Afro-Cuban Music: History, Problems, and Solutions

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History, Problems, and Solutions
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I hid behind the door, hoping she would not make eye contact. The people around me were dancing, clapping, singing, smoking cigars, drinking rum out of coconut shells, and spraying each other’s necks with what smelled like bug spray. The drummers were in the very front of the small room and about twenty people were crowded towards the back. The woman was dancing in front of the drummers, smoking a cigar and shouting things at the congregation. I couldn’t help but watch her and the musicians, but she didn’t seem to notice me through the crowd.

At one point, the drummers passed around the claves and the guataca instrument. I had gone to the ceremony with a small group of friends. Several of the Americans I came with began playing and passing the instruments around. My sole purpose for being there was to study drums, and so I began to inch out from behind the door—hoping for a chance to play. The instruments were passed in front of me, behind me, around me, and each time I reached for them, they seemed to bypass my hands. I felt somewhat dejected, but as the outsider in an unfamiliar environment, I didn’t want to cause a scene, accidentally offend people or disrupt the religious ceremony. I inched back towards the door.

The woman was still dancing, singing, and smoking her cigar. I watched as she locked eyes with one of the Americans standing in front of me. She slowly approached him, singing to him, and stepped closer until her face almost touched his. She then took a large sip of rum from the coconut, stared at him for a moment, cocked her head to one side, and in one long spew of continuous liquid she sprayed the rum from her mouth into his face. Everyone burst out laughing, I
could not help but chuckle myself. She threw her head back, laughed, and nonchalantly puffed her cigar as she contemplated what to do next. I looked away and inched closer to the wall—as far behind the door as I could get. Suddenly, she pushed the drenched man aside and through the cloud of smoke about her head she locked eyes with me. I knew I was next.

The rum shower marked the beginning of my first and (so far) only experience at an Afro-Cuban religious ceremony. I found out a few weeks later that I had attended a Palo Monte celebration of Yemonja’s birthday. Eventually, the cigar-smoking priestess sprayed every non-Palero\(^1\) at the ceremony.

The purpose for her actions is still unclear to me. Spitting rum may have been a joking result of her spontaneous whim—poking gentle fun at the non-Paleros at the ceremony. The spraying might have been a traditional custom meant to cleanse or mark non-believers. Spitting out a precious and expensive Cuban commodity might have been a sign of thanks and welcome, similar to Frank Herbert’s *Dune* character who spat (or relinquished precious body water) as a sign of respect. Possibly, the custom of spraying might trace its origins to Africa, where spraying money or alcohol on someone can be a sign of appreciation, much like in the United States when people “shower” their friends with gifts to celebrate their accomplishments, or throw rice at a newly married couple. Possibly her rum shower can be equated to showering a wonderful performer with roses during a curtain call—or the dreaded opposite of throwing tomatoes at someone who has disgraced the stage. Her spraying of rum—an

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\(^1\) *Palero*—A member of the Palo Monte religion.
expensive drink in Cuba—indicates that the action probably did not harbor malicious intent.

Still, perhaps that Palo Monte congregation might have preferred to worship in peace. The presence of tourists created a distraction from Yemonja—the religious focus. Their video cameras and flash photos made the sacred performance more profane. Yet, tourists have more money than most Cuban civilians and their presence dramatically increases the volume of cash in the offering bowl, which in turn helps to sustain the religion. The result, however, is a Catch 22, for since the Special Period, congregations partly depend on tourists for their economic survival, but the presence of strangers tends to mutate the intended religious event into a public spectacle—thereby destroying the religious gathering that the tourists were to sustain. Afro-Cuban music, in general, has a similar tourist relationship, and tourism is only one of many problems that threatens Afro-Cuban music as it stands today.

The first problem addressed in this thesis is one of philosophy. It attempts to answer: What is Afro-Cuban music? The second problem addressed is historical: How much do we really know about the “Afro” part of Afro-Cuban music, such as slavery and nineteenth century racism in Cuba? How much African musical culture is in tact in Cuba today? The third problem consists of recent economic, political, and commercial developments, and their impact on further confusing the definition of “Afro-Cuban” music.

The first chapter provides some historical background. The second, third, and fourth chapters respectively focus on the three problems of philosophy,
historical accuracy, and the effects of modern paradigms on Afro-Cuban music.

The last chapter attempts to prescribe some actions that must be taken in order to curb the destruction of Afro-Cuban music.
Chapter One

*Historiography*
General Principles and Ideas in Ethnomusicology

Most of the sources cited in this thesis are what John Blacking describes as "microscopic data" collections. Christopher Waterman expands Blacking's idea and ascertains that "large scale economic and political structures articulate with and broadly condition the localized microprocesses of musical performance." By examining a variety of isolated Afro-Cuban musical studies and their existence within larger social structures, and by assuming Waterman's proposed relationship between "microscopic data" and certain economic and political superstructures within which they exist, I will point out three problems with the state of Afro-Cuban music as it now exists.

Still, it is difficult to make sweeping generalizations about music in Latin America; Anthony Seeger has outlined three main problems with Latin American musical analysis:

1. The mobilization of ethnic identity almost always arises as a part of a conflict.
2. Even when a musical style remains that same, its significance may change—as when church hymns are taken out of churches and onto the streets, and the "freedom land" and the obstacles that "we shall overcome" cease to be in the afterlife and become an ambition to realize in this life, in this country.

2 "From a purely practical point of view, there are conflicting needs to study a musical system both intensively in its social context and at various stages of its evolution... the year or two that is normally allowed for fieldwork in ethnomusicology rarely provides opportunities for observing musical change and the sequences of decision-making that led to it, and yet studies of music history can be misleading without the microscopic data that can only be obtained by intensive study of the cultural and social context of music-making." Blacking, John, 1977: 13-14. As found in Waterman, Christopher Alan. Jùjì. A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990. 2.

3 Ibid. 3.
3. The very fact that there is a conflict among researchers and within research institutions signals our involvement in the processes of ethnicity. Furthermore, ethnographer involvement in research has deeply affected the study of music in Cuba. Research of Afro-Cuban music began to take place only about 100 years ago, when, in “Western” society, Social Darwinism concepts were popular, the initial stages of modern psychology (Freud) were germinating, and the Positivist, Zionist, and anti-Semitic movements were underway. In addition, the British colonial empire teemed with enthusiastic explorers in Africa, India, and Latin America, new conceptions of nationalism emerged, art and architecture abandoned classicism and moved in “modern,” liberal directions, and music composition was incorporating rhythmic, non-diatonic, and other 20th-Century elements. Academics in the early 20th Century began to apply scientific principles (such as the scientific method) to social research; there was an assumption that social study could isolate one-dimensional problems which could then be solved. This scientific approach to society embodied the Zeitgeist (if such a thing exists) of the turn-of-the-century, which inspired many curious researchers who determined themselves to isolate and solve problems. For instance, Fernando Ortiz, a pioneer in the study of Afro-Cuban music, began his research in an attempt to isolate and alter the biological/psychological components of society that caused crime. He began with the black neighborhoods in Cuba, expecting to

5 For instance, artists such as Klimt and movements such as Impressionism.
6 The architect Otto Wagner and his many protégés, for example.
find a crime network. Instead he found vibrant musical culture derived from music in Africa.

The first studies of Cuban and African music were undertaken by “Western” researchers, schooled in the scientific-method intellectual environment (Ortiz, for instance, studied in Italy). Their observations tell us much about their subjects, but lingering romanticism in their writing betray researcher biases, personal motivations, and prejudices. The majority were naturalized outside of the cultures they studied, and the resultant one-sided collection of sources contributes to the overall ethnocentric impression of Cuban and African music during the 20th century. Today there is an emphasis on objective writing to avoid such highly-biased research, but by exposing the researcher’s bias and motivations we can better understand why, by whom, and what kind of research was done.

In this study of music transfer it is imperative to examine the type of research done about the giver and the recipient of musical culture. For the sake of efficiency I call Africa the “giver” and Latin America the “recipient,” but in reality these boundaries are blurred. (see vignette)

### Examples of Musical Culture flowing West to East Across the Atlantic

One Brazilian’s point of view: “We have retained more African musical tradition than Africans themselves; so much so that Africans come to Salvador to rediscover what they lost.”

Cuban groups, such as the CFNC have toured internationally in Africa, starting in the 1960’s. The moment the CFNC performed in Africa the roles of recipient and giver switched. The music in Africa today has been changing as a result of international music tours. Cuba and West Africa have been sharing music, which makes both the giver and the recipient.

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Still, before recording technology, Africa had culturally affected Cuba more than vice versa, because of the forced migration of 702,000 people from Africa to Cuba and not from Cuba to Africa. When music from one culture influences music from another, it is not a phenomenon that can be examined with purely scientific methods. If we were to mix, for instance, equal amounts of two non-reactive gasses—one blue and one red—in a sealed container, eventually the gasses would diffuse into each other to create a purple gas of equally mixed particles. This diffusion is based on the idea that the original gasses are pure, homogeneous substances that diffuse to create a non-homogeneous mixture. In terms of cultural antecedents, however, there are no pure\(^8\) musics just as there are no pure cultures,\(^9\) and so when two musics mix we cannot turn to scientific principles of diffusion to account for the results of cultural confrontations.

During the initial stages of Afro-Cuban research, \textquoteleft\textquoteleft culture was considered something static, rigidly delineated. For Africa it was assumed that people there had been carrying on the same cultural traditions for centuries without any notable change. Africa was considered a \textquoteleft\textquoteleft continent without history.\textquoteright\textquoteright\(^{10}\) With a new cultural awareness of Africa, it is important to go back and reassess early research on Afro-Cuban music, pinpoint assumptions, and rethink conclusions.

To understand the African element of Afro-Cuban music, African ethnomusicology studies must be carried out in order to form a basis of

\(^8\) The term \textit{pure}, in this sentence, is synonymous with the term \textit{indigenous}.

\(^9\) \textquoteleft\textquoteleft It is fair to say that any culture in the world is a product of previous transculturation, and this has always been so in history. There have never been any \textquoteleft pure\textquoteright cultures on our planet. For this reason we speak of cultural configuration and reconfiguration, rather than of \textquoteleft culture\textquoteright as a rigid and singular term.\textquoteright\textquoteright\(^{10}\) Kubik, Gerhard. \textquoteleft\textquoteleft Ethnicity, Cultural Identity, and the Psychology of Cultural Contact.\textquoteright\textquoteright In \textit{Music and Black Ethnicity: The Caribbean and South America}, Gerard H. Béhague, ed. Miami: University of Miami North-South Center, 1994. 25.

\(^{10}\) Ibid. 21-22.
comparison. The serious study of Afro-Cuban ethnomusicology began in the early twentieth century, and the study of African ethnomusicology began in the early-mid twentieth century\textsuperscript{11}—roughly at the same period in time.

**History of African Ethnomusicology**

Recent scholarly studies of African music have been few, selectively regional, and sometimes heavily biased. Christopher Waterman recounts these factors in the first chapter of his book, \textit{Jujú}, which discusses the historiography of African cultural and musical studies.

On recent interest and bias, Waterman asserts:

The history of African response to European colonialism encompasses nationalist movements, labor strikes, armed resistance, and an astonishing efflorescence of creativity in language, religion, theater, cuisine, visual arts, dress, dance, and music. There was, however, no serious scholarship on syncretic forms of African popular culture before World War II. This lacuna was related to the colonial imperative to define traditional cultures, and to a fundamental anti-Creolisation ideology expressed across a wide range of colonial discourse.\textsuperscript{12}

The bulk of Africanist urban ethnography \textit{is} from the late 1930's through the 1960's. Music and dance were generally deemed interesting only insofar as they elucidated patterns of social organization. Nor did the impact of Marxist theory on African Studies in the 1960's and 70's encourage the study of popular culture. Marxist analyses have often treated performance arts as super-structural epiphenomena, or assumed that mass cultural forms not explicitly involved in class struggle are counter revolutionary and thus unworthy of explication.\textsuperscript{13}

Waterman also indicates that African studies have been biased by regional selection:

\textsuperscript{11} "Ethnomusicological interest in African popular music has expanded since the first articles appeared in the 1950's." Waterman, \textit{Jujú}, 5.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, 4.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, 4.
A survey of literature suggests that some areas of the continent have received more attention than others; in general, Southern and West Africa are best represented while the popular musics of Central and East Africa have been studied less intensively.\(^{14}\)

Furthermore, there is a general trend to refer to "Africa" as a homogeneous culture area. Akpabot, an Ibibio scholar, quotes Bascom and Herskovits (in the early-mid twentieth century they laid the foundation for methodology in African musicology) who warn of the dangers of generalizing African music:

The diversity of African cultures and of African reaction to European culture presents a major obstacle to understanding contemporary Africa even for experienced observers. It makes the task of describing Africa to those who have never seen it the more difficult because of the temptation to draw generalizations that are valid only for specific African groups and particular African regions.\(^ {15}\)

John S. Mbiti, a Professor of Religious Studies at Makerere University College in Uganda (1968-), has written extensively on African religions. As an African, his examinations of African religions paint a different picture than the African studies undertaken by Europeans and Americans. He tends to flavor his writing with a sense of purpose—almost as if he feels he inherently knows more about Africa than any non-African (which is probably true) and it is his duty to eradicate misconceptions among the non-African public and educate non-Africans about Africans.

Like Waterman, he mentions the newness of serious African study:

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\(^{14}\) Ibid, 5.

The world is just beginning to take African traditional religions and philosophy seriously. It is only around the middle of the twentieth century that these subjects have begun to be studied properly and respectfully as an academic discipline in their own right. During the preceding one hundred years African religions were described by European and American missionaries and by students of anthropology, sociology, and comparative religion. It is from these writers that we have most of our information, although some of them had never been to Africa and only a few had done serious field study of these religions.

He describes Africans as a multitude of different peoples who have different ways of life but share basic characteristics. Sometimes he speaks of Africans as a homogeneous culture group, at other times he stresses the need to avoid lumping together different African cultures and the individual people who comprise them. His studies present a struggle between loyalty to one’s immediate culture, loyalty to one’s nation, and loyalty to one’s continent. This struggle to balance one’s hierarchy of loyalty has deeply affected society and music. In the U.S., for instance, because slavery uprooted and dispersed so many African families and individuals, many African Americans do not know exactly where their African ancestors came from. The uncertainty of family history results in a sense of continentalism: African descendants relating to several different types of African cultures and referring to “Africa” as a conglomerate group rather than a fragmented collection of nations and tribes. After all, this African artist, that African dancer, or that African writer could be family.

Possibly because of the post-slavery trend to refer to Africa as a unified group, until the 1950’s, Western scholars referred to “Africa” as a homogeneous culture area. This might be considered an imposition to an African

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who feels loyalty towards a nation or tribe and would rather not be generalized with an entire continent. Yet other Africans might feel a sense of importance to recognize the sense of solidarity among all Africans. Mbiti warns against sweeping generalizations but then attempts to locate major idiosyncracies between the different groups who live on the African continent. He is concerned with locating an overall “African Philosophy” by examining smaller groups of people. In terms of music, he relates that every African is involved in religion, which usually includes some form of musical culture:

Africans are notoriously religious... Traditional religions are not primarily for the individual, but for his community of which he is a part... To be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals [which almost always involve music] of that community. A person cannot detach himself from the religion of his group, for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundation, his context of security, his kinships and the entire group of those who make him aware of his own existence... To be without religion amounts to a self-excommunication from the entire life of society, and African people do not know how to exist without religion.

Yet, oricha worship in Yorubaland has declined greatly in the past few hundred years, and has only become popular again recently. Efún Moyiwa estimates that, until recently, only ten percent of the population practiced traditional Yoruba Religion (the others converted to Christianity or Islam). He also mentions that the younger generations did not wish to carry on religious

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17 It is interesting to compare this idea with African modes of slavery. In Africa, one definition of a “slave” is severance from one’s family. Here, Mbiti says that by not participating in religion one severs himself from one’s family.
practices, because they were "more interested in finding their fortunes in the cities and the 'modern world.""19

According to Moyiwá, oricha worship in Africa "was attacked on three fronts." These were Islam, the slave trade, and Colonialism. In conclusion, due to the cultural influences of Islam, slavery, and Colonialism, Africa was culturally changing during the entire duration of the Atlantic slave trade. A slave in Cuba, therefore, brought a very different culture to the table than a slave who was brought from a different area in Africa. But also, a slave in 1600 might have brought a much different culture to Cuba than a slave, from the same village, would have brought in 1850.

History of Afro-Cuban Ethnomusicology

Just as African ethnographies have inherent biases and ideological flaws (such as the previously mentioned Marxian analyses), so do Cuban ethnographies. The first (popular) pioneer of Cuban ethnomusicology was Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969), a man with an almost Wagnerite-like following. His first book (1906), Hampa afro-cubana: Los negros brujos (Afro-Cuban Underworld: The Black Wizzards/Sorcerers), attempted to make a connection between race and crime in Cuba. Katherine Hagedorn, an experienced professor, interviewer, and Santerian bata drummer and priestess, and author of the informative book, Divine Utterances, states:

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Ortiz, although he wrote books about the anthropology, musicology, and history of Cuba, was a lawyer by training, and initially was interested in the African-based traditions of Cuba's black population to support his thesis that the brujeria or "sorcery" of this sector of the population caused an increase in crime in Havana and the two surrounding provinces of Matanzas and Pinar del Rio... Ortiz, in his first attempt to understand the African influence in Cuba, had seized upon its most visible manifestation, the infamy of which had already been exaggerated in the popular imagination of Havana, and had formed erroneous generalizations based on this particular group. Inaccurate as this initial assessment might have been, Ortiz was a respected scholar in Cuba and his views were absorbed and assimilated by an entire generation of Cuban scholars.

Ortiz's initial postulations as a criminologist reflect the "Social Darwinian roots of his training, which posited a gradual sociophysical evolution from dark races to light." It is ironic that Afro-Cuban musical societies owe their transformation in Cuban middle/upper-class society from "witchcraft" to viable social groups with intricate and culturally important music to a man who originally posited racist views against Cuba's black population and initially wanted to eradicate the "psiquis Africana" (African psyche) to reduce crime. Ortiz changed his mind about the bad influences of the African psyche and ended up dedicating his entire life to the study of Afro-Cuban music; "there is little in his background that would account for his apparent sudden and total dedication to the study of Cuba's African population."

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20 This paragraph can be misleading, because "his views" are not necessarily limited to Los Negros Brujos. Possibly, Hagedorn was referring to all of his views—even his later views, and then impact that they had collectively.
22 Ibid. 177.
23 Ibid. 175.
24 Ibid. 174.
Ortiz himself offered comment in defense of his first book, and described his feelings about the reaction of his initial work, both from Cuba's black and white population:

This was a brief tentative study of the religious and black magic survivals of African cultures in Cuba. I revealed them as they were and not as they were thought to be: an extravagant variation of the white man's witchcraft, i.e., the thousand-year-old dealings with demons or evil spirits whose classic examples are the horrible practices of European witches who sucked children's blood and soared to their haunts on brooms. We were indeed fortunate in Cuba to learn through the first investigation of witchcraft and its mysteries that there never existed such diabolic aeronautics here, and that the so-called witchcraft in Cuba was mostly a jumble of religious practices and African magic, hagiographic legends and superstitions of Christian origin added to the vestiges of pre-Christian paganism.

My first book was generally received by the whites with benevolence, accompanied by the same condescending or disdainful smile which is often the reaction to Bertoldo's anecdotes, bar-room stories and off-color jokes, while among the colored people the only reaction was an ominous silence broken only by expressions of a restrained hostility; all this in spite of the fact that the book, [was] written with objectivity.

So far as the whites were concerned, this book on Negro religions was not a factual study, but simply "picturesque" reading, amusing at times, which even poked gentle fun at them. The Negroes looked upon it as a work written deliberately against them, since it uncovered zealously hidden secrets, cryptic beliefs and customs which, once removed from their environment, were humiliating and, so they thought, would serve to stigmatize the whole race. I was conscious of this hostility, but not intimidated by it.  

In 1943 Ortiz gave a speech in which he offered a brief history of his career and detailed the reactions he evoked among different sectors of the population. This vignette provides insight into his motivations and personality and to race relations in Cuba during the early twentieth century:

25 "This speech was delivered by Fernando Ortiz on the evening of December 12, 1942, at the Club Atenas of Havana, on receiving the title Socio de Honor (Honorary Member) from the Club. It was published originally as 'Por la integración cubana de blancos y negros' in the January 1943 edition of Ultra [1943g]. This English translation by Dr. Ben Frederick Carruthers first appeared in the Pan-American Union's October 1943 special edition of Points of View [1943r]." <http://digilib.nypl.org/dynaweb/ortiz/ortizfin>
I had hardly returned from my years of foreign university study when I began to investigate Cuban life, and this led me at once to the Negro. This was entirely natural. Without the Negro, Cuba would not be Cuba. He could not therefore be ignored. It was imperative then to study this integral element of Cuban life; but no one had ever studied him, and, indeed, it appeared that no one cared to study him. Some did not consider him worth the trouble; still others felt that to do so would arouse conflicts and unpleasantness; still others probably believed that such a study would cause the erstwhile silent voice of a guilty conscience to be heard. The least that can be said is that the study of the Negro was a heavy and laborious task, open to ridicule and yielding no profit. There was an abundant literature on slavery and its abolition and much discussion of this tragic subject, but the whole thing was clouded by hatred, myths, politics, guesswork, and flights of fancy. There were also writings in praise of... colored men who had achieved national renown in letters or in the struggle for freedom; but about the Negro as a human being, his mind, his history, his ancestral background, his languages, his arts—his positive values and social possibilities—there was nothing. It was dangerous even to speak in public about the Negro and this could be done only on the sly and under cover. It even seemed that the Negro, and especially the mulatto, wished to forget himself and to abhor his race so as not to recall its martyrdom and frustration, very much as the leper tries to conceal his misfortune. But I reaffirmed my determination and, proceeding to my study, essayed the first steps through the black jungle of what seemed to me the most characteristic of the colored element in Cuba, that is the mystery of the secret societies of African origin which still survive in our land.

Everyone talked about this, but no one really knew the truth. It seemed to be a shady business, about which there were many macabre fables and bloody tales, all of which served to spur my own interest. I even offered to a publisher, a friend of mine, a book I was to write within a year. Forty years have elapsed and the book is not yet written, notwithstanding the wealth of facts and observation I have accumulated. I began my investigations but soon realized that I, like most Cubans, was utterly confused. For it was not only the curious phenomenon of Negro Masonry that I encountered, but also a most complex mélange of religious survivals of remote cultural origin. All this with a variety of social origins, languages, music, instruments, dances, songs, traditions, legends, arts, games, and folkways; in other words, I found that the whole conglomeration of different African cultures—then virtually unknown to men of science—had been transplanted to Cuba. All of them were here in a state of confusion as a result of having been brought from one side of the Atlantic to the other and transplanted. It was as though the four centuries of slave trade had deliberately hacked out and laid waste whole mountains of black humanity and thrown the countless branches, roots, flowers and seeds, torn from all the jungles of Africa, onto the soil of Cuba.
The years went by and I continued to work, constantly writing in kindred themes. Inasmuch as there was no evidence of prejudice or contempt in my analyses and commentaries but only observations on things as they were and explanations of their ethnic origin and sociological meaning, and, since I made a point of establishing a comparison with identical or similar phenomena to be found in typical white cultures at various times and in various lands, the hostility of the colored people gradually wore off, giving way to a cautious silence and courtesy in which there was a mixture of timidity, apology, and desire to ingratiate me. They did not like the idea of my publishing such things, but they offered no tangible opposition.

"What's up this little white fellow's sleeve?" I heard this many times behind my back. Often they asked me to my face, "Why do you butt in on this Negro business? What is it to you? Wouldn't it be better not to bother with it?" About that time I had the misfortune of getting mixed up in politics. During those ten or twelve years I became very well known and popular to some extent; but every time I went to Marianao, Regla, Guanabacoa and certain neighborhoods in Havana, poking around meeting-places, religious gatherings, ñáñigo ceremonies, carnival processions, singing groups, dances, revivals and other get-togethers where the ancestral traditions of the Negro world still survive, I heard some strange new interpretation placed upon my persistent search. A liberal said, "This doctor is an opportunist who wishes to flatter the Negroes in order to get their votes!" A mulatto conservative, who pretended to be white, contributed this remark: "This liberal is doing a lot of harm to Cuba by bringing back unpleasant memories of the days of slavery." There was even a highbrow society woman who said that I frequented Negro religious gatherings attracted by the pretty devotees of Our Lady of Regla rather than by the ceremonies of her cult.

Today confidence in ethnographic research is growing in Cuba and we already have a select, conscientious, capable and farsighted minority which understands that the only sure path to complete freedom from prejudices is an acquaintance with reality based on scientific investigation and on the just appreciation of facts and circumstances.26

Ortiz organized many public performances and lectures on the topic of Afro-Cuban culture and music. His work was inspirational to many subsequent scholars,27 including his protégé, Argeliers León (1918-1991). León supported Fidel Castro’s revolution and utilized theater, music, and other areas of culture to

26 Ibid.
embody what he considered to be the egalitarian mission of the revolution—especially the eradication of class and racism. He studied and wrote music, and “was a key figure in the conceptualization and utilization of Cuba’s ‘Africanized’ folklore.”28 He studied music and culture and also taught others how to most effectively study music and culture, which helped to create and sustain the momentum of Afro-Cuban studies during the mid-twentieth century. He believed culture-sharing was a means through which to eliminate inequality, figuring that if all cultures were well educated about the others they would respect each others differences. Yet, his commitment to equality might have been epidermal. The following excerpt from an interview (Hagedorn interviewer/León interviewed) subtly demonstrates his attitude toward race:

“Enseñábamos cómo preguntar al Negro sobre cosas muy íntimas, muy adentro... cómo forjar preguntas a alguien muy diferente que nosotros... cómo organizar y analizar el dato” (We were teaching how to ask the black man about very private, personal things... how to formulate questions for someone very different from ourselves... how to organize and analyze data).29 [the seminar was in 1960-1]

León distinctly identifies two different groups: “the black man” and “ourselves.” From a postmodern viewpoint, “ourselves acts as the subject while “the black man” represents the “Other.” The word “ourselves” suggests that his students were not black, which is important because in Cuba, like in Africa (with the exception of researchers such as Mbiti and Akpabot) most cultural studies of Africa were conducted by non-Africans.

28 Hagedorn, Divine Utterances, 138.
29 Ibid. 138. Interview with León on Oct. 18, 1990.
Regardless of his intentions, León had good reason to formulate a specific method to interview Santeros, Paleros, and Abakua members. Most practitioners, regardless of their skin color, are very sensitive about certain secret rites, such as initiation. The following excerpt comes from an interview I conducted (Sept., 2002) with a Yoruba priestess from New York (Yoruba is a form of Cuban Santería in the U.S.):

E.B.: Do you have a close relationship with your head oricha?
V: Head oricha?
E.B.: Your oricha.
V: Oh yes. I pray to her every day, every day. I think about her all the time.
E.B.: Who is she?
V.: Yemoja.  
E.B.: What are her characteristics?
V.: She’s a mother.
E.B.: What are her colors, and what substances does she own?
V.: Blue and crystal. She owns the water—but not sweet water. Still, before the water was sweet water it was regular water, and she owned it then.
E.B.: Did you have to shave your head?
V.: -pause- Let me tell you something; lets just get this out in the open, I’m not gonna answer any questions about initiation. Nothing about initiation, nothing about rituals.  

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30 V., a Yoruba priestess (wished to remain anonymous) from New York City, interview with author, Indiana, PA., 14 September 2002.
31 This is the spelling of the oricha’s name as advised by the interviewee.
32 V., Yoruba priestess interview.
Things were going well until I brought up head-shaving, which is usually a part of initiation. It was not a question that I intended to ask her, but halfway through the interview I became curious. I had read about initiation rites (including head-shaving) in a book, and I reasoned that if it was published information I could feel comfortable talking about it in an interview. I was not expecting her harsh response, and after I asked that question, a negative ambience presided. Her attitude towards me became more defensive, and for a few moments I felt as if I was interrogating her. After that experience I more fully understood why León felt it was necessary to teach people how to interview Afro-Cuban religious practitioners.

León’s wife, Maria Teresa Linares, also conducted extensive research in the field of Cuban folkmusic and musicology. The couple encountered problems with “secret” information even after they created a methodology with which to interview Afro-Cuban religious practitioners. In 1964 musicologists organized a public performance of an Abakuá initiation ceremony. “It sparked a few fistfights between those religious practitioners in the audience who felt that the informants gave away too many secrets.”

Linares witnessed (and suffered from) a major conflict during her directorship of Havana’s folkloric musical group (CFNC). One member, Miguel Valdés, made less money than other members because, according to her standards, he did not qualify for the higher pay. Valdés possessed bitter animosity towards Linares. Possibly his complete hatred stemmed from the low

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33 Hagedorn, Divine Utterances, 139.
34 Ibid. 142.
salary he was receiving, or it could have stemmed from race or from gender roles (i.e. possibly his machismo was insulted when a woman placed him at the lower end of a pay-scale), or any mixture of these stimuli. In any case, he entered her office and fired seven close-range shots at her. Amazingly, none were fatal.  

Linares contributed to her profession with her leadership and penmanship. She directed several organizations that promoted Afro-Cuban music and she also produced an Anthology of Cuban Music. The near-death experience, however, might possibly have had some effects on her research and writing.

Why does Afro-Cuban music and culture generate interest?

In reference to Afro-Cuban religions, Eugenio Matibag states that this part of “culture had been ignored or subject to frequent ethnocentric misunderstanding.” When he uses the term “ethnocentric misunderstanding,” he probably refers to the lack of an objective third party. Practitioners invest faith in their studies and base their results on certain religious assumptions, while non-practitioners do not accept the religious Grand Narratives that are integrated in their studies. Higher numbers of European or non-African scholars conduct their research on (but are not immersed in) Afro-Cuban religions, and approach it from a foreign point of view. Matibag continues stating that the “systematic study” of Afro-Cuban elements is “only just the beginning” and that the “literature [referring to the cultural literature—music, dance, oral tradition—of Afro-Cuban religions] will impress generations of scholars not only with its beauty and

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35 For a more detailed description of this event, see Hagedorn. 160-165.
evocative power but also with its intellectual challenge to Eurocentric modes of reading culture." Hagedorn presents evidence that supports Matibag’s prediction that Afro-Cuban literature will impress scholars—at least in the United States—when she mentions that:

In the United States during just the last few years, nationwide tours of such popular Cuban bands as Buena Vista Social Club and Irakere have sold out weeks in advance, and in April 1999 the Afro-Cuban All Stars appeared on A Prairie Home Companion... the overwhelming success of both groups as well as of Wim Winders’s film Buena Vista Social Club has allowed individual band members to sign with major international record labels. The peculiarly American fascination with those parts of the world that are politically and economically off-limits has made Cuban cultural products something of a cult in the United States.  

Matibag referred to religious literature impressing scholars, while Hagedorn referred to secular music’s success in U.S. pop-culture, yet both implied that some aspect of Afro-Cuban music is/will generate interest in the United States. Hagedorn attributes this to U.S. fascination in “off-limits” cultures, while Matibag attributes the interest to beauty and evocative power in the music/literature itself.

In essence, both reasons for U.S. fascination are correct, and together they reveal parallel movements of growing popularity of Afro-Cuban culture in academia and pop-culture.

Another reason for interest in Afro-Cuban culture is fascination with the (supposed) preserved African culture that has survived for centuries on the island. In the United States, most communities/groups of people who are descendants of Africans have not retained the African culture of their ancestors to the extent that it has been retained in Cuba. While certain musical aspects of African music have

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37 Ibid.
38 Hagedorn, Divine Utterances. 10.
been utilized in U.S. music such as jazz, hip-hop, etc., specific music
(instrumentation and orchestration) from Africa has not, on the whole, been
preserved. Likewise, while certain linguistic features have contributed to the
vernacular language used today, specific African languages have not been
preserved. In Cuba, these phenomenon exist (on some level) and generate
interest, especially among U.S. scholars where the phenomenon do not exist.
Cubans can speak in African languages and play some of the same songs their
African ancestors passed down to them.\textsuperscript{39} Christopher Waterman admits that his
interest in Afro-Latin American culture stems from the preservation of African
culture:

Pursuing an avid interest in African-American culture history, I was struck
by the prominence of Yoruba terminology and concepts in neo-African
religious traditions of the Caribbean and South America. What, I
wondered, might account for the apparent dominance of Yoruba patterns
in the theology and practice of Cuban Santeria and Bahian\textsuperscript{40} candomblé?
Who were these people anyway?\textsuperscript{41}

U.S. interest in Afro-Cuban culture blossomed in part as a result of the
Cuban revolution that occurred under Fidel Castro. This can be examined in John
Amira and Steven Cornelius’ case study on Cuban bata drumming in New York,
where they trace themes and identify the key participants of early interest in

\textsuperscript{39} This might be a result of the small size of Cuba in comparison to the Southern United States—it
is easier for families to get lost from each other in the vast continent of North America than on the
island of Cuba.

\textsuperscript{40} The term “Bahian” refers to Bahia—a region in Brazil (that includes the city of Salvador) where
people practice candomblé. Bira, the percussionist (quoted earlier) who said “Africans come to
Brazil to discover what they lost” is from Bahia.

\textsuperscript{41} Waterman, Jújú, 1.
Santerian music. This important vignette from their book provides vital information for analysis:

Batá drumming was introduced into the NY community by Cuban drummers in the late 50's. While at that time there was already a strong Afro-Cuban presence in the commercial music business, ritual drumming finds its roots with Julio Collazo. With the exception of a very select group of musicians that Collazo eventually taught, the first New York drummers could not follow the traditional method. Instead, they used a combination of sources; watching and listening to the isolated examples that Collazo played, studying published transcriptions, and transcribing material from commercially available recorded examples.

The books of Cuban scholar Fernando Ortiz were very important in the early stages of NY batá performance. Ortiz published a number of volumes in the 1950's which provided a massive amount of general information about the music of Santeria, including transcriptions of a major portion of the batá repertory. While the transcriptions are problematic, they provide insights into the musical structure and therefore became an important source of information for NY musicians. Using the general map the transcriptions provided, musicians then went to various sound recordings and began to work out the intricacies of batá drumming for themselves.

Even at the beginning of the 1970's there were probably no more than three or four batá groups performing in the New York metropolitan area. However, in the mid-1970's interest boomed. Santeria was becoming known to a broader cross-section of the population, and this was reflected in the attention that the music was receiving.

The next stage in New York batá drumming began with the Mariel boat lift of 1980. Many of the arriving immigrants initially claimed (falsely) to be important and knowledgeable ritual drummers in Cuba. However, they were surprised to find an active, well established and remarkably informed New York music scene. Therefore, of these new arrivals, only the best were able to maintain themselves within the musical community.

One of the major consequences of the Mariel immigration was a loosening up of performance style. New York musicians were suddenly confronted with a drumming style considerably less rigid than that which they themselves had come to play. No longer confined by relatively static sources of information..., new innovations were assimilated into New York performance.

42 In this work they also transcribed and recorded the main body of batá literature, which has become a widely used and respected source of information. It is one of the few sources of its kind.

43 This vignette is edited—I excluded some sentences that were irrelevant for this study.
When New York musicians began learning and performing amongst themselves in the 1960’s and 70’s, any musician who was tenacious enough could probably have gotten the opportunity to learn to play, for batá drumming was approached primarily in terms of musical knowledge rather than sacred formula. However, this situation began to change as the local musicians became more involved in liturgical performance. By playing for actual ceremonies drummers discovered a new range of possibilities, they learned to manipulate the musical and ritual factors under their control and thereby began to regulate the process of spirit possession. No longer was this just “drumming,” rather, the music of the batá drums was once again sounding its highest potential—it was invoking the orichas. This direct confrontation and integration of the music with the sacred broadened the musicians’ overall perspective from a sonic focus to a view more in line with Santería’s cosmology.

Throughout the world, sacred music tends to be more resistant to change than does secular music. This is also the case for New York batá drumming where because of the sacred nature of the salute rhythms, personal creativity must follow the dictates of religious conception. The limits for change are defined by tradition (although actually borders are hazy) and if a performer is seen as moving outside of these confines, the music can no longer be what it must.44

Amira and Cornelius tell us that one individual (Collazo) transplanted an entire musical culture, but that he was selective in doing so, with his conscious choice to teach small numbers of students who met his standards. Collazo did not wish to spread his music to the multitudes, he wanted to protect the sacredness of batá music by only revealing its secrets to certain people with approved motivations. Collazo was not a musical evangelist seeking reaffirmation in popularity and numbers, but rather a musical preserver seeking to avoid the cheapening of his musical-religious knowledge. The early batá drummers who were denied apprenticeship under Collazo (or who did not seek it) learned the music from recordings and Ortiz’s written sources. By bypassing the important

apprentice-teacher relationship in the batá drumming process the musicians secularized the music and played it outside of its intended context.

In ritual batá drumming females are prohibited from performing. Today, they are allowed to play unconsecrated drums that are played solely for secular gatherings. Apparently, the female menstrual cycle interferes with the powerful "aña" inside of sacred batá drums, and so a woman who plays the drums cannot speak to the orichas. In fact, a woman who merely touches consecrated batá destroys their potential to communicate with the orichas by robbing them of ache. Hagedorn cites the possibility of "the notion of menstruation being a type of cleansing that men desperately need but never get (hence, men have to play bata drums)." Amira and Cornelius state that in New York, the "tenacious" musician could learn to play—a term that does not exclude women. Women performers further secularized batá drumming.

Amira and Cornelius make it clear that when batá first came to New York they were secularized by non-practitioners. They also make a reference to the scant popularity of being a batá drummer when they mention that only about four groups (of three players) were playing in the 1970's; which means that after about 20 years of Collazo's presence in New York, only twelve people were actively performing. They then relate a surge in interest in the seventies—possibly a result of the growing popularity of drums among the hippie counterculture. The Mariel boat lift altered the direction of batá drumming: it forced Cubans to compete with non-Cubans for drummer positions, it brought a new wealth of knowledge to add upon the transcriptions of Ortiz and the limited-availability of Collazo's

information, it reaffirmed and strengthened the Santerian religion in New York, and it left some empty holes in Cuba's bata drumming community.

This case study is important not only for the information about the transfer of sacred bata music from Cuba to New York, but because it provides a model from which we can make hypotheses about the transfer of sacred music from one cultural region to another. Since little is known regarding the transfer of bata music from Africa to Cuba during the colonial period, we can look at what happened between Cuba and New York and posit some generalizations. Although there are few constants (i.e. the forced migration of Africans to Cuba barely resembles the voluntary migrations of the Mariel boat lift) it is a possible point of departure.

One possible hypothesis might be that one or two bata drummers from Africa were taken as slaves during the initial waves of the colonial period. Just as Collazo, practically by himself, transplanted a wealth of bata drum knowledge to an entirely new place, these bata drummers from Africa might have done the same thing. The "static" environment that Amira describes in New York due to having only a few sources of information may have been invigorated by Africans who arrived as slaves long after the original few transplanted bata drum culture. Amira also describes an initial move from sacred to secular. Perhaps Cuba confronted the same issues in the colonial period, and musicians countered this trend by further retreating into musical secrecy and relying completely on a long-term apprentice system between master-drummer and student, which resulted in
the secret and difficult-to-access environment of batá music that Ortiz
encountered in the early twentieth century.

Furthermore, the studies of Lopez Valdez\(^6\) show that the Bantu tribe was
represented in numbers more than the Yoruba tribe (Bantu: 400,000 slaves;
Yoruba, 275,000 slaves), yet Yoruba music (Santerian music) flourished and
Bantu music did not.\(^7\) Santeria became very popular: Perhaps the sacredness of
the drums and their potential to speak with divine orichas combined with the
selective musician apprenticeship served to make early Cuban Santería extremely
fascinating and attractive among the assortment of African religions that were
found among the various representatives from Africa. Furthermore, during the
colonial period perhaps the constant renewal of musical knowledge and energy
forced musicians from Cuba and those newly arrived from Africa to compete with
one another and keep the level of skill fairly high, just as Amira described the
same conflict among Cuban batá drummers who came during the Mariel boat lift
and discovered that they could not compete with New York batá drummers. In
fact, perhaps the Mariel boat lift could be compared with the surge of slaves that
arrived in Cuba during the early nineteenth century due to the British occupation
of Havana (discussed further in the chapter on race and slavery).

\(^6\) These statistics are not entirely reliable. Firstly, they are from the internet. Secondly, Valdez
claims that 1.3 million slaves landed alive in Cuba, which is almost twice as many slaves as the
currently accepted number of 702,000.

\(^7\) Lopez, Valdez. Lecture: "Ethnic Influences in Cuba Resulting from the History of the African
Slave Trade to Cuba." 1992. As found on www.batadrums.com
The Word "Afro-Cuban": Where did it come from?

My initial hypothesis about the word origin of "Afro-Cuban" was based on location; someone must have made the observation that Africans and/or their descendants were making music in Cuba, hence the name Afro-Cuban. I assumed the observer put the two words together and the name stuck. In actuality, however, the name functioned as a political term to persuade Cuba's white population that the black population (or African population) was indeed Cuban.

The first probable person to use the term afrocubana was Antonio de Veitia. But in Ortiz's previously mentioned book, Hampa afro-cubana: Los negros brujos, the term afrocubana first gained widespread use. Ortiz mentions that,

In this book I introduced the expression "Afro-Cuban," thereby avoiding the risk of using designations tainted with prejudice and moreover exactly defining the dual origin of the social phenomena I had set out to study. This word had already been used in Cuba in 1847... but it had not been incorporated into common parlance as is the case today.

Much thought went into this word choice. Ortiz used the word "Afro" to represent the African "origin" of the music and "Cuban" to represent the Cuban "origin." Africa and Cuba are both landmasses, but Ortiz used "Afro" to represent a few specific musical culture qualifiers that slaves brought to Cuba from Africa, and he used "Cuban" to represent—not the Cuban land mass or Cuban musical culture qualifiers—but the "national" Cuban culture which, he felt, should include the black population. The word choice was designed by him to explicitly draw the African population (or population descended from Africans) into the realm of Cuban nationalism; in other words, he chose a name that forced Euro-Cubans to accept Africans and their descendants as legitimate Cubans. The
term “afrocubana” was utilized as a lobbying tool—the motive was political.

Ortiz also used the term judiciously to fulfill his own personal goals as an ethnographer: it avoided the alienation of his informants. He knew that a word tainted with social prejudice that he would increase difficulty in continuing work among those he had degraded. He also felt that he would understate the importance of Afro-Cuban music and culture if he did not force people to accept it through its name.

Rather than basing his reasoning on the nationality of those who invented the music he created his name according to the nature of race relations in early twentieth-century Cuba. His decision to use the name could be seen as groundbreaking in terms of race relations in the early twentieth century. His choice according to today’s values, however, has only perpetuated racial tension in Cuba by cementing the African population to the music genre. “Afro” has ceased to mean “musical cultural qualifier from Africa” and instead means “black,” while “Cuba” continues to refer to a national culture. The name has made it difficult for black people to accept white people who play Afro-Cuban music, and it has also made it difficult for white people to accept black people who play non-Afro-Cuban music.

Chapter Summary

In review of the main points: Waterman laid out the foundation for the theory that music is directly related to its regions economic and political superstructures. African ethnomusicology is relatively scant, selective, and regional. The Ortizian Afro-Cuban ethnomusicology is Western-biased. Today,
Afro-Cuban music generates international interest mainly due to globalization and commercialism. One of the most important contemporary carriers of Afro-Cuban music to the U.S. is the Buena Vista Social Club. Because people left Cuba after Fidel Castro took over, the revolution helped Afro-Cuban music to flourish outside of Cuba. After leaving Cuba, Afro-Cuban music (specifically bata music) transformed from sacred to secular, and then back to sacred music. Ortiz coined the term "afrocubana" as a politician, and he used it as political term.

What does all this have to do with the problems of Afro-Cuban music?

The name Afro-Cuban, therefore, has little to do with academic nomenclature. Instead, it was a political term born out of racial tension and personal motivation. The name might be a cause for the perpetuation of racial tension, and it has been used as political fuel by Castro's government. Since then, the name has been used commercially by secular groups who possess little or no sensitivity to academic nomenclature when promoting their music.

The name is not derived from the actual music, which make sit easy to place any music under its title. The name is instead derived from the people who originally played and studies the music—which has psychologically limited who can play and study the music.
Chapter Two

*Philosophy of the Argument*
Music is Music is Music.

In an ultimate and fundamental sense, *music is music*—who cares what people call it? Yet essentially, the music itself should determine what name it carries. The problem occurs when the name determines—for whatever reasons (political, commercial, or social)—what kind of music it defines. In the case of Afro-Cuban music, the name seems to have governed the course the music has taken. Attempts to keep the music “Afro” or to keep it “Cuban” have ultimately resulted in a dichotomy of insiders and outsiders. The stipulations for being an insider or an outsider have no foundations in musical style or music in general. Rather, they lie in skin color, gender, political affiliations, country of citizenship, and religious affiliations.

A search for the legitimacy of a name

What’s in a name? My great great grandfather’s last name signified his profession and helped the community distinguish him from others with the same first name. A name once betrayed one’s birthplace and line of work. In the post-Industrial and Technological Revolution Age, however, the need for an information-filled name has become obsolete and the function of a name has changed. Today, numbers—such as area codes, social security, zip codes, and credit card numbers—divulge our location, profession, and much more. Currently, names function only to attract one’s attention, or as labels for easy referencing.
Descriptive names for people are no longer necessary, or at least no longer as necessary as they once were. The opposite is true with many objects, places, genres, ideas, and products. "Light switches," "book bags," "tooth brushes," "Arizona," "The Clapper," "Contact Lenses," "Bicycle," "Evolution," and "Utilitarianism," are just a few examples of extremely informative non-human household names.

In the scholarly world, names should reflect the ideas/genres that they represent. They should not be arbitrary. Psychology, Social Studies, Criminology, Physics, and Musicology are all efficient and informative names of scholarly fields. Specifically, the field of Ethnomusicology represents several musical styles, types, and genres, all of which are descriptively named. It would be deceptive and illogical for a musicologist to label a music genre with a random name or a name that has little or nothing to do with the genre being represented. If a businessperson, journalist, or politician were given the chance to name a musical genre (or any genre outside of their expertise) that person might have ulterior and self-preserving motivations or inexperience and a lack of field-related knowledge that might lead the individual to mis-represent the genre.

Currently, the field of Ethnomusicology includes the music genre "Afro-Cuban music," a name given by a politician and confirmed by politicians, militants, and commercial organizations. Yet, to avoid certain counter arguments, perhaps there are flaws in the name itself, and not just the namers.

The name "Afro-Cuban" references two specific places—Africa and Cuba. Do these place names hold significance, and if so, why? Is there an

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48 Baroque, Romantic, Atonal, Chance music.
“African” music type, representative of all music on the continent? Has the meaning of “African music” changed since the 1500’s? Has the meaning of “African” changed since the 1500’s? Should the many diverse cultures that people the continent be generalized? Should their music? If so, should it be accurately cross-referenced when referring to some music performed in Cuba?

What’s in a document? Comparing the paper trails of Europe and Africa

How can we attempt to classify music into genres and types? Much “Western” music began as a composer’s original musical idea, as an expansion or transcription of an orally passed-down piece of music, or as musical accompaniment to text. The composer then documented the musical idea with commonly understood notation symbols (staffs, note heads, stems, dynamic and phrase markings, etc.) that allow sounds engendered in the imagination to be similarly recreated in the physical world. A pianist playing a Beethoven piano sonata has virtually the same notational tools today as a musician would have had 100 years ago. The musical documentation allows little room for doubt about Beethoven’s musical intentions. We can zoom out from the case-examination of Beethoven’s musical documents, add them to most other Western musical documents, and find characteristics that we can use to subdivide and categorize. For instance, key signatures, the dominant tonal center, and the beginning and ending chords of a document facilitate determining the key of a specific piece. If documentation did not exist it would be difficult, if not impossible, for a musician

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49 For example, inspiration from playing an instrument or hearing one, hearing a song in one’s head and writing it out according to Western notational and harmonic rules, or a product of a practice piece, such as a mock piece or an exercise in counterpoint or canon.

50 Gregorian chants make up the base of many “new” songs.
today to assert knowledge of Beethoven's original intentions. Oral and aural transmission of ideas are not reliable due to the whisper-down-the-lane effect. Imagine if one person heard Beethoven play and imitated the piece; then another person imitates the imitator—a note gets changed, a chord alteration occurs, perhaps the piece is transposed, the phrasing and tempo may mutate, some ideas are forgotten, some added. One hundred years later the final result might be beyond even the composers recognition.

Notation and documentation allow scholars to formulate historical hypothesis about music and music origins. As every historian knows, without documents, any attempt to establish a scholarly argument involves a certain amount of unreliable guesswork. "Prehistory" encompasses all human activity before documents and anthropologists provide prehistoric information. In Western music, notated musical documents exist from as early as 100 C.E.\(^51\) In Africa, the study of music history begins much later in time. E. Jefferson Murphy notes that "By about the eighth century, when the earliest written records appear, a thriving trans-Saharan trade system had been developed."\(^52\) In most civilizations, the birth of writing seems to correspond with the birth of large-scale trade.

Hagedorn quoted Karen Smith when she relates that "on the basis of glottochronological evidence, the Yoruba [A West African culture] language is between five and six thousand years old... [but] written evidence of the reigns of


kings or the wars that they fought is lacking until the early sixteenth century."

Because of the importance of lineage and its implications for inheritance and marriage-union rules, lineage lines are usually one of the first aspects of society (second to trade) to be recorded among societies that begin to transform language into written symbols. Since the earliest written records are from the eighth century, and Yoruba royal lineages were just beginning to be recorded in the early 1500’s then the transfer of musical ideas into notation must have occurred much later, and probably not without Europe’s already-systematized notation influence.

Even if certain societies in West Africa were developing musical notation just before the height of the slave trade, the African slaves in Latin America had neither the time, supplies, energy, nor motivation to notate music. In fact, there are no existing musical documents that supply evidence that Cuban slaves notated or had a notation system for preserving music. When did someone first notate “Afro-Cuban” music? When did Afro-Cuban music history begin, and how much information about Afro-Cuban music is merely guesswork from prehistoric anthropologic sources such as aural and oral history?

A large part of being a musician trained in the Western style is learning to read, understand, and write music. In West Africa, and subsequently in Latin American communities that have been influenced by West African culture, music is learned aurally and not read from notated symbols on paper. The music and musicians exist independent of documents. When examining Africa’s musical past, evidence of a performance exists only if music was transcribed by an outside

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54 Quite near the time when the Portuguese began coastal trade with West Africa (1450’s).
source (or by an inside source who read and wrote Western music notation).\textsuperscript{55} Documents record an event but are not necessary for the musical event to exist because the music would have been performed regardless of whether the music was notated or transcribed. The concept of music existing without documents is foreign to a Wagnerian opera (that can last hours) in which the breadth, length, and stamina of the performance requires documents—the performers need to learn their lines from documents, the musicians need to read the constantly changing music from a document in order to know what to play, and the conductor needs to have a stable and unchanging guideline (score) to follow in order to lead the performance.

Since one type of music relies on documents for a performance and another can and usually does carry on without documents, and since history is the study of documents, can the history and prehistory of each type of music depend on the same stipulations for documents? In other words, since the music is not supposed to be written down and thereby does not have documents, does West African music have no history; is it considered "prehistoric?" Or, should it be exempt from document-requirement? Might there be a method (undiscovered by Westerners, but practiced by African and some Latin American musicians) to remember large amounts of complex music without the aid of documents? (Perhaps, similar to methods used by epic poem reciters, or the mathematical methods of raga construction utilized by Indian tabla drummers). Is the memorized and aurally-passed-down music simpler than Western music in an

\textsuperscript{55} During the past 75 years, however, recording devices have decreased the speculative guesswork in transcriptions.
aspect (form, technique, execution) that allows it to exist without documents? Or, is the memorized andaurally-passed-down music *supposed* to change and mutate through each musician with each interpretation and each performance? Hagedorn describes the experience of a Santerian batá drummer-apprentice as learning “how to perform differently from one’s teacher.” How does the concept of constant rebirth affect the manner in which Western-schooled musicologists can evaluate and study the history of Afro-Cuban music?

Western music is essentially a musical idea born in the composer and written down on paper in musical notation. A Western musician can read the notation, play the musical idea, and independently recreate the composer’s idea. The idea, however, is always interpreted through a literary and symbolic mean. The following graph sequentially reveals what happens when a composer performs a musical idea that students mimic (void of notation).

When students play from documents, however, there is no aural perception of the composer’s original musical idea. Instead, music is conceptualized within the boundaries of notation and reborn without the “spirit” or “force” that inspired the original musical idea in the composer. The Western composer’s challenge,

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therefore, is to articulate the musical idea as precisely as possible within the realm
of standard musical notation to get a result as close as possible to his or her idea.
Still, no matter how articulate the music is symbolically represented on paper,
something is always missing; the idea can never be fully captured due to the non-
encompassing nature of ideas and the restrictive nature of symbols.

This idea is comparable to Plato's Analogy of the Cave. Consider, for
instance, does the musician who plays free of notation play music closer to the
forms that exist outside of the cave? Does the musician who plays from notation
play music that can be compared to the shadows of the physical
conceptualizations of the forms that are cast on the walls of the cave? This
ideological debate resembles linguistic debates, and might be more easily
understood to a non-musician through the medium of language. Do thoughts exist
independent of language? (yes) Can the most basic and original thoughts—which
are interpreted by us through our language—be accurately represented by words,
which can be interpreted by the listener in so many different ways? Is non-
notated music comparable to an original thought passed from one musician to
another, and is notated music comparable to a mere linguistic representation of
the original thought? Furthermore, does the process of reading music rob the
musician of concentration and energy that could be used to infuse the musical
idea with some/more original thought?

Musical notation (the emphasis on written scores) is so important because
it has been used as fuel to challenge the integrity of non-Western music. Afro-
Cuban music has been described as primitive, in part because notation has been
used as a characterization of a higher level of civilization, and also because of the religious, racial, and class associations that generally accompany non-Western music. Within some areas of discipline, such African studies and anthropology, there are scholars pitted against Classical music critics and Western-schooled musicians in a struggle for supremacy between notated and non-notated music. Each school, for their own reasons, touts their form of music as superior to the other. Take for instance, a recent article published in The National Review, in which Jason Steorts attempts to undermine the foundation of the field of Ethnomusicology by declaring “the fact that the West has a Beethoven is something of which we should be unabashedly proud. Those who teach in our colleges and conservatories would do well to recognize this—and to disabuse themselves of the idea that all music is created equal.” Steorts also mentions that non-Western music contributes to the growth of Western music, but non-Western music is inferior to Western music. Perhaps Steorts was responding to a small circle of radical ethnomusicologists, but despite his intentions, he is mistaken in his assumption that all ethnomusicologists find all music equal and that there are no universal standards for sorting “good” art from “bad” art. I agree with Steorts that we should be immensely proud of Beethoven, but might there possibly be an undiscovered Beethoven in the non-Western world, and shouldn't he or she be searched for?

Much time and energy—that could be spent studying music of all types—is, in my opinion, wasted on deciding which type of music is “better.” For my purposes, the tense relationship between notated Western “art” music and

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functional non-Western religious/folk music is pertinent to the study of Cuban
music because both types of music collided with great force in Cuba.
Additionally, I feel a personal need—as a Western-trained musician—to justify
my interest in non-Western music. I fully understand how an uninformed
Western musician might consider non-notated music (or a paper written about it)
a waste of time—in fact, before I began studying Afro-Cuban music “hand 
drumming” conjured up images of ten unkempt hippies sitting in a drum circle.
Authentic drummers, however, play in much different atmospheres and study
more intensely than the average street drummer.

This paper assumes that “good” non-notated Afro-Cuban music might
possibly have just as much integrity as “good” Western classical music and that
notation does not indicate a higher level of musical sophistication. From my
Western-schooled point of view, musical notation has allowed Westerners to
approach the realization and actualization of complex musical ideas of genius
composers (Beethoven, Mozart, Wagner) which, without notation, would
otherwise remain hidden in an inaccessible area of the human brain. But perhaps
musical notation has also kept Westerners from the realization and actualization
of the musician’s own musical ideas that are hidden in an accessible area of the
brain. Perhaps there is no debate over which type of music is better. Perhaps
there is simply a clash between two different types of musical intelligence. The
central question is: should the results of two different types of musical
intelligence be compared and categorized together under the same paradigm and
hierarchy of values? And should a notation-oriented Western scholar accurately
categorize or evaluate Afro-Cuban music? Would Beethoven trust a Santerian batá drummer to formulate a system under which to categorize or evaluate Western art music?

Musical Taxonomy: What is it based on? What should it be based on?

Kingdom-Phylum-Class-Order-Family-Genus-Species is an accepted and scientifically logical method used to taxonomize every living creature on Earth. In this extensive and specific method of categorizing life forms, one interesting ingredient is left out: place. A rhinoceros is still a rhinoceros whether it resides in China, Japan, Africa, Alaska, or Iceland. Its name does not change if it runs over an invisible border. Music, unlike animal classification, seems to have ties to locations (such as “Afro-Cuban” music). An examination of music’s relationship to place should be attempted in order to better understand Afro-Cuban music.

Geographic Features and Political Entities

First, we must distinguish between geographic features (mountains, continents, lakes) and political entities (countries, towns, properties).

Geographic: If it can be scientifically determined that the majority of a certain type of music is composed and performed in a certain geographic area, sometimes that music is named after the place (ex.- Andean flute music, Caribbean music, Afro-Cuban music). These geographic namesakes, however, are meaningless because geography is independent of music. Most likely, no name “stuck” to these types of music when they were invented, so the easiest way
for people to refer to them happened to be by referring to the place in which they originated or became popular.

It is true that geography can determine what kind of plants, trees, or animals flourish in a certain area, which will in turn influence the instruments made and who can play them. Geography also affects climate, which can determine how long instruments last, how tonally precise they are, how standard their pitch can be, and what types of materials can be used to make them. Geography (such as scenic mountains, rainy climate, dark forests, and large lakes) can also inspire certain musical sounds, ideas, or ambiances; for example, rain might inspire musicians to create objects that imitate the sounds of rain (rain sticks); flute-like instruments may mimic the calls of local birds, etc. The Abakua ekue drum, for instance, imitates the sound of a fish: “The sound of ekue symbolizes the magic voice of Tanze the fish.”

The decision to make a tree into a drum, a reed into a flute, to play or sing a certain melody might be influenced by geography, but human creativity was the essential force behind the instrument production or the melodic construction. Different people can use the same resources to make many different things, and while geography may have inspired the human to make music, the human chose to make music, and geography is merely a resource-contributing factor.

Political: Political locations are more unstable and arbitrary than most geographic locations. Charles Seeger states that “Practically all the composed
music we know... was composed within the political boundaries of nations,“^{59} and that “all music made in what we call a ‘nation’ is national—even music that claims to be neither.”^{60} Although almost all musics are “national” according to Seeger, naming music genres after nations is problematic.

Let us hypothetically consider a system of nomenclature in which the names of music genres and types are determined according to the political boundaries in which they originated. This process would not take into consideration the political boundaries in which the composer or musicians were born or naturalized. Take, for instance, a composer in Poland and a composer in Ecuador. They each write a piece for a percussion ensemble based on a particular rhythmic motive. They happen to pick the same motif and the pieces happen to be exactly the same. In this case, one piece of music created by two different people in two different countries was etched into existence at approximately the same time. Though the odds are slim, consider how many songs are similar to each other but composed by different people in different countries who had never been exposed to one another. Would the resulting piece then be classified as Polish and Ecuadorian music simultaneously? The problem with relying on location for music-type names lies in the tendency to ignore the music and focus instead on political boundaries.

We might further consider the fragile and ever-shifting nature of national border lines. In the last 200 years alone hundreds of border changes have

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^{60} Ibid. 196.
occurred: Poland, Uruguay, Germany, France, Texas, California, Hawaii, Cuba, Brazil, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, and almost all areas of the Caribbean and South America, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Russia, Vietnam, Korea, Israel, Alaska. The Kingdom-Phylum-Class-Order-Family-Genus-Species method of categorizing organisms avoids the mess of placing territory names on living things—why should we rely on such a fragile and politically-dependant classification system for music?

The significance of music, musicians', and composers' inter-cultural travel

If music is composed by a Nigerian while in Nigeria, and performed by Nigerian musicians in Nigeria, the music might be referred to by scholars as “Nigerian music” on the basis that the music was invented and performed by Nigerians in Nigeria (see example No 1. on the following page). Suppose that these musicians went to Austria and performed the music there. The music might still be referred to as “Nigerian” music because the music was composed by Nigerians in Nigeria, and performed by Nigerians. While “Nigerian Music” might currently be an accepted name, I disagree on grounds of globalization. To demonstrate my point, I will complicate the situation to a few different degrees:

Suppose those Nigerian musicians who performed in Austria happened to go to the Opera house and hear Don Giovanni. Would that musical experience affect the way that the Nigerians went about performing the so-called “Nigerian” music? If it did, even in the slightest bit, then the “Nigerian” music could no longer be completely and purely “Nigerian” music.
Now suppose that a Nigerian composed music while in Paris, then returned to Nigeria where the music was performed by Nigerians (see diagram No 2). Some scholars might assert that if the composer utilized Nigerian musical influences while in Paris, and since the music was still performed by Nigerians in Nigeria, then yes, the music could be called "Nigerian" music. But did the music experienced by the composer in Paris have any effect at all on the music that was composed while in Paris? Now suppose that the Nigerian composed music in Paris and Nigerians performed it in Paris (see No. 3). Since all of the composition and performance elements are Nigerian, it could possibly be considered "Nigerian" music. However, would the music be different, however slightly, if the composer and musicians incorporated Parisian musical experiences into their performance?

Now let us suppose that a Nigerian composes music in Nigeria and it is performed in Nigeria by Parisians (see No. 3). In this case, the performers are not Nigerian and it is possible that they will not be able to perform the music to the same level of intricacy and understanding than the Nigerian musicians (who probably better understand the musical nuances due to exposure). Some scholars might ascertain that the music is still Nigerian music, since the composer is Nigerian and the music was composed and performed in Nigeria. But suppose a Parisian composed music while in Nigeria, which was performed by Nigerians in Nigeria. Because of the Parisian composer's country of nationalization the music might be classified as Parisian music, or Pari-Nigerian music, but it also might still be classified as Nigerian music. Suppose further that a Mongolian composer
(raised in Brazil) wrote music while in Japan and Australia, which received performances by Austrians and Canadians while in Mexico. Should be call the music Mongolian? Brazilian? Mongo-Brazilian?

The following page demonstrates music and globalization graphically:
### One degree of Globalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ex. No. 1</th>
<th>Nigerian</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Composition</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Performance</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Two degrees of Globalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ex. No. 2</th>
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<th>Parisian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Composition</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Performance</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ex. No. 3</th>
<th>Nigerian</th>
<th>Parisian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Composition</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location of Performance</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ex. No. 4</th>
<th>Nigerian</th>
<th>Parisian</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Location of Composition</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location of Performance</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7 degrees of globalization, with more factors taken into consideration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. 5</th>
<th>Mongolian</th>
<th>Brazilian</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Austria</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composer’s Naturalization</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Musician</td>
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<td>Location of Composition</td>
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<td>Location of Performance</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
When it comes to naming music after politically-boundaried territories, where should we draw the line? I propose that we should not draw any line and avoid the argument entirely by avoiding place-names for music. We could analyze this data and come to a conclusion that in each example, the column with the most checks should be the name-sake location. Mathematically, it seems logical, but the analysis is so far-removed from the music that to use this data to determine a name would be ridiculous. Not only does this classification have little to do with actual music, but each factor in the left had column has different percentages of value. For instance, usually music is classified as whatever column the check mark is in under “composer naturalization,” but even this method does not account for globalization, composer influences, and personal style and taste. The following chapters are written with the assumption that music should not be classified according to locations of composers or musicians, nor should it be classified according to other arbitrary qualifiers such as religion, race, class, or location.

Can a musician or composer from one culture accurately play or compose music from a different culture? Are there cultural limits for who can play certain types of music?

This paper operates on the assumption that a musician or composer, with enough dedication, talent, and opportunity, can learn to play or write music outside of his or her culture of naturalization. Seeger disagrees. He ascertains that “composers can imitate characteristic features of a national tradition not their own, but there is a difference in the resulting product that is discernible to the
knowledgeable carriers of the tradition imitated.\textsuperscript{61} I do not deny that certain national traditions, as well as racial, religious, class-oriented, and/or locational aspects of a composer or musician's life may deeply affect the created music. Still, nationality, race, religion, class, and location do not \textit{have} to affect the music. These stimuli only affect the music if a composer or musician allows them to due to choice, ignorance, or a self-preserving motivation. For instance, a hispanic upper-class Christian musician from Vienna might not swing jazz the proper way due to ignorance and unfamiliarity with the genre. If the musician possessed dedication, intelligence, musicality, and determination to learn about, listen to, and practice jazz, then the musician might eventually learn how to play jazz. With enough motivation and genius a musician can overcome personal or cultural barriers and learn to play the music of an unfamiliar culture just as he or she learned to play the music of his or her own culture. Learning another culture's music takes time, however, and requires a certain degree of globalization to ensure musical exposure.

Many people in the world lack the opportunity to explore such a wide selection of musical resources as certain Americans and Europeans. I would not expect a Cuban, who had never seen an Irish spoon-performer, to learn to play the spoons. I would, however, expect this of other musicians—especially my friend Kinho, a talented percussionist from Brazil. One evening, in Brazil, we (and several others) went out to eat. Ann, an Irish woman in our party, picked up two spoons from the table and played rapid and intricate rhythms with them. The entire table of percussionists stopped their conversations and watched her—

\textsuperscript{61} Seeger. Charles. 196.
mesmerized by the sounds she evoked from two objects that we had never before considered as percussion instruments. Ann spent the next hour teaching everyone proper spoon technique; Kinho was especially interested and rapidly learned the basic patterns. Still, he learned the spoon rhythms outside of the musical context in which they exist to Ann. If Kinho really wanted to become a spoon player Ann might have suggested CDs he could purchase on the internet, he might have sought out a teacher in Brazil, or traveled to Ireland to learn. Because of his rhythmic talent and musical intelligence, Kinho could become a spoon player and play the spoons comfortably—even exceptionally—in an Irish ensemble. Today he’s in Brazil (and not learning spoons in Ireland) because his personal motivation as a musician lies elsewhere than in the spoons. Kinho will not be a famous spoon player ten years from now because he is content (and exceptional at) playing samba and pagode music on his pandairo, and not because he is black, Brazilian, male, or from the lower-middle class.

Percussionist Ed Uribe published a collection of Afro-Cuban drum set and percussion rhythms. In his preface he addressed the issue of cross-cultural music performance:

... in my involvement with performing and recording Latin-American musics, I’ve come across some attitudes and philosophies that say you cannot play these styles “correctly”—whatever that means—unless you are “born into it,” from a certain country and the like... It’s true that to some degree you are a product of your culture and your time... Nonetheless, you can learn how to play... and not have come up in that time—there’s certainly plenty of evidence for that—and with very committed study, Afro-Latin styles and instruments can also be learned and your playing developed to a very high level... It’s just like learning a
language. You have to be around it, live it, speak it enough, and you’ll start to sound like a native.  

From the examples of Ed Uribe and Kinho it becomes clear that mature musicians and composers do not play or write music because they are black or white, rich or poor, male or female, from this country or that country; rather, they write and perform music according to their individual private motivations. Since music is a product of individual, private, non-constant, and almost unqualifiable personal motivations, then arbitrary qualifiers such as the musician or composer’s location, race, class, sex, or nationality should not affect its classification.

Musical form differences in “Western” and “African” music and the relationship to composition

Western composers write music within certain forms, such as ternary (ABA), Sonata-Allegro (AA development A’), and strophic (AAAAA, etc.). Each letter can be broken down into smaller letters, which can be broken down into smaller letters, and the form can be more complex on the different sub-levels. Although there are many exceptions, “African” music (specifically West African music) is generally based upon the idea of a “groove,” which is similar to the Western strophic form (AAA) except that one groove cycle is usually much shorter (usually one or two measures) than a typical “A” strophe (12+ measures).

The West African strophe (hereafter called a “groove cycle”) is usually based on the idea of a repeating pattern of notes and rhythms that creates a sense of movement and continuity. This groove cycle is often characterized by a simple, repetitive bass line and a more complex, syncopated drum pattern that provides the rhythmic foundation for the other instruments. The melody is usually harmonized with chords that are not too far removed from the bass, creating a sense of tonal stability.

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63 It's possible that music talent could have roots in biological DNA, which would mean that race and/or sex could affect which types of people can play which types of music. DNA musicality research is far from conclusive, and even if concrete evidence existed that musical talent and ability springs from biological DNA then we would still have the “Attica” debate about the possibility of overcoming one’s biological misfortunes.
upon a rhythmic percussive theme (such as one cycle of clave or bell pattern),
while the Western strophe is usually based upon a full cycle of a melody (such as
one verse of a hymn). Since Western forms are larger (each letter section can be
hundreds of measures long) than groove cycles, Western composers have more
freedom in constructing pieces within a form and more ease in maintaining
originality.

In Cuba, genres such as the palo, makuta, yuka, guaguancó and the
chachachá are based on two-measure groove cycles that repeat incessantly until a
group leader signals the end. If a composer decides to write a guaguancó, the
percussion parts will essentially be the same as all other guaguancós, and the
melody, lyrics, and non-percussion instrumentation (including the piano) will be
the composer’s only creative contributions. Many groove cycles revolve around
the concept of instrumentation, however, and to “compose” a groove cycle, in
some aspects, is contradictory.64 The pre-established groove cycles force Cuban
music analysts to draw a line between what is newly composed and what is re-
interpreted older material. Some Cubans began claiming old songs as original
compositions which initiated a discrepancy over copyright issues. For, despite
claims of originality, the “new” songs shared enough characteristics with the
“old” songs for a rational, non-deaf human being, familiar with the music, to
recognize a re-interpretation, rather than a new invention.

Peter Manuel published a book of articles by Cuban musicologists which
spans the 20th century. In it, Argeliers León comments on the problematic aspects

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64 Although long ago, there had to be one person or group who initially invented the rhythm.
of mixing groove cycles with composition:

The presence of the composer, ever more wrapped up in authorial organizations and even legal controversies regarding cases of copyright and plagiarism, in which, however, all was ultimately plagiarism—except for whatever was not Cuban—and where the ingenuity of the self-styled "creators" of this or that genre was limited to the more or less successful mixture of the ingredients already extant in our musical culture.65

León's statement that all "Cuban" music is ultimately plagiarism reflects the notion that Cuban music is based upon groove cycles, and that as long as a group plays that specific groove cycle for a particular genre they are not composing anything; rather, they are performing an interpretation of a previous interpretation.

It is also interesting to note León's nationalistic writing tone. He first mentions "Cuban" music, and then refers to "our musical culture," as if only Cubans comprised his reading audience. Many other Cuban authors reflect this same nationalistic tone in their writing, and this phenomenon might be attributed to nationalistic propaganda which is heavily distributed in post-revolutionary Cuba.

Authorial problems when writing "compositions" that utilize groove cycles:

The percussive aspects of the song are borrowed, not composed.

The musicians utilize personal improvisation over which the composer has no control. Those musical elements inserted into a piece through improvisation, therefore, are not written by the composer and the composer cannot claim that he composed the particular sections.

Composers mixed elements of different types of music and called it a new genre, when in reality it was a faintly disguised old genre.

What is the role of the audience and do they affect the performance?

If the presence of a specific kind of audience affects a performance, then it is important to understand the audience since they influence the music.

*Performance: The act or style of performing a work or role before an audience.*

Due to the definition of performance, there can be no performance without an audience.

The audience, therefore, is central to performance. The audiences in Cuba have been changing, due to a changing population. Musicians have been changing in order to cater to the new audiences.

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The Western Audience

In Western music the audience plays a minimal role of importance in the execution of music. I remember attending a performance of a violin concerto presented by the Philadelphia Philharmonic Orchestra—the entire sold-out audience did not make a sound during the entire performance. It was an eerie experience; I knew I was surrounded by hundreds of people, but there was no coughing, no breathing—I heard only the sound from the stage. In retrospect, the extreme quiet was a sign of respect and audience appreciation, but in my personal experience, the silence was unreadable. I was unable to tell if the audience was enjoying the performance until, suddenly, not even a second after the last note was played and with no time for the room to absorb the fullness of the last chord, raucous and energetic applause broke out, people stood, whistled, and shouted “bravo!”

Every Western musician has probably experienced some form of audience feedback that in turn affected the performance, whether it comes as a standing ovation after one piece that in turn affects the energy of the next piece, or just “sensing” positive energy from the audience. A Western audience has the power to boost the confidence of the performers so that they play at their best level, but the audience has minimal control over the program (what is played, for how long it is played, how many times it is played, and by whom it is played) and no power to change the direction or scope of the music.

The Afro-Cuban and West African Audience

In the Afro-Cuban and West African musical traditions the audience is more influential than a Western audience. During a performance, complete silence from the audience rarely exists—bad performances receive shouts of displeasure and encouragement to stop playing while good performances receive encouraging shouts, whistles, and frequently result in dancing and singing. The audience usually does not allow the musicians to stop playing until the audience is satisfied or too tired to continue dancing—whichever happens first. The audience, therefore, greatly dictates what, for how long, and by whom music is played.

Hagedorn, in her case study of the Conjunto Folklórico (or CFNC—a Cuban music and dance troupe famous for international tours and portrayals of Afro-Cuban music and dance) believes “that the audience holds the key to
understanding the negotiation and perpetuation of meaning in the CFNC’s performances.\textsuperscript{67} She separates the audience into four subgroups:

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{diagram.png}
\caption{CFNC audience}
\end{figure}

Hagedorn distinguishes the four-tiered audience of\textit{ folkloric} performance from the solely-\textit{creyente} audiences that attend\textit{ religious} performances of roughly the same material. The main difference in the nationalized, de-religicized performances of the CFNC and other more “authentic” religious performances lies in the musical intent of the performers.

\textbf{Where should we draw the line between Sacred and Secular Afro-Cuban music?}

\textsuperscript{67} Hagedorn, \textit{Divine Utterances}, 58.
Another problem to consider is that the term “Afro-Cuban music” is a broad umbrella under which many different musical types are nestled. Scraping a stick against the secret Abakúa ceremonial drum, Tito Puente’s mambo band, The Buena Vista Social Club, guiro ensembles, and virtually any Santerian batá drum trio are all currently considered types of Afro-Cuban music. These groups use different drums, instruments, harmonic rules and systems. They have different audiences, reasons for playing, and culturally different performers. All of the examples are music, but they should not be representatives of the same musical genre. In sorting out the “mess” of different musics that are currently “Afro-Cuban,” one of the first things to do is sort through the sacred and the secular.

The drummers of the CFNC are all religiously affiliated with some or all of the four main African-based religions in Cuba: Santeria, Palo Monte, Arará, and Abakuá (or Abakwa). Since the CFNC drummers are familiar with and spiritually devoted to these religions and the music, they choose what to portray in the folkloric setting. They take care to guard the secret ceremonies and only display what is safe to expose to “non-believers.” Some practitioners feel that the troupe reveals too much and are vehemently opposed to the CFNC and what it stands for. Besides revealing too much, the secular performances of the religious ceremonies might cheapen the ceremonies and eventually make the religions less potent. Hagedorn reflects upon her first opinions of the CFNC and how they have changed:

The performances of the Conjunto Folklórico seemed symptomatic of a larger policy: diluting the demographic base of Afro-Cuban religious

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68 For an informative overview of each of these religions, see the first chapter of Drumming for the Gods, by María Teresa Vélez.
practitioners by bombarding them with secular theatrical performances derived from their own religious traditions… What was missing from my initial analysis, however, was a more nuanced understanding of how deeply related the Conjunto Folklorico’s performances were to religious ceremonies.⁶⁹

Cuban music’s folkloric and religious relationship is a close one. At a Santerian possession festival batá drummers play on sacred batá drums built specifically to communicate with the orichas. The special drums are usually very old, have been “baptized,” spoken to, “fed” sacrifices, and certain rules for them have been respected, for instance, they have never touched the ground, nor have they ever been touched by a woman. The CFNC drums, however, are not baptized and cannot speak to the orichas. Fernando Ortiz, the “Father” of Afro-Cuban music studies commissioned the first secular set of batá in the early twentieth century for the first secular performance of Santerian and Abakua rhythms.

Likewise, CFNC performances began as presentations by real religious practitioners who agreed to play only on unbaptized drums commissioned by musicologists. The original dancers were religious dancers who taught the dances to non-religious practitioners. Over the years, the dances and music have become choreographed. The spontaneous shouting and yelling, the song extensions, and the spirit possession of the dancers have all disappeared in the folkloric context, and the CFNC’s performances have predetermined beginnings and endings, with little or no improvisation. The dances are not a result of a religious devotee’s spirit possession; rather, they are pre-learned dance steps performed by a young

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⁶⁹ Hagedorn, *Divine Utterances*, 65.
student (usually a non-practitioner of an Afro-Cuban religion). Even though the performer intent is secular and not religious, sometimes a creyente in the audience will be so moved by the music and dance that he/she will become possessed during a performance and have to be taken outside.

Perhaps a hundred years ago we could have drawn a clearer line between sacred and the secular Afro-Cuban music. The Buena Vista Social Club produces secular music. The Abakua drum-scrapping is profoundly sacred music. But cross-over organizations like the CFNC have made it harder to make the distinction. Religious musical repertoire, played by religious practitioners but danced by secular dancers in a secular setting, can be referred to as either sacred, secular, or both.

A review of the main points: Geographic or political names are inefficient and confusing when used to name music genres. Inter-cultural travel causes music to change. Talented musicians, with that aid of dedication and opportunity, and learn to play the music of a different culture. The musical form of Western art music is different than that of West African and Afro-Cuban music. It is difficult to “compose” Cuban music due to constant groove cycles. The audience is essential to performance, but more so in Afro-Cuban music performances than in the performance of Western art music. The difference between sacred and secular Afro-Cuban music is dwindling.
Chapter Three
*Slavery and Racism*
The Effects of Race, Racism, and Slavery on Cuban Music

While in Cuba I was amazed by the diverse racial composition of society, the high percentage of biracial marriage unions, and the casual racial references used in daily language. I heard people refer to their loved ones with racial terms of endearment, such as “El Negro,” “negrieta,” and “mullata.” The nicknames did not, on the surface, harbor malicious tones, and were not intended to make the person feel excluded. The names seemed to simply point out obvious color differences—similar to when people call me “Red” because of my red hair. This led me to believe, at the time, that perhaps Cuba had reached one of the goals of the revolution: the eradication of racism. Slavery and been abolished more than one-hundred years before my visit, and I concluded that the large difference in the male/female ratio of Spanish settlers created an environment in which it was common and socially acceptable for white Spanish men to marry black African women. I attributed this phenomenon to the racial heterogeneity of Cuba’s current society. Upon further study, however, I found that my initial assessment could not have been more wrong.

I visited only Havana and Matanzas, which may or may not represent an accurate cross-section of the entire Cuban population. Furthermore, many upper class Cubans who stood to lose their entire life savings and accumulations fled Cuba when Castro took over. “The loss of population in the early years was stunning: 62,000 in 1960, 67,000 in 1961, 66,000 in 1962.” It is estimated that one-tenth of Cuba’s population is currently living in exile. Most émigrés were

upper or upper-middle class people, who, due to residual colonial society, were mostly white. Since I visited during a time just after tens of thousands of white Cubans had fled, I witnessed only a section, albeit a large section, of the population. Using a current time-slice theory, I witnessed racial diversity; but using a more over-reaching theory, in which exiles are included in the Cuban population, my observations were misleading. This raises the question: should exiles be included in Cuba's population? I do not include them in Cuba's population. When people migrated in such large volume, Cuba changed. The implications of the name "Cuban" changed. The music changed. Afro-Cuban music is different than it was a century ago.

A complex form of racism exists in Cuba today. It sometimes manifests itself subtly, at other times there is an obvious schism between races. For instance, Hagedorn documented that a white American woman was sexually assaulted in Havana and, when being questioned by the police was asked, "Was he black?" When she replied "no," the policeman repeated the question. She answered "No, he was white." The policeman replied "He wasn't black? Are you sure?" Since authorities assume criminals are black, it seems to indicate that a

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71 I have no official racial statistics about the exiles, but certain information leads me to believe that they are. Pérez notes that "Priests were mainly Spaniards... ministering to mostly white, middle-class congregations... By the early 1960's, ... the sector of the population over which the church had the greatest influence was already in exile" (334). Furthermore, since slavery was abolished less than 100 years before Castro took over, the black community was mostly poor and still struggling to obtain social equality. The poor have less money to utilize towards travel expenses, plus they did not receive equal education and, compared to some white upper class Cubans, probably did not have a global network of supportive friends or the advantage of knowing where to go abroad, what language to learn and how to learn it, and how to establish oneself in a foreign country.

72 Hagedorn, Divine Utterances, 32.
certain amount of racial profiling occurs in Havana if authorities assume that criminals are black.

Furthermore, Cubans define race differently than the United States. When engaging in census-taking, Cuba racially distinguishes people as either "black," "white," or "mullato," whereas in the United States (with the exception of recent polls), bi-racial people tend to be categorized as either "black" or "white."

### Racial Stereotypes in Cuba

Although institutional racism has been considerably lessened [since Castro seized power], its existence is still apparent in the lack of black people holding the highest positions across the professional spectrum. Very few top jobs are held by Afro-Cubans outside of sport or entertainment and, especially in the tourist industry, lighter skinned people hold the front-line jobs while black people are more usually employed in menial labour, as cleaners, maids, or chauffeurs. Overturning the racism inherent in the colonial structure will take longer than forty years.

Certainly to express overtly racist opinions is taboo and Cuba's citizens are acutely aware of the prescribed view on the subject, but behind closed doors attitudes differ. Various negative racial stereotypes prevail in Cuba: Afro-Cubans are often considered lazier, less intelligent and more likely to commit crime than white people, and marriage between a black man and a white woman is more likely to be frowned upon than between a black woman and a white man. A more recent dimension in the race question has arisen from the tourist trade. Jineteros and jineteras [see CFNC audience structure] are internationally perceived as exclusively Afro-Cuban, and this in turn has led to the stereotype of wealthy Afro-Cubans as prostitutes, pimps and touts, while white Cubans with money are generally assumed to be supported by relatives in Miami.\(^3\)

The four races which make up the majority of Cuba’s population are Caucasian (white Spaniards), Asian ("Between the late 1840's and 1870's, an estimated 125,000 Chinese contract laborers were imported to work under indenture in Cuba"\(^4\)), Black (Africans), and Amerindians (although their population suffered almost complete genocide during the first few years of Spanish Conquest they still contribute to some of the cultural and biological factors of present-day Cuba). In addition, Cuba has a prominent French


influence—more cultural than biological—from when French and Creole people fled from Haiti to Cuba during the Haitian Revolution. Although "French" is not a race, important additional racial elements were added to Cuba when Haitians emigrated. Black Haitian slaves and Freedmen came to Cuba, some from Africa while others were Creole slaves or freedmen. White French people also fled to Cuba (again, some were French-born and others were Creole). How did these culturally and racially diverse groups of people learn to cooperate and live together on a tiny island of 46,000 sq. miles? How did the mass migrations of many different cultures to and from Cuba affect Cuban music? Original Afro-Cuban music, if it ever truly existed in the first place, has been assaulted from many cultural directions, such as the French, Creole, Chinese, Spanish, and British. It has been frequently pressured to mutate and change.

Official CIA 2002 Fact Book statistics for Cuba's current racial population are: mulatto 51%, white 37%, black 11%, and Chinese 1%. According to the numbers only 11% of Cuba's current population is black (roughly 1,234,675 people), but 62% of Cubans claim African heritage/ancestry (roughly 6,959,079 people). Other sources report more whites and less mulattos. Fiona McAuslan, in reference to the "66% white" statistic, suggests that "some critics of the figures" feel that the numbers are presented to downplay "the importance of... black heritage."
The influence of race on Afro-Cuban music

Consider, for instance, one drummer’s comments on race and drums in contemporary Cuba hint at the correlation between music and race:

Since I was a kid I've always loved percussion. My cousin, Alejandro Brito ("Tito") inspired me greatly. He was the first in our family, in the barrio of Cerro, to play batá. He played with a famous tambolero named Papo Angariga. (A tambolero is one who plays batá). He never had a white guy in his band. In that era, all the tamboleros were black. To play in the world of drums was difficult. My cousin was a very good man, a good player, very organized, not interested in anything but drums. And I didn’t have a problem with the world of rumba, palo, guiro. I was about 17 or 18 years at that time.

I played in a famous group in Regla... There was one drummer in the group, El Chino Sarakó. El Chino was a mullato. He was Abakwa also. I knew el Chino well. He used to ask me, "hey, you like the drums?" Sure I liked them! I would tell El Chino, man I really want to play but I've got problems because of the color of my skin. You know how the people are. Chino would tell me, "man, you're gonna play. You play well, you're a good man. You come with me." He helped me a lot. I had experiences before this, where I would play but because of the color of my skin I wouldn't be respected. Chino would tell them, hey he's with me, he's a good person, and he can play.  

-Martinez Furé, a Cuban ethnomusicologist, makes a correlation between race and music in his essay “Tambor”:

Object of veneration and cult worship for some, cursed and prohibited by others; regarded as a messenger of the gods and an incarnation of the ancestors in the black religions of Cuba; vicim of confiscations and slashings by racist and reactionary authorities, the drum has had a fate parallel to that of the black man, its creator par excellence. All the political and social vicissitudes experienced by this sector of the Cuban population have been reflected in its most characteristic instrument. No one like the black man has known how to extract its telluric music nor how to carve it with such life and reverence; no one else has endangered his life so many times by protecting it from the persecution of the police, nor has anyone else known how to take it on such triumphant tours

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throughout the world, conveying the variety and richness of its rhythms to the public. 81

Both Laly and Furé imply that Cuba's black population had the monopoly in Afro-Cuban musicianship. In the early twentieth century, the opposite was also true: Cuba's white population had the monopoly in European and Western music. León mentions in his essay, "Notes towards a Panorama of Popular and Folk Musics," that freed slaves chose one of two musical paths: They

either remained closely tied to these ancestral traditions, or distanced themselves from such customs and adopted, as much as was possible, the life-styles of the more Europeanized (albeit in a provincial rather than courtly sense) citizens. Several freed Africans or creolized first-generation blacks participated in salon ensembles, playing minuets, polkas, 'gallops,' old lanceros,... and the entire repertoire of slightly out-of-date European salon music... In many cases, the black performer, in the capacity of an ensemble member, could even penetrate white society to lend a touch of 'mestizo-ness,' of 'color' with his music as well as his blood. 82

León points out that in the early twentieth century blacks had limited opportunities as musicians—mostly they played European music as members of larger ensembles, rather than perform as soloists or conductors.

Technically, the color "black" has little to do with Afro-Cuban music. "Africa" has little to do with Afro-Cuban music. The people living on the African continent today have little to do with Afro-Cuban music. And yet, when researching Afro-Cuban music the terms "Africa" and "black" recur.

Black is a color and Africa is a landmass. The ideas that the words "black" and "Africa" conjure are (just like the desire to make music) non-constant and defined by personal motivations and individual beliefs. Sometimes these

82 León. "Notes on a Panorama" In Manuel, Essays on Cuban Music. 7.
personal, individual word-associations can span large groups of people who share a similar culture, but even in culture groups a spectrum of intensity exists.

Music is physical—it is air vibrations, made with specific musical intent, that can be measured in volume, duration, intensity, and speed. A performance of music takes place at a specific time for a specific duration in a specific environment with a specific audience. Music conjures and inspires ideas, but it is not an idea. Music cannot be directly associated with the words "black," "white," "Africa," or "Cuba," nor with the ideas that they conjure. Still, to understand the condition of Afro-Cuban music in contemporary society, the need arises to confront the issue of musical association with color and location. In Chapter 2 I discussed the inefficacy of applying location names to music; I now contend that race should not dictate musical or cultural nomenclature, at least in the context of Cuba. Kubik argues,

The combination "black" with "ethnicity" is a contradiction of terms, because "black" is not an ethnic qualifier, and "ethnic" is not a racial qualifier. However, this word combination exists; it is widely used and has therefore an impact on public intellectual life. Moreover, although a person's physical appearance and cultural background are, in principle, unrelated, they can be made to appear being related when the surrounding society postulates a relationship.  

Racial barriers in Cuba, postulated by the surrounding society, prevent certain types of music from being intimately shared, between black Cubans and white Cubans, and between Cubans from Africa and Cubans from Iberia. These barriers trace their roots to European color-associations, racism, and slavery.  

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84 Slavery existed in Africa before the Portuguese arrived with their first slave ships. The African definition of a slave: "Persons who had for one reason or another been separated from their lineage." (Brandon, 19) The European definition is different and makes no reference to lineage: "A human being whose person and
European color associations

In 1988 Frank Taylor commented on the idea of color associations in his article "Revolution, Race, and Foreign Relations Since 1959." 

Racism outlived the slave mode of production...[because]...its raison d'etre had not derived from economics alone. Iberians had long subscribed to Western Christian color symbolism wherein white is associated with purity, virtue, beauty, and the dove of the Holy Spirit, and black with malignance, repugnance, corruption, sin, and death.

In 1994 Gerhard Kubick explored the idea a bit farther:

If the idea of "black," for example, is charged with a negative content in one culture, as was historically the case in many Mediterranean and European cultures—hence surviving terms such as Black Death, black market, black cat, black magic, black sheep, to blackmail, blacklist, blackout, black widow, black pot, and so on—this can form the basis of

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services are subject to an owner or master." (Winston, pre 1937 Advanced Edition). Being a slave in Africa meant having no cultural ancestry or family. Slavery in pre-Columbian Africa usually resulted from one of three situations:

1. As payment of a debt a person might be given over as a possession to someone in another lineage for a specified period.
2. Prisoners of War
3. Infractions of kinship obligations could get severance from the lineage. He or she could be sold as a slave to another lineage (slave offspring could be adopted into the lineage)." (Brandon, 19)

The circumstances under which an African became enslaved by another African do not resemble European reasons for enslavement, which were primarily economic (in the sense of profit-related).

Brandon's enslavement reason No.1 implies that a person other than the debtor may be turned over to the creditor, but still, only for a specific time period. This form of slavery is economic—but not profit related. It serves as a temporary remedy to an emergency situation, utilized as a social safety net in communities to allow debtors to become debt-free; the system is not in the best interest of the debtor and so the "slaver" (who is also the debtor) has no incentive to actively and voluntarily participate in slavery.

Enslavement reason No.2 slightly resembles European enslavement reasons, but not the reasons that Europeans used in Africa. POW's have been an age-old source of slavery, but at the dawn of the Afro-Euro slave trade Portugal and Spain were not at war with any African countries. The slaves, therefore, were not prisoners of war, but simply prisoners. African countries possibly sold their POW's (from Africa vs. Africa conflicts) to Europeans as a way to get rid of and profit from social "degenerates" (or prisoners). Warriors are aware of the possibility of death or enslavement, and still fight. Although certain consequences are unjust and/or undeserved, there exists an aspect of self-sacrifice since the warriors knew the possible consequences of their actions before engaging in them.

Enslavement reason No.3 is particularly fascinating because it insinuates a social "trash can." All societies create spaces for the unwanted and underprivileged, such as leper colonies, AIDS compounds, homeless shelters, bordellos, and jails. Rather than turning disowned relatives out into the streets (or the wild) to fend for themselves, selling cut-off family members to neighbors for profit could be seen as extremely efficient and safe, and also a method by which to promote good behavior in the family.


Ibid. 20.
reinterpretations in culture contact resulting in neurotically distorted images of reality.\textsuperscript{87}

**Slavery**

It is difficult (if not impossible) to morally justify slavery, despite the slaver’s intentions, but it is even more difficult to justify slavery when the slaver lacks retributitional motive.\textsuperscript{88} European motives for enslavement had no safety-oriented or civilization-stabilizing utilitarian goals in mind, nor was it retribution or punishment. An African slave in the Americas must have struggled with the question, “Why?” The disoriented aloneness left many slaves with nothing to turn to save ancestral spirits (orichas),\textsuperscript{89} and familiar sounds (song and music) that they could manage to recreate. The disorientation and dislocation had major effects on slave culture, as Karen Brown points out:

> When the elders, the priests, the institutions, the musical instruments, the images, the altars, and the sacred objects are absent, where do you turn for spiritual aid? In an African-based religion, possession seems an obvious answer. In Yorubaland and Dahomey, two of the areas of origin for Haiti’s [and Cuba’s] slave population, most possession-performances were formulaic affairs with more or less predictable words and gestures. In the New World, however, in that early time when the body and the voice were the slaves’ principal mnemonic devices, possession [which normally happens through music] could well have received much greater emphasis, and possession-performances could have quickly become much more extemporaneous and expressive. In other words, cut loose from their African base and institutional moorings, the spirits may well have burst into flower.\textsuperscript{90}

**How many slaves?**


\textsuperscript{88} The enslavement of a POW might be justified according to Mill’s Principles of Utility (Greatest good for the greatest number with least bad for the smallest number) in that should the prisoner be let free, they might injure, kill, threaten the stability of civilization, or cause harm to the society if they were enslaved.

\textsuperscript{89} See Hagedorn, *Divine Utterances*, 114-5.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid. 115; as in K. Brown 1991:253.
This question is important to pursue because without information about slave statistics and origins, we cannot accurately trace musical origins. We have only approximations of how many slaves were brought to Cuba, and a number of factors contribute to the difficulty in determining an accurate number. Amidst the uncertainty, scholars have calculated rough estimates. "Of the estimated seven hundred thousand to one million slaves brought to Cuba, over 85% were imported in the nineteenth century." The generally accepted number is 702,000.

The following non-definitive estimate gives insight to the slave trade's importance during different time periods in Cuba:

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91 These factors include: not all records have survived or are known; human error in record-keeping; slave-owner wishes to under-report number of slaves (to avoid taxes); slave-catcher wishes to over-report the number of slaves caught; slave ship records are not always articulate in their number and do not always specify if the number represents the amount of slaves who left Africa, the amount of slaves who were on board in transit, and/or the amount of slaves who landed alive in Cuba (hence the term “landed slaves”); the existence of contraband slave trade forces us to view all official records as underestimates; some slaves made it to Cuba but dies before laboring on a plantation or in a household; slaves born in Cuba might not be fully accounted for; slaves born in Cuba with a Spanish father and an African mother might be considered slaves but socially treated as Spanish (or legally considered to be Creole but socially considered slaves; maroon communities add to the confusion, so do pregnant African women who bearchildren in transit or after reaching Cuba; some numbers estimate landed slaves but do not specify if the slaves that landed alive were from Africa or the Yucatan peninsula. Furthermore, the following questions sometimes affect the numbers: Should ship-suicides be considered in the slave counts since they died in bondage? What did the English do with captured slave ships? Did they escort the slaves back to their individual homelands, or did they leave them on the African coast, only to be captured again? Or did they take them to England to be naturalized and join the English workforce?

92 Vélez, Drumming for the Gods. 7.

7. Her source: Pérez de la Riva, 1974:78-79 and 1976: 108. Other numbers: Curtain (1969:46) estimates a total number of landed slaves at approximately 702,000, and of these, over 600,000 arrived as recently as the first sixty-five years of the nineteenth century. (From Amira, John and Steven Cornelius. The Music of Santería, Traditional Rhythms of the Batá Drums. Crown Point, IN: White Cliffs Media Company. 1992. p 6.). Curtain estimates that out of his calculated total of 9,566,000 slaves transported during the Atlantic trade, some 4,040,000 (42.2%) were destined for the Caribbean islands, and that some 702,000 of those, or 7.3% of the worldwide total, were taken to Cuba (Curtain. 88-89). (From Matibag, Eugenio. Afro-Cuban Religious Experience, Cultural Reflections in Narrative. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996. 20-21.). Castellanos and Castellanos estimate a higher minimum of 850,000 slaves brought to Cuba. (From ibid. 20-21.). The number of slaves landing alive in Cuba over the whole period (1521-1870's) was about 1.3 million, almost one tenth of all slaves in the Americas. (From Valdez. Lopez. Lecture, 1992. As transcribed on www.batadrums.com).
During the... years of Spanish rule between 1512 and 1763, an estimated total of 60,000 slaves had been introduced into Cuba. This rate changed dramatically, and between 1764 and 1790, the number of slaves imported into Cuba surpassed the 50,000 mark, averaging at approximately 2,000 slaves a year.  

Graphically, these statistics are shocking:  

During 251 years: 60,000 slaves  
During 26 years: 50,000+ slaves  

Therefore, an estimated 85% of slaves brought to Cuba arrived during the first 65 years of the nineteenth century, while the remaining 15% arrived between 1512 and 1763. Because there are two distinct periods of forced migration, we have at least three possibilities to consider about the origins of Afro-Cuban music.  

Possibility #1  

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94 A ten-month British occupation of Havana caused the sudden explosion in the slave trade after 1762/3. For a more detailed explanation, see Pérez, Reform and Revolution, 60.  
95 (600,000/702,000)
Afro-Cuban religions began to exist the moment the first slaves used spirit possession to comfort them in an unfamiliar world. During the trauma of being dislocated from all palpable familiarity, the first slaves in Cuba turned to spirit possession in order to obtain guidance from their orichas. The orichas were the only "things" they could take with them across the ocean, and so a new religious importance was placed upon spirit possession that was much stronger in the Americas than in Africa. The new importance enabled several religions (e.g. Santeria, Palo Monte) based upon spirit possession to flourish. The orichas are most effectively communicated with through music and dance, and so early in the slave trade music became a primary and integral part of worship. The second wave of slaves brought to Cuba during the early nineteenth century were entering a slave culture of already established possession-oriented religions. Instead of beginning their own societies based on nineteenth-century West-African societies, they latched onto the most effective and popular cabildos that pre-1800 slaves had established, conformed to existing paradigms, and built upon a fixed core of stable ideas.

Because the early slaves rooted their religions firmly and allowed minimal incorporation of culture from the second wave of 19th century slaves, Afro-Cuban music finds its antecedents mostly in 16th and 17th century West African music.

Possibility #2

The sheer numbers of the 2nd wave slaves facilitated the dominating popularity of their religions (and related musical culture) over the religions of the
older slaves. Eventually, the religions established by slaves in the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries assimilated into the “new: religions brought to Cuba by the second wave of slaves after the British occupation of Havana.

Because contemporary Afro-Cuban music grew mostly from 19\textsuperscript{th} century slave culture, Afro-Cuban music finds its antecedents mostly in 19\textsuperscript{th} century West African music.

Possibility #3

Cuban slaves during the 16\textsuperscript{th}, 17\textsuperscript{th}, and 18\textsuperscript{th} century established religions based upon the religions of 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} century West Africa. In the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the amount of Africans brought to Cuba roughly equaled all Africans brought to Cuban in the previous 300 years. The influx of people originally turned to the religions already established in Cuba. Over time, however, they incorporated their own culture and the Afro-Cuban religions balanced into a religion based equally on 16\textsuperscript{th} thru 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} century West African culture.

Because the balance of traditions resulted in religions based on different time periods and cultures from around West Africa, Afro-Cuban music finds its antecedents equally in 16\textsuperscript{th}-18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} century West African music.

Factoring in Time

There should be a scholarly estimation of how far removed today’s Afro-Cuban music is from African music.

We know that the regional expressions of 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} century African cultures were quite different from those of 20\textsuperscript{th} century African cultures, and it is one of the axioms in current comparative research, for example,
The music on the African continent has not been static for the past 500 years, and we should know whether Afro-Cuban music draws mostly upon fourteenth-century West African music, nineteenth-century West African music, or somewhere in between. If the antecedents are recent, then we have some basis of comparison. If the musical antecedents are distant, such as the 16th or 17th century, then we have almost no basis of comparison. History is the interpretation of surviving documents, and if there are no documents that notated fifteenth century African music, then that period of African music lies in prehistory. There are few documents that notate or describe music from West Africa during the 18th century, yet still, they comprise a small basis of comparison. If we have an uncertain basis, or no basis at all to compare West African music with current Afro-Cuban music, then it is impossible to definitively determine musical influences. It's possible that Afro-Cuban music might only claim faint (or albeit strong) African influences, but in actuality is an entirely new musical genre, invented by descendents of Africans, but original to Cuba.

This issue raises questions discussed in the Philosophy chapter: If an African creates a new type of music in Cuba should the music be regarded as African music or Cuban music? If a Cuban, born of African parents, invents a new music type, should the music be regarded as African or Cuban?

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96 Kubik. In Béhague, Black Ethnicity, 21-22.
African female musical ensembles did not survive the slave trade

The following section of this chapter examines a case study of Ibibio music. The study was done in 1975 by Samuel Akpabot. In Cuba, male musical fraternities, such as Abakua, thrive in abundance. There are no Cuban female musical sororities that date from earlier than the mid-twentieth century, and even the female musical groups in Cuba today are dwarfed in comparison to the Abakua society. Akpabot's study includes a section devoted to Ibibio female musical ensembles. In addition, several African female music groups have been documented in other sources. It is interesting to note that none of these African female musical groups survived in Cuba. There are a few postulations as to why they didn't survive:

1. Perhaps few or no females musicians were forced into bondage.
2. Perhaps female musicians were taken to other areas of the Caribbean and South America.
3. Perhaps the groups established but failed to sustain themselves in Cuba.
4. Perhaps the stresses of slavery, alone or in combination with some other factors such as Christianity, created a social environment in which these groups could not establish themselves.

Number 4 seems to be the most logical conclusion. If female musicians did make it to Cuba, then there must be a reason(s) why African female musical
ensembles did not survive in Cuba. Perhaps West African gender roles and
gender interaction caused female music ensembles to disappear in Cuba.

**Gender Roles**

The Eka Uta (mother uta ['flute']) and the Iya Ilu Bata (mother bata drum)
are the instruments in their respective groups which talk the loudest; and
the name mother attached to them points to the sense of humor of the
African musician who sees the women as being too talkative.\(^7\)

This statement pits males against females, because it demonstrates how one sex
(males) makes fun of another sex (females) by incorporating a gender-based joke
into one of the key elements of musical society. This statement also demonstrates
a certain amount of male-male solidarity because the names of the musical
instruments create a humorous point upon which the males can fraternize, revel in
their gender, and be glad together that they are not too-talkative females.

The quoted statement, however, written by an Ibibio man, could possibly
be a misinterpretation. Akpabot says that the "mother" name was designated to
the louder drums because women talk too much. Akpabot does not clarify if this
is his own interpretation, or that of the Ibibio musicians that he studied.

Another explanation for the designated "mother-" name might derive from
the fact that the louder, "mother," drums are bigger than the smaller drums. In
Ibibio culture, a standard of female beauty is obesity. Most of the Ibibio females
\(^{13/18}\) or 72%\(^{99}\) pictured in Akpabot's book were slightly obese (what
Americans might consider 20-40 pounds "overweight"). Conversely, all of the

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\(^7\) Akpabot, Samuel Ekpe. *Ibibio Music in Nigerian Culture*. Michigan State University, 1975. 41.
\(^{98}\) One of these females was a skinny pre-teen who had not yet been through the fattening room. If
we took the child out of the statistics, it would change the results to 13/17, which would be 76%.
\(^{99}\) 30 females were pictured in the book, but it was impossible to tell the weight of some women as
they were standing behind others, and only their faces were visible.
featured Ibibio males (5/5) were skinny and muscular. The reason for slight female obesity could have something to do with the female lifestyle and the tasks delegated to them. For instance, in Ibibioland (at least during the time of Akpabot's study), there is a four-week period each year when women are not allowed to leave their houses except under special circumstances. A month of house confinement negates the opportunity for exercise, and probably results in weight gain. Furthermore, “virtuous” women pass through a fattening room when they reach puberty. Confinement and a lack of movement are imposed upon the women in order to help them gain weight, so that they can be beautiful and attract a mate, or become more beautiful for their husbands. There is a direct correlation between female beauty and weight, and so there could possibly be a direct correlation between larger instruments and their “mother” nicknames.

Another possible reason why some drums are named “mother” might derive from the function of the instruments. It seems that Ibibio women cultivate and harvest vegetables. Akpabot mentions, “Each woman goes to her farm to harvest this yam [Ebre yam], which she presents in symbolic fashion to her husband as a mark of respect. He in turn gives her a present to show his appreciation. The bigger the yam, the better the present.” Women, therefore, are in charge of growing yams, and one of their important jobs in society is to tend the earth and pull food from it. The food quality depends on how skillfully she completes her work. Likewise, in music, these lower instruments (mother

100 Akpabot, 53-54. “During the festival of new yams known as Ekpo Abasi (the god of creation), Ekpo masqueraders parade around the village and no woman is permitted to see or meet them. If a woman wanted to go out during this four-week period, she had to be accompanied by a man who was himself a member of the Ekpo society.”

101 Akpabot, 54.
bata and mother uta) improvise underneath of an ostinato played by the higher-pitched “male” drums. The skill of their improvisation determines the quality of the entire ensemble. The pre-determined ostinato “male” rhythms only sound “good” if the musician that plays the mother instrument performs skillfully and consistently. In other words, the male instruments sound appealing only if the mother instrument performs well, just as Ibibio males are respect-worthy if their females are skillful and consistent house/farm workers. The female function in society could possibly parallel the female function in music.

Of course, Akpabot could be correct, and the “mother” nickname might be a reflection of the Ibibio sense of humor in terms of gender characteristics. Perhaps the “mother” nickname was designated due to society function, or the largeness of the instrument, but the original reason for naming it “mother” has since been forgotten, and it has evolved into a joke among male members of Ibibio society.\(^{102}\)

If Akpabot is correct, and African/Ibibio men really do believe that women talk too much, perhaps we can trace the reason for this interesting and seemingly universal\(^{103}\) opinion. A possible reason why women are considered “too-talkative” might be derivative of aggressive female power groups. Observe the following Ebre chant as an example of female loudness in Ibibio culture (notice the scream at the end):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solo</th>
<th>Ladies what is this sweet music?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>Ebre music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo</td>
<td>Ladies, you will not compromise, will you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This chant demonstrates clear and passionate vehemence and annoyance at male chauvinism. Ebre women, by singing this chant, took an extremely aggressive platform against males, and vowed to not engage in sexual intercourse.

The women who sing these songs are obviously frustrated and angry at their position in society. They view themselves as “mattresses for men” and are trying to fight that stigma. The formation of this sorority (the Ebre society) functions in part as an informative wake-up call to society that, according to the “virtuous” Ebre members, women deserve more respect.

Rather than address the problem of inequality and attempt to protest gender paradigms, the women have resorted to factionalism and gender segregation. They vow to deny their bodies to men, much like the women of ancient Greece that lived on the Isle of Lesbos. Ebre women might have chosen other methods of protest, for example, they could learn to play male-

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104 Akpabot, 57-58.
105 This refers to Aristophanes’ Greek drama Lysistrata.
oriented music, or be present at all-male meetings. They could have organized
together and stopped farming and cooking. They could have demanded sexual
satisfaction for themselves in return for giving it to males.

The difference between the women of Lesbos and Ibibio Ebre women is
that the sexual protest on Lesbos had specific goals and reasons. Greek women
refused their husbands advances in order to get them to stop fighting. It is unclear
why Ibibio Ebre women choose to refuse their husbands. They describe sex as
"nonsense" and "intolerable." Perhaps they don’t see a point to sexual intercourse
because they have diminished sex drives due to clitoridectomy.106

Investigation of why Ebre women chose factionalism rather than gender
integration possibly reveals interesting trends. It was not an option for women to
impose upon male music and ceremonies for one reason: If a female even
accidentally stumbled upon certain all-male ceremonies, the punishment was
death.107,108 It was also not an option for females to stop farming and cooking. If
they had stopped farming, by the time the males took the movement seriously and
realized that they would have to begin farming in order to eat, the females would
have gone on starving in the meantime, and obvious side-effects are starvation,

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106 This point, however, could be moot as Akpabot is very ambiguous as to the status of
clitoridectomy when he wrote the book in 1975. He described the ceremonies in detail; yet spoke
about it in the past tense. He explained it, but did not say whether or not it was still performed,
and if so, how often and where. Perhaps, as an Ibibio man living in London, he wished to be
ambiguous about cultural practices that the scholarly world might possibly condemn him for.

107 In reference to the Egbo cult: "The usurping male drove out the women so completely that a
death penalty was proclaimed for any such who should dare to attempt to pierce its mysteries or
even become unwitting intruders upon its rites." —Akpabot, 26, as originally found in Talbot, P.

108 Since the source of this information is from 1923, it is possible that the death penalty is no
longer the punishment, and that my whole explanation for why females do not attempt to impose
themselves upon male rites is a moot point. Still, if the custom was popular during colonial times,
female slaves could have suffered psychological symptoms of inferiority.
malnutrition, etc. Nor could females have demanded sexual satisfaction for themselves in return for giving it to males for one simple reason: It was difficult for them to be sexually satisfied since many Ebre females were castrated when they reached puberty.

It seems that Ebre women did not understand (for obvious reasons) why their husbands wanted to lie on top of them at night and treat them as mattresses. They wrestled with the double standard: men supported polygamous family structures with multiple wives. At the same time, virginity was a young woman’s most prized possession, and she was ridiculed and shunned from society if she lost her virginity before she was properly married. Virginity was celebrated:

In Ibibio traditional society when a girl reached puberty... her parents arranged for her to be admitted to the fattening room. If she was already married, this ceremony was to make her more beautiful for her husband; if unmarried, then she had to be a virgin to be admitted... the ceremony was called Mbopo [virgin] and placed any girl admitted into very good standing with the community for it publicized her virginity, the highest mark of purity.

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109 Not sure as to the validity of this point—it is unclear whether women do all of the farming, or just the yam farming.
110 If Ibibios do have polygamous family structures, perhaps Akpabot did not mention this for the same reason that he was ambiguous about clitoridectomy (he did not want to receive ridicule from his western colleagues). A few times I suspected that Akpabot was leaving something out. When he described the yam ceremony, where women presented yams to their husbands, he did not say whether this was done in private or in public. This ceremony seems to be a private ceremony—an exchange of work and gifts between husband and wife. It also seems to be an indicator that Ibibio men have multiple wives, because this ceremony would be almost pointless and functionless if it was done in private between monogamous couples—at least not worthy of attention in this book. If done in private in a family with one male and many wives, however, it would serve as a great means of competition among wives to be the better farmer, raise the bigger yams, and therefore compete for her husbands attention and graces and receive the better gifts. Akpabot does, however, mention Catholic influence on the Ibibios, so perhaps if they ever were polygamous, they have since stopped as a result of Catholic pressure.
111 He speaks about this ceremony as if it is in past tense, yet he has pictures of girls (in 1975) that were undergoing the Mbopo ceremonies. This leads me to believe that maybe when he writes about clitoridectomy and the female death penalty in the past tense, perhaps he is really referring to contemporary customs.
112 Akpabot. 48.
Ebre women probably had no need for men (for survival or sexual pleasure). Since they probably had no sex drives and did all of the housework, farming, and cooking. Their self-sufficiency led to their course of action to secede\(^\text{113}\) from male society and form their own all-female support groups within a co-gender society, and do all this without upsetting male musical culture.

The Ebre society creates repercussions throughout Ibibio society. While the Ebre society serves as a female-female solidarity group for the members involved, Ebre women harshly attack promiscuous or weak women. They are an elitist clique that discriminates against all women who do not engage in their lifestyle. For each other, they are an important support group, but the Ebre value system can be destructive for female-female relationships between Ebres and outsiders.

The Ebre society also seems to be a radical group within Ibibio society.

They sing another song:

Hand me my pipe
Let me smoke my way to the market.
I am not attached to my father.
I am not attached to my husband.\(^\text{114}\)

Akpabot's reaction to this song sheds more light on the Ebre society's position in Ibibio culture:

These lyrics show how fiercely independent the members of the Ebre society considered themselves, for in traditional Ibibio society, the women was very subservient to the man.\(^\text{115}\)

\(^{113}\) Secede might not be the best word here. They don't leave society and form an all female society, but they do reject all of the male elements in their lives as they possibly can.

\(^{114}\) Akpabot. 57.

\(^{115}\) Ibid. 57.
Still, Ibibio women in general seem to be emotionally strong women, with no sympathy for weakness among their ranks. A lack of sympathy for physical pain is demonstrated in a specific custom:

An Ibibio women's society that was not widespread over the area, but which had some influence on Mbopo [virgin] ceremonies in parts of the community, was the Nyama or Uso ceremony. Because the Ibibios believed that clitoridectomy aided childbirth, the Nyama society existed primarily to perform clitoridectomy on prospective Mbopo girls. Usually the ceremony was performed shortly before the girl entered the fattening room. It was done without any anesthetic and the girl was not supposed to utter one cry of pain. During the ceremony itself, the people present sang in loud voices to drown out the possibility of a yell from the girl. If it happened that she cried out in pain, she was ridiculed in song by the women after the ceremony.

Clitoridectomy seems to have been a rite of passage into womanhood. If a girl bravely faced the ceremony and withstood the pain in silence, she was accepted into adult female society. At the same time, if the girl yelled during the ceremony, her female peers showed (or were supposed to show) no sympathy for the pain that she suffered. Instead she was ridiculed and laughed at. Furthermore, the people who performed the operation on the girl were women. This whole part of life seems to have been organized, supported, and condoned by women.

Akpabot did not clarify the male role in the ceremony, if there was/is one at all. To western society, female-organized and female-performed clitoridectomy seems to be an obvious example of female-against-female interaction; but an Ibibio woman might possibly see herself as performing a great favor for the girl, and actually forming some kind of gender bond, based on pain. If males participated.

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116 It's interesting to see that Akpabot felt the need to stress that the ceremony is not universal among Ibibios. He also speaks about it in the past tense; but he speaks about it as if it is such an important ceremony, and devotes so much time to it that it is hard to believe that this ceremony was not occurring when he wrote the book in 1975.

117 It's interesting that Akpabot attempts to scientifically rationalize the ceremony.

118 Akpabot, 60.
in the ceremony, there could be some traces of male-female solidarity deducted. The participants all knew and realized that the operation was painful, and so in order to help the girl through, men and women raised their voices together to drown out any cries, and to try and save the girl from ridicule by the women afterwards. Perhaps no songs of the Nyama society survived the transfer to Cuba because the practice of clitoridectomy was not transplanted to Cuba.

Ibibio males seem to have incorporated various traditions into their societies that reward docile females and punish non-docile females. The following is one example of the control that one man can have over the course of a female’s life:

At the end of her confinement period, a masquerader known as Ekong Mbopo goes to examine how she has reacted physically to the treatment. If he finds her fat and glowing with health, he rubs her with Ndom Otong, a kind of whitish chalk to signify his approval. If she has not grown fat, he rubs her with a kind of charcoal which causes itching and much discomfort; he then goes into the village to scandalize her in song which he improvises for the occasion.119

Furthermore,

It was the custom to get a girl betrothed very young because she would fetch a better dowry for her parents. If a girl grew up to be about 20 without anyone asking for her hand in marriage, she became a source of embarrassment to her parents.120

Rewarding docile females is done mostly by males, but contrary to the previous example, punishing non-docile females is performed mainly by women. Because of this, women can find asexual psychological refuge in the company of neither males nor females. Around males, if they want to seek rewards, they must remain

119 Akpabot. 49.
120 Ibid. 48.
docile. Around females, if they want to avoid ridicule and being the object of
gossip, they must remain docile.

An example of punishment of women by females:

One of the conditions for being admitted into the society [Ebre] was that
the prospective member passed through the fattening room as a virgin. In
this way they maintained a continuity of virtuous living from puberty to
old age. The Ebre society was a means of exerting social control among
the women of the community and exposing thieves and women of easy
virtue to ridicule. —Akpabot, 57

Another example of punishment of women by females:

Before bedtime, she is rubbed with a special oil called Mmem which has a
most distasteful odor, to discourage any man (including her husband, if
she is married) from sneaking into her room. If a girl became pregnant
while in the fattening room it was a source of disgrace, and she was
immediately banished with the women of the society making up songs of
insult and abuse to discredit her.121

An example of a male reward for female docility:

When a woman attains the age of thirty, she becomes eligible to join the
Ekpo society and enjoy its amenities and immunities, although she is
never allowed to parade as a masquerader.122

The “concessions” made by male Ekpo members to female Ekpo members were
few and far between. Upon becoming a member of the society a woman gained
few privileges.123 Furthermore, females were forced to compete for eligibility of
Ekpo membership.

One interesting custom that is a part of the Mbopo ceremony indicates that
female competition is inherent in female nature:

121 Akpabot. 49.
122 Ibid. 27.
123 “Their actually participation in the affairs of the society [Ekpo] is limited to being allowed to
watch an Ekpo masquerader, and helping to cook food and prepare the special arena where and
Ekpo performance takes place. They are forbidden to wear a masquerade or play on any of the
Ekpo musical instruments.” (Akpabot, 26). This is one example of a custom that did survive the
passage to the new world (women not being allowed to play men’s instruments).
On the market day for virgins, during the time when the virgin, who has just left the fattening room, is paraded around the marketplace naked, with a dead chicken around her neck, rattles on her ankles, and cowbells tied around her waist. "Only elderly women and possible suitors are allowed to attend the market on this day. Young girls and unmarried women are prohibited as they might jeopardize her chances of finding a suitable bridegroom." 

In terms of gender relations, Akpabot’s book revealed many examples of female-female solidarity, male-male solidarity, female vs. female antagonisms, and male vs. female antagonisms. There were few examples of female-male solidarity. There were, however, no examples of male vs. male antagonistic situations. In reference to Ibibio music, Akpabot did not mention or include an ambience of competition among males.

**What does all of this have to do with Afro-Cuban music?**

Afro-Cuban music is extremely male-oriented. Male musicians, dancers, and singers dominate the ceremonies. If it is truly Afro-Cuban music, one would expect to see elements from all of Africa, not just half—the male half—of Africa’s population. When Ibibio cultural territory is taken into consideration, due to its coastal location, it seems that Ibibio culture would have had great influence upon Cuban music. Female musical societies, such as the Ebre society, did not survive the Atlantic slave trade to the New World. The lack of transfer of

124 When Akpabot speaks about the ceremony, he leaves out the fact that she is paraded around naked. Later in the book, however, he speaks about why the Ebre women do not wear shirts: "Reminiscent of when they first showed themselves to the public as Mbopo girls fresh from the fattening room with nothing on, members of the Ebre society leave their breasts bare." (Akpabot, 57).
125 Ibid. 49.
126 Ibid. 49.
127 Ibid. 49. The Abakuá masquerader who transmits messages from the dead also wears a belt of cowbells.
128 Ibid. 52.
this important part of African culture makes Cuba's music that much more
difficult to understand. Old elements from African music, such as the "mother"
name for the largest bata drum, do not make sense in a Cuban context. Ebre
women constantly affirm the convictions of Ibibio men that women are talkative
and that that is why the loudest drum is called mother. In Cuba, musicians might
not understand the original nuance which is an integral part of their music.

Male-dominated music in Cuba has also strongly affected the current
gender roles in Cuba, especially among blacks.

Possible reasons why:

1. The Catholic Church deemed many women's societies as pagan. (While the
   same might be true of men's secret societies, women were probably seen as more
dangerous to Europeans accustomed to female witch legends).

2. More male slaves were imported than female slaves.

The Catholic Church affected the transfer of female musical groups to Cuba in
two ways. First, it discouraged any female groups (that might have reached
Cuba) to the point of extinction. Secondly, the Church stomped out many female
music societies in Africa before slavery could take them to Cuba. Akpabot notes
how:

Mbopo and Ebre music are the only two surviving types\textsuperscript{129} of women's
social control music that existed prior to the advent of Christianity in the
Ibibio area. Other women's societies were labeled pagan by the

\textsuperscript{129} If he is right, and these really are the only two types of female groups that survived, then
perhaps clitoridectomy—and Nyama, the group that performed it—might have died out. Still,
Akpabot knew much about the Nyama ceremony, so it must have been performed somewhere
during his research, or sometime in the past 50 years before his research, so that women would
still remember enough to tell him about the ceremony.
missionaries, and today [1975] it would take a very diligent search to find communities where this type of music is still being played. For instance, it was the belief that members of the Ebre society were blessed with supernatural powers, and the church frowned upon the sometimes obscene language in their music and chanting.\textsuperscript{130}

It is important to avoid overlooking time. The previously mentioned uncertainty over whether Afro-Cuban music traces its most important antecedents to the sixteenth or nineteenth century affects the conclusions about the lack of transfer of female musical groups and gender roles to Cuba. Akpabot's studies span mostly the first $\frac{3}{4}$ of the twentieth century. At times he refers to the past in ambiguous references, making it unclear if he means a few years or a few hundred years past. Perhaps female Ibibio musical groups only began appearing in the late nineteenth century, which would make my previous conjectures less valid.

Furthermore, to buttress the previous material, the case studies of functional musical ensembles such as the Nyama and Ebre societies might be representative of an even larger trend. The music of each society performed a specific function; Nyama music was loud to cover up screams during a painful operation, Ebre music was angry to protest male domination. Akpabot mentions several other functional musical ensembles (he refers to them as functional orchestras) that do not appear in Cuba:

\textit{Asian Ubo Ikpa and Iban}: “Performed by maidens who wished to remind the young men of the village how beautiful and eligible they were.”\textsuperscript{131}

\textit{Ekpri Akata}: music of “social control,” “played and sung by young men in the village, who set themselves up as watchdogs of the their society. They listen to

\textsuperscript{130} Akpabot, 58.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid. 45.
the latest gossips, check on men and women of suspicious characters, and especially look out for thieves and fornicators. On a given night when there is no moon, the members gather together around two o'clock and move from house to house singing and warning people of evil-doers in the village.\textsuperscript{132}

\textit{Ndok Ufok Ebe}: music “performed by women who felt that their husbands were maltreating them.”\textsuperscript{133}

\textit{Nkerebe}: music “performed by fifteen year old girls before they went into the fattening room.” It means “the thinking of a husband.”\textsuperscript{134}

\textit{Oko}: music performed at “the burial of prominent old men in the village.”\textsuperscript{135}

\textit{Uta}: music performed at the funeral “of an old woman who is very prominent in the community.”\textsuperscript{136}

Other authors mention functional music ensembles as well. Brandon mentions the Egungun Society of male maskers who impersonate ancestors of the community.

In each of these examples of functional ensembles, the music played is directly associated with events or particular occasions. When separated from the occasion or event, the music might not survive. If slaves, taken from their communities, could not sustain the events, then they probably could also not sustain the music associated with events. The Nyama society would have no reason to sing Nyama songs without a clitoridectomy operation. Ekpri Akata music probably died out in Cuba (if any Ibibio slaves brought it to begin with)

\textsuperscript{132} Akpabot. 44.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid. 58.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid. 58.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid. 43.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid. 41.
because the institution of slavery did not permit the freedom to go from house to house to sing songs about evil-doers. Ndok Ufok Ebe music probably did not survive in Cuba because there were not enough women available to perform the music, and the maltreatment of the slaves probably dwarfed the spousal maltreatment that the Ndok Ufok Ebe women sang about. Oko and Uta music might have died out because, separated from their societies, deceased elders in an ever-shifting slave community probably did not command the same level of respect that they would have in their home villages in Africa. In general, functional musics, when separated from their associated events, probably did not survive in Cuba.
Chapter Four

*Post-Revolutionary Afro-Cuban Music*
Afro-Cuban Musical Culture Under Castro

A major focus of Castro’s revolution, in order to maintain support and a sense of regional pride, was to promote nationalism. As part of the promotion, he attempted to locate and then glorify the cultural aspects of Cuba. Before Castro, during Fulgencio Batista’s reign, two distinct avenues of music coexisted—that of the poor neighborhoods and that of the richer neighborhoods. The poor neighborhoods, consisting mostly of freed slaves and their descendants, mostly played music that derived its roots from African and Haitian culture. The more wealthy neighborhoods played music that derived from European sources. Prior to 1959, the genre that received the most “support and acclaim” in Cuba was ballet (which implies “classical” music, but does not necessarily always mean that ballet music is classical). Meanwhile Afro-Cuban dance and music were performed mostly for private audiences in homes of lower class citizens and at religious festivals. Afro-Cuban music did not enter the concert hall, nor was it marketed as an art music prior to 1959.

Music was not a major priority of Batista’s government. In his book The Growth and Decline of the Cuban Republic, aimed at defending his decisions as ruler and pointing out the shortcomings of Castro, he outlines the major areas of pre-Castro Cuban well-being. He mentions his advances in hospitals, public

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137 b. 1901 d. 1975.
138 Daniele, Yvonne. Rumba. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. “Before the Castro victory, ballet had received tremendous support and acclaim in Cuba, but neither folkloric dance nor modern dance had been much supported or encouraged.”
139 The general public tends to think that the transfer of power went directly from Batista to Castro. However, Batista’s last successor was actually the Dean of the Supreme Court Justices, but before he could establish a foothold on the leadership position Castro took over. Information found in Fulgencio Batista’s book, The Growth and Decline of the Cuban Republic. New York: Devon Adair Company. 1964. Back cover-leaf.
welfare, crops and livestock, fiscal policy, banking, land reform, restabilizing the sugar industry, highways, beaches, tourism, poverty, electricity, industry, and much more. He does not mention any cultural programs, such as the fine arts (including music), that aided the "Growth of the Cuban Republic," as his title might suggest. Castro, however, as a part of his campaign to retain (and gain) the support of the Cuban people, incorporated cultural promotion as much, if not more, than some of his other programs (such as housing, medical, food distribution, etc.). In 1993 he stated, "What I could suggest is that we be capable of maintaining our affinity and love for all these values during such difficult times, when we are threatened by so many different things and so many risks. Culture is the first thing we need defend... We need to show how culture can help the country overcome the Special Period\(^1\), how culture can influence the economy and the country's resources. We have an imperious need of those resources."

Yet, when basic needs are not being fulfilled (such as food/shelter/clothing), it is difficult to "maintain affinity and love" for values. Hagedorn best describes the sometimes inapplicable moral transcendence of the revolution:

A simplified, official explanation for this denial of access relies on the broad concept of revolutionary struggle, which, in this case, implies the moral superiority of a people who not only can forgo the luxuries of life

\(^1\) The Special Period: a period of extreme economic crisis in Cuba due to the cut-off financial support from the toppled Soviet Union.

(Havana Club rum, dinner at the elegant Hotel Nacional), but who can forgo them while watching potential enemies of the revolution (tourists from capitalist countries) consume these luxuries at will. This explanation pivots on the notion of sacrifice for the future: the Cuban people must be willing, theoretically, to sacrifice some material luxuries in the short term so that the basic goal of the revolution, the achievement of an egalitarian socialist state, may triumph in the long run.  

Although music is one of Cuba’s most important cultural features, Castro has admitted that he has “a terrible ear for music. I like music, but I have no musical talent. I like classical music, and I have a special preference for marches.” Regardless of his personal tastes, Afro-Cuban music has come to represent Cuban national culture. Yvonne Daniel, in her book *Rumba*, explains that this phenomenon had little to do with the music itself. In the case of rumba, “the interest… cannot be interpreted solely as an interest in artistic concerns; rather, it represents a concern for previously denied Cubans and their immediate importance to the new government… they [government] rejected attitudes and guiding ideas associated with the elite stratum of society.” Castro embraced Afro-Cuban music (especially in recent years) in part because it supported his political agenda.  

One goal of the revolution was to eradicate racism, and by extolling and publicizing the culture of the black population, barriers between races were broken down. Furthermore, “The practitioners of these religions [Santería, Palo Monte, Arará, Abakuá], harassed and persecuted for several centuries, suddenly

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142 Hagedorn, *Divine Utterances*, 27.
144 Daniel, *Rumba*, 16.
found themselves to be among the most popular representatives of Cuba’s postrevolutionary identity.”

Exiles

One problem that surfaced as a result of the revolution is the inclusion of exiles in cultural analysis. There are many people in the US who consider themselves to be exiled Cubans. With 1/10 of the Cuban population in the United States, should this important chunk of Cuban society be included in the study of Cuban music? For instance, Amira and Cornelius’s Cuban studies in NY?

Recent Worldwide Popularity of Afro-Cuban Music

Essentially, many different circumstances collided at roughly the same period in time which allowed Afro-Cuban music to become popular world-wide. The circumstances:

- Ortiz had penetrated and promoted the study of Afro-Cuban religions. He initiated Western study of Afro-Cuban religions and inspired others to study the genre. By the time Castro came to power a school of scholarly Afro-Cuban ethnographers had already been established.

- Castro’s revolution, based on socialist economy, raised the standard of living for lower class people (mostly black) which lowered the standard of living for upper class people (mostly white). Castro’s power depended on the lower classes (who happened to mostly practice Afro-Cuban religions), and so he catered to their cultural tastes as a part of a strategy to stay in power.

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145 Hagedorn, Divine Utterances, 23.
• Many white Cuban elites who viewed the Afro-Cuban religions as unsophisticated fled the island when Batista fell from power.

• After recovering from the Great Depression and the post-war recession many middle-class Americans, towards the beginning of the mid-twentieth century, found that their incomes could support leisure time activities—one important activity being international tourism. Globalization in combination with technology allowed culture (and music) to spread faster than ever before.

• Airplane travel made it easier to visit the island.

• Latin American culture became more popular in the United States due to the growing latino population. Salsa clubs, Latin American dancing (dancers like “Cuban Pete”), famous entertainers such as Tito Puente, and the addition of Latin American instruments into Wind Band and Orchestral repertoire have increased awareness of and interest in Latin American music (which includes Afro-Cuban music).

• The 1980 Mariel boatlift displaced approximately 125,000 people\textsuperscript{146} (many of whom were Afro-Cuban religious practitioners) from Cuba to New York and Los Angeles, where Afro-Cuban religions spread and flourished. The Afro-Cuban influence in the United States urban areas also fosters awareness of and interest in Afro-Cuban music.

\footnotesize{146} 125,000 number taken from McAuslan, Rough Guide, 473.
Ry Cooter’s Buena Vista Social Club project became popular world-wide and the musical group played at Carnegie Hall and continues to sell CD’s from almost every major CD distributor.

Atheism, a socialist value touted by Castro’s revolution, edged Christianity (and other religions) out of Cuba. Afro-Cuban religions remained because the rate of change at which Castro wished to implement his ideals did not accommodate the lower classes—especially among older practitioners (who were usually leaders in the communities). In order to retain their support Castro needed to cater to some of their desires, and he did this by not outlawing the Afro-Cuban religions. Castro compromised their situation, however, by encouraging and supporting the commercialization of the religions to presenting them as a secular version of Cuba’s culture (i.e. CFNC).\(^{147}\)

Afro-Cuban religions had been outlawed for hundreds of years. Towards the latter part of the slave trade only chartered organizations were allowed to legally congregate. Upper and middle-class Cubans in the early-mid twentieth century considered Afro-Cuban religions witchcraft. Because of this the Afro-Cuban religious congregations were accustomed to meeting in secret and could survive the atheism that Castro promoted.

Afro-Cuban” is an overused term, exploited in the early-mid twentieth century by nationalists, politicians, and pioneering musicologists who were only beginning to

\(^{147}\) See Katherine Hagedorn’s book Divine Utterances for a detailed description of the folkloricization of Afro-Cuban religions.
learn about religions such as Santeria, Palo Monte, and Arará. The term was and is still exploited from the mid-twentieth century through the present-day by musical ensembles who use the terms to generate commercial interest.

Tourism

"It is precisely tourism that both reveals and obscures Cuba's performative essence."\(^{148}\)

Tourism might possibly be the single most important factor in determining what Afro-Cuban music has become today. Since 1959, there have been three distinct economic periods which parallel recent trends in Afro-Cuban music. During the first period, from 1959-1989, Cuba's economy, with growing help from the Soviet Union, grew steadily after the initial recession following the change of power from Batista to Castro. The second period, from 1989 through the mid-1990's, marked a time of severe economic depression due to the fall of the Soviet Union. The third period, 1994/5-present, has witnessed a slow economic comeback, mainly due to a growing dependence on the tourist industry.

During the first period, tourism immediately dropped off. Initially, tourists perceived Cuba as revolutionary. At first, the world did not know what to think of Castro and the U.S. had hopes of alliance. Then, as his first hundred days in office elapsed, Castro's reputation became soiled as he conducted executions for petty crimes, nationalized commercial and private property, and decreed several harsh laws. Batista supporters and wealthy Cubans who stood to lose property fled in exile. This period also witnessed the Bay of Pigs Invasion and

\(^{148}\) Hagedorn, Utterances, 10.
the Cuban Missile Crisis. Invasions, nuclear weapons, harsh punishment for crimes, and the U.S. embargo practically destroyed existing tourism.

Also during the first period, Afro-Cuban religions lingered in perceptions of witchcraft.

In the early years if the revolution... it was common for black Cubans on their way to religious ceremonies to be stopped by the local police, verbally and physically harassed, and then “liberated” of their birds, foodstuffs, and ritual objects they carried with them. This harassment carried on well into the 1980’s, despite the various government-sponsored research projects focusing on the performance and material culture of African-based religious traditions.149

Yet, the government realized that in order to maintain control they needed to make the lower classes feel important. Simultaneously, Ortiz’s followers who supported Castro’s revolution, such as León, saw the government as an outlet to publicize their studies on Afro-Cuban folklore.

The National Folkloric Ensemble of Cuba, the Conjunto Folklórico Nacional dancers, musicians, and administrators, along with several Ministry of Culture officials, took advantage of the pervasive popularity of rumba over other folkloric dances and instituted Rumba Saturday as part of an embracing cultural education program as well as an entertainment program for foreign visitors. These Saturday performances, beginning late in 1979, celebrated rumba as a national symbol and, among foreign visitors, as an international image of Cuba.150

The musicologists and Afro-Cuban performers were enjoying fame and a feeling of being precious to national culture, the government found that the cultural activities—when displayed abroad—helped its international reputation, and those involved discovered it to be profitable—especially to tourists from first world countries who generally possessed a higher per-capita income than most Cubans. In part because of the emphasis on culture, tourism slightly picked up.

149 Hagedorn, Utterances, 9.
150 Daniel, Rumba, 13.
The alliance with the Soviet Union also created a new tourist group. Afro-Cuban music and culture grew into a lucrative business, and eventually, the public performances split from their sacred counterparts. The split has been so drastic in some areas of performance that religion seems distant and someone witnessing an Afro-Cuban performance in a tourist setting would not even guess that the spectacles of music and dance originated from sacred religious congregations.

Since the mid-1980's, Afro-Cuban floor shows have become ubiquitous in most Cuban tourist hotels. Performative themes range from the anthropomorphic dramatization of a few of the major deities of Santeria, a brief dance narrative of the rumba guaguanco, to a Tropicana-like cabaret extravaganza that refers to several African-based religious traditions simultaneously.151

Collapse of the Soviet Union

The collapse affected all areas of Cuban life. The immediate cut-off from Soviet financial aid devastated the economy and the following period of economic depression became known as the Special Period. The service sector of the economy lost a large percent of Soviet clientele. Furthermore, the world's most powerful communist country dissolved overnight, which put a damper on the upbeat communistic propaganda of the revolution. Cubans were in poor spirits, they had lost most of their tourist customers, and everyone suffered financially in their personal lives. The tourist industry changed out of desperation to make ends meat.

Cubans who work in the tourist hotels... benefit covertly from the system by participating in it. But Cubans who are not hotel employees also try to benefit from the system by actions as suspect as attempting to trade pesos for dollars on hotel premises or the simple and often innocent act of temporarily escaping the noonday sun by waiting in an air-conditioned hotel lobby. Such events provoke... self-hatred..., because
the Cubans who work in the tourist hotels must throw out the Cuban "loiterers" in order to keep their jobs and thus maintain their privileges. Although the main stratification is between Cubans and foreigners, as a result of the potential privilege associated with the tourist industry, Cubans become stratified once again into those who work in (and collude with) the tourist industry and those who do not.\(^{152}\)

Despite the "segregation" of those with and without service jobs, the economy has steadily grown in the service sector to include more Cubans. Currently, over half of Cuba's population works in service. There is, however, a much greater benefit to work in the cities, which generally attract more tourists.

\[^{152}\text{Hagedorn, Utterances, 28.}\]
Not only has tourism provided service jobs, tourism has generated a vast amount of revenue:

![Tourism Revenue in Cuba Graph](image)

*1995 amount is a projected, rather than an actual, value.*

Under the pressure of tourism, and the wealth it creates, Afro-Cuban religious music has become more secular in nature:

One reason the policy of defanging the sacred while empowering the secular was so successful, I reasoned, was that the Cuban government knew exactly who would comprise the audience, and how each sector of the audience would function. The creyentes would soak up the exposure of their until recently repressed religious practices, and might even take home the overlay of the new secular context. The jineteros would trade Cuban pesos for tourist dollars, which was illegal until July 1993, bringing more hard currency into the Cuban economy. And the tourists would flock to the shows, the international appeal of which had already been proven on the Conjunto's first few European and African tours in the 1960's.

Some sectors of Afro-Cuban religions have transformed into money-making businesses. Some Santeria members, for instance, have a program called

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153 Numbers taken from (Hagedorn, *Utterances*, 8) as found in Fernández, Alberto (1993:2).
Ochatur in which anyone can enroll (for several thousand dollars) to be initiated into Santeria.

Chapter Conclusions

The revolutionary government encouraged cultural activities and the economy, after going through several stages, has become dependent upon tourism. With the growth of tourism, Afro-Cuban culture became extremely popular. Certain Afro-Cuban religions which, in 1959 consisted of private unpopular congregations, have transformed into secular (and sometimes sacred) businesses. The music has changed as a result.
The state of Afro-Cuban music exhibits three main problems: philosophical and historical problems, problems associated with a lack of transfer of musical culture from Africa to Cuba, and problems instigated by post-revolutionary Cuban politics and tourism.

Much Afro-Cuban music is sophisticated and vitally important to Latin American society. The music, however, has not been documented properly in Western music publications. In order for Afro-Cuban music to be taken seriously in the scholarly world, several changes must occur.

Spelling and referencing should become uniform worldwide. For starters, people should decide how to spell "Afro-Cuban." Several different spellings exist: Afrocubana, Afrocuban, Afro-Cuban, and Afro Cuban. People should decide how to spell chachachá. Several different spellings exist: Cha cha cha, Chachacha, Cha-chacha, Cha-Cha-Cha, Cha-cha-chá, Cha-Cha-Chá, Cha cha chá, and chachachá. Scholars should demand a higher quality of writing from "Afro-Cuban" scholars, in that it should be demanded from them that they use accents and other punctuation, where necessary. Batá drums, for example, are one of the most important elements of Afro-Cuban music, yet some people write "bata" while others write "batá." While it may not seem to be a big deal to most people, it does matter, especially to higher-level intellectuals who react with disdain to "improper" spelling. The problem is so wide-spread that several authors feel the need to add spelling disclaimers to their books. María Theresa Vélez, in her biography on Felipe García Villamil, includes a "note on spelling:"

I have chosen to follow the Spanish orthography in transcribing the Lucumi, Abakúa, and Congo words, with a few changes adopted for reasons of clarity. I made this choice because Felipe, with whom I worked closely, is a Cuban whose Lucumi side of the family, like most of the Lucumi speakers in Cuba, are not familiar with written Yoruba and acquired their literacy following the rules of written Spanish. Accents and sometimes even letters vary. I have chosen one spelling for each term and use it consistently in the text but in no way consider my choice “the right spelling” for those terms.

One of the main debates about spelling results from the African oral tradition. Since many of the songs and African words that transferred to Cuba transferred orally, and since most Cuban slaves did not know how to write, uniform pronunciation exists on the island, but not uniform spelling. Today Cuba has one of the highest literacy rates in the world (95.7%\(^\text{c}\)), and since most people who play/study Afro-Cuban music can read and write, it’s time that they decide upon correct spellings of everyday terms. One of the most important terms I can think of is the name for a very important religion/fraternity: Abakua (Also spelled Abakwa, Abakuá, and Abakwá). This popular religion abounds in the Havana and Matanzas provinces, yet has no definitive name-spelling.

Besides surface semantics, such as spelling, a set of general characteristics of Afro-Cuban music should be decided upon. For starters, music described as “Afro-Cuban” should have a groove cycle and there should be the constant presence of a clave (either physical or implied).

Scholars should decide if mambo, salsa, chachachá, and other fairly “new” (“new” meaning mid/late-twentieth century) musical genres should be categorized under “Afro-Cuban.” A decent case could be made for their belonging to a

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\(^\text{155}\) Vélez, Drumming for the Gods, xi.

\(^\text{156}\) CIA Fact Book, 2002.
different musical genre, due to the addition of newer instruments (drum set, saxophone, electronic keyboard), amplifying technology, recording technology, and the resulting inherent differences in musical characteristics.

In addition, people (scholars, musicians, the general public, music distributors) should become more selective about what they name "Afro-Cuban." Scholars who specialize in African musicology should study Afro-Cuban music and attempt to distinguish between African antecedents and the musical elements that were invented in Cuba. Bands should resist labeling their recordings "Afro-Cuban" simply for commercial purposes, especially if the music is essentially fusion music, or a very distant relative of Afro-Cuban music.

Prominent musical publications and societies should sponsor, commission, or develop catalogues of discography, instruments, music types, musicians, and dances. Music Encyclopedias should hire Caribbean editors, Central American editors, South American editors, and North American editors in order to present more accurate information about the different types of Latin American music.

As our global society becomes "hooked" on Afro-Cuban music, one of the most important things we can do to preserve historical knowledge and honor Afro-Cuban musical tradition is to collect and preserve artifacts. A safe place for the Afro-Cuban historical artifacts should be erected—such as a museum for antiquated instruments, music documents, biographic displays of past-musicians, and perhaps even old dancing clothes, photographs, etc. The museum could even have a listening lab, and a gift shop selling recordings.
Respect is earned. To me, and probably many others, the music is enough. Still, in order for Afro-Cuban music genres to be respect-worthy from a scholarly standpoint, we need to raise the bar.


CIA Factbook, 2002.


Seeger, Anthony. “Whoever we are today, we can sing a song about it.” In Music and Black Ethnicity: The Caribbean and South America. Gerard Béhague, ed. Miami: University of Miami North-South Center, 1994.