ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis:	PALOS MUSIC AND FIESTAS DE MISTERIOS IN THE PROVINCE OF SANTIAGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
	Victor Miguel Hernandez Sang, Master of Arts, 2018
Thesis Directed By:	Assistant Professor, Fernando Rios, School of Music, Ethnomusicology

Musicians, religious leaders, and devotees of the Dominican religion *Las Veintiunas Divisiones* commonly assert that *palos* percussion music is performed in *fiestas de misterios* solely for religious purposes, namely, to facilitate spirit possession and entertain the *misterios* (deities). Based on fieldwork conducted in the Province of Santiago, this thesis demonstrates that palos music fulfills an additional important purpose in these occasions, that of attracting devotees and potential devotees. In Santiago, many practices in this religion and music are unconventional compared to other regions in country. Examining these unorthodox practices, I argue, reveals the extent to which palos musicians cater to the aesthetic preferences of the human spectators they wish to entice to attend these fiestas. Another interesting facet of the tradition that I examine is the participation of non-devotee drummers in religious ceremonies, a phenomenon that is not common in analogous Afro-Caribbean traditions such as Haitian *Vodou* and Cuban *Santería*.

FLEXIBLE MUSICAL PRACTICES AND THE ROLE OF DOMINICAN PALOS MUSIC IN FIESTAS DE MISTERIOS

by

Victor Miguel Hernandez Sang

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
2018

Advisory Committee:
Assistant Professor Fernando Rios, Chair
Professor John Lawrence Witzleben
Assistant Professor Siv Lie

Dedication

To my parents, Suk-Lang and Sigfrido, to whom I owe everything.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the servidoras and paleros who graced me with their time and knowledge, without which I would not have a project in the first place. Special gratitude to paleros Héctor Turbí and Fermín De los Santos, who welcomed me in their homes and with who I developed lasting friendships. I would also like to thank my committee—Dr. Fernando Rios, Dr. Siv Lie, and Dr. J. Lawrence Witzleben—for their support, feedback, and patience during my time working on this project. I am indebted to the comradery and friendship of my cohort at the University of Maryland within and without my home program—Alice Rogers, William D. Scally, Benjamin Jackson, Hyunjin Yeo, Nathanial Gailey-Schiltz, Maxwell Yamane, Sabrina González, Jonathan Brower, Cara Snyder, Britta Anderson, and Mónica Ocasio—who directly and indirectly have supported me through my time in graduate school, and some who also read early drafts of my thesis providing ample feedback. Finally, I want to thank my parents—Suk-Lang and Sigfrido—and my sisters—Ana and Julia—who have supported me in unimaginable ways and have been along my side every step of the way in my pursuits.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Balloons, colored ribbons, and cake are always present at *fiestas de misterios*, which are the communal celebrations of the Dominican religion known as Las Veintiunas Divisiones (The Twenty-One Divisions; LVD). When I asked *servidores* (religious leaders) and *paleros* (percussionists who play *palos* ensemble music at these celebrations and other occasions) about the festive decor and confection, they explained to me that those elements are there because it is the birthday party of the *misterio* (LVD deity).[1] For practitioners of Las Veintiunas Divisiones, the misterio who is being honored indisputably is of central importance. During the celebration, a large image or figurine of the misterio prominently adorns the altar. The servidor, moreover, makes sure that the color theme of the fiesta and special clothing of the host matches the hues traditionally associated with the deity. Also reflecting the importance given to misterios, servidores and paleros confer with them to receive instructions on the setup of the fiesta and the music to be used in the celebration.

The paleros and servidores with whom I consulted in the Dominican Republic consistently maintained that the primary function of palos music in these types of religious occasions is to facilitate servidores' spirit possession and to entertain the misterio. In the scholarship on Las Veintiunas Divisiones, most researchers uphold this conventional interpretation. However, as I document in this thesis, which is based on fieldwork that I conducted in the Province of Santiago, the festive music making that animates LVD celebrations is intended not only for the misterios, but also for the

[1] Palos music ensembles traditionally consist of three *palos* drums, along with a *güira* (metal scraper), *pandero* (tambourine), and pair of maracas.

devotees and other audience members. The musicians whom I interviewed did not emphasize this point, unsurprisingly, given the religious associations of palos music.

In Santiago, some practices regarding palos music in fiestas de misterisos seem to be non-existent in other regions of the country, based on the case studies documented by scholars. Some groups, for instance, complemented the standard palos ensemble line-up with instruments that Dominicans strongly identify with contemporary local popular music styles such as *merengue* and *bachata*.[2] Examining musical practices such as this example, I argue, reveals the extent to which palos musicians in the Province of Santiago knowingly cater to the aesthetic preferences of the human spectators they wish to entice to attend these fiestas, with the purpose of attracting a large turnout.

These practices also differentiate LVD events of the Province of Santiago from analogous religious celebration traditions in Haitian *Vodou*, Cuban *Santería* (also known as *Regla de Ocha*, or "The Law of the Ocha/Orisha"), and other African-derived Caribbean belief systems (e.g. Hagedorn 2001 and Delgado 2008 on Cuban Santería, and Wilken 1992 and Sager 2002 on Haitian Vodou). Another interesting facet of Santiago's LVD tradition is that many of the palos musicians are not devotees of the religion, and view their participation in fiestas de misterios above all as an opportunity to earn money, not as a means to fulfill religious obligations. Compared to other areas of the Dominican Republic, the Province of Santiago possesses no religious brotherhoods or *cofradías*, and a smaller number of locally-based palos musicians who have been initiated into Las Veintiunas Divisiones, which I suggest

[2] For discussions of merengue and bachata, see Austerliz 1997 and Pacini Hernandez 1995.

created a niche in the region's fiestas de misterios circuit for non-devotee palos musicians.

In the scholarship on LVD, researchers usually mention musical practices only in passing, and instead analyze other aspects of the tradition, from a variety of perspectives (e.g., Deive 1979, Tejeda 1995, Sánchez-Carretero 2005, Davis 2007, Schaffler 2015). Dominican scholars trained in the Dominican Republic who research Afro-Dominican musics have focused, almost exclusively, on musical sound. An example of this kind of scholarship is the ambitious volume by Josué Santana and Edis Sánchez, which examines many Afro-Dominican musical traditions (2010). Santana and Sánchez analyze musical form, structure, harmony, and melodic material, and briefly overview the social context within which the music is performed. The sole chapter on palos music, for instance, does not provide detailed information on the role that ensemble performances enact in fiestas de misterios.

Compared to their Dominican-based counterparts, ethnomusicologists based or trained in the U.S. who study Afro-Dominican traditions have given far more attention to socio-cultural considerations. Angelina Tallaj, Daniel Piper, and Martha Ellen Davis represent this scholarly orientation. Piper, in his 2012 doctoral dissertation, analyzes post-1960s changes in gender roles within Afro-Dominican musical ensemble traditions and religious celebration practices (including palos in fiestas de misterios) in the south-central area of the Dominican Republic, and connects these changes to the large-scale rural-to-urban migration that the country experienced following the death of President Rafael Trujillo, who ruled the country from 1930 to 1961. Tallaj, a Dominican scholar who was trained primarily in the

U.S., in her dissertation sheds light on the racial discourses surrounding various Afro-Dominican musics (2015). In her chapter on palos, she discusses how servidores and musicians in New York City blur the lines between the secular and sacred realms, by hosting fiestas de misterios at discos and other non-religious spaces. Davis, who studied anthropology in addition to ethnomusicology, has published extensively on the musical and religious practices of the Dominican Republic's Afro-descendant population. Her work on *salves* (the text in the palos repertoire), which appears in the books *Voces del Purgatorio* (Voices of Purgatory; 1981) and *La Otra Ciencia* (The Other Science; 1987), represents a seminal contribution to the scholarship on Afro-Dominican religious belief systems and their associated musical expressions.

Despite the insightful work of Piper, Tallaj, and Davis, research on Las Veintiunas Divisiones is underrepresented in the scholarship on African-derived Caribbean religions, most noticeably in the English language literature. For instance, Cuban Santería and Haitian Vodou, and their respective musical practices, have garnered considerably greater interest from ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, historians, and other social scientists in the U.S. and elsewhere. This thesis, therefore, is an attempt to broaden understanding of the key role that musical practices perform in the least-studied of the Caribbean's African-derived religious belief systems.

Las Veintiuna Divisiones, or Devoción a los Misterios

I now turn to defining Las Veintiunas Divisiones and palos music. There is no consensus on the name of the religion. Although some devotees prefer the designation Las Veintiunas Divisiones (see Deive 1979, Davis 1987), among my consultants the

most common term was “devoción a los misterios” (devotion to misterios). Scholars, both Dominican and foreign, often refer to the religion as Dominican *vodú* (or *vudú*), to emphasize its close relationship with, and similarity to, Haitian Vodou. When I asked my interlocutors, however, they were quick to dismiss this designation, and strongly underscored the differences between LVD and Haitian Vodou. This reaction is unsurprising, when one considers the long, and deeply disturbing, history of anti-Haitian sentiment in the Dominican Republic (see next section).

LVD is one of many Afro-descendant religions that developed in the New World that display a combination between Roman Catholicism and African religions. Scholars have historically referred to the amalgamation of these religions as religious syncretism. In addition to Haitian Vodou and Cuban Santería, other Afro-American syncretic religions are Jamaican Kumina, Brazilian Candomble, and Trinidadian Shango. Among scholars, a well accepted grand narrative about how these religions emerged is that African slaves utilized Catholic imagery and names to camouflage their religions in order to avoid censorship (e.g., Murrell 2010).

Individual practices are central in LVD, meaning that each servidor focuses more on personal preferences and choices than on a collective set of rigid rules. The servidor, which is the name given to the religious leader who has the ability to be possessed by the misterios (or, devotees often say, be mounted by the misterios, or receive the misterios), maintains and exhibits an altar at their home in a designated room. Servidores often have a close relationship with one or various misterios, whose image(s) graces the center of the altar. Pictures and/or statues of misterios, accompanied by candles and other objects, also commonly appear on altars. Each

servidor is known for having a principal ability or main trade, which can be healing, foretelling, or counselling (see Deive 1979, Davis 1987). Devotees of misterios (often Catholics who have a special devotion to a misterio or saint) attend private consultations with servidores, and pay a price for these as determined by the misterio. This money allows servidores to make a living and fund fiestas de misterios, which take place at various times of the year, depending on the misterio being honored.

Fiestas de misterios are communal celebrations hosted and sponsored by a servidor de misterios to pay homage to a specific misterio on the feast day of the Catholic Saint with which the LVD deity is associated, or as an act of gratitude to a misterio who has bestowed something of value to the servidor or his/her client (who is usually a devotee of that specific misterio). The fiestas can vary widely from servidor to servidor, but in general, the events involve live palos music, live or recorded popular dance music (e.g., merengue, bachata), dancing, drinks, and food. Clients of the host and other devotees attend these events, along with people who have come mainly to enjoy the festive environment and dine on the free food.

The name “twenty-one divisions” is a reference to the organization of misterios in the LVD pantheon. Misterios are classified by “divisions” or “nations,” where each one contains a few deities, and one of them is the leader (see Davis 1987 and Deive 1979). Among scholars and practitioners, however, there is no consensus on which misterios belong to each division, which are the twenty-one divisions, or whether there actually are that many groups. In my experience, and as indicated by researchers, a few widely popular misterios and divisions have the largest following

among devotees and servidores throughout the country (e.g., Patrón Santiago, Anaísa, San Miguel, San Elías, Santa Marta, among others).

Palos Music and Salves de Misterios

The preferred percussion ensemble for misterios in fiestas in the northern region of the country is the palos group. Besides playing drums, the members of these ensembles sing *salves* with texts that center on the Saints, misterios, and other deities.[3] The themes in salves range from praising deities to expressing devotion to them, to showing loyalty and requesting favors (See Appendix 3 for examples of salves). Most of my interlocutors refer to this repertoire (i.e., salves with palos drum accompaniment) as "música de palos" (palos music), rather than *salves con palos*.[4] The combination of salves with the palos ensemble is the defining factor of the music, while the rhythms of the drums vary from group to group.

The palos ensemble normally consists of three palos drums along with a *güira* (metal scraper), a *pandero* (tambourine), and a pair of maracas. Some groups also have a wooden stick played by hitting it against the side of one of the drums. Built by hollowing a tree trunk and using goat or cow skin for the drumhead, palos drums are of the same height but of different diameters. Each drum has its distinctive rhythmic pattern. The *chivita* (smallest diameter) plays a fixed rhythm, the *alcahuete* (medium

[3] Besides the palos group, throughout the Dominican Republic various types of percussion ensembles accompany salves. For instance, an ensemble comprised of a set of 4 to 5 panderos (tambourine), 3 mongós (short, one-headed drums), and a balsié (drum played sideways on the floor) is usually referred to as "salves con panderos." Another ensemble type, "salves con balsié," is led by a balsié and accompanied by a tambora. Both groups also include a güira.

[4] In accordance with this practice, in this thesis I employ the compound term "palos music" for this tradition. I also use "salve" and "song" interchangeably.

size) allows for some variations, and the *palo mayor* (largest diameter) is the lead drum, which improvises and is often played by the lead singer of the group (see Appendix 2 for pictures).The playing technique consists of playing open tones and slaps (closed tones) near the rim of the head, and bass tones with the heel of the hand or a sideway fist in the center of the drumhead. The rhythmic foundation of palos music is based on the Caribbean tresillo, which is very common throughout the Caribbean and Latin America in both traditional and popular genres.

The role of palos drums within the ensemble is very similar to that of Vodou and Santeria (in terms of the relative sizes and rhythmic distinctions between the drums). In the ensembles of the other music traditions, drums have rhythms that are different to each other and each of them fulfil a particular role within the ensemble. While the ensembles in Vodou and Santeria have specific rhythmic patterns that are associated with specific deities that are played to invoke them, in palos music, however, palos groups play the same patterns for all misterios regardless of the salve they sing.

Anti-Haitianism and Hispanicist Ideology in the Dominican Republic

Unlike most countries in the Americas, the Dominican Republic earned its independence from another Latin American state, namely Haiti, instead of a European colonial power.[5] This defining moment in Dominican history has had profound ramifications on how the local elite, intellectuals, and government officials

[5] Haiti governed the Dominican Republic from 1822 to 1844, when Dominicans earned independence.

subsequently envisioned “Dominican culture.” For much of the country’s history as an independent political entity, its intelligentsia and leading politicians have believed that it was of prime importance to differentiate their nation from its island neighbor, and accordingly have stressed that Dominicans and Haitians share little in common culturally and racially. One major consequence of this strategy is that official representations of Dominican culture traditionally have foregrounded only the Hispanic roots of the country’s typical cultural practices, while downplaying or ignoring the important contributions that Afro-descendant peoples and traditions have made to the country throughout its history. In other words, because Dominican political leaders and intellectuals have defined the cultural essence of Dominican national identity in opposition to that of Haiti—a country with a black-majority population who self-identifies as such, this political tactic has led to the historical erasure of the African roots of many Dominican cultural expressions (Paulino 2016).

During the second half of the 19th century, Dominican government officials passed numerous orders prohibiting various Afro-Dominican cultural activities, which these officials often labeled derogatively as “savage” and “rowdy.” Social dances involving percussion ensembles represented one target of these discriminatory laws in the rural areas surrounding Santiago (Rodriguez 1971). Scholars frequently underscore that these prohibitions reflected the Dominican elite’s long-standing bias against local African-derived traditions, especially those that in any way resembled typically Haitian cultural expressions. Today, for similar reasons, many LVD practitioners find it objectionable when their religion is labeled “Dominican vudú.”

In the 20th century, the long dictatorship of President Rafael Trujillo (1930-1961) represents a period of heightened anti-Haitianism and pro-Hispanicist nationalist rhetoric on the part of the Dominican state. The most infamous illustration of Trujillo's anti-Haiti policy is the massacre of thousands of Haitian immigrants that the regime brutally carried out in 1937. Unsurprisingly, given this context, in the Trujillo years the country's Afro-descendant communities did not organize politically along racial lines to advance economic or political agendas, nor did their members even publicly self-identify as *negro* (black) or *afrodescendiente* (Afro-descendant).[6] In more recent times, as various censuses document, Dominicans have continued to classify themselves primarily as *mulato* or *mestizo* (i.e., mixed-race), and to a far lesser degree, as black or white (Howard 2001: 3).

Since the 1970s, local and foreign scholars have published a large body of research on the Dominican Republic's Afro-descendant traditions, and frequently have argued that these cultural expressions should be viewed as quintessentially Dominican. This research has influenced how many local community members, and the broader Dominican public, currently view local African-derived traditions. For many of my interlocutors, for example, it was through attending cultural festivals and scholarly lectures, and interacting with researchers in other forums, that they became aware of the extent to which LVD draws from African religious belief systems.

[6] However, the religious *cofradías* of African-descendant Dominican communities maintained a variety of African-derived local music-dance traditions (Hernández Soto & Sánchez 1997).

The Ethnographic Context: Cibao Region

Around mid-16th century, the economic system of Hispaniola Island, then a Spanish colony, turned from gold mining to cattle raising and sugar. After exploiting and exterminating the indigenous Taino population of the island, Spanish local rulers found the need to bring African slaves to work the land. These sugarcane fields were located relatively near the capital city and in the eastern and southern regions of the colony, while cattle raising primarily developed in the northern Cibao region (Moya Pons 2010). Starting in the 17th century, African slaves founded cofradías (brotherhoods) around the areas where plantations were located. These functioned as mutual-aid societies primarily to offer burial and health services, and held a strong devotion to a particular deity that was considered the patron of the cofradía (Davis 1976:87). While plantations concentrated a larger number of African slaves, white Spanish settlers dominated cattle raising and the production of hide (Moya Pons 2010). Because of the predominance of cattle raising in the northern region and the lack of plantations, cofradías did not flourish in the central Cibao region (what is the Province of Santiago). These factors contributed to less racial mixture than the areas with larger African populations, making the Cibao have the mixed population with the largest European descent proportion.

In the summer of 2012, while conducting research for my Bachelor's thesis on palos music, I observed musical practices not typically done elsewhere in the country—based on my survey of existing literature—such as palos groups performing non-religious paid gigs at nightclubs. This particularity of the region and the network of palos groups and servidores I built during my first fieldwork experience led me to

continue research for this project. During my main field research trip to Santiago in the summer of 2015 for the Master's, I observed musical practices that, according to some paleros and servidores I had talked to, were not allowed in fiestas de misterios. For instance, in 2012 some of my consultants told me that palos music is the only appropriate music to play for misterios's enjoyment. In the summer of 2015, servidora Juana, however, hosted a fiesta where a merengue group performed while she was dancing in possession of misterio Anaísa. These practices (and other ones discussed in Chapter One) seem to be characteristic of the Province of Santiago and less so elsewhere in the Dominican Republic. These encounters led me to wonder why these were occurring and to seek to understand why people resourced to such practices.

Field Research in the Province of Santiago

The main field research for this project was conducted primarily in the summer of 2015 (from late May to mid-August), and during a shorter stay in January of 2016. I attended and documented fiestas mainly in the city of Santiago de los Caballeros (capital of the Province) and the town of Navarrete with groups from within the Province. I interviewed twelve paleros who, in addition to living in the aforementioned cities, maintain residences in the towns of Tamboril, Canca la Piedra, Los Cocos, and Llanos de Pérez (in the Province of Puerto Plata) (see figure 1). I also spoke to many servidores and devotees of misterios. My observations also draw from prior trips I made to the region in 2013 and 2014 (between undergraduate and graduate studies). On several occasions, I took private music lessons with Fermín de

Los Santos and Héctor Turbí, to learn the basics of playing the three types of palos drums and the güira. At the fiestas de misterios that I attended, I interacted informally with attendees and other audience members, and gathered information from them concerning their relationship to the fiesta, the religion, and the music. But most of my learning has come from the paleros and servidores with whom I developed a close relationship.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter One develops the main argument of the thesis: palos music is not intended solely for the enjoyment of the misterios but is also used to create the atmosphere necessary to attract the greatest number of participants possible and thus have a successful celebration. I analyze several musical practices that initially puzzled me, because they ran counter to what I had understood to represent appropriate practice. For instance, some people expressed to me that the palos ensemble should not play with amplification when the misterios are dancing, but I witnessed a fiesta de misterios where this was precisely what occurred, and no one seemed to object to it. Practices such as these, I argue, reveal the non-religious role that palos music plays in fiestas de misterios. In Chapter Two, I discuss additional flexible musical practices that currently exist in the tradition, such as the frequent participation of non-practitioner paleros in religious contexts. I also compare the practices of LVD with those of Haitian Vodou and Cuban Regla de Ocha. In the last chapter, I offer some closing thoughts about racism and anti-Haitianism in the Dominican Republic, in the wake of a 2013 Dominican government decree that stripped away thousands of

Haitian-Dominicans of their Dominican citizenship, led to mass deportations, and prompted the resurgence of xenophobic and racist discourses.

Chapter 1: The Role of Palos Music in *Fiestas de Misterios*

Juana's fiesta in honor of Anaísa (St. Anne): Merengue Group for Both Musical Components

On July 26th of 2015, my friends Paola and José Ramón (who had never attended a fiesta de misterios before and had been curious to experience one) accompanied me to Juana's fiesta that evening. There, people danced to a merengue group, which was contracted not only for the more secular-oriented portion of the event, but also for the task of entertaining the misterio. As the band started to play religious genres, the vocalist began singing salves in honor of Anaísa, the misterio counterpart of Saint Anne. At times during their performance, the conga player drummed louder and added additional embellishments, to excite the audience. The singer, responding to the emotional build-up, shouted out to the crowd, telling them that they should pay close attention to Anaísa, who was now dancing in the form of the servidora Juana, whom the misterio had possessed.

Days before the celebration, Juana let me know that the palos group Unión San Miguel, which usually performed at her fiestas, would not be doing so this year. She and the leader of the ensemble, Fermín De Los Santos, had come to an agreement fifteen years ago that his group would provide the music at her fiestas annually. Due to financial factors, however, they were not able to find common ground this time for the fiestas that Juana hosted for Anaísa, Patrón Santiago, and San Miguel. Now without the services of Unión San Miguel, Juana decided that the merengue band that

normally performed the secular music segment in her fiestas was going to have to play the salves de misterios, as well as their usual merengue songs. I asked her if she thought that the misterios would approve of this atypical practice, and Juana replied that she had already consulted Anaísa and Patrón Santiago (another LVD deity), and both misterios had agreed that this course of action was acceptable.

It seems to me that Juana's priority was to ensure that music would be performed at the fiesta, even if she was unable to procure her preferred type of ensemble. The absence of a palos group at this event does not conform to orthodox practice. I have never seen or heard of a servidor, other than Juana, who has hosted a fiesta without contracting a sacred drumming ensemble, nor have I encountered examples of this practice in the scholarly literature on Las Veintiunas Divisiones. Nonetheless, this event illustrates the palos music tradition's flexibility in the fiestas de misterios context. Juana's choice to hire a merengue band to play for the misterio exemplifies the lack of standardization in LVD. It also shows how the religion largely relies on the decisions of the servidor, who relays or interprets requests from the misterio. This flexibility and practices that veer away from the mainstream practices often mentioned by servidores, paleros, and devotees is key in understanding the role palos play in fiestas de misterios.

Taking into account the flexibility I encountered in LVD musical practices throughout the Province of Santiago that seem to be uncommon in other regions of the country that have been documented, I believe palos music fulfills key social functions beyond the ones normally stated by paleros and servidores, who, as already noted, usually say that palos music is primarily intended for the entertainment of

misterios and facilitation of spirit possession. My research reveals that palos music performances at fiestas de misterios create an atmosphere that draws religious insiders and outsiders to these celebrations, and thereby attracts new potential devotees. It is very common around the world, of course, for the music that is traditionally played in sacred contexts to have important purposes other than the ones commonly expressed by the members of the religion. Regardless of what the practitioners state, musical practices in religious ceremonies often serve to create and maintain bonds among followers and potential followers.

Flexible Musical Practices in Fiestas de Misterios

From the time I first conducted field research on fiestas de misterios as an undergraduate student in 2012, I have learned from paleros and servidores that when performing music for the misterios, it is inappropriate to use instruments that are not part of the traditional palos ensemble format, such as those that Dominican popular musicians play. Many people told me that the misterios do not like contemporary music. Fermín De los Santos insisted to me that misterios enjoy dancing to the palos music of their times, as opposed to musics of more recent origin. For example, De los Santos and Francisco Peralta (leader of the group San Miguel de Canca) explained that misterios would refuse to dance to currently fashionable music genres. Peralta emphatically stated, "No misterio comes down with *merengue*, *bachata*, or *salsa*. The misterio comes down if palos are played … San Miguel is not going to come down with bachata, doesn't come down with merengue, but if you play palos to San Miguel, he will come down" (Peralta p.c.). Mario, a palero from Llano de Pérez in

Puerto Plata Province, north of Santiago, similarly asserted to me that palos music is performed at LVD events "because misterios like that kind of music. That's the music of misterios" (Mario p.c.) Paleros, servidores, and devotees alike expressed this view.

According to servidores, misterios guide them in all aspects of religious conduct. When a servidor holds a consultation with a parishioner, he or she does so by channeling the misterio, whose advice is then passed on to the client. The misterio also dictates to the servidor his or her specifications for the construction, placement, and choice of decorative items for the deity's altar. In the area of finances, misterios determine the cost of consultations, what percentage of that income should go toward the servidor's own living expenses, and how much money the servidor should invest on materials for the annual fiestas. After servidores decide which musical groups they would like to hire, they must have the misterio approve of the final selection. Whenever servidores face an obstacle that forces them to make a change in the plans for a fiesta (which is what occurred in Juana's case), they must consult the misterio, to receive permission from them before making further arrangements.

Juana's party for Anaísa was one of several fiestas I attended where servidores' decisions were unconventional within the broader accepted LVD fiesta practices, such as when Juana hired a merengue band to play sacred and secular music at the event. I also have attended fiestas where the paleros used amplification, even though this practice is frowned upon by some practitioners of Las Veintiunas Divisiones. At other celebrations, I have seen palos groups serve as the musical act for both components of the fiesta, that is, music for the misterios, and music for the

public. And yet at another party, a group entertained the misterios with an accordion, an instrument considered outside of the traditional domain of palos ensembles.

Lucia's Fiesta in Honor of San Miguel: Palos Group for Both Components

Every year, at the fiesta in honor of San Miguel (September 29th), Héctor Turbí and his palos group Los Mellos perform at the altar of Lucía. Servidora Lucía usually does not employ a live merengue group to play in between the sets of the palos ensemble. Instead, she hires Los Mellos to perform in front of the altar for the misterio, and later on a stage for the public. On September 29th of 2013, I arrived at Lucía's fiesta at around 11:00 a.m., and made my way to the area next to the altar, where the group was interpreting the last few salves of the set. The musicians finished this component of the program after performing about more three salves, at which point the servidora asked them to move to the stage located outside and prepare for the next set. An audio engineer helped the group position microphones for the palos and voices. After about 15 minutes of organization, the group started their musical numbers while attendees began to dance near the front of the stage. Because of the modest size of his house, the area was not large enough to allow many couples to dance, thus many stood or continued to sit at their tables while watching the musicians. After a set of about five salves, Turbí announced that food was going to be served.

Juana's and Lucia's fiestas demonstrate how the flexibility of LVD practices allows servidores to accommodate the limitations in their resources. When facing

budgetary constraints, the lack of an adequate space, and the occasional trouble in obtaining personnel, for example, servidores, with the blessing of the misterios, often can deviate from the norm to make sure that live music will be available. By adapting LVD fiesta practices in this way, servidores and paleros have created fiesta spaces that not only satisfy the misterios, but also make the events attractive to the public.

Accordion and Other Popular Music Instruments in the Palos Ensemble (Rafael, Los Mellos, and Tipipalo)

There are a number of palos groups that use instruments that are not normally considered to form part of palos ensembles (which typically includes three palos drums and various idiophones, as already explained). Los Mellos, Tipipalo, and Rafael's group San Miguel y Las Siete Potencias represent this direction. These ensembles add other kinds of drums (e.g., *tambora*, congas), melodic instruments (e.g., accordion, electric bass), and even an electronic percussion pad.[7] Tipipalo and Los Mellos have had careers performing for local TV stations, nightclubs, and other secular venues/events. When they participate in LVD religious occasions, however, Tipipalo and Los Mellos use the traditional format. Héctor Turbí, leader of Los Mellos, expressed that he adds new instruments to the group's line-up only when they perform non-religious repertoire, to make the music more appealing for audience members who like popular merengue songs that incorporate palos drums. Similarly, Julio "El Barón," leader of Tipipalo, told me that he used non-traditional instruments

[7] The Dominican tambora, a two-headed drum, is one of the mainstays of merengue ensembles.

to expand the group's repertoire beyond the palos canon. Los Mellos and Tipipalo, therefore, sing salves for misterios, secular salves, and well-known merengue tunes.

Toward the beginning of my project, many people explained to me that performing with the "extra" instruments in a fiesta de misterios was not appropriate because the misterios only like traditional palos ensemble music. During the summer of 2016, however, I encountered Rafael Colón's group performing in a fiesta de misterios with an accordion, which surprised me. I later asked Rafael about it, expressing to him that I thought that paleros would not use the accordion in a religious ceremony. Unlike what I had heard before, Rafael asserted that the accordion forms part of the musical styles that the honored misterio appreciates, and for this reason the group has no problem employing this instrument. This fiesta paid homage to San Santiago and Anaísa, and took place on July 25th in the neighborhood Ciudad de Dios, Santiago. Its occurrence on a weekday and during daytime hours, unfortunately, hampered the number of attendees. At this celebration, I also observed the unconventional practice of including merengue songs in the same set as salves de misterios. Not only did the group play merengue tunes, but they did so while the servidora was possessed by San Santiago and attendees were talking to the misterio.

In other instances, the misterios do not agree that other instruments should be played in the fiestas honoring them. Fermín De Los Santos, who has an especially close relationship with San Miguel (not only because De Los Santos is a long-time devotee, but also because his sister Deisy is a servidora and follower of the deity), and Héctor Turbí told me stories of how San Miguel would explain to them how to perform their palos music. According to Turbí, San Miguel did not want him to use

amplification or extra instruments in front of the altar during his fiesta, although he gave Turbí permission to do so when his band was playing just for the attendees. In Fermín's case, several years ago he had thought about including new instruments to the ensemble. Through Deisy, who channeled San Miguel, Fermín was told that if he chose to expand the group, San Miguel would not stop him, although there was a high possibility that the quality of his playing style would suffer ("*dañar*"). San Miguel stressed that he wanted the palos drums interpreted in the way Fermín had learned to play them, that is, in the traditional sense. In the end, De los Santos decided to abide by San Miguel's wishes, and did not alter the instrumentation of his palos ensemble.

Amplification in Fiestas de Misterios (Rafael)

At the fiesta held in Ciudad de Dios that I described above, Rafael Colón's group performed with amplification, while the servidora was in a trance state. In 2012, a few years before I conducted the primary field research for this thesis, Juana's husband, Heriberto, told me that palos groups do not use amplification, because the misterios object to this type of electronic assistance. He said that "palo music is for the misterios, and because of that paleros here [at their altar] do not perform with amplification, because it should be música criolla, for the misterios, traditional" (Heriberto, p.c.). In a similar manner, other paleros, such as Héctor Turbí, often emphasized to me that misterios prefer acoustic palos music. For Rafael, though, deviating from this convention was unproblematic, because the misterio (via the

servidora) gave him permission to do so. Besides, he explained, using amplification made it easier for the fiesta audience to clearly hear the vocals over the drums.

As these four cases illustrate, servidores and paleros have found multiple ways to adapt palos music performance practices. Although the practices that I documented in the last few pages do not appear to be common in the Dominican Republic,[8] they illustrate the degree of flexibility that currently exists in Santiago's LVD tradition.

Socializing in Fiestas de Misterios

Many participants come to fiestas not primarily to interact with the misterio, but rather to spend an afternoon or evening with friends, family, and community members in a festive environment where they can drink, eat free food, and dance to both palos music and popular music. These partygoers often live in the community surrounding the servidor's house, and may or may not be practitioners of LVD. Other people who are devotees or clients of the servidor might also attend fiestas to interact with the misterio, but at the same time, also to enjoy the other perks the fiestas offer.

Alex, a long-time devotee of San Miguel, primarily attends fiestas to pay homage to the misterios, but also views the setting as an ideal space for doing what he loves, which is dancing and spending time with friends. Every year, he travels throughout Santiago to enjoy several fiestas, not only the one held in his neighborhood. He even goes to several events held in honor of the same misterio. During the summer of 2015, of the many ceremonies he participated in, two included

[8] I based this observation on my readings of scholarly sources that document fiestas de misterios.

fiestas organized for Anaísa that occurred on the same day. Fermín De Los Santos introduced me to Alex at a celebration in honor of San Santiago on July 25th. The next day, at Ruth's fiesta for Anaísa, we encountered him once again. Noticing my interest in fiestas, Alex asked me to join him later that evening to attend another event for Anaísa that would be taking place in a different neighborhood located nearby. He mentioned to me that he tries to go to several fiestas every year, especially in late July, when over the course of a single week one can attend three different religious celebrations (July 25th for Patrón Santiago, 26th for Anaísa, and 29th for Santa Marta).

At fiestas de misterios, I have observed that there is always a relatively large percentage of attendees who do not attempt to make a connection with the misterio. That is, while the devotees normally approach the deity's altar and dance during salves alongside the servidor, the non-believers do not interact in these ways. There are revelers who might not even be acquainted with the servidor, or know very much about religious devotion to the misterios, but attend the fiesta anyway. For instance, in the summer of 2012, I ran into an acquaintance at a fiesta honoring Anaísa. He was there with his mother, who sometimes goes to the fiestas, primarily to dance and eat. Neither of them, though, have any ties with the misterios or the servidora Ruth.

In houses with a large area to accommodate a fiesta, it is easier to notice the many people who go back and forth between the dancing and sitting sections, but do not confer with the misterio at the altar. Juana and Ruth, who have relatively generous spaces in their residences to host these affairs, always have a designated sitting area with plastic chairs and tables where people can congregate to eat and drink. Juana's home has enough room to accommodate approximately seven tables of eight chairs

each. Ruth sets aside the front part of her house for dancing to popular music, and dining. Tables and chairs surround the dance floor, and this appears to be where most of the attendees who are non-practitioners of LVD sit. In the rear section of the backyard is the *enramada* (tin-roofed shed) where the palos group performs. This open area functions as a dance space during the salves and houses an outside altar. Plastic chairs and benches encircle where the palos perform. The people who sit in this area are devotees. Occasionally, people seated in the section reserved for popular music will come to the back area and dance to palos music, but not interact with Ruth or the misterio. Even at smaller fiestas with more modest budgets and less space for seating, one can observe people who attend fiestas mainly to enjoy the food, dance to the music, and spend time with people, rather than treat the occasion as a religious experience.

As I mentioned earlier, servidores often say that the principal purpose of hosting a fiesta de misterios is to honor a deity of Las Veintiuna Divisiones. Some devotees say the event is a birthday party for the designated misterio, and that the celebration provides the atmosphere necessary to attract the misterio. The value of having a large turnout, however, is downplayed by servidores, apparently because from their perspective the most important spectator is the LVD deity, not the people in attendance. Paleros, similarly, seldom state that the music they perform at fiestas is intended as much for the pleasure of the audience as for the enjoyment of the deity. Even so, as this chapter has documented, and the next chapter also reveals, many of the musical practices I encountered in fiestas de misterios in Santiago show that drawing a large audience represents a prime consideration for servidores and paleros.

Chapter 2: Flexibility and Openness in *Las Veintiuna Divisiones*

Many paleros told me that earning money was the primary reason why they performed music at fiestas de misterios. As I unexpectedly discovered while attending these events in the Province of Santiago, the palos drummers active in the region often are not devotees of the misterios. Some Santiago-based palos musicians whom I interviewed even occasionally expressed skepticism regarding the classification of Las Veintiuna Divisiones as a religion. That non-devotee paleros frequently supply the music at fiestas de misterios in the Province of Santiago appears to represent a major departure from broader Dominican LVD practice.[9] It also reveals one of the ways in which the local LVD tradition exhibits considerable flexibility, when compared to the religion's Afro-Caribbean counterparts in Cuba and Haiti.

Flexible Practices within Fiestas de Misterios

Flexibility with musicians: Non-devotee Paleros

A palo drummer from Navarrete (located about 25 minutes northwest of Santiago; see Appendix, Figure 1), Radhamés Núñez characterizes himself as a "product" of Dominican *clubes culturales* (cultural clubs).[10] Radhamés tells the story

[9] As Martha Ellen Davis, Daniel Piper, and other scholars have documented for other regions of the Dominican Republic, paleros normally are practitioners of LVD, especially in rural areas.

[10] Tallaj (2015: 154) describes clubes culturales as "neighborhood communal associations created by inhabitants who wanted to improve their social conditions." These clubs, especially common in the 1980s, offered social services and educational programs for youth, and many incorporated folk troupes.

of a man from San Cristobal, Rafael López, who settled in Navarrete in the 1970s. The next decade, Rafael brought palos drums from his home region to Navarrete, and introduced them to the left-leaning Club Juan Pablo Duarte, where the instruments were regarded as "folkloric." Radhamés, then a high school student, joined the club and eventually the palos group. The ensemble performed secular- and Saint-themed songs at birthday parties and folklore events held in the club, and also participated in the city's *fiestas patronales* (Catholic patron Saint celebrations).[11] Years later, as an active group member, Rafael introduced the other musicians to the belief system of LVD. Until then, the members had known little about the key aspects of the religion. The group soon started to perform regularly at fiestas de misterios, and ultimately Radhamés became a devoted practitioner of Las Veintiuna Divisiones (Núñez p.c.).

Raúl, a palero from Canca la Piedra (about 20 minutes northeast of Santiago), learned to play palos as a secular tradition, and later took part in fiestas patronales, before he was invited to perform in fiestas de misterios by paleros from Tamboril. As a young boy, Raúl related to me, he used to improvise rhythms on a *tambora* drum, which he played upside down, pretending that it was a palo drum. Later, in his teenage years, Raúl learned how to play the palo drum and sing misterios-themed salves with the late Ramón Vásquez, a devotee palero from Tamboril. In the late 1990s, Raúl formed his own palos group, San Miguel de Canca, with his relatives and friends (the ensemble was comprised mostly of non-believers). Although he continues to be a palero to this day, Raúl never became a devotee of the misterios. He stresses

[11] Fiestas patronales are festivities organized and hosted by town and city governments throughout the Dominican Republic in honor of the city/town's patron. The festivities start a few days before the day of the Saint and include family- and community-oriented activities such as music and dance performances (usually folk-dance groups), games, food, and friendly competitions (Tejeda 1998).

that he performs at fiestas de misterios for the sake of getting paid (Raúl, p.c.). The story of Nao Mejía is very similar to that of Raul. Nao and Raúl were born and raised in the same town, moved to Tamboril, and became involved in palos groups like Potencia Santera and San Miguel de Canca. Nao has been playing palos in fiestas de misterios ever since.

José González's early involvement in the tradition resembles that of Raúl and Nao. José started playing palos in the patronales of Tamboril, initially as secular entertainment, before he began to perform at events dedicated to the misterios. Now in his 60s, José remains a non-devotee, and uses these gigs to supplement his income as a garbage collector in Tamboril's town hall. Like Raúl, José, while a young boy, expressed his initial interest in palos music by tapping out rhythms on upside-down cans and belting out songs heard on the radio. Folklore troupes introduced José to the musical styles associated with Las Veintiuna Divisiones in the 1970s, before he had the opportunity to experience palos performances at fiestas patronales. Around the time that Ramón Vázquez invited Raúl to join his ensemble, he extended the same invitation to José. To this day, José remains a member of Ramón's group (José González, p.c.).

For Radhamés, Raúl, José, and Nao, then, their initial exposure to palos music happened in non-religious settings, often within the context of national folklore shows, and it was only much later that they came to understand the function that palos music fulfills in fiestas de misterios, that is, inducing spirit possession in the servidor. After becoming aware of the traditional role of palos music, though, they remained

non-practitioners of Las Veintiuna Divisiones.[12] The fiesta de misterios circuit mainly represented a regular paid gig for them. The limited number of locally-based palos groups in the Province of Santiago, compared to the country's southern region (e.g., San Cristobal), may partially explain why in Santiago servidores allow non-devotee percussionists to perform religious-themed repertoire in public fiestas de misterios.

Flexibility with Tunes

In a typical fiestas de misterios, palos musicians, following the directions of the servidor's assistant, perform salves for the misterio or Saint for whom the fiesta is dedicated. Groups often present two or three tunes to that misterio, and after completing the set, shift to repertoire that honors other LVD deities. Unlike with Cuban Santería and Haitian Vodou, however, in the LVD tradition specific rhythmic patterns are not associated with individual misterios.[13] Indeed, during a palos group performance, the same rhythmic patterns often appear throughout the repertoire.

To add musical variety, and differentiate themselves from their competitors, palos ensembles usually personalize their repertoire through the rhythms they play. Rhadamés Núñez, the leader of Navarrete's Los Indios de Caonabo, explained to me that the younger members of his group often watch YouTube clips to learn the styles of other groups. The palos ensembles whom they borrow rhythms from hail from various locales, although mainly (I suspect, based on my survey of YouTube videos)

[12] In contrast to LVD, in Cuba, for instance, Santeria drummers have to go through longer periods of training and be initiated into the religion (Scheweitzer 2015).
[13] In Cuban Santería ceremonies, musicians evoke deities through orisha-specific repertoire (Hagedorn 2001). In Haitian Vodou, similarly, songs are associated with the nations of the *lwas* (Wilken 1992).

Santo Domingo, Baní, and San Cristobal. Núñez does not object to this practice, although he makes sure the rhythms fit within the parameters of the palos tradition.

Another musician who participates in this eclectic practice is Carlos Almonte. From Santiago, Carlos did not grow up surrounded by devotees of misterios, but came into the tradition later in life, as a young adult, largely because of his wife. The two initially were members of the Jehovah Witness Church, until the misterio San Elías possessed his wife several times, and commanded them to leave the Church. Also following the misterio's instructions, from this point onward they have honored the deity every year in January, by hosting an event featuring a palos ensemble. Although the couple eventually moved to New York City, they often travel back to the Dominican Republic for the January fiesta. While in New York, Almonte ended up operating a *botánica*, which are the stores that sell misterios' and saints' images, candles, and all of the other materials that servidores display on LVD altars.

Carlos explained to me that the misterio who possessed his wife instructed him to start his own palos group, and also asked him to complement the ensemble's configuration with non-traditional instruments. Honoring this request, Carlos added a tambora and saxophone to the line-up, which allowed him to fuse palos music with *merengue típico*.[14] In the 1990s, while in New York, he started to learn to play congas with the help of Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians. Later, once he returned to Santiago, he invented his own rhythms for all three sizes of the palo drum, which he began to perform with his group El Barón y su Tipi Palo (Carlos Almonte, p.c.).

[14] See Hutchinson 2016a for a discussion of merengue típico (typical merengue), a rural-associated form of merengue that prominently features saxophones solos.

As these brief overviews of the careers of Carlos Almonte and Rhadamés Núñez suggest, as long as palos groups employ the core instruments of the ensemble, the musicians often are quite free to experiment with their performance practices, a relatively unusual scenario for a musical tradition that enacts a key religious function.

Flexibility with Participants and Attendees: Openness of Celebrations

As discussed in Chapter 1, fiestas de misterios are open to members of the community in which the servidor's house is located. Some servidores advertise their fiestas. Juana, every year, places a large street banner in front of her place that displays the name of the honored misterio (e.g. "Fiesta in honor of Santiago"). Other servidores, like Ruth (who does not provide live popular music in her fiesta), blares popular music through a sound system during the events, which makes it obvious to anyone in the vicinity that a celebration is happening. Some, like the servidora Tarira from Cienfuegos, sets up a stage for the merengue band in the middle of the street.

Hosts of fiestas generally do not limit the influx of people into the celebration. In none of the fiestas that I attended did anyone question me at all about my presence. At some events, where the number of attendees was especially high, and the food and drinks on offer were plentiful, it appeared to me that many of the audience members came chiefly to enjoy the non-religious aspects of the celebration. In any case, apparently anyone is welcome to come in, take a seat, and dance to the music.

Secular / Popular Music in the Religious Context

The presence of sacred and secular musical styles in fiestas de misterios differentiates the LVD tradition from Vodou, Santería, and other Afro-Caribbean religious belief systems that do not feature secular music in public celebrations. It is common in fiestas de misterios for there to be a designated moment where palos music is performed for the deity, and a later moment in the event where the band interprets popular dance music styles (e.g., merengue, bachata) primarily for the enjoyment of the audience. Practitioners of Las Veintiuna Divisiones usually refer to the latter repertoire as "music for the living," and the former as "music for the dead."

Depending on the resources available to the fiesta host, servidores either hire a merengue band, or play popular music recordings via a sound system. The most common practice is to have a popular music group alternate with a palos ensemble. The celebrations that Ruth hosts in Las Charcas depart from this standard practice, as they often feature popular music performances throughout the event in the front of her property, which has a large space for dancing. The palos group, meanwhile, plays in the backyard, where the outside altar is located. The fiesta that Lucia organizes to honor Santa Marta represents another exception. At these celebrations, the band Los Mellos fulfills both of the musical components of the celebration, by interpreting secular and sacred repertoire at different moments, as I explained in Chapter One.

Blurring the lines between the sacred and secular realms frequently occurs in contemporary LVD practices. Angelina Tallaj, in Chapter Five of her dissertation (2015), discusses another recent manifestation of this tendency. Among the Dominican diaspora in New York City, as she documents, servidores often host

fiestas de misterios in overtly secular spaces, such as nightclubs. Tallaj contends that "the sacred and profane elements of Dominican Vudú and its music cannot be seen as antagonistic forces ... it is precisely these new seemingly secular, commercial, and theatrical practices that have given Dominicans the freedom to exercise more agency and flexibility in their religious identification and practices" (2015: 240). Given the large size of New York's Dominican community, and the ways in which cultural practices often circulate between the island and diaspora, the practices examined by Tallaj form part of the broader phenomenon that I focus on in this chapter.

Fiestas de Misterios and Palos Ensembles in the Province of Santiago: Trajectories of Paleros

Paleros in Santiago: Locals and Migrants

In Santiago, some palos drummers grew up in religious families (either only Catholic or both Catholic and devoted to misterios), while others did not. Those raised in rural areas often first encountered palos performances in religious contexts, including fiestas patronales. The De Los Santos siblings, Deisy and Fermín, for instance, attended many of these types of events in their community, and also in their mother's hometown (Santana, Province of Elias Piña). Héctor Turbí's early exposure to the palos tradition was similar to that of Deisy and Fermín, although Héctor was raised in the southern region, in San Juan de la Maguana (see Appendix, Figure 2).

Paleros from Los Cocos de Jacagua (small town north of Santiago; see Appendix, Figure 1), such as Miguel Ángel, Nelly (who are cousins), and Rafael

Colón, recount that in their childhoods they often attended religious celebrations in which the devotees would host a small gathering to pray and make petitions to the Saint, and, at a later part of the event, the paleros would interpret popular music hits. The latter practice also was common in the towns of Tamboril and Canca, where the paleros Raul and José González were raised (I profiled these musicians in Chapter 1). During my interviews with Raúl from Canca and Miguel Ángel from Los Cocos, they sang for me some of the popular music tunes that they had learned in their youths.

According to the oral histories I collected, prior to the 1980s fiestas de misterios in the Santiago area did not feature live musical performances, although during the ceremonies the attendees would sing salves, prayers, and *tercios*. Paleros started to migrate to Santiago in the 1980s, and it was at this moment that servidores began to include palos ensembles in fiestas de misterios that were open to the public. It appears, therefore, that rural-to-urban migration paved the way for palos groups to become a fundamental component of LVD ceremonies in the Santiago region. De los Santos, for example, asserts that the palos tradition was established in the Santiago area by musicians who, like himself, were raised in southern regions of the country.

Palos in Fiestas de Misterios: Regional Comparison

As Daniel Piper has documented for San Cristobal and nearby southern areas, palos ensembles seldom took part in fiestas de misterios during the repressive Trujillo dictatorship (1930-1961), especially in urban centers such as state capitals, and it was not until the 1980s that LVD celebrations in San Cristobal began to regularly include

live performances by palos groups and other musical ensemble-types. Piper's chronology for the San Cristobal area thus appears to parallel the Santiago case.

In other respects, though, LVD musical practices in Santiago differ considerably from those of San Cristobal and neighboring regions. Many of the seemingly unorthodox musical practices that I have documented in this thesis, such as the participation of non-devotee musicians in religious celebrations, and the inclusion of popular music performances in sacred contexts, are not common in San Cristobal, and may represent practices that are unique to LVD events held in the Santiago area.

Many factors likely account for this regional uniqueness. One contributing factor may be the absence of LVD cofradías or religious brotherhoods in Santiago, given that in other parts of the country these mutual aid associations have played a central role in maintaining Afro-Dominican secular and sacred music-dance traditions. In any case, the musical practices at fiestas de misterios in Santiago represent not only a departure from those of other Dominican regions, but also mark a point of contrast with the ceremonial occasions of Cuban Santería and Haitian Vodou.

Closing Thoughts

As I was conducting the main fieldwork for this thesis, the Dominican Republic was in the midst of heated debates, in the media and on the streets, that revolved around the September 2013 constitutional ruling that mandated the deportation of thousands of longstanding Dominican residents of Haitian heritage. Many Dominicans, unfortunately, approved of this course of action, and frequently portrayed those who opposed the ruling as being unpatriotic. Although I strongly disagreed with the government's position on the status of Haitian-Dominicans, while conducting fieldwork I did not volunteer my personal views on this matter to my interlocutors, to avoid become involved in divisive arguments over an issue that seemed, at the time, largely peripheral to the research project I was investigating.

Even so, the issue often came up, albeit indirectly, during my fieldwork. As I mentioned previously, devotees frequently underscored to me the ways in which Las Veintiuna Divisiones differs from Haitian Vodou, and seldom acknowledged the many similarities that exist between the two religions and their associated musical practices. I also found that LVD practitioners tended to strongly object to the characterization of their belief system as a Dominican variant of Vodou. Some of my consultants, moreover, related stories about negative interactions with Vodou priests. Others used words such as "dark" and "evil" when discussing the Haitian religion. This is not to say that every LVD practitioner characterized Vodou in this manner, as some devotees of Las Veintiuna Divisiones whom I met expressed more neutral views. At any rate, Haitian-Dominicans represent an exceedingly small proportion of

the attendees at fiestas de misterios, at least in the areas where I conducted fieldwork, which may suggest that followers of LVD do not regularly extend invitations to them.

Recently, Dominican and Dominicanist historians, to provide more nuanced understandings of Dominican-Haitian relations, have published revisionist interpretations of the political and socio-cultural processes through which the local elite racialized the country's relationship to its neighbor, and of how various sectors of the local population resisted this development (e.g., Mayes 2014, Ricourt 2016). Sydney Hutchinson, an ethnomusicologist who has published extensively on merengue típico, has revisited the origins of the genre, as a way to contest standard Dominican nativist-nationalist representations (2016b). In most scholarly and journalistic accounts of merengue's rise and consolidation as a music-dance expression, the contributions of Haitians invariably are ignored. Hutchinson argues, though, based on her analysis of 19th century transcriptions, that interactions between the popular music scenes on both sides of the island shaped the early development of merengue, and thus the Dominican Republic's national genre bears a Haitian imprint.

In the future, I would like to contribute to this emergent field of research, as it addresses one of the most salient issues the Dominican Republic currently is facing. A new study on LVD musical practices, for example, could more fully explore the diverse viewpoints that devotee and non-devotee paleros express about Haitian musical-religious practices, and the ways in which LVD musicians attempt to maintain, and perhaps sometimes undermine, the boundaries separating the traditions. In my opinion, such a study could provide new vantagepoints from which to consider the evolution of the relationship between Dominicans and Haitians in the 21st century.

Appendix 1

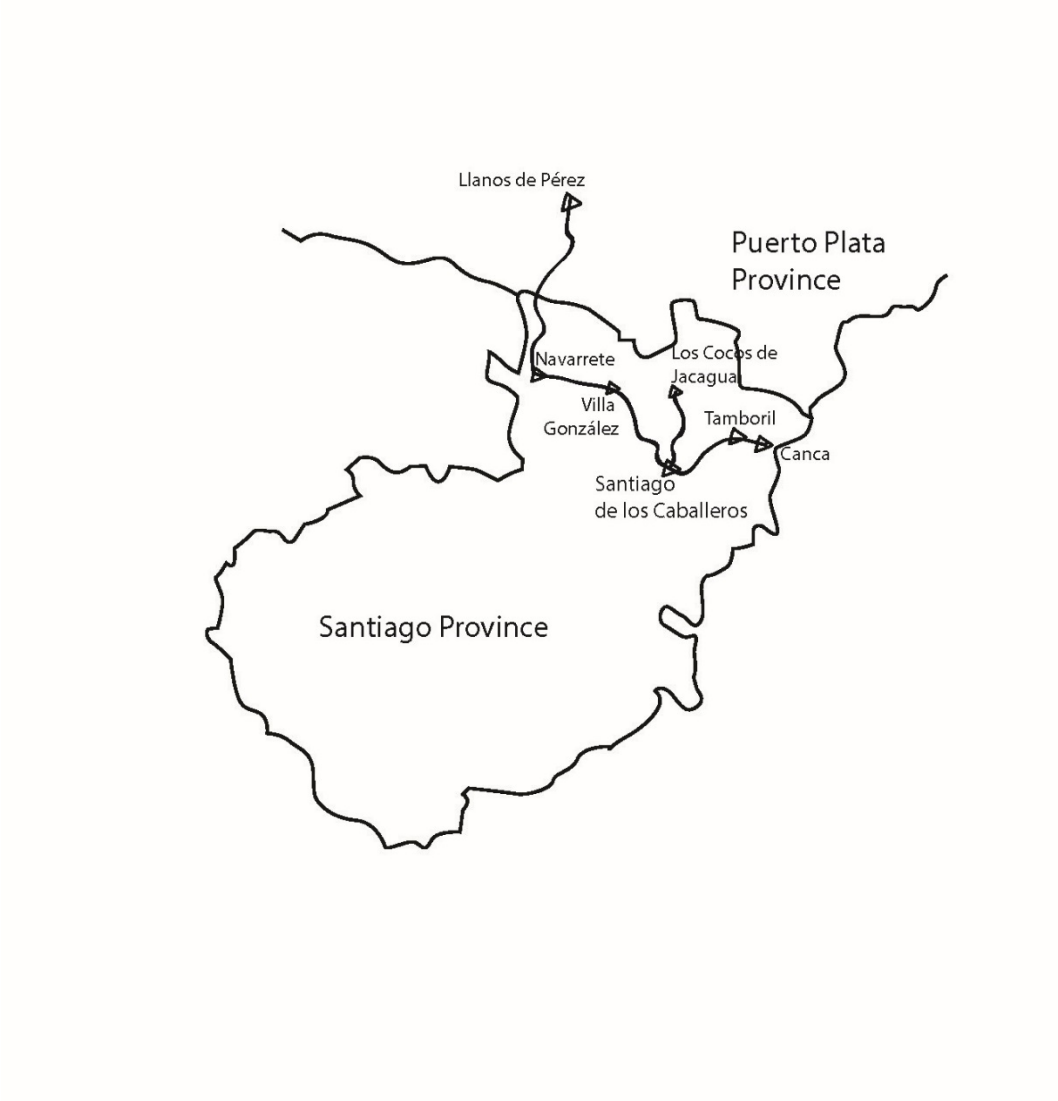

Figure 1: Map of Santiago Province with towns and cities referenced

Figure 2: Map of the Dominican Republic with cities referenced

Appendix 2

Figure 1: Palos ensemble.

Figure 2: Palos group Unión San Miguel at a fiesta for Anaísa.

Appendix 3

Salve in honor of Saint Michael

Chorus
Oh San Miguel, Oh San Miguel
Dímelo ahora, ¿qué voy a hacer?

Verses
Ay yo lo voy llamando, ay padre San Miguel
Dame la mano que lo quiero ver

Ay ya la media noche, que ya yo llegué
Virgen de Altagracia y Padre San Miguel

Ay ya la media noche, ay gran poder de Dios
Dame la mano y vámonos con Dios

Ay que yo voy a hacer, gran poder de Dios
Virgen de Altagracia, vámonos con Dios

English translation:

Chorus
Oh San Miguel, Oh San Miguel
Tell me, what will I do now?

Verses
I'm calling him, ah father San Miguel
Give me a hand because I want to see him

At midnight, I'm already here
Virgen de Altagracia and father San Miguel

At midnight, almighty power of God
Give me a hand, and let's leave with God's blessing

What am I going to do, almighty God?
Virgen de Altagracia, let's leave with God's blessing

Salve in honor of Saint Martha

Chorus
Santa Marta e' la Dominadora
Ay, dile a la culebra que no suba ahora

Verses
Ay muchacha no llore, ¿por qué va a llorar?
Ay siendo el mismo gusto que no' vamo' a dar

Que no la suba ahora, que no la suba ahorita
¿Qué dice Santa Marta y esa muchachita?

Ay mira como viene, que mira cómo va
Qué dice Santa Marta que viene a trabajar

Ay e'to se 'ta quemando, que te lo digo yo
Ay donde ta Anaísa que Marta llegó

<u>English translation:</u>

Chorus
Santa Marta is the dominant one
Oh, tell the snake not to come down now

Verses
Oh, don't cry young woman, why do you cry?
We are going to have a good time

May she not come down now, may she not come down later
What do Santa Marta and this young woman say?

Look at her coming, look at her going
Santa Marta is coming to work

This is burning, I'm telling you
Marta is here, where is Anaísa?

Bibliography

Austerlitz, Paul. 1997. *Merengue: Dominican and Dominican Identity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Davis, Martha E. 1976. "Afro-Dominican Religious Brotherhoods: Structure, Ritual, and Music. PhD Diss. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

_____. 1981. *Voces del pulgatorio: estudio de la salve dominicana*. Santo Domingo: Taller.

_____. 2007. "Vodú of the Dominican Republic: Devotion *to La Veintiuna División*." *Afro-Hispanic Review* 26 (1): 75–90.

_____. "Diasporal Dimensions of Dominican Folk Religion and Music." *Black Music Research Journal* 32 (1): 161–191

Deive, Carlos. 1979. *Vodú y Magia en Santo Domingo*. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Museo del Hombre Dominicano.

Delgado, Kevin. 2008. "Iyesá Complexes: Reexaminig Perceptions of Tradition in Cuban Iyesá Music. *Black Music Research Journal* 28 (2): 1-39.

Hagedorn, Katherine. 2001. *Divine Utterances: The Performance of Afro-Cuban Santería*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Hernández Soto, Carlos and Edis Sánchez. 1997. "Los Congos de Villa Mella, República Dominicana." *Latin American Music Review* 18 (2): 297–316.

Howard, David. 2001. *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic*. Boulder: Lynn Rienner.

Hutchinson, Sydney. 2016a. *Tigers of a Different Stripe: Performing Gender in Dominican Music*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

_____. 2016b. "Entangled Rhythms on a Conflicted Island: Digging up the Buried Histories of Dominican Folk Music." *Resonancias* 20 (39): 139–155.

Moya Pons, Frank. 2010 [1995]. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers.

Murrell, Nathaniel. 2010. *Afro-Caribbean Religions: An Introduction to Their Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Traditions*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Pacini Hernandez, Deborah. 1995. *Bachata: A Social History of a Dominican Popular Music*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Paulino, Edward. 2016. *Dividing Hispaniola: The Dominican Republic's Border Campaign Against Haiti, 1930 1961*. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press.

Piper, Daniel. 2012. "Urbanization, Gender, and Cultural Emergence in the Music of Dominican Popular Religion: Palos and Salves in San Cristobal. PhD diss., Brown University.

Ricourt, Milagros. 2016. *The Dominican Racial Imaginary: Surveying the Landscape of Race and Nation in Hispaniola*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Rodríguez Demorizi, Emilio. 1971. *Música y baile en Santo Domingo*. Santo Domingo: Librería Hispaniola.

Sager, Rebecca. 2002. "Musical Meaning of Haitian Vodou Singing: An Ethnography of Musical and Ritual Discourse at a Lakou Ginen in Northern Haiti." PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin.

Sánchez-Carretero, Cristina. 2005. "Santos y Misterios as Channels of Communication in the Diaspora: Afro-Dominican Religious Practices Abroad." *The Journal of American Folklore* 118 (469): 308–26.

Santana, Josué, and Edis Sánchez. 2010. *La música folclórica dominicana*. Santo Domingo: IPGH.

Schaffler, Yvonne et al. 2016. "Traumatic Experience and Somatoform Dissociation Among Spirit Possession Practitioners in the Dominican Republic." *Cult Med Psychiatry* 40: 74–99.

Schweitzer, Kenneth. 2015. "The Cuban Añá Fraternity: Strategies for Cohesion." In *The Yoruba God of Drumming: Transatlantic Perspectives on the Wood that Talks*, edited by Amanda Villepastour. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Tallaj, Angelina. 2015. "Performing Blackness in a Mulatto Society: Negotiating Racial IdentityThrough Music in the Dominican Republic." PhD diss., CUNY Graduate Center.

Tejeda, Dagoberto et al. 1995. *Religiosidad popular dominicana y psiquiatría*. Santo Domingo: Corripio.

Tejeda, Dagoberto. 1998. *Cultura popular e identidad nacional*, vol. 2. Santo Domingo: MEDYABITE.

Wilken, Louis. 1992. *The Drums of Vodou*. Tempe: White Cliffs Media Co.

Interviews

Alex. 2015. Interview by the author. Santiago, DR. August 4.

Almonte, Carlos. 2015. Interview by the author. Santiago, DR. August 10.

Colón, Rafael. 2016. Interview by the author. Santiago, DR. January 7.

De Los Santos, Fermín. 2015. Interview by the author. Santiago, DR. August 6.

De Los Santos, Deisy. 2015. Interview by the author. Santiago, DR. August 7.

González, José. 2015. Interview by the author. Tamboril, DR. August 16.

Heriberto.2012. Interview by the author. Santiago, DR. August 14.

Mario. 2015. Interview by the author. Llanos de Pérez, DR. August 13.

Mejía, Nao. 2016. Interview by the author. Tamboril, DR. January 9.

Miguel Ángel. 2016. Interview by the author. Los Cocos, DR. January 13.

Nelly. 2016. Interview by the author. Los Cocos, DR. January 13.

Núñez, Radhamés. 2015. Interview by the author. Navarrete, DR. August 7.

Peralta, Francisco. 2016. Interview by the author. Canca la Piedra, DR. August 3.

Raúl. 2015. Interview by the author. Canca la Piedra, DR. August 5.

Turbí, Héctor. 2015. Interview by the author. Santiago, DR. August 7.