

Orisa Tradtion, Catholicism, And The Construction Of Black Identity In 19th Century Brazil And Cuba

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ÒRÌSÀ TRADITION, CATHOLICISM, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF BLACK IDENTITY
IN 19TH CENTURY BRAZIL AND CUBA

by

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B.A. Columbus State University, 2009

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

This thesis compares the role of the hybridized religious traditions Candomblé and Santería in the construction of identity for people of color in Brazil and Cuba in the 19th century. In particular, it focuses on the development of these traditions within Catholic confraternities and contrasts the use of ethnic and religious categories within them to define “African-ness” and “blackness” as Brazil and Cuba transitioned from slaveholding colonies to post-abolition nation-states. This comparison is illustrated through the examination of each colony’s slave trade and the nature of slavery as it was practiced within them; the analysis of the structure of Ibero-American Catholic practice and the diverse forms of religious expression which resulted from its interaction with Yorùbá òrìsà worship; comparing each colony’s independence and abolition movements and the racial tensions which followed; and contrasting the Brazilian and Cuban hierarchies of color, including the variety of mechanisms that both the enslaved and free people of color employed to navigate the multi-racial societies in which they lived.

ORTHOGRAPHIC NOTE

As much as possible, I have remained faithful to the spelling and diacritic usage for terminology as dictated by its language of origin. This sometimes results in variations when referring to a single concept (for instance: òrìsà, oricha, orixá). Such variations generally do not affect clarity; where confusion might arise, I have attempted to clarify. In addition, I have elected to use Yorùbá spellings when not speaking about either Santería or Candomblé specifically (that is to say, when discussing Yorùbá religion in either Africa or the diaspora generally).

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INTRODUCTION

The trans-Atlantic slave trade in the 19th century brought thousands of Africans from a small region in what is now southwestern Nigeria to the Iberian colonies of Brazil and Cuba. These people, who initially identified themselves by city or region, ultimately coalesced under slavery into a more broadly defined ethnic group – the Yorùbá – who shared the same language, similar customs, and perhaps most importantly, a religious tradition: òrìsà worship. Under the Catholic societies of Brazil and Cuba, the Yorùbá (known as Nagô and Lucumí, respectively) practiced their religion in secret, under the guise of saint veneration within Catholic confraternities. However, two fully hybridized traditions ultimately emerged: Candomblé and Santería. This work concerns how these traditions later formed critical referents in the construction of black identities in post-abolition Brazil and Cuba.

The historiography of the Yorùbá and their descendants is exceptionally rich. Perhaps more than any other African ethnic group to cross the Atlantic in the era of slavery, the Yorùbá captured scholars' attention. This trend began just before the turn of the 20th century and had a far-reaching impact on the study of the African diaspora in the Americas. Their civilization was lauded as exceptionally sophisticated and resilient to Westernization and, simultaneously, as highly adaptable and thus capable of transmission across cultural boundaries. Their language, music, customs, and especially religion have been meticulously studied for over a century, and American scholars likely know more about them than any other African ethnic group thanks to the pioneering efforts of Samuel Johnson, Fernando Ortiz, Lydia Cabrera, Pierre Verger, William

Bascom, and countless others.¹ Of particular interest to many has been the process of transculturation (coined by Ortiz in 1940²) which occurred among people of Yorùbá descent in the slave societies of Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States. That process, and its impact on black identity, forms the foundation of my thesis.

This work contributes to scholarship concerning the Yorùbá diaspora by comparing the ways in which Yorùbá- and Catholic- derived religious traditions – Candomblé and Santería – contributed to the development of identity for people of color in 19th century Brazil and Cuba. Both have been extensively researched and much has been published about their place in Afro-Latin American culture. My intention is to utilize existing research along with primary sources to contrast how ethnic and religious identity as defined within these hybridized traditions were employed in the construction of black identity as Brazil and Cuba transitioned from slaveholding colonies to independent, post-abolition states.

The first chapter breaks down the trans-Atlantic slave trade to Brazil and Cuba, as well as delineating the nature of slavery as it was practiced in both places. It is imperative to understand the way in which slavery was implemented in order to discuss master-slave relations, the distribution of ethnic groups, and the impact these factors would have on religious practice among the enslaved. This chapter relies primarily on published statistics and the respective histories of Brazil and Cuba's slave societies.

¹ See Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas* (1921); Fernando Ortiz, *Los negros esclavos* (1916); Lydia Cabrera, *Yemayá y Ochún* (1980); Pierre Verger, *Fluxo e Refluxo do tráfico de escravos entre o golfo de Benin e a Bahia de Todos os Santos* (1985); William Bascom, *The Sociological Role of the Yoruba Cult-Group* (1944), *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria* (1969). For broader discussions of African religions in the American context, see also the seminal works Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941); E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (1963); Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion* (1978); Roger Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil* (1978).

² Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, trans. Harriet de Onís (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 97.

Chapter 2 addresses religious observance in slaveholding Brazil and Cuba. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the way in which Christianization was carried out in the colonies, as well as pointing to the manifold ways in which people of African descent were able to conceal, reproduce, and adapt their traditional customs under slavery. I follow George Brandon and Paul Johnson in abandoning the terms “syncretism” and “hybrid” as static categories that describe this effect, distinguishing Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Cuban traditions that developed at this time from the “pure” or “original” religions that did not in fact exist. Rather I embrace their approach to religious expression in the colonial context as a process – *hybridizing* – and therefore acknowledge it as a constant building and reshaping of identity that mediated disparate cultures.³ To explain the creation of the hybridized religions Candomblé and Santería, I examine the legal and social “niches” that existed within Ibero-American Catholic culture which allowed them to develop, as well as the influence of Yorùbá culture and cosmology in their genesis. In order to do this, I have made use here of the vast secondary literature on the subject of religion and slavery in both colonies; primary accounts describing religious services and encounters with slaves and slaveholders; and court, ecclesiastical, and legal records that illustrate how Catholic indoctrination was intended to be carried out, the position of Church and state concerning African practices, and the persistence of those practices throughout the slave era.

Chapter 3 describes the transition from slaveholding to abolition within Brazil and Cuba and the impact of both the abolition and independence movements on the status of people of color. The elimination of slavery as a place marker on the social ladder represented a significant challenge to the established racial hierarchy, and both whites and people of color struggled to define their place in relation to each other. In Brazil, this played out within a three-tiered system

³ Paul Christopher Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods: The Transformation of Brazilian Candomblé* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 71-72.

of white, mulatto (*pardo*), and black (*prêto*), while Cuba in many ways followed the United States' formula of a black-white dichotomy (while certainly its racial system was characterized by greater flexibility than that in the U.S.).⁴ By analyzing the mechanisms for social, political, and legal maneuvering for people of color, the strategies of control and "whitening" on the part of both Cuba's and Brazil's governments, and the construction of "blackness" and "African-ness" after abolition, I argue that Candomblé and Santería form critical referents for two different identities. Here, I have utilized works which address construction of ethnic and racial identity and secondary and primary literature concerning slave rebellion, the independence struggles, and abolition.

My conclusion is that in Brazil, Candomblé became associated with blackness and African identity in opposition to whiteness and the West. As a result, ethnic designations within them were reduced to exclusively theological concepts that served primarily to differentiate members and their "cult" houses from each other. In Cuba, because people of color had more effective tools for mobilizing against white oppression at their disposal at the turn of the century, Santería failed to become a rallying point for racial solidarity. It therefore remained tied to Yorùbá ethnic identity, and as such distinguished itself from other African traditions (namely Palo Monte and Abakuá), dispelling the notion that people of color in Cuba were part of a monolithic, undifferentiated "race."

⁴ Aline Helg, "Race and Black Mobilization in Colonial and Early Independent Cuba: A Comparative Perspective," *Ethnohistory* 44, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 54-55; Nancy Morejón and David L. Frye, "Cuba and its Deep Africanity," *Callaloo* 28, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 937.

THE ORIGINS OF HYBRIDIZATION

“...the slave trade was the business that involved the greatest amount of capital investment in the world during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. And a business of this size would never have kept up a classificatory scheme had it not been meaningful...”
--Moreno Fraginals⁵

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade to the Iberian Colonies

The trans-Atlantic slave trade that began after the earliest conquests in the Americas would come to define what slavery meant to the western world. Prior to the establishment of this vast network of ports and trade routes, millions of slaves had already been exported to southwest Asia and had been routinely exchanged in the ongoing internal trade of the African continent.⁶ The slave trade across the Sahara and Indian Ocean was in fact roughly equal in volume to that crossing the Atlantic, but was much more widely dispersed and occurred over many more centuries. In contrast, the peak years of the trans-Atlantic trade took up just one and a half centuries (1680-1830)⁷ and occurred almost exclusively on the western African coast that stretches from what is now Senegal to modern Angola. These differences would result in a very different demographic and cultural impact both on the African continent and in the lands where slaves were transported.

By 1600, the trans-Atlantic slave trade had surpassed the internal and eastern trade in volume and just a century later, slaves had become Africa's number one export. Between the 18th and first half of the 19th century, 80 per cent of all slaves leaving Africa traveled to the Americas.

⁵ As quoted in Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the Links* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 23.

⁶ Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 12-13.

⁷ David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 12.

While most European nations participated in the slave trade to some degree, it would be dominated by the Portuguese, British, French and Dutch until the 19th century.⁸ Spain, meanwhile, relied much more on other nations to supply most of the huge volume of black labor its colonies ultimately demanded.⁹

The Bight of Benin became a region of great importance to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and particularly to the Brazilian and Cuban trades. The key event to the rise of slave exportation from that area seems to have been the reorganization of the trade associated with the emergence of the port at Ouidah, after which essentially all European powers engaged in slave trading began to exploit the Bight of Benin to some degree. The French, English, and Portuguese all built forts at Ouidah, side by side, in 1721.¹⁰ For Spain, whether or not its slaves came from this port depended upon which nation was meeting its labor needs.¹¹ After the British effectively closed the ports of the Niger River Delta – Bonny and Calabar – the ports at Porto Novo, Ouidah, and Lagos (on the coasts of present-day Benin and Nigeria) became the last slave-trading strongholds along the “Guinea Coast.”¹²

Beginning in the late 18th century, the ethnic composition of slaves coming from the Bight of Benin to Bahia in Brazil and to Cuba was dominated by the ethnic group known as the Yorùbá.¹³ While the Yorùbá and their descendants are now scattered throughout West Africa, the Americas, and the Caribbean, their original location was southwest Nigeria (formerly called the “Slave Coast”). Historically, their territory included parts of the modern nations of Benin, Togo,

⁸ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 16, 140.

⁹ Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 21.

¹⁰ Katia M. de Queirós, Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil, 1550-1868*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 11.

¹¹ David Eltis, “The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no.1 (January 2001): 27, 34, 39.

¹² Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 64.

¹³ Eltis, “The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade,” 39.

Cameroon, Mali, Sierra Leone, Senegal and other linguistically compatible areas in West and Central Africa.¹⁴

Prior to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, slavery formed an important part of Yorùbá society. People were routinely captured and taken into indentured servitude in annual inter-kingdom battles, but the nature of slavery in West Africa was markedly different from that practiced in the Americas. Domestic slavery in city-state governments did not strip slaves of their humanity, and social and cultural assimilation was expected between captives and hosts. Being enslaved did not mean being stigmatized, nor was it considered a permanent or heritable condition. Slaves regularly married into the extended families of their captors and received educations, as well as enjoying social and civil liberties. Also, West African slavery was primarily a form of consumption rather than the production-oriented enterprise of the New World system, at least until late in the 19th century, with many African slaves working in the service sectors of concubinage, domestic servitude, entertainment, and education. While few would argue that slavery of any type is a desirable social system, it seems clear that African slavery was at the very least a less dehumanizing type than that practiced by Europeans and Americans across the Atlantic.¹⁵

However, as the demand for slaves by European traders grew, conflict between the city-states increased and the extraction of slaves for the chattel system practiced in the Americas supplanted the slave system West Africans had previously known. Slaves captured in the wars between the Yorùbá kingdom of Oyo and its neighbors in Dahomey and Ilorin in the late 18th and

¹⁴ Faola Ifagboyede, "The Scattering of Oduduwa's Children," in *Òrìsà: Yorùbá Gods and Spiritual Identity in Africa and the Diaspora*, ed. Toyin Falola and Ann Genova (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005), 228-229.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 230; Toyin Falola, "Slavery and Pawnship in the Yoruba Economy of the Nineteenth Century," in *Pawnship, Slavery, and Colonialism in Africa*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy and Toyin Falola (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2003), 116-121, 130.

19th century funneled many slaves into the trade through the port at Ouidah. The collapse of Oyo in 1839 only meant an increase in that traffic.¹⁶ In neighboring cities, weak kings hungry for European goods and desperate not to be invaded themselves, launched campaign after campaign against each other.¹⁷

The adoption of the designation “Yorùbá” by Europeans to apply broadly to all people of the same linguistic group from this area likely dates to these internecine conflicts.¹⁸ It is important to note that prior to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, there was no broad term which identified a single ethnic group known as “the Yorùbá.” The name was, like so many labels, most likely a term originally given by outsiders – “Yorùbá” was first ascribed only to the people of the city Oyo by their Fulani and Hausa neighbors.¹⁹ Similarly, in Brazil, captives from the Bight of Benin were generally known as “Nagô,” a term that appeared in the mid-18th century. Like the term “Yorùbá,” it was derived from a label applied from the outside – *anago* – which the Fon of Dahomey used to designate Yorùbá speakers.²⁰ In Cuba, the Yorùbá were known as “Lucumí,” a designation of more uncertain origin. According to some sources, it is derived from the name of a kingdom northwest of Benin, and may have been the name by which Europeans first referred to Oyo. It has also been speculated that it came from the Yorùbá’s neighbors, who called people from Oyo “Olukumi.” Still others claim it comes from a Yorùbá phrase, “Olukumi,” which means “My confidant” or “My fellow tribesman,” and was used as a form of

¹⁶ Bascom, *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria* (Holt, Reinhart, & Winston, Inc., 1969; repr., Waveland Press, Inc., 1984) 12, 13; Robin Law and Paul E. Lovejoy, “Borgu in the Atlantic Slave Trade,” *African Economic History*, no. 27 (1999): 70-71.

¹⁷ Ifagboyede, “The Scattering of Oduduwa’s Children,” 231.

¹⁸ Bascom, *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria*, 12, 13.

¹⁹ Ifagboyede, “The Scattering of Oduduwa’s Children,” 228-229.

²⁰ Paul Christopher Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods: The Transformation of Brazilian Candomblé* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 64.

address.²¹ What is most significant about these terms is that they actually encompass many subgroups that initially were all linguistically and politically connected but relatively autonomous. At this point, much like in Europe before the age of nationalism, these people identified themselves by their geographical location rather than by ethnic or linguistic group.²² There is, in fact, no evidence that the Yorùbá were all united under Oyo before the 19th century, although that city was very powerful and of great political importance., or that it had been a major source of slaves before the political turmoil of that period.²³

Prior to their forced migration across the Atlantic, then, it is clear that West and West Central Africans had complex group identifications, defined in opposition to multiple others, and characterized by non-rigidity. This fluidity was enhanced under American slavery.²⁴ It is obvious therefore that names of regions or people have to be used and examined carefully. Regardless of its origin, the use of an African ethnonym in any case can be extremely problematic. Aside from the practical problems of empirical data – determining the size of the population, tracing the movements of that population, and so on *ad infinitum* – there is the very real issue of determining what constitutes membership in an ethnic group to begin with.²⁵ In the New World context, Africans were no longer sure of their place and were forced to express their culture in new ways. Even claiming membership in a particular group could be motivated by any number of factors, not the least of which was the claimant's understanding of his or her audience's expectations. Joseph Miller argues that the labels given to those who documented slavery were calculated to

²¹ Mercedes Cros Sandoval, *Worldview, the Orichas, and Santería: Africa to Cuba and Beyond* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2006), 49.

²² Ifagboyede, "The Scattering of Oduduwa's Children," 228-229.

²³ Bascom, *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria*, 6; Miguel Willie Ramos, "La Division de La Habana: Territorial Conflict and Cultural Hegemony in the Followers of Oyo Lukumi Religion, 1850s-1920s," *Cuban Studies* 34 (2003): 41-42.

²⁴ William C. Van Norman, "The Process of Cultural Change Among Cuban Bozales During the Nineteenth Century," *The Americas* 62, no. 2 (October, 2005): 180.

²⁵ Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas*, 48.

tell them what they wanted to hear and, simultaneously, to conceal and protect who else the slaves thought they were. Such behavior, the deliberate misrepresentation of self, was necessitated by slavery, a system which depended on the destruction and manipulation of identities.²⁶

Does this render such labels meaningless? Hardly so. Indeed, for the enslaved, the choice to identify one's self one way or another was also motivated by the need to establish connections that had been destroyed by the initial isolation and inherent instability of enslavement. The loss of pre-existing connections represented a key deprivation and violation of dignity that slaves sought to overcome. The enslaved naturally sought solace in the company of others and therefore constructed identities of a social sort. The identities in Africa lost through capture were only attainable through these connections with others, and claiming them meant an effort to gain recognition in coherent New World communities, to come back to life after what Orlando Patterson termed the "social death" that was enslavement.²⁷ Out of necessity, slaves utilized new experiences and relationships, along with their memories and traditions, to build lives of their own if allowed to remain in one place long enough to consolidate social connections that validated their being. Survival meant continual rebuilding of new connections out of a succession of transitory circumstances over which they had little, if any, control, and they struggled to restore a sense of community and build new relationships to survive and to become visible to one another in the disruption and anonymity that typified slavery in the Americas.²⁸

²⁶ Joseph C. Miller, "Retention, Reinvention, and Remembering: Restoring Identities through Enslavement in Africa and under Slavery in Brazil," in *Enslaving Connections: Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil during the Era of Slavery*, ed. José C. Curto and Paul E. Lovejoy (New York: Humanity Books, 2004), 82, 83.

²⁷ James Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 32-34.

²⁸ Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas*, 57; Miller, "Retention, Reinvention, and Remembering," 83, 109-110; Van Norman, "The Process of Cultural Change Among Bozales," 183.

It is somewhat ironic that the nations of Europe, although they readily entered the trans-Atlantic slave trade, had been free of full chattel slavery of this kind since the medieval period.²⁹ By the 15th century in Europe, the concept of the “insider” (the unenslavable, as opposed to the enslavable “outsider”) applied to essentially all people of the European subcontinent. Some were non-white, but very few were non-Christian.³⁰ Just a century later, West Africans in particular had virtually replaced all other ethnic and religious groups in the European slave markets. The indigenous people that worked the plantations of the Canary Islands and the few Amerindians on the Iberian peninsula were all ultimately freed. Muslims had largely left and united under Turkish rule. The Turks had also closed off the Slavic and Balkan sources of slaves.³¹ African slavery, therefore, had become the only chattel slavery Europeans any longer recognized.

It is also worth noting that while Europeans had discretion in terms of where and from whom they would purchase slaves and may have had preferences for certain characteristics (sex, age, or ethnic group), Africans themselves – directly or indirectly – largely determined who entered the trade. The options available to Europeans generally depended on which groups were in conflict, which trade routes were most in use, and what the demands were in the internal slave trade. This is not to say that Europeans did not exacerbate internecine wars or exert economic pressure to increase the flow of slaves – they absolutely did – nor does it imply that they did not make every effort to procure specific “types.” Rather, it simply means that foreign slavers were largely at the mercy of African conditions and more often than not took what they could get.³²

To illustrate, consider the dominance of men among slave numbers throughout much of the slave

²⁹ Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*, 6-7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 60, 27-29.

³¹ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 27.

³² Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*, 146-147; Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 146.; Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas*, 51, 56; David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, “Was the Slave Trade Dominated by Men?” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, no. 2 (Autumn 1992): 248-249, 255.

era in the Americas. The counter-demand for female slaves in the Indian and African internal trades explains in part this sexual imbalance. In African polygynous societies, purchasing slave women was an efficient way for a man to increase his social status and wealth and to grow his family. Indeed, when one considers that a slave woman had no obligation to an extended family of her own and that women provided essential domestic services and agricultural labor to their families, purchasing a woman outright could be quite a wise investment. This means that when choosing which slaves to hand over to Europeans, Africans often withheld women to keep for trade among themselves or to send to the Indian market where they fetched higher prices. In terms of the slave populations of the Americas, then, this contributed to a relatively common ratio of two men to every woman.³³ Thus, conditions on the African continent in many ways determined what slavery in the Americas would look like.

The Slave-Based Economies of Brazil and Cuba

The Portuguese engaged in slave trading from the earliest days to the very last. By the time Brazil began to really demand slave labor, Portugal had established long-standing trading partnerships and political ties with Africans that dated back to the 1500s.³⁴ West central Africa was the first and most important source for Brazilian slaves, but it was hardly the only region the Portuguese exploited. The trade route between the ports in the Bight of Benin and Bahia, of particular significance for the purposes of this work, was established in the last quarter of the 18th century; four out of five slaves went to Bahia from the Bight of Benin, while a similar proportion went from west central Africa to the other major slave regions in Brazil.³⁵ In terms of total volume, only the British can be counted as real competitors with Portugal in transporting slaves.

³³ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 12-13, 147-148.

³⁴ Ivan Elbl, "Slaves Are a Very Risky Business...: Supply and Demand in the Early Atlantic Slave Trade," in *Enslaving Connections* (see note 25), 31, 35, 36, 42-47; Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 16.

³⁵ Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment," 26-27, 39.

But, once other European powers abolished slave trading in the first quarter of the 19th century, the Portuguese were again the major (and indeed, almost the only) dealers in African slaves, accounting for 71 per cent of slaving vessels after 1810.³⁶

Because the Spanish sold slaving rights to various nationals throughout most of the slave era, their colonies obtained slaves from all along the African coast depending on which European nation had the contract (*asiento*) and which African regions were then being exploited.³⁷ The case of Cuba dramatically demonstrates this. It received the greatest diversity of African peoples, most within a single century, and with no more than 28 per cent of arrivals coming from any one African region (the only region not well-represented being the Gold Coast).³⁸ Although virtually every European power and the United States ultimately brought slaves to Cuba's ports, the two nations that most served Cuba's demand for slave labor were Great Britain and Portugal. This remained true even after Spain began its own slaving operations and opened the slave trade to all nations.³⁹ As a result, the slaving patterns of these two nations were reflected in the demography of the slave population in Cuba. For example, in the late 18th and early 19th century, groups such as the Congo and Carabalí from west central Africa together made up nearly half of slave ethnicities recorded on Cuban sugar and coffee estates, while in the last decades of the trade, the Yorùbá from the Bight of Benin made up a third by themselves.⁴⁰

In terms of sourcing slaves, trading ships limited themselves to one region more often than is commonly thought. The practice of stopping at multiple ports in a single voyage was expensive and logistically impractical. The "fixed depot," where employees were permanently

³⁶ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 150; Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade," 29.

³⁷ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 152.

³⁸ Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade," 39.

³⁹ Leslie B. Rout, Jr., *The African Experience in Spanish America* (Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 1976), 41-61; Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade," 30.

⁴⁰ Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas*, 36.

stationed and could gather large numbers of slaves to await transport, was more efficient and more common.⁴¹ Longer voyages also meant higher mortality rates for human cargo.⁴² Other factors also came into play. Merchants selected cargoes for specific markets because Africans had regionally distinct preferences for the merchandise they brought to trade.⁴³ To return to the Brazilian case, Bahia tobacco, for instance, was a commodity in high demand in the Bight of Benin.⁴⁴ In fact, this relationship was so important that Bahia had been responsible for the construction of the Portuguese fort at Ouidah and bore all the costs of its upkeep.⁴⁵ Particular European captains would also return to the same region to deal with the same merchants. And, as was the case for the Portuguese in west central Africa, nations would occasionally dominate the trade of entire regions.⁴⁶ This does not mean that such trade relationships were static or exclusive. Rather, it merely means that where economic bonds were forged, they allowed for the formation of distinctive trade patterns along the African coast.⁴⁷

Brazil continued to import African slaves legally until 1850, after which the trade declined significantly; Cuba, meanwhile, held out until 1868 in spite of prohibitions against slave trading, and only then brought the trade to an end as a result of internal political turmoil and mounting pressure from the British and an increasingly meddling northern neighbor, the United States.⁴⁸ The ships flying the flags of minor slaving nations (according to David Eltis, non-British and non-Portuguese) that appeared in the slave trade after 1820 were in most cases simply traveling incognito, attempting to mask the real national identity of the traders, who were at that point mainly Spanish or Portuguese smugglers. Overall, Brazil would be responsible for

⁴¹ Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil*, 28-29.

⁴² Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas*, 28, 56.

⁴³ Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade," 31.

⁴⁴ Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas*, 66; Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil*, 11.

⁴⁵ Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil*, 23.

⁴⁶ Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade," 32.

⁴⁷ Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas*, 50.

⁴⁸ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 151.

just over 40 per cent of the entire trans-Atlantic slave traffic, and the Spanish Americas would account for 14 per cent, due largely to the meteoric rise of Cuba in the 19th century.⁴⁹ To understand why these two colonies demanded so many African laborers, and why they resisted abolition so long, we will explore the nature of their economies in the paragraphs that follow.

Before any colony in the Americas became a source of great wealth for their mother countries, the Portuguese began experimenting with colonization and cash crop production much closer to home. It would be their Atlantic island possessions – Madeira, São Tomé, and Cape Verde – that would come to define for Europeans the plantation model and its slave system by the 1600s and, by extension, the nature of slavery in the Americas. These island estates established all the trappings of the plantation complex that eventually dominated much of the New World: a small number of wealthy mill-owners at the top of the hierarchy who held most of the land and slaves, an intermediate layer of planters who owned slaves and sugar fields but could not afford mills, and a non-Christian, African labor force held on large estates for agricultural production.⁵⁰

The plantation complex that developed on these Atlantic islands would ultimately be critical to the expansion of slavery throughout the Americas. However, it was only after transportation improvements allowed agricultural products to be shipped in large quantities from the New World to the Old, and after Amerindian labor had been depleted by disease and encroachment, that African slavery became the preferred labor source.⁵¹ Brazil and Cuba are cases in point. Brazil's physical proximity to Europe allowed it to be a competitor with the sugar producers of the Atlantic islands early on, and unlike the Spanish, the Portuguese did not hesitate to enslave native populations. By 1580, however, they had already demonstrated their

⁴⁹ Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade," 31, 38.

⁵⁰ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 18, 20.

⁵¹ Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas*, 58.

vulnerability to smallpox and other diseases on the plantation and the switch was quickly made to African labor.⁵² Cuba, however, remained economically stagnant and its tiny slave population dwindled until it, too, adopted the plantation model.⁵³ While sugar cane had been planted on all the Spanish islands and slaves were used in its production almost immediately, this should not be confused with the large-scale plantation complex that would develop much later. In the early years of colonization, therefore, slavery was not a labor institution of great importance on any of Spain's Caribbean possessions.⁵⁴

That said, the first African slaves imported in large numbers into Spanish America went to the mineral-rich zones of Mexico and Peru. What is noteworthy about the slave system that emerged in Peru is that it became the standard for virtually all of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies. Here, a relative balance of urban and rural slave populations occurred. Many slaves were manual laborers, but it was not unusual for them to be semi-skilled or skilled craftsmen, and as such they were frequently rented out to work for others. There was a possibility that a slave might be manumitted or freed through self-purchase, and thus very quickly there was a strong presence of free blacks and mulattos in these colonial societies.⁵⁵ These characteristics were replicated throughout the Spanish colonies, most clearly in Cuba, and in Brazil, and contrasted sharply with the colonies of other European powers, whose slave populations tended to be largely rural, mostly unskilled, and did not experience similar rates of manumission.

As for the Amerindian populations in the Iberian colonies, although the Spanish did not ever technically enslave them, they did exploit them for labor and took full advantage of their

⁵² Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 61.

⁵³ Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*, 25-27.

⁵⁴ Laird W. Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 34.

⁵⁵ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 32-34; Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States*, 46-48, 53-55.

large numbers, complex social structure, and peasant-based economies.⁵⁶ It was where such social systems and populations were either absent or quickly decimated by European disease that the Spanish turned to African slavery. The Portuguese, on the other hand, took to African slavery much faster. The Amerindian population in Brazil was much smaller (only a few hundred thousand compared to the millions in Spanish possessions) and they did not have the elaborate economic and political systems upon which to superimpose Portuguese rule.⁵⁷ Portugal's own population was tiny and could not expect to meet the demand for labor necessitated by large-scale settlement. Beyond that, as previously mentioned, the Portuguese already had experience with African slavery and ready access to the slave market.⁵⁸

Initially, however, in much the same way that the Spanish would at first treat Cuba like an imperial backwater, Portugal had little interest in developing Brazil. Their Asian trade was very lucrative, and the policy of establishing simple trading posts to extract valuable goods, rather than form settlements, had worked well for them in Africa. At first, this held true in Brazil as well.⁵⁹ It was not until their dominion in Brazil was challenged by other European powers (namely the Dutch) that they would invest in full-scale colonization.⁶⁰ Immediately afterward, they set about securing a profitable and reliable export product. Sugar became the obvious choice. The Atlantic islands had demonstrated that it could be readily cultivated on plantations and Portugal's early domination of the African slave trade ensured a steady supply of labor. By the 1550s, the first plantation system in the Americas was established in Brazil. It quickly

⁵⁶ Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States*, 36.

⁵⁷ Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil*, 9.

⁵⁸ Roger Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil: Toward a Sociology of the Interpenetration of Civilizations*, trans. Helen Sebba (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 32; Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 26.

⁵⁹ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 31.

⁶⁰ John Frederick Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America: From Conquest to Revolution and Beyond* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 48-49.

surpassed the Atlantic islands in production. Two zones stood out as strong producers – Pernambuco and Bahia. They would remain the most important throughout the colonial period.⁶¹

The importation of African slaves into Brazil began on a massive scale after 1570. At first, Africans moved into the most skilled positions. Many West Africans were from agriculturally and technologically sophisticated societies, familiar with advanced farming techniques and iron-making. While the Amerindian population lasted, Africans were preferred for the skilled positions in sugar-making and Amerindians were relegated to field labor. By 1600, nearly half of all slaves in Brazil were African, and by 1620, as indigenous populations began to dwindle, most sugar estates were entirely black.⁶²

The investment in Cuba was slower in coming. In the early centuries of conquest and settlement, the Spanish almost entirely neglected their island holdings. Cuba, not yet the great Pearl of the Antilles, was quickly drained of men and capital by the rich mines of the Spanish Main. Moreover, in spite of its use as a major port for the defense of the silver armadas beginning in the late 16th century, its economic endeavors (mostly agricultural) were unable to generate substantial income due to severe trade restrictions imposed by the Spanish Crown.⁶³ In terms of acquiring slave labor, Spain's policy during the first three centuries of the colony's history was to contract ships, mostly foreign, to bring captives to the island. This *asiento* system effectively sold private companies the right to introduce a specific number of slaves from Africa.⁶⁴ Objections to the system arose almost immediately, as settlers complained that selling the privilege increased the price of slaves to the point that many could not afford to purchase

⁶¹ Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States*, 38-39; Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 37-39, 79, 116.

⁶² Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 42; Bastide, *The African Religions in Brazil*, 33.

⁶³ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 86-87.

⁶⁴ Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 21.

them. Cuba, in fact, was for decades simply left out of many *asientos* because there just was not a substantial market for slaves there.⁶⁵

This dearth of slave labor was later exacerbated by a bull issued by Pope Urban III in 1639 denouncing the slave trade and forbidding Catholics to take part in it. For more than twenty years afterward, islanders wanting slaves were theoretically required to travel to Spain or the African continent themselves to get them. The only other option at this time was resorting to smuggling, and the English, Dutch, and French were only too happy to oblige. In 1655, the English took Jamaica, and Cuba began to surreptitiously source many slaves from that island. By 1662, *asientos* also seemed to quietly resume without objection from anyone.⁶⁶

At this time, Brazil's sugar economy faced a serious threat with the reversal in its trade relationship with the Dutch. Dutch shipping had played a major role in connecting Brazilian plantations with European markets, but after the Netherlands became independent from Spain, hostilities between the two nations spilled over into Portugal (at this point united with Spain) and ended the partnership with Brazil. The Dutch began to attack the colony and eventually took Pernambuco, as well as capturing the Portuguese port of Luanda and the fortress at El Mina in the 1630s, both on the African coast. As a result, Bahia took the lead as the major sugar producing zone, Amerindian slavery was revived, and expansion into the interior of the colony began in earnest.⁶⁷

The Dutch were eventually driven out in the 1650s, but their impact was far-reaching. Aside from helping to spread mill technology and extending credit to other fledgling colonies, the Dutch incursion contributed to the diversification of Brazil's economy. It was in the interior

⁶⁵ Hubert H. S. Aimes, *A History of Slavery in Cuba, 1511-1868* (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907; repr., New York: Octagon Books, 1967) 7-10, 16-17.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 16-18.

⁶⁷ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 39, 45-47; Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States*, 51-52.

region of Minas Gerais that gold and diamonds were discovered in 1689 and a new slaving economy for Brazil was born. By 1710, this previously desolate province had approximately 20,000 whites and 20,000 blacks. Before the decade closed, slaves outnumbered whites at 35,000, and by the 1730s they numbered more than 100,000.⁶⁸ The demand for labor was so high in the 1750s that nearly 60 per cent of slaves entering the port of Salvador were re-exported to the gold mines. This population was heavily male, and combined with the enormous demand, meant that constant and enormous importations of slaves were necessary.⁶⁹ The growth of Minas Gerais and the neighboring mining regions of Goiás and Mato Grosso also resulted in the growth of Rio de Janeiro. It soon overtook Bahia in shipping and trade and experienced an enormous population boom. In 1763, Rio de Janeiro had replaced Salvador da Bahia as the capital of the colony. By the end of the century, it was the leading slave port, a major port for trade to Minas Gerais, and was the leading urban center at over 100,000 people. The mining boom also meant a more even distribution of Brazil's population and the spread of slavery throughout the colony and into all sectors of the economy. Slaves processed blubber in whale oil factories (two to three thousand in whaling season), grew cotton (approximately 30,000), and sailed on merchant and slave ships (just over 10,000), as well as working on cattle ranches and producing foodstuffs for the colony.⁷⁰

In Spain, meanwhile, after the death of Charles II in 1700, the alliance with France under Bourbon rule infused the Spanish empire with capital and stimulated industrial enterprise by providing a new market for colonial goods. In particular, the tobacco trade to France gave Cuba a

⁶⁸ Herbert S. Klein and Francisco Vidal Luna, *Slavery in Brazil*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 36

⁶⁹ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 68-69, 71; Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States*, 60.

⁷⁰ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 72-78; Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States*, 60-61, 76-78.

much-needed economic boost. This, in turn, created an even larger demand for plantation labor, which French companies readily supplied under *asiento* contracts. This potentially very profitable relationship was unfortunately unable to meet expectations due to the War of the Spanish Succession. This conflict caused France and Spain to divert attention and resources away from their imperial ambitions and toward their troubles on the European continent. They thus left the slave trade to the British and after the war, Spain had no choice but to rely on British companies to supply slaves.⁷¹ The British, however, failed to live up to their obligations and repeatedly breached their contracts by engaging in widespread smuggling of cheap British goods into the colonies under cover of the *asientos*. After failed attempts to curtail the trade in contraband goods, which led to a brief war with Britain, Spain annulled their *asientos*.⁷²

At this point, it seemed clear that the demand for slaves could not be met without either great expense or the risk of foreign interference in the Spanish colonies' economic affairs. It was likewise impossible to imagine an alternative to the trade – with high mortality rates, especially on plantations, and a pronounced gender imbalance among the enslaved population, Cuba could scarcely rely on natural increase to meet its need for labor.⁷³ Thus, in 1740, for the first time since the papal bull of 1639, a company owned and operated by the Spanish was given permission to introduce slaves into Cuba. The Real Compañía Mercantil de la Habana was given effective control of the trade of all Cuba's goods and authorized to bring in African captives. Still, slave prices remained high and the demand for labor therefore went unsatisfied.⁷⁴

By the mid-18th century, planters, merchants, and colonial officials in Cuba considered a free slave trade to be necessary for the island's prosperity and pressed the Spanish monarch to

⁷¹ Aimes, *A History of Slavery in Cuba*, 20-23.

⁷² Rout, *The African Experience in Spanish America*, 53-61; Aimes, *A History of Slavery in Cuba*, 21-23.

⁷³ George Reid Andrews, *Afro-Latin America, 1800-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 17-18.

⁷⁴ Aimes, *A History of Slavery in Cuba*, 23-25.

allow it. Aside from the monopoly which the Real Compañía held on the trade and the exclusion of foreign traders, slave prices continued to be extraordinarily high in the Spanish colonies for several other reasons. Spain had no frigates at the African stations, and so their ships required heavy protection. They owned no ports and had no slave trading establishments on the African coast, and thus had to rely on intermediaries at every stage. Finally, in order to trade for slaves, ships had to stop off in Europe for goods to exchange for the enslaved, which led to riskier and longer voyages.⁷⁵

The beginning of the end of Spain's restrictive navigational policies and Cuba's longstanding isolation from both foreign markets and foreign traders was brought by war with Britain and their subsequent occupation of Havana in 1762-1763. Charles III had already begun breaking down the old system in favor of the Bourbons' more liberal trade and commercial policies, with the goal in mind of making Havana the center of a vast colonial trade network. In 1765, in fact, he had opened Cuba's markets to the entire Iberian peninsula, where it had previously been limited to Cadíz.⁷⁶ Combined with the flood of British goods and African slaves during the brief occupation, Cuba was propelled into an era of economic prosperity. Islanders were quick to take advantage of their chance to increase stocks at low prices, and slave importation exploded.⁷⁷

Spain then purchased trading stations on the African coast in 1778, and by 1780, islanders insisted that the king open the slave trade to foreign ships through Havana and Santiago, claiming that the high prices of "second-hand" slaves continued to cause a labor shortage. Indeed, by 1775, the labor situation had seemed to support export producers'

⁷⁵ Aimes, *A History of Slavery in Cuba*, 25.

⁷⁶ Gloria García Rodríguez, ed., *Voices of the Enslaved in Nineteenth Century Cuba*, trans. Nancy L. Westrate (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 5.

⁷⁷ Aimes, *A History of Slavery in Cuba*, 32-33.

arguments for opening the trade. Slave shipments came in every six months, but were barely enough to cover “replacements.” This rendered opening new acreage for exploitation impossible. The Crown finally relented and ended what had been deemed unnecessary hindrances on the slave trade.⁷⁸ After the *asiento* of 1786-1789 expired, the *Real Cédula* of 1789 was issued, permitting Spanish and foreign traders to bring in slaves to qualified ports, free of charge, for two years and to sell them at whatever rates they were able (as opposed to the previous system of fixed prices). The only stipulations were that the slaves be of “good races,” that they be at least one third female, and that those not bound for agricultural labor would be subject to an annual tax.⁷⁹ The slave population exploded. In Cuba’s census of 1774, there were 44,333 slaves in a population of 171,620, just over a quarter of the island’s residents. In 1791, just three years after the opening of the trade, the number of inhabitants had jumped to 272,300. Blacks represented more than half the population at that point, and slaves the majority of that number.⁸⁰

An extension was requested as the *cédula* neared expiration, and was granted – this time for six years – in 1791. More Cuban ports were added, the percentage of women was left out, and the tax on non-farm laborers was cancelled.⁸¹ It was extended for another six years, with the same conditions, in 1798, and again at the end of that decree. The Spanish government initially agreed to an extension for twenty years for Spanish traders and twelve for foreigners, though with a warning about the dangers of an unlimited introduction of *bozales* – slaves born in Africa – in light of the Haitian Revolution and other manifestations of slave rebellion elsewhere. These concerns eventually led to an amendment to this last *cédula*, reducing the number of years to

⁷⁸ Rodríguez, *Voices of the Enslaved*, 7; Aimes, *A History of Slavery in Cuba*, 38-45

⁷⁹ Rout, *The African Experience in Spanish America*, 60-61; “Royal Decree and Instructional Circular for the Indies on the Education, Treatment, and Work Regimen of Slaves, May 31, 1789” in *Voices of the Enslaved* (see note 75), 49.

⁸⁰ Sandoval, *Worldview, the Orichas, and Santería*, 23.

⁸¹ Aimes, *A History of Slavery in Cuba*, 49-50.

twelve for Spaniards and six for foreign traders, and with instructions to planters to supply their male slaves with enough women that any who wanted a wife could have one (suggesting a preference that the island eventually shift from regular importation to natural increase to meet its labor needs).⁸² The result of these continuous extensions was an exponential growth in the number of slaves on the island. By 1810, it had risen to 212,000, then to 324,000 in the 1840s, and finally peaking at 370,000 in 1862, just a few years before abolition.⁸³ Clearly, even after the 1817 and 1835 treaties with Britain that were supposed to end the slave traffic, slaves continued to come in. The contraband trade from Africa and with other Caribbean islands, plus arrivals from Haiti, Florida, Louisiana, and the newly independent Latin American nations all contributed to Cuba's slave population. Indeed, records indicate that contraband slaves continued to be seized off the Cuban coast as late as 1870.⁸⁴

Slave populations in Cuba, as in other colonies, were naturally concentrated in those activities geared toward the export economy. Slavery had always been a part of Cuba's economy, and the economy had always been export driven. Prior to the rapid expansion of sugar plantations, thought, leather tanning and tobacco had been the primary export products.⁸⁵ During the revolution in St. Domingue, escaping French planters brought coffee cultivation and the latest production techniques to the sugar industry on the island. Cuba's first major sugar boom occurred in the late 18th century, and sugar estates quickly spread from their previous stronghold in Havana (although the Havana-Matanzas region would remain the heartland of the sugar

⁸² Aimes, *A History of Slavery in Cuba*, 60-61.

⁸³ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 95; Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States*, 97.

⁸⁴ Laird W. Bergad, Fe Iglesias García, and María del Carmen Barcía, *The Cuban Slave Market 1790-1880* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 29; Rodríguez, *Voices of the Enslaved*, 8; Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 23-27.

⁸⁵ Rodríguez, *Voices of the Enslaved*, 4.

industry into the 1860s⁸⁶). Together with *cafetales* (coffee plantations), sugar plantations employed approximately 100,000 of the island's slaves by the 1820s.⁸⁷ Unlike Brazil, slaves in Cuba at this point were under-represented in agricultural activities away from the plantations, making up only about a third of the labor force in other rural activities like cattle ranching. And in urban settings, where slavery had insinuated itself into domestic and commercial activities early on, was by this time dominated by free labor. However, when the numbers of slaves engaged in other rural pursuits and urban /non-farming tasks are combined, they roughly equal the number of those working on plantation complexes.⁸⁸

After its peak in the 1830s, Cuban coffee took a backseat in the export economy. It could not compete with sugar for land or slaves, and hurricanes in the 1840s also did significant damage to *cafetales*. At that point, Brazil overtook Cuba in coffee production. The expansion of the Cuban railroad system in 1838 and the introduction of steam power to the sugar mills, however, meant an explosion of growth in sugar production that would continue more or less unabated until abolition.⁸⁹

Brazil's sugar zones had also continued to grow at the end of the 18th century. While Pernambuco never recovered its position as the top producer after the expulsion of the Dutch, it still took second place after Bahia. The regions around São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro became centers for the production of unrefined sugar (*muscovado*) and alcohols made from sugarcane (*aguardente* and *cachasa*). By the 1780s, Rio de Janeiro alone had 25,000 slaves in sugar.⁹⁰

In the mining region of Minas Gerais, in spite of declines in both gold and diamonds after the middle decades of the 18th century, slave populations remained high and continued to be

⁸⁶ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 98-99.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 93, 97.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 94, 96; Rodríguez, *Voices of the Enslaved*, 4.

⁸⁹ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 97.

⁹⁰ Klein and Luna, *Slavery in Brazil*, 69-70; Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 79.

imported into the 1800s, many from the Mina Coast (a large swath of the African coast that could at any given time refer to the “Gold Coast,” “Slave Coast,” and the Bights of Benin or Biafra).⁹¹ At both the beginning and end of the 19th century, in fact, Minas Gerais had the largest slave population of any Brazilian province. Herbert Klein argues that this was a result of the province’s agricultural diversification and a relatively even distribution of slaves per owner. The region had become a major supplier of foodstuffs for the rest of Brazil, and later developed coffee production. Without large numbers of slaves tied up on a single plantation of any type, owners had the flexibility to channel their labor into these other activities once mining ceased to be profitable.⁹²

By 1800, Brazil had over one million slaves. It also had the most diverse economic use of slave labor in the Americas. At that time, no more than 25 per cent of all slaves in Brazil were employed in either mining or plantation agriculture. Approximately ten percent were urban slaves, and the rest were in rural occupations of every type – muleteering, herding or ranching, foodstuff production, and so on. Although many Brazilian products experienced a boom-bust cycle, new products were always being developed and the internal market was big enough to create a steady demand for slave labor.⁹³

The revolution in St. Domingue helped to encourage the intensification of the plantation system in Brazil. With the biggest sugar colony out of the market, the old northeastern provinces of Bahia and Pernambuco were infused with new life – slave numbers increased and new plantations were added. In Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, too, sugar fields began to expand. Thus, between 1790 and 1820, the slave population in Bahia had risen to 150,000. Pernambuco had 100,000 in 1810, and then 145,000 in the 1850s. Rio de Janeiro had 170,000 slaves by 1820,

⁹¹ Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas*, 80, 114.

⁹² Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 80-81.

⁹³ Klein and Luna, *Slavery in Brazil*, 62, 72-73.

with 20,000 devoted to sugar alone, and at the same time, São Paulo had 12,000 of its 50,000 slaves working on sugar plantations. This increased to 20,000 by the 1840s.⁹⁴ Yorùbá-speakers made up a significant portion of the slaves brought in during this period and were concentrated in Bahia.⁹⁵

Still, by mid-century, with the closing of the Brazilian slave trade and the increasing importance of coffee, the number of slaves working in sugar began to level off. However, this was made up for in free labor. Here again, the Haitian revolution played a role. The island's coffee production dropped precipitously in the years after the revolution – although was not wiped out, as sugar had been – and Brazil simply picked up where St. Domingue had left off. By 1831, coffee exports exceeded those of sugar, and within a decade, Brazil was producing more coffee than both Cuba and Puerto Rico combined.⁹⁶

With the slave trade officially closed after 1850 and with prices too high to make illegal trade as profitable as it had once been – because fewer people could afford to buy the slaves being imported – slaves were instead diverted from areas of diminishing profitability, like the sugar zones in the northeast, to coffee plantations (*fazendas*) in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Minas Gerais.⁹⁷ While it is true that smugglers continued to bring Africans from the continent, from that decade onward, coffee estates began to rely more heavily on these internal migrations of slaves and later a mixed labor force of free and enslaved workers. Still, slaves continued to play a vital role and coffee in southeast Brazil created the largest single market for trans-Atlantic slaves in the Americas after 1820.⁹⁸ A typical early 19th-century estate might have 40,000 coffee

⁹⁴ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 114-118.

⁹⁵ Luis Nicolau Parés, “Ethnic-Religious Modes of Identification Among the Gbe-Speaking People in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Brazil,” in *Africa, Brazil, and the Construction of Trans-Atlantic Identities*, ed. Livio Sansone, Eliseé Soumonni, and Boubacar Barry (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2008), 195.

⁹⁶ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 117-120.

⁹⁷ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 61-62.

⁹⁸ Eltis, “The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade,” 38.

trees and 30 slaves, while the largest could have up to half a million trees with three to four hundred slaves. Of great importance were also the slaves who transported materials, goods, and most importantly the coffee, especially muleteers in the years before the railroads were built. At any given time, a third of a *fazenda's* slave force could be employed off the plantation in this way, and this continued to be true even after the railroads came.⁹⁹ In the last two decades of Brazil's slave era, coffee was the largest employer of slave labor, but still only accounted for approximately one third of all slaves in Brazil.¹⁰⁰ As had been the case throughout previous centuries, in spite of the huge importance of cash crop production and the extent to which the plantation dominated the Brazilian economy, slaves and free people of color continued to be employed in a variety of other occupations.

In the 19th century, Brazil and Cuba imported huge numbers of African slaves. Between 1801 and 1850, Brazil alone took in 1.7 million Africans, just over half of all slaves disembarking in the Americas for that period. Cuba, meanwhile, imported roughly half that number between 1790 and 1867.¹⁰¹ Naturally, the sugar and coffee estates dominated both economies, but neither colony's slave population was confined solely to the plantation. Both Cuba and Brazil had large numbers of urban slaves, whose lives differed greatly from their rural counterparts. Slaves in the cities were rented out by their owners and as such enjoyed the freedom to mingle with the general population. Many lived away from home, in exchange for a fixed rental fee, and were otherwise financially self-sufficient due to their valuable services as artisans, masons, carpenters, seamstresses, and even prostitutes. As a result of their ability to

⁹⁹ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 119-123.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁰¹ Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States*, 111-112.

earn income, this group, perhaps more than any other, took advantage of the right to self-purchase (*coartación*) and helped their relatives and friends purchase their freedom as well.¹⁰²

However, there were some important differences in the two systems. Perhaps most importantly, Cuba never demonstrated the same level of economic diversity as Brazil. While it is true that slaves in Cuba were employed in both urban and rural sectors, eventually Cuba followed the typical large-scale plantation model of most Caribbean islands. Coffee and sugar defined the economy and by the second half of the 19th century, slaves had become concentrated in and around plantations. Overall, 80 percent of arrivals in Havana and other western ports stayed in the island's sugar belt. In contrast, Brazil's large regional economies engaged in a massive internal trade of goods, services, and slaves, in addition to participating in the international sugar and coffee markets. This meant that throughout the slave era, Africans coming into Brazil could be employed virtually anywhere.¹⁰³

Moreover, the distribution of slavery and slave ownership in Brazil was much more even than that which occurred in Cuba. Black labor was relatively cheap in Brazil throughout the slave era.¹⁰⁴ Even the poor in Brazil might own at least one slave – miners, fishermen, artisans, and even some slaves were themselves slaveowners. Cuban slaveowners, on the other hand, made up just twelve percent of the white urban population and nine percent of the rural, half the rate which occurred in Brazil, and the average urban and rural master in Cuba owned three and twelve slaves, respectively. These numbers are markedly skewed, however, as Cuban plantations

¹⁰² Kirsten Schultz, "The Crisis of Empire and the Problem of Slavery: Portugal and Brazil, c. 1700-1820," *Common Knowledge* 11, no. 2 (2005): 274-275; Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 102, 128-130; Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States*, 48.

¹⁰³ Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States*, 111-112, 119, 125; Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade," 39.

¹⁰⁴ Schultz, "The Crisis of Empire and the Problem of Slavery," 274.

averaged 127 slaves, with some reaching the two to four hundred range. It becomes clear then that in Cuba a few masters controlled the bulk of slaves on the island.¹⁰⁵

Ethnic Enclaves and Transplanted Religions

While the ethnonym “Yorùbá” can provide a limited and sometimes misleading approximation of identity (or identities) constructed to replace those ties disrupted by enslavement,¹⁰⁶ this does not mean that such designations are either arbitrary or without any meaning that is useful to historians. The Yorùbá were in fact a culturally distinct linguistic group, and while some variations in their customs certainly existed, it is also true that they shared a unique set of social, political, and cultural practices that bound them together. Moreover, while Africans redefined themselves according to changing demographic contexts, and drew on a multiplicity of flexible identities in the face of a more rigid and racialized identity in the Americas, sufficient numbers of this particular group were a vital starting point for the formation of a community identity, however modified.

This can certainly be considered the case in both Brazil and Cuba in the 19th century. Moreover, Gwendolyn Midlo Hall argues that masters sometimes contributed to the formation of such communities by actively clustering new Africans with “seasoned” slaves of the same ethnic or linguistic group. While certainly fractionalizing groups to minimize the risk of conspiracy and rebellion was also a strategy masters employed, it is likewise true that it could be helpful to have many slaves with a common background in order to facilitate the socialization of newcomers.¹⁰⁷ Gloria García Rodríguez gives us an example of how this could sometimes play out. On the San Juan Bautista Ingenio in Puerta de la Güira, Cuba, African slave Savad Carabalí Bibí was

¹⁰⁵ Manolo Florintino, “Slave Trading and Slave Trades in Rio de Janeiro, 1790-1830,” trans. José C. Curto, in *Enslaving Connections* (see note 25), 62; Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 96.

¹⁰⁶ Miller, “Retention, Reinvention, and Remembering,” 87.

¹⁰⁷ Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas*, 68;

arrested in 1831 for assaulting the plantation's carter. Several witnesses reported that he was insane. This assertion was based largely on the fact that he could not understand anything said to him and no one seemed to understand his language.¹⁰⁸ As a result of his linguistic isolation, he could not be properly integrated into the slave population (at least not immediately). Without the means to establish connections with other slaves upon his arrival, he represented a threat to the social fabric of the plantation.

Even where they might be deliberately fragmented, members of the various African ethnic groups also coalesced of their own volition around shared origins and customs, forming communities (however small) in response to the "others" all around them. This was managed through group activities like dancing, secret communication networks between plantations and towns, and social settings like taverns and clubs.¹⁰⁹ The nature of slavery in Cuba and Brazil – the estates with massive numbers of slaves and the cities and towns with their very mobile slave populations – meant that this could not really be stopped. Regardless of how they came together, however, it seems clear that whenever possible the enslaved, both African and Creole, selected aspects of their personal backgrounds to collectively mobilize responses to specific, immediate challenges. Slaves were able to accomplish this on a rather large scale when they could identify and agree upon salient points of commonality.¹¹⁰ That a person might cling more strongly to a

¹⁰⁸ "Savad Carabalí Bibí assaults the Carter from the Ingenio San Juan Bautista, Puerta de la Guira, July 1, 1831," in *Voices of the Enslaved* (see note 75), 109-110.

¹⁰⁹ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 60. See also the following examples: "Pedro Real Congo, Capataz of the Congo Association, Intervenes on Behalf of His Compatriot, María Luísa González, Havana, April 21, 1854," in *Voices of the Enslaved* (see note 75), 139-140; "The Lucumís of Arratia Rise Up in Solidarity with their Fellow Slaves to Protest their Punishment, Macurijes, July 22, 1842," in *Voices of the Enslaved* (see note 75), 132-135; "War in the Lands of Mariel, Banes, August 13, 1833," in *Voices of the Enslaved* (see note 75), 176-180; "The Government of Bahia Orders Special Measures to Restrict and Control the Province's Slave Population (1822)," in *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil*, ed. Robert Edgar Conrad (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984; repr., University Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 2006), 254-256; "Local Ordinances Bearing on Slavery from Six Provincial Law Collections (1833-1866)," in *Children of God's Fire*, 259-267.

¹¹⁰ Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas*, 57; Miller, "Retention, Reinvention, and Remembering," 88-89.

“Yorùbá” identity in the context of slavery is therefore not an indication that such an identity was false, but rather that it was the point at which the most powerful connections and meanings converged.

In the context of religious practice, this strategy becomes even more revealing. Africans, generally speaking, tended to view enslavement by Europeans as a result of witchcraft – in effect, that they had been cursed. Therefore, many slaves united around healing strategies and spiritual traditions that were identified as possible remedies for their situation. Those that were unfamiliar or untested (ergo, they had not yet been discredited) were especially attractive. Preceding generations of slaves thus looked to incoming captives for new “cures.” Slaves generally also saw Christianity in the same way, especially in terms of the emphasis of fighting the “Devil’s” influence in their lives. Fighting the Devil and fighting witchcraft appeared synonymous. For slaves who identified with the Yorùbá in Brazil and Cuba, this ultimately resulted in a blending of a real devotion to Catholicism with their own ways of combating the deprivations of enslavement. Continuities in this context thus stem as much from shared cultural materials as from parallel experiences in Africa and the Americas and the need to address similar problems. Slaves gave new meaning to old symbols and converted ideas that may have differentiated them in Africa into symbols that united them in the Americas.¹¹¹

Similarly, Africans drew from the religion of the whites. They found similarities and equivalents in their own traditions and reshaped Christian beliefs and practices to suit their needs and circumstances. Much like in Catholicism, in most West African traditions the realms of the sacred and the profane were not separate; rather, they engaged in an interactive flow. They were contiguous, as were the realms of the living and dead. Religion was such a part of the fabric of

¹¹¹ Miller, “Retention, Reinvention, and Remembering,” 90, 93.

life that people needed to regularly consult oracles, give offerings, and be mindful of taboos to engage with the supernatural powers that presided over their lives.¹¹²

Many elements of Catholic practice easily corresponded with that of traditional West African religious systems. The Catholicism that was transplanted in Brazil and Cuba in the colonial era was that of the Counter Reformation, which had revived the medieval worship of saints as its primary form of devotion in the wake of Protestant condemnation.¹¹³ Catholicism in this period was demonstrative and emotive, with great importance attached to rites, images, relics, indulgences, and other attributes of an external, formal religion. George Brandon argues that this explains the Church's embrace, or at least tolerance, of practices that had previously been confined to the realm of folk Catholicism. He groups Catholic religious manifestations at this time under two headings: the basic cult of the seven sacraments (baptism, confirmation, matrimony, extreme unction, eucharist, penance, and holy orders) and the cult of personages (specialized cults of Jesus, Mary, and the saints). Saints were believed to be powerful intermediaries between man and God, and as such were the most popular and important objects of worship. They responded to pleas, prayers, offerings, and imitation, and received the greatest adoration. The tending of the home altar and veneration of patron saints paralleled and sometimes replaced attendance at mass as the primary form of spiritual devotion.¹¹⁴

The cult of personages spawned an assortment of religious phenomena: legends and miracle stories, an annual cycle of feast days, and festivals for the patron saints.¹¹⁵ Iberian peasants routinely invoked the mysterious and magical powers of saints to ward off natural

¹¹² Sandoval, *Worldview, the Orichas, and Santería*, 9.

¹¹³ Stephen Selka, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Bahia, Brazil* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 16.

¹¹⁴ George Brandon, *Santeria from Africa to the New World: The Dead Sell Memories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 46-47.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

disasters, and the fundamental stages of life – birth, marriage, and death – revolved around the ceremonies of the church. Such ceremonies took on extravagant forms, whether in the great processions of Holy Week or the somber flagellations of Lent.¹¹⁶

Among the West African traditions brought to the Americas, the òrìsà worship of the Yorùbá perhaps most paralleled these Catholic practices. The Yorùbá believed in what was essentially a supreme being – Oloḍumarè or Olórun – who was powerful, transcendent, and responsible for the creation of the universe.¹¹⁷ However, this being was also primarily approached through intermediaries, the òrìsà. These òrìsà numbered in the hundreds. A select few were ubiquitously acknowledged throughout Yorùbáland; many more were unique to certain regions, city-states, and might even be worshipped in just one village. (In the Americas, the number of òrìsà reduced dramatically to just a few of the most powerful and culturally significant.)¹¹⁸ This geographic specificity was echoed in Catholic culture, in which cities and towns had patron saints that protected them. Citizens of those towns likewise felt allegiance to their patrons and sought their protection and help in times of need.¹¹⁹ As with the saints, òrìsà were capable of conferring virtually anything upon their devotees – children, wealth, good health, or resolutions to personal conflicts – but they remained distinct individuals with their own histories, talents, and associations.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ William J. Callahan and David Higgs, eds., *Church and Society in Catholic Europe of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 45-46.

¹¹⁷ J. Omosade Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites* (London: Longman Group, Ltd., 1979), 10-16.

¹¹⁸ Robert Voeks, "African Medicine and Magic in the Americas," *Geographical Review* 83, no. 1 (January 1993), 71; William Bascom, *Ifa Divination: Communication between Gods and Men in West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 103.

¹¹⁹ Sandoval, *Worldview, the Orichas, and Santería*, 38.

¹²⁰ P.R. McKenzie, "Yorùbá Òrìsà Cults: Some Marginal Notes concerning Their Cosmology and Concepts of Deity," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 8, Fasc. 3 (1976), 198.

Conclusion

The trans-Atlantic slave trade to Brazil and Cuba in the 19th century was characterized by a large proportion of Yorùbá captives. These captives became concentrated in certain zones within each colony: in Brazil, primarily in the northeastern provinces of Bahia and Pernambuco; in Cuba, in the west around the cities of Havana and Matanzas. This clustering fostered the cohesion of Yorùbá communities and the partial erasure of former geographic distinctions among them. In the context of slavery, common cultural traits – language and religion especially – became the primary markers of membership in a broader ethnic group.

The nature of slavery as it was practiced in Brazil and Cuba also contributed to the retention and adaptation of Yorùbá traditions. The plantation complex which dominated their economies quite naturally shaped the demographics of slavery. It had been responsible for the greatest importations of slaves and in many ways dictated the distribution of slave labor. What's more, the wealth generated by the export economy contributed to the development of nearby cities. The proximity of these cities to the plantations, the networks of communication between them, and the presence of both slaves and free blacks in urban areas, all combined to create "niches" in which the enslaved could form communities, carry on traditions, and invent new ones. This was expressed most dramatically in religious practice, where parallels in ritual, cosmology, and devotional activity permitted Africans to maintain and adapt their beliefs and customs.

Both Ibero-American Catholicism and Yorùbá òrìsà worship in many ways lent themselves to this hybridization. Devotion to saints was the foundational religious experience in Latin America. Missionaries practiced it and considered it a tool of pastoral work.¹²¹ Patronal

¹²¹ Manuel María Marzal, "Daily Life in the Indies (Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries)," in *The Church in Latin America, 1492-1992*, ed. Enrique Dussel, 69-80, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 77-78.

festivals were likewise brought to the colonies deliberately by missionaries as tools for evangelization. They were the most visible form of religious observance among the colonists and the slaves they shipped from Africa. Thus the transmission of Catholic *belief* might have been gradual, but the transmission of religious *practices* – ambiguous in nature and thus easy to reinterpret – occurred much faster.¹²² This made room for Africans, and in this case the Yorùbá especially, to draw from both their own tradition and the new forms of religious expression they encountered as they struggled to reconstitute their culture, their identity, in the context of slavery.

¹²² Marzal, “Daily Life in the Indies,” 74.

RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION IN THE COLONIAL CONTEXT

“The man in the street is confronted with a wide variety of religious and other reality-defining agencies that compete for his allegiance or at least attention, none of which is in a position to coerce him into allegiance.”
---Pierre Verger¹²³

Catholicism and Slavery in Brazil and Cuba: Rural vs. Urban

Over the course of the slave era, the Catholic Church had an ambivalent relationship with the Iberian powers and their colonizing efforts across the Atlantic. While the Church had endorsed and legitimized the missions of Spain and Portugal as they explored and conquered foreign lands, handing so much control over ecclesiastical affairs to the Crown ultimately proved problematic. And although Rome authorized the enslavement of non-Christians, there was considerable disagreement about the conditions under which that enslavement could be carried out and what rights slaves were ultimately entitled to claim. These tensions, combined with the structure of society in Brazil and Cuba and the nature of Iberian religious observance in this period, helped to create niches in which transplanted Africans could both reconstitute their religious communities and adapt them to the colonial context.¹²⁴

In the 1490s, a series of papal bulls essentially divided the world into two spheres of influence: Spain was granted dominion over the Americas in the west, Portugal over Africa in the east. A subsequent treaty between the two kingdoms later ceded control of Brazil to Portugal as well.¹²⁵ The Vatican authorized the two powers to attack and conquer any Muslim, pagan, or heathen peoples they encountered in their explorations, and also granted the power to take their property and enslave those groups as an extension of the Reconquista that had reclaimed the

¹²³ As quoted in Robert Motta, “Ethnicity, Purity, the Market and Syncretism in Afro-Brazilian Cults,” in *Reinventing Religions: Syncretism and Transformation in Africa and the Americas*, eds. Sidney M. Greenfield and André Droogers (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 71-72.

¹²⁴ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 160.

¹²⁵ Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America*, 40, 46-47.

Iberian peninsula from Muslim control over the course of the previous seven centuries.¹²⁶ With these papal bulls, Rome gave Spain and Portugal broad administrative powers over the colonial church and also authorized the Crown to collect and use the tithe in order to build churches and support priests. This system of patronage – *Patronato Real* or *Patronato Regio* – meant that responsibility for both the Church's administration and its finances in the colonies fell to the secular authorities.¹²⁷

Thus, from the 16th century on, the Iberian crowns exercised great control over church affairs in the Americas and, to a lesser extent, Africa. Over the course of the next three centuries, the states created a vast network of secular church laws that had been derived from canon law but ultimately went far beyond them in matters of detail. The Spanish imperial government saw itself as a papal vicar, entrusted with the office of mission to non-Christians and the foundation and endowment of churches in its overseas territories. Portugal took the same position concerning Brazil.¹²⁸ However, Portugal's grip on the reigns of the Church was not quite so tight as Spain's at first. This was due largely to the initially small settler population and strong Jesuit presence, who took evangelization upon themselves and were accustomed to a certain degree of autonomy.¹²⁹ Still, neither Spain nor Portugal failed to intercede when Catholic policy interfered with the colonies' economic interests, and when challenged they could always harken back to their original appointment by the pope as stewards of the faith in the New World. As a result, Catholic practice in the colonies more consistently reflected colonial economic and social realities than official Church doctrine.

¹²⁶ John Francis Maxwell, *Slavery and the Catholic Church: The History of Catholic Teaching Concerning the Moral Legitimacy of the Institution of Slavery*, (Chichester, UK: Barry Rose Publishers, 1975), 52-55.

¹²⁷ Francis J. Weber, "Real Patronato de Indias," *The Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (June 1961): 215-216; Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America*, 40, 46-47; Selka, *Religion and the Politics of Ethnic Identity*, 16-17.

¹²⁸ Johannes Meier, "The Organization of the Church," in *The Church in Latin America*, (see note 120), 60-63.

¹²⁹ Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America*, 49-50, 68

In addition to the juridical struggle for control that emerged between the Iberian and Vatican authorities, both Church and state had to cope with persistent tensions between local and central authority. Disputes over policy did not necessarily reflect local bishops' and priests' immediate concerns. As the front line of the Church operating at the very farthest periphery, they could hardly wait for papal or state authorization as new circumstances arose, and they quickly grew accustomed to acting without oversight. The first missionaries and priests in the Americas were largely independent from the scrutiny of their superiors and bishoprics were spread few and far between. The march to any semblance of central church governance was very slow indeed, and Spain and Portugal were more than happy to take advantage in the absence of a strong ecclesiastical presence. The regular clergy, who did not operate under imperial control, were systematically rooted out in favor of secular clerics who would be obliged to support royal policies (or at the very least, not stand in their way). By the 17th century, those regulars who remained became concentrated in convents and houses in urban areas.¹³⁰ The more numerous secular clergy were divided into the privileged elite, who usually had aristocratic backgrounds and served in either universities or cathedral chapters, and the mass of the clergy, who were parish priests, curates, and unbeneficed clerics.

More challenging than the power plays and internal bickering was the sheer logistical nightmare that evangelization in the colonies posed. Like in Europe, the regular and upper clergy were paid through tithe collected by the church, while parish priests relied on alms and fees paid for the exercise of sacraments by the faithful. This represented an enormous obstacle to widespread proselytizing in the colonies, where populations who might support church activity were initially small and widely dispersed. Compounding this problem was the fact that both the Spanish and Portuguese Churches in general were suffering from an insufficient supply of clerics

¹³⁰ Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America*, 7-8.

to serve at home and abroad. This resulted in parishes that seldom saw their priests and bishops who were isolated from the mass of the faithful.¹³¹

The situation was especially dire in rural areas, including the sugar and coffee zones that ultimately dominated Brazil and Cuba. There were no schools, no formal associations beyond the family or neighborhood, and very few churches beyond the city limits. To address this problem, the Church attempted to establish a foothold on the plantation early on, primarily using the argument that Christianized slaves would be less troublesome and more productive. Indeed, all the way up to the 1830s, plantations were required to keep chaplains in their employ.¹³² But these were not parishes that were part of a diocese. They had little connection with the episcopate or Rome, and no interference from anyone except the occasional travelling missionary.¹³³ Rural clerics on these estates depended entirely on their patriarchs and were employed in their service exclusively, and as such were only expected to teach the master's children, say mass, hear confession, celebrate baptisms, and officiate marriages and funerals.¹³⁴

Planters did not have any interest in these so-called sugar chaplains for long, nor did the Church seem able to dictate their behavior. Neither seemed to harbor any illusions about their effectiveness. By the time the sugar boom got under way in the 19th century, estate chapels and clergy had mostly faded away.¹³⁵ Moreover, with or without a chaplain living on the plantations, their geographic isolation led to a de facto spiritual isolation. In both Brazil and Cuba, therefore, the patriarchal planter family formed the religious center in rural areas. This "household"

¹³¹ Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America*, 80, 8.

¹³² Brandon, *Santería from Africa to the New World*, 61, 63.

¹³³ Eduardo Hoornaert, "The Church in Brazil," in *The Church in Latin America* (see note 120), 191-192.

¹³⁴ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 111-112.

¹³⁵ Brandon, *Santería from Africa to the New World*, 61, 63.

religion was strongly influenced by popular Catholicism, namely in its devotion to the patriarch's patron saints and the veneration of the family's dead.¹³⁶

Still, the church's ceremonies, sacraments, and calendar marked the rhythms of plantation life; feast days were those of the family's guardian saints, and agrarian holidays, harvest times, and special occasions were sanctified by priests.¹³⁷ More than this, however, Catholicism marked most exchanges between the worlds of the master and the slaves, reinforcing white paternalism and black submission from morning to night. Adèle Toussaint-Samson, a Parisian who spent many years living with her family in Brazil, described this in her account of a visit to the São José *fazenda* in the mid-19th century. While there, she witnessed the call to prayer, which she was told occurred every Saturday. The master rang a bell and all the estate's slaves emerged and gathered before him on the veranda outside. Two slave overseers produced an image of Christ and four candles. They were responsible for officiating the prayer, having "retained a smattering of Latin, which a chaplain, formerly at the plantation, had taught them." The slaves went through the litany of saints, sang a song, and prostrated themselves before the image of Christ. Then, they filed one by one by the whites, asking benediction and receiving a blessing from them.¹³⁸ Whether this was simply a show for a foreign guest or part of a regular routine is difficult to determine, but the key points to note are that the ritual was conducted by slaves without benefit of a priest; that the affectation of devotion seemed to satisfy everyone present; and that the postures of both parties, white and black, reflected their respective positions in society.

Ritual activity of this kind illustrates that the religion of the plantation was primarily intended to reinforce paternalism for the masters and conformity and privation for the slaves. It

¹³⁶ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 41.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹³⁸ Adèle Toussaint-Samson, *A Parisian in Brazil: The Travel Account of a Frenchwoman in Nineteenth Century Rio de Janeiro*, 1883(?) trans. Emma Toussaint, ed. June E. Hahner (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2001), 56-58.

also tells us that even when plantations maintained a chaplain, most slaves rarely ever had direct contact with the clergy and often relied on their masters and, more importantly, their fellow slaves for religious instruction day-to-day. In fact, in 1707 the Archbishop of Bahia explicitly emphasized the master's role in slaves' religious education, stressing that the clergy should become involved only when slaves were unreceptive to the master's tutelage.¹³⁹ Such instruction, as one might expect, was primarily concerned with the outward display of religious signs.¹⁴⁰ White planters in fact did very little to indoctrinate slaves – baptisms were hasty, catechism was neglected, and last rites often forgotten.¹⁴¹ Baptism and evangelization was not designed so much to engender a religious transformation as it was simply to force Africans to mime a few sacraments in order to meet the minimum requirements of the law and preserve the reputations of their masters.¹⁴² John George F. Wurdemann, for instance, observed in *Notes on Cuba* (1844) that every owner was “bound to instruct his slaves in the principles of the Catholic religion, after the labor of the day has been finished, to the end that they may be baptized and partake of the sacrament,” but claimed that baptism and burial in sacred ground were the only enforced religious practices on the plantations.¹⁴³ In his 1850 book, *Cuba and the Cubans*, Richard Burleigh Kimball painted a bleaker picture, saying that the “poor African...[is] doomed to remain forever sunk in the imbruted ignorance in which he was torn from his native and distant land...” He further states firmly that no slaves were ever instructed in the Gospel, few were

¹³⁹ “Slavery and Church Doctrine: The Archbishop of Bahia Rules on Slave Evangelization and Aspects of Their Treatment (1707),” in *Children of God's Fire* (see note 109), 156.

¹⁴⁰ Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil*, 99-100; Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 111-112.

¹⁴¹ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 53.

¹⁴² Manuel María Marzal, “Daily Life in the Indies,” 72; Van Norman, “The Process of Cultural Change Among Bozales,” 189-190, 201.

¹⁴³ John George F. Wurdemann, *Notes on Cuba* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1844) in *Slaves, Sugar, and Colonial Society: Travel Accounts of Cuba, 1801-1899*, ed. Louis A. Pérez, Jr. (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1992), 107-109.

baptized, and hardly any were properly married.¹⁴⁴ Granted, these are the observations of tourists and foreigners who had their own biases and perhaps even political motivations for making such comments. Still, the fact remains that keeping up appearances in order to save face as good Catholics was really all that masters had to gain from Christianizing their slaves, and so it is not surprising that generally speaking, the barest minimum was done to meet that obligation. What's more, during much of the slave era, Africans were conceived of as soulless beasts, nothing more. Christian teachings interfered with the conception of blacks as objects, and therefore were never completely or universally obeyed.¹⁴⁵

Foreign visitors were sometimes surprised by this Christianity of “much praying and few priests, many saints and few sacraments, many feasts and little penance, many promises and few masses.” The religion of white Brazilians and Cubans was demonstrative, material, and ritualistic. They traded goods and services with saints and made promises to them in exchange for help or mercy. In this respect, white religious practice was very similar to that of the slaves: they offered fruit, flowers, and candles to saints' images; they wore amulets for protection from evil; and to reach God, they relied on the saints who offered divine intervention for whatever concerns were brought to their attention. As a result, the saints who protected the master came to protect slaves by providing a religious system with manifold interstices, where their deities and traditions could be inserted, remembered, and ritualized without attracting undue attention.¹⁴⁶

Even in those cases where masters might have a genuine interest in Christianizing their slaves, economic factors invariably took precedence. In 1873, Antonio Gallenga witnessed an exchange between a Cuban planter and a priest. The planter, seeking to baptize his slaves out of

¹⁴⁴ Richard, Burleigh Kimball, *Cuba and the Cubans* (New York: Samuel Hueston, 1850) in *Slaves, Sugar, and Colonial Society* (see note 142), 160.

¹⁴⁵ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 129.

¹⁴⁶ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 70.

the sincere desire that they no longer “continue like dumb cattle,” was nearly discouraged by the high fees the priest charged for the service. While this particular planter was ultimately successful, Gallenga asserts that others were dissuaded by the heavy price of one ounce of gold per slave baptism. (Still, he further argues that such a “venal” and “base” religion as this was better than none at all, again reflecting the extent of whites’ commitment to Christianization.)¹⁴⁷ Whether the priest’s fees were determined by need, avarice, or indifference to the spiritual lives of slaves is less important than the implications of this exchange: part of the reality of rural life was limited access to religious services of all kinds and for all persons.

In the cities, religious participation in general was stronger. This is evidenced in rates of baptism, pilgrimage, attendance at mass, participation in confession and the Easter communion, and the receipt of final benediction in the sacrament of death.¹⁴⁸ Here again, however, one can only speculate to what extent such participation reflected genuine religious feeling or orthodox catechism. If the Spanish and Portuguese Churches are any indication, one cannot be sure about the quality or regularity of religious observance. While contemporary observers praised the dedication and devotion of eighteenth century Iberian bishops, for instance, they criticized the lax morality and ignorance of lower clerics, especially those in under-funded parishes. In particular, other Europeans expressed dismay at the Spanish clergy’s lack of formal education and their superstitious ways. In Portugal, unorthodox practices and beliefs were even exacerbated by local clergy, especially in isolated rural areas, who took on a quasi-shaman role in popular religion.¹⁴⁹ As for the mass of the faithful, religious practice in both Portugal and Spain frequently had as much or more to do with social concerns as with personal spiritual devotion. Certificates of confession, for example, were required in Spain, but how and why people met that

¹⁴⁷ Gallenga, *The Pearl of the Antilles*, in *Slaves, Sugar, and Colonial Society* (see note 142), 171-172.

¹⁴⁸ Marzal, “Daily Life in the Indies,” 73.

¹⁴⁹ Callahan and Higgs, *Church and Society in Catholic Europe*, 38-39, 41, 63.

obligation varied widely. In rural areas, there was heavy social pressure to go to confession; in the cities, on the other hand, prostitutes sold certificates of confession on the street for cheap. In Portugal, bribes allowed some to get out of Easter communion, and there was tension between popular Catholicism and official orthodoxy, especially in rural areas.¹⁵⁰

If this kind of variability existed in the mother countries, one could hardly expect better in the far away colonies. It does seem clear that attendance at mass was primarily a female activity among whites, and that slaves attended with some regularity. Several accounts confirm this. For instance, on his visit to a Havana church on Holy Thursday, William Cullen Bryant described the crowd thus: “aged negro men and women, half-naked negro children, ladies richly attired, little girls in Parisian dresses,” all prostrating themselves before an image of Christ carrying his cross.¹⁵¹ In urban centers, too, the streets were an instrument of cultural immersion for slaves, forming a place where they could connect with others of their own ethnic group and also participate more actively in Catholic ritual. As the plantation chapel was replaced by the parish church and fraternity in town, slaves turned to neighborhood saints rather than household patron saints.¹⁵²

In Cuban cities, the Catholic Church in some ways broke down the racial hierarchy that dictated every aspect of slaves’ lives. Perhaps the most obvious indication that the church was a special place for them was that it was not segregated. Travelers John Wurdemann, Alexander Gilmore Cattell, and William Cullen Bryant, for example, all note in their accounts that blacks

¹⁵⁰ Callahan and Higgs, *Church and Society in Catholic Europe*, 46-47, 61.

¹⁵¹ William Cullen Bryant, “A Letter from Havana, 1849,” in *Travelers’ Tales of Old Cuba*, ed. John Jenkins (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia: Ocean Press, 2000), 34.

¹⁵² Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 118.

and whites mingled freely in Cuba's churches.¹⁵³ The Catholic Church's educational institutions also provided opportunities for upward mobility, and its policies concerning work on Sundays and holidays made it a guarantor of slaves' free time, at least in theory.¹⁵⁴ It should be noted that this was primarily the case away from the plantations. In urban areas, in the mines, and in more mobile professions (i.e., cart driver, cattle rancher), slaves had comparatively more personal freedom, more economic opportunities, and a greater awareness of their rights. Thus they were more likely to negotiate (and even demand) their rights to free time as dictated by the Church and the law.¹⁵⁵

Other refuges for Cuban slaves included clubs and fraternal organizations, which were both important centers for the preservation of African culture in cities as well as targets of the Church's efforts at what George Brandon calls "guided cultural change" among the black population. For example, in the mid-18th century, Bishop Pedro Agustín Morell de Santa Cruz of Havana began a campaign to bring Catholicism into clubs and taverns where Africans and Afro-Cubans gathered to drink and dance. He traveled to each one, administered confirmation, and prayed the Holy Rosary with them before an image of Mary, which he then left with them. He charged them with continuing their devotion and then assigned clergy to go to each club on

¹⁵³ John George F. Wurdemann, *Notes on Cuba* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1844) in *Slaves, Sugar, and Colonial Society* (see note 142), 153-154; Alexander Gilmore Cattell, *To Cuba and Back in 22 Days*, (Philadelphia, PA: Press of the Times, 1874) in *Slaves, Sugar, and Colonial Society* (see note 142), 172; William Cullen Bryant, "A Letter from Havana, 1849," in *Travelers' Tales of Old Cuba* (see note 150), 34.

¹⁵⁴ "Royal Decree and Instructional Circular for the Indies on the Education, Treatment, and Work Regimen of Slaves, May 31, 1789" pp. 47-54 in *Voices of the Enslaved* (see note 75), 48-49; Brandon, *Santería from Africa to the New World*, 69; John George F. Wurdemann, *Notes on Cuba* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1844) in *Slaves, Sugar, and Colonial Society* (see note 142), 107-108.

¹⁵⁵ Matt Childs, "Master-Slave Rituals of Power at a Gold Mine in Nineteenth-Century Brazil," *History Workshop Journal*, No. 53 (Spring 2002) 53-54; Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 69-70, 166-167.

Sundays and holy days to teach Catholic doctrine, even suggesting that they attempt to learn African languages to facilitate instruction.¹⁵⁶

Cuban festivals were characterized by strong African and free black participation alongside whites as well. Each *cabildo de nación* (Catholic brotherhoods for blacks) brought its own costumes, drums, songs, and dances into the processions. In essence, the processions allowed Africans to *play themselves* in a way their daily lives often prevented. Creoles, meanwhile, held themselves at a distance from the brotherhoods, preferring instead to model themselves after the whites.¹⁵⁷ During festival celebrations, the *cabildos* demonstrated solidarity in recalling their heritage, flexed their financial muscle, and proudly asserted their authority and influence among their members.¹⁵⁸ For the whites, such festivities also served multiple purposes: it fostered rivalry between ethnic groups, which showed primarily in performative competition and sometimes in the eruption of violence between them; it was believed to provide a safety valve for releasing slaves' passions (and relieving resentment); and it brought African practices into the fold of sanctioned religious observance by drawing on parallel traditions.¹⁵⁹ Roberto González Echevarría also speculates, based on his analysis of contemporary artwork depicting the scene during *el Día de los Reyes*, that the temporary grant of freedom for these celebrations was also a ritual of atonement, a penance to relieve whites' consciences.¹⁶⁰

In contrast to Cuba, Brazilian churches either held separate services for white and black worshippers or, more often, reserved the nave with its indoor benches for whites, while blacks congregated under a portico outside. Black Catholicism might exist side by side with white, but

¹⁵⁶ Sandoval, *Worldview, the Orichas, and Santería*, 21; Brandon, *Santería from Africa to the New World*, 69-70.

¹⁵⁷ Fernando Ortiz, "The Afro-Cuban Festival 'Day of Kings,'" in *Cuban Festivals: A Century of Afro-Cuban Culture*, ed. Judith Bettelheim, 1-40 (Princeton, NJ: Markus Weiner Publishers, Inc., 2001), 4-5; Roberto González Echevarría, *Cuban Fiestas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 107.

¹⁵⁸ Judith Bettelheim, "Carnival in Santiago de Cuba," in *Cuban Festivals* (see note 156), 97-99.

¹⁵⁹ Echevarría, *Cuban Fiestas*, 98; Ortiz, "The Afro-Cuban Festival 'Day of Kings,'" 5, 9-10, 23, 29-30.

¹⁶⁰ Echevarría, *Cuban Fiestas*, 103.

it was always seen as inferior. In large cities, and in particular in the northeastern provinces Bahia and Pernambuco, Brazilian civilization was proudly Lusitanian (at least until independence in 1820¹⁶¹). The Amerindian and the African were merely tools for work or pleasure, and the racial pride of the white colonists and later creoles was contingent upon holding themselves at a distance from “men of color.” The Church even assigned black saints for Africans’ particular worship: St. Benedict, the Moor, and Our Lady of the Rosary, the blacks’ own Madonna.¹⁶² The Church, which formed the primary link between Brazil and Portugal and the major vein of continuing influence, was therefore a mechanism for safeguarding against the contamination of white Brazilians by African and Amerindian influence. This racial stratification also spilled over into black churches in Brazil, which were internally divided along racial lines. Mulattos generally did not want to be classified along with blacks, and creoles and Africans separated themselves as well.¹⁶³ The distinction between African and non-African became especially important after the abolition of the slave trade. Up to that point, African ethnic designations had continued to be significant to both blacks and whites, but once regular importations ceased, racial identity became key.¹⁶⁴ If in Cuba the goal was to lead blacks into white culture in order to eliminate African influence, in Brazil the tendency was instead to contain the threat of Africanization and to preserve the separation between the two worlds through the determined denigration of blackness and all the characteristics it gathered in.

Like in Cuba, public religious celebrations were not segregated per se, but they too reflected the hierarchy of color in Brazilian society. African slaves celebrated according to their own rituals and whites held themselves aloof, never “stooping” to the slaves’ Catholicism.

¹⁶¹ Hendrik Kraay, *Race, State, and Armed Forces in Independence-Era Brazil, Bahia, 1790s-1840s* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 114.

¹⁶² Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 110-111, 113.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 41-42, 115.

¹⁶⁴ Parés, “Ethnic-Religious Modes of Identification,” 198.

During processions, black participants took the lead while the last and most prestigious positions were filled by whites. The clergy occupied the middle, acting as both a literal and symbolic link between them.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, festivals, though they might be attended by any and everyone, were readily identified as either white *or* black celebrations, not both. This was apparent even to foreigners. The Archduke Maximilian observed a festival at the Church of Our Lady of Bomfim at Bahia in 1866, the object of which was a pilgrimage of women into the church to wash the entrance on the terrace and the stone pavement in order to obtain blessings for bearing children. He describes only black women participating in this ritual – even noting that the exercise seemed to be in vain as the birthrate among slave women had not improved – although there is some indication that all races are present and welcome to enjoy the spectacle. Commenting on the mass, he notes that it was given over the din of talking, drinking and general merriment. One realizes immediately his discomfort with this situation, even as he explains how it is justified: “Brazilian priests maintain that it is necessary to lead the negroes into the paths of religion by this means...that they can only be brought into the church by mirth and gaiety and when plied with cachaca.” He immediately dismisses this claim, considering it a convenient way to justify slavery by categorizing blacks as “half-animals.”¹⁶⁶ This assertion illustrates that even at this late date, white Brazilian society regarded African religious practice as something that first, could only approximate real Christian devotion, and second, required appealing to “base” tastes believed to be inherent to slaves’ mentalities.

Although in both Brazil and Cuba, Catholicism incorporated African elements and distinctions were made between white and black public celebrations, their treatment of black participation in Catholic religious observance was markedly different. In Cuba, there was an

¹⁶⁵ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 112-113, 117-118.

¹⁶⁶ “The Negroes Were Holding Their Saturnalia: A Popular Festival at the Church of Our Lady of Bomfim at Bahia (1866),” in *Children of God’s Fire* (see note 109), 198.

expectation that the permissive attitude toward African traditions in the short-term and their incorporation into Catholic practice would ultimately lead to the abandonment of “paganism” in favor of the “true” faith the long-term. Indeed, Creole blacks were expected to distance themselves from the *cabildos*, as they were believed to be more “civilized” and thus ostensibly had no need for the kind of acculturation the brotherhoods were thought to engender. In Brazil, on the other hand, control was emphasized far more often than conversion.¹⁶⁷ It was, in fact, considered impossible to imagine that black Catholicism would ever be able to approximate the sincerity and sophistication of whites’.¹⁶⁸ Allowing the least objectionable African customs to continue reflected this belief, and in part provided justification for slavery.

Black Cofradías

With churches limited almost exclusively to urban areas and clerics thin on the ground and not terribly effective where they were found, popular associations were forced to pick up where the Church left off.¹⁶⁹ In particular, Catholic *cofradías* (confraternities) became powerful instruments of evangelization for the colonial church – they organized devotion to saints, sacramental practices, and holy day celebrations. They also functioned as mutual aid societies and a source of group solidarity in a caste society.¹⁷⁰ These brotherhoods were known as *irmandades* in Brazil and *cabildos de nación* (or simply *cabildos*) in Cuba. The Iberian precursors to these organizations had been grouped by occupation or ethnic designation and were affiliated with a specific church. They were organized in much the same way in the Americas, but with a much stronger focus on racial or ethnic identity, and rather than being housed in local

¹⁶⁷ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 70; Matt D. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle against Atlantic Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 99.

¹⁶⁸ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 129.

¹⁶⁹ Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America*, 8.

¹⁷⁰ Marzal, “Daily Life in the Indies,” 75-76.

churches, their meeting places were located in members' living quarters.¹⁷¹ This further removed them from the official Church's influence and strengthened group identity within the brotherhoods. It also meant that they were predominantly urban organizations, since both whites and blacks were by and large confined to the isolation of the plantation in rural areas.

In both Brazil and Cuba, therefore, slaves had their own brotherhoods and were encouraged to engage in voluntary associations based on "national" (read: ethnic) identities. Colonial authorities were quick to make use of previous religious or civic leaders and place them in charge of these ostensibly "Christian" clubs.¹⁷² It helped that such clubs were reminiscent of social and religious institutions prevalent in Africa. There, benevolent and secret societies served multiple functions: religious, charitable, recreational, political, and economic. Like their American counterparts, they were composed of people who shared the same language and culture, and they had officers and councils. This system of social organization, already familiar to them, was thus relatively simple for enslaved Africans to embrace and facilitated their transition between two environments and societies.¹⁷³

The civil-religious activities of mutual aid, cooperation, and social and religious observance among the free and slave black population were considered an integral part of the paternalistic slave system and, because of their emphasis on "national" identity, were in line with the divide-and-conquer philosophy that was designed to prevent united uprisings (although that did not ultimately prove to be a viable strategy, as will be discussed in the next chapter).¹⁷⁴

Under the direction of a diocesan priest, these brotherhoods also allowed for the accommodation

¹⁷¹ Philip A. Howard, *Changing History: Afro-Cuban Cabildos and Societies of Color in the Nineteenth Century*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 1998), 25-27; Brandon, *Santería from Africa to the New World*, 70.

¹⁷² Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America*, 57; Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 111.

¹⁷³ Howard, *Changing History*, 21, 26.

¹⁷⁴ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 182-183.

of African customs to Christian worship, in the hope that through this acculturation, Africans would be swept into mainstream Christianity and in time would forsake their traditional customs. Dances with African drums, songs, steps, and rhythms were the confraternities' most frequent recreational activities, for instance, and the most important dances took place on Catholic religious holidays. This highlights the attempt by the Church to accommodate inoffensive African practices; the important connections Africans made between music, dance, and religion; and their insistence upon expressing religious devotion in their own ways. As a result of slaves' attraction to these brotherhoods and their integrative function, *cofradías*, rather than parish churches, formed the principle organizing structure of African religious life under Brazil's and Cuba's slave systems.¹⁷⁵

For their part, people of color also viewed these confraternities as an avenue to manumission, a source of support, a training ground for leadership, and a means for upward mobility through prestigious positions within them.¹⁷⁶ Through the fees and contributions of members, black brotherhoods could help purchase the freedom of members or cover their funeral expenses, and several became quite influential within their communities. In Minas Gerais, for instance, local *irmandades* – mostly Angolan and Congolese – involved most slaves and free people of color and managed to amass enough money to build churches and patronize music and the arts.¹⁷⁷ In Cuba, Carabalí *cabildos* (made up of Africans of Igbo descent) monopolized stevedore jobs and worked together to secure them for members of their ethnic group.¹⁷⁸ Membership in these brotherhoods thus offered a number of attractive benefits, and as British resident of Pernambuco Henry Koster noted, the “the ambition of a slave very generally aims at

¹⁷⁵ Brandon, *Santería from Africa to the New World*, 71-72.

¹⁷⁶ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 115-116.

¹⁷⁷ Childs, “Master-Slave Rituals of Power at a Gold Mine in Nineteenth-Century Brazil,” 58; Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America*, 185.

¹⁷⁸ Howard, *Changing History*, 34-35.

being admitted...and at being made one of the officers and directors of the concerns of the brotherhood.”¹⁷⁹

Because of their emphasis on “nationality,” confraternities quickly became a source of racial and ethnic solidarity. In Brazil, membership consisted chiefly of Congolese or Angolans (often collectively termed “Bantu”); the Nagô (Yorùbá) and Dahomeans were also included, but to a lesser extent.¹⁸⁰ This is due in part to the ethnic make-up of Brazilian slave importations. As noted in the previous chapter, slaves from Yorùbá and Dahomean territories were not imported in significant numbers until the turn of the nineteenth century, while Congolese and Angolans, who had represented a large portion of the slave population for centuries, had already established their own ethnic “clusters.”¹⁸¹ Conversely, Cuba’s slave population exploded suddenly at the end of the 18th century, with large numbers from various ethnic groups arriving all at once. The Lucumí (Yorùbá), Congo, and Carabalí constituted the largest groups in the 1800s and were all well-represented in the *cabildos*. In the west, the Lucumí were the most numerous; the Carabalí predominated in the east.¹⁸² In both Brazil and Cuba, these ethnic categories carried multiple subcategories based on more narrowly defined identities, usually centered on particular lands, provinces, or cities in Africa.¹⁸³ Although identification with specific African backgrounds within the brotherhoods was contingent on concentrations of slaves arriving from each region, community solidarity was as much a result of external contrast (both to white Catholics and to other ethnic groups) as internal similarities.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ “A British Resident of Pernambuco Describes the Beneficial Effects of Catholicism on Slaves, Notably Upon Those Belonging to Plantations of the Benedictine Order (about 1815)” in *Children of God’s Fire* (see note 109), 186-187.

¹⁸⁰ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 53-54.

¹⁸¹ Sweet, *Recreating Africa*, 29-30; Parés, “Ethnic-Religious Modes of Identification,” 195.

¹⁸² Howard, *Changing History*, 16.

¹⁸³ Parés, “Ethnic-Religious Modes of Identification,” 180-181.

¹⁸⁴ Miller, “Retention, Reinvention, and Remembering,” 96.

Religious Hybridization: Candomblé and Santería

As the preceding paragraphs suggest, Africans did not *openly* resist Christianization under slavery. They did not have to. Besides the manifold ways in which Catholic society in both Brazil and Cuba provided “hiding places” for the preservation of African religious expression, there is little evidence that suggests Africans traditionally thought of their spiritual traditions as self-contained “religions” in the first place.¹⁸⁵ Rather, African religions were primarily preoccupied with power and viewed the universe and human life as dynamic agencies. Through devotional activities like sacrifice and divination, Africans believed they could enhance their power within the context of social relationships in both the natural and supernatural realms. The importance of power, its increase or diminution, was the constant concern in prayers, invocations, spells, and magic. As a result, the prevailing African attitude to religions other than their own was as a supplement, rather than a replacement.¹⁸⁶ As Andrés Petit, the head of an Abakuá lodge in Cuba, once said: “mientras más religions tenga una persona, más santidad” (the more religions a person has, the more holiness).¹⁸⁷

To reject a religion so clearly identified with power in the colonial context (whites were the masters there, after all) would be to deny themselves access to that power. This meant that enslaved Africans were in all actuality inclined to accept baptism to improve their status among both creole slaves and whites. As noted in the previous chapter, accepting the religion of the whites also echoed another dynamic prevalent in most West African cultures, in which it was customary to assimilate slaves into the society of their masters. Africans and creole blacks therefore initially saw Catholicism more as a social activity than as a mystique, an organization

¹⁸⁵ Louis Brenner, “Histories of Religion in Africa,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 30, Fasc. 2 (May 2000): 143-146, 162-163.

¹⁸⁶ Howard, *Changing History*, 60, 63.

¹⁸⁷ As quoted in Christine Ayorinde, *Afro-Cuban Religiosity, Revolution, and National Identity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 23.

that yielded benefits on earth rather than celestial rewards in the afterlife. This attitude was reinforced by the way Iberian Catholicism had been transplanted in Brazil and Cuba – as much or more a social institution as a religious one.¹⁸⁸

Moreover, the catechization required of slaves was more or less perfunctory, allowing them to integrate Catholicism into their own traditions rather than replace them altogether. Real integration, however, was initially impeded by the nature of their religious education under slavery. As previously discussed, chaplains did not so much evangelize as they simply performed services. They baptized and married the slaves, but they did not really teach them.¹⁸⁹ Even when masters or clergy had a sincere interest in conversion, language and cultural barriers made immediate indoctrination impossible. It was through immersion in Catholic culture then, rather than proper instruction, that slaves were taught about Christian beliefs and practices. This immersion was characterized primarily by interactions with other slaves, and so Christian symbols and rituals were imbued with double meanings – Western and African.

Even before the era of widespread African slavery, the colonial Catholic Church was well-organized for this hybridized approach to religious conquest and conversion. In evangelizing to Amerindians, for instance, local gods were destroyed, but sacred places were maintained and re-purposed with Christian cosmology and religious observance through the erection of churches and shrines. Brown-skinned Marys appeared in religious centers and spiritual devotion to her was similar to pre-existing rituals. While elite Catholic intellectuals certainly objected, they were not able to stop this practice.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, Amerindians participated in the church activities that corresponded with their own traditions or lent themselves to the incorporation of old deities. As a result, Spaniards and Amerindians interpreted

¹⁸⁸ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 158.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 126-127.

¹⁹⁰ Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 184.

each other's actions from within their own cultural experience.¹⁹¹ This situation was replicated with African slaves in Brazil and Cuba, except in that it was Africans who both refashioned existing sacred spaces and objects to suit their needs and incorporated Catholic ritual insofar as it accommodated their traditions and worldview. In a process that likely began as a subversive exercise, a way to continue òrìsà worship in the land of saints, the parallels that permitted such activity also contributed to the creation of a new religious system that embraced aspects of both African and Catholic beliefs and practices.¹⁹²

The Catholic folk tradition that had been brought into the official fold in the Iberian colonies also contributed to religious hybridization. Baroque Catholicism emphasized lavish manifestations of piety: religious processions, great cathedrals, sumptuous altars, and opulent music.¹⁹³ Until enslaved Africans had the opportunity to make sense of Catholicism on their own terms, they endeavored to maintain the belief systems that had served them in their homelands. As a result, when possible they superimposed Catholic images and rituals onto African ones in order to continue their own religious observance. Over time, this juxtaposition of corresponding practices also contributed to the blending of traditions.

The Yorùbá ethnic group that predominated in northeastern Brazil and western Cuba engaged in what was perhaps the most integrative and complex hybridization with Christianity in the colonial context. Their traditions, a mix of òrìsà worship and Catholicism, became known as Candomblé and Santería in Brazil and Cuba, respectively. In Brazil, the Nagô element set the standard for Dahomean, Angolan, and Congolese candomblés.¹⁹⁴ In Cuba, while members of

¹⁹¹ Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America*, 85.

¹⁹² Christopher C. Fennell, *Crossroads and Cosmologies: Diasporas and Ethnogenesis in the New World* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 85-86.

¹⁹³ Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America*, 71-72.

¹⁹⁴ Robert A. Voeks, *Sacred Leaves of Candomblé: African Magic, Medicine, and Religion in Brazil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 52-53.

Santería groups might practice elements of Palo Monte and other spiritual traditions, they still ultimately regarded themselves and their spiritual tradition as Yorùbá. Even today, the religion is still sometimes referred to as “Lucumí religion” or simply “Lucumí.”¹⁹⁵

The religious congregations Africans formed through their brotherhoods were an exceptionally powerful means of articulating ethnic identity – and ultimately religious identity – through their explicit “national” orientation, strong collective organization between members, and their contact and confrontation with competing groups. While they thus came in various forms, in Brazil only one – that of the Yorùbá – predominated and provided the basis for the theology, ritual, and festival activity for all others.¹⁹⁶ In Cuba, meanwhile, several ethnic groups established distinct traditions, Santería or Lucumí representing only one incarnation of African-derived religious expression.¹⁹⁷ The implications of these differences on the construction of black identities in Brazil and Cuba will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

This tendency for Yorùbá cosmology to dominate was due in part to the less fragmented circumstances of their capture and deployment on the African continent. Generally speaking, the Yorùbá were not captured and sold individually, as were many Africans, but rather in large groups as a result of military losses.¹⁹⁸ Perhaps more importantly, the nature of their religious observance lent itself more readily to hybridization with Catholicism. While traditional Central African religious practices generally focused more on their therapeutic purposes, emphasizing magic and the veneration of ancestors, those of West Africa employed an elaborate ritual structure with an accompanying array of deities. The intermediary spirits in Central African

¹⁹⁵ Howard, *Changing History*, 74; Sandoval, *Worldview, the Orichas, and Santería*, 48; Fennell, *Crossroads and Cosmologies*, 86.

¹⁹⁶ Parés, “Ethnic-Religious Mode of Identification,” 190, 193-194.

¹⁹⁷ Judith Bettelheim, “Negotiations of Power in Carnival Culture in Santiago de Cuba,” *African Arts* 24, no. 2 (April 1991), 72.

¹⁹⁸ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 69.

practice were more strongly associated with natural bodies and phenomena, such as mountains and bodies of water, and did not retain similarly specific personalities like the *òrìsà*.¹⁹⁹ Congolese or Angolan clients therefore primarily consulted with religious experts who produced charms and provided other services to address pressing concerns. West African religious practice, on the other hand, although characterized by the same tendency, emphasized the devotional aspect of religious practice – tending to their *òrìsà*'s shrines, celebrating festivals in their honor, and maintaining a relationship with them through highly ritualized acts of worship.²⁰⁰ This element of devotion also made *òrìsà* worship more compatible with Catholicism, both in terms of ritual practice and approximating Western civilization. This in turn helped to make it more prestigious among Africans of other groups and more sustainable in the context of slavery.

But where was Yorùbá *òrìsà* worship most apt to blend with Catholic practice, resulting in the hybridized traditions of Candomblé and Santería? The rural context seems unlikely. This was not due to a lack of exposure to *African* practices or belief systems. Quite the contrary – Brandon instead insists that it was a lack of immersion in *Catholic* culture and the absence of Catholic instruction. The sugar boom in Cuba precluded leisure time for the slaves, and therefore brought to an end any hope for real religious instruction. Any clergy attempting to catechize slaves working in such conditions managed just to provide them with the rudimentary lessons and received only empty repetition as satisfaction. Before 1800, slaves might have had Sundays and holidays off and might even have been given time at night for dancing and drumming, but by the second decade of the century, the Church had capitulated to the sugar masters. The diocesan bishops authorized plantations to work slaves on both Sundays and saints' days. As for the

¹⁹⁹ Howard, *Changing History*, 57; Fennell, *Crossroads and Cosmologies*, 55.

²⁰⁰ Parés, "Ethnic-Religious Mode of Identification," 190-191.

traditional African diversions? Even if the planters thought them harmless, they were unproductive and ultimately discarded.²⁰¹ Meanwhile, in Brazil, by the mid-seventeenth century, plantation slaves given Sundays off were expected to provide their own food and clothing in return for the loss of their labor. Thus, they spent Sundays cultivating their private plots rather than attending mass. Those masters who continued to insist that their slaves work the fields on Sundays did so based on the argument that African slaves would either persist in honoring their own deities rather than the Christian God, or would simply waste the day drinking, dancing, or causing trouble.²⁰²

What of domestic slaves living in the big house? There, Africans and creole blacks were more fully integrated into white culture and formed a bridge between the house and the plantation's fields – they brought African healers into the house and helped to spread Christianity in some form to the slaves who worked the plantation.²⁰³ Still, these two enslaved groups lived worlds apart, and the likelihood that such exchanges formed the basis of a hybridized tradition is hard to imagine. The population of domestic slaves was small and equally likely to be ethnically diverse, leaving little opportunity for the establishment of a Yorùbá concentration. In addition, it would have been exceedingly difficult to carry on such a highly ritualized and hierarchical religious system right under the nose of the master and his family. Even where African practices were incorporated, this very informal and small-scale hybridization was insufficient to constitute an entire tradition of its own.²⁰⁴ Individual beliefs and actions, insofar as they are not derived from a communal standard, are magic, for which there are clients but no “church.” Religions

²⁰¹ Brandon, *Santería from Africa to the New World*, 59, 61.

²⁰² Sweet, *Recreating Africa*, 201-202.

²⁰³ Brandon, *Santería from Africa to the New World*, 64.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 65; Rodríguez, *Voices of the Enslaved*, 23; Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 69-70.

must be shared by a community in order to be tenable.²⁰⁵ Moreover, any hope for upward mobility was entirely contingent upon slaves' willingness and ability to assimilate into white culture as much as possible.²⁰⁶ Those in domestic service in rural areas would have felt this pressure most acutely – with more interaction with the master's family than the large community of slaves who worked the plantation, and few (if any) opportunities to escape to the streets of the city, the culture of the white patriarch formed the major influence in their lives.

Of course, Brazilian and Cuban societies were not dichotomous; there was more than just the plantation or the city. Large mines in interior Brazil could employ hundreds of slaves. In both Brazil and Cuba, transportation networks and smaller agricultural operations like cattle herding utilized slave labor. And there were runaway settlements of slaves who took refuge together in the forests and mountains – *quilombos* in Brazil, *palenques* in Cuba. Why were these not suitable environments for the genesis of hybridized religious traditions among the enslaved Africans within them? Let us take them one at a time.

In the mining regions of Brazil, slaves could number over 1,000 in a single mine.²⁰⁷ Here, like on the plantations, isolation and intense labor demands played important roles in curtailing religious activities. The lack of seasonal rhythms with which to mark festivals, the constant supervision to prevent stealing, and long work hours also left few opportunities for Africans to regularly engage in rituals or in the kind of social activities that characterized the brotherhoods.²⁰⁸ What's more, while there is some sparse evidence that the African "nations" and *irmandades* were a factor in establishing a sense of community identity in mining regions like Minas Gerais, it is important to remember that individual competition to purchase one's

²⁰⁵ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 33.

²⁰⁶ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 163.

²⁰⁷ Childs, "Master-Slave Rituals of Power at a Gold Mine in Nineteenth-Century Brazil," 46.

²⁰⁸ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 50.

freedom and get rich (a real possibility when mining for gold and diamonds) could stymie African solidarity.²⁰⁹ In addition, Central Africa remained the primary source of slaves for the mining regions, with the exception of a few decades in the early eighteenth century and the later internal migrations of slaves in the nineteenth.²¹⁰ This meant that there was little chance for Africans of Yorùbá descent to establish the kind of stronghold necessary to develop their hybridized system of worship.

On smaller farms and ranches, fewer slaves meant that those who worked on them were culturally overwhelmed. Lacking the numbers to establish cohesive communities and working in close quarters with whites and wage laborers intensified the process of creolization.²¹¹ The cart drivers, messengers, and other slaves who travelled between rural and urban areas maintained economic and social links connecting the two worlds, but ultimately belonged to one or the other. On the plantation, they lived apart from the masses of slaves who worked in the fields in much the same way as domestic slaves did. In town, they were a part of the vast urban slave community with its refuges in taverns, brotherhoods, and private living spaces. While they might provide the networks necessary for coordinating resistance movements or the mechanisms for individual slaves to maintain kinship ties and links with the free population in town, such networks could not form the basis for either Candomblé or Santería.²¹² Òrìṣà worship and Catholicism were geographically bound, highly structured traditions that depended upon fixed locations for much of their ritual activity.²¹³ Such activity among the enslaved could not be

²⁰⁹ Childs, "Master-Slave Rituals of Power at a Gold Mine in Nineteenth-Century Brazil," 59-61; Bastide, *The Religions of Brazil*, 118.

²¹⁰ Sweet, *Recreating Africa*, 24; Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil*, 49-50.

²¹¹ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 50.

²¹² Rodríguez, *Voices of the Enslaved*, 23, 36-37, 40.

²¹³ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 41, 118, 216.

supported without the “home bases” provided by the *cofradías* (and later, the *terreiros* and *reglas* that replaced them).

Finally, the maroon communities hidden away in the scrub and mountains of Brazil and Cuba seem likewise unable to provide havens for Candomblé or Santería. In Cuba, this is partly because their ethnic makeup is uncertain and because their religious proclivities remain somewhat mysterious. Documentation concerning religious expression within them is fragmentary at best. Although they certainly left evidence of African religion and magic in the form of talismans, and witnesses reported that sorcerers and African priesthoods played a part in their affairs, there is not enough evidence to determine the extent of Yorùbá influence.²¹⁴ In Brazil, runaway communities were perhaps more numerous than anywhere in the Americas thanks to its vast frontier, and some of Brazil’s *quilombos* became very large and lasted for decades.²¹⁵ Many were characterized by organization based on the merit-based warrior societies (*ki-lombos*) found in Central Africa with hierarchical structures complete with kings, captains, and officers. Often, these societies erased lineage ties, were typically isolated, and primarily male.²¹⁶ In both Brazil and Cuba, isolation and secrecy were key to the settlements’ survival, and because of sexual imbalances and white hostility to their existence, they were inherently unstable. Even the strongest and most notorious, like the Palmares and Pará *quilombos* of Brazil, eventually succumbed.²¹⁷ These conditions make maroon communities improbable sites for the establishment of either Santería or Candomblé houses.

The genesis of Candomblé and Santería was thus primarily an urban phenomenon. The freedom afforded slaves who rented themselves out, the presence of free blacks, and the

²¹⁴ Brandon, *Santeria from Africa to the New World*, 65-67.

²¹⁵ Klein and Luna, *Slavery in Brazil*, 195-196.

²¹⁶ Sweet, *Recreating Africa*, 50.

²¹⁷ Klein and Luna, *Slavery in Brazil*, 196, 198.

proliferation of *cofradías* all encouraged the development of religious strongholds in cities. In Cuba, for instance, Havana and Matanzas provinces were the bastions of Santería. To be sure, there were surrounded by large sugar producing estates. However, in those areas where there were many plantations and many Africans to work them, but no large cities – in other words, most of the eastern half of the island – Santería was virtually unknown or very little practiced.²¹⁸ After all, it was in town that free blacks and *coartados* (slaves who had begun the process of purchasing their freedom, known in Brazil as *escravos de ganho*) gathered in the streets, speaking their own languages and holding meetings in their quarters.²¹⁹ Bastide argues that plantation slavery in some ways de-Africanized the slaves by confining them to the estate and tightly controlling their activities, while urban slavery re-Africanized them by putting them in constant contact with their compatriots and with centers of cultural resistance (namely, the *cofradías*).²²⁰ There, too, black brotherhoods provided a place for the reconstitution of a priesthood and communal worship combined with an immersion in Catholic culture which was necessary for a hybridized tradition to emerge.

Conclusion

Spanish and Portuguese Catholicism during the slave era was characterized by the veneration of saints, demonstrative and material forms of devotion, and both geographic and intellectual distance between the orthodoxy of the official Church and the religious habits of the mass of the faithful. The transmission of Catholicism into the American colonies exacerbated this distance. As a result, Brazilian and Cuban settlers primarily employed the clergy only when

²¹⁸ Brandon, *Santería from Africa to the New World*, 61; Ayorinde, *Afro-Cuban Religiosity*, 23

²¹⁹ “Slaves Rebel in the Captaincy of Bahia (1814)” in *Children of God’s Fire* (see note 109), 405; Rodríguez, *Voices of the Enslaved*, 32.

²²⁰ Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 51, 66.

observing major sacraments, and household or neighborhood saints became the objects of their daily devotions and prayers.

The relationship between the Church and slavery was, at best, ambiguous. Initially, Christianization had formed one of the justifications for slavery, and therefore religious instruction was, in theory, a moral imperative. However, economic interests invariably took precedence. The maintenance of clerics on plantations was widely considered unnecessary and fees for their services could be costly. More to the point, slaves' lives were dictated by the need for extracting as much labor as possible from them, leaving little time for spiritual reflection or Christian tutelage. What instruction was provided was geared primarily toward ensuring their passive submission to enslavement.

It was therefore in urban areas, where slaves' free time was to some extent their own and where exposure to Catholicism was greater, that people of African descent became immersed in Catholic culture. It was also in the towns and cities that Catholic brotherhoods, *cofradías*, filled the void left by a frequently ineffective clergy. However, the general lack of official supervision and authorities' encouragement of division along ethnic lines meant that these were also sites of ethnic solidarity and religious transculturation. In particular, they formed the foundations of the Yorùbá-derived hybridized traditions Candomblé and Santería. Unfortunately, the persistence of African traditions within them, combined with their prestige and influence, eventually contributed to white anxiety about their role in slave rebellion. This concern represented just one part of a larger insecurity about the relationship between whites and non-whites as Brazil and Cuba began to separate themselves from their colonial masters, prepared for the dissolution of slavery, and struggled with national identity over the course of the 19th century.

RELIGIOUS HYBRIDIZATION AND BLACK IDENTITY

“Sugar changes its coloring; it is born brown and whitens itself; at first it is a syrupy mulatto and in this state pleases the common taste; then it is bleached and refined until it can pass for white... climbing to the top of the social ladder.”

--Fernando Ortiz²²¹

Rebellion, Independence, and Abolition

While the black brotherhoods and their activities had been widely supported by both the state (as a form of social control) and the Church (as a tool for Christianization), over time they became the subject of anxiety and controversy.²²² Given the global disposition of slavery and the surge in rebellious activities in Brazil and Cuba in the first half of the 19th century, fears about African religious practices and ethnic solidarity seemed justified. The Aponte Rebellion of 1812 in Cuba, for instance, began with a revolt in Puerto Príncipe that free blacks and slaves had organized in meetings of the local *cabildos* between Christmas and Epiphany.²²³ There were also multiple uprisings in and around the Cuban towns Catalina de Güines, Havana, Puerto Príncipe, Matanzas, Banes, Santa Ana, Macuriges, Júcaro, and Sabanilla del Encomendador between the second and fourth decades of the 19th century which were led primarily by individuals of the same ethnic group (with Lucumís standing out as some of the most troublesome).²²⁴ In Brazil, meanwhile, white elites wrote of “drumming, sorcery, and superstitious actions,” expressing fear about African and Afro-Brazilian practices forming loci of resistance and rebellion in the wake of the Haitian Revolution. Between 1807 and 1835, more than two dozen slave conspiracies and

²²¹ Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, 9.

²²² Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America*, 182-183, 185-186; Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, 54.

²²³ Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 123-124.

²²⁴ Manuel Barcia, *Seeds of Insurrection: Domination and Resistance on Western Cuban Plantations, 1808-1848* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 33-40.

rebellions were attempted in the city of Salvador alone.²²⁵ In 1835, the largest urban slave rebellion to occur in Brazil was led by African Muslims (mostly of the Nagô ethnic group, known as Malês because of their Islamic background). It was given away by a Nagô (non-Muslim) informer, and later denounced by other slaves as an exclusively Malê rebellion in spite of the predominance of Nagô participants, indicating a much subtler network of identities than the whites recognized.²²⁶

These and other cases demonstrated that both enslaved and free blacks frequently called on their compatriots to conceal, organize, and participate in uprisings. At the same time, members of rival groups (ethnic or religious) could take the opportunity to foil the plans of conspirators and reveal plots to the whites before they could be carried out. Likewise, they provided testimony when revolts failed and punishment was being doled out, in order to separate themselves from the trouble-makers. Even small outbreaks of violence, in which a handful of slaves rose up against a single master, were often motivated by ethnic allegiances, some of which traced back to Africans' homelands. Frequently, slaves captured during these revolts confessed that they had joined out of loyalty to military leaders they had known in Africa or because of kinship ties, and many uprisings featured the use of African drums, magic charms, and African languages.²²⁷

Although ethnic solidarity could certainly be a factor in rebellion, this of course does not preclude cooperation across ethnic lines. On the contrary, most rebellions – especially large ones – involved multiple “nations.” In 1844, for instance, authorities uncovered what was arguably

²²⁵ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 73-74.

²²⁶ João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia*, trans. Arthur Brakel (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 74-75, 97-98, 139-140; Maria Inês Côrtes de Oliveira, “Ethnicity in Bahia: The Case of the Nagô,” in *Trans-Atlantic Dimension of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora*, eds. Paul E. Lovejoy and David V. Trotman, 158-180 (London: Continuum, 2003), 164.

²²⁷ Barcia, *Seeds of Insurrection*, 43-45.

Cuba's most famous slave conspiracy, "La Escalera," allegedly preventing hundreds of slaves, free blacks, and mulattos from carrying out a revolution similar to that which had occurred in Haiti.²²⁸ That rebellions would draw from multiple groups is not surprising given the mixed populations in which they lived. However, it is equally true that most slave revolts were dominated by a particular ethnic group – either in terms of leadership or sheer predominance in numbers – and that it was Africans, rather than Creoles, who carried out most revolts and other acts of violent resistance.²²⁹

The instability that characterized master-slave relations at this time in both Brazil and Cuba set off a series of hostile responses by the white community that were targeted at expressions of African identity, the most visible assertion of which was religious practice. Prior to the 19th century, there is little evidence that African religions in particular were a major concern to colonial administrators. Slavery and its laws restricted slaves' activities in general; so much so that, for the most part, the authorities saw no need to curtail religious activity specifically.²³⁰ Indeed, as we have seen, traditional practices had in fact been encouraged to some degree. Still, slave owners were generally suspicious of and hostile towards slaves' religious practices, and tended to view them as, at best, tools for diffusing slaves' passions, and at worst, serious threats to safety and public order. Eventually, the persistence of African traditions within the *cofradías*, along with the brotherhoods' role in increasing the ranks of the free population, their power and influence among blacks, and their record of involvement in rebellious activity all combined to threaten white authority.

Thus, from the late 18th century onward, the history of the black brotherhoods and other social organizations for people of color was characterized by ever-increasing restriction. In Cuba,

²²⁸ Barcia, *Seeds of Insurrection*, 27-29.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 31, 34-36.

²³⁰ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 77.

el Bando de buen gobierno y policia (Good Government Law) of 1792 prohibited blacks from staging dances except on Sundays and feast days as importations of Africans began to rise with the opening of the slave trade. *Cabildos* were also prohibited from displaying ethnic insignia when participating in street festivals, including African symbols and drums, and the sale and consumption of alcohol was forbidden at *cabildo* affairs. As the 19th century wore on, laws became stricter still. In Matanzas in 1835, *cabildo* dances were only allowed on feast days and were pushed away from the main processions and out to the cities' peripheries. By 1842, all such dances were prohibited except on Epiphany (*el Día de los Reyes*), the most important and popular festival of the year.²³¹ Regarding rural areas in Cuba, Article 5 of the 1842 slave code contained a "Public Order" section which stipulated that only slaves from the same plantation could meet and hold dances with African drums, and that such dances had to take place during the day under supervision. These measures were designed both to stifle conspiracies and to map out places where blacks congregated for extra surveillance.²³² Finally, by 1886, the *cabildo* system fell out of favor and was largely replaced by Afro-Cuban religious organizations known as *reglas*.²³³ These *reglas* followed the ethnic patterns established within the *cabildos* and formed the foundations of Santería, Palo Monte, and Abakuá.

In Brazil, the perceived uptick in slave conspiracies coincided with the rise of abolitionist sentiment and the arrival of Portugal's court in 1807. Slavery and the slave trade had become illegal in the metrópole. The institution of slavery was questioned as a political and economic weak point: it was argued that slavery rendered a huge proportion of Brazil's population virtually stateless, as it had robbed them of their personhood and thus any notion of citizenship; it engendered bitterness and hostility toward all whites on the part of the enslaved and free blacks;

²³¹ Brandon, *Santería from Africa to the New World*, 72.

²³² Howard, *Changing History*, 6, 27.

²³³ Fennell, *Crossroads and Cosmologies*, 85.

it forced a dependence on agriculture and thus stymied industrialization; and international sentiment was turning against it, not least of all in Britain, Portugal's influential ally and long-time financial backer.²³⁴ Beneath all of these assertions, however, lay a single unifying fear that the presence of African influence was a poison that crippled the progress toward a unified, prosperous, and modern Brazil. Africans, "uncivilized" and "barbarous," had no place in that future, and both before and after Brazil achieved independence, efforts were made to displace their culture through white immigration, the ending of the slave trade, and prohibitions on African activities.²³⁵ Although the rhetoric at the time all but embraced abolition, arguments for ending slavery stopped short of anything more than a gradual approach. When Brazil freed itself from Portugal, this remained the case.

In the transition from colony to empire, Brazilian society had to contend with other problems more typical of nascent states: conflict between political groups, competition among rival provinces, division within the ruling class, and severe economic troubles. Competing interests erupted into popular revolts in the decades following the revolution, constituting a serious threat to political unity. Such institutional breakdowns proved fertile ground for slave rebellion, which only increased white insecurity.²³⁶ In addition, as monarchic absolutism began to unravel around 1830, individual liberties and public order suddenly seemed to be in need of institutional safeguards. These were supplied by an increasingly aggressive police force. As classes and races mixed more freely than ever before in public spaces, the ruling elite demanded protection from intercourse with slaves and the poor. The police, responsible for the maintenance

²³⁴ Schultz, "The Crisis of Empire and the Problem of Slavery," 276-280; Kim D. Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won: Afro-Brazilians in Post-Abolition São Paul and Salvador* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 24-26.

²³⁵ Schultz, "The Crisis of Empire and the Problem of Slavery," 280; Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won*, 33-40.

²³⁶ Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil*, 21-23.

of public order as defined by these slaveowners, quickly learned to treat all people of dubious status (read: non-white) in a similarly violent fashion.²³⁷ The slave laws of 1822 provided for policemen who circulated the cities looking for *batuques*, another term for African drum ceremonies, shutting them down and arresting participants.²³⁸ Several provinces – including Bahia – also banned African dances and gatherings outright and authorized the police to raid African “cult” houses.²³⁹ The streets of Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, and other urban areas thus ceased to be a haven for black social interaction, and instead became an ever more dangerous site of contention with white authority.

Change came to the Brazilian Church as well in the late 19th century. Once Brazil had separated itself from Portugal, the Church ceased to be governed by the Board of Conscience and Orders in Lisbon and entered the orbit of the Vatican. This “Romanization” of the church was intended to “clericalize” church life, and as such came into conflict with the *irmandades* that had been the backbone of Brazilian Catholicism for the previous three centuries.²⁴⁰ Combined with the volatile political atmosphere, this resulted in an increasingly oppressive environment for people of color in Brazil and the religious organizations upon which they had come to rely for support, unity, and stability.

Unlike Brazil, Cuba’s move toward independent status occurred long after most other Iberian colonies had liberated themselves from imperial control. Instead, Cuban leaders elected to remain under the protection of Spain rather than risk handling a very large and potentially

²³⁷ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 77; Schultz, “The Crisis of Empire and the Problem of Slavery,” 275.

²³⁸ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 73-74.

²³⁹ “Local Ordinances Bearing on Slavery from Six Provincial Law Collections (1833-1866)” in *Children of God’s Fire* (see note 109), 260-265; “The Government of Bahia Orders Special Measures to Restrict and Control the Province’s Slave Population, (1822)” in *Children of God’s Fire* (see note 109), 254-256; Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil*, 113.

²⁴⁰ Hoornaert, “The Church in Brazil,” 195; Stephen Selka, *Religion and the Politics of Ethnic Identity in Bahia, Brazil* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 11

dangerous slave population on its own. Economic interests naturally played a role in this decision. The planter class had consistently supported the Crown (and vice versa), meaning that slavery as an institution remained relatively safe until very late in the 19th century.²⁴¹ However, Cuban nationalists ultimately challenged Spain directly in the Ten Years' War (1868-1878). The rebels were unsuccessful, regrouped briefly in 1879, and failed again. It was not until 1895 that they organized what Rebecca Scott called the “multi-class, cross-racial, and island-wide revolution” that would wrest the Pearl of the Antilles from Spanish hands.²⁴²

Initially, however, it was the very diversity of their fighting force that proved most problematic for the insurgents' leadership and complicated their push for independence. The ranks of the revolutionaries in 1868 were fraught with disagreement about the disposition of slavery. The leaders initially refused to fully embrace abolition, not wanting to scare off potential supporters who might also be slaveholders. Instead, they advocated an incremental abolition process that would follow the success of the revolution.²⁴³ This hesitancy to commit to abolition was not sustainable in light of the participation by both opponents of slavery and people of color. By 1869, the insurgent leadership declared “all inhabitants of the Republic entirely free.” Decisive though this position might have seemed, blacks and mulattos freed by this proclamation – dubbed *libertos* – were still generally regarded as manpower, rather than individuals. Regulations were put in place to control and channel their energies for the cause; it was simply easier to fight the war if freed slaves were distributed to the army to do their share without taking their wishes into consideration. Wartime exigency and longstanding prejudice meant that

²⁴¹ Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 21. 8.

²⁴² Rebecca J. Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860-1899* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 56-57.

²⁴³ Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 22-23.

insurgent leaders viewed *libertos* as a useful but dangerous force.²⁴⁴ The *libertos*, meanwhile, had to make sense of receiving new freedoms that they were then ordered not to use. However, their participation, and indeed their very presence, pushed abolition closer to the forefront of the rebel cause.²⁴⁵

The insurgents were not the first to suggest that abolition was coming to Cuba. By the 1860s, anti-slavery ideology had become a part of Spanish liberal rhetoric. The Crown had finally succumbed to international pressure and was enforcing longstanding bans on the slave trade. The outcome of the U.S. Civil War seemed to indicate that Cuban abolitionists might be able to count on American support, while pro-slavery annexationists lost an ally in the defeated U.S. South. Slaveholders and officials also worried that the example of the United States would disrupt master-slave relations on the island. And of course, anti-colonial revolutionaries had freed slaves and declared that abolition was among their goals for the new republic. Meanwhile, Cuba's large and growing white population was unique among the Caribbean sugar islands. In the census of 1861-1862, a clear shift had taken place in the island's demography since the previous census of 1846 – whites had become a majority, their numbers accounted for both in terms of immigration and natural increase. Among the population of color, slaves still predominated by a ratio of 1.7 to 1 (a slight decline from the 2:1 recorded in 1846). Despite a slightly more flexible system of ethnic classification than Anglo- and Francophone slave societies, the concept of an African “stain” still stigmatized the descendants of slaves in Cuba and a black-white dichotomy prevailed in public discourse.²⁴⁶

By 1876, insurgent forces were divided and weak and the Spanish army had gained ground in turning back the rebels. In 1877, the president of the republic in arms was captured,

²⁴⁴ Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 47-48, 55.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 53; Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 27.

²⁴⁶ Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 6, 9.

and his successor began negotiating reconciliation the next year. While the war had remained largely confined to the eastern side of the island, the fact that abolition was part of its platform (and thus its appeal) caused Spain to rethink its position on slavery in order to maintain control of the island. Realizing the impossibility of returning to the status quo, the Spanish government included respecting the freedom of former slaves who had participated in the insurrection in the terms for peace. It was difficult to imagine persuading *libertos*, who had fought on condition of freedom, to lay down their weapons and rejoin the colony otherwise.²⁴⁷ As a result of this decision, 16,000 former slaves received legal freedom.²⁴⁸ Spain took a further step toward abolition by introducing the Moret Law of 1870, which declared free all slaves born since 1868 and all slaves over the age of 60. The law also proposed the gradual emancipation of all remaining slaves, organized with the cooperation of Cuban delegates once the war was safely behind them.²⁴⁹ The application of the law revealed it to be less decisive than it seemed: the maintenance of slaves' children until maturity left them with a debt to pay in either cash or labor; fraudulent record-keeping and ill-defined terms meant many elderly slaves' condition remained largely unchanged; and restrictions on mobility and behavior were instituted to control the black population and ensure a reliable workforce as emancipation moved slowly forward.²⁵⁰

The war of independence in 1895 finally resulted in a complete break with Spain. As had been the case in the Ten Years' War, thousands of Cuba's blacks and mulattos joined the cause by fighting as soldiers, growing food, or smuggling supplies. Those who fought in the insurgent ranks hoped that their rights and opportunities would expand in the new republic in a way that they had not after emancipation. With the entrance of the United States, however, self-

²⁴⁷ Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 62, 113-115.

²⁴⁸ Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 16.

²⁴⁹ Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 64.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 68-71.

determination for the new nation was subordinated to a lucrative economic relationship, and with it any hope of racial equality quickly disappeared as the discourse about race in Cuba continued to mirror the American model.²⁵¹

Emancipation came to Brazil in May 1888, followed one year later by the collapse of the empire. However, it should be noted that abolition in Brazil freed few slaves. By this time, the actual enslaved population hovered around five percent of the new nation's total number of inhabitants. Similar to Cuba's Moret Law, the *Rio Branco* Law of 1871 had freed children born to slave mothers from that year onward, and a separate law in 1885 freed those over 60. In a symbolic moment, the Finance Minister Rui Barbosa burned the government's slave registers in 1890. Brazil was declared a "racial democracy."²⁵² However, whites' preoccupation with "public order" and their insistence that the new Brazil appear modern and progressive meant that blacks and mulattos remained under tight social and legal control; indeed, in the first year of the republic, public order violations constituted 83 percent of all crimes recorded for males, many of whom were arrested by police officers who continued to focus their surveillance on areas frequented by people of color.²⁵³

Blackness, Whitening, and Finding a Place in a Multi-Racial Society

As slaveowners, merchants, and officials accepted that slavery would ultimately be extinguished, people of color began to negotiate their changing position in Brazilian and Cuban society. The hierarchies of color in each place manifested in dissimilar ways, and the mechanisms for navigating those hierarchies likewise differed. In Cuba, collective negotiations took multiple forms and met with some success; in Brazil, individual arbitration was the order of the day, and the options available seem to have been much more limited.

²⁵¹ Scott, "Defining the Boundaries of Freedom in the World of Cane," 87-88.

²⁵² Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won* 7.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 40.

As we have noted, one of the most important social institutions for blacks and mulattos in Cuba was the military. Black soldiers received military privileges on par with those of whites, such as access to military courts, the right to bear arms, and exemptions from municipal fees. Their appearance in public displays also increased their social standing among blacks and whites alike. The militia provided opportunities for leadership and to distinguish one's self in battle. Interestingly, many militia soldiers also earned prestigious elected positions in *cabildos* as a result of their service.²⁵⁴ Perhaps most importantly, as previously discussed, military service became an important avenue to freedom during and after the independence movement.

In contrast, while people of color certainly participated on both sides during and after the independence movement in Brazil – and indeed had been a part of the colony's defense for centuries prior – neither the Portuguese nor Brazilian military made any promises concerning freedom or expansion of their rights in exchange for service. Serving might be an alternative to laboring on the plantation, in the mines, or in domestic service, but it was not a path to membership in the whites' *sistema de civilização* ("system of civilization").²⁵⁵ In point of fact, the militia for men of color had in part been contrived to keep that population obedient and under control in the years leading up to independence. The Portuguese therefore seemed to think of it in much the same way that many masters viewed slavery – a system of rules and roles designed to keep people of color productive and under supervision.²⁵⁶ This clearly reflected Brazil's racial hierarchy and also fomented the already powerful prejudice between Brazilian mulattos (*pardos*) and blacks (*prêtos*) by highlighting the distinction between them.²⁵⁷ The implications of these

²⁵⁴ Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 83, 86, 112; Reid, "Protesting Service," 7-9.

²⁵⁵ Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil*, 29-30.

²⁵⁶ Schultz, "The Crisis of Empire and the Problem of Slavery," 269.

²⁵⁷ Kraay, *Race, State, and Armed Forces*, 56, 79-80, 235-238; Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won*,

policies effectively eliminated the possibility that Brazilian blacks would consider military service an avenue for upward mobility.

Combined with the limited opportunities to improve one's station through service and the discriminatory policies outlined above, the imprecision of Brazil's racial structure itself rendered military service a less than desirable occupation. After all, once commissioned, one's race essentially became permanent (particularly if identified as *prêto*). Although from census to census, a civilian's classification could potentially change, the public nature of military service and its division into white, mulatto, and black units likely resulted in a great deal of tension as individuals negotiated their "race" with authorities.²⁵⁸ Between 1820 and 1825, persistent ambivalence about the inclusion of blacks and mulattos on both the Portuguese and Brazilian sides did nothing to resolve the ambiguous status of people of color. Moreover, the independence movement quickly became defined in racial terms, as Portuguese constitutionalists dismissed their opponents as traitorous "men of color," while Brazilians referred to those born in Portugal as "whitewashed" (*caiado*) and nicknamed the European soldiers "sheep."²⁵⁹

In Cuba, the presence of a militia of color in and of itself contradicted the notion that all people of African ancestry were automatically subordinate to whites. By belonging to the militia, blacks and mulattos had the potential to transcend race- and class-based barriers in Cuba.²⁶⁰ In addition, it served as a mobilizing force, in some ways because of the black-white polarity present within it and within Cuban society at large. Regardless of militiamen's service, colonial officials regarded them above all as blacks. This fact, combined with the corporate identity created by military service, unified the free people of color who served. The benefits of military

²⁵⁸ Hebe Mattos, "'Black Troops' and Hierarchies of Color in the Portuguese Atlantic World: The Case of Henrique Dias and His Black Regiment," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 45, no. 1 (2008): 23; Kraay, *Race, State, and Armed Forces*, 237-238, 262.

²⁵⁹ Kraay, *Race, State, and Armed Forces*, 109-114.

²⁶⁰ Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 87.

service also provided an opportunity to challenge social norms within a safe space.²⁶¹ In spite of the limited intentions of the insurgent leaders and Spanish officials with respect to slavery during and after the Ten Years' War, nominal abolition in the first years of the insurgency encouraged *libertos* to resist mistreatment and press for an expansion of their rights.²⁶² The experience and knowledge gained in the military gave black and mulatto soldiers tools for negotiating as a group with white authority as the institution of slavery weakened and their place in Cuba's republic remained uncertain.²⁶³ Indeed, it was black veterans of the 1895-1898 war who formed the *Partido Independiente de Color* in the first decade of the 20th century, a political party organized primarily in response to mistreatment by the Cuban government.²⁶⁴

The military represented just one possible mechanism for navigating Brazilian and Cuban societies for people of color. I mention it here to help illustrate how blacks and mulattos made use of socially sanctioned activities, in addition to subversive practices (such as continuing African religious traditions), in order to define themselves within these racialized systems. It also demonstrates how racial categories had begun to shift in the wake of abolition. Where social identity in Cuba had become defined by European or African racial features over the course of the 19th century – regardless of documentation, socioeconomic status, or other factors – Brazil's more flexible three-tier racial hierarchy made class, occupation, and status part of defining race.²⁶⁵ This meant that individuals could belong to several racial categories in a lifetime (and occasionally, more than one simultaneously). Therefore, it was possible to break into a more advantageous racial category, as all persons existed on what Kim Butler describes as a racial spectrum or continuum. In order to do so, one must have the right tools – money or connections,

²⁶¹ Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 94; Reid, "Protesting Service," 10.

²⁶² Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 61.

²⁶³ Reid, "Protesting Service," 21.

²⁶⁴ Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba Between Reform and Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 167.

²⁶⁵ Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 74; Kraay, *Race, State, and Armed Forces*, 89, 237-238.

for instance – and it was also necessary to disassociate one’s self as much as possible from blackness, the lowest rung on the social ladder.²⁶⁶

Meanwhile, Cuban slaves’ initiative in utilizing the mechanisms at their disposal to acquire their freedom pushed the half-hearted measures of the Spanish parliament toward full emancipation.²⁶⁷ While the Moret Law was very limited in its scope and ineffective in its application, its existence and the use of agents to enforce it reminded the enslaved that an external authority existed that was greater than their masters, one to which they could appeal and to whom the master was beholden.²⁶⁸ Cuban slaves recognized that they possessed a legal personality, which allowed them to exercise their limited rights in their own favor. This had been more the case in urban areas and among Creoles, who regularly took advantage of *coartación*, learned how to legally denounce their masters and request new ones, and pursued emancipation outright based on a variety of laws which they interpreted to their advantage.²⁶⁹ After the war ended, the mass desertion and passive resistance by rural slaves of the eastern plantations also helped cause the Spanish to capitulate, at least nominally; gradual abolition through a system of “tutelage” (*patronato*) that would create an intermediate relationship between master and slave was implemented in 1880.²⁷⁰

In contrast, concerted efforts to change the dynamics of power on the part of blacks and mulattos were rare in the early decades of Brazil’s republic. While they, too, had used legal maneuvers to secure personal rights, there do not seem to have been formal strikes in the sugar zones, nor were any rural unions established. For the most part, struggles over the terms of labor

²⁶⁶ Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won*, 20, 49, 51.

²⁶⁷ Scott, “Defining the Boundaries of Freedom in the World of Cane,” 82.

²⁶⁸ Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 73, 78.

²⁶⁹ Barcia, *Seeds of Insurrection*, 94-97; Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 75-82.

²⁷⁰ Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 122-124.

were carried out on an individual basis.²⁷¹ This response reflects the nature of Brazilian political culture until the 1930s, which followed the model of patronage: the exchange of services and loyalty for protection and support between people who shared personal or professional connections – family, godparentage, and patron-client arrangements. Such a system discouraged group mobilization precisely because navigating it was contingent upon highly individual networks. Political activist organizations and parties for people of color thus did not appear in Brazil until the third decade of the 20th century. Indeed, group activism that sought to work within the existing government was essentially unheard of prior to the 20th century. Where people of color banded together to make common cause, it seemed their goal had consistently been to reject the system entirely and begin anew.²⁷²

With the formation of the First Republic in Brazil in 1889, Afro-Brazilians and their relationship to the Brazilian state became an even more pressing concern than it had been in the Empire. During that time, even as distinctions were made between Creole and African-born slaves, they had generally been regarded as “Brazilian” due to their undeniable contribution to the economy. As a result, at least nominal efforts had been made to integrate Africans and their descendants into Brazilian society at large. With abolition, their status in the eyes of whites shifted back to that of “African” – a foreign, polluting, and potentially dangerous force that had to be contained.²⁷³

This played out dramatically as the new Brazilian republic determined its stance on religion. Africans’ freedom to engage in religious ceremonies involving drumming, sacrifice, and possession dance was an obvious site of contestation since it was in such ritual performances that

²⁷¹ Scott, “Defining the Boundaries of Freedom in the World of Cane,” 92, 98.

²⁷² Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil*, 121; Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won*, 8, 18, 21.

²⁷³ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 82.

difference, non-Brazilian identity, was most radically marked.²⁷⁴ In Decree 119A in January 1890, Brazil had followed the French and U.S. models' separation of church and state, terminating its patronage of the Catholic Church and declaring freedom of religion. However, this decision further complicated racial tension and the formation of Brazilian identity. Up to this point slaves and their religious practices had been subject to masters' whims and hence posed no issue for state policy as a whole. However, their emancipation in 1888 and the subsequent declaration of religious liberty made such issues a national problem as Brazilians sought to establish an identity in keeping with modernity and Western values – in short, a “white” identity.²⁷⁵

The simultaneous promulgation of religious freedom and the view of former slaves as racial poison presented a conflict that was addressed legally in several ways. The first was Decree 528 of June 1890, which prohibited Africans and Asians from entering Brazil without special congressional approval, while European immigration was encouraged. Free land was conceded to European settlers and São Paulo even offered to compensate white immigrants for the costs of ocean passage. The second was the Penal Code of 1890, which included three articles addressing the “illegitimate” practice of medicine, magic, and curing. These articles and the declaration of freedom of religion came together to form a paradox in the Afro-Brazilian case by classifying African “cults” as something other than religion and providing terms for controlling their activities. A final declaration, Law 173 of 1893, which regulated religious associations, granted legal recognition (and therefore rights) only to associations that declared their existence in civil registers and that did not promote “illicit” or “immoral” ends. This law

²⁷⁴ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 82.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

remained in force until the 1940s.²⁷⁶ These legal maneuvers arose out of a series of movements occurring in Brazil during the same period: as previously mentioned, the necessity of redefining national identity as enlightened and progressive (and thus “white”); a preoccupation with public hygiene and a tendency to equate blackness with both social and physical degeneration; and positivism, which provided a framework for the connections between biology and social health, as well as a language of social evolution and progress.²⁷⁷

As victory against Spain became imminent after decades of struggling for independence, Cuban nationalists were likewise preoccupied with the appearance of being “civilized” and “progressive,” coded terms that hid a racialized conception of the nation’s future. Like Brazil, these euphemisms referred to a process of acquiring the cultural, social, and political trappings of modernity. The condition of being civilized and modern seemed to necessitate the appearance of certain groups (and alternatively, the absence of others), the distinction of which became ever more determined by the physical characteristics of race. In Cuba, however, the struggle to define their civilization as modern, Western, and white played out largely in the political tug-of-war with the United States in the wake of independence.²⁷⁸ Throughout thirty years of revolutionary activity, black mobilization in the political arena seemed to concern white authorities much more than their religious practice. African religious demonstrations remained a source of embarrassment and continued to be persecuted, but religion had not formed a core of resistance for people of color in light of the other, more effective options available to them – namely military service, political activity, and education provided by the new republic’s government as part of its effort to “assimilate” blacks.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁶ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 82-83; Sansone, *Blackness without Ethnicity*, 62.

²⁷⁷ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 83-84, 87-89.

²⁷⁸ Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 178-181, 189-191.

²⁷⁹ Ayorinde, *Afro-Cuban Religiosity*, 35-38.

African-ness vs. Ethnicity: Candomblé and Santería in the Making of Black Identity

People of African descent in Brazil and Cuba responded to tightening discipline and increasing public repression in divergent ways. While Cuba's population of color embraced group mobilization and demonstrated a level of unity in their response to white hostility, Brazilian blacks combated rampant antagonism largely through personal and individualized methods and remained divided from mulattos. These circumstances affected each group's conception of their religious identities as much as their political and social status. The hybridized traditions that had provided support, solidarity, and refuge in the era of slavery continued to do so afterward, but the conception of those traditions and their relationship to black identity differed markedly in Brazil and Cuba as a result of their communities' differing strategies of resistance and adaptation to post-abolition society.

In Cuba, the dramatic increase in slave imports in the 19th century resulted in African identities which remained strong even in the face of racialized categorization and resulted in *bozal* dominance in the *cabildos*. Indeed, there is little evidence that mulattos participated to a great extent in *cabildos*; some brotherhoods excluded them outright or put restrictions on their membership, and Cuban officials may have also prohibited them from joining in an attempt to prevent collaboration between blacks and mulattos. Cuban-born blacks, on the other hand, were regular participants, although they did not have the same rights as African-born members and sometimes sought to separate themselves from *bozales*.²⁸⁰ Still, *cabildos* were the only organizations which permitted voluntary grouping along ethnic lines by Africans and Creoles, men and women, enslaved and free in Cuba. For a society sharply divided between white and black, slave and free, the *cabildos* offered a place to embrace an alternative identity.²⁸¹ Because

²⁸⁰ Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 100, 107-108

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

local governments in Cuba dictated where clubhouses and *cabildo* headquarters could be located, concentrations of them emerged, each defined by ethnicity.²⁸²

Similarly, in Brazil, candomblé houses (*terreiros*) moved to the outskirts of town, situated on hills where they could spot police forces headed their way. Candomblé as a distinct religious tradition began to crystallize in the 1820s. This was the period in which the *Engenho Velho* (“Old Sugar Mill”) *terreiro* was founded, arguably the most important founding house of Candomblé (especially Nagô Candomblé). The basic ritual format had been created during the first decades of the 1800s, but the *terreiro* as a community had its roots in the *irmandades* and followed their formula of identifying with particular African ethnic groups.²⁸³ As noted in Chapter 2, the Yorùbá, which had formed a major part of the last large slave importations, represented the major African religious influence, and thus their cosmology became especially attractive in this context.²⁸⁴

The regulations that dictated where African meeting places could be located were meant to control and monitor their activities, but also exerted an enabling influence on them by setting them away from white supervision. And because the government prohibited public attendance at African celebrations, blacks had the opportunity to preserve their own identities in private.²⁸⁵ Paradoxically, while this increasing marginalization was intended to stamp out subversive activities and did in fact close some of the hiding places where secret religious practices had thrived, it also added to their prestige among people of African descent by forcing them to become ever more secretive and exclusive, endowing them with extraordinary powers only

²⁸² Howard, *Changing History*, 52.

²⁸³ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 75.

²⁸⁴ Miller, “Retention, Reinvention, and Remembering,” 107.

²⁸⁵ Howard, *Changing History*, 53, 56-57.

accessible to those bold enough to seek them out at the edge of town, behind locked gates.²⁸⁶ In both Cuba and Brazil, ethnic identity formed part of the criteria for membership in these exclusive religious communities, but ethnicity as a useful category of identification did not manifest itself in the same way in each case.

African “nations” continued to reunite specific communities in Brazil well into the 19th century, but by mid-century, the “nations” as distinct language and culture groups had been muted by new multicultural generations more Afro-Brazilian than specifically Nagô, Jeje, or Angolan. Creoles and mulattos instead took part in broadly termed “African” religious ceremonies, and eventually what remained were ties of fictive kinship reconstructed within the broader category of African-ness.²⁸⁷ With the birth of the new republic and waves of non-Portuguese immigrants coming into Brazil, free persons had been forced to define themselves in national terms – as Brazilians. Africans and their descendants, trying to find their place in a society not entirely sure that there *was* any place for them, quickly identified themselves as *Afro-Brazilian*. A powerful method of distinguishing themselves as such was through participation in Brazilian religious activities that featured prominent African idioms.²⁸⁸ Although they came under heavy persecution under imperial Brazil, African religious organizations therefore became important sites for negotiating social boundaries and challenging prohibitions on blacks’ behavior.

In spite of increasing restrictions, Candomblé practitioners found ways to continue participating in ritual activity, becoming a secret society in which practitioners concealed their membership. Devotees often left celebrations with concoctions to appease their masters, perhaps for medicinal or magical purposes; blacks with specialized skills or whose labor was badly

²⁸⁶ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 77-78.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁸⁸ Miller, “Retention, Reinvention, and Remembering,” 107.

needed might have to be released soon after arrest at a dance; attendees could file complaints if arrested while conforming to laws concerning African ceremonies and dances.²⁸⁹ Candomblé also offered the opportunity to invert the every-day social order: those who were servants or poor laborers during the day could become kings and queens in public ceremonies. Their reputations as sorcerers or religious leaders could also be exploited to negotiate their socioeconomic status or extract favors.²⁹⁰ Perhaps most importantly, Candomblé houses themselves served as patrons to their members: the priesthood tended to devotees' spiritual needs, which in turn affected their material and physical circumstances. In return, they were expected to support the *terreiro* financially.²⁹¹

All of these maneuvers had been utilized before 1820, but the political, social, and economic uncertainties raised during the independence movement had caused whites to be more fearful than ever about their position on the social ladder and to close off as many paths for “racial uplift” as possible. As a result, spiritual strategies had taken on greater importance as the primary tools of arbitration left to Brazilian blacks and mulattos. This is not surprising when one considers the emphasis on the individual in both social and spiritual relationships in Brazilian society. The system of patronage which formed the underlying principle of virtually all social contracts in Brazil relied on very personal patron-client relationships. Likewise, religious devotion was about personal connections with a patron saint or orixá which depended upon the exchange of tokens and promises for solutions to problems.

During slavery, the status of people of color in Brazil – enslaved, emancipated, free-born, mulatto, African-born, and Brazilian-born – had been of much greater importance than the

²⁸⁹ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 27, 74-75.

²⁹⁰ Livio Sansone, *Blackness without Ethnicity: Constructing Race in Brazil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 35-36

²⁹¹ Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won*, 23.

physical markers of “race.” It was only after abolition, which it must be remembered was not characterized by *legal* racial segregation, that physical appearance began to determine status. Nationalism and scientific racism helped construct this new definition of “African” in Brazilian society in the republic after 1889 in order to quarantine and ultimately eliminate its influence. Traces of African culture were removed from shared public space, which included prohibiting *batuques* and African-derived rituals.²⁹²

The post-slave trade period marked the beginning then of the association of a general “African-ness” with the *candomblés* in opposition to the white or Western traditions of Catholicism and Kardecist Spiritism (*espiritismo*).²⁹³ The *orixás* of *Candomblé* were (and still are) seen as purely African; they carried the names of African rivers (Oyá, Obá) and ancient kings (Xangô).²⁹⁴ *Candomblé* groups thus became a way of creating broad African identities in reaction to racial exclusion in Brazil, as whites concerned themselves primarily with what did or did not constitute Brazilian identity, and regular importations of African ethnic groups were no longer a reality.²⁹⁵ From the 1880s onward, Africa and African rituals formed a locus of identity formation and social power, although *Candomblé* devotees did not represent a united political force.²⁹⁶ This remained most the case in Bahia and Pernambuco, which, as we have discussed, were characterized by a concentration of Yorùbá and their descendants.

The *candomblé* “cult houses” at this point became inclusive and open to anyone, in spite of their use of specific ethnic names. Those ethnic designations which persisted were, by the end of the 19th century, meta-ethnic, Afro-Brazilian inventions that did not represent any coherent

²⁹² Sansone, *Blackness without Ethnicity*, 62.

²⁹³ Parés, 198. “Ethnic-Religious Modes of Identification,” 198; Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won*, 53.

²⁹⁴ Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods*, 54.²⁹⁵ Parés, “Ethnic-Religious Modes of Identification,” 179; Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won*, 56.

²⁹⁵ Parés, “Ethnic-Religious Modes of Identification,” 179; Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won*, 56.

²⁹⁶ Sansone, *Blackness without Ethnicity*, 62-63; Motta, “Ethnicity, Purity, the Market, and Syncretism,” 76.

community that the slaves who used them had recalled from Africa.²⁹⁷ In fact, many *candomblé* houses particular to various “sub-nations” became extinct as the ritual diversity brought by a constant influx of Africans during the slave trade had come to a halt. Although even now most practitioners of *Candomblé* identify their “cult houses” by “nation,” over time, these categories ceased to be ethnic categories and rather came to be theological concepts. Thus, the houses differentiated themselves based on modes of ritual, different names for spiritual entities, and their own drum rhythms, songs, and dances. While “African” progressively replaced specific ethnic identities in the broader discourse, in religious contexts these continued to be perceived as useful distinctions in terms of authenticity and prestige.²⁹⁸ Since the beginning of the 19th century, *Candomblé* has therefore come to offer individuals and groups layered identities: African (in their interactions with whites), meta-ethnic (in distinguishing *Nagô* from *Jeje* or Angolan traditions), and ethnic (in specifying one’s “cult house”).²⁹⁹

As opposed to this highly heterogeneous, multi-layered system, *Santería* in large part remained identified almost exclusively with *Lucumí* ethnic identity. Like Brazil, an important factor contributing to this identity is the fact that slavery was abolished in Cuba shortly after the last contingent of Africans arrived.³⁰⁰ As described in earlier chapters, while the *Lucumí* subculture certainly borrowed from *Dahomey*, *Benin*, and perhaps even *Nupe* or *Hausa* cultures, *Yorùbá* culture still formed the core of *Santería*’s organizing principles and ethos.³⁰¹ Similarly, *Palo Monte* and *Abakuá* drew primarily from *Congolese* and *Carabalí* culture in establishing their cosmology and ritual practice. The concentration of ethnic groups within the *cabildos* in the course of just a few decades of massive slave importation made this persistent individuation

²⁹⁷ Motta, “Ethnicity, Purity, the Market, and Syncretism,” 76, 79.

²⁹⁸ Parés, “Ethnic-Religious Modes of Identification,” 179-180, 198-200.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 181; Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won*, 54-55.

³⁰⁰ Sandoval, *Worldview, the Orichas, and Santería*, 42.

³⁰¹ Brandon, *Santeria from Africa to the New World*, 56.

possible.³⁰² As in Candomblé, distinctions between variations in ritual practice have existed from the earliest days of Santería, but these differences are based primarily on the fact that the priesthood and practitioners originated from different city-states within Yorùbáland (i.e., Oyo, Egbado, etc.). Members simultaneously acknowledge different homelands while recognizing their common Yorùbá culture, and the same occurs within the Congo and Carabalí groups. The debates center around orthopraxy, rather than authenticity or legitimacy.³⁰³

William Van Norman expands upon this when he argues that 19th-century slaves in Cuba, who performed religious rituals (namely coming together to dance, sing, and play music) became ever more aware of their status as “other” in relief against their masters’ culture. This self-consciousness, rooted in the imprecise notions of African-ness held by whites, informed slave actions in the reassertion, remembering, and reconstitution of their own African understandings in the ritual setting. In a context away from whites, many slaves needed to find a way to express who they were, not who their oppressors thought they were or wanted them to be. Rituals of devotion, the maintenance of personal altars, and the reenactment of sacred rites offered people of color the opportunity to express an individual and collective identity apart from monolithic blackness.³⁰⁴

Conclusion

In both Brazil and Cuba, a aggressive repression following regular slave disturbances coincided with broader anxieties about independence and abolition, resulting in an increasingly hostile environment for the expression of “African-ness.” Religious practice, among the most visible displays of that identity, was especially targeted in the effort to “civilize” and “whiten” both societies as they struggled to define themselves on the world stage. As a result, religious

³⁰² Fennell, *Crossroads and Cosmologies*, 84; Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 105.

³⁰³ Ramos, “La Division de La Habana,” 54-56, 59; Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 110.

³⁰⁴ Van Norman, “The Process of Cultural Change Among Bozales,” 205-206.

practice became a critical referent for identity among Brazilian and Cuban people of color. This process took more than one form, however, based largely on the availability of alternatives for the expression of identity and avenues for challenging white authority.

In response to white hostility, people of color struggled to find ways to subvert and resist efforts to control their behavior. In Cuba, this primarily took the form of group mobilization: military service, mass desertions, and just after the turn of the 20th century, political activity. Brazilian blacks and mulattos, however, relied on more personal forms of resistance. This was due to a combination of factors: Brazil's multi-tier racial system; the institutionalization of patronage in Brazilian society; and the paucity of viable official channels for group activism.

As a result of their exclusion from national identity, people of African descent in Brazil and Cuba ultimately identified themselves in opposition to whiteness. In both cases, one facet in the formulation of that identity included new ethnic categories associated with distinct religious traditions – Candomblé and Santería – that had been forged in the context of Catholic brotherhoods.³⁰⁵ Brazilian people of color found within Candomblé the means to begin to articulate a black, African identity in a multi-racial hierarchy. Alternatively, in Cuba, Santería provided an opportunity to express Lucumí identity, a way to distinguish one's self in a largely black-and-white world. This divergence is just one demonstration of the manifold ways in which people of color negotiated their position and asserted their personhood in the racialized societies of Brazil and Cuba in the 19th century.

³⁰⁵ Paul E. Lovejoy, "Trans-Atlantic Transformations: The Origins and Identities of Africans in the Americas," in *Africa, Brazil, and the Construction of Trans-Atlantic Black Identities*, eds. Livio Sansone, Eliseé Soumonni, and Boubacar Barry, 81-111 (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2008), 98.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, ethnic and religious affiliations in the context of Brazilian and Cuban slavery often overlapped. Both religion and ethnicity served to integrate individuals of diverse backgrounds into communities and social networks that were products of the slave trade. Both “creolized” slaves in that they provided the means to establish social relationships under the oppressive restrictions of slavery and required that the enslaved subordinate old identities in favor of new, shared consciousnesses as people of color in a racial hierarchy.³⁰⁶ While owners were important in establishing the conditions for identity transformation under slavery, slaves themselves manifested (and thereby validated) new identifications through their actions.³⁰⁷ This process continued after abolition, as former slaves struggled to define themselves both in response to and in spite of white hostility.

The large proportion of Yorùbá captives brought into Brazil and Cuba by the slave trade fostered the establishment of Yorùbá communities based on common culture, religious practice forming perhaps the most visible aspect of that culture. Networks of communication between urban and rural areas, the presence of both slaves and free blacks in towns, and the development of Catholic brotherhoods based on ethnic identity all combined to create “niches” in which the people of African descent could preserve and reshape their traditions. Christianization, haphazard under slavery, was left largely in the hands of the slaves themselves. Africans, particularly the Yorùbá, therefore drew from both their own cosmology and the new forms of religious expression they encountered in order to reconstitute their identity in the colonial context. This process formed the foundations of the Yorùbá-derived hybridized traditions Candomblé and Santería.

³⁰⁶ Lovejoy, “Trans-Atlantic Transformations,” 81-82.

³⁰⁷ Van Norman, “The Process of Cultural Change Among Bozales,” 182.

The persistence of these African-derived traditions in Brazil and Cuba came to exacerbate white anxieties about slave rebellion and abolition in the age of revolution. These concerns, in turn, reflected a broader insecurity about the relationship between whites and non-whites as Brazil and Cuba transitioned from colony to independent status. This produced an increasingly hostile environment for people of color as a wave of repressive policies attempted to erase any evidence of “Africanization.” Whites in both societies, preoccupied with modernization, civilization, and progress, attempted to leave the African element both literally and figuratively in the past. In response to this antagonism, people of color found the means to resist exclusion and domination. In Cuba, this primarily took the form of formal group mobilization; in Brazil, resistance was articulated on a largely individual basis.

People of color in Brazil and Cuba ultimately identified themselves in opposition to whiteness in different ways as a result of the racial structures and demographic realities within Brazilian and Cuban society, as well as the differing methods available for mitigating their position. Religious practice represented just one part of a broad strategy of fighting oppression. As they had done prior to enslavement, Africans primarily expressed group consciousness through spiritual actions of music, dance, and ritual work. The colonial context affected all people of African descent, regardless of group membership, and necessitated the continuous adaptation of these activities. This allowed religious practices to be altered and diffused throughout the slave population. The sort of rites that were used became symbols of power in the struggle for expression and control, a battle of wills from which there would never emerge a clear victor (as evidenced by the presence of hybridized traditions). People of color reconstructed their religious (and by extension, social and individual) identities with pieces of their past and

present while working within the structures of enslavement and colonialism.³⁰⁸ Singing, dancing, and playing African music continued to be clear forms of resistance to white authority and proclamations of identity under increasing pressure to reject all things African in post-abolition Brazil and Cuba, but the nature of that resistance was not uniform. Brazilian people of color, who had largely operated on a spectrum of racial fluidity, were able to coalesce under Candomblé as “black” and “African” regardless of variations in their socioeconomic status or skin color. Cuban blacks, in contrast, were able to use membership in Santería to express Lucumí identity as an alternative to a monolithic, race-based classification that had been imposed upon them by whites.

I have attempted to provide a thorough comparison of these two societies and the ways in which hybridized Yorùbá-Catholic religious traditions contributed to the formation of identity for people of color in the 19th century. Still, I envision this thesis as the foundation of a larger project, and there are fruitful avenues of research that remain to be explored which would greatly add to this work. Perhaps what would be most valuable is a comparative analysis of the development of positivist ideals within Brazil and Cuba and a discussion of external influences on that development. Because the ideology of scientific racism played a central role in defining racial categories throughout the Western world in the 19th century, exploring the influence of British, French, and American discourses on those of Brazil and Cuba would contribute to a more complete understanding of their race hierarchies. In addition, within Candomblé and Santería, the strong presence of women as priestesses and devotees has been documented and discussed by several scholars. It would be interesting to compare how their participation influenced internal dialogs about the role of ethnic categories within Candomblé and Santería (and thus whether they helped shape the external projection of identity from within each

³⁰⁸ Van Norman, “The Process of Cultural Change Among Bozales,” 202.

tradition). Similarly, the structure and stability of the family unit among the enslaved differed in each colony. Cuba's slave system was not characterized by the kind of internal migrations that destabilized the family and slave marriages were encouraged. Brazilian slaveowners, however, were not terribly interested in the integrity of slave families, nor were they reticent about moving slaves from one region to another.³⁰⁹ What impact might this have had on ritual and ethnic continuities in each case? One final suggestion concerns the construction of sacred space. What might the "cult houses" of Candomblé and Santería say about the social standing of each tradition, if anything? How do they compare to each other?

As I said, these are questions that remain to be answered. For my part, I have endeavored to demonstrate that the construction of black identity was not confined to the political sphere; rather, that just as social and political conditions certainly affected the development of hybridized religions, so too did these religions form part of the development of social and political identity. Indeed, where political mechanisms failed to address the needs of people of color as they defined themselves in the 19th century, Candomblé and Santería offered alternative tools for constructing personhood in the context of multi-racial (and racialized) societies.

³⁰⁹ Bergad, *The Comparative Histories of Slavery*, 177

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