

# Cuban heritage in Africa: Deported Nānigos to Fernando Po in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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## Abstract

*This paper focuses on the 19<sup>th</sup> century deportation of Nānigos (members of Abakuá, a Cuban secret society) to Fernando Po (Bioko). I argue against the widely held negative image of this group as portrayed in the news and press information in Spanish newspapers from 1865 to 1950 that document the Cuban heritage in Africa. I highlight the point that the deportation of Nānigos to Africa was, in part, due to their association with, in part, due to their association with rebel groups in the decades and years prior to and during the War of Independence. Further, I pointed out the need of the Spanish Government to colonize the African island and use it to harbor expelled groups from the Caribbean island prosecuted for their rebellious character against the colony. As a result, many emancipated slaves<sup>1</sup> and Cuban people were deported to Fernando Po in the second half of the nineteenth century, which explains their presence on the island. I discuss, in details, their memory, which has been maintained through some cultural elements – rituals, body attires, and musical and dance elements..*

**Keywords:** Nānigos, slave heritage, Bonkó ritual dance, Nānkue ritual dance, initiation societies, Cuban deportees

## Résumé

*Ce document met l'accent sur le 19<sup>e</sup> siècle de la déportation de Nānigos (membres de Abakuá, une société secrète cubaine) à Fernando Po (Bioko). Je soutiens contre l'image négative largement répandue de ce groupe comme dépeint dans les nouvelles et les informations de presse dans les journaux espagnols 1865-1950 qui documentent le patrimoine cubaine en Afrique. Je souligne le point que l'expulsion du Nānigos à l'Afrique était en partie en raison de leur association avec des groupes rebelles dans les décennies et les années avant et pendant la guerre d'Indépendance. En outre, je l'ai souligné la nécessité du gouvernement espagnol à coloniser l'île africaine et l'utiliser pour héberger des groupes expulsés de l'île des Caraïbes poursuivis pour leur caractère rebelle contre la colonie. En conséquence, de nombreux esclaves émancipés et peuple cubain ont été déportés à Fernando Po dans la seconde moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, ce qui explique leur présence sur l'île. Je discute, dans les détails, leur mémoire, qui a été maintenu à travers quelques éléments culturels – rituels, atours corporels et des éléments musicaux et de danse ..*

**Mots clés:** Nānigos, patrimoine de l'esclave, Bonko danse rituelle, Nānkue danse rituelle, les sociétés d'initiation, déportés

## Introduction

The dance and music of certain communities in Africa represent a living memory that can be considered in terms of a history that speaks of African voyages across the Atlantic during the slave trade, and after abolition. In some cases, this memory was maintained through some cultural elements that served as a form of resistance in the American continent; such cultural elements returned to Africa transformed by the slaves and their descendants. In an earlier paper on the music of Fernandino<sup>2</sup> Creole people, I studied the influence of a secret Cuban society, -called *Abakuá*- in Bioko and Annobón (Equatorial Guinea). I examined its ritual dance, named *Bonkó* or *Ñánkue* that is now performed during Christmas time on the two islands. Cuba was struggling for independence and hundreds of Cuban *Ñáñigos* were deported to Bioko (formerly Fernando Po) at the end of the nineteenth century. This paper documents<sup>3</sup> the presence of *Abakuá* members, also called *Ñáñigos*, in Fernando Po. I gathered news and press information in Spanish newspapers from 1865 to 1950 that document the Cuban heritage in Africa.

The wealth of this Cuban legacy survives today among the Fernandino Creoles, the Annobonese, the Bubi and the Fang of Equatorial Guinea. This legacy adds an element of “Africanness” to the otherwise rather European customs of the black Fernandino Creole community. For example, the ritual dance, *Bonkó* or *Ñánkue*, has spread to other groups due to the influence that the Fernandino Creoles exerted because of their economic power on the island in the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. *Bonkó*, or *Ñánkue*, was incorporated into the rituals and dances of some Bubi villages, and this ritual-dance was also brought to the island of Annobón where it is known as *Mamahe*. It is also practiced by the Fang in Rio Muni mainland under the name of *Abakuya*.<sup>4</sup>

During my fieldwork in Bioko<sup>5</sup> and on the island of Annobón, I witnessed the ritual dance of *Bonkó* or *Ñánkue*. There, I compared the Cuban *Abakuá* with the Fernandino *Ñánkue* [that both form] part of a cultural legacy of slavery. I will argue that the *Bonkó* or *Ñánkue* performances are cultural expressions of African groups that –in spite of having been deprived of their dignity because of their enslavement – paradoxically have enriched African culture with their legacy on their return. I took the results of my research carried out in Equatorial Guinea to Havana in May 2011.<sup>6</sup> *Abakuá* members recognised the strong link in the audio visual documents that I showed them. In San Miguel de Padrón, Havana, I attended an *Abakuá* initiation ceremony (*plante*) in which, together with others outside the temple, on the *patio* or *isaroko* (courtyard), I heard the sound of the friction drum inside the temple or *fambá*. This penetrating and mysterious sound, with a deep spiritual meaning among the *Abakuá* and among the Efik of Calabar, is called “*crai Egbo*” today in Malabo (Bioko), as it is used to mourn members of society during *Ñánkue* funeral rites. I witnessed an *Abakuá* procession in Old Havana on one of the few occasions that it was performed since 1880, when the Cuban government banned these parades.

The historical relatedness of these three ritual performances – the *Ekpe* in Calabar, the *Abakuá* in Cuba, and the *Bonkó* in Bioko – is of great interest as a testimonial bestowal of cultural identities. The relationship that exists between many of their rituals, body attires, and musical and dance elements has remained fully evident, even after their return trip across the Atlantic to Africa. The comparison between the two Atlantic borders or colonial Hispanic scenarios, allows us to ponder the strength of culture as a fundamental element of African identity that has been transported across the black Atlantic, and there preserved and camouflaged.



**Image 1: Ekpe in Calabar, Abakuá in Cuba, Bonkó in Malabo and Annobón (Equatorial Guinea).**

The data collected in the archives, especially in newspapers – although they largely depict the image, linking *ñañiguismo* to crime, that the Spanish society projected on Africans at the time – confirm this undeniable reality of the *Abakuá* presence on the island of Fernando Po (today Bioko).

## Spanish colonies on opposite sides of the Atlantic: Cuban deportees in Fernando Po.

The *Abakuá* society emerged from the *Ekpe* society of Calabar (Nigeria). It has preserved many of its rites, ceremonies, masks, instruments, and music and language features in songs.<sup>7</sup> In the two Hispanic colonial scenarios of Cuba and Fernando Po this legacy is an expression of resistance<sup>8</sup>. The deportation of *Ñáñigos* to Africa was in part due to their association with rebel groups in the decades and years prior to and during the War of Independence, so that their image is presented with the negative characteristics that led to their isolation by the colonial society.

In 1862, two hundred emancipated Cuban slaves were sent to Fernando Po. Until the end of 1897, many more ships with Cuban deportees were sent to this African island. In 1898 most of these deportees were granted amnesty, but the Royal Order excluded “*Ñáñigos*, rustlers and anarchists”, until these were finally also pardoned after the declaration of Cuba’s independence in December of the same year. In January 1899, there were still unpardoned deportees in Fernando Po. In Cuba, the name *Ñáñigos* was given to members of the *Abakuá* society, with connotations of criminality. The use of the term *Ñáñigos* also spread to the academic field,<sup>9</sup> although members of the *Abakuá* society nowadays prefer the term *Abakuá* because of the discriminatory connotations of the term *Ñáñigo* (as many *Abakuá* members in Havana said to me). The Spanish press of the nineteenth century reflects this negative image of the ritual association in Spanish society.<sup>10</sup>

Hundreds of *Ñáñigos* were deported in many boats to Fernando Po. The great numbers of Cuban *Abakuá* members at that time – a large proportion in relation to the population of the city of Santa Isabel (today Malabo), allows us to sense its legacy and influence on the African colony. The government decided not to send more anarchists there since, “in Fernando Po there are already many *Ñáñigos* [...] and the number of dangerous people should not increase further”.<sup>11</sup> A letter published in 1897 reflects the malaise in the colony by the high number of *Ñáñigos* on the island:

“WHAT IS GOING ON IN FERNANDO PO?”<sup>12</sup>

“[...] the arrival of Cuban deportees, who mostly are not politicians but *Ñáñigos* [...], has changed completely the quiet life in the colony.”<sup>13</sup>

Scholars have studied the linguistic aspect of the Cuban legacy (Granda 1985), and the aspects of the cultural heritage; for example, Aranzadi’s (2009) study of the influence of *Abakuá* on many rituals and musical elements of the Fernandino *Bonkó* or *Ñánkue*. During the period that Malabo was becoming multiethnic and creolization was in progress (this is a process of the past two centuries), this heritage has become a symbol of Fernandino Creoles or Crió people and is recorded by the popular saying, “in Malabo there can be no Christmas without *Ñánkue*”. The term *Ñánkue* has been used in many different ways in

Calabar, Cuba, and Fernando Po (now Bioko). It was given different meanings and uses, even within these regions, and has been used to denote the dance, the procession, the masks, a funeral ceremony or a degree in the hierarchy of this society.<sup>14</sup>

In the Spanish colonies, both in Cuba and in Africa, there has been a phenomenon of camouflage in which music and celebration represent the public face of a secret ritual that was preserved for 160 years in Malabo (according to oral tradition)<sup>15</sup> and 175 years in Cuba. It was preserved since the foundation of the first *Abakuá* lodge (*juego, tierra, potencia, or logia*) in Havana. Both the Cuban *Abakuá* and the Fernandino *Nánkue* or *Bonkó* have two types of performances that are found also in other African initiation societies such as the *Ndowe Mekuio* (Aranzadi 2009:96), the *Galoa Ukuyo* (Perrois 1976:47), the *Só* and the *Ngil* among the Fang (Alexandre and Binet 1958:63).<sup>16</sup> One of the two performance types is private and the other public. One is related to the initiation and to degrees of secret knowledge, while the other enables the participation of the entire community. The *Ekpe* society<sup>17</sup> in Calabar, from which the secret *Abakuá* society derives (Martín 1966:68), also had such judicial and regulating roles. The associations that carry out these rites normally also maintain social control and act as courts. It is rare, however, that the entire community participates in *Abakuá* ceremonies.<sup>18</sup>

*Abakuá* originated as a purely male society in an environment that was uprooted because of slavery. However, in the *Ekpe* society in Calabar older women are present (Miller and Ejong 2012:3)<sup>19</sup> and the *Abang* dance can be considered a female counterpart of *Ekpe* (Onyile 2000:6).<sup>20</sup> Usually, each *Ekpe* house had at least one female title-holder (Röschenthaler 2011:119). In Africa, it is more common to grant older women beyond reproductive age access to societies or rites of male membership.

Regarding the creolization processes in the city of Santa Isabel (now Malabo), the Sierra Leoneans who arrived in Fernando Po in 1827 and the following decades, formed the nucleus of the Fernandino Creole community. The majority of Fernandino are descendants of Sierra Leoneans (in addition to some recaptured slaves and Africans from the West Africa coast. They were the first to arrive into a social space that was soon to become multiethnic and in which an intense process of creolization took place. The Cubans joined this group later and some of them even became landowners<sup>21</sup> in the 1880s (Ibarra, 1887:188; Sundiata, 1996:231). The Fernandino belonged to the upper classes (Garcia Cantus 2004:175) and the Cubans were, according to the few existing documents, “they were incorporated [by 1873], in the group of those who spoke English (Díaz Matarranz 2005:118). Clarence-Smith (1994:491) also confirms their assimilation.

The contribution of Cubans to the Fernandino *Nánkue* is confirmed by oral tradition and recorded ethnographically. It clearly invites us to support the idea of assimilation of the Cuban deportees into the group of Creoles. In Santa Isabel, two African American Creole identities met. The Fernandino are descendants of African Americans who have “returned” to Africa to found the city of Freetown. The Fernandino who had already arrived from Freetown earlier became the hosts of the



GRUPO DE DEPORTADOS.

1. Federico Leplero;—2, Fernando Casillas;—3, Pedro de la Cruz;—4, Avelino Díaz;—5, Florencio del Valle;—6, Emilio V. Infante;—7, Dr. Emiliano Núñez;—8, José Ignacio Alfonso;—9, Enrique Carrillo;—10, Carlos González;—11, pardo, Celestino Silveira;—12, pardo, Ventura González;—13, moreno, José de la M. Arasco.

Harvard University. Collection Development Department, Widener Library, HCL/Valdés Infante, Emilio. Cubanos en Fernando Poo. Habana Impr. Espit. El Fíguro Espit., 1898.

### Image 2: Cuban deportees in 1897 in Fernando Poo (Valdés Infante 1898)

African Hispanic group of Creoles from Cuba. The Cuban Creoles brought along with them their ritual dance *Bonkó* or *Náñkue* which influenced the African British Creole culture of the Fernandino who had considered themselves as British subjects since long. In other words, they brought an African cultural element that they had developed as a form of colonial resistance in Cuba and preserved with strength and

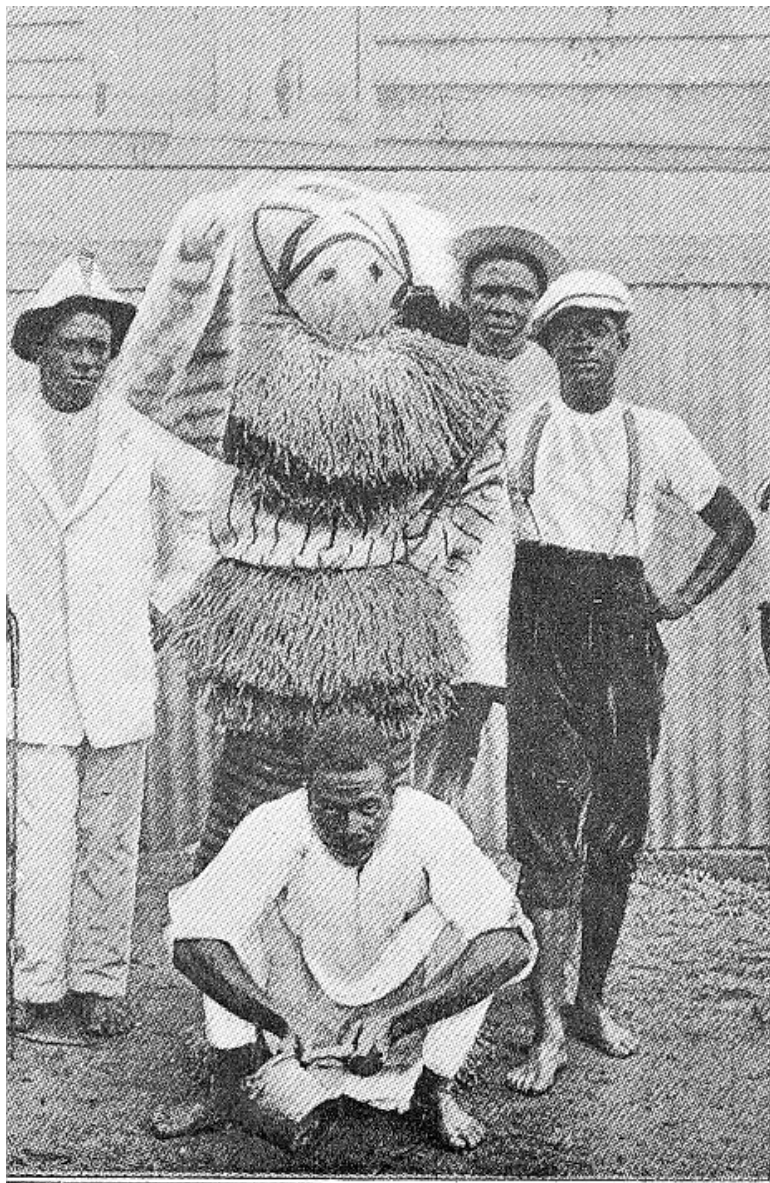
pride as an element of their identity. Although there is no memory of their origins, many Cuban surnames have been conserved among Creole families in Bioko such as Brown, Castillo, Riquito, Mata, Rivas, Balboa, Valcárcel, etc. until today.

The *Ñánkue* ritual dance and the *Cumbé* drum-dance are manifestations of African American influences (Aranzadi, 2009:36-7). They are quintessentially African customs among the Fernandino, a community of black African Creoles with European habits. The African elements of their culture have barely been mentioned in colonial sources,<sup>22</sup> because its consideration as “hybrid” groups [without interest]. However, African Creoles played an important role in the early days of colonization and are an important part of African history. In this African-American heritage, the element that was brought by Cuban *Ñáñigo* deportees represents the memory that returned to the continent from which they originated. It therefore provides an identity to a Creole group and a legacy that can still be observed today.

The conservation of these cultural expressions in Cuba and Bioko has been more or less concealed from the eyes of the members of the dominant cultural group. Different from the introduction of *Abakuá* in Cuba, the *Ñánkue* camouflage on the island of Bioko has occurred without many hurdles. Although Protestants complained of African rites and forbidden drums (Lynn 1978:161) under Spanish rule, their performances were allowed and the Annobonese *cumbé* (a square drum inherited from the Jamaican Maroons via Sierra Leone) regularly practiced (Aranzadi 2010:21). The few sources in the Catholic Spanish colony that mention the Nankue or *Bonkó* consider the Fernandino musical culture as the remains of “indigenous” performances that are “harmless” or “childish” acts that were “permitted” by the authorities and generically called *baleles* (dances). This interpretation made it easier for people to continue practicing them in Catholic colonies (including Cuba). An article from 1828 in *La Guinea Española*, however, advises the abandonment of this Fernandino funeral ritual with a moralizing tone of caution, but this is rather the exception:

“News from the Colony Santa Isabel” [Malabo]

Christmas: It is over, thank God, and with it also the uproar of incoherent and annoying noises that characterize the people still to be educated. [...] There has been a waste of joy among people of color [...] the traditional *mamarracho*,<sup>23</sup> that, as in previous years, has been wandering through our streets, especially late at night and in the early morning, and during the day, and to the cemetery to make a series of nonsense there, that if it wasn't a desecration of those who rest there and prohibited by law, would make laugh sarcastically about those who carry it out. We are not enemies of the *mamarracho*, but we believe his appearance should be restricted [...] To go to the cemetery and do what they have done there for years on Christmas Eve and New Year is a forbidden act by law [...]. We believe the time has come that our Fernandino canalize this custom that is foreign. They should replace them by others activities more in harmony with civilization because now they have received education and they are so proud of it. We think that the next years all must be under control without the action by the authorities.<sup>24</sup>



UNA MÁSCARA

Image 3: Mask of Ñánkue in the first decades of twenty century in Santa Isabel



### (today Malabo). Bravo Carbonell 1925

*Ñánkue* rituals in cemeteries on Christmas Eve constitute the opening of the ritual dance that lasts for the Christmas period in Malabo, during which the procession with masks (*Ñánkues*), accompanied by the women's choir and the musicians, cross the whole city every afternoon. At the gates of the cemetery,<sup>25</sup> the blessing of the ancestors is requested and the friction drum is beaten for the *crai Egbo*. The only other occasion that this drum is used is when a member of the society dies (Aranzadi 2009:166).

In Cuba, it was only possible to preserve the rites and the *Abakuá* music because they remained hidden from the discrimination and prejudice that led to surveillance,<sup>26</sup> persecution and prohibition of members. Resistance encouraged members to preserve the memory that passed from generations of African slaves born in Africa (*bozales*) to those born in Cuba (Creoles), before this memory was lost between both generations.<sup>27</sup> The first lodge (*juego*) of the secret *Abakuá* society in Cuba was created in 1836,<sup>28</sup> and three years later the first members were arrested (Deschamps Chapeaux 1964:98). These arrests continued in the following decades,<sup>29</sup> and one of the consequences was deportation to Spain, the Canary Islands,<sup>30</sup> Ceuta, Chafarinas, or Fernando Po.

### ***Abakuá* society in Cuba: African memory as a support for spirituality: The Bonkó or *Ñánkue* Fernandino**

The *Abakuá* secret society was founded in Cuba with the social objective of financially aiding their members, and also for giving them secret spiritual protection (Cabrera 1975:5). *Abakuá* originated in the ancient *cabildos* (brotherhoods) of Carabali slaves. *Abakuá* is a male initiation society that recreated the *Ekpe* association of Calabar and, with its ritual and communal memory, confronted the imposition of the European culture and the social uprooting that occurred after their forced deportation. In the words of Lydia Cabrera: "Those Carabali who came to the land of the whites to serve as their slaves, brought in their mind the memory of the Ecué voice" (1975:342).<sup>31</sup> Andres Flores stated the same in an interview with Ivor Miller (2009:44): "We brought the *Abakuá* in our minds."

The *Abakuá* society only emerged in the port areas of Havana, Regla, Guanabacoa, Marianao, Cárdenas and Matanzas.<sup>32</sup> However, in 1880, the arrest of a lodge of *Ñánigos* in Santiago de Cuba was recorded in two newspapers.<sup>33</sup> The slaves who arrived in Cuba were able to group themselves into associations of people with the same ethnic identity,<sup>34</sup> the *Cabildos de Nación* (Ortiz 1921:8-12). Through these groups, they were able to preserve multiple cultural and religious expressions and created secret societies such as *Abakuá* for their protection. The name *Abapkwa* or *Abapka* was a settlement of the Qua community located in Calabar between Duke Town and Old Town.<sup>35</sup> According to Sosa, it was linked to the Duala ethnic group<sup>36</sup> when there was no border yet between Nigeria and Cameroon (1982:32, 62). Many words of the *Ñánigo* vocabulary are also

found in the Duala language (Martin, 1966). In Fernando Po in the late nineteenth century, there were drums of the “Duala type”, as Mary Kingsley mentioned (1897:67), and Fernando Ortiz stated,<sup>37</sup> that they were similar to those of the *Ñañigos* of Cuba, introduced by Afrocubans in Fernando Po (1996[1952] Vol. I: 322). The testimony of Mary Kingsley in 1897 coincides with the arrival of hundreds of *Ñañigos* discussed earlier. We can compare the Ndowe instruments (Aranzadi 2009) with those of *Abakuá*. The Duala are a Ndowe subgroup as many others like the Eshira or Mpongwe in Gabon, the Kombe and Benga in Equatorial Guinea and the Batanga and Duala in Cameroon, all these ethnic groups have similar drums to the *abakuá* drums.<sup>38</sup>

In August 1876 a decree was issued in Havana that stated: “*Ñañigo* meetings are completely prohibited” (Sosa, 1982:379). It applied the law of banditry the following year (Roche y Monteagudo (1925 [1908]) :51). In 1880, the performance of *íremes* or *Abakuá* masks in the streets was prohibited, and four years later all processions of *Cabildos* during Epiphany. “The one in 1884 was the last one: January 6, 1885 was the first silent epiphany that Cuba ever had” (Ortiz 1921:20).

Despite the repression, *Abakuá* membership constantly grew (Palmié 2007:282). Between 1920 and 1950, *Abakuá* culture was gradually considered part of Cuban culture (Brown 2003:130). The revolutionary government promoted the expression of Afro-Cuban roots, although it prosecuted *Abakuá* intermittently and prohibited the initiation of new members in 1967 (Lavarreres 2012:19).<sup>39</sup> In fact, these prejudices and inadequate evaluations were hardly fully overcome in Cuba during the last half of the century.<sup>40</sup> The ban was only lifted in 1996, in the “special period”, with its new openness to religion (Camacho 2011:36).<sup>41</sup> Only then, Afro-Cuban folklore became a sign of national identity (Brown 2003:130) and was revalued as important in the context of globalization (Routon 2005:374). Today, *Abakuá* society in Cuba has more than 20,000 members as *Abakuá Buró* members in Havana told me in 2012.<sup>42</sup>

The *Abakuá* society attracts growing interest and has influenced the language, music and arts of Cuba, despite its being a religious association.<sup>43</sup> We find its influence in the key rhythms of rumba and son,<sup>44</sup> the dance moves<sup>45</sup> of the Columbia (León 1964:48), the repertoire of current performance groups,<sup>46</sup> the fusion of music in jazz,<sup>47</sup> in literature, theater and paintings of artists such as Belkis Ayllon, or even in movies (Torres Zayas 2011).

Among the items that I observed in the *Bonkó* or *Ñánkue* in Malabo during Christmas, which can be compared with those in the *Abakuá*, are the sacred instruments. In the *Abakuá* rites, there are two orders of instruments: musical and symbolic drums (Ortiz 1994:7). The musical drums are always shown in public but not other symbolic instruments: the *Ekue* drum in Cuba and the so-called *crai Egbo* in Malabo are both friction drums that are only used in private ceremonies. In both Cuba and Bioko the drums are played slung over the drummer’s shoulders during the procession or on the ground when stationary. Some drum builders in Cuba place a metal ring in the mouth of the drum (Neira 1991:8) as in Malabo where the instruments can only be touched by

the member of the society that is responsible for them. In each *juego* (lodge) an *obonekue* guards the drums (Orozco and Bolivar, 1998:226). When a member infringes a rule of the society, the punishment is carried out at the drum (Aranzadi, 2009:174) in Malabo as well as in Cuba (Trujillo and Monagas 1882:366).

In the colonial period, at Epiphany the Governor used to give the “aguinaldo” (Christmas bonus) to the association in Havana (1882:365) as he did in Fernando Po. At Christmas many ethnic groups used to show their dances, but only the Fernandino penetrated the building of the governor and they were flattered when they received [from the Governor] a large sum of the money [...]” (Moreno Moreno 1948:84).

After independence in 1968, this Cuban colonial legacy continued to be alive in Equatorial Guinea; the parade began to stop in front of the palace to congratulate President Francisco Macías Nguema, and it still continues to do so for President Teodoro Obiang.<sup>48</sup> The influence from *Abakuá* and *Ekpe* in Calabar continues to be of importance. For example, the Fernandino bell *kon-kon* is the same as the *Abakuá ekón* (bell), and both keep the rhythmic key. Both terms derive from the Efik term *a-Kan-Kan* (bell).<sup>49</sup> The missionary Goldie lists this term in his Efik-English Dictionary (1862: 7). Performers wear the same dress with a pointed hood as the *Abakuá* masked dancers (*íremes*). In Malabo some ornamental “tentacles” have been added to the head along with many handkerchiefs around the waist. In Cuba, the *íreme* or *Abakuá* mask called *Enkrikamo* also wears handkerchiefs around the waist (Ortiz 1950:83), as recorded by Lydia Cabrera:

“Often at a celebration in Matanzas [...] a woman at the height of excitement, spears at the foot of his flamboyant best dancer a silk scarf. Often we can see handkerchiefs testifying female admiration to the *íreme*” (1975:47).





**Image 4: Abakuá in Habana2011. Bonkó in Malabo 2013. Photos: Isabela de Aranzadi**

There were similar scenes in Fernando Po in the early twentieth century, where “often ‘yanques’[*Ñánkues*] jockeying to see who danced better, and the girls gave away large silk handkerchief to the single ‘yanques’; the more admirers one had the more silk handkerchief [were] around his waist“(Jones 1962:246 ).

The handkerchief is in both cases an element of value. It has been an object of trade between Africa and Europe, like brandy, tobacco, gunpowder and iron (Guillemar de Aragon 1852:82; Iradier 1887:240). The *Ñánkue*, called *Mamahê* in Annobón, where it arrived a hundred years ago (Aranzadi, 2009), has fewer handkerchiefs in its dress and is less evolved because of the isolation of this small island. It rather resembles the Cuban *íreme* nowadays and the *Ñánkue* attire in southern Bioko in the early twentieth century as it is described by Jones (1962:243).<sup>50</sup> The outfit in Malabo also resembles the higher grade of *Ekpe*, called *Nyamkpe* in Calabar.<sup>51</sup> In both societies, in the *Abakuá* in Cuba and the *Ñínigo Ñánkue* in Bioko, there was a hierarchy with different roles and positions, and a regulatory structure with punishments for those that did not obey. Other elements are the decorated walking stick, the “escoba amarga” (sour broom, a bunch of herbs) and bells or cowbells in varying numbers, which *Ñánkues* carry on their waist in Malabo. The *Ekpe* in Calabar and the *íremes* in Cuba wear these bells, named *nkaniká* (Ortiz 1996[1952] Vol.I:290), the same term as in Calabar (Miller, 2005: 25; Goldie 1862: 35, 115).

The movements of the Cuban *íreme* named *Anamangui*<sup>52</sup> are identical with the performance of the *Ñánkue Sekonmunin* of the Creoles in Malabo who both perform at funerals. They drag themselves and mourn with movements writhing on the floor to ‘cry’ for their ancestors. Before dawn every 1<sup>st</sup> January I witnessed the brief appearance of *Sekonmunin* to mourn it’s ancestors, rolling on the asphalt covering the site of the

ancient cemetery that was firstly in the town of Santa Isabel (called today Malabo). This *Ñánkue* masked dancer plays a mourning role also on two other occasions, on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> December.



**Image 5: Funerary mask Sekonmunin in Malabo. Photo: Isabela de Aranzadi.**

The central figure of the ancestors, represented by masks, means that there is an African spirituality present in Cuba and the Bight of Biafra, in which the community brings together the two domains: that of the living and of the ancestors. The sound element is placed in the doorway and acts as a hinge that connects both worlds.<sup>53</sup>

## Deportations to Fernando Po: Expelling the Ñáñigos from Cuba

The presence of Cubans on the island of Fernando Po is due to certain historical reasons, such as the dual need of the Spanish Government, first to colonize the African island and second, to expel groups from the Caribbean island prosecuted for their subversive character against the colony. As a result, many emancipated slaves<sup>54</sup> and Cuban people were deported to Fernando Po in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The lack of a Spanish colonial project since 1828, after the arrival of the British in Fernando Po spurred in Spain the idea of making Fernando Po a prison, as an alternative to the British presence on the island (Castro, 1996:43). After a first attempt by the Spanish, which failed because of the high mortality rate, in a second attempt black Cubans were used more successfully to create a civil population with a Hispanic language and culture (Holt 33; Granda 1988:216).

There were many deportations cited in newspapers, which have not been absorbed in major academic sources. The political deportations in 1866, 1869, 1881 and 1896 were documented but without any details, and furthermore, the Cubans were described as mostly white, having their own means.<sup>55</sup> Ñáñigos are not mentioned. But we already know from the press that in the first deportation of 1866 at the time of the governor of Cuba, Lersundi, many Ñáñigos were sent to Fernando Po.<sup>56</sup>

In 1878 Cuban deportees in Fernando Po received an award at the Amsterdam Exhibition of tobacco plantations, (Unzueta 1947:231) for making cigars that were “better than those of the Canary Islands” (Borrajo Viñas 1902:156). It is noteworthy that the Cubans who were deported to Fernando Po were experts in growing tobacco. Prior to the 1895 war, most of the workers in the guild of tobacco growers were *Abakuá* and “there where the cigar factories in which only *Ñáñigos* would work and even the foremen were initiated *Abakuá* members” (López Valdés 1966:10).

In 1881, 267 deportees arrived from the “abortive conspiracy of Santiago de Cuba”<sup>57</sup> or “Guerra Chiquita” (Small War), most of them were black (Montes de Oca 1883:47). Some of these deportees paradoxically accompanied Ossorio and Montes de Oca in 1886 on the Muni expedition to expand the Spanish territories. They were remembered in the Ateneo of Madrid for “the great service they provided to Spain; nine Cuban deportees in Fernando Po [...] responded in Africa to the intimate and common sense of Spanish nationality”.<sup>58</sup>

The official documents on Cubans in Fernando Po rarely mention the Ñáñigos. Therefore, the data found in the press is a significant testimony of the presence of *Abakuá*. We have the stories of six Cubans who were deported to Fernando Po,<sup>59</sup> together with descriptions of nineteenth-century colonial scenes. One of these six deportees speaks about the presence of Ñáñigos (Miranda, 1903). These stories are valuable documents for a socio-historical and linguistic analysis.<sup>60</sup> Apart from oral memory in Cuba where especially members of *Abakuá* know about the deportations of Ñáñigos to Fernando Po,

there are very few written records from Cuba. We have a testimony made by the ex-slave and maroon Esteban Montejo who lived in Cuba before independence. He was the main informant of Barnet in his book *El Cimarrón* (The Maroon):

“I remember a criminal [...] Polavieja [...] He was Governor in the nineties. Nobody wanted him [...] he started sending blacks to Fernando Po. [...] The Nñáñigos also went to that island. [...] He said they were anarchists. Workers who had nothing to do with ñañiguismo or revolution remained in Cuba” (Barnet 1966:90).

José Luciano Franco recorded deportations to Fernando Po between 1812 and 1835, during the Aponte conspiracy, but this does not appear in any other source, and the island of Fernando Po (today Bioko) was colonized only in 1827, so deportations during that period are unlikely. Even the many Cubans, who returned to Cuba from Fernando Po between 1878 and 1892, provided African cultural elements well-known “among *Abakuá* or Carabali” and those who returned after the war, as Franco says, “brought to Cuba songs and legends that were widespread among youth during my childhood” (1976:8).

The number of deported Nñáñigos and the time periods during which this happened is intrinsically related to Cuban history and the desire of Cubans for independence. During the ten years of war between 1868 and 1878, many Nñáñigos were prosecuted and deported. The general consensus of the time was that the Nñáñigos should be persecuted. This view is reflected in the press of 1865 in a letter from Havana, and also in 1876, after the arrest of 150 Nñáñigos, which states “everybody hopes that Captain Jovellar sends them to Fernando Po,<sup>61</sup> the “right” place to establish a “system of colonization by convicts”.<sup>62</sup>

Many newspapers speak about the presence of whites among the deported *Nñáñigos*. The *Abakuá* Society founded the first lodge in Cuba in 1836 and it only admitted black people. They formed the first white *juego* in 1863 (Trujillo y Monagas 1882:369). In 1882, there were already 83 lodges in nine districts of Havana, Regla and Guanabacoa, of which five had a white male membership.<sup>63</sup>

The criminalization of movements considered subversive such as *Abakuá* began in Cuba with the influence of the slave revolts in Haiti, Louisiana, and Jamaica. Jose Antonio Aponte, a free black Creole led the first national conspiracy in Cuba in 1812. He planted the seeds of rebellion against the colony among the African families such as the Carabali (who transmitted the *Ekpe* legacy of Calabar to the Cuban Creoles) (Franco 1963:17-37). The slave traders thought that the gradual growth of the free black Creoles represented a risk to their interests because of their rebelliousness and their readiness to fight which was more determined than that of the slaves (Sarracino 1988:108). Media reports also reflect such danger in 1894 and 1896:

“The masters of black men prevented their slaves from going to jail because they would be deprived of the work of ‘one of their beasts.’”<sup>64</sup> “When the ñañiguismo sprouts, and banditry grows, it means that work is not rife and the plantation not productive.”<sup>65</sup>

The image created around the *Ñáñigos* was partly due to the economic interests in the colony and the thirst of political control. One of the prejudices against the *Ñáñigos* was their hostility towards “la patria” (“the Spanish Fatherland”).<sup>66</sup> In 1880, we read in *El Gallego* (a newspaper published in Buenos Aires):

“*Ñáñigos* are currently natural allies of those raving for Antillean independence [...] The *Ñáñigo* society was discovered in time of General Concha,<sup>67</sup> and [...] over two thousand prisoners were arrested, many of whom were brought in chains and distributed among the islands of Fernando Po and Annobón.”<sup>68</sup>

In 1888, a number of *Ñáñigos* were arrested and the press revealed information of the signs painted on their bodies.<sup>69</sup> Months later, Rodríguez Batista seized their sacred objects, called *atributos*, such as scepters, itones (staves), etc.<sup>70</sup> Madrid requested that the sacred objects must be sent to the Ultramar (Overseas) Museum.<sup>71</sup> Some of these are now housed at the National Museum of Anthropology in Madrid.<sup>72</sup> In 1901, Fernando Ortiz, when he was in the Ultramar Museum, admired the costumes of *íremes* or *diablitos*, the liturgical drums<sup>73</sup> and other sacred objects,<sup>74</sup> that were “judíos” (unbaptized), built very quickly to keep the real ones hidden” (1996 [1952] Vol. I: 49). Later, Ortiz began research on Afro-Cuban religion, which he considered as one of the roots of Cuban identity 1939:86).

From 1889 to 1897, the press praised politicians who prosecuted the *Ñáñigos*<sup>75</sup> and the demand for their total extermination appeared repeatedly:

“At the time of General Lersundi, something was done against *Ñáñigos*, deporting some, later Rodríguez Batista wanted to finish them, but he was deceived by the *Ñáñigos* [...]. Now [with General Porrúa] is when the campaign really has been done [...]. 76 “[...] The deserved ascent of La Barrera [...] to which we owe the complete disappearance of the *Ñáñigos*.”<sup>77</sup>

In the last years of the war for independence the elimination of pro-independence forces became urgent and many *Ñáñigos* were deported to Spain and to Fernando Po. As recorded by the *Diario de Tenerife*, on August 29, 1896, “24 criminals who belong to the association of the white and colored *Ñáñigos*” were sent from Havana by Porrúa. This was welcomed with approval and satisfaction by colonial society in Cuba.<sup>78</sup> From epistolary documents and news in the press, we know that infantry forces in Fernando Po were increased and considered “necessary for the great number of deportees in that place and for the] ones soon to come.” The Spanish government in Madrid then asked the Ministry of Ultramar about the capacity of the colony, having in view to send more deportees.<sup>79</sup>

After several *Ñáñigo* deportations, the first shipment of hundreds of them took place in October 1896 when they came out of Cuba in the steamboat *Buenos Aires*. 181 *Ñáñigos* were deported to Fernando Po<sup>80</sup> and, as recorded by *El Imparcial*, 230 *Ñáñigos*



were already in the colony in Africa at that time.<sup>81</sup>

“[...] the steam boat had prepared a steam pipe of 180 pounds of pressure that would fall on the *Ñáñigos* if these rebelled.” “Here we have a high morality campaign applauded in Havana<sup>82</sup> [...] by all honorable men [...] That Epiphany celebration [in which the *ñáñigos* took the opportunity to meet and all slaves of the same origin made parades of dances], and other freedoms that were allowed were a disguise of intention to hold them.”<sup>83</sup>

The *Abakuá* society, which initially allowed only black people into their lodges, accepted progressively from 1836 to the end of the century, black Bozales and black Creoles, white Creoles and Chinese Creoles,<sup>84</sup> Cubans and Spaniards,<sup>85</sup> poor and rich, bringing together different sectors of society (which made up the Cuban nation), thereby increasing its influence, and the urgency of its dissolution.<sup>86</sup>

“The black and white *Ñáñigos* [have] an influence as great as, or bigger than, many of the highest characters [...] I’ve seen in the offices, persons of high position asking for the release of these people ...”<sup>87</sup>.

For 175 years, this society resisted the pressure on it and its prohibitions by law in Cuba; their members however left their traces and legacy in the African colony, which we can now attest to, using the data collected in the press on the living archive (collected previously in orality and ethnography). No information on *ñáñigos* can be found in colonial documents. The presence of the Cuban *Abakuá* in Fernando Poo has been invisible in scholarly sources on Fernando Po.<sup>88</sup> Oral tradition records that “Cubans brought a drum” [...] “a Nigerian [Efik] brought three drums and later Cubans brought another one.” Ethnography speaks clearly of a memory that remains alive, and the similarities between Ekpe-*Abakuá*-Bonkó in Calabar, Cuba and Bioko are evident on both sides of the Atlantic. .

In June 1896, the Governor General of Fernando Po awaited the arrival of Cuban deportees and intended to replace the “less intelligent” Kroo workers by the deportees in public works to “improve the development of Santa Isabel”, saving costs and reducing their daily rate to “3 pesos monthly”.<sup>89</sup>

On December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1896, according to the press,<sup>90</sup> 278 *Ñáñigos* left Havana and were deported to Fernando Po.<sup>91</sup> According to a letter from the Governor of Fernando Po –in which he expressed his satisfaction with the order and discipline during the voyage – 269 deportees reached their destiny. This is the ship on which Manuel Miranda (1903:3) traveled, together with Cuban deportees (including many *Abakuá*)<sup>92</sup> Miranda describes in the first person the journey from Havana. He mentions the chants of the *Ñáñigos* on the boat and how they arrived at a prison in Cadiz which was crowded with deportees waiting to be brought on different ships bound for Ceuta, Chafarinas, and Fernando Po. On January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1897, three hundred deportees arrived at the port

of Las Palmas (Márquez Quevedo 1998:111).<sup>93</sup> After a terrible trip, on January 17<sup>th</sup> they were received by the Governor of Fernando Po with a speech from the balcony of the Government House, in which they were accused of being rebels and unpatriotic and threatened in case they would try to escape or bother any Spaniard (Miranda 1903:27).<sup>94</sup> Once again, it is the political cause and the rebellion against the colonial power exercised for centuries in Cuba that defined their position, this time before the eyes of the Governor of Fernando Po. In the city of Santa Isabel (today Malabo), as Miranda recounts [reports], the Cubans participated in a *balele* (dance) with the Sierra Leoneans [the Fernandino] (1901:31), and, as the Governor of Ultramar states in his letters, they had a variety of jobs, and professions.<sup>95</sup>

On 30 March 1897, the “Larache” sailed from Cádiz to Fernando Po with 206 *Ñáñigos* aboard.<sup>96</sup> This boat reached the Canary Islands on 2 April 1897, as has been reported in the *Diario de Las Palmas*.<sup>97</sup> Among the deportees was Emilio Valdés Infante, who, however, did not mention the presence of *Ñáñigos* in his account. The boat arrived on the African island (1898:26)<sup>98</sup> on 16 April 1897. Subsequently, hundreds of *Ñáñigos* were deported from Cuba to the “Península” (Spain).<sup>99</sup> On 28 June was announced the deportation of 80 *Ñáñigos* from Cádiz to Fernando Po, accompanied by the marine forces to maintain order to maintain order.<sup>100</sup> They arrived a week later in the Canary Islands (Márquez Quevedo 1998:111).<sup>101</sup>

This information causes us to reflect upon the *Abakuá* presence in a city where the number of inhabitants was 1,500 at the end of the nineteenth century. The large number of *Ñáñigos* was a heavy burden, and this was emphasized in articles, letters and even poetry:

“[...] from Cadiz it is notified [to the Ultramar Minister] that there, there are a lot of *Ñáñigos*, and there is no place for them”<sup>102</sup>

Around the time of the amnesty in June 1897, further deportations to Fernando Po were cancelled,<sup>103</sup> and in October more deportees were granted amnesty,<sup>104</sup> but *Ñáñigos* were excluded.<sup>105</sup> In 1898, the transfer had not yet taken place. In October, the minister of Ultramar declared that there were about 600 *Ñáñigos*<sup>106</sup> in different parts of the Peninsula (Spain), who would be sent to Cuba in due course.<sup>107</sup> Finally, on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1899 a Royal Order was issued<sup>108</sup> which states:

“ [Those who are not included in previous amnesties remain still in the Peninsula and Fernando Po] due to their being *Ñáñigos*, rustlers or anarchists, [they now will be included in this Real Order] [...] We (the King), authorize their return to the island of Cuba [...] Madrid, January 4, 1899.”<sup>109</sup>

Paradoxically, on the eve of Epiphany, the most important feast of Africans in Cuba, the subjugation of the colony ended. The Cuban *Abakuá* society, left their influence in

the Bonkó or *Ñánkue*. This ritual dance is still performed today in Equatorial Guinea as a symbol for the Creoles and as I mentioned earlier, for the Christmas festivity in the city of Malabo nowadays. Some deportees were set free in Fernando Po, in February 1898,<sup>110</sup> but only in January 1899, the Cuban deportees that had remained in Fernando Po learned of their complete freedom] (Miranda 1903:49, 54).

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the Spanish press continued the prevailing idea from the nineteenth century, in which *Ñáñigos* are synonymous with crime and witchcraft,<sup>111</sup> or masonry.<sup>112</sup> The Europeans have, for centuries, associated “blacks” with being “savage” and “obscene”. With regards to tango, it is said that in Cuba “only blacks and mulattoes and especially *Ñáñigos* [...] have danced it and that tango was an obscene dance”.<sup>113</sup> In 1903 the American dance cakewalk was labeled as a dance of *Ñáñigos*.<sup>114</sup> In the media, the anti-Spanish attitude was repeated, using the term *Ñáñigos* to insult “intellectual eunuchs, [...] *Ñáñigos* leash and poets [criticize] the Quintero Brothers (patriotic writers).”<sup>115</sup> In 1949, *La Vanguardia* printed a poem that stated: “Girl do not leave home, be careful that the *Ñáñigo* does not take you.”

Still in 1922, in Spain the island of Fernando Po was considered to be a place of deportees:

“With regards to Fernando Po, there was just the notion [...] that it was a very bad place’ and that many Cubans and *Ñáñigos* had been sent there never to return [...]”.<sup>116</sup>

## Conclusion

Living memory becomes a document when it is narrated, embodied in performance or recorded. This memory that is reflected in abakuá and bonkó invokes African spirituality in rituals, songs and dances. The Cuban Abakuá that was taken to Fernando Po has brought an element of Africanity, an African memory, into a group of black African Creoles that was added to their African American heritage and European manners and who had considered themselves for decades as British subjects. This experience shows that paths across the Black Atlantic existed not only during slavery but also after the abolition of slavery. This resulted in two black African American Creole cultures joining in a space of creolization in which a community with different provenance and roots has been created and developed, but with African (slaves’ ancestors in all cases) that took place on the island of Fernando Po (Bioko). In this way, a British and a Hispanic Creole identity came together on this island; we have also analyzed how two cultures meet in two Hispanic regions, one in America (Cuba) and the other in Africa (Bioko).

The African identity that bestowed these cultural expressions has been preserved through the voyages of the slave trade, the deportations of Afro-Cubans and the resettlement of Afro-Americans who later had returned to Africa. This constant flow of people and cultural elements has contributed to the maintenance of the ritual and musical culture. We

have also noted the paradox that these African people have been deprived of their dignity; however, their cultural practices have come back to enrich African culture.

The Fernandino ÑÑÑkue or *Bonkó* has been influenced by those who returned to Africa, bringing cultural expressions that, once they were transformed by the slaves and their descendants, have continued to be alive as elements of identity and as a form of resistance. The comparative between these three areas on both sides in the Atlantic (Calabar, Cuba and Bioko) is a testimony of an element of identity providing memory. This article documents this influence, examining previous ethnographic work on the music of the Fernandino Creoles, the influence of the Cuban *Abakuá* secret society (which finds its roots in the *Ekpe* society in Calabar, Nigeria) and in the *Bonkó* or *ÑÑÑkue* in Equatorial Guinea. The data in the Spanish press from 1865 to 1950 provide sound evidence of the presence of *Abakuá* (also called the ÑÑÑigos) in Fernando Po (now Bioko) and again confirm the Cuban heritage in Africa.

The hundreds of ÑÑÑigo deportees sent to Fernando Po in the late nineteenth century make up a large proportion of the population of the African island; they have influence on the language, culture and musical rituals. We see this in the performances (a living archive) of the Fernandino *Bonkó* and the Annobonés *Mamabe*, which in present-day Bioko and Annobon begin on December 24<sup>th</sup> and continue through Christmas. This confirms the oral report through which the *Bonkó* or *ÑÑÑkue* received influences from both Calabar and Cubans who were on the island of Fernando Po. The wealth of this Cuban Creole legacy survives today in different ways among Fernandino, Annobonese, Bubi and the Fang of Equatorial Guinea.



El ñÑÑkue en Annobón llamado Mamabe. Navidad 2009. Foto: Isabela de Aranzadi.

**Image 6: Bonkó dance (named Mamahe) on the little island of Annobón. Photo: Isabela de Aranzadi.**

The *Abakuá* society exists for 175 years. It represents resistance and has conserved the African legacy, despite the experience of slavery and the difficulties of living in a society that has been keen to work on their repression and dissolution in Cuba. This resistance eventually resulted in the deportation of *Abakuá* members (Ñáñigos) to Fernando Po. However, this memory has endured even in a scenario of exile. In this way, the *Bonkó* or *Ñánkue* has become a tradition that has been practiced for 160 years in Bioko. In a double-crossing of the Atlantic, the African culture (the Calabar *Ekpe* society with Carabalí slaves) became African American and is preserved today in Cuba as *Abakuá*. This African culture has returned back to Africa in the nineteenth century and the members of this secret society of *Abakuá* have brought their memory and their musical ritual to Fernando Po, where it remains today in the Fernandino *Bonkó* or *Ñánkue*.

## Endnotes

1. In 1862, two hundred emancipated people reached Fernando Po. They lived in the “village of the *Congos*” (Balmaseda 1869:149), a neighborhood in the city of Santa Isabel, the majority belonged to this ethnic group (Castro 1994:36), and provided very cheap labor in the making of public works (Serrano 1985:80). By R. O. 1865, 105 blacks caught between San Cristóbal and Pinar del Rio, were transported to Fernando Po, they chose to stay or to go elsewhere on the African coast (Roldan Montaud 2011:185). According to Franco, the R. O. is 1867 (1976:8).
2. Named by the Spanish because they were the people who had been born in Fernando Po, they considered themselves British, until well into the twentieth century.
3. Official documents and epistolary and news stories in the press in addition to the tales from the deportees themselves published at the time.
4. See the similarity with the Cuban term *Abakuá*. Thousands of Fang people went from Rio Muni in the Continental Region of Equatorial Guinea to the island of Fernando Po to work on cocoa plantations, on termination of the agreement with the government of Liberia in 1926. Some of them returned to their villages later where they continue to practice this dance with some adaptation in the rhythms and masks.
5. Bioko was named Fernando Po, the island where I was born.
6. I was invited to the *IV Coloquio sobre religiones afroamericanas* (dedicated to *Ekpe* and *Abakuá*) organized by Jesus Rafael Robaina, director of the Cuban Institute of Anthropology, with a lecture on the Cuban heritage in Africa.
7. *Ekpe* society emerged in southeastern Nigeria as an association that allowed a better control of commercial networks and that provided prestige. It has a number of hierarchical grades that function as a governing body, make laws, sort out debts, etc. The villages were part of the social tissue, which eased the relationships in a network or *Ekpe* ecumene, uniting people with the “same spirit” although they did not know each other (Röschenthaler 2011:99-101). *Ekpe* has also become a dance association. For a comparison between *Ekpe* and *Abakuá*, see Miller (2012). According to the old informants, there were few changes in the making of the *Carabalí* instruments used by *Abakuá* musicians compared to those of their ancestors in Africa (Elí 1997a:223).

8. Ramón Torres Zayas Zayas (*Abakuá* member and academic known as “Mongi”), he raises suggest [he is the one who raises? Raise resistance?] the binomial secret society-resistance [I do not know what this means, maybe drop it, since the text must be shortened] (Torres Zayas Zayas 2010).
9. Among the leading scholars of *Abakuá* society stand Rafael Salillas (1901), Fernando Ortiz (1921, 1924, 1939, 1950, 1951, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1996[1952]), Lydia Cabrera (1969, 1975, 1988, 2005[1959]), Deschamps Chapeaux (1964), Martín (1930, 1966), López Valdés (1966), Martínez Furé (1998), Enrique Sosa (1982, 1998), Argeliers León (1964, 1984, 2001), Jesús Guanche (1983, 1997, 2007), Lino Neira (1991), Tato Quiñones (1994) and recently David H. Brown (2003), Ivor Miller (2005, 209, 2012), Stephan Palmié (2005, 2006, 2007), Ramón Torres Zayas Zayas (2010, 2011) and Odalys Pérez Martínez (2011).
10. According to Martínez Furé, it is not a religion but a secret society (1998:150).
11. *La Vanguardia*, May 6, 1897.
12. “Lo que pasa en Fernando Po”. *El Imparcial* 4 mar. 1897; “Ecos políticos”. *La Correspondencia de España* March 2. 1897 “De Fernando Po. Santa Isabel de Fernando Po. 3 de febrero de 1897”. *La Correspondencia de España* March 3 1897.
13. *El Imparcial*, March 4, 1897; *La Correspondencia de España*, March 3, 1897.
14. The *Ñánkue*, means the masked dance, the ritual-dance, or the Christmas procession in Malabo and also means the society itself (*Ñíñigo Ñánkue* is the name of the society which appears in their rules) (Aranzadi 2010:36). In Cuba, it means funeral ceremony among the *Abakuá* (*Ñánkue* in *ñáñigo* language means dead) (Ortiz 1951:338). The *Ñánkue* is the deceased *abanekue*, the member who has died in the *Abakuá* society; it is *nlloro* or funeral ceremony (Cabrera 1988:426-427; 2005[1959]: 9). In the southeast of Nigeria is a pidgin term for *Ekpe* (Röschenhaler 2011:520). In Calabar *Ñánkue* is one of the degrees of *Ekpe* society. It is written *yampai* (Holman 1834:393), *nyampa* (Hutchinson 1858:141), *nyampe* (Goldie 1862:117), *nyampke* (Talbot 1926:192, 278). According to Malcom Ruel, it is a degree of *Ekpe*, both among the *Èfik* and the *Ejagham* (Miller 2009:228). *Ñangué* is the woman sacrificed in the legend that gave birth to society and the moan of *Sikanekue* emitted while the *Ekueñon* oppressed her neck (Cabrera 1988: 424); *ñangüé* is *ñáñigo* (Martín 1946:16). *Ñangüé* is the figurehead in the Fernandino and the remembrance of cubanism *ñanguio* or *ñáñigo* (González Echegaray 1959:47). *Yangüé* is the dance of the Fernandino

in Santa Isabel and is the mask dancing (Álvarez 1951:222; Moreno Moreno 1948:94). *Yanque* is the main character of the dance and Christmas procession in Fernando Po (Jones 1962:247). *Ñampe* is *Ñánkue*, the dead (Sosa 1982:409). The grade *Ekpe* Ñámpkè has been used by law and as a jury, *nyánpké* is the term for the *Ekpe* society in Cameroon (Miller 2009:271,129). *Ñánkue* in Annobón is the ritual-dance though the local name is *mamabe* (Aranzadi 2009:147). The first time the *Bonkó* is documented in Bioko is in 1880's (Sundiata 1972:206).

15. The Fernandino Creole people agree to state that Daniel Nathaniel Kinson is the Fernandino that brought the *Ñánkue* from Calabar by marrying an Efik dancer who belonged to *Ekpe* (it is said his brother brought the rite *Ekueñon*, or that his son bought the degree *Ñánkue* in Nigeria). There is a document granting the medal of Isabella the Catholic to this Fernandino (Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, C, Sig. 297 exp. 0). Inside we can read that he was born in 1829, which would confirm, by the approximate date of his marriage, the oral tradition according to which the ritual-dance of *Ñánkue* has been in Malabo for one hundred and sixty years.
16. All these societies have a mask bearing the representative of the highest authority when the ritual or dance is celebrated. Both the *Mekuio* as the *Ukuyo*, similar to the *Ukuku* society gathered by Mary Kingsley referring to it as a society with judicial function (1897:563), hold a ceremony with a white mask with black and red paint (Aranzadi Instruments 96). They are societies of initiation with different degrees and with a public function. Women and children they participate singing and the initiated deal with the secret rites in a private closed space as a temple, located in the same sacred space where the dance is held. Women do not know who the mask carrier is and he plays a role of judge regulatory of adultery or other unlawful acts considered by their society. The *Só* society of the Fang, now disappeared, has influenced others like *Ngil* (also extinct nowadays) or the *Biwiti*, exogamic society with Christian elements (Alexandre et Binet 1959).
17. There was also this function of imposing order *Ekpe* society (Röschenthaler 2011:101).
18. An older woman called "La Ñata" witnessed the oaths in the juramentos (initiation) of the *juego* (group) *Usagaré Mutanga* (Cabrera 1975:6).
19. As also happens with the Fang (Aranzadi 1998).



20. The Efik *Abang* dance has influenced ritual Fernandino *Bonkó* (Aranzadi 2010:35). *Ntimi* is a type of non-public dance *Abang*, an adaptation from the *Nyoro* of the procession *Ebonko* (*Ekpe*). It represents the interests of women and involves memory of female participation in the *Ekpe* cult, at some point in the history of the Efik (Onyile 2000:7).
21. Archivo General de la Administración (AGA), Caja 81/07 636, exp. 1. One of the deportees requested hectares to work on agriculture (letter to the Governor in October 1899) in the eighties (Ibarra 1887:188; Sundiata 1972:231).
22. Except *Nánkue* descriptions which are included in Álvarez García, Arija, Jones and Sialo. On the Fernandino customs, see Morgades.
23. As well as the term *balele* it is a generic term used in the colony for any mask, ignoring the wealth of culture of each ethnic group and with a pejorative meaning.
24. *La Guinea Española*, January 10th 1928, nº 656:13. This text was written in 1928 and shows that the Catholic mission did not approve of the fact that they were dancing to the cemetery. They had to be civilized. And it allowed because not considered “dangerous”. These dances were “nonsense” (trifle), but the missionary warned that if they continued to do so, they would have to notify the authorities to prohibit them.
25. Only members of *Egbo* (English word for *Ekpe*) Council can participate. Previously on Fernando Po was only one *Egbo* (*Big Egbo*). Today the council is made up of ten people *Egbo*. These rituals are performed inside the cemetery. President Macias Nguema, fearing witchcraft, barred it from entering the cemetery.
26. Even dance academies were surveyed in La Havana (Deschamps Chapeaux 1964:106).
27. During a break in an *Abakuá* function, court officials were surprised that “all detainees being Creoles and free, try to imitate the *bozales* on their uses and customs” (Deschamps Chapeaux 1964:100-101).
28. We find valuable information in the field of police work and criminology with existing prejudices at the time. Trujillo and Monagas publish a pamphlet published in 1882 in *La Correspondencia de Cuba* showing a report of Rodriguez Arias (Brown 2003:145) with many data *Abakuá* society. Other works are Landaluz (1881) and Roche y Monteagudo (1925 [1908]).

29. There was a crackdown in 1844 in the so-called “Conspiración de la Escalera” (Palmié 2007:282).
30. Cuban deportees were also sent to the Canary Islands (González Rodríguez 1993:711; Márquez Quevedo 1998:115).
31. The sacred voice sounds in the *Ecué* drum inside the temple. It represents the voice of the spirit. In the legend, the voice emerged from the water [add: through a sacred] fish. It also represents the voice of the leopard (Miller 2009; Röschenhaler 2011:100).
32. There is unanimity about *Abakuá* areas (Ortiz 1950:79, 1986:13). However, Nuevitas and Cienfuegos had sporadically the presence of *Abakuá* (Guanche 1983; Elí 1997a:420, 222). Many *Abakuá* population lived along the docks controlling recruitment and the foremen were Nánigos (López Valdés 1966), which also happened in the guild of tobacco producers (10), and in the public markets and slaughterhouses (Guanche 1983:443). In 1867, the *Abakuá* society is established in 1927 in Matanzas and Cárdenas (Palmié 2006: 103).
33. *El Siglo Futuro*, February 10, 1880; *El Gallego*, March 14, 1880.
34. The first name of the *Cabildo* was the [cut: pier; add: embarking point] in Africa as in the case of Calabar who named the *Carabalí*, named first by the slave traders and later by the slaves themselves. The second name was the ethnonym nation, ethnic or linguistic, as in the case of *Carabalí Ibo* or *Carabalí Orú* (Guanche 1983:416).
35. According to Goldie (1901:15, 50, and 1862: 359). *Abak* is an ethnic subgroup of the Ibibio, as Leon Argeliers classification (preface to Neira). “The term *Abakpa* was used by the British for Ekoi subgroup of Kwa” (Sosa 1998: 314). As Ute Röschenhaler told me (personal communication), “*Abakpa* is a neighbourhood in Calabar, in which Qua-Ejagham live, but the intonation of *Abakuá* is quite different from *Abàkpà*, and among the Ejagham, *Abakpa* usually also means a Hausa settlement. There were also settlements of mobile fishermen who settled all over the coast, and were then made to settle further inland along the Cross river as Biase. They have linguistic relationship with other coastal people such as the Duala”.
36. The Duala belongs to the Ndowe ethnic group who live in the coast of Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon. Different Ndowe groupes have similar instruments. The *Abakuá* drum *Ekúé* photographed by Fernando Ortiz in Balaguer Museum of Vilanova and Geltrú (1996[1952] Vol.I:408) and also by

Cristina Bordas Ibáñez (1999:334) at the National Museum of Anthropology in Madrid, have the same shape and dimensions of the *mosomba* drum among the Ndowe of Equatorial Guinea, with ropes, wedges and three legs, described in Aranzadi (2009:199).

37. Ortiz quotes Moreno Moreno, judge stationed at Fernando Po. Moreno was the first to suggest the link between Fernandino *Yangüé*, Cuban *Ñáñigos* and members of *Ekpe* in Calabar, in a two-page article from 1948.
38. Ndowe people are classified in A´Bodjedi (2008). Instruments of some ethnic Ndowe sub-groups in Gabon and Equatorial Guinea and its comparative analysis are in Aranzadi (2009).
39. Nowadays it is also necessary to have permission to hold a *plante* or *juramento* (initiation) and police monitors courtyard setting where public ceremonies are held. I was able to observe that on May 28, 2011 in Havana, when the first *plante* (initiation) of the *juego* (group) named *Efi Entumá Enyuaó*, was celebrated at the *Temple House of Uriabón Efi Brandy Masongo*, in San Miguel de Padrón.
40. Guancho (preface to Torres Zayas Zayas, *Relación Barrio*). Since the triumph of the Revolution in 1959-1990, only one *juego* was created in Cuba (Orozco and Bolívar 1998:262).
41. It initiates an “institutionalization” of religions at the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party in 1991 and the establishment of the Supreme *Abakuá* Council in 1996, representing 73 *juegos* (Torres Zayas 2010).
42. As *Abakuá Buró* members in Havana told me in 2012. In 1998, there were 12,000 *Abakuás* (Orozco and Bolívar 1998:262).
43. For a distribution of religious expression and musical expressions, see Elí (1997b).
44. Conference by Gregorio Hernández El *Goyo*. IV *Coloquio sobre religiones afroamericanas*, Havana, May 2011. El *Goyo*, a key figure in Cuban music and *Abakuá* member, died in January 2012, when we were expecting his presence in a conference organized by Casa Africa in Havana.
45. In Cuba, the rumba, conga and popular religions of African ancestry are stronger together by the thread intergenerational according to Guancho (prologue to Torres Zayas Zayas 2010).

46. For an analysis of *Abakuá* influenced music, see Miller (2005, 2009) and Truly (2009).
47. I attended a musical project performance named *Anamafimba*, a Latin jazz fusion group with *Abakuá* songs at the National Arts Theatre, January 7, 2012 in Havana.
48. They have been the only two presidents since the independence in 1968.
49. Ortiz proposed this term for the Cuban *ekón* (1996[1952] Vol.I: 272).
50. Daniel Jones was the son of Maximiliano Jones, a very important Fernandino landowner in San Carlos, in the south of the island. The first *Náñkue* picture I have been able to document is “a mask in Santa Isabel” dating from 1910-20, in Bravo Carbonell (1917:20)
51. According to the picture provided by Ekpo.
52. As I have seen in the documentary *Asere*, a brief approach to the life of *Abakuá* in Cuba today. *Afrokuba Project*, directed by Miguel Angel Garcia Velasco, premiered at the IV Simposio de Religiones.
53. The instruments are prepared, encouraging the spirits of ancestors. Although festive, all *Abakuá plante* (initiation) is a ceremony for the dead, for they are called and must participate (Elí 1997a:221).
54. In 1862, two hundred emancipated people reached Fernando Po. They lived in the “village of the *Congos*” (Balmaseda 1869:149), a neighborhood in the city of Santa Isabel, the majority belonged to this ethnic group (Castro 1994:36), and provided very cheap labor in the making of public works (Serrano 1985:80). By R. O. 1865, 105 blacks caught between San Cristóbal and Pinar del Rio, were transported to Fernando Po, they chose to stay or to go elsewhere on the African coast (Roldan Montaud 2011:185). According to Franco, the R. O. is 1867 (1976:8).
55. Especially in the deportation of 1869 (González Rodríguez 1993:710).
56. *El Imparcial*, November 20, 1896. Also in (Brown 2003:135)
57. *La Iberia*, May 5, 1881.
58. *Revista de Geografía Comercial*, June 15 and 30, 1886:347-62).

59. Four authors describe the deportation of 1869: Balmaseda, Siffredo y Llopiz, Saluvert and Bravo Senties. Miranda and Valdés Infante describe the ones of 1896 and 1897.
60. Susana Castillo (2011) examines the linguistic legacy of the Cuban Spanish emancipated and deported. Susan Martin-Márquez (2011) emphasizes the sociopolitical aspect through an analysis that reflects the Cuban Creole perception of the Castilian colonizer, highlighting socio-racial stratification among the deported themselves.
61. *La España*, May 18, 1865. *La Época*, April 2, 1876. *El Imparcial*, April 3, 1876; *La Iberia*, April 4, 1876.
62. *La Época*, July 21, 1895. Signed by Fernando Cadalso.
63. *La Vanguardia*. August 22, 1882.
64. *El Imparcial*, November 20, 1896.
65. *La Vanguardia*, August 11, 1894.
66. *El Imparcial*, November 16, 1896.
67. Concha ruled in the periods of (1850-52), (1854-59) and (1874-75), sending Nñáñigos to Fernando Po, from which we do not know anything.
68. March 14, 1880, signed by Cisneros Luces and entitled "Nñáñigos".
69. *El Correo Militar*, July 26, 1888. Such symbols are plotted with yellow (in the *plante*) or white plaster (in funeral ceremonies) and comprise three categories: the *firmas* or *Anaforuanas*, the *sellos* (stamps) and the *gando*, representing each *plaza* or hierarchy, each *juego* or *potencia* and some actions or situations that allude to the legend (Guanche, 1983:442).
70. *La Vanguardia*, February 6, 1889. Rodriguez Batista caught the Nñáñigo chiefs (total 15) who took two days to reveal the constitution of their *juegos* and deliver books, records, documents, stamps and emblems. *El Correo de Madrid* publishes a facsimile of some stamps. According to Ortiz, Rodriguez Batista lived in Regla and it could be that when he was young he would have been initiated so that would explain the peaceful success of their work because of their knowledge of *Abakuá* (1996[1952] Vol.I:50). According to Roche y Monteagudo the seized *juegos* were, *Macaro Ecorio Efó 1st, 2nd and 3rd* and *Ebion* ((1925 [1908]):43).

71. *La Monarquía*, March 9, 1889. On leaving to the Peninsula, he took some of *atributos*, including a Diablito *saco* or suit (Roche and Monteagudo (1925 [1908]):49).
72. Photographed in Bordas Ibáñez (1999:333-4).
73. Anything that is worshiped, because it incorporates a god or spirit, is a *fundamento* (Cabrera 1969:149).
74. Objects and signs make an objectual corpus bearing symbolic content (Guanche 2007:67).
75. *La Vanguardia*, February 6, 1889, *El Día*, January 15, 1892. Notes 63 and 64.
76. *El Imparcial*, November 20, 1896.
77. *La Correspondencia* de España, July 6, 1897; *La Época*, July 7, 1897.
78. *Gedeón*, September 17, 1896.
79. A.G.A., Caja 81/07636, exp. 1. *La Unión Católica*, September 24 1896. Reinforcements were also sent in 1897 (*El Liberal*, June 28, 1897).
80. *La Correspondencia de España*, November 16, 1896. Out of the 234 prisoners, 180 are Ñañigos. *La Época*, November 15, 1896. October 30, 1896 in *El Siglo Futuro* and in *La Unión Católica*; *La Dinastía*, October 31, 1896; *Diario de Tenerife*, November 23, 1896.
81. *El Imparcial*, November 20, 1896. According to Barcia many of the deported were falsely accused of being Ñañigos (2003:11).
82. *Diario de Avisos de Madrid*, November 16, 1896.
83. *El Imparcial*, November 20, 1896. Signed in Havana by Domingo Blanco. Lengthy article entitled “*Los Ñañigos*” (origin oath ceremonies, extermination, reassured society, a *Ñañigo* released by the U.S. consul).
84. Between 1847 and 1875, about 142,000 Chinese workers immigrated to Cuba. They replaced the reduced availability of Africans due to blockages of trafficking and the fear of another revolution occurring as in Haiti. They were officially

“contracted workers”, but in fact, they lived and died as slaves. Many Cuban of Chinese descent joined *Abakuá* groups by the end of the century (Miller 2009:117). In Regla there is a plaque that commemorates the arrival in 1847 of the first shipment of Chinese (Orozco y Bolívar 1998:257). It is located very near the plaque commemorating the founding of the first *Abakuá juego* in 1836, where I attended on January 6, 2012 to homage in honor to the *Abakuá* persecuted: the deported *Ñáñigos* to Fernando Po were remembered in the words of Orlando Gutierrez, secretary of religious affairs of Supreme Council of *Abakuá* in Cuba.

85. In the newspaper, it is said that there is a *Ñáñigo* from Cadiz. *El Imparcial* November 20, 1896.
86. “Today *Abakuá* are settled in all sectors of Cuban society” [in 1998] (Orozco and Bolívar 276).
87. *El Imparcial*, November 20, 1896.
88. A *Ñáñigo* is mentioned in a letter from the Governor in Fernando Po to Cuba government in July 12, 1897, regarding a sentence by the Court of Matanzas. In all other documents they appear as deportees and while there is mentioned some social-racial “classes” among them, no one speaks about *Ñáñigos* in the colony.
89. A.G.A., Caja 81/07636, exp. 1. Letters of the government of Fernando Po, June 18, 1896 and March 3, 1897.
90. *La Unión Católica* and *La Iberia*.
91. A.G.A., Caja 81/07636, exp. 1. A total of 269 deported arrive according to the January 27 letter to the Minister of Ultramar manifested in contentment for order and discipline during the voyage.
92. In some sources, there are 73 *Ñáñigos* (December 14, 1896 in *El Liberal*, *La Iberia* and *El Imparcial*). These sources coincide with Roche y Monteagudo ((1925 [1908]):53), who also mentions two other *Ñáñigo* deportations from Cuba to Fernando Po in September and October 1896.
93. *Diario Las Palmas*, January 4, 1897.
94. In the story of Miranda, there is a mistake in the arrival date to Fernando Po on December 17, 1896.

95. A.G.A., Caja 81/07636, exp. 1. Letters from the governor in Fernando Po, October 31 and December 17, 1897.
96. *El Día*, March 30, 1897. 68 deportees were sent. March 31, 1897 in *La Iberia* and in *El Día*.
97. *Diario Las Palmas*, April 5 and 8, 1897.
98. 8 Valdés Infante left Cuba in the “Buenos Aires” and although he did not mentioned it in his story, with him traveling 10 Nñáñigos (*La Correspondencia*, 20 March 1897). It is assumed that the remaining Nñáñigos embarked in Cádiz.
99. Between January and June, there are reports of around 300 Nñáñigos leaving Cuba as deportees and transferred among ports of the peninsula. Sources: *El Globo*, January 5, 1897; *El Imparcial*, January 10, 1897; *El Imparcial*, January 24, 1897; *La Época*, January 25, 1897; *La Correspondencia de España*, January 21, 1897; *El Imparcial*, January 22, 1897; *El Globo*, January 29, 1897; *El Imparcial*, February 27, 1897; *La Dinastía*, March 25, 1897; *El Imparcial*, March 27, 1897; *El Día*, March 31, 1897; *El Imparcial*, May 2 and 17, 1897; *El Imparcial*, June 10, 1897; *El Liberal*, June 28, 1897. Of which, and non-documented in the press, 36 Nñáñigos are deported to Fernando Po, February 28, May 10, and June 10, 1897 (Roche y Monteagudo (1925 [1908]):53).
100. *El Liberal*, June 28, 1897.
101. *Diario de las Palmas*, July 5, 1897.
102. *El Globo*, June 27, 1897.
103. *La Vanguardia*, June 29, 1897. *La Correspondencia de España*, June 30, 1897. In Ceuta, there are 400 deported and large “ñañiguería” (*El Imparcial*, August 29, 1897).
104. A.G.A., Caja 81/07636, exp. 1. In a letter of November 1897, the deported, after being pardoned, requested al Governor of Fernando Po to reside in Barcelona. They are Included in the list of Valdés Infante (1898:84-5).
105. A.H.N., Ultramar, Leg. 5007, exp. 832. There are several transfers among peninsular prisons, but two hundred Nñáñigos are denied to be shipped to Cuba, because of the state of war. In May of 1898 Arturo Sotolongo Limendoux is the only ñáñigo deported remaining in Chafarinas.



106. *El Correo Militar*, October 6, 1898. This is a list of names kept in the AHN, Ultramar, Leg. 5007, exp. 832., with 640 deportees of which 581 Nñáñigos are excluded in previous pardons, appearing Miranda as “anarchist”, which coincides with his story. According to Aline Helg “Over 580 Nñáñigos were deported during the war and their fate, until the end of September, 1896 was Fernando Po, ironically the island was located just off the Cross River estuary, in the Niger Delta, where society *Abakuá* originated “(1995:83).
107. A.H.N., Gobernación, Leg. 597, exp. 2-4. List of names to be sent to Cuba in October: 290 political deportees from Ceuta (including 22 Nñáñigos) in December, 33 Nñáñigos from Santander and 237 Nñáñigos from Figueras (also published *El Imparcial*, December 22, 1898). For this purpose, twenty thousand *duros* are destined (The Liberal, October 4, 1898). (*El Liberal*, October 4, 1898).
108. A.H.N., Gobernación, Leg. 597, exp. 2-4. On December 15, 1898 in *El Día* and in *El Siglo Futuro*.
109. *La Época*, January 5, 1899; *El Nuevo País*, January 6, 1899.
110. A. G. A., Caja 81/07636. Letters of February 13, and September 18, 1898. According to the Governor only the rustlers remained. In February 1898, following the departure of 140 deportees (Serrano 81), there remained deportees seeking pardon, and finally they left in September 1898. In *El Bien Público*, July 22, 1898, it is published from New York, that Commodore Watson was to go with his squad to pick up the Cuban deportees to Fernando Po. The names of those who left in September match Valdés Infante list (1898:84).
111. *Alrededor del Mundo*, January 10, 1916.
112. *La lectura Dominical*, November 27, 1909.
113. *El Heraldo de Madrid*, December 20, 1913.
114. *El Imparcial*, January 22, 1903.
115. *La Correspondencia Militar*, June 4, 1908.
116. *La Acción. Diario de la Noche*, June 3, 1922.

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