of universal aesthetic values, without losing its authentic patriotic message (Ortiz [1950] 1965, 141)."[69] Ortiz never explicitly defines his use of "universal" in this context, but elsewhere implies that the term involves the adoption of Euroclassical paradigms. Consider the following passage citing composer Edgardo Martín, for instance, with a decidedly elitist tone.

> The presence of Cuban music in universal forms of art has been a conscious preoccupation in recent years . . . it was no longer possible to continue conforming to a style of overly abstract universalism,[70] nor to reduce Cuban expression to the formula of a short work,[71] or to the mere manifestation of popular art forms. Who, giving the matter any thought, does not believe that the wellsprings of our popular music do not contain excellent material with which to create the highest universal monuments? (Ortiz [1950] 1965, 142)[72]

Although Ortiz perceived value in all forms of Afro-Cuban expression, he had greatest enthusiasm for the creations of formally trained composers with the ability to "raise Afro-Cuban music to supreme heights" ([1950] 1965, 139). To Ortiz, Afro-descendant music needed to be preserved and studied but also strengthened, elevated, and "technified" (140). He thus called for the

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68. See "Afro-Cuban Music," *Inter-American Quarterly* 1 (1939): 66.
69. "Llevar su inspirada música a resonancias clásicas por su maestría técnica, por su atrevimiento novedoso, por sus valores estéticos universales y sin perder su genuino mensaje patrio." Commentary by and about Alain Locke and William Grant Still appears in the same work, pp. 139–140.
70. An apparent reference to serialism and other forms of modernist composition.
71. An apparent reference to short nineteenth-century forms of nationalistic music in Cuba based on the *danza* and *contradanza*, by composers such as Ignacio Cervantes and Manuel Saumell.
72. "La presencia de Cuba en el arte universal ha sido en los últimos años una preocupación consciente . . . ni era posible continuar apegados a un universalismo demasiado abstracto, ni reducir lo cubano a la fórmula de una obra pequeña, o al simple hecho del arte popular. ¿Quién, que se haya detenido a meditar, no piensa que en las fuentes de nuestra música popular hay una cantera riquísima de donde tomar una materia excelente con que elevar los más altos monumentos universales?"

creation of a new concert tradition, infused with aesthetic influences from the masses: "Our Afro-Cuban 'classical' music is still in the bud and awaits a Glinka who made Russian music bloom, or a Liszt or a Brahms, a Dvorak or a Smetena, someone to do in Cuba what they accomplished [by means of traditional musical elements] in Hungary and Bohemia" (141).[73]

Ortiz is generally known for his richly descriptive historical and ethnographic work rather than for theoretical concepts, but authors in various disciplines have adopted his concept of transculturation that first appeared in *Contrapunteo cubano* ("Cuban Counterpoint," 1940).[74] In that book Ortiz states, "I have chosen the word *transculturation* to express the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place here . . . The real history of Cuba is the history of its intermeshed transculturations" (Ortiz [1940] 1995, 98). He defines the process as an intense, complex, unbroken series of cultural and social interactions among distinct groups, all in a state of transition (Ortiz [1940] 1995, 103). The groups include indigenous Cubans before and after the conquest, white immigrants from Spain and Western Europe, enslaved Africans, and migrants from China, North America, and elsewhere. Ortiz proposed transculturation as an alternative to Melville Herskovits's term *acculturation*, first discussed in the article "A Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation" from 1936 and jointly authored with Robert Redfield and Ralph Linto (Garcia 2014, 7; Herskovits 1936). Many authors of the period characterized the process of acculturation as unilinear, a flow of cultural influence from the dominant to the dominated, and through such analysis implied the superiority and enduring influence of Western cultures. Ortiz objected to that characterization; he believed his term better captured the multidirectional processes of culture contact and that it served to undermine the hierarchical cultural/racial discourses circulating in Europe at the time. He corresponded with Malinowski and Herskovits and both expressed interest in his alternate terminology.[75] Ultimately, however, Ortiz's term *transculturation* did not prove nearly as influential as *acculturation* among English-speaking academics, in part because the latter as initially conceived by Herskovits also implied a multidirectional process of exchange and did not presume a unilinear flow of European-derived culture to others (Yelvington 2006, 71–72). The fact that Herskovits originally published his theories in English, disseminated them within established first-world academic circles, and received the early endorsement of the American Anthropological Association also undoubtedly contributed to their greater acceptance.

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[73] "Nuestra música afrocubana 'clásica' ya está en capullo y espera un Glinka como el que hizo florecer la música rusa, o un Liszt o un Brahms, un Dvorak o un Smetana, que hagan en Cuba lo que ellos en Hungría o en Bohemia."

[74] One prominent example of the concept's influence is its use by Uruguayan literary critic Ángel Rama in the book *Transculturación Narrativa en América Latina* from 1982.

[75] Thanks to David Garcia for sharing copies of correspondence between Ortiz and Herskovits in October 1940 that attests to these changes. See also Malinowski's introduction to *Cuban Counterpoint* that includes a favorable evaluation of transculturation (Malinowski [1940] 1995, lvii–lxiv).

In *Cuban Counterpoint* (Ortiz [1940] 1995, 102–3), Ortiz suggested that transculturation be conceived of as an umbrella term for various stages associated with culture contact such as deculturation (the loss or uprooting of a previous culture), acculturation (the adoption of new cultural forms), and neoculturation (the emergence of entirely new practices resulting from cultural fusion). Additionally, Ortiz adopted the terms *metastasis* (the movement of cultural forms between social classes) and *metalepsis* (the use of cultural forms in new contexts by the same social class, such as the incorporation of sacred elements in secular events).[76] A later essay, "Por la integración cubana de blancos y negros" (1943) elaborated further on the dynamics of transculturation on the part of culturally divided societies, modifying theories initially published in R. C. Thurnwald's *Black and White in East Africa* (1935). The stages of the transculturative process discussed in the 1943 essay include (1) initial hostility toward new cultural influences on the part of the dominated, (2) a transient stage of reluctant acceptance, (3) a stage of adaptation and the rejection of earlier cultural practices, (4) a stage of gradual recuperation and renewed appreciation for cultural forms that have been lost, and (5) a final stage of equitable integration and harmony among distinct influences. Ortiz suggested that Cuba was entering the fourth phase, beginning to valorize its African heritage, and had yet to arrive at the fifth (265). In addition to applying the concept of transculturation to his study of sugar and tobacco in *Cuban Counterpoint*, he used it in a 1952 essay (Ortiz 1952a) on the history of Arab war drums, their adoption by the Spanish military, and their eventual use by black performers in nineteenth-century Cuban dance bands.[77]

Various authors have argued that Ortiz's concept of transculturation has helped refine conceptions of national culture in the Caribbean, Latin America, and beyond. In addition to transcending previous essentialist definitions of Latin American heritage as imposed by North American or European authors, or local elites, Palmié (2013, 97) notes that the transculturative model suggests constant cultural/social adaptation and change as fundamental elements of New World experience rather than hybridity per se. The notion of transculturation rejects racial or ethnic purity; instead, it suggests that cultural forms identified as African, European, or Latin American

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76. Iznaga (1989, 79–80) provides a useful overview of Ortiz's use of these terms.

77. Ortiz, "La transculturación negra de los tambores de blancos," *Archivos venezolanos de folklore* año 1, no. 2 (July–Dec 1952), 235–65.

change over time and are perceived differently according to the contingencies of particular historical periods (Castellanos and Castellanos 1994, 32). Ortiz's focus on relational, shifting meanings and cultural dialogics can be read as a form of early postmodernism (Benítez-Rojo 1996, 150–76). With its emphasis on "permanent cultural construction" and transitory or fragmentary identities rather than homogeneous cultures, it suggests an epistemological antecedent to the work of anthropologists such as James Clifford and Dennis Tedlock (Rojas 2005, 69). Insightfully, Pavez Ojeda's more critical analysis (2016, 234) posits that the concept of transculturation disavowing racial purity exists in tension in Ortiz's writings with the somewhat contradictory belief that diverse elements of Cuban culture were in a "pure" form prior to contact.

Ortiz's Fieldwork and Collaborations

Among the unanswered questions surrounding Fernando Ortiz's publications are exactly when and where he conducted fieldwork to gather information for them, who helped him with his research, and what information they provided. Most of Ortiz's books and essays make no reference to specific locations he observed music making or to the informants he worked with. To the extent that fieldwork is mentioned, it tends to appear in commentary such as in the following passage, discussing his investigations in the 1910s.

> At the time I had the misfortune to get involved with politics, and over those ten or so years I became very well known and reasonably popular. Every time I went to the neighborhoods of Marianao, Regla, Guanabacoa, and certain other Havana neighborhoods in search of cabildos, Santería houses, Abakuá *plantes*, comparsa or clave bands, dances, drum sessions, and centers where ancestral traditions of the black world had been preserved, I heard new and curious interpretations of my persistent inquiries (Ortiz 1943, 261).[78]

The lack of reference to specific sites and informants is typical of much early ethnographic work of this period. It may derive in some cases from a low estimation of individual performers' points of view and/or their relevance to the broader purpose of the study. In Ortiz's case, I believe such omissions resulted in part from a long-standing interest in the stages of development he associated with Afro-Cuban religion, dance, and music that shifted his focus away from individual actors. In his best-known later publications, Ortiz links particular forms of black art to possible antecedent forms in Africa and discusses the mimetic nature of many kinds of black African dances in religious contexts, as well as other characteristics. His focus on broad tendencies rather than on specific instances of performance gives much of his analysis a timeless, ungrounded feel, a sense that it is lost in a normative "ethnographic present" (Sanjek 1991). This is true of organological publications as well in which discussion of instrument measurements and construction takes precedence over the social contexts of performance (Pavez Ojeda 2016, 211). Ortiz's approach to musical research in this sense results in rather apolitical scholarship that largely avoids issues of agency or the meanings of black expression within the black community itself. Much as in the case of Herskovits, Ortiz seems to have consciously divorced the bulk of his writing on black culture in the 1940s and 1950s from discussions of ongoing racial oppression or violence. His most forceful statements on the latter topics come in separate publications.

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[78] "Por entonces tuve yo la malaventura de meterme en política y durante aquellos diez o doce años, ya muy conocido y con cierta popularidad, cada vez que iba por Marianao, Regla, Guanabacoa y por ciertos barrios habaneros en excursión exploradora de cabildos, santerías, plantes, comparsas, claves, bailes, toques y demás núcleos donde sobreviven las ancestrales tradiciones del mundo negro, oía yo alguna nueva y curiosa interpretación de mis persistentes averiguaciones."

At least by 1909, Ortiz was already attending Afro-Cuban religious ceremonies. He mentions in an essay written that year (Ortiz [1913] 1987, 93) that the day before he "had the pleasure of attending a religious event of a Lucumí[79] cult, celebrated in Havana," and was accompanied by two university colleagues and two government officials.[80] By 1911, he had established close personal relations with Santería religious leader Fernando Guerra and members of the Lucumí Society Saint Rita de Casia and Saint Lazarus, and the Saint Barbara Mutual Aid Society, repeatedly visiting their houses of worship and participating in ritual activities (Palmié 2002, 250–54). Ortiz became so comfortable at Afro-Cuban religious events subsequently that he would dance alongside devotees, sit on the ground to eat ritual meals, and drink *aguardiente* from gourd ladles "like the *santeros*" (Torregrosa in Calvo et al. 1969).

Stephan Palmié's recent work (2013) contains a fascinating account of the extent to which Ortiz's informants on Afro-diasporic heritage influenced the focus of his research from its earliest years, and how his publications effectively helped create and reify our current understandings of Yoruba heritage and Afro-Cuban religion. Palmié describes how the notion of a Yoruba people (associated with the ancient Oyo empire) was itself the largely fictive creation of individuals in Nigeria and Sierra Leone who developed it as part of nation-building projects. Ortiz adopted the notion of Yoruba culture after being exposed to it in Nina Rodrígues's writings, themselves molded by key informants of his who traveled between Salvador, Bahia, and Lagos (Palmié 2013, 54) and by African nationalist historians such as Samuel Johnson. The notion of Yoruba heritage did not exist in Cuba in the early twentieth century. Individuals we now associate with the Yoruba referred to themselves as Lucumí, an ambivalent referent with countless variants and imprecise geographic origins. Religious leaders created centers of Lucumí religious practice in the nineteenth century and invited community members of diverse ethnic origins to participate, not merely those of a specific origin. The term "Lucumí" was only replaced by "Yoruba" in early twentieth-century Cuba and elsewhere, a process Palmié (2013, 45) describes as "meta-ethnic consolidation." The growing influence of Ortiz's own writings and his acceptance of the term had much to do with that trend.

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[79] An adjective used to reference Yoruba heritage in Cuba, as well as Santería, a religion with historical ties to religious practices in Nigeria and neighboring countries in West Africa.

[80] Clearly, by 1909, he had learned to distinguish between Yoruba- and Kongo-derived traditions; the two are occasionally conflated in his earliest works.

Several of Ortiz's key early informants had sociopolitical agendas of their own. They undertook a campaign to define Lucumí/Yoruba devotional practice as a religion in the Western sense in order to avoid persecution and to achieve greater freedom of expression, such as the right to play drums publicly. Regla de Ocha[81] priests Fernando Guerra and Silvestre Erice, for instance, sought out Ortiz in about 1909, making an attempt to confront the person who had written *Los negros brujos* and who had thereby unleashed a wave of police violence on their houses of worship. They invited Ortiz to their spiritual center, the Lucumí Society Saint Rita de Casia and Saint Lazarus, along with other journalists, foreign visitors, even decidedly antagonistic police inspectors such as Rafael Roche Monteagudo in an attempt to challenge the stereotypes surrounding their beliefs and rituals (Palmié 2013, 54). Ortiz visited their religious site frequently, and by 1911 began to offer them legal advice on how to argue for the right to use batá drums in the courts. By offering to serve as Ortiz's informants, Guerra and Erice effectively used his public authority to their advantage.

A few academic publications, as well as essays by Ortiz himself, mention some of the many other locations Ortiz visited subsequently as part of field research. In the Havana area these included the cabildo Changó Tedún on San Nicolas St. where he observed batá drumming by Eduardo Salakó and Alatuán, and *chekeré* performers, among others;[82] the cabildo of Remigio Herrera-Adechina and his daughter Francisca (Pepa) Herrera-Echu Bí in Regla (Palmié 2013, 56); the Abakuá society Ebión Efó in the neighborhood of Pogolotti, where he apparently observed ceremonies in the company of composer Amadeo Roldán (Pavez Ojeda 2016, 215); and a society of *babalaos*[83] called The Children of St. Francis of Assisi in Regla.[84] In the Matanzas area Ortiz observed fiestas de Olokum in the home of Fermina Gómez and Arará drums in the Cabildo Espíritu Santo and went to Esteban Baró's house in Jovellanos.[85] In provinces of Cuba farther to the east, he attended *cordón de orilé* ceremonies at La Antorcha del Camino in Bayamo;[86] the Cabildo Congo "Enkoria Katua" in Remedios, where he observed *kinfuiti* drums;[87] and a cabildo of Musundi Kongos in Las Villas province, Sagua la Grande, the Kunalambo Cabildo (much information in Chapter 3 on *makuta* drums and in Chapter 7 appears to come from this location; see Guiteras Holmes 1965, 7; Pavez Ojeda 2016, 228); and in western Cuba he went to the Orozco sugar plantation in Pinar del Río. Although Ortiz conducted most of his work in Havana, and it remains unclear how often he undertook fieldwork elsewhere, his explorations clearly extended across the entire island. Much fieldwork in other provinces seems to have taken place on weekends in the company of Raúl Díaz and Trinidad Torregrosa in the years immediately following the first presentation of batá drums in the Campoamor Theater (Guiteras Holmes 1965, 7; León 1981, 20). Ortiz typically paid informants for their information and interviews.

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[81] Literally, "rule of the orishas," another term for Santería.

[82] See Ortiz 1952c, 133; Ortiz 1952d, 278–79; Ortiz 1965, 363. The latter source mentions that his visits to the cabildo took place in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Ortiz developed close personal friendships with many performers and Afro-Cuban religious figures, yet not all those he worked with (or attempted to work with) liked him. This was especially true in early years, when members of the Afro-Cuban community recalled his close ties to police actions and a judicial system intent on disrupting Afro-diasporic religious practices. Even in later years, individuals such as Esteban Baró described Ortiz to anthropologist William Bascom as a usurper of Afro-Cuban religion, urging Bascom not to share any information with him (Garcia 2014, 21). Alberto Yenkins in Matanzas was critical of Ortiz's scholarship, noting that he had paid someone in Matanzas $4,000 for information on the batá drums and had managed to get his facts wrong.[88] Other informants held similarly negative views. Even protégé and collaborator Rómulo Lachatañeré, discussed below, had an ambivalent view of Ortiz's scholarship because of the tenor of his early publications on Santería (ibid., 12–13, 21–23). In fairness, however, many religious figures such as Arcadio Calvo and Emilio O'Farrill had a decidedly positive view of Ortiz and his scholarship.

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[83] *A babalao* is a male priest in the *Santería* religion.

[84] See Ortiz 1952d, 283. These individuals may have included Eulogio Rodríguez-Tata Gaitán and Guillermo Castro, mentioned by Palmié (2013, 56) as principal informants.

[85] María Elena Vinueza, personal e-mail communication, June 7, 2013. See also Herminio Portell Vilá's reference to his and Ortiz's visit to Jovellanos in brief articles from the *Archivos del folklore cubano* (Portell Vilá 1928, 1929).

[86] Ortiz, "Las espirituales 'Cordoneros del Orilé.'" *Bohemia* año 42, no. 5 (January 1950): 20.

[87] Ortiz 1950b, 20.

[88] It is possible that some of Yenkins's reaction may have derived from discrepancies between batá practice in Havana and in Matanzas.

In addition to undertaking short field excursions, Ortiz conducted frequent interviews with religious leaders and performers and collaborated with other folklorists and musicologists in his home. Thus, much information in his final publications comes from interviews and/or the statements of others rather than firsthand observation.[89] The extensive notes Ortiz took during such interview sessions in notebooks and on file cards are currently housed at the Instituto de Literatura y Lingüística in Havana (ILL; formerly the Sociedad Económica del Amigos del País) and remain at least partially uncataloged.[90] His earliest informants included older individuals born in Africa who had survived into the twentieth century (León 1981, 20). Much of the information he collected about batá drums and Santería ceremony came from a few specific performers with whom he developed a close friendship in the in the 1930s such as Trinidad Torregrosa (1893–1977) and Pablo Roche, also known as "Akilakuá" ("Powerful Arm," 1890–1957). Their names and photos appear frequently in his publications.[91] Torregrosa's collaboration began with his recitation of all the Santería vocal repertoire he knew for purposes of transcription. Ortiz showed draft text about drumming traditions to Torregrosa and others, incorporating their suggestions and edits (Barnet 1965, 18; Pavez Ojeda 2016, 224–26). As of the 1930s, Raúl Díaz "Nasakó"[92] (1915–?) served as an important source of information about Afro-Cuban heritage as well (see Figure I.1). Díaz played tuba in a municipal band in addition to performing on Afro-Cuban drums and thus knew how to read Western music notation. He helped create many of the transcriptions found in Ortiz's later works (León 1981, 23).[93] The youngest of Ortiz's principal drummer-informants, Díaz became indispensable to his

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[89] Victoria Eli Rodríguez, personal e-mail communication, July 29, 2013.

[90] Stephan Palmié (personal communication, January 3, 2017) notes that María del Rosario Díaz helped organize some of the materials in the Ortiz collection during her many years at the ILL. She now works at the Centro de Antropología.

[91] See, for instance, Ortiz (1950) 1965, 368, 373; Ortiz 1952d, 231. Palmié (2002, 253) notes that both Torregrosa and Roche performed regularly in the Regla-based religious centers of Josefina "Pepa" Herrera and Susana Cantero; Ortiz frequented these locations in his search for information about Afro-descendant religions and first came to know Pérez, Torregrosa, and other drummers such as Aguedo Hinojosa in that context (Pavez Ojeda 2016, 219).

[92] In Abakuá mythology, Nasakó was a powerful shaman and guardian of the secret language of the Abakuá. See Cabrera 1988, 377; León 1984, 87; and Chapter 9 of this volume. Nasakó is also a ritual title within Abakuá groups, indicating that Díaz was an initiate and held this position.

[93] A picture appears in Ortiz 1965, 369, of Ortiz together with Gaspar Agüero, Raúl Díaz, Giraldo Rodríguez (another batalero), and Trinidad Torregrosa, documenting their collective work. An interesting aside: Pavez Ojeda (2016, 229) has documented a tour of the United States that Díaz, Rodríguez, and Torregrosa undertook in 1952 and that included batá performances in Las Vegas, NV, Evansville, IN, and Washington, DC.

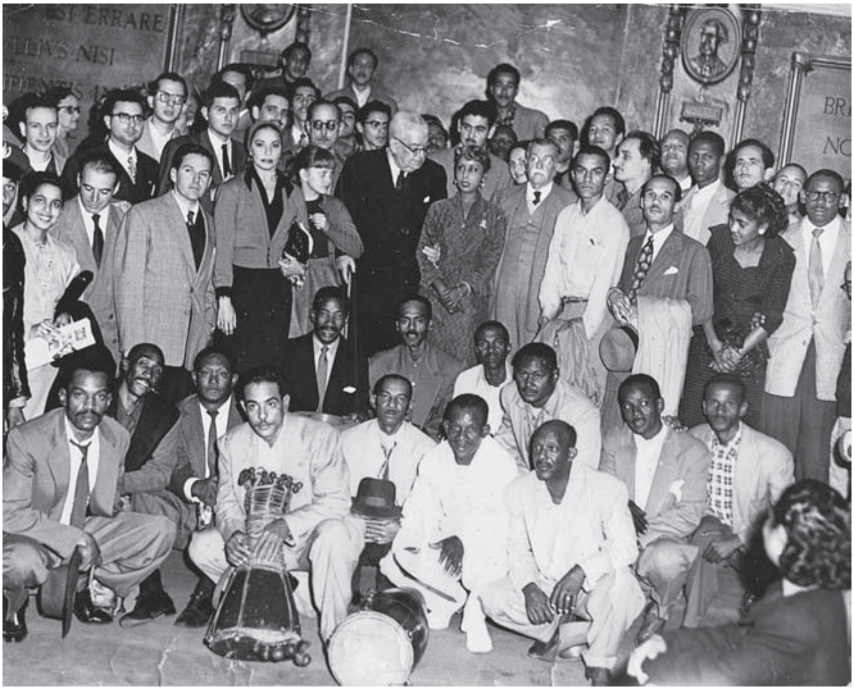

Figure I.1. Photo in the Aula Magna of the University of Havana from the mid-1950s depicting Fernando Ortiz (center, black suit) with many of his collaborators and admirers. To the right of Ortiz stands Merceditas Valdés and next to her Dr. Clemente Inclán, rector of the University of Havana for many years. Next to Ortiz on the left stands his daughter María Fernanda Ortiz and to her left ballet dancer Alicia Alonso. Behind Inclán and to the right in the back row stands painter Wifredo Lam. In the front row (third from left) with the large iyá drum sits Raúl Díaz. To his immediate left is Giraldo Rodríguez, and to his left in the dark jacket is Eugenio de la Rosa. Thanks to Judith Gutiérrez Ganzaraín and María Fernanda Ortiz for providing the image, and to John Santos and Michael Spiro for help identifying the musicians. (Images courtesy of María Fernanda Ortiz, representative of the Ortiz Successors, and edited by Judith Gutiérrez Ganzaraín.)

work. During their most intense periods of collaboration in the 1940s, Torregrosa, Díaz, and others met as often as four times a week in Ortiz's office where blank note cards stood at the ready alongside the Yoruba dictionary of Samuel Crowther. In addition to playing and singing (while drinking whiskey highballs), to facilitate transcriptions, they provided explanations for the actions that Ortiz had observed in religious events (Guiteras Holmes 1965, 7).

Other collaborators included composer and conductor Amadeo Roldán (1900–39) and musicologist Gaspar Agüero (1873–1951). Roldán, a prominent Cuban musician of the early twentieth century, lived and trained in Spain as an adolescent, then moved back to Cuba in 1919. In addition to his work as a composer and conductor, and performances with the Havana Symphony Orchestra, Roldán collaborated with Ortiz on research related to Afro-Cuban drumming, for instance, Abakuá traditions (Ortiz [1950] 1965, 424–26). Such research influenced Roldán's compositions, including his *Obertura sobre temas cubanos*. Agüero began his career in the comic theater and later taught for many years at the National Music Conservatory Hubert de Blanck (Giro 2007, 29; Linares 1997). Like Raúl Díaz, he transcribed short examples of traditional music that were later added to Ortiz's article and book publications, as Ortiz could not read or write music himself. Later, Ortiz also worked with his most eminent musicology student, Argeliers León (1918–91), who accompanied him on research trips and helped him analyze musical elements of Afro-Cuban repertoire.[94] The two met as León participated in summer courses offered by Ortiz at the University of Havana in the 1940s, and thereafter became close friends. Following Ortiz's death, León continued the avenues of research he initiated, conducting research in Africa, publishing articles and books on black Cuban heritage, and promoting it through public performances.

Aside from these musicologists, other collaborators provided information about religious events and local music and dance, though precisely what they shared remains unclear in many cases. One of the most influential was Rómulo Lachatañeré (or Lachataignerais, 1909–51). From eastern Cuba and of Afro-Haitian descent, Lachatañeré trained as a pharmacist, earning his doctorate in Havana in 1929. Alongside the publications of Ortiz and Lydia Cabrera, Lachatañeré's are considered foundational to Afro-Cuban studies (Ortega 2012). His most notable works include *¡¡Oh, mío Yemayá!!* (1938) and *Manual de santería; el sistema de los cultos lucumí* (1942a).[95] A founding member of the of Society of Afro-Cuban Studies, Lachatañeré appears to have been the first to write in detail on Afro-Cuban religious ritual in its totality beginning in 1936, something not even Ortiz had done beforehand (Barreal 1992, xiii). Lachatañeré also published the first analyses of Santería that included the views of practitioners themselves. At the same time, he published on issues of racism and inequality in Cuba[96] and undoubtedly sensitized Ortiz to social issues of that nature as well.

Two important collaborators about whom less is known are Teodoro Díaz Fabelo (1916–?) and Alberto Zayas Govín (1908–83). Born in Regla, Havana, Díaz Fabelo was trained as a schoolteacher. His work with Ortiz focused on the linguistic analysis of Yoruba terminology and of Ifá divination, and he published many important works related to those topics (Díaz Fabelo 1956, 1960, 1988, 1983). Ortiz's papers in the Instituto de Literatura y

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[94] The video documentary *Argeliers* (de la Nuez 2009) discusses this relationship in some detail.

[95] This work first appeared as a series of three articles from 1939 in *Estudios afrocubanos*.

[96] See, for instance, his essay in the *Negro Quarterly* (Lachatañeré 1942b).

Lingüística contain multiple ethnographic notebooks written by Díaz Fabelo, and many note cards in Ortiz's handwriting that begin with the phrase "Fabelo tells me that . . .", suggesting a sustained collaboration between the two.[97] Díaz Fabelo's frustration over the lack of interest in research on Afro-Cuban religions within Cuba, especially after Ortiz's death, led him to emigrate to Venezuela around 1970. Alberto Zayas, "El Melodioso" (The Melodious One, 1908–83), gained fame as a rumba singer and songwriter in the mid-twentieth century and as leader of the Grupo Afrocubano Lulú Yonkori. That ensemble and the Conjunto Alberto Zayas recorded some of the first LPs of traditional rumba beginning in 1956. Zayas collaborated with Ortiz by sharing insights into various styles of Afro-Cuban music and dance and by introducing him to other key informants in Regla. Additionally, Zayas facilitated the first recordings of Abakuá music by Harold Courlander in 1941, later released on Folkways Records as *Cult Music of Cuba* (1951; see also Courlander 1984).

Finally, Merceditas Valdés (1922–96) and Agustín "Flor de Amor" Pina Sánchez[98] deserve mention for helping Ortiz become familiar with the Afro-Cuban vocal repertoire. Both apparently began collaborating with him in the 1920s. A renowned *akpowna* or sacred lead singer, Valdés often performed in Ortiz's home for him as well as in public events (Barnet 1998, 9). Pina Sánchez, lead singer and founder in 1926 of the group Clave y Guaguancó, also performed regularly in Ortiz's home in order to facilitate the study of traditional repertoire.

Selected Works in This Anthology

The works selected for translation provide insights into Ortiz's development as a scholar, document the impressive breadth of his publications in terms of content, and foreground research he conducted in later years that has never been surpassed or expanded upon by others. Many of his writings on specific instruments and on nineteenth-century popular dances and other celebrations are especially valuable in this sense, for instance his essays on makuta drumming, *baile de maní* competitions, and cabildo street processions. Two early essays have been included, one from 1906 and one from

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[97] Thanks to Stephan Palmié for providing much of this background information (personal e-mail communication, July 2, 2015). For a list of Díaz Fabelo's publications, see Moore 2006, 290 (see footnote 20).

[98] Dates of birth and death for Pina Sánchez are unavailable in standard Cuban music dictionaries and encyclopedias. However, filmmaker Sara Gómez published an article on rumba in 1964 with photos of this individual. In them, he appears to be in his late 60s or 70s, which would make his date of birth about 1895. See Sara Gómez, "La rumba," *La revista de Cuba* año 3, no. 32 (December 1964): 58–67.

1921, in order to provide examples of his scholarship at that time. The remainder date from the post-1935 period; four representative essays are on distinct instrument traditions and three others focus on music and dance of the primary African-derived ethnic groups in Cuba: Bantu/Kongo, Yoruba, and Abakuá. A final essay focuses on late nineteenth- and twentieth-century satirical and political song. Whenever possible, we selected essays that were published independently in journals in order to reproduce complete examples of Ortiz's work as originally conceived. Two of the essays (on Kongo heritage and political song) consist of excerpts from *Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba*, however, as Ortiz never published on such topics elsewhere. In those cases, some paragraphs were excised from the original if they deviated significantly from the central focus of discussion.[99] *Los bailes* is generally considered Ortiz's single most important publication today (Barnet and Fernández 1984, 9; Rubin 1998, 5) because of the wealth of original data it contains on Afro-Caribbean heritage, and we hope it and other books by Ortiz will soon be translated in their entirety. Many of Ortiz's countless instrumental essays contain fascinating material and merit translation but were not included for lack of space. A number of his ethnographic essays (on the history of the claves, on Kings' Day celebrations, on the history of the *timbales*, etc.) are excellent candidates for translation as well, as are samples of Ortiz's interview notes and other unpublished materials housed in the Instituto de Literatura y Lingüística in Havana.

The translated essays selected for this volume originally included many photos and musical examples that have not all been reproduced. The original photos were mostly unavailable and the quality of the images in Ortiz's books are often poor and thus difficult to scan. Additionally, the cost of reproducing all photos would have been prohibitive. In the text, our translations do reference where original photographs appear, along with the page number of the original photograph, even if they have not been included so that interested readers can consult them. Some photos that appear in this volume were provided by María Fernanda Ortiz, or by the Instituto de Literatura y Linguística in Havana; others have been included despite their poor quality because of their exceptional content or because they give a feel for the sorts of fieldwork Ortiz was conducting and the groundbreaking nature of his research. Line drawings in Ortiz's publications have been included more consistently since they are easier to scan.

Most of Ortiz's original musical examples were also left out, in part to reduce costs, though their accuracy is now in doubt (they frequently present rhythms and melodies in duple meter that are now typically interpreted in 6/8 or 12/8 time, for instance) and more recent studies, especially of

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[99] As those who have read Ortiz's books are aware, he frequently digresses for paragraphs or pages at a time, in order to explore tangential subjects, then returns to his original topic.

Yoruba-influenced repertoire, have far surpassed Ortiz's earlier efforts in terms of accuracy and detail.[100] Still, footnotes indicate where the original transcriptions appear in the text, should readers wish to consult them. The essays on Kongo-derived traditions reproduce a few musical examples, however, because Ortiz's work still remains one of the few available sources of information on that music. A typical musical example from Ortiz (1965, 272) depicting the batá rhythm *yakotá* (Figure I.2) is reproduced below, followed by a modern rendering of the same rhythm (Figure I.3) in Moore and Sayre (2006, 132, 135–36, 141–48) in order to make clearer the problems surrounding the original transcriptions.[101]

Regarding the prose itself, the contributors have attempted to capture the flavor of Ortiz's early twentieth-century "man of letters" style, a rather florid and at times metaphorically laden form of writing influenced by the Latin American *ensayo* genre in that it aspires to be simultaneously scientific and literary.[102] Sentences tend to be long, with multiple subordinate clauses and extended vocabulary, all of which presents challenges in attempting to create translations that are easily readable in modern English. The translators took some liberty with sentence structure, length, and punctuation, as a result, and have also changed passive constructions to active voice in some cases, but otherwise have tried to remain faithful to the original. Below is a typical sentence from Ortiz's publications, as an example:

> Baile de ceremonia pantomímica muy solemne era el que se ejecutaba en el local del cabildo, que solían denominar *kindembo mpangüe* a la llegada del rey, la reina y su séquito, evocando la pomposa corte que los *congos entótela* o reales tuvieron en su capital *Kongo-Mbanza* allá en el siglo XVI, cuando el cristianizado rey Don Alfonso Nvemba-Nzinga y sus descendientes. (Ortiz [1951] 1981, 390)

A literal translation of the sentence might be rendered this way.

> A solemn, pantomimed, ceremonial dance was performed in the *cabildo* hall upon the arrival of the king, the queen, and their entourage

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[100] For an example of a musical transcription that is clearly mislabeled, see Ortiz (1951) 1981, 294. The chant labeled "A Eleggua" is actually a devotional song to Oggún, and, in fact, the word Oggún appears in the second-to-last measure of the transcription. For examples of recent transcriptions of batá drum rhythms that far surpass Ortiz's in terms of accuracy and complexity, see, for instance, Amira and Cornelius 1992; Summers and Duran 2007; and Schweitzer 2015. In the case of religious chants, see Altmann 1998.

[101] As an additional example, compare the chant to Elegguá as transcribed in Ortiz (1951) 1981, 299–300, with the version in Altmann 1998, 15.

[102] For further insights into the Latin American ensayo, see José Luis Gómez-Martínez's *Teoría del ensayo*, http://www.ensayistas.org/critica/ensayo/gomez/indice.htm (accessed May 11, 2017).

Toque "Ya-ko-tá", de varios ORICHAS.

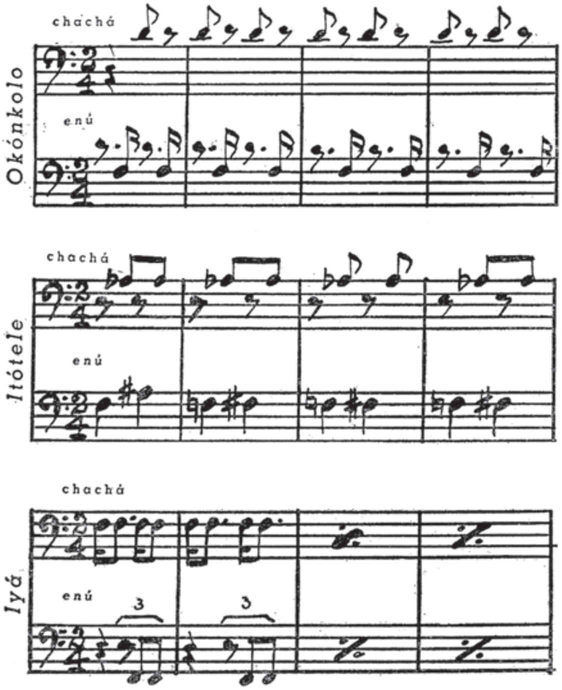

Figura 19.—Toque lucumí a varios *orichas*, con un pentagrama para cada una de las seis membranas de los tambores *batá*.

Figure I.2. A transcription of the *yakotá* rhythm as reproduced in Fernando Ortiz's *La africanía de la música folklórica de Cuba*. The term *enú* refers to the larger drum head of each instrument, and *chachá* to the smaller head. Note the setting in 2/4 time, typical of many musical transcriptions in his books; it does not accurately convey the fundamentally triple-meter, polyrhythmic feel of most Afro-Cuban ritual drumming.

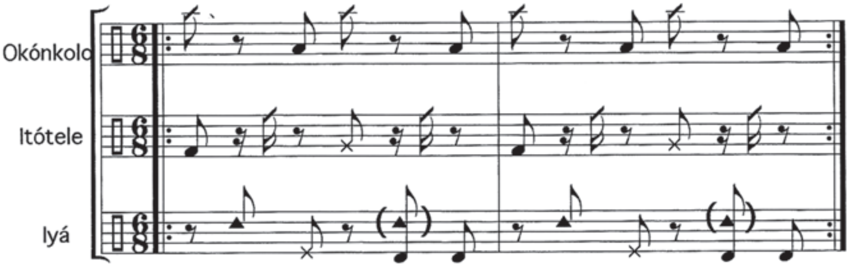

Figure I.3. A more modern transcription of the same *yakotá* rhythm as reproduced in Moore and Sayre (2006, 136), with lower and higher drum head patterns for each instrument written together on the same staff line. Note that the *iyá* or low drum pattern is quite different from that in the original Ortiz transcription, as is the *okónkolo* or high drum; and the *okónkolo's* pattern begins with its high note rather than the low note as it does in Ortiz's version, which is an incorrect characterization (the chachá of the Okónkolo typically marks strong beats and coincides with the beginning of *clave*). Thus, both the transcription of many rhythms in the original Ortiz publications and their relationship to other notated rhythms do not reflect standard performance practices today.

> known as kindembo *mpangüe*, evoking the pageantry that royal (or *entótela*) Kongos organized in the capital of Kongo-Mbanza in the sixteenth century during the reign of their Christianized king Don Alfonso Nvemba-Nzinga and his descendants.

In our translation, we write the passage as two sentences and in active voice for purposes of clarity:

> The *cabildo* (black mutual aid society) organized solemn, pantomimed ceremonial dances upon the arrival of the king and queen of the *cabildo* and their entourage that members referred to as *kindembo mpangüe*. Dance events re-created the pageantry that royal (or *entótela*) Kongos organized in the capital of Kongo-Mbanza in the sixteenth century, during the reign of their Christianized king Don Alfonso Nvemba-Nzinga and his descendants.

Similarly, we chose to avoid Ortiz's frequent use of quotation marks to denote slang terms with specific local usage. An example of this tendency is found in the following sentence (Ortiz [1951] 1981, 419): "Los cantos con frecuencia se improvisaban y cada 'gallo' lanzaba a su antojo sus 'puyas' y fanfarronadas que enardecían a los rivales." The sentence might be literally translated as: "The songs were frequently improvised and each '*gallo*' ['rooster' or lead singer] lashed out whenever he cared to with his 'puya' [literally, 'goad or pointed stick,' i.e., vocal taunt] and boasting so as to infuriate his rivals." We chose a freer form of translation in active voice that involved reprinting less foreign terminology (though, of course, any terms appearing multiple times are defined in footnotes and in the Glossary): "The *gallo* or lead singer often improvised his songs and freely lashed out whenever he cared to with his *puya* (sung taunts) and boasting so as to infuriate his rivals."

Footnotes included in the translations represent comments both by the translators and by Ortiz himself. Those written by Ortiz are followed by "[F.O.]" to indicate their authorship. Whenever possible, we have added complete references to citations of authors that Ortiz did not provide. Works cited by Ortiz himself appear as a complete reference in the footnotes upon first mention and in shortened form thereafter, while those cited by the translators appear in author-date citation format and are fully referenced in the final reference list at the end of the book.

We have modified Ortiz's use of italics: now, foreign terms used repeatedly appear in italics only upon first usage, thereafter in normal script. Terms specific to local Cuban usage (*arará, bozal, lucumí,* etc.) are either defined in a footnote or glossed in the text with an explanatory footnote making clear the term Ortiz originally used. Foreign terms that appear three or more times in the text are included in the glossary as well. The editor's notes comment on any erroneous or incomplete information in Ortiz's original text and provide background information on contemporary events or personalities in Cuba and Latin America with which readers may be unfamiliar. We have attempted to provide at least partial translations of African-derived phrases or song lyrics based on more recent linguistic and musical scholarship (Cabrera 1970, 1988, 2001; Mason 1992, etc.), even if Ortiz did not do so himself. It must be stressed (as Ortiz did himself) that the translation of Afro-diasporic praise songs is exceedingly difficult, as the texts are frequently metaphorical and open to multiple interpretations. Afro-descendant terminology is far from standard as well, as it has existed largely in oral tradition for generations. Finally, many chants make oblique references to stories about the *orishas* in their various incarnations and thus cannot be understood without broader knowledge of the religions.

Certain terms or phrases in Ortiz's manuscript have been especially difficult to translate and deserve brief mention. At times Ortiz uses the word *el negro* or *los negros* in an imprecise fashion so that it is unclear whether he is referring to Africans, Cuban blacks, or all Afro-descendant people. Similarly, phrases such as *el lenguaje de los negros* could be translated as "the language of blacks" or "the language of Africans," or, more generally, as "black speech." We have rendered *los negros* as "blacks" in many cases in order to perpetuate the same ambiguity, though in some cases we have changed *los negros* to "Africans" or "Afro-Cubans," based on the focus of discussion in the text. The terms *congo* and *bantú* also generated some discussion regarding translation; Ortiz uses them interchangeably, though congo appears more frequently. We have adopted a similar approach, reproducing both words as they appear and using Kongo to refer to people, religions, languages, or artistic forms influenced by Kongos of the present-day Republic of Congo or Angola. Congo is used to refer only to the countries Ortiz knew as the Congo or Belgian Congo (today the Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, or Democratic Republic of the Congo).

Some of Ortiz's vocabulary would be associated with racial bias by present-day standards. Ortiz continues to use the term *brujo* to refer to Afro-Cuban religious figures even in some late publications, for instance. We chose to reproduce the term *brujo* in the original Spanish, given that it has no perfect, ungendered translation in English, though we gloss *brujería* as witchcraft since it appears less frequently and has less overtly gendered associations. Other terms such as *culto* (which can mean "cult" in a derogatory sense, or more neutrally "devotion" or "liturgy") required a close reading of the original in order to discern Ortiz's intent at any given time.

The names of all individuals serving as principal translators of specific essays in the volume are noted in the table of contents, and on each title page. Robin Moore selected the material to be included in the anthology in consultation with other translators and was closely involved in the translation and revision of all segments.

PART I

Early Writings

1

The Future of Cuban Witchcraft

Translated by **Robin D. Moore**

1. De-Africanizing Witchcraft

With knowledge of the diverse forms of witchcraft in Cuban history, its future can now be considered. Without presuming the infallibility that brujo-diviners here often ascribe to themselves, we can predict some aspects of witchcraft's future by keeping in mind the dynamics surrounding such activities and the favorable and unfavorable contexts in which they take place.

Ignorance produces fear, which in turn gives rise to superstitions that function as defense mechanisms. Superstition, even if only apparently real, creates obstacles to social progress as tangible as the fear that inspires it. For that reason, Sergi[1] calls such reactions "pathological functions of the defensive psyche." In view of this, it is apparent that intellectual progress will gradually lessen superstitious belief in Cuba, encourage Cubans to have more faith in themselves, and slowly eliminate what is considered supernatural activity. As Bain[2] has said, "The best cure for fear is science."

Translated from Fernando Ortiz, *Hampa afro-cubana. Los negros brujos* (Miami, FL: Ediciones Universal, 1973), 221–53. First published 1906 by Librería de F. Fé.

[1] No citation is included in the original text in relation to this commentary, but Ortiz refers elsewhere to Guiseppe Sergi's book *L'Origine dei Fenomeni Psichici e loro significazione biologica* (Milan, Italy: Dumolard, 1885).

[2] A reference to Scottish philosopher Alexander Bain (1818–1903).

If white practitioners are slowly managing to distance themselves from the metaphysical aspects of their religions and instead are focusing on questions of morality, practitioners of fetishism, by contrast, are not. Black fetishists, adherents to an amoral form of religion, ascribe supernatural characteristics to natural phenomena. Although whites are slowly learning to separate science from religion, considering the latter only a guide to the ethical norms of life, black brujos have no science other than their religious faith, and their morality is not subject to divine regulation. If some intellectually superior whites have learned not to ascribe human characteristics to nature and confer ultimate authority to science, then religious practice for them represents nothing more than a cultural survival of the past. Our multiethnic society exists in an equilibrium that accepts both religion and science, recognizing both phenomena simultaneously, yet for black brujos their misguided religion obscures everything else. For them, scientific perspectives might be described as unusual or capricious.

The exclusively religious character of witchcraft is rapidly disappearing and will soon die out, even if brujos continue to act as medicine men and diviners for some time. In 1899, thirteen thousand African natives lived in Cuba. When they are gone—within a couple more generations at most, assuming no further immigration of primitive black Africans—faith in Obatalá will also disappear. Blacks thereafter will either adopt the religions of whites in a more fetishistic manner or will be seduced by the general lack of interest in religious matters today and by the whirlwinds of economic struggle that are breaking through the ramshackle levees of faith.

Brujos who cast spells or make charms may persist longer because, continuing established practice, they abandon the shortcomings of religion per se and adopt the role of medicine men, or popular healers. Yet such activity requires a more advanced intelligence than that of infelicitous black brujos. Even if belief in the efficacy of popular medicine persists, black practitioners will find themselves overshadowed by white practitioners, who now compete with them fiercely, often successfully.

Black diviners will persist, in all likelihood, even if they no longer function as priests or spell casters. While belief in oracles persists unabated among whites, tendencies toward its decline can be seen in the related fantastical beliefs of blacks. But, of course, the fate of black brujos is tied to the intellectual progress of their race. They will be forced to adopt the more intellectual divinatory practices of whites—for example, palmistry. Nevertheless, they will gradually lose prestige and influence as a result of both an increase in the cultural level of the population and competition with white divinatory practices, including palmistry, card reading, and even the pseudoscientific practices of spirit mediums.

Witchcraft, in each of its three aspects,[3] will gradually be de-Africanized. Yet sadly, even when Obatalá is no longer worshipped, when *embós* (magical spells or amulets) no longer produce curses or happiness, and when Ifá[4] necklaces are no longer associated with arcane knowledge, feeble minds will still adhere to superstitious beliefs that today are the exclusive provenance of whites. Fear of the future, sickness, and the unknown in general will prompt them to find white patterns of behavior through which to express their fantastical faith. Many years will pass before conscious or unconscious fear of the supernatural will be eradicated by the superior strata of civilization in Cuban society, abroad, and among all races. Until that time, such beliefs will remain a decisive force in social life and will slow human advancement and progress.

2. Brujos, Creatures of the Underworld

The foregoing discussion contextualizes the appropriate response of civilized society and public authority in the face of such crass forms of superstition. The antisocial character of witchcraft and the ways in which it clearly impedes cultural development are enough to justify measures leading to its decline and eventual disappearance. But in order to determine appropriate forms of action, it is necessary to fully define the antisocial character of witchcraft in its three recognized forms, considering its concrete manifestations and keeping in mind the observations above.

As I have mentioned elsewhere, Afro-Cuban witchcraft cannot be associated with the same degree of malevolence as similar practices found in Haiti, Jamaica, and elsewhere. The murders committed by Afro-Cuban practitioners are rare, insufficient to label them as criminal and habitually homicidal. It is true that in the solitude of runaway slave encampments or in the countryside in times past, brujos have killed people in order to procure ingredients for their charms and perhaps also to make offerings to their idols. But in modern times such actions are highly unusual, as demonstrated by the tremendous furor caused by the crimes committed by Bocú and his accomplices in El Gabriel.[5] But the seeds of criminal activity are almost always found in the psyche of brujos, even if they lie dormant. Whenever their fanatical belief in superstition combines with excessive impulsiveness, they seek resolution through witchcraft, and this can lead to criminal behavior.

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[3] Ortiz refers here to black religious leaders' simultaneous roles as priests, magicians, and diviners, as discussed earlier in *Hampa afro-cubana*.

[4] Ifá is a system of divination with origins in West Africa.

[5] Bocú was the name of an Afro-Cuban religious practitioner who was falsely accused and sentenced to death for killing a young white girl and cutting out her heart for use in demonic ritual. A picture of Bocú appears in Ortiz (1906) 1973, 136, fig. 28. El Gabriel is the name of a small town in Havana province.

It is worth reminding the reader of what I discussed in an earlier part of *Hampa afro-cubana* about poisonings being associated with witchcraft, though I apologize for the repetition.

Afro-Cuban witchcraft as practiced today does not habitually lead to homicide. When such serious crimes take place, they represent the criminal tendencies of a brujo above and beyond his belief in superstitions and charms. Such tendencies manifest themselves as witchcraft in order to materialize the impulse. But it is not witchcraft itself that forces the brujo inexorably toward homicide. We might say that witchcraft (adopting Lacassagne's[6] analogy) is the *petri dish solution* that allows for the development of *criminal microbes* found in the brujo's psyche. But if these microbes do not contain the dormant seeds of violent criminality, they generate no such spontaneous reaction.

One curious aspect of the influence of fanatical witchcraft on homicide is revealed by the case discussed at the end of the previous chapter of *Hampa afro-cubana*. A black woman threatens to kill another woman by means of witchcraft, relying upon the action of successive embós conjured against her victim to do so. But the victim, hysterical and impulsively African in character,[7] living in constant fear of death by witchcraft, manages to kill her enemy in a quicker fashion. She buys a knife, searches for her, and when she finds her on a streetcar, climbs in and stabs her. She does this with the force of conviction of someone who feels her acts are justified, that she has acted in self-defense. A civilized mind would have discounted the embós. But the savage African mind of the killer predetermined her hysterically aggressive action. She would have done the same in Africa, a primitive context in which her reaction to the spell caster would have met with universal approval. Judging from the clothing they wore, the two black women—the assassin and the victim—belonged to distinct religious sects. In light of this, is it possible that a simple rivalry between two *brujas*, or perhaps a rivalry between devotees of distinct *santos* (African deities), may have motivated the crime? It is impossible to know, but the question is worth posing.

The hybrid nature of local religion and witchcraft in the superstitions and practices of devotees contributes to another sort of crime that causes intense revulsion: grave robbing. This practice, though it is on the decline, in some cases represents an alternative to homicide, for reasons discussed earlier.

The cult of witchcraft can also lead to crimes of lesser importance. One brujo compelled a young boy to steal roosters that were later used in liturgical offerings. This practice derives from the poverty in which brujo-priests, as well as most of their devotees, frequently live. As a result, in many cases brujo-priests find it difficult to offer the sacrifices that their gods require. This leads to rooster theft, for rituals that require roosters as offerings, with the rituals in some cases specifying the required color of the feathers. The same is true for other birds—used for *limpiezas* (ritual cleansings), the preparation of magic spells, etc.—and for other animals. In the countryside, for instance, where conditions facilitate the sacrifice of cattle, cows are also stolen to facilitate idol worship. Sometimes in order to ensure the success of certain spells, items must be acquired illegally. Nevertheless, property crimes derived from witchcraft cults are of little overall significance. If the respect of private property is not absolute among the followers of brujos, their tendency to disregard it is exacerbated by the views of African priests. From their position of religious authority, such individuals condone any predatory activity disguised as serving religious ends. The faithful themselves use such approbation to justify trampling the rights of their fellow men. This is evident, as I mentioned earlier, in robberies committed by devotees to *Shangó*.

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[6] Alexandre Lacassagne (1843–1924), a French physician and criminologist. He founded his own school of criminology, a rival to Cesare Lombroso's.

[7] A picture of this woman appears in Ortiz (1906) 1973, 137, fig. 33.

One truly antisocial and savage phenomenon entails the dances associated with brujo cults. This applies to convulsive dances that induce hypnosis and produce an epileptic state that worshippers refer to as "giving themselves to their saint" (*dar al santo*). It is also true of the lascivious dances found in both religious and secular festivals, even if they do not always manifest such markedly antisocial character.

Similarly detrimental to society is the widespread superstitious practice of relying blindly on various magical amulets prepared by brujos or on graphic fetishes of European origin called "Prayers to the Righteous Judge" (Justo Juez) as a ward against prosecution in the courts, a safeguard to guarantee impunity. If brujos in their role as priest have not received prior absolution for all future sins, it is because sins do not exist for them. The amorality of brujos does not extend to granting impunity to devotees in the afterlife, but they seek to provide earthly protection by means of amulets. Brujos do not consider crime in the abstract as blameworthy; they see it as blameworthy only when it runs the risk of reprisals. They view the risks associated with it amorally, as if crime were nothing more than a nighttime walk in a jungle inhabited by wild beasts. In their view people need to be protected via magic from both magical assaults and the actions of the police; no special distinction is made between the two spheres. Brujo cults are, in the end, a negative influence with respect to the betterment of our society. Given the primitiveness that characterizes them—total immorality—they contribute to keeping black minds uncivilized, in the farthest depths of African barbarism.

The Afro-Cuban brujo in his role as sorcerer is no less socially damaging. Nevertheless, I have already noted that differences exist between Cuban brujos and their counterparts throughout the Antilles and the Americas.

Despite the notoriety of Cuban brujos with respect to poisons, their criminal acts are not as extreme as those associated with the popular practices of other countries. Residents abroad describe their *obis*,[8] *oangas*,[9] and so on as gifted toxicologists and consider them to have habitual criminal tendencies. A lack of criminal statistics absolves our own brujos of similar accusations on the basis of positivist data. Public opinion suggests that a short time ago Cuba witnessed some cases of poisoning. In any case, Cuban brujos enjoy a more honorable reputation than their colleagues mentioned above. But even if they are not involved in habitual poisonings, their use of disturbing spells and charms as *intentional agents of harm* must be underscored, to use Corre's[10] phrase. And whether their facility in conjuring and employing malevolent embós suggests homicidal or criminal tendencies, even if reduced to a less malevolent spiritual realm, is a valid question. Alternately, their practices may act in symbiosis with other superstitions. In this sense they negatively affect the course of criminal acts: instead of being expressed through an embó, they may manifest criminal intent in the form of a stabbing wound or as poison.

Although the bilongos, or spells, of sorcerers typically inspire pity and mockery, it is no less true that witchcraft often intersects with a sphere of undeniably criminal behavior. The potions that brujos prepare, primarily of the amorous sort, can prove to be truly hazardous to the health of persons who imbibe them. Aphrodisiacs, for instance, which are used to attract the attention of an aloof lover and are often administered to people clandestinely, can produce serious side effects. The same can be said of the drugs used to reduce sexual desire. Potions intended to induce abortion are also criminal. Cases have been documented in which the unfortunate individuals taking them have suffered subsequent mental disorders or even death. One curious incidence of this, discussed earlier in *Hampa afro-cubana,* demonstrates the absolute African barbarity of those who prepared the potion. Witchcraft is also involved in cases of rape and seduction. This may involve the creation of simple aphrodisiacs or, on other occasions, narcotics. It is not uncommon for brujos to take advantage of their own conjurings in this way.

Brujos' preparations of embós represent an illegal use of medicine regardless of whether they have injurious effects on humans. There is no need to underscore the antisocial nature of such practices because it is patently obvious. And the medicines of witchcraft circulate not only among blacks;

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[8] *Obi* is another term for Obeah, used in the English-speaking West Indies to refer to folk magic, sorcery, and related practices cultivated by slaves, particularly those of Igbo origin.

[9] *Oanga* (also *wanga*) also derives from the English-speaking West Indies and refers to magical charms or pouches.

[10] Armand Corre (1841–1908), another famous criminologist who published monographs such as *Le Crime en Pays Créoles* (Lyon, France: A. Storck, 1889).

many whites are among its victims, proof of its broad influence and frightful nature.

As diviners, brujos are also regressive social agents. What they charge to predict the future with their *caracoles,* or shells, to confer the necklace of Ifá,[11] or for spells and spiritual cleansings represents a form of criminal fraud. It abuses and exploits victims' ignorance and fanatical credulity.

Brujos' prophecies and their "discoveries" of hidden truths, even when they do not lead to the use of an embó, further upset the erratic norms and conduct of believers. Prophecies subject the credulous to illogical and frequently immoral influences. Brujos' advice can have an especially strong effect on married couples, often leading to divorce.

Witchcraft, then, is an impediment to the advancement of civilization, principally among the population of color, because it represents the most barbaric form of religious sentiment and is lacking in any moral basis. In bygone times and in other countries, witchcraft has on occasion achieved a symbiosis with religion, since it also involves the negation of enlightened thought, specifically the attribution of natural phenomena such as disease to otherworldly causes. It subverts the conduct of healthy minds emancipated from superstition. It does this by employing vengeful or amorous embós, suggesting that it can predict the future and that certain outcomes *have been written*, or by purporting to reveal hidden truths.

The psyche of the Afro-Cuban brujo is detrimental to the laws and customs of society because of the superstitions it shelters and maintains. As such, brujos must be considered one of the most repugnant and harmful character types found in the Cuban underworld. They are almost always delinquents and sometimes rapists and assassins. They desecrate graves when they can. They are lecherous and demonstrate the most barbaric sexual perversions. They exploit women as concubines, enter into polygamous relationships, are wanton in their cult practices and in other contexts, and contribute to prostitution. They should be considered social parasites because of their exploitation of ignorant minds and because of their exploitation of women as concubines.

But since brujos believe in the potency of their idols, spells, and charms, as I have said, the same beliefs support a majority of their actions, even if they are immoral or criminal. Since brujos believe that the heart of a girl is the key ingredient in a charm against evil spells, they order her death to get it. Because they believe in the power of a fetish composed of human remains, they desecrate graves. Because they believe in the value of a ritual cleansing, a magical spell, or a prophecy and consider themselves priests, sorcerers, and diviners, they defraud their victims by charging them to make their saint.[12] The fanaticism of brujos is exacerbated by the amorality of their superstitions; this in turn leads them to commit acts that they consider ethically acceptable. To brujos, the use of malevolent spells is neither criminal nor immoral. The same is true of allowing nude worshippers to participate in ritual events, offering pornographic ritual advice, and so on. A criminal lawyer might consider the degree of illegal behavior in such cases to be attenuated by the limited intelligence of the subject. The goodwill of brujos at times is such that their objectively antisocial acts seem to them to be inspired by altruism. They do not always intend spells and charms to harm anyone; they sometimes use them to counter evil attacks, even if they must create them using human blood and bones.

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[11] Conferring a necklace of Ifá suggests teaching another how to predict the future and to become a diviner. Alternately, a necklace may be conferred in order to ward off evil influences or as a gesture of atonement to the orishas.

Owing in large part to this aspect of their character, brujos are criminal recidivists. It is true that campaigns against witchcraft in Cuba have never been rigorous, and the laws against it tend to be ineffective. The common penalties employed—fines or brief periods of incarceration—seem to brujos nothing more than risks associated with their profession, well worth the cost when compared to the benefits accrued by their parasitic acts. The suggestion that fetishism, as the saying goes, is "in the very blood" of black Africans and largely in the psyche of brujos is no less true.

Witchcraft results from a lack of evolution. Those who adhere to it perpetuate the same beliefs that existed in their countries of origin if they are African. If they are Cuban born, they are typically the children of Africans and raised on the same beliefs. White fetishists can also be found whose psychology is comparable to that of the Africans, even if they do not identify with them. Cuban brujos can no longer be considered African brujos, but the difference between them is no more than that of a single generation.

The Afro-Cuban brujo is, to use criminological terminology, what Lombroso would describe as an innate delinquent. This congenital condition leads to his moral backwardness in addition to his offensive acts. The innate delinquent is not atavistic in the strict sense of the term, however. That is, he does not represent an earlier stage of development of his species with respect to his broader social environment. It is more accurate to say that in traveling from Africa to Cuba his social environment took a sudden evolutionary step forward, leaving him and his countrymen by contrast in the depths of their savagery, in the early stages of their psychic evolution. For that reason, rather than atavistic, the character of the brujo should be described as psychically primitive. Brujos are a *primitive* delinquent, as Penta[13] would say. Brujos and their followers are delinquents in Cuba because they have not progressed socially; they are savages who have been brought to a civilized country.

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[12] Ortiz literally writes here, "estafa a sus víctimas cobrando el oyá."

[13] Pasquale Penta (1859–1904), an Italian physician-turned-criminologist, who ascribed the motivations of crime to atavistic and evolutionistic causes.

Observations of this sort demonstrate, by contrast, the truth of Lombroso's theories of atavism as an explanation for delinquency. Brujos are primitives because their social milieu has become more sophisticated, rather than because they have regressed evolutionarily to an earlier stage of development. By contrast, the delinquents of civilized societies are primitive in a different way; they themselves have taken an evolutionary step backward because they are incapable of maintaining the higher moral standard of modern times. In the first case it is the context that changes, while in the second it is the individual, but in both cases the forms of social adaptation and their effects on the subject are identical.

Alongside innately criminal Afro-Cuban brujos exists another kind of brujo. This one is usually Cuban born, imitating or maintaining the fetishistic practices of the other, corrupted by the goings-on around him, and limited by a psyche that has progressed only so far. This latter character type is a *habitual* criminal brujo who adopts a comfortable parasitic lifestyle, dragged down by multiple social factors. If in the first sort of brujo we may find an excess of goodwill toward others, in the second sort we find very little. I base all efforts to cleanse society of witchcraft and rid it of such parasites on the considerations expressed above.

3. The Current Repression of Witchcraft, a Need for Positivist Criteria, Punitive Action against Brujos and Justification for It, Specific Forms of Action, the Expansion of Action, Penal Alternatives, Instruction, Religion, and Other Preventative Measures

Efforts to redress manifestations of antisocial behavior share the fate of campaigns related to other forms of social hygiene. The efforts of government authorities have been superficial. In only a few instances have they drafted appropriate legal guidelines; ongoing attempts to engage more substantively and in a positivistic manner with the problem, undertaken through the routine channels of government, result in total failure.

Under existing Cuban law, witchcraft has not been attacked head-on and rarely even from the flanks. Action taken extends notoriously beyond the blurry confines of the legal code. For instance, in the case of the murder of Zoila Díaz in El Gabriel, the perpetrators were accused of murder. The same would have been true if the motive of the crime had been lust or revenge; someone's failure to satisfy the greedy demands of a kidnapper, as a malicious act against the parents of the young victim; and so on. The tribunals have not declared witchcraft itself to be a crime. And the same is true of other means of repressing witchcraft. Brujos are punished for the crime of robbery, for violating graves, for threatening behavior, for conducting abortions, for fraud, or for failure to secure appropriate authorizations. The last offense might include throwing raucous parties without permission, disturbing the public peace, engaging in illicit association, undertaking unlawful medical procedures, desecrating cadavers and cemeteries, or throwing dead animals into the street.

Only one ordinance of the penal code references a specific manifestation of witchcraft, though not by name. Article 614 states that "those who charge others to interpret dreams, predict the future, or take advantage of the public trust in similar ways if not prosecuted under section 2 of this Code (i.e., for fraudulent activity as defined in Article 565) will be punished by short imprisonment for up to 30 days." Minor charges can also be levied for the use of paraphernalia in divination or similar tricks, as discussed in footnote 7 of Article 630 in the same legislation. But these repressive measures have been all but forgotten, and Article 614 of the penal code represents nothing more than words on a page. The same is true in most other countries that have laws against modern forms of magic and divination. It is worth noting that charging money for fortune-telling is what represents a betrayal of the public trust in legal terms. So a diviner with no interest in payment could freely abuse the public without incurring any sanction.

This criterion for the suppression of witchcraft is clearly deficient. The result of such a lax policy is that witchcraft in its many manifestations is effectively legal as long as the practitioner does not get caught in a related crime, is not lacking a permit, and does not commit any other police violation. Individuals can go about their business, though within narrow parameters, since the legal code constrains them in many ways. But their mere existence is evidence that a legal space exists in which to practice witchcraft. It is important to keep in mind that the most common criminal acts of brujos—attempting home abortions, committing fraud, making threats, etc.—are difficult to uncover because those who could accuse them of wrongdoing, in their role as accomplices or victims, would prefer to conceal the matter to avoid being sanctioned by the courts themselves, publicly ridiculed, or subjected to the real or imagined vengeful actions of the brujo. The prosecution of individuals without permits is at least as difficult, since the mandates of the third book of the penal code have never been enforced vigorously. Their efficacy is confined almost exclusively to the efforts of modest police functionaries (those who in times past were known as a special type of security guard, often as criminal as those they guarded against in working-class neighborhoods). These individuals did not always perform such duties carefully or vigilantly, because the punishment was inconsequential, because they were otherwise occupied, or out of a reprehensible tolerance. Such an attitude works in tandem with the aforementioned desire some have to hide or even (repugnantly) support brujos and their actions. Thus, brujos' sphere of activity is relatively broad and is more than sufficient to comfortably support their actions, despite legal mandates. Brujos persist in parasitic activity and in their exploitation of the invariable backwardness of their believers.

If efforts to suppress witchcraft have been divided, crushed, or spread thinly in multiple directions, it is because they derive from what is essentially sterile dogmatism, as do most of our penal principles. Current law prevents the occasional minor infraction, but legislators do not understand the persona of the brujo in the same way that they understand and penalize a murderer or a thief. Since only murder and theft are penalized, the profile of the murderer or thief remains in the shadows. Officials attempt to take aggressive action against witchcraft and other delinquent acts without understanding their underlying causes. At one time we hoped to eliminate yellow fever without studying its victims or determining its specific lethal qualities. I use this comparison because we have achieved nothing less than complete victory against yellow fever, owing to the application of aggressive medical procedures and hygienic practices advocated by modern science in light of the discoveries of the brilliant Cuban physician Dr. Finlay.[14] Any country capable of that feat can envision success in the fight against witchcraft and other degenerate lifestyles. It will merely require that we employ similarly energetic methods of suppression and prevention (therapeutic and prophylactic) that today's scientific progress requires.

Now that the nature of crimes and other fearsomely antisocial acts associated with brujos is clear, we can distinguish between the offending acts of brujos and other delinquents from a criminological and positivistic perspective. We can compare the murder of a young girl in order to obtain her viscera to prepare an embó with a similar murder used to cover up an act of rape, for example. In this way, identical pathological phenomena may derive from distinct causes. In order to effectively combat an illness or wrongdoing, we must first study it from the perspective of the individuals involved and their motivation.

The campaign against witchcraft should have two objectives: first and most immediately, the destruction of all infected centers of activity and, in the longer term, the disinfection of the environment so that its harmful behavior cannot be perpetuated or reproduced.

To fight against witchcraft with greater likelihood of success, the persona of the brujo must be made visible in order to direct initial assaults against him. As I have said, brujos do not kill because their superstitious beliefs force them to commit such crimes, but because the criminal inclinations of their psyches are manifest in the course of their professional activities. If a brujo needs a human heart and kills to get it, there are others with a more highly developed moral sense that would prevent such action and would lead them to commit related but less serious crimes. Even considering this, however, it is no less true that even Afro-Cuban brujos who have not committed crimes (which is virtually impossible) represent an antisocial element that must be eliminated for the good of society. We should undertake this in the same way that we initiate campaigns against begging, vagrancy, and drunkenness, even if these are not actual crimes. If an individual appears to be a professional brujo, that is enough to merit that he become the focus of socially defensive action.

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[14] Carlos Finlay (1833–1915), a Spanish-Cuban epidemiologist and a pioneer in research into combating yellow fever.

It is impossible in Cuba, as in other countries, to suddenly implement all reforms called for by modern criminal science. It is too much to ask at present that measures involving the punishment of brujos for only individual manifestations of their criminal behavior cease. Nevertheless, the first step toward reform is to make the habitual practice of witchcraft itself a criminal act. That is to say, until criminological advances suggest more radical solutions, we must find a way to repress those who make a living from witchcraft, those who practice it as a profession, without the need to prosecute individual crimes they may become involved in.

In order to apply this sort of sanction against a brujo for merely being a brujo, it is not necessary to know whether he is an utter scoundrel who knowingly exploits and deceives his disciples or whether he is devoutly faithful to his cult and his charms and believes the price of his otherworldly services to be fair compensation for his labor. If this sort of determination could be made using the prevailing penal philosophy—with a gradation of punishments according to the degree of suffering caused by the brujo in each case—then implementing a positivist theoretical frame would involve only a change in the form of appropriate penalties. They would depend on whether the brujo believed in his own witchcraft or was a mere parasite; religious forms of suggestion would thus be evaluated the same as any other, but a punishment would be imposed in any case. Today, criminology has determined the frightful nature of such offenders as the scientific basis of sanction. In other words, through an analysis of their social impact, it has established that brujos are fear-provoking and socially detrimental. It suggests that defensive action needs to be taken against them.

The call for the targeted suppression of witchcraft does not represent backward thinking, as one might initially presume. It does not involve returning to the practices of the past in which witchcraft was considered one of the most abhorrent crimes. It does not involve lighting bonfires to burn brujos at the stake or strangling them with a garrote, that implement of death that still exists in Cuba. In the past, officials punished witches or sorcerers precisely because they believed in their fortune-telling and spells, and secondarily because they practiced religion outside the bounds of orthodox faith as heretics and renegades. The deliberations of Alfonso the Wise,[15] in his codex of Seven Principles,[16] ordered the punishment of "soothsayers, fortune-tellers, or the creators of supernatural objects, or those who read the omens of birds, or sneezes, or words, or tell the future," and so forth. At the same time Alfonso permitted astrology because, he said, "the proclamations and foretellings generated through that art are found by studying the natural movement of the planets and stars, taken from the books of Ptolemy." Alfonso sentenced wizards and necromancers to death yet established that "those who use enchantment and related arts with good intention, such as casting out demons from the bodies of men, or to separate man and wife if they are not suited for one another, or to remove ice from hail or fog so that it does not damage fruits; or to kill locust or aphids that damages the fruit of the vine, or for any other similar reason should not be punished. Rather, he should be rewarded for this." Sorcerers or witches of the time were considered priests and friends of the devil, for reasons I have discussed. Their persecution, as in the case of enemies of the dominant religion, derives from the religious battles that bloodied all of Europe. Subsequent intellectual and political progress in the region made many reasonable individuals react against the cruel, absurd, and counterproductive repression of witchcraft and criminality in general. But if respect for this view led to a gradual attenuation of punishments that had become damaging and exaggerated, greater respect for witchcraft led to an end to all punishment against it, as well as heresy, sacrilege, and other crimes incompatible with freedom of conscience. And the reaction of abolitionists was so extreme in this sense that they began to forget about the existence of individuals who continued to practice witchcraft and divination, exploiting the credulity of the masses as vilely as any other social parasite. It is true that most victims of the Inquisition were burned at the stake, especially women, unfortunate souls who would these days be put in the hands of psychiatrists, and others guilty of only independent intellectual or political thought. But it is no less true that there have always been actual sorcerers, astrologers, necromancers, and others who made a living from such mysterious professions, not always clandestinely. In recent times, as science has generated skepticism regarding the supernatural or diabolical powers of good or bad sorcerers and the efficacy of divination (whether based on bird flight or the books of Ptolemy), society must defend itself against them. It should not revert to persecuting the enemies of orthodox superstitions or the allies of demons. Rather, it must step forward and take aggressive action against witchcraft as one of many other forms of social parasitism that is perpetuated by means of specific, well-defined characteristics. The cleansing of society must involve work in this area, as it does with alcoholism, vagrancy, begging, and so on. In times past these matters may not have required the attention of the authorities, and social ills such as begging were actually condoned as the result of misguided religious beliefs.

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[15] Alfonso X (1252–84), king of Castile, created his *Siete Partidas del Sabio Rey* as a means of establishing more legal uniformity throughout his kingdom.

[16] Partida VII, tit. XXIII. [F.O.]

Extending the overt suppression of witchcraft to cases in which a brujo has not committed any act recognized as criminal in the penal codes—that is, even to cases in which he confines his activities to the functions of a priest—may raise objections. One might ask, "Doesn't prosecuting a brujo cult that is not involved in illicit activity violate principles of freedom of thought and of religion as recognized by our Constitution and those of many other countries? If a brujo who confines himself to acting as a priest of his religion is still subject to legal prosecution, why couldn't the same happen to other religious leaders? If fetishistic groups are considered false religions, might others be judged similarly? Will the social order reestablish a religious tyranny, tolerating some groups and chastising others?" From this point of view the opinions expressed by a representative of our Congress would not be considered misguided.[17] Approving a section of a bill under discussion that required the mayor of every town to protect the rights of religious sects held inside their respective temples, according to Representative Sobrado, would mean that authorities would also be obliged to protect the rites of witchcraft cults, which he described as absurd.

Only in the abstract, in a fantasy world, will one find cases of black brujos who act only as priests and do not prepare magical spells or practice divination. This scenario is inconceivable using positivist judicial criteria. The sacerdotal function of such individuals is their weakest because it is based on such a primitive form of faith that it crumbles in the face of even modest intellectual advancement. The perpetuation of witchcraft's religious function over long periods of time requires that it be tied to divination and sorcery. Given the low psychic level of brujos, their human passions are not constrained by faith in eventual divine justice; rather, they require immediate satisfaction by means of a benign or malevolent embó or the revelations of a soothsayer. Thus, imagining brujos whose moral development is high enough for them to forswear all criminal or antisocial practices and yet who remain in a primitive state of religious barbarism is preposterous. It is absurd from a psychological perspective and requires no further comment. Nevertheless, conventional judicial practice might assume this possibility if no proof of an individual's illicit behavior exists. We must presume the existence of criminality in every case and combat any hypothetical presumptions to the contrary.

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17. House of Representatives session held on November 16, 1904. Speech made by Representative Sobrado. [F.O.]

Science has concluded that religion is nothing more than a pathological defense mechanism. But even if this is true, when religion is part of relatively advanced societies, it achieves a certain symbiosis with human behavior by means of its relationship to morality. This is true even for members of the intellectual elite who consider its precepts outdated. Morality exists outside the bounds of religion and yet sustains it; without it, religion would quickly be discredited. Religions, by contrast, perpetuate themselves through the assumption that fear of the otherworldly will lead believers to adopt moral principles. Many moral beliefs would thus become weaker without the support of religion and would eventually be replaced by others of a less desirable nature. But Afro-Cuban fetishistic religion conveys no such social benefits. Such witchcraft, as we have emphasized repeatedly, is amoral. Judged from a sociological perspective and in terms of its repercussions for Cuban society, it is both immoral and criminal. Even considering it as only amoral, is there any reason to justify tolerance for this sort of barbarism that impedes the progress of the Cuban people and stains their name? The gods of black witchcraft are boorish and brutal. Why tolerate their existence and the possible spread of related superstitious beliefs associated with them, since they produce no social benefit? On the contrary, they sustain and even augment the intellectual and moral backwardness of the masses. If witchcraft were associated with moral beliefs, as is the case for other religions in Cuba, and if it conformed to the moral guidelines established by society, then it and its parasitic activities would be tolerable. But since that is not the case, we must sweep away the remains of African savagery that are infecting our country and cause such harm to the lower classes imprisoned by them. Freed of these conceptual bonds, the masses will more effectively collaborate in the work of progress toward civilization.

The first step in the defensive battle against witchcraft involves getting rid of brujos and isolating the faithful, just like those infected with yellow fever, because witchcraft is similarly contagious. As long as brujos enjoy more or less complete freedom to continue their parasitic acts, they will encounter others to support them; in their intellectual torpor, their followers will tolerate the situation happily. The swindlers must be eradicated, their fiestas, dances, and savage rites made a thing of the past, their temples torn down, their gods prohibited, and all other tentacles of witchcraft severed that imprison believers in the barbarous depths of our society. When that happens, the masses will be freed from their bonds. Their eventually de-Africanized minds will begin to shed the weight of confused superstitions and improve their cultural level.

In order to achieve this, it is not necessary to contemplate a radical process of social elimination such as the death penalty, incompatible with contemporary penal development and a practice that should have already done away with it.

The expulsion of brujos from the country, a practice employed in times past to rid the English colonies of obis,[18] might have been a solution if it were practical to deport them to their African countries of origin, along with other harmful immigrants, delinquent foreigners, and so forth. But this approach would not affect the many Cuban-born brujos here, and thus its utility would be limited. The general expulsion of all brujos without providing transport to African countries is contrary to international law and the dictates of a healthy conscience, besides being nearly impossible in practical terms.

Thus, no other option is available except their internment, the only effective means of isolating them. But this approach faces a significant obstacle—the backward nature of the penitentiary system we employ. Punishing brujos[19] by locking them in one of our jail cells for a predetermined amount of time is unproductive. If the incarceration lasts only a short time, brujos will find their reputations enhanced by such prosecution and will soon attract (even without seeking to) followers from the past and probably new ones as well. Long-term incarceration to keep the brujo from returning to parasitic behavior is also problematic. Under the current standards that determine when prisoners are to be liberated, such an approach would become scientifically if not legally unjustifiable. The law sets individual sentences relative to those of all incarcerated individuals, as detailed by positivist criminologists.

I have discussed two primary categories of offending parasite-brujos. The first consists of fanatical brujos, totally convinced of their important social role. If they deceive their followers and continue offering ritual advice, they do so without preconceived intentions of exploitation. We might describe this group as good-faith brujos, or natural-born brujos. The other group consists of habitual brujos who have made the conscious decision to practice witchcraft because they find it easy to earn a living by casting spells, one of the many ways of exploiting human ignorance. We cannot expect any change in the mind-set of those in the first group, in which older Africans predominate. They are brujos and will die as such; they are incorrigible. The second group, consisting primarily of Cuban-born individuals, should be able to abandon their superstitious practices, depending on the degree of rootedness in their parasitic habits. In most cases they are similar to other habitual delinquents and can be rehabilitated. Of course, neither category is completely mutually exclusive, and decisions about the association of a particular offender with one or the other are difficult. This is true of almost all categories and classifications of delinquents and of all natural creatures.

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[18] Antonio Bachiller y Morales, *Los negros* (Barcelona: Gorgas y Cía., c. 1885), 124. [F.O.]

[19] I refer consistently here to social action against witchcraft as an institution, aside from any delinquent acts it may be associated with. [F.O.]

It is necessary, in an ongoing fashion, to distance brujos in the first category from all superstitious activity and especially from that of women who are so inclined. But this should not involve confining them, caging them like wild beasts, or substituting their priestly parasitism for similar activity in the jails. Society should not support such brujos as a substitute for the gullible who support them now. Brujos need not be the subject of defensive social actions other than their removal from contexts in which their parasitic actions can take root. In general, they should be redirected to honest work that provides for their sustenance. The mass confinement of brujos in prisons would be inconvenient and also dangerous. If they were all placed in forced labor groups, jails, or prison blocks together with others of their race, they would probably continue the same activities in conjunction with other criminals. That would be an ideal context for the perpetuation of their beliefs. When brujos charged with the murders of El Gabriel were incarcerated, other inmates stayed away from them and avoided contact out of fear, believing them to possess mysterious powers. Even if brujos were subject to a work regimen imposed inside the prison, such efforts would not be very productive. And although the confinement of brujos in special cell blocks might be possible, it would be impossible to prohibit their contact with other inmates.

The difficulty of isolating brujos from others can largely be overcome by keeping them in individual cells. But, of course, this conflicts with the rational principles of modern criminal justice.

If a true penal colony existed in Cuba, the problem would be almost entirely resolved. In such contexts, brujos could be given assigned work and could be isolated from other types of delinquents. But even under current circumstances, brujos who have not been accused of other delinquent activity could be required to perform prescribed work and at the same time could be isolated from infected or infectable environs. This strategy would break with current penal practice with respect to the repression of witchcraft. New delinquents could be given entry-level work in public establishments. For example, they could clean and service the inside of fortresses, military barracks, and so on or provide help with public works projects. This would guarantee their isolation from other honest workers and criminals with minimal oversight, and they would not be forced to perform tasks any more difficult than other free workers. The same approach could be taken with the smaller number of professional female brujas: they could be employed in jobs such as washing and sewing. Owing to the relatively small number of brujos relative to the overall delinquent population, the solutions described here are feasible.

Nevertheless, given the special conditions of isolation that brujos must be confined to, those who are merely practitioners and those who have been sentenced for committing related crimes should be isolated together, as long as they were professionally involved in witchcraft and their crimes relate to it in some way. This pertains to the case of Bocú, a murderer inspired by witchcraft. Incarcerating brujo-offenders together with regular criminals would be senseless, especially since those who have committed related offenses already are even more dangerous. Their fanaticism has led them to acts far beyond those of parasites, acts that enter the criminal realm.

The nature of particular individuals' delinquency might call for greater or lesser degrees of vigilance in order to ensure their isolation and prevent their escape. But it should not involve radical differences in the type of sentence and the nature of their isolation. These issues could also be resolved through the creation of a penal colony, but we cannot consider that option at this time.

As noted, some brujos knowingly deceive others but generally do not commit more than minor crimes of theft or attempted abortion. In some cases they are not wildly fanatical and their beliefs do not blind them to the risks involved in serious offenses. They represent merely a class of hustlers, yet their threat to society is growing and is characterized by the fact that their victims are willing and are even thankful for their own exploitation. It would be enough to apply to them what are known as correctional penalties: a requirement that they work in a legal profession of their choice under the watchful eye of the authorities, a probation officer, and so on.

But this proposal cannot be put into effect while a classically decrepit penal code governs our prisons. Effective suppression of witchcraft cannot be achieved until our system evolves new formulas more in line with contemporary scientific discoveries and principles. One relatively simple step in this direction would be the legal classification of brujos as criminal offenders subject to penalties. Given that there is resistance to applying punitive criteria to the parasitic activities of brujos, the penalties could be classified as aggravations of other offenses. This would be justifiable, for example, in the same way that a vagrant can be guilty of a crime. There is no doubt that the parasitic actions of brujos are at least as detrimental to society as those of vagrants.

Of course, even in cases in which no penalties are levied, I would suggest confiscating all idols, images, religious necklaces, altars, *chumbas*,[20] and related implements and useless trinkets from brujo temples. But instead of destroying them, as is typical now, we should deposit them in one of our museums. No legal changes are required to accomplish this. It would involve only recommendations from competent directors on the basis of the preference of minor fiscal authorities that such objects be conserved in the interest of science.

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[20] An inexpensive ritual vessel created by placing a china bowl facedown over a second bowl, intended to house the essence of an initiate's principal *oricha,* or divinity in Santería. See Brown 2003b, 265.

As we undertake the fight against witchcraft with seriousness of purpose, destroying all loci of infection, we should keep in mind that some may contain parasitic actors other than brujos as they are typically defined and have been studied herein. These include *curanderos,* or popular healers, common figures who are similar to brujos in many respects, especially in their use of magnetism and hypnotism, testing an individual's ability to commune with spirits. They also include white diviners of many types (palmists, clairvoyants, card readers, sleepwalkers, etc.). They claim to be infallible visionaries of hidden things, and their temples are well known and widely discussed in the press. Clearly, these individuals also contribute to the exploitation of the ignorant, ascribing supernatural causality to natural phenomena. Curanderos and diviners are nothing more than evolved and highly specialized brujos. For that reason they have become parasites of the upper classes of society. Despite the relatively advanced intellect of such individuals—in some cases they appear on the surface to have cultivated tastes— the core of their being continues to be that of a savage. The popular expression in Cuba to describe such individuals is *indios con levita*, roughly "evolved Indians." Originally a Parisian expression, it has a broader application than many commonly believe. Even in the boulevards of famous Ville Lumière, notes Berenger Feraud,[21] one can find gullible individuals as blind as those in central Africa.

Because of popular healers' illicit use of medicine and diviners' parasitic acts, both of which involve minor yet constant fraud, they can and should be regulated along with brujos and be subject to the same sorts of correctional interventions. This need not require that legislators give judicial authorities new powers; current law is broad enough to be effectively applied. We should keep in mind that healers and diviners almost always defraud others knowingly. Aware of most others' gullible nature, they take advantage of it, adopting practices in consonance with the thin veneer of civilization of their victims. Indeed, most do not object to the unshakable fanaticism of Afro-Cuban brujos.

Judicial prosecution should also extend to devotees of witchcraft, in some cases, to make certain ritual acts more difficult. These include ritual dances, the expansive meals offered as part of sacred fiestas, the casting of intentionally benevolent or malevolent embós, and so on. In these acts believers participate in important ways. It would be appropriate to levy small fines such as are already used in the courts for similar acts, as well as heavier fines, short-term incarceration, and obligatory work penalties.

This is the extent to which social action can be taken against witchcraft now. Because it is not enough, however, society should utilize indirect methods in its defense as well. They are secondary but very effective (what Ferri calls *penal substitutes* or alternatives to the use of incarceration): progressive immunization against the microbes of witchcraft.

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[21] Berenger Feraud, *Superstitions et survivances étudiées au point de vue de leur origine et de leurs transformation*, vol. 5 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1896), 393. [F.O.]

Achieving this will involve offering intense forms of instruction in all classrooms of the republic. It should not be superficial instruction such as we are exposed to as children, but rather instruction that imparts defined scientific notions about the true causes of natural and social phenomena. The effort will not benefit brujos themselves, because their savagery and predispositions will make it impossible for them to reap any benefit from it. On the contrary, brujos might try to use the classroom as a means of extending the reach of their influences (as was evident in Bocú's letters). Nevertheless, as the educational campaign begins to influence gullible minds, over time it will lead to a gradual attenuation of superstitious belief and the parasitic acts of fetishists. Instructional activity, not only targeting witchcraft but also addressing the general ignorance of our lower classes (and certain aspects of the thinking of higher classes), must be a priority. This applies to public schools and establishments of "superior" or secondary education. The effort will not succeed unless it penetrates directly into the most vulgar minds. Ongoing and systematic lectures to the general public can be effective, as can short courses that demonstrate the advances of the natural and social sciences to everyone. The only thing needed to make this happen is a little goodwill and voluntary effort on the part of individuals, something that tropical lethargy often robs us of. We should take inspiration from popular scientific institutions, popular universities, and so on, that have had such positive results in other countries.

Since this effort, while potentially quite effective against witchcraft, is of a more general nature, I do not insist on its implementation. It is merely one part of modern pedagogical practice, one aspect of the responsibilities that social progress requires of the ruling classes.

Instruction is not enough to eliminate witchcraft even within a few generations. But at least it will contribute to its de-Africanization and the disappearance of the most harmful forms of delinquency associated with it. Over time African brujos will become more civilized and acclimated to European norms, their parasitic acts more tolerable and comparable to those of white diviners.

Education is not an infallible cure for delinquency as was once believed; in some cases it can even lead to an increase in delinquent behavior. But as a project designed to combat witchcraft, it can function positively in two ways. First, it will make brujos less barbaric and less violent, although at the same time more astute. Second, it will positively impact the devotees of witchcraft. It may well awaken dormant forms of intelligence in them and elevate their minds so that they leave brujos behind and escape from the clutches of parasitism. Brujos keep the masses prisoner in this way, and their liberation is directly tied to the extent to which formal education can positively impact their ignorant minds.

All social policies limiting the reach of religious phenomena should help in the struggle against fanaticism and superstitious witchcraft as well. This is especially true of policies that restrict public religious displays, even if some may inspire us. For some, religion represents a safeguard against all vices, yet this belief is at least partially in error. As Lombroso notes,[22] "Religion is a positive social force when it is completely grounded in morality and abandons formulaic doctrine. This is only evident in new religions. All religions are initially moral, but as they are practiced over time they become dogmatic and their rituals begin to subsume moral issues, as the latter are more difficult for the uneducated to conceive. Modern monotheistic sects exhort believers to struggle against ignoble passions." Cuba needs these new and superior forms of religion to spread among the population in order to perform their moralizing function. Analogous examples of what Lombroso proposes[23] may be found in the conversion of blacks in the United States to Protestantism, which has led to their moral advancement.[24] Nevertheless, as long as the African psyche perpetuates itself in Cuba with the same tenacity as it does today, a black evangelical will never be able to entirely shake off the practice of fetishism, whatever other benefit he gains from such an affiliation. Nor will he be able to disassociate himself from parasitic witchcraft. Among his primitive superstitions, amoral beliefs perpetuate themselves robustly. This distances him from religious doctrine in general and inclines him to accept various forms of religious belief whose sermons and teachings may be essentially moral.[25] Even if the religious aspects of witchcraft were eliminated through the mass conversion of devotees to a more moral form of worship, parasitic elements associated with brujos—namely, spell casting and divination—would persist. Neither brujos nor their religious dogma as the ordinary person understands them has anything to do with morality, aside from vague notions of divine intervention. It is clear that Afro-Cuban fetishists are not averse to other religious practices and that for them a simple combining of deities or pantheons is enough to adopt new religious beliefs. In all likelihood, the preachers of one of those absurd new sects would find converts among Afro-Cuban fetishists. Created by true paranoids, according to Lombroso, they often appear as conceited firebrands who preach over the crumbling dogmas of older religions. They are especially attractive to the masses if they adopt an otherworldly appearance such as that of a sorcerer. Cuban fetishists need to see miracles in order to abandon their fetishism, even if superficially or for a short time. A religion without miracles has no value to them. The furor caused by an individual known as Man God (*Hombre Dios*)[26] in certain regions of our country suggests that conditions are ripe for a religious epidemic. Man God's miraculous ambulatory antics inspired changes in laws regarding the congregation of public crowds. But religious preaching that attracts crowds in that way will simply substitute one form of parasitic activity for another, one set of superstitions for another. It will leave Afro-Cuban intellects largely in the same state of backwardness they find themselves in now. For that reason our primary goal should be to elevate the minds of the common people as a means of attenuating and channeling their religious sentiment.

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[22] Cesare Lombroso, *El delito, sus causas y remedio*, trans. C. Bernardo de Quirós (Madrid: Librería General Victoriano, 1902), 195. [F.O.]

[23] Ibid., 193. [F.O.]

[24] However, one would need to ascertain whether such conversion is the cause of moral advancement, an independent result of moral and intellectual progress, or both simultaneously. [F.O.]

[25] This has occurred in the United States as well as in other countries, including Jamaica. [F.O.]

It is not necessary to belabor the topic of the progressive advancement of human civilization, despite its importance. After exploring the commonalities between the most widespread civilized religious groups and witchcraft, it is clear that the decline of the former will have a negative effect on the latter, even if that suggestion may seem paradoxical to some. With religious sentiment growing constantly weaker, at least as it is expressed today, we should expect to see the destruction of all idols over time, the rejection of sterile dogmas or superstitions, and their replacement with assertive altruistic ideals.

One aspect of this civilizing campaign should be the prohibition of the sale of prayers—such as those to Justo the Righteous Judge, to the magnet stone, etc.—of an undeniably atavistic nature. These objects, which might even be described as criminal, are sold today in public.

It would be opportune as well, in the fight against witchcraft and popular medicine, to increase the number of trained physicians in rural municipalities. This would put the benefits of modern science within the reach of everyone at no cost and would serve as an effective means of preventing illicit forms of fraud.

African dances serve as a provocative context in which brujos find new groups of followers, even if the drumming appears to be nothing more than a source of innocent diversion. Rural authorities, especially, should increase their oversight of such dances, denying permission for any gatherings that may be disguising acts of witchcraft, inspecting the locations where events are to be held, and so on.

There is no reason that the press should not contribute to the civilizing of the country and the suppression of parasitic brujos, curanderos, and fortunetellers. Members of the press should not hide the true nature of these festering social wounds or any other. Rather, they should claim redress from those who exploit the credulity of the masses and sometimes benefit from human suffering. They should resist publishing advertisements related to such matters in the same way that they choose not to publish the pronouncements of criminals and sinners. Neither interviews with diviners nor descriptions of their temples should be published, since this tends to work to the advantage of characters from the underworld in spreading their superstitions and attracting new victims. The public should be told the truth about these modern magicians, and all other forms of criminal behavior, without favoring them. In discussing such matters, even in the name of curiosity, reporters should make appropriate comments regarding their veracity and suppress all information of a personal nature that could benefit the reputation of a particular fortune-teller or all such individuals. Problems associated with the influence of the press on delinquent behavior are central to the field of criminology, but I limit myself here to discussion related to parasitic brujos.

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[26] Reinaldo Román's book *Governing Spirits* (2007) contains additional information on this figure and others in Cuba and Puerto Rico.

In the fight against witchcraft, individuals of color could be of special help. If they have risen through the caliber of their intellect and morality to a superior position relative to others of their race, they would enjoy a degree of prestige among other blacks that would facilitate the diffusion of culture and learning among them.

We must also have faith in the superior living conditions of the Cuban population of color, not unknown to others. This has prevented the degree of misery and backwardness among them that is found in other regions of the Americas. Certainly the black population will advance with a firm stride, encouraged by the prospects of their future accomplishments, when they receive vigorous support along the path of progress, assisted by acts of voluntary goodwill and related civilizing initiatives.

We must have faith as well in the enlightenment and zeal of the authorities who chart the path of our recently founded country. They must land more accurate blows than have been managed to date against the bastions of ignorance. Many take advantage of their position and continue doing things as they have always been done. This approach benumbs us and makes our first steps as a free nation those of a hesitant child. Our actions should be those of robust strength, especially because of the long and cruel revolutionary process that paved our way.

More than anything, we need light, much light, so that superstitions can find refuge only in the remotest shadows. Let us extend formal instruction, popularize scientific truths. One of our founding fathers[27] said, “Only the truth will allow us to pass from infancy to adolescence.”

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[27] The author of this phrase was José de la Luz y Caballero (1800–62), an influential Cuban intellectual. The original phrase was “sólo la verdad nos pondrá la toga viril” (“only truth will permit us to don the white toga”), in reference to the white toga of adulthood given to adolescents in ancient Rome after they had reached sixteen years of age.

2

Afro-Cuban Cabildos

Translated by Robin D. Moore

The Cabildos, Their Organization, the King or Foreman, and Other Roles

At various times, I have briefly discussed African cabildos in my writings—groups that presented their most exuberant public displays on Kings' Day.[1] The term *cabildo* is still in frequent use in our daily speech, and, although these black institutions have been abolished, some of their customs have survived, and thus they are often remembered. I now focus specifically on the cabildos of the past.

Blacks belonging to the same African tribe formed organizations called cabildos (councils) in each Cuban city, perhaps using that name because they were analogous in certain respects to city councils. Pichardo, in his dictionary,[2] defines cabildos in the following way: "Meetings of recently arrived black slaves in private homes dedicated to such activities on particular feast days. Members play their drums and other tribal instruments, sing, and dance in a confused and disorderly manner to the beat of diabolical and never-ending rhythms. They collect dues and form organizations for the sake of diversion and mutual support, with their elected positions of treasurer, overseer, ad-

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Translated from Fernando Ortiz, "Los cabildos afrocubanos." *Revista bimestre cubana* 16, no. 1 (January–February 1921): 5–39.

[1] January 6, also known as Epiphany or Three Kings' Day.
[2] See Pichardo (1836) 1976, 114.

ministrator, king, queen, etc." Outside of Havana, some of these societies were named *reinados* (kingdoms) says Pichardo, "because of those celebrations with a black queen, who, sitting on a high throne and accompanied by her officials, presided over the continuous dance and drumming of her subjects."

Each cabildo, I repeat, was formed by the compatriots of the same African tribe or nation. The cabildo was similar to the chapter of a society, a counsel, or chamber that presumed to represent all blacks of the same origin. The king of the cabildo was an enslaved individual recognized as a leader, not usually the chief of the group but generally its oldest member. In his country of origin, he would have received another name; and, in Spanish, he might have been called foreman (*capataz*) or captain, the former associated with slave bosses in charge of work crews, the latter derived from military terminology to which blacks were attracted, and perhaps also (as in the case of the term *cabildo* itself) from the Latin *caput,* head or leader. The cabildo king enjoyed considerable authority within the limited sphere of action permitted him by white social power. During the year, he had control over the society's funds and would impose fines on its members. The queen occupied the next level of authority down. Other roles existed, though not all terribly well defined and largely of a ceremonial character. One coveted position was that of the *abanderado* or flag-bearer, a position created when the flag was introduced as a symbol of cabildo. The second in command was usually called *mayor de plaza* (roughly, chief of staff), a title derived from the army.

Ramón Meza states:[3] "The king or foreman was considered priest of these cults of idolatry created by African tribes." However, I believe it is more likely that religious and royal authority were assumed by separate individuals, as was common in the African towns where members originally came from. In my judgment, this hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that cabildo kings and queens dressed up in ornate garments similar to those used by whites: frock coats, starched shirts, large ties, resplendent two-cornered hats, thick suspenders crossed on the chest, medals, a sword in a scabbard, and a large cane with a silver handle, a symbol of authority. Their style of dress brings the paintings of Landaluze[4] to mind.[5] All these accessories derive principally from the Spanish army and none demonstrate religious associations (amulets, necklaces, etc.). I do not wish to suggest, however, that African fetishism did not play a role in such black revelry. On the contrary, its role was central and what most impressed the spectators of such events because of the costumes in a typical African style employed in such dancing, capering about, etc. I am referring to the figures known locally as *diablitos*.[6] At a more appropriate time I will extend this hypothesis further, but for now I return to my initial focus.

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[3] "Three Kings' Day." *Diario de la Marina de la Habana*, January 8, 1903, n.p. [F.O.]

[4] Víctor Patricio Landaluze (1830–99), a Spanish-born artist best known for his paintings of black slaves, working-class, or underclass Cuban subjects, many of them depicted laughably or disparagingly.

[5] The cane is a symbol of royalty in various African regions. See Ratzel's example, (1882, 1:356). It is also used by black chiefs in the Americas. In the Guianas, for example, see Harry Johnston, *The Negro in the New World* (New York: Johnson Reprint [1910] 1969), 26. [F.O.]

On Kings' Day, the Kongo king usually wore a jacket, dress pants, a two-cornered hat, carried a tall cane, and so on. Note that a Kongo king in Africa used all these attributes of European origin, and also a royal cloak and a scepter, when he visited the king of Portugal with great pageantry in 1888.[7] Since the early period of African colonization, Kongo kings liked to dress in attire similar to that of powerful white men, as a symbol of their authority: they used crowns, military or marine hats, even top hats (!), uniforms of all sorts, shotguns, sabers, umbrellas, and the like.

The esteem and respect that the king or foreman enjoyed from his subordinates are easily understood: he was the political figure that legally represented them to white society. Though foreign to our civilization, the king was recognized as the ambassador of their group or African nation by the Spanish authorities. The king's death represented a significant social event and members even kept chronologies of the reign of their elected monarchs. Bacardí[8] discusses the death of José Trinidad XXXV in Santiago de Cuba in 1848 and his solemn burial. Even today one finds references in the press to the death of such figures from various provinces.[9]

An old Kongo gave me the following description of the election of a king of the cabildo. It took place on Kings' Day and candidates would be selected for their special talents (*entu*). The election of the king (*salí*) took place every four years in a gathering called after three days of vigil and ceremonies to Saint Antonio,[10] to whom they made offerings. They wrote a symbol corresponding to the name of each nominee on small pieces of paper and placed them in a hollow gourd. The name of the lucky individual chosen in this way would be received with applause, the sound of cowbells, and repeated cries of *uuu . . . i*, *uuu . . . i*. A king could not be reelected. Members also chose a substitute king called *isuru* or "small one." According to this Kongo informant, Lucumí (Yoruba) blacks did not elect kings.

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[6] Dancers who wore masked costumes in an African style, usually representing supernatural spirits.

[7] Examine the interesting picture of the Mbembe Kongo King, Sir Pedro VI, and his royal adornments in John H. Weeks's *Among the Primitive Bakongo, and Other Tribes of Equatorial Africa* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1914), 52. [F.O.]

[8] Emilio Bacardí, *Crónicas de Santiago de Cuba,* vol. 2 (Barcelona, Tip. de Carbonell y Esteva, 1913), 369. [F.O.]

[9] See the example below, taken from *La Discusión* newspaper in Havana (February 11, 1913), commenting on events from a town in the islands interior: "The King of the Kongos Has Died," February 9. Today we confirm the burial of the King of the Kongos, his majesty Canuto Montalvo. He is being remembered with honors befitting his high social station in the tradition of his tribe. His many subjects accompanied the corpse while singing mournful chants and performing the requisite drumming and dancing. As they passed the church, its bells rang out in honor of the king's death. We wish him eternal rest and we send his numerous family members our deepest condolences. *The Correspondent.* [F.O.]

[10] This is the Portuguese patron saint whose influence in the Congo was intense and well documented. When the Kongos Catholicized their beliefs superficially, they became devotees of the saints of their masters. [F.O.]

The foreman or king was responsible to the authorities for any offenses committed by his subjects. We know, for example, that in 1813 authorities fined three cabildo leaders for having started fires in the streets.[11]

Women formed part of the cabildos, as we have seen, and they still have administrative roles in the societies that exist today. The same is true in other colonies of the Americas. José María Ots de Capdequí[12] states the following in his erudite study "Derechos de la mujer en la legislación de Indias":

> During the eighteenth century when colonial authorities granted slaves the right to congregate,[13] women played a very central role in the *cofradías* (brotherhoods, guilds). I consider it opportune to reproduce what Mr. Palma wrote in *Tradiciones peruanas*: "In the eighteenth century, authorities permitted slaves to form cofradías according to their tribal heritage. Many of these cofradías came to have a decidedly reputable status. Their queen was a free and rich black woman. On the day of her procession, a very solemn affair, the queen appeared in white attire, covered with flaxen cuffs bordered with precious stones, a golden belt and scepter, and pearls. Young slaves, also luxuriously dressed, attended the queen and pampered her. Following them in the procession came the rest of the tribe, the women holding candles in their hands and the men playing African instruments."[14]

Andalusian Origins and Altruist Intent of the Cabildos, Their Economic Resources, and Their Locations in Havana

Let us examine how these Afro-Cuban cabildos may have originated. They surely did not emerge spontaneously in Cuba. Today we know that African cabildos date back to the fourteenth century, more than one hundred years before the discovery of the Americas. Irrefutable data on the ancient antecedents of Afro-Cuban cabildos and their leaders can be found in Seville, as seen in the chronicles of Ortiz de Zúñiga. He refers to the dances and festivities of African slaves in the Andalusian capital during the reign of Don Enrique III (1390). He also provides information about the overseer of such groups who other slaves viewed as their leader and judge,[15] just as in the case of Havana's cabildos.

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[11] Manuel Pérez Beato, *El curioso americano: correspondencia entre literatos, anticuarios, americanistas, timbrólogos etc., y revista de todo género de documentos y noticias interesantes* (Havana: [s.n.], 1892), 73. [F.O.]

[12] José María Ots y Capdequí, *Revista General de Legislación y Jurisprudencia* (Madrid) April 1920, 345. [F.O.]

[13] Free blacks were permitted to congregate much earlier. Ricardo Palma states that in 1650 they organized a labor union of water vendors in Lima. See José María Ots de Capdequí, *Apéndice a mis últimas tradiciones peruanas* (Barcelona: Maucci [1910?]), 116. [F.O.]

[14] Ricardo Palma and Pamela Francis, *Tradiciones peruanas,* vol. 2 (Oxford: Pergamon Press [1893–96] 1969), 152. [F.O.]

In Seville, cofradías even existed (and still exist) among Gypsies, a group in Andalusia with closer affinities to the white population than in other countries and a more intimate, personal relationship with dominant society. Nonetheless, one can study their legacy and customs in order to discover something about the social position of blacks in Seville between the fifteenth century and the eighteenth century, since the two groups fell victim to similar forms of persecution and dishonor. Gypsies and blacks in Seville had much in common because both were in a socially marginal position due to their exotic languages, customs, skin color,[16] contagious superstitions, tribal affiliations, and so forth. It is no surprise, then, that whites grouped Gypsies into cofradías and cabildos,[17] or that the leaders of the Gypsy tribes were called kings or captains,[18] just like African tribal groups, and both groups elected kings and queens.[19] The social organization of Afro-Cuban cabildos, as well as their kings and captains, was a structure that Spain gave to foreign immigrants (especially those from uncivilized, subjugated nations) and recognized on its own soil. Our own colonial authorities did not capriciously invent the position of African leaders (*capataces*); rather, it represents the importation of an established Spanish institution from Seville. The African leader became a foreign consul for immigrants, a political representative for imported Africans.

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[15] Diego Ortiz de Zúñiga, *Anales eclesiásticos y seculares de la Ciudad de Sevilla que contienen sus más principales memorias por Diego Ortiz de Zúñiga*, bk. 12 (Madrid: García Infançon, 1677), chap. 10. The term "mayoral" (overseer) is still used interchangeably with capataz in Cuba, often by agricultural workers in sugar mills. According to de Zúñiga: "Blacks in Seville were treated with great kindness since the times of Don Henrique III. Authorities permitted them to organize dances and celebration on holidays, which put them in a better mood for work and made their enslavement more tolerable." [F.O.]

[16] Blacks and Gypsies were both called *morenos,* and both were known to have black ancestry. See F. M. Pabanó, *Historia y costumbres de los gitanos, colección de cuentos viejos y nuevos, dichos y timos graciosos, maldiciones y refranes netamente gitanos* (Barcelona: Montaner y Simón, 1915), 5, 74, 137, and others. [F.O.]

[17] A Gypsy curse says: "May a cabildo of herons surround you and fight you." Pabanó, ibid., 95. [F.O.]

[18] Francisco de Sales Mayo. *Los gitanos, su historia, sus costumbres, su dialecto. Con un vocabulario Caló-Castellano por Francisco Quindalé* (Madrid: Oficina Tip. del Hospicio, 1869). [F.O.]

[19] Pabanó, *Historia y costumbres.* [F.O.]

Cabildo, a term used in the translation of the epic ballad *Fuero jugo*, means "a council of men living under a set of laws." Archaic terms like *cabildo* and *ayuntamiento* (council) elegantly reference institutions of the past, the latter municipal and the former ecclesiastical. We still tend to use the term municipal cabildo as a synonym for ayuntamiento, the legislative chamber or deliberative body of our municipality.[20] The term *cabildo* was used in Spain during the period of colonization in reference to meetings and assemblies of religious organizations.[21] And in Seville prominent African cabildos existed since ancient times.[22]

There also existed a cabildo for mulattoes in Mulatos St. with its own chapel[23] (the street was named after the chapel). It is very probable that authorities imposed cabildo organizations on blacks in Seville, since many existed long before the discovery of the Indies. In the same way, all trade guilds in Seville had been forced to organize into cofradías since the time of King Alfonso the Wise (1221–84). "Wanting to create civil and ecclesiastical order in Seville, Don Alfonso divided his inhabitants into guilds and classes and asked them to establish brotherhoods and religious groups. Each one of these was further asked to choose a patron saint whose chapel would serve as a place for meetings or cabildos."[24] These guilds from Seville persisted beyond the Middle Ages. And undoubtedly the countless blacks in Seville (enslaved or not)[25] had to conform to this sovereign decree by forming religious organizations (cofradías) in which they had their cabildos, entirely aside from their natural inclination to take advantage of such groups that were not always religious in nature.[26] And black cabildos and cofradías came from Seville (where there once was a large nucleus of Africans) to the Indies, reproducing their metropolitan organizations here.[27]

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[20] We still say *cabildeos*, cathedral cabildo, chapter hall, and so on. [F.O.]

[21] See Justino Matute y Gaviria, *Noticias relativas á la historia de Sevilla que no constan en sus anales, recogidas de diversos impresos y manuscritos* (Seville: E. Rasco, 1886), 76. [F.O.] "In 1584, a space was provided Our Lady of Iniesta church so that its various groups could meet in cabildo" (Part II, folio 3, chap. 1). Mateo Alemán states in *Guzmán de Alfarache*, referring to the members of certain fantastical brotherhoods or groups: "Even if you believe them to be brothers, do not take advantage of them, do not admit them into the cabildos, nor give them candles on the day of their festivities." See Mateo Alemán and Samuel Gili Gaya, *Guzmán de Alfarache* (Madrid: Ediciones de "La Lectura," 1926). [F.O.]

[22] Matute y Gaviria, *Noticias*, 95. Black cabildos there entered into conflict with Cardinal de Guevara in 1601, and he forbade them from processing on feast days even though they had a papal bull from the Highest Authority granting them that right. (De Juan Robles and Manuel Justiniano, *Tardes del Alcázar. Doctrina para el perfecto vasallo* (Sevilla: Diputación Provincial, Patronato de Cultura, folio 10, v. M. S. de la Colombina, 1948). In 1656, a passionate black man wanted festivities to take place in the San Roque chapel, Seville, in atonement to the Holy Virgin. Hearing about the event in Madrid, he put himself up for sale on Catalanes St. next to a cross called *del Negro* in his honor, to cover the remaining expenses. See Matute, *Noticias*, 133. [F.O.]

[23] Matute y Gaviria, *Noticias*, 33. [F.O.]

[24] Ortiz de Zúñiga, vol. 1, 192. [F.O.]

[25] In 1565, there were approximately fifteen thousand slaves in the Archbishop's jurisdiction according to Argote de Molina. See Gonzalo Argote de Molina, *Aparato ò apuntamientos que para escribir la historia de Sevilla* (Seville: F. J. Delgado, 1811). (Matute y Gaviria's citation). [F.O.]

Cofradías, cabildos, and *hermandades* were thus common both in various regions of Castile and its territories. In many cases, royal authorities had to struggle repeatedly against illegal activities committed under their auspices. Don Enrique IV and Don Carlos I both restricted the free association of hermandades, the former in 1462 and the latter in in 1534.[28] The cofradías or guilds of Seville must have disappeared or been transformed as of 1552 when the emperor issued his Royal Pragmatic. Specifically, Law XIII of Title XIII, from Book XII of the *Novísima recopilación* (see Zamora y Coronado 1845, 505) states: "We proclaim that the officials and leaders of our kingdoms' cofradías must renounce their positions, and that no others will replace them henceforth unless they are confirmed by the royal court.[29] In the name of such an office or position they may not form or create cabildos or councils. Noncompliance will result in a fine of 1,000 *maravedis*[30] and banishment from the kingdom for a year." As of this date, cofradías other than those of a specifically religious or charitable sort were disbanded. Those of the black community in Spain must have been considered subject to dissolution, just as they were here.

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[26] Aside from the data cited above, information exists about another black cofradía dedicated to Our Lady of Angels. The group celebrated a religious festival on August 2 throughout the eighteenth century. See Matute y Gaviria, *Anales,* vol. 1, 229. [F.O.]

[27] These organizations also existed in Peru beginning in the sixteenth century and lasted until nearly the eighteenth century. See Ricardo Palma, *Mis últimas tradiciones peruanas y cachivachería* (Barcelona: Casa Editorial Maucci, 1906), 48 and 327. [F.O.]

[28] It is very interesting to read law XII, Title XIII, bk. XII of *Novísima Recopilación,* a set of decrees by Don Enrique IV in Toledo in 1462. It states: "Many people with evil desires, wishing to harm their neighbors or to inflict ill will on others, organize distinct cofradías. In order to execute their evil intentions, they take the name of a Saint and dedicate the group to him or her, making oaths and creating bonds in order to help one another. On occasion, in order to give the public appearance of honesty, they make virtuous proclamations, suggesting these as the motivation of their institution. But in secret as a group they involve themselves in other things that involve doing harm to those around them, occasioning scandals among the people. Even though the government and our kingdom denounce and ban such illicit groups, their organizers search out and create façades, attaching them to holy names. With some honest decrees at the beginning of their bylaws, they attempt to demonstrate that their harmful objectives may be forgiven henceforth. They collect and share large quantities of money among themselves to undertake their evil deeds. These often result in great scandals, commotion, and other harm in the towns or regions where they take place. Therefore, wishing to provide redress and resolution to the problem, I hereby dissolve any and all cabildos created from 1464 onward in any city, town, or place in our kingdom with the exception of those created for pious and spiritual reasons, or those that predate my reign and authority. No more shall be created except as described above, under threat of punishment (according to the previously cited chapter 25 of the Instruction to Corrective Agencies, part of the circular from May 15, 1388, it is not permitted for cofradías of false cults to make excessive purchases, and no new cofradías may be established without explicit permission). Moreover, it is mandated that institutions established before 1464 that were not created for pious reasons must stop their gatherings and refrain from calling themselves cofradías, under threat of public denunciation by the scribe and the public authorities of the city, town or place they were created. Whoever acts to the contrary will be killed and their possessions confiscated by our legislature and treasury. The justices may investigate such institutions in order to make sure they comply with these laws, and no threat of denunciation or censure or other ruling will be made against them." [F.O.]

In Cuba, the city council of Havana stated on April 10, 1573, that all free blacks wishing to take part in the processions of the Feast of Corpus Christi could do so, just as they had in famous Corpus Christi processions of Seville.[31] One easily deduces from this that the African cabildos in Cuba have Spanish origins, that they represent a survival of a medieval institution in Seville from across the ocean. Seville, the metropolis made wealthy from trade with the Americas, influenced us in this manner, as in the case of many other things that characterize our society.

The purpose of African cabildos in Cuba was essentially the same as that of the cabildos or cofradías in Seville: to organize a particular social group for mutual benefit and religious indoctrination.[32]

Apparently, one of the main objectives of the cabildos was dancing. External observers frequently focus on this sort of noisy expression, the sort best known by whites. But one might come to a different conclusion by studying the internal life of the cabildo. This does not mean to suggest that dance was not one of blacks' most attractive and revealing activities, especially in later periods. Certainly it is one of the primary reasons for the survival of cabildos through the present day. Yet Pichardo and Arboleya recognize the importance of the cabildos' mutual aid and support. Ramón Meza also refers to this aspect of such institutions when he describes how cabildo leaders tended to their members when they were sick, paid for their burials, and devoted part of the cabildo's budget to help the elderly and infirm. It is likely that their beneficent character derives from that of similar organizations in Seville, even if they probably developed such a tendency sometime after their founding. I do not suppose this because the groups' altruism is inconsistent with the psychological traits of the blacks recently uprooted from their

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[29] Chapter 25 of the *Instrucción de Corregidores* states that if any cofradía-guilds do not follow the mandate, the authorities should take appropriate measures against them. [F.O.]

[30] A medieval Spanish copper coin.

[31] Jose María de la Torre, *Lo que fuimos y lo que somos o La Habana antigua y moderna* (Havana: Edición Fernando Ortiz [1857] 1914), 162. An identical decree from 1497 permitting all blacks in Seville to take part in Corpus festivities can be found in Gestoso, José. *Curiosidades antiguas sevillanas* (Seville: El Correo de Andalusia, 1917), 101. [F.O.]

[32] See the description of this aspect of the cofradías in Seville as discussed in Matute y Gaviria, Justino. *Anales eclesiásticos y seculares de la muy noble y muy leal ciudad de Sevilla metrópoli de la Andalucía, que contienen las más principales memorias desde el año de 1701 . . . hasta el de 1800 . . . Continuación de los que formó D. Diego Ortiz de Zúñiga hasta en año de 1671 y siguió hasta el de 1700 D. Antonio M. Espinosa y Cárcel*, vol. 3 (Seville: E. Rasco, 1887), 163. [F.O.]

African homeland, since in Africa one also finds analogous organizations. Rather, the existence of mutual aid groups presupposes an economic base, a social income of relative substance, something that the unfortunate African slaves founding their primitive cabildos did not have (many of the groups remain primitive to this day). Also, it undoubtedly was difficult for leaders to charge dues and administer their institutions effectively, given the limited education of the cabildo kings and their bewilderment in a new social environment. For that reason, one would assume that blacks who had lived for some time in Cuba organized and ran the earliest Cuban cabildos, or perhaps blacks brought directly from Seville, rather than recently arrived slaves.

Pichardo[33] defines a corporation or meeting of inept or disorganized men as a *cabildo de congos*. The broader and clearer description of Cuban cabildos as understood by local residents is expressed in the following paragraph:

> A black cabildo is understood to be a gathering of different tribes on feast days in order to perform traditional dances. According to my sources, these cabildos originated in permissions for the celebration of certain festivities that the king conceded to blacks in exchange for wood they cut to use for boat construction of the Spanish armadas, along with a certain number of cattle used to feed mine workers. Free and enslaved blacks have taken part in such gatherings since time immemorial. They bring flags as insignia of their cabildos (the flag of the Royal Kongo nation[34] is very similar to that of our national flag). These institutions are useful because they promote humanitarian and compassionate acts. They also help to free enslaved members who, because of their upright moral character and good behavior, are considered worthy of freedom bought with the organization's funds, collected through small tips they receive while dancing in public. Such funds also provide care for their sick countrymen.[35]

During the period of the greatest African population in Cuba,[36] cabildos had ample funds. This enabled them to pursue humanitarian ends but also to acquire homes for their activities and even additional properties to rent out. A few of them are still in use. The income of the cabildos consisted of monthly dues that their members, subjects, or guild-members paid. At dances, every curious onlooker interested in attending would be charged a *real*.[37] Additionally, members took frequent collections for other causes. In the eighteenth century, almost all cabildos had their own houses, many of which are still identifiable,[38] though some have been converted into meeting places for a variety of parochial churches.

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[33] Ibid., 114. [F.O.]

[34] A reference to the historical Kingdom of Kongo established in the fourteenth century and that survived through the late nineteenth century. It was located in parts of present-day Angola, Cabinda, Republic of Congo, and Democratic Republic of Congo.

[35] Pedro Antonio Alfonso, *Memorias de un Matancero: apuntes para la historia de la isla de Cuba, con relación á la cuidad de San Carlos y San Severino de Matanzas* (Matanzas: Marsal y ca., 1854), 39. [F.O.]

[36] The late eighteenth century through about 1840.

Initially, the cabildos were located within the walls of Old Havana. They had permanent residences where their members met. M. Pérez Beato[39] remembers some of them, including the Arará cabildo, located on Bernaza street in front of Silveras's house; the Apapá Chiquito cabildo on Egido St., in front of the new arsenal entrance; the Royal Kongo cabildo on what has been named Florida St. in relatively modern times; the Mandinga cabildo on Habana St. near the corner of Merced; the Oro cabildo located on the corner known as Pólvora in 1819, at the corner of Progreso and Monserrate, where a grocery store now stands.

Article 39 of the *Bando de Buen Gobierno y Policía* of 1792 forced cabildos to the edge of the city along its walls. The decree stated the following: "Because some cabildos are located in streets inhabited by respectable citizens who justifiably complain about the discomfort caused by the harsh and unpleasant sounds of the cabildos' musical instruments, and because the tenements in which they reside should have been built in a manner that complemented or beautified the city, I order that within a year from this day all cabildos move to the edges of the city, between the old Tenaza (Pincer) and Punta (Point) entrances, but not in front of the Tierra (Land) entrance." In Article 87, an 1842 decree reiterates this announcement by prohibiting cabildos within the city and insisting they move to "houses facing the city wall." It also limits their celebrations to Sundays and saints' day celebrations. Some cabildos chose to distance themselves from the old city as the walls were torn down and the population expanded beyond their earlier limits.

Their Semireligious Character

Some or perhaps all cabildos also had a religious character, as Arboleya notes,[40] and this is evident in the way the groups carried fetishes in their street processions. Authorities quickly prohibited the use of such religious figures, at least in the public streets, believing them an affront to the Catholic religion. Blacks circumvented this problem easily, by adopting a Catholic saint as a patron related in some way to its African counterpart and bestowing upon it all of the power of their original fetish, or (perhaps more accurately stated) conflating one with the other. Eventually, cabildo members began substituting the carrying of a painted image of the saint on a flag in processions instead of a Catholic idol. This undoubtedly represents the influence of the Spanish army whose regalia dazzled black Africans' infantile minds.

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[37] A Spanish silver coin.

[38] See the following advertisements of slave sales taken from the *Papel Periódico de la Habana* on January 2 and 17 of 1799: "A black Carabalí female, on sale for 330 pesos. You will find her in the tenement building known as the Kongo cabildo in front of the mulatto garrison [*cuartel de pardos*]." "A black Mandinga woman around 22 years old, trained as a laundress and cook, healthy and without blemishes, on sale for 400 pesos. She may be found in front of the Arará cabildo, on the first corner of the houses on Navarrete." [F.O.]

[39] "La procedencia de los Negros de Cuba" (a published letter to Fernando Ortiz). See *El Curioso Americano*, March–April 1910, 51–52. [F.O.]

[40] José García de Arboleya. *Manual de la isla de Cuba,* 2nd ed. (Havana: Imprenta del Tiempo, 1859), 362. [F.O.]

From a religious point of view, cabildos were intended to adopt the character of religious cofradías in the broadest sense of the term. As is evident in my book *Los negros brujos,*[41] members consisted of the devotees of a given saint or idol. And since no African tribe was monotheistic nor had a single divine patron, the simple logic of the Africans, as mentioned, reacted psychologically to their new circumstances by Africanizing certain Catholic saints[42] or Catholicizing some of their own sylvan and fetishistic deities. In that way they adapted quickly to Hispanic political and religious organizations. By 1598 free blacks from the Zape (?) nation had established a cofradía dedicated to Our Lady of Remedies in Havana's Santo Domingo church. Thereafter, one by one, the cabildos slowly converted to cofradías and were incorporated into particular Catholic parishes.

Another manifestation of the religious character of cabildos can be observed in their contributions to funerary rites, as R. Meza describes them. They bear a close resemblance to societies dedicated solely to the celebration of elaborate burials in Brazil, other parts of the Antilles, and especially in Bahamas according to A. B. Ellis.[43] Thus, cabildos had religious associations as manifest in two mandates of the *Bando de Buen Gobierno y Policía* from 1792, reproduced below.

> Article 8: It is not permitted for African blacks to build altars to our saints in their cabildo houses as part of native dances from their lands that they organize. Government representatives will inform the leaders (*capataces*) of each nation of this decree. If the groups persist in said activities, the leader will be fined eight ducats on each occasion and instructed to send all members back to their respective

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[41] The topic of black cofradías will be examined at much greater length in the next edition of the book. [F.O.]

[42] The curious phenomenon of religious interinfluence or endosmosis has been studied for the first time in my book *Los negros brujos* whose greatly expanded second edition will continue analysis in the current work. [F.O.]

[43] A. B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa* (London: Chapman and Hall), 1894, 162.

> homes. The altar will be disassembled and the image of the saint and its other adornments will be transported to the priest or guardian of the neighborhood parish to do with as he will.
>
> Article 9: Deputies will communicate to the leaders of each cabildo that henceforth processions with black cadavers accompanied by dances or tribal cries will not be permitted under any circumstances or for any reason. If the order is not followed and if deputies find the widower, executor, or patron of the cadaver creating disorder of this nature, they will immediately take charge of the corpse and deliver it to the morgue.

It will thus come as no surprise to hear that the cabildos provided protection to African religions and helped sustain what is commonly known in Cuba as *brujería* (witchcraft).

Their Dances and Legal Regulation of Them

The heart, if not the soul, of cabildos involved dance events. On Sundays, members gathered for hours of diversion. Authorities permitted such revelry, with the understanding that the king or captain would be responsible for any unruly behavior that took place. Article 36 of the 1792 book of legislation states the following:

> Dances are only permitted in black cabildos on holidays. They may begin at 10am after Divine Offices until noon, from three in the afternoon until 8 in the evening. At that time all activity should cease and everyone must return to their homes. Festivities are not to continue under any pretext or participants will be fined. Capataces will be fined eight ducats upon first offense, with proceeds to benefit the Chamber of Governance and public works. Upon the second offense they will incur a fine of ten ducats along with various days of imprisonment, and the capataz will be divested of the leadership of the nation that has been conferred upon him.

And Article 37, in order to prevent the excesses that such celebrations might lead to, warned:

> Cabildos are also prohibited from selling food and drink to blacks attending dance events, even those that use the pretext that all participants must contribute to the event's expenses. This ruling applies to the poor in our jails as well, so that no one sells them alcohol.

In the ordinances of government legislation from 1835 issued by Brigadier General Jáuregui for Matanzas, we find the following disposition (Article 71) that demonstrates how regulations in Havana applied to other cities.

> The African dances of cabildos are not permitted except on holidays and on the edges of the city. They can begin as of ten in the morning through three in the afternoon, when prayers begin. The leaders of institutions violating these rules will be subject to a fine of four ducats upon first infraction, twice as much for the second, and fifteen days in prison for the third offense. Three-time offenders will be stripped of the position conferred upon them by members of their tribe.

In the decree of 1842, Article 87, discussed previously. reiterates these mandates involving cabildo celebrations.

During the first centuries of the Cuban colony, cabildo members took to the streets in processions, carrying religious imagery as well as drums and other instruments to celebrate their events, but Article 38 of the laws of 1792 curtailed such activity severely:

> In no instance shall blacks be permitted to take to the streets in tribal groups with their flags or other insignia, not even to seek out their cabildo leaders in their domiciles, and never to amuse themselves by playing their instruments, nor for any other reason or pretext. If they decide to do so despite this ordinance, they will be imprisoned and forced to labor for eight days on public works projects.

Nevertheless, this prohibition must have fallen into disuse, or at the very least authorities must have begun to issue special permits to cabildos on occasion so that they could perform in the streets. The tradition remained well known, as is evident in the legal code of 1842, which states in Article 88 that

> In no instance will blacks take to the street as a tribe with their flag or other insignia without permission of the government. Offending capataces will pay a fine of ten pesos. However, they are permitted to celebrate the diversion known as diablito dancing on the day of the Holy Kings in the same way they have done so in the past and in no other fashion.

Bachiller y Morales[44] notes that the scribe or secretary of each cabildo kept a copy of the regulations that were established. These regulations appear not to have been preserved to the present day. Where have they gone? Are they in private collections, or perhaps in some public library? Have they been irrevocably lost? Cabildos as such were regulated by the colonial mandates of 1792, not only in a religious sense but in many other ways, as I have discussed and will elaborate on in more detail. After 1792, other regulations reduced the legal purview of these institutions, especially in terms of their overtly public activities, their dances and festivities, to such an extent that the term cabildo has become synonymous only with the fiestas of such groups.

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[44] Antonio Bachiller y Morales, *Tipos y costrumbres de la isla de Cuba* (Havana: Miguel de Villa, 1881), 31. [F.O.]

Decline of the Cabildos and Their Manifestations Today

The abolition of slavery led to the decline of the cabildo tradition. The governor general decreed on January 2, 1877, that all cabildo meetings involving the election of leaders and the administration of funds be presided over by the senior guardian of security in that city district. This was probably in response to civil disorder or excesses that had taken place and to ensure a more constant intervention on the part of authorities in the activities of black societies. In 1882, a Royal Order of April 24 and a subsequent dispatch by the governor general on June 7 required that cabildos not prohibit the mixing of Africans and Cuban-born blacks among their members. The intent was not to "bother blacks nor violate their customs, but to skillfully and prudently influence their behavior so that the cabildos gradually lose their current character and eventually become more like other recreational societies, governed by common legislation." It is clear that the Spanish governor continued to believe, like the population in general, that the primary focus of the cabildos involved dance and recreation.

The provincial civil governor's proclamation of December 19, 1884, banned African cabildo gatherings and their processions through the streets on Christmas Eve and Kings' Day. Thus, the African saturnalia passed into history. The celebrations of 1884 were the last permitted to take place; January 6, 1885, represented the first Epiphany in silence that Cuba ever had. The decree was often poorly interpreted, as some believed that it banned all cabildo meetings. But a ruling by the colonial government on January 7, 1885, made clear that "the effect of the earlier pronouncement pertains only to the gatherings and processions of said cabildos through the public streets on determined days associated with such expression. In terms of the gatherings that cabildos organize in their respective domiciles, they may continue current practice."

But the cabildos entered into a process of decline nevertheless. The governor general established on January 2, 1877, that cabildos needed to be registered and subject to the laws governing other social groups in order for their existence and property rights to be legalized. And in a ruling from April 4, 1888, he prohibited the formation of any additional cabildos following older models, the only exception being if they were organized according to modern civil codes and oversight. When Governor Rodríguez Batista[45] reprimanded ñáñigo secret societies and expressed a desire to regulate cabildos, which seemed abnormal institutions to him, he obliged them to adopt a Catholic denomination taken from a saint and sign an agreement to the effect that in the event of the dissolution of the cabildo or society all their possessions would become property of the church institution.

This mandate revived the medieval practice of centuries past across the Atlantic of the cofradías in Seville. That is why we find numerous African social organizations today, survivals of the older cabildos, maintained as part of a fierce struggle to exist in the face of growing hostility and apathy toward them on the part of society that wished them gone. These societies are blanketed in Catholic trappings, yet perpetuated by those most opposed to change: devotees with faith in religious ritual and in African fetishes. They profess belief in and worship their Lucumí idols, thinly disguised by a superficial Catholicism.

The cabildo's transformation under official pressure to conform to legislation related to other social organizations has been a curious process. The considerable reliable data I have amassed shed light on the ways that older practices have been perpetuated, on the distortions evident in such practice today, and on the vitality and importance of the cabildos in their heyday. In 1909 the following institutions were still registered on the list of associations of the government of Havana province, openly or clandestinely tied to older cabildos.

- The "Our Lady of Mercy" Society of Mutual Aid, Instruction, and Recreation, part of the Center for Cooks and Confectioners
- The "Our Lady the Caridad del Cobre"[46] Society in Bejucal
- The Mutual Aid Society "Our Lady of Regla" for people of color in Bauta
- The Mutual Aid Society "Our Lady of Mercies" in Ceiba del Agua
- The Mutual Aid Society "San Diego del Alcalá," or the old Carabalí[47] Cabildo Acocuá.

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[45] Carlos Rodríguez Batista, civil governor of Havana province in the late 1880s, known for his campaigns against ñáñigos or Abakuás. The latter are members of secret societies modeled after similar practices of the Efik people of the Cross Delta region, between present-day Nigeria and Cameroon.

[46] The patron saint of Cuba, a mulatto woman, syncretized among devotees of Santería with the Yoruba goddess Ochún.

[47] A local term to denote individuals with ancestral ties to the Calabar or Cross River Delta region in Africa, between present-day Nigeria and Cameroon.

- The Mutual Aid Society "Union of Children of the Arará Cuévano Nation"
- The Mutual Aid Society "Saint Cajetan" for people of color
- The Mutual Aid Society "Masinga Kongos," dedicated to Our Lady of Montserrat
- The Mutual Aid Society "Arará Magino," dedicated to the Holy Spirit
- The Mutual Aid Society "Royal Kongos" cabildo, dedicated to Christ Our Lord of Safe Passage
- The "Congo Mumbala" Cabildo Mutual Aid Society
- The "African Lucumí" cabildo, a mutual aid society dedicated to Santa Barbara
- "The Poor of St. Lazarus" Mutual Aid Society
- "Evolution," a mutual aid society of the Arará Sabalú tribe, dedicated to the Holy Spirit
- "Our Lady of Charity" a mutual aid society of the Kongo Mobangué tribe, dedicated to the Caridad del Cobre
- "African Association," formerly the Royal Kongo Cabildo devoted to Our Lady of Solitude
- Mutual Aid Society of the former Carabalí cabildo
- Saint Cajetan Minas Popo Gold Coast. A society of recreation and mutual aid.

The study of the regulations governing these associations is interesting in that they describe in modern terms the past practices of Afro-Cuban cabildos. The Children of the Arará Cuévano Tribe's society was founded "for the protection of its members in all forms." It does not have any assets. The role of president, director, and treasurer, state the bylaws, "will all be performed by the capataz of the association." It has an advisory council of women (in addition to the one formed by men) consisting of a matron, anywhere from two to six *camareras* (ladies in waiting), a *mayordoma* (female overseer), and six spokespersons. The group's Catholic patron is the Holy Spirit and the attendance of all members is required at their celebrations on the second day of Pentecostal Easter. This society existed only for a very short time.

Another, called the Union of Cuévano Ararás, has as its declared objective the mutual aid of members in case of sickness or death. It owned ranch houses in the countryside, organized a Catholic celebration in honor of the Holy Spirit, and had a registered address, Antón Recio St. #70. Its governance consisted of a king, a secretary, and four representatives, as well as an honorary directorate consisting of women. In 1895 it was forced to disband solemnly as all members had died.

The Mutual Aid Society of the Carabalí Isuamo Isiegue de Oro cabildo had a directorate consisting of three presidents or matrons and an administrator. It had its own property, a house located on Monserrate St. #57. It did not charge its members any dues. Its religious events took place on the Day of the Dead and the Day of Immaculate Conception. The society rented out a rustic country house "so that sick members could stay there." Earlier the institution was called Gold Carabalí Cabildo, Isuama Isueque of Pure and Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of the Rosary, Saint Benedict and Saint Christopher. The Mutual Aid Society of the Carabalí Cabildo Ungrí owned its own properties, for instance, Monserrate St. #57, and an administrative organization similar to the group described above with six female presidents or matrons. Its patron saint was the Virgin of the Rosary.

The Mutual Aid Society of the Mina Popo tribe from the Gold Coast was founded under the celestial patronage of Saint Cajetan and represented a new incarnation of the older cabildo. It owned various properties at one time, but lost them. The institution celebrated its annual fiesta in the Saintly Christ church and was overseen by an administrator, two male presidents, and three women. It later broke up.

Royal Kongos formed the King Saint Melchior[48] cabildo at Florida St. #46, as established by the public record on June 6, 1792, and April 13, 1796. The organization claimed other properties as well that were under litigation. Its emblem states "Mutual Aid Society of the descendants (!) of Saint Melchior the King."

The Arará Magino cabildo was founded or legalized on February 25, 1890. Members had to be "honorable" and to have never belonged to the supposedly extinct association of ñáñigos. "The cabildo will hold celebrations on all feast days associated with its tribe, those involving African dances, but will not allow the inclusion of drumming styles not associated with its tribe." The leadership (one president, two vice presidents, three matrons, a treasurer, and a secretary) held positions for life. The group's properties (a house on Saint Nicolas St. #276 and part of the building at Compostela #171, registered on November 23, 1691) could not be sold without the unanimous agreement of all members. The cabildo was reorganized in 1892. In 1909, it drafted new bylaws under the name "Arará Magino and Their Descendants." Each January 1st it organized a traditional celebration in the manner of the members' place of origin with gourd instruments and frame drums or tambourines.[49] Its aim is to "perpetuate what was known as the 'Arará Nation' in Havana." Women now occupy two positions as representatives within its directorate.

Joaquín Cádiz reorganized the African Lucumí Cabildo in 1891, making its principal goal one of mutual aid in cases of sickness or death. On all festival days the group is mandated to organize African dances "known as *tambores* or drumming events," with drumming styles other than those of the Lucumí not permitted. Every December 4 it celebrates the day of its patron saint, Saint Barbara.[50] All officers (one president, two vice presidents, three matrons, one secretary, one treasurer, and three spokespersons) hold their positions for life. The institution was located on Jesús Peregrino St. #49. In 1839, it was also reorganized, adopting a flag of bright red and white.[51] Every December 4 members celebrated a mass with a solemn sermon. On December 5, it held mass for deceased members of the society and later led a procession. Members paid dues consisting of two pesos to join and one peso per month thereafter. "If any member becomes habitually involved in serious vices, they will be expelled." In 1905, the group was reorganized yet again; as of that date they hired a physician to attend to their members. In 1909 and 1912, new bylaws appeared yet again. I plan to examine these documents, as well as the history and religious ties of this interesting present-day cabildo, as well as others, in the next edition of my book *Los negros brujos*.[52] It will support the analysis of fetishistic Afro-Cuban social groups. The Lucumí cabildo is located on San Nicolás St. #302. In 1910, its treasury held about 700 pesos.

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[48] One of the three kings from eastern lands said to have visited the baby Jesus, and popularly believed to have had a dark complexion.

[49] The bylaws attempt to avoid the word *tambores,* for reasons I explain elsewhere. [F.O.]

Ramón Rodríguez, a black man, legally established and modernized the Arará Dahomey Society, located on Esperanza St. #37, on March 16, 1889. The society owned that residence as well as one at Florida St. #40 and one third of Compostela #171. It was to organize religious celebrations "in accordance with the Catholic church," as well as dances and raffles. If the organization were to disband, all properties would pass to the Holy Spirit parish. The group resolved to nominate the black woman María de Jesús Puig as administrator. Sometime later, Ernesto Noriega, who lived next to Florida #42 and served as president of the Africa Mutual Aid Society, brought suit against María de Jesús Puig in the eastern court. The documents refer to her as administrator of the now-disbanded Arará Dahomey Mutual Aid Society. The suit claims that Puig not only lived in the house at Esperanza #37 illegally, the one previously owned by the cabildo, but had failed to formally announce the dissolution of the society. This had ostensibly permitted her to sell off the other house at Florida #40, which had also been the property of the cabildo, donated by María Joaquina Mesa.

In 1892 two other societies were formed: the Zabalino cabildo and the Ajícaro or Ajícario Society. I am unaware of the origin of either term. The same can be said of another association registered under the name Cabildo Four Eyes. The existence of these institutions must have been brief.

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[50] Saint Barbara is syncretized with the Yoruba deity Changó.

[51] The colors of St. Barbara, or Changó, Lucumí deity of thunder. [F.O.]

[52] Despite this assertion, a second edition of *Los negros brujos* never appeared.

The continued legal existence of nearly all the African societies today derives first from their involvement in the practice of fetish cults and second from the need to perpetuate institutions that could manage and enjoy the benefits of the few modest pieces of real estate owned by groups of the past, inherited from the great cabildos of the nineteenth century. Though the properties were quite modest, on more than one occasion they attracted the attention of the Cuban tribunals. One noteworthy example of this is the house at Maloja #149, a bequest of the black man Simón Carro in 1871 to the Carabalí Brícamo San José tribe and cabildo. This cabildo never came under the regulation by the laws of social associations; its existence (if it had one) was outside the law.

In 1892 a curious association called African Union and Its Descendants was formed. Its bylaws reveal the influences of modern society and a certain level of cultural sophistication. The objective of the institution was the union of all Africans in Cuba, the creation of schools, the organization of medical services, and so on. In 1893 its membership asked to use an African flag as its flag, in accordance with the imagery used in the treaty signed between Spain and the International Association of the Congo (*sic*) on January 7, 1885. This flag was blue with gold stars in the center. The Spanish governor denied them permission to do so, asserting that "Africans were not foreigners in Cuba, but rather when they arrived they were considered Spanish." The bylaws of this eccentric society state that "in periods of mourning, women should attend events dressed in white with black capes." In 1894 its members nominated Mr. William George Emanuel the "sole representative of the African race to the Governor." In 1895 they gave him the new title of "Dawn of Hope," extending his legal jurisdiction to the entire island and dedicating the society as a whole to King Melchior of the east. Among the objectives of the society was to promote "trade with steam ships between Africa and Cuba" (!).

Mr. Emanuel, founder of the organization and apparently a Protestant pastor, proposed to combine all existing cabildos into a single powerful organization with fantastical ambitions. He believed that in collecting and allocating income from all the cabildo houses he could undertake mutual reciprocity on a mass scale and monopolize the public representation of hundreds of thousands of Afro-Cubans, and so forth. The initiative never resulted in more than an ill-fated attempt. In 1896 a meeting took place with representatives from the Dahomey, Gabalú, Mina, Carabalí, Mandinga, Mundukuka, Masinga, Mumbanque, Mundamba, Luamú Numbara, and Saint Iphigenia cabildos from Guanabacoa. After vigorous controversy, Mr. Emanuel was expelled from the Dawn of Hope cabildo. That institution did not cease to exist, however; on April 18, 1897, a meeting was held with Juan Sifré (president of the Gangas), Eduardo Balló (president of the Mandingas), Eusebio Zayas (president of the Carabalís), and Federico Rencurell (president of the Minas). Those in attendance agreed upon a new set of joint regulations similar to those proposed earlier. But as of that moment, the actions of the association leave no further written record. Nevertheless, even in 1910 it appears that Mr. Emanuel had not given up his aspirations. He presented himself to the authorities as the representative of African natives, calling for their civilizing in the country. He suggested he could be a representative and liquidator of African cabildos and requested certificates attesting to the dissolving of certain cabildos. I personally came to know Mr. Emanuel years later and know from speaking with him that he never abandoned his goal of representing all black Africans to Cuban authorities. He hoped to reclaim all the properties that formerly belonged to cabildos and that he believes (and it well may be the case) were squandered through their owners' ignorance of the law and the maliciousness of whites and of some cabildo leaders.

This data demonstrates the impossibility of accommodating cabildos within modern legal codes, as well as the fickleness and inability of their leaders to generate formal written documents and seriously administer their affairs in a manner consistent with a civilized and legally advanced civilization. The data also shows how artificial many of the cabildos were, without a real or formalized existence. The only reason that many of them persisted was their adherence to fetish cults brought from Africa, cults that still have many followers all across Cuba.

Government agencies waged war against the cabildos, despite their proclamations to the contrary. Officials believed that such "relics from the times of slavery" belonged to an earlier period, one associated with backwardness. They felt a sense of urgency to whitewash and renovate society and to hide what they believed to be antiquated eccentricities. In addition, authorities believed that cabildos had contact with dangerous ñáñigo secret societies. They believed both groups were identical in their aims, if not in their particular manifestations. They painted both with the same brush.

On the other hand, even many blacks believed that cabildos represented a form of social stigma for blacks who had been freed from slavery. They were determined to erase the most visible parts of their racialized public profile, at least superficially, and to imitate white behavior. And more than anything else, the end of African immigration and the ever-greater predominance of Cuban-born blacks made cabildos seem increasingly less necessary. Blacks no longer felt the same urgency to enjoy the benefits of interacting with their compatriots from the same tribe.

The government's intent, clearly expressed, to transform cabildos into modern institutions, failed miserably. The government focused on attacking their external antiquated manifestations but did not recognize the persistence of their internal essence. Cabildos disappeared, and with them the many good things associated with them: mutual aid, security in the face of illness, a base of support for members, and a traditional and rigorous form of group intimacy. Some of the raucous drumming of their members disappeared as well, inoffensive and so gratifying to Africans. What has persisted, by contrast, is sylvan, animist fetishism disguised by devotion to Catholic saints, with the bylaws of new institutions adapted to legal formalism. And thus the authorities were satisfied. How much better off we would be if the opposite were the case! How much better things would be if we had cabildos of mutual aid and public dancing with drums, but no sorcerers' temples, whether clandestine or officially tolerated!

Our society has deprecated and put an end to the secular tradition of African mutual aid societies without creating any other modern form of mutual aid or social program in their place. This has resulted in a great loss for our economic vitality and for the well-being of our poorest social classes. As we strive to advance and create new institutions of social welfare, we realize that we will have to re-create the essence of cabildos of the past, though, of course, with a distinct structure and in new forms. If we had known how to study these groups before it was too late and support their efforts, civilizing their inherently charitable traditions, we would have advanced Cuban social cooperation significantly. There were always a few individuals who defended cabildos from this perspective,[53] but they never recognized the transcendent nature of the problem. Today we admire the powerful and regionally based mutual aid associations founded by Spanish immigrants.[54] We recognize how much work they have undertaken and how much official energy is saved through their private collective initiatives. It makes one think about what it would cost the government to satisfy the needs that these groups dedicate themselves to magnanimously. We might consider that our poor and underclasses do not have any analogous institution and that the cabildos might have satisfied similar needs for the population of color as they did in years past. Instead of destroying cabildos in bureaucratic ignorance, we could have contributed to their evolution and improvement. On a more modest scale, they might have been like the Spanish societies of today that unite members around a common origin and widespread practices of mutual cooperation. What are these Spanish institutions if not immense and civilized cabildos for whites?

It is interesting to observe how the drive to create mutual aid groups among Africans led to their founding organizations identical to the cabildos, even in countries more hostile than ours to their free social movement. Thus, we can observe in Phillips' writings[55] how, as late as 1860, blacks in New Orleans founded the Union Band Society with characteristics analogous to those of our cabildos. Their directorate consisted of a president, a vice president, a secretary, a treasurer, a marshal, a mother, and six male and twelve female persons in waiting. The duties of members included maintaining peace and unity among all and paying fifty cents each a month in dues. The material benefits of belonging to the society included: care during periods of illness and the assignment of one of the persons in waiting to assist them, male or female depending on the gender of the ill member; the washing of their clothes and payment for medical care; and coverage of funeral costs as necessary. This Afro-American cabildo in Louisiana offered its services to nonmembers and arranged their funerals for a cost of $50. If members got behind in the payment of dues for three consecutive months, they were expelled from the group unless the cause was abject poverty. In that case, other members might choose voluntarily to pay their outstanding dues for them. The black societies of Louisiana consisted of free and enslaved blacks, though the latter were preferred. One aspect of such groups was distinct from that of Afro-Cuban cabildos, namely a tendency to be secretive, as Phillips notes, and to be strongly influenced by Masonic practices and similar white secret societies. Our cabildos were not secret, nor can they be described as black lodges as this erudite North American historian does in reference to Louisiana. This may be due to the fact that blacks interested in close social ties and who were inclined to more overt social action always had the option of becoming a ñáñigo and thus part of a secretive Afro-Cuban association. It may also be that the same factors producing an efflorescence of ñáñigo groups in Cuba were at work in a slightly different way in the southern states of our neighbor to the north (the United States), though this has not been studied carefully by American sociologists. On the surface, slave societies create conditions that favor the emergence of slave associations, making me think a correlation may exist. I plan to examine the topic of black secret societies in the United States as part of a future book on *ñañiguismo* in Cuba. These paragraphs are perhaps sufficient to make evident how strongly blacks brought here during the slave trade desired to create new social organizations everywhere they were able to do so.

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[53] Pedro Antonio Alfonso, *Memorias de un matancero* (Matanzas: Marsal y Cia., 1854). [F.O.]

[54] Some of them have more than fifty thousand members and pay dues of a peso and a half or two each month. [F.O.]

[55] Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment, and Control of Negro Labor as Determined* (New York: D. Appleton, 1918), 415ff.

Comparsas: Their Description, Origin, and Social Significance

An interesting topic related to the focus of this study is an African survival, the most recent, genuine manifestation of the people derived from Afro-Cuban celebrations of old involving cabildos and diablitos. I refer here to contemporary comparsas or carnival street bands. The reader who has lived or visited Cuba may have seen motley comparsas made up of members of the poorer sectors of society. They typically perform during carnival season or during other public festivities. At the head of this multiethnic retinue marches an individual, usually black, who holds a painted lantern made of multicolored paper, not always devoid of artistic qualities. Behind him march other individuals dressed in garish outfits and carrying many other lanterns, all of them surrounded by a chaotic crowd in which blacks predominate, shouting out a refrain in voices that are out of tune and hoarse. They repeat their tune endlessly and with despairing monotony; the lyrics tend to be utter foolishness.[56] Jesús Castellanos[57] describes them in this way:

> It is undeniable that there is poetry of a somewhat violent and exotic sort in those motley waves of revelers who pass enthusiastically through the streets in poorer neighborhoods. Something about them reminds one of religious ceremonies and the delirium of war. Over their heads, the spirit of the primates hovers, finding a place within the safe haven of civilization. This primal spirit lives on in countries of the fevered and fanatical. The columns of inflamed participants walk menacingly, gravely, blood injected into the whites of their eyes. A paper lantern turning on high hypnotizes them, and the drums make their feet untiring. Beating out the same rhythm, the performers devour streets and plazas, insensitive and pompous. Their necks protrude into the air, shiny with the sheen of sweat and displaying fat veins like the strings of a violin. Their song emanates from ample throats: monotonous, ardent, bellicose grunting or shouting. The members' outfits bear no relation to anything: plumed Indians, fantastic warriors, Chinamen in colorful prints. All of them manifest an impropriety that further excites the river of human meat. They may have begun their procession in a particular order, arranged with carts and lanterns according to some plan. But a fever spreads and contaminates the masked figures from the edges, and soon the river becomes a confused flow. Only vibrant, barbarous song rings out in harmony from all, felt by every breast. The crowd does not laugh; something great is taking place. Everyone is possessed, they have a sinister appearance . . . I do not deny that the groups have a certain

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[56] I include a few examples of lyrics from recent years, as recorded in the newspaper *Cuba,* February 29, 1912. "The group coming by now is called the 'Chinos de Arnán' (Arnan's Chinamen). Here is what they are singing: 'Chin, llán, chin llán, los seliputá alló, alló, alló, mira colim, tomca, alló, alló' [most of this text has no clear meaning]. Next comes a group in modernist costumes, the comparsa Chanticleer, singing 'Come here, my sweet, come here, love, I feel like a chanticleer, let's have a good time.' And the chorus: 'Look at me walking along, like a chanticleer, like a chanticleer.' May the muses of Rostand forgive us!" [F.O.] The final remark is an apparent reference to Edmond Eugène Alexis Rostand (1868–1918), French poet and dramatist.

[57] Ortiz does not provide a reference for this citation, but he cites the same text in a brief article by Jesús Castellanos (1879–1912) on comparsas from 1907 (See Appendix, Ortiz 1907), suggesting that the essay must have appeared in the first years of the twentieth century.

> artistic quality, a little too risqué, perhaps, but always an artistic aspect to these scenes of black paganism. It is a shame that the names of the comparsas do not correspond to the rabid tone of these strange carnival celebrations; names like The Hawk (El Gavilán), The Free Kongos (Los Congos Libres), The Little Scorpion (El Alacrán Chiquito), The Snake (La Culebra).[58]

Carnival celebrations represent a distinct form of cultural survival, perhaps imported by Wolof[59] Africans. Berenguer Feraud discusses a similar celebration that predates those of Afro-Cubans, for instance.[60] He writes the following:

> On the island of Gorée and in Saint-Luis, but principally in the former, a very original celebration is held, a festival of lanterns on Christmas Eve. All the blacks process through the streets before and after twelve o'clock mass with a lantern in their hands. The lanterns are of the most original shapes, and the person with the most original design is undoubtedly delighted with himself. Youths begin to gather about a month beforehand and build monumental lanterns that must be carried by eight men or affixed to a cart. The effect of the lanterns is quite beautiful at times. All those with free time on their hands, men, women, and children, follow behind the monumental lantern in the procession, admiring it constantly. The promoters of the event stop at every store to ask for *sángara*,[61] then immediately sing a variety of diverse and monotonous songs, on and on.

The names of comparsas reflect the primitive and overwhelmingly African psyche of their participants perfectly. Not one civilized name is used, not even a name in vogue among more erudite [white] comparsas such as "Harmony," "Estudiantina,"[62] and "Worker Woman." Their names are savage, though they appear to have been translated. Groups such as "The Snake" (La Culebra) "The Little Scorpion" (El Alacrán Chiquito), or "Beautiful Bird" (Pájaro Lindo) recall atavistic totems, names taken from fauna and bestowed with sacred connotations on a tribe, family, or individual. It is not necessary to explore the potency of African totemism here in order to recognize that the use of these animal names in the titles of comparsa bands is nothing more than a memory retained through the years and across the seas. One comparsa is called "Children of Quirina" (Hijos de Quirina). It recalls a particular moment in the history of the Afro-Cuban masses in which "Children of Quirina" meant something like the traditional orthodoxy who oppose heterodox fetishists.[63] Other comparsas are named "Red Moor Mandinga" (Mandinga Moro Rojo) and "Blue Moor Mandinga" (Mandinga Moro Azul), names that recall the Muslim faith so common among African Mandingas. Their color descriptors attempt to momentarily revive the symbolism of colors in Africa, distinctive of particular tribes. Undoubtedly in order to differentiate themselves, the Mandinga comparsas chose a particular color, just as their forebearers would have done in Africa. And there are other odd titles like "Chávez Kongos," "Chinamen from Venice" and "Turks from Regla" (!). They reveal a continuation of the exaggerated localist spirit of the black race, a localism not delimited by a race or tribe (Kongos, Chinese, etc.) but instead rooted in the Havana neighborhoods where they live, such as Chávez or Regla. The study of the black Cuban population provides many examples of such localism, but this is not the place to explore the topic. Note that even in cases in which the African derivation of the groups' structure and names are less obvious, African influences still permeate the lowest psychic levels of our society in that gray layer[64] I have spoken of elsewhere. One recent comparsa took the name "Amalia's Hungarians" (!), another "Quirina's Children," and another "Martin's Children, United with Pires's Grandchildren." Even if comparsas do not reflect African survivals in their entirety, one can find savage adornments associated with pre-Columbian Cuban inhabitants used by some of them, or Chinese adornments, the latter a race that shared the hardships of forced plantation labor with blacks. On other occasions, comparsas adopt the persona of our campesinos (also known as *guajiros*). In such cases, each member takes pleasure in representing a somewhat thuggish guajiro with a machete at their waist, or drawn from its scabbard, even if the presence of guitars and *bandurrias*[65] and the obligatory representation of a thatched hut lend a certain civilized aspect to their masquerade. The same comparsa members adorn themselves with attractive silk scarves, an African-derived practice. The reader must surely understand by now that the theme of African influences deserves greater attention, as I plan to undertake in a future study of the black underworld in Cuba.

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[58] See also the article by Israel Castellanos, "El carnaval como revelador de la inferioridad psíquica de una raza" ("Carnival as an Indicator of the Psychic Inferiority of the Black Race") in the *Gaceta Médica del Sur de España,* 1914, 580. José María Collantes has dedicated a few verses to the same topic in the poem "Atavism" from 1900. [F.O.]

[59] An ethnic group in present-day Senegal, Gambia, and Mauritania.

[60] Berenguer Feraud, *Les Peuplades de la Sénégambie* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1879), 24. [F.O.]

[61] This anecdote reminds me of the way Cuban comparsas stop at neighborhood stores in poor neighborhoods. [F.O.]

[62] The name for a student-based, ambulatory music group.

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[63] I will expand on this topic in the next edition of *Los negros brujos*. [F.O.] In fact, as noted, Ortiz never published a new edition of the book.

[64] An apparent reference to the "Cuban underworld" (*hampa cubana*) discussed in *Los negros brujos*.

[65] A plucked lute-like instrument similar to the mandolin.

For many years comparsa groups have employed their characteristic lanterns (*farolas*) in Havana. Long ago the black population referred to the barrio El Ángel as *El Cangrejo*, or "The Crab." They did so because on the evening of Saint Rafael's holy day a comparsa band performed there and its members carried a great lantern with a crab painted on it. (Taking advantage of the extraordinary crowds that came to such festivities, some poor families from the neighborhood began selling special tortillas.[66] They later became known as San Rafael tortillas and still bear that name today.)

In recent years, comparsas have suffered from unjust legal decisions on the part of white authorities. Some years, recognizing how Afro-Cubans love these carnivalesque, noisy, and orgiastic processions, the municipal government attempts to gratify them in order to garner their votes in elections. On such occasions it has not only permitted comparsas but organized contests between them. Other years, in the guise of cultural management or aversion to African cultural survivals, it has banned them or limited their processions to certain neighborhoods. And until 1914 authorities attempted to make transitory comparsa groups subject to laws governing more formal social entities. An example of the inconsistent and unjust criteria that pervade governmental agencies in this sense can be seen in the following police proclamation.[67]

> Havana 1 February 1913. Police headquarters, in accordance with the authority granted to it by the authorities, makes known to all captains and lieutenants in charge of police stations that they must fulfill the following order. Comparsas are henceforth not allowed to take to

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[66] This implies the Spanish-style tortilla, a baked dish made with eggs and potato.

[67] The civil authorities have expressed similar ambivalence about the illegality or legality of throwing flour or eggs during Havana's carnival. Sometimes the authorities believe they should punish such annoying behavior. At other times they decide they should permit it, which is perhaps more surprising. Such carnival habits, defended by many as a traditional practice, derive from Spain where they were long-standing diversions associated with Shrovetide, the days immediately preceding Ash Wednesday. This can be seen in the text of an interesting book by Enrique Cock, a Dutch apostolic notary and archer who worked in Spain at the end of the sixteenth century (see Enrique Cock, *Jornada de Tarazona hecha por Felipe II en 1592* (Madrid: Imprenta de M. Tello, 1879). Cited in J. García Mercadal, ed., *España vista por los extranjeros,* vol. 2 (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1917). Cock writes: "In Spain it is customary for the people to put on masks and stroll through the streets singing couplets and other things to amuse themselves. They throw eggs filled with scented water at young ladies who appear at windows. This is the most common practice of people here, very given to carnal pleasures, and they let themselves go during these three days. Gentlemen as well as common folk on horseback or on foot recite the couplets that they know. They attempt to release the amorous desires of their hearts and reap the rewards of such efforts. The common people, the service class, throw handfuls of flour at each other as they pass, or snowballs if snow has fallen, or oranges in the case of Andalucia that has many of them." In Cuba years ago, and still today, both gentlemen and common people stealthily appear in public with flour-filled eggs. [F.O.]

> the streets using instruments, whether bass drums or other drums, that imitate the sound of African drums. Such groups are also not allowed to use gourd instruments, *marimbas,*[68] or dance or move their bodies to the sound of such music. As soon as a comparsa appears, the watchmen associated with that area is to notify the appropriate police station so that it sends an official (or sergeant serving as an official) to accompany said comparsa until it leaves their city zone. It is also mandated that during the entire route the comparsa travels it be accompanied by guardsmen wherever they go, until their procession is over. During the period they are in the streets, comparsa groups must never be allowed to use the Paseo de Martí avenue or the Malecón.[69]

One finds yet another prohibition against African drums in this proclamation, a constant obsession among our police and civil authorities. Yet drumming offends them less when it is used to pander to the common people for political purposes. In such cases they permit the most disgraceful and orgiastic debauchery to the sound of African drums in our streets and public plazas. Without a doubt, aside from the irritating and exasperating noise comparsas create for those unused to African music (and, in that sense, it does not merit regulation any more than the strident, offensive, and insulting cornets heard in our working-class dance bands), African drums do not represent a danger to public order, or morality, or civilization. We should vigilantly regulate lewd dances such as orgiastic rumbas, intervene in fetishistic dance events as well as those of a political nature, and ensure that drumming only take place on certain days and at certain times. But there is no need to deprive blacks of certain inoffensive public acts, at least no more pernicious and unbearable than similar pastimes that whites are permitted to take part in. Crack down on drumming if you must, but do not give free reign to the cornet. The performance of both is vulgar, an affront to the ear, and heretical to musical aesthetic orthodoxy. Perhaps public penance should be required of those who use them.

We should not persecute African drumming, since blacks and, perhaps even more so, whites need to have a way of releasing their natural and innocently spirited impulses. Our Constitution protects the right to play on a cornet and a drum. And, above all, our authorities need to standardize legal criteria regarding such matters. The arbiter of legislation related to Afro-Cuban carnival music should not be a mayor or police officer who may be civilized or not, bribable or not. And such matters should not be decided by the demands of a particular political campaign; that would be truly sad. Change in this area is necessary in the pursuit of justice and in order to support a major social concern: the coexistence of blacks and whites in our nation.

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[68] Also known as *marímbulas,* this term refers to African-derived *mbira* or thumb pianos, some of them quite large and used as bass instruments.

[69] The Paseo del Prado is a wide Havana street that divides the old city area from Central Havana. The Malecón is a similarly wide street that runs along the ocean's edge.

And besides, even in comparsas of evident primitiveness we find something artistic, as the perceptive Jesús Castellanos has noted. Why should we eliminate them when we can transform, improve, and incorporate them, thus purifying our national folklore? Don't we maintain other persistent traditions of a corrupting and antisocial nature, traditions just as savage, impure, and impossible to purify that we never discuss banning such as the lottery and cock fighting? Though we have proven ourselves to be a dynamic civilization, able to eliminate previously sanctioned customs, do we still believe that all of these uncultured but deeply engrained practices need to disappear from Cuba? Can we still justify a repressive campaign against these remnants of childlike African art even if it were one free of prejudice and a priori or arrogant denouncements?

PART II

Instrument Essays

3

Makuta

Translated by **David F. Garcia**

Makuta is a drum, dance, and rhythm of Kongo origin used in sacred ceremonies. The makuta drum is cylindrical, single headed, and open at the bottom. Sources suggest that performers originally constructed the drums with tuning wedges along the sides. Today, the heads are generally nailed down and the drums are sometimes made with threaded tuning bolts.

In Africa, Bantu religious concepts are the most poorly understood; they have not been well studied in the Americas either.[1] They constitute a large lacuna in Afro-American ethnography. Because of the vast geographic expanse and extensive human population corresponding to the Bantu ethnic group, and because the religions in their great region have not evolved to the same extent as the complex and elaborate practices of the Yoruba and Arará cultures, the Kongos' magical-religious ideas have been the least conspicuous of all black ethnic groups in the Americas. References to them are rare,

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Translated from Fernando Ortiz, *Los instrumentos de la música afrocubana*, vol. 3 (Havana: Ministerio de Educación, Dirección de Cultura, 1952), 430–45.

[1] As mentioned, Ortiz uses *bantú* (Bantu) and *congo* (Kongo) synonymously. *Bantú* does not appear as an entry in his *Glosario de afronegrismos* from 1924. Multiple entries for *Congo* do appear, however, including references to "the African region of the Congo" and the need to "explain the geographic origins of various tribes that spread throughout Cuba during slavery and were known as Kongos." See Ortiz (1924) 1991, 118–20. Lydia Cabrera (2001, 31, 160) defines *Bantu* as a "conglomerate of peoples united by language. They occupy two-thirds of the southern portion of Africa."

unreliable, vague, and almost always confused (even among black commentators) compared with those of other Afro-diasporic cultures. Nevertheless, the data I have accumulated in Cuba, though still unpublished, allow me to make some provisional conclusions about them.

Cuban Kongos have long had sacred/magical cults; these still exist, though sometimes they are contaminated by foreign influences. The groups have a liturgical music for their public religious ceremonies and another, more cryptic, music for their magical practices. This magical music was and continues to be performed for *palos*, *garabatos,* or *lungóua* when *nganguleros* "played palo" with their initiates, often accompanying them on a little drum.[2] Religious music performed in public was generally executed on a set of makuta drums. Figure 3.1[3] shows two makuta drums, with heads tightened with screws and bolts. The photograph, taken in 1899 or 1900 during the U.S. intervention in Cuba, depicts a rural Kongo *cabildo*. The king and queen are pictured, the former with his cane and the latter with her silk sash insignia. Also shown are the *mayor de plaza* (roughly, "chief of staff") with his sword, the standard-bearer with his flag of indecipherable symbolism, and others dressed up, modestly, in the style of the period.

The Bantu word *makuta* was feminized during its creolization in Cuba (i.e., as *la makuta*), just as occurred with the word *conga*. In Congo, *kuta* means "collect," "convene," "congregate,"[4] and *ma* is an article or prefix meaning "something." Makuta is thus "something that congregates," which corresponds to the social function of "playing makuta," the bringing together of people for a religious or collective act.

On the other hand, the religious character of makuta rhythms suggests that perhaps the word is none other than the Kongo word *ma-kuta*, from *kuta,* meaning "medicine," as in a charm or magical substance wrapped in a bundle (which, in the local vernacular of Cuba, we call *makuto*). Makuta is the name of a *nkisi*, or, as the Cuban-born *tata-nganga* say, a *prenda,* when

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[2] *Palo* refers to religious and musical practices associated with Palo Monte. *Garabato* (literally, "staff"; *lungóua* in Kongo) refers to sticks considered to have magical powers that are used to play intricate rhythmic patterns on the ground. Practitioners of Palo Mayombe call garabatos "lungóua." *Nganguleros* are Kongo priests who summon or interact with spirits of the dead in Kongo-derived religions. See León 1984, 73, and Ortiz 1952b, 196–203. Ortiz uses the past tense frequently in this paragraph, suggesting that he views Kongo-influenced religions as antiquated and in the process of dying out. Note that *bailes* or *danzas de garabato* of a different sort are found on the Atlantic coast of Colombia and in Puerto Rico.

[3] Originally, "Toque de makuta en un viejo cabildo congo," in Ortiz 1952d, 431, fig. 262. Jorge Castellanos, "El Plácido desconocido," *Magazine de Hoy* (Havana), March 19, 1950.

[4] W. Holman Bentley, *Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language as Spoken at San Salvador, the Ancient Capital of the Old Kongo Empire, West Africa; Compiled and Prepared for the Baptist Mission on the Kongo River, West Africa, by the Rev. W. Holman Bentley* (London: Baptist Missionary Society and Trübner, 1887), 316. [F.O.]

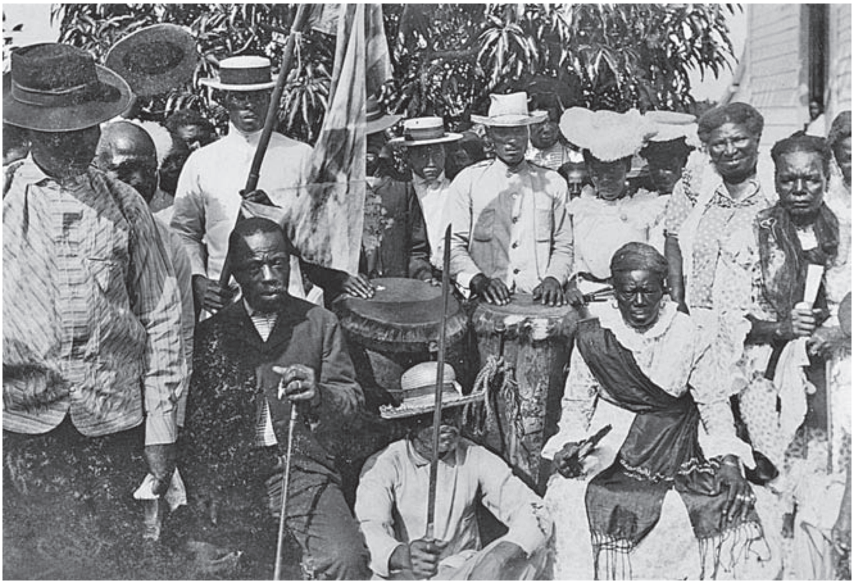

Figure 3.1. Makuta performance in an old Kongo cabildo. (Courtesy of the Fernando Ortiz Archive in the "José A. Portuondo Valdor" Literature and Linguistics Institute Havana, Cuba.)

it is enclosed in a gourd.[5] Makuta was a ritual dance performed before the nkisi or spirit of a dead person, controlled by a Kongo necromancer. Makuta seems, then, to pertain to the religious rhythms of secret sects. According to missionary Henri Nicod, in the *isango,* or secret society called *Njokbolo,* consisting of women from Cameroon (from the coast of Duala to the end of the savannah region), initiates dance to the sound of drums and makuta (a type of very loud maracas) tied around their ankles.[6] In Cuba, makuta also applies to the dance or dances that occur when makuta drums are played. According to Weeks, Makuta is the name of a dance found to this day in the Congo.[7]

I have observed in Cuba that makuta dances usually start with a ritual salute. A member of the cabildo kneels in front of an altar and pronounces certain phrases in an African language. Then the individual makes a cross with gypsum dust on the ground in front of the drums (placed together in the hall, opposite the altar), on each of the drum's shells, on the head of each drummer, and on his own forehead. On completing this ritual preparation, the officiant claps and the music begins its rhythm or *sikangoma* (in Kongo *sikangoma* means "to make music with drums"); at the same time, men's and women's dances begin. Dancers perform alone, never in couples.

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[5] A nkisi is a supernatural power or spirit used by Kongo priests (tata-ngangas). *Prenda* also refers to the spiritual power believed to reside in sacred objects collected in a gourd (*güiro*) or a ritual iron vessel (*nganga*).

[6] Henri Nicod, *La vie mystérieuse de l'Afrique Noire* (Lausanne, Switzerland: Payot, 1948), 143. [F.O.]

[7] John H. Weeks, *Among the Primitive Bakongo; A Record of Thirty Years' Close Intercourse with the Bakongo and Other Tribes of Equatorial Africa, with a Description of Their Habits, Customs and Religious Beliefs* (London: Seeley, Service, & Co., 1914), 133. [F.O.]

The first dance usually is ceremonial; it is known as the flag dance. A lead dancer, singing and carrying a large flag, moves in front of the other dancers, who are grouped behind him; he guides them, and they respond to his song with a refrain. Today, the flag of the Republic of Cuba is used in this context, although in years past it was the red and gold flag of Spain. I am told that another flag was (and is) sometimes used (blue with a five-pointed yellow star in the middle, the flag of the Belgian Congo), but this is probably a tradition of blacks born in the Caribbean. The dancers lean forward, legs bent, taking short steps, singing in rhythm and marching from the drums to the altar. Upon arriving at the altar, they all quickly move backward, returning to the drums without turning their backs, and then they begin anew advancing toward the altar in an attitude of ceremonial homage. They repeat this again and again, with everyone behind the flagbearer, who waves the flag repeatedly over the dancers' and spectators' heads and later lowers it in front of the altar to show deference. I am told that in the past the flag dance was also performed for the kings of the cabildo who sat next to the altar. The flag work seems to represent an adoption of ancient Portuguese courtly and/or military ceremonies by the Kongos in Africa.

Dancers march in the same fashion toward the *fundamento*.[8] In Sagua,[9] I witnessed this processional dance from the altar to a well outside the temple grounds—home, since time immemorial, of a prenda, or sacred magical entity, that is generally the principal, primal, and mysterious focus of Kongo necromantic rites.

I am told that some dances featured a character named *mbonguí*, which sometimes was represented by a man dressed like a woman whom they called *butatoko*. I cannot determine the precise nature of this character, which has been described as like a *diablito* or *mojiganga*.[10] In the Kongo language, *mbonguí* means "the one who starts." *Mbonguí-ankunga* means "the soloist who begins the singing." And *mbonguí* also means "mortuary," which could indicate that the disguised individual had some ties to funerary rites. *Butatoko* derives from *mbuta*—"the eldest chief, the leader." *Mbutatoko* is the one who directs the dance, according to Laman.[11] *Tooko* is "the one who marches in front." On the other hand, in Kongo *buta* means "engender," "birth," "harvest," or "woman who has given birth," suggesting that the female character has some significance in rites of fertility. The mbonguí and butatoko could thus be fantastical personages, imagined supernatural entities, a very frequent phenomenon among black Africans.

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[8] A Cuban-Spanish word for nganga or source of spiritual power.

[9] Sagua la Grande, also known as Sagua, is a municipality and city located in the province of Villa Clara in central Cuba.

[10] A masked figure representing a supernatural being.

Another makuta dance was the so-called *sakinao*, executed in a circle to simpler rhythms. In Kongo, *kina* means "dance." But *kina* also means "a nkisi's demand," "sacred," or "taboo"; *wo* is "onomatopoeia for clapping" and *nsa* is "a group of people or an entourage." Is *sakinao* possibly a sorcery dance?

In one makuta performance at the Kunalumbu cabildo in Sagua, I saw a black man who suddenly began to strike the skin of the *nsumbí* drum with his head, playing his rhythm in this way. Later I asked him the reason for such a unique style of performance: he responded with only a smile. I do not know whether the technique was for dramatic effect or for some symbolic reason that he did not want to divulge.

Makuta dances are principally *de fundamento*, the elders tell us, suggesting they are of a ritual and religious character. But in fiestas they are also danced for play or diversion. Today, the profane dances are most common. In the Kunalumbu cabildo, I witnessed some makuta dances of an erotic nature. They were unequivocally lascivious, danced only by a woman who appeared to convulse in the throes of a Dionysian frenzy, like a drunk, among a mass of enthusiastic spectators who accompanied her with their chorus.

Because each dancer has to pay for the music in some form, as in the case of the Lucumís's *iyá*,[12] dancers deposit a coin in a small calabash placed in front of the makuta drums of the Kongos, near the large drum. In makuta performance, when any dancer delays payment of the *nsimbo,* or tip, the *makutero* will suddenly interject a different rhythm, briefly interrupting the dancer to serve as a warning to "pay up" via the gourd.

In makuta, based on what we have observed, the orchestra is strictly composed of seven instruments: two drums, a small stick to strike the base of the *salidor*,[13] two maracas attached to the wrists of the main drummer, a *ngunga* (or small copper bell), and a *nsansi* (or maraca held by a handle). Acolytes play these last two instruments only to accentuate the strong beats of the rhythm. It is likely that they were introduced by members of the

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[11] K. E. Laman, *Dictionnaire kikongo-français, avec une étude phonétique décrivant les dialectes le plus importants de la langue dite Kikongo* (Brussels: n.p., 1936). [F.O.]

[12] Iyá is the largest *batá* drum.

[13] This is the name of the smallest of the two drums used to play makuta.

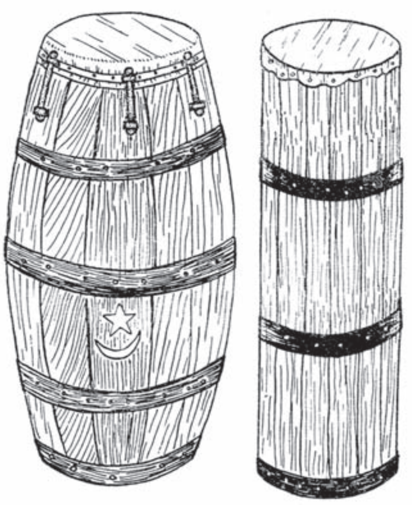

Figure 3.2. Line drawings of makuta drums, the larger nsumbí and the salidor.

Lucumí cult, like Ochún's bell (*agógo*) and Changó's *acheré*.[14] In the Kunalumbu cabildo, the maraca bears the painted figure of Changó among *ceiba* and palm trees.

Playing makuta requires two drums of distinct shape (Figure 3.2),[15] but it can be played with other groupings of drums as well. In this century, the three drums used to play *yuka* are sometimes played at makuta dances,[16] but this is because of the absence of the appropriate drums and a secularizing of makuta's religious nature. I am inclined to believe that originally only two makuta drums were used, though occasionally performers would incorporate a third, smaller drum representing the syncretic influence of other three-drum African traditions, the most common practice in Cuba. In funeral performances, a *kinfuiti*,[17] "a drum that pulls the dead," would accompany them. See my corresponding article on the topic.[18]

Makuta drums are very tall, and drummers, standing up but bending over a little, play both of them with bare hands. Sometimes the drummers tie them to their waists with a small rope to stabilize them. To play these heavy drums in a procession or a simple march, the drummer—in addition to attaching the drum to his waist—holds the top part of the drum firmly and pushes the drum from below with the movement of his left leg, thus lifting the instrument slightly off the ground at every step. Even so, after the drum sounds, it falls to the ground again at the end of each step, making the motion difficult. Sometimes a boy will help by lifting the drum from below, leaving both drummer's hands free to play. In any event, playing the drums while walking is quite tiring. Perhaps for this reason, we have seen in such

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14. *Agógo* (also spelled *agogo* or *agogó*) is a type of clapperless iron bell, and the *acheré* is a rattle; both are associated with sacred Yoruba-influenced rituals in Cuba. In Brazil, the bell is known as the *agogô*.
15. Originally, "Dos tambores de makuta," in Ortiz 1952d, 436, fig. 263.
16. Yuka is a Kongo-derived music and dance tradition in Cuba involving performance on three drums (caja, *mula*, and *cachimbo*) and a bell or hoe blade.
17. Kinfuiti is a friction drum associated with Kongo-derived *Kimbisa* religious practices.
18. The entry for kinfuiti appears in Ortiz 1955, 150–56.

processions that the salidor is at times replaced with a modern conga drum, as the latter is very light and can be strapped across the musician's shoulder. But the larger nsumbí, a "sacred drum," cannot be replaced and continues to play its rhythm with each step.[19] This frequent substitution of a smaller drum for the standard salidor may have led some to believe that makuta is performed using three drums instead of two.

The second drum produces two sonorities, the latter created by a third musician who bends over and strikes the lower part of the drum with two sticks. This same technique occurs with the *bonkó* of the *ñáñigos* and the music of other Afro-Cuban groups, a musical effect used to fill in rhythmic texture, which I have discussed previously.[20]

To this day, probably for religious rather than economic reasons, makuta performance in the Kongo cabildos uses only two drums: the first, known as nsumbí or *caja*[21] and the second, or small drum, generally called salidor. I base my description on the two makuta drums that were used in the old Kongo cabildo, called Kunalumbu, which still exists in Sagua la Grande (Figure 3.3).[22]

The larger nsumbí drum is about one meter in height and about 50 cm in its upper diameter, or drumhead. The shell is barreled-shaped and made of staves that are tightened with six metal hoops. The skin is secured with an iron ring that is covered, from the outside toward the inside, with the edges of the same skin, the skin being simultaneously fastened to the body of the drum by means of the ring with six threaded or long bolts. They extend from the above-mentioned ring through nuts attached to the shell.

This drum is noteworthy in that its goatskin still has the animal's original hair along its edges. It extends out from the edge of the playing surface and over the ring or frame that holds the head to the drum. This hairy strip is about three inches wide and is intended to be decorative. The portion of the skin that produces sound was carefully shaved. If the skin rips along the edges, musicians take it off and use it on the second, smaller drum. Community members tell me there is a nsumbí drum very similar to this one in Santa Isabel de las Lajas.[23]

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[19] Ortiz uses the alternate spellings "Nsumbí," "nsumbi," and "nsumbí" in reference to the same drum, both generically and regarding the instrument he observed in Sagua la Grande. His usage appears inconsistent; for simplicity's sake, we use "nsumbí" throughout.

[20] For information on the *bonkó* of the *abakuá*, see Ortiz 1954, 1–85. Ortiz discusses the rhythmic-textural effects from striking the sides of drums with "resonant sticks" in Ortiz 1955, 259–64. *Abakuás* (also known as *ñáñigos*) are groups of predominantly Afro-Cuban men that belong to secret societies of African origin (from the Cross Delta region between Cameroon and Nigeria).

[21] Literally, "box." The term often refers to the largest percussion instrument used in a particular ensemble.

[22] Originally, "Toque de makuta en el cabildo Kunalumbu de Sagua la Grande," in Ortiz 1952d, 437, fig. 264.

[23] A municipality in Cienfuegos province.

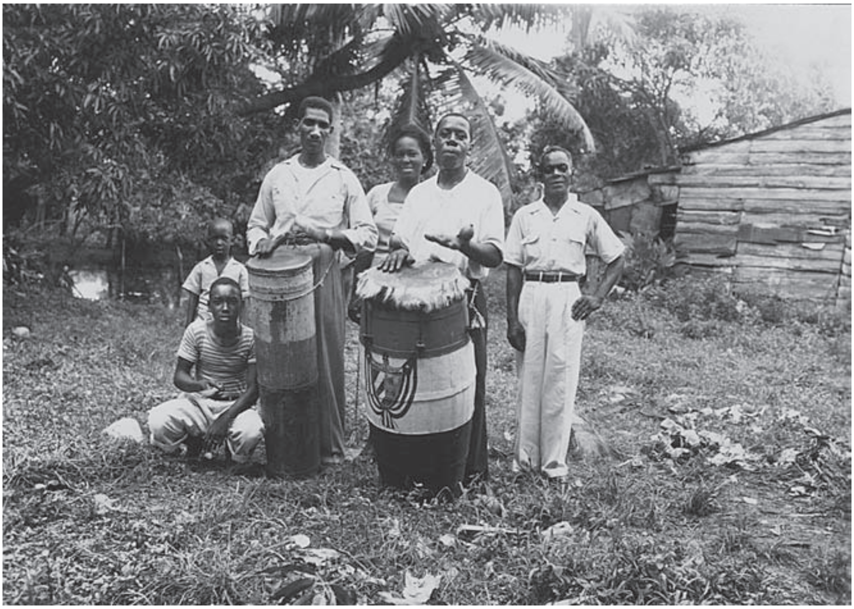

Figure 3.3. Makuta performance in the cabildo Kunalumbu, Sagua la Grande. (Courtesy of the Fernando Ortiz Archive in the "José A. Portuondo Valdor" Literature and Linguistics Institute Havana, Cuba.)

The second drum is also constructed of staves and hoops, but it is cylindrical rather than barrel-shaped. It is the same height as the nsumbí and with a diameter of 30 cm or a little more. The drum's head is nailed down and tuned by the heat of a fire. The distinct structure of the two makuta drums must have an explanation, but I do not know what it is. Apparently the structural changes made to these makutas from Sagua (the use of bolts and screws) apply only to the large drum. It should be noted that most believe this large makuta drum was previously tightened by a system of ropes and that nails were never used on it.

Both drums are painted. The largest drum for many years had its body painted blue, with white rings encircling it. White is a symbol of Saint Francis of Assisi, or of Kalunga, the Kongo deity of the sea. Painted on one side, also in white, was a pentagram over a crescent moon that practitioners erroneously believed to be a symbol of the Congo nation in Africa. Later (1947), cabildo members repainted the drum's three horizontal rings blue, white, and red, and in the center now appears the shield of the Republic of Cuba. It is no longer a Kongo drum but instead belongs to Cuba.

The second drum has blue rings and the body is divided into three sections, as seen between the rings. The upper third is red or bright red, the middle third is blue, and the lower third is white. Perhaps those colors also have a liturgical relationship to the Kongo supernatural spirits Nsasi, Baluande, and Nsambí, respectively.

Each makuta drum has its own personal name. The largest drum in this Kongo cabildo has two names: one in African, *nsumbí*, and a second individual name in Spanish, *Catalina*. This female name derives from a famous black woman who was queen of the cabildo. The largest drum is also known by the Spanish word *caja*, a term that those born in Cuba and the nonreligious use generically to describe the largest of the drums in various Afro-Cuban drum ensembles, such as makuta, yuka, conga, batá, Abakuá, and so forth.

The name nsumbí is sacred. Among the Kongo people, *Zumbí* refers to a spirit or fetish that brings good luck. Sometimes it is an animal, at other times an idol, and at still other times a simple bundle of grasses and other bewitched substances of magical power. That this name is given to a makuta drum seems to allude to its sacred power. In the cabildo Kunalumbu in Sagua, Nsumbi is the name given to their patron saint, Catholicized as Saint Francis of Assisi, whose effigy they worship and carry in processions. Calling their largest drum nsumbí seems to imply "the drum of Nsumbi or of Saint Francis." I do not know if nsumbí is an individual name, or if it belongs only to the aforementioned drum of that name, or if it applies to all large (caja) makuta drums. Lacking a generic African term, I continue to provisionally use nsumbí for the larger of the two makuta drums.

Informants tell me that the second makuta drum in Cuba is called *kundiabato*, and that the third, if it is used, is called *mbanga mune*; but I cannot confirm those names. More common is the name *ngoma* for the nsumbí and *ngoma nkila* for the smaller drum. But these are generic. Ngoma in Kongo is "drum" and nkila means "tail," or the one who goes behind, one might say the "responder" or "second." Every African cabildo had its own ancestral African religious ties, together with a syncretic or mimetic Catholic name. The latter was typically secret but at times public. The same is true of Kongo cabildos. Saint Anthony, Saint Iphigenia, or the saintly King Melchior may have sat on the altar, but below the altar was hidden the prenda, the residence of a dead man's spirit, and devotees evoked the same gods as those of ages past.

The rhythms and performances of makuta music are special, different from those of other Afro-Cuban cults, and faster in tempo. Its performance is liturgical and its musicians, as in the case of similar rites, have to be men, not homosexuals, who are ritually consecrated to serve in that role. Makuta dancers do not perform *vacunas*.[24] The *ngueye* comes down to earth when they hear the sound of makutas. These are supernatural beings similar to

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[24] Ortiz refers here to the signature gesture in *rumba guaguancó* in which the male dancer makes sexual advances toward the female. It is more typically referred to as a *vacunao*.

Yoruba “saints,” but with certain differences I cannot discuss here. Makuta drums play various rhythms or songs (*nkunga*) according to the spirits they salute, whether for solemn mystical exaltation or for funerary rituals, and so on.

Elder Kongos tell me that, in the past, women wore *gangarrias* or cowbells on their waists, since the dance involves a great deal of hip movement, causing them to ring out during makuta dances and scare away malignant spirits. The elders added that, in part because of its suggestive movements, only Africans could attend such dances, not Cuban-born blacks or mulattoes. It seems, however, that eventually its religious secrets proved more important than any misgivings about its sexual or lascivious associations. According to Cavazzi de Montecucclo, makuta was the name of a witch doctor in the Congo who, invariably accompanied by his assistant, cured sicknesses with his enchantments.[25] In Cuba, makuta drummers must be initiates of the sect, devotees of the *nbumba*,[26] “bomba,” “prenda” or “fundamento.”

The nsumbí, like the iyá of the Yoruba, contains a “secret” or *aña* (also *añá*) inside, in other words a magical fetish tied together with some little bells that ring as the drum plays, in the same way as the *chaguoró*[27] on the aforementioned iyá. The nsumbí and other makuta drums are considered “people,” living things. Devotees offer them food, just as they do to the batás. It may consist of the blood and entrails of a rooster that has been sacrificed for them, along with palm oil, as is offered to Yoruba drums. But Kongo drums are also offered ginger, balls of corn with yams, *sacusacu*,[28] Guinea pepper, a dash of liquor, tobacco smoke, and lighted stearin candles. Without that “meal,” the makuta drums do not sound. The nsumbí in Sagua also requires English beer, a certain old brand, which is poured on the ground around the drum’s shell.

Some tell me that the makuta drum “plays by itself” upon the death of a makuta drummer, a “son of the prenda,” or an initiate of the sect. The drums declare in Kongo language “yen, yen, tóndele” and will resist being taken to the funeral until devotees strike them with palm leaves.[29] I do not know if this is part of a compulsory ritual of punishment or a preventive magical cleansing of “the bad thing” that impedes the drum from “working.”

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[25] G. A. Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, *Istorica Descrizione de’ tre Regni, Congo, Matamba et Angola, Situati nell’ Etiopia Inferiori Occidentale e delle Missione Apostoliche Efercitateui da Religiosfi Capuccini* (Bologna: Giacomo Monti, 1687). [F.O.]

[26] Cabrera (2001, 242) translates nbumba as “rainbow” but it appears to have other associations as well.

[27] Chaguoró are the straps with bells attached that are tied around the shell of the iyá drum.

[28] Cabrera (2001, 270) defines sacusacu (spelled saku saku) as onions mashed with garlic so that their fragrance can be offered to the nganga.

[29] Cabrera (2001, 282, 293) translates yen, yen as “courageous” and tóndele as “thank you.”

The nsumbí drum, also like the Yoruba iyá, carries on its skin a resonant substance or *fardela*, which in the Congo is called *ndimbudimbu* and in Cuba simply *ndimbu*. Some assume this substance or ndimbu is wax; but it is not. If a ball of wax were to be stuck on the skin of the makuta, it would quickly fall off because of the strong vibrations created when it is struck. The ndimbu is not like the fardela of the batá either, although some have made the comparison. Curiously, ndimbu is created by mixing three substances: charcoal ash, spider's web, and guava jelly (*pasta de guayaba*). This substance serves to dampen the drumhead and cannot be used on nailed-on heads tuned with fire, since it is incompatible with heat. Rather, it is only employed on drums tightened with ropes. The presence of ndimbudimbu on the nsumbí drum seems to confirm that in days gone by the nsumbí was tightened with ropes.

From the imprecise data I have been able to obtain, it seems likely that this drum's skin was formerly held against the shell with a system of ropes similar to those used on Arará drums. In other words, it must have had straps going from the ring holding the head to the tuning pegs, but without the hooked or bent ends as on Arará drums. Instead, they used smooth pegs without any tips as are found in Africa. But I cannot be certain.

Makuta drums, at least the nsumbí, probably had a rope-based system of tightening the heads in the past. But today some of them have been replaced by drums with nailed-on skins that are tuned with fire, as with many other drums. In some cases, makuta drums today have threaded tuning bolts, such as the nsumbí drum of the Kunalumbu cabildo of Sagua la Grande. I do not know for certain the reason for this local adoption of threaded screws on the nsumbí of Sagua, but I imagine that the importance of the railroad in the area must have played a part. Since the time of slavery the region has been home to machine shops that repaired parts for sugar mills and rail cars. All of that probably influenced some black man in the Kongo cabildo there, resulting in the substitution of the primitive roped system of the large nsumbí for its current system of six threaded lugs. And this morphological transculturation of the nsumbí, its tuning by threaded screws, must have occurred after 1880, following abolition. At that time there emerged a violent and foolish repression of all African survivals in Cuba, even cultural, aesthetic, and deeply rooted or widespread popular practices. It was as if the Bourbon colony[30] wanted to rid itself of its conscience and its deeply held sense of culpability for having perpetuated slavery in the Americas much longer than the metropolitan nations of Europe. Spain initiated its system of slavery in the New World, and in Cuba, beginning with Christopher Columbus in 1492, the same year of its discovery, putting peaceful Indians in bondage. It only abolished slavery definitively in 1886, ending the so-called "patronage" of freed blacks a mere twelve years before Spain ended its four-century-long domination of the region. In the history of transatlantic Spanish imperialism, which lasted for 406 years, slavery thus persisted for the first 394 years and freedom only for the past 12.

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[30] That is, subjects of the Bourbon monarchy that ruled Spain and parts of Italy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Thereafter, the cabildos, the social nuclei of the freed Africans, were dismantled. Even Cuban-born blacks and mulattoes contributed to this dismantling, believing that if they erased or hid their ancestral rituals, dances, and drums they would erase the social and psychological trauma of four centuries of violent uprooting, detribalization, exile, and slavery from history and from their souls. As such attitudes began to change, black Cubans re-formed their nuclei of social cohesion and resumed their religious practices, customs, and collective diversions. But they also adopted mimetic forms of adaptation. They Catholicized their altars, placing the "white" iconography of crosses, monstrances, and chalices on them, and disguised their drums as much as possible. One such ingenious technique involved replacing the traditional roped system of their sacred membranophones with the threaded bolt system of "white" or "Christian" hardware. I personally witnessed that same transculturative phenomenon in Havana thirty years ago in the Changó-Tedún cabildo: in order to avoid a prohibitive decree against batá drums, members took off the instruments' old leather tuning straps and in their place used large iron bolts. That is why I presume that the transculturative process of the nsumbí in Sagua was of a similar nature, entirely aside from the arguable advantages of the new approach in tuning divine drums with greater ease and efficiency. I observed something analogous in Santiago with the transculturation of the comparsa drums[31] of the Carabalí and the congas.[32]

Today the playing of makuta is dying out in Cuba. The Kongo cabildo Angunga in the barrio of Jesús María, Havana, used to be well known for its makuta music. The genre is still played in rural parts of Matanzas province. In Las Villas province it can only be heard now and then in Sagua, Remedios, Palmira, and perhaps elsewhere. The tradition may also persist in Trinidad, but in that city I could only confirm the presence of yuka drumming, now the most common style of performance in centers of Kongo culture.

Makuta at one time must have been very widespread among Cuban Bantus. Black Macuas[33] apparently performed it as well, though in a "more staccato" rhythm. An old Cuban-born black man of Kongo origin told me that the Brazilian samba, now heard over the radio, was a "Macua rhythm" in Cuba. The *samba-macoté* in Brazil is one of many recognized variants; it apparently alludes to sambas played on drums tuned by fire.[34] In Haiti, the makuta drums seem to originally have been associated with those of "*jeu-Petro*" or the African-derived ritual called *Don Petro*, named for the person who introduced it there from Cuba in the eighteenth century, according to Moreau de St. Méry.[35] There the large drum (nsumbí) is called *mamán* and its sound *ralé*; the small drum is called *pitite* and its sound *taillé*. They are tightened by means of leather ropes tied to holes on the sides of the shell.[36] Don Pedro drums are both single headed, open on one end, and played with bare hands, like the makuta drums. Today, it is said, "in Haiti these drums are associated with a cult of deities most of whose powers are generally used for malevolent purposes . . . and against Rada deities."[37] But in reality it appears to be a Kongo sect whose religious mythology includes not only deities but also nkisi, beneficent as well as malevolent, perhaps even the spirit of the famous Don Pedro. But, if so, he represents one of many nkisi and not a deity of human origin. The syncretic interpenetration of Arará and Kongo beliefs is two hundred years in the making in Haitian Vodoun, creating a tangled confusion of practices that is undecipherable if one does not begin by analyzing the beliefs and practices of the religions or magic of the diverse ethnic groups that have been mixing. In Haiti, the drums of Don Pedro seem to perpetuate the ancestral Bantu traditions associated with makuta.

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[31] 31. Comparsa instruments used in Santiago include the *bocú* (single-headed drum of Kongo origin), iron brakes, and *corneta china* of Chinese origin (see León 1984, 240–241).

[32] 32. "Congas" here refers to groups of drummers, singers, and dancers who play during carnival street celebrations.

[33] 33. Ortiz suggests that the Macua originated in Eastern Africa, particularly, Mozambique. Their language is Bantu-based (see Ortiz, [1924] 1991, 292).

Perhaps the Kongo survivals in Don Pedro rites contributed to the origins of *Petronila*, "a happy combination of black and white music exclusively found in Venezuela where it is played in the Barlovento region, strongly influenced by the black population there. Communities use it to celebrate births and anniversaries, or simply the end of the work week on Saturdays and Sundays."[38] *Petro-nila* in the language of the western Congo may mean "the great Pedro," but I lack conclusive data.

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[34] Mario de Andrade, "Curuso," *Revista do Archivo Municipal*, 115 (1947): 98. [F.O.]

[35] Ortiz does not include a footnote for this citation. In his bibliography he includes incomplete references for the following two works by M. L. E. (Méderic Louis Elie) Moreau de Saint-Méry, (1) *Danse: Article extrait d'un ouvrage de M.L.E. Moreau de St.-Méry. Ayant pour titre: Répertoire des notions coloniales. Par ordre alphabétique* (Philadelphia: self-published at the printer-bookstore at Front & Walnut Streets no 84, 1796); and (2) *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Dupont, 1798).

[36] Ortiz ascribes this citation to Lorimer and Paul. He lists two works by the authors in his bibliography but does not specify which of the two he is taking the citation from. The two publications are as follows: (1) Denis Lorimer and Emmanuel C. Paul. *Le sacrifice du tambour Assoto* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'État, 1942); and (2) *Essai d'organographie haïtienne*. (Port-au-Prince: Impr. V. Valcin, 1947). Upon investigation, the source for his information appears to be the *Essai d'organographie haïtienne*, which has been reproduced in Jacques Oriol, ed., *Publication du Bureau d'Ethnologie de la République d'Haiti* (Port-au-Prince: Le Bureau, 1980), 62–63. Note that Worldcat (accession number 81717343) lists Jacques Roumain as the author of *Le sacrifice du tambour Assoto,* not Lorimer and Paul.

[37] Maria Leach, ed., Jerome Fried, associate editor. *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1950, 860. [F.O.] In Haiti, Rada deities are one of a number of distinct "nations" of spirits honored in religious ceremonies.

I also wonder whether Kongo-derived makuta dances manifest the influence of their African antecedents or the name of a sensual Venezuelan folkloric dance known as *La marakutana*. In the Kikongo language, according to Laman,[39] *ma-nkutana* means "an assembly or reunion of people." By extending a simple metaphor, we might translate the Venezuelan variant as "group dance."

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[38] Olga Briceño, "Música folklórica venezolana," *Boletín de la Unión Panamericana*, 82 (1948). [F.O.]

[39] This apparently refers to K. E. Laman, *Dictionnaire kikongo-français* (Brussels: Librairie Falk, 1936).

4

Arará Drums

Translated by **David F. Garcia**

In Cuba, the term *Arará*, when applied to drums, is understood to mean those that are constructed either by blacks from Dahomey, commonly known in Cuba as Ararás,[1] or by their descendants who make them in the traditional fashion. The drums are of various types, but all are single headed and open ended on the other side. They can be distinguished by their size, the shape of their bodies, and their respective tuning systems.

The body of most Arará drums typically consists of four parts, all carved from a solid piece of tree trunk. The first part, starting at the edge of the drum's top opening, is the area to which the skin is attached around its frame and where pegs are fastened to hold the ropes that tighten the skin. The second part consists of a strip that almost always appears below this top section, like a simple belt in bas-relief style, at times sculpted or painted. This second section, the molded script, is found on most drums and made Leo Frobenius suspect that Arará drums originated through transformation of drums with tuning wedges. This might have occurred, he believed, when the wedges stopped being multiedged and became cylindrical studs or pegs that were nailed into the body rather than inserted between sections one and

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Translated from Fernando Ortiz, *Los instrumentos de la música afrocubana*, vol. 3 (Havana: Ministerio de Educación, Dirección de Cultura, 1952), 320–61.

[1] The Arará are an African ethnic group in Cuba associated with the ancient kingdom of Dahomey in present-day Benin. Their name derives from the coastal kingdom of Arada, conquered by the Dahomey in the eighteenth century. Most Arará descendants today live in Matanzas province.

two.[2] Frobenius believes that the sculpted strip on the Arará drum's body was inspired by the earlier drum's cords straps, the area where the cords were hammered down to increase their tension. The third part of the drum consists of its body. Whether long or short and somewhat rounded, it generates a majority of the drum's length and in certain instruments tends to be larger in diameter than is the case in most other Afro-Cuban drums. Sometimes in the area between the third and the fourth sections of the typical Arará drum appears another ornamental border in bas-relief. The fourth section of the drum consists of its base or foot, generally cylindrical and of a much smaller diameter than the rest of the instrument. This lower part is quite different from the primary outer shell of the drum, making it appear as if it were constructed from two separate pieces and as if the main body rested on a small independent support.

It has sometimes been said that this type of body is infundibuliform, with a wide body and a very narrow base, somewhat similar to the shape of a funnel. The narrowness of the base has resulted in Cubans also calling these drums *abotinado*, a term that cannot be translated without some explanation. Abotinado means "in the form of an ankle boot," in other words an antiquated form of footwear that covered the foot, ankle, and part of the leg very tightly.[3] Abotinado is essentially the same as the adjectives *atobillado* or *agargantado*.[4] In the same way, abotinado also referred in the past to short pants whose legs closed and tightened at the bottom edge around the ankle or instep, just like the ankle boot. These trousers were the opposite of the baggy pants sailors used to wear, whose leg bottoms were bell-shaped.

Figure 4.1 depicts a collection of Arará drums (except for one that is Lucumí and a bimembranophone) housed in the National Museum in Havana, all of which are single-headed and tuned with pegs. These fifteen drums are notable in that the courts confiscated them from old cabildos of the Dahomey nation between the years 1913 and 1917, during the first period of President Mario García Menocal's administration.[5] Also appearing in the photograph are an ivory horn, two *ekón*, one *agbé,* and two *iruke*.[6]

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[2] Ortiz does not give a citation for this reference to Frobenius, but he does list a number of Frobenius's works in his bibliography: *Der Ursprung der Afrikanischen kulturen* (Berlin: 1890); *The Childhood of Man* (London: Seeley, 1908); *Und Africa sprach* (Berlin: Vita, Deutsches Verlagshaus, 1912); *Histoire de la civilisation africaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1933); *La mythologie de l'Atlantide* (Paris: Payot, 1949).

[3] The root word of abotinado is *botín* or ankle boot.

[4] The root words of atobillado and agargantado are *tobillo* (ankle) and *garganta* (instep), respectively.

[5] Mario García Menocal was president of Cuba from 1913 to 1921.

[6] Associated with the Abakuá, ekón is a clapperless iron bell made of two small plates that meet in an arch at their center. An *agbé* or *ágbe* is a Yoruba-derived term for gourd, and by extension for the *chekeré* (see Chapter 5). Associated with the Arará and Yoruba, the *iruke* is a ritual object made of leather and hair from a horse's or ox's tail, held by certain ancestor-deities while dancing.

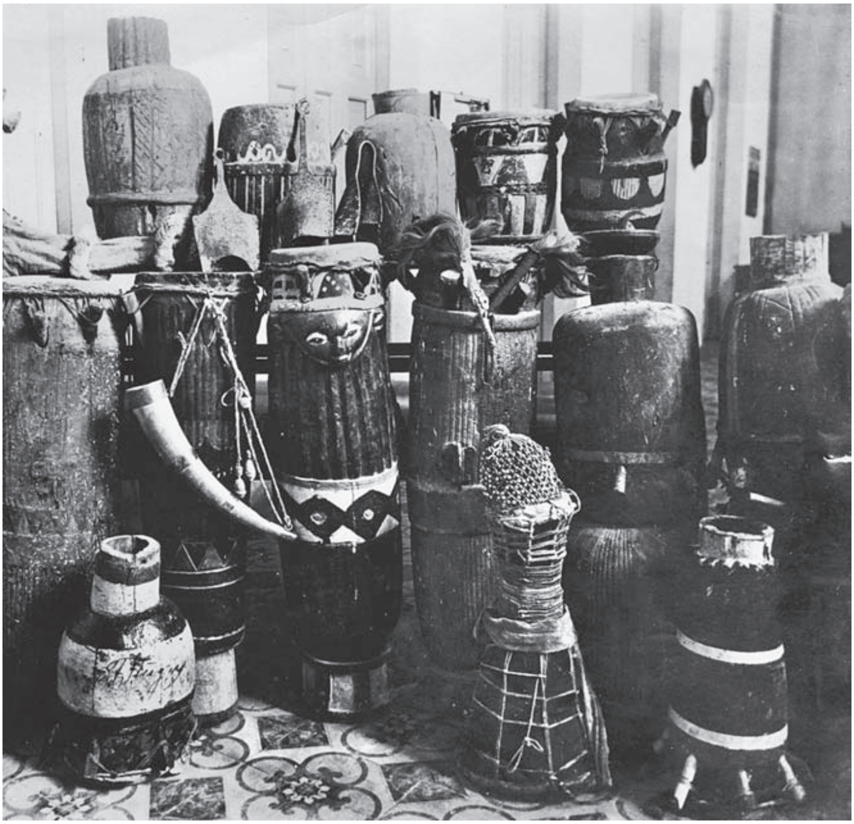

Figure 4.1. A collection of Arará drums at the National Museum of Music in Havana. (Courtesy of the Fernando Ortiz Archive in the "José A. Portuondo Valdor" Literature and Linguistics Institute Havana, Cuba.)

The presence of a base or foot on Arará drums is very common, making them appear like single-footed creatures. The diameter of the lower part of the drum's body becomes gradually smaller, sometimes noticeably, so that it makes the instrument resemble a basin in the form of a cup.[7] In other cases the base's diameter is not as reduced, but it is still noticeable.[8] Some drums have wider bases, only just small enough to identify them as a distinct section, and are painted with strong colors as if to accentuate their function. These characteristics are found in drums that appear to be the most archaic (Figure 4.2a). In other specimens, drum makers have fashioned two rows of small protuberances into the foot of the body, giving the

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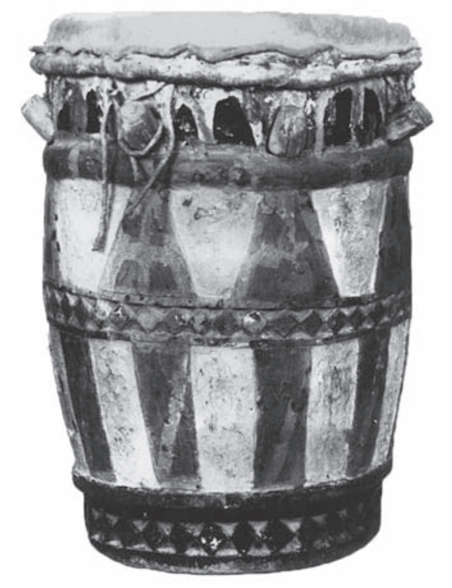
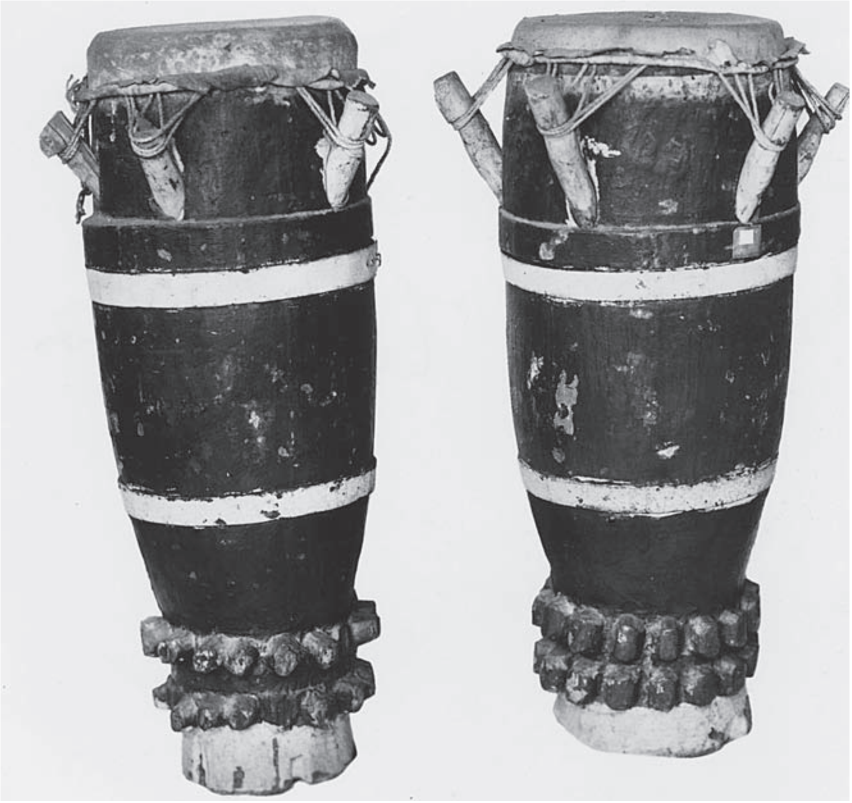
[7] See "Tambor arará abotinado, en forma de pilón o copa," in Ortiz 1952d, 322, fig. 216.

[8] See "Tambor arará abotinado pero de base menos reducida" and "Tambor arará abotinado de base poco reducida," in Ortiz 1952d, 323, figs. 217 and 218, respectively.



Figures 4.2a, b, and c. Arará drums with tapered bases in distinct styles, the latter with sculptured protuberances imitating bells or rattles. (Courtesy of the Fernando Ortiz Archive in the "José A. Portuondo Valdor" Literature and Linguistics Institute Havana, Cuba.)



appearance of two necklaces of little metal rattles or bells like *chaguoró*[9] (Figures 4.2b and c).[10]

Densmore suggests that in Haiti the bases or feet of these drums may have been pushed into sand or loose dirt in order to stabilize them.[11] But I do not believe this to be the usual purpose of the base. In Cuba, Arará drums are never played with their bases buried in sand or dirt. This would be the equivalent of converting an open-ended drum into a closed one and, consequently, modifying its sound.

There are other types of Arará drums whose bodies differ totally from those discussed above because of their shorter size, slightly conical form, straight sides, lack of carvings or painted ornamentation, and tuning system based on pegs but with drumheads inserted into the body. I discuss these below.

The most common Arará drums, we might say the most traditional, have their skins tightened by pegs and ropes. The Arará of Cuba do not use drums with tacked-on heads, nor tuning systems of straps, bolts and screws, tension sticks, or wedges. Drums with peg and rope system are often erroneously called wedge drums while they should be called peg drums.

The Arará drums of Cuba usually have their drumheads attached by first stitching their edges around a ring made of vine taken from baskets,[12] those in which potatoes are brought from Canada, or of fine strips of *caña de Castilla*, or of bamboo. Drum makers first soak these flexible rings in water to soften them, and later dry them over a fire so that all of their moisture evaporates. They then fold the drum skin back under the rings, far enough that the skin's edges are tightly secured. Later they sew the skin's edge with sturdy thread, forming a taught drumhead around the ring frame that is later fastened to the drum's body.

The drum shell, always circular in shape, contains four or more holes drilled at a certain distance from the rim, roughly 30 cm. Drum makers insert cylindrical sticks, pegs, or wedges of hard wood into these holes by pushing them in forcefully. The pegs end not in a knob, as some have claimed, but rather with a hooked end, or in a "pipe shape" as one black man described it. Unlike a pipe, however, the end of the wedge is not hollow. Haitians call these pegs "drum's horns." The important thing is that the stick's hooked end must project out of the drum facing downward and away from

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[9] Chaguoró are the bells that wrap around the *iyá* drum.

[10] Originally, "Tambor arará de base ostensible pero apenas reducida de diámetro" (caption for fig. 219) and "Tambores ararás abotinados, con protuberancias esculpidas imitando cascabeles o cencerros" (caption for figs. 220 and 221, which appear together) in Ortiz 1952d, 324–25, figs. 219, 220, and 221.

[11] Francis Densmore, *Handbook of the Collection of Musical Instruments in the U.S. National Museum* (Washington, DC: U.S. Govt. Print Office, 1927), 57. [F.O.]

[12] Apparently, locals referred to such containers as "*canastas de manzano*."

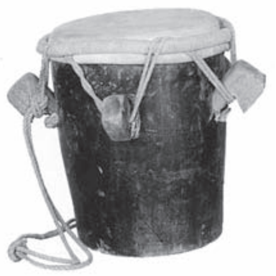

Figure 4.3. Cone-shaped Arará drum with loosened head and pipe-shaped pegs. (Courtesy of the Fernando Ortiz Archive in the "José A. Portuondo Valdor" Literature and Linguistics Institute Havana, Cuba.)

the body in order to support the tightening cords. Observing Figure 4.3,[13] one can see the hooked or pipe-shaped pegs, the simplicity of the tightening mechanism, and the complete covering of the ring with the drumhead, which in this case is loose.

I have observed various kinds of pegs used in Arará drums. In a few cases, the pegs could be described as wood anchors,[14] as Cuban carpenters say, the kind used in door frames and other analogous constructions, without any protuberance or hooks on the end. In this case, the peg is slightly cone shaped so that as it enters a hole in another piece of wood it gets increasingly tighter. This peg shape seems like a local "bastardization" of the original African design; though it tightens up the head effectively, the repeated action of striking the drum affects the cords whose ends are attached to the heads of the pegs. They eventually come loose and must be tightened repeatedly. Thus, traditional African pegs are preferred, those made of a nearly cylindrical peg, almost conical, but with a hooked protuberance at the end. Those pegs go completely through the body, from the outside to the center. To secure them well one must strike them so that as the pegs wedge themselves further into the body the cords and the hide attached to them stretch out. In some drums, such pegs are replaced with sticks that are nearly cylindrical their entire lengths, without a hook, but instead with a simple deep notch or low cut made close to the end that holds the cords (refer back to Figures 4.2b and c). Here, the principal method is the pegged one, although simpler in its execution. It is likely that the morphological differences between pegs correspond to distinct ethnic groups.

Some Arará drums in Cuban museums and temples have four pegs, while others have five, six, or nine. Informants tell me that the number of pegs has no ritual significance. The same is true of the pegs or "horns" of Vodoun cult drums in Haiti.[15] But I have heard plausible conjecture that the number of pegs used may correspond to the sacred number associated with the “saint” to which the drum is dedicated. Yoruba religion ascribes importance to the mythological symbolism of numbers. I do not know if this is true to the same extent among Dahomeyans.

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[13] Originally, "Tambor arará, troncónico, con cuero suelto y clavijas de cachimba," in Ortiz 1952d, 327, fig. 222.

[14] The term used by Ortiz is *tarugos de fugo.*

[15] Ortiz cites "Lorimer et Paul, p. 88" without including a reference or date. The source is Denis Lorimer and Emmanuel C. Paul, *Essai d'organographie haïtienne* (Port-au-Prince: Impr. V. Valcin, 1947). The essay is reproduced in Jacques Oriol, ed., *Publication du Bureau d'Ethnologie de la République d'Haiti* (Port-au-Prince: Le Bureau, 1980).

Once the skin is situated by attaching it to the body via its circular frame covering the mouth of the drum, the next step is to stretch a series of cords between the skin and the pegs affixed to the shell. The cords pass through the skin above the ring and extend down at an angle to one of the pegs where they hook on. They then continue back up toward the ring, pass through it, and so on again and again until the skin is tightly stretched by the ropes that extend from pegs to drumhead and vice versa. This traditional form is that depicted in Figures 4.2b and c.

Even all this does not ensure proper tuning of the drum. The final step is to hammer the heads of the pegs again so that they penetrate further into the shell, thus, tightening the cords further. With the skin attached in this way, it becomes well stretched and resonant.

Some believe that to produce the required tension the cords tied from the ring to the pegs should be coiled around the latter like the strings of a guitar around its tuning keys. Members of the Arará community say that many years ago, in the slave barracks of the Tuinicú sugar mill, Arará drums of this sort were played. But I have no reliable data and this information may be erroneous. In every Arará drum I have seen, the pegs penetrate straight into the body like spikes and are held through friction contact with the shell. They never turn, since they are not made to do so.

Another curious type of Arará tuning/tension that was used in an old Sabalú or Majino[16] cabildo can be seen in Figure 4.3. This drum does not have a base supporting the body. It is slightly conical shaped with four pegs through which pass the double cords whose upper part attaches to a ring that has been wrapped tightly with cords. This ring is not covered by the edges of the drumhead, since it is an independent piece. In order to tighten the skin, the ring is placed on top of the skin after the latter has been extended over the mouth of the drum, thus placing pressure on the skin’s edges by folding it downward and tightening it against the sides of the body. This is the most perfect peg drum, organologically speaking, that I know of. It adopts an African form of tuning, even though it was made in Cuba and not too long ago, probably at the end of the nineteenth century.

I have seen two other drums made in a similar fashion, although less perfectly realized.[17] That is, they have an independent ring fitted to the drumhead and placed over the skin rather than under it. The shells of such drums are made of solid wood, but in one case metal bands (a local invention) were added to help avoid the cracks in the shell.[18] These two drums are unusual in that some of the pegs, because they don't tighten down well into the holes where they are inserted, have to be tightened with additional wooden wedges (these are really wedges) alongside them, probably owing to the improper manufacture of the instruments.

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[16] Sabalú and Majino are two of at least three subethnic groups of the Arará in Cuba. The other, according to Ortiz, is Dahomey (Ortiz 1952d, 336); see also, Hippolyte Brice Sogbossi 1998, 20.

[17] See Ortiz 1952d, 330 and 331, figs. 223 and 224.

There are other drums that, because of their style of tuning, are also considered Arará drums, probably for good reason; I refer to them as *abotonados* (buttonhole drums). Their tuning system involves making some U-shaped twists in the rope on the drum's upper rim, where the skin covers the ring. The ends of the rope are thus similar to buttonholes, with the leather twisted from left to right and a peg passing through them as well. In this way, the strip of leather at the edge of the drum hide is stretched downward by the action of the same peg that passes through the skin and into the drum's body.[19]

In buttonhole drums, the pegs act like buttons that the skins are caught in. They look like large wooden nails with protruding heads. On occasion the pegs pass through the skin and on top of them sits a ring to which is tied the straps coming from the pegs. Drums of this type differ significantly from those discussed earlier.[20] In buttonhole drums, cords are not used. The body's upper section is more markedly conical so that it maintains the doubled leather ropes at an open angle rather than straight up and down, permitting the adjustment of its corresponding buttons.

It is likely that the construction of Arará drums involves ritual filled with magical and religious procedures, entirely apart from a detailed technical process. The data Herskovits has collected on Haitian Vodoun drums support this view, as do Rattray's publications on Ashanti drums.[21] But no one has investigated the topic in Cuba.

As to the playing technique of these Arará drums, musicians strike the skin in the center or edge with their fingers or palms, depending on the drum and the occasion, and also play on the drum shell, just as in Haitian Vodoun rituals. Some sacred Arará drums are played with bare hands. But most are played with a hand and a curved stick or *garabato*, which players call *bidafí*, *igdafí*, *guidafí*, or *aguidafí*.[22] Without a doubt this percussive tool

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[18] See Ortiz 1952d, 330, fig. 223.

[19] See Ortiz 1952d, 323, fig. 217, and also the detail drawing in Ortiz 1952d, 260. The latter is entitled "Fig. 208. Tipo de ojales con tiras de cuero torcido abrochados a las clavijas del tambor." [F.O.]

[20] See "Tambor arará abotonado sin cordajes y pintado con profusos símbolos," in Ortiz 1952d, 332, fig. 225.

[21] Melville J. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937), 37ff; and R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1923), 258ff. [F.O.]

[22] See "Aguidafi [*sic*], percutiente de un tambor" in Ortiz 1952d, 287, fig. 211.

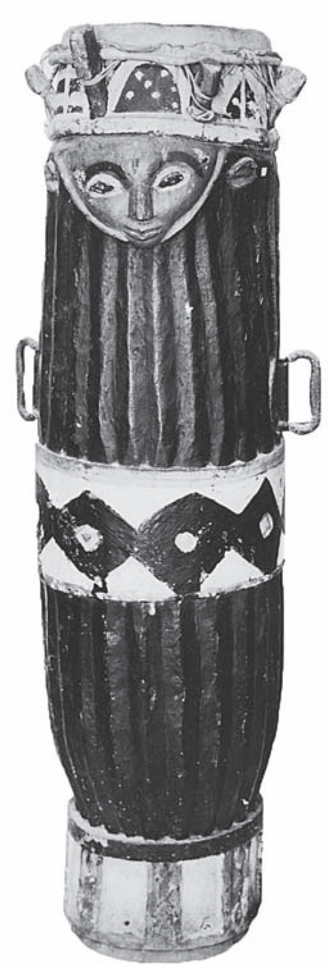

Figure 4.4. Arará drum with sculpted, multicolor adornments and removable handles. (Courtesy of the Fernando Ortiz Archive in the "José A. Portuondo Valdor" Literature and Linguistics Institute Havana, Cuba.)

has religious symbolism, and, indeed, initiates of certain deities use the aguidafí when they dance in the god's honor. They hold it in their right hand, or at times put it in their waistband. The aguidafí is typically ornamented with white and red glass beads in the colors of a particular saint, and sacred cowries or seashells. It is like a type of divine scepter and its use with certain drums seems to align with that symbolism.

As to the ornamentation of the Arará drums, a few are carved but almost all are painted. The most important visual decoration can be observed on the drum in Figure 4.4.[23] Aside from the grooves of triangular bas-relief that extend longitudinally on the drum's body, the drum's most notable feature is the African head carved in the upper end, as if to personify the drum's divine spirit. It is multicolored, which contributes to its decorative effect. On top, between each peg, drawings of inverted arch shapes with a blue background and white crisscrossed lines or dots can be seen. Together they seem to evoke the celestial heavens with thunder or stars. The body is painted black. In its center, a horizontal area features dark drawings with double zigzags over a white background. The foot or base of the drum, typically Dahomeyan, is white with blue vertical stripes, dividing the base into squares. A separate image gives an indication of the drum's height.[24] This instrument is the jewel of the museum. I am told that a highly respected drummer made it in Havana for the cabildo Sabalú, intending it to rival in splendor another drum from a different cabildo. In the second cabildo, a fearful sorcerer cast a mysterious *candangaso* on the drum maker that killed him instantly. *Candangaso* means "spell or malevolent curse." It is a mulatto term derived from *candango*, a name sometimes given in Cuba to the supernatural spirit controlled by a Kongo witch doctor (brujo).

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[23] Originally, "Tambor arará con adornos esculpidos y policromados, y asas de hierro postizas," in Ortiz 1952d, 334, fig. 226.

[24] The drum appears to be almost five feet tall. See "J Rodríguez Morey, director del Museo Nacional de Cuba, y el autor de este libro examinando la esculpida cara antropomorfa que adorna un tambor arará" in Ortiz 1952d, 335, fig. 227.

This kind of drum is found in Africa among the blacks of Togo whose ethnological connections to Dahomeyans are well known.[25] Another drum with similar characteristics is from the Vodoun cult, that is, Dahomeyan,[26] studied by Ling Roth in northeast Benin.[27] That drum's ornamental head reminds me of the cleaned craniums that the blacks of Togo and Dahomey hung on their war drums.[28]

The drum from the National Museum of Havana comes from the ancient and now-extinct cabildo named Arará Sabalú, according to our informants. Three Arará cabildos existed in Havana at one time, founded by blacks from the African kingdom Alada or Ardra, today part of the French colony of Dahomey. But in Cuba the Ararás had three important nuclei and a population of sufficient numbers to support cabildos according to the specific ethnic origins of each. These groups were the Arará Dahomey, the Arará Majino, and the Arará Sabalú. Anthropologists still encounter the same ethnicities in Africa today. Sabalú (or Sabalou in French) is today the hub of a large district spreading from the center to the north of Abomey, closely tied to Yoruba history.[29] The political persecution of President Menocal's government destroyed all three of these cabildos in Havana.

Other sculpted drums can be found in the museum's collection.[30] In addition to certain geometric, vertical, and zigzag lines, some include two carved snakes standing up, symmetrically presented with identical details in their undulations and scales. Such drums probably had multicolored decorations but have faded over time.

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25. P. A. Witte, "Zur trommelsprache bei den Ewe-Leuten," *Anthropos* 5, no. 1 (1910): 50–53; Bernhard Ankermann, "Die afrikanischen musikinstrumente," *Ethnologisches Notizblatt* 3, no. 1 (1901): 1–174; and Oberleutnant von Smend, "Negermusik und Musikinstrumente in Togo," *Globus* 93, nos. 5–6 (1908): 71–75, 89–94. [F.O.]
26. B. W. Merwin, "A Voodoo Drum from Hayti," *The Museum Journal* 8, no. 2 (June 1917): 123–25. [F.O.]
27. Edouard Foà et al. *Le dahomey. Histoire, géographie, moeurs, coutumes, commerce, industrie, expeditions françaises (1891–94)* (Paris: A. Hennuyer, 1895), 250; H. Ling Roth, *Great Benin, Its Customs and Horrors* (Halifax: F. King & Songs, 1903), 152. [F.O.]
28. Leo Frobenius, *The Childhood of Man: A Popular Account of the Lives, Customs and Thoughts of the Primitive Races,* trans. A. H. Keane (London: Seeley, 1909), 173; and F. E. Forbes, "Dahomey and the Dahomeyans," *Missions to Dahomey, 1849–50,* 2 (1851): 237. [F.O.]
29. Geoffrey Parrinder, "Yoruba-Speaking Peoples in Dahomey," *Africa* 17 (April 1947): 122–29. [F.O.]
30. See "Tambor arará abotinado, con dos serpientes y otros adornos esculpidos," in Ortiz 1952d, 337, fig. 228.

Many Ararás drums, in Cuba and Haiti, are painted decoratively, something not found in the drums of other ethnic groups with the exception of Cuban-born Kongos and Dahomeyans. Many have vertical stripes but also designs of geometric character, the symbolism of which I am unaware.[31] One particular drum is especially picturesque, with floral drawings, birds, and other images of unknown meaning.[32] When it became necessary to prevent the drum's body from cracking, performers added a metal band or hoop to keep the body together. They tended to paint over this addition with a decorative horizontal stripe as well. Another drum in the collection seems to be the pair or double of that shown in Figure 4.4.[33] And other drums are painted in pairs, without a doubt intended to be played together.[34]

Devotees sometimes add to the ornamentation of certain Ararás drums by "dressing" them on predetermined sacred occasions in honor of the supernatural entity they represent. In Cuba, I am unaware whether the practice of dressing such drums is as extensive as in the Vodoun rituals in Haiti. But without a doubt it is also practiced here. Proof of this is the strip of white cloth decorated with old lace trimmings and projections typically draped over the two *achébolisá* drums and the skirts of the *ñonofó* drum.[35] Furthermore, during the days of divine offices for Asoyí or St. Lazarus, practitioners dress the great *asojún* drum by hanging a number of silk handkerchiefs of varying lively colors on it, from a cord that they wrap around the bottom of the pegs (Figure 4.5). Richly colored handkerchiefs are one of the most traditional and luxurious ornaments used by black Africans in all the villages of Guinea that are in contact with whites. In the Antilles, blacks have adopted silk handkerchiefs in diverse ways, but always as an ostentatious sign of high social status. This is the case too with Cuban street personalities such as the *negros curros*[36] and their female companions, and popular dancers who dress up in silk handkerchiefs and shawls. Ararás and Lucumí practitioners adorn religious initiates in the same way when the saints possess them.

Cuban Ararás drums are unique in other respects. Most of them only have their pegs and cord-based tuning systems in common with others of the same group. It seems that such drums must have similar yet distinct

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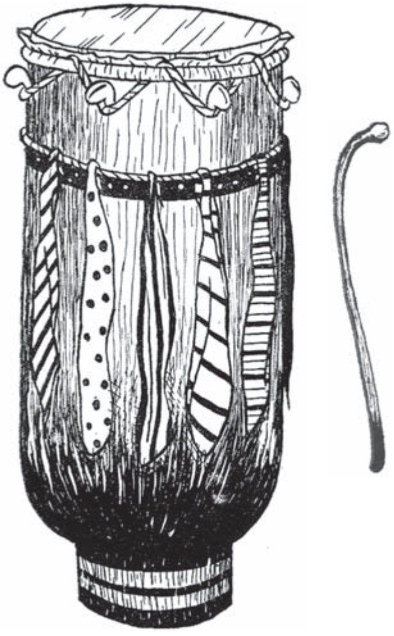
31. See Ortiz 1952d, 338–39, figs. 229, 230, 231, and 232.
32. See "Tambor arará abotonado sin cordajes y pintado con profusos símbolos," in Ortiz 1952d, 332, fig. 225.
33. See "Tambor arará, pareja del tambor de las Figs. 226 y 227," in Ortiz 1952d, 340, fig. 233.
34. See "Tambores ararás emparejados," in Ortiz 1952d, 341, figs. 234 and 235.
35. Ortiz discusses the achébolisá, ñonofó, and asojún drums later in this essay.
36. "Negros curros" were an urban, subcultural Afro-Cuban group of the nineteenth century whose forebearers came from Spain and who had a preference for loud clothing/adornments that included scarves, large earrings, and gold teeth. They were satirized in the Cuban popular theater for decades. See Moore 1997, 54, and Ortiz 1986.



Figures 4.5a and b. Arará asojún drum, decorated with colored scarves, and striker.

ethnic origins. One should not forget that black Africans arrived in Cuba with the name of their respective nation or tribe and its geographic origin as understood by their slave traders. But the criteria used to make such distinctions were often extremely simplistic, confused, and unreliable. This is quite understandable given that during the centuries associated with slavery, the West's understanding of the geography, places, and peoples of Africa was scanty and imprecise. Cuban blacks known as Ararás recognized their diverse backgrounds as well as their similarities with other ethnicities. Every year on Pentecost, for instance, the Dahomey, Sabalú, and Majino cabildos used to process together to the Catholic festival at the Church of the Holy Spirit to play drums and sing their sacred hymns.

The Arará drums of the National Museum belonged to those three Arará cabildos (Dahomey, Sabalú, and Majino), according to older black men who still lament the sacking and destruction of their temples with a pain similar to that of the Jews at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. Other black Africans in Cuba sometimes affiliated themselves with the Arará on account of their small numbers and the similar nature of their ethnic backgrounds. That is what occurred frequently with the Ashanti, Mina, and Ganga.[37]

One should remember that among certain neighboring African groups with turbulent histories, cultural interinfluences among them have been frequent and in many instances overlap with others in inextricable ways. For example, the Iyesá, who tend to pass for Lucumí, employ peg drums like the Arará. And in Cuban Yoruba/Lucumí temples, practitioners on occasion use Iyesá drums for rites to the god Oggún and the goddess Ochún because those deities came from the Ijesha or Ijesa[38] people, who appear to have been a neighboring population of Dahomey. The same occurs with *gueleddé* drums.[39]

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[37] Elsewhere Ortiz explains that the Ashanti, Mina, and Ganga (or Gangá) were African ethnic groups from various regions located on the Gold Coast, West Africa. Although historical documentation is scattered, he concludes that Gangá is a group related to the Ewe. See Ortiz (1924) 1991, 16, 207–9, 320. These ethnic groups are located in the modern nations of Benin, Ghana, Guinea, and Togo.

Given the long-standing and incessant syncretism among African religions and their gods that took place even in Africa, it is common to see rituals practiced in a given temple dedicated to gods of foreign origin that have been incorporated into the local theology. This occurred among the Greeks and Romans and even in Catholic hagiography with powerful or influential deities of foreign conquered peoples, and it also occurs in the Yoruba religion. Among members of that group, a knowledge of the origins of other deities has become indispensable in understanding their own mythologies and liturgies. The Lucumí sometimes play drums from other groups to honor the homelands of certain gods believed to be foreign such as Olokun, Ochún, Ogún, and Babalú Ayé. The same occurs among the Dahomeyans/Arará and other tribes whose members were transported to the Americas. It is thus probable that the varieties of drum types believed to be Arará that I have found in Cuba actually belong to diverse ethnicities, entirely aside from the many other drum types they have adopted for religious or secular functions. The multitude of drum types among the Arará can be observed even in Africa, as noted by Herskovits. He divides Dahomey gods into diverse pantheons and each one has its special drums played in groups of three or five with one musician assigned to each instrument.[40]

In Havana not a single Arará cabildo has survived, and only one exists in a nearby town. One must go to Matanzas, Jovellanos, Perico, Cienfuegos, and other semirural areas of Matanzas, Las Villas, and Oriente provinces to find others. Guanabacoa no longer has an active Arará cabildo either. It has been thirty years since its sacred drums have been heard, though they still exist and are in the care of a Lucumí priestess. More than a decade ago, initiated Arará drummers from Perico (Matanzas province) had to come to Guanabacoa with consecrated instruments to rehabilitate them. But even so the cabildo has not been revived. It appears that Havana no longer has enough consecrated drummers of that sort, and those who remain do not welcome women as directors of the cabildo. In any case, believers still meet there from time to time to practice their rituals, music, and dances with drummers invited from Matanzas.

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[38] The Iyesá, as they are known in Cuba, are descendants of the Ijesa people of southwest Nigeria. Ijesa is also the name of a historical kingdom founded in the fourteenth century.

[39] As with many Afro-descendant terms in Cuba and elsewhere, Ortiz's spelling of this term does not correspond to current Yoruba usage. See Drewal 1992 for discussion of Gẹlẹdẹ folkloric practice among the Yoruba today, ritual events involving masked dancing and drumming. Ortiz discusses gueleddé drums from Matanzas in Ortiz 1952d, 412–15. As he describes them, the gueleddé are single-headed sacred drums similar in construction to those of the Arará. They are performed in groups of three or four drums, each played with varying combinations of sticks and hands. They are, he suggests, of Mina origin, though he reports to have heard the gueleddé played in Matanzas following the playing of batá drums in a Lucumí temple.

[40] Melville J. Herskovits, *Dahomey, an Ancient West African Kingdom,* vol. 1 (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1938), 317. [F.O.]

Some of the drums from Havana's former cabildo are traditional, but most are local variants that deviate from orthodox classification. All of them hang as decorations on the walls of the aforementioned Lucumí temple, in a corner of the hall where the altar to Changó is located. Changó is the god of music and thunder that resounds in the heavens. The drums belonged to a reputed *bokonú* or Arará priest. Today they belong to his daughter, a Lucumí priestess and wife of a Yoruba babalao who is also a member of the Abakuá. Behind an African-style image of Changó and a Catholic monstrance, the babalao has a picture filled with ritual "signatures" or graphic emblems of the *ñáñigo* Nasakó. What a complex syncretism! In Guanabacoa, Arará music is played occasionally, two or three times a year, usually in a Lucumí temple. The similarity and growing syncretism between the two cults permit this relationship.

In the past, each Arará cabildo had many drums, for all of them are required for their ceremonies and musical events. In the above-mentioned temple in Guanabacoa, I saw no less than nine drums of various kinds. This multitude of drums seems to be used according to the gods who are honored by the cult at any given time. This does not mean that each "saint" of the *chiré* (the *oru* or ritual liturgy of the Ararás) has a drum exclusively for him or her. What it does mean is that each drum is dedicated to a certain group of saints, as occurs in Dahomey. Thus, one pair of white drums are played for a certain goddess and for the Twins, another is used for Nana Burukú, and so on.[41] In addition, it appears that among the Arará each sacred drum has its own personality and name.

The Arará drums of Guanabacoa do not have another kind of decoration besides paint, with the exception of light grooves visible in the upper section of the achebólisá, near the pegs. Some of these drums are old and others new, yet all were made in Cuba and recently repainted, suggesting that some of their ornamentation may have been covered up by solid-color paint.

There are discrepancies in Cuba regarding the names of Arará drums used today. According to Courlander,[42] the four Arará drums are generically referred to as *hun* or *jun* and, from the largest to smallest, they are called *bugán*, *xumpé*, *hun-hogulo* and *buní*.[43] These data probably come from Arará living in Matanzas province. I have not been able to find unanimously agreed upon nomenclature for such instruments, however. The most widely accepted seem to be as follows: (1) *ñonofó* or *yonofó*; (2) *aplití* or *aplintí*; (3) *aché-bolisá*; (4) *güegüé*; (5) *klokó*. I took down these terms at an Arará performance observed on October 23, 1949, in Matanzas at the temple of the centenarian Ña Ferminita, recently deceased.

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[41] The Twins, also known as Jimaguas or Ibeyis, are minor orishas, a male and female, children of Changó and Ochún. Nana Burukú is an Arará deity who is known to cure strokes. See Ortiz (1924) 1991, 253, and Cabrera 2009, 44.

[42] Harold Courlander (1908–96) conducted fieldwork and made ethnographic recordings of Afro-diasporic music in Cuba and Haiti in the 1930s and 1940s.

[43] Ortiz does not provide a citation here for Courlander, but he does in his next reference to the author.

Some initiates include two additional names in the list of Arará instruments: *sojún* or *asojún* and *ogán*. They say that the asojún drum is dedicated exclusively to the god Asoyí, a "major saint" that the Arará Catholicize with the name Saint Lazarus. They frequently call the same god Nana Burukú when he appears in his incarnation with crutches. The asojún is the longest drum of all ritual percussion. In Haiti, Jacques Roumain notes that *assotó* is the name given to the great drum representing a powerful Afro-Haitian god, about whom he wrote an interesting monograph.[44] But asojún is better thought of as a generic term. Asojún means "sacred drum." In the Dahomeyan language, hun (more often spelled jun in Spanish orthography) means Vodoun. Among the Fon or Dahomeyan people, the *sohoun* drum (in Spanish we would write *sojún* or asojún) in Cuba, and another drum called *akofín*, are drums that "speak" in the sacred orchestra of this group.[45] That is to say, the drums can produce varying tones and are dedicated to imitating human words in the Dahomeyan language and directing these to the gods. The drums can reproduce the idiomatic tones of traditional liturgical prayers or hymns discussing deeds of the ancestors in this way. In Yoruba, *ojún* means "to speak," according to Bowen's dictionary.[46] Other informants assure us that in Cuba asojún means a long drum and that the drum is used only for playful or secular dances. The asojún drummer stands in the center of a circle formed by dancers who complement the drum's rhythms with their hand clapping. In such dances, which might have once been fertility rites, dancers mimic the act of hunting with bow and arrows. The final segment of the dance involves the *ombligada* or samba, as the Brazilians say (a belly-bump; in Cuba it is known as *vacunao* or the *botao*). Thus, it appears that the term asojún is used imprecisely in Cuba and that it describes secular events or is used to reference various drums.

Ararás use the term *ogán* to describe the metal instrument known by ñáñigos as ekón. It appears that the use of this term to denote a drum is erroneous. The ogán forms part of the religious orchestra of the Arará, but it is not a drum.[47] Nevertheless, Rowanet notes that *hun-gán* is the name of large drum in Dahomey.[48] And *hu-gán* is the name of the largest Arará drum in Cuba, according to Courlander's informants.[49]

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[44] Jacques Roumain, *Le sacrifice du tambour Assoto* (Port-au-Prince, Imprimerie de l'État, 1942). [F.O.]

[45] Ortiz cites Maurice Delafosse, *Les langues du Monde* (Paris, Librarie Ancienne Édouard Champion, 1924. 1924), 538. In WorldCat, however, the author of this book title is Antoine Meillet, not Delafosse.

[46] Ortiz does not provide a citation here, but appears to reference T. J. Bowen, *Grammar and Dictionary of the Yoruba Language: With an Introductory Description of the Country and People of Yoruba*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1858.

The ñonofó or yonofó (Figure 4.5) is truly a drum, the largest and musically and religiously the most important that I observed in performance at Ña Ferminita's house. Perhaps it is the same drum known as *kun-gán*. The ñonofó is female and is dedicated to an Arará goddess who is analogous to the Lucumí Yeggua, goddess of the cemetery. The instrument is a "señorita," and for this reason it is typically dressed in a kind of skirt made of white cloth with lace and in a fancy *bandé* or red apron adorned with cowries, beads, and necklaces. The drum's body rests on a smaller base and both are painted red. It has six pegs. Before playing it, drummers feed it a cup of water with *sará* or *ecó*,[50] eggs shells, and cocoa butter. The musician plays the drum standing up, striking various parts of the skin with his left hand and with a garabato (curved stick) or *adafí* in his right hand. The stick's point or flat end can be used to strike the membrane or part of the stick's edge and the side of the garabato's angled appendage so that sound is produced by both parts together, or by hitting the drum's body with the adafí on its flat side. The yonofó is a drum that "speaks."

The aplintí drum is the second type, and somewhat smaller than the ñonofó. It also has pegs, a base, and a body painted red with some white spots.[51] Musicians play it sitting down with the drum held between their legs. They strike it either with both hands or with only the left hand and an adafí in the right. Devotees offer it dry wine so it will play.

Informants tell me that the aplintí drum is like one from the National Museum that has two snakes sculpted on its body,[52] but I cannot be sure whether that one is actually an aplintí. Certainly the *apintí* drums of the blacks in Dutch Guiana are decorated with engraved snake figures.[53] The Arará aplintí drum seems to be the same kind that the blacks in Dutch Guiana call apintí (Herskovits suggests they are of Ashanti origin). But these apintí, as with other Ashanti drums of the same name discussed by Rattray, do not have a base like the one in Cuba.

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[47] See the entry on such clapperless bells in Ortiz 1952c, 229–61.

[48] Jules Rouanet, "La musique arabe: La musique arabe dans le Maghreb," in *Encyclopédie de la musique et dictionnaire du conservatoire*, ed. Albert Lavignac and Lionel de La Laurencie (Paris: C. Delagrave, 1922), 3204. [F.O.]

[49] Harold Courlander, "Musical Instruments of Cuba," *The Musical Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (April 1942), 236. [F.O.]

[50] Ecó is a mixture of fermented cornmeal and sugar dissolved in water. Ortiz [1924] 1991, 185.

[51] See "Tambor aplintí de los ararás," in Ortiz 1952d, 348, fig. 238.

[52] See Ortiz 1952d, 337, fig. 228.

[53] Ortiz's footnote indicates "Kahn, 1927, p. 284," but his entries for Norton Kahn's publications in the bibliography do not include a work published in 1927. The references by Kahn are as follows: "The Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana," *Journal of the American Museum of Natural History* 28 (1928): 243–52; and "Notes on the Saramaccaner Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana," *American Anthropologist* 31 (1929): 468–90. Dutch Guinea is better known today as Suriname.

The Guianese say that they call the apintí drums *asante kog-bwá*. This makes me think that, in Cuba, although all such instruments are known generically as Arará, they may at one time have been from distinct ethnic groups. Without a doubt, the apintí drums are very common among the Ashanti people, neighbors of the Dahomeyans who call the drums *mpintin*. One can learn about these drums in the ethnographic work of Captain R. S. Rattray.[54] On the other hand, various kinds of the types of drums we call Arará are also used by the Ashanti. They have the same kind of base, identical systems of pegs and cords, paintings of vertical stripes, "white dresses" for ceremonies, and can also be played with two garabatos or, rarely, with the bare hands. The *sika*, *akukua* and *akukuadwe* drums of the Ashanti are identical in their structural aspects to the Afro-Cuban buttonhole drums[55] discussed earlier.

The Ashanti also have a type of drum without a base whose entire lower cylindrical circumference rests on the floor.[56] This is the *fasafakoko*, a war drum. Perhaps this name became popular in Cuba where it changed to *safakoka* to indicate "quarrel, scandal or turmoil." It is not unlikely, on the other hand, that a group of people might hold a drum of foreign origin in great esteem and adopt it as their own, whatever its original religious significance. The Ashanti played the great war drum *fasafakoko* with pride, but only in important magical ceremonies and warlike occasions. Rattray suggests their soldiers captured the instrument from a powerful enemy king in a land neighboring the Gangá, or possibly from the Gangá nation. These links notwithstanding, our word *safacoca* most likely comes to us from the old maritime language of Castile, much of which passed into the Cuban vernacular. The term *safacoca* to mariners signified "terrible navigational accident." It derived from the order to *zafar cocas* (riot) or the term *zafarrancho* (havoc), uttered in case of serious danger as a warning to get oneself to safety. *Zafacoca* and *zafarrancho* in Spanish continue to be used metaphorically to reference a struggle or quarrel.

Consider that the Yoruba in the mid-nineteenth century also had a drum they called *akpintí*, according to Bowen, and it appears they still do. According to Talbot,[57] the apintí that is played for festivals in southern

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[54] R. S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 284. [F.O.]

[55] See Ortiz 1952d, 250–51, figs. 200 and 201; and Ortiz 1952d, 323, 332, figs. 217 and 225. See also, Henri Labouret, "Langage tambouriné et sifflé," *Bulletin du Comité d'Études Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidental Française* (1923):148. There are drums similar in the Crosby Brown Collection of New York. (N. 1410) [F.O.]

[56] See Ortiz 1952d, 330, fig. 223.

[57] P. Amaury Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria: A Sketch of Their History, Ethnology and Languages, with an Abstract of the 1921 Census*, vol. 3 (London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1926), 814. [F.O.]

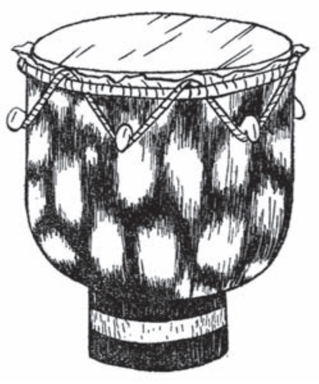

Figure 4.6. The Arará achébolisá drum.

Nigeria is a short, single-headed drum played between the knees. The broad musical and perhaps religious appeal of the apintí drum seems to have been significant since it is found, in the same form and under the same name, among African peoples of distinct cultures and languages.

The achébolisá is the third drum type used in the Arará fiesta in Matanzas (Figure 4.6).[58] It is like the cited aplintí of said orchestra but a bit smaller, and as mentioned a seated musician plays it by hitting it with two small sticks. Nevertheless, in certain performances the same musician plays the achébolisá and aplintí drums, with one hand on each membrane. This is done, I am told, in performances for Obatalá, Ogún, and the Ibédyi or Twins. Perhaps this system of joining the performance of achébolisá and aplintí drums I saw in Matanzas was coincidental and due to economic factors. According to other data and as I have seen the music played in Guanabacoa in the ritual orchestra of Arará cabildos, there are usually two drums called achébolisá and not just one. Musicians play them especially for the annual festival of Pentecostals called the Holy Spirit Festival. In years past many referred to this event in Cuba as "Easter for the blacks."

The two achébolisá drums are always played together by a single musician, and for this reason they call the drums *jimaguas* or *mellizos* (twins). Some may call one of the drums *aché* and the other *bolisá*, as one Arará priest suggested. However, others say that both drums have only a single name, Segbó Lisá, the Arará name of the deity to which the drums are consecrated, equivalent to the Yoruba orisha Obatalá. The words Segbó Lisá or *achébo lisá*, the Cuban variant, appear to be of Yoruba origin: *aché-bo-orichá*. (*aché*: "actor," "power," "authority," "marvel" or "party"; *bo*: "worship" or "stir up"; and *orichá*: "deity.") Aché-bo-orichá is thus equivalent to saying literally "festive or powerful actor, worshipping a god." *Se*, or *Dadá Segbó*, is a surname in Dahomey given also to *Mawú*, father of the gods. And Lisá seems to be his son.[59] The Lisá cult is certainly old in Dahomey, so much so that in 1660 a short and unsuccessful mission of Spanish Capuchin friars translated this Vodoun word as "God" and the word *Lisá* as "Jesus," using them in their translation of *Christian Doctrine*, with the title *Pranvi elisá*. The name Lisá in Dahomey is none other than a derivation of the Yoruba word orisha,

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[58] Originally, "Tambor achebólisá de los ararás," in Ortiz 1952d, 351, fig. 239.

[59] Parrinder, "Yoruba-Speaking," 35. [F.O.]

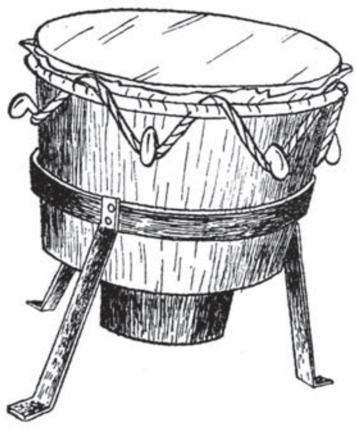

Figure 4.7. The Arará güegüé drum.

according to Maupoil. According to the Dahomey author Maximilien Quénum, in his language *Chegbó-Lisá* means "the greatest Spirit."[60] It appears related to the pair of Arará drums. Herskovits describe them as representing "the unity of a dual leadership of the pantheon by Mawu and Lisá . . . Both drums are played by a single drummer, since a battery of drums is not permitted in the ritual Mawu-Lisá."[61] According to Quénum, *majú* or *mawu* is also equivalent to *che*, which signifies "spirit protector," such that *Chebólisá* is also the name of the supreme god ruling over the pantheon with Lisá the Dahomeyan Obatalá. As Afro-Cubans say, it is the "Holy Spirit," the supreme god of the Christianized Ararás.

In Cuba, these paired achébolisá drums can be differentiated from others by their distinctive decorations and white markings, the color of Obatalá. The National Museum houses two of them.[62] The relation or analogy between these two achebólisá drums and the god Obatalá is confirmed by the fact that certain Yoruba tribes close to Ifé in Africa dedicate two drums (one male and one female) to the orisha Obatalá, as Leo Frobenius discusses in his *La mythologie de l'Atlantide*.[63]

The fourth drum of the Arará orchestra, the güegüé, is similar to the others, but smaller, and unique in that it is held up by a mobile iron tripod consisting of a hoop made of the same metal that encases the drum. Perhaps the drum's small size makes playing it difficult without such support. This is the only Afro-Cuban drum with such a metal tripod, and I do not know whether it represents a local creation or derives from Africa (Figure 4.7).[64] The güegüé is also unique in that it is played neither with an aguidafí nor with the hand but rather with two fine rods made from a bush known locally as *rascabarriga* (belly-scratcher).[65] The rods are half a meter in length and very flexible in nature, and much of the bark peels off from the area that strikes the membrane along its length. Although some say little rods are called igdafí, they are not garabatos or hook shaped and thus cannot strike the drum skin with their tip or hook but, rather, only along the side and very forcefully, like a whip. The rhythms of the güegüé are very fast and produce a single tone, creating musical *remplissage*[66] that is even denser than those produced on the Lucumí batás. In this Arará orchestra, the drummers' hands, the guidafí, and the ogán produce eight distinct tones together in combination.

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[60] Maximilien Quénum, *Au pays des fons. Us et coutumes du Dahomey* (Paris: Larose, 1938), 66. [F.O.]

[61] Herskovits, *Dahomey*, vol. 2, 115. [F.O.]

[62] See Ortiz 1952d, 341, figs. 234 and 235.

[63] Frobenius, *Mythologie de l'Atlantide* (Paris: Payot, 1949), 172. [F.O.]

[64] Originally, "Tambor güegüé de los ararás," in Ortiz 1952d, 353, fig. 240.

[65] The botanical name of this shrub is *Espadaea amoena*.

The name *güegüé* seems to refer to blacks known by the same name in Brazil,[67] those who are probably known as Gangá in Cuba. The güegüé drum could very well be of Gangá origin, introduced into the Arará cults as the Gangá themselves entered them. The many uncertainties regarding the African names for drums and their diverse formal types prevent me from making clearer conclusions. The African Yoruba also had a drum called *gangán*, according to Bowen.

Yet another drum is found in the Arará orchestra, distinct from others, called the *klokó*.[68] Although it has pegs like the other drums, its body is cylindrical and it has no base or foot. The drummer plays it sitting down using two small sticks. The instrument may derive from a distinct ethnic group, and I cannot ascertain whether it came from Africa or represents a local creation. *Klokó* seems to be an onomatopoeic word.

Sacred Arará drums are not all played together. Sometimes, for example, the drummer only plays the asojún. At other times two drums are played, for example, the achébolisá. Generally, three drums, and on certain occasions four, are played together. It is clear that some of the old drums from the museum were created in pairs because of their similar size, form, and design.[69] I am unsure whether all of those pairs of drums are chegbó-lisá.

In the Arará orchestra of Matanzas I never saw more than four drums played. When the yonofó sounded the aplintí was silent. In Haitian Rada or Arará rites only three drums are played, known locally in Kreyol as *mamán*, *papá*, and *bulá* or *katá*, according to Seabrook and Katherine Dunham.[70]

All of the Arará drums I have seen in Matanzas have solid bodies. Of the nine Arará drums from Guanabacoa, seven are made from solid wood with the typical "abotinado" foot of a smaller diameter. Two of those, although solid, have metal bands wrapped around them to keep the wood from cracking. Two are made of slats. Of the nine Arará drums from Guanabacoa, the two achébolisá are the same, 90 cm in height. Another three are somewhat smaller, made in the same shape but of differing sizes. They appear to have been played together, like the batás of the Lucumí. The aplintí is a similar height and has a somewhat protruding body. Another somewhat wider drum has an almost cylindrical or slightly conical body, without the typical foot, its skin tightened by nine pegs. Additionally, it stands out for not being made of one piece of wood nor constructed of staves but rather of long slats two inches wide. They were fitted side by side to form a nearly cylindrical tube and secured with glue and many curved wooden pieces situated at distinct heights within the drum cavity. The slats are glued and nailed together with tacks as if they were wedges intended to secure the assembly. This is not African style but clearly a Cuban variant influenced by the art of a contemporary carpentry. It is the only drum from Guanabacoa constructed in that way. The drum is also unique because it plays against the rhythm of the other drums.

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[66] Ortiz uses the French term *remplissage* (filling up) here and elsewhere to characterize the interlocking textures produced through Afro-Cuban drumming. See Ortiz (1951) 1981, chap. 1.

[67] Ortiz is alluding to the Gegê, an Afro-Brazilian group or "nation" with origins among the Ewe-speaking people of Dahomey. See Herskovits 1966.

[68] See "Tambor klokló [*sic*] de los ararás," in Ortiz 1952d, 355, fig. 241.

[69] See Ortiz 1952d, 339 and 341, figs 231, 232, 234, and 235.

[70] William Seabrook, *The Magic Island* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929), 300. And Katherine Dunham, "Las danzas de Haití," *Acta Antropológica* 2 (1947): 236. [F.O.]

The Arará of Cuba have yet another drum, the longest, measuring almost two meters. All drums of this type in Africa were probably of one single hollowed-out tree trunk, but the specimen in Guanabacoa is constructed from slats in the creolized form discussed above. It resembles the *yuka* drums of the Kongos, although it has the usual Arará pegs. It is played with an adafí. Musicians straddle the drum to perform on it, with the drum almost horizontal, one end on the floor and the other on a small wooden support. It seems this drum does not have sacred associations and is typically used to accompany amusements and joyous dancing, as occurs with the *bembé* drums of the Lucumí. It may be a Mina drum.[71]

This long drum is intended for "playing around." Precisely for this purpose, devotees of Vodoun in Haiti use it for *jubá* dances, in which the dead are bid farewell during novena rituals, instead of using the strange and esoteric *jícara de jobá* instrument found in Cuba and dedicated to that ceremony. Since novenas are celebrated as a soirée or farewell to appease and placate the dead as they leave their earthly bodies and are about to undertake a final journey without return, it is logical that the festive drum could be played and still not disrupt the funerary character of the event. I have information suggesting that in Cuba this same drum is sometimes substituted for the jobá when it is not possible to utilize one of the gourd-type instruments discussed elsewhere.[72] The data come from Camagüey province; I have yet to determine whether this is a drum from an Arará temple that plays *tumba francesa*[73] or if it belongs to a group of Haitians who have immigrated to work in the sugar mills of Cuba. The immigrants continue to practice the Vodoun religion of their homeland; for example, in Lombillo near Morón (Camagüey), Palma Soriano (Oriente), and other places.

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[71] Ortiz identifies the Mina as an ethnic group from the southwest of Dahomey. See Ortiz (1924) 1991, 320.

[72] See Ortiz 1952d, 160–83. Ortiz defines the jícara de jobá as sacred and notes that it is performed to accompany the funerary rituals of various Afro-Cuban groups. The gourd is placed upside down in water and played with two sticks.

In the jubá drum performances of Haiti, according to Courlander, the musician who straddles the instrument plays the drumhead with his hands and also modulates its tone by applying pressure on the membrane with his bare heels.[74] Drummers probably use their heels in the same way as they play the drum from Camagüey, but according to my information the musician employs one or both of his heels to rub or slide on the skin, which produces grunt-like and mournful noises. These vibrations, unique to so-called friction drums, are characteristic of esoteric rituals associated with the dead as practiced in Cuba and many other nations, something I analyze elsewhere. It is likely that the sounds drummers produce by sliding their feet on the skin are also made by Haitians on their jubá drum, even if the practice has never been noticed or documented. In any case, the use of the aforementioned Arará instrument as both a friction drum and one played with the hands confirms its ties to well-known jobá mortuary rituals. The Mina drum found in Venezuela is similar to the Arará drum from Guanabacoa in its dimensions, cylindrical body, and use of pegs. It apparently has its origins among Mina Africans or the area around San Jorge de Mina, the old factory near the homeland of the Arará.[75]

Almost all of the drums of the tumba francesa groups that still exist in Santiago de Cuba and Guantanamo are of Arará or Dahomey construction as well, but I discuss them in a separate publication.[76]

Another Arará drum used in Jovellanos (Matanzas), in the St. Lazarus temple or social club, is the so-called *gurugú*. The body's height is about half a meter and nearly another half meter in diameter, with pegs. It is built in a truncated cone shape. Musicians play the drum by striking it with two thick belts some 30 cm in length and 2 cm in thickness, and it performs together with another three drums of the same structure. I am uncertain as to the African origins of the name *gurugú*. This term may be a variant of the Moroccan mountain named Gourougou that was discussed frequently in late nineteenth-century Cuba because of its fleeting importance in the Spanish colonial war of Melilla (North Africa). Perhaps the name derives instead from *gudugudú*, a closed drum from Nigeria, according to Talbot. A drum of the same name exists in Cienfuegos, which musicians play as part of syncretic Lucumí-Arará rites, also with two belts.[77]

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[73] Tumba francesa refers to the drumming and dancing performed by Haitians and their Cuban descendants.

[74] Harold Courlander, "Gods of the Haitian Mountains," *The Journal of Negro History* 29, no. 3 (1944): 39. [F.O.]

[75] Juan Liscano, *Folklore y cultura, ensayos* (Caracas: Avila Gráfica, 1950), 95 and 120. [F.O.]

[76] See "Las tumbas francesas," in Ortiz 1954, 117–57.

It is worth mentioning a curious way of superficially maintaining the traditional look of certain Arará drums without having to carve the bodies with complex exterior features as documented by Courlander in Matanzas province.[78] It involves imitating the great belly of the drum by covering the middle section with various layers of tire rubber or strips of cloth, glued one over the other and then painted thickly so that the entire surface looks like wood. This precludes the costly operation of forming the Arará drum's potbellied shape, its base, and its various sections by means of manual labor or on a lathe. It appears that just like in the province of Matanzas where the batá are losing their traditional form, the same is happening with the drums of Arará rites.

A simple ethnographic and organological comparison of Cuban Arará drums with those of Haitians and their Dahomeyan instruments makes it indisputable that they are the same. Many sacred dances of the Dahomeyan cabildo in Havana used such drums, some of which had symbolic serpentine ornaments, as we have seen. Their use suggests the presence of a snake cult, very common in Haiti and among the Arará and Dahomey. One still encounters ophiomorphic survivals in Cuba and hears of sacred dances involving snakes hung around the neck of Arará priests who conducted spiritual "work" with trained snakes that lived in their temples. This has led some to believe that Arará performance in Cuba is nothing more than Haitian Vodoun, and without a doubt their similarities are many. When a Haitian folkloric troupe came to Cuba not long ago, older black men immediately suggested that the Haitians were playing "Arará music." Comparative study on the topic remains to be done, but must be approached without misguided preconceptions.

I must respond to a question I am repeatedly asked in reference to the Arará religion of Cuba. Is it the same as Haitian Vodoun? I would say not. The Arará religion is influenced by the three groups of Dahomeyans who came to Cuba: Dahomey, Majino, and Sabalú. The religion of all three is similar to that of the Yoruba with whom they had sustained contact in Africa. The Arará religion is very similar to Vodoun, perhaps the strongest cultural influence in Haiti. But Vodoun represents a mixture of African religions, principally those of the Dahomeyans, the Nagos or Yorubas, and the Kongos. Vodoun's syncretism had already begun in the eighteenth century when the Haitian revolution broke out, culminating in independence. By 1768, a black man named Don Pedro, a Bantu shaman and probably Cuban, became famous in Haiti for his sacred-magical rituals. Although it is conceivable that he could have introduced a Kongo sect in Haiti, as occurred in Cuba, it is certain that prior to his arrival there were a great number of Kongo people on that island who practiced ancestral magic. Perhaps this celebrity, Don Pedro, introduced the first syncretic "reforms" that fused Kongo and Dahomeyan rituals, helping to establish Haitian Vodoun's unique and complex character. Some have interpreted a popular Haitian war song, collected more than a century ago by Moreau de St. Méry, and later in the Dominican Republic and Cuba, as a hymn or *areíto* to the Indian queen Anacaona. In fact, it was a *nganga* sorcerer's spell intended for use against white men, sung in the Kongo language and set to the accompaniment of a French folk song, as I have demonstrated in another book.[79] On the other hand, the colors and symbols of the Haitian national flag are the same as those of the Ogún, the Nago, and Arará god of war. And in Vodoun rituals an inextricable mixture of African survivals continues to emerge that has been forming and distilling for centuries.

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[77] See "El gudúgudú cerrado," in Ortiz 1954, 398–99.

[78] Courlander, "Musical Instruments," 235. [F.O.]

Vodoun, about which many errors, follies, and even deceptive statements have been written, was not originally "the Dahomey snake cult" as P. Williams[80] suggested. I argued in 1938 that "in the first place, the term Vodoun does not apply only to the snake cults of Dahomey. It is an Ewe term derived from the root word *vo*, which means 'terrorize,' 'reverent fear,' or 'the sacred.'" Vodoun in that language generally signifies "god" or "supernatural being," "something mysterious of an otherworldly power," or something similar to how anthropologists use the word mana, which could be translated as sacred-power or sacredness.[81] Vodoun is thus a very general word and it applies to the sacred snake cult as well as to everything that is sacred and steeped in religion. Upon arriving in the Antilles with their languages, beliefs, drums, and music, the Dahomeyans continued to use the word Vodoun in the same generic way that it was used in Africa. And in Haiti everything religious is called Vodoun, as is the case in Africa: gods, idols, fetishes, beliefs, *majás*,[82] dances, instruments, and songs. And due to favorable historical circumstances, the snake cult, so well known to the citizens of Whydah and Ardra,[83] adapted easily to the Antilles given the abundance of large and harmless snakes there. It proved very attractive to the Haitian people who syncretized the religion of the Dahomeyans along with others from Guinea, Gabon, and Congo, and even the dogma and symbolism of French Catholicism. They created a new synthesis, just like those created in other epochs, by other peoples, when they, too, experienced the accidental clash of disparate religions.[84]

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[79] Fernando Ortiz, *La africanía de la música folklórica de Cuba* (Havana: Ministerio de Educación, Dirección de Cultura, 1950), chap. 1. [F.O.]

[80] Ortiz does not include a reference here, but he seems to be citing Joseph J. Williams, *Voodoos and Obeahs; Phases of West India Witchcraft* (New York: L. MacVeagh, Dial Press, 1932).

[81] According to the *Dictionary of Modern Sociology,* the term *mana* was originally widely used in Polynesian cultures to denote supernatural power. See Hoult 1977, 191.

[82] Majá is the name of a large tree boa common in Cuba whose scientific name is *Chilabothrus angulifer.*

[83] Ancient kingdoms of Dahomey in what is now the country of Benin.

P. Williams recognizes that the Haitian masses eventually applied the concept and name Vodoun to all non-Christian ritual practices, even those far removed from snake rituals and Dahomeyan religions, as well as to profane dances and other popular entertainment. In 1768, Don Pedro, a Cuban-born black man, initiated a religious movement in Haiti and from there certain cannibalistic practices (says the Jesuit author) were incorporated into Vodoun, together with other spells derived from Jamaican Obeah that one Boukman[85] introduced in Haiti. Little by little, he says, the cult transitioned from a focus on good spirits to bad ones until it degenerated into a blood cult, culminating in paroxysms of human sacrifice. The religion of Whydah, concludes P. Williams, has become the witchcraft of Haiti. This theory has been rejected by Haitian intellectuals. As to the origins of the vicious cannibals who according to P. Williams appear sporadically in Haiti owing to the influences of the Cuban Don Pedro,[86] or of the subsequent degeneration of their rites into delirious orgies, so frequent in Haitian rituals,[87] it seems advisable to pursue an explanation less simplistic and more scientific than of "bad spirits," yet I will not pursue it here. I note in passing that the paragraphs copied by P. Williams from H. H. Johnston[88] referring to the beliefs and rituals of black Cubans are totally erroneous. Johnston is excused since, as he himself says, he only mentions what uneducated and ignorant people told him about Cuba.

Today various groups of Haitians who practice Vodoun rituals live in Cuba. Some are found in Santiago and other parts of Oriente, and also in towns near Camagüey such as in Lombillo. There they organize crowded festivals to the accompaniment of their traditional drums, the slaughtering of four-legged beasts, and other Vodoun rites.

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[84] Fernando Ortiz, "Cuba, bib y bibop," *Revista del Ministerio de Educación* (1948): 130. [F.O.]

[85] A reference to Haitian slave and insurgent Dutty Boukman (died 1791).

[86] (Joseph J. Williams, *Voodoos and obeahs; phases of West India witchcraft*. New York, L. MacVeagh, Dial Press, Inc. 1932, 73. [F.O.]

[87] Ibid., 106–7. [F.O.]

[88] Sir Harry H. Johnson, *The Negro in the New World* (London: Methuen, 1910).

5

The Chekeré, Ágbe, or Aggüé

Translated by **Cary Peñate**

The *ágbe*[1] is similar in structure to the netted and externally sounded maracas discussed earlier[2] (Figure 5.1). In Cuba, we usually use or write the term *ággüe* or *aggüé* instead of *ágbe*. The Yoruba peoples in Africa call certain fruits belonging to the gourd family ágbe if they have an elongated shape. People there use the gourds as containers for liquids such as water, palm wine, or palm oil by making an incision on the top of the gourd. Bowen describes this sort of receptacle as a gourd-bottle.[3] The Yoruba call such gourds *agbe-yólo* if they have a more elongated stem. Aggüé is a creolized Cuban derivative of the word ágbe. Ágbe also derives from the Ibo language, related to Yoruba, in which it means "pumpkin" or squash (*calabaza*). The same definition is found in the anonymous *Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language*[4] printed by W. M. Watts in

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Translated from Fernando Ortiz, *Los instrumentos de la música afrocubana*, vol. 2 (Havana: Ministerio de Educación, Dirección de Cultura, 1952), 123–40.

[1] Ortiz uses the term *ágbe* to refer to the Yoruba-derived term for gourd, so we have included it. Note, however, that the spelling *abwe* is at least as common today.

[2] Ortiz refers here to the essay directly preceding the one on chekerés in Ortiz 1952c, 115–22. It is entitled "El chachá o la maraca de red" ("The chachá or the bead-net maraca").

[3] Thomas J. Bowen, *Grammar and Dictionary of the Yoruba Language* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1858), 10. [F.O.]

[4] Samuel Crowther and Owen Emeric Vidal, *A Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language* (London: Seeleys, 1852).

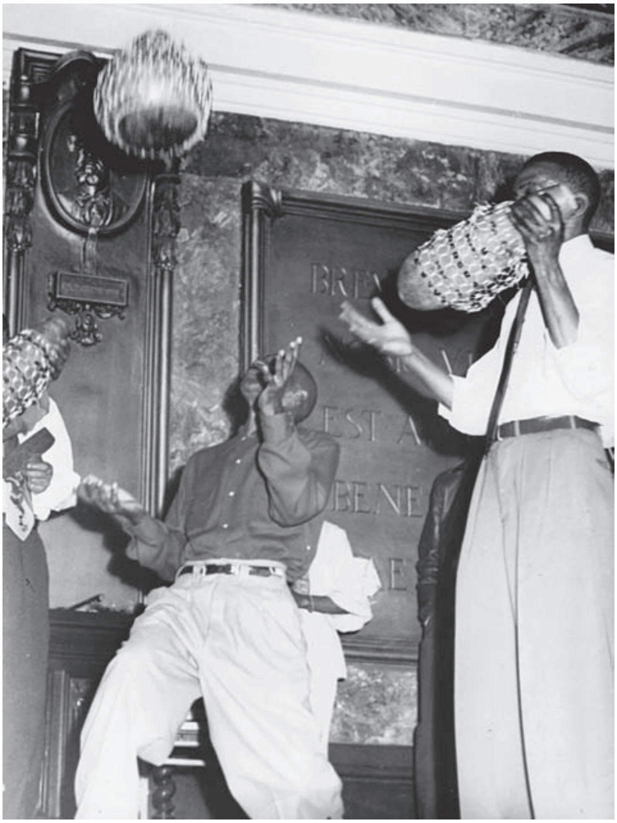

Figure 5.1. A performance of chekerés in the mid-1950s organized by Fernando Ortiz in the Aula Magna of the University of Havana. (Image courtesy of María Fernanda Ortiz, representative of the Ortiz Successors, and edited by Judith Gutiérrez Ganzaraín.)

London (1860), and in the most recent edition of *A Dictionary of the Yoruba Language*.[5]

Crowther[6] uses the term *shékere* in his old Yoruba dictionary to describe this kind of instrument, a name clearly derived from the sound it makes. Bowen employs the same term to reference a drum made from a certain kind of gourd. The same term and definition appear in Talbot and Basden's publications,[7] in Crowther's dictionary, and in Sowande's dictionary, recently edited by Oxford. Clearly, then, the Yoruba people call the instrument *shekeré*. Ágbe or ággüe refers to what we call *güiro* (gourd) in Cuba. Here we simply call the instrument güiro instead of using its African names ágbe or

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[5] Samuel Crowther and E. J. Sowande, *A Dictionary of the Yoruba Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1852). [F.O.]

[6] Samuel Crowther, *Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language: Part I. English and Yoruba. Part II. Yoruba and English. To Which Are Prefixed, the Grammatical Elements of the Yoruba Language* (London: Printed for the Church Missionary Society, 1843), 164. [F.O.]

[7] Ortiz refers to George T. Basden and P. Amaury Talbot, both of whom wrote extensively on the peoples and cultures of Nigeria and the surrounding region in the early twentieth century.

ággüe. To "play the güiros" is to play the ágbes. When Afro-Cubans say ágbe or ággüe, they are in fact saying "gourd" in the Lucumí language; but shekeré or chekeré represent more precise terminology. In Cuba, then, the instrument should be called chekeré, not ággüe or even ágbe. Courlander refers to the existence of this instrument in Cuba,[8] but because of an informant's error he calls it an *acheré.*[9] In Cuba, aggüé players are known as *güireros* or gourd players; rarely are they described as *aggüereros.* In Yorubaland, chekeré performers are known as *onichekeré.*

Renowned scholar Nina Rodrigues[10] has observed performances of the chekerés in Brazil. He describes them specifically as "empty gourds covered with threaded netting of relatively large mesh, and with thick beads, cowries, or seeds fastened to the knots. Gripped by the neck with the right hand, they are shaken vigorously against the open palm of the left hand, resulting in a confused or diffuse sound, but a loud one, similar to the crashing of many rocks."[11] Nina Rodrigues used the word *agueé* to refer to the instruments; *agué* is the name used by Brazilian blacks in Bahia.[12] Among Afro-Brazilians, the instrument is also known as *amelé, xaque-xaque, calabaza,* and *piano de cuia.*[13]

The chekeré, ágbe, or ággüe is a variant of the gourd maraca, a large version of a *chachá,* but without the elongated stem handle by which it is shaken. The top part is held (using the right hand) by a loop of a string near the open top of the güiro, in place of a stem handle.

The chekeré consists of a large gourd (among the largest available, often 50 cm long or more), dried and hollowed out, and almost entirely wrapped—except for its two extremities—by a net of twine with mesh holes of a little under an inch in size. Multiple strings of the mesh pass through large beads, which are called *glorias* in Cuba. Glorias in the slang of *Santería* initiates alludes to the beads used in Catholic rosaries as part of recitation of the Gloria Patri prayer. The glorias strike the exterior surface of the gourd as it is shaken.[14] The inside of the gourd is empty, without pebbles or other percussive objects. This aspect of its construction distinguishes it from the maraca and the chachá. But it makes a loud sound due to its large size and the resonance of the empty güiro as the beads strike it simultaneously from multiple external points

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[8] Harold Courlander, "Musical Instruments of Cuba," *The Musical Quarterly* vol. 28 no. 2 (April 1942) plate 1, figs 2 and 3 between pages 228 and 229. [F.O.].

[9] See Ortiz's entry on the acheré in the section on "Los instrumentos sacuditivos," Ortiz 1952c, 80–86.

[10] Raimundo Nina Rodrigues (1862–1902) was a Brazilian medical doctor who dedicated his life to the study Afro-Brazilian communities in the late nineteenth century. Many of his publications were markedly racist, focusing on "black criminology" and African-derived cultural practices such as totemism.

[11] Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, "A raza negra na América Portuguesa," *Revista do Brasil* 21 (1922): 24. [F.O.]

[12] Manuel Querino, *Costumes Africanos no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, s.a., 1938), 187. [F.O.]

[13] Renato Almeida, *Historia da Musica Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: King, 1942), 114. [F.O.]

[14] See "Chekeré o ágbe," in Ortiz 1952c, 125, fig. 65.

Courlander states that the exterior percussive net of this instrument (which he calls an *acheré*) is woven with beads made of glass, wood, or peanuts. I have never seen peanuts used in this way, as they do not have a hard shell nor would they hold together long enough to create the appropriate percussive sound. Using peanuts would produce a dull timbre and their fragility would make it difficult and time-consuming to attach them to the mesh. The loud sound produced by percussive rhythms of the chekeré is what enables the instrument to be effective. The instrument requires strong beads in order to be durable.

Performance on the chekerés requires special talent to master the rhythmic aesthetics required to accompany certain ritual dances. Ágbes are played by güireros in five distinct ways: (1) *Tossing*: holding the ágbe with the right hand (by inserting it inside the string loop attached to the opening on the top) and shaking or tossing the instrument up and down against the other hand; (2) *Striking*: holding it with the right hand in the same fashion and hitting the bottom or "ass" (*culo*) of the gourd with the left hand now and again, the part of the instrument not covered by the net; (3) *Shaking*: holding the gourd with both hands, on the top and the bottom, and shaking it rapidly; (4) *Rotating*: moving it in a circular motion, which produces a sound similar to a tremolo; and (5) *Throwing*: tossing the instrument into the air occasionally and catching it again with both hands, all to the beat of the music. The first three modes of performance are the most common, while the last two are considered embellishments (*floreos*). These different instrumental techniques may coincide with or stand out from what the rest of the orchestra is doing.[15]

In Matanzas and other places, I have seen aggüé trios play in the following way: the largest instrument is tossed from side to side and shaken, the midsized instrument is shaken, and the smallest is struck on the bottom and occasionally employs the rotating tremolo technique out of time, creating a sound similar to that of an acheré as it calls to the saints or ancestor spirits. There are usually never more than three aggüés playing at the same time, even if some have written that three or four may play together.

I was told years ago that the second approach to playing the ágbe—hitting it on the bottom—was not common in Havana until the great Lucumí musician, Adofó, introduced it in the mid-twentieth century. He did so because at that time the authorities had forbidden the use of "African drums" in houses of worship or other gatherings of black people. For that reason performers played religious events with ágbes instead, and to play religious rhythms and simulate the sound of drums, it became common for performers to strike the bottom of the güiro below the net. In that spot, the palm of the hand produces a sharp tone similar to that of a Lucumí drummer when he strikes the small end of a ritually consecrated *batá* drum (*ilú*) with his open hand. The story may be true, but more evidence is required in order to judge its veracity. A first step in that process is to understand clearly and in great detail the techniques with which the ágbe is played in Africa.

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[15] See "Tocadores de chekeré o ágbe," in Ortiz 1952c, 127, fig. 66.

Schaeffner notes that the percussive sound of the chekeré is more precise than the shaking of the maracas.[16] That is true, but chekerés are incapable of reproducing all the marvelous rhythms of the batás for which they sometimes substitute in Afro-Cuban rituals.

The best ágbe are made from large gourds. A set of three gourds of this sort are sometimes referred to as "*güirones*." They usually generate the best sound but tend to tire out the musicians. Performers often say that "the güiro is more work than the drums," referring to single-headed drums and not the two-sided batás. For this reason, many prefer the güiros they play to be lighter and smaller in size.

The making of an ágbe or chekeré involves a long process and must be done carefully, because the fragile outer surface of the gourd is easily cracked. The chekeré is made of large gourds, either from "vining plants from the savannah" or from "bitter gourd," the male variety, from which ancient apothecaries would get resinous *acíbar* extract. All types of gourds, whether they are used to construct scrapers or maracas, and especially for the making of a aggüés, require much attention from the moment they are growing or hanging from the plant in order to avoid any deformed shape or pest infestation. The large-sized gourds require greatest attention. One farmer who grew large gourds for scrapers and storage containers (*jícaras*) told me "they must be cared for like fine roosters."

Large gourds used for the construction of ágbes require strict vigilance during their development. When the gourds become heavy they are supported on a bed of leaves taken from the same plant and tied to other branches by strings. In this way, the gourd can grow as large as possible without being put at risk by its weight or volume. Once it has reached the desired size and is still green, it is separated from the plant precisely at the waning of the moon. The farmer then cuts it open near the stalk, creating a small circular opening by which he or she empties the gourd of its pulp and seeds (often referred to as the *gandofia*). Once the gourd has been emptied, it is placed in hot water and later a mixture of cane alcohol and ashes is poured inside. Workers then scrape the inside until only the outer shell remains and thus the inner wall does not spoil or turn black. In order for the gourd to dry well, it is "cured" by hanging it for 21 days in the open air, in the shade and exposed to the night dew. During this time, palm oil is applied to the gourd both inside and outside, sucking all water out of it and drying it completely. The use of oil also imparts a certain elasticity to the gourd, helping prevent any cracks. Even after the instrument has been finished it is important to continue applying oil on its outer surface. Nevertheless, it may crack or break and if so the crack must be sown up with waxed thread. The crack is then filled with wax on the outside and with rosin known in Cuba as *fardela*[17] on the inside.

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[16] André Schaeffner, *Origine des instruments de musique. Introduction ethnologique à l'histoire de la musique instrumentale* (Paris: Payot, 1936), 44. [F.O.]

Dolores Montalvo was a renowned gourd cultivator who lived in the mountains in the Unión de Reyes region of Matanzas province. She sold sets of three large gourds already finished or strung with beads for twenty-five pesos or dollars.

Chekerés always look shiny, not only because of the polishing produced by the percussive striking of the beads but also because of the palm oil musicians apply to them. With proper care, a chekeré may last for many years, more than half a century.

The weave of the net and the threading of the beads into it can be done various ways. Sometimes the beads are tied into the thread between two knots. Other times several beads are tied between every two knots. But what appears to be the most orthodox approach, at least what I have seen in the oldest ritual ágbes (those of the former *cabildo* Changó Tedún), involves a more complex process. There, two strings are passed through each bead, with knots tied on both sides of it before and after passing the string through the hole of the bead. In order to weave the net, one begins by placing a cord collar around the neck of the gourd. Doubled strings are looped onto the initial collar with slip knots, approximately an inch apart, so that each one forms where the string doubles back in the middle, affixing it to the collar. Beads are then inserted into the strings hanging down. The two strings are separated at a right angle; the left-side string attaches to its neighbor string on the right and makes a knot where the bead is inserted, then it is knotted again. With the bead suspended this way, the strings are separated again in the same fashion. Each one attaches to another nearby, a new knot is created, and the net is created by each successive knot with all strings tied to the collar and with beads knotted to the strings. At the very bottom of the gourd where the diameter of the net becomes smaller again, the mesh also becomes smaller until one arrives at the edge, where another cord is looped, called a *faja*. All the ends of the other strings are tied to this cord, which completes the formation of the netting

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[17] This rosin is also applied to the head of the lower-sounding *iyá* batá drum in order to modify its intonation. The rosin forms a circular patch in the center of the drumhead.

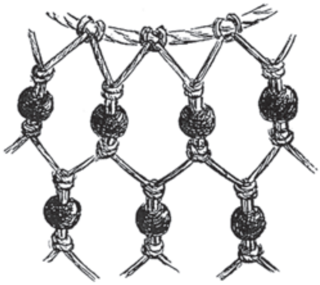

Figure 5.2. A style of weaving the net of the chekeré or ágbe.

(Figure 5.2).[18] It remains somewhat loose but is firmly affixed so that it can't slip off the gourd.[19] Other simpler weaves are employed as well. In that case, the two strings formed by the net are only tied after the bead is inserted. Both strings pass through the opening of the bead and upon exiting are knotted, with the process continuing in the same way successively. An even simpler type of net contains more than one knot between beads. Beads may be inserted without the knots, resulting in beads that slip a bit and create somewhat irregular nets.[20] This last type of netting does not last as long. It is easily broken through continuous shaking, as the threads tend to separate and to push the inside edges of the beads outward, which makes the strings break. This method of instrument making is cheaper and easier, but the weave described earlier remains the best model.

Sometimes the beads on each ágbe are different sizes, but this should not be the case. In the more orthodox ágbes the beads employed should be large and strong, those known as glorias or *marías* in Cuba. The instrument maker must ensure that the net does not cling too tightly nor too loosely to the body of the gourd. The circumference of the net should be proportional to the gourd's size in each round of knots. An appropriate looseness of the net is crucial to a well-made ágbe, as it allows the beads to sound effectively on its surface.

In Cuba, I have seen a few ágbes made with seashells or cowries tied in knots within the netting. These shells are very important in Guinean religions. Without a doubt, as they hit the surface of the gourd they produce sonorities similar to those made by glorias, yet not as precise. For this reason shells on the chekeré or ágbe are mainly used for decoration, as symbols of wealth and of the supernatural. This is seen in gourds used by the Ibo people of Nigeria, according to Basden,[21] others in Nigeria according to Delano,[22] and also in Dahomey according to Herskovits.[23] Oxford's *New Yoruba Dictionary* defines the chekeré as "a drum made from a pumpkin with a net of cowries." The category of "drum" is disputable, but it is notable that the net is described as containing cowries.

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[18] See original line drawing "Fig. 67. Un tipo de tejido de la red del chekeré o ágbe," in Ortiz 1952c, 130.

[19] See photo of three chekerés made with the complex weave, in Ortiz 1952c, 133, fig. 68.

[20] See Ortiz 1952c, 125, fig. 65.

[21] George T. Basden, *Niger Ibos: A Description of the Primitive Life, Customs and Animistic Beliefs, etc., of the Ibo People of Nigeria* (London: Cass, 1938), 345. [F.O.]

[22] Isaac O. Delano, *The Soul of Nigeria* (New York: AMS Press, 1937), 160. [F.O.]

[23] Melville Herskovits, *Dahomey, an Ancient West African Kingdom,* vol. 2 (New York: Augustin, 1938), 319. [F.O.]

In various African countries, pieces of snake vertebrae are tied into the knots of the instrument. This occurs in Dahomey[24] and among the modern Fon people.[25] In Abomey, musicians use goat vertebrae.[26] As previously mentioned when discussing the chachá, the Haitian *asson* rattle also employs snake vertebrae as percussive bodies in the knots of its net, which is understandable due to the strong influence of Dahomeyan Vodoun on the island. In Cuba, I have not come across snake vertebrae in such instruments, but I have little doubt they have been used here as well, especially in Arará cabildos. But few such cabildos remain, and snakes such as *jubos* or *majás*[27] are used less and less in acts of witchcraft.

I have also observed certain *mates* or seeds of natural black, gray, yellow, or reddish colors used on some Cuban ágbes. They are found mostly in rural towns as a substitute for glorias, which tend to be expensive and hard to find there. Mates on the other hand are easily accessible to peasants. In order to be affixed to the net of the chekeré, the mates need to be very dry and perforated carefully because of their fragile nature. To successfully perforate them, it is best to do so quickly with a very thin and red-hot metal punch. Mates have a certain magical value in all African medicine, but their use in this case seems to derive from their ability to create percussive sounds as long as the gourd is well maintained.

Manuel Querino notes that in Brazil chekeré instruments emit a sound not only because of the beads tied to their exterior but also because of certain rocks rolling around inside.[28] The same is suggested by Pierson.[29] This is not the case in Cuba. Chekerés here are empty and always have an opening made at the stem end. The authors cited above may be referring instead to the chachás, which are closed.

The chekeré is not played alone but always in groups of three at once. Each one combines its rhythms with the others, as occurs in the liturgical orchestra of three batá drums for which ággües frequently substitute in religious rites. Similar to the batás, ággüe come in different sizes and therefore produce distinct tones. Yet the sound of the chekeré lacks the rhythmic precision of the batás. For this reason, a group of three chekeré is usually accompanied by a drum of some sort, or (even better) by an agógo, a type of metal bell discussed later, or a metal hoe blade that serves the same purpose. When the chekerés are accompanied in this way, they organize their rhythms around those of the accompanying instrument.

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[24] Alfred J. Skertchly, *Dahomey as It Is* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1874), 19. [F.O.]

[25] Maximilien Quénum, *Au pays de Fons* (Paris: Larose, 1938), 159 [F.O.]

[26] Jules Rouanet, *La musique Arabe. La Musique Arabe dans le Maghreb* (Paris: Encyclopédie de la Musique et Dictionnaire du Conservatoire, 1922), 3203. [F.O.]

[27] Majás are nonvenomous yellow snakes found in Cuba with brownish-gray and reddish spots that grow up to 2 m long and 25 cm wide. Jubos are another species of majá, but smaller in size.

[28] Manuel Querino, "A raça Africana e seus costumes na Bahia," *Revista da Academia Brasileira de Letras,* Año 8, no. 89 (1927): 187. [F.O.].

[29] Donald Pierson, *Negroes in Brazil: A Study of Race Contact at Bahia* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1942), 251. [F.O.]

The ágbe or chekeré form a trio, as frequently occurs in the case of other African instruments.[30] The first one is the smallest, named *salidor*, as it is the one that starts off. The second or medium-sized instrument is called *dos golpes* ("two strikes") due to its role in the elaboration of the rhythms played.[31] The third and largest chekeré is called the *caja*. Performers in the Changó Tedún cabildo called the largest chekeré *la culona* ("the big ass"). Each of the three instruments produces unusual and distinct sounds. Their pitches are not tunable or adjustable in relation to each other. The ágbe trio in the Changó Tedún cabildo is among the largest known in Cuba. The smallest instrument is 44 cm long and 11 cm in diameter; the medium-sized chekeré is 57 cm long and 18 cm wide; and the largest is 60 cm long and 22 cm wide. Gourds of that size are no longer found in Cuba. The trio just discussed may be as much as a century old. Informants tell me it was used during the time of slavery, long before the Wars of Independence.[32]

The sound of the three ágbes is produced naturally as the result of their respective sizes, the dryness of the outer shell, the size of the percussive beads used, and the looseness of the net holding them in place. For this reason, each set of ágbes tends to sound different from others. But, in any case, the pitches of each group of three is a combination of the trio's high-, medium-, and low-pitched tones. The sound of ágbes is not as precise as that of drums because they are not tunable. Ágbes are similar in this sense to large *bombo* bass drums, snare drums, frame drums, and castanets. Batás, *enkomos*,[33] and other drums are more similar to *timbales* or *atabales* because they can be tuned.

When Professor Gaspar Agüero and Raúl Díaz examined a set of ágbes specifically for me, they determined that the salidor or small ágbe produced a B-flat pitch just below middle C when struck on the bottom by a musician.[34] Simultaneously, it produced other sounds as the beads of the net struck the outer surface of the gourd. The dos golpes produced an A-flat pitch below middle C as well as the familiar sounds of the beads net. But its beads can be heard either when the instrument is struck on the bottom (as is the case with the salidor) or when shaken intentionally by a musician without striking it. In this way, the dos golpes güiro combines its pitched and unpitched sounds, interpolating them in order to accentuate its rhythms. The largest caja gourd produced a B-flat pitch below the bottom edge of the bass clef staff (more than two octaves below middle C) as well as the low additional sound of the thick beads rubbing against the outer surface. Either sound could be made separately or simultaneously in execution of complex rhythms, according to the whim of the performer.

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[30] See "Tres chekeré o ágbe del antiguo cabildo habanero Changó Tedún. (1906)," in Ortiz 1952c, 133, fig. 68.

[31] The middle instrument plays a pattern very similar to that of the bell in the ensemble; its rhythm includes two fundamental tones played together by slapping the bottom of the instrument twice. See Moore 2010, 60, and specifically the line marked *segundo*.

[32] This suggests they were made prior to the 1860s.

[33] The name for a group of single-headed drums associated with Abakuá processions and rites.

[34] See "Tonalidades de los chekeré," in Ortiz 1952c, 134, fig. 69. Note that performers today do not typically believe chekerés are intended to sound specific pitches, only to make relatively higher and lower pitches within a specific ensemble.

The musician (known as the *cajero*) who plays the large caja ágbe is the virtuoso of the trio, as is the case with the iyá and *bonkó,* the largest drums of their respective ensembles.[35] While the salidor and the dos golpes repeat their respective rhythms, weaving together the same constant rhythmic base, the cajero plays whatever rhythmic variations he cares to within the basic metric structure. As if this was not enough, the caja performer frequently executes other whimsical variants, one moment rapidly shaking the gourd in trills or tremolos, another moment throwing it into the air and catching it forcefully between his hands, and making other musical gestures, all to the beat of the music. Such extravagant variations are called *visiones.* Once I told a cajero that he was clowning around and he responded that this was precisely his purpose, admitting to a certain theatrical component of the *floreos* (flourishes) in his rhythmic executions. At times in the ágbe orchestra, the salidor and dos golpes temporarily switch parts and play each other's rhythms, which varies the tonal combinations.

The rhythms played by the ágbe are different from the *orus* of the batás[36] because they are less complicated. Although the instruments are frequently used in Lucumí rites, they no longer have a liturgical character. Formerly, the chants accompanying ágbes were different, suggesting that they derived from distinct ethnic origins. Today, a fusion of distinct religious practices is taking place through song. The masses of Santería devotees regularly sing orisha hymns to the rhythm of the gourds, breaking with earlier established tradition.

The chekeré or ágbe are used in certain less solemn rites, or when practitioners do not wish to attract the attention of nonbelievers that the piercing sound of batás or other drums can lead to. The chekerés at times play exactly the same rhythms as the batás but are accompanied by a metal agógo that helps make their rhythms more controlled and precise. The chekeré is a religious musical instrument[37] peculiar to Yoruba and Dahomeyan liturgy and is not used by blacks in contexts other than ceremonies and dance rituals. It is not customary to "feed" the ágbe or chekeré. In other words, animals are not sacrificed to them because they do not contain *aña* (an orisha of the drums, a spiritual force); they are not consecrated as batá drums are. For this reason, chekerés cannot be used in the most solemn or sacramental rites but are used instead in secondary rituals (or for entertainment), as in the so-called "middle day," the second day of an extended three-day initiation ceremony. On such occasions the sacred batá drums are not used as the novice or *yaguó* sits on his or her throne dressed as an orisha and receives visitors who come to pay tribute and offer their reverent *foribalé* (ritual salutes). Outside the *igbodu* (inner sanctuary), ágbes play in the *eyá aranla* (main or public room) and people dance to the religious rhythms of the informal celebration (*bembé*). The ágbes do not need to be played by musicians who are ritually consecrated, as in the case of master *bataleros*; they may be played by anyone who knows how. Chekerés, as in the case of other black instruments, tend to be played by men, but at times women use them. This demonstrates that, although they are considered sacred, their status is lower than that of the batás. In a private letter, Schaeffner[38] tells me of having found chekerés in French West Africa used exclusively in certain rites of passage or initiation of young black women who had reached the age of puberty. In this case we are dealing with female ritual instruments. Yet there is no record of such a practice in Cuba.

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[35] The iyá, as mentioned, is the largest batá drum; the *bonko echemiyá* is a lead instrument in Abakuá traditions. Regarding the latter, see Ortiz 1954, chap. 14.

[36] An oru is a complex sequence of specific drum rhythms and variations performed in the context of a Santería ceremony. For transcribed examples of oru sequences performed without accompanying songs and dances, see Amira and Cornelius 1991.

It is frequently said that chekerés were used in Cuba as unconsecrated instruments that allowed performers to craftily avoid prohibitions against playing the strident batá drums and still perform liturgical dances without any significant alteration. This may be partially accurate, but it is not the whole truth. Ágbes were already sacred in Africa, but certain ceremonies always had to be performed in the presence of drums and in front of them. Those liturgies cannot be celebrated without the sacred aña found in the lead batá drum, accompanied by its two assisting drums. Nevertheless, consecrated batás are rare and expensive, as I have demonstrated, and they also require a group of talented musicians who are *jurados*, that is, religiously prepared to play such drums. Batás, more than musical instruments, are considered mythological entities to be worshipped. Thus, economic factors, more than individual preferences, restrict the use of batás for some occasions. Such drums only exist in certain provinces of Havana and Matanzas and remain unknown in the rest of Cuba. Where they do not exist or cannot be performed, musicians substitute the batá drums with other drums, or with the ágbe or chekeré. The latter have the advantage of forming part of the religious instrumentation of the Yoruba people, while drums other than the batás are truly intrusive, foreign to the ceremonies.[39] Economic realities apply even to the Afro-Cuban "saints," since they can only listen to the instruments and music that their supporters can afford to pay for. When listening to the güiros or chekerés, believers can still be moved and become possessed when they hear particular rhythms, just as occurs with the sacred batás. It is common to play ágbes for spirits of the dead after formal funeral ceremonies. This is perfectly understandable since it is customary to bid farewell to the dead with "happy" music, throwing a party in their honor. In that context, ágbes are more appropriate than drums.

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[37] Charles K. Meek, *The Northern Tribe of Nigeria: An Ethnographical Account of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria Together with a Report on the 1921 Decennial Census*, vol. 2 (London: University Press, 1925), 159. [F.O.]

[38] André Schaeffner (1895–1980) was a comparative musicologist who developed a well-known system for classifying instruments in the 1930s. See, for instance, Schaeffner 1936.

I have been told that the chekerés played in Cuba today were brought to the country after 1880 by blacks who were deported to Fernando Po[40] during the Ten Years War (1868–78) and were then repatriated as a result of a general amnesty that was negotiated. This story seems unlikely, yet possible. The chekerés, as we have seen, are instruments well known throughout Guinea and other parts of Africa, characterized by their use in religious devotion. They probably arrived in Cuba much earlier along with drums. If the instruments were not brought from Africa, they could have been easily constructed in Cuba, with musicians reproducing their African antecedents from memory.

The African origin of the instrument and name chekeré is unquestionable. Talbot mentions seeing it among the Yoruba and Lucumís, using the name *sekeré* to describe it and noting it was an instrument made out of an empty pumpkin or gourd decorated with strands of shells or cowries.[41] Crowther refers to the instrument as *Shekkerreh*.[42] Among the Ibos (neighbors of the Yoruba people), Basden[43] finds that the instrument called *aoyao* "produc[es] a sound similar to the crashing of waves on a flat sandy beach." In Benin, Roth[44] has studied the instrument, providing a drawing of it, but with a flattened gourd, different from the shape found in Cuba. The acrobatic dancers that travel in Yorubaland "use the *Sekeré,* not drums but pumpkins or gourds that performers attach shells to and that resound when shaken."[45] The songs of the chekerés are beautiful and captivating, says I. O. Delano,[46] even if they are not modern and do not include the names of contemporary individuals in the form of praise or satire.

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[39] Ortiz does not use the word *foreign* here, but rather *aberikulá* (roughly, unconsecrated) and *judío* (in this case, foreign).

[40] An island off the coast of West Africa, now known as Bioko.

[41] Percy A. Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, vol. 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 81. [F.O.]

[42] Crowther, *Vocabulary of the Yoruba language*, 164. [F.O.]

[43] George T. Basden, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria: An Account of the Curious and Interesting Habits, Customs, and Beliefs of a Little Known African People by One Who Has for Many Years Lived Amongst Them on Close and Intimate Terms* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1921), 131. [F.O.]

[44] Henry L. Roth, *Great Benin: Its Customs, Art, and Horrors* (England: King, 1903), 108. Data taken from a Dutch chronicle dated 1609. [F.O.].

The same instrument is also used by blacks in Togo,[47] especially in the southern areas near Yorubaland. Its form and construction are just like the ágbes of the Lucumís: an empty pumpkin or gourd wrapped in a net, with beads tied to the knots of the netting. It is found in the same form in Dahomey,[48] where it is called *kayí* or *kahayí.*[49] "The most original of these sound producers is an instrument consisting of a gourd wrapped in a mesh netting to which have been tied bones, shells, or little rocks. Since the net of the gourd is loosely wrapped around the gourd, the shaking of the instrument allows the attached bones, shells, or little rocks to strike the sounding wall of the gourd. It produces a dry and muted sound, distinctly articulated in a two-part rhythm, depending on whether the instrument is moved upward or downward. This Dahomeyan instrument is called *Hanhí.*"[50]

Joyeux finds this instrument to the north of Yorubaland among the Malinke or Mandinga of Upper Guinea, perhaps because the Yoruba once lived there.[51] The cataloged artifacts in the Ethnographic Museum of Berlin also suggest that the chekeré is found among the Mandingas.[52] We find it in Sierra Leone,[53] among the Bambaras,[54] and even in East Africa.[55] The instrument is considered sacred in all these regions, as it is in Cuba. Meek[56] suggests that these gourds covered by a net into which little pieces of bones, rocks, or hard seeds are inserted "are characteristic of Nigeria." Yet, even while they are found most frequently in Nigerian towns—from which they were originally brought to Cuba along with their religions and rituals—they are also found in neighboring regions, as discussed.

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[45] Delano, *The Soul of Nigeria,* 160. [F.O.]

[46] Ibid., 161. [F.O.]

[47] Oberleutnant von Smend, "Negermusik und Musikinstrumente in Togo," *Globus* (1908):89. [F.O.]

[48] Eduoard Foá, *Le Dahomey* (Paris: A. Hennuyer, 1895), 252. [F.O.]

[49] Maurice Delafosse, *Manuel Dahoméen: Grammaire, Chrestomathie, Dictionnaire Français-Dahoméen et Dahoméen-Français* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1894), 387, 396. [F.O.]

[50] Julien Tiersot, "La musique chez les négres d'Afrique," *Encyclopédie de la Musique et Dictionnaire du Conservatoire*, vol. 5, ed. Albert Lavignac (Paris: Delagrave, 1922), 3204. [F.O.]

[51] Charles H. Joyeux, "Étude sur quelques manifestations musicales observées en Haute-Guinée Francaise," *Revue d'ethnographie et des traditions populaires* (1924):183. [F.O.]

[52] Bernhardt Anckermann did not mention the ágbe in his excellent study, "Die afrikanischen musikinstrumente," *Etnologisches Notizblatt* 1, no. 3 (1901): 1–174. Berlin: Museum für Völkerkunde. [F.O.]

[53] Thomas J. Aldridge, *The Shebro and Its Hinterland.* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901), 122. [F.O.]

[54] Jos. Henry, *L'âme d'un peuple africain. Les Bambara, leur vie psychique, étique, sociale, religieuse* (Münster i.W.: Aschendorff, 1910), 122. [F.O.] Ortiz refers to this author as "Henry, P" and fails to include the book in his reference list, but this appears to be the correct citation.

[55] Charles W. Hobley, "Further Researches into Kikuyo Religious Beliefs and Customs," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropology Institute,* 41 (1911): 448, 450, 456. [F.O.]

[56] Charles K. Meek, *The Northern Tribes of Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), 159. [F.O.]

In Dahomey, one can still find a unique form of playing the chekeré, by one or more musicians. In the latter case, each musician plays on a single instrument. "They hold it with the left hand, with the neck of the gourd facing downward. They shake the instrument in time with the beat while the right hand—in alternation with the shaking of the little bones in the net—strikes the body of the gourd with a small wooden drumstick."[57] When the same performer plays two chekerés at once, one in each hand, their technique is described this way by Skertchly: "Sometimes two instruments are played at a time by the same performer, but in that case the gourds are held by the neck, with the wider part below. This approach is only used as accompaniment or in choirs." The Lucumís have played chekerés this way in Cuba, and ñáñigos play the *maracas de canasta* or erikundí[58] similarly.

In Nigeria, certain professional acrobatic dancers who circulate through towns to entertain and provide diversion play the chekerés while singing and dancing. At times they throw the instrument into the air and catch it without losing the rhythm or their dance step. In Cuba, I have also witnessed these same acrobatics and virtuosic flourishes or "clowning." The Ibos from Nigeria play such gourds by taking one in each hand and shaking them up and down in alternation with great precision.[59] In this way, they are used like two simple maracas. Yet, this approach does not produce as much sound as when they are played "by striking their butt with the palm of the hand," as is said of the approach in Cuba.

Cuban blacks do not know the exact origin of their ágbes with certainty, but the most accepted theory is that they were brought from the lands of the Mina[60] people and have been introduced into certain Yoruba ceremonies because the goddess Yemayá was from the Mina tribes. The instruments belong to this goddess of the sea; its sound evokes that of the ocean waves.

Chekerés or musical gourds from Cuba are used primarily in rural areas where the peasants cannot afford the luxury of hiring sacred batá drums. Therefore, they substitute the chekerés for batá drums as they gather for their diversions accompanied by the rhythms of the bembé. In Havana, chekerés are used less frequently. Without a doubt, in dance events the sound of chekerés is more appropriate than maracas. If chekerés are not used, it is because they are more difficult to play and only sound correct if played in groups of three, involving greater expense for those hiring the performers. Additionally, chekerés are still considered black instruments by Cuban society. They are primarily played by African-born blacks (*negros de nación*) who are not embarrassed about their ethnic origins and continue to socialize among their own people, in their cabildos, without adopting the "public" or whitened music of the creolized population. Everyone knows that whites do not dance to "black" drums.

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[57] Skertchly, J. Alfred. *Dahomey as It Is.* London: Chapman and Hall, 1874, 19. [F.O.]

[58] A bell-shaped maraca made from a gourd or tinplate base and woven sides that are played in Abakuá rites. It consists of a receptacle formed weaving strips of cane into a basket shape (hence the name "maracas de canasta.") The handle on top is made out of rope or vine. (See "Las erikundí," in Ortiz 1952c, 103–13.)

[59] George T. Basden, *Niger Ibos* (London: Seeley, Service, & Co., 1938), 345. [F. O.]

[60] An indigenous ethnic group in sub-Saharan Africa that live mostly in present-day Ghana, Togo, and Benin.

Performers played gourd instruments similar to chekerés about forty years ago on the San Manuel de Ariosa sugar plantation, near the town of Zulueta in Las Villas. The gourds there were spherical in shape and also had netting wrapped around them with beads that struck the face of the instruments. The ensembles consisted of a set of three gourds played together. But instead of standing up, the musicians sat down. They held the instruments resting on their legs with the open end facing upward and struck them from side to side. This way of playing the gourds was unique to that town and is attributed to the fact that the musicians were either born in or descendants of the Makua[61] nation. Many of them arrived as slaves and were hired in the region to perform in religious events. This suggests that their gourds had nothing in common with the chekerés or ágbes of the Ararás or Lucumís, since they came from a nation both ethnically and geographically very distant from them, located in East Africa.

Even though chekerés are not as sacred as batás, until recently they have not been used outside Afro-Cuban temples, for instance, in profane or erotic dances. For that reason the instrument is not well known by those who have not seen traditional rites. Castellanos[62] does not mention them in his writings. I have never seen chekerés in any musical museum, including the National Museum of Havana. Today the occasional ágbe or chekeré under the colloquial name "güiro" has begun to appear in cabaret orchestras, assuming a role similar to that of the maracas, only because of their exotic appeal. But in such contexts no one dances to bembé rhythms with the complete three-ágbe orchestra. One day these instruments will become secularized and transverse the ocean! Haven't the congas already done so?

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[61] A Bantu ethnic group living in Central and Southern Africa. Most of the Makua population is located in Mozambique, South Tanzania, and the Republic of Congo.

[62] Israel Castellanos (1891–1977) was a Cuban author and contemporary to Ortiz; most of his research focused on racial criminology (see Moore 1997, 32). Like Ortiz, he wrote extensively on Afro-Cuban instruments in his book *Instrumentos musicales de los afrocubanos* (Havana: Imprenta El Siglo XX, 1927).

6

The Conga

Translated by **Sarah Lahasky**

The term *conga* often describes an Afro-Cuban drum, but it can also refer to a dance, a song, the music that is played, danced, or sung to such an instrument, or the comparsas (carnival ensembles) that play them. *Conga* may mean "a drum that people use to play conga" or the march or dance music that is referred to by that name. I wrote the following in the *Glosario de afronegrismos*: CONGA, feminine noun—"an Afro-Cuban music, made up of specific drums, associated with the black population, and the melodies of this music."[1]

As María Cadilla de Martínez[2] explains, in Puerto Rico *la conga* once referred to a dance derived from the *bambola*.[3] Her description of the dance suggests that it was similar to others performed by Kongo slaves in their plantation barracks, but provides no other details.

Translated from Fernando Ortiz, *Los instrumentos de la música afrocubana*, vol. 3 (Havana: Ministerio de Educación, Dirección de Cultura, 1952), 392–407.

[1] Fernando Ortiz, *Glosario de afronegrismos* (Havana: El Siglo XX, 1924), 125. [F.O.]

[2] María Cadilla de Martínez, "La Conga," *Estudios afrocubanos* 5 (1946): 176–78. [F.O.]

[3] This term is an alternate spelling of *bamboula*, an Afro-Caribbean dance form found on many islands, especially in French-speaking areas, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

According to Cannecatim,[4] *Ma-ma-kongo* means "song" in Kongo; similarly, Bentley and Laman[5] define *nkunga* or *ma-kunga* as "song," "sound," "poem," "psalm," "hymn," and so on.[6] Junod[7] explains that *kunga* is a ritual offering to the chief by way of messengers when it is requested through his intermediaries. For Bantu-speaking people, *kunga* refers, in essence, to a "ceremonial song." And *nkónga* means "navel," which is closely related to certain Kongo dances, as they accompany Bantu terms *samba* and *kummba*, which also mean "navel." The *ombligada*,[8] the *vacunao,* and the *botao*[9] are common steps of various African dances of erotic character.

Conga drums today are almost always made out of wooden barrel staves and strips of iron. They are about a meter long and somewhat rounded, with a drumhead on only one side made of ox hide and secured in place with nails. They were originally *tambores de candela,* drums whose heads had to be repeatedly tuned or tightened by means of a fire.

There are various types of conga drum. The shell of the simplest, what we might call type A, is generally made out of straight pieces of wood arranged in the shape of a truncated cone. This type of drum most closely resembles the African original, made from a hollowed tree trunk.[10] The body of type B largely remains cylindrical, but the lower half tapers to a cone shape.[11] Type C is barrel shaped or rounded. The two halves of the body look like cones joined together at their widest parts, creating a curve in the middle that expands outward and forms the stomach of the drum.[12] The oldest Cuban conga drum in my collection is precisely the most rounded in shape.[13] Recently, a new conga has developed with a solid body of hollowed-out wood like *yuka* drums,[14] having almost a completely cylindrical shape other than the lowest eighth of the drum body, where the diameter reduces to form a small base. The body is painted with esoteric signs and markings, and a belt or collar made of tiger fur is tightly wrapped around the top part of the drum.[15] This instrument represents a pure fantasy of false exoticism, and it is made only to perform in cabarets.

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[4] Bernardo María de Cannecattim, *Diccionario da lingua bunda, ou angolense, explicada na portugueza, e latina* (Lisbon: Impressãa Regia, 1804). [F.O.]

[5] William Holman Bentley, *Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language, as Spoken at San Salvador, the Ancient Capital of the Old Kongo Empire, West Africa* (London: Baptist Missionary Society and Trübner, 1887), 386. [F.O.]

[6] Karl Edvard Laman, *Dictionnaire KiKongo-Français avec une étude phonétique décrivant les dialectes les plus importants de la langue dite Kongo* (Brussels: Gregg Press, 1936), 734. [F.O.]

[7] Henri Junod, *Moeurs et coutumes des Bantous. La vie d'une tribu sud-africaine* (Paris: Payot, 1936), 120. [F.O.]

[8] A term used in Brazil to describe Afro-diasporic dances involving a "belly-bump" between a male and female dancer.

[9] The vacunao or "vaccination" and the botao are choreographic moves associated with traditional rumba guaguancó in Cuba.

[10] See "Tipo A de *conga*, caja rectilinear, troncónica," in Ortiz 1952d, 393, fig. 246.

[11] See "Tipo B de *conga*," in Ortiz 1952d, 394, fig. 247.

[12] See "Tipo C o abarrigado de *conga*," in Ortiz 1952d, 394, fig. 248.

[13] See "Tipo abarrilado de *conga*," in Ortiz 1952d, 395, fig. 249.

[14] According to Ortiz (1954, 180–200), the yuka is a drum of Kongo origin made from a long, hollowed-out tree trunk. It is typically played in a set of three and with a seven-piece percussive yuka orchestra. The yuka can also refer to the dance that accompanies these drums.

Today, conga drums are well known, spreading the passion for fiery Cuban dance music throughout the world.[16] Many Cubans have gained fame for playing conga, like Chano Pozo.[17]

The fitting of heads to drums with nails requires special care, both with congas made today and with the barrel-shaped instruments of the past. The leather, first soaked and still quite moist, is placed over the head of the drum and the far ends of its long edges are pinned down with nails to the wooden shell of the instrument. These nails are only a first step in the fastening, however, as another set of more permanent nails will be required later. Two people can do the job in a few hours. One of them, with pliers or high-tension clamps, grabs the leather in a given spot and stretches it with all of his strength to achieve the highest tension there. The other drum maker pins the leather with various finishing nails close to the rim of the body. Gradually, they continue this process until they have gone all the way around the drum.

Following the nailing, an iron band or ring is typically placed around the head to reinforce the placement of the leather and to prevent the nails from coming loose during performance. The iron ring is already part of the imported barrels used to make many instruments, to prevent them coming apart during the movement associated with transport. The metal bands, hoops, or rings fastened over the edges of the leather head are essential to conga drums, because, as the leather dries, it often begins to twist or curl. The tension from the taut skin, augmented by the percussive slaps of the drummers, would eventually loosen the nails and make them fly out of the wood if both nails and leather were not restrained by the pressure of the iron ring. Drum-making experts say that “the leather gives more than the nails.” Finally, excess leather below the iron ring is cut off, and the drum is ready to be played until it grows old, breaks, or wears out.

Recently, drum makers have begun to place two semicircular pieces of inch-thick wood inside and under the leather-covered mouth of the congas, forming a circle. This prevents the barrel staves of the shell from pulling inward due to the constant pressure of the taut leather. A set of congas typically includes three similarly sized drums.[18] Musicians can play the congas whether seated or standing, stationary or moving. In the latter case, the drums are suspended by a neck strap.[19]

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[15] See “Ejemplar fantástico y atípico de *conga*, de falso exotismo,” in Ortiz 1952d, 395, fig. 250.

[16] See “Tocadores de *conga*,” in Ortiz 1952d, 397, fig. 251.

[17] See “Chano Poso [*sic*], un famoso tocador de *congas* que influyó en la transformación de la música del *jazz* norteamericano,” in Ortiz 1952d, 399, fig. 252.

[18] See “Un moderno juego de *congas*,” in Ortiz 1952d, 401, fig. 253.

In addition to signifying a class of drums, the term *conga* is also used in reference to an ensemble or instrumental duo of two drums: The first of the two instruments is known as the conga, *mambisa,* or *caja* (all of which are considered feminine, like their *makuta*[20] drum ancestor) and the second is called the *salidor* or *tumbador.*

The primitive conga ensemble was composed of only two drums, accompanied by the *jimaguas,* or *ekón doble*,[21] as well as two sticks for the *guagua*.[22] Today, a third drum known as the *quinto* has been added to the original two. Quinto can be translated either as "high-pitched" or "*tiple*."[23] This is the instrument that imposes its will on the others, and "sings very beautifully," as Cubans say. The incorporation of the quinto drum provides work to one more musician and more closely mimics the rhythmic patterns of popular and common instrumental percussive trios from Africa, such as those of the *batá*, *bembé,* and yuka drums.[24]

In discussion, the term *conga* in Cuba adopts the Spanish feminine "a" ending. As the language of African blacks began to creolize, and as they passed from *bozales* or recently arrived slaves to acculturated Spanish speakers, they began to describe things as either male or female, as is typical in Spanish, according to the ending of the word. In Kongo, the instrument name derives from *nkunga* or *ma-konga*. The Kongo language does not ascribe a particular gender to objects, but since conga ended in "a," speakers began to think of the word as feminine. This seems to suggest that the term *conga* initially referred to "song" in Africa and Cuba before it began to signify a type of drum.

The introduction of the term conga in Cuba is relatively recent. It likely emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, popularized among the island-born and mixed-race populations. Earlier generations of slaves tended to say in local parlance "play or dance *tambor*" (drum), and for them nkunga referred simultaneously to "song, dance, and music." Their descendants, instead of saying "let's sing or dance" in Kongo, Hispanicized the original African term with a new and easier ending. Thus, they said "let's go to the conga" instead of "let's *kunga*," which meant the same thing. Or, if one reads *nkónga* as meaning "belly button," the expression "let's go to the conga" was similar to saying, "let's samba or kúmmba." In other words, it was like saying, "let's go to the *cumbancha*," a phrase heard later, or as Spanish speakers now say, "to the *cumbanchata* or the *bachata*."[25]

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[19] See Ortiz 1952d, 397, 399, and 402, figs. 251, 252, and 254.

[20] Ortiz elsewhere describes the makuta as a pair of drums played in Kongo cabildos and other religious gatherings for purposes of dancing. See Chapter 3.

[21] The *ekón doble* or *jimaguas* consists of two *ekónes* of varying sizes and/or tones that are attached to the same handle. See Ortiz 1955, 2:230–61.

[22] The *guagua* refers to rhythms played with two sticks on a piece of bamboo in some forms of Afro-Cuban music. See Ortiz 1952b, 263. The term appears to mean "quick" or "agitated" in Kongo and Efik languages.

[23] A high-pitched, guitar-like instrument. *Tiple* can also be translated as "soprano."

[24] The batá, bembé, and yuka drums are all typically played in sets of three and accompany dancing.

In the Eastern region of Cuba, where the population is mostly black, conga is the name of specific carnival ensembles that incorporate various conga drums and many others. One informant told me "they make a big commotion with them." It is out of the eastern carnival congas that Havana's conga ensembles developed. Havana's street orchestras consist of numerous drums and other unusual Afro-Cuban percussion instruments, some of which were invented especially for the ensemble. Cuban politicians used them in 1908 and later years to liven up their rallies and meetings. The Liberal Party began this tradition with the song *La chambelona* and the conservatives responded with *La conga*. The former emerged in Las Villas, the latter in Oriente. Every year, the people of San Miguel del Padrón on the outskirts of Havana celebrate a folkloric festival and kick it off with an ensemble they call "*la tambora*," which is actually a conga.

It is said the conga originated in Havana during Spanish colonialism.[26] Conga rhythms were already well known in Havana and surrounding towns from this bygone era. By playing on the two drums in the original conga ensemble, performers attempted to imitate the beats of makuta drums. After slavery was abolished, older drums that referenced Africa and newly arrived slaves slowly fell into disuse. Performers began to replace the older drums with drums made of long casks, and later of related materials, either made from staves or wooden slats especially designed to serve as drums. The barrel makers and flat-bottom boat makers from the neighborhoods of Jesús María, Carraguao, and Pueblo Nuevo were the original craftsmen of such drums. After the abolition of slavery in Cuba, they were most likely motivated by the desire to preserve their beloved rhythms, songs, and dances from the Congo while simultaneously making fun of the absurd prohibitions imposed by Spanish colonial authorities. Leaders of the early republic at times perpetuated such policies and did not permit "the playing of *African drums*." With the invention of a new type of barrel drum, made with staves fastened with strips of iron, Afro-Cubans could freely evoke their ancestral traditions and call to the gods . . . since they no longer played an "African drum" but rather a "creolized drum."

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[25] Ortiz ([1924] 1991, 143) defines *cumbancha* as an African term describing an early dance of the Cuban slave population, one in which male and female dancers would often bump bellies. The derivative terms *cumbanchata* and *bachata* have come to mean a rowdy working-class party.

[26] See "Tipo abarrilado de *conga*," of an old conga that belonged to a dark-skinned creole musician known by his nickname, Perico Culito, in Ortiz 1952d, 395 (for commentary on the photo) and 400, fig. 249 (the photo itself).

In Oriente, I saw three unusual congas with their leather drumheads tightened down with screws and nuts.[27] This method certainly worked well, and drum makers favored it for economic reasons. This was especially true in port cities and centers of sugarcane production where barrel making was common and it was easier to make drums out of staves than hollowed-out tree trunks. The three drums[28] of modified structure and appearance are used to play the ritual music of Lucumí Santería, which is currently becoming very popular throughout the Vueltarriba region of eastern Cuba. One of these three congas, the largest one painted in the style of an Arará drum, assumes the role of the hourglass-shaped iyá of the Yoruba/Cuban batás. For this reason, rattles and bells are hung from around the drumhead to imitate the style of a typical *chaguoró.*[29] The other two congas serve as the more common *itótele* and *okónkolo.*[30]

The drums known as congas began to achieve wider popularity during the first years of the twentieth century. The largest drum is known as the mambisa and the smallest the *salidor, tumbador,* or *llamador.*[31] The mambisa is not at all related to the Wars of Independence, as its name suggests.[32] It was cleverly named in this way by Cuban-born blacks to protect the new drum and differentiate it from its African ancestors. The name *mambisa* provided immunity and protection. Who would dare prohibit the sound of an instrument from the Revolution for Independence? Some years later, as Afro-Cubans began to achieve greater self-confidence and greater respect of all of their folkloric traditions, they began to call them *La conga* and *La mula* once again, reverting to their ancestral names.

La mula (the mule) is a name that Kongo performers gave to a long drum that musicians straddle to play. Some say it is called the mule precisely because it is sat on in this way. Others believe that the name derives from the mule skin used as the drum's vibrating membrane. But the name seems to derive from the Kongo language, in which Bentley suggests *mula* means "at a very great distance," "very far away," "very deep." The term, then, may refer to the sonic qualities of the drum.

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[27] See "Tres *congas* modernas con pinturas, tensión de rosca y un aditamento de campanillas y cencerros," in Ortiz 1952d, 403, fig. 255.

[28] See Ortiz 1952d, 403, fig. 255.

[29] The chaguoró (also *chaguoro*) refers to the strings of small bells that are wrapped around the iyá drum.

[30] The itótele and okónkolo are the two smaller drums of the three *batá* and serve to answer and accompany the lead iyá.

[31] This terminology appears to have changed in more recent times. The largest conga is more typically referred to as the *caja* or *tumba*, the middle drum as the conga or tres-dos, and the smallest as the *salidor, llamador*, or *quinto.*

[32] *Mambí* is the name of an independence fighter in Cuba's wars against Spain, referenced here by the adjective *mambisa*.

In order to situate the conga ethnographically in Cuba, it is first necessary to consider other types of Bantu drums in the country and their changing circumstances. Please see my articles entitled "Makuta"[33] and "Yuka,"[34] terms that refer to drums, drum ensembles, dances, songs, and music of the Kongo people. The makuta is a sacred genre, while yuka is secular.

Some believe that the conga developed out of the sacred makuta tradition. This claim is supported by the fact that the conga ensemble originally had only two drums, just like the makuta groups that performed in cabildos. Others believe that the conga is derived from secular yuka performance, the yuka that is for the Kongos what the bembé is for the Lucumís. The two scenarios are both plausible, and both may have occurred in particular cases. The secularization of Kongo drumming styles could have involved the direct influence of makuta traditions, or it could have developed indirectly via the yuka.

It is also possible that Kongo carnival ensembles originating in the province of Oriente developed through imitation of certain carnival ensembles from Haiti called *congó*, also referring to a drum and dance originating from the black population.[35] The drums in the Haitian ensemble[36] are similar to Cuban congas, with the exception of the bottom part of the drum that quickly tapers to a small base like that of Arará percussion instruments. Cuban congas never have such a tapered bottom shape. Haitian drums also use ropes to tighten the drumheads, which Cuban drums do not. Other prominent Haitian carnival ensembles include *rará*[37] or *laloidit*, which use other types of drums of Arará or Nagó[38] origin.

In any case, the drums known today as congas were not the same instruments used in the cabildo of Royal Kongos, known as *entótela* and *ngunga* in the African tongue, nor in the other various cabildos that the so-called "*congos de nación*" (tribal Kongos, Kongos from Africa) established in Cuba. Without a doubt, modern congas are presumptuous instruments and have survived owing to their tenacity and their ability to accommodate themselves into any given situation. Congas, barrel shaped with hip-like curves, are mulatto instruments whose charming vibrations have traveled around the world. Today, all Cubans dance to the sound of the congas, regardless of the color of their skin. In Cuba, the congas have become the most popular percussion instrument in secular dance music, closely followed by bongo drums held together in a frame.[39] Congas are also beginning to be used in certain hybrid rituals of Santería and witchcraft. I know of three congas used in Guantánamo[40] by a young dark-skinned man, a ñáñigo originally from Matanzas, who uses them to practice the religions of Lucumí Santería and the *Palo* religion of the Kongos. There are various Catholic, Lucumí, Kongo, and ñáñigo symbols on the shells of these drums, even though the congas are neither traditional nor orthodox instruments of any of these religions.

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[33] See Chapter 3 in this volume.

[34] See Ortiz 1954, 180–200, chap. 15.

[35] Jules Faine, *Philologie Créole* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'État, 1937). [F.O.]

[36] See "*Tambor* de Haití, parecido a la *conga*," in Ortiz 1952d, 405, fig. 256.

[37] Performed during an annual six-week festival between Carnival and Easter, Haitian *rará* street bands honor the Afro-Haitian deities through musical processions and ritual.

[38] Arará and Nagó both refer to Yoruba ethnic groups (Ortiz [1924] 1991, 267).

With respect to the conga as a popular dance rhythm, Professor Alberto Brito[41] says:

> This refers, without a doubt, to the vogue that the conga acquired in Havana, coinciding with the rise of the Conservative Party's political carnival ensembles that were brought to that city from Oriente. The rhythms of the congas were born in Africa and eventually became a local Caribbean phenomenon near the slave barracks of coffee and sugar plantations. They slowly extended their popularity, anonymously and involving mass participation in fields, villages, and side streets, until favorable historical conditions made them acceptable to white audiences. This is how the conga ceased to be a drum, rhythm and dance exclusive to the black population and became part of white traditions. From slave barracks to the salons to the conservative aristocracy; from the slaves and common masses to the governing leaders and the "refined" population; from the barefoot or the wearers of common wooden sandals to those shod with tall boots or brilliantly polished high-heeled leather shoes.

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[39] The article on the bongo appears in Ortiz 1954, 416–448, chap. 18.

[40] See "Tres *congas* de Guantánamo, con símbolos lucumís, congos, ñáñigos y cristianos," in Ortiz 1952d, 407, fig. 257.

[41] According to Miguel A. Martín's recounting. [F.O.]

PART III

Ethnographic Essays

7

Kongo Traditions

Translated by **Robin D. Moore**

Yuka, Baile de Maní, and *Other* Dances

Black Kongos performed mimetic religious dances, as well as others for ceremonial and secular events. Kongos do not usually perform pantomimed choreography for each deity as one finds among the Yoruba. Yet in each Kongo sect the officiants and initiates dance, and sometimes possessed individuals do as well. They perform various ritual choreographies, and religious belief informs all their dance traditions. In 1947, I observed a religious festival dedicated to the god *Kimbúngula* ("The Cyclone," syncretized in Cuba with San Francisco) in a cabildo of Musundi Kongos in Las Villas province. It consisted of various liturgical dances. Some of them, performed before *Kimbúngula*'s (or San Francisco's) altar, seemed to be purely for pleasure, though at times they incorporated elements of lascivious mimicry, probably a remnant of ancient fertility rites.[1] Another dance had as its objective a procession or march,[2] from the drums over to a well where the magical essence of the cabildo resided. There the members sang to a deity living in the well named Yanga.[3] I also observed what may have been an old

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Translated from Fernando Ortiz, *Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas [1951] 1981), 386–432, 473–83, 534–37.

[1] See "Toque y canto de Makuta," Ortiz (1951) 1981, 416, fig. 70.

[2] See "Toque y canto de Makuta. Marcha al pozo," in Ortiz (1951) 1981, 417, fig. 71.

[3] See "Toque y canto de Makuta. Canto a Yanga," in Ortiz (1951) 1981, 417, fig. 72.

court dance of homage to god and king. I've called it the "Flag Dance,"[4] given that two rows of dancers advanced rhythmically yet silently behind a blue flag held by a flag bearer who made wavelike motions with it. Then, suddenly, everyone bent down and moved backward to a place where they initiated a pantomime.[5]

These Kongo religious dances in Cuba are called *toques de makuta*. They are played on two cylindrical, single-sided drums, the larger called *ngoma* (which in the cabildo I observed had a personal name as well), and the smaller called *ngoma nkila* or *nusumbi*. Kongos of the past also had their diablito performers and funerary dances.

The cabildo I visited organized solemn, pantomimed ceremonial dances that members referred to as *kindembo mpangüe*. They were performed for the arrival of the king and queen of the cabildo and their entourage. Dance events attempted to re-create the pagentry that royal (or *entótela*) Kongos organized in the capital of Kongo-Mbanza in the sixteenth century, during the reign of their Christianized king Don Alfonso Nvemba-Nzinga[6] and his descendants. A few octogenarian Kongos still dance in this style with ineffable grace, fondly remembering their younger years. Musicians played their makuta and other drums in the patio or cabildo hall, while other members at the entrance crossed two large staffs covered with ribbons that may have represented the ancestors. Beating one staff against the other, they created a rhythm that complemented that of the drums. Suddenly one yelled "Gua Kó ma tó Ko!" as if to say "Here comes the queen mother in all her splendor," her ceremonial attire. The other responded "Guai-o!" They then uncrossed the staffs and through the open doorway the king, queen, and courtly retinue departed, all dressed in silk and jewels, dancing a happy and dignified march of short steps to the sound of ngoma and *kinfuiti*[7] drums.

In all Cuban cities the celebrations of the Kongo cabildos were very popular. Some marked the coronation of a king or queen, others the advent of the New Year or the patron saint days of San Antonio or San Francisco. But in Cuba they were never as elaborate as in Brazil where one can still find *reisados, cheganzas*, *taieras*, *quilombos*, *maracatú*, *cucumbís*, and other dramatized festival dances.[8]

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[4] Baile de la Bandera.

[5] See "Toque y canto de Makuta. Baile de 'Las Banderas,'" in Ortiz (1951) 1981, 418, fig. 73.

[6] Ortiz refers here to Mvemba a Nzinga, also known as Afonso I (c. 1456–1542), who reigned over the Kongo empire in the early sixteenth century.

[7] A single-headed friction drum, with a stick inserted into the head and rubbed to produce sound. It is associated with Kongo-derived Kimbisa religious practices.

[8] The term *reisado* refers to Christmas-time festivals of Portuguese origin involving enactments of the birth of Jesus or the travels of the three Wise Men. Especially in the northeast, such traditions in Brazil have been heavily influenced by African-derived processional music and dance traditions. *Cheganza* reenactments are dance events inspired by battles in Portugal between Arabs and Portuguese leaders, and the eventual reunification of Portugal. They are found in

Cuban Kongos never re-created dramatic ancient battles of their homeland either, such as those between various kingdoms of the sixteenth century (for example, the wars of the royal or entótela Kongos against the Musundi, or against the Portuguese invaders), as was the case in Brazil. Nor did Cuban blacks re-create biblical dramatizations in the style of Spanish *autos* about the mystery of the Eucharist, as can be found in the first black Baptist churches in the United States according to Arthur Ramos.[9] It is likely, nevertheless, that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries some *autos* were presented in Havana in front of the church parish in conjunction with the feast of Corpus Christi. Blacks participated in such events with their dances, but that subject will be discussed elsewhere.

In Cuba the Kongos danced *yuka,* and its rhythms are still heard in the countryside, even if it is now dying out. Yuka music employs three drums, the *caja, mula,* and *cachimbo,*[10] each of which produces four timbres. The drums are accompanied by the *guagua* patterns, which involves playing with two sticks on the shell of the caja drum.[11] The soloist or *gallo* typically improvises his melodic line, called an *inspiración,* and when he finishes he repeats it to the accompaniment of the drums and complemented by a choral response, sung either by dancers or the public. Rival gallos often respond to the first one and thus form a sort of counterpoint.[12] In all likelihood, these profane dances once incorporated mimetic action. We should remember that dances such as the *calenda* or *calinda,* called *caringa* in Cuba, were famous for their lewd and sexual pantomime.[13]

Serigipe province, among others. *Taieras* are old popular religious dance processions associated with the Afro-descendant population of Bahia. *Quilombos* are settlements of runaway slaves with their own unique forms of music and dance. *Maracatú* drumming, associated with northeast Brazil, is a processional tradition linked both to religious festivities and to reenacted ceremonies of the Kongo kings of central Africa. The term *cucubumí* denotes Kongo-derived music and dance performed at events of circumcision or at funerary events in places during the early years of the founding of Brazil.

[9] Ortiz's original footnote here cites Ramón Martínez's book *Oriente folklórico* (Santiago de Cuba, El Lápiz Rojo, 1930), without a page number. Ortiz does include Arthur Ramos's books in his bibliography as well, however, including *O Folklore Negro do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização brasileira, 1935). He probably meant to refer to that publication.

[10] *Caja* literally means "box"; it is usually used to describe the largest drum in a given ensemble. *Mula* translates as "mule." The term *cachimbo* has various meanings in Cuban Spanish. It can refer to a small sugar mill, likening its prominent chimney to a pipe blowing smoke (*cachimba* is a slang term for "pipe"). It can refer to an arrogant black man, or even a bucket used in making sugar. See Ortiz (1923) 1985, 101–2.

[11] See "Toque y canto congo en *Yuka*," in Ortiz (1951) 1981, 419–20, fig. 74a-b.

[12] See "Toque y canto congo de gallo" and "Otro canto de gallo," in Ortiz (1951) 1981, 421, figs. 75 and 76.

[13] The calenda and related forms are Kongo-derived couple dances similar to Cuban rumba as well as to the Brazilian *semba* and *umbigada*. They were common throughout the Caribbean for many years, as well as Louisiana. Their choreography involves touching bellies or thighs together, and many European onlookers perceived it as lewd.

African slaves also brought athletic dances to Cuba, such as are found all along the west coast of Africa, and especially in the towns of the Gulf of Guinea. Leo Frobenius references a dance called *ekócheche,* performed by the Takuá tribe, which he describes as the most vibrant and entertaining form of sport that he saw in Africa. Talbot documents a pugilistic dance among the Ibo and Ekoy peoples that some tribes still practice ritualistically in order to ensure a good harvest. These public African games and dances require drums and special rhythms to accompany them; the games and dances come in many forms. Brazilians have a stylized Angolan game called *brinquedo dos capoeiras,* for instance, involving dance and song that accompanies mock fighting between two players that strike each other with feet and legs. Courlander[14] saw a pantomimic dance in Haiti in imitation of two athletes.

The *maní* game and dance, also known in Las Villas as *Bambosá,* is widespread in Cuba. Martínez Moles[15] defines it in this way: "A dance of black Africans that involves acrobatics and feigned attacks on a nearby opponent, but actual blows to another who lets his guard down." It apparently derives from the Gangá ethnic group and especially those referred to as *Gangá Maní.*[16] People call it the *maní* game and it was as much a game as a dance, curious and gymnastic. In the past it could commonly be found in the towns of Matanzas and Las Villas province; until twenty years ago one could also see it performed in the neighborhood of Los Pocitos, Marianao, on the outskirts of Havana. Although technically prohibited, some always tolerated and even protected it, such as the very popular mayor of Marianao, Baldomero Acosta.

The *maní* game consisted essentially of a fight during which a player who was dancing tried to knock down one of various other participants with a single heavy punch from his fist. Participants on the defensive formed a ring around the attacker. An old black man informed me that some maní players (*maniseros*) tied their left hand behind their back and played only with their right, but this doesn't appear to have been common. The maní game/dance was for men only, but in some cases butch women enjoyed participating in the games as well and delivered solid blows. Maniseros entered the game barefoot, naked to the waist, and in short pants or trousers raised above the knee. They carried no weapons, insignias, or adornments other than the occasional colored handkerchief hanging from a thick leather belt that protected their abdomen.

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[14] Harold Courlander (1908–96), an American folklorist who specialized in Haitian culture.

[15] Manuel Martínez Moles (1863–1951), a Cuban journalist, politician, and historian. He wrote and published on the folklore of Sancti Spíritus, especially in the book *Contribución al folklore* (Havana: Imprenta El Fígaro y Cultural), 1931.

[16] Alessandra Basso (2001, 196) mentions that the people referred to in Cuba as Gangás are known in Africa as the Kono and live in present-day Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. The Cuban term *Gangá* may derive from that of the river Gbangbá in Sierra Leone.

Maní was always played during the day and on dry ground, but in various forms. *Maní limpio* (clean maní) involved naked combatants or maseros; in *maní con grasa* (oiled *maní*) participants covered their upper bodies, arms, and heads with palm oil, which made each blow slide upon impact and thus less damaging and decisive. Performers also played maní with bare hands and wrists, or with wrist covers. In the latter variant, players sheathed both wrists and part of their forearms in ox hide, complete with "adornments" consisting of hard nail heads or steel spikes affixed to the mitt, or with hidden rocks inside. In addition, they inserted *makutos*[17] and other magical charms with which they hoped to assure themselves of the accuracy of their punches, twists, and parries, and eventual victory. Sometimes the victim of a blow would fall backward unconscious. But on other occasions it was the lead dancer who when attacking would do so with such strength and so poorly that his victim, stepping aside just in time, would make him miss, lose his balance, and fall flat on his face between two members of the circle. In the dances with wrist covers the blows were the most serious and in some cases injured players could die. But even the aggressor on his feet could receive dangerous wounds from others. Players aimed their blows at the head or the body of their target, from the waist up. If they hit below the waist the attack was considered invalid and dirty, and could result in bloody reprisals. Certain cunning blows were especially prohibited, such as the rip-puncture[18] aimed at the liver. Frequently the rules of the game were forgotten as participants "hit dirty," however they cared to, not only with the fists but also with the feet and head, and attacking the face and trunk as well as the stomach and groin. Even when participants followed the rules, the game was cruel and required great stoicism. For that reason one famous maní song contained the following lyrics: "If you can't take it, don't get any closer. Just stand back and watch."[19]

The number of participants or fighters in a *maní* match could vary: it could be six, ten, or as many as twenty. Everyone made their wagers before the event began, depositing money in a fund held by the chief of the cabildo or an older individual elected for that purpose who later awarded it to the champion as a prize. With the collective betting of the competitors complete, participants drew lots to see who would be the first to dance. The process began with the eldest participants and usually involved flipping a piece of sugar cane stalk in the air that had been split in half. One of the players

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[17] Talisman pouches associated with Kongo religious sects such as Palo Monte.

[18] The original term in Ortiz's text is *raja-puyón*.

[19] The text as Ortiz printed is "E que no guanta no rima. Ponte lejo pa mirá." This is written in dialectical Spanish; he follows this version with the same phrase in standard Spanish, "Quien no aguante los golpes que no se arrime y se quede lejos sólo para mirar."

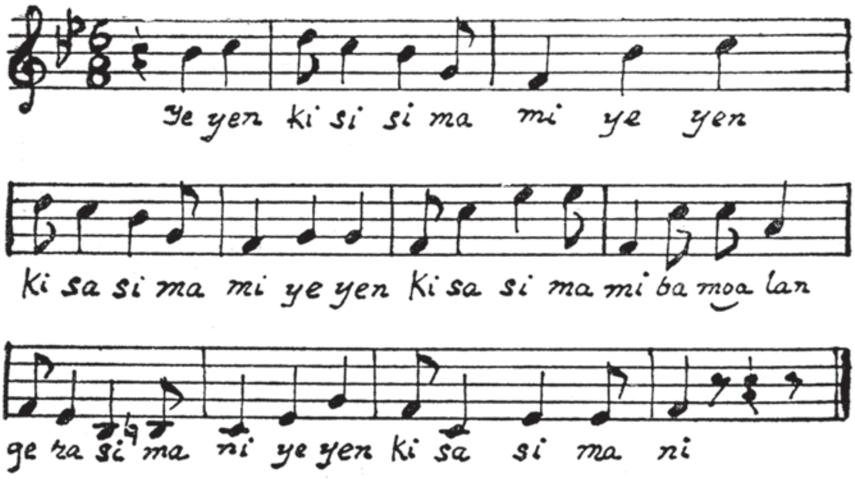
Ye yen ki si si ma mi ye yen
Ki sa si ma mi ye yen Ki sa si ma mi ba moa lan
ge ra si ma ni ye yen Ki sa si ma ni

Figure 7.1. Maní song.

would be asked as it fell whether it would land face-up or face-down, much in the same way that one tosses a coin in the air and asks someone else to choose "heads or tails." The loser of the toss moved to the side and had to join the circle. The process of elimination continued in this fashion with successive up or down tosses until one individual was chosen to start the dance.

As a prelude to the event, all maniseros except for the dancer formed a circle or ring, one right next to the other, with musicians sometimes closing the formation; their performance provided a backdrop to the stylized fight. In the center of all of them, the lead performer danced and sang. Events typically began with the song reproduced above (Figure 7.1).[20] The best-known combatants began their performance by singing brashly of their past victories and challenging the others. Sometimes maní songs were in African languages, but, in general, singers used a form of local Spanish that would be understood by all blacks present, representing diverse African tribes. They used a basic form of Spanish when communicating with each other, with Cuban-born blacks, and with whites. One African maní song said the following, which I have not been able to translate: "*Oyaré aserendé numbaléo.*" The chorus then repeated the same phrase. Another song or "*cantao*" said in broken Spanish: (soloist) "Are you tough enough to join the dance, old man? (chorus) Are you tough?"[21] Another advised fighters to attempt a dirty blow: (soloist) "Hit him dirty, let's hear it, oh, oh. (chorus) Let's hear it, oh, oh."[22]

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[20] See "Canto de maní," in Ortiz (1951) 1981, 422, fig. 77.

[21] The original text reads: (Solo) "*Tié való pa tumbá viejo.*" (Coro) "*Tié való.*" "*Tumbá*" is interpreted here as "tumbar," "moverte," move to the music, swagger. The verse could also be interpreted as "Are you tough enough to knock down the old champ?"

[22] The original text reads: (Solo) "*Tira a revé, que suena o ó.*" (Coro) "*Que suena o ó.*"

The gallo or lead singer often improvised his songs and lashed out with whatever *puya*[23] (taunts) and boasting would infuriate his rivals. The chorus responded to the soloist's songs by repeating a refrain or the final words of the phrase he had just sung.

Maní dances had no special choreography. The lead dancer used wildly varied gestures, steps, jumps, and sometimes exquisitely extravagant moves and shifts in order to show off and also distract other members of the circle. In this way the dancer took their attention away from his real intent and hoped to catch them unawares. In the circle every participant kept their arms free, balancing forward and back over firmly planted feet, legs spread wide, in contact with those of others. Thus, each person placed their right leg so as to cross behind that of a fellow player at the same time that their companion to the left crossed their right leg in front of his left. The legs formed a sort of fence or barricade, as they describe it, and no member of the maní dancers in the circle could separate themselves from the formation without being pronounced a loser and removed from the game. They would also be denounced as cowards if they voluntarily abandoned the arena and quit.

The music began with its aggressive rhythm and the dancer moved from side to side in response. He executed various steps, some serene, others salutary. One moment he would dance along the line of other participants, then jump capriciously from one to the other, whatever took his fancy. The secret of the dancer's technique lay in his unexpected moves and infinite variations. His skill consisted of unexpectedly casting a blow that would knock down any other player or make him step out of the circle. Anyone who could not stop or avoid the blow and thus fell or stepped out of line, breaking the formation, lost and remained permanently outside the ring.

Each maní player had to remain in place, but exclusively on the defensive. He could stop the swings of his adversary with his arms that were allowed to move freely, or avoid them by moving his trunk and head to one side or the other, or by bending over. The rules did not permit him to respond to blows with those of his own. Maní was not boxing, an equal fight between two individuals. It was more than anything a game of force, agility, physical ability, and endurance. Dance served as the rhythmic basis of the movements of the protagonist. His many changing steps, like a tangled thicket, hid the intentions and yet-to-be realized movements of his sudden aggression. If the aggressor raised his mighty arm, was it a mere capricious gesture, part of the choreography, or did it conceal the onset of a punch? Only an instant separated a threat from true aggression, or between an apparently threatening gesture and its transformation into a dance step. No one knew with certainty who would be the object of an attack, nor when or how it would take place. The dancer raised his arm and readied it for a thrust, but against whom? Was it against the player in front of him, or one of the others nearby? Perhaps he planned to hit someone even farther away, distracted and overconfident. Or was it only a feint to misleadingly threaten someone he did not plan to attack and in that way strike a decisive blow against another unsuspecting victim? Invariably, strike after strike, the circle got smaller as the fighter-dancer continued his choreographic aggression. If the lead player failed in his onslaught because the victim moved out of the way, he lost and the happy member of the circle in turn came to occupy the privileged position of protagonist, taking the initiative. The contest continued until the group consisted of such a small number of participants that they (alongside the drummers) could no longer close the circle. At that time all remaining maniseros, all of whom were now known as gallos or tough guys, formed a semicircle around the drums, with the lead dancer continuing to dance between them and the musicians. The match continued with one gallo competing against his rivals in the same way until he eventually danced against a single rival. Both employed the same skills and faced the same consequences: the dancer tried to strike his opponent unexpectedly with a forceful blow, and the defender tried to endure or evade the blow while standing firm. Whoever won in that ultimate round won the match and took possession of the prize money.

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[23] Literally, goad or pointed stick.

From this description one can see that it is impossible to win after being knocked from the circle. In order to win, a player must have stayed on his feet in the ring, enduring all incidental blows and parrying or dodging the heavier ones. It was even possible to lose without ever receiving a punch; for instance, if one became lead dancer and was unsuccessful in landing a solid blow. In failing to do that, the lead dancer lost everything. If he won the role of lead dancer by cannily parrying a blow, he could lose just as quickly because of another defensive action, assuming his adversary successfully evaded a blow that he threw while dancing in the center. That would mean leaving the game unscathed. Nevertheless, it appears that in some cases the rules were more demanding and that fighters never left the ring until being knocked down. The lead dancer lost if he lost his balance and fell, but if he merely failed to hit another member decisively he then joined the ring and his opponent moved to occupy the central position. This continued indefinitely until all had fallen or left the ring as the result of injury.

Participants ran the risk of receiving severe blows that could be life threatening. Open wounds were treated with a mixture of cane alcohol and urine, into which was thrown a mouthful of chewed-up tobacco leaves. Near the circle, participants had access to washing troughs filled with water that they could use to rinse blood from the more serious wounds such as a blow to the eye, a torn ear, lip, or cheek, all of which were common. If a contestant passed out, the others threw water on his feet so that he would regain consciousness. Even if someone died, the game did not stop. The dead body was removed and the game continued; once begun, it had to continue to its conclusion. As the winner collected his prize money, all others were expected to congratulate him and shake his hand.

The appeal of *maní,* this game of blows, lay in its emphasis on brute force, dexterity, and cunning, all accompanied by music and dance. The instruments accompanying such events consisted of an agógo[24] or hoe blade struck with a small metal rod. Drummers could take part in the adventures of the game as well. They played vertical, cylindrical drums with tack heads, tuned with fire, constructed from the hollowed-out trunk of an avocado tree and covered in ox skin. The musicians played slow, traditional rhythms on their instruments, which the lead dancer and other maniseros responded to with improvised taunting songs (*puyas*) and choral refrains. Even as the performers played they ran the risk of taking part in maní. Although their job involved primarily playing percussive rhythms on the drum skins, they also faced the possibility that others would strike their own hides. As drummers played their music to accompany the songs and dance, their leader, the *cajero*, had to remain very alert. The rules of the game demanded that whenever the dancer struck an unsuspecting blow the lead drummer had to strike his drum precisely synchronized with the blow of the dancer. The cajero, who usually played elegantly on his large drum, improvising like the *quinto*[25] performer in rumba, had to mark the blows of the lead dancer at the precise moment they happened. The blow from the dancer and on the drum needed to sound together, in unison; this represented one of the subtleties associated with the game. If anything distracted the lead drummer or delayed him a little, he lost his position and entered the circle to suffer the same fate as the rest. Others could knock him senseless along with other players, while another musician took his place. This musical simultaneity between the drummer and certain moves of the dancer is also common in *rumbas bravas* or "fierce rumbas," those heard in marginal neighborhoods. It is a very traditional characteristic, and also interesting since its presence in the Cuban baile de maní suggests that the more widely practiced rumba is of Gangá origin as well.

The maní game in Africa may have originally had magical associations, which is typical of athletic spectacles often related to astrological or agrarian rituals. But I am unaware if anything of the sort ever existed in Cuba. In any event, maní performers frequently made use of witchcraft to assure their own victory or the defeat of their adversaries. Maniseros usually kept very powerful makutos, *masangos*,[26] protective charms, powders, talismans, and other magical objects in their hand wraps or belts, both defensive and offensive. And when distinct groups of maniseros fought one another, they prepared well in advance with magical rites and spells in order to *akangá* (defeat) the enemy. Maní was a game in which protagonists chose to enter individually. But frequently groups formed that collectively challenged others. Sometimes members of one sugar plantation would challenge another. At times slave owners attended such spectacles, adding to the collective betting pool and thus creating more incentive among combatants. And some brawny and spirited whites, attracted to the exotic fighting, entered the circle just like a valiant black man. There are tales of a Spaniard, a military governor of the city of Trinidad, who gained renown as a manisero. At other times migratory groups of professional maniseros gained fame for their repeated victories. The ferocity of one such group led by a black bruja from Trinidad named Martina was especially renowned; they always beat their opponents. Maní players of Trinidad had a very fearful reputation. One of them, who along with many others participated as a revolutionary in the Wars of Independence against Spain, told me that soldiers frequently played maní in military encampments. In such contexts the maniseros from Trinidad gained such a reputation that they sang sarcastically in the matches, suggesting they could find no one to rival them: "Lots of players from Trinidad here. Let's head to Trinidad."

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[24] For further discussion of the agógo, see Ortiz 1952b, 231.

[25] The name for the highest-pitched drum in the rumba ensemble, associated with improvisational flourishes.

In the provinces of Havana and Matanzas, the maniseros from Aguacate, Canasí, Caraballo, and nearby towns were recognized as excellent players; their charms inevitably made them victorious and they left their opponents in a sorry state. Even in the more modern period associated with baseball, some players didn't want to travel to those towns. They feared the tricks employed by brujos there would obstruct their play and harm them.

Older ex-slaves have told me that on occasion the slave owners on plantations would get interested in the games of their black folk and organize manisero groups that challenged rivals from other farms, much as if they were fighting cocks. Each slave owner bet that his group would defeat the others, and in those games the defeated slaves came to be the property of the winning masters. Roger Bastide[27] believes that Brazilian *capoeira* groups were permitted by whites in order to redirect the aggression and resentment of slaves there toward violent but ultimately insignificant expression. Whether or not that is true in Cuba, the maní game represented one of the most important forms of diversion for black Africans and their descendants; many in sugar-producing areas achieved widespread fame, just like the great boxers of today. One of the best known from the south of Las Villas province was Indalecio Esponda. The slave earned so much money as a manisero for his owner (who had a sugar plantation called "Bacuino" in Sancti Spíritus province) that the owner freed him after he bested several of his most formidable rivals. I have heard Clemente Diago, now in his nineties, discuss his past prowess as a gallo, singer, and manisero on the sugar plantations of Matanzas and Las Villas. Some women players, *maniseras*, also gained prominence. Caridad Cantero is one name that was heard frequently in Las Villas, she was a fierce warrior in the game. It is said that one *manisero* of note named José Sarriá lost to a woman, which so embarrassed him that he never played the game again.

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[26] An evil spell of Kongo derivation. Also a magic talisman.

[27] Roger Bastide (1898–1974) was a French sociologist and anthropologist, and an early scholar of the African diaspora in the Americas.

The most famous slave maniseros often managed to buy their freedom with their earnings. Sometimes they became troublemakers thereafter and disrupted maní events; if that happened, others would watch out for them and make them leave the area. At one time maní was played a great deal in the Las Villas region and the games began to degenerate into terrible battles verging on the criminal. Some say that the maní game was banned, but there is no proof that the authorities enforced such a law. It all likelihood it was only a temporary and local precaution on the part of one sugar plantation or area, trying to avoid excessive wagers or complications during the sugar cane harvest. These days one finds maní still being played in a few rural towns, but typically in the form of an amusing parody, without punches, hand wraps, or wounds, and with participants only "marking" the hits in play rather than actually throwing blows. This terrible game-dance has now become a mere pantomime of an ancestral rite. Without a doubt, the maní dance-fight involved more aesthetic nuance than the brutality of boxing as practiced in civilized society. I believe it would be a good idea to support its ongoing presence in Cuba as a popular form of sport, exercise, and physical education.

Many other forms of pantomimed dance are still seen and heard in Cuba. Examples include the ritual dances of certain esoteric Kongo sects. In Palo Monte, when members dance in a ring and sing together with the *mfumbi*[28] in order to call the *perro* ("dog") or spiritual force, or when they sing in order to send it away. An example of a Palo song is reproduced below (Figure 7.2).[29]

In the Mayombe sect, the rites associated with *yimbulá* are the most spectacular. Participants sing and dance to entice a spirit (*mayombe, mbuá,* "dog," "horse," or "servant") to come down. The spiritual leader or *tata-*

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[28] Spirits contained in ritual iron bowls and controlled by a religious leader. See Cabrera 2001, 180.

[29] Originally, "Canto congo en la secta de Palo Monte," in Ortiz (1951) 1981, 423, fig. 78.

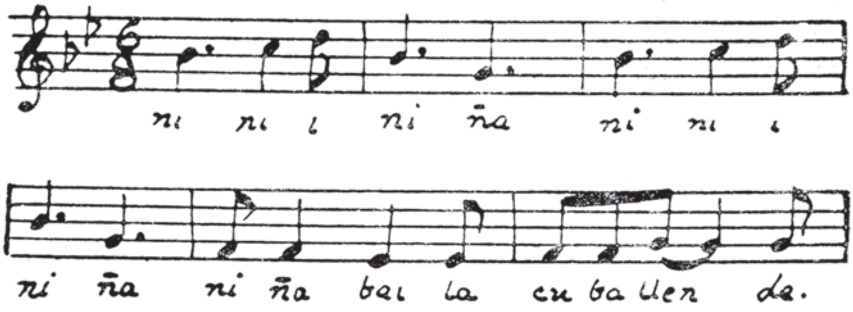

Figure 7.2. Palo Monte song.

nganga[30] sings invocations and the circle of congregants[31] responds to them.[32] But the spiritual force may be slow to appear and must be exhorted, so the religious leader in a state of trance grasps the *yaya* plant[33] symbolizing magical power, or alternately a bunch of grama grass or crabgrass, or a magical *mpaka* horn[34] charged with magic. The liturgical dance continues until the "dog" comes down for a visit.[35]

The Biyumba sect has analogous danced rites, but they are most complicated when they involve sending away the spirit or *mbuá*. The sorcerer stretches out face down with the *mpaka* horn while others make crosses on his forehead, the back of the neck, the breast, the back, the hamstrings, the elbows, the feet, and hands, all the while singing chants[36] until candles are extinguished by means of symbolic gestures in front of the ritual iron vessel (*prenda*) used to summon spirits and the ritual ends.

Havana's Kimbisa sect derives from a powerful Kongo secret society, but a mulatto practitioner named Andrés Petit transformed it radically through clever syncretism with Catholic elements. Its ritual dances are also from the Kongo but the songs contain elements from the Christian church.[37] The figure below reproduces a sacred chant to *Chola Güengue* (Figure 7.3)[38] in the form of a little rumba that is danced in a circle with little jump-like steps.

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[30] *Tata-nganga* is a common term in Cuba for priests of Kongo-derived religions. *Tata* literally means "father" and *nganga* refers to the spirits of the dead that priests summon to perform service or request advice, and by extension to the ritual vessels used to summon them.

[31] Literally, *vasallos,* vassals or subjects.

[32] See also, *La africanía de la música folklórica de Cuba* (1950), 312, fig. 27. [F.O.].

[33] A tropical shrub of the Annonaceae family with whitish flowers and hard, flexible wood.

[34] Images of many such horns can be viewed on the Internet; see, for instance: http://palomontenegro.blogspot.com/2011/08/sacrificios-humanos-y-genealogia-del.html

[35] Ortiz uses the local phrase for this sort of visit from a spirit force, "*dar un volío*."

[36] See Ortiz (1951) 1981, 324, fig. 80; and Ortiz (1950) 1965, 313, fig. 28.

[37] See also, Ortiz (1950) 1965, 314–15, figs. 29 and 30. Fig. 29 is a chant to the Kongo deity *Sarabanda* and fig. 30 is dedicated to Chamalongo. [F.O.]

[38] Originally, "Canto de los Kimbisas a Chola Güengue," in Ortiz (1951) 1981, 427, fig. 81.

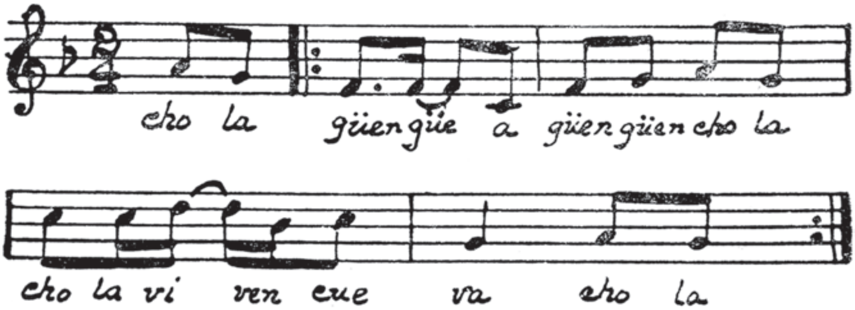

Figure 7.3. Kimbisa song to Chola Güengue.

Another Kimbisa chant is dedicated to Erisi Balandé.[39] It is performed when the priest, dressed in his or her ritual garments and raising a magic wand, called a *báculo*, opens the altar in the morning and later at sundown uses the chant again to close the altar through the evocation of bats. Some Kimbisa melodies are heptatonic and appear to be influenced by European music; they are mulatto or creole forms of expression, just like the sect in general.

Cuban blacks used their inventiveness and propensity for imitative pantomime to create dances and songs inspired in the Cuban context, new for them at the time. Here are a few examples. The *ziripá*, according to Ramón Martínez, was a song from the mid-nineteenth century that became very popular and had the refrain "Ziripá, a tough black guy / Strike after strike, they never hit him."[40] The ziripá was danced with one hand on the head and another on the buttocks, imitating the antics and jumping of slaves attempting to avoid strokes of the lash when the plantation overseer punished them.

Cuban Kongos frequently performed a secular and very erotic dance involving a great deal of hip movement, similar to one described by P. Wing as *makinu ma luketo*.[41] The Cuban version was danced to a song with the lyrics "*makinu mantú mango mangüé*." Only the final phrase seems to have survived to the present in the form of a vendor's cry used to sell mangos. It is heard frequently in Havana each year when mangos are in season.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the *papalote* or kite dance gained popularity. In it, a male dancer standing in front of a female partner imitated the movements of someone bending and turning in order to make a kite fly. We call kites *papalotes* in Cuba because of influence from Mexico where they employ the same term, using the indigenous word for butterfly. The mimicry involved in bending and turning translates easily into pornographic suggestiveness.

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[39] See *La africanía*, 316, fig. 31. [F.O.].

[40] The original text: "Ziripá, negro con bronco, pá con pá, no pega ná." Thanks to Alira Ashvo-Muñoz for her insights into these lyrics.

[41] No "P. Wing" appears in Ortiz's bibliography. The author apparently refers to Joseph van Wing's publication *Études Bakongo* (Brussels: Goemaere, 1920).

Rumba is essentially a pantomime, the simulation of amorous courtship, even including its orgasmic climax; it always revolves around a dialogue between the sexes, whether stylized in crude fashion or with subtle restraint. But in addition to this African-derived choreography, the dance in Cuba has adopted other forms of complementary mimetic expression. Older rumba performers who wish to demonstrate their "erudition" and show off with antiquated rumba styles reproduce some of the pantomimic sort. One of them, for example, imitates a scene between a woman who pretends to be a teacher and a man who acts like a rebellious child entering a school. The accompanying song alludes to his mischief with saucy double entendre, while the teacher strikes the "boy" with a strap. In another rumba the title and theme is "Lola Doesn't Know How to Do Anything." The dancer goes through the gestures of ironing, hanging out clothes to dry, and so forth, following the song lyrics. "Shoe the Mule" is a form of rumba highly acclaimed by foreign tourists. The woman in that dance pretends to be a pack animal "on all fours," and the man, the blacksmith, pretends to nail on her horseshoes. This rumba is one of many crude degenerations of the original Afro-Cuban dance, invented to please touristic perversions. It has lost all the graceful mimetic charm typical of the original Cuban rumba.

Kongo Masked Dancing of the Nineteenth Century

The Kongo peoples of Africa also customarily adopted masked dancing, that is, representations of fantastical creatures that accompanied certain rites. One "little devil"[42] of this type was the *mojiganga*. These Kongo "devils" were originally none other than tata-ngangas or *gangulero*s,[43] as they are commonly known amongst practitioners of witchcraft,[44] or *nganga-nkisi*.[45] In their African finery they marched through the streets on January 6th as part of festivities that enslaved or free members of various African tribes[46] celebrated on Epiphany, “The Day of Three Kings,” or chose instead to act in hidden rural communities and obscure places associated with their craft. Even in the early twentieth century during carnival a few black performers appeared in the streets dressed as mojigangas, strangely shaped beings that frightened women and children. The word mojiganga or *mujiganga* in Cuba referred originally to a species of doll or idol made of wood that functioned as a messenger or assistant of the spirit or nkisi evoked by tata-ngangas and whom they dispatched by means of spells and magic arts to obtain information or “fight” with an enemy, defending themselves from enchantment or doing harm in order to counteract the effects of malice. Even as late as 1938, a *mayombero*[47] from Guanabacoa named Eufemio used the *mpaka* or magical horn[48] with a small figure attached to the top that he called a mujiganga and also a *conga*. According to him, his figurine served the function of assistant to his primary nkisi spirit. I observed another figurine carved rustically out of wood called mojiganga, used by a shaman who lived years ago in the village of Monte Oscuro, in Bayamo, an area famous today for its “spiritual center” called “Searching for Light.”[49] The figure, the concept, and the word mojiganga all derive from these statuettes or fetishes used by Cuban Kongos and dressed extravagantly in the fashion of Bantu sorcerers. By extension, mojiganga also refers to extravagant masked dancers or *mamarrachos*[50] that both frightened and delighted Kings’ Day onlookers.

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[42] African-derived masked dancers are referred to in popular Cuban discourse as *diablitos* or "little devils." Many such figures can be viewed on the Internet: see for instance, http://www.folkcuba.com/lukumi_abakua_ht/object_list_abakuajp08.html; and also images 9.1a and b in Chapter 9.

[43] *Ganga* can refer either to a spirit of the dead or to the ritual iron vessel that Kongo priests use to summon the dead. Thus, a *gangulero* is a summoner of spirits, or the owner of a ritual vessel used to summon spirits.

[44] Ortiz uses the term *brujería* here.

[45] Lydia Cabrera (2001, 252) defines nkisi as "supernatural power," or by extension the ritual ganga or receptacle used to summon and control spirits. Thus, a nganga-nkisi might be translated as a controller of ritual powers.

In carnival, the mojiganga mask took various forms. Some of these extravagant disguises were of pleasing African character, given the nature of the faces and artificial arms and the height of the disguise. They were typically suspended by a frame of lathe strips over the shoulders of the masked individual whose body disappeared under an elaborate vestment consisting of a raffia skirt, strings of garlic, and rags. In the figure below (Figure 7.4),[51] the individual simulates “riding on horseback” in a frame of straps and vegetable fibers, and with an equine head. However, behind him and against his buttocks rides a figurine, a true mojiganga. The individual on horseback may symbolize an *engueye* or ancestral spirit “mounted” in possession, and the figurine or mojiganga the previously mentioned messenger. Grotesque

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[46] Ortiz uses the phrase *negros de nación* in the original, meaning black Cubans who were born in Africa and identify with a particular African tribe or nation.

[47] *Mayombe* is a Kongo ethnic group. Thus, mayombero refers to a Kongo religious practitioner, usually one associated with the sect known as Palo Monte.

[48] The 1981 reprint of *Los bailes* mistakenly uses the word *cuero* (skin) here, rather than *cuerno* (horn).

[49] Buscando Luz.

[50] *Mamarracho* or *moharracho* are both Arab-derived terms for clowns, or people who dress in ridiculous costumes to entertain others (Ortiz [1924] 1991, 322).

[51] Originally, “Una mojiganga montada,” in Ortiz (1951) 1981, 476, fig. 108.

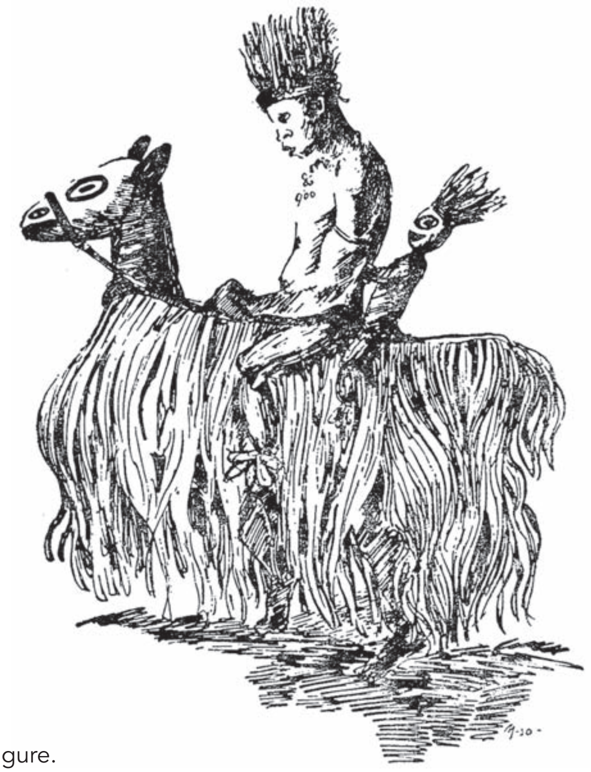

Figure 7.4.
A mounted mojiganga figure.

figures of men simulating a ride on horseback can be found in Europe as early as the fifteenth century, as seen in the processions of ecclesiastical events of the Middle Ages with their animal-head masks and "little devils." The explanation for Cuban masked figures does not involve them, but I refer to such antecedents so that no one will imagine such detailed figures and masks are invariably of African origin. This essay focuses on what black personalities meant in historical Cuban festivities, and especially the figure known as the mojiganga.

The Kongos in Cuba of the past also typically celebrated the day of Our Lady of Candelaria, February 2, with a grand event in honor of the ancestors, or the *güiri* as they call them, in which practitioners ritually offered them certain foods and prayers. On those occasions it has been shown that some of the liturgical dances involved masked figures that represented the *güiri*. Such masks are no longer used today, but certain Kongo sects in Cuba still meet each February 2 to celebrate funerary rites and to receive the "entities" that speak through worshippers in the possession trances that some participants experience.

In the past, Cuban blacks frequently wore *kokoríkamo* costumes that first appeared in African-derived ritual contexts and later became part of Havana's popular carnivals. Kokoríkamo, as I prefer to write it, or *cocorícamo* as it is sometimes written, has two accepted meanings in Afro-Cuban folklore, now part of our vernacular language. The first refers to "a mysterious and inexplicable quality," or in more everyday terminology the "*je ne sais quois* of certain things." When Cubans want to praise the attractive qualities of a beautiful woman, they say "she's got cocorícamo." They say the same, for example, about the great valor of a hero: "he's got cocorícamo"; about a gravely ill patient: "he's got cocorícamo"; about an individual's embarrassing passivity in the face of the most atrocious taunting: "he's/she's got cocorícamo"; about intense cold: "it's got cocorícamo"; about the startling velocity of an automobile: "it's got cocorícamo"; or the fury of a hurricane: "it's got cocorícamo." In this way, people use cocorícamo to reference everything unprecedented, extraordinary, ineffable, or superhuman. And this superhuman quality extends to everything mysterious, even the most sacred. Thus, cocorícamo is roughly equivalent to a spell or witchcraft, and to the other supernatural force or sacred power that ethnographers call *mana*. The concept of mana is difficult to understand because of its imprecise nature; no word in our vocabulary corresponds exactly to this concept as understood among primitive peoples. To them, mana is something real, part of the vital essence of all reality. It is for them, according to Lévy Bruhl, "a mystical reality that extends everywhere, and, in truth, it is less manifested than felt. For that reason it cannot be reduced to a formal concept, much like the universal matter discussed by our metaphysicists."[52] The concept of mana, although of Polynesian origin, is widely used by North American peoples and is roughly equivalent, according to Pettazzoni,[53] to *chemin* or *zemí* among the Arawak or Taino Indians who controlled Cuba and other islands of the Greater Antilles at the time of their discovery by the Spanish. Mana is mystical and obscure, the impersonal force that forms the center of all religion. It is a protoreligious[54] concept, pretheological, pretheist, and could be translated as "sacred power" or sacral, a bit like numinosity if that term did not presuppose a degree of personification.

But kokoríkamo has another meaning in Cuba, a noun that refers to "an ugly being, a terrible monster" (Figure 7.5).[55] Used this way it might describe an ugly woman dressed horribly, or a person in rags: "they look like a

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[52] Lucien Lévy Bruhl, *La mentalité primitive* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1922), 3 [F.O.].

[53] Raffaele Pettazzoni, *Dio*: *Formazione e sviluppo del monoteismo nella storia delle religioni*, vol. 1 (Rome: Società Editrice Athenaeum, 1922), 325. [F.O.].

[54] Ortiz uses the rather obscure term *teoplásmico* or *theoplasmic*, which means, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the "raw material out of which religious concepts are evolved." See Olgilve 2012, 95.

[55] Originally, "Un Kokoríkamo o Kokorioko," in Ortiz (1951) 1981, 479, fig. 109.

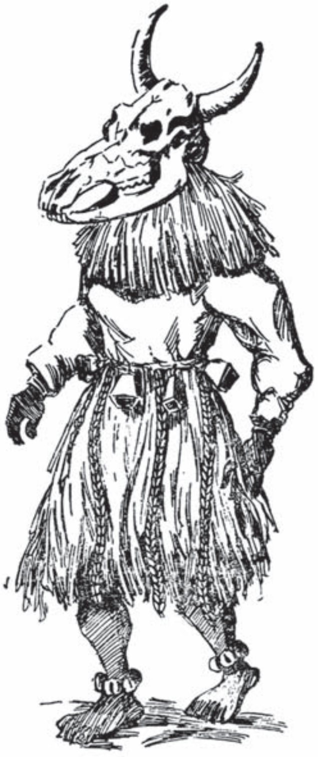

Figure 7.5. A kokoríkamo or kokorioko figure.

kokoríkamo." This sense relates to the aforementioned figure with the horrible mask. Two forms of African etymology are possible for the term. The most likely derives from *Koko*, which in Bantu languages means a mysterious and frightening being. Speakers often use it to describe "phantasms," "spirits," or "devils," and among Bantus of the northeast "ancestor" or "grandparent." *Koko* is a term that extends to everything frightening: to ferocious beasts, flying birds, extraordinary creatures, prehensile arms, grabbing hands, whatever phantasm the imagination creates. Fear of the *Koko* is fear of the "otherworldly," a form of sacred terror.

One could also possibly ascribe a Yoruba or Lucumí etymology to the term Kokoríkamo, deriving it from *koko* (much or many) and *emo* or *mo* (surprising, inaudible, monstrous, unknown, sacred, brilliant).[56]

The Kokoríkamo is sometimes called a *Kokorioko*, apparently a derivation of the same word. *Korioko* comes from *koko* and *eri-oko* or *eroko*, the latter meaning "terrible and secret basis of the brotherhood of the ñáñigos." A kokoríkamo consisted simply of a grotesque mask accompanied by a vestment of indefinite form featuring old rope twisted apart that was usually combined with rags, weeds, palm fronds, and small strands of cloth or colored ribbons. Sometimes dancers also attached strands of garlic to their waists, reminiscent of the raffia and leaf skirts so common to certain African religious dances. The face of the costume was made of sackcloth and cardboard and had a horrendous visage, representing an animal or intended to startle. Sometimes it featured horse jawbones that opened and closed with a clicking sound like the maw of a monster. Sometimes the mouth itself was enormous, with very prominent lips[57] made of cotton waste covered with red cloth, and teeth simulated with garlic cloves. Kokoríkamos wrapped strands of rattles or bells around their waists and ankles that jingled strangely with each step. In some cases old cans were used for the bells so that they sounded comical, like a caricature of ñáñigo bells.[58]

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[56] For more information on African concepts of *koko* and the *coco* used to scare Hispanic children, and the fruit of the same name, see Fernando Ortiz, "El cocorícamo y otros conceptos teoplásmicos del folklore afrocubano," *Archivos del folklore cubano* 4, no. 4 (October–December 1929): 289–312. [F.O.]

[57] Ortiz uses the local term *bemba*, generally meaning prominent lips, common among African people.

And so in the vernacular speech of Havana it became common to hear phrases like "uglier than a kokoríkamo" or "she's so ugly she looks like a kokorioko." In Havana's carnivals of during the first decade of this century, youngsters of color still often went through working-class neighborhoods in groups of a dozen or more kokoríkamos. Typically they were led by a large masked figure who played a rhythm on a frying pan or set of pans, much in the way that the African instrument known as ekón[59] is used by ñáñigos. The kokoríkamos marched in two lines, on opposing sides of the street, to a slow, metallic rhythm. Every now and then the leader executed a flourish on the frying pans and the carnival procession dissolved. At that moment each kokoríkamo began to perform devilish tricks of their own creation, jumping, dancing, climbing up the window bars of nearby houses, entering houses, rolling about on the floor, even adopting lusty, animal-like, or unearthly pantomimes, and more than anything else amusing themselves in a way that inspired fear in women and children, just like masked dancers do in Africa. Kokoríkamos bear a certain relationship to "little devils" in certain sects derived from sub-Saharan Africa, part of annual rituals involving the expulsion of bad spirits. They have nothing to do with Cuban ñáñigos, as some have suggested.

Similar to the kokoríkamos, but more rustic, were the so-called *peludos* or hairy creatures; dressed shabbily, they typically accompanied carnival processions to the sound of drums. Peludos derive their name from the masks they employed, evocative of African costumes, daubed with multicolored paint and covered with expanses of disheveled hair created out of burlap or the bristles of scouring pads.

Enanos or dwarves were very common too in outlying Havana neighborhoods, reminiscent of the pygmies of central Africa who appeared in Egyptian paintings thousands of years ago. The black populations of Atlantic coastal areas recall them in their folklore as mythological types associated with magical rites, including the ritual figurines[60] of the tata-nganga in Africa and their descendants in Cuba. Afro-Cuban *enano* masks consisted of giant heads formed from a large flour sack, on one side of which was painted the features of an enormous face in black and red ochre. With the mask thus

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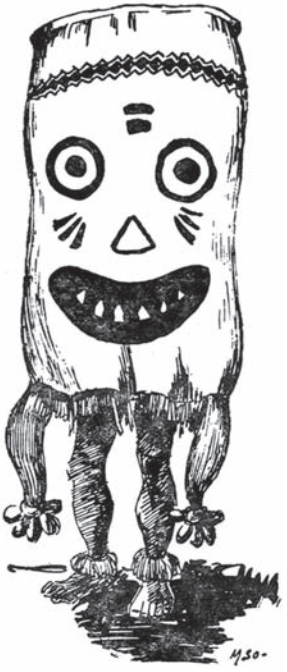
[58] Ortiz uses the African-derived term *enkaniká* to refer to these bells, sewn into the fabric of ritual costumes.

[59] For images of mounted frying pans used in carnival groups and of the ekón, see Ortiz 1952c, 226–27 and 230.

[60] Ortiz uses the term *mbaka*, one of the Pygmy ethnic groups in the Kongo.

Figure 7.6. Mbaka or enano mask.



fashioned, the creators stretched out a hoop (taken from shipping barrels) in the bottom of the sack, which kept it open wide. Into this, the dancer inserted his head, arms, and trunk up to the waist, holding up the hoop and thus the full mask head with hands held high. The outside of the sack displayed two small sleeves filled with fibers and strip-like fingers sewed to their end. The masks thus represented the dwarves of African mythology, with no body, only a head and extremities, and they danced for, amused, and even shocked onlookers since they retained certain mythological associations with the supernatural, such as goblins or *mbaka* (see Figure 7.6).[61] Other masks tended to feature animal figures. I remember one masked dancer of a country alligator[62] hunter. It featured a man dressed in crude sackcloth who was armed with a stick and machete. He carried an alligator figure on his back whose head extended over the hunter and functioned as a sort of mask. Thus, hunter and alligator formed a single unit: the masked figure imitated both the movements of the great lizard as well as the cautious hunter who pursued him. Animal masks were found in Europe as well, in ancient pagan rites and even in the processions of Corpus Christi.

Effigy Dances

In Cuba, it is customary in Afro-descendant processional dances to carry certain effigies representative of saints, idols, or other creatures of unknown symbolism, probably related to past local events or personages. Not long ago, I witnessed a public procession in a city of Las Villas province, organized by a Kongo cabildo. It took place on October 4 and was dedicated to San Francisco, celestial protector against hurricanes and known to them as *Tata Pancho Kimbúngula*. The Kongo name means “Protector from San Francisco’s Lashing.” In the procession of the modest group, an officiant carried a carved effigy that he raised, lowered, and moved from side to side to the rhythm of the drums. He attempted in this way to suggest that it was the “saint” who

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[61] Originally, “Máscara de un Mbaka o Enano,” in Ortiz (1951) 1981, 481, fig. 110.

[62] Literally, caiman.

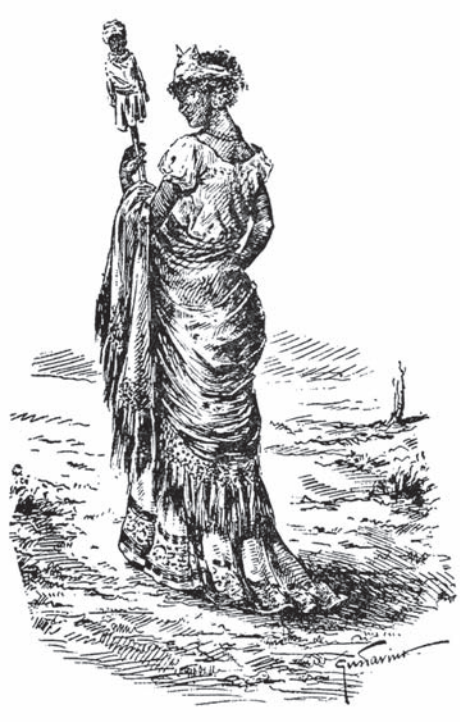

Figure 7.7. A *mulata de rumbo* (mulatto woman of the streets) dancing the anaquillé.

was moving, that it was alive and participated actively in the ambulatory ceremony. When they passed in front of the church, the priest closed the doors so that San Francisco could not enter, a long-standing tradition of past times. After the door closed the figurine moved violently from side to side as if to demonstrate its anger. There is a certain analogy between these "dancing figures" and dance steps to Afro-descendant rhythms that blacks (many of them ñáñigos) performed during the procession of August 15 as they carried the Virgin of Assumption, the Guardian Angel, through the town Guanabacoa. That image also moved to a "creolized beat" and bent down from time to time as if to cordially greet others and demonstrate its pleasure as it entered the parish in front of the house of the leader of the city council. Some images in processions of the Holy Encounter[63] during Easter week in Santiago, Trinidad, Remedios, and other Cuban cities perform similar movements.

Certain effigies carried through the streets of Havana on Kings' Day in times past were known as *anaquillé.* The figurines or idols belonged to African rites; black dancers held them at the end of a long pole as they performed religious events (Figure 7.7).[64] Anaquillé was also the name of an Afro-Cuban dance that is no longer performed. It is possible that effigies used by blacks in the Old Calabar region and incorporated into biennial celebrations involving the expulsion of devils represent antecedents to the Cuban anaquillé. In the Calabar, such effigies were known as *Nabikém*. In Dahomey,

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[63] This refers to the *Santo Encuentro*, derived from Spanish traditions and celebrated during Easter week. It involves processions in which figures of the Virgin Mary and the risen Christ are carried through the streets.

[64] Originally, "'Mulata de rumbo' bailando el anaquillé," in Ortiz (1951) 1981, 533, fig. 120.

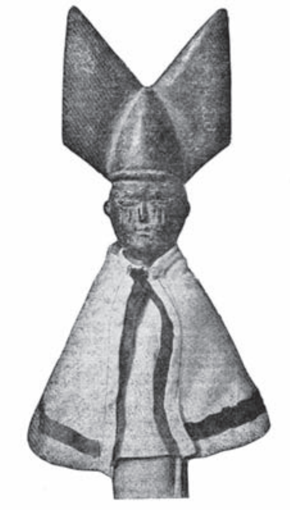

Figure 7.8. Effigy of Changó used while dancing.

too, on similar occasions residents carry a multitude of horrible figures by canoe to the center of a lake and submerge them in the water. Some believe these images represent the dead that are always bid farewell in this way from the Porto Novo area.[65] To others they represent evil spirits that must be cast out from their home in Dahomey. Even today in Cuba, the practitioners of Lucumí rituals use in sacred dances small idols that they carry in their hand at the other end of a pole, such as the *okú mambo* or weapon of Changó (Figure 7.8).[66] The term *anaquillé*, used in passing, has other meanings. In card games it was used frequently to refer to "a token or object put on the table to indicate a doubling of the wager." When someone wants to play a game with anaquillé, one of the participants takes out an object and puts it on the table, near the chips or the money. Sometimes a chip other than that used to represent money is used, or a knife, or any other object. Whoever wins the first hand takes both the kitty and the anaquillé. The winning player places the anaquillé in front of him or herself on the table during rounds in which he isn't dealing. When it is his turn to deal again, he places the anaquillé in the center of the table and thus all bets are doubled, with the winner taking possession of the anaquillé as well. This process continues through the following rounds. I have also heard the term used to mean "amulet." A rare coin or other object associated with good luck can be described as an anaquillé in that sense.

Not long ago, the carnival bands of Yaguajay, Cuba often took to the streets during Christmas festivities. Each represented a neighborhood of the town, and each carried a mannequin representing that neighborhood that they raised into the air and moved as if to make it dance. Locals called these figurines *sirindingos*, a term that has certain pejorative connotations, like "dummy." The mannequin from the barrio of Sansarí was a black woman whose specific name I no longer remember. The sirindingo from the La Loma barrio depicted a fat, hairy Galician Spaniard named Kalmuta.[67]

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[65] Porto Novo is now the official capital of the West African state of Benin, home to the Dahomey people.

[66] Originally, "Efigie de Changó para bailar," in Ortiz (1951) 1981, 535, fig. 121.

[67] Data confirmed by Prof. Teodoro Díaz Fabelo [F.O.].

Analogous carnival traditions are found in Brazil. In certain rural villages, João Paulino and Maria Angio were very popular, huge figurines nine feet high that presided over carnival participants, much like the giant figures that lead Corpus Christi processions in some Spanish cities.[68] In the processions of Zaragoza, one of the giant figures or *cabezudos* is called *El Negrito* and has a large black head. The Brazilian figurine called *babalotin* in the form of a black woman is also worth mentioning. Carried by a child, it appears in front of certain sacred and profane street bands that form part of carnival in Bahia. It appears to represent the orishas known as Ibédyi in Cuba, "the Twins," represented collectively by the babalotin and the child who carries it.[69] Also worthy of mention in terms of Kongo rites in Brazil is the *kalunga* doll held by certain individuals in the same manner as scepters with a doll figure on top that minor tribal chiefs use in Loanda; and the doll-scepters and doll-idols used by *maracatú* and *xangó* groups in northern Brazil with names like Katita, Gangalúa, Santa Bárbara, and so on, as mentioned by Roger Bastide.[70]

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[68] Mario Aguiar, "São Luis de Paraitinga," *Revista do arquivo municipal* (Rio de Janeiro) 121 (1949): 16 [F.O.].

[69] Cláudio Tuiti Tavares and Pierre Verger, "Afroché, ritmo bárbaro de Bahía," *O Cruzeiro* (Rio de Janeiro) 20, no. 32 (May 29, 1948): 57.

[70] Roger Bastide, *Imagens de Nordeste Místico en Branco e Prieto* (Rio de Janeiro: Empresa Gráfica 'O Cruzeiro,' 1945). [F.O.].

8

The Religious Music of Black Cuban Yorubas

Translated by **Robin D. Moore**

There are no pure races in this world. All peoples represent mixtures, and Cuba is no exception. Cuba is a cultural stew (*ajiaco*). It is a beautiful cooking pot placed in the tropical heat where diverse cultures have blended together in our local broth, so nutritious and tasty. In Cuba, all the "great races" have intertwined: copper-colored Indians, white Europeans, black Africans, yellow Asians. And even if all these races are not reflected in our own skin color, we carry the spirit of their cultural essence within us.

The Indians practiced various Paleolithic and Neolithic cultures, cultures of the Stone Age. They died out, but not without leaving us precious gifts: corn, cassava, and tobacco. White immigrants brought various cultures with them, from Iberia as well as Italy, France, and England, representing various ethnic groups: Catholics, Protestants, Jews, a few Muslims, and a fair number of heretics. And the same can be said of blacks. They represent varied African cultures with distinct languages, economies, religions, arts, and forms of social organization.

Translated from Fernando Ortiz, "La música religiosa de los yorubas entre los negros cubanos." *Estudios afrocubanos* 5 (1945–46): 19–60.[1]

[1] Much of this text comes from Ortiz's first-ever public presentation on the batá drums in May 1937. He modified and extended the text in subsequent presentations at the University of Havana and elsewhere.

Many African groups are represented in Cuba, but primarily those from West Africa. The predominant ethnicities include the so-called Sudanese represented by the Ashanti, Ganga, Dahomeyan or Arará, Lucumí, and others; the semi-Bantu Carabalí,[2] among others; and the Bantu, consisting of the Kongo, Mayombe, Loango, and Angolan. Anthropologists today recognize the principal Sudanese groups to be the Tshi, Ewe, and Yoruba. In the western region of Cuba from Havana to Matanzas, the sugar-producing region of the country for centuries, the Yoruba or so-called Lucumí culture predominates. The African groups who left an important mark on Cuba did so owing to the value of their cultural contributions and because of the numbers of their immigrants. Their influence can be seen largely in their religious worship and in their instrumental music, dance, and sacred songs. Ritual or secular celebrations involving drumming are usually referred to as *toques de santo* (performances for the saints), or simply *toques* (drumming, performances). This segment of the minicourse entitled "Ethnographic Influences in Cuba" is devoted to the toques de santo of the Yoruba Africans in our country. I will endeavor to provide an overview of their component parts and most characteristic elements.

Yoruba cultural influences have not only infused Cuban popular music for centuries but have intensified in recent decades. It is true that it has been nearly a century since black Africans arrived here from across the Atlantic. But it is only recently that the musical values of Africans have manifested themselves with greatest intensity, in Cuba and throughout the Americas. This is because all citizens in our country and abroad can now express themselves with greater freedom, and everyone is more confident of their own merits. Thus, the petulant, racist prejudices that hide so much from us (blacks and whites) are only now being overcome and allowing us to perceive the true merit of such artistic expression. Not long ago it was almost blasphemy to suggest that Cuban music was characterized by the assimilation of African influences. At the same time, many attested to the influence of indigenous influences, even if such assertions were fantastical and impossible to prove.

I must begin by stressing that blacks have their own unique forms of music. This may seem an unnecessary assertion, but I must make it repeatedly, as the arrogantly vacuous among us tend to assert that blacks do not have their own music but only make noise. Those who say such things are unaware of the poetic textures created in their drum rhythms and the exquisite nature of their melodies, almost always carried by the voice. Such disdain for African music is a remnant of a long-standing attitude among white colonials who have exploited the forced labor of the unfortunate and subjugated the black race. Slave traders, eager to justify the bondage of slaves because of their supposed racial inferiority, chose to see black musical expression as a form of mere infantile diversion. They characterized it as devoid of any aesthetic value, and even as a blemish associated with "deficient races," those cursed by Noah and destined to be ruled by others. Today this assertion is simply ridiculous given the expansive musicological literature that now exists on Africa. In Cuba, so many of us feel the captivating allure of black rhythm in our veins and even compose black music without intending to, or at least without saying so. Often our musicians deny the most prominent source of their bewitching musical inspirations. Frivolous people who speak without thinking continue to spurn the recognition or study of our rich African artistic influences in Cuba. But expressive trends throughout the world, in plastic and musical arts, impel them toward black musical sensibilities. These days, black musical influences are not only recognized in Cuban popular music, formed through the intermixture of various cultures, but are understood to be the source of its most essential and attractive characteristics.

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[2] A local term to denote individuals with ancestral ties to the Calabar or Cross River Delta region in Africa, between present-day Nigeria and Cameroon.

It is not only in Cuba that people now dance to mulatto music, and sometimes music that is almost entirely from Guinea and the Congo. Enthusiasts around the world dance to such music, owing in large part to its mass diffusion by means of concerts, records, radio shows, movie theaters, and cabarets. This white-black music from Cuba is getting the whole planet excited, carrying its charm from pole to pole and to every geographic region, from cold lands to those located in the steamy tropics. Today Cuba is sending its music to the world once again. Once more the artistic and emotive merits of our mulatto music are becoming popular abroad, repeating a process of musical transculturation found in every century, the nineteenth, the twentieth, even in each generation. Transculturation is evident in the sarabande, the chaconne, the *guineo,* the *paracumbé,* and other dances from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In more recent times the same phenomenon is evident in the tango, the Cuban *danza,* the *habanera*, later in the *danzón* and *son*, and finally in the rumba and conga, despite their unseemly commercial adulteration.

Cuba's ethnographic riches are becoming the focus of study in various foreign universities. They examine its indigenous peoples, its blacks, and the complex phenomenon of transculturation with its unique characteristics derived from the impact of diverse cultures. A university team came here recently interested in studying our black music. This type of work is far from absurd. On the contrary, it is a scientific responsibility, a rational decision. Faculty at the University of Havana itself recently decided to initiate the study of black music, so poorly researched in Cuba.

My presentation today is dedicated to only one source of Afro-Cuban musical influence: that of black Yorubas. This is far from the only style of

African music found here. In the heart of our population one can still find Bantu or Kongo music performed as part of campesino dances; Carabalí music in the century-old rites of the ñáñigos, with their unique drumming practices and ekón bell; Ganga music is still played and said to be the origin of early rumba; Arará or Dahomeyan music, what Haitians call Vodoun music and here tends to blend with Lucumí practices; and finally the best preserved and most varied form of African music, from the Yorubas, which constitutes one of the most abundant sources of black music in our country.

Who are the Yoruba? They are Africans who came be known as Lucumí during the slave trade, taking that name from an ancient kingdom along the Niger River where their tribe came from. The Lucumí or Yoruba, along with the Dahomeyans, are the most civilized groups in West Africa. Their religions are the most advanced and their mythology and art forms remind one of the intimate relationships they maintained with old social groups of the Mediterranean: with Egypt, Crete, Tartessos,[3] Carthage . . . Yoruba religion is also the most complex in terms of its liturgy, musical forms, instruments, chants, and sacred dances, entirely aside from its myths of cosmology and philosophy, its plastic arts, and its forms of divination.

Blacks brought as slaves to the Americas were forced to become Christians. This gave rise to the phenomenon of syncretism, which always occurs when one religion is imposed on the territory of a foreign group. Here the syncretism never got much beyond a simple replacement of the original names of supernatural beings worshipped by cult members. Thus, in Cuba the Catholic Virgin of Mercy was adopted in place of the god Obatalá; the Virgin of Charity is now Ochún; the Virgin of Regla is Yemayá; Saint Lazarus is Babalú-Ayé, and so on.[4] Catholic priests and *santeros* (devotees of Santería) tend to participate in these celebrations, paying homage to the same spiritual beings and images but using different names for them. But neither the myths nor the liturgies of the two groups have mixed together and become one, and this includes their music, instruments, and songs.

The famous Dominican and bishop of Chiapas Father Bartolomé de las Casas supported the incorporation of some indigenous *areíto*[5] music and dance into Catholic worship. His parish priests accomplished this primarily by means of writing new texts for existing Indian melodies. These days, missionaries in Niger use the same liturgical songs and dances that you will see and hear shortly in the teaching of Catholic doctrine, sung in the Yoruba language.

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[3] A civilization mentioned by Herodotus and others on the southern edge of the Iberian peninsula. It apparently existed during the first millenium B.C.E.

[4] The orthography of the orisha names mentioned here, and others, is wildly inconsistent. Ortiz himself spells many of their names differently in his writings, even within the same essay, and others use even more varied spellings. For simplicity's sake, we have chosen one common form of spelling associated with each orisha that appears often in Ortiz's work and have employed it throughout the volume.

[5] Communal forms of religious music and dance, performed in a circle, associated at the time of the conquest with the Siboney and other groups.

Since the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic church has not been inclined to permit its parochial congregations to adopt the sounds of local songs or dances as part of giving themselves over to mystical emotion. (Protestants took the opposite approach and since the time of Martin Luther have attempted to capture ever more effectively the collective emotion of choral singing.) For this reason, pure, orthodox Yoruba religious song has been maintained in Cuba and never entered the Catholic church. Because of the secrecy and isolation associated with such worship, its essential African nature has not been transformed by white influences.

The music of black Africans is performed together with singing and dancing. In Africa, music does not exist apart from them. Together they invoke a complex aesthetic of expressive emotion, always enveloped by religion. Among groups that have not yet progressed far enough to develop writing, such art forms are linked together and individuals assume the constant presence of the gods. If writing makes mankind more human, to a greater extent than spoken language (the original form of human expression), it does so by fixing language and making it last, extending it in an unlimited fashion through space and time. In the process, artistic forms begin to separate and sublimate themselves according to specific types of expression. Symphonies, dances, and poetry influence other arts and introduce them to new and infinite possibilities.

Today I discuss three moments in the transculturation of Yoruba or Lucumí music in Cuba. The first is its pure period, that of its orthodox religion and liturgy. The second is still associated with black music, but of a mixed sort involving heterodox religious practices and syncretic ritual. The third period, that of the present, involves secularization and cultural fusion. Three periods: African Lucumí, Cuban Lucumí, and mulatto Lucumí.

The first period to be discussed is the African Lucumí phase. Music of this sort is still predominant in the religious celebrations of Yorubas in the Havana area and nearby provinces. It is not heard in such pure form in the rest of Cuba, or on other Caribbean islands, although it probably is further afield in Brazil. Not a word of Spanish is present in the lyrics of these songs, nor any movements involving the mimicry of white dance in its choreography, nor any instrument that does not have African origins in its ensembles, nor any melody or rhythm that does not originate in Africa. All of this liturgical Yoruba music ascribes to certain norms. Yoruba liturgies incorporate various musical instruments, some of which are rapidly falling into disuse in Cuba. I have some instruments in my personal collection that are no longer typically seen in houses of worship. But the instruments that continue to be used are the most important, especially the three batá drums.[6] They are built in distinct sizes but in the same shape. To give them a precise, technical or organological definition, we could describe them as closed, two-headed, ambipercussive bimembranophones. The shell is constructed of a piece of solid wood carved in an hourglass shape, and the head is tuned by means of a number of strips of leather cords. The drums are known as bimembranophones because they use two drumheads attached to the shell; hitting each produces a unique sound. They are known as "ambipercussive" because musicians lay the instrument on its side over their knees and play both heads with their bare hands. They are considered to have an hourglass shape because their shell roughly approximates the shape of ancient clocks that used water or sand; it is also known as clepsydrical. Their shells are wooden, made from the trunk of a tree, hollowed out with fire as well as with specific techniques and tools. Their construction is accompanied by auspicious, genuinely African rites of consecration. Batás are known as closed drums because the inside of each shell is sealed, enclosed by the two skins attached to each end, which creates an invisible, resonant hollowness in the middle. It is so sensitive that a vibration from one membrane is transmitted internally to the other, influencing its sound, and consequently making virtuosic performance on the instrument more difficult. The inside of the drums also contains a secret magical essence that the drum makers (understandably!) do not wish to discuss. They are drums under permanent tension; the cords holding the skins tightly in tune are made of strips running lengthwise across the instrument made of bull hide. These extend from the hoop around which one drumhead is tied all the way to the other. In addition, they are held in place securely by additional strips of male goat skin, tied and tightened widthwise over the bull hide straps. In that way, all cords are obliged to remain against the shell of the drum and increase the tension on the heads.

The Yoruba or Lucumí are the only individuals who use drums of this sort in Africa. Similar two-headed drums were used in Ancient Egypt and are used in present-day northern India, but these have a barrel or spool shape, not an hourglass shape. The Lucumí drums that exist in Cuba are distinct in form and structure from those used in Haitian Vodoun. They are also different from drums used in the Americas and in Africa by Dahomeyans, Gangas, Kongos, Angolans, and other groups. Batá drums only exist in Havana and nearby provinces, according to what informants in Brazil have told me. Our bimembranophone Yoruba drums bear a certain formal similarity to biconical drums used by Mandinga Africans, but the system of cord strapping is different. In the latter, variable tension is achieved by pressing the cord straps under the arm of the performer and only one drumhead is played on. The Mandinga drums are also hourglass-shaped, as are certain ñáñigo or Carabalí drums (which also can be found in Cuba). They are what some anthropologists consider part of the so-called “Maleo-Polynesian cultural circuit” that originated on black islands in Oceania and spread to the coast of Guinea, according to *Kulturkreis* theories.

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[6] See Ortiz 1946, 33, plate 1A.

The three drums used in Yoruba liturgy are referred to generically with the sacred name *aña*[7] and the secular term *ilú*.[8] But all three are commonly known in Africa and in Cuba as *batá*, a term also used to describe the full ensemble in its most proper usage. The music played by such instruments is known as a *toque de batá* and the performers are known as *olubatá*.[9] Each aña or ilú also has a more specific name. The smallest drum is called *okónkolo* or *omelé*. It is the drum that plays the highest pitch. The middle-sized or second batá drum is called *itótele*. It plays the tonic note. The largest batá drum and the one that represents the center of the three-drum orchestra is called iyá. It is commonly known as the mother of the drums, since in the Yoruba language *iyá* means “mother.” The iyá is played by the most experienced performer in the group. His hands generate a prodigious, virtuosic display of rhythms and tonalities. While his right hand on the larger head performs a capricious background of rhythmic arabesques, his left hand on the smaller head produces the magical language of the drum, a language that provokes Dionesian euphoria, mystical possession, and the illusion of contact with the gods. In every time period and among every race of people, religious euphoria has involved the delirium of communing outside oneself, hypnotic evasion, consoling hope, and/or impotent resignation. The olubatá or drummer on the iyá bears the title *kpuatakí*, which means “first in importance” or “leader.”

As you will see, all three batá drums are played simultaneously by a separate musician. Musicians sit and rest the drums on their knees; sometimes they tie the drum to a rope that runs under their thighs to make it move less during performance. All three ilú have two heads or *auó*. The larger auó on each drum is called the *enú* or “mouth,” and the small auó is called *chachá* or “butt.” The enú head of the iyá produces the lowest sound in the ensemble, while the chachá of the okónkolo produces the highest sound. Musicians strike all six drumheads with their hands rather than with sticks or mallets, either in the center of the skin or on the edge. Sometimes they use their fingers, sometimes the outer edges of the palm, sometimes the full palm. The technique employed varies according to the size of the drum played, and only the virtuoso performers know all the particular techniques.

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[7] Also *añá*. A divine spiritual force believed to reside in consecrated batá drums.

[8] *Ilú* is a generic term for drum in Yoruba. See Cabrera 1970, 165.

[9] Ortiz writes *olobatá*, but the correct term is *olubatá*; see Cabrera, 1970, 259. Cabrera notes that *olú* can mean chief of a tribe or babalawo and is clearly a sign of respect. Olubatá might best be translated as “ritually consecrated drummer” or “master of the batá.”

The strokes must be made rapidly, as any unnecessary prolongation of the blow against the skin deadens its vibration and tone and lessens its resonance. The left hand on the chachá produces the drum's high notes in two registers, high and low. The right hand on the enú executes low tones, also in two registers.

The musician's two hands almost never strike drumheads simultaneously. Each note derives from a particular hit on one of the two skins, fitting into a predetermined moment within the structure of the music in order to create the desired repeating tonal rhythms. Drum music is a language. The drums speak. Even if we can't understand them, black Africans do. These three drums *hablan lengua* (speak in African languages): taking advantage of the multiple tonalities of the words characteristic of tonal languages spoken in Africa and brought to Cuba, they express themselves in Lucumí. And their notes, like syllables produced on the vibrating skin of the drums, do not sound in unison, nor in a jumble, but in a specific order one after another, just as sounds made in a particular order form words.

In order to achieve this delicate interplay of rhythms and tones, the drums must be tuned carefully. Each of the six heads must be tuned by stretching their skins to a certain tension, a complicated process. First, the skins are stretched and tied to a flexible wooden hoop. They are then placed on either end of the drum and the skins are stretched further, by pulling the leather cords attached to each. When the desired tension is achieved, musicians increase it further by wrapping the cords running lengthways with others running around the instrument. In this way, performers attain a permanent level of tension that ensures the drumheads will ring out with the appropriate sound when played. Tuning batás does not involve heating the heads over fire, as in the case of the popular bongo drum. That would represent a form of sacrilege that the goddess Oyá would punish us for, striking us down in a flash. Instead, the hoops and the system of cordage are tightened further by means of a small wooden mallet called *igguí*. But this procedure is not enough on the largest heads, the enús of the iyá and itótele. On those two skins, the proper sound is produced by means of a vegetable-based resin paste that is applied to the head. It forms a circular strip in the middle of the skin, but it does not cover the center or the edge, the two places where musicians strike. The resin is called *iddá* in Yoruba; in Cuba it is substituted by a similar substance called *fardela*. The way the resin is applied and the extent to which it covers the circular area of the skin affects the tones produced. Tones are lower when more of the skin is left without a coating of resin and thus vibrates more freely. The okónkolo's (or omelé's) heads do not require resin for tuning because its membranes sound in unison.

My lack of musical training prohibits me from discussing the technical characteristics of the music of the batá drums and the songs that accompany them in detail. I therefore take advantage of Maestro Gilberto Valdés's[10] generosity, as his enthusiasm and musical background have allowed him to study these issues in great detail. The following commentary builds upon his insights. The first curious conclusion Maestro Valdés comes to is that "Afro-Cuban drummers don't have any conception of syncopation." The statement may come as a surprise to those of us who have been accustomed to hearing that syncopation is characteristic of Afro-American music, both Anglo-American jazz as well as the dances of the Hispanic Americas. But Maestro Valdés's assessment of Yoruba liturgical music as perpetuated in Cuba corroborates observations made by Herskovits[11] about Afro-Latin American music in Suriname, and others by von Hornbostel[12] regarding authentic African music in general. I have no time to provide additional explication of this matter here, but the topic should be of great interest to musicologists.

Another observation by Maestro Valdés regarding the music of black Africans is that "one rarely finds songs that accentuate strong beats. This is even less true of rhythms; almost invariably, the strong beat is marked by rests." Rests are part of the technique employed in African rhythm, those moments of the beat or pulse that are not marked by tones, but instead are only noted mentally by the instrumentalist as they complete their execution of the rhythm. Even if the rests do not translate into notes, the musician recognizes them, perhaps instinctively or unconsciously. This may manifest itself in movements of his body, gestures or expressions, or by lightly making contact with the drumhead in an inaudible way. Thus, the rhythmic notes actually sounded on the drum tend to begin as an anacrusis; that is to say, they begin on a weak beat in the rhythm, or part way through a beat or phrase. This creates a greater improvisatory and spontaneous sound to the songs or melodies.

Songs often end suddenly, without warning, as if the result of the exhaustion of the magical force in a given ensemble, or a faltering of willpower as musicians are worn out by contact with superhuman powers. The attractiveness of African drum music derives not only from the bewitching nature of its rhythms, often difficult to grasp because of the complexity of their elaborate structures and their rests; it also derives from their nuanced tonal patterns.

In African drumming, the fundamental elements of rhythm (consisting of sustained pitches and rests, according to Liebold) combine with high, medium, and low tones of differing timbres, and other sonorous variables found in the exuberant phonics of African languages. All of this together creates enormous rhythmic complexity. Additionally, in closed, two-headed and ambipercussive drums such as the batás, each set of paired drumheads passes internal vibrations back and forth from membrane to membrane, contributing to the richness of the sound. It creates that living, carnal resonance characteristic of such music that makes some believe the spirit of a deity resides in and speaks from the leather bowels of each instrument. Other factors affect the drums' resonance that have yet to be explained.

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[10] A Cuban composer and performer primarily of popular music, Gilberto Valdés (1905–71) was one of the first conservatory-trained musicians to experiment with the incorporation of Afro-Cuban musical elements derived from Yoruba religious ritual into secular music. As of the 1930s, he collaborated with Rita Montaner and Katherine Dunham in such efforts, as well as with Fernando Ortiz.

[11] Melville Herskovits (1895–1963), the founder of Afro-American Studies in the United States.

[12] Erich Moritz von Hornbostel (1877–1935), an early champion of global comparative musicology and a forerunner of the emergent field of ethnomusicology.

"Although it seems incredible," Maestro Valdés informs us, "batá drums tune to A 440 like any other instrument. This pitch, the A found in the fourth octave of the piano, is sounded by the smaller drum head of the iyá.[13] Next, the low drum head of the iyá is tuned to F in the piano's second octave. After the iyá is tuned, the itótele or middle drum tunes its two heads to notes a half tone away from those of the iyá, respectively. The low head of the itótele holds a pitch a major seventh higher than the F of the iyá's low head (E) in the piano's third octave, and its high head sounds a G# in the same octave. This creates a major third between the two itótele heads and an interval of a minor ninth from the higher head of the iyá. Finally, the okónkolo is tuned relative to the pitches of the itótele. Its pitches are the same on both heads, B natural in the piano's third octave, a fifth higher than the low head of the itótele." Additional commentary of a technical musical nature is not appropriate here. But note that "the tones of the okónkolo and the itótele together form a perfect E major chord," and thus "a constant bitonality is evident in batá performance."

Another decidedly unique characteristic of African music is the predominance of drums. In compositions of vocal and instrumental art music that are conventionally considered "white," melody occupies an essential place. But the same cannot be said of black music concerts where drums play a central role.

Yoruba religious chants are typically responsorial or antiphonal, as is the case in all liturgical, sacred repertoire including Catholic Gregorian chant. The lead singer (called the *akpuón*) initiates or "raises" the chant in whatever key is appropriate to his or her voice, and the chorus (called *ankorí*)[14] responds in the same key. Singers disregard the tuning of the drums in choosing the key they will sing in. In reality, it is the drums (and especially the iyá) that "speak," directing and leading the singers who do no more than add to the music with their voices. One might say that the drums sing and that the singers (the *olori*) accompany *them*.

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[13] All of the assertions by Gilberto Valdés regarding batá drum tuning in this section are highly questionable. None of the more recent publications on batá drumming by percussionists John Amira, Kenneth Schweitzer, and others suggest the drums are tuned in this fashion.

[14] Ortiz is inconsistent in his spelling of this term, sometimes using an accent, sometimes not. Cabrera's dictionary (1971, 53) includes the accent, so we have adopted that spelling.

If we were to listen to an orchestra of popular music, we might well hear a cornet, a trombone, and a brass bass instrument. Except in very rare instances, we would expect that the cornet would play the melody since its range is the highest, the trombone would provide a countermelody, and the bass (however poor the instrumentalist might be) would mark the beat. In African batá drumming this is not the case. The itótele, roughly the equivalent of the trombone, plays the role of the bass with its low drumhead. The okónkolo's high note, equivalent to the cornet, plays a duet together with the higher head of the itótele. And the iyá performs a capricious and diabolical fantasy of timbres. It prances around with low notes, performing them in delirious rhythms like the caprine leaping of a drunken faun. The performance is enough to drive the best instrumentalists from white orchestras mad, accustomed as they are to restrained meters. With the high notes of its smaller head, meanwhile, the iyá player shouts out crazy feminine interjections in time, like the voices of feverish, drunken women.

Notice how the iyá drum tends to be supported by complementary sounds. In liturgical song and dance events, especially when great solemnity is required, an *ichaoró* or *chaguoró* is added to the ensemble, a term that in Lucumí means "happiness" or "disturbance." The ichaoró consists of a collection of bells, rattles, and similar metallic objects, all attached to a strap that is tied around the large end of the big iyá drum. As the iyá is played, these small metal objects sound automatically, adding to and enriching the polyphonic sonority of the drums with mineral timbres.

Musicologists as insightful as Coeuroy[15] and Schraffner[16] observe the frequent juxtaposition of metallic sonorities and drums found in African music. They wonder whether such a tendency reflects a perpetual desire to change the intensity of pitches or their quality. Or perhaps it reflects even more the unflagging desire of black musicians to multiply the ways they can unleash polyphonic sonorities and pure, contrapuntal rhythms, always a strength of such artists. Whatever the case, it seems to me that the union of sounds made from minerals and wooden plant matter, animal skins and human voices, ascribes to magical criteria involving the integration of all cosmic powers in order to compel the gods to action.

We now proceed to our musical demonstration. First the okónkolo will play a few notes by itself, then the itótele, and finally the iyá. Now the three will perform together. This section of the concert only involves rhythms played on the three batá drums with six hands. Almost invariably, each hand plays a rhythm different from the others and their notes do not sound at the same time. The six hands form a new, collective rhythm derived from the fusion of all their efforts. The itótele invariably starts playing first. The program of rhythms to be played by the batás consists of: (1) Eleggua, in 2/4; (2) Ogún, in 4/4; (3) Ochosi, in 2/4; (4) Ile, in 5/4; (5) Babalú Ayé, in 2/4; (6) Changó, in 6//8; (7) Yemayá, in 6/8; (8) Ochún, in 4/4; (9) Obatalá, in 8/4; and (10) Oyá, in 12/8.[17]

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[15] André Coeuroy (1891–1976), a French music critic, specializing in Wagner as well as jazz.

[16] André Schaeffner (1895–1980), another French musicologist who collaborated with Coeuroy in publications on jazz.

Now we turn to the full Yoruba liturgical ensemble that combines musical performance, song, and dance. We call this event *luluyenkori*, a composite Yoruba term meaning “drumming, dance, and song.” In this part of our presentation, the same drum rhythms played on the batás will be heard again, complemented now by sacred African melodies sung by lead vocalists, a chorus, and liturgical dances dedicated to particular deities. To be completely honest with you and to the benevolent deities, I must tell you that these three drums are not exactly the same as those in a Lucumí cabildo, even had they been consecrated in all the appropriate ceremonies (which they were not). It was necessary to make new drums, since sacred drums cannot be used in secular contexts. But their formal musical differences are insignificant, consisting only of a small reduction in their typical size, less than an inch, which is not enough to alter their sound. I should also say that the drummers in their playing and the dancers in their choreography will hold themselves back a little, restrain themselves, not abandon themselves to the emotional frenzy associated with being mounted by a god, which is not the purpose of the presentation. And for lack of space you will also not be able to see the ambulatory nature of certain dances.

All the chants and choreography you will see and hear are in praise of the gods, represented by the three batá drums. In Yoruba ritual, devotees offer the drums certain reverential salutations beforehand. The chants are strictly liturgical, even sacramental. Each of the numerous divinities in the Yoruba pantheon have multiple songs dedicated to them. What you will hear today is only a very reduced, representative selection of diverse song types, chosen from among hundreds. And each song has its unique vocal melody. Consider after hearing this how misguided the suggestion is (fractious individuals tend to make it the most emphatically) that African music has no melody.

The distance between the stage and spectators, and the long dresses worn by the chorus, will make it difficult for you to appreciate the extremely complex choreographic synergy of some dances. African dance is an absolute symphony of rhythmic movements that incorporates every muscle. All the dances have a mimetic aspect as well, attempting to reproduce movements that symbolize characteristic activities of the divinity to which they are dedicated. For example, in the dance to Babalú Ayé, the dancer bends down like a sick leper who walks on crutches. In the dance to Ochosi the dancer's hands and arms imitate the act of hunting with a bow and arrows. These ritual gestures are quite stylized in the present day, and for that reason their meaning tends not to be understood by the uninitiated unless it is pointed out to them ahead of time. Some of the dances have an erotic character, hidden by similar forms of stylization. In a certain dance to Changó, god of virility, the gestures extoll his phallic exuberance. In another dance to Yemayá, the Lucumí Venus, the dancer's movements recall a lascivious embrace, and so forth.

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[17] See Ortiz 1946, 30–35, figs. 1–10). Again, many of these metric distinctions are highly questionable.

In this presentation of the dances we have chosen not to employ ritual necklaces (*collares*), ritual vestments of the gods, or adornments and other whimsical items that might have provided more theatrical impact to the lecture. In doing so we would have risked taking away from its pure and authentic character. I prefer that the presentation be an objective one, presented without undue artifice. The musicians will play their sacred music just as they are accustomed to doing in Lucumí rites. Dancers and singers will play their liturgical role without accommodation or changing their appearance on stage, yet also without abandoning themselves to sacred fervor, and with a few other restrictions. These are unavoidable, given that it is impossible in the small space and short period of time we have to offer a full presentation of the many choreographic figures in this tradition. If you reflect for a moment, you will realize that you spectators are receiving your first introduction to African music, song, and choreography. In such matters you are still in the equivalent of kindergarten; you cannot expect that in an initial presentation of only two hours we can offer an entire course on the subject.

Now, let us fix our attention on the dances accompanied by the ankorí. (Four women and eight men step onto the stage, the chorus of singers and dancers). The Yoruba adore the mysterious forces of nature, personified in their deities who are called *orishas*. Devotees offer them food and sacrifices and direct their attention with taunting prayers in order to placate their ill tempers or receive their favor. All such behavior takes place as part of individual and collective ritual. Collective religious ceremonies consist of a complex, aggregate liturgy with the objective of the solemn praise and worship of the gods through music and dance. Yorubas believe that the sacred beings or orishas come to earth to take part in the festivities, temporarily possessing the body of some of their devotees. In a state of possession, the god or goddess dances in all its ritual finery and complacent camaraderie. Sometimes it speaks, predicts the future, gives advice, or prophesizes, just as certain spirit mediums do as part of spiritualist trances. The difference is that mediums channel the voice of the dead, while in Santería only the gods or saints possess the faithful.[18]

These solemn ceremonies always begin in secret with certain drum rhythms unaccompanied by dances or singing. Musicians play them in the confines of the inner sanctuary room, as devotees say, the room or shrine where images and ritual symbols of nearly all the gods are kept. There in a secret ceremony, drummers invoke the principal gods, asking that they accept the liturgy to be held in their honor and that they come to earth to interact with believers. The sacred drums on their own speak to the great deities by means of certain rhythms dedicated to each one. They perform a series of invocations in the form of a musical litany, using only drum language. The litany is known as an *oru.* Once this sacred-magical act of consecration is performed, the ceremony becomes public and the dancing and singing begins.

To start, we first invoke the favor of the gods in their Yoruba language: *Arikú*! *Iré achegu mota*![19]

Eleggua

All Santería ceremonies necessarily begin and end with praise to Eleggua. He is the god who "opens pathways" and keeps malevolent spirits from appearing. He does not have "children" (devotees) who dedicate themselves to his worship, but he cannot be overlooked. In Africa as in Cuba, believers place a statue of Eleggua behind the front door of the house so that as they enter or exit they will be cleansed of evil spirits. Eleggua is a trickster who enjoys taunting those who do not show him respect. Many describe him as a little boy given to jokes, sometimes in bad taste, and other capricious pranks. For this reason his dances employ two types of symbolism. One is that of "opening a path." To represent this the dancer usually employs a crooked stick or garabato, moving it from one side to another as if parting the undergrowth or clearing a trail in the jungle. The other style of dancing involves making unexpected movements: dancing on one foot, pretending to play spinning tops or marbles, flying a kite, striking those in attendance with the garabato, leaving and returning suddenly, taking the hat of an attendee and putting it on, or grabbing someone else's cigar and smoking it, among other things. Eleggua's dances allow for a great deal of improvisation on the part of the individual performing them. He or she can take advantage

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18. I choose not to consider here the possible ephemeral character of some deities and others associated with funerary rites. [F.O.]

19. Ortiz does not translate this phrase, nor the many other ritual phrases he quotes below. Cabrera suggests that arikú means "health," and iré means "the favor of the orishas" (see Cabrera 1970, 58, 169). She translates the phrase *achegún otá* (26) as "luck to overcome enemies."

of this to display their virtuosity, to the surprise and delight of onlookers, as if they saw in such actions the god's joy that he delights them with. Through a process of transculturation, santeros in Cuba equate Eleggua with the Lonely Soul or with Saint Anthony, the abbot from Padua who knew how to free himself from demons, evil spirits, and their temptations so well.

Now you will hear the ritual "opening song" and hymn to Eleggua, whose text is "*Ibá orisha, iba cuyéo aché moyuba*."[20] If the believers have sufficient time and wish to continue worshipping Eleggua, they will sing additional songs in his honor of a less liturgical nature. These songs of diversion are not required, even if dedicated to a particular deity. Their lyrics do not include a sense of sacred ritualistic action. All orishas have these optional or secondary songs as part of their liturgy, often referred to as bembé songs. They probably derive from a process of religious syncretism, the incorporation of religious chants from similar religions into the traditional repertoire of the old spiritual leaders from the sacred city of Ifé.[21] Such repertoire can be interpreted on secular drums of any kind, not necessarily by sacred batás. In rural towns and temples that do not have access to batá drums, religious performances (toques de santo) are often called *toques de bembé* and are played on other drums, boxes, or gourd instruments called *ágbe*.

Bembé rhythms in general are simpler and more upbeat than those played on the batás. For that reason, when santeros discuss them they often say "every saint has its little rumba rhythms" ("*cada santo tiene su rumbita*"). But this is not strictly true, because bembé rhythms are not the same as rumba rhythms. Other people describe these simpler, happier, less liturgical songs with the local term *guajeo*.[22] That is, they equate them with the sound of the people's laughter, uproarious mirth, commotion, and more with pleasure than with mystical fervor. Let us now listen to a guajeo for Eleggua that says "Eleggua, Eleggua, ó (repeat), bembé ataladdé (o yacaé lopié) Eleggua."[23]

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[20] I cannot translate the lyrics of these songs idiomatically with any precision. They are sung in many different ways by vocalists, not only in terms of the individual words that vary from one version to the next but also in terms of their pronunciation. Similar problems pertain to their translation. Translations by one individual contradict those of another in many cases, and sometimes the true meaning of the text has been completely lost. This is understandable given the purely oral transmission of liturgical chants and the vast distances in space and time from their place of origin that they are now performed in. An entire ocean separates the songs from their homeland, and three or more generations have passed since they first arrived in Cuba. Communication with Africa was severed, and devotees had not a single written document to maintain the orthodoxy of their sacred texts. As if this weren't enough, consider too the local dialectical variation among the same language in Africa itself and the widespread linguistic syncretism among such groups that has taken place in Cuba. And remember that these African songs and dances do not follow a strictly ritualistic format. They provide ample opportunity for the lead singer to improvise and to satisfy his personal desire for originality, within the accepted style of each piece and the preferences of local tastes within his social group. [F.O.] See Ortiz (1946, 39, fig. 11), for a transcription (although problematic and imprecise) of the first part of this chant, apparently notated by Gilberto Valdés. Mason (1992, 60) translates the chant roughly as "Homage to the orishas, to the owners of the world. Authority, I pay homage."

[21] An ancient Yoruba city in the southwest part of present-day Nigeria.

[22] In present-day usage, the term *guajeo* refers to repeated, open-ended vamps that serve as the basis for improvisation in secular dance music.

Oggún

This god or "saint," as believers say, is Eleggua's companion. He is restless and very astute. One might even say he is an intellectual. He was an ironworker and inventor of the forge, and for that reason is the orisha of minerals and mountains. His invention gave him great power to make weapons, and he is a warrior saint whose symbols are keys, machetes, shovels, pick axes, chains, and other iron objects. Oggún carries on his shoulder a bag made of tiger skin. He is the God of iron and for that reason in Cuba his Catholic equivalent is St. Peter, since that saint carries the keys of heaven in his hands, which appear to be made of iron, according to those who know about key making in heaven. Dances to Oggún imitate one of two things: either they are bellicose, with the dancer brandishing a machete in a menacing fashion, or they mimic agricultural work, weeding, or the cutting away of underbrush in a forest with a machete. In the latter case, Oggún dances by leaning over and standing on one foot, stepping forward on it while cutting with the machete and dragging the other foot behind him. Those clearing ground do this to keep their back foot from being struck involuntarily by the machete as it cuts low growth. Here is a song of war to Oggún called "Eye kua, eye kua."[24] Another chant to Oggún begins "Oggún de arere."[25] And now a bembé chant to Oggún with the phrase "akua nilé mai mai."[26]

Ochosi

Ochosi is the Yoruba god of the hunt. For that reason, santeros in Havana associate him with the Catholic saint Norbert, patron of hunters whose imagery usually depicts him in front of a deer with a luminescent cross between its large, innocent antlers. Although Ochosi is included among the warrior saints, he is less ferocious than the others. Ochosi, the hunter of birds and wild beasts, also carries a leather bag, sometimes adorned with seashells and beads, and his accessories are a bow and arrows. Dancers symbolically brandish them when they evoke this saint. If there are no bows or arrows in the temple, the dancers cross the index finger on their right hand, representing the arrow, over the index finger of their left hand, representing the bow, and in that way imitate the ecstasy of hunting in such a fashion. Let's listen to a prayer (*rezo*)[27] or chant of invocation to Ochosi. This song derives from a legend, as in the case of many other songs to the orishas. They represent a type of parable and contain abundantly rich folkloric elements that still remain to be collected and analyzed. According to the legend, Olofi, the Supreme God, forbade Ochosi the hunter from continuing to hunt because his indulgences were depopulating the forest of animals and people living there could no longer find food. Still, Ochosi let himself be drawn by his love for the chase and disobeyed Olofi. It did not take long for him to be punished. One day just as he had set out to hunt he saw a beautiful deer and prepared an arrow, forgetting that he had been forbidden from hunting. He fired and the arrow buried itself in the animal's throat. Yet it didn't die, and from in between its antlers a great light began to glow (some santeros call it the Holy Sacrament). It illuminated Ochosi, and he became terrified at this fearful apparition of Olofi. He threw away his bow and vowed never to hunt again. This legend about Ochosi, his betrayal of trust, his prohibition, his disobedience, and his repentance, is all contained in the song that begins "*Moró moró comoddé more*."[28] But Ochosi continues to hunt, now in the mystical realm. Let's listen to another song and dance to Ochosi, the "Song of the Hunt," which begins with the words "*Ochosi oyileddá alamala oggué*."[29] And now an up-tempo bembé piece for Ochosi, "*Ochosi emoni guara guara oké oké*."[30]

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[23] See Ortiz 1946, 40, fig. 12. As before, he does not provide a translation of the text. Cabrera (1970, 62, 198, 222) offers a few possible clues, suggesting that *ó* can mean "you," *atá* means spice or pepper, and *ladé* refers to a child of Ochún.

[24] Cabrera (1970, 132, 195) suggests this may mean great tragedy or certain tragedy. See Ortiz 1946, 40, fig. 13.

[25] Arére means quiet or tranquil (Cabrera 1970, 58). See Ortiz 1946, 41, fig. 14.

[26] Cabrera (1970, 45) defines *akuá* as "arms" and *mai mai* as either "cinnamon" or "tasty, sweet" (206). Cuban performance artist Susana Arenas Pedroso translates the full phrase as "unified, constant force" (personal communication, July 27, 2016). For a melodic transcription, see Ortiz 1946, 41, fig. 15.

Ebeyí

Ebeyí[31] means "twins" and refers to twin or identical twin saints whom santeros syncretize Saint Cosmas and Saint Damian. They are the saints of children. They do not possess believers but play around with them, playing inoffensive tricks on them in everyday life. For that reason they must be placated with songs and dances. Dancers imitate the whimsical steps of children, performing little jumps forward and backward, and other playful, infantile moves. The song to Ebeyí begins with the akpuón singing "*Omó beyí obeyí*."[32]

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[27] Rezos in the Santería tradition usually involve relatively slow melodies sung out of time over a percussive accompaniment.

[28] Mason (1992, 105) translates this chant as "Know the tradition, know the tradition. Certainly the hunter's child is to know the tradition." See also Ortiz 1946, 42, fig. 16.

[29] With slightly different orthography, Mason (1992, 109) translates this as "Ochosi, revolver that turns away famine, the dazzling one arrives." See Ortiz 1946, 43, fig. 17.

[30] Mason (1992, 108) translates this phrase as "Ochosi, you know me, quickly cherish me, cherish me." See Ortiz 1946, 43, fig. 18.

[31] The term is more frequently written *Ibeyis* today.

Changó

Changó is the god of virility, strength, fire, and war, the Yoruba version of Mars. He is the god of thunder and lightning and the orisha of untamed sexuality. He is a terror, yet is androgynous. He presents himself as a male warrior, in which case he is truly Changó; or as a powerful woman, in which case santeros refer to him as Saint Barbara. He is undoubtedly associated with her because among Catholics she is the saint of gunmen and protects against lighting strikes. There is no orisha more impulsive and energetic than Changó. When he possesses a believer, no one jumps higher, nor performs more violent contortions, nor movements more difficult to believe. Changó's dances are either warlike or erotic. In his war dance, he brandishes a two-headed axe, typical of Zeus or Jupiter in the ancient Mediterranean, and evokes the dances of the Greeks, Cretans, and other Aegean peoples. In his erotic dances, the dancer's movements try to accentuate his phallic power and his sexual provocativeness. This is especially true in the so-called "Prayer to Changó," his song of invocation in which gestures of love and warfare are both represented in order to incite him to come to earth and enjoy its pleasures.

You will hear the drumming of the "Prayer to Changó" and see the accompanying dance, but you must forgive us for not singing the song, just as we did not perform the dance to accompany the "Prayer to Ochosi." The drumming, song, and dance constitute such an evocative, suggestive combination that many initiates find it difficult to resist the stimulus. They easily fall into a trance and are "mounted by their saint." The first time that I gave a public presentation about these rites I experienced that surprising result, and I do not wish to repeat it. For the same reason, we chose not to include the *acheré* in our performance, a small maraca used in contexts of worship and performed precisely in order to bring down the saints. So, now you will witness the drumming and dancing of Changó's invocation, the latter performed by a couple. The lyrics of the accompanying song, not to be performed, begin with the words "*Meta i aruyá Changó*."[33] And here is another drum rhythm played to Changó in which the deity "shows off his waist," as santeros say. A conceited suitor, Changó believes that no one dances as beautifully as he does. This erotic and hip-shaking dance begins with the lead vocalist singing "*Ure ure kare Iroko*."[34] Another chant to Changó is called "E é lube ó mayó."[35] And now we perform a song to Changó in his female incarnation, as Saint Barbara. The dancers imitate women's work, specifically that of grinding grain in a pestle and stirring with the movement of their hips. Santeros say that they are "making flour." The lyrics of the song say "*Arimabú ka ka*."[36]

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[32] *Omó* means child and *beyí* identical twins (Cabrera 1970, 81, 263). See Ortiz 1946, 44, fig. 19.

[33] See the transcription in Ortiz 1946, 45, fig. 20.

[34] "It pleases the chief to cut off the blessings of Iroko" (Mason 1992, 193). Iroko is a minor orisha associated with desire. See Ortiz 1946, 45, fig. 21.

Babalú Ayé

This saint, like several others, had a very troubled youth. He did all sorts of things and contracted leprosy. But later as an old man on crutches he became an advocate for virtue and now is a highly venerated saint. In Cuba, santeros have Catholicized him, identifying him with Saint Lazarus, or more precisely the traditional figure of the old leper, covered in sores, who walks with difficulty, supported by crutches, and using his right hand to strike two small tablets together. He does this to advise unsuspecting passersby that he is coming closer, so that they run away in order not to catch a terrible disease. The leper is a folkloric medieval figure whose Christian form originates in Seville. It was very popular there prior to the discovery of the Americas with its crutches, its noise maker, and the dog that licks at its wounds. The figure's African manifestation seems to come from the Dahomeyans or Ararás, a neighbor nation of the Yoruba and their enemies. This discussion gives me the opportunity to insert an Arará segment into our Lucumí program.

In the few Arará temples or cabildos that remain in this part of Cuba, batá drums are not played. Their rhythmic polyphony, less intricate than that of the Yorubas, derives from performance on the five different drums that you see here. Although they are larger than batás, they are simpler, with a single head, played vertically, and with a different style of affixing the skins. The songs are in the Arará language and their rhythms are less complex. Arará dances are also of a mimetic nature. Dancers interpreting Babalú Ayé evoke the movements of a leper. Their bodies are bent and appear sickly and they usually employ a crutch or cane. Sometimes the dancers pretend to shoo away flies and other insects resting on the pustular, oozing wounds associated with leprous diseases. Black Africans believed that flies, mosquitoes, and other insects transmitted diseases, taking them from the sick or from cadavers and passing them along to others by order of angry gods, or by means of malevolent magic. Here is an Arará performance to Babalú Ayé entitled "*Machetó, machetó, towé.*" Another song to Babalú Ayé begins "*Abbere kutu akwa cerekó.*"[37]

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[35] "Chief of brilliant red, you are truly overwhelming" (Mason 1992, 198). See Ortiz 1946, 46, fig. 22.

[36] David Font (personal communication, December 16, 2016) notes that this Lucumí chant is usually accompanied by Iyesá music and thus also represents a form of cultural fusion. *Aina* refers to fire or flame. The phrase can be understood as a reference to cooking over flame but also to the sound of a leopard's roar through a play on words.

Inle

Inle is a mythical personification of the earth, not in the planetary sense but rather as the benevolent provider of human sustenance. Inle is a saint and at the same time an agriculturalist and fisherman. He is the saint of manual work, the god of the economy, of mining or extraction and agriculture, activities associated with the Yoruba civilization. Inle is a saint who ensures human happiness by providing an economic base. Perhaps in the Yoruba Olympus they accuse venerable Inle of being a Marxist. Also suggestive of this is the color of his sacred emblems: subdued red. Inle is the god who cures all the evil in the world with his conjurings and spells. Inle, the fisherman and shaman saint, has become Saint Raphael in Cuba because in Catholic imagery this archangel appears with a fish in his hand and miraculously cures ailments of various kinds. In his ritual dance, dancers pay homage to Inle not with angry raised arms and clenched fists but with wavelike movements, those of fisherman rowing in their canoes. Here is a chant to Inle that begins "*E o Inle o.*"[38]

Obatalá

In Africa, Obatalá or Babá is considered the creator of the world. Like Changó he is an androgynous being who can present himself as a man or woman depending on the incarnations (*caminos*) in which he appears. In Cuba, his feminine, maternal personality is best known. His color is white, and for that reason devotees associate old Obatalá with the Virgin of Mercies who wears the white habit belonging to the ancient Mercedarian order of friars. Dances to Obatalá imitate the gentle movements of the ancient god, bent over, trembling, sometimes supporting himself on a small cane. Usually Obatalá dancers hold a sacred object: a white ox tail that they wave on high in order to purify the space and scare away evil spirits. Here is a prayer to Obatalá that says "*Obanlá esé, obanlá esé, aremí obasa rakoé é—obanlá esé, obanlá esé.*"[39] Next is a song of cleansing. The lead singer begins with the line "*Eyaggüare eyaggüare baba lechuré osaggüé yi ekó*."[40] And here is another song to Obatalá that begins "*Loló ké babá*."[41]

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[37] See Ortiz 1946, 47, figs. 23 and 24. David Font and Elizabeth Sayre note that these chants derive from Arará heritage and are in the Fon language, demonstrating the extent to which Yoruba-influenced Lucumí practice has been influenced by other groups. The first phrase offers homage to the deity Masé, and the second is a praise song to Babalú Ayé.

[38] See Ortiz 1946, 48, fig. 25.

[39] See Ortiz 1946, 49, fig. 26. *Obanlá* appears to mean both "great king" (Mason 1992, 248) and the feminine incarnation of Obatalá (Cabrera 1970, 224). *Aremi* appears to mean "may justice be done" (Cabrera 1970, 58).

Oyá

She is an explosive spark, goddess of the cemetery. She is a vengeful queen in search of justice. The santeros say she is the goddess of flames and fire. Some associate her with Our Lady of the Candlemas, others with Saint Teresa of Jesus. Her colors are those of the rainbow. Oyá's dancers wave a ritual instrument of cleansing, similar to that of Obatalá, but a colored one, any color besides white. Her dancing is agitated, frenetic, like a drunken woman who in her delirium wishes to set the woods where her temple is located on fire, with purifying flames that she carries in her right hand. And while the liturgical action and choreography are extremely fast and vertiginous, her song sounds low and solemn, like the reflexive invocation of justice. Now we will perform a "Prayer to Oyá." You will hear the sacred batá drums and see the accompanying dance. The chant begins "*Ayiloddá Oyá o kwo*."[42] But it will not be sung here. We have decided to silence it, because we do not wish the combined suggestive force of the song of invocation, the rhythm of the drums, and the stimulus of the dance to make Oyá come to earth and possess any of our dancers. We must avoid the possibility since this space is not prepared for such an incident involving the presence of mystical spirits. Nor are we prepared to witness it, nor understand it. And the dancers are not inclined to let themselves be dragged into a mystical swoon on a secular occasion like this one.

We will play one additional piece to Oyá for you, inspired by one of the legends about this goddess. The Greeks and Romans imagined the figure of Justice with her eyes blindfolded as a symbol of her impartiality. But the same bandage blinded Justice and led to mistakes, since she was deprived of light. The goddess Oyá is also known to make mistakes on occasion. Olofi, the Great God, asked her to prepare a ritual meal with the whitest eggshells she could find. But Oyá forgot to do so, and Olofi felt offended. The song you will now hear discusses how Oyá went crazy and forgot to offer ritual food to the Supreme God. The dancers reminisce about the forgetful goddess in their trance of repentance. They reference the story of her disgrace, the food made of *orí*[43] and *amalá*[44] that Olofi asked her for, and her terrible memory lapse. For this reason, Oyá dancers put their hands on their temples in that universal imitative gesture that means "it slipped my mind," "I lost my head." When members of Lucumí temples hear this song to Oyá, they all put their hands on their heads so that the goddess, given to forgetfulness, will preserve her memories. If there is a student or a professor listening to me who has problems with his or her memory or thinks they may "lose their head" (*perder la cabeza*), perhaps this song provides an opportunity for you. You can learn it and make the appropriate liturgical gesture, invoking Oyá. The "Song of Forgetfulness" begins with the lead singer who says "*Yansá guamio*,"[45] and the chorus responds "*Ayiloddá obinisa laorí*."[46] And now we will play another song and dance to the same goddess: a bembé or *meta* to Oyá, which begins with the phrase "*Bembé araguá ayiloddá*."[47] The chorus repeats the same phrase a few times, in the same upbeat rhythm.

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[40] See Ortiz 1946, 49, fig. 27. David Font (personal communication, December 16, 2016) describes this chant as a fusion of Lucumí and Arará traditions. "Osa" means orisha, and "osaggüé" references an Arará deity analogous to Obatalá.

[41] See Ortiz 1946, 49, fig. 28. This chant appears to translate as "He has the wealth of mountains" (Mason 1992, 257).

[42] See Ortiz 1946, 50, fig. 29. "The spinning one who twists to create, Mother, long life to you" (Mason 1992, 324).

Ochún

Ochún is a *mulata*, "the saintly mulata," as a Cuban santero might say. Locally she is known as the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, the Virgin of Charity from Cobre Valley. In Africa she is no virgin, but rather more like Aphrodite: happy, attractive, alluring, eccentric, and a bit mocking. But at the same time she is a good and saintly mother. She is goddess of conjugal love and fertility, of lust, and of the home. Ochún is another "divine woman," the "most divine of all goddesses" as a social chronicler of the spiritual world might say. She is the Lucumí Venus, goddess of love. A child of mountains, she was born in them, next to the springs that issue forth from under large rocks. She is the goddess of rivers, sweet water, and everything sweet. She is also a goddess associated with gold, little grains of which are found among pebbles and sandy river beds. Ochún dresses in yellow and her face is the color of the earth, as was the case of ancient goddesses in Mediterranean lands.

Ochún's music is the most sexual, and her lyrics the most salacious. Dances to Ochún evoke her by waving their arms up high so that her gold bracelets jingle. And from up on high, as if from the mountaintops, her hands descend and run along the length of her body, like a water source. Her jumps, turns, and smooth undulations demonstrate her joyous youthfulness and bring to mind the rapid rushing of a river as well as its whirlpools, and the languid waves in its side pools. Some dances to Ochún involve the gestures of rowing in a canoe. At other times they recall her virtuous femininity by imitating the movements of African women grinding up *funche*[48] mash for their family in a pestle. And finally, the choreography may also have dancers extend their hands out in front of themselves, begging for *oñí, oñí* (honey) with allusive pelvic contortions and libidinous fury. Honey is a symbol of sweetness, enjoyment, and the amorous essence of life.

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[43] Cabrera (1970, 272) defines *orí* as ground eggshells, among other things.

[44] A ritual food made of corn flour.

[45] "The mother of nine joins with me" (Mason 1992, 329).

[46] "The foremost woman runs to perch on the head" (Mason 1992, 329). See Ortiz 1946, 51, fig. 30.

[47] "Stoutness of the senior ancestor; the revolving one who twists to create stoutness" (Mason 1992, 332). As Ortiz mentioned earlier, these texts are notoriously difficult to translate and are often nonsensical even when translated unless one has an intimate knowledge of Lucumí lore.

Ochún's dances are performed one after another at times, like the episodes of a choreographic poem based on legends about the mystical goddess. First, let's observe the dance known as "Ochún's Promenade," which might also be called the "Dance of the Natural Spring." Ochún dances at the edges of the river, or perhaps on its dry riverbed, and makes water flow down to fill it from the mountains. The dancer calls to the goddess first on one side of the river, then on the other, and by all of her names or incarnations that are like her smaller streams or water sources. The dancer's movements represent waves of flowing water and the spirals of whirlpools. The dance accompanying the lovely toque we will play for you begins with the line "*Daré koyú yeye mi ofelitikó*."[49] And now we will perform another dance to this mulatto goddess of love. It is known as "The Bathing of Ochún." The goddess has arrived at the river, and, as she contemplates the limpid and soothing waters, she appears to be bathing herself in the current as part of a cleansing rite. She plays with the water, washes in it, combs her hair that divides into waves just as the river parts into streams. She looks at herself in the crystalline mirror of a pool, quiet like the surface of a lagoon. She contemplates herself with the fine coquettishness of a divine woman, a woman goddess. Ochún knows herself to be beautiful and she dresses for the celebrations of life. The akpuón initiates the song by saying "*Iyalo ddé tenibú*,"[50] and the chorus responds "*Ofé ikó erimá*."[51]

The poem to Ochún continues. The goddess has now dressed and heads off to the evening soiree that nature invites her to. Ochún arrives well decorated, showing off bracelets of gold on her wrists, jewelry that jingles softly like the rain that falls from the sky, the supreme source of sweet water. It is love itself calling to creation. The exotic guajeo to Ochún, the "Bembé to the Virgin of Charity," has a rather upbeat rhythm. The lead singer says "*Yeyé, yeyé o are núo*,"[52] and the chorus repeats the same boisterous verse. One final song to Ochún says "*Enio bombo solo yu*."[53]

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[48] A food consisting of cornmeal mixed with coconut milk or cream, milk, salt, and butter.

[49] See Ortiz 1946, 53, fig. 32.

[50] Mason (1992, 339) translates the first two words as "Mother of first rank."

[51] See Ortiz 1946, 54, fig. 33. "Ofé" is a term of love or admiration in Cuban Yoruba. David Font translates the chant roughly as "I love you, you are my head/leader forever."

[52] "Mother, mother you are provocative" (Mason 1992, 341). See Ortiz 1946, 55, fig. 34.

[53] The first two words may mean "The venerable one" (Mason 1992, 360). See Ortiz 1946, 55, fig. 35.

Yemayá

She is the queen of the ocean and salt water. The color of her dress is marine blue, but her face is black like the most profound depths of the ocean. In Cuba they syncretize her with the Virgin of Regla. Yemayá is a female deity, not the goddess of love but of motherhood. She is the mother of the world, a mythological feminine entity, just like Cybele.[54] Since she is a woman, she is amenable to good company and ostentation. She is a "social saint," a virtuous mother, chaste, and knowledgeable, but at the same time happy and graceful. Wisdom and grace are not deemed incompatible in African Olympus. Dances to Yemayá begin with slow undulations, like waters that move languidly in the breeze. Soon, however, the waves begin to curl and increase in energy, as if gathering ferocity in a strong gale. The dancers' repeated swaying symbolizes angry waves that move faster and faster, imitating ocean whirlwinds propelled by a hurricane.

Africans knew what they were doing when they invented these thousand-year-old dances to Yemayá that evoke the ocean and its tempests. They indicated that the dance movements be circular and that they always turn to the left, or counter-clockwise. The great musicologist Sachs[55] could not ascertain the reason behind this peculiar choreographic directive common to certain dances among so-called "primitive" peoples. In the Northern Hemisphere where the Yoruba people and Cubans live, whirlwinds, cyclones, and all other related weather formations move in the same direction as well.

I take advantage of the especially vigorous rhythm associated with this dance to suggest we conduct a little experiment that will demonstrate the centrality of the iyá drum to this group of percussion, song, and dance. Plug your ears with the fingers of both hands. You will stop hearing the voices, the footsteps of the dancers, and the sound of the two smaller drums. But the iyá will continue to mysteriously penetrate your senses with its high and low tones. They are impossible to silence, like the language of a god. Perhaps if your eardrums were punctured you would still continue to perceive this language of mystery; its vibrations extend into the very depths of your being as if they communicated the beating of a vital, divine rhythm.

You will now witness one of the most popular dances of Santería, known as "Yemayá's Ring." We might also call it the "Dance of the Waves and Whirlwinds." The soloist begins the singing with the phrase "*Aggolona-ó yalé yalé*."[56] The chorus responds with its line, followed by many, many others in infinite variation. Another dance to the same goddess is known as

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[54] A mother goddess figure from Asia Minor.

[55] Curt Sachs (1881–1959), author of works such as *A World History of Dance* and *2,000 Years of Music*.

[56] "Make way on the road, it is the powerful mother" (Mason 1992, 302). See Ortiz 1946, 57, fig. 36.

"Yemayá's Step Dance" (*El zapateo*[57] *de Yemayá*). It is not really a zapateo, although it is noteworthy that dancers lift their long skirts while they execute its fast footwork, just like in Cuban campesino dances. We might also call it "The Shoreline Dance." This is a dance that Yemayá performs in front of Ochún; the goddess of the ocean dances together with the goddess of rivers. Both stand on the water's edge. The dancers' feet move subtly and discretely, like the waves that play in beach inlets where rivers flow into the sea. The chant begins "*Sokuta niguó*."[58] And, finally, here is one more performance for Yemayá. The goddess heads away, rowing in her canoe toward unfathomable horizons from whence she came. A famous guajeo or bembé for Yemayá begins "*Asabai olokún, mama yoccoddá*."[59]

We could present the dances of many other gods or orishas here, such as Agallú,[60] and more. But we have little time or energy left. That applies to you and me, not the drummers, nor the dancers, nor the ankorí. They could continue their performances all night long and all the next day until the sun began to set. Yet we have arrived at the end of our presentation. The god Eleggua who opened the ceremony must be the one to close it, protecting us from mishaps as we keep his company. Now we perform the liturgical song that concludes batá ceremonies. It begins "*Barabó agó moyubara*."[61]

Up until now you have heard purely liturgical songs, all of them sacred. Now you will hear songs of pure exaltation. That is to say, songs of joy, those used to create more excitement and emotional involvement as part of worship. African deities in general are very happy. They do not suffer from philosophical agony or the interventionist ethics of white gods. They like to come to earth and enjoy themselves with their believers as good friends. Local Lucumís say "every saint has their little rumba." Those interested in the origins of the Afro-Cuban rumba might consider whether this dance understood as secular today may represent a transculturated version of the songs and dances of joy found in Lucumí sanctuaries. The repertoire is played on batá drums and yet incorporates the traditional rhythms of popular rumba. The musicians will play a rumba to Ochún and to Oyá for you.

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[57] A Spanish-derived secular dance form involving fast footwork and the use of shoes as percussion instruments.

[58] See Ortiz 1946, 57, fig. 37. David Font (personal communication, December 16, 2016) notes that this chant is invariably accompanied by a batá rhythm of the same name. Some interpret the chant to be about Yemayá crying, but Font believes it is better understood as a generic salute or praise song in a familiar/intimate voice.

[59] Mason (1992, 302) translates a similar chant as "The one chosen to be born, owner of the river." See also Ortiz, 1946, 58, fig. 38.

[60] Many alternate spellings are commonly used for this deity, such as Agayú or Aggayú (and in fact Ortiz uses multiple spellings himself). He is the orisha of volcanoes.

[61] This text is unusual in that it does not correspond exactly to the text reproduced as part of fig. 39 (see Ortiz 1946, 58). One possible translation of the full text in fig. 39 would be "Homage to the orishas, make way, I pay homage. Child who teaches the doctrine, make way. Eleggua is the one who owns the road" (Mason 1992, 61).

Now we demonstrate a few examples of the second phase of Lucumí music: creolized or local Lucumí repertoire. These dances are generally known in Cuba as bembés. They are based on the same rhythms used in ceremonies, but they include other elements that are not purely Lucumí and thus are tinged with heretical elements. Lucumís say that bembé is *ocha arauko,* or a rustic sort of ceremony, a crude version. It is still religious, but the music is not played on batá drums, the classic liturgical instrument. Dances accompanying such music are not the same either, they are no longer mimetic. In bembé dance, the strict rules of the past have been abandoned. Bembé is a form of expression of Cuban-born blacks in which those from the Lucumí nation share space with individuals of other ethnicities, producing a syncretic form of choreography.

Bembé instruments consist of three drums, but they are different in shape from the batás, simpler and with a single head. They are referred to as the *mula* (mule) and the *mayor* (largest). Sometimes, as is the case this evening, the mayor is replaced by a *marímbula*,[62] which plays the low notes in the ensemble. The marímbula is a melodic instrument, like a primitive piano with vibrating strips of iron. It appears to be of Bantu or Kongo origin. Additionally, a maraca or acheré is used in bembés, or an ágbe (a type of inverted maraca), along with a hoe blade or *oggán*, apparently of Dahomeyan origin. You will now hear three bembé pieces: one to Eleggua, one to Agayú, and one to Changó.

And to conclude, witness now for the first time an extremely modern form of musical transculturation or mulatto Lucumí music that is just being developed. The music is played on the three batá drums as part of religious worship, employing sacred rhythms, but the typical accompanying dances and liturgical songs are not performed. This is a decidedly secular phenomenon. A Bantu marímbula, a *tres* (a string instrument associated with whites), and a pair of *claves* (a mestizo instrument invented in Havana) all accompany the three batá drums. In addition, the language of the accompanying songs is Spanish, and the song themes may be patriotic, anecdotal, or amorous. The songs are similar in that sense to any other white songs that are part of our national folklore. With the same sacred rhythm that the Lucumís use to worship the graceful goddess Ochún, you will hear a secular song in Spanish, in a "mulatto Lucumí" style. It is called "I'm Tired" (*Yo tá cansá*) and evokes the lamentations of a slave.

Dear listeners, may Babalú Ayé be with you! Arikú! The presentation has ended.

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[62] A large box with tuned metal tines on it that are plucked to produce pitches. It derives from the African *mbira*.

9

The “Tragedy” of the Ñáñigos

Translated by **Susan Thomas**

(Dedicated to Alfonso Reyes)

One of the most interesting anthropological phenomena in all of the Americas is, without doubt, that of the ñáñigos. Also called Abakuás, they constitute a male-only secret society founded in Cuba around 1830 by black slaves with origins in the Calabar[1] region and the south of Nigeria. *Ñáñiguismo*[2] represents the transplantation in America of an esoteric African society with the same rituals, beliefs, languages, songs, instruments, music, and intent to provide social defense that it maintained across the Atlantic. A century later, this regrowth of African culture remains vigorous, with thousands of initiates in the cities of Havana, Regla, and Guanabacoa and in the maritime ports of Matanzas and Cárdenas. There are no large groups of ñáñigos in any other country in the Americas, or even elsewhere in Cuba.

During the nineteenth century, ñáñiguismo was associated with a dark shroud of criminality that was more legendary than real. It was even believed that initiation of a neophyte required him to kill a Christian as a proof of his valor. During colonial times the authorities sometimes persecuted ñáñigu-

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Translated from Fernando Ortiz, “La ‘tragedia’ de los *ñáñigos.*” *Cuadernos americanos* 9, no. 4 (July–August 1950): 79–101.

[1] In the original text, Ortiz refers to *los calabares*, or “the Calabars.” Although Calabar now refers to a city in the river delta of southern Nigeria, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the term (or Carabalí) was used in Cuba to refer to the greater Efik-speaking region that encompassed what is now southern Nigeria and parts of Cameroon.

[2] *Ñáñiguismo* refers to the practice of being a ñáñigo, or following the Abakuá tradition.

ismo, and they continued to do so during the Republic as well. Yet ñáñigos have persevered in Cuba and continue to celebrate "the sacred mysteries"[3] of Africa with the same fervor they had centuries ago. They may have even practiced them millennia ago if the "mysteries" are related to ancient concepts and mystical liturgies that took place in Egypt, Crete, Thrace, Eleusis, Athens, and other regions of the classic Aegean, as Frobenius, Talbot and others believe. Today, ñáñigo societies in Cuba consist not only of blacks, as they were in their early decades; they also "swear in" mulattoes and whites, Cubans and foreigners, to such an extent that dark-skinned people are a minority and it is said that whites are the most numerous participants. Not a few local politicians and government officials have been initiated into *juegos* (groups) or *potencias* (powers), as the ñáñigos call their lodges. However, the ancestral African liturgies remain essentially unchanged. The only exceptions to this are superficial, colorful details of pure religious mimicry that are of little importance, as well as certain changes in the rites over the past half century owing to the unique social circumstances in Cuba.

Many rumors and falsehoods have been published about ñáñigos, even by writers of a certain reputation. In Cuba, people frequently confuse them with the many religious cults and forms of witchcraft of African ancestry that survive in Cuba. The same cults exist in Brazil, the United States, Haiti, and other regions of the Americas with significant demographic deposits derived from slavery and the slave trade. It seems high time to raise the curtains of dense ignorance and foolish prejudice that impede objective understanding about the ethnic and social realities of our people. I have been working for many years on this very curious and interesting manifestation of African transculturation, the only one of its type in the Americas. My aim is not to "discover secrets" about rites and terminology that have little importance in themselves. Rather, I endeavor to scientifically explain the origin, character, folklore, ceremonies, and transformations of this secret society in Cuba, as well as the reasons for its survival, diffusion, and transformation. In Africa, the society was created to resolve complex political and social realities, much like whites on other continents have created numerous hermetic groups that still exist such as the Masons, the Knights of Columbus, the Elks, the Ku Klux Klan, and many other secretive organizations. In Cuba itself we have other secret groups dating from both before and after the birth of ñañiguismo such as the secular Suns of Bolivar and the modern A.B.C.[4]

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3. Ortiz uses the concept of religious "mysteries" throughout this text in order to echo trends in contemporary writing on ancient religions, particularly in regard to work on Ancient Greece. We retain his usage to maintain the flavor of the original.

4. The Suns of Bolívar (Soles de Bolívar) was a clandestine masonic order in nineteenth-century Cuba created to foment rebellion against Spain and achieve Cuban independence. The A.B.C. was an organization founded in 1930 among intellectuals and middle-class professionals that opposed the authoritarian regime of President Gerardo Machado.

I have selected certain unpublished observations for *Cuadernos Americanos* from my studies of Afro-Cuban ñáñiguismo that describe its most impressive liturgies. I have redacted them for a forthcoming book, *Black Dances and Theater in Cuban Folklore*.[5]

The ñáñigo or Abakuá rite referred to as a "sacrifice" is perhaps the most theatrical of those that survive in Cuba. It is the great festival, or *fititi*[6] *ñongo*, of ñáñigo enclaves. There is no doubt that in Africa the rite involved human sacrifice in the past. The Abakuá of Cuba preserve the memory that a Kongo slave was used for this purpose, that is, a foreign victim.[7] Later, a sacrifice was made of a buck or male goat instead, as also occurred in Greece; this practice was brought to Cuba and continues to this day. The cited ritual of the "sacrifice of a goat," known among ñáñigos as *embori mapá*, unfolds in a rather episodic way that constitutes a true tragedy. It was used in certain solemn occasions as, for example, the exaltation or "swearing in" of an initiate for certain prestigious roles or hierarchical positions within the brotherhood. I provide a schematic description of the theatrical liturgy here. The setting is the *isaroko*, a small square patio or open space where the public rites are held. On one side is the temple or *fambá*. (Fambá is the "temple of the mysteries," like the *mystikos sekos* of the Eleusinian rites.[8] It is probably derived from the Efik words *fañ* meaning "place" and *wa* meaning "ritual sacrifice." The fambá is also known as *batamú* and *butamé*.) Located near the isaroko is a ceiba tree or, lacking one, a shrub that symbolizes that sacred tree.

In later episodes or scenes of this liturgy, various characters intervene: priests, sorcerers, acolytes, musicians, and choruses, in addition to the figures generally referred to as *diablitos* (little devils). The diablitos (also *írime* or *íreme*) have an appearance that is . . . diabolical (see Figures 9.1a and 9.1b).[9] They appear all covered in burlap or with multicolored fiber cloth painted with playful and primarily geometric designs. On their heads they wear a pointed cap with drawings of one or more simulated eyes and at the top is one or more plumed rods (*muñones*). Behind their head is a circular collar with designs emblematic of high rank; at their waist, a belt with puffs of cloth or fabric

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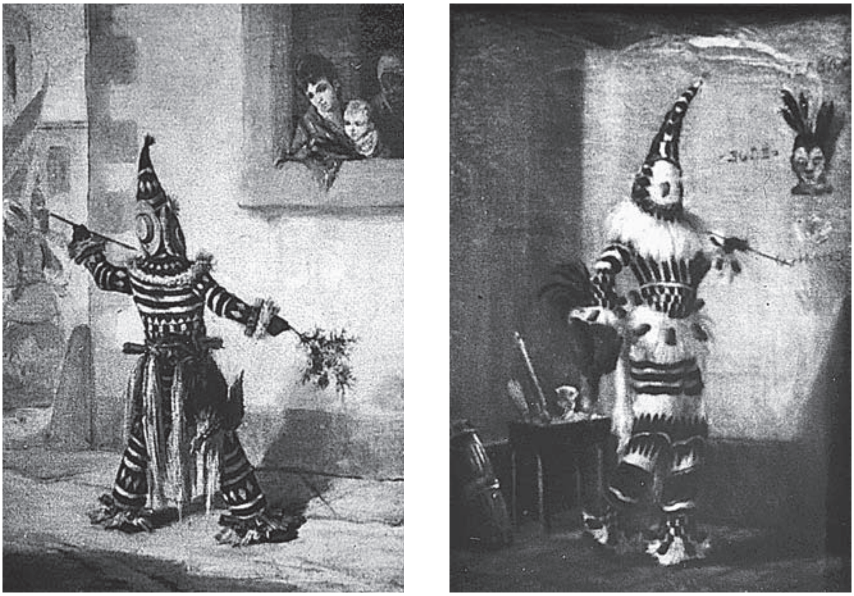
[5] The book Ortiz refers to was published in 1951 as *Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba*.

[6] Ortiz spells this term both as *fititi* and *fitití*. The former seems to be more commonly accepted today.

[7] This memory refers to the interethnic conflicts that existed between various groups in West Africa before and during the Atlantic slave trade.

[8] Comparing indigenous or Afro-descendant religious rites in the Americas to those of the ancient Greeks was common among early anthropologists and religious scholars. Similar comparisons to the mystikos sekos were made with Mayan and the Inkan rites. See, for example, Le Plongeon 1909.

[9] The original caption (Ortiz 1950a, 96) reads "Un íreme o diablito de los ñáñigos de La Habana." (Estampa de Landaluze. Segunda mitad del siglo XIX). The figures reproduced are by Landaluze, similar but not identical to those that Ortiz includes.



Figures 9.1a and b. Ñáñigo íreme or diablito figures. (Images by Víctor Patricio Landaluze, courtesy of the Museo de Bellas Artes, Havana.)

gathered in the manner of a shroud that symbolizes the disinterred dead. At the neck, waist, cuffs of the sleeves, hem of the pants, and sometimes at the knee their costumes have decorative chains fashioned from frayed rope. At their waists and ankles, cowbells are hung that make noise while they walk and dance, and whenever the figures move, to frighten onlookers. In their hands, the diablitos carry a rod (*itón*) and a branch (*ifán*) of *escoba amarga*,[10] or other plant. The diablito does not use a proper mask but rather covers his face with a semitransparent cloth through which he can still see with some difficulty. Some diablitos once wore garments made of sheep skin with the wool on the outside, making one wonder whether they represented some wild or sacrificial animal.

It is possible that the figure of the diablito or ñáñigo originally had sexual symbolism. Its strange steps and swaying have led to some to realist, mimetic interpretations, believing that the íreme tries to simulate "in a very stylized but immediately recognizable way the gestures of a rooster in the act of sexual union." This interpretation is not acceptable to ñáñigos, at least not contemporary ones, but it is possible that such mimicry is part of an archaic sensibility that is now lost among current Cuban sects. Yet today's practitioners almost unanimously reject the idea, reluctant as they are to accept explanations that contradict the typical ethical values of the Cuban culture and people. In any case, it is very likely that the íreme had some type of phallic symbolism in the past, since it earlier carried a kind of scepter in its right hand that today is transformed into a vulgar itón or stick of magic power. Perhaps in Africa ñáñigo rites were originally tied to agricultural fertility and cults of the dead, which tend to be linked among primeval peoples. In some dances of the Congo tied to funerary rites and agricultural fertility, dancers have been known to carry enormous wooden phalluses just as they did in the Dionysian festivals of ancient Greece. Even today there are some aspects of ñáñigo ceremony preserved in Cuba that seem to be survivals from this original phase; it would be imprudent, however, to strongly assert this claim. If we accept that the *diablito ñáñigo* was originally of a phallic character, like other figures in Greek Dionysian cults, it could suggest new analogies related to the appearance of staged comedy.

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[10] A plant native to Cuba (Latin name *Parthenium hysterophorus).* A member of the aster family, escoba amarga is known in English as Santa Maria feverfew. It is known for invading recently disturbed ground and is quite aggressive, often crowding out food crops, thus earning the nickname "famine weed."

Additional characters appear in the isaroko in less surprising form, yet they are also eye-catching, colorful, and allegorical.[11] The Nasakó adopts the zany persona of the witch doctor, a typical Kongo sorcerer. Other participants in the rite also carry symbolic garments indicative of their hierarchies and functions. The Isué[12] wears a purple cape and in some cases a three-cornered hat. I have seen some Ekueñón[13] figures with a red and blue velvet cap. The Moruá Yuánsa[14] tends to wear a pointy cap in the shape of a funnel, decorated with contrasting bright colors and frayed rope fibers around the edge. The Mokongo[15] sports a red sash that crosses diagonally from his right shoulder to the left side of the waist, with his "signature" (*firma*) or symbolic insignia embroidered in the center with yellow stitches, similar to the sashes worn by many state or decorated military leaders. The Enkríkamo,[16] the Mosongo,[17] and others carry two separate, brightly colored silk scarves at the waist, the neck, across the chest and sometimes on the head, with two of their corners loose and flowing and the others tied at the nape. They all have the emblems of their respective roles embroidered with yellow cord. But economic constraints, fear of persecution, and the gradual weakening of orthodox traditions have meant that these costumes are now rarely used.

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[11] Within Abakuá groups are many *plazas* or hierarchical positions of authority and most derive their names from the founding ancestors. Truly (2009, 49), citing Brown (2003a, 62–64), notes that the top four plazas are Iyamba, Mokongo, Isué, and Isunekue, and each are represented by a plumed feather that is inserted into certain ritual drums. The Iyamba, considered the "highest king," carries a staff and is responsible for sounding the Ékue drum discussed later in the essay.

[12] Cabrera (1988, 250) describes the Isué as the "Lord of Consecration" and notes that he is referred to as The Bishop. He represents a religious authority within the society and is the custodian of the seseribó drum, also discussed below.

[13] Keeper of the sacred Ecué drum; see below for further discussion of his ceremonial role.

[14] Cabrera (1988, 357, 528) calls the Moruá Yuánsa the "son of Moruá Eribó" and defines *moruá* as "poet, singer." The Moruá Yuánsa is said to be a "singer and enchanter" who can "get anything with his voice." He is "a senior advisor to the spiritual powers."

[15] Cabrera (1988, 168, 347) defines Mokongo (or Chabiaka Mokongo) as a "representative of supreme justice and military power." Truly (2009, 49) notes that the Mokongo follows the Iyamba in ritual processions.

[16] "Chief of the íremes" and owner of the enkríkamo drum that commands them and guards the fambá or inner sanctum (Brown 2003a, 63–64).

This solemn rite, like almost all ñáñigo mysteries, begins at midnight, a sacred hour in many religions and magical practices. Part of the liturgy is hidden and part is public. The mystery begins secretly at night in the interior of the temple or fambá, where initiates begin their ceremony with habitual combinations of oral and graphic conjuring, and by offering the lifeblood of a rooster. Meanwhile the Great Mystery, the Ékue, even though invisible, manifests its presence by its voice, a sound resembling a leopard roaring in the jungle.[18] The word "ékue" in the Efik language actually means "leopard." Meanwhile, a male goat with large horns, well bearded and splendid in its sexual power, waits to complete its destiny, tied to the sacred ceiba tree and entertained by the music and songs of initiates.

All magical preparation for the ritual is done in secret. One of its essential requirements is to "scratch" (*rayar*) or draw with yellow plaster (or with white in the case of funeral obsequies) certain linear figures of solemn meaning onto the people and objects that are to intervene in the liturgy: all of the officiants, the temple, its door, the three curtains that veil the mysteries, the altar, all of the emblematic pieces and attributes, the "laws" and offerings, the drums and other instruments, the earth, the incense, the holy water . . . everything. It must all be magically enlivened with supernatural force. Without these magical etchings there would be no sacred power, everything would continue passively and indifferently in the profane world, the Ékue would not reveal itself and the liturgy would be in vain. Once the preparations are finished, the Ekueñón comes out, a type of mystagogue who is "slave of the Ékue;" a *hierodule*,[19] as the ancient Greeks would say.[20] With Empegó's drum and accompanied by the Moruá Yuánsa who plays the magical ekón, the Ekueñón "breaks open" (*rompe*) or initiates the liturgy with oral conjuring and to the sound of the drum keeping order. The embori mapá liturgy always takes place while the sun is shining, generally at midday.

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[17] Guardian and owner of the ritual scepter (itón) as it leaves the inner sanctum and accompanies the drums to the sacrifice of the goat (Cabrera 1988, 358).

[18] The Ékue is both a divine entity and a friction drum, kept in the inner sanctum of the temple and seen but never heard by most ritual participants. See Ortiz 1955, 203–54.

[19] *Hierodule* (*hieródulo* in Spanish) refers to a sacred prostitute or temple slave.

[20] Truly (2009, 50) additionally defines the Ekueñón as "The Hunter," "The Executioner."

Act One. Public Scene

Two priests come out of the cryptic fambá, the Embákara[21] and the Ekueñón, and they proceed to the ceiba tree where the goat to be sacrificed is tied up. The Embákara unties the animal and takes it to the Ekueñón. They both return with it to the temple and perform an esoteric rite that prepares the goat for its death. The goat must be marked with plaster and sworn into the group as if it were being initiated like a brother. Once that is done, the victim is offered to the Ékue and this invisible entity accepts it with roars of happiness.

Act Two

The door of the fambá opens and out come the Ekueñón, the Empegó, the Nasakó, the candidate for exaltation, the diablito Aberisún (guided by the Enkríkamo), and the diablito Eribangandó (guided by the Moruá Yuánsa). The candidate leads the animal on a rope and the Nasakó carries a wooden tray containing *uemba* or witchcraft. This party moves toward the ceiba tree that serves as a type of altar or receptacle for the mythical being who will witness the consecration. It is at the tree that the prolonged public ritual is carried out.

After several songs of invocation, the Empegó,[22] who is a type of scribe, uses yellow plaster to mark certain linear symbols on the trunk of the ceiba. Afterward, he traces curious patterns on the ground and at the foot of the tree with the same plaster, making a large and complex cabbalistic design. It represents the sacred site on the banks of the legendary river in Africa where the *baroko* or ceremony of fraternal brotherhood was held. Sometimes a sacrifice must be made in honor of the river, and blood must be offered so that the running water continues to be rich in fish and the river's canoes full of merchandise. In such cases, the ceremony is held at the edge of a real creek, on the bank of the Almendares River, or on the shore of Havana bay where the first swearing in was carried out in Cuba more than one hundred years ago by the lodge called Efik Ebutón. In locations near water, members recreate the traditional African coastal pier where the first baroko sacrifice was made. In such cases there is more theatricality because the rites are longer and showier for the public. It is an ecclesiastical procession that passes solemnly through streets and plazas, more impressive than those held in inside the temple enclosure or in its atrium.

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[21] The Embákara is responsible for meting out justice and pronouncing sentence on those who break Abakuá law (Taylor 2013, 5).

[22] The Empego (or Mpegó) represents the law. He owns the *empegó* drum and the sacred chalk, *ngomo* (Truly 2009, 38).

In the temple space, already chosen and prepared for the liturgy, the Empegó traces the plaster symbols out on the ground, a magical formula that explains what must be done and indicates the precise locations of all action. These esoteric drawings, generally called "signatures" (*firmas*) or simply "sketches" (*trazos*), are very common in Abakuá and Kongo rites that survive in Cuba, expressions of written magic that complement oral magic.[23] They are an African hieroglyphic language, holographic and conventional, that recalls the *nsibidi* of the African Ekoi people and may cast light on the origins of writing in human artistry. Its description and study does not fall within the scope of this essay and will be discussed elsewhere.

But the candidate for initiation, waiting next to the ceiba tree, still needs to be prepared. He is stripped to the waist and his head, arms, and legs are bare. The Nasakó, with his incantations, gestures, and ablution of spells (known as uemba or *awamambó*) does a ritual cleansing to purify the aspirant. The diablito Eribangandó, with a live rooster in his hands, passes it over the body of the candidate so that it will remove all evil. Then the Empegó marks the candidate with yellow sigils on his forehead, cheeks, the nape of his neck, his chest, back, arms, hands, ankles, and feet. Still there is something missing. The Nasakó completes the general cleansing by chasing away "the bad," spraying out mouthfuls of strong rum, dry wine, and holy water, and waving incense over all of the yellow plaster markings. All of these magical preparations are accompanied by spells, songs, and drumming. Now the liturgical event is ready to proceed. Everything has been drawn, the spells have been uttered, the proprietary blood of the rooster has been drunk by the Mystery, the Ékue has spoken (one might say it thunders like Dionysus), the orchestra beats out its rhythms in metallic, vegetal, and animal vibrations, that is, in all earthly elements. A mystical atmosphere fills the environment.

Tragic Scene

Suddenly the Aberisún, acting as executioner, becomes distraught. He has received a terrible order from the Enkríkamo, who sings certain spells to him and attracts him with his magic drum. The Aberisún is supposed to kill the goat, but he refuses to do so. Aberisún has been tricked by the shadows of the mystery, believing that his role would be to use the terror his presence inspires to cleanse the space of evil spirits. For that reason he runs around the isaroko and performs rites of purification, but the Enkríkamo lures him over to the unhappy quadruped that is the object of sacrifice. The goat is already flaunting the trappings of his initiation and awaiting his moment, for which some acolytes hold him standing firmly in place with their hands according to ritual procedure. One of the acolytes, putting his arm between the goat's back legs, grabs the front legs while pushing down a bit on his head, while another shuts the goat's mouth so that it can't bleat. The Enkríkamo, standing before this animal that is about to serve as *hostia* or host, as the classical Greeks would say, orders Aberisún to perform the execution. But Aberisún, faced with the immanent event, is afraid, resists, and attempts to flee. He implores Abasí,[24] the celestial god, that he not be obligated to kill the goat, because he is a "brother." This is the pathos of the tragedy, as G. Murray would say;[25] but the spell of the Enkríkamo is threatening. Terrified, Aberisún closes in on the victim. Without looking at it, almost with his back to it, he takes the sacred rod and delivers a fierce blow to the goat's forehead, killing it instantly or at least leaving it senseless. After this pathetic slaughter, the diablito Aberisún flees aghast, as did the ritual executioners in Greece and Rome.[26]

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[23] See Ortiz 1950a, 96, for an image that reproduces Abakuá firmas. The original caption reads "Algunas de las firmas o trazos lineales usados por los ñáñigos como símbolos del título de cada uno de sus 'juegos' o 'potencias,' como emblemas de sus altos cargos jerárquicos o signos mágicos empleados en sus diversos ritos crípticos."

The goat has rolled its eyes and given anguished looks at its executioners, but it hasn't voiced the smallest complaint. If it had, the sacrifice would have to be suspended and the animal freed, like a brother who managed to beg God for his life. The magical preparations and markings the goat had received in the fambá prevented his protests, and especially the strong hands that closed his jaw so that he could not use his voice. In the past, another diablito (the Aberiñán) performed the task of restraining the goat's feet and mouth, but that is no longer the practice. The victim is slow to close its eyes; they seem to shoot anguished glances as if they were human, but to no avail. An officiant sticks a knife in its throat, slicing through the jugular vein and spilling all of its blood into a vessel. Then members amputate its head, skin it, and cut up its flesh. During all of this, songs announce the death of the sacrificial creature, serving as threnodies like the classical *anagnorosis* of recognition.[27] The sacrifice has been happily consummated.

Of all the mystical actors found in Cuba, the ñáñigo diablitos are without doubt the most dramatic due to the meanings and spectacle of the rites that they perform. Men always assume the dramatic roles, as ñáñigo society is exclusively male. Only men are admitted, and members reject those who are too effeminate, calling them *eronkibá* or *abóro*. Although female secret societies exist in parts of Africa that have their own diablitos who are personified and danced by women, the same does not occur among residents of Cuba.

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[24] Cabrera (1988, 18) defines Abasí as "the supreme god of the Ibibio and the Efik people." She also notes that Cuban Abakuás created a position in their potencias with that name that never existed in Africa. The title is conferred upon some "kings of the Ékue" for exemplary personal merit and service to the lodge.

[25] In Jane Ellen Harrison, *Themis* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 341. [F.O.]

[26] Jane Ellen Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual* (London: T. Butterworth, 1935), 90. See also William Warde Fowler, *Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic: An Introduction to the Study of the Religion of the Romans* (London: MacMillan, 1916). [F.O.]

[27] The term *anagnorisis* comes from ancient Greek tragedy and refers to the moment when a character discovers the true identity or nature of him- or herself, or of another character in the play.

I omit here discussion of the warrior íremes, such as the Íreme Embema, along with others whose terrible acts are today mostly reduced to legend. Instead, I consider the protagonists of the more complex and theatrical rites that are still frequently celebrated. The rites of the ñáñigos are many, all based on the presence and actions of íremes or ancestor spirits who appear as masked actors, dressed strangely, performing unusual mimicry and otherworldly dances. Moreover, each group of ñáñigos constitutes a set (juego), "power" (potencia), "land" (*tierra*), or lodge made up of numerous initiates (*ekobios*), strictly bound by solemn oaths of initiation and by a permanent hierarchy made up of many officials or positions, each sworn to the group and with an important and exclusive role to play in its liturgies. They are a true dramatic spectacle involving mimicry, song, cryptic language, íreme dances, altars, offerings, ablutions, smoke and incense, processions, episodes of magic, the sacrifice of victims, blood communions, symbolic feasts, resurrectionist initiations, terrible oaths, commemorations of death and past wars, and the imposing and meting out of punishment. All this takes place within an atmosphere of mystical awe and in communication with the mystery that lies beyond the grave. A drama of the living and the dead, protagonists of two worlds! Tragedy! Supreme theater!

It is true that there are no women among the ñáñigos; but the tragic play begins with a woman's mythological betrayal, just as Eve in the Garden of Eden initiated human drama. Her daughters and the daughters of her daughters became part of a perennial chorus, albeit invisible and silent, that cannot penetrate the sacred space of mysteries.

Certainly various weighty social factors led to the creation of these secret African societies, and their continued existence, in Cuba as well as on the other side of the Atlantic. But one of the most important factors, especially today, is the aesthetic, emotional, and social pleasure generated by the dramas themselves and the very personal role that each ekobio plays on the liturgical stage. Humble and humiliated as they may be in ordinary life, in the cryptic world of liturgy every individual is ritually converted into a leader with authority and a transcendental social function. They are highly visible and endowed with collective prestige, relieving them of the frustrations of their miserable daily lives.

The blood and the head of the goat or "brother" are introduced into the fambá for a secret blood rite that hearkens back to the *criobolios*[28] of the classical ancient mysteries. In the fambá, the blood of the sacrifice is offered to the Ékue. Later, after it has been magically prepared and "charged," the candidate and the "brothers" drink it as well in the form of a sacrament so that it will renew their vitality. The head is dedicated to Ekueñón, the "slave of Ékue," by placing it on the head of his drum. Perhaps some of these ritual details bring to mind the Eleusinian mysteries[29] in which, during initiation, the neophyte said, "I have eaten on the drum, I have drunk from the cymbal, I have carried the *kernos*,[30] I have entered through the ceremonial canopy," in other words into the chamber of the Goddess. After entering the acolyte offers her the testicles of a sacrificial animal in whose blood he had been baptized. Thus did Clemente of Alexandria describe the ritual.[31] The "meal on the drum" is evoked here by the head of the sacrificed goat on top of the *eribó*;[32] the beverage in Cuba is called *mocuba*, which is consecrated by the voice of Ékue and drunk out of a special shallow dish. This represents a type of intimate communion such as experienced by the initiates of old. The kernos is like the eribó, a magically charged ceremonial vessel that is carried in processional rites with the severed head of the goat (*mbori*) on top. And the entrance of the ceremonial canopy is equivalent to the ceremony in which the neophyte penetrates the inner sanctum where the Mother or Ékue resides and to whom, in Cuba as well, the testicles of the sacrifice are presented. Afterward, the Afro-Cuban mystic takes the blindfold off of the eyes of the Abakuá candidate or initiate. The Abakuá priest, like his Eleusinian counterpart, shows the initiate the sacred objects and officiates over the remaining rites, at the end of which the neophyte is reborn.[33] He has been resuscitated; he is now an ekobio, a sworn member of the lodge.

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[28] This refers to the sacrifice of a calf made ritually to the Greek deity Cybele, roughly equivalent to the Roman mother earth goddess Rhea. Cybele was a popular religious figure in Greece in the fifth and sixth centuries B.C.E.

The Offertory Scene

The door of the fambá opens and a procession, or *beromo,* streams out. The head diablito, the Enkoboró, dances in the lead, "cleansing the path." Behind him, the great priest, or Isué, who is, the ñáñigos say, similar to a bishop. In his mouth, held by its crest in his teeth, is the head of a rooster that was offered to the eribó, the body of which he now carries in his hands. The eribó is a drum of variable shape, heavily decorated with leather, cowrie shells, feathers, and other tokens. It is always placed on the altar. Initiates say that it symbolizes a deity or supernatural power, probably one of the ancestors and especially the spirit of the sacrificed *Sikanekua*.[34] During the procession, the Isué moves from one side to the other, raising and lowering the eribó in order to signify that the drum is alive as he presents it so that it can be revered by the spectators, much like the priests of Theophorus[35] did in their ancient cults. The Eribó calls to mind the *modius*, the *cista*, and the *tympanon* instruments of the classical Egyptian cults of Osiris, Attis-Cybele, and Dionysus in which were kept the "secrets of the great religion," the ashes of the dead High Priest, according to Frazer.[36] The eribó similarly contains a secret necromantic power and in this way recalls the kernos of Eleusis with its relics and analogous secrets.

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[29] Eleusinian Mysteries were initiations held every year for the cult of Demeter and Persephone based at Eleusis in ancient Greece.

[30] A ritual tray made of ceramic or stone.

[31] H. Hollard, *Les Cultes des Mystères. L'anciènne Rédemption Paènne et le Christianisme* (Paris: Editiones Berger-Levrault, 1938), 1. [F.O.]

[32] A round, single-headed ritual drum of the Abakuá, representing a metaphysical being. The head of the instrument is often covered with ritual drawings, and it has four muñones (plumed rods) attached on the sides, representing the four most important positions within the Abakuá hierarchy. See Ortiz 1954, 49–72.

[33] Ortiz uses the Latin word *renatus* (reborn) here.

Behind the Isué in the procession come other important actors: the Mokongo in the center, the Mosongo[37] and the Abasongo[38] to his right and left, each of the three carrying a highly decorated itón or short staff in the style of a scepter that is charged with sacred power and symbolizes certain ancestors. There are ñáñigo lodges that possess up to seven of these staffs, for historical reasons. Further back in the procession one finds an example of syncretism with Christianity. An official called Abasí, the All-Powerful God, walks with a crucifix between two acolytes carrying candles. One of them uses a bunch of basil as a swab to sprinkle holy water, the other waves incense. These acts are taken from the Catholic liturgy. Nevertheless, note that the esoteric Cuban Abakuá ritual employs two candles, probably using them instead of two firebrands or torches like those carried to symbolize Persephone in the introductory initiation ceremonies that took place in the temple of Eleusis in Athens. The latter were held in the light of the full moon, as the priest proclaimed the personal attributes of the candidates, weeding out those who were impure, suspected of using magic or of murder, the same as in the old orthodoxy of the ñáñigos. In the secret space of the fambá, a candle (called *enka-uke-eribó*) is placed next to the eribó, and another (called *enka-lú-man-togo*) is placed before the Ékue. During funerals, members place a third candle (*enka-lú-mape*) by the body. Torches constantly appear as one of the primary emblems of the Eleusinian cult, according to Hollard.

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[34] Ortiz uses the spelling Sikaneka and Sikanekua interchangeably. Cabrera (1988, 486), by contrast, uses *Sikanekue*. Clearly, multiple variants exist; we have chosen to use Sikanekua throughout for consistency's sake. This is the name of the woman who was sacrificed in the tales of Abakuá lore and whose skin was used to create the Ékue drum.

[35] The surname of St. Ignatius of Antioch, an early Christian martyr.

[36] James George Frazer, *Adonis: A Study in the History of Oriental Religion*, vol. 1. (London: Watts, 1932), 279. [F.O.]

[37] A member whose duty is to ensure that the society's secrets are not betrayed.

[38] The Abasongo's mandate is religion, justice, and order. He carries an itón and assists the Iyamba and Mosongo (Truly 2009, 50).

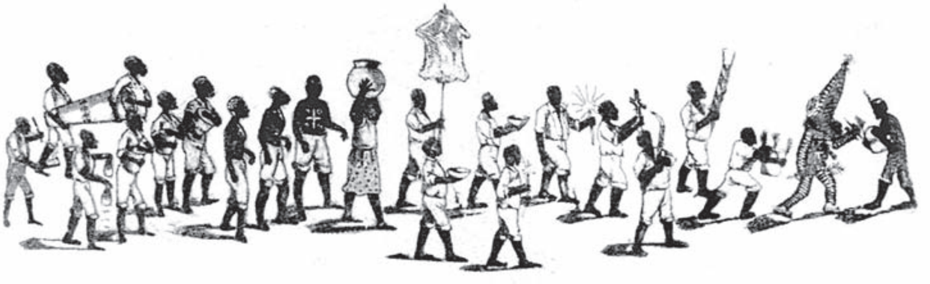

Figure 9.2. Schematic drawing of a ñáñigo procession, made by an initiate, that reproduces the characters, insignias, attributes, musical instruments, and requisite liturgical order of the group.

In years past, a woman walked at the end of the procession. She was Sikanekua or Sikan Eka, the only woman who took part in ñáñigo rites, a representative of the legendary woman who discovered the secret of the founders of the order and for that was condemned to death at the foot of a ceiba tree. Today a goat hide (*sukubakariongo*) that symbolizes her flayed skin appears in the procession as a banner. An acolyte dressed as a woman now marches in her place, carrying on his head a jar filled with water that evokes the myth in which Sikanekua found the fish of the Great Original Mystery. After this processional figure, the seven musicians of the ñáñigo orchestra come playing their instruments (Figure 9.2.)[39] and a chorus accompanies their rhythms with exultant hymns to Ékue with the same naturalness as that of Dionysian dithyrambs:

"¡Ékue*!* ¡Ékue*!* ¡*Chabiaka* Mokongo *ma chébere!*"[40]

The procession arrives at the baroko, the place of sacrifice. The Ekueñón, standing before the eribó, raises the skin or *ekoko* of the sacrificed goat and presents it to the heavens, some say to Abasí, others say to the stars; then he covers the eribó with it. If the ceremony involves the consecration of a new priest for the position of Embákara, initiates wrap the goatskin around the candidate, a ritual act similar to certain ancient Mediterranean rites in which the priest dressed in the skin of an animal sacrificed to Jupiter (the god called Kodion) and thus represented the personification of god. In Cuba, the goat is skinned and the hide is left in one piece, still connected to the testicles and scrotum and the four legs with their bones up to the knees. This proves that a healthy and intact animal was sacrificed. The testicles are offered to Ékue and a leg to each of the four ritual leaders or *obones*. When the ceremony is finished, the candidate gets up and, while the chorus sings "Baroko mandibá baroko,"[41] he returns with the procession to the fambá for his consecration into the priesthood.

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[39] The original caption to the image reads "Dibujo esquemático de una procesión de ñáñigos, hecho por un iniciado, en el cual se representan sus personajes, insignias, atributos, instrumentos musicales y orden litúrgico." Ortiz 1950a, 96.

[40] Cabrera (1988, 132) defines *Ékue* as "the secret and sacred," and *chébere* as "elegant, beautiful, valiant." Ivor Miller (personal e-mail communication, August 10, 2016) notes that the full phrase Ortiz cites praises the bravery of the Mokongo. Regarding the final word in this phrase, it is worth mentioning that Ortiz uses the spelling "chévere" in alternation with "chebere." We have adopted Cabrera's spelling throughout.

Inside the fambá, the consecrated benediction of the new priest is confirmed in secret. When that is finished the procession begins again, this time with greater solemnity. The Nasakó, with his witchcraft, takes the lead. The diablitos Aberisún and Eribangandó are no longer present. Only one íreme participates, the most important one called Enkóboro,[42] directed by the Enkríkamo. Now the Empegó walks on the right of the Isué with his "drum of order"; to his left is the Ekueñón with his own drum upon which lies the head of the sacrificed animal. Behind them the Abasí processes with his two candles, his smoke censer, and his acolyte carrying holy water, along with the new priest/initiate. The group parades around the isaroko. During the first part of the journey, the chorus intones the previously mentioned hymn, "Ékue, Ékue, Chiaka Mokongo ma chébere," and upon beginning the return trip it sings, "O yáo seseribó o yáo ooo"[43] until the ritual committee enters into the sanctuary.

The obligatory ritual has still not concluded. The Act of the Communal Meal follows. The divine being and his children have already drunk the blood of the sacrifice, now they must consume its raw meat in a ritual feast of brotherly love. As part of the ceremony, the Empegó goes to the foot of the same ceiba where the sacrifice was made and draws on the ground with plaster, marking the requisite signs and graphic conjurings. The Nasakó, the sorcerer, tosses a dusting of *ikún* onto the yellow markings, black gunpowder that is strong in magic. Another actor, Enkandemo, the "chef," has already cooked a stew in a kettle made of the victim's meat together with fruits that were offered to the Ékue. He dedicates them to the spirits along with verses that evoke the legend of the first meal their ancestors cooked and shared in Africa on the banks of the mythical Usagaré River. Then he places a large vessel filled with food on a magical circular sigil and places a smaller empty vessel on another point of the same design.

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[41] Baroko seems to mean sacred ceremony or meeting. See Cabrera 1988, 98.

[42] Many texts also spell this name Enkoboró.

[43] *O yáo* is an exclamation meaning "hear me." Sese eribó (or seseribó) is the Abakuá "silent" drum that represents Sikán, the mother of Abakuá culture. The song thus praises the sese eribó drum (Ivor Miller, personal e-mail communication, August 10, 2016). See also Ortiz 1954, 51, 62.

A new diablito appears with his Moruá. It is the so-called Enkaníma, the previously mentioned Eribangandó (both benevolent or purificatory íremes) and in a ritual dance he offers food to the invisible beings of the space, throwing bits of meat to the four winds. Other pieces he carries inside the fambá so that the Iyamba and other high dignitaries of the lodge can begin their communal banquet. The diablito goes out again and serves himself a portion of food in the smaller empty vessel before dividing up the rest of the food between all present. But, in a moment of comedy and surprise, the Eribangandó feels cheated. The ekobios know he shouldn't eat; while they surround and distract him with songs and dances, the Nasakó suddenly ignites the gunpowder and, in the confusion this produces, a brother snatches the large pot of food and runs away with it to offer it up to the ancestors, chased by the mocked Eribangandó who is unable to capture him. In the end, faced with the derision of the initiates, the diablito calms his fury, quiets himself with gestures of resignation, and disappears from the stage.

Now we turn to the scene of the communion rite. Everyone gathers around the vessel containing the sacred food of the sacrificed "brother" that will give them renewed vigor. They dance in a ring while each one receives from the diablito a serving of the food in his hand and they all sing a hymn of joy: "bambán ko mama ñaña riké ndiagame ofí obón Ékue."[44]

But the tragedy has not concluded, for there still remains the final scene, the apotheosis, in the form of an ambulatory rite involving many people. All are involved with the exception of the guardians of the tabernacle of mysteries who never come out in public. The Nasakó, the sorcerer of the secret brotherhood, starts the procession, cleansing the space of foreign magics and casting the appropriate defensive spells. The Nasakó typically wears his extravagant sorcerer's costume: his rags, his cloths of many colors, his vermin skins, his feathers from prophesy-telling birds, his head covered with false hair adorned with a diadem of plumage, his face, feet, and hands painted with prophylactic emblems, his mouth holding the *cachimba* or pipe with its magical smoke, his chest covered with bead necklaces and fetishes, and at his waist his magical horns. These include the *empaka*[45] that allows him "to see," the horn flask containing gunpowder. Behind the Nasakó goes another diablito, Eribangandó, carrying in his hands the rooster with which he ritually cleanses the path, guided by the Moruá Yuánsa who plays upon an idiophone called the *erikundo*.[46] They are followed by other diablitos, each one with his Moruá: there goes the Emboko, cleaning the space with a sugar cane stalk, and the Enkanima performing the same function with his mimetic dance. The central figures of the procession follow, preceded by the diablito called Enkoboró who is their guardian, and guided by the Enkríkamo. Next comes the Isué carrying the eribó; the Ekueñón and the Empegó go alongside the Mokongo, the Mosongo and the Abasongo with their scepters; the Abasí carries the cross and candles, while one acolyte carries the aspergillum and another the censor. The Sikanekua comes next with a jar on his/her head, and at the end of the line the chorus and musicians we are already familiar with. The beromo or procession travels around the isaroko. In the hymns, the voices and rhythmic vibrations of natural elements emanating from the *enkomo*,[47] the ekón, the erikundí shakers, and the itón sticks, praise with more jubilation than ever the miracle of the Ékue . . . The mystical proposition penetrates the sanctuary and from inside is heard something like psalmody. The Empegó comes out with his drum and from the door of the fambá he ends the ceremony with an *enkam*e or prayer directed towards the heavens. The music stops, the Ékue is silenced. The sun has set and the mystery is finished.

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[44] Cabrera (1988, 96, 387, 438) translates *Bambankó mamá ñanga eriké* as "procession on the edges of the river," *ndiagamé* as "a half gourd used as a plate," and *obón* as "king." Ivor Miller (personal e-mail communication, August 10, 2016) suggests that the phrase is referring to the first ritual food eaten by the Efik in Africa. He believes that traditionally the chant ends with the phrase *Efí obón Ékue* or "chief of Ekpe in Efikland."

[45] A ritual flask with a piece of mirror affixed at the tip. The gunpowder inside is used primarily in rites of divination.

I have made various allusions to certain classical rites from Greece. Tragedy develops as a literary genre in A.D. sixth century and "the writer first known for producing it was Thespis of Icaria, a district of Attica that was linked in various ways with the cult of Dionysus. Tradition holds that the plots of the first tragedies were invariably about the adventures of this god; only some time later were other myths adapted to such themes."[48] It is believed as well that Greek drama developed out of the Dionysian cults and, although this is somewhat controversial, that the tragedy derives from songs originally sung during the sacrifice of a male goat as an offering to the divinity. Whether or not this theory is correct, it is quite credible when one considers certain parts of ñáñigo liturgy during which a male goat is sacrificed and their similarity to Bacchanalian rites, to those of the Phrygians from Attica-Cybele, and to other mysteries from the ancient Mediterranean. The previously cited author H. J. Rose has argued based on texts of Plato and Pliny that an organization similar to the secret societies of the "leopard men" of Africa

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[46] This instrument appears to be a double maraca used by Abakuás, with bulb-shaped rattles on each end of a stick handle. On occasion they are also made in a cross-shape with four rattles. See the graphics in Ortiz 1952c, 99, 100. However, Ortiz in that book uses the word *erikúnde,* not erikundo, to describe them. No entry for erikundo is included. Ortiz also discusses a basket rattle sometimes used by Abakuás called *erikundí,* however; see Ortiz 1952c, 103–13.

[47] A set of three small, single-headed drums played in Abakuá ritual processions. Their individual names are the *obi apá, kuchí yeremá,* and *biankomé*. They accompany the lead drum or *bonkó enchemiyá*. See Ortiz 1954, 21.

[48] Herbert Jennings Rose, *Ancient Greek Religion* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1946), 83. [F.O.]

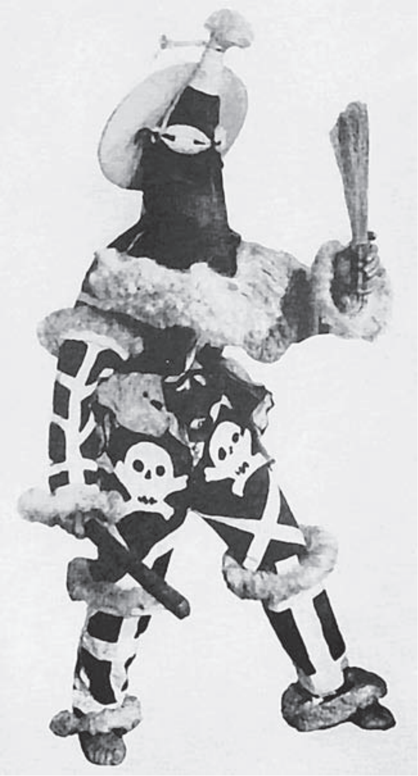

Figure 9.3. The íreme called Anamanguí, a funerary íreme.

existed in Arcadia, related to the cabalistic cult of Zeus Lykaios. We might describe the latter as similar to "Ékue men" or "*Ngo* men."[49]

The ñáñigo funeral rite, what some call the *enyoró* or *angoró*, is also of interest in this sense. This mourning rite is by no means a *fititi ñongo* or festival. In the enyoró of a dead ekobio, the protagonist of the dramatic pantomime is the diablito Anamanguí, dressed in black and covered in macabre symbols. When an Iyamba or chief of a ñáñigo lodge dies, another diablito appears alongside the funerary íreme or Anamanguí with his robe of red and white diamonds or squares (Figure 9.3).[50] This does not take place often. Funeral rites for the death of an Iyamba are the most solemn in another sense, because preparations must be taken so that the mysterious Ékue participates in them. In times past, an enyoró or mourning rite was held nine days after death, but today this ritual may take place on the same day as the burial or on other days. That is when final good-byes are made to the dead person, telling him "Embayakán suakán," which means "go and never return."

The Anamanguí makes such a strong impression among initiates that many refuse to represent him by dressing in his íreme costume. The Anamanguí appears to recognize the dead person. He contemplates him, embraces him, tries to see if he is truly dead or only sleeping in order to trick him. Upon seeing that the brother is really dead, the Anamanguí despairs and becomes furious, asking him who killed him. Faced with silence, he turns to the sorcerer of the fraternity, the Nasakó, berating him with his gestures because the Nasakó, with all his wisdom, did not know to defend

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[49] *Ngo* means "leopard" in the Bantu and Ekoi languages.

[50] Originally, "El íreme denominado Anamanguí, o íreme funerario," in Ortiz 1950a, between pp. 96 and 97.

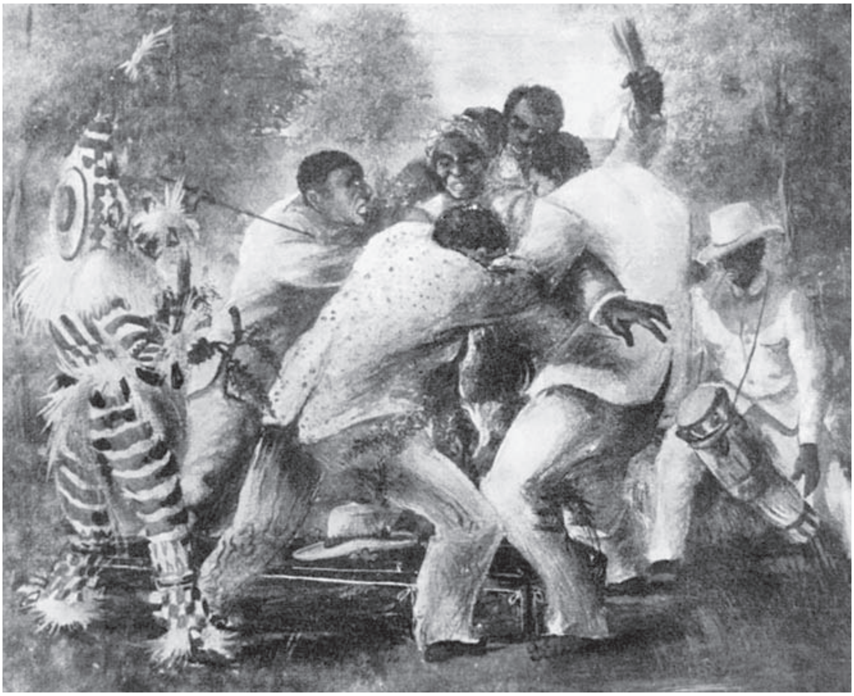

Figure 9.4. Re-creation of a ñáñigo funeral by Víctor Patricio Landaluze. The painting is entitled "Red íreme at the burial of an iyamba or chief of a ñáñigo juego."

his brother. He ends by beating him (Figure 9.4).[51] These scenes are repeated all throughout the wake and the funeral service during which the dead man is cleansed, marked as he was during his initiation, but now with white plaster which is the color of the dead, of skeletons picked clean and ghostly apparitions. Meanwhile, the brothers intone their elegies before the corpse using the emotional melodies of their prayers to bid farewell to their dead *monina*. *Monina* is a word derived from the Bantu, *nina* or *ina*, which mean "blood brotherhood," "uterine kinship," and, in its broadest sense, "clan" or "tribe."[52]

It used to be that during the funeral procession the coffin was lifted up and carried on the shoulders of the pall bearers who marched in a zigzag fashion with short, dragging, and swinging steps that called to mind a ritual dance. Upon arriving at the door of the necropolis, the bearers of the dead man would behave with great uncertainty, widening their zigzags. As if they were disoriented, they carried the coffin around and around from one place to another, taking steps forward and backward to confuse the evil spirits, until suddenly they went inside. The last ñáñigo burial celebrated with a full liturgy took place in Regla[53] in 1926. The corpse belonged to Mr. Guillermo González, called Iyamba Okekeré, who died at 114 years of age and who was the leader or Iyamba of the old ñáñigo lodge known as Efí Abakuá, founded on December 5, 1845. It has had only two iyambas in its one-hundred-year history. Because of the special circumstances of the burial, the funeral rites and the interment were of extreme solemnity, both in secret and in public. The erratic turns and zigzags made by pallbearers carrying the body to its burial are not exclusive to ñáñigos but were also practiced by other African tribes or nations. Such acts were also common among American indigenous groups, for example, the Ch'ortí and the K'iché peoples of Guatemala. "Upon leaving the funeral home, the bearers of the body turn around three times with it, a movement that is repeated in the cemetery with the goal of disorienting the dead person so that he loses his way and is unable to return home, unless God grants the him permission to attend his own novena celebration, a Siquín festival, or in even rarer instances grants him permission to communicate with the living. The same custom occurs among the K'iché."[54]

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[51] The original caption beneath this nineteenth-century oil painting by Landaluze reads "El ireme rojo en el entierro de un iyamba o jefe de un juego de ñáñigos" (Ortiz 1950a, following p. 96).

[52] H. H. Johnston. *A Comparative Study of the Bantu and Semi-Bantu Languages*, vol. 2 (Oxford, U.K.: The Clarendon Press, 1922), 263. [F.O.]

Ñáñigo burials are organized like other typical Abakuá processions I have already described, with the difference that the seseribó is not used. The drums are not tuned, are played out of time, and are carried "backward" (upside down) so that the hides are played from the bottom. Initiates sing songs to this flaccid music and the Anamanguí, already sad and enraged, must be placated until the interment is finished. At that point, he will mysteriously disappear in order to accompany his brother on his invisible journey.

Without doubt, William Ridgeway would see elements of classical Greek tragedy in the enyoró of the ñáñigos. The death of a member of the brotherhood falls outside of the dramatic ñáñigo rite discussed above. It begins after the *peripeteia* (turning point), *agon* (struggle), and the pathos (emotional awakening) have already taken place. There remain, however, the lamentations, epiphany, and appearance of the divine. Strictly speaking, due to its programmatic development, the enyoró ends up being the final part of the ritual sacrifice of the goat. I believe that the death of the embori is nothing other than an allegorical substitution for the death of a human being, perhaps the death of an ekobio or initiated brother. We can see in the drama's

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53. Regla is a municipality that lies at the lower entrance to the Bay of Havana. It has long been an important industrial center and shipping port. A vibrant site for diverse Afro-Cuban religious traditions, Regla is also home to the shrine of the Virgin de Regla, the black Madonna who is syncretized in Cuban Santería with the orisha Yemayá.

54. Rafael Girard, *Los Chortís ante el problema maya. Historia de las culturas indígenas de América, desde su origen hasta hoy,* vol. 1 (Antigua, Guatemala: Librería Robredo, 1949), 205. [F.O.]

array of pantomimed symbolism the adventures, conflicts, and developmental episodes typical of ancient tragedy. William Ridgeway in his two books *The Origin of Greek Tragedy* and *The Dramas and Dramatic Dances of non-European Races* suggests that drama arises from funeral rites held at the tombs of the demigods, heroes, and other great tribal characters. Those who agree with Ridgeway may find a great deal of vibrant, suggestive corroborating data in religious art from black Africa that survives in Cuba. See especially the latter book cited in which the author claims, with a profusion of historical and contemporary facts from very diverse populations, that Greek tragedy arose from primitive funeral rites. He believes that performers periodically dedicated such rites to the ancestors and acted out the highlights of the person's life in pantomime. Ridgeway supports his claims with, among other things, references to Yoruba funerary rites that are celebrated each June in honor of all of those who have died over the past year (something that until recently also took place in Cuba among Lucumí blacks). During these events an actor appeared representing the *egungun*, the dead, who made visits to family members.

On the other hand, Ridgeway also cites various African secret brotherhoods that have very important social functions, above all of a political, religious, and pedagogical nature, that predominate over their role as artistic entertainment. One of the most powerful forces within these hierarchical societies consists precisely of the profound collective emotion of terror they provoke with their representations of the íreme, egungun, and other symbolic characters. Such figures come from the jungle and assume, via a mask that simulates a spectral being, the important role of reassuring faith in the real existence of an inexorable and superhuman executor of justice. In doing so, they strengthen the social discipline of human society through a charade of mystic terrorism.

In relation to such Afro-Cuban figures, one might reflect on Gorer's observation (in relation to Ridgeway's thesis) that all masked dances are nothing other than ritual representations of the cult of death. Gorer, in his work *Africa Dances*, suggests that if Professor Ridgeway's evidence is convincing in explaining the origins of Greek tragedy, it does not correspond to the reality he has observed among Afro-Occidental peoples where "masks never represent dead men, but rather spirits." In the Americas, says Gorer, dances are celebrated in which the dead are represented but always portrayed by a dancer entirely covered in robes without a mask. The dancer does not allow any part of his skin to be seen and his physical features are only vaguely evident, if anything outlined by designs fashioned of shells or beads. In Cuba, similarly, gods are personified in Yoruba ritual dance with their respective masks, but this is not the case with egun or egungun, the figures of death or of all ancestors in general. Nor is it the case in the death of deceased individuals who are the subject of a funeral rite. But even if the actors playing egun in funerary dances do not use masks, by contrast Oyá's mask and that of all of the other gods appear when they dance alongside egun in the solemn choreographies dedicated to the commemoration of great deceased individuals.

In Cuba, the íremes or ñáñigo diablitos, considered temporarily visible ancestors and participants in all rites of the brotherhood, do not use masks as such. Nor do the corresponding semi-Bantu or "bantoid" (as some call them) secret societies, those of black Cubans that derive from Africa. Afro-Cuban funeral rites thus confirm Gorer's objective observation. This does not mean, however, that in Africa the spirits that appear to secret societies, personified by diablitos, do not occasionally use masks, as do the personifications of gods. Some employ them when the supernatural entity is conceived more as "the spirit of the jungle" than as a "spirit ancestor." In such cases, the mythological personality of the diablito is more defined and is something akin to a sylvan demigod.

What is the reason that the gods all dance with their own theomorphic masks while the Afro-Cuban figures of egun or íreme do not? Perhaps the reason is a simple economic one. The masks of the gods and demigods are permanent; once they are constructed out of carved wood, as is usually the case, they can serve for all successive functions; the divine image does not need to change its traditional features at every appearance. On the contrary, creating a representational mask of each deceased individual for his funeral rites would require specific details so that viewers would be able to identify him. It is feasible, satisfactory, and easy for an actor to represent a dead individual if he has generally the same physical shape as the deceased person had in life, takes on his mannerisms, gait, and so forth. But it would be very difficult to construct a realistic mask that would convincingly evoke the presence of the deceased for onlookers. For that reason it has proven easier to adopt a vague and imprecise figure as an allegorical image, totally covered in cloths from head to toe but without any clear definition beyond the elementary features necessary for anthropomorphism. Moreover, this vagueness of the emblematic figure of the dead is consistent with the idea we have of their status: that they exist in a domain that is also vague and imprecise, between the water and the sky, still not completely detached from the human realm nor transposed to the ethereal and perennial realm of the gods.

Ridgeway's theory of the historical genesis of ancient tragedy is not solely based on African data.[55] Studies of the secret societies of the Indians of the northeast United States and Canada and their habitual ceremonies lead me to believe that they (in contrast with others in Melanesia and Africa) are especially given to dramatic representation. Their members' "masonic" privileges are important, but they exercise little authority. In fact, these societies might be described as amateur dramatic clubs, with a religious veneer like those of the medieval guilds. Frazer describes their practices as "religious drama," like that in ancient Greece.[56] The performance fulfills various purposes other than that of entertainment; various, too, are the characters represented, according to the constitution of the society, whether totemic or consecrated to guardian spirits or otherwise. But the essence of their function is pantomime and the mask is the means of impersonation.[57] That is, it involves theatrical performance. This is true, but not the supposed contrast with the secret societies of other continents.

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[55] Ortíz is referring here to the work of William Ridgway, *The Origin of Tragedy with Special Reference to the Greek Tragedians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910).

The same Ridgeway has also signaled that the very powerful and still-active secret societies from Africa, created for important and beneficial social functions, later began to degenerate into predatory groups and in the end into companies of inoffensive minstrels. Today they amuse themselves by continuing to represent the dramatic dances that at one time were part of their original terrorist liturgy; and, at the same time, they provide picturesque entertainment to the uninitiated. These religious societies of cryptic rites, says Ridgeway, have been converted into mere troupes of dancers and strolling players who lack their earlier social prestige. Today their dances and songs only serve as entertainment in popular parties. The author mentions several of these secret societies, antecedents to the ñáñigos of Cuba, in which the principal masked figure and the protagonist of the dances personifies the souls or the spirits of the dead, as still occurs with the egun and íremes in Havana today.

There is another ñáñigo initiation rite that in Cuba is called *aprofá bakesongo*, or "oath." Although it bears no relation to the tragedy, it does appear to have similarities to the classical mysteries of the ancient Mediterranean. Various ethnographers have alluded to certain analogies between the secret societies of West African blacks, especially the semi-Bantus, and various pre-Christian mysteries that flourished in the ancient port of Eleusis and in other Mediterranean cities. All of them ascribed to esoteric doctrines of purification and fraternal protection from malignant beings, whether human or superhuman. In the African rites and in their Cuban transculturations, we find, without a doubt, certain fundamental elements from the classical Eleusinian mysteries. As for the ñáñigo initiation rite, one finds in Cuba (as in Greece) the ceremonial purification of the initiate, the simulation of his death, his resurrection, the appearance of the ancestors, and the initiate's conversation with them. These elements are equivalent to the Greek mysteries of *katarsis* (catharsis), *paradosis* (transmission or lore), *epopteia* (revelation), purification, the divulgence of great secrets, and the illumination of the initiates. In Cuba, the initiation rite unfolds to the sound of special music. Long ago one of the drums, the *bonkó enchemiyá*, dialogued with the growling voice of the mysterious Ékue, who, from an unseen space, would accept the ritual scenes of the initiation.

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[56] Ortíz provides no footnote here, but his citation of Frazer is taken nearly word for word from James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol 8 (New York: Charles Scribner, 1916), 485. Hastings did provide a source for the Frazer quote, however. It is taken from James George Frazer, *Pausanias*, vol. 3 (London: MacMillan, 1898), 107.

[57] In James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics,* vol. 8, 485–86. [F.O.]

When referring to certain beliefs of the ancient Greeks of Arcadia, H. J. Rose in *Primitive Culture in Greece* makes the analogy between some of their cryptic rites and those of the secret societies of the "man-leopards" in West Africa. One such esoteric rite survives in Cuba, even if no longer in the cruel form that existed formerly in Africa and in Greece. Rose, based on the writings of Plato (*The Republic* vol. 8, 565), Pliny (*Natural History* vol. 8, 81), and other classical authors claims that in Arcadia in the rustic and rural Zeus Lykaios cult (so distinct from the Zeus of Homer and Phidias) there were certain clans or sects whose members changed into wolves after being initiated. This metamorphosis, whether folkloric illusion or true lycanthropy, was produced by a rite of communion in which the initiate ate the meat and entrails of the sacrifice. In Arcadia at the time, the sacrifice was a human being, later substituted by a male goat. Through this rite of ceremonial anthropophagy, the neophyte "became a wolf," a metamorphosis that lasted nine years. Perhaps, Rose suggests, the "man-leopards" of West Africa had a similar rite in their initiation to convert themselves into leopards. This very perceptive hypothesis by Rose is accurate. The traditions of Cuban ñáñigos derive in part from the ancient African societies of man-leopards. It is said that long ago the secret societies or "powers" (lodges) of the ñáñigos in Africa (*ngó* is "leopard" in the Efik language, which is the language of the "ñañngó" rite) sacrificed human beings in their liturgy of initiation and the body had to be eaten by the initiates. Anthropologists have confirmed the existence of this tradition, which survives among the ñáñigos. According to them, in Africa the Ékue would not speak without being offered the blood of a Kongo. Later they changed the practice and instead sacrificed a male goat. This is what occurs in initiation rites of the ñáñigos in Cuba today. The African sacrifice is now made by killing a male goat (*mbori*) or a rooster (*enkiko*) and with the blood and the flesh of the animal and with many vegetables, herbs, and magical substances, and while saying and drawing magical spells, they prepare the mocuba (sacramental drink) and the feast of ritual cannibalism. This part of the rite is also complex. Initiates go around and around the ritual platter, singing:

Bámba ekón mama ñánga eríke[58]
endiagáme efík obón ékue

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[58] Cabrera (1988, 96) translates the phrase as "procession on the banks of the river."

This evokes African legends and the first sacred meal that was made in the land of the Efik. They keep singing until the rite is finished.

Amana amana empaira
Ékue empaira, etc.

Once the drink and the food have been consecrated they proceed to the general communion. The íreme Eribangandó, who is the mystagogue of the liturgy, offers pieces of meat to the four winds and others to the mysterious Ékue who presides over the mystery and the dead in the cemetery. With the ancestors and the mysteries attended to, he then officiates the communion of the neophytes. All those being initiated as ekobios must drink the mocuba and partake of the sacred meat. This is not an ordeal or a disagreeable test, as the flavor of the liquid and the food is pleasant and does not produce hypnotic or toxic effects. Its transcendence is only magical and signifies nothing other than the carnal communion and kinship with the brothers of the group or secret clan. It is the supreme rite of consecration that defines the brotherhood, exactly in the same way as the hermetic rites of the "man-wolves" in Arcadia a thousand years ago.

These similarities between rituals of people separated by millennia and by oceans could not be any more suggestive. The theme is wide and fascinating; it deserves much more study and further inquiry would be inopportune here. Such esoteric African rites that persist in Cuba may have traveled here from the Aegean or from Egypt, or vice versa. Perhaps they developed separately, without a causal or consequential relationship to the ancient mysteries, either before or after their emergence. But the similarities between them, some of them very specific, are of great interest; the esoteric brotherhoods of West Africa call to mind those of remote antiquity. Undoubtedly, the exhaustive study of their Afro-Cuban survivals will help remedy the lack of knowledge regarding the liturgical role of the secret African brotherhoods that has yet to be resolved. It may cast light on the problems relating to the early development of theater among preliterate peoples. The scientific study of the black secret brotherhoods that exist in the Americas, particularly in Cuba, will undoubtedly provide a better understanding of their predecessors in the nations and tribes of Africa.

10

Satirical and Commercial Song

Translated by **Robin D. Moore**

Slave Songs

It may be that satirical songs reveal the spirit of African cultural heritage more than in any other repertoire; in such music, African heritage achieves its freest expression in Cuba as it is gradually transformed into creolized national artistry. Slaves commonly performed songs in their outbuildings and barracks, whether complaining about hunger, whippings, excessive work, or in order to poke fun at those who fell victim to their displeasure. Satirical slave songs were quite popular, and if this form of folklore has not been recorded it is because in addition to being very common it was fleeting, exclusively oral, performed by illiterate and unschooled people, the result of improvisations on the trivial topics of everyday life. I cannot resist the temptation to reproduce a few elegant paragraphs by Anselmo Suárez y Romero[1] about the plantation songs of black Africans.

> When the blacks saw me leave the veranda and walk towards them, they began to communicate with one another, even those working in

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Translated from Fernando Ortiz, *Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas [1951] 1981), 564–68, 571–82, 588.

[1] Anselmo Suárez y Romero (1818–78) was a renowned Cuban writer and novelist, best known for writing the first novel about slavery in the Americas: *Francisco.* It appeared shortly after his death.

the boiler houses. Their joyous songs communicated their pleasure in seeing their master arrive with coarse but heartfelt lyrics . . . I noticed that the blacks laughed with one another and that their songs were rowdy. One old black man, a cane gatherer, said a few words in hushed tones and in response the young, men and women, burst forth into certain refrains. I listened and realized that the lyrics were about me. On a certain day the slaves' issue of clothing and blankets had been handed out, on another day I had ordered some shackles removed, on another I had gone to the slaves' kitchen in order to ascertain how the food was being prepared. The same day I had given permission for a couple to get married the following Sunday, authorized the baptism of various children, and later from evening prayers until 10pm I allowed drumming in the outhouses facing the living quarters. Such was the content of the refrains; the old black man kept prompting them and the young ones would then vary the theme at their whim. Giving thanks to me in this way, they also began to include new requests as well. Those who know of our customs and understand the blacks' coarse dialect on the plantations will have frequently heard needs expressed in such songs that the masters ignored. Often the slaves expressed complaints and even witty or satirical commentary about those who ruled over them and who did not recognize their obligations. I smiled as I listed to the sincere expression of the slaves' thanks, when I noticed that the old man had raised himself off of the log he allowed himself to sit on in order to collect sugarcane stalks and moved closer to me. After having sung happily with his companions, he wished to ask me if I would let him rest since he was old and sickly. "I have cleared a lot of ground; I have plowed almost all the lands of the plantation; I have cut more sugarcane than there are leaves on the trees. I have seen palm trees grow tall that barely rose above the weeds when I came from my African land. I have several sons who now work in my place. Let me go rest and warm myself near the fire in my hut until I die." That is what he said, that septuagenarian cane cutter, looking at me and moving his head with its white hair.

. . . There is no event on the sugar plantations associated with the lives of the slaves that is not mentioned joyously or sadly through song. If a spirited and beautiful ox that everyone fights over in order to pull their cart dies of gangrene one scorching day; if the bottom falls out of a sugar evaporator pan; if the gears of the sugar press break; if the cane fields catch on fire and feverous effort is required to put out the sea of flames; if the rising river has swept away corn, rice, or sugarcane plants that had just been planted along its edges; if a drought or heavy downpours threaten the harvest; if a fattened pig

> that is ready to be sold to a trader on the property suddenly dies and no one knows why; if a companion who went out alone into the countryside to cut down palm branches has fallen to the ground; if the hideout of a runaway slave has been discovered by the overseer and the dogs; if the brown cow, or the pig with the white snout, or the prettiest mare in the pasture has given birth. Slaves sing their songs while weeding or cutting cane, when they meet or while carrying things to the cane press (*trapiche*) building, when they stand facing each other and stir sugary liquid with machine-driven paddles that has just been poured out of the cooling pans. They compose songs when their food ration changes; when their work hours increase or decrease; when a new machine, instrument, or procedure is introduced that both surprises them and facilitates or decreases their workload. They sing about the giving of Christmas alms, announcing over fences and across thickets that soon the masters will arrive; when they are offered a piece of land so that when the sugar harvest ends they can plant a garden; when they are permitted to cut down palm fronds to cover the roofs of their huts; when a cow is killed and distributed in rations; when the master's wife chooses which Cuban-born slaves she will bring with her to the living quarters; or when a prize is offered to the cart driver who was first to arrive back at the plantation, the horns of its oxen covered with flowering stalks (*güines*) of cane; the day that the sugar harvest begins in the plantation town (*batey*); occasions when the sugar cane workers continue producing quality reductions of the juice even after the technician has left. Songs may reference what took place on the day a certain machine was first used or a factory was constructed, the day that a passenger or freight train crossed the estate, passing by the cane fields and stopping the machete strokes of the stupefied field hands.[2]

These songs sung by black tribal Africans represent the antecedents of the countless pieces performed by blacks subsequently in the Hispanic world with their rhyming verses, satire, and biting sense of humor (*choteo*). In Cuba, blacks and their descendants continue singing satirically just like their ancestors in Africa did. Their spirit of criticism and parody serves as constant inspiration for folkloric song. Among Yoruba descendants, and especially among the Kongos, improvised song competitions (*desafíos* or *contrapunteos de puyas*) and so-called *majagua* or *macagua* songs of the countryside were renowned, as I alluded to earlier. Singers gathered to perform surrounded by onlookers. Each one in turn would invent their verses and their *puyas* (verbal attacks) in counterpoint while the audience responded with raucous laughter, applause, and commentary. Cuban-born blacks referred to this practice as *sacar majagua* or *hacer lilaya*, and also as the *juego de macagua*, if the competition involved a more formalized match between professional *gallos* (lead singers). One traveler to Cuba in the first decades of the nineteenth century noted that Kongos had an unusual mode of conversation involving their simple and rustic music that they enjoyed greatly. Sometimes when two of them met on a road, one would begin to sing. The other would follow the rhythm and respond in kind.[3] In that way they established a dialogue that lasted an hour or two. They served as town criers who passed along interesting news about everyday life.

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[2] Anselmo Suárez y Romero, *Colección de artículos* (Havana: Establecimiento Tipográfico La Antilla, 1859), 219–20. [F.O.]

This improvised, dialogic, epigrammatic, and satirical music associated with Africans may have also incorporated influences from similar ancient genres associated with the Mediterranean region that the white population brought to Cuba. The Spanish and Portuguese cultivated troubador songs, a transculturated form from the Iberian Peninsula, Provence, Sicily, and wherever they settled for any extended period as colonizers. Many of the musicians and poets came from Arabia and Moorish lands. Perhaps it would be opportune here to recall graceful *labia* song and dance genre, characteristic of Andalusia. It is invariably well seasoned, graceful and alluring (*sandungueada*),[4] with a dose of sea salt from the ports and spice from the Congo.

Street Bands, Textual Improvisation, and Cultural Appropriation

In order to enhance their possibilities of collective criticism, black musicians formed carnival bands (comparsas), *claves*, trios, and other ensembles, usually as part of carnival revelry. These groups included vocalists and mimics in costume, with or without masks. They walked through the streets of poor or marginal neighborhoods (often situated on hillsides above the town), displaying their theatrical and satirical humor. They directed their parodical songs or songs of challenge to rival groups, disagreeable people, or events that the public found distasteful. *Mamarracho* celebrations[5] in Santiago de Cuba created the context for masked revelry, street bands, and popular satirical and critical songs. *Ensaladilla* groups represent one popular form of expressing Cuban satirical song in the mid-nineteenth century.

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[3] Charles A. Murray, *Travels in North America, during the Years 1834, 1835, 1836, including a Summer Residence with the Pawnee Tribe of Indians, in the Remote Prairies of the Missouri, and a Visit to Cuba and the Azores Islands,* vol. 7 (London: Richard Bentley, 1841), 259. [F.O.]

[4] See Ortiz (1923) 1985, 444, for discussion of the origins of the term *sandunguear* and its possible relation to the Kongo term *ndungu* meaning pepper or spice.

[5] A carnivalesque event associated exclusively with the city of Santiago and celebrated in the summer months rather than prior to Lent.

> They were a form of literary patchwork quilt, they formed poetic lines into verses. Sometimes the verses rhymed, sometimes not; they might be in an exacting poetic form or loosely structured. The verses might be gracefully conceived, or be so poorly rendered that they provoked derision. Individuals used them to criticize distinguished members of our society, justifiably or out of envy. Little strips of paper with verses of variable quality circulated among the public, where they were savored with delight.[6]

Ramón Martínez references many of these songs in his book *Oriente folklórico,* and the political pieces among them are especially noteworthy. Most authors criticized the colonial government in favor of the Cuban insurgents, and as a result some singers ended their carnival celebrations in jail. In about the 1880s when the colonial authorities failed to recognize the free status of black slaves as they had agreed to, locals began singing a clear and threatening refrain: "Freedom's not coming / There won't be any sugarcane."[7] Martínez Moles has undertaken a scholarly analysis of the ensaladillas mentioned above. They might be described as a finely chopped artistic dish consisting of people and events mixed together with plenty of white salt and black pepper, white and black cultural influence.

Below is an example of a black Cuban macagua song against whites, alluding to the cruel actions of General Weyler[8] in 1896:

> That white man is evil, Weyler
> That white man is evil, Weyler
> He throws people into a well
> He shoots them with shotguns
> That white man is evil, Weyler
> That white man is evil, Weyler[9]

And in this way the song could be extended indefinitely with additional complaints about what was happening during the war. Here is another song from 1901, before the founding of the republic, alluding to the dangers of Cuban annexation by the United States.

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[6] Ramón Martínez. *Oriente folklórico* (Santiago de Cuba: El Lápiz Rojo, 1934). [F.O.]

[7] "Libertad no viene, Caña no hay."

[8] Valeriano Weyler (1838–1930) served as governor general of Cuba from 1896–97 during the height of the Wars of Independence against Spain. He became known as "Butcher Weyler" because of his decision to forcibly relocate large numbers of rural residents, after which thousands died from disease or hunger.

[9] The original text is written in broken *bozal* Spanish, associated with African slaves who were unable to speak standard Spanish. The text reads: "branco son malo, Güelé. branco son malo, Güelé. Tira gente la poso. Tira gente la escopeta. Branco son malo, Güelé, branco son malo, Güelé."

Cuban, open your eyes about Cuba
The Americans will take everything for themselves
Cuban, open your eyes about Cuba
Americans, the Americans will end up owning it[10]

Satirical song practices continued into the twentieth century. In the mamarracho celebrations of 1912, participants sang this little jingle everywhere: "*Chocholí* is headed to the hills, grab it 'cause it's getting away from you."[11] This was the song of the *montompolo*, according to Ramón Martínez, the name for a great parade that took place on the final day of mamarracho festivities. The song lyrics alluded to an uprising soon to occur among certain black groups in that region.[12] Choncholí is the name of a black bird, very black and with a metallic sheen, known in the rest of Cuba as *totí* and outside of Cuba as *quiscal*.[13] In Cuba one often hears the saying "be the first and last like the choncholí," because (according to Luis J. Morlote), it is the first bird that sings at dawn up in the mountains and the last one to sing as night falls.

Sometimes the verses of political songs can be biting. The song of the Conservative Party's *conga* (Afro-Cuban carnival band) in Remedios, for example went like this:

The women in the Chambelona
How can they walk with their babies?
They're all breaking the law
'Cause all of them are shaking their hips[14]

The chorus repeated the verse, to which the Liberals replied singing with a soloist and chorus in their Chambelona song:

The Chambelona will always respect
The women of the Conservatives

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[10] This song is also in bozal. The original text reads: "cubano jabre sojo con Cuba, Mericano ba cogé tó pa é. Cubano jabre ojo con Cuba, Mericano, mericano ba queda con é."

[11] "Choncholí se va pal monte, Cógelo que te se va" [*sic*].

[12] This uprising and the response to it on the part of the Cuban government are known as the Guerrita del 12. Black insurgents, inspired by leaders of the Partido Independiente de Color (Independent Party of Color, or PIC), rose up in arms to demand appropriate representation in Congress, jobs for black veterans of the Wars of Independence, and related concerns of the Afro-Cuban community. Cuban president José Miguel Gómez ordered the newly formed national army to attack the protesters, resulting in the death of approximately six thousand of them. See Helg 1995.

[13] The bird's Latin name is *Ptiloxena atroviolacea*; it is known in English as the Cuban blackbird.

[14] "Las mujeres de La Chambelona, yo no sé como van con su criatura; todas están fuera de la ley porque todas van meneando la cintura."

No one messes with us
And long live our all-powerful band![15]

The improvising lead soloist of the Conga replied with the multitude repeating:

Aé, aé, aé
The Conga is coming, sweeping away all in its path
It comes smoothly, but lashing out . . .
Part of the same *pirulí*[16]

And the solo singers and chorus of the Chambelona replied with this:

Let's overpower the conservatives
Take a machete to the traitors
That poor little Conga isn't any good
It's only a little monkey paw! Timbale! Aé, aé[17]

The Chambelona and the Conga were street bands consisting of a cornet, hand drums, and other percussion of the most diverse sort, some of which had been invented for the occasion. Cuban politicians used them in 1908 and in later years to enliven their demonstrations and meetings. The Liberals initiated the practice with the Chambelona and the Conservatives responded with the Conga. The former was created in Las Villas, the latter in Oriente, eastern Cuba. The Conga represents an adaptation of a Santiago-style carnival band. The name of the Chambelona appears to derive from Chambas, a very isolated town at that time in the northern part of Camagüey province. Some say that Chambelona means "music from Chambas." This Cuban place name in turn derives from Africa, where in Bantu languages *chamba* is the name given to very isolated plantations in wetlands of the Congo.[18] But it is important to note that in Cameroon an orchestra called chamba is very popular among black residents. It employs two drums with tacked-on skin heads and a number of wooden whistles. Women sing along to the music. "The combination of sounds is perfect," Migeod says, "it is the best music I have heard in Africa."[19] It is very possible that the Cuban Chambelona group, with its culturally mixed origins and its drums and percussion used to accompany melodies on the cornet, may have originally referenced African ensembles from the Calabar. Conga derives from a term that is not originally *conga*—the name given today to the popular, barrel-shaped creolized drum played in street bands—but rather *kunga*, which in Kongo languages means "song" or "revelry."

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[15] "La mujer conservadora la chambelona siempre respeta; con ella no hay quien se meta y ¡viva la arrolladora!"

[16] A pirulí is a cone-shaped multicolored lollipop. Its meaning in this context is not entirely clear. But the term *chambelona* can also mean a round lollipop, so describing the conga as a pirulí may be an oblique reference to chambelonas.

[17] Pedro Capdevila, "Remedios folklóricos," October 8, 1943. [F.O.] Ortiz includes an incomplete reference here and I have been unable to determine its source. The original Spanish lyrics cited in Capdevila's quotation are: "Vamo arrollar al conservador, dale machete al que es traidor, Pobre conga ya tu no vale . . . ¡Patilla de mono! ¡Timbale! Aé, aé."

[18] The phrase Ortiz uses is "*campos de tumba*," an apparent reference to the *Tumba*-Ngiri-Maindombe wetlands in the present-day Democratic Republic of Congo.

I just made reference to the "repopularizing" and "readaptation" of music. It represents a sort of "transvalorization of culture" as Marett[20] would say, and to which I have alluded earlier. These transvalorizations occur frequently in music, not only in Cuba. They may involve the incorporation of a folkloric song into a masterful "art music" composition, or vice versa. Bizet chose to write a genuine Cuban *habanera* for his Gypsy-infused opera *Carmen,* and an amorous phrase from the protagonist of that same opera was later taken forcefully by another composer. Like a cross-dresser in a white flowing robe with loose panels rather than a skirt of colored frills associated with flamenco, the original phrase was transformed into the lovely and languid habanera "Tú."[21] In the popular musics of the Americas and even in Spain, "arrangements" and "translations" of this sort are common and frequently represent blatant acts of plagiarism, difficult to defend without a doubt. Local popular musicians often take European melodies in vogue and insert them in their entirety, with little alteration, into songs and dances such as *guarachas, tangos, danzones, rumbas, sones,* and *congas.* In the mid-nineteenth century, Arboleya[22] wrote, "Our musicians suggest that they compose danzas by themselves, but they really do so by working with popular opera themes, melodies invented by the masses, even the cries of street vendors, and songs of the blacks." Toward the end of the nineteenth century a historian from Santiago, Cuba, said the following:

> There exist an infinite number of bolero singers. With nonsensical verses they manage to compose pretty little songs on occasion. At other times they create songs reminiscent of music heard in times past, accompanied by accordion and maracas. Danzones are a common form of the latter. It matters little to such ignorant individuals whether they ruin melodies taken from good music, from sublime

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[19] Frederick William Hugh Migeod, *A View of Sierra Leone* (New York: Brentano's, 1927), 192. [F.O.]

[20] Ortiz does not include a citation here, but he does include two references to books by R. R. Marett. They are *The Threshold of Religion* (London: Methuen, 1909) and *Faith, Hope, and Charity in Primitive Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1932).

[21] A habanera written by Cuban composer Eduardo Sánchez de Fuentes in 1892.

[22] José García de Arboleya, best known for his 1852 publication *Manual de la Isla de Cuba.*

> theatrical scenes. They trample the divine notes of “Spirto gentil” from the opera *La Favorita,*[23] and the final rondo of *La sonámbula*,[24] for example, to the extent that the dance is punctuated by the sound of the timbales.[25]

The same thing has occurred frequently in cheap popular music from Spain. Cortijo protested against this tendency, the ultimate form of sarcasm to which classical music can be subjected. In the midst of a ruckus of disarticulated sounds, the cornet or other instrument of greatest volume—without adhering in any way to any artistic rules and whether or not it is in tune—may impudently perform pieces from *Rigoletto, Favorita, Cavallería, Juramento, Marina,* or any other opera or zarzuela that is of greater appeal.[26] The phenomenon has been observed in African American music from the United States as well: “It is recognized that jazz borrows or steals most of its melodies.”[27]

But “repopularizations” or “readaptations” are also a frequent occurrence. Musics that have died may be “reincarnated” and heard again as the years pass, “transvalorated” in time to new purposes. Nearly a century after it was composed in Cuba, based on one of our folkloric melodies, Gottschalks’s *Cubana* once again began to create a stir internationally as a music characteristic of Cuba. But this time it took place through plagiarism, without recognition of the name of the actual author and disguised by the new title “The Peanut Vendor.”[28]

> The celebrated “Peanut Vendor,” it is widely asserted, is nothing other than the danza *Cubana,* note for note! In the same way, and at the same time as “The Peanut Vendor,” the popular Afro-Cuban song “Mama Inés” circulated throughout Cuba and the Americas and provoked litigation over its intellectual property rights. The tribunals declared the song to be anonymous, noting that it had already been sung by a carnival band consisting of black performers in Villa Clara province, Cuba in 1868. The song circulated again in the twentieth

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[23] Composed by Gaetano Donizetti in 1840.

[24] A ballet by Vincenzo Bellini, written in 1831.

[25] Laureano Fuentes Matons, *Las artes en Santiago de Cuba* (Santiago: Imprenta Ravelo, 1893), 192. [F.O.]

[26] Ortiz includes only a partial citation in his bibliography to this author, and no book with the title he lists (*Música popular española*) appears to have been written by any author named Cortijo. He may have intended to reference this work: L. Auteur Cortijo, *La música popular y los músicos célebres de la América Latina* (Barcelona: Editorial Maucci, 1914).

[27] Paul Fritz Laubenstein, “Jazz, Debit and Credit,” *The Musical Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (October 1929): 606–24. [F.O.]

[28] Alain Locke, *The Negro and His Music* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1936). [F.O.]

> century when the very well known composers Ernesto Lecuona and Eliseo Grenet included it in their zarzuela *La niña Rita*.[29]

The same thing can be observed in the most folkloric repertoire. The famous Chambelona associated with the Liberal politicians of 1908 was already an old song when they repopularized it. It was well known in the 1880s. Ramón A. Catalá states that the journalist Felipe López Briñas improvised this quatrain for the Havana daily *La lucha:*

> Since Chinchilla went away
> And Polavieja has come
> I no longer eat margarine
> Nor *ropa vieja*
> ¡Aé, aé, aé la chambelona![30]

We do not know what the music sounded like, but the chorus was taken from a song popular at that time that the journalist used in his satiric political verse.

Consider too the song "La cañandonga," so popular around 1920, that appears to have been danced in Madrid in the middle of the nineteenth century. E. Gutiérrez Gamero attests to it.[31] "It [the cañandonga] was a slow dance, they say they learned it in Cuba, to the rhythm of the habanera. It is quite striking, with gracious poses that couples adopt. None of the movements are lascivious, of course, and as they dance the participants sing in unison":

> Mama, I want to eat
> Some of that tasty fruit
> I want rose apple
> Star fruit, peaches
> I want cashew apple too
> With *cañandonga*[32]

This celebrated resurgence of folkloric music demonstrates its great vitality. But we must also recognize the ease with which local musicians of the

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[29] Juan M. García Garófalo, "Los orígenes del son 'Mamá Inés,'" *Archivos del folklore* 5, no. 2 (June 1930): 160–63. [F.O.]

[30] A. M. Catalá, "Del lejano ayer," *Diario de la Marina* (May 1930), no specific date, no page. [F.O.] The original lyrics of the quatrain are: "Desde que se fue Chinchilla y ha venido Polavieja, yo no como . . . mantequilla ni tampoco 'ropa vieja,' ¡Aé, aé, aé la chambelona!" Ropa vieja is a traditional Cuban dish made of pulled beef in red sauce.

[31] Emilio Gutiérrez Gamero, *Mis primeros ochenta años (memorias). Segundo tomo, Lo que me dejé en el tintero* (Madrid: Librería y Editorial Madrid, 1927). [F.O.]

[32] The scientific name of cañandonga is *Cassia grandis*, and the tree it grows on is known as a pink shower tree in English, but the fruit doesn't seem to have a corresponding English name.

Americas, influenced by the community-based sociality of black artistic forms, appropriate their themes. Inspired by the common heritage and anonymous creations that circulate among the masses, they profit from them without compensation for the rights associated with individual ownership that are only being recognized and guaranteed in recent years. Copyright has been pursued with such earnestness that malicious litigation has been filed with the intent to "register" the orthodox and traditional songs and dances of Santería as individual property.

Verses sung in nonstandard Spanish, influenced by the postabolition black population, marked the entry of Cuban-born poets of color into popular literature. This danceable song repertoire (frequently satirical) is always variable in form, fleeting, usually anonymous, and with its roots in folkloric expression. It remains an abundant wellspring of poetry that resides in the population.

This superabundance of orality, poetry, and verse-making has attained broad efflorescence in Cuba owing to black influences. They first appeared when Afro-Cubanisms began to be translated into the Spanish language, to mix with Hispanic elements in the great stream of creolized culture. This is what made a French visitor to Cuba in 1850 say, "There exists no other country with a greater number of poets and improvisers."[33] For the same reason Menéndez y Pelayo could write of Cuba that "in no other place can one find such genius and facility for creating verse, even if much of it is tainted or spoiled by literary cronyism or by lack of all healthy discipline."[34] The aforementioned critic also noted the profusion of improvising *repentista* singers, commentators, and poets.

> The eighteenth century witnessed the rise of improvisers in the interior of the island. They made a facile display of their ingenuity in inventing décimas [10-line verses] and epic ballads, naturally disfigured by bad taste and vices born of a lack of literary study and contact. Among them, commentators mention the medical doctor and pharmacist Don José Surí y Águila (1696–1762) of Santa Clara most often. He was known for putting medical prescriptions into verse, and he had a strange ability to compose improvised praises for processions and religious festivities, reciting them in front of the images of the saints . . . Even Plácido, the mulatto martyr who produced memorable works in the nineteenth century, was susceptible to such moments of literary carelessness; he never recognized that they resulted from particular ethnic and historical circumstances. We

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[33] Gustave D'Harponville D'Hespel, *La Reine des Antilles*. (Paris: Gide et Baudry, 1850), 251. [F.O.]

[34] Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de la poesía hispano-americana,* vol. 1 (Madrid: V. Suárez, 1911), 289. [F.O.]

> might refer to these tendencies in today's language as improvisations, musicality, banality, or *guataquería,* without even considering the anecdotal and biting commentary in Plácido's improvisations that were never written down or published.
>
> The compositions that Plácido produced, out of such unhappy circumstances and yet with such richness, included odes to the queens Cristina and Isabella and songs of praise to his numerous patrons, famous citizens, or simply landowners and capitalists. They were frequently nonsense, but a sonorous form of nonsense. The author often didn't know what he was saying, but the result pleased the ear, and when he described or characterized another he became a different person. His artistic qualities are almost all on the surface of his work, but they are brilliant. If one considers Plácido to have been an official improviser, I would have no reservation in describing him as one of the few improvisers who has been fortunate enough to leave something dignified to posterity. He squandered the majority of his talent in trivial pursuits or in commissioned verses, and often became a fabricator of empty words, contaminated by all the vices and poor taste of the colonial era and of amateur rhyming.[35]

This Spanish critic failed to mention the horrific social conditions in Cuba during its period of slavery.[36]

These songs of choteo, punishment, or sanction that we might today describe as a repertoire of "social defense," are numerous. They have proliferated greatly, like the sentences of a judge upon those in a penitentiary. The songs appear one after another, in response to whatever cases attract public attention, but not the front-page headlines. They might comment on an act of cowardice or an accident during which someone was run over and mention by analogy when a despicable act has taken place in the past so that the public remembers such antecedents. Sometimes the verses commenting on contemporary events appear immediately after they have taken place. A short time ago, for instance, a military figure known for his corpulence fell into destitute circumstances. Two days later, performers began to sing a song in shows, cabarets, and on the radio entitled "*En Camaguey cayó el gordo*" ("The Big One Came Down in Camagüey"). It appeared to be a reference to the winning of a large lottery prize and not to the contemporary news event, which itself was also *gordo* (fat, serious).

Nevertheless, many satirical songs are personal and mention the name of their protagonist in their lyrics. This reveals the real-life, anecdotal inspiration for the piece and personalizes its jesting sarcasm, which often could not be more tenacious. For example, in Africa there are "songs of ridicule" chastising homosexuals, and the same is true in Cuba. I remember one old rumba guaguancó whose verses aggressively attacked a lesbian woman in her forties, well known and envied for her economic status. Fifteen or so years ago the song was sung by one of the *clave* groups in Havana's carnival, provoking a bloody response. I am aware of other songs critiquing lesbians (such women are known as *alacpata* in Lucumí and *nkento muyakala* in Kongo), sodomites (*addodié* in Lucumí, *manganene* and *yankún* in Kongo, *efónkiba*, *aboró*, and *guasikundi* in ñáñigo). Nevertheless, the punitive force of such lyrics is limited in Cuba because the condemnation is not always used consistently or personalized. And the "Cuban tribe" is now not as cohesive and severe in its views of such behavior as African tribes across the sea. Openly homosexual behavior is more apparent every day in Santería festivities, to the great displeasure of babalaos and those religious practitioners (Lucumí *olochas*[37] and Kongo tata-ngangas) who maintain pure, orthodox practices. This depraved period following the world wars has resulted in great laxity and the spread, even the overt exhibitionism, of homosexuality among whites, even in elite society and respected establishments. Gay people no longer have the same inhibitions maintained by past social repulsion in the face of a "nefarious sin." Contemporary picaresque songs contribute more to complacent tolerance of homosexuality rather than to expressing displeasure.

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[35] Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia,* 216, 261. [F.O.]

[36] For allusions to this aspect of Plácido's witty and sarcastic lyrics, see Jorge Castellanos, "El Plácido desconocido," *Magazine de Hoy* (Havana), March 19, 1950. [F.O.]

Some baile de maní singers discussed earlier were true griots, or variety show actors as we might describe them today: they sang taunting, improvised songs (*cantos de puya* or *de managua*) as they performed pugilistic dances. And by means of this undeniably artistic profession they earned their living, traveling to small towns and sugar plantations to entertain people and earn money through their challenges to others.

No one can doubt the presence of griots or related African figures in Cuba. Years ago it was common to see old black men among the population who earned a living by playing on a black instrument: a monochord string instrument, a little drum, or a marímbula, generally accompanied by a companion who played a scraper, a pair of maracas, or the timbales. I can still recall that about 1920 near Remedios I heard an old Cuban-born griot recite the story of the ungrateful boa (*el majá ingrato*). He was of Kongo origin, known in his language as Enkoria kuata. He earned a living almost like a beggar, singing popular songs of the day and performing house to house, in cafes, storefronts, and in local festivals. Sometimes he included local satirical commentary in his lyrics. The public tolerated this, it was said, because he was almost always drunk. I do not doubt that alcoholic spirits sometimes inspired his verses more than the spirits of the ancestors. But in any case he embodied his ancestral traditions to such an extent that when he found himself before a benevolent public he sang verses in a Kongo language. On sugar plantations and the towns of Havana and Matanzas provinces, perhaps no figure of this sort was mentioned more frequently than Sabás Caraballo, a great improviser in African languages and in Spanish, a lead singer (gallo) in improvised poetic duels, a singer of yuka repertoire, and a guitar player.

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[37] Initiates.

Final Comments

My intent has been only to write a general introduction to the study of black African music. The data and commentary that I have presented in this book and in others cited previously should be sufficient to clearly establish the existence of music, poetry, and original sonic arts among the black population. All of them represent positive human and aesthetic contributions, capable of being accommodated within universal forms of art. Those data are also enough to make a few preliminary ethnographic, historical, and social judgments that may be useful in the study of common, folkloric art forms of the Cuban people that hearken back to their African wellsprings.

Appendix

Selected Publications by Fernando Ortiz on Afro-Cuban Music and Cultural History

1906 “César Lombroso.” *Derecho y sociología* año 1, no. 4 (April 1906): 9–16; no. 5 (May 1906): 91–96.
“El fundador de una ciencia: César Lombroso.” *Cuba y América* 21, no. 5 (April 1906): 70–71.
Los negros brujos. Apuntes para un estudio de etnología criminal. Madrid: Librería de Fernando Fé.
“Teología bruja.” *El Fígaro* año 22, no. 29 (July 1906): 374.

1907 “Las comparsas.” *Cuba y América* año 10, 23 (9): 137–38.

1908 “Los brujos afrocubanos.” *Cuba y América* 27, no. 11 (July 1908): 3–8.

1910 “Folklore cubano—A Jesús Castellanos.” *Letras* año 4, época 2, no. 49 (December 1910): 486.
“Las rebeliones de los afrocubanos.” *Revista bimestre cubana* 4, no. 2 (March–April 1910): 97–112.

1912 “Las rebeliones de los negros en Cuba.” *Revista de administración* 2, no. 9 (May 1912): 157–64.

1913 *Entre cubanos*. Paris: Librería P. Ollendorff.
“Los comedores de niños.” *Gráfico* 2, no. 17 (July 1913): 5–6.
“Torre, José María de la.” In *Lo que fuimos y lo que somos o La Habana antigua y moderna*, vii–xviii. Havana: Cervantes.

1914 “El lamentable suceso del Prado.” Havana: *La Discusión*, May 22, 1914, 9, 12, 14.

1916 “Las insurrecciones afrocubanas.” *La reforma social* 8, no. 2 (September 1916): 239–47.

Los negros esclavos; estudio sociológico y de derecho público. Havana: Revista Bimestre Cubana.
"Origen de los afrocubanos." *Cuba contemporánea* 11, no. 3 (July 1916): 213–39.

1919 *Las fases de la evolución religiosa.* Havana: Tip. Moderna.

1920 "La fiesta afrocubana del 'Día de Reyes.'" *Revista bimestre cubana* 15, no. 1 (January–June 1920): 5–26.

1921 "Los cabildos afrocubanos." *Revista bimestre cubana* 16, no. 1 (January–February 1921): 5–39.

1922 "Los afronegrismos de nuestro lenguaje." *Revista bimestre cubana* 17, no. 6 (November–December 1922): 321–36.

1923 [Juan del Morro]. "La sociedad del folklore cubano." *Revista bimestre cubana* 18, no. 1 (January–February 1923): 47–52.
Un catauro de cubanismos: apuntes lexicográficos. Havana: no publisher.

1924 "Actas de la 'sociedad del folklore cubano.'" *Archivos del folklore cubano* 1, no. 1 (January 1924): 76–90.
"El folklore azucarero: Costumbres populares cubanas." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 1, no. 2 (April 1924): 176–77.
Glosario de afronegrismos. Havana: El Siglo XX.
"Las piedras del rayo: Folklore religioso del cubano." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 1, no. 2 (April 1924): 172–73.
"Personajes del folklore afrocubano." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 1, no. 1 (January 1924): 62–75; no. 2 (April 1924): 116–19.

1925 "Chocolongo. Cumbumba. Bómboro fotoro. Chichígua. Juegos infantiles cubanos." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 1, no. 3 (May 1925): 274–77.

1926 "La repatriación post mortem entre los afrocubanos." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 2, no. 3 (October 1926): 271–73.
"Los negros curros." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 2, no. 3 (October 1926): 209–22; no. 4 (June 1927): 285, 325; 3, no. 1 (January–March 1928): 27–50; no. 2 (April–June 1928): 160–75; no. 3 (July–September 1928): 250–56; no. 4 (October–December 1928): 51–53.

1927 "La copla política en Cuba." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 2, no. 4 (June 1927): 391–92; 3, no. 2 (April–June 1928): 177–79.
"Los matiabos: Folklore religioso del cubano." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 2, no. 4 (June 1927): 387–89.

1928 "Cultura, cultura y cultura, en lugar de raza, religión e idioma." *El mundo* (December 1928): 1, 23.
"El 'ajá' de las habaneras." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 3, no. 4 (October–December 1928): 38–47.

"El baile negro." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 3, no. 1 (January–March 1928): 86–88.

1929 "Cuentos afrocubanos." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 4, no. 2 (April–June 1929): 97–112.

[Juan del Morro]. "Cultura, no raza." *Revista bimestre cubana* 24, no. 5 (September–October 1929): 716–20.

"El cocorícamo y otros conceptos teoplásmicos del folklore afrocubano." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 4, no. 4 (October–December 1929): 289–312.

"El estudio de la música afrocubana." *Musicalia* 5 (January–February 1929): 169–74.

"El vocablo folklore." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 4, no. 3 (July–September 1929): 206–8.

"José Antonio Saco y sus ideas cubanas." *Revista bimestre cubana* 24, no. 2 (March–April 1929): 171–94; no. 3 (May–June 1929): 360–409; no. 4 (July–August 1929): 513–70; no. 5 (September–October 1929): 739–78; no. 6 (November–December 1929): 816–86.

"Los afrocubanos dientimellados." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 4, no. 1 (January–March 1929): 16–26.

"Ni racismos ni xenofobias." *Revista bimestre cubana* 24, no. 1 (January–February 1929): 6–19.

"Pregones populares." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 4, no. 4 (October–December 1929), 375.

1930 Espadero, Nicolás Ruiz and Fernando Ortiz. "El centenario de Luis M. Gottschalk." *Revista bimestre cubana* 26, no. 2 (November–December 1930): 254–63.

[Juan del Morro]. "El estudio del folklore y su contenido." *Archivos del folklore cubano* 5, no. 2 (April–June 1930): 173–74.

1934 "De la música afrocubana. Un estímulo para su estudio." *Universidad de la Habana* vol. 1 no. 3 (May–Jun 1934), 111–25.

"La poesía mulata, presentación de Eusebia Cosme, la recitadora." *Revista bimestre cubana* 24, nos. 2–3 (September–December 1934): 205–13.

1935 *La 'clave' xilofónica de la música cubana; ensayo etnográfico*. Havana: Molina y Cía.

"Los últimos versos mulatos." *Revista bimestre cubana* 35, no. 3 (May–June 1935): 321–36.

1936 "Afirmaciones de cultura." *Ultra* 1, no. 1 (July 1936): 79–81.

"Dante de Laytano: Os africanismos do dialecto gaucho." *Revista bimestre cubana* 38, no. 2 (September–December 1936): 306–8.

"De la rumba y el bongó." *Polémica* año 2, no. 3 (May 1936): 3–5.

"Más acerca de la poesía mulata. Escorzos para un estudio." *Revista bimestre cubana* 37, no. 1 (January–February 1936): 23–39; no. 2 (March–April 1936): 218–27; no. 3 (May–June 1936): 439–43.

1937 “El emblema de la sociedad de estudios afrocubanos.” *Estudios afrocubanos* 1, no. 1 (1937): 11–14.
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“Los ‘Santos’ de la religión lucumí.” *Bohemia* año 29, no. 28 (Jul 1937): 18–19, 51–52.
“Luis Palés Matos: Poemas afroantillanos.” *Estudios afrocubanos* 1, no. 1 (1937): 156–59.
“Viaje folklórico.” *Revista cubana* 8, nos. 22–24 (April–June 1937): 231–36.

1938 “Arturo Clavijo Tisseur: A ritmo de tambor, versos negros.” *Estudios afrocubanos* 2, no. 1 (1938): 126–27.
“Dos nuevos libros del folklore afrocubano.” *Revista bimestre cubana* 42, no. 3 (November–December 1938): 307–20.
“El negro en el teatro español.” *Ultra* 4, no. 24 (June 1938): 553–55.
“Lachatañere, Rómulo.” In *¡Oh, mío Yemayá!; cuentos y cantos negros,* vii–ix. Mexico: El Arte.
“Saco, la esclavitud y los negros.” *Revista bimestre cubana* 42, nos. 1–2 (July–October 1938): 37–64.

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“La cubanidad y los negros.” *Estudios afrocubanos* 3, nos. 1–4 (1939): 3–15.

1940 “Cabrera, Lydia.” In *Cuentos negros de Cuba*. Havana: La Verónica, 7–11.
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“Los factores humanos de la cubanidad.” *Revista bimestre cubana* 45, no. 2 (March–April 1940): 161–86.

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1942 “La cultura no puede ser neutral.” *Ultra* 11, no. 65 (January 1942): 86.
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1943 *Las cuatro culturas indias de Cuba*. Havana: Arellano y Cía.
On the Relations between Blacks and Whites. Washington DC: Pan American Union, Division of Intellectual Cooperation.
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1944 “Las cuatro culturas de los indios de Cuba.” *Acta americana* 2, nos. 1–2 (January–June 1944): 79–84.
“Urgencias de la cultura en Cuba.” *Revista bimestre cubana* 53, no. 3 (May–June 1944): 242–49.

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“Las razas y sus olores.” *Revista de América* 3, no. 9 (September 1945): 321–28.
“Las razas de las almas.” *La nueva democracia* 26, no. 9 (November 1945): 3–7, 30–32.
“Más contactos de las culturas.” *Cuba y la U.R.S.S.* año 1, no. 1 (August 1945): 1.
“‘Raza:’ voz de mala cuna y de mala vida.” *Cuadernos americanos* año 4, no. 5 (September–October 1945): 77–107.

1946 “Algunos afronegrismos en la toponimia de Cuba.” *Afroamérica* 2, no. 3 (January 1946): 91–112.
El engaño de las razas. Havana: Páginas.
“El instrumento que los indocubanos llamaba ‘tabaco’: corrección de un error.” *Revista tabaco* año 14, no. 152 (January 1946): 17–22.
“Estudiemos la música afrocubana.” *Estudios afrocubanos* 5 (1945–1946): 7–18.
“La habilidad musical del negro.” *Estudios afrocubanos* 5 (1945–1946): 110–12.
“Las comparsas populares del carnaval habanero.” *Estudios afrocubanos* 5 (1945–1946): 129–47.
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Glossary

Abakuás. Also known as *ñáñigos*. Groups of predominantly Afro-Cuban men who belong to secret societies of African origin (from the Cross Delta region between Cameroon and Nigeria). Abakuá "potencias" or brotherhoods perform a variety of unique songs and dances and use instruments particular to their group.

Abasí. The supreme god of the Ibibio and the Efik people. In Abakuá ceremony, the Abasí is personified by an officiant.

Aberikulá. An adjective used to describe single- or double-headed drums (usually batás) that have not been ritually consecrated and are not believed to contain *aña* or spiritual power. Aberikulá instruments are employed in informal or secular contexts, not in religious events.

Aberisún. The name of an Abakuá diablito or ritual masked dancer who performs as part of ritual events in honor of Ékue and others recounting the origin of the Efik people.

Abotinado. Literally, "in the form of an ankle boot." Used to describe the shape of most Arará drums.

Achébolisá. An Arará drum played from a seated position with two sticks or played in pairs by one musician.

Acheré. A ritual rattle used in Santería ceremonies to induce spirit possession.

Ágbe. Also *aggüe*. A Yoruba-derived term for gourd and, by extension, for the *chekeré*.

Aggüe. See *Ágbe*.

Agógo. Also *agogo* or *agogó*. A type of clapperless iron bell associated with sacred Yoruba-influenced rituals in Cuba.

Aguidafí. A crooked stick used when performing with Arará drums.

Akpuón. Also *akpwon* or *akpwón*. The lead singer of Yoruba-influenced religious repertoire.

Aña (also *añá*). A divine spiritual force (orisha) believed to reside in consecrated batá drums.

Anaquillé. The name for effigies carried by Afro-Cuban revelers through the streets of Havana on Kings' Day in the nineteenth century. Also an Afro-Cuban dance associated with the colonial era.

Ankorí. The vocal chorus in Yoruba-derived religious rituals.

Aplintí. An Arará drum played from a seated position with sticks and/or hands.

Arará. The Arará are an Afro-Cuban ethnic group associated with the ancient kingdom of Dahomey. Their name derives from the coastal kingdom of Arada, conquered by the Dahomey in the eighteenth century. Most Arará descendants today live in Matanzas province. Arará drums are single headed and vary in size and shape.

Asoyí. A deity of the Arará who is Catholicized as St. Lazarus.

Auó. The term for a drumhead among Yoruba descendants in Cuba.

Babalao. A male priest of divination in the Santería religion.

Baile de maní. See *Maní, juego y baile de*.

Bantu. A linguistic designation encompassing hundreds of ethnic groups spread throughout central and southern Africa. Synonymous with Kongo.

Batás. The most important and most sacred drums associated with Afro-Cuban Santería, batás are hourglass-shaped drums with two heads. They come in sets of three, of differing sizes, including the *iyá* or large "mother drum," *itótele* (middle), and *okónkolo* (smallest). Batás are used to bring down to earth the orishas, or ancestor-saints, during religious ceremonies. The drums are consecrated in special rituals and are believed to contain spiritual energy.

Bembé. A term for Afro-Cuban religious celebrations of a lighter, less formal nature. More broadly, the term has also become synonymous with "party."

Bembé drum. A single- or double-headed drum originally made from a tree trunk. Typically, bembé drums come in sets of three, each of a different size, similar to the batás. Bembé traditions derive from both Lucumí and Kongo influences, though the drums are used to perform primarily Yoruba-influenced music today. Bembé ensembles may play either sacred or secular repertoire, though primarily the former.

Bilongo. A spell, curse, or conjuring, which can be of a malicious or benevolent nature. Ortiz ([1923] 1985, 76–77) suggests the term is of Lukumí origin. See also *embó*.

Biyumba. A specific form of Kongo-influenced religious practice in Cuba, one of many including Kimbisa, Mayombe, Palo Monte, and others.

Bombo. In Cuba, a large one- or two-sided bass drum typically used in theatrical orchestras, military bands, or carnival bands.

Bonkó enchemiyá. A single-headed drum, and the lead instrument in Abakuá processional ensembles that frequently perform with masked dancers. It is cylindrical and fashioned from long strips of wood.

Brujo. Sorcerer, witch, witch-doctor. The pejorative term that many Cuban elites used to describe practitioners of Afro-Cuban religions through at least the 1930s.

Cabildo. Literally, "council." In colonial-era Cuba, a social organization formed by African slaves along ethnic or tribal lines.

Cachimbo. In musical terminology, the highest-pitched drum used in yuka performance.

Caja. Literally, "box." The largest drum used in yuka performance and to accompany *bailes de maní*.

Cajero. Literally, player of the box. The term *caja* is usually used to refer to the largest and lowest-sounding drum in a given ensemble, often the lead instrument.

Calenda. Also *calinda* or *caringa*. A term for Kongo-derived couple dances similar to Cuban rumba and found for many years throughout the Caribbean and other parts of Latin America, as well as in New Orleans.

Capataz (pl. *capataces*) Literally, leader, head, or chief. One of the terms used in reference to the head of a cabildo.

Carabalí. A local term in Cuba to denote ancestral ties to the Calabar or Cross River Delta region in Africa, between present-day Nigeria and Cameroon.

Castañuelas. An instrument similar to the castanets made from two wooden discs that strike together on their inner edges.

Chachá. Literally, "butt." The name for the smaller of the two heads on batá drums. Alternately, an externally sounded maraca (or inverted maraca) made from a small gourd surrounded by a net of beads.

Chaguoró. Also *Ichaoró.* Leather straps with many bells attached that are tied onto the shell of the iyá drum and provide a secondary sound source as it is played.

Changó Tedún. A Kongo cabildo in early twentieth-century Havana. It was frequented by Fernando Ortiz during his research into Afro-Cuban religions. *See also* cabildo.

Chekeré. Also *chékere, chéquere, shékere,* or *shekeré.* A Yoruba-derived percussion instrument consisting of a dried gourd cut open at the top and around which a net of beads, shells, or seeds is attached. The instrument can produce a tone by striking it on the closed end with the palm, or by shaking it rhythmically.

Choncholí. In eastern Cuba, the name of a dark black bird with a metallic sheen, known in the rest of Cuba as *totí*.

Chumba. A ritual vessel usually made out of porcelain that represents the spirit of a particular orisha or deity in Santería.

Cofradía. Brotherhood or guild. See also *cabildo, hermandad.*

Comparsas. Street bands consisting of percussionists, trumpet players, and/or other horns, singers, and dancers. They have their origins in Afro-Cuban ensembles that paraded through streets on Kings' Day (January 6) during colonial times. As of the twentieth century, the bands have been organized by neighborhood and typically perform during the pre-Lenten season.

Congo. A term used in Cuba to designate ethnic groups whose origins are among the Bantu-speaking groups of central and southern Africa, synonymous with Bantu.

Contrapunteos. Also *contrapunteos de puyas.* See *desafíos.*

Curandero. A popular healer or faith healer.

Dahomey. An ancient kingdom that existed in what is now Benin. In Cuba, Dahomeyans became known as Arará, a name that derives from the coastal kingdom of Arada. Most Arará descendants today live in Matanzas province.

Desafíos. Also *contrapunteos* or *contrapunteos de puyas.* Sung poetic dueling. The practice is widespread in Afro-descendant traditions in Cuba and throughout Latin America, as well as in Iberian and Arab-derived performance. The term *puya* refers to the verbal "barbs" associated with the style.

Diablitos. Literally, "little devils." Dancers who wore masked costumes in an African style, usually representing supernatural spirits. Also referred to as "írimes" or "íremes," they are important figures in Abakuá rituals. They frequently took to the streets as part of Kings' Day celebrations in nineteenth-century Cuba.

Dos Golpes. The medium-sized chekeré of the standard three-instrument ensemble. It is known as "two hits" because of the rhythms it plays that closely imitate the bell pattern and includes two open tones performed in quick succession.

Egungun. Also *egun*. The term for spirits of the dead in Yoruba-influenced rituals. Also, masked figures that represent spirits of the dead in ritual contexts.

Ekobio. An Abakuá initiate.

Ekón. A clapperless iron bell associated primarily with Abakuá music.

Ékue. Also *Ekué.* A sacred, single-headed friction drum through which the voice of the divine is said to speak to Abakuás. Its sound is said to resemble the roar of a leopard, and it takes its name from the word for leopard in the Efik language.

Ekueñón. A dignitary of Abakuá rituals, the Ekueñón has the role of "breaking open" or starting the ritual through spoken prayers and keeping time on a drum. He is also referred to as the "hunter," and the "executioner."

Embó. A magical spell or amulet, used in the practice of witchcraft, frequently of a malevolent nature. More generally, spell or witchcraft. See also *bilongo.*

Embori (or *mbori*). A goat. An "*embori mapá*" (*mbori mapá*) is the ritual sacrifice of a goat.

Enkomo. A set of three cylinder-shaped wooden drums played by an Abakuá processional ensemble, accompanying the larger bonkó enchemiyá drum. The names of the three enkomo drums are the *obiapá*, *kuchi yeremá*, and *binkomé.*

Enkríkamo. An Abakuá ritual leader, known as "chief of the íremes," and owner of the enkríkamo drum that commands them and guards the fambá or inner sanctum.

Ensaladillas. Afro-Cuban groups from Santiago de Cuba that performed satirical sung poetry in the mid-nineteenth century.

Enú. Literally, "mouth." The term for the larger of the two heads on batá drums.

Enyoró. An Abakuá funeral rite. The enyoró may have varying degrees of solemnity, depending on the status of the initiate or official who has died.

Eribó. A round, single-headed drum of the Abakuá, representing a metaphysical being. The head of the instrument is often covered with ritual drawings, and it has four *muñones* (plumed rods) attached on the sides, representing the four most important positions within the Abakuá hierarchy.

Eyá Aranla. A hall, patio, or large room in a house used by Afro-Cuban religious devotees. It is used to perform songs, dances, and drumming to the orishas during the public part of ritual events.

Fambá. The hidden inner room or temple where the most secret parts of Abakuá rituals are performed. It is constructed near a ceiba tree, if possible, at the edge of the isoroko, or patio, where more public rites take place.

Floreos. Embellishments performed on the chekeré or other instruments. Such improvisations are also known as payasadas.

Foribalé. A reverent greeting given to a *yaguó* or novice in Afro-Cuban religious rituals, or to the orishas.

Fundamento. A Cuban-Spanish word for nganga, spirit, or supernatural force.

Gallo. Literally, "rooster." The lead vocalist in yuka performance, or other Kongo-derived vocal traditions. Also a semifinalist in the baile de maní.

Ganga. (Spanish-Cuban: *Gangá*). Along with the Ashanti and Mina, the Ganga were African ethnic groups from various regions located on the Gold Coast, West Africa. Ortiz suggests that the Ganga are related to the Ewe.

Garabato. A curved stick used to play various drums such as the ñonofó of the Arará.

Glorias. A name for large religious beads used in constructing some *chekeré* instruments.

Guagua. A stick pattern played on the shell of a drum or wood block that accompanies yuka performance.

Guajeo. In present-day usage, the term refers to repeated, open-ended vamps that serve as the basis for improvisation in secular dance music. It appears to have been used earlier to refer to songs devoted to the orishas of a “lighter” or less ritualistic nature than those required for worship.

Güegüé. An Arará drum (of possible Gangá origin) held up by a mobile iron tripod. It is played with two fine rods made from the bush known locally as rascabarriga (belly-scratcher).

Güirero. An ággue or chekeré player.

Güiro. Literally, gourd. The term is also used to refer to percussion instruments made out of gourds.

Hermandad. Brotherhood. See also cabildo, cofradía.

Ichaoró. See *chaguoró*.

Ifá. A system of divination derived from West Africa and associated with Cuban Santería.

Igbodu. Literally, sacred throne room. A sanctuary within a Yoruba-influenced Afro-Cuban religious temple or home where special ritual items are kept. Formal ceremonies begin in this space with the performance of instrumental religious salutes on the batás.

Igdafí. A term for the sticks used by Arará drummers.

Ilú. The Yoruba term for drum.

Inspiración. An improvised melodic line.

Íreme (*írime*). See diablito.

Isaroko. A small square patio or open space where the public rites of Abakuá groups are held.

Isué. A religious authority within the Abakuá tradition and the custodian of the ritual seseribó drum.

Itón. A wooden rod or staff carried by some diablitos and officiants in Abakuá rituals.

Itótele. The name of the middle-sized batá drum in the three-drum ensemble.

Iyá. Literally, “mother.” The name of the largest, lead drum in the three-drum batá ensemble.

Iyamba. One of the top four hierarchical positions in Abakuá societies. The Iyamba is considered the “highest king” and carries a staff.

Iyesá. Descendants of the Ijesa people of southwest Nigeria. It is also the name of a historical kingdom founded in the fourteenth century.

Judío. Literally, Jewish. A term used to describe unconsecrated drums, as in “un tambor judío.”

Juego de maní. See *Maní, juego y baile de*.

Jurado. Formally tested, consecrated, and recognized as ritually competent. The term is used frequently in conjunction with batá drummers.

Kimbisa. A specific form of Kongo-influenced religious practices in Cuba; one of many including Mayombe, Palo Monte, and others.

Kinfuiti. A single-headed friction drum with a stick inserted into the head that is rubbed to produce sound. The *kinfuiti* is associated with Kongo-derived Kimbisa religious practices.

Lucumí. A local Cuban adjective that references anything derived from or influenced by practitioners of Santería. These days the term is associated with Yoruba heritage.

Macagua songs. Also *majagua* songs. The name for verbal sung duels among rural Kongo-descendant groups in Cuba. See also *desafíos*. Ortiz mentions many related terms used to describe such verbal dueling including sacar majagua or hacer lilaya.

Majino. One of the three subethnic groups (the other two are Sabalú and Dahomey) of the Arará in Cuba.

Makuto. Talisman pouches associated with Kongo religions such as Palo Monte.

Makuta drums. A pair of single-headed, tall drums played in Kongo cabildos and other religious gatherings for purposes of dancing. One of the drums is barrel shaped, while the other is cylindrical, and the musicians stand while they play. Makuta can also refer to the dance performed to the accompaniment of these instruments.

Makuta, toque de. A form of religious drumming and dance associated with Kongo traditions, and especially in Afro-Cuban cabildos of the nineteenth century. Single-headed, cylindrical makuta drums are said to be an antecedent to the modern conga drum.

Mamarracho. An Arab-derived term for clown. In Cuba, an Afro-Cuban masked dancer associated with nineteenth-century Kings' Day celebrations.

Mamarracho celebrations. Carnivalesque celebrations associated in the past with Santiago de Cuba in the month of June.

Maní, juego y baile de. An African-derived pugilistic dance for men. It derives its name from the Gangá-Maní, the local Cuban term for the *Cono* people who live in Northern Guinea as well as in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In maní competitions, a lead dancer tries to knock other unsuspecting participants out of a circle with a swift blow, to the accompaniment of song and dance.

Manisero A maní player/dancer.

Masango. An evil spell of Kongo derivation. Also a magic talisman.

Mayombe. A specific form of Kongo-influenced religious practices in Cuba; one of many including Biyumba, Kimbisa, Palo Monte, and others.

Mfumbi. A spirit of the dead in Kongo-influenced religions, and an active force in the present.

Mina. African ethnic group from the Gold Coast, West Africa.

Mokongo. One of the four top hierarchical positions within the Abakuá. In ritual processions, the Mokongo follows behind the Iyamba, and his role symbolizes supreme justice and military power.

Moruá Yuánsa. An officiant in Abakuá ceremonies who serves as the lead ritual singer.

Mula. Literally, "mule." The midsized drum used in yuka performance.

Muñón (pl. *muñones*). A plumed rod or scepter used in Abakuá ceremonies.

Náñigos. See *Abakuás*.

Nasakó. An Abakuá ritual figure who personifies a sorcerer.

Nganga (also *prenda*). This term refers both to the spirits of the dead that Kongo priests summon in order to perform services or request advice, and by extension to the ritual iron vessels used to summon them.

Nganguleros. Those who summon or interact with spirits of the dead in Kongo-derived religions.

Ngoma. The larger of two drums used in makuta performances.

Ngoma nkila. Also *nusumbi*. The smaller of two drums used in makuta performances.

Nkisi. In Cuba, supernatural spirit powers utilized by Kongo religious priests or tatangangas, or the ritual object it inhabits. In the Congo, the term referred originally to small wooden statuettes of a ritual nature and was used to communicate with the ancestors.

Ñonofó (also *yonofó*). An Arará drum played by standing up and striking various parts of the skin with the left hand and with a garabato or adafí in the right.

Obatalá. The orisha of creation, creativity, wisdom, and spiritual clarity.

Ogán. An Arará bell.

Oggún. The *orisha* of metal and warfare.

Okónkolo. Also *omelé*. The name for the smallest of the three batá drums.

Onichekeré. The Yoruba term for a chekeré performer.

Orisha. Also *oricha*. Yoruba-derived deities in the Santería religion.

Palo Monte. Also *Palo*. A specific form of Kongo-influenced religious practices in Cuba; one of many including Biyumba, Kimbisa, Mayombe, and others.

Quinto. The highest-pitched drum in the three-drum rumba ensemble, and the one that improvises.

Royal Kongo. A reference to the historical Kingdom of Kongo established in the fourteenth century and that survived through the late nineteenth century. It was located in parts of present-day Angola, Cabinda, Republic of Congo, and Democratic Republic of Congo and was ruled by a royal family. Many Kongo cabildos reference this heritage in their organization's name.

Sabalú. One of the three subethnic groups of the Arará in Cuba (the other two are Majino and Dahomey).

Salidor. The name for the smallest of the three drums used to play bembé music. Ortiz also uses this term to identify the smallest of the set of two drums used to play makuta.

Santería. Literally, "the worship of the saints." Also known as la Regla de Ocha, *Santería* is an African-derived religious system that has also adopted elements of Catholicism.

Santero. A practitioner of Santería.

Santos. Literally, "saints." Afro-Cuban deity-ancestors worshipped and invoked during ritual performances.

Seseribó (also *sese eribó*). The sacred Abakuá "silent drum" that represents Sikán, the mother of Abakuá culture. The drum is watched over by Isué and is not used in funeral rites.

Shékere or *Shekeré*. See *chekeré*.

Tata-nganga. A common term in Cuba for priests of Kongo-derived religions who summon spirit forces. See also *nganga*.

Toque. A performance or combinative rhythm, typically interpreted by a drum or percussion ensemble.

Toque de santo. A religious performance dedicated to the orishas.

Vodoun. Afro-Haitian religion.

Yoruba. People of southwestern Nigeria and Benin. Also, the language of the Yoruba.

Yuka. A secular Kongo-derived music and dance tradition involving performance on three drums (caja, mula, and cachimbo) and a bell or hoe blade. Yuka can also refer to the dance that accompanies these drums.

Yuka drum. A single-headed drum of Kongo origin made from a long, hollowed-out tree trunk.

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