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# The Anagó Language of Cuba

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

THE ANAGÓ LANGUAGE OF CUBA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STUDIES

by

Maria Concordia

2012

To: Dean Kenneth G. Furton  
College of Arts and Sciences

This thesis, written by Maria Concordia, and entitled The Anagó Language of Cuba, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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Astrid Arrarás

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Jean Robert Cadely

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Sherry Johnson, Major Professor

Date of Defense: November 6, 2012

The thesis of Maria Concordia is approved.

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Dean Kenneth G. Furton  
College of Arts and Sciences

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Florida International University, 2012

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Jorge Morales Rodriguez *Oggun Lana* and Miriam Licea Jimenez *Ochun Migua*, two Lucumí elders who wholeheartedly supported my studies, and to my parents Joseph J. Concordia and Teresa Marie Concordia Campaneli.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS  
THE ANAGÓ LANGUAGE OF CUBA

by

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Florida International University, 2012

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This thesis investigates the socio-linguistic factors that led to the emergence of a new language in Cuba known as Anagó. This language emerged from contact between multiple dialects of the West African Yoruba language and Spanish. Language contact between the Yoruba language and Spanish took place in Cuba beginning in the nineteenth century after the introduction of large numbers of Yoruba speakers into Cuba during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This thesis argues against the opinion that Anagó is simply a corrupted and imperfect form of Yoruba. Instead, it maintains that Anagó is a new language that emerged in Cuba and became a functional vehicle for the transmission of ideas and culture. Additionally, this study will present evidence that the Anagó speaking community was a constituent part of Cuban society since the nineteenth century, and is therefore an inextricable part of Cuban cultural patrimony. Twentieth century examples of Anagó language are examined as evidence of a vital Anagó speaking transnational community.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

The history of the Anagó language in Cuba is definitively tied to the importation of thousands of Africans into Cuba during the trans-Atlantic slavery experience. Before this event, Anagó did not exist in Cuba or in Africa. Slavery was the seminal event that created a variety of communities and sub-communities in Cuba, each with its own distinct language or dialect. One of these communities was created from the influx of Yoruba speakers into Cuba in the mid and late nineteenth century. The community of Yoruba speakers and their Creole descendents in Cuba are referred to in the literature as the *Lucumí*<sup>1</sup> or Anagó speech community. The origin of these terms is fully explained in the section on key definitions which follows this introduction. The Anagó community of speakers has preserved many cultural and religious concepts of the Yoruba ethnic groups that were brought to Cuba from West Africa. Thus the Anagó language is inextricably tied to the legacy of Yoruba traditional religion in Cuba. The Anagó language is an essential language for religious and ritual communication in the religion known as *Lucumí*, *Santería* or *Regla de Ocha*.<sup>2</sup> The origin, characteristics and evolution of this community of speakers is the subject of this study.

My thesis will critique the viewpoint of John Mason (1992), Wande Abimbola (1997), and Miguel Ramos (2011) who have stated that the Anagó language is a corrupted and incomplete version of Yoruba. Instead my study follows the logic of linguists such as Noam Chomsky (1986, 2000, 2006, 2012) and Steven Pinker (1994) who offer non-prescriptionist<sup>3</sup> views of language. Instead of passing judgment on the

form used by the Lucumí community to communicate and preserve their culture and religion, my study will present the position that the Anagó language is a functional vehicle for the transmission of ideas and culture and is an irreplaceable cultural component of the Lucumí community. Additionally, the present study will present evidence that the Anagó speaking community was a constituent part of Cuban society since the nineteenth century, and thus is an inextricable part of Cuban cultural patrimony.

My thesis offers a socio-linguistic overview of the events which shaped the Anagó speaking community, beginning in the nineteenth century, continuing into the twentieth century and up to the present day. The study will examine samples of Anagó language from different periods in the development of Cuban society and culture. The religious institutions created by the Spanish colonial government and the Catholic Church during slavery known as *cabildos de nación*, which grouped Africans by ethnic affiliation and shared language, provided Anagó speakers the opportunity to assemble both publically and privately to share their common language. Documents taken from these *cabildos* and presented in this study will provide evidence of the existence of Anagó in Cuba as early as 1874.

After the abolition of slavery on October 7, 1886 by royal decree, the *cabildos* were dissolved but they did not disappear. Neither did the speech communities associated with them. The current study will present evidence of Anagó language retention that occurred in plantation centered *pre-casa-templos* and in unofficial versions of *cabildos* -- that no longer had ties to the Catholic Church. For example, The *Cabildo of the Virgin of Regla*, a Yoruba focused religious house that existed in the 1940s. *Sociedades de color*

(Society for people of color) and *casa- templos* (home based temple) during The Cuban Republican Period (1912-1959) similarly provided a positive language environment for this community by continuing to foster opportunities for Anagó language interchange.<sup>4</sup>

In the twentieth century, ethnographic works of Fernando Ortiz and Lydia Cabrera related to Afro-Cuban religions, folklore and music preserved examples of Anagó language on a large scale. The *Sociedad del Folklore Cubano* (Society of Cuban Folklore) established by Fernando Ortiz in 1923 and the *Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba* (National Folkloric Ensemble of Cuba) created by the revolutionary government in 1960 were two Cuban institutions that documented Anagó and utilized members of the Anagó speaking community as informants for publications and performances.

A key twentieth century event that resulted in the preservation of Anagó language occurred when an elite priest class known as *babalawos*<sup>5</sup> began to compile, publish and disseminate Anagó language texts. The actions of these men resulted in the first official publication of an Anagó based text, *The Book of Diagnosis in Ifá Divination*<sup>6</sup> (c1950). By this time, the Anagó speaking community had expanded to communities in the United States, Venezuela and Mexico. The exportation of Anagó language has continued into the present century. The continuation of the Anagó language outside of Cuba is documented in this study through in - person interviews in Venezuela, Paris and London. These interviews with Anagó speakers in the neo-diaspora along with field notes from interactions with modern day Anagó speakers in Cuba will provide further documentation of this language.

After a review of the evidence compiled from these periods in the development of Cuban society and culture, my study will answer the following questions:

1. What conditions converged in Cuba to provide a favorable environment for Anagó to emerge?
2. Were these conditions limited to external or internal social factors? What other elements should be considered?
3. Were there specific events, individuals, or class of individuals, in the Anagó speaking community who made a significant contribution to the preservation of the Anagó language?

In order to answer these questions and also to present additional lines of investigation my thesis will examine the available literature and present evidence of Anagó language from diverse sources including texts, manuscripts, field notes and transcripts of analog and digital recordings.

### **Key Definitions**

Anagó and Lucumí are the two primary terms used interchangeably in the literature to refer to a dialect of the Yoruba language spoken in Cuba. Other common terms are: Yoruba language of Cuba, Yoruba dialect of Cuba, *lengua*,<sup>7</sup> and more recently Lukuñol.<sup>8</sup> My thesis will use the term Anagó to refer to this language, and the phrase ‘Anagó speakers’, to refer to the community of speakers that utilize it. Lydia Cabrera (1970) was the first researcher to use this term to describe the language of the descendants of Yoruba speakers in Cuba.<sup>9</sup> Although Cabrera assigned the term Anagó to

their language and published its first and only dictionary, many researchers continue to use the term Lucumí when referring to this language. My thesis will respect this usage when citing these authors.

The term Lucumí has a broad and confusing usage in the literature. It was first used to describe the group of Africans who originated in West Africa and shared the common language of Yoruba. Later it was used in Cuba to refer to not only these Africans but also their Creole descendants. The term became inextricably linked to the religious tradition brought to Cuba by this group of Yoruba speakers, thus the term Lucumí was applied not only to the original Africans and their Creole descendants but to their religious family members. Over time Lucumí became a term that no longer had an ethnic component as its dominant characteristic. What now distinguishes Lucumí is its association to a religious practice, not the ethnic makeup of an individual. Thus, the meaning of the term Lucumí has changed over time and its definition depends on the historical context. This thesis will use the term Lucumí as follows:

- a) Africans brought to Cuba during the years of trans-Atlantic slave trade, who were native to West Africa and who used the Yoruba language as their *lingua franca*.
- b) Any ethnic or ritual kinship<sup>10</sup> descendant of the abovementioned group
- c) A Cuban religious tradition originating from the Yoruba people of West Africa

For the purposes of this thesis the term Lucumí community is used to refer to practitioners of Lucumí religion, some of which are fluent Anagó speakers and some not.

The Lucumí religion is founded on the ancestral religious beliefs and practices of the Yoruba people. It was brought to Cuba (and the Caribbean) as a result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade but has since obtained an international presence, and is one of many African Traditional Religions (known as ATR) that are practiced all over the world. Its main centers of worship are Cuba, Venezuela, Brazil, United States, Puerto Rico, Mexico and other areas of Latin America and Europe. Other terms used to describe the tradition are: *Santería*, a less accurate term which implies a syncretism with Catholic Saints and is presently falling out of usage among practitioners; *Ifá*, which is a direct reference to a Yoruba divination system containing all of the theological precepts of the religion; *La Regla de Ocha* (The rule/law of Ocha), meaning the way of the *Orisha* (ancestral divinities that intercede for humans), or simply *Ocha* (shortened version of the word Orisha). The religion is monotheistic, having one God known as Olodumare, and animistic, in that it recognizes Gods manifestation in nature. It also professes a belief in the immortality of the human spirit, re-incarnation and universal law similar to the Buddhist concept of the inherited debt of previous lives known as karma.

Within the Lucumí community, there are hierarchical positions of priesthood. The *aleyo* is a beginning practitioner and can also refer to an outsider in that this individual has not undergone a ceremonial initiation. An *aleyo* is usually a believer or *creyente*. The novice priest is referred to as *iyawo* (mother of the secret) and the term is the same for males and females. After completing certain restrictions that include a year of wearing

white clothing and eating while sitting on a mat the floor, the iyawo is then referred to as an *oloricha* or owner of *oricha*. An *oricha* is a traditional Yoruba deity that is considered an intermediary force between God and humankind. Each priest is dedicated to a particular *oricha* and learns all of the rituals, prayers, songs and practices associated with that *Oricha*. The *olorichas* may one day initiate followers into the religious tradition, and if so, they may now be referred to as *iyalocha* (mother of the *oricha*) or *babalocha* (father of the *oricha*). The term *ocha* is a shortened version of the word *oricha* and is used interchangeably.

There are higher levels of the priesthood that have their access restricted by certain criteria. The *oba oriáte* (king of the divining tray) is a level of priesthood which can be attained by both males and females; however women have been generally excluded from this level for various reasons.<sup>11</sup> The *oba oriáte* is the master of ceremonies and is required to know all the songs, prayers, rituals and divination verses that make up the Lucumí religious practice. Fluency in Anagó is indispensable at this level.

A male-only position that represents the highest level of the priesthood is known as the *babalawo*. The *babalawo* must know everything regarding the rituals and ceremonies, divinatory advices, prayers, chants and sacrifices related to the philosophy and theology of Lucumí religion. The system of knowledge is generally referred to as *Ifá*.

The term *bozal* has two applications and has relevance to my thesis both in its linguistic usage and as a definition of cultural and national origin. It primarily refers to a member of any African ethnic group who was born in Africa and brought to Cuba during the years of legal and illegal slave trade. Newly arrived African slaves were called

bozales, by slave traders, Spanish, Creole and free- people of color in nineteenth century Cuban society. Bozales generally retained a full knowledge of their original language, religion and culture. The term bozal is also used to refer to a language spoken by Africans who have been in contact with Spanish and Portuguese traders. Bozal language is not unique to Cuba and has been documented from as early as the fifteenth century. John Lipsky has defined bozal as “Spanish spoken imperfectly by slaves born in Africa”<sup>12</sup> He has affirmed that this language existed before any African arrived to Cuba. The distinction between bozal and Anagó is an important point for my thesis. Bozal existed many years before any African stepped foot on Cuba soil whereas Anagó did not.

My thesis uses the term Yoruba speakers to define individuals who use Yoruba or one of its many dialectical forms to communicate. The term requires a bit of digression to fully elucidate its usage. Before 1838, Yoruba did not exist in a written form, i.e., there was no one universally recognized standard form of Yoruba. There are as many as twenty dialects of Yoruba associated with regional and ethnic groups in West Africa. Yoruba speakers share a similar history and culture, yet have well-defined identities which distinguish them. The recognition of separate ethnic identities by Yoruba speakers is important because at the time that these Yoruba speakers were brought to Cuba, the idea of a single Yoruba identity did not exist. A parallel can be drawn by comparing this with the English language. English speakers can communicate using their common language; however, an Australian English speaker, a North American and a British one have distinct cultures. If these groups of English speakers were placed on an island together, this would not erase or negate their ethnic and cultural identities. Similarly, Yoruba speakers were brought to Cuba and retained their ethnic identities. Therefore, for



purposes of this thesis, the term Yoruba speaker, when used to refer to speakers during the nineteenth century, includes all of the dialects associated with that language. Yoruba speakers in nineteenth century Cuba were members of a multi-dialectal, multi-ethnic Yoruba speaking community.

The translation of non-English terms in this study will generally follow the format of an italicized version of the non-English word followed by the English equivalent in parenthesis. There are a few exceptions. Some Anagó words lack a one-to-one English equivalent; the translation may involve a paraphrase. In that case the translation will be found in the end notes. For example the priest name *Omi T'oke* is best rendered as the-water-that-touches-the-base-of-the-mountain.

Informants for this study belong to the high level priesthood of the Lucumí religion. It is customary and respectful to include the priest's Lucumí name after the legal name. The format followed was: legal name, priest name in italics (when known) and translation of the priest name in parenthesis.

### **Contribution to the Field**

My thesis seeks to contribute to the sociolinguistic and anthropological literature on African cultural retentions in Cuba by focusing on the evolution of a specific language community. The Anagó speaking language community however, does not follow the regular evolutionary pattern of other language communities because after the turn of the century this language ceased to be acquired during childhood. Instead, many speakers learned Anagó as adolescents or adults. In addition, the language became relegated for

use primarily in Afro-Cuban Lucumí rituals and not for the purpose of general conversation. The use of Anagó is mostly in one direction, between a practitioner and heaven, God and/or the ancestors. Because of this unique aspect of Anagó, textual and audio documentation of Anagó language should be considered proof-of-life of the community. In other words, the community must exist and be vital if it continues to produce examples of its language.

Researchers have typically approached Anagó from either a linguistic perspective (Bascom 1950, 1951 Olmstead 1953, Castellanos 1977) or an ethnographic one (Ortiz 1921, 1924, 1939, 1961, Cabrera 1968, 1970, Castellanos and Castellanos 1987). These approaches do not provide satisfactory answers to the questions posed in this study. In order to sufficiently address this complex issue this study will combine linguistic information with an examination of the Anagó speaking community in its historical and social setting. The process of nation building and the formation of the Cuban culture, described by Ortiz (1939) as an *ajiaco*<sup>13</sup> made up of African, Indian and Spanish “flavors”,<sup>14</sup> suggest the implicit contribution of an Anagó speaking community that was present in Cuba during those years. My study will present evidence that the Anagó speaking community was a part of that process and that until now its presence has not been sufficiently investigated.

The majority of academic and non-academic publications such as: *El Monte: Igbo finda ewe orisha vittiti finda* (The Forest: Sacred Land Sacred Plants Spiritual Vision) by Lydia Cabrera (1954), *Lengua de Santeros (Guiné Góngori)* (The Language of Santeros) by T.D. Fabelo (1956) and *The Use of Language in Afro-Cuban Religion* by Isabel

Castellanos (1977), have focused on the significance of Anagó as a repository of ritual knowledge. Although Anagó language is intrinsically tied to the Afro-Cuban Lucumí religion, my study does not center its research on the theological or ritual applications of Anagó texts. The underlying motivation for the analysis done in this study is to highlight the importance of the emergence of this unique language and to value it as validation of the importance of the Anagó speaking community from the nineteenth century until the present day.

My examination of Anagó language in Cuba will fill a noticeable void in the literature and contribute significant analysis of primary sources that have not been fully evaluated by the academic community. It will also contribute to the available literature by providing information from original interviews and field notes as well as from a number of unpublished manuscripts. The current work approaches the subject matter from a unique perspective and avoids the over emphasis on ritual authenticity that is prevalent in some publications. The search for “purity” in ritual language expression is counterproductive to a full understanding of the exceptional series of events and distinctive environmental circumstances that led to the emergence of Anagó from the contact between Spanish and the Yoruba language<sup>15</sup>. The approach taken in this study is to value the circumstances and individuals that were a part of this process, to document this and to shine the light of academic investigation upon it. In doing so, this thesis hopes to be the first of its kind of many such studies that will examine the Anagó language as a worthy entity in itself rather than an incomplete and corrupted version of its source language.

## **Research Design**

This thesis investigates the emergence of Anagó in Cuba from the time of the highest introduction of Yoruba speakers to Cuba in the nineteenth century to the present day Anagó speakers in the diaspora. To provide evidence of this language and to track its origin and evolution textual examples from the nineteenth and twentieth century will be presented and analyzed. In addition of digital and analog recordings will be examined. The unit of analysis of this study is the community of speakers who were responsible for these texts and audio samples.

The research conducted for this study was based on an extensive review of available literature and utilization of accessible primary sources including interviews, field notes and unpublished manuscripts. Interviews were conducted over a twenty-year period using a combination of collection methods. Field notes from open ended oral history discourse contributed to this study. Investigations were conducted in Havana and Matanzas Cuba; Caracas, Venezuela; London, England; Paris, France and Oakland, California. Subjects were chosen based on their high level of fluency of the Anagó language and their level of ritual knowledge. Interviews were conducted in accordance with the standards of responsible conduct in research (RCR) and the interview instrument used in this study has received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

This study will present a phonemic<sup>16</sup> inventory of Anagó speech from the results of a linguistic comparison of Yoruba and Anagó conducted by David Olmstead (1953). The results published by Olmstead are important to establish the efficacy of the claim that Anagó did result from the influx of Yoruba speakers and not another language group

from West Africa. Research conducted for this thesis shows that the Anagó language presents identifiable linguistic characteristics and sufficient evidence of cognate matching<sup>17</sup> to point to Yoruba as one of its source languages.

The theoretical basis for my thesis is the theory of transculturalism developed by Fernando Ortiz (1940) to explain the convergence of multiple ethnic identities in Cuba, which resulted in the inimitable and distinctive Cuban national character.

Transculturation became the lens to observe all of Afro-Cuban culture and Cuban identity after Ortiz published his findings. The importance of Ortiz' theory of transculturation for my paper relates to the specificity of his noting the distinct character of African speech as it expresses itself in Cuba. Ortiz used language as a principal source of evidence to fuel his ground breaking observations that acculturation<sup>18</sup> was not an adequate explanation for the cultural environment in Cuba. Ortiz specifically states that when examining the formation of the *lenguaje criollo* (Creole style of speech) of Cuba "The African influence is most definite and visible"<sup>19</sup> This finding by Ortiz is an important focus because he extracted a broad theory from his observations on language, demonstrating that language can provide information about society and culture.

The framework of my thesis is as follows. Chapter one presents an overview of this study as well as description of key terms. It also presents the important theoretical and historiographical works that relate to the subject in the literature review section. Scholarly works which examine Anagó from a socio-linguistic perspective are limited. The fact that scholarship is limited contributes to the importance of my study, which is

expanded in chapter one, along with an overview of the research methods used to support the conclusions.

Chapter two identifies socio-political factors that contributed to the increase of Yoruba speakers brought to Cuba from 1818 to the 1860s and defines the language environment of the Anagó speaking community in nineteenth century Cuba. I use data on the ethnic composition of slaves brought to Cuba from Romulo Lachatañere (1939) and Jesús Guaniche (2009) among others.

Chapter three examines institutions such as cabildos de nación, casa-templos and the plantation based pre-casa-templo, as well as the post-abolition unofficial cabildos. These official and unofficial organizations are important because they were havens for Anagó language transmission. In chapter three, examples of Anagó texts from these organizations will be presented. Examples of Anagó texts from the ethnographic studies of Fernando Ortiz and Lydia Cabrera during the Cuban Republican period (1902-1959) will also be presented. After this review of the important contributions made by Ortiz, Cabrera and other ethnographers such as T.D. Fabelo and Romulo Lachatañere, my thesis presents further evidence of Anagó language from the pre-Castro period. The compilation and dissemination of Anagó texts by an elite caste of Lucumí priests, centered in Havana during the late 1950s is examined. Secular music and its role in the preservation of Anagó language is then explored through an analysis of the influence of Luciano “Chano” Pozo on Latin Jazz and the creation of a new musical form known as Cu-Bop in 1947. The post-Castro revolutionary period is dominated by the role that the Conjunto Folklórico Nacional played in the maintenance of Anagó language in popular Cuban culture and the

integration of Anagó speakers, such as Jesus Pérez, as informants for folkloric and academic purposes.

Chapter four gives a basic outline of linguistic features of Yoruba, the source language for Anagó. It also places the Yoruba language in a historical perspective with regards to its evolution towards a standardized version. This overview is followed by a summary of the linguistic features of Anagó as defined by David Olmstead (1953) and Isabel Castellanos (1977).

Chapter five will move the perspective from the socio-political and institutional to the individual and identify members of the Anagó speaking community that hold prestigious positions because of their knowledge. In this chapter I will include a qualitative review of interview data and field notes compiled with Anagó speakers. Chapter five will also identify unique forms of ritual language such as *patakín* (folktale with a moral message), *refrán* (short proverb) and *oriki* (praise-prayer) that require Anagó language components in order to have efficacy in the Lucumí religious community<sup>20</sup>. These elements of ritual language contain essential cultural and historical messages and are not easily translated into other languages. The linguistic form used to hold this information is just as important as the information itself.

Chapter six offers the conclusion of the thesis and reviews the questions posed at the beginning of the study. The conclusion will address each question and offer suggestions for future avenues of study. Following chapter six are relevant appendices.

## Literature Review

The research conducted for this thesis revealed that the available literature specific to the Anagó language in Cuba can be generally divided into three sections: analysis of ritual texts and manuscripts, ethnographic analysis, and a linguistic overview. Of these three categories, the most valuable and conversely the most difficult to analyze proved to be the ritual texts and manuscripts. These texts are valuable because each one of them represent evidence of Anagó language preservation and transmission. They are difficult to analyze because of the lack of a standardized phonetics transcription and of course the absence of the original native Anagó speakers' intuitions.

The largest collection of primary sources of archival Anagó language texts were found at the University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection, Lydia Cabrera Archives. Much of the sources for Cabrera's publications are held in this archive. For examples of Anagó prayers and songs this study used Cabrera's *Anagó Vocabulario Lucumí: El Yoruba que se habla en Cuba* (Anagó Lucumí Vocabulary: The Yoruba that is Spoken in Cuba) which catalogued approximately 6900 words with contextual usage and extended definitions, *Koeko Iyawó: Aprende Novicia Pequeño Tratado de Regla Lucumí* (Lessons for the Mother of the Secret: The Novice Learns, A Brief Compilation of the Rules of Lucumí Religion) and *El Monte: Igbo finda ewe orisha vittiti finda* (The Forest: Sacred Land Sacred Plants Spiritual Vision). Cabrera has compiled the largest collection of evidence useful for the study of Anagó language. Although she prolifically published this information and has created the only Anagó dictionary to date, there remains a wealth of information held in unpublished manuscripts and field notes in the Cabrera archives. Her



publications are useful to this study because they provide evidence of the vitality of the Anagó speaking community in the 1930s and 1940s. She has stated that during the time that she collected the information from her Lucumí informants there were many fluent speakers of Anagó in Cuba. The prevalence of Anagó speakers in Cuba is no longer the case. Cabrera's publications and the archives that hold the original documents are critical for any scholarly study of Anagó.

Literature that deals directly with the subject of Anagó as a language is scarce. Therefore, this thesis attempts to go beyond the scope of available literature by relying on primary sources. My study benefitted from field notes compiled from 1998-2010 in Havana and Matanzas Cuba, as well as collections of unpublished manuscripts and *libretas*. The libreta is a booklet, usually hand written, that contains ritual advice, secrets, terminology, and genealogy of a casa-templo. It is usually handed down from god-parent to god-child. A manual of Lucumí ritual teaching that is handed down through a religious family. Several authors' self-published works provided examples of Anagó texts with helpful historical information. Some of these works are not available to the general academic community. These books belong to a tradition that began in the 1950s when the babalawo cast of priests began to compile oral histories and ritual information for publication and dissemination within the Lucumí community. Many of these publications were eventually sold outside of the community both officially and unofficially. The practice of collecting and disseminating ritual knowledge is now a common practice and has led to an attitude in the Lucumí community known as "every house has its [own] book".<sup>21</sup> As each casa-templo maintains its own version of Anagó prayers and ritual texts, conflicting information is inevitable. Nevertheless, this study found useful

information in the self-published works of Nicolas Angarica and Lazaro Pedroso. Both of these authors publish from the perspective of participants and make significant contributions to documentation of Anagó language. Angarica wrote *El Lucumí al Alcance de Todos* (The Lucumí Language Within the Reach of All) (c.1955), and he is the first author to document the existence of dialectical variation within the Anagó language. His work presents crucial evidence for one of the central findings of this thesis. He directly challenges Ortiz and other ethnographic researchers such as T.D. Fabelo and Lydia Cabrera, by contesting their idea that Anagó could be represented as a singular form without morphophonological variation. He proposes that ethnic identities were still present in Cuba in the 1950s and that these ethnic markers as it relates to variation were present in the language.

Lazaro Pedroso has self-published four books and distributed them through an informal network. The most useful of these was *Obbedí-Kaká Datos Bibliográficos Yorubá-Lucumí*<sup>22</sup> (c1992). In it the author presents an extensive glossary and explanation of Anagó grammatical structure. His personal biography is included which provides an example of how Anagó was being preserved and transmitted in the early twentieth century.

Ethnographic studies were important for this thesis. A number of publications by Fernando Ortiz proved valuable to this study. Ortiz used members of the Lucumí community who had a high level of fluency in Anagó as informants. Jesús Pérez a Lucumí priest and drummer was a key contributor to *Los Instrumentos de la Música AfroCubana* (The instruments of Afro-Cuban Music) Vol. Two (1952), which was useful

to this study because of its assessment of African influenced music in Cuba and its collection of specialized Anagó prayers. In this book Ortiz explains the Yoruba roots of Afro-Cuban drums known as *bata*<sup>23</sup> and includes detailed information from bata drum consecration ceremonies. The studies on bata are important because the bata drums have an identifiable relationship with Anagó phonology. Certain drum sounds are designed to reproduce Anagó phonemes and these sounds are therefore preserved through musical performance.<sup>24</sup>

The works of Fernando Ortiz that relate to his theory of transculturation were also essential for this study. Of most relevance to this paper are: *Los Negros Curros* (The Marginal Blacks) (1986) published posthumously and *Contrapunteo Cubano del Tabaco y Azucar* (Cuban Counterpoint of Tobacco and Sugar) (1940). In the former work, Ortiz identifies the importance not only of Africans in Cuban culture, but specifically, the influence of the Yoruba people. In the latter, he introduces for the first time the concept of transculturalization. An excellent overview of Ortiz's importance in Cuban ethnographic studies as well as specific illustrations of the theory of transculturation can be found in Diana Iznaga's *Transculturación en Fernando Ortiz* (Transculturation in the Works of Fernando Ortiz) (1989).

For the linguistic perspective of Anagó, the work of Isabel Castellanos, *The Use of Language in Afro-Cuban Religion* (1976) provided a good starting point but as the focus of this work tends towards the religious application of the language it was not sufficient to address the questions posed in this study. Isabel Castellanos in conjunction with Jorge Castellanos also produced an important summary of Yoruba Language

retention published in *Cultura AfroCubana 3: Las Religiones y Las Lenguas* (Afro-Cuban Culture 3: Religion and Language) (1992). Their work examines in more detail each of the separate ethnic groups which contributed to the African language influence in Cuban culture.

My thesis utilized three books to establish basic linguistic concepts that were important to understand the evolution of Anagó. First, *A Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language* (1855) by Samuel Crowther. It was the primordial Yoruba language dictionary and had about 2,700 entries. Second, *Dictionary of Modern Yoruba* (1958) by R.C. Abraham, with over 50,000 words an extensive introduction, appendixes and hand written diacritical marks, historical data elaborate botanical references and hand drawn illustrations. Abraham was a leading authority on West African languages; at one time he was a Nigerian government anthropologist and linguist. His work reflects these influences. Abraham's publication far surpasses that of Crowther in its detailed investigation of the phonetics, orthography, diacritic marks, tonal system, noun-object and noun-noun linkage rules, nasalized vowels, palatized tones, congruence of forms, metathesis (transposition of sounds), reduplication and a complete grammar analysis. He consulted over 150 academic publications and official sources to compile the information and includes an extensive appendix of hand-drawn illustrations of flora, fauna and cultural artifacts. Definitions include long narratives that link individual words to historical events, religious significance and folklore. The work by Abraham is not a simple glossary, it borders on being an encyclopedia of Yoruba culture. It is indispensable for the study of Anagó as it creates the comparison model for Anagó's divergence. The third book within the group of linguistic sources is that of E.A. Akintan,

*History and Structure of the Yoruba Language* (1950). His book is essential for its explanation of the tonal structure and diacritic marking system of the Yoruba language. A basic understanding of Yoruba is important in order to understand the evolution of the Anagó stress and tone system, a characteristic which distinguishes it from Yoruba.

In the preparation of my thesis I also consulted books that were not directly related to the ethnographic, linguistic or religious aspects of Anagó. To understand the ethnic makeup of the African slave community in Cuba during the nineteenth century, I used the data provided by Jesús Guanche in *Africanity y ethnicidad en Cuba*, (African Identity and Ethnicity in Cuba) (2009). which was broadly helpful in understanding the diverse ethnic make-up of Yoruba speakers in Cuba.

Two books were important to this thesis in providing a historical overview of the evolution of the Lucumí community. A summary of the specific factors which brought the high number of Yoruba speakers to Cuba was found in *The History of the Yoruba* (1921) by Samuel Johnson, and a comprehensive history of the Lucumí community in Cuba was obtained in *Santería Enthroned: Art Ritual and Innovation in an Afro-Cuban Religion* (2003) by David H. Brown. These books are helpful to the thesis as they highlight the interconnectedness between the political environment of the South Central area of West Africa known as Oyó, and the dominant ethnic group in Havana during the early stages of creation of religious communities in the nineteenth century. The combinations of data from these two authors provide a panoramic view of the development of the Lucumí community. Political upheavals in Oyó dovetail with ethnic Oyó-style Lucumí casa-templos in Cuba. This information supports findings in this thesis

about the importance of recognizing the multi-ethnic make-up of the Anagó speaking community.

Anagó language is one of three languages that had their origins during the years of trans-Atlantic slave trade into Cuba. Each of the three languages, Anagó, Abakuá<sup>25</sup> and Bantu-Congo<sup>26</sup> all have similar origins yet diversely different manifestations in Cuba. Studies in the same vein as this thesis but focused on other African languages that remained in Cuba after the end of slavery are being conducted by Ivor Miller. One publication that was helpful was “Cuban Abakuá Chants: Examining New Linguistic and Historical Evidence for the African Diaspora”. In this article, Miller explores the retention of African identity and language in Cuba and gives evidence of how this retained identity is functioning in modern society. He observed that after his publication of Abakuá phrases from a commercially recorded album in 2000, "Nigerian members of the Cross River Ékpè society living in the United States...recognized these texts as part of their own history."<sup>27</sup> The author facilitated an exchange between a group of Cuban Abakuá and West African Èfik at the Èfik National Association meeting in New York in 2001. Although Abakuá language and ethnicity are different than Anagó, this type of interaction is also occurring within the Anagó speaking community. Yoruba speakers from present day Nigeria are very involved in the modern Lucumí community and this is having a great affect on the language. Miller offers a perspective as to why this may be occurring. Miller’s study presents evidence that is important in recognizing that the borders of the Anagó speaking community are ever-expanding.

Studies published by Maureen Warner-Lewis on Trinidad Yoruba provided this thesis with a contrasting example of Yoruba language retention. *Trinidad Yoruba: from Mother Tongue to Memory* (1997) and *Yoruba Songs of Trinidad* (1994) illustrate that the Yoruba language did not undergo the transformation into Anagó as it did in Cuba. Cultural and theological concepts contained in Yoruba words were retained and conserved by the Yoruba speaking community in Trinidad. These two books offer numerous examples of Yoruba language retention in transcriptions of field songs and funeral dirges and prayers. The evidence compiled by Warner-Lewis shows that there is no Anagó-like dialect in Trinidad. The absence of a comparable dialect is an interesting event and provokes further questions. Is it possible that a Trinidadian form of Yoruba exists but that it was lost in transcriptions that used standard conversational Yoruba morphology? Are dialectical forms of Yoruba still present in Trinidad Yoruba? These questions cannot be addressed within the scope of this thesis but nevertheless indicate avenues for future study.

## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> *Lucumí* (also spelled *Lukumí*) - a term used to describe the religion, the language and the community derived from the influence of the Yoruba people in Cuba.

<sup>2</sup> *Lucumí*, *Regla de Ocha* and *Santería* are terms used to describe the religion derived from the ancestral religion of the Yoruba people of West Africa as it is practiced in Cuba and the diaspora. This thesis recognizes that these terms are used interchangeably in current literature and will respect the usage when quoting sources however, recent changes within the community of practitioners have made the term *Santería* less desirable as it implies a liturgical connection with the Catholic Church.

<sup>3</sup> Non-prescriptionist - The viewpoint that language can have a flexible grammatical structure without diminishing the validity of that language and that one language may have more than one correct grammatical expression. Prescriptionist opinions usually present one standard

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grammatical form for a language and argue for the enforcement of laws and educational programs to diminish the use of other versions.

<sup>4</sup> *Cabildo of the Virgin of Regla* - Regla is a port town in the municipality of Havana Cuba, and the entry point for many African slaves. It is noted for the hermitage of Our Lady of Regla which was founded in 1690.

*Sociedades de color* – Lit. Society for people of color. Cuban Pan African societies created during the Republican Period for self help and recreation.

*Casa-templos* - Home based temples where Lucumí religious families gather to worship.

<sup>5</sup> *Babalawos* – Lit. Father of the secret. A male only caste of priests in the Lucumí religion.

<sup>6</sup> The Book of Diagnosis in Ifá Divination – Ifá is another term used to define the religious tradition of the Yoruba however this term refers to its African manifestation and implies a relation to the male only caste of priests known as babalawos. The babalawo is considered an eternal student of Ifá, and representation of its earthly manifestation. Ifá divination, the act of interpreting divine messages to the individual and the community, is relegated to the babalawo.

<sup>7</sup> *Lengua* - Lit. tongue, used to refer to any African based language spoken in Cuba.

<sup>8</sup> *Lukuñol* - A hybridization of the words Lucumí and *Español* (Spanish) coined by Miguel Willie Ramos in *Orí eledá mí ó* (2011).

<sup>9</sup> Lydia Cabrera, *Anagó: Vocabulario Lucumí* (Havana: Ediciones Universal, 1970), 53.

<sup>10</sup> Ritual kinship - Families based on religious affiliation rather than blood relation.

<sup>11</sup> For a full explanation of how and why women have been excluded from the position of oriáte see Willie Ramos, “La división de la Habana: Territorial Conflict and Cultural Hegemony in the Followers of Oyo Lukumí- Religion, 1850s-1920s.” *Cuban Studies* 34 (2003).

<sup>12</sup> John Lipsky “On the Construction ta + Infinitive in Caribbean Bozal Spanish”, (*Romance Philology* Vol. XL, No. 4, 1987), 431.

<sup>13</sup> *Ajiaco*- a type of stew made in Cuba that contains, root vegetables such as a yucca, taro, sweet potato along with diverse cuts of meat and corn and pumpkin, and savory spices. The seasoning is unique to the island and each of the ingredients represents foods that were typical to the different ethnic groups that make up Cuba.

<sup>14</sup> Fernando Ortiz, *La Cubanidad y Los Negros: Párrafos tomados de una conferencia dicha en 1939 Universidad de la Habana.*, *Estudios Afrocubanos Revista Trimestral*, Sociedad de Estudios Afrocubanos (1939), 4.

<sup>15</sup> For a fuller explanation on the search for purity in African Traditional Religions (ATR) see “The Cult of Nations and the Ritualization of Their Purity” *The South Atlantic Quarterly- special issue on Atlantic Genealogies*, J. Lorand Matory.



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<sup>16</sup> Phonemic – A phoneme is the smallest unit of speech that makes up a language. Phonemes are the sounds of a language and when languages share phonemes then relationships between languages can be demonstrated.

<sup>17</sup> Cognate matching - cognates are words that exist in one language that can be identified in another language and show some similarity in sound and meaning.

<sup>18</sup> Acculturation-Was the dominant cultural theory at the time and explained that when two cultures come into contact one will dominate the other.

<sup>19</sup> Fernando Ortiz, *Los Negros Curros*. (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1986), 75.

<sup>20</sup> Lucumí religious community - Group of people who are followers of the Lucumí religion.

<sup>21</sup> *Cada casa con su libro*.

<sup>22</sup> *Obbedi-Kaká Datos Bibliográficos Yorubá-Lucumí* - Eight-Seven *kaká*: Bibliographic Information about the Yorubá –Lucumí ( *Obbedi kaká* in an allusion to a divinatory construct; Ogbe is the number eight in Anagó, ‘Di is the shortened form of the number seven which is Odi, and *kaká* is an onomatopoeic sound that evokes the hitting of a drum. The folktale associated with the divination verse of Ogbe-dí --shortened to Obbedi in this title--is the history of the creation of the drum hence this sound is associated with the eight-seven configuration).

<sup>23</sup> *Bata*- a two headed drum shaped like an hourglass that originated in West Africa and is used in Lucumí ritual. Ortiz with the co-operation of Pérez and other Lucumí drummer-priests brought bata drumming into the public sphere in 1935.

<sup>24</sup> This is covered in more depth by Katherine J. Hagedorn in *Divine Utterances: The Performance of Afro-Cuban Santería*, c2001 Washington D.C. Smithsonian Institution Press.

<sup>25</sup> *Abakuá*- Language of the West African Èfik Ékpè and Ejagham Úgbè societies of Southeastern Nigeria and Southwestern Cameroon, used in the Afro-Cuban religious tradition also called Abakuá.

<sup>26</sup> *Bantu-Kongo*- Language from the West African Bantu-Kongo peoples used in the Afro-Cuban religion of Palo-Monte.

<sup>27</sup> Ivor Miller, “Cuban Abakuá Chants: Examining New Linguistic and Historical Evidence for the African Diaspora.” *African Studies Review*. 48.1 (2005), 25.

## Chapter II

### Socio-Political Factors in Africa and the Caribbean

There are three important events which contributed to the importation of Yoruba speakers into Cuba in the nineteenth century. First, political upheavals in the West African kingdom of Oyó (1823-1836), second the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) and third the British ban on slavery (1833- late 1840s). Although these events occurred between the years of 1791 and 1840 their effects in Cuba lasted until the late 1880s. After the Spanish government formally ended slavery by royal decree in Cuba on October 7, 1886, the first stage in the evolution of the Anagó speaking community ended, and although it was no longer legal to enslave people of color, Cuban society remained divided along racial lines.<sup>1</sup>

During the 1500s Yoruba speaking groups of the Sub-Sahara region of West Africa lived in a highly developed network of city states composed of diverse ethnic groups. These city states were ruled by hereditary kings whose histories date back to the fourth century AD. The lineages of these kings were preserved and passed on via intricate oral histories that contain information which has been confirmed by archeological studies. Copper, zinc-brass and terra-cotta sculpted heads and masks dating from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries have immortalized some of the Yoruba kings of this early era.<sup>2</sup> Wars were common, not only between competing groups that spoke diverse languages, but also inter-tribal ethnic groups among people who shared the same language. Throughout history, wars between African kings in West Africa produced large numbers of captives who were often sold into slavery. The selling of defeated enemies

into slavery was a motivation for the Portuguese, Spanish and British slave traders to locate their supply depots in coastal cities.

The region of Central West Africa known as Oyó was originally involved in the exportation of slaves who had been acquired from extensive military actions enacted upon neighboring tribes. Oyó had a five hundred year golden period of expansion, conquest and stability beginning in the fourteenth century, a product of its highly developed army and cavalry. Oyó's dominance of the area began to change in the late eighteenth century and deteriorated under attacks from the Fulani<sup>3</sup> of the northern savanna region and the Fon people of Dahomey from the West. King Gezo of Dahomey declared independence from Oyó in 1818 when he refused to pay the yearly tax tribute and began conducting slave raids on neighboring Yoruba towns.<sup>4</sup> Internal political struggles between Oyó warlords and fratricidal wars added to the unstable conditions. The systemic weakening of Oyó in 1817 occurred during a peak in trans-Atlantic slave trade. Oyó, originally a provider of slaves to the trans-Atlantic market soon became a major source of slaves to the Caribbean. The reversal of fortune for many residents of Oyó territories turned previously affluent and privileged citizens into refugees and slaves as a result of the political avarice of their rulers.<sup>5</sup> The political upheaval in Oyó is the first factor that contributed to the movement of Yoruba speakers into Cuba.

The second event did not occur either in Africa or Cuba. The Haitian rebellion in 1791 and the subsequent establishment of Haiti as a free republic on January 1, 1804, created an opportunity for Cuba to develop its sugar industry. French elites forced off the island by the slave rebellion brought their knowledge and experience as well as their techniques to Cuba.<sup>6</sup> As the price of sugar rose in Europe because of the dramatic fall in

production, the pressure to establish a base for production of sugar in Cuba increased. Although Cuban elites in the nineteenth century diversified their economic investments into other areas such as tobacco and cattle, the number of Cuban sugar estates increased from 529 in 1792 to 1,000 in 1827, to 1,439 in 1846 and to 2,430 in 1862.<sup>7</sup> Each *ingenio* (sugar mill) required from 80 to 300 slaves to operate it during the sugar production season or *zafra*.<sup>8</sup> The increase in the number of sugar estates had a direct effect on the demographics of Cuba because sugar production required an increased number of slaves. The population of Cuba changed in size and composition, as the number of slaves and free people of color increased to keep pace with the growing numbers of ingenios.<sup>9</sup> The harsh existence of the ingenios put the average life span of the workers at about seven years requiring a constant supply of imported workers. The slave masters preferred Lucumí slaves to work on the sugar plantations.<sup>10</sup> This information is important to this study because Yoruba speakers caught in the unstable political conditions in Oyó were more likely to end up in Cuba during the years that Cuba was increasing sugar production.

The last factor that contributed to the increase in the number of Yoruba speakers in Cuba was the result of an act of English Parliament. The British, formerly participants in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, legislated against it in 1807 with The Slave Trade Act. The legislation was specifically aimed at making it illegal for ships to be outfitted with any type of gear or fittings such as shackles or grated holds that could be used to transport human cargo. For example Article Ten of the Act declared that “hatches with open gratings, instead of solid or closed hatches, to be illegal...the usual fittings of a slaver ...to be illegal, and when found on board any Spanish...vessel they will be considered as

evidence against such vessels.”<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately for every element implemented to stop the transport of slaves by Spanish vessels as outlined by the Slave Trade Act, the slavers succeeded in going around the regulations with methods that made the transport of slaves even more inhuman. As a result of that Act, in 1808 British ships began patrolling the coast of West Africa in an attempt to intercept slave ships. This action may have resulted in the capturing of more than 1,500 slave ships and the freeing of 150,000 Africans<sup>12</sup> but it also increased the economic motivation for illegal slave trade. Slavers were motivated to transport as many slaves as possible before the British ban went into effect.

The abolition of slavery did not occur on one specific date, nor was it universally applied in every country. It was a process of a number of legislations and negotiations that occurred throughout the nineteenth century. Britain, for example, passed more than ninety legislative acts in Parliament from 1788 to 1834 related to ending slavery.<sup>13</sup> As stated above, Spain did not fully cooperate with the British bans on the trading of slaves. On January 5, 1833 reports from Sierra Leone to Viscount Palmerston by the British Commissioner of the area reported that “the Spanish slave trade carried on under our own observation, is in as full activity on this devoted coast as it ever was.”<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the legislation passed by the British had no effect whatsoever on the pressure to sell captives from the unending wars into slavery. In fact, prisoners of war that could not be sold were routinely slaughtered by their captors whose primary intent was not political but economic. In 1829 the slaughter of 4,190 prisoners of war was witnessed by a rich landowner from the coast of Puerto Rico who was traveling in West Africa.<sup>15</sup> On the African coast, slavers continued in direct defiance of the English laws. The continued transportation of slaves dovetailed with the need for more slave labor in Cuba. During the

time period that the trafficking in slaves was technically illegal, slavery was still an important component of the economic system in Cuba. The need for slaves was affected by a fall in the price of sugar from 1826 to 1844 and a change in the method of sugar production, specifically the introduction of horizontal rollers for crushing the cane beginning in 1827.<sup>16</sup> By the late 1840s the slave population was decreasing and there was increased pressure to employ imported laborers. Although sugar production had doubled from 1836 to 1846 this was not attributable to an increase in the number of bozales imported to Cuba, but rather to improvements in methods of production, as twice as much sugar could now be produced with half as much labor.<sup>17</sup> The British blockade put pressure on the slave traders but, as with all illegal goods, it made their cargo more profitable. Although the need for slaves may have lessened in terms of the ingenios, the push from war lords on the African Coast to sell their prisoners coupled with the greed of slavers who regularly made a 180 per cent or more profit on their cargo,<sup>18</sup> kept the contraband slave market functioning in Cuba.

### **Yoruba Speakers Arrive in Cuba**

It is unlikely that any concrete number of slaves brought to Cuba will ever be established. Slave traders had differing motivations for recording the number of slaves brought on a particular journey. When it was profitable for them to keep accurate records, they did, but if there were reasons to change the numbers to avoid tariffs or to hide mortality rates then the figures could have been stated incorrectly. There is also the issue of illegal slave trade, which by its very nature would be difficult to quantify. Slave owners were motivated to present incorrect data because they were taxed for their slaves.

Abolitionists, who were responsible for producing much of the data after 1820, had a predisposition to present a worst case scenario.<sup>19</sup>

The possibility of determining the number of Yoruba speakers brought to Cuba during the nineteenth century has been considered in this study. Studies on the ethnic makeup of slaves in Cuba have been undertaken by Fernando Ortiz (1906, 1916), Romulo Lacahtañere (1939), Pedro Deschamps Chapeaux (1970), Rafaél López Valdéz (1986), Jesús Guanche (2009) and others. A comparison of the results presented by these researchers shows there is scarcity of definitive statistics and great variation in the data. Jesús Guanche presented an overview of findings on the ethnic composition of Cuban slaves published in Cuba from 1836 to 2001 and from these data he stated there was a significant increase in the number of Lucumí brought to work in Cuba from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. He further stated that by the 1860s the Lucumí comprised 35.52% of all slaves held on the ingenios in Cuba.<sup>20</sup> He determined that from the first half of the sixteenth century until the end of slavery, the Lucumí made up 38.81% of all slaves brought to Cuba from the area of Africa known as the Slave Coast.<sup>21</sup>

The literature on the number of slaves brought to Cuba in the nineteenth century presents contradictory data. For example, Lachatañere reports that from 1820-1865, while Spain was negotiating with England to end the slave trade, 238,948 new slaves were registered in Cuba.<sup>22</sup> Aimes reports a figure of 217,048 for the same time period, a difference of just over 20,000.<sup>23</sup> Other studies show that from 1760 to 1769, 4,307 slaves were imported in to Cuba, from 1800-1820 this number increased to 5,402 and from 1850-1870 to 9,177.<sup>24</sup> In the first time period quoted, the Lucumí comprised only 8.22%, in the second 8.38%, while in the last time period they comprised 34.52%.<sup>25</sup> These data

show that the number of Yoruba speakers increased fourfold from 1850 to 1870. These years occurred directly after an extended period of ethnic clashes in the Oyó region of West Africa known as the Owu and Egba wars (1821-1851). During those wars for the first time in the history of the Yoruba people, whole towns were razed and their entire populations enslaved.<sup>26</sup> The fact that entire towns from West Africa were being captured and sold into slavery is important to this thesis because there was a high possibility that these Yoruba speakers ended up in Cuba.

It has been stated that the entire population of Ketu, a town located near the present day border of Benín and Nigeria, was captured and sent to Cuba and Brazil.<sup>27</sup> The town of Ketu is considered to be the origin of a West African deity known as *Ochosi*<sup>28</sup> whose worship is a crucial element of Lucumí ritual. Various sources have stated that this deity is no longer worshiped in Africa as all of the inhabitants of Ketu who had this ritual knowledge are gone. Ochosi is well known in Cuba and Brazil. The relocation of Ochosi's worship to Cuba may be the best evidence of the importation of Anagó speech into Cuba because the ethnic group that carried the worship of Ochosi to Cuba, also brought their regional dialect, as well as the songs, chants and prayers associated with that deity. The importation of ritual practices from West Africa and the associated ceremonial lexicon for worship may be a model for the introduction of the Anagó language in Cuba.

Political upheavals in Oyó may have saturated the slave population exported to Cuba with Yoruba speakers at the same time that Cuba was actively increasing importation of labor to expand agricultural production and general development on all fronts. The present study did not find evidence that linked increased slave importation



directly to the sugar economy; however during the 1840s the labor market in Cuba still relied on slaves as its major component.<sup>29</sup> A further investigation of primary sources may reveal more information regarding the role of Yoruba speakers within that market. The following three observations can be determined from the evidence collected for this preliminary study. First, the early to mid-nineteenth century was a time when it was likely that Yoruba speakers would be brought to Cuba. Second, illegal slavery coincided with three definable periods of political instability in West Africa: the wars with Dahomey instigated by King Gezo (1818-1821), The Owu - Egba wars, (1821-1851) and the Fall of Oyó (1817-1840). Third, after 1850 the Lucumí population in Cuba was higher on the ingenios than it had been at any time in the past.

On the basis of this information, my thesis considers the period from about 1807 to 1850 as the starting point for the development of the Anagó language in Cuba. During this time, the seeds of Anagó language were being sown in Cuba. This “seeding” phase evolved into a period of coalescence that took place over the next forty years until slavery was abolished. The “seeding” and coalescence phases encompass the first stage in the development of the Anagó speaking community in Cuba. After surviving the horrors of the middle passage, Yoruba speakers would naturally seek out and form bonds with other Yoruba speakers on the island. At the mid-point in this stage, around 1845, the population of African born slaves and their Creole descendants reached as high as 60% of the total population on the Island.<sup>30</sup> These data bring into focus the demographic environment faced by Anagó speakers during this time period.

## **The Anagó Speaking Community in the Late Nineteenth Century**

The importation of African slaves to Cuba began to decrease in the 1840s and ended in 1866. The economic conditions could not support the expensive labor system that was required.<sup>31</sup> Although some ships continued to smuggle Africans into Cuba, after 1870 the plantation owners were relying more and more on reproduction rather than importation to replenish their supply of workers.<sup>32</sup> Plantation owners who had formally been importing only males began to import women and children. The pre-1790 slave community was markedly different than the one that was created in the late 1850s. The demographic change was intentional, and based on a model of economic efficiency not because the plantation owners meant to create stable families in their slave population. Nevertheless, a more stable family structure within the slave community was one of the results. After 1850, seven out of every fifteen slaves imported to Cuba were women.<sup>33</sup> The increase in importation of Yoruba women during this time may have been another reason why the Anagó speaking community was able to survive. My study will show that in one recorded case, two women were solely responsible for the transmission of Anagó language for an entire regional religious family.

In the early 1890s there were approximately 500,000 men, women and children of African descent living in Cuba.<sup>34</sup> By 1907 in Cuba there were only about 8,000 bozales who had been born in Africa.<sup>35</sup> The community of Anagó speakers was becoming creolized. Yoruba speakers who arrived when the era of slavery was approaching its end had a better chance of participating in the fledgling Anagó community. There were more opportunities for manumission and an already established language community in place. The Anagó speaking community at the end of the nineteenth century would have been

composed of bozales and their Creole descendants, free-people of color, and *emancipados* (slaves liberated under the treaties with Great Britain). Slaves taken from ships that were seized by British anti-slave patrols were given certificates of freedom and a sponsor. In the forty-two year period that this treaty and its sub-treaties were enforced by the British Authorities, 25,660 Africans were given status as *emancipados*.<sup>36</sup> This community of freed slaves was still not fully integrated into Cuban society. As Cubans fought to free themselves from Spanish rule, Anagó speakers found themselves in a hostile and unstable society that was reluctant to accept them as full citizens. As people of color continued to be excluded from the wider Cuban society, bonds created by the sharing of a common language would be re-enforced.

The Wars of Independence (1868 - 1898) contributed to the already militarized society and many ingenios were destroyed. Equally destructive to the ingenios were slave rebellions that burned many acres of sugar cane. By 1895 only 1,100 ingenios remained in Cuba, and the Wars of Independence had destroyed many of the principal agricultural resources of the Island.<sup>37</sup> Slavery had been abolished, but full emancipation in terms of acceptance in Cuban society was still many years away. Although some freed slaves were able to find other forms of employment such as masons, woodworkers, shoemakers and tailors, many freed slaves still found themselves cutting cane during the *zafra*.<sup>38</sup> At the turn of the century the Anagó speaking community was composed of free people of color, Creoles and bozales. Race was not a unifying factor and neither was ethnic origin. Once again the unifying factor for this group was a shared language. The Creole and the ex-slave may not have the same economic or social status, but the opportunity to communicate in Anagó, perhaps only during religious festivals, could overcome this

barrier. This ritual centered *mélange* would encourage language preservation and continue the process of coalescence.

In 1887 only 11% of Afro-Cubans of all ages could read and write.<sup>39</sup> Although there were laws in place that guaranteed Afro-Cuban children an equal education, many Afro-Cubans remained illiterate. White Cubans responded to pressure from the Afro-Cuban community to integrate public schools by opening more private schools for upper class white families. As literacy is intrinsically tied to language, the thrust for Afro-Cubans to become literate was contradictory to the preservation of Anagó language. A countering influence to this was that Anagó continued to be preserved within the homes of Afro-Cubans. In the twentieth century the children of freed slaves were educated in two separate linguistic environments, one outside of the home and the other within. The older generation, not able to attend school, maintained their oral traditions and passed them on to their children. Many Afro-Cubans of this generation were still fluent in their native dialects. Interviews with Lucumí descendants from the 1930s have stated that their education had two distinct components, one in the municipal school system and one at home. The existence of a home based schooling, that centered on the transmission of African concepts and language is mentioned repeatedly by informants in the manuscripts of Lydia Cabrera. “Everyone in my generation was Lucumí: father, mother, godfather, godmother and husband. I came home from school and in my home we had African school.”<sup>40</sup>

Chapter two has reviewed some of the socio-political conditions that existed at the first stage of the development of Anagó language in Cuba. These conditions led to two phases of development, a "seeding" phase, when Yoruba speakers were brought to Cuba

in great numbers, and a coalescence phase, where speakers relied on their shared language to navigate the hostile environment that they were placed into. My thesis will now examine in more detail the institutions and social organizations that may have allowed the Anagó language to remain cohesive.

## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Aline Helg *Our Rightful Share, The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912.*(Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 24.

<sup>2</sup> Suzanne Preston Blier, “Kings Crowns and Rights of Succession: Obalufon Arts and Ife and Other Yoruba Centers” *Art Bulletin* Vol 67 No. 3 PDF web accessed Sept 2012.

<sup>3</sup> *Fulani*- The Fulani are a Muslim group that began a Jihad in 1804 and succeeded in infiltrating the highest levels of Oyó government. This action culminated in the destruction of Oyó 1840.

<sup>4</sup> George Brandon, *Santería from Africa to the New World: The Dead Sell Memories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1997), 28.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate.* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1921) 201.

<sup>6</sup> Arturo Arnalte *Los Últimos Esclavos de Cuba: Los Niños Cautivos de la Goleta Batans.* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2001), 23.

<sup>7</sup> Louis A Pérez Jr., Ed. *Slaves, Sugar and Colonial Society Travel Accounts of Cuba, 1801-1899.* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc, 1992), xv.

<sup>8</sup> *Zafra*- The period of sugar harvest in Cuba was from December to April. “For a plantation to produce 2,000 boxes of sugar it must have 300 negroes” Pérez, *Slaves, Sugar*, 41.

<sup>9</sup> Pérez Jr, *Slaves, Sugar*, xiii.

<sup>10</sup> Jesús Guanche, *Africanía y etnicidad en Cuba* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales 2009), 25.

<sup>11</sup> Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions, Anti-Slavery Society, *A Brief Account of the Foreign Slave Trade from the Date of the English Abolition Act to the Present Time.*(London: J. Hatchard and son, 1837), 7. Google eBook.

<sup>12</sup> See Christopher Llyod, *The Navy and the Slave Trade: The Suppression of the African Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Cass and Company 1949).

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.pdavis.nl/Legislation.htm> D.O.A. June 2012.

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- <sup>14</sup> Society for the Mitigation, *Brief Account of the Foreign Slave Trade*. 27.
- <sup>15</sup> Don Mariano Torrente, *Slavery in the Island of Cuba with Remarks on the Statements of the British Press Relative to the Slave Trade*. (London: C Wood 1853), 14. Google eBook.
- <sup>16</sup> Hubert H.S. Aimes, *A History of Slavery in Cuba; 1511 to 1868*. (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1907), 154.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid*,158.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid*,171.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 242.
- <sup>20</sup> Guanche, *Africanía y etnicidad* , 25.
- <sup>21</sup> Guanche. *Africanía* , 127. The Slave Coast was the area of West Africa that includes the territories of what are known today as; Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia.
- <sup>22</sup> Romulo Lachatañere, "El Sistema Religioso de los Lucumís y otras Influencias Africanas en Cuba" *Estudios AfroCubanos Revista Trimestral*, Vol. 2, No's. 1, 2, 3 and 4 (1934), 36.
- <sup>23</sup> Aimes, *History of Slavery*, 242.
- <sup>24</sup> George Brandon *Santería from Africa to the New World: The Dead Sell Memories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1997), 58.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid* ,28.
- <sup>27</sup> Miguel A. De La Torre *Santería: The Beliefs and Rituals of a Growing Religion in America* (Grand Rapids Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 66.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ochosi*- An Orisha associated with hunters whose symbol is the bow and arrow.
- <sup>29</sup> Aimes, *History of Slavery*, 171.
- <sup>30</sup> Pedro Deschamps Chapeaux, *El Negro en la Economía Habanera del siglo XIX*. (La Habana:Unión de Escritores Y Artistas de Cuba, 1971), 16.
- <sup>31</sup> "Slavery is rapidly disappearing on the island. 'Slave labor is more costly than any other, all things considered' Pérez Jr. , *Slaves, Sugar*,130.
- <sup>32</sup> Brandon, *Santería*, 54.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>34</sup> Helg *Our Rightful Share*, 28.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.,55.

<sup>36</sup> Aimes, *History of Slavery*, 222, 237.

<sup>37</sup> Maria Poumier, *Apuntes sobre La Vida Cotidiana en Cuba en 1898*. (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencia Sociales, 1975), 20.

<sup>38</sup> Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 26.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.25.

<sup>40</sup> Quote from Calixta Morales a main informant of Lydia Cabrera. “Toda mi generación era lucumí: padre, madre, padrino y madrina y marido. Legaba de la escuelita y en la casa tenia colegio africano”. Lydia Cabrera Papers Cuban Heritage Collection Box nineteen folder 1, unpublished manuscript entitled *cosas oídas a Calixta-y notas sobre su biografía* (Things heard from Calixta-and notes about her biography)

### Chapter III

In the previous chapter, this thesis has presented information that traced the arrival of Yoruba speakers to Cuba and detailed the composition of the newly formed Anagó language community. Chapter three will examine the institutional and social groups that allowed for the Anagó language community to remain cohesive enough to preserve the language. In addition, chapter three will examine cabildos de nación, the casa-templo, pan-African societies, ethnographic studies and secular expressions. An examination of how the language contact that occurred within these groups contributed to the formation of the Anagó language will be discussed in chapter four.

#### **Cabildos de Nación**

During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century there were a number of Afro-Cuban social groups and state sponsored institutions that most likely allowed the preservation of Yoruba dialects while simultaneously providing direct language contact with Spanish speakers. The most likely source for the early development of the Anagó language community was within the cabildos de nación. During colonial times throughout Latin America as well as in Cuba, the word *cabildo* referred to a council that governed a town or city, also known as the *ayuntamiento* (town council). In contrast, when writing about Cuban history, the word *cabildo* more often refers to the cabildos de nación, African mutual aid societies, which were organized, based on ethnic groupings and attached to the Catholic Church. The cabildos had their origins in Spain in the fifteenth century and were designed based upon Iberian Catholic principals. Their manifestation in Cuba surpassed the colonial and peninsular expressions



by evolving into further materializations such as the *comparsa* (street carnivals). The *comparsa* tradition came from the seventeenth and eighteenth century processions of patron saints which are directly related to the processions of patron saints in Spain. In Cuba, these street processions such as the *Día de los Reyes* (Day of Kings) were yearly celebrations when the slaves were allowed to march through the streets playing drums, and singing and dancing which became part of Afro-Cuban identity. African concepts of religion and culture were central to the African's self-definition, one could not be separated from the other, and consequently the *cabildo* was a safe haven for this component of African personality. Furthermore, they were the bridge that allowed these African ethno-cultural and religious beliefs to weather the storm of slavery, colonization and the wars of independence as well as persecution during the formative days of the republic.

Spanish institutions in Cuba were part of a religious strategy used by the Spanish government in alignment with the Catholic Church to control the slaves and the general public. The government backed up the Church's evangelical motives with laws that required all slaves to be baptized. The Church was inextricably part of the colonial government and was the overseer for the indoctrination of the arriving slaves. In this way the Yoruba speakers brought to Cuba were forced into the new world religious community.

Hierarchical social organizations had precedence in Africa where benevolent and secret societies held religious, charitable, recreational, political and economic functions and were composed of individuals who possessed the same language, ethnicity, nationality and/or gender.<sup>1</sup> The structure of the *cabildos* was analogous to hierarchical

structures of these secret societies. The *Ogboni*<sup>2</sup> society had been a part of West African culture for hundreds of years and during the 1812 Aponte rebellion in Cuba, there was evidence that this society was functioning.<sup>3</sup> Secret societies and hierarchal religious orders were not unknown to the Yoruba speaking slaves. The *cabildo*'s outward structure took the form of the Spanish Church-inspired *cofradía* (Iberian Spanish religious association or brotherhood) but kept an internal component that existed in Africa. The social organizations brought by the slaves from Africa were firmly intertwined with each nation's understanding about nature, god, and human purpose in life, and formed the basis for understanding how to interact with the world. These rules were easily transferred to the Catholic *cabildo* because they already were part of African social structure.

The conservation of ritual language is a necessary component to religious practice. Modupue Idowu has stated that the defining characteristic of the African, in terms of self-definition is religion, which forms the foundation and the all-governing principle of life.<sup>4</sup> Africans who were brought to Cuba were intensely loyal to their religious traditions, and this dedication found a cooperative system for preservation within the *cabildos de nación*. This combination of a strong cultural quality of religious expression with an institution that provided ethnic association, gave African language and culture a chance to remain cohesive in Cuba.

In 1894 the *Cabildo Carabalí Isuama*, had about 700 members and had as its mission the legal recreation and mutual aid of its members.<sup>5</sup> The *cabildo*, although named *Carabalí*, which would indicate a relation to the Bakongo ethnic group, maintained within its ceremonies, Yoruba prayers. The Yoruba word *mo júbà* (I pay homage)<sup>6</sup> was

preserved in the prayers of this cabildo. When the members of the cabildo gathered to rehearse for public performances they would pay homage to the ancestors of the cabildo by reciting the following prayer.

*Moyú bareo* to commander Simon Baracoa

*Moyú bareo* to lieutenant Juan Baracoíta

*Moyú bareo* to Capitan Luis Baracoa.<sup>7</sup>

These prayers provide an early textual example of the Anagó version of a Yoruba word.

See example one.

(1)

*Moyú ba reo*

I pay homage to

/mo yu ba rə o/

Other cabildos have preserved songs and prayers that are specific to the ethnic roots of their speakers. The Iyesa Modu Cabildo of San Juan Bautista was founded on June 24, 1845, but had begun its organizing as early as 1830.<sup>8</sup> Cabildo Iyesa still exists in Matanzas and is the source of many of songs that come from this Yoruba ethnic group known as Yesa or Iyesa. These songs now belong to the greater Anagó song corpus. One song which has been preserved by this ethnic group states “Come to the world orisha who always works the earth speak to us bless our home the earth we are calling to you.”<sup>9</sup>

Each cabildo was arranged by ethnic group and as such we can safely assume that within that group there existed a corresponding dialectical form of Yoruba. The names of these cabildos provide evidence of these ethnic identities and each region in Africa had corresponding cabildos. For example in Santiago de Cuba the following cabildos: Cabildo Lucumí, Cabildo Bibí, Cabildo Congo del Rey Melchor, Cabildo (I)suama, Cabildo Arará and others registered property with the city.<sup>10</sup> The Cabildo de Nación Arará was founded in Havana in 1691 and was still in existence in the same location in 1909.<sup>11</sup> These cabildos were legal entities until 1884 when they were prohibited by the Spanish government from having their traditional street parades to celebrate Christmas.<sup>12</sup> The law was modified in 1885, and the cabildos were forced to adopt a Catholic patronage and pass all of their real estate holdings to the Catholic Church. The laws pertaining to the legal character of the cabildos began to change during the same time period that slavery finally ended in Cuba. The transition into Cuban society was hindered by racist attitudes and the cabildos were seen as *un atraso* (holding back, a left-over from slavery).

The cabildos had long been suspected as being havens for anti-government activity ever since the 1812 slave rebellion masterminded by Jose Antonio Aponte. The Cabildos were an ideal center for planning rebellion “because its members usually communicated in their African languages whether Mandinga, Yoruba or Carabali.”<sup>13</sup> Aponte was the principal architect of a slave rebellion that united slaves and free people of color as well as some Creoles with the aim of ending colonial rule. He was also the leader of Cabildo Shangó Tedun and a member of the most powerful secret society of Yoruba land, the Ogboni.<sup>14</sup> It is easy to see that the leader of cabildo dedicated to

Chango, who was considered the greatest Yoruba king and war strategist, would assume the lead in a rebellion to free his fellow Africans. Under the guise of meeting to plan religious holidays, Aponte's home which was also the location of the *cabildo*, was used to plan the rebellion. Although the internal workings of the *cabildo* cannot be documented at this point, it is likely that they followed a similar pattern as that which we find within the traditional *casa-templos* of today. Therefore, it is likely that African Divination systems, such as those described by Bascom (1952), were used to plan strategies for the rebellion. Afro-Cuban divination systems in Cuba were identical to those used by the Yoruba in Nigeria and divination is traditionally used for political decisions by Yoruba chiefs.<sup>15</sup> Although Aponte failed, this did not stop other *cabildo* leaders such as Hermengildo Jáurequi (leader of *Cabildo Lucumí*) and Juan Nepomuceno Prieto (captain of *Cabildo Lucumí Oyó*) from planning and implementing insurrections in 1835.<sup>16</sup> The colonial government under Capitan General O'Donnell tried to disband *cabildos* in 1844, but ultimately let them continue until 1882 when the separatist character of the *cabildos* was discouraged by the enactment of a law discouraging the prohibition of the mixing of Africans and Creoles in the *cabildos*.<sup>17</sup> Changes in the laws relating to the membership in the *cabildos* opened the way for Creoles and whites to participate in African religions.

From 1877 to 1888, because of the passage of specific laws relating to the functioning of the *cabildos*, the creation of the *patronato* (tutelage), the character of the *cabildos* changed from decidedly ethnic and African to Creole and Catholic. The *patronato* was an abolition law passed in 1880 that made newly freed slaves pass through an eight year period of indentured servitude. It is possible that this time period saw an increase in Spanish language contact in the Anagó speaking community. Ortiz recognized

that the Cabildos were fighting to maintain themselves against a “rising current of apathy and hostility in the social environment, which is destructive to them.”<sup>18</sup> The late 1880s is often viewed as the end of the cabildos, however the social and religious bonds that were made did not disappear, and the cabildos resisted dissolution for the next fifty years. The speech communities created in the cabildos evolved into other forms such as the casa-templo and the sociedades de color. The former provided a purely religious environment and the latter a more social one.

### **Plantation Based Pre-Casa-Templos**

Looking closely at the word casa-templo (home-church) will reveal a defining characteristic of African traditional religion in Cuba. After the cabildos lost their legal rights to own property, the home located church was the next logical step. A home that is also a church implies that the community will gather in private homes for the purposes of worship. Although, these private homes became the standard for Lucumí ceremony the term casa-templo could also be applied to communities that had no physical address. The leader of a lineage of practitioners could also be said to have a casa-templo, and yet never be associated with a physical building. Once the cabildos were ordered to have a church sponsor the actual activities of that group and its associated speech community became controlled by the Catholic Church. The independent casa-templo however, was free of this and could exist outside of any physical structure and free from control of the Catholic Church. The Anagó language community would benefit from both types of organizations because both would provide an opportunity to share language. In its loosest interpretation, the casa-templo could be a corpus of inherited knowledge passed from an elder to his or her religious followers. At the other end of the spectrum, the casa-templo

could be an extensive community of speakers originating from the cabildos de nación which survived the dominance of the Catholic Church and were able to maintain their traditional practices.

In contrast to the casa-templo which evolved out of Church controlled cabildos, the plantation based casa-templo provides a more plausible model for language preservation in rural Cuba. There is evidence that the tradition of passing on Anagó language from elder to religious neophyte was functioning in the extensive network of small farms and plantations far away from the urbanized areas and the formal cabildos. A Lucumí historian who is also president of *Church of the Lucumí Babaluaye* in Miami (a new world casa-templo), has stated that the cabildos were not the primary socio-linguistic incubators for the Anagó language nor did the cabildos did not play such an important role in the preservation of Lucumí language.<sup>19</sup> The cabildos were Catholic institutions that Lucumí practitioners belonged to because of pressure from the colonial government and the Catholic Church, because they were a convenient vehicle for social gatherings and because they conferred certain privileges to their members. The main purpose for membership in the cabildo then was to gain social status or power not to transmit language and culture. His viewpoint encourages an examination from the perspective that the actual preservation of religious teaching was taking place much more successfully and intensively on the actual plantations and ingenios. Under this scenario we can see that it is quite possible that the first casa-templos were occurring on those very plantations.<sup>20</sup> African language retention in these communities has been evidenced in collections of plantation work songs and folktales.<sup>21</sup>

In Villa Clara, located in the central region of Cuba, 287 Anagó words have been cataloged from texts recovered in Placetas, a small village located in that region. Placetas was formally established as a village in 1861. It was primarily involved in cattle farming and sugar cane production. Baptism records from the archives of the Catholic Church of Placetas contain the record of the number of slaves in the area and their ethnic origins. Although these records show that the Lucumí were not the largest group, there was a strong presence of casa-templos that emerged in the area. The data from 1817-1886 show a total of 940 slaves with only nineteen Lucumí (seventeen males and two females), fifteen of which arrived between 1843 and 1847; three arrived between 1848 and 1852 and one between 1863 and 1867.<sup>22</sup> The largest group of slaves in Placetas during that time period were the Congos with 160. The source of Lucumí tradition, according to various sources in Placetas seems to have been attributed to one very important female oloricha, Ma. Antoñica Finez. “The first slave who could freely practice her religión thanks to the benefits she received from the daughter of Coronel Martínez Fortún.”<sup>23</sup> After the abolition of slavery, another female oloricha, Ma. Donata Garcia, began a casa-templo in the same *barracones* (slave quarters) where once they were enslaved.<sup>24</sup> These two women are attributed with the entire Lucumí religious tradition of the area, including the transmission of sacred prayer and songs. The transmission of this Anagó lexicon occurred outside of any cabildo.

The plantation based pre-casa-templo model fits in with 1857 census data from the *Archivo Historico Naci6nal* (National Historical Archives) of Las Villas, Cuba. The document shows that the smaller sized plantations usually had less than ten slaves. The census showed of the 1,233 plantations a total of 6,466 slaves. The *Sociedad Agrícola*



*Cubana* (Cuban Agricultural Society) located in Las Villas, shows a record in the county of *Esperanzas* (Hope) of 100 slaves, whereas that of Mr. Mariano Mora recorded fifty-six, and Mr. Franco Maestic Eraso recorded fifty-eight. In the county of *Niguas*, Mr. Joaquin Machado listed 121 slaves while the majority of the other plantations had less than ten slaves, many having one to five. In the area of *Las Villas*, smaller plantations clearly outnumbered the ingenio model.<sup>25</sup>

### **Pan-African Sociedades de Color**

Religious communities and their associated Anagó speakers may have been solidified in casa-templos but the general population of freed slaves and people of color in Cuba after abolition and during the wars of independence had other options for maintaining their culture and language. In the late 1880s people of color were attempting to present a unified stand against racism and to that end created the *Directorio Central de las Sociedades de la Raza de Color* (Central Directory of Societies for People of Color). It was founded in 1887 to represent the interests of people of color and to coordinate the actions of the various “color societies” throughout the island in order to present a unified stand against racism. By July 1892, the directory consisted of 65 societies throughout Cuba.<sup>26</sup> Its official newspaper was entitled *La Igualdad* (The Equality).

The struggle went on well into the twentieth century. The cabildos then began to suffer under a developing Cuban identity that wanted to separate itself from the memories of slavery Afro-Cubans generally wanted to separate themselves from the memories of slavery. Many cabildos were replaced by sociedades de color, which were organized around mutual help and education rather than religion and ethnic identity. For example

the *Cabildo de Nación Gangá Purísima Concepción* (Cabildo of the Gangá Nation of The Immaculate Conception) which was founded by ethnic Malinkes of Sierra Leone, filed an official request to transform their association into a society of educational instruction “so as not to remain in the state of ignorance and backwardness.”<sup>27</sup> Other societies focused on trade organizations such as cooks and dock workers, and sports such as baseball. The demographics at that time reflected the conflicts that Cuban society was facing. Although there may have been conflicts in loyalty and ethnic divisions were now beginning to blur, African language was still a strong component of identity for Afro-Cubans.<sup>28</sup> These Pan-African societies did not have a religious or ethnic purpose. They were centered on labor groups and modeled on the white-only mutual aid societies established for “honest workers and day-laborers” and enrolled only all-white people of good education.”<sup>29</sup> The Pan-African societies did not restrict membership on the basis of origins, nationality or ethnicity, and the model of integration was being followed in the religious *casa-templos* as well. In general the Anagó speaking community evolved from the limited ethnic environment of the early *cabildos* to an expansive and inclusive social setting such as in the Pan-African societies. The inclusion of Creole members into twentieth century *casa-templos* permanently changed the makeup of the Anagó speaking community.

### **Lucumí Identity in Twentieth Century Casa-Templos**

In the early 1900s the idea of being Lucumí was a part of Creole identity as well as African born. The Lucumí community started by multi-ethnic Yoruba speakers from Africa grew to include Cuban-born mulattos, Creoles, and finally non-Cubans. During the early twentieth century, the formal *casa-templo* flourished. It was an independent entity, not tied to the Catholic Church, led by Creole elders who were fluent in Anagó and could

still understand Yoruba. The number of African born in Cuba at this time had been reduced to less than 8,000. The casa-templo's main purpose was to transmit Lucumí religious tradition and to provide a safe place to worship. Some may have been composed of former members of cabildos, in fact may have been considered an extension of the cabildo without the tethering to the Catholic Church. These organizations however, were no longer defined by ethnic association. All ritually initiated members were considered Lucumí. The metaethnonym<sup>30</sup> Lucumí was now applicable to a group of people who shared two qualities: one, a religious affiliation and two, the use of Anagó as a ritual language. The change in the community of Anagó speakers typified the makeup of the casa templos in the early twentieth century.

The transition from ethnic cabildo to Creole casa-templo is well studied. One example is the Cabildo Africano Lucumí which was founded in 1891 by Joaquín Cádiz in Regla, a municipality of Havana. The Cabildo Africano underwent a number of personnel and name changes as the social conditions in Cuba changed from early post-abolition, to the first American occupation (1899-1902), to the first republic (1902-1940). Its roster of membership began to reflect the increased presence of a sub-class of Creole Lucumí priests known as the babalawo. The babalawo class membership began to rise in the late 1900s and this particular cabildo was the origin of one of the most influential priests in Havana, Eulogio Rodríguez Gaitán "Tata Gaitán" (1861-1944). He was a property owner who purchased a huge house in the Guanabacoa (a suburb of Havana) in 1916 and was linked to several influential politicians of the time, such as the mayor of Guanabacoa and President Gerardo Machado (1924-1933).<sup>31</sup> Tata Gaitán was important because he was part of a supremely effective course of action undertaken in the 1940s to compile the oral

and hand written recollections of Lucumí rituals into a printed form. Three other Cuban babalawos -- Bernardo Rojas, Miguel Febles and Pedro Pablo Pérez Rodríguez -- are credited as being the first to begin “collecting (recopilando) textualizing and disseminating in the form of libretas (notebooks) the Ifá oral tradition from the African and early Creole elders.”<sup>32</sup> In effect they became their own ethnographers and created the first Anagó texts. The information was archived into hand written volumes, and then later typed into individual volumes, or by using carbon paper where a limited number of copies could be made. The first known book of this type appeared in the early 1950s in Havana it was called *The Book of Diagnosis in Ifá Divination* and is described as “...a consensus of oral knowledge held by free-slave and first generation religious leaders of Cuba from the late 1800s to early 1950s.”<sup>33</sup>

The motivation for this enormous task was twofold. First, there was the very important task of preserving ceremonial knowledge from the elders who had high levels of information and in some cases direct connection to the source in Africa. But the element of power was also a motivating force because these teachings had never been written down whoever possessed them could lay claim to a high level of ritual knowledge. Some of this oral knowledge had never been written down because of the high level of secrecy associated with the ceremonial ingredients and other of it was only passed within ritual families who may have sworn an oath of secrecy. The elders were cautious and did not want this information to leak out to the general public and certainly not to non-priests. In the 1950s, Pedro Arango, an Orisha priest (not a babalawo) began to sell this information throughout Havana. He was known to make his living selling information. He was probably the first “information broker” of Lucumí knowledge. This

information however, was intended for babalawos and they were outraged when they found that their books were being sold.<sup>34</sup> The by-product of this effort was the consolidation of thousands of traditional prayers, songs and chants many of which have formed the foundation of language transmission for the modern Anagó speaking community.

The creation of a written version of the oral Anagó tradition created a great problem for its speakers. Prior to this time period, Anagó language was mostly transmitted orally from elder priest to novice or intergenerationally within families. The compilation and publication of thousands of Lucumí prayers without consistent orthographic representation created repercussions when novice priests, without access to living elders, were faced with interpreting these prayers without a model for pronunciation. At the time of these early publications it was standard practice to type all Anagó prayers in capital letters with no diacritical marks. To add to this, these publications were the first versions accessible to English speakers, creating yet another layer of language contact.

### **Ethnographic Studies in the Twentieth Century**

A major source of Anagó language samples can be found in the ethnographic studies of Fernando Ortiz (1924, 1939, 1954, 1961). Although Ortiz did not focus on Anagó language specifically, he did make observations about African languages in general and their effects on Castilian Spanish. In 1924 Ortiz published *Glosario de Afro-Negrismos* (Glossary of Africanisms) where he presented examples of bozal speech in Cuba, collected from Afro-Cubans of various ethnic groups. Ortiz found support for his

theory of transculturation in observations he made of bozal speech. He used the metaphor of the ajiaco to identify the formation of the Cuban identity. An ajiaco is a type of stew made in Cuba that contains root vegetables such as a yucca, taro, sweet potato along with diverse cuts of meat and corn and pumpkin, and savory spices. The seasoning is unique to the island and each of the ingredients represents foods that were typical to the different ethnic groups that make up Cuba. The indigenous Arawak Indians gave the corn, yucca and taro and other root vegetables that formed their diet. This pre-Columbian stew used iguana, turtle and bush rat to provide the meat element. The Spaniard substitutes that element with ham and beef and added pumpkin. The African portion included yam and plantain. Ortiz also includes in his accounting of ajiaco Chinese, French and Anglo-American elements. Ortiz states that “The image of the Creole stew is a good representation of the makeup of the Cuban people.”<sup>35</sup> He includes Creole speech patterns as expression of that identity. He expresses the metaphor of the ajiaco in detail and rather romantically in *La Cubanidad y Los Negros* (Cuban Identity and Afro Cubans) where he explains that the unique phonology of Cuban speech as well as the use of refrains has been attributed to the influence of African languages. The shortening or elimination of /r/ is a marker that can be easily observed in Cuban Creole speech as well as that of Southern Spain. The elision of /r/ in Creole Spanish has been identified as a marker of Caribbean and Southern Spanish accent. Ortiz reported that the weak /r/ was possibly the result of contact with African languages whose speakers belonged to Kwa-Niger language groups, such as Yoruba, where /r/ also was pronounced as such. He related the distinct character of African speech as it expresses itself in Cuba (and the Antilles) with interchange of the /r/ and /l/ sounds as a marker for African influenced language. “With

the Lucumí or Yoruba, as with the blacks of Sudan and Egypt, the switching of /r/ for /l/ is frequent.”<sup>36</sup>

Ortiz’s observations are important to my thesis because of the emphasis that he put on language being a strong marker of culture and community. Furthermore, Ortiz used language as evidence to demonstrate that neither Spanish Culture nor African culture had been subsumed by the other, but that a third culture had been created. His thinking is complementary to my thesis because I consider Anagó a new language which is neither Yoruba nor Spanish.

Ethnographers who collected Anagó prayers, songs and vocabulary to document and analyze the Lucumí religion did not at first recognize the fact that the Anagó language was a conglomerate of ethnic dialects from the Yoruba family. However, their informants were quite adamant in pointing out that ethnic identity was still an element to be considered in regards to language. Each religious house spoke their own unique version of Anagó based on their particular heritage. “In one house they spoke oyó, in another, ará-tàko, egguado, iyésá, arará and so on.”<sup>37</sup> Some members of the Lucumí religious community were even offended that this fact had gone unnoticed by the academic and literary elite who were studying them. Twentieth century researchers were accused of misrepresentation and “improper condensation”<sup>38</sup> of the varied African languages and religions. They had overlooked the fact that there still existed “diverse classes of African religions each one possessing their own language in alignment with their place of origin. Each piece of Africa, which was the home land of a feudal tribe, maintained a religious tradition, which was in accordance with the traditional customs taught to them by their ancestors.”<sup>39</sup> One Lucumí priest who self-published a libreta with

an extensive glossary stated “The Lucumí had their spoken language, that was different from their close neighbors and within the Lucumís themselves there were varios dialects: the iyésá, the tacua, the eguado, the ará-taco. This [sic] last dialect is what we will utilize in this book.”<sup>40</sup> He then presented a glossary of over 700 “Lucumí words of the ará-táco dialect.”<sup>41</sup> The central point here is that throughout the time that Anagó was being crafted by the Yoruba speaking community, there were distinct dialects present. Each region of Yoruba land had its own dialect of Yoruba and these dialects were maintained in Cuba within the Anagó language. Angarica’s information is relevant to my thesis because it reinforces the concept that Anagó is not simply the result of contact with Spanish, but that dialectical versions of Yoruba that were associated with distinct ethnic groups also contributed to the creation of the Anagó language community.

Lydia Cabrera (1954, 1970) collected the largest amount of Anagó texts and produced the definitive dictionary of the language. These publications indicate that during the mid to late twentieth century the Anagó language was being used by the community and had solidified its position as the ritual language of the Lucumí. Data from Cabrera’s collections of manuscripts and libretas allow us to say for certain that during the early twentieth century there were groups of Afro-Cubans decisively transcribing Anagó vocabulary and passing it down through religious or blood families. Libretas, hand-written or manually typed manuscripts that contained Anagó-Spanish glossaries, prayers, patakíns, songs, chants, ceremonies and divination instructions. For example the 1938 hand written manuscript entitled *Vocabulario lucumí* (Lucumí vocabulary); written by Anagó speaker Má Calixta y Calazán Herrera *Bangoche* (king that always works)



contained numerous examples of Anagó speech with Spanish translations.<sup>42</sup> These libretas were hand written and passed down from elder to novice within the casa-templo.

The libreta was used to teach Anagó to novice priests of all ages and continues to be used in modern Lucumí casa-templos. Cabrera states that during her studies in Havana in 1928-1930 she met various Lucumí who provided vocabulary for her collection of Lucumí dictionary.<sup>43</sup> After publishing the Anagó-Spanish dictionary, Cabrera was told that Yoruba speakers in Nigeria recognized and understood her compilation of words. Furthermore, she states that Yoruba sailors who landed in Cárdenas understood Creole speakers of Anagó.<sup>44</sup> Cabrera's research can allow us to say decisively that in the early twentieth century there were still Cubans who spoke Anagó fluently and that this dialect was understandable to Yoruba speakers.

Ethnographic studies and compilations by elite babalawos, libretas and glossaries published in the twentieth century have left strong evidence that as late as the 1970s the Anagó language community was vibrant and multi-faceted. While some researchers attempted to represent Anagó as a singular form, others struggled to assert a particular ethnic identity within the Lucumí community. All of these examples reinforce a major tenet of this thesis. Anagó is derived from Yoruba, not an imperfect form of Yoruba.

### **Secular Expressions**

In the twentieth century, Anagó was being documented in academic publications and in compilations of ritual knowledge. These disseminations expanded and re-enforced the Anagó language community. The greatest influence occurred through folkloric and popular musical performances. After Ortiz published his studies on the African influence

on Cuban music, Anagó language began to appear on stage and in popular song. The Sociedad de Folklore Cubano and the *Conjunto Folklorico Nacional de Cuba* (National Folkloric Troupe of Cuba) collected a substantial amount of information from members of the Anagó language community. The information provided by knowledgeable Lucumí practitioners, was used to create secular versions of Afro-Cuban religious performance.

The most prolific contributor to the documentation of Afro Cuban folklore in the 1940s was Jesús Pérez *Oba Ilu* (king of the town/drum). He was a recognized priest and *olu bata* (owner of the sacred bata drum) of Lucumí. He was an instrumental informant for the studies published by Ortiz and Rogelio Martínez-Furé and was the source of much ritual information used in the creation of Afro-Cuban folkloric performance. He was a well known musician and traveled to Mexico where he performed the play *Obá Kosó* (the king did not hang). The production of *Obá Kosó* was most likely the first time Anagó songs appeared in secular context outside of the island of Cuba. While in Mexico, Pérez recorded an album that combined secular music with Lucumí ritual songs, and in 1962 he co-founded the *Conjunto Folklorico Nacional de Cuba*. In the 1940s Mercedes Valdés with the help of Jesús Pérez and another Ortiz informant Trinidad Torregrosa, created a radio program that broadcast authentic Anagó songs and prayers on radio *Suaritos*<sup>45</sup> which became famous throughout the island.<sup>46</sup>

Jesús Pérez, Mercedes Valdés and other musician/priests provided Anagó song lyrics for folkloric performances, and popular musicians used Anagó in *mambo*, *rhumba* and *son*.<sup>47</sup> Luciano “Chano” Pozo Gonzales better known as Chano Pozo was born in 1915 and grew up in a neighborhood of Havana called *cayo hueso* (bone alley). He was known to be an initiate of Lucumí religion, specifically devoted to Chango. He became a

well known drummer and was one of the Cuban artists who had a direct influence on the development of Latin Jazz in the United States through his association with Dizzy Gillespie. He traveled to New York with Miguelito Valdes in January of 1947 and performed at Boston Symphony Hall in October. The merging of the Afro-Cuban rhythms of Chano and improvisational jazz style of Dizzy is considered to be the birth of the Afro-Cuban swing sound known as Cu-Bop. Chano Pozo was one of many *rumberos* (player of drums and rumba rhythms), who used Anagó as lyrics for popular song. Some of these songs were taken from the comparsa or carnival tradition, which has its roots in the early religious processions of the cabildos de nación. The comparsa is a venue where secular and non-secular music can freely mingle. The song *Ariñaña-ra iya*<sup>48</sup> written by Chano and recorded by Orquesta Casino de la Playa (1940) in Cuba was made famous by Miguelito Valdes and has been re-recorded by many famous artists. It contains Anagó lyrics and also utilizes some Congo elements.

Mambo, Rumba, and Son are examples of Afro-Cuban music that often have Anagó words in their lyrics. The drum rhythms that are central to these types of music are also part of the cultural legacy of Africans in Cuba. A good example of this can be seen in the song *Cantaremos y Bailaremos*<sup>49</sup> recorded by the group *Clave y Guaguancó*<sup>50</sup> in 1994.

There is no one in this world  
Who can say to me  
That they like the rumba more than me  
I am from over there  
Where the blacks eased their pain

To the rhythms of the drum

I am a Lucumí king who came from a land of mountains with a secret speech/tongue

The base of the mountain holds my secret<sup>51</sup>

Afro-Cuban secular songs have travelled the globe and taken Anagó language with them. This exportation via secular usage has de-mystified certain lexicons and placed them the category of the vernacular. The purpose of this digression is to note that the Anagó language has a recognizable presence in popular music and this music in turn, has influenced the Anagó language community. Anagó language in secular song may preserve certain lexemes, and may distribute Anagó vocabulary far and wide, but the applications of these ritual words are out of context and may lose ritual value. Folkloric performances and popular renditions of traditional Lucumí songs often are misrepresented on purpose to preserve secret knowledge, inaccurately transmitted, or modified to fit some musical requirement. It brings to the forefront questions about how ritual knowledge and language may be altered in communities via secular expression and how a language community may react to the diluting of this knowledge. It also brings into focus how Anagó may be perceived as a corrupt and useless form of Yoruba by some researchers. The dilution of Anagó ritual language via secular usage underscores the importance of key transmitters of language in the Anagó language community, who are able to maintain a baseline of functionality. The linguistic progression of Anagó language will be discussed in chapter five.

## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Howard, *Changing History Afro-Cuban Cabildos and Societies of Color in the Nineteenth Century*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Ogboni society - A West African fraternal secret society with political and religious functions

<sup>3</sup> Howard, *Changing History*, 78.

<sup>4</sup> Bolaji E Ìdòwú *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*. (London: Longmans, 1962.), 5.

<sup>5</sup> Nancy Perez *El Cabildo Carabalí Isuama*, (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial de Oriente, 1982),62.

<sup>6</sup> Yoruba *Mo* = ( I ) + *jùbà* = ( to pay homage or respect) + *re* = (blessings or goodness) + *o* = emphasis.

<sup>7</sup> Pérez Jr., *El Cabildo Carabalí*, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Rogélio Martínez Furé *Dialogos Imaginarios*. La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas. ca. 1997.

<sup>9</sup> June 2008 field notes Matanzas, Cuba. Notes taken during street festival (comparsa) for the celebration of the beginning of summer, and presented by members of the Cabildo San Juan de Bautista located on Salamanca Street in Matanzas. The cabildo members begin at the entrance of the cabildo then parade down Salamanca Street to the river playing drums and coroneta and singing Yesa songs. When they arrive at the river they light a large doll on fire and all of the priests collect the ashes to be used to bless their homes. The original song is as follows *Laye laye ara oko nso ile oko ara oko nso ile oko /li yə li yə a ra o ko so i lə o ko a ra o ko so i lə o ko/*.

<sup>10</sup> Marcelino Arozarena “Los cabildos de nación ante el registro de la propiedad” *Actas de Folklore Centro de estudios del Folklore del Teatro Nacional de Cuba (TNC)* La Habana Enero 1961 Año 1 no. 1 ed. Argeliers Leon , 15.

<sup>11</sup> Rogelio Martínez Furé, *Diálogos Imaginarios*. (Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1979),139.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*,16.

<sup>13</sup> Howard, *Changing History* , 78.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*,74.

<sup>15</sup> William Bascom, “Yoruba in Cuba” *Nigeria Magazine*. Vol 37, (1951),169.

<sup>16</sup> Howard, *Changing History*, 79.

<sup>17</sup> Arozarena, *Los Cabildos*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Arozarena, *Los Cabildos*, 23.

<sup>19</sup> Ernesto Pichardo personal interview January 20, 2012 Miami, FL.

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- <sup>20</sup> Pichardo personal interview January 20, 2012 Miami, FL.
- <sup>21</sup> See Lydia Cabrera *Los Animales en el Folklore y La Magia de Cuba* (Madrid: Editorial Vosgos S.A.,1988).
- <sup>22</sup> Nerys Gomes Abreus“Estudio de la Presencia de Remanentes Lingüísticos de Origen Lucumí (Yoruba) en la Region Central de Cuba:Zona de Placetas, Villa Clara.” *Islas* no. 95 ( ) 175.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid 162 “la primera esclava que pudo practicar su religión con libertad, gracias a los beneficios que recibiera de la hija del coronel martínez Fortún.”
- <sup>24</sup> Gomes Abreus, *Estudio*, 162.
- <sup>25</sup> AHN Censo de esclavos 1857-58 Levi Marerro Collection Greene Library FIU.
- <sup>26</sup> Aline Helg *Our Rightful Share: the Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality 1886-1912*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, (1995)28.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.,30.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., 28.
- <sup>29</sup> Howard *Changing History* ,97.
- <sup>30</sup> Metaethnonym- an ethnic description that includes multiple ethnic identities.
- <sup>31</sup> David H.Brown *Santería Enthroned: Art Ritual and Innovation in an Afro-Cuban Religion*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003),72.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid 84.
- <sup>33</sup> In-person Interview Ernesto Pichardo Miami Fl January 2012.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> *La imagen del ajiaco criollo nos simboliza bien la formación del pueblo cubano* Fernando Ortiz, *La Cubanidad y Los Negros: Párrafos tomados de una conferencia dicha en 1939* (Universidad de la Habana., Estudios Afrocubanos Revista Trimestral, Sociedad de Estudios Afrocubanos) ,4.
- <sup>36</sup> “Entre los Lucumís o Yorubas, como entre los negros de Sudan y del Egipto, el cambio de *r* por *l* es frecuente “ Fernando Ortiz, *Los Negros Curros*. (La Habana:Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1986), 76.
- <sup>37</sup> “en una casa hablan oyó y en otras ará-táko, egguado, iyesa, guérefé, arará...” T.D. Fableo *Lengua de Santeros (Guiné Góngori)* (La Habana, 1956), 6.
- <sup>38</sup> *condensación impropia*

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<sup>39</sup> “Diversas clases de Religiones Africanas donde cada una posee una lengua propia que es de acuerdo con la religion natal de origen. Téngase presente que cada pedazo de tierra africana, de donde procede o radica una tribu de tipo feudal mantienen por tradición religiosa, una religión especial, que está en concordancia con sus costumbres tradicionales que les enseñaron sus antepasados”. Nicolas Angarica, *El Lucumí al Alcance de Todos*. Havana n.d. ,ii.

<sup>40</sup> “Los Lucumí tambien tienen su lenguaje hablado, que es distinto al de los vecinos cercanos y entre los mismos Lucumís hay varios dialectos: El iyésá, El tacua, el eguado, el ará-taco. Este ultimo dialecto es el que utilizaremos en este libro”. Anagrica, *El Lucumí*, 1.

<sup>41</sup> “palabras Lucumís, del dialecto ará-taco” Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> The following is an example of a typical glossary entry in a Lucumí libreta  
Estoy sufriendo - Ollún cuan mi, (I am suffering)  
Estoy llorando - Mofên sucu (I am crying)  
Estoy llorando - sucú-sucú (I am crying)  
Estoy ciega - Moda fá llú ( I am blind)  
Niño que nace de pie – Atésébi (name for a child born feet first)  
Sientese - Yó kó (yo có) (sit down)

<sup>43</sup> Lydia Cabrera, *Anagó: Vocabulario Lucumí- (El Yoruba que se Habla en Cuba)*. (Miami: Ediciones Universal Colección de Chicherekú. 1970), 14.

<sup>44</sup> Lydia Cabrera, *Koeko Iyawó: Aprende Novicia Pequeño Tratado de Regla Lucumí*. (Miami: Ediciones Universal Colección de Chicherekú, 1980), 3.

<sup>45</sup> Cuban radio station founded in the 1930s by Laureano Suárez Valdés. For more information see <http://www.cubarte.cult.cu/periodico/letra-con-filo/6837/6837.html>

<sup>46</sup> Ivor Miller, “Jesus Perez, and the Transculturation of the Cuban Bata Drum.” *Dialago* 7, (2003), 74 .

<sup>47</sup> Mambo, rumba and son are three types of Cuban music that use African rhythms.

<sup>48</sup> The source appears to have been a combination of traditional Anagó songs sung for *Olba* and for Chango. The original song, *arinyanya kirin nya kirin ya kirinya eleri mo ba'le*, refers to a patakin where Olba cuts off her ear and cooks it in Chango's favorite corn meal porridge in order maintain his love. The plan of course backfires, as he is revulsed and she is rejected. This story recounts the bad advice of Oya who originally convinced Olba to undertake the doomed plan.

<sup>49</sup> We will sing and we will dance.

<sup>50</sup> Beat and drum rhythm.

<sup>51</sup> *No hay en el mundo un ser  
Que me pueda decir  
Que le gusta la rumba más que mi  
Yo soy decendiente de allá  
Donde los negros calmaban su dolor  
Al ritmo del tambor  
Yo soy lucumí obá oke mewo mewo*

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Clave y Guagaunco was a famous rumba ensemble which had many Lucumí initiates as members. Transcription/translation by author.



## Chapter IV

### Description of the Anagó language

The phonemic<sup>1</sup> inventory of Anagó has been catalogued by David Olmstead (1953). His information came from a sampling of informants originating from the Habana-Jovellanos-Matanzas areas of Cuba. Olmsted created a map of Anagó phonemes as shown below.<sup>2</sup>

Anagó vowels /i/ /e/ /ɛ/ /a/ /o/ /u/

Anagó consonants /b/ /gb/ /kp/ /d/ /t/ /j/ /č/ /g/ /k/ /f/ /s/ /r/ /l/ /m/ /n/ /ñ/ /ŋ/

Anagó word structure is similar to Yoruba word structure. Akintan (1950) describes the Yoruba language as follows, “it is an agglutinating<sup>3</sup> language like the Chinese. It has no closed syllable, that is no consonant ending in a word ... The final ‘n’ in some cases is but part of a nasal vowel.”<sup>4</sup> Yoruba is a tonal language, having three tones, low, middle and high. A single word has the potential for three different pronunciations, depending on the tonal pattern of the vowel. The tonal pattern of the vowel carries a rising or falling sound as in *dò*, *re*, *mí*. This tonal pattern associated with the vowel will determine the significance of the word as indicated in example one.

(1)  
bu /bu/ (moldy)

bù /bù/ (dipped out)

bú /bú/ (insulted)

Anagó does not follow this pattern. The vowels in Anagó do not have tones; the more correct description for the pattern is stress.<sup>5</sup> The Anagó stress pattern is shown in

example two. The stress is not accompanied by a raising or lowering of the pitch, as in Yoruba. See example two.

(2)  
*Omi* /o mi/ (water)

*ori* /o ri/ (head)

*óke* /o kə/ (mountain)

*iché.* /e čə/ (work)

The Anagó language does not have tonal vowels but rather follows a Spanish stress pattern with the stress usually falling on the last syllable of the word. The stress pattern of Anagó is a subject that requires further study which is not within the scope of this thesis. The examination of Anagó stress patterns and their relationship to the Yoruba tonal system should be an area of further research and one that may provide important information about the emergence of Anagó and the presence of Yoruba dialects within Anagó.

The Anagó word is composed of morphemes. A morpheme is the smallest semantically meaningful unit of language. Anagó is generally an agglutinative language (with a few exceptions discussed below), that is morphemes are joined together to form new words. The sentence structure of Anagó is subject verb object (SVO). See example three.

(3a)  
*Mo Ofé Iré*  
I to see blessing/goodness

(3b)  
*Mo'ferere*

It is a blessing for me to see you/ look at you.

Tense, mood and aspect are indicated by particles placed before the verbal morpheme.

See example four.

(4a)

*Mo Wa*  
I to come

(4b)

*Mo ti wa*  
I past arrived/come  
I have arrived

(4c)

*Emi Ni Lo*  
I/myself here to go

(4d)

*Emini un ló*  
I here aspect leave  
I here am leaving

Anagó usually follows the regular patterning of subject, tense/mood/aspect, and verb. However, the contact with Spanish has created some hybrid forms. Some Anagó verbs are being used in an infinitive form and being conjugated in the same way as the Spanish verbs. The creation of an infinitive form would negate the observation that Anagó is a completely agglutinative language since it is showing some fusional<sup>6</sup> properties. See example five.

(5a)

*Mo yuba*  
I pay homage

Mo'yuba  
I pay homage/I pray

*Mo yubar*

I to pay homage

*Moyubando*

I am praying/paying homage

(5b)

*Até ifá*

divination tray religious work/knowledge

*Tefar*

to tap the edge of the divining tray

The plural form is formed by the addition of number markers. See example six.

(6)

*Awon*

many

*Ile*

house

*Awon ile*

many houses

*Akuko*

rooster

*Meta*

three

*Akuko meta*

three roosters

Negation is formed by the addition of the marker *ko*. This marker is also used to indicate intensity. See example seven.

(7a)

*Ko Si Aro*

No/not are/exist/be illness

*Ko si aro*

May there be no illness



and syntax is needed before a definitive determination can be made. Furthermore the non-cognates could not be attributed as having been derived from Spanish.<sup>12</sup> The presence of non-cognates would indicate that there was additional language contact that must be identified. It is possible that the non-cognate words are Yoruba ethnic regionalisms, or that there was contact with non-Yoruba based languages in Cuba.

### **The Source Language-Yoruba**

On the basis of the research done by Bascom and Olmstead it can be said that Yoruba is most likely the source language for Anagó. Because of this, it is important to now present some information about the Yoruba language. African languages were classified by Joseph Greenburg (1949) into four geographic areas, Northwestern Sub-Saharan, Upper Guinea, Lower Guinea, and Bight of Biafra and then into subdivisions according to linguistic criteria.<sup>13</sup> The Niger-Congo language family was named after the two rivers in Africa that form the geographical borders of the areas where these languages dominate.<sup>14</sup> The Yoruba language is classified in the Kwa subgroup of the Niger-Congo language family and has been in existence for over two thousand years. The Kwa sub-group has four major branches, Ewe, Akan, Yoruba and Nupe. The Yoruba branch has six sub-branches; Yoruba, Egba, Ife, Ijesha, Ekiti, and Ijebu, which are most likely sources of the Anagó language in Cuba. See appendix one. Each of these sub-branches represents at least one dialect. These same ethnic group divisions and their dialects were identified in Cuba within the slave population by Jorge Castellanos and Isabel Castellanos (1987). The study by Castellanos and Castellanos utilized the following terms to designate these groups: Lucumí, Oyó, Egguado, Egbado, Lucumí-Egbado, Ketu, Fee, Yesa, Yeza, Lucumí-Yesa, Ekiti, Ijebu, Yebú, and Lucumí-Yebú<sup>15</sup>

(see appendix two). These data are important because it defines the ethnic composition of the Anagó speaking community in Cuba, and indicates that this community carried their identifiable dialects with them. These data show that at the time of the early formation of the Anagó speaking community, there were at least six dialects of Yoruba present. The information shows that there was the opportunity for intra-language dialect contact within the Anagó speaking community. Castellanos created a detailed list of Anagó phonemes and compared them to Yoruba phonemes (see appendix three).

The information on intra-language dialectical contact underscores a central point that this thesis has uncovered. Anagó emerges from contact between varieties of the Yoruba language and Spanish. The central point is that besides the obvious language contact with Spanish, Anagó exhibits intra-language dialectic contact. That is to say that the source language that the Anagó speaking community drew from was not homogenous. The non-homogenous language pool means that when the different Yoruba speaking ethnic groups formed the new speech community in Cuba, their unique dialects each contributed to the formation of Anagó. However, it is not known which of these varied dialects had more influence on the emergence of the Anagó language. Further qualitative and quantitative analysis could lead to a more definite outline of the formation of Anagó. That investigation is not within the scope of this study; however it has been shown that there are sufficient examples available to conduct such a study.

Yoruba ethnic groups in Cuba, each with their respective dialects, no longer had geographical boundaries that contributed to the maintenance of a cohesive speaking community. The new speaking community was an amalgam and the boundary was based on race, not geography. In this new environment, Anagó emerged with representations of

many dialects combined, something that did not happen on the continent because communities could maintain their separate identities. Yoruba is known to have many dialects and has often been called a Yoruba dialect continuum.<sup>16</sup> The fact that Yoruba has many dialects would tend support the idea that like all languages, Yoruba has always had many correct forms, and supports the idea that Anagó is not a corrupted or incomplete form of Yoruba. Anagó emerged from a re-organization and expansion of the Yoruba speaking community as a result of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The first attempt to produce a standardized written form of Yoruba was in 1838 by Bishop Samuel Ajai-Crowther in Sierra Leone.<sup>17</sup> Samuel Crowther published a number of grammar and vocabulary books (1849, 1852) and utilized Roman characters to create the Yoruba alphabet in 1856. Prior to this time, Yoruba speakers had an oral tradition of regional dialects some of which were mutually intelligible, others not. After Crowther published the first tentative guides for the standardization of formal Yoruba, a wave of prescriptive publications were produced, all in the search for a more exact definition of proper Yoruba. Akintan has presented seventy rules for proper spelling and pronunciation and 201 examples of common mistakes being made by the Yoruba speaking public. Dialectical forms that did not align with these linguistic standards have been discouraged on the continent of Africa. The creation of a standardized form of Yoruba by Samuel Crowther in the late nineteenth century, and the prescriptionist publications by Akintan and other linguists has made one dialect of Yoruba the “favored” form. The development of standard or “favored” language status from dialectical forms has been extensively researched and presented by Leonard Bloomfield (1914).<sup>18</sup> While a standard version of Yoruba was being developed on the continent of Africa in the



nineteenth century, Yoruba speakers in Cuba were protected from these prescriptive publications. This allowed dialectal forms to be preserved and contribute to the evolution of Anagó. The replacement of the Yoruba tonal pattern with the Spanish stress pattern may provide some evidence that Anagó emerged from contact between Yoruba and Spanish.

Spanish has also contributed to the formation of Anagó sentence structure.

Sentence construction in the Anagó language follows a similar pattern to that which is found in bozal speech patterns. John Lipski (1987) has defined bozal as “Spanish spoken imperfectly by slaves born in Africa”.<sup>19</sup> He has stated that the influence of the African on Spanish language in the Americas is “indisputable.”<sup>20</sup> He examined the bozal speech feature of sentence construction *ta*+ the infinitive verb form in various Afro-Hispanic dialects such as Colombian *palanquero*<sup>21</sup>, Papiamentu<sup>22</sup> and nineteenth century Cuban and Puerto Rican bozal and has found many parallel features.<sup>23</sup> The *ta* + the infinitive feature is also found in Anagó. Example eight from a 1937 manuscript shows the *+ta* form being used in Anagó sentences.<sup>24</sup>

(8a)

*Cucúnducú 'ta áro*

/ku ku ndu ku ta a ro/

The mulata is sick

(8b)

***Cuando*** *omorde tá* *cuelé-cuelé*, *bobo* *madé* ***que*** *tayo* ***con*** *ilé ofé y* *sodaque*

/kuan do omo or d e ta kue le kue le, gbo gbo ma de ke ta jo kon i le o fe i so da kə/

When everyone is speaking it is better to watch and be quiet

Sentence (8b) in the above example shows not only ta + infinitive, but also code-switching, the substitution of Spanish words for Anagó words. The Spanish words have been written in bold italics.

The above examples show the influence of Spanish on Yoruba in the formation of Anagó. This thesis has also found evidence that Yoruba dialects have influenced Anagó as well. In other words, Anagó was not created from one version of Yoruba, but from many. As stated earlier six or more Yoruba dialects were identified as components of the early Anagó speaking community. Remnants of these dialects are present in phonemes in the Anagó lexicon. Castellanos and Castellanos noted that that the shift from the Yoruba sound /š/ to the Spanish sound /č/ was the result of “a powerful Castilian (Spanish) influence.”<sup>25</sup> See example nine.

(9a)

Yoruba *Šango* /ša ŋo/ (Yoruba deity and King of Oyó)

Anagó *Chango* /ča ŋo/ (Yoruba deity, Orisha of fire)

(9b)

Yoruba *Aše* /A še/ (may it happen)

Anagó *Aché* /A če/ (may it happen, Amen, blessing)

(9c)

Yoruba *Ašo* /A šo/ (cloth)

Anagó *Achó* /A čo/ (cloth, clothing)

There may be another explanation for the use of /č/ instead of /š/ in Anagó speech. The earliest recording of Anagó speech was done in the late 1950s by Lydia Cabrera.<sup>26</sup> Upon hearing these recordings, Wande Abimbola (1997), an expert on Yoruba religious history and texts and a native Yoruba speaker, was able to identify the regional origin of

these songs and prayers. He stated that the language revealed the lead voice to be using a dialect of the Egbado region which he recognized in words using the /č/ phoneme as opposed to the standard Yoruba /š/. “It is the dialect of the whole of the western part of Yoruba land, from Saki, Ìséyìn, Ìbàràpá, Ègbádò and Kétu, where they make use of the /č/. We call most of these dialects Ònkò. Also some of their vowels are nasalized in a way that is distinct from standard Yorùbá”.<sup>27</sup> It is very likely that there are other songs and prayers that have preserved distinct dialectical features of the various Yoruba speaking ethnic groups that comprise the Anagó speaking community. The presence of Yoruba dialectical features in Anagó would suggest that more research should be done to find other influences in the creation of Anagó and perhaps trace the presence of specific Yoruba dialects. Some of these dialects may have declined on the continent as a result of the process of Yoruba standardization that began in 1838.

In addition to the presence of the /č/ phoneme, which is a marker of a Western Yoruba dialect, research conducted as part of this thesis revealed further evidence of a Western Yoruba dialect in Anagó. During in-person interviews conducted as part of my thesis Chief Kola Abiola identified the origin of certain song texts as being from the Egbado area of Yoruba land. The Egbado area of West Africa is the same area where Abimbola localized the /č/ phoneme. Chief Kola was able to identify the origin of the song from its cadence, which had the distinct sound of the Egbado people.<sup>28</sup> On the basis of the above evidence, Anagó should be considered to have evolved via the consolidation of a number of Yoruba dialects as well as through contact with Spanish.

The Anagó speaking community preserved many songs, prayers and chants that are used in Lucumí ceremony. The Egbado ethnic group has been identified by David H.

Brown (2003) as one of the principal contributors to that corpus but he has also documented Oyó based contributions as well as Arará and Yesá ethnic group traditional songs and prayers.<sup>29</sup> If the literary corpus of songs, prayers and chants utilized by the Anagó speaking community has retained such a well defined indication of ethnic identity and origin, then it is safe to say that the dialects associated with those groups are present in the Anagó language. If so, ethnic groups such as Egbado, Oyó, Yesá and others identified by Castellanos and Castellanos in their study on the linguistic and ethnologic roots of Cuban blacks would have left evidence either in phonetic or lexical form. The ethnic roots of Cuban black as they relate to Anagó is an area of investigation that would be beneficial to explore because it may unveil evidence that will more fully describe the ethnic makeup of the early Anagó speaking community.

### **Classifying Anagó Speakers as Bilingual**

Castellanos states that the relationship between Lucumí and Spanish does not follow any of the established rules for diglossia and may be better defined as a “superimposed bilingualism, because it is learned in the context of religious instruction and is not the native language of any of the speakers”<sup>30</sup> Standard linguistic models of bilingualism do not sufficiently address the unique characteristics of the Anagó language community. Bilingual models that rate first and second languages by qualitative comparisons of word usage in conversation will not be able to assess the importance of Anagó within its community. A fluent speaker of Anagó may never use Anagó in normal conversation, yet be able to participate fully during Lucumí ritual using Anagó and Spanish. Defining the Anagó speaker as bilingual may be difficult. Can a speaker with a compartmentalized usage of a second language be classified as bilingual? My thesis is

not designed to measure whether the Anagó language community would be considered a bilingual community. But I was able to document that Anagó speakers do code-switch when their knowledge of Anagó prayers are incomplete. Anagó speakers in Cuba were observed inserting Spanish words into Anagó prayers, as well as reciting prayers in Spanish with Anagó words inserted for emphasis. During interviews conducted for this thesis, three informants used code-switching during conversations about Anagó song translations. Although Anagó is not used in general conversation and after the turn of the century it can better be described as a ritual language, there is a multi-national community that relied on Anagó for religion specific discourse. The question of bilingualism during ritual speech is not within the scope of this thesis; however this line of investigation would most likely benefit from a quantitative analysis.

### **Interview Analysis**

Research conducted for my thesis included four in-person interviews with Anagó speakers. The four Anagó speakers were shown ten traditional Anagó songs and asked two questions:

1. Have you ever heard this song?
2. Do you know the meaning of this song?

In order to create a comparative scale, the speakers' answers to these questions were rated as a bi-partate value with a maximum of .5 for each question (see appendix four). Scoring a perfect response for familiarity and interpretation of a song would result in a value of one making the total for ten songs a perfect score of ten. Although the sample size for this study was small, and therefore cannot be used for quantitative analysis, it can

be considered as a proto-type for future studies. The informants for my study included three Anagó speakers and one fluent speaker of Yoruba. All of the informants in this study had a high level of knowledge of Lucumí tradition. On the comparative scale used in this thesis (with ten being a perfect score) the three Anagó speakers results were 9.1, 8.8 and 8.4 and the Yoruba speaker's result was 6.7 (see appendix five). The findings of the present thesis could be expanded, and would benefit by future studies if and when travel to Cuba becomes possible.

## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Phoneme- the smallest unit of language, a word is composed of segments called phonemes.

<sup>2</sup> David L. Olmsted, "Comparative Notes on Yoruba and Lucumí." *Journal of the Linguistic Society of America*. Vol 29. no.2 (1953), 161.

<sup>3</sup> Agglutinating language- a language where each component of a word corresponds to a single meaning, the meaning of a word changes based on what is added to it not by internal changes in the root word.

<sup>4</sup> Akintan, *History Yorùbá Language*,1.

<sup>5</sup> Stress - emphasis given to certain syllables of a word, also known as accent, or lexical stress.

<sup>6</sup> Fusional languages will change the meaning of words by altering the root word, In Spanish the verb, *comer*- to eat, will change meaning as the root form is changed as in *comí* - I ate.

<sup>7</sup> William Bascom, "The Focus of Cuban Santería." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*. 6.1 (1950): 64.

<sup>8</sup> Olmsted used the term Lucumí to refer to the Anagó language.

<sup>9</sup> A cognate match is a word that means the same thing in two different languages, the word soap in English and *Jabón* in Spanish are cognate matches. The word white in English and *fúnfún* in Anagó are cognate matches.

<sup>10</sup> Olmsted, *Comparative Notes*,160.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*,161.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*,163.

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<sup>13</sup> Jorge and Isabel Castellanos, “The Geographic, Ethnologic, and Linguistic Roots of Cuban Blacks”, *Cuban Studies*. 17 (1987): 102.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Greenberg, “Studies in African Linguistic Classification: I The Niger-Congo Family” *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol 5 No. 2 ( Summer 1949), 85.

<sup>15</sup> Castellanos, Geographic, Ethnologic Roots, 102.

<sup>16</sup> Dialect continuum - was defined by Leonard Bloomfield(1977) as a range of dialects that are spoken in a geographic area, these dialects will not vary greatly in neighboring areas but as the boundaries extend outward there will be greater variations, until the two forms become unintelligible. Yoruba has been referred to as a dialect continuum because it is composed of a collection of dialects, with standard Yoruba being an independent member of the Yoruba dialect cluster.

<sup>17</sup> E.A. Akintan, *The History and Structure of the Yoruba Language*. (Lagos: Oluseji Press, 1950), 1.

<sup>18</sup> See Leonard Bloomfield, *An Introduction to the Study of Language* pp 28—291 for a complete account of the development of “favored” language status from a dialectical form.

<sup>19</sup> John Lipsky, “On the Construction ta + Infinitive in Caribbean Bozal Spanish”, *Romance Philology* Vol XL, No. 4, (1987), 431.

<sup>20</sup> John Lipsky, “Contactos hispanos-africanos en el Africa ecuatorial y su importancia para la fonética del Caribe hispano” *Studies in Caribbean Spanish Dialectology*, Eds Robert M. Hammond, Melvyn C. Resnick, (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1988), 50.

<sup>21</sup> An Afro-Columbian language.

<sup>22</sup> Papiamentu - A language spoken in the Caribbean which has official status on the islands of Aruba and Curaçao.

<sup>23</sup> Lipsky, ta+infinitive, 443.

<sup>24</sup> Cuban Heritage Collection University of Miami Lydia Cabrera Papers box 18 folder # 1.

<sup>25</sup> *una poderosa influencia del castellano* Isabel Castellanos and Jorge Castellanos “Las Religiones y Las Lenguas in Cultura AfroCubana 3.” *Ediciones Universales*, (1992): 296.

<sup>26</sup> Havana & Matanzas, Cuba ca. 1957: Batá, Bembé and Palo Songs from the historic recordings of Lydia Cabrera and Josefina Tarafa. Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40-434.

<sup>27</sup>Wande Abimbola, *Ifa will Mend Our Broken World*. (Houston: AIM books, 1997),145.

<sup>28</sup> Kola Abiola, Personal interview. London, England, March 2012. Digital recording.

<sup>29</sup>Arará song and chants are part of the Lucumí ritual corpus and are attributed to the Benin ethnic group, The Yesá are part of the Yoruba sub-family.

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<sup>30</sup> Jorge and Isabel Castellanos, “The Geographic, Ethnologic, and Linguistic Roots of Cuban Blacks”, *Cuban Studies*. 17 (1987), 70.



## **Chapter V**

The preceding chapters have explored the process by which the Anagó language community was established in Cuba. It has been acknowledged that the community of Anagó speakers was created in Cuba as a result of the slave trade and that a large group of Yoruba speakers arrived to Cuba in the mid-nineteenth century. This group arrived to Cuba right before the Yoruba language was captured into a standard written form in 1856. Therefore, these speakers brought dialectical versions of Yoruba, based on their ethnic origins and these dialectical forms were the foundation of Anagó. This fact has established one of the tenants of this thesis -- language contact between dialects occurred in conjunction with the more obvious Spanish language contact. Anagó shows evidence of both events; it has retained the character of some Yoruba dialects as well as features of the Spanish language.

### **Motivations for Language Preservation**

The following section will examine possible motivations or underlying reasons why the Anagó language community was so successful at retaining its ritual language. Considering the fact that Yoruba speakers were brought to many areas during the trans-Atlantic slave trade, why was Cuba more successful in producing a new dialect? Similar conditions existed in Trinidad, yet no new dialectical form of Yoruba has been identified there. In fact, based on the research done by Maureen Warner-Lewis (1994, 1997), the Yoruba language community in Trinidad has retained an abbreviated religious lexicon and a more traditional version of Yoruba.

Warner-Lewis has examined the retention of Yoruba language in Trinidad, which she calls Trinidad Yoruba. Her assessment as to why so many Yoruba speakers were present in the late nineteenth century trans-Atlantic slave trade so as to create a stable new world Yoruba speaking community in Trinidad is comparable to the assessment presented in this thesis for the Cuban case. An unsettled situation brought about by political upheaval lent itself to the economic exploitation of captive humans, many of whom were Yoruba speakers.<sup>1</sup> In Trinidad, the social structures that gave protection to chants, songs, dirges and the like, was not as developed as in Cuba, however intergenerational exchange within families was present. Warner-Lewis found that the Yoruba language in Trinidad is largely a mnemonic language competence based on a corpus generated by formerly active Yoruba language users. The main vehicle for language transmission is song which is confined to religious ritual and funeral dirges. At the same time, her research uncovered that in Trinidad there did exist further competence in Yoruba discourse which extended beyond sacred topics and functions.<sup>2</sup> Warner-Lewis observed a number of factors that led to modification in pronunciation and interpretation such as “the disappearance of certain social and religious institutions in the new locale...[and] a decline in the original complex divination rituals.”<sup>3</sup> The lack of social structures such as the *cabildo de nación* and the *casa-templo* has made the majority of evidence for Yoruba language retention to be found in entertainment or work-accompaniment songs. Warner-Lewis does note that what remains of religious chant has survived due to the vitality of the *Shango*<sup>4</sup> religion.<sup>5</sup> Shango religion in Trinidad does not have the complexity of Lucumí tradition in that it focuses on the worship on one deity, Shango. This deified king was the main political and spiritual deity of the deposed

Yoruba capitol, Oyó. “In Trinidad, as in northeastern Brazil, Shango is the name of the cult in which the Yoruba gods, known as “powers,” are worshipped.”<sup>6</sup>

Warner-Lewis’ study translated and reconstructed these Yoruba songs. Apart from whatever the actual pronunciation was on the original recorded texts, the transcription is presented in grammatically correct Yoruba. She employed the assistance of a phonologist and other linguistic and cultural specialists to produce “textually cohesive renditions” by “exploring the multilayered sound and semantic play yielded by these literary artifacts.”<sup>7</sup> As a result of this action there is no way to ascertain from the texts if there was a cohesive Trinidad Yoruba dialectical form such as we find in Cuba, or if the retention was strongly tonalized similar to its original form. All of the texts are presented with contemporary Yoruba diacritical accent marks. Only a review of the original recordings could reveal this information.

This information is relevant to the following discussion because Warner-Lewis identified the same underlying motivation for language retention as has been identified by this thesis. Speakers are highly motivated to retain their language, even when the multi-layered historical and cultural meanings have become scarce because of generational language loss, language-contact and dilution of an ethnic identity.<sup>8</sup> Language loyalty is upheld because of the communal belief that mystic power invests African languages. Such belief permeates the community with universal religious ideas about the creative and generally enabling potency of speech.<sup>9</sup> This concept of the power of speech is crucial to understanding the common motivation shared by all members of the Yoruba-Anagó speaking community across the diaspora and ethnic borders.

Isabel Castellanos (1976) identifies this point as follows, “In ritual events, words and actions are inextricably bound together and the utterance of words is part of the ritual action.”<sup>10</sup> Anthropological linguists, such as Leach (1966) and Tambiah (1968) have found that speech is so important to ritual, the two are almost inseparable. The words and the rite are not disparate; the performance of ritual speech is itself the ritual. Castellanos rightly notes that the members of Afro-Cuban religious sects deeply believe in the efficacy of the spoken word.<sup>11</sup> These observations can help to explain why in every stage in the development of the Anagó speaking community, from their arrival as enslaved Yoruba speakers, to their dispersion and extension across new world communities of varied ethnic composition, their vocabulary has been carefully preserved. Simply put, for the Lucumí practitioner, words are sacred.

The desire of speakers whether individual or communal, to preserve their language may be stronger than transitory institutional constructs or historical events. This desire may explain why no one institution or event can be credited as being the vehicle for continuity for Anagó speakers, rather, the motivation for lexical preservation adapted to any form presented to it. Here is an example of a language process, to which Salikoko Mufwene (2001) alludes to when he stated that languages should be noted to have always been in an ecological motion of change not solely due to contact. He discusses the role of innovation and survival of idiolects when there is no language contact, or the “distinction between internally and externally motivated changes.”<sup>12</sup> These prayers were important and transmitted essential elements of West African thought. A belief in the veneration of the ancestors that was shared across all ethnic groups and ethnic divisions took second position to the survival of an important construct. Internal factors based on the

individual's desire to preserve heavily concept laden words may be an invisible component that makes external forms such as cabildos and casa-templos function uniformly in maintaining a language community.

### **The Power of Speech -- Bara**

Yoruba speakers brought many West African concepts with them that have survived in Cuba and the diaspora. One of these is the concept of spiritual power -- *aché*,<sup>13</sup> which is related to the concept of the power of speech—*bara*.<sup>14</sup> Olaoluwa Fasadé states, “Within the belief system of Yoruba culture, there is the overwhelming belief in the divine power of the word...*bara* is the power of creative speech. *Bara* is the power that sets life force (*aṣe*) in motion.”<sup>15</sup> The corresponding Yoruba term is *ofo’ṣe*<sup>16</sup> meaning “the power of making events to happen through utterance.”<sup>17</sup> The idea of sound being sacred is common to many cultures. The fundamental importance of sound, the absolutely irreplaceable nature of certain words for Lucumí rituals to function has given Anagó language a preferred position for cultural retention. *Bara* is intrinsically tied to another essential concept -- *aché* -- which is another important West African concept that as a result of transculturalism has become a part of Cuban culture. The Yoruba-Lucumí notion of *aché* is similar to the Chinese concept of *Qi*<sup>18</sup> or the indigenous Pacific Islander concept of *mana*,<sup>19</sup> a life force that animates all living beings. The German ethnologist Leo Frobenius (1873-1938) was the first scientist who recognized the Yoruba concept of *aché* which he defined as a life-force of mystic character inherent in gods and man.<sup>20</sup> Roland Hallgren (1995) has stated that the ultimate definition of Yoruba *aché* has yet to be elucidated but identifies the principal investigators as Pierre Verger and Wande Abimbola.<sup>21</sup> The relation between words and *aché* has been described as follows, “Ritual

instruments as well as ritual words are full of authority, [and] you have to handle them carefully. They are forces of authority.”<sup>22</sup> From his personal studies in Nigeria (including on-the-street interviews with common people as well as priests) and a comparative review of ethnographic and academic literature, Hallgren concludes that “Àṣẹ is the dominant power of an uttered order. Such an order proves its power by being efficacious. Àṣẹ is a combination of letters forming a sound that connotes the spoken word has power.”<sup>23</sup> The Yoruba person who follows traditional religion and the new world Lucumí practitioner equally believe that *bara*, the word, holds a life force -- *aché*. This fact is important to this thesis because it establishes that speakers were highly motivated to preserve their language. If the power of speech is a fundamental rule of ritual, the conservation of unique ritually-specific lexemes becomes a communal goal.

The belief in the power of speech may explain why nineteenth century Afro-Cubans diligently passed hand written *libretas* down through generations of religious families, and why a privileged class of *babalawos* in the 1950s collected hundreds of prayers, songs, refrains and folktales from members of the community who had direct memories of their African elders and diligently passed these books through an informal network of priests in Cuba and Miami. Knowledge contained in these *Anagó* texts was so important that Pedro Arango became a successful “information broker” of Lucumí ritual knowledge.

Members of the Lucumí religious community who have retained a large *Anagó* vocabulary have a higher status. A prayer in Spanish does not have the same status as a prayer in *Anagó*. Prayers in *Anagó* will invoke the correct response from the community during call and response ritual song, and therefore are passed on. *Anagó* prayers have a

position of prestige within the Lucumí speech community but not in the general Spanish speaking community. “In the Afro-Cuban speech community, the relative prestige of Lucumí and Spanish is in an ambiguous or even conflictive situation...for members of Afro-Cuban sects its is prestigious to know Lucumí since fluency in this language is associated with wisdom and deep religious knowledge.”<sup>24</sup> Higher status for sacred ritual language, even when it is not completely understood by the congregation, is not unique to Lucumí ritual. It is much like Latin in Catholicism used to be. However Latin would always have a higher prestige whereas Anagó only temporarily has prestige within the community of Anagó speakers during ritual actions and ceremonies. This is because Anagó is identified with a lower social class and therefore may also stigmatize the speaker creating tension.<sup>25</sup> Therefore within a limited community, such as during a ritual, Anagó temporarily ascends to a higher position, and Spanish which is the dominant language, becomes the low variety. This makes the classification of Anagó speakers difficult in terms of diglossia or bilingualism.

Within the speech community there are contradictory forces acting upon the speakers. Anagó may be a prestige language within the religious community but outside of that community, it has no status. In contrast, for the believer, the essential concept of the power of speech remains a motivating factor for the Anagó speaker to retain their language. Many religions utilize prayer and song to worship their deity or deities. For some, there are also metaphysical or even supernatural qualities attributed to words, sound and utterances. Lucumí tradition has this West African element in its practice and because of this religious component Anagó language has been afforded a privileged place

in the tradition. The importance of the power of the word, called *bara*, is undoubtedly a motivating factor in the preservation of this language.

The concept of *bara* and the privileged position of the word in Lucumí ritual has in turn endowed certain Anagó speakers with a prestigious position within the community. This position has created pockets of language concentration sectors of the Lucumí community that have a greater retention of language, as well as a greater understanding of the significance. These positions of prestige are completely dependent on the level of Anagó language ability. These language dependant positions are the *akpuon*<sup>26</sup> and the *obá oriáte*.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Akpuon and Obá Oriáte, Key Transmitters of Ritual Language**

The Anagó speaking community is a religious community which has a hierarchical structure, so certain individuals have more responsibility than others in the correct transmission of religious lexicon. There are two positions, which are most imbued with this power, the *akpuon* and the *obá oriate*. The *akpuon* is the master of songs who must lead the congregation during drumming celebrations and other public ceremonies. The *akpuon* may also be a master drummer known as *omo anya*,<sup>28</sup> in which case he will be equally skilled in the playing of sacred rhythms on the *bata* drum. The *bata* drum is an hourglass shaped drum, of Yoruba origin, which Ortiz fully documented in his book *Los Instrumentos de la Música Afrocubana* (The Instruments of Afro-Cuban Music) in 1954. The relationship of *bata* tone language and Anagó song is complex, certainly warranting its own study, as the tonal nature of Yoruba is reproduced by the different drum sounds to imitate sacred speech. Because of this, the drums in Afro-Cuban religious tradition are



said to “talk”. Some research has been done in this area by Kenneth Schweitzer (2003), but this is mostly from the perspective of ethnomusicology, not language. A linguistic perspective or multi-disciplinary approach may show that Anagó was assisted in the retention of phonological elements because of the relationship to tonal Yoruba drum expression, however no studies have been done as of yet. The akpuon/omo-anya, is a male-only position; females are not allowed to touch the sacred drums, although they are allowed to sing with them. The akpuon holds a prestigious position and a very public one and literally is a broadcaster of Anagó language. The akpuon must learn thousands of songs and know correct application and the significance of the song in order to create a proper ceremonial experience. The akpuon is specifically charged with directing the correct invocation to invite the participation of the orisha during public ceremony. These songs and invocations must be done in Anagó, any akpuon who lapses into bozal or Spanish would be considered incompetent.

Examples of Anagó song and ritual language used in this study have been collected from knowledgeable Anagó akpuon and obá oriátes, via digital recordings, field notes, interviews, video transcriptions, cassette recordings, and direct oral transmission from 1992 to the present day. A qualitative review of these samples has contributed to the findings of this thesis. This study has directly benefitted from some of the greatest akpuon of all time including Maestro Lazaro Galaragga in Los Angeles, Lazaro Pedroso *Ogun Tolu* (Ogun gave me the power of the drum/town) of Havana, and Amelia Pedroso *Olo mide* (the owner of water has given me a crown) *ibaye*.<sup>29</sup> Other exceptional akpuon such as Marta Galaragga *Obá nire* (king of good luck), Nioli *Obá Nile* (king of the house), Renecito Celgreñas and Maikel de Leon have also contributed songs and prayers

with corresponding translations. In this thesis, the collection of Anagó speech in song, prayers and chants includes four directed interviews using ten Anagó songs as models to test familiarity and comprehension. See appendix four. Approximately 60% of interviews and field notes were from Lucumí akpuon, the remaining interviews and field notes were from obá oriátes.

Compared to the akpuon, the obá oriate occupies a more private position in the community; however some extraordinary obá oriátes are akpuon and omo-anya as well. One such individual, Michel Madrazo *Obá ni Koso* (the king did not hang) in Matanzas, made significant contributions to this study. The obá oriáte is charged with knowing complete song and chants corpus, refrains of *Odun*<sup>30</sup> and all ritual actions to construct initiations and other rituals that accompany Lucumí theology. The obá will memorize thousands of *oriki* (praise prayer), *siyeres* (chanted prayer), *orin* (song) and *refrânes* (refrain) and must know the meaning, order and placement of each one, or will be considered incompetent by the community. The position of obá oriáte was previously open to males and females; however a surge of fundamentalist conservatism in the 1990s caused women to be excluded from this position. At the present time males outnumber females in a ratio of about 100 to 1; there are only five women in the world who are functioning as obá oriáte. This study has benefitted from the information provided by one of them, Gladys Quiroga Delgado *Omi Toke* (water touches the base of the mountain), as well as from one of her teachers, Wagner Barreto *Aladé Jinmí* (a crown was given to me).

Because this study focused on Anagó speakers who hold a high level of prestige and responsibility in the community, there was a correspondingly high level of semantic knowledge found in all of the interviews. Every informant questioned could provide

substantial information about the content and correct application of the songs in the sample. These speakers possessed a high level of ritual register which is a means of delineating expert knowledge and social or sacred power.”<sup>31</sup> All of the interviews and examples used in this study came from individuals who hold this high position.

Research done for my thesis has shown that akpuon and obá oriátes are meticulously aware of the semantic content of the songs and verses they sing, although they do not always agree with each other on that content. This causes conflicting information for the community, yet these semantic interpretations are somehow able to co-exist without causing complete disorder. What this study focuses on is not the fact that there may be contradictory interpretations, but that the action of preserving an interpretation is operative. All obás and akpuon make a supreme effort to understand the significance of what they are saying, and to accurately reproduce the sounds. The ability to be fluent in Anagó is one quality that distinguishes them from other members in the community.

My study has documented many instances of akpuon with a high level of semantic knowledge and meticulous attention to the details. For example, in 1998 in *Barrio*<sup>32</sup> Jesús Maria in Havana, a well known akpuon in the casa-templo of Amelia Pedroso, exhibited a high level of fluency in Anagó and was able to recite from memory over one hundred songs with their meaning in Spanish.<sup>33</sup> He explained how the akpuon can alter songs by changing one term in order to fit the appropriate situation. One word changes the meaning of the entire song and the akpuon must be able to apply it correctly. The very detailed knowledge required to make this type of word substitution should directly negate claims that Lucumí practitioners do not know the meaning of what they

are singing.<sup>34</sup> A single word shift will result in a different invocational intent to that orisha. The akpuon must know when to make this subtle word substitution. Research done for this thesis clearly shows that this level of discourse was not simply a mnemonic repetition of phrases and that there was a consistently high level of ritual register.

Further evidence of this type of high ritual register came from Maestro Lazaro Galarraga who explained the meaning of more than 500 songs during a three year transcription/translation project conducted by Professor Michael Spiro of Indiana University. Maestro Galarraga explained that many songs have more than one correct expression. The skilled akpuon has to exhibit elaborate fine tuning during the performance of these songs in order to respond to ritual action as well as possible challenges from other akpuon. Maestro Galarraga emphasized that ritual song was important because the act of playing drums and singing was purposeful and that this was being lost in today's environment. Galarraga and other akpuon effortlessly switch between Spanish and Anagó. He elaborated on the meaning of ritual song as follows, “*iche ni a sara ma wo eh*, [means] come to work, you are calling the orisha because... when you play [a *tambour*]<sup>35</sup> for the orisha... [it is not] to have a party, people are mistaken, the tambour is not a party, it is for a specific reason, to do an *ebó* (offering) or because the orisha asked for it, or for your stability or something.”<sup>36</sup> Maestro Galarraga expressed that transmission of ritual song in communities is purposeful and vital and the akpuon has a position of responsibility in the accurate transmission of those songs.

The transmission of sacred knowledge is taken very seriously by Anagó speakers. In Matanzas, Cuba in 2009, during an interview with Miriam Licea Jimenez *Ochun Migua* (Ochun should arrive), while relating a story about an annual communal worship

done at the edge of the ocean, she stopped to express to all in the room the importance of recalling and recording events and circumstances of Lucumí traditions. “This is a story that I have told before, but the problem is you all don’t pay attention, so don’t confuse yourselves, we are not eternal, everyone will die one day, and I speak so that you all who will remain will know and remember this story.”<sup>37</sup> Miriam is a direct religious descendant of the famous iyalocha Fermina Gomez, who is credited with establishing the worship of Olokun (orisha of the ocean) in Cuba.<sup>38</sup> Fermina’s casa-templo carries the Egbado tradition which still has a strong presence in Matanzas. The establishment of Olokun worship, a deity that originates in the Egbado area of Yoruba land, is another example of concrete evidence that ethnic identity has been preserved in Lucumí tradition even to the present day.

Jorge Morales Rodriguez *Ogun Lana* (Oggun is power) *ibaye*, a well known obá oriáte from La Vibora, in Havana, would often illustrate the various advices given in the *itá*<sup>39</sup> of the novice priest with songs which re-enforced the divinatory message. In 2009 in Matanzas, during one such itá, Jorge stopped and began to sing a song to Ochun to illustrate the message given during the divination. He interrupted his own rendition of the song to translate. “This is where Ochun takes off the shackles of slavery because she cannot stand to be imprisoned anymore.”<sup>40</sup> Jorge, like the skilled akpuon, will move from Spanish to Anagó seamlessly within a sentence. This ability gave him the highest level of status in the community.

Jorge explained the origin of the Orisha *Agallu* (volcano) by translating a *rezocantado* (song-prayer) during an interview in 2007. During this explanation Jorge moved effortlessly between Spanish and Anagó and exhibited a high level of ritual knowledge.<sup>41</sup>

See appendix six. His explanation was a testament to the importance of original Anagó words being used to transmit cultural and religious concepts. Certain words must be said in Anagó in order for the ritual contract to proceed. These words cannot be substituted by Spanish equivalents because they are too charged with historical meaning or they possess a sound quality that provides additional information to the listener. For example the Anagó word *alagwa lagwa* (respected elder). The speaker can repeat the final syllable (lagwa) up to three or four times for emphasis thus rendering higher praise upon the orisha. As this often occurs during a sung prayer, the variation and intonation of the repetition will also create a deeper meaning for the congregation. Repetition of words for emphasis is common in the Yoruba language and this tradition has continued in Anagó.

An obá oriáte must know the meaning of the songs in order to apply them correctly during ritual, and to give a unique version that demonstrates their knowledge. Most prayer chants, follow a similar form but every obá has a personal version which contain the basic required elements along with his particular innovation. Certain terms must be present in Anagó for a prayer to be acceptable. The prayer chant for *Yemalla* (Orisha of the Ocean) has to contain *alagwa lagwa* as well as *a la ko uro kowa kowa*, (will you come to the earth to be with us), in order to be considered traditional because these are markers of knowledge and essential elements that define that particular Orisha.

The permissive form of the prayer chants which allows a degree of improvisation, has given highly skilled akpuon the ability to create new versions of the standard prayers. This has given vitality to the language. Most of the Anagó rezo-cantado follow a standard form and are meticulously passed down from teacher to student. Matanzas and Havana have distinct styles and the former has preserved Egbado and Arará versions which often

lead to differences of opinion about which one is the most correct. The rezo-cantado is a vehicle for language preservation and has functioned successfully in retaining ethnic identity. Anagó speakers can still identify whether these prayer chants are of Oyó, Egbado, Yesa or Arará origin.

In the quest for the highest pinnacle of traditional prayer, some Lucumí scholars have arrived to similar conclusions; Anagó is a corrupt and mostly useless form of Yoruba. John Mason has stated that the textual sources of Anagó prayers in the works of Lydia Cabrera are of little value and are “a confusing perfusion of run-on, seemingly repetitive word clusters.”<sup>42</sup> Miguel Ramos regards Anagó as archaic and almost ridiculous because the lack of accenture causes nonsensical results. Ramos states that as a result of years of separation from native speakers, what was left of the language has been corrupted and degenerated and that very few Lucumí practitioners can give the exact meaning of the prayers and songs that they recite.<sup>43</sup> Research conducted for this study found that not to be completely true. Informants in this study consistently translated long passages of songs, prayers and folktales from Anagó into Spanish. They could make purposeful additions and adjustments to these traditional forms. Some oba oriátes and akpuon would effortlessly switch between Anagó and Spanish within the same sentence.

Wande Abimbola author of many books on Yoruba traditions has stated that Lucumí recordings are impossible to understand and that “the Cubans have lost the language and literature terribly due to official neglect. They had no convention to establish Yoruba and standardize it with an alphabet.”<sup>44</sup> Abimbola further laments that in Cuba the Yoruba language is no longer a living language and that the Anagó language community does not understand its own corpus of songs and chants.<sup>45</sup> These opinions

come from the perspective of ritual purity. The perspective of this thesis is that languages should never be compared. Each one is a microcosm of interconnected cultural and historical events, and is a cognitive process that occurs naturally as a part of the human experience.

Noam Chomsky (1975) has established that the human species is equipped with a “mental organ” which makes possible the acquisition of language.<sup>46</sup> This “language faculty” makes possible the knowledge of a language from limited and impoverished primary linguistic data.<sup>47</sup> New dialects emerge from the natural and autonomous process of language acquisition. Steven Pinker (1994) has stated that language does not shape thought, language illustrates thought. Language is a way we can “see” how the mind works, it is an auditory illustration of bio-chemical synapses, a physical representation of brain-logic.<sup>48</sup> This perspective does not allow for the existence of an imperfect language. Furthermore, Pinker states that “every sentence that a person utters or understands is a brand-new combination of words appearing for the first time in the history of the universe.”<sup>49</sup> From this perspective, language is continually being invented and the creation of Anagó is a natural process of evolution not corruption. What can deteriorate, however, is a community of speakers. My thesis has documented that the Anagó language community has not disappeared and that it is vitally present today and has left traceable evidence of its existence since the nineteenth century.



## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Maureen Warner-Lewis *Trinidad Yoruba: From Mother Tongue to Memory*, (Barbados: The Press University of the West Indies, 1997),6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid 10.

<sup>4</sup> Shango is the Trinidadian version of the Yoruba cult dedicated to the 4<sup>th</sup> *Alafin* (king) of Oyó. In Cuba this worship is included in the general worship of the Orishas and does not have its own dedicated cult.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid 8.

<sup>6</sup> William Bascom, “Shango in the New World.” *African and Afro-American Research Institute. Occasional Publication*. (1972): 10.

<sup>7</sup> Maureen Warner-Lewis *Yoruba Songs of Trinidad*. (London: Karnak House, 1994), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Warner-Lewis, *Mother Tongue*, 17.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Isabel Castellanos *The Use of Language in Afro-Cuban Religion*, (PhD Diss. Georgetown University, 1977), ii.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid,51.

<sup>12</sup> Salikoko Mufwene *The Ecology of Language Evolution*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001),15.

<sup>13</sup> *Ache*- A Lucumí word that means Amen or So be it, and refers to a metaphysical power that pervades all nature. This word has a variety of orthographic representations depending on the source. This thesis will use the Anagó spelling which is Ache, but will respect other authors’ spelling, such as aše, àše, etc when citing.

<sup>14</sup> *Bara*- Lucumí word that relates to the power of speech.

<sup>15</sup> Olaoluwa Fasade, *The Orisa Says Speak (Orisa ni oro)*. (New York: Iwas Publishing Co., 1991),3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ofo* ‘še Yoruba word composed of two parts- *ofo* [o foh] speech and ‘še [shay] from *aše* [ah shay] may it be so.

<sup>17</sup> Oduyoye, Modupe. *The Vocabulary of Yoruba Religious Discourse*. Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1971), 207.

<sup>18</sup> Qi- the active energy held in all living things.

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- <sup>19</sup> Mana- an impersonal life force that resides in all living things.
- <sup>20</sup> Roland Hallgren “The Vital Force: A Study of Aṣe in the Traditional and Neo-traditional Culture of the Yoruba People.” *Lund Studies in African and Asian Religion* 10 (1995), 33.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid 2.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid 91. From an interview with Chief Àràbà Aworeni Awoyemi high priest of the Yoruba religion conducted by Hallgren in Ile-Ifè in 1992.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid 87.
- <sup>24</sup> Isabel Castellanos *The Use of Language in Afro-Cuban Religion*, PhD Diss. Georgetown University, (1977),72.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid 72.
- <sup>26</sup> *Akpunon*- lead singer in religious ritual in the Lucumí tradition.
- <sup>27</sup> *Obá oriáte*- king of the divination mat. A high level Lucumí priest who is responsible for transmission of sacred knowledge and the enactment of proper ritual. The term is often shortened to *Obá*.
- <sup>28</sup> *Omo anya*- a drummer who has been ritually consecrated to play the sacred bata drums
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibaye*- this term is used to give respect to a deceased priest.
- <sup>30</sup> *Odun*- a collection of divinatory advices that are expressed through folktales and sayings each with a moral or message.
- <sup>31</sup> Kristina Wirtz “Where Obscurity Is A Virtue: The Mystique of Unintelligibility in Santeria Ritual.” *Language & Communication* 25 (2005), 353.
- <sup>32</sup> *Barrio*- Spanish term meaning neighborhood, it is used to give more specific locations in Havana and Matanzas as many areas are known more by their barrio designation. Certain barrios have fame as centers for Lucumí tradition such as Barrio Jesus Maria in Havana and Barrio Simpson in Matanzas.
- <sup>33</sup> For example “*Eni kawo mada kawo meyo kawo maferelekun fereni oka chon chon awa mi awade awade l’ orun obátala*, was translated as “whoever comes to me for help will never lose their head, and I will give them strength to continue helping others.” Field notes, in-person interview, El Gordo, Barrio Jesús Maria Havana Cuba 1998.
- <sup>34</sup> Certain Anagó words have no direct translation and their use within a song will reference an historical event. For example without changing any of the other words in a song for the orisha *Asojano* (the orisha of disease) the use of *osi nana* will mark a request to be protected from epidemics and *etu l’ona* would refer to a folktale about war between two kings.
- <sup>35</sup> *Tambour*- Ceremony of ritual drumming.

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<sup>36</sup> “venga aqui para trabajar, tu estas llamando santo, cuando uno calling the Orisha, es porque..es mas, cuando you play, nobody plays for party, es un cuento la gente tiene un diferente concepto que tambour es party, cuando you play es por una razon por un ebó o porque the ocha asking to you for your stability o something! la gente estan equivocado” Lazaro Galarraga.

<sup>37</sup> Field notes interview Miriam Licea Jimenez Versailles, Matanzas 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Wille Ramos, La división de la Habana: Territorial Conflict and Cultural Hegemony in the Followers of Oyo Lukumí- Religion, 1850s-1920s.” *Cuban Studies* 34 (2003)

<sup>39</sup> *Itá*- A daylong session of advices given to new initiates which are considered to be the direct messages of the Orisha.

<sup>40</sup> The full quote is as follows: “*ide wede wede ide ochun ide wede wede, Ocha kini wa dide Ochun cheke cheke...* Aquí esta donde Ochun quita sus cadenas de esclavitud, y las lanza porque ‘no me dejan no me dejan, estoy presa y yo quiero ser libre’ y se quito los *cheke cheke* y salio. Field notes Interview Jorge Morales 2009 Versailles Matanzas, Cuba.

<sup>41</sup> Field notes Interview Jorge Morales 2009 Versailles Matanzas, Cuba.

<sup>42</sup> John Mason, *Àdúrà Òrìsà: Prayers for Selected Heads*, Brooklyn: Yoruba Theological Archministry, 2002 iii.

<sup>43</sup> Miguel Ramos *Ori Eledá mi ó...Si Mi Cabeza No Me Vende*. (Miami: Eleda Org. Publications Kindle Edition, 2011) Loc. 307.

<sup>44</sup> Wande Abimbola *Ifa will Mend Our Broken World*. (Houston: AIM books, 1997), 145.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Noam Chomsky *The Generative Enterprise Revisited* (Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter, 2004), 5.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Steven Pinker *The Language Instinct*. (New York: William Morrow and Co. Inc. 1994),18.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 22.

## Chapter VI

### Conclusion

Anagó -- a language that was distilled from multiple dialects of Yoruba in contact with Spanish, survived in Cuba for four reasons. First, from as early as the seventeenth century, the community of speakers had many options to remain cohesive; these options included: *cabildos de nación*, *sociedades de color* and *casa-templos*. Second, key individuals compiled and transmitted Anagó songs, chants, vocabulary, prayers, refrains and folktales to members of their own ritual families and to the general community of Lucumí practitioners. Third, beginning in the early twentieth century folkloric performances based on *de-facto* religious texts and ceremonial lore were encouraged in Afro-Cuban secular expressions. Fourth, the West African concept of sacred speech, integrated into Lucumí religious thought, made the preservation of correct ritual speech obligatory for high level priests. These four aspects of Cuban culture illustrate the conditions that produced a favorable environment for Anagó to emerge which answers question one posed in the introduction to this thesis.

The community of Anagó speakers was created in Cuba as a result of the slave trade. The largest group of Yoruba speakers arrived to Cuba in the mid-nineteenth century. These speakers brought dialectical versions of Yoruba based on their ethnic origins and these dialectical forms were the foundation of Anagó. Ethnic boundaries in Africa, whether geographical or social, did not exist in Cuba so ethnic language communities converged into a multi ethnic Yoruba speaking community. Language

contact between dialects occurred in conjunction with Spanish language contact, and Anagó shows evidence of both events.

Lucumí priests who were Anagó speakers were highly motivated to retain ritual elements because speech is considered sacred in West African religion. This internal element within the Anagó language community shows that the conditions which contributed to a favorable environment for Anagó to emerge are not limited to external social factors. This addresses question two which was posed in the introduction -- were these conditions limited to external or internal social factors? The akpuon and oba oriáte held important positions in the religious hierarchy, and were obligated to transmit ritual language as accurately as possible. Heads of casa-templos known as iyalochas, babalochas and babalawos also held the responsibility of passing on ritual knowledge correctly and did so in hand written libretas, typed manuscripts and self-published manuals. These highly knowledgeable individuals contributed to the ethnographic studies done by Fernando Ortiz and Lydia Cabrera and were instrumental in Anagó language being used in folkloric performances and secular music. These individuals made significant contributions to the preservation of the Anagó language. This addresses question three stated in the introduction to this thesis -- were there specific events, individuals, or class of individuals, in the Anagó speaking community who made a significant contribution to the preservation of the Anagó language?

The study of the Anagó language community, its history and evolution, and the investigation of some of its linguistic features can contribute to several areas of academic investigation. In the area of socio-linguistics, the Anagó case can contribute to the study of bilingualism, language endangerment, language loss and contact linguistics. Future

longitudinal studies could shed light on the impact of Anagó language community expansion across transnational borders, and multi-language contact such as in Anagó language communities in Europe comprised of French, Spanish and Italian speakers in contact with Anagó.

A more detailed study of the socio-political aspects of the Anagó language community may contribute to efforts for revitalization and maintenance. This thesis has identified that a core characteristic of the Anagó language community is the desire to preserve and transmit ritual language. This motivation is fueled by the belief that words have power and that speech can be sacred. This belief will positively impact revitalization and maintenance efforts because a speaker's attitude about his/her own language is an important factor in language preservation.

The Anagó language is a solid example of Ortiz's concept of transculturation. The contact between multiple Yoruba dialects and Spanish has resulted in a new language; a language that did not exist before, a language that is neither Spanish nor Yoruba. This language is a reflection, or more exactly a projection of its community of speakers. As the community changed; from enslaved Africans, to free people of color, to Creoles and Afro-Cubans and onto its present transnational and multi-ethnic composition, the Anagó language likewise changed, evolved and expanded. Anagó language faithfully represents its people and the culture that it is a part of.

In the corpus of ethnographic literature regarding African cultural retentions in Cuban culture, the study of Anagó has demonstrated that even up to the present day African religious concepts have been preserved. In the religious community ethnic

identities remain important. The impact of the trans-Atlantic slave trade on the new world and the importance of the African element in diaspora music, art and religion, is reflected in the multi-national Anagó language community.

My thesis challenged the idea that Anagó is a corrupt or imperfect form of Yoruba. It approached the investigation of Anagó from an anti-prescriptive position and put forth the idea that Anagó should not be judged in comparison to any language, that it is the logical outcome of contact between various dialects of the Yoruba language and Spanish. Documentation of Anagó from the early nineteenth century through the present day was presented in this thesis as proof-of-life of the Anagó language community. Disagreements over semantics, conflicting dialectical versions, and orthographic inconsistency has caused some researchers to underestimate the vitality of this community. My thesis does not consider those aspects of the Anagó language community to be negative, and has considered all versions as worthy of investigation because they are only reflections of the speakers themselves. This is why my thesis considers these Anagó texts in all their varied forms to be proof-of-life of this community

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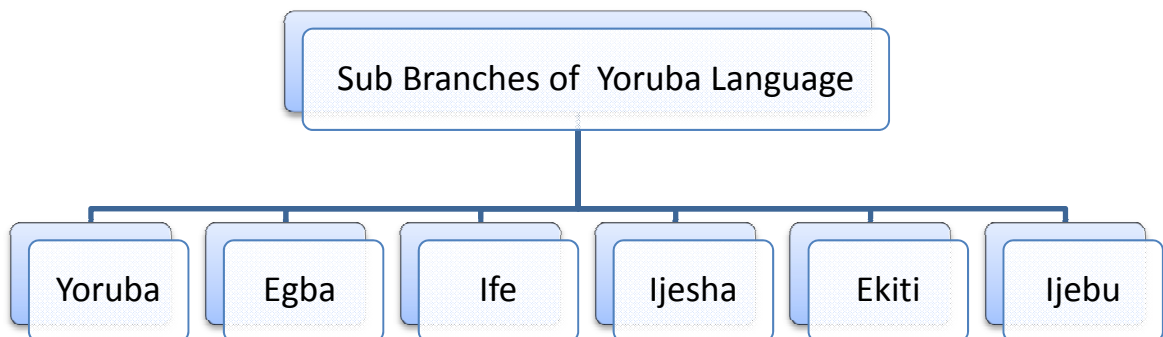
## Appendices

### Appendix One

Joseph Greenburg's (1949) Classification of African Languages showing Yoruba as belonging to the Niger Congo Language Family:



Diagram of Yoruba language dialects that were identified in Cuba:



Source: Jorge and Isabel Castellanos, "The Geographic, Ethnologic, and Linguistic Roots of Cuban Blacks", *Cuban Studies*. 17 (1987)

## Appendix Two

Comparison of Yoruba language linguistic groups identified in Africa by Joseph Greenburg (1949) with Yoruba speaking ethnic groups in Cuba identified by Castellanos and Castellanos (1987).

<b>Greenburg's division of Linguistic groups in Africa</b>	<b>Castellanos and Castellanos' division of Linguistic groups in Cuba</b>
Yoruba	Lucumí, Oyó
Egba	Egguado, Egbado, Lucumí-Egbado
Ife	Fee
Ijesha	Yesa, Yeza, Lucumí-Yesa
Ekiti	Ekiti
Ijebu	Yebú, Lucumí-Yebú

Source: Jorge and Isabel Castellanos, "The Geographic, Ethnologic, and Linguistic Roots of Cuban Blacks", *Cuban Studies*. 17 (1987)

### Appendix Three

A Comparison of Yoruba and Anagó Phonemes.

Yoruba	Anagó	Yoruba	Anagó	Yoruba	Anagó
i	i	kp	kp	š (ş)	
e	e	d	d	h	
ε	ε	t	t	r	r
a	a	j	j	l	l
Ə	Ə		č	w	
o	o	g	g	y	
u	u	k	k	m	m
b	b	f	f	n	n
gb	gb	s	s		ñ
				ŋ	ŋ

Source: Jorge and Isabel Castellanos, “The Geographic, Ethnologic, and Linguistic Roots of Cuban Blacks”, *Cuban Studies*. 17 (1987)

## Appendix Four

The list of Anagó songs with their English translations used in this study during interviews with Anagó speakers. Research conducted from May 2011 to March 2012.

1)

- a) *Ichon chon abe i chon chon abe odara ko leri eyo ichon chon abe odara ko leri eyo baba che mi.* (The razor advances, the point on the head like a razor advances splendidly, we do not want tragedy in our path, father work to help me.)
- b) *Ago kori oma le kawa olele ago tori oma lekawa fumiye bara nsoro ogodo omo lowo sire o olele.* (Permission of the head to create power, open the world so that I may walk, man who holds power in speech, who holds prosperity in his hands.)

2)

- a) *Acho eje ogun de ogun arere kowa ile.* (Oggun is clothed in blood, Oggun who owns blessings enter the home.)
- b) *Akuko oko ejeun ota kele kele alado ogun mai mai.* (The male rooster feeds the stone, the prince Oggun is enjoying it.)

3) *Aya beken bele ko ima ko ima Ayan bekun bele ko ima ko ima wa ile.* (Who has fear should buy a dog. The hungry leopard is stronger than the well rested and well fed dog.)

4)



- a) *Emi nso emi alado nso moni jere miye.* (I am the prince owner of the sacred throne, I speak with power, pounded beans are eaten to give sustenance, I eat for survival.)
- b) *Oba do chango kueri oba lado chango kueri oba.* (King of the sacred throne we are calling you to be seated on your throne.)
- c) *Mo fori nyana mo forisole mo forisole aku kpa aro awa alado feyi sole.* (A good head knows where to pay homage, I pay homage to the thrower of stones.)
- 5) *Dada ma sunkun mo dada ma binu mo ero ijaye m bo lona.* (Dada don't cry, Dada we speak on the road for you to be calm.)
- 6)
- a) *Oya de mariwo oyansa loro yoko ro.* (The sound of the mariwo announces Oya)
- b) *Oya de o aina oyade iya made che ku be le.* (Oya with the crown of fire, Oya shares the power with death.)
- 7) *Oyigi yigi ota lomi o Ojigi ji ota lomi oyiki yiki awado kuma oyigi jigi otan lo mi.*  
(The immovable stone, the ancestors arise from the river-water, we defeat death with the unbreakable stone from the river.)
- 8) *Ba sien se mi osain youro me ewiwi awa yoroko ewiwi awa tinibu.* (The waterfall incites the King of herbs and plants to arrive and work for us.)
- 9)

- a) *Se kure a laido are mi yeyé wa che o moro refa.* (The veil of the river defeats death, mother come to save us child of prayers brings blessings.)
- b) *Yeyé yeyeo arideun a dinyale kowisi yeyé o moro efa ariwoyo arideun adinyale kowo si.* (Mother we have your offerings, see the offerings are you coming to enjoy them.)
- c) *Dide maro pranga.* (Arise and stand with us.)
- 10) *Akere iya mi mo tumba o Yemalla woyo mo tumba o. Yemalla okun moforile akota awoyo olodo.* (Chief-mother we wish to praise you, Yemalla we give praise. Deep waters we praise the home you have and the power owner of the sacred throne.)

## Appendix Five

Results of ritual song interviews conducted for this thesis between May 2011 and March 2012. Scale: each song has a potential to score 1 point based on familiarity (upper score) and translation (lower score). A perfect score would give a final result of ten.

Song	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	TOTAL
G.Q.	.5	.2	.5	.5	.0	.5	.5	.5	.5	.5	8.4
	.5	.5	.5	.5	.0	.5	.5	.5	.5	.2	
W.B	.5	.1	.5	.5	.4	.5	.5	.5	.5	.5	8.8
	.5	.2	.5	.5	.2	.5	.5	.5	.5	.4	
M.G	.5	.5	.5	.5	.0	.5	.5	.5	.5	.5	9.1
	.5	.5	.5	.5	.1	.5	.5	.5	.5	.5	
K.A	.4	.3	.0	.5	.1	.1	.2	.5	.1	.3	6.7
	.5	.5	.1	.5	.5	.4	.4	.5	.4	.4	

## Appendix Six

Field notes: Interview Jorge Morales 2009 Versailles Matanzas, Cuba

“*Mana Mana Alaguede iwin oricha*, porque Agallu nadie lo conocia, y entonces con la fragua Oggun escarvó la tierra y encontró un hombre encadenado, por eso dice...”

(No one knew who Agallu was and Oggun was working with his forge and began to dig in the earth and found a man in chains [Agallu] and that is why we say *mana mana alaguede Oggun oricha*.”)<sup>198</sup>

“porque, awgwa lagwa lagwa lagwa, porque es un orisha mayor, porque un oricha mayor? porque gracias a yemalla nosotros tenemos oricha, porque el otan viene del mar y el dilogun no mas de ningun otro lugar.. porque Olofi dijo a Yemalla, a la ko uro a la ko uro a la ko uro kowa kowa, y Yemalla empezó con sus olas a llevar los otanes a la orilla, y el dilogun.”

(“Why do we say *alagwa lagwa, lagwa lagwa*?<sup>199</sup> Because she is an honored elder Orisha, and why is she honored? Because thanks to Yemalla we have oricha, because the *otan*<sup>200</sup> come from the ocean and the *dilogun*<sup>201</sup> come from the ocean ...Olofi<sup>202</sup> said to Yemalla *a la ko uro a la ko uro a la ko uro kowa kowa*<sup>203</sup> and Yemalla began with her waves to carry the otan and dilogun to the edge of beach.

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<sup>198</sup> *Mana mana alaguede Oggun Orisha*: *mana mana* refers to lightning and *alaguede* to the blacksmith, an avatar of the Orisha Oggun. The image is a blacksmith working as a lightning bolt strikes the earth, which opens and reveals a man, chained deep in the earth, who is the Orisha Agallu.

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<sup>199</sup> Alagwa lagwa - respected elder.

<sup>200</sup> *Otan* - Sacred stones used in Orisha worship.

<sup>201</sup> *Dilogun* - Cowery shells used in divination.

<sup>202</sup> *Olofin* - Orisha who is considered an aspect of God-in-heaven.

<sup>203</sup> *a la ko uro a la ko uro a la ko uro kowa kowa* - will you come to be with us, implies the action of the ocean waves on the shore .