# CAJÓN PA' LOS MUERTOS

## TRANSCULTURATION AND EMERGENT TRADITION IN AFRO-CUBAN RITUAL DRUMMING AND SONG

A thesis

submitted by

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**Abstract**

*Cajón pa' los Muertos* ceremonies are relatively unknown compared to other forms of Afro-Cuban religious music. As such, this is the first in-depth study of these heterodox musical ceremonies for the dead, which combine *Espiritismo*, *Palo*, and *Santería*, among other religious practices.

Grupo Cuero y Cajón, from Pogolotti, Marianao (Havana), are the case study for this thesis. Personal fieldwork with them over the past six years has led to this presentation of the drum rhythms they use as well as over two hundred songs from their repertoire, analyzed for their cultural and spiritual significance.

This thesis is written from the framework of transculturation and foregrounds the role of musicians in the emergence of new traditions through the use of cohesive acts. It also studies the antecedents of Cajón, issues of pragmatism in ritual, Cajón as a site of preservation and innovation, and suffering as expressed in popular religion.

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Last, but not least, I would like to recognize my parents for their unconditional love and support during my life's path. Words cannot express my thanks to them.

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Notation for tumbadora is not standardized. This fact, combined with my reliance on archaic music notation software has resulted in the key below. The sound of the *tapao* is between an unaccented slap and a muffle. In the tumbadora transcriptions, the strong hand is notated above the line while the other hand is on the line (likewise with *guagua* parts).

open slap bass muffle palm fingertips tapao

*Cajón and Batá*

The cajón transcriptions are based on a somewhat standardized batá notation. Following this precedent, the low-pitched open and muffle tones are placed below the high-pitched slap. Since the strong hand plays the open tones, it is placed lower on the staff (the reverse of the tumbadora). It should be kept in mind that the cajón, as used by Grupo Cuero y Cajón, is the main improvising instrument. Therefore, transcriptions of its "parts" are representations of the most common pattern for it.

open muffle slap

## Introduction

*Entrada – Entrance*

"Put this is your book," Pedro told me as we waited for the bus back to Pogolotti. "Tell them how we walk five kilometers just to play one *actividad*. Tell them how we carry our instruments on our backs." Pedro looked up and down the street in the warm darkness while *maquinas* sputtered by the group waiting for the bus. The darkness of Havana's outskirts provided just barely enough light to make out Pedro's disappointed expression, and he had reason to be frustrated. Our trip had begun that day in an old French school bus with rotting floorboards, converted for use as a city bus. Then, an hour-long walk in Havana's blazing midday sun while carrying instruments finally got us to the house in the Martí neighborhood where Grupo Cuero y Cajón had been hired to play. After another hour of waiting, we realized that Luciano, the singer, wasn't going to show up, forcing Pedro to nervously take over leading the songs as best he could.[1] This sort of struggle wasn't unusual for Grupo Cuero y Cajón. In some ways, it was just another day at work. Yet, their toil may pay off in the history of Afro-Cuban music, as they are an important force in the development of an emerging ritual tradition sometimes known as *Cajón pa' los Muertos*.

In August of 2000, I witnessed my first Cajón ceremony, though I had no idea what it was. My initial reason for traveling to Cuba, to study batá drums, was a common one among percussionists interested in Afro-Cuban drumming. On my first day there, I walked around aimlessly in the Vedado area, taking in the "forbidden land" of Cuba, and serendipitously happened upon a batá ceremony. There, I met Lekiam, who invited me to another ceremony in

[1] We later learned that Luciano had been sick and unable to contact anyone in the group.

Pogolotti the next day.[2] I was surprised, though, to realize that the ceremony was not anything that I was familiar with, despite having studied Afro-Cuban music for many years. Lekiam introduced me to Grupo Cuero y Cajón and I quickly abandoned most of my plans to study batá, in favor of this previously unknown music and ceremony. I felt certain that when I returned to the United States, I could study the history and significance of the ceremonies I saw – clearly it was in a part of Ortiz's many books that I just hadn't read yet. Or, maybe there were articles about it in *Ethnomusicology* that I had missed. I was quite disappointed, even after compiling a bibliography of Afro-Cuban music, to find no studies of this type of ceremony. It is my hope, then, to take up the subject of Cajón in order to broaden Afro-Cuban musical studies beyond that which has been studied repeatedly (e.g., batá) and to enrich the burgeoning awareness of Cajón beyond the shores of Cuba itself.

*Al Lector – To the Reader*

It is impossible to have a complete view of today's Afro-Cuban music and religion without some understanding of *Cajón pa' los Muertos*. Cajón is a religious practice for the dead, but it is not a religion. It has no institutional existence or requirement of initiation, nor does it have a priesthood. It is not a "cult" in the anthropological sense of the word (or any other sense[3]) since it is not part of any one particular religion. Instead, Cajón functions within the worldview of many religions. In the past few decades, Cajón ceremonies have taken their current form, usually utilizing the musical instrument that is its namesake: the cajón, a wooden box drum.[4] As

[2] It would be naïve to say that I found Lekiam and Grupo Cuero y Cajón. I do not entertain any romantic spiritual notions when I say that they found me. It was bound to be someone, and I'm quite glad that it was them.
[3] By the "anthropological sense" of *cult* I mean a group within a larger religious belief system that focuses on specific aspects of the larger religious system.
[4] Throughout the thesis, I use Cajón (uppercase "C") when referring to the ceremony and cajón (lowercase "c") when referring to the musical instrument. Cajón here also specifically refers to *Cajón pa' los Muertos* (Cajón for

this thesis will show, Cajón is in many ways representative of contemporary Afro-Cuban religious and musical identity.

This thesis began in Pogolotti, a neighborhood within the municipality of Marianao, essentially a suburb of Havana. Pogolotti is inhabited mostly by Afro-Cubans and, as a community, is deeply rooted in Afro-Cuban religion and music such as Lucumí batá drumming, Palo, Abakuá, Arará, Bembé, as well as less-talked-about phenomena such as Freemasonry, Violín ceremonies, and Cajón itself. Because of its profound heritage, Pogolotti has been the location of many scholarly studies by Cubans and foreigners alike, including Lydia Cabrera (1986a:4; 2000:32), Fernando Ortiz and, more recently, CIDMUC.[5] This fame is paralleled by another, less spectacular *fama* among Habaneros who see it as a neighborhood where, by merely entering, one risks his or her life.[6] If this view was ever based in any fact, it is not so relevant today.[7] In any case, it was in neighborhoods such as Pogolotti where Cajón and its music were formed. One group that is deeply involved in the development of Cajón is the case study for this thesis.

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the Dead), a.k.a. *Cajón al Muerto* (lit: Cajón to the Dead). It should not be confused with the use of cajón for Orisha ceremonies or secular rumba. See Chapter Six for more on these uses.

[5] Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Música Cubana. Their work, *Instrumentos de la Música Folclórico-Popular de Cuba*, cites a number of "testimonials" (i.e., interviews) from elders in Pogolotti.

[6] One bookseller, after hearing that I was doing research in Pogolotti, warned me not to travel there since "they'll kill you just to take the shirt off your back." Such a view, which was predictably expressed by many people, all light-skinned, reflects a deep and continuing racism in Cuba despite being a deeply intermixed society.

[7] In all the time I spent in Pogolotti, including living there for at least a month, I never had any reason to fear physical danger, though I was also usually accompanied by locals. The interconnectedness of the community seemed to be beneficial for all. In one curious example of this, a friend asked me to take pictures of his son's first birthday party with his own camera. I walked to the location of the party with his family, carrying the camera in my hand. As we walked, a young boy on a bike rode by and yanked the camera from my hand, breaking the strap around my wrist. We gave chase, but couldn't catch him on his bike. After word got around, however, that it was the camera of a well-connected Pogolotti resident instead of a foreigner, it miraculously appeared fifteen minutes later.

*Grupo Cuero y Cajón*

Grupo Cuero y Cajón (GCyC) have been developing their musical and ritual approach to Cajón for over fifteen years. Their "creación religiosa musical" distinguishes them from other groups and thus makes them a fruitful group from which to understand the role of transculturation and innovation in the emergence of tradition. It is only appropriate, then, to introduce the members of the group before studying what they have done. I introduce their full names here, but refer to them by first name throughout the text, a form more befitting our actual relationship.[8]

As mentioned above, Lekiam Aguilar Guerrero was the person to introduce me to GCyC. Lekiam's musical and religious affiliations are truly indicative of his upbringing in Pogolotti. His family is deeply involved in Regla de Ocha, Palo, and Abakuá, though they do not exclude practices influenced by Espiritismo. Though only twenty-five years of age, he financially aids his family (including a son) by drumming and serving as an *akpwón* in ceremonies such as those of Regla de Ocha, Cajón, and Arará. Like all drummers in Pogolotti, he learned through observation of elders such as Gustavo Diaz, Andrés Chacón, and Papo Angarica, who is also his godfather in Ifa. Through Lekiam, I was introduced to his uncles[9] Pedro Alberto Pozo Pedroso and Silvano Pozo Pedroso, the musical backbone of Grupo Cuero y Cajón.

Pedro, the cajón player and musical director for GCyC, is probably the most influential person in the development of GCyC's unique sound. This is certainly due to his nostalgic musical sensibilities, since he is more likely to be found listening to Beny Moré than any recent

[8] Using first names for my "informants" and surnames when quoting scholars might be a contentious double standard. However, I think it better represents the relationships involved since I do not personally know most of the scholars that I quote, but my relationship with the members of GCyC is certainly on a first-name basis. If they were to write something about me, I would find it strangely impersonal if they used only my last name, if not almost offensive.

[9] Though not actually blood relatives, Lekiam's mother grew up in the same house with Pedro and Silvano.

Cuban music. His conversations with other musicians are filled with nostalgia and a healthy resentment of current popular music, often saying things like "los tiempos han cambiado" [times have changed]. At forty-two and unmarried, people like to poke fun at him, saying that he's married to the cajón – the cajón is "su mujer" [his woman]. As a child of Obatalá, Pedro has a spiritual outlook on things (i.e., he is a "believer"), but is not deeply involved in any one religion.

Silvano, Pedro's brother and the tumbadora player for GCyC, has a similar take on religion. He is *rayado* (initiated in Palo) but considers his religion to be "Yoruba," though he was never initiated in Regla de Ocha. He and Pedro both consider themselves to be musicians by family inheritance, having grown up in a musical household. Their maternal grandfather, Julio Pedroso, played flute in the Tropicana nightclub during its golden years before the revolution, and they remember listening to records of popular music as well as folkloric groups such as Los Muñequitos and Los Papines during their childhood. Silvano and Pedro are perfect examples of how much can be done with a little in Cuba. Despite being professional musicians[10] who make their entire living through music, they own only the instruments that they play every day. Pedro has only one cajón while Silvano has a tumbadora that was gifted to him in addition to a small backup cajón for when the tumbadora is being re-headed.

In the early 1980's, Silvano met Luciano Silverio Ochandarena who would later become the singer for GCyC. The two started a musical group with their schoolmates in 1981, a natural progression for Luciano who grew up learning music in his family. Luciano recalls learning Lucumí songs from his mother who would sing while washing clothes during his childhood. His knowledge of Espiritismo songs comes from his grandmother who was a "Santera" and "Espiritista" with her own Espiritismo *centro* (center). For many years, he performed with his

[10] Sadly, Pedro once stated "nosotros no somos musicos" [we're not musicians] because they don't read music.

brothers in Havana hotels, singing popular and folkloric music for tourists before eventually forming GCyC with Pedro and Luciano around 1991, starting their long career together by playing in the Espiritismo centro of Luciano's grandmother.

Luciano is a calm and collected person who looks quite young despite forty-four years and multiple grandchildren. In the eyes of many, his Africanness is authenticated by his very dark skin. Lekiam, who has told me he is impressed by Luciano's knowledge of songs, once referred to him as "puro Congo" due to his deep knowledge, dark skin, and tendency to wear non-flashy "old-fashioned" clothes. Of course, when asked directly about darkness as a marker of authenticity, Cubans, whether academics or not, will definitely deny it in deference to political correctness. In casual conversation, though, Luciano's friends often point out that he is "Africano" as an excuse for his absentmindedness. Luciano himself takes advantage of this, saying, when scheduling the next day's activities, "hey, I'm African, I'll get here when I get here."

Despite his supposed African nature, though, and the fact that he is rayado and initiated as a child of Ogun, Luciano considers himself of no specific religion. I once assumed he was a Palero due to his knowledge of the songs and initiation in it, but he corrected me, saying that these days he was more interested in astrology and numerology. Clearly, he believes in the power of many religious systems and forms of knowledge, which, as we will see, might actually be the deepest substantiation of the claims that he is more African than Cuban. His knowledge of many religious practices and songs also led me to conduct more interviews with him than any other person. In fact, Pedro and Lekiam would often choose not to answer certain religious questions, recommending that I ask Luciano instead.

Like many Cubans, Luciano yearns to leave the country in search of better work.[11] His goal is to move to Finland where his brothers now live and work as professional musicians. It might seem unfortunate for such a deep culture bearer to leave behind the traditions that he has inherited and helped to shape (he sees GCyC and Los Nani as the groups who have shaped Cajón as it exists today). But, Luciano has no concerns for the future of the tradition that he helped create. He also has an interesting outlook for GCyC. In response to the question what would happen to the group if he left, he said "este grupo es un grupo bueno… hay muchas cosas que puede hacer… pero si no hay movimiento…" [this group is a good group… there are many things that it could do… but if there's no movement…"]. He trailed off, insinuating that he is not happy to do the same thing every day for its own sake. He sees GCyC no differently than a popular music group that should begin small and continue until some degree of major recognition is earned. For the musicians, religious drumming is like any other musical work; they make no distinction between folkloric and popular music, at least in terms of what counts as success. To Luciano, the only unfortunate thing about wanting to leave Cuba is that he feels compelled to do so as a result of the limited options.

There are some signs, however, that Luciano is correct to believe that Cajón will continue despite the absence of some "escaped" tradition bearers. GCyC have been training an unofficial apprentice for many years. Dairon Rodriguez Perlez began performing with GCyC as a teenager. According to Silvano, Dairon occasionally resisted becoming a member of GCyC for unknown reasons, possibly because he wasn't interested in traditional music at that age. The group, and Dairon's mother, who all recognized his talent, pushed him to continue, in some ways choosing his career for him. Now in his early twenties, he is a fulltime member who often takes over

[11] This is the dream of most of the members of GCyC, as well as most young men in Pogolotti.

Pedro's responsibilities on cajón and, most importantly, is learning to lead the songs in Luciano's absence.

All of the members of Grupo Cuero y Cajón have been educated in fields other than music. Most of them have gone to technical schools for mechanical trades, but they make all of their money through music. This is not surprising, considering that the group makes a total of four hundred Cuban pesos for each ceremony. Though this is the equivalent of less than $20USD, it is decidedly more lucrative than the fields in which they have been officially trained. By comparison, a nurse might make three hundred Cuban pesos each month, while GCyC members can make twice that amount in one week. Folkloric musicians are also paid directly by the people that hire them, therefore avoiding any kind of taxation. In this sense they are outside of the economic system, but Pedro scoffed at that suggestion. "How can I be considered outside of the system if I have to buy my shirts, shoes, and food from the government," he said. Of course, their earnings seem less significant when one realizes that most of the essential items are sold in dollars (i.e., technically, the Cuban "Convertible Peso," which is equal in value to the dollar). In the end, though, within the Cuban system, folkloric musicians do relatively well financially, thus leading many young men to take up the profession. Pedro bemoans this non-religious approach, which is ironic considering that the members of GCyC, though religious, all turned to Cajón as a more lucrative pursuit than popular music.

My focus on Grupo Cuero y Cajón has been of great value for its insight into the individual's innovative role in emerging traditions. As will be shown, musicians are an integral part in the codification of Cajón ritual. On the other hand, though, such a case study is not without limitations.

*Limitations of this Research*

As mentioned above, this thesis was informed primarily from the musician's experience in Cajón. Though this is useful for an ethnomusicological study, it limits the ethnographic information that can be collected. For instance, since I had no extended contact with those who hired GCyC, I never was able to experience the *misas* (masses) that occurred one day before Cajón ceremonies.[12] Similarly, a case study naturally precludes an overall view of Cajón as it is enacted in different localities and by different musicians.[13]

Additionally, this thesis is limited by the amount of time spent in the field. This is due mostly to the difficulty of funding such a study.[14] My time spent studying Cajón in Cuba amounts to approximately fourth months, spread over six years (2000–2006). This has allowed me to see long-term changes by GCyC, but lessened the total number of ceremonies I could attend for the sake of comparison.[15] This short time also prohibited extensive connections with other professional Cajón groups in Havana.[16]

Though these limitations are frustrating, I find some solace in the fact that Clifford Geertz has stated that "cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete" (29). Despite the fact that this study is merely a beginning, it has been adequate to draw some preliminary conclusions about Cajón and its general significance in Afro-Cuban musical religious practice.

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[12] My impression from the members of GCyC is that these misas are not unlike those often done before Regla de Ocha ceremonies, though they have their provenance in Espiritismo, as discussed in the Lucumí and Espiritismo chapters.

[13] This could be an important point since the musicians often guide the ritual process during Cajón ceremonies.

[14] Common channels of financial support are unavailable for ethnographic work leading to a master's thesis, especially those requiring travel to Cuba.

[15] I probably have witnessed between forty to fifty actual Cajón ceremonies. Though this might seem, in some ways, to be a large number, the amount of variation among them was sometimes astounding.

[16] Cajón seems to be mostly Havana-based, though its constituent religions are found in most places throughout the island. According to Reynaldo González Fernandez, a dancer from Matanzas now living in the Boston area, Cajón is rare in Matanzas, happening only a few times per month at the most. This focus on Havana unfortunately continues a Havana-centric approach to the academic study of Cuba, but was unavoidable for this study due to time and financial constraint.

*Transculturation*

This thesis is heavily influenced by my interest in the concept of transculturation, and is constructed with a framework that highlights that process. The most important reason for this is that the data supports such a theoretical framework, but it is also my way of responding to the general exclusion of Latin American theory from the Euro-American canon.[17] Transculturation is a word and concept developed by the Cuban scholar Fernando Ortiz (1881–1969) in 1940 as a response to the uses of the word *acculturation* and its associated theory. Ortiz is somewhat controversial in light of his earlier works that reflected a status-quo racism, but his profound reversal later in life positioned him to become the first champion of Afro-Cuban culture. His ability to essentially start over when confronted with evidence that proved his earlier theories wrong is a powerful lesson for academia and resulted in his success as the first scholar to valorize Afro-Cuban culture through his prolific documentation. Today his work is often validated by Afro-Cubans themselves, as witnessed by Luciano's comments that "Ortiz fue un buen investigador" [Ortiz was a good researcher] and that his works "son correctos" [are correct].[18]

Ortiz's definition of transculturation came about as a response to the word *acculturation* and its common use to mean merely "acquiring another culture" (Ortiz 1995:102). Acculturation was (and is) usually erroneously understood to be a process where two cultures come into contact and the weaker of the two looses its culture and adopts that of the more powerful society. To put it simply, Ortiz wanted to move away from the usage of acculturation because it suggested assimilation. Furthermore, he wanted to emphasize the importance of what he called

[17] For lack of a better word, *Euro-American* refers to English-language scholarship of Europe and North America.

*neoculturation*, the creation of new cultures as a result of culture contact, which he compared to offspring that contain something of each parent, yet are different and autonomous (103). Technically, when one considers just the definitions of *transculturation* and *acculturation*, they are not much different. In fact, in the definition of *acculturation* by Melville Herskovits, there is clearly room for the bi-directional flow of culture (see Herskovits 1938). Part of the confusion surrounding it, though, was based on Herskovits' reliance on "real history," thus necessitating studies that consisted of at least one documentary culture, which was also usually an imperial one. Thus, *acculturation's* association with *assimilation* might not have been correct, but it was a fact both in academic and popular parlance.

Ironically, the misunderstanding of acculturation continues today and has led to the misinterpretation of transculturation as its opposite. Ángel Rama was first to extend the oppositional element of transculturation in his study of the influence of indigenous Andean culture in the development of Peruvian literature (1982). This was later furthered by authors such as Mary Louise Pratt (1992) and Phyllis Peres (1997), mistakenly framing transculturation essentially as resistance to acculturation. In its original conception, however, transculturation did not signify only resistance (though that could have been a part of it). As Diana Taylor pointed out, transculturation is not "inherently or necessarily a minority or oppositional theory" (93).

Despite the problems associated with acculturation for its focus on unequal power relationships, studies under the rubric of transculturation have not eschewed this difficult variable. If transculturation is to ever have any heuristic value, it must first be applied to groups whose relationship is relatively power neutral. This, in my opinion, is one benefit of this thesis

[18] Scholarly works by authors such as Fernando Ortiz and Natalia Bolívar are so widely known in Cuba that one wonders to what extent their books might be codifying religious knowledge among some practitioners.

since it approaches the history of multiple African ethnic groups as they have influenced each other in Cuba.

It is a truism that there is no "pure" culture free of transculturation. All cultures and traditions are the result of culture change and processes of transculturation, but not all have been established long enough ago to be perceived today as something "pure" or whole. For example, the English language, which is clearly the result of profound transculturation, is today considered a regenerative whole with its own standards of "purity." To talk, then, of transculturation is to talk about the process when it is most perceivable. Cajón is an example of this, having been recently developed from clear antecedents and still undergoing significant changes.

In the use of transculturation in this thesis, I endeavor not to treat culture as an object,[19] but as a mode of living and perceiving which grants meaning to experience. Thus, different cultural modes[20] of perception can grant different meanings to singular events. This is the case of Cajón, whose attendees might all give a similar definition of the purpose of the event, but understand it with different degrees of importance within their own cultural modes (e.g., Espiritismo, Palo, Lucumí, Abakuá, Catholicism, etc). Likewise, people who come from other cultural modes will understand Cajón in different ways, such as those from other religions, the academy, or the professional music community.

[19] The use of the word *culture* is becoming less frequent in anthropology (and maybe ethnomusicology) as it is taken over by other fields such as literary theory. It seems to me that this is also partly a response to the use of the word culture in common parlance to mean those things which are particular to certain groups of people but can be commodified (e.g., music, art, and other "cultural resources"). This is obviously a limited view of culture, one that should be corrected through re-appropriation rather than allowing the word to fall into scholarly disuse by shying away from its popular connotations.

[20] I use *cultural mode* to not confuse it with an understanding of the word *culture* that might include nationality or large ethnic groupings. For example, within "Afro-Cuban" culture, there are different cultural modes such as Palero, Abakuá, Santero, and so on. It is not unlike the term *subculture* except that, like a musical mode, two cultural modes might be structured almost identically, yet enacted or performed in a different manner.

Recently, the concept of hybridity has come to contend with transculturation for favored concept status. This is especially true in the work of Néstor García Canclini whose book *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* can be seen as an extension of the concept of transculturation despite conspicuously neglecting to ever use the word or mention Ortiz. Possibly, García Canclini wanted to distance himself from a word that was fifty years old and saw the advent of postmodernism as a significant reason for a new vocabulary. To the extent that postmodernism means no single truth, only multiple, momentary ones, then it might be useful in the development of transculturation (see Benitez-Rojo). However, I have avoided the words *modern* and *postmodern* as much as possible in this thesis since they seem to be hegemonic concepts, improperly applied to Latin America.[21] Even under the rubric of postmodernity, hybridity seems to be old wine in new bottles, a new product for a new time, but one that is not significantly different from transculturation. Though hybridity could signify the simultaneous existence of multiple cultural modes instead of the creation of new ones (as is emphasized in transculturation), such an understanding of it could still be seen as one possible outcome in the larger process of transculturation.[22]

Cajón is an excellent source for the study of transculturation since the process of transculturation is most perceivable in the emergent traditions of polyglot societies. There is a possible danger in trying to identify all the contributors to such a tradition, though, if the people who participate in it do not draw such distinctions. As Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart put it:

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[21] It seems that *modernity* and *postmodernity* are used to signify different stages of society or culture, thus leading some people to talk about Latin America as still containing "pre-modern" traditions (i.e., African and indigenous ones). Even the subtitle of García Canclini's book, *Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, portrays these stages as a necessary linear progression. As such, they are deeply embedded with an evolutionary conception of culture not unlike the way *stone age* and *iron age* were once used.

> …just as colonial power entailed the categorizing of people into essentialized 'tribal' entities with fixed boundaries ('you are Igbo'), anthropological hegemony now entails taking apart practices and identities which are phenomenological realities for those who use them ('your tradition is invented'). In our enthusiasm for deconstructing syncretic traditions we may have invented another kind of intellectual imperialism. [Shaw and Stewart:23]

In some ways, this may be a justified concern, but I do not agree that analysis equals imperialism, especially when the people for whom the tradition is a "phenomenological reality" are quite comfortable calling it a *mezcla* (mixture), thus implying that its many components can and should be understood individually. Furthermore, as Christopher Waterman pointed out, "it might be useful for us to draw an analytical distinction between *invented traditions* – in which continuity with the past is demonstrably factitious [sic] – and everyday processes of *stereotypic reproduction*…" (1990:377). This is my reason for using *emergent tradition* in place of *invented tradition*. It is not my purpose to reveal some hidden or unconscious reality, like those who call Cuban Espiritistas and Santeros "confused Catholics."[23] Cajón is a fully functional phenomenon within the respective cultural modes of its practitioners, whose individual religious beliefs are quite clear, and who are well aware that Cajón is a mezcla. If this thesis can be seen as a "pulling apart" of Cajón's various elements, it is only in order to put together an understanding of Cajón that is closer to that of its various practitioners, an understanding that sheds light on how supposedly separate religions are in some ways quite similar or, at least, can be understood on a personal level to complement each other within a larger Afro-Cuban religious identity.

By using a framework of transculturation to analyze Cajón and GCyC, I hope to move away from the "binary spiraling" (Trigo:87) that results from considering an unrealistically small number of cultural contributions to a new whole. Dichotomies such as African vs. European,

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[22] See Chapter Ten, which mentions "compartmentalization," similar to the conception of hybridity mentioned above.

high vs. low culture, powerful vs. disempowered, and periphery vs. center all have some value, but their over-employment, especially here, would remind us that "deep knowledge by definition opposes public discourse" (Apter:180). That is to say, they would oversimplify the vast complexity that has led to Cajón. Transculturation provided room to move beyond these simplified binaries even before they were brought to light in post-structuralism. As we will see in the overview below, the chapters on the antecedents of Cajón utilize historic data under the lens of transculturation to push back against oversimplification in Afro-Cuban studies, showing these antecedents, in turn, to also be the results of transculturation.

This analysis also considers the structures of Cajón's constituent religions that allow them to be compatible in a new setting. I encountered two impressive metaphors that support the validity of this approach, one emic, and the other etic. During a conversation with Lekiam, I asked why Spanish was now being sung to honor the Orishas in place of Lucumí. He picked up a pencil and said, contemplatively, "it doesn't matter if you use a pencil or a pen, what matters is that you can write the same thing."[24] Likewise, in a conversation about Cajón with Olavo Alén Rodriguez, the director of CIDMUC, he cautioned me about putting too much emphasis on the way it is musically enacted by specific groups. "If you borrow someone's clothes," he said, "you might look a little different, but you're still the same person. If you study the clothes too much, you'll miss the person and forget that they can change." Of course, the clothes that people wear (i.e., the music they use) are chosen for important reasons, but there is a deeper person behind them. Thus, surface level signifiers are informative but they point towards deeper structures and meanings that are of paramount importance. Surface signifiers that conjoin these deeper

[23] The view of Cuban Espiritistas and/or Santeros as "confused Catholics" is one sometimes held by those who are probably only projecting their own confusion about a religious practice that they do not understand or agree with.

structures and express personal affinity among different cultural modes can be called cohesive acts.

I have coined the term *cohesive acts* to call attention to the agency of individuals and/or groups to affect transculturation directly. They are acts that purposefully juxtapose, combine, intermix, or otherwise connect signifiers from diverse cultural modes, coaxing them to exist in a new whole. Cohesive acts could be found in iconography or dance, among many other forms, but are studied here in the songs and drumming of Cajón. Though cohesive acts might not be present in all instances of transculturation, they are certainly present in cases such as Cajón where influential bearers of the tradition actively bridge different cultural modes, becoming one with the other.

*Pragmatism, Innovation, and Preservation*

There are two additional theses or, at least, areas of exploration in this study. The first of these is the interplay of pragmatic and spiritual considerations affecting the development of Cajón. Many studies tend to focus on the spiritual or religious significance of Afro-Cuban music, which, although more politically correct and theoretically straightforward, is an oversimplification. Considering the pragmatic components of Cajón is not only an etic view since the spiritual significance of Cajón for its practitioners and, more so, for its musicians, is tempered by practical considerations in its ritual enactment. By looking too much at the spiritual, we miss the pragmatic issues involved (e.g., playing for the people present, not just the spirits). Likewise, by looking too much at the pragmatic, we miss the spiritual significance (as is the case with "syncretism" of Orishas and Saints). It is my hope to balance pragmatic and

[24] Many quotes in English, such as those by Lekiam, Pedro, and Luciano, are my translations from what they said during a Spanish conversation (none of them speak English). In cases where something was stated in a recorded

spiritual issues in Cajón, pointing out instances where practicality has influenced ritual performance, and especially noting when the two cannot be separated.

Another area of exploration in this study is the function of Cajón as a site for innovation and preservation in Afro-Cuban religious music. Often, tradition is thought of as something done from time immemorial, but clearly all tradition was at one time an innovation. As the Brazilian ethnomusicologist José Jorge de Carvalho put it, "it is not possible to understand tradition without understanding innovation" (García Canclini:155). Religious and musical innovation in Cajón is a result of the process of transculturation, but also personal creativity and composition. A person's ability to innovate, though, is held in check by their considerations for historical authenticity, legitimacy, and aesthetic principles. It is also limited by Cajón's de facto existence as a site of preservation. This is not an explicit goal for the sake of esoteric cultural heritage. Instead, it is the result of its goal to please the spirits of the dead, therefore seeking recourse in appropriately "old" music. This is witnessed in the use of songs from Garabato and Tumba Francesa, musical forms otherwise extinct in Havana.

*Overview*

The first part of this thesis consists of four chapters on the religious and ethnic antecedents of Cajón pa' los Muertos. They provide some of the requisite background knowledge about the constituent religions of Cajón, thus allowing it to be understood as a result of transculturation. Chapter Two presents what is probably the strongest religious underpinning of Cajón: Espiritismo. Though some readers might be familiar with Espiritismo's connection to the writings of Allan Kardec in France, fewer probably know that it actually originated in the

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interview, I give the exact Spanish statement first.

U.S. as "Spiritualism." Its history and variations in Cuba are explored as well as its theological tenets.

Chapter Three discusses the influence in Cuba of people from Bantu-speaking areas of central Africa, generally referred to as *Congos* in Spanish. This includes the influence of the KiKongo language as well as religious and musical influence in Cajón. Maybe most importantly, it considers the fact that Congo culture was well aware of Catholicism before arriving in Cuba, and had many adherents. This problematizes common depictions of African-Catholic "syncretism" as something that originated in the New World.

The fourth chapter considers what is probably the most well known African influence in Cuba, that is the influence of the Yoruba/Lucumí people from what is now Nigeria. Their religion, music, and ethnicity are presented as they took shape in Cuba and in Cajón. This chapter also contains a fairly lengthy exploration of Cajón's theoretical implications for the concept of "syncretism" in Afro-Cuban religion, which is clearly an important issue for this thesis.

Chapter Five contains historical considerations related to three additional antecedents of Cajón. The first of these is Marianism and popular Catholicism. Though popular Catholicism is also mentioned in the Lucumí chapter, the importance of Mary, especially as the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, is highlighted for its relevance to Cuban nationalism. The second section of this chapter considers the historical significance of French-Haitian ethnicity in Cuba, an important factor in establishing the thesis of Cajón as a site of preservation. The third section speculates on the reasons for the presence of the Islamic greeting *salamalecun* in Cajón, especially in light of the role of appropriation in Afro-Cuban religion.

The second part of this thesis, dedicated to Cajón itself, begins with Chapter Six on the instrument known as the cajón. It considers the origins of the instrument itself, its place within multiple emic and etic classificatory systems, and its development from being a purely secular instrument to one used as a substitute for religious instruments (and, later, as a religious instrument in its own right).

Chapter Seven is primarily an ethnography of Cajón, also contemplating its possible historic origins in Havana. In addition to explaining aspects of the ceremony itself, it presents brief synopses of some of the main spirits honored in Cajón and contemplates the issues of sacredness versus secularity when situating Cajón in relation to other Afro-Cuban religious practices.

The eighth chapter is on the most important religious aspect of Cajón: its songs. The purpose of this chapter is to understand how the structure of Cajón songs and songs cycles (i.e., groupings of different songs) are constructed and used to maximize ritual efficacy. It is also in the songs where we see important examples of cohesive acts and proof of Cajón as a site of preservation. The chapter concludes with a possibly sobering analysis of Cajón songs as they support Orlando Espín's idea that Latino and Latin American popular religion is an epistemology of suffering.

Chapter Nine is a study of the drumming used in Cajón. It begins with a review of the only recordings of ceremonial Cajón music that exist to this point, considering issues such as musical instrumentation and rhythms used. It then moves to a closer case study of the way GCyC have chosen their instrumentation for sonic and practical purposes, and the role of each instrument in the ensemble. This is followed by a study of the rhythms used by GCyC and the patterns on which they are structured, that is *clave* and *campana*. It is important to note that this

chapter and Chapter Eight utilize the terminology developed by Professor David Locke to analyze West African drumming. I have found this "Lockian" vocabulary quite useful in discussing Afro-Cuban drumming, which is probably only natural considering its provenance. This chapter finishes by considering GCyC's drum rhythms, and the way they accompany the songs, as cohesive acts.

The third part of this thesis, which contains only Chapter Ten, is a more in-depth study of the history and theory of transculturation. It presents the creator of this neologism, Fernando Ortiz, and the development of his word/theory by different scholars. It also presents transculturation, and the work of Latin American scholars in general, as a site of theory production that has been subjugated and excluded from the Euro-American canon. This subjugation may or may not have been purposeful, but clearly, as Foucault might remind us, one does not need to be conscious of power to utilize it. The chapter concludes with a call for a (re)evaluation of Ortiz and the usefulness of transculturation in today's academic theorizing, suggesting that it might not only aid our understanding of complex cultural interaction, but also our understanding of ourselves.

# Part One

*Antecedents of Cajón*

## Chapter Two: Espiritismo

*Origins*

One of the main religious antecedents of Cajón is that of *Espiritismo*, which has its origins, somewhat surprisingly, in the United States. During 1848 in upstate New York, young Margaret and Kate Fox began to hear a rapping sound that was believed to be a communication from the spirit of a murdered peddler buried under their parents' house by a previous owner (Carroll:3). The phenomenon of "spirit rapping" and communicating with the dead excited a movement in the United States and Europe known as Spiritualism. It gained a significant following even among such well-known individuals as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Queen Victoria herself (Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert:172). Spiritualist séances to establish contact with higher spiritual realms became popular especially among middle-class progressive Christians who had a generally "restless disapproval of the status quo" (Carroll:4).

Music did not seem to be an essential part of séances, but the independent nature of Spiritualism allowed many groups (or "circles" as they were called) to employ hymns. There are two known hymnals that were produced for Spiritualist circles, containing mostly Christian hymns that could fit the context, but also newly composed hymns.[1]

By the late 1800's and early 1900's, many "mediums" had begun to emphasize the spectacle of Spiritualism, essentially relying on parlor tricks to excite those attending a séance. This "trickery" lead to its general rejection by most people in the United States, though a small number of believers continued to make contact with the spirits, aided by new Spiritualist teachings coming from France.

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[1] These hymnals included: Henck, E.C. *Spirit Voices: Odes, Dictated by Spirits of the Second Sphere, for the use of Harmonial Circles*. Philadelphia: G.D. Henck (1853); and Packard, J.B., and J.S. Loveland. *The Spirit Minstrel; A Collection of Hymns and Music, for the Use of Spiritualists, in Their Circles and Public Meetings*. 2nd ed. Boston:

*Theology/Philosophy*

Allan Kardec was the pen name[2] of the man who would codify the practice of Spiritualism, leading to its resurgence, especially in Europe and Latin America. He did this beginning in 1850 by attending séances and taking a "scientific" approach in his inquiries of the spirits. The information provided by "advanced" spirits (rather than lower or "ignorant" ones) was codified and propagated with the publication of Kardec's books on what was now being called "Spiritism" (*Espiritismo* in Spanish) to distinguish from its previous form in the United States. These books, which continue to be used today, include *The Spirits' Book* (1857), *The Mediums' Book* (1859/1861), *The Gospel According to Spiritism* (1864), and *Heaven and Hell* (1865).

Spiritism, as the spirits explained it to Kardec, was based heavily on Christian moral philosophy – many of its followers were Christians – but rejected the divinity of Jesus, instead focusing on his teachings as an advanced spirit among men. In Spiritism, Heaven and Hell were considered abstract states that were not merely either-or destinations for the soul after death. Instead, spirits reincarnated continuously until they could advance towards perfection and Godliness. Satan, therefore, was merely a "personification of the principal of evil under an allegorical form…" (Kardec 1993:106).

The belief in spirits also raises the issue of the interplay between spirit and matter, an important issue for understanding Espiritismo in Cuba today and, by extension, Cajón. The following excerpt, taken from *The Spirits' Book* speaks to this issue. (It is numbered in the

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Bela Marsh (1856). A review of *The Spirit Minstrel* confirmed that there is no similarity between its songs and those used in Cajón.

[2] His real name is spelled differently in different texts. Variations include Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail, León Hipólito Denizard Revail, and Léon-Dénizarth-Hippolyte Rivail (1804–1869).

manner found in the book for easier reference among different editions. Quoted passages are the spirits' responses to Kardec's questions.)

> 25. Is spirit independent of matter, or is it only one of the properties of matter…?
> "Spirit and matter are distinct from one another; but the union of spirit and matter is necessary to give intelligent activity to matter."
>
> Is this union equally necessary to the manifestation of spirit? […]
> "It is necessary for you, because you are not organised for perceiving spirit apart from matter.
> […]
> 27. There are, then, two general elements of the universe – matter and spirit?
> "Yes; and above them both is God…"

Matter is also the "element which enchains spirit, the instrument which serves it, and upon which, at the same time, it exerts its action" (Kardec 1993:69). The material incarnation of spirits on earth is one phase of their longer process in spiritual advancement or evolution towards perfection.

Also important for the understanding of Espiritismo's influence on Cajón is the belief that other spirits (without corporeal form) are literally around us all the time.

> 87. […] Spirits are everywhere; the infinitudes of space are peopled with them in infinite numbers. …they are incessantly beside you, observing and acting upon you; for spirits are one of the powers of Nature, and are the instruments employed by God for the accomplishment of His providential designs. But all spirits do not go everywhere; there are regions of which the entrance is interdicted to those who are less advanced.

This belief in the omnipresence of spirits (especially Guardian Spirits) is found not only in Espiritismo but also, as we will see later in more depth, in Afro-Cuban religions such as *Regla de Ocha* (a.k.a. Santería) and the *Reglas de Congos* (one of which is Palo). Thus, participants in Cajón ceremonies might all have the same belief in the spirits despite the belief itself coming from different religious practices. Likewise, the theological understanding of mediumship or "possession" in these different religions is quite similar, that is to say they understand it as a domination of one spirit over another with some degree of consent by the latter.

Though Spiritism was progressive in some ways, it also had aspects that could make a modern reader cringe at its implications. Among the progressive aspects of it were its anti-

slavery beliefs and the struggle towards more equal relations between men and women. This latter stance can be seen in the following quote that should also be taken into consideration as an indicator of the role of women as mediums in Espiritismo (and today in Cajón).[3]

> 818. Whence comes the moral inferiority of women in some countries?
> "From the cruel and unjust supremacy which man has usurped over her. It is a result of social institutions, and of the abusive exercise of strength over weakness. Among men but little advanced morally, might is mistaken for right."

On the other hand, the presence of an imperial worldview as it relates to an evolutionary episteme of race is also quite glaring. For example, the beliefs that "those who are born among cannibals are not advanced spirits" (Kardec 1993:169) and that the abolition of polygamy "marks an era of social progress" (269) are indicative of their times (and maybe, unfortunately, today's as well). Some of the imperialist issues were (are?[4]) downright frightening:

> 787. Are there not races that, by their nature, are incapable of progress?
> "Yes, but they are day by day becoming annihilated corporeally."
> – What will be the future fate of the souls that animate those races?
> "They, like all others, will arrive at perfection by passing through other existences."

Luckily for the "incapable" races, Spiritists also saw murder as a sin.

Music did not seem to be of much importance to the middle- and ruling-class adherents of Spiritism in Europe. Its use in séances was not mentioned by Kardec or the spirits, but that approach to Spiritism would change as it became increasingly known in Latin America as Espiritismo.

*Espiritismo in Cuba*

Kardecian Espiritismo and the popular religious practices that appropriated parts of it are probably the most widespread religious practices in Cuba (Millet 1996). It is also found

[3] To approach the role of women in Espiritismo, though, we might have to believe that their mediumship was actually faked in order to impress their political or social views. This is a stance I'm not interested in taking, though I offer it for the reader to consider.

throughout Latin America, especially in Brazil and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean such as Puerto Rico. Yet despite numerous adherents and vast influence, Espiritismo is one of the least studied religions and musical practices in Cuba. Instead, it takes second (or third, or fourth) seat to Afro-centric studies preoccupied with the search for African "survivals" rather than the process of African religious appropriation in the New World. This is true of Cuban scholars as well as foreigners[5] who have even gone so far as to assign Espiritismo an almost purely Central African origin. An article on Puerto Rican Espiritismo by Marta Moreno Vega (1999) is an example of the misleading approach of seeing Espiritismo as something that must be assigned one ethnic origin.[6] To state that the practices called Espiritismo in Latin America have only one ethnic origin – whether it be from Africa or Europe – is quite misleading in the sense that it does not distinguish between *antecedents* and *origins*.[7]

With possibly the exception of Kardecian Espiritismo, most Cuban practices referred to as Espiritismo *originated* in Cuba itself. The *antecedents*, however, are numerous, leading to a multiplicity of practices that all fall under the general term Espiritismo. The difficulty or even impossibility of delineating these practices leads to a number of problematic and sometimes vague groupings. José Millet stated that the majority of Espiritismo practices in Cuba could be called, along with their practitioners, *católica-espiritisa* (Catholic-Spiritist). This is probably true in a general sense, pointing to more of a popular Catholicism than just Espiritismo, but it

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[4] These books are still in wide use throughout the Americas. I'm unsure if all of the views found in Kardec's books are still maintained or if they are somehow interpreted differently by current Spiritists.

[5] Cuban studies in the United States and Europe, especially those on Afro-Cuban culture, are incredibly limited by their focus on Havana and Matanzas. Though this thesis is a part of that focus on Havana, it at least pushes the boundaries (I hope) to reference religious practices coming mostly from Oriente, and those which are not just "survivals" but are Cuban creations.

[6] Moreno Vega is correct to focus on the *function* of Espiritismo as being the same as Kongo ancestral reverence, but incorrect to imply or state that it actually has its origins in Africa, which she does multiple times.

[7] My thanks go out to Olavo Alén Rodriguez for pointing out this conflation in my own previous work (Warden 2005). In that article I talked about the "origins" of the tumbadora when, in fact, I should have been careful to say *antecedents*, which implies influences leading to a new creation versus a direct lineage from one source.

does not define all Espiritistas nor point to the array of antecedents often at play. Furthermore, Kardecian Espiritismo in Cuba, institutionalized as the *Confederación Nacional*, dissolved and divided itself in 1963,[8] probably leading to increasingly divergent local practices.

Espiritismo was known in Cuba before it was codified by Allan Kardec. All Cuban scholars state that it first came from the United States as Spiritualism, and some claim that it was there as early as 1856, a few years before a Cuban version of the batá drums had even been created. By the 1880's, a number of centros had been created throughout the island and Kardec's works were imported clandestinely under the Spanish colonial government (which was still ostensibly Catholic). The translations of *El Libro de Los Espíritus* and *El Evangelio Según Espiritismo* are the most popular works, even widely available today in any religious *botánica* in the United States. In Cuba, small homemade pamphlets that reproduce the prayers from *El Evangelio Según Espiritismo* (The Gospel According to Spiritism) along with other writings are ubiquitous in households with any connection to any form of Espiritismo, and often show up on the *bóvedas* used in Cajón ceremonies.

Cuban Espiritismo is usually divided into three categories, though, depending on the author, it could also be divided into anywhere from two to five types. The two main types are *Espiritismo de Mesa* (Kardecian Spiritism, also called "Scientific Spiritism") and *Espiritismo de Cordón*. After these two, most scholars then group everything else into a category called *Espiritismo Cruzao* (short for *Cruzado*, meaning crossed or mixed). Armando Andrés Bermudez also cited a type called *Caridad* which seemed to be more focused on free works of cleansing done by popular mediums (1967), while José Millet also added *Bembé de Sao*, which he believed

[8] This was ostensibly to become the more-scientific-sounding *Sociedades de Estudios Psico-Sociales*, but was likely a tactic to avoid religious persecution.

to be a precursor to *Espiritismo Cruzao* that contained rhythms of "African origin" (1996:44).[9] The forms of Espiritismo in Cuba are impossible to completely delineate, partly due to their localized, non-institutional existence. Thus, to separate them might be a type of reification, but it does nevertheless help to grasp some of the major variations.

Espiritismo de Mesa (Table Spiritism) is also called Kardecism due to its relatively strict adherence to the work of Kardec. There is often no music used in these sessions, and versions of it called *misas* (masses[10]) are often now used before initiation into Santería. In such cases, and when they are used before a Cajón ceremony, Luciano simply refers to them as "*bóveda*" but he is quite clear that songs are used. The explosion of musical creation in Cuban Espiritismo, however, is usually linked to Cordón.

Espiritismo de Cordón originated during the TenYears' War from 1868–1878 in the eastern province now known as Granma (Lago Vieito:142). The pragmatic reason for this is clear in the following quote:

> … ser calambuco-beato, era manifestarse de acuerdo con el régimen español; hacerse protestante era ser partido de la anexión con Estados Unidos; la incorporación a Regla de Ocha, era ser portador de elementos de la esclavitud y afiliarse al Vodú, equivalía a denominarse extranjero.[11] [Argüelles Medero and Hodge Limonta:178]

The spiritual reasons for Cordón to become popular in Oriente were also strong. In that region, Spanish troops had massacred seemingly endless numbers of civilians during the Ten Years' War. Thus, any religious practice offering communication with the deceased was clearly of use for contacting lost loved ones.

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[9] Bembé de Sao is probably more like Cajón in the sense that it is an independent practice resistant to categorization but with elements of Espiritismo that let it be grouped as *Cruzao* for the sake of convenience.
[10] The influence of popular Catholicism is obvious in the use of the word *misa*.
[11] "…to be Catholic was to be in accord with the Spanish regime; to become Protestant was to be party to the annexing to the United States; to incorporate oneself in Regla de Ocha was to maintain elements of slavery and to affiliate yourself with Vodú was equivalent to calling yourself a foreigner."

Cordón was (and is) known for its songs, most of which were probably new creations, though some of them also likely came from popular Catholic activities such as Altares de Cruz (Millet 1996; see also Moore 2006). The most distinctive element of Cordón, though, was its dance that involved holding hands and dancing in a counterclockwise circle.[12] The antecedents of this practice are contested. Many scholars, noticing the emphasis on the spirits of the dead, point to the influence of Congo funeral rites that were strong in Oriente (Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert:181). Ortiz, however, noted early on that dancing together, especially while holding hands, is an aesthetic not found among any Afro-Cuban or even African practices, thus leading some to conclude that previous scholars had overlooked the possible Taíno influences which were still significant during that time (Lago Vieito:105). These numerous antecedents move us to the next group, the most intermixed category of Espiritismo in Cuba.

Espiritismo Cruzao is essentially a miscellaneous "catch-all" category in which all the practices that resist categorization are grouped. Most authors state that Cruzao refers to a mixture of Espiritismo and Palo, though others say Santería. In addition to these, though, one might also include little-known movements or practices such as the Havana-based José Movement during the 1950's that so far has been studied only by María Isabel Morales. The José Movement was led by Leocadia Perez Herrero, a medium who would be possessed by the "humble Congo slave" known as José. This movement combined many elements of Espiritismo, such as the use of glasses of water to represent clarity, though Leocadia always considered herself a Catholic. Her house-temple was used to give consultations as well as occasional concerts of symphonic music in honor of the Congo spirit. The seven-pointed star representing the movement consisted of the colors of the *Siete Potencias Africanas* (Seven African Powers),

[12] This is where Cordón gets its name, meaning *cord.*

popular Orishas of Lucumí religion.[13] Today, at Leocadia's grave, Espiritistas gather on the anniversary of her death and ask for blessings from José. After they have finished, Paleros who have appropriated José as their own, offer their prayers and ask for blessings, referring to him as "*Ta José*."[14]

The José Movement is just one of probably many movements led by charismatic mediums which get grouped under the heading of "Espiritismo Cruzao." Others grouped in this same category make use of altars for the Orishas. Obviously the Cruzao category is a vague one for all practices that resist classification. If one believed that the category of Espiritismo Cruzao meant anything at all, Cajón itself could be grouped in it. However, doing so would mask the many antecedents that led to this practice and would lead us away from seeing it as something to be considered in its own right. To group Cajón as Espiritismo Cruzao would misrepresent it as a part of Espiritismo. Instead, this is only one cultural mode from which it can be understood by participants.

One important belief that links most forms of Espiritismo is the importance and possible interrelationship of Congo and Indio spirits. Mass-produced statues of Plains Indians are found on altars of many Spiritual practices in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Brazil, and even the United States among southern African-American Spiritual Churches. Stephen C. Wehmeyer was probably the first to point out the connection between Indian spirits and Congos in an article on Spiritual Churches in New Orleans. He makes a convincing argument for the historic connection of Indian Altars to Kongo culture.[15] Judith Bettelheim brought this idea into a Caribbean

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[13] The seven colors were white (for Obatalá), purple (for Babaluaye), blue (for Yemaya), yellow (for Ochún), red (for Changó), brown (for Orula), and green (for Ogun).

[14] Ta José can be short for Taita or Tata and is used among Paleros as a generic to refer to all male Congo slaves. It is also used in Cajón songs, but doesn't necessarily honor *this* José.

[15] Wehmeyer also points out the use of a bucket filled with secret spiritual elements that is strikingly similar to the ngangas used in Cuban Palo.

perspective by pointing out the shared aesthetic of feathered headdresses, documenting it not only by reference to Central African culture, but also with a *carte de viste* (business card) from Havana. This card from a late 1800's photo studio depicts participants in Día de los Reyes celebrations wearing feathered headdresses and sitting with what appear to be Yuka drums. She states that "the Congo masquerader in feather headdress merged with the popular image of an Indian in feathered headdress" (2005:323).

These arguments are fascinating, but what do the Indians mean to practitioners today? The connections are meaningful for historic interest, but we cannot go so far as to say that the presence of the Indian in the altars of Espiritismo (or songs to them[16]) are "actually" representing Congo ancestors. When I asked Luciano about his thoughts on the possible connection between the two, he was adamant that the two entities should not be conflated in any way other than being spiritual cohabitants of the same place. To him, the Indios are spiritually important since they were the first inhabitants of the land (i.e., Cuba or America in general), while the Congos were the most numerous. The Indian spirits are not Congos in disguise. Wehmeyer, after mentioning to his informant about the possible historical connection of the two cultures, wrote that "he seemed far less impressed with the cross-cultural connections than I was. 'Spirit' is universal,' Coleman said expansively, 'and He's a universal God for a universal people'" (Wehmeyer:69). Wehmeyer went on to conclude that "questions about the historical or hagiographic origins of a particular saint or spirit guide are far less important than questions about how that saint or guide can help one lead a happy, moral, successful life in the face of constant struggle" (69). The same

[16] See the songs chapter, song text appendix, and CD 1, Track 9 for more on the Indio – Congo connection.

could be said regarding Cajón and Cuban Espiritismo, not only for the Indian spirits, but also, as we will see in later chapters, for the presence of Catholic saints.[17]

*Music*

Only in Latin America did Espiritismo gain a substantial musical repertoire. In Cuba, though the independent and localized nature of Espiritismo practices resulted in much variation, there are many songs known throughout the island. In Havana, Cajón musicians make use of a large number of songs from Espiritismo that are also heard in Oriente among Cordoneros and other practitioners.

Axel Hesse, who was based in Berlin and did his research in Havana, Santiago de Cuba, and Baracoa between 1963 and 1965, was the only previous person to study the songs associated with Espiritismo.[18] In such a diverse field, though, his work – and this one – might still only be scratching the surface of a vast repertoire in which the spiritual beliefs, hopes, and suffering[19] of Cubans are encoded. In any case, the music studied in this thesis, and the songs studies by Hesse, point to a larger phenomenon that could be quite beneficial for a larger understanding of religious practice in Cuba.

The songs that Hesse studied were often called *transmisiones* or *plegarias*. Among the people consulted for this thesis, the word *plegarias* was quite common for certain types of songs, though *transmisiones* was never used. Hesse divided the songs of Espiritismo into three major

[17] The Congo-Indio issue is one that relates to what Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart called the "intellectual hegemony" of talking about "invented tradition," and thus our pretence to *really* know what it means.
[18] Axel Hesse's PhD dissertation *Das Transmissionen-Singen im Kubanischen Spiritismus: Musikethnologische und Soziologische Untersuchungen zur Transkulturations-Problematik im Städtisch-Halbproletarischen Kontaktbereich der Afroiden und Europäischen Gruppenkultur en Kubas* (Berlin, 1971) was unavailable to be borrowed from any German libraries. The German national archive reported to me that the third part of the dissertation (which contains the song transcriptions) was "unreadable" in their copy. Clearly this is unfortunate since it was the first substantial study of the music of Espiritismo.
[19] The issue of suffering as expressed in the songs of Cajón is discussed in the chapter on Songs.

types: 1) those originating outside of Cuba,[20] 2) those from Cuba but not originating in Espiritismo[21] and 3) songs specifically created for Espiritismo. Additionally, he cites five major purposes for the songs: 1) to give the spiritual session a certain ambience, 2) to invoke, greet, or bid farewell to the spirits, 3) to make communication possible between mediums and spirits or spirits and Saints, 4) to prepare water for purification and 5) to characterize a spirit culturally (Hesse 1975). These types and purposes are not unlike the songs used in Cajón, with the addition of *puyas*, though those will be addressed later.[22] Suffice to say that the music of Espiritismo and, by extension, of Cajón, make up an area of Cuban musical culture that is vastly under studied by both Cuban and foreign scholars. If Espiritismo-related practices make up the vast majority of religious activity in Cuba, as some Cuban scholars believe, then we can never completely grasp the entirety of Cuban musical culture without at least some knowledge of the songs of Espiritismo.

[20] This might possibly include songs from the U.S., Africa, Europe, other Caribbean Islands, or Latin America.
[21] Such as those from Palo, Santería, and Catholicism.
[22] Though Hesse's categories apply well in Cajón, one important addition could be *puyas*, songs to insult spirits and thus tempt them to arrive to defend their honor. In Cajón, these songs come mostly from Palo and, therefore, might not have been used by Hesse's associates.

## Chapter Three: Bantu Antecedents

*Ethnicity*

*Congo*, as the word is used in Cuba, signifies something slightly different than in English. It is more of an ethnicity within the term Afro-Cuban that refers to the slaves and their descendents who came from Central Africa and, more generally, of a Bantu linguistic group. It refers not only to the historic Kingdom of Kongo, but the area from what is now southern Cameroon to central Angola, including lands west of Lake Tanganyika and even into Mozambique (Castellanos and Castellanos, 1:35). This is clearly a vast area consisting of many ethnic groups and languages, but in Cuba they were all generally grouped by the word Congo (ibid., 3:129). The elderly informants of Lydia Cabrera recalled that many of the slaves from those lands would refer to themselves with specific ethnic signifiers. She lists at least twenty-seven, such as Congo BaKongo, Congo Musundi, Congo Mbaka, and Congo Ngola (1986a:60).[1] In Cuba today, though African ethnicities are clearly intermixed, Congo or *Bantú* is generally used to refer to the culture considered to be from that area, especially the music and religion known as Palo.

The Bantu had an early and sustained influence in Cuba and were brought there as slaves in greater numbers than people from any other region of Africa.[2] Information gathered by CIDMUC[3] revealed that from 1851 to 1860, more than 32% of the slaves in Cuba were of the Congo "meta-ethnic" group (Eli Rodríguez, atlas:8). This was more than double that of the next largest group, the Lucumí. They were so numerous and widespread that they established

[1] BaKongo refers to the people of the Kingdom of Kongo, while the others likely are connected to the Ba'aka and Angola.
[2] Though it conflates linguistic group with ethnicity, I prefer the word *Bantu* since *Kongo* is not general enough to refer to all Central Africans in Cuba while *Congo* is easily confused with the current African nation. I have retained the word *Congo* in other places, though, when speaking of spirits who might be referred to in that way. In general, *Congo* and *Bantu* are usually synonymous in Cuba and I have maintained that to some degree here.

*cabildos* "en todos los pueblos" [in every town] (Cabrera 1986a:58). These numbers are somewhat misleading, though, considering the huge area referred to as the Congo during those times. Thus, those numbers would have consisted of many dialects and cultures versus the Lucumí who were more centralized and likely had mutually-intelligible dialects. Nevertheless, Bantu culture had a profound impact in all of Cuba and today is considered to be more of an essential element of Cuban national identity, while other groups such as the Lucumí are still considered to be more of an African "survival."

While there are no longer fluent speakers of any Bantu language in Cuba, Bantu words and phrases still survive as a ritual language and have even influenced Spanish itself (for example, the word *tumbadora* from the Bantu *tumba*). A large number of publications have been produced on the "residual" Bantu language that exists in Cuba. The number of slaves speaking a Bantu dialect led to an Afro-Cuban creole language called *Bozal*, a word that also referred to slaves who were born in Africa. While no longer used conversationally, this creole language, mostly a mix of Bantu words and grammar with Spanish, is significant to an understanding of Cajón ceremonies. The spirits that possess attendees at these ceremonies are usually Congos from that time period in Cuba's history and thus speak Bozal, or at least something similar to it. The actual sound of Bozal is unknown since it died out before being recorded, thus leaving only a small number of written accounts that have been pieced together by some researchers.[4]

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[3] CIDMUC stands for *Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Música Cubana* (Center for Research and Development of Cuban Music).

[4] See article in *Folklore Forum* by Isabel Castellanos (1990), and work by Jesús Fuentes Guerra and Armin Schwegler. Characteristics of Bozal include dropping of final consonants and especially the letter *s*. Much of this is present in Palo songs used in Cajón, including conjugations such as "*Yo va*" instead of "*Yo voy*." Bozal survives only in the writings of authors who wrote exactly as their informants spoke, as well as in Afro-Cuban music and ritual to some extent. This raises the issue of writing things as they are spoken, such as "Black English." Usually it is thought of as condescending to write the way something sounds, instead writing what the person "really means" in

*Religion*

The religion of the Bantu people in Cuba is sometimes referred to as *Regla Conga*, *Regla de Palo*, or often only *Palo*. This is representative of the way the religion exists today but it masks a more complex history. The phrase *Reglas de Congos* (Rules of the Congos) is probably the most accurate, if not the most pleasing to the ear, since it leaves room for the many variations of Palo in addition to historic practices that are mostly extinct today (such as *Makúta* and *Garabato*).[5] Reglas de Congos were historically centered in cabildos and are now carried on in the *nso-nganga*, called *casa-templo* (house-temple) in Spanish. Practitioners of Palo, some of the most common attendees at Cajón ceremonies, are called *Paleros* and considered *rayado* due to the discreet scarification process during initiation.

The variations of Palo are vague and generally not understood by outsiders due to a lack of scholarly study and secrecy on the part of practitioners. Different practices such as Monte, Mayombe, Brillumba (also Briyumba or Vrillumba), and Kimbisa are not "hard and fast" distinctions, as demonstrated in the writings of Lydia Cabrera who made no distinction between Palo Monte and Palo Mayombe, simply calling it Monte-Mayombe. Miguel Barnet cites three major groupings within which most variations fall: Briyumba, Kimbisa, and Mayombe (1995). According to his study, Mayombe is synonymous with Palo Monte; Kimbisa is older but has fewer practitioners and often mixes Espiritismo and Catholicism; and Briyumba is found mostly in Havana and Matanzas. According to one of Cabrera's associates, "Vrillumba fue creada por los criollos" [Vrillumba was created by the creoles].

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standard spelling. Documenting Bozal as it was spoken was the only way to historically document it as a form of Spanish influenced by Bantu grammatical principles.

[5] The music of Makúta and Garabato have both been incorporated to some extent into Palo and, therefore, Cajón.

Regardless of the variation of Palo being practiced, all believe in an omnipotent God called Nsambi (also spelled Nzambi, Sambi, Sambia[6]). Below Nsambi in the divine hierarchy are the Mpungus, or "espíritus superiores" (Cabrera 1986a:127). They are usually earth-related spirits such as water and forest spirits, many of which are considered by most practitioners to have counterparts in other religions.[7] The most important Mpungus referenced in Cajón include the following[8]:

– Lucero Mundo (whose main counterpart is Elegguá)

– Sarabanda (whose main counterpart is Ogún, though only Sarabanda is mentioned by name)

– Siete Rayos (counterpart is Shangó, though Shangó is never directly referenced in Cajón)

– Madre Agua (whose counterparts are Yemaya and Virgen de Regla)

– Mamá Chola or Chola Wengue (counterpart to Ochún and Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre)

– Centella (whose counterpart, Oya, is not mentioned directly in Cajón)

– Tiembla Tierra (usually referenced in Cajón as Obatalá, La Mercedes, or Santisimo)

Though the Mpungus are referenced quite a bit in Palo songs used in Cajón, the main emphasis in both Palo and Cajón is on the dead. Luciano refers to the dead in Bantu as "nfumbe" and Cabrera documented other spellings/pronunciations (nfumbi, füiri, nfunde, etc.). The nfumbe are paramount in the practice of Palo. In the words of one of Cabrera's associates, "los congos… ciudaban más de sus muertos, y por eso nuestra religión se basa principalmente en el Muerto"[9] (1986a:125). It is probably this emphasis on the dead that made Palo such an essential force in the creation of Cajón ceremonies and music. Unlike Cajón or other Afro-Cuban religious practices, though, in Palo there is an emphasis on controlling spirits of the dead.

[6] The use of this word in Haitian *Vodou* ceremonies led to its exoticization in Hollywood movies as "zombie."
[7] See chapter on Lucumí for more information about this "syncretism" or counterparts in other religions.
[8] The counterparts mentioned in this list were stated by Luciano.
[9] "The Congos care more for their *muertos* [dead] and because of this our religion is based principally on the dead."

For example, in Lucumí religion they honor the dead but "no se les manda"[10] (ibid.). This focus on controlling the dead is realized materially with the *nganga*.

The nganga (or *prenda*) is an iron pot containing ritual elements with which a Palero does his (or sometimes her) work. This work is usually used to control the actions of a dead spirit for the benefit of the Palero working the nganga, or for the benefit of his clients. This work can be interpreted as being for good or evil purposes and this results in the ngangas being separated into two categories: "*Cristiano*" (for good) and "*Judío*" (for evil work). Instantly, a contentious and questionable separation is established by the use of the words "Christian" and "Jewish." One question is who would actually claim that they work a nganga for evil? Thus, this separation is likely the result of outsider paranoia regarding a secretive religion, especially among some Santeros who believe that Palo is brutish and always used for evil. Even among Paleros themselves there is finger pointing. Cabrera's informant (1986a:179) claims that Briyumba is "Judío" while Barnet's informant, probably a Briyumbero, claims that it is for good while Mayombe is "Judío" (1995:24).[11] The anti-semitic element is also clearly at issue, though this may not have developed in Cuba itself, as we are about to see.

The myth that transculturation happened between a "pure" Catholic-Spanish culture and a "pure" African culture, obviously does not take into account the fact that Jesus Christ and his mother Mary were both from the Kongo, as we'll see in a moment. What is often overlooked in studies of Cuban transculturation is that Catholicism was present in Africa even before Columbus "discovered" the New World. In fact, Catholicism was such a political and cultural force in Central Africa that the first Kongolese king to convert to Christianity did so in 1491.

[10] "They don't order them."

[11] The belief that some ngangas are used for evil is also due to the fact that some are made with human bones and skulls. Because of this, Paleros "are known for digging up cadavers" and are often accused of working with *ndokis*, i.e., criminals and other evil dead spirits (Cabrera 1986:121).

This is generally forgotten in studies of Afro-American culture because it is too "embarrassingly bizarre" to fit within our preconceived ideas about Africa (Thornton:1). By the 18th century, the Kingdom of Kongo even had its own African Catholic prophets. Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita (1684–1706), a Kongolese woman who was believed by some to be possessed by Saint Anthony, led a political and religious reform movement now known as the Antonian Movement (see Thornton). Dona Beatriz was born to a noble family and received training as a *nganga*[12] in addition to her Catholic upbringing. Her Antonian movement gained many Kongolese followers and preached, among other things, that Jesus and Mary were Kongolese. Such a movement was seen as a religious and political threat that led to the execution of Dona Beatriz by being burned at the stake.

Such an example makes clear that some African slaves in Cuba (and the rest of America) were well aware of Catholicism by the time they arrived on the island, and already thought of themselves as Catholics, though they likely maintained many non-Catholic religious practices. Intense missionizing had taken part in the Kingdom of Kongo, even resulting in an official KiKongo translation of the Salve Regina that refers to Mary as the "Holy mother of Nzambi a Mpungu" (Thornton:115).[13] With these things in mind, it is not hard to see that referring to ngangas as "Cristiano" and "Judío" could have easily existed even in the Kongo, as anti-Semitic thought was commonplace in the Catholic church at that time. Furthermore, it is from this milieu that the Europeans purchased thousands of Kongolese slaves from other Kongolese as a result of years of devastating civil wars. Thornton cites Kongolese slave exports to the "Spanish Indies" during this time, thus making it quite possible that followers of the Antonian Movement were

[12] In Central Africa, nganga refers to a traditional spiritual healer, or someone with training in spiritual matters. Because of this, the term nganga was also used to refer to Catholic priests (Thornton:54).
[13] Thornton also shows an illustration from that period that depicts a priest blessing the weapons of African warriors while the warriors dance to the beat of a drum that is quite similar to the Yuka drum of Cuba (see Thornton:197).

present in Cuba by the mid-1700's (208). All of this reminds us that transculturation is an ever-present process that does not only happen in certain places or times, nor between some mythical "pure" cultures which, as reified ideas, often serve purposes that are not always innocent.

*Music*

The most substantial contribution to Cajón from Palo is its songs, which constitute the largest number of songs used in Cajón.[14] Songs and incantations used in Palo are often called *mambos* and incorporate a good deal of Spanish with Bantu words. This is fitting since it is most common for Congolese Bozales to mount people in Cajón ceremonies. In this way, the mix of Spanish and Bantu is efficacious for calling the Congos. Pragmatically, these songs are also better understood by Spanish speakers than, say, Orisha songs in Lucumí, and have the added benefit of usually being accompanied by fast-tempo, powerful drumming which aids in the process of mounting. While there are songs used specifically when working with a nganga, these do not seem to be appropriate in Cajón. Instead, most of the songs are those that would be used in Palo ceremonies that include drumming.

There are many types of drumming and instrumental music that fall within the purview of Bantu culture in Cuba. Many such as *Yuka*, *Kinfuiti*, and *Maní* are disappearing or have done so already. Others, such as *Garabato* and *Makúta*, have been incorporated into the music generally known as Palo, and from there appropriated for Cajón. Garabato, originally played on the floor with hooked sticks called garabatos, had its songs incorporated in Palo ceremonies and no longer exists in its older form. Likewise, Makúta, a sacred drumming style has also mostly disappeared though its songs now exist to some degree in Cajón (see CD). Its drum rhythms are also invoked

to some degree by Grupo Cuero y Cajón, especially through the use of Makúta's bell pattern which is built on the rhythmic structure sometimes called *tresillo*.

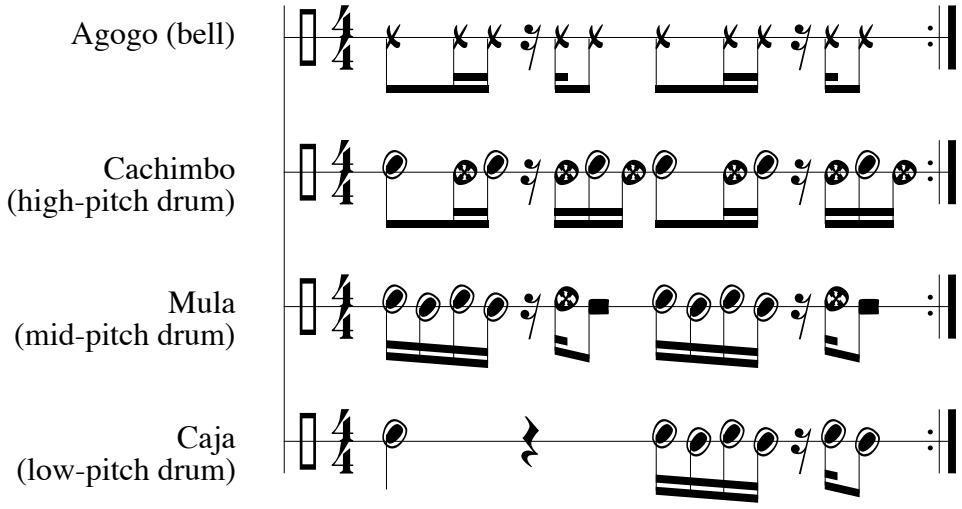


**Figure 1. Makúta as taught by Regino Jiménez.**

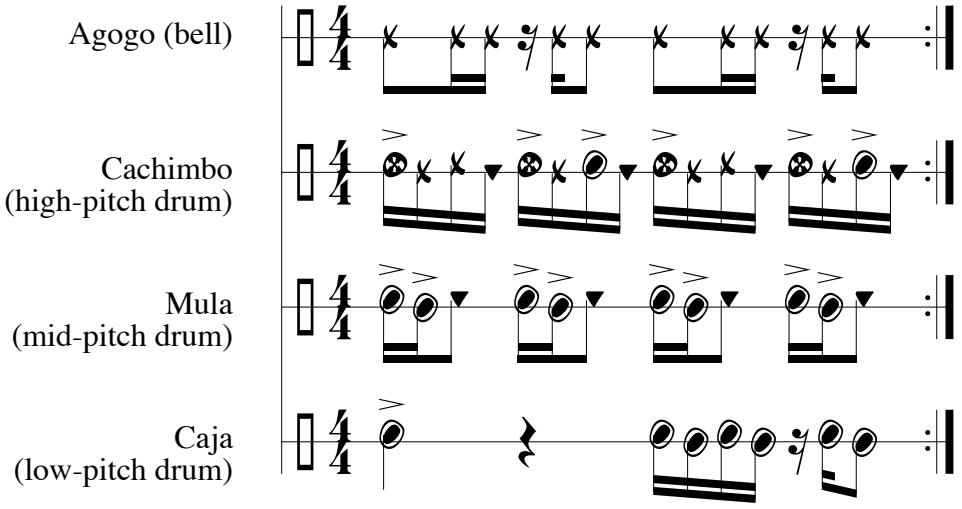


**Figure 2. "Makúta Vieja" as taught by Regino Jiménez.**

[14] Though Palo songs might number more than songs from other religions, this might be misleading since Palo songs are often quite short. Espiritismo songs, on the other hand, are usually longer and slower, thus probably taking the same amount of time in a ceremony as the songs from Palo.

In addition to the bell pattern, it is interesting to note that the cachimbo in "Makúta Vieja" is quite similar to the tumbadora part in GCyC's version of Iyesá (see Figure 9).

Drumming referred to as Palo has many variations and is played on drums generically referred to as *ngoma* (see Warden 2005). One of the more standardized versions from Havana has been arranged by Grupo Cuero y Cajón to fit their instrumentation (see Figure 17).

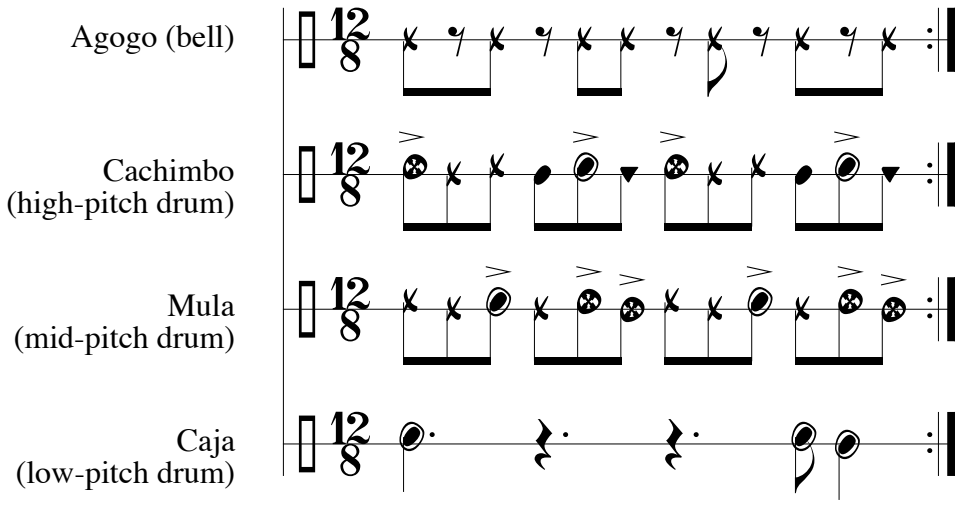


**Figure 3. Havana-style Palo as taught by Regino Jiménez.**

## Chapter Four: Lucumí/Yoruba Antecedents

*Ethnicity*

*Lucumí* is the word used in Cuba to refer to the people, language, and culture coming from the Yoruba people of Nigeria. This name likely came from "Ulkamí" or "Ulkumí" which were used by the Portuguese to refer to the people from Oyo, and comes from the Yoruba greeting *Olùkù mi* meaning "my friend" (Lawal:28; Castellanos 1996:40). The use of the term Lucumí even predated the word Yoruba since "there were no Yoruba—that is, no one who would have said 'I am Yoruba'—before the early 19th century" (Waterman:369). In Cuba, "the term 'Yoruba' was unknown" (Castellanos 1996:41) and many ethnic groups from that region of West Africa were grouped as Lucumí, meaning that a Pan-Yoruba identity existed in Cuba before it existed in Africa.

Often, those who were grouped as Lucumí included the *Iyesá* (also from Nigeria) and the *Arará* (from Dahomey/Benin). "The Iyesá are the Cuban descendents of the Ijesa people of Nigeria… [who] speak a dialect of the Yoruba language… [and] are considered to be a sub-group of the Yoruba people" (Delgado:109). They were numerous enough "in the 19th century to establish cabildos in several locales in the plantation-saturated sections of western and central Cuba, including Havana, Regla [across the bay from Havana], Matanzas, Jovellanos, Trinidad, and Sancti Spiritus" (214). All of these cabildos have now died out except in Matanzas. The Arará were also often grouped with the Lucumí, though their music and religion exist apart from the Lucumí to a greater extent than the Iyesá.[1] Both the Arará and Iyesá have been greatly influenced by Lucumí religion in Cuba, though the reverse is also true, as we will see.

[1] The Arará are considered to be of "Ewe-Fon" origin and refer to as *Foddún* what the Yoruba would call Orishas. Arará religion has been greatly influenced by Santería and to some degree incorporated into it. Though it seems to exist most strongly in Matanzas, it does exist in Havana as well. I witnessed one Arará-style presentation of an *Iyawo* (initiate) in Marianao and have heard of Arará drums that exist in Pogolotti. Unlike in Matanzas, where the

Lucumí culture is focused in Havana and Matanzas, though it has spread throughout the entire island, especially to other urban areas. Religiously and musically, it is the "poster-child" for African cultural "survivals" in Cuba, as well as being the most popular symbol of Afro-Cuban identity. This is partly a result of Yoruba organization and religious hegemony (see Ramos 2000) in addition to government sponsored initiatives to propagate the "folkloric" aspects of it, though there are also historic reasons for its position in Cuban culture. George Brandon summarized data by Moreno Fraginals that stated that the Lucumí "entered as a substantial portion of the slaves imported during the final twenty years of the era of slavery [in Cuba]" (1993:58). In earlier years of the slave trade (mid-18th century), the Lucumí were only 8.22% of incoming slaves[2] while from 1850–70 they constituted the largest group at 34.52%.[3] Therefore, the Lucumí had a distinct advantage in terms of preserving their religious practices since the majority of them arrived in Cuba just before slavery ended.

*Religion*

The religion of the Lucumí is variously referred to as *Regla de Ocha*, *Santería*, or simply *Religión Lucumí*. Contrary to popular belief, it is not really a "polytheistic" religion since it believes in one supreme God known as Olodumare (who can also be called Olofi or Olorun). This supreme being, however, is considered unapproachable by humans and thus recourse to

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drums are leaned against a bench to be played, in the ceremony I witnessed they were set directly on the floor and played while seated. The lead drummer played standing up with the largest drum between his legs and strapped to his waist, similar to Yuka. Unfortunately, these ceremonies are rare and might be disappearing. The drummers playing in the Havana ceremony usually play batá and, since Arará ceremonies happen only once every few months, many of them were forgetting parts of the drumming. Lekiam, who did some of the lead singing for the ceremony, felt it necessary to listen to CD's the day before in order to remember certain pronunciations of the songs.

[2] This made them the fourth largest group compared to Congo (30.30%), Carabali (25.31%), and Mandinga (18%).

[3] Though the Lucumí were the largest group of incoming slaves, the atlas by CIDMUC (mentioned in the Bantu chapter) reminds us that in terms of census numbers, those of the Congo "meta-ethnic" group were still predominant since it included African slaves and their Cuban-born children who would still have been identified as "Congo."

Olodumare's divine subjects is more appropriate. The Orishas[4], as they are known, are the beings to which humans give their devotion and ask for assistance. Among the Yoruba in Nigeria, there are hundreds of Orishas, some more locally significant than others. Among the Lucumí in Cuba, however, there are around twenty-three, depending on who is writing or talking to you. Though Cajón ceremonies are not really meant for Orisha worship, they nevertheless involve some reverence for the Orishas. The main Orishas mentioned in Cajón ceremonies are Elegguá, Obatalá, Oshún (Ochún), Yemaya (a.k.a. Olókun), and Babaluaye. All of the Orishas in Cuba have a counterpart in Palo and Catholicism, though some of these relationships are more important than others. The concept of "syncretism" becomes an issue, though this will be discussed later.

Elegguá is the first Orisha to be honored in Lucumí religion. As the guardian of the crossroads, he must be given respect first in order for communication to be possible with other Orishas. He is sometimes considered childlike and thus a relationship is drawn with the Santo Niño de Atocha, and his playful trickster side is called Eshu. As a "puente entre los vivos y los muertos"[5] he is an important spirit to be honored in Cajón ceremonies.

Obatalá, the Orisha of wisdom and purity, is quite important in Cajón, in addition to his Catholic counterpart, La Virgen de la Mercedes. Spiritually, Obatalá might be the most important *Orisha* in Cajón ceremonies as he is responsible for peacefulness and clarity.

Oshún is the Orisha of femininity, beauty, sexuality, and vanity, though she is also somewhat associated with death. According to John Mason, "Death (Ikú) is her friend and pays her respect" (1997:316). Her popular image as an icon of feminine power and beauty, though, has made her extremely popular among Cuban women and, thus, Cajón, since its attendees are

[4] *Orisha* is a common English spelling, though in Spanish it is often written and pronounced as *Oricha*.
[5] "…bridge between the living and the dead…" Luciano referred to Elegguá in this way.

mostly women. Her Catholic counterpart is La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, the most popular Catholic icon in Cuba (explained in more depth in the following chapter), resulting in her status as an unofficial symbol of national Cuban pride (see Portuondo Zúñiga and DeRojas). The popularity of Oshún and Caridad among all Cuban social classes has led to the rise of religious ceremonies that eschew most of the Lucumí language and drumming in favor of popular music utilizing violin and guitar. *Violín*, as the ceremonies are called, are spiritually efficacious in the sense that Oshún is believed to enjoy the sweet sounds of the violin, but pragmatic explanations are also possible. Violín ceremonies are more popular among upper-class Cubans and those who prefer a more racially neutral celebration. The only significant publication that talks about these ceremonies is by Bárbara Balbuena Gutiérrez who also points to the overproduction of conservatory-trained musicians in Cuba as a contributing factor to this phenomenon. Whether explained spiritually or pragmatically, though, Violín ceremonies seem to have grown in popularity over the last decade while Oshún's importance in Cajón ceremonies also continues.

Yemaya is another important female Orisha honored in Cajón. This is not surprising because, like Oshún, she is representative of feminine power, especially that of motherhood. As Olókun, she is also connected to death and the infinite depths of the ocean. This connection to water and oceans likely resulted in her counterpart being that of La Virgen de Regla. In light of these many connections to death and womanhood, though, it is surprising that Oya, the female Orisha associated with the cemetery, is not present in Cajón except through her Palo counterpart Centella. This is possibly due to her Catholic counterpart, Santa Teresa, not having the amount of popularity as other saints in Cuba. On the other hand, the popular Santa Barbara is also

missing, possibly due to her Lucumí counterpart being Changó (Shangó), the hot-tempered male Orisha of masculinity.[6]

Babaluaye, whose counterpart is San Lázaro, is probably the most important Orisha honored in Cajón due to his association with illness, a major reason for having Cajón ceremonies. Babaluaye/San Lázaro[7] is the focus of much modern Cuban religious devotion as witnessed in the massive pilgrimages to Rincón, outside of Havana, where there is a shrine for San Lázaro (see Hagedorn 2002). Historically he is associated with smallpox and leprosy, though recently his domain has also come to include HIV/AIDS. Far from being simply associated with illness, he is considered to have the knowledge of how to survive illness and, as such, is essential to the goals of Cajón ceremonies.

In addition to the Orishas, Lucumí religion honors *eggún* (the dead). Though certainly not as popular as Orisha ceremonies and possibly disappearing, ceremonies for eggún are still occasionally practiced. In one *ceremonia fúnebre* (funerary ceremony) that I witnessed near Pogolotti, almost all attendees were elderly, and they were all women. Batá drums[8] were played while attendees sang and danced a circle around the *akpwón* (lead singer) who rapped the ground with a cane.[9] Outside on the back patio was an offering of two roosters along with the head of a pig, which is an offering for the dead sometimes present in Cajón ceremonies. This type of event is said to be very rare and seems to be dying out, though the importance of the muertos themselves is not dying out.

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[6] Why Oya and Chango are not revered much in Cajón could be an interesting avenue for further research from a feminist or religious studies approach.

[7] When constructing a table of religious counterparts, Luciano instructed me to erase "Babaluaye" from the Orisha column and put "San Lázaro" in its place. That San Lázaro would be placed in the Orisha column speaks to the importance of *caminos*, which are addressed later in this chapter.

[8] Batá drums are mentioned later in this chapter. Though I have been studying batá off-and-on for a number of years and know the rhythms of Oru del Igbodu and Oru Cantado, most of the rhythms used in this ceremony were unfamiliar to me.

[9] Lekiam was the akpwón for this ceremony and told me later that they happen very rarely these days.

The importance of the muertos in Lucumí religion is seen in this passage from Michael Atwood Mason's *Living Santería*:

> The effects that the spirits of the dead have on the living are both more frequent and less obvious [than the Orishas]. As a group, the dead are said to give people resolve. They are most often represented by a carved, figurative cane, and their presence is said to steady humans' lives. Spirits venerated include deceased ancestors in the ritual family, those who have gone before in the blood family of the individual, and spirits who are otherwise essential because of some prenatal commitment to the individual (*cuadro espiritual*). …different categories of the dead are known for their skills in certain areas. The *congo* spirits are thought to be strong-willed, powerful, and extremely good at guiding people through hostile social circumstances. The *gitano* spirits have terrific psychic powers and therefore warn people of impending troubles and diagnose and treat difficult illnesses. Similarly, known individual spirits continue to have the skills they possessed when alive. Thus, a person's wise mother might appear in a dream or a *misa* to offer moral guidance. [2002:95]

It is interesting that Mason speaks of Congos and Gitanos who are spirits that, we can probably safely assume, did not exist in Oyo or any other Yoruba polity. These spirits and the mention of the *misa* (mass) speak to elements of Espiritismo that have been appropriated by many practitioners of Lucumí religion (also see Hagedorn 2001 and Balbuena Gutiérrez). Though certainly not all practitioners of Lucumí religion incorporate these elements, ceremonias fúnebres are probably dying out and, in their place, is a growing reliance on Espiritismo and especially Cajón ceremonies for honoring and communicating with the muertos.

*On "Syncretism" and "Santería"*[10]

Syncretism is certainly contentious as both a word and a concept, partly because of its many definitions. In general, it usually refers to a mixing of religious tenets, icons, or practices but becomes problematic in the way such mixings are perceived. That is to say, depending on

[10] This section is intended to clarify my approach to these important issues in Afro-Cuban studies. Though syncretism is not something exclusive to Lucumí religion, it is often spoken of in regards to it and, for this reason, I have placed it here. I hope that the issues raised here might suggest avenues of additional research on religious aspects of Cajón that might also inform our understanding of other Afro-Cuban religious practices.

one's perspective, syncretism is sometimes perceived as being "illegitimate" or "impure" while others see it as a "creative" response to culture contact and generally positive. In studies of Lucumí religion, one could easily talk about syncretism between different African ethnic groups (such as the Arará, Nupe, Hausa, Lucumí/Yoruba, etc.) but, despite this possibility, it almost always signifies the issue of Catholicism. This shows a scholarly preoccupation in Afro-Cuban studies with the term *syncretism* as it relates to Orishas and Catholic Saints and thus becomes politically contentious. Even the term *Santería* has come under fire since it is seen by some as an incorrect, Euro-centric word for what is "really" only Orisha worship. At the heart of the issue is this question: Is the presence of Catholic Saints in Lucumí religion merely a disguise for the Orishas, or does it have deeper religious significance?

The study of syncretism (and its larger concept, transculturation[11]) would be much more easily and fruitfully approached by studying cultures and subcultures of relatively equal power to each other. For example, Cabrera's quote about Shangó being "mas Congo que Lucumí"[12] (2000:243) shows that syncretism is not something that exists only between that which is "European" and that which is "African." However, it is also not as politically charged, and thus the debate doesn't have as much invested in it since the "victor" of such a discourse stands to gain very little. Thus, since the presence of Catholicism, or lack thereof, in both Lucumí religion and Cajón is essentially the political "elephant in the room" in a study such as this, it would perhaps be best to clarify a stance on it.

Much of what is made about syncretism in Afro-Cuban religion is based on mistaken or oversimplified understandings of the term itself. Herskovits' use of the term syncretism in his studies of African culture in the New World is often cited, correctly or incorrectly, as a view that

[11] Syncretism is often reserved for discussions of religious intermixing (Shaw and Stewart 1994), thus I see it as one part of transculturation which refers to culture in general, including religion but not limited to it.

understood syncretism to represent some sort of unconscious conflation of African deities (usually Orishas) with Catholic Saints. Such a view would deny agency on the part of the African slaves who are then defended by claims to the effect that Catholic Saints were merely disguises to fool slave owners as to the true nature of the African religious practices taking place in the Americas. Such an oversimplified response to the idea of syncretism is seen in statements such as the following:

> …el llamado *sincretismo religioso* entre la Regla de Ocha o santería y el catolicismo no es sino un enmascaramiento, en el decursar histórico, de las deidades africanas en las católicas bajo medios sociales tradicionalmente adversos a la manifestación de los orishas del panteón yoruba.[13] [Bolívar and López:94]

Such a simple view, however, also denies agency to the individuals involved in the process and is likely socio-politically invested in an Afro-centric take on Afro-Cuban religion that attempts to focus on "survivals" and advocates the removal of that which is Catholic. This is seen in the "American Yoruba" movement (see Palmié 1995) that resulted in the establishment of institutions such as Oyotunji Village and the Yoruba Theological Archministry, both of which are historically connected to Cuban Santería yet were developed by African Americans who eschewed elements that they considered to be Catholic. The view that Catholicism is a contaminant is a valid theological development in its own right, but an academic extension of this approach is ideologically suspect since it ignores historic and ethnographic evidence that proves not only that Afro-Cubans *can* actually believe in Catholic Saints but that many *do*.

If the presence of the Saints was merely a mask for the Orishas, then why are the Saints still present today in Afro-Cuban households? To approach this, let's consider the place of the Catholic Church historically and in contemporary Cuba. First and foremost, we must realize that

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[12] "…more Congo than Lucumí…"

the Catholic Church in Cuba was always a relatively weak institution when compared to other Spanish colonies. Lisandro Pérez notes the "relative lack of religiosity" in Cuba even before Castro's revolution, also citing a U.S. writer who traveled to Cuba and remarked in 1859 that "the Roman Catholic Church has now neither civil nor political power in Cuba" (148). This was written while Yoruba slaves were arriving in larger numbers than ever before and thus many of them were probably never given any significant Catholic education. Thorough indoctrination never really occurred on the plantations (see Lisandro Pérez), though the Lucumí learned about Catholicism in other ways. George Brandon points out the importance of "hagiolotry" (i.e., popular Spanish and European saint worship) that was probably more influential in the formation of Santería than Vatican-style dogma (1991:55). The church was not a powerful entity in those days, and it did not gain any power in the years ahead. It aligned itself with Spain during the war for independence, leaving it a much-disliked institution among the pro-independence elite as well as the impoverished ex-slaves who served a large role in the war for independence. Much later, after Castro's revolution, the Catholic Church was an easy target for official state atheism. After 1960–61, "the Catholic Church became totally silent and quite powerless" (Clark:12) until only recently reemerging somewhat.

The powerlessness of the Church gave Afro-Cubans ample chance to remove any Catholic images if they were still indeed masking the Orishas. Afro-Cuban religion had been at least acknowledged, if not completely valorized, by the *Afrocubanismo* movement in the early 20th century and the state-sponsored support for Afro-Cuban culture during the 1960's. In fact, it might have even been beneficial for Afro-Cubans to remove Catholic images during the later

[13] "…the so-called *religious syncretism* between Regla de Ocha or Santería and Catholicism is nothing but a masking, in historical discourse, of the African deities by the Catholic ones under social settings traditionally adverse to the manifestation of the Orishas of the Yoruba pantheon.."

decades of the revolution since Catholics were persecuted probably more than practitioners of Afro-Cuban religions, which were becoming somewhat tolerated as a symbol of the proletariat.

Finally, and this is probably the most common reason given for the Afro-Cuban belief in Saints, though it is no less powerful an argument, is the fact that if we can generalize at all about African religious practices, they are often additive. That is to say that they are not opposed to incorporating foreign deities or spirits into local belief systems if it is locally suitable. This additive nature, considered in conjunction not with a Roman Catholic dogma but with the hagiolotry of the commoners, makes it clear that Afro-Cubans are no longer merely masking the Orishas with Catholic Saints. In the end, failing all these previous arguments, one cannot argue with the fact that "the cat is out of the bag," so to speak, and no one could seriously claim that the presence of Catholic Saints still exists as a way to fool outsiders. Thus, we must conclude (and it might have been an obvious conclusion all along) that many, if not most, practitioners of Lucumí religion (or Santería) do actually put some degree of faith in Catholic saints. We are still left, though, with the tricky theological point of syncretism.

Does syncretism in this case mean two entities becoming one or simply being associated through similarities, or is the issue more complex than that? One could probably find self-identified Santeros who truly believe that Babaluaye and San Lázaro are the exact same deity, but such a belief is probably only held among the smallest minority of Santeros. Miguel "Willie" Ramos, a *babalawo*[14] and scholar, reminds us that "most Afro-Cuban devotees make a point of distinguishing the differences between one religion and the other" (1996:55). This was the case in my own research which also led me to a deeper understanding and reevaluation of *caminos*.

[14] Essentially a "priest" of Santería who has been trained in divination.

The idea of caminos (roads) is incredibly important in Lucumí religion and, I believe, for Afro-Cuban religion in general. To refer to a camino of an Orisha is to make reference to a personality trait or a specific manifestation of that Orisha. For example, Elegguá, as a trickster, can be referred to as Eshu. In many ways, the title Elegguá is simply a category that refers to all of his various caminos, and the same could be said for all of the Orishas. Most importantly, the concept of caminos works inter-religiously as well. In an interview with Luciano, I brought up the fact that many of the songs in Cajón refer to deities almost synonymously, for example, the song that begins "Bendita eres Virgen de Regla, bendita eres mi Yemaya." His response was simply that the Virgen de Regla is the "camino Católico" of Yemaya, just as Madre Agua is her "camino en Palo." The obvious question then was "are they the same or are they two distinct things?" Luciano replied casually "dos cosas distintas" [two distinct things] then, after pondering briefly, stated emphatically "dos cosas en una!" [two things in one].[15]

Saying that a Saint and an Orisha are two things in one does not mean they are conflated to be exactly "the same," though mere observation of Cajón could mistakenly lead to this conclusion. Take for instance, the owner of one house who asked GCyC to play something for "La Caridad" since her niece had just been initiated as a child of "Ochún." To say, then, that they are synonymous is logical, but not totally correct, and would be somewhat like saying, in a Christian context, that Jesus is the same as the Holy Spirit. In fact, this simile is not completely unrelated because it points to an extremely important issue in understanding Cajón: the material versus the spiritual.

During my interviews with Luciano, he went to great lengths to point out a separation between *materia* (material) and *espíritu* (spirit). "En Cajón," he stated, "hay una mezcla entre

[15] The concept of multiple beings or deities in one should not be hard to understand by anyone familiar with the Christian Holy Trinity, sometimes referred to as "the great three in one."

materia y espíritu."[16] In this sense, *material* is that which is related to African deities because they are fed (i.e., given sacrifices) while *spiritual* refers to the Saints or muertos who do not require such material sustenance.[17] For this reason, I have been careful to use the word *counterpart* when referring to what could also be called inter-religious caminos. *Counterpart* signifies a thing which closely resembles another in form or *function*. Thus, Yemaya and Madre Agua are material forms that serve the same *function* as the spirit of La Virgen de Regla, though they are all distinct.[18]

To conclude this brief interlude on syncretism, we have seen that simultaneous belief in both the Saints and Orishas does exist. While most practitioners distinguish between different belief systems, they also find it beneficial to harness the power of deities from belief systems that were historically separate. Therefore, the name Santería is also appropriate for the beliefs of many Afro-Cubans (and, of course, now, Cubans of non-African descent and even non-Cubans).[19] However, it could be an inappropriate word for some practitioners who do not believe in mixing historically separate religions. Cabrera quotes one practitioner who said "lucumí é lucumí, Iglesia é Iglesia, congo é congo, y aquí en Matanzas, mueto é mueto. Lon dó separao: Kisinpúnbo no se lleva con lo Ocha. Si quiere rezá Santo blanco, va a la Iglesia, si lucumí, a casa el Santero; si quiere chécherengoma, a la casa Nganga"[20] (1986a:129). This is

[16] "In Cajón, there's a mix between material and spirit."
[17] The a priori conflation of material with the spiritual in some studies of Santería is probably a result of previous researchers presupposing that all practitioners understand the Orishas to be both spiritual and material. For some this is probably true, but there is likely more to it, as witnessed in Luciano's statements.
[18] Such a way of recognizing counterparts is found throughout the Americas in a surprisingly similar fashion. That is to say the counterparts have often been seen as connected in the same way in different countries, independent of each other. Even in Africa, connections have been made in similar ways. Herskovits, studying in Dahomey, reported that Xevioso (similar to Shangó) had Santa Barbara as his counterpart, just as in Cuba (1937:640). This points towards a process or an underlying implicit "grammatical" principle (Mintz and Price:27) in the African approach to adopting or appropriating "foreign" religious elements.
[19] For a fascinating take on the different understandings of syncretism among practitioners, see George Brandon's *Santería from Africa to the New World*.
[20] "Lucumí is Lucumí, Church is Church, Congo is Congo, and here in Matanzas, *muerto* is muerto. They're separate: Kisinpúnbo doesn't come with Ocha. If you want to pray to a white Saint, go to the Church, if Lucumí, to

certainly not the approach taken by Luciano, members of GCyC, or any attendee of a Cajón ceremony. Therefore, and this should always be kept in mind, the answers to religious questions such as these depend on who you ask. In the end, a relativistic approach that recognizes the existence of multiple truths is probably the best way to approach these issues. Such a relativistic approach clearly exists among practitioners, as articulated by Miguel "Willie" Ramos:

> The belief that *ashe*[21] is contained within everything that exists justifies the existence of this transcendental force in other cultures and religious beliefs, for Olodumare is not the exclusive domain of the Yoruba. He made his presence known to all human beings, regardless of 'race' and skin color. This explains why Yoruba descendants in the New World were not only receptive to Christianity and Catholicism, but also to other African beliefs, Kardecian Spiritualism, and the indigenous practices that prevailed throughout the Americas. In the New World, the Yoruba and their descendants find *ashe* in the holy water and candles of the Europeans, the magical practices of the Bantus and Abakuas, the Vodun of the Ewe-Fon and Rada, possession by 'spiritual guides,' and the maize and tobacco of the indigenous populations. [Ramos 1996:60]

This approach is an empowering one that grants agency to the individuals involved in the development of Afro-Cuban religion. A similar understanding is present among academic philosophers as well:

> The Catholicism of Vodoun, Candomblé, and Santería was not an ecumenical screen, hiding the worship of African deities from official persecution. It was the religion of the masters, revised, transformed, and appropriated by slaves to harness its power within their universes of discourse. [Andrew Apter:178]

These quotes might gloss past the early pragmatic benefit of harnessing the images of the Saints, but they also speak to the truth and authenticity of the Saints in Afro-Cuban religion. The presence of Saints in Lucumí religion was not an unconscious or spontaneous syncretism, but an active appropriation resulting in the real and vital presence of the Saints for many practitioners.

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the house of a Santero; if you want *chéchere ngoma*, go to [the house of a Palero]." Interestingly, this person still calls a practitioner of Lucumí a "Santero."

[21] To put it simply, ashé means power or divine energy.

*Music*

Without drumming, dancing, and singing, it would be impossible to communicate with the Orishas. The musical ceremony in which the Orishas mount their devotees is referred to as *Wemilere* (or *Güemilere*), *Toque de Santo*, or simply *Tambor*, which is most common among drummers in Pogolotti.

The language used in a Tambor[22] is Lucumí, though there are few, if any fluent speakers of the language today. As the language is not completely understood by all practitioners, it is maybe not surprising that Spanish has begun to show up in the liturgical songs. The most common examples are "O felicidad" in place of "Ofe ni ki ya" and the song "Yo me llamo abukenke," which may or may not be a replacement for Lucumí verses. Though an akpwón will usually know how a song could be translated, the general practitioner will not have an extensive knowledge in that regard. The Lucumí language is considered by some to be "muy difícil pa' la gente,"[23] though its use is unquestioned in Lucumí ceremonies since it is the language of the Orishas themselves. In Cajón and Espiritismo, however, the focus is not on bringing the Orishas, though there is a desire to honor them. This has allowed people to be receptive in those settings to singing to the Orishas in Spanish. According to Luciano, this is appropriate because they are honoring the spiritual side of the Orishas more than the material side, in addition to the fact that Spanish does not lose *la esencia* (the essence) of the devotion.

Drumming in Lucumí religion has many manifestations including *Batá*, *Bembé*, and *Güiro*, among others. The bembé drums are considered sacred, though maybe not so much as the batá. Bembé drums include a vast amount of variations in their construction and in the way

[22] Note how the ceremony itself is often referred to by the instruments played, similar to "Violín," "Güiro," and "Cajón." Is is similar to the way ceremonies are named in many parts of Africa.
[23] "…very difficult for people." This was stated by Luciano after I asked why in Cajón there weren't more Lucumí verses used.

the rhythms are played, not only between Havana and Matanzas, but also within each of those cities and in other locations. Some are peg-tuned with only one skin while others are double-headed with the skins tacked to the wooden shell. Some are played with only bare hands, others with one stick and one hand (see Ortiz 1952–55 and Eli Rodríguez). Today, bembé drums are often replaced with mass-produced, factory-made *tumbadoras* (a.k.a. conga drums), and have undergone some standardization in the way the rhythms are played. The following example shows the way in which the late Regino Jiménez taught Bembé, one of the most common ways it is played in Havana.

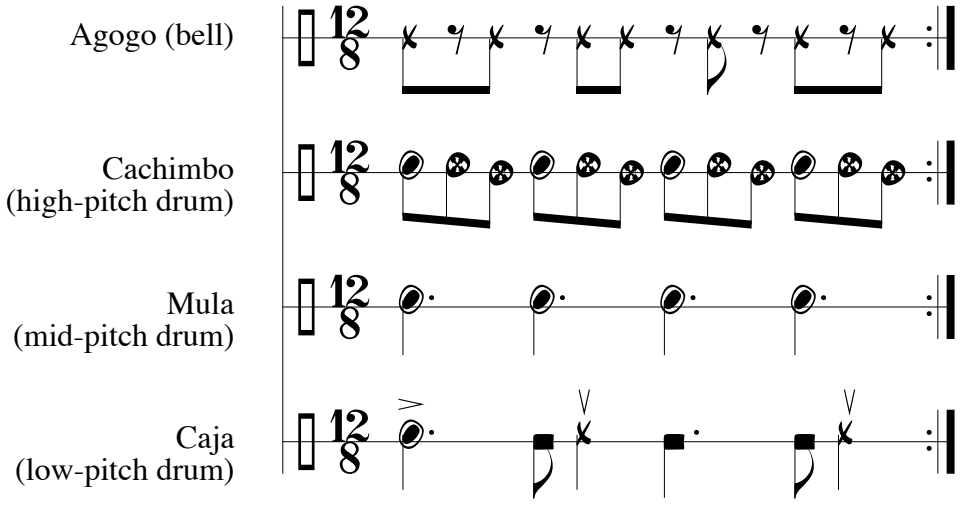


**Figure 4. Bembé as taught by Regino Jiménez in Havana.**[24]

Another form of Bembé uses the cachimbo and mula patterns shown below. Though this particular version was documented in Matanzas by CIDMUC, the patterns are not uncommon in Havana.

[24] The Caja is the improvising, lead drum and thus the patterns shown here should not be taken as the only rhythms it plays. The "x" notehead with a "v" pointing towards it represents a stick hitting the drum while it's muted with the other hand.

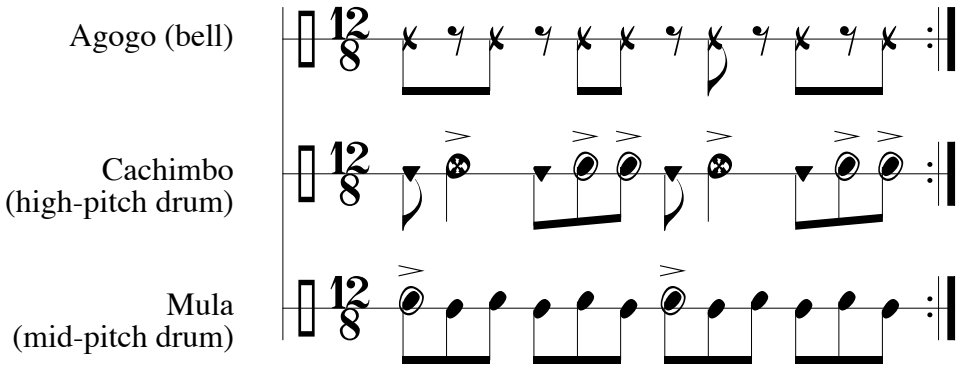


**Figure 5. Another version of Bembé, documented by CIDMUC.**

Batá drums are much more standardized than bembé drums and are comparatively much more complicated in terms of knowledge needed to perform them competently. The rhythms are different for each Orisha and also change during different parts of the ceremony such as the *Oru Seco* (drumming only, also known as the *Oru del Igbodu*) and the *Oru Cantado* (drumming with singing). The drums themselves are *fundamento* (consecrated) if they contain the Orisha called *Aña*, which is occasionally fed sacrificially. Since the 1930's, when Fernando Ortiz commissioned an unconsecrated set of batá to be made for public performance (the first performance ever done outside of a ceremonial setting), batá sets without Aña (known as *aberikula* or *aberinkula*) have begun to be employed as a less-expensive, albeit less-powerful option for ceremonies.

Batá drums in Cuba are directly related to the drums of the same name still used by the Yoruba people in Nigeria. Among the Yoruba, as with the Lucumí, batá drums are sacred to Shangó, though they can be used for other Orishas as well. In Nigeria they are used for Egungun, Shapana (Babaluaye), Orishanla (Obatalá), and Eshu (Bascom:1953). Batá are played to honor almost all the Orishas recognized in Cuba. The drums were first created in Cuba in the

late-1860's, if not earlier, most likely in Havana, though some drummers from Matanzas claim that they appeared there first (see Ramos 2000).

The main batá rhythms influencing the music of Grupo Cuero y Cajón are *Ñongo* and *Iyesá*. Ñongo is a "catch-all" rhythm used extensively in the Oru Cantado to accompany songs for many of the Orishas. Because of its commonality, even drummers who do not play batá professionally are familiar with it. Thus it is no surprise that it has influenced GCyC. The following notation demonstrates the rhythm Ñongo as it is played on the batá (in Havana) and how it is interpreted by GCyC for their instrumentation. Notice how the tumbadora references Bembé while the cajón plays the Iyá part (low-pitch lead drum) of Ñongo. Thus, GCyC create a new rhythm but also rhythmically signify a Lucumí aesthetic, one that can elicit a feeling of familiarity from any Cajón attendee who has experience with batá or bembé ceremonies.

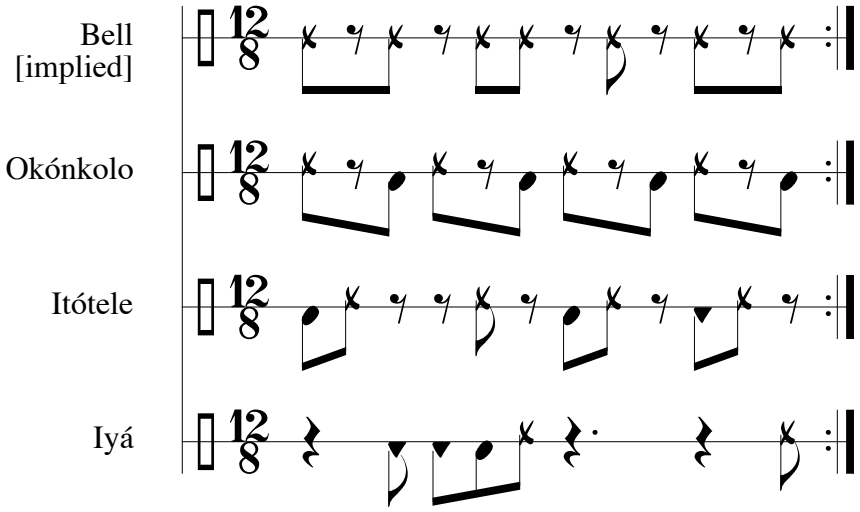


**Figure 6. Ñongo as played in Havana.**

Grupo Cuero y Cajon have created their own mixture of Bembé and Ñongo. In the following example, notice the Cajón part is the same as the Iyá in Ñongo, while the Tumbadora plays two

versions of the cachimbo part from Bembé (shown above). The guataca (bell) pattern they use is also common in Bembé.

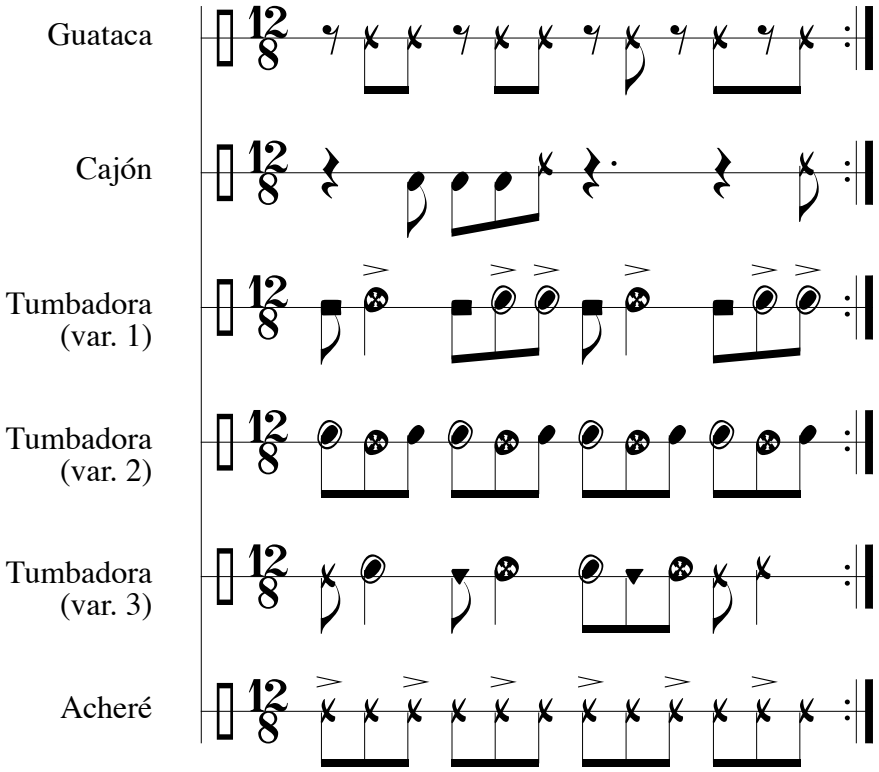


**Figure 7. Ñongo/Bembé as played by GCyC.**

The other influential batá rhythm in the music of GCyC is Iyesá. As mentioned before, the Iyesá are an ethnic group related to the Yoruba. In Cuba, they had their own drumming style that now seems to be disappearing. The interrelationship of Iyesá and Lucumí people in Cuba led to the incorporation of at least one of their rhythms into the batá liturgy.[25] The rhythm, known simply as Iyesá, is often played for Oshún as well as Elegguá. GCyC's version of Iyesá has already been mentioned in the Bantu chapter since it incorporates the Makúta bell pattern, but it is important to realize that the cajón is playing the Iyá part of Iyesá. Pedro and Silvano

[25] A rhythm called "Arará" was also appropriated for the batá, though it is not used as often nor by GCyC.

also incorporate the common rhythmic conversation used in the batá ensemble. This Iyesá "phenomenon" is an excellent example of transculturation through multiple phases of appropriation based on personal aesthetic and religious affinities.

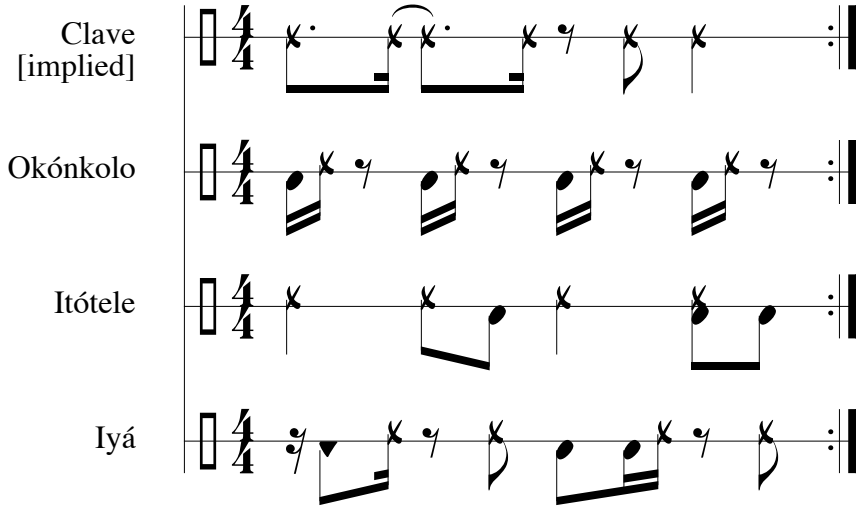


**Figure 8. Iyesá as played on Batá drums in Havana.**

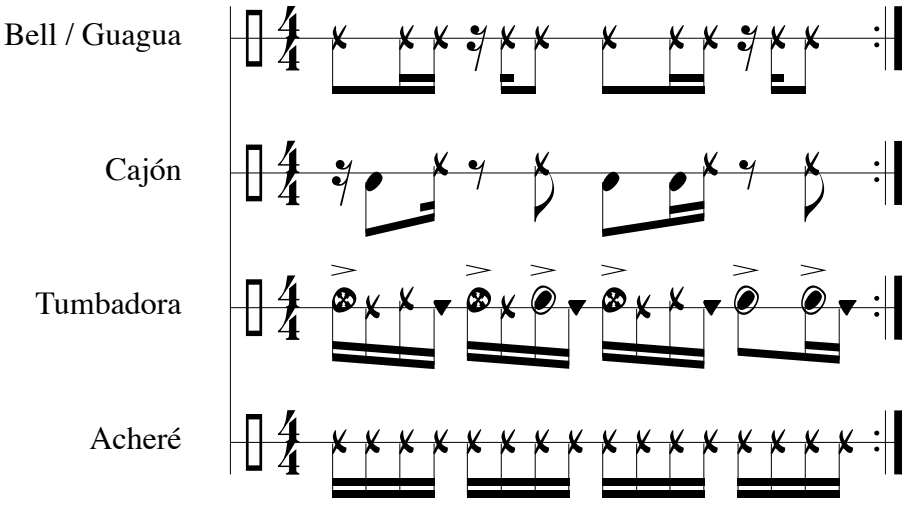


**Figure 9. Iyesá as played by Grupo Cuero y Cajón.**

## Chapter Five: Other Antecedents

*Marianism and Popular Catholicism*

As mentioned before, hagiolotry, or popular Spanish Catholicism, was probably more influential in the emergence of Orisha-Saint counterparts than official Roman Catholicism. A major example of this is La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, Cuba's patroness. "El culto Mariano," as some have called it, sees Mary as an intermediary between humans and God (Portuondo Zúñiga:40), not unlike the spiritual hierarchies of Espiritismo, Lucumí religion, or Palo. The vast number of songs used in Cajón that reference La Caridad make her vital for an understanding of it.

The statue of the Virgin Mary found floating in a bay by two Taínos and a black slave in 1613, and the story surrounding it, have become a major part of Cuban identity (both on and off the island). The story itself has been embellished (i.e., changed) to fit what it symbolizes (see DeRojas; Stevens-Arroyo; and Portuondo Zúñiga). The three sailors are now usually called *Los Juanes* and are depicted as an African, Spaniard, and Taíno, symbolizing "racial harmony and a resultant national identity as Cubans" (Stevens-Arroyo:51). Cachita, as she is often affectionately called, is even quite popular among Miami Cubans, though often with different political significance for Cuban identity (see DeRojas).

The popular images of La Caridad and Los Juanes has her perched atop an arched crescent, rather than a concave one like the images of many European Virgins. This has been interpreted by Stevens-Arroyo as a result of European Catholic reformation, but is often perceived as being a result of Taíno imagery signifying either the female deity Guabonito (associated with healing and inaccessible sexuality) or Atabey (a female water spirit). In either case, it points to the thesis that single images and religious practices can have different meanings

depending on the cultural mode from which an individual perceives it. La Caridad is a symbol of *Cubanía* whether the camino is invoked as Ochún, Mama Chola, or simply Cachita.

*Tumba Francesa*

The Haitian revolution at the end of the 18th century lead to an influx in Cuba of French-Creole landowners and their slaves. The resultant Afro-Haitian influence in Cuba was felt mostly in Oriente, including Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo (Armas Rigal:1), but also in Havana and other western provinces. In addition to the growth of French-owned *cafetales* (coffee plantations) that converted the image of Cuba into one of a coffee producer, there was a growth of French and Afro-Haitian musical forms.

*Tumba Francesa* (French Drum), as one genre of Afro-Haitian-Cuban music became known, used drums that were similar in construction to those of Arará and other ethnic groups from the Ewe-Fon lineage, but incorporated dances that were similar to French society dances. Tumba Francesa, though now almost completely gone, still exists to some small degree in places such as Holguin and other eastern provinces (Ramos Venereo:262). In Havana, though, it has disappeared completely as a self-existing form (Eli Rodríguez, atlas:23), though some of the songs such as "No Hay Novedad" and "Guerillero del Monte" are used in Cajón. This shows not only the ability of Cajón participants to incorporate (and appropriate) otherwise disparate musical forms, but also reminds us that in this way Cajón acts as a site of preservation.

*Islam*

One of the most enigmatic elements of Cajón is the use of the Islamic greeting "Salamalecun."[26] This phrase and its response, "Malecunsala," come to Cajón from their use in Palo, but then how did they come to be used among Paleros? In Central Africa, the area with which Palo is historically connected, there was little Islamic influence.[27] Even in recent times, Muslims in Central Africa are few, outnumbered heavily by Christians and those of autochthonous religions (see Young 1969). On the other hand, Muslims have been present in Cuba since the day the first "Old World" explorers set foot upon it.

When Columbus first arrived in Cuba, Spain had only just recently regained its independence from the "Moors" (i.e., African Muslims). Some of the first non-natives to live in Cuba were of Islamic heritage.[28] In pre-plantation Cuba there were three types of Muslims: enslaved, free, and *forzados* who were essentially indentured servants (Gomez:30). Some of those who were enslaved came from the Iberian Peninsula, but "Muslims from North and West Africa were present in Cuba from at least the sixteenth century into the nineteenth" (Gomez:38). These included Mandinga, Wolof, and Fula, and by the mid-19th century were also among some of the Yoruba arriving in Cuba. As slaves and Muslims in an ostensibly Catholic society, they probably would not have been able to publicly practice their religion but still, as Michael Gomez wrote, "it is inconceivable that the Mande, Fulbe, and Wolof in Cuba did not include Muslims. The probability that most were in fact Muslim is enhanced by the fact that 1790 to 1869 was a period in West Africa of Islamic reform, holy wars, and intensified rates of conversions" (36).

[26] This is the way that Lekiam spelled it and I have seen it spelled that way at other times in Cuba. A more common transliteration in the Roman alphabet is *Assalam Alaikum*.
[27] There were some contacts through Islamic trading and slaving, but Cuban slaves from the Congo likely encountered more Muslims in Cuba (among other slaves) than in their homeland.
[28] Though they were legally required to convert in order to stay in Spain and its colonies, many are considered to have done so merely as simulacrum.

Among these groups, the greeting "Salamalecun" was probably somewhat common. Paleros, not averse to appropriating language or rituals for religious efficacy, likely saw this as a signifier of the Muslim religion and sought to harness it to some degree within their own religious universe. Though the lack of historic documentation makes this claim a speculative one, it seems much more likely than the possibility that the phrase "Salamalecun" arrived with slaves from Central Africa.

# Part Two

*Cajón pa' los Muertos*

**Chapter Six: Cajón (The Instrument)**

The cajón is found in many parts of Latin America including Cuba, Peru, Colombia, and Chile. It has also become popular in flamenco music of Spain, though its place there can be traced back to the Afro-Peruvian cajón. Fernando Ortiz referred to the cajón as "el primer instrumento mulato" [the first mulatto instrument] (1952–55, 3:149). This shows Ortiz's tendency to conflate culture with race, but the point is nevertheless significant. In many ways, the cajón can be perceived as a creation of the Américas, unless one perceives it as being merely a part of a long history of wooden idiophones, a possibility we will see in this chapter. Though the basic idea is always the same—a wooden drum played with the hands—there are two major types of cajón: the Cuban and the Peruvian. The genesis of cajones[1] as a musical instrument in these two places may or may not have been related, but the history of the Peruvian cajón is mostly unwritten.[2]

In Cuba, there are two main types of wooden box drums that are both generally called cajón and can be distinguished by the way they are played. One style, probably the most common these days in Cuba and especially in the United States, is played between the legs. It is often referred to as *caja* (literally: box) or *quinto*. The other type, usually just called *cajón* (literally: large box), is sat upon and played on the wide frontside by the strong hand (producing an open bass tone) while the weaker hand plays on the narrower side (usually for a sharper slap tone).

[1] *Cajones* is the Spanish plural of cajón. It should not be confused with *cojones*, which means something quite different.

[2] The environments in which the cajón was created may have been quite similar in both Cuba and Peru. A lack of scholarly study of cajón in Peru makes its history blurry. For instance, there is no entry for it in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* under its own heading or even under Peru. One should keep in mind that this chapter is only in regards to Cuban cajón which is played quite differently from the Peruvian cajón.

In addition to being called cajón and caja, the drums are often referred to by the part they are playing within an ensemble. For example, in a set of three cajones playing rumba, the largest might be called *salidor*, the mid-sized *tres golpes*, and the smallest called *quinto*. These names vary quite a bit; in Havana the most common names are (from largest to smallest) *tumbador*, *tres dos*, and *quinto* while in Matanzas *tumbador* is instead usually called *caja* (Sáenz Coopat:87). These are quite general distinctions however and might change with different players or in different situations due to the existence of many synonymous names. For example, Grupo Cuero y Cajón usually refer to the largest as *cajón*, though they also sometimes call it *caja*.[3]

This chapter outlines the origins of the cajón in Cuba, its place in both emic and etic classificatory systems, its role as a substitute for other drums, and its more recent place as a needed instrument in its own right. Since there is not much written about the cajón, much of the historical information is a synthesis of relevant parts from three main sources: *Los Instrumentos de la Música Afrocubana* by Fernando Ortiz (1952–55), the cajón entry in *Instrumentos de la Música Folclórico-Popular de Cuba* by Carmen María Sáenz Coopat (1997), and *Las Celebraciones Rituales Festivas en la Regla de Ocha* by Bárbara Balbuena Gutiérrez (2003).[4]

*Origins*

The Cuban cajón developed in the final decades of the 19th century within the percussive music and dance genre known as Rumba. It appeared as a musical instrument in "barrios

[3] The use of the term *tumbadora* for the largest cajón in Havana likely comes from its common use in the rumba ensemble. *Caja*, on the other hand, is a term associated more with the lead drum in religious situations such as bembé. It is this religious significance that is being referenced by GCyC and, probably, in Matanzas.
[4] I have cited these three main sources in order to avoid redundant parenthetical citations unless something comes only from one source.

marginales, suburbanos, …el solar"[5] and just about any place where informal musical parties happened (Sáenz Coopat:94). Most importantly, though, the use of boxes as musical instruments in Cuba has its origins among the dockworkers, especially in port towns such as Havana and Matanzas. The dockworkers are said to have used wooden shipping crates as improvised musical instruments to entertain themselves. The use of empty *bacalao* (codfish) and candle crates resulted in the two main sizes of cajones in Cuba (the former being the model for the cajón proper and the latter becoming the smaller caja/quinto).

This history of the cajón's origin, though I do not completely dispute it, is often told with an air of nostalgia and without historic evidence. That is to say, there are never historic writings or documentation of dockworkers playing bacalao boxes on their break, nor historic photos of such happenings, nor even oral testimony from former dockworkers. As such, the retelling of the history of cajón as being an invention of the dockworkers might be one of narrative convenience that avoids a possibly more complex telling which could consider a number of socio-historical factors. For example, the issues of poverty and the lack of drum-making materials might have been a more important issue in the recourse to wooden boxes. This would also de-center the phenomenon from metropolitan port towns, raising the possibility of multiple independent geneses.

In any case, the cajón's association with the spontaneous nature of early rumba music continues today. Though mostly replaced by its musical successor, the tumbadora, the cajón is still used by many professional rumba groups. This is especially true in the presentation of *Yambú*, considered to be the oldest of the three main rumba styles. This use in popular music,

[5] "…marginal and suburban neighborhoods, … *el solar*." Solar is usually translated as *slum*, but refers to a specific type of living situation, usually impoverished, that was essentially a large house shared by many families. It was especially common during the era after slavery when many Afro-Cubans came to urban areas in search of employment.

though, is now probably dwarfed in comparison to its extensive use in emergent sacred settings, as we will see in a moment.

*Organology*

Cuban cajones have a number of variations in construction and acoustical properties, though they are all usually grouped as one type of instrument regardless of the taxonomy in question. The larger cajón, which is sat upon, is usually of a consistent construction regardless of the maker (with minor variations in the dimensions or type of wood[6]). However, the smaller cajón has a number of variations depending on the maker and the preferences of the musician. While the majority of cajones played between the legs have square playing surfaces, some makers have widened it for a "sharper" sound, thus sometimes necessitating wooden stabilizers on the edges to make it easier to hold between the legs (see photos in Appendix). In Matanzas, the instrument maker known as "Fatty" (Marino Marquez) also makes the smaller cajón with metal snares underneath the playing surface to create a buzzing sound.[7] This might also happen in Havana but I have seen no evidence of it.

Similar to the wide cajones for *quinto* soloing in Matanzas, in Havana it has become common to see a smaller playing surface attached to the player's side of the small cajón. This can be seen in the photo of Pancho Quinto's[8] cajones as well as an invention that seems to be his: the addition of two bells on the front of the cajón. This is probably inspired by the *chaworo*, a string of metal bells attached to the lowest pitched drums of the batá and bembé ensembles. Like

[6] Grupo Cuero y Cajón use a thick plywood with the following dimensions: 57cm (length) x 44cm (height) x 35cm (depth).

[7] The buzzing is a common sound made by the playing surface not being completely attached to the body. Some find it aesthetically pleasing, however, and use the snare to enhance it. This is also common in Peruvian cajones, not to mention a similar aesthetic found throughout Sub-Saharan Africa.

these drums, the quinto has a more improvisational role, but the pitch has been reversed (i.e., as a solo drum it is no longer the lowest pitch, but instead the highest). This has often been cited as a move away from the African aesthetic of a low pitched lead drum towards a more European aesthetic of the solo instrument being higher in pitch.[9] Interestingly, while some groups that play for Cajón ceremonies employ a rumba configuration (with quinto as the solo drum), GCyC use the larger cajón as the improvisational lead drum.[10] Only time will tell how this aesthetic will be negotiated for Cajón ceremonies in general.

When originally created as musical instruments, cajones were made of hardwoods such as cedar. Since the 1950's, however, the main material used for the construction of cajones has been plywood, which became widely available during that decade. This practice continues today as plywood is generally cheaper and more readily available than solid hardwoods, though it is also valued for its acoustical qualities.

From an organological perspective, the cajón is often called a "tambor xilofónico" [xylophonic drum], a word that Ortiz was fond of using and still has some currency in recent scholarship. The most precise categorization of it comes from a Cuban taxonomy developed by Ana Victoria Casanova Oliva in her book *Problemática Organológica Cubana* (1988) which is a critical extension of the Sachs-Van Hornbostel system and also employs the Dewey decimal system for categorization. Under this system, the cajón is classified under the heading "111.244.1" for box idiophones played independently and struck directly by the hands.[11] This system, though useful, must be considered as what it is—a system developed from the

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[8] Pancho Quinto (or Kinto) was the founder of the rumba group Yoruba Andabo. His full name is Francisco Hernández Mora.

[9] Of course, in Africa there are examples of high-pitched instruments being used for lead roles, but this was not originally found in Afro-Cuban musical practices. All African ethnicities in Cuba used low-pitched lead drums.

[10] The one exception to this is the first section of Yambu in which the tumbadora is the improvisational instrument.

[11] 111 = idiophones struck directly, 244 = boxes, 1 = played independently

perspective of one cultural mode (generally "Western"), which is quite deductive in its process (i.e., from the top down). It does not necessarily take into account the classification systems of tradition bearers themselves.

A more inductive approach to this would be informed by a deeper ethnography, beyond the way the instruments are played, towards an approach sensitive to religious symbolism. Though there seems to be no articulated meta-classifications of Afro-Cuban religious instruments, there is nonetheless a number of ways of grouping instruments. Materials such as woods, animal hides, and metals are important things to consider in ensembles with religious intent. For example, iron bells such as a *guataca* are not played with batá, though brass bells might be rung at certain times. The religious significance of this is important since the batá are owned by Shangó, while iron is the domain of Ogún and brass that of Ochún. Thus, Ogún's iron would, in a way, be competing with Shangó's batá, though the brass of Ochún, one of Shangó's lovers, can certainly be rung during rhythms in her honor.

This method of grouping instruments based on religious significance is especially important for Orisha worship, though one might wonder how much it applies to the cajón itself. Can the cajón be considered sacred at all? Certainly it did not develop as a sacred instrument though, as we will see later, it eventually became a substitute for various types of sacred drums. Today, depending on the setting in which it is used, the cajón can be considered a somewhat sacred instrument.[12] Coinciding with its rise in ceremonial use, there have been a number of reports of "consecrated" sets of cajón. Though I have never seen a set that has been called "consecrated," "sacred," or *fundamento*, there are musicians in Cuba that I spoke with who told me about this practice. It seems that there also might be varying degrees of consecration and,

thus, no one standardized method (unlike the batá). While some might simply have crosses drawn on the inside walls of the cajón to spiritually protect it from perturbation by malicious spirits (see photo in Appendix), there are probably other ways of consecration that are unknown to me at this point.[13] The spiritual reasons for the consecration of cajón sets are probably related to a need to separate those for secular and sacred use, as well as to increase the spiritual agency of the instruments themselves. On the other hand, a pragmatist might point out that it could also be seen as an attempt by cajón players to begin charging more for their services. In any case, it would be valuable for future research to investigate sacred cajones and their place in local classifications.

A non-religious classification by material also holds some weight, though. For Pedro, the cajón is an instrument that "is older than the batá" since they are made "only of wood" while the batá have the added technology of rope-tuned skins.[14] It is noteworthy that Lekiam was present when Pedro told me this and, as a younger musician teaching within the school system, he was quick to contradict Pedro. "No," he interjected quickly, pointing out that Pedro had forgotten that the cajón "was invented in Cuba" while "the batá are African." "They don't have cajón in Africa," Lekiam said laughing. To my surprise, they turned to me to settle the dispute but I declared that I had no opinion. Though their dispute was more about the age of the cajón as an instrument, it speaks to at least one "organic" way of classifying instruments. To Pedro, any struck piece of wood could be generally grouped as similar whether it was made with an electric

[12] Sacredness in Afro-Cuban music and religion seems more appropriately addressed as a spectrum rather than as binary opposites. In a spectrum moving incrementally from "not sacred" to "most sacred" we would find drums such as tumbadoras (used in rumba), cajón (used in Cajón ceremonies), bembé, and fundamento batá, in that order.
[13] Sacred batá are often called fundamento due to the Orisha Aña that materially resides in them. There are cajones that are now referred to as fundamento, though they could not be consecrated in the same way as batá since they could not physically hold the same secret materials.
[14] Pedro attributed this belief to the Pogolotti batá elder and CIDMUC interviewee, Gustavo Diaz.

saw or hollowed out from a log. The crucial element was the number of materials involved and the complexity of their integration.

Thus, we have seen that there are probably multiple classificatory systems known within Afro-Cuban religious music, but further research in this regard could be quite revealing. There are at least three classification systems that can be seen as relevant: that of the sacred significance of instruments, that of the materials from which they are constructed, and that of the academy, which is not completely unknown among those who play religious Afro-Cuban music. I am not suggesting the use of one over another, but the consideration of all three for the different ways in which each one illuminates different issues and perspectives at play.

*Cajón as a Substitute*

The cajón is often used as a substitute for other drums in religious settings. According to Ortiz, "el cajón es un sustitutivo ocasional del tambor litúrgico. Con el cajón, o los cajones, los negros tocan vodú y también lucumí y congo y cualquier otra música tamborera, cuando les faltan los tradicionales tambores de membrana"[15] (1952–55, 3:148). Ortiz was probably not being flippant with his use of the word "qualquier" (whichever) since substitution is haphazard in the sense that cajones do not just substitute for specific instruments. They are not just replacements for batá or bembé drums, but could be used for any drums including those of Arará, Makúta, and so on. It is not their correspondence with these drums that is interesting, but instead the reasons behind their substitutions.

[15] "…the cajón is an occasional substitute for the liturgical drum. With the cajón, or the cajones, the blacks play Vodú and also Lucumí and Congo and whichever other drum music, when they lack the traditional membrane drums." It is interesting that he mentions Vodú, pointing to the existence of Cajón in Oriente or the existence of Vodú in the Western provinces.

The most common reason to substitute cajones for sacred drums (such as batá) is the reduced financial strain that a cajón ensemble would incur to a host. Hiring a set of consecrated batá drums (and the many drummers that usually come along) can easily be double the cost of a four-person cajón ensemble. Unlike ceremonies with batá, cajón ceremonies require no extra payment in the form of tipping while the drummers play for your Orisha. Furthermore, there is usually no elaborate pre-ceremony meal or animal sacrifices. All of these elements make hiring a cajón ensemble much more attractive for those without great financial means, though there may often be additional reasons.

Two interrelated factors that seem to influence the choice to use cajón are the depth of one's religious knowledge combined with social expectations related to race. For a nominally religious person, the rituals involved in a batá ceremony might be beyond their religious knowledge. Cajón relieves some of the expectations of rigorous ritual enactment by signifying a slightly less sacred event.[16] Intertwined with this understanding is the fact that the cajón is sometimes thought of as a *mulato* instrument (i.e., "not too black"). Therefore, even families that have the economic means to choose a batá ceremony might opt for cajón since it does not have such an African connotation. In the race-sensitive society of Cuba, appearing too African is not in the interests of many upwardly mobile *mulatos* despite their religious beliefs. These intertwined reasons for the use of cajón are also likely present in the rise in popularity of *violín* ceremonies for Ochún. In the words of the white landlord where I rented a room in Havana, her choice to give a *violín* instead of a *toque de santo* (with batá) was because *violín* ceremonies are "mas bonito."

[16] Only once did I witness GCyC play for an Orisha ceremony. It was significantly less "serious" than a batá ceremony in the sense that people were not as familiar with the Orisha dances nor did they know all the songs. Unlike any batá ceremony I've ever witnessed, the family members put on a reggaetón CD after the drumming was finished.

Maybe equally important in the use of cajón as a substitute is the issue of legality. Avoiding persecution and prosecution have certainly aided the popularity of cajón. Both before and after the revolution, authorities were known to persecute those holding religious ceremonies or even just religious views. Historically, this was usually linked to the banning of "African" drums, though in the past few decades anti-religious sentiment has fallen under the rubric of eliminating "superstition" and "erroneous perceptions of reality" (see Martínez Furé:252). Often, authorities would give permission to have a "rumba" but not a "religious" ceremony. Naturally, the use of cajón as a substitute provided an adequate loophole in this distinction due to its association with non-religious music making. Even though "official" persecution of Afro-Cuban religious ceremonies was never rampant, local-level persecution by overzealous party members was quite common, especially during the seventies and eighties (Moore 2004).

One fascinating way to avoid the persecution of religious ceremonies (and the instruments associated with them) was the creation of a type of cajón called "Las Cajitas." These were a set of cajones played across the lap like batá drums. They were invented by Lázaro Pedroso in 1957 and, though not specifically invented to avoid persecution,[17] they did nevertheless become quite popular in Havana in the sixties. The fact that the set became so popular during a period of increasing religious intolerance is probably not merely a coincidence, though economic reasons were probably also involved. Interestingly, these drums were also used for Cajón al Muerto ceremonies and were copied (possibly without financial compensation) by a drum maker in California, though the name was changed from "Las Cajitas" to "Batajón" (Balbuena Gutiérrez:106).[18]

[17] He apparently built them to learn how to play batá since he did not have actual access to them at that time. This also points to the issue of batá drumming as an exclusive guild activity.

[18] This obviously raises intellectual property issues that might have gone unconsidered under the a priori belief that the drums were just "traditional." Furthermore, even if the inventor wanted to take legal action for financial

The substitution of cajón for more sacred drums was an act of evasion, taking advantage of the authorities' culturally-constructed mode of perception. In other words, the system as it was devised by the authorities contained a loophole that didn't (or couldn't) distinguish between religious drums and religious ceremonies. Thus, cajón was *initially* used to conceal or obfuscate the religious intent of the ceremonies from an outsider's perspective. This is not unlike the *initial* use of Catholic saints to merely conceal the Orishas. However, the appropriation of cajón into the religious sphere has altered its very existence—cajones, like the saints, have been made essential in the religious lives of many people.

*Cajón: No Longer Just a Substitute*

Though the cajón continues to be used as a substitute for other drums, it has also become an essential instrument in its own right. Obviously, the necessity of cajón in Cajón pa' los Muertos is encoded in the name itself. Furthermore, the necessity of cajón in this ceremony is demonstrated by the fact that cajones are not being used as replacements for other drums, nor are they ever totally replaced by other drums.

The pragmatic reasons for the cajón's popularization have already been discussed, but the spiritual explanation can also be a useful means of understanding its necessity. At least in the case of Cajón al Muerto, the ceremony is being given for the spirits of the deceased, especially localized ancestors. These ancestors, as we'll see in the next chapter, are often *Congos*, former slaves and their descendents from the Bantu-speaking people of Central Africa. Thus, many of these spirits were considered to have been living people during the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. This makes them, as emancipated slaves often living in solares or

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restitution, such a thing would be impractical if not impossible due to Cuba's own laws regarding intellectual property (or lack thereof) and the U.S. embargo.

impoverished Afro-Cuban enclaves, the very people who gave birth to the cajón as a musical instrument. Thus we see a common thread with other spirit possession ceremonies throughout the world: the use of music and instruments from a time period with which the spirits would be familiar.

**Chapter Seven: Cajón (The Activity)**

The activity referred to as *Cajón pa' los Muertos* or *Cajón al Muerto* resists categorization and even naming. During my first trip to Cuba, the only word I ever heard used to speak about this type of ceremony was simply *actividad* (activity). Just like a ceremony with batá is usually called a *tambor* (drumming), saying "actividad" was enough for members of Grupo Cuero y Cajón to understand the subject of the conversation. It wasn't until after returning to the United States that I began to hear the music described as that of Cajón al Muerto on recordings. Upon a recent trip to Cuba, Luciano told me that they did occasionally say "Cajón pa' los Muertos" when talking with potential clients.[1] However, this was long after I had almost given up on trying to find a more descriptive name for the ceremonies. During my first trip to Cuba, I had heard a little about Espiritismo and asked Lekiam if that's what it was. He considered it and then slowly (and somewhat uncertainly) shook his head no, saying it's for "los muertos, los antepasados," but he seemed to have no name for it other than actividad.[2]

Later, I pressed Lekiam again to give me a more succinct name or categorization for the ceremony. I asked if it was "a variation of Palo, Regla de Ocha, or Espiritismo," to which he replied that "it's a variation of Palo."[3] This is evidence of the multiple ways in which Cajón is understood by different people. Lekiam, a Santero training in Ifa who does not see Cajón as an official part of his religion, assigned it to another religion. A Palero would likely do the same, pointing out that many who call themselves Santeros sometimes have *misas espirituales*, similar

[1] During an interview with Pedro, I made the mistake of asking "if I'm going to write about this, what can I call it?" He said "Cajón al Muerto" was alright but he preferred "Cajón Espiritual." I took this at face value for a while until the same issue came up in a discussion with Silvano. Upon hearing that his brother Pedro thought I should use "Cajón Espiritual," he remarked, "a, sí, mas presentable" [Ah, yes, that's more presentable]. I then realized Pedro had been considering the word *Espiritual* (Spiritual) as a better way to represent it to outsiders in place of *al Muerto* (to the dead), raising issues of representation and how understandings are sculpted by insiders for outsiders. I've used *Cajón* most often here, but also *Cajón pa' los Muertos* since it is more common among practitioners.

[2] Lekiam, however, is less involved in Cajón, playing usually only as a substitute when Dairon isn't available and even then only when he doesn't have an Orisha ceremony in which to perform.

to Cajón ceremonies but without drumming. Silvano, who believes in "religión Lucumí," and Luciano, who is initiated in Palo, have both referred to their clients as "Espiritistas." Though this assignation is common, Kardecian Spiritists (i.e., those of "scientific" or "table" Spiritism) would likely shy away from claiming something like Cajón as their own.[4] Pedro was probably the most evenhanded when he said that those who give Cajón ceremonies could be Espiritistas, Paleros, or Santeros.

Cajón ceremonies are heterodox in the sense of the word that implies a coexistence of multiple religious tenets. It is not of any one religion but accommodates Cuba's religious pluralism by bringing together practitioners from different religious backgrounds, whether those practitioners are living or dead. As the name implies, it is to honor and celebrate with los muertos, but it is also for the living participants. In the words of Luciano, the purpose of Cajón is "romper y traer" [to break and to bring], that is to break unlucky streaks or overcome unfortunate events and at the same time bring that which is good. Pedro stated that they are always used in the case of "infermedad" (sickness), in hopes of receiving advice from los muertos on how an ailing family member might regain their health. In my interpretation, Cajón is also a means of creating and maintaining community solidarity, bringing together people of otherwise separate religions who are living in desperate times and often in desperate economic situations, in hopes that honoring their ancestors can lead to a healthier and more prosperous future.

According to Bárbara Balbuena Gutiérrez, Cajón started to take its current form[5] in the 1970's (106).[6] Her interviewees linked it to Atarés, an impoverished neighborhood in Havana,

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[3] This was a leading question, but helped see how he would categorize it.
[4] This would be similar to the Vatican claiming Santería as its own.
[5] That is to say in the form of using cajones to honor the dead and entice them to mount participants through the use of songs from sources such as Espiritismo, Palo, Lucumí religion, among others.

just south of Habana Vieja, though it probably had multiple geneses. As we have seen, the use of the cajón in general is often an economic choice. Therefore, the connection of Cajón ceremonies to Atarés and Pogolotti, among other impoverished Afro-Cuban neighborhoods, is not surprising since Atarés is one of the poorest neighborhoods in Greater Havana, while Marianao, of which Pogolotti is a part, has more shanty dwellings than any other place in Cuba (Coyula and Hamberg:12). The rise of Cajón in the 70's is also not surprising since it was during that time when religious persecution was at its worst (see Moore 2006).[7]

As mentioned before, Cajón now exists as its own phenomenon, independent from any one particular religion. However, unlike batá drumming, it has been slow to gain a foothold outside of Cuba. In general, both practitioners and aficionados of Afro-Cuban music seem to be unaware of its existence in the United States. There have been some reports of the cajón being used for Orisha and Palo ceremonies in Miami, New York City, and Boston, but not in actual Cajón pa' los Muertos ceremonies.[8] In the San Francisco Bay Area, a stronghold of Afro-Cuban music and culture in the United States, there was at least one set of cajones brought from Cuba by an American female percussionist for the sole purpose of playing for los muertos. The religious community, though, has been slow to realize a need for honoring "eggun" [muertos]. The fact that this Bay Area percussionist and Santera is a white female is interesting since I have never seen or heard of a Cuban woman playing for Cajón ceremonies, which brings us to the issue of gender in Cajón.

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[6] Balbuena Gutierrez's book, *Las Celebraciones Rituales Festivas en la Regla de Ocha*, seems to be the first and only book to give any detail about Cajón pa' los Muertos and Violín ceremonies.

[7] Robin Moore wrote that "although the official position of the government since the early 1970's had been to allow freedom of religious expression, in practice it tended to suppress religions of all types" (2004:269). Lydia Cabrera's book *El Monte* (2000), originally published in 1954, contains photos of *yerberos* (religious supply shops) in Havana that no longer exist and have been essentially driven underground. Even admitting religious affiliation led to fewer opportunities for work, leading only 2% of Cubans to self-identify as either Catholic or Santero in 1976, versus a majority who did so before the revolution (Moore 2004:269)

[8] See the Conclusion (Chapter Eleven) for an interesting development regarding this statement.

Musicians for Cajón are all men, though not by any religious exclusion of women as is the case for batá drumming. The vast majority of attendees are women, often outnumbering men 8 to 1. This does not bother men who do attend, nor does it bring their masculinity into question in any way. The main reason for the predominance of women in Cajón seems to be the historic predominance of women in all Cuban religion (see Pérez). It is usually women who hire GCyC and are in charge of the house while the actividad is happening. Husbands of these women, though often participating, sometimes sit outside conversing with friends or watching a large cauldron of *caldosa*[9] over an open fire. Some men, especially younger ones, seem to show up only because of the large number of women gathered in one place.[10] Teenagers following their girlfriends around are often dragged to an actividad and stand to the side observantly, though some are tempted to show off their ability to dance Palo.

*The Actividad*

Grupo Cuero y Cajón performs almost every single day, and sometimes twice a day. In my two months with them in the Summer of 2005 they probably had only five days of rest at the most, and some of those only because someone had cancelled at the last minute.[11] The vast majority of their activities are within walking distance of their neighborhood and, considering their claims that there are probably five or six other cajón groups within that same walking distance, this speaks to the frequent need for Cajón ceremonies.

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[9] Caldosa is a common stew given to participants after an actividad, especially popular around July 26, the anniversary of the revolution.

[10] One ceremony where I saw more men than usual was in the house of a woman who worked in the Tropicana nightclub. About fifteen of the female Tropicana dancers showed up with a large number of men in tow. Silvano remarked afterwards that the ambience was strange with all of the "Tropicanitas" dressed in the latest styles and not knowing many songs.

[11] GCyC's ability to play any day of the week is aided by Cuba's problem of over-employment. Even those with a job might not have to work every weekday and thus actividades can be well attended on any day of the week.

*Actividades*, as Grupo Cuero y Cajón simply refer to them, inevitably take place in a private home, usually indoors but sometimes in a backyard patio. When indoors, the musicians set up in the largest room of the house, often the front room, where the drumming, dancing, and singing will take place. All attendees, including musicians and those who live in the house, are obliged to cleanse themselves upon arrival with the perfumed water that is always present in a bowl next to the entryway. This water, perfumed with *agua florida*, flower petals, and sometimes herbs, is dabbed or cupped in the hands and spread on the arms, neck, or face to remove negative energy, then shook off the hands over the *bóveda*.

The bóveda is a small table present at all actividades in honor of the muertos. The agua florida found on the bóveda can also be applied throughout the ceremony to attract good spirits and deny malevolent ones. The bóveda is covered in a white cloth and, in addition to agua florida, holds glasses of water, candles, flowers, cigars, rum, photos of ancestors, and possibly personal articles of deceased family members. The glasses of water are meant to attract los muertos and are usually arranged in the shape of a "V". The glass at the point of the "V" often holds a crucifix, occasionally draped with a rosary. There is always a candle burning in the center of the bóveda which is meant to illuminate the path for the muertos whose world is one of "darkness."[12] The cigars on the bóveda are for those in attendance, though when muertos arrive they will sometimes request one to be brought to them. The bóveda is present in the house at all times, not just during a ceremony, but often in a more minimal incarnation (fewer glasses of water, fewer flowers, etc). Its constant presence, though, continuously acknowledges the presence of one's religious or family ancestors.

[12] A glass of water and a candle are also usually placed near the drummers.

Bóvedas, while the most visible religious component of Cajón ceremonies, are not exclusive to that domain. They are found in all communities with a connection to Caribbean Espiritismo, including Puerto Rico and the United States, and are often put up even by Santeros who do not practice Espiritismo. It is also important to note that the word *bóveda* is synonymous in Spanish with *sepultura* (tomb or grave), thus signifying that it is a residence of the dead as much as an offering to them.

Attendees, if not directly related to the family giving[13] the actividad, are always from the neighborhood, thus making the honoring of the deceased a community event or even a responsibility of the community. The host family welcomes participants not only verbally but also with beverages, sometimes sodas or water, but mostly rum or its less-refined, cheaper version – *aguardiente*.[14] Although attendees do not have to be practitioners of Palo, Santería, Espiritismo, or Catholicism, most usually have some degree of affiliation with one or more of those religions.

The ceremony usually begins with the recitation of Catholic Our Father's or Hail Mary's, and the reading of excerpts from the writings of Allan Kardec, though this varies from house to house. Some people who hire GCyC do so as a result of divination or something revealed to them by a muerto or Orisha previously. Others do so simply to get rid of some affliction. Therefore, people who give Cajón ceremonies do not always have the same goals, nor do they have equal knowledge of how the ceremony should be carried out. In the case of someone unfamiliar with the rituals, Pedro or Luciano often advise them when to do things such as

[13] The word *dar* (to give) is used when referring to a religious ceremony, rather than *tener* (to have/hold).
[14] Cigars and alcohol are not used in Espiritismo de Mesa, but are more common in Palo and Cajón. The use of tobacco as a sacred implement is of indigenous Cuban origins.

prepare the bucket of water[15] at the end of the ceremony. In this way, professional musicians become almost de facto priests due to their knowledge of the ceremonies learned through daily repetition.

In most cases, the drumming and singing go on for some time before attendees really become comfortable and begin singing and dancing more freely. By that time, the cigar smoke, smell of rum, and Cuba's oppressive heat, made more humid by sweating dancers, have contributed to an atmosphere conducive to being mounted (i.e., "possessed").[16] Almost always, a mounting eventually occurs, although there are certainly ceremonies in which it does not happen. Sometimes it takes hours, but there are also cases when someone can become mounted during the very first song cycle. Thus, there is never any precise knowledge of when exactly someone will be mounted or if it will happen at all. When it does happen, the drumming and dancing stop momentarily and then resume playing while the muerto gives advice to people in another room, or in the same room as the musicians. In some cases, the muertos will request specific songs or even just begin singing a different song themselves. Since advice and congregation with the muertos is highly valued, a ceremony in which no one is mounted is usually considered a disappointment, while ceremonies with multiple mountings might be considered a more powerful or fulfilling one. The absence of a mounting is not the fault of any one element of the ceremony, but there is almost an expectation to have at least one muerto arrive.

The expectation of a mounting has resulted in the occasional practice of hiring *caballos* (lit: horses, but referring to mediums or those who are mounted with ease). In my time studying with GCyC, I became familiar with at least three caballos, though there were likely more with

[15] This will be discussed in the Songs chapter since there are specific songs that accompany this ritual which closes the ceremony.
[16] The word *montar* (to mount) is usually used to refer to possession, raising the idea of the spirit mounting the person and controlling them like a horse.

whom I was unfamiliar. Their role became apparent to me when I would see the same caballo mounted at different ceremonies in areas of the city that were quite far apart. Members of GCyC confirmed that hiring caballos does happen, but they did not seem clear on the details of that practice or possibly did not want to discuss it. In any case, caballos usually bring along attendants who know how to take care of the muerto that mounts them and can often interpret the *bozal* in which many of the muertos speak.[17] Caballos also might be the harbingers of the emergence of local variations in the way ceremonies are conducted since when they are not mounted they often act as officiants to begin and end the ceremony. This usually involves the recitation of Hail Mary's and orations from the writings of Allan Kardec, which would otherwise be read from printed versions by the owner of the house, but are instead memorized by caballos.[18]

As outlined in previous chapters, Cajón has antecedents in many religious practices, but there are often few distinct lines in Cajón itself that would identify a practice as coming purely from one religion or another. Besides songs and drum rhythms that specifically come from one religion, the overlap of theological and practical elements can be seen in a number of ways. The use of water to purify or attract good spirits is used in Espiritismo, Santería, and Palo. The color white, used in the bóveda and the dress of some attendees, has inter-ethnic and inter-religious significance; in Palo it represents "the supernatural word" and the dead (Gonzalez:52), while in Santería it is worn by initiates to represent their newness in the religion, a significance not unlike that of European Spiritism and Christianity as the color of purity or holiness. However, in

[17] Caballos sometimes speak of "my muerto" referring to the fact that they are usually mounted by the same muerto or one of a few.

[18] Many of the ritual actions involved are being negotiated over time. Usually, at the end of a ceremony, the song "Se Van los Seres" is sung while people wave their hands over their head. Once, when this did not happen, I asked Pedro why they didn't do it. "Maybe they don't know about it," he said, implying that for him it's dispensable.

addition to these shared signifiers and the many religious backgrounds of attendees, the culturally plural existence of Cajón is also obvious in the spirits that it honors.

*Los Muertos*

The main purpose of Cajón is to honor and communicate with the *los muertos* (the dead). Attendees hope to benefit from the knowledge of spirituality and healing that most muertos have. The ceremonies are also enjoyable for the muertos, though, who are relieved of their dark, lonely existence and are once again able to celebrate with song, dance, and community. Edilberto Silva, an uncle of Lekiam and an *Abakuá*[19], said somewhat poetically that the spirits "lack what we have, and we lack what they have," referring to their lack of life and our lack of spiritual advancement or knowledge about other realms. The extreme importance of muertos in the religions influencing the development of Cajón has already been mentioned in previous chapters. It is necessary to keep in mind, however, that some of the ceremonies for the dead in those individual religious practices are disappearing. This seems to have resulted in an increased reliance on Cajón as an inter-religious activity that fulfills a similar ceremonial and theological function.

"El mundo de los espíritus es muy profundo, muy amplio,"[20] says Luciano. They exist in a manner that has already been referred to as "spiritual" instead of "material" (see Lucumí chapter), but it is also a dark, vagrant, solitary existence. As vagrant spirits, the muertos are in search of material in which to rest. The bóveda provides them with guidance to the location as well as a temporary place of rest, though the goal is for a muerto to mount an attendee. In general, the muertos are spiritually and physically strong, though they are not always free of

[19] Abakuá is a religious fraternity associated with the Carabalí slaves brought to Cuba.
[20] "The world of the spirits is very profound, very ample."

personality quirks or immodesty, just as when they were living. They can be introverted, quiet and solemn, or they can be outgoing entertainers, vulgar jokesters, or maybe even rude. Though they are usually strong and healthy, they can also be crippled or infirm. I once witnessed a muerto that had an uncontrollable stutter, though the person who was mounted did not. Muertos can also be "mentiras" [fakes], says Pedro, referring to the fact that some people are just pretending for reasons unknown. To the eyes of some – not mine – this would be obvious by their movements and sayings, though it does not happen often.[21] Though the personalities of the muertos are potentially infinitely numerous, they usually fall into one of a few main categories. As Axel Hesse has noted, "cada espíritu es representante de su cultura" (1975:82).[22]

By far, the most common type of muerto is the Congo (male or female), who usually lived during or soon after the era of slavery. There are two reasons for their commonness as muertos. First, as Luciano puts it, "la cultura conga es mas amplia, mas profunda."[23] That is to say they were more spiritually profound, but also simply more numerous in Cuba, which speaks to the second reason for the predominance of Congo spirits, the belief that they are usually "mas pegados a la tierra."[24] The historically vast number of Congos in Cuba as living people resulted in their numerically proportionate representation as spirits.

Congos often like to show off their strength by doing things that would hurt an unmounted person. Some run lit cigars down their arms or burning candles across their chest and under their feet while others might drink half a bottle of rum all at once. After arriving,

[21] In one ceremony where my wife was present, a muerto told us that our future travels would end in disaster if she didn't become initiated in Ocha soon. Conveniently, the muerto recommended the family of the person he had supposedly mounted as her religious *padrinos* (Godfathers). Later, Pedro laughed this off. My wife, concerned but also curious, asked "why would the muerto say that, then? Don't the muertos speak the truth?" Pedro shook it off and said, almost cynically, "Well, they say so many things, some of it must be true," but he made it clear that he wasn't convinced by this one.

[22] "Each spirit is representative of its culture." Muertos are often almost racial stereotypes, though by stating this I may be betraying some personal doubt about the religious elements themselves.

[23] "The Congo culture is more ample, more profound."

many greet the participants by hugging them or knocking elbows with them while saying "salamalecun", to which people answer "malecunsala." People help the Congos roll up the legs or their pants and take off their shoes while the Congo often asks someone to fetch him/her a *nsunga* (cigar) or *malafo* (rum). Some are standoffish while others work with individuals and the group in general, imparting spiritual advice or herbal remedies.

Another common muerto in Cajón is *La Gitana* who is similar to the "Madamas" in Puerto Rican Espiritismo (see Moreno Vega 1999). In Spanish, *gitana* can mean simply gypsy woman and in Cajón seems to refer to a woman who is knowledgeable about spiritual and herbal healing whether she is Spanish or a *mulata* of Spanish and African descent. Sometimes simply referred to as *Españolas* (Spanish women), the Gitanas are archetypes of femininity, enjoying sweet things and dancing in a way that recalls a Flamenco-style hand-clapping and stomping. On one occasion, honey was taken from the bóveda and poured on a plate for a Gitana who licked it, then took some in her hands, spreading it on the faces of attendees and feeding it to the drummers.[25] Gitanas arrive much less frequently than Congos, but their function is similar in the sense that all muertos advise attendees in spiritual matters.

In addition to the Congos and Gitanas, there are also a number of spirits who come less frequently. One such muerto arrived during the songs for Babaluaye. A woman possibly in her late-60's, dancing and apparently in good health, began to slowly drop to the floor and go prostrate. Her right leg became stiff and her mouth drooped to the right as if having suffered a debilitating stroke. She tried to get up and did so with the help of others who also rubbed her immobile leg. This muerto was only present for approximately a minute, said nothing, and then disappeared quickly as another muerto mounted the same woman. This mounting was quite

[24] "More connected to the earth/land."
[25] In Santería ceremonies, Oshún is also usually given a plate of honey.

unlike most that are signified by convulsions or disorientation, and it was also the only time I witnessed a mounting during the songs for Babaluaye. Other spirits who arrive infrequently are sometimes referenced in Cajón songs such as the *Indios* (Indians/Natives), *San Miguel Arcángel*, and *San Hilarion*.[26] Those not referenced directly in the music include spirits of Haitians and Jamaicans, and even direct family or religious ancestors of the attendees. The infrequent arrival of these spirits is due to one of two possible reasons. Either they are of a higher spiritual existence and thus need not return to earth as much (as is the case of the Saints), or they were simply not numerous as living people in Cuba itself (such as Haitians and Jamaicans).

The concept of *desarollo espiritual* (spiritual development) is important for understanding theological elements of Cajón. Occasionally muertos will arrive quite violently, knocking over the person they are mounting and thrashing about. Pedro resisted calling these muertos "bad" but called them "brutos" or "disorganized." "You have to work with the people to avoid them, though, or at least keep them from hurting people," said Pedro. These spirits lack development in the sense that they did not die peacefully or do not know how to advance to higher *planos* (planes) of spirituality. This concept of planos, according to Luciano, comes from Espiritismo, but previous chapters have shown that it is not dissimilar to the theologies of Santería, Palo, or even Catholicism. Those spirits who have reached higher planes, such as San Miguel Arcángel and other Saints and Orishas, do not need to return to earth as much and therefore arrive much less frequently than the Congos who inhabit lower echelons of the spiritual realm. Those who arrive violently, then, are the least spiritually developed, though Luciano believes that humans (or other muertos) can work with those spirits when they arrive to help

[26] San Hilarion is mentioned by Armando Andrés Bermudez (1967:22) as a medium who lead a Cuban Spiritist movement during the early 1900's that brought the attention of the authorities who considered him a political agitator. He was also referred to as Papa Hilarion and "The New God." Whether this has any connection to the San Hilarion mentioned in the songs of Cajón is unclear.

them progress to higher planes. The figure below (Figure 10) was drawn by Luciano to represent how the different planes are hierarchical and less inhabited at higher levels.[27]

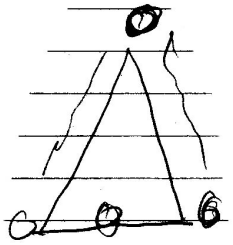

**Figure 10. Spiritual planos as drawn by Luciano (on lined paper).**

The idea of planos also points to the importance of space and physical location in the conception of Cajón, since planes are not just spiritual abstractions, but signify actual physical distance from earth.

The significance of space is not only found in the spiritual planes and the existence of Congos who live physically closer to the earth, but is important to the actual muertos who arrive and the way in which they arrive. Luciano, when stating that Indios do not arrive very often in Cajón, postulated that they might arrive more frequently in *Oriente* (Eastern Cuba) since Indios lived there more recently (and some of their descendents are still numerous there). He also assumed that Espiritismo and even Cajón would be different in different lands, with Congos and Gitanas replaced by regional ancestors if it were, say, practiced in the United States.[28] Likewise, Luis, Lekiam's step-father and a Palero, implied the importance of place when being mounted. He explained to me that being mounted is like passing out or falling asleep – you don't remember it – but before it actually happens you feel the *corriente* (current) of the muerto

[27] It is interesting that Luciano chose to represent the spiritual realm as a triangle. In early Spiritualism it was represented as a circle which was also a large part of Spiritualism's symbolic elements.
[28] Upon mentioning this to a scholar studying Espiritismo, the person instantly replied that this was "wrong." It is interesting how loyal scholars are to what they have been told. If I have learned anything about Afro-Cuban culture (be it religion or music) it is that there is not just one true or correct version of anything.

arriving. He specifically tied it to "being next to the cajón, the instruments," and reminded me that many people are frightened when they are about to be mounted and go running to another room or outside. Thus, place and physical location are important in the conception of Cajón.

*On the Sacred & the Secular*

Cajón is sacred but it is not remarkably sanctimonious. That is to say, it might not appear to be a sacred event to those who are unfamiliar with its purpose. Much of the Cajón aesthetic is similar to any secular rumba gathering including smoking and drinking (though almost never excessive drunkenness).[29] There is usually a quite jovial feeling among participants that leads to joking and even flirtation. This party-like atmosphere often results in people trying to coax the musicians into playing longer, leading Pedro to comment to me in a state of frustration that "you have to take yourself into consideration," meaning people will take advantage of the musicians and not treat them like professionals.[30]

Despite this secular feel, however, Cajón ceremonies are somewhat closed to outsiders or strangers. In one instance, GCyC were hired for an actividad in an area that made it inconvenient for me to meet them in Pogolotti beforehand. We planned to meet where the actividad was to take place and for me to film parts of the event, but I ended up arriving after they had begun. The house was crowded so I stood near the door and observed from outside. Pedro saw me and motioned that I could begin filming, which I did. Unaware of my connection to the group, a woman from inside the house (not the owner) saw me and rushed over, adamantly waving a finger to say I couldn't record. Pedro and the others called to her: "Tia, it's alright.

[29] Cigars and alcohol (especially rum) have sacred power in Cajón. Cigarettes, on the other hand, are rarely smoked in a ceremony. While cigars and rum are consumed in large quantities, being excessively drunk becomes a negative spiritual presence and is avoided. Once, a drunk man who wondered into a Cajón ceremony by accident was tolerated for a while and then ejected.

He's with us. We asked the owner." Satisfied, she smiled and left me to film, but the experience of being mistaken for a lost tourist filming without permission showed that Cajón is not a secular or even completely public event.

In all, Cajón has elements of both the sacred and the secular. Some people, however, have asked if such a distinction should be made at all, believing that this might be a Western bias not appropriate for traditions of African descent. However, to those who would claim that the difference between sacred and secular is not observed in "traditional" African culture or its New World diaspora, I would first say that religious worldview is not a way of life particular to Africans and their descendents. One need only look at the current religious fundamentalism throughout the world to know this. To those who are deeply religious, there is no separation between sacred and secular – all things are viewed as having religious significance.[31] Furthermore, we must realize that Afro-Cubans are *not* Africans living in a mythical village untouched by European separation of church and state. To suggest that Afro-Cubans do not or cannot differentiate between sacred and secular is to forget that at many times throughout Cuban history participation in sacred Afro-Cuban events could have resulted in arrest and prosecution. Afro-Cuban music should be viewed as having a sacral continuum. It spans from secular genres (such as rumba) to the most sacred (such as the Oru del Igbodu section of batá ceremonies).

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[30] Pedro also referred to the fact that they can't overplay or else their hands won't feel good for the next day of work.
[31] In case one believes that I'm referring only to recent Islamic fundamentalism, I would recommend that they consider the evangelical Daystar television network where preachers holding a Bible are flanked by assault rifle-toting mannequins dressed in U.S. military camouflage. Clearly, to suggest that African and African-derived cultures are alone in maintaining a religious worldview is certainly false.

Cajón falls near the center of this spectrum, sharing some of the secular aesthetic, though, as a spirit mounting activity, it is clearly sacred.

**Chapter Eight: Songs**

Song is the most important religious implement in Cajón. Though singing works in tandem with the drumming, bóveda, and other ritual components of the ceremonies, it is the most important ritual element for honoring and calling the muertos. This thesis documents over two hundred songs[1] that make up the vast majority of Grupo Cuero y Cajón's repertoire and, therefore, a great deal of the repertoire used in Cajón ceremonies in general.[2] Most of the songs come from Palo and Espiritismo and, therefore, the ones collected here might also help contribute to further studies of those religions.

Members of GCyC and Cajón attendees variously refer to songs as *cantos* (chants), *canciones* (songs), *plegarias* (prayers/implorings), and *espirituales* (spirituals), usually depending on their religious provenance. Slower songs with verses lasting as many as twelve clave cycles and imploring the intervention of Catholic saints are usually called plegarias, while those coming from Lucumí religion or Palo are more often called cantos and might last only two or four clave cycles. While muertos do not always arrive during songs specifically for them (e.g., a Gitana can arrive during Palo songs), it is most common for them to arrive during the songs originally associated with Palo. Most of the songs are known by all participants due to widespread historic use, but there are many that some people learn on the spot, following the lead of the GCyC drummers who always sing the responses. Since all of the songs are antiphonal (i.e., "call-and-response"), an unknown song can be learned by participants through repetition. In addition to teaching participants new or unknown songs, the drummers sing in order to maintain a consistent level of momentum and intensity throughout the ceremony.

[1] Since songs are from two to twelve clave cycles in length, they are not as long as what is normally thought of as a "song" in English.
[2] There are probably at least another fifty songs that I did not have time to learn. Also, there is a good deal of variation in the repertoires of different groups.

*Song Cycles*

Songs are almost always sung in groupings for specific deities or spirits, which we might call *song cycles*. These can reference a particular type of spirit (e.g., La Gitana, mothers in general, or Babaluaye, etc), or they can reference various religious groupings such as Palo Mpungus. At times, a song cycle can even begin for one type of spirit and transition to unrelated ones, such as those that begin with songs from Espiritismo and transition to those from Palo (see Song Cycle Appendix under July 23, 2005 and CD 1, Track 7). The progression of songs within these cycles and the number of times each song is repeated is not always the same, and therefore the song leader is responsible for controlling these aspects of the ceremony.

Grupo Cuero y Cajón have mastered the use of song cycles to build intensity and emotion, an important skill for creating an appropriate ambience that allows for spirit mountings. Song cycles usually last ten to twenty minutes, during which time many aspects of the music can be employed to build intensity. These aspects include tempo increases, the use of a song's half-coro, estribillo sections, and meter changes.[3] Tempo increases happen imperceptibly over the entire song cycle. For example, the rhythm Iyesá, if played for an entire song cycle, might begin with the quarter note at 90 beats-per-minute (bpm) and end at over 120bpm.

In almost every song cycle, the singer can make use of what could be called half-coros (or half-choruses). For example, the coro (i.e., the response after the song leader) of "A la Hora" (CD 1, Track 7) is first sung as "A la hora que lo llama mi Congo trabaja." To create a half-coro, the song leader can sing the first half of the chorus – "A la hora que lo llama" – which is then answered with the last half of the original chorus, "mi Congo trabaja." This technique is

[3] Estribillo sections and meter changes are commonly used by GCyC, but not among other Cajón groups.

common in Afro-Cuban religious music and can be found in many Afro-American musical forms. Therefore, this is probably a technique coming from a musical aesthetic common in Western- and Central-Africa. Interestingly, though, the technique has been used in a number of songs from Catholicism and Espiritismo. As such, it is probably one of the few ways in which the songs of a more Euro-Cuban heritage have been altered to fit an Afro-Cuban religious music aesthetic.[4]

Another technique that serves to increase the intensity of a song cycle is the use of an *estribillo* section during the rhythm Yambu.[5] Estribillo refers to the refrain or burden of a poem or ballad and is indicated in Rumba by a shorter cycle of call and response. That is to say, a half-coro is used or a different song is begun that might last only two clave cycles instead of four or eight.[6] Most importantly, the *acheré* (maraca) begins to mark all four partials of each beat (i.e., every sixteenth-note), adding more momentum to the sonic texture. In secular performances of Guaguanco, the estribillo is the point at which the dancers make their entrance. Therefore, use of an estribillo section in Cajón ceremonies easily elicits more inspired dancing from attendees along with shouts encouraging the drummers. Not surprisingly, it is common for muertos to arrive during the estribillo section of a song cycle.

Probably the most obvious technique used by GCyC to increase the intensity of a song cycle is to change the rhythm they are playing. This usually also involves a change of meter and sometimes a tempo increase. While they most commonly transition from Yambu (slow 4/4

[4] The other obvious way in which Euro-Cuban songs have been adapted to an Afro-Cuban aesthetic is the use of antiphonal singing rather than the use of multiple verses. In general, though, it is almost meaningless to draw a distinction between Euro- and Afro-Cuban songs since their development was never purely from one cultural mode or another (i.e., Euro-Cuban music was influenced by Afro-Cuban culture and vice-versa).
[5] I never heard the members of GCyC use the term estribillo. My use of it comes from Yvonne Daniel's book *Rumba: Dance and Social Change in Contemporary Cuba* (1995).
[6] *Clave* is discussed in the chapter on Drumming.

meter), to Ñongo/Bembé (12/8 meter), to Palo (faster 12/8),[7] the group also occasionally transitions from Ñongo/Bembé to a faster Yambu. An upcoming transition is made known to the drummers by the singing of a song usually played in a different meter. After a few song cycles in the previous rhythm, the drummers then switch to the rhythm best suited for the song being sung. Rhythm change is also a way for the song leader to begin honoring different spirits or deities, thus it is a technique that serves the dual purposes of song cycle intensification and the bridging of songs from different religions and ethnicities.

*Song Cycle Order*

The order of the first three and the final song cycles provides an insight into the way Cajón is ordered by the musicians themselves for ritual and religious symbolism. The order was chosen and arranged by the members of Grupo Cuero y Cajón, especially Luciano and Pedro. This is a reminder of the important role musicians can play in the emergence of tradition since they are not merely repeating that which was done before them, but are actively creating and defining the way the tradition is enacted.

The first three song cycles are almost always the same for every ceremony by GCyC, and represent a microcosm of religious beliefs present in Cajón.[8] The opening song cycle itself is also a self-contained version of the microcosm, leading to a layering affect. The opening, which is in many ways an introduction to the rest of the actividad, begins with the song "Sea el

[7] See CD 1, Track 14 for an example of this.

[8] The only time I witnessed these three song cycles not performed first was at the house of Paleros who had a Ceiba tree in their backyard. In that case, Luciano chose to sing for the Ceiba first and then continue with the three normal song cycles (see DVD for video of this). As a relative of the African Baobab tree, the Ceiba is sacred in both Palo and Lucumí religion, as well as most indigenous cultures in the American tropics (including the native people of Cuba). Interestingly, it was even known for its life-saving abilities among those of European descent who used its fibers as the main material in lifejackets until the 1950's. Luciano's choice to honor the Ceiba before proceeding with their normal introductory songs is also important considering that this was the only time I ever witnessed him

Santisimo."[9] In Spanish, *Santisimo* refers to the sacrament of the Eucharist (i.e., Christ). This Catholic significance is understood in Cajón, but is simultaneously understood to signify Obatalá and the bóveda itself. Luciano connected it to the creation of the world, and therefore it is a fitting song to be played first. In that same song, Mary is also referenced, creating a duality of Catholicism and Espiritismo that continues for most of the opening song cycle (see Song Cycle Appendix).[10]

At this point, it is important to remember that much of Cajón's theological underpinnings deal with the interrelationship of spirit and material. When keeping in mind the spiritual hierarchy of *planos*, as well as the belief that spirits are vagrant entities searching for material in which to rest, it comes as no surprise that the Catholic and Espiritista content of the first songs is followed by calls to Indios and then Congos. Musically, during the first song cycle, there is also the common progression from slow plegarias and espirituales towards an estribillo section containing half-coros and a faster tempo (though it stays in Yambu the entire time). The texts and musical progression of the first song cycle represent a progression from spirit to material, but do so with songs specifically from Catholicism and Espiritismo. In this way, the second two song cycles are left to textually and musically represent their respective religious origins.

The second song cycle honors the Orisha Elegguá, guardian of the crossroads. In Lucumí religion, Elegguá is always honored first so it is interesting that in this context he is proceeded by anything at all, especially synecdochic muertos.[11] To Luciano, Elegguá's presence is essential in

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become mounted, something quite unusual for musicians but made possible when a friend of his briefly took over the singing.

[9] Most song titles are my own, given only for the sake of convenience in writing about them.

[10] The focus on Mary and mothers in various forms is important considering that women make up the majority of Cajón attendees.

[11] The names of the muertos are synecdochic in the sense that they do not represent one specific person with the name, but all similar muertos. For example, "Ta José" is not a particular person but a particular *type* of person (i.e., a Congo).

Cajón since he is "el puente entre los vivos y los muertos."[12] Musically, this song cycle is supported by Ñongo/Bembé, a rhythm constructed from Lucumí rhythms appropriate for Elegguá. The song that begins the cycle was considered to be a "canto espiritual… del campo"[13] by Luciano, thus it is a textual and religious segue from the first song cycle. Often, the song cycle for Elegguá ends with the song "Elegguá Suayo," making a full transition to a Lucumí musical aesthetic.[14]

The third song cycle is sometimes called "Saludo Congo," referring to its intent to greet and welcome Congo spirits who in many ways are already present. In Luciano's words, it is to salute "el sol… los cuatro puntos cardinales, la casa, todos los muertos, [y] Sarabanda,"[15] among other Congo spirits. Like the song cycles before it, it is "fundamental" in Cajón. The drum rhythm, a version of Iyesá, becomes more appropriate for greeting the Congos since GCyC have fused the Makúta bell pattern into it. In many ways, it concludes the microcosm of the first three song cycles by being the last of a tripartite introduction honoring different "categories" of spirits. When briefly describing this to me, Luciano mentioned that the Catholic spirits (Saints, etc) can be seen as "mas elevada" (more elevated) while African spirits are generally "menos elevada" (less elevated). The Congos, greeted in the third song cycle, are "mas pegados a la tierra" (more connected to the earth), and in this way they conclude a sung progression not only from the spiritual to the material, but also from the cosmos towards earth itself.

Besides the first three song cycles, the only songs with a predetermined order are those that close the actividad. The beginning of the closing song cycle seems somewhat unimportant, at least in the sense that it is not always the same. The predetermined portion usually consists

[12] "The bridge between the living and the dead." Elegguá's colors are also red ("la vida") and black ("la muerte").
[13] "Spiritual song/chant… from the countryside."
[14] "Elegguá Suayo" isn't always sung. In those cases, the song cycle for Elegguá is entirely in Spanish, demonstrating how Regla de Ocha has become part of a larger Cuban religiosity.

only of the final four songs.[16] During the first of these four, "Con el Agua del Rio," a bucket of water is prepared in the room with the drummers. The owner of the house usually performs this task, sometimes under the guidance of Pedro or Luciano since those who hire GCyC do not always recall the ritual process in detail. In such cases, the musicians fill almost a priestly role, or at least one that contributes to ritual continuity from one house to another. After the water is elaborated with perfume, flower petals, and *cascarilla* (eggshell powder) from the bóveda, it is placed between the drummers and attendees. According to Luciano, this water is "una representación de la Virgen María."[17] During the song "Adios Madre Agua," the woman of the house will pick up the bucket of water, turning in circles with it as a type of purification. In the words of Luciano, this is "para limpiar la casa… pa' despedir… [y] refrescar el camino."[18] The woman then carries the bucket outside and tosses the water in the street to be rid of the water that purified the house as well as to usher away the muertos. As she does this, GCyC play "Dile a Marufina" and, when she returns, the group plays "Adios Soledad" to finish the actividad. They do not play their instruments again after this, though in most houses the attendees will sing the following verse once, unaccompanied:

Se van los seres, se van los seres, se van los seres [haci]a otra mansión
Gracias le damos, gracias le damos, gracias le damos al divino señor
Gracias, gracias, gracias le damos al divino señor
Con Dios comenzamos y con Dios
Nunca terminamos y a Dios las gracias le damos[19]

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[15] … "the sun… the four cardinal points, the house, all the dead, [and] Sarabanda…"
[16] Of the four listed here, sometimes only the final three are sung. In that case, the water would be prepared during "Adios Madre Agua." Refer to the Song Cycles Appendix, the DVD of July 24, 2005, and CD 1, Track 14.
[17] The use of water to symbolize Mary could also shed light on bóveda symbolism. For example, if the water glasses on the bóveda also symbolize her to some extent, then this could be another explanation for the presence of the small crucifix usually placed in the foremost glass of water.
[18] … "to cleanse the house… to bid farewell… [and] refresh the road/pathway."
[19] An accompanied version of this was recorded on *Espiritistas ¡a Cantar!* by Los Nani (EGREM CD0260). Interestingly, the final two lines as listed above do not seem to have a melody. Los Nani ends the song before reaching them and in every Cajón ceremony that I've witnessed the melody fades at that point to a spoken unison.

This is the last thing sung at an actividad for the muertos. At that point it becomes "for the living," and on rare occasions people might turn on a stereo or continue with their own impromptu rumba, though usually people relax and wait for food to be handed out.[20]

Between the opening song cycles and the closing songs mentioned above, the rest of the actividad follows no particular order. Song cycles and the songs within them are mostly at the whim of the song leader who chooses them based on the people present, the religion of the people who hired them, and whichever songs seem to be bringing muertos easier on a given day. Though song cycles have gained some predictability for GCyC over the years, they can be altered at a moment's notice based on events in the actividad itself. For example, during a song cycle in 6/8, a muerto began to gather all the children present to have them dance in front of the drums. He proceeded to pick up some of them, dancing with the child slung over his shoulder. Luciano quickly changed from an unrelated song to "Lindo Elegguá" since Elegguá is a child Orisha. As another example, the only time I ever heard the song "Caracol le Viene" was to end a song cycle that almost saw someone mounted only to have the muerto recede. Additionally, songs known as *puyas* are very common. They are intended to insult or offend the muertos in hopes that it will bring them quicker.[21] These are often sung during Palo sections as a last resort to inspire a mounting.

Though the choice of songs is ultimately up to the musicians, and especially the song leader, there are times when an attendee might dare to request a certain song or type of song cycle. In one of the few instances when I witnessed this, Luciano, who always took such a challenge to his authority quite coldly, replied to the woman making the request: "we have CD's

[20] Usually *caldosa* (broth/stew) is given out afterwards, though sweets such as cakes or pastries are not uncommon. Giving food like this is common after most Afro-Cuban musical ceremonies.
[21] See, for example, "Yo Vine Pa' Ver." Luciano once stated that all the Congo songs are puyas, though this is a bit of a hyperbole.

available." She responded wittily, "then buy one for us and we'll play it," to which she got a laugh from the other attendees. Luciano eventually begrudgingly honored her request, but even the fact that it happened in the first place points to the religious situating of Cajón. A request in a Lucumí ceremony is unheard of, partly because the entire order is set, but even particular song choices are left to the akpwón. The possibility of making a request in Cajón, though maybe in poor taste or simply inappropriate, reminds us that as a religious ceremony it has some elements of the secular.

*Song Melody and Rhythm*

The majority of songs in Cajón come directly from other ceremonial sources such as Misas Espirituales, Palo, and Lucumí religion. Having heard songs used in Cajón that have been documented in other religious settings, I conclude that the songs do not seem to have undergone any rhythmic or melodic changes when appropriated for Cajón.[22] For an ethnomusicological study, an analysis of the melodies themselves would not reveal much since they are not strikingly "foreign." That is to say, they are composed of standard major and minor scales, with melodic structures familiar to any "Western" listener. For example, the opening song cycle begins in a minor key (chosen by the song leader to fit his register) and transitions between that key and its relative major for different songs.[23] Since such musical components are therefore rather uninsightful, it will be more beneficial to analyze the musical techniques used to enhance ritual efficacy.

[22] There is a dearth of information and documentation related to Palo, Espiritismo, and popular Catholic songs, both in texts and recordings. Therefore, this statement is made based on the few sources available.
[23] Actual pitches might be an interesting avenue of further investigation regarding Afro-Cuban music. Many singers seem to use notes that sound almost "out of tune" to a Western scale, but use those notes consistently. The "blue note" phenomenon might also be present in Afro-Cuban music. I know of no studies that approach this issue and do not have the technology at my disposal to perform such a study.

The song cycles performed by GCyC are constructed in a way that highlights differences among melodic textures. It is quite common for a song cycle to begin with slower, longer melodies, then move through estribillo sections, half-coros, and meter changes, towards songs with shorter melodies. By the time a fast Palo rhythm has been reached, it is not uncommon for the coro to consist of only two pitches, with one pitch resolving to the tonicized half-step above it.[24] This progression from long melodic phrases to short, incantation-like phrases aids the communal movement towards an ambience conducive to spirit mounting.

Song rhythms are probably more indicative of a generally African[25] musical aesthetic than the song melodies. Even in slower binary-meter songs for Catholic Saints, a rumba aesthetic exists where melodies are sung in a heavily off-beat manner. This is true for most of the songs sung with Yambu, such as "Sea el Santisimo" and "Alala-e Shola," transcribed below.

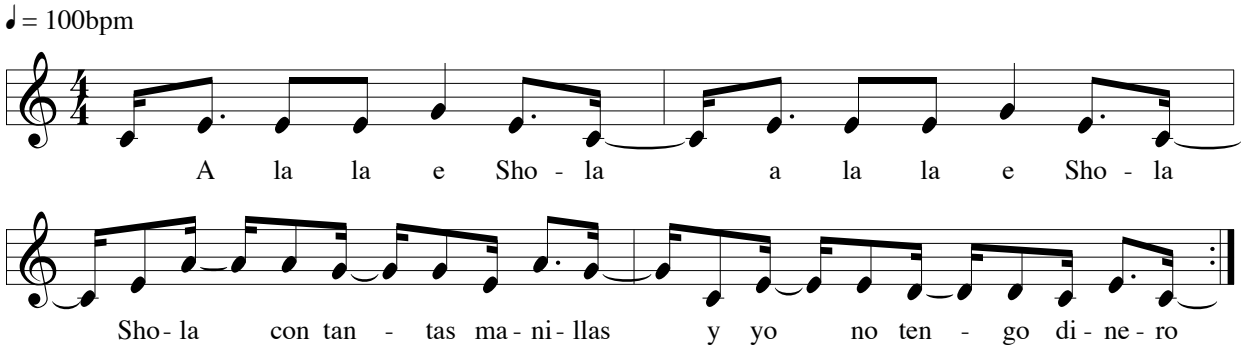


**Figure 11. Alala-e Shola[26]**

[24] I hesitate to call it a leading-tone because it is not used in the way signified by that word. The "tonicized" pitch is not necessarily the tonic from the beginning of the song cycle, nor are the total pitches at that point enough to construct a heptatonic scale.
[25] Again, this is a tricky generalization, but I am referring to the West- and Central-African cultures from which most Cuban slaves came.
[26] Without a recording of this song, I have transcribed it from memory partly for the sake of documentation. The key chosen here is merely to demonstrate intervals; the choice of register (or, key) would be up to the song leader.

This common off-beat approach in Yambu is contrasted with the 12/8 meters such as Ñongo/Bembé and Palo. These rhythms usually accompany songs that outline the secondary beat series, that is, a 6/4 feel instead of 12/8.[27] Furthermore, Palo songs, in addition to tending towards the secondary beat series, also tend to reinforce the first beat of the measure.[28] Therefore, since song cycles commonly begin with Yambu and end with Palo, the progression from heavily off-beat, slow songs towards on-beat faster ones appears to be another significant factor in creating a ritual atmosphere in which muertos can arrive with ease.

There are two more important factors that might be considered in an analysis of the "sound itself" as performed by GCyC. These include vocal timbre and extra-musical sounds. As is common among other Afro-Cuban musical forms, nasality is an essential vocal quality. In addition to simply being "natural" in Afro-Cuban musical settings, nasality and the overtones associated with it are pragmatic in the sense that they allow a song leader's voice to cut through the volume of drumming with greater ease. Extra-musical elements are also important for the sonic texture of Cajón. For example, the drummers often make use of their own favorite sounds for expressing enjoyment and/or tempting muertos to mount a participant. When a person starts to show initial signs of being mounted, Silvano will often make a long kissing sound with his lips, similar to the sound people make to animate a horse.[29] Dairon, when playing cajón, often begins to growl along with the song, mostly as a result of his enjoyment of the music's intensity, but it is also strikingly similar to the sound that some muertos make when they are arriving. In my interpretation, these extra-musical sounds, if they should even be called that, are ways of pushing a mounting to the point of no return. In all, then, there are a number of melodic,

[27] As mentioned in Chapter One, rhythmic vocabulary used here comes from the work of David Locke.
[28] Of course, to call it the "first" beat is misleading, since it could also be considered the "last" beat of a resolving phrase.

rhythmic, and extra-musical techniques used simultaneously by GCyC to increase musical intensity and, therefore, the chances of spirit mountings.

*Language(s) of Cajón Songs*

The texts of the songs used in Cajón come from a number of languages including Spanish, Bozal/Bantu, Lucumí, and Patois, in that order of commonality. The use of Spanish is preeminent, even for honoring the Orishas, thus eschewing the esoteric traditionalism of an unknown language for the spiritual fulfillment of a language deeply understood.[30] In the film *Voices of the Orishas*, Lázaro Pedroso, a musician deeply knowledgeable about Lucumí religion, stated that "nunca va morir la música. El conocimiento sí… [Lucumí] es una lengua muerta."[31] Similarly, in an interview with me, Luciano stated that Lucumí is "muy difícil pa' la gente" [very difficult for people]. Not surprisingly then, though Cajón ceremonies occasionally use Lucumí songs, it has become one of the few ceremonial contexts in which Spanish is used to honor the Orishas.

After Spanish, Bozal and/or remnants of Bantu languages are the most common languages in Cajón.[32] This is due to its heavy reliance on the songs of Palo which usually combine Spanish with Bantu words or phrases. However, much like the Lucumí Orishas, who are increasingly sung to in Spanish, Congo spirits are rarely sung to in pure *lengua* (tongue/language). Spanish is used to sing to Congo spirits such as Mamá Francisca, Ta José,

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[29] The use of this sound might not be unrelated to the fact that possession is called *mounting* and those mounted easily are called *caballos* (horses).
[30] It's also important to note that Cajón is not for the Orishas, thus not really necessitating their language.
[31] "The music's never going to die. The knowledge, yes… [Lucumí] is a dead language."
[32] Recent work by Armin Schwegler and Jesús Fuentes Guerra has stated that the specific influence of KiKongo in Bozal (and Palo ritual), rather than a mixture of many Bantu languages, is stronger than previously thought.

and Francisco,[33] possibly a sign of their importance in Espiritismo, or simply a sign of decreasing knowledge of Bozal/Bantu. The continued presence of Bozal in song, however, shows that in some ways it is still a living language.

The absence or presence of specific grammatical structures in Cajón songs can also be a sign of their ethnic or religious origin. For example, there are many songs that reference Congos, but not all of them use Bozal. The presence of its grammatical indicators[34] can remind listeners of a song's religious origins in Palo. On the other hand, songs referencing Congos without Bozal speech patterns are more likely to have their origins in Espiritismo. It is also interesting to note that Espiritismo and popular Catholic songs have likely undergone linguistic changes over time as they moved from Oriente to the Western side of Cuba. Ortiz documented songs of Espiritismo de Cordón (1950c), which almost all used *vosotros* verb conjugations, thus giving a very traditional or peninsular Spanish affect. This is unheard of in Cajón, where the use of the *nosotros* form, considered less pompous, is absolute. These multiple linguistic signifiers, and indeed multiple grammatical systems, existing simultaneously in Cajón lead us to issues of transculturation.

*Songs as Cohesive Acts*

The texts of many songs used in Cajón are excellent examples of transculturation. The purposeful juxtaposition and interconnectedness of different ethnicities and religions in these compositions can be seen as cohesive acts. As the first example of this, we can consider the following song, "En Esta Mano":

[33] These names are not necessarily of an actual person or one spirit, as with the Orishas. Instead they are synecdochic references to those types of spirits.

En esta mano yo traigo una cruz [2x]
En la otra mano un rayo de luz [2x]

Luciano commented that this could be understood as the first-person voice of Babaluaye, majestically portrayed carrying a cross in one hand and a ray of light in the other. This "mezcla de espiritualidad" [mix of spirituality], as Luciano put it, poetically joins the Lucumí Orisha with elements of Christianity and Espiritismo. In another example, the song "Santa María Madre de Dios" juxtaposes the Christian mother of God with the Palo Mpungu Madre Agua. The two religious signifiers are split between the coro and the song leader, allowing the listener (or singer, or reader) to draw the religious connection through the juxtaposition itself.[35]

There are a number of songs that draw connections between Congo and Lucumí ethnicity, including "Congo de Guinea Soy," "De la Tierra Lucumí," "Mamá Francisca Soy Yo," and "Ayumi, Ayumi." The interconnectedness of Congos and Lucumíes in song is no surprise considering the centuries of genetic and cultural intermixing between different African ethnic groups in Cuba. It seems only natural that spirits such as Mamá Francisca – the "Conga Lucumí" – are considered so powerful despite not being of any one "pure" culture. It is possible that a good deal of her power is derived precisely from her dual ethnicity.

In a more complex example, the song "Tengo un Indio" defies an easy explanation:

[Yo] tengo un Indio que viste de Congo [I have an Indian that dresses as a Congo]
[Yo] tengo un Congo que viste de Indio [I have a Congo that dresses as an Indian]

Luciano believes that a living man in the Havana area composed this song, though he could not remember his name. This might be the most fascinating sung example of a cohesive act in Cajón since it is not merely juxtaposition and metaphor, but also an allegorical statement about maintaining individual identity despite mutual appropriation.

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[34] Again, see the work of Isabel Castellanos, Jesús Fuentes Guerra, and Armin Schwegler for details about Bozal. The most common grammatical indicators in Cajón songs are absence of plurals and the use of he/she/it conjugations for first person statements (i.e., "Yo va" instead of "Yo voy.")

*Songs as a Site of Preservation and Innovation*

Because of Cajón's focus on pleasing the muertos, it is not surprising that most of its songs are considered to be "cantos viejisimos" [really old songs]. This makes Cajón a site of preservation, not so much for the sake of practitioners preserving their heritage, but for the sake of performing songs that would be pleasing to spirits who lived many years ago. Recordings from Oriente made during the mid-20th century of the songs "Jecua, Jecua" and "Lindo Elegguá" are found on the Cuban LP *Viejos Cantos Afrocubanos*, almost exactly as they are sung today by GCyC in Havana. Similarly, the song "Ndúndu Dale Vuelta" can be found on Lydia Cabrera's recordings[36] made on sugar estates in the late-1950's, almost exactly as it is sung by GCyC today. Even songs that have little or no significance today in Havana are preserved for the sake of the muertos. This is the case of Tumba Francesa songs, especially the song "Congo Manuel" (CD 2, Track 34) which contains a long interjection by the song leader in patois. When I asked Luciano about its meaning, he shook his head unknowingly, saying that it was a language he didn't understand. This type of blind preservation, however, can also lead to certain types of innovation.

Songs in Cajón are not sung in "proper," academic Spanish. The heavy Cuban accent gains another level of obfuscation by the influence of Bozal, leading practitioners and even drummers to sometimes wonder if they understand things correctly. Pedro would always refer me to Luciano for questions about the song texts since he did not want to propagate something that he might have misunderstood. Luciano pointed out common misunderstandings such as "Mbombo Gara," which is usually sung as "Congo gara." Likewise, while we were discussing

[35] Madre Agua and Mary are caminos of each other through La Virgen de Regla

the song "Oraré," Lekiam happened to be in the room and was surprised to find out that he had been mistakenly singing "lloraré" his entire life. Though these misunderstandings might be a major factor in the development of regional song variations, it should also be kept in mind that the main reason to see Cajón as an emergent tradition is its innovation through personal composition. Thus, in Cajón, there is a give and take between preserving songs that have been sung for generations and creating songs for one's own pleasure and spiritual fulfillment.[37]

*Popular Religion and Suffering*

On a final note, it would be absolutely negligent to talk about Cajón without confronting the fact that it is made necessary in no small part by suffering. The very purpose of Cajón – *romper y traer* (to break and to bring) – has the relief of suffering encoded in it. Orlando Espín has pointed out that "popular religion is the real and unquestioned mainstream religion of U.S. Latinos," and it is probably safe to expand his statement to include much of Latin America, especially Cuba. Throughout Cuba, the most common response to "¿Qué volá asére?" [What's up, brother] is usually "Ya tú sabes, la lucha" [You know, the struggle].[38] "La lucha" is the quotidian struggle that never seems to completely resolve, and is at the heart of what the living hope to resolve with Cajón. It is recounted in the songs of Cajón such as "Alala-e Shola" (see above) and "Tanto Como Yo Camino" (CD 1, Track 10), which speak to financial hardship despite endless toil. The song "A Remar" (CD 1, Track 14), can also be interpreted in this way since, although *remar* means *to row*, it can also mean *to toil* or *to struggle*.

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[36] Cabrera's recordings are found on *Havana & Matanzas, Cuba, ca. 1957: Batá, Bembé, and Palo Songs*. © 2003 by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, SFW CD 40434.
[37] Songs composed by Luciano are marked in the songs Appendix.
[38] This clearly reveals a different experience of daily life when we compare the common Cuban response "la lucha" with the most common English response "fine."

The central role of suffering in Cajón is present even in the very muertos that it honors. First and foremost are the Congos whose profound suffering as slaves and ex-slaves does not need elaboration here. Likewise, the plight of the Indios and their annihilation from Cuba and the rest of America is well known. Even Las Gitanas can be seen as sufferers at least to the extent that as biracial "gypsies" they would occupy a low social status. It is interesting that these lowly sufferers are, in Cajón, understood as the owners of true ritual and spiritual knowledge. This clearly supports Victor Turner's theories about "structural inferiority" in ritual. The muertos honored in Cajón are another example of "the structurally inferior as the morally and ritually superior, and secular weakness as sacred power" (Turner:125).

Continuing with this framework of social role reversal for the sacred world, it would then be appropriate to honor the muertos by acknowledging this reversal. This approach is evidenced by the song "Corre Corre Mayoral" (CD 1, Track 9), composed by Luciano, which translates loosely as "run, run overseer, the Congo is going to arrive." Though this composition also could have been influenced by Luciano's own contemporary socio-political beliefs, he did not describe it that way, instead referring to the end of slavery as a time when roles were reversed. Thus, the importance of muertos as sufferers who are also the true knowers forces us to recognize that popular religion – in this case Cajón – is an "epistemology of suffering" (Espin 1994) for those who practice it. It is a way to make sense of the suffering in their own lives.[39]

[39] By raising the obvious issue of suffering, I do not at all intend to appear as though I am choosing a side in the political quagmire between the U.S. and Cuba. This is not a critique of Cuban socialism or U.S. foreign policy, but both, since it seems to me that they share the blame for the suffering in Cuba.

**Chapter Nine: Rhythms and Drumming**

Over the past decade, Afro-Cuban folkloric music aficionados and musicians outside of Cuba have become increasingly aware of Cajón. It has been slow to take hold, though, probably due in part to its misunderstood religious significance and, more importantly, to the lack of standardization in the drumming. In general, most groups that perform Cajón ceremonies gravitate towards rumba, especially Guaguanco, with approximations of Palo and Makúta arranged for two cajones held between the legs. This can be seen in a number of recordings including *Espiritistas ¡a Cantar!* by Los Nani, *Cajón Espiritual* with Omí Iná, and *Cajón al Muerto* by Fariñas. The review of this "literature" that follows will give an overview of Cajón as it has been represented beyond the shores of Cuba up to this point.

The first recording featuring the music of Cajón ceremonies, and the only one that has been released in Cuba, was *Espiritistas ¡a Cantar!* by the group Los Nani.[1] This recording was a studio recording by EGREM and became the first audio document of much of this music. Los Nani, who apparently hail from Guanabacoa,[2] play mostly Guaguanco throughout the disc, utilizing two cajones and other auxiliary percussion. Though it is safe to say that the way they chose to record their music in a studio would not be exactly as they would play in a ceremony, there usually is a great deal of continuity between the two settings for Afro-Cuban religious music.[3] The members of GCyC also hold this belief. Before one actividad, the owners of the

[1] Previously, there were recordings that contained some songs from Espiritismo, but none that featured Espiritismo or Cajón exclusively.
[2] I was unable to contact Los Nani because, according to their representation at EGREM, they were in Santiago de Cuba at the time of my fieldwork. Guanabacoa is part of the Greater Havana area, known for its deep Afro-Cuban heritage along with its neighbor, Regla.
[3] The main difference between field- and studio-recordings of Afro-Cuban religious music is the coro. For the studio, most groups hire singers who are able to hold a strong coro, sometimes adding more harmonization than normal for a ceremony. The song texts and drumming, however, are almost always unchanged. In ethnomusicology, it is not a best practice to use studio recordings as evidence; some scholars would even exclude field recordings not personally made (Agawu:178). It should, however, be considered adequate for simply studying

house were playing the Los Nani recording, prompting me to ask Luciano for his opinion of the group. He commented simply that one of their melodies "no es real" [isn't real]. This assumes that their studio performance is the same or similar to their ceremonial performance, and raises the issue of the ability of musicians to vary and innovate while maintaining historical or religious legitimacy.[4]

A more recent recording is the DVD *Cajón Espiritual: The Music Box of Cuba* produced by Luke Wassermann and Todd Brown for the earthcds label. One of the groups on this recording, Omí Iná, uses only two cajones and claves, sometimes replacing the claves with guataca.[5] This group also utilizes Guaguanco a great deal in addition to an arrangement of Palo. In an interview with the group, they claim Pancho Quinto as one of their main influences, in addition to their own father. Interestingly, the use of two cajones was Pancho Quinto's older style of instrumentation, before he led the popularization of cajón in the 1980's (Sáenz Coopat:92). If Omí Iná's instrumentation is the same in ceremonies as in the recording, and it probably is, it could be a reference to this older instrumentation.[6]

The only other recording specifically of Cajón[7] is *Cajón al Muerto* by Rumba singer Pedro Celestino Fariñas, better known simply as Fariñas. This recording, released internationally by the Spanish label Envidia, uses instrumentation similar to that of Omí Iná and

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Afro-Cuban song texts and drum rhythms. As shown above, this is an emic approach as well, since musicians who have done recordings know that they change little or nothing from the ceremonial context.

[4] As seen later, Pedro is also critical of Los Nani. Considering Luciano's criticism, which questions their authenticity but does not go in to great detail, it is possible that there are other factors influencing their evaluations. At times, I sensed a possible bitterness that Los Nani had been tapped to record for EGREM due to their connections with that agency, while GCyC had been laboring for as long as that group, if not longer, without national recognition.

[5] The other group on the DVD, Obbara, also performed some songs used in Cajón, but with a very unique percussion setup designed to showcase a coordination of multiple instruments for each player. After meeting with a member of Omí Iná, Stanley Insua, it is clear that they perform Cajón often in the Centro neighborhood of Havana. I was unable to contact Obbara, however, and could therefore not conclude that the setup on the DVD is also used in a ceremonial setting. If so, it would be a very unique approach, furthering the idea that the secular can become sacred.

[6] The issue of practicality could be another explanation. Fewer people playing means fewer people to pay.

Los Nani, also relying heavily on Guaguanco. In addition to these three main recordings, there are some that include songs used in Cajón, but are more focused on Palo. For example, the field-recording *Religious Music of Palo Monte* released by earthcds contains many of the same songs used in Cajón. Interestingly, though the musicians referred to the music as Palo, the ceremony begins with a song cycle for the Orishas sung in Lucumí. In a discussion I had with Lawrence Millard, the proprietor of earthcds and the person who made the recording, he mentioned that he had questioned the musicians about this beginning. One of them replied, in essence, "well, everybody shares."[8] This is the type of additive approach to religion and religious music that allows for groups such as Grupo Cuero y Cajón to be successful.

*Grupo Cuero y Cajón's Instrumentation*

The musical approach of GCyC is significantly different from most Cajón groups. Having formed approximately fifteen years ago, and finding much work over the years, they have had a good deal of time to sculpt a musical approach befitting their understanding of Cajón's religious significance. They have a surprising ability to sound textually dense despite being only four musicians (and sometimes only three), but this ability is tempered and reserved for appropriate times. This musical awareness led Pedro to soundly reject the common approach of playing Cajón ceremonies with fast-tempo Guaguanco. "Plegarias shouldn't be played with Guaguanco," he said, patronizingly singing the sound of a fast and hectic Guaguanco rhythm. "They should feel like a *bolero*." This is indicative of Pedro's generally nostalgic outlook on life, but also the group's focus on projecting an "old-time" sound for the pleasure of the muertos

[7] I am speaking only of Cajón music as discussed in this thesis. There are many other recordings of cajón instruments used in rumba, and some of cajón used for the Orishas (see Discography).

and the living.[9] The group also takes a somewhat different approach in their choice of instrumentation.

Unlike most Cajón groups that use two cajones held between the legs and a time-keeper of some sort, GCyC usually uses a large cajón that is sat upon, a tumbadora, a guataca (hoe-blade), and an acheré (a.k.a. maraca). Compared to a cajón held between the legs, the large cajón used by GCyC provides a much deeper bass sound and, therefore, a wider sonic spectrum for the group in general. To my knowledge, this is the only instrument that has any degree of spiritual preparation, as mentioned in Chapter Six.[10]

Musically, the tumbadora is used by GCyC as both a supporting and a responding instrument in the sense that it holds a repeating part with brief rhythmic responses to the cajón. In a larger cultural view, though, the tumbadora is a case-study in transculturation and culture change in general. In many ways, the tumbadora has come to replace the religious instruments that were its antecedents (see Warden 2005). GCyC use a fiberglass tumbadora mass-produced in Thailand by the U.S. manufacturer Latin Percussion (LP), despite the fact that the tumbadora is historically a Cuban creation and LP instruments are not sold in Cuba due to the embargo.[11] In Spanish, the word *tumbadora* is more common but recently in Cuba the word *conga* has become

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[8] This is my paraphrasing. Larry Millard clarified that the actual quote was given to him in Cuban-style English, which he recalled as "Yeah, its OK the Orishas in Palo. We believe all and don't make it only for this one. It's all together."

[9] Despite the "bolero" approach, GCyC do have a general rumba aesthetic, even during plegarias. Once, while I was playing acheré, I played a *repique* (short improvisation or changeup) like I had done many times before. It happened to be during Luciano's lead part this time, though, and elicited an "eso es mío" [that's mine]. This is similar to any rumba aesthetic where the instruments are reserved during the lead and improvise more during the coro.

[10] See photos in Appendix.

[11] LP is a well known brand in Cuba. GCyC got their LP tumbadora from a friend who brought it from Puerto Rico as a gift. The popularity of LP in Cuba could, of course, be critiqued from a Marxist perspective in the sense that the percussionists and instrument makers in Cuba have been alienated from the production of their own cultural creation. This is complicated, though, by the fact that Cuba is ostensibly socialist and still has been unable to reclaim such production for the benefit of their musicians who desire a more popular foreign brand (even if they can't obtain it). In many ways, the power of marketing and name brands as status symbols has overpowered any interest in locally-produced instruments for their own sake.

increasingly synonymous. This is somewhat surprising since the word *conga* was originally only used in Cuba to refer to a dance and rhythm during *carnaval*. A widespread popular version of *la conga* in the United States during the early 20th century led to *conga* being mistakenly applied to all tumbadoras regardless of their musical application (Warden 2005). From the continental U.S., *conga* became synonymous in Puerto Rico with tumbadora and, from there, influenced the Cuban lexicon. When Silvano occasionally referred to the tumbadora as a conga, I asked him if he was just doing it because I was from the United States. "No," he replied, "its synonymous here ever since people like Giovanni started calling it that." Giovanni Hidalgo, the most famous *conguero* today and a Puerto Rican, is incredibly famous among Cuban musicians, thus contributing to the circular transculturation of the tumbadora.

In addition to the cajón and tumbadora, GCyC now always make use of a guataca (metal hoe blade). When showing video clips of GCyC to Olavo Alén Rodríguez, the director of CIDMUC, he commented that it was quite an unusual innovation to play *guagua*[12] on the guataca. Though it is unusual, this innovation has its origin purely in practicality. In the past, GCyC would use a guataca for Ñongo/Bembé and Palo, and play guagua on the side of a "cajoncito"[13] during Yambu and Iyesá. This would not only require the player to switch back and forth between the instruments when changing rhythms, but also carry one more instrument on the walk to each day's actividad. In the end, practicality was the victor. This is also the case with the tumbadora which is sometimes replaced with a small cajón held between the legs when the location of an actividad requires an unusually long walk.

Likewise, the use of the acheré (in Lucumí), or maraca (in Spanish), is subject to issues of practicality. Often, not all members of GCyC can attend an actividad, leaving only three

[12] Guagua is the part usually played by two sticks on a hollow piece of bamboo or a woodblock-type instrument.

performers (usually Luciano, Pedro, and Silvano). In these cases, the acheré is cut in favor of the cajón, tumbadora, and guataca. Though it may be slightly less important, the acheré is definitely not trivial since it is religiously symbolic and serves as a musical tool to aid spirit mounting. These two purposes are signaled when the acheré is "rolled," that is to say, briskly shaken out of meter instead of playing its usual repeating part. A slower rolling is often used during the beginning of plegarias for Saints and Orishas, not unlike the way it would be used in front of a Lucumí altar to alert the Orishas to one's invocations. Conversely, rolling the acheré during a high-intensity portion of a song cycle in which someone is close to being mounted can create a moment of sonic super-stimulation in order to coax a full mounting.

Though this instrumentation is particular to GCyC and chosen to project specific musical sensibilities, their willingness to alter it is inherent in Afro-Cuban music and ritual itself. If not constantly in flux, musical and ritual elements are at least constantly up for reevaluation and change for spiritual or practical purposes.

*Drum Rhythms Used By Grupo Cuero y Cajón*

All rhythms in Cajón are structured around a unifying rhythmic principal that is either actually played or implied through rhythmic composition. In African music scholarship, such rhythmic patterns are often called "time referents" or "time lines," and serve to provide a common reference point from which all performers orient their own parts (see Locke 1978). In Afro-Cuban music, this is usually simply referred to as *clave*, which literally means key. Though I do not intend to give an intensive analysis of clave, its presence must be understood as the foundation for the rhythmic creations of GCyC, and Afro-Cuban music in general. In rhythms

[13] This refers to the small cajón held between the legs, but shows the ability to refer to the instruments in many ways, since *cajoncito* literally means *little big box*.

using a ternary meter (e.g., 12/8) such as Palo and Ñongo/Bembé, the clave is usually elaborated to form the rhythm simply referred to as *campana* (bell).

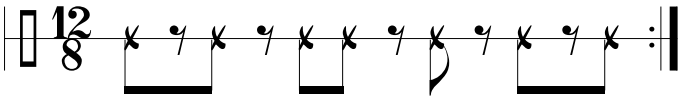

**Figure 12. Campana**

Campana, whether actually marked or implied with the drum rhythms, outlines four primary beats per cycle, each beat containing three pulses. It can also be understood to have a secondary beat series consisting of six beats per bell cycle, with those beats each having two pulses.

In binary meters (e.g. 4/4), GCyC do not actually mark clave, but it is implied by the instruments.[14] The only exception to this is if the cajón player stops during a high intensity moment to clap clave as a sort of "breakdown" or stoptime section.

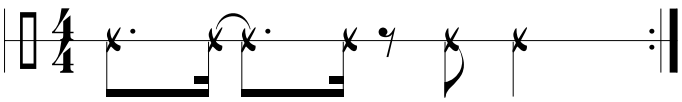

**Figure 13. Clave**

As the foundation for Afro-Cuban music, clave establishes meter. Because it is a repeating phrase that is thought of as a whole, I feel that it is best to notate clave within one bar, rather than over two, which would imply a separation between two halves.[15] It is on the foundation of clave, then, like all Afro-Cuban music, that the rhythms of GCyC are built.

Grupo Cuero y Cajón use four main rhythms, all of which have a number of variations that can be used for different songs, tempos, or parts of a song cycle. There are two rhythms in a

[14] Usually, in secular rumba, the clave is marked with two idiophonic sticks also called *claves*.
[15] In popular Latin music arrangement, clave is often written over two measures of 4/4 or "cut-time." While useful in that setting, it is not necessary in Afro-Cuban drumming since when written in one measure there is almost never a subdivision beyond the sixteenth note.

binary meter (Yambu and Iyesá) and two rhythms in ternary meter (Ñongo/Bembé and Palo). Yambu, the slowest rhythm, is usually used for plegarias and the beginning of many song cycles.

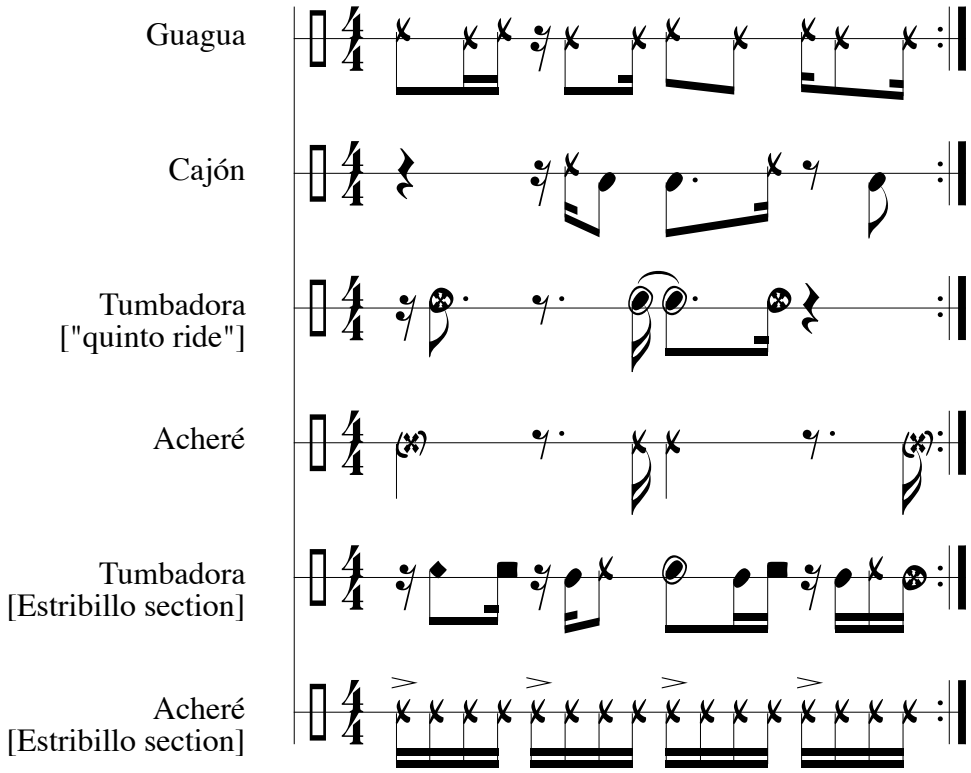


**Figure 14. Yambu as played by GCyC.[16]**

When GCyC begin a song cycle with Yambu, Silvano usually plays an improvisational part based on the "quinto ride" or "quinto lock" represented above.[17] An entire phrase of quinto ride would last two clave cycles and, during the second cycle, have the same rhythm as above but with the tones reversed. To transition to the estribillo section, the acheré moves towards quarter-notes and then a sixteenth-note pattern while the tumbadora plays the part notated above. Interestingly, this part is more reminiscent of a *tres golpes* part in Havana-style Guaguanco, and

[16] The word *guagua* is used in the transcription, since the part is often called that, but it is usually now played on the guataca by GCyC. Also, the cajón part transcribed here is probably the most common pattern played by Pedro, but certainly there are elaborations and variations that can be heard on the recordings.

the rhythm in its entirety is unlike any common version of Yambu.[18] Despite being more like Guaguanco, GCyC probably call this Yambu based on its slow tempo (around 90bpm) and the use of the cajón, whereas Guaguanco is faster and usually uses only tumbadoras.[19]

Iyesá has been mentioned in the Lucumí chapter and thus does not need much elaboration. It should be remembered that although it is called Iyesá, the bell pattern comes from Makúta. The Makúta bell outlines only a repetition of the first half of clave, sometimes called *tresillo*, but the entire clave is still implied by the cajón. It is also interesting to note the way the two hands coordinate the bell/guagua part. Essentially, the weak hand is always one partial behind what the strong hand plays. However, if the rhythm of each hand was written numerically for the way it divides the partials, the strong hand would be 3-3-2 while the weaker hand would be 2-3-3.

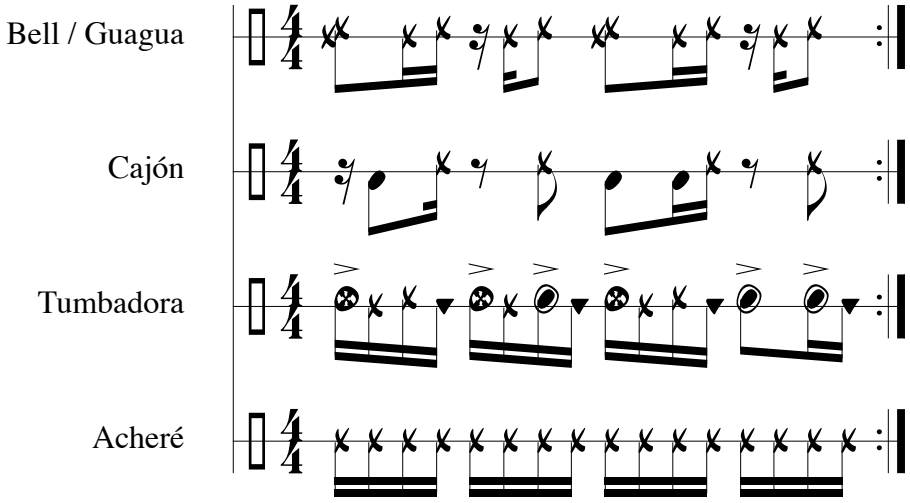


**Figure 15. Iyesá as played by GCyC.[20]**

[17] *Quinto ride* is, to my knowledge, a word created by English-speakers to refer to the "basic" pattern for quinto improvisation. It is on this pattern that quinto improvisations are built.
[18] The members of GCyC usually just referred to the rhythm as "rumba," but did occasionally also call it Yambu.
[19] Yambu is considered to be the oldest style of Rumba, therefore played on the older instrumentation (i.e., cajón).
[20] The bell part in Iyesá is sometimes substituted with the guagua part of Yambu.

The slower of the two 12/8 rhythms, Ñongo/Bembé, is also referred to in the Lucumí chapter, though there are a few details about it that should be discussed here. First, when transitioning from Yambu to Ñongo/Bembé, the guataca usually plays the standard version of the campana rhythm once before switching to the variation below. This variation may be unique to Afro-Cuban music since its unmarked pulses (i.e., rests) outline two beats from the primary beat series followed by three from the secondary beat series, the reverse of what is common in much of West Africa. Additionally, the acheré heavily outlines the secondary beat series, being synchronous with the singing, which also commonly outlines the secondary beat series. Finally, the third tumbadora variation seems to be a rhythmic simile of the tumbadora variation in Yambu. Though the tones are not all the same, the rhythm itself seems to have been realigned to fit a ternary beat division.

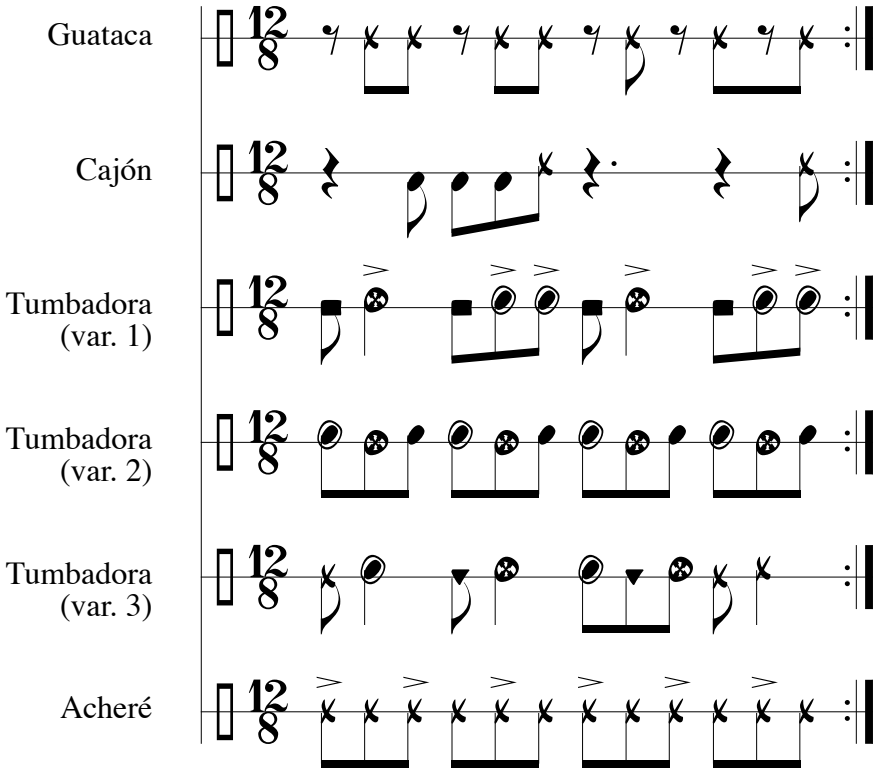


**Figure 16. Ñongo/Bembé as played by GCyC.**

Of the rhythms used by Grupo Cuero y Cajón, Palo might be the most interesting for a musical analysis. Gerhard Kubik's concept of "movement patterns" comes to mind when considering (or playing) the tumbadora part, as it contains important rhythmic movements that are not always audible (Kubik 1979). The tumbadora player's hands imply a 2:3 cross rhythm by marking the secondary beat series in his strong hand while occasionally accenting beat two of the primary beat series with the fingertips of his other hand. This is not written as an accent in the transcription however, because it is an accent felt in the fingertips more than heard by the ears of a listener.

As the tempo increases, Palo seems to move from having four main beats to just two (i.e., beats one and three when written in 4/4). This is marked mostly in the dancing but also by the

improvisations of the cajón to some degree. As a variation for a faster tempo, Silvano often switches to a part that continues outlining the secondary beat series with the strong hand while the other hand marks the second partial of beats one and three (the two main beats at that tempo). Interestingly, this rhythm is exactly the same as the one usually marked on the ride cymbal in jazz, but shifted to one partial later. To an unwary listener familiar with jazz, this could result in confusion as to the placement of the beat itself.[21]

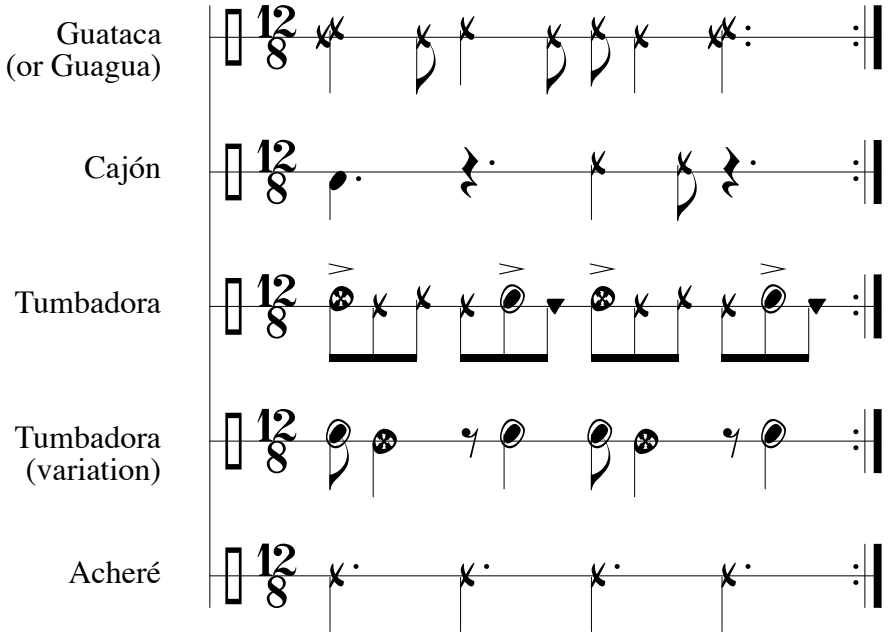


**Figure 17. Palo as played by GCyC.**

It is curious that the drum rhythms have been able to be rearranged and profoundly intermixed from various ethnic sources, while the songs have not been changed in any way. As mentioned in the Songs chapter, the songs used in Cajón have come from their respective religious settings wholly unchanged. The exact opposite seems to be the case with the drumming for GCyC, where intermixing, creation, and change in general are typical. The most likely

[21] This of course would only happen if you were familiar with the jazz ride pattern, thus allowing you to feel it on the beat instead of displaced.

reason is that perceptually, humans are more cognizant of sung melodic structure and have greater ease evaluating and reproducing vocal melodies. This is likely compounded by the fact that the great majority of attendees in Cajón ceremonies are women, untrained in drumming which is exclusively the domain of men. Therefore, an untrained aesthetic sense among most of the practitioners allows the drummers more musical options within a larger Afro-Cuban religious music aesthetic.[22]

*The Cohesive Act of Combining Drum Rhythms and Songs*

As seen before, many of the songs in Cajón are excellent examples of cohesive acts that purposefully bring together previously unrelated ethnic groups or religions. The addition of the drum rhythms to the songs thus furthers the complexity of this process. To begin with, the very act of combining any of the songs originating in Espiritismo or popular Catholicism with any type of Afro-Cuban religious drumming is a bold step on its own. This combination might have been easier since the instruments and rhythm (Yambu) were originally secular, but such an act was unheard of historically. More interesting, though, is the interweaving of different African ethnic signifiers. For instance, we can consider the use of Iyesá to accompany Makúta songs such as "Kuenda Congo," "Chichirigüa," and "Vamos Andar Mamá Chola." Makúta songs, associated with Congo religion in Cuba, are easily supported by the Lucumí version of Iyesá due to the addition of the Makúta guagua/bell pattern, thus smoothly coaxing one religious musical signifier into another. Maybe the best example of this layering is the third song cycle used by GCyC: *Saludo Congo*. In that case, the songs greet Palo Mpungus with the Islamic greeting

[22] It is important to remember that many of the songs came from Espiritismo and therefore had no original instrumental accompaniment, thus necessitating some sort of creation. Nevertheless, the fact remains that a new rhythm was not created just for those songs, nor did other songs retain the same drum rhythms from their original religious settings.

*Salamalecun*, sung to the accompaniment of a rhythm from the Iyesá people which was appropriated in Cuba for Yoruba/Lucumí batá drums and now by GCyC for cajón. Examples such as this are ubiquitous in Cajón.[23]

Most importantly, this mix of signifiers is well understood by the musicians who created it, and could be understood by anyone with some understanding of the origins of the rhythms used by GCyC (e.g., batá drummers). Even though such an intermixed musical ceremony can be understood in this way, however, it still functions as an integral whole. Maybe the most exciting fact is that Grupo Cuero y Cajón's "propia mezcla" [own mixture] can be ritually effective without a complete knowledge of the way it sublimely intermixes rhythms from different settings. Though practitioners are aware of the different religious influences involved, the musical ramifications of these influences are not always understood, and therefore function autonomously from their origins and antecedents. Put simply, the drumming works not because all practitioners understand its construction, but because it satisfies the spiritual goals of Cajón.

[23] Cohesive acts such as these are not exclusive to the music. Visual imagery, such as that in the bóveda, as well as dancing could also be analyzed for cohesive acts.

# Part Three

*Transculturation*

## Chapter Ten: Transculturation and Fernando Ortiz

In a letter to Fernando Ortiz from Melville Herskovits dated October 29, 1940, Herksovits calls the implications of Ortiz's theory of transculturation of "far-reaching importance" and promises to use Ortiz's book in his seminar on acculturation. Bronislaw Malinowski, in his introduction to Ortiz's book on transculturation, stated that he would enthusiastically accept the neologism and use it "constantly and loyally" while "acknowledging its paternity" (lvii). Today, though, despite the interest shown by these luminaries in anthropological thought, Fernando Ortiz is almost unheard of in the North American scholarly canon while his terminology, and the theory behind it, have been almost erased under the shadow of Herskovitsian acculturation. The continued lack of knowledge about Fernando Ortiz in North America, despite early translations of his works and his many connections with US academies, is evidence that transculturation—and Latin American theory in general—is a subjugated knowledge living under the academic hegemony of North American and European scholarship.

This chapter explores the work of Fernando Ortiz, specifically his concept of transculturation, its development in Latin American theorizing, and its general non-use and misunderstanding in the North American academic canon.

### *Fernando Ortiz (1881–1969)*

Fernando Ortiz was born in Havana, Cuba but raised mostly in Spain (Minorca) where he received his early education. He returned briefly to Cuba where he studied Penal Law until returning to Spain where he earned the equivalent of a Bachelor's degree in law at the *Universidad de Barcelona*. After returning again to Cuba in 1902, Ortiz earned his doctorate in

civil law at the *Universidad de la Habana*. In Cuba, he worked professionally in various civil servant positions, while furthering his studies in criminology.

The ideas of Italian criminologist César Lombroso[1] heavily influenced Ortiz's early works, such as *Los Negros Brujos* (The Black Sorcerers/Witches), which demonstrate the influence of evolutionary theories in the social sciences. His publications continued along these lines of essentially scientific racism,[2] forming part of the mechanism of state-sponsored oppression of Afro-Cuban culture, until a marked change could be seen in his approach beginning in the mid-1920's. He founded the journal *Archivos del Folkore* in 1926 and, most tellingly, in 1937, founded the *Sociedad de Estudios Afrocubanos* (Society of Afro-Cuban Studies).[3] This turn towards valorization in place of criminalization of Afro-Cuban culture was part of a larger movement of *Afrocubanismo* among Cuban intellectuals who sought the recognition of Afro-Cuban culture in the creation of Cuban national identity.

In 1940, Ortiz published *Contrapunteo Cubano del Tabaco y del Azúcar* (*Cuban Counterpoint of Tobacco and Sugar*) with an introduction by Bronislaw Malinowski. In this work, Ortiz's intellectual development results in the theory of *transculturation*. The book was interpreted differently depending on the ideology of the reader, as witnessed by the many words that have been used to describe it, including "nationalistic," "functionalist," "literary," and "proto-postmodern."

[1] Also written sometimes as *Cesare* Lombroso (1835–1909). Lombroso founded the Italian school of positivist criminology that held that criminals were born as such and could be identified by physical characteristics.
[2] Lombroso's ideas could be seen in Ortiz's works that viewed black culture (the term Afro-Cuban didn't exist yet) merely as a source of criminal activity in Cuba.
[3] Ortiz created the term *Afro-Cuban*, an act that undoubtedly had progressive ideological purposes since the belief that African culture had influenced Cuban national culture was not widely accepted at that time.

*The Origins of Transculturation*

Ortiz introduced the word *transculturación* (transculturation) in the second part of *Contrapunteo*. His reasons for creating the word are clear in his presentation of it:

> I am of the opinion that *transculturation* better expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another because this does not consist merely in acquiring another culture, which is what the English word *acculturation* really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as deculturation. In addition it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neoculturation. …The concept of transculturation is fundamental and indispensable for an understanding of the history of Cuba, and, for analogous reasons, of that of America in general. … When the proposed neologism, transculturation, was submitted to the unimpeachable authority of Bronislaw Malinowski, the great figure in contemporary ethnography and sociology, it met with his instant approbation. [Ortiz 1995:102–103]

Though this immediately raises theoretical issues, it is interesting to first note an article that dealt with the origins of transculturation. Arcadio Díaz Quiñones claims that "spiritist doctrine [of Allan Kardec] constitutes a fundamental aspect of the concept of [Ortiz's] transculturation" (Díaz Quiñones 2000:12). He claims that Espiritismo provided Ortiz with the "interpretative tools" to understand race and evolution. To Ortiz, Espiritismo was an "evolutionist theory of the soul" and Díaz Quiñones sees this as a connection to transculturation through the ideas of transmigration of souls based on spiritual progress and evolution (23).[4] The seed of transculturation, according to Díaz Quiñones, is found in the nationalistic view of deracialization – racial mixing allowing spirits to progress or evolve towards purer existence.

However, none of these key elements shows up in *Contrapunteo* in 1940. While Ortiz did study Espiritismo academically, it is impossible to prove that this is more than an affinity based on a correlation between its philosophy and his early intellectual framework. During the early 20th century, most intellectual and popular thought was influenced by evolutionary theory

[4] Refer to the Espiritismo chapter for a more detailed explanation of its ideas about the evolution of spirits.

and, thus, Espiritismo was not necessarily the germination of transculturation, but was a religious philosophy, ostensibly based on science, that impressed Ortiz due to its correlation with his own early intellectual preconceptions. Ortiz turned away from his earlier thinking in *Contrapunteo*, however, which "leaves behind positivistic accounts of Cuba's social formations to turn toward a cultural critique of modernizing forces" (De la Campa:79). Espiritismo might have helped pave the way for Ortiz's theory of transculturation, but spiritual evolution is not the same as cultural interweaving and appropriation. The origins of the term transculturation lie not so much in Espiritismo as in Ortiz's creative manipulation of language to rectify a problematic word (i.e., *acculturation*) while addressing the conceptual necessity of his subject matter.

*The "Avatars" of Transculturation*

In the Cuban journal *Temas* (1995), Jesús Guanche Pérez gives an insightful overview of the development of the theory of transculturation. His study and the book *Latin Americanism* by Román de la Campa (1999) provide much of the background information and analysis of the development of transculturation presented here. There are a number of authors who have employed the word transculturation, but there are three authors known for the development of the theory itself. The first, of course, is Ortiz himself, followed by Ángel Rama and Néstor García Canclini. These authors can be seen as a triumvirate of transculturation, as explained by De la Campa, who sees in their work on transculturation "a post-colonial corrective to postmodern immanence" (64–65). Considering these writers, all from Spanish-speaking American countries, one might perceive transculturation as a theory for those interested in a certain geographically delimited area, but this is not necessary. Transculturation could be widely applied but has not made large gains outside of Latin American studies, as will be seen later.

Ángel Rama, well known for his work *La Ciudad Letrada* (*The Lettered City*), employed transculturation in 1982 with *Transculturación Narrativa en América Latina* (*Narrative Transculturation in Latin America*). The book is a response to the lack of interest in Andean literature among Latin Americanists (especially those in the United States) and demonstrates the ability of popular cultures to resist losses and changes despite being under the influence of "modernizing markets." According to De la Campa:

> [Rama distances himself from] transculturation as an impressionistic form of ethnic history… He makes it clear from the first chapter that his preference for the term *transculturation* draws from the work of Fernando Ortiz, but he is less interested in the latter's scientific methods than of his creative understanding of the way transmission occurs between different cultures, particularly those in dissimilar positions of power. [De la Campa:74]

This change from the social-science use of transculturation towards its application to narrative "flows" might parallel larger shifts in academia,[5] but its actual implementation is mostly unchanged. "Like Ortiz, Rama sees in transculturation a metaphor for inclusion and perhaps revindication, in contrast with *acculturation* which emphasizes the acquisition of the new" (De la Campa:74).[6]

The third major figure in the theory of transculturation is Néstor García Canclini, specifically his book entitled *Culturas Híbridas: Estrategias para Entrar y Salir de la Modernidad* (1990, translated into English in 1995 as *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*). The book deals with the reception by working- and middle-class Mexicans of what might be called "high" culture. Additionally, García Canclini considers things

[5] By this, I mean the very study of *culture* as it has been increasingly approached by literary studies.
[6] In 1981, Margaret Kartomi advocated for the word *transculturation* in her article on musical culture contact. She saw it as the most fitting word when discussing culture contact since it is "relatively free of ambiguous meanings" and because "unlike the word acculturation, it does not attempt to cover, nor does it confuse, the processes and responses to contact" (Kartomi:234). The statement that it is "relatively free of ambiguous meanings" has lost some accuracy since the publication of Kartomi's article. As mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, various definitions of the term started to show up especially in the 1990's. It is significant that Kartomi used the word

such as the appropriation of modern art in the handicrafts of indigenous Mexicans. Through García Canclini,

> …transculturation obtains… a much more contemporary range than many of its critics usually expect. It is not merely a descriptive device for the give-and-take of cultures in contact, nor a sociological content analysis of Latin American history, but rather a complex strategy in which deconstruction is not left in a state of epistemological arrest, but is driven to ongoing construction of social and intellectual challenges that position the critic as producer as well. [De la Campa:72]

Strangely, García Canclini never uses the word *transculturation*. Nor is Ortiz ever cited in his work or even added to the bibliography, though García Canclini must have been familiar with his work. Despite conceptual issues that are almost exactly the same, he avoids connecting himself directly to the theory for reasons that are unknown. It is possible that he simply wanted to distance himself from a discourse that was over fifty years old in favor of more contemporary terminology, but the reasons remain unclear.

In Cuba, transculturation is still a common theoretical framework, probably thanks in part to the fact that Ortiz stayed in the country until his death and was, at the beginning at least, somewhat of a supporter of the revolution. In a 1995 article in *Temas*, a journal of "culture, ideology, and society," Jesús Guanche Pérez gives an overview of some of the smaller details of transculturation that were overlooked by De la Campa's focus on major works by the aforementioned triumvirate. Guanche Pérez mentions a significant work from 1989 by Angel Palerm entitled *Guía para la Clasificación de Datos Culturales*, apparently a reworking of George P. Murdock's guide for anthropological research from the 1950's. This was the first major work to use *transculturation* in place of *acculturation*, nearly fifty years after the term was proposed (Guanche Pérez:125). Guanche Pérez also brings to our attention an interesting

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*transculturation* even before Rama in 1982, yet the word is still relatively unused in ethnomusicology. Take for example, the member's directory of SEM that has *acculturation* as a choice under areas of interest.

simultaneous use of both terms in the work of Max Peter Baumann, a German ethnomusicologist working in Spain.

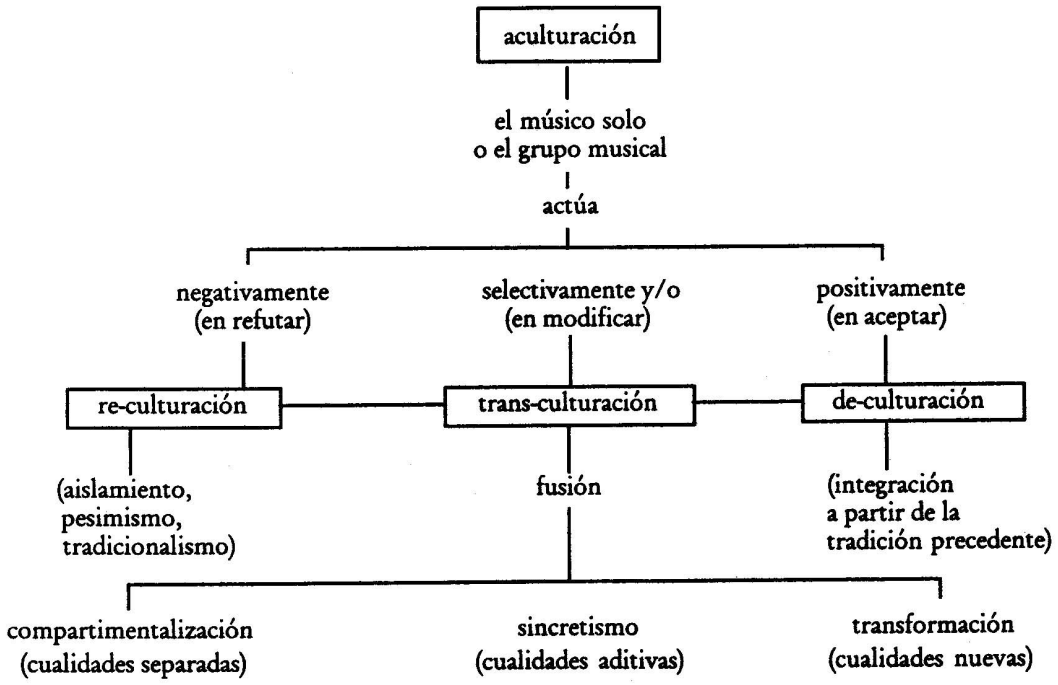


**Figure 18. Max Peter Baumann's schematic of Acculturation.**[7]

This schematic (Figure 18) is an interesting and creative way to conceptually reconcile the terms *acculturation* and *transculturation*, though acculturation is still preeminent. What's most interesting is its displacement of *deculturation* and *neoculturation*, Ortiz's two elements of transculturation. Deculturation has become a type of response to another culture that is separate from transculturation while neoculturation seems to be what Baumann calls "transformation." This schematic, while in some ways clumsy, importantly adds the concept of "compartmentalization." This is a useful inclusion since it could be considered harmonious with other terminologies such as double-consciousness, multi-culturalism, code-switching, and maybe even hybridity.

[7] This image taken from Guanche Pérez 1995.

Guanche Pérez's article is useful but it probably shows, more than anything, that authors have generally defined transculturation in their own way, whether or not their definition conformed to any previously accepted definition. He even cites an example of it being given an "ethno-psychological" definition as one of the many that could be considered unusual appropriations of the term (125). In addition to his examples, I would add the works by Phyllis Peres (1997) and Mary Louise Pratt (1992) for their definition of transculturation as merely a form of resistance to colonialism rather than a process of cultural counterpoint, therefore overextending Rama's use of the term in narrative production.

*Transculturation and Acculturation: Is There a Difference?*

Acculturation, as defined by Melville Herskovits, is not unlike the way Ortiz defined transculturation. Herskovits states that acculturation is the contact of cultures and the "subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (1937:259). Furthermore, he says that it is distinguished from "assimilation," though that can be a "phase" of acculturation (1938:10). Herskovits also distances it from *diffusion* due to its use of "real history," not assumptions based on reconstructions from distributional analysis (1938:15). With this definition, it seems like the only real difference between *transculturation* and *acculturation* is what Margaret Kartomi pointed out: transculturation refers to only the process, not the result (1981). However, while the definitions might be similar, their usage is drastically different.

Both colloquially and academically, acculturation has been used as a synonym for assimilation. In the book *Acculturation* (1938), Herskovits cites many early uses of the term that almost always imply unidirectional change, if not also forced assimilation. Herskovits admits this type of usage and therefore attempts to redefine the term as mentioned above. The second

section of *Acculturation*, though, provides some examples of work done on the concept of acculturation and, maybe not surprisingly, they are almost all concerned with the impact of Western culture on that of "primitives." Thus, this academic usage again casts the term in a colonial or imperial sense, rarely concerning itself with culture exchange between native groups, probably because of Herskovits' concern about the cultures under study having "real history."[8]

After Ortiz's neologism became known to Herskovits, he wrote a letter to Ortiz asking if he had seen his book *Acculturation*. In his letter, he critiques Malinowski's students for their forays with this concept and attempts another definition: "certainly, in our use of the term [acculturation] in this country, there is no implication of handing down a superior civilization to a 'savage' folk," stressing that the term in the United States is "entirely colorless."[9] In a later work, Herskovits critiques Ortiz for "misapprehending" the term acculturation, again overzealously defending the term by saying that it "has never had" an ethnocentric meaning (1948:529). This, despite the fact that a decade earlier he had outlined the many early ethnocentric uses of the term in his seminal work on the topic. Interestingly, though, Herskovits does give Ortiz's term some credit, saying that "were not the term acculturation so firmly fixed in the literature of anthropology, 'transculturation' might equally well be used to express the same concept" (529). Herskovits' stubbornness begins to show through as he (once again) goes on to define acculturation and point out (again) that it does not imply handing down culture from a "higher" or "more advanced" civilization. The fact that he continues to publicly define the term so often proves that there is a general understanding of the term, colloquially, academically, or both, as a synonym for assimilation. While this might not have been the fault of Herskovits,

[8] Herskovits thought that the study of acculturation depended on the existence of "real history," meaning documents such as books, as opposed to myth or legend. It is only natural, then, that such a framework was limited to the imperial or colonial experience.
[9] These letters are reproduced in Santi 2002.

his stubbornness to accept the term transculturation was an error.[10] The term *acculturation* is still used synonymously with *assimilation* while *transculturation* is considered neutral (at least by those who have heard the word).

Another difference between transculturation and acculturation, and maybe the most important difference, is in Ortiz's very approach to writing a scholarly work. The entire first half of *Contrapunteo* is a *literary* work of social science and history. Taking as its model an ancient Spanish literary work, Ortiz gives personality traits to tobacco and sugar and writes them into a contrapuntal interaction that portrays them more as anthropomorphic entities than economic commodities to be dryly analyzed. It is likely that scholars from the United States and Europe did not embrace, or simply did not understand, this unorthodox approach to scholarship since its creativity is only mentioned in the works of other Latin American authors. In Fernando Coronil's introduction to the 1995 English translation, he points out that

> …in Malinowski's introduction, there is little receptivity to a reading of *Cuban Counterpoint* as a critical intervention in Cuban historiography and, least of all, as a text that could develop metropolitan anthropology. He reads *transculturation* narrowly as a technical term that expresses certain dynamism in cultural exchanges, not as a critical category intended to reorient both the ethnography of the Americas and anthropological theory. [Coronil 2005:145]

This interpretive literary approach, long before Clifford Geertz, is what has given transculturation the most sway among current scholars reading Ortiz. De la Campa points out that this creative literary nature of *Contrapunteo* tells us that transculturation "should be understood as a mode, not a method, particularly relevant for the study of the non-synchronous development of peripherally modern and post colonial societies" (83).

[10] Part of his reasoning was probably not based on the terms themselves, but on what Herskovits perceived as Ortiz siding with Malinowski in their academic dispute over culture change. Of course, Malinowski was the one responsible for claiming Ortiz within his own school of thought, while Ortiz remained mute on the issue.

In *The Repeating Island* (1996), Antonio Benítez-Rojo discussed Ortiz's literary approach to academic writing, finding it to be an example of the Caribbean response to modernity (and postmodernity) in the absence of interaction with Cuba and the Caribbean in those meta-narratives. Benítez-Rojo sees *Contrapunteo* as a proto-postmodern work in multiple senses of the word postmodern. First, by putting the literary work first and only then giving any type of introduction to the work, Ortiz downplays the importance of the academic approach. He is also modest in his approach, stating clearly that he claims no absolute authority on the subject. Second, Ortiz considered the literary Part I of the work to be the central focus, with history, economy, and social theory coming second. Thus he is not seeking legitimization through social science but, instead, through literature. Third, Benítez-Rojo views Ortiz as not explicitly ideological. This is a strong argument coming from a Cuban exile living in the United States (De la Campa:90), especially when Ortiz's familiarity with Marx can be seen coming through clearly at times. Nevertheless, it is obviously open to multiple interpretations, as witnessed with the introduction by Malinowski – stressing the political "good-neighbor" policy of the time – and the original prologue by Herminio Portell Vilá, which was clearly a nationalistic interpretation.

The argument by Benítez-Rojo that *Contrapunteo* is a proto-postmodern work is hard to deny. One must give Ortiz credit for the foresight and creativity required to write such a reflexive, interpretive piece long before it was fashionable to do so.

*Critiques of Transculturation*

It is difficult to find full critiques of transculturation and *Contrapunteo* since Ortiz's work is rarely engaged with outside of Latin America. Criticisms are brief and usually culled from other un-cited sources. One such critique is that it is a modern totalizing paradigm and,

moreover, one that expresses a preference for cultural or racial synthesis, erasing difference. This critique seems to fail to take into account the creativity implied in Ortiz's concept of "neoculturation," a counteractive mode that resists homogenization.

Another critique of transculturation is that it fails to address gender issues and engage with Latin American feminists (De la Campa:83). It is true that Ortiz, Rama, and García Canclini did not specifically write about gender issues, nor did they engage feminist writings (though, of course, Ortiz couldn't). This seems to be a failure – if that's a fair word – of the authors themselves rather than the theory since transculturation could certainly be extended to consider feminism and gender issues. De la Campa does not give any recommendations for how the authors should have "read women," or what that would mean for the theory of transculturation, but one wonders if they simply didn't feel the need to approach the issue of gender since it was not an integral issue in their topics.

*Was Ortiz a Functionalist?*

Malinowski's introduction to *Contrapunteo* states that Ortiz "belongs to that school… of modern social science known today by the name of 'functionalism,'" even patronizingly calling him a "good functionalist" (lxii). His explanation of this claim does not seem quite adequate and can be seen in a more telling light considering his statements two pages earlier. Malinowski states that he is in "complete accord" with Ortiz and proves it by citing his own work. By revealing how Ortiz is in accord with his earlier findings, Malinowski seems to be saying that his work anticipated that of Ortiz. Throughout the introduction, Malinowski attempts to assimilate Ortiz's work into his own goals. Fernando Coronil puts it well when he says that "the introduction [to *Contrapunteo*] assimilates Ortiz's project into Malinowski's own, blunting its

critical edge and diminishing its originality" (Coronil 2005:145). This can be seen as an act of academic hegemony of North American and European scholarship over that of Latin America.

*Subjugated Knowledge*

∞∞∞

> Subjugated knowledges are thus those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematizing theory and which criticism—which obviously draws upon scholarship—has been able to reveal. [Foucault 1972:203]

∞∞∞

There is no absolute reason why we should assume that Euro-American[11] and Latin American theorizings are compatible and with the same end purpose. Though they can both be considered Western cultures, they are still culturally different. Nevertheless, their compatibility has been the assumption up to this point (in a rather a priori way) not only for this paper, but in scholarship in general. If we accept that they are compatible then we are led to the question of why the Euro-American canon has generally disregarded the development of transculturation as an important academic theory of Latin American provenance. Malinowski, in later works, did use the term, though only twice and without initially crediting it to Ortiz. Thus, the Oxford English Dictionary credited Malinowski with the first English use of the word and, adding injury to insult, states that it is synonymous with acculturation (Coronil 1995:xlv).

In a 1943 article on Latin American acculturation studies, Julian Steward neglects to mention Ortiz and, in fact, doesn't mention any Latin American scholars, citing only North Americans such as Herskovits. This can be compared with today's outpacing of degrees granted in Latin American Studies programs in North America with those granted in total throughout Latin America itself. We could say that the discourse on Latin America has become dominated

[11] "Euro-American" is admittedly vague, but I use it for lack of a better word to describe the academic heritage comprised predominantly of English-speakers in Europe and North America.

by North Americans, except that it was never dominated by Latin Americans in the first place. Fernando Coronil has a poignant remark in this regard:

> As we seek useful theories to understand today's world, Malinowski's reception of Ortiz's ideas raises critical questions concerning the relationship between theory production, understood as self-critical forms of thought produced anywhere, and canon formation. It suggests that while theory formation is often a transcultural process, the canonization of theory is fundamentally a power-laden metropolitan operation that, through silencing and selective appropriation, conceals the complicity between knowledge and power. Yet even canons… often bear the traces of their historical formation and are inhabited by subaltern echoes. [Coronil 2005:148]

As a critical approach to theory production becomes more commonplace in the Euro-American academy, Ortiz's work becomes increasingly important as a case study in how our own canon is formed. It is also an example of how Latin American theory can contribute to this canon, though it is really already a quiet(ed) partner. Along these same lines, De la Campa wonders, "what does it mean for Latin America's novels to become part of the U.S. canon? Who is being read through whose texts?" (71). To further that question, we might add "What would it mean for Latin American theory, such as transculturation, to become part of the Euro-American academic canon?" It would mean accepting Latin American scholarship as the ultimate authority on itself and as a site of theory production not completely distinct from our own. It would also mean that we would be recognizing a previously subjugated knowledge of ourselves. That is to say, we would be reading about ourselves through the texts of others.

**Conclusion**

In late June of 2006, well into the final revisions of this thesis, Reynaldo Gonzalez Fernandez was hired to perform a "fiesta pa' los muertos" in Stoughton, Massachusetts. The Cuban family[1] that hired him had previously lived in the Jamaica Plain area of Boston, and knew of Reynaldo from his Boston-area dance classes and previous religious performances (with batá and bembé). He, in turn, hired me and two other Boston-area percussionists, Mike Spencer and Les Wood. To my knowledge, this may have been the first ceremony for los muertos to happen in New England,[2] but in some ways it was quite disappointing. Reynaldo was not excited about the event from the beginning, a reaction that I interpreted as his belief that it is merely a false or weak approach to Santería.[3] On the other hand, there were many similarities between Cuban Cajón ceremonies and this "fiesta pa' los muertos." Most obviously, the majority of the attendees were women. Some of Kardec's writings were read to begin the ceremony, along with (Spanish) recitations of "Our Father" and "Hail Mary." The bóveda was constructed similarly to those in Cuba, including the presence of perfumed water. The major differences were, predictably, those related to music. After the Kardec readings, the woman who hired Reynaldo put on the CD by Fariñas and said, "can you do something like this," referring to the type of music on the recording. Clearly, the rarity of such ceremonies in the area led to some general uncertainty about how it should be enacted.

[1] To my understanding, this family was originally from Havana but, judging by their English, had been in the U.S. for many years.
[2] I assume ceremonies such as this have happened in NYC, though I've never heard of specific instances. The actual date of the ceremony in Stoughton was Saturday, June 24, 2006.
[3] Reynaldo's thoughts on this were clear from the beginning, showing a disregard for the seriousness of the ceremony. This was likely influenced by the lack of Cajón ceremonies in Matanzas, his hometown; he often poked fun at it as a "Havana thing." He was also not born into a family of Santeros, but converted much later in life. This might explain his concern regarding the "purity" of "his" religion, as converts may be the most zealous adherents to orthodoxy.

The people present, including Reynaldo and the other drummers, knew very few songs used in Cajón. Needless to say, it was an unusual experience for me, originally from Indiana, to have the most extensive song knowledge for this Afro-Cuban religious setting.[4] While leading the songs, I would inevitably reach some that were unknown by anyone else, resulting in an uncomfortable silence when the response should have happened.[5] This problem was exacerbated by the fact that I had woken up with a sore throat and was unable to sing at all by the end of the ceremony. In the face of such difficulties, Reynaldo, and maybe others present, seemed content to take breaks more often than actually play music. I began to have a greater empathy for Cubans who immigrate to the United States and are disappointed by religious activities that are "different" than in Cuba.[6] This interesting experience, however, can be seen to support some of the theses of this study, especially those on transculturation and pragmatic considerations in ritual.[7]

Practical considerations were prominent in this experience, maybe even more influential than the spiritual intent. Even the name of the ceremony changed under the particular local conditions. While Cubans in Cuba might hire drummers for a "Cajón pa' los muertos," the woman who hired Reynaldo apparently asked for a "fiesta pa' los muertos." Instrumental specificity became less important, relying on the musicians to make their own choices in the face of few options. This resulted in the use of what was owned by those hired: tumbadoras, a

[4] This strange yet exciting feeling was compounded by the realization that I would become, along with my Bostonian friends, an object of study in my own thesis.
[5] This shows the importance of the drummers leading the response, as in GCyC, to maintain momentum at times when attendees might not know many songs.
[6] Small but interesting differences included drummers being given a bottle of cognac instead of rum. One might imagine that the difficulties of this ceremony were similar to early attempts at Orisha ceremonies in NYC before the arrival of deeply knowledgeable drummers and actual batá drums.
[7] The thesis regarding Cajón as a site of innovation and preservation is not as relevant here because of the small number of songs known by attendees.

guataca[8], claves, and, at one point, a shekere. Since Reynaldo was somewhat unclear as to what exactly the house wanted us to play, he told us upon our hiring that we would just play "whatever" (i.e., whatever rhythms we wanted). Also, the lack of extensive song knowledge, and the fact that it was "Ogun's day," led Reynaldo to perform Lucumí songs for Ogun (after the obligatory songs to Elegguá[9]). Though this experience was in many ways unlike the way Cajón is enacted in Cuba, it does remind us that pragmatic concerns deeply interact with spiritual ones, sometimes even trumping them.

As the first attempt in the area, this ceremony was in some ways a failure. Despite intentions, few songs were actually sung for los muertos, and no one was mounted. Also conspicuously absent, under the framework of transculturation, was what I have called cohesive acts. With groups such as GCyC, cohesive acts are visible in songs and their own composed drum rhythms. These were not really present in Stoughton due to lack of song knowledge and the lack of intermixed songs and drum rhythms (i.e., Lucumí songs were accompanied with Bembé, Makúta songs were accompanied with Makúta, and so on).[10] As such, the ceremony was more of a miscellany of different types of religious musics, but not an expression of something new and autonomous. This reminds us of the importance of the musicians in ritual enactment, but also that transculturation hinges on individuals appropriating or changing aspects of their culture in response to valuing other cultural modes in some way.[11] Such appropriation by those

[8] I purposefully chose to use spoons to play the guataca, not only because it was more "authentic," but also because they sound good.
[9] Reynaldo's deep knowledge of Lucumí songs resulted in his reliance on those for much of the ceremony. For example, I led the songs for Elegguá as done by GCyC (i.e., in Spanish) but Reynaldo wasn't satisfied, continuing with Lucumí songs after I stopped. This could have been done to fill more time or out of disregard for singing to the Orishas in Spanish. This is another example where practical and religious explanations cannot be separated.
[10] The iconographic composition of the bóveda, however, could still be seen as a cohesive act.
[11] I say "in some way" to be purposefully vague. Clearly, transculturation does not depend on *accurate* or *complete* appropriation of "the other." For example, people in the United States need not speak Spanish to cook Mexican food in their home. Likewise, individuals need not have a complete understanding of the religions of others in order to appropriate from them.

who value multiple systems of knowledge, religious beliefs, or cultural modes, leads to cohesive acts and, as in the case of Cajón, new rituals and traditions.

The future of Cajón pa' los Muertos in Cuba, the U.S., and abroad, obviously relies on people who have an interest in honoring their ancestors in such a way. It currently seems to be an issue of contention between Afro-Cuban "purists" versus those who have a more additive or heterodox approach to ritual, such as the members of Grupo Cuero y Cajón. As a ritual that seems to be more widespread in Havana, this also might be a point of contention in the Cuban diaspora (e.g., the U.S.) where there is sometimes a power struggle between enacting ritual in a way specific to Havana or Matanzas. Though predictions are impossible, if current trends continue, Cajón will become an increasingly important force in the ritual enactment of modern Afro-Cuban religion and music.

**Glossary of Terms**

***Actividad***

Literally, *activity*. It is used by Grupo Cuero y Cajón to refer to a Cajón ceremony.

***Akpwón***

Lead singer who guides song changes during a ceremony. This is a Lucumí word that I have adopted for Cajón.

***Batá***

Double-headed drums played lengthwise across the lap. They are used in Lucumí religion in Cuba and originated among the Yoruba people of what is now called Nigeria.

***Botánica***

A store that sells religious items for Lucumí religion, Espiritismo, and other practices.

***Bóveda***

An altar for the dead used in Cajón, but also among Espiritistas and Santeros. Usually draped with a white cloth and containing glass chalices of water, flowers, perfumed water, cigars, and other offerings. Synonymous in Spanish with *tomb* or *crypt*.

***Bozal***

A Spanish creole spoken by African slaves in the New World. It also referred to slaves who were born in Africa, as opposed to those born in the Americas.

***Cabildo***

Usually translated as a "mutual aid society." These organizations, which were either sponsored by the Catholic Church or independent, were a form of social support for Afro-Cubans that were usually for a specific African ethnic group. They are often cited as one reason for the strong presence of African cultures in Cuba.

***Cajón***

Wooden box drum or a ceremony that makes use of such an instrument. In this thesis, *Cajón* (capital *C*) refers to the ceremony while *cajón* (lower-case *c*) refers to the instrument. See chapters six and seven.

***Camino***

Literally *road*, but usually referring to a specific characteristic of an Orisha. Is also used inter-religiously to reference counterparts such as Ochún (in Lucumí), Mama Chola (in Palo), and Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre (in Catholicism).

***Eggún***

Lucumí word for the spirits of the dead, or *los muertos*, including religious, family, and community ancestors.

***Espiritismo***

Generally, religious beliefs and practices that are influenced, at least to some extent, by the writings of Allan Kardec. They are usually grouped in three ways: *Espiritismo de Mesa* (the most similar to the practices of Kardec); *Espiritismo de Cordón / Orilé* (more popular in the Eastern region of Cuba); and *Espiritismo Cruzao* (a catch-all term for Espiritismo that incorporates greater or lesser degrees of any Afro-Cuban religion).

***Iyesá***

The Spanish spelling of an ethnic group in what is now called Nigeria. They are related culturally and linguistically to the Yoruba and, in Cuba, have had much of their music incorporated into Lucumí religion.

***Lucumí***

The Cuban word referring to the people now known as the Yoruba. It can be used to refer to the religion, language, or people.

***Makúta***

A sacred music and dance with Congolese antecedents, similar to Palo.

***Misa***

Literally *mass*, as in Catholicism, but referring to spiritual ceremonies such as those in Espiritismo.

***Mpungus***

Palo deities/spirits such as Lucero, Sarabanda, Tiembla Tierra, Siete Rayos, Siete Sayas, Mamá Chola, and Centella. They are similar to the Orishas of Lucumí religion.

***Muertos***

Literally, *[the] dead*. Refers to the spirits that mount practitioners in Cajón ceremonies, but can also refer to ancestral spirits in the context of any Afro-Cuban religion. They are most often the spirits of Congolese *bozales* but could include any ancestor whether of direct family ancestry or not.

***Oriente***

The eastern region of Cuba including provinces such as Granma, Holguin, and Santiago.

***Orisha / Oricha***

Divinities of Regla de Ocha and Yoruba religion. Sometimes called Santos (Saints) in Cuba, they rule over natural phenomena and are associated with certain personalities. They are responsible to the supreme God in Lucumí/Yoruba religion known as Olodumare.

***Palero***

A person initiated into the religion generally known as Palo.

***Palo***

Literally, *stick*. An Afro-Cuban religion whose antecedents are found in the Bantu-speaking cultures of the Congo. There are many practices that fall generally under "Palo," including Palo Monte, Palo Mayombe, Brillumba, and Kimbisa. Musically it has come to include forms that used to be separate entities such as Garabato.

***Planos***

Literally, planes. Refers to development or advancement of spirits.

***Puya***

A song meant to insult or offend a spirit in order to force them to arrive and defend their good name.

***Rayado***

Literally, striped or scratched. Initiates of Palo are often referred to as "rayado" due to the discreet scarification process during initation.

***Regla de Ocha***

Religion of Lucumí provenance, often called Santería.

***Religión Lucumí***

Usually synonymous with Regla de Ocha or Santería. Used here as a broader signifier of the Afro-Cuban religion whose main antecedent is found in the Yoruba Orisha worship but can include influences from other ethnic groups or religions (Ewe-Fon, Iyesá, Arará, Espiritismo, Catholicism, etc).

***Santería (see Regla de Ocha)***

Generally refers to Orisha worship in Cuba that includes, to some degree, elements of Catholicism.

***Santero***

Used to refer to a practitioner of Lucumí religion, usually regardless of the degree of Catholicism in their beliefs.

***Yoruba***

General signifier for various ethnicities of Nigeria such as the Oyo, as well as their music and language.

**Appendix One: Examples of Song Cycles**

----- (transition to estribillo section)
=== (transition to different drum rhythm)

*Opening (ex. 1 – August 12, 2005)* [alternate recording on CD 1, Track 1]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Sea el Santisimo | [1x] | [Yambu] |
| – La Luz Redentora (Oye Buen Ser) | [2x] | |
| – Santa Clara | [1x] | |
| – Si a Tu Puerta | [1x] | |
| – La Novena | [1x] | |
| – Ave María | [1x] | |
| – O María Madre Mia | [1x] | |
| – Cristo Bajó | [1x] | |
| – La Luz, La Luz | [1x] | |
| – Oren, Oren | [1x] | |
| – Siento Una Voz | [1x] | |
| – Indio Carire | [1x] | |
| – Mamá Francisca | [1x] | |
| – Yo Vengo de Ina Ina | [1x] | |
| – Congo de Guinea Soy | [1x] | |
| ----- | | |
| – Congo Conguito | [2x] | |
| – Ayumi, Ayumi | [2x] | |
| – Vama a Ver (Si Son Verdad) | [4x] | |

*Opening (ex. 2 – August 1, 2005)*

[same as above until…]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Indio Carire | [2x] | |
| – Mamá Francisca | [1x] | |
| – Yo Vengo de Ina Ina | [1x] | |
| – Congo de Guinea Soy | [1x] | |
| ----- | | |
| – Congo Conguito | [2x] | |
| – Ayumi, Ayumi | [2x] | |
| – Vama a Ver (Si Son Verdad) | [11x+] [mounting] | |

*Elegguá (ex. 1 – August 22, 2000)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Lindo Elegguá | [13x] | [Ñongo/Bembé] |

*Elegguá (ex. 2 – July 25, 2005)* [CD 1, Track 2]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Lindo Elegguá | [4x] | [Ñongo/Bembé] |
| – Elegguá Tiene Garabato | [4x] | |
| – Elegguá Suwayo | [5x] | |

*Elegguá (ex. 3 – August 10, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Lindo Elegguá | [3x] | [Ñongo/Bembé] |
| – Ellegguá Tiene Garabato | [7x] | |

*Saludo Congo (ex. 1 – August 22, 2000)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Salamale-male | [16x] | [Iyesá] |
| – Lumbe, Lumbe | [5x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [4x] | |
| – Lumbe, Lumbe | [3x] | |
| – A Jugar Bembé | [18x] | |

*Saludo Congo (ex. 2 – July 26, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Salamale-male | [6x] | [Iyesá] |
| – Lumbe, Lumbe | [3x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [3x] | |
| – Lumbe, Lumbe | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [3x] | |
| – Lumbe, Lumbe | [1x] | |
| – Buena Noche Ta José | [11x] | |

*Saludo Congo (ex. 3 – August 12, 2005)* [CD 1, Track 3]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Salamale-male | [2x] | [Iyesá] |
| – Lumbe, Lumbe | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [4x] | |
| – Lumbe, Lumbe | [3x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [4x] | |
| – Todavia Congo No Esta Acababa | [7x] | |
| Alli Arriba | [3x] | |
| Siguaralla | [4x] | |
| Alli Arriba | [3x] | |
| Siguaralla | [4x] | |
| Caminando Llegó | [5x+] [mounting] | |

*Saludo Congo (ex. 4 – July 25, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Salamale-male | [7x] | [Iyesá] |
| – Lumbe, Lumbe | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [4x] | |
| – Lumbe, Lumbe | [1x] | |
| === | | |
| – Lumbe la Cueva Nganga [metered] | [14x] | [Ñongo/Bembé] |

*Closing of Actividad (ex. 1 – July 24, 2005)* [CD 1, Track 14]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Caridad Te Llama | [2x] | [Yambu] |
| – Allá a lo Lejos Se Ve | [1x] | |

– Alumbra Aquí [2x]
– Allá en la Mar [1x]
– A Remar [1x]
– Marinero [1x]
– A Remar [1x]
---
1/2 coro [5x]
===
– Con el Agua del Rio [2x] [Ñongo/Bembé]
– Adios Madre Agua [10x]
===
– Dile a Marufina [5x] [Palo]
– Adios Soledad [5x]

*Closing of Actividad (ex. 2 – August 22, 2000)*
– Chichirigüa [23x] [Iyesá]
– Adios Madre Agua [30x]
===
– Dile a Marufina [5x] [Palo]
– Adios Soledad [8x]

*Virgen de Regla – Yemaya – Madre Agua (ex. 1 – July 21, 2005 – private recording*)*
– Bendita Eres [2x] [Yambu]
– Que Viva la Gloria [2x]
– Marinero [2x]
– A Remar [2x]
---
– Santa María Madre de Dios [8x]
– Madre de Agua Esta en los Rios [8x]

[* "Private recording" signifies they were not recorded in an *actividad*]

*Virgen de Regla – Yemaya – Madre Agua (ex. 2 – August 22, 2000)*
– Bendita Eres [3x] [Yambu]
– Que Viva la Gloria [2x]
– Sirena Soy [1x]
– Sirena, Sirena [2x]
---
1/2 coro [9x]
– Allá en la Mar (Yo Tengo Mi Calunga) [15x]
– Cuando Yo Era Chiquitico [20x]
– Madre de Agua Tú Ven Acá [2x]
1/2 coro [5x]
– Madre de Agua Tú Ven Acá [2x]
1/2 coro [2x]

– Santa María Madre de Dios [35x]
– Che Che Calunga [60x]

*Congo Managua (ex. 1 – August 22, 2000)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Congo Managua | [44x] | [Ñongo/Bembé] |
| – Yerba Guinea | [8x] | |
| – Congo Managua | [9x] | |
| – Yerba Guinea | [9x] | |
| – Que Salve María | [6x] | |
| – Congo Managua | [7x] | |

*Congo Managua (ex. 2 – August 25, 2000 – private recording)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Congo Managua | [25x] | [Ñongo/Bembé] |
| === | | |
| – Lumbe la Cueva Nganga [unmetered] | [2x] | [unmetered] |
| – Buena Noche Mi Lemba | [1x] | |
| === | | |
| – Sara Como Sarango | [20x] | [Palo] |

*Congo Managua (ex. 3 – July 21, 2005 – private recording)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Congo Managua | [16x] | [Ñongo/Bembé] |
| – Osain Erumawo | [12x] | |
| – Ndúndu Nganga | [12x] | |
| – Con Manigua E | [8x] | |

*La Gitana (ex. 1 – July 24, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Gitana Linda y Morena | [2x] | [Iyesá] |
| – Gitanta, Gitana | [1x] | |
| – Poropo Poro Poro | [2x] | (clapping 2nd time) |
| – Gitana Linda y Morena | [1x] | (drumming restarts on coro) |
| – Gitana, Gitana | [2x] | |
| – Poropo Poro Poro | [2x] | |

*La Gitana (ex. 2 – July 21, 2005 – private recording)* [CD 1, Track 8]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Gitana Linda y Morena | [2x] | [Iyesá] |
| – Gitana, Gitana | [2x] | |
| – De Allá, Andalucia | [2x] | |
| – Gitana, Gitana | [2x] | |
| – Poropo Poro Poro | [3x] | (clapping 2nd time) |
| – Gitana, Gitana | [2x] | (drumming restarts on coro) |

*(July 21, 2005 – private recording)* [CD 2, Track 12]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Por Qué Me Llama (Pregunto Yo) | [3x] | [Yambu] |
| --- | | |
| – Yo Estaba en Mi Rincón | [6x] | |
| === | | |
| – A los Pies Tambor | [2x] | [Ñongo/Bembé] |
| 1/2 coro | [3x] | |
| – Arrima Rrima Tambo | [3x] | |
| – Mundo Es | [4x] | |
| === | | |
| – Arrima Rrima Tambo | [2x] | [Palo] |
| – Mundo Es | [10x] | |
| – Como Seacara | [8x] | |
| – Awara Wara Sokende | [7x] | |
| – Comarere Guama | [6x] | |
| – Congo Gara | [3x] | |

*(July 23, 2005)* [CD 1, Track 7]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Desenvuelven Noble Ser | [3x] | [Yambu] |
| – Yo Como Misionero | [1x] | |
| – Un Rayo de Luz | [1x] | |
| – Adonde Va Buen Ser | [1x] | |
| – Adelante Con la Fe | [2x] | |
| – Vamos a Vencer Buen Ser | [16x] | |
| – San Hilarion | [24x] | |
| === | | |
| – Aquí Estoy Yo Criollo | [4x] | [Ñongo/Bembé] |
| – Nganga Yo Vine Pa' Jugar | [10x] | |
| – Palo Quiqui | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [4x] | |
| – Palo Quiqui | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [4x] | |
| – Palo Quiqui | [1x] | |
| – A la Hora | [5x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [3x] | |
| === | | |
| – A la Hora | [3x+] [mounting] | [Palo] |

*(July 24, 2005)*

[begins part-way through]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Palo Quiqui | [2x] | [Ñongo/Bembé] |
| 1/2 coro | [6x] | |
| – Palo Quiqui | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [3x] | |

===

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Palo Quiqui | [2x] | [Palo] |
| 1/2 coro | [9x] | |
| – Palo Quiqui | [3x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [8x] | |
| – Palo Quiqui | [2x] | |
| – Llama Llama Congo | [16x] | |

*Babaluaye (ex. 1 – July 24, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Tanto Como Yo Camino | [5x] | [Yambu] |
| – Lázaro Bendito | [1x] | |
| – En Esta Mano | [2x] | |
| --- | | |
| 1/2 coro of Lázaro Bendito | [24x] | |
| – San Lázaro | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [4x] | |
| – San Lázaro | [1x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [18x] | |
| – Empresta la Muleta | [16x] | |

*Babaluaye (ex. 2 – July 25, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Tanto Como Yo Camino | [4x] | [Yambu] |
| – Lázaro Bendito | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [5x] | |
| – Lázaro Bendito | [1x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [4x] | |
| --- | | |
| – En Esta Mano | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro of Lázaro Bendito | [12x] | |
| – San Lázaro | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [6x] | |
| – San Lázaro | [1x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [7x+] | [mounting] |

*Babaluaye (ex 3. – August 25, 2000 – private recording)* [CD 3, Track 47]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Por un Sendero | [2x] | [Yambu] |
| – San Rafael, Iluminalo | [2x] | |
| – Por un Sendero | [2x] | |
| – San Rafael, Iluminalo | [2x] | |
| – Jecua Jecua | [9x] | |
| – Que Viva Babalu | [10x] | |

*Yemaya (July 24, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Corre el Agua | [3x] | [Ñongo/Bembé] |
| 1/2 coro | [5x] | |
| – Corre el Agua | [3x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [9x] | |
| – Corre el Agua | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [10x] | |
| – Cai Cai Cai | [7x] | |
| === | | |
| – Linda Madre Agua | [24x] | [Yambu on 12th time*] |
| – Santa María Madre de Dios | [16x] | |

[* Yambu in this case was faster than usual, closer to Guaguanco tempo]

*(July 24, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Mamá Francisca | [2x] | [Yambu] |
| – Llama a Mamá | [1x] | |
| – Misericordia | [1x] | |
| – Cuando la Madre | [1x] | |
| – Mamá Francisca (Te Estoy Lllamando) | [2x] | |
| --- | | |
| – Mamá Francisca Soy Yo | [13x] | |
| – Sirena, Sirena | [2x] | |
| – Marinero | [±48x] | (participant almost mounted) |
| – Caracol le Viene | [±8x] | |

*Centella (July 24, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Mbombo Gara | [8x+] | [Palo] |
| – Centellita Ndoki | [7x] | |
| – Si Centella Me Lleva Yo Va | [4x] | |
| – Ay Yo Va, Yo Va | [16x] | |
| – Viento Que Topa con Lucero | [9x] | |
| – [unknown] | [5x] | |
| – Me Lleva | [14x] | |
| – Ay Yo Va, Yo Va | [8x] | |

*Makuta (July 24, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Kuenda Congo | [4x] | [Iyesá] |
| 1/2 coro | [2x] | |
| – Kuenda Congo | [7x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [4x] | |
| – Kuenda Congo | [2x] | |
| – Tenge Tenge María | [4x] | |

– Tengere María Tengere [4x]
– Tenge Tenge María [3x]
– Yo Va Pa' la Ile [14x]
– Vamos Andar Mamá Chola [18x]
– Niña Linda [2x]
1/2 coro [4x]
– Chichirigüa [3x]
1/2 coro [5x]
– Chichirigüa [3x]
1/2 coro [4x]
– Chichirigüa [2x]
– Salamale-male [3x]
1/2 coro [6x]
– Salamale-male [3x]

*Makuta – Mamá Chola (August 22, 2000)*
– Vamos Andar Mamá Chola [44x] [Iyesá]
– Niña Linda [5x]
1/2 coro [4x]
– Niña Linda [5x]
1/2 coro [7x]
– Niña Linda [2x]
1/2 coro [4x]
– Chola Guengue [43x]

*Obatalá / Mercedes / Santisimo (ex. 1 – July 25, 2005)* [Disc 2, Track 22]
– Una Paloma Blanca [2x] [Yambu]
– Paloma Blanca (La Mensajera) [2x]
– En el Rio de Jordán [2x]
– Bendicilo San Salvador [2x]
---
– Este es la Misión [8x]
– Sea Como Sea [28x+] [mounting]

*Obatalá / Mercedes / Santisimo (ex. 2 – July 26, 2005)*
– Una Imagen Bendita de Dios [2x] [Yambu]
– Oraré [2x]
– Paloma Blanca (La Mensajera) [2x]
– En el Rio de Jordán [2x]
– Bendicilo San Salvador [3x]
---
– Este es la Misión [9x+] [mounting]

*Obatalá / Mercedes / Santisimo (ex. 3 – July 21, 2005 – private recording)* [CD 2, Track 23]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Flores Azucena Traigo Yo | [2x] | [Yambu] |
| – Virgen Protectora | [1x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [2x] | |
| – Obatalá Tú Eres La Luz | [2x] | |
| --- | | |
| – Tata Ganguengue | [7x] | |
| – La Bendición Tata | [20x+] | |

*(July 25, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Nga Nga Nga Baluarde | [24x] | [Iyesá] |
| – Tenge Tenge María | [4x] | |
| – Tengere María Tengere | [4x] | |
| – Tenge Tenge María | [6x] | |
| – Tengere María Tengere | [12x] | |
| – Tenge Tenge María | [1x] | |
| – Vamos a Ver (La Ola María) | [16x] | |
| – Madre Agua Ponte en Vela | [16x] | |
| – Linda Madre Agua | [25x+] [mounting] | |

*(August 1, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Nga Nga Nga Baluarde | [19x+] | [Iyesá] |
| – Calunga | [54x] | |

*(July 25, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Calunga Quiere Crecer | [4x] | [Palo] |
| 1/2 coro | [3x] | |
| – Calunga Quiere Crecer | [6x] | |
| – Llama Llama Congo | [35x] | |
| – Francisco (Como Me Llamo Yo) | [16x] | |
| – Jala y Jala | [16x] | |

*(August 1, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Soy Ngagulero | [20x+] | [Ñongo/Bembé] |
| – Palo Mayimbe | [10x] | |

*Mamá Francisca (July 25, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Mamá Francisca (Te Estoy Llamando) | [2x] | [Yambu] |
| – Llama a Mamá | [2x] | |
| – Misericordia | [1x] | |
| – Cuando la Madre | [2x] | |
| – Oye la Misa | [2x] | |
| – Aunque Sea un Momentico | [15x] | |

– Yo Vine Pa' Ver [2x]
– Que Vengan los Congos [4x]
– Yo Vine Pa' Ver [2x]
1/2 coro [6x]
– Yo Vine Pa' Ver [1x]
– Que Vengan los Congos [10x]
– Por Allí Pasó [2x+] [mounting]

*Mamá Francisca (July 27, 2005)*
[Tape begins partway through]
– Cuando la Madre [2x] [Yambu]
– Mamá Francisca (Te Estoy Llamando) [2x]
– De la Tierra Lucumí [1x]
– Mamá Francisca Soy Yo [13x+] [mounting]

*Mamá Francisca – Mamá Chola (August 10, 2005)*
– Misericordia [1x] [Yambu]
– Cuando la Madre [1x]
– Mamá Francisca (Te Estoy Llamando) [1x]
– Yo Vengo de Ina Ina [2x]
– Este es la Misión [3x]
===
– Mamá Francisca Soy Yo [8x] [Ñongo/Bembé 6th time]
– Pa' Qué Tú Me Llamas [18x]
– A los Pies Tambor [3x]
1/2 coro [4x]
– A los Pies Tambor [2x]
1/2 coro [5x]
– Camina Chola (Camina Linda) [2x]
===
– Camina Chola Tentete [8x] [Palo 4th time]
– Camina Chola (Camina Linda) [2x]
– Camina Chola Tentete [12x]

*Buen Amigo Llegó (July 26, 2005)*
– Llegó Llegó Buen Amigo [20x] [Palo]
– Llegué Llegué [34x]
– Nganga Aquí Estoy [14x]
– Yo Me Llamo Ta José [50x+] [mounting]

*Sarabanda (August 1, 2005)*
[Tape partway through]
– Mbombo Gara [25x+] [Palo]
– Palo Doquindoya [21x]

– Awarawara Sokende [16x]
1/2 coro [24x]
– Comarere Guama [8x]
1/2 coro of Awarawara Sokende [9x]

*(August 10, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Yo Soy Ese Ser | [2x] | [Yambu] |
| 1/2 coro | [1x] | |
| – San Miguel Bendito | [2x] | |
| – Vamos a Vencer Buen Ser | [14x] | |
| === | | |
| – San Hilarion | [16x] | [Ñongo/Bembé 12th time] |
| – Palo Quiqui | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [4x] | |
| – Palo Quiqui | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [4x] | |
| – Palo Quiqui | [1x] | |
| – A la Hora | [14x] | |
| === | | |
| – Jala Congo | [20x] | [Palo 9th time] |

*Indio – Congo (August 11, 2005)* [CD 1, Track 9]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Indio, Indio, Indio | [2x] | [Yambu] |
| – Indio Carire | [2x] | |
| – Que Vengan los Indios | [2x] | |
| – Indio Carire | [2x] | |
| – Tengo un Indio | [2x] | |
| – A-e, A-e, A-e, Los Indios | [2x] | |
| --- | | |
| – Siacara | [2x] | |
| – Corre Corre Mayoral | [14x] | |
| – Nganga Aquí Estoy | [22x] | |
| === | | |
| – A los Pies Tambor | [4x] | [Ñongo/Bembé 3rd time] |
| 1/2 coro | [5x] | |
| – A los Pies Tambor | [2x] | |
| – Pa' Qué Tú Me Llamas | [17x] | |
| – Camina Chola (Camina Linda) | [2x] | |
| === | | |
| – Camina Chola Tentete | [34x] | [Palo 19th time] |
| – Alli Va Alli Va | [20x] | |
| – Pa' Qué Tú Me Llamas | [8x] [mounting] | |

*(August 12, 2005)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Yo Como Misionero | [2x] | [Yambu] |
| – Un Rayo de Luz | [2x] | |
| – Adonde Va Buen Ser | [2x] | |
| – Adelante Con la Fe | [3x] | |
| --- | | |
| – Vamos a Vencer Buen Ser | [22x] | |
| – Vence Batalla (Mi Congo) | [12x] [mounting] | |

*Played for Ceiba (August 24, 2005)* [CD 2, Track 1]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Lumbe la Cueva Nganga | [2x] | [unmetered] |
| – Buena Noche Mi Lemba | [2x] | |
| === | | |
| – Buena Noche Ngo | [8x] | [Palo] |
| – E Saludando | [14x] | |
| – Ceiba, Dame Sombra | [12x] | |

*(August 18, 2002)* [CD 3, Track 6–12]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Veni Buen Ser | [11x+] | [Yambu] |
| --- | | |
| – Todos los Congos Van a Bailar | [16x] | |
| === | | |
| – Yo Vine Pa' Ver | [7x] | [Ñongo/Bembé 4th time] |
| 1/2 coro | [4x] | |
| – Yo Vine Pa' Ver | [2x] | |
| – Vamos a Jugar, Isengere | [6x] | |
| – E Mundo Es | [8x] | |
| === | | |
| – Vamos a Jugar, Isengere | [4x] | [Palo 2nd time] |
| – E Mundo Es | [12x] | |
| – Amuama Isengere | [7x] | |
| – Isengere (Toco Yumba) | [13x] | |
| – Isengere | [5x] | |
| – Va Como Va | [29x] | |
| – Aguantalo Bien | [18x] | |

*(August 18, 2002)* [CD 3, Tracks 16–20]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Llamalo Si No Conocen | [3x] | [Ñongo/Bembé] |
| 1/2 coro | [3x] | |
| – Llamalo Si No Conocen | [3x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [5x] | |
| – Llamalo Si No Conocen | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [4x] | |

– Llamalo Si No Conocen [1x]
– Pa' Qué Llama Yo [2x]
1/2 coro [5x]
– Pa' Qué Llama Yo [1x]
1/2 coro [4x]
– Pa' Qué Llama Yo [2x]
1/2 coro [11x]
– Y Era Marufina [2x]
1/2 coro [4x]
– Y Era Marufina [1x]
1/2 coro [6x]
– Y Era Marufina [2x]
1/2 coro [7x]
– Abre Puerta a Munda Nso [2x]
===
1/2 coro [9x] [Palo 9th time]
– Abre Puerta a Munda Nso [2x]
1/2 coro [18x]
– Abre Puerta a Munda Nso [3x]
1/2 [5x]
– Malembe Ya Ya [±38x]
– A la Minge [±68x]

*(August 18, 2002)* [CD 3, Tracks 1–5]
– Desenvuelven Noble Ser [3x] [Yambu]
– Que Instante [1x]
– Oraré [3x]
– Paloma Blanca (La Mensajera) [2x]
– Hay Viene Un Ser [2x]
– Raya la Luz [2x]
– Luz Divina [2x] [mounting]
[muerto talking]
– Brilla la Luz
[muerto talking]
– Llegó Buen Amigo, Llegó [±64x] [Palo]
[muerto talking]
– Ndúndu Dale Vuelta [±42x] [Ñongo/Bembé]
[muerto talking]
– Debajo del Laurel [±37x] [Palo]
– Debajo del Laurel [variation] [±33x]
– Tango Yalemba [20x+]

*"A las Madres" (August 22, 2000)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Bendita y Pura | [2x] | [Yambu] |
| – Ay Madre | [3x] | |
| – Bendita y Pura | [1x] | |

*(August 22, 2000)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Baracuté No Sea Tan Boro | [43x] | [Iyesá] |
| – Cuantas Banderas Tengo Yo | [20x] | |

*Tumba Francesa (August 22, 2000)* [CD 2, Track 32–34]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – No Hay Novedad | [8x] | [Iyesá] |
| – Guerillero del Monte | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [5x] | |
| – Guerillero del Monte | [2x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [8x] | |
| – Guerillero del Monte | [1x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [12x] | |
| – Congo Manuel | [40x+] | |

*(August 20, 2000)* [CD 3, Tracks 13–15]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| – Por la Señal | [26x] | [Palo] |
| – Sarabanda Andile | [10x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [4x] | |
| – Sarabanda Andile | [5x] | |
| 1/2 coro | [11x] | |
| – Mbombo Gara | [28x] | |
| – Yo Jala Garabato (Mi Congo) | [5x] | |
| – Yo Jala Garabato (Garunlengo) | [6x] | |
| – Santa María Madre de Dios | [22x] | |
| – Ngo Ngo Ngo | [15x] | |

## Appendix Two: Song Track Numbers

- A-e, A-e, A-e Los Indios [CD 1, Track 9]
- A Jugar Bembé [CD 1, Track 4]
- A la Hora [CD 1, Track 7]
- A la Minge [CD 3, Track 20]
- A los Pies Tambor [CD 2, Track 12] [CD 1, Track 9]
- A Remar [CD 1, Track 14]
- Abre Puerta [a] Munda Nso [CD 3, Track 18]
- Adelante Con la Fe [CD 1, Track 7]
- Adios Madre Agua [CD 1, Track 14]
- Adios Soledad [CD 1, Track 14]
- Adonde Va Buen Ser [CD1, Track 7]
- Aguantalo Bien [CD 3, Track 12]
- Alala-e Shola [no recording]
- Allá a lo Lejos Se Ve [CD 1, Track 14]
- Allá en la Mar [CD 1, Track 14]
- Allá en la Mar (Yo Tengo Mi Calunga) [CD 2, Track 24]
- Alli Va Alli Va [CD 1, Track 9]
- Alumbra Aquí [CD 1, Track 14]
- Amuama Isengere [CD 3, Track 10]
- Aquí Estoy Yo Criollo [CD 1, Track 7]
- Arriba en la Loma [no recording]
- Arrima Rrima Tambo [CD 2, Track 15] [CD 2, Track 12]
- Aunque Sea Un Momentico [CD 2, Track 13]
- Ave María [CD 1, Track 1]
- Awarawara Sokende [CD 3, Track 25] [CD 2, Track 12]
- Ay Madre [CD 2, Track 2]
- Ay Yo Va, Yo Va [CD 2, Track 3]
- Ayumi, Ayumi [CD 1, Track 1]

- Baracuté No Sea Tan Boro [CD 3, Track 36]
- Bendicilo San Salvador [CD 2, Track 22]
- Bendita Eres [CD 2, Track 24]
- Bendita y Pura [CD 2, Track 2]
- Brilla la Luz [CD 3, Track 2]
- Buena Noche Mi Lemba [CD 2, Track 1]
- Buena Noche Ngo [CD 2, Track 1]
- Buena Noche Ta José [CD 1, Track 5]

- Cai Cai Cai [CD 2, Track 29]
- Calunga [CD 3, Track 37]
- Calunga Quiere Crecer [CD 3, Track 30]
- Camina Chola (Camina Linda) [CD 1, Track 9]
- Camina Chola Tentete [CD 1, Track 9]
- Caracol Le Viene [CD 2, Track 17]
- Caridad Te Llama [CD 1, Track 14]
- Ceiba, Dame Sombra [CD 2, Track 1]
- Centellita Ndoki [CD 3, Track 3]
- Che Che Calunga [CD 2, Track 27]
- Chichirigüa [CD 3, Track 38]

- Chichirivaco [CD 3, Track 39]
- Chola Guengue [CD 2, Track 31]
- Comarere Guama [CD 3, Track 26] [CD 2, Track 12]
- Como Seacara [CD 2, Track 12]
- Con el Agua del Rio [CD 1, Track 14]
- Con Manigua E [CD 2, Track 9]
- Congo Conguito [CD 1, Track 1]
- Congo de Guinea Soy [CD 1, Track 1]
- Congo Managua [CD 2, Track 10]
- Congo Manuel [CD 2, Track 34]
- Corre Corre Mayoral [CD 1, Track 9]
- Corre el Agua [CD 2, Track 29]
- Cristo Bajó [CD 1, Track 1]
- Cuando la Madre [CD 2, Track 18]
- Cuando Yo Era Chiquitico [CD 2, Track 25]
- Cuantas Banderas Tengo Yo [CD 3, Track 36]
- Cuidado Con Yo [CD 3, Track 40]

- De Allá, Andalucia [CD 1, Track 8]
- De la Tierra Lucumí [CD 2, Track 16]
- Debajo del Laurel [CD 3, Track 5]
- Desenvuelven Noble Ser [CD 1, Track 7] [CD 3, Track 1]
- Dile a Marufina [CD 1, Track 14]
- Dondequiera Que Yo Llego [CD 3, Track 40]
- Donde Va Jose Tan Triste [no recording]

- Elegguá Suwayo [CD 1, Track 2]
- Elegguá Tiene Garabato [CD 1, Track 2]
- Empresta la Muleta [CD 1, Track 13]
- En el Rio de Jordán [CD 2, Track 22]
- En Esta Mano [CD 1, Track 11]
- E Saludando [CD 2, Track 1]
- Este es la Misión [CD 2, Track 22]

- Flores Azucena Traigo Yo [CD 2, Track 23]
- Francisca, en Ganga Tú Tiene Nombre [no recording]
- Francisco (Como Me Llamo Yo) [CD 3, Track 32]
- Francisco la Luma [no recording]

- Gitana, Gitana [CD 1, Track 8]
- Gitana Linda y Morena [CD 1, Track 8]
- Guerillero del Monte [CD 2, Track 33]

- Hay Viene Un Ser [CD 3, Track 1]

- Indio Carire [CD 1, Track 1] [CD 1, Track 9]
- Indio, Indio, Indio [CD 1, Track 9]
- Isengere [CD 3, Track 11]
- Isengere (Toco Yumba) [CD 3, Track 10]

- Jala Congo [CD 3, Track 41]

- Jala y Jala [CD 3, Track 32]
- Jecua Jecua [CD 3, Track 47]

- Kuenda Congo [CD 3, Track 28]

- La Bendición Tata [CD 2, Track 23]
- La Luz, La Luz [CD 1, Track 1]
- La Luz Redentora (Oye Buen Ser) [CD 1, Track 1]
- La Novena [CD 1, Track 1]
- Lázaro Bendito [CD 1, Track 10]
- Licencia Ango Moile [CD 3, Track 42]
- Linda Madre Agua [CD 3, Track 45]
- Lindo Elegguá [CD 1, Track 2]
- Llama a Mamá [CD 2, Track 13]
- Llama Llama Congo [CD 3, Track 31]
- Llamalo Si No Conocen [CD 3, Track 16]
- Llegó Buen Amigo, Llegó [CD 3, Track 3]
- Llegó Llegó Buen Amigo [CD 3, Track 33]
- Llegué Llegué [CD 3, Track 33]
- Lumbe la Cueva Nganga [unmetered] [CD 2, Track 1]
- Lumbe la Cueva Nganga [metered] [CD 1, Track 6]
- Lumbe, Lumbe [CD 1, Track 3]
- Luz Divina [CD 3, Track 1]

- Madre Agua Ponte en Vela [CD 3, Track 45]
- Madre de Agua Esta en los Rios [CD 2, Track 28]
- Madre de Agua Tú Ven Acá [CD 2, Track 26]
- Malembe Ya Ya [CD 3, Track 19]
- Mamá Francisca (Te Estoy Llamando) [CD 2, Track 13]
- Mamá Francisca Soy Yo [CD 2, Track 16]
- Marinero, Marinero [CD 1, Track 14]
- Marufina Con Dos Jimaguas [no recording]
- Marufina Por Qué [no recording]
- Mbombo Gara [CD 2, Track 12] [CD 3, Track 23 & 24]
- Misericordia [CD 2, Track 18]
- Mundo Es [CD 2, Track 12] [CD 3, Track 9]

- Ndúndu Dale Vuelta [CD 3, Track 4]
- Ndúndu Nganga [CD 2, Track 8]
- Nganga Aquí Estoy [CD 3, Track 34]
- Nganga Yo Vine Pa' Jugar [CD 1, Track 7]
- Nga Nga Nga Baluarde [CD 3, Track 43]
- Ngo Ngo Ngo [CD 3, Track 15]
- Niña Linda [CD 2, Track 30]
- No Hay Novedad [CD 2, Track 32]

- O María Madre Mia [CD 1, Track 1]
- Obatalá Tú Eres la Luz [CD 2, Track 23]
- Oraré [CD 3, Track 1]
- Oren, Oren [CD 1, Track 1]
- Osain Erumawo [CD 2, Track 7]

- Oye la Misa [CD 2, Track 18]

- Palo Doquindoya [CD 3, Track 24]
- Palo Mayimbe [CD 3, Track 44]
- Palo Quiqui [CD 1, Track 7] [CD 3, Track 22]
- Paloma Blanca (La Mensajera) [CD 2, Track 22] [CD 3, Track 1]
- Pa' Qué Llama Yo [CD 3, Track 16]
- Pa' Qué Tú Me Llamas [CD 1, Track 9] [CD 2, Track 14]
- Por Allí Pasó [CD 2, Track 19]
- Por la Señal [CD 3, Track 13]
- Por Qué Me Llama (Pregunto Yo) [CD 2, Track 12]
- Por un Sendero [CD 3, Track 47]
- Poropo Poro Poro [CD 1, Track 8]

- Que Instante [CD 3, Track 1]
- Que Salve María [CD 2, Track 10]
- Que Vengan Los Congos [CD 2, Track 20]
- Que Vengan Los Indios [CD 1, Track 9]
- Que Viva Babalu [CD 3, Track 47]
- Que Viva la Gloria [CD 2, Track 24]

- Radia la Luz [CD 3, Track 1]

- Salamale-male [CD 1, Track 3]
- San Hilarion [CD 1, Track 7]
- San Lázaro [CD 1, Track 10]
- San Miguel Bendito [CD 2, Track 11]
- San Miguel Venció [CD 2, Track 11]
- San Rafael, Iluminalo [CD 3, Track 47]
- Santa Clara [CD 1, Track 1]
- Santa María Madre de Dios [CD 2, Track 26]
- Sara Como Sarango [CD 3, Track 27]
- Sarabanda Andile [CD 3, Track 13]
- Sea Como Sea [CD 2, Track 22]
- Sea el Santisimo [CD 1, Track 1]
- Si a Tu Puerta [CD 1, Track 1]
- Si Centella Me Lleva Yo Va [CD 2, Track 4]
- Si Male [CD 3, Track 29]
- Siacara [CD 1, Track 9]
- Siento Una Voz [CD 1, Track 1]
- Siete Con Siete [CD 3, Track 27]
- Siete Rayos Malongo [CD 3, Track 27]
- Sirena Soy [CD 2, Track 24]
- Sirena, Sirena [CD 2, Track 24]
- Si Tú Vas al Cobre [no recording]
- Soy Ngangulero [CD 3, Track 44]

- Tango Yalemba [CD 5, Track 5]
- Tanto Como Yo Camino [CD 1, Track 10]
- Tata Ganguengue [CD 2, Track 23]
- Tenge Tenge María [CD 3, Track 28]

- Tengere María Tengere [CD 3, Track 28]
- Tengo un Indio [CD 1, Track 9]
- Todavía Congo No Esta Acababa [CD 1, Track 3]
- Todo los Congos Van a Bailar [CD 3, Track 6]

- Un Rayo de Luz [CD 1, Track 7]
- Una Imagen Bendita de Dios [CD 2, Track 21]
- Una Paloma Blanca [CD 2, Track 22]

- Va Como Va [CD 3, Track 11]
- Vama a Ver (Si Son Verdad) [CD 1, Track 1]
- Vamos a Jugar, Isengere [CD 3, Track 9]
- Vamos a Vencer Buen Ser [CD 1, Track 7]
- Vamos a Ver (La Ola María) [CD 3, Track 45]
- Vamos Andar Mamá Chola [CD 2, Track 30]
- Vence Batalla (Mi Congo) [CD 3, Track 46]
- Veni Buen Ser [CD 3, Track 6]
- Viento Que Topa Con Lucero [CD 2, Track 6]
- Virgen Protectora [CD 2, Track 23]
- Vititi Congo [CD 3, Track 21]

- Y Era Marufina [CD 3, Track 17]
- Yayita (Buey Suerto) [no recording]
- Yerba Guinea [CD 2, Track 10]
- Yo Como Misionero [CD 1, Track 7]
- Yo Estaba en Mi Rincón [CD 2, Track 12]
- Yo Jala Garabato (Garunlengo) [CD 3, Track 14]
- Yo Jala Garabato (Mi Congo) [CD 3, Track 14]
- Yo Me Llamo Ta José [CD 3, Track 35]
- Yo Soy Ese Ser [CD 2, Track 11]
- Yo Va Pa' la Ile [CD 3, Track 28]
- Yo Vengo de Ina Ina [CD 1, Track 1]
- Yo Vine Pa' Ver [CD 3, Track 7]

## Appendix Three: Selected Songs

The songs here are arranged alphabetically by assigned titles. They are not in any ceremonial order. For that, refer to the Song Cycles appendix.

All songs titles followed by [L.S.O.] are those composed by Luciano Silverio Ochandarena.

Much of the orthography here is haphazard. It is the result of a combination of my own spellings, those used by Cabrera and Ortiz, and those informed by Luciano and Lekiam. I originally asked Luciano to write the songs for me but after two verses of illegible text, Lekiam took over. His penmanship, though beautiful, was quite slow so, to his relief, I decided to take over transcribing the words after the first class. I was torn over whether or not to put things back in proper Castilian (such as *bendición* instead of *vendicion*). Likewise, Bantu words were problematic such as *nganga* vs. *ganga*, *mundanso* vs. *munda nso*, etc. I have bracketed some orthographic notes, but maintain a healthy degree of ambivalence about "correcting" pronunciations influenced by Bozal (*vama ver* or *vamos a ver*, and so on). Luciano would often chide me for trying to put Afro-Cuban pronunciations – he called it "*Congo*" – back into Castilian. I feel that my ambivalence and the presence of both forms of Spanish represent a more emic approach, where two forms of pronunciation and literation exist.

By putting these songs to paper I may inadvertently be codifying them. I hope no one takes these representations as an absolute truth or "correct way." These songs are not static and therefore their representation here is merely one version within a longer series of intentional and accidental modifications by those who sing them.

On a technical note, *A* stands for *akpwón* and *C* stands for *coro*. Often, the akpwón changes the song by singing the coro and then his/her own lead part. For songs where this is common, I've written the coro part first.

---

***A-e, A-e, A-e Los Indios***

A/C:
A-e, a-e, a-e los indios
A-e, a-e, a-e los congos

***A Jugar Bembé***

C:
A jugar, a jugar bembé
A:
Hoy es dia de jugar José

***A la Hora***

C:
A la hora que lo llama mi congo trabaja
A:
Mi congo trabaja [2x]

1/2 coro
A: A la hora que lo llamo
C: Mi congo trabaja

***A la Minge***

C:
A la minge
A:
E mi nganga [or: Siete Rayos mi nganga]

[Coro sometimes sounds more like *Nganga andile*. Minge refers to the forest, i.e., *el monte*.]

***A los Pies Tambor***

A/C:
A los pies tambor yo vine pa' jugar [2x]

[or: A oir tambor…]

***A Remar***

A/C:
A remar, a remar, a remar [3x]
Que la Virgen de Regla nos va acompañar

1/2 coro
A: La Virgen de Regla
C: Nos va acompañar

[*Remar* means *to row*, and thus refers to the relations of the Cuban Marías to the ocean. Interestingly, though, *remar* can also be translated as *to toil* or *to struggle*.]

***Abre Puerta a Munda Nso***

A/C:
Abre puerta a munda nso, bilongo yaya [2x]

1/2 coro:
A: Abre puerta mundanso
C: Bilongo yaya

[Also sung as:
A/C:
Dale vuelta Mundanso, Nfumbe va pasar
Dale vuelta Mundanso, Nfumbe va pasar

1/2 coro:
A: Dale vuelta Mundanso
C: Nfumbe va pasar]

[Depending on if one understands this to be "abre puerta *a* munda nso" or "abre puerta munda nso," it could have slightly different meanings. Cabrera

documented the following translations of the individual words: Munda = candle; nso = house/ tomb/cemetary (2000). Therefore, Munda Nso could possibly be a reference to the bóveda, the house itself, or even the people present at an actividad.]

***Adelante con la Fe***

A/C:
Adelante con la fe, la fe de Dios
Adelante con la fe, que lo manda Salvador

***Adios Madre Agua***

C:
Adios Madre Agua
A:
Sirena me esta llamando

***Adios Soledad***

C:
Adio Soleda [adios soledad]
A:
Memoria por allá

***Adonde Va Buen Ser***

A/C:
Adonde va[s] buen ser, adonde va[s]
Con esa cruz
A los montes de calvario
Entregarse a Jesús

***Aguantalo Bien***

C:
Aguantalo bien
A:
???

[Aguantar = to endure, sustain, tolerate, hold back, control, restrain. This song is often sung when a muerto begins to mount someone.]

***Alala-e Shola***

A/C:
A la la e Shola [2x]
Shola con tantas manillas
Y yo no tengo dinero

***Allá a lo Lejos Se Ve (or: Si a lo Lejos Se Ve)***

A/C:
Allá a lo lejos se ve, una gran claridad [2x]
Es el manto divino, de mamá Caridad [2x]

***Allá en La Mar***

A/C:
Allá en la mar
Hay una barca llena de flores
Llena de luz
De la divina Caridad

***Allá en la Mar (Yo Tengo Mi Calunga)***

C:
Allá en la mar, yo tengo mi calunga
A:
Yo tengo mi calunga [2x]

***Alli Va Alli Va***

C:
Alli va alli va
A:
Chola Guengue

***Alumbra Aquí***

A/C:
Alumbra aquí, alumbra allá
Que si tú no me alumbras
Quién me alumbrará

[Sometimes written as *quién me va a alumbrar*.]

***Amuama Isengere***

A/C:
Amuama Isengere, Amuama [2x]

[Might also be sung as *Vama jugar Isengere, Vama jugar*.]

***Aquí Estoy Yo Criollo***

A/C:
Aquí estoy yo, criollo, aquí estoy yo [2x]

***Arriba en la Loma***

A/C:
Arriba en la loma yo tengo Lucerito
Yo tengo Sarabanda, yo tengo Madre Agua

***Arrima Rrima Tambo***

A/C:
Arrima rrima tambo, rrima rrima
Arrima rrima tambo miyonbero

[Arrimar = to gather around, to come close to. These are Lekiam's spellings.]

***Aunque Sea Un Momentico***

C:
Aunque sea un momentico
Tú tienes que venir
A:
Tú tienes que venir, tú tienes que venir

***Ave Maria***

A:
Del cielo a bajado la Madre de Dios
Cantemos el ave a su protección
C:
Ave, ave, ave Maria [2x]

[Above spelled by Lekiam. Documented in *Cuba Canta Su Fe* as "Del Cielo ha bajado la Madre de Dios. Cantemos el ave a su concepción" (212). Found in an Espiritista booklet as "Del cielo ha bajado la Madre de Dios, Cantemos al ave y a su salvador."]

***Awarawara Sokende***

C:
Awarawara sokende Awarawara ndoya
A:
Awarawara ndoya [2x]
[or: Awarawara sokende Awarawara ndoya]

1/2 coro
transition A: E Awarawara sokende, awarawara ndoya
C: Awarawara sokende
A: Awarawara sokende
[or: Sokende sokende]

***Ay Madre***

A/C:
Ay Madre [3x]
Oye mi voz

***Ay Yo Va, Yo Va***

C:
Ay yo va, yo va
A:
Centella me lleva [or: Nganga me lleva]

***Ayumi, Ayumi***

A/C:
Ayumi, ayumi, hay un Congo Lucumí

***Baracuté No Sea Tan Boro***

C:
Baracuté no sea tan boro
A:
Ya todos los congos plantan bandera

***Bendicilo San Salvador***

A/C:
Bendicilo San Salvador
San Salvador bendicilo
Bendicilo en el nombre de Dios

***Bendita Eres*** [L.S.O.]

A/C:
Bendita eres Virgen de Regla
Bendita eres mi Yemaya
Bendita eres virgen sagrada
Virgen de Regla reina del mar
[*Bendita* can be substituted with *Gloriosa*, and *reina del mar* can be substituted with *mi Yemaya*.]

***Bendita y Pura*** [L.S.O.]

A/C:
Bendita y pura te hizo ser el Señor
Entre los seres, madre querida
Y ante tu actal regamos flores
Madre querida, amen Jesús

***Brilla la Luz***

A/C:
Brilla la luz, brilla la luz
En el campo espiritual

***Buena Noche Mi Lemba***

A/C:
Buena noche mi Lemba [2x] [or: Legba]
Mundo nuevo carire [2x]

***Buena Noche Ngo***

C:
Buena ngo, saludando ngo
A:
Saludando ngo, saludando ngo

***Buena Noche Ta José***

A/C:
Buena noche Ta José, saludando Ta José

***Cai Cai Cai***

A/C:
Cai cai cai
Yemaya ologum [Olokun]
Cai cai cai
Asesu ologum [usually sung as *olodo* by coro, not *ologum*.]

***Calunga***

C:
Calunga
A:
Fue a la monte (ya) [or: "Ella que crecer"]

***Calunga Quiere Crecer***

A/C:
Calunga quiere crecer brillumba
Calunga quiere crecer y no hay lugar
[Usually just the first line is sung twice, though the akpwón might say the second line.]

1/2 coro:
A: Calunga quiere crecer
C: Brillumba

***Camina Chola (Camina Linda)***

A/C:
Camina Chola camina linda
Camina Chola camina vamos

***Camina Chola Tentete***

C:
Camina Chola tentete
A:
Chola linda
[This could possibly be just the 1/2 coro of *Camina Chola (Camina Linda).*]

***Caracol Le Viene***

A/C:
Caracol le viene
Caracol le va
Caracol le viene
Del fondo de la mar

***Caridad Te Llama***

A/C:
Caridad te llama
Caridad te emploro
Si una Caridad yo pido a gran poder de Dios
Una Caridad para esa hermana

[or:
A/C:
Caridad te llaman ay dios
Caridad te emploro
[Si] una Caridad yo le pido
Un gran poder de Dios
Una Caridad para esa hermana]

***Ceiba, Dame Sombra***

C:
Ceiba, dame sombra
A:
Dame sombra, dame sombra

***Centellita Ndoki***

A/C:
Centellita ndoki yo veni a ver
Vira mundo pa' tormenta yo quiero ver

***Che Che Calunga***

C:
Che che calunga
A:
E calunga

***Chichirigüa***

A/C:
Chichirigüa güa güa
Chichirigüa mi Coballende

***Chichirivaco***

A:
Si malenbe malenbe
C:
Aaaa, si malenbe malenbe chichirivaco

1/2 coro
A: Ya mi gallo esta cantando
C: chichirivaco

[Luciano referred to this as a puya, translating *malenbe* as "bad" or "not working." This is also one of Cabrera's translations, though *malembe* has also been translated as *buenos días* (Díaz Fabelo:98).]

***Chola Guengue***

C:
Chola guengue, guengue Chola
A:
E Chola Linda
[or Vamos vamos; E miyunbera; etc.]

***Comarere Guama***

A/C:
Comarere guama, comarere-o

***Como Seacara***

A (transition):
Cani te te te cani güi sa wo [2x]
Aririkutu manakutu
Como jara quindembu
C:
Como seacara [sea cara?]
A:
Como jara quindembu

***Con el Agua del Rio***

A/C:
Con el agua del rio, con el agua del mar
Con el agua del rio, yo me llevo todo malo

***Con Manigua E***

C:
Con Manigua-e
A:
Manigua son manigua
[Could be 1/2 coro of *Ndúndu Nganga.*]

***Congo Conguito***

A/C:
Congo, conguito, congo de verdad
Tu baja la tierra hacer caridad [claridad]

***Congo de Guinea Soy***

A/C:
(Si) congo de Guinea soy, soy yo [2x]
La buena noche criollo [2x]
Yo deja mis huesos allá
Yo vengo hacer claridad [caridad]

***Congo Managua***

A:
Congo managua, congo managua
[or: E brillunbero congo managua]
[or: Arriba en ganga congo managua]
[or: E arriba mundo congo mangua]
C:
E e, congo managua

***Congo Manuel***

C:
El Congo, Congo Manuel
A:
El Congo, mi Congo
[The recording for this song (CD 2, Track 34) contains the coro as well as an interjected phrase by Luciano. As a Tumba Francesa song, the interjection is in *patois*, or French Creole, but he was at a loss about the meaning of the phrase.]

***Corre Corre Mayoral*** [L.S.O.]

C:
Corre corre mayoral
Congo ya esta llegar
A:
Congo ya esta llegar [2x]

***Corre el Agua (A)***

A/C:
Corre el agua [2x]
Corre el agua mi Yemaya
Corre el agua [2x]
Con corriente espiritual

***Corre el Agua (B)***

A/C:
Corre el agua [2x]
Corre el agua mi Yemaya
Corre el agua

1/2 coro
A: Corre el agua mi Yemaya
[or: Corre el agua espiritual]
C: Corre el agua

***Cristo Bajó***

A/C:
Cristo bajó del alto cielo
decenvolvió entre las nubes
y ahora viene regando flores
hay Dios mio, mi Sericordia

***Cuando la Madre***

A/C:
Cuando la madre llama a sus hijos
Cuando los hijos llaman a la madre
Madre te estoy llamando, ay Dios
Te estoy llamando en [el] nombre de Dios
[Titled in an Espiritista booklet as *Canción a las madres fallecidas* and written as "Cuando una madre llora por sus hijos, Cuando los hijos lloran por su madre…]

***Cuando Yo Era Chiquitico***

C:
Cuando yo era chiquitico
Yo jugaba en la rollo
A:
Yo jugaba en la rollo [2x]

***Cuantas Banderas Tengo Yo***

C:
Cuantas banderas tengo yo
A:
Siete na' ma'

***Cuidado Con Yo***

C:
Cuidado con yo
A:
Que a mis hijos se respetan
[It would be easy to mistake the sound of this for "cuidado coño," which would have quite a different meaning, but Luciano was clear that it was *con yo*.]

***De Allá, Andalucia***

A/C:
De Allá Andalucia anda Gitana que yo queria
De Allá Andalucia anda Gitana, qué maravilla
[It is usually sung as *hay una Gitana*, though Luciano taught it to me as *anda Gitana*.]

***De la Tierra Lucumí***

A/C:
De la tierra Lucumí
Llegó la negra
Mamá Francisca
La Conga espiritual

***Debajo del Laurel***

C:
Debajo del laurel, yo tengo mi confianza
A:
Yo tengo mi confianza [2x]

Variation:
C:
Debajo del laurel, mi ganga tiene misterio
A:
Mi ganga tiene misterio [2x]

***Desenvuelven Noble Ser***

A/C:
Desenvuelven noble ser
Desenvuelven tu mision
Desenvuelven en plano tierra
Ay Dios mio San Salvador

***Dile a Marufina***

A:
Que ya yo me va, que ya yo me va
C:
Dile a marufina que ya yo me va
[or: "…que *tambor se va*"]

***Dondequiera Que Yo Llego***

C:
Dondequiera que yo llego
Me llaman abukenke
A:
Me llaman abukenke, me llaman abukenke

***Donde Va Jose Tan Triste***

A/C:
Donde va Jose tan triste
Donde va Jose tan solo
Triste Jose, donde va
Donde va Jose tan solo

***Elegguá Suayo***

A:
(Ago) Itakua barankelona Elegua suayo
[var: Ago itakua bara laroye Elegua suayo]
[var: Alaguana barankelona Laroye suayo]
C:
A e, barankelona Elegua suayo
[Spelling from Coburg's *Cantos Especiales*.]

***Elegguá Tiene Garabato***

A:
Elegua tiene garabato
[or: Laroye tiene garabato]
C:
Veda veda, Elegua tiene garabato, veda veda
[verdad verdad]

***Empresta la Muleta***

A/C:
Empresta la muleta
Pa' poder caminar

***En el Rio de Jordán***

A/C:
En el Rio de Jordán
Se han visto mil maravillas
Jesus Cristo de rodillas
Bautizando a su San Juan

***En Esta Mano***

A/C:
En esta mano yo traigo una cruz [2x]
En la otra mano un rayo de luz [2x]
[Luciano commented that this is in the first-person voice of Babaluaye, referring to the three elements – an Orisha, a cross, and a ray of light – as a "*mezcla de espiritualidad*."]

***E Saludando***

A/C:
E-e-e-e, saludando [2x]

[Var. A: E-e-e-e, saludando [Palo divinity], e-e-e-e, saludando]

***Este es la Misión***

A/C:
Y este es la misión [3x]
De un misionero

***Flores Azucena Traigo Yo*** [L.S.O.]

A/C:
Flores, flores azucena[s] traigo yo
A la divina Mercedes
La reina, la virgen de la paz

***Francisca, en Ganga Tú Tiene Nombre***

A/C:
Francisca en ganga tú tiene[s] nombre [2x]
¿Como te llama[s]? ¿Como te dice[s]?
[or: ¿Como te *llaman*? ¿Como te *dicen*?]

***Francisco (Como Me Llamo Yo)***

A:
¿Como me llamo yo?
C:
Francisco
Y me llamo yo
Francisco

***Francisco la Luma***

A/C:
Francisco/a la luma
Ya toca campana
A las doce de la noche
Pa' qué tú me llamas

***Gitana, Gitana***

A/C:
Gitana, gitana
Que con su luz, nos esta alumbrando

***Gitana Linda y Morena*** [L.S.O.]

A/C:
Gitana, linda y morena
Que desde el cielo viene bajando
Gitana, linda y morena
Que con su luz nos esta alumbrando

***Guerillero del Monte***

A/C:
Guerillero del Monte, a la manigua guerillé
Guerillero del Monte, a la manigua guerillé
Ha se acabó lo que se daba
Quitate tú pa' ponerme yo

1/2 coro:
A: Ha se acabó lo que se daba
C: Quitate tú pa' ponerme yo

***Hay Viene Un Ser***

A/C:
Hay viene un ser pidiendo la gloria
Hay viene un ser pidiendo la luz
Hay viene un ser pidiendo misericordia
Ya lo veran, ya lo veran, ya lo veran

***Indio Carire***

A/C:
Indio carire [caribe?], indio rojo
yo lo llamo a laboral [laborar]

***Indio, Indio, Indio***

A/C:
¿Indio[s], indio[s], indio[s]
A donde va[n] con esa cruz?
Hacia la monte de Calvario
A entregarse [la?] a Jesús

[Written for San Rafael in an Espiritista booklet as "¿Dónde va San Rafael? ¿Dónde vas con esa cruz? Voy al monte del calvario, a llevársela a Jesús."]

***Isengere***

A:
Vamo a la rio trae arena
C:
Isengere, vamo a la rio trae arena, icengere
[written by Lekiam in these two spellings]

[Luciano translated Isengere as "*un bicho*" (a tiny beast / bad person).

***Isengere (Toco Yumba)***

C:
Isengere, toco yumba, toco yumba, Isengere
A:
Toco yumba, toco yumba

***Jala Congo***

C:
Jala Congo, jala pa' yo ve
A:
Jala pa' yo ve, jala pa' yo ve

***Jala y Jala***

C:
Jala y jala
A:
Yo jala garabato
[or: Sarabanda, Mamá Chola, etc]

***Jecua Jecua***

A/C:
E e, jecua
Babaluaye jecua

[Var. A: tanto como yo camino, tanto como yo trabajo]
[Var. A: Adelante todo los Congos en el nombre de Babalu]

[Can also be heard on a 1950 fieldrecording from Oriente region of Cuba released on *Viejos Cantos Afrocubanos* Vol. 1 (Areito LD-3325).]

***Kuenda Congo***

A/C:
Kuenda Congo kuenda makana
Makana Congo kuenda andile

1/2 coro
A: Makana Congo
C: Kuenda andile

***La Bendición Tata***

C:
La bendición Tata
A:
[improvisación ]

***La Luz, la Luz***

A/C:
La luz, la luz, la luz
Radia la luz hermanos mios
Radia la luz para ese ser
[*Poder divino* sometimes sung instead of *hermanos mios.* ]

***La Luz Redentora (Oye Buen Ser)***

A:
[Y] si la luz redentora te llama buen ser
Y te llama con amor a la tierra
Yo quisiera ver a ese ser
Cantandole gloria al divino Manuel
C:
Oye buen ser, avansa y ven
Que el coro te llama y te dice ven
[*La Luz Redentora* and *Oye Buen Ser* are sung as separate songs by other groups.]

***La Novena***

A/C:
La novena, la novena, la novena espiritual
que novena tan sagrada
hay que saberla llevar

***Lázaro Bendito***

A/C:
Lázaro bendito, Lázaro Jesús
Lázaro bendito, Lázaro Jesús
Limpianos con tu manto y darnos la salud
Limpianos con tu manto y darnos la salud

1/2 coro
A: Limpianos con tu manto
C: Y darnos la salud

***Licencia Ango Moile***

A/C:
Licencia ango moile
Licencia ango moile palo ya ya

***Linda Madre Agua***

C:
Linda, linda
Linda Madre Agua
A:
Qué linda Madre Agua
Linda Madre Agua [or similar variations]

***Lindo Elegguá***

C:
Lindo, lindo, lindo, lindo Elegua
A:
Lindo lindo Elegua, lindo lindo Elegua
(or: No hay un santo mas lindo que Elegua [2x])
[A very similar song can be heard on a 1950 fieldrecording from Oriente region of Cuba released on *Viejos Cantos Afrocubanos* Vol. 1 (Areito LD-3325).]

***Llama a Mamá***

A/C:
Llama a mamá no me oye
Llama a papa y tampoco
Yo llama a los Africanos
Que vengan poquito a poco

***Llama Llama Congo***

C:
Llama[n] llama[n] congo
A:
E como llama[n]

***Llamalo Si No Conocen***

A/C:
Llamalo[s] llamalo[s]
Llamalo[s] si no conocen
Vama ver como se llaman
Aunque que llegue la doce
[or: …*la noche*]

1/2 coro:
A: Vama ver como se llaman
C: Aunque que llegue la doce

***Llegó Buen Amigo, Llegó***

C:
Llegó, buen amigo, llegó
A:
Buen amigo

***Llegó Llegó Buen Amigo***

A/C:
Llegó llegó buen amigo [2x]

***Llegué Llegué***

C:
Llegué llegué
A:
Saludando la buena noche
[or: “Saludando arriba mundo” etc.]

***Lumbe la Cueva Nganga [unmetered]***

A/C:
Lumbe, lumbe, lumbe
Lumbe la cueva en ganga [la cueva ngana]
(Si) Sarabanda ta cere cere
Palo quindiambo cese agüe

[Luciano referred to "lumbe" as "a God" but also, later, as a deer or antelope. His understanding of the last two lines of this song translate as "If Sarabanda is sleeping, the nganga doesn't work."]

***Lumbe la Cueva Nganga [metered]***

C:
Lumbe lumbe lumbe
Lumbe la cueva en ganga
A:
Lumbe la cueva en ganga [2x]
[var: Salamalecun Malecunsala, lumbe mi cueva nganga

***Lumbe, Lumbe***

C:
Lumbe lumbe, Salamalecun Congo
A:
Salamalecun Congo, Salamalecun Congo

1/2 coro:
A: Lumbe lumbe
C: Salamalecun Congo

***Luz Divina***

A:
Luz divina (C: Radia la luz)
Que luz divina (C: Pa' ese ser)
Que luz tan grande
Radian los seres
Si los seres buenos
Bajan a la tierra
Pidiendo gloria
Y misericordia [or: A misericordia]
C:
Luz divina (Radia la luz)
Que luz divina (Pa' ese ser)
Que luz tan grande
Radian los seres
Si los seres buenos
Bajan a la tierra
Pidiendo gloria
Y misericordia

***Madre Agua Ponte en Vela***

C:
Madre Agua ponte en vela
A:
Que tu nganga se te va

***Madre de Agua Esta en los Rios***

C:
Madre de Agua esta en los rios
A:
Esta en los rios [2x]

***Madre de Agua, Tu Ven Acá***

A:
Madre de Agua, mira pa' yo
Tú ven acá, mira mundo me va llevar
C:
Madre de Agua, tú ven acá
Tú mira yo, mira mundo me va llevar

***Malembe Ya Ya***

C:
Malembe ya ya, ya ya malembe
A:
???

***Mamá Francisca (Te Estoy Llamando)***

A/C:
Mamá Francisca te estoy llamando Madre
Mamá Francisca en nombre de Dios
Mamá Francisca reina Africana, reina Africana
(Tu) son Lucumí

***Mamá Francisca Soy Yo***

C:
Mamá Francisca soy yo
Yo soy conga lucumí
A:
Yo soy conga lucumí [2x]

***Marinero***

A:
Marinero pa' Yemaya
[or: Marinero, marinero; etc.]
C:
Marinero [alternates high and low pitch]

***Marinero, Marinero***

A/C:
Marinero, marinero, marinero alta mar
emprestame tu barquilla, para irme a navegar

***Marufina Con Dos Jimaguas***

C:
Marufina con dos jimaguas
A:
Con dos jimaguas, con dos jimaguas
[or: "*Son* dos jimaguas…"]

[According to Luciano, Marufina can be a reference to Mamá Chola or Siete Rayos.]

***Marufina Por Qué***

A/C:
¿Marufina por qué?
Palo me lleva a la montaña

***Mbombo Gara***

A/C:
Mbombo gara, mbombo gara
[or: Congo gara, congo gara]

[Luciano sings *mbombo* but coro usually sings *Congo*.]

***Misericordia***

A/C:
Misericordia, misericordia
Misericordia poder divino
Misericordia, misericordia (ay Dios)
Sea derramar en el nombre de Dios

***Mundo Es***

C:
Wai wai wai
A:
E mundo es

***Ndúndu Dale Vuelta***

C:
Ndúndu dale vuelta al ingenio, Ndúndu
A:
Dale vuelta al ingenio

[Luciano stated that Ndúndu is a camino of Osain, the Orisha who owns the forest and has extensive herbal knowledge. Cabrera translates the Bantu word *ndúndu* as spirit (Cabrera 2000:244). Her recording of this song can be found on Smithsonian Folkways Recordings' *Havana & Matanzas, Cuba ca. 1957* (SFW CD 40434). In the liner notes for that CD, Morton Marks draws the connection to turkey vultures, an important animal in Palo representing the dead, that circled the sugar plantations (*igenios*).]

***Ndúndu Nganga***

C:
Ndúndu nganga yo mismo soy manigua
A:
Yo mismo soy manigua [2x]

***Nganga Aquí Estoy***

C:
Nganga aquí estoy, aquí estoy
A:
Aquí estoy yo

***Nganga Yo Vine Pa' Jugar***

C:
Nganga yo vine pa' jugar
A:
Yo vine pa' mirar

***Nga Nga Nga Baluarde***

A:
Baluarde los congos con su nganga andile
C:
Nga nga nga
Baluarde los congos con su nganga andile
Nga nga nga

***Ngo Ngo Ngo***

A [transition]:
Ngo ngo ngo [2x], mi Madre Agua ngo
C:
Ngo ngo ngo
A:
Mi Madre Agua ngo

[Transition used to keep song in clave.]

***Niña Linda***

A/C:
Niña linda, niña linda
Niña linda, la Mamá Chola

1/2 coro
A: Niña linda
C: La Mamá Chola

***No Hay Novedad***

A/C:
No hay novedad, no hay novedad
Arriba en mi pueblo, no hay novedad

***O María Madre Mia***

A/C:
O Maria, madre mia
O consuelo inmortal
Amparanos y guianos
A la patria celestial

[Documented in *Cuba Canta Su Fe* as "Oh María, Madre mía, oh consuelo del mortal, amparadme y guiadme a la patria celestial" (221).]

***Obatalá Tú Eres la Luz***

A/C:
Obatalá tu eres la luz
de[l] fundamento Lucumí

***Oraré***

A/C:
Oraré y oraré y ora y ora
Oraré y oraré y orara
[2x]

***Oren, Oren***

A/C:
Oren, oren, oren
Oren, oren hermanos mios
oren, oren a esta mision

***Osain Erumawo***

A [transition]:
Osain erumawo [Sometimes written as *Osain leri mawo*.]
C:
Awerito su Madre [or: abuelito su ma (y) e]
A:
Que le falta Elegua
le falta Dios

***Oye la Misa***

A/C:
Oye la misa, oye la misa
Oye la misa, que estoy llamando

***Palo Doquindoya***

C:
Awarwarandoya [Awara wara ndoya ?]
A:
Palo doquindoya

***Palo Mayimbe***

C:
Palo mayimbe me llevan pa' la loma
A:
Me llevan pa' la loma [2x]

***Palo Quiqui***

A/C:
Palo quiqui palo siguaralla
yo esta yamando un Congo
que sirva pa' batalla
[or: que venga Siete Sayas]

***Paloma Blanca (La Mensajera)***

A/C:
Paloma blanca
La mensajera
Trae[me] un mensaje [or: lleva un mensaje]
Que manda Dios [or: de mas allá]

***Pa' Qué Llama Yo***

A/C:
Pa' qué llama yo [2x]
Pa' qué llama yo colina
Yo estaba en la loma dormiendo

1/2 coro:
A: Pa' qué me llama yo colina
C: Yo estaba en la loma dormiendo

***Pa' Qué Tú Me Llamas***

C:
Pa' qué tu me llama[s]
A:
Si tu no me conoces

***Por Allí Pasó***

A/C:
Por allí pasó, por allí pasó
Por allí pasó mi Congo
Y nadie lo vio

***Por la Señal***

C:
Por la señal
Sambia manda que yo rece
Por la señal
A:
Sambia manda que yo rece

***Por Qué Me Llama (Pregunto Yo)***

A/C:
Por qué me llama[s], pregunto yo [2x]
Sea a las doce de la noche
Quien fue que me llamó

[Var. A: Misericordia poder divino
Misericordia de pillo al padre
a las doce de la noche
Quien fue que me llamó]

***Por un Sendero*** [L.S.O.]

A/C:
Por un sendero viene caminando
El viejo Babalu
El no[s] viene limpiando
Y a dar nos la salud

***Poropo Poro Poro***

A/C:
Poropo poro poro poropo…
[These syllables have no particular meaning for Luciano who learned them from a cassette of Flamenco music.]

***Que Instante***

A/C:
Que instante se encuentran los seres
Y a pensar que muy cerca los tenemos
Pidiendo a María que nos hecho bendición

***Que Salve María***

A:
Que salve María [2x]
C:
Que los sabe dios
Que los sabe María

***Que Vengan los Congos***

A:
Si son sabaneros, si son sabaneros
C:
Que vengan los congos si son sabaneros

***Que Vengan Los Indios***

A/C:
Que venga[n] los indio[s] [2x]
Que venga[n] los indio[s] a laborar

***Que Viva Babalu***

C:
Que viva Babalu
A:
Babaluaye

[Var. A: tanto yo camino; adelante misioneros; siete dias con siete noches]

***Que Viva la Gloria***

A/C:
Que viva la gloria
que brilla la luz
Que viva la Virgen
La Virgen de Regla

***Radia La Luz***

A/C:
Radia la luz
Suena el clarín
Asi radia los buenos seres (por la Caridad)
Y por el Santisimo

***Salamale-male***

A/C:
Salamale male, Salamale Malecunsala
[Var. A: La buena noche pa' to' los Congos, Salamale Malecunsala]

1/2 coro
A: Salamale
C: Malecunsala

***San Hilarion***

C:
San Hilarion
A:
Con mision Africana
[or: Tus hijos te llaman]

***San Lázaro***

A/C:
San Lázaro oiganse un coro [2x]
Los hijos de Eleguá, Babaluaye [2x]

1/2 coro:
A: Son los hijos de Eleguá
C: Babaluaye

[When I asked Luciano to clarify if the words were *son los hijos* or *somos hijos* he said "*comoquiera*" – however you want.]

***San Miguel Bendito***

A/C:
San Miguel, San Miguel bendito
Prestame tu espada que quiero vencer

***San Miguel Venció***

A/C:
San Miguel venció [2x]
San Miguel venció a sus enemigos
Con el poder de Dios

***San Rafael, Iluminalo***

A/C:
San Rafael iluminalo, iluminalo San Rafael

***Santa Clara***

A/C:
Santa Clara aclaradora
Aclara este umilde ser
Que viene de lo infinito
Buscando la claridad

***Santa María Madre de Dios***

C:
Santa María madre Dios
A:
Madre Agua

[The *de* before Dios is not usually pronounced.]

***Sara Como Sarango***

C:
Sara como sarango [or: sara ngo]
A:
Sarango la buena noche brillumbero
Sarango cuenta arriba cuenta abajo [etc.]

[Luciano gave me no indication on how to spell this so I provide these translations that might be relevant:

Nsala = magic work, cleasing; Ngo = leopard, tiger; Nsaura = vulture; Nsalakó = magic work (Cabrera 2000). Luciano believed *ngo* to mean *estar* (to be) or *llegar* (to arrive).]

***Sarabanda Andile***

A/C:
Sarabanda andile buena noche
Sarabanda andile buena noche
[or: Sarabanda andile sola sola]

***Sea Como Sea***

A:
Sea como sea
C:
[Que] para bien sea

***Sea el Santisimo***

A/C:
Sea el Santisimo (coro: Sea) [2x.]
Madre mia de la Carida[d]
Ayudanos, amparanos
En el nombre de Dios, (Ay, Dios)

***Si a Tú Puerta***

A/C:
Si a tu puerta llega un ser
Pidiendo la claridad
No se la nieges hermano
Que Dios te la pagara

***Si Centella Me Lleva Yo Va***

A/C:
Si Centella me lleva yo va [2x]
Con licencia usted Sarabanda [2x]

***Siacara***

A/C:
Siacara, siacara, siacara
Hay viene los Congos

***Siento Una Voz***

A/C:
Siento una voz que me llama
de lo profundo del mar
es la voz de un misionero
que ahora viene a laborar

***Siete Con Siete***

A/C:
Siete con siete, siete nama [nada mas]
Siete tiene mi ganga, siete nama

1/2 coro
A: Siete tiene mi ganga
C: Siete nama

[Luciano saw this as a song for both Madre Agua and Siete Rayos since they both related to the number seven."

***Siete Rayos Malongo***

A/C:
Siete Rayo[s] malongo ta con el [2x]

1/2 coro
C: Ta con el
A: So mi taco sincero

***Si Male***

C:
Si male, yo na' ma', si male
[also: si mani; si malí; si mande]
A:
Yo na' ma' [or: Congo na' ma']

***Sirena Soy***

A/C:
Sirena, sirena soy
Yo saca agua, tu saca arena
Y tú nama que eres
Sirena de la mar

[Sirena here refers to Olokun and/or Yemaya. Luciano calls it a representation of "the floor of the sea."]

***Sirena, Sirena***

A/C:
Sirena, sirena, sirena de la mar
Quien fuera marinero
Para verte navegar

1/2 coro
A: Quien fuera marinero
C: Para verte navegar

***Si Tú Vas al Cobre***

A/C:
[Y] si vas al Cobre
Quiero que me traigas
Una virgencita
De la Caridad

[I have no fieldrecording of this song. Interestingly, though, Willy Chirino sings it in his version of the classic Cuban song *Son de la Loma*.]

***Soy Ngangulero***

C:
Soy ngangulero
Brisa que viento me lleva
A:
Brisa que viento me lleva [2x]

[Written in an Espiritist booklet as "Yo soy gangulero, visa que el viento me lleva…"]

***Tango Yalemba***

C:
Tango yalemba
Toito su manito
Tango yalemba
A:
Toito su manito

[Working with Luciano, I transcribed this as *Tango Ya Limba* and *son manito*. After closer listening, though, the song might make more sense as *yalemba* and *su manito* wich would translate something like *Far away sun, the earth is [in?] your hand*. Tango = sun; yalemba = far; toto = earth (Cabrera 2000).]

***Tanto Como Yo Camino***

A/C:
Tanto como yo camino
Tanto como yo trabajo
Y no encuentro una limosna
Pa' mi viejo Babaluaye

[Var A: Siete dias con siete noches
Por el mundo caminando
Voy buscando una limosna
Pa' mi viejo Babaluaye]

[Var A: Ay San Lázaro bendito
Santo de mi devoción
Si me haz lo que te pido
Te haré una coronación]

***Tata Ganguengue***

A:
Tata Ganguengue [2x]
C:
Ya llegó Tata Ganguengue

***Tenge Tenge Maria***

A/C:
Tenge tenge Maria
Tenge tenge andile

[Var. A: Santa Maria mi Madre Agua
Ay Dios Tenge Maria]

***Tengere Maria Tengere***

A:
Maria
C:
Tengere Maria tengere

[This song could be just the 1/2 coro of *Tenge Tenge María*. The melody is substantially different, but it always follows *Tenge Tenge María*, metrically halving it.]

***Tengo un Indio***

A/C:
[Yo] tengo un Indio que viste de Congo
[Yo] tengo un Congo que viste de Indio

[Luciano believed this song was composed by a man in the Havana area, though he could not remember his name.]

***Todavía Congo No Esta Acababa***

C:
Todavía Congo no esta acababa, todavía
A:
Congo no esta acababa

A:
Yo tengo mi cuncuní
[or: tongorí (nganga), tonganí, changaní (palenque)]
C:
Alli arriba yo tengo mi cuncuní, alli arriba

A:
Palo no tumba yo
C:
Siguaralla palo no tumba yo, Siguaralla

A:
José Batalla
C:
Caminando llegó, José Batalla
Caminando llegó

[Though *Todavía Congo No Esta Acababa* usually starts this progression, the order is not always exactly as listed here, nor do all variations need to be sung. The apkwón switches between coros by simply singing a different lead part.]

***Todo los Congos Van a Bailar***

C:
Todo los congos van a bailar
A:
Cuni cuni, cuni cuna

***Un Rayo de Luz***

A/C:
Un rayo de luz
Yo traigo en la mano
En la otra mano
La cruz de Jesús

***Una Imagen Bendita de Dios*** [L.S.O.]

A/C:
Una imagen bendita de Dios
Que en el cielo tú esta sentado
Que se hagan sus milagros [2x]
Y su santa bendición

***Una Paloma Blanca*** [L.S.O.]

A/C:
Una paloma blanca viene volando
Y ella trae un mensaje
Para todos los misioneros [2x]
En el nombre de Dios

***Va Como Va***

C:
Va como va
A:
Malanga como se puede

***Vama a Ver (Si Son Verdad)***

A/C:
Vama a ver, vama a ver [vamos a ver]
vama a ver si son verdad

***Vamos a Jugar, Isengere***

A/C:
Vamos a jugar, Isengere, vamos a jugar [2x]
[Pronounced as *vama jugar*.]

***Vamos a Vencer Buen Ser***

A:
Yo venzo una yo venzo dos
C:
Vama a vencer buen ser

***Vamos a Ver (La Ola Maria)***

A/C:
Vama ver la ola Maria
Vama ver la vuelta que da

***Vamos Andar Mamá Chola***

C:
Vamos andar Mamá Chola como e
A:
Lango va correr

***Vence Batalla (Mi Congo)***

C:
Vence batalla mi Congo
A:
Mi congo, mi congo va trabajar
[or other improvisations]

***Veni Buen Ser***

A/C:
Veni buen ser
Avanza y ven
Ven a este plano tierra
Que tus hermanos tu queren ver

***Viento Que Topa Con Lucero***

A/C:
Viento que topa con Lucero
Viento que topa con Lucero que palo es

***Virgen Protectora***

A/C:
Virgen protectora
Salvadora de lo infinito
Proteganos con tu manto
Y darnos la vendicion [bendición]

1/2 coro:
A: Proteganos con tu manto
C: Y darnos la vendicion

***Vititi Congo***

C:
Vititi Congo
A:
Nganga ven aca [or: Yo llama Marufina]

***Y Era Marufina***

A/C:
Yo estaba dormiendo yo oiá un runrún
Y era Marufina que me estaba llamando

***Yayita (Buey Suerto)***

A/C:
Yaya yayita
Buey Suerto
Lucero viene alumbrando
Como e[s]

1/2 coro:
A: Lucero viene alumbrando
C: Como e[s]

[No recording of this. Yaya can mean *canto* or *madre* but also is used for some Mpungus such as *Yaya Kéngue*, another name for Centella (Barnet:135).]

***Yerba Guinea***

C:
Estaba contigo en yerba guinea
A:
Yerba guinea, la yerba guinea

***Yo Como Misionero***

A/C:
Yo como misionero
Yo cargo la cruz
[Y] en la otra mano
Un rayo de luz

***Yo Estaba en Mi Rincon***

C:
Yo estaba en mi rincon
Pa' qué tu me llamas
A:
Pa' qué tu me llamas [2x]
[or: A las doce de la noche, pa' qué tu me llamas]
[or: Me llaman Abukenke, pa' qué tu me llamas]

***Yo Jala Garabato (Garunlengo)***

A/C:
Yo jala garabato
Yo jala garunlengo

***Yo Jala Garabato (Mi Congo)***

A/C:
Yo jala garabato mi Congo
[Mi] Congo, Congo lea
Yo jala garabato, a-e

***Yo Me Llamo Ta José***

A:
¿Como me llamo yo?
C:
Yo me llamo Ta José

[Also sometimes as:
A: ¿Como me llamo yo?
C: Yo me llamo Abukenke]

***Yo Soy Ese Ser*** [L.S.O.]

A/C:
Yo soy ese ser que viene vagando
como un peregrino
Yo soy ese ser que viene alumbrando
con la luz
Yo soy San Miguel, San Miguel bendito
San Miguel bendito, en [el] nombre de Dios

1/2 coro:
A/C:
Yo soy San Miguel
San Miguel bendito
San Miguel bendito
En [el] nombre de Dios

***Yo Va Pa' la Ile***

A:
Yo va pa' la ile [2x]
C:
E yo va, yo va pa' la ile [house]

***Yo Vengo de Ina Ina***

A/C:
Yo vengo de ina ina
yo vengo de Olodumare
Cuando congo baja a tierra
Sacudiendo sus collares

***Yo Vine Pa' Ver***

A/C:
Yo vine pa' ver [2x]
Yo vine pa' ver un congo
Yo vine pa' ver
No hay na'

1/2 coro
A: Yo vine pa' ver un congo
C: Yo vine pa' ver, no hay na'

## Appendix Four: Photos

**Figure 19. Lekiam, Pedro, and Silvano after a day of work.**

**Figure 20. Pedro and Silvano on their way to work.**


**Figure 21. Silvano, Pedro, and Luciano at work.** (Photo by Hilda Torres Urista)

**Figure 22. Luciano, Pedro, myself, and Silvano.** (Photographer unknown)


**Figure 23. GCyC's tumbadora and cajón in front of *El Indio*.**

**Figure 24. Underside of Pedro's cajón showing some of the crosses inside.**

**Figure 25. A relatively elaborate bóveda near Pogolotti.**

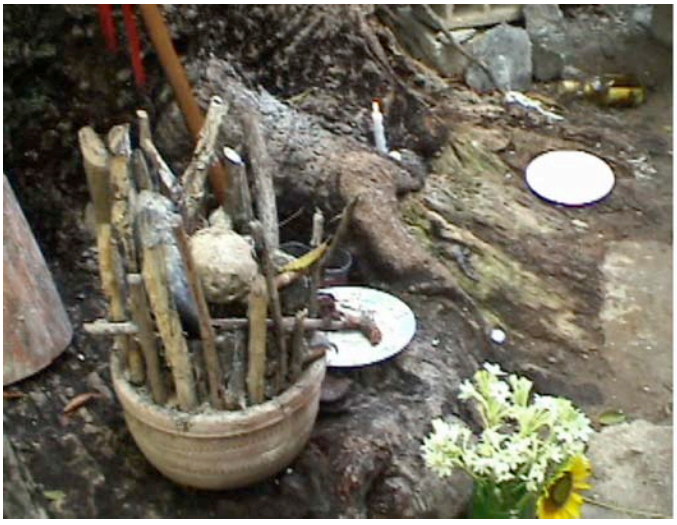

**Figure 26. Altar at the foot of a ceiba tree. (See DVD)**


**Figure 27. Cajones made by Pancho Quinto in Havana.** (Photo by Dan Callis)


**Figure 28. Detail of small cajón showing bells and edge for higher pitches.** (Photo by Dan Callis)

**Figure 29. Small cajón made by "Fatty" in Matanzas.** (Photo by Dan Callis)

**Figure 30. A wider cajón by "Fatty" in Matanzas.** (Photo by Dan Callis)

**Figure 31. Underside of wide cajón showing added snares.** (Photo by Dan Callis)

**Figure 32. "Fatty" (Marino Marquez) with students in Matanzas.** (Photo by Dan Callis)

**Discography**

*Afrocubano 4Vientos*. Audiocassette by Candela Records, SLP 608.

Celestino Fariñas, Pedro. *Fariñas: Cajón al Muerto*. © 2002 by Envidia, A70 7049. CD.

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*Havana & Matanzas, Cuba, ca. 1957: Batá, Bembé, and Palo Songs*. © 2003 by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, SFW CD 40434. Fieldrecordings by Lydia Cabrera and Josefina Tarafa.

Hermanos Los Inkises. *Los Espiritus y Sus Misterios*. CD by Candela Records, SLP 600.

Iré Otonoguá. *Cajónes Para Los Orichas*. 2002 CD produced by Dudu Tucci.

Los Nani. *Espiritistas ¡a Cantar!* © 1997 by EGREM, CD 0260.

*Mambos de Palo: Por la Señal*. Audiocassette by Candela Records.

Omí Iná and Obbara. *Cajón Espiritual: The Music Box of Cuba*. © 2004 by Luke Wassermann and Todd Brown. DVD distributed by earthcds.

*Religious Music of Palo Monte: A Cajón Ceremony*. © 2002 by Lawrence Millard, earthcds. CD.

*Viejos Cantos Afrocubanos*. Vol. 1. LP by Areito, LD-3325

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