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CREATING SALSA, CLAIMING SALSA:

IDENTITY, LOCATION, AND AUTHENTICITY IN A GLOBAL POPULAR MUSIC

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Music

William Guthrie LeGrand

University of Northern Iowa

July, 2010

ABSTRACT

Although Latin American ethnomusicological scholarship in the last twenty years has addressed much of the Caribbean, particularly Cuba, the popular genre salsa has often been treated as a side project of scholars with other specialties. Much of previous Latin American scholarship has favored nation-based, particularly folkloric, genres, while current trends have largely moved toward either re-engaging nation-based scholarship within postmodern critical contexts or addressing *reggaeton* as part of the scholarly fascination with global hip-hop culture. Salsa, which has always been created, contested, and claimed through transnational/global routes, has therefore often been marginalized through its continued association with Latin American musical contexts, particularly through nation-based lenses.

Instead, salsa benefits from treatment as a postmodern, global popular music: disseminated throughout varied regional centers, guided by modern capitalist maneuvers, and claimed by diverse groups with different sociocultural purposes, meanings, and practices. In particular, the development of salsa involved a polyphonic interplay of identity, memory, and location as it traveled first between the U.S. and the Caribbean, later throughout the world. As a result, discourses of authenticity often act to mediate the meanings and reception of salsa within sociocultural spheres of influence. The focus of this research project, then, is to investigate and engage emergent subtexts of authenticity historically present in the creation of salsa, highlighting varied negotiations of identity situated among salsa's multiple discourses of race, class, culture, and place.

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This Study by: William Guthrie LeGrand

Entitled: Creating Salsa, Claiming Salsa: Identity, Location, and Authenticity in a Global Popular Music

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INTRODUCTION

Although Latin American ethnomusicological scholarship in the last twenty years has addressed much of the Caribbean, particularly Cuba,[1] the popular genre salsa has often been treated as a side project of scholars with other specialties.[2] Much of previous Latin American scholarship has favored nation-based, particularly folkloric, genres,[3] while current trends have largely moved toward either re-engaging nation-based scholarship within postmodern critical contexts or addressing *reggaeton* as part of the scholarly fascination with global hip-hop culture.[4] Salsa, which has always been created, contested, and claimed through transnational/global routes, has therefore often been marginalized through its continued association with Latin American musical contexts, particularly through nation-based lenses.

Instead, salsa benefits from treatment as a postmodern, global popular music: disseminated throughout varied regional centers, guided by modern capitalist maneuvers,

---

[1] See Katherine J. Hagedorn, *Divine Utterances: The Performance of Afro-Cuban Santeria* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001); Robin Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997); Ned Sublette, *Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2004); María Teresa Vélez, *Drumming for the Gods: The Life and Times of Felipe García Villamil, Santero, Palero, and Abakuá* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

[2] See discussions of salsa by various Latin U.S./Caribbean scholars such as Robin Moore and Juan Flores in Lise Waxer, ed., *Situating Salsa: Global Markets and Local Meanings in Latin Popular Music* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

[3] See John Amira and Steven Cornelius, *The Music of Santería: Traditional Rhythms of the Batá Drums* (Crown Point, IN: White Cliffs Media Company, 1992); Benjamin Lapidus, *Origins of Cuban Music and Dance: Changüí* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2008).

[4] See Robin Moore, *Music and Revolution: Cultural Change in Socialist Cuba* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Raquel Z. Rivera, Wayne Marshall, and Deborah Pacini Hernandez, eds., *Reggaeton* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

and claimed by diverse groups with different sociocultural purposes, meanings, and practices.[5] In particular, the development of salsa involved a polyphonic interplay of identity, memory, and location as it traveled first between the U.S. and the Caribbean, later throughout the world. As a result, discourses of authenticity often act to mediate the meanings and reception of salsa within sociocultural spheres of influence. The focus of this research project, then, is to investigate and engage emergent subtexts of authenticity historically present in the creation of salsa, highlighting varied negotiations of identity situated among salsa's multiple discourses of race, class, culture, and place.

Referring to her interest in broadening the scope of salsa research beyond limited, nation-based geosocial constructs, Lise Waxer nevertheless states "understanding salsa is fruitless if we forget its initial emergence as a vehicle for Puerto Rican and Nuyorican cultural identity and resistance against U.S. domination."[6] To this, I argue that understanding this 1960s/1970s Puerto Rican and Nuyorican cultural, and musical, identity is fruitless if we do not recognize that it was highly diffuse, shaped through uneven, transnational flows of influence from Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Tracing geo-temporal locations of sociomusical influence, then, this thesis will excavate various sites of Cuban, Afro-Cuban, and African practices and discourses present within the salsa

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[5] Frances Aparicio, *Listening to Salsa: Gender, Latin Popular Music, and Puerto Rican Cultures* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998); Shuhei Hosokawa, "Salsa No Tiene Fronteras: Orquesta de la Luz and the Globalization of Popular Music," in *Situating Salsa: Global Markets and Local Meanings in Latin Popular Music*, ed. Lise Waxer (New York: Routledge, 2002); Keith Negus, *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

[6] Lise Waxer, "Situating Salsa: Latin Music at the Crossroads," in *Situating Salsa*, ed. Lise Waxer (New York: Routledge, 2002), 17.

imaginary and vital to "its initial emergence as a vehicle for Puerto Rican and Nuyorican cultural identity."[7]

Since the 1980s, particularly after the appearance of *Writing Culture* in 1986,[8] postmodern scholarship has repeatedly questioned constructions such as gender, identity, race, and class, as well as the way in which they are represented in the ethnographic text. Interdisciplinary by definition, ethnomusicology has been well suited to this decentered, postmodern approach, and scholarly works that grapple with multiple angles of an issue from multiple theoretical positions have flourished since.[9] In particular, ethnomusicological work has turned from authoritative ethnographic texts about a certain people toward topics involving modern, heterogeneous populations and individual experiences. In few situations are (post)modern experiences such as transnationalism, migration, (post)colonialism, racism, and socioeconomic hegemony/marginalization as central a feature as in the popular music known as salsa.

Of the ethnographic methods developed to highlight these new topics and approaches, many have found fruit in interpretive ethnography.[10] The overall approach enlisted in this project draws much from the interpretive methods outlined by Norman

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[7] Waxer, "Situating Salsa," 17.

[8] Clifford, James and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

[9] Among Latin Caribbean scholarship, see discussions of: literary criticism in Frances Aparicio, "Ethnifying Rhythms, Feminizing Cultures," in *Music and the Racial Imagination*, ed. Ronald Rodano and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 95-112; identity and transnationalism in David García, *Arsenio Rodgríguez and the Transnational Flows of Latin Popular Music* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); race and class in Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*; ideology in Moore, *Music and Revolution.*

[10] Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 171.

Denzin.[11] Discussing postmodern ethnography as "the moral discourse of the contemporary world," Denzin argues that ethnographers should move beyond the traditional, objective forms of writing about peoples to more empathetic texts.[12] In doing so, he moves ethnographic work toward emotive, narrative truth and away from objectified, scientific truth; thus seeking to enliven heterogeneous points of view rather than fixed universal truths. While interrogating distant historical topics related to salsa, such as the Atlantic slave trade or the growth of a black middle class in Cuba, this thesis seeks to engage historical interactions between the local/transnational/global context through which identity and authenticity may be inscribed within lived experiences, emphasizing the multipleness of transactional pathways.

With regard to this last point, this project draws heavily on the theories of Paul Gilroy, whose focus on the "lived particularity" of members of the African Diaspora can inform an interpretive approach.[13] Gilroy terms his approach "anti-antiessentialism" in order to form a reaction against both the absolutist terms of essentialism and the pluralist stance of anti-essentialism. In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy argues that a reflexive middle ground between the two standpoints is best positioned to contest both overgeneralization (essentialism), such as a racial essence, and overparticularization (anti-essentialism), such as the denial of racial solidarity.[14] This thesis will apply the anti-antiessentialist concept

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[11] Norman Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1997), 3-48.

[12] Denzin, xvi.

[13] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 99.

[14] Gilroy, 100-102.

to formulations of African, Caribbean, Latin, and/or global identities in various discussions of authenticity.

Within this theoretical framework, the first two chapters of this thesis detail a sociomusical pre-history of salsa. Chapter 1 follows the construction of an Afro-Cuban identity from the founding of Cuba to the end of slavery at the cusp of the twentieth century. It details social histories and musical practices of various African ethnic groups brought to Cuba, situating these heritages within the European socioeconomic policies in which Cuban slave life functioned. The chapter closes with rumba, one of the first pan-African musics in Cuba that developed without reference to African traditions, and the emergence of an Afro-Cuban discourse and identity.

The racial/class binary established by the slave trade is examined in Chapter 2, a discussion of the cosmopolitan stratification of Cuban society in the first half of the twentieth century. The rise of an Afro-Cuban middle class, while still actively oppressed, created new economic opportunities and sociomusical transactional flows. Through an active presence in military and professional bands, Afro-Cuban musical developments reached an ever-increasing audience, presaging a Cuban music boom throughout the Caribbean diaspora following the creation of radio broadcasting. The chapter discusses influential figures in twentieth century popular music, the emigration of Cuban musicians and genres, and the early appropriations/re-significations of Cuban music by Puerto Ricans in the U.S. preceding the Cuban Revolution of 1959.

Chapter 3 follows the post-revolution sociomusical developments of the Latino, primarily Puerto Rican, population in the U.S. Responding to marginalized class status

and urban ghetto locations, Latino musics such as salsa were situated within larger debates over dialectic forces such as cultural assimilation/opposition and musical appropriation/imagination. The chapter profiles influential musicians and the ways in which salsa was used as a vehicle to voice, sonically as well as linguistically, diverse modes of meaning. It traces economic and artistic impacts of the recording industry, and the destabilizing impact of localized centers of salsa production upon hegemonic industry interests and practices. These centers traced broad transnational routes, and by the end of the century salsa was characterized by decentered, global interactions negotiated through varied means of constructing identity and authenticity.

Although the project as a whole involves diverse forms of investigation throughout, each chapter focuses around a methodological orientation. Chapter 1 primarily adopts a historical perspective, Chapter 2 presents analytical perspectives on music and genre, and Chapter 3 centers around the interpretation of sociocultural meanings and significance within an ever-expanding geosocial sphere. Throughout, the sonic subject is viewed as simultaneously situated both throughout a broad geographical, cultural, economic, and historical continuum as well as within the continuously unfolding present tense during which lived, and sounded, reality occurs.

CHAPTER 1

ANTIQUITY-1900

The Birth of Afro-Cuba

Although each side of the debate over whether salsa is a new musical expression, or simply an industry term coined to cover up the appropriation and exploitation of Cuban music, has firm adherents, musicians and salsa industry leaders all readily acknowledge that Cuban popular music of the early twentieth century undoubtedly forms the greatest single influence on salsa.[15] In song lyrics, tribute albums, and interviews, salsa artists and industry executives frequently reference early Cuban musicians such as Arsenio Rodríguez, Benny Moré, or the group La Sonora Matancera as the great predecessors to salsa, often activating associations with these names in demonstrations of/claims to authenticity. Understanding salsa, then, requires an understanding of the Cuban popular music that preceded it, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Early Cuban popular music itself, though, represented a transcultural environment in which authenticity could be invoked through multiple forms of signification, such as sound, language, or instrumentation. Arsenio Rodríguez frequently made reference to his

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[15] Joseph Blum, "Problems of Salsa Research," *Ethnomusicology* 22, no. 1 (January, 1978): 138, http://www.jstor.org/stable/851369 (accessed February 9, 2010); Jorge Duany, "Popular Music in Puerto Rico: Toward an Anthropology of 'Salsa,'" *Latin American Music Review* 5, no. 2 (Autumn-Winter, 1984): 192, http://www.jstor.org/stable/780072 (accessed February 3, 2010); Peter Manuel, "Puerto Rican Music and Cultural Identity: Creative Appropriation of Cuban Sources from Danza to Salsa," *Ethnomusicology* 38, no. 2 (Spring-Summer, 1994): 260, http://www.jstor.org/stable/780203 (accessed February 12, 2010); Leonardo Padura Fuentes, *Faces of Salsa: A Spoken History of the Music*, trans. Stephen J. Clark (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003), 186; César Miguel Rondón, *The Book of Salsa*, trans. Frances Aparicio and Jackie White (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 14.

African ancestry in interviews and his lyrics, often including words or phrases drawn from practices of the various African ethnic groups in Cuba.[16] At the same time, poetic forms drawn from Spain provided a frame within which the improvisation of vocalists could be compared and judged. Thus, in order to understand the sociomusical meanings and messages of the Cuban forerunners of salsa, it becomes necessary to study the sociomusical antecedents of twentieth century Cuban music, namely, the collision of people and cultures from Spain and the central portion of the western coast of Africa. Thus, this chapter will focus on presenting a broad historical overview of developments in pre-twentieth century Cuban music, history, and culture in order to inform and condition the more analytical approach that will be taken in the subsequent chapters.

The history of the Iberian Peninsula, and of Spain, is one of continual multicultural change. Cádiz, the oldest city in Western Europe, was founded by the Phoenicians roughly around 1100 B.C.E. on an island off the southern coast of the peninsula. In approximately 200 B.C.E., Cádiz was claimed by the Romans during the Second Punic War, becoming the second largest city in the Roman Empire, after Rome itself, and renowned as a hotbed of immorality known for its singing girls with castanets.[17] When the Roman Empire collapsed, a period of banditry eventually came to an end as the Visigoths asserted control over the peninsula in the fourth century C.E. from their capital across the Pyrenees Mountains in southern France. This cross-Pyrenees

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[16] David García, *Arsenio Rodríguez and the Transnational Flows of Latin Popular Music* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 16.

[17] Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Spain and Portugal* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1973), 1-6; Ned Sublette, *Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2004), 7-8.

influence would bring much more French and Germanic contact to northern Spain, such as the musician/poet *jongleurs*, resulting in a distinctly continental, non-Mediterranean culture that continues to the present in areas such as Catalonia.[18]

During the eighth century C.E., the Arab/Muslim conquest of the Mediterranean overtook the peninsula, although brutal fighting continued for centuries from their base in central and southern Iberia with the Visigoth/Christian stronghold that remained near the Pyrenées mountain range in the northeast. With the conquest, the Muslims brought the sophisticated knowledge and progressive culture developed throughout their far-ranging empire to Iberia, creating a center for educational and scientific advancement unequaled in Europe at the time.[19] In addition, they brought a new melismatic, improvisational singing style and the *oud*, the unfretted plucked string instrument which prompted the creation of one of Spain's most important instruments, the guitar.[20] The Arabs also brought slaves from sub-Saharan Africa with them to fight, and the war drums of the Senegambians (from modern day Senegal and Gambia) accompanied Muslim fighters such as the North African Almoravids in their eleventh century battles.[21] Christian fighters slowly gained control of the peninsula, and after many centuries of battle, the marriage of Isabelle I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon created an alliance that would prove fatal to the Muslims. The Christian conquest of Iberia was completed with the control of Granada in 1492, the same year that Christopher Columbus first

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[18] Payne, 8-13; Sublette, 27-28.

[19] Thomas F. Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 217-220, 248-250.

[20] Sublette, 36.

[21] Glick, 151.

encountered the space that is now known as Cuba.[22] Also during that year, the Spanish Inquisition required Jews to convert to Catholicism or to be expelled from the peninsula, now united under central control and the title Spain.[23]

In 1511, Diego Velázquez de Cuellar founded Baracoa, the first Spanish settlement in what would become Cuba, on the far eastern edge of the island.[24] Cuba played a small part early in the massive Spanish colonization of the Caribbean, Central, and South America, and was primarily used as a distribution point for shipping traffic between Spain and the colonies. As a result, Cuba hosted a range of European, American, and African cultural influences, with the notable exception of the indigenous population, known as Taíno and Ciboney, who were forced into slavery and virtually eliminated by Spanish violence and disease. The Taíno and the Ciboney population and traditional culture diminished so quickly that they did not have the opportunity to exert any significant influence on Cuban culture.[25]

During its first 250 years, Cuba would primarily remain a shipping destination, with a small population engaged in sugar and coffee production through slave plantations. As a result of the drastic decline among the Taíno population once they were forced into slavery, a similar situation occurred in many of the colonies, the Spanish crown quickly ordered the importation of slaves from sub-Saharan Africa.[26] However, the Spanish grew increasingly fearful of the possible influence of this large imported

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[22] Payne, 173.
[23] Payne, 207.
[24] Richard Gott, *Cuba: A New History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 11.
[25] Gott, 21-22.
[26] Gott, 24.

population, prompting King Charles I to include a passage in his famous royal order of 1526 stating "take much care in the House of Trade that there not pass to the Indies any black slaves, called Gelofes [Wolofs], nor those from the Levant, ... nor any others, raised with Moors, although they be of the race of Guinea Negroes."[27] The purpose of this document, a product of one of the most intense periods of religious persecution throughout the Spanish Inquisition, was to require and enforce Muslim conversion to Catholicism. The result of the above passage, though, was that soon after Cuba's founding, Charles I effectively held Islam at bay by stopping the flow of African slaves that had been exposed to Islam, which corresponded to the Sahelian region of west Africa. Cuban music scholar and record label executive Ned Sublette draws attention to this moment as a landmark in the history of African diasporic music, because the edict resulted in the transport of an Islamized sub-Saharan musical influence through Sahelian cultures to the U.S. and a Christianized sub-Saharan musical influence through central African cultures to Cuba. According to Sublette, this polarized importation can be used to trace certain differences in African-American and Afro-Cuban musical cultures.[28]

Though the merits of Sublette's argument lie outside the scope of this thesis, the royal order issued by Charles I is certainly a landmark in Cuban music history.[29] Through this order, Charles I aimed to extend Catholicism among Spain's slave

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[27] Quoted in José Luciano Franco, *Los palenques de los negros cimarrones* (Havana: Departamento de Orientación Revolucionaria del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba, 1973), 9; translated in Ned Sublette, *Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2004), 77.

[28] Sublette, 77.

[29] In addition, Sublette's provoking claim is rendered problematic by not probing issues such as the denial of opportunity for slaves in the U.S. to continue Islamic religious practice, or the forced Christianization of slaves upon arrival in the U.S.

population, in spite of the marginality of slave experience under the Spanish gaze. Thus, in addition to the use of force, slave traders were forced to locate Africans with the syncretic will to adopt the veneer of Catholicism. In Cuba, religious, musical, and cultural syncretism made possible the illicit preservation of African heritages.[30] It is not surprising, then, that syncretism would later mark much of the innovation in Cuban cultural life and production.

Although the Spanish authorities' xenophobia primarily stemmed from their rise to power at the end of hundreds of years of war between Christians and Muslims in the late fifteenth century, recent developments in the colonies had also become a concern. In Cuba, for instance, Wolof slaves from the Senegambia were instrumental in fomenting the revolt, and escape, of many slaves during the Cuban Slave Rebellion of 1522.[31] Although the Wolofs were specifically targeted by Charles I in his order, it is not clear whether the Spanish were aware at the time that ethnic Wolofs had been a part of the Islamic Senegambian presence in Spain dating back to the reign of the Almoravids in the eleventh century.[32]

In Cuba, the immediate result of the royal order was a shift in the point of origin of slave traffic further south along the western coast of Africa, in particular to central Africa.[33] Having established Christian missionary activity in central Africa during the

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[30] Moore, *Music and Revolution*, 198-199; Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 17-18.

[31] Gott, 25.

[32] Sublette, 78.

[33] Sublette, 189. For clarity of writing, this paper will use the term "Central Africa" to refer to the western coast of Africa spanning the area from the Benin/Nigeria

fifteenth century, Portuguese slave traders near the Congo River and its basin were particularly well-prepared to heed Spain's new policy.[34] The vast majority of slaves brought to Cuba over the next several hundred years would originate from this area, members of many different ethnic groups belonging to the large Bantu family. Of these ethnic groups, the Bakongo people from the river basin appear to have formed the majority group.[35]

Founded at some point between the twelfth and early fifteenth centuries, the kingdom of Kongo was a product of the several thousand year expansion of the Bantu family from west Africa across central, east, and south Africa. Settling in and lending their name to the Congo River basin, at the meeting point of modern-day Congo-Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Angola, the Bakongo people ruled over several neighboring kingdoms, expanding their influence over a large area. According to historian Anne Hilton, the Bakongo were primarily engaged in farming and working the river, becoming experienced in shipbuilding, copper mining, and metallurgy.[36] In Cuba, this shipbuilding expertise would bring many Bakongo to the docks of the major shipping ports, locations which would become intimately tied to the creation of rumba.

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borderlands south to Angola, and the term "West Africa" to refer to the area spanning from Benin in the southeast, to Mali in the northeast, to Senegal in the northwest.

[34] Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 51.

[35] Philip Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 38.

[36] Anne Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 30-33.

In 1482, the Portuguese first arrived at the Congo River, quickly establishing Christian missionary activity among the syncretic Bakongo, whose belief system continued unabated.[37] The leader of the Bakongo, titled *Manikongo*, was baptized in 1491.[38] By 1526, as Charles I was issuing his order for catholicized slaves, the Catholic, Portuguese-speaking *Manikongo* named Afonso began issuing formal complaints to King João III of Portugal that the Portuguese were suddenly only interested in slaves.[39]

Arriving in Cuba, the Bakongo were amalgamated with numerous other small populations of Bantu relatives, and their mutually intelligible languages and cultures led to their classification, by the Spanish in Cuba, as *Congos*. Contributing a large number of words to the Cuban vocabulary, Bantu clusters such as "mb" and "ng" frequently appear in musical terms such as *tumbao*, mambo, *bongó*, and conga.[40] In Cuba, the Bantu were able to preserve and assimilate their various cultures primarily through ethnic mutual aid societies known as *cabildos*, set up by the colonists to indoctrinate African slaves in Spanish-style institutions, though in reality they functioned to maintain, develop, and/or assimilate African traditions.

Throughout the 370 year history of slavery in Cuba, the *cabildos*, along with the nineteenth-century *barracones* (slave barracks) of the large rural sugar plantations, were an essential part of slave experience as one of the few locations in which the

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[37] Peter Fryer, *Rhythms of Resistance: African Musical Heritage in Brazil* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 159.

[38] Ibid., 150.

[39] Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 13.

[40] Sublette, 180.

remembrance and creation of non-European culture could be performed.[41] The Spanish intended the *cabildos* to fracture the slave population into small ethnic groups in order to avoid large scale solidarity and rebellion, a policy which was largely successful, although it likely owed as much to the slight thread of cultural dignity the slaves were allowed to maintain as to marginalization along ethnic lines. At the same time, the Spanish attempted to further the introduction of Catholicism among slaves by requiring the *cabildos* to be registered with a Catholic name and to adopt the appearance of Catholic practices. However, officials did not closely monitor meetings and did not understand the syncretization of public Catholic displays with secret African practices that was taking place in the *cabildos*.[42]

The *cabildos* are often cited as the primary difference between the post-slavery sociomusical creations in Cuba and in the U.S., where officials had attempted to control the slave population by negating cultural histories through intermixing and direct repression. Of central importance in the popular literature is the issue of the drum, with the frequently repeated statement that Africans in Cuba were allowed to keep their drums while Africans in the U.S. were not, thus resulting in the greater presence of percussion and a more direct "African" influence in Afro-Cuban music than in African-American music of the twentieth century.[43] Though this idea does hold some truth, it represents a

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[41] Raul A. Fernandez, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 27.

[42] Sublette, 208.

[43] Ed Morales, *The Latin Beat: The Rhythms and Roots of Latin Music from Bossa Nova to Salsa and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1997), 28; John Storm Roberts, *Black Music of Two Worlds: African, Caribbean, Latin, and African-American Traditions*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schirmer Books, 1998), 248.

drastically distorted, misinformed, and racist historical perspective. While this cross-cultural comparison is only tangential to the current study, it is very fruitful to briefly deconstruct this narrative in order to demonstrate the effectiveness and necessity of questioning historical assumptions in order to effectively interpret modern music.

First, slaves in Cuba were forced to construct drums from available materials such as shipping crates, and were rarely allowed to bring them from Africa.[44] As such, the sonic shifts which resulted from the loss of instruments would have broken, or at least limited, the ability to reproduce indigenous or ancestral African musics. In addition, the psychological impact of creating instruments from discarded materials may have altered the cultural meanings and performances in which slaves were allowed to drum. These impacts severed important cultural ties among certain ethnic groups, such as the *Lucumí*, to the practice of embodying new drums with sacred figures or symbols drawn from older, origin drums through elaborate initiation practices. Drum construction in Cuba eventually created fundamentally different drums, such as the conga or the *bongó*, from those found in Africa. Therefore, the very concept of the drum itself changed, in some cases drastically, for Africans in Cuba, problematizing the direct link from Africa to twentieth-century Cuban popular music.

Second, the demographic composition of primarily Central Africans in Cuba and Sahelian Africans in the U.S. accounts, not surprisingly, for vast differences in sociomusical practices.[45] While not implying a direct link, it should be noted that many Sahelian cultures forced into the slave trade to the U.S. employ the string instruments and

[44] Sublette, 85.
[45] Sublette, 170.

solo, melismatic singing that also characterized some musics of the pre- and post-slavery African-American population. Many of the Central African people that were taken to Cuba, on the other hand, brought musical cultures centered around drumming, dancing, and call-and-response singing, all characteristics of pre- and post-slavery Afro-Cuban music. The view also does not account for social factors such as difference between the cosmopolitan environments of turn of the century New Orleans (jazz) and Havana (*son*) or the isolated, rural environments of the Mississippi Delta (delta blues) or Guantanamo (*changüí*) in the creation and narrative of music of the African diaspora. Thus, it does not appear that the distinct musical differences between African-American and Afro-Cuban music can so easily be related to the simple issue of slaves and their drums.

The most insidious part of the claim that the pervasive percussion in Cuban music resulted from enslaved Africans maintaining the drum, however, lies in the racist construction of an absolute "African" identity. This stems from a discourse rooted in the belief that Africans inherently possess a certain predilection for rhythm, assuming, as a result, that the drum must be a central part of all African music. Utilizing this essentialist conceptualization to reveal Africans as either greater or lesser, though always clearly Other, musicians, and often, by extension, people, negates individual agency and the particularities of varied African, and diasporic, experiences.[46] Though the discussion of an essentialized African primitivism, at least in terms of music, fell from academic and popular circles long ago, many have continued to promote the stereotype by attempting to

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[46] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 99-101.

frame it in a positive light by prioritizing "African" over "Western": deep Africa as the birthplace of true rhythm, and so on.

Rebutting issues such as these, this chapter, and this study as a whole, attempts to interrogate modernist assumptions of authoritativeness by affirming heterogeneity, variability, and agency in the formation of identity and the negotiation of authenticity. The result of the slave trade, of course, is that individual experiences were not recorded, and the best information currently available only allows the researcher to understand broad ethnic categories and practices. However, this lack of information should not be allowed to enable a clearly flawed narrative. Thus, the discussion of these sociomusical worlds attempts to highlight multiple potential experiences available to individuals, such as the continuum from ethnic Bakongo to Bantu in Cuba to Cuban Congo, in order to expose problematic assumptions and offer a flexible alternative from which further research could proceed.

By the eighteenth century, the Bantu sacred practice that developed, known as *Palo monte*, *Regla de Palo*, or simply *palo*, represented a coalescence of sacred animist traditions drawn from, and based on, the forested regions of central Africa.[47] As a preservation of tradition, a syncretism among ethnic groups, and a belief system open to initiates, *Palo monte* and its accompanying sacred music represented an important hybridized form of cultural resistance and resonance practiced largely in secret.[48] In Cuba, as the Congo *cabildos* grew in size and influence, the drum ensembles that

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[47] Lydia Cabrera, *Reglas de Congo: Mayombe Palo monte* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1986), 10.

[48] Vélez, 15-16.

accompanied the practice of *Palo monte* developed into a cycle with rhythms such as *yuka*, *palo*, and *makuta*, often adaptations of traditional Bantu rhythms.

Bearing some similarities to the ring shout in the U.S., the music of the *Palo monte* cycle involves a group of singers and percussionists situated in a circle, with dancers alternating in the center with all participants able to engage in conversations and duels. The featured percussion instrument was the Cuban version of an open-bottomed Bantu drum which eventually became the quintessential Cuban musical icon: the *tumbadora*, known as conga in English. A full *Palo monte* drum ensemble traditionally used three *tumbadora*s, referred to as *cachimbo* (high-pitched), *mula* (middle-pitched), and *caja* (low-pitched), as well as a *guataca* (hoe blade), struck with a stick, and a *cata* (box drum), struck with either sticks or spoons.[49] Within this group, the guataca and cata outlined the basic rhythmic key to each rhythm, certain rhythms from the cycle are clear early examples of the concept of *clave*, which will be discussed later. The cachimbo and mula provided structural rhythmic support, and the caja, the lowest pitched instrument in the ensemble, improvised a communication between drummers, dancers, and singers. Figure 1 provides a transcription based on that of renowned percussionist and instructor Chuck Silverman, adapted by the author to reflect a live recording of a traditional performance of the *palo* rhythm.[50]

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[49] Curtis Lanoue, "Afro-Cuban Folkloric Rhythms," June 23, 1997, http://www.salsaholic.de/curtis1.htm

[50] Chuck Silverman, "Applications of Folkloric Rhythms to the Drum Set," http://www.chucksilverman.com/lessons/drumset-folkoric.html; Various Artists, "Cantos de *Palo*," *Afro-Cuba: A Musical Anthology* (Rounder CD 1088, 1994).

Guataca (Hoe Blade)
Catá (Box Drum)
Cachimbo (High Drum)
Mula (Middle Drum)

Figure 1: *Palo*

Although scholars have not been able to establish a link, the similarity between rhythms such as *palo* and the widespread Cuban genre known as rumba (discussed below) is striking, and the well-known historical prominence of *palero*s among *rumbero*s is well-documented.[51] Descended from experienced shipbuilders, the Congo people were numerous among the dockworkers of the nineteenth century ports, and it was on the docks of Matanzas where the rumba developed.[52] Thus, by the close of the eighteenth century, when non-Bantu slave populations started to appear, Bantu ethnic groups, recognized as Cuban and referred to as Congo from this point onward, had already introduced instruments and musics that would become central to Cuban culture.

Between 1778 and 1793, the Cuban sugar trade exploded, quadrupling its production and leading to the development of sugar as the island's leading industry in the

[51] Sublette, 181, 188.
[52] Sublette, 266-267.

nineteenth century.[53] Accompanying this expansion, Spanish officials in need of a massive labor force declared the free importation of slaves, and slave traders raced to Cuba with vast numbers of enslaved Africans. Some estimates state that the slaves brought to Cuba after 1790 account for 75-90 percent of the Africans forcibly brought to Cuba throughout the slave trade.[54] Significantly, the Spanish colonists decided to continue importing primarily male slaves, rather than adopt the U.S. model of "breeding" domestic slaves by importing both men and women, thus bringing great numbers of enslaved first-generation Africans to Cuba throughout the colonial period.[55] As the nineteenth century progressed and slave traffic dwindled, however, the numbers of African women and children taken to Cuba greatly increased, perpetuating a first generation link to Africa well into the twentieth century, and it was not uncommon among early- and mid-twentieth century researchers to note Cubans who could speak their ancestral languages.[56] As a result, Cuba became the location for a discursive cultural remembrance through an ongoing east/west diasporic encounter performed in the *cabildos* and the *barracones*.

As slave traffic intensified, ships began landing further north along the African coast. Taken from the Cross River estuary at the various mouths of the Niger River, at the border of modern-day Nigeria and Cameroon, the people of the Calabar region consisted

[53] Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 15-16; Olavo Alén Rodríguez, "The Afro-French Settlement and the Legacy of Its Music to the Cuban People," in *Music and Black Ethnicity: The Caribbean and South America*, ed. Gerard H. Béhague (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami North-South Center, 1994), 112.

[54] Laird W. Bergad, Fe Iglesias García, and María del Carmen Barcia, *The Cuban Slave Market, 1790-1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 38.

[55] Thomas, 126.

[56] Bergad, 27.

of a large number of ethnic groups that lived in and around the marshland.[57] These groups were not affiliated politically, organized instead at the village level, commonly headed by ritual-based secret societies.[58] In Cuba, the Calabar people were termed *carabalí*, and the most significant institution of the *carabalí* aid societies to impact Cuban culture was a secret, ritual-based male brotherhood known as *Abakuá*, first established in Cuba in 1836.[59]

Secret *Abakuá* societies, whose members were referred to as *ñáñigos*, flourished as a fully-formed underground culture, with a full range of mythologies, music and musical instruments, dance, costumes, and linguistic references.[60] Rumors circulated widely regarding the violence and mysterious practices, such as sacrificial rites, of the *ñáñigos*. Also known for their unsurpassed skill in drumming and dancing, both integral parts of *Abakuá* traditions, *ñáñigo* ritual practices were actively suppressed by authorities.[61] The *Abakuá* societies controlled much of the work on the docks of western Cuban ports, where many Congos also worked. The *ñáñigos* likely participated in the dueling atmosphere of the Congo's drumming traditions, adding distinctive percussion elements, such as glissandi derived from the *Abakuá* use of friction drums, and the pantomime of violence and sexuality which would later became central elements of rumba. In particular, *Abakuá* initiates developed a reputation for the knife dance of the

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[57] Curtin, 188.
[58] Sublette, 191.
[59] Lydia Cabrera, *La Sociedad Secreta Abakuá* (Miami: Ediciones CR, 1970), 47.
[60] Sublette, 195.
[61] Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 169-170.

rumba columbia, in which a dancer rapidly passed sharp knives over their mouth, face, and body in the performance of masculinity.[62]

In the 1820s the Cuban sugar trade began to reach peak production, and with British ships blocking West African traffic a heretofore minor ethnic group in the transatlantic slave trade became the dominant group.[63] The Yoruba people, of modern-day Bénin and southwestern Nigeria, arrived in Cuba with a rich oral history, origin myth, polytheistic religion, and sacred musical tradition. Members of the large Oyó empire, they were an urban civilization with a sophisticated political system and a strong military. Following the death of the Oyó leader in 1789, the Yoruba people were pushed to the sea and ultimately into slavery by the combined effects of civil war and an Islamic jihad from the north.[64]

Arriving almost exclusively on the western end of the island, with men, women, and children in great numbers, the Yoruban slaves were able to successfully preserve much of their cultural heritage. Termed *Lucumí* and forced to live on the sugar estates in large prison-style compounds known as *barracones*, many Yorubans never separated and carried on cultural practices under the colonial watch. In particular, they were able to disguise their own gods, *orishas*, as Catholic saints, developing a complex and highly syncretized Cuban religion known as *santería* that Spanish officials openly encouraged due to its presumed Catholic nature.[65]

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[62] Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 185.
[63] Curtin, 244.
[64] Sublette, 212.
[65] Katherine J. Hagedorn, *Divine Utterances: The Performance of Afro-Cuban Santería* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 10-14.

Although the *Lucumí* are widely recognized as highly skilled drummers that introduced the double-headed Yoruban *batá* drums to Cuba, the religious nature of their music places it outside the standard Cuban popular genres, often relegating its study to strictly folkloric research.[66] As such, the *Lucumí* cultural influence is traditionally confined to the widespread practice of *santería*, but this view can be misleading. In keeping with the traditions of *santería*, the *batá* themselves were considered sacred embodiments of spiritual figures and the production of a *batá* drum involved an elaborate ceremony in which the drums were consecrated, receiving their significance through older drums in an attempt to maintain a link to an original divinity.[67] As a result, the *batá* drums were revered and not used for casual gatherings or popular music, although this has not been the case in Cuba since the middle of the twentieth-century as many crossover genres such as batarumba have developed. Therefore, the *batá* repertory would almost certainly have influenced many of the numerous Afro-Cuban musicians who came into contact with it, even though the *batá* were not used in early Cuban popular music.

The *batá* repertoire developed as a unified sacred music and dance form. A traditional *batá* ensemble will include three double-headed drums and involve the layering of two interlocking drums, the high-pitched *okónkolo* and the medium-pitched *itótele*, with a lead drum, the low-pitched *iyá*, which communicates between the

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[66] John Amira and Steven Cornelius, *The Music of Santería: Traditional Rhythms of the Batá Drums* (Crown Point, IN: White Cliffs Media Company, 1992); Hagedorn, *Divine Utterances*; María Teresa Vélez, *Drumming for the Gods: The Life and Times of Felipe García Villamil, Santero, Palero, and Abakuá* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

[67] Hagedorn, 33.

dancers/participants and the *orishas*.[68] Due to the size and variety of *batá* accompaniments, as well as the frequent use of improvisation and variation among all three drums, a brief transcription can not accurately illustrate the breadth of each drum's role and is therefore not included here. The traditional roles of the drums are as follows: the small *okónkolo* generally carries the basic time structure, upon which the medium *itótele* builds a conversant hocket-esque rhythmic framework, with the large *iyá* incorporating improvisation with a large number of specific rhythms that convey specific meanings or signals. However, due to the nature of the sacred practice, any one of these drums may improvise within a prescribed part or at times take the lead among the ensemble, depending on the context of the performance, the point within the performance, and the states of the participants.[69]

The complex *batá* accompaniment of *santería* ceremonies, by musicians who studied the repertoire for years, meant not only that the great numbers of musicians who were practicing *santeros* were, and continue to be, exposed to *Lucumí* music and dance but also that the sacred *batá* repertoire itself was venerated as a major Cuban genre. The devotional cycle known as the *orú*, which developed as a syncretization of Yoruba mythology and the Catholic liturgy, involves an intricate knowledge of the *batá* repertoire as the drummers attempt to communicate with the pantheon of deities through the performance of music associated with each god.[70] Bearing this in mind, it is not

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[68] Amira and Cornelius, 36.

[69] Kenneth George Schweitzer, "Afro-Cuban *Batá* Drum Aesthetics: Developing Individual and Group Technique, Sound, and Identity" (D.M.A. Thesis, University of Maryland, 2003), 44-54.

[70] Schweitzer, 58.

surprising that as the practice of *santería* spread from Cuba to other Caribbean nations, and to New York, it would become a signifier of cultural authenticity among salsa musicians referring to cultural "roots."[71]

As a self-contained Cuban sacred practice, *santería* derived from a single ethnic family that arrived in large numbers late in the slave trade. It bears a remarkable resemblance to traditions still practiced among Yorubans in present-day Nigeria.[72] In its preservation of tradition, *santería* undermined white dominance through its invocation of a cultural pre-history, while its survival as a syncretic reconstitution in Cuba subverted authority through the appropriation of its very symbol, Catholicism. This cultural resistance would bear much of the same significance for Puerto Ricans in New York who actively practiced and referred to *santería*.

In 1886, slavery was abolished in Cuba, the final region of the Americas to do so.[73] Consistent with the standard version of Cuban music history, this act unleashed a great profusion of music as the rich musical and cultural heritage that had been preserved, intermixed, and/or created in the *cabildos* and *barracones* suddenly had open access to the movement of the emancipated slaves. As had happened in the U.S., freed Cuban slaves overwhelmingly moved to the prosperous cities, particularly the neighboring western ports of Matanzas, the famed center of Afro-Cuban culture, and Havana, the nation's cosmopolitan capital. During this period, the late nineteenth and early twentieth

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[71] Rondón, 164.

[72] Victoria Eli Rodríguez, "Cuban Music and Ethnicity: Historical Considerations," in *Music and Black Ethnicity: The Caribbean and South America*, ed. Gerard H. Béhague (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami North-South Center, 1994), 98.

[73] Thomas, 790.

centuries, genres such as rumba and *danzón* emigrated from Matanzas to Havana,[74] *son* spread from the eastern Oriente Province throughout the island and become akin to a national genre,[75] and the sacred *batá* drumming of *santería* developed into a widespread cultural practice.[76]

Racism remained rampant, however, and in an attempt to prevent revolutionary activity by the emancipated slaves, the white ruling class either closed or reorganized the *cabildos*, outlawing official gatherings for Afro-Cuban performances and sacred practices.[77] It is at this point, then, that the hybridized notion of the Afro-Cuban begins to come to prominence. For many, lived experiences changed, willfully or not, from an African affiliation to a Cuban affiliation, from that of the *Lucumí* on a western sugar plantation living among other *Lucumí* to the Afro-Cuban living in an urban center amongst black and white, for instance. This Afro-Cuban reality became the nexus for twentieth-century Cuban popular music, and a source of authenticity for succeeding generations, as this new degree of cross-cultural interaction fostered uniquely Cuban modes of musical production.[78] Due to restrictions and frequent police crackdowns, though, Afro-Cuban practices and societies were often secretly maintained in private homes during this period.[79] Not until the 1920s did the repression lighten to some degree, at a time when a fascination with a Europeanized construction of Afro-Cuban culture and

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[74] Sublette, 257-258.
[75] Lapidus, 170-173.
[76] Vélez, 10.
[77] Vélez, 8.
[78] This analysis is based on those set forth in Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic.*
[79] Vélez, 8.

identity, what Robin Moore terms a "vogue of *afrocubanismo*," swept through the island.[80]

Bearing the most resemblance to any African sociomusical practice of the Cuban popular genres, the rumba of interest in this discussion refers to the music and dance forms known as *columbia*, *yambú*, and *guaguancó*, which feature vocals, percussion, and dance.[81] Rumba developed toward the end of the nineteenth century in Matanzas, a shipping town in western Cuba that was a cultural center of Afro-Cuban activity roughly thirty miles from Havana. As mentioned earlier, it was principally among the dockworkers and working class of Matanzas that rumba developed, adopting a similar form to the *palo* of the Congos with particularly strong influence from the percussion rituals and traditions of the *ñáñigos* who consolidated power and grew to control the work and life of Afro-Cubans on the docks.[82] Though its most obvious roots lie amongst the Congos and *Carabalí*, many *rumberos* also practiced, and continue to practice the *santería* of the *Lucumí*, with frequent references to the *orishas* in rumba lyrics. Already a Cuban ethnic hybridization of Congo/*Carabalí*/*Lucumí*, or a cultural hybridization of *palero*/*ñáñigo*/*santero*, rumba also incorporated uniquely Cuban instruments and musical concepts to become arguably the most readily identified genre of Afro-Cuban music.[83]

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[80] Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 114.

[81] That is, this discussion does not refer to the commercial music of the "Rumba/Rhumba Craze" that swept through the U.S. during the 1930s. This music was almost entirely based on son, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

[82] Vernon W. Boggs, *Salsiology: Afro-Cuban Music and the Evolution of Salsa in New York City* (New York: Excelsior Music Publishing Co., 1992), 31-34.

[83] Sublette, 264-266.

The instrumentation of the modern rumba was also created on the docks of Matanzas. The *claves*, which were used to outline the basic rhythmic structure known as *clave*, were made from the shipbuilders' *clavijas*, hard wooden pegs used to hold the ships together without nails.[84] The *claves* meshed with the interlocking *guagua*, an instrument similar to a woodblock, struck with a stick, and also referred to as a *catá*. The repeating rhythmic pattern layered on top of the *claves* and *guagua* was played by the *salidor* (low-pitched drum) and the *tres golpes* (middle-pitched drum). These drums, famous today as *tumbadoras* or congas, were originally created by the barrel makers on the docks, who assembled them from empty wine barrels with a hide stretched across the top. The final percussion part, the improvisation meant to carry a conversation between all of the participants, was played by the *quinto* (a high-pitched box drum), originally assembled from small crates and played with a pair of spoons.[85] Due to the circumstances of performance and the availability of materials, early rumba instrumentation was widely variable, ranging from hand clapping to box drum ensembles, for instance. However, the standard ensemble that developed featured the *claves*, *guagua*, and three *tumbadoras* of different size and pitch.

The *clave* (key), a rhythmic pattern played by the *claves*, is the fundamental concept to understand in order to properly study the majority of Afro-Cuban music created in post-slavery Cuba. Later, *clave* would become an integral part of salsa, and it has exerted a strong, mostly unacknowledged, influence on the popular music of the U.S.

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[84] Ibid., 94
[85] Boggs, 36-37.

since at least the 1910s.[86] It consists of a two-measure syncopated rhythmic framework to which all other musical elements – melody, percussion, and dance – relate, either by embellishing the *clave* or by filling in the spaces, hocketing, of the *clave*. Musicians and dancers are judged by their ability to work with, and against, the *clave* in a sophisticated, complex manner, while those that are unable to maintain a relationship with the *clave* or become reversed in the two-measure pattern are disparaged and said to be *cruzado* (crossed).[87] Most importantly, *clave* is implied rather than sounded in much Cuban music and salsa, understood by the musicians and dancers involved and interpreted through the underlying relationship of all rhythmic activity.

Below, Figure 2 shows the two most widely used *clave* patterns, the rumba *clave* and the *son clave*, each named after its respective genre. The alternating pattern of three accents versus two may be started on either side, resulting in either a "three-two" or "two-three" *clave*, and the two-measure nature of *clave* leads to the predominant use of phrases of an even-numbered length in Cuban popular music. However, as the *clave* remains constant once a performance begins, phrases of an odd number of measures are frequently employed in order to create tension and forward momentum by "turning around" the melodic/harmonic emphasis within the *clave*, creating a switch from a three-two feel to a two-three feel without interrupting or breaking the rhythmic cycle. This technique may be performed multiple times within a single performance.

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[86] See John Storm Roberts, *The Latin Tinge: The Impact of Latin American Music on the United States*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[87] Christopher Washburne, "Play it 'Con Filin!': The Swing and Expression of Salsa," *Latin American Music Review* 19, no. 2 (Autumn-Winter, 1998): 167, http://www.jstor.org/stable/779989 (accessed February 4, 2010).

Figure 2: *Clave* patterns

Figure 3 demonstrates several ways in which a typical repeating melodic figure, or *montuno*, could be used to imply the *clave* to experienced musicians and dancers without actually sounding it. First, the "two" side of the *son clave* traditionally starts with a downbeat on beat one, while the "three" side is often anticipated by an eighth note.[88] Also, the difference between the landing on beat two of the two side and the off-beat of beat two on the three side would likely be enough information for most experienced musicians to correctly interpret the *clave* underlying this *montuno*.[89] Figure 4 extends this *montuno* through an odd number of measures in order to demonstrate a turnaround from two-three to three-two *son clave*.

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[88] The opposite downbeat/anticipation scheme is often characteristic of rumba *clave*.

[89] Peter Manuel, "The Anticipated Bass in Cuban Popular Music," *Latin American Music Review* 6, no. 2 (Autumn-Winter, 1985): 250, 258, http://www.jstor.org/stable/780203 (accessed February 12, 2010).

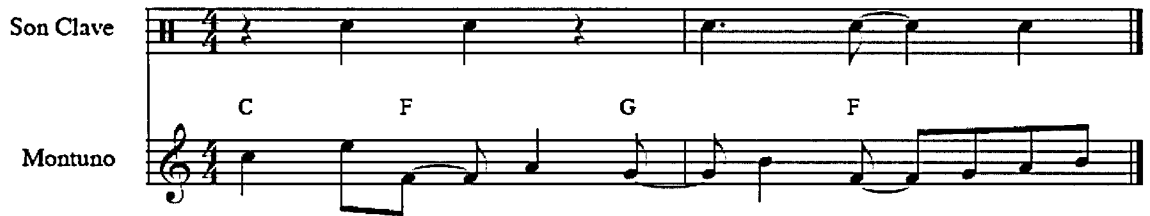

Figure 3: *Clave-montuno* interaction

Figure 4: Two-three to three-two turnaround

In addition to a musical practice, the term rumba can also refer to a party, as the two frequently appear together.[90] In a rumba party, percussionists, singers, and dancers compete to create, or maintain, a position of significance through a distinguished performance. As mentioned earlier, the most widely practiced rumba rhythms and dances that survived into the twentieth century are the *yambú*, *columbia*, and *guaguancó*. One of the most distinctive instrumental features of rumba in comparison to other hand-percussion-based genres is the use of a hocketed melody carried between the *salidor* and the *tres golpes*. This is accomplished through the use of ringing, accented open tones traditionally tuned roughly a perfect fifth apart, often played in direct conflict with the *clave*.

[90] Sublette, 261.

The earliest form of rumba, dating from approximately the 1870s, *yambú* is the slowest, and least aggressive, of the rumba dances. Originally played by an ensemble of *cajones* (box drums), it is a couple dance that seeks to imitate the soft and sensual movements of an older couple.[91] It bears many similarities to the much faster *rumba guaguancó*, except for the famous sung verse "el *yambú* no se vacuna" ("there is no *vacunao* in the *yambú*"), referring to the central element of the *guaguancó* dance.[92] Occasionally the couple will mime a story, such as the hawk and the hunter or the stern grandmother and the reluctant school boy, which the singer narrates.[93] The rhythmic structure of *yambú* is basically the same as the *guaguancó* shown in Figure 5, though it is played at a much slower tempo.

In the following decade, the *rumba guaguancó* grew out of the *yambú* when it began being played with the new barrel drum, the *tumbadora*, at a fast, aggressive tempo.[94] It is the most famous of the rumba dances, a product of the *vacunao*, and would become very influential on many of the most important Cuban popular musicians of the twentieth century, some of whom were famed *rumbero*s themselves. In *guaguancó*, a single couple participates in a stylized erotic pursuit in which the woman attempts to attract her partner yet avoid his *vacunao*, a sudden sexual approach with a hand, foot, or pelvic thrust.[95] The *vacunao* is executed without physical contact, and either a graceful sidestep by the woman or an effective advance from the man elicit laughter and applause

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[91] Boggs, 35.
[92] Sublette, 268.
[93] Boggs, 36-37.
[94] Boggs, 38.
[95] Sublette, 271.

from the spectators.[96] The distinctive melody, shown in Figure 5, famously played against the *clave* by the *tres golpes* and the *salidor*, has become so well known that it has been used by many musicians, especially in salsa, to invoke a reference to *guaguancó* without actually playing *guaguancó*.

Clave
Guagua
Tres Golpes (Middle Drum)
Salidor (Low Drum)
Melody

Figure 5: *Rumba yambú/guaguancó*

Rumba columbia features a very fast triple meter rhythm traditionally danced only by men, and was historically associated with the *Abakuá* society. In *columbia*, a single dancer carries out a series of virtuosic moves in which the competition among dancers and between dancers and drummers continually grows. As the dancers seek recognition over each other, they also individually dialogue with the improvising drum, the *quinto*, in

[96] For a feminist discussion of similar dances in the popular music of the Spanish Caribbean, see Frances Aparicio, *Listening to Salsa: Gender, Latin Popular Music, and Puerto Rican Cultures* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998).

a friendly attempt to throw the other out of time.[97] Figure 6 shows the traditional rhythmic structure of *rumba columbia*, which bears many similarities to the *palo* example (1.1) shown above, particularly between the guataca of *palo* and the *clave* of *rumba columbia*.

Figure 6: *Rumba columbia*

The vocal structure of rumba has three parts, which may not always be present or in the order described here. The first section is referred to as the *diana*, where the lead singer freely sings syllables such as "na" or "ay," with the other voices often repeating the melody. The *diana* often functions as a "warm up" to the rumba, with minimal percussion activity and no dancing. Following these vocal flourishes is the verse, which may be sung with one or two voices in harmony, depending on the ensemble. Each verse

[97] Boggs, 30-33.

may be interrupted by an interlude along the lines of the *diana*. Following the verse, the *coro* (chorus) sings a repeated pattern with the lead singer improvising responses of the same length. This section is called the *estribillo* and traditionally marks the beginning of the dancing. A *quinto* solo often occurs after the *estribillo*, and the piece may close with another *diana*, *estribillo*, or simply with percussion.[98]

Rumba texts can be short or long, and appear in a variety of structures, though by far the most popular is the ten-line *décima* from Spain which is common in much Cuban music.[99] Typically, the topics include songs of praise, boasts, nonsense, social commentary, and more. Linguistic references to Bantu, *Carabalí*, or *Lucumí* languages and culture are frequent, particularly the use of *Abakuá* references in *rumba columbia*. Those singers most highly praised have an extensive repertoire, sophisticated verbal and melodic improvisation, and an ability to continue to build energy and excitement among the singers, dancers, and drummers as a whole.[100]

Actively suppressed by the white elite well into the twentieth century, rumba represented a classic essentializing trope to both whites and blacks. The product of an oppressive class system, rumba incorporated influences from various African backgrounds but was not specific to any location or identity.[101] In an attempt to express musically what Gilroy terms the "unsayability"[102] of slave experience, early rumba comes

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[98] Sublette, 257-262.
[99] Morales, 47.
[100] Sublette, 199, 261-262, 335.
[101] Marta Moreno Vega, "Interlocking African Diaspora Cultures in the Work of Fernando Ortiz," *Journal of Black Studies* 31, no. 1 (September, 2000): 39-50, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2645931 (accessed November 8, 2009).
[102] Gilroy, 74.

to represent a shared acknowledgement of lost history through the communal embrace of music, gesture, and dance in the expression of a local and transnational identity. That rumba flourished in the face of direct, racist pressure speaks to its resonance as a discursive force contesting white authority.

Thus, by the beginning of the twentieth century, a truly Afro-Cuban music had developed and begun to thrive, albeit privately and away from the gaze of the ruling class. The product of numerous levels of Euro- and Afro-American interactions, Afro-Cuban culture was poised for significant growth and recognition throughout the island in the coming decades. What few people likely foresaw, though, was the absolute explosion throughout the Americas, Europe, and Africa that Cuban popular music would experience between the turn of the century and the revolution of 1959.

CHAPTER 2

1900-1959

Cosmopolitanism and the Cuban Popular Music Explosion

Although Cuba continued its official importation of slaves longer than any other nation in the Americas, it did allow slaves the opportunity of freedom. Beginning at some point near the founding of Cuba in the early sixteenth century, *coartación* was a legal device through which any slave possessed the legal right to enter into a contract with the slave owner in order to purchase their freedom. Significantly, any slave that entered into *coartación* was granted separate legal rights, such as the right to receive a portion of the income he or she generated, not available to slaves during the long self-purchasing process. By the time of the sugar industry boom and subsequent massive slave importation of the late eighteenth century, Cuba had a significant population of black and multiracial freed slaves and freeborn citizens.

Without access to the privileges of the white ruling class, free non-white Cubans often practiced the trades disdained by the colonists, such as tailoring, shoemaking, and blacksmithing. One of the most significant opportunities for non-white citizens was to become a musician, and many people combined daytime work in the trades with nighttime work as a musician. Over time, a non-white middle class developed and thrived, relative to other slaving territories, in colonial Cuba.[103]

In addition, the Spanish army instituted a draft in 1764 that created separate battalions of *pardos* (multiracial) and *morenos* (black). Although this was not a

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[103] Ned Sublette, *Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2004), 89-90.

voluntary service, it did offer non-whites an opportunity to advance their social standing. Moreover, the battalions offered the chance to learn the wind instruments so significant in military drills. Clarinets were featured with the infantry's fife and drums, while the *timbales*, a Cuban kettle drum roughly the size of a snare drum and played with sticks, were associated with the bugles of the cavalry. The instrumentation and travels of these military bands increased in the nineteenth century, creating an entire class of well-trained musicians that had traveled throughout the island, sometimes beyond.[104]

Thus, alongside the development of an Afro-Cuban experience and consciousness in response to the lived reality of slavery and its legacy, a cosmopolitan middle class of black and multiracial free Cuban citizens also emerged.[105] Therefore, by the time slavery was abolished in 1886, Cuba had a large population of first-generation Africans carrying on traditional practices (*santería*); the cultural remembrances and creations of the Afro-Cubans in the *cabildos*, (*palo*, rumba); an established tradition of non-white military bands now playing concerts throughout the island; a substantial non-white urban population that dominated the professional music scene; and a genre/rhythm that had gained fame throughout the hemisphere (*habanera*).[106]

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[104] Sublette, 90-91.

[105] On cosmopolitanism and the development of national identity, see Thomas Turino, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Turino, "Nationalism and Latin American Music: Selected Case Studies and Theoretical Considerations," *Latin American Music Review* 24, no. 2 (Autumn-Winter, 2003): 169-209, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3598738 (accessed December 7, 2009).

[106] Robin Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 35, 41; Sublette, 155.

The urban cosmopolitans possessed a degree of legal rights, freedom of movement, and specialized vocations officially accepted by the ruling elite, however subordinate their lived status may have been. This social group would pave the road to acceptance for African and Afro-Cuban cultures in Cuba, and would ultimately fuel the ideology of a Cuba without/beyond race. When the wave of excitement in *afrocubanismo* (Afro-Cubanness) swept through the island in the 1920s, it was to the cosmopolitan class that interest was shown, and it was their music that would flourish and reach well beyond Cuba's shores.[107]

On January 1, 1879, at the *Liceo de Matanzas* (Social Club of Matanzas), the twenty-seven-year-old mulatto composer Miguel Faílde (1852-1921) premiered a *danzón* he had written two years earlier named "Las Alturas del Simpson" (Simpson Heights), dedicated to a *barrio* (neighborhood) of Matanzas that had formerly been the estate of an American named Simpson. The location of the performance, an upper class New Year's dance, was significant, representing the first time in which the new genre was openly accepted by the social elite.[108] Although this was not the first appearance of *danzón*, the exact birth of which is unclear, "Las Alturas del Simpson" remains a milestone in the growth of Cuba's first musical creation that would receive widespread acknowledgement and imitation.

Faílde's group was largely derived from the military band tradition and was referred to as an *orquesta típica* (typical orchestra), consisting of a cornet, valve trombone, an ophicleide (a bass bugle, now obsolete), two clarinets, two violins,

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[107] Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 114-117.
[108] Sublette, 247.

contrabass, *timbales*, and *guiro* (a hollow, notched gourd played by running a stick across the grooves). The *orquestas típica*s were also known as *charangas*, a word used in Spain to denote a military wind band. In addition to the long history that Faílde's instrumentation referenced, hence the name *típica*, the music of "Las Alturas del Simpson" itself alluded to a considerable European and Cuban lineage.[109]

Throughout the sugar boom, the *contradanza* was the most popular of all the dances among the Cuban elite. Influenced by the English contredance, which introduced simplified dances that were easier to learn than the complicated European court dances, the contradanza was often no more than a monophonic melody with light rhythmic accompaniment, generally performed by the free black and multiracial musicians. Its mid-nineteenth-century successor, the *danza*, further slowed and simplified the contradanza, though without significant musical alterations. Formally, these dances were repetitious, alternating ABAB. Instead, rhythm was the primary factor of interest. The rhythm that developed to accompany these dances was called *tango* by Cubans (before the word was attached to an entire genre in Argentina), though it was renamed *habanera*, in reference to the capital, *la Habana*, when it was eventually popularized abroad.[110] Figure 7 shows the *habanera*/tango rhythm.

Figure 7: *Habanera*/tango

[109] Sublette, 247-249.
[110] Sublette, 134.

An important variation of this rhythm simply tied the middle two notes together, creating a three note pattern referred to as a *tresillo*. This rhythm was prominent among the *contradanzas* of nineteenth-century Havana, and today is an instantly recognizable rhythm across numerous American cultures.[111] Figure 8 shows the *tresillo*.

Figure 8: *Tresillo*

In Oriente, the easternmost province in Cuba, many Afro-Haitians had arrived during the early sugar boom, fleeing after the Haitian slave revolt of 1791 that sparked the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804.[112] The single most influential musical custom that Afro-Haitian *cabildos* contributed to Cuban music was a rhythm associated with the genre *tumba francesa*. This rhythm, known as the *cinquillo*, shown in Figure 9, could be heard as a further division of the *tresillo*. It would become an important rhythmic pattern in Caribbean music, familiar in Cuban *danzón*, Dominican *meringue*, Puerto Rican *bomba*, and many other genres.[113]

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[111] Sublette, 134.

[112] Although Haitians of Dahomeyan (modern-day Ghana/Togo) descent did have a significant impact on the culture of eastern Cuba, the history of ethnicity in Haiti, and of Afro-Haitians in Cuba, will not be discussed here.

[113] Benjamin Lapidus, *Origins of Cuban Music and Dance: Changüí* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2008), 126-130; Sublette, 134-135.

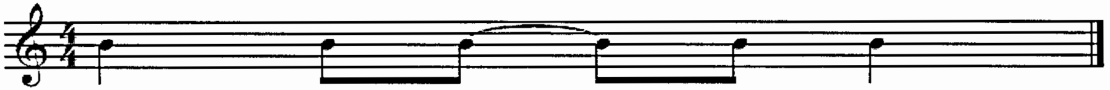

Figure 9: *Cinquillo*

Accounts vary in determining how the Haitian influence managed to migrate to the cultural capitals of western Cuba without significant Haitian population numbers. However, many agree that through the proliferation of traveling military bands, of black and multiracial musicians with access both to the culture of the *cabildos* and to the music of the aristocracy, a Haitian influence could have been propagated across the island and into the salons of the elite. Regardless of how it arrived, though, the non-white professional musicians of Matanzas and Havana in the later nineteenth-century had incorporated the syncopated *cinquillo* rhythmic pattern into the instrumentation of the military bands and the environment of the aristocratic danza to create the undisputed national dance until the rise of *son* in the 1920s, a genre that has endured many alterations but still remains popular today. They called this new genre big danza, or *danzón*.

Taking a rondo form, ABACADA, etc., rather than the binary form of the contradanza and the danza, *danzón* offered musicians and dancers continuous variety. Highlighting different instruments during each variation, musicians were able to display a new level of individual musical skill between the statements of the recurring theme. Bearing many similarities to the development of jazz happening at the same time in New Orleans, such as the instrumentation of military winds with percussion, a rondo-like form, an emphasis on dance, and a cosmopolitan, multiracial musician class, some have

speculated that Cuban *danzoneros* made up a part of the famous "Latin tinge" present in early jazz.[114] In Cuba, unlike New Orleans, though, the solo breaks in *danzón* did not lead to greater improvisational experimentation, as they fulfilled an entirely different cultural purpose. Danced by couples, as opposed to the separated line dances of its predecessors, the *danzón* interludes allowed dancers the chance to have a brief rest, which was noted as a welcome break for the heavily dressed aristocrats dancing in the warm Cuban climate.[115]

As this upper class interest in *danzón* continued, the instrumentation began to change from the military timbres associated with the lower classes toward instruments considered to be more proper. Most importantly, this led to the increasing appearance of the piano by the 1910s in ensembles that were termed *charangas francesas*, apparently classifying the *charanga*-with-piano ensemble as "French" to imply greater sophistication than the traditional wind band *charanga*.[116] Although the traditional *charanga* continued to have success, particularly due to its portability, the piano-led ensemble gradually won the audience's favor, featuring the flutes (the five-key, wooden, Cuban transverse flute), violins (occasionally with cello), piano, contrabass, *timbales*, and guiro for which *danzón* orchestras would be known throughout the twentieth century. These groups cultivated an increasingly elegant style, developing a system for "danzonizing" popular and classical themes, much like the "ragging" of tunes in the U.S.,

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[114] Alejandro Madrid, personal communication, November 7, 2008; Ethnomusicologist and University of Illinois-Chicago associate professor of Latin American and Latino Studies Alejandro Madrid has received a Fullbright grant to undertake research on the relation of early *danzón* and jazz.

[115] Sublette, 250.

[116] Sublette, 307.

and capitalizing on the intense upper class interest in Italian opera with *danzón* versions of themes from *La Bohéme* or *Rigoletto*, for instance.[117]

During this turn-of-the-century period, in which rumba and *danzón* developed in the urban port cities of western Cuba from sociocultural and socioeconomic phenomena, respectively, a separate geosocial musical creation was taking place throughout the remote eastern end of the island. The large Oriente Province, which was divided into five separate provinces in 1976, was a mountainous region that had not taken part in the sugar boom and remained relatively sparsely populated, a haven for freed slaves seeking a new life. In addition, Oriente was geographically closer to Haiti than to Havana, and it experienced two great waves of Haitian immigration – mostly Afro-Haitians but also some French colonists – the first a result of the aforementioned 1791 revolution in Haiti, the second at the beginning of the twentieth century when a simultaneous growth in the Haitian population and the Cuban economy brought many Afro-Haitian laborers.[118] Thus, Oriente did not take part in the constant influx of first-generation Africans to nearly the same degree as did western Cuba, and its historically greater numbers of free, non-white citizens led to a majority of the population sharing a multiracial heritage. The music that grew to be popular in Oriente reflected this history of heterogeneous ethnicity, cultural contact, and relative tolerance, and was originally defined more by location than race, class, or economic situations.[119] This was typified by the genre known as *son*, the internationally famed, celebrated, and appropriated forerunner of salsa.

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[117] Sublette, 309.
[118] Lapidus, 125-126, 131.
[119] Lapidus, 96.

The precise origins of *son* are unclear. The standard linear narrative claims that Oriente was home to various genres such as *nengón*, *kiribá*, and *changüí* that eventually merged to create *son*, which was spread to Havana in 1909 by the military bands. Ethnomusicologist Benjamin Lapidus, in addition to local scholars in Guantánamo, has shown that this narrative is problematic: *nengón*, *kiribá*, and *changüí* have many fundamental differences, and the *tumba francesa* of the Afro-Haitians as well as the *punto guajiro* music of the rural Spanish farmers likely had much more influence than previously thought.[120] The mention of these genres and of the varied understanding of *son* in the present study simply serves to highlight the great diversity of influence which helped to form *son* and the local adaptability of the *son* format. By the 1910s, *son* had spread throughout the island and in the 1920s it surpassed the *danzón* as the most popular genre in Cuba. It has been regularly referred to by Cubans and foreigners as the creole genre par excellence.

The localized version of *son* in Havana would quickly become the canonic representative. Due to its position as the economic and political capital, Havana was the central location for radio, which debuted in Cuba in 1922, and foreign tourism. Through radio broadcasts, the rest of the island was exposed to the *clave*-based *son* from Havana, rather than the more syncopated *son* from Oriente or the more vocal-centered *son* from far western Cuba, helping to jump start the cosmopolitan rage of the 1920s, *afrocubanismo*.[121] On the other hand, foreign tourism in Havana created the economic

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[120] Lapidus, x, xv-xix; Lapidus cites much work by Guantanameros Rafael Inciarte Brioso and Dr. Luis Morlote Ruiz.

[121] Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 120.

conditions for local music and musicians to develop and thrive while the music's greater exposure enticed foreign recording companies to record and distribute the Havanese *son* beyond Cuba's shores. Thus, by the mid-decade successes of the Sexteto Habanero, other versions of *son* had been effectively marginalized, and the *son* from Havana would forever be known simply as *son.*[122]

The success of *son* is based very clearly on its effortless adaptability. In the words of Ned Sublette, "the rustic oriental *son* was a highly portable format, requiring little more than a surface to slap (a *taburete*, a chair with a goatskin seat, turned upside down would do fine), a bottle to tap, at best a guitar and a *tres*, and the voices of the participants."[123] Even more deconstructed, the early *son* ensemble featured singing accompanied by plucked strings and percussion. It was likely very syncopated but without the concept of *clave*, much like *changüí*, featuring lyrics about local topics set to a four-line rhyme scheme, much like *punto guajiro*.[124] A reflection of its heritage in Oriente, *son* incorporated basic instruments of both Spanish and African heritage as well as several unique creations.

Prominent among the new instruments were the *tres* and *bongó*, each with an extremely influential role. Developed in nineteenth-century Oriente from the Spanish *bandurria*, a double-strung instrument similar to the modern mandolin, with which *punto guajiro* singers accompanied themselves, the *tres* is a small, high-pitched relative of the guitar that has three pairs of double strings. It is equally a melodic and percussive

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[122] Sublette, 333.
[123] Sublette, 335.
[124] Lapidus, 179.

instrument, as the strings are widely spaced to allow the *tresero* to strike heavily each note with the pick. The role of the *tres* in *son* was to provide the *guajeo*, an endlessly repeating melodic/rhythmic figure that effectively accompanied the vocalists by outlining the harmonic, rhythmic, and formal designs of a song.[125] Decades later, salsa musicians would transfer the role of the *tres* to the piano, renaming the *guajeo* the *montuno* (mentioned in Chapter 1).

Small and portable, the *bongó* is nevertheless known for its loud, penetrating sound – the perfect rhythm section for the mobile *son*. A unique Afro-Cuban creation, the *bongó* consisted of two connected, open-bottomed drums that were gendered, the larger drum known as the *hembra* (female) and the smaller drum the *macho* (male). Early important *bongoseros* were often knowledgeable percussionists associated with other Afro-Cuban traditions, influenced by the Haitian *tumba francesa*, rumba, *batá*, and/or *Abakuá*. With a two-drum setup, the *bongosero* was often able to assimilate and utilize rhythms associated with these Afro-Cuban traditions. Early *son* recordings, from the late 1910s/early 1920s, frequently feature a friction glissando produced by sliding a spit-moistened finger across the drum head, a direct reference to *Abakuá* friction drums at a time when *Abakuá* ceremonies were outlawed. The highly influential bongosero Agustín Gutiérrez, of the Sexteto Habanero and the Septeto Nacional, was an *Abakuá* member and can be heard repeatedly performing the glissando.[126] The role of the early *bongó* was improvisatory and meant essentially to direct the *son* ensemble: setting

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[125] Sublette, 336-338.

[126] Ivor Miller, "A Secret Society Goes Public: The Relationship between *Abakuá* and Cuban Popular Culture," *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (April, 2000), 172. http://www.jstor.org/stable/524726 (accessed March 12, 2010).

tempos, signaling breaks, maintaining/creating excitement, and tying the musical product together.[127] The *bongó* remains an essential instrument in salsa today, and the incorporation of Afro-Cuban rhythmic concepts into Cuban popular music by early bongoseros continues to stand as one of the most unsung impacts on the history of twentieth-century popular music.

One element that was almost undoubtedly added to *son* after its introduction in Havana, or at least through interaction with western Cubans, is its *clave*. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the concept of a unifying two-measure rhythmic cell was originally developed in rumba.[128] Ever adaptable, *son* quickly evolved a less syncopated *clave* that proved to be far more danceable to the broader public than its Afro-Cuban sibling. Figure 10 demonstrates the three-two rumba and *son claves*.

Figure 10: Three-two Rumba and *Son Claves*

The bass instrument used in early *son* groups varied, but the standard instrument used by the 1920s was the contrabass, an instrument that was already an integral part of the *danzón* ensembles. With the flexibility of the contrabass, *son* ensembles

[127] Sublette, 338-339.
[128] Rebecca Mauleón, *Salsa Guidebook for Piano and Ensemble* (Petaluma, CA: Sher Music Co., 1993), 13.

experimented with new bass figures, developing over time from a downbeat-centered rhythm to an entirely upbeat-based pattern. Figure 11 demonstrates the change from the original bass pattern to the *habanera*, the *tresillo*, and finally the standard modern *son*/salsa bass line which developed years later.[129]

Figure 11: Bass patterns in *son*

Completing the early *son* ensemble were the maracas and the guitar. Each of these instruments traditionally maintained a background role within the ensemble. The primary pattern of each was an unbroken series of eighth notes, within which a musician could place accents or rests here and there, but essentially maintaining a steady pulse for the other musicians. Traditionally, the *sonero* (lead singer) played the *claves* while the *segundo* (second, or harmony, singer) played the maracas. The instrumentalists typically

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[129] Peter Manuel, "The Anticipated Bass in Cuban Popular Music." *Latin American Music Review* 6, no. 2 (Autumn-Winter, 1985): 249-261, http://www.jstor.org/stable/780203 (accessed February 12, 2010).

sang as part of the *coro* (chorus). Figure 12 shows a sample of the rhythmic interaction taking place among the early *son* sextet.

Figure 12: *Son* ensemble without improvised *bongó* and vocals

Formally, *son* had two basic sections, the verses and the *montuno*. The verses followed a well-defined rhyme scheme and the accompaniment was relatively reserved in order to highlight the lyrics and to provide contrast to the second section. When the music reached the transition point, very often an ensemble would employ an odd phrase length in order to turn the *clave* around, creating an instant lift in excitement at the outset of the *montuno*. At this point, the *coro* enters, singing the *estribillo*, a tuneful phrase that is repeated many times as part of a call-and-response duet with the *sonero*.[130] The rhythmic tension increases, the volume of the *coro* grows with every repetition, and the final judgment of the *sonero* rests on his or her ability to improvise both lyrics and

[130] Vernon W. Boggs, *Salsiology: Afro-Cuban Music and the Evolution of Salsa in New York City* (New York: Excelsior Music Publishing Co., 1992), 24.

melodies while steadily building the piece to its dynamic apex. This form is strikingly similar to the setting in rumba.[131]

Son was originally considered to be a music of the lower classes, even briefly outlawed as rumba was at the time. The use of hand percussion, as opposed to the use of sticks, and the overtly sexual dance, in which hip-shaking couples danced closely, were considered an immodest creation of the Afro-Cubans as opposed to the stately *danzón*. However, tastes changed quickly and in 1916 Cuban president Mario Menocal invited the *son*-like group Los Apaches to play a party at the Vedado Tennis Club. Later that year, members of Los Apaches would form the Cuarteto Oriental (a reference to the origins of *son* in Oriente), recording the first *sones* two years later for the U.S.-based Victor label. In 1920, the group added two new members, and renamed themselves the Sexteto Habanero, the first widely popular *son* ensemble and the first to be brought, in 1925, to New York to record, laying the foundation for the *son*-based "rumba craze" of the U.S. in the 1930s.[132]

Riding the wave of *afrocubanismo* that sprung forth in the 1920s,[133] the Sexteto Habanero received great attention throughout the island, and this popularity led to the standardization of the Havana-style *son* ensemble and format mentioned above. The early recordings of the Sexteto Habanero clearly feature the storytelling aspect of the

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[131] John Storm Roberts, *Black Music of Two Worlds: African, Caribbean, Latin, and African-American Traditions*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schirmer Books, 1998), 236; Sublette, 344.

[132] Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 28; Sublette, 336, 363.

[133] The reader is reminded that afrocubanismo did not refer to Afro-Cuban practices, which were simply persecuted to a lesser extent than before, but cosmopolitan practices created by those of multiracial and/or Afro-Cuban heritage.

genre, with an emphasis on multiple verses preceding short, loosely constructed *montuno* sections. However, some of the Habanero recordings do feature a tightly constructed call-and-response *montuno* section with basic vocal improvisation, primarily exhorting the musicians and the dancers to grow more active.

Given the success of the Victor Records label with the Sexteto Habanero, rival label Columbia Records decided to bring its own *son* group to record in 1926. Although the Sexteto Occidente (Western Sextet) did not achieve the success of the Sexteto Habanero, its bassist, Ignacio Piñeiro (1888-1969), reformed the group the following year with his compositions and direction. Quickly, the Sexteto Nacional became an immediate counterpart to the Habanero, as well as a Cuban institution, and Piñeiro a musical icon for his innovations.[134]

Soon after forming his band, Piñeiro augmented the sextet with the addition of trumpeter Lázaro Herrera (1903-2000), creating the widely famous Septeto Nacional.[135] A seemingly simple idea, the addition of trumpet paved the way for nearly all *son* developments that would follow, as well as providing the basic format of the salsa groups of the 1970s. The early sextets were composed of wooden instruments with strings and skins and played by hand; thus, the trumpet filled a neglected sonic space: loud, high, and metallic. The role of the trumpet was to create melodic fills, brief interludes, and, most importantly, to solo in place of the *sonero* during the call-and-response *montuno* sections. To make room for the trumpet, the *bongó* switched to a steady stream of eighth notes that

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[134] Boggs, 23.

[135] Within months, the Sexteto Habanero hired young trumpeter Felix Chappotín (1907-1983), later one of the most famous trumpeters in Cuba, and adopted the name Septeto Habanero.

resulted in the *martillo* (hammer), a melodic pattern varied through accents rather than rhythm, shown in Figure 13. As a result, the band was capable of creating greater excitement and producing lengthy *montuno* sections that allowed the vocalists a chance to rest and heightened the dramatic impact of the eventual vocal improvisations that followed the trumpet solo.

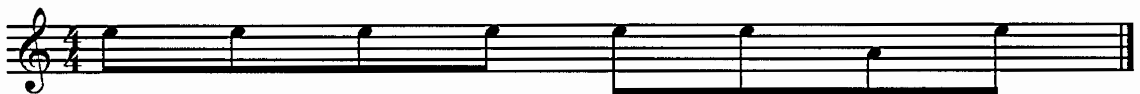

Figure 13: *Martillo* pattern – *macho* (high) and *hembra* (low) drums

Ignacio Piñeiro was a bricklayer from the Afro-Cuban barrio of *Jesús María* in Havana. An *Abakuá* member and a *rumbero*, his Septeto Nacional played faster tempos, increased the rhythmic complexity of the ensemble, and used more elaborate arrangements, particularly in highlighting its vocalists in soloistic roles more than the Habanero and previous groups had. A renowned improviser of *décimas*, the Spanish ten-line poetic scheme, Piñeiro was a prolific, innovative composer who borrowed freely from Afro-Cuban music, as well as Cuban popular music, demonstrating the syncretic nature of *son* in creating hybrids such as *guaguancó-son* or *canción-son*. His 1932 hit "Échale salsita" was quoted, without credit, by George Gershwin in his *Cuban Overture* after Gershwin's three-week stay in Havana and would be cited as the first use of the term salsa in reference to *son*. With the enthusiastically-received performance of the

Septeto Nacional at the 1933 World Fair in Chicago, Piñeiro had truly modernized *son* and prepared it for the international stage.[136]

The 1930s were a decade of economic collapse in the U.S. and, consequently, throughout the Caribbean. Cuba experienced enormous political turmoil throughout the decade, with coups, violence, and uprisings frequent. As a result, much of the infrastructure supporting music in Cuba collapsed and U.S. recording companies stopped traveling to record Cuban music. At the same time, though, the widespread use of radio brought an incredible wealth of music to Cuba, such as jazz, blues, samba, and tango.[137] In return, Cuba exported *son* to the entire Caribbean population, from New York to Caracas, Venezuela to Ponce, Puerto Rico to Cali, Colombia, locations where Cuban popular music would be assimilated and recreated by successive generations.[138] Cuba also exported many musicians, particularly to Mexico and New York, often fusing their own music with the musical culture of the new landscape. Most famous of all, and credited by many as the person who invented salsa, was Mario Bauzá (1911-1993) with his Afro-Cuban jazz.

Born in 1911 in Havana, Bauzá was a clarinet prodigy, performing in the Havana Philharmonic Orchestra by age sixteen, and picking up work playing trumpet in the style

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[136] Sublette, 348-350.

[137] Lise Waxer, "Of Mambo Kings and Songs of Love: Dance Music in Havana and New York from the 1930s to the 1950s," *Latin American Music Review* 15, no. 2 (Autumn-Winter 1994), 142. http://www.jstor.org/stable/780230 (accessed February 5, 2010).

[138] Lise Waxer, *The City of Musical Memory: Salsa, Record Grooves, and Popular Music in Calí, Colombia* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 14-18.

of Lázaro Herrera, of the Septeto Nacional.[139] In 1930, he moved to New York to take part in the big bands that were forming the Swing movement, and by 1932 he was recognized as one of the premier trumpeters in New York, accepting the role of musical director with the Chick Webb Orchestra, one of the most famous jazz bands of the early Swing era. By 1938 he was playing trumpet in the extremely popular band of Cab Calloway, convincing Calloway to hire a young trumpeter named Dizzy Gillespie (1917-1993). Bauzá and Gillespie formed a deep friendship in the Calloway band, fueled by their mutual interest in both jazz and Afro-Cuban music.[140]

Bauzá was determined to combine the sophisticated harmonies and instrumental virtuosity of jazz with the rhythms of Afro-Cuban music. He convinced his brother-in-law Frank "Macho" Grillo, a well-respected *rumbero* and *sonero* in Cuba, to move to New York and on December 3, 1940, they debuted Machito and His Afro-Cubans.[141] Featuring the voice of Machito ("Little Macho") with the arrangements of musical director Bauzá, Machito and His Afro-Cubans was the first New York band to use conga (*tumbadora*), *bongó*, and *timbales* in the rhythm section, later the standard salsa percussion section, and the band was an important training ground for a generation of American-born percussionists such as Tito Puente.[142] Table 1 demonstrates Bauzá's formal scheme devised for "Blen Blen Blen," in effect a heavily orchestrated/disguised *son* featuring the traditional verse/*montuno* format.

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[139] Sublette, 459.

[140] Leonardo Padura Fuentes, *Faces of Salsa: A Spoken History of the Music*, trans. Stephen J. Clark (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003), 16.

[141] John Storm Roberts, *Latin Jazz: First of the Fusions, 1880s to Today* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1999), 55, 62-66.

[142] Padura Fuentes, 20.

Table 1: "Blen Blen Blen" formal scheme

1) Instrumental introduction	2) Verse	3) Instrumental interlude (brass/sax counterpoint)	4) Verse	5) *Montuno* (sung *coro*)
6) Instrumental interlude: "wall of sound"	7) *Montuno* (instrumental *coro*)	8) *Bongó* solo	9) *Montuno* (sung *coro*)	10) Instrumental tutti finale

Through his years of arranging experience, Bauzá was able to create jazz big band figures that fit within the Cuban rhythmic structures. Bauzá's composition "Tanga," from 1943, is often cited as the first truly Afro-Cuban jazz composition, seamlessly blending the Swing era's growling trumpets, numerous improvised solos, brass-versus-saxophone counterpoint, and "wall of sound" horn climaxes with the syncopated bass lines of *son* and a pan-Afro-Cuban percussion concept.[143] "Tanga" also displayed Bauzá's interest in extended compositions, along the lines of Duke Ellington's work, rather than the traditional verse/*montuno* forms popular in Cuba. Table 2 shows a formal scheme for "Tanga."

[143] Roberts, *Latin Jazz*, 65-68.

Table 2: "Tanga" formal scheme

1) "Wall of sound" introduction	2) *Montuno* (sung and instrumental *coros*)	3) Instrumental interlude (brass/sax)	4) Trumpet solo over interlude (*septeto* trumpet influence)
5) Alto Sax solo over bass and percussion (dissonant)	6) Instrumental interlude (growls, pitch mass)	7) Tenor Sax solo with brass backgrounds (swing style)	8) Vamp and fade out

As Bauzá was developing his fusion of Cuban music and big band jazz, his former Cab Calloway band mate Dizzy Gillespie was at work with a small group of musicians developing a more harmonically complex and rhythmically daring music that would become known as bebop. Gillespie and alto saxophonist Charlie Parker were virtuoso instrumentalists that sought to eliminate the stock arrangements of the 1930s and early 1940s big bands in favor of highly improvisational small groups. The music they created pushed tempos faster, extended and altered the harmonic structures, fragmented and syncopated the rhythmic feel, and developed a highly chromatic melodic concept, leading Gillespie and Parker to the top of the jazz world by 1945.[144] But Gillespie remained fascinated by Bauzá's rhythmic concepts and continued to study Afro-Cuban music with him.

In 1946, Bauzá introduced the Cuban conga master Chano Pozo to Gillespie, and Pozo soon became a member of Gillespie's newly formed experimental, bebop-based big band. Pozo, an *Abakuá* member, was already a well-known musician, dancer, and

[144] Lewis Porter, Michael Ullman, and Edward Hazell, *Jazz: From Its Origins to the Present* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 192-197.

composer in Cuba before he arrived in New York in 1945. He composed and popularized "Blen Blen Blen" in 1939 and was the first to record traditional rumba in 1947.[145] On September 29, 1947, Pozo performed with Gillespie's band at Carnegie Hall on a piece titled "Cubana Be, Cubana Bop" which featured a Pozo conga solo as well as an *Abakuá* chant, and on December 30, 1947, the band recorded Pozo and Gillespie's new collaboration "Manteca," a Cuban composition with a bebop bridge, which would become Gillespie's best selling album ever.[146] Figures 14 and 15 detail Pozo's compositional approach on "Manteca," demonstrating his use of call-and-response orchestration that was built upon rhythmic relationships, compared to the contrapuntal approach of Bauzá. Unfortunately, this promising pair came to a premature end when Pozo was murdered in December 1948, and Gillespie decided not to hire another *conguero*, stating that he would never find another Chano Pozo. However, the short-lived partnership did help to cement the continued interaction between Cuban music and jazz.[147]

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[145] Sublette, 531.
[146] Roberts, *Latin Jazz*, 77.
[147] Roberts, *Latin Jazz*, 76.

Baritone Sax
Trombone
Bass
Conga
Clave

Figure 14: "Manteca" introduction

Trumpets
Saxes
Bass
Conga
Clave

Figure 15: "Manteca"

One of the few 1930s recording sessions in Cuba occurred on June 15-17, 1937, in a marathon recording of many Cuban groups by RCA Victor. The penultimate group

to be recorded, Casino de la Playa, was led by a blind *tresero* from Matanzas named Arsenio Rodríguez, who became one of the most important Cuban popular musicians of all, and whose influence on salsa was rivaled only by Mario Bauzá.[148] A *rumbero* and a member of the *Abakuá* society in Matanzas, Rodríguez, like Chano Pozo, was among the first popular musicians in Cuba to openly celebrate Africa and blackness, a result of increasing multicultural acceptance through the continuing *afrocubanismo* movement. He frequently made reference to his Congo heritage and culture, sang in *lengua* (using Bantu, *Carabalí*, and *Lucumí* words or phrases), and cultivated a self-conscious style that increasingly incorporated Afro-Cuban elements while eschewing much of the Spanish influence in *son*.[149] He called his music *son montuno*, playing with the meanings of *montuno* as both the call-and-response section of *son*, which Rodríguez greatly expanded, and its literal meaning, mountain, which implied both a rugged demeanor and an anti-cosmopolitan image of the mountainous countryside of Oriente. Dancing to Rodríguez's *son montuno* was done in *contratiempo* (against the time), requiring skilled dancers who could interact with the music on a sophisticated level, much like the Afro-Cuban rumba dancers.[150] His music was rhythmically dense and instrumentally complex, it was slower, thicker, and heavier, and in the 1940s it was the most popular music heard throughout Cuba.[151]

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[148] Ed Morales, *The Latin Beat: Latin Music from Bossa Nova to Salsa and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003), 36.

[149] David García, *Arsenio Rodgríguez and the Transnational Flows of Latin Popular Music*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 16-21.

[150] García, 34-35.

[151] Sublette, 478-480.

By the early 1940s, Rodríguez had greatly expanded the traditional *septeto*, adding multiple trumpets, piano, cowbell, and, most importantly, *tumbadora* (conga). He referred to the new ensemble as a *conjunto*, an instrumentation that provided Rodríguez, a gifted arranger/composer, with a wider palette of textures and timbres than the *septetos*. In adding the larger *tumbadora*, with its deep pitch, to the small *bongó*, Rodríguez was able to create a fusion of rumba and *son* that had not yet occurred, altering the *tumbaos* (melodic/rhythmic patterns) played by the *tumbadora*s in rumba to fit the *clave* and rhythmic vocabulary of *son*, while freeing the *bongó* from the *martillo* pattern and allowing it to function as the high-pitched "talking" drum, in the same manner as the *quinto* in rumba.[152] During the *montuno* sections, Rodríguez would often have the bongosero switch to playing repeated downbeats on the *campana*, a heavy cowbell, sounding a metallic whack that has added a propulsive rhythmic character to numerous other musical styles, especially salsa, ever since.[153]

With the *claves*, maracas, *bongó*/*campana*, and *tumbadora* setting a polyrhythmic foundation, Rodríguez further experimented with instrumental techniques and arranging concepts. His highly syncopated playing revolutionized the role of the *tres* in the ensemble, defining, and commenting on, the time and character of the music much as the early bongoseros had. To support his unique role, Rodríguez utilized the piano as the basic harmonic instrument, performing the traditional melodic/rhythmic ostinati of the *tres* with a different percussive sound as well as defining a more complex harmonic vocabulary. Reported to be the first to feature the *tres* in the role of an improvised

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[152] García, 53.
[153] Fernandez, 38-40.

melodic soloist, Rodríguez frequently featured all of the members of his band in the role of soloist. He particularly liked to pit the trumpet soloists against each other, much in the same fashion as the dueling singers of the rumba.[154]

As mentioned earlier, the name of Rodríguez's self-titled genre *son montuno* grew from his emphasis on the *montuno* section of *son*. Often omitting the introductory verses from his *sones* altogether, Rodríguez structured the *montuno* to include as many possibilities as his band allowed, such as *coro* with *sonero*, *coro* with trumpet solo, trumpet *coro* with *sonero*, *etcetera*.[155] In doing away with the calm, serene introductory verses composed of poetic *décimas* and moving directly to the *estribillo*, traditionally the climax of the piece, Rodríguez was forced to create new instrumental sections in order to generate formal and dynamic development. Of these, his most effective creation was a section in which the trumpets repeated interlocking patterns, generally at full blast. This section traditionally follows a break after an instrumental solo, and precedes the return to the *montuno*. Ever conscious of his status as Other, he named this section the *diablo* (devil), the word he shouted during performance as the *diablo* continued increasing the intensity level among the musicians and dancers.[156] Table 3 shows an example of *son montuno* formal design in Rodríguez's "Dame un Cachito Pa' Huele."

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[154] García, 54-60.
[155] Morales, 36.
[156] Sublette, 507.

Table 3: "Dame un Cachito Pa' Huele" formal scheme

1) Instrumental introduction	2) *Montuno* (trumpet response)	3) *Montuno* (vocal response); *campana*	4) Piano solo
5) Break	6) *Diablo*	7) *Montuno* (trumpet response)	8) Concluding phrase

Considered by many to be the most influential Cuban musician of the twentieth century, Arsenio Rodríguez modernized Cuban popular music and gave birth to several new styles.[157] Moving to New York in 1952, his *son montuno* influenced many of the progressive, young Latin musicians who would create salsa in the following decades. In Cuba, the traditional, relaxed *son* came back into prominence after Rodríguez emigrated, as popularized by the Matanzas supergroup La Sonora Matancera. By the end of the 1950s, Rodríguez would fall from the spotlight, passed over by a new generation interested in the newest craze: mambo. This was a cruel twist of fate for Rodríguez, whose innovative *son montuno* is widely cited as the original mambo.[158] Even the Cubans that named the new style, the brothers Israel and Orestes López, referred to Arsenio Rodríguez as the inventor of the mambo.[159]

Flutist Antonio Arcaño formed his first *charanga*, La Maravilla de Arcaño, in 1937, renaming the group Arcaño y sus Maravillas in 1940 after making the decision to focus on instrumental *danzón*, a genre that had experienced a resurgence in the mid-1930s. Noting the popularity of Arsenio Rodríguez y su *Conjunto*, Arcaño wisely

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[157] García, 4-6; Morales, 36.
[158] García, 64-65.
[159] Sublette, 451-452.

booked the two very different bands as a sought after double bill throughout Cuba in the 1940s.[160] Featuring music composed by the highly influential brothers Orestes López and Israel "Cachao" López, this *charanga* became the most famous in Cuba and the only group able to rival Arsenio Rodríguez y su *Conjunto* throughout the 1940s.

In 1939, cellist Orestes López wrote a *danzón* entitled "Mambo" that added a Rodríguez-influenced *montuno* section to the end of the piece, incorporating an instrumental *coro* with improvised responses on the flute.[161] Inspired by Rodríguez's ability to captivate dancers, the López brothers had decided to incorporate elements of the more dynamic *son montuno* into their lighter, commercial *danzón*. With the popularity of "Mambo" and several more similar compositions by the López brothers, Arcaño decided to eliminate the singers from his band in 1940, instead highlighting the new mambo section at the end of each piece.[162] Arcaño increased the tempo of his music, and, following Rodríguez's lead, added the conga, featured increased instrumental improvisation, and shifted the overall emphasis of much of his music from melody to rhythm.[163]

Meanwhile, Cachao was becoming one of Cuba's most important musicians. He introduced a new level of virtuosity to the bass and asserted a new significance for the bass within the overall rhythmic scheme by adapting rumba *tumbaos*, melodic/rhythmic patterns which originated in rumba percussion, for the bass.[164] Jaco Pastorius, one of the

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[160] García, 80.
[161] Morales, 37.
[162] Sublette, 449-452.
[163] Sublette, 493.
[164] Morales, 36.

most influential electric bassists of the twentieth century, often cited Cachao as the greatest bassist in the world.[165] Cachao took the lead in developing the mambo section of the *danzón*, composing hundreds of pieces that synthesized his rhythmic bass lines with the faster tempos, daring instrumental improvisation, and added percussion of Arcaño's *charanga*.[166] By the mid-1940s, led by Cachao López, the mambo broke free of the *danzón*, and later of Cuba itself, to become its own genre.

In the 1950s Cachao would record a series of *descargas*, essentially Cuban jam sessions. These *descargas* gathered many of the top musicians in Havana to improvise music in informal, late-night sessions. The result was a direct precursor of salsa, featuring dynamic brass and percussion solos over *son*-based piano *guajeo*s and Cachao's *tumbaos*, in a *montuno*-based format. The *descargas* were one of the first attempts at moving beyond genre classification in Cuban popular music, as different songs could draw on *son*, rumba, mambo, or any other genre, often creating unique mixtures.[167] The *descargas* offered an entirely different view of the marriage of Afro-Cuban music and jazz from that of Mario Bauzá, one that incorporated the freedom of jazz improvisation into a wholly Cuban context. This format found many interested listeners among the young, marginalized Latin audience in New York that was searching for their own musical identity.[168]

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[165] Fernandez, xi.
[166] Sublette, 343-345.
[167] Boggs, 96.
[168] Juan Flores, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity* (New York: *Columbia* University Press, 2000), 99.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the demand for mambo spread throughout Mexico and the U.S. At the forefront of this "mambo craze" was Dámaso Pérez Prado, a pianist from Matanzas who began his career with Arsenio Rodríguez. Pérez Prado formed his own band and moved to Mexico City in 1944, showcasing a fast, frenetic, jazz-inspired form of mambo that pitted heavy brass sections against clipped, rhythmic saxophone sections over Afro-Cuban percussion. Marrying modern dissonance with danceable rhythms, Pérez Prado's version of mambo was much like the concept behind the Afro-Cuban jazz of Machito and His Afro-Cubans in New York, although Pérez Prado's focus on popularity and Bauzá's focus on artistic merits did separate the two styles.[169] Famed for his rhythmic grunts and shouts, Pérez Prado's music and performances captured a white audience's fascination with the idea of the primitive, particularly the image of ecstatic practice channeled through the frenetic energy of the band.

In 1949, Pérez Prado collaborated with famed Cuban singer Benny Moré to produce the multi-million selling album *Que Rico el Mambo*. This album quickly crossed the northern border and Pérez Prado followed closely behind, debuting in New York in 1951 and frequently touring the U.S. in the 1950s. Pérez Prado's 1955 album *Mambo Mania* included the single "Cherry Pink, Apple Blossom White," which was the top song on the U.S. pop charts that year for ten weeks.[170] Although Pérez Prado's commercial style was not as influential on salsa as either those of Rodríguez and Cachao, he was far

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[169] Morales, 43-45.

[170] John Storm Roberts, *The Latin Tinge: The Impact of Latin American Music on the United States*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 127-129.

more popular and played a major role in introducing Cuban music to the post-WWII foreign audience. However, as Pérez Prado's fame was spreading throughout Mexico and the western U.S., Puerto Rican musicians living in New York were beginning to appropriate Cuban music to assert their own cultural identity.

Although a steady stream of immigrants from Cuba had arrived in New York throughout the first half of the twentieth century, a massive influx of Puerto Ricans in the late 1940s turned them into the largest Latino ethnic group in the city.[171] During this period, agrarian-based Puerto Rico was undergoing massive social changes under the banner Operation Bootstrap, an island-wide industrialization. The purpose of Operation Bootstrap was purportedly to stabilize employment and the economy through the wide-scale introduction of factory jobs, a response to the wild market fluctuations of farming exports, such as sugar, in the wake of the Great Depression in the U.S. and World War II. However, the population was too large to employ as a fully industrialized workforce, and millions of Puerto Ricans emigrated to New York. By the 1960s, Operation Bootstrap faced an unemployment crisis, and throughout the latter twentieth century Puerto Rico was forced to battle against ever-increasing foreign competition.

The subtext of Operation Bootstrap, plainly recognized by many Puerto Ricans, was economic exploitation undertaken by the U.S. In the post-World War II industrial environment, the economic desires of the U.S. quickly turned from the agricultural interests it had promoted throughout the Caribbean. In the early 1940s, U.S.-appointed governor Rexford Guy Trugwell, previously a member of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's

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[171] Morales, 46.

"Brain Trust," and Luis Muñoz Marín, the president of the Puerto Rican senate, engineered the creation of nationalized sectors such as banking and transportation, along the lines of the U.S. model. Under Muñoz, Operation Bootstrap chief architect Teodoro Moscoso created a system of inexpensive labor, tax shelters, and government cooperation for U.S.-based private investment. In addition, to address the population problem, emigration incentives were offered in the form of cheap airline tickets to New York, providing the rapidly growing urban center with a very large, inexpensive, and marginalized labor force.[172] Both on and off the island, Puerto Ricans were relegated to inferior status, utilized by hegemonic interests for profit potential. In many ways, salsa was created as a direct response to these sociocultural conditions – Puerto Rican population, class status, lack of economic opportunities, *etcetera* – imposed by Operation Bootstrap.[173] Not surprisingly, the immediate appeal of salsa, particularly its pan-Latino discourse of the late 1970s, throughout much of Latin America parallels a trail of destructive, self-serving U.S. policies in Latin America.[174]

Located at 53rd Street and Broadway in midtown Manhattan, The Palladium Ballroom was a second-floor dancehall that opened during World War II but was struggling by 1947 with its whites only business model. Tommy Martin, the Palladium's manager and the former tour manager of Chick Webb's big band, approached Mario Bauzá, Webb's former musical director, about bringing Machito and His Afro-Cubans to the ballroom. It was agreed that the Palladium would host Sunday matinee sessions with

[172] A.W. Maldonado, *Teodoro Moscoso and Puerto Rico's Operation Bootstrap* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997).

[173] Flores, 118-121.

[174] Turino, "Nationalism and Latin American Music," 182.

Machito's band so that the Latino population, overwhelmingly Puerto Rican, could be welcomed without interfering with the Palladium's segregation system. With Bauzá, it was decided that the matinee sessions would be called "The Blen Blen Club," a reference to the Chano Pozo composition, to Latinos in New York seeking recognition outside of *El Barrio* (Spanish Harlem), and to the Afro-Cuban jazz experimentation of Machito and of Dizzy Gillespie.[175]

The Blen Blen Club was so popular that soon Wednesday nights were Latin nights, within the year every night was Latin night, and from 1948-1966 the Palladium Ballroom was the recognized center of Latin dance music in the U.S. Much like the jazz clubs lining 52nd Street at the same time, the midtown location of the Palladium allowed it to draw a racially diverse audience, based around sound and movement rather than the racial profiles that stigmatized and isolated the jazz and Latin clubs uptown in Harlem and *El Barrio*.[176] Throughout its existence, the most popular band associated with the Palladium was the group led by a dynamic young *timbalero* (*timbales* player) named Tito Puente (1923-2000), whose nickname became "*El Rey*" ("The King").[177]

The most important of the first generation of New York-born Puerto Rican (Nuyorican) musicians, Puente grew up listening as much to jazz as to Cuban and Puerto Rican musics. After serving in the U.S. Navy from 1942-1945, during which time he learned the saxophone and played in jazz bands, Puente used the G.I. Bill to attend the

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[175] Boggs, 128-131.

[176] Morales, 45-46.

[177] Steven Loza, *Tito Puente and the Making of Latin Music* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 13.

Juilliard School of Music for several years, studying composition and orchestration.[178] However, Puente decided to pursue public performance at a time when mambo and Afro-Cuban jazz were becoming extremely popular and the opportunities for Latino musicians in the U.S. were increasing. Puente's early genius was his ability to strike a middle ground between the dance craze surrounding Pérez Prado's commercialized mambo and the cosmopolitan sophistication of Bauzá's Afro-Cuban jazz, generating interest among the new Euro- and African-American audience as well as retaining the core Latino population. This unique ability to forge a single audience from multiple sociomusical backgrounds would be the hallmark of both Puente and salsa, leading many to consider him the first *salsero*, a term he flatly rejected.[179] Following the heyday of both the Palladium Ballroom and mambo, Puente continued to be a prominent figure of the music and culture of the Latin Caribbean and its diaspora until his death, releasing over one hundred recordings featuring both folkloric and urban, cosmopolitan genres.[180]

Although he performed with many salsa musicians, throughout his life Puente adamantly held that salsa did not exist, that it was simply a marketing term meant to obscure the music's Cuban origins during a time of U.S.-Cuba conflict. He repeatedly made statements such as "the only salsa I know comes in a bottle, I play Cuban music" or

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[178] Loza, 32-34.

[179] Loza, 40.

[180] Francis R. Aparicio, *Listening to Salsa: Gender, Latin Popular Music, and Puerto Rican Cultures* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998), 74; Loza, 20-26.

"I'm a musician, not a cook."[181] Thus, Puente exercised the trope of Cuba, an island he was not able to visit, as a pan-Latino means of resistance to the hegemonic interests of U.S. policy, as a gold standard of authenticity recognized by the Latino audience, and as an attempt to stand above music industry genre classifications so common among minority populations – such as the soul, funk, and R&B genres of the late 1960s and early 1970s African-American community.[182] In so doing, he became a principal model of both cultural cosmopolitan and protectionist for the next generation of Latino musicians in New York.

Thus, the period from the late nineteenth century to the end of the 1950s witnessed a massive creative output in Cuban music. From Miguel Faílde's *danzón* "Las Alturas del Simpson" in 1879 to Tito Puente's Palladium Ballroom mambo hits, Cuban music had assimilated the wealth of cultural heritages present on the island in multiple forms of expression, exporting them throughout the Caribbean diaspora that stretched north to New York. Throughout the period, musicians negotiated individual and collective identity by invoking multiple diasporas, from *Abakuá* references in early *son* to Mario Bauzá's pan-African unity.[183] The resultant interaction of identities contributed varied discourses of interactionism and protectionism, of Chano Pozo collaborating with

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[181] Peter Manuel, Kenneth Bilby, and Michael Largey, *Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music from Rumba to Reggae* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 74; Morales, 56.

[182] Ingrid Monson, "Art Blakey's African Diaspora," in *The African Diaspora: A Musical Perspective*, Ingrid Monson ed., 329-352 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000), 339.

[183] Marta Moreno Vega, "Interlocking African Diaspora Cultures in the Work of Fernando Ortiz," *Journal of Black Studies* 31, no. 1 (September, 2000): 40-41. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2645931 (accessed November 8, 2009).

Dizzy Gillespie and of Arsenio Rodríguez's blackness, which shaped constructions of cultural authenticity. With the addition of transnational elements, primarily Puerto Rico and New York, Cuban music itself became a readily-appropriated diasporic signifier by the 1950s. Following the 1950s, it provided the foundation for a continued encounter between location, generation, and ethnicity in the negotiation of identity and authenticity.

CHAPTER 3

1959-2000

The Salsa Imaginary

Though this thesis purports to focus on salsa music, the bulk of the material presented thus far refers to the pre-salsa era. The purpose for this historical viewpoint is to attempt to negate the hotly contested issue of whether salsa is real or imagined: a unique sociomusical creation or a mass appropriation of Cuban music and culture.[184] Although this debate is less relevant today, as salsa has become the label for a global popular music made up of diverse musical genres and sociocultural meanings, I have attempted to create my own approach to this critical issue by situating salsa within a history of continuously re-negotiated and re-signified sociomusical practices. In so doing, one may read beyond surface issues of appropriation and assimilation in order to understand the cultural processes and meanings underpinning sociomusical creation; in this case, that of a subaltern community voicing resistance to hegemonic interests through the performance of cultural remembrance.

[184] See Marisol Berríos-Miranda, "Is Salsa a Musical Genre," in *Situating Salsa: Global Markets and Local Meanings in Latin Popular Music*, ed. Lise Waxer (New York: Routledge, 2002), 23-50; Jorge Duany, "Popular Music in Puerto Rico: Toward an Anthropology of 'Salsa,'" *Latin American Music Review* 5, no. 2 (Autumn-Winter, 1984): 186-216. http://www.jstor.org/stable/780072 (accessed February 3, 2010); Peter Manuel, "Puerto Rican Music and Cultural Identity: Creative Appropriation of Cuban Sources from Danza to Salsa," *Ethnomusicology* 38, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 1994): 249-280. http://www.jstor.org/stable/851740 (accessed February 16, 2010); César Miguel Rondón, *The Book of Salsa*, trans. Frances Aparicio and Jackie White (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Leonardo Padura Fuentes, *Faces of Salsa: A Spoken History of the Music*, trans. Stephen J. Clark (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003).

Understanding salsa within a broader geo-social-historical perspective reveals a problematic essentialist, or absolutist, discourse in the "salsa is Cuban music" argument. For instance, few scholars debate the lived reality of the practice of *santería*, in spite of its very clear similarities with Yoruba practices in Africa. *Santería* is understood to have traveled with Yorubans to Cuba, where it syncretized Catholic practices in response to oppressive colonial policy to become the practice recognized today. Soon, it was adopted by others of African descent in Cuba, labeled an Afro-Cuban religion, and eventually attracted followers throughout the Cuban/Caribbean diaspora, enjoying something of a hidden global boom as its practices have been shared through international flows over the past thirty or so years. *Santería's* many similarities to modern Yoruban practices are celebrated as a cultural survival while its differences, namely Christian influences, are considered the means by which an Afro-Cuban identity was created.

This practice and development has historically been documented by whites of privilege, first among the Cuban aristocracy and later of the elitist international academic class (in which this thesis takes part), concealing a message of cultural regret while continuing to negate agency among the historical and current population of African descent. In this context, Africa is recognized as a marker of ultimate authenticity, the so-called "motherland." The ties between *santería* and Africa have been recognized, by those documenting it, as a source of authenticity, often without the critical consideration of sociocultural locations, contexts, or meanings.[185] That many other Africans and

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[185] Fernando Ortiz, *The Batá in Cuba: Selected from the Writings of Fernando Ortiz*, ed. and trans. John Turpin and B.E. Martinez (Oakland, CA: Institute for the Study of Ancient African Traditions, 1980).

African descendents became initiated only strengthens its assumed authenticity, allowing it to be documented under an essentialized Afro-Cuban banner that seeks to – at least on the part of the historian – absolve the post-slavery white elite by providing a form of cultural recognition and reparation while nevertheless maintaining those of African descent as thoroughly marginalized Others.[186] The particularities of sociocultural interactions with racial terror are neglected; instead the discourse celebrates creations of triumphant Afro-Cuba in perpetual resistance to racist white authorities, reviled by, and distanced from, the continuing white hegemony.[187]

On the other hand, salsa is repeatedly attacked as a hegemonic music industry term obscuring its origins in Cuban *son*.[188] Again, this historical critique is lodged by those with an interest in an essentialist discourse that depicts Cuba as a unified sociocultural construct with a fully formed musical heritage.[189] This argument generally does not make the effort to acknowledge that the *son* format, on which much salsa is based, represents its own broad historical development from varied transnational flows, such as the influences of Afro-Haitians in Oriente or recording companies in New York.[190] Further interrogating this point, *son* was broadcast and widely popular throughout the Caribbean from the time of its early popularity in Cuba in the 1920s,

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[186] Laurent Aubert, *The Music of the Other: New Challenges for Ethnomusicology in a Global Age*, trans. Carla Ribeiro (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007).

[187] On racialism and race construction, see Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[188] Keith Negus, *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 132.

[189] Padura Fuentes, 178.

[190] Duany, 188.

forming part of a pan-Caribbean soundscape in which many individuals from New York to Colombia chose to locate their own identity. Thus, the negation of salsa along the lines of its Cuban heritage, limits individual experiences and heterogeneous flows of influence while seeking to position Cuba as an elite cultural arbiter.

This last point derives from Cuba's post-1959 oppositional political location, a state in which an absolutist, "raceless" rhetoric and socialist economic system have consistently been elucidated in conjunction and/or opposition with a racist, capitalist Other.[191] This position attempts to force 1970s Nuyorican musicians expressing their own lived forms of cultural heritage and enacting their own resistance to hegemony to submit to the legacy of an absolute Cuban music. This is the direct opposite of the *santería* example, in which the elite class celebrated the creation of Afro-Cuba through pan-African remembrance and resistance. When the cosmopolitan music of Cuba was appropriated by Puerto Ricans in the oppositional location of New York, however, suddenly pan-Caribbean remembrance was labeled a fraud. This argument clearly illustrates the "doubleness" thrust upon the African diaspora, in which the ruling ideology supposedly determines identity.[192] In addition, as with *santería*, this argument neglects the heterogeneous sociocultural realities lived within the subaltern population, perpetuating an elitist discourse that is neglectful of issues of race, class, and more.

I argue, then, that salsa, like *santería*, does exist as the product of uniquely lived intersections of memory, location, situation, and sound. Although drawing heavily on various Cuban musics, the birth of a new genre called salsa heralded a music created

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[191] Moore, *Music and Revolution*, 14-15.
[192] Gilroy, 58.

from a different landscape that would itself further spawn new genres, such as *salsa consciente* (conscious, or protest salsa) or *salsa erótica.* These later genres would be subject to similar absolutist criticism invoking culturally inscribed notions of authenticity as well.[193] By the 1990s, salsa was being performed by, and for, an international body of musicians and dancers, bringing into question modes of signification and cultural production/reception within the globalized landscape. Interrogating these issues, this chapter will detail my selection of the most influential moments and figures within salsa from a global standpoint, attempting to analyze cultural messages rather than ascribe value to one particular strain of salsa over others.

Absent from the Cuba-New York discussion is perhaps one of the most important early figures in the creation of salsa. Rafael Cortijo (1928-1982) was an Afro-Puerto Rican percussionist whose short-lived group Cortijo y su Combo was widely popular among Puerto Ricans on and off the island from 1955 to 1962, when the group disbanded. At the time of the combo's founding – when Cachao was recording his *descargas*, Arsenio Rodríguez had moved to New York, and Tito Puente was at the height of his popularity – Puerto Rican popular music was dominated by the large orchestras of the mambo era. Cortijo, however, incorporated the rhythms and lyrics of folkloric Puerto Rican genres with *son montuno* and, with the smaller *conjunto* instrumentation, was able to popularize these genres throughout the varied levels of Puerto Rican society. Paralleling the rise of *son*, Cortijo y su Combo reached a wide

[193] Negus, 145.

audience through participation in broadcast media, as a Monday-Friday feature of the television show "El show del media día" for five years.[194]

Most importantly, Cortijo incorporated the Afro-Puerto Rican genres *bomba* and *plena* into the *son montuno* style, creating the first notable Puerto Rican re-working of the Cuban *son*.[195] Before Cortijo, these genres were associated with the black slums of Puerto Rico's two largest cities, San Juan and Ponce. *Bomba* was known for its polyrhythmic drumming based around the *tresillo* and *cinquillo* commonly found throughout Afro-Caribbean musics. *Plena*, played on various percussion instruments but primarily associated with the *pandereta* (local version of a tambourine), functioned as narrative songs centered around the relatively less-syncopated rhythmic figure shown in Figure 16.[196]

Figure 16: *Plena*

Cortijo y su Combo variously incorporated the lyrics, topics, instruments, and/or rhythms of Afro-Puerto Rican music with those of *son montuno*. In so doing, the group provided Puerto Ricans on the island and in the diaspora with a sonic representation of a

[194] Duany, 195.

[195] *Bomba* and *plena*, now considered folkloric genres in Puerto Rico, are greatly underrepresented in both the popular and academic literature. See Salvador E. Ferreras, "Solo Drumming in the Puerto Rican *Bomba*: An Analysis of Musical Processes and Improvisational Strategies" (Ph.D. Diss., University of British *Columbia*, 2005).

[196] Duany, 196.

unique sociomusical heritage that acknowledged flows among, and reinforced ties to, the greater Caribbean. Their influence was widely felt throughout Puerto Rican communities. A decade later, Puerto Rican musicians in New York would utilize the pan-Caribbean stylistic approach popularized by Cortijo y su Combo in the creation of salsa.

On January 1, 1959, the 26th of July Movement led by Fidel Castro completed its overthrow of the Batista regime, ushering in a new era for Cuba. Most significantly, this date roughly marks the end of the fruitful relationships between musicians in Cuba and the U.S. that had characterized the previous forty years. Following the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, the U.S. trade embargo immediately halted, with only a few exceptions, contact between musicians in Cuba and those in the U.S.[197] The period also ushered in a period of musical stagnation in Cuba, as cultural upheaval and dramatic changes in the ideology of the ruling class left musical creation in a state of confusion.[198] In New York, this meant that the already dominant Puerto Rican sector of the Latino population soon became the overwhelming majority through the continued migrations related to Operation Bootstrap.

By the early 1960s, with the international silencing of Cuba, the continuing dislocation of Puerto Rico, the end of Rafael Trujillo's brutal thirty-year dictatorship in the Dominican Republic, and the recent separation of political control and military intervention in both Colombia and Venezuela, New York in many ways became the

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[197] Morales, 30.
[198] Moore, *Music and Revolution*, 56-59.

cultural capital of the Latin Caribbean.[199] As the mambo craze began to wane in the U.S., the sounds of The Beatles captured the attention of the public, progressively pushing Latin popular music out of the mainstream. During this time, the Palladium Ballroom and other venues for Latin music in New York played host to a brief fad, *pachanga*. Carrying on the tradition of fast music accompanying light, energetic dancing that had characterized mambo, *pachanga* was essentially an altered *danzón* - emphasizing the flute/violin timbre and mambo section of *danzón* but with a faster tempo, greater emphasis on solos, and *son montuno*-like formal scheme in place of the rondo scheme of *danzón*.[200]

Although the vogue for *pachanga* only lasted a few years, and was popular primarily among the relatively small Latino audience in New York, it was the first product of a younger generation. Chief among the new bandleaders was a Dominican immigrant named Johnny Pacheco. Having moved to New York with his family in 1946, at age 11, Pacheco was a talented multi-instrumentalist who took jobs playing violin, flute, saxophone, clarinet, and percussion. Like Tito Puente, he spent several years at the Juilliard School of Music studying percussion. Settling on the five-key wooden transverse flute from Cuba, the twenty-five year old Pacheco founded his first group, Pacheco y su *Charanga*, in 1960, releasing an extremely popular self-titled debut album in 1962. By 1963, Pacheco y su *Charanga* reigned as the leading exponents of *pachanga*, increasingly performing for young Latinos in El Barrio and the South Bronx at

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[199] Boggs, 79.
[200] Rondón, 9-12.

places such as Teatro Puerto Rico and the Park Plaza, rather than at the ethnically diverse Palladium Ballroom in midtown.[201]

Having watched the workings of his record label, Alegre Records, as a premier attraction, in 1964 Pacheco formed his own label, Fania Records. A joint venture between Pacheco and his lawyer, Jerry Masucci, Fania held a virtual monopoly on Latin music in New York until 1980 and is credited with the wide circulation of the term salsa. With Fania, although Pacheco would continue to remain a highly visible and popular performer, his greatest and most lasting influence could be felt through his role as the company's creative director and musical producer.[202]

Out of the *pachanga* fad, only one song truly reached beyond the Latino audience. The Nuyorican Ray Barretto's "El Watusi" became a Billboard Top 20 hit in 1962, and the album *Charanga Moderna* was certified gold the following year. A rather odd novelty hit, "El Watusi" featured a piano/bass/hand clap ostinato, shown in Figure 17, under a rambling spoken dialogue in Spanish, only briefly breaking into a full band *pachanga* sound. A *conguero* who had recorded on Tito Puente's most popular album, 1958's *Dance Mania*, Barretto spent several years attempting to recreate the success of "El Watusi" without luck. Joining Fania Records in 1967, though, Barretto burst into the young Latino market with his album *Acid*, swapping *pachanga* for boogaloo, a newly-popularized genre mixing *son* and African-American genres, such as soul.[203]

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[201] Morales, 58-59; Rondón, 46-47.
[202] Negus, 149.
[203] Morales, 45.

Figure 17: "El Watusi"

Oddly enough, the first hints of this new sound, variously referred to as boogaloo, Latin boogaloo, or *bugalú*, appeared in the form of an implied backbeat in Barretto's own "El Watusi." Far more clearly stated, though, was Cuban percussionist Mongo Santamaría's mixture of Afro-Cuban percussion into the backbeat-oriented, blues-drenched performance on his 1963 cover of Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man." Supposedly, Hancock filled in on a Santamaría concert in the Bronx one night in 1962, playing "Watermelon Man" at a friend's request, when Santamaría cued his band to play a cha-cha beat, much like a slower mambo feel, as the audience went wild.[204] By the time of the recording, Santamaría had retained the cha-cha percussion and Hancock's original gospel-inflected piano groove, but had added a backbeat-based drum set and greatly exaggerated the bluesy pitch-bending of Hancock's original melody. This single reached number ten on the Billboard charts that year, kicking off a new wave of creativity

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[204] Charley Gerard, *Music From Cuba: Mongo Santamaría, Chocolate Armenteros, and Cuban Musicians in the United States* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 54-55.

centered around the excitement over boogaloo that would signal the demise of the Latin-based musics of the pre-1960s generation.[205]

Reflecting their marginalized class status, Latinos and African-Americans in New York had long been living in close proximity, primarily in Harlem/El Barrio (East Harlem) and the South Bronx. This cross-cultural influence had been reflected musically at least since the 1930s, when musicians such as Mario Bauzá worked in African-American jazz bands, and was the expressed idea behind the collaboration of Chano Pozo and Dizzy Gillespie in the 1940s. However, these earlier attempts at a fusion of Afro-Cuban and African-American forms were often hampered by the incompatibility of even (Afro-Cuban) and uneven (African-American) rhythmic divisions and the relative foreignness of the two musical cultures, as the most successful marriages involved people such as Bauzá and Tito Puente who had lived within both cultures. In contrast to these earlier experiments, boogaloo emerged as an organic multi-cultural interaction of a young generation of musicians in the midst of a profoundly creative sociocultural moment, the civil rights era of the mid 1960s, who had lived together and influenced each other's music for over a generation.[206]

Boogaloo bandleaders such as Joe Cuba and Pete Rodriguez scored major crossover hits from 1966-1969 with songs such as "Bang, Bang," "El Pito," and "I Like It Like That." Locating the musicians' cross-cultural origins through an amalgamation of *montunos*, backbeats (especially hand claps), and both English and Spanish lyrics,

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[205] Juan Flores, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity* (New York: *Columbia* University Press, 2000), 93.
[206] Flores, 83.

boogaloo's success grew from its sonic mapping of the multicultural ghettos in Manhattan and the South Bronx during the Civil Rights era. Meanwhile, Johnny Pacheco was busy signing an unknown seventeen year old Nuyorican trombonist from the South Bronx to the Fania Records roster who traversed the cross-cultural climate by resignifying Caribbean music from the New York ghetto. Widely recognized as the most out of tune, untrained, unpolished, and *cruzado* (crossed *clave*) musician throughout Fania's reign, trombonist/composer/arranger/singer/producer Willie Colón (1950-) sold over 30,000,000 records and became the creative genius behind countless innovations in salsa, the mentor to future stars, and an important social activist directly involved in the intersection of Puerto Rico-New York as well as Latin America-U.S.[207] His 1967 debut album, *El malo* (*The Bad One*), announced a new consciousness directly through its title and album art portraying Colón, as best he could at age seventeen, posed as the quintessential tough guy.

From the first notes of "Jazzy," the album's opener, Colón's clear visual/textual message is rendered sonic: loud, strident trombones with dense piano *montunos* and a thick, aggressive percussion section. Later in the album, the self-proclaimed Puerto Rican *jíbaro* (person from the countryside) Hector Lavoe (1946-1993) made his first recorded appearance, with high, soaring vocals that extended *son* to previously unheard sonic spaces. The album mixes harsh, gritty, English-language boogaloo such as "Willie Baby" with uncompromisingly brash *son montuno* on "Borinquen" and "Quimbombo."

[207] Padura Fuentes, 27; Christopher Washburne, "Play It 'Con Filin!': The Swing and Expression of Salsa," *Latin American Music Review* 19, no. 2 (Autumn-Winter, 1998): 178, http://www.jstor.org/stable/779989 (accessed February 4, 2010).

In my opinion, among many valid others, *El malo* is the beginning of salsa. It is not a matter of musical technique, transcription captures neither its sonic impact nor its social implications. Gone are the trumpets, the *tres*, the polished ensemble, the emphasis on elegant dancing, and the lyrics about harmless pastoral scenes and island life.[208] What remains is a brazen, urban soundscape of resistance and identity formed, and forming, in the diaspora amidst marginalization and repression.

Colón and Lavoe were immediately popular among the young Latino audience in New York, particularly those frustrated with their social situation in an increasingly hostile environment. They represented themselves as the authentic Puerto Rican experience: Colón with the rough life of urban Puerto Ricans living in New York, Lavoe with the twang of rural, inner Puerto Rico, with both as figures of frustration and resentment. The two released a string of successful albums that progressively extended the message begun with *El malo*: the cultural pluralism of boogaloo was continually phased out in favor of a stronger Latino identity articulated through *son montuno* and Spanish lyrics, the music continued to feature harsh and aggressive sonorities, and the album names and cover art thoroughly exercised the bad boy theme.[209] Colón's fourth album, *Cosa nuestra* (*Our Thing*, 1970), featured a textual/visual play on the infamous *Cosa Nostra* organized crime syndicate, with a picture of Colón standing under the Brooklyn Bridge on the docks of the South Street Seaport, a known mafia stronghold at

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[208] Rondón, 68.

[209] Wilson A. Valentín Escobar, "El Hombre que Respira Debajo del Agua: Trans-*Boricua* Memories, Identities, and Nationalisms Performed through the Death of Héctor Lavoe," in *Situating Salsa: Global Markets and Local Meanings in Latin Popular Music*, ed. Lise Waxer (New York: Routledge, 2002), 174.

the time. In the picture, Colón is holding his trombone case as if it concealed a gun, a dead body lying at his feet, presumably before being dumped into the East River.

Continuing to pursue this image until 1973, Colón made one of his most truly oppositional statements with his 1971 album *Asalto navideño Vol. 1* (Christmas Robbery), followed by volume two the next year.[210] Pigeonholed by both supporters and detractors, the twenty-one year old Colón had suddenly recorded two Christmas albums! The albums play with the superimposition of the bad boy- and Christmas-related visual/textual image through the performance of violence and comedy implied in the title and the cover art, which depicts Colón and Lavoe dressed as absurd elves robbing gifts from under a Christmas tree (Vol. 1) or, with the help of Santa Claus himself, from a gas station attendant (Vol. 2). For these albums, Colón reflected on a tradition of folkloric Puerto Rican Christmas music, *aguinaldos*, within the sonic space of his own music. The featured instrument throughout is the *cuatro*, the Puerto Rican relative of the Cuban *tres*, played by Yomo Toro, renowned for his knowledge of Puerto Rican folkloric traditions.[211] Through these albums, his most popular up to that point and one of Fania's largest-grossing albums ever, Colón engaged a broader Caribbean audience, resisted the ghettoization so common of oppositional figures representing minorities, wrestled with the deep conflict between modernity and heritage, and opened salsa to a host of interactive flows of influence.

Significantly, volume one opens with a *bomba*-influenced introduction. Long rejected as a music of the lower, particularly African-related, classes, the use of *bomba*

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[210] *Asalto* can be translated as "mugging" or "Christmas party;" (Rondón, 66).
[211] Rondón, 66.

directly addressed a range of associations, from the African legacy in Puerto Rico, to the forgotten Rafael Cortijo, to the issue of a New Yorker performing the island's folklore.[212] Volume two opens with a samba and includes numerous pan-Latin references to "el pueblo latino," in Colón's clear attempt to reach beyond the Spanish-speaking Caribbean to the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean, contesting historical divisions along lines of colonial heritage. The rest of both albums are an exercise in genre-bending, seamlessly incorporating biting trombones into sweet *aguinaldos* and the small, acoustic *cuatro* into the thunderous *montunos* of Colón's urban sound.

The following year, 1973, at the height of his success and fame throughout Latin America, Colón disbanded his orchestra and quit performing, although he continued to compose, arrange, and produce for others, particularly Hector Lavoe, who became the undisputed superstar of salsa during the mid-1970s. In 1975, Colón released *El bueno, el malo, y el feo* (*The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*), a wide collection of recordings made throughout the previous years, featuring *danzón*, salsa, rock, Puerto Rican folkloric music, Spanish *pasodoble*, and Brazilian bossa nova. Colón himself sang on most of the tracks, with Hector Lavoe appearing only twice on the record. Despite their incredibly popular association, Colón no longer wanted to deal with the increasing drug use and star power of Lavoe, and this record marks their last collaboration, ending one of the most influential collaborations in salsa history.[213]

Later that year, Colón and Mon Rivera co-released *Se chavó el vecindario* (*There Goes the Neighborhood*), a collection of *bombas* and *plenas* arranged by Colón to feature

[212] Flores, 70.
[213] Rondón, 274-275.

salsa-based trombones, piano, bass, and formal structure, while highlighting percussion drawn from the Puerto Rican genres. At the time of the recording, Mon Rivera, a legend in Puerto Rican music credited with first introducing the all-trombone sound to the *conjunto* format in the early 1960s, had fallen from the spotlight, much like Rafael Cortijo. Colón's collaboration served to revive Rivera's career, to spotlight the importance of Puerto Rican *bomba* and *plena* in addition to Afro-Cuban forms in salsa, and to act as an intra-diasporic homage to a critical early figure in the popular music of Puerto Ricans.[214] Although neither of these albums sold well, they further distanced Colón from the bad boy image and aggressive salsa sound he had helped to create and popularize.[215]

Colón's next recordings, his first entirely self-conceived recordings since 1973, were produced in 1977, taking place in a very different environment than that of *El malo* a decade earlier. His concept album *El Baquiné de los angelitos negros* was produced as an all-instrumental ballet that featured his traditional version of salsa alongside many other influences, including West African, Afro-Caribbean, and African-American musics, musicians, and instruments.[216] Much of the music on the album is not danceable, and once again Colón avoided any coherent approach to genre; as a result, it did not sell well and was quickly forgotten, surviving only through a dedicated cult following.[217] The album did, however, help to prepare the salsa world for his ground-breaking

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[214] Flores, 53.
[215] Rondón, 275.
[216] Rondón, 275-276.
[217] Rondón, 65.

collaborations with Panamanian singer Rubén Blades (1948-), which produced the best-selling salsa album to date, *Siembra.*

Singer, composer, actor, lawyer, and politician, Blades brought a revolutionary Latin voice and spirit to the New York salsa scene of the 1970s. His first appearance, on Pete Rodríguez's 1970 album *De Panamá a Nueva York, Pete Rodríguez presenta a Rubén Blades*, was given little notice by a public that associated Rodríguez with the now-waning boogaloo sound of his mid-1960s hits, especially "I Like It Like That." However, this album did present the basic concepts that would bring Blades great fame within the decade, principally his long-form compositions and the subject matter of his lyrics. In the song "Juan González," Blades narrates the story of a guerilla fighter killed in the mountains, within the limits of a conservative verse-*montuno* arrangement.[218] In stark contrast to the traditional *son* themes of love and dancing, or to early salsa's themes of toughness and life in the ghetto, "Juan González" implies parallels to famous revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara and appeals to a broad, revolution-minded Latin American youth. Significantly, after two verses, the traditional length at the time, the song moves to the *montuno*, where Blades continues to narrate and comment on the story, instead of exhorting the listeners to dance or discussing himself and the band, as was usual. The line Blades's writes for the *coro*, "The mountain is in mourning/Because

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[218] For a discussion of thematic recurrences in Blades's narratives, see Frank M. Figueroa, "Rubén Blades and His Cast of Characters," *Latin Beat Magazine*, June-July 1997. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0FXV/is_n5_v7/ai_19491545/?tag=content;col1 (accessed March 14, 2010).

they've killed Juan González," and the closing sounds of machine-gun fire mark a drastic step away from the messages of early salsa.[219]

Following the disappointing results of *De Panamá a Nueva York*, Blades returned to Panama to finish his law degree at the Universidad Nacional de Panama. In 1974, though, he was already back in New York, working in the mailroom of Fania Records while writing songs for Fania's major artists. That year, the singer Ismael Miranda recorded Blades's "Cipriano Armenteros," telling the story of a Panamanian bandit from 1806. With the long-popular Miranda, Blades' song became a major hit, inaugurating the "narrative salsa" movement, and was followed the next year with a sequel, "Vuelve Cipriano" ("Return Cipriano").[220] Later that year, Willie Colón hired Blades to record his song "El Cazanguero," written during Blades' university days, for his album *El bueno, el malo, y el feo*. This recording allowed Blades to display his considerable vocal talents, his insistence on formal schemes based around the expression of text unique to each song rather than adhering to the traditional verse-*montuno* binary, and his desire to include musical elements beyond the Cuba-New York-Puerto Rico nexus.[221] Blades's concepts fit very well with the experiment-minded Colón, and "El Cazanguero" became one of the most popular songs on the album, in spite of the presence of the star Hector Lavoe on the album's two opening tracks.[222]

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[219] Translated in Rondón, 277.

[220] Rondón, 130, 278.

[221] "El Cazanguero" includes the Brazilian *pandeiro* (similar to a tambourine) and *cuica* (a friction drum) and samba-influenced rhythmic settings.

[222] Rondón, 278-279.

In 1977, *Metiendo mano: Willie Colón presents Rubén Blades* introduced the Colón/Blades partnership to the public on a grand scale. Featuring Blades' narratives, an old Cuban *son*, a *bolero* (ballad genre), two songs by contemporary salsa composers, and an urban adaptation of Cuban folklore, *Metiendo mano* displayed the duo's ability to smoothly amalgamate their wide-ranging interests and potential to the most receptive audience Colón had enjoyed since 1973. The song "Pablo Pueblo," written while Blades was a student, sought to highlight the struggles of common life, particularly those of the Latin American ghettos, and became an anthem throughout the Caribbean.[223] It was the first major salsa hit throughout Latin America to voice specifically a pan-Latin solidarity. In the words of César Miguel Rondón, "salsa was a popular music created to give voice to the lived realities of the *barrio* where it was born," highlighting the lyrics:

> A man returns in silence
>
> Weary from his work...
>
> To the street corner
>
> With its streetlights, its garbage, its noisy cantinas...
>
> Pablo Pueblo, son of the cry and the street,
>
> Son of the misery and the hunger,
>
> Son of the alley and the pain.[224]

Rather than producing tongue-twisters, word play, or tropicalized topics, Blades focused his efforts on producing messages of empowerment and solidarity in reaction to disenfranchisement. Choosing to disseminate these messages through salsa, Blades

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[223] Padura Fuentes, 47.

[224] Quote and translation, Rondón, 280.

contested the populist-intellectual dialectic commonly marking hegemonic Euro-American cultural values, authenticating his pan-Latin stance of resistance.

The following year, 1978, Colón and Blades released the best-selling salsa album to date, *Siembra* (*Sowing*), featuring songs centered around the image of common toil and struggle referred to by the title. Excluding "Ojos" by Johnny Ortiz, all of the songs were written by Blades. On the opening track, "Plástico," Blades counterposes superficial people, "She was a plastic girl like many that we see/Like those who when agitated sweat Chanel No. 3," with his picture of Latin Americans, "people of flesh and bones who do not sell themselves out," finishing with the line "to that united race that Bolívar dreamed about."[225] On the album's biggest single, one of the most popular salsa songs to date, "Pedro Navaja," Blades retells the Mackie Messer/Mack the Knife story of Bertholt Brecht and Kurt Weill in a modern New York setting, altering the well-known story at the point when Pedro Navaja stabs his female victim:

> Where suddenly a gunshot burst out like a cannon...
>
> And Pedro Navaja fell on the curb as he saw the woman
>
> With the gun in her hand, mortally wounded, and telling him
>
> 'I thought today is not my day, I'm on a bad streak,
>
> But Pedro Navaja, you're worse, you're worthless."[226]

A far cry from songs of heartsick lovers and "sensual mulattas who dance in the fields," Blades' messages of pan-Latino solidarity, of urban/migratory realities, and of the

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[225] Rondón, 281.

[226] Translation http://www.maestravida.com/PNenglish.html (accessed March 21, 2010).

empowerment of historically silenced voices began a movement referred to as "*salsa consciente*" ("conscious salsa").[227]

Equally important to the words of Blades and the conscious salsa movement was the musical direction of Willie Colón, whose continuous, relentless experimentation with form, genre, and tradition provided him with a unique musical standpoint from which to set Blades' long narratives. Harmonically, Colón's language on *Siembra* is much broader than the tonic/sub-dominant/dominant nexus featured a decade earlier, employing remote modulations, extended and non-tonal sonorities, pedal points, and enriched harmonic progressions. His approach to genre and form differs from his mid-1970s albums, in which each song abruptly featured a different genre, as he utilizes multiple genres within individual songs as a means of maintaining forward motion, and marking formal divisions, through Blades' extended narratives. For instance, "Plástico" consistently transitions between disco, *son*, *bomba*, and mambo, variously using pedal point interludes and non-repeating harmonic progressions to slow and obscure growth toward the climactic *montuno/diablo* section before fading the track out over a bass/trombone pedal point ostinato. Thus, the conscious salsa sound referred as much to Colón's pan-American, pan-historical sonic palette as to Blades' extended chronicles, with *Siembra* as a prime document of Latin American political and social struggles of the late 1970s.[228]

Two years later, in 1980, Jerry Masucci sold Fania Records amidst managerial chaos and declining record sales, *Siembra* excepted, as the dancing public had turned

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[227] Rondón, 281.

[228] Patria Román-Velázquez, "The Embodiment of Salsa: Musicians, Instruments, and the Performance of a Latin Style and Identity," in *Ethnomusicology: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Jennifer C. Post (New York: Routledge, 2006), 298-300.

overwhelmingly toward disco and Dominican *merengue*. Over the previous decade, Masucci had built Fania into a hegemonic presence in New York's Latin music industry, buying out and consolidating nearly all other record labels producing salsa.[229] Whereas Willie Colón had created salsa that reflected lived urban experiences, vast musical experimentation, and sociopolitical posturing, the great majority of Fania's output reflected creative director Johnny Pacheco's taste for a more conservative sound. Pacheco's approach was heavily indebted to the recordings of the already traditionalist group La Sonora Matancera, a *son* group that had been widely popular in Cuba since the 1930s for their rehearsed, polished arrangements and, in the 1950s, a four-trumpet brass section. Pacheco even appropriated much of La Sonora Matancera's repertoire, simply repackaging it with updated arrangements and labeling it salsa – a practice, termed *matancerization*, for which he has been widely criticized.[230]

Throughout the 1970s, Masucci favored Pacheco's traditional sound as a consistent return on investment, tolerating the erratic sales of an artist such as Willie Colón for the prestige (read authenticity) he lent the label and for the occasional blockbuster album. Masucci was widely condemned by Fania's recording artists for his exploitative practices, using his recording/distribution monopoly to strong arm musicians into severe artistic and financial compromises. Above all, Masucci developed Fania, and salsa, toward a superstar mentality through numerous tours, recordings, and concert films of the Fania All-Stars – a group made up only of band leaders built to highlight Fania's

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[229] Negus, 148.
[230] Manuel, "Puerto Rican Music"; Rondón, 135-136.

most famous singers through standardized arrangements of hit songs.[231] Of these singers, Celia Cruz (1925-2003) became the most consistent, and least problematic, attraction, further authenticating Fania with the crown jewel of 1950s Cuban *son*. Although the conservative salsa sound covers the output of numerous talented musicians, this thesis will focus on the figure of Cruz, Fania's marketing of her, and her album *Celia & Johnny*, produced by Johnny Pacheco, as musically and ideologically representative of the conservative movement.

Widely recognized as one of the greatest singers of the twentieth century, Celia Cruz rose to fame in Cuba after being hired as the lead singer of La Sonora Matancera in 1950. Throughout the decade, the group tirelessly crisscrossed Latin America, and while on tour in 1960 Cruz and the members of La Sonora Matancera defected and moved to New York. While La Sonora Matancera struggled to find relevance for their music in New York, Cruz found work fronting the major orchestras of the mambo era, particularly Tito Puente's. In the early 1970s, Johnny Pacheco signed her to Fania Records, and the 1974 recording *Celia & Johnny* marked the beginning of her aggressive marketing as a salsa singer.[232] Known as "La reina de la salsa" ("The Queen of Salsa"), Cruz recorded over seventy albums, featuring many folkloric and modern Latin American musics, and was the only singer from the 1950s, 1960s, or 1970s to maintain strong record sales for new projects through the end of the century. Throughout her career, Cruz succeeded in

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[231] Washburne, *Sounding Salsa: Performing Latin Music in New York City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 22.

[232] Frances Aparicio, "La Lupe, La India, and Celia: Toward a Feminist Genealogy of Salsa Music," in *Situating Salsa: Global Markets and Local Meanings in Latin Popular Music*, ed. Lise Waxer (New York: Routledge, 2002), 140.

the extremely male-dominated world of Latin popular music through her undeniable presence as a musician and an entertainer, regularly contesting the feminine stereotypes that had been pushed onto so many other female performers during the course of her career.[233]

Although her musical skills and uplifting messages to both women and Latinos have never been questioned, some debate her standing as a salsa singer. Rondón, who defines salsa as the contestatory urban experience as exemplified by Willie Colón, claims that although Cruz covered a wide repertoire she did not truly alter her *son*-based style, nor address topical sociopolitical issues, labeling her music as a continuation of the Cuban tradition. Here his primary concern is to address Masucci's intentionally misleading marketing strategies that appropriated and profited from Cuban sources in an era of forced Cuban silence – a topic that Cruz did not discuss.[234] Cruz, true to form, avoided the discussion simply by noting that she was a Cuban singing her music, regardless of the label, "salsa is Cuban music with another name. It's mambo, chachachá, rumba, *son* … all the Cuban rhythms under one name."[235] In so doing, she was able to access and utilize her sociomusical authenticity to override academic speculations into, or to feign ignorance of, the business machine behind her success.

In rebuttal, others have pointed out her tenuous position, that of an uneducated, Spanish-speaking, black, female, Cuban musician in a U.S. hostile to each of those

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[233] Aparicio, *Listening to Salsa.*
[234] Rondón, 85-87.
[235] Morales, 57.

communities.[236] This ultra-minority status likely forced a distinct shape to her negotiation of fame, severely limiting her access to the political/musical avenues that were easily open to a "revolutionary" such as Rubén Blades, a white, university-educated male who graduated from Harvard Law School in 1985, appeared in multiple Hollywood movies, and ran for president of Panama in 1994. In addition, Aparicio disputes the traditional notion of Cruz's apolitical stance through her popular re-gendering of the popular song "Usted abusó" ("You Abused Me"), "from that of a male diatribe against a woman to that of a feminist anthem against sexual abuse and domestic violence."[237] In Cruz's own words, "When people hear me sing, I want them to be happy, happy, happy. I don't want them thinking about when there's not any money, or when there's fighting at home. My message is always *felicidad* - happiness."[238] The discourse regarding Cruz's historical status exposes culturally inscribed value judgments placed on gender, artistic purpose (serious/popular), and race in negotiating authenticity/appropriation – rendered particularly poignant by her massive commercial success and artistic respect before, during, and away from salsa.

Whether Cruz was a *salsera* or not, whether she talked about politics or not, *Celia & Johnny* catapulted her to the apex of the traditional salsa scene in 1974, where she

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[236] Deborah Pacini Hernandez, "Dancing with the Enemy: Cuban Popular Music, Race, Authenticity, and the World-Music Landscape," *Latin American Perspectives* 25, no. 3 (May 1998): 118. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2634169 (accessed February 23, 2010).

[237] Aparicio, *Listening to Salsa*, 173-174.

[238] Jon Pareles, "Celia Cruz, Petite Powerhouse of Latin Music, Dies at 77," *New York Times*, July 17, 2003, Arts section. http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/17/arts/celia-cruz-petite-powerhouse-of-latin-music-dies-at-77.html (accessed January 27, 2010).

would remain for the rest of her life.[239] The album was full of old *sones*, of Afro-Puerto Rican *bomba* and Afro-Peruvian *landó* arranged within *son montuno* formal schemes, and of a few new *sones* written in the older style to best establish Cruz's long-recognized skills for a new audience. Nearly all of the songs follow the standardized *son montuno* format of verse-*montuno*-instrumental solo-*montuno*, with *matancerized* trumpet introductions and interludes between sections, and without any *diablo* sections. Pacheco's orchestra was a well-rehearsed, polished *conjunto* in the *matancera* tradition of four trumpets, *tres*, piano, bass, and percussion, sounding like an error-free ensemble from the 1950s. As the popularity of salsa exploded throughout the 1970s, this template became the Fania Records workhorse - a mix of *sones*, *boleros* (ballads), and Afro-Latin folklore; *matancerized* formal scheme; *conjunto* instrumentation with varying brass instruments; professional backing bands; and the superstar singer as the *raison d'être*.

The downfall of Fania Records by the end of the decade was marked by several important factors. First, the public had grown increasingly uninterested in the simplistic format and stale arrangements of the traditional salsa movement with which Fania had saturated the market.[240] Secondly, Fania artists such as Rubén Blades had complained vigorously since the middle of the decade about poor management and compensation, and many major artists began leaving Fania once their contractual obligations were finished.[241] Possibly the most important factor, though, was that salsa's popularity outside New York and the U.S. had exploded so quickly that Masucci was unable to

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[239] Aparicio, "La Lupe," 144.
[240] Negus, 147.
[241] Rondón, 130.

extend and perpetuate Fania's monopoly over the regional centers and localized negotiations of salsa that began to appear by the mid 1970s.[242] From the late 1970s into the 1990s, salsa's dislocation from New York and Fania Records created a diverse constellation of musics and music-making practices contextualized, distributed, and negotiated at local, transnational, and global intersections.

Known by the mid-1980s as "el sonero mayor" ("the best *son* singer") and "el sonero del mundo" ("the world's *son* singer"), Venezuelan singer/bassist Oscar D'Leon (1943-) rose to prominence in the oil rich and salsa crazy Caracas of the mid-1970s. The traditional sound forwarded by Fania found great popularity in Venezuela as a result of its resonance with the Cuban *son* of the 1940s and 1950s, which had remained very popular throughout Venezuela. Thriving local scenes developed throughout the country, particularly in Caracas, and both regional groups and international stars toured Venezuela regularly throughout the decade.[243] According to Rondón, salsa sales in Venezuela tripled those of New York and the Caribbean combined by the late 1970s.[244] The most popular group, D'Leon's La Dimensión Latina, was internationally visible enough to produce a successful series of concerts in New York in 1976. However, the collapse of

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[242] Lise Waxer, *The City of Musical Memory: Salsa, Record Grooves, and Popular Music in Calí, Colombia* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 20.

[243] Waxer, "*Llegó la Salsa*: The Rise of Salsa in Venezuela and Colombia," in *Situating Salsa: Global Markets and Local Meanings in Latin Popular Music*, ed. Lise Waxer (New York: Routledge, 2002), 220-222.

[244] Rondón, 222.

international oil prices in the early 1980s had a dire impact on the Venezuelan economy, destroying the infrastructure that had provided the nation's massive support of salsa.[245]

D'Leon's first major hit with La Dimensión Latina, "Llorarás" ("You Will Cry") from the 1975 album *Dimensión Latina 75*, was recognized by many New York audiences as a foreign product. Featuring a memorable piano *montuno* and tuneful trombone refrain, the song nevertheless did not feature either the prominent percussion section or the aggressive rhythmic feel common to many New York groups. Instead, the principal focus of "Llorarás" was D'Leon's vocal quality and improvisational skill during the call-and-response *montuno*. Through the emphasis on the voice and a relaxed rhythmic feel, D'Leon and La Dimensión Latina – while distinctly a product of the Fania era – proudly exhibited a clear debt to the Cuban *son*, which were neither forgotten nor actively silenced in Venezuela.[246]

Through their proximity to the older Cuban tradition, La Dimension Latina's successful New York concerts in 1976 challenged the sociomusical values that undergirded the New York salsa scene. In short, La Dimensión Latina danced together, Willie Colón danced *if* he felt it.[247] Musicians growing up in New York were heir to a tradition that bestowed greater cultural value on autonomous music, divorced from the effort to entertain through movement, appearance, or calculation. Through this lens, many New York-based salsa musicians interpreted the uniformed, choreographed ensembles of the Machito and His Afro-Cubans or the mambo bands of Dámaso Pérez

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[245] Waxer, "*Llegó la Salsa*," 224-228.
[246] Rondón, 220.
[247] Rondón, 223-225; Waxer, "*Llegó la Salsa*," 229.

Prado and Tito Puente as having pandered to the prejudices and values of the hegemonic white audience.[248]

Much as happened earlier in the U.S. with the counterculture reactions of bebop and late 1960s/early 1970s rock, salsa musicians largely moved to authenticate their oppositional stance through a growing disassociation with entertainment, viewed as mass-culture commercialism. Interestingly, whereas African-American bebop musicians contested marginalization by cultivating an ultra-sophisticated, anti-dance, elitist image applauded by cultural norms, Latino musicians raised in New York asserted the image of the anti-hero deviant consciously challenging cultural norms. In both cases, the marginalized community reinforced the hegemonic cultural dialectic of art vs. entertainment in order to access this confrontational position. The developments in rock, which attempted to enmesh issues such as art/entertainment or race/class/status, largely grew from *within* the hegemonic population, a location that allowed for the fundamental rescripting of hegemonic sociocultural values central to the identity, and authenticity, of the movement.

So, when La Dimensión Latina choreographed their appearance and their stage show, they differentiated themselves from the sociomusical matrix of New York. Instead, they maintained ties to Latin Caribbean cultural values in which the quality of the music was often judged by its ability to entertain, particularly to encourage dancing.[249] According to Rondón, this value system "emphasizes that the music, in addition to its own quality, innovations, and variations as music, also carries within itself

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[248] Román-Velázquez, 307.
[249] Román-Velázquez, 310.

the condition of the dance."[250] Many other highly visible Caribbean groups, such as Puerto Rico's El Gran Combo or Colombia's Orquesta Guayacán, have been known for their choreographed wardrobe and dancing, as well. The popularity of La Dimensión Latina's stage show in New York grew partly from the chance to reaffirm distant cultural values within the diaspora, and marked the beginning of a shift in interest away from the New York sound and style among much of the salsa fan base.[251]

In 1984, the song "Cali Pachanguero" ("The Partying City of Cali") became a major hit in Colombia, becoming a part of the standard international repertoire for many salsa groups by the end of the decade. Performed by Grupo Niche from Cali, Colombia, the song memorialized the city popularly referred to as "el sucursal del cielo" ("heaven's outpost").[252] At the turn of the 1980s, while the Venezuelan economy shrank and Caracas faded from the salsa spotlight, Cali's economy had begun to experience a localized explosion related to the rise of drug cartels and cocaine trafficking. Wealthy cartel members financed luxury nightclubs and lavish private parties, creating a constant demand for salsa, at times providing local salsa bands with uniforms and instruments.[253] By the mid-1980s, through the popularity of "Cali Pachanguero," the infusion of money into the local salsa scene by cartel-related impresarios, and the international visibility of its December *Feria* (Carnival) which increasingly featured international salsa stars and

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[250] Rondón, 224.
[251] Washburne, *Sounding Salsa*, 18.
[252] Waxer, *The City of Musical Memory*, 153.
[253] Waxer, *Situating Salsa*, 236.

marathon concerts/dance competitions, Cali's reputation as a salsa-centered party hub was reflected in its self-appointed title of "World Capital of Salsa."[254]

This demand reflected decades of intense *Caleño* (citizen of Cali) engagement and identification with Afro-Caribbean music in spite of Cali's location near Colombia's Pacific coast. From the 1920s to the 1980s, collecting and listening to records became a central part of *Caleño* culture, based around the performative acts of dance or connoisseurship rather than musical production. The unique dance culture that developed, light-footed and fast, dictated a taste for uptempo music by playing 33 r.p.m. discs at 45 r.p.m., so much that when New York boogaloo stars Richie Ray and Bobby Cruz played at the 1968 December *Feria* (Carnival) they were requested to increase their tempos in order to suit the dancers.[255] Thus, before the economic conditions necessary for a live music scene were present, *Caleños* had already exerted agency in defining a local sociomusical identity.

The most visible salsa band to develop from Cali's live scene, Grupo Niche was founded in 1978 by Jairo Varela and Alexis Lozano. Before cultivating an international sound and image in the late 1980s, the group developed a crisp, light sound based in part on the *típico* (traditional) models of popular Caribbean groups, such as those of Oscar D'Leon, rather than the heavy, aggressive style of the New York bands. In particular, the percussion was intentionally light and played directly on top of the beat, an intentional reflection of the rhythmic styles present in the Afro-Colombian music of the Pacific

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[254] Waxer, "'*En Conga, Bonga y Campana*:' The Rise of Colombian Salsa," *Latin American Music Review* 21, no. 2 (Autumn-Winter 2000): 128-129, http://www.jstor.org/stable/780450 (accessed December 1, 2009).

[255] Waxer, *Situating Salsa*, 234-235.

coastal region.[256] This percussion sound best facilitated the execution of Cali's unique dance style, an example of the above-mentioned prioritization, rather than exclusion, of dance. Horn parts, both trumpets and trombones, featured short, clipped phrases, and the overall focus of the music is on the voice, in particular the lyrics. Grupo Niche, while finding a sonic medium capable of expressing the *Caleño* dance style, derived much of its early impact in Colombia from lyrics that consciously referenced Colombian locations/themes. One such song, "Buenaventura y Caney," begins with the assertion of a distinct Colombian character, referencing the Caney bar in the Pacific port city of Buenaventura, within the acknowledgement of a greater Caribbean diasporic character:

> To New York today, let them pardon
> That I don't dedicate my song to them,
> To Panama and Venezuela
> To all, all the little brothers,
> Grupo Niche begs pardon,
> But it's not our fault,
> That on the Pacific Coast,
> There's a town that we carry
> In our souls, that really strikes deep.[257]

While the lyrics speak to a specifically Colombian character, and in spite of international popularity, Grupo Niche was criticized outside of Colombia for the *cruzado* (crossed *clave*) arrangements on their albums. In response, Varela hired La Dimensión

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[256] Waxer, "The Rise of Colombian Salsa," 134.
[257] Waxer, "The Rise of Colombian Salsa," 130-132.

Latina co-founder Cesar Monge in 1987 to help the band and to rewrite problematic arrangements. Later that year, Grupo Niche released *Historia Musical* with the updated versions of the band's previous hits, featuring arrangements that would be maintained in live performances from this point onward, indicating the desire to produce a respected, polished product equal to those of other Caribbean locations. This preference for pan-Caribbean standards over local practice grew in part from the continued prominence of a tradition- and record-based culture, and from an engagement with the Caribbean from a uniquely Colombian identity/location that nevertheless met culturally inscribed notions of authenticity.[258]

By the end of the 1980s, the world of salsa had grown extremely diffuse. Willie Colón had released a string of rather unsuccessful attempts, partly due to his weak voice, to fuse modern pop instrumentation within his salsa aesthetic.[259] Rubén Blades had incorporated such a mélange of Latin American musics as to lose touch with a strictly salsa audience.[260] The audience in New York had declined after a decade of hip-hop, partially born from Puerto Ricans in many of the same *barrios* that spawned boogaloo and salsa.[261] Oscar D'Leon and other Caribbean stars toured regularly, maintaining highly polished professional bands that played accurate, precise reproductions of earlier hits.[262] By this time, Puerto Rico had become the center of salsa production, dominated by the sounds of *salsa romántica*, a movement that highlighted love songs, lush

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[258] Waxer, *The City of Musical Memory*, 173-175.
[259] Rondón, 300.
[260] Rondón, 287-288.
[261] Flores, 115-118.
[262] Rondón, 290

arrangements, U.S. pop music influences, and glamorous solo singers such as "El caballero de la salsa" ("The Gentleman of Salsa") Gilberto Santa Rosa.[263]

Although transnational flows of influence and activity had been clear in salsa for years, it remained a music that was ultimately authenticated through its production by members of the Latin Caribbean. Thus, the warm acceptance of Japan's popular Orquesta de la Luz in New York at the Madison Square Garden Salsa Festival in 1989, and subsequent Billboard Tropical Chart-topping album *Salsa caliente del Japón*, marked an important transformation in the nature of salsa production.[264] Several years later, the collective Africando released its first album, *Trovador*, featuring the collaboration of professional salsa musicians from New York with vocalists and instrumentalists from West Africa, primarily Senegal. Orquesta de la Luz activated acceptance into the greater salsa community through their flawless creation and execution of salsa arrangements, rhythmic feels, formal schemes, and lyrical inventiveness, playing with East-West inferences in pieces such as "Arroz con salsa" ("Rice with salsa") and "Somos diferentes" ("We Are Different").[265] Africando, on the other hand, asserted salsa's ability as a genre to absorb and accommodate varied international modes of music and musical production.[266]

Throughout the 1990s, then, salsa continued to emerge from its status as a transnational, Latin music. On one hand, characterized by variable flows of influence,

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[263] Negus, 134; Washburne, *Sounding Salsa*, 170.

[264] Aparicio, *Listening to Salsa*, 74-75.

[265] Shuhei Hosokawa, "Salsa No Tiene Fronteras: Orquesta de la Luz and the Globalization of Popular Music," in *Situating Salsa: Global Markets and Local Meanings in Latin Popular Music*, ed. Lise Waxer (New York: Routledge, 2002), 290.

[266] Boggs, 350.

salsa had become a blanket that continuously incorporated various musics and identities within locally negotiated modes of interpretation and meaning, as in the *típico* or *romántica* movements. On the other hand, salsa had proven capable of functioning as a defined genre for authentic sociomusical expression beyond ties to stereotypes of location and/or identity, as in the case of Orquesta de la Luz. By the turn of the millennium, salsa had truly become an internationally-recognized, locally-contextualized global popular music with dense, polyphonic narratives of history and identity.

CONCLUSION

The previous chapters represent an attempt to situate the initial and ongoing creation of salsa within both a continuum and the continuous. They address Leonardo Padura Fuentes' question "does salsa exist?" by positioning genre formation as an outgrowth of accumulated and unfolding sociocultural processes and (re)signification, rather than of technical musical developments.[267] Creating salsa in late 1960s/early 1970s New York, Willie Colón sounded a message indebted to Cuban traditions but thoroughly born of, and directed toward, a modern urban *barrio* aesthetic. Creating salsa in early 1980s Cali, Grupo Niche voiced a message of locality within an increasingly amorphous pan-Latin tradition, acknowledging technical requisites of negotiated musical authenticity without sacrificing expressive agency. Creating salsa and claiming salsa, then, result from lived dialogic transactions between varied situations of sociocultural factors such as memory, location, and identity.

The subtitle of Chapter 3, "The Salsa Imaginary," refers to the ever-negotiated state of salsa, polyphonically situated within dialectics of past/present, tradition/modernity, and difference/solidarity, among others. Throughout the research material consulted in support of this thesis, no author dared to brave a definition of salsa along purely musical terms, referring, if at all, to issues of sociomusical (re)signification. In my opinion, salsa is best approached as a product of geo-sociocultural imaginings situated within sonic identities continuously negotiated through time. This standpoint effectively contests such essentialized notions as salsa existing only as an appropriation

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[267] Leonardo Padura Fuentes, *Faces of Salsa: A Spoken History of the Music*, trans. Stephen J. Clark (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003), 183.

of Cuban music or as one style/mode of salsa having more authenticity than another. The salsa imaginary also defies pluralist (anti-essentialist) emphasis on unrelated micro-cultures, as the pan-American ideology and success of Willie Colón's and Rubén Blades' *Siembra* successfully epitomized the general/particular doubleness of Paul Gilroy's anti-antiessentialism.

Born from diverse traditions such as *palo*, rumba, *son*, mambo, *bomba*, jazz, and soul, salsa maps its own distinct territory within historical continuums. At the same time, salsa's ongoing incorporation of Others, whether modern pop ballad production techniques (*salsa romántica*) or Sahelian vocal traditions (Africando), continuously propels the genre in varied directions while furthering its interaction within Other sociomusical continuums. The salsa imaginary reflects less on musical techniques than on the divergent musics and cultural processes created across multiple situations that continue to be bound by the signifier "salsa" and held to the qualifier "authentic" in the expression of individual/group identities.

Throughout, the themes of identity, location, and authenticity interrelate and have guided the information presented in this study. Chapter 1 can be seen as an investigation of the effects of location, and of the collision of locations, on sociomusical procedures. However, this chapter largely frames the consideration within the issue of the sociopolitical status of race in colonial Cuba, emphasizing varied modes through which location channeled cultural discourses. Overlaying the divide of locational conflict, this chapter further addresses the variability of identity formation among slave populations in Cuba in order to produce a historical reading of Afro-Cuba rife with potentialities rather

than absolutes. Thus, the stratifications of ethnicity, geo-socioeconomic status (for instance, slave barracks vs. docks of Matanzas), and performative modes of sociocultural expression, among other factors, created a novel Cuban landscape through which individual agency, however repressed and terrorized, nevertheless persisted. Thus, the practices of the *Abakuá* societies or of *santería* devotees flowered as fully individual traditions, while at the same time rumba became a syncretic expression drawing from diverse traditions. This heterogeneity of experience, a foundation of modernity itself, grounded and characterized later discourses of authenticity in salsa.

Delving within the investigation of location, Chapter 2 faces issues of multi-locationality (migration, cosmopolitanism, transnationalism) from individual- and group-based standpoints. The importance of the implicit acknowledgement during this period of the non-white citizenry, through their increasing participation in military and economic matters – cherished cultural heritages of the ruling class – is difficult to overstate, despite the severe restrictions and manipulations that continued to plague non-white Cubans. This status created increased traffic for music via human movement and became, particularly when combined with the disembodied flows of influence accomplished by newly-disseminated technologies of commercial recording and radio broadcast, a potent actuator of solidarity throughout Cuban society. From the early 1920s interest in an essentialized *afrocubanismo*, however, this chapter contrasts varied individual interpretations in order to diversify and contour the discussion, discussing the musical approaches and travels of the Sexteto Habanero and the Septeto Nacional. In so doing,

the location-based interrogation of identity formation in Chapter 1 gives way to the varied identity-based themes underscoring Chapter 2.

Chronicling the rise of modernity and its discursive commentaries on race, class, and culture within the growing debate over authenticity/appropriation, Chapter 2 hinges on the discussion of four individuals: Arsenio Rodríguez, Cachao López, Dámaso Pérez Prado, and Tito Puente. Over time, musicians and audiences began to assert individual agency by activating unique notions of authenticity, often disembodying locationality through reference to physical/cultural/temporal distance rather than proximity. Thus, Rodríguez's dialogue of blackness, López's multicultural musicality, Pérez Prado's exoticism, and Puente's cultural protectionism all functioned through direct engagement with geosocial Others. Abstract relations to locationality became subsumed under constructions of identity, increasingly aiding the intense transnational circulation and proliferation of Cuban *son* and mambo between World War II and the 1959 Cuban Revolution.

As in Chapter 1, cultural upheaval, migration, and socioeconomic marginalization mark many of the developments in Chapter 3. This context gave rise to the localized identity titled Nuyorican, a term whose doubleness mirrors the simultaneous experience of belonging to two situations without fully belonging to either. From this perspective, identity became a differentially-produced concept within each individual that was increasingly governed through transitive definitions of authenticity. That is, the polyphonic modes of identification present in the 1960s and 1970s often turned toward conceptions of authenticity as abstract mediations among diverse potentialities.

Chapter 3 details in some depth the fluid pathways Willie Colón navigated in constructing and de-constructing multiple notions of authenticity, producing sociomusical messages and meanings that shaped, and were shaped by, ongoing interactions of location and identity. That other musicians, such as Celia Cruz, chose highly different methods and purposes substantiates the claim of a de-centered, negotiated sense of authenticity. That all operated within the confines of the same hegemonic, corporate ideology justifies viewing abstraction and self-determined representation as the overriding modes governing salsa's postmodern discourses of authenticity.

Following the postmodern thread, Chapter 3 also traces the eventual disruption of the Cuba-New York-Puerto Rico triangle of musical, economic, and discursive influence in salsa. From the pristine improvisations and vocal quality of Oscar D'Leon to the reclaimed localness and danceability of Grupo Niche, Latin American artists asserted their difference while appealing to much of the same transnational Latin audience that had been so receptive to the New York salsa dictated by Jerry Masucci and Fania Records. The entry, and acceptance, of Japanese and Senegalese musicians into the milieu in the 1990s re-situated salsa within global continuums and processes, ushering in a renewed investigation and negotiation of identity, location, and authenticity within a gloablized context.

Thus, this study traces many points, people, and places along the continuum within which salsa has been, and continues to be, created and claimed. The primary argument forwarded has advocated that the re-reading of history, culture, and sound necessitate flexible, at times even contradictory, critical positions and maneuvers in order

to further investigate the human act of making music. I hope the message may find its own resonance.

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APPENDIX

GLOSSARY

Abakuá. Secret male society that developed among the *carabalí* in Cuba.

afrocubanismo. A sense of Afro-Cubanness, particularly referring to the *afrocubanismo* movement of the 1920s-1940s.

Aguinaldo. Puerto Rican folkloric music associated with Christmas celebrations.

barracones. Slave barracks, particularly of the large sugar plantations in western Cuba.

batá. Double-headed drums used to accompany *santería* practices.

bomba. Afro-Puerto Rican folkloric tradition featuring singing and polyrhythmic drumming.

bongó. Small, connected pair of drums first associated with *son*.

boogaloo. Latino/African-American hybrid music popular in the 1960s.

cabildo. Mutual aid societies where slaves in Cuba were allowed to congrégate.

cajón. Box drum

campana. Heavy cowbell

carabalí. Cuban name given to slaves brought from the Calabar region, associated with *Abakuá* societies.

changüí. Cuban genre from Oriente featuring constant syncopation but no *clave* – similarities to *son*.

charanga. Orchestra associated with *danzón*, later *pachanga*, featuring flute, violin, piano, bass, *timbales*, and *güiro*.

cinquillo. Five-note rhythmic cell introduced in Cuba by Afro-Haitians.

clave. Two-measure rhythmic cell around which *son* and rumba are organized.

coartación. Cuban legal process by which slaves gained legal rights and could purchase their freedom.

conjunto. *Son* ensemble introduced by Arsenio Rodríguez featuring several trumpets, piano and/or *tres*, bass, *bongó*, and *tumbadora*.

coro. Chorus, particularly in reference to the call-and-response section in *son* and rumba.

cruzado. Crossed, referring to music played out of *clave*.

cuatro. Puerto Rican plucked string instruments featuring four courses of double strings, similar to the Cuban *tres*.

danzón. Cuban genre popular from the late nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century, played by *charangas*, traditionally featuring instrumental music.

descarga. Cuban "jam session" principally associated with recordings released by Cachao López in the late 1950s.

décima. Ten-line poetic form brought to Cuba from Spain.

diablo. Section of *son montuno* popularized by Arsenio Rodríguez featuring interlocking horn ostinati at the climax of the piece.

diana. The first section, sometimes omitted, of a rumba performance, in which the lead singer freely sings meaningless syllables.

estribillo. The repeating call which frames the call-and-response section between the *coro* and an improvising soloist, vocal or instrumental, often found in *son* and rumba.

Feria. Annual carnival celebrations in Cali, Colombia known for salsa performances and competitions.

guagua/catá. An instrument similar to a woodblock that performs an interlocking rhythm with the *clave* in rumba.

guajeo. Repeating melodic/rhythmic cell played by the *tres*, also called a *montuno*.

itótele. The medium-pitched *batá* drum used in the three-drum *batá* ensemble.

iyá. The low-pitched, improvising *batá* drum used in the three-drum *batá* ensemble to communicate between the dancers/participants and the *orishas*.

Lucumí. Cuban name given to slaves brought from Yoruba, associated with *santería*.

mambo. Originally a *montuno* section applied to the end of a *danzón*, later a *son*-based combination of jazz big band instrumentation with Afro-Cuban percussion.

martillo. Hammer, referring to the constant eighth-note pattern played by the *bongó*.

matancera. A stylistic trend associated with conservativism among salsa musicians in the 1970s referring to the Cuban group La Sonora Matancera.

montuno. 1) Repeating melodic/harmonic/rhythmic cell played by the *tres* or the piano in *son* or salsa, sometimes referred to as a *guajeo*. 2) Second section, after the verse, of the traditional *son* formal scheme, featuring a call-and-response *coro*/soloist dialogue.

ñáñigo. An *Abakuá* member.

okónkolo. The high-pitched *batá* drum used in the three-drum *batá* ensemble.

orisha. A deity within the *santería* pantheon.

Oriente. Westernmost province of Cuba prior to its division in 1976.

orú. A *santería* devotional cycle.

pachanga. Brief fad in New York in the early 1960s featuring *charangas* playing fast *danzónes*.

palo. Rhythm associated with *palo monte*.

palo monte. Sacred practices associated with Bantu descendents in Cuba.

palero. One who practices *palo monte*.

plena. Folkloric Afro-Puerto Rican tradition repopularized in Puerto Rico and New York by Rafael Cortijo.

punto guajiro. "Country" or "peasant" music of Spanish farmers in rural Cuba.

quinto. The high-pitched, "talking" *tumbadora* used in the three-drum rumba ensemble as a conversant with the dancers and singers.

rumba columbia. Rumba genre in 6/8 time featuring solo dancers.

rumba yambú. Rumba genre in 4/4 time featuring slow couple dancing.

rumba guaguancó. Rumba genre in 4/4/ time featuring fast couple dancing, known for the presence of the *vacunao*.

rumbero. One who plays rumba.

salidor. The low-pitched *tumbadora* used in the three-drum rumba ensemble.

salsa consciente. A salsa movement featuring pan-Latin ideology, focusing on advanced narrative and musical methods, often associated with Rubén Blades.

salsa romántica. A salsa movement often featuring love songs, lush arrangements, U.S. pop music influences, and glamorous solo singers.

santería. Sacred practices associated with Yoruba descendents in Cuba, featuring *batá* drums and syncretic Catholic/Yoruba traditions.

santero. One who practices *santería*.

son. Widely influential Cuban genre traditionally featuring a two-part, verse/*montuno* format; the primary influence on salsa.

son montuno. Approach to playing *son* developed by Arsenio Rodríguez in which the verse is typically eliminated in favor of various other developmental procedures.

timbales. A pair of kettle drums played with sticks, originally used in *danzón*, later incorporated into many popular genres, including salsa.

típica. A term referring to typical instrumentation and/or stylistic traits, applied at various times to *danzón* and *salsa*.

tres. Cuban plucked string instruments featuring three courses of double strings, similar to the Puerto Rican *cuatro*.

tres golpes. The middle-pitched *tumbadora* used in the three-drum rumba ensemble.

tresillo. Three-note rhythmic cell introduced in Cuba by Afro-Haitians.

tumbadora. Open-bottomed drum often referred to as "conga."

tumba francesa. Cuban genre associated with Afro-Haitians.

tumbao. Repeating melodic/rhythmic pattern traditionally associated with the hocket patterns of the *salidor* and *tres golpes* in rumba; later influencing the bass playing of Cachao López and others.

vacunao. Dance of male/female sexual aggression/avoidance associated with *rumba guaguancó*.