

Afro-Cuban Catholicisms

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter focuses on Afro-Cuban Catholic beliefs and practices, taking an historical approach and bringing the reader up to the contemporary moment. As the chapter will demonstrate, people of African descent in Cuba have developed politically sophisticated and multivalent responses to Catholicism as *ecclesia docens*—the Church hierarchy in its authoritative teaching function—and to the Church as an institutional structure. Likewise, practitioners of transnational Afro-Cuban West and Central African-inspired religions have been embedded in complex relationships with Catholic theology writ large and its social inscription within the power structures of local parishes while grappling with Catholicism as a hegemonic source of cultural value. This chapter pays special attention to *a mi manera* (“in my own way”)—Catholics who draw on a rich and familiar history of prerevolutionary idiomatic expression in which women have been dominant and powerful figures.

Keywords: Afro-Cuban, Catholicism, African, Lucumí, orishas, saints, Espiritismo, Cuban Revolution, Virgin, Yemayá

AS several of the authors in this handbook demonstrate, Roman Catholicism is not one tradition but encompasses many. It is catholic in the sense of heterogeneous, as well as racialized, gendered, and class specific, depending on the historical conditions of its practice. People of African descent in Cuba have developed politically sophisticated and multivalent responses to Catholicism as *ecclesia docens*—the Church hierarchy in its authoritative teaching function—and to the Church as an institutional structure. Likewise, practitioners of transnational Afro-Cuban West and Central African-inspired religions have been embedded in complex relationships with Catholic theology writ large and its social inscription within the power structures of local parishes while grappling with Catholicism as a hegemonic source of cultural value.

The term “Afro-Cuban” requires a brief gloss. Not all people of African descent in Cuba have historically identified as *afrodescendiente* or Afro-Cuban, a term not coined yet actively disseminated by the legendary historian, ethnographer, and *pensador* Fernando Or-

tiz in the early twentieth century. Slavery not only behaved as a brutal system of forced labor but also reinforced existing forms of social stratification.¹ Prior to emancipation, skin color and phenotypical features such as hair texture came to act as rulers by which to measure how far a given person had come from the perceived indignity of enslavement.² After abolition in 1886, discussion of color dominated the racial discourse, yet it acquired salient importance as an indicator of class. Light skin implied ownership of property, whereas dark skin indicated that one's ancestors had suffered as the property of others.

Assuming the label of "Afro-Cuban" has, then, expressed a desire to enter into solidarity with others of African descent. Typically light-skinned Cubans who have been able to conceal their ancestors' sub-Saharan roots have done so, since their disavowal in favor of European origins has been incentivized as a condition of social "elevation." Racial passing as a mechanism of advancement has received countless treatments in Cuban popular culture, as in the "great Cuban novel" *Cecilia Valdés o la Loma del Ángel* (1882). Analogously, practitioners of Afro-Cuban religions—withstanding race or class—have sometimes chosen to "pass" as Catholic within their natal families. (p. 69) Outside of religious contexts, not all white or Asian practitioners have been eager to associate with Afro-Cubans, much less be suspected of having African blood.³ To speak of Afro-Cuban Catholicisms, then, is to contemplate the plurality of ways that those with African descent—biologically or religiously—have approached Catholicism, whether or not they have sought to embrace Blackness as a foundational component of their social and political identities.

History

1517 to 1959

While historians mark 1513 as the date when the first enslaved Africans arrived in Cuba, evangelization was not an immediate priority for the Spanish Crown. The expropriation of indigenous labor was of paramount importance, and the Taíno/Arawak and Ciboneys spent their days toiling in copper and gold mines as well as in small-scale plantation labor on *encomiendas*. As María Elena Díaz writes, the missionary project did not begin in earnest until a critical mass of enslaved Africans arrived almost a century later, in the early seventeenth century, primarily for the forced cultivation of tobacco and sugarcane. Due to the then-recent "Reconquest" of the Iberian Peninsula (wholly or in part "Al-Andalus" from 711 to 1492) and the fear of resurgent Muslim influence, the Crown mandated that enslaved people from Islamicized regions of Africa not be imported to the Spanish Americas. In Cuba as elsewhere, the Crown exhorted its subjects to christen enslaved people with European names upon purchase, baptize them, expose them to Church services at least twice a year, and allow them to rest on the Sabbath and Catholic days of obligation.⁴

The Crown's interest in evangelization on the island intensified in the eighteenth century, as the African population was set to multiply exponentially. When the Haitian Revolution began in 1791, Cuba was poised to take the lead in Caribbean sugar production. At the beginning of a massive compilation of Spanish colonial legislation published for Don Carlos II, *Recopilación de leyes de los reynos de las Indias*, the Crown obligates Catholic officials, Spaniards, and creoles who claimed people as property to instruct the enslaved in the faith.⁵ The *Recopilación* opens with the announcement of a mission to bring Catholicism, and therefore universal redemption, to the American part of Spain. The command to convert, indoctrinate, and otherwise save Indian "pagans" goes hand in hand with the order to stamp out idolatry, forbid the consumption of human flesh, and banish false priests. In the *Recopilación's* seventeenth law, Africans as well as Indians are prohibited from laboring on Sundays and feast days. Needless to say, their putative protections went unobserved, as did the regulations governing the treatment of the enslaved listed in the notorious Code Noir, decreed by Louis XIV in 1685 for French overseas possessions.⁶

(p. 70) In the *Recopilación's* thirteenth law, those who hold people in slavery are directed to send the enslaved (not designated as persons themselves) to Masses and catechisms at the hour appointed by the local prelate. The mention of a local prelate is significant, as the large percentage of monastics among overseas clergy had begun to alarm the monarchy; monks' commercial endeavors and primary ecclesiastical allegiance to the papacy made them suspect of divided political loyalties. As Karen Y. Morrison writes, "One clear effect of Bourbon policies toward Catholic institutions was to direct educational responsibilities for [B]lack indoctrination and socialization away from the regular, monastic orders (especially Jesuits, Dominicans, and Franciscans) toward parish-level diocesan priests. The first catechism guide for Africans in Cuba only appeared in the latter part of the eighteenth century and was intended for use by such parish priests."⁷ In the 1760s and again in the 1840s, the Crown expelled slaveholding monastic orders that encouraged family formation for the enslaved through marriage and tutored them in the rudiments of Catholic doctrine. The challenges of the latter subsequently fell to local priests.

The results were uneven to say the least. Among ordinary Cubans, the stereotype of the Spanish colonial priest has been one of public pretention and private vice; for example, it is still said today that clergymen were sent to Cuba as punishment for egregious moral infractions committed in other Spanish possessions or on the Iberian Peninsula. Although the Inquisition—so active in New Spain and Peru—was comparatively ineffectual in Cuba due to internal conflicts among ecclesiastical bodies, a few cases were prosecuted vigorously against Protestants.⁸ In *Historia de una pelea cubana contra los demonios* (1959), Fernando Ortiz satirized the Inquisition's inability to eradicate African-inspired practices in seventeenth-century Cuba and its projection of Devil worship onto religious systems without a concept of the diabolical. "In 1510, the Bishop of Cuba complained that every boat from Spain was bringing Jews, New Christians and heretics," yet their internalization of Catholic doctrine was much less of a worry than the threat of Afro-Cuban rebellion against the colonial regime.⁹

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In 1682, the Synod of the Diocese of Santiago de Cuba, Jamaica, Habana, and Florida forbade those designated as Black and mulatto from entering any religious orders; the history of Afro-Cuban Catholicisms is therefore overwhelmingly that of the laity. In 1842, the Crown issued a degree echoing the *Recopilación* that called on those who claimed people as property to recommit to the religious training of the enslaved. The emergent discourse of fetishism—the rubric under which any African religious activity had come to be subsumed since the early eighteenth century—would cast enslaved people as in thrall to material possessions based on an instinctual misattribution of agency to things. The evidence suggests that priests emphasized the power of crucifixes, icons, and other objects over doctrine in deference to the purportedly fetishistic natures of their catechumens. Africans were baptized with holy water, but so were sugar estates. Sugar mills were also assigned godparents and named after saints and the Blessed Virgin Mary.¹⁰ The analogy between the colonial factory and the body of the Catholic subject is too resonant and multilayered to be explored here; suffice it to say that the Crown considered enslaved people little more than machines for the reproduction of Spanish (p. 71) cultural hegemony and economic domination. Any protections afforded to their bodies merely constituted a type of insurance policy for the colonial regime.

One of the “secular” social arenas most heavily impacted by Church involvement was that of legal matrimony. While the Church generally supported the right of Afro-Cuban adults to receive the sacrament of marriage, the Crown put up significant obstacles to the unions of people with incompatible class positions and/or differences in legal color. Legal color was a combination of phenotypical or “real” color—everyday social identification based on appearance—and one’s classification, along with one’s parents, on official documents such as baptismal records and court proceedings. Color ideally performed a synecdochal function, so that at a glance one could determine the social status of any Cuban, but at any moment phenotypical color could either complement or contradict legal color.

Then as today, Afro-Cubans have identified as *negro*, *pardo*, *prieto*, *moreno*, *mulato*, *jabao*, and *bien trigüeño*, among any number of labels; an encyclopedic taxonomy of race has registered minute gradations of difference in hair texture and facial features as well as skin color throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. During the colonial period, such subjective assessments formed the basis for declarations of legal color that decided whom Afro-Cubans could marry. It was not uncommon for the parents of the betrothed to object to the nuptials based on a judgment of unequal station—that is, a discrepancy between the social positions of one would-be marital partner and another, based on phenotypical color, class, and the gendered notion of honor (itself dependent on the perception of premarital virginity and chastity among the female members of a given family). Sometimes Catholic priests testified on behalf of Afro-Cubans of unequal station, or in cases of intermarriage between Afro-Cubans and people of European or Chinese descent (especially after 1848, after which over 150,000 Cantonese indentured servants arrived in Cuba). However, priests only intervened on behalf of those Afro-Cubans whom they deemed worthy of the legal safeguards that marriage would impart.

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The colonial regime had an incentive to hinder enslaved couples from marrying, since the legitimacy of their offspring would confer a degree of prestige on the entire family that could facilitate its members' freedom or manumission (*coartado*). By contrast, the Crown implicitly endorsed the institution of interracial concubinage, in which Afro-Cuban women and white women from the lower classes acted as the mistresses of white and Asian men, often setting up separate households with them. These so-called free or consensual unions—which, like legal marriages, not infrequently involved coercion and violence—produced children without a legal right to either paternal recognition or inheritance. While this situation punished both parents and children for transgressing against patriarchal norms, the moral discourse surrounding unregulated, unauthorized cohabitation and female sexuality masked the fact that the Crown profited from keeping land, capital, and other kinds of wealth in the hands of elites. Public officials and the press reserved particular venom for Black women's presumed depravity; such sayings as "There is no sweet tamarind fruit, nor virgin mulatta," sought to place the blame on Afro-Cuban women for their own violent exploitation.¹¹

(p. 72) Afro-Cubans relied with greater confidence on the practice of godparentage, a species of religious kinship that bound together the families of newborns with a man and a woman chosen to act as their spiritual guardians in the sacrament of baptism. Since the medieval period the Church had underscored the lifelong spiritual responsibilities associated with godparentage, such as providing children with a Christian education and counseling them in the cultivation of virtue. It was not uncommon for Afro-Cubans to seek baptismal godparents for their children among more affluent white Cubans, solely to diminish the extent to which they would be subjected to the whims of the colonial and, later, Republican juridical system. The historical importance of the institution is evinced by the prevalence of this terminology within the Afro-Cuban religion *Lucumí* (popularly called *Santería* or *regla ocha*), in which one's religious sponsors and mentors are known as godmothers (*madrinas*) and/or godfathers (*padrinos*).

The Spanish Crown bequeathed Afro-Cubans two other Catholic institutions that would leave a much greater religious legacy than other efforts at evangelization: *cofrádias de negros* (Black fraternities dedicated to the veneration of particular saints) and *cabildos de nación* (societies organized according to African ethnic group). Beginning the late fifteenth century, local parishes and noble families in Seville and Lisbon funded *cofrádias* and *cabildos de nación* so as to regulate the association of free Africans and manumitted slaves. Clerical and secular authorities in Havana soon followed suit; "cabildos of this type were reported in Cuba as early as 1535 in Santiago and 1568 for Havana."¹² Clergymen and aristocratic elites reasoned that by supplying resources to people of African descent for the staging of processions and other devotional activities, they might succeed in habituating them into Catholic orthodoxy. The Church sought to replace Africans' "primitive" superstitions and propensity for witchcraft, or *brujería*, with the honor (*dulia*) owed to the saints, veneration (*hyperdulia*) of the Virgin Mary, and worship (*latria*) of God. For its part, the Crown hoped that *cofrádias* and *cabildos de nación* would assist in their divide-and-conquer strategy, acting to separate "fresh" "saltwater" Africans

from “seasoned” ones, the African-born from creoles, the enslaved from free Black people, and distinct African ethnicities from one another.

These institutions did the opposite. *Cabildos* hosted the performance of African-inspired rituals and evolved into mutual-aid societies with dues-paying members. They offered loans; arranged for medical care and financial assistance in case of illness; pooled funds to pay for compatriots’ funerals; and manumitted enslaved peers, further bonding members together on the basis of religious affinity rather than ethnicity. Afro-Cubans undoubtedly absorbed some components of Catholic doctrine, yet *cofradías* and *cabildos de nación*—in Cuba as in Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and Brazil—became key sites of Black sovereignty, self-making, and fugitivity.¹³ Women not only participated in *cabildos* but also had a voice in electing their leaders. They wielded power in the position of queen, queen mother, and *capataz*, among others. “The important duty of guarding the safe that contained the *cabildo*’s money usually fell upon the queen,” writes Matt D. Childs.¹⁴

These organizations also fostered the innovative recombination of African religions. Indeed, scholarly consensus now holds that *cabildos* stimulated the emergence of (p. 73) Lucumí, the Ewe/Fon religious formation Arará, and Palo Monte (among other Kongo-inspired *reglas de congo*), as well as the initiatory brotherhood of Abakuá, a creative reinstantiation of the Calabar Ékpè secret society. For example, Lucumí *cabildos* were defined by Yorùbá ethnic affiliation, yet they offered membership to Afro-Cubans from other “nations”; *cabildo* leaders followed the pattern set by cults of the Yorùbá deities, or orishas, by converting these groups into “‘cross-cutting’ institutions ... based on initiation rather than descent.”¹⁵ *Cabildos* integrated Afro-Cubans into communities headed by elders with a near-monopoly on the ritual information, or “secrets,” regarded as traditions and devised durable protocols for the transmission of Yorùbá, Ewe/Fon, Kongo, and Calabar religious knowledge.¹⁶ Saints and virgins came to represent West African orishas and *fo-duces* as well as the Central African spirits called *mpungus* or *inquices* (*nkisis*); the correspondences between them crystallized due to perceived similarities between the hagiographies of the former and mythologies of the latter (reinforced by the iconographic details seen in statues, chromolithographs, and other images).

Lucumí *cabildos* appropriated the European aesthetics and creole Cuban aristocratic styles of the colonial period, procuring fine porcelains, gilded adornments, and opulent fabrics to fashion sumptuous altars for their patron orishas.¹⁷ *Cabildos* bestowed royal titles such as queen, prince, and courtier on both elected and hereditary officeholders. They also paraded through the streets on saints’ feast days and for the Epiphany (January 6). According to David H. Brown, “*Cabildo* processions presented subversive public models of royal wealth, order, power, and alternative authority.”¹⁸ As Miguel “Willie” Ramos writes, “By the late 1700s, they were beginning to worry the master class. Various articles of the 1792 Bando de Buen Gobierno y Policia were addressed at controlling the *cabildos* and their members. Article 39 claimed to attend to the complaints about *cabildos* located on streets inhabited by ‘honest neighbors who justly complain about the discomfort occasioned by the coarse and unpleasant sounds of their [African] instruments ... I or-

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der that within one year counting from today, all the cabildos move to the edges of the city.' ”¹⁹

In the 1880s, cabildos throughout Cuba started to die out as a result of repressive legislation, and after 1887, cabildos increasingly began to be located in private homes. New legislation enjoined cabildos to obtain prior official recognition and licenses, and in 1888, the government prohibited cabildos from being organized independently as they were in colonial times, ruling that they had to be overseen following the laws promulgated for white societies. Most cabildos disbanded or went underground, giving rise to the institution of the Afro-Cuban “house temple.” Even today, most Lucumí, Arará, and Palo Monte initiatory communities operate out of their leaders’ homes, where the consecrated objects that embody their patron deities live alongside their children, spouses, and extended families.

Ironically, the Crown had a policy of freeing enslaved people who fled to Cuba from Protestant countries, but slavery was not completely abolished on the island until 1886.²⁰ During the struggle for independence from Spain in the latter half of the nineteenth century, writes Louis A. Perez, “The Catholic Church symbolized some of the most (p. 74) odious features of Spanish colonialism: illiberal traditions, authoritarian structures, and the preponderance of *peninsulares* within the church hierarchy.”²¹ Not surprisingly then, many critics of the Spanish regime turned to Protestant denominations, viewed as representative of more modern, rational, and egalitarian forms of Christianity, with their “democratic” emphasis on the priesthood of believers. Others—particularly women and Afro-Cubans of all genders—partook in emergent modalities of Spiritism based partly on the writings of French polymath Allan Kardec and partly on a labile assemblage of ritual techniques to contact the spirits of the dead that had originated among Afro-Cubans in south-eastern Cuba.

Espiritismo poached liturgically from biblical sources, Roman Catholic iconography, and devotional music incorporated vernacular beliefs surrounding the ability of the deceased to guide the living. It gained followers in the midst of the inconceivable social upheaval caused by the Ten Years’ War against Spain (1868–1878), as well as Spanish General Valeriano Weyler’s policy of “reconcentrating” civilians in Oriente from 1896 to 1898—the last three years of the Second War for Independence from Spain—to areas directly administered by the Spanish army. Doing so was intended to deprive guerillas of new recruits and grassroots material support. In this respect, it succeeded; according to one conservative estimate, however, 30 percent of Cubans interned in these “concentration camps” perished due to malnutrition and disease. Some traumatized survivors lost contact with relatives and other beloved *reconcentrados* and then spent the remainder of their days attempting to find them. The nationalist sentiments provoked by “Butcher” Weyler’s excesses turned the island more forcefully against Spanish rule and the Catholic hierarchy, widely regarded as complicit with the atrocities inflicted on the creole population.

Three types of Espiritismo came to predominate in Cuba: *de mesa*, *de cordón*, and *cruzao* [*cruzado*]. In Espiritismo *de mesa*, affluent and upwardly mobile participants follow

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Kardecist principles of “Scientific” Spiritism and hold séances around a white table; in the liturgies of *cordón*, practitioners “of a lower class status” stand in a circle holding hands, singing and inviting trance possession.²² *Cruzao* combines elements of both and is “crossed” with practices derived from Lucumí and Palo Monte. All three types of Es-piritismo have held out the hope of reconnecting the bereaved with departed loved ones. They have also recognized the array of ethnic groups on the island by identifying personal guardians as “spirit guides” drawn from the ranks of *Indios*; *Kongos* and other Africans; formerly enslaved Black Cubans; Romani women (immortalized as *Gitanas*); Asian and Arabic *muertos*; and Roman Catholic priests and nuns, racialized as Spaniards. The acknowledgment of these groups as contributing positively to Cubans’ spiritual welfare has gone hand in hand with an appreciation for women as spirit mediums, celebrated for their aptitude in channeling the spirit guides in rituals called *misas blancas* or *misas espirituales*. Mediums understood to be especially gifted have ascended to the status of “god men” and their ardent followings have contested the supremacy of the Catholic Church as ultimate arbiter of religious norms.²³

Unfortunately, the “ideology of racelessness” propagated by the journalist, poet, and revolutionary José Martí—so persuasive to white and light-skinned Cubans—denied (p. 75) not only the ubiquity of racial labels but also the ability of Afro-Cubans to mobilize on the basis of such distinctions. Despite fighting in demographically disproportionate numbers during the wars of independence, Black Cubans did not get an equal share of the socio-economic pie carved out after the Spanish authorities departed; in fact, few Afro-Cuban veterans received even remotely adequate compensation for their efforts. In Miguel Barnet’s interview cum historical novel *The Autobiography of a Runaway Slave*, the formerly enslaved Esteban Montejo recalled his day-to-day life as a freedom fighter in the Liberation Army: “War destroys men’s trust, your brothers die beside you, and there is nothing you can do about it. Then along come the smart guys and grab all the good jobs.”²⁴ After the United States occupied the island in 1898 following the Spanish-American War and segregated its major cities, racial tensions intensified. Afro-Cubans found themselves unable to articulate their grievances without confronting the accusation of racism themselves, leveled by white politicians interested in promoting a “colorblind” Cuban identity insensible to the reality of widespread discrimination.

From 1898 to 1902, during the neocolonial administration of Republican Cuba by the United States, Protestant missionaries established a number of congregations and won converts, even as the attraction to Afro-Cuban religions endured. However, the early Republican period (1902–1933) witnessed several “witch crazes” in which Afro-Cuban religious practitioners were implicated in the kidnapping and murder of white children and jailed. Several Black Cubans were garroted for these crimes, although the evidence proved flimsy at best. With the tacit approval of the Catholic Church, the state security apparatus routinely harassed members of Afro-Cuban religious formations and lynched many associated with Lucumí and the *reglas de congo*.²⁵ In the opinion of white Cuban elites, the island was in the midst of a demographic crisis, and they hoped that massive European immigration would address not one but two dangers: that of the Afro-Cuban

population becoming a majority, and the danger of agricultural labor shortages in post-emancipation years.²⁶

Cuban statesmen and legislators turned to South American models for inspiration. As Aline Helg writes, “The economic success of Argentina, which was credited to ‘the colonization of its countryside by European families,’ was on the mind of the ruling class.”²⁷ Public intellectuals fought with politicians over the practicality of implementing a similar policy, yet few denied the benefits of whitening Cuba with blood from outside the “degenerate” tropics. As a result of government policies and heavy financial incentives, “approximately 900,000 Spaniards and Canary Islanders emigrated to Cuba between 1900 and 1929, enabling this community to strengthen its position in trade and industry,” thereby weakening the economic foothold painstakingly gained by both Chinese and Black Cubans in the early twentieth century.²⁸ The Catholic Church underwrote these efforts by integrating newcomers seamlessly into existing parishes, accommodating their religious customs, and minimizing any critique of racial discrimination. In 1908, Evaristo Estenoz founded the first (and last) Black political party in Cuba to agitate for the rights of Afro-Cubans. When government sought to crush the Partido Independiente de Color, the Church did not dissent. Neither did it protest when the state—with the help of American Marines—massacred upwards of three thousand (p. 76) Afro-Cubans during the so-called race war in 1912 in response to the Partido’s isolated acts of sabotage and arson, ironically committed to goad the United States into intervening on its own behalf.

As the price of continued relevance for Afro-Cuban Catholics, the Church grudgingly accepted the veneration of Marian figures identified with orishas in annual processions that incorporated such features as the playing of consecrated *bàtá* drums outside parish doors and chants in the Lucumí liturgical language during the feast days of la Virgen de Regla and Cuba’s patroness, la Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre. For their part, upwardly mobile Cubans of mixed race strove to counter the dominant nationalist discourse by pursuing assimilation and urging a stricter adherence to Roman Catholicism.²⁹ Afro-Cuban newspapers scorned African drum music and dance as “barbarisms of bygone days” and an “African atavism” that Cubans of color would do well to eschew.³⁰ Editorials lamented the degenerate practice of witchcraft and traditional medicine, asserting that the crude healing arts of the ancestors had no place in the modern world. Although they condemned the repression of *brujos* applauded in (and partially orchestrated by) the white newspapers, they offered scant defense for those practicing African-inspired traditions. Aline Helg says of Afro-Cuban elites, “Too small in number and in power, they were not in a position to change the parameters of a debate that presented Cuban’s options in terms of ‘white civilization’ versus ‘barbarian Africanization.’”³¹

Until 1959, the influence of the Catholic Church was felt most strongly in the realm of education. Parochial schools instituted in 1876 placed most elementary and secondary schooling in the hands of the Christian Brothers of De La Salle and other teaching orders. The tuition required by these schools made attendance prohibitive for members of the lower classes, including a majority of the Afro-Cuban population, and further entrenched existing social hierarchies. Indeed, apart from schools run by the Oblate Sisters of Provi-

dence, only a handful admitted Black students until 1959.³² While parochial schools attempted to bring Afro-Cubans into the doctrinal fold by emphasizing receipt of the sacraments, they operated to reproduce the rigid structure of the ruling class. Political leaders were drawn from cohorts of graduates and upheld their social mores (although the Jesuit-educated Fidel Castro would be among the exceptions). The administration of these schools on Church-owned tracts of land and the low taxes it paid to the government made the Church an object of condemnation for lower-class Cubans. Despite this, returning the Church's property to the state was not one of the main priorities articulated by Cuban revolutionaries.³³

1959 to the Present Day

After the "triumph" of the Cuban Revolution, the Catholic Church became a target of policies aimed at extirpating religion from Cuban society. Almost immediately, the government shuttered Catholic publications and expelled priests. Mob violence beset local parishes, desecrating shrines and disrupting Eucharistic Masses and other Church services. Persecution became increasingly systematic in 1961, with the expulsion of (p. 77) clergy, arrests of priests and bishops, and confiscation of parochial schools and church businesses. Clergy who chose to remain on the island risked imprisonment. In 1962, Fidel Castro announced that Cuba was officially an atheist state and starting in 1965, both Catholic and Protestant ministers were sent to the newly created UMAP (Military Units to Aid Production) labor camps, along with members of the laity, homosexuals, and members of other groups seen as in need of revolutionary re-education. In 1969, the celebration of Christmas was banned. Although comparatively few of the clergy were Afro-Cuban, the repression had a chilling effect on devotional practices such as processions and *fiestas patronales*. Much of the traditional music played for Catholic festivals and holidays, such as the *Altars de Cruz*, was never recorded.³⁴ Such events carried with them the memories of centuries-old local Afro-Cuban, European, and indigenous traditions that regrettably eluded documentation by scholars.

Conversely, Afro-Cuban religions increased in cachet in the first decades after the Revolution. While rhetorically demoted to the status of "folklore," Afro-Cuban religions achieved recognition as cultural patrimony and institutions dedicated to their study sprung up in Havana, Santiago de Cuba, and elsewhere. During the "carnival stage" of the Revolution prior to the late 1960s, Afro-Cuban culture workers came into demand as performers of sacred music and dances, partly as a demonstration of the Revolution's solidarity with the Black lower classes.³⁵ Later, Lucumí practitioners would be prohibited from wearing their sacred necklaces (*elekes*) in public, wearing white for a year after ordination as per traditional protocols, and holding initiation rituals and/or drumming ceremonies without permits. The Castro regime banned practitioners from joining socialist youth organizations, thus sabotaging their professional advancement. However, the international outcry over religious freedom in Cuba would mainly focus on the persecution of Catholics and Jehovah's Witnesses.

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The publication of the 1985 bestseller *Fidel & Religion: Conversations with Frei Betto on Marxism & Liberation Theology* signaled a concession from the revolutionary leadership that Christianity could coexist with communism in Cuba. In 1985 and again in 1990, Fidel Castro met with Evangelical leaders; 1990 was also the year that the state began to allow Christmas and Easter festivities to be televised (although private celebrations of these holidays would not be permitted until 1987). With Cuba's official declaration of religious tolerance in 1992 and removal of scientific atheism from the Constitution as official state policy, the possibility of a rapprochement with the Church opened up. This ideological move was motivated by the economic realities imposed by the fall of the Soviet Union and the identification of religious commerce and tourism as a vital source of income for the state. In 1998, Pope John Paul II became the first reigning pontiff to visit Cuba and raised hopes of political reforms that, for the most part, failed to bear fruit. Choirs such as those from the city of Guantánamo fêted the Pope with performances showcasing the fidelity of parishioners who had waited over a generation to publicly and joyously affirm their commitment to the faith.

Pope Benedict XVI visited Cuba in 2012, and Pope Francis followed in 2015. During each of their three visits, the Popes refused to meet with representatives of Afro-Cuban religions, despite seeking out Christian and Jewish Cuban leaders for (p. 78) ecumenical consultations. Notwithstanding the state's ambivalence toward the practice of Catholicism—a much less lucrative enterprise than the de facto sponsorship of Lucumí through “diplo-Santería” tours that began in the 1990s—the Archbishops of Havana continue to have an adversarial relationship to the regime, due to their advocacy on behalf of dissidents. Today, the Church competes for Afro-Cubans adherents with Evangelical missions (heavily subsidized by conservative groups located in the United States), a resurgence of interest in Sunni Islam, and a flourishing array of Afro-Cuban religions. The Cuban population was estimated to stand at 11.2 million in 2017, and an estimated 60.5 percent currently identify as Catholics—down from 93 percent in 1953—5 percent as Protestant, and 0.1 percent (approximately 10,000) as Muslim, most of whom are adult converts.³⁶ According to estimates, 70–80 percent of the population practices an Afro-Cuban religion, yet no reliable statistical data currently exist.³⁷

The first Cubans to seek asylum in the United States and Spain after the Cuban Revolution were predominantly of European descent and from the middle and upper classes. When the Cuban government began allowing airlifts to the United States (1965–1973)—coinciding with perhaps the most intense period of political repression on the island—Afro-Cuban exiles entered the United States in significantly larger numbers. Practitioners of Lucumí, Espiritismo, and the *reglas de congo* joined what had become a burgeoning transnational religious scene in New York City, Union City, New Jersey, and Miami, Florida, as Black Americans collaborated with Latinx to worship African deities and enlarge their priesthoods. During this period, various church institutions sprang up to meet the needs of Cuban refugees, such as Miami's Shrine of Our Lady of Charity, completed in 1973. These efforts have tended to exclude or marginalize Afro-Cuban voices and the

“face” of Cuban Catholicism in the mainstream media—as of the exile community more generally—has been white.

Demographic change came once again with the 1980 “Mariel boatlift,” an exodus in which upwards of 125,000 Cubans arrived in the United States in a matter of months. The Cuban government’s pretext for the release of these so-called *Marielitos* was to rid the nation of counterrevolutionary parasites, criminals, and “scum” such as homosexuals. Despite its imposition by the Castro regime, this stigma would complicate *Marielitos’* integration into white-dominated Cuban communities in Miami and elsewhere. The disproportionate percentage of Afro-Cubans who emigrated during the Mariel flotilla and those who have done so since then—largely by leaving the island on rickety boats or makeshift rafts called *balsas*—have not enjoyed the social capital and economic mobility enjoyed by previous generations of exiles. Yet as a result of the Mariel boatlift and the frequency of religious travel to Cuba, “Afro-Cuban” traditions are no longer tied only to Latinx or African Americans. A racially and ethnically diverse cross-section of practitioners connect via social media channels such as Facebook and Instagram; these also facilitate dialogue with Afro-Cuban Catholics, as devotees trade clips of choral music, religious services, and memes (for example, colorful montages featuring St. Jude, whose “cultus” has always been tied to an ethos of public promotion and storytelling among his devotees).³⁸

(p. 79) **Culture: Católico “a Mi Manera” in a Multireligious Society**

Some Afro-Cubans practice Catholicism exclusively, yet *a mi manera* (“in my own way”)—citing a “familiar prerevolutionary idiomatic expression”—as do coreligionists of European and Asian descent.³⁹ Some may be classified as “Easter Sunday Catholics,” apt to attend Mass only on Easter, Christmas, and a handful of other holidays, despite possessing the full complement of sacraments. Others with consistent church attendance and unimpeachable catechisms are so-called cafeteria Catholics, since their beliefs on a range of social issues conflict with Church dogma; they feel compelled to “pick and choose” the doctrinal points that articulate best with their sociopolitical identities. These Afro-Cubans negotiate their belonging in the Church alongside others brought together by common interpretive frame of references, reciprocal obligations, and relationships based on sentiments of affinity. Well aware that only papal pronouncements delivered *ex cathedra* are judged infallible and therefore spiritually binding, many such Catholics are far savvier than their critics.

A-mi-manera Catholics may conduct domestic rites with roots in both European vernacular Catholicism and Afro-Diasporic religions, such as cleansings with Florida water and herbs (*despojos*) and offerings of food, tobacco, and liquor to statues of saints (especially San Lázaro, Santa Bárbara, and la Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, enshrined within and in front of the home). Regional variation also shapes religious subjectivity; for example, in the southeastern part of the island, Afro-Cuban Catholicism may be inflected by the practice of Haitian-derived *Vodú*. “Good Catholics” there and elsewhere may know how to di-

agnose problems, prescribe solutions, and divine the future by “throwing” Spanish playing cards (*tirar las barajas españolas*), a ritual technology that may be attributable to the presence of Romani people and Canary Islanders in Cuba during the colonial period.⁴⁰ Like other Cubans, Catholics may adorn their children with onyx cabochons set in gold earrings, necklaces, pins, and bracelets to absorb the evil eye (*mal de ojo*). They may depend on folk remedies—especially herbal teas (*cocimientos*)—when ill and ascribe to an ethos of therapeutic pluralism. In short, Afro-Cubans resemble Catholics throughout the world in supplementing faith in God, the Virgin Mary, and the community of saints with trust in other ceremonially accessible forces.

It is important to note the prevalence of multiple allegiances in Afro-Cuban religions. Participation in these and indeed most Black Atlantic traditions are far from mutually exclusive, thus diverging sharply from standard post-Enlightenment models of “religion” as a category. In fact, Lucumí, the *reglas de palo*, Arará, and Espiritismo are historically and practically interdependent. The performance of *misas espirituales* for spirit guides and initiation into Palo Monte and other Kongo-inspired traditions must still sometimes precede Lucumí ordination, depending on the divinations executed for a would-be novice. It is possible to be initiated in these traditions as well as Arará (p. 80) and Abakuá without calling into question one’s commitment to any of them, as long as practitioners exhibit lineage-based competence in ritual contexts and obedience to their elders. In some Lucumí communities, individuals may not be ordained unless they have undergone baptism, and visiting a Catholic church and cemetery remains part of initiation as a rite of passage in several lineages. Yet this practice reflects the emphasis on initiation as recapitulating and telescoping the experience of enslavement, rather than any attempt to indoctrinate novices into Catholic belief and continued practice.

It is nevertheless not unusual to be initiated in one or more of the preceding traditions and call oneself Catholic, since this may merely be employed as a religious label that differentiates one from Protestants, without implying Catholic practice to the absolute exclusion of Afro-Cuban religions. An uninitiated practitioner may also identify as Catholic if they only attend Afro-Cuban religious ceremonies sporadically or occasionally arrange for divinations as clients. In the mid-twentieth century, it had not been uncommon for white Cubans to declare, if questioned about their presence in an Afro-Cuban ritual, “*Yo no creo pero lo repito*,” no doubt a variation on the famous reply of the colonial Spanish Viceroy to his monarch: “*Obedezco pero no cumplo*.”⁴¹ Although the stigma of involvement in Black Atlantic traditions more generally has diminished, the correlation between belief, ritual participation, and obedience to religious authorities remains far from straightforward. The question of the material and ideological relationship between Catholicism and Afro-Cuban religions thus remains a complex one not satisfactorily answered with reference to the notion of syncretism.

The conflation of Yorùbá-inspired religious practice with the worship of saints had its origin in the appropriation of Roman Catholic iconography and material culture by practitioners. Calling *regla ocha* Santería was initially an improvement over the terminology of *brujería*, but it gave the erroneous impression that Lucumí was a product of syncretism,

as an unconscious merging of two distinct, superficially discordant, traditions into one harmonious blend (the premise of countless internet articles about the tradition). Santería has persisted as a misnomer despite strenuous objections from practitioners themselves, many of whom have chosen to dispense with Roman Catholic imagery altogether, whether or not they hew to the tenets of African American style “Yorùbá Reversionism” or heed protocols set by Nigerian Yorùbá lineages of orisha worship. On the other hand, *santero/a* persists as a neutral term for “practitioner” among many Latinx.

Perhaps we should consider the “poaching” of saints by Afro-Cuban religious communities to represent deities and other spirits not as a tactic of dissimulation but as an intricate comparative project, only faintly registered (and anachronistically rationalized) in the tables of correspondences included in so many studies of Lucumí and the *reglas de congo*. The scholarship of John Thornton, among others, has shown that due to the Christianization of enslaved peoples from the Kingdom of Kongo by the Portuguese in the late sixteenth century, Catholicism can no longer be cast as a foreign or superficial element of Haitian Vodou, but part of its distinctively African contribution. Likewise, the common characterization of the saints as “masking” Afro-Cuban gods is scantily documented; nineteenth-century clergy and European guests of cabildo leaders (p. 81) are on record on having seen through any ruse there may have been.⁴² Few observers were fooled. Moreover, any dissimulation would not have needed to continue beyond the 1940s, when Afro-Cuban religions began to be recognized as legitimate components of Cuban culture and government persecution diminished. Present-day practitioners would not maintain such deep affective ties to their personal sculptures of the saints, chromolithographs, and other images, in addition to Catholic feast days.

The notion of orishas as intermediaries between human beings and Olorun/Olodumare/Olofi, the personified source of vital energy and primordial spiritual substance called *aché*, lends itself to comparison with the intercessory power of archangels, apparitions of the Virgin Mary, and canonized and biblical saints.⁴³ As Miguel “Willie” Ramos has argued, Lucumí does not have a *Deus otiosus*, but a “high god” conceptualized as analogous to the Catholic God the Father.⁴⁴ Although the emphasis on the presence of Catholic iconography and material culture in Lucumí, the *reglas de congo*, Arará, and Abakuá should not be overstated, they are pronounced enough to suggest more of an interpenetration of Catholic and African-derived ontologies than exists in reality. The inclusion of crucifixes and monstrances in Palo Monte, Espiritismo, and Abakuá, images of reliquaries in Lucumí altar cloths, and other such hybrid objects must be interpreted according to both West and Central African precedents and the Afro-Cuban historical experience. They also commemorate a history of resistance to Catholicism in which Afro-Cubans had to “make do” with the material and discursive artifacts available to them. Syncretism should thus be dispensed with as a descriptor, despite its tenacity within the popular and scholarly literature.

Historical and Contemporary Ritual Practice

During the colonial period, the Day of Kings (*Día de Los Reyes*) on January 6 became a carnivalesque space for both enslaved Africans and free Black Cubans to express pride in their ethnic and religious affiliations through costumed musical performances and dance routines organized by the *cabildos*. On the Epiphany, Afro-Cubans proclaimed their equality with white Cubans by parading in their creole finery, flaunting their sartorial mastery, and granting their peers the dignity of which they were customarily deprived. As Fernando Ortiz persuasively argued, Afro-Cubans also protested the colonial order by taking back the streets in a collective cleansing ritual to “drive out the devils”—those who held people as property and complicit whites—from the major cities in which the holiday was observed.⁴⁵ Day of Kings celebrations ended in the mid-nineteenth century, but they present a particularly well-documented example of the multilayered commemoration of Catholic feast days for Afro-Cubans.

Owing to the aforementioned correspondences of saints and *mpungus* with orishas, the Catholic ritual calendar remains replete with opportunities for practitioners of Afro-Cuban religions to participate in collective renewals of solidarity and shared identity. Caridad (Our Lady of Charity) occupies a central place in the religious lives of all Catholic Cubans, yet she holds particular relevance for Afro-Cubans, practitioners of Lucumí, and the *reglas de congo*. The statue that indexes her apparition was legendarily discovered in 1621 in a community of enslaved people in Oriente, and she rose to the stature of a national symbol. Affectionately called Cachita (“little brown one”), she presides over processions, carnivals, and political events such as protests and rallies, as well as domestic shrines. However light-skinned her icon, Cubans view her as the mixed-race epitome of *mulatez*, Cuba’s version of the Latin American ideology of *mestizaje*. As such, she also embodies Ochún, the orisha of sensual love, sweet water, prosperity, and intelligence, along with the similarly described *mpungu* Mama Chola.

By contrast, the dark-skinned and unambiguously Black Virgin of Regla is regarded as Marian patroness of the city of Regla alone, rather than a symbol of Cuban national identity (*Cubanidad*).⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Caridad and Regla—the Catholic counterpart of the *mpungu* Madre Agua and Yemayá, the orisha of motherhood, maternal labor, and saltwater seas—are petitioned for the blessing of children, particularly on their feast days (September 7 and 8). The feast day of Santa Bárbara, virgin martyr, patroness of lightning and firemen, is remembered throughout the island on December 4 with vigils, Masses, pilgrimages, and bouquets of spear-shaped gladiolus flowers. Those aware of her correspondence with the *mpungu* Siete Rayos and Shangó (orisha of just rule, drum music, dance, and male virility) may wear red and white in Santa Bárbara’s honor and offer bananas and apples along with traditional Lucumí dishes like *amalá ilá* (cornmeal pudding with a spicy okra and tomato sauce). Annual processions take place throughout the island with devotees carrying aloft statues that represent these saints and others (such as San Manuel on the first of January and San Juan Bautista on June 24).

Then there is the amply documented pilgrimage to El Rincón, just outside of Havana, to the church of San Lázaro. While many Cubans undoubtedly relate to San Lázaro solely as a Catholic saint (though one now deemed apocryphal by the Church), he is associated with the *mpungu* Kobayende and the orisha Babalú Ayé; they both govern the spread of illness, especially dermatological and venereal diseases that cause eruptions on the skin.⁴⁷ The location of San Lázaro's church was originally the site of a leprosarium, the Hospital San Lázaro, which later became a specialty clinic for dermatological conditions and currently houses a sanatorium for HIV-positive Cubans. Thousands of Cubans flood the streets on December 16 for the vigil of Saint Lazarus, and some can be seen *cumpliendo promesas* in thanks for his aid; they may have promised to crawl or drag themselves along the route, or otherwise mortify their flesh publicly as a testament to the miracles they have experienced through his intercession. Lucumí practitioners approach December 17 as an occasion for collective cleansing rituals in honor of Babalú Ayé called *agban*. Devotees also greet the 17th by ritually refreshing life-sized statues of San Lázaro and the similarly depicted San Roque (associated with the orisha Elegba).

(p. 83) The role of women in sustaining the aforementioned devotions deserves a special mention. Afro-Cuban women have had the most to lose from the Church's emphasis on premarital virginity, chastity, and social respectability, as well as its denunciation of homosexuality. Dark-skinned women have suffered from appalling levels of social erasure, on the one hand, and hypervisibility, on the other, via the circulation of corrosive stereotypes deriving from colonial genres of minstrelsy such as *teatro bufo*; the same discourses have depicted mixed-race women as predatory and promiscuous. Afro-Cuban women remain underrepresented as decision-makers in Catholic parishes and among the clergy, a situation reversed—as something of a historical corrective—in African-inspired traditions that privilege women's experience and leadership. Nevertheless, they formed the backbone of colonial cabildos and sustained vernacular Catholic traditions into the twenty-first century, elevating "provincial" customs to the status of transnational phenomena. They have been instrumental in dislodging hegemonic interpretations of religious media such as chromolithographs; turning rituals into sites for the transmission of countermemories and subjugated knowledges; and otherwise ameliorating the excesses of patriarchal oppression.⁴⁸ Without Afro-Cuban women, Afro-Cuban Catholicism would not be an essay in this volume, but a footnote.

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Notes:

- (1.) Verena Martinez-Alier, *Marriage, Class, and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba: A Study of Racial Attitudes and Sexual Values in a Slave Society* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 11.
- (2.) Martinez-Alier, *Marriage, Class, and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba*, 73.
- (3.) This is not to imply that Asians have not played a role in the development of Afro-Cuban religions; on the contrary, Chinese Cubans in particular have left an impressive legacy.
- (4.) María Elena Díaz, *The Virgin, the King, and the Royal Slaves of El Cobre: Negotiating Freedom in Colonial Cuba, 1670–1780* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).
- (5.) *Recopilación de leyes de los reynos de las Indias* I, 5, Libro I, Título I, Ley I–XVII (Madrid: Andres Ortega, 1774).
- (6.) For a sense of the contemporary interpretive debates surrounding this text, see Chris Bongie, “Haiti, History, and the Law: Colin Dayan’s Fables of Conversion,” *Small Axe* 18, no. 3 (2014): 162–177.
- (7.) Karen Y. Morrison, *Cuba’s Racial Crucible: The Sexual Economy of Social Identities, 1750–2000* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 8.
- (8.) See Brendan Fletcher, “Conflict and Conformity: The Holy Office of the Inquisition in Colonial Cuba, 1511–1821.” PhD diss., (Missouri State University, 2006)..
- (9.) Seymour B. Liebman, *The Jews in New Spain: Faith, Flame and the Inquisition* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1970), 47.
- (10.) Rev. Abiel Abbott, cited in George Brandon, *Santeria from Africa to the New World: The Dead Sell Memories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 49.
- (11.) Martinez-Alier, *Marriage, Class, and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba*, 115.
- (12.) Morrison, *Cuba’s Racial Crucible*, 8.
- (13.) Fred Moten, “The Case of Blackness,” *Criticism* 50, no. 2 (2008): 177–218.
- (14.) Matt D. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle against Atlantic Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 114.
- (15.) Robin Horton, quoted in Stephan Palmié, “Ethnogenetic Processes and Cultural Transfer in Afro-American Slave Populations,” in *Slavery in the Americas*, ed. Wolfgang Binder (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1993), 346.
- (16.) Palmié, “Ethnogenetic Processes and Cultural Transfer in Afro-American Slave Populations,” 342.

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(17.) David H. Brown, "Thrones of the *Orichas*: Afro-Cuban Altars in New Jersey, New York, and Havana," *African Arts* 26, no. 4 (1993): 44–59.

(18.) Brown, "Thrones of the *Orichas*," 56.

(19.) Miguel "Willie" Ramos, "The Empire Beats On: Oyo, Bata Drums and Hegemony in Nineteenth-Century Cuba" (MA thesis, Florida International University, 2000), 82.

(20.) Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle against Atlantic Slavery*, 44.

(21.) Louis A. Perez, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 56.

(22.) Mozella G. Mitchell, *Crucial Issues in Caribbean Religions* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 137.

(23.) See Reinaldo Román, *Governing Spirits: Religion, Miracles, and Spectacles in Cuba and Puerto Rico, 1898–1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

(24.) Miguel Barnet, *The Autobiography of a Runaway Slave*, translated by Jocasta Innes (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 187.

(25.) Alejandra Bronfman, "'En Plena Libertad y Democracia': Negros Brujos and the Social Question, 1904–1919," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82, no. 3 (2002): 549–587.

(26.) Alejandro de la Fuente, "Two Dangers, One Solution: Immigration, Race, and Labor in Cuba, 1900–1930," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 51 (1997): 35.

(27.) Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886–1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 104.

(28.) Aline Helg, "Race in Argentina and Cuba, 1880–1930: Theory, Policies, and Popular Reaction," in *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870–1940*, ed. Richard Graham (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 52.

(29.) Karen Y. Morrison, "Civilization and Citizenship through the Eyes of Afro-Cuban Intellectuals during the First Constitutional Era, 1902–1940," *Cuban Studies* 30 (2000): 80.

(30.) Helg, "Afro-Cuban Protest," 110.

(31.) Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 51.

(32.) Jalane Schmidt, *Cachita's Streets: The Virgin of Charity, Race, and Revolution in Cuba* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 203.

(33.) Margaret E. Crahan, "Catholicism in Cuba," *Cuban Studies* 19 (1989): 3–24.

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(34.) Robin D. Moore, *Music and Revolution: Cultural Change in Socialist Cuba* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 203. It may be that some Catholic folk songs survived within Espiritismo as *plegarias* for different groups' spirit guides, especially those identified as priests and nuns.

(35.) María Teresa Vélez, *Drumming for the Gods: The Life and Times of Felipe García Vilamil, Santero, Palero, and Abakuá* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), 72.

(36.) Pew Research Center, "Table: Muslim Population by Country," January 27, 2011. <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/table-muslim-population-by-country/> The Jewish population declined from its pre-Revolutionary high of 15,000 and now stands between 500 and 1,500.

(37.) State Department, "International Religious Freedom Report 2005–Cuba," November 9, 2005, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2005/51634.htm> Complicating the collection of data is the fact that queries about affiliation may be taken to ask about complete initiation, thereby further suppressing the official number of practitioners. The difficulty in defining religious affiliation lies not only in habits of ritual attendance but also in the way that most Afro-Cuban houses of worship conceptualize belonging, as discussed later.

(38.) Robert A. Orsi, "'He Keeps Me Going': Women's Devotion to Saint Jude Thaddeus and the Dialectics of Gender in American Catholicism, 1929–1965," in *Religion in American History: A Reader*, ed. Jon Butler and Harry S. Stout (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 441–467.

(39.) Thomas A. Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 31; Carrie Viarnes, "Muñecas and Memoryscapes: Negotiating Identity and History in Cuban Espiritismo," in *Activating the Past: History and Memory in the Black Atlantic World*, ed. Andrew Apter and Lauren Derby (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 319–369.

(40.) Ana Viña Brito, "El juego de naipes en el primer siglo de la colonización canaria. ¿Vicio o entretenimiento?," *Cartas Diferentes: Revista Canaria de Patrimonio Documental* 12 (2016): 221–244.

(41.) Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: la lucha por la libertad 1762–1970, vol. 3: La república socialista, 1959–1970* (Barcelona: Ediciones Grijalbo, 1973), 1445.

(42.) See Joseph M. Murphy, "Yéyé Cachita: Ochún in a Cuban Mirror," in *Òsun across the Waters: A Yoruba Goddess in Africa and the Americas*, ed. Joseph Murphy and Mei-Mei Sanford (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 87–101.

(43.) See the discussion of "pantheonization" in David H. Brown, *Santería Enthroned: Art, Ritual, and Innovation in an Afro-Cuban Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 114–124.

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(44.) Miguel “Willie” Ramos, “Afro-Cuban Orisha Worship,” in *Santería Aesthetics in Contemporary Latin American Art*, ed. Arturo Lindsay (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 56–74.

(45.) Fernando Ortiz, “The Afro-Cuban Festival ‘Day of the Kings,’” in *Cuban Festivals: A Century of Afro-Cuban Culture*, ed. Judith Bettelheim (Kingston: Ian Randle & Markus Wiener, 2001), 1–40, 54–55.

(46.) See Elizabeth Pérez, “Nobody’s Mammy: Yemayá as Fierce Foremother in Afro-Cuban Religions,” in *Yemoja: Gender, Sexuality, and Creativity in the Latina/o and Afro-Atlantic Diasporas*, ed. Solimar Otero and Toyin Falola (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 1–20.

(47.) See Katherine J. Hagedorn, “Long Day’s Journey to Rincón: From Suffering to Resistance in the Procession of San Lázaro/Babalú Ayé,” *Ethnomusicology Forum* 11, no. 1 (2002): 43–69.

(48.) Elizabeth Pérez, “The Virgin in the Mirror: Reading Images of a Black Madonna Through the Lens of Afro-Cuban Women’s Experiences,” *Journal of African-American History* 95, no. 2 (2010): 202–228.

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