

The Giraldo Rodriguez Record

by Thomas Altmann, 2006 (revised in 2008 / 2009)

This article is a homage to one of the most beautiful, most influential, and moreover one of the first recordings of the Afro-Cuban *batá* drums, generally known as the famous **Afro Tambores Batá** by **Giraldo Rodríguez** and his ensemble. I will try to shed a little light on this poorly documented record. I want to thank John Amira, Frank Van Herteryck, David Peñalosa, John Santos, Tomás Jimeno Díaz, Dr. Ivor Miller, and Mark Sanders for their input, information and support in this venture.

Regrettably, the most natural proceeding, which would have been to start the research by asking the record company remained ineffective, i.e. without response.

I. Specification of the Record

Title of the record: Afro. Ritmos Afrocubanos con los auténticos Tambores Batá de Giraldo Rodríguez

Artist: Giraldo Rodríguez

Record Company: Orfeon

Serial number: LP-LAB-08, or LP-12-38008, or LPO-33

Track list as appearing on the record cover:

LADO "A"

1. Elegua (Entrada) - Toque Cantado - 3231 - 2'15
2. Oggun - Toque Cantado - 3232 - 2'30
3. Ochosi - Toque Cantado - 3233 - 2'27
4. Drume Negrita - Solista Adriano Rodríguez - 3234 - 2'00
5. Obbantala - Toque Cantado - 3235 - 2'23
6. Yemala - 3232 - 2'53 <Yemaya>

LADO "B"

1. Chango - Toque Cantado - 3237 - 2'25
2. Olla - Toque Cantado - 3239 - 2'20
3. Babalu Aye - Toque Cantado - 3240 - 2'38
4. Obba - Toque Cantado - 3241 - 2'16
5. Ochum - Rumba Illeca (Toque Cantado) - 3238 - 2'30
6. Elegua (Salida) - Toque Cantado - 3242 - 2'40

A friend of mine brought this exotic record home from New York in 1980. It disappeared a few years later; perhaps it was stolen. Approximately from the mid-eighties on, I decided to search for this record myself. I learned that the production had been discontinued, and that the disc was traded for about 100 Dollars on the second-hand market in New York – if you could find it! After looking for this item for more than twenty years, I finally found it for sale at the *Haggle Vinyl* record shop in London, UK. I called them up in an instant, was treated very fair, and got the record within a week at an affordable price.

This record has a very special significance for my personal career as a drummer, percussionist, and – eventually – batá drummer, because it was through this record that I heard the sound and the rhythms of the batá for the very first time.

II. The Historical Significance of "Afro Tambores Batá"

As a matter of fact, this record represents one of the first studio recordings of these ritual Afro-Cuban drums.

The studio recordings that may have been produced at the same time (or earlier) in the Panart studios in Havana were, according to José Reyes Fortún [*Los fabulosos años 50*], three LPs:

1. with the Obdulio Morales Orchestra and batá drums (LP-2023);
2. with Merceditas Valdés, the Orchestra Adolfo Guzmán, plus Jesús Pérez and his tambores batá (LD-3096); as well as
3. the compilation "Santero Afro-Cuban Cult Music, Vol. 1", presenting the collaboration of singers Eugenio de la Rosa, Celia Cruz, Merceditas Valdés, Caridad Suárez, Bienvenido León and the "Voces de Facundo Rivero" with the "Tambores Batá de Jesús Pérez" (LP-2060 / CD Panart 1414).

Cristobal Díaz-Ayala, in his *Encyclopedic Discography of Cuban Music 1925-1960* (see "Coro Yoruba"), names the batá drummers besides Jesús Pérez: Virgilio Ramirez and Trinidad Torregrosa. The first two recordings have been made towards the end of the year 1955, the last mentioned was issued as an LP at that same time, although the individual tracks were recorded as early as 1947 and 1948 [Díaz-Ayala, *ibid.*].

The field recording that clearly precedes every other recording of the batá is without a doubt the one by Harold Courlander, dating from 1940. The other field recordings that come near the emergence of the Giraldo Rodríguez record are the ones made by Josefina Tarafa and Lydia Cabrera (ca. 1957). Both the Courlander and the Cabrera/Tarafa recordings are well documented and available from Smithsonian Folkways.

The recording date and place of the Giraldo Rodríguez record are not reported. What is also missing, is the line-up of the personnel, except for Giraldo Rodríguez himself and his brother Adriano Rodríguez (*1923), who is a *sonero* and *cancionero*, and who, according to batá drummer Carlos Aldama, has never sung on real drum ceremonies, "for various reasons".

A respective inquiry to the Orfeon company in Mexico remained without result. It was (and still is) a common habit of record companies that produce other music than Jazz or Classical Music to withhold this kind of information from the listener, using the space on the cover sleeve rather for advertising purposes; Latin music of any kind was probably not regarded a "serious" art form. This ignorance leaves us alone with speculations. Where does the desire to know more about this particular record come from?

In the book "The Music of Santería" by Steven Cornelius and John Amira, published by White Cliffs Media in 1992, we read:

"Batá drumming was introduced into the New York community by Cuban drummers in the late 1950s." ... "New York ritual drumming finds its roots with Julio Collazo and Francisco Aguabella, perhaps the only people in the United States during the 1950s, who understood the deeper intricacies of batá drumming. In terms of New York tradition, Collazo is the most important, for Aguabella moved to the West Coast shortly after his arrival in the United States." ... "When Collazo began to play ceremonies within the New York musical community, local drummers quickly became interested in learning how to perform." [1992:10]

Amira explains how Collazo did select his apprentices very carefully, with the result that those drummers, who did not belong to this circle, "used a combination of sources; watching and listening to the isolated examples that Collazo played, studying published transcriptions, and *transcribing material from commercially available recorded examples.*" [pg.11] According to his own account, Amira himself was in that same situation; teaming up with Marcus Gordon, Carl Vail, Ray McKethan and Rudy Wright, he first "decoded the batá parts off the record". This was about seven years before Julito Collazo started choosing disciples at all. However, Amira came to play (and learn at the same time) with Julito Collazo later, "on a fair number of ceremonies". Amira credits Carl Vail, Ray McKethan, and Rudy Wright for having "started the whole lineage of bata in this country ..." [Amira, private correspondence].

While the transcriptions of Fernando Ortíz in his works "Africanía de la música folklórica de Cuba" and "Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba" had to serve as guidelines, the Giraldo Rodríguez record was the principal audio source, because it sounded better than every other recording (if available), so the different drum parts could be discerned more clearly. Meanwhile, the scores provided by Ortíz (or rather Gaspar Agüero, who made the musical transcriptions for him) did not prove to be as accurate as desired, mainly perhaps because he seemed to have avoided using ternary meters like 6/8.

But the record was not only an alternative for studying with Collazo while he was there; percussionist David Peñalosa recalls the account of his former batá teacher Marcus Gordon, who also started learning and playing the batá before Collazo began giving lessons in 1969:

"The Giraldo Rodriguez record 'Afro Tambores Bata' was a crucial element in the forming of the 'indigenous' batá community in the United States. North Americans were playing batá in NYC *before* Julito Collazo or any other Cubans taught in this country. Therefore, that vinyl LP was a kind of 'subversive' component, in that it facilitated the learning of batá when there were no willing teachers."

"My first batá teacher was Marcus Gordon, who was playing with John Amira, Gene Golden and John 'Windcloud' Montalvo during the early 60's in NYC. ... As I remember being told, Marcus and the other drummers used the charts in the Ortiz book and memorized 'Afro Tambores Bata'. As they were exposed to other rhythms they would fill-in the gaps of their knowledge. ... He also told me that the drummers he hung out with in the early 60's refined their ability to pick rhythms off of records. They could play the entire Muñequitos (called Grupo Matancero back then) record 'Guaguancó' verbatim. They used that same focus with the 'Afro Tambores Bata' record. There were no folkloric teachers at that time. ... That particular record and those upstart North Americans had an essential role in the launching the batá scene in NYC."

"I began taking batá lessons from Marcus Gordon in 1980. 'Afro Tambores Bata' was my basic model too. The transcriptions in John Amira's batá book 'The Music of Santería' are close to Marcus' repertoire I was taught. It reflects a study of batá in which the information came hard. ... The LP 'Afro Tambores Bata' reminds me of the time when the rhythms were closely-guarded secrets and you appreciated every little scrap of information you could get your hands on." [Peñalosa on the *CongaBoard*]

The record does not only hold the place of something like a "nursery school" for legions of batá pioneers in the U.S. and around the world, with all the emotions connected with that. It also serves as a witness of an older, traditional style of playing batá, which is not played anymore in Cuba today. Due to the laws of oral tradition, this way of playing would be in danger of getting lost without Ortíz's book, without John Amira's book, and without records

like "Afro Tambores Bata". All of these relate to the second generation of drummers after Pablo Roche "Okilakpa", like Julito Collazo (1925-2004), Jesús Pérez (1915-1985), Raúl "Nasacó" Díaz (1915-?), Trinidad Torregrosa (1893-1977), Aguedo Morales, Giraldo Rodríguez and Mario Jáuregui. Of these legendary drummers, who were all steeped in the Roche school, only Jáuregui (*1932) is still alive in Guanabacoa. No such dates are known of Giraldo Rodríguez.

III. The Musicians

John Amira wrote in "The Music of Santería":

"The most influential recording was published on the Orfeon label. It was 'Afro Tambores Batá' (Orfeon LP-LAB-08). The batá ensemble was headed by Giraldo Rodríguez. Jesús Pérez, a student and member of Pablo Roche's ensemble, also performed with this group and was probably playing iyá on at least some if not all of the tracks." [1992:13]

Today, however, Amira as well as his former student Orlando Fiol are tending towards the opinion that Pérez was probably playing the itótele, because they are missing certain identifiable manners in the iyá players style that would be typical of Pérez' way of handling this part. That would consequently leave the iyá part for Rodríguez. Amira says:

"They were both such magnificent players that it would be very hard to say that one played better than the other, although Julito <Collazo> once said that he felt Giraldo had something extra special." [private correspondence]

What gives us an indication that the "Tambores Batá de Giraldo Rodríguez" was probably appearing as a regular group with relatively permanent members, is the fact that the trio was three times booked for recordings at the Orfeon studios in Mexico within approximately the same time frame;

1. "Ecos Afrocubanos" con Bola de Nieve, su piano y su voz, Chico O'Farrill y su Orquesta con Girardo Rodriguez y sus Tambores Batá (LP 12-138);
2. "Brisas del Caribe" by Chico O'Farrill y su Orquesta con Girardo Rodriguez y sus Tambores Batá (LPE-3039), and
3. "Afro Ritmos Afrocubanos Tambores Batá" (this record).

It is very common in the recording scene to use one and the same team of backing musicians over and over again, to build on mutual experience and avoid risks of any kind. Even without an iron-clad proof (which will be supplied later), we may assume that we have the same personnel on each of these recordings.

On the reverse side of the Bola de Nieve record cover, the drummers are mentioned in the liner notes:

"Los Batá o Añá ... son los auténticos que se utilizan en los ritos sagrados de la religión lucumí o yoruba en Cuba. *Girardo, Jesús y Gabino* son miembros de esta religión." (Italics by me.)

While it is questionable whether the drums that they played have really been consecrated ceremonial drums (I seriously doubt that), and while it is beyond question that the drummers were initiated *olúbatá*, we now learn that their names are Girardo (Giraldo), Jesús <Pérez>, and Gabino. The second name of Gabino remains obscure. Gabino also appears on the Mongo Santamaria LP "Bembé" (now on the CD "Our Man in Havana"), along with Jesús Pérez and Adriano <Rodríguez>.

So, for now we probably know the name of the okónkolo player.

There are even pictures of the drummers, like these, on the Bola de Nieve album:



Photos by John Amira

I am especially grateful to John Amira, who graciously shared his information and the photos of record covers, like the following picture, too, that shows the same ensemble on a record called "Santeria Cubana", under the label of Teca Records:



Photo by John Amira

We see Jesús Pérez on the iyá sitting in the middle, Giraldo sitting to his left on the itótele. Okónkolo: (probably) Gabino. John Amira told me that it has Orisha songs with marimbula accompaniment (identical with the LP Maype 180 "Rezo de Santo - Ritmo de Santo de la tierra de Africa en Arará"). According to percussionist Mark Sanders, however, the Teca record "Santeria Cubana" incorporates several additional cuts that have batá, albeit "poorly recorded" [pers. comm. 06/2008]. Anyway, for now we have an idea of the physical appearance of the percussion ensemble that also played on "Afro Tambores Batá".

The name of singer Adriano Rodríguez Bolaños has already been mentioned. His bolero-style, almost opera bariton sounds admittedly beautiful, but is quite unusual in ritual Lukumí music, to put it mildly. He has probably been hired via relationship with his brother Giraldo. They also collaborated as conga drummers *and* vocalists on two other records: "Festival in

Havana", 1955 (LP Riverside 4005 / CD Milestone 9337-2), and "El Yambú de los Barrios" by Alberto Zayas, Havana 1955-1956 (CD Tumbao 708).

On the tracks Yemaya (Yemalla, Yemala), Chango, Ochun (Ochum) and the Salida (Eleggua), however, we realize that there is another solo singer. By comparison with another recording ("Rhythmes de Cuba", by Chant du Monde, France), John Amira identified his voice as belonging to Jesús Pérez. It does not seem quite probable that he overdubbed his voice on top of the ready drum tracks, so he probably sang at the same time while he played his drum. According to Amira, there were no other players on the record. And besides, I cannot notice any difference in the percussion between those tracks and the ones that Adriano sang on.

IV. Dates and History

Recording date, publication date, reissues, and different pressings of this record are a mystery in itself. Everybody has a different information, a different idea or estimation.

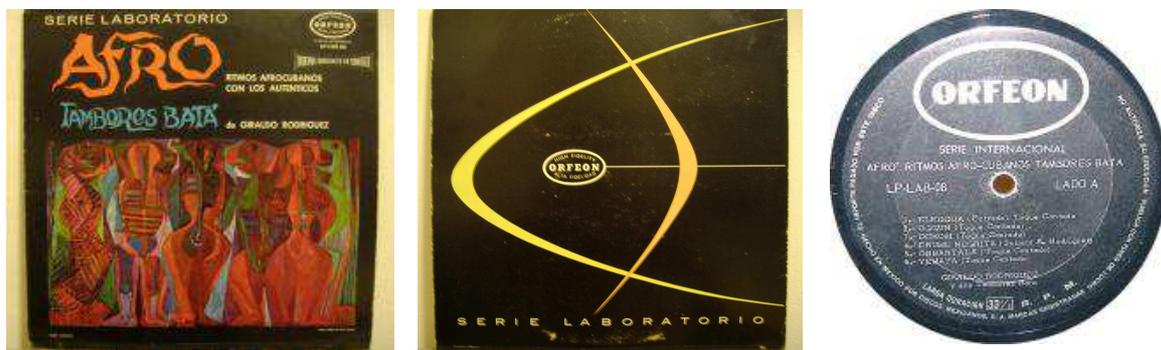
To begin with the earliest date mentioned, in the book "Instrumentos de la música folclórico-popular de Cuba, Vol. 2" by the Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Música Cubana (CIDMUC), the recording date of this record (from the collection of a Tomás Jimeno) is listed as 1954.[1997:334]

The Haggie Vinyl Shop in London said it was 1957.

Interestingly, the record company Orfeon was founded only in the year 1958 in Mexico.[Van Herteryc, personal correspondence]

According to *Hipwax Records*, "deluxe Mexican original is gatefold; US version non-gatefold". Percussionist and instructor/historian John Santos told me about these two editions that the record with the folding cover had been remastered for an artificial stereo effect. John Amira owns both issues. He says that the first one came out around 1964 in Mexico and the second one perhaps one or two years later in Hialeah, Florida.

The Mexican album ("printed in Mexico") has a graphic reverse side, saying "Serie Laboratorio", matrix number LP-LAB-08. It has liner notes on the inside of the folding sleeve.



Photos by John Amira

The US-American record has the same matrix number as the Mexican pressing, but the record company signs as Orfeón Videovox, S.A.. The production line is called "Orfeon en Laboratorio". The actual pressing, though, had been taken on by Velvet Records Inc.. The liner notes are printed on the reverse side of the cover.



Photos by John Amira

Drummer/historian John Santos has estimated the recording date as the early sixties. He argues that before the 1964 stereo-remastered issue, there must have been an earlier one that was plain monoaural. [Santos, personal communication] Martin Blais, on his *Santería Music Database* website, gives us an exact release date of 1968/01/17, which is the latest date that I have heard of; it might rather refer to the particular pressing of his copy.

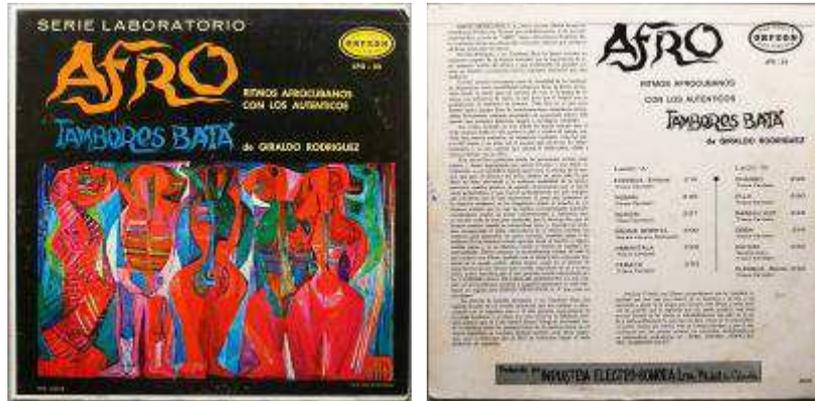
John Amira reports that there had been an earlier issue, which he deems to be the original one. It was not yet entitled "Afro Ritmos Afrocubanos Tambores Batá", but "Rituales Afrocubanos Lucumi - Tambores y Cantos con Girardo Rodriguez y sus Tambores Aña", or simply "Lucumi", in deviation from later issues. Amira approximates the issue date to about 1958 or 1959, which would correspond to my first intuitive estimation. "The players' names were Giraldo (written as Girardo), Jesus Perez, and Gabino (no last name). There were no other players on the record. It was recorded in Mexico" [Amira, personal correspondence]

Cristobal Díaz Ayala, in his *Encyclopedic Discography of Cuban Music 1925-1960*, adds the comment: "Al parecer, reedición de un LP Velvet". Velvet Records also appeared as the manufacturer of the Florida issue. The photo below, however, clearly displays the Orfeon logo in the upper right of the front cover:



Photo courtesy of John Amira

Another issue of the Giraldo Rodríguez record is mentioned by Frank Van Herterycck, record collector in London (U.K.). His sample was pressed by *Industria Electro Sonora Ltda.*, Medellín, Colombia, and distributed by Discos Mexicanos S.A.. On the inner sleeve he finds marketing shots of records by the companies Orfeon, Velvet, and Lyra. The label says Orfeon, the matrix numbers of his record are LPO-33A and LPO-33B. The line is again "Serie Laboratorio".

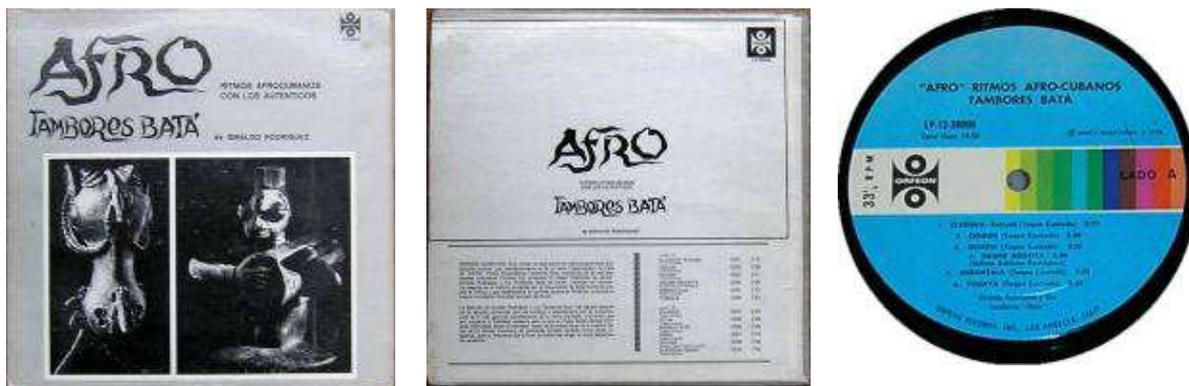


Photos courtesy of Frank Van Herterycck

As Discos Mexicanos S.A. was founded in 1963, the record could not have been issued prior to that.

What is interesting, is that there has probably been a cooperation of the companies Orfeon and Velvet that extended to the production of "Afro Tambores Batá".

My issue is a pressing by Orfeon Records Inc., Los Angeles (CA), from 1970, matrix number LP-12-38008. The liner notes are only a quarter as long as the original text of the 60es' issues. For this, each track carries a number, which I tend to take for the original registration numbers of the individual recording. Yemaya is misspelled "Yemala" on the reverse side of the cover. The name "Orfeon Videovox, S.A." is still mentioned in the cover text.



Photos by Thomas Altmann

V. Description of the Record Cover

The original forerunner of the "Afro Tambores Batá", "Rituales Afrocubanos Lucumi", shows a metal statue that looks like a sun with a cross on top. Down in the right corner we see two hands over a chachá drum head of a iyá batá, identifiable by the bells (*chaworó*) slung around the head. The titles of the tracks are mentioned underneath the record title and the artist's name. Giraldo is spelled "Girardo" here. The cover is kept in a reddish color.

The original cover of the Mexican, U.S.-American (Florida), and Colombian pressing from the sixties is adorned by a multicolored painting by the Mexican artist Pedro Coronel. In the title, the words "Afro" and "Tambores Batá" are highlighted and colored orange and blue, respectively. This is probably the reason for the popular misnomer for this record, "Afro Tambores Batá". The letter design of these words remind me rather of an advertisement sign of the ghost train. The background coloring of the front cover is black. Unlike the later U.S.- and Colombian covers, the Mexican front cover carries the remarks "La voz de Hispanoamerica" and "Nuevos horizontes en sonido" in capital letters below the Orfeon logo.

The cover of the later issue, like the one I had acquired, has the same letter design as its predecessor, but plain black on a grey background, with two black-and-white photos beneath. The left photo on the front cover shows a sculpture that looks like an adorned horse head and could be of African Yoruba or Bini origin. The photo on the right depicts the statue of a dundun drummer, the "talking drum" played with the bare hand in this instance. (The dundun is normally struck with a crooked stick.) This statue is typical Yoruba style.

VI. Comments

The Orfeon company has to be credited for having produced a great, important record of historical significance. The ensemble of Giraldo Rodríguez plays with a high degree of accuracy and precision. The swing on certain tracks and passages is exemplary. Drummers should check out "Chango" for learning how to make the *Chachálokpafúñ* groove. They should try to emulate the 3rd. section of *Latokpa* for Elegua (the one with the *okónkolo* variation), or the *Hueso*-Part in "Obba". Notice that the entrance call for *Latokpa* is almost played in perfect triplets, unlike the most commonly taught duplet version. Listen to the tension between the static *iyá* part and the timing of the *itótele* player in the 1st. section of "Ochosi" (*Aggueré*). Note that the ensemble plays the extension of the *itótele*'s double-off-beat *chachá* part, like described in the Amira-Cornelius book (*The Music of Santería*). Also note that the conversation in the slow 1st. section of "Obbantala" (*Obatala por derecho*) stays in Common (4/4) Time, without inserting one measure of 5/4 (or one extra beat, respectively).

Notice the relatively low tuning of the drums, especially the *itótele* and the *okónkolo*. Also notice the "pop" attack of these drums, as well as the sustain of the *iyá*. Despite of today's habit of tuning the batá drums higher and higher (especially the hardware-tuned instruments), this sound is still the ideal for me.

Note that in "Chango" the *itótele* player gives out the calls for the conversation, while the *iyá* player responds. Today, this is usually the other way around, as every batá drummer knows. An *itótele* player who does that, is generally suspected to challenge the *iyá* player and to try to dominate the ensemble. However, John Amira informed me:

"There are in fact two such conversations in Chachalokpafun that the itotele does initiate. Whenever I played with Julito and called them, he would always respond to them and he in turn would call those two from the itotele." [Amira, private correspondence]

The sound quality of the recording is remarkable. Orfeon claimed it was "grabado con la técnica más avanzada que existe en el mundo entero" and marked it "High Fidelity". Of course it was recorded mono. I have to add, however, that the big iyá drum sounds a little indirect, like recorded from a distance. The small chachá head of the iyá is mostly very hard to hear. Nevertheless, it was the best sounding recording of the batá at that time (1960's).

The liner notes clearly leave some objective information to be desired. They are confined to a turgid, sensationalist promotion text that alludes to exotism and spookiness, and is in places downright inaccurate. The text obviously tries to confirm the public image of savage cults in the tropics, in order to sell the record better.

The description of the tracks is not always correct. As a suggestion, a better list might read as follows:

1. Eleggua (toque "Latokpa", cantos *Moyuba Orisa, Ibaragó Moyuba*)
2. Oggún (toque "Ogún", canto *Ogún dé Arere*)
3. Ochosi (toque "Agguéré" - seco)
4. Drume Negrita (canción de cuna, con toques "Aggayú" y "Rumba Obatala")
5. Obatala ("Obbantala") (toques a Obatala "por derecho" - seco)
6. Yemayá ("Yemalla") (toque "Alaró", canto *Osi ni ba o yalé*)
7. Changó (toque Chachálokpafulúñ, cantos *Obalube, Oba icheré, Kawo e*)
8. Oyá ("Olla") (toque "Oyá bí 'kú" - seco)
9. Babalú Ayé (toque "Babalú Ayé" *Aberikuto a wa*; toque "Yegua": *Asokara luwe, Towe Towe*)
10. Obba (toque "Obba" - seco)
11. Ochún ("Rumba Iyesá", cantos *Omí yeyé, Ore Ore, Ala umba che ma che*)
12. Eleggua ("Salida"; cantos *Eleggua ni tá, E agó Eleggua e, Kini-kini yo*)

I would like to add that:

- the *toques secos* for Ochosi, Obatala, and Oya, are not complete;
- the words on most songs are not correct;
- the secular Afro-Cuban lullabye song by Ernesto Grenet, "Drume Negrita", is neither part of the orthodox liturgy, nor is it usually accompanied by these toques or with batá drums at all, but with a rhythm called "Afro" ("Afro-Cuban");
- the song "Kini-Kini Yo" is traditionally not sung in the Closing ceremony (*Cierre*).

VII. Coda

The Orfeon company does still exist. A few years ago, I ordered three CDs by Orfeon Videovox, S.A., called *Afro Cuban Roots (Vol. 1-3)*, *Cantos y Toques de Santos*, played by a certain "Grupo Folklórico de Cuba". The production dates from 2002. I thought it was something like a recently discovered old recording of a group from Cuba. Well, I was even more amazed than annoyed to find that these three CDs contained the material from two records of the Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba, one of which ("Lucumí") had already

been successfully re-issued by *Bembe Records* ("*Música Yoruba*"). The material of the two former CFN LPs was completely mixed up and appeared here in a rather disappointing sound quality. The third volume contained also religious songs accompanied by what I think is a marimbula (the traditional bass instrument in the Cuban Son), an interesting but not less obscure combination, which had first been issued as LP Maype 180, "Rezo de Santo - Ritmo de Santo de la Tierra de Africa en Arará", directed by Cuban composer Gilberto Valdés. This was the album that was re-issued around 1960 as LP Teca 733 under the title "Santería Cubana", depicting on the front cover the Giraldo Rodríguez ensemble. This record, too, was available on CD Maype 180 under the original title, long before Orfeon Videovox brought it out as "Grupo Folklorico de Cuba". Again, no liner notes were provided with any of the Orfeon discs.

Consequently, the suspicion that the actual recording of "Afro Tambores Batá" might have taken place in Havana years before the Orfeon company published the LP, would at least be justified.

On the other hand, the CIDMUC / Tomás Jimeno information that mentioned the figure 1954 demands consideration. The only chance to learn about the real circumstances of this record production is to contact singer Adriano Rodríguez, who is still active and lives in Alamar, La Habana. In 2007 I was lucky to correspond personally with Tomás Jimeno Díaz, who is living and working in Helsinki, Finland, since 1998. Until then, Tomás Jimeno had been working with the *Grupo AfroCuba de Matanzas* as a singer and percussionist, and also co-produced their record *Rituales AfroCubanos* in 1993. In addition to that, he is a researcher of Cuban music, inspired by Lydia Cabrera and Josefina Tarafa, whom he accompanied as their assistant when he was still a child. During the time when Tomás Jimeno was living in Havana, his mother was friends with Giraldo Rodríguez's wife Angelita (who is also singing on the *Afro Tambores Batá* record, according to Jimeno). Giraldo and Angelita were living in the *barrio* Carragua in Cerro back then. Tomás Jimeno told me that the information of 1954 being the year of production came indeed from no one else but Adriano Rodríguez himself; so there was no way to come closer to the truth than that.

Regarding the *okonkolero* whose name is reported to be Gabino, Papo Angarica, in an interview he granted me in July 2005, mentioned a drummer with this name, who used to play *okónkolo* and *itótele* with Jesús Pérez, along with Giraldo and Trinidad Torregrosa, and who later died in Mexico. Angarica said that these drummers always played together in performance situations. Complementing this information, Ivor Miller, on page 12 of the the liner notes for the triple-CD-box *Tambor Lukumi* by Andrés Chacón and the group *Iré Iré* (*Middlepath Media /EarthCDs*, 2006), shows a photo from 1959 with Francisco Sáez Batista, Andrés Chacón and a certain *Gabino Fellobe*. Probably Gabino Fellobe (or *Fellove*) is the full name of that same drummer who played on the Giraldo Rodríguez recording.

I conclude my research report with an e-mail I received from Dr. Ivor Miller in February 2009 that read like an answer to all questions. Miller submitted an excerpt from interviews he made with Adriano Rodríguez in 1999 and 2002 in his home in Havana. I thank Dr. Miller for his helpful contribution and convey my English translation of his complete quote as follows:

Adriano Rodríguez: "My brother Barbaro José Giraldo Rodríguez Bolaños, known as Giraldo, was one of the finest percussionists of his time. He was born on the 4th. of December, 1920."

"In January 1959 I had a chance to go to Mexico, and I talked to Luis Trápaga (a famous Cuban dancer, now deceased) to bring Giraldo and Jesús <Pérez>, and he agreed."

"In Mexico we worked in a show that Luis Trápaga had brought <there>. The show had two parts; one of them was called "Oba Kosó Batá" (the king of the batá is not dead), a name given to it by Jesús, and the show was folklore; the other show was called "Gran Tour", which, as its name indicates, included various styles. It had Cuban music for me to sing, as well as music from other countries for the dance section."

"We recorded; a disc in Mexico, because the owner of the record company came to the cabaret, and he liked the show very much. He asked me to sing "Drume Negrita" with the *tambores* of Jesús, which was what I did in the show. On the record, I am singing for Eleguá in the beginning, for Oggún, and for San Lázaro. Jesús is singing for Yemayá, for Changó, and for Eleguá at the end, and my brother ... for Ochún. Moreover, we were all together singing *coro*. The batá were played by Jesús, Giraldo and Gabino Fellove, who is the brother of composer Francisco <Fellove> who is still <living> in Mexico." *

When I mentioned the discrepancy between the date given by Tomás Jimeno (1954) and his own figure being 1959, Dr. Miller replied that "it is significant ... that Adriano was very specific about January 1959, then returning to the Revolution, and this is convincing."

As Orfeon does not seem to have any interest in re-issuing this seminal recording on CD, it would be my wish that their managers make up their mind and sell the tapes to someone who knows how to digitally process the material and who handles it with the love and care that it deserves. Meanwhile, however, we have the opportunity to help ourselves by downloading Gene Golden's copy of the record in mp3 formate from the *esquina rumbera* page of Barry Cox. (Thank you, Barry!)



Giraldo Rodríguez (front) and Raúl Díaz, 1950 or earlier
(from F. Ortiz: *Africania de la musica folklorica de Cuba*, 1965)

** "Mi hermano Barbaro José Giraldo Rodríguez Bolaños, conocido como Giraldo, era uno de los mejores percusionistas de su época, nació el cuatro de diciembre, 1920."*

"En enero 1959, se presentó un viaje a Mexico para mí, y yo hablé con Luis Trápaga (famoso bailarín cubano que ya falleció), para que se llevara a Giraldo y a Jesús, y él aceptó."

"En México trabajamos en un show que llevó Luis Trápaga; el show tenía dos partes: uno se llamaba "Oba Kosó Batá" (El rey del batá no está muerto), nombre que le puso Jesús y el show era folklor; el otro show se llamaba "Gran Tour", que como su nombre indica, abarcaba varios géneros - tenía música cubana para cantar yo, y música de otros países para el cuerpo de baile."

"Grabamos un disco en México, porque el dueño de la compañía disquera iba al cabaret y le gustaba mucho el show. Él me pidió que le cantara "Drume Negrita" con los tambores de Jesús, que era lo que yo hacía en el show. En el disco canto yo para Eleguá en el principio, para Oggún, y para San Lázaro. Jesús canta para Yemayá, para Changó, y para Eleguá al final, y mi hermano canta para Ochún. Aparte en el coro cantábamos todos. El batá lo tocaban Jesús, Giraldo y Gabino Fellove, que es el hermano de Francisco, el compositor que está en México todavía."