

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:           IN BLACK AND BROWN: INTELLECTUALS,  
BLACKNESS, AND INTER-AMERICANISM IN  
MEXICO AFTER 1910

Theodore Cohen, Doctor of Philosophy, 2013

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“In Black and Brown” examines how blackness and Africanness became constituent elements of Mexican culture after the Revolution of 1910. In refuting the common claim that black cultures and identities were erased or ignored in the post-revolutionary era, it argues that anthropologists, historians, (ethno)musicologists, and local intellectuals integrated black and, after 1940, African-descended peoples and cultures into a democratic concept of national identity. Although multiple historical actors contributed to this nationalist project, three intellectuals—composer and ethnomusicologist Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster (1898-1967), anthropologist Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán (1908-1996), and city of Veracruz poet Francisco Rivera (1908-1994)—most coherently identified Africanness in Mexican history and culture. As these state and local intellectuals read ethnographic texts about African cultural retentions throughout the Western Hemisphere, they situated these cultural practices in specific Mexican communities and regional

spaces. By tracing the inter-American networks that shaped these identities, “In Black and Brown” asserts that the classification of blackness and Africanness as Mexican was in conversation with the refashioning of blackness, Africanness, and indigeneity across the Americas and was part of the construction of the Western Hemisphere as a historical, cultural, and racial entity. More broadly, it questions the commonplace assumption that certain nations of the Americas are part of the African Diaspora while others are defined as indigenous.

IN BLACK AND BROWN: INTELLECTUALS, BLACKNESS, AND INTER-  
AMERICANISM IN MEXICO AFTER 1910

By

Theodore Cohen

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To Joanna

## Acknowledgements

Since “In Black and Brown” takes so much space tracing intellectual genealogies, it seems only natural that I sketch my own. I have been lucky to work with countless brilliant scholars, welcoming archivists, generous friends, and understanding family members who have always given me more comments, intellectual encouragement, and emotional support than I ever could have imagined. There are not enough words to express the thanks that they deserve. In unique ways, each and every one of them has improved this dissertation.

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## Abbreviations

CC	Centros Coordinadores [Coordinating Centers]
III	Instituto Indigenista Interamericano [Inter-American Indigenous Institute]
INI	Instituto Nacional Indigenista [National Indigenous Institute]
LEAR	Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios [League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists]
MoMA	Museum of Modern Art
PAIGH	Pan American Institute for Geography and History
PAU	Pan American Union
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional [Institutional Revolutionary Party]
SEP	Secretaria de Educación Pública [Ministry of Public Education]
UN	United Nations



## Introduction

“The majority of huapangos are undeniably Spanish music that was born in Mexico in the sixteenth century.

Some of them, such as the case of ‘La Bamba’ and ‘La Palomita,’ for example, are descendants of the black slaves of the Spanish conquistadores.

It would not be difficult to admit the black ancestry in the harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic elements of ‘La Bamba.’”

-Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster (1942)<sup>1</sup>

“The influence of the black population in the cultures of Guerrero should be great; black cultural patterns still survive in regards to types of houses, institutions—marriage, religion, etc.—that are particularly notable in isolated communities like that of Cuajinicuilapa. The black influence in the music of Guerrero, although denied by our musicologists, is also unquestionable.”

-Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán (1949)<sup>2</sup>

“The flame went out,  
since the jarocho danzón  
rhythmical and deeply-rooted  
playful and showy  
little by little came to an end.

[La candela se acabó,  
ya aquel danzón jarocho  
cadencioso y asentado  
juguetón y pinturero  
poco a poco se ha acabado.]”

-Francisco Rivera (1957)<sup>3</sup>

Each of these passages celebrates black music in Mexico. Yet their authors—composer and ethnomusicologist Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster (1898-1967), anthropologist Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán (1908-1996), and poet Francisco Rivera (1908-1994)—fundamentally

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<sup>1</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, “El Huapango,” *Revista Musical Mexicano*, núm. 8 (Abril 21 de 1942): 183. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

<sup>2</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “Estudio Antropológico de la población negra de Cuajinicuilapa de la Costa Chica de Guerrero,” Octubre 1, 1949, pg. 141, 1572.-1, Tomo CCXXIII, INAH-AT-CNA.

<sup>3</sup> Paco [Francisco] Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y en la cumbancha con una selección de poemas jarochos* (1957), 55 lines 61-65.

disagreed on the appropriate cultural vocabulary to depict these musical genres as Mexican. Baqueiro Foster discussed Mexico's "black ancestry" in his study of the *huapango*: a vernacular genre from the *Huasteca* region of the states of San Luis Potosí, Hidalgo, Puebla, and Veracruz. For him, the adjective black—or *negro*, as he said in Spanish—signified a cultural heritage that could be identified in melodies, harmonies, and rhythms. Although his reference to black slaves implied that these musical traits originated in Africa, his use of the term black did not connote any African cultural retention. Through musicological analysis and ethnographic observation, he concluded that the *huapango* contained black, indigenous, and Spanish roots that blended together in a distinctly regional space. Unlike Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán connected black cultural practices, such as marriage patterns and housing structures, to their African origins while he also pleaded for the study of "the black influence in music." Although he too employed the term *negro*, he argued that these cultural practices were African cultural retentions that influenced local indigenous and *mestizo* (or racially- and culturally-mixed) cultural behaviors in the region surrounding Cuajinicuilapa, Guerrero. Rivera embraced an alternative racial vocabulary—one linked to an Afro-Cuban vernacular—to highlight the cultural importance of Africanness in Mexico. His panegyric characterized the city of Veracruz as "jarocho." While *jarocho* typically signified the mixture of black and indigenous peoples in the region surrounding the city, he defined it as the fusion of African, Afro-Cuban, and Mexican peoples and cultures.

These terms point to the multiple disciplinary registers and cultural landscapes that shaped how Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera classified black, African, and Afro-Cuban music as Mexican. In castigating musicologists for ignoring the black

origins of Mexican vernacular songs, Aguirre Beltrán unintentionally illustrated how contrasting disciplinary methods and sources—such as the search for cultural patterns in anthropology and the use of musicological data in ethnomusicology—gave the term *negro* multiple racial geographies. Written for a localized popular audience, Rivera’s poetry depicted other sources of African-descended identities. Rather than describing blackness as an identity divorced from or bound to an African past, he portrayed a complex cultural and historical union among Africa, the Caribbean, and the port-city.

“In Black and Brown” uncovers how and why these disparate cultural lexicons and racial geographies emerged after the Revolution of 1910. More broadly, this project discusses how black and African cultural identities were—and still are—made and remade in the Americas. Focusing on the generation of scholars who came of age in the 1920s and 1930s and who defined Mexican national identity from the 1940s until the late 1960s, it asks: how did Mexican intellectuals render blackness and Africanness constitutive elements of national culture? To answer this question, “In Black and Brown” primarily examines how Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera wedded Mexico’s indigenous-centric post-revolutionary rhetoric to the study of African cultural retentions across the Americas. Because these intellectuals frequently wrote about Mexico’s African-descended populations as well as black, African, and Afro-Caribbean cultures in Mexican localities, they are the focus of this study.

Using them as lenses to understand post-revolutionary nation formation and hemispheric conceptions of black and African-descended cultures, “In Black and Brown” traces the transnational cultural and intellectual projects that added blackness and, after 1940, Africanness to Mexico’s cultural and racial landscape. Although Mexican

nationalists characterized African-descended peoples and cultures as culturally insignificant, biologically inferior, and/or irrelevant to national and global politics in the years immediately following the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, transnational dialogues about modernist aesthetics began to transform the relationship between blackness and Mexicanness in the 1920s. Progressive state intellectuals and foreigners sympathetic to the Revolution's democratic goals used ethnographic observation to document Mexico's multiple indigenous communities and, in the process, "discovered" people who had black physiological characteristics and cultural traits. Recognition of all local cultural practices, in theory, would allow the state to govern effectively, develop a more just society, and unite the populace under a common national identity. With the radicalization of cultural politics in Mexico, the United States, and across the globe in the 1930s, these ethnographic projects adopted Popular Front rhetoric and Marxist class analysis to describe black slaves in colonial Mexican history and to depict black cultures as part of post-revolutionary national identity. Through historical analyses, anthropological publications, and musical productions, progressive ethnographers and artists reified all subaltern peoples regardless of racial origin as a single historical group that was finally able to have a voice in national culture.

After 1940, these nationalist discussions of blackness expanded when state and popular intellectuals—most notably Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera— ascribed African and Afro-Caribbean roots to the peoples and cultures who had previously been defined as black. This transformation occurred as Mexico became a site of inter-American solidarity during World War II. Mexican scholars and artists read, quoted, cited, and paraphrased the ethnographic and musicological studies about

Africanness in other parts of the Americas. Perceiving historical and cultural continuities across national boundaries, they corroborated their ethnographic findings and discussed Mexico's African and Afro-Caribbean heritages in a manner similar to projects to rehabilitate the image of African-descended peoples and cultures in the United States, Cuba, and Brazil. These transnational intellectual and cultural endeavors continued the pluralist, anti-racist rhetoric that epitomized the cultural politics of the 1920s and 1930s. While historians acknowledge that the Mexican state turned toward economic modernization, political authoritarianism, and more conservative cultural policies after 1940, "In Black and Brown" demonstrates that aspects of Mexico's democratic cultural nationalism expanded to include African-descended cultural identities during and after World War II.

### **The Erasure of Blackness in Mexican History and Historiography**

The intellectual and cultural history of African-descended identities in twentieth-century Mexico is complex. As "In Black and Brown" shows, these intellectual and cultural genealogies move between disciplinary theories and methods; blur the boundaries among vernacular, popular, and high cultures; and weave the historiography of colonial Mexico into the fabric of post-revolutionary history. While there have been some ethnographic and literary studies of blackness after the Mexican Revolution, no historian has completed a study of blackness or Africanness in the post-revolutionary period. Scholars across disciplines have assumed that, other than oral interviews, there are no sources on the topic. This has produced the prevailing belief that African-descended peoples and cultures have been erased from post-revolutionary national

culture. The lack of a readily-identifiable black body in Mexican demographics and discourses has prevented scholars from regarding twentieth-century Mexico as part of the African Diaspora, or what George Reid Andrews calls “Afro-Latin America.”<sup>4</sup> Post-revolutionary Mexico’s exclusion from this literature is the result of nineteenth-century liberal rhetoric that removed racial identifiers from the national census. It is not because Mexico historically lacks an African-descended population or an African-descended cultural heritage.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, African slavery was critical for the development of colonial society. When the indigenous population collapsed from exposure to Old World diseases, military defeat, and cultural anomie, Spanish settlers relied on African slaves. This new labor source was so integral to the colonial economy that from 1521 to 1640 Africans outnumbered Europeans in Mexico. In the seventeenth century, these slaves and their progeny comprised the largest free black and second largest enslaved populations in the Americas. As a result of colonial politics and the demographic resurgence of the indigenous population, the importation of slaves to Mexico declined after 1640. In 1646, there were approximately 35,000 Africans in Mexico and another 115,000 people of African descent. When the struggles for independence began in 1810, approximately 624,000 people, or ten percent of the population, were of African descent.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> George Reid Andrews, *Afro-Latin America, 1800-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Maps 1, 2, and 3 (np) and 3-6; also see “Reports From the Black World,” *Black World* (October, 1975): 79.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick J. Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity, and Regional Development*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), xiii-xv and 8-26; Herman Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico: Absolutism, Christianity, and Afro-Creole Consciousness, 1570-1640* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1.

Because of their high degree of racial mixture and their comparatively low degree of African cultural retentions, Mexico's African-descended population, as Patrick J. Carroll explains, has become a "forgotten people."<sup>6</sup> Miscegenation with rural indigenous communities and with the urban lower class created a panoply of *casta* signifiers—such as mulatto or *pardo* (a person of African and European stocks), *zambo* (of African and indigenous ancestries), and *morisco* (the offspring of a *mulato* and a European).<sup>7</sup> This system helped the Spanish government maintain social control as it bestowed certain privileges on different *casta* groups and provided them with defined places in the colonial hierarchy.<sup>8</sup> To make slavery and the *casta* system more tolerable, slaves appealed to their masters, the Catholic Church and the Inquisition, the Spanish government, and the legal system for social privileges and to protest their unjust treatment.<sup>9</sup> Creating more cultural exchange and racial mixture, other slaves joined autonomous indigenous societies to escape grueling labor, to forge kinship networks, and

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<sup>6</sup> Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz*, xiii.

<sup>7</sup> These terms were not always racial identities. For a discussion of how *casta* signifiers could be characterized by religious purity, geographic origin, and physical appearance, see Kathryn Burns, "Unfixing Race," in *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, eds. Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 188-202.

<sup>8</sup> See R. Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994); Ben Vinson III, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: the Free Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico* (California: Stanford University Press, 2001); Laura A. Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors: Power, Witchcraft, and Caste in Colonial Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); and María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Javier Villa-Flores, "To Lose One's Soul: Blasphemy and Slavery in New Spain, 1596-1669," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 82, no. 3 (August 2002): 435-68; Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico*; and Brian P. Owensby, "How Juan and Leonor Won Their Freedom: Litigation and Liberty in Seventeenth-Century Mexico," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 85, no. 1 (February 2005): 38-79.

to establish some semblance of cultural stability.<sup>10</sup> Finally some slaves, like Gaspar Yanga, established maroon communities to gain freedom and, to the best of their abilities, to recreate African life.<sup>11</sup>

By the wars of independence (1810-1821), slave labor was not a pressing social or economic issue. Because of the expansion of the racially-mixed population and the growing preference for free wage labor, the mercantile slave economy fell out of favor.<sup>12</sup> At the dawn of the nineteenth century, slavery only continued as a key form of labor in the regions that became the states of Morelos, Veracruz, and Guerrero. Peter Guardino explains that, during and immediately after independence, blackness functioned a metonym for *casta* oppression and, more generally, Spanish colonial rule.<sup>13</sup> Black identity was not predominately bound to the bodies of African-descended slaves, because most of them had been freed during the colonial period. Elites debated whether or not to abolish slavery as well as the *casta* system in an attempt to forge a more egalitarian national society that was not based on Spanish colonial discrimination. As a result of the political maneuverings of Vicente Guerrero (1783-1831)—a politician of African,

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<sup>10</sup> Luz María Martínez Montiel, “Esclavitud y sociedad,” in *El rostro colectivo de la nación mexicana* coord., María Guadalupe Chávez Carbajal (México: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1997), 279-304; Andrew B. Fischer, “Negotiating Two Worlds: The Free-Black Experience in Guerrero’s Tierra Caliente,” in *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*, eds. Ben Vinson III and Matthew Restall (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 51-71; and Pat Carroll, “Black Aliens and Black Natives in New Spain’s Indigenous Communities,” in *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*, eds. Ben Vinson III and Matthew Restall (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 72-95.

<sup>11</sup> Frank “Trey” Proctor III, “Slave Rebellion and Liberty in Colonial Mexico,” in *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*, eds. Ben Vinson III and Matthew Restall (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 21-50.

<sup>12</sup> Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz*, especially pages 40-60; and John Tutino, *Making a New World: Founding Capitalism in the Bajío and Spanish North America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Peter Guardino, “La identidad nacional y los afromexicanos en el siglo XIX,” in *Prácticas populares, cultura política y poder en México, siglo XIX*, ed. Brian Connaughton (México, DF: Casa Juan Pablos, 2008), 269-84. Also see Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors*, 4 and 182.



Spanish, and indigenous descent—abolition became a vital element of independence rhetoric. In 1829, the national government abolished slavery.<sup>14</sup> In place of a racialized *casta* vocabulary, the new nation adopted the language of *mestizaje*, or the racial and cultural mixture of Mexico's indigenous and Spanish pasts, to forge a national citizenry that was not predicated on racial classification.<sup>15</sup>

Although the abolition of the *casta* system attempted to establish an inclusive, egalitarian political system, it failed in practice.<sup>16</sup> Racial signifiers continued to be used in official reports into the 1830s. By the 1840s, most documents elusively referred to Mexican individuals and communities as Indian and non-Indian.<sup>17</sup> Despite the transformation of Mexico's racial and cultural lexicon, a racially-mixed African-descended population remained, even though it lacked any social or political reason to claim an African ancestry. The liberal erasure of black identity therefore was a rhetorical game that sought to rid the nation of any footprints of its colonial African slave population. Such strategies buried blackness—as a racial phenomenon, a cultural identity, and a subject of historical inquiry—in the archives of the colonial past.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Guardino, "La identidad nacional y los afromexicanos," 286-93; and Theodore G. Vincent, *The Legacy of Vicente Guerrero: Mexico's First Black Indian President* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2001), 195-9.

<sup>15</sup> Agustín Basave Benítez, *México mestizo. Análisis del nacionalismo mexicano en torno a la mestizofilia de Andrés Molina Enríquez*, 2nd ed. (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2002), 21.

<sup>16</sup> Marisela Jiménez Ramos, "Black Mexico: Nineteenth-Century Discourses of Race and Nation" (PhD diss., Brown University, 2009): 42-76. On the question of postcolonial inclusion and exclusion, see Claudio Lomnitz, "Modes of Citizenship in Mexico," *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (1999): 274-6.

<sup>17</sup> Álvaro Ochoa Serrano, "Comentario," in *Tradicón e identidad en la cultura mexicana*, coords. Agustín Jacinto Zavala and Álvaro Ochoa Serrano (Zamora, Mich.: El Colegio de Michoacán, 1995), 413; and Rebecca Earle, *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 217-9.

<sup>18</sup> Patrick J. Carroll, "Los mexicanos negros, el mestizaje y los fundamentos olvidados de la 'Raza Cósmica': una perspectiva regional," trans. Jeffrey N. Lamb, *Historia Mexicana* 44, no. 3 (January 1995):

As a result of this rhetoric, it has become fashionable for historians, anthropologists, and literary critics to remove black identity from their analyses of Mexican nationalism during and after the Revolution of 1910. The hackneyed claim that there are no longer any self-identifying black people in Mexico has become the common point of departure for the historical study of blackness after the Mexican Revolution. Yet much of the existing literature implies that there are unnamed and unrecognized African-descended peoples who need to be integrated into the national landscape. A spate of ethnographic inquiries contends that these communities downplay their African past and identify themselves as *mestizos* or Indians. Many of these studies do not even narrate the history of black communities beyond the end of the colonial period or abolition.<sup>19</sup> In critiquing the liberal discourse of whitening, the implicit historical narrative in these texts reaffirms the nineteenth-century myth that there are no longer any black populations and that there is no reason to study African-descended peoples and cultures after independence.

Some studies even imply that an alternative black identity, which was not bound to the tragic emplotments of *mestizaje*, was possible.<sup>20</sup> Literary critic Marco Polo

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403-38; Álvaro Ochoa Serrano, *Afrodescendientes. Sobre piel canela* (Zamora, Mich.: Colegio de Michoacán, 1997), 21-4; and Ramos, "Black Mexico," 77-112.

<sup>19</sup> For example see María Luisa Herrera Casasús, *Presencia y escavitud del negro en la Huasteca* (México: Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas, 1989); Rafael Valdez Aguilar, *Sinaloa: Negritud y Olvido* (Culiacán, Sinaloa, México: Talleres Gráficos, 1993); Francisco Fernández Repetto and Genny Negroe Sierra, *Una población perdida en la memoria: los negros de Yucatán* (Mérida, Yucatán: Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, 1995), ix-x; Juan Carlos Reyes G., "Negros y afroestizos en Colima, siglos XVI-XIX," in *Presencia africana en México*, coord. Luz María Martínez Montiel (México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1997), 259-335; and Juan Andrade Torres, "Historia de la población negra en Tabasco," in *Presencia africana en México*, coord. Luz María Martínez Montiel (México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1997), 423-62.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of tragedy in historical narratives and its contemporary political implications, see Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural*

Hernández Cuevas goes so far as to applaud the visibility of black identities in the United States that resulted from an “apartheid system that forced African Americans in the United States to look into themselves in search of identity, as there was no hope of entering the mainstream.” Conversely, people of African descent in Mexico, he bemoans, suffered a racial holocaust. In identifying themselves as Mexican and succumbing to the national narrative of racial and cultural mixture, they have “yet to discover a truer picture of themselves.”<sup>21</sup> However, this emphasis on intrinsic African roots and innate cultural sensibilities imperialistically chastises local communities that appear to be of African descent for adopting indigenous or *mestizo* identities.<sup>22</sup>

This approach fallaciously, and oftentimes eagerly, reduces all forms of *mestizaje* to homogenization, whitening, and cultural erasure.<sup>23</sup> For political purposes, it also glorifies a particular definition of black identity that is often associated with physiological traits. In simplifying the discussion of blackness to the dichotomy between

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*Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), especially 83 and 87; and David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> Marco Polo Hernandez Cuevas, *African Mexicans and the Discourse on Modern Nation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004), 24 and 25. This idea is echoed by Christina A. Sue; see Christina A. Sue, *Land of the Cosmic Race: Race Mixture, Racism, and Blackness in Mexico* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 116.

<sup>22</sup> Laura A. Lewis, “Blacks, Black Indians, Afromexicans: The Dynamics of Race, Nation, and Identity in a Mexican ‘moreno’ Community (Guerrero),” *American Ethnologist* 27, no. 4 (Nov., 2000): 898-926; María Guevara Sanginés, “Perspectivas metodológicas en los estudios historiográficos sobre los negros en México hacia finales del siglo XX,” in *Poblaciones y culturas de origen africano en México*, comps. María Elisa Velázquez Gutiérrez and Ethel Correa Duró (México, D.F.: INAH, 2005), 76-7; and Luis Eugenio Campos, “Caracterización étnica de los pueblos de negros de la costa chica de Oaxaca. Una visión etnográfica,” in *Poblaciones y culturas de origen africano en México*, comps. María Elisa Velázquez Gutiérrez and Ethel Correa Duró México, D.F.: INAH, 2005), 411-3.

<sup>23</sup> See Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas, *África en México: una herencia repudiada/Africa in Mexico: A Repudiated Heritage* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), 7-20; and Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas *The Africanization of Mexico from the Sixteenth Century Onward: A Review of the Evidence* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), 1-40. For a critique of the idea that racial mixture must be seen as whitening, see Pabst, “Blackness/Mixedness,” 202.

black visibility and erasure, these studies fail to take into account the variegated nature of post-revolutionary cultural politics.<sup>24</sup> Although the rhetoric of *mestizaje* occasionally operated as a homogenizing and whitening discourse, it also propagated democratic theories of nation formation that were predicated on popular suffrage, social justice, ethnic heterogeneity, and cultural pluralism.<sup>25</sup>

Adopting an alternative—albeit related—line of inquiry, some historians claim that post-revolutionary intellectuals perceived blackness as the bugbear of degeneracy, antithetical to any form of national modernity.<sup>26</sup> Others have taken the absence of discourses about blackness in post-revolutionary Mexico as preordained and ineluctable, implicitly declaring that blackness can only be historically interrogated through the temporary or permanent immigration of foreign black nationals who fled the confining policies of racial segregation and political persecution in the United States and Cuba.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> This does not mean that nineteenth-century racial thought did not continue into the post-revolutionary period. See David A. Brading, “Manuel Gamio and Official Indigenismo in Mexico,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 7, no. 1 (1988): 75-89; and Emilio H. Kouri, “Interpreting the Expropriation of Indian Pueblo Lands in Porfirian Mexico: The Unexamined Legacies of Andrés Molina Enríquez,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82, no. 1 (February 2002): 69-118.

<sup>25</sup> This new perspective is rapidly expanding. See, Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997); Basave Benítez, *México mestizo*; Peter Wade, “Afterward: Race and Nation in Latin America: An Anthropological View,” in *Race & Nation in Modern Latin America*, eds. Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, and Karin Alejandra Roseblatt (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 263-81; Mary Kay Vaughan and Stephen Lewis, eds. *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); and Rick A. López, *Crafting Mexico: Intellectuals, Artisans, and the State after the Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>26</sup> Ben Vinson III and Matthew Restall go as far as to claim that “Blacks were literally written out of the national narrative.” See Ben Vinson III and Matthew Restall, “Introduction,” in *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*, eds. Ben Vinson III and Matthew Restall (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 4.

<sup>27</sup> Melanie Anne Herzog, *Elizabeth Catlett: An American Artist in Mexico* (University of Washington Press, 2000); Ben Vinson III, *Flight: the Story of Virgil Richardson, A Tuskegee Airman in Mexico* (New York, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004); and Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); and Yolanda Juárez Hernández, *Persistencias culturales afrocaribeñas en Veracruz* (México: Editora de Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, 2006).

While this latter line of inquiry integrates Mexico into the larger cultural debates about the African Diaspora, it fails to examine blackness and Africanness as Mexican.

Despite black cultural identities' apparent propensity to disappear, they have been resuscitated in recent historical and ethnographic projects.<sup>28</sup> Since the late 1980s, some Mexicans have adopted the term "Nuestra tercera raíz [Our Third Root]" to redefine *mestizaje* and to depict blackness as Mexico's third racial and cultural trunk. As recent anthropological works indicate, black and African identities have remained visible or have recently re-emerged in regional spaces and local communities along the Costa Chica of Oaxaca and Guerrero as well as in the eponymous community of Yanga in the state of Veracruz.<sup>29</sup> A gaping hole nonetheless exists in the history of blackness between abolition in 1829 and the emergence of these ethnographies since the 1980s.<sup>30</sup> Without filling it, black cultural identities remain fixed, and Mexico's African-descended population remains an object in the historical record. If these peoples and cultures remain buried in the colonial past or ahistorically bound to contemporary ethnographic observations, the cultural meanings of blackness and Africanness cannot change with

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<sup>28</sup> María Luisa Herrera Casasús, *Raíces Africanas en la Población de Tamaulipas* (Tamaulipas, México: Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas, 1998), 5 and 68.

<sup>29</sup> For example, see Sagrario Cruz Carretero, *El Carnaval en Yanga: Notas y comentarios sobre una fiesta de la negritude* (México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la cultura y las artes, 1990), 7. For an ethnographic analysis of blackness in relation to indigeneity and *mestizaje*, see Vaughn, "Race and Nation;" and Laura A. Lewis, *Chocolate and Corn Flour: History, Race, and Place in the Making of "Black" Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

<sup>30</sup> Vinson III and Restall, "Introduction," 8. In spite of seeing the need to historically link blackness in the colonial period to the contemporary period, they divide the anthology into sections on the colonial period and contemporary ethnographic analyses.

Mexico's historical landscape.<sup>31</sup> They remain essentialized, and the ideational histories that shape contemporary constructions of them remain hidden.

“In Black and Brown” examines the intellectual routes that led to multiple constructions of blackness and Africanness after the Revolution of 1910. Instead of seeing *mestizaje* as an inversion of Western racial hierarchies—what Alan Knight calls “reverse racism”—this project situates black and African identities within the multiple, sometimes competing, and oftentimes ambivalent conceptions of post-revolutionary *mestizaje*.<sup>32</sup> It expands Guardino's idea that blackness functioned as a metonym for social justice and anti-racism to include cultural pluralism and inclusion as well as universal human rights. In this political context, Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera rejected the nineteenth-century liberal idea that black and African cultures as well as people of African descent hindered national modernity.

### **Diasporic Cultural Vocabularies in Post-Revolutionary Mexico**

Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera each identified African-descended identities as Mexican in order to expand Mexico's racial and cultural geography. However, as the vignettes at the beginning of the introduction illustrate, they did not employ identical racial and cultural lexicons. In “In Black and Brown,” I explore black identity, as Stuart Hall declares, not as “an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent” but as “a ‘production’, which is never complete, always

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<sup>31</sup> See Michel Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*”: *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 6-10; Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 55-94, especially, 56 and 62; and Herman L. Bennett, *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 7.

<sup>32</sup> Alan Knight, “Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*: Mexico, 1910-1940,” in *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940*, ed. Richard Graham (Austin Texas: University of Texas Press, 1990), 87.

a process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.”<sup>33</sup> Looking at blackness as a process of representation allows us to perceive the shared cultural, historical, and structural components that span the African Diaspora. But, it also leaves space for Diasporic identities that must be noted in relative or comparative terms. These more peculiar and localized traits cannot be defined, let alone translated, without distorting their explicit cultural meanings and implicit connotations.<sup>34</sup>

Continuing the rebuttal of racial essentialism that informs “In Black and Brown,” Brent Hays Edwards asserts that “the semantic shifts in this bilingual flood of racial appellations and adjectives” makes “a field through which are carried signifiers of ‘racial identity’: *New Negro*, *internationalism noir*, *Afro-Latin*, *noirs américains*, *nègres*, *Afro-Américain*, *nègres nouveau*.” In revealing how racial terms—like black, *negro* (in Spanish), and *nègre* and *noir* (in French)—cannot be exactly translated, he examines the sensibilities that make it impossible to forge a common discursive language about African-descended identities across the African Diaspora.<sup>35</sup> “In Black and Brown” therefore examines the constructions of black and African-descended identities in Mexico

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<sup>33</sup> Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart: 1998), 222.

<sup>34</sup> Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 229. Also see Stuart Hall, “Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,” in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, eds. Houston A. Baker Jr., Mathia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 16-60; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993); and Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998).

<sup>35</sup> Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 20-1. Incorrect associations—such as between *negro* (Spanish) and Negro (English)—renders racial classification across linguistic boundaries more difficult; see Lewis, *Chocolate and Corn Flour*, 315.

in relation to the array of racial and cultural terms that characterizes the African Diaspora.<sup>36</sup>

It has been notoriously hard to construct and to analyze blackness in Mexico.<sup>37</sup> In explaining why there are so many terms to designate black cultural identities, Odile Hoffman declares that “the processes of identification have not yet been crystallized” in and across Mexican “politics, academics, and civil society.”<sup>38</sup> At the dawn of the twenty-first century, local communities and academics have used and continue to use a multitude of racial vocabularies. Scholars of Mexico oftentimes use *negro* or the more politically correct *Afro-descendiente* [Afro-descendant]. Other terms—such as mulatto, Afro-Mexican, and *afromestizo* (a neologism coined by Aguirre Beltrán to signify a person or culture that is racially and culturally mixed but predominately of African descent)—have gained academic appeal.<sup>39</sup> In popular parlance, *cubano* [Cuban] has come to signify black people in Afro-Cuban communities in Veracruz just as *moreno* (defined as dark-skinned,

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<sup>36</sup> For an good, albeit incomplete, example of the many historical terms used to classify people of African-descent, see Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *Black in Latin America* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 223-32. Also see Livio Sansone, *Blackness without Ethnicity: Constructing Race in Brazil* (New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 55-8.

<sup>37</sup> Martha Menchaca examines the complexity of black identification in Mexico (and former Mexican territories now in the United States) as a historical, genealogical, and ethnographic question. See Martha Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001).

<sup>38</sup> Odile Hoffmann, “Negros y afromestizos en México: Viejas y nuevas lecturas de un mundo olvidado,” trans. Camila Pascal, *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 68, no. 1 (Enero 2006): 103-4. To see how this idea is relevant for all of Latin America see Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* (London: Pluto Press, 1997), 5-7.

<sup>39</sup> On the discursive uniqueness of the term *afromestizo*, see Bobby Vaughn, “Race and Nation: A Study of Blackness in Mexico” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2001), 30-3.



brown, or indigenous) and *jarocho* have often supplanted *negro* in order to transcend the historically derogatory connotations of the latter term.<sup>40</sup>

Because there are many racial terminologies in Mexico, I pay attention to the cultural connotations of the terms I use. All constructions of blackness and Africanness in Mexico are at least implicitly and oftentimes explicitly in conversation with other cultural identities across the African Diaspora. The multiple academic and vernacular lexicons used by Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera illustrate the textual, discursive, and cultural vibrancy of post-revolutionary nation formation. Because I must accurately represent their ideas, I cannot employ terms that are so broad that they lose their implicit meanings or historical contexts. My words also cannot be so narrow that they appear essentialized or innate.<sup>41</sup> In this project, black and blackness denote any construction of African cultures and identities in the Americas (by Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, Rivera, or another scholar) that is not explicitly rooted in Africa or intimately bound to Diasporic cultural politics.<sup>42</sup> This practice was especially common before 1940, when many ethnographers in the Americas believed that the Middle Passage and the brutality of slave life destroyed all African cultural behaviors.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> On the term *cubano* and *moreno*, see Alfredo Martínez Maranto, “Dios pinto como quiere. Identidad y cultura en un pueblo afroestizado de Veracruz,” in *Presencia africana en México*, coord. Luz María Martínez Montiel (México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1997), 529-35 and 556-60; and Lewis, *Chocolate and Corn Flour*; also see Sue, *Land of the Cosmic Race*, especially 3, 38, and 119.

<sup>41</sup> Frederick Cooper and Rogers Brubaker, “Identity,” in *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, by Frederick Cooper (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 59-90.

<sup>42</sup> On the need to think of black cultural identity in Mexico beyond Afro-Diasporic cultural politics, see Lewis, *Chocolate and Corn Flour*, 306-7.

<sup>43</sup> On the use of a black identity that was affiliated with the Americas, chiefly the United States, rather than with an African heritage, see Michael Hanchard, “Identity, Meaning and the African-American,” *Social Text*, no. 24 (1990): 34.

I also use black in two specific cases. First, it is the direct translation of *negro* from Spanish to English. Second, I use it when an intellectual discusses an unknown ratio of cultural heritages or racial descents that include a black root. This second usage—which, for example, I employ to examine the passage by Baqueiro Foster at the beginning of the introduction—will be followed by a discussion of cultural or racial mixture to indicate that neither I nor the scholar that I am analyzing employed black in a manner akin to the one-drop-rule in the United States. Finally, when the discussion of black cultures, identities, and bodies cannot be reduced to any one of these descriptors and a more general term is needed, I use blackness.

In many academic discussions of the African Diaspora, black is often associated with visceral traits tied to the human body. “In Black and Brown” cannot build on this assumption and instead draws on recent critiques that dissociate blackness from the black body. The unquestioned association between blackness and corporeality reduces the complexities of racial identification and classification to configurations that are foreign to many discussions of black identities in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Mexico.<sup>44</sup> This does not mean that black racial identities were never associated with bodily features; they occasionally were.<sup>45</sup> In “In Black and Brown,” black and blackness are invoked when black cultures and identities are not intimately bound to physical traits and are oftentimes devoid of any explicit reference to the bodily features. When I analyze sources that

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<sup>44</sup> On the need to disassociate black culture and identity from the black body, see Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), 19-53; Sansone, *Blackness without Ethnicity*, 12 and 79; and Naomi Pabst, “Blackness/Mixedness: Contestations over Crossing Signs,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 54 (Spring, 2003): 178-212.

<sup>45</sup> For an analysis of how the body could be used as a means to classify racial types in Mexico, see Deborah Poole, “An Image of ‘Our Indian’: Type Photographs and Racial Sentiments in Oaxaca, 1920-1940,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 84, no. 1 (2004): 37-82.

discuss the black body or specific physiological traits, I will specifically mention the black body.<sup>46</sup>

I repeat the precise terms employed by Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, Rivera, and their colleagues. I note when these intellectuals refer specifically to Africa, African cultural retentions, or other cultures and identities that are associated with a real or invented African past.<sup>47</sup> Like blackness, I employ Africanness to denote when a discussion of Africa cannot be reduced to a culture, corporeal trait, or identity. Similarly, African-descended is used to signify imprecise discussions of African cultures and ancestries that have in some way been transformed across the Diaspora. When racial argots—such as *afromestizo* for Aguirre Beltrán and *jarocho* for Rivera—are present in the primary sources, I repeat them in my analysis. This is especially important for Rivera’s poetry, because he used an obscure Afro-Cuban vernacular language that acquired ethnographic legitimacy as a result of the linguistic studies and cultural productions of Cuba’s *afrocubanista* movement in the 1920s and 1930s. Many of these terms cannot be translated into English, because no succinct approximation exists. Consequently, I employ the original Spanish terms, define them, and provide an explanation of their genealogical origins when I introduce them.

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<sup>46</sup> It is important, however, to note the distinction between concept of color, which is often described in physiological terms, and racial identities that can, but do not have to be, connected to color. See Sue, *Land of the Cosmic Race*, 28-46.

<sup>47</sup> On the invention of an African past see Kamari Maxine Clarke, *Mapping Yorùbá Networks: Power and Agency in the Making of Transnational Communities* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); J. Lorand Matory. *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); and Heidi Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru: Reviving African Musical Heritage in the Black Pacific* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2007).

### **Blackness and Africanness in Post-Revolutionary Mexico**

Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera were each part of the generation born in the years immediately preceding the Revolution of 1910. They came of age during the revolutionary violence and political factionalism of the 1910s and the processes of state and nation formation that took place in the 1920s and 1930s. They saw how the post-revolutionary state initiated *indigenista* programs to integrate the indigenous population into the nation. This generation was still molding Mexican national discourse when the political and cultural polemics of the 1968 generation dramatically re-evaluated post-revolutionary progress. Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, Rivera, and their contemporaries therefore bridge the major shifts in post-revolutionary Mexican history.

A flautist of Mayan descent from the state of Campeche, Baqueiro Foster initially made a name for himself in 1926 when Mexican composers and musical theorists debated how to forge a post-revolutionary music that was both vernacular and modern. As a new generation of composers led by Carlos Chávez (1899-1978) embraced an ethnomusicological approach to transposing indigenous music after 1928, Baqueiro Foster worked at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música [National Conservatory of Music] in Mexico City.<sup>48</sup> Under Chávez's ethnographic initiative, he travelled to the state of Veracruz to study the *huapango* in 1934 and later arranged the vernacular song in the classical composition *Huapangos* that Chávez premiered at the MoMA in New York City in 1940. After this trip, he spent the rest of his career studying local and regional musical

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<sup>48</sup> Miguel Civeira Taboada, "Apuntes para la historia de la música en México (selección bibliográfica de Gerónimo Baqueiro Fóster)," *Boletín bibliográfico de la Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público*, núm. 287 (1968): 2-3.

genres—including some that he classified as Afro-Cuban, Afro-Colombian, and African—across southern Mexico.

Born into a liberal family from Tlacotalpan, Veracruz, Aguirre Beltrán began his professional career in the 1930s as a rural doctor in his home state. While offering services to the local indigenous population of Huatusco, he sympathized with the post-revolutionary attempts to redistribute land and to integrate remote indigenous populations into the nation. Inspired by his first-hand observations, he published an ethnographic history of the region, *El señorío de Cuauhtochco. Luchas agrarias en México durante el virreinato* [*The Manor of Cuauhtochco: Agrarian Reforms in Mexico during the Viceroyalty*] in 1940.<sup>49</sup> Then he moved to Mexico City to continue working within the post-revolutionary ethnographic project that Manuel Gamio (1883-1960) had begun in 1916. At Gamio's request, he began to research Mexico's colonial slave population in 1942. Two years later, at the invitation of prominent anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits (1895-1963), he travelled to Northwestern University on a Rockefeller Foundation grant to learn about the anthropology of African-descended peoples in the Americas. After the publication of *La población negra de México, 1519-1810. Estudio etnohistórico* [*The Black Population of Mexico, 1519-1810: An Ethnographic Study*] in 1946 and a brief stint in government service, he ventured to Cuijla, Guerrero, to study a contemporary African-descended community. Building on these observations, he investigated the social, cultural, and political integration of indigenous and *afromestizo* communities throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and into the early 1970s.

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<sup>49</sup> Guillermo de la Peña, "Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán," in *La antropología en México. Panorama histórico*, vol. 9 Los protagonistas (Acosta-Dávila), coords., Lina Odena Güemes and Carlos García Mora (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Historia, 1988), 63-4.

Born in the city of Veracruz to a white mother from Paseo de Ovejas, Veracruz, and a Spanish father, Rivera spent much of his life interested in poetry. After briefly studying in Mexico City, he spent most of the 1920s and 1930s in the states of Veracruz and Oaxaca working as a waiter and a pharmacist. When his father won the lottery, Rivera gained enough financial stability to travel across southern Mexico and to write a few poems and satirical plays. After getting a job at *El Dictamen* (the major newspaper in the state of Veracruz) in the mid-1950s, his picturesque representations of everyday life in the port-city became more accessible.<sup>50</sup> With the publication of his epic poem *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha* [*Veracruz in history and the cumbancha*] in 1957 and a second edition that continued the poetic history approximately to 1970, he tied his hometown to Afro-Cuban music and dance while celebrating the cosmopolitan and heroic history of the city.

As Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera identified black and African cultures in Mexican history and in local communities, they voyeuristically perceived and intuited which cultural practices they deemed to be black, Afro-Caribbean, or African. Nevertheless, these analyses risked overstating the African origins and eschewing the indigenous roots of local customs.<sup>51</sup> Their ethnographic notes and publications were political projects riddled by power imbalances just as much as they were veritable transcriptions of local practices.<sup>52</sup> Because none of them were of African descent, they—

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<sup>50</sup> Horacio Guadarrama Olivera, “Francisco Rivera *Paco Píldora*: genio y figura,” in *Personajes populares de Veracruz*, coord. Félix Báez-Jorge (México: Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, Secretaría de Educación del Estado do Veracruz, Universidad Veracruzana, 2010), 270-5.

<sup>51</sup> Laura Lewis levies this critique against Aguirre Beltrán. See Lewis, *Chocolate and Corn Flour*, 119-54.

<sup>52</sup> There is a large literature on the asymmetrical power relations that inhere in ethnographic observation. For example, see James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: the Poetics and*

and, by association, their projects—were defined more by their position vis-à-vis the state apparatus than by their racial phenotypes.<sup>53</sup> These asymmetrical relations were particularly important for Baqueiro Foster and Aguirre Beltrán. As state-sponsored cultural outsiders, they ascribed racial attributes to unfamiliar regional spaces and local communities.<sup>54</sup> Conversely, Rivera almost exclusively studied and depicted his home city. Following the *costumbrista* tradition whereby intellectuals constructed and celebrated local and regional particularities, he wanted his epic history to be a scenic representation of the city's history and everyday life.<sup>55</sup>

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*Politics of Ethnography*, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); and James Clifford, "Introduction: The Pure Products Go Crazy," and "On Ethnographic Authority," in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 1-17 and 21-54.

<sup>53</sup> On the spatial relationship between academic and popular views of race in Latin America, see Claudio Lomnitz-Alder, *Exits from the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Florencia E. Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos: The Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919-1991* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

<sup>54</sup> On the political and symbolic power that inheres in the making of spatial, often racial, identities, see Pierre Bourdieu, "Identity and Representation: *Elements for a Critical Reflection on the Idea of Region*" and "Social Space and the Genesis of 'Classes,'" in *Language & Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 220-8 and 239-43; Fernando Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories," *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 1 (February 1996): 51-87; Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Culture, Power, Place: Ethnography at the End of an Era" and "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, eds. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 1-29 and 33-51.

<sup>55</sup> For a discussion of *costumbrismo*, see Ricardo Pérez Montfort, *Estampas de nacionalismo popular mexicano. Ensayos sobre cultura popular y nacionalismo* (México, D.F: CIESAS, 1994), 23; Edward N. Wright-Rios, "Indian Saints and Nation-States: Ignacio Manuel Altamirano's Landscapes and Legends," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 20, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 49-50; and Amada Carolina Pérez Benavides, "Actores, escenarios y relaciones sociales en tres publicaciones periódicas mexicanas de mediados del siglo XIX," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 56, no. 4 (April 2007): 1165-70.

Although the state-sponsored ethnographic tradition continued after 1940, such pluralist discourses arguably diminished.<sup>56</sup> With the 1940 election of Miguel Ávila Camacho (1897-1955), the ruling PRI consolidated its practice of handpicking presidential successors. State intellectuals emphasized a policy of rural modernization that, when implemented in local arenas, emphasized economic development even when it could harm indigenous cultural traditions.<sup>57</sup> Beginning in the 1940s, and especially after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, local intellectuals critiqued the PRI for its inability to foster democratic politics and continue the popular aims of the Mexican Revolution. Discontent with the realities produced by the government's rural policies, many communities claimed that PRI politicians had corrupted the Mexican Revolution's democratic goals.<sup>58</sup> By the 1960s, these critiques intensified when a new generation of state intellectuals and urban middle class youths lamented the lack of revolutionary progress.<sup>59</sup> While the PRI sought to show the world the fruits of its economic miracle by hosting the Olympics in that year, hundreds of students in Mexico City demonstrated

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<sup>56</sup> Alexander S. Dawson, *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2004), 157-8.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen R. Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption* (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 1999); Stephen E. Lewis, "Mexico's National Indigenist Institute and the Negotiation of Applied Anthropology in Highland Chiapas, 1951-1954," *Ethnohistory* 55, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 609-32; and Karin Alejandra Roseblatt, "Other Americas: Transnationalism, Scholarship, and the Culture of Poverty in Mexico and the United States," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 89, no. 4 (2009): 603-41.

<sup>58</sup> Jeffrey W. Rubin, *Decentering the Regime: Ethnicity, Radicalism, and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); and Tanalís Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of the Pax Priísta, 1940-1962* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>59</sup> These discourses include Pablo González Casanova, *La democracia en México* (México, DF: Ediciones Era, 1965); and Arturo Warman, et. al., *De eso que llaman Antropología Mexicana* (México D.F.: Ediciones Nuestro Tiempo, 1970). Also see Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and Deborah Cohn, "The Mexican Intelligentsia, 1950-1968: Cosmopolitanism, National Identity, and the State," *Estudios Mexicanos* 21, no. 1 (Winter, 2005): 141-82.



against the government's authoritarian practices and then were murdered by the police in Tlatelolco Plaza on October 2.<sup>60</sup>

In examining the multiple constructions of black and African cultures, “In Black and Brown” rethinks how historians discuss Mexican history from the 1920s to the countercultural movement of the 1960s. It shows how multiple incarnations of democratic thought continued to be articulated by state intellectuals who constructed black and African cultural identities.<sup>61</sup> While the post-1940 period saw the expansion of PRI authoritarian rule and new forms of popular resistance to the state apparatus, it also saw the extension of Mexico's cultural nationalism to include African and African-descended cultural practices.<sup>62</sup> This occurred when intellectuals—like Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera—read ethnographic studies about African cultural retentions from other parts of the Americas and located African-descended peoples and cultures in local and regional spaces across southern Mexico. The racial and cultural components of

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<sup>60</sup> Elena Poniatowska, *La Noche de Tlatelolco* (México, DF: Ediciones Era, 1971); Lessie Jo Frazier and Deborah Cohn, “Defining the Spaces of Mexico ’68: Heroic Masculinity in the Prison and ‘Women’ in the Streets,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 83, no. 4 (2003): 617-60; and Eric Zolov, “Showcasing the ‘Land of Tomorrow’: Mexico and the 1968 Olympics,” *The Americas* 61, no. 2 (October 2004): 159-88.

<sup>61</sup> This use of democracy builds on the idea that democratic discourse must continuously produce and integrate new identities; see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), 85-140; and Judith Butler, “Restaging the Universal: Hegemony and the Limits of Formalism,” in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality, Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, by Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2000), 24-5 and 35-7.

<sup>62</sup> In regard to the question of blackness and Africanness, the post-1940 has only been seen as one where foreign scholars, drawing on Aguirre Beltrán's publications, became interested in the study of blackness in Mexico. See Ben Vinson III, “Afro-Mexican History: Trends and Directions in Scholarship,” *History Compass* 3, no. 1 (2005): np.

what Mary Kay Vaughan calls Mexico's "inclusive, multiethnic, populist nationalism" expanded after 1940 to include African-descended cultural identities.<sup>63</sup>

Rivera's verses also shed new light on the popular resistance to the PRI regime. While political dissidents began to draw on Cuban politics after 1959, his 1957 epic poem looked to Cuba, particularly Afro-Cuban culture, as a means to protest the lack of electoral democracy before Fidel Castro (1926-) overthrew Fulgencio Batista (1901-1973). Like the younger generation of intellectuals who cut their teeth on theories of decolonization, Rivera sympathized with the oppressed masses across the Caribbean. However, the new generation's acerbic polemics as well as its countercultural aesthetics did not sit well with him. Similar to Baqueiro Foster and Aguirre Beltrán, he saw hope in post-revolutionary democratic rhetoric that intended to engender cultural inclusion, social justice, and pluralist national identity.

### **Inter-American Dialogues**

To wed the history of post-revolutionary Mexico and the African Diaspora, "In Black and Brown" also rethinks the transnational networks and ideational routes that framed how intellectuals across the Americas defined blackness and Africanness. Recent literature on the African Diaspora has been concerned with how local, regional, national, and transnational spaces construct racial and cultural identities.<sup>64</sup> An interest in how

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<sup>63</sup> Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 7. On the political and cultural shift in 1940, also see Gilbert Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov, "Assembling the Fragments: Writing a Cultural History of Mexico Since 1940," in *Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico Since 1940*, eds. Gilbert Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 8-11; and Lomnitz, "Modes of Citizenship in Mexico," 290.

<sup>64</sup> Deborah A. Thomas, *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*; and Jacqueline Nassy Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool* (Princeton: Princeton

intellectuals assign racial markers to spatial landscapes also informs recent studies of nation formation in Mexico and more broadly in Latin America.<sup>65</sup> This project adds an inter-American dimension to what scholars of Mexico and the African Diaspora often consider to be these transnational conversations.<sup>66</sup> Inter-American dialogues and institutions provided intellectuals—such as Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera—with a shared ethnographic and historical language with which to discuss the multiple meanings of blackness, Africanness, and indigeneity across the Americas.<sup>67</sup>

Thinking in hemispheric terms, Mexican cultural historian Ricardo Pérez Montfort claims that

since time immemorial, the vast region that we now recognize as America has been considered as a space relatively identifiable and definable, as much in geographical terms as in cultural ones. . . . Bringing together a collection of diverse ideas-concepts-representations (national, regional, local, etc.), the incorporation of the American voice in dictionaries and encyclopedias, manuals and specialized studies has undergone a long process in order to arrive at the series of beginnings that compose it. These beginnings have had diverse origins—

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University Press, 2005); and Michelle Ann Stephens, *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

<sup>65</sup> Lomnitz-Alder, *Exits from the Labyrinth*; Rubin, *Decentering the Regime*; Mary Kay Vaughan, “Cultural Approaches to Peasant Politics in the Mexican Revolution,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 79, no. 2 (May 1999): 269-305; and Raymond B. Craib, *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). Some of the pioneering studies of race and space in Latin American contexts include Peter Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture: the Dynamics of Racial Identity in Colombia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Nancy P. Appelbaum, *Muddied Waters: Race, Region, and Local History in Colombia, 1846-1948* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); and Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, and Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, eds., *Race & Nation in Modern Latin America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

<sup>66</sup> On these transnational conversations see, Kevin A. Yelvington, ed., *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora*, (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 2006); and Livio Sansone, “Turner, Franklin and Herskovits in the Gantois House of Candomblé: The Transnational Origin of Afro-Brazilian Studies,” *The Black Scholar* 41, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 48-63.

<sup>67</sup> The transmission of racial vocabularies across national borders should not, however, be depicted merely as a form of cultural imperialism. See John D. French, “Translation, Diasporic Dialogue, and the Errors of Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant,” *Nepantla: Views from South* 4, no. 2 (2003): 375-89; and Michael Hanchard, “Acts of Misrecognition: Translational Black Politics, Anti-imperialism and the Ethnocentrism of Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 20, no. 4 (2003): 10-1.

which were established from certain orders of space, history and shared culture—  
from which there is the ability to arrive at an agreement or definition.<sup>68</sup>

Inter-American rhetoric, he concludes, is concerned with the historical roots of the hemisphere's diverse cultural spaces. Drawing on this analysis, "In Black and Brown" defines inter-Americanism as a project that perceived cultural, linguistic, racial, political, and historical similarities across the nations of the Western Hemisphere. From this perspective, it is possible to understand the simultaneous constructions of blackness, Africaness, and indigeneity in local, regional, national, and transnational settings.<sup>69</sup> The construction of these racial identities helped unite the Americas as a discursive, geographic, and political space.<sup>70</sup> Inter-American rhetoric congealed during and immediately after World War II, when intellectuals in the Americas could define the Western Hemisphere—in contrast to the endemic ethnocentrism of the Old World—as a bastion of racial inclusion and democratic pluralism.

Although they have been ensconced in uneven power relationships, inter-American conversations and institutions also increased the dissemination of ethnographic

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<sup>68</sup> Ricardo Pérez Montfort, "Folklore e identidad. Reflexiones sobre una herencia nacionalista en América," in *Avatares del nacionalismo cultural. Cinco ensayos* (México, D.F.: CIDHEM, 2000), 15.

<sup>69</sup> On the need to think about blackness in hemispheric terms, see Hanchard, "Identity, Meaning and the African-American," 31-2; and Anita González, *Afro-Mexico: Dancing Between Myth and Reality* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), 13.

<sup>70</sup> On the construction of the Americas as a singular entity, see Arthur P. Whitaker, *The Western Hemisphere Idea: Its Rise and Decline* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954); Edmundo O'Gorman, *La invención de América. Investigación acerca de la estructura histórica del nuevo mundo y del sentido de su devenir* (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1958); Lewis Hanke, ed., *Do the Americas have A Common History? A Critique of the Bolton Theory*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964); and Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine, "Introduction: Essays Beyond the Nation," in *Hemispheric American Studies*, eds. Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine (Rutgers, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 3-6.

knowledge.<sup>71</sup> In the first half of the twentieth century, progressive writers, poets, artists, anthropologists, and sociologists rejected the nineteenth-century stereotypical views of black peoples and cultures that depicted blackness as backward and uncivilized.<sup>72</sup> They used their own ethnographic observations and historical research as well as the publications of other progressive scholars across the Americas. The act of quoting, paraphrasing, and citing others across forged inter-American ties that filtered into discourses such as the aesthetics of the New Negro Movement and *afrocubanismo* as well as the populist cultural policies of the Getúlio Vargas regime (1930-1945) in Brazil and the post-revolutionary Mexican state apparatus. Such rhetoric depicted Mexico and, more broadly, the Americas as a bastion of democratic politics and cultural inclusion in the wake of World War I and especially during and after World War II. It functioned as means of exchange, cooperation, and genuine creativity that at times engendered more benevolent relations.<sup>73</sup>

Oftentimes the networks surrounding German-born, U.S. anthropologist Franz Boas (1858-1942) and Melville Herskovits linked these transnational networks. Boas's innovative use of ethnographic observation and analysis of physical types helped initiate the cultural rejection of racial hierarchies across the Americas. His Latin American

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<sup>71</sup> On these power dynamics and their importance for Mexican cultural production, see Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, 234-47; and Seth Fein, "Myths of Cultural Imperialism and Nationalism in Golden Age Mexican Cinema," in *Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico Since 1940*, eds. Gilbert Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 159-98.

<sup>72</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black," *Representations*, no. 24 (Autumn, 1988): 129-55; and Kevin A. Yelvington, "The Invention of Africa in Latin America and the Caribbean: Political Discourse and Anthropological Praxis, 1920-1940," in *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues: Anthropology in the Diaspora*, ed. Kevin A. Yelvington (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 2006), 35-82.

<sup>73</sup> David Sheinin, "Rethinking Pan Americanism: An Introduction," in *Beyond the Ideal: Pan Americanism in Inter-American Affairs*, ed. David Sheinin (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2000), 1-8.

students and colleagues, including Gamio and Brazil's Gilberto Freyre (1900-1987), applied his ethnographic praxis to their national projects.<sup>74</sup> While Boas's work rethought the study of black and indigenous cultures, Herskovits's ethnographies recast the nature of African-descended cultures across the Americas. Beginning as student of Boas and a participant in the New Negro Movement, he eventually conversed with Freyre about African cultures in Brazil, engaged in heated debates with *afrocubanista* intellectual Fernando Ortiz (1880-1969), and mentored Aguirre Beltrán.<sup>75</sup>

Analyzing these networks, scholars acknowledge that there were discursive and political parallels between the remaking of indigenous identities in nations like Mexico and black identities in ones like Cuba, Brazil, and the United States.<sup>76</sup> By examining the routes to racial identification rather than the roots of national cultures, these transnational inquiries question the enduring, parochial, and oftentimes exceptionalist tendencies that have typified the study nationalist ideologies and cultures across the Americas.<sup>77</sup>

However, they do not examine how the discursive recasting of blackness and indigeneity

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<sup>74</sup> Thomas E. Skidmore, "Racial Ideas and Social Policy in Brazil, 1870-1940," in *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940*, ed. Richard Graham (Austin Texas: University of Texas Press, 1990), 17-8; and Guillermo de la Peña, "Nacionales y extranjeros en la historia de la antropología en mexicana," in *La Historia de la antropología en México: Fuentes y transmisión*, comp. Mechthild Rutsch (Mexico: Plaza y Valdés, S.A. de C.V., 1996), 42-72.

<sup>75</sup> On Herskovits's intellectual network, see Yelvington, "The Invention of Africa in Latin America and the Caribbean," 35-82.

<sup>76</sup> Matory. *Black Atlantic Religion*, 10-1; Mauricio Tenorio Trillo, "Stereophonic Scientific Modernisms: Social Science between Mexico and the United States, 1880s-1930s," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (December 1999): 1174; David Luis-Brown, *Waves of Decolonization: Discourses of Race and Hemispheric Citizenship in Cuba, Mexico, and the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Roseblatt, "Other Americas," 603-41; and Frank Andre Guridy, *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Empire and Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 108-9.

<sup>77</sup> Guridy, *Forging Diaspora*, 4-7 and 108-9. Also see Appelbaum, Macpherson, and Roseblatt, *Race & Nation in Modern Latin America*; Micol Seigel, "Beyond Compare: Comparative Method after the Transnational Turn," *Radical History Review* 91 (Winter 2005): 62-7; and López, *Crafting Mexico*, 95-126.

was in constant dialogue with the hemispheric, and often modernist, remapping of racial landscapes and cultural practices.<sup>78</sup>

“In Black and Brown” places these intellectual networks about indigeneity and blackness in national and inter-American contexts that unite them. By looking across racial categories, I show how the refashioning of blackness and Africanness in Mexico influenced the nationalist constructions indigeneity and *mestizaje* after the Mexican Revolution. This perspective also explains why Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera looked abroad for exemplary ethnographies about black and African-descended cultures. By comparing their data with the observations made by other ethnographers in the Western Hemisphere, they found similar cultural practices and musical forms that corroborated the African ancestry of certain local communities and verified the African cultural influences in vernacular and popular cultures.

Certain scholars, like anthropologist Herskovits and Ortiz, were instrumental in shaping Baqueiro Foster’s, Aguirre Beltrán’s, and Rivera’s analyses of Africanness. Even though only Aguirre Beltrán personally knew Herskovits, Herskovits’s discussions of African cultural retentions filtered into the study of black and indigenous music in Mexico and other American nations. Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera each voraciously read Ortiz’s publications as they compared his ideas with their own ethnographic pursuits. Publications by and discussions of other intellectuals—such as U.S. ethnomusicologist Charles Seeger (1886-1979) as well as Cuban novelist and ethnomusicologist Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980)—also waded in and out of some of their

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<sup>78</sup> For a critique of the desire to divide nations according to their black or indigenous roots, see Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*, 25; and Barbara Weinstein, “Erecting and Erasing Boundaries: Can We Combine the ‘Indo’ and the ‘Afro’ in Latin American Studies?,” *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe* 19, no. 1 (Enero-Junio 2008): np.

libraries, scrapbooks, and published treatises. As a result of how they read and responded to these ethnographic texts, Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera were inter-American intellectuals. They perceived cultural and historical bonds across the nations of the Americas. Through institutions such as the PAU and the III, Baqueiro Foster and Aguirre Beltrán discussed blackness, Africanness, and indigeneity on a hemispheric plane if not on the world stage. The rapid increase of inter-American institutions during and immediately after World War II made it easier for Mexican scholars to become aware of the ethnographic search for African cultural retentions. While not ensconced in these organizations, Rivera also found connections between black cultures in Mexico and Cuba when he read the ethnographic works of Ortiz and Carpentier along with the ethnographically-inspired poetry of Nicolas Guillén (1902-1989).

Because Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera had similar cultural and political goals, their writings were part of the same nationalist conversations. However, their disparate spatial orientations, disciplinary perspectives, and discursive registers prevented them from quoting, citing, or collaborating with each other. At best Aguirre Beltrán's condemnation of Mexican musicologists could be read as a critique of Baqueiro Foster. Their ideational genealogies overlapped more at the inter-American level than at the national one. Even if the recasting of black cultures sat somewhat at the edges of Mexican nation formation, it operated at the center of the hemispheric ethnographic constructions of blackness, Africanness, and indigeneity.



## Sources and Chapter Outlines

Like all intellectual histories, this project examines the published and unpublished works of Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera in addition to their personal and institutional correspondences. The availability of Aguirre Beltrán's and Rivera's personal libraries along with Baqueiro Foster's voluminous scrapbook collection makes it easier to perceive the intellectual worldviews and ideational histories (particularly for Rivera, whose poems lack citations and footnotes) that permeate their texts. These archival sources made Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera ideal subjects for this historical inquiry.

As various chapters explain, other Mexican anthropologists, historians, musicologists, and ethnomusicologists also ruminated about blackness and Africanness. However, their discussions were often not as coherent, frequent, or developed as those by Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera. These much more fragmented and ephemeral conversations about black cultures prefigure, contextualize, and enhance the constructions of blackness and Africanness by Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera. They help illustrate how the pluralist ethnographic inquiries that encountered black cultures in the 1920s and 1930s paved the way for the inclusion of African and Afro-Caribbean cultures after 1940. Other times, these more parenthetical discussions of black and African-descended cultures help weave together the multiple—sometimes overlapping but often mutually exclusive—genealogies about race and culture in the Western Hemisphere.

In tracing the construction of African-descended cultural identities, “In Black and Brown” focuses on the anthropological and ethnomusicological circles in the Americas

that informed Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera. I use ethnomusicological definitions of vernacular and popular cultures, since these intellectuals shared an interest in music and since, as Seth Fein argues, music was “a pervasive symbol of inter-American cohesion.”<sup>79</sup> Similarly, because “In Black and Brown” emphasizes the ways in which intellectuals assigned racial signifiers to spatial identities, I define vernacular and popular cultures in relation to the spatial concept of the local.<sup>80</sup> There are no clear demarcations among vernacular, popular, folkloric, and classical music, or what music scholars call art music. Ethnomusicologists often depict these concepts along a continuum, for instance, from vernacular (or folkloric) to classical music.<sup>81</sup> I use the term vernacular in place of folkloric to remove myself from the latter’s association with early-twentieth-century populist cultural projects that were buttressed by discourses about primitiveness and cultural authenticity.<sup>82</sup> In “In Black and Brown,” vernacular signifies the culture of any clearly-demarcated locality or region: urban or rural; indigenous, black, *mestizo*, or white. Vernacular culture becomes popular culture when people outside of the

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<sup>79</sup> Seth Fein, “Hollywood and United States-Mexico Relations in the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, December 1996), 491.

<sup>80</sup> On the relationship between space and musical terms, see Sydney Hutchinson, “*Típico, folklórico or popular?* Musical categories, place, and identity in a transnational listening community,” *Popular Music* 30, no. 2 (2011): 245-62.

<sup>81</sup> Bruno Nettl, “I’ve Never Heard a Horse Sing,” in *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and Concepts* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 303-5.

<sup>82</sup> On this use of folklore in Latin America, see Corrine A. Pernet, “For the Genuine Culture of the Americas: Musical Folklore, Popular Arts, and the Cultural Politics of Pan Americanisms, 1933-1950,” in *Decentering America: Explorations in Culture and International History*, ed. Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 134-40.

community practice or perform it, listen to or watch it, and give it cultural, social, and symbolic value that transcends any single locale or region.<sup>83</sup>

While I organized the chapters of “In Black and Brown” in roughly chronological order, I jump between the works of Baqueiro Foster and Aguirre Beltrán. Other scholars, particularly Herskovits and Ortiz, move in and out of the various intellectual dialogues that shape this project. While Rivera participated in these inter-American conversations, his published and archival source base is more limited. Being a local intellectual who did not have institutional resources to pay for international travel or to access large academic libraries, his intellectual milieu was more confined and thus so is his chapter. The chapters on Baqueiro Foster and Aguirre Beltrán can thus be read in two ways. If they are read according to chronology (more or less in the order presented), the overlapping ethnographic themes and debates between anthropology and ethnomusicology are more evident. If the chapters are selectively read out of order, they can be read according to the disciplinary trajectory of how Baqueiro Foster and Aguirre Beltrán each constructed blackness as Mexican.

The first two chapters of “In Black and Brown” examine the culturally pluralist construction of blackness before 1940. Chapter 1 examines how, between 1909 and 1940, Mexican intellectuals and, to a lesser degree, progressive scholars in the United States moved from seeing black peoples and cultures as irrelevant to constructing them as historical actors in the colonial past and part of Mexico’s contemporary cultural landscape. In outlining this discursive shift, this chapter also points to the importance of

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<sup>83</sup> For a description of vernacular culture and its relationship to modern culture, popular culture, and national culture, see Archie Green, “Vernacular Music: A Naming Compass,” *The Musical Quarterly* 77, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 35-46; Margaret Lantis, “Vernacular Culture,” *American Anthropologist* 62, no. 2 (Apr. 1960): 202-7; and Holt N. Parker “Toward a Definition of Popular Culture,” *History and Theory* 50 (May 2011): 147-70.

ethnographic exchange among U.S. and Mexican anthropologists and historians that resulted from Boasian ethnographic thought. Beginning with discussions about the relationship between indigenous vernacular music and modern art music, chapter 2 examines how Mexican composers and ethnomusicologists—especially Chávez and Baqueiro Foster—used ethnography to integrate black music into Mexico’s modernist canon. In this transnational setting, it examines how Baqueiro Foster studied the *huapango* and wrote *Huapangos* for Chávez’s MoMA concert series in New York City in 1940.

While these two chapters focus on how Mexican intellectuals constructed blackness as Mexican in a transnational space, the rest of “In Black and Brown” examines the constructions of African-descended and Afro-Caribbean cultures as Mexican. Chapter 3 looks at how Mexico (as an inter-American institutional site) and Mexican intellectuals became part of the hemispheric discussions about blackness and eventually Africanness. It traces how Mexican intellectuals engaged with the cultural polemics about black cultures and African cultural retentions that emerged in the New Negro Movement and *afrocubanismo*. It argues that, by the mid-1940s, Mexico was a site for inter-American discussions about African-descended cultures. It also contends that these inter-American conversations and institutions ensconced Mexican intellectuals, like Aguirre Beltrán, in heated debates about African cultural survivals and the controversial theory of acculturation that Herskovits used to study these African retentions.

Chapter 4 examines how inter-American institutions—like the Seeger’s Music Division of the PAU—united musicologists, ethnomusicologists, and composers to discuss black, African, and indigenous music in the Americas. Through these inter-

American channels, Baqueiro Foster as well as musicologist Otto Mayer-Serra (1904-1968) expanded the boundaries of Mexican vernacular and popular music to include African-descended music that could be found in Cuba and Colombia. This chapter also shows how Baqueiro Foster's *Huapangos*, which he had renamed *Suite Veracruzana, No. 1*, was integrated into the Afro-Diasporic performances of Katherine Dunham (1909-2006), one of Herskovits's former students. Like chapter 3, it demonstrates how Mexican intellectuals entered into hemispheric conversations concerned with the African Diaspora.

Chapters 5 and 6 return to Aguirre Beltrán. Chapter 5 examines how Aguirre Beltrán adopted Herskovits's theory of acculturation and used it to integrate Mexico's slave population into Mexican *mestizaje* in *La población negra de México, 1519-1810* in 1946. It concludes by showing how he continued this project by looking for African cultural survivals in the community of Cuijla, Guerrero, in the late 1940s. Chapter 6 examines how Aguirre Beltrán moved from emphasizing pure African cultural retentions in the late 1940s to emphasizing a more syncretic concept of blackness and Africanness by the time he published a new edition of *La población negra de México* in 1972. To make this argument, it traces how he rethought the paradigm of acculturation when, after 1949, he wedded the research on blackness and Africanness to Mexico's *indigenista* project.

Finally, chapter 7 interprets Rivera's poetry, particularly his two editions of *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha*, through his reading of *afrocubanista* texts by Ortiz and Carpentier. This chapter examines how he poetically linked the Afro-Cuban *danzón* to Mexico's revolutionary democratic promises and then yearned for a return to the city's democratic *danzonera* heritage, both of which—he argued—had been lost by

1940. This chapter contends that his hope in 1957 for a more culturally and politically democratic Mexico waned as he became more pessimistic by the 1970s. This verse illustrates that Rivera's popular critique of the PRI's post-revolutionary cultural politics embraced the same *afrocubanista* cultural and intellectual projects that informed Baqueiro Foster's and Aguirre Beltrán's constructions of Africanness.

The conclusion briefly traces how Aguirre Beltrán's and Rivera's constructions of blackness have been appropriated by national and local government institutions respectively. It shows how their constructions of African-descended cultural identities have garnered attention while others, including Baqueiro Foster's, have been eschewed. This chapter then ties the multiple intellectual routes and democratic ideologies that informed the multiple constructions of blackness and Africanness in Mexico together.

## Chapter 1: “Black Physical Characteristics Have Disappeared”: Blackness, *Mestizaje*, and Social Justice, 1909-1940

In 1921, Mexican historian Alfonso Toro (1873) asserted that most “black physical characteristics have disappeared” from the national population. This statement drew on the assumption that Mexico’s colonial black slave population had racially mixed with the surrounding indigenous and European populations to such a degree that no black people remained.<sup>1</sup> Writing for anthropologist Manuel Gamio’s journal *Ethnos*, Toro asserted that a black revolutionary character still pervaded Mexico’s national consciousness even after *mestizaje* washed away the black body. The proclivity for blacks to rebel against their slave owners, he attested, echoed the radical sentiments of the Revolution of 1910 and left an indelible mark on the nation’s insurgent spirit.

Toro’s discussion of blackness emerged from the post-revolutionary desire to study, classify, and understand Mexico’s indigenous population. It was one of the first treatises that situated black identity within the discussions of *mestizaje* that previously had been characterized by the fusion of indigenous and Spanish peoples and cultures. This chapter argues that national and transnational conversations about Mexico’s indigenous and *mestizo* populations constructed multiple definitions of black culture and the black body. It begins by analyzing how the foundational texts of post-revolutionary nation formation eschewed blackness and Africanness on the eve of the Mexican Revolution and throughout the 1910s. While the remaking of indigeneity and *mestizaje*

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<sup>1</sup> Lic. Alfonso Toro, “Influencia de la raza negra en la formación del pueblo mexicano,” *Ethnos: revista dedicada al estudio y mejoramiento de la población indígena de México*, tomo 1, núms. 8-12 (Noviembre 1920 a Marzo 1921): 218.

began immediately before the Mexican Revolution commenced, intellectuals like Toro did not begin to reconstruct blackness until the 1920s. Although blackness was not at the forefront of these nationalist ethnographic projects, studies of black identity helped Mexican and U.S. intellectuals bolster post-revolutionary rhetoric about social justice and democratic cultural pluralism. By the 1930s, these relativist discourses permeated Mexican historiography when Marxist historians concerned with cross-race class analysis integrated black slaves into the nation's colonial history of subaltern resistance. These constructions of blackness as Mexican illustrated many of the ideological fractures and convergences that sustained ethnographic and historical debates about how homogenous or heterogeneous Mexican *mestizaje* should be throughout the twentieth century.

### **Liberal Thought and the Disappearance of Blackness to 1920**

Toro's discussion of a black revolutionary spirit in twentieth-century Mexico rejected earlier nationalist discussions of blackness. In the decades before his essay, Mexican historians and anthropologists utilized the idea of racial disappearance and black inferiority to erase, eschew, or ignore blackness. As late as 1916, these discourses drew on nineteenth-century thought that deemed black peoples incapable of having a culture or being an agent of historical change.<sup>2</sup> In 1836, liberal José María Luis Mora (1794-1850) declared that Mexico's black population "had almost completely disappeared." The few who remained along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts were "entirely insignificant."<sup>3</sup> When

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<sup>2</sup> Herman L. Bennett, "The Subject in the Plot: National Boundaries and the 'History' of the Black Atlantic," *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (April 2000): 102-3.

<sup>3</sup> José María Luis Mora, *México y sus revoluciones* (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1986), quoted in Ben Vinson III, "La historia del estudio de los negros e México," in *Afroméxico. El pulso de la población negra en México: una historia recordada, olvidada y vuelta a recorda*, by Ben Vinson III and Bobby Vaughn, trad. Clara García Ayluardo (México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004), 38.



nineteenth-century nationalists, like Mora, mentioned black peoples—they did not want to integrate them as historical agents into Mexican history. Instead, they discussed blackness to address the horrors of Spanish colonial rule and to inveigh against all forms of racial classification.

This political ideology explains how and why historian Vicente Riva Palacio (1832-1896) discussed blackness in his historical accounts of Mexico. Racial identification (which included black slaves and their racially-mixed descendants), he argued, was an obstacle to his desire to craft a racially and culturally homogenous nation built upon “universal fraternity.” Through *mestizaje*, elites could create a racially-mixed society that would rid the nation of its atavistic African roots.<sup>4</sup> In spite of this racist depiction of African civilization, he wove the history of African-descended peoples—particularly an account of the runaway slave community led by Gaspar Yanga—into Mexico’s colonial past in order to depict the brutal and atomizing nature of Spanish colonial subjugation.<sup>5</sup>

The collectively-written *El libro rojo* [*The Red Book*] (1870) included Riva Palacio’s “Los treinta y tres negros [The Thirty Three Blacks],” his first published account of Yanga.<sup>6</sup> Embracing nineteenth-century liberal rhetoric, he asserted that

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<sup>4</sup> Vicente Riva Palacio, *El vireinato. Historia de la dominación española en México desde 1521 á 1808*, in *México a través de los siglos. Historia general y completa del desenvolvimiento social, político, religioso, militar, artístico, científico y literario de México desde la antigüedad más remota hasta la época actual*, vol. 2, directed by Vicente Riva Palacio (México: Ballezá y comp. Editores, 1888-9), 471-2.

<sup>5</sup> Vincent, *The Legacy of Vicente Guerrero*, 208 and 236-46; and Ben Vinson, III, “La historia del estudio de los negros en México,” in *Afroméxico. El pulso de la población negra en México: una historia recordada, olvidada y vuelta a recorda*, by Ben Vinson III and Bobby Vaughn, trans. Clara García Ayuardo (México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004), 43-4.

<sup>6</sup> On *El libro rojo*, see Claudio Lomntiz, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 241.

African-born slaves “thought about liberty, not only because the love of liberty is innate in the heart, but also in order to flee from the barbaric treatments that they were exposed to every day and all day.” Unable to buy their own freedom, they fled to the mountains and jungles. The leader of these black runaways—“the spirit of this revolution,” as Riva Palacio poetically described him—was Yanga. After fighting Yanga and his followers to a draw, the Spanish colonial government decided to grant the community its freedom. Riva Palacio continued the story with a vignette from three years later. In 1612, Spaniards living in and around Mexico City feared that the black population would revolt and consequently convinced the Spanish authorities to kill thirty-three black slaves. Based on archival research, Riva Palacio admitted that this slave conspiracy might not have existed and concluded that the murder and dismemberment of these slaves was “one of the most terrible executions that there has been in memory.” Although the narrative focused on black slaves and sympathized with their inhumane treatment, it argued that the Spanish colonial system, particularly its use of racial identifiers, only bred fear and violence; racial classification could not generate a unified Mexican nationality.<sup>7</sup>

Other liberal ideologues were even less concerned with Mexico’s black population. With the publication of *Evolución política del pueblo mexicano* [*Political Evolution of the Mexican Community*] between 1900 and 1902, Porfirian historian Justo Sierra (1848-1912) synthesized this liberal narrative and its distaste for Spanish *casta* divisions. Unlike Riva Palacio, he made no mention of Mexico’s African slave population or of the abolition of slavery.<sup>8</sup> The Mexican nation, he claimed, was “born of

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<sup>7</sup> Vicente Riva Palacio, “Los treinta y tres negros,” in *El Libro Rojo, 1520-1867*, tomo 1, eds. Vicente Riva Palacio, et. al. (México: A Pola, 1905), 351-68.

<sup>8</sup> Ramos, “Black Mexico,” 102-3.

the two races:” the Indian and the Spaniard.<sup>9</sup> Drawing on positivist evolutionary theories, he wanted to unite the nation and civilize the indigenous population through public education and improved nutrition.<sup>10</sup> This homogenizing concept of *mestizaje* ignored blackness and saw the fusion of indigenous and Spanish peoples as the foundation for national progress.<sup>11</sup>

Even though positivist-lawyer and sociologist Andrés Molina Enríquez (1865-1940) repeated this notion of *mestizaje* in 1909, he marginally reintroduced blackness in order to affirm its historical insignificance. His canonical text *Los grandes problemas nacionales* [*The Grand National Problems*] (1909) established social and political parameters for how post-revolutionary intellectuals would eventually articulate Mexico’s agrarian problem.<sup>12</sup> He envisioned a united *mestizo* nation that was buttressed by linguistic, physiological, evolutionary, and cultural homogeneity. Despite asserting that European nations had achieved the highest degree of social development, he did not want nineteenth-century social engineering projects to modernize Mexico through European immigration. Any attempt to Europeanize Mexican society would inhibit the unification of the diverse physical and cultural types that populated the nation. These processes would craft a European society rather than a *mestizo* one.<sup>13</sup> Like Sierra and other pre-

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<sup>9</sup> Justo Sierra, *Evolución política del pueblo mexicano* (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1986), 67.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Kay Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880-1928* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1982), 22-4; and Basave Benítez, *México mestizo*, 34.

<sup>11</sup> Charles A. Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 238.

<sup>12</sup> Kourí, “Interpreting the Expropriation of Indian Pueblo Lands in Porfirian Mexico,” 82 and 104-10.

<sup>13</sup> Andrés Molina Enríquez, *Los grandes problemas nacionales [1909] [y otros textos, 1911-1919]*, octava reimpression (México: Ediciones Era, 1997), 323, 406-10; and Basave Benítez, *México mestizo*, 58.

revolutionary intellectuals, he believed that indigenous uplift was the only way to forge a modern nation.<sup>14</sup>

Following dominant nineteenth-century ideas about history and racial evolution, Molina Enríquez generally relegated any discussion of African civilizations to the marginal, ahistorical peoples who were deemed to be irrelevant to national and global politics. However, his discussion of racial mixture during the colonial period implicitly identified the African-descended slave population as a root of the national populace. *Mestizaje* was a historical and cultural consequence of colonial-era demographics. Because few Spanish women initially settled in the region, male colonists had to reproduce with indigenous women. Indigenous communities, he claimed, suffered “profound modification or disappearance with the first crossing with whichever race or caste of European, African, or Asian origin.” Admitting that black slaves had been present in colonial Yucatán, he implied that there were some African biological elements and cultural traits in the *mestizo* population.<sup>15</sup> However, he failed to explain this vague connection between Africanness and *mestizaje*. As a form of “modification or disappearance,” *mestizaje* could destroy the indigenous population; it could presumably do the same to Mexico’s African-descended population.

In regard to the diversity of racial groups in Mexico, he contended that Mexico “can be divided into various general elements that we have called race and that present, of course, very large differences of separation. These elements are: the indigenous, the creole, and the mestizo: the black [negro] is insignificant.” This perspective carried over

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<sup>14</sup> Molina Enríquez, *Los grandes problemas nacionales*, 357-415. Also see Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico*, 217-8.

<sup>15</sup> Molina Enríquez, *Los grandes problemas nacionales*, 284 and 339.

into his analysis of world politics, where Africa and Oceania “do not signify anything now nor did they signify anything for many centuries in international politics.”<sup>16</sup> Based on the trivial role that blacks played in history and diplomacy, Molina Enríquez downplayed the question of black migrants from the United States and the Caribbean, especially Cuba, who were entering Mexico in the decades before the Mexican Revolution.<sup>17</sup>

Other pre-revolutionary nationalists were more concerned with black immigration and, in particular, Mexico’s new immigration laws that declared that immigrants could not be denied entry because of race.<sup>18</sup> Rejecting the idea that all racial groups were inherently equal, xenophobic Porfirian intellectual Alberto M. Carreño spoke to the Sociedad de Geografía y Estadística [Mexican Geographic and Statistic Society] on April 28, 1910 about what he considered to be “the *black threat*.” Blacks, he claimed, were “lazy and indolent” laborers who were prone to criminality. Similar to Molina Enríquez’s passing references of black peoples, he proclaimed that they “lack history,” “intellectual development,” and therefore “remain stationary” or “descend into barbarism.” Bereft of any positive traits to offer the Mexican nation, these immigrants only hindered the social and cultural advancement of the indigenous population.<sup>19</sup> Rather than ignore black

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 378 and 435.

<sup>17</sup> Horne, *Black and Brown*, 12-24; Juárez Hernández, *Persistencias culturales afrocaribeñas en Veracruz*, 191-265.

<sup>18</sup> “Exposición de motivos,” in “Ley de Inmigración 1909,” in *Compilación Histórica de la Legislación Migratoria en México, 1821-2002*, tercera edición, corregida y aumentada (México: Secretaría de Gobernación, 2002), 109.

<sup>19</sup> Alberto María Carreño, *El peligro negro* (México: Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística, 1910), 4 and 8.

peoples, Carreño—like Molina Enríquez—explicitly discussed them in order to discredit blackness.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1910s, progressive anthropologist Manuel Gamio also eschewed blackness as he rethought the belief that national modernity required racial and cultural homogeneity. Influenced by U.S. anthropologist Franz Boas, he situated ethnographic observation—especially the idea that cultural practices could be ascribed to a particular region—at the center of post-revolutionary nation formation. This project began in 1909 when Boas brought Gamio to Columbia University to get a Masters Degree.<sup>21</sup> Then in 1911, Boas traveled to Mexico to establish the International School of American Archeology and Ethnology. This hemispheric institution, Boas hoped, would enhance his project to study the cultures of the Americas (and, more generally, all of the great civilizations across the globe). Like many inter-American institutions, it also aspired to unite scholars across the Western Hemisphere who rejected racist sentiments.<sup>22</sup>

Boas believed that there was no inherent link between biology and culture. Theories about cultural and racial hierarchies could not be linked to human physiology.<sup>23</sup> Methodologically, he promulgated the idea that ethnographic analysis had to be rooted in empirically-validated claims. Historical and ethnographic inquiries—particularly the idea that all cultural behaviors were bound to distinct localities in specific moments in time—

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<sup>20</sup> This was a common practice in the circum-Caribbean world; see Lara Putnam, *Radical Moves: Caribbean Migrants and the Politics of Race in the Jazz Age* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 82-122.

<sup>21</sup> Mechthild Rutsch, *Entre el campo y el gabinete. Nacionales y extranjeros en la profesionalización de la antropología Mexicana (1877-1920)* (México, D.F.: INAH, 2007), 243-6. On Gamio's time in New York City, see Ángeles González Gamio, *Manuel Gamio. Una lucha sin final*, segunda edición (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2003), 38-44.

<sup>22</sup> Rutsch, *Entre el campo y el gabinete*, 199 and 227-53.

<sup>23</sup> Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man*, 2<sup>nd</sup> paperback edition (New York: The Free Press, 1966).

provided an alternative to the predominant armchair theories of human development that did not require first-hand observation.<sup>24</sup> The desire to ascribe cultural traits to a particular place informed the concept of a culture area, or a geographic region where a cultural trait was present. Although the idea is not principally associated with Boas, the culture area provided him with a new way to conceptualize the practice of cultural traits: he could map the diffusion of indigenous cultural patterns and languages.<sup>25</sup>

In Mexican anthropology, Gamio's ideas have represented Boas's most enduring legacy.<sup>26</sup> Under his mentor's instruction and the institutional auspices of the International School, Gamio investigated the indigenous community of Atzacpotzalco (which today is part of Mexico City) to expand the knowledge of regional "cultural zones" across the nation.<sup>27</sup> As the Director of Archeology at the International School in 1914, he began to research the pre-Columbian metropolis of Teotihuacán. In response to the revolutionary violence and political hostility, he wrote his own treatise on Mexican nation formation, *Forjando patria (pro-nacionalismo)* [*Forging the Nation (Pro-Nationalism)*], in 1916.

It outlined an ethnographic project—the cultural classification of the entire national populace—that, he hoped, would facilitate the cultural development of the Mexican people and allow the post-revolutionary state to unite and govern the nation.

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<sup>24</sup> George W. Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: the Free Press, 1968), 210-2.

<sup>25</sup> On the culture area, see R. Lee Lyman and Michael J. O'Brien, "Cultural Traits: Units of Analysis in Early Twentieth-Century Anthropology," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 59, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 229-30. On Boas's use of it, see Regina Darnell, *And along came Boas: Continuity and Revolution in Americanist Anthropology* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1998), 45-67.

<sup>26</sup> de la Peña "Nacionales y extranjeros en la historia de la antropología mexicana," 42-72; and Claudio Lomnitz, "Bordering on Anthropology: Dialectics of a National Tradition," in *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 250.

<sup>27</sup> Manuel Gamio. "Apuntes para la monografía de la Zona Arqueológica de Atzacpotzalco. Características de Zonas Culturales. 1918," 298.-1, Tomo XLI, INAH DF Varios (1918-1945), INAH-AT-CNA.

Despite his personal and intellectual relationship with Boas, Gamio's nationalistic goals and desire to mix indigenous cultures into a *mestizo* nation radically transformed Boasian thought into a politically-driven project to create a national citizenry.<sup>28</sup> In spite of the lofty desire to break cultural analysis from the study of race, his discussion of *mestizaje* did not fully dissociate race from his stereotyped cultural analyses.<sup>29</sup> For instance, he argued that Mexico's *mestizo* ethos—particularly its rebellious nature—had already helped to overthrow the Spanish and most recently removed Porfirio Díaz from power.<sup>30</sup>

Although he wanted Mexico to become racially and culturally homogenous, Gamio rooted his concept of *mestizaje* in cultural pluralism. This desire for national homogeneity derived from his idealized understanding of European politics. Culturally, linguistically, and racially homogenous nations in Europe, he claimed, could modernize more efficiently than heterogeneous ones. But, because a purely European aesthetic had not successfully permeated indigenous cultures during the colonial period, the formation of a more hybrid culture would be the most efficacious manner to forge the nation.<sup>31</sup> As a mixture of indigenous, *mestizo*, and European cultures and populations, Mexico's heterogeneity was a product of the cultural practices, geographic conditions, and historical contingencies that typified every locale. "Each community," he declared,

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<sup>28</sup> de la Peña "Nacionales y extranjeros en la historia de la antropología mexicana," 59-62 and 72; and Brading "Manuel Gamio and Official Indigenismo," 77.

<sup>29</sup> Dawson, *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico*, xvi and 6-16; and López, *Crafting Mexico*, 42.

<sup>30</sup> Manuel Gamio, *Forjando patria (pro nacionalismo)* (México: Librería de Porrúa Hermanos, 1916), 172-3.

<sup>31</sup> Gamio, *Forjando patria*, especially 10-20 and 172. Also see Manuel Gamio, *Traduction of the Introduction, Synthesis and Conclusions of the Work The Population of the Valley of Teotihuacan*, Reprint of Dissertation in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Philosophy, Columbia University, New York, U.S., pgs I to C; Volume 1, Tome 1(Mexico: Talleres Graficos de la Nacion, 1922), 2.



“possesses the culture that is inherent in their ethnic-social nature and in the physical and biological conditions of the land that they inhabit.”<sup>32</sup>

Gamio defined Mexican unity through an overarching system that embraced local cultural difference.<sup>33</sup> Using the Yucatán as a regional metonym for the nation, he wanted Mexico to have a “happy fusion of races” where, for instance, everyone presumably knew Spanish, but some bilingual indigenous Yucatecans more frequently spoke Mayan.<sup>34</sup> Integration and unity should “be proportionally beneficial” to all sectors of Mexican society “and not only to the elements of the white race, as has happened until today.” This pluralist concept of social justice and ethnic heterogeneity required that the state apparatus not only maintain but also “facilitate the spontaneous development of their [regional and ethnic] genuine expressions, collaborating discretely in the evolutionary fusion—not artificial—of theirs with that of the race that until now has dominated.”<sup>35</sup>

Gamio defined *mestizaje* as the process of mixing European and indigenous stocks. But unlike his predecessors, he discussed indigeneity, *mestizaje*, and blackness without any mention of innate racial or cultural inferiority. He perceived Mexican history as a process of European colonization and the subsequent creation of two communities: one indigenous and the other a fusion of European and indigenous stocks. This schematic understanding of Mexican history ignored the nation’s black ancestry but did not

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<sup>32</sup> Gamio, *Forjando patria*, 168-7 and 185.

<sup>33</sup> Poole, “An Image of ‘Our Indian:’” 67-72; and López, *Crafting Mexico*, 131 and 145.

<sup>34</sup> Gamio, *Forjando patria*, 19. On bilingualism, see Claude Fell, *José Vasconcelos. Los años del águila (1920-1925). Educación, cultura e iberoamericanismo en el México postrevolucionario* (México: Universidad Autónoma de México, 1989), 209.

<sup>35</sup> Gamio, *Forjando patria*, 311, 314-6, and 325.

explicitly disparage black peoples or cultures. Because of their “important influences” on Mexican life, Gamio connected Mexico’s past and present to the people of Central America, the United States, South America, Spain, and France. In holistic terms, he classified the rest of the world, including Africa, as part of “the history of the other countries in general, no matter how remote or close, because all peoples are influenced by each other.”<sup>36</sup> His cultural analysis did not mention Africa or the slave trade, let alone any black (or African) presence in Mexico. Africa, its peoples, and its cultures had no place within Gamio’s framework for understanding Mexican history or contemporary society.

Soon after Gamio wrote *Forjando patria*, post-revolutionary nation formation began to develop around the language of the Constitution of 1917 and the templates for *mestizaje* that Molina Enríquez and Gamio articulated. As part of the increasing nationalist zeal, Molina Enríquez helped to write Article 27, which gave the federal government the ability to take land and distribute it as communal landholdings.<sup>37</sup> While Molina Enríquez’s ideas gradually acquired legal currency, the ethnographic methods that Gamio espoused became a point of departure for state institutions, such as the Dirección de Antropología [Bureau of Anthropology], and anthropological publications. Although it was part of the emerging post-revolutionary consensus, the Bureau also had a history dating back to the Mexican Delegation at the Second Pan-American Congress in Washington DC in 1915 and 1916. There, the Delegation intended for the Bureau to be an anthropological institute for the qualitative study of the physical types, languages, civilization and culture, and the environment—what was called “regional physico-

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 112-3.

<sup>37</sup> Kourí, “Interpreting the Expropriation of Indian Pueblo Lands in Porfirian Mexico,” 104-10.

biology.”<sup>38</sup> Not coincidentally, the latent inter-Americanism that undergirded Boas’s International School and Gamio’s Bureau also permeated Mexico’s post-revolutionary cultural project to refashion indigeneity and *mestizaje*. The ethnographic and historical analysis of all communities, Gamio claimed, would further the inter-American desire to understand the histories and cultures of the Western Hemisphere, spur harmonic international relations, and create a more inclusive national culture.<sup>39</sup>

### ***Mestizaje* and the Trope of Disappearance**

Gamio was mainly concerned with how to integrate the indigenous populations that had undergone “a continuous and spontaneous process of fusion, intermixture, substitution and elimination” during the colonial period. During the nineteenth century, he claimed that liberal elites had “almost entirely forgotten” the needs of these communities.<sup>40</sup> The fear that these communities might disappear—whether through economic modernization or *mestizaje*—shaped his desire to integrate the indigenous population into the nation. These concerns also resonated with modernist intellectuals in Mexico and the United States who were preoccupied with the disappearance all non-Western cultures. The trope of racial and cultural disappearance often provided a common perspective for post-revolutionary discussions of indigeneity, *mestizaje*, and blackness in Mexico.

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<sup>38</sup> Anónimo, “Reglamento interior de la Dirección de Antropología,” pg. 1-3, 1436.-8, *Leyes y Estudios para formular la ‘Ley Sobre PROTECCION y Conservación de Monumentos Arqueológicos y Históricos y su reglamento’*. 1896-1926, Tomo CLXXXII, INAH-AT-CNA.

<sup>39</sup> Gamio, *Forjando patria*, 28.

<sup>40</sup> Manuel Gamio, *Traduction of the Introduction, Synthesis and Conclusions of the Work The Population of the Valley of Teotihuacan*, xiii and xxxiii.

These discourses were part of the global modernist crusade to forge new aesthetics that responded to, if not lamented, the standardization of everyday life through the mass media and commercialization.<sup>41</sup> Amid a rapidly modernizing world, modernist scholars and artists rethought the meaning of the primitive so that it was not just a synonym for non-Western peoples who had not yet attained Western cultural modernity. Although the movement had many ideological and aesthetic strands, its intellectuals generally studied and appropriated the vernacular cultures of Asian, African, Indian, racially-mixed, and oftentimes (in the United States and Europe) rural white communities in their artistic forms and ethnographic narratives. These projects rebutted the absolutist racial hierarchies that pervaded nineteenth-century thought, but they also maintained certain evolutionary trajectories. They straddled the line between romantically glorifying the vernacular and reaffirming racist stereotypes of it.<sup>42</sup>

The redefinition of vernacular cultures through ethnographic and historical studies produced these tensions. To be valid inspirations for modern art, music, and ethnography, local cultures had to be considered worthy of modernist displays.<sup>43</sup> Anthropologists (and

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<sup>41</sup> James S. Miller, "Inventing the 'Found' Object: Artifactuality, Folk History, and the Rise of Capitalist Ethnography in 1930s America," *Journal of American Folklore* 117, no. 466 (Fall, 2004): 373-93.

<sup>42</sup> George W. Stocking, "Romantic Motives and the History of Anthropology," and "The Ethnographic Sensibility of the 1920s and the Dualism of the Anthropological Tradition" in *Romantic Motives: Essays on Anthropological Sensibility*, ed. George W. Stocking (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 3-9 and 208-76.

<sup>43</sup> On this expansive literature, see James Clifford, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 189-202; Julia E. Liss, "Patterns of Strangeness: Franz Boas, Modernism, and the Origins of Anthropology," in *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism*, eds. Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 114-30; and John Warne Monroe, "Surface Tensions: Empire, Parisian Modernism, and 'Authenticity' in African Sculpture, 1917-1939," *American Historical Review* 117, no. 2 (April 2012): 451-3.

as the next chapter will indicate, ethnomusicologists) in the United States, Mexico, and the rest of the Americas recorded indigenous, black, *mestizo*, and rural white vernacular song and dance, transcribed folk-tales, and noted cultural practices to refashion national identities. These ethnographic practices were named “salvage” anthropology.<sup>44</sup> From this perspective, modernist projects attempted to save local cultures that otherwise—as Mexican nationalist, Dr. Atl, claimed—were “doomed to disappear” as modernization permeated the countryside.<sup>45</sup>

In the early twentieth century, ethnographers, like Boas and Gamio, ceased discussing a monolithic concept of “Culture” that was representative of European civilization. They began to examine cultures from a pluralist sensibility that, for example, enhanced Mexico’s post-revolutionary ideas of pluralist cultural inclusion.<sup>46</sup> U.S. and Mexican academics worked together to better understand Mexico’s complex cultural geography. Because ethnographic research required first-hand observations, U.S. researchers spent more time in Mexico and, in doing so, developed more enduring personal ties with nationalist intellectuals like Gamio.<sup>47</sup> This diverse cadre of progressive historians, writers, and ethnographers included writer Katherine Anne Porter (1890-1980), who among other things worked with nationalist ballet productions in 1920. In her journal *Mexican Folkways*, folkloricist Frances Toor (1890-1956) placed the scholarly

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<sup>44</sup> Henrika Kuklick, “The British Tradition,” in *A New History of Anthropology*, ed. Henrika Kuklick (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 53.

<sup>45</sup> Dr. Atl, “Popular Arts of Mexico,” *The Survey Graphic* LII, no. 3 (May, 1 1924): 164.

<sup>46</sup> Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 199-206; and Tenorio Trillo, “Stereophonic Modernisms,” 1172-3. The disaggregation of race and culture in regards to civilization and biology is explained in A. L. Kroeber, “The Superorganic,” *American Anthropologist* 19, no. 2 (April 1917): 176 and 179-84.

<sup>47</sup> Helen Delpar, *Looking South: The Evolution of Latin Americanist Scholarship in The United States, 1850-1975* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2008), 68.

observations of anthropologists like Elsie Clews Parsons (1875-1941) in dialogue with the nationalist ideas of Gamio and muralists, such as Diego Rivera (1886-1957) and José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949). Anita Brenner (1905-1974), one of Boas's Ph.D. students, often translated Gamio's writings into English.<sup>48</sup> At Gamio's suggestion, sociologist Robert Redfield (1897-1958) traveled to Tepoztlán, Morelos—a town about an hour from Mexico City—to write about the disappearance of local cultures as indigenous communities modernized and became more urban.<sup>49</sup>

The ethnographic interests of U.S. scholars in Mexico generally emphasized indigeneity and *mestizaje* as they examined the trope of cultural and racial disappearance. However, leftist journalist Carleton Beals (1893-1979) integrated blackness into this rubric in 1931. Among the various chapters about Mexican indigenous communities in *Mexican Maze*, he described the African-descended community of Valerio Trujano in the state of Oaxaca. Linking Africanness to both physiological traits and cultural practices, he noted that several people had “kinky hair” and that the music had “an ominous African undertone.” Unsure of why these racial and cultural traits had endured over so many centuries of *mestizaje*, he framed his observations within the discourse of cultural and racial disappearance:

In most places in Mexico, the negro stain has been vanquished, weeded out, assimilated, overwhelmed by brown-skinned Indian. Not so in Valerio Trujano; though the negro blood of this place dates back to the early part of the sixteenth century, it has endured. Why has it remained so dominant? Perhaps because of the propitious tropical climate. Perhaps because of the village's long status of isolating servitude. Perhaps because Valerio Trujano was a created settlement

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<sup>48</sup> Susannah Joel Glusker, *Anita Brenner: A Mind of Her Own* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 36-7 and 70-1; and López, *Crafting Mexico*, 95-115.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Redfield, *Tepoztlan: A Mexican Village: A Study of Folk Life* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1958 [1930]); and Delpar, *Looking South*, 69.

while all the towns around were already old and Indian and had their *mores* determined long before the arrival of the Spaniards.

The inevitable disappearance of Africanness did not shape his description of Valerrio Trujano. Although he admitted that “Valerio Trujano is far from the highways of modernity,” he also proclaimed—in modernist terms that blurred the boundaries between traditional and modern societies—that “its problems are eternally modern: thirst for freedom, for knowledge, for decency.” Capitalist industries and modern infrastructures, he concluded, did not have to destroy local indigenous or black communities. Instead, modernization and *mestizaje* would probably forge “a new amalgam and the gradual evolution of new norms.”<sup>50</sup>

With the advent of this pluralist concept of culture, nationalist and foreign intellectuals discussed indigenous, black, and *mestizo* cultures from numerous points of view. They often focused on whether indigenous cultures should be depicted through their own vernacular garb, dances, and arts or transformed into an avant-garde aesthetic that would help integrate Mexico and indigeneity into the modern world.<sup>51</sup> While some of these polemics did attempt to rid the nation of its indigenous past, many of them depicted *mestizaje* as a means to modernize the indigenous population and use it as a foundation for the making of the post-revolutionary nation. The question about whether the state apparatus needed to modernize local cultures to forge a modern nation was, in reality, just an alternative means to examine the relationship between national homogeneity and heterogeneity in the making of a *mestizo* nation. However, as Beals’s analysis illustrates,

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<sup>50</sup> Carleton Beals, *Mexican Maze* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1931), 142-9, and 357.

<sup>51</sup> López, *Crafting Mexico*, 29-150; and Fell, *José Vasconcelos*, 362-5.

modernist discussions of culture and *mestizaje* could also integrate Africanness into Mexican identity.

As Mexicans sought to create a more modern nation after 1920, *mestizaje* acquired multiple meanings. It could signify the biological fusion of Mexico's biologically-defined, racial populations (indigenous, European, and sometimes black) and/or the amalgamation of the nation's distinct cultures (indigenous, European, and sometimes black). The confusion that materialized out of these new modernist understandings of culture did not constitute an intellectual crisis. These ambivalences, however, fragmented the post-revolutionary project into ideologically competing groups that had to grapple with what Alexandra Minna Stern calls the inherent "paradoxes between hybridity and homogeneity." *Mestizaje* was "a conceptually weak, if not untenable, national metonym," in part because the trope of disappearance framed these ethnographic discussions of indigeneity, *mestizaje*, and blackness.<sup>52</sup>

### **Blackness and *Mestizaje* in the 1920s**

Beginning in the 1920s, several concepts of blackness emerged from the two main strands of post-revolutionary thought: Gamio's desire to map the nation and José Vasconcelos's cosmic race. Continuing the ethnographic project that he outlined as early as 1916, Gamio used the Bureau of Anthropology "to initiate the study of our population." This project intended to study Mexico's indigenous population before it disappeared. In 1920, Gamio founded *Ethnos* to help execute this initiative. In the

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<sup>52</sup> Alexandra Minna Stern, "From Mestizophilia to Biotypology: Racialization and Science in Mexico, 1920-1960," in *Race & Nation in Modern Latin America*, eds. Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, and Karin Alejandra Roseblatt (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 191.



“Introduction” to the first issue, he framed the publication as the social scientific—including, historical, anthropological, and psychological—study of “normal or abnormal development” across “the Mexican population.”<sup>53</sup> Similar to how Boas used cultural areas to understand indigenous cultures, he divided Mexico into contiguous cultural groups that he argued shared the same indigenous practices, histories, environmental conditions, and physical geographies.<sup>54</sup> Gamio argued that ethnographic knowledge was necessary for the state apparatus to represent the people and govern according to their needs.<sup>55</sup> Earlier regimes had failed to adjust to local cultural, racial, and historical conditions, because the demographic data they collected was insufficient. While statistics about nationality, sex, age, language, and marital status (among other things) was useful, previous censuses lacked necessary discussions of “**racial** (physical type) and **cultural** (cultural type) characteristics.” Gamio wanted to use anthropometric and ethnographic studies to acquire a more accurate picture of the national populace.<sup>56</sup>

Gamio’s successor at *Ethnos*, Lucio Mendieta y Núñez (1895-1988), reiterated these grandiose ideals. As early as 1917, he had claimed that ethnographic methods were needed for a “geographic, historical, biological, and sociological investigation” of the Mexican people. Only with this knowledge could the “*sentiments, ideas, and tendencies*

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<sup>53</sup> “Introducción,” *Ethnos: revista dedicada al estudio y mejoramiento de la población indígena de México* 1, núm. 1 (Abril de 1920): 1.

<sup>54</sup> Manuel Gamio, “El Conocimiento de la Población Mexicana y el Problema Indígena,” *Ethnos: revista dedicada al estudio y mejoramiento de la población indígena de México* 1, núm. 4 (Julio de 1920): 81. However, in other publications, Gamio slightly altered these cultural areas while still maintaining the same understanding of indigenous cultural areas; for instance see Gamio, *Traduction of the Introduction, Synthesis and Conclusions of the Work The Population of the Valley of Teotihuacan*, xi.

<sup>55</sup> Manuel Gamio, “Los Cambios de Gobierno en México,” *Ethnos: revista dedicada al estudio y mejoramiento de la población indígena de México* 1, núm. 2 (Mayo de 1920): 27-8.

<sup>56</sup> Manuel Gamio, “El Censo de la población mexicana desde el punto de vista antropológico,” *Ethnos: revista dedicada al estudio y mejoramiento de la población indígena de México* 1, núm. 2 (Mayo de 1920): 44-6 (emphasis in original text).

*that constitute the popular soul*” be comprehended. Ethnographic observation provided a baseline from which scholars could trace the rate of social progress and the evolutionary trajectory of the nation’s diverse communities.<sup>57</sup> In *Ethnos*, he claimed that the Mexican Revolution helped to separate national culture from the upper and middle classes’ pre-revolutionary desire “to Europeanize themselves.” In place of European mimicry, the nation was learning about its own magnificent art, music, and sculpture.<sup>58</sup> More importantly, he proclaimed that, through ethnographic observation, indigenous groups could escape the debilitating epistemological discourses that characterized their societies as ahistorical civilizations that had disappeared or were about to vanish.<sup>59</sup>

In 1921, Alfonso Toro wrote an article that integrated blackness to Gamio’s project. His “Influencia de la raza negra en la formación del pueblo mexicano [The Influence of the Black Race on the Formation of the Mexican Community]” drew upon a 1920 demographic analysis of Mexico’s colonial period.<sup>60</sup> Although it was only a few pages long, Toro’s statement was the most deliberate attempt to integrate blackness into Mexican *mestizaje* in the 1920s.<sup>61</sup> He fundamentally refuted the nineteenth-century liberal idea that “the black race has had very little influence in the formation of the

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<sup>57</sup> L. Mendieta y Núñez, “La Etnografía. 1. Definición. Objeto,” Diciembre 8 de 1917, pg. 3-4, 1571.-1, Tomo CCXXVI, INAH. Etnografía, Etnología Lingüística, 1917-1929, INAH-AT-CNA.

<sup>58</sup> Lic. Lucio Mendieta y Núñez, “El Renacimiento de Nacionalismo,” *Ethnos: revista dedicada al estudio y mejoramiento de la población indígena de México*, tercera época 1, núms. 1-2 (Enero y Febrero 1925): 3-5.

<sup>59</sup> Lic. Lucio Mendieta y Núñez, “Importancia científica y practicada de los estudios etnológicos y etnográficos,” *Ethnos: revista dedicada al estudio y mejoramiento de la población indígena de México*, Tercera época 1, núms. 3 y 4 (Marzo y Abril de 1925): 44.

<sup>60</sup> Vinson, “La historia del estudio de los negros en México,” 47.

<sup>61</sup> Ben Vinson III astutely makes this point in order to attempt to move contemporary scholarship away from its narrow vision of the intellectual construction of blackness in Mexico after the Revolution of 1910. See Ben Vinson III, “Introduction: African (Black) Diaspora History, Latin American History,” *The Americas* 63, no. 1 (July 2006): 10n30.

Mexican people.” By analyzing census data, he illustrated that there were more African slaves than Spanish settlers in the mid-sixteenth century. While forwarding the concept that African-descended peoples contributed as much, if not more, than Europeans to the biological descent of the Mexican nation, he equated *mestizaje* with a process of whitening whereby the indigenous and African populations became more European with each successive generation of racial mixture. The African-descended population dwindled as it mixed, and black corporal traits therefore diminished to the degree that any remaining “black physical characteristics have disappeared.” He later qualified this statement by asserting that “the persistence of the ethnographic traits of the African race is demonstrated among many of the mestizos of the Gulf and Pacific [coastlines] and in the regions called **tierra caliente**.”<sup>62</sup>

While Toro rooted his ethnographic project in scientific objectivity, elite stereotypes about black exoticism and primitiveness informed his project and its relationship to *mestizaje*. Resembling Mendieta y Núñez’s desire to uncover the Mexican soul, Toro asserted that some black cultural traits—what he called “moral temperaments”—still resided in contemporary life. These cerebral attributes included being “hypocrites” and being “ready for rebellion.” The latter element was particularly important, since he wondered whether “black blood provided the insubordinate nature of the Mexican people to subject themselves to their ruler and their tendency to incite revolution.” While the black body might not be present in most Mexican locales, traces of African ancestry helped to generate and then to channel the revolutionary spirit that overthrew Spanish colonial rule in the nineteenth century and deposed Díaz in the

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<sup>62</sup> Toro, “Influencia de la raza negra en la formación del pueblo mexicano,” 215-8 (emphasis in original).

twentieth.<sup>63</sup> Although Gamio had already claimed that *mestizo* rebelliousness was one of the nation's driving historical motifs, Toro added blackness to Mexico's innate bellicosity.

In 1925, *Ethnos* did not have the appropriate funding to continue to promote and to publish anthropomorphic, demographic, and ethnographic information on the entire Mexican population. Despite the close ties between anthropological institutions and state coffers, the state apparatus lacked the financial and bureaucratic infrastructure to support nationwide ethnographic projects. Many of them—such as Gamio's—were not completed.<sup>64</sup> While Gamio was not preoccupied with questions of Mexico's black population and its cultural heritage, his ethnographic mission had begun to forge an intellectual space for ethnographic and historical inquiries, like Toro's, that did discuss it.

Citing Toro, Nicolás León depicted the various iterations of racial mixture that constituted Mexico's colonial *casta* population: the population which became affirmatively called *mestizos* after independence. His 1924 discussion of the *casta* population included the descendants of Mexico's African slave population. Geographically, he claimed that black and mulatto populations were located in cities, such as Cuernavaca, and along the coasts of Veracruz, Guerrero, and Oaxaca: the regions where sugar and other tropical economies predominated. He acknowledged that blacks became part of the four-part—European; creole, or a European born in the Americas;

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>64</sup> Lomnitz, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico*, 230; and López, *Crafting Mexico*, 142.

indigenous; and black—schema that established *mestizaje* as a common trope in Mexican history.<sup>65</sup>

León condemned the “hateful and ridiculous denominations” that characterized the *casta* system and that degraded the indigenous and *mestizo* populations. He admitted that many *casta* terms were difficult, if not impossible, to apply to the current population. Their meanings were “confused, limited, and contradictory” and only hindered the post-revolutionary desire to classify the nation. But, in contrast to Toro, León denounced the introduction of African slaves into colonial society. In his opinion, blacks lowered the social standing of the other *casta* groups and perpetuated racist discourses that cast off the indigenous population and all racially-mixed populations as social pariahs. This rhetoric inverted the nineteenth-century liberal narrative that blamed the Spanish for all colonial social ills.<sup>66</sup>

That same year, an alternative modernist conception of blackness emerged. In *La raza cósmica* [*The Cosmic Race*], Minister of SEP José Vasconcelos (1882-1959) ambivalently integrated blackness into Mexican *mestizaje* as he oscillated between giving primacy to biological descent and cultural heritage. These ambivalences resulted from his piecemeal fusion of pre-revolutionary positivism and post-revolutionary modernist thought.<sup>67</sup> Animated by the ideas of philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941), he embraced a mystical and romantic concept of evolution that emphasized spontaneity and

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<sup>65</sup> Nicolás León, *Las castas del México colonial o Nueva España. Noticias etno-antropológicas* (México: Talleres Gráficos del Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnografía, 1924), 7, 14-6, 20 16.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 20, and 28.

<sup>67</sup> Fell, *José Vasconcelos*, 639.

aesthetic creativity.<sup>68</sup> Like Gamio, Vasconcelos advocated a policy of racial mixture whereby *mestizaje*, or what he called the cosmic race, would forge national unity. Cultural projects—such as the creation of public murals and the dissemination of popular music—and educational reforms were necessary to unite the nation through a *mestizo* aesthetic.<sup>69</sup>

In defining the cosmic race, Vasconcelos quixotically discussed blackness, even though did not depict it as inherently Mexican. For him, world civilizations could be subdivided into “four stages and four trunks: black, Indian, Mongol, and white.” Each group, he declared, had dominated global affairs for a particular epoch of global history. Most recently, the white race, particularly the Anglo-Saxon population, controlled international relations. In the next stage of historical evolution, he proudly proclaimed that the cosmic race—the fusion of these four racial groups—would supplant white domination. Drawing on the nineteenth-century conflation of biology and culture, Vasconcelos contended that this new race would be the most evolved, because each racial group would supply their best cultural traits. In stereotyped rhetoric reminiscent of the nineteenth century, he claimed that black blood was “eager for sensual happiness, drunk with dance, and unbridled lust.”<sup>70</sup>

Rather than a nuanced cultural geography of the Mexican landscape, the cosmic race was a holistic account of all Latin American nations. It was based on his travels

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<sup>68</sup> Patrick Romanell, “Bergson in Mexico: A Tribute to José Vasconcelos,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 21, no. 4 (June 1961): 507-10

<sup>69</sup> Fell, *José Vasconcelos*, 205, 411-7.

<sup>70</sup> José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica*, veagesimoquinta reimpresión (México, D.F.: Colección Austral, 2002), 16 and 31.

throughout South America in 1922.<sup>71</sup> In spite of this romantic cosmic future, he noted that there was cultural and racial diversity across the continent. He characterized Cuba as “mulatta.” Buenos Aires, the city that he contended was the capital of this cosmic race, was “cosmopolitan” with “the Spanish spirit in its universal expression.” He concluded that Mexico was “Indian” with “an indigenous environment.” Like most nationalist scholars before him, he asserted that Mexico had “very few blacks and the majority of them had been transformed already into the mulatta populations.”<sup>72</sup> Despite the presence—no matter how small—of blacks in Mexico, Vasconcelos never explained why these racial groups were not part of his discussion of contemporary race relations. It is unclear in *La raza cósmica* whether Vasconcelos thought that Latin America would eventually acquire a racial, cultural, and aesthetic equilibrium. If so, Mexico would eventually acquire a visible black body and cultural footprint. He potentially clarified this idea in his 1937 *Breve historia de México* [*Short History of Mexico*], when he noted the deleterious presence of a rebellious black population in the colonial period and during the wars of independence. However, this population conveniently disappeared from the national landscape after independence. As a result, he defined the Mexican nation as the fusion of its indigenous and Spanish roots.<sup>73</sup>

In 1926, he hinted at the potential existence of a black population along Mexico’s coastlines when he noted the cultural areas of the entire Western Hemisphere. Focusing on the environmental determinants of social evolution, he noted the following regions:

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<sup>71</sup> Fell, *José Vasconcelos*, 553-633.

<sup>72</sup> Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica*, 35-7 42-4, 148, and 206.

<sup>73</sup> José Vasconcelos, *Breve Historia de México* (México, D.F.: Editorial Trillas, 1998), 154 and 220 for a discussion of the black population; see page 302 for his analysis of *mestizaje*.

(1) the North American, Anglo-Saxon zone of the United States and Canadian lowlands; (2) the highland or Sierra Madre, Andean Plateau of temperate climate and mixed Indian-Spanish populations; (3) the torrid, or tropical, zone consisting of Cuba, Santo Domingo, and Puerto Rico, plus the coast of Mexico and Central America and the hot low countries of Venezuela and Colombia, with the immense unexplored zone of the Amazonas and the Orinoco; (4) and farther south, the Latin lowlands of Argentina and Brazil.<sup>74</sup>

Historically, there had been African-descended slaves and freed-peoples in the third region: the Caribbean Islands as well as the coastlines of Mexico, Central America, Venezuela, and Colombia. While it was not stated, this geographic demarcation hinted at the historical possibility that there was blackness within certain Mexican regions.

The cosmic race reversed the traditional ideas of racial hierarchy that normally venerated whiteness as the pinnacle of civilization and that condemned racial miscegenation, particularly among the non-white races, as antithetical to evolutionary progress. More than the discourses espoused by Molina Enríquez and Gamio, his inversion of Victorian racial tropes has led some scholars to assert that his definition of *mestizaje* was a form of reverse racism.<sup>75</sup> Because of his emphasis on the Western literary and philosophical canon in SEP programs, Vasconcelos's construction of *mestizaje* can be equated with the Europeanization of the indigenous population and of national culture.<sup>76</sup> But, while his discussion of blackness was stereotyped and racist, it did acknowledge discursive and historical connections between *mestizaje* and blackness in ways that few other nationalists in the 1920s considered.

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<sup>74</sup> José Vasconcelos, "The Latin-American Basis of Mexican Civilization," in *Aspects of Mexican Civilization*, by José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1926), 23.

<sup>75</sup> Knight, "Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*," 86-8; and Hernandez Cuevas, *African Mexicans and the Discourse on Modern Nation*, 8-17.

<sup>76</sup> José Joaquín Blanco, *Se llama Vasconcelos: una evocación crítica* (México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1979), 105; Fell, *José Vasconcelos*, 97 and 206; and Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico*, 140.



### Indigenous and Black Cultural Areas in the 1920s and 1930s

Gamio's ethnographic project to map the cultures of Mexico became a principal undercurrent of nation formation in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1940, it was most fully realized by Carlos Basauri (1900-1965), who in three volumes examined many of Mexico's indigenous cultural and racial groups and situated black communities within the national cultural landscape. Amid the institutional and monetary ebb and flow that characterized the Mexican state apparatus in the 1920s and 1930s, Basauri had worked in Chiapas with a cohort of anthropologists led by Tulane University's Frans Blom (1893-1963).<sup>77</sup> In 1928, Basauri wrote his own treatise on Mexico that illustrated his inchoate analysis of culture and race. Using linguistic, cultural, and physical traits, he argued that the nation was composed of the indigenous, *mestizo*, and white races; he did not mention blackness. In fusing cultural production to biological ideas of evolution, he contended that the indigenous population tragically represented "a dead culture, annihilated for four hundred years." Indigenous communities could only be preserved as best as possible since their "biological development had already been reached."<sup>78</sup>

By 1940, Basauri's discussion of indigeneity and *mestizaje* was entrenched in the national desire to collect ethnographic data so that state institutions, like the SEP, could better understand indigenous development and the cultural traditions that the Indian population had "lost."<sup>79</sup> He still embraced an evolutionary view of race and culture as

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<sup>77</sup> INAH Tulane Expedition (1928), Tomo XII, INAH-AT-CNA.

<sup>78</sup> Carlos Basauri, "El tipo nacional mexicano del porvenir," septiembre 26, 1928, 1579.-1, Tomo CCXXVI, INAH. Etnografía, Etnología y Lingüística, 1917-1929, pgs 1-5.

<sup>79</sup> Carlos Basauri, "Primer informe de los trabajos realizados por la Tulane Expedition, entre Comitán y Tapachula. Abril 25 de 1928", pg. 5, 188.-1, Tomo XII, INAH Tulane Expedition (1928), INAH-AT-CNA.

well as a modernist ethnographic desire to prevent the disappearance of indigenous cultures. Employing racial and cultural analyses in tandem, his project epitomized the pluralist depiction of Mexican cultures that developed in the latter half of the 1930s.<sup>80</sup> Basauri's *La población indígena de México* [*The Indigenous Population of Mexico*] discussed Mexico's indigenous populations, only ignoring ones that he claimed had "almost disappeared."<sup>81</sup> Although the concept of racial and cultural disappearance was a common trope in post-revolutionary *indigenismo*, he did not clarify whether such disappearance was primarily cultural or racial. He also failed to specify whether it was a result of colonial violence, *mestizaje*, or the often-criticized liberal reforms that sought to privatize communal landholdings. By admitting that certain indigenous communities and cultural practices had not been lost, he distanced himself from his earlier, fatalistic assessment that indigeneity was doomed to disappear. This optimism created an alternative ethnographic narrative that was bound to the idea that indigeneity could not only inform but also become a constitutive element of post-revolutionary national culture.

*La población indígena de México* discussed the multiple factors that helped classify racial groups according to their relative degree of evolution or degeneration. These included the regional environment, local history, material and spiritual cultures, economics, and social structure.<sup>82</sup> While his introduction did not mention people of African descent or black cultures, the third tome concluded with a chapter on black peoples who lived in Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Veracruz; in a circumspect way, this chapter

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<sup>80</sup> Dawson, *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico*, 85-93.

<sup>81</sup> Carlos Basauri, *La población indígena de México*, Tomo I (México: Secretaria de Educación Pública, 1940), 8.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9 and 38.

asserted that blackness had not disappeared in certain local communities. Analyzing language, anthropometric features, cultural practices, living arrangements, and other cultural practices, he structured this final chapter like his more voluminous chapters on indigeneity. Focusing primarily on the state of Oaxaca, Basauri employed ethnographic tools and anthropometric data to analyze local black communities. In comparative terms, he equated black social standing with that of the nearby indigenous groups. *Mestizos* considered them both to be inferior. As a result of this regional discrimination, these black enclaves also encountered antagonism from the surrounding indigenous communities. Presumably as a result of these social tensions, blacks generally remained isolated from all other racial groups, lacked any allegiance to the nation, and only felt nominally connected to the state of Oaxaca. Paradoxically, this black population, he argued, was racially-mixed, because some of their physical features—such as hair and skin colors as well as nose and lip sizes—were “not corresponding with the anthropological type of the classic black person [negro].”<sup>83</sup>

Lacking a clear historical narrative, Basauri failed to explain how racial mixture and social segregation could occur simultaneously. Unlike many ethnographers in the Western Hemisphere, he failed to connect his discussion of blackness in housing, music, or other local cultural traits to African or African-descended cultural behaviors. At best, he depicted black cultural practices as bastardized forms of traditional Mexican cultural traits. Despite highlighting such practices, he attempted to prove the existence of black peoples through anthropometry and biotypology. Even though his analysis was

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<sup>83</sup> Carlos Basauri, *La población indígena de México*, Tomo III (México: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1940), 675-8.

predicated on the idea that there were multiple living cultures in Mexico, he primarily defined blackness through the black body.<sup>84</sup>

In spite of its schematic nature, this discussion of Mexico's black population was groundbreaking. Most of the existing literature on black peoples and cultures in Mexico highlighted their gradual integration into a racially-mixed population. The standard narrative asserted that blacks disappeared. Conversely, Basauri's introduction openly claimed that he was only discussing communities that had not been lost within the contours of *mestizaje* and modernity. Similar to Beal's discussion of blackness in Oaxaca, Basauri explicitly stated that black communities existed in post-revolutionary Mexico. Blackness had not completely dissolved into the *mestizo* population or been erased by the unflinching spread of modernization. It could be classified with physiological and cultural data.

### **Black Slaves and Mexican Historiography in the 1930s**

This pluralist ethnographic sensibility also permeated Mexican historiography in the 1930s. As the post-revolutionary state increasingly calcified during and after Plutarco Elías Calles's presidency from 1924 to 1928, many of Mexico's progressive intellectuals became disillusioned with the limited progress of the post-revolutionary reforms.<sup>85</sup> After the global depression began in 1929, radicalization forged new intellectual and artistic endeavors within and outside the state apparatus. Anthropologists and historians embraced a Marxist cross-race class discourse to reinvigorate Mexican aesthetics, to

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<sup>84</sup> Basauri, *La población indígena de Méx, co*, Tomo III 665- 91; on the relationship between physiology and culture, see Basauri, *La población indígena de México*, Tomo I, 40.

<sup>85</sup> Manuel Gamio, *Hacia un México nuevo. Problemas sociales* (México: 1935), 229-31.

improve the material conditions of the rural population, and to supplement earlier ideas of social justice.<sup>86</sup> As Minister of the SEP from 1931 to 1934, engineer Narciso Bassols (1897-1959) ushered in many of these discursive and political changes when he implemented a policy of socialist education.<sup>87</sup> In the 1930s, radicals—like muralist Diego Rivera, composer Silvestre Revueltas (1899-1940), anthropologist Julio de la Fuente (1905-1970), and historians José Mancisidor (1894-1956) and José Revueltas (1914-1976)—wrote about and participated in Marxist-inspired organizations such as the literary magazine *Ruta* and LEAR. They fused art, history, music, and theater together to establish socially-conscious art that would fulfill the goals of the Mexican Revolution.<sup>88</sup>

While ethnographers emphasized indigenous cultural diversity, historians stressed Mexico's provincial history. This historiographic turn glorified subaltern resistance and reinforced the ideas of social justice that had permeated ethnographic accounts and treatises since the 1920s.<sup>89</sup> Following the wars of independence and the *Reforma* of the mid-nineteenth century, the Revolution of 1910 became the final historical act in Mexico's quest to rid itself of its toxic colonial past. Marxist historian Luis Chávez Orozco (1901-1966) called the Revolution of 1910 a “democratic-bourgeois Revolution”

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<sup>86</sup> Robert A. Potash, “Historiografía del México independiente,” *Historia Mexicana* 10, no. 3 (1961): 374-6.

<sup>87</sup> Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 31 and 35.

<sup>88</sup> Alicia Azuela, “El Machete and Frente a Frente: Art Committed to Social Justice in Mexico,” *Art Journal* 52, no. 1 (Spring, 1993): 82; and Eugenia Revueltas, “La Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios y Silvestre Revueltas,” in *Diálogo de resplandores: Carlos Chávez y Silvestre Revueltas*, eds., Yael Bitrán and Ricardo Miranda (México, DF: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2002), 176.

<sup>89</sup> Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 38-40.

that overturned large landholding and foreign ownership in the name of small land tenure and the rights of indigenous and industrial laborers.<sup>90</sup>

Perhaps the most theoretically inclined of these historians, Alfonso Teja Zabre (1888-1962) linked his understanding of history to modernist relativism and Marxism. In *Biografía de México. Introducción y sinopsis* [*Biography of Mexico. Introduction and Synopsis*] (1931), he yearned to overcome the tensions between race and culture in Mexican nationalism. Using the modernist rejection of racial inferiority as a point of departure, he employed historical materialism to express the plight of the oppressed classes of industrial workers, indigenous peoples, and *mestizo* farm hands and to advocate for their economic emancipation. Like his positivist predecessors, he linked this history to Mexican social evolution. However, modernist relativism—particularly the concept of relativity articulated by Albert Einstein (1879-1955)—persuaded him to think about social evolution and cultural production beyond the positivist evolutionary notion of a singular linear path toward modernity.<sup>91</sup>

For Teja Zabre, relativism begat “a new humanism” that engendered agrarian reform, economic liberation, and social equality.<sup>92</sup> Similar to Boas and Gamio, he argued that “‘cultures’ have a life independent of the races that encompass them. They are biologically separate.”<sup>93</sup> This ethnographically-inspired rejection of cultural hierarchies undergirded his understanding of historical class dynamics. In transcending racial

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<sup>90</sup> Luis Chávez Orozco, *Revolución industrial, revolución política* (México: DAPP, 1937), 58-72.

<sup>91</sup> Alfonso Teja Zabre, *Biografía de México. Introducción y sinopsis* (México: Universidad Nacional de México Autónoma, 1931), 19-20. On Einstein’s modernism, see Christopher Herbert, “Frazer, Einstein, and Free Play,” *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism*, eds. Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 133-58.

<sup>92</sup> Alfonso Teja Zabre, *Teoría de la Revolución* (México: Ediciones Botas, 1936), 56-7 and 94-7.

<sup>93</sup> Teja Zabre, *Biografía de México*, 16.

determinism, he concluded that a materialist account of Mexican history highlighted the proletarian and agrarian currents of Mexico's "democratic revolution."<sup>94</sup> This project consciously surpassed the confines of a strict Marxist analysis of class to examine "the origins and the formation of Mexican culture."<sup>95</sup> An emphasis on class oppression and a desire to transcend the confines of racial hierarchies allowed him to integrate Mexico's black slave population into the post-revolutionary narrative that venerated the agency of the lower classes. He commented that after indigenous slavery became less viable, the enslavement of Africans proliferated. Linked by their history of oppression in the colonial period, he noted that there were "uprisings or conspiracies by Indians and blacks" that were quickly and violently repressed.<sup>96</sup>

Rafael Ramos Pedrueza also hoped his analysis would help to achieve the Revolution's "mission of social emancipation."<sup>97</sup> For him, historical materialism functioned as a critical aspect of post-revolutionary education, because history buttressed all aspects of society, including artistic production and social scientific research. A national narrative that examined social change and subaltern resistance would be the most expedient method for understanding Mexico's historical trajectory.<sup>98</sup> Similar to Gamio

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<sup>94</sup> Teja Zabre, *Biografía de México*, 23-4 and 32; and Andrea Sánchez Quintana, "Estudio introductorio," in *Tres Socialistas Frente a la revolución Mexicana: José Mancisidor, Rafael Ramos Pedrueza, Alfonso Teja Zabre*, ed. Andrea Sánchez Quintana (México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1994), 29-30.

<sup>95</sup> Teja Zabre, *Biografía de México*, 72-3.

<sup>96</sup> Alfonso Teja Zabre, *Breve Historia de México*, 2nd ed., Corregida y aumentada (Coahuila, Méx.: SEP, 1935), 72 and 116-7.

<sup>97</sup> Rafael Ramos Pedrueza, *La lucha de las clases a través de la historia de México* (México, D.F.: Ediciones Revista LUX, 1934), 10; and Sánchez Quintana, "Estudio introductorio," 30.

<sup>98</sup> Rafael Ramos Pedrueza, *Sugerencias Revolucionarias para la Enseñanza de la Historia* (México: Universidad Nacional de México Autónoma, 1932), 3-7 and 10.

and Toro, he linked blackness to the inchoate revolutionary spirit that was brewing among the colonial *casta* population and that culminated with the Revolution of 1910. Besides describing the black population as one of the three racial groups that forged the *casta* population, he romantically portrayed their resistance to the Spanish regime. Among these conspiracies, “Blacks, particularly in the jungles of Veracruz, rose up against their tyrants.”<sup>99</sup> These rebellions, including this reference to Yanga, led to the wars of independence that ended slavery and established a more egalitarian society.<sup>100</sup>

This same teleological narrative emerged in the analyses of José Mancisidor. Unlike Teja Zabre and Ramos Pedrueza, Mancisidor did not discuss black resistance through the lens of a broad-based *casta* population or the rhetoric of *mestizaje*. He highlighted the historical agency of blacks, as a self-contained socio-economic group, more than any other post-revolutionary nationalist in the 1920s or 1930s. Probably as a result of living the first forty years of his life in Veracruz (where the history of African slavery was well-known), he seamlessly integrated the narrative of Yanga not only into the state’s own history but also into the post-revolutionary historical narrative.

Mancisidor perceived education, not politics, as the most expedient manner to improve everyday social conditions. After being a proponent of Adalberto Tejeda’s populist labor reforms in Veracruz in the 1920s, he was an interim governor of the state of Quintana Roo. Then he returned to Xalapa, the state capital of Veracruz, where he taught at the Escuela Normal Veracruzana [Veracruz Teaching School] from 1930 to

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<sup>99</sup> Ramos Pedrueza, *La lucha de las clases a través de la historia de México*, 33-5.

<sup>100</sup> Ramos Pedrueza, *Sugerencias Revolucionarias para la Enseñanza de la Historia*, 16-8.



1936.<sup>101</sup> In 1936, he wrote about a project to have four murals painted in the Escuela Normal that depicted the history of Mexico. In four hagiographic scenes, the murals would sketch Mexico's revolutionary trajectory from its incipient colonial resistance to the contemporary post-revolutionary moment. They would depict Yanga; José María Morelos (1765-1815), an African-descended hero of the wars of independence; Benito Juárez (1806-1872), who brought about reforms in the mid-nineteenth century and overthrew the European monarchy of Maximilian; and Emiliano Zapata (1879-1919), a popular leader of the Mexican Revolution.<sup>102</sup> In contrast with the typical nationalist narrative, Mancisidor personified all colonial resistance—orchestrated by indigenous, black, and racially-mixed populations—in Yanga. Mancisidor's emphasis on Yanga in Veracruz was, in all likelihood, part of the same cultural politics that had the community of San Lorenzo de los Negros renamed Yanga in 1932.<sup>103</sup> But, unlike his Marxist contemporaries, he also loosely affiliated Yanga and therefore Mexico with an Afro-Diasporic cultural politics across the Americas.

This discursive difference was most evident in his play (or perhaps screenplay) *Yanga*. Other than a script of *Yanga* that is published in his *Obras Completas* [*Complete Works*], little is known about it, including its original date of publication and whether it was ever produced. However, many of the tropes in the play resonate with the mural project for the Escuela Normal. In *Yanga*, Mancisidor developed his critique of colonial

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<sup>101</sup> Alfonso Berrios, "Vida y Obras de José Mancisidor," in *Obras Completas de José Mancisidor*, Tomo 1, by José Mancisidor (Xalapa: Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, 1978), 25 and 27; and Miguel Bustos Cerecedo, "José Mancisidor, el Hombre," in *Obras Completas de José Mancisidor*, Tomo 1 (Xalapa: Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, 1978), 253-6.

<sup>102</sup> José Mancisidor, "Índice de la decoración mural de la Escuela Normal Veracruzana," in *Obras completas de José Mancisidor*, Tomo V (Xalapa: Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, 1980), 137-61.

<sup>103</sup> Ramos, "Black Mexico," 249.

oppression and mythologized Yanga as a black and Mexican revolutionary. Similar to Riva Palacio's "Los treinta y tres negros," the script commences with a biting condemnation of the poor treatment of black slaves in a sugar plantation in Veracruz. The slaves—beginning with Yanga—gradually run away to the nearby mountains and forests that, as they had for Riva Palacios, signify freedom. Throughout the play, a foreboding and reoccurring chant echoes across the surrounding terrain, proclaiming:

Forests, dark forests  
Mountains, dark mountains  
Shelter of wolves and serpents  
Shelter also for liberty.

As the refrain rhythmically spreads "over the surface of the land like a promise," it foreshadows Yanga's eventual flight and struck fear into the foreman and owner of the sugar plantation. The Spanish elite feverishly, but unsuccessfully, search for the seemingly omnipresent voice. Mancisidor juxtaposed the constant articulation of the chant with the horrific nature of "black slavery [that] comes and goes with rushed and silent steps."<sup>104</sup>

Other slaves eventually join Yanga. At this point in the story, Mancisidor deviated significantly from Riva Palacio's. As the colonial government becomes concerned with this runaway community and its ability to hinder trade routes, the Spanish attempt to destroy the maroon society. In Mexico City, the government even publicly tortures, kills, and then publically displays the mutilated bodies of "29 black men and 4 black women" to quell black unrest. When Yanga learns about this tragedy, he repeats the chant, and he and his followers prepare to battle the Spanish militia. Despite retreating from the skirmish and disappearing into the wilderness, the maroon community convinces the

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<sup>104</sup> José Mancisidor, *Yanga*, in *Obras Completas de José Mancisidor*, Tomo VII (Xalapa: Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, 1982), 133-50, especially 134, 138, and 140.

Spanish that it cannot be defeated. The script ends with the Spanish coming to a truce with Yanga and giving the slaves freedom, self-government, and the legal rights of a free community under the Spanish crown.<sup>105</sup>

In *Yanga*, Mancisidor situated the events in Mexico City between Yanga's flight and his eventual victory whereas Riva Palacio placed the brutality in the capital after his entire discussion of the maroon community. This alteration engenders a new climactic moment that transforms the political message of the story. By culminating with a discussion of the bloodshed in Mexico City, Riva Palacio condemned colonial violence and racial classification. In contrast to this somber ending, Mancisidor concluded *Yanga* with the triumph of black freedom against the Spanish colonial regime. To justify how he lionized Yanga in the 1930s, Mancisidor linked him to the optimistic, emancipatory language of the post-revolutionary period as well as a reification of subaltern resistance. In the middle of the play, he wrote that "Yanga had been converted into a symbol: the symbol of life and of liberty." Yanga signified "The love of life. Hope in the future. The belief in a better tomorrow. The pain of living and the joy of rebirth." At the end, his fight against the Spanish illustrates how "The symptoms of rebellion came from all areas."<sup>106</sup>

While other Marxist historians only briefly mentioned that black slaves in Mexico were forcibly carried from Africa, Mancisidor embraced and romanticized this trans-Atlantic heritage.<sup>107</sup> The often-repeated chant drove the plot forward. According to the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 150-76.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 150, 160, and 174.

<sup>107</sup> It should be noted that Riva Palacio did associate some black slaves in Mexico with an Angolan past. In this regard, his fleeting mention of the connection between Africa and Mexico was quite unique; see Riva Palacio, "Los treinta y tres negros," 358.

unnamed narrator in *Yanga*, it was “reminiscent of Africa.” At the end of *Yanga*, Mancisidor reiterated the importance of this African heritage in his only performance note, which rather cryptically stated “African, Afro-American and Afro-Cuban musical background and songs.”<sup>108</sup> Read from this hemispheric context, *Yanga*’s bellicosity resonated with the cultural politics of other African-descended peoples in the Americas. Perhaps Mancisidor did not want to use Mexican music in *Yanga*, because Mexico’s black cultural influences had, as he implied in the script, come and gone “with rushed and silent steps.” This mythopoetic narrative characterized *Yanga* simultaneously as symbol of Mexican rebelliousness and Afro-diasporic cultural politics.

While he intimated that African-descended cultures had disappeared in Mexico, he proclaimed *Yanga*’s historical importance as a precursor to the Mexican Revolution. *Yanga* therefore could be read as a parable that examined the boundaries of social justice and the ubiquitous need to overcome class divisions. These themes—which Mancisidor claimed were caused by a capitalist “modern society” that denied “the liberation of the working classes” and “the equality of rights and duties”—not only characterized the plight of *Yanga* and his followers but also the oppressed masses who rebelled during the Mexican Revolution.<sup>109</sup> In addition to historical discussions of the black slave class, the Marxist desire to aid the oppressed pushed Mexican nation formation to expand suffrage and to give a voice to feminist organizations, workers groups, and other “authentic popular nuclei.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Mancisidor, *Yanga*, 139 and 176.

<sup>109</sup> José Mancisidor, *Marx*, in *Obras Completas de José Mancisidor*, Tomo V (Xalapa: Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, 1980), 497.

<sup>110</sup> Arellano Belloc [on behalf of Mancisidor] to Cárdenas, Feb 22, 1938, 544.61/103, AGN-FLCR.

### Andrés Molina Enríquez and Blackness

In the early 1930s, Molina Enríquez embraced the relativist approach to ethnography and the Marxist turn in historiography. Writing about Mexican history, he welded an historical analysis of the causes of the Mexican Revolution to the ethnographic desire to map the nation's cultural communities. More than any other ethnographer or historian in the 1920s and 1930s, he attempted to integrate blackness into Mexican history as well as its ethnographic present in his five-volume *La revolución agraria de México, 1910-1920* [*The Agrarian Revolution of Mexico, 1910-1920*]. This complete reversal on the question of blackness illustrated the extent to which ethnographers and historians had refashioned Mexico's indigenous, *mestizo*, and black peoples and cultures between 1909 and 1940.

Molina Enríquez did not completely discount the theory of evolution in the 1930s. But, in first volume of *La revolución agraria de México, 1910-1920*, he condemned the antiquated belief that there was only one single linear path to modern civilization and that there was a discernible cultural endpoint that signified civilization.<sup>111</sup> Instead, he argued that there were two main cultural groups in the world: an Eastern culture defined by its “memory of seeing” (where language and writing is visual and denoted by characters) and a Western culture characterized by a “memory of hearing” (such that each letter has a specific sound associated with it). The lone exception to this bifurcated world-system was the continent of Africa which “remains between the one and the other as an always indecisive camp.” Although he had adopted a more relativist approach to culture and racial evolution—one that drew on the ideas of Boas and Gamio—Molina Enríquez still

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<sup>111</sup> Andrés Molina Enríquez, *La revolución agraria de México 1910-1920*, Tomo I (México: UNAM, 1986), 74; and Basave Benitez, *México mestizo*, 73.

downplayed the importance of blackness and Africanness on the world stage just as he had in 1909.<sup>112</sup>

His discussion of blackness in Mexican history in volumes one and two (both of which were published in 1932) was much more pronounced than his veiled references to the enslavement of blacks in Yucatán in *Los grandes problemas nacionales*.<sup>113</sup> Citing Toro, Molina Enríquez claimed that Mexico's colonial population included "Indians, mestizos, whites, yellows, and blacks."<sup>114</sup> Because the encounter between the Western and Eastern cultural systems defined the Spanish conquest, mutual understanding—what he called the lynchpin of "the incorporation of the Spaniards and Indians"—was impossible. Instead of benevolent cultural and racial exchanges, the *casta* system emerged.<sup>115</sup> These social and cultural divisions, he contended, could only be rectified with post-revolutionary land and labor reforms.<sup>116</sup>

Molina Enríquez argued that the multiple distinct racial groups—indigenous, black (presumably but not explicitly stated as African), and white—each brought their own cultural systems to Mexico. Their differences prevented a unified *casta* population and as late as the 1930s still prevented a singular *mestizo* cultural identity from forming. Instead of producing racial and evolutionary homogeneity (as Molina Enríquez wished), the practice of racial exogamy continued to atomize society. In regions like Morelos and the city of Veracruz, where the indigenous population more readily succumbed to

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<sup>112</sup> Molina Enríquez, *La revolución agraria de México 1910-1920*, Tomo I, 12, 22, and 38-60.

<sup>113</sup> Basave Benitez, *México mestizo*, 74.

<sup>114</sup> Molina Enríquez, *La revolución agraria de México 1910-1920*, Tomo I, 67 and 86-7.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-86.

<sup>116</sup> Andrés Molina Enríquez, *La revolución agraria de México 1910-1920*, Tomo V (México: UNAM, 1986).

disease, the *mestizo* population had a higher percentage of black ancestry. Embracing the need to map cultural areas, he included maps in the first volume of *La revolución agraria* that identified Mexico's black populations [See Maps 1 and 2]. The first illustrated the "distribution of black blood," a racial category that he primarily situated along the coastlines. The second map identified the various iterations of Mexico's *mestizo* population. While central Mexico was predominately of indigenous and European mixture, the northern-central region was creole, or white. The Gulf Coast and much of southern Mexico was a mixture of "European, indigenous, and black blood."<sup>117</sup>

To discuss *mestizaje* historically, Molina Enríquez embraced a variation of the trope of racial disappearance. With independence and abolition, he stated, "the number of blacks has been diminishing" to such a degree that they were hardly ever seen.<sup>118</sup> Instead of being a social problem like the indigenous population, blacks enjoyed "full liberty" and lived "in conditions of relative wellbeing."<sup>119</sup> They melted into the *mestizo* population, and consequently any discussion of the black and *mestizo* populations "appear muddled between one and another." To distinguish this black population from the more typical *mestizo* that was a mixture of indigenous and white blood lines, Molina Enríquez coined the term "triple mestizo" to depict someone of indigenous, black, and

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<sup>117</sup> Molina Enríquez, *La revolución agraria de México 1910-1920*, Tomo I, 113-21. Although he does not specify, these maps are most likely approximations for the colonial period.

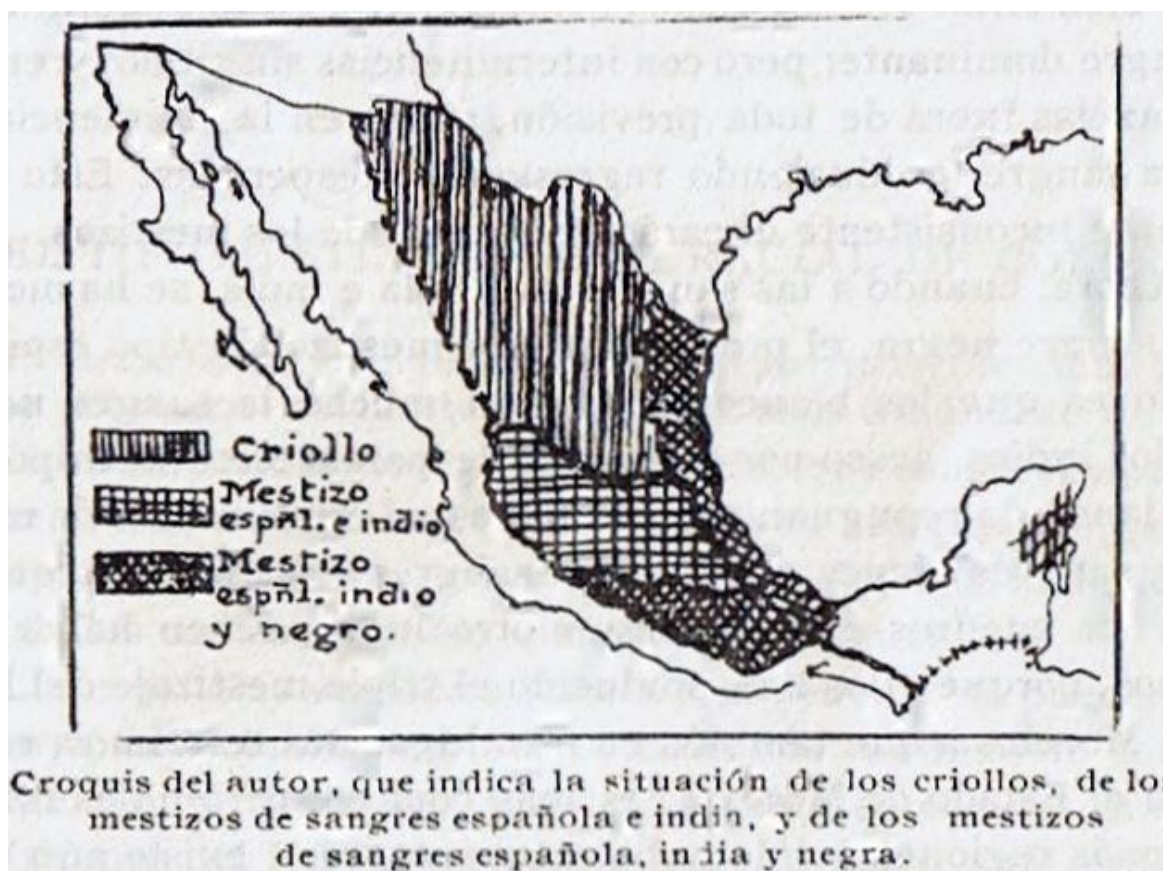
<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>119</sup> Andrés Molina Enríquez, *La revolución agraria de México 1910-1920*, Tomo II (México: UNAM, 1986), 64.



**Map 1:** Map of the Distribution of Black Blood. From Andrés Molina Enríquez, *La revolución agraria de México*, 1910-1920, Tomo 1, 119.





**Map 2:** Map of the Distribution of the Mestizajes. “Sketch of the author that indicates the location of the creoles, the mestizos of Spanish and Indian blood, and the mestizos of Spanish, Indian, and black blood.” From Andrés Molina Enríquez, *La revolución agraria de México*, 1910-1920, Tomo 1, 121.

Spanish ancestries. This term reappeared in the third volume and fifth volumes of *La revolución agraria* that were published in 1933 and 1936.<sup>120</sup>

Following the standard post-revolutionary narrative, he highlighted Mexican heroes during the wars for independence, the Reforma, and the Revolution of 1910. However, his narrative (like Mancisidor's) classified some of these national heroes as having black blood. He identified Vicente Guerrero—the president who abolished slavery—as a triple *mestizo*.<sup>121</sup> He more provocatively declared that Zapata, the popular icon of the Mexican Revolution, was also a triple *mestizo*.<sup>122</sup> Molina Enríquez assumed that Zapata had some black ancestry because he was from the sugar producing state of Morelos that Molina Enríquez already identified as being of indigenous, Spanish, and black descent [see Map 2].<sup>123</sup>

Two inter-related issues, he asserted, hindered Mexico from freeing itself from its colonial social problems. First and foremost, the agrarian problem had not been fixed, because “the Indians and indio-mestizos—paralyzed by the incomprehensible complex of inferiority—have not liberated themselves from the apparent social superiority and from the perverse political actions of the Spanish, of the creoles and of the creole-mestizos.”<sup>124</sup> The culturally relativist rejection of racial hierarchy was needed to overcome this conundrum. In the fourth and fifth volumes, he linked these issues to the exploitative

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<sup>120</sup> Molina Enríquez, *La revolución agraria de México 1910-1920*, Tomo I, 116-7; and Basave Benitez, *México mestizo*, 75-6.

<sup>121</sup> Molina Enríquez, *La revolución agraria de México 1910-1920*, Tomo III, 52. Vincent claims that Guerrero was of African and indigenous descent, see Vincent, *The Legacy of Vicente Guerrero*, 9.

<sup>122</sup> Molina Enríquez, *La revolución agraria de México 1910-1920*, Tomo V, 147.

<sup>123</sup> On the African-descended population in Morelos, see Cheryl English Martin, *Rural Society in Colonial Morelos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985), especially 151-2.

<sup>124</sup> Andrés Molina Enríquez, *La revolución agraria de México, 1910-1920*, Tomo V, 193.

nature of capitalism: the second problem facing Mexico. U.S. industries, he argued in the fourth tome, created social injustices that prevented national unification.<sup>125</sup>

In the fifth installment, he explicitly added a Marxist approach to his analysis of Mexico's social problem. Like Teja Zabre, Molina Enríquez wanted to align Marxism with the ethnographic theories that shaped post-revolutionary nation formation; historical materialism could explain the socio-economic conditions that transformed triple *mestizos*, like Zapata, into revolutionaries. This theoretical orientation would combine the economic issues that buttressed the agrarian question with the problem of racial hierarchy that had historically divided Mexican society. For him, relativist cultural understanding as well as objective historical analysis was needed to unite the nation.<sup>126</sup>

By the fifth volume of *La revolución agraria de México*, Molina Enríquez had significantly moved beyond the positivist concept of *mestizo* evolution that characterized *Los grandes problemas nacionales*. By fusing Boasian cultural relativism to Marxist historical materialism, he rethought the nature of *mestizaje* and the economic, social, cultural, and racial conditions that could establish social justice. Despite his new theoretical orientations, he still subsumed cultural practices to biological concepts of race that he identified with blood lines. In his history of Mexico, blackness—particularly defined through the concept of the triple *mestizo*—permeated his discussion of the colonial *casta* regime, the post-independence depiction of *mestizaje*, and Mexico's contemporary racial landscape. Personified in Zapata, Mexico's black ancestry was part of the revolutionary spirit that Molina Enríquez glorified as the culmination of over a century of social struggle.

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<sup>125</sup> Andrés Molina Enríquez, *La revolución agraria de México*, 1910-1920, Tomo IV, 114-27.

<sup>126</sup> Andrés Molina Enríquez, *La revolución agraria de México*, 1910-1920, Tomo V, 10-2.

## Conclusion

By 1940, the nationalist construction of *mestizaje* had fundamentally changed. Ethnographers no longer deemed black peoples a threat to Mexico's indigenous population or rendered them insignificant on the world's stage. Epitomized by Molina Enríquez's stark intellectual transformation between 1909 and 1936, blackness entered into Mexico's historical past and ethnographic present. Although the trope of black racial and cultural disappearance informed multiple discussions of blackness in the decades that followed the Mexican Revolution, many Mexican nationalists concluded that black cultures, mentalities, and peoples had not completely been erased from the national landscape. Modernist aesthetics—especially relativist theories that favored racial and cultural pluralism—buttressed the recasting of indigeneity and *mestizaje* after 1916 and blackness after 1920. As the next chapter shows, this modernist ethnographic interest in blackness also informed Mexican musical composition and the making of Mexico's post-revolutionary musical canon.

## Chapter 2: “Descendants of the Songs of the Black Slaves”: Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster’s *Huapangos* and the Construction of Black Music as Mexican, 1917-1942

In the musical program guide for Mexico’s 1940 exhibition *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, modernist composer Carlos Chávez asserted that the famous Mexican vernacular song *La Bamba* “has an unmistakable Negro tang.”<sup>1</sup> This reference to black music was part of the larger ethnomusicological discussion of Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster’s *Huapangos*, a classical composition that debuted at the exhibit. The New York City audience that came to the MoMA would not have been surprised to learn that Mexican music had Spanish and pre-Columbian roots. However, they would have been shocked to read that it also contained black melodies, harmonies, and rhythms. Like all Mexican music, *La Bamba* had traditionally been depicted as the mixture of Spanish and indigenous cultures. In this transnational setting, Chávez and Baqueiro Foster expanded the cultural and racial cartography of Mexican music to include black culture: a theme that previously had been seen as foreign and a threat to Mexican nationalism.

Baqueiro Foster and Chávez used modernist aesthetics and ethnographic methods similar to those discussed in the previous chapter to construct a post-revolutionary musical canon that represented Mexico’s diverse vernacular music (what I define as the song and dance of a particular, geographically-defined community). Because they considered African-descended and indigenous music to be primitive, they ontologically linked these racially-defined vernacular genres in modernist musicological and ethnomusicological theories and methods. Using the rhetoric of cultural pluralism and the

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<sup>1</sup> Carlos Chávez, “VI. Huapangos,” in *Mexican Music: Notes by Herbert Weinstock for Concerts Arranged by Carlos Chávez*, trans. Herbert Weinstock (The Museum of Modern Art: May 1940), 21.

desire to incorporate vernacular music into an inclusive cross-race national oeuvre in the 1930s, they began to think about the degree to which black musical elements permeated specific rural locales.<sup>2</sup>

The current literature on musical composition, musical theory, and ethnomusicology in the post-revolutionary period fails to acknowledge the importance of black melodies, harmonies, and rhythms when it discusses the integration of local songs into a modern Mexican soundscape characterized by *mestizaje*.<sup>3</sup> This historiography claims that post-revolutionary musical nationalism culminated, often with the MoMA concert series, in 1940.<sup>4</sup> Using Baqueiro Foster as a central thread, this chapter begins to rethink this chronology as it adds black music to the history of post-revolutionary composition and ethnomusicology. It begins by discussing how composers, musicologists, and ethnomusicologists in the 1910s and 1920s disregarded African-descended tunes while they debated how to deploy indigenous and *mestizo* music within modernist aesthetics. After Chávez initiated a cross-race ethnomusicological project to document and modernize the music of the subaltern masses in the 1930s, black music

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<sup>2</sup> This idea expands on the regional dynamics explained in Marco Velázquez and Mary Kay Vaughan, “*Mestizaje* and Musical Nationalism in Mexico,” in *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940*, eds. Mary Kay Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 95-118.

<sup>3</sup> There is an abundant literature on how Mexican composers tried to integrate indigenous music into a modern nationalist oeuvre. See Yolanda Moreno Rivas, *La composición en México en el siglo XX* (México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1994); Leonora Saavedra, “Of Selves and Others: Historiography, Ideology, and the Politics of Modern Mexican Music” (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2001); Alejandro L. Madrid, *Sounds of the Modern Nation: Music, Culture, and Ideas in Post-Revolutionary Mexico* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2009); and Aurelio Tello, “La creación musical en México durante el siglo XX,” in *La música en México. Panorama del siglo XX*, coord. Aurelio Tello (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010), 486-555.

<sup>4</sup> See Dan Malmström, *Introduction to Twentieth Century Mexican Music* (Sweden: The Institute of Musicology, Uppsala University, 1974), 98; Saavedra, “Of Selves and Others,” 13 and 317-29; and Alberto Rodríguez, “Nacionalismo y folklore en la Escuela Nacional de Música,” in *Preludio y fuga. Historias trashumantes de la Escuela Nacional de Música de la UNAM*, coord., María Esther Aguirre Lora (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2008), 415.

ceased to be a foreign threat to post-revolutionary nationalism and entered into these indigenous-centric polemics. This initiative laid the foundation for more nuanced analyses of African-descended musical genres after 1940.

### **Vernacular Music and Blackness in the 1910s**

Throughout the nineteenth century, composers were generally more attuned to European musical aesthetics than to vernacular genres. Nonetheless, the musical elite occasionally debated how to include indigenous culture in nationalist classical compositions. With the wars of independence (1810-1821), they attempted to liberate themselves from the confining cultural boundaries of Spanish colonial rule. The popular mobilization against the Spanish and later against the French in the 1860s engendered temporary patriotic spirits that embraced local song and dance. But as the century progressed, German, Italian, and French romantic melodies predominated in Mexican art music and elite salon performances. When composers placed indigenous melodies within Western compositional forms and styles, they tended to disregard local aesthetics and promote European ones.<sup>5</sup> At the turn of the century, vernacular music began to filter back into modernist classical compositions. Some composers adapted indigenous and *mestizo* songs to situate Mexican culture within the Western canon.<sup>6</sup> They did not classify black music as Mexican or transpose it into art music. For instance, the popular Afro-Cuban

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<sup>5</sup> Moreno Rivas, *La composición en México en el siglo XX*, 12-9; Yolanda Moreno Rivas, *Historia de la música popular mexicana* (México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para Cultura y las Artes, 1989), 11; and Velázquez and Vaughan, “*Mestizaje* and Musical Nationalism in Mexico,” 95-100.

<sup>6</sup> Saavedra, “Of Selves and Others.”

stylings of the *danzón* remained confined to popular dance halls in Yucatán, the city of Veracruz, and Mexico City.<sup>7</sup>

Most notably, composer Manuel M. Ponce (1883-1948) championed the use of vernacular songs in classical compositions when he began to explore whether Mexican music fit neatly within the Eurocentric ideas of universal music. Although this interest began before the Mexican Revolution, it congealed after 1910. He asserted that music was a means for the poor and uneducated to gain a voice, albeit one that needed to be filtered through elites.<sup>8</sup> The study of vernacular music was a means to “discover the treasure of our [Mexican] folklore.” Composers, he insisted, had to couch insipid indigenous and *mestizo* music in vibrant modern aesthetics.<sup>9</sup> While praising vernacular music for its “remarkable local flavor,” he bemoaned the “monotonal” use of harmony, the “lack of melodic development . . . the poverty of the rhythms, and an untranslatable vagueness that extends the indefinite, primitive accompaniment after every stanza.”<sup>10</sup>

Whether it was the indigenous melodies of Mexico or African tribal songs, vernacular music “bred sounds that lacked significance.” Indigenous and *mestizo* music—“the loyal expression of the life of the people”—represented the popular insurgencies that sustained the Mexican Revolution. But, these tunes needed to be

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<sup>7</sup> Simón Jara Gámez, Aurelio Rodríguez Yeyo, and Antonio Zedillo Castillo, *De Cuba con amor . . . el danzón en México* (México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1994), 36-61. Also see Jesús Flores y Escalante, *Salón México. Historia Documental y Gráfica del Danzón en México* (México: Asociación Mexicana de Estudios Fonográficos, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Moreno Rivas, *Historia de la música popular mexicana*, 17-8; and Saavedra, “Of Selves and Others,” 17-28.

<sup>9</sup> Rubén M. Campos, “Prologo,” *Cultura* IV, núm. 1-6: iv.

<sup>10</sup> Manuel M. Ponce, “Cultura: Escritos y composiciones musicales,” *Cultura* IV, núm. 1-6: 10.



modernized when composers transposed them.<sup>11</sup> Drawing on nineteenth-century positivist thought, Ponce proclaimed that rhythm and sound were a means to chart social progress. Ancient Greek music, he purported, was inferior to modern classical compositions, because it only used four or five notes rather than the twelve associated with modern classical composition. With only three or four notes, pre-Columbian indigenous music was even less evolved. Vernacular music needed to become more “complex” if it was to remain a vital component of Mexican culture.<sup>12</sup> Composers, he argued, should transpose these less sophisticated pentatonic (five-note) songs into the heptatonic (seven-note) scale employed in Western art music.<sup>13</sup>

After his voluntary exile in Cuba from 1915 to 1917, Ponce explicitly disassociated African-derived music and other foreign influences from Mexican national identity.<sup>14</sup> Mexican music originated in the indigenous and Spanish past. Any song that comprised of European, U.S., or Cuban stylings was “not vernacular music, but [an] imitation.” Coastal compositions, such as Cuba’s “voluptuous *danzónes*,” were not Mexican. While these songs had been

created in Mexico and become extremely popular, we should consider them as true imitations of Cuban music. . . . They are genuinely of Cuban origin and while composed in our country, they are not freed from the peculiar musical styles of the Antillean pearls. While modifying them and converting them into national dances, I conclude that they should not be considered important parts of Mexico’s folkloric nationalism.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Manuel M. Ponce, “El folk-lore musical mexicano. Lo que se ha hecho. Lo que puede hacerse,” *Revista musical de México* 1, núm. 5 (1919): 5-6 and 8.

<sup>12</sup> Ponce, “Cultura,” 7 and 41-43.

<sup>13</sup> Saavedra, “Of Selves and Others,” 39-41.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-9.

<sup>15</sup> Ponce, “Cultura,” 11 and 16.

This analysis helped to forge a post-revolutionary concept of national patrimony that failed to perceive the global cultural flows and migratory patterns that shaped local communities. Despite the Mexicanization of the *danzón*, it was not and could never be part of how Ponce construed national identity.

His innovative ideas about vernacular music catalyzed a transformation in Mexican musical nationalism. It became fashionable to transpose, if not modernize, vernacular melodies. In the early 1920s, his sentimental depiction of vernacular music resonated with the state's nation-building project led by José Vasconcelos. Directing the SEP, Vasconcelos vehemently rejected pre-revolutionary salon music as well as unfiltered post-revolutionary renditions of local songs. Rather, he favored the sentimentalized popular tunes that Ponce and his colleagues composed.<sup>16</sup>

While Ponce classified music according to its harmonic complexity, musicologist Alba Herrera y Ogazón (1883-1931) analyzed melodies and rhythms to understand and transpose vernacular melodies into modernist classical compositions. In 1917, she promoted a more Eurocentric and essentialized understanding of vernacular music and national identity than Ponce. For her, musical melodies and rhythms were the “sensual elements” of musical expression and the natural “instinctive tendencies of men.” While all human societies expressed themselves through music, each individual community developed a unique musical culture in accordance with its evolutionary progress. Singular melodic lines and simple rhythmic styles were less evolved than the European compositions that were polyphonic (having multiple melodic lines) and more rhythmically complex. Instead of understanding musical evolution through the number of

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<sup>16</sup> Saavedra, “Of Selves and Others,” 17-50, 82, 132-133; and Madrid, *Sounds of the Modern Nation*, 55.

notes used (like Ponce), she classified it through the intricacies of its melodies and rhythms. She feared that Mexicans would merely imitate more advanced European styles without selectively incorporating what she called the “barbaric” indigenous melodies that had survived the violence and cultural anomie of the Spanish conquest. The combination of indigenous and Spanish music, she wrote, brought “the sadness of the Indian” in contact “with the vivacity of the Spanish.” This stereotyped understanding of indigenous, Spanish, and Mexican cultures left no space for a black element, which she ignored. She encouraged the forging of a nationalist musical genre that represented the Mexican race “as a result of the careful exploitation of the vernacular song.” Advocating for more musical innovation than Ponce, she claimed that local music ought to be “amplified, embellished, changed, and in the end transform[ed]” so that it would become more “refined” and be “differentiated from its primitive, ornamental version.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Microtonality and Ethnomusicology before 1928**

Ponce and Herrera y Ogazón both defined national music through a calculated fusion of indigenous vernacular songs and Western aesthetics. Their desire to situate local music within classical composition did not always align with goals of a younger generation that, in the 1920s, espoused the avant-garde theory of microtonality in addition to modern ethnomusicological principles. Although this new generation failed to develop a coherent program until after 1928, they ushered in a transnational modernist

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<sup>17</sup> Alba Herrera y Ogazón, *El arte musical en México* (México: Departamento Editorial de la Dirección General de las Bellas Artes, 1917), 5-15, 21, and 219-22.

ideology that condemned the unquestioned mimicry of European aesthetics.<sup>18</sup> Despite their ideological and methodological divisions in the 1920s, they either followed Ponce in explicitly discounting black songs as Mexican or continued Herrera y Ogazón's implicit dismissal of such vernacular music.

The microtonal critique of Mexican music began with composer Julián Carrillo (1875-1965). Even though he was part of the pre-revolutionary old guard, he claimed that his theory of microtonality, what he called "El Sonido 13 [The Thirteenth Sound]," could "give life to dead or ancient compositions" while it overturned the entire system of musical composition.<sup>19</sup> He understood music along an evolutionary progression that began with songs that lacked harmony and continued with those that embraced the finite number of harmonies contained in the major and minor scales. Current Mexican composers either used these harmonics or the next musical stage that was dissonant, chromatic, and atonal. Whether it utilized major, minor, or chromatic scales, classical music used a mathematical series of twelve notes that had equal intervals between each successive note, a system called equal temperament. According to Carrillo, the next and final step in the evolution of musical composition was the microtonal subdivision of the

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<sup>18</sup> Alejandro L. Madrid outlines these debates from the 1920s in *Sounds of the Modern Nation*. For a wider context on these new ideas see Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4; and Arnold Schoenberg, "New Music," in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley: University of California, 1975), 137-9.

<sup>19</sup> Julián Carrillo, "Instituto Musical Revolucionario 'Sonido 13'", s/f, Caja 0134 B0374 Carrillo, Julián. Documento acerca de un experimento acústico hecho en Nueva York, INBA/CENIDIM-ABF. For a more detailed discussion of Carrillo's theory and its relationship to Mexican nationalism, see Madrid, *Sounds of the Modern Nation*, 18-48.

existing twelve tones so that there would be an infinite number of notes available to composers.<sup>20</sup>

Carrillo was predominantly concerned with musical theory.<sup>21</sup> However, some of his students, including Baqueiro Foster and Daniel Castañeda (1899-1957), applied microtonality to Mexico's post-revolutionary project at Mexico's First National Congress of Music in 1926. Led by scholars, like Herrera y Ogazón, who embraced pre-revolutionary aesthetics, the Congress attempted to define post-revolutionary musical theory, practice, and education. The question of how to transpose vernacular melodies into classical compositions shaped these debates. Although the organizing committee accepted most of the submitted papers, it only accepted Baqueiro Foster and Castañeda's microtonal papers, because Castañeda was one of the Congress's organizers. Their colleague Vicente T. Mendoza (1894-1964) also wanted to present on the topic, but the organizing committee rejected his paper, even after Baqueiro Foster edited it.<sup>22</sup>

As Leonora Saavedra explains, the microtonal theories in these papers rethought the relationship between indigenous vernacular music and national art music.<sup>23</sup>

Expanding her argument, Alejandro L. Madrid astutely contends that their ideas signified a populist cultural politics that integrated indigenous music into a modern nationalist

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<sup>20</sup> Carrillo, "Instituto Musical Revolucionario 'Sonido 13.'" For a cultural history of the origin of temperament in Western classical music, see Timothy D. Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 17-42.

<sup>21</sup> Madrid, *Sounds of the Modern Nation*, 24.

<sup>22</sup> On the Congress see Saavedra, "Of Selves and Others," 134-5 and 178-86; and Madrid, *Sounds of the Modern Nation*, 111-30.

<sup>23</sup> Saavedra, "Of Selves and Others," 182-4. Also see María Esther Aguirre Lora, "Raíces y vuelos en la renovación musical. Los Congresos Nacionales de Música (1926, 1928)," in *Preludio y fuga. Historias trashumantes de la Escuela Nacional de Música de la UNAM*, coord. María Esther Aguirre Lora (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2008), 119-26.

repertoire.<sup>24</sup> Although they were concerned with the music of Mexico's indigenous population, the papers presented by Baqueiro Foster and Castañeda—as well as the one written by Mendoza—also articulated a humanistic and pluralist concept of vernacular music and national identity. This ideology eventually buttressed Baqueiro Foster's ethnomusicological research in the 1930s, his orchestration of *Huapangos* that derived from it, and his construction of black music as Mexican.

At the Congress, Baqueiro Foster and Castañeda presented five papers. They articulated a new concept of musical composition that provided composers and musicologists with better tools to understand and transpose vernacular songs. While they did not blindly copy Carrillo's *Sonido 13*, they elucidated his theory by contending that it was necessary to embrace what they called a “Doctrina de la No-Tonalidad [Doctrine of No-Tonality],” an idea that subdivided musical intervals into ninety-six tones.<sup>25</sup> While Ponce and Herrera y Ogazón had argued that vernacular music needed to be transposed into European forms, Baqueiro Foster and Castañeda highlighted the need to align Western musical nomenclature and musical theory with the natural harmonies that inhered in vernacular music.

They based their analysis on the belief that the Western tempered scale could not represent all of the harmonies in indigenous music.<sup>26</sup> Certain intervals in vernacular songs did not align with the pitches in the twelve-tone system but could be approximated

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<sup>24</sup> Madrid, *Sounds of the Modern Nation*, 125-30.

<sup>25</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster and Daniel Castañeda, “Teoría general de la subdivisión del tono. Su fundamento, su crítica y su porvenir,” pg. 1, Caja 1527 Congreso Nacional de Música (1o: 1926: México), INBA/CENIDIM-ABF; and Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster and Daniel Castañeda, “Principios técnicos para el Folk-lore en general, y en particular para el folk-lore mexicano,” pg. 2, Caja 1527 Congreso Nacional de Música (1o: 1926: México), INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

<sup>26</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster and Daniel Castañeda, “Doctrina de la No-Tonalidad,” pg. 10, Caja 1527 Congreso Nacional de Música (1o: 1926: México), INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

when they were transposed into classical compositions. Other harmonics could not accurately be notated within the existing tempered intervals.<sup>27</sup> According to Baqueiro Foster and Castañeda, the harmonic progression in vernacular music—particularly the first five harmonics that could be transcribed into a pentatonic scale—characterized all primitive music whether it was Ancient Greek, Egyptian, indigenous, or Asian.<sup>28</sup> Like Ponce, they saw an underlying similarity among the music of indigenous, African, and Ancient Greek civilizations. Their modernist desire to rediscover the harmonies of vernacular music was not a product of ethnographic observation. It was a positivist assumption based on widely-accepted evolutionist perspectives that saw the Western even-tempered system as more advanced than natural pentatonic harmonies.<sup>29</sup> Thus, it resonated with the stereotyped images of indigenous melancholy, black sensuality, and *mestizo* bellicosity that anthropologists and musicologists articulated in the 1910s and 1920s.

The inability of even temperament to notate vernacular songs, Baqueiro Foster and Castañeda contended, hindered Mexico's pluralist attempt to classify and preserve the "primitive folklore [that is] common to all peoples." Composers would not be able to successfully transpose "the diverse scales that characterize the melodies of every peoples and that mark, to say it as such, of their stage of musical evolution, and with that their artistic culture." If a composer "wanted to translate the existing melodies of the old

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<sup>27</sup> Baqueiro Foster and Castañeda "Doctrina de la No-Tonalidad," 3; and Baqueiro Foster and Castañeda, "Principios técnicos para el Folk-lore en general," 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> Baqueiro Foster and Castañeda, "Principios técnicos para el Folk-lore en general." However, they were not the only composers to do equate primitive music to the natural harmonic system; for instance, see, Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy E. Carter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 18-22.

<sup>29</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Schoenberg and the New Music*, trans. Derrick Puffett and Alfred Clayton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 64-5; and Madrid, *Sounds of the Modern Nation*, 126-8.

Maya-Quiché civilization to our tempered twelve-tone scale and to our mathematical musical system, it would be impossible.” The lack of a microtonal system Europeanized vernacular music, because “the rich and multiple variety of autochthonous and popular scales . . . [would be] lost, or as those who understand what is going on say, it becomes European.”<sup>30</sup> In theory, microtonal analysis would not only generate more nuanced understandings of vernacular cultures in Mexico but also produce a more pluralist understanding of Mexico’s indigenous past. By dividing the twelve-tone system into ninety-six semitones, composers would be able to represent indigenous music accurately in Mexico’s post-revolutionary canon.

Mendoza more explicitly linked microtonal harmonics to this relativist cultural endeavor. His essay articulated an inchoate, democratic cultural sensitivity that would be more visible when he became Mexico’s pre-eminent ethnomusicologist in the 1930s and 1940s. More than his colleagues, he directly applied microtonality to the post-revolutionary re-valorization of the indigenous population.<sup>31</sup> In an unsuccessful attempt to have his essay “Reformas a la Técnica de la Composición y Nuevas Orientaciones Estéticas [Reforms of Technical Composition and New Aesthetic Orientations]” added to the Congress’s program, Baqueiro Foster edited it. In the paper, Mendoza made—and Baqueiro Foster reinforced—a plea to use microtonality to render classical music more humanistic. Mendoza wrote: “Art takes us, the musician conscious of his labor, towards the beauty that is closest to the original; thus, it needs a much more human musical language, much more expression.” Baqueiro Foster adjusted the end of this statement to

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<sup>30</sup> Baqueiro Foster and Castañeda, “Principios técnicos para el Folk-lore en general,” 1-11.

<sup>31</sup> Vicente T. Mendoza, “Reformas a la Técnica de la Composición y Nuevas Orientaciones Estéticas,” pg. 1 and 5, Caja 1527 Congreso Nacional de Música (1o: 1926: México), INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.



say, “thus, it needs a musical language that is much more human, much more expressive.”<sup>32</sup> Underlining “much more human” did not change the meaning of the passage. Read as a palimpsest, this alteration indicates that Baqueiro Foster celebrated the humanistic importance of microtonality. His ideas were not just an abstract assertion of Mexican nationalist aesthetics in the face of European musical norms. Microtonalism allowed composers to assert a pluralist national culture through the study and modernist orchestration of Mexico’s vernacular music.

At the same time that Baqueiro Foster, Castañeda, and Mendoza advocated for microtonal principles and ontological ideas of vernacular music, other musicologists turned to ethnographic study as a means to understand vernacular music. Jesús C. Romero, one of the organizers of the 1926 Congress, was interested in how ethnographic studies could “dignify our art.” He declared that people make music as a statement of their own identity. To use vernacular music, composers needed to understand how and why music was made as well as how it was performed in contemporary indigenous communities.<sup>33</sup> While this initiative also embraced positivist and stereotyped ideas, it valued the local cultural contexts that shaped vernacular music.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, like their musicological contemporaries and the generation that preceded them, ethnomusicologists either ignored or discounted black music.

Also at the First National Congress of Music, Pedro Michaca F. Domínguez made an equally impassioned plea for a better understanding of vernacular music. He drew on

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>33</sup> Dr. Jesús C. Romero, *La Historia Crítica de la Música en México* (Mexico: Tall. Linotip, 1927), pg. 21, Caja 1527 Congreso Nacional de Música (1o: 1926: México), INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

<sup>34</sup> Rodríguez, “Nacionalismo y folklore en la Escuela Nacional de Música,” 380-1 and 384-6.

Ponce's belief that Mexican local music represented vibrant cultures, particularly the splendors of Mexico's living indigenous communities. Through the ethnographic study of local music in northern Mexico and in the state of Michoacán, he intended "to make a complete study of the customs, people, clothing and popular music." From his research in Michoacán, he concluded that Mexican vernacular music was heterogeneous and needed to be classified according to its "constitution, rhythm, and regional and racial characteristics." Such studies would permit Mexicans to "follow a distinct path, getting ourselves closer to the people, sharing everyday life with them, penetrating their ideas, sentiments and needs."<sup>35</sup>

In 1928, Rubén M. Campos (1876-1945) published his canonical ethnomusicological work *El Folklore y la Música Mexicana* [*Folklore and Mexican Music*]. Based on his research in Michoacán, he situated ample empirical evidence, often musical scores, within the context of community life. Like Romero, he understood vernacular culture to be more than just an archeological artifact that should be collected. It was a lived experience that "could be reconstructed through the fusing of [musical] phrases and the construction of melodies that obeyed determined, intuitive forms." These processes required "going door to door to rummage in ancient homes" for ancient melodies that might only be partially remembered. While acknowledging that indigenous music could change, he—like Herrera y Ogazón—admitted that certain intrinsic elements, like its melancholy, permanently remained.<sup>36</sup> Campos's ethnographic

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<sup>35</sup> Pedro Michaca F. Domínguez, "Nuevas orientaciones sobre el folk-lore mexicano. Tesis presentada en el Primer Congreso Nacional de Música en México, el día 5 de septiembre de 1926," pg. 3-5, Caja 1527 Congreso Nacional de Música (1o: 1926: México), INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

<sup>36</sup> Rubén M. Campos, *El folklore y la música mexicana. Investigación acerca de la cultura musical en México (1525-1925)* (México: Publicaciones de la Secretaria de Educación Pública, 1928), 7 and 21-6.

sensibility therefore maintained certain cultural stereotypes even as it wedded them to a relativist discussion of indigenous cultural diversity.

Unlike most post-revolutionary musicologists in the 1910s and 1920s, Campos analyzed rhythms rather than melodies or harmonies. He likened vernacular music to a poem, albeit a bad one characterized by banal language. Rhythmic complexity and, at times, competing time signatures characterized indigenous music. In a rather modernist analogy, he stated that vernacular music, particularly its poor melodic voice and its rhythmic vibrancy, resembled “the maelstrom of automobile traffic.” These rhythms were “still alive in regions where cosmopolitanism had not ended the sources for the people’s poetic infantile imagination.” As long as indigenous communities continued to create new songs, vernacular music would remain a contemporary issue, not just one tragically buried in the past.<sup>37</sup>

Culturally, Campos defined Mexican music through the interaction among three cultures: Spanish; indigenous; and, to a lesser extent, Arab. Other musical influences—including African-descended ones—threatened the formation of a national music and the preservation of indigenous rhythms. He favored European melodic lines over insipid indigenous ones and praised the development of more beautiful nineteenth-century melodies that fused Italian romanticism to Mexican vernacular music. Yet he also disdained foreign musical inspirations—such as the polka, the foxtrot, jazz, and various Cuban dances—that adulterated indigenous rhythms. Resembling Ponce’s critique of foreign music, he stated that these genres hindered the development and study of local music, because they introduced cosmopolitan musical elements that were not part of “the memory of our people.” Cuban music, for instance, shared many rhythmic structures with

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 13-7, 27-38, and 53-4.

Mexican genres. However, its “passion and youthfulness” prevented it from expressing the melancholy and sadness that, for Campos, was inherent to indigenous song and dance.<sup>38</sup> Like Ponce, Baqueiro Foster, and Castañeda, Campos perceived musicological similarities among vernacular music that had indigenous and black (or Cuban) roots. However, the essentialized ideas of indigenous and *mestizo* music that he used to depict Mexican identity prevented black music from being part of the national cultural landscape.

### **Carlos Chávez, Ethnomusicology, and U.S.-Mexican Exchanges**

The most notable absence at the First National Congress of Music was Carlos Chávez. By the 1930s and 1940s, Chávez had become Mexico’s foremost musical figure, possessing a commanding stature within cultural institutions, such as the Orquesta Sinfónica de México [Mexican Symphonic Orchestra], the Departamento de Bellas Artes [Department of Fine Arts], the Conservatorio Nacional de Música [National Conservatory of Music], and the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes [National Institute of Fine Arts]. Beginning in 1928, he defined the boundaries of Mexico’s musical production to such a degree that debates about how to represent Mexico’s indigenous music subsided. The generation of composers who came of age in the late 1920s and 1930s embraced his modernist leanings and helped to institute ethnomusicology as a foundation for musical nationalism.<sup>39</sup> They rejected some of the elitist admonitions of Ponce and

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 38, 56, 67, 74, and 160-1.

<sup>39</sup> Saavedra, “Of Selves and Others,” 218-38; Rodríguez, “Nacionalismo y folklore en la Escuela Nacional de Música,” 375-418; and Ricardo Pérez Montfort, “Carlos Chávez en los Años Cuarenta: Caudillo o Cacique Cultural,” in *Diálogo de Resplandores: Carlos Chávez y Silvestre Revueltas*, eds. Yael Bitrán and Ricardo Miranda (México, D.F.: INBA, 2002), 174-81.

Campos as they began to view blackness as a valid artistic expression that could be part of Mexican musical identity.

In the 1920s, Chávez spent much of his time abroad. He travelled to Europe from 1922 to 1923 and spent significant time in New York City from 1923 to 1924 and again between 1926 and 1928. New York City was an intellectual center for Mexican musicians, including Ponce, Carrillo, and Chávez.<sup>40</sup> With the overwhelming interest in vernacular art and music in both nations, Mexican handicrafts, art exhibits, and musical shows were quite popular.<sup>41</sup> During his two trips, Chávez entered into New York City's modernist circles and occasionally participated in the Pan-American Association of Composers, an organization that united avant-garde composers from the United States, Mexico, and Cuba. He became acquainted with New York's cultural elite, especially Aaron Copland (1900-1990), a composer with whom he would maintain a friendship for decades.<sup>42</sup> He also grew to appreciate jazz and began to incorporate its black-infused stylings into some of his compositions, including *Blues* (1928), *Fox* (1928), and his ballet

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<sup>40</sup> Christina Taylor Gibson, "The Music of Manuel M. Ponce, Julián Carrillo, and Carlos Chávez" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2008).

<sup>41</sup> Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1935* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1992); and Elizabeth Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890-1915* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

<sup>42</sup> Mary Kay Vaughan and Theodore Cohen, "Black, Brown, and Blues: Miguel Covarrubias and Carlos Chávez in the United States and Mexico," in *Creating an Archetype: The Influence of the Mexican Revolution in the United States* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, Forthcoming); Oja, *Making Modern Music*, 192-4 and 278-9; and Robert Parker, *Trece panoramas en torno a Carlos Chávez* (México, D.F.: CONACULTA, 2009), 131-51. On the Pan-American Association of Composers, see Stephanie N. Stallings, "Collective Difference: The Pan-American Association of Composers and Pan-American Ideology in Music, 1925-1945" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2009).

*Caballos de vapor* [*Horse Power*] (1926-1932), which also employed vernacular songs, such as the *huapango*.<sup>43</sup>

In 1928, Chávez instituted a new musical agenda for the nation. He disregarded all musical aesthetics, including the *Sonido 13*, which he thought were derivative of European sensibilities. Instead of fostering musical nationalism, such crudely mechanical imitations of European music would stifle, if not endanger, Mexico's post-revolutionary endgame. Good music, he proclaimed, needed to be uniquely Mexican: indigenous in its inspiration and musical origins, yet modern in its compositional style.<sup>44</sup> Thus, he also attacked the limitations of Mexico's older generation of composers, like Ponce, who transcribed vernacular music with "pretty melodies and harmonized them beautifully." Chávez wanted composers to adopt the more evolved and discordant chords commonplace in avant-garde musical circles.<sup>45</sup> He lamented the failure of Mexican composers to seek inspiration from the "very high degree of autochthonous culture" that derived from the grandeur of pre-Columbian indigenous societies.<sup>46</sup>

Because he saw pitch as a fixed aspect of musical composition, Chávez did not appreciate the nuanced ideas of harmony espoused by Baqueiro Foster, Castañeda, and Mendoza in 1926. He wanted to foment a more pluralist musical nationalism through

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<sup>43</sup> Robert L. Parker, *Carlos Chávez: Mexico's Modern-Day Orpheus* (Boston Massachusetts: Twayne Publishers, 1983), 7; and Stallings, "Collective Difference," 135.

<sup>44</sup> Carlos Chávez, "Sexto Editorial de Música," Expediente 5 (Artículos Periodísticos, 1924-1934), Vol. 1, Caja 1, Sección Escritos, AGN-FCC.

<sup>45</sup> Carlos Chávez, "Armonía y Melodía," *El Universal*, 21 de diciembre 1924.

<sup>46</sup> Carlos Chávez, "La Importación en México," Expediente 5 (Artículos Periodísticos, 1924-1934), Vol. 1, Caja 1, Sección Escritos, AGN-FCC.

ethnographic observation rather than abstract musical theories.<sup>47</sup> But like the microtonalists, he believed that indigenous music originated in “a music lesson from nature.” It could be transposed into a pentatonic scale. From this evolutionary perspective that deemed indigenous music as natural, Chávez did not question the relevancy of Western even temperament, since he declared that this scale could be depicted without semitones.<sup>48</sup>

Because Mexico was fundamentally “Indo-European,” Chávez’s project required the ethnographic and historical incorporation of indigenous arts into the national scene.

He expressly wanted composers

to also note work realized with the documentary intention that is more historical, ethnographic, etc., and that does not directly concern the musical art of the present, but that could be of great utility; fundamentally, they cooperate with movements that consciously look for a musical intellectual expression that presents and typifies the characteristic features of their nationality.

He saw multiple indigenous and *mestizo* cultures. National music needed to benefit from “the grafting together of thousands and thousands of musical expressions which day-by-day have arrived in our nation.” While Chávez thought that Mexico lacked any singular “Mexican musical archetype,” he ingenuously asserted that all regional music was founded on indigeneity.<sup>49</sup>

In the 1930s, this pluralist rhetoric radicalized and solidified within a broad-based class dynamic that linked indigeneity and blackness. Classical incarnations of vernacular music were part of the Mexican Revolution’s “liberating movement” that highlighted “the fight for the redemption of the oppressed classes and fight against imperialist

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<sup>47</sup> Carlos Chávez, “The Two Persons,” *Musical Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (April 1929): 155-6.

<sup>48</sup> Carlos Chávez, “Introduction,” 8; also see Saavedra, “Of Selves and Others,” 234-7 and 322-3.

<sup>49</sup> Expediente 9 (Nacionalismo en Latino América), Vol. 1, Caja 1, Sección Escritos, AGN-FCC.

foreigners.” Chávez wanted to give workers, field hands, and indigenous communities a voice.<sup>50</sup> Music—such as his *Sinfonía proletaria* [*Proletarian Symphony*] (1934) and *Sinfonía india* [*Indian Symphony*] (1935)—typified his desire to liberate the subaltern masses from class exploitation, “because in expressing himself, the individual satisfies the primordial necessity [for freedom], and also, makes his other needs more conscious.”<sup>51</sup> Reiterating this perspective, Marxist historian Alfonso Teja Zabre (1888-1962) venerated *Sinfonía india* for its innovative use of Mexico’s “popular roots.”<sup>52</sup>

Composer Luis Sandi (1905-1996) declared that these new ethnomusicological principles depicted a more genuine national culture. “Regarding today’s music,” he poetically asserted, “it has descended from the heights of the unreal to the everyday reality of everyone . . . It has become the spokesperson for the humble in contrast to the public announcements of the splendors of the dominant castes.”<sup>53</sup> This romantic depiction of post-revolutionary music no longer saw a divide between vernacular music and elite orchestrations of it. Composers rhetorically claimed that art music had descended from its elitist origins to be part of the everyday lives of Mexico’s populace. Embracing this populist rhetoric, Ponce even attempted to resuscitate pre-Columbian melodies in his symphonic representation of Mexico City’s famous Chapultepec Park.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Expediente 6 (La Tesis Nacionalista de Ponce), Vol. 1, Caja 1, Sección Escritos, AGN-FCC.

<sup>51</sup> Carlos Chávez, “Arte proletario,” *El Universal*, 29 de septiembre de 1934.

<sup>52</sup> Alfonso Teja Zabre, *Panorama Histórico de la Revolución Mexicana* (México: Ediciones Botas, 1939), 198.

<sup>53</sup> Luis Sandi, “La música y las épocas,” Expediente 169 (Luis Sandi), Vol. 6, Caja 10, Sección Correspondencia, AGN-FCC.

<sup>54</sup> See Leonora Saavedra, “Manuel M. Ponce’s *Chapultepec* and the Conflicted Representations of a Contested Space,” *Musical Quarterly* 92, no. 3-4 (2009): 270-328.



U.S. intellectuals—such as Charles Seeger (1886-1979) and Copland—similarly inquired about the class dynamics of industrial workers, farmers, and in some cases Mexican indigenous communities. For Seeger, the analysis of music as an expression of social conditions was an attempt to balance the tensions between musical traditions and modernist aesthetics and also an effort to overcome the fallacious bourgeois divisions among art music, vernacular music, and proletarian music.<sup>55</sup> It was part of the need “to discover America” by studying rural music and abandoning European musical traditions.<sup>56</sup> Proletarian music was “a weapon in the class struggle” in addition to being a means to overcome the banal hegemony of the bourgeoisie’s musical sensibilities.<sup>57</sup> In less radical terms, Copland wanted to make classical music more accessible by having composers work with government institutions in order to remain conscious of the needs of the public.<sup>58</sup> In part as a result of his friendship with Chávez, Copland uncritically and romantically viewed Mexican society as “the ‘people,’” a trope that he compared with European culture that was constantly “striving to be bourgeois.”<sup>59</sup>

Because of these transnational exchanges, the rise of class-based rhetoric, and the increasing popularity of ethnographic observation—Mexican composers gained a new appreciation for black genres, like jazz, that were becoming increasingly popular in the

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<sup>55</sup> Leonora Saavedra, “The American Composer in the 1930s: The Social Thought of Seeger and Chávez,” in *Understanding Charles Seeger, Pioneer in American Musicology*, eds. Bell Yung and Helen Rees (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 34-41.

<sup>56</sup> Charles Seeger, “Grassroots for American Composers,” in *Studies in Musicology II, 1929-1979*, ed. Ann M. Pescatello (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 386.

<sup>57</sup> Charles Seeger, “On Proletarian Music,” *Modern Music XI*, issue 3 (March 1934): 122-4.

<sup>58</sup> Aaron Copland to Carlos Chávez, December 16, 1933, in *The Selected Correspondence of Aaron Copland*, by Aaron Copland, eds. Elizabeth B. Crist and Wayne Shirley (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 103.

<sup>59</sup> Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland: 1900 through 1942* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1984), 214.

1920s and 1930s.<sup>60</sup> Campos still feared that the Afro-Cuban *danzón* might jeopardize post-revolutionary cultural politics, but he admitted that jazz as well as genres of Cuban music were beginning to influence nationalist composers.<sup>61</sup> Sandi characterized indigenous dances, jazz, and more broadly the music of former black slaves as the foundation for the popular response to assiduous aristocratic music across the Western Hemisphere.<sup>62</sup> Chávez celebrated the explosion of studies about jazz as well as those about African art and music.<sup>63</sup> He even assigned branches of the Conservatorio Nacional de Música to study vernacular traditions in Mexico as well as summarize the work done on these traditions in Asia and Africa.<sup>64</sup>

Unlike the composers, musicologists, and ethnomusicologists of the 1910s and 1920s, these intellectuals did not fear the encroachment of black songs on indigenous vernacular music. In the 1940s, African Americans—such as opera singer Marian Anderson (1897-1993) and ballerina Katherine Dunham (1909-2006)—came to Mexico to perform music that “was not a question of races” but rather that showcased the ability to overcome racial discrimination.<sup>65</sup> According to Baqueiro Foster, these concerts illustrated “what the black race could be when it reached the high level of culture for

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<sup>60</sup> On the circulation and popularity of jazz in the circum-Caribbean, see Putnam, *Radical Moves*, 153-95.

<sup>61</sup> Rodríguez, “Nacionalismo y folklore,” 389.

<sup>62</sup> Sandi, “La música y las épocas.”

<sup>63</sup> Carlos Chávez, “El Arte Popular y el no Popular,” 7 de julio de 1929, Expediente 5 (Artículos Periodísticos, 1924-1934) Vol. 1, Caja 1, Sección Escritos, AGN-FCC.

<sup>64</sup> Saavedra, “Of Selves and Others,” 231.

<sup>65</sup> “Marian Anderson está ya en México,” RP-MF 00865 31354, Mayo 1943, Expedientes, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

which it was so anxiously looking.”<sup>66</sup> This new understanding of black culture was a result of the transnational exchanges that encouraged Mexican musical circles to define black music in the Americas from a modern ethnographic perspective that did not fear the presence of blackness.

### **Baqueiro Foster and the *Huapango* in the 1930s**

By 1930, Baqueiro Foster, Castañeda, and Mendoza had accepted Chávez’s leadership in Mexican music. That year they published updated versions of their polemical essays from the 1926 Music Congress in Chávez’s *Música: Revista Mexicana* [*Music: Mexican Journal*].<sup>67</sup> Throughout the 1930s, their work embodied the historical and ethnographic methods that Chávez espoused. Castañeda continued by studying music in relation to the socio-cultural goals of the Mexican Revolution, principally as he investigated the relationship between European and the pre-Columbian indigenous cultures that were “not yet incorporated into civilization.”<sup>68</sup> Mendoza became the director of the *Academias de Investigación* [Research Academies] at the *Conservatorio Nacional de Música* and later the *Inspector for the Departamento de Música* [Music Department] of the SEP.<sup>69</sup> According to Baqueiro Foster, he solidified himself as “Mexico’s first

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<sup>66</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, “Marian Anderson, un radiante espiritual,” *Suplemento de El Nacional*, 14 de junio de 1959, RP-MF 27015, Cuaderno—Marzo a Dic 1959, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

<sup>67</sup> Saavedra, “Of Selves and Others,” 232.

<sup>68</sup> Castañeda, Daniel, “La Música y la Revolución Mexicana,” RP-MF 06171, RP-MF 06172, RP-MF 06179, RP-MF 06199, and RP-MF-06201, Cuaderno Julio 1934 a Dic 1935,” CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

<sup>69</sup> Jesús C. Romero, “Prologo,” in *El Romance Español y el Corrido Mexicano*, by Vicente T. Mendoza (México: Ediciones de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma, 1939), x-xi.

folkloricist.”<sup>70</sup> Together, Mendoza and Castañeda even published a study of pre-colonial percussion instruments *Instrumental precortesiano [Pre-Colombian Instruments]* in 1933.<sup>71</sup>

Like his counterparts, Baqueiro Foster embraced ethnomusicology as a means to understand “the ‘knowledge of the people’ . . . ‘the memory’ of the people.”<sup>72</sup> In the 1930s, he began to study and write newspaper articles about vernacular music and the history of Mexican music. These inquiries established him as one of the most prominent ethnomusicologists in the states of Veracruz and Yucatán.<sup>73</sup> While the ethnographic study of music could not solve the problem of transcribing vernacular music into equal temperament, it did allow him to continue to articulate a pluralist concept of vernacular music and modern aesthetics. In 1933, he began to travel throughout the nation documenting local musical practices so that he could to write a book about indigenous rhythms.<sup>74</sup> The following year, he arrived in Veracruz to study the *huapango*, a project that he continued through short visits over the next eight years.<sup>75</sup>

He found ethnomusicological observation to be more complex than he initially anticipated. It required more than understanding how and why indigenous communities

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<sup>70</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, “Vicente T. Mendoza, el primer folklorista mexicano,” *Suplemento de El Nacional*, 15 de noviembre de 1964, RP-MF 23432, Cuaderno Artículos II Dic 1963 al Dic. 1966, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

<sup>71</sup> Romero, “Prologo,” x-xi; and Daniel Castañeda and Vicente T. Mendoza, *Instrumental precortesiano* (México: Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnografía, 1933).

<sup>72</sup> Baqueiro Foster, “El Huapango,” 171.

<sup>73</sup> “Conferencia de Baqueiro Foster sobre los sonos,” 24 de marzo de 1959, *El Dictamen*, RP-MF 20943, Cuaderno Marzo a Dic. 1959, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

<sup>74</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster to Carlos Chávez, 6 de noviembre de 1933, Expediente 99 (Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster), Vol. 4, Caja 1, Sección Correspondencia, AGN-FCC.

<sup>75</sup> Baqueiro Foster, “El Huapango,” 183.

performed their music. His analysis of the *huapango* did not align with either the dominant concepts of melody, harmony, and rhythm that typified classical composition or with the cultural geography of Mexican musical nationalism that eschewed blackness. He constantly had to listen to this music “to familiarize his Westernized ears with its exotic melodies.”<sup>76</sup> The ethnomusicological method necessitated that he “study the root of the SONGS of the Huapango in the music of Veracruz . . . for their priceless traditional value and their prolific instructions that would facilitate the substitution of decadent melodic doctrines, harmonies, and forms with ignored possibilities.”<sup>77</sup>

His entire inquiry built upon the premise that the harmonics, rhythmic accents, and timber of the *huapango* differed from the “popular music of today.” The use of particular instruments—chiefly the *arpa-requinto*, a local variation of the harp—produced distinctive harmonic modulations for *huapanguero* musicians; they resembled Ancient Greek music more than classical art music. As a result, local harpists were reluctant to perform popular revolutionary songs, like *la Adelita*, and commercial genres, such as the *danzón* and foxtrot, that had foreign harmonic structures. Baqueiro Foster noted that local musicians recently “have timidly begun” to play these melodies, but in the process they have added “curious deformations” that provide local flavor. They have also started to adopt typical classical harmonic modulations. This disconnect between local vernacular and popular musical styles, he feared, would cause the *huapango*—most notably its use of the *arpa-requinto* and the *jarana*, a type of small guitar from the

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<sup>76</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, “La música popular en el sotavento veracruzano. III,” 1 de noviembre de 1959, Caja 0344 B0930 *El Dictamen*, INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

<sup>77</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster to Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, 29 de noviembre de 1945, Caja 2732 B0154 Veracruz, Ver. Cartas y documentos en relación con los huapangos, sonos del Sotavento Veracruzano, INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

region—to disappear. The genre was already acquiring “a hardness and monotone harmony” as the six-string guitar replaced them. Similarly, the quality of the singing was diminishing as performers increasingly relied on “cloying singing in thirds, [which] were not used with nobility and discretion of the *arpa-requinto*, but in the manner of Italian or Italian-derived Opera music.”<sup>78</sup>

Baqueiro Foster understood that his study of the *huapango* was more than a project to document and preserve vernacular music. Seeing how the genre could provide Mexican composers with new harmonic modulations and melodic forms that had not yet been considered, he implicitly continued his critiques of equal temperament from 1926. Aware of Chávez’s distaste for microtonal analysis, Baqueiro Foster did not reference the treatises that he, Castañeda, and Mendoza had written nor did he explicitly discuss microtonality. His discussion of how the six-string guitar and Italian opera music altered the harmonies of the *huapango*, however, illustrated that his earlier admonitions about the Europeanization of vernacular harmonies were still relevant.

Dependent on local tastes, instrumentation, and the abilities of singers, the specific characteristics of the *huapango* varied from community to community. However, certain musicological traits—such as the reliance on three musical instruments and three singers—surmounted this ethnographic diversity and defined all incarnations of the genre.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps to echo the inclusive rhetoric of the post-revolutionary era, Baqueiro Foster claimed that the *huapango* was inherently “democratic:” it was for all the people of the community regardless of their age or sex. Its rhythms, not its harmonics or

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<sup>78</sup> Baqueiro Foster, “El Huapango,” 175-6.

<sup>79</sup> César Hernández Azuara, *Huapango. El son huasteco y sus instrumentos en los siglos XIX y XX* (México, D.F.: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2003), 21 and 98.

melodies, also defined the genre. The quintessential variation of the *huapango*, *La Bamba*, “was a Song of insignificant melodic and harmonic value.” Singers therefore improvised melodies to syncopated rhythms that had “fantastic polyphony,” or harmonic accompaniments.<sup>80</sup>

Baqueiro Foster rethought the prevailing nationalist framework of Mexican culture in his analysis. He vaguely depicted black rhythms and harmonies as constitutive elements of vernacular music. Previously, ethnomusicologists defined the *huapango* in relation to the interactions between indigenous and Spanish musical elements.<sup>81</sup> For instance, in a 1932 issue of *Mexican Folkways*, U.S. folkloricist Frances Toor contended that the *huapango* was “in the European tradition.”<sup>82</sup> In a more extended analysis, José de J. Núñez y Domínguez (1887-1959) associated the “ethnic regional” genre with pre-Columbian Nahuatl as he depicted it in exotic terms. In somewhat ethnographic terms, he contended that it was the product of “the rustic decoration of fantastic exuberance” that required “the feverish temperature of the torrid zone which makes the blood boil in impetuous waves.” Only locals, he continued, could “understand all the witchery of those melodies, born among the luxurious vegetation of the tropics, and at the same time of the still water blues that are like the tears of the woods.”<sup>83</sup>

Only Gabriel Saldívar’s 1934 *Historia de la música en México* [*History of Music in Mexico*] asserted that black music had contributed to Mexico’s *mestizo* landscape. As

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<sup>80</sup> Baqueiro Foster, “El Huapango,” 174-8 and 181.

<sup>81</sup> See various documents in Caja 2732 B0154 Veracruz, Ver. Cartas y documentos en relación con los huapangos, sones del Sotavento Veracruzano, INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

<sup>82</sup> Frances Toor, “Nota sobre los Huapangos/Note on Huapangos,” *Mexican Folk-ways* VII, num. 4 (October-December 1932): 168.

<sup>83</sup> José de J. Núñez y Domínguez, “Los Huapangos/The Huapangos,” *Mexican Folk-ways* VII, num. 4 (October-December 1932): 186.

trained doctor from the state of Tamaulipas, Saldívar (1909-1980) framed his entire chapter on the black and African music with a critique of all those who preceded him: “Those who have dedicated themselves to writing about music have not given any importance—we do not know the reason why—to the influence that the African race has exerted in our musical production.” As part of the SEP’s interest in pre-Colombian and colonial eras, he studied black music in relation to the everyday song and dance of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Mexico. In the classist rhetoric of the 1930s, he asserted that African-descended tunes allowed slaves to express their own culture. Through archival research at Mexico’s National Archives, he claimed that black migrants who entered Mexico at the port of Veracruz after 1766 introduced rhythms and “African sentiments” into Mexico’s *huapangos*, *rumbas*, and *danzones*.<sup>84</sup>

Despite such concrete statements about the role of blackness in the making of vernacular music, Saldívar was not certain how much of this music was authentically African. He correctly admitted that black music “came to us [Mexico] with some modifications suffered during its time in the Caribbean.” However, he continued in more fatalistic and imprecise terms. Through the “forced migration” and “great oppression,” black music “did not conserve its old customs or remember them; slavery had killed all of the bad habits of their past, with the exception of its color.”<sup>85</sup> He paradoxically said that there were African musical elements in the *huapango* even though there were no African cultural retentions in Mexico.

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<sup>84</sup> Gabriel Saldívar, *Historia de la música en México (épocas precortesiana y colonial)* (México: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1934), 219-25 and 292; and Marina Alonso Bolaños, *La “invención” de la música indígena de México. Antropología e historia de las políticas culturales del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Colección Complejidad Humana, 2008), 81-3.

<sup>85</sup> Saldívar, *Historia de la música en México*, 224-5 and 290-2.



While Baqueiro Foster expanded on Saldívar's arguments, he also created a different historical chronology that demonstrated how difficult it was to examine when black music influenced the *huapango*. Regarding his predecessor's analysis, Baqueiro Foster stated that "Salvador is, for his erudition and interest in the topic, a forerunner."<sup>86</sup> Ideally more information was needed, because historical context provided composers and musicians with the necessary information to classify, transpose, and perform vernacular tunes accurately.<sup>87</sup> Baqueiro Foster claimed that the *huapango*'s indigenous and black roots originated much earlier in the colonial period than Saldívar had declared. His etymological analysis mirrored Núñez y Domínguez's. The *huapango*, Baqueiro Foster noted, derived from pre-Columbian Nahuatl words for log, place, and wood. He also stated that the black harmonies, melodies, and rhythms that contributed to the genre entered with sixteenth century conquistadors, not after 1766:

‘La Bamba’ and ‘La Palomita’ [versions of the *huapango*], for example, were descendants of the songs of the black slaves of the Spanish conquerors.

It would not be difficult to acknowledge this black ancestry in the harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic elements of ‘La Bamba.’<sup>88</sup>

Thus, he and Saldívar completely disagreed about when black music entered Mexico and when these musical elements actually became a constitutive feature of the *huapango*. They only agreed that the genre had black traits and that its melodies, harmonies, and rhythms were strongest in the region surrounding the city of Veracruz, where Baqueiro

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<sup>86</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, "Historia de la música en México, de Gabriel Saldívar," 28 de diciembre de 1958, *Suplemento de El Nacional*, RP-MF 26235, Cuaderno No 14—1 de abril de 1958 al 28 de febrero de 1959, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

<sup>87</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster to Nicolás Sosa, 11 de julio de 1938, Caja 2723 Sosa, Nicolás. Cartas de y para él e Inocencio Gutierrez (Músicos veracruzanos de arpa y jarana), INBA/CENIDIM-ABF. He expanded this idea in a letter to Luis Sandi, November 18, 1940, Exp. 99 (Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster), Vol. 4, Caja 1, Sección Correspondencia, AGN-FCC.

<sup>88</sup> Baqueiro Foster, "El Huapango," 174 and 183.

Foster claimed the *huapango* was the “most pure.”<sup>89</sup> Both histories also fail to note which melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic elements were of black, indigenous, or Spanish origins. For them and for other musical scholars, it was unclear how much black music actually influenced the *huapango*.<sup>90</sup>

Baqueiro Foster began to present his analysis on the *huapango* in August 1937.<sup>91</sup> The following year, he began to compose a version of *La Bamba* for a jazz orchestra; but, before he completed it, Chávez invited him to compose a classical orchestration for the 1940 MoMA exhibition.<sup>92</sup> Funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, Baqueiro Foster wanted *Huapangos* to depict the genre “of all times, but also [be] modern, without inuring it with pretentious transpositions and modulations or inappropriate harmonies” that would hide “the purity of the popular inspiration.”<sup>93</sup> Another writer explained, this music was hard “to transcribe with accuracy,” because it was “a mixture of black rhythms, without the sensuality of the rhythm of the Rumba, with the rhythms of the

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>90</sup> Jean B. Johnson, “The Huapango: A Mexican Song Contest,” *California Folklore Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (July 1942): 235.

<sup>91</sup> Advertisement: Departamento de Bellas Artes, Sección de Divulgación de la Alta cultura artística, Caja 2732 B0154, Veracruz, Ver. Cartas y documentos en relación con los huapangos, sones del Sotavento Veracruzano, INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

<sup>92</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster to Sr. D. Martín Luis Gusmán, Director de ‘TIEMPO’ from 2 de octubre de 1945, Caja 2732 B0154 Veracruz, Ver. Cartas y documentos en relación con los huapangos, sones del Sotavento Veracruzano, INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

<sup>93</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster to Lic. Jorge Cerdan, 31 de octubre 1945; and Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster to Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, Gob. de Estado de Veracruz, 29 de noviembre de 1945, Caja 2732 B0154 Veracruz, Ver. Cartas y documentos en relación con los huapangos, sones del Sotavento Veracruzano, INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

Zambra of the ancient Spanish Moors, and with a song characteristic and original that is not precisely Andalusian but certainly Spanish from three of four centuries ago.”<sup>94</sup>

### ***Huapangos at the MoMA in 1940***

Despite the difficulties that Baqueiro Foster saw in transposing vernacular music, he composed *Huapangos* for the 1940 MoMA exhibition. The exhibit traced Mexico’s cultural history from its pre-Columbian roots, through European colonization, and finally to a modern contemporary reality.<sup>95</sup> In adhering to the post-revolutionary modernist interest in vernacular culture, it highlighted the role of “Folk or Popular Art which runs through all periods.”<sup>96</sup> In the rhetoric of inter-American exchange, it sought to give the United States a better sense of Mexican culture.<sup>97</sup> It also enriched the MoMA’s interest in displaying vernacular art. In previous exhibitions—such as *American Folk Art* (1933-1934), *African Negro Art* (1935-1936), and *Three Mexican Artists* (1938-1939)—the museum sought to provide its patrons with a modernist ethnographic gaze into rural white, indigenous, black, and African cultures.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> “El Son de Sotavento es un conjunto especializado en la música de huapangos,” Caja 2732 B0154 Veracruz, Ver. Cartas y documentos en relación con los huapangos, sones del Sotavento, INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

<sup>95</sup> “Forward of the Museum of Modern Art,” in *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* (New York City: Museum of Modern Art, 1940), 11-12.

<sup>96</sup> “Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art Being Assembled for the Museum of Modern Art,” February 21, 1940, pg 1, MoMA-PRA.

<sup>97</sup> “Foreword of the Museum of Modern Art,” 11-12; and “Foreword of the Mexican Department of Foreign Affairs,” in *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* (New York City: Museum of Modern Art, 1940), 10.

<sup>98</sup> “Current Exhibitions,” *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 7, no. 5 (Sep., 1940): 2-14. For a discussion of ethnography and vernacular art, see Charles Ratton, “African Negro Art,” *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 2, no. 6/7 (March 1935): 2-3.

Accompanying Mexico's art exhibition, Chávez formed an orchestra comprised of New York City and Mexican musicians. The concerts aimed to depict the historical scope, geographic diversity, and artistic breadth of Mexican music. Including modernist renditions of pre-Columbian music as well as of vernacular songs from Jalisco, Michoacán, Sonora, and other Mexican states, the program highlighted "the unrecorded traditional music from the pre-Spanish era to the modern" that Baqueiro Foster and others had found in their ethnomusicological investigations.<sup>99</sup> In the "Introduction" to the concert notes, Chávez defined "Mexican music" as "the Indian music of the ancient Mexicans; the music of Spanish or other origin implanted in Mexico; and, finally, the production in Mexico of a mixture of these elements."<sup>100</sup>

But despite this emphasis on indigeneity and Spanishness, the 1940 performance of *Hupanagos* cemented black music within Mexico's vernacular tradition and nationalist canon. Just a few sentences after he defined Mexican music, Chávez added that along "the entire coast of the Gulf of Mexico the music of Negro slaves from Africa has had an important influence."<sup>101</sup> To introduce the *huapango* in the program guide, he selectively culled information from Baqueiro Foster's own ethnomusicological inquiry, a study that Baqueiro Foster would publish in an extended form in the *Revista Musical Mexicana* [*Mexican Musical Journal*] in March 1942.<sup>102</sup> In discussing the origins of the *huapango*, Chávez emphasized the "Popular and peasant music and dances" that "were introduced

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<sup>99</sup> "Museum of Modern Art Commissions Chavez to Arrange and Conduct Special Program of Mexican Music," May 1, 1940, pg. 1-2, MoMA-PRA; also see "Series Arranged of Mexican Music," *New York Times*, May 1, 1940.

<sup>100</sup> Chávez, "Introduction," 9-10.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>102</sup> See Baqueiro Foster, "El Huapango," especially 175n1 for an explanation of the relationship between the 1940 program notes and Baqueiro Foster's essay.

by the Spaniards.”<sup>103</sup> *La Bamba*, he proclaimed, had “an unmistakable Negro tang.”<sup>104</sup> Chávez’s reference to the African origins of Mexico’s slave class even transcended Baqueiro Foster’s more general discussion of black slaves and Saldívar’s contradictory analysis of African musical retentions. This passing reference simultaneously linked Mexican musical *mestizaje* to black music and its African origins.

### **Conclusion**

The holistic construction of black music in Baqueiro Foster’s analysis of the *huapango* integrated black melodies, harmonies, and rhythms into Mexican ethnomusicology. Chávez’s debut of *Huapangos* in New York City solidified black music in Mexico’s pluralist musical soundscape. Like the larger concert program at the MoMA, Baqueiro Foster’s composition was a product of the transnational intellectual exchanges about vernacular and modern music that sought to rethink the contours of classical composition and give a legitimate cultural voice to the unheralded masses of any racial descent. Blackness was no longer seen as a threat to indigenous vernacular music. Pushing these boundaries even further, Saldívar and Chávez hinted at the possible presence of African melodies, harmonies, and rhythms in Mexican cultural identity. Although their discussions were often vague and lacked precision, they initiated—as later chapters will indicate—the ethnomusicological processes of identifying African and Afro-Caribbean musical genres in Mexico’s vernacular and popular traditions.

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<sup>103</sup> Chávez, “Introduction,” 7 and 8.

<sup>104</sup> Chávez, “VI. Huapangos,” 21.

### **Chapter 3: “The Cradle for Afro-American Studies”: Inter-American Dialogues and Institutions and the Rise of the International Institute for Afro-American Studies in Mexico City, 1919-1946**

The previous chapters argued that between 1909 and 1940 Mexican anthropologists, historians, and ethnomusicologists wedded inchoate understandings of black culture and, at times, the black body to Mexican *mestizaje*. Transnational conversations and cultural encounters strengthened these ethnographic projects. Similarly, the International School of American Archeology and Ethnology, the Pan-American Association of Composers, and Mexico’s *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* exhibit were among the myriad institutions and exhibitions that united scholars across the Western Hemisphere in the study of pre-Columbian and black cultures. This chapter places Mexican ethnographic and cultural endeavors in conversation with similar projects across the Americas—namely the New Negro Movement in the United States and *afrocubanismo* in Cuba—that sought to debunk stereotyped and racist discourses about black culture. After 1920, intellectuals and artists across the Americas, including in Mexico, touted blackness as well as Africanness as constitutive elements of national and hemispheric identities rather than a bugbear of degeneracy or a handicap to modernity.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter begins by examining the transnational conversations engaging Langston Hughes, Melville Herskovits, and the *afrocubanista* scholars that linked Mexican intellectuals to broader dialogues about black identities and African cultural survivals. By the 1940s, inter-American institutions—which often chose to situate

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<sup>1</sup> On these cultural projects and many others, see Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002). For a discussion of the ethnographic refashioning of blackness, see Yelvington, “The Invention of Africa in Latin America and the Caribbean,” 35-82.

Mexico City as a center for the study of indigeneity, Africanness, and anti-racism—united many of these discussions. This chapter also examines how and why Mexican intellectuals participated in the transnational conversations about African cultural retentions that, for instance, debated Herskovits's theory of acculturation, a paradigm of cultural contact and exchange that drew on the ethnographic analyses of African-descended cultures in the Americas and indigeneity in Mexico. This discussion of acculturation does not intend to resuscitate the term, which has been replaced by the related concept of transculturation. Rather, this chapter defines the parameters of hemispheric polemics about acculturation in order to frame how, in the following three chapters, Mexican ethnomusicologists and anthropologists adapted the paradigm to fit the exigencies of post-revolutionary nation formation.

### **The New Negro, *Afrocubanismo*, and Mexico, 1919-1940**

In the 1920s and 1930s, ethnographers and artists throughout the Americas began to rebuff statements that African-descended peoples could not be part of modern aesthetics and national cultures. Responding to the desire to whiten Cuban society after emancipation, *afrocubanista* intellectuals rejected the idea that Cuban national identity needed to be defined through its Spanish roots and without any African cultural inheritance.<sup>2</sup> Poet Nicolás Guillén situated Afro-Cuban rhythms in the meter of his

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<sup>2</sup> For a broad discussion of *afrocubanismo* and the remaking of African cultures within Cuban society, see Alejandra Bronfman, *Measures of Equality: Social Science, Citizenship, and Race in Cuba, 1902-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); and Emily A. Maguire, *Racial Experiments in Cuban Literature and Ethnography* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011).

poems.<sup>3</sup> In 1931, he asserted that his *afrocubanista* poetry—what he called “mulatto verses”—might “disgust many people.” He was happy to upset those who denied the ways in which African culture “crosses and interweaves” as it helped to forge Cuban national identity.<sup>4</sup> Such refashioning of black cultures asserted the primacy of Cuba’s African heritage and, more broadly, defined the Americas through the fusion of its Spanish, African, and (at times) indigenous pasts.<sup>5</sup> In venerating Guillén’s poetic depiction of *mestizaje*, *afrocubanista* Gustavo E. Urrutia (1881-1958) claimed that it functioned as a uniting and defining feature of the “American family.”<sup>6</sup> Such fascination with African-derived cultures inspired the writing of Afro-Cuban dictionaries. In 1924 lawyer and ethnographer Fernando Ortiz compiled his *Glosario de Afronegrismos* [*Glosary of Afro-negrisms*] to note “the influence of Africa in the very vocabulary of Euroamericans.” Ortiz feared that these vernacular terms would otherwise be forgotten.<sup>7</sup> Influenced by Ortiz, Alejo Carpentier added a glossary of Afro-Cuban words to *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, his 1933 avant-garde novel about Afro-Cuban religiosity.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> There is a voluminous literature on Guillén’s *afrocubanista* poetry; for example, see Miguel Arnedo-Gómez, *Writing Rumba: The Afrocubanista Movement in Poetry* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Nicolás Guillén, “Prólogo,” in *Sóngoro Cosongo* [1931], in *Nicolás Guillén. Obra Poética, 1920-1958*, Tomo I (La Habana: Instituto Cubano del Libro, 1972), 113-4.

<sup>5</sup> See Regino E. Boti, “La Poesía Cubana de Nicolás Guillén,” 343-53, Part #4: “Nicolas Guillen, 1902-,” NYPL-SCRBC-LM-NGS.

<sup>6</sup> *Diario de la Marina* (newspaper clipping from New York, 516 Fifth Ave); and “El mulato Guillen” [December 1931?] by Gustavo E. Urrutia, Part #4: “Nicolas Guillen, 1902-,” NYPL-SCRBC-LM-NGS.

<sup>7</sup> Fernando Ortiz, *Glosario de Afronegrismos* (Habana: Imprenta ‘El Siglo XX’: 1924), xiii.

<sup>8</sup> Alejo Carpentier, *Écue-Yamba-Ó* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2002), 198-207. For Carpentier’s relationship to Ortiz, see Roberto González Echeverría, *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 44-8 and 62-78.



In rethinking Brazilian nationality through the lens of cultural and racial mixture, Boas-trained anthropologist Gilberto Freyre asserted that “The majority of our countrymen are the near descendants either of masters or of slaves, and many of them have sprung from the union of slave-owners with slave women.”<sup>9</sup> As part of the desire to assert a truly modern culture that was not filtered through European racism, he defined the nation through the strategic invocation of regional and local icons, like the samba, in addition to discourses of racial and cultural mixture.<sup>10</sup> This populist project rejected turn-of-the-century discussions of racial degeneracy and black criminality that claimed racial miscegenation would inhibit national modernity.<sup>11</sup> In his 1933 seminal monograph *Casa-grande e senzala* [*The Masters and the Slaves*], he even combined the Portuguese *casa-grande*, or plantation house, with the African term *senzala*, or slave quarters, to depict the fusion of Portuguese and African elements in Brazilian nationality.<sup>12</sup>

In the United States, New Negro intellectuals constructed what they considered to be the Old Negro, an image of black people that was characterized by racist nineteenth-century stereotypes and caricatures. In simultaneously developing the New Negro as a foil to the Old, philosopher Alain Locke (1886-1954) and his compatriots articulated a

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<sup>9</sup> Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*, trans. Samuel Putnam (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), xi.

<sup>10</sup> Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); and Barbara Weinstein, “Racializing Regional Difference: Sao Paulo versus Brazil, 1932,” in *Race & Nation in Modern Latin America*, eds. Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, and Karin Alejandra Roseblatt (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 237-62.

<sup>11</sup> Dain Borges, “‘Puffy, Ugly, Slothful, and Inert’: Degeneration in Brazilian Social Thought, 1880-1940,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25 (1993): 239-51; and Brian Owensby, “Toward a History of Brazil’s ‘Cordial Racism,’—Race Beyond Liberalism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47 (2005): 325-7.

<sup>12</sup> Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves*, xvi.

vision of black identity that maintained a proud racial consciousness, that was a dynamic actor in contemporary cultural life, and that aspired to having more economic power and political capital.<sup>13</sup> Locke called Harlem “the greatest Negro community the world has known;” it was a city that “is—or promises at least to be—a race capital.”<sup>14</sup> Comprised principally of black and white actors in the United States as well as foreign artists and intellectuals, the New Negro Movement was not confined to the black residents of Harlem.<sup>15</sup> Like the movements in Cuba and Brazil, it drew on and contributed to the reformulation of racial and cultural identities across the Western Hemisphere and the expansion of discussions about blackness to include Africanness.

Mexico’s Revolution of 1910 inspired Locke. In a special edition of the *Survey Graphic* and then in his canonical anthology, *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, he associated the New Negro Movement with an awareness of and a fascination with the popular subaltern classes across the world, including Mexico’s indigenous population. The New Negro Movement was part of the “resurgence of a people” in nations like Mexico, India, China, Ireland, and Egypt. This global consciousness drew on the May 1924 issue of *Survey Graphic*, “Mexico—A Promise,” that U.S. historian Frank

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<sup>13</sup> See Gates, Jr., “The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black,” 129-55; Lee D. Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 127-42; Martha Jane Nadell, *Enter the New Negroes: Images of Race in American Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 10-67; and Anne Elizabeth Carroll, *Word, Image, and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 122-90.

<sup>14</sup> See Alain Locke, “Harlem,” *The Survey Graphic* VI, no. 6 (March 1925): 629.

<sup>15</sup> On this expanding literature about the New Negro Movement, which geographically extends the boundaries of the Harlem Renaissance, see Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, especially 322n8; Stephens, *Black Empire*, 21 and 35-55; and Luis-Brown, *Waves of Decolonization*, 147-201. For an overview, see Perry A. Hall, “Perspectives on Interwar Culture: Remapping the New Negro Era,” in *The Harlem Renaissance Revisited: Politics, Arts, and Letters*, ed. Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 195-6.

Tannenbaum (1893-1969) edited.<sup>16</sup> With essays by prominent Mexican intellectuals—including Manuel Gamio, José Vasconcelos, and Diego Rivera—the issue celebrated Mexico’s innovative “attempts to overcome the very problems that are still to be dealt with by much of the rest of Latin America.”<sup>17</sup> Embracing the anthropometric impulse to classify Mexico’s physical types, the German-born U.S. artist Winold Reiss (1886-1953) sketched portraits of a “Man from Tepozotlán,” a “Native of Tlaquepaque,” and “A pure Aztec type” in addition to his more ethnographically-inspired “The market town of Cuernavaca.”<sup>18</sup>

Solidifying the relationship between Tannenbaum’s and Locke’s issues of the *Survey Graphic*, Reiss also contributed three drawings of black physical types to Locke’s volume. Locke subsequently included these illustrations, as well as a fourth one, in *The New Negro*.<sup>19</sup> He was aware of these connections in Reiss’s oeuvre. At the end of this second anthology, Locke noted in passing that Reiss was fascinated with drawing the “folk types and folk character” of black and indigenous peoples.<sup>20</sup> Further consolidating the bond between Mexico and the New Negro Movement, *The New Negro* even included

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<sup>16</sup> Alain Locke, “Forward,” in *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Alain Locke (New York, New York: Touchstone, 1992 [1925]), qtd. xxvii; Paul Kellogg to Melville J. Herskovits, April 17, 1924, Folder 1 (Locke, Alain (*Survey Graphic*), 1924-1940), Box 13, NULA-MJHP; and Luis-Brown, *Waves of Decolonization*, 147.

<sup>17</sup> Frank Tannenbaum, “Mexico—A Promise,” *The Survey Graphic* LII, no. 3 (May 1, 1924): 129.

<sup>18</sup> Winold Reiss, “Mexican Types,” *The Survey Graphic* LII, no. 3 (May 1, 1924): 153-6.

<sup>19</sup> Carroll, *Word, Image, and the New Negro*, 159-60.

<sup>20</sup> Alain Locke, “Notes to the Illustrations,” in *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Alain Locke (New York, New York: Touchstone, 1992 [1925]), 419.

a drawing, “Blues Singer,” by Mexican Miguel Covarrubias, an emerging New York City caricaturist who was fascinated by the dance and music of Harlem.<sup>21</sup>

New Negro poet Langston Hughes was also in conversation with Mexican nationalist thought in the 1920s and 1930s. He travelled to Mexico and collaborated with Mexican intellectuals, such as Covarrubias and the Marxist historian and writer José Mancisidor. More than Locke, Hughes helped to introduce Mexican scholars and artists to the transnational debates about black cultural identities. In 1919, he travelled to Mexico to visit his father, James N. Hughes. Like other blacks in the United States, James Hughes had moved to Latin America—first Cuba and then Mexico—to escape the legal confines, segregation, and racism that infiltrated all aspects of U.S. society.<sup>22</sup> While in Mexico, Langston Hughes began to sympathize with the nation’s oppressed indigenous peoples, including the revolutionary Zapatistas. After graduating high school in the 1920, he returned to Mexico. Living there until he went to college at Columbia University in 1921, he became fluent in Spanish, a skill that helped him maintain friendships in Mexico and Cuba, especially with Guillén.<sup>23</sup>

Hughes knew Covarrubias through mutual friend Carl Van Vechten (1880-1964), a journalist who edited *Vanity Fair* and published many of Covarrubias’s drawings and

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<sup>21</sup> For Covarrubias’s sketch, see “Blues Singer,” in *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Alain Locke (New York, New York: Touchstone, 1992 [1925]), 227.

<sup>22</sup> Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993 [1940]), 39-40. Also see Horne, *Black and Brown*, 12-45 and 183.

<sup>23</sup> Hughes, *The Big Sea*, 53-69 and 79. On the relationship between Hughes and Guillén see, Keith Ellis, “Nicolás Guillén and Langston Hughes: Convergences and Divergences,” in *Between Race and Empire: African-Americans and Cubans before the Cuban Revolution*, eds. Lisa Brock and Digna Castañeda Fuertes (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 129-67; and Guridy, *Forging Diaspora*, 107-50.

Hughes's poems.<sup>24</sup> In 1926, Covarrubias drew the cover to Hughes's first volume of poetry, *The Weary Blues*, a collection that Van Vechten introduced. In his opening words, he characterized Hughes as a global voyageur who had travelled to Mexico, the Canary Islands, the Azores, West Africa, and Europe.<sup>25</sup> The collection used the rhythms of the blues to bring the cultural vibrancy of Harlem night clubs and dancers to life. It also depicted the austere lives of blacks in the United States and, in "Mexican Market Woman," the suffering of the Mexican poor that was a result of racism against all non-white peoples.<sup>26</sup>

Hughes's passing remarks about indigeneity bridged Mexico's fascination with indigeneity with his overriding interest in Africanness in the Americas. Conversing in 1930, he and Guillén discussed the vogue of all things black. Reflecting back on the encounter, Guillén contextualized Hughes by criticizing artists in the United States for having so much "concern with blackness [lo negro], of everything related to blacks." Hughes, however, admitted that this black craze was relatively new. Previously all things affiliated with Russia had been in vogue, and soon he predicted "I think it will be indigeneity [lo indio]. The American Indian [lo indio de América], you know? Everything relative to the autochthonous races of the Continent."<sup>27</sup> For Hughes, the modernist fascination with the vernacular linked blackness and indigeneity.

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<sup>24</sup> Guridy, *Forging Diaspora*, 129; and Vaughan and Cohen, "In Black, Brown, and Blues."

<sup>25</sup> Carl Van Vechten, "Introducing Langston Hughes to the Reader," in *The Weary Blues*, by Langston Hughes (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), 9-11.

<sup>26</sup> Langston Hughes, "Mexican Market Woman," in *The Weary Blues* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), 91.

<sup>27</sup> Nicolás Guillén, "Conversación con Langston Hughes," in *Prosa de prisa, 1929-1972*, tomo 1, comp. Ángel Augier (La Habana: Editorial Arte y Literatura, 1975), 17.

Like many other intellectuals across the Americas in the 1920s and 1930s, he contrasted Jim Crow laws in the United States with Latin America's apparent racial tolerance—a rhetoric that helped to generate and maintain the myth of racial democracy in Spanish and Portuguese America. The disparate cultural and social scenes created by U.S. segregation and Latin American integration were a motif that Hughes would continue to ponder as he corresponded with and translated the verses of Guillén.

Reflecting on his own travels, Hughes praised Latin American racial practices:

There is always the matter [in the U.S.] of where the Negroes are to sleep, too, and where they are to eat. When one has been in Europe or in Mexico where these things never come up, and one can sleep or eat anywhere, no matter what one's complexion, such considerations seem doubly stupid.<sup>28</sup>

These romantic representations of Latin American racial acceptance often hid the latent structural and personal racisms that permeated Latin American nations, including Mexico.<sup>29</sup>

In his second autobiography, *I Wonder as I Wander* (1956), Hughes demonstrated that his sympathetic depiction of Mexico was not just a result of the nation's ostensible disregard for racial categories and its condemnation of the overt segregation in the United States. In the book, he was more preoccupied with global intellectual exchanges and his worldly travels than the cultural endeavors that surrounded the New Negro Movement.<sup>30</sup>

Besides recalling his trip to document the Spanish Civil War as a journalist for the

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<sup>28</sup> Hughes, *The Big Sea*, 301.

<sup>29</sup> Teresa Mead and Gregorio Alonso Pirió, "In Search of the Afro-American Eldorado: Attempts by North American Blacks to Enter Brazil in the 1920s," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 25, no. 1 (1988): 85-110; and George Reid Andrews, *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo, Brazil, 1888-1988* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

<sup>30</sup> Joseph McLaren, "Introduction," in *Autobiography: I Wonder As I Wander*, by Langston Hughes, ed. Joseph McLaren, *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes*, Volume 14 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 1.

*Baltimore Afro-American*, he also discussed his sojourns to Mexico and Cuba and the personal friendships that he forged with Diego Rivera and Mancisidor. He also made references to how his presence in Mexico unearthed the often veiled discussions of blackness in Mexico. In particular, he mentioned how Covarrubias and Rivera had told him “about the African strains to be found in Mexican blood, particularly in the Vera Cruz section of the coast where many of the people are dark indeed.”<sup>31</sup>

His travels to Mexico also created a space for Mexican and foreign intellectuals to discuss blackness as a transnational phenomenon. In 1935, Hughes lived in Mexico City for about one year. Upon his arrival, the Mexico City newspaper *El Nacional* [*The National*] published a series of editorials—including one by Cuban journalist and diplomat José Antonio Fernández de Castro (1887-1951)—that introduced Hughes to the Mexican public.<sup>32</sup> These articles reflected Hughes’s stature as an U.S. black poet and situated his oeuvre in a diasporic context when Fernández de Castro noted the Caribbean elements to Hughes’s poetry. Throughout the article, “Impresión personal [Personal Impression],” Fernández de Castro associated Hughes with Cuba’s own cultural production.<sup>33</sup>

Amid the radicalization of the post-revolutionary Mexico in the 1930s, these articles linked Hughes’s ideology with the biting social, racial, and class critiques that Marxist intellectuals and artists associated with a cross-racial historical materialism.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Langston Hughes, *Autobiography: I Wonder as I Wander*, ed. Joseph McLaren, The Collected Works of Langston Hughes, Volume 14 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 289.

<sup>32</sup> Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes: I, Too, Sing America*, Volume 1: 1902-1941 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 302-3.

<sup>33</sup> J.A. Fernández de Castro, “Impresión personal,” *El Nacional*, March 3, 1935, Folder A1, Box 1, Reel 1, NYPL-SCRBC-LM-LHC.

Fernández de Castro wrote that Hughes advocated for “the oppressed peoples” of the world. Continuing with this effusive praise, he proclaimed that “the Mexican peon interests him [Hughes] as much as the black Yankee oppressed by the white Yankee. And as much as the guajíro of Cuba, as much as the coolí of China and the Filipino fisherman.”<sup>35</sup>

This discussion of Hughes not only echoed—but also explicitly cited—earlier discussions of blackness in Mexico and the United States. Using Hughes’s arrival as a springboard to discuss the oblique and fragmented nature of blackness in Mexico, Fernández de Castro exclaimed:

Now we find in Mexico the upright man and artist L. H. [Langson Hughes]. I do not doubt that he has dedicated part of his eagerness to learn about and uncover in this admirable country, under such circumstances, the African elements that have not yet been incorporated into Mexican mestizaje. Do not forget, dear Langston, that colonial Mexico divided its black population into no less than 18 classes, according to what the erudite tell us. And that there were insurgent leaders of the most pure black race, according to what Diego Rivera has told me. . . . And that Carleton Beals in his controversial and valuable ‘Mexican Maize’ dedicates an entire chapter to telling the world about the courageous and rebellious vicissitudes of a community of blacks in the Pacific Coast of Mexico. And the songs of the coast of Veracruz are very much like the songs of my land which is mulatta.<sup>36</sup>

Fernández de Castro culled this complex genealogy of blackness in Mexico from Mexican nationalist thought as well as the ethnographic observations of progressive U.S. intellectuals, like Beals. He linked black cultural elements in Mexico to Cuba and Africa in ways that Mexican historians, ethnographers, and musicians had not yet considered. In cautioning Hughes that black identities in Mexico—as a result of the *casta* system—and

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<sup>34</sup> Luis Cardoza y Aragon, “Langston Hughes, el Poeta de los Negros” *El Nacional*, March 17, 1935?; Folder A1, Box 1, Reel 1, NYPL-SCRBC-LM-LHC; and Fernández de Castro, “Impresión personal.”

<sup>35</sup> J.A. Fernández de Castro, “Impresión personal.”

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*



the United States were not analogous, Fernández de Castro celebrated the multiple concepts of black culture and history that characterized the history of the Americas and that were still present in the twentieth century. Thus, as a result of Hughes's itinerant wanderings to and from Mexico, affirmative discussions of a transnational, if not inchoately hemispheric, African-descended identity entered into Mexican print culture.

Although Hughes did not disclose his participation, or lack thereof, in the Communist Party in the 1930s, he had already articulated a concern with the oppressed in *The Weary Blues*. This continued when Hughes travelled to Spain to document the Spanish Civil War in 1937.<sup>37</sup> Seeing blacks fighting in integrated units renewed his pride in his race. Its ability to transform history without being identified exclusively through racial descent or the specter of a race war encouraged him.<sup>38</sup> With Guillén often accompanying him in Spain, Hughes conversed with *afrocubanistas*, like Carpentier, in addition to sympathetic Mexican nationalists, such as composer Silvestre Revueltas and Mancisidor, both who had been members of the revolutionary leftist cultural group LEAR.<sup>39</sup> Fondly recounting his time in Spain, he exclaimed that Revueltas "set my 'Song for a Dark Girl' to music" in 1937.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> On his lack of disclosure in regard to his leftist political leanings, see Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes: I, Too, Sing America*, 215.

<sup>38</sup> Langston Hughes, "Moscow and Me: A Noted American Writer Relates his Experiences," July 1933, pg 62, Folder B56, Box 5, Reel 3, NYPL-SCRBC-LM-LHC. For an analysis of how Hughes applied these ideas during the Spanish Civil War, see Brent Hayes Edwards, "Langston Hughes and the Futures of Diaspora," *American Literary History* 19, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 692-3.

<sup>39</sup> Hughes, *Autobiography: I Wonder as I Wander*, 313-25, 372, and 377-82.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 372. Revueltas did not finish the composition until 1938, after he had returned to Mexico. See "Principales obras musicales de Silvestre Revueltas," in *Silvestre Revueltas por él mismo. Apuntes autobiográficos, diarios, correspondencia y otros escritos de un gran músico*, recopilación de Rosaura Revueltas (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1989), 251.

The shared cultural and political sympathies among Hughes, Guillén, and Revueltas resonated with Mexico's musical project to resuscitate the music of the masses.<sup>41</sup> Such beliefs previously permeated Mexican musical nationalism in 1934, when Revueltas adapted Guillén's *afrocubanista* poem "Sensemayá" into a classical composition of the same name.<sup>42</sup> These exchanges also solidified the rhetoric of racial democracy and its embodiment in music. Hughes's depictions of black life during Jim Crow segregation not coincidentally inspired Carlos Chávez to use compose *North Carolina Blues* in 1942.<sup>43</sup>

While in Spain, Hughes also conversed with Mancisidor. Although Mancisidor sympathized with the Soviet Union, he too was not a member of the Communist Party. He had arrived in Europe to evaluate the war effort, to contribute to the Popular Front attack on fascism, and to participate in the International Congress of Anti-Fascist Writers.<sup>44</sup> However, Spain was not the site of their first encounter. In 1935, Hughes had translated Mancisidor's short story "Home" into English for the fashionable New York City *Partisan Review*. Inspired by what the journal perceived of as the "economic and political crisis of capitalism, the growth of the revolutionary movement the world over, and the successful building of socialism in the Soviet Union," the *Partisan Review* attempted to be the vanguard for "a movement to create a revolutionary art" that would

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<sup>41</sup> However, among black communists in the U.S., modernist aesthetics did not inform this musical culture; it was based upon a stricter adherence to black working-class music. See Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels, Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1996), 115-20.

<sup>42</sup> Revueltas, "La Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios y Silvestre Revueltas," 179; and Carol A. Hess, "Silvestre Revueltas in Republican Spain: Music as Political Utterance," *Latin American Music Review* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 1997): 279.

<sup>43</sup> Stallings, "Collective Difference," 133.

<sup>44</sup> Octavio Paz, *Itinerary: An Intellectual Journey*, trans. Jason Wilson (San Diego: Harcourt, Inc., 1999), 38-9. On his relations with the Soviet Union and the Communist Party, see Berrios, "Vida y Obras de José Mancisidor," 34, 49, and 59-60.

fight against class inequality, imperialism, fascism, and racial discrimination.<sup>45</sup> It accordingly sought to transcend aesthetic, national, and racial boundaries.<sup>46</sup> Embracing both Mexico's post-revolutionary rhetoric and the cultural politics espoused by the *Partisan Review*, Mancisidor argued that the politics of the Popular Front united people across "different languages" as well as "races that until now lived profoundly hating each other."<sup>47</sup> In "Home," Mancisidor condemned the racism that Mexicans encountered in the United States and also combated the optimistic, nostalgic, and naïve assumptions that everything would be better if Mexican immigrants returned to their homeland.<sup>48</sup> This desire to overcome racial division united Mancisidor's nationalism with Hughes's Afro-Diasporic cultural politics.

That same year, Mancisidor published the novel *Nueva York revolucionario* [*Revolutionary New York*]. Based on his sojourn to New York City, *Nueva York revolucionario* echoed the same racial and class politics that buttressed his nationalist writings about Mexican history. It was also replete with the same sensitivity toward oppressed peoples that Hughes articulated in his poetry and in his translation of "Home." Resembling the cultural politics of the *Partisan Review*, the novel traces the wanderings of a Marxist revolutionary who is visiting New York during the Great Depression. The unnamed narrator examines New York City as a metonym for modern society at large. The metropolis represents the eternal "class conflict between capitalists and workers." As

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<sup>45</sup> "Editorial Statement," *Partisan Review* 1, no. 1 (February-March 1934): np.

<sup>46</sup> Terry A. Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals: Partisan Review and Its Circle* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 5.

<sup>47</sup> José Mancisidor, "Índice de la decoración mural de la Escuela Normal Veracruzana," 150-9. Also see José Mancisidor and others, to Presidente Avila Camacho, Nov 1, 1944, 161.1/62, AGN-FMAC.

<sup>48</sup> José Mancisidor, "Home," trans. Langston Hughes, *Partisan Review* II, no. 8 (July-August 1935): 20-3.

the story develops, people increasingly take to the street to protest class inequalities. At the climax of the novel, this clash becomes linked to the plight of Harlem's residents and, more broadly, to the racial inequalities of all former black slaves who lack sufficient land. For the working-class blacks in the novel, Marxist revolutionary thought operates as a means to overcome structural economic exploitation as well as the stifling racial vocabulary of the bourgeoisie that "tries to feign consideration and humanitarianism for blacks." When the narrator leaves New York City as the novel draws to a close, the revolutionary fervor among Harlemites is permeating the Communist Party. The narrator notes the optimism that pervades the multi-racial proletariat as the revolution seemingly nears.<sup>49</sup>

For Mancisidor, *Nueva York revolucionario* was predominately about the relationship between cultural production and social revolution. He spent pages on dense diatribes discussing the importance of historical materialism within revolutionary cultural production. Not coincidentally, he concluded the novel in Harlem. Echoing the rhetoric of the New Negro Movement in Locke's anthologies, the narrator purports that Harlem "is, in our times, the most important black population in the world."<sup>50</sup> Considering the importance of culture in the novel, Mancisidor's mythopoetic depiction of Harlem illustrated his respect for the community and the cultural politics of the New Negro Movement. Drawing on Marxist rhetoric and modernist aesthetics, the novel can be read as product of the racial, cultural, and intellectual dialogues that passed between the

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<sup>49</sup> José Mancisidor, *Nueva York revolucionario*, in *Obras completas de José Mancisidor*, Tomo II (Xalapa, Ver.: Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, 1978), 317, 312, and 352.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 393.

Mexican intellectuals and the New Negro Movement.<sup>51</sup> It also signals how Mexican nationalists had adopted the rhetoric of the New Negro Movement.

### **Melville Herskovits and the Ethnographic Study of African-Descended Peoples in the Americas, 1928-1941**

Mexico's connection to the reformulation of African-descended identities in the Americas was not confined to Hughes's personal contacts. Melville Herskovits, another New Negro intellectual, also brought transnational discussions about Africanness to Mexico. After completing a dissertation under Franz Boas and working with Locke in the early-to-mid 1920s, Herskovits came in contact with Mexico: first through the ethnographic work of other anthropologists, then through the processes of institution-making, and finally through professional acquaintances.

These multiple encounters were linked to how he—oftentimes accompanied by anthropologist Ralph Linton (1893-1953) and sociologist Robert Redfield (1897-1958)—developed the polemical theory of acculturation between 1928 and 1936. Their theory transcended the assimilationist ideas of cultural contact and change that shaped Herskovits's ideas as a New Negro intellectual. In Locke's issue of *Survey Graphic* and then *The New Negro*, Herskovits deviated from the predominant emphasis on black cultural particularity. According to Herskovits, black Harlemites had culturally assimilated into the dominant, national—or, in other words, white—culture. Using

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<sup>51</sup> The entire New Negro Movement, however, was not preoccupied with the welfare of the black lower classes. See Carroll, *Word, Image, and the New Negro*, 187-8.

holistic observations, he claimed that blacks in Harlem were “just like any other American community.”<sup>52</sup>

Beginning with his first trip to study the Bush Negroes of Suriname in 1928, his geographic and theoretical interests radically changed. He (and often his wife Frances) began to study African-descended cultures in other parts of the Americas to note the retention—rather than the assimilation—of African cultures, what Herskovits called Africanisms.<sup>53</sup> This project placed him in conversation with nationalist scholars throughout the Western Hemisphere and, as he developed the theory of acculturation, with anthropological studies of indigeneity in Mexico. He quickly surmised that the ethnographic data that he and Frances compiled in Suriname provided the basis for a new theoretical formulation of cultural contact and interaction. Writing to Linton in October 1928, he proclaimed that “the civilization of the Bush Negroes is much more African than anyone has dreamed, but their significance for general cultural processes was quite unknown and I shall take great pleasure in working it out.”<sup>54</sup>

As a result of their two trips to Suriname, the Herskovitses argued that cultural behavior and African cultural survivals varied according to the degree of racial miscegenation and cultural contact that each black community shared with European and

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<sup>52</sup> Melville J. Herskovits, “The Negro’s Americanism,” in *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Alain Locke (New York, New York: Touchstone, 1992 [1925]), 353-60. Also see Melville J. Herskovits “The Dilemma of Social Pattern,” *The Survey Graphic* VI, no. 6 (March 1925): 676-8.

<sup>53</sup> On this shift away from assimilation, see Richard Price and Sally Price, *The Roots of Roots Or, How Afro-American Anthropology Got Its Start* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), 78.

<sup>54</sup> Melville J. Herskovits to Ralph Linton, October 1, 1928, Folder 31 (Linton, Ralph, 1928-1940), Box 12, NULA-MJHP.

indigenous cultures.<sup>55</sup> They concluded that each ethnographic locality was defined by its own peculiar system of racial classification and its degree of African cultural retentions.

#### Identification as black or African-descended

relates to those who are either actually of full African descent, or who in appearance give the impression of being of full African descent, and to those, who, though showing some racial mixture, choose to be identified with this Negro group by adhering to the practices which distinguish the Negro population as such from the rest of the inhabitants of the city. All reference to the beliefs of the town Negro population must, therefore, be held as excluding those mulattoes and others, who, representing varying degrees of crossing with non-Negroid stocks, participate in the culture of the Europeans of the colony in dress, manner of living, and worship.<sup>56</sup>

This ethnographic perspective illustrated that the survival of African cultural practices was historically contingent and was not defined according to linear concepts of evolutionary history.

The degree to which African cultures remained in the Americas needed to be mapped. As early as 1930, Herskovits argued that “It is quite possible . . . to make a kind of chart indicating the extent to which the descendants of Africans brought to the New World have retained Africanisms in their cultural behavior.” Blacks in the Bush of Suriname were the most African, followed by those in the Guiana coastline, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. African culture was less prevalent in the British, Dutch, and Danish Caribbean. Finally, with the exception of parts of southern Georgia and the Gullah Islands of the Carolinas, the United States had the least amount of African retentions in the Americas.<sup>57</sup> This approach expanded the concept of cultural areas, which

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<sup>55</sup> Melville J. Herskovits and Frances S. Herskovits, *Suriname Folk-lore*, with transcriptions and musicological analysis by Dr. M. Kolinski (New York: AMS Press, 1969 [1936]).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>57</sup> Melville J. Herskovits, “The Negro in the New World: The Statement of a Problem,” *American Anthropologist* 32, no. 1 (January 1930): 149-50.

prior to his doctoral dissertation had only been applied to indigeneity, to include African practices.<sup>58</sup> Culminating with the publication of his polemical *The Myth of the Negro Past* in 1941, Herskovits increasingly insisted that Africanisms were a vibrant part of cultural life in the Americas. In his opinion, the study of African retentions in the Americas would debunk the racist myths that blacks were savage, immature, and ahistorical.<sup>59</sup>

To make these claims, Herskovits used his own ethnographic data and the cultural observations of other ethnographers throughout the Americas. He and Frances travelled to West Africa to study the Dahomey people in 1931. This trip provided them with a better understanding of the African cultural behaviors that had been maintained and transformed by African-descended peoples in the Western Hemisphere. Instinctively perceiving the cultural continuities between Dahomey and Haiti (as a result of his quick stopover there on the way to Suriname in 1928), Herskovits returned to nation in 1934. Throughout the next decade, the Herskovits travelled across the Americas: to Trinidad in 1939 and to Brazil in 1941.

Even before he arrived in Suriname in 1928, Herskovits had begun to correspond with ethnographers from around the Americas. Beginning with Haitian nationalist anthropologist Jean Price-Mars (1876-1969), Herskovits gradually entered into anthropological circles that spanned the Americas and that straddled the line between scientific objectivity and nationalist fervor. For instance, Price-Mars wanted to forge a nationalist Haitian equivalent to the cultural pronouncements of the New Negro

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<sup>58</sup> For Herskovits's description of African culture areas, see Melville J. Herskovits, "The Culture Areas of Africa," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 3, no. 1 (January 1930): 59-77. On its relationship to indigenous culture areas in the Americas, see Melville J. Herskovits, "The Cattle Complex in East Africa," *American Anthropologist* 28, no. 1 (January 1926): 230 and 238-47.

<sup>59</sup> Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1941), especially 1-32.



Movement through, among other things, anthropological study. His ethnographic treatise, *Ainsi parla l'Oncle* [*So Spoke the Uncle*], vehemently inveighed against the dominant Eurocentrism in Haiti that supported the U.S. invasion in 1915 and continued to resonate in nationalist rhetoric. Aware of Price-Mars's research, Herskovits wrote to him in order to learn more about Haitian voodoo. This knowledge, Herskovits assumed, would prepare him for his arrival in Suriname.<sup>60</sup>

These dialogues were not limited to Herskovits's interest in Haiti. As Herskovits travelled across the Americas, he corresponded and became friends with scholars who were oriented toward their own various national settings. He thought that Ortiz's ethnographic research on black criminality, witchcraft, and African linguistic survivals would enhance his ever-expanding compendium of ethnographic data on the nature of African-descended cultures in the Americas.<sup>61</sup> Amid the renewed interest in studying Africa's cultural influence in Brazil during the Getúlio Vargas regime, Herskovits was invited to the First Afro-Brazilian Congress of 1934 and contributed a paper to the Second Afro-Brazilian Congress of 1937.<sup>62</sup> To acquire more ethnographic knowledge, he trained black anthropologists from the United States—such as writer Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960), dancer Katherine Dunham, and anthropologist Hugh Smythe (1913-1977)—as well as Brazilian Octavio da Costa Eduardo (1919-), who came to

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<sup>60</sup> Yelvington, "The Invention of Africa in Latin America and the Caribbean," 52-4.

<sup>61</sup> On his interest in meeting Ortiz, see Melville Herskovits to Frances Herskovits, nd, Folder 8—Correspondences during FSH's Paris Trip, Sept-Oct 1930, Box 1, Personal Papers, NYPL-SCRBC-MA-MFHP; and Kevin A. Yelvington, "The Invention of Africa in Latin America and the Caribbean," 55-60.

<sup>62</sup> Anadelia A. Romo, *Brazil's Living Museum: Race, Reform, and Tradition in Bahia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 53-69.

Northwestern with a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship.<sup>63</sup> He hoped that these students would travel to and study the Caribbean Islands of Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, and other less explored American nations, such as Honduras.<sup>64</sup>

As Herskovits's intellectual network was growing in the 1930s, he formulated—with Redfield and Linton—the theory of acculturation. Prior to the publication of their joint statement in 1936, acculturation lacked a clear and concise definition and, as a result, had been employed to depict cultural interchange, adaption, borrowing, fusion, and transfer in addition to the more common concept of assimilation.<sup>65</sup> For Herskovits, acculturation explained how and why varying degrees of Africanisms existed in the Americas. However, for other scholars, acculturation also provided a platform with which they could debate whether African cultures survived the horrors of the Middle Passage and the subsequent history of slavery in the Western Hemisphere.

In what has become the canonical definition of acculturation, Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits asserted in 1936:

‘Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with

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<sup>63</sup> Despite his mentorship of many black students, Herskovits has been criticized for not allowing the freedom to pursue their work as they pleased and even hindering the career advancement of some of them; see Yelvington, “The Invention of Africa in Latin America and the Caribbean,” 70-1.

<sup>64</sup> For example, see Melville J. Herskovits to Zora Neale Hurston, September 28, 1936, Folder 32 (Hurston, Zora Neale, 1926-1937), Box 9, NULA-MJHP; Melville J. Herskovits to the Administrative Secretary of the American Council of Learned Societies, February 27, 1941, Folder 36 (Smythe, Hugh 1941), Box 21, NULA-MJHP; and Melville J. Herskovits to Dean T. Moody Campbell, April 5, 1945, Folder 11 (Bastien, Remy, 1945-1946), Box 32, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>65</sup> See Otis Tufton Mason, “Similarities in Culture,” *American Anthropologist* 8, no. 2 (April 1895): 101-17; Franz Boas, “The Methods of Ethnology,” *American Anthropologist* 22, no. 4 (October 1920): 311-21; Melville J. Herskovits, “Acculturation and the American Negro,” *The Southwestern Political and Social Science Quarterly* VIII, no. 3 (December 1927): 212-24; Richard Thurnwald, “The Psychology of Acculturation,” *American Anthropologist* 34, no. 4 (October 1932): 557-79; and Robert Redfield, “Culture Changes in Yucatan,” *American Anthropologist* 36, no. 1 (January 1934): 57-69. Also see George W. Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 212.

subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups.’ (NOTE: Under this definition, acculturation is to be distinguished from *culture-change*, of which it is but one aspect, and *assimilation*, which is at times a phase of acculturation. It is also to be differentiated from *diffusion*, which, while occurring in all instances of acculturation, is not only a phenomenon which frequently takes place without the occurrence of the type of contact between peoples specified in the definition given above, but also constitutes only one aspect of the process of acculturation.)<sup>66</sup>

According to them, some or all cultures that are in contact will undergo change. This description did not wholeheartedly jettison the theory of assimilation but rather ensconced it within a larger, more pluralist doctrine of cultural change. It revealed that the cultural contact could align with the paradigm of assimilation but could also engender new syncretic cultural behaviors.<sup>67</sup> The theory highlighted moments of personal exchange during periods of conquest and migration rather than holistic notions of cultural diffusion that diminished human agency and cultural innovation.<sup>68</sup> Cultural traits could be forced upon another people, accepted, resisted, and reinterpreted. Cultural change could be the result of colonialist cultural imposition or pluralist exchanges shaped by social and political equality.<sup>69</sup>

The acculturationist paradigm developed at the confluence of studies about indigenous and *mestizo* peoples in Mexico and research on African-descended communities, particularly in Suriname. Corresponding about the project, both Redfield

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<sup>66</sup> Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton, and Melville J. Herskovits, “Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation,” *American Anthropologist* 38, no. 1 (January 1936): 149-50.

<sup>67</sup> “Note on the Concept Acculturation” Folder 5 (Social Science Research Council Acculturation Committee, 1935), Box 22, NULA-MJHP; and Melville J. Herskovits, *Acculturation: the Study of Culture Contact* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1958 [1938]), 10.

<sup>68</sup> Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man: An Introduction*, Student’s Edition (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc, 1936), 335-6; and Melville J. Herskovits to Robert Redfield, June 30, 1935, Folder 5 (Social Science Research Council Acculturation Committee, 1935), Box 22, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>69</sup> Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits, “Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation,” 150-2.

and Herskovits wanted their new formulation to provide a theoretical basis for comparing the cultural transformations of indigenous and black groups.<sup>70</sup> In his 1930 study of Tepoztlán, Mexico, Redfield began to make this connection when he, in passing, equated the process of urbanization and modernization among Mexico's indigenous communities with the black population in the rural U.S. South.<sup>71</sup> Anthropologist Elsie Clews Parsons's ethnographic work on indigenous culture in Mitla, Oaxaca, buttressed their theoretical assertions. Similar to Herskovits's analysis of Africanisms in Suriname, her research indicated that assimilation could not denote the complex cultural changes that had resulted from Spanish conquest. Some indigenous cultural traits, such as childbirth rituals and pottery, "were preserved and persist in the Mitla culture of today." Other cultural behaviors, like human and animal sacrifice, "are extinct." Finally, some indigenous customs, like kinship practices, have "have mixed with Spanish traits."<sup>72</sup> Acculturation, not assimilation, could explain how contact between two societies simultaneously engendered cultural disappearance, survival, and syncretism.

The association between acculturation and Africanisms first emerged in *Suriname Folk-Lore*, a monograph that the Herskovitses published in 1936. Although they had finished most of the manuscript by 1932, the conflict in Europe had delayed the musicological analyses done for the book by Polish musicologist Mieczyslaw Kolinski

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<sup>70</sup> Robert Redfield to Melville J. Herskovits, October 10, 1934, Folder 1 (Redfield, Robert, 1924-1942), Box 20, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>71</sup> Redfield, *Tepoztlan*, 4-5.

<sup>72</sup> "Analysis of Causes for Differential Acculturation—Mitla, Oaxaca (From Parsons, by C. Nash)," Folder 5 (Social Science Research Council Acculturation Committee, 1935), Box 22, NULA-MJHP.

(1901-1981).<sup>73</sup> The one passing reference to acculturation in *Suriname Folk-Lore* occurred in Kolinski's section, the portion of the manuscript that Herskovits polished while he was collaborating with Redfield and Linton in the mid-1930s. The ethnomusicological study and comparison of African and African-descended music, the Herskovitses and Kolinski concluded, helps to clarify "some of the important problems of acculturation."<sup>74</sup> Most likely, Herskovits added the term to Kolinski's analysis, since Kolinski's earlier analyses of Bush Negro music discussed the "mixing of European and African style" as well as "hybrid songs" instead of the dynamics of acculturation.<sup>75</sup> While Herskovits had been grappling with the concepts that came to define acculturation since he was in Suriname in 1928, he did not fully associate them with the concept of Africanisms until he worked with Redfield and Linton.

For Herskovits, historicism—what he called ethno-history—would examine whether acculturation happened in the past or was occurring at the present moment.<sup>76</sup> The linkage between culture change and history was essential for Herskovits's intellectual project. Indicating that African-descended peoples had historical agency undermined the nineteenth-century belief that they were inferior peoples incapable of sustaining some of their African cultures in the Americas.<sup>77</sup> This emphasis on historical change isolated his

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<sup>73</sup> George Herzog to Melville J. Herskovits, March 21, 1934, Folder 22 (Herzog, George, 1929-1940), Box 9, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>74</sup> Herskovits and Herskovits, *Suriname Folk-Lore*, 491.

<sup>75</sup> "Ethnographic Considerations" [c1930], Folder 23 (Kolinski, Mieczyslaw (1929-1938)), Box 11, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>76</sup> Melville J. Herskovits, "Introduction," in *Acculturation in the Americas: Proceedings and Selected Papers of the XXIXth International Congress of Americanists*, ed. Sol Tax (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), 53; and Herskovits, *Acculturation*, 117-25.

<sup>77</sup> Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*.

definition of acculturation from Linton's desire to highlight the multiple forms of cultural contact.<sup>78</sup> It most explicitly deviated from Redfield's concept of acculturation: one that perceived cultural change as a contemporary phenomenon devoid of any historical significance.<sup>79</sup>

Many anthropologists in the Americas rejected Herskovits's use of acculturation as they called the term redundant, vague, or racist. The paradigm became a central pillar in hemispheric debates about Africanisms and the cultural politics surrounding how to integrate blackness and Africanness into national cultures. Herskovits most clearly articulated the theoretical distinction between acculturation and assimilation in a heated exchange with black sociologist E. Franklin Frazier (1894-1962) about the nature of Africanisms in Bahia, Brazil. Disagreeing with Herskovits's emphasis on African cultural retentions, Frazier argued that African-descended Brazilians had assimilated to Portuguese familial structures.<sup>80</sup> Frazier and other scholars, like Redfield, correctly contended that Herskovits too romantically searched for Africanisms at the expense of other cultural practices.<sup>81</sup> Herskovits retorted that Frazier's simplistic assimilationist perspective established an "either-or" position that "overlooks the well-recognized process of syncretism that provides the means to reconcile African and European

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<sup>78</sup> Ralph Linton, "Introduction," in *Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes*, ed. Ralph Linton (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1963 [1940]), viii-ix; and Ralph Linton, "Acculturation and the Processes of Culture Change," in *Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes*, ed. Ralph Linton (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1963 [1940]), 464-5.

<sup>79</sup> Redfield, *Tepoztlan*, 10-3.

<sup>80</sup> E. Franklin Frazier, "The Negro Family in Bahia, Brazil," *American Sociological Review* 7, no. 4 (August 1942): 466-75.

<sup>81</sup> Jerry Gershenhorn, *Melville J. Herskovits and the Racial Politics of Knowledge* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 84 and 111-5. See Frazier, "The Negro Family in Bahia, Brazil;" and E. Franklin Frazier, "Rejoinder to Melville J. Herskovits' 'The Negro in Bahia, Brazil: A Problem in Method,'" *American Sociological Review* 8, no. 4 (August 1943): 402-4.

divergencies [sic] in tradition.” Instead of the binary understanding of cultural contact and transformation that could be explained with assimilation, Herskovits vehemently proposed that “we are dealing with an acculturative situation.” Through acculturation, ethnographers could see “greater variation in any phase of custom.” Afro-Bahian culture, he contended, should be examined a series of cultural continuums whereby certain cultural traits in a community could be African, others could be indigenous or European, and finally some could be syncretic.<sup>82</sup>

Despite Herskovits’s pleas to the contrary, Ortiz argued that the acculturation etymologically signaled “the process of transition from one culture to another,” a concept of culture change that mirrored assimilation. Instead, Ortiz advocated that transculturation be employed

to express the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place here, and without a knowledge of which it is impossible to understand the evolution of the Cuban folk, either in the economic or in the institutional, legal, ethical, religious, artistic, linguistic, psychological, sexual, or other aspects of its life.<sup>83</sup>

From his position at Yale University, Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) echoed Ortiz when he stated (much like the definition of acculturation by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits) that transculturation

is a process in which something is always given in return for what one receives, a system of give and take. It is a process in which both parts of the equation are modified, a process from which a new reality emerges, transformed and complex,

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<sup>82</sup> Melville J. Herskovits, “The Negro in Bahia, Brazil: A Problem in Method,” *American Sociological Review* 8, no. 4 (August 1943): 401-2.

<sup>83</sup> Fernando Ortiz, *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y azúcar* (La Habana: J. Montero, 1940), 136-7. Translation from Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, trans. Harriet de Onís, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 98.

a reality that is not a mechanical agglomeration of traits, nor even a mosaic, but a new phenomenon, original and independent.<sup>84</sup>

Malinowski found acculturation to be an “ethnocentric” rehashing of what often could be articulated as the diffusion Western culture. Taking a rather holistic example he discredited the concept simply by claiming that “It would be as preposterous to suggest that the Spaniards who settled in Cuba became ‘acculturated’—that is, assimilated—to the Indian cultures, as it would be to affirm that they did not receive from the natives very tangible and definite influences.” He even sarcastically repudiated acculturation for its poor phonetics, claiming “it sounds like a cross between a hiccup and a belch.”<sup>85</sup> These critiques correctly argued that acculturation—as postulated by Redfield, Linton, and especially Herskovits—could be assimilation, but they failed to appreciate the nuanced idea that acculturation did not have to be assimilation. They replaced acculturation with the practically synonymous concept of transculturation.

In response to Ortiz and Malinowski, Herskovits questioned the usefulness of transculturation. Writing to Ortiz on October 29, 1940, he respectfully commented:

I am particularly interested in your suggestion that the word ‘acculturation’ should be replaced by ‘transculturation’. It is a thought-provoking proposal, though I wonder whether or not the term ‘acculturation’ is not so firmly established, and its meaning well enough understood, that it will be somewhat difficult to substitute for it the new term which you have proposed. . . .

Certainly, it is necessary for me to enter a very strong demur to the implications of the term ‘acculturation’ advanced on pages xvi-xvii by Malinowski.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, “Introduction,” in *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, by Fernando Ortiz, trans. Harriet de Onís, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), lviii-lvix.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, lviii and lix.

<sup>86</sup> Melville J. Herskovits to Fernando Ortiz, October 29, 1940, Folder 15 (Ortiz, Fernando, 1929-1941), Box 17, NULA-MJHP.



By 1948, their difference of opinion had become more markedly hostile. Herskovits asserted that transculturation was unnecessary, because it only duplicated what he meant by acculturation. He continued his diatribe by asserting that “the misapprehension of Ortiz concerning the use of the term acculturation is certainly not as serious as one which would ascribe to acculturation an ethnocentric quality which it has never had.”<sup>87</sup> In Herskovits’s opinion, it was not ethnocentric to declare that non-Western cultures could—and often did—change when they encountered European societies. It was racist to presuppose that all non-Western cultures, like the African ones he investigated, would disappear when placed in contact with European ways of life.<sup>88</sup>

### **Inter-American Ideals and Institutions**

These debates about assimilation, acculturation, and transculturation sought to establish an ethnographic theory and praxis that repudiated ethnocentric beliefs and prevented future racial atrocities. They also integrated Mexican ethnographers and artists into inter-American discussions about the nature of race, culture, and democracy. To avert the spread of fascism in the Americas, scholars, artists, and statesmen joined together to create inter-American institutions—many of which were centered in Mexico City—that would protect democratic values and continue the ethnographic study of indigenous, black, and African cultures. These goals embraced the humanitarian rhetoric of the UN that aimed to promote “the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable

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<sup>87</sup> Melville J. Herskovits, *Man and His Works: The Science of Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1970 [1947]), 529.

<sup>88</sup> Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, 27.

rights of all members of the human family.”<sup>89</sup> Many of the transnational conversations that developed around discussion of blackness, Africanness, and indigeneity (such as those surrounding Herskovits) consolidated as inter-American institutions during World War II.<sup>90</sup> Others, like the Mexico-City-based PAIGH, continued their initiatives from the 1920s and 1930s while also embracing the need to foment hemispheric unity and continental defense in the 1940s.<sup>91</sup> During World War II, scholars began to write a common hemispheric history and culture to distinguish the Americas from the conflicts in Europe and Asia.<sup>92</sup>

Supported by the UN, inter-American institutions like the PAIGH and the III used democratic anti-fascist discourses as propaganda to foment hemispheric solidarity. Also located in Mexico City, the III was the result of a resolution passed at the Eighth Pan American Conference in Lima, Peru in 1938. The Institute intended “to supplement the deficiencies of their [indigenous] physical and intellectual development” so that the hemisphere’s autochthonous groups could be integrated into their respective national communities. Because each indigenous community had a unique cultural heritage and

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<sup>89</sup> “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” *Handbook on Human Rights*, num 1 (Publications Department, International Secretariat, Academy of Human Rights), 1-2, Folder: Correspondence: Academy of Human Rights, Box 1, Ralph Leon Beals Papers, SI-NAA.

<sup>90</sup> This was a very conscious action to institutionalize these intellectual networks. For example, see Arturo Torres Rioseco, “The Need for Cultural Understanding Between the Americas,” in *Inter American Intellectual Exchange* (Institute of Latin American Studies of the University of Texas, 1943), 92.

<sup>91</sup> On this hemispheric orientation, see “Report on the Organization and Activities of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History” Bogota, 1948, pg 11-2, Folder: General Assembly Meetings: V, Santiago Chile 1950 Reports, Box 2, Pan American Institute of Geography and History, SI-NAA.

<sup>92</sup> See Arthur P. Whitaker, “Cultural Interchange and the Teaching of History in the United States,” in *Inter American Intellectual Exchange* (Institute of Latin American Studies of the University of Texas, 1943), 129-30; and Pan American Institute of Geography and History, Commission on History, *Press Notices: Creation and Program of the Pan American Commission on History* (Mexico, D.F.), Folder: Commission on History Meetings, Creation 1946, Box 11, Pan American Institute of Geography and History, SI-NAA.

historical trajectory, the III wanted to compile and share as much ethnographic material on them as possible.<sup>93</sup>

In 1940, this pluralist discussion of indigenous cultures congealed during the First Inter-American Indigenous Conference in Pátzcuaro, Mexico. The Pátzcuaro Conference also legitimated Mexico's rhetoric of cultural inclusion.<sup>94</sup> Wrestling with indigeneity as a hemispheric phenomenon, the III built upon the idea that "the indigenous problems in the different nations of America present fundamentally very similar modes, because they have been produced through historical, economic, and social factors that have essentially evolutionary uniform origins and characteristics."<sup>95</sup> To further this project, the attendees decided that all American nations should establish, in conjunction with the III, their own national indigenous institutes, a project that many state governments embraced throughout the 1940s.<sup>96</sup>

It was not a coincidence that both the PAIGH and the III were located in Mexico City. Other institutions, like the Smithsonian's Institute of Social Anthropology, also resided there.<sup>97</sup> Most U.S. intellectuals did not want inter-American institutions to be located in the United States, because they feared that such organization would become, or

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<sup>93</sup> "Declaraciones y resoluciones de la octava conferencia internacional Americana sobre materia indígena", Lima 1938, pgs 1-2, Reunión/Conferencia Congreso Indigenista Interamericano (1º: 1940 abr. 14-25: Pátzcuaro, Michoacán), Primer Congreso Indigenista Interamericano, Tomo 1, FD AI/0001, CDI-CDJR.

<sup>94</sup> Dawson, *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico*, 85.

<sup>95</sup> Lic. Gilberto Loyo, John Collier, and Dr. José Angel Escalante, "Informe de la comisión de estudio del proyecto de organización del Instituto Indígena Interamericano," pg 2 Reunión/Conferencia Congreso Indigenista Interamericano (1º: 1940 abr. 14-25: Pátzcuaro, Michoacán), Primer, Congreso Indigenista Interamericano Primer Congreso Indigenista Interamericano, Tomo 1, FD AI/0001, CDI-CDJR.

<sup>96</sup> "El Instituto Indigenista Interamericano: Sus actividades en el periodo 1943-1945," *Boletín Bibliográfico de Antropología Americana* 8, no. 1/3 (Enero-Diciembre 1945): 7.

<sup>97</sup> Julian H. Steward, "Memorandum to: Mr. M.L. Leap" July 23, 1943, pg 3. Folder: Mexico, General, 1942-43, Box 13, Institute of Social Anthropology, SI-NAA.

at least be perceived to be, instruments of U.S. imperialism and propaganda.<sup>98</sup> Latin Americans, such as Chávez, were also fearful that inter-Americanism would become a tool for U.S. foreign policy.<sup>99</sup> As a result of Mexico's geographic centrality and its well-established academic institutions, Mexico City became a popular site for institutional headquarters.<sup>100</sup>

Mexico's official lack of racial identification also made it a good location for inter-American institutions to advocate for racial tolerance. Writing for the Council for Pan American Democracy in 1940, Herskovits applauded the Mexican state for its progressive laws regarding immigration. In accordance with his comparative framework for understanding black and African cultures in the Americas, he stated:

It is good to learn that the Government of Mexico has reaffirmed its historic policy of refusing to discriminate against racial groups by insisting that its Consuls in the United States disregard the race of applicants in issuing tourist visas. In these days when the concept of race has become a political football in the international arena, it is particularly important that traditions of equality of treatment for all racial groups be guarded more vigilantly than ever. The discrimination practiced against Negroes in the United States, both in the North and the South, makes the position taken by the Mexican Government all the more striking in contrast; and all the more constitutes a challenge to those who in this country feel that democracy is more than a formality, without meaning in everyday life.<sup>101</sup>

Although it was based on nationalist propaganda, this belief in Mexico's racial egalitarianism was overstated. In the 1920s and 1930s, the government implemented

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<sup>98</sup> Letter to Dr. Steward, from Ralph Beals, May 25, 1945, Folder: Acta Americana, 1944-49, Box 14, Institute of Social Anthropology, SI-NAA.

<sup>99</sup> Stallings, "Collective Difference," 66 and 134.

<sup>100</sup> On Mexico's geographic centrality, see Ralph Beals to Daniel Cosío Villegas, October 22, 1942, Folder: Acta Americana, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Box 7, Ralph Leon Beals Papers, SI-NAA.

<sup>101</sup> "Statement" by Professor Melville J. Herskovits, October 9, 1940, Folder 14 (Council for Pan American Democracy, 1940-1941), Box 6, NULA-MJHP.

xenophobic laws to prevent the immigration of certain groups, such the Chinese and African-descend peoples.<sup>102</sup> Even as the Mexican political system increasingly deviated from any actual practice of electoral democracy after 1940, the Mexican nation and its revolutionary legacy continued to be heralded as a symbol for anti-fascist and anti-racist democracy in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>103</sup>

### **The Inter-American Demographic Congress and International Institute of Afro-American Studies in Mexico City, 1943-1946**

In 1943, scholars from around the Americas travelled to Mexico City to join Manuel Gamio, pioneering Marxist historian Luis Chávez Orozco, and others for the First Inter-American Demographic Congress. The Congress was concerned with how post-war migration to the Americas would affect American nations and democracy across the globe. Framed by Mexican official Miguel Alemán's opening speech, the meeting intended to establish an "international co-fraternity" among the American nations. Similar to the other anti-racist, inter-American discourses of the late 1930s and early 1940s, Alemán (1900-1983) couched the problem of demographics and immigration in universal anti-totalitarian terms. He admonished the attendees, however, about misused

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<sup>102</sup> "Exposición de motivos," in "Ley de Migración 1926," in *Compilación Histórica de la legislación Migratoria en México, 1821-2002*, tercera edición, corregida y aumentada (México: Secretaría de Gobernación, 2002), 123; and "Ley General de Población de 1936," in *Compilación Histórica de la legislación Migratoria en México, 1821-2002*, tercera edición, corregida y aumentada (México: Secretaría de Gobernación, 2002), 184. Also, see Vinson, "La historia del estudio de los negros en México," 41; and Gerardo Rénique, "Race, Region, and Nation: Sonora's Anti-Chinese Racism and Mexico's Postrevolutionary Nationalism, 1920s-1930s," in *Race & Nation in Modern Latin America*, eds. Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, and Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 211-36.

<sup>103</sup> For example, see Ezequiel Padilla, "Mexico's Demonstration of Democracy," Folder: Research Materials: Fisk and African Americans: Printed and Processed Materials [3 of 3], Box 3, Ruth Landes Papers, SI-NAA. For an example of this democratic rhetoric in an inter-American context, see Samuel Guy Inman, "Background and Problems in Intellectual Exchange," in *Inter American Intellectual Exchange* (Institute of Latin American Studies of the University of Texas, 1943), 3-18.

demographic data, which could foster racial hatred and lead to atrocities such as World War II.<sup>104</sup> Demographics needed to be understood in relative terms so that the “the needs of each community” would be addressed without reference to the superiority of some peoples and the inferiority of others.<sup>105</sup>

Scholars from all American nations attended the conference. In addition, the Pan American Union, PAIGH, III, and other inter-American organizations sent delegates. From October 12 to 21, intellectuals and statesmen discussed ethnography, eugenics, and demographic politics and policies.<sup>106</sup> The Congress emphasized the need to understand the “ethnic composition of the American communities [pueblos].” It also aspired to understand how “inter-American migration” would “help foment the cultural and social and economic development for the American nations.”<sup>107</sup> Like the III, the Congress wanted to “facilitate the incorporation of the indigenous population into the active life of the Nation.” Following the path forged at Pátzcuaro, the Congress gave the III the task of publishing an “Encyclopedia of the Indian American.”<sup>108</sup> In regard to the hemisphere’s black population, the attendees hoped “to stimulate the scientific study of black

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<sup>104</sup> Miguel Alemán, “Discurso del Licenciado Miguel Alemán, Secretario de Gobernación, al Inaugurarse el Congreso,” in *Corresponde a las Américas. La forjación del mundo que ya llega* (México: Secretaría de Gobernación, 1943), 7-11.

<sup>105</sup> José Manuel Carbonell, “Discurso del Excmo. Sr. Dr. José Manuel Carbonell, Embajador de Cuba,” in *Corresponde a las Américas. La forjación del mundo que ya llega* (México: Secretaría de Gobernación, 1943), 15.

<sup>106</sup> “Congreso Demográfico Interamericano (1943),” *Boletín Bibliográfico de Antropología Americana* 7, no. 1/3 (Enero 1943 a Diciembre 1944): 53-4.

<sup>107</sup> “Comisiones de estudio,” ScGb430913c-2, Expediente: Secretaría de Gobernación, Disco: Desde Secretaría de Educación Pública 1943-46, hasta Secretaría del a Asistencia Pública 1940-1951, III-AH-CD.

<sup>108</sup> Primer Congreso Demográfico Interamericano, *Acta Final del Primer Congreso Demográfico Interamericano. Celebrado en México, D.F. del 12 al 21 de octubre de 1943* (México, 1943), 14 and 34.

populations, their conditions, potentialities, cultures in general, and their contributions to the national and continental heritage.”<sup>109</sup>

Mexican officials and intellectuals had a prominent role in the proceedings. Alemán was President of the Congress. Gamio attended simultaneously as Director of the Mexico’s Departamento Demográfico [Demographic Department] of the Secretaría de Gobernación [Ministry of the Interior] and as the head of the III.<sup>110</sup> Chávez Orozco was a member of the section on demographics and participated in the discussion how to assimilate foreigners into the nation.<sup>111</sup> Archeologist Alfonso Caso (1896-1970) and anthropologist Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán—the two *indigenista* intellectuals who would become the leaders of Mexico’s INI after it was founded in 1948—participated in the Ortiz-led section “Ethnic composition of the American communities” that discussed indigeneity, blackness, and *mestizaje*.<sup>112</sup> Because of Mexico’s supposed progressive race relations, the Congress encouraged all of the nations of the Western Hemisphere to follow Mexico’s anti-racist democratic example. Rather than using racial classifications, cultural traits (like the ones employed in Mexico’s 1940 census) needed to be deployed in order to understand and classify national populaces.

Inter-American communities quickly fêted the Congress. The *Boletín Bibliográfico de Antropología Americana* [*Bibliographic Bulletin of American*

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<sup>109</sup> “Congreso Demográfico Interamericano (1943),” 54.

<sup>110</sup> Miguel Alemán to Manuel Gamio, 11 de octubre de 1943, ScGb431011, Expediente Secretaría de Gobernación, Disco: Desde Secretaría de Educación Pública 1943-46, hasta Secretaría del a Asistencia Pública 1940-1951, III-AH-CD.

<sup>111</sup> “Comisiones de estudio,” ScGb430913c-1, Expediente Secretaría de Gobernación, Disco: Desde Secretaría de Educación Pública 1943-46, hasta Secretaría del a Asistencia Pública 1940-1951, III-AH-CD.

<sup>112</sup> “Comisiones de estudio,” ScGb430913c-2; and “Congreso Demográfico Interamericano (1943),” 54.

*Anthropology*] as well as *Population Index* summarized its main points.<sup>113</sup> Although not all of the papers presented were published, Mexico's Secretaría de Gobernación published Carlos Basauri's *La población negroide mexicana* [*The Mexican Negroid Population*] that year. *Population Index* called it "one of the most interesting papers given at the Congress."<sup>114</sup> While Basauri's essay drew on his earlier research on Mexico's indigenous population—the three volume *La población indígena de México* that concluded with a chapter on Mexico's black population (See Chapter 1)—it also noted Aguirre Beltrán's recent, pioneering ethnographic and historical work.

Basauri began by stating that how Mexico's fascination with indigeneity had limited the ethnographic exploration of blackness to a few isolated studies on the Costa Chica of Guerrero and Oaxaca. While Mexico's lack of racial classification was a point of pride at the Congress and among scholars like Hughes and Herskovits, Basauri criticized it. Since independence, the census had not contained "any data on the black population. That is to say: this sector is officially ignored in the Mexican population." Unlike the indigenous population that could be identified through linguistic analyses, the black population had been difficult to classify, because the state apparatus had abandoned the necessary racial terms. As a result, blacks in Mexico "prefer to declare themselves white or indigenous" even though there were still black physiological characteristics that, he claimed, were easy to identify through skin color, the texture and color of the hair, and facial characteristics. Culturally, he claimed that the black population was not terribly

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<sup>113</sup> "Congreso Demográfico Interamericano (1943)," 53-5; and "First Inter-American Demographic Congress," *Population Index* 10, no. 1 (January 1944): 13-4.

<sup>114</sup> "First Inter-American Demographic Congress," 14. It should be noted that Basauri also wrote *Breves Notas Etnográficas sobre la Población Negra del Distrito de Jamiltepec, Oax.* (México, D.F.: Primer Congreso Demográfico Interamericano, 1943) for the Congress. This essay, however, was very much just a shortened version of his chapter on Mexico's black population from his 1940 *La población indígena de México*, Tomo III.



significant, because their cultures were not sufficiently evolved and had consequently been destroyed by generations of racial and cultural mixture. Generally aligned with the assimilationist perspective on immigration at the Congress, Basauri concluded that “it can be said that culturally the black and negroide population has been found assimilated into the Mexican population, principally into the Indian in rural regions.”<sup>115</sup>

Although he did not emphasize African-descended cultural practices, Basauri occasionally mentioned that some African cultural behaviors were present in Mexico. To make these claims, he referenced another paper from the Congress: Aguirre Beltrán’s “La Población Negra de México Durante el Virreinato [The Black Population of Mexico during the Viceroyalty].” According to Basauri, Aguirre Beltrán’s “magnificent and well-documented, unpublished book” discussed the African—specifically the Senegambian, Guinean, Congolese, and Angolan—origins of Mexico’s black slave population. Aguirre Beltrán’s detailed analysis of African cultures and languages as well as the social situation of blacks during the colonial period bestowed a historical perspective upon Basauri’s ethnographic analyses. Using and often quoting this research, Basauri expanded his previous argument to acknowledge that black culture had left a small cultural footprint in specific regions. Not taking credit for this analysis, he stated “According to Aguirre Beltrán, many current dances like the huapango, the fandango, the bamba, etc. had their origin in regard to rhythm in black music and dance.”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Carlos Basauri, *La población negroide mexicana* (México, D.F.: Secretaría de Gobernación. Primero Congreso Demografico Interamericano, 1943), 5, 6, and 19. He was not the only scholar to note that the abolition of race in legal documents could cause the black population to disappear. See Harold Schoen, “The Free Negro in the Republic of Texas,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (April 1936): 293.

<sup>116</sup> Basauri, *La población negroide mexicana*, 7-17.

Although Aguirre Beltrán did not play a major role at the congress, he was quickly acquiring a name for himself. Besides the attention that Basauri gave him, he became a prominent figure in the institutionalization of the inter-American anthropological study of African-descended peoples and cultures. Before the conference, several scholars—including Ortiz and Herskovits—had begun to outline a grandiose project to study and discuss the black population of the Americas and then publish a scholarly journal about it. According to Herskovits, this journal was to be modeled after Ortiz’s periodical *Estudios Afro-Cubanos* [*Afro-Cuban Studies*]. The new organization would contribute to the “furthering of Inter-American relations.”<sup>117</sup> However, during the Conference (at least, according to Herskovits and his friend, historian Richard Pattee), Ortiz hijacked the initiative and, without Herskovits’s agreement, made himself President and Aguirre Beltrán Vice-Director of what became the International Institute of Afro-American Studies.<sup>118</sup>

The somewhat secretive manner in which Ortiz founded the Institute was, in part, a product of the polemical exchanges over acculturation and transculturation. Cognizant of Herskovits’s growing number of disciples and acquaintances across the Americas, Ortiz presumably wanted to take control of the new organization before Herskovits could claim it as his own. Aguirre Beltrán was a young anthropologist who was in the midst of pioneering the study of the black population in Mexico, one of the few remaining nations in the Americas that lacked a book-length ethnographic study of its African cultural

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<sup>117</sup> “Draft of letter to Dr. Joseph Willite, Rockefeller Foundation” 1943, Nov 27, Folder 24 (International Institute of Afro-American Studies, 1943-1944), Box 28, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>118</sup> Melville J. Herskovits to Fernando Ortiz, December 7, 1943 and Richard Pattee to Melville J. Herskovits, March 2 1944, Box 28, NULA-MJHP. On the growing tension with Ortiz, see Richard Pattee to Melville J. Herskovits, December 29, 1944, Folder 14 (Pattee, Richard, 1944-1946), Box 35, NULA-MJHP.

heritage. Because Aguirre Beltrán could become a key figure in the brewing power struggle between Herskovits and Ortiz, they both attempted to pull him into their respective theoretical camps.

The tension between Ortiz and Herskovits became more palpable. After hearing about Ortiz's apparent coup, a slightly bewildered and clearly irritated Herskovits wrote the following to Ortiz:

In this week's issue of the Pittsburgh Courier, one of our Negro newspapers, I ran across a story signed by Irene Diggs, telling of the formation in Mexico City of an International Institute of Afro-American Studies.

As I have heard nothing of this development, I would appreciate learning something about it, particularly since, according to this story, I am a member of the Executive Committee.<sup>119</sup>

Pattee's correspondence with Herskovits did not help to ameliorate the situation. In describing Ortiz's role in the Institute, he wrote that Ortiz "has gone off the deep end."<sup>120</sup>

Despite these tensions, the International Institute for Afro-American Studies was a product of the inter-American spirit and the zealous impulse to engender democratic institutions. At the First Inter-American Demographic Congress, the delegates unanimously voted to establish the Institute.<sup>121</sup> Not coincidentally, Ortiz chose Mexico City as its institutional hub, because Mexico lacked "prejudice to the degree of other nations." The sprawling capital, he contended, was an ideal place to discuss "all these

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<sup>119</sup> Melville J. Herskovits to Fernando Ortiz, December 7, 1943, Folder 24 (International Institute of Afro-American Studies, 1943-1944), Box 28, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>120</sup> Richard Pattee to Melville J. Herskovits, March 2, 1944, Folder 24 (International Institute of Afro-American Studies, 1943-1944), Box 28, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>121</sup> "Instituto Internacional de Estudios Afroamericanos," *Boletín Bibliográfico de Antropología Americana* 7, no. 1/3 (Enero 1943-Diciembre 1944): 13.

racial problems.”<sup>122</sup>As a result of the Institute’s location, Mexico became, in the eyes of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, “the cradle for Afro-American studies not only in America, nor on a scale inter-American, but in the world.”<sup>123</sup> Similarly, W.E.B. DuBois (1868-1963) praised Ortiz for establishing such an important institute dedicated to the African-descended populations of the Americas.<sup>124</sup>

Ortiz and Aguirre Beltrán began the Institute’s journal, *Afroamérica* [*Afro-America*], in 1945. A lack of funding limited the journal to two issues. Nonetheless, it contributed to the hemispheric institutional and scholarly push toward racial equality in the wake of World War II.<sup>125</sup> The Institute intended to “study the black populations of America in its biological and cultural aspects and in regards to its influences in American communities.”<sup>126</sup> Following the inter-American agendas articulated at the First Inter-American Demographic Congress, the Institute sought to enlighten governments, private institutions, and individuals about the cultural plight of African-descended peoples. Participating scholars and artists sought to weld government projects to scholarly publications in order to foster civil rights projects and to generate greater political democracy and cultural inclusion. Published by Mexico’s Fondo de Cultura Económica, *Afroamérica* transcended the linguistic boundaries of the Americas as it briefly united

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<sup>122</sup> Fernando Ortiz to Melville J. Herskovits, enero de 26 de 1944, Folder 24 (International Institute of Afro-American Studies, 1943-1944), Box 28, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>123</sup> “Cuban Leader Helped To Found Negro Study Center” by Irene Diggs (12/4/1943), Folder 24 (International Institute of Afro-American Studies, 1943-1944), Box 28, NULAP-MJHP.

<sup>124</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, “A Chronicle of Race Relations,” *Phylon* 5, no. 1 (1944): 89.

<sup>125</sup> On the lack of funding, see various letters in Folder 17 (Beltran, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1946-1948), Box 37, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>126</sup> Fernando Ortiz to Alfonso Caso 15 de febrero de 1944, Folder 9: Correspondencia de Caso con el Instituto Internacional de Estudios Afroamericanos, Box 45, UNAM-IIA-FAC. This idea was reiterated in inter-American publications. See “Instituto Internacional de Estudios Afroamericanos,” *Boletín Bibliográfico de Antropología Americana* (1937-1948) 7, no. 1/3 (Enero 1943 a Diciembre 1944): 13.

English-, French-, Spanish-, and Portuguese-speaking intellectuals in anthropology, literature, poetry, art, and history. The impressive array of participating academics and artists included: Price-Mars of Haiti; Freyre and Arthur Ramos (1903-1949) from Brazil; Carpentier, Guillén, and Ortiz in Cuba; Du Bois, Frazier, the Herskovitses, Locke, and Tannenbaum of the United States; and Mexico's Aguirre Beltrán, Basauri, Chávez Orozco, and Covarrubias.<sup>127</sup> While he not primarily engaged with questions of black culture, even Mexico's pre-eminent archeologist, Alfonso Caso, became a founding member.<sup>128</sup> Despite its lofty goals and impressive cadre of contributors, the Institute lost its momentum soon after *Afroamérica* was terminated in 1946. This innovative organization was defunct by 1948.<sup>129</sup>

In its two publications, *Afroamérica* expanded the study of Africanisms in the Americas and implicitly continued the debates about acculturation and transculturation. The first issue of *Afroamérica* commenced with Herskovits's canonical essay, "Problem, Method and Theory in Afroamerican Studies," a synthetic essay that expanded his desire to map Africanisms in the Americas. Drawing on his *The Myth of the Negro Past* along with the work of his Brazilian student Octavio Eduardo, Ortiz, and others, Herskovits examined Africanisms across the Western Hemisphere. His chart, "Scale or Intensity of New World Africanisms" looked at the degree to which African cultural traits—such as

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<sup>127</sup> "Resolución del Primer Congreso Demográfico Interamericano sobre la población negra," *Afroamérica* I, nos 1 y 2 (Enero y Julio de 1945): 147-66; and "Colaboradores," Folder 29 (International Institute of Afro-American Studies, 1944-), Box 33, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>128</sup> Fernando Ortiz to Alfonso Caso, 15 de febrero de 1944; and Fernando Ortiz to Senores Miembros del Instituto Internacional de Estudios Afroamericanos, 27 de julio de 1944, Folder 9: Correspondencia de Caso con el Instituto Internacional de Estudios Afroamericanos, Box 45, UNAM-IIA-FAC.

<sup>129</sup> The November 1, 1947 to October 31, 1948 budget of the American Anthropological Association included an allocation of three dollars for a membership to the International Institute of Afro-American Studies; this money was not spent, implying that the Institute no longer existed. See "Report," *American Anthropologist* 51, no. 2 (April 1949): 354.

technology, economics, social organization, magic, art, and music—persisted in the Americas. He noted these traits in nations, like Cuba, as well as regions and localities, such as the Suriname Bush and the urban city of Paramaribo, urban and rural (what he called “peasant”) Haiti, and the north and “rural south” in the United States. Mexico was not included. For each category in each geographic region, he noted whether the trait was “very African,” “quite African,” “somewhat African,” “a little African,” and “trace of African custom, or absent.” He did caution his readers that “only the greatest degree of retention is indicated for each group.”<sup>130</sup>

In this essay, Herskovits refrained from using the term acculturation. Nonetheless, he strategically outlined the cultural processes in a manner that strongly resembled acculturation when he stated that “just as race-crossing invariably follows on contact between peoples of different physical types, so cultural borrowing—two-way borrowing—also ensues.” He perceived these cultural transformations in “reference to the process of *syncretism*, the tendency to identify those elements in the new culture with similar elements in the old one” as well as those that had undergone processes “of *reinterpretation*.”<sup>131</sup> Perhaps this veiled discussion of acculturation was Herskovits’s response to Ortiz’s position as President of the Institute and to Ortiz’s disdain for the paradigm.

Just as Mexico City was becoming an institutional site for these the debates, Mexican intellectuals were beginning to participate in them. Although Aguirre Beltrán and Basauri had been concerned with Africanness before the Institute was founded, most

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<sup>130</sup> Melville J. Herskovits, “Problem, Method and Theory in Afroamerican Studies,” *Afroamérica* I, nos 1 y 2 (Enero y Julio de 1945): 14; see page 24 for the chart’s bibliography.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, 19, and 20.

other Mexican nationalists were not. In the spring of 1945, Rémy Bastien (a Haitian anthropology student in Mexico who studied Pre-Columbian art with Covarrubias) even complained to Herskovits that Mexican ethnography “is paralyzed by its total ignorance of Africology.”<sup>132</sup> In this inter-American context, Covarrubias (who was now an ethnographer of southern Mexico and Bali) published a short review essay on the Bush Negroes of Suriname in *Afroamérica*.<sup>133</sup>

Drawing on Herskovits’s ethnographic work in Suriname, Covarrubias discussed the presence of African cultures and even made brief references to the West African and Bantu origins of the black religion and art in the region. However, the central theoretical premise behind his synthetic essay was Ortiz’s concept of transculturation. Although he did not cite Ortiz, Covarrubias did list the Spanish translation of Brazilian Arthur Ramos’s *As culturas negras no Novo Mundo* [*Las culturas negras en el Nuevo Mundo* or *The Black Cultures of the New World*] in his bibliography.<sup>134</sup> While the Portuguese version readily embraced, cited, and quoted Herskovits’s use of acculturation, the editors of the Spanish edition replaced acculturation with Ortiz’s concept of transculturation because “it is more expressive in Spanish of the process that will be explained.”<sup>135</sup> Covarrubias’s bibliography and the circulation of knowledge that was embedded in it

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<sup>132</sup> Rémy Bastien to Melville J. Herskovits, 29 mars 1945, Folder 11 (Bastien, Remy, 1945-1946), Box 32, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>133</sup> On Covarrubias’s transformation from New Negro artist to ethnographer, see Vaughan and Cohen “Black, Brown, and Blues.”

<sup>134</sup> Miguel Covarrubias, “Los Djukas: ‘Bush Negroes’ de la Guayana Holandesa,” *Afroamérica* II, num. 3 (Enero de 1946): 121-2.

<sup>135</sup> Arthur Ramos, *Las culturas negras en el Nuevo Mundo* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1943), editor’s note page 7.

were therefore a product of the inter-American dialogues about acculturation and transculturation that shaped the works of Herskovits, Ramos, and Ortiz.

Between Covarrubias's time sketching Harlem life in the 1920s and the 1946 publication of his essay on Suriname, Mexican discussions of blackness and Africanness, including Covarrubias's, had radically changed as a result of the increasing ethnographic emphasis on African cultural retentions, the polemics about acculturation and transculturation, and the expansion of inter-American conversations during World War II. But, like many of these national and transnational dialogues, Covarrubias's interests were not confined to questions of blackness and Africanness. His 1947 English-language ethnography of southern Mexico, *Mexico South: The Isthmus of Tehuantepec*, placed his artistic and ethnographic project squarely in conversation with post-revolutionary Mexico's fascination with indigenous vernacular culture. Not surprisingly, it also continued the transnational networks that shaped Covarrubias's early career. In an analysis of indigenous vernacular cultures in southern Veracruz, Covarrubias noted that "the distinguished American poet Langston Hughes" had translated a popular local ballad into English for him.<sup>136</sup> In addition to demonstrating the transnational polyglot genealogies that typified Mexican ethnography, Hughes's translation also illustrated the tenacious cultural and intellectual ties that united the refashioning of race and culture in Mexico, the United States, and more broadly across the Americas.

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<sup>136</sup> Miguel Covarrubias, *Mexico South: The Isthmus of Tehuantepec* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), see Acknowledgements and 31-5.



## Conclusion

By the mid-1940s, ethnographic discussions of blackness in Mexico began to include the nation's African racial and cultural pasts. The acknowledgement of this heritage was the result of the transnational conversations among Mexican artists and ethnographers, New Negro intellectuals, and *afrocubanistas* that began in the 1920s and 1930s. With the explosion of inter-American institutions during World War II, Mexico City became an institutional hub for hemispheric discussions of indigeneity and Africanness. And, as a result of the increased dissemination of ethnographic data during and immediately after the war, Mexican anthropologists began to see similarities between African-descended peoples and cultures in Mexico and other American nations. Nationalists like Basauri, Covarrubias, and Aguirre Beltrán briefly discussed African cultural retentions and, consciously or not, engaged in the transnational polemics about assimilation, acculturation, and transculturation.

When ethnographically-inspired intellectuals—especially ethnomusicologists and anthropologists—began to acknowledge that African cultures had arrived on Mexican soil in the colonial period, they transformed the contours of Mexico's cultural and racial geography. As the next chapter argues, ethnomusicologists began to see African-descended, especially Afro-Cuban, music as part of Mexico's vernacular and popular soundscape rather than as a foreign threat to Mexican nationality. More broadly, the rest of "In Black and Brown" shows how ethnographic discussions and cultural depictions of African-descended cultures refashioned the theoretical underpinnings of post-revolutionary nation formation, engendered more democratic concepts of national identity, and integrated new racialized vocabularies into Mexican cultural politics.

## **Chapter 4: “Through the Marvelous Prism of Cuban Folklore”: Baqueiro Foster and the Inter-American Construction of African-Descended Music as Mexican, 1940-1970**

The institutionalization of inter-American solidarity in the late 1930s and 1940s helped Mexican scholars identify African-descended music as Mexican. Anthropologists and ethnomusicologists worked together to study, notate, and understand African-descended and indigenous vernacular music across the Americas.<sup>1</sup> This chapter argues that these hemispheric musical discussions helped Mexican scholars—like Spanish-born Mexican nationalist Otto Mayer-Serra (1904-1968) and Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster—and Mexican music, such as Baqueiro Foster’s *Suite Veracruzana, No. 1*, enter into the cultural politics about African cultural retentions in the Western Hemisphere. By reading studies of African-descended music in other nations, Mayer-Serra and Baqueiro Foster perceived commonalities among the vernacular, popular, and national music of the Americas. They joined a diverse cadre of scholars who rejected the belief that vernacular music merely assimilated to dominant Westernized forms of composition and performance and who often embraced the theory of acculturation. In this hemispheric context, the ethnographic ruminations on black music in Mexico that lacked a clear connection to Africa in the 1930s transformed into careful ethnographic discussions of African-descended, often Afro-Caribbean, musical genres after 1940.

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<sup>1</sup> See various essays in Bruno Nettl and Philip V. Bohlman, eds, *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music: Essays on the History of Ethnomusicology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Bruno Nettl, *Nettl’s Elephant: On the History of Ethnomusicology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 84 and 119-21.

While anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, and sociologists across the Americas assigned African and African-descended racial markers to musical genres, they blurred the distinctions among vernacular, popular, and classical music. These ambiguities helped some Mexican nationalists to downplay or erase the presence of African-descended music as they classified certain genres as Mexican. Such ambivalence also helped Mayer-Serra and Baqueiro Foster to integrate the African-descended musical influences that came from Cuba and, to a lesser degree, Colombia into Mexico's regionally-defined soundscapes. This tension between the whitening of Afro-Caribbean music in Mexico and the recognition of the Afro-Caribbean regional and local racial identities that inhered in specific vernacular genres illustrates that Mexico's musical elite continued to struggle with how to create a unified and pluralist musical culture after 1940. As a result of the importance of locality and regionalism in these ethnomusicological projects, this chapter defines vernacular music as the songs of a demarcated community and popular music as songs that have a cultural value that transcends any singular geographic space.

### **Predecessors to Charles Seeger's Music Division in the 1930s**

Inter-American dialogues about black, African, and indigenous music institutionalized in 1941, when Charles Seeger became head of the Music Division of the PAU, a position he would hold until 1953. The institutional framework provided by the Music Division—like its counterparts in Education, Fine Arts, and Philosophy and Letters—forged transnational intellectual communities and disseminated knowledge

about Latin American culture in the United States.<sup>2</sup> It also dispersed ethnographic publications about African-descended cultures within Latin America. However, Seeger's Music Division was not the first attempt to build these inter-American networks; they had been developing since the 1920s and, for example, had momentarily coalesced into the Pan American Composers Guild. The Music Division drew explicitly on the intellectual network constructed by German-born Uruguayan musicologist Francisco Curt Lange (1903-1997) and, more implicitly, on the discussions of acculturation pioneered by U.S. anthropologist Melville Herskovits.

In the 1930s, Curt Lange was interested in mapping the musical and racial composition of each nation in the Western Hemisphere, what he eventually called "el americanismo musical [musical Americanism]."<sup>3</sup> Through ethnographic analyses, he wanted "to protect the development [of the American continent], understand the exact reach of its intrinsic values, know the medium in which they were born and know how to locate them in the global historical movement."<sup>4</sup> Inspired by his personal conversations with Aaron Copland, Curt Lange explored the cultural peculiarity of Latin American nations through the study and veneration of "popular and autochthonous music."<sup>5</sup> Like many of his contemporaries throughout the Americas, he perceived music as a means to "better interpret the thousand hidden voices that tremble," to fuel the re-emergence of

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<sup>2</sup> Ann M. Pescatello, *Charles Seeger: A Life in American Music* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 173.

<sup>3</sup> F. Curt Lange, "La Situación de la Música en la América Latina," *El Nacional*, Abril 1939, RP-MF 319074, 29536 Expediente Enero-Noviembre 1939, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

<sup>4</sup> Francisco Curt Lange, *Americanismo Musical. La sección de investigaciones musicales. Su creación, propósitos y finalidades* (Montevideo: Instituto de Estudios Superiores, 1934), 5 and 11.

<sup>5</sup> Francisco Curt Lange, "Suma de las relaciones interamericanas en el campo de la música," *Boletín Latino-Americano de Música* V (Octubre de 1941): 11-5.

“disappeared races,” and to engender the “awakening of the sentiments of autonomy and liberty.” Although he sought to revive indigenous vernacular music in American nations, he was not concerned with black music, particularly jazz. Because black musical genres had been distorted by the mechanized and commercialized mass media, he proclaimed that they were not rooted in the American cultural landscape.<sup>6</sup>

*El americanismo musical* intended to provide a venue for the exchange of musical knowledge in the Americas, particularly through the *Boletín Latino-Americano de Música* [*Latin American Bulletin of Music*] that the Montevideo-based Instituto Interamericano de Musicología [Inter-American Musicology Institute] published between 1935 and 1946. Most of the issues highlighted the musical traditions of a particular nation. For instance, the fifth volume predominately discussed music in the United States and Mexico. Coordinated by Seeger, it had articles written by Seeger, Herskovits, and other modernist composers and ethnomusicologists.<sup>7</sup> It also contained articles by Mexican scholars like Mayer-Serra.<sup>8</sup> Despite his emphasis on indigeneity, Curt Lange was interested in Herskovits’s discussions of African cultural retentions (or Africanisms) and, in 1944, asked Herskovits for help in locating copies of monographs on African cultures in the Americas.<sup>9</sup> Because of Herskovits’s travels to Brazil, Curt Lange and

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<sup>6</sup> Curt Lange, *Americanismo Musical*, 5-6 and 13-14.

<sup>7</sup> On the coordination of the volume, see various letters in Folder 21 (Seeger, Charles, 1940), Box 21, Melville Herskovits Papers, Northwestern University Library. Also see Melville J. Herskovits, “El estudio de la música negra en el hemisferio occidental,” *Boletín Latino-Americano de Música* V (Octubre de 1941): 133-41; and Charles Seeger, “La música en los Estados Unidos,” *Boletín Latino-Americano de Música* V (Octubre de 1941): 229-34.

<sup>8</sup> Otto Mayer-Serra, “Silvestre Revueltas y el nacionalismo musical en México,” *Boletín Latino-Americano de Música* V (Octubre de 1941): 543-64.

<sup>9</sup> Francisco Curt Lange to Melville J. Herskovits, 6 de agosto de 1944, Folder 40 (Lange, Francisco Curt, 1944-1946), Box 33, NULA-MJHP.

Seeger wanted him to publish some findings on Brazil in the *Boletín* in 1944.<sup>10</sup> The following year, Curt Lange translated an article by Herskovits and ethnomusicologist Richard A. Waterman (1914-1971) about Afro-Bahian vernacular music into Spanish.<sup>11</sup>

The essay, “Música de culto afrobahiana [Afro-Bahian Art Music],” drew upon the microtonal approach that Herskovits and musicologist Mieczyslaw Kolinski had introduced in *Suriname Folk-Lore* (1936). Herskovits and Kolinski also utilized the paradigm of acculturation. Drawing on current musicological methods, their discussion of music proved the existence of African music in the Americas. Previously, musicologists asserted either that there were no African musical retentions in the black music of the Americas or that the few African melodies, harmonies, and rhythms that remained were being lost as these genres assimilated to Western musical traditions.<sup>12</sup> With the musical recordings that Herskovits and his wife Frances gathered in Suriname, Kolinski charted the relative amount of African musical retentions in various communities across Suriname.

Working from the ideas of his mentor E.M. von Hornbostel (1877-1935), Kolinski applied the assumption that the number of tones in a melodic line provided musicologists with the necessary tools to classify vernacular genres.<sup>13</sup> The discussion of African-

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<sup>10</sup> Francisco Curt Lange to Melville J. Herskovits, 29 de marzo de 1944; and Charles Seeger to Melville J. Herskovits, July 25, 1944, Folder 34 (Lange, Francisco Curt, 1944), Box 28, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>11</sup> Melville J. Herskovits to Curt Lange, December 12, 1945, Folder 40 (Lange, Francisco Curt, 1944-1946), Box 33, NULA-MJHP; and Melville J. Herskovits and Richard A. Waterman, “Música de culto afrobahiana,” trad. de Francisco Curt Lange, *Revista de Estudios Musicales* 1, núm 2 (Diciembre de 1949 [1945]): 65-127.

<sup>12</sup> For example, see Herskovits, “Acculturation and the American Negro,” 220-3; E. M. von Hornbostel, “African Negro Music,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 1, no. 1 (Jan. 1928): 60; and George Herzog, “Research in primitive and folk music in the United States: a Survey,” *Bulletin of the American Council of Learned Societies*, no. 24 (April 1936), 52 and 56-7.

<sup>13</sup> von Hornbostel, “African Negro Music,” 37-8 and 61-2.

descended music in *Suriname Folk-lore* was groundbreaking insofar as it was the first example of how to analyze musicological data such as tonal structure and rhythm in quantitative terms.<sup>14</sup> Following Herskovits's ethnographic interest in the dynamics of how cultures interact and transform, Kolinski framed his analysis around the need to chart the continuum of musical cultures from the most African to the purely Western.<sup>15</sup>

Kolinski classified African-descended music as primitive and defined it in relation to tonal relationships that were considered to be natural. Like the microtonal ideas that Baqueiro Foster articulated in 1926, Kolinski claimed that vernacular music did not always align with Western equal temperament, or the twelve tone system used in classical composition. When transcribing some of the songs recorded by the Herskovitses, he approximated some of the pitches in equal temperament and notated if any note should be played slightly sharp or flat to represent the vernacular music of Suriname more authentically. Through an analysis of these harmonics as well as the rhythms and other musical accoutrements that accompanied them, Kolinski asserted that blacks in the rural Bush regions of Suriname played African music with almost no European influences; blacks on the coast played a syncretic music that had African and European elements; and that those living in urban Paramaribo had adopted the musical harmonics that aligned with the most common Western tonal structures, principally the major scale.<sup>16</sup> Thus, while the microtonal theories espoused by Baqueiro Foster in 1926 did not gain a wide

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<sup>14</sup> Linton C. Freeman and Alan P. Merriam, "Statistical Classification in Anthropology: An Application to Ethnomusicology," *American Anthropologist* 58, no. 3 (June 1956): 465 and 472.

<sup>15</sup> M. Kolinski, "Suriname Music," in *Suriname Folk-Lore*, by Melville J. Herskovits and Frances S. Herskovits (New York: AMS Press, 1969 [1936]), 491.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 489-518; on natural tonal relationships, see 491-2 and 501-7.

following in Mexico, they were instrumental in demonstrating the existence of African and African-descended music throughout the Americas.

### **Inter-American Dialogues and Seeger's Music Division**

By participating in Curt Lange's *Boletín*, Seeger began to enmesh himself in inter-American musicological exchanges. Seeger also valued Herskovits's innovative approach to acculturation and the study of vernacular music to such a degree that, in 1940, he put Herskovits in charge of the study of black music in the Americas for the "Organizing Committee Conference on Interamerican Relations in the Field of Music Report."<sup>17</sup> These intellectual connections—which moved fluidly among discussions of indigeneity, blackness, and Africanness as well as across national and disciplinary boundaries—influenced how Seeger outlined the cultural, political, and hermeneutic goals of the Music Division of the PAU.

Part of the United State's wartime efforts and integral to the hemispheric rhetoric of cultural democracy, the Music Division sought to foment "international understanding, friendship and peace."<sup>18</sup> Following the modernist projects that united composers across the Americas in the 1920s and 1930s, Seeger wanted to divorce hemispheric musical aesthetics from elite European styles. He wanted to promote intellectual exchange and to establish a common historical and cultural identity in the Western Hemisphere. This program drew on the actions of composers and ethnomusicologists who "had labored for

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<sup>17</sup> "Organizing Committee Conference on Interamerican Relations in the Field of Music Report," Folder 21 (Seeger, Charles, 1940), Box 21, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Seeger, "Brief History of the Music Division of the Pan American Union" June 9, 1947, File Copy February 5, 1951, pg. 2, Archives JX 1980.53.M75.B63, Organization of American States, Columbus Memorial Library (hereafter cited as OAS-CML); and Pernet, "For the Genuine Culture of the Americas," 132-68.



some time upon the technical problems of integrating in their work regional and local folk and popular idioms of their countries.”<sup>19</sup> Unlike Curt Lange, Seeger perceived indigeneity and Africanness as the roots of a hemispheric identity.

Seeger used the institutional infrastructure provided by the Music Division to discuss vernacular music and broader questions of cultural exchange across the American nations. Invigorated by the social importance of music, he had worked on the New Deal’s Federal Music Project of the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s.<sup>20</sup> Along with other composers and ethnomusicologists who were concerned with the social aspects of musical production, he tried to redefine vernacular culture at a time when folkloric studies were becoming an academic discipline.<sup>21</sup> For many scholars, the investigation of vernacular music gradually became the historical and ethnographic study of the living expressions of a people rather than the archeological study of ancient dead cultures.<sup>22</sup> Through an essentialized notion of ‘the people,’ such studies examined vernacular music as the historical and cultural foundation for inclusive national identities.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Charles Seeger, “Brief History of the Music Division of the Pan American Union,” 2-3; and Charles Seeger “Review of Inter-American Relations in the Field of Music, 1940-1943,” pgs. 1-8, and 12, Archives JX 1980.53.M75.S22, OAS-CML.

<sup>20</sup> On the social importance of music for Seeger and others, like Chávez, see Helen Rees, “‘Temporary Bypaths’? Seeger and Folk Music Research,” in *Understanding Charles Seeger: Pioneer in American Musicology*, eds. Bell Yung and Helen Rees (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 85; Saavedra “The American Composer in the 1930s,” 29-63; and Pescatello, *Charles Seeger*, 136-72.

<sup>21</sup> For the institutionalization of folklore as an academic discipline in Mexico, see Clara Meierovich, *Vicente T. Mendoza. Artista y Primer Folclorólogo Musical* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1995); and Pernet, “For the Genuine Culture of the Americas,” 134-40.

<sup>22</sup> Paulo de Carvalho-Neto, *Folklore y psicoanálisis* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Psique, 1959), 22 and 284; and Jesús C. Romero, *El Folklore en México* (México, DF: Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística, 1947), 679-782.

<sup>23</sup> Hutchinson, “*Típico, folklórico or popular?*,” 248.

These inquiries wanted to divorce vernacular music from rigid and condescending Eurocentric aesthetics. Mexican ethnomusicologist Jesús C. Romero defined folklore as “the popular, spontaneous manifestation of the ethnic class that produces it” when its “vernacular traits have not been disfigured by Western [universal] influence.”<sup>24</sup> According to Baqueiro Foster, this ethnographic description of folklore became the standard definition among Mexican scholars.<sup>25</sup> It gave vernacular music a cultural dynamism and a fluidity that allowed it to be studied through ethnographic methods.

The emphasis on contact among cultural groups began to supplant the previously dominant ideology in music which only stressed the assimilation of vernacular music into Western melodies, harmonies, and rhythms. As a result, Herskovits’s paradigm of acculturation gained currency in ethnomusicological circles. Similar to Kolinski and Herskovits, Seeger used acculturation to demonstrate musical transformations on a cultural continuum that, in Mexico, spanned from the most isolated rural communities—which had “slight evidence, if any at all, of acculturation with European or African traditions”—to the quintessentially modern and urban Mexico City, where there were “productions of fine-art music in a practically ‘pure’ contemporary European and cosmopolitan tradition.”<sup>26</sup> Despite his attempt to transcend the theory of assimilation, Seeger’s invocation of acculturation still associated pure Western culture with modernity

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<sup>24</sup> Romero, *El Folklore en México*, 683-6.

<sup>25</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, “El Dr. Jesús C. Romero, Servidor del Arte y de la Ciencia,” 19 de octubre de 1958, *Suplemento de El Nacional*, RP-MF 26176, Cuaderno No. 14—1 de abril de 1958 al 28 de febrero de 1959, CNA-BA-AGBF.

<sup>26</sup> Charles Seeger, “Forward to Original Edition,” in *El estado presente de la música en México/The Present State of Music in Mexico*, by Otto Mayer-Serra, reprint of 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Washington DC: Pan American Union, 1960 [1946]), pg. xii, JX 1980.58.M931 no. 15 1960, OAS-CML. On Seeger and his relationship to acculturation and Herskovits, see Malena Kuss, “Charles Seeger’s Leitmotifs on Latin America,” *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* 11 (1979): 85; and Pescatello, *Charles Seeger*, 164 and 200-1.

and therefore revered European aesthetics as superior to the vernacular ones he sought to preserve and study.

In broader terms, Seeger sought “to fit the many little fragments of information together into one mosaic in which an evaluation of the resultant acculturation can be made.”<sup>27</sup> The formation of national and hemispheric music in the Americas was a product of “the historical processes of acculturation among at least three great musics—European, African and American—[which] have to be sought upon at least four levels—primitive, folk, popular and fine-art.”<sup>28</sup> Transcending dichotomous understandings of musical exchange—vernacular and classical, popular and classical, indigenous and European, and black and European—he defined vernacular music through multivalent social and cultural exchanges. Acculturation also facilitated the forging of a hemispheric cultural and historical identity. The paradigm gave musicologists and ethnomusicologists a means to explore “the relative importance of claims based upon nationality, regionalism, continentalism, or upon what Dr. Francisco Curt Lange calls ‘americanismo musical.’”<sup>29</sup>

In this context, Seeger participated in the III’s initiative to record the indigenous music of the Americas. Although it was never completed, the goal was to broadcast these vernacular tunes and modernist interpretations of them on major radio stations, such as the National Broadcasting Company in the United States and XEQ in Mexico.<sup>30</sup> These

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<sup>27</sup> Charles Seeger, “Forward,” in *Notes on the History of Music Exchange Between the Americas Before 1940*, by Eugenio Pereira Salas (Washington D.C.: Music Division Pan American Union, January 1943), pg. i, Pan American Union Music Series, vol 1, nos. 1-13, JX 1980.58.M931 no. 1-13, OAS-CML.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Seeger, “Forward to Original Edition,” xii.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

<sup>30</sup> “Propaganda por Radio del Instituto Inter-Americano Indigenista,” Propa411215SFb-1, Expediente 5. Radio Propaganda, 1940-3, Disco: Música y el III, III-AH-CD.

programs were to be supplemented by “commentaries in English, Spanish, and Portuguese” that explained ethnographic importance of indigenous music.<sup>31</sup> Participants, like U.S.-ethnomusicologist Henrietta Yurchenco (1916-2007), travelled across Mexico and other nations to record vernacular music and analyze its social implications. Writing as Director of the III, Manuel Gamio explained that these scholars intended to “record the music that is considered to be the most autochthonous possible and that still survives among distinct, indigenous populations of the Continent.”<sup>32</sup>

Gamio wanted to emphasize indigenous rather than black or African music.<sup>33</sup> However, the radio scripts occasionally acknowledged the important contributions of black music in popular songs such as the *bambuco* of Columbia.<sup>34</sup> It is not surprising that Seeger quickly linked the PAU to Gamio’s initiative and even suggested other scholars—such as George Herzog (1901-1983), Herskovits, and Copland—who would have access to recordings of vernacular music as well as have the capabilities to modernize them for classical orchestrations.<sup>35</sup> He even volunteered to write an article on the relationship

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<sup>31</sup> Carlos Giron Cerna to Dr. Charles Seeger, June 27, 1941, ChSeeger410627, Expediente 4. Ch. Seeger, Disco: Música y el III, III-AH-CD.

<sup>32</sup> Manuel Gamio to Allan Bonalie, Presidente de Líneas Aéreas Mexicanas, 25 de abril de 1946, PRadio460425, Expediente 6. Propaganda 1946-1947, Disco: Música y el III, III-AH-CD. This emphasis on survivals is echoed in Henrietta Yurchenco, *Around the World in 80 Years: A Memoir: A Musical Odyssey* (Point Richmond: Music Research Institute, 2002), 111.

<sup>33</sup> On emphasis on indigeneity, see Manuel Gamio to Francisco Curt Lange, Octubre 8, 1942, Propa421008a-1, Expediente 5. Radio Propaganda, 1940-3, Disco: Música y el III, III-AH-CD; and Manuel Gamio to Gilbert Chase, 26 de Diciembre de 1942, Propa421226, Expediente 5. Radio Propaganda, 1940-3, Disco: Música y el III, III-AH-CD.

<sup>34</sup> On not wanting recordings of black music see, Manuel Gamio to Gilbert Chase, 26 de Diciembre de 1942, Propa421226, Expediente 5. Radio Propaganda, 1940-3, Disco: Música y el III, III-AH-CD. On mentioning black music in a radio broadcast, see, “Radio Script. Colombia—Huizar”, Propa430831SFd-2, Manuel Gamio to Gilbert Chase, 26 de Diciembre de 1942, Propa421226, Expediente 5. Radio Propaganda, 1940-3, Disco: Música y el III, III-AH-CD.

<sup>35</sup> Charles Seeger to Carlos Girón Cerna, July 8, 1941, ChSeeger410708; Charles Seeger to Mr. Geron Cerna, July 11, 1941, ChSeeger410711; Charles Seeger to Manuel Gamio, July 31, 1942,

between society and indigenous culture for the III's journal, *América Indígena*.<sup>36</sup> By 1942, Seeger's Music Division of the PAU was so enmeshed in the III's radio initiative that it, along with the III and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México [National Autonomous University of Mexico], sponsored the entire series.<sup>37</sup>

Through the PAU, Seeger commissioned the writing of musical histories for all nations of the Western Hemisphere. The series depicted the complex, historical musical exchanges that shaped the formation of vernacular and national music in the Americas. More than for Curt Lange and Gamio, Seeger highlighted African music in addition to indigenous genres. The acculturationist paradigm, he contended, was most important for the study of African-descended cultures, because there was more interaction between African and European groups than between indigenous and European communities.<sup>38</sup> He intended to use these national histories to understand the cultural development of American nations and, hopefully, to establish a “the pattern of the general development of culture throughout the hemisphere.”<sup>39</sup>

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ChSeeger420731-1; and Charles Seeger to Manuel Gamio, October 15, 1942, ChSeeger421015-1, Expediente 4. Ch Seeger, Disco: Música y el III, III-AH-CD.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Seeger to Carlos Girón Cerna, August 28, 1941, ChSeeger410828, Expediente 4. Ch Seeger, Disco: Música y el III, III-AH-CD.

<sup>37</sup> Manuel Gamio to Charles Seeger, September 28, 1942, ChSeeger420928, Expediente 4. Ch Seeger, Disco: Música y el III, III-AH-CD.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Seeger, “Music and Society: Some New-World Evidence of Their Relationship,” in *Studies in Musicology, 1935-1975*, by Charles Seeger (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977): 182-92; and Pescatello, *Charles Seeger*, 178.

<sup>39</sup> Seeger, “Forward to Original Edition,” xi.

### Otto Mayer-Serra, Blackness, and Africanisms in the 1940s

Mayer-Serra wrote *El estado presente de la música en México/The Present State of Music in Mexico* for Seeger's series. Like many other ethnographic publications in the early 1940s, the essay embraced the desire to transcend the language of assimilation and to fuse discussions of popular, vernacular, and national music together. It stressed the cultural exchanges between national, indigenous, and black cultures, particularly in the *huapango* that had the influence of "African blacks [negros africanos]."<sup>40</sup> Along with his 1941 *Panorama de la Música Mexicana. Desde la Independencia Hasta la Actualidad* [*Panorama of Mexican Music: From Independence to the Present*], this essay illustrated the integration of Africanness into the dominant Chávez-centric post-revolutionary narrative of Mexican music that venerated ethnomusicological principles and modernist aesthetics.<sup>41</sup>

*Panorama de la Música Mexicana* was the product of ten months of ethnographic research in 1940 and of the encouragement of Baqueiro Foster—who, according to Mayer-Serra, "not only suggested the theme . . . but also constantly and tirelessly watched over the making of this book." While it was historical in nature, Mayer-Serra characterized the study as a sociological inquiry into national culture and the "themes of modern musicology" that were concerned with theories of cultural interaction. At beginning his chapter on post-revolutionary music, he explored how the national music assimilated European music to the degree that it became "disfigured, fuzzy, and finally,

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<sup>40</sup> Otto Mayer-Serra, *El estado presente de la música en México/The Present State of Music in Mexico*, Reprint of 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Washington DC: Pan American Union, 1960), pgs. 5 and 28 for quote in Spanish and English, JX 1980.58.M931 no. 14 1960, OAS-CML.

<sup>41</sup> Otto Mayer-Serra to Carlos Chávez, 30, de junio de 1940, Expediente 33 (Otto Mayer Serra), Vol. 1, Caja 8, Sección Correspondencia, AGN-FCC. On this Chávez-centric narrative, see Saavedra, "Of Selves and Others," 9n9; and Madrid, *Sounds of the Modern Nation*, 47.

imperceptible,” only leaving the “original popular source.” Despite this use of assimilation, he asserted that the post-revolutionary desire to create a nationalist culture through the appropriation of vernacular music had to transcend “the mere assimilation of ‘folkloric’ materials in the creation of a musical language.”<sup>42</sup>

More than his predecessors in Mexico, Mayer-Serra introduced African-descended cultures into the Mexico’s musical landscape. Because of the emphasis on social context, cultural contact, and ethnographic observation, vernacular music could now be tied to transnational cultural exchanges that did not originate during the colonial encounters between the Spanish and the Amerindian populations. By disassociating vernacular culture from the idea that it was static, archeological, and authentic, he characterized “African and Afro-Cuban” music as Mexican. Constant “continental influences” and “inter-American migrations” made it impossible to connect any musical element to a particular racial group. Drawing on Gabriel Saldívar’s and Baqueiro Foster’s studies of the *huapango*, he contended that “The ancient dances like the *bamba* in Mexico” could be “called *mulatas* in Cuba.” Despite his insistence on disassociating culture and race, he paradoxically valued foreign music for its racial integrity, particularly in the United States, Cuba, and Brazil where he stated in ambivalent terms that black music “has been conserved in its racial essence (although profoundly modified by foreign influences).”<sup>43</sup>

In his two volume *Música y músicos de latinoamérica* [*Music and Musicians of Latin America*] (1947), Mayer-Serra integrated Mexico into inter-American discussions

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<sup>42</sup> Otto Mayer-Serra, *Panorama de la Música Mexicana. Desde la Independencia Hasta la Actualidad* (México: Colegio de México, 1941), 9-11, 96, and 100.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 112, 119, 131, and 161.

of African cultural retentions. In this encyclopedia, he read, referred to, and cited scholars throughout Latin America while he discussed the black, African, indigenous, and racially-hybrid music that defined “American culture.” Perhaps as a response to the U.S.-centric initiatives of Seeger’s Music Division, he declared that “it is urgent for all of Latin America to know the distinct aspects of their traditional civilization, its roots and strengths to give it inertia for the future.”<sup>44</sup> Similar to Seeger, he saw the formation of national music through the fusion of indigenous, African, and European vernacular music—a process that created “an authentic language . . . a profoundly American, democratic sensibility.” This rhetoric of cultural and racial inclusion was enhanced by the use of innovative “popular music,” like jazz, in classical compositions.<sup>45</sup>

Mayer-Serra embraced the hemispheric interest in African-descended music. Many of his definitions—such as Dahomey, Lucumí, and Yoruba—stressed the survival of specific African cultural practices in distinct American locales. While he was aware of and valued African-descended music in Mexico, he also knew that it was even more integral to other Latin American nations, such as Brazil and Cuba. To make these claims, he cited Herskovits’s studies of Dahomey and Haiti as well as the Spanish translation of Arthur Ramos’s *As culturas negras no Novo Mundo* [*The Black Cultures of the New World*] (1937).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Otto Mayer-Serra, Untitled introduction to *Musica y músicos de latinoamérica. A-J* (México, D.F.: Editorial Atlante, S.A., 1947).

<sup>45</sup> Otto Mayer-Serra, *Musica y músicos de latinoamérica. A-J* (México, D.F.: Editorial Atlante, S.A., 1947), 133 and 279 and 307; and Otto Mayer-Serra, *Musica y músicos de latinoamérica. K-Z* (México, D.F.: Editorial Atlante, S.A., 1947), 566-567 and 1109.

<sup>46</sup> For Ramos, see Mayer-Serra, *Musica y músicos de latinoamérica. A-J*, 173 and 225; for Herskovits’s analysis of Haiti and the Dahomey, 465 and 496 of the same volume.



To note African-descended cultural continuities across the Western Hemisphere, he also cited Cuban sociologist and ethnographer Fernando Ortiz more than forty-five times. According to Mayer-Serra, “African music in Cuba has been studied scientifically, in a great many of valiant works by the great folkloricist and anthropologist Fernando Ortiz.” Mayer-Serra principally cited Ortiz’s *Glosario de Afronegrismos*, a somewhat criminological and somewhat reverential analysis of Afro-Cuban culture. Practically quoting Ortiz, Mayer-Serra defined *El Cumbé* as “a dance of African origin” which “has given us Afro-Cubanisms as common as *cumbancha* (orgy, to go on the town partying, diversion), *cumbanchar*, *cumbanchear*.” He continued with a linguistic analysis of the term that also drew on Ortiz’s research. “This root *kumb*,” Mayer-Serra stated, “has diffused in Western Africa and is observed among the Congos where *kumba* signifies making noise, yelling, roaring, . . .”<sup>47</sup>

Despite citing Ortiz’s oeuvre more than Herskovits’s, Mayer-Serra adopted the concept of acculturation that he most likely saw in Herskovits’s writings as well as Seeger’s PAU series. He did not cite Ortiz’s *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y azúcar* [*Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*] (1940), which defined the term transculturation. Mayer-Serra’s discussion of acculturation explored how African music became an integral part of national cultures. He said that “while the Indian factor has not been musically assimilated by subsequent ethnic influences, African culture has bred various types of Afro-Cuban music that have great folkloric valor.” This diversity is the result of “the morphological processes, transplantation, and acculturation of African

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 254 and 265. Also see Ortiz, *Glosario de Afronegrismos*, 153. On the ambivalence’s of Ortiz’s thought in the 1920s and 1930s, see Robin Moore, “Representations of Afrocuban Expressive Culture in the Writings of Fernando Ortiz,” *Latin American Music Review* 15, no. 1 (1994): 32-54.

music in Cuba.”<sup>48</sup> He took the existence of Africanisms as a point of departure rather than a polemic that engaged anthropologists, musicologists, and ethnomusicologists across the Western Hemisphere.

In his depiction of *La Bamba*, Mayer-Serra cited Ortiz and alluded to Baqueiro Foster’s ethnomusicological studies in Veracruz. But while Baqueiro Foster looked to situate the *huapango* etymologically in relation to Nahuatl words, Mayer-Serra associated it with Africa. Drawing on Ortiz, Mayer-Serra defined *La Bamba* in relation to *Mbamba* the Congolese word for game. He continued by explaining that *La Bamba* is linked to improvisation and “has been made recently popular with the *Son* of the Mexican *huapango*.”<sup>49</sup> Mayer-Serra’s articulation of African cultural survivals—which he discussed in relation to ethnographic studies by Herskovits and Ortiz as well as Baqueiro Foster’s ethnomusicological inquiries—illustrated how he legitimated African music not only as Mexican but also as part of the larger inter-American construction of African-descended soundscapes within and across national boundaries.

### **Baqueiro Foster and Black Music in Guerrero and Veracruz**

In the 1940s and 1950s, other Mexican ethnomusicologists participated in these transnational exchanges. To honor Ortiz and to recognize his influence on Mexican ethnomusicology, Vicente T. Mendoza wrote the essay “Algo del Folklore Negro en México [Something about Black Folklore in Mexico],” which loosely linked African cultures to Mexico’s colonial past and Afro-Cuban music to contemporary songs in

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<sup>48</sup> Mayer-Serra, *Musica y músicos de latinoamérica. A-J*, 254.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 91; and Ortiz, *Glosario*, 41.

Veracruz and Yucatán.<sup>50</sup> Because Baqueiro Foster wanted to understand the cultural ties between Cuba and Mexico, he wrote to Ortiz asking for a copy of his *Los instrumentos de la música afrocubana* [*Instruments of Afro-Cuban Music*] in 1954.<sup>51</sup> This inquiry demonstrated how his research had shifted from an analysis of the roots of Mexico's vernacular tradition to a discussion of the inter-American musical routes that shaped Mexican culture.

Through the PAU, Baqueiro Foster acquired and read books, such as J. M. Coopersmith's 1949 *Música y músicos de la República Dominicana* [*Music and Musicians of the Dominican Republic*].<sup>52</sup> He read ethnomusicological studies by Curt Lange to understand music in South American nations like Brazil.<sup>53</sup> Like Seeger, Baqueiro Foster began to perceive racially-derived musical commonalities across American nations. In 1961, he declared:

The basic element is the native; next came the religious and secular Spanish. Then the process of mestizaje between both Spanish groups and the indigenous population began. To this, we should add the interventions of black peoples, especially in Cuba and Brazil, but also in Mexico and Venezuela, where we cannot escape many of their tunes that possess rhythms, accents, and melodic particularities compliments of the black origin.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Vicente T. Mendoza, "Algo del Folklore Negro en México," in *Miscelanea de estudios dedicados a Fernando Ortiz*, volumen 2 (La Habana, 1956), 1093-111.

<sup>51</sup> Fernando Ortiz to Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, 25 de junio de 1954, Caja 1545—Ortiz, Fernando, INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

<sup>52</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, "Música y Músicos de la República Dominicana," *Suplemento de El Nacional*, 23 de abril de 1950, RP-MF 19900, Cuaderno—Junio 1949 a Agosto 1950, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

<sup>53</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, "Francisco Curt Lange y la Escuela de Minas Geraes," *Suplemento de El Nacional*, 8 de octubre de 1961, RP-MF 27427; and Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, "Algo más Sobre la Música Barroca de Minas Geraes," *Suplemento de El Nacional*, 13 de octubre de 1961, RP-MF 27428, Cuaderno—1 enero 1961 a 31 de diciembre de 1961, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

<sup>54</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, "La música en el Brasil," *Suplemento de El Nacional*, 22 de octubre de 1961, RP-MF 27433, Cuaderno—1 enero 1961 a 31 de diciembre de 1961, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

He began to note that coastal states, like Veracruz and Yucatán, had Afro-Caribbean musical influences in their vernacular and popular soundscapes.

This inter-American perspective is apparent in Baqueiro Foster's review of Alejo Carpentier's canonical *La música en Cuba* [*The Music of Cuba*] (1946) for his weekly newspaper column in Yucatán's *Diario del Sureste* [*The Southeast Daily*]. Carpentier wrote this historical book for a series on the national music of Latin American nations published by Mexico's Fondo de Cultura Económica.<sup>55</sup> In the glowing review, Baqueiro Foster praised Carpentier as "the most authorized pen of Cuban ethnomusicology."<sup>56</sup> Presumably to make the book more appealing to its Mexican audience, Carpentier and Baqueiro Foster both associated certain Cuban genres, like the Afro-Cuban *guaracha* and Spanish-derived *zapateado*, with Mexican popular music. At the end of his analysis of the seventeenth century, Carpentier acknowledged the cultural connections among all American nations. He stated:

It would be wearisome to enumerate all the popular dances from Mexico, Argentina, Chile, and Venezuela that are derived from the zapateo. Its inter-American migrations were as considerable as the African-based ones.<sup>57</sup>

Similarly, Baqueiro Foster asserted, "His [Carpentier's] study of nineteenth-century *guarachas* will be fruitful for us since this genre became in-vogue in the Yucatán

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<sup>55</sup> Timothy Brennan, "Preface to the English Edition," in *Music in Cuba*, by Alejo Carpentier, ed. Timothy Brennan, trans. Alan West-Durán (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>56</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, "La Música en Cuba," *Diario del Sureste*, 8 de septiembre de 1946, RP-MF 17774, Cuaderno No. 4—G. Baqueiro Foster Artículos—1 de enero de 1941 a Enero 1950, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

<sup>57</sup> Alejo Carpentier, *La música en Cuba* (La Habana, Cuba: 1961), 43. Translation from Alejo Carpentier, *Music in Cuba*, ed. Timothy Brennan, trans. Alan West-Durán (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 105.

Peninsula and since, until now, nobody has studied it or its Cuban antecedents pointed out so clearly by Carpentier.”<sup>58</sup>

Recognition of cultural flows from Cuba to Mexico enriched Baqueiro Foster’s discussion of Mexico’s musical cartography, even when he was not concerned with blackness. There were varying degrees of Cuban musical influences across Mexico. He asserted: “In Cuba, they developed music like the zapateado . . . that the people of Veracruz inherited and, in their own way, intensified rhythmically . . . In Tabasco, it is not like this, but not because of less interest in the zapateado.” The state of Tabasco had less Cuban rhythmic influence because it had a more pronounced Spanish heritage than Veracruz.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, such influences—which Baqueiro Foster read about in Carpentier’s *La música en Cuba*—were part of the vernacular traditions in both coastal states as well as in Cuba.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the centrality of black music in much of his research, Baqueiro Foster did not travel across Mexico with the express purpose of looking for it. He studied vernacular music whether it happened to be indigenous, black, or Cuban. Thus, when in 1949 he traveled to the Sixth Congress of Mexican History in Guerrero, he presented an analysis

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<sup>58</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, “La Música en Cuba,” *Diario del Sureste*, 8 de septiembre de 1946. Carpentier says that the *guaracha* was a dance that originated in the 1700s and spread to Veracruz at the end of the eighteenth century. While Carpentier said it was of creole origin, it was popular among Afro-Cubans; see Carpentier, *La música en Cuba*, 9, 40, and 132-3.

<sup>59</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, “Bosquejo panorámico de la música mexicana (síntesis de una plática en el casino veracruzano),” *Diario del Sureste*, 28 de diciembre de 1947, RP-MF 17830, Cuaderno No. 4—G. Baqueiro Foster Artículos—1 de enero de 1941 a Enero 1950, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

<sup>60</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, “El desarrollo musical de Tabasco,” in *Antología folklórica y musical de Tabasco*, by Francisco J. Santamaria, arr. by Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster (Villahermosa, Tab., Mej.: Publicaciones del Gobierno del Estado, 1952) xlii-xliii.

of local music that he attributed mostly to the Spanish and indigenous populations.<sup>61</sup> Having spent much of the past fourteen years investigating Gulf and Caribbean music, Baqueiro Foster saw that the study of music along the Pacific coast unlocked a new set of inter-American musical influences, particularly the cultural exchanges with Chile and Peru, for him to document.<sup>62</sup> He was less sure of the black influences in Guerrero than he had been for the Gulf and Caribbean coastlines. There were some linguistic connections between the *Zamba*, a popular dance in Guerrero, and the Bantu word *Zambra*, which could be translated as dance. This etymology was evidence “that blacks were a factor in the formation of the genre.” However, he could not determine “the basic elements of black ingredients” in the dance. These songs were too old to use melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic analyses to determine their distinct racial and cultural origins. At best, he could only definitively conclude that Spanish music had influenced the *Zamba*.<sup>63</sup>

Other times, transnational cultural flows muddled his conclusions about what could be authentically Cuban and Mexican. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Cuban music, including the Afro-Cuban *danzón*, had permeated the cosmopolitan culture in Veracruz and come to define the popular culture of the state. In his own ethnographic work on southern Mexico, caricaturist and ethnographer Miguel Covarrubias stated that “The *danzón*, the regional dance of Vera Cruz, is nationalized rather than native, for it

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<sup>61</sup> Agustín Cue Canovas, “El Congreso Mexicano de Historia. La Música en Guerrero,” *El Popular*, 24 de enero, RP-MF 2812838, Expediente: Enero 1949, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

<sup>62</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, “‘La Sanmarquena’, Chilena de la Costa Chica del Estado de Guerrero,” *Suplemento de El Nacional*, 24 de Marzo, RP-MF 28916, Expediente Marzo 1949, Part II, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF; and Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, “El Alma de Andalucía en el Folklore Musical de Guerrero” Part III, *Suplemento de El Nacional*, 1 de enero de 1949, RP-MF 17895, Cuaderno No. 4—G. Baqueiro Foster Artículos—1 de enero de 1941 a Enero 1950, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

<sup>63</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, “El Alma de Andalucía en el Folklore Musical de Guerrero,” Part III.

came from Africa by way of Cuba, but it has acquired a strong local flavor—intense, self-confident, and full of erotic grandeur—that is wholly characteristic.”<sup>64</sup> Conversely, Baqueiro Foster claimed that the rhythm of “the Cuban danzón has not really stuck, even with its half century of popularity.” Because of the different rhythmical elements in the *danzones* from Veracruz, he paradoxically stated that “They play it well and pretend to make good danzones, but nobody could say that these songs are truly veracruzano.” As a result of the Mexicanization of vernacular and popular music through the radio, he lamented that “it is a difficult thing to discuss, the fact that the great popular composers of Veracruz have been trained in a metropolitan environment that necessarily bleaches and distances them from their sources” in Cuba.<sup>65</sup> Baqueiro Foster understood that a certain amount of musical transformation would occur as a result of these transnational cultural flows. However, he was wary of the Mexicanization of such music. The integration of Afro-Cuban music into Mexican popular culture was fraught with racial ambiguities that, at times, risked erasing the Africanness of particular song or genre.

**Baqueiro Foster’s *Suite Veracruzana No. 1* in Veracruz and in the United States, 1947-1950s**

The nationalist as well as inter-American desire to disseminate vernacular, classical, and popular music transformed the cultural and racial meanings of these songs. As Gamio’s inter-American musical initiative demonstrated, the broadcasting of vernacular and classical music on the radio was inherently a racializing process. When

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<sup>64</sup> Covarrubias, *Mexico South*, 6.

<sup>65</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, “El Estado de Veracruz, su Música y sus Músicos,” *Suplemento de El Nacional*, 1 de abril de 1956, RP-MF 25129, Cuaderno—Abril 1956 a Abril 1957, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

the 1946 presidential campaign of Veracruz-born Miguel Alemán disseminated *La Bamba* across the nation, the tune lost any connection to its black ancestry.<sup>66</sup> The whitening—or bleaching, as Baqueiro Foster called it—of the music of Veracruz was an attempt to make vernacular and popular songs more palatable to Mexico’s radio audiences. Baqueiro Foster’s discontent with these whitened depictions of regional music was, in all likelihood, also a result of his unhappiness with how his composition, *Suite Veracruzana, No. 1*, was being discussed on the radio.

*Suite Veracruzana, No. 1* was an updated and renamed version of his 1940 composition *Huapangos*. In the mid-to-late 1940s, the Mexico-City-based radio station XEQ regularly broadcast it on the Sunday evening program “El ‘Instituto Salvador Díaz Mirón’ Sección Cultural del Casino del Estado de Veracruz [The ‘Salvador Díaz Mirón Institute’ Cultural Section of the Casino of the State of Veracruz]” [See Image 1]. In celebrating the history and culture of Veracruz, the radio announcers extolled a romanticized Spanish past. At times, the program paid homage to Cuban influences in the regional culture, particularly with Cuba’s “primitive Habanera Dance” that migrated to the region in the late eighteenth century. But, there was no mention of black, African, or Afro-Cuban cultures.<sup>67</sup>

In this context, many of the vernacular songs within *Suite Veracruzana, No. 1*, such as the *Pajaro Cú*, were depicted as “romantic” and with “a traditional melody.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Randall Ch. Kohl S., *Ecos de ‘La Bamba.’ Una historia etnomusicológica sobre el son jarocho de Veracruz, 1946-1959* (Veracruz, Veracruz, México: Instituto Veracruzano de Cultura, 2007), 195-203.

<sup>67</sup> “Programa del Instituto Salvador Díaz Miron”, 20 de Julio de 1947, pg 1, Caja 0040 B0080—Scripts de radio de la Sección Cultural del Casino Veracruzano, INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

<sup>68</sup> Marzo 16 de 1947, “La Sección Cultural del Casino del Estado de Veracruz, presente en X.E.Q. . . .,” pg. 2-3, Caja 0040 B0080—Scripts de radio de la Sección Cultural del Casino Veracruzano, INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.



**EL INSTITUTO  
SALVADOR DIAZ MIRON**

Sección Cultural del Casino del Estado de Veracruz  
Presenta en:

**X. E. Q.**  
Hoy, a las 21.30 horas (9.30 p. m.)

VERACRUZ POR LA CULTURA Y PARA LA CULTURA DE MEXICO, CON LA NOTABLE  
MEZZO SOPRANO

**MARIA LUISA LLARVY**  
y el estupendo tenor vernáculo

**"EL JAROCHO"**  
y la magnífica Orquesta Sinfónica que dirige el  
maestro

**JERONIMO BAQUEIRO FOSTER**  
en la interpretación del son popular jarocho

**"EL BALAHU"**  
ilustrado por la gracia de la gentil bailadora

**ROSALBA JOHNSON**  
"Gardenia de Gardenias"

Invitado de honor: El distinguido crítico de arte

**RICARDO CORTES TAMAYO**  
Disertando acerca de los cuentos y de los  
Cuentistas Mexicanos

**Image 1:** Advertisement for "El Balahú." Advertisement for XEQ Broadcast of Baqueiro Foster's "El Balahú," 11 de mayo, *El Universal*, RP-MF 18359, Expediente Mayo 1947, CNA-FE-AGBF.

Baqueiro Foster's composition was praised for being "pure" melodic representations of these tunes.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, the program anointed him as "the most versed musicologist in the musical folklore of Veracruz."<sup>70</sup> Obscuring any mention of racial and cultural origins, one announcer asserted that Baqueiro Foster had been successful in "conserving their [the vernacular tunes'] essence, their traditional force."<sup>71</sup> On April 20, 1947, the commentator declared that *La Bamba*—the vernacular song that Baqueiro Foster, Carlos Chávez, and Mayer-Serra had explicitly associated with blackness, Africanness, and indigeneity—etymologically and musically originated in Andalusia, Spain.<sup>72</sup> Probably because radio stations were told to stress Mexico's indigenous and Spanish roots and *mestizo* cultures, the announcers failed to mention the African origins of Baqueiro Foster's composition.

When African American dancer Katherine Dunham visited to Mexico at Chávez's invitation in 1947, she learned of this composition. Baqueiro Foster's careful ethnographic and musicological analysis inspired Dunham to choreograph "Veracruzana" to *Suite Veracruzana, No. 1*. More broadly, she linked Baqueiro Foster's project directly to Herskovits's network of scholars who were concerned with African cultural retentions. As his former student, she was part of the hemispheric ethnographic movement to

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<sup>69</sup> Marzo 23 de 1947, "La Sección Cultural del Casino del Estado de Veracruz, presente en X.E.Q. . . .," pg. 3, Caja 0040 B0080—Scripts de radio de la Sección Cultural del Casino Veracruzano, INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

<sup>70</sup> "Programa del Instituto Salvador Díaz Miron", 28 de Septiembre de 1947," pg 2, Caja 0040 B0080—Scripts de radio de la Sección Cultural del Casino Veracruzano, INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

<sup>71</sup> Marzo 30 de 1947, "La Sección Cultural del Casino del Estado de Veracruz, presente en X.E.Q. . . .," pg 3, Caja 0040 B0080—Scripts de radio de la Sección Cultural del Casino Veracruzano, INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

<sup>72</sup> Abril 20 de 1947, "El 'Instituto Salvador Díaz Mirón' Sección Cultural del Casino del Estado de Veracruz, presente en X.E.Q. . . .,"pg. 2, Caja 0040 B0080—Scripts de radio de la Sección Cultural del Casino Veracruzano, INBA/CENIDIM-ABF.

refashion black cultural identities by giving African-descended peoples historical agency and cultural modernity.<sup>73</sup>

From this transnational space, Dunham reasserted the African roots of Baqueiro Foster's composition. For the inter-American journal *Acta Antropológica* [*Anthropological Record*] that was published in Mexico City, she argued that African music in the Americas needed to be analyzed in relation to its artistic forms as well as its sociological and historical functions in Africa and the Americas. It needed to be studied in relation to the process of acculturation that Herskovits developed.<sup>74</sup> Ethnographers, Dunham argued, could fuse elite conceptions of culture with the “the bubbling, churning ferment of the black peasants” if they studied the dances of African peoples. Instead of arguing for black cultural particularity amid an avant-garde terrain that perceived universality and humanity as European, she wanted to forge “a community of men, who happen to be black, but must belong to the world around, no matter what kind of color.”<sup>75</sup> Her political agenda required the modernist reinterpretation of African-descended vernacular dance that was predicated upon the ethnographic analysis.<sup>76</sup> The mixture of modern aesthetics and ethnography became one of her hallmark traits.<sup>77</sup> The elegant

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<sup>73</sup> Daphne Lamothe, *Inventing the New Negro: Narrative, Culture, and Ethnography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 115-35.

<sup>74</sup> Katherine Dunham, “The Dances of Haiti,” *Acta Antropológica* 2, no. 4 (November 1947): 5-58.

<sup>75</sup> Katherine Dunham, *Island Possessed* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1969), 4.

<sup>76</sup> Melville J. Herskovits to Katherine Dunham, June 20, 1933; Katherine Dunham to Melville J. Herskovits, 1935, c.Sept 10, and Melville J. Herskovits to Katherine Dunham, Dec 19, 1935, Folder 12 (Dunham, Katherine, 1932-1942), Box 7, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>77</sup> John Martin, “Dunham’s Troupe Offers New Show,” *New York Times*, May 9, 1950.

simplicity of her performances—often only having a guitar or the “monotonous rhythms of a few African drums”—let her grace and ethnographic prowess shine.<sup>78</sup>

Amid this cultural and intellectual milieu, Dunham performed “Veracruzana” in a long white dress on Broadway and in many other locales in the late 1940s and 1950s [see Image 2].<sup>79</sup> She highlighted the African origins of the vernacular styling of *La Bamba* in her essay on Haiti and in her performances. It was one of the many African-descended names—including “*chica, bamba, calenda, bamboula, congo, meringue, banda, juba*, to name only a few”—that shaped the musical cartography of Haiti, Mexico, and the entire Western Hemisphere.<sup>80</sup> However, unlike Baqueiro Foster, Chávez, and Mayer-Serra, she was not bound to Mexico’s nationalist narrative and regional cultural politics that, at times, downplayed if not ignored the African roots to Mexican vernacular music. Instead of highlighting how *La Bamba* was characterized by the fusion of indigenous, European, and black musical heritages, she emphasized its Africanness and its connection to other African-descended cultural and racial identities in the Americas.

### **Vernacular and Popular Music in Yucatán, 1940-1970**

As the disparate depictions of *Suite Veracruzana, No. 1* indicate, the ascription of race to musical composition and performance was fickle. The local, regional, national, and hemispheric trappings that characterized this composition varied with audience, performer, commentator, and context. The blurred distinctions between popular and

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<sup>78</sup> Ceferino R. Avecilla, “‘L’Ag’Ya’” de Catherine Dunham,” *Excelsior*, 8 de junio, RP-MF 18564, Expediente Junio 1947, CNA-FE-AGBF.

<sup>79</sup> Joyce Aschenbrenner, *Katherine Dunham: Dancing a Life* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 131 and 139-40.

<sup>80</sup> Dunham “The Dances of Haiti,” 6.



**Image 2:** Katherine Dunham in "Veracruzana," 1948, Studio Iris, Paris, Missouri History Museum, St. Louis, Image Number 28545.

vernacular music, particularly in an inter-American context, often made the ambivalent bonds between race and music more complex. Not coincidentally, Baqueiro Foster's discontent with the discussion and use of vernacular music resulted from how he and the mass media discussed Mexico's cultural and racial heritage. As he saw cultural ties across American nations, he linked African-descended musical traits in the vernacular music of other nations with Mexican popular music, particularly in the state of Yucatán. In discussing the Cuban origins of popular music in Veracruz, Baqueiro Foster had not directly claimed that such music had Afro-Cuban dimensions, even while he hinted that the *danzón* had been bleached of its Afro-Cuban origins. But, in his analysis of popular music in the state of Yucatán, African-descended music from Cuba and Colombia became quintessentially Mexican.

After finishing his study of the *huapango* in Veracruz, Baqueiro Foster returned to Yucatán in the early 1940s to help the state government forge a distinct regional identity through radio broadcasts. In 1942, the governor, Ernesto Novelo Torres (1895-1968), asked composer Daniel Ayala (1906-1975) to coordinate this initiative. Aided by Baqueiro Foster, Ayala formed the Orquesta Típica Yukalpetén [Typical Yucatecan Orchestra], which intended to accompany local singers and perform regional Yucatecan popular music for mass consumption.<sup>81</sup> While in Yucatán, Baquero Foster wrote weekly articles on local music that were published in Mérida's *El Diario de Yucatán* [The

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<sup>81</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, *La Canción Popular de Yucatán (1850-1950)* (México, D.F.: Editorial del Magisterio, 1970), 312-3; Miguel Civeira Taboada, "Prologo," in *La Canción Popular de Yucatán (1850-1950)*, by Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster (México, D.F.: Editorial del Magisterio, 1970); and Enrique Martín and Álvaro Vega, "La canción yucateca," in *La música en México. Panorama del siglo XX*, coord., Aurelio Tello (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010), 274-5.

*Yucatecan Daily*] and that were occasionally reprinted in national newspapers, such as the cultural supplement to *El Nacional*.<sup>82</sup>

Baqueiro Foster wanted to write a history of music in the state of Yucatán. It would be part of a larger series that he hoped to call “Geografía de la Canción Mexicana [Geography of the Mexican Song].” The series began with a 1952 study of vernacular music in the state of Tabasco that Baqueiro Foster arranged and introduced.<sup>83</sup> He wanted his study of Yucatán to continue the post-revolutionary ethnographic mapping of Mexican music that began in the 1920s and that ethnomusicologists and state institutions, like the INI and the SEP, had continued.<sup>84</sup> When Baqueiro Foster died in 1967, his monumental project ended. Posthumously published in 1970, *La Canción Popular de Yucatán (1850-1950)* [*The Popular Songs of Yucatán (1850-1950)*] republished many of his newspaper articles as a history of Yucatecan music. It detailed the development of regional popular music. The fluid relationship between vernacular music and popular music shaped the book’s argument. Tracing the historical popular memory of Yucatecan music, he examined the degree to which African-descended music in Cuba and Colombia informed local music.

Like most Mexican musical scholars, Baqueiro Foster contended that vernacular music began in the colonial period, when pre-Columbian indigenous music came in

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<sup>82</sup> See Miguel Civeira Taboada, “Prologo.”

<sup>83</sup> Miguel Civeira Taboada, “Prologo;” and Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, “Prefacio,” ix-x.

<sup>84</sup> The INI published Concha Michel, *Cantos Indígenas de México* (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1951). Similarly, the SEP published various ethnographic texts from the 1930s in its *Investigación folklórica en México. Materiales*, volumen I, Introducción y notas por Baltasar Samper and Expediciones de investigación por Francisco Domínguez, Luis Sandi y Roberto Téllez Girón (México: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1962).

contact with Spanish culture.<sup>85</sup> Because colonial and nineteenth-century composers and poets were not interested in preserving and studying indigenous music, he naïvely assumed that the vernacular music of Yucatán disappeared. However, “the attitude of Yucatecan poets at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century . . . made the style of the Yucatecan song.”<sup>86</sup> This new popular musical tradition did not embrace the post-revolutionary desire to build on a vernacular past. It forged its own history, one that was based on the introduction the African-descended *bambuco*, *guaracha*, *bolero*, and *danzón*.<sup>87</sup> According to Baqueiro Foster, this cultural genealogy began with the late-nineteenth century popular music of Chan Cil (1849-1910) and H’Uay Cuuc.<sup>88</sup> However, the post-revolutionary veneration of local music and the pluralist desire “to extend and spread previously ignored material so that everyone could enjoy it” facilitated the dissemination of Yucatecan popular music across the state, nation, and globe.<sup>89</sup>

In Baqueiro Foster’s opinion, the history of popular music in Yucatán “should begin first with the state of popular music on the island of Cuba,” particularly the Afro-Cuban *guaracha* that, in Mexico, was made famous by Chan Cil. H’Uay Cuuc’s sojourns to Cuba continued these transnational musical ties. As Baqueiro Foster discussed popular

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<sup>85</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, “Bosquejo panorámico de la música mexicana (síntesis de una plática en el casino veracruzano),” *Diario del Sureste*, 28 de diciembre de 1947, RP-MF 17830, Cuaderno No. 4—G. Baqueiro Foster Artículos—1 de enero de 1941 a Enero 1950, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF.

<sup>86</sup> Baqueiro Foster, *La Canción Popular de Yucatán*, 103.

<sup>87</sup> On this history, see Jesús Flores y Escalante, *Salón México*, 1-38; Jara Gámez, et. al., *De Cuba con amor . . . el danzón en México*; and *Bolero. Clave del Corazón* (México, D.F.: Fundación Ingeniero Alejo Peralta y Díaz Ceballos, 2004), especially 61-8.

<sup>88</sup> Baqueiro Foster, *La Canción Popular de Yucatán*, 176.

<sup>89</sup> Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster, “La Revolución Mexicana y el Nacionalismo Musical,” *Suplemento de El Nacional*, 19 de noviembre de 1950, RP-MF 21056, Cuaderno—Sep 1949 al Nov 1951, CNA-BA-FE-AGBF; and Baqueiro Foster, *La Canción Popular de Yucatán*.



music in Yucatán, he quoted other local experts who drew on the legacies of these performers to tie local music to Cuba, Colombia, and even Africa. According to one of Baqueiro Foster's informants, the *bolero* had its roots “in mother Spain, through the marvelous prism of Cuban folklore.” In another interview, Baqueiro Foster quoted local expert Cirilo Baqueiro, who proclaimed that the *bambuco*—and “its black origin”—was rooted in Colombia. According to this informant, the genre originated in various regions of Africa, such as Sudan, Egypt, Senegal, and Equatorial Africa. Although slave life in Colombia and “the melodic influence of indigenous peoples and also the Spanish music” modified it, the *bambuco* still maintained some of its African cultural traits when it arrived in Yucatán in 1909.<sup>90</sup>

When faced with the statement that there were no Cuban or Colombian influences in Yucatecan popular music, many of Baqueiro Foster's interviewees “stopped him short of saying it, with the intention of showing that in earlier times these influences were strong and had produced a hybrid music of vernacular elements and of bambucos, boleros, claves, criollos that have now passed into history.” His informants passionately argued that these Atlantic and inter-American cultural exchanges needed to be told to younger generations so that “the new rhythms [produced by the fusion of foreign and Mexican musical elements] do not waste away.” One local musician proclaimed that “through the laws of mestizaje [and] together with what national exchanges have given us, the most precious essences of Spain, Cuba, Colombia and other nations of the Americas have been refined.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Baqueiro Foster, *La Canción Popular de Yucatán*, 20-21, 56, 66-72 and 172.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 85, 91-92, and 194.

In *La Canción Popular de Yucatán*, Baqueiro Foster documented the popular acceptance of Afro-Cuban and Afro-Colombian music. These African-descended influences had become celebrated parts of Yucatecan popular music. He legitimated his claims by quoting, often at length, the fervent assertions of local musicians that not only mentioned inter-American cultural flows but even holistically discussed African cultural areas. As had become commonplace among Mexican ethnomusicologists, Baqueiro Foster used the words of other people to legitimate African-descended music as Mexican. As a palimpsest, his text gave a voice to local performers and supported his own claims about the Yucatecan music. He contended that Afro-Caribbean, especially Afro-Cuban, rhythms and melodies characterized popular music in Yucatán and informed the popular music of Veracruz. Prior to his analysis of Yucatecan popular music, he had classified local vernacular music as black. In *La Canción Popular de Yucatán*, he noted how Afro-Caribbean vernacular traditions permeated Mexican vernacular and popular cultures.

### **Conclusion**

By 1970, Mayer-Serra and Baqueiro Foster had attributed Afro-Caribbean identities to some of the popular and vernacular genres in the coastal states of Veracruz and Yucatán. The colonial-era mixture of pre-Columbian, European, and black slave music was no longer the sole foundation for Mexican music. Their new perspective was buttressed by inter-American anthropological and musicological endeavors to understand the indigenous, African, and European origins of all vernacular and popular music in the Western Hemisphere. Mexican music, for instance, entered into Afro-Diasporic cultural milieus when dancer and Herskovits-trained ethnographer Katherine Dunham performed

“Veracruzana” to Baqueiro Foster’s *Suite Veracruzana, No. 1* in the late 1940s and 1950s. Looking for musical commonalities across the Americas, Mayer-Serra and Baqueiro Foster ascribed African and especially Afro-Cuban origins to vernacular songs such as *La Bamba* when they read, paraphrased, quoted, and cited ethnographic publications from the United States, Cuba, and other American nations. By linking the soundscapes of Mexico’s Gulf and Caribbean coastlines to the African-descended music of the Caribbean, they introduced an African-descended racial cartography to post-revolutionary Mexican ethnomusicology.

## **Chapter 5: “The Remnants of Our Grand, Colonial Black Population”: Aguirre Beltrán and the Ethno-Historical Construction of Africanness, 1940-1949**

In 1942, Manuel Gamio asked Veracruz-born surgeon and medical anthropologist Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán to study Mexico’s black population as part of the ongoing plan to classify the biological and cultural roots of the national populace.<sup>1</sup> Aguirre Beltrán accepted the offer and almost instantly became Mexico’s unquestioned expert on its African-descended peoples and cultures.<sup>2</sup> Two years after he began to document the African slave population at Mexico’s National Archives, he travelled to Evanston, Illinois, to work with Melville Herskovits. With Herskovits’s guidance and grants from the Rockefeller Foundation and later the Wenner Gren Foundation, Aguirre Beltrán set out to add African-descended peoples and cultures to Mexican history and demographics. While he was at Northwestern, he entered into the transnational debates about African cultural retentions, or Africanisms, in the Americas that were discussed in the previous two chapters. In this transnational context, he adopted his mentor’s controversial paradigm of acculturation and began a project to document the cultural and demographic legacies of Mexico’s African slave population.

This chapter argues that Aguirre Beltrán strictly applied Herskovits’s ideas of acculturation and ethno-history to document the transfer of African peoples and cultures into colonial society in *La población negra de México* (1946) and then into the everyday

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<sup>1</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán,” in *Vidas en la antropología mexicana*, eds. María José con Uribe and Magalí Daltabuit Godás (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2004), 18; and Vinson, “La historia del estudio de los negros en México,” 53.

<sup>2</sup> For example see Patrick Carroll, “Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán y *La población negra de México*,” in *Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán. Homenaje Nacional: Memorias* (Xalapa: Universidad Veracruzana, 1996), 105-9; and Vinson, “La historia del estudio de los negros en México,” 45.

realities of the African-descended community of Cuijla (now called Cuaji) in the state of Guerrero. His use of acculturation in addition to his interest in blackness and Africanness refashioned the racial and cultural boundaries of Mexican *mestizaje*. While ethnomusicologists after 1940 integrated Afro-Caribbean musical genres into Mexico's soundscape, Aguirre Beltrán defined *mestizaje* directly in relation to the nation's colonial history of African slavery. Abandoning the notion of *mestizaje* as exclusively the biological and cultural mixture of indigenous and European (and sometimes black) traits, he divided it into three main strands: *afromestizos* who were predominately of African origin; *indomestizos* who were principally indigenous; and *euromestizos* who descended mostly European. In his virtually unknown 1949 manuscript on Cuijla, he pushed the boundaries of Mexican *mestizaje* even further by declaring that he had found and studied pure African cultural retentions in Mexico. Although Aguirre Beltrán overstated the presence of Africanisms, especially in his 1949 manuscript, his historical and ethnographic studies were, at that time, the most theoretically and methodologically sophisticated attempts to integrate African-descended cultures into Mexico's post-revolutionary cultural landscape.<sup>3</sup>

### **Aguirre Beltrán and Herskovits, 1940-1945**

Having grown-up in Veracruz, Aguirre Beltrán was aware of Mexico's history of African slavery and the existence of black cultural and biological traits in a few scattered

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<sup>3</sup> This chapter therefore seeks a middle ground between the idea that he wanted to whiten the black population and the argument that he wanted to Africanize it. See Hernández Cuevas, *África en México*, 7-20; and Lewis, *Chocolate and Corn Flour*, 119-33.

communities across the state.<sup>4</sup> He spent the early-to-mid 1930s working as a municipal doctor and, between 1938 and 1941, helping *ejidal* landholders in Huatusco, Veracruz.<sup>5</sup> Perceiving the need for land reform, he turned to what can broadly be classified as ethnographic analysis and historical narration to further the post-revolutionary desire to integrate indigenous communities into the nation. He published a study of local land tenure, his first foray into ethnographic analysis, in 1940 as *El señorío de Cuauhtochco. Luchas agrarias en México durante el virreinato* [*The Manor of Cuauhtochco: Agrarian Reforms in Mexico during the Viceroyalty*].<sup>6</sup>

*El señorío de Cuauhtochco* narrated the history of indigenous landholding in Huatusco from pre-Columbian times to the present. He contended that local histories, such as this one, were essential for the successful fulfillment of the goals of the Mexican Revolution. Amid Mexico's widespread land redistribution during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), he argued that "the history of a pueblo is the history of its agrarian reforms. . . . In no other case, like that of the Huatusco, is the affirmation more true: the fight for the conquest of the land is its own history." Throughout the monograph, he situated various historical antagonists who, at times, thwarted indigenous land tenure: the Spanish colonists, local landholders, and post-independence liberal elites.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> González Gamio, *Manuel Gamio*, 159.

<sup>5</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Curriculum Vitae," August 3, 1944, Folder 267 (Northwestern University—Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre (Visit, Anthropology), 1944-1952), Box 19, Series 216.S, Record Group 1.1, RAC-RFR.

<sup>6</sup> On *El señorío de Cuauhtochco* as an ethno-history, see Arturo Warman "Prólogo," in *El señorío de Cuauhtochco. Luchas Agrarias en México durante el virreinato*, by Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Obra antropológica*, vol. 1 (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1991 [1940]), 7. Also see, Aguirre Beltrán, "Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán," 17.

<sup>7</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *El señorío de Cuauhtochco. Luchas Agrarias en México durante el virreinato*, in *Obra antropológica*, vol. I (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1991 [1940]), 48.

Nineteenth-century liberal reforms that privatized communal lands, he argued, were the final “deathblow” to indigenous landholding.<sup>8</sup>

Aguirre Beltrán also noted that runaway black slaves in the colonial period were equally deleterious to indigenous communities. While other progressive scholars of the 1930s venerated Mexico’s rebellious black slave population while they celebrated Mexican history through the lens of subaltern resistance, Aguirre Beltrán did not. These maroon societies, principally the notorious Yanga community, obstructed indigenous life and landholding. Their “violent and illegal actions” disrupted the trade routes and harvest times that were central to indigenous life.<sup>9</sup> While his analysis of Huatusco contributed to the national *indigenista* project of the 1930s, it did not align with the romantic veneration of black, indigenous, and *mestizo* bellicosity.

In commenting on the present condition of Mexico’s indigenous population, he saw a tragic outcome looming if the post-revolutionary state did not restore and maintain indigenous communal lands. Without state protection, these communities would disappear. He declared that indigenous peoples could not be integrated into the nation on equal footing, because their “poor state of evolution” prevented them from being “able to adapt to the state of things in which the West places them.” In the name of social justice, he critiqued an absolutist notion of human equality. The nineteenth-century liberal belief that declared that all people had the same abilities was “imperious,” because it failed to give less-evolved communities the assistance they required.<sup>10</sup> In subsequent publications,

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 203-4.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 204.

he moderated but did not remove these blatantly evolutionist and deprecating claims. But, his paternalism and distaste for social policies that he thought would destroy local communities would continue to frame his discussion of indigenous and black peoples after 1940.

His study of Huatusco gained the attention of *indigenistas*, like Gamio, in Mexico City. In 1942, Aguirre Beltrán began a career that was almost always bound to state projects and enmeshed in inter-American networks. He was initially a biologist within the Departamento Demográfico, the agency Gamio directed within the Secretaría de Gobernación. When Gamio left to run the III in 1943, Aguirre Beltrán became the Department's director.<sup>11</sup> At Gamio's request, he began an archival project, mostly at Mexico's National Archives, to document Mexico's colonial African slave population. That same year, he was part of Mexico's delegation at the First Inter-American Demographic Congress. When he became the Chief Clerk of the Congress, he entered into the inter-American networks that contextualized Mexican *indigenismo*, the anthropology of African-descended peoples in the Americas, and the intellectual rejection of racial hierarchies during and after World War II.<sup>12</sup>

Perceiving Aguirre Beltrán's increasing importance in hemispheric circles about black culture and demographics, Herskovits quickly asked all of his acquaintances in Mexico for as much information about him as possible.<sup>13</sup> Once Herskovits was assured

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<sup>11</sup> Lewis, *Chocolate and Corn Flour*, 123; and de la Peña, "Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán," 65-6.

<sup>12</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Curriculum Vitae," August 3, 1944, Folder 267 (Northwestern University—Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre (Visit, Anthropology), 1944-1952), Box 19, Series 216.S, Record Group 1.1, RAC-RFR.

<sup>13</sup> Melville J. Herskovits to Dr. Richard Pattee, January 19, 1944; and Richard Pattee to Melville J. Herskovits, March 2, 1944, Folder 24 (International Institute of Afro-American Studies, 1943-1944), Box



that Aguirre Beltrán was not only bright but also had an extremely assiduous work ethic, he asked Aguirre Beltrán to travel to Northwestern University. Using his contacts, he acquired a Rockefeller Foundation Grant for Aguirre Beltrán for the 1944-1945 academic year.<sup>14</sup> Ten months later, Aguirre Beltrán arrived at Northwestern University, having already completed a draft of what would eventually become *La población negra de México* and having presented a portion of it at the First Inter-American Demographic Congress.<sup>15</sup>

Aguirre Beltrán presumably wanted only to tinker with his conclusions while residing in the United States. Herskovits had other plans. Herskovits had told the Rockefeller Foundation that this manuscript was “a remarkable piece of work . . . with findings that threw new and important light on the history of the Negro in the New World.” However, he lamented that “Aguirre Beltrán lacked the knowledge of African backgrounds he should have, particularly as concerns tools with which to analyze tribal provenience, and second, that he was not in touch with the work of the men in the field of New World Negro studies.”<sup>16</sup> Presumably Aguirre Beltrán’s manuscript—like his earlier

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28, NULA-MJHP. Also see Melville J. Herskovits to Richard Pattee, Jan 11, 1944, Folder 5 (Pattee, Richard, 1943-1944), Box 30, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>14</sup> For Herskovits’s interest in acquiring a Rockefeller Foundation Grant for Aguirre Beltrán, see Melville J. Herskovits to Richard Pattee, March 8, 1944 and April 10, 1944, Folder 5 (Pattee, Richard, 1943-1944), Box 30, NULA-MJH. It should be noted that by the 1970s, Aguirre Beltrán claimed that Alfred Métraux gave him the idea to study at Northwestern in 1944; see Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México. Estudio Etnohistorico, 1519-1810*, 2nd edición, corregida y aumentada (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1972), 10. However, Herskovits’s correspondence with Métraux in the Herskovits archive at Northwestern University makes no mention of any such encounter. Herskovits’s letters to Pattee indicate that Herskovits most likely initiated these exchanges.

<sup>15</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán to Melville J. Herskovits, July 6, 1944; and Melville J. Herskovits to Mr. Roger F. Evans, April 4, 1944, Folder 267 (Northwestern University—Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre (Visit, Anthropology), 1944-1952), Box 19, Series 216.S, Record Group 1.1, RAC-RFR.

<sup>16</sup> Melville J. Herskovits to Mr. Roger F. Evans, April 4, 1944, Folder 267 (Northwestern University—Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre (Visit, Anthropology), 1944-1952), Box 19, Series 216.S, Record Group 1.1, RAC-RFR.

publications, including *El señorío de Cuauhtochco* and a 1944 essay for the *Hispanic American Historical Review* entitled “The Slave Trade in Mexico”—failed to reference any historical or ethnographic studies of the African slave population published in the Americas.<sup>17</sup>

To expand Aguirre Beltrán’s knowledge about the anthropology of African-descended peoples in the Americas, Herskovits proposed sending him for a few weeks to the East Coast to meet like-minded scholars at the Schomburg Center in Harlem, to visit Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950) at Howard University, and to meet W.E.B. DuBois in Atlanta. He also hoped that Aguirre Beltrán would go to the Deep South to “see something of Negro life there.”<sup>18</sup> To Herskovits’s delight, Aguirre Beltrán chose to postpone the publication of his book so that he could continue to work on it under Herskovits’s tutelage.<sup>19</sup> As a result of his travels throughout the United States, he met Ralph Linton, DuBois, Alain Locke, and Lewis Hanke (1905-1993).<sup>20</sup> While at Northwestern, he became fluent in the theories and methods of ethnographic research that left an indelible mark on his construction and reconstruction of blackness, Africanness, and indigeneity after 1945.

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<sup>17</sup> See Aguirre Beltrán, *El señorío de Cuauhtochco*; and Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “The Slave Trade in Mexico,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 24, no. 3 (August 1944): 412-31.

<sup>18</sup> Melville J. Herskovits to Roger F. Evans, June 12, 1944, Folder 267 (Northwestern University—Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre (Visit, Anthropology), 1944-1952), Box 19, Series 216.S, Record Group 1.1, RAC-RFR. For a discussion about the Schomburg and Woodson, see a letter from Melville J. Herskovits to Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, June 27, 1944; and Melville J. Herskovits to Mr. Roger F. Evans, April 4, 1944, Folder 267 (Northwestern University—Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre (Visit, Anthropology), 1944-1952), Box 19, Series 216.S, Record Group 1.1, RAC-RFR.

<sup>19</sup> Melville J. Herskovits to Richard Pattee, February 14, 1945, Folder 14 (Pattee, Richard, 1944-1946), Box 35, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>20</sup> See Aguirre Beltrán to Melville J. Herskovits, 27 de abril 1945; and “Northwestern University Requisition,” April 16, 1945, Folder 14 (Beltran, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1944-1946), Box 32, NULA-MJHP.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Aguirre Beltrán and Herskovits corresponded, usually when Aguirre Beltrán was about to publish or had just published a new monograph.<sup>21</sup> In the second volume of *Afroamérica*, Aguirre Beltrán summarized Herskovits's canonical "Problem, Method and Theory in Afro-American Studies" for the journal's Spanish-speaking audience.<sup>22</sup> In 1959, he translated Herskovits's polemical essay "The Ahistorical Approach to Afroamerican Studies: A Critique" and published it in Veracruz.<sup>23</sup> Probably to increase his own prestige in global circles and to validate his endorsement of Aguirre Beltrán, Herskovits forwarded the praises of UN functionaries about Aguirre Beltrán's work on Mexican indigenous communities to the Rockefeller Foundation in 1952.<sup>24</sup>

### **Acculturation and the *Fromestizo*, 1945-1946**

Most importantly, Aguirre Beltrán helped forge the ethnographic study of blacks in Mexico, a field which Herskovits called "hitherto neglected."<sup>25</sup> When Aguirre Beltrán studied with Herskovits, he became versed in his mentor's ethno-historical method, discarded the blatantly evolutionary rhetoric that informed *El señorío de Cuauhtochco*, and adopted, practically verbatim, the definition of acculturation that Herskovits

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<sup>21</sup> See Folder 14 (Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1944-1946), Box 32; Folder 17 (Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1946-1948), Box 37; and Folder 8 (Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1948-1949), Box 43, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>22</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Problema, método y teoría en los estudios afroamericanos, según Melville J. Herskovits," *Afroamérica* II, no. 3 (Enero de 1946): 187-96.

<sup>23</sup> Melville J. Herskovits, "El enfoque anhistórico en los estudios Afroamericanos: Crítica," trans. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La Palabra y el Hombre*, no. 14 (Abril-Junio 1960): 5-17.

<sup>24</sup> Melville J. Herskovits to Roger F. Evans, August 26, 1952; and Ernest Beaglehole to Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, July 21, 1952, Folder 267 (Northwestern University—Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre (Visit, Anthropology), 1944-1952), Box 19, Series 216.S, Record Group 1.1, RAC-RFR.

<sup>25</sup> Melville J. Herskovits to Dr. Waldo G. Leland, April 12, 1945, Folder 14 (Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1944-1946), Box 32, NULA-MJHP.

espoused. Aguirre Beltrán described acculturation as “the formation of a *syncretism*,” a process whereby diverse peoples interact in everyday life and exchanged cultural practices.<sup>26</sup> He attempted to show how cultural behaviors could cross biologically-defined racial boundaries. Like anthropologists before him, he used this empirical data to refute the belief in absolute racial hierarchies. But despite such progressive goals, he often conflated cultural practice and biological race.<sup>27</sup>

Embracing Herskovits’s methods, Aguirre Beltrán framed his study of Africanness in Mexico within ethnography and history. In *La población negra de México*, his first book-length publication after returning to Mexico, he affirmed his methodological allegiance to Herskovits when he stated:

In the neighboring countries of the Americas where the negro is present, the resolution of the problem has been attacked in two distinct directions: from the ethnographic point of view and from the historical point of view. The combined sum of these two disciplines—it can be said, the ethno-historical approximation—has produced valiant conclusions that have permitted us to pay clear and precise attention to the place of origin of negroes and the origin of their cultures.<sup>28</sup>

Building on Herskovits’s discussion of African cultural areas, Aguirre Beltrán investigated the African practices that the Atlantic slave trade transferred to colonial Mexico.<sup>29</sup>

After Aguirre Beltrán returned to Mexico, the eminent editor of *The Journal of Negro History*, Carter G. Woodson, asked him to contribute several essays about

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<sup>26</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México. 1519-1810. Estudio etnohistórico* (México: Ediciones Fuente Cultural, 1946), 216.

<sup>27</sup> On this astute critique of Aguirre Beltrán, see Lewis, *Chocolate and Corn Flour*, 119-33.

<sup>28</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México* (1946), 96.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

Mexico's slave population.<sup>30</sup> His articles explored the African cultures that had crossed the Atlantic from Guinea and São Tomé and then mixed into colonial Mexican society.

Resembling Herskovits's own ideas, particularly those enunciated in *The Myth of Negro Past*, Aguirre Beltrán stated

The determination of the origins of these survivals will only be possible when we know the cultures from which they derived; thus we see the enormous importance for us to fix exactly the origin of slaves, to know the base line, the fixed point at which future studies of the dark sector of our nationality must begin.<sup>31</sup>

Unlike any previous study of black cultures in Mexico, his essays included maps of African cultural areas, such as those along the Rivers of Guiana and in the Congo [See Maps 3 and 4]. He claimed that Mande slaves of West Africa, who were classified as Mandingos in the colonial Inquisition records, “exercised the greatest influence in Mexico, during the entire 16<sup>th</sup> century.” In presentist terms, he justified this statement by claiming that they “left as a souvenir of their presence in New Spain a number of geographical places which bear their name and the survival of the tribal name as a popular designation of the devil.”<sup>32</sup>

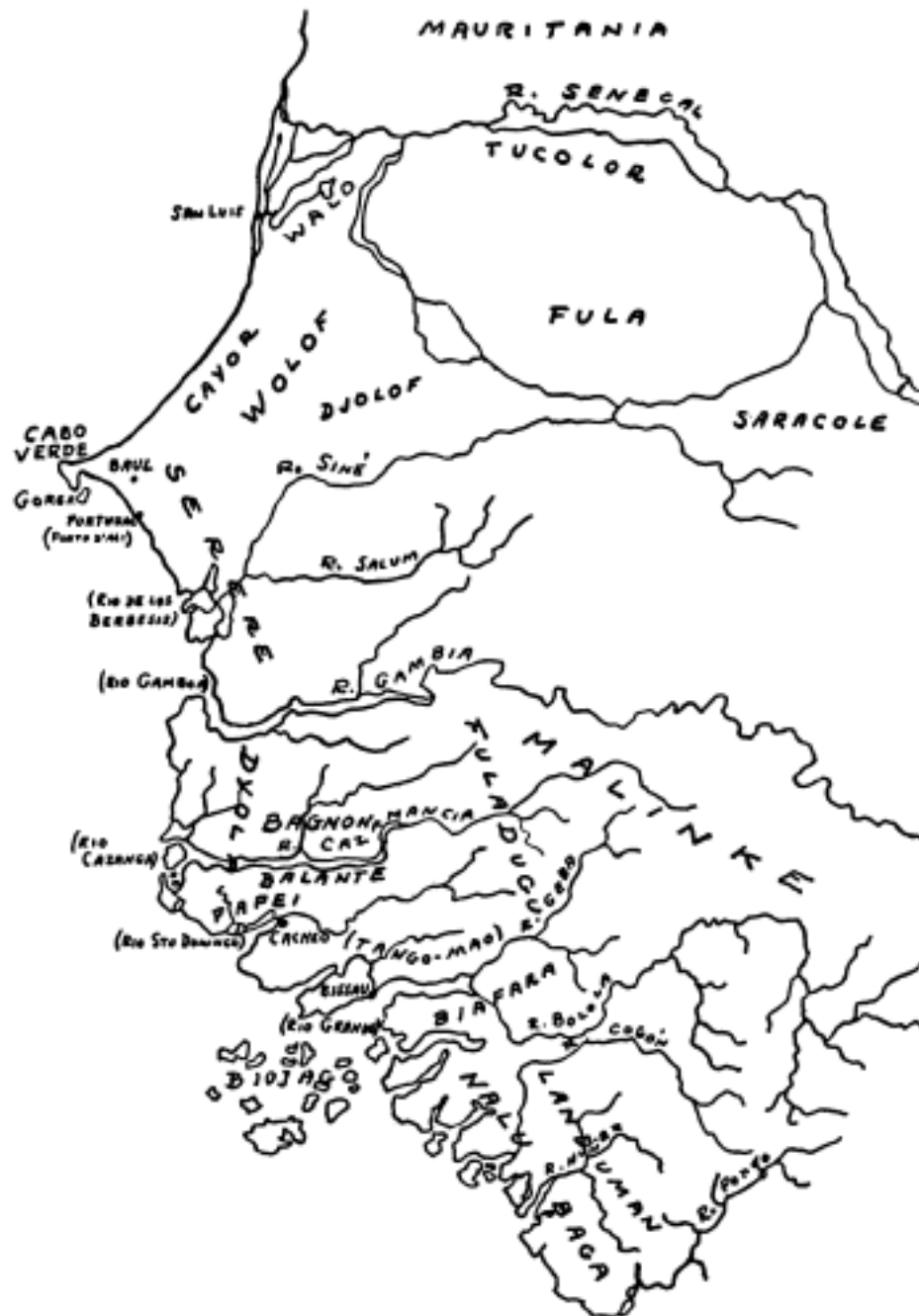
In addition to using the archival research that he had completed at Mexico's National Archives, Aguirre Beltrán corroborated his discussions about the transfer of African cultures to Mexico with ethnographic data compiled by Cuban Fernando Ortiz,

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<sup>30</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán to Melville J. Herskovits, 7 de abril de 1946, Folder 14 (Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1944-1946), Box 32, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>31</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico: Historical Background,” *The Journal of Negro History* 31, no. 3 (July 1946): 269-89. Also see Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico: The Rivers of Guinea,” *The Journal of Negro History* 31, no. 3 (July 1946): 290-316; and Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico: San Thome,” *The Journal of Negro History* 31, no. 3 (July 1946): 317-52.

<sup>32</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, “Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico: Historical Background,” 280. The second quotation cites “Felix Ramos Duarte, *Diccionario de Mexicanismos, México*, 1895, p. 169”; see page 280n38.



**Map 3:** Tribes of the Rivers of Guinea. From Aguirre Beltrán, “Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico: The Rivers of Guinea,” 293. Used with the permission of the Association for the Study of African American Life & History [www.asalh.org](http://www.asalh.org).



**Map 4:** Congo Tribes. From Aguirre Beltrán, "Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico: San Thome," 331. Used with the permission of the Association for the Study of African American Life & History [www.asalh.org](http://www.asalh.org).

Brazilian Nina Rodríguez, and Herskovits, among others. These studies provided him with a critical analysis of slave trade bills and other historical sources common to colonial Mexico and the rest of Spanish and Portuguese America.<sup>33</sup> They also supplied him with discussions of African cultural groups, such as the Mandingo, that arrived in colonial Mexico.<sup>34</sup> He deftly compared the naming of African tribes across the Western Hemisphere to justify his citing other scholars' ethnographies. For example, the Yoruba were called Nâgo in Brazil and Haiti but were designated Locumí in Cuba and Mexico.<sup>35</sup> With such knowledge of tribal names, he traced cultural continuities from Africa to colonial Mexico and between Mexico and other nations of the Western Hemisphere. As Herskovits had hoped, Aguirre Beltrán was placing his work in dialogue with the hemispheric polemics about African cultural retentions.

Having demarcated the African origins of Mexico's slave population, Aguirre Beltrán turned to a demographic and cultural discussion of how they integrated into colonial Mexican society. Like Herskovits and many other anthropologists of African-descended peoples in the Americas, he used comparative cultural analyses to identify African communities and to chart their demographic footprint in the New World. Although scholars deemed this literature on African cultural areas and demographics innovative at the time, they nonetheless drew upon stereotyped images of African life and African-descended cultural behaviors in the Americas. Often they only studied Africa or

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<sup>33</sup> For a citation of of Fernando Ortiz's *Glosario de Afronegrismos* (Habana, 1924) and Nina Rodríguez's *Os Africanos no Brasil* (Sao Paulo, 1932), see Aguirre Beltrán, "Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico: Historical Background," 271n1 and 271n2.

<sup>34</sup> For the example about the Mandingo peoples, he drew on the work of Ortiz. See Aguirre Beltrán, "Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico: The Rivers of Guiana," 305.

<sup>35</sup> To make this claim, he draws on Herskovits, Ortiz, Rodríguez, and others. See Aguirre Beltrán, "Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico: San Thome," 324, including 324n37-43.



a specific cultural group in holistic terms in order to justify broad claims about the cultural traits they observed in the Americas. Inspired by progressive political agendas that attempted to give African-descended peoples in the Western Hemisphere an authentic culture and history, they were not always as concerned with the intricacies of African history; its mere presence was often sufficient.<sup>36</sup>

Published in 1946, *La población negra de México, 1519-1810. Estudio etnohistórico* argued that African-descended peoples were part of Mexico's demographic past and, by association, its present. Following the paradigm of acculturation, Aguirre Beltrán documented the cultural survivals and transformations that accompanied Africans as they crossed the Atlantic Ocean and became integral to Mexico's colonial economy and social system. He began the monograph by tracing the political and economic dynamics of the Atlantic slave trade. Drawing on his essays in *The Journal of Negro History* and the publications of other ethnographers, especially Ortiz's 1924 *Glosario de Afronegrismos*, he again mapped the African cultural areas—such as Guinea, Congo, and Angola—that provided most of the African slaves for the New World. Using the archival records of colonial officials and slave traders who adopted and even invented African tribal names to classify African ethnicities, he approximated the geographic origins of Mexico's African slave class. With this information, he asserted that post-revolutionary nationalists could grasp “the diverse physical types of people of dark-skinned descent that entered into the racial crucible that molded our population.” Like the indigenous and

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<sup>36</sup> On this critique, see Andrew Apter, “Herskovits's Heritage: Rethinking Syncretism in the African Diaspora” *Diaspora: a Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 3 (1991): 235; David Scott, “That Event, This Memory: Notes on the Anthropology of African Diasporas in the New World” *Diaspora: a Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 3 (1991): 261-84; and Yelvington “The Invention of Africa in Latin America and the Caribbean,” 36-7 and 52-67.

Spanish populations, Africans “took part in integrating the nation” and thus in being “part of Mexican nationality.”<sup>37</sup>

He surrounded a brief but groundbreaking analysis on African cultural retentions with a discussion of the demographics of racial mixture. He noted that certain African cultural traits, most notably polygamy, did cross the Atlantic Ocean and become part of colonial Mexican society. This cultural practice, he claimed in simplistic terms, illustrated the importance of women in the informal family-based economies in Africa. Underestimating the ability of African-descended people to maintain kinship networks and African cultural beliefs when they adapted to colonial society, he also declared that only runaway communities could maintain African cultural behaviors.<sup>38</sup> Over the course of the sixteenth century, most African and African-descended slaves integrated into colonial society to such a degree that, by 1600, there were African-born blacks who had accepted the duties and customs of Spanish rule and who therefore were able to gain material and symbolic benefits from the colonial authorities.<sup>39</sup> They were no longer harbingers of economic destruction and social unrest as they had been in *El señorío de Cuauhtochco*. Rather, Aguirre Beltrán claimed that their clearly-defined religious beliefs

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<sup>37</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México* (1946), 3-150, and 288-94. Maps of Africa, including Guinea, Sierra Leon, and Congo are at the back of the monograph on un-numbered pages that follow the Index.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 254-5. An extensive literature disputes Aguirre Beltrán’s claim that only maroon communities could maintain African cultural practices and identities; see Bennett, *Colonial Blackness*, 58-85; Frank “Trey” Proctor III, “African Diasporic Ethnicity in Mexico City to 1650,” in *Africans to Spanish America: Expanding the Diaspora*, eds. Sherwin K. Bryant, Rachel Sarah O’Toole, and Ben Vinson III (Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press 2012), 50-72; and Joan C. Bristol, “Afro-Mexican Sainly Devotion in a Mexico City Alley, in *Africans to Spanish America: Expanding the Diaspora*, eds. Sherwin K. Bryant, Rachel Sarah O’Toole, and Ben Vinson III (Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press 2012), 114-35.

<sup>39</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México* (1946), 161. On this process of identity formation for African-descended people, also see Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations: Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) 12, 44-5, 53, and 188.

and exposure to Islamic literature proved that they were capable of contributing to a modern nation.<sup>40</sup>

He argued that the African-descended population contributed to Mexican society more through racial mixture than through cultural retentions. In demographic terms, the disproportionate presence of Spanish and African males, he contended, engendered the complex *casta* system that characterized Mexico's history of *mestizaje*.<sup>41</sup> By the seventeenth century, *casta* signifiers identified racially-mixed peoples according to their degree of Spanish, indigenous, and African blood. In general this system applied the following terms to depict racial mixture as a biological concept:

1. Spanish and Indian: mestizo
2. Mestizo and Spanish: castiza
3. Castiza and Spanish: Spanish
4. Spanish and black: mulata
5. Spanish and mulata: morisco.<sup>42</sup>

In this rubric, *mestizo* and *mulato* had clearly defined meanings. But, as these iterations continued (usually with scholars providing sixteen derivations), Aguirre Beltrán argued that the terminology became more unwieldy. For example, the mixture of a Spaniard and *morisca* could be “albina,” or “chino.” These terms, he bemoaned, deteriorated into ludicrous phrases like “Here you are [Ahí te estás],” “Turning Backwards [Torno atrás],” “Jumping backwards [Salta atrás],” “Up in mid-air [Tente en el aire],” and “I do not

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<sup>40</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México* (1946), 160 and, more broadly, for his refutation of the stereotypical idea of black physical inferiority and an African propensity for violence see pages 154 and 181-3.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 249-53. This idea has been refuted by Trey Proctor; see Proctor, “African Diasporic Ethnicity in Mexico City to 1650,” especially 54-6.

<sup>42</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México* (1946), 162, and 175-6.

understand you [No te entiendo].” Such whimsical expressions were not used in practice and, according to Aguirre Beltrán, “were positively unintelligible.”<sup>43</sup>

He claimed that this fluidity among *casta* signifiers enabled individuals to move from derogatory *casta* identities to more beneficial ones.<sup>44</sup> To overcome the damning legacy of slavery, African-descended peoples—such as independence-era hero José María Morelos—used racial passing to become more indigenous or white. Regional elites and local communities also began to recast blackness in order to refute the *casta* system after independence. In Veracruz, the term *jarocho* became a popular means to articulate regional culture as the mixture of its African and indigenous pasts.<sup>45</sup> By examining the racial, cultural, and geographic meanings of these terms on the eve of and after independence, Aguirre Beltrán concluded that their malleability prevented nineteenth-century nationalist intellectuals from agreeing on a national racial vocabulary.

Consequently, he advocated for “a new vocabulary” that would prevent Mexico’s African-descended, racially-mixed population from being lost within the racial uncertainties of *mestizaje*. Through a cultural-cum-demographic matrix, he coined three categories of racial and cultural mixture: *indomestizo*, *euromestizo*, and *afromestizo*. *Indomestizos* were racially-mixed people who were of mostly indigenous descent and culture. *Euromestizos* were predominately European. *Afromestizos* had a cultural heritage and biological roots that primarily descended from Africa. For him, these terms solved

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 164-6 and 177.

<sup>44</sup> Many scholars agree with and have expanded upon this statement. See Phil C. Weigand, “La población negra del occidente de México según el censo de Menéndez (1791-1793), in *Tradicón e identidad en la cultura mexicana*, coords. Agustín Jacinto Zavala and Álvaro Ochoa Serrano (Zamora, Mich: El Colegio de Michoacán, 1995), 381-2; and Vinson III, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty*.

<sup>45</sup> On racial passing and José María Morelos, see Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México* (1946), 272-8. On the term *jarocho*, see pages 178-9.

the problem of how to classify racial identities in Mexico's past and present. They had a distinct advantage over the more taxonomic specifications of the *casta* system: they allowed for racial mixture to be classified without the degrees of inconsistency and inaccuracy that inhered in colonial-era demographics. Similar to the 1930s Marxist historians who clumped indigenous, black, and *mestizo* resistance together, he declared that the *indomestizo* was "linked culturally to the *afromestizo*" through their shared colonial subjugation. As *afromestizos* adopted indigenous cultural practices and abandoned their African heritage, *afromestizo* and *indomestizo* cultural identities united as a foil to the more dominant *euromestizo* class.<sup>46</sup>

Using demographics from colonial-era censuses, contemporary demographic data, and statistical approximations of the lifespan of slaves, he noted the relative population of Indians, Europeans, Africans, and *afro-*, *indo-*, and *euro-mestizos* between 1570 and 1810.<sup>47</sup> Not surprisingly, he noted that the African population peaked at two percent, or 35,089 people, a few years after the African slave trade moved to other parts of the Americas in 1640. The *afromestizo* population, conversely, grew in absolute numbers throughout the colonial era. There were 2,437 *afromestizos* (or 0.07 percent of the entire population) in 1570; 116,529 (6.8 percent) in 1646; 266,196 (10.8 percent) in 1742; 369,790 (9.6 percent) in 1793; and 624,461 (10.1 percent) in 1810.<sup>48</sup> By showing that there was a large *afromestizo* population during the wars of independence, he demonstrated the demographic significance of the African slave trade for the historical

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 162 and 199-281.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 199-237. Although other scholars have slightly adjusted Aguirre Beltrán's statistics, the general patterns he depicts are thought to be correct. See Ben Vinson III, "The Racial Profile of a Rural Mexican Province in the 'Costa Chica': Igualepa in 1791," *The Americas* 57, no. 2 (October 2000): 269n1; and Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors*, 189n5.

<sup>48</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México* (1946), 237.

development of Mexican *mestizaje* and also implied that African-descended peoples still lived in Mexico.

Aguirre Beltrán hoped that his conclusions would make post-revolutionary *mestizaje* more culturally and demographically inclusive. To resolve post-revolutionary social problems, he declared that the state apparatus needed to expunge the caste identifiers that prevented racial uplift and national development and embrace his neologisms. The discourse of *mestizaje* had to acknowledge Mexico's African heritage without isolating it from the rest of colonial and post-independence society. Post-revolutionary racial vocabularies had to protect these cultures so that they would not be erased as they became *mestizo*. If the state followed his advice, then Mexico could become a class society where "the inferior classes would be elevated and absorbed" into higher classes. While he admitted that this transformation could arguably be seen as "the extinction of the *afromestizo*" as it entered into a class system, Aguirre Beltrán openly proclaimed that it was not. Rather a class society functioned as both the "hiding" and the survival of the *afromestizo*. Built on the idea that caste divisions reproduced harsh social and economic barriers that hindered social mobility, this social and discursive transformation would recast racial and cultural identities in class terms that prohibited racial segregation and promoted social advancement.<sup>49</sup>

Herskovits found the manner in which Aguirre Beltrán discussed how the blacks "contrived to lose himself in the preponderant Indian element in the Mexican population"

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 178, 270, and 278. For a discussion of caste and class in this context, see Patricia Seed, "Social Dimensions of Race: Mexico City, 1753," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 62, no. 4 (November 1982): 602.

to be “described in masterly fashion.”<sup>50</sup> In discussing the variegated forms of syncretism that permeated racial mixture, cultural exchange, and the fluidity of racial and cultural identification, *La población negra de México* highlighted the importance of the African and *afromestizo* populations in Mexican history. Without surrendering all of their African cultural behaviors, African-descended peoples became Mexican through the process of acculturation. Following Herskovits’s ethno-historical methodology, Aguirre Beltrán furthered the project to document and to classify all forms of African-descended cultures in the Americas. He even constructed a new definition of black culture and identity that was linked to African cultural retentions and *mestizaje*.

### **Hemispheric Responses to *La población negra de México***

Aguirre Beltrán’s emphasis on the demographic and cultural importance of Mexico’s *afromestizo* population did not go unnoticed. While he entered into inter-American networks, his work integrated Mexico into hemispheric discussions about the history and culture of African-descended peoples. Like many of the book’s reviewers, Herskovits thought that *La población negra de México* was significant because it “completely changes the accepted demographic picture” of Mexico.<sup>51</sup> He cited its importance for the study of African cultural areas in one of his polemical essays on the

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<sup>50</sup> Melville J. Herskovits to Jorge A. Vivó, September 24, 1946, Folder 35 (International Institute of Afro-American Studies, 1946-1947), Box 38, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>51</sup> Melville Herskovits to President Franklyn B. Snyder, October 29, 1946, Folder 17 (Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1946-1948) Box 37, NULA-MJHP. Also see, Manuel Moreno Fraginals, review of *La población negra de México, 1510-1810. Estudio Etnohistorico* by Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Hispanic American Historical Review* 27, no. 1 (February 1947): 117-9.

necessity of historicism in acculturation studies.<sup>52</sup> Another time, he used the book to link the studies of black and indigenous peoples. While citing it, he declared

the early African and the Indians and Europeans with whom they came into contact . . . have provided information on the New World distribution of Negroes at different times, showing, as in the case of Mexico, an unsuspected demographic component that must be taken into account in all future studies of the Indians of Central America.<sup>53</sup>

Reviewing *La población negra de México* in 1947, Gamio claimed that the monograph proved how the black population “was not destroyed, but assimilated.”<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Woodson praised the monograph for its nuanced discussion of racial mixture and assimilation that juxtaposed black life in Mexico with the racist segregation of blacks in the United States.<sup>55</sup> However, a significant error in terminology was buried within their praises. Many scholars in Mexico and throughout the Americas wrote that Aguirre Beltrán was discussing the assimilation—not the acculturation—of the African-descended population. Calling Aguirre Beltrán’s work assimilationist, rather than acculturationist, profoundly belied its political and cultural message about *mestizaje*. The assimilation of the African population into the Mexican nation implied that all African cultural retentions had been lost and that this population had not influenced Mexican society. Through the paradigm of acculturation, Aguirre Beltrán illustrated how colonial

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<sup>52</sup> Melville J. Herskovits, “The Ahistorical Approach to Afroamerican Studies: A Critique,” *American Anthropologist* 62, no. 4 (August 1960): 560.

<sup>53</sup> Folder 473: “Ethnohistory and the Study of Cultural Dynamics” from *Congreso Internacional de Ciencias Antropológicas e Ethnográficas*, 1948, Box 40, Writings: Published Articles, MG 261, Melville & Frances Herskovits Papers, NYPL-SCRBC-MA-MFHP.

<sup>54</sup> Manuel Gamio, review of *La población negra de México, 1510-1810*, by Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *América Indígena* 7, núm. 1 (Enero 1947): 98.

<sup>55</sup> Carter G. Woodson, review of *La población negra de México, 1510-1810. Estudio Etnohistórico* by Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *The Journal of Negro History* 31, no. 4 (October 1946): 491-4.



Mexican society altered the lives of African slaves just as this slave population transformed the racial and cultural vocabulary of colonial society.

While Ortiz and Malinowski had criticized Herskovits' concept of acculturation for being too assimilationist, Gamio and Woodson fallaciously celebrated the advanced state of black assimilation that, in their readings of *La población negra de México*, had ended racial prejudice in Mexico. Implicit in their statements was a simplistic comparison between the lack of racial classification and discrimination in Mexico (and much of Latin America) and the harsh segregationist policies of the United States seen in Jim Crow laws and Indian reservations.<sup>56</sup> After acknowledging the close relationship between Herskovits and Aguirre Beltrán, Cuban historian Manuel Moreno Fraginals (1920-2001) even applied Ortiz's paradigm of transculturation to Aguirre Beltrán's depiction of *mestizaje*.<sup>57</sup>

Although Aguirre Beltrán did envision the eventual end to caste distinctions—or racial prejudice, as his U.S. reviewers would describe it—he did not think that Mexico had already achieved such a goal. These reviews therefore indicated that both critics of the concept of acculturation and proponents of Aguirre Beltrán's political initiatives reduced Aguirre Beltrán's use of acculturation to assimilation or, for Fraginals, replaced acculturation with transculturation. Although Herskovits found Aguirre Beltrán's discussion of acculturation to be sufficient, it clearly lacked a clear definition for other scholars who were potentially less attuned to Herskovits's refashioning of the term or who accepted Ortiz's critique of it.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Also see Kingsley Davis, review of *La población negra de México, 1510-1810. Estudio Etnohistorico* by Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *American Anthropologist* 50, no. 1, part 1 (January 1948): 115-6.

<sup>57</sup> Moreno Fraginals, "Review of *La población negra de México*," 118.

Like many of his reviewers, Aguirre Beltrán blatantly associated his monograph with Herskovits. He dedicated the book to Herskovits and his wife Frances as well as to Aguirre Beltrán's friend, the former governor of Veracruz and current Mexican president Miguel Alemán (1946-1952).<sup>58</sup> In looking over and editing a manuscript version of *La población negra de México*, Herskovits had been especially interested in two aspects of it: how Aguirre Beltrán defined African cultural areas and how he situated them in Mexican race relations, particularly the colonial *casta* system. These interests were logical, considering that they were the subject of much of Herskovits's research in the 1920s and into the 1930s. Herskovits and Aguirre Beltrán's understanding of the relationship between *mestizaje* and acculturation is most apparent in a grammatical correction that Herskovits made. In a passage on African cultures, Aguirre Beltrán wrote: "whether by mestizaje or acculturatiob [sic]." Herskovits corrected the misspelling of acculturation without questioning Aguirre Beltrán's skimming over of the multiple possible relationships between these two terms, an ambivalence that had engendered cultural and intellectual debate and controversy in Mexican nationalist thought for decades.<sup>59</sup> These edits indicate that Herskovits was comfortable with how Aguirre Beltrán analyzed *mestizaje* in relation to the African cultural areas and *casta* identities.

Although *La población negra de México* almost instantly garnered an outpouring of praise throughout the Americas, Aguirre Beltrán feared that his study would not be published. Readers abroad were more attuned to his analysis of African cultural areas and *afromestizo* cultures than his domestic audience. Despite his friendship with Alemán, he

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<sup>58</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México* (1946), ix.

<sup>59</sup> Folder 810: Introduccion al Estudio Del Negro en Nueva Espana, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltran, Box 84, General File: Writings by Other Scholars, A-C, NYPL-SCRBC-A-MFHP. For the correction of acculturatiob, see chapter VII, pg 13.

felt that his progressive analysis of social justice did not align with the conservative political turn and the theories of economic development that influenced nationalist scholarship by 1946.<sup>60</sup> According to historian Daniel Cosío Villegas (1898-1976), editor of the Fondo de Cultura Económica, the monograph was “not economical,” because it was too “specialized” to have a wide audience.<sup>61</sup> In spite of Mexico’s changing political register and the indifference of some scholars toward the question of blackness and Africanness, *La población negra de México* was published by Ediciones Fuente Cultural a few months later.

### **Acculturation, Africanisms, and Blackness in Cuijla, 1946-1949**

The same year that Aguirre Beltrán dedicated *La población negra de México* to Herskovits and Alemán, the latter was elected president of Mexico. Aguirre Beltrán’s friendship with Alemán dated back, at least, to the First Inter-American Demographic Congress. Because of this connection to the PRI, Herskovits feared that Aguirre Beltrán would not have sufficient time to devote to his research after Alemán’s inauguration.<sup>62</sup> By January 1947, Aguirre Beltrán was already being considered for various positions such as Director General de la Población [General Director of Population] and Director

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<sup>60</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán to Melville J. Herskovits, 30 de noviembre de 1945, Folder 14 (Beltran, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1944-1946), Box 32, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>61</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán to Melville J. Herskovits, 5 de marzo de 1946, Folder 14 (Beltran, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1944-1946), Box 32, NULA-MJHP. If Aguirre Beltrán had not found a publisher in Mexico, Herskovits was about to request that the Rockefeller Foundation help him publish the monograph in the United States; see Melville J. Herskovits to Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, March 11, 1946, Folder 14 (Beltran, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1944-1946), Box 32, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>62</sup> See Melville J. Herskovits to Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, September 23, 1946, Folder 17 (Beltran, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1946-1948), Box 37, NULA-MJHP.

General de Asuntos Indígenas [General Director of Indigenous Affairs].<sup>63</sup> He briefly acquired the latter post. However, as a result of what Aguirre Beltrán called the “astonishing” and abrupt political shift to the right in Mexican politics in 1947, left-leaning intellectuals like himself and fellow ethnographers Julio de la Fuente and Miguel Covarrubias faced “the dilemma of accommodating themselves to the new situation or renounce” their government positions. Aguirre Beltrán chose to distance himself from public service and returned to anthropological research on Mexico’s African-descended peoples and cultures.<sup>64</sup>

Although Herskovits wanted him to expand his ethnographic study of Africanisms eventually to other unexplored nations (such as Honduras, Colombia, and Venezuela), Aguirre Beltrán set out to continue his ethno-historical research in Mexico.<sup>65</sup> In particular, he hoped “to begin a series of field work on the mulatta population of the nation.”<sup>66</sup> Even before the publication of *La población negra de México*, he knew that a more ethnographic study of post-revolutionary black communities would be needed to complement his previous investigations. In 1942, Gamio had suggested that he study the Costa Chica of Guerrero in order to connect discussions of blackness in the colonial period with post-revolutionary society.<sup>67</sup> Aguirre Beltrán echoed this sentiment in his

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<sup>63</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán to Melville J. Herskovits, 2 de enero de 1947, Folder 17 (Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1946-1948), Box 37, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>64</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán to Melville J. Herskovits, 26 de marzo de 1948, Folder 17 (Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1946-1948), Box 37, NULA-MJHP. It should be noted that Aguirre Beltrán was not the only person to note the changing intellectual and political climate; see Covarrubias, *Mexico South*, xxvi.

<sup>65</sup> Melville J. Herskovits to Richard Evans, April 9, 1945, Folder 26, (Rockefeller Foundation, 1944-1946), Box 35, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>66</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán to Melville J. Herskovits, 26 de marzo de 1948, Folder 17 (Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1946-1948), Box 37, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>67</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, “Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán,” 18-9.

1946 essay “Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico: Historical Background” for *The Journal of Negro History*. He declared “it is easy to prove in colonial archives the role they [black slaves] played in the integration of the patterns of culture of the colony and the persistence of their influx will surely be recognized when ethnographic investigations motivated by the Negro groups which still live in Mexico are under-taken.”<sup>68</sup> Herskovits called this new project “the first real word of any Afroamerican ethnography in Mexico.”<sup>69</sup>

In 1948, Aguirre Beltrán sought funds from the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia [National Institute of Anthropology and History] and the Wenner Gren Foundation for a ten-month study of Cuijla. During his first month in the field (which spanned December 1948 to January 1949), he described the exchange of cultural practices across racial groups. In a January 28, 1949 letter to Herskovits, he asserted that Cuijla was “a community with a high percentage of blacks” where “there only existed four ‘mestiza’ families, which according to the cultural patterns of the United States would surely also be classified as black.” Despite the overwhelming presence of a black body, “the majority of the cultural patterns of this community are indigenous, even though some elements could frankly be described as black and, for others, it is not known if they are black or indigenous.” He claimed that marriage “by robbery” was “of African ancestry, even though . . . it has many indigenous and Western practices.”<sup>70</sup> Building on his earlier studies of acculturation in the colonial period, these statements illustrated the

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<sup>68</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, “Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico: Historical Background,” 281.

<sup>69</sup> Melville J. Herskovits to Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, February 2, 1949, Folder 8 (Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1948-1949), Box 43, NULA-MJHP.

<sup>70</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán to Melville J. Herskovits, 28 de enero de 1949, Folder 8 (Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1948-1949), Box 43, NULA-MJHP.

continuing cultural exchanges among people who would typically be classified as African-descended, *mestizo*, and indigenous.

While *La población negra de México* did not emphasize cultural exchanges among indigenous, Africa-descended, and Spanish peoples, this study of Cuijla did. Aguirre Beltrán claimed that it “would be necessary to fill [the gap left by previous studies of racial mixture] as it studied the remnants of our grand, colonial black population.” Like his earlier studies, this research used archival sources, such as those at the National Archives and the Library of the Anthropology Museum. Similar to Herskovits, he intended to amass and sometimes record “folkloric material, including more than seventy regional and local songs.”<sup>71</sup> But, by the time of the completion of his manuscript on Cuijla in October 1949, his discursive framework for examining blackness and Africanness had changed even though his ethno-historical method had not.

Instead of highlighting *mestizaje*, Aguirre Beltrán embraced the often criticized practice that Herskovits made famous: he looked for the most palpable African cultural survivals that he could encounter. He contended that the Gulf and Caribbean coastlines, like those in Veracruz, had an “easily accessible” black presence that had been historically tied to economic and cultural exchanges with the Caribbean and Atlantic worlds. These cosmopolitan communities “had suffered frequent and continual contacts with individuals with Western culture” that altered certain aspects of their cultural behaviors. Thus, they were not suitable for a study of African cultural retentions. African-descended peoples on the Pacific Coast, conversely, “have remained in total isolation” and were ideal “subjects to investigate the survival of African cultures that were brought

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<sup>71</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, “Estudio Antropológico de la población negra de Cuajinuilapa de la Costa Chica de Guerrero. Octubre 1º de 1949,” 1-3.

there by their ancestors and can, in this form, point to [their] cultural elements, traits, complexes, and configurations.” Incorrectly believing that the people of Cuijla were descendants of runaway slave communities, he thought that this community lacked the cultural exchanges that typified African-descended cultural practices elsewhere in Mexico.<sup>72</sup>

For two reasons, Cuijla operated as an important case study for state and nation formation. It represented the opportunity to find pure Africanisms and to understand the effects of post-revolutionary development of Guerrero in a local setting. As the major coastal town in Guerrero, Acapulco was quickly becoming a modern city characterized by a burgeoning tourist industry. Aided by the interstate highway that connected Acapulco to Mexico City in 1927, a vast infrastructure of roads and hotels, along with the co-requisite modern amenities needed to sustain them and a tourist economy, emerged. The national government also built more highways in the 1940s to improve communication and trade throughout the state. Urbanization not only changed the life of Acapulco’s residents. As the state apparatus became increasingly aware by the 1940s, it also fundamentally transformed the well-being and cultural practices of the local rural communities. Previously remote indigenous communities were becoming more connected to the nation.<sup>73</sup>

The same was true for isolated black communities, like Cuijla, that were only about two hundred kilometers from Mexico’s emerging tourist mecca. With the

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 1 and 140-1. On his incorrect view of Cuijla as a maroon community, see Lewis, *Chocolate and Corn Flour*, 128.

<sup>73</sup> Andrew Jonathan Sackett, “The Making of Acapulco: People, Land, and the State in the Development of the Mexican Riviera, 1927-1973” (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 2009); and Tomás Bustamante Álvarez, “La reconstrucción,” in *Historia General de Guerrero*, vol. iv: Revolución (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1998), 289-92.

construction of a Pacific-coastal highway between Acapulco and Puerto Angel (on the coast of Oaxaca about 475 kilometers from Acapulco), small towns like Cuijla and larger regional centers like Ometepe would presumably be integrated into the national economy.<sup>74</sup> According to Aguirre Beltrán, communities such as Cuijla “would undoubtedly disappear through mestizaje.”<sup>75</sup> An ethno-history of the community had to be completed soon, if Aguirre Beltrán’s fatalistic yet inevitable predictions held true. Ethnographic analysis would not encourage racial disappearance but instead would help engender a more benign form of modernization and integration.

His manuscript analyzed the history of Cuijla in addition to the residents’ marriage patterns, housing structures, medicine, religious beliefs, and cultural and economic relations with nearby communities. He claimed that the local residents were descendants of Bantu-speaking peoples of Angola, Mozambique, and Congo.<sup>76</sup> Despite his interest in Africanisms, Aguirre Beltrán discussed the process of acculturation and used the vocabulary of the *afro-*, *indo-*, and *euro-mestizo*. As he illustrated in *La población negra de México*, these terms highlighted the fluidity and multiplicity of cultural exchange much more than the tenacity of cultural retentions. The manuscript therefore wavered between stressing Africanisms and an acculturationist definition of *mestizaje* whereby African cultures permeated indigenous and *mestizo* communities.

Drawing on a simplistic discussion of marriage practices in *La población negra de México*, he called African marriage patterns “marriage of the mountain” and the

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<sup>74</sup> Gral. Baltazar R. Leyva M. to Pres. Avila Camacho, 23 de Noviembre de 1945, 515.1/5, AGN-FMAC.

<sup>75</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, “Estudio Antropológico de la población negra de Cuajinuilapa de la Costa Chica de Guerrero. Octubre 1º de 1949,” 141.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.



behaviors of indigenous, white, and *mestizo* communities “marriage of the city.” Marriage of the city, or marriage of “high society,” was bound to the social conventions of white and indigenous communities. It was characterized “by *asking*” the parents of the girlfriend for her hand in marriage. Conversely, marriage of the mountain was made “by *robbery*” and was done without the consent of the soon-to-be wife’s parents.<sup>77</sup> Unlike the analysis he presented to Herskovits on January 28, 1949, this depiction of African marriage patterns oversimplified the origins of marriage by robbery, because it did not effectively discuss the possibility that local indigenous communities also contributed to the practice.<sup>78</sup>

Through his use of the ethno-historical method, Aguirre Beltrán contended that marriage of the mountain was an Africanism that could be documented in Mexican archives and could be ethnographically observed. Because he perceived similarities—particularly the desire to maintain “the old customs of their peoples”—among all runaway maroon communities, he equated contemporary marriage patterns in Cuijla with those in the infamous Yanga community from 1609. Drawing directly from the Inquisition testimony of Fray Alonso de Benavides, he asserted:

Having embarked on the job of evangelizing the negro cimarrones [runaway slave communities] that in 1609 accepted being limited to the town that later took the name of Yanga, Fray Alonso de Benavides gave-up such a laborious task, because he was exasperated by the obstinacy of the neophytes under his supervision who did not want to abandon many of the old customs of their place of origin [marriage of the mountain]. . .

The distinction between ‘marriage of the mountain’ and ‘marriage of the city’ remains in the black town of Cuajinicuilapa, Gro.—nicknamed Cuijla—despite the 340 years that passed. Now, like then, the marriage patterns of blacks,

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 115-8. Also see Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México*, 254.

<sup>78</sup> Lewis, *Chocolate and Corn Flour*, 127-31.

which are seen as an abominable practice, continue being a motive of profound worry for the Christian evangelizers.<sup>79</sup>

This passage provides several insights into Aguirre Beltrán's understanding of the historical past and its relationship to the ethnographic present. In comparing colonial Inquisition records with his ethnographic observations, he assumed that these marriage practices had identical African roots. Both communities, he contended, were isolated and consequently had not undergone much if any cultural exchange with indigenous or Spanish peoples. While not exactly ethnographic upstreaming (applying contemporary ethnographic evidence to the past) or ethnographic downstreaming (applying ethnographic evidence from the past to the present), this conclusion could not be proven empirically.<sup>80</sup> Considering the ubiquity of racial and cultural mixture that Aguirre Beltrán explored in *La población negra de México* and the religious encounters he described in the above passage, it seems naïve for him to posit that these two towns shared the exact same African cultural retentions. This claim indicated that, despite the practical difficulties that he encountered, he used history and ethnography as best as possible to document and connect African cultural practices in the colonial past with cultural behaviors in the post-revolutionary period.

His unrelenting search for African cultural survivals distanced his work from the syncretic concept of acculturation he espoused. It also put him in tension with the larger post-revolutionary project of nation formation and its *mestizo*-centric rhetoric. Like Herskovits, his steadfast adherence to a singular theoretical and methodological approach

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<sup>79</sup>Aguirre Beltrán, "Estudio Antropológico de la población negra de Cuajinilapa de la Costa Chica de Guerrero. Octubre 1º de 1949," 114-5.

<sup>80</sup> Kristine L. Jones explains how the uses of ethnographic upstreaming and downstreaming were employed as ethno-historical devices to "avoid anachronism." These practices came under scrutiny by the 1970s. See Kristine L. Jones, "Comparative Ethnohistory and the Southern Cone," *Latin American Research Review* 29, no. 1 (1994): 108-9.

isolated him from scholars of other disciplines. Toward the end of his 1949 manuscript, Aguirre Beltrán criticized Mexico's entire post-revolutionary musical scene for denying the African influences in the music of Guerrero. He asserted that "The influence of the black population in the cultures of Guerrero should be great; black cultural patterns still survive in regards to types of houses, institutions—marriage, religion, etc.—that are particularly notable in isolated communities like that of Cuajinicuilapa." This summary of his findings was followed by a much more vehement, if not incendiary, critique of post-revolutionary ethnomusicology. "The African influence in the music of Guerrero," he continued, "although denied by our musicologists, is also unquestionable."<sup>81</sup>

In all likelihood, this diatribe was the result of his impressions of Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster's presentation at the Sixth Conference on Mexican History in Chilpancingo, Guerrero, in January 1949.<sup>82</sup> At the Conference, Baqueiro Foster proclaimed that there was not enough empirical evidence to verify any black musical presence in the state (see Chapter 4). Thus, Aguirre Beltrán's intransigent desire to find Africanisms blinded him from seeing alternative ways to identify African-descended cultures.<sup>83</sup> While castigating ethnomusicologists for ignoring blackness and Africanness, Aguirre Beltrán implicitly declared that he knew how they should do their research. His theoretical emphasis on Africanisms isolated his research from the dominant national

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<sup>81</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, "Estudio Antropológico de la población negra de Cuajinicuilapa de la Costa Chica de Guerrero. Octubre 1º de 1949," 141.

<sup>82</sup> E. Dávalos Hurtado, "La IX Sesión del Congreso Mexicano de Historia," *Boletín Bibliográfico de Antropología Americana* 12, no. 1 (1949): 154.

<sup>83</sup> Gabriel Moedano claims that the disparate views at the Conference illustrate Mexican ethnomusicology's denial of black musical influences and anthropology's desire to find them. See Gabriel Moedano, "Comentario," in *Tradicón e identidad en la cultura mexicana*, coords. Agustín Jacinto Zavala and Álvaro Ochoa Serrano (Zamora, Mich: El Colegio de Michoacán, 1995), 449-50.

narrative and also created a disjuncture between his argument on acculturation and his thesis about African cultural retentions.<sup>84</sup>

During his search for visceral African cultural retentions, he frequently overstated the nature of Africanisms in Mexico. In this regard, he went as far as to assert in October 1949 that all cultural practices “that have not yet been identified to this date or are neither indigenous nor Spanish—were of black origin.”<sup>85</sup> Using African cultural practices to expand Mexican nationalism, he pushed the cultural, racial, and discursive boundaries of *mestizaje* beyond its traditional limits. He unwittingly ignored all other cultural practices that were not of indigenous, Spanish, or African origin in Mexico’s cultural landscape. In this sense, he did not completely reformulate the dominant form of *mestizaje* in Mexican nationalist thought that downplayed if not erased the cultural contributions of other immigrant groups.<sup>86</sup>

In spite of his larger goal to document pure Africanisms, Aguirre Beltrán occasionally acknowledged that people of African descent could be part of larger inter-ethnic cultural exchanges. For instance he noted that while the concept of the round house originated in both indigenous and African communities, the practice of using it for habitation was “unquestionably of African origin.” This Africanism permeated indigenous life in the community of Cabecera, a community that (he claimed) was not in

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<sup>84</sup> Aguirre Beltrán’s indifference or skepticism toward tonal analysis is perhaps best illustrated in his only publication dedicated to music; see Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “Baile de negros,” *Revista de la Universidad de México* 25, no. 2 (1970): 1-5.

<sup>85</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, “Estudio Antropológico de la población negra de Cuajinilapa de la Costa Chica de Guerrero. Octubre 1º de 1949,” 1.

<sup>86</sup> These immigrants included Japanese, Lebanese, and Chinese peoples. See Luz María Martínez Montiel y Araceli Reynoso Medina, “Inmigración europea y asiática, siglos XIX y XX,” in *Simbiosis de culturas. Los inmigrantes y su cultura en México*, comp. Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993), 299-319; and Rénique, “Race, Region, and Nation,” 211-36.

direct contact with Cuijla. Based on the demographics of the colonial period, he intuited that there must have been a black community in Cabecera. Without any empirical verification, he assumed that the local indigenous population must have adopted the round house before the black population “was biologically absorbed by the grand indigenous masses.” Thus, “through the process of acculturation,” there were African cultures in post-revolutionary Cabecera, but there was not “in actuality, black [any] somatic characteristics.”<sup>87</sup> Conversely, the reciprocal processes whereby indigenous cultures infiltrated black communities were less present in his analysis.

He also noted some indirect interactions between black and indigenous communities in the more developed *mestizo* town of Ometepec. Because black and indigenous communities “are not truly in direct contact,” Ometepec “serves as an intermediary for the commercial transactions, exchange of products, and the cultural mixture, exchange, and reinterpretation” among the nearby communities. It was “the only center of diffusion for Western culture” in this region of Guerrero. In spite of such limited interactions, these communities independently directed “true hostility” toward “the mestizo, intermediary nucleus at Ometepec.”<sup>88</sup> These ethnic tensions, he implied, prevented the formation of modern class relations that would create a more egalitarian social and economic encounters in the region.

Despite these antagonistic social relations, Aguirre Beltrán still based his study on Cuijla’s supposed isolation. He did not explain the tension between the structural

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<sup>87</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, “Estudio Antropológico de la población negra de Cuajinuilapa de la Costa Chica de Guerrero. Octubre 1º de 1949,” 131-5. For a critique of how Aguirre Beltrán discusses the round house, see Lewis, *Chocolate and Corn Flour*, 134.

<sup>88</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, “Estudio Antropológico de la población negra de Cuajinuilapa de la Costa Chica de Guerrero. Octubre 1º de 1949,” 131-2.

assumptions about the community's remoteness and its tense exchanges with the surrounding indigenous and *mestizo* populations. Perhaps this is why he did not publish the manuscript in 1949. Instead, he admitted that he needed to do more research on the economics, social structures, language, and vernacular arts in Cuijla.<sup>89</sup> However, more than any other text that he wrote before or after it, this manuscript was Aguirre Beltrán's most conscious attempt to integrate Africanness into Mexican nationality and Mexican history into the comparative study of African slavery and post-emancipation race relations across the Americas. However, its limitations were the result of the difficulties he had in implementing Herskovits's ethno-historical methods.

## Conclusion

Aguirre Beltrán's project was groundbreaking in its use of African cultural areas and its application of acculturation in Mexican history and anthropology. However, his overstated, steadfast search for Africanisms by the late 1940s isolated him from Mexico's broader post-revolutionary project. His dogmatism, for instance, blinded him from the ethnomusicological discussions of Afro-Caribbean musical genres in Mexico that were beginning to emerge in the 1940s. His geographic construction of Africanness could not incorporate the Afro-Caribbean soundscapes that Mexican ethnomusicologists began to integrate into Mexican music in the 1940s. It also created a fundamental tension in his work: African slaves had seamlessly integrated into Mexican *mestizaje* and had remained isolated, at least in Cuijla, to such a degree that their Africanisms could still be found in an untainted form. As the next chapter shows, Aguirre Beltrán refashioned the theory of

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<sup>89</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán to Sr. Arquitecto, 1 de octubre de 1949, in Aguirre Beltrán, "Estudio Antropológico de la población negra de Cuajinuilapa de la Costa Chica de Guerrero. Octubre 1° de 1949," 1 and 3-4.

acculturation as he began to study Mexico's indigenous population. Between 1958 and 1972, he used this new conceptualization of acculturation to rectify this ambiguity within his ethno-historical study of Cuijla and his larger project to document Mexico's African-descended demographics and cultures.

## Chapter 6: “Integration of the Negro”: Aguirre Beltrán, the INI, and Inter-Ethnic Relations, 1949-1972

When he did not publish his manuscript on Cuijla in October 1949, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán joined the INI, a newly formed state institution that sought to integrate the indigenous population into the nation. In this institutional context, his Herskovits-ian understanding of acculturation transformed into a tool of applied anthropology. While he still used acculturation to integrate Africanness into the cultural and demographic contours of *mestizaje*, he reformulated the paradigm so that the state apparatus could create a more politically-inclusive and socially-just nation. If anthropologists followed his model for crafting post-revolutionary society, then they would work in tandem with local communities to reinterpret modern life so that it would resonate with local customs. Some vernacular traits would be lost through economic modernization and political integration—but, in theory, many cultural practices would remain unchanged. This project would craft a more egalitarian national society that would improve upon the pluralist cultural initiatives of the 1920s and 1930s.

From the perspective of applied anthropology, Aguirre Beltrán began to define indigeneity through the theoretical lens that he had previously used to construct Africanness. As this theoretical shift linked acculturation directly to post-revolutionary democratic rhetoric, it also helped him to rethink his analysis of Africanisms in Cuijla. In 1958, he published his monograph about Cuijla. Unlike his 1949 manuscript, *Cuijla: Esbozo entográfico de un pueblo negro* [*Cuijla: An Ethnographic Outline of a Black Community*] highlighted racial and cultural mixture more than the pure retention of African cultures. By the 1960s, his interest in indigeneity and Africanness reinvigorated



the discussion of caste and class that he first outlined in *La población negra de México*. This placed his analysis of blackness and indigeneity in direct comparison for the first time. Mexico's African-descended population became a model for how the indigenous population should be integrated into Mexican *mestizaje*.<sup>1</sup> As he equated the structural problems that blacks had faced in the colonial period with the historical and contemporary problems that indigenous communities encountered, he depicted African-descended, indigenous, and *mestizo* cultures as part of a single regional problem: the region of refuge. Moving away from the question of African cultural retentions, he updated and published a second edition of *La población negra de México* in 1972. In tracing Aguirre Beltrán's understanding of Africanness and his use of Africanisms and acculturation through his work as an *indigenista* intellectual, this chapter shows how his constructions of African-descended cultural identities informed his analysis of indigeneity and vice versa.<sup>2</sup>

### **Indigeneity, Acculturation, and the INI, 1949-1957**

Following the post-revolutionary *indigenista* program, Aguirre Beltrán believed that it was the state's role to unify the nation through anthropological research.<sup>3</sup> His turn

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<sup>1</sup> Some have claimed that blacks in Mexico were a "model minority;" see Vincent, *The Legacy of Vicente Guerrero, Mexico's First Black Indian President*, 269. I am not making that point. Instead, I argue that Aguirre Beltrán saw Mexico's African-descended population as a model for indigenous integration into the nation.

<sup>2</sup> Previous scholarship about his work segregates his analyses of indigeneity and blackness in separate research agendas. For example see *Homenaje a Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán*, 3 Tomos (México: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1973-1974); *Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán. Homenaje Nacional: Memorias* (Xalapa: Universidad Veracruzana, 1996); and Félix Báez-Jorge, coord. *Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán. Memorial Crítico. Diálogos con la obra de Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán en el centenario de su natalicio* (México: Editora de Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Alfonso Villa Rojas, "Integración e Indigenismo en el Pensamiento de Aguirre Beltrán," in *Homenaje a Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán*, Tomo 1 (México: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1973), 5;

to applied anthropology contrasted with Herskovits's skepticism toward policy-oriented academic research.<sup>4</sup> Across the globe, the role of the anthropologist was changing as many embraced questions about post-war economic development.<sup>5</sup> The tenets of applied anthropology encouraged Aguirre Beltrán to rethink the paradigm of acculturation as he entered into nationalist and hemispheric debates about how to integrate indigenous peoples into modern American nations. Despite their focus on socio-economic analysis, *indigenistas* in Mexico and throughout the Americas still debated questions of cultural contact and change. Some favored the belief that national integration would assimilate the indigenous population into a homogenous national populace.<sup>6</sup>

According to those in favor of acculturation studies, there was another option. Through acculturation, the indigenous population could become part of a national populace that had overarching cultural and social commonalities but was differentiated by the urban-rural divide and by some of the cultural peculiarities that inhered in each indigenous and *mestizo* community. Rather than thinking about indigenous culture as a singular entity that could only be indigenous or modern, acculturationists looked at how specific technological advancements—such as the introduction of the sewing machine—could modernize aspects of indigenous life while maintaining other more traditional

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Salomón Nahmad, "El esquema teórico del proceso de aculturación según Aguirre Beltrán," in *Homenaje a Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán*, Tomo 1 (México: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1973), 168 and 175.

<sup>4</sup> Yelvington, "The Invention of Africa in Latin America and the Caribbean," 68.

<sup>5</sup> Robert A. Manners, "Functionalism, Realpolitik and Anthropology in Underdeveloped Areas," *América Indígena* 16, núm 1 (Enero 1956): 8.

<sup>6</sup> There are many discussions on this topic. For example, see Darcy Ribeiro y otros "Un concepto sobre integración social," *América Indígena* 20, núm. 1 (Enero 1960): 7-13; and Sol Tax, "The Importance of Preserving Indian Culture," *América Indígena* 26, núm. 1 (Enero 1966): 84-5. For these debates in regard to Mexico, see Hewitt de Alcántara, *Anthropological perspectives on rural Mexico*, 28-9.

cultural practices. Writing from this perspective, U.S. anthropologist Julian Steward described

the problem of Indian acculturation, both scientifically and administratively, as one that requires first, a recognition of the inevitability of continued impacts that will never permit an Indian culture to reach a stabilized equilibrium, and second, of wise and sympathetic control of these impacts which, understanding the extent of their effects, helps the Indian to reintegrate at each shock.<sup>7</sup>

From this paternalistic perspective, the so-called indigenous problem could not be seen in isolation but instead had to be contextualized within the broader contours of cultural contact and exchange. In theory, acculturation did not force anthropologists to make imperialist choices about what aspects of culture would be retained. According to its proponents, the best and most useful indigenous traits would naturally survive any cultural encounter and would contribute to a more pluralist and socially-just society.

While Aguirre Beltrán was becoming increasingly concerned with Mexico's *indigenista* project and was spearheading an acculturationist approach to nation formation, the institutional foundations of Mexican *indigenismo* were rapidly changing. Until 1948, Mexico had not yet fulfilled its obligation to the III to establish a National Indigenist Institute.<sup>8</sup> President Miguel Alemán wanted Mexico to remain at the forefront of the hemisphere's *indigenista* projects and intended for the image of Mexican Revolution of 1910 to remain the archetypal example of indigenous democratic revolution in Latin America. Thus, he established the INI in 1948 to uphold Mexico's prestige and to tackle the limitations of earlier *indigenista* projects.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Julian H. Steward, "Acculturation and the Indian Problem," *América Indígena* 3, núm. 4 (Octubre 1943): 326-8.

<sup>8</sup> Although it should be noted that there had been previous institutions, like the Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas, that had similar purposes; see Dawson, *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico*.

The January 1949 issue of the III's *América Indígena* outlined the INI's core beliefs. It intended to aid and to modernize indigenous groups so that they could contribute to Mexican society. According to III Director Manuel Gamio, the INI and other state institutions should aspire "to wipe out or to diminish the noxious action of certain cultural characteristics of the indian groups whatever be their chronological and cultural origin, of which there are not a few of the modern occidental type that are distinctly harmful." This brash form of culture change and modernization would attempt "to remedy defects, to stimulate that which is useful and beneficial, and lastly to introduce new characteristics by means of which the groups under discussion may satisfy their elementary necessities, such as advanced agricultural and industrial techniques, medical care, etc., which are nowadays indispensable to a normal existence."<sup>10</sup>

Gamio's blatantly paternalistic depiction of the INI countered the more benevolent but equally patronizing aims that Director Alfonso Caso espoused. As an archeologist familiar with indigenous art and society, Caso had previously contributed an essay, "Pre-Spanish Art," that discussed the diversity of pre-Columbian art for the Mexico's 1940 MoMA exhibition.<sup>11</sup> By the late 1940s, Caso and other *indigenistas* began to emphasize the integration, rather than the preservation, of indigenous culture and society. With the rise of commercialism in the 1940s, *indigenistas* were debating which

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<sup>9</sup> "El ejecutivo de mi cargo, con fundamento en lo que previene la fracción del artículo 71 de la Constitución General de la República," 20 de septiembre de 1948, 545.3/172, AGN-FMAV; and "Anteproyecto. Instituto Indigenista Nacional de México," 9 de abril de 1948, 545.3/172, AGN-FMAV.

<sup>10</sup> Manuel Gamio, "The Director of the National Indian Institute of Mexico," *América Indígena* 9, núm. 1 (Enero 1949): 6.

<sup>11</sup> Alfonso Caso, "Pre-Spanish Art," in *Twenty Centuries of Modern Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1940), 23-6.

cultural practices to maintain and which to abandon in the name of socio-economic development and national modernity.<sup>12</sup>

Foreshadowing many of the ideas that would define Aguirre Beltrán's concept of *indigenista* acculturation, Caso wanted the INI "to explore regional indigenous problems . . . in order to transform as soon as possible the lamentable conditions in which the majority of the indigenous groups of Mexico live." For him, the indigenous question was not confined to indigenous communities. The segregation of these societies from Mexico's *mestizo* and white populations would be discriminatory and would hinder the post-revolutionary project of cultural and social inclusion. By selectively providing indigenous communities with improved technology and the "modern social and political organization," the INI strategically sought to "conserve" and "reinforce" the indigenous artistic production that it found useful to the national project.<sup>13</sup>

Amid these hemispheric debates, Caso proposed that the INI learn how to integrate isolated indigenous communities into the nation through the study of three distinct societies: the Tarahumara of Chihuahua, the Mixteca of Oaxaca, and the Totonaca of Veracruz.<sup>14</sup> Throughout the 1950s, the INI grew in size—and Aguirre Beltrán gained access to more and more ethnographic information on indigenous communities and their *mestizo* environs. As he analyzed these regional power dynamics, he reformulated acculturation to fit the institution's needs. He studied the Tarascan

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<sup>12</sup> López, *Crafting Mexico*, especially 177-85; Alex Saragoza, "The Selling of Mexico: Tourism and the State, 1929-1952," in *Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico Since 1940*, eds. Gilbert Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 102-10; and Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 52-8.

<sup>13</sup> Alfonso Caso to Presidente Miguel Alemán, 24 de diciembre de 1948, 545.3/172, AGN-FMAV.

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

Indians of Michoacán from 1949 to 1950. Then from 1951 until 1952, he founded and directed the prototype for Caso's regional INI program: the CC Tzeltal-Tzotzil in Chiapas. Finally, from 1952 to 1956, he was sub-director of the INI under Caso.<sup>15</sup>

After he began to work at the CC in Chiapas, Aguirre Beltrán solidified the connections between his earlier analyses of Africanness and his more recent observations of indigenous life. The social dynamics he saw in Chiapas mirrored the socio-economic situation he encountered in Ometepec, Guerrero. Making these observations in 1952, Aguirre Beltrán wrote Herskovits to re-affirm the centrality of Herskovits's mentorship—and implicitly his earlier work on Africanness—to his current work on indigenous political and economic integration. He said:

I am also pleased to tell you that the Center, founded in Chiapas in order to bring about the integration of the natives of that region, is enjoying great success. In a visit that a group of experts from the UN made to this Center, they expressed their satisfaction with the way in which anthropology is being applied and programs of action were being developed. All this is due to the instruction I received from you, and for this reason I am writing you about it.<sup>16</sup>

In the Basin of Tepalcatepec of the state of Michoacán, Aguirre Beltrán noted the clearly demarcated distinctions between indigenous communities who spoke native languages and non-indigenous peoples who spoke Spanish. In part to explain such awkward classificatory divisions among the white, black, indigenous populations within the basin, he admitted that ethnographic analysis was hindered by the lack of racial identification in government documents. Through an analysis of language, education, land tenure, science, and modern technology, he contended that “one can consider the

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<sup>15</sup> de la Peña, “Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán,” 70. Also see, Hewitt de Alcántara, *Anthropological perspectives on rural Mexico*, 49.

<sup>16</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán to Melville J. Herskovits, August 6, 1952, Folder 267 (Northwestern University—Beltrán, Gonzalo Aguirre (Visit, Anthropology), 1944-1952), Box 19, Series 216.S, Record Group 1.1, RAC-RFR.

population of the basin in three strata: the mestizo, of a predominately Western culture; the Indian, of predominately native culture; and the mestindio [often called indomestizo], where Western and indigenous culture are at equilibrium.” He argued that there were no longer any black cultures in the region; they had undergone processes of “dilution, assimilation, and extinction.”<sup>17</sup> Because racialized languages would only reify the caste markers that he despised, Aguirre Beltrán employed cultural and linguistic markers to classify communities. As in his earlier works on Mexico’s African-descended population, cultural beliefs and their resonance in social organization and economic activities differentiated Mexico’s various demographic groups.

As this regional study hinted, many of these ethnographic investigations of indigenous life built upon his discussion of acculturation and *mestizaje* from the 1940s. Aguirre Beltrán characterized post-independence and post-revolutionary indigenous life through the prism of Spanish colonialism and the *casta* system that atomized colonial Mexican society. Because Spanish social hierarchies used biological ancestry to bestow legal rights and obligations on its subjects, indigenous populations (who, he claimed, enjoyed these rights) did not want to integrate into national life after independence. They “were not Mexican citizens because they did not feel like they were Mexican and did not enjoy aspects of national culture.”<sup>18</sup> As a result of colonial-era discrimination and its postcolonial legacies, there was still “a state of unjust discrimination, not only social but

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<sup>17</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Problemas de la población indígena de la Cuenca del Tepalcatepec*, Memorias del Instituto Nacional Indigenista, vol. III (México: Ediciones del Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1952), 9, 12-13, and 87.

<sup>18</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Formas de gobierno indígena*, in *Obra antropológica*, vol. iv (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1991 [1953]), 15-16 and 31-57.

also economic against Indians that was in open contradiction with our democracy.”<sup>19</sup> The colonial (and presumably post-revolutionary) act of giving different communities legal distinctions based on ethnic classifications was fundamentally a problem that needed to be resolved.<sup>20</sup>

For Aguirre Beltrán, the process of political integration depended on how each indigenous community experienced Spanish colonial rule and how much it had acculturated during the colonial period. Regions with a history of less cultural exchange, such as the Tarahumara of Chihuahua and the Tzotziles and Tzeltales of Chiapas, were more favorable to national political integration and participation than communities, like the Tarascans of Michoacán, who were already more acculturated to the dominant *mestizo* social and political norms. The Tzotzil and Tzeltal communities that were most indigenous and least acculturated, for example, did not even allow *mestizos* to live there. While this conclusion may appear counter-intuitive, Aguirre Beltrán explained that the more isolated regions had faced harsher and more explicit forms of exclusion and exploitation and therefore more readily accepted aid from institutions, like the INI, that could potentially balance the asymmetrical power relationships between the *mestizo* and indigenous populations. The plight of these indigenous peoples, he argued, could be rectified by allowing greater municipal autonomy while also establishing political and social bonds that would connect these localities to the state apparatus. Pre-Columbian

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<sup>19</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “La Región Tarahumara, ante la Reunión de Directores de Centros y Antropólogos, Agosto de 1955, pg. 2, 1574.-1, Tomo CCXXV, INAH-AT-CNA.

<sup>20</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “Declaración de México en Materia Indigenista” for the Organización Internacional del Trabajo (1955), in Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La Labor Indigenista del Gobierno de la Revolución*, FD 09/0012, CDI-CDJR.



community traditions, such as their governing systems, would have to be slightly re-invented, but they would not be destroyed.<sup>21</sup>

Aguirre Beltrán couched his discussion of political integration in the language of political democracy and the benevolent discourse of indigenous pride. However, because he was an ardent PRIista, his analysis functioned as more than an astute ethnography; it provided populist government functionaries with what he considered the most advantageous manner for gaining popular support. He stated that in these less acculturated areas, the PRI “appeared, formally, as the only operating party.” Conversely, in the more politically integrated and acculturated communities, political factions fostered antagonism that hindered the post-revolutionary integration. In regard to political rhetoric, he concluded that the PRI was able to have such a widespread political base, because “the Indians are the actual representatives of a past that the Revolution idealized and, for that reason, it [the PRI] is awarded a higher mystic valor.”<sup>22</sup> He therefore tied his own ideas about nation formation, the CCs, and the PRI rule together through the concept of acculturation. Despite the lack of true electoral democracy in this single-party state, Aguirre Beltrán explicitly used democratic rhetoric to bolster his analysis. His schematic understanding of party politics and acculturation attempted to tell PRI leaders where it would be useful to campaign and where electoral outcomes were likely predetermined. It also was most likely an attempt to acquire more funds for the INI.<sup>23</sup> Through the ethnographic analysis, the PRI could forge bonds with local communities that would

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<sup>21</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *Formas de gobierno indígena*, 15-19, 55-6, 96, and 155. For an example of how the INI, in theory, help abrogate regional exploitation, see Lewis, “Mexico’s National Indigenist Institute and the Negotiation of Applied Anthropology in Highland Chiapas, 1951-1954,” 609-32.

<sup>22</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *Formas de gobierno indígena*, 155.

<sup>23</sup> As Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara explains, the INI could not fulfill its projects, in part, because of a lack of funding; see Hewitt de Alcántara, *Anthropological perspectives on rural Mexico*, 54.

generate a more representative political culture, one that was receptive to the needs of the indigenous population.

Aguirre Beltrán had no problem with the PRI managing the power dynamics within the regional inter-ethnic relations. If the PRI was able to campaign and improve the material conditions of indigenous communities, he thought that its rule would be inherently more democratic than the exploitative regional politics that currently existed. This political agenda strengthened the *indigenista* project that sought to end the systematic exploitative relations in Chiapas, Chihuahua, and other states. If *mestizo* regional domination could be curtailed, then local indigenous groups would be able to interact directly with the state apparatus. Improving these remote indigenous communities also required modernizing the *mestizo* centers that exploited them. Otherwise it would be more difficult to bind both the indigenous and *mestizo* communities to a nation where all peoples had the access to social welfare and economic development.<sup>24</sup> However, as Stephen E. Lewis explains, resistance by the *mestizo* elite, who feared any indigenous empowerment, confounded the INI's often noble aspirations. Practicality reduced these progressive visions of regional integration to projects that transformed indigenous communities and accommodated to the regional elite.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the acculturationist rhetoric that Aguirre Beltrán articulated yielded to the everyday local realities that shaped nation formation.

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<sup>24</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Los centros coordinadores. Proyectos Regionales de Desarrollo Integral," in Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La Labor Indigenista del Gobierno de la Revolución*, pg. 6. FD 09/0012, CDI-CDJR.

<sup>25</sup> Dawson, *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico*, 142-3; and Lewis, "Mexico's National Indigenist Institute and the Negotiation of Applied Anthropology in Highland Chiapas, 1951-1954," 609-32.

Ultimately, Aguirre Beltrán envisioned “the harmonic elevation of their [indigenous] acculturation and the structuring of an economic inter-dependence where [all] factors combine to produce mutual benefits and not create situations where severe inter-ethnic tensions hinder biological and cultural mestizaje.” Through the selective preservation of certain aspects of indigenous life during indigenous integration, acculturation would craft “the final integration of the nation into a grand community, sufficiently homogeneous to the degree that regional variations would not get in the way of the overall march of the nation towards economic modernization and future industrialization.”<sup>26</sup> Acculturation was a syncretic process. Homogeneity, therefore, did not require the forging of a single *mestizo* culture. It signified a nation in which people would be “sufficiently” united. Within this shared political, social, and economic system, no communities would be depicted as inferior as a result of their racial ancestry or ethnic affiliations.

In 1957, Aguirre Beltrán compiled these ideas into a reformulation of acculturation: his theoretical treatise *El proceso de la aculturación y el cambio socio-cultural en México* [*The process of acculturation and socio-cultural change in Mexico*]. It examined the scattered processes of cultural contact that he and others had been investigating since the early 1940s. The monograph became one of the seminal texts to explain post-1940 *indigenista* policies.<sup>27</sup> Like Herskovits, Aguirre Beltrán asserted that cultures were fluid and always changing when they encountered new historical, social,

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<sup>26</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *Formas de gobierno indígena*, 112.

<sup>27</sup> Excerpts of *El Proceso de la aculturación* were published by the INI as Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “Compulsión vs. Volición,” *Acción Indigenista*, núm. 48 (Junio 1957): 3-4.

environmental, economic, and political milieus.<sup>28</sup> Based on his ethnographic observations, Aguirre Beltrán added a new dimension to the process of acculturation. It was a means to explain and to resolve inter-ethnic relations between indigenous and *mestizo* communities. Rather than describing indigenous societies as autonomous and self-sufficient, he perceived them (as Caso had already said) as “part of a regional structure that has a mestizo city at the epicenter, with which the satellite indigenous communities maintain an inter-dependent relationship that varies from region to region and community to community.” Thus, the social, cultural, economic, and political markers that differentiated the regional *mestizo* center from the indigenous hinterlands had to be abrogated through “the conscious action directed toward achieving, in the least amount of time possible, national integration and cultural homogeneity.”<sup>29</sup>

Aguirre Beltrán based his idea of acculturation and homogeneity on the dialectical assumption that cultural exchange would generate an underlying cultural union. However acculturation was not “the mechanical passing of elements from one culture to another.” It was the “re-elaboration and re-interpretation of these elements to make them fit functionally in the old traditional structure.” Thus, he refashioned Herskovits’s idea of acculturation to fit within Mexico’s post-revolutionary nation-building project. In dialectical terms:

The opposing elements of cultures in *contact* tend to exclude, fight each other, and reciprocally oppose each other; but at the same time they tend to overlap, combine, and identify together. The total *identification* resolves or overcomes the contradiction and gives origin to a new unity that initiates the history of its own development, growing and developing through a series of advances and retreats

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<sup>28</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *El proceso de la aculturación y el cambio socio-cultural en México*, in obra antropológica, vol. vi (México: Fondo de cultura económica, 1992 [1957]), 9-21.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 21, 24, and 30.

until becoming dominant; at the same time the original elements dwindle and decay, condemned to extinction.

Depending on the degree of exchange, acculturation could result in varying degrees of integration: “parallel integration,” which maintains the co-existence, self-sufficiency, and self-containment of all groups in contact; “alternative integration,” where one group enters into the society of the other at a subordinate position; and “polar integration,” or the syncretic fusion of all groups in contact such that they are no longer defined through racial markers and instead attain distinctions by social class.<sup>30</sup>

Through polar integration, *mestizaje* and homogenization would not destroy local cultures or prevent a pluralist national culture. Although Aguirre Beltrán’s approach to national integration did accept the Boasian idea that state intellectuals and anthropologists should not judge human cultures through external value systems, it vehemently rejected another aspect of how some post-war anthropologists characterized cultural relativism: the belief that any cultural practice should be allowed to exist.<sup>31</sup> According to Aguirre Beltrán, cultural relativism advocated a social policy that allowed indigenous communities live on their own terms and without being part of the Mexican nation.<sup>32</sup> Such isolationism conflicted with Mexico’s acculturationist approach to nation-building, because it functioned as a continuation of segregationist caste politics that resembled the Jim Crow laws and Indian reservations of the United States.<sup>33</sup> When

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 28-31 and 45-49.

<sup>31</sup> This was not the only way to interpret cultural relativism. On its multiple meanings, see Melford E. Spiro, “Cultural Relativism and the Future of Anthropology,” in *Rereading Cultural Anthropology*, ed. George E. Marcus (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 124-51.

<sup>32</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *El proceso de la aculturación*, 31 and 45-9, 122-3.

<sup>33</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “Declaración de México en Materia Indigenista,” in Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La Labor Indigenista del Gobierno de la Revolución*, FD 09/0012, CDI-CDJR and Miguel León-

communities accustomed to legal distinctions and full autonomy faced the specter of national integration and the processes of acculturation, they would suffer cultural anomie, or what Caso and Aguirre Beltrán paternalistically called “cultural maladjustment.”<sup>34</sup>

Acculturation signified the end of racial—or what Aguirre Beltrán called caste—markers. This approach would mitigate “the destruction of the traditional values of indigenous communities.”<sup>35</sup> In many ways, this tension between national homogeneity and local cultural particularity allowed for the possibility that acculturation would be misread as a synonym of assimilation, particularly when acculturationist theories could not be effectively implemented in local and regional settings. Like Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits, Aguirre Beltrán admitted that acculturation could be assimilation, even though it did not always result in a purely assimilationist endgame. Similarly, he followed Herskovits’s impassioned defense of the term when he claimed that Fernando Ortiz’s concept of transculturation was merely the unnecessary renaming of Herskovits’s paradigm.<sup>36</sup>

Aguirre Beltrán saw post-revolutionary concepts of national integration as complex and at times contradictory. Nonetheless, they were still a vast improvement on the assimilationist nineteenth-century liberal conceptions of nation formation that also

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Portilla, “¿Qué es el indigenismo interamericano?,” *América Indígena* 26, núm. 4 (Octubre 1966): 344 and 347-50.

<sup>34</sup> Alfonso Caso and Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “Applied Anthropology in Mexico,” 1955, pg. 5 FD 09/0780, CDI-CDJR. It should be noted that Caso was more fond of the idea of cultural relativism than Aguirre Beltrán and even equated it with democracy; see Alfonso Caso, “Los ideales de la acción indigenista,” *Acción Indigenista*, núm 108 (Junio 1962): 1 and 4.

<sup>35</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Problemas y Métodos en el Estudio de la Demografía Mesoamericana* (10 de junio 1954), pg. 9, FD 09/ 0319, CDI-CDJR.

<sup>36</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *El proceso de aculturación*, 9-12 and 185-6.

sought to unite the nation through the extermination of caste identities.<sup>37</sup> He argued that pre-revolutionary ideas had hindered indigenous integration on two levels. First, they unproductively sought to rid indigenous communities of their communal ways by privatizing property.<sup>38</sup> Second, laissez-faire economics allowed *mestizo* centers to exploit indigenous communities and render them dependent on *mestizo* dominance for subsistence. Through these “brutal methods,” he argued, “liberalism had the ability to permanently destroy, within the one hundred years that passed from its initiation during independence to the end of the Porfiriato,” the remaining indigenous population.<sup>39</sup>

Aguirre Beltrán was well aware that his acculturationist program was filled with ideological and practical tensions. The desire to establish national homogeneity was particularly troublesome. With anthropologist Ricardo Pozas (1912-1994), he eloquently articulated these ideas in 1953:

Thanks to this circumstance [the problem of colonial segregation and subsequently the lack of indigenous technological advancement] the Revolution defined its fundamental leanings: one the one hand, the idealization of the indigenous past and, on the other, economic modernization. It established a conflicting set of programs that set out to improve indigenous communities, since economic modernization did not signify anything but the Westernization of indigenous communities, what would be the adoption of the characteristics of industrial capitalism by groups that base their living on a subsistence economy. The resolution of this conflict is being achieved by means of a slow process of reinterpreting modern economic forms within the social structure of indigenous communities. The obstacles have been numerous and the employed methods have suffered and continue to suffer modifications in light of the already achieved successes or failures.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “Indigenismo y mestizaje. Una polaridad bio-cultural,” pg. 3-4, FD 09/0773, CDI-CDJR.

<sup>38</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *El proceso de la aculturación*, 117; and Caso and Aguirre Beltrán, “Applied Anthropology in Mexico.”

<sup>39</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán y Ricardo Pozas, *Instituciones Indígenas en México Actual* (1953), pg. 56, FD 09/0004, CDI-CDJR.

<sup>40</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán y Ricardo Pozas, *Instituciones Indígenas en México Actual*, 104-5.

Following the classist rhetoric that dated back to the 1930s, he concluded that racial distinctions were the bugbear of national integration and the harbinger of racial discrimination and capitalist exploitation.<sup>41</sup> A national culture that embraced all cultural roots was only feasible if there was an economic foundation that prevented the exploitation and subsequent destruction of underdeveloped indigenous and black groups.<sup>42</sup> Then a democratic cultural politics could define post-revolutionary society and make all peoples productive Mexican citizens.<sup>43</sup> According to Aguirre Beltrán, this acculturationist policy would establish “a democratic regime that awards indigenous peoples fullness and equality as citizens.”<sup>44</sup>

### **From the INI to *Cuijla***

By 1957, it was no longer useful for Aguirre Beltrán to chart the demographics of pure African or European populations. According to the theory of acculturation, these populations had become *afromestizos*, *indomestizos*, or *euromestizos*. In *El proceso de la aculturación*, he noted the cultural-cum-demographic forms of *mestizaje* in the predominately indigenous-descended Latin American nations that he called “Mestizo America.” He classified these peoples as Indians, *indomestizos*, and *afromestizos*. For instance, in 1950, Mexico was 20 percent indigenous, 79 percent *indomestizo*, and 0.4

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<sup>41</sup> Roseblatt, “Other Americas,” 612.

<sup>42</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *El proceso de la aculturación*, 57-62 and 125. This idea is reiterated in the editorial by Manuel Gamio, “La aculturación del indígena,” *América Indígena* 20, num. 1 (Enero 1960): 3-4.

<sup>43</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “Introducción,” in *Educación, antropología y desarrollo de la comunidad*, by Julio de la Fuente (México, DF: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1964), 16.

<sup>44</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “Discurso del Dr. G. Aguirre Beltrán,” *Acción Indigenista*, núm. 142 (Abril 1965).



percent *afromestizo* (or approximately 120,000 people).<sup>45</sup> Unlike his colonial-era demographic tallies in *La población negra de México*, contemporary Mexico did not have racially-unmixed African and European peoples or *euromestizos*.

The lack of any discussion of blackness or Africanness in a racially-, culturally-, or demographically-unmixed form illustrates his rejection of the romantic, if not jaded, search for pure isolated Africanisms in the Americas after he began to remake acculturation in the 1950s. Highlighting *mestizaje* also emphasized the fact that Mexico could not become purely European or nostalgically return to a blissful, pre-Columbian past built on pure indigenous cultures. Although *Mestizo* America was a fusion of African, European, and indigenous racial and cultural heritages, it was primarily of indigenous origin.<sup>46</sup> For Aguirre Beltrán, acculturation studies were no longer concerned with questions of pure cultural retentions; they discussed a dialectical form of cultural syncretism.

In 1958, he applied this new definition of acculturation in his published version of *Cuijla*. In this monograph, he contended that social relations needed to be analyzed beyond the schematic continuum from cultural homogeneity to heterogeneity and from purely isolated to fully integrated.<sup>47</sup> The premise of black isolation that dated back to colonial-era maroonage in Cuijla no longer operated in his understanding of Africanisms, acculturation, and *mestizaje*. Although it is unclear exactly when he rethought his

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<sup>45</sup> Aguirre Beltrán *El proceso de la aculturación*, 115. This chart also appears in Aguirre Beltrán, "Indigenismo y mestizaje. Una polaridad bio-cultural," 1-2.

<sup>46</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Indigenismo y mestizaje. Una polaridad bio-cultural," 1. For his critique of the post-revolutionary romantic fascination with the pre-colonial past, see pg. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Cuijla. Esbozo etnográfico de un pueblo negro*, vol. VII, *Obra Antropológica* (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1995 [1958]), 225n87.

analysis of Africanisms, it was after 1951. That year he published “Casamiento del Monte,” an essay that contained the same problematic discussion of African marriage patterns in seventeenth-century Yanga and twentieth-century Cuijla as his 1949 manuscript.<sup>48</sup> In *Cuijla*, he no longer included this reference and, instead, contended that black isolation “has never been complete.”<sup>49</sup> He had turned methodologically away from his dogmatic desire to discover and preserve Africanisms.

This new approach lessened the tensions between Africanisms and *mestizaje* in his depiction of this region of Guerrero. Aguirre Beltrán’s use of acculturation also became more prominent. For example, he explained how the African-Spanish dialect in Cuijla had slightly different pronunciations and phrases than more traditional forms of Spanish. Locals, he argued, would say “*boi a cantar* [I’m gonna sing] in place of *cantaré* [I will sing]” and “*me ba a pagar* [They gonna pay me] in place of *me pagará* [They will pay me].” This phraseology “facilitates perfect rhythms in the regional song [corrido].” These acculturative linguistic exchanges among Spanish and various African dialects, he argued, informed the contemporary forms of local vernacular music just as they demonstrated the local linguistic syncretism.<sup>50</sup>

In complete counter-distinction from his claims in 1949, Aguirre Beltrán situated his research as anything but the study of visible and pure Africanisms. He wrote:

Mexican investigators have come to understand the fascinating field of Afro-American studies late. This also explains why the most important characteristic of these studies, among us, has to be its essentially ethno-historical character.

In those countries where blacks are a living, actual phenomenon, Afro-

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<sup>48</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “Casamiento del Monte,” in *Homenaje al Doctor Alfonso Caso* (México, DF: Imprenta Nuevo Mundo, 1951), 41-54.

<sup>49</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *Cuijla*, 90.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 206 and 208.

Americanists, can resign themselves to common anthropological instruments, methods, and techniques to do their studies, without looking at greater depth at the information supplied to them from the people that they directly observe; but in other countries, like Mexico, where blacks not yet exist as a differentiated group, only the historical perspective has the ability to provide the exact, comprehensive perspective.

In making this point, Aguirre Beltrán embraced an historical approach to ethnographic study highlighted by the theory of acculturation that mirrored Herskovits's ethno-historical method. His historical discussion of black cultural behaviors in *indomestizo* Cabecera and his ethnographic depiction of inter-ethnic relations around Ometepe were more logical when they were not linked principally to the study of Africanisms. African-descended cultures and communities were not in isolation but rather always in constant contact with other local communities. This approach mediated Mexican anthropology's interest in indigeneity with his focus on blackness and Africanness. As an ethno-history, *Cuijla* noted the colonial legacies that characterized *afromestizo* communities. Just as he asserted in 1946, all local cultures in Mexico had been acculturated, borrowed, or reinterpreted.<sup>51</sup>

### **Inter-Americanism, Caste, and Class, 1958-1970**

By the 1950s and 1960s, *indigenistas* across the Americas generally accepted theories, like Aguirre Beltrán's acculturation, that transcended the concept of assimilation. For example, at the Fourth Inter-American Indian Congress in Guatemala in May, 1959, the III discouraged policies of national integration that would make all people "identical" or require "total 'de-Indianization.'" It favored "the progressive development of mutual adjustments" that would preserve indigenous life, raise *per capita* income,

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 38-61, and 120.

improve welfare systems, and provide access to modern medicine.<sup>52</sup> This approach rejected “the thesis of incorporating or assimilating indigenous cultures into the dominant cultures of their respective countries, or into Western culture.” Social integration should not be defined by a singular identity nor by homogeneity but, instead, through “the daily development of mutual adjustments” in language, attitude, and behavior. Cultural exchange and the socio-economic transformation of indigenous communities into non-indigenous ones could occur. As long as there was mutual understanding and respect across cultural differences, cultural heterogeneity was acceptable.<sup>53</sup>

In this context, scholars in Mexico and throughout the Americas began to investigate the nature of caste and class societies to discuss theories about national development and modernization. Often caste and class became euphemisms for race and biology.<sup>54</sup> The transition from a caste to a class society, however, was not as simple as Aguirre Beltrán and his colleagues depicted it, because these identities had historically been constructed in tandem. Their constant intersection produced what anthropologist Laura A. Lewis describes as “overlapping idioms about difference and hierarchy.”<sup>55</sup> These inquiries into caste and class, however, were not new to Aguirre Beltrán. They dated back to his 1946 study of Mexico’s colonial black population, continued latently in his discussion of discrimination in Cuijla, and re-emerged in his analysis of polar

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<sup>52</sup> Darcy Ribeiro y otros, “Un concepto sobre integración social,” 7-13; quoted from “Summary of ‘Un concepto sobre integración social,’” by Darcy Ribeiro y otros, *América Indígena* 20, num. 1 (Enero 1960): 7; and Tax, “The Importance of Preserving Indian Culture,” 84-5.

<sup>53</sup> Darcy Ribeiro y otros “Un concepto sobre integración social,” 7-12.

<sup>54</sup> Roseblatt, “Other Americas,” 603-41.

<sup>55</sup> See Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination* for an analysis of how a colonial plebeian class culture existed in spite of the dominant caste system in colonial Mexico. Also see Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors*, 4 and 185-6n6; and Vinson, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty*, 4.

integration. As these discussions progressed in the 1960s, Aguirre Beltrán began to directly compare and contrast the social situation surrounding Mexico's black and indigenous populations in a single historical narrative.

His first extended comparisons between indigeneity and blackness took place in *Medicina y magia. El proceso de la aculturación en la estructura colonial* [*Medicine and Magic: the Process of Acculturation in the Colonial Structure*]. This monograph linked his theory of acculturation to Mexico's pressing need for national integration. He perceived black communities as exemplars of nation formation; they provided a structural and historical blueprint for how to integrate the indigenous population into the nation. As a project that began as a study of acculturation in the 1940s and that had been released in an abridged form in 1955, *Medicina y magia* became an empirical analysis of political and social integration when it was published in 1963.<sup>56</sup> As a result of the temporal gap between when he began to write the monograph in the 1940s and when he published it in its final form, Aguirre Beltrán awkwardly discussed blackness, Africanness, and indigeneity as he back-and-forth between his pre-INI search for Africanisms and his post-1949 interest in acculturative national integration.

In *Medicina y magia*, he argued that the black population was more willing than indigenous communities to integrate into colonial and post-independence society. To substantiate this argument Aguirre Beltrán asserted that ideas of medicine and magic were exchanged and reinterpreted throughout the colonial period. During the peak of the African slave trade to Mexico in the early seventeenth century, African-derived medicine

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<sup>56</sup> On the origins of this project in the 1940s, see Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán to Melville J. Herskovits, December 16, 1948, Folder 8 (Beltran, Gonzalo Aguirre, 1948-1949), Box 43, NULA-MJHP; and Aguirre Beltrán "Estudio Antropológico de la población negra de Cuajinuilapa de la Costa Chica de Guerrero. Octubre 1° de 1949," 99n9. On the 1955 version, see Vinson, "La historia del estudio de los negros en México," 55.

and magic influenced indigenous, Spanish, and *casta* populations. However—and most important for his argument—the indigenous and Spanish populations were furthest removed from such biological and cultural mixing. They only faced parallel acculturation and failed to develop syncretic cultural practices. They became wedded to their caste identities and the rights and responsibilities that inhered in them. This complex analysis of acculturation harkened back to Aguirre Beltrán’s discussion of the parallel, alternative, and polar acculturation in *El proceso de la aculturación*.<sup>57</sup> Like many other scholars, he contended that blacks wanted to enter a class society that rejected slavery and racial classification.<sup>58</sup>

*Medicina y magia* was wrought with tensions. Parts of the monograph read as if they were written in the 1940s while others appear to be products of his ethnographic research in the 1950s and early 1960s. His discussion of black medicine and magic sat ambivalently between his ephemeral search for Africanisms and his desire to explain why blacks integrated into Mexican society. He began with the assumption that the importation of African slaves produced the conditions that made *mestizaje* feasible. Although “blacks [el negro] never constituted an integrated caste or social group, even in cases where they founded palenques of Cimarron communities and enjoyed the freedom of fugitives,” the legal classifications of colonial society united them, because they were the only group that could be enslaved. Resembling his Herskovits-inspired work from the 1940s, he stated that African cultural conservatism allowed the essential features of

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<sup>57</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Medicina y magia. El proceso de aculturación en la estructura colonial*, *Obra Antropológica*, vol. VIII (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992 [1963]), 248-56 and 330n54.

<sup>58</sup> See Magnus Mörner, *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), 6 and 102; and various essays in Magnus Mörner, ed., *Race and Class in Latin America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

African medicine and magic, such as spirit possession, to remain.<sup>59</sup> This discussion of Africanisms contradicted his overarching thesis about black integration and appears to be leftover from his research in the late 1940s.

For the rest of the 1960s, Aguirre Beltrán examined the diverging historical trajectories of these black and indigenous communities. He noted that caste identities, which the indigenous populations favored, were permanently ensconced in a regional system of *mestizo* exploitation. Caste signifiers prevented them from gaining access to the rights that they deserved as post-revolutionary citizens. Drawing directly on his work in the 1950s, he called this abusive structure a “region of refuge.”<sup>60</sup> If the state effectively encouraged indigenous communities to follow the process of integration that had already been navigated by blacks, then there would be, “for the first time, an element of social justice in indigenista politics.”<sup>61</sup> Social justice would facilitate social mobility, a middle class, and, most importantly, a democratic class system that allowed for “the equality of all people without limitations according to sex, race, or creed.”<sup>62</sup>

These discussions about race, class, and caste also resonated with sectors of what Magnus Mörner (1924-2012) called “the inter-American scholarly community.”<sup>63</sup> In this context, he asked Aguirre Beltrán to participate in a conference on caste and class in New York City in 1965. The ubiquity of *mestizaje* in Latin American history, Mörner argued,

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<sup>59</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *Medicina y magia*, 60 and 256.

<sup>60</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Regiones de refugio* (México: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1967).

<sup>61</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “Un postulado de política indigenista,” *América Indígena* 27, núm. 3 (Julio 1967): 559-65.

<sup>62</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *Regiones de refugio*, 154-9, 166, and 210. For a discussion of these mestizo intermediaries in the 1930s, see Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*.

<sup>63</sup> Magnus Mörner, “Introduction,” in *Race and Class in Latin America*, ed. Magnus Mörner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 1.

begat a multitude of academic and popular uses for the terms of race and class that needed to be elucidated.<sup>64</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, Mörner, and the other contributors to the conference examined how the post-independence elimination of caste distinctions affected indigenous as well as black peoples.<sup>65</sup> Resembling Aguirre Beltrán's work, Mörner's synthetic essay on class in nineteenth-century Latin America juxtaposed the integration of black peoples with the relative isolation of indigenous communities that resulted from their rejection of the new national, class systems.<sup>66</sup>

The conference proceedings were published in 1970. Aguirre Beltrán's essay, "The Integration of the Negro into the National Society of Mexico," developed the hypothesis he outlined in *Medicina y magia*. He compared how black communities welcomed national integration after independence with the indigenous desire to remain within the caste politics that provided them with legal rights. Indigenous communities, he argued, nostalgically attempted to return to their pre-Columbian ways of life and therefore clung to all remnants of ancestral cultures and lands. Deviating from his discussions of Cuijla, he claimed that blacks did not envision the possibility of reproducing their African pasts. They looked for ways to rid themselves of the fetters of their colonial *casta* identities and, after independence, entered into the national citizenry. The integration of the black population into the Mexican nation commenced with racial and cultural mixture in the colonial period and continued with the abolition of slavery and of the *casta* system immediately after independence. While they were still haunted by the

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<sup>64</sup> Mörner, "Introduction," 3-5.

<sup>65</sup> Patricia Seed notes that, for Mörner, caste had acquired a new set of meanings characterized by juridical rights and responsibilities for different racial groups; see Seed, "Social Dimensions of Race," 603.

<sup>66</sup> Magnus Mörner, "Historical Research on Race Relations in Latin America During the National Period," in *Race and Class in Latin America*, ed. Magnus Mörner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 199-202.



stigma of being former slaves and were not regarded as full citizens, this subset of the national populace had established a relationship with the regional *mestizo* elite. These relations, like those between Cuijla and Ometepe, were “as egalitarian as is possible between persons of different classes.” As a result of post-revolutionary initiatives to abolish caste politics, the integration of the black population was finally nearing competition.<sup>67</sup>

Aguirre Beltrán’s attenuation of the racial and cultural tensions between the *mestizo* elite in Ometepe and *afromestizo* communities along the Costa Chica is surprising, considering what he had previously written on the subject. In a draft of the paper, he discussed some of the social tensions that he noticed in Cuijla. He said that the integration of black communities into the nation

operates in countries where blacks constitute a major sector of the total population and in those, like Mexico, where mestizaje has erased their original differences, but where there are still a few black nuclei, isolated in regions of refuge that still can be distinguished thanks to the visibility of their racial characteristics.<sup>68</sup>

This class relationship elided the regional tensions that were the subject of his previous research. Since he proclaimed that black communities were the archetypal example of national integration, it would have been illogical for him to discuss their inability to overcome the social stigmas of their African and slave pasts or the prejudice against people with darker skin pigmentation.

The historical narrative of caste and class that Aguirre Beltrán wrote about black communities in 1970 was far more optimistic, idyllic, and ingenuous than the ones he

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<sup>67</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “The Integration of the Negro into the National Society of Mexico,” in *Race and Class in Latin America*, ed. Magnus Mörner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 11-27.

<sup>68</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, “La integración de la población negra en la sociedad nacional,” FD 09/1191, CDI-CDJR.

depicted in the 1940s and 1950s. Such reasoning was a product of the debates about caste and class that circulated throughout the Americas in the 1960s. Rather than grounding his conclusions in his ethnographic observations of Cuijla, he based them on his utopian dream for a society that could acknowledge its racial roots without acknowledging caste identities or racial discrimination. It was certainly not aligned with the colonial relationship he described for Ometepe in the 1940s and which became the basis for how he defined the region of refuge by the 1960s.

Despite many theoretical jumps and empirical lacuna, “The Integration of the Negro into the National Society of Mexico” offered the most sophisticated explanation of the theoretical and methodological difficulties that Aguirre Beltrán faced while he connected the colonial history of blackness to post-revolutionary *afromestizo* communities. Because blacks had not left a clear archival footprint in the post-independence period, he naïvely assumed that blacks voluntarily integrated into Mexican society in the period immediately after independence. Unlike their indigenous compatriots who left an abundance of archival sources, they were sufficiently happy with merely being freed from their colonial *casta* shackles.<sup>69</sup> In historical terms that mirrored Herskovits’s own project, Aguirre Beltrán had finally traced blackness from Africa, through the colonial period and the abolition of the caste system with independence, and to the post-revolutionary ethnographic present. He had embedded blackness within Mexican history and contemporary life.

Aguirre Beltrán’s implementation of the ethno-historical method was simultaneously in dialogue with the post-revolutionary desire to integrate the nation, his Herskovits-ian theoretical background, and the inter-American desire to discuss the

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<sup>69</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, “The Integration of the Negro into the National Society of Mexico,” 13.

transition from caste to class societies. Synthesizing decades of research and theoretical treatises on acculturation and integration—along with numerous publications on blackness, indigeneity, and inter-ethnic relations—he asserted:

History will give us a knowledge of the past; ethnography will permit us to understand the present; and ethnohistory will help us interpret the process in its global context and give it, through the interplay of history and ethnography, a more exact interpretation. Ethnographic studies of the Negro in Mexico and, in particular, of interethnic relations between the national populations and the Negroes and between the Negro and Indian populations will provide us with a knowledge of those integrative mechanisms which encourage unity and those seigniorial mechanisms which oppose it.<sup>70</sup>

By 1970, blackness and indigeneity were inherently tied together in his ethnographic observations, historical narratives, and his socio-economic models for post-revolutionary society.

### **The Second Edition of *La población negra de México* (1972)**

Having conceived of a more developed discussion of independence, abolition, and the transformation from caste to class in the nineteenth century, Aguirre Beltrán updated and republished *La población negra de México* in 1972. The second edition united many of the empirical observations and theoretical debates that had entered in and, at times, left his intellectual trajectory since the early 1940s. In the “Prologue,” he depicted blackness in Mexico as a regional, if not a local phenomenon, that was a central element to the nation’s inter-ethnic cultural and demographic mosaic. African-descended communities could be found on the Gulf and Pacific coasts. Other areas were indigenous, *mestizo*, or even predominately white. Although he noted African cultural influences in Cuijla, he

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 12-5.

claimed that blacks had fundamentally integrated into the nation through processes of acculturation.<sup>71</sup>

With the exception of the “Prologue” and a final chapter entitled “Integración del negro [Integration of the Negro],” the 1972 edition left the 1946 version mostly intact. Only some grammatical and syntactic changes were made. However, the new final chapter made the same fundamental arguments about the integration of blacks into the Mexican nation that had been articulated in *Medicina y magia* and again in his essay for Mörner’s anthology. Integration, Aguirre Beltrán claimed, was “today passing through its final moments.” He copied verbatim some of the discussions about ethno-history and integration that were published in 1970. In doing so, he established a coherent narrative about Africanness that was bound by the ethno-historical method. Not surprisingly, he argued that black communities exemplified the process whereby regions of refuge were destroyed and democratic national integration triumphed. Although the lack of a visible African-descended population was, he claimed, an “undesirable” consequence of Spanish colonial rule and the abolition of the *casta* system, the history of black integration into the nation represented what should happen to autonomous indigenous communities that were unfortunately hampered by the regional *mestizo* elite and by their own ethnic divisions. If these regional problems were resolved, then indigenous communities could maintain their cultural practices, enter a class society, and establish ties with the state apparatus and the global political economy.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edición, corregida y aumentada (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1972), 7-12.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 277-80 and 292.

## Conclusion

With the republication of *La población negra de México* in 1972, Aguirre Beltrán came full circle in his construction of Africanness and indigeneity. As he began to study African-descended peoples and cultures in Mexico in the 1940s, he worked with notions of acculturation that he learned from Herskovits. Sensitive to inter-American debates about African cultural retentions, he briefly attempted in his manuscript about Cuijla to situate pure Africanisms within Mexico's ethnographic present. By 1972, he moderated his emphasis on African cultural retentions but, in doing so, managed to write a coherent structural history of Africanness that traced African-descended peoples and cultures from Africa, through the violence of colonial-era slavery and the ethnocentrism of nineteenth-century liberalism, and into the post-revolutionary period.

These changes reflected his time working on indigenous integration for the INI. Between 1949 and 1957, Aguirre Beltrán analyzed indigeneity through the matrix of historical empiricism not through a romanticized nostalgia for the pre-Columbian past or, what he considered to be, the insipid refrains of cultural relativism. The longing for this grand pastime and the championing of authentic indigenous ways of life promulgated myopic discourses that favored local autonomy at the expense of any historical analysis of cultural encounter and transformation. Such a position, he contended, favored racial segregation, caste discrimination, and the desire to maintain pure indigenous and African cultural practices. Through acculturationist policies attuned to the exigencies of *indigenista* nation formation, the state could make caste-dominated regions of refuge disappear. He wanted indigenous communities to copy the historical routes forged when

Mexico's African slave population rejected racial classifications, became *afromestizos*, and integrated into the nation.

In theory, this re-conceptualization of post-revolutionary democracy expanded the pluralist rhetoric that he had espoused before joining the INI and that had been a defining trait of post-revolutionary cultural nationalism for decades. As he constructed Africanness and indigeneity in tandem, he redefined the histories and cultural identities of Mexico's African-descended peoples as well as the democratic underpinnings of Mexican nation formation. But, as the analysis of Francisco Rivera's poetry in next chapter illustrates, these concepts of acculturation and democratic nation formation did not always leave sufficient space for the articulation of local cultural practices and racial identities. Just as Aguirre Beltrán constructed Africanness to craft an inclusive national identity, Rivera used his own conceptualization of it to critique the state apparatus for being un-democratic and to propose an alternative cultural politics that would fulfill the aims of the Mexican Revolution.

## Chapter 7: “Speech, Rally, Danzón”: Francisco Rivera, *Afroubanismo*, and the Mulatto Poetics of Anti-PRIista Protest after 1957

State intellectuals were not the only Mexican nationalists who participated in transnational ethnographic dialogues about African cultural retentions. Francisco Rivera, the popular poet and chronicler of the city of Veracruz, also read and culled from the ethnographic publications of the *afroubanista* movement. In his verse, he depicted a cultural and historical union between the exuberance of Afro-Cuban music, particularly the *danzón*, and the heroic rebelliousness of the city of Veracruz. Embracing Mexico’s *costumbrista* tradition—whereby intellectuals tell Mexican history through picturesque narratives about the vernacular culture of a specific locality—he redeployed *afroubanista* cultural politics to forge a more culturally and politically democratic nation and to critique the PRI for its inability to foster electoral democracy.

Exemplified by the slogan “Speech, rally, danzón,” the satirical verses in his 1957 epic poem *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha* equated the Afro-Cuban music with local culture.<sup>1</sup> For his local readers, this reference to the *danzón* immediately evoked the city’s Afro-Caribbean heritage. However, Rivera also used a more esoteric *afroubanista* vocabulary to tell an alternative local (and national) history from the PRI’s teleological narrative. In 1957, he still hoped that the Revolution’s goals could be fulfilled and that the city’s *danzonera* culture could re-emerge after years of neglect. But as the PRI imposed economic modernization on local communities and continued to govern practically unopposed, Rivera’s hopes waned. By the early 1970s, he explicitly critiqued

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<sup>1</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha* (1957), 29 line 16.

the ruling party's policies that, he claimed, ignored the needs of local residents.

Sometime after 1970, he wrote a second edition of *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha* that added the history of the city from 1957 to approximately that year. The epic's tone became cynical and nostalgic. The Afro-Cuban cultures represented in "Speech, rally, danzón," ceased to bounce off the city streets. Musical festivities no longer characterized the city's identity, and consequently any hope for a return to democratic politics had vanished.

This chapter places Rivera and his verse in the city's history of cultural and intellectual exchange with Cuba since the mid-1850s. It discusses how he used *afrocubanista* discourses in 1957 and why his politically-driven narrative tenor changed by the second edition of *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha*. His poetry introduced African-descended cultures and vocabularies to the political dissent of the 1950s and 1960s. He articulated a different cultural, racial, and discursive critique of PRI authoritarianism from the diatribes issued by urban middle class youth, workers, and rural communities who have traditionally garnered more attention.<sup>2</sup> Through his depiction of African-descended identities in the city's everyday cosmopolitan culture, he established a particular historical bond between the city and Cuba. He defined this cultural identity as *jarocho*: the mixture of Mexican and Afro-Cuban (and therefore African-descended) heritages that developed chiefly when *danzón* became part of the city's everyday cultural life by the turn of the twentieth century.

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<sup>2</sup> On middle class youth, see Elena Ponatowska, *La Noche de Tlatelolco* (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1975); and Zolov, *Refried Elvis*. On workers see, Robert Francis Alegre, "Contesting the 'Mexican Miracle': Railway Men and Women and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico, 1943-1959" (PhD diss, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2007). On indigenous resistance, see Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata*; and Rubin *Decentering the Regime*.



## Rivera's Historical and Cultural Context

Rivera was born on February 25, 1908 in the historic district of the city of Veracruz and only a few blocks from its docks. The Porfirian government (1876-1910) had just finished a three-decade-long project to renovate the port and provide the city with better sanitation, clean water, electricity, and other modern amenities. From 1900 to 1930 the population of the state of Veracruz increased, nearly doubling from 134,469 people to 261,223. Of the state's major cities, the population of port-city increased the most. There were 29,164 residents in 1900; 48,633 in 1910; and 67,801 in 1930.<sup>3</sup> Since Cuba's wars of independence began in 1868, many Cuban exiles arrived at the port. Although the exact numbers are unknown, many remained in the state to work in the growing tobacco industry.<sup>4</sup> As late as 1917, Cuban migrants still trickled into the port.<sup>5</sup> Besides being field hands, they worked as skilled professionals—lawyers, teachers, tailors, and pharmacists—in the city of Veracruz and across the state.<sup>6</sup>

As they participated in the city's cultural and intellectual life, Cuban nationalists wedded the port-city to Cuban politics in the 1890s. Drawing on the New York City-based movement to fight for Cuban independence, they founded local branches of the Partido Revolucionario Cubano [Cuban Revolutionary Party] in the historic district and

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew Grant Wood, *Revolution in the Street: Women, Workers, and Urban Protest in Veracruz, 1870-1927* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc, 2001), 3-6.

<sup>4</sup> On Cuban immigration, see Juárez Hernández, *Persistencias culturales afrocaribeñas en Veracruz*, 191-232; and María del Socorro Herrera Barreda, "Un caso de xenofilia mexicana: la inmigración cubana entre 1868 y 1898," in *Xenofobia y xenofilia en la historia de México. Siglos XIX y XX*, coord. Delia Salazar Anaya (México: SEGOB, 2006), 181. On tobacco, see José González Sierra, "La rica hoja: San Andrés y el tabaco a fines del XIX," *La Palabra y el Hombre* 72 (Octubre-Diciembre 1989): 186-99.

<sup>5</sup> Cartas de naturalización/Pasaportes, Exp 13, Caja 1, AGEV.

<sup>6</sup> Foja 109-18, Vol. 350, Caja 248; and Foja 26-56, Vol. 367, Caja 261, AMV-AH.

published the newsletter *Guillermón* throughout the 1890s.<sup>7</sup> In 1885 José Miguel Macías (1831-1904), the president of Club Maximo Gómez and a friend of the Governor of Veracruz Teodoro Dehesa (1848-1936), published *Diccionario cubano. Etimológico, critico, razonado y comprensivo* [*Cuban Dictionary: Etymological, critical, reasoned, and comprehensive*].<sup>8</sup> The dictionary, he hoped, would note the linguistic similarities between Mexico and Cuba and, more broadly, between the Spanish-speaking mainland and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean.<sup>9</sup>

Music also connected Cuba and the port-city. In the second-half of the nineteenth century, Cuban dancers and musicians, like los Bufos Habaneros, brought the *danzón*—an offshoot of the European *contradanza* where couples danced cheek-to-cheek while swiveling their hips to the music’s African-descended syncopated rhythms—to Mexico. By the early 1880s, this Afro-Cuban dance gained popularity in the city of Veracruz, the state of Yucatán, and Mexico City. With the emergence of the recording industry and the radio in the 1920s and 1930s, the *danzón* as well as other Cuban genres gained popularity across the nation.<sup>10</sup> By the 1930s, the romantic *boleros* sung by Agustín Lara (1897-1970) and Veracruz-native Antonia del Carmen Peregrino Álvarez (1912-1983), or Toña La Negra as she was affectionately called, represented the nation’s fascination with Afro-

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<sup>7</sup> *Guillermón*, 1897 and 1898, Microfilm, pg. 9, IHSUV-BLCO; and Juárez Hernández, *Persistencias culturales afrocaribeñas en Veracruz*, 222. On the Partido Revolucionario Cubano, see Lillian Guerra, *The Myth of José Martí: Conflicting Nationalisms in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 15-6 and 62-3.

<sup>8</sup> *Guillermón*, 1897 and 1898, Microfilm, pg. 2, IHSUV-BLCO. Also see Leonardo Pasquel, “Prólogo,” in *Discurso a Veracruz en su Tercer Centenario*, by José Miguel Macías (México, D.F.: Editorial Citlaltepen, 1967), xiv.

<sup>9</sup> José Miguel Macías, *Diccionario cubano. Etimológico, critico, razonado y comprensivo* (Veracruz: Imprenta de C. Towbridge, 1885), x-xi.

<sup>10</sup> Flores y Escalante, *Salón México*; and Jara Gámez, Rodríguez Yeyo, and Zedillo Castillo, *De Cuba con amor . . . el danzón en México*.

Cuban musical genres.<sup>11</sup> The dissemination of classical and popular music from Veracruz on radio stations like XEW helped the state apparatus to unite the nation's diverse musical tastes. Because major radio stations became a mouthpiece for state cultural politics, music became a rhetorical device for local intellectuals, like Rivera, to condemn state practices and to reaffirm alternative forms of local identity.<sup>12</sup>

The son of a Spanish father and a *huapanguera* (a female *huapango* performer) from the rural town of Ovejas, Veracruz, Rivera grew-up listening to the vernacular music of his home state as well as popular Cuban songs. Epitomized by musical exchanges and the cultural initiatives of Cuban nationalists like Macías, these immigrants helped forge a cultural and historical bond between Cuba and the port-city that left a lasting impression on Rivera. He attended a primary school named after Macías, read poems by *afrocubanista* Nicolás Guillén, and studied major events in Cuban history. As Rivera proclaimed in 1983, he learned “to love and respect Cuba” during his formative years.<sup>13</sup>

As a waiter and a pharmacist, he worked in Oaxaca and Veracruz in the late 1920s and 1930s. In 1939, he returned to the port-city to work at a pharmacy. Although he had always been interested in poetry and began to write a few verses in the 1930s, he did not become a poet until his father won the lottery. With financial stability, Rivera gave up his

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<sup>11</sup> Carlos Monsiváis, *Mexican Postcards*, ed. and trans. John Kraniuskas (New York, NY: Verso, 2000), 179-86; and Guadalupe Loaeza and Pável Granados, *Mi novia, la tristeza* (México, D.F.: Océano, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> On the use of the radio for Mexican nation formation, see Joy Elizabeth Hayes, *Radio Nation: Communication, Popular Culture, and Nationalism in Mexico, 1920-1950* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> “Entrevista a Paco Pildora,” in *Plano oblicuo* 1, no. 1 (Primavera 1983), Expediente Reportajes periodísticos con diversos personalidades de la cultura y la política, Caja Diversos Reportes a Francisco Rivera Ávila, AMV-FFRA; and “Mis escuelas primarias mis condiscípulos de entonces,” Expediente Revolviendo Papeles, Box “Cartel Exposición Temporal,” AMV-FFRA.

job, travelled around Veracruz, and began to write in local newspapers that comically depicted literary figures and local cultural practices. When he began to write for *El Dictamen* (the state's main newspaper) in the mid-1950s, his local and regional fame increased.<sup>14</sup> As a result of his job as a pharmacist, he even acquired the nickname Paco Píldora [Paco Pill], a moniker that affectionately symbolized his jocular representations of the port-city.<sup>15</sup> With the publication of his 1957 epic history *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha*, he became known as a “humorist, folkloric poet” as well as a “jarocho poet.”<sup>16</sup> His epic narrative established him as the defining popular voice of the port-city for the rest of the twentieth century.

### **Rivera's Library and *Afrocubanista* Vocabulary**

*Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha* tells the history of the city of Veracruz. The epic poem begins with Hernán Cortés's arrival in 1519 and continues with the Atlantic economy based on slavery, tobacco, and sugar; black and indigenous resistance to the colonial regime; the wars of independence; and nineteenth century state formation. It culminates with the Revolution of 1910 and the cultural and political projects that developed in the post-revolutionary period. Writing for a popular audience in 1957, Rivera hoped that the epic poem would “be used as a (free) textbook and reference

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<sup>14</sup> Guadarrama Olivera, “Francisco Rivera *Paco Píldora*,” 271-5.

<sup>15</sup> “Entrevista a Paco Píldora,” in *Plano oblicuo* 1, no. 1 (Primavera 1983), Folder Reportajes periodísticos con diversos personalidades de la cultura y la política, Box Diversos Reportes a Francisco Rivera Ávila, AMV-FFRA.

<sup>16</sup> “La Semana Social,” Expediente Nota del libro *Veracruz en la Historia y la Cumbancha*; and Expediente Notas sobre el libro *Veracruz en la Historia y la Cumbancha*. México, D.F. 1957; Caja Cartel Exposición Temporal, AMV-FFRA.

guide.”<sup>17</sup> Presumably to make it more palatable for popular audiences, he followed a simple five-line stanza structure, used end rhyme, and occasionally truncated words or playfully added extra syllables to increase the fluidity of a line or a stanza and to mimic popular speech patterns.

Although Rivera was not the first scholar to define *jarocho* culture, he innovatively grafted *afrocubanista* discourses and an Afro-Cuban vernacular onto local history and culture. The term *jarocho* had connoted various class, geographic, and racial meanings that predated his verse. Dictionaries often defined it as a rural field-hand or rancher who lived in the areas surrounding the city.<sup>18</sup> In *Diccionario Cubano*, Macías added that, in the port-city and in Cuba, *jarochos* could also be “individuals originating from the African race.”<sup>19</sup> In 1924, Nicolas León claimed that *jarocho* had been harshly defined “in some provinces [as] a person with abrupt manners, rotten, and some rudeness.” But, he noted (just like Aguirre Beltrán later explained in both editions of *La población negra de México*) that it could also be more benevolently defined as the people of indigenous and black descent in the state of Veracruz. Synthesizing many of these performative, geographic, and racial connotations, León characterized *jarocho* as half black and half Indian.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha con una selección de poemas jarochos* (1957), np.

<sup>18</sup> Félix Ramos y Duarte, *Diccionario de mejicanismos* (Mejico: Imprenta de Eduardo Dublan, 1895), 320; and Francisco J. Santamaria, *Diccionario general de americanismos*, tomo 2 (Méjico, D.F.: Editorial Pedro Robredo, 1942), 141.

<sup>19</sup> Macías, *Diccionario Cubano*, 724.

<sup>20</sup> León, *Las castas del México colonial*, 24 and figure 24.

In a culturally astute analysis of the economic exploitation of the indigenous population of Veracruz, economist Moisés T. de la Peña characterized *jarocho* culture as a harmonious blend of indigenous, Spanish, and black biological stocks. Blacks from Northern Africa, he claimed in 1947, had integrated into regional life to the degree that “it is no longer possible to separate them from the future of the State.” Although this analysis stressed Veracruz’s African-descended slave population, it failed to discuss the role the role of African cultural retentions or of nineteenth-century Afro-Cuban cultures.<sup>21</sup> As was often the case in national histories, the mention of Africanness in the history of Veracruz was reduced to references to slavery, the history of Yanga, and the black communities that resided in the state.<sup>22</sup>

In constructing a *jarocho* identity, Rivera built upon the racialized definitions that linked the term with an African ancestry. Even though Macías emphasized indigenous and Spanish language more than African ones, the linguistic relationship that he saw between Cuban and port life was the closest to Rivera’s formulation of *jarocho* identity.<sup>23</sup> To highlight the urban port-city, Rivera dismissed the *campesino* traits that were occasionally affiliated with the moniker. The city’s ties to the Caribbean, particularly to Afro-Cuba, and to the wider Atlantic world epitomized his understanding of *jarocho*. In a strategic move to ascribe Afro-Cuban culture to local identity, he used an *afrocubanista*

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<sup>21</sup> Moisés T. de la Peña, *Veracruz económico*, Tomo 1 (México: Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, 1946), 233.

<sup>22</sup> de la Peña, *Veracruz económico*, tomo 1, 233; *Veracruz (Apuntes Históricos)* (México, D.F.: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1947), 34; Felipe Montemayor, *La población de Veracruz. Historia de lenguas. Culturas actuales. Rasgos físicos de la población* (Gobierno de Veracruz, 1950-1956), 14. Also see Rafael Valenzuela, *Geografía elemental del Estado de Veracruz*, nueva edición (México, D.F.: Ediciones “Aguilas” S.A., 1939)

<sup>23</sup> Macías, *Diccionario cubano*, x.

vocabulary in *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha*. However, the complete lack of explicit references to or citations of Cuban nationalists—like Nicolas Guillén, Alejo Carpentier, and Fernando Ortiz—obscured his linguistic appropriation of an Afro-Cuban vernacular dialect.

The title *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha* alluded to these linguistic connections. In Cuba, *cumbancha* signified a party that was often accompanied by live rumba music.<sup>24</sup> In his seminal *afrocubanista* text, *Glosario de Afronegrismos*, Ortiz defined it as an “orgy, partying, revelry, messy fun and noisy.” It was “a voice of African lineage, a derivation from the cumbé, [an] ancient black dance.”<sup>25</sup> However, *cumbancha* was not a common word in Mexico and had only entered Mexican musicological discussions that drew upon Ortiz’s *Glosario de Afronegrismos*.<sup>26</sup> In popular culture, Lara and Toña La Negra sang the bolero “La Cumbancha” (1934), which asked if the rhythmic sounds of the harpsichord, bongo drums, and maracas made people forget the bad times.<sup>27</sup> While the song implicitly linked the *cumbancha* to laughter, its mention of African-derived bongos and maracas strengthened the somewhat implicit connection between local festivities and African-descended cultures. Other Mexican dictionaries, including Macías’s *Diccionario cubano*, failed to mention *cumbancha*.<sup>28</sup> The partying and raucous

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<sup>24</sup> Hughes, *Autobiography: I Wonder as I Wander*, 44.

<sup>25</sup> Ortiz, *Glosario de afronegrismos*, 153.

<sup>26</sup> For discussion of *cumbancha*, see Mayer-Serra, *Música y músicos de latinoamérica. A-J*, 254.

<sup>27</sup> For lyrics to “La Cumbancha,” see Hugo Argüelles, *Teatro vario*, vol. IV (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998), 271. Also see Loaeza and Granados, *Mi novia, la tristeza*, 288.

<sup>28</sup> *Cumbancha* is not included in Macías, *Diccionario cubano*; Ramos y Duarte, *Diccionario de mejicanismos*; or Santamaria, *Diccionario general de americanismos*, 3 tomos.

nature of Ortiz's definition and Lara's musical reference to it most likely shaped Rivera's picturesque cultural history.

Rivera's personal library also points to his interest in *afrocubanista* thought. His collection included Nicolás Guillén's classic poetry anthology *Sóngoro cosongo* (1931) and Alejo Carpentier's canonical *La música en Cuba* (1946).<sup>29</sup> Although it is not possible to know exactly when Rivera acquired these texts, the fact that he owned first editions indicates that Rivera was most likely concerned with the topic before the publication of *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha*. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Rivera acquired more books by and about Guillén and Carpentier.<sup>30</sup> During this period, he also bought Fernando Ortiz's 1965 *La africanía de la música folklórica de Cuba* [*The African-ness of the folkloric music of Cuba*].<sup>31</sup> Although he did not own it, Ortiz's voluminous *Glosario de afronegrismos* most likely provided him with much of much of the vocabulary, such as *cumbancha*, that he deployed to associate Afro-Cuban music and culture with the city of Veracruz. By the second edition of his epic history, Rivera had added the poem "Cundingó" that, as Rivera admitted, "utilized Cuban terms like

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<sup>29</sup> Nicolás Guillén, *Sóngoro consongo* (La Habana, Cuba, 1931), 811-13A, AMV-FFRA; and Alejo Carpentier, *La música en Cuba* (México, DF, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1946), 780-4, AMV-FFRA.

<sup>30</sup> Nicolás Guillén, *Antología mayor/El son entero y otros poemas* (La Habana, Cuba: Ediciones Unión, 1964), 811-11, AMV-FFRA; Alejo Carpentier, *Concierto barroco* (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1979), 813-7, AMV-FFRA; Angel Augier, *Nicolás Guillén* (La Habana, Cuba: Editado por la Unidad Productora, 1971), 811-2, AMV-FFRA; and Angel Augier, *La revolución cubana en la poesía de Nicolás Guillén* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letra Cubanas, 1979), 811-1, AMV-FFRA.

<sup>31</sup> Fernando Ortiz, *La africanía de la música folklórica de Cuba* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Universitaria, 1965), 780-11, AMV-FFRA.



‘ocambo’” to mimic how “they talk in Cuba to the old blacks [negros] in the ñañigo dialect.”<sup>32</sup>

In an article from 1985, he linked these monographs to his own analyses of Afro-Cuban music in the city of Veracruz. Quoting Carpentier’s *La música en Cuba*, Rivera wrote that the Argentine tangos performed in the port-city were rooted in African music and were therefore not just a derivation of European genres. Like the African-descended rumba and *yambú* that had also travelled from Africa (via Spain) to Cuba, Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, and other nations in the Western Hemisphere, these tangos were a product of “the coming and going of the black rhythms and dances in America and Spain and vice-versa.” Drawing on Ortiz, he noted that *ñañigo* music—the music of a particular religious secret society in Cuba—originated in West Africa and could be found anywhere in the Americas. Although it was typically depicted as Afro-Cuban, this genre did not inhere in “a race, a people [pueblo], or a country” and, instead, was present in any community that had people who participated in this secret society.<sup>33</sup> As he quoted Carpentier and Ortiz, Rivera grafted their analysis of African-descended music onto his own observations and justified his belief that Afro-Cuban culture could flourish in communities that did not consist primarily of Afro-Cubans.

As a result of his fascination with African-descended music in the city of Veracruz and Cuba, Rivera had become interested in the song and dance of African

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<sup>32</sup> See Francisco Rivera, “Cundingó” in *Veracruz en la historia y en la cumbancha. Poemas Jarochos*, 2nd edición (Col. Centro Veracruz, Ver.: Juan Carlos Lara Prado, 1994), 114-6, especially line 62; and “Entrevista a Paco Pildora,” in *Plano oblicuo* 1, no. 1 (Primavera 1983), Expediente Reportajes periodísticos con diversos personalidades de la cultura y la política, Caja Diversos Reportes a Francisco Rivera Ávila, AMV-FFRA.

<sup>33</sup> Paco Pildora, “Revolviendo Papeles. Fernando Ortiz. La Africanía de la música folklórica de Cuba,” Expediente Revolviendo Papeles, Caja, Cartel Exposición Temporal, AMV-FFRA.

peoples (such as the Yoruba, Bantu, and Dahomey). Concluding this 1985 article, he proclaimed “I have at your disposal in my small library some works about African music, [and] in America, the blacks of the Continent. . . . If they interest you, you can borrow them.”<sup>34</sup> This social consciousness and desire to disseminate knowledge about African and Afro-Cuban music in the city reinforced his belief that *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha* should be free and available for all people who wanted to read it. Rivera intended for his poetry and his library to a means to teach residents about their Afro-Cuban and therefore their African heritage.

### ***Jarocho Identity in Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha***

In *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha*, Rivera used sounds—waves hitting the beach, musical rhythms, and the cacophony of political debate—to characterize *jarocho* culture. The sea that brought the Spanish settlers and African slaves began the process of making this cosmopolitan community. Although indigenous peoples did inhabit the region before Cortés arrived in 1519, Rivera depicted the majestic beaches and waters of the port without reference to them. He depicted the seemingly virgin land as:

Blue sky and white beaches  
white feathers of the birds;  
and silent and serious  
—like the sturdy watchtowers—  
two emerald islets

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

[Cielo azul y blancas playas  
albo plumón de los aves;  
y taciturnas y graves  
—como recias atalayas—  
dos islotes de esmeralda].<sup>35</sup>

While the land was silent, there was “the crash of the waves [el tumbo de las olas]” and

inland the murmur  
of the dashing conch shells.

[tierra adentro el murmurío  
de maricales caracoles.]<sup>36</sup>

Like other historians of Veracruz, Rivera frequently mentioned the seemingly ubiquitous arrival and departure of merchant ships from the port during the colonial period. Economic exchange as well as the exploitation and, at times, enslavement of indigenous communities caused the indigenous and Spanish races to mix together. As Rivera explained, the Atlantic economy also helped the city’s infrastructure develop and its population to be more culturally diverse:

It grew, grew like lavender  
the Vera Cruz, dressed up  
the Cove, the real pier,  
—the danzones from Havana—  
The parish church, the hospital.

[Crece, crece como espliego  
la Vera Cruz, se engalana,  
la Caleta, el muelle real,  
—los danzones de la Habana—  
La parroquia, el hospital.]<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha con una selección de poemas jarocho* (1957), 9 lines 1-5.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 lines 8-10.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 lines 36-40.

In discussing the expansion of the city in the early-to-mid sixteenth century, he noted the building of hospitals and churches as well as the arrival of the *danzón*. His reference to this Cuban dance was strategic and anachronistic considering that by the 1950s it was commonly thought that African-descended peoples, particularly Miguel Faílde (1852-1921), composed and began to dance the *danzón* in the late 1870s.<sup>38</sup> By situating the origins of the genre in the early colonial period, Rivera claimed that it was foundational for the making of the city's culture. Despite his historical inclinations, this ahistorical treatment of certain musical genres helped him to construct an innate, if not essentialized, *jarocho* identity.

With the forced importation of Africans, he explained that a racially-mixed population emerged:

The population meanwhile  
grew in number and color,  
creoles, mulattos, mestizos,

[La población entre tanto  
crece en número y color,  
criollos, mulatos, mestizos,].”<sup>39</sup>

For Rivera, the importation of blacks was critical for the development of colonial society:

They arrived from the Windward Islands  
The blacks and the good tobacco,  
Opened their stores at Buitrón  
—selling fermented drinks and stews  
and expanding the population—

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<sup>38</sup> Carpentier, *La música en Cuba*, 135-6. However, Hettie Malcomson explains that the first danzones were first composed as early as 1813. See Hettie Malcomson, “The ‘routes’ and ‘roots’ of *danzón*: a critique of the history of a genre,” *Popular Music* 30, no 2 (2011): 267.

<sup>39</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha con una selección de poemas jarochos* (1957), 10 lines 61-3.

[Nos llegan de Barlovento  
 los negros y el buen tabaco,  
 abre sus ventas Buitrón  
 —vende tepache y ajiaco  
 y crece la población—].<sup>40</sup>

As he would clarify in 1973, the deplorable conditions at Buitrón founded “by a miraculous coincidence” the racially-mixed and culturally-hybrid origins of *jarocho* identity.<sup>41</sup>

Trans-Atlantic commercial routes also brought pirates who sacked the city. To illustrate the importance of these African-descended people and to rebut the idea that blackness was equivalent to criminality, Rivera used Afro-Cuban music to depict the defense of the port-city against ocean-faring marauders. In romantic terms, he proclaimed:

The convicts were trained  
 Armed with the rebambaramba  
 They go up the watchtower  
 La Bamba sounds in the air  
 The musketry shines.

[Se entrenan los presidiarios  
 se arma la rebambaramba,  
 sube a la torre el vigía  
 suena en los aires La Bamba  
 brilla la fusilería.]<sup>42</sup>

In this stanza, Rivera referenced *La Bamba*, a regional vernacular tune that—as Baqueiro Foster noted—had had black melodies, harmonies, and rhythms. Again, Rivera’s musical reference was anachronistic. As variation of the *huapango*, *La Bamba* emerged from the

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 10 lines 11-15.

<sup>41</sup> “Raíz del Jarocho,” *El Chaquiste*, Octubre 16, 1973, Expediente Raíz del Jarocho, Caja M-V, AMV-FFRA.

<sup>42</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha con una selección de poemas jarochos* (1957), 11 lines 56-60.

Spanish *fandango* around 1790, not in the early-to-mid colonial period that Rivera was depicting. By placing this initial reference to the song in the early colonial period, he highlighted the local origins of a song that had become popular across Mexico in the mid-1940s.<sup>43</sup>

There was another purpose for mentioning *La Bamba* in this stanza. Since the mid-1800s, the residents of city and state of Veracruz prided themselves on their courageous defense of the port and the entire nation during foreign invasions. In this passage, Rivera used the alliteration between *bamba* and *bomba* [bomb] to associate blackness with the valiant defense of the city. In another history of *La Bamba*, he utilized a comic strip [see Image 3] to make this playful word-game between bombs and music. This form of art was a way for intellectuals, like him, to reach a larger audience and, as historian Anne Rubenstein explains, to create alternative cultural narratives.<sup>44</sup> The heroism that he associated with *La Bamba*—and which reinforced with the alliterative use of *bomba*—helped him define *jarocho* life and connect it to Afro-Cuban culture.

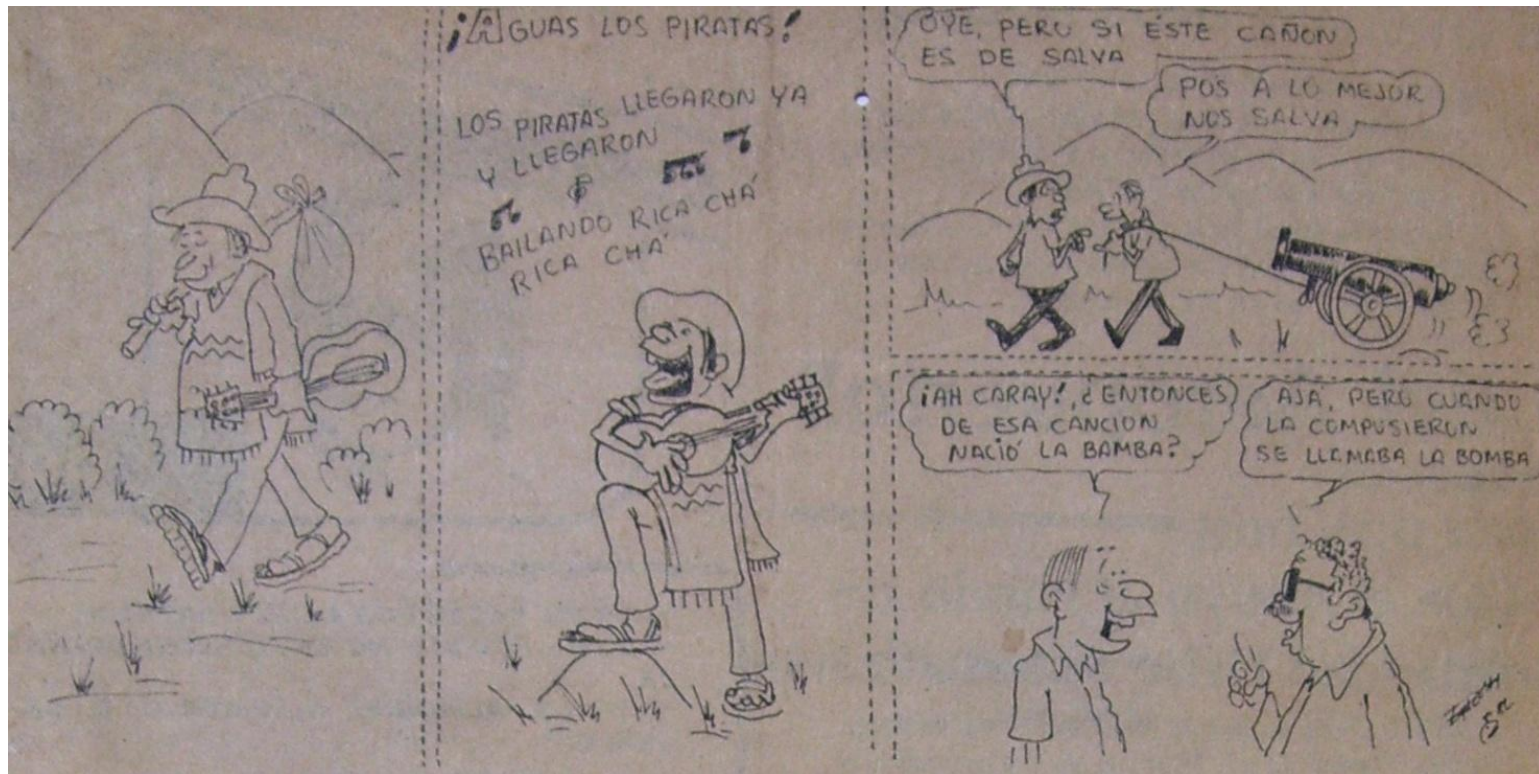
This stanza also had several possible allusions to *afrocubanista* texts. In *Glosario de afronegrismos*, Ortiz asserted that *bamba* was a word from the Congo that could signify a game or a form of improvisation.<sup>45</sup> Because *La Bamba* was a well-known Mexican vernacular song, it is doubtful that Rivera only used it because of Ortiz's definition. However, Ortiz's definition linked *La Bamba* more directly to Africa than other regional definitions, such as Baqueiro Foster's inchoate discussion of it or Macías's

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<sup>43</sup> Kohl S., *Ecos de "La Bamba."* 57-9 and 61-4.

<sup>44</sup> On the comic book genre in post-revolutionary Mexico, see Anne Rubenstein, *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, and Other Threats to the Nation: A Political History of Comic Books in Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

<sup>45</sup> Ortiz, *Glosario de afronegrismos*, 41.



**Image 3:** La Bamba. From Box 2: “Water, the Pirates!” (singing) “The pirates already arrived and they arrived dancing rica chá, rica chá”; Box 3: “Listen, but if this cannon has blanks.” “But, it better saves us.”; Box 4: “Good Heavens! Then La Bamba was born from this song?” “Uh-Huh, but when it was composed, they called it La Bomba.” From: Paco Rivera Avila “¡¡ASÍ se Escribió la Historia!!” Folder: La Bamba. El Dictamen, Caja M-Z, AMV-FFRA.

definition, which ignored blackness and Africanness altogether.<sup>46</sup> However, the stanza's connection to *afrocubanismo* is more present in the word *rebambaramba*. Rivera associated *rebambaramba* with popular noises that often upset the elite.<sup>47</sup> Similarly for Ortiz, it was a “scandal, disorder, confusion.”<sup>48</sup> In this sense, *bamba* and *rebambaramba* resonated with the concept of *cumbancha* that framed the entire epic poem.

*Rebambaramba* could also have referred to the classical composition *La Rebambaramba* that Cuban Amadeo Roldán (1900-1939) composed and debuted in 1928. Based on a libretto by Carpentier, the opera illustrated everyday life in Havana in 1830 and depicted the popular religions of the Congo and Lucumí slaves in Cuba.<sup>49</sup> In *Música en Cuba*, Carpentier noted that Roldán's composition (which had been performed in Mexico) was a beautiful fusion of African motifs and modernist musical accoutrements that made it quintessentially *afrocubanista*.<sup>50</sup> By situating a reference to everyday Afro-Cuban life in the subaltern defense of the city, Rivera connected Afro-Cuban music to local culture and history just as he had accomplished with his analysis of Buitrón. Instead of giving black music and parties a negative criminal connotation, he celebrated them as archetypal aspects of local culture. This verse therefore critiqued the commonplace assumption that African and Afro-Cuban cultures were a threat to Mexican nationality.

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<sup>46</sup> Macías, *Diccionario cubano*, 130.

<sup>47</sup> Paco Pildora, “Condes y condesas varones y marqueses de la rancia aristocracia [sic] veracruzana,” Expediente Revolviendo Papeles, Caja Cartel Exposición Temporal, AMV-FFRA.

<sup>48</sup> Ortiz, *Glosario de afronegrismos*, 405.

<sup>49</sup> Alejo Carpentier, “The Rebambaramba,” trans. Jill A. Netchinsky, *Latin American Literary Review* 15, no. 30 (July 1987): 68-70.

<sup>50</sup> Carpentier *La música en Cuba*, 175-6.



Discussing the city of Veracruz as well as the Mexican nation on the eve of the wars of independence, Rivera made his first reference to “the jarocho entity [la jarocho entidad].”<sup>51</sup> A few lines later, he introduced the idea of a Mexican nationality when he articulated that hopes of independence had permeated across “the Mexican lands [las tierras mexicanas].”<sup>52</sup> The crafting of these local and national identities drew on the subaltern resistance of African slaves like Yanga and anti-colonial actions of the indigenous population.<sup>53</sup> Although national identity crystallized with independence, the city’s *jarocho* culture was still developing. As he moved into a discussion of the heroic defense of the port in nineteenth century, Rivera constantly alluded to the Afro-Cuban rumba. This rhythmic dance, for instance, represented the celebrations that accompanied independence and the defeat of the Austrian Archduke Maximilian in 1867.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to its Cuban heritage, this nineteenth-century *jarocho* musical scene included tunes that dated back to Mexico’s slave past. Discussing to two *huapanguera* songs, the *Pájaro Cú* and the *Balajú*, Rivera celebrated this transformation in the life of the city of Veracruz in the years immediately after independence:

The jarocho entered at last  
and spread through the population  
singing el pájaro Cú,  
and even the Spaniards  
sang the happy balajú.

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<sup>51</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha con una selección de poemas jarochos* (1957), 13 line 50.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 line 68.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 lines 26-30.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 lines 1-35 and 18 lines 66-70.

[Entra el jarocho por fin  
y en la población se riega  
cantando el pájaro Cú,  
y hasta la gente gallega  
canta alegre el balajú.]<sup>55</sup>

The city's *jarocho* identity continued to develop throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. The influx of Cuban immigrants in the second half of the nineteenth century represented the culmination of the city's cosmopolitan cultural flows. In eugenic terms, Rivera argued that the city became healthy when, during the Porfiriato, it finished becoming *jarocho*:

The strong and healthy population  
one hundred percent jarocho,  
- the vomiting had finished  
with every foreign element  
from abroad having arrived.

[La población fuerte y sana  
jarocho ciento por ciento,  
- el vómito había acabado  
con todo ajeno elemento  
que de fuera había llegado.]<sup>56</sup>

It is unclear, however, in this stanza whether Cuban immigration or Porfirian modernization improved public health. In all likelihood, Rivera associated them both with this healthy and vibrant *jarocho* culture.

Having foreshadowed this idea numerous times, Rivera finally placed the *danzón* in its correct historical moment:

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 14 lines 46-50.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 20 lines 46-50.

Veracruz vibrates in danzones,  
 since the immigration  
 of the happy Cubans,  
 they are teachers and craftsmen  
 in arts and the *danzón*.

[Veracruz vibra en danzones,  
 pues llega la emigración  
 de los alegres cubanos,  
 son maestros y artesanos  
 en las letras y el *danzón*.]<sup>57</sup>

Although a racially diverse set of white and blue collar Cubans arrived in the port-city during the island's wars with Spain and the United States, Rivera subsumed their diverse phenotypes, ideologies, skills, and cultural practices to their ability to perform the *danzón*. Because of them, the *danzón* became a "ritual [rito]" in the city.<sup>58</sup>

Without explicitly mentioning race, he claimed that the entire city embraced this Afro-Cuban revelry since

the danzones continued sounding  
 guarachas, yambús and rumbas

[siguen sonando danzones  
 guarachas, yambús y rumbas].<sup>59</sup>

All of these musical genres had Afro-Cuban origins and had previously been discussed by Carpentier in *Música en Cuba*. Unlike his references to the popular *danzón*, rumba, and *guaracha*, Rivera's mention of the *yambú*, an urban variation of the rumba, was a comparatively more obscure allusion to Afro-Cuban music that was most likely

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 21 lines 1-5.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 21 line 13.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 22 lines 9-10.

indicative of his reading of *afrocubanista* texts.<sup>60</sup> In *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, Carpentier defined the *yambú* as a variation of the Afro-Cuban *son*.<sup>61</sup> Ortiz noted its African origins when he characterized it as an “Afro-Cuban dance” that etymologically originated from the *Yambú* language “that is equivalent to *Yoruba*.”<sup>62</sup> While Rivera characterized *jarocho* identity through the *danzón* and rumba, he also used *afrocubanista* texts to identify other Afro-Cuban musical genres that permeated the port-city’s everyday *cumbanchera* culture. In his poetry, he crafted a new definition of *cumbancha* as he recast Mexican understandings of blackness and Africanness. *Cumbancha* lacked the stereotyped, criminological connotations that Ortiz noted in his analysis of Afro-Cuban merriment and ebullience.

### **Afro-Cuban Music and Post-Revolutionary Democracy in Veracruz *en la historia y la cumbancha***

Rivera crafted a peaceful picture of city life during the Porfiriato in order to construct a *jarocho* identity that transcended class lines and that embraced its indigenous, Afro-Cuban, African, and Spanish heritages. He asserted:

There was not scandal or conundrums,  
there was peace and tranquility,  
with agility the *jarocho*  
spread across the entire city  
his happiness and liveliness.

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<sup>60</sup> On the *yambú*, see Carpentier, *La música en Cuba*, 138; Larry Crook, “A Musical Analysis of the Cuban Rumba,” *Latin American Music Review* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1982):93; and Maya Roy, *Cuban Music: From Son and Rumba to The Buena Vista Social Club and timba Cubana*, trans. Denise Asfar and Gabriel Asfar (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers 2002), 58-9.

<sup>61</sup> Carpentier, *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, 206.

<sup>62</sup> Ortiz, *Glosario de afronegrismos*, 473-4.

[No hay escándalos ni brete,  
 hay paz y tranquilidad,  
 el jarocho con soltura  
 riega en toda la ciudad  
 su alegría y su sabrosura.]<sup>63</sup>

To paint such a benevolent scene, he downplayed the social tensions that undergirded the entire nineteenth century.<sup>64</sup> He also mitigated the racist refrains about the inferiority of African-descended cultures and black criminality that dominated pre-revolutionary rhetoric. But, his idyllic representations of the Porfirian period were also a sarcastic and implicit critique of the Díaz regime.

Turning to the first decade of the twentieth century, he was more critical of Porfirian government. Bereft of any glimmers of social peace, his verse juxtaposed the port's heroic tenacity with Díaz's anti-democratic politics. The port-city therefore embraced the Maderista charge against the Porfirian regime.<sup>65</sup> Social protest emerged as the city's ebullient atmosphere transformed from being raucous to revolutionary:

There already were workers protests,  
 unease, although apparent,  
 everything was in turmoil,  
 and the people now spoke  
 about no reelection.

[Hay ya protestas obreras,  
 malestar, aunque aparente,  
 todo está en ebullición  
 y ya platica la gente  
 sobre la no reelección.]<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha con una selección de poemas jarocho* (1957), 22 lines 26-30.

<sup>64</sup> On these conflicts, see Wood, *Revolution in the Street*, 1-20.

<sup>65</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha con una selección de poemas jarocho* (1957), 23 lines 46-60.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 lines 61-5.

To show this transformation, Rivera possibly made an interesting play on words that perhaps again drew on Afro-Cuban vernacular speech. In discussing the moment when Díaz broke his promise for a democratic election in 1910, he described the increasingly popular groundswell against Díaz:

and the people got tired  
of the mouse, they became smart

[y el pueblo diz que cansado  
al ratón, se pone chango].<sup>67</sup>

However, read from an *afrocubanista* perspective, the colloquial phrase “they got smart [se pone chango]” could have two alternative meanings, particularly since the subject of the action is not specified in Spanish (even though it is required in an English translation) and could be either the people or the mouse (Díaz).<sup>68</sup> The most traditional, Mexican definition of *chango* is monkey. According to this definition, these lines declare that either the people of Veracruz or, as it was more likely, Díaz became a monkey. However, according to Ortiz, *chango* is an “Afro-Cuban dance” that originated in the Congo.<sup>69</sup> In this second meaning, only the people of the city of Veracruz could make sense as the subject of these two lines. In this instance, the people of Veracruz embraced this specific Afro-Cuban dance to protest Díaz’s political failures. Reinforcing the colloquial expression about “getting smart,” the port-city’s Afro-Cuban heritage functioned as

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 23 lines 74-5.

<sup>68</sup> There is a third, albeit unlikely, meaning of *chango*. In Veracruz, it can also be defined as “an ugly black [person].” See Ramos y Duarte, *Diccionario de mejicanismos*, 158. However, this definition does not make sense in Rivera’s verse.

<sup>69</sup> Rivera’s use of *chango* is not synonymous with *Changó* (or *Shangó*), the Yoruba orisha. Ortiz notes this difference; see Ortiz, *Glosario de afronegrismos*, 163-4.

means of cultural and political resistance, a trope that Rivera would continue throughout his discussion of post-revolutionary electoral democracy.

Similar to his portrayal of the Porfiriato, Rivera did not merely glorify or condemn the Revolution of 1910. While praising Madero's electoral goals, he noted that many of the revolutionary leaders desired money and power more than they sought to democratize Mexican politics.<sup>70</sup> When self-serving politicians succumbed to avarice and treason, popular discontent spread, and new leaders—such as Emiliano Zapata, Pancho Villa (1878-1923), and Venustiano Carranza (1859-1920)—marshaled popular support and initiated Mexico's agrarian revolution. Class divisions between the indigenous peoples and the political elite escalated social tensions and political factionalism.<sup>71</sup>

Rivera traced the ebb and flow of revolutionary optimism through the port-city's musical culture. When Madero's uprising introduced the expectation of democratic elections, "The Port continued to rumba [El Puerto sigue rumbero]" just as it had done in the nineteenth century.<sup>72</sup> After the initial optimism subsided and violence continued,

the parties of high society  
were postponed several months

[las fiestas de sociedad  
muchos meses se aplazaron].<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha con una selección de poemas jarocho* (1957), 24 lines 31-5.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 line 46 to 25 line 40.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 line 36.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 lines 14-5.

With the United States' invasion of the port in 1914, "The hot rumba sounded [Suena la rumba caliente]." <sup>74</sup> Similar to his discussion of *La Bamba* and the *bomba* in the colonial period, the rumba signified how, in fighting the United States, the port

put its breast to the cannon  
and fought valiantly

[Veracruz pone su pecho al canon  
y pelea valientemente]. <sup>75</sup>

Continuing to conflate music and history, Rivera shortly thereafter depicted the city as

Danzón fun and docile  
in a cumbachero atmosphere,

[Danzón sabrosón y manso  
en ambiente cumbachero,]. <sup>76</sup>

Rivera's use of the term *cumbachero*, a derivation of *cumbancha*, was not accidental.

Local *danzonera* culture was not confined to the weekend bacchanalias when the *danzón* was performed. Rivera wedded the excitement of this popular genre to the political agitation and proliferation of multiple voices that, for him, inhered in electoral democracy. Amid worker discontent in the city,

The people got caught up in the burundanga  
and in the heat of the danzón

[Se prende en la burundanga  
y en caliente danzoneo]. <sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 25 line 66.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 25 lines 64-5.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 27 lines 66-7.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 29 lines 1-2.



In these lines, he used the Afro-Cuban word *burundanga* to make a poetic leap from the musical spontaneity and polyvocality of Afro-Cuban music to the cacophony of political rallies and popular suffrage. Meaning scandal, agitation, and jubilation, *burundanga* brought a more austere and political connotation to the free-spirited *cumbanchera* nature of Veracruz.<sup>78</sup>

This revolutionary electoral impulse gathered momentum in the city of Veracruz in 1917. Situating the *danzón* in this political context, Rivera wrote:

Speech, rally, *danzón*,  
there are already liberal parties,  
getting into the ring Domingo Ramos  
for personal merit,  
democracy began.

[Discursos, mitin, *danzón*,  
ya hay partidos liberals,  
sube al ring Domingo Ramos  
por méritos personales,  
la democracia empezamos.]<sup>79</sup>

In discussing the origins of popular suffrage, Rivera referred to Domingo Ramos, the democratically-elected mayor of city who, in 1917, tried to improve the condition of the local streets and the living conditions for the working poor.<sup>80</sup> For Rivera, this historical moment signified the peak of Mexico's revolutionary democracy. Local elections were taking place, and there was hope that national ones would emerge with the ratification of

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<sup>78</sup> For a discussion of *burundanga*, see Ortiz, *Glosario de afronegrismos*, 76-7.

<sup>79</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha con una selección de poemas jarocho* (1957), 29 lines 16-20.

<sup>80</sup> Wood, *Revolution in the Streets*, 30.

the Constitution of 1917.<sup>81</sup> In this stanza, he explicitly linked the rabble-rousing energy of speeches and the ruckus of political rallies with the *danzón*. During these rallies, just like during weekend festivities, “the people shout themselves hoarse [el pueblo se desgañita].”<sup>82</sup> The multiple voices that inhered in these musical and political gatherings united them. For Rivera, this period was the apex of city’s *cumbanchera* culture.<sup>83</sup> Repeated throughout the rest of the epic poem, the line “Speech, rally, *danzón*” represented this fusion of local Afro-Cuban culture and democratic elections.

But, the political optimism that he associated with 1917 vanished in the 1920s and 1930s. He lamented that

The Revolution forgot  
its beginnings, its loyalty

[La Revolución olvida  
sus principios, su lealtad].<sup>84</sup>

The government had not made necessary improvements—such as the rebuilding of the piers—that were needed to fulfill the needs of the people and, for the port-city, maintain its cosmopolitan connections to the Caribbean. Political greed prevented officials from caring about the day-to-day affairs of the poor. Elections, he purported, became mere lotteries and games played by the elites. After Plutarco Elías Calles (1877-1945) came to

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<sup>81</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha con una selección de poemas jarocho* (1957), 29 lines 41-5.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 line 18.

<sup>83</sup> Paco Rivera, “El 3 de mayo. A Domingo Ramos, afectuosamente,” in *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha con una selección de poemas jarocho* (1957), p. 68 lines 1-13 and p. 69 lines 32-4.

<sup>84</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha con una selección de poemas jarocho* (1957), 31 lines 76-7.

power in 1924, political oppression marked the beginning of the end of the democratic politics that had commenced in 1917.<sup>85</sup>

For Rivera, revolutionary (and democratic) politics ended with the 1938 oil expropriation. In discussing the period from 1917 to 1938, he contrasted national political stagnation with the cultural jubilation of the port-city. Rumbas and *danzones* continued, and consequently the city maintained its *cumbachero* atmosphere. To demonstrate that revolutionary ideas still permeated society, he wrote that local groups still deployed the slogan “Speech, rally, danzón” when they critiqued the so-called election of Emilio Portes Gil as president in 1928.<sup>86</sup> As the handpicked successor to Calles, Portes Gil inaugurated a tradition of presidential succession that, in reality, undermined the practice of electoral democracy. When President Lázaro Cárdenas (1895-1970) nationalized the oil industry, he broke the city’s cosmopolitan ties. Rivera bemoaned:

and the Port was idle,  
without ships or signals

[y el Puerto deshabilitado,  
de los barcos ni señal].<sup>87</sup>

According to Rivera, the connections to Cuba and the rest of the Caribbean would continue for a little while longer, but the peak of port-city’s cosmopolitan culture had passed. The simultaneous decline of meaningful democratic elections and *danzonera* festivities marked the local and national failure of the post-revolutionary project.

In criticizing post-revolutionary progress, Rivera recast the dominant post-revolutionary historical narrative. The official rhetoric of the PRI claimed that the post-

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 31 line 36 to 42 line 35.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 37 line 50.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 42, lines 29-30.

revolutionary state would unite the nation so that it could overcome the political and social fissures of Spanish colonialism and nineteenth century liberalism. Conversely, he linked the PRI to the colonial enterprise. At the very beginning of his chapter on the colonial period, he proclaimed:

The P.R.I was erected. A lottery!  
Vote for Portocarrero!  
Photos of Jack, democracy,  
registered to the mailman  
and there began our misfortune.

With shrewdness and audacity,  
the town council was founded,  
born the city of political platforms  
—already murmuring and speaking  
The story begins to form—

[Se instala el P.R.I. ¡Lotería!  
¡Vote por Portocarrero!  
Fotos de Jack, democracia,  
se empadrona hasta el cartero  
y empieza nuestra desgracia.

Con astucia, con audacia,  
se funda el Ayuntamiento,  
nace la ciudad de tablas  
—ya se murmura y se habla  
Se empieza a formar el cuento—].<sup>88</sup>

In jumping directly from Cortés and the Spanish conquest to the PRI, Rivera characterized the post-revolutionary ruling part as the logical successor to Cortés's search for wealth and power. Rivera cynically hinted at the unsettling nature of democratic elections as he conflated Spanish conquest with the absence of post-revolutionary electoral democracy. Because the outcome of popular suffrage could not be accurately predicted in a PRI-dominated state, he equated democratic elections with the fanciful

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 10 lines 1-10.

gambling of the lottery. To highlight this point, he invented a sarcastic campaign slogan, “Vote for Portocarrero!” that probably referenced Cortés’s compatriot Alfonso Hernández Portocarrero. The motto represented the farcical notion that the indigenous peoples had the choice to vote for Spanish rule and therefore intimated that the people had no choice but to vote for the PRI.

In this narrative, the lack of open presidential elections and political rallies mirrored the cultural changes in port-city after the Cárdenas presidency. With the diffusion of culture on the radio, new cultural influences—such as the Cuban mambo and rural *ranchero* music—were supplanting the city’s *cumbanchera* heritage.<sup>89</sup> With the exception of the songs of Agustín Lara, Rivera’s longtime friend, the *danzón* was not only becoming less popular but “the verses became ‘sickly-sweet’ [la trove se hace ‘melosa’].”<sup>90</sup> In his critique of popular culture and the mass media, Rivera lamented the cultural erasure of the music’s Afro-Cuban heritage. Employing an Afro-Cuban vocabulary again, he stated:

Tradition has gone away,  
the ‘malanga’ has finished,  
The ‘skullcap’ and the ‘chestnut’,  
Everything today is burundanga,  
Nobody any longer ‘cuts the cane’.

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<sup>89</sup> On the mambo in the city of Veracruz, see Malcomson, “The ‘routes’ and ‘roots’ of *danzón*,” 268. On the popularity of *ranchero* music after 1940, see Velázquez and Vaughan, “Mestizaje and Musical Nationalism in Mexico,” 110-3.

<sup>90</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha con una selección de poemas jarochos* (1957), 44 line 72. On this friendship, also see Loaeza and Granados, *Mi novia, la tristeza*, 329, 377, and 390.

[Se va lo tradicional  
ya se acabó la ‘malanga,’  
el ‘casquete’ y la ‘castaña’,  
ahora todo es burundanga,  
ya nadie ‘tumba la caña’.]<sup>91</sup>

The inability to remember the city’s slave past and its Atlantic connections—embodied in the images of cutting cane and eating tubers, like the *malanga*—divorced the Afro-Cuban traditions from the Mexicanized versions of the *danzón* that circulated on the radio.

The city lost its connection to the Afro-Cuban past and therefore any connection to the brief democratic opening in and immediately following 1917. Echoing the typical *afrocubanista* history of the *danzón* that began with Carpentier, Rivera noted that the genre had transformed into the mambo and then into the cha-cha-chá.<sup>92</sup> He disliked the popular mambos made famous by Afro-Cuban composer and bandleader Dámaso Pérez Prado (1916-1989). The musician flooded the port-city with what Rivera considered to be the miserable sounds of trumpets and bongo drums.<sup>93</sup> The subsequent arrival of the Cuban cha-cha-chá merely served to “deafen and mortify [ensordece y mortifica]” Rivera’s hometown.<sup>94</sup>

A specific Afro-Cuban musical genre—the *danzón*—defined the city’s *cumbanchera* culture and its *jarocho* identity. Longing for a return to this past, Rivera lamented:

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 44 lines 16-20.

<sup>92</sup> For this history and its critique, see Malcomson, “The ‘routes’ and ‘roots’ of *danzón*,” 263-78.

<sup>93</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha con una selección de poemas jarochos* (1957), 53 lines 46-50.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 55 lines 24-5.

The flame went out,  
 Since the jarocho danzón  
 rhythmical and deeply-rooted  
 playful and showy  
 little by little came to an end.

[La candela se acabó,  
 ya aquel danzón jarocho  
 cadencioso y asentado  
 juguetón y pinturero  
 poco a poco se ha acabado.]<sup>95</sup>

No longer characterized by its linkages to the Caribbean, its raucous parties, or its loud political rallies, life in the port-city had transformed. Rivera mourned that

There was silence and solitude  
 in the parks and on the streets

[Hay silencio y soledad  
 en los parques y paseos].<sup>96</sup>

“Speech, rally, danzón” no longer bounced off the streets and the walls of the port-city or resonated with the cultural politics of the post-revolutionary state.

In spite of a few glimmers of democratic promise in local politics, he depicted a less promising picture on the national scene. Nonetheless, Rivera concluded the epic with the hope that the city’s residents would unite once again:

Now is the moment  
 to change the authorities  
 and there is an uproar in the spirit  
 of the jarocho spirit  
 for a new city council.

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 55 lines 61-5.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 46 lines 51-2.

[Así se llega el momento  
de cambiar autoridad  
y hay bulla en el elemento  
de la jarocho entidad  
por el nuevo ayuntamiento.]<sup>97</sup>

He thought that if the city could return to its *cumbanchera* culture and its *danzonera* lineage, then democratic electoral politics could be on the horizon.

### **To the Second Edition of *Veracruz en historia y la cumbancha***

Rivera's optimism at the end of *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha* manifested itself one year later in during satirical political campaign. In 1958, he helped his friend Salvador Kuri Jatar run for municipal president of the city of Veracruz.<sup>98</sup> Under the sardonic banner of the Partido Reformista Inmaculado [Immaculate Reformist Party], they redeployed the PRI acronym that had heretofore signified the state's post-revolutionary achievements. While the ruling party's name highlighted the institutionalization of the Mexican Revolution's democratic aims, Rivera and Kuri Jatar's variation stressed the cleanliness of their party and therefore implied that the Partido Revolucionario Institucional had become tarnished when it failed to follow the spirit of electoral democracy. Echoing the refrain "Speech, rally, *danzón*" from Rivera's epic poem, they used the *danzón* to spread the party platform and gain local support. For one meeting, they even hired a *danzonera* [a female who danced the *danzón*] to parade

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 56 lines 66-70.

<sup>98</sup> Guadarrama Olivera, "Francisco Rivera *Paco Píldora*," 280-1.



around the city.<sup>99</sup> After the campaign failed, Rivera turned away from politics and, in 1959, became the director of the city's public library.<sup>100</sup>

Inspired by the Cuban Revolution of 1959 he added a political bond to the cultural and historical ties that he had already noted between the city of Veracruz and the Cuban nation. His poem "Mensaje al pueblo de Cuba fraternalmente [Fraternal Message to the Cuban People]" celebrated Fidel Castro's revolution against the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. It began with an apostrophe to the Cuban people:

Brother:  
I want to plow a thought for you  
from my own hand,  
to tell you that I am sorry  
to see the suffering  
of the Cuban people.

[Hermano:  
yo quiero roturarte un pensamiento  
de mi propia mano,  
decirte lo que siento  
al ver el sufrimiento  
del pueblo cubano.]<sup>101</sup>

Cuba functioned as a metonym for the entire Caribbean. For Rivera, the Caribbean—including the city of Veracruz—shared a history of oppression under colonial rule, dictatorship, and single-party states. He therefore directed the message of this poem toward the entire Caribbean:

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<sup>99</sup> "El segundo mitin de Sakuja," Expediente Revolviendo Papeles, Caja Cartel Exposición Temporal, AMV-FFRA.

<sup>100</sup> Guadarrama Olivera, "Francisco Rivera *Paco Píldora*," 274.

<sup>101</sup> Rivera, "Mensaje al pueblo de Cuba fraternalmente," in *Veracruz en la historia y en la cumbancha*, 2nd ed., 112 lines 1-6.

for Cuba that has suffered torture  
 for the people of the Antilles  
 who fight bravely,  
 to overthrow the dictatorship  
 of a tyrant.

[Para Cuba que sufre atormentada,  
 para el pueblo antillano  
 que lucha con bravura,  
 por sacudir la dictadura  
 de un tirano.]<sup>102</sup>

Besides expanding the cultural and historical geography that Rivera sketched in his poetry, the Cuban Revolution possibly made him more skeptical about the future of Mexican politics and the port-city's everyday culture. Like other political and cultural dissidents in Mexico, he was inspired by the Cuban Revolution. But unlike other critics of the PRI, he buttressed censure with *afrocubanista* literature not the radical rhetoric of the Castro regime and the theories of decolonization, internal colonialism, and dependency theory that drew upon Fanonian concepts of Caribbean and African identity.<sup>103</sup> His 1959 poem "Añoranzas [Yearnings]" painted a somber picture of the city's future. He replaced the optimism of *Veracruz en la historia y en la cumbancha* with a melancholy tone:

Play a danzón jarocho  
 that brings to my memory  
 those glorious times  
 of the danzonero Veracruz.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 112 lines 10-4.

<sup>103</sup> On the importance of Cuba, see Alberto Ulloa Bernemann, *Surviving Mexico's Dirty War: A Political Prisoner's Memoir*, ed. and trans. Arthur Schmidt and Aurora Camacho de Schmidt (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2007); and Juan Rafael Reynaga Mejía, *La Revolución cubana en México a través de la revista Política: construcción imaginaria de un discurso para América Latina* (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2007), 105-36. On this new, more radical nationalism, for example see Warman, et. al. *De eso que llaman Antropología Mexicana*; and Margarita Nolasco Armas, *Oaxaca indígena: problemas de aculturación en el estado de Oaxaca y subáreas culturales* (México: SEP: Instituto de Investigación e integración social del estado de Oaxaca, 1972).

[Toca un danzón jarocho  
que me traiga a la memoria  
aquéllos tiempos de gloria  
del Veracruz danzonero.]<sup>104</sup>

As the likelihood of electoral democracy continued to diminish and labor unions aligned with the authoritarian state, Rivera's hopefulness waned in the 1960s and early 1970s. Seeing the negative impact of inflation and lower wages on the workers in the city of Veracruz, Rivera claimed the state's interest in developing industries merely exploited the people and caused foodstuffs to become too expensive.<sup>105</sup> Attempting to return to the city's glorious past, he and some friends founded a new local newspaper, *El Chakiste*, a weekly local newspaper that he directed in 1974, after they changed its name to *El Chakiste Versador*. Resembling his own discourse from *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha*, the newspaper was subtitled "Juguetón y Bullanguero [Playful and Fun-Loving]."<sup>106</sup> By this time, the picturesque and satirical narrative that he wrote in 1957 had transformed into biting political condemnation of the PRI. The lack of popular suffrage, he argued, had turned electoral democracy into a farce. Sadness and a lack of confidence in the government spread across the city. With each election

We already have a candidate  
appointed by the P.R.I.

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<sup>104</sup> "Añoranzas" in "Entrevista a Paco Píldora" lines 9-12, Caja Reportajes periodísticos con diversas personalidades de la cultura y la política, Caja Diversos Reportajes a Francisco Rivera Ávila, AMV-FFRA.

<sup>105</sup> See various poems in Expediente "El Chaquiste Verdador," Caja Así se escribió la historia, AMV-FFRA. On the relationship between the state and labor, see Kevin J. Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State, and Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

<sup>106</sup> Expediente "El Chaquiste Verdador," Caja Así se escribió la historia, AMV-FFRA; and Guadarrama Olivera, "Francisco Rivera *Paco Píldora*," 279.

[Ya tenemos candidato  
designado por el P.R.I.]<sup>107</sup>

Popular quiescence replaced the bellicose atmosphere of the revolutionary period:

The people do not get suspicious  
because they are accustomed,  
the bad keep coming  
between fasting and lamenting,  
declarations and tales  
and we keep waiting.

[La gente ya ni se escama  
porque se va acostumbrando,  
los males se van pasando  
entre ayunos y lamentos,  
declaraciones y cuentos  
y seguimos esperando.]<sup>108</sup>

To comment on the how the city's culture had lost its *danzonera* heritage and how the state apparatus had corrupted the Revolution's democratic ideals, Rivera updated *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha*. Although it is not clear when Rivera made these additions, it is very possible that they were written in the early 1970s. The tone of the second edition mirrored the pessimism of his poems in *El Chakiste* and *El Chakiste Versador*. Also, because the second edition concluded in the wake of the 1968 Olympics and very possibly the days leading up to Lara's death in 1970, its chronology aligns with the historical moment in which he wrote his some of his most inflammatory attacks on the PRI.

Similar to the subtitle to of *El Chakiste Versador*, the second edition continued to describe the port-city as rowdy, loud, and festive. However, the democratic *danzonera*

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<sup>107</sup> Paco Pildora, "¿Como Ira la Cosa?," 10 junio 1974, *El Chakiste*, Expediente "El Chaquiste Verdador," Caja Así se escribió la historia, AMV-FFRA.

<sup>108</sup> Paco Pildora, "Catorce Sobres y un Estampilla," lines 5-10, 12 septiembre 1973, *El Chakiste*, Expediente "El Chaquiste Verdador," Caja Así se escribió la historia, AMV-FFRA.

culture that he associated with the city in 1957 was absent in his verses about the post-1957 period. Politics—or what he called “The National Lottery [La Lotería Nacional]”—no longer united the city and rarely provided the economic development and infrastructure that locals needed.<sup>109</sup> Government-sponsored modernity fragmented the city’s residents along class lines and established a tourist economy that established a modern national image.<sup>110</sup> The 1968 Olympics in Mexico City epitomized the state’s desire to construct a modern veneer that hid popular discontent.<sup>111</sup> Tourism, Rivera contended, segregated the beautiful, modernized, and wealthy segments of the city from the working-class communities. The beaches used by foreigners and national elites buried the voices of the proletarian workers.<sup>112</sup>

Amid these social fissures, the line “There are demonstrations, ruckus and revelry [Hay mitin, bulla y jolgorio]” replaced the slogan “Speech, rally, *danzón*” that Rivera had equated with democracy in 1957.<sup>113</sup> This new motto illustrated how the declining popularity of the *danzón* mirrored the end of electoral politics. He wanted to return to a culture that was both Mexican and Afro-Cuban, one that was “mulatta from infancy

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<sup>109</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y en la cumbancha*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 79 line 26.

<sup>110</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y en la cumbancha*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 80 line 16 to 81 line 15; and Paco Píldora, “Inflación,” 15 de Noviembre de 1973, Expediente El Chaquiste versador, Caja Primeras Decimas, AMV-FFRA. For historical context on Mexican tourism in the 1960s and 1970s, see Saragoza, “The Selling of Mexico,” 102-10; and M. Bianet Castellanos, “Cancún and the Campo: Indigenous Migration and Tourism Development in the Yucatán Peninsula,” in *Holiday in Mexico: Critical Reflections on Tourism and Tourist Encounters*, eds. Dina Berger and Andrew Grant Wood (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 242-5.

<sup>111</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y en la cumbancha*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 88 Lines 6-20; and Zolov, “Showcasing the ‘Land of Tomorrow,’” 159-88

<sup>112</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y en la cumbancha*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 82 lines 19-20.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 79 line 48.

[mulata de pañalón].”<sup>114</sup> This definition of mulatto recast the cultural and racial geography of the term. Instead of being the colonial-era mixture of Spanish and African peoples in the Americas, it was the mixture of Mexican and Afro-Cuban cultures. Embodied in the city of Veracruz, the notion of the mulatto was a distinctly New World phenomenon, one that Rivera ascribed as much to Africanness as to his racialized notion of Cuban national culture. Concluding the second edition of *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha*, Rivera wrote that the *danzón* was currently

without conceited “strength,” without mulatta,  
without the rhythm that pulls the waist  
the old *danzón* wanders rootless,  
outside of time, like armor  
that extols the glory of the past.

[sin “ñeques” parejeros, sin mulata,  
sin el compás que arrastra a la cintura,  
vaga el viejo *danzón* desarraigado,  
fuera de tiempo, como una armadura  
que pregon a la gloria del pasado.]<sup>115</sup>

The *danzón*—and, by association, the city of Veracruz—was no longer mulatto.

The city’s residents had forgotten the Afro-Cuban aspects of its heritage. Rivera disdained the young, countercultural generation of political dissidents that emerged on the national scene in the 1960s, because they—like the PRI—were unaware of the plight facing most of Mexico’s popular classes. Favoring rebellion for the sake of rebellion, they were made “of meringue and candy [de meringue y alfajor].”<sup>116</sup> Because they did not dance the *danzón* or rumba, they could not carry forth the motto “Speech, rally,

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<sup>114</sup> Francisco Rivera, “Mulata Veracruz,” in *Veracruz en la historia y en la cumbancha*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 117 line 3.

<sup>115</sup> Francisco Rivera, “El arremanga (Apología del *danzón*),” in *Veracruz en la historia y en la cumbancha*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 126 lines 15-19.

<sup>116</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y en la cumbancha*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 80 line 22.

danzón” or comprehend the democratic spirit of the Mexican Revolution. He concluded that the rock and roll tunes that these student protesters enjoyed were not real music. This new genre was not what Mexico needed.<sup>117</sup> For Rivera, the declining popularity of the *danzón* and the isolation of the city from particular Afro-Caribbean cultures symbolized the end of electoral democracy in Mexico. PRI authoritarianism and economic modernization had stripped the city of the *cumbanchera* atmosphere that typified *jarocho* identity. Consequently, the second edition of *Veracruz en la historia y la cumbancha* lacked the optimistic tenor of the 1957 edition. The Mexican Revolution’s democratic spirit had been lost.

## Conclusion

While Rivera’s political objections to the PRI resonated with indigenous, working-class, and middle-class discontent, he employed an alternative cultural and racial language to articulate them. Assuming that the discussions of African-descended cultural practices in the ethnographic works of Ortiz and Carpentier were accurate observations, he applied *afrocubanista* language to graft Afro-Cuban identities onto the port-city. Like Baqueiro Foster and Aguirre Beltrán, he used *afrocubanista* cultural projects and ethnographic observations to locate Africanness in Mexican localities. While the city always had cosmopolitan cultural connections, Rivera’s construction of *jarocho* culture drew specifically on the *danzonera* heritage that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century. In his opinion, the genre’s popularity peaked at the same time that

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<sup>117</sup> Rivera, *Veracruz en la historia y en la cumbancha*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 85 lines 21-50. See Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis* for an analysis of how rock music from the United States influenced the urban middle-class youth of Mexico City.

Mexico was politically democratic. This idealized *jarocho* identity was mulatto, a hybrid of particular Afro-Cuban and Mexican cultures and languages. Through this racialized vocabulary, he showed the versatility and cultural inclusivity of post-revolutionary rhetoric. Rivera's Afro-Cuban-inspired verse simultaneously functioned as a critique of PRI rule and a celebration of Mexico's revolutionary tradition.



## Conclusion

In 1970, Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster's *La canción popular de Yucatán* was published. Two years later, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán published a revised second edition of *La población negra de México*. In all likelihood, Francisco Rivera had just updated or was about to update *Veracruz en la cumbancha y la historia*. Written within a few years of each other, these texts characterized African-descended cultures as part of Mexican history. They were also the culmination of decades of ethnographic observations of and inter-American dialogues about African-descended cultures in the Americas. While Baqueiro Foster documented the local communities that strove to maintain African and Afro-Caribbean musical influences, Rivera lamented the loss of particular Afro-Cuban musical inspirations. The issue of cultural disappearance particularly concerned Aguirre Beltrán, since his entire oeuvre analyzed the processes of acculturation that shaped the racial and cultural contours of *mestizaje* and that characterized Mexican nation formation after 1949.

In the 1960s and especially by the 1970s, a new generation of anthropologists claimed that Aguirre Beltrán's policies were ethnocentric, paternalist, and assimilationist.<sup>1</sup> As a result, he defended his acculturative concept of national integration and refuted the polemic that his theories intended to destroy indigenous communities and make vernacular cultures disappear in the name of national modernity.<sup>2</sup> Rivera similarly

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see Warman, et. al., *De eso que llaman Antropología Mexicana*.

<sup>2</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Obra polémica*, in *Obra antropológica*, vol. XI (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992 [1976]).

disdained this new revolutionary zeal, calling these countercultural iconoclasts a generation made “of meringue and candy.” But despite the pleas of the intellectual and artistic establishment, these younger intellectuals supplanted Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera (and the rest of the generation who came of age in the 1920s and 1930s) as the heirs to the Mexican Revolution and the voice of the people in the years following the October 2, 1968 massacre at Tlatelolco Plaza.

Embracing earlier iterations of the post-revolutionary spirit, Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera each constructed Africanness to forge a more democratic national culture. Beginning with Andrés Molina Enríquez’s *Los grandes problemas nacionales* in 1909, Mexican nationalists had debated how to create a socially-just and politically-representative nation. The desire for electoral democracy that sustained Francisco Madero’s charge against Porfirio Díaz in 1910 invigorated Rivera’s condemnation of the PRI authoritarianism and resonated with his depiction of Afro-Cuban music in the city of Veracruz. More often, post-revolutionary discussions of black and African identities applied concepts of cultural pluralism and inclusion. Beginning in the 1920s, the progressive belief in cultural relativism informed artistic and ethnographic discussions of black culture and music. Composers included vernacular cultures in modernist musical scores that were performed in Mexico and across the Americas. In the 1930s, Marxist historians and artists who sought to create a more egalitarian nation used cross-race class analyses to document a black slave population in the colonial period and to venerate the oppressed subaltern classes in Mexico’s triumphalist post-revolutionary narrative. These iterations of post-revolutionary cultural nationalism sought to situate a regionally-diverse set of peoples and cultures within a unified national identity.

With the increase of inter-American institutions and the dissemination of ethnographic knowledge about African cultural retentions after 1940, Mexican scholars—chiefly Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera—began to document African and Afro-Caribbean cultural influences in Mexican history and in the nation’s ethnographic present. They mapped a national landscape that contained African-descended heritages along the Gulf and Caribbean coastlines as well as the Costa Chica of Guerrero and Oaxaca. Drawing on the pluralist rhetoric of the 1920s and 1930s, they located Africanness in specific local and regional settings in the decades after 1940. Their ethnographic and cultural projects linked Mexico’s post-revolutionary cultural nationalism to the reconstruction of Africanness in Mexico and across the Western Hemisphere.

As a result of these historical and ethnographic initiatives, scholarly inquiries that unearth Mexico’s African-descended peoples and cultures have become more common in academic venues. In the past few decades, Mexico’s colonial African population has garnered increased historical attention. Similarly, ethnographers have travelled to local communities along both coastlines to investigate the degree to which African cultures and identities have been maintained or invented.<sup>3</sup> This literature often associates the resurgence of African cultural identities in Mexico with late-twentieth century multiculturalism.<sup>4</sup> In Veracruz, artists and scholars have even begun to assert a circum-Caribbean identity that echoes Baqueiro Foster’s and Rivera’s depictions of Afro-

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<sup>3</sup> For a synthetic bibliographic analysis of these projects, see Vinson, “La historia del estudio de los negros en México,” 19-20 and 45-73.

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Lewis, *Chocolate and Corn Flour*, 156. On the multicultural redefinition of mestizaje and Mexican identity, see Carrie C. Chorba, *Mexico, From Mestizo to Multicultural: National Identity and Recent Representations of the Conquest* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2007).

Caribbean soundscapes in certain coastal locales.<sup>5</sup> These pluralist projects draw on and also critique ideas articulated by Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera. But as Rick López astutely notes, we cannot cast the rhetoric of multiculturalism onto the intellectual, cultural, and aesthetic projects that shaped the Mexican nation formation from 1910 to the 1970s.<sup>6</sup>

While acknowledging the limits of Baqueiro Foster's, Aguirre Beltrán's, and Rivera's projects, "In Black and Brown" provides an intellectual and cultural history that contextualizes their scholarly and artistic pursuits in relation to the political ideologies, historical narratives, and ethnographic theories that shaped the generation of Mexican nationalists who came of age immediately after the Mexican Revolution. These eclectic intellectual genealogies highlight the vibrant give-and-take of inter-American ethnographic exchange throughout the twentieth-century. In a teleological sense, this project also points to why Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera have recently become foundational figures in the study of black and African cultures in Mexico.

### **The Institutionalization of Blackness and Africanness**

Walking into the courtyard of the Municipal Archive of Veracruz, one sees placards of quotations by Rivera adorning the walls. On the left, there are rooms named in honor of him and Aguirre Beltrán. Among the building's vast array of historical archives and published documents sit Rivera's library and personal papers as well as a portion of Aguirre Beltrán's voluminous book collection. As memorials to these two

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<sup>5</sup> For examples of this project, see Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, "Los estudios afromexicanos: los cimientos y las fuentes locales," *La Palabra y el Hombre*, núm 97 (1996): 125.

<sup>6</sup> López, *Crafting Mexico*, 295-6.

intellectuals, these rooms illustrate their longstanding importance in the city of Veracruz. But, unlike Aguirre Beltrán, Rivera has only been canonized in this local setting. In 1981, a street was named after him. For his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1988, the Instituto Veracruzano de Cultura [Veracruz Institute of Culture] compiled and republished many of his poems in an anthology entitled *Estampillas Jarochoas* [*Jarocho Stamps*]. It was part of a collection of texts about the state's history and prominent intellectual and cultural icons—a series that, not coincidentally, also published *Jornadas de homenaje a Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán* [*Conference in homage of Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán*] that same year. And, upon Rivera's death in 1994, the city published a second edition of his epic poem *Veracruz en la historia y en la cumbancha* with a new prologue that praised him for “creating a poetry—with the features of the land, a sense of feeling that is without social distinctions, a language that at times full of local idioms—that serves to sustain in verse what has come to be the city's patrimony.”<sup>7</sup>

While Rivera's legacy has been tied explicitly to the city of Veracruz, those of Aguirre Beltrán and Baqueiro Foster have been associated with regional spaces and national institutions. The Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores-Golfo [Center of Investigations and Advanced Studies-Gulf Coast] in Xalapa houses more of Aguirre Beltrán's library. At the Universidad Veracruzana [Veracruz University] in Xalapa, a statue commemorates his time as Rector from 1956 to 1961. Baqueiro Foster has not been memorialized in Veracruz but rather in his home state of Yucatán. In 2002, the Centro Regional de Investigación, Documentación y Difusión Musical Gerónimo

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<sup>7</sup> Lic. Francisco Ramírez Govea, “Prólogo a la Segunda Edición,” in *Veracruz en la historia y en la cumbancha. Poemas Jarochoas*, by Francisco Rivera (Col. Centro, Veracruz, Ver.: Juan Carlos Lara Prado, julio de 1994), np.

Baqueiro Fóster [Gerónimo Baqueiro Foster Regional Center of Investigation, Documentation and Musical Diffusion] was founded in Mérida. It focuses on the popular music of the Yucatán, a subject to which Baqueiro Foster devoted much of his life.

At the national level, Aguirre Beltrán's influence has been the most prominent. In 1979, some of his ideas from *El proceso de la aculturación* were republished in a celebratory volume that commemorated the INI's Thirtieth Anniversary.<sup>8</sup> Many of his manuscripts and notes on blackness and indigeneity are housed in the archives of the INI, which is now called the Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas [National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Communities, or CDI], in Mexico City. In 1989, the CDI initiated a program called Nuestra Tercera Raíz that built explicitly on his studies of Africanness. The project claims that blackness was Mexico's third racial and cultural root, behind Mexico's indigenous and Spanish racial ancestries and cultural heritages.<sup>9</sup> Although scholarship on Mexico's black population has drawn on Aguirre Beltrán since the publication of *La población negra en México* in 1946 and continued to expand with the global radicalization of black cultural politics in the 1960s and 1970s, it has exploded under the auspices of Nuestra Tercera Raíz.<sup>10</sup> Drawing on

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<sup>8</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Integración regional," in *INI 30 años después. Revisión crítica* (México, D.F.: México Indígena, Diciembre de 1978), 87-93.

<sup>9</sup> See Luz María Martínez Montiel, "La cultura Africana: tercera raíz," in *Simbiosis de culturas. Los inmigrantes y su cultura en México*, comp. Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1993), 171 and 175; Jean-Philibert Mobwa Mobwa N'Djoli, "The Need to Recognize Afro-Mexicans as an Ethnic Group," in *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*, eds. Ben Vinson III and Matthew Restall (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 224-31; and Sagrario Cruz-Carretero, "The African Presence in México," trans. Linda Aurora Keller, in *The African Presence in México: From Yanga to the Present* (Chicago, IL: Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, 2006), 18.

<sup>10</sup> For some early works that drew on Aguirre Beltrán, see Gutierre Tibon, *Pinotepa nacional. Mixtecos, negros y triques* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1961); and Colin A.

Aguirre Beltrán, this national multicultural ethnographic initiative has helped to craft essentialized notions of African tradition in local communities.<sup>11</sup> Seeking to recover its own cultural identity in 1999, the town of Cuijla institutionalized Aguirre Beltrán's innovative concept of *afromestizaje* when it founded the Museo de las Culturas Afromestizas [Museum of Afromestizo Cultures].<sup>12</sup>

Since Baqueiro Foster did not compose much music besides *Huapangos/Suite Veracruzana, No. 1*, he has garnered less attention within nationalist circles than Aguirre Beltrán.<sup>13</sup> Somewhat hidden by Carlos Chávez's demagogic image, most of Baqueiro Foster's archival repositories are linked to Chávez's legacy. With the exception a voluminous scrapbook collection at the Centro Nacional de las Artes [National Center for the Arts], his archives are predominantly found at the Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información Musical Carlos Chávez [Carlos Chávez National Center for Musical Investigation, Documentation and Information] and within the Chávez Collection at the Archivo General de la Nación [National Archives]. Although his participation in Chávez's cultural project cemented his historical and institutional place amid the pantheon of post-revolutionary composers, Baqueiro Foster has taken a secondary position to more prolific and heralded composers, such as Silvestre Revueltas and the Grupo de los Cuatro [Group of Four] that was comprised of José Pablo Moncayo

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Palmer, *Slaves of the White Gods: Blacks in Mexico, 1570-1650* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976).

<sup>11</sup> Lewis, *Chocolate and Corn Flour*, 144-6.

<sup>12</sup> Vaughn, "Race and Nation," 152 and 154.

<sup>13</sup> Tello, "La creación musical en México durante el siglo XX," 502.

(1912-1958), Blas Galindo (1910-1993), Daniel Ayala, and Salvador Contreras (1910-1982).

With the notable exception of *Nuestra Tercera Raíz*, regional and national institutions have classified the works of Baqueiro Foster and Aguirre Beltrán within the more prevailing interest in indigeneity.<sup>14</sup> Scholars widely accept that the processes of institution-making and archival organization are power-laden political projects intimately linked to historical concerns and to contemporary polemics. The assumption that Mexico is an indigenous nation devoid of a significant black presence has contributed to these classificatory practices that have often eschewed blackness and Africanness.

### **Intellectual Genealogies about Blackness and Africanness**

It would be easy to write the history of these three intellectuals from their privileged archival and institutional locations. Such a narrative, however, would be in jeopardy of being too apologetic or hagiographic. The intellectual conversations—face-to-face encounters; correspondences; dialogic paraphrasing, citing, and quoting of other ethnographic studies; and institutional settings—that ensconced Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera were not confined to the local, regional, and national spaces that posthumously commemorate them. By historicizing their works at the confluence of inter-American exchanges and nationalist rhetoric, an intricate intellectual and cultural terrain emerges.

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<sup>14</sup> Bobby Vaughn, “Los negros, los indígenas y la diáspora. Una perspectiva etnográfica de la Costa Chica,” in *Afroméxico. El pulso de la población negra en México: una historia recordada, olvidada y vuelta a recorda*, by Ben Vinson III and Bobby Vaughn, trad. Clara García Ayuardo (México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004), 78.



A hemispheric orientation situates their ideas in multiple political, cultural, and spatial contexts. This perspective demonstrates that their ideas about blackness and Africanness were part of the same broadly-defined ethnographic conversations, even when they were not directly in dialogue with each other. It also shows how World War II-era anti-racist rhetoric in the Americas expanded and often institutionalized the transnational conversations that helped state and local intellectuals define African-descended cultural identities as Mexican. These nationalist discussions drew on *afrocubanista* and New Negro cultural politics in addition to the intellectual networks that formed around Boasian anthropology. Even local intellectuals, like Rivera and the ones who Baqueiro Foster interviewed in Yucatán, noted the ubiquity of African-descended cultural traits across the circum-Caribbean world. These ethnographic constructions of African-descended cultural identities shaped the boundaries of national inclusion and exclusion while they simultaneously informed the cultural projects and discourses that typified inter-American rhetoric.

“In Black and Brown” indicates that these ethnographic studies had multiple relationships with local communities, regional spaces, national rhetoric, and inter-American institutions. Blackness and Africanness emerged in popular and state-sponsored discourses that spanned multiple disciplines and countless geographic spaces. In Mexico, certain local and regional settings—like the city and state of Veracruz, the Costa Chica of Guerrero and Oaxaca, and the state of Yucatán—became central sites for the historical and ethnographic study of black cultures and communities. Many transnational conversations—such as those surrounding Langston Hughes, Melville Herskovits, and Fernando Ortiz—encouraged discussions about African-descended

cultures that occasionally congealed as institutions such as the International Institute for Afro-American Studies. Conversely, indigenous-centric initiatives, such as the musical projects sponsored by Francisco Curt Lange and Manuel Gamio as well as the XEQ broadcasts of Baqueiro Foster's *Suite Veracruzana, No. 1*, discounted if not erased blackness in regional, national, and hemispheric arenas. Mexico's official rejection of racial classification contributed to the nation's integration into hemispheric discussions of Africanisms. However, as Carlos Basauri and Aguirre Beltrán lamented, these progressive (and supposedly egalitarian) policies also made the study of blackness more difficult and fragmented. Inter-Americanism and Mexican nationalism generally facilitated, but occasionally hindered, the construction of blackness and Africanness in Mexico.

While Baqueiro Foster's, Aguirre Beltrán's, and Rivera's constructions of blackness and Africanness have acquired varying degrees of scholarly attention, institutional recognition, and popular acceptance, other ethnographic investigations and cultural treatises have not become seminal points of reference for historical or ethnographic inquiries. From the discussions of black cultural areas by Molina Enriquez and Basauri to the portrayal of black music by Chávez, black culture (and at times, the black body) entered into ethnographic projects that were more concerned within indigeneity and *mestizaje*. Sometimes cultural movements in other American nations buttressed passing references, like those by José Mancisidor and Otto Mayer-Serra, to blackness and Africanness in Mexico. Illustrating the commonality of ethnography across these variegated, Miguel Covarrubias traversed national and disciplinary boundaries and multiple cultural forms as he sketched the New Negro Movement, discussed Africanisms

through a circuitous reading of Herskovits's theory of acculturation and Ortiz's concept of transculturation, and noted (in English, with the help of Hughes) the Afro-Cuban origins of the *danzón* in the city of Veracruz.

Like many Mexican nationalists, certain cultural and ethnographic theories traversed these spatial and disciplinary boundaries. Microtonality, for instance, entered into Baqueiro Foster's analysis of vernacular music and Herskovits's ethnographic search for Africanisms. Acculturation similarly crossed between anthropological, musicological, and ethnomusicological discussions of culture change in Mexico and throughout the Americas. These inter-American conversations were more often united by intellectuals in Cuba and the United States than those in Mexico. Most notably, Ortiz was the only scholar who entered into the ideational genealogies of Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, and Rivera. Other prominent figures, like Herskovits and Alejo Carpentier, fastened some, but not all, of these disparate intellectual networks and cultural geographies together.

These interlocking movements responded to nineteenth-century cultural politics that sought to whiten national identities and to define them without blackness. New racial and cultural discourses about indigeneity, blackness, Africanness, and *mestizaje* emerged throughout the Americas when artists and academics feared that indigenous and black vernacular cultures would disappear. Like the *indigenista* scholars in the 1920s and 1930s who have received significantly more attention, Mexican ethnographers concerned with blackness and Africanness wanted to expand the discourse of *mestizaje* as they ascribed black and then African-descended cultural identities to local and regional spaces. Old racial and cultural categories—such as black [*negro*], mulatto, and *jarocho*—acquired

new meanings. Other terms, like *afromestizo*, had to be invented in local and regional spaces. For Baqueiro Foster, Aguirre Beltrán, Rivera, and their colleagues, the rhetoric of democratic inclusion, not the trope of disappearance, shaped how they characterized blackness and, after 1940, Africanness as Mexican.

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