

# NECKLACES USED IN THE SANTERÍA OF CUBA

**Lourdes S. Domínguez**  
**Translated by Jayson Rubio**

*This article examines the necklaces used in the Afro-Cuban Rule of Orisha, more commonly known as Santería. This religion, created by African slaves brought to Cuba starting in the 16th century, combines aspects of Yoruba orisha worship and Spanish Catholicism. It allowed African religious beliefs and practices to survive despite the imposition of Catholic doctrine. One of the outcomes of this amalgamation is the practice of associating individual orishas (deities) with certain Catholic saints. Each orisha is represented by specific necklaces that incorporate particular bead forms, colors, and numbers.*

## INTRODUCTION

Research on bead necklaces is relatively uncommon in the world because they are generally considered to be articles of little importance and only come into debate within the cultural process that created them. Even dictionary definitions are weak and individualize them exclusively as objects for feminine use. They are of sundry forms and the materials that can be used to make them are also quite varied.

This study deals with the necklaces presently utilized in the Afro-Cuban Rule of Orisha (*Reglas de Ocha*), more commonly known as *Santería* (the Way of the Saints). To start, we will examine the origins of the necklaces. So far, it is not known if identical necklaces were brought directly from Africa, or if their use was copied from the beads introduced by the Spanish. Perhaps when the Spaniards encountered the natives of Cuba, who also used necklaces, they realized that a symbiosis was achieved that permitted the necklaces to be converted into part of the fashion associated with worship. What is clear is that the necklaces used by the Rule of Orisha possess antecedents common to the three cultures (aboriginal, European, and African) that have helped shape the symbiosis originating from the African-American religions of which *Santería* is a part.

This is an initial study of the subject that will not only support future work but can also be used to initiate the

investigation of other elements of the material that forms a part of the paraphernalia used in the ritual of *Santería*.

We begin our study with the compilation of bibliographic information which, although scarce, allows us to create a coherent overview of the possible origins of *Santería* necklaces without having to utilize interviews or investigating the *Libretas* (documentation that the officiants must follow) of *Santero*. We then define the value and the use of these necklaces, examine their production, their sanctification, their relationship to relics, and—most importantly—their relation to the saints or orishas. We will also examine the forms and design elements of the necklaces with respect to their size, the variety and artistic use of color, the shapes and sizes of the beads, the materials, and the strands on which they are strung.

We use the descriptive method for the detailed analysis of the necklaces and the historic method for the narrative treatment of the orishas and their corresponding glass beads and how they are arranged in necklaces.

Some aspects of *Santería* necklaces will not be dealt with in this article, but it can be noted that the present use of these necklaces differs greatly from their original use to such an extreme that it makes us think that this proliferation of necklaces confirms a real change in religious ideas and their practice in Cuba. The use of the necklaces is currently very popular in Cuba and reveals that what was once secret and kept hidden is now emphasized and so common that it no longer garners much attention, primarily due to the commercialized over-production of the necklaces. So what once was very restricted in use is now popular with tourists.

## HUMAN ADORNMENT

Ever since humans sprouted from the face of the earth, they have utilized many different forms of adornment, whether by adding auxiliary items to the body or by making

changes to themselves, always in keeping with the aesthetic criteria prevalent at the time.

Members of many cultures have frequently altered the forms of their bodies, and this is also what today's Cuban Indians have done. They have mutilated their teeth to form points (Rivero de la Calle 1974), and they have pierced their ears, noses, lips, and genitals, placing in these everything that was of importance to them and that they could obtain. Humans have also painted their bodies, or have tattooed or scarified their skins; in other words, doing just about everything possible to permanently decorate the body in a manner pleasing to the person and totally dependent on fashion (Brain 1979; Vallés 1992).

One of the simplest forms of self-decoration, and also the most common, is to adorn the neck with whatever objects that can be suspended there. Strands of such objects have come to be called necklaces, and have been utilized throughout time and in every socioeconomic class.

There are numerous forms of necklaces, composed of various materials, that have been worn by both men and women of all ages. The significance of a necklace varies depending on the different aspects of the life of its creator or wearer; i.e., whether it is used as a symbol of status, of religious ideas, of creative dress, of likes, or of fashion. The necklaces, therefore, incorporated the principal materials that were available to them and were important in their lives (Matillo Vila 1978).

Whether for status or for pleasure, humans hung from their necks something that would accompany them in their lives and could offer security. These incorporated beads of various substances such as glass, ceramic, shell, metal, and seeds. They also incorporated such things as colorful bird feathers, seashells, and pieces of metal, all of which were adapted for use as the wearer desired.

Archaeology provides numerous examples of the significance of the past use of necklaces and pendants. An example is the Sofka II site at Vienguerovo in Western Siberia where, in 1982, excavations uncovered a Neolithic tomb containing the burial of a child with a small bag of cowry shells tied around his neck. Centuries later, this same shell continues to be important in the Afro-American religions where they possess extraordinary value (Domínguez 1980).

In Cuba, excavations conducted at the Ingenio Taoro slave cemetery in Havana in 1970 revealed the presence of necklaces composed of round, white, wooden beads in one of the coffins. Another burial at the same site was accompanied by necklaces formed of jet beads and North American coins perforated for suspension, as well as canine

teeth (Pl. IA). These date to the period from around 1865 to 1873 (Domínguez 1986).

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In dealing with the theme of this study, we had two options for carrying out the initial search for information: 1) doing the work using the books of Santería (Arango 1990) as well as informants, or 2) only using the literature that existed in Cuba and was generated by Cubans. We chose the second option because the first required a series of actions beyond our capability.

An initial review of the literature revealed that relevant sources were quite limited and these would need to be utilized to the fullest to achieve a true understanding of the subject. We sorted the gathered literature into three different categories: 1) works that deal specifically with the necklaces of the orishas, 2) those that deal with the theme jointly with other ethnographic research, and 3) the general literature.

Studies concerning the necklaces of the Santería are very scarce with most of the information being found in the works that embrace the theme of Afro-Cuban religion. Being very broad in scope, they provide little information. Though concise, there is one very useful study that deals entirely with the subject. It is by the ethnologist and folklorist Rogelio Martínez Furé (1961). Using the works of Lydia Cabrera (1989) and Teodoro Díaz Fabelo (1956) as a basis for his study, he incorporates the results of his own field research, successfully explaining the use of the necklaces and their relation to the protective deities through the colors used and their marking number. Romulo Lachatañeré (1961) is the author of another classic on the subject: *Tipos étnicos africanos que concurrieron en la amalgama cubana*.

Three other works—though they provided a very general analysis of the Afro-Cuban theme—contribute a great deal of information about the necklaces of the Santería. The first two are by Jesús Guanache: *Procesos etnoculturales en Cuba* (1983) and *Componentes étnicos de la nación cubana* (1996). The third, *Componentes africanos en el etnos cubano*, is by Rafael L. López Valdés (1985). They all provide a valid analysis from the ethnographic point of view, including the use of the necklaces, and give us a general overview of the Yoruba religion as practiced in Cuba and of the progression of the Afro-American religions in our country.

Guanache (1983) dedicates a chapter to the paraphernalia used in the Yoruba religion and closely examines everything concerned with the necklaces. He also gives credit to Lydia Cabrera and to Martínez Furé, although he is much more explicit than they are, especially concerning the initiation

ritual, also clarifying the production of the necklaces and the rules for their use.

In all of these works, great emphasis is placed on the number of necklaces that can be associated with any one saint. While there are rules that dictate what constitutes a necklace for a specific orisha, the appearance of the necklace depends on the creativity of the *Padrino* (the highest ranking official in the Rule of Orisha; also called *Babalao*) and the bead stringer (Arguelles n.d.).

The most recent work that has permitted us to derive an understanding of the Yoruba religion and the use of Santería necklaces therein, especially their association with specific orishas, is that of esteemed ethnologist Natalia Bolívar (1990). She has systemized the study of the Yoruba pantheon, and provides knowledge about the system of stringing beads for the necklaces of the different orishas and the value that is placed on the necklaces.

A novel point that arose during this study is the possible relationship of the Yoruba pantheon and the Arawak, the prehistoric inhabitants of Cuba. We found great similarities by consulting two works that are the basis for the study of Arawak mythology: those of José Juan Arrom (1989) and Sebastián Robiou Lamarche (1996). Combining this knowledge with the magnificent work of the much-esteemed Antonio Stevens-Arroyo (1988), as well as the studies by Daysi Fariñas (1995) and José Manuel Guarch (Guarch and Querejeta 1993), we were able to achieve our initial goal of determining the interrelationship of the *cemíes* (powerful spirits), saints, and orishas.

## ORIGINS

The religious beliefs of the Cuban people are derived from the symbiotic relationship (or *ajiaco*, as it was called by Don Fernando Ortiz [1963]) of three major cultural groups: the aboriginal, European, and African. Each of these was influential and dominant in Cuba at different times during the past 500 years. Their interaction led to the sociological process called trans-culturalization (Ortiz 1963).

As the new culture evolved, it is logical that religious ideas played a significance role and syncretization occurred. Until now it has always been stated that the syncretization was between the Christian pantheon with its saints and the African pantheon, especially the Yoruba, with its orishas, but no one has ever spoken of the syncretization with the Arawak pantheon, in which the so-called *cemíes* have the same function as the saints and orishas. This was not recorded in the Chronicles of that time, but it had to have happened in Cuba because it did occur in other parts of the Americas.

What is certain is the presence of many of the elements of Arawak religion in the Afro-Cuban religions, the Rule of Orisha and the Palo Monte, a religion that originated with Bantu slaves from central Africa.

There are a great many examples, some of which are unrecognized as having been part of the daily life and beliefs of the Taíno Indians. These include the petaloid axe, better known as the stone of lightning (*piedra de rayo*), of indispensable use in Yoruba ritual but which was a tool for ordinary work originally, and the maraca which was initially a part of Arawak ritual and not a musical instrument. Also the worship of the forest or mystical trees and, especially, the use of necklaces (Domínguez 1997; Pérez 1979; Tro Pérez 1978).

Necklaces were used by the three participating cultural groups for one reason or another, but the group that seems to have actually utilized the necklaces of Santería was the aborigines who originally inhabited Cuba. We briefly studied the necklaces in the three groups and could establish their form and mode.

The Cuban aborigines were of South American Arawak origin, and profusely used adornment, from body paint to glass beads of all kinds. Made of various materials, necklaces were a major item and many have been excavated by archaeologists. These include strings of small shell beads in the style of the *mostacilla* (very small glass beads) in which the color as well as the number per string played a considerable role. Today they are still used in communities bound to their ancestors and who live in Venezuelan lands. There the colors red and pink are highly appreciated and the necklaces are made with fixed quantities of beads (Domínguez 1994). The forms of the necklaces present an extraordinary likeness to those that are made today for the Santería, above all those which correspond to the simple or single-strand necklaces and to the *mazo* necklaces which consist of several strands.

Spanish conquerors brought into mode the necklace of glass beads, of different colors and shades and styles, and these were used as much by men as by women. They were used as part of the initial commerce with the aborigines, as archaeology reveals them in great quantities from this period.

The men of African origin who arrived in Cuba during the early part of the conquest came from Spain. Blacks born in the motherland were the only slaves permitted to be brought to the New World. They, of course, brought European customs with them. This did not happen later in the 18th and 19th centuries when the slaves came directly from Africa (León 1980).

## BEADS

Glass beads were first brought to the Caribbean region by Christopher Columbus in 1492 (Karklins 1967). Some authors suggest that the glass-bead industry originated in Barcelona and Andalusia, but there is solid evidence that they were produced in other parts of Spain, as well as in Italy (Venice), Holland, and other European cities (Smith and Good 1982).

The beads that came over with the Europeans during the early colonial period have been found at various sites in the Caribbean including Nueva Cádiz in Venezuela where they were found in large numbers (Goggin n.d.; Smith and Good 1982), as well as in St. Augustine in Florida, in La Isabela in Santo Domingo, and even Havana. These early beads have nothing to do with the present-day necklaces that are discussed here. And if by chance any of them were used in the necklaces of Santería, they were only used as *glorias*, large beads that are inserted into necklaces to segment the strand.

Everything suggests that the Santería necklaces were first used by the Africans. We know, however, that the slaves that arrived in the 16th and 17th centuries came mostly from Spain and any beads would probably have originated there. But the slaves that arrived in the 18th and 19th centuries came directly from Africa and they would have brought the beads with them if they really did use them. Information on this subject is very limited, with very few archaeological excavations carried out at the embarkation points and generally interest there has been focused on what are considered more important artifacts such as those made of metal (León 1980). Prof. Irmino Valdés, who worked in Africa for a long time, did tell us that he could not find any reference to necklaces of beads in the major African departure points for the Caribbean, and that the necklaces that were occasionally found in archaeological excavations were composed of durable seeds. Furthermore, he was almost certain that the interaction of cultures in the Americas resulted in the assimilation of beads into the occult worship of the Yoruba and the Palo Monte (Valdés 1994: pers. comm.).

As previously mentioned, the few excavated archaeological sites in Cuba and in other parts of the Caribbean have not produced examples of African beads. There have been some similar ones but made of wood, and monochrome. For example, grave no. 5 in the Ingenio Taoro cemetery contained a Black individual who had beads at the neck. The strand did not reach completely around the neck and had a jet bead attached to it. It could have been a *gloria* (Domínguez 1986).

The conclusion is that the Santería necklace initially was not what it is today, not in its form, nor in the array of colors that we are presented with in the market, and that the necklace that resembles it the most is the aboriginal one composed of *mostacillas* (very small glass beads) in white and red.

There is a system for stringing glass beads for the necklaces of the Santería as each deity in the Yoruba pantheon is represented by different forms and colors. The beads are called *matipós* (opaque necklace beads) and can be strung into different forms, either simple ones composed of a single strand or the ones called *mazo* which are formed of several strings held together at intervals by larger beads. They are also made for personal use, like the simple necklace, in the form of a bracelet that is called *ildé* (a bracelet or charm with the colors of the orishas).

The beads are generally small and rounded, bright, of transparent or opaque or dull glass, and present all the primary and secondary colors in various shades. They vary in size from 2 to 3 mm in length and with a diameter of 1 mm. At times larger beads (*glorias*) are used as spacers. These can be of different materials and shapes, such as faceted glass.

When the necklace is completed it is said to be a Jewish (*judío*) necklace and is called *eleke* (a necklace of an orisha that has not passed through the consecration ceremony). After it has gone through the ceremony it is called *iñale* (necklace of the consecrated saint) or *ñale* (contraction of *iñale*). The necklaces may be divided into three groups:

1) The simple necklace composed of a single strand (*see cover*) that is worn around the neck. Its length depends on the size of the person who will wear it as it should end at the top of the stomach, but always maintaining the prescribed marking number without altering the number of beads.

2) Rarely used, the double necklace is composed of two parallel strands held together at intervals by a *gloria* that could be made of jet, coral, or shell. Each saint or orisha has a specific base or foundation necklace to which the *Babalao* or *Padrino* makes additions pertaining to other saints for his godchild or initiate, depending on the paths he believes he or she should follow.

3) The *mazo* necklace (Pl. IB) is a true work of art that consists of various strings joined together at intervals with large *glorias*. These are necklaces for officiating and keep a relation in color and number with the guardian orisha. Generally they are not for personal use but used only while officiating in ceremonies (Figs. 1-2). Subsequently they are placed on the altars.

It is common to incorporate other elements into the necklaces that symbolize different aspects of great value



**Figure 1.** Vestments worn by those officiating over orisha rites relating to Obatalá (left) and Yemayá (right), along with other regalia (Museo Casa de Africa, Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de la Habana, Havana).



**Figure 2.** Ceremonial vestments and other paraphernalia related to Shangó (Museo Casa de Africa, Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de la Habana, Havana).

such as the canine teeth of leopards or tigers or, lacking these, those of dogs or pigs. The introduction of shells is essential in some necklaces and if these are cowries, from Africa for excellence, they are much more effective, although other species of specific value can be used in their place. Long valued, cowries in the Caribbean are substituted for the so-called *cinturita* which are also used for divination.

Other objects utilized in the necklaces include chains, perforated coins, and medals; in short, anything that appeals to the maker. Also used are beads of semiprecious materials like jet, amber, coral, and lapis lazuli, as well as conch shell, mother-of-pearl, ivory, and bone.

### THE RULE OF ORISHA OR SANTERÍA

The first news about the religions that apparently arrived directly from Africa with the slaves comes from the beginning of the 19th century. In reality, however, those who arrived in Cuba found religious beliefs already in place that had been derived from many elements of an endless number of beliefs. In time they would meld and produce what we know as the Afro-American religions which are very special in Cuba, as well as in other places in the Americas where African slaves arrived. In Cuba today there are two major religious groups: the Santería and the Palo Monte.

The religion of Lucumí origin, that we know as Yoruba and that originated from the area of present-day Nigeria, is what received the name Rule of Orisha or Santería. It is a polytheist cult that presents in its pantheon a conglomerate of deities called orishas, eminently earthly and thus a popular tradition (López Valdés 1985).

The other cult established in the Caribbean is also derived from Africa. Called the Rule of the Palo Monte, or the Arará religion of Bantu origin, it has elements similar to the previous one in some aspects of its pantheon with which it is interrelated and also utilizes elements of its paraphernalia. Both cults utilize necklaces for special purposes in their rituals, since both share at times their deities and other elements of official manner, but only those associated with the Santería will be described here.

We think that the Yoruba religion in Cuba and the rest of the Caribbean, where they profess actual conformity to a coherent cult and with many followers, has taken many elements from previous cults and has "transculturized" (Ortiz 1975) and given way to something new, which is what we see today.

In the Rule of Orisha, the necklaces are of great importance, whether they are simple or the ones called *mazo* which are used in rituals only. They are defined by

their colors and by the number of beads. Each orisha is represented by favored colors and numbers. In making the necklaces, there can be variants that are decided upon by the one who rules the initiation of the neophyte, the *Padrino* or *Babalao*.

The use of the necklaces is traditional, possibly from the 19th century. The values attributed to them are many, but above all and specifically they serve to unite the worshiper and the religion. Their use is evident and that is what accredits the person with sound judgment. The necklaces are also displayed boastfully today because it is believed that they serve to ward off bad things, and with them, one can acquire the strength to live.

### CEREMONY

The preparation and imposition of the necklaces in the Santería has its regulations. We did not want to use the criterion provided by informants but rather we have just utilized information gathered from the surveyed literature which, though quite scant, has provided enough data to put the whole process in order.

The stringing process can be entrusted to a professional bead stringer whom the *Padrino* provides with specific instructions in each instance, or the *Babalao* or *Padrino* can make the necklace himself. The thread should be made from the agave (*pita*) plant and never nylon, keeping in mind the size and the order of the colors along with the proper number of beads, as well as the type of beads required for a specific orisha.

They are an example of *animismo* since a series of rituals are indispensable in initiating the necklaces and the neophyte who wears them. It is the initiation into life for the believer, and it is the initiation into life for the necklaces, but so that they can be effective and serve as an amulet or good luck charm, strict rules must be observed, otherwise they will not serve the purpose for which they are intended.

The ceremony of imposition is known as *medio santo*, or middle saint, and it consists only of receiving the necklaces; later they are returned to the warriors, another phase in the religion.

The necklaces invigorate life as soon as they are worn and to permit the wearer to feel real protection against evil, their primary function, the wearer should obey certain rules that regulate his or her austerity and comportment, from here the influential role playing of the Yoruba religion. When the necklace is to be initiated it should first be "washed" (*lavarse*) or "wiped" (*enjugarse*), bathing it in the blood of the animals that were sacrificed for this purpose. Called

*asiento* (accession), this ritual lasts three days. Offerings (*omiero*) are placed for the saints and for the necklaces and prayers, called *súyeres*, are offered by the initiate and the *Padrino*, in accordance with what is stipulated in the *Libretas* and always said in *lengua* (tongues).

The *Padrino*, before imposing the necklace, must have consulted the divination system or the Panel of Ifá, so that he could be told which saint or holy protector is appropriate for the initiate. At this time other necklaces may be added or additions may be made to the base necklaces themselves to invoke the aid of other saints for the future life. Once the necklace has been imposed, it is said to be *trabajados*, or “working.”

For the new worshipers who have had necklaces placed upon them, there are obligatory norms in their daily use, the most important being that there should be periodic offerings to them. One must also be aware of their behavior, since they talk to their master, their deity. For example, when the necklaces get tangled, that could mean that something bad is going to happen to the wearer, who should seek the advice of the *Padrino* to learn what can be done about the situation. The same thing holds true if the necklace breaks, which is even a worse case still, and the person should go quickly to the *Padrino* for advice (Guanche 1983).

The necklaces can be worn around the neck exposed to the view of others or they can be hidden and carried in a little purse in the pocket or a pocket book, depending on the occasion. The *ildé* (bracelet) can also be worn openly or hidden inside a skin bracelet. As much for women as for the men who wear them, there are rules that limit the wearing of the necklaces during sexual activities and, in the case of woman, they should be taken off during the menstrual cycle (Martínez Furé 1961).

## THE ORISHAS AND THEIR NECKLACES

Having provided an introduction to the subject, we will now delve deeper by providing a summary of each saint or orisha in the Yoruba pantheon with a corresponding reference to the *eleke*, the foundation or base necklace that relates to each. It is impossible to list all the variants of the foundation necklaces as they are practically infinite.

Although some deities have more than one foundation necklace, it has been possible to compile the marking numbers and sacred numbers for each deity, as well as the colors that pertain to each. It will also be noted if the necklaces are single or double; i.e., whether they have one or two strands. *Mazo* and composite necklaces will not be dealt with because their production and uses are different,

nor will the *ildés* or bracelets because they relate to other facets of Yoruba ritual.

The orishas are presented in alphabetical order since the hierarchy of these deities is very complex and it is not possible to present a clear exposition given the interrelationship of the Yoruba pantheon. Aided by the work of Natalia Bolívar, it has been possible to provide a short biography of each orisha, which clarifies their importance in Yoruba cosmogeny, and how they syncretize with the Catholic saints. Something new that has come from this research is the similarity that many of the orishas have with the *cemíes* named in the works of Pané (1977).

### Aggayú

This major orisha is also called Aggayú Solá and Argayumare in the Yoruba pantheon. In the Palo Monte they call him Quendú and he syncretizes with the Catholic Saint Christopher.

He is the strong and violent man of the pantheon. He is the one who sustains the world and on many occasions is personified as the sun. He is also called the Giant of the Orishas. He is the father of Shangó, powerful and feared, master of the rivers and the rich and fertile land with optimum possibilities for planting.

Another of his characteristics is the energy he possesses, and he is considered the patron saint of wanderers or travelers. He is the patron saint of the city of Havana, which pays homage to him. His refuge as orisha is the royal palm. He has similarities with Huión in the Arawak cosmology who symbolizes the sun and is the divine ruler of the land.

Aggayú's necklace is plain, being of a single strand, and the marking number is 9, or a multiple of 9 until reaching 18. There are other numbers that can be used as well with this orisha and they are 3 and 6, but in this event the colors must be properly inserted when making the necklace.

The most representative color is caramel or cocoa-colored, although it is also valid to insert supporting colors like dark turquoise blue, as well as yellow, green, and red.

Some base necklace varieties for Aggayú are:

- Caramel-colored beads alternating with other beads of *agua de jabón* (“soapy water”—a translucent milk-white bead, much prized) until reaching 18 and then repeating this until the end of the necklace; the other three colors may also be added at this time.
- Cocoa-colored beads alternating with 9 beads that can be turquoise blue, and at other times red, green, and yellow.



- Round beads (*perlas*) in red and white with a sequence of 6 in 6.
- Cocoa-colored beads; after every nine beads may be inserted beads of red and turquoise blue, or green and yellow.
- Sequence of 9 red and 8 yellow beads with a large white bead at the end of the sequence, repeating the order until the end.

### Babalú Ayé

A major orisha, also given the name of Obaluaye, who is syncretized with the Catholic Saint Lazarus in his two manifestations, the one of the church and the popular one which is the image of the saint with two dogs.

He is a much venerated saint because of his ties to the contagious diseases, especially leprosy, syphilis, and the infectious diseases that assaulted the New World in the 19th century. He is personified as the Father of the World. He had a very licentious life from which he fell ill and died, but it is told that he returned to life because God, who is so merciful, wanted it that way. The mythological persona that corresponds to him in the Arawak religion is Abeborael Guahayona, sufferer of a skin disease that was cured through prayer.

His necklace is simple with the marking number 17, although it can also be 7, 13, or 14. His unique color is purple, in its full spectrum. The beads that represent him are of the dull type (*matipó*) or opaque, white with small aqua blue stripes.

Variants of his basic necklace include:

- A complete strand of white *matipós* with small blue lines without the interference of any other color.
- Round beads of blue and white in a running sequence.
- Black beads, with *matipó* of Oyá (of various colors) and of Saint Lazarus (white with blue stripes), and red beads, all combined as one likes (Pl. IC) and sometimes with the addition of cowries or pierced African snails.

### Dada

A minor orisha, syncretized with Our Lady of Rosario. He is the brother of Shangó, who raised him. He does not have any representation in any necklace, number, or color.

### Elegguá

Minor orisha who also receives the name Elegbá. In the Rule of Palo Monte they call him Mañunga and he syncretizes in the Catholic sainthood with various deities such as The Holy Child of Atocha, the Lonely Soul (*Anima Sola*), St. Anthony of Padua, and St. John the Baptist.

He represents the god who holds the keys to destiny and is the first of the four warriors. He is also known as the gatekeeper of the forest and the savannahs, and to enter them one must ask his permission. He is considered the god of play and trickery, but for everyone he is the one who opens pathways, but very importantly, he can also close them.

There is a great similarity with the Arawak god Yucahú, the most important of that pantheon because he was the one who gave nourishment to the world and therefore opened the way for humanity.

His necklace is the simple type with the marking number 3, with red and black as its most representative colors, colors that simultaneously represent life and death, the beginning and the end, one and the other, in short duality, and the struggle between the two.

The variants that the foundation necklaces can have are as follows:

- Alternating red and black beads (Pl. ID, central strand).
- Black and red *matipós* which are augmented with something white and of jet.
- White and black round beads.
- A sequence of 3 red, 3 black, and 3 white beads, repeated until the string is finished.
- Alternating white and black beads.

### Ibeyis

Minor orishas, represented by twins and always found in venerated situations in almost all the religions. They represent good luck in the Yoruba pantheon. They syncretize in the Catholic sainthood with Dimas and Damian, saints who appear to be brothers. They are the preferred and spoiled sons of Yemayá and Changó. They are cheerful and deceitful, and enjoy sweets very much. In Arawak mythology the presence of twins is very common and they are represented by conjoined Siamese twins.

They do not have a marking number or colors, and are not credited with necklaces.

## Inle

A major orisha also called Erinlé who is syncretized in the Catholic religion with the Archangel St. Rafael and the Guardian Angel. In the Arawak religion there are similarities with the *cemí* Baibrama who is the guardian of health and of farming and its produce.

It is said that Inle is the remedy of God and is known as the Doctor of the Orishas. He is the patron saint of doctors and physicians, and it is said that he is the one who directs and organizes the guardian angels. He was so handsome in his physiognomy that Yemayá (c.f.) fell so in love with him that she kidnaped him and took him to the bottom of the sea, as she knew these depths and their more secluded parts. He saw all her secrets so that when he wanted to leave, Yemayá cut out his tongue so that he could not describe what he had seen.

The necklace of Inle is simple with the marking number 21, although 5 and 7 can also be added. His most common color is dark green.

Variations of the foundation necklaces include:

- 21 bright blue beads and 3 yellow beads.
- 1 dark blue bead and 2 yellow beads.
- Dark green *matipós* for the entire necklace with 2 Prussian blue beads and one coral.

## Iroko

He is represented by the ceiba, a much-venerated mystical tree. It is believed that all of the orishas reside in this tree. It was also a sacred or mystical tree to the Taínos. It was venerated by all and offerings were left at its base. The ceiba was adopted by the Africans upon their arrival in place of the boabab, an African tree of equal mystical value.

Iroko represents the principles of the world, the heavens and the earth, and he is considered the staff of Olofi. When he finds the time he will dance around with a staff covered with various necklaces representing all of the saints and sometimes a broom adorned with beads. He syncretizes with the Immaculate Conception

In most cases it is reported that he does not have a necklace, but in others it is said that it is of a single strand with alternating white and red beads.

## Naná Bukurú

She is not considered to be a major orisha, nor a minor one, but she is the mother of Babalú Ayé. She has many mysteries associated with her, and in addition is as terrible as

the thunder and as unpredictable. In the Catholic sainthood she syncretizes with Saint Anne. She has some relation with the *cemí* Guatuaba who represents thunder.

As for her necklace, there does not seem to be a concrete one, and there is no marking number. The necklaces that can represent her since he doesn't have her own are:

- Black and red beads, joined by alternating purple beads.
- Alternating round beads of white, red, and blue (Pl. ID, outer strand).

## Obatalá

Major orisha, son of Olordumare and creator of the earth. Above all he is known as the sculptor of humankind. He is the deity with pure excellence, master of the head, and is considered by many to be the best of the orishas. He was commanded to go to earth and do good. He is merciful and a lover of peace and harmony. He is always seen as the source of things.

He is syncretized in the Catholic sainthood with the Virgin of Mercy (*Mercedes*). In the Palo Monte he is called Quenqui and Mamá Quenqué. He may have a close relation to Yayael, the son of the supreme god Yaya of the Arawaks, although he also has a strong relationship to Marohú, a *cemí* who represents good times, happiness, and the good that pervades everything.

His necklaces are simple and the marking number is 8 or a multiple of 8. His color is white, although in the necklaces there can be beads of red, coral, green, purple, mother-of-pearl, *agua de jabón* (a translucent milk-white bead), and sometimes ivory.

The base necklaces are varied:

- A continuous strand of white beads with a single point of color (Pl. ID, inner strand).
- Sequence of 16 white beads, 4 of *agua de jabón*, 1 of coral, and 4 of *agua de jabón*, repeated thus until the end.
- All round white beads with a single bead of another color; it could be black, red, or blue.
- 24 white beads, and 1 red and 1 of ivory or mother-of-pearl.

This orisha can have an infinite number of paths in accordance with the suggestions of the *Padrino* which, in any case, are represented in the necklaces by the established colors and marking numbers.

## Obba

A major orisha, she is one of the wives of Shangó. She represents conjugal joy and is the eternal lover and advocate of difficult causes. She is also called Obá and syncretizes in the Catholic sainthood with Saint Rita of Cascia, Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Lucy, and the Virgin del Camino.

In the Palo Monte she is called Totonkúa. She is portrayed without an ear as it is said that she was fooled by Ochún, who told her that to fuss over her man she should cut off an ear and she did so. She has similarities with the *cemí* Guamanaco who represents the first woman, who is seen to have been created by the moon.

She has a plain necklace with the marking numbers of 8 and 5. The most representative colors are caramel and amber, and also beads of translucent white glass (*jabón*). Pink and yellow beads are always a part of these necklaces.

The base necklaces and their varieties are as follows:

- 8 translucent white glass (*jabón*) beads, 8 caramel-colored beads augmented with 5 real amber beads (jet beads may be used in place of the amber beads, but both should be real).
- 27 caramel-colored beads, 3 honey-colored, and one of coral, repeated until the desired length is achieved.
- Alternating pink and lilac beads.
- Alternating purple and lilac beads.

## Ochosi

Major orisha, also called Oshosi. He is syncretized with Saint Norbert, Saint Hubert, and Saint Albert, as well as with the Archangel St. James. Ochosi is the son of Yemayá. He lives in the forest and is king of the hunt and of justice. He is the best of the hunters, therefore his symbol is always the bow and arrow. It is said that his arrows never fail. He is the patron saint of those who have problems with injustice, magicians, diviners, and warriors.

His necklaces are double, composed of two strands which are joined by larger *gloria* beads placed at intervals. His marking number can be 2, 3, or 7, and his colors are green and blue. His necklaces always incorporate a snail shell, a bead of amber or of coral; a leopard's canine tooth is highly ranked. Occasionally chains are added.

The variants of the base necklaces are:

- Two strings with 14 blue beads on each which are then joined together by passing the thread through

3 honey-colored beads, one of amber, and another 3 honey-colored ones. This sequence continues to the end of the strand with the addition of snail shells and a coral bead.

- Bright green *matipos*.
- Round beads of transparent green or clear violet.
- Two strings of Prussian blue beads and from string to string one amber bead mixed in with 4 snail shells separated into twos by the amber bead, and alternates with some coral beads.

## Ochumare

He is an orisha who was venerated in the 19th century, and is syncretized with Catholic St. Bartholomew. He is the orisha of the rainbow when it appears in the sky and for that reason has a relation with Oyá for having all the colors. He symbolizes the benediction of the world and humanity.

There is no known marking number and his necklace is a sequence of all the colors without order.

## Ochun

Major orisha also known as Oshún. In the Palo Monte she is called Chola Nagüengue. She is personified by a splendid mulatto, who represents feminine excellence, and is syncretized in the Catholic religion with the Patron Saint of Cuba, the *Virgen de las Caridad del Cobre*.

She is the wife of Shangó and very intimate with Elegguá who is her protector. She is the beauty among the beautiful, reigns over love, and is the symbol of flirting, grace, and feminine sexuality. She assists in everything that deals with the process of human birth. She likes to walk through the forest singing and playing with the animals, which are obedient to her and praise her. She tames the wild beasts and it is said that not even the scorpion can sting her.

In a popular argot it is said "that she is the only one who brings enjoyment to Changó." She is very good, but can kill anyone with a smile, and in reality, when she laughs, she is truly the angriest.

Ochun is comparable in the Arawak-Taíno religion to the *cemí* Atabey, mother of the waters, mother of the Supreme Being, the feminine divinity of excellence and guardian of good childbirth, and above all, the ruler of happiness.

Her marking number is 5 and multiples thereof, but 8 is her day and also her number. Her colors are yellow and red. Her preference is for gold and everything that is golden. Her necklace is of a single strand and apart from the foundation

necklaces, represent an infinite number of paths (Pl. IIA).

Her base necklaces are:

- Bright yellow strings of *matipó*.
- Round beads of yellow glass or of amber with red beads alternating 5 with 5.
- Round yellow beads in fives or multiples of 5, inserting one red bead every 5 beads.

### Oddúa

This major orisha represents the mysteries of death and all of its secrets. It is suggested that he is able to cure the dying. Oddúa is a historical king in the foundation of Ifé. He is considered the King of Oyó and for all is Father Death.

He is syncretized with Jesus Christ and with the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. His father, as did the father of Jesus, sent him to earth to help mankind establish order over the land. He is also known as the ruler of solitude.

Oddúa can be compared with Maquetaire Guayaba of the Arawak pantheon, who is the servant of the dwelling of the dead and from another prospective he is related to Yayael, who was sent to earth by his father to help man.

The marking number is 4, and his colors are white and the color of coral. His necklaces are simple and should be 18 inches long. There are twelve known paths in addition to the foundation necklaces that are:

- 4 green and 4 white beads alternating to the end.
- 1 green and 1 white bead alternating to the end.
- 16 green and 16 white beads, with the addition of a mother-of-pearl or ivory bead.
- 16 white beads, then 8 red, 8 white, 1 of coral, and 8 white until finished.
- A necklace with 8 sections of milk-white beads separated from each other by 2 mother-of-pearl beads with a coral bead between them.

### Oggan

A minor orisha who is the saint who serves as a warrior. Also called Asia Eleké or Bandera, he represents all the saints and that is why he is able to wage war. He lives and eats with Oggún.

He does not have a marking number and enjoys all of the colors. The foundation necklace is a great gamut of repeating colors with the addition of 3 snail shells and a chain.

### Oggún

Major orisha and brother of Shangó and Elegguá. He is the master of iron. In the Palo Monte he is called Zarabanda, and is syncretized with a great deal of saints from the Catholic religion including St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John the Baptist, and the Archangels St. Michael and St. Raphael.

He is represented by a dark *negrito*, is violent and astute, and is considered the god of minerals, tools, and the mountains. He is also known as a lone hunter and a wanderer who travels through the woods and understands all of its secrets. As a sorcerer he rules the secrets and the mysteries of the forest and the mountains. He is the master of keys, chains, and jails.

His is a simple necklace with the marking numbers 3 and 7. His colors are black, green, and sometimes something red. His foundation necklaces are:

- A black bead and a green one with a red one.
- Alternating transparent green and black beads.
- 21 black, 7 green, 1 red, 1 jet, and 1 red bead, until done.
- 3 black and 3 green beads, to the end.
- 7 green, 1 red, 7 black, and 1 red bead, repeated until finished.

The canines of large feline animals, cowrie shells, and jet can be incorporated into the necklaces. When the necklace of Oggún belongs to an *oriaté* (a master of orisha rites and major ceremonies), cowries are added to it.

### Oke

A minor orisha, Oke is the patron god of the mountains and is syncretized with the Apostle St. James. He represents the first hill or promontory that emerged from the depths of the ocean and everything that is elevated or high. He is vigilant and a guardian. He does not have a number, a color, or a necklace.

### Oko

Major orisha who is the deity of agriculture, the earth, and the harvest. He is syncretized with St. Isidore, the Farmer. In the Palo Monte he is called Musilango. He has a really strong relation to the *cemí* Boynayel or Llorá Lluvias who in the Arawak pantheon is the one who makes the land prosper.

Oko is personified as a young farmer, serious and chaste, and for that reason he is the patron saint of farmers.

This orisha assures the prosperity of the land because he is the master of everything that is harvested and everything that has to do with the earth. He is also seen as the arbitrator of disputes between women and, above all, between the orishas.

His marking number is 7 and his colors are pink and blue together. His necklace is simple. The foundation necklaces can be:

- 7 clear turquoise blue and 7 pink beads that are almost lilac, and may be adorned with snail shells.
- Red beads with darker stripes.
- 7 transparent blue, 1 red, 7 purple, and 1 jet, with interspersed coral.
- Alternating aqua blue and black beads.

### Olokun

Major orisha, owner and master of the ocean, powerful and terrible on land and in the sea. Tries to dominate the land by all possible means. Lives at the bottom of the ocean with a giant marine serpent held by seven chains. He does not relate to any known Catholic saint. He has a certain relationship to Deniman Caracaracol who is the ruler of the seas in Arawak cosmology.

His necklace is simple. The marking number is 9 and his colors are blue and white. The variants present in his base necklace include:

- Alternating blue and white beads.
- Alternating dark blue and translucent white glass (*espuma de jabón*) beads.
- Round crystal beads of different tones of blue, with the addition of a few green and red beads.
- Indigo blue beads combined, as one likes, with red glass beads, and opal and coral beads.

Previously necklaces were formed of large beads of an intense blue that resembled lapis lazuli, mounted on an iron wire.

### Orula

He is a major orisha, also given the name of Orumilla, who is syncretized with Saint Frances of Assisi, Saint Joseph of the Mountain, and Saint Philip. He is the one who has the secret of divinations that was given to him by Shangó. Orula is the only orisha who Olodumare confided in regarding the secrets of Ifá.

A complex religion has been organized around this deity that highlights him and distinguishes him in relation to the other orishas. He is presented as a great benefactor of mankind and for all, the most important advisor, because he can reveal the future and allows man to influence it. Personified with wisdom, he is also the supreme oracle and knows the secrets of Ifá. He can be personified with Yayael, the son of Yaya, in Taíno mythology because he has come to earth to help mankind.

His necklace is simple. The marking number is 8, and his colors are green and yellow. His foundation necklaces are:

- Alternating green and yellow beads (Pl. IIB). This necklace can only be worn by the *Babalao*. There is also a bracelet or *ildé* with the same color pattern.
- Alternating red and green beads. The same pattern is used for the bracelet.
- 8 red, 8 pale blue, 8 white, 8 caramel-colored, and 8 yellow beads, then 8 white and 8 red beads, until finished.
- Alternating round beads of opaque yellow glass and green glass.

Orula is also accorded a necklace of all the colors because it is the necklace of war and he is the force.

### Osaín

A major orisha, also known as Osayín and Irosun, who is syncretized with Saint Joseph and Saint Benedict. In the Palo Monte they call him Gurunfinda. He may be related to Yahubaba, who is the *cemí* in charge of collecting herbs in the forest. There are *cemíes* that are characterized as having only one eye who may be related to Osaín.

Osaín has only one hand, one leg, and one eye. He is the master of the forest and of herbs. He does not have a father or a mother, but sprouted from the earth like a plant. For this reason he is established as the ruler of nature. He is also the ruler of all the shrubs, good and bad, and possesses magical powers because of these plants.

His necklace is simple; its marking number is 4 and its colors very varied. The foundation necklace is as follows:

- Beads of different colors like red, blue, green, white, etc.

Various items may be added to the necklace: silver coins; old copper coins (*quilo prieto*); beads of mother-of-pearl, ivory, amber, and other materials; tortoise shell; rooster spurs; tiger skin; grains of toasted corn; dog canines, etc.

## Osun

Major orisha who is the guardian of the heads of the believers. He is syncretized with the Staff of St. Francis, St. Manuel, St. Dimas, and the Divine Providence. He is the guardian of Obatalá and the messenger of Olofi. He is the orisha of irradiation and is considered next to the warriors. Ultimately he represents life itself. He is related in Arawak cosmogeny to Maroya who radiates because she is the moon and watches over the world.

His necklace is simple and the marking number is 8. The colors are clear blue, white, yellow, and red. The foundation necklaces are:

- 8 clear blue, 8 yellow, 8 white, and 8 red beads alternating to the end of the strand.
- Beads of 4 colors (white, blue, yellow, and red) that signify the paths. These beads are separated by 2 mother-of-pearl beads with a coral bead in between.
- 16 white and 8 *punzo* (vibrant red) beads alternating to the end.

## Oyá

A major orisha also known by the names Yaya and Oyá Yansá. She is syncretized with the Virgin of the Candlemas, the *Virgen del Carmen*, and Saint Teresa of Jesus. She relates to the Arawak *cemí* Guabancex who is the lady of the winds, personifying the hurricane with her arms in the form of whirlwinds.

Oyá represents lightning and that is how she is known in the Palo Monte. She is the goddess of winds and storms, and guardian of the foremost part of the cemetery. She is violent and impetuous, loves war, and personifies hurricanes. Oyá accompanied Shangó in all of his battles and fought together with him to destroy the enemy with her spears and lightning. She was Changó's lover and is considered his favorite.

Her marking number is 9 and her colors are very varied. Her necklaces are very simple, with the foundation necklaces as follows:

- 9 caramel-colored beads with black and white stripes, followed by 1 red or maroon and 9 caramel-colored beads, alternating.
- 9 black and 9 white beads that alternate.
- *Canutillos* (beads that are smaller than the normal ones) of clear sienna or dark sienna.
- 9 white and 9 black beads in 9 groups each.

## Shangó (Changó)

Major orisha who is syncretized with St. Barbara, although he is considered a male orisha. In the Palo Monte he is called Siete Rayos. In the Arawak religion he is similar to the *cemí* Bayamanaco, ruler of fire and master of the secret of the making of cassava bread.

Shangó is the king of fertility and of fire, chief of the thunderbolt and of war, as well as of the drums. Son of the orishas Aggayú and Yemayá, he was raised by Obatalá who gave him his white and *punzó* (vibrant red) necklace and told him that he would be King of the World.

He is the representation of virile beauty, and patron and advocate of warriors. Storms are entrusted to him for he guides them. He is a very festive supporter of dancing and music. His preferred symbol is the metal axe and the *pedra de rayo* (stone of lightning), which is none other than the petaloid axe of the Taíno.

The necklace of Shangó is simple. The marking number is 4 or multiples of 4. His color is red, symbol of love and blood, with the addition of the color white to refresh it.

The variants that have been found for the base necklaces are:

- Alternating red and white beads (Pl. IIC).
- Alternating round beads of red and white.
- One white and one red bead, 6 white and 6 red, which are followed by a white bead and a red bead to a total of 12, and then 6 white and 6 red beads; this sequence continues until the desired length is reached.

## Yemayá

A major orisha, Mother of the Waters, who possesses other names like Yemanya and Yemaja. She is syncretized with Our Lady of Rule. In the Palo Monte she is called Baluanda. She compares with the Arawak *cemí* Guabonito. She is grand since she lives in the depths of the ocean and has great magical powers.

As Yemayá is the mistress of the waters, from her came the seas and the rivers and therefore everything that is nourished and lives on the land, since water is the fountain of life. Because of this she has received the name Mother of Life, the fundamental fountain of life. She is also considered the goddess of fish and marine life in general. She prefers to live in the foam of a wave, and to show reverence one must make an offering of coins at the edge of the shore as a sign of grace.

Her necklace is simple. Her marking number is 7 and her color is every shade of blue. Also white beads, especially when they are used with the beads that are called *espuma de jabón* (translucent milk-white).

The foundation necklaces (Pl. IID) are:

- *Ñales* or aqua blue beads.
- Round beads of white glass and clear or translucent blue, alternating 7 each.
- Ultramarine blue beads of opaque or transparent glass, alternating 7 and 7 or multiples of 7, being 14 or 21.

### Yewa

A major orisha that has the name Bantalonqui in the Palo Monte. She is syncretized with Our Lady of the Abandoned, Our Lady of Sorrows (*la Virgen de los Dolores*), Saint Clare of Assisi, Saint Rose of Lima, and also Our Lady of Monserrate.

She is the beautiful daughter of Oddúa, mother of Shangó, and seduced by him, for which she was punished by being made to oversee the dead when they are given to Oyá for burial in cemeteries and tombs. She is the equal of the *cemí* Itiba Cahubaba, great mother, the great giver who also takes care of cemeteries.

Her necklace is simple. Her marking number is 11 and sometimes 4. Her color is pink. Her foundation necklaces are:

- A strand of opaque pink *matipó* beads.
- 4 pink and 4 red beads, 1 real coral bead, and an interspersed jet bead.

### CONCLUSION

This study supports the hypothesis that the necklaces used in the Santería of Cuba are derived from a symbiosis of the earlier Antillean native legacy and the later African one of slave origin.

Beginning with the use of color, the selection of numbers, and the counting of beads for the stringing of the necklace, we find a union of ideas and forms that permit an implicit reading of the necklaces. Thus, a specific message is expressed by means of the necklace that hangs from a believer's neck.

There is still much more to investigate and clarify about necklaces of the Santería, beginning with their origins. We

have only outlined the subject and explained or taken into account the inferences from the written documentation available in Cuba and leave the subject open for future interpretation.

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Lourdes S. Domínguez  
Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad  
Gabinete de Arqueología  
Tacón 12  
Habana Vieja 10100  
Cuba  
Email: lourdes@cultural.ohch.cu

Jayson Rubio  
1119 Greene St., Apt. A  
Augusta, GA 30901  
Email: rubiohelloworld@aol.com