

# Aponte's Legacy in Cuban Popular Culture<sup>1</sup>

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*"Am I the head of Aponte hanging from the Chávez bridge?"<sup>2</sup>*

*-Rogelio Martínez Furé (Cimarrón 12)*

Aponte's "conspiracy" was a watershed moment in the evolution of *cubanidad*,—such is the forthright view of poet and scholar Rogelio Martínez Furé, referring to the impact of anticolonial struggles on modern Cuban national consciousness. In 1812, Spanish authorities publicly displayed Aponte's severed head to terrorize a restive populace into submission; they also erased evidence of Aponte's activism, including the documents he created to inform his community about liberation struggles of earlier times and places. Fernando Ortiz cited similar violent executions by Spanish authorities to remind that, "This was the exemplary punishment, of death and infamy, imposed by the authorities of the Indies on those who rebelled against the order of Imperial Spain."<sup>3</sup> Like other histories of resistance to European occupation across the Western Hemisphere, the complex reality of the Aponte phenomenon in Cuba is neither fully remembered nor totally forgotten, dropped from official archives but upheld in popular culture. Here I address the role of non-state archives, both written and retold by Aponte's inheritors: members of African-descended ritual lineages as well as literate artisans residing in the port regions of Havana and Matanzas.

Current legends of Aponte's movement claim that it was organized in parallel among Africans, creoles and foreign nationals, it adopted West African cultural forms like a ritual oath of secrecy and that it compiled a library of books and manuscripts on earlier liberation struggles and that Aponte himself headed a Lukumí *cabildo*. In evaluating these reports, historians are frustrated by gaps in the official archives, but the status of documented "truth" is less important than the impact of Aponte's myth. Reflecting upon the persistence of the legend of Robin Hood even though the underlying events and personalities can no longer be identified, John Meek concludes: "If those who attempt to interpret the world do so only through the prism of professional thinkers, and ignore the persistence of myth in everyday thought and speech, the interpretations will be deficient" (3).

The Aponte Rebellion of 1812 was the first movement to seek both Cuban independence and the abolition of slavery. It was led by African descendants in Havana and organized "inter-nationally" across ethnic boundaries with like-minded groups across the island.<sup>4</sup> A wealth of cultural forms enhanced the rebellion's legitimacy, secrecy and coordination between African and African-descended *cabildos*.

Eventually the leaders were identified, executed, and their followers banished. Aponte's severed head was displayed in a cage at a prominent crossroad of Havana City, while his books full of underground histories of black leadership were made to disappear. Nevertheless, evidence from nineteenth century police reports as well as recent oral tradition from African descendants in Havana and Matanzas indicate remarkable continuity between Aponte's era and later generations. Aponte's legacy was not lost but became an element in the formation of a Cuban national and collective identity.

## Slippery Symbols

Large gaps in the official archives and academic histories of the Aponte episode are filled with private archives created by anonymous Cubans to maintain and disseminate collective memory. Not focused on chronology, these narratives instead invoke ritual lineages described as Carabalí-Abakuá, Lukumí-Yorùbá, Kongo, and so on. These sources—elucidated with their West African context—reflect the insurrectionary network of Aponte and his colleagues, epitomized by the multi-ethnic Abakuá mutual-aid society that operated below the colonial radar in the early 1800s.

One prominent example is a mythic scene of Abakuá's origin in West Africa, where the sun rises over a landscape divided by a river, both sides inhabited by a distinct ethnic community (see fig. 1). Based on an original drawing by "an African" in Havana and published by Roche in 1925, variations of this image are often reproduced by Abakuá members in their homes and lodges. Roche reported that an eighty six year-old "native" drew it to depict the foundation of Abakuá in Calabar; he also included brief explanations of the symbols (*La policía y sus misterios* 99–101; Miller, *Voice of the Leopard* 48). Structural similarities are often pointed out between this image and the official seal of Cuba, supporting claims for the impact of Carabalí people and Abakuá solidarity in Cuban nationalism, and providing concrete evidence for an autonomous, popular historiography.<sup>5</sup>

The Cuban national seal was created in 1849 as a collage of symbols (fig. 2).<sup>6</sup> A Royal Palm tree grows between two mountains; the sun is reflected over a calm sea with land on either side. The tree represents the island's indigenous inhabitants, since its materials were used to build their dwellings.<sup>7</sup> In Lukumí and Kongo traditions, the Royal Palm is a natural lightning rod representing the deities as Changó and Siete Rayos respectively. Cabrera wrote, "[I]n Cuba Changó 'is born in the palm tree'" (*El monte* 73). In Abakuá mythology, the palm was a sentient witness to the birth of the society, and the original source of its drums. The sun's rays, a universal sign of "hope," also signify sonic waves of the "mystic Voice" in Abakuá ceremonies.<sup>8</sup> The water between two lands may be the Bay of Havana, but for the Abakuá it also represents the river dividing the Efí and Efó ethnic communities of Calabar.

In the Abakuá scene (fig. 1), the river is a "gandó," a symbol drawn to show movement from one place to another, in this case the energy from the ancestors below the water igniting the sun as metaphor for the mystic Voice heard in initiation rites. Similarly for Abakuá, the laurel of leaves around the seal evokes the leaves held by an Íreme mask to ritually purify the dance space and participants.

Resonance between the myth of Abakuá's birth in Africa and founding symbols of the Cuban nation show a slippage between official State history and alternative versions maintained within African-derived initiation systems, part of "the Caribbean's 'other' history" celebrated by Cuban writer Benítez-Rojo "written starting from the *palenque* and the maroon" (*The Repeating Island* 254).<sup>9</sup> The connection finds support in documentary evidence: an 1839 police report identified a black militia member who had participated in Aponte's movement as a founding member of an Abakuá lodge, while other police files link Aponte's associates and Abakuá founders to the same social sectors: Freemasons, black and mulatto militiamen, *cabildo* members, free black artisans, and slaves.<sup>10</sup>

### Incomplete Archives

State authorities create their own versions of important events by restricting or purging contrary information from official files. Examples include distinct versions of The Holy Bible: Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, not to mention unauthorized compilations including chapters deemed apocryphal. To take a more homely example from the southern United States in the mid-1800s, African-Americans taught distilling to their white owners who used this knowledge to become wealthy distillers of whiskey. One historian observed, "Though their owners tended to value their slaves' distilling prowess, they rarely documented how the slaves made such fine spirits" (Risen 16). Such top-down erasures also challenge historians of Aponte's era, as James Sweet has remarked:

While Brazil and St. Domingue along with Jamaica, Cuba, and parts of the US South might be more accurately understood as African societies in the years leading up to 1820, we are still left with the formidable challenge of how to demonstrate processes of intra African acculturation and exchange, especially given the consistent erasure of Africans from the European colonial archives. (154)

Official archives are manipulated, yet alternative versions can be sought. For at least a few generations after a particular event, oral tradition remains a viable witness. Academic historians implicitly trust written sources and treat oral ones with suspicion, whereas both types need to be independently verified. Neither oral nor written data are immune to romantic and manipulative inventions of a convenient past, but these can be vetted by philological comparison (known in humanistic studies as textual criticism, and then applied by Darwin as phylogeny) to sort out archaisms from innovations. Unconscious facts are more probative for historical purposes than facts that are accessible to conscious manipulation, as

Franz Boas recognized:

It would seem that the essential difference between linguistic phenomena and other ethnological phenomena is, that linguistic classifications never rise into consciousness, while in other ethnological phenomena, although the same unconscious origin prevails, these often rise into consciousness, and thus give rise to secondary reasoning and to reinterpretations. (67)

Such reinterpretations, "generally obscure the real history of the development of ideas" (71). As a statistical matter, the stronger the historical "signal" transmitted through the widest range of independent variants, the more likely that it actually occurred.

### Critiquing José Luciano Franco

Since Aponte's execution in 1812, the content of his papers has become a subject of great controversy, since they were "lost" after the trial. Authorities classified other information from his trial for over 150 years, until 1963, when Cuban historian José Luciano Franco (Havana, 1891–1989) wrote *La conspiración de José Aponte de 1812*.<sup>11</sup> Franco's publication, based upon research in the National Archives as well as conversations with illustrious descendants of Aponte's movement, made several claims that have been questioned by later historians working predominantly in the archives.<sup>12</sup> In one example, David Brown wrote:

José Luciano Franco reports that Aponte led the famous Lucumí "cabildo" called Changó-Tedúm, was a member of the "Ogboni society," and was a priest of Changó. It remains unclear how Franco arrived at such conclusions. (Brown 312 note 18)

After exhaustive archival research for a dissertation on Aponte's movement, Matt Childs concluded:

If Aponte was a member of the cabildo Chango-Tedum or any other cabildo for that matter, it never entered the court record during his more than twenty hours of testimony. . . . Further, neither Aponte's name nor the cabildo Chango-Tedum could be found among the cabildo records detailing more than fifty societies that operated at the time of the rebellion. . . . Nonetheless, this does not mean that Aponte had no knowledge of or associations with cabildos. (*1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba*, 144–45)

Cuban historian María del Carmen Barcia questioned Luciano's findings for lack of archival documentation:

According to the prestigious historian José Luciano Franco, who must have received this information from oral sources, Aponte . . . was the captain of a *cabildo*, in this case of the Lucumí Changó Terddún. This information has been repeated without greater analysis for forty years, and therefore merits revision. José Antonio was the grandson of Joaquín Aponte, captain of the soldiers of the Battalion of Free Mulattos of Havana, who was a creole and a master bricklayer . . . . His father, Nicolás, was a second generation creole, therefore he himself was a third generation creole. This circumstance evidently conspires against the thesis that he was the captain of a Havana *cabildo*, since although we have encountered creoles in these societies, their participation was illegal and often questioned, and they could not be elected for

positions as directors in these societies. If one understands that the election for these positions of responsibility were confirmed by the colonial authorities, for whom the *cabildos* were forms of sociability in which only Africans could compete and that were ruled by strict laws, it seems doubtful that Aponte could have been captain of a society of this type in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Much more believable would be his performance in religious functions that would have been hidden from the eyes of non-initiates. (164)<sup>13</sup>

How a historian could discount a potential act based on its illegality boggles the mind, since illegal acts pervade the history of the Americas! Nevertheless, Childs found evidence of a creole elected as leader of an African *cabildo*: in 1803 in Havana, creole Juan Echevarría, became second captain of the *cabildo* Karabali Induri ("The Defects of being a Black Creole" 109–10). Childs discovered other such examples, indicating the existence of creole leaders of *cabildos* who were not documented in the courts because their status went unchallenged (Childs, Personal interview). That the bulk of evidence found solely in the official archives does not support some details of Franco's findings is not surprising. What alternatives then exist for evaluating Franco's claims?

One could start with the career of Franco, a Cuban creole from a humble background who, after working as a teenage tobacco roller and a dockworker, was trained in historical method by Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, the official Historian of the City of Havana, and by Joaquín Llaverías, the Director of the National Archive. From the 1930s steadily onwards, Franco published important works based on archival research as well as oral tradition within African-descended communities. From the 1950s onwards, he published foundational texts on the African slave trade, slave rebellions, and a three-volume biography of General Antonio Maceo of the Mambí rebel army. In 1937, when Ortiz created the Society for Afro-Cuban Studies, Franco and Lino D'ou were among six "Vocales" or Advisory Members (*Estudios Afrocubanos* 9).

Conversations with Lino D'ou were fundamental to Franco during research about Aponte's conspiracy of 1812, and the Abakuá participation within it.<sup>14</sup> Lino D'ou (1871–1939) was a writer, a member of the national House of Representatives (1909–12),<sup>15</sup> a Freemason, as well as a member of the Abakuá lodge Bakokó Efó.<sup>16</sup> In the final War of Independence (1895–98), D'ou was the "jefe de despacho" of General José Maceo, holding the rank of Lieutenant Colonel of the Mambí army, making him the Abakuá member with the highest rank in the rebel army.<sup>17</sup>

Scholarly tradition of Franco's era may explain the failure to cite oral sources. Although indexes are mandatory in English non-fiction publications, they are absent from many Spanish publications. Other twentieth century Cuban scholars of African-derived heritage also failed to cite their oral sources, with rare exceptions. While Ortiz has been taken to task for this habit, a review of publications by Lydia Cabrera and Argeliers León shows the same tendency.<sup>18</sup> One possibility is that anonymous sources (in essence, unlettered community members) may have

requested anonymity. In Cuba of this era, to be a culture-bearing "informant" divulging community secrets for publication was viewed negatively by orthodox community members; because these communities had experienced generations of police surveillance, "to inform" was to be "a rat," as in Mafia parlance, or "a goat" in Abakuá speech. Whatever the case, Franco's lack of citations is not in itself evidence that he invented a fictive account.

### The *cabildo* Changó Tedún

The arrival of Africans into the mid-nineteenth century and their internal activities were necessarily undocumented and obscure, especially following the 1817 Anglo-Spanish agreement that prohibited the slave trade in Spanish colonies, just as Cuban planters increased the illegal trade (Aimes 171; Knight 78).

In a slave colony, *any* collective action led by Africans and their descendants was illegal, therefore *all* autonomous groups of Africans were illegal until authorities deemed otherwise. Consequently, the entire process of cultural transmission from Africa to the Caribbean through collective rites was illegal. Would a contemporary scholar seriously argue that it did not happen? Instead, the debate around Franco's claims could be used to question the methods of professional historians who rely "fetischistically" on documents, while lacking rigorous methods of conducting oral histories with members of the communities they study. In another example from the former Soviet Union, the context of cold war Bulgaria is at least marginally reconstructible today. Yet a recent debate around the veracity of documents created by communist Bulgaria's State Security demonstrates that even "the most important repository of the institutional memory of the former regime" cannot be taken at face value (Kenarov). If the contents of recent documents are unreliable, even more so those created by authorities in overseas posts of European colonial regimes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nevertheless, we literates seem predisposed to trust the printed word, resulting in the reigning naiveté about written sources by professional historians.

Regarding the absence of the *cabildo* Chango-Tedun in the Cuban *cabildo* records, African forced migrants created *cabildo* groups using indigenous names, but colonial authorities later registered them under Catholic names. Franco's narrative used the internal Lukumí name for the *cabildo* in Aponte's movement, while colonial authorities documented it as the *Cabildo Lucumí Sociedad Santa Bárbara*. Among fifteen documented Lukumí *cabildos* in colonial Havana, four were named Santa Bárbara, while one of these was located on San Nicolás Street, referred to by Ortiz as "[T]he temple of the old *cabildo* of Santa Bárbara or 'Changó Tedún' that was on San Nicolás Street" (*Los instrumentos* 116).<sup>19</sup> In 1820, this group was registered at #302 San Nicolás street as the "Cabildo Lucumí Sociedad Santa Bárbara. Sociedad de protección mutua y recreo del culto africano Lucumí" (Cabildo Lukumí Saint Barbara Society. Mutual aid and recreation of African Lukumí worship). (Barcia

414–17). A 1910 report of the same *cabildo* lists its members, many of whom were identified by their lineage descendants as Ifá diviners (*babaláwos*) connected to the *cabildo* Changó Tedún. Supplemented by details from lineage descendants, the *cabildo* list provides a fuller picture of generational continuity and social networks between Ifá diviners, *batá* drummers and Abakuá lodges historically related to Changó Tedún, as follows.

In 1910 the “Cabildo Lucumí Sociedad Santa Bárbara” president was listed as Isidro Sandrina, known within Lukumí lineages as a *babaláwo*.<sup>20</sup> The *cabildo* Treasurer was Bernabé Menocal, also a *babaláwo*, who was an advisor to Cuban President Gerardo Machado y Morales, who ruled from 1925–1933.<sup>21</sup> Bernabé Menocal initiated Miguel Fébles (1910–1986), an Ifá specialist who initiated others in Colombia, Mexico, Panama, Puerto Rico, the United States, and Venezuela, thus guiding the global expansion of Cuban Ifá practice.<sup>22</sup> During his foundational research into Lukumí lineages, David Brown learned that:

The African godfathers of Tata Gaitán and Bernabé Menocal were close colleagues of Adechina [Adésínà], and these two men continued those fundamental connections in their collaborative ritual work after Adechina's death. (70)

West African-born *babaláwo* Adésínà (d. 1905) was a link between Changó Tedún and an Abakuá lineage, as discussed ahead.

Among the “Vocales” or Advisory Members of the *cabildo* were Eulogio Rodríguez, Silvestre Erice, and Quintín García. Eulogio Rodríguez was a *babaláwo* known popularly as “Tata Gaitán,” who seems to have initiated President Machado into Ifá.<sup>23</sup> Silvestre Erice was “the famous Lucumí priest ‘Papá’ Silvestre Erice, considered ‘the last Lucumí pontiff’ (*el último pontífice Lucumí*) upon his death at more than eighty years of age, about 1915.”<sup>24</sup> Quintín García (d. 1921), a *babaláwo*, was son of Àtandá (1799–1876)<sup>25</sup>, an African-born sculptor who created *batá* drums, as documented by Ortiz:

In Cuba the “batá” sounded for the first time in a Lucumí “cabildo” called Alakisá, meaning “gravelly” [in essence, “rough”] or “refus” [in essence, “garbage”], on Egidio Street in Havana. . . around 1830, the African “onilú” Añabí came to an agreement with Atandá, who in Africa had been an “agbéguí” or sculptor . . . Atandá also knew how to build drums, so the two friends constructed and consecrated a set of hourglass-shaped “batá” drums, “baptizing” them with the name Añabí, meaning “born from” or “son of Añá.” The first true set of sacred “batá” in Cuba was thus consecrated to Añá (*Los instrumentos* 315–6).

Cabrera wrote that “the [cabildo] Changó Terddún, (Cabildo of Santa Bárbara)” was also known as “Arakisa,” as she learned from “Bangoché, José de Calazán Herrera, one of my most competent informants” (*El monte* 24–25 nota 1, 73).<sup>26</sup> Oral tradition of the second half of the twentieth century therefore links Changó Tedún with *batá* drumming, as one would expect since the relation between Sàngó and *batá* emerged from Oyó-Ilé in present-day Nigeria. What's interesting and innovative is

that tradition also links Changó Tedún with the Carabalí-derived Abakuá society, because “Tata Gaitán” Quintín García, and many other *babaláwos* were members.<sup>27</sup> García held the Nkandemo title of the Abarakó Taiba lodge of Regla.<sup>28</sup>

Quintín García's son Quintín Lecón “Tín” was a *babaláwo* with important political connections.<sup>29</sup> In the 1940s, he created an association of *babaláwos* called “Sons of Saint Francis,” that was sponsored by Cuba's President Carlos Prío Socarrás.<sup>30</sup> Ortiz received an invitation from “the President of the Advisory Board and Treasurer of that association, the highly reputed ‘babalao’ Mr. Quintín Lecón y Lombillo,” to attend a ceremony for “the formal placing of the first stone of their meeting hall, temple and school, that they will raise in Regla with their own resources and the donation of \$20,000 by the President of the Republic, Dr. Carlos Prío.”<sup>31</sup> Ortiz wrote:

The ceremony, in which I participated on June 23, 1951, began with an ecclesiastic blessing in Latin by his Eminence the Cuban Cardinal Manuel Arteaga, Archbishop of Havana; after he left, the rites continued in Lukumí of the “rule of Oricha,” celebrated by three Cuban “babalaos” directed by their senior leader, the octogenarian “olúo” Mr. J. Asunción Villalonga, who recited a “moyuba” to the ancestors and poured “omitutu” over the stone.<sup>32</sup> To conclude, in the reverent general silence and without song or dance, three “olubató,” played the impressive mortuary rhythms of “Égun” on their sacred “añá” drums. (*Los instrumentos* 193–95).

This remarkable story suggests inter-generational continuity through initiation rites within a context of national political figures, a narrative necessarily submerged within ritual secrecy.<sup>33</sup>

An important factor in conducting oral history is the position of the interviewer in relation to knowledgeable interviewees: if perceived as part of the community, the information will likely be more detailed and accurate. But if the interviewer is perceived as part of a more powerful group historically antagonistic to the community being “investigated,” there will be obstacles and dead ends. The same Havana *babaláwo* Quintín Lecón “Tín” refused to speak to scholar Ortiz for this reason:

“Tín” refused to help Fernando Ortiz for over twenty years because of Ortiz's early slandering of the Africans and their culture. Ortiz called the Africans thieves and savages with nothing worthwhile to contribute to Cuban culture. Even though Ortiz reversed his opinions as time went on, his first positions left “Tín” ever distrustful of his real motives. (Mason 269, note 210)

Exemplary here is the work of John Mason, an African-American community historian, descended from a Cuban family, who is a leader within Lukumí lineages of New York City; for decades, he has traveled to Matanzas and Havana to learn from Lukumí elders. In 1986, Mason interviewed “Tín,” who he referred to as Euleoterio Quintín Lecón Lombillo (1917–1999).<sup>34</sup> The elder *babaláwo* told him:

The Society of Santa Bárbara was the oldest *cabildo* in Havana. . . . The African name was Sàngó Tẹ̀ Dún. . . . It was in the first decades of the 18th century that it really became organized. All the Yorùbá belonged there, Àtandá, Adésínà, Ifá Lobí, and "Tata" Gaitán all belonged there, yet there were also other Africans who were not Yorùbá, but they were all dealing with the òrìsà here in Cuba. . . . Some were from Guinea, some were from the Kongo and Angola. They all tried to raise money so that they could help to liberate their brothers who were slaves. (152–4)

Mason's success in learning from "Tín" is extraordinary, given his fame for not discussing Lukumí heritage with others, even within his own community.<sup>35</sup> Mason's persistence, as well as his position as a knowledgeable initiate with an international perspective on Lukumí indigenous history was crucial to this interview. If Mason learned that the autonomous group Changó Tedún was established in the 1700s from a descendant of this group, yet colonial documents report the foundation in 1820, the disparity indicates the existence of an undocumented underground society that survived under the radar. Such a phenomenon would not be unusual in Cuban history: during the last War of Independence, national hero José Martí wrote to a colleague: "En silencio ha tenido que ser" ("It had to be done in silence"), a strategy and a phrase known by all astute Cubans!<sup>36</sup>

The submerged history of African-derived lineages within the social labyrinth of Havana was alluded to by Benítez-Rojo when he wrote:

The runaway slave's impact on the big city is already being studied . . . the extremely complex and difficult architecture of secret routes, trenches, traps, caves, breathing holes, and underground rivers that constitute the "rhizome" of the Caribbean psyche (*The Repeating Island* 254–5).

Throughout my field research in Havana and Matanzas from 1992 onwards, several contemporary leaders of Ifá and Abakuá spoke to me of the *cabildo* Changó Tedún with reverence, signaling the impact of the legend of this lineage through the 1960s. From Òyó, Nigeria, Professor Wándé Ábímbolá interpreted Sàngó tẹ̀dún as 'Sàngó piled up edùn', edùn being the "thunder stones" he uses to punish wrongdoers (Ábímbolá, Personal interview). This *cabildo* name is an *oriki* "praise name" meaning that "Sàngó has so many stones from punishing wrongdoers." From the Òrìsà Sàngó's origins in the old Òyó empire of West Africa, Sàngó continues to be evoked as "deity of justice," as he would have been in Aponte's era.

### Abakuá-Lukumí Solidarity

The multi-ethnic collaboration that characterized Aponte's movement is surprising to those following colonial myths about African "tribal conflicts" perpetuated in Cuba. For example, in his classic study of Cuban music, Alejo Carpentier reported the unfortunate idea that, ". . . the bloody clashes between Abakuá lodges in the nineteenth century reflected intertribal rivalries back in Africa" (225).<sup>37</sup> Colonial authorities encouraged Africans to create *cabildos* precisely to reify ethnic distinctions.<sup>38</sup> In Cuba, people from diverse parts of the African

continent created inclusive groups with flexible identities. Childs documented a tendency to create *cabildos* under wide umbrella terms, then as the population of a single ethnic group increased, they would become independent to form a separate *cabildo*.<sup>39</sup>

Far from the myths of "tribal conflicts," Havana's official historian, Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, used eye-witness reports from the 1800s to describe a "pan-African" moment during the January 6th Día de Reyes celebrations in Havana:

It seemed that all of Africa appeared in the streets of Havana: the Arará and the Carabalí, the Gangá and the Lukumí, the Mandingas and the Guiseos . . . . How many outbursts and displays of satisfaction upon the meeting of fathers and sons, husbands and wives, separated during the rest of the year! How many joyful reunions of "carabales" [shipmates].

For a short time, the "bozales" and "ladinos" [African-born and Spanish-speaking], the blacks of different African regions and countries mixed together as if all were family and constituted a single race. ("Recuerdos de antaño" 466)<sup>40</sup>

These tendencies for multi-ethnic solidarity were also reflected by Abakuá specialists who recounted a history of Lukumí–Carabalí interaction bearing directly upon Aponte's legacy. In the mid-1800s in Regla, the birthplace of Abakuá in Cuba, a lodge called Abarakó Taibá was founded.<sup>41</sup> Normally, lodges of that era were sponsored by Carabalí *cabildos* or by an existing lodge, but in this case, contemporary lodge leaders claim that Abarakó was created with the participation of Ifá diviners and Changó initiates, all members of the *cabildo* Changó Tedún.<sup>42</sup> Supporting this idea, the patron saint of Abarakó Taibá is San Francisco, a Catholic avatar of Orula, deity of divination and babaláwos, according to associations made between Lukumí Orishas and Catholic saints in the colonial period.<sup>43</sup> An Abakuá specialist in Havana reported:

In the 1960s, Abakuá elders said that thirteen *babaláwos* founded Abarakó Taibá, and that Adechina directed the rites. This makes sense, because lodges in the nineteenth century had thirteen titled leaders. Demetrio Vidal, who died in 1949, was the third Iyamba of Abarakó Taibá. His sons Amado and Francisco "Pancho" were also members of Abarakó Taibá, and they spoke about this. (Abakuá anonimo)<sup>44</sup>

Adésínà was an African-born *babaláwo* (fig. 3). In the process of adaptation to Cuba, Ifá Odù ("chapters") acknowledged parallel African traditions, so that the Odù called "Oturá Óbe" refers to Abakuá titles.<sup>45</sup> In another example, the Odù called "Otura Adakoi" (also "Oturá Ofún") speaks of Ayelóún, daughter of Ochún (divinity of the rivers) whose story parallels that of Sikán, the mythic Calabar princess who founded Abakuá. Multiple ties between Carabalí and Lukumí traditions were forged in the early 1800s through the multi-ethnic organizing of Aponte's era, but not documented until the 1950s by Cabre'a, who observed the tendency of Abakuá initiates to be devotees of Changó:

Changó is a Lukumí (Yoruba) orisha, perhaps the most popular of the orishas in Cuba. Naturally, he plays no role in the Abakuá society, but many Abakuá are great devotees of Changó, or "sons" of Changó as well as of Akanarán (*La lengua sagrada de los Ñañigos*, 120).<sup>46</sup>

"Akanarán," an Abakuá term for "mother," means here "an Abakuá lodge." In the same period, Ortiz referred to "a Yoruba 'babalao', who is also 'abakuá'" (*Los instrumentos* 344).<sup>47</sup> Other evidence for Carabalí-Lukumí solidarity was presented by Rogelio Martínez-Furé, who in the 1970s wrote about African descendants in Matanzas city:

My principal informant, Pedro Pablo Calle, reported that his grandfather Anselmo had 'irons that ate', and although he called them Ogún, he insisted that they were inherited from his ancestors (which may indicate the existence of a Yorubá-Carabalí syncretism from the 1800s). (Martínez-Furé, *Diálogos imaginarios* 170)<sup>48</sup>

Paralleling the story of the Abarakó Taibá lodge of Regla, Martínez-Furé also reported the creation of a *cabildo* using symbolic numbers. In Matanzas city, the *cabildo* iyesá modu San Juan Batista was founded on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June of 1845.

by fourteen *babaláwos* . . . and seven *osainistas* (*olósain*). . . . The number of founders, twenty-one people in total, corresponded to the "mark" or symbolic number of Ogún, god of metals, the forest, and blacksmithing, who together with Oshún . . . goddess of the rivers and springs, would govern the new *cabildo*. (Martínez-Furé, *Diálogos imaginarios* 151)<sup>49</sup>

Martínez Furé states that this phenomenon,

could serve as grounds for research about the foundation of other colonial *cabildos*. The fact that *babaláwos* and *osainistas* (*olósain*) were founders and that a symbolic number of the patron deity was employed, was a singular act not seen before in studies about other *cabildos*. (*Diálogos imaginarios* 151–2, notes)<sup>50</sup>

Members of different ethnic *cabildos* and lodges used common symbolic elements, specific numbers, colors, or myths of female founders, to self-organize in solidarity.

Abarakó lodge leaders report that African-born *babaláwo* Adésínà (c. 1816–1905)—one of the founders of Ifá in Cuba—was the first Mokóngo titleholder of this lodge (fig. 3).<sup>51</sup> When the Abarakó Taibá lodge marched in procession through Regla in the early twentieth century, they would stop to pay tribute at the home of Josefina Herrera "Pepa" (d. 1947), Adésínà's daughter (Gómez, Personal interview). "Pepa" directed one of two Regla *cabildos* that led annual processions with *batá* drumming on Yemaya's day in September. A leader of *batá* culture, Trinidad Torregrosa, remembered meeting Ortiz through "Pepa" in Regla:

The musicians of that time, Pablo Roche, the famous Akiapkwa, known as the best *batá* drummer, Aguedo Hinojosa, Jesús Pérez and I knew Ortiz through Josefina Herrera, Pepa or Echubí in Lukumí, an elder Santería priest in Regla. Echubí was the daughter of one of the first Lukumí in Cuba. He was known as Adechina in Ocha and he was a *babalawo*. (36)

The "Yorubá-Carabalí syncretism" pondered by Martínez-Furé was evident in the activities of the Regla *cabildo*, where most of the *batá* players—like the aforementioned Pablo Roche and Jesús Pérez—were also Abakuá members, and where the Abarakó lodge paid tribute. Because of their popularity, the Regla

*cabildo* processions were described as "national events," until their last performance in 1961.

These mutually supporting traditions were sustained by ritualized relationships that emerged from the early 1800s involving Carabalí-Lukumí ties within the *cabildo* Changó Tedún, the Abarakó Taibá lodge, and the Yemayá *cabildo* in the town of Regla.<sup>52</sup> Ortiz documented the work of founding *batá* drummers Àtandá and Añabí in the Yemayá *cabildo* founded by Adésínà:

Both Ño Filomeno García or Atandá and Ño Juan or Añabí are also attributed as founders of a Lukumí *cabildo* in Regla, the Yemayá *Cabildo*, together with the great African *babalao* Ño Remigio [Herrera, aka Adechina (Adésínà)], father of the octogenarian and popular santera "Pepa," or "Echubí," who, although blind, crippled, and nearly invalid, continued as its director until her death [in 1947]. Añabí and Atandá made and consecrated a second set of "batá" for this Regla "cabildo," naming it Atandá after one of them. (*Los instrumentos* 316)

Because Aponte's Rebellion was based upon multi-ethnic solidarity, and because the *cabildo* Changó Tedún may have been present but undocumented in 1812, the unusual story of the foundation and the practices of the Abarakó Taibá lodge can be considered part of Aponte's legacy in popular culture.

### Obutong Lodge

The deeper one digs into Havana society of the early 1800s, the multi-ethnic nature of the city looms large, therefore Aponte's movement would have necessarily organized across ethnicity. The formation of the Abakuá society provides a good example. In its West African homeland, the Ékpè "leopard" society was a multi-ethnic institution that linked diverse communities along trade routes by providing a common coded culture, jargon and protocol for communities speaking various languages. Reflecting this, the documented history of Cuba's Ékpè variant, called Abakuá, shows multi-ethnic collaboration in the foundation of the first lodges, as Cabrera presented:

An elder Abakuá outlined the genealogy of Abakuá lodges—"powers," "lands," "parties" or "teams"—that emerged in the first third of the last [19th] century this way: "The foundation of Abakuá in Cuba, Appapa (Efó) authorized Efík Butón, who in turn authorized Efík Kondó, Efík Nyumané, Efík Akamaró, Efík Kunakúa, Efík Efigueremo and Efík Enyemiyá; they also authorized Eforí Isún, Eforí Kondó, Eforí Ororó, Eforí Mukero, Eforí Bumá, Eforí Araocón. These are the seven brothers or lineages of the two founding lodges, Efí and Efó. (*El monte* 196)<sup>53</sup>

From Efí and Efó *cabildos* emerged the first lodge for the creole offspring of Calabarí migrants, as Cabrera reported:

The first lodge, Apapa Efor, was comprised of "erensúa" [natives of Calabar]. And it was established here as it was in Calabar: Ekoi (Efor) initiated the Efík. Efí could then call themselves Apapa Efík. (This was the first lodge born in Cuba, sponsored by the Efó in Regla, called Efík Butón Efí Aroró). (Cabrera, *El monte* 50)<sup>54</sup>

If Efik Butón, the first creole lodge emerged in the 1830s as is commonly reported, Carabalí lodges were already functioning in Havana to establish it. Cabrera provides examples through Abakuá phrases she documented in *La lengua sagrada de los Ñañigos*:

1. Bongori Makabambá Efor: A reference to the oldest tribe, Apapa Efor Ekoi, that initiated the others, recognized by Efik as the "the predecessor who gave Ekue to the rest of the Carabálíes." (123)<sup>55</sup>
2. Chitubé akarán Efik Butón?: Who is the Mother of Efik Butón? Efik Butón Anamerutón. (135)<sup>56</sup>
3. Efik Butón: Efik lodge, 'lineage' affiliated with Efor. The Efik Butón lodges were born in Cuba. The Efor were African and the Efik were creole [Cuban born]. (145)

These narratives refer to early Carabalí lodges existing in Cuba before the foundation of the first lodge for creoles in the 1830s. The undocumented underground activities of Calabarí groups from the late 1700s onwards provide indirect evidence for Franco's claim of Abakuá presence in Aponte's rebellion.

### Andrés Petit (1850s)

Responding to the brutality of Spanish colonists towards African-centered liberation movements like Aponte's "conspiracy" (1812) and La Escalera (1844), the descendants of lineages involved in both movements increased multi-ethnic solidarity, represented clearly by what Ortiz called "the reformation of Petit" (*Los instrumentos* 70–71). In Havana in the late 1850s, Andrés Petit, the Isué of the Bakokó Efó lodge, began to organize the sons of society elites, who were phenotypically "white" men, to create the Akanarán Efó lodge. Andrés Petit was a free mulatto and lay member of the Catholic Church, as well as a founder of La Regla de Kimbisa, a practice fusing elements from Cuban-Kongo, Catholic, and Espiritismo traditions that he established in Havana as an early form of liberation theology (Miller, *Voice of the Leopard* 105).<sup>57</sup> Because Abakuá lodges were becoming popular in Havana and Matanzas, creoles of all backgrounds participating in an emerging national identity wanted to join them. Petit brought in the scions of elite Cuban families to defend the Abakuá from colonial attacks, as well as to purchase the liberty of enslaved brothers with their initiation fees. In the 1950s in Havana, Cuban journalist Manuel Cuellar-Vizcaino, a leader of the Afro-Cuban group Club Atenas, reported that, "the initiation of the white Abakuá had two aims: the liberty of slaves and the liberty of Cuba."<sup>58</sup> Supporting this idea, Cabrera wrote:

Petit consecrated the first lodge of white through patriotic zeal, because its founders were youth from good families, students, who had been accused of conspiring against Spain (*La Regla Kimbisa* 1).<sup>59</sup>

Petit's legacy through the Akanarán Efó lodge and its extensive lineage led him to be called a "forger of the Cuban nation" (Mosquera 256; Moliner 14–15). Because Petit's strategic inclusion follows the logic of Aponte's networking, it may be considered part of Aponte's legacy in popular culture.

### Abakuá Manuscripts

"Aponte taught us the necessity of having a library."  
—Anonymous Abakuá, Personal interview.

If colonial authorities disappeared the books and self-created manuscripts Aponte used to teach his community about liberation struggles, they could not stop the tradition of "self-curated manuscripts" created within communities linked to Aponte's movement. When and how this tradition began is unknown, since it was under the radar in a colony that censored the press and used martial law to keep workers and slaves ignorant. There is evidence that by the 1860s, manuscripts were created within the Abakuá lineage established by Andrés Petit to document the knowledge of African culture bearers as well as their contributions to Cuban social history. Created and curated exclusively within initiation lineages, these books promote Cuban "Carabalí" heritage by illustrating the ritual knowledge of African-born leaders both in Africa and in Cuba. Because they promote awareness of the cultural victories of African leadership, they may be considered part of Aponte's legacy.

An Abakuá manuscript in a private archive, dated from 1877, has survived by being repeatedly copied by generations of owners. A page therein documents that Plácido (1809–1844), considered one of the first African descended poet of Cuba, was an Abakuá member. The manuscript owner reported that Andrés Petit himself, the Isué of Bakokó Efó in Havana, initiated Plácido in 1839–40 (Miller, "The Relationship" 191). This of course is unofficial history; most Cubans know that by 1844, Diego Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés known as "Plácido," was implicated in La Escalera Conspiracy and executed by colonial authorities. A recent study reports: "[T]he historiography of La Escalera has long made Plácido, the renowned mulatto poet, synonymous with the leadership of the 1844 movement" (Finch 19). The Abakuá manuscript that documented Plácido's Abakuá membership may be considered part of Aponte's legacy, because Aponte created manuscripts to educate his community.

Another Abakuá manuscript contains a "map of Orú territory" documenting the diverse composition of a third Abakuá lineage called Orú, that includes the ethnic designations of Barondo, Efí, Efó, Ekondo, Ibibio, Isuama, Usagaré and more into a single group (fig. 4). This map illustrates a "mythic geography" supported by Abakuá phrases describing the multi-ethnic foundation of the society in West Africa. Such diversity was characteristic of Carabalí *cabildos* since their creation in Havana in the early 1700s, the earliest on record being the *cabildo* Carabalí Isieque, documented in Havana in 1717 (Barcia 395).

The "map of Orú territory" is especially interesting because police records implicate this lineage in connection to Aponte's movement and its aftermath. In 1839 in Havana, a police raid discovered members of the Loyal Black Battalions,

of Freemason-like societies, and of Abakuá lodges in the process of organizing an Abakuá lodge called Oró Apapa (Deschamps, "Margarito Blanco").<sup>60</sup> Among them were participants in Aponte's Rebellion of 1812. Abakuá signatures confiscated in the 1839 police raid show common elements with Abakuá signs used in the twentieth century, as well as with West African Nsibidi signs from lodges in Calabar and its hinterlands. Franco reproduced "a conventional sign used as a signature by the Abakuá," found by colonial authorities among the papers of Aponte's colleague Clemente Chacón ("La conspiración" 179).<sup>61</sup> Franco's report indicates that in Havana, either West African Ékpè was operating in Carabalí *cabildos* by 1812, or Abakuá lodges for creoles had been established decades before the generally accepted date of 1836 (Orozco and Bolívar 244).<sup>62</sup> Supporting this, in 1824 in the barrio of Jesús María, authorities apprehended two groups of Black Curros—that is, Spanish-descended blacks—who were using Carabalí styled masks in a group called Oró Papá, whose director was a member of Havana's Black Battalion (Deschamps, "Los negros curros" 38, 40; Miller, *Voice of the Leopard* 80). Deschamps wrote:

The name of the group or *cabildo* Oró Papá is of a Carablí origin and its foundation in the year 1824, with all the characteristics that we have outlined, alters in our judgment, the date that we have for the foundation of the Abakuá ("Los negros curros" 40).

Deschamps's findings challenge us to rethink Abakuá's foundation. Either the five documented Carabalí *cabildos* in 1755 in Havana would have included Ékpè members from West Africa who created the signs found among the papers of Aponte's Rebellion. Or, by 1812, Abakuá lodges for creoles were already operating. Given the decades of repression that followed the execution of Aponte and colleagues, these Abakuá lodges were forced underground until the 1830s, when it was safer to declare them as "operational."

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Dedicated to Carlos Gómez, *babaláwo*, as well as Ìyámbà of Abarakó Taibá in Havana (ibayé!), and to Etubom Bassey Ekpo Bassey, Ìyámbà of Efe Ékpè Eyo Ema, Ekoretonko community, in Calabar (ibayé!). For help during research in Cuba, special thanks to Fernando Arias-Pérez (Nasakó of Obáne Sése Kondo); Reinaldo Brito del Valle (Obonékue "facultado" of Uriabón Efí); Andrés Chacón-Franquiz "Pogolotti" (1933–2001, Abasónko of Ekoriatan Orú); José de la Fuente, Rubén Hernández-Santana "Abebe Oshún," (1947–2012); Rogelio Martínez-Furú; Ernesto Soto (Isunékue of Ítia Mukandá Efó). For help during research in Nigeria and Cameroon, special thanks to Chief (Engineer) B.E. Bassey in Calabar. Thanks also to Jeremy Brecher, Víctor Manfredi, Patricia González.

<sup>2</sup> "¿Soy la cabeza de Aponte / que cuelgo del puente / de Chávez?" (Martínez Furú, *Cimarrón* 12).

<sup>3</sup> "En 1605 . . . el audaz cuadillo Montoro fue condenado por las autoridades "a ser hecho cuartos y cortadas las manos y cabezas, y los cuartos puestos en los caminos, y las manos y cabeza traídos a esta ciudad de Santo Domingo y puestas en escarpas en la picota de la plaza." Este era el castigo

ejemplar, de muerte e infamia, que se imponía por las autoridades de Indias a los rebeldes contra el orden imperial de España; fue la pena que dos siglos después, cuando ya el pueblo de La Española era independiente, en Cuba sufrió Aponte, el jefe negro de una de las primeras revoluciones en pro de las libertades cubanas" (*Historia de una pelea* 49)

<sup>4</sup> Franco reported that Aponte's movement included, "Mandingas, Ararás, Congos, Carabalfes, Macuá, Bibis and others . . . as well as groups of blacks and mulatto migrants from Haiti, Santo Domingo, Jamaica, Panama, Cartagena de Indias, and the USA" ("La conspiración" 150).

<sup>5</sup> Did Abakuá painters use ideas from the Cuban seal in their paintings of mythic West Africa? Or did the creator(s) of the Cuban seal use Abakuá mythology? In the United States, similar debates have occurred about Freemasons who may have designed foundational national symbols in relation to Masonic geometric signs.

<sup>6</sup> "El escudo lo inventó Miguel Teurbe Tolón [1820–1857] en 1849, según el testimonio, no controvertido hasta hoy, de Cirilo Villaverde . . . en el periódico *El Independiente*, de Nueva Orleans, dijo el 13 de febrero de 1853 que el escudo fue trazado 'conforme a las instrucciones del general [Narciso] López'" (Gay-Calbó 87).

<sup>7</sup> "Palma real: f. *Roystonea regia*. Es la celebrada palma de los campos cubanos. De su tronco se hacen tablas para las paredes de las construcciones rurales. Las pencas u hojas sirven para techar las casas y para dar sombra en las vegas de tabaco. Con las yaguas se hacen catauros y tercios para envasar el tabaco en rama; también se usan en paredes y techos. Los frutos, llamados palmiche, son un excelente alimento para los cerdos" ("Palma real," 2001).

<sup>8</sup> These interpretations were documented by Lydia Cabrera: "Uyo: sun" (*La lengua sagrada* 520). "Uyo" is normally "the mystic Voice," but here it is encoded as "the sun."

"Ekuerebiñ: Ekue and the sun are the strongest ones in Guinea."

"Ekuerebiñ: There is no world without Ekue or the sun" (*La lengua sagrada* 191).

"Ekuerebiñ Ekuerisú (without Ekue and without the sun, there is no world)" (*Anaforuana* 332).

<sup>9</sup> "[T]he Caribbean's 'other' history had begun to be written starting from the *palenque* and the maroon. . . little by little these pages will build an enormous branching narration that will serve as an alternative to the 'planters' histories' that we know." (Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island* 254)..

<sup>10</sup> Second Lieutenant Pilar Borrego, exiled to Puerto Rico for involvement in Aponte's rebellion, was arrested in Havana twenty-seven years later during an Abakuá meeting (Deschamps, "Margarito Blanco" 98; Deschamps, *Los batallones de pardos y morenos* 79–80, 83).

"Miembros del cabildo Mina Guagui formaron parte en Marzo de 1809, de las algaradas que se produjeron en La Habana contra los franceses y participaron, bajo la jefatura de Salvador Terrero, en el movimiento dirigido por José Antonio Aponte en 1812, miembro a su vez de un cabildo lucumí" (Deschamps, "Marcas Tribales" 73).

<sup>11</sup> "El expediente de Aponte, conservado en el Archivo Nacional de Cuba, fue desclasificado en 1963 por el fallecido historiador afrocubano José Luciano Franco" (Pavez 667–68).

<sup>12</sup> See Palmié, Pavez, and Childs.

<sup>13</sup> "Según el prestigioso historiador José Luciano Franco, quien debió recibir esa información de fuentes orales, Aponte, al igual que Ternero, era capataz de un cabildo, en este caso del lucumí changó terddún. Esta información se ha repetido, sin mayor análisis, a lo largo de cuarenta años, sin embargo merece cierta revisión. José Antonio era nieto de Joaquín Aponte, capitán de granaderos del Batallón de Morenos Libres de la Habana; criollo, de oficio albañil, y estuvo en el sitio de la Habana en al cual tuvo dos encuentros, uno en la Chorrera y otro en Puentes Grandes. También participó en la expedición de la Luisiana, donde obtuvo la medalla de la Real Efigie que le fue concedida el 27 de agosto de 1770. Su padre, Nicolás, era ya criollo de segunda generación, en tanto él lo era de tercera. Esta circunstancia conspira, evidentemente, contra la tesis de su presencia

como capataz de un cabildo habanero, pues aunque hemos encontrado criollos en estas sociedades su participación era ilegal y bastante cuestionada y no podían ser elegidos para los cargos de dirección en esas sociedades. Si se tiene en cuenta que la elección para estas responsabilidades era confirmada por las autoridades coloniales, para las cuales los cabildos eran formas de sociabilidad que sólo competían a los africanos y se regían por leyes estrictas, resulta poco verosímil que Aponte hubiese podido ser capataz de una sociedad de este tipo en la primera decena del siglo XIX, mucho más creíble es su desempeño en funciones religiosas que debían permanecer ocultas a los ojos de los no iniciados" (Barcia 164).

<sup>14</sup> See Franco, "La conspiración" 186. See also Cabrera-Peña (35) and Helg (150).

<sup>15</sup> See De la Fuente (38).

<sup>16</sup> According to the manuscript books of the Awana Mokoko lodge (a.k.a. Bakoko Efó), Lino D'ou was Obonékue of Bakoko Efó and also a Freemason (Martí Labarrer, Personal interview).

<sup>17</sup> Padrón-Valdés, Personal interview. See also D'ou (6).

<sup>18</sup> Moore, Davis and Witmer, Marcuzzi, and Villepastour have all questioned Ortiz's tendency not to cite his informants for each idea he received from them.

<sup>19</sup> Barcia (414–17) lista quince Lucumi Cabildos del siglo XIX en La Habana, entre ellos cuatro con el nombre de Santa Bárbara, y uno de ellos en la calle San Nicolás, donde Ortiz menciona Changó Tedun. "[E]l templo del viejo 'cabildo' de Santa Bárbara" o 'Changó Tedún' que estaba en la calle de San Nicolás" (Ortiz, *Los instrumentos*, vol. 2, pp. 116).

<sup>20</sup> "Sandrina lived in the barrio de la Timba in Vedado; his Ifá sign was Otura Ogunda. Miguel Febles often mentioned him to me. He was the Ifá *padrino* of the mother of one of my Ifá godchildren." (Cabrera-Suárez, Personal interview). "Sandrina vivió en el barrio de la Timba in Vedado. Miguel Febles me hablaba de él; su signo de Ifá era Otura Ogunda. Era el *padrino* de Ifá de uno de mis ahijados de Ifá" (Cabrera-Suárez, Personal interview).

<sup>21</sup> "Bernabé Menocal was probably initiated . . . in the 1870s," and died around 1927 (Brown 323, note 66, note 70). Bernabé's Ifá sign was "Baba Eyobe" (Cabrera-Suárez, Personal interview).

<sup>22</sup> Brown (88–92); Cabrera-Suárez, Personal interview.

<sup>23</sup> "Eulogio Rodríguez (Tata Gaitán)" (Brown 69). "Some babalawos . . . distanced themselves from Tata Gaitán, because they believed he had initiated Cuba's brutal dictator, Gerardo Machado, into Ifá" (Brown 290).

"Tata Gaitán was probably initiated . . . in the early 1880s." (Brown 323, note 66). "Tata Gaitán—Ògúndá Òfún (1861–1944)" (Mason 152). "Tata Gaitán's Ifá sign was Ogunda Fun" (Cabrera-Suárez, Personal interview).

<sup>24</sup> "Silvestre Erice's Sociedad de Protección Mutua Santa Rita de Casia y San Lázaro, known commonly as the Cabildo de Papá Silvestre" (Brown 70). "Silvestre Erice was from the same family as José Antonio Erice 'Baba Eyobe,' godson of Tata Gaitán, and Ifá godfather of my father Martín Cabrera together with Bernardo Rojas. José Antonio Erice was the father of Francisco 'Panchito' Erice 'Osa Ojuani,' my Ifá godfather together with my own father. 'Panchito' Erice (d. 2016) died when over 80 years of age" (Cabrera-Suárez, Personal interview).

"Silvestre Erice es familia de José Antonio Erice 'Baba Eyobe,' ahijado de Tata Gaitán, y padrino de Ifá de mi padre Martín Cabrera junto con Bernardo Rojas. José Antonio Erice era el padre de Francisco 'Panchito' Erice 'Osa Ojuani,' mi padrino de Ifá junto con mi padre. 'Panchito' Erice (d. 2016) falleció con 80 pico años" (Cabrera-Suárez, Personal interview). A photograph of José Antonio Erice is published in Cabrera-Suárez (149c).

<sup>25</sup> Quintín García's and Àtandá's dates come from Quintín "Tín" (Mason 152). Quintín García's Ifá sign was "Otura Nfko" otherwise known as "Otura Óbe" (Mason 152; Cabrera-Suárez, Personal interview).

<sup>26</sup> "Bangoché, José de Calazán Herrera, uno de mis más competentes informantes". (Cabrera, *El monte* 73).

In the 1950s Lydia Cabrera wrote, "el [cabildo] de Changó Terddún, (Cabildo de Santa Bárbara) porque aún se recuerda con orgullo. Pretende Calazán que uno de sus fundadores fue su padre, Tá Román, conocido entre sus compatriotas por el príncipe Latikuá Achiku Latticú. Fue un gran Cabildo, 'hasta que los criollos se metieron en el Changó Terddún y se hicieron dos bandos: el de los criollos que querían presumir y mandar, progresistas, y el de los viejos de nación, intransigentes. Los chéveres, petimetres, empezaron a llamar a los viejos Arakisas, los onirirá . . . (gente descuidada, sucia). Allí por los setenta y tantos, el Changó Terddún ocupó una casa en la calle de Jesús Peregrino. Luego en Jesús Marfa,—Gloria entre Indio y Florida. 'Entonces era lo que se llamaba un Cabildo'" (*El monte* 24–25, nota 1).

<sup>27</sup> "Undoubtedly, Tata was multilingual: he not only spoke Spanish, but also utilized the Lucumí, Congo, and Abakuá Brícamo languages" (Brown 72). "Tata Gaitán was a member (*obonekue*) either of Havana's Usagaré Kamawá [sic] or Mutanga lodge (interviews with Joseito Valdés [1992] and Jesús Varona [1998], both of whom are 'babalawos' and Abakuá members). According to interviews with a number of Havana 'babalawos' (1991–99) . . . Bonifacio Valdés was the Mokongo of Efi Embemoró of Cayo Hueso; Pedro P. Pérez was the Mokongo of Aroko Kujúao [Eróko Nyuáo], and Guillermo Castro was an 'obonekue' of Orú Papá" (Brown 319, note 23).

An Abakuá specialist responded: "Usagaré Kamawá would be Usagaré Mawán of Matanzas; Joseito Valdés (f. 1990s) was an *obonékue* of Usagaré Mutánga and Iyámba of Usagaré Efóri Mebó" (Anonymous Abakuá, Personal interview). Another responded: "Jesús Varona was Nasakó of Efóri Tongó of Regla" (Rodríguez, Personal interview, 2015).

"Usagaré Kamawá sería Usagaré Mawán de Matanzas; Joseito Valdés (f. 1990s) era *obonékue* de Usagaré Mutánga y Iyámba de Usagaré Efóri Mebó." (Anonymous Abakuá, Personal interview). Another responded: "Jesús Varona era Nasakó de Efóri Tongó de Regla." (Rodríguez, Personal interview, 2015).

<sup>28</sup> Quintín García was consecrated with the title of Nkandem, and also did the ritual work of Mokongo in the Abarakó Taibá lodge. Quintín's son "Tín" was prohibited from becoming Abakuá because as a child he was initiated into Ocha, but as a *babalawo*, he ritually prepared the sacred objects of the Abarakó Taibá lodge (Anonymous Abakuá, Personal interview). Both Brown and Mason documented the popular idea of Quintín García as Mokongo (Brown 319, note 23; Mason 156).

<sup>29</sup> "Tata Gaitán" hizo Ifá a Quintín García Lecuón ('Otura Óbe'), quien era hijo de 'Àtandá y el padre de "Tín" Àtandá era el padre sanguino de Quintín García y el abuelo sanguino de "Tín." "Tín" was in possession of the *batá* de Àtandá y las caretas de Olókun" (Cabrera-Suárez, Personal interview; Mason 155).

<sup>30</sup> "The grandson of the Lucumí Atandá, Quintín Lecón Lombillo (also known as Tín), inscribed his own Asociación de los Hijos de San Francisco de Asís . . . Tín secured over forty thousand pesos from his powerful godchild, Carlos Prío Socarrás, Cuba's president from 1948 to 1952" (Brown 84). "Tín gave Prío the 'Hand of Orula', signifying the protection of Ifá and making the president Tín's ritual godchild, and Prío Tín's economic patron" (Brown 325, note 85). "Tín, initiated in about 1939, became Cuba's senior 'babalawo'" (Brown 325, note 88). "Tín . . . died virtually alone in August 1999" (Brown 86).

<sup>31</sup> "Hijos de San Francisco de Asís" . . . el Presidente del Consejo Superior y Tesorero de dicha asociación, el reputado *babalao* Sr. Quintín Lecón y Lombillo . . . la solemne colocación de la primera piedra de su edificio para reuniones, templo y escuela, que levantarán en Regla con recursos propios y la cooperación de \$20,000 que les ha donado al efecto el Sr. Presidente de la República, Dr. Carlos Prío" (Ortiz, *Los instrumentos* 193–5). Brown published a photograph of this

event with the caption: "Cuban president Carlos Prío Socarrás presenting reported forty-thousand-peso check to Quintín Lecón Lombillo (Otrupon Adakino), founder of La Asociación los Hijos de San Francisco de Asís" (Brown 85). Brown did not cite Ortiz's *Los instrumentos* references to this event, thus the discrepancy in the amount of the donation.

<sup>32</sup> "Asunción Villalonga, the son of the Yoruba Francisco Villalonga Ifá Bf, was born about 1858 and was initiated into Ifá about 1878" (Brown 323, note 66). "Asunción Villalonga ([d.] 1953)" (Brown 82).

<sup>33</sup> This anecdote also shows the accommodation of Lukumí leaders to power, in the form of the Catholic Church and the nation's president, a stance quite different from Abakuá leaders, who tended to resist State power and remain underground.

<sup>34</sup> Mason (152–54) published two death dates for Quintín Lecón: 1991 and 1999, and confirmed for the author that 1999 was correct (Mason, Personal interview).

<sup>35</sup> The author visited Quintín Lecón's home in San Miguel de Padrón in 1995 with *babaláwo* Frank Cabrera-Suárez in an attempt to learn details of the history of Cuban Ifá. Quintín greeted us, but he was not interested in speaking about his cultural heritage.

<sup>36</sup> "En silencio ha tenido que ser, y como indirectamente, porque hay cosas que para logradas han de andar ocultas, y de proclamarse en lo que son, levantarían dificultades demasiado recias p<sup>a</sup> alcanzar sobre ellas el fin" (Carta de José Martí a Manuel Mercado, Campamento de Dos Ríos, 18 de mayo de 1895).

<sup>37</sup> "En cuanto a los choques sangrientos registrados entre 'potencias' ñáñigas en el siglo XIX, Vivó sostiene que eran reflejo de viejas luchas intertribales del África" (Carpentier 225).

<sup>38</sup> "Spanish authorities sought to separate the African and Cuban-born populations and, therefore, discouraged Creole participation in 'cabildos.' In the same vein of preventing a broad racial identity, government officials encouraged the formation of 'cabildos' because they emphasized distinct African ethnicities. Despite official discouragement and even limited political rights, some Creoles joined *cabildos* and continued to identify with the nation of their parents and ancestors" (Childs, *Aponte Rebellion* 99).

<sup>39</sup> "In the 1780s a dispute surfaced with the Lucumí cabildo between the diverse ethnicities that claimed membership. . . . One member recalled that 'the cabildo was erected by the Lucumí nations, specifically the Nangas and the Barbaes'" (Childs, *Aponte Rebellion* 216).

<sup>40</sup> "El África entera parecía verse en las calles de la Habana: los *arará* y los *carabalí*, los *gangá* y los *lucumí*, los *mandinga* y los *guiseos*. . . . ¡Cuántas efusiones y muestras de satisfacción al encontrarse padres e hijos, esposo y esposas, separados durante el resto del año! ¡Cuántos transportes de alegría al reunirse de Nuevo los *carabelas*!"

Durante unos momentos se mezclaban *bozales* y ladinos, negros de las distintas regiones y comarcas del África, como si todos fuesen hermanos y formasen una sola raza" (Roig de Leuchsenring, "Recuerdos de antaño" 466).

<sup>41</sup> "Efi Abarakó Taiba" (Ortiz, *Los instrumentos* 29). This lodge is also known as Abarakó Nankábia.

<sup>42</sup> Publicly, lodge leaders claim Abarakó Taibá was founded in 1864 by Efi Abarakó Etá ("first"), but internally, the story is that Abarakó Taibá had Lukumí founders, and was later recognized by Efi Abarakó Etá (Gómez, Personal interview).

<sup>43</sup> "Orula (Orúmbila, Orúmbila), dios de la adivinación"; "Orula (San Francisco de Asís)" (Martínez-Furé, *Diálogos imaginarios* 155; 156). Information about San Francisco and Abarakó from Anonymous Abakuá (Personal interview). An Abakuá elder whose grandfather was the Mokóngo of Abarakó Taibá, reported, "Los Hijos de San Francisco de Asís era una sociedad de *babaláwos* que fueron los fundadores de Abarakó Taibá (con 13 *babaláwos*)" (Miller, "Encuentro con Reinaldo Brito" 3).

<sup>44</sup> "Los mayores Abakuá en los 1960s decían que habían 13 *babalawos* que fundaron a Abarakó Taibá y que Adechina era director del rito. Eso tiene sentido, porque en el siglo XIX los juegos tenían 13 plazas. El tercer Iyamba de Abarakó Taiba era Demetrio Vidal, muere en 1949. Sus hijos Amado y Francisco 'Pancho' eran Abarakó Taiba. Ellos hablaban de eso" (Anonymous Abakuá, Personal interview).

<sup>45</sup> As taught by Miguel Febles to his apprentice Frank Cabrera-Suárez "Obeche." This process is called "intra African acculturation and exchange" by Sweet (154) and as "horizontal integration" by Miller ("Pathways to peace").

<sup>46</sup> "Chargó es un orisha 'lucumí' (Yoruba), quizá en Cuba el más popular de los orishas. Naturalmente, no juega ningún papel en el culto Abakuá, pero muchos ñáñigos son grandes devotos de Changó, 'hijos' suyos a la par que de Akanarán" (Cabrera, *La sociedad secreta* 120).

<sup>47</sup> "un 'babalao' yoruba, quien además es 'abakuá.'" (Ortiz, *Los instrumentos* 344)

<sup>48</sup> "[M] informante principal, Pedro Pablo Calle, sostiene que su abuelo Anselmo tenía 'hierros que comían', y aunque él los llama Ogún insiste en que eran heredados de sus antepasados (lo que pudiera indicar la existencia de un sincretismo yorubá-carabalí desde el siglo XIX)" (Martínez-Furé, *Diálogos imaginarios* 170).

<sup>49</sup> "El cabildo iyesá modu San Juan Batista . . . fue fundado el 24 de junio de 1845 en la ciudad de Matanzas por catorce *babalawo* . . . y siete *osainistas* (*olósain*). . . . El número de los fundadores, veintiuna personas en total, correspondía a la *marca* o número simbólico de Ogun" (Martínez-Furé, *Diálogos imaginarios* 151).

<sup>50</sup> "Es interesante este dato, ya que puede servir de pista en las investigaciones sobre la fundación de otros cabildos coloniales. Que sean *babalawo* y *osainistas* (*olósain*) sus fundadores y que emplearan el número simbólico del dios que sería patrón es un hecho singular que no hemos visto consignado en los estudios realizados sobre otros cabildos" (Martínez-Furé, *Diálogos imaginarios* 151–2 notes).

<sup>51</sup> Adésínà's dates, and his being Mokóngo in Abarakó Taibá, come from Quintín "Tín" (Mason 152 and 156). Brown wrote: "According to interviews with a number of Havana 'babalawos' (1991–99), Tata's elder and colleague, Adechina [d. 1905], was the Mokóngo of Efi Abarakó Taibá" (Brown 319, note 23).

<sup>52</sup> Ortiz noted a distinctive feature of the Abarakó lodge, signaling its unique traditions: "We have recently realized that an Abakuá lodge of Regla called Efi Abarakó Taibá still uses a 'double ekón' in its rites. This seems to be the only lodge to do so today" (Ortiz *Los instrumentos* 260). Cabrera also referred to this double *ekón* (*La lengua sagrada* 166).

<sup>53</sup> "Un viejo ñáñigo nos traza así la genealogía de las sociedades—potencias, tierras, partidos o 'juegos' de ñáñigos—que surgen en el primer tercio del siglo pasado: 'Appapa,' (Efó) el fundamento de Abakuá en Cuba, autoriza a Efik Butón, quien autoriza a Efik Kondó, Efik Numané, Efik Acamaró, Efik Kunakúa, Efik Efigueremo y a Efik Enyemiyá; a Eforí Isún, Eforí Kondó, Eforí Ororó, Eforí Mukero, Eforí Bumá, Eforí Araocón. Son estas las siete filiales o ramas de las dos potencias creadoras, Efi y Efó" (Cabrera, *El monte* 196).

<sup>54</sup> "La primera Potencia, toda de erensuá [nota: "De Africanos nativos del Calabar"] era Apapa Efor. Y aquí se hizo como allá en el Calabar. Ekoi, (efór) le dio el ser a Efik. A Efi, que entonces pudo llamarse Apapa Efik. (Fue el mismo Efik Butón Efi Aroró, el primer juego que nació en Cuba, apadrinado por los Efó, en Regla" (Cabrera, *La sociedad secreta* 50).

<sup>55</sup> "Bongó Orí akambabamba Efó. Akambabamba derives from 'okámbo', meaning 'old.'"

<sup>56</sup> "Akanarán 'mother'. Anamerúton was the lodge of Africans that founded the lodge Efi Ebúton in Havana in the 1800s" (Anonymous Abakuá, Personal interview).

<sup>57</sup> Petit founded *La Regla Kimbisa del Santo Cristo del Buen Viaje*, cf. Cabrera (*La Regla Kimbisa*), see also Bolívar and González (50).

- <sup>58</sup> "La iniciación de ñañigos blancos tuvo dos fines: la libertad de esclavos y la libertad de Cuba" (Téllez 2).
- <sup>59</sup> "Petit consagró el primer juego de blancos por fervor patriótico porque los fundadores de éste, eran jóvenes de buenas familias, estudiantes, que habían sido acusados de conspirar contra España" (Cabrera, *La Regla Kimbisa* 1).
- <sup>60</sup> Contemporary lodge leaders told the author that the Orú Apapa lodge was founded in 1848, a sign that the waves of suppression following the 1839 police investigation forced Abakuá leaders underground for a decade.
- <sup>61</sup> "Under a secret oath—whose reach and gravity only the Abakuá knew—the brigadier Narciso [of Santo Domingo] agreed with Aponte to lead the rebels once they had weapons in their power" (Franco, "La conspiración" 154).
- <sup>62</sup> "Aunque históricamente la primera sociedad *abakuá* se funda en 1836, hay antecedentes de que antes de esa fecha los ñañigos se mantenían unidos. Así se demuestra al estudiar la conocida como Conspiración de Aponte de 1812" (Orozco and Bolívar 244).

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## Figures



Fig. 1. Usugaré



Fig. 2. Escudo cubano

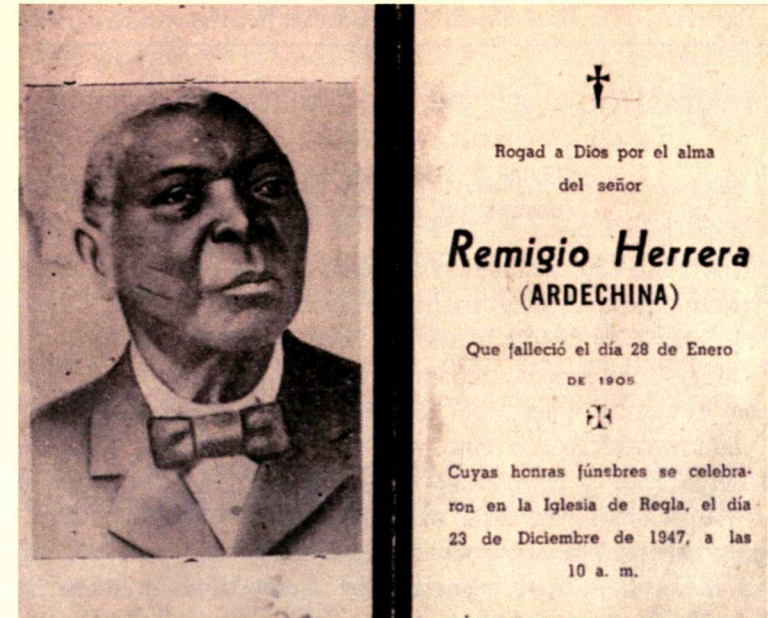


Fig. 3. Adesina

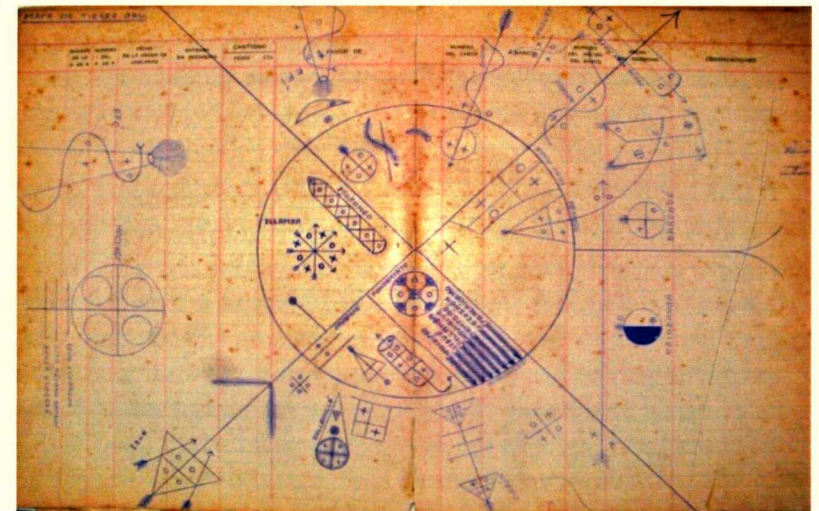


Fig. 4. Tierra Oru

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