

Re-Percussion of Añá in Europe

A historical account of batá drumming practice in European countries

written by Thomas Altmann in 2007 (with an epilogue from 2013)

Dedicated to my elder (though younger) fellow omóañá and babalawo Michael Marcuzzi (ibae) from Toronto, Canada, who had to die of blood cancer in 2012 at the age of 46. Michael, I have learned so much from you. You were my idol. Thank you for everything, and rest in peace!

Abstract

This article is an account of the beginnings, developments and the current status in the establishment and the activity of the *orisha* (Yoruba deity) Añá in Western Europe.

Because *aberikula* (unconsecrated *batá*) drumming has to be regarded here as the initial step towards the ritually elevated manipulation of Añá, I will outline this early history of *batá* drumming in Europe up to the present time. Particular attention will be paid to the *fundamento* (consecrated) *batá* drum sets and their owners, as they are currently present in Europe.

The standing and the power of Añá cannot be seen outside of the context of the religious activities around this *orisha*, such as *Santería* drumming ceremonies and initiation rituals. As part of this study, I will examine the preconditions that allow and call for these activities, as referred to different European countries.

The information presented here has been collected by the author through personal telephone- and email communication as well as internet research during the first three months of 2007.

Repercussions

At the moment that this article is written, little less than five hundred years have passed after the first deportation of African slaves to Cuba, and from 170 years ago, the establishment of the secret Cuban tradition of Añá, the Yoruba deity that lives in the consecrated batá drum, is reported. These hundred and seventy years have been years of secrecy and concealment of Lukumí liturgy and rituals.

Up to the middle of the twentieth century, Africans and *criollos* (Cuban born blacks) were feared for their apparent skills in sorcery and their command of occult powers, and in a way, practitioners of the Palo cult and *santeros/santeras* (Santería priests) are still feared for the same reasons today. As the African drum seemed to play a mysterious part in the empowerment and the uniting of Cuban blacks, and because African drumming projected an unknown degree of intensity and insistent power that were even capable of evoking uncanny trance states among the dancers, Afro-Cuban drums and drumming have gone through repeated periods of persecution, prohibition, banning and confiscation of the instruments. Afro-Cuban people had every good reason to hide their culture, their faith, and their deities. While the original African deities were hidden behind the names and icons of the Catholic saints, the sacred rhythms and songs of the liturgical repertory were painstakingly guarded and kept as secret as all ritual details. This refers particularly to the repertory of the Yoruba-derived batá, as well as to the rituals of the *Abakuá* secret society.

It seems to be a well deserved irony of fate that after five hundred years of enslavement of Africans, of cultural oppression and the banning of their drums, the same Afro-Cuban drums and their rhythms are not only heard and played around the globe, but are bouncing right back into the original countries of their former oppressors on the European continent. And, in continuation of this movement, Afro-Cuban dance classes and batá drum workshops often function as the Trojan Horse, from which the underlying Lukumí religion spreads out to the innocently interested European students, who sometimes become followers of, and even initiates in, the religion.

***Afrocubanismo* and Folkloricization as Preconditions for the Dissemination of Batá Drumming**

The first reported occasion on which batá drums were played outside of a religious ritual was a demonstration lecture of the Cuban ethnomusicologist Fernando Ortíz in Havana, 1936, during which drummers Pablo Roche, Aguedo Morales, and Jesús Pérez played a set of unconsecrated batá drums. Ortíz is regarded as the founding father of the so-called *afrocubanismo*, the recognition of the African heritage as an important constituent part of Cuban national culture.

Subsequently, a couple of records were released in Cuba featuring the *tambores batá* of Jesús Pérez, as well as Merceditas Valdés and Celia Cruz, among others (on *Santero Afro-Cuban Cult Music, Vol.1*), or the *tambores batá* of Giraldo Rodriguez (commonly known as the *Afro Tambores Bata* record). These were two of the first records that were responsible for single-handedly turning percussionists into batá players, in America as well as in Europe; percussionists, especially in the Latin American field, used to be so captivated by the rhythms and the sound of the batá drums that they couldn't but decide to become *bataleros*.

The Cuban revolution in 1959 brought forth the foundation of the *Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba* (Cuban National Folklore Ensemble) in 1962. The *CFNC* exemplified the final *folkloricization* of formerly secret ritual Afro-Cuban music under Fidel Castro. The communist regime refused to acknowledge religions altogether, but saw a valuable anthem of national culture in the liturgical music and dance of the Afro-Cubans. Batá drumming and Lukumí songs and dances became working class folklore of the young communist island state. In terms of the abolition of ritual secrecy and the increasing accessibility of the Lukumí musical repertoire even to cultural outsiders, the Cuban revolution and the *Conjunto Folklórico* played a major role. The records of the *CFNC*, namely *Conjunto Folklórico Nacional* and *Lucumí*, became a revelation for hundreds and thousands of aspiring batá drummers who were unable to travel to Cuba and see a live batá performance.

Had the batá never been brought out of the Ocha or Ifá houses, had it never been played in public, and had it never been recorded for LPs that sold internationally, albeit to a minority audience, it would without a doubt not have gained the following of percussionists in every part of the world. One could also speculate whether the Afro-Cuban Santería religion (more accurately named the *Regla de Ocha*) would have reached European shores at all, had it not been heralded by its musical ambassador, the batá drum.

Musical Interest and Religious Involvement

The first European percussionists started to study batá drumming from the end of the 1970s to the mid-1980s. It can be stated that nearly all European batá drummers had originally started with another percussion instrument, mostly conga drums, bongos and timbales, or sometimes the drum set. It can also be stated that all of the percussionists who chose the batá as an additional percussion instrument, or as an independent musical branch to follow, did so for purely musical reasons. Nevertheless, most of the young percussionists who had decided to try this music for themselves must have been aware of the religious content of the repertory. At least, it was pointed out on the record sleeves. Back then, every drummer and every musician was in search of the latest “hip” music and the most intricate rhythms. I remember that when I first heard German percussionists Ralf Moufang and Alfred Mehnert play batá in 1983, I sensed that this was the “cutting edge”. I had listened to batá

recordings since 1980, and here were some fellows playing something that sounded exactly what I had heard on records. The apparent mystery that surrounded the batá drums and their rhythms, according to the liner notes of the *Afro Tambores Batá* record and the *Concepts in Unity*, only added to the fascination of this music.

It must be understood that Western Europe at that time had just recovered from a period of extreme intellectualism, liberation from all kinds of irrational manners, rituals and habits, and a spirit of revolution for social justice and equal rights. This had been in the 1960's. Religion was "out", and particularly younger people had distanced themselves from the Christian church. It was an act of liberation. I can say that at that time, no young artist wanted his creative mind to be limited or guided by something like a god.

I found that the 1970's were characterized by a lack of orientation. Progressiveness, *avant-garde*, and intellectualism had not made anyone happy, and at the end of the seventies and through the eighties, the revolutionary spirit shifted more towards the search for new ways of living and new ways to perceive the world. The New Age had begun. Oriental, African, and Australian cultures, along with "World Music", gained the interest of the Westerners. "Esoteric bookstores" mushroomed everywhere. Everybody sensed a spiritual void, but still nobody wanted back a theistic religion.

This was the time when European drummers started to play the batá, and I think one should consider this specific *Zeitgeist* to understand the attitude of European batá drummers towards the religion behind the liturgy of the batá, or the spectrum of attitudes, respectively: Still to this day, some drummers do not want to have anything to do with the religion of Santería, some of them just want to know the gist of it, and others become absorbed by the world around the batá, even to the point where the batá eventually take a second place to higher initiations into the religious priesthood, like Ocha or Ifá. Although each of these types of drummers shows the common purpose to accumulate as much musical knowledge, and develop as much instrumental facility as possible, those who refuse to dedicate themselves fully to the ritual dimension of the batá, equally tend to lack the dedication that it takes to fully comprehend the musical dimension. After all, batá music is functional by its nature, and many musical elements are directly linked to ritual.

***Aberikula* – Unconsecrated Batá Drums**

When reading Fernando Ortíz¹, one gets the impression that unconsecrated batá drums are not real batá drums, suggesting that the "real" consecrated batá drums must have been the original ones,

¹ Namely *Los tambores batá* in *Los instrumentos de la música afrocubana* (La Habana 1952, extract 1985)

before the false imitations, the unconsecrated batá drums (*aberikula*), were built as a surrogate for the consecrated *batá de fundamento* (*batá-Añá*). However, it is not evident from the Ortiz text that the unconsecrated drums that were played in rituals before Añabí and Atanda created the first *batá-Añá* (in 1837) had not been *aberikula* batá by their phenomenology.

Furthermore, every batá student in Cuba and elsewhere learns how to play on *aberikula* drums before he is ritually empowered to play the consecrated drums. So in this way too, the *aberikula* batá is the natural predecessor of the *fundamento* batá.

While there are religious purposes that it cannot fulfill, the *tambor aberikula* is nevertheless capable of evoking trance possession or, in other words, of calling the orisha down, just as a *toque bembe* or a *toque de güíro* is.

While in the time that this article is written, six sets of *batá de fundamento* are present in Europe in all², there was not one single consecrated *tambor* in Europe before 1992. It can be said that the everyday work of the average European batá drummer is still based on *aberikula* today. This is even more so, as the religious context that calls for *fundamento* drumming is either sparsely given in Europe (if at all), or only in particular areas, especially where a larger Cuban community has established, or wherever a higher religious activity can be found. *Añá* cannot function in isolation from the other orishas; it cannot fulfill any role outside of the religious context. The *tambor Añá* demands a special care and attention of its owner, from tuning (by rope or leather strips) to feeding the drums. It demands a certain etiquette, as far as storage, handling, preparation, and performance are concerned. To end with, only drummers who are either initiated to *Añá* or have at least undergone the ritual of “washing the hands” are allowed to play them.

An unconsecrated set of batá does not require any etiquette. It needs no attendance. It can have a metal tuning hardware and is thereby easy to handle. It may be played by anyone. Plus, it is commonly less expensive to hire an *tambor aberikula* than a *fundamento*. And for the European percussionist, who uses the batá drum exclusively for folkloric performances, the hardware-tuned *aberikula* batá is the only choice anyway, no matter whether he is initiated in *Añá* or not. Only an initiated drummer who is also a *babalawo* (or at least an *oba oriate*) might consider to acquire a set of *fundamento* drums (which is usually extremely expensive) for ritual purposes.

The industry-made batá drums that were available from US-American companies in the 1980's had only remote resemblance to the sound and the looks of the Cuban batá. Today, batá drums of various brands display the right proportions along with a satisfying sound.

² see the epilogue on page 21 for update information.

Aberikula Performance

The application of the *aberikula* batá drums is basically the same in Europe as anywhere else; they are incorporated in the compositions of Fusion bands, like Kevin Haynes' *Grupo Elegua* in London or Sjahin During's *Bayuba Cante* (with Martha Galarraga) and the projects of Mark Alban Lotz in Holland. In some instances, percussionists play all three batá drums together as a set.

Some batá drummers accompany Afro-Cuban dance classes, which is great for training. Often, percussionists who are able to play the set of three alone by themselves are preferred over a trio of drummers, because one musician is less expensive than three. If he can sing at the same time, even better.

In a few countries, folklore ensembles have formed, which either cover the entire stylistic spectrum of the Afro-Cuban culture, including Rumba, Carabalí, Comparsas etc., or specialize in Lukumí music only. They always incorporate singing, and often also dancing. Some of these are *Iluyenkori* in France, *Obbara Ire* and *Aché Batá* in Sweden, *Grupo Okantomi* in Denmark, and *D'Akokan*, *Siacará*, and *Awo Ilu* in Switzerland, to name but a few. Some of these groups are short-lived, because they are hard to maintain for a number of reasons.

For many European percussionists, playing batá in a folklore ensemble more or less modelled after the *Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba* or similar projects, meant the ultimate goal they had strived to achieve since they had heard the records of these groups for the first time. Reportedly, however, *aberikula* groups are also occasionally called to play in Ocha houses in Europe. These may either be *tambor* ceremonies *sin fundamento* or are often informal parties in honor of one or more orishas. In the same way as several Santería rituals in the European diaspora have to be modified and improvised, sometimes improvised drum feasts are organized in the style of a *tambor*. Musicians who accept such an engagement but lack ritual expertise, run the risk of failure. It is advisable to have at least one experienced singer, plus a skillful *iyá* player. And this refers to the case where the participants of the feast are familiar with the song repertoire. Otherwise it would be a safe bet that the drummers must also make up for *coro* singing, in addition to their drumming – if they can.

In countries like Sweden or the Netherlands, these *tambor* engagements may come as seldom as once a year. Jens Kerkhoff and Sjahin During in Holland state that the frequency of such engagements has lessened over the recent years. One had to speculate whether these engagements had been taken over by competing groups, or whether the same priests are less inclined to organize such an event than before.

Frame Data of Research

During my six weeks of research, I was able to spot 179 batá drummers in Europe. I found out the contact information for 103 drummers, was able to contact 88 of them, either by telephone or by e-mail, and received answers from 60 batá drummers from all over Europe. Neither was it possible for me, for financial reasons, to travel around and visit selected towns in Europe, nor did the estimated time span of two months suffice to wait for every pending query to be answered. Regrettably, this affected also some historically significant points that I wish I could have elaborated better. I am yet confident that my statistical research does already provide representative results.

Of course there are more batá drummers in Europe than those that I could trace. It is hard to estimate a total number, and I doubt that such a figure would be relevant; but I might possibly count between 200 and 250 drummers over a longer period of research, and on the other hand I doubt that there are substantially more than 300 batá drummers in Europe. Anyway, such a figure is to be rounded up or down according to the standard that one applies by the question: When is an ordinary percussionist to be called a batá drummer? And; which musical standard has someone to represent to be called a batá drummer? Is a batá drummer who has (perhaps temporarily) suspended the actual practice of his art still to be called a batá drummer? Is a European batá drummer who is living abroad (mostly in Cuba or the USA) for several years still to be regarded a European drummer? Naturally, there is always some fluctuation happening, also within Europe itself.

Of all the 179 batá drummers that I could trace in Europe, at least 47 are either fully consecrated *omóañá* (Añá initiates) or *aláña* (*fundamento* owners). More 8 have undergone the hand-washing ritual.

Batá drumming in Europe started around 1980, which was about 15 years before the advent of the first Cuban drummers in Europe. I have already mentioned that nearly every batá drummer in Europe had played another percussion instrument before picking up the batá, and that the motives to play batá were almost exclusively of musical nature. It can also be stated that every European batá drummer has traveled to Cuba and that almost each of them has studied batá in Cuba. Some of the more ambitious European drummers are still visiting Cuba on a regular basis, such as every year, and sometimes even more often than just once a year.

When writing a study like this, it is inevitable to mention names of drummers that the author deems important, either historically, artistically, or just for his influence on other batá players. It is equally inevitable to attract the displeasure of those 150 drummers who remain unmentioned, especially in cases where these have actually been the ones who were the most supportive. An author's gesture that has to ensue in each of these instances is to apologize for the omission, and this is exactly what I sincerely ask my fellow drummers to accept.

The Beginnings of Batá Drumming in Europe

As it seems, the first musical and stylistic influence on, and perhaps the initial impulse that laid the foundation for, the European batá scene came from California, USA. In the second half of the 1970s, percussionist **Roger Fixy** from Martinique worked with Bill Summers, who was living in San Francisco at that time. Also, in 1979, **Roberto Evangelisti** from Rome, Italy, witnessed a batá lesson that Summers gave to **Jon Otis**. Jon Otis is the son of hit singer Johnny Otis, and is still active as a drummer, percussionist, and singer. Jon Otis moved to Switzerland in the early 1980s, where he stayed for about twenty years. In Switzerland, Otis played with Andreas Vollenweider, among others. Roberto Evangelisti immediately took batá lessons from Jon Otis and also played together with him in the band *Camaleon*. About the same time in Paris, France, Roger Fixy founded the group *Makoubary* together with **Christian Nicolas**. This was in the beginning of the 1980s. Roger Fixy and Christian Nicolas in France, along with Roberto Evangelisti in Italy, and of course Jon Otis in Switzerland, are regarded as the first percussionists in Europe to play the batá. The material came from Bill Summers in San Francisco, complemented by transcriptions of recordings that most batá drummers use to make on their own.

Roberto “Mamey” Evangelisti was fortunate to have batá lessons with Jesús Pérez in Havana in 1984. As Jesús Pérez died one year later, Evangelisti continued his studies with Carlos Aldama in 1988 and 1990, and later with Irián López of the “Chinitos”, who were responsible for the Abbilona CD productions. (The “Chinitos”, namely Irián López and Manley “Piri” López are quite influential in southern France and in Italy today.) Roberto Evangelisti is also a *babalawo* who made Ifá in Cuba in 1993.

Also in 1984, Roger Fixy traveled to Havana for his first time. Fixy studied with Mario Jáuregui Franquíz “Aspirina”, among others. In 1987, he founded the seminal group *Iluyenkori*, and in 1992 was the first drummer to bring a consecrated *tambor de fundamento* from Cuba to Europe, which was given to him by Amado Díaz in Matanzas.

The art of transcribing batá *toques* off the records was especially successful pursued by the German percussionists **Martin Hesselbach** and **Ottmar “Otti” Köhler**, who started it in 1981 and 1982, respectively. While the proof of Hesselbach’s accuracy can be found on the recordings with his band *Salsa Picante* (1985/86), Otti Köhler played batá with Reinhard Flatischler’s *Megadrums* in Berlin (since 1983), later alongside with Milton Cardona. In 1987, together with **Florian Schade** and **Reinhard Allgaier**, Köhler also played for the Cuban dancers Orestes Mejica and Ines Corajoud, who eventually made the contact with Angel Bolaños in Havana. In 1988, the trio went to Cuba to study with Bolaños.

Two other German pioneers were **Ralf Moufang** and **Alfred Mehnert** in the Frankfurt area, who had heard Jon Otis and Willy Kotoun playing batá on a percussion workshop in Switzerland. Moufang and Mehnert then took batá lessons from Jon Otis in 1983. It was still the old Bill Summers material, and when I took my first real batá lessons from Ralf Moufang in Hamburg 1986, he passed it on to me. (In 1984 I had already learned the *toques Chachálokpañún* and *Rumba Iyesá* during my first stay in Havana, from the conga player of the group *LA 440*, Rodolfo “El Moro”.)

I shared the lessons from Moufang with **Ulrike Herzog**, who was to travel to Havana extensively in the subsequent years, to study batá with Angel Bolaños and Julio Guerra Acosta. She wrote her master thesis about the batá and is currently teaching ethnomusicology at the Hamburg university. Moufang and Mehnert do not actively play batá anymore.

In the Netherlands, around 1980, Dutch percussionist **Jack Maas** (alias Francisco La Mosa) started playing from the books of Fernando Ortíz. Later in 1986, he took lessons from Mario Jáuregui and Angel Bolaños. Towards the end of the 1980s, he worked with Roger Fixy’s group *Iluyenkori*, and from 1997 to 2002, turned to José de la Cruz and Maffe in Camagüey, and to Chichillo in Holguín for further studies. **Jos Oey**, also in Holland, learned his first batá rhythms in 1984, from **Nevelton Butler**, who – like Jon Otis in Switzerland – hailed from San Francisco. While Butler is not playing batá anymore, Jos Oey is today acclaimed as the most consistent *batalero* in Holland, who, according to Jack Maas, still practices batá every day. He visited Cuba six times to study batá, inspired by a performance of the *Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba* at the *Fabrik* in Hamburg, Germany, 1986. In Havana, Oey studied with Mario Jáuregui, Angel Bolaños, and Julio Guerra.

In Switzerland, the percussionists **Peter Zwahlen**, **Willy Kotoun**, **Olivier “Ohle” Gagneux**, and **Roger Barman** decided to study Cuban percussion from Cubans in the early 1980s. From 1981 to 1982, Peter Zwahlen and Willy Kotoun belonged to the first generation of Western music students to be accepted to the *Instituto Superior del Arte* in Havana. Kotoun remembers that his teacher, Alejandro Carvajal Justíz Sr. (“Nene”), offered him to teach him batá at the end of their courses of study, but they could not afford staying in Cuba any longer at that time. Ohle Gagneux played with the group *Kubata* in New York, under the direction of Roberto Borrell, in 1983.

Swiss Willy Kotoun reports that from the early 1980s on, Cuban drummers first started slowly opening up to teaching batá to Europeans. My own statistics show that until today (2007), Angel Bolaños and Mario Jáuregui “Aspirina” have the greatest stylistic influence on the European batá scene through their teaching, followed by Milian Galí Rivery, Regino Jimenez (d. 2005), Octavio Rodriguez, and Francisco Mora “Pancho Quinto” (d. 2005).

By and large, the Havana style of playing batá is clearly predominant in Europe, with small islands of the Matanzas style, namely in Finland, where Tomás Jimeno Díaz (formerly of *Grupo*

Afrocuba de Matanzas) is living since 1998, after having visited the country with *Afrocuba* for the first time in 1987. Besides Jimeno, Milian Galí sometimes teaches Matanzas style to his European students, along with Havana style, while Roger Fixy in France has his knowledge of the Matanzas style from his lessons with Daniel Alfonso, Ramón “Sandy” García Pérez, and the deceased Amado Díaz (Manuel Guantica) in Matanzas. In Britain, Christian Weaver (Manchester) represents the Matanzas influence, having studied with Ricardo Suarez “Fantoma”, Sandy García, and Francisco Zamora Chirino.

Beside the traditional personal student-teacher method, the influence of a specific book should not be overlooked: Since its publication by White Cliffs Media in 1992, *The Music of Santería* by John Amira and Steven Cornelius, the notation of the Havana style *oru seco* in this book has become a primary reference source and guide book for many European drummers and percussion ensembles who do not have the chance to take conventional drum lessons with an acknowledged master. The transcriptions presented in “the Amira book” and its supplementary recording largely reflect an older style of playing that was propagated in New York in the 1960s and 1970s, informed by Julito Collazo, who had been a direct student of the legendary Pablo Roche in Havana.

The Batá Scene in Switzerland

When the German percussionists Ottmar Köhler, Florian Schade, and Reinhard Allgaier returned from Havana in 1989 with their hands washed, they brought material of Angel Bolaños’ *oru seco* and *oru cantado* home. While Köhler and Schade were living in Berlin, Allgaier, who lived in Freiburg at that time, practiced the *oru seco* à la Bolaños together with Ohle Gagneux and his younger brother **Sébastien Gagneux** in Basel, Switzerland. Later on, **Stefan Weber** joined the trio, who is still actively playing today (2007).

At the time this article is written, Sébastien Gagneux is working as a research scientist in bacteriology in Seattle, USA, keeping his musical skills up. He is still remembered for his extraordinary talent in all genres of Afro-Cuban percussion and singing. He had started to play batá in 1987. From 1989 to 1990 he studied in Cuba with Bolaños, got his hands washed by Pancho Quinto, and played in the *tambor* of Andrés Chacón (d. 2001). Upon his return, he founded the folklore ensemble *D’Akokan* in Basel. He went to the USA in 2001 (see epilogue).

In 1993, **Beat von Wattenwyl** took batá lessons from **Julio Davalos** in Havana. After that, he invited Davalos to give classes in Bern, Switzerland, where he also met **Adrian Coburg** for the first time. In the following years, Julio Davalos kept visiting Switzerland frequently, at times teaming up with Gagneux’s *D’Akokan* project. Von Wattenwyl says that Julio Davalos was “the only sage” in Switzerland at the time, habitually gathering a crowd of ten to fifteen drummers to study with him. They also put together a comprehensive Lukumí songbook at that time. In 2002, Julio Davalos left

Cuba to live in Biel, Switzerland. Adrian Coburg, however, has to be credited with notating and publishing the batá repertory according to Julio Davalos in his seminal two-volume books *Bata Scores* (2002), later to be followed by six Afro-Cuban songbooks and two CDs. Coburg was sworn to one of the *tambores de fundamento* of Papo Angarica in 1999.

Another Swiss *omoañá*, **Mathieu “Mateo” Zehnder** in Geneva, who had studied with Román Díaz in Cuba from 1998 to 2001, was responsible for the invitation of another Cuban batá master to his home town: **Reynaldo Delgado Salerno “Flecha”**, who is known as the *iyá* player on all of the Orisha Aye CDs with Lázaro Ros. Flecha is married in Switzerland.

Jean Bruno (jB) Meier founded *Citypercussion*, a company of artists from different disciplines. What he contributed to the worldwide batá community is a remarkable online resource of batá transcriptions of the *oru seco* according to Angel Bolaños.

Toques batá that cannot be found on the Citypercussion site, are possibly offered by **Dominik Burch** at ilufumi.com (expired). Burch, who had also studied with Bolaños in Cuba, is not only initiated to Añá (2000), but also in Ifá.

Germany

Besides the drummers I have mentioned earlier, **Stephan Möller** and **Christian Paulus** (Darmstadt) and **Christoph “Colón” Kissel** (Koblenz), as well as the *omoañá* **Brüning von Alten** and **Holger Poehlmann** in Munich, **Gerd Seemann** in Bremen, and **Andreas “Molino” Müller** in Cologne, deserve recognition. Both Von Alten and Poehlmann studied with Bolaños and were eventually initiated by him to Añá. Brüning von Alten recorded a CD with Bolaños, Julio Guerra and Lázaro Ros in Germany (“*Ori Batá*”, 2000), but gave up batá in favor of the tres. Holger Poehlmann is *olorisha (omo-Elegua)*, and is still trying to keep his skills up.

I did not really start playing before I got my first set of batá in 1988. I relied a great deal on my own transcriptions, but took lessons from every batá player who showed up in Germany. I had a batá ensemble with singers and dancers for twelve years. My book *Cantos Lucumí a los Orichas* (1998) was originally written as a learning aid for the singers in my group. I remember my purpose to pay respect not only to the religion and its followers, but at the same time also to the socio-cultural environment of the people I was dealing with. Although we succeeded in bridging many gaps and maintaining a balance between religious content and cultural performance, I gave the project up in 2005 and in the same year went to Havana. I took some lessons with Angel Bolaños and Daniel Carbonell and was initiated as *omoañá* on one of the oldest *fundamento* sets in Cuba, *Añá Ará Lovo Oré* (Adofó, 1896), in Regla by Lázaro Moliner “El Fimba”.

When Andreas Müller went to Cuba in 1989 for conga and bongo lessons, it was Pancho Quinto who almost tricked him into learning batá instead. Müller was called Andrés Molino in Cuba. In 1998, he was sworn to Pancho's *tambor Añá Obeñe*. For a couple of years he spent half of his time in Cuba, where he played on *toques de santo*, often the *iyá*. In 2000, he also recorded a CD in Cuba, featuring Pancho Quinto and Santa Cruz ("Yé Yé Oludé").

Another student of Pancho Quinto, **Marcos Ilukán**, came from Havana to Germany as early as in 1991, but appeared on the music scene in Hamburg first around 1997. Ilukán is *omóañá* as well as a *babalawo*. Today he is shuttling between Havana and Europe.

Yansser Cardoso, initiated as *omóañá* by Wilmer Ferrán in Camagüey, Cuba, is living in Duisburg since 2004.

In 2006, **Arturo Martínez Cabrera**, *akpwón*, *rumbero* and *omóañá* from Havana, Cuba, moved to Hamburg from Barcelona, where he had lived since 2002. In Havana, Arturo Martínez had been a member of the *Conjunto Clave y Guaguancó*. In Barcelona, he had worked as an *akpwón* with the *tambor* of Lázaro Montalvo.

Austria

The Austrian artist **Moussa Kone** (a pseudonym) is playing batá, having studied with his compatriot **Christian Rodulfo Martinek**, whom he credits with being the premier batá player and teacher in his country. Among others, Kone mentions **Lorenzo Gangi** and **Wolfgang Tozzi** as *bataleros* in Austria.

Greece

At the moment this article was written (2007), the famed *babalawo* and *aláña* **Cristobal Larrinaga Cabrera** – *Awó Obedí* – has lived in Athens, Greece, since 2000. For a while, from 1979 to 1986, he had been in Germany (Dessau, former GDR) for engineering studies. In Cuba, he worked in the *tambores* of Nicolas Angarica and of Andrés Chacón and was a member of the *Conjunto Clave y Guaguancó*. Later he became the owner (*dueño*) of a consecrated set of batá himself, which he brought with him to Greece in the year 2000. He has never played it since he was living in Greece, but he sustains them and feeds them with loving care. "*El ojo del amo engorda el caballo*," Larrinaga says, meaning that nothing can ever be in better hands than in those of its owner. His *tambor de fundamento* has the name *Añá Ilu Alaye* and was born from the *tambor Añabí* of the deceased Alejandro del Cerro. The set is still in Greece, and it was the second *Añá* in Europe after the one that Roger Fixy had brought to France, but the first one from Havana.

The Netherlands

Following Jack Maas and Jos Oey, who estimates his starting year in batá drumming at 1984, Curaçao-born **Martin Verdonk** started studying batá in 1986 with Mario Jáuregui after hearing batá drums for the first time played live by the *Conjunto Folklórico Nacional* in Cuba. Verdonk is a master percussionist who has performed with various famous Pop artists, which gained him a well-deserved publicity. In 1988, he recorded an LP with his band *Congarilla* with fellow percussionists Raul Rekow and Nippy Noya, which incorporated many references to Lukumí music. He was also probably the first European percussionist to give public batá workshops.

Martin Verdonk still teaches percussion at the *Rotterdam Academy for World Music*, a department of the *Rotterdams Conservatorium*. The World Music Academy in Rotterdam exists since 1990, and at least a basic knowledge of some *toques batá* is obligatory for its graduates. The opportunity to study African, Brazilian, and Afro-Cuban percussion in Rotterdam and make an official music diploma lured many talented percussionists from all over Europe to Holland. Some of them stayed in Holland after their studies, such as the Germans **Arndt Beckmann**, **Jens Kerkhoff**, and **Nils Fischer**. Of these three, Jens Kerkhoff has the broadest reputation as a batá specialist, while Nils Fischer presides the Latin percussion department at the Rotterdam academy today.

In the second half of the 1990s, percussionist **Sjahin During** invited his batá teacher **Javier Campos Martínez** several times to give workshops in Holland. Sjahin During started to study batá with Javier Campos in Havana in 1996. After Javier Campos had settled down in Paris with his *tambor de fundamento* named *Añá Obanyoko Ará*, both Sjahin During and Jos Oey from Amsterdam went to France to be initiated to Añá on his *tambor* by him in 2004. They are the only batá drummers that I know who made this ceremony in Europe. In 2005, Campos sent his own *tambor* back to Havana.

From Santiago de Cuba, the former percussionist of the folklore ensemble *Cutumba* and master batá drummer, **Marcos Betancourt Ramirez**, is also living in Holland. Other batá players in the Netherlands include **Frank van Dok** and **Jos de Haas**.

Belgium

In Liege (Lüttich), Belgium, lives **Freddy Schmetz**, *babalawo* and *omoañá*, who studied batá with Alejandro (“Nene”) Carvajal Justíz Sr. in Havana since 1993. In Cuba, he played with Carvajal, with Francisco Mora (“Pancho Quinto”), and with Andrés Chacón. He was initiated to Añá in 2003 by Tomás Bravo. In Brussels are **Didier de Groef**, **Gauthier Lisein**, and **Gwenaël Francotte**.

Luxembourg

This small country has produced at least two remarkable percussionists who are recognized batá players: **Eric Durrer** and **Jerome Goldschmidt**. Goldschmidt began to play drum set at the age of four and had studied classical percussion before he started learning and playing batá with Roger Fixy's group *Iluyenkori* in Paris, France, in 1989. He played and recorded with *Iluyenkori* until 1992. Then he went to Cuba for six months, got his "hands washed" and played with Cristobal Larrinaga, until he moved to New York, where he taught percussion at the *Harbour School* along with Louis Bauzo, and recorded with Tito Puente and with Mongo Santamaria, playing batá. At the moment this is written, he is back in Luxembourg.

France

When (the already mentioned) Roger Fixy founded his ensemble *Iluyenkori* in Paris in 1987, he and his group soon became the central school of batá drumming in France. This status was even solidified when Fixy was initiated to Añá and received his *tambor de fundamento* from Amado Díaz in Matanzas in 1992. The *tambor* carries the name *Aira kere* and is said to be born from Amado's *tambor "La Atómica"*. With *Iluyenkori*, Fixy recorded four CDs.

Olivier Congar (Nantes) started playing batá in 1985, inspired by a concert of the group *Macoubary* in Paris (with Fixy and Christian Nicolas). He then studied with Fixy in France and with Mario Jáuregui in Cuba and played and recorded with *Iluyenkori*. In 1994, he was sworn to the *tambor Añá Ladé* by Armando Pedroso in Havana. He flies to Cuba two or three times a year and plays in Europe in all kinds of settings, including ceremonies on *aberikula* basis.

Venezuelan master percussionist and initiated batá player **Orlando Poleo** moved to Paris in 1989. In Venezuela he had played in the *tambor* of Benigno Medina, consecrated by Papo Angarica. Another excellent percussionist and *batalero* from Venezuela who is living in France now is **Gustavo Ovalles**.

From Havana, Cuba, in 2002 came the aforementioned Javier Campos Martínez, a disciple of Angel Bolaños and Regino Jiménez, who – for a short time – introduced a second *fundamento* set in Paris. He was the founder of the group *Afrekete* in Havana, with which he also recorded a CD, and played with Omar Sosa and Marta Galarraga. Also from Cuba are **Miguel "Puntilla" Rios Morales Jr.**, son of the famous Orlando "Puntilla" Rios in New York, as well as **Felipe "Koki" Sarria** (ex-*Clave y Guaguancó*), and **Onel Ramos Miranda** and **Juanito Ramos Delgado**, son of Juan de Dios Ramos Morejon (*Raíces Profundas*).

Other batá drummers in France include **Sebastián Quezada**, **Marcel Roy** (also builds drums), **Antoine Miniconi** (currently studying with the “Chinitos” in Cuba), and **Miké Delevallez**.

One particular person to be mentioned is **Patrice “Patricio” Banchereau**, percussionist, singer, and professor at the *Conservatoire National de Région de Toulon*, who not only played and sang at *tambores* in Cuba, but is also organizing workshops with Cuban masters in France, and has an enormous knowledge of the music and about musicians; as a matter of fact, he provided a considerable amount of information for this article.

Spain

Regarding religious batá drumming involving Añá, Spain occupies a very special position in Europe because of its relatively high Cuban immigration rate. The reason for this is clearly that Cuba is still historically linked to Spain; Cuban immigrants in Europe feel much more drawn to a country where they find the same language, a similar climate, and a familiar culture and mentality. While I am not able to juxtapose corresponding figures for all European countries that refer to the same census date, it might suffice to mention for example that, while in Sweden in March 2007 about 1.600 Cuban residents were estimated, and the *Statistisches Bundesamt Wiesbaden* counted 8.792 Cuban residents in Germany on the Dec. 31st, 2005, the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística* (INE) counted 45.009 Cuban residents in Spain on Jan. 1st, 2005.

In Spain, four sets of *tambores de fundamento* can be found (in April 2007). And they are not just hanging on the wall, but are actually played at *toques de santo* in Spain. Arturo Martínez, *akpwón* and *omóañá* of *Clave y Guaguancó* fame, who lived in Barcelona since 2002 until he decided to move to Hamburg, Germany in 2006, reports that Santería is pretty popular in Spain. He says that the *tambor* ceremonies in Barcelona are absolutely identical to those in Havana. Even complete initiations in Ocha have already been carried out there.

The first *tambor de fundamento* is located in Barcelona. It is called *Añabí* and belongs to **Lázaro Montalvo**, who came to Europe in 1997. This *tambor* was born from the Añá *Abó Ikí* in Matanzas. It arrived in Europe in the year 2001.

The second *tambor* belongs to **Tony (Antonio) Urdaneta Castro** in Madrid and is called *Aña Ladé*. It was born from one of his two other sets that he had left behind in Havana, called *Aña bi Oyó* (which in turn stems from the *tambor Aña Obba Aye* of Ramón Cabrera, Obesá). *Aña Ladé* was born in October 2003 and arrived in Spain eleven days later. Urdaneta says that his *tambor* works an average of two times per month. He recalls four *iyawos* being presented to this Añá. The drummers who play his *tambor* are: **Juan Carlos “Papito” Angarica**, **Yonder de Jesús Peña Llovet**, **Clemente Raydel Sibori Medina**, and Tony Urdaneta himself, all of them being Cubans, sworn to Añá in Cuba.

The two other sets in Spain are based in Las Palmas, Gran Canaria. The first one, *Añá Alashé*, belongs to **Leonardo Ruíz Rodríguez** and was born from the *tambor* of the deceased Alejandro del Cerro in 2000. The drummers who play this *tambor* are: **Alfonso Aldama** (who lives in Tenerife at the moment this article is written), **Emidio Rodríguez Morales “El Jimagua”**, Tony Urdaneta, Osmel Urdaneta Viera (nephew of Tony Urdaneta), **Miguelito Mandarrea**, and **Barbaro Valdés “Kuquito”**. The *tambor* plays approximately two times per month. About eight *iyawos* have already been presented to this *añá*, and four Canarian *babalawos* were initiated on it (to *Añá*).

The second *tambor* in Las Palmas belongs to **Osmel Urdaneta Viera**, Tony’s nephew, and is called *Añá Obba Ayé*. It was born from his uncle’s other *tambor* in Cuba, *Añá bi Okan*, in December 2005. It came to Las Palmas in October 2006. The drummers are: Emidio Rodríguez Morales, Yonder de Jesús Peña Llovet, “Papito” Angarica, Tony Urdaneta, and Osmel Urdaneta Viera himself.

I could not identify any “indigenous” Spanish batá drummers, although I am sure that there must be some.

Italy

Reportedly, many Cubans have also immigrated to Italy, resulting in a corresponding high presence and activity of Santería. Cuban drummers in Italy include **Humberto Oviedo “Película”** (ex-*Conjunto Folklórico Nacional*), **Reynaldo “Naldo” Hernández** (son of Gregorio Hernández “Goyo”) in Rome, and **Yamil Castillo Otero**, who has been a member of Papo Angarica’s *tambor* in Cuba and came to Italy in 1994. Yamil Castillo lives in Milan.

The early presence of a percussionist and teacher like the aforementioned Roberto Evangelisti, who in 1989 co-founded the *Timba* music school in Rome, facilitated the entry of aspiring Italian percussionists to Afro-Cuban music, including the *toques batá*. Evangelisti was sworn to the *tambor Aráfumí* by Irián López in 2005.

Other Italian batá pioneers were the Peruvian born **Paulo La Rosa**, **Marco Fossati** (Genoa), **Marco Esposito**, and **Giovanni Imperato** (Naples/Rome). Imperato was sworn to the *tambor Orun Imale* in Marianao, Havana, by Raufer and Gilberto Rojas Herrera in 2006. In 2000 he published an demonstrational batá video.

Valerio “Metangala” Perla first learned batá with Giovanni Imperato and Roberto Evangelisti in Italy, then studied with Alejandro Carvajal Sr. and Irián López in Havana, Cuba. He was sworn to the *tambor Oba Ilu Oba* in Matanzas in 2006 by Michel de Colon. He is also an *olórisha*, priest of Obatala.

Other batá drummers in Italy include **Raul “Cuervo” Scebba, Paolo Bianconcini, Daniele Cuscuna, Davide Saponaro,** and **Carlo and Matteo Di Francesco.**

Until April 2007, no *tambor de fundamento* could be found in Italy (see epilogue).

Great Britain and Ireland

Some excellent batá drummers can be encountered in the United Kingdom. Of these, I personally got to know **David Pattman, Crispin “Spry” Robinson** and **Hamish Orr** in London. Pattman and Robinson were initiated as *omoañá* by Angel Bolaños in 2004.

Sri Lanka-born **Ravin “Raz” Jayasuriya** (Hitchin/Herts UK) has studied with Octavio Rodríguez in Havana since 1993, but probably started in 1991 with **Chris Manis**. Jayasuriya plays many percussion instruments and styles, and in 1996 founded *One Voice Music* (OVM), a school for Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian percussion and dance in Hitchin. Through the musical education that he provides he has considerable influence in Britain and abroad.

Christian Weaver (Manchester) started playing batá in 1992 with Jayasuriya and in 2003 was initiated to *Añá* on the *tambor Añá bi Okan* in Havana by Mario Facundo Rodriguez Pedroso. He has studied with Rodriguez, but also with Ricardo Suarez “Fantoma”, Sandy García and Francisco Zamora in Matanzas. Weaver plays a wide range of percussion instruments and styles and does not foremost consider himself a *batalero*. He is the musical director of the band *La Timbala*, a *rumbero*, and – remarkably – a specialist in Arará drumming, playing Arará ceremonies in Matanzas.

The only Cuban batá player I could find in the UK is **Flavio Correa** in London. He came to Europe in 1994, with but a little experience on the *okónkolo* and his hands washed by the deceased Nicolas Mauro Silva. Correa says he became inspired to continue playing by the Europeans he heard in England. He studied with Kevin Haynes and also plays with David Pattman and Crispin Robinson. This trio has already played *aberikula* and *guiro* ceremonies in Britain.

Other batá players in Great Britain are: **Jason Gaines** (Bristol), **Mauricio Ravalico, Davide Giovannini, Kevin Haynes, Bill Bland, John Paul Courtney** (London), **Richard Kensington** (Nottingham), **Richard “Ricardo” Sliwa** and **Andy Boothman** in Manchester, and **Richard Linn** in Scotland.

The only Irish batá drummer I know of is **Niall Gregory** in Drogheda.

No Cuban *fundamento* set is to be found in Great Britain (in 2007).

Another important person in London figures prominently in the worldwide batá community (if there is any, hopefully). Australian born **Amanda (Vincent) Villepastour** is a pianist, ethnomusicologist, and orisha priest of Oshun initiated in Oshogbo, Nigeria, who has also studied with African and Cuban batá masters, although she does not consider herself a batá drummer. Her contribution is to be found in her research about conceptual aspects of batá playing and revolving around the (exclusively male) order of Añá. The relevance of her findings bridges the Atlantic between Nigeria and Cuba.

Europe may be well suited to become a neutral place of reunion, exchange, and transformation of stylistic and ritual traditions. Amanda Vincent (Villepastour) recounts an event in 2001:

“I was at an Ocha birthday party just outside of London 3 weeks ago. It was for a Cuban priestess of Yemoja, and as far as we know, this was the first ceremony of its kind in England. It was a small gathering with several *santeros* and a couple of *iyawos*, all made in Cuba. The ceremony was in the house of two Yoruba Orisa priests, one of whom is a musician who plays batá in both traditions. The other one is a priest of Sango. And I was there as a Nigerian made Osun. The drummers were playing Cuban batá and the fiesta was at its height with everyone singing and dancing. My Nigerian friend appeared with a *dundun* and joined the Cuban drummers. It was a magic, crystalline moment. It was a musical fusion which had emerged purely organically and through inspiration. We were singing for Yemoja, and the Nigerian drummer was playing *oriki* for Yemoja in response to the song while listening to the batá (he knows the rhythms so was coming from an informed place).“³

Scandinavia

In 1996, Denmark has become the home of Cuban batá master **Ignacio Guerra Acosta** (brother of Julio Guerra Acosta). He had visited the country two years ago when he was a member of the *Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba*. The Danish percussionist **Rune Harder Olesen**, who had been practicing batá with records and transcriptions since 1991, recalls that one day in 1994, Ignacio Guerra just walked into his rehearsal room in Copenhagen, which became the first time Olesen had ever played with a real batá drummer. Ignacio Guerra works currently (2007) with the folklore ensemble *Okantomi*. Rune Harder Olesen, who studied with Guerra and later in Cuba with Israel Rodríguez and Regino Jiménez, joins him in the percussion section, together with Danish drummer **Michael Finding**.

³ <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/batadrums/conversations/messages/699>, post from June 29, 2001; last viewed March 12, 2014.

There is another Danish batá player with the name of **Allan Gardersøe**, who had studied with Octavio Rodriguez and in 1998 was concentrating on playing the batá set (three drums together). I was not able to find out anything about him recently.

Lasse Bergström in Stockholm, Sweden, began to play batá in 1987 and in 1988 studied with Angel Bolaños for ten months. The only Swedish batá drummer who could possibly have started as early as Bergström, is a woman; **Eva Svensson**, who does not play batá anymore. The only trace of Svensson that I could find is the CD she recorded with Angel Bolaños and Julio Guerra and her group *Hatuey* in 1992 (“*La Leyenda*”). This record must have been quite influential on the European scene at that time; at least Jos Oey from Holland took lessons with Svensson once; and for Swedish batá drummer **Valter Kinbom**, this CD was one of the recordings that inspired him to play batá.

Valter Kinbom is in 2007 the only Swedish *omoañá*, initiated by Alejandro Carvajal Guerra Jr. and Mayito Angarica on Mayito’s *tambor Añá bi Lona* in Havana, 2004. Having started out on batá in 1999 with Carvajal as his teacher, Kinbom is a very talented drummer and, in addition to that, a constructor of drums and *cajones*.

According to **Magnus Almqvist**, it was his Argentinean girlfriend, the percussionist **Liliana Zavala**, who in 2000 taught him the first batá *toques*. Later he continued his studies with Alejandro Carvajal Jr. in Cuba.

Cuban batá drummers in Sweden are **Horacio Rodriguez** (dancer, singer, *omoañá*) and **Tomás Jimeno Rodriguez Jr.** (“**Tomasito**”), son of Tomás Jimeno Díaz (who lives in Helsinki today). Tomasito Jimeno Jr. came to Sweden in 2000 and is living in Malmö (in 2007).

Both father and son Tomás Jimeno are two of the very few acknowledged Cuban batá players who are not initiated to Añá. “*Como hijo de Changó trato de tocarlos,*” says **Tomás Jimeno Díaz**, who is permanently living in Finland since 1998. Tomás Jimeno Sr.(born 1944) is *the* Cuban percussion- and batá teacher in Finland, who has also traveled to Hungary, Bulgaria, and Estonia for workshops. Not only is he a master percussionist, but also a researcher of Cuban music and informant for the *Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Música Cubana* (CIDMUC) in Havana, perhaps infected by Lydia Cabrera and Josefina Tarafa, whom he used to accompany when he was still a boy. Jimeno was born in Matanzas and later moved to Havana. He was a member of the *Grupo Afrocuba de Matanzas* and consequently, he plays Matanzas style batá (in addition to the Havana style).

When Tomás Jimeno and *AfroCuba de Matanzas* visited Finland in 1987 for the *Pori Jazz Festival*, Finnish percussionist **Tero Toivanen** attended the accompanying teaching program and took batá courses for a whole week. Tero Toivanen is a Son musician first and foremost, but is also the

Finnish batá senior. Toivanen confesses that he prefers the Matanzas style to the Havana style. From 1992 to 2001, Toivanen was living in Santiago de Cuba.

Other batá players in Finland are: **Ricardo Padilla, Ville Hukkinen, Mika Rytönen, and Vili Rantanen.**

Living on a small island before Oslo, Norway, is one of my teachers, **Félix Navarro** from Santiago de Cuba, former musical director of the *Cutumba* folklore ensemble. He has learned batá from Milian Galí and was one of the first *Santiagueros* who were sworn to a *tambor* from Matanzas, i.e. the *tambor* of Chachá. He moved to Norway in 2003 and has his family there.

I will never forget one situation with Félix Navarro. One day he joined a choir rehearsal of my batá ensemble *Ayé-Ilù* in Hamburg. We were about seven innocent young people, mostly women, bravely trying to learn the words, the melodies, the phrasing, and the *clave* of some songs that we had to practice for our next program. After some time we asked him if he had any comments on what to improve. “I don’t know,” he said, “but you must do something. Something has to be done.” We did not understand. “You see, “ he continued, pointing towards my Cuban *aberikula* batá, “you are right; these drums are not sacred, but the songs still are, and the rhythms as well. *Hay que hacer algo, yo no sé.*” I just wanted to open my mouth to reply something when he stopped me: “I’m not talking about you. You are a *brujo.*”

Although I am certainly far from being a “sorcerer”, I had an idea of what Félix meant. In Europe, handling and performing Lukumí religious music, as well as practicing the religion itself, demands an extra dose of seriosity and responsibility that includes humility and a certain kind of discretion. It should come naturally when considering the history, the tradition, the function and the power of the drums and the music. It is impossible to fool around with it as one might do with some “hobby”. And I have always been conscious of that.

Epilogue (2013)

About six and a half years later, I am concluding this article with a provisional update. Obviously, any update has to remain provisional; since I wrote the above article, many things have happened, and we can expect a lot more to happen in the future.

It can be assumed that the amount of *tambores batá de fundamento* has increased in Europe, especially in countries like Spain and Italy. On the internet, Yamil Castillo announced the presence of his consecrated *tambor* Obba Añá in Milan, Italy, several years ago. (The internet, especially “You-Tube”, has brought about severe changes to batá drumming and the religion of Ocha/Ifá. Nowadays,

everything is visible, secret rituals are revealed, *Añá* is recorded and filmed, and *toques* can be studied as in an “correspondence course” – blessing or curse?)

Furthermore, while Latin-American music and percussion in general suffers from a fashion ban in the broader European public (actually affecting everything formerly “alternative” of the 1980s), more Cubans are immigrating, and more batá players emerge in different places of the continent (the first not necessarily being the cause for the latter). As far as my own country – Germany – is concerned, **Lorge Martínez Sánchez**, who had moved from Cuba to Berlin in 1998, is now actively playing batá in his own trio, while in Hamburg **Felix Barg** deserves recognition as a batá player.

In Switzerland, a group centered around Julio Davalos, Stefan Weber and Sébastien Gagneux, who returned Switzerland in 2010, has regularly performed on *tambor aberikula* events of hybrid religious/folkloric character. I visited the first of these events in Freiburg, Germany. However, while the drumming was excellent, the transplanting of quasi-religious content into a secular context proved to be problematic in this case.

The religion itself seems to be growing in Europe. As an occasional participant in the Euro-OrishaNetwork forum (hosted by German *santera* Varuna Holzapfel), I am witnessing how more Germans are not only showing a remote interest in Santería, but also travel to Cuba to become initiated. In 2009, German anthropologist Dr. Lioba Rossbach De Olmos arranged a meeting of Orisha- and Ifá- priests in Berlin that was attended by *santeros* and *babalawos* not only from Germany, but from all over Europe. The German *babalawo* John Ziegler – *Awó Odisá, Ifálorí* – from Cologne reports to confer several *Manos de Orula* per year and is looking forward to the arrival of his own *Añá (tambor de fundamento)*! He sustains two religious websites. As to myself, I was initiated as *olórisha, omó-Obatala* in Havana in 2007, and proceeded to Ifá as *Awó Otura Meyi* in 2012.

In 2009, I had the honour of giving Czech musicians **Vačlav Greif** and **Michael Cába** their first introduction on the batá. They later continued their studies with the young Manley “Piri” López of the Chinitos from Havana and keep a working batá group in the Czech Republic today.

In London in 2010, Dr. Amanda Villepastour published her book “Ancient Text Messages of the Yorùbá Bâtá Drum”. Following up her Ph.D. thesis “Bata conversations: guardianship and entitlement narratives about the bata in Nigeria and Cuba” from 2006, it is somehow remarkable that it was reserved for a female scholar to publish the closest-to-*Añá* information in literary form that is thinkable (except for Cuban *libretas* and secret *tratados*). Currently, in 2013, Villepastour is teaching at the Cardiff University School of Music. It may be worth mentioning that I wrote this article initially as a chapter for her forthcoming book “Wood that Talks” (edited by Villepastour and the late Michael Marcuzzi, Toronto), until my draft was eventually rejected.

The European batá scene mourns the passing of *omóañá* Roger Fixy (†2008) and Adrian Coburg (†2011), as well as Mexican percussionist /batá drummer David Saucedo Valle in Poland (†2010). I had corresponded with all of them personally. *Ibae 'bayentonú!*

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