# Breaking the rules: The impact of transnational migration on religion, music and occupation in the Dominican Republic




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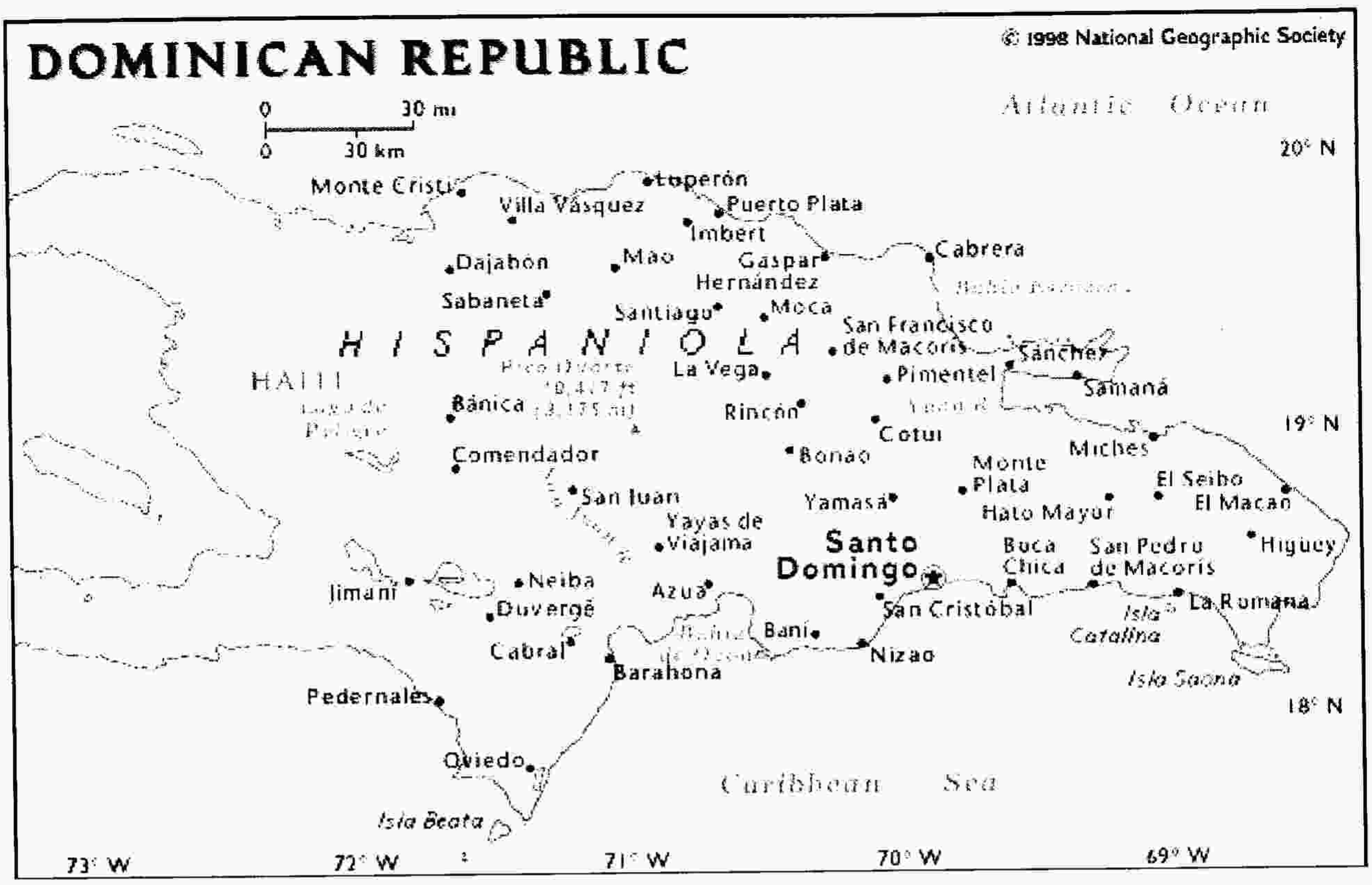
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**Breaking the rules: the impact of transnational migration on religion, music and occupation in the Dominican Republic**

**Hannah E. Gill**

## ABSTRACT

'Breaking the rules: the impact of transnational migration on religion, music and occupation in the Dominican Republic' is an exploration of how processes of transnational migration have changed the way that mainstream Dominican society perceives marginalized groups and their cultural practices. The thesis focuses on a community of rural poor descended from slaves known as Monte Cruz, located outside of the city of Baní on the south-central coast of the Dominican Republic. People from this area have migrated to Boston and other northeastern U.S. cities in the past three decades. Migrants have revitalized their homeland religion of Dominican Vodú as a strategy for overcoming the challenges and risks of travelling, living and working in the U.S. The transnational context in which these traditions are carried out has given rise to the de-stigmatization of expressive cultural practices of music and religion, so that Vodú has become more visible and widespread, music genres of religious palo are increasingly played in non-sacred contexts, and the brothel music of bachata has become popular in mainstream elite circles. Transnational migration creates transformations in other spheres of home society that are changing traditional hierarchies of class, race and morality. The thesis explores the process of 'shifting latitude', a form of social mobility that is eroding and re-constituting social hierarchies in home communities.




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## Introduction

> When our audiences in New York—mostly Dominicans who have not been to their towns or their country for a long time—see their music performed live, they go crazy, hugging and kissing each other, telling you they love you. I have a lot of songs but if they ask for the *palos*, I *have* to sing them. Often I will be singing and people will be *montado*, that is, possessed by the spirit, which enters the body and then they fall on the floor. This has happened a lot in Boston and in New York. This is a cultural thing, these are religious rituals. Sometimes I am at a private concert where there are lots of *gente rica* and *gente de la clase alta* [rich and upper class people], and the spirit enters their body and they fall, too! It's because this is a music that people feel inside of them . . . . This is the music of our culture.
>
> (Kinito Mendez, Interview, February 2003)

When the well-known Dominican merengue singer Kinito Mendez incorporated religious *palo* drums into his album *A Palo Limpio* in 2001, he received an overwhelmingly positive response from fans in migrant communities in the U.S. and in his home country of the Dominican Republic. After successful concert tours throughout the U.S., Latin America and Europe, he was awarded with a Grammy and acclaimed in the Dominican Republic by critics who referred to the album as an 'authentic expression of our folklore' (Caceres 2001), a presentation of 'cultural Dominican rural roots' (Núñez Del Risco 2001) and an exposure of semi-occult Dominican roots (Vargas 2001)[1]. This response was notable, considering that the palo drum music used traditionally in Vodú rituals has always been stigmatized in the Dominican Republic because of its 'African origins'; only fifteen years before, former President Joaquín Balaguer had published a book describing his attempts to eradicate the religion (Ibid.:1983). Also noteworthy were the changes in contexts of palo: the music had shifted from sacred to popular and its audiences from poor *campesinos* (country folk) to wealthy city dwellers.

Mendez' success with palo music calls for explanation as it is emblematic of a confluence of processes relating to Dominican migration, religion, music, and social transformation. This thesis will explain how these processes of transnational migration have changed the way that mainstream Dominican society perceives marginalized groups and their cultural practices. Through the course of the thesis, several important questions will be addressed. How have migrants revitalized their homeland religion of Dominican Vodú as a strategy for overcoming the

challenges of travelling, living and working in the U.S.? How has the transnational context in which these traditions are carried out given rise to the de-stigmatization of expressive cultural practices of music and religion? How do these transformations have potentially wide reaching impacts in other spheres of society?

To answer these questions, we focus our attention on a historically marginalized slave community known as Monte Cruz[2], located outside of the city of Baní (pop. 56,300)[3] on the south-central coast of the Dominican Republic. Throughout this community and region, emigration is the goal of thousands. Walking through Baní, the hub of surrounding agricultural communities, one is reminded of the many trans-Atlantic migrations that began to shape this society five hundred years ago; a 'human tide' that scholars have referred to as 'the most massive geographic and acculturational phenomena in world history' (Mintz 1996:294). Plaques commemorating early colonial founders are prominent next to tourist shops selling 'artifacts' of the long gone indigenous Taino people, while the drums in music playing from loudspeakers are a testimony to the African slaves who cut sugar cane in the surrounding fields.

In the same streets of Baní where houses bear the family crests of the first Spanish settlers, there is evidence of a more recent era of migration to the U.S., a fifty-year phenomenon that involves a quarter of the population of the Dominican Republic annually. *Orange* mobile phone stores advertise transcontinental connections with loved ones and travel agencies display the latest deals on flights to New York City in shop windows. Ignoring the hot climate, women wear tight jeans from Los Angeles brought back by migrant relatives and school children run down the *avenidas* with English books stuffed in their backpacks. In Baní, emigrants have remitted money and invested in the development of their hometown, and its resources contrast greatly with the more marginalized rural settlements on Baní's periphery. Peripheral communities like Monte Cruz—places where stigmatized social practices like palo music and Vodú originate—have taken advantage of Banilejo migrant networks and have started to follow the migration trend in the last twenty years to the U.S. This fact is evident as one leaves the city limits and enters these marginal communities, observing the occasional corrugated metal roof

bought with migrant remittances standing out conspicuously next to the palm thatches of its neighbours.

In this region and in the rest of this island country, few Dominicans (themselves the products of centuries of population movement) are unaffected by the most recent mass dispersal of people from a hierarchy of regional and socio-economic backgrounds in the Dominican Republic. While Dominicans are scattered around the globe from Spain to Venezuela, a majority of emigrants—nearly one million—live in the U.S. today, concentrated in the northeastern cities of New York and Boston[4]. These numbers make up more than ten percent of the total population on the island, estimated around nine million[5]. According to the 2000 Census, over thirty-four thousand people of Dominican origin make the Boston area the second largest concentration of Dominican migrants after New York City. While most migrants in Boston come from the town of Baní, growing numbers of migrants from significantly poorer communities like Monte Cruz have begun to settle and work in Boston, taking advantage of the networks established by earlier Banilejo migrants.

The Dominican presence is particularly strong in a neighbourhood of Boston called Jamaica Plain, where shops display Dominican flags and license plates, stores read 'Baní' or 'Peravia' (the name of the province), and *colmados* carry every variety of Caribbean fruit and vegetable for cheap prices. Daily calls from Boston to the Dominican Republic are so frequent here that competition between phone card companies is fierce; as of August 2003 the average ten-dollar (£5) phone card would give someone a three-hour conversation. In this part of the city a typical block has many Dominican remittance businesses, restaurants in which you can find *chimis* (pork sandwiches), *batidas* (fruit milkshakes), and *tostones* (fried green plantains) and many more *colmados,* the ubiquitous corner store of Dominican society. Many travel agencies offer services that deliver clients from their doors in Boston to their door in the Dominican Republic.

*A Transnational Framework*

Montecruzeños and other Dominican migrants in Boston take advantage of globalized communication and transportation technologies to maintain constant contact with home communities over national borders, reinforce home religious and nationalistic ties, and send remittances to island kin. Many migrants from Baní even have dual nationality. Despite the frequent arrivals and departures of family members and neighbours from 'home' who may only stay temporarily to earn money and reunite with relatives, Dominican communities are well established and swiftly growing in the U.S. Strong migrant networks both draw newcomers and facilitate return to the homeland in a cycle of people, goods, dollars, cultural practices and knowledge.

In response to this growing mobility and connectedness of Dominicans and other migrant groups worldwide, social theorists in the last two decades have constructed new models for conceptualising migration-driven social change that replace traditional assimilationist, push-pull migration theory (Brettell 2000). Transnationalism is a theoretical framework increasingly applied to migrant societies that are no longer located in one geographical place, but rather, in a 'social field' of many contexts sown with cross-border relationships (DeWind et al 2004, Glick Schiller & Levitt forthcoming). These relationships can be effectively analyzed with multi-site fieldwork methods pioneered by migration scholars in the 1970s (Watson 1977:2). Transnational models challenge traditional anthropological notions of 'culture', nation-states, family, and citizenship (Tomlinson 1999), but at the same time acknowledge that migrant activities can also reinforce national identifications (Glick Schiller & Levitt forthcoming). Like diasporas of old, many contemporary migrant groups retain political, linguistic, and economic ties, as well as socio-cultural traditions of the homeland. Today, however, they are able to maintain these connections more effectively and intensely through global communication and transportation technologies. Moreover, these forms of connection facilitate migration-driven social changes that are carried back and incorporated into home societies.

Researchers find it conceptually clearer to delineate their study in terms of a political, socio-cultural or economic focus, combating criticisms that scholars are not rigorous enough in

their application of the term 'transnational' (Portes et al 1999). The present study will address the socio-cultural realm of transnational migration that includes expressive cultural practices of religion and music. However, transnational activities may have a wide-reaching impact in many areas of society that makes a holistic anthropological perspective touching upon interrelated economies, political systems, occupational strategies and linguistic structures (to give a few examples) necessary and helpful. Religious ritual is a useful focus in the present study because it concerns these many everyday aspects of migrant life. Several scholars have researched the socio-cultural aspects of the Dominican transnational experience in the U.S. (Levitt 2001, Pessar 1995, Sørenson 1997, Torres Saillant & Hernandez 1998, Grasmuck & Pessar 1991). Levitt's ethnography on Dominican migrants in Boston specifically addresses the forms of contact that migrants have with families at home and how these 'social remittances' have cumulative effects that create social change in home societies.

*Social hierarchies*

Banilejo society has traditionally been composed of a hierarchy of class levels, with upper classes consisting of the lighter-skinned descendants of colonial Spanish and a middle class composed of rural and urban petty bourgeoisie, clerks, managers, professionals, sales and outreach workers in the state and private institutions, independent professionals, and university students' (Bray 1984:218). Underclasses consist of the descendants of slaves in communities such as Monte Cruz with little or no education, employment, or land. Their social practices, geographical location, skin colour, and cultural products have fallen into these hierarchies, so that Vodú religion, palo, bachata music and the geographical space of the *campo* have always been markers of lower social strata. While scholars like Pessar and Levitt have emphasized the diverse socio-economic background of Dominican migrant communities in the U.S. (Pessar 1995:4, Levitt 2001:47), a large body of research has also found that migrants more frequently come from 'middle-income' backgrounds with some higher education rather than from the poorest sectors (Georges 1991:46, Ugalde, Bean & Cardenas 1979, Bray 1987). Studies have also indicated that migration is dependent on amassing substantial resources for the trip, which is often achieved by

moving from a rural to urban area in the Dominican Republic first (Gonzalez 1976, Hendricks 1974). Pessar emphasizes the difficulties of non-professionals convincing consulate officials to grant them visas because of their status as unskilled labourers (1995:11). Georges writes that the migrant stream to the U.S., although diverse, 'is under-representing the least skilled and poorest' (1991:46). A 1986 survey of migrants waiting in line for visas at the U.S. embassy in Santo Domingo found that most earned 'middle-level' incomes and were part of the urban working class (Evertsz & Ramírez 1986).

These findings partly reflect the fact that migration policies of the U.S. nation state keep out those with the fewest resources who might have to rely on public welfare funds. For this reason most individuals from the poorest sectors of society find it easier to go to Spain or Latin America rather than the U.S.[6]. However, there are also growing communities of migrants from underclass backgrounds that have been overlooked. As Dominican population movements have matured and networks have made it easier to get to the U.S. with fewer resources, Dominicans from communities like Monte Cruz with little or no education, farmable land or job prospects have begun to migrate. A survey conducted at a consular office would not have reflected the existence of these migrants because they often skip formal channels of migration such as applying for visas. Largely undocumented, they are absent from census data and purposely keep a low profile. The present study contributes to the field of Dominican migration studies by presenting the less visible perspectives and experiences of Dominicans from poor backgrounds living in the U.S., and thus contributes to a field of study that has focussed primarily on a different group. While Montecruzeños may not represent the majority of Dominican migrants in the U.S., the thesis argues that the transnational experiences of even a minority within a minority have the potential to create social transformation in home communities.

*Transnational connections and migrant strategy*

In Boston and in other northeastern U.S. cities, differing socio-economic backgrounds and cultural practices in origin communities have played a major role in shaping migrant experiences and settlement patterns. These processes call for explanation. Reflecting colonial

settlement patterns of Spanish elites in the cities segregated from slave communities on the periphery, contemporary cultural practices (not just income and educational level) contrast greatly between urban centres like Baní and outlying villages like Monte Cruz. Although Dominicans have largely mixed as a population since colonial times, Monte Cruz and other rural areas in the Dominican Republic still exhibit strong linguistic, musical and religious connections to West Africa. In terms of expressive cultural forms, Vodú, a religion syncretized of Catholic and West African elements, takes on a greater importance than the official Catholicism, while bachata music (a rural lower class genre) has become more popular than the mainstream merengue. Linguistic patterns are also distinctive; there are far more words of West African origin in rural areas than in the urban centres.

These differences have historically been valued negatively and placed into class and other social hierarchies. Dominican Vodú practitioners have endured a great deal of persecution by the nation state, the Catholic Church and much of the traditional middle and upper class society in the past four hundred years. Until recent times, people of African descent in rural areas have had the fewest resources and the lowest socio-economic position in Dominican society due in part to anti-African and Haitian prejudices that have developed throughout a history of conflict with Haiti. People with dark skin like Montecruzeños are linked to Haitians, 'the people of Africa', because of their religious practices of Vodú, which resemble Haitian *voudoun*. They have largely been excluded from legal migration routes, as travel and work visas are restricted to those who own a business, property, are married and have a sizeable amount of money in the bank. Nevertheless, they have created strategies for getting to the U.S. successfully, even though they rarely appear in U.S. census counts and official records, which show middle and upper classes migrating to the US. These migrants blend in with established Dominican communities and are easily hidden in mazes of high-rise city housing, back kitchens of restaurants and in the night shifts of cleaning office buildings in places like downtown Boston. With so many disadvantages, how do they adopt strategies to live in the most expensive cities in the U.S. (where the most jobs are located), supporting their families back home at the same time?

Moreover, how do migrants negotiate the risk, unpredictability and danger of their migration strategies? Migrants and their families constantly worry and tell stories of robbings, assaults or deaths while crossing the Mexican border, one entry point for Dominican migrants. Songs commemorate the many who have drowned in *yolas*, small boats that illegally transport hundreds of migrants at a time across the 70-mile Mona Passage to Puerto Rico. Life in the destination city presents challenges and hardships of finding work and affordable housing without documentation, avoiding the police, and learning how to speak English. And while kin networks help newcomers to overcome these disadvantages, they are not always positive structures in the lives of migrants. As a result of historical inequalities, little education, and desperate circumstances, many Montecruzeños become involved with marginalized occupational strategies as well. Thousands have been arrested, incarcerated, and then deported from the U.S. for involvement with drugs, thefts, or illegal immigration in the past two decades. The community of Monte Cruz has been especially hard hit; every household in the present study has a family member who has died in a violence-related death abroad or has been incarcerated in the U.S. for drug involvement[7]. These problems reach home communities in the Dominican Republic: violence, theft and homicides in the Baní area have also increased to the point that all businesses and many residences have handguns. An investigation into the negative side of global networks responds to the question of Slocum and Thomas: 'why have anthropologists not paid more specific attention to . . . the intensification of drug-related and other forms of inter-personal violence that clearly swell in and around globalizing processes' (2003:553)? A consideration of drug-related violence is crucial to the present study if only because this context shapes cultural products (such as music) and social practices (such as religious rituals). This context is also important because the underground economy has been sustained through transnational migration practices and vice versa. The present study will show how the many Montecruzeños exposed to drugs and criminal activity are like spiders caught in their own webs: the threads of the networks that sustain can also entrap.

At home and abroad, Montecruzeños cope with the challenges of migration through their homeland religion of Dominican Vodú. Migrants have responded to violence, incarcerations, and

deportations of family members not only through practical means but also by petitioning for spiritual intervention from *La 21 División*, the pantheon of protective saints central to Dominican Vodú whose powers make migration possible in the first place. Vodú rituals known as *fiestas de palos* traditionally performed in the community for divination or curative reasons now facilitate many stages in the migration process, from the acquisition of the material passport to the safe arrival at the destination. The increase in the practice of Vodú has been accompanied by many other social changes: a revivalism of *música de palos*, which is changing from a sacred to a popular music, as well as increased economic growth in the industry of religious paraphernalia shops called *botánicas*. While many strategies of migrants—not just religious ones-- make survival and prosperity abroad possible, maintaining a strong relationship with Vodú spirits is an important way to ensure success in life, from an emic perspective. How have migrants creatively interpreted 'channels', so that telecommunication and spiritual networks are used simultaneously? How has the selective use of 'migrant saints' contributed to the conception of Vodú as a cosmology of migration? These questions call for explanations that synthesize a number of different theoretical strains in the anthropology of migration, religion and music.

*Religion and Transnationalism*

As a life-guiding cosmology, religious practices of Dominican Vodú govern all aspects of the lives of its practitioners. Rituals are reserved not only for crises or major events, but for living everyday lives. Religious practices dictate what people wear, what they eat, what music they listen to, how they deal with conflict, and how they cross national borders. If the wide-reaching importance of Vodú could be boiled down to one statement by a thirty-six year old year old Montecruzeño man in Boston, it would be: 'I wouldn't have been able to get to Nueva York, find a job, get my papers or get married without San Miguel'. From an emic perspective, religion—as an expressive cultural medium—offers important insight into the migration experience. 'Religion . . . is salient in many migrants' day-to-day lives and exercises significant influence over the ways in which migrants are incorporated into host societies and stay attached to their homelands. Yet, until recently, most studies ignored the role of religion in transnational migration' (DeWind et al

2003). Much of the ethnography of Dominicans in the U.S. has little mention of Vodú or religious musical practices because most informants originated in predominately middle income backgrounds rather than in poor rural communities of slave origin like Monte Cruz. While Pessar, Levitt and Duany refer briefly to 'folk rituals' or 'popular folk catholicism' and Levitt has written in depth on Catholicism practiced in migrant communities, they do not give much attention to Vodú practices, which may be less frequently practiced by their informants. By contrast, there is a more substantial body of literature on Haitian Vodú in the U.S. (MacAlister 2002, McCarthy Brown 1991) and some work on Dominican migrants in Spain with similar religious and socio-economic backgrounds (Sanchez 2003) that provides relevant parallels to the present study.

Religion can be used as a barometer of social transformation in a community of transnational migrants. From simple documentation of what people pray about to more complex mapping out of changes in the content and context of ritual practices, we can gauge how migration has affected a community. Exploring the changes in a cosmology—the creation of new rituals, the use of new materials, and changing prominence of spirit personalities, for example—exposes the shifting priorities and values of a community and even provides insights into why people migrate. The relationship between religion and home social hierarchies is an important consideration in the present study and has been explored by Tambiah, who emphasizes that ritual reflects social hierarchies and social class relations are integral to cosmology in Southeast Asia (1985:121). He refers specifically to how the resources expended on rituals reflect the social position of the practitioners. In the context of migration, we can measure how traditional social hierarchies have eroded by investigating how Vodú rituals and music have gained popularity among a greater diversity of the population, increased in visibility, and led to new occupational niches. These changes affect the perception of class hierarchies, racial attitudes and morality—all part of the social climate of Baní and Monte Cruz.

Religion reflects the risks inherent in migrant lifestyles but also has a more instrumental role in contributing to those changes. Rituals give migrants the agency to combat those risks and achieve their goals of migrating and improving their lives. In this way, the thesis will contribute

to an understanding of religion as a vehicle of social agency, or as Lambek has expressed as an impingement on the real time of social life (1998:440). In other words, religion can be interpreted as a social activity that, despite having supernatural orientations, can nevertheless bring much to bear on everyday life. Referring to spirit possession and agency, Lambek writes, '. . .out of passion stems a course of action' (Ibid.: 441).

In the case of Montecruzeño migrants, we will explore how far this agency goes and for what purposes it is employed. Montecruzeño migration—made possible by spiritual assistance—is carried out to resist and reverse marginality to some extent by putting meat on the table, paying for medicines, and moving to a nicer part of town. The instrumental qualities of Vodú religion emerge more on a personal rather than collective level of social protest. But in a transnational context of continually circulating people, goods and communications, the change-inducing actions of individuals have aggregate effects that shift mainstream perceptions of a stigmatized religion. In this way, transnational religious activity is an indirect mode of changing mainstream perceptions of Vodú, *música de palos*, and extra-legal occupational strategies—an ancillary benefit, or what Vertovec refers to as a 'knock-on effect' of transnationalism (2003).

*Organization of thesis*

Rather than discuss sending and receiving contexts separately in different chapters, the organization of the thesis follows a 'transnational' orientation: chapters relate to the whole by incorporating both contexts in the Dominican Republic and in the U.S., interrogating theory along the way. As music is an important form of cultural expression in the Dominican Republic and there is a wealth of music concerning the themes of chapters, each chapter will open with the lyrics of a palo or a bachata song. The thesis begins with an emphasis on the contexts of emigration, focussing on the national level with colonial history (necessary for an understanding of contemporary migration), followed by a look at local factors influencing migration from the community of Monte Cruz. Following the migration trajectory, the thesis then considers how migrants negotiate the difficult journey to the U.S., shifting the discourse to one of immigration and receiving contexts. At this point we will consider the ways that migrants use religion and

music to mediate the challenges of settlement in the U.S. Finally, the thesis will travel back 'home' again, analyzing how migration has transformed the community of Monte Cruz.

Chapter One gives a historical overview of the migrant origins of Dominicans from the rural community of Monte Cruz in order to place contemporary migration in the context of past population movements of Europeans and Africans to the Caribbean. What structural (socio-economic and political) and historical factors have shaped Dominican migration to Boston? This chapter addresses past cultural syncretizations of religious and musical traditions from West Africa, Spain and indigenous America and their presence in the community of Monte Cruz. The history of slavery and Haitian-Dominican relations is crucial for an understanding of current racial beliefs as well as settlement patterns and demography of the research communities. While the first part of chapter one leads us from colonization up to the more recent era of the Trujillo dictatorship, the second part deals with contemporary post-Trujillo migration to the U.S. beginning in 1961. The second part identifies causes of internal and external population movement among different socio-economic groups in a variety of geographical areas. Finally, the chapter examines the relevance of transnationalism to the present study by reviewing past scholarship in the field.

Chapter Two is largely ethnographic, explaining subsistence strategies, political structures, kinship and residence patterns in the community of Monte Cruz. This information is important for an understanding of how the community has become dependent on migration, and will provide a base for later discussion on how migration has transformed traditional life of the community.

Chapter Three explores the occupational and travel strategies of migrants in detail. Lacking resources, Montecruzeños have faced considerable disadvantages compared to other Dominican migrant groups in their attempts to migrate to the U.S. and other countries. Because legal migration favours the middle classes, Montecruzeños have had to invent creative strategies for getting to the U.S. that often break and re-shape the rules. This chapter will look at these strategies for travelling to the U.S., finding employment and surviving in expensive northeastern cities.

Chapter Four examines how migrants have revitalized homeland social practices and religious beliefs to cope with the risks and dangers of occupational and travel strategies. This chapter analyzes the origins and cosmology of Dominican Vodú in order to explain how religion plays such a large role in migrant methods of reaching the U.S. Dominican Vodú has become instrumental in this process of risk-management by simultaneously using spiritual and global telecommunication 'channels' to the homeland.

Chapter Five analyzes similar shifts in musical contexts, namely, the popularization of the religious genre of palo drums and the mainstreaming of rural bachata music. In a transnational context of media/technology globalization and increased resources, migrant actors transform Vodú and the accompanying music of palo drums, so that a once-secretive religion is becoming public, while a once-sacred music is becoming popularized. Changed conceptions of music, art, religion and occupation have been transferred back home and 'reinserted' into Dominican society via global communication networks and physical return.

Chapter Six examines how the de-stigmatization of a marginalized community affects morality, race, class and gender hierarchies in home communities of Monte Cruz and Baní. This chapter evaluates the extent to which migration has affected the community of Monte Cruz and explores the concept of *latitude*, a form of social mobility enabled by migration.

*Methodology: Multi-site ethnography*

Traditional anthropological methods have incorporated qualitative research over an extended period of time, typically in one geographical location. In his 1974 study of migrants in Great Britain, James Watson found that a multi-site approach to anthropological fieldwork was crucial for studying mobile populations: '. . . it is impossible to gain a true picture of immigration as a process without investigating the people and their families on both sides' (Ibid.:3). Focussing on a society of emigrants as well as the society of immigrants provides an alternative to discourses of assimilation and integration, and this comparative understanding is difficult without incorporating a number of different locations into research. 'One country's immigration is another country's emigration. The two are indissociable aspects of a single reality, and one cannot be

explained without reference to another' (Sayad 2004:1). When groups make use of global communication, media networks, and 'merging production and reception sites', multi-site research also becomes an important method (Marcus 1995:103).

The methodology for the present study also incorporated research at more than one site in the U.S. and in the Dominican Republic, and using this framework I was able to follow informants over national borders. Fieldwork was carried out over a twenty-one month period beginning with nine months in Boston, Massachusetts, in a community of migrants from Monte Cruz (in south central Dominican Republic). When migrant informants returned to Monte Cruz, I followed them and stayed with their families 'at home' for six months. For the final six-month segment of field research I returned to Boston to continue fieldwork and lived in Jamaica Plain, Boston, working as a Spanish language computer teacher. Participant observation, formal and informal interviews, informal household surveys, archival and internet research were all employed in the study.

*Defining fieldsites*

Defining the research community presented challenges, for borders become problematized for migrant groups, especially Dominicans, who live in a number of communities in the U.S. and the Dominican Republic. While we can easily speak of a 'community' at home based on geographical, kinship and socio-economic commonalities, it becomes more complicated when including migrants in this 'community' abroad. Migrants have created their own lives abroad but are still an important and everyday part of Monte Cruz even if not physically present because they make and influence decisions in their families and community at 'home' on a small and large scale. They should justifiably be included in the idea of 'community'. But are the hundreds of Montecruzeños who have left home and settled temporarily or permanently in Boston, part of a separate 'community' abroad at the same time? To some extent, trying to identify a 'community' of Monte Cruz in Boston is forcing coherency on widely scattered group. Empirical proof of the lack of a Monte Cruz 'community' was evident early on when I could not 'find' a group that I knew had a significant presence in Boston. This was partly because there is

no public social centre for Montecruzeños *per se*, but also because people do not always identify themselves as belonging to Monte Cruz. Lacking geographical concentration, Montecruzeños in Boston are dispersed throughout the city; many informants lived in South Boston, a neighbourhood several miles away from Jamaica Plain.

Moreover, they are part of many different and changing 'communities' and identify with and participate to varying degree in them. For example, one could say that Montecruzeños are part of the Dominican 'community' of Jamaica Plain that asserts itself in Spanish newspapers, radio stations, prominent display of Dominican flags, and businesses and license plates named after home places. However, daily interactions with one's neighbours also include people from many different geographic and socio-economic backgrounds such as Puerto Ricans, other Latin Americans and a growing student population seeking cheaper renting alternatives to Cambridge or the Fenway neighbourhoods. Montecruzeños may also perceive of themselves at times as part of a larger 'community' of *hispanos* or Spanish speakers, especially during election times when politicians push the image of a collective Latino identity. Many other levels of identification emerge that have an influence on how people talk about 'community': a 'Dominican' identity is used to emphasize difference from Puerto Ricans, while other times people from Monte Cruz may call themselves 'Banilejo' to distinguish themselves from other Dominicans.

If Montecruzeños cohere as a community abroad, it is mainly in performative contexts, intentionally created with substantial effort. People are scattered and must make a conscious effort to come together in different places in the city, whether it be at a palo fiesta or at work in family-owned businesses. 'Performative' is an appropriate word because of its temporal connotations; religious fiestas bring together Montecruzeños in one place more than any other social event for short periods of time before the 'community' disperses into the city. At *fiestas de palos*, people identify with their specific rural origins and call upon the spirits that govern that particular location, such as Santa Elena, patron saint of Monte Cruz. They see relatives and catch up on news, even though they will have already been in continual contact by phone within the city of Boston. Ironically, the more elusive sense of Monte Cruz as a community abroad allows migrants to reinforce their connections with home: in a heterogeneous international context migrants are

liberated from the stereotypes and biases that marginalize them as a visible, intact community at home. Not only are migrants provided with a less judgemental context for activities frowned upon by mainstream society in the Dominican Republic, in Boston they can also disassociate with a particular group or stereotype by subscribing to any number of other groups—as an *hispano*, a Spanish speaker, a Dominican, a Banilejo, or even as a person of colour.

For Joanne Passaro (1997), grouping her homeless informants in New York City into a 'community' or unified subculture would have meant imposing a coherence upon her group that did not exist. She resisted those who told her that her choice of New York as a field site was 'too chaotic' to study, inappropriate for an anthropology traditionally concerned with delimiting a field site or a 'community'. She writes, 'unless anthropology can adopt units and strategies of analysis capable of "seeing" and understanding unstable, hybridized, and non-holistic experiences, we will fail at our object of adequate social analysis. . . .' (1997:161). In the same volume, Gupta and Ferguson (1997) advocate fieldwork focussed on shifting locations rather than bounded fields (1997:38). Passaro's experiences point to the difficulty of assembling informants in a large city into a coherent whole, when they could be seen as part of many different groups with varying identifications.

Drawing on these traditions, the present study does not take 'community' for granted and concentrates on the connections between international locations. The scale on which social interactions are analyzed has important implications for how we conceive of Monte Cruz as a 'community' as well as how we craft field research methods. During fieldwork, rather than being restricted to one 'community', I was open to letting migrants guide me to different locations.

While focussing on actors, we must not lose sight of a larger global context. A transnational 'social field' approach addresses the difficulties of pinning 'community' down to one geographical location and acknowledges the complexities of migrant identity. Levitt conceives of Dominicans from the village of Miraflores at home and abroad as part of one 'community' sharing a social field constantly enforced by transnational social networks so that physical presence is not a prerequisite for membership in the community. Cultural practices and social interactions can take place and be maintained across international borders: '. . . migrants are

embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind' (Glick Schiller & Levitt 2004:1). Thinking of the community conceptually (as a social field) rather than geographically (as two separate groups 'here' and 'there') resolves the difficulty in trying to locate a Montecruzeño 'community' in Boston, which is a very slippery concept considering the many different circles in which migrants move. It also highlights the fact that hundreds in the Diaspora are unified by a common, continually enforced sense of Monte Cruz as 'home'.

The ease with which I—and migrants—could switch between the two places made it clear that these sites, while in different countries, were nevertheless part of the same social field constantly maintained by communication and remittances. In Boston, I learned the local variant of Spanish language of my field site in the Dominican Republic, found a place to live and established contacts in Monte Cruz. It was in Boston that I initially saw and learned about the sacred palo drums, the cosmology of Vodú religion, and how to peel yucca nicely so that the *abuelita* (grandmother) would not yell at me when I got to Monte Cruz. When I finally did go to Monte Cruz, my suitcase laden with gifts from relatives in Boston, I was able to skip many steps of the usual anthropological process of getting established in a community that include language acquisition/familiarity of dialect, location of informants and building of relationships with gatekeepers. I already knew the families of informants in Boston because I had seen them in pictures, videos, learned their names, and even talked to several on the telephone. The process of getting to know them had begun long before I set foot in the Dominican Republic.

*Participant Observation*

Long-term fieldwork enabled a high degree of participation and observation of the many different aspects of the lives of migrants and their families in the U.S. and in the Dominican Republic. Initially in Boston, the lack of public Montecruzeño social centres, the urban context and a cold climate made it difficult to find informants and 'break into' the fieldsite. Montecruzeños come together in private residences rather than public places, and religious fiestas are almost always performed in private places inaccessible to an outsider. In Boston, most

interactions take place inside behind closed doors by people who want to maintain a low profile, in the case of undocumented migrants. People have little free time, work long hours and have little time to talk. In the Dominican Republic, on the other hand, people simply follow the sound of music to know where the party is located. A more leisurely sensibility gives the anthropologist long hours of conversation.

To learn about people's lives in Boston I eventually had to work alongside them. Beginning the study in Boston, I lived and worked in Jamaica Plain, taking advantage of opportunities in this very concentrated area of Dominican and Spanish-speaking businesses, schools, churches and residences. Both businesses and the non-profit sector served as entry points into the lives of Montecruzeño families and allowed me to spend more time with informants. I volunteered at a social service agency that provides English language classes to Latino migrants, most of whom were Dominican. As an English tutor I was able to meet and get to know Dominican families and build a base of contacts from these relationships. Another volunteer job positioned me daily with Dominican teenagers in a Latino cultural club in an after-school program. In the business sector, I worked at a Banilejo family's bakery, where extended family members were in various stages of arriving in Boston or returning to the Dominican Republic. While I already spoke Spanish, it was here that I learned Dominican accents and slang. Gatekeepers finally emerged: my workplace was across the street from the largest Dominican music store in the area, and the owner was the organizer for all concerts of Dominican musicians whose international tours went through Boston. With his help, I was able to attend these concerts and interview the musicians who performed there, as well as learn about other types of Dominican music such as *palos*.

A main project goal was to meet and follow an extended family of migrants in their journeys from their homeland to Boston and back again. After eight months, a family of *palo* musicians I had been working with in Boston decided to return to their home community of Monte Cruz in the Dominican Republic temporarily for a funeral. I took this opportunity to observe their homecoming, leaving Boston with them to join their family 'left behind' in Monte Cruz.

*Interviews*

Interviews were necessary for a wide range of perspectives on Banilejo migration, music and crime. In fifteen months, I interviewed over one hundred people in Boston, New York, Baní, Monte Cruz, and Santo Domingo. In the popular music industry I interviewed DJs, radio and television producers, sound mixers, talk show hosts, and *merengue* or *bachata* musicians, including Luís Segura, Monchy y Alexandra, Aventura, Raulín Rodriguez, and Kinito Mendez. In Boston and New York City I interviewed police officers, politicians in Dominican party headquarters of the PLD (*Partido de la Liberación Dominicana*) and PRD (*Partido Revolucionario Dominicano*), *palo* musicians, Montecruzeño business owners, teachers, doctors, social service agency workers, and members of extended families. In Baní I interviewed the regional chief of police, the Secretaría de la Mujer (Secretary of Women's' Rights), directors of battered women's shelters, migrant business owners, *palo* musicians, thirty-two spirit mediums (*servidores*), convicted drug traffickers, Catholic clergy, migrants who have lived in Boston, Dominicans who have been deported from Boston, professional U.S. baseball players, academics and politicians. Most interviews were conducted in Spanish and all translations are mine. Bachata musicians interviewed signed a release form allowing the interview to be published. Because some informants expressed the desire for interviews to be confidential, and I have changed names quoted in the text.

Some interviews were more formal that others, with a pre-arranged appointment, a guideline of questions, and the use of a tape recorder with the informant's consent. Other 'interviews' were conducted more spontaneously, or in locations where it was difficult to use a tape recorder or refer to a guide. Places like backstage during concerts and during religious gatherings were especially difficult for anything other than a very informal interview. Musical recordings were another important aspect of the study; I digitally recorded dozens of *palo* and *bachata* groups during fieldwork and made copies available to musicians. Not only was providing recordings to musicians who never had this opportunity a way to thank them for their invaluable help, from these recordings I was able to transcribe melodies and lyrics, which open each chapter and provide rich illustration for the arguments of the thesis.

*Surveys*

Household surveys were conducted in an informal manner over the course of fieldwork. In Monte Cruz I interviewed over fifty families, taking down information on occupation, consumption habits, estimated income level, music preferences, genealogy, and migration experience. Once I had established a relationship with a family, I then asked if I could talk to them about their relatives living abroad, explaining that I was writing about why people move to the U.S. Many times I also asked if I could tape the conversation, and people agreed almost without exception. As I came to know these families in my neighbourhood, I was able to expand on the information they had initially provided in surveys. While I had initially anticipated a reluctance to speak about family members incarcerated abroad, many people did not hesitate to give me details of arrest, incarcerations, and other sensitive aspects of migrant life once they knew it would be confidential. The willingness to talk on the part of older Montecruzeños 'left behind' who have never been to the U.S. may reflect a desire to be vocal about the negative aspects of migration such as family separation and occasional abandonment, infidelity of spouses, and an influx of what they perceive as aggressive, ostentatious behaviour associated with crime. These informants were typically happy to talk about crime and violence openly and critically. Younger informants, on the other hand, have their sights set on migrating and were careful to distance themselves from conversation of crime and drugs.

Because nearly all community members have a television and cablevision (even if they do not have indoor plumbing), documenting media consumption was an important part of research methods. I watched and kept a journal of the local Monte Cruz news show every day at lunch, which was often the only form of mass media that reported crime, violence or death in the community. I regularly collected articles from local publications such as the monthly provincial newspaper *El Peraviano* as well as the national newpapers, *Listín Diario*, *Hoy* and *Diario Libre.* I also conducted archival research at the Baní town library, which has oral histories and books written by local authors that do not circulate widely elsewhere. All information regarding crime

and deportations included in this project is public knowledge available from U.S. census, state prison, U.S. and Dominican embassy and Boston police reports.

*Reflections*

| | |
|---|---|
| ¡Aquí en Baní, Que cosas rara'! | Here in Baní, what strange things happen! |
| ¡Bailando palos con una Americana! | We are dancing palos with an American! |

These improvised lyrics were sung to the tune of a religious song during a palo fiesta I attended in Monte Cruz. At the time I had completed over a year of fieldwork, established close relationships with the people and band members present, and generally felt a member of the community until I looked into a mirror. Yet their joking lyrics made me realize I was far from being the camouflaged mossy stone that Malinowski sought to be during his fieldwork. The position from where I carried out these methods of participant observation, interviews, and surveys, is worth reflection and most certainly influenced the quality and nature of my research. As a white American female, the most significant disadvantage I initially faced was the stereotype of a 'party-goer', established by the constant flow of thousands of tourists from Europe and the U.S. While I lived in a village outside a town with virtually no tourist travel, people still expected me, like many tourists, to drink alcohol in large quantities and engage in promiscuous behaviour, which initially made it impossible to be independent or attend a social event alone without a great deal of attention. Painfully aware of the damaging effect of these stereotypes, I refrained from drinking alcohol and learned to interview men in the company of their sisters, mothers, or colleagues. The long-term duration of fieldwork was crucial to avoiding people's application of this stereotype to me, and after a couple months people still regarded me as the American, but 'not the typical American'.

When I first arrived, I was faced with the decision of *where* to position myself in terms of my living situation. Conversations about where I would live arose over my first meetings in Baní and Monte Cruz when I gave packages and news to the families of migrant informants in Boston. I was generously offered many places to stay as well as a barrage of advice on where to live. This

'advice' however, took the form of dire warnings and extreme concern; I was frequently told I was a walking duck asking to be robbed, raped, or worse. I was warned by many Banílejo families in the 'urban' town environment not to live in Monte Cruz; most told me it was 'full of *tigres*, thieves, drug addicts and would never have electricity.' But when I went to Monte Cruz, family members implored me not to live in the city, which was 'full of *tigres*, thieves, drug addicts and no shady trees.' All agreed on one point: I should live with a family, for my own safety.

My choice of living in Monte Cruz with the family of informants in Boston significantly affected research. Perhaps my initial disbelief towards the many warnings was a result of the atmosphere around me—a sunny village of people dancing to maniacally happy music far into the night. Nevertheless, underlying the gay atmosphere was a community of many secrets and contentions. Understanding a community's history means being aware of its unspoken and concealed past, which was crucial in my case because generations of alliances and disputes had framed the rules that would govern how I could interact with community members. Simply by choosing to live with a particular household I had inadvertently made my alliance, limiting whom I could visit and where I could go. I found this out early when I went to interview a prominent musician and was told she could not speak because of 'an attack of the nerves' that came and went periodically. Over the next few weeks, her 'nerves' always seemed to attack when I came to visit. I later discovered that the woman had been part of a palo group with musicians in the family I lived with, but had split up with them years before on bad terms. This information, concealed from me in Monte Cruz, surfaced in Boston, where an informant later told me, 'Of course she's not going to talk to you, you are with Lenia's people'.

Accounts of 'finding out the hard way' that information has been purposefully concealed from the anthropologist have been humorous parts of much ethnography, including Napoleon Chagnon's *The Fierce People* (1983) and Daniel Bradburd's *Being There, the Necessity of Fieldwork* (1998). According to Chagnon, informants had given him false names in their genealogies, while Bradburd's household census had to be redone because people lied about their income. Because the researcher has few checks on validity, and may not know if the informant is

telling the truth, qualitative methods such as long-term fieldwork educate the researcher and broaden understandings in other ways (Bradburd 1998).

Changing sites was one way of checking validity. I became aware of the truth of the 'nerves' and many other stories when I changed sites, distance providing a buffer between people and unpleasant events and making them easier to talk about. This loosening of social restrictions on information exchange (such as rules about keeping secrets) that often occurred when people changed international contexts mirrored what was happening with other social practices of music and religion; things abroad lost their 'secret', 'unpleasant' or 'shameful' connotations because they were out of the context that originally cast them in a negative light. I also found that leaving the field, normally a time of wrapping up projects, fussing over travel plans and sad goodbyes, is also an important time for observation and discoveries. Upon leaving, everyone felt more inclined to tell me the 'real' stories of the neighbourhood, assuming I would be safer with this knowledge far away.

Living with a family may have been a way of declaring allegiances, but was preferable in many ways to living alone. I inadvertently learned that any other living arrangement—namely living alone or with 'strangers'--would have been highly inappropriate for a young woman. Community members had very ambiguous, distrustful feelings for female American Peace Corps volunteers in neighbouring villages because they lived alone, rode bicycles and drank beer at the *colmados*; all things that a proper young Dominican woman should not do with any regularity. Granted, they were not Dominican, but their credibility and leadership as role models and teachers were compromised by their behaviour.

Living so close to informants had advantages. I found that my fieldwork experience had much in common with Lila Abu-Lughod's fieldwork in Libya (1986) and other women anthropologists given the privilege of intimate contact with informants. As part of a household of people I was able to witness much of what would have been hidden from my view otherwise. As events occurred in the community and news 'broke', I observed spontaneous reactions and unreflexive social interactions in my household. Living with other women established close friendships, and female family members went to great lengths to make me look and act like a

*Dominicana*, dying my hair, shaving my eyebrows, sewing me tight clothes with inside pockets to hide my money from *tigres* (hoodlums), and teaching me the appropriate phrases for fending off unwanted males. I participated in these activities not so much because I thought I could 'pass' as one of them, but because they are the primary ways that women socialize and spend time together. The value of appearances, however, was profoundly important and will be explored later. While being different in so many other ways, being a woman was a crucial point of commonality around which most of my relationships seemed to be based.

My day-to-day observations of how people live and react to random happenings or events were invaluable. While many of the days did not bring ground-shattering discoveries, they were crucial to setting the scene for that one day when I did stumble across thesis-changing discovery—the music of *palos* in migration rituals relating to 'extra-legal' activities abroad. As Pieke notes, serendipitous discovery comes about only after intensive linguistic, ethnographic, and regional preparation, as well as round-the-clock participant observation and patient listening (2000:143-144). I would add that strategically placing oneself under someone else's responsibility increases the likelihood of serendipitous events and speeds up the process of 'discovery'. The more quickly the newcomer is socialized to the homestead, the less worry for all. I was under the family's 'responsibility', and their daily instructions and chastisements about proper behaviour clued me in to the issues of real importance in the community. They warned me not to be too nosey in certain situations because I would bring danger to myself and their family. As a female subordinate to older matriarchal heads, I was restricted by the social rules regarding women, which meant that I could not go anywhere alone or speak to people I did not know. There was a great fear on the part of the older women of the household that I would bring 'danger' back to the compound in the form of one of the *tigres* I had interviewed. These 'warnings' were the first major discoveries of what lay below the surface in Baní-Boston migration, and the strict rules of conduct I was expected to adhere to, though extremely restrictive at times, were in the end what gave me most insight.

While being cast as a potential victim of any number of horrendous crimes was unrealistic and therefore frustrating, it revealed the ways in which a climate of fear and even paranoia is

constantly generated to enforce social restrictions on women. Moreover, it elucidated how the community has internalized the increasing violence that migration has exacerbated over the past several years. Finally, I was probably a lot safer in the end, even though I followed the rules out of respect for the family I lived with rather than because I thought they were necessary.

Maintaining a delicate balance between work, which broke a lot of rules because it was necessary to interview so many 'strangers', and home life was initially very difficult. Eventually I learned ways of circumventing these restrictions without compromising my fieldwork and trust of my household. I took advantage of my outsider position to do certain things like travel to the capital city alone, which was generally frowned upon but allowed because I emphasized my 'city experience'. I had also lived in Boston and New York City, which many imagined to be a chaotic, crime-ridden place. In order to not be seen alone, I learned to take a child along with me to interviews, who played nearby or was given food while I conducted interviews, much like Elenore Smith Bowen did when conducting fieldwork in Nigeria (1964).

I was constantly surrounded by women of all ages and in intimate settings, which gave me opportunity to observe what women consciously told me in answer to my questions as well as how they unreflexively reacted to events and conversations. By living in a family, the setting was not staged like the intrinsic structure of the interviews. The more valuable data came out of conversations between women talking about men, in which I was just as much a part of the dialogue as anyone else. The discussion of perceptions of sexually transmitted disease, monogamy and migration discussed in the following chapters benefits from my intimate exposure to women's conversation but is clearly lacking, though not devoid of, men's perspectives 'untainted' by female presence. On the other hand, even though I had comparatively less access to men's worlds, I found that men were more willing to talk about their migration experiences and sensitive issues dealing with crime and illegality. Women *servidores* (spirit mediums) were very guarded about sharing their *recetas* (magical preparations) and telling me about the types of problems their clients approached them with, while men were more open and trusting of me. Many men assumed that I wanted to become a Vodú spirit medium myself (why else would I be asking about recipes) and asked if I was interested in setting up a transnational Vodú practice in

which I would be the Boston agent. In a society where men control the public domain and frequently assert their power over women, perhaps as a woman I did not seem particularly threatening. In this way my position vis-à-vis men was advantageous.

Considering the stigma attached to Vodú, I had anticipated having difficulty in getting past pre-formulated, doctrinaire responses to my questions regarding cosmology and religion. Would people I talked to try to veil their religious practices in the Catholic guise used for centuries? To my pleasant surprise, many Montecruzenos seemed to be unhesitatingly frank about their religious practices. This was even more the case among Haitians I spoke to. They were proud of their altars, invited me in to see them, and enthusiastically explained the potency of the *luás* and the *petros*, the most notorious and poorly understood spirits of Dominican Vodú, equated with the devil by Catholics and hidden under the table in many Banilejo altars. By contrast, those who were more defensive about Vodú were the spirit mediums I interviewed in Baní, who had a greater awareness of what was mainstream and how it excluded their beliefs. In general, the farther I moved from town, the easier it was to be part of Vodú celebrations and get access to spirit mediums and clients.

My decision to participate fully in the Vodú fiestas also facilitated my access to 'sacred' knowledge. I learned the songs, the dances and the prayers and took advantage of opportunities to speak to the *misterios* through the spirit mediums (they often sought me out). When I reported that I had gotten 'chill bumps' during one fiesta (when the drummers began to play), this was supposedly the sign that I had the potential to become possessed myself, and I was told it was just a matter of time. As a human, I was under the same cosmic powers as everyone else, and it did not matter that I was an outsider in this sense.

*Ethics*

As the American Anthropological Association's ethical guidelines suggest, a researcher should make contributions to her study community, as a way of 'giving back': 'Fair return should be given them [informants] for all services'[8]. This aspect of field research is crucial to the integrity of anthropology as a professional discipline. Fortunately, I have a skill that many

Dominicans seek: the knowledge of English. In the U.S., Dominicans suffer from their lack of English language; one only has to listen to some of the more popular *merengues* to hear about mishaps that result from not being able to communicate in 'Nueva York'. In the Dominican Republic, classified job ads frequently seek English speakers. Throughout my twenty-one months of fieldwork, I taught and tutored English to Dominican migrants who approached me with an interest in learning. For my English class in Jamaica Plain, I compiled essays and poems from students for a publication on migrant perspectives, printed by a grant through the Hyde Square Task Force social service agency (75 copies of the booklet were printed for the students and the community). In Baní, I tutored English several times a week to family members and friends. I gave copies of digital audio recordings reformatted into CDs to musicians who had generously let me record their performances.

Ethical guidelines also suggest providing the research community with translations of work in order to make the researcher's intentions clear. It is not enough to change names and places; while researchers expend great effort in concealing identities of informants, it is often impossible to conceal the location of a community completely, as Nancy Scheper Hughes discovered after publishing research on a coastal Irish community (1979). Transparency became especially important with my topic, which addresses sensitive issues of crime and legality. While Dominicans in Boston may escape from the stereotypes of their home societies to some extent, they become the target of new stigmas in the U.S.. Hollywood has made Dominicans notorious in blockbuster movies like *Shaft*, in which the hero cop played by Samuel L. Jackson fights evil Dominican drug lords in New York. Other movies with similar plots involving Dominican drug dealers include *Clear and Present Danger* (1994) and *Stone Cold Killers* (2003). The well-known *Serpent and the Rainbow* (1972), a film that takes place in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, has made the practice of Vodú synonymous with hallucinogenic drugs and zombies. The blame of the drug problem in the U.S. often falls upon Latinos and other impoverished groups; the majority of people incarcerated in the U.S. are low-level drug pushers self-identified as African American and Latino. My aim was to provide a background context for a complex problem that encompasses more than the minority of migrants (and U.S. citizens) involved in

crime and drug trafficking in the U.S., a task that Philippe Bourgois set out to accomplish in his 1995 ethnography of Spanish Harlem. Montecruzeños provide an alternative perspective of people who, in their efforts to make a living by moving to the U.S., may find themselves entangled in networks of crime and poverty. I did not want my research on migration in this context to be misunderstood as providing ammunition to a stereotype; on the contrary, understanding the mechanisms and conditions behind conflict and violence in a community is a large step towards alleviating these problems.

To ensure transparency of research, upon arriving I submitted my research project proposal to Carlos Andujar, the director of the national museum of anthropology (El Museo del Hombre) and overseer of research conducted in the country. At the end of fieldwork, I felt it necessary to gauge potential repercussions of my research by sharing my findings with the public and the study community. I gave a public lecture at the Museo del Hombre in Santo Domingo at which I presented my findings, emphasizing the connection of extra-legal activities and palo fiestas as well as the growing popularity of Vodú and música de palos. This lecture was a way of testing if the conclusions I had drawn from my fieldwork made sense to community members in Monte Cruz, Dominican migrants, anthropologists, and other Dominican academics. It also was a 'feeling out' of the potential repercussions of writing about the controversial topic of drug involvement and undocumented migration.

The audience consisted of over a hundred people, including academics and journalists from the national newspapers, my family and neighbours in Monte Cruz who had travelled two hours by crowded bus, and the general public of Baní and Santo Domingo. The lecture was recorded and large parts of the text were published in the national newspaper *Hoy* on 31 August, 2004. Audience members contributed many comments. One man said, 'Banilejos have a reputation throughout the republic for being a hard-working people. You must be careful not to make us sound like we all deal drugs'. Another man stood up and commented 'I think that more people should address the issue of drugs in our community, it's a growing problem with young people and migration only makes it worse. Our values of hard work and respect are changing with all these people coming home with money, acting like exhibitionists'. Another young

Dominican man who had spent most of his adolescence in Washington Heights, New York City, commented (in English): 'Palo is becoming important for the second generation in New York but no one ever talks about it. What you say rings true for us'. While there was not and never will be a consensus among such a diverse audience, comments were overwhelmingly positive and supportive towards the research.

After the lecture, *Palos Fácil* , a group of *palo* musicians from Baní who had been particularly invaluable to my research, gave a public concert. They were paid with a grant from the Benjamin Franklin Cultural Center in Santo Domingo. As *palo* music is rare in the capital centre and not well-known by middle and upper class Dominicans, a large concert of this nature positively exposed the music to a different segment of the population.

## Chapter One

## History of Migration in the Dominican Republic

| | |
|---|---|
| 'San Miguel y San Santiago' | 'San Miguel and San Santiago' |
| San Miguel y San Santiago | San Miguel and San Santiago |
| Eso a mi me dieron | This they once told me |
| Ellos no eran de españoles | That they were not Spanish |
| Que de la Africa vinieron | That Africa was where they came from. |
| San Santiago me llamó | San Santiago called upon me |
| Para que me recordara | So that I may remember |
| Que de mi herencia negra | That my Negro heritage |
| Hay que nunca me olvidara | Is one that I should never forget |

Palo song, Bony Raposo y La 21 División, New York City

> The history of the Caribbean has been almost entirely a colonial history; there is no way to approach the European, African and Asian pasts of contemporary Caribbean peoples without trying to understand their historical experience (Mintz 1996:299).

Montecruzeños living in Boston will often say they are from Baní, an irony quickly realized upon seeing the differences between the *pueblo* (town) of Baní and the *campo* (village) of Monte Cruz. While Baní is only a twenty-minute walk away and there is constant movement between the two locations, Monte Cruz differs greatly in physical appearance. Crossing the riverbed into Monte Cruz from Baní, concrete houses and urban pavement give way to palm thatches and village dirt roads that become impassable mud ditches in the rainy months of May and June. Leaving Baní, one observes how shoes are replaced by bare feet and medical clinics give way to signs advertising spiritual healers of Dominican Vodú. The landscape opens up to plots of earth shaded by mature mango, cherry, guanabana and tamarind trees, giving a sense of the agricultural use and labour that built the streets and shops of the town of Baní.

Besides the immediate visible physical differences between Baní and its rural neighbour, Monte Cruz's history, traditions, and socio-economic status as a colonial settlement of African slaves and impoverished coffee labourers not only define the community in contrast to Baní but create contemporary migration patterns distinct from migrants living in the pueblo of Baní. Contemporary migration is one example of the global processes have been shaping the Dominican

Republic for five centuries, beginning with the Spanish conquest of the Americas and the transatlantic slave trade that followed. The south central coastal region in which Baní and Monte Cruz are located was important to Spanish colonizers, and their settlement of the area in the past is important in understanding the social relations of Dominicans today at home and abroad. The effects of Spanish conquest and colonization are still very apparent; despite efforts to maintain a separation between European colonial and African slave groups in Dominican society, intermarriage and cultural exchange have resulted in the creation of distinctive new traditions.

This chapter, divided into three main parts, will first examine the migrant origins of modern day Dominican transnationals and the colonial formation of social hierarchies that have marginalized the community of Monte Cruz and other *campos*. The second section discusses the factors influencing contemporary migration, a phenomenon that commenced following the assassination of dictator Rafael Trujillo in 1961. The final section reviews the academic literature on the topic in order to highlight how this study contributes to the anthropology of migration.

## Part I: Dominican migration from Columbus to Trujillo (1492—1961)

*The first migrants: a history of Monte Cruz*

In Monte Cruz and throughout the Dominican Republic, the arrival of Christopher Columbus and Spanish colonialists in 1492 established the beginnings of a society divided by race and inequality. The original creation of Monte Cruz was a colonial project designed to create a slave community separate from the Spanish settlement of Baní (Monte Cruz still retains its colonial name, which, according to *Montecruzeños*, came from a Spanish noblewoman). Similar to other peripheral agricultural communities around Baní, most of the people who live in Monte Cruz today are descended from West African slaves that worked on Spanish-run coffee and sugar plantations from the 16th to the 19th centuries. These communities, separate from colonial settlements, served as slave quarters. The fact that the site of Monte Cruz was originally where these communities of African slaves lived distinguishes it from the town of Baní, where Spaniards and Canary Island colonists built and maintained a segregated settlement.

Today, the population in Monte Cruz is largely descended from and still carries the surnames of three African-descended families that settled the *campo* three hundred years ago. Their Spanish surnames today reflect the practice of slaves taking their masters' surnames. There is a local story that one of the surnames can be traced to a Frenchman who moved here in the 1800s, fell in love with and married a slave, set her free and then settled here. While today people throughout the whole region have intermarried and mixed culturally to the point that one no longer can really identify 'African' and 'Spanish' people, the community of Monte Cruz and other agricultural settlements on the periphery of Baní have a very strong African influence in their religion and language.

This region was initially important to Spanish colonizers, and Baní was wealthy and prosperous in the early years of settlement. Close proximity to a major port in Azua, a city to the west, was a key advantage to merchants and farmers. In the 1500s the Spaniards enjoyed a successful trade in cattle and horses in Baní and in the surrounding southern flat area of the region near the coast (Tejeda Ortiz 2003). In the late 1700s the economy began to change from livestock operations primarily to agriculture and commerce. Sugar became important, and huge export operations were established in the region, located near the major ports of Barahona, Haina, and Nizao, which served as local and international transportation hubs before roads were built between the capital (Santo Domingo) and Baní. In the town of Baní and the countryside to the north, where flat plains become hilly and the soil less sandy, coffee cultivation also became important. In the 1800s, the economy completely changed from cattle ranching to coffee, which has remained a major product of Baní until only very recently in the 1960s. Coffee changed Baní's economy from small-scale agricultural productions to a thriving market economy.

The slave trade, flourishing in the Caribbean and Americas between 1500 and the mid-1800s, brought thousands of West Africans to the island, known as 'Santo Domingo', a name still popularly used to refer to Hispaniola. Although the population was entirely indigenous when the Spanish began settling it in the early 1500s, the Taino Indians, like other native populations in the Americas, were decimated by European disease, and few remnants of their culture remain. While the Spanish built their homes and lived in the town of Baní, the slaves lived in the surrounding

areas and formed communities that today are known as Mata Gorda, Río Arriba, Fundación, Monte Cruz, Boca Canasta, Sombrero, El Llano, Cañafistol, and Matanza.

In the earlier years of the colony's existence, slaves lived where they worked on cattle ranches in the flat areas of the region. As coffee production increased, they became seasonal labourers, moving to camps in the hills several kilometres to the north in the autumn when the coffee beans needed to be harvested and processed. In the summer, men picked the coffee, followed by three months of processing starting in September. Women and children would leave home to travel toward the hills north of Monte Cruz to prepare the coffee for drying in one of the five large *secadores* or *cooperativos* (drying warehouses)[9]. Following production, people carried the coffee to market in Baní, which was the largest city between coffee production sites in the hills and the port of Azua thirty kilometres west. From there it went to Azua, after which it was exported to Europe. The owners of the coffee operations prospered, building the first houses of cement in Baní and filling them with expensive European goods such as pianos and accordions. This pattern of cyclic labour migration to the coffee hills, which started in the late 1700s and continued until the 1960s, made formal education in schools virtually impossible for coffee workers and their families, contributing to a cycle of poverty that has endured until present.

The region was prosperous in the 18th and 19th centuries and attracted people from the border regions separating Santo Domingo (the name for the Spanish-speaking half of the island) from the French-colonized western half that would one day be Haiti. International migrants were attracted too: in 1774, migrants from the Canary Islands arrived in Baní and in Paya, a community ten kilometres east. Called *isleños*, they came in waves throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These migrants became the founders of modern-day Baní and allied with the Spanish owners of the remaining cattle operations, coffee and sugar plantations. In Nigua, Haina and Nizao, nearby settlements where there were thirty-six sugar plantations, the areas were largely settled by slaves and remaining indigenous people. The Canary *Isleño* Spanish moved into these areas, displaced the people there, and took over the sugar operations.

Throughout the island of Hispaniola's long colonial history, conditions were harsh for slaves. There were a series of slave revolts, most famously the Haitian slave revolution of

Toussaint L'Ouverture in 1791. In the Dominican Republic, escaped slaves called *cimarrones* followed a migration north to the *manieles* (settlements) in the hills. Their destination was the area around Mount Banilejo, known today by the oldest people in Baní as 'El Maniel' (Tejeda-Ortiz 2003). The *cimarrones negros* in the hills took up cultivation of plantains, bananas, corn and other vegetables and also began to work on the coffee plantations.

*African elements in contemporary religion, music and language*

In these *manieles*, Afro-Dominicans continued to develop their strong tradition of drumming styles and Vodú practice. African elements in contemporary religion, music and language are briefly introduced here as they inform the contemporary cultural practices of Montecruzeño migrants. Despite resistance on the part of the elites, linguistic and cultural elements of European, West African and indigenous societies have blended in the Dominican Republic, resulting in new religions and a Spanish language full of African and indigenous Taino words. Many words commonly used with a much greater frequency in Monte Cruz than in more urban areas such as Santo Domingo or Baní reflect slaves' diverse West African origins (Deive 1979:100). For example, the word *mabí*, which comes from the *Ronga* word *mabikana* for white wine, is used in Monte Cruz and other rural areas to mean a type of lemonade sold only in rural *colmados*. *Maco*, a rural term for a type of large, warty toad, comes from the Zimbabwean Tonga word *makoto*, which means knobby and rough (the Spanish word *sapo* is more frequently used in Baní). *Concón*, meaning 'burnt rice stuck to the bottom of the pan' is the same in *Sherbro*. Slang for 'penis' (used most often in reference to children or animals) in Monte Cruz is *bimbín* which comes from the Zulu *bimbi* for immature fruit (Megenney 1990). Language is a marker of class and geographical origin; not only do uneducated *campesinos* tend to use different words and slang, they also have a different accent that can be distinguished from the light-skinned upper classes of Santo Domingo.

*Dominican Vodú*

In contemporary religion and music (the subjects of chapters four and five), African origins are also evident. In a linguistic study of African words in the Dominican Republic, Megenney emphasizes the strong presence of religious terms in African-derived vocabulary. Despite the Catholic Church's condemnation of 'heathen' practices and prohibition of funerary rites and worship of West African deities (Hoetink 1982), the first West Africans in Santo Domingo continued their traditions of praying to ancestor spirits, oracles, using imitative and contagious magic, and belief in witchcraft. Their traditions, however, did not stay completely the same; in response to the prohibitions of the Church, people imposed the identities of Catholic saints on their many deities and accepted 'God' as supreme. A unique type of religion began to form in Hispaniola, and this blending of Catholicism, Taino sacred knowledge and West African spirituality is known today as the popular religion of Dominican *Vodú*. The sacred music of drums, called *palos*, that accompanies Vodú rituals, also exhibits a mixing of diverse origins, incorporating West African drumming styles, Spanish Catholic *salves* (a song of the rosary) and indigenous Taino/African instruments (Davis 1998:854).

*Segregation and settlement patterns*

Ideas of race have also separated Monte Cruz from Baní. In Baní and its surrounding towns, people of 'Spanish' descent have traditionally remained very segregated from people of 'African' or indigenous descent in hopes of discouraging intermarriage. Canary *isleños* were known for isolating themselves in enclaves throughout Santo Domingo. Hoetink writes of their barrios as being 'surprisingly homogeneous in an ethnic and cultural sense. . .'(1982: 27). Although Spanish children were raised by African slaves and there were slaves working in Spanish households, communities remained separate. The physical and socially constructed divisions between settlements of African slaves in the hills and Spanish in the centre of Baní have remained for centuries, manifested not only geographical settlement but also in social hierarchies based on cultural inventions of 'race', despite intermarriage between slaves, indigenous Taino, and Spanish.

Customs of racial segregation have existed here since colonization, although elites' rejections of black racial identity were strongly enforced by the Haitian occupation of Santo Domingo from 1804 to 1844, in which slave revolts in Haiti gathered momentum and spread into Spanish regions. Haitians brought their own variation of Vodú to the eastern half of the island, revitalizing and reinterpreting cultural practices of African origin. However, these movements were not enduring. Dominican military regained control of the Republic from Haitian president Jean-Pierre Boyer in 1844 and there has since been a backlash against anything 'African' or 'Haitian'. Tensions caused by this occupation greatly contributed to the formation of a Dominican national identity defined by its opposition to Haiti.

As African heritage was viewed as a negative attribute by powerful slave owners, all social practices seemingly 'African' were marginalized in the Dominican Republic. Cultural practices believed by lighter-skinned upper classes to be 'tainted' by Africa have long been outlawed. In the 1800s the Catholic Church and the Dominican state, a fused entity, passed laws prohibiting certain dances believed to have African influences. Laws restricted social bands in rural areas and one edict of 1862 prohibited 'Vodú' and the dance of 'palos', called obscene, satanic, and immoral (Davis 1987:35). Although Dominicans won their independence in 1865 against Spain, a colonial power that still condoned slavery, resentment persisted. Intellectuals predicted that Haitians crossing the border to work in Dominican sugar plantations would contribute to the ' "Africanizing" of the Dominican frontier, rendering Dominican culture more "barbaric" and "backward" '. . . 'popular haitian culture, and voudou in particular, became demonized as a threat to the Dominican nation"' (Turits 2001:618).

Intellectuals and writers condemned Vodú in poems, essays and books. A poem, written by the well known Juan Antonio Alix, entitled 'Los Curanderos' (En bien de la Humanidad) condemns *servidores* as 'charlatans and fools and criminal inventors; these fake doctors with no skill murder people without pity'. He refers to Vodú as a 'crime that brings horror'. Governments assassinated Vodú cult leaders, such as Olivorio Mateo 'Liborio' in 1922, who led a messianistic movement before his death (Davis 1987:38). The cult of Liborio's followers was continually suppressed by the government; first by Trujillo in 1937 who denounced their

'immoral practices' (Vega 1986:131), and then by his successor Joaquín Balaguer, who ordered the killing of *Liboristas* at Palma Sola in 1962. Justification for the massacre at Palma Sola was directed at Vodú practices, according to Balaguer in *La Isla a Revés: Haití y el destino dominicano* ('The Island upside-down: Haiti and the Dominican destiny'): 'We intended to mount all political machinery to fight the introduction in the country of 'vaudou' and other practices related to the animism of the African tribes imported to the country's neighbour' (1989:210). This passage propagates the idea of Dominican identity as Christian and white Hispanic, and condemns Haitians in the Dominican Republic for causing the ethnic downfall of the country.

*Trujillo and the propagation of anti-Haitian sentiment*

Rafael Trujillo, dictator president from 1930 to 1961, persecuted Haitians and was instrumental in the formation of a potent anti-African/Haitian identity. He was from the Baní area and of African descent. Nevertheless he reinforced racial prejudices and inflamed hatred of Haiti throughout his administration. His campaign in the 1930s to exterminate Haitians, called 'the Dominicanization of the border', left thousands of Haitians and Dominicans dead. It is estimated that between 12,000 and 40,000 Haitians were murdered by the Dominican military under Trujillo's orders (Austerlitz 1997:65). Besides physical extermination of African-descended lower classes, Trujillo's policies further marginalized cultural practices with any African or Haitian elements, building upon past centuries of political administrations attempting to 'de-Africanize' citizens.

Trujillo's anti-African rhetoric had cultural manifestations. He reinvented the music of merengue, changing its image as a rural, African-derived music to a white, Europeanized national music. During his thirty-year reign merengue went from a bawdy, country dance music to an orchestrated dance-hall affair. Radio stations, all government owned, played only merengue, even though other Dominican genres such as *palos* and *bachata* were popular amongst lower classes. Music from abroad, such as Cuban *son*, was restricted in the country as well. Through merengue, Trujillo promoted white, Hispanic culture, emphasizing the merengue of the urban and predominately light-skinned Cibao region, which he claimed did not exhibit the African

influences of other more rural regions. However, ethnomusicological research has now proved that merengue *cibaeño* has African influences (Davis 1998).

The differences forged by colonial settlement have influenced the contemporary migration patterns of Montecruzeños. Although Montecruzeños share the same destinations as other migrants in the region of Baní, their methods for arriving in the destination, their occupational patterns, and cultural practices may differ, as Part II will make clear.

**Part II: The Contemporary Era of Post-Trujillo migration**

The larger population movement of Dominican international migration to the United States, Europe and Latin America must be considered in a study of contemporary Monte Cruz migration patterns. Widespread internal and external migration of Dominicans began in the 1960s following the assassination of president Trujillo, whose thirty-year administration was notorious for its restriction and control over Dominican society. International migration in the Trujillo era was limited to the wealthy and members of the government, external media were banned, and the creation of a Hispanicized national identity left no tolerance for many cultural practices of African origin. With respect to migration, the Dominican Republic was unlike other Caribbean countries such as Haiti, Puerto Rico and Jamaica, whose populations had been moving since slavery was abolished in the mid 1800s (Bray 1987: 152). Trujillo's assassination in 1961 opened the country to many changes. Rural to urban migration, the invitation of foreign companies onto the island and the ease of migration restrictions were some of the changes that have had the largest impact on Dominican society.

The first Dominican migrants to come to the U.S. left for political reasons in the 1960s, escaping the unrest after right-wing upper classes and military staged a U.S.-backed coup against the popular but short-lived successor to Trujillo, Juan Bosch. Even after Joaquín Balaguer replaced Bosch as the president in September 1963, the political climate was unstable and the economy unresponsive to economic reforms of the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD). Attempting to diffuse tensions reminiscent of the Cuban revolutionary conflict in the political turmoil that followed Trujillo's assassination, the U.S. occupied Santo Domingo and opened its

borders to accommodate political refugees of the short-lived anti-Trujillista government of Juan Bosch in 1961. Dominicans migrated to New York and Miami and political flight gave way to economic motives and began to form communities of Dominicans in the Northeast.

*Rural-urban internal migration*

While people living in the cities began to emigrate to foreign countries, people living in rural areas began to migrate to the cities. Dominicans moving from rural *campos* (villages) to the cities created an internal migration trend that continued as thousands of Dominicans found that agriculture was no longer a viable source of income. Even though much of the land owned by Trujillo was redistributed after his death and collectively-owned farms were divided into private plots in the early 1980s, only a minority received these new land titles. Land management policies concentrated land and credit among few people (Lundius 1991:15). Furthermore, a growing population had made rural farm plots scarce and fragmented among family members. Government consolidation and subsequent redistribution of land in the 1960s did not help. Lacking farmable land, peasants moved to the cities in search of work as an alternative to farming.

Land devoted to cash crops such as coffee and sugar production established a dependency on import foodstuffs that had once been produced domestically. When the U.S. began to substitute the cheaper corn syrup for cane sugar, it drastically reduced sugar imports in the 1980s. The economy of the Dominican Republic suffered and the instability of sugar and coffee markets made *campesinos* look for more reliable means of income in cities. By the 1980s, falling prices for sugar, devastation by Hurricane David (severely felt in Baní), and an economic depression in 1988 worsened conditions. Migrants flooded to the cities, but eventually urban areas were filled with unemployed. A series of IMF structural adjustment policies administered in 1984 and 1991 increased the prices of basic necessities and sparked demonstrations among the poorest. These policies were intended to decrease the national debt, but they have only exacerbated poverty (Ferguson 1992).

The administration of Joaquin Balaguer, who ruled the country until 1994, tried new economic strategies that favoured the development of industrial sectors rather than rural areas,

which fell behind in production. Balaguer's policies were managed poorly and too much investment in capital-strong labour-weak industries contributed to a growing unemployed population in urban areas in the seventies. Aided by the Reagan administration's 1983 Caribbean Basin Initiative which gave privilege to imports from Caribbean countries, the government invested in foreign companies such as Gulf and Western, American Airlines, Chase Manhattan, Citibank, Xerox, and Texaco, contrasting greatly with Trujillo's fierce protection of domestic industries (which had largely belonged to him). These multinationals bought up a large percentage of the land near urban areas and established Industrial Free Trade Zones (IFZs), production/assembly factories offering low-wage jobs to citizens and attracting job seekers from rural areas.

Many claimed this strategy produced an economic boost in the Dominican Republic powered by the industries of tourism, construction, telecommunications and free-trade zone manufacturing. A significant number of Dominicans living in urban areas profited from new jobs and earned enough to support their families. With significant migration from rural to urban areas, the urban middle class began to expand during the 1970s, and the enrolment of students, professional and technical occupations increased. Many in this growing middle class eventually migrated to New York. Little improved for the rural poor, however; lower level jobs at the IFZs paid scant wages and foreign multi-national corporations exploited this cheap labour. Jobs, although poorly paid, pulled people out of rural areas and left many *campos* impoverished.

Although there was significant economic growth in the Dominican Republic in the 1970s, scarcity of jobs continued to encourage migration from the Dominican Republic to the United States as well as some migration to other destinations such as Spain, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela in particular for a period of time. In the 1970s and 80s Dominicans joined the flow of Latin Americans to Venezuela to take advantage of petroleum-related economic prosperity. It was estimated that between 1971 and 1981 17,469 Dominicans came to Venezuela, a group that consisted largely women from rural areas in the Dominican Republic (Suarez 2000:65). In 1980 Venezuela experienced an economic crisis, and Dominicans there began returning after 1984 because of political and economic instability. From then on, Venezuela has served more as a

bridge to other countries than a destination (Ibid.:66). Although the GDP rose slightly in the nineties when Balaguer set up economic reforms and balanced the budget with the help of an IMF agreement, the rate of migration to the U.S. did not slow (Torres-Saillant & Hernandez 1998).

The 1990s did not bring significant improvement for the most marginalized. In the cities, the poorest barrios are overcrowded and lack running water and indoor sanitation (Michael 2001:2). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) declared that the economic growth of the 1990s 'does not appear to have dramatically reduced poverty'. Unable to find a viable income even in the cities, the poorest Dominicans continue to look towards international migration to support themselves and their families.

*Migrant origins*

A large quantity of the early scholarship on Dominican migration was concerned with which sectors of the population were migrating and why. Early small-scale studies looked at migrants from rural poor backgrounds (González 1970, Hendricks 1974, Garrison and Weiss 1979), while later studies and larger, more representative surveys have established that migrants come from more middle class backgrounds or have lived in urban areas before migrating (Ugalde et al 1979, Pessar 1995, Bray 1984). Scholars have contended that it was from this sector that the majority of Dominicans in the U.S. originated. Ugalde et al found that the 'majority of Dominican migrants belong to a relatively affluent social strata by Dominican standards . . .', educated, literate and socially mobile, dispelling the myth that they were a poor, uneducated and unemployable group (1979:243). Bray predicted that 'middle sector migration is likely to be a relatively enduring feature of Dominican development'(1984:232). Yet as the population movement has matured and networks have made it easier to get to the United States with fewer resources, it has become clear that Dominicans from very diverse socio-economic backgrounds such as Monte Cruz are migrating. Earlier counts of migrants to the US may have also overlooked undocumented flows, as many informants had been migrating to the United States, illegally, since the early 80s. Moreover, when the difficulty of migrating for poor groups was once

cited as a factor in limiting their migration (Bray 1984: 231), increasing evidence shows that migrants find ways of circumventing state-imposed obstacles to migration (Cornelius 2001: 666).

Dominican migration to the U.S. is now diverse. The U.S. continues to be a major destination for Banilejos and increasingly for Montecruzeños as well, who make up part of the 50,000 Dominicans living in the Boston. Today there are an estimated 800,000 Dominicans living in the United States (which is over ten percent of the roughly nine million people living in the Dominican Republic) most of whom are concentrated in the Northeast (US Census 2000).

*Baní and Monte Cruz*

On a smaller scale, internal and external migration patterns in the past five decades in the Dominican Republic are reflected in the population movements of the province of Peravia. Migration patterns of middle and upper classes from Baní differ from peripheral communities like Monte Cruz largely because of disparities in class and resource base. In terms of internal migration, many working class Banilejos (primarily self-employed small business owners) moved to the capital in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, establishing *colmados* in Santo Domingo and on the outskirts of the capital. Poorer Montecruzeños and Dominicans in rural areas of the province have left shrinking land holdings and moved closer to Baní to work in *zona franca* sweat shops or the service industry (such as transportation, construction, or domestic work) for wealthier townspeople. Their wages are scant, reflected by the sprawling barrios on the town's periphery that consist of cheaply constructed shacks lacking running water and indoor toilets.

In terms of international migration, the first people from the town of Baní to leave the country in the 1960s and 1970s went to destinations other than the United States, such as Spain and Venezuela. These were members of working classes who also moved to the capital, as well as wealthier professionals seeking higher wages abroad. Over the next decade, Banilejos began to move to the U.S., specifically New York, Miami and Boston. These migrants created the first international networks between the U.S. and Baní, established businesses in Boston, secured citizenship and have since been bringing family from Baní over to the U.S.

Expanding communities in the United States have attracted Dominicans wanting to reunify with family members abroad and take advantage of citizenship opportunities through already naturalized parents, siblings and spouses. Today the income level and connections of many of these early international migrants qualify them for legal visas and cover the cost of travel and settlement in the U.S. For working class Banilejos, success in small enterprise development in the U.S., migrant connections, and investment in Baní have secured them positions as the elite of Banilejo society. Many well-connected elite professionals who migrated to the U.S. have also returned to Baní. Most educated Banilejos such as politicians, teachers, lawyers, doctors and engineers have spent a number of years in the U.S., have relatives or children living there, and may speak some English.

For Montecruzeños, international migration has been more difficult due to lack of resources and elite connections. Many limited by income and visa regulations that favour the wealthier of society find that destinations outside the U.S. are often more feasible. Over the past three decades, Montecruzeña women have found temporary work (for durations of six months, for example) as domestic labourers in other parts of the Caribbean such as Aruba and Puerto Rico. Spain has a scheme of recruiting temporary domestic labourers in Latin America. In 1999, 10,994 Dominicans had Spanish work permits as domestic housekeepers[10], contributing to a sizable Dominican community in Madrid. The 2000 Spanish census reported that there were 26,481 Dominicans registered as living in Spain in 2000, among them 12,043 in Madrid and 7,185 in Barcelona (most women). These migrants make large contributions to the Dominican economy, sending an estimated $1 billion in remittances each year.[11]

Most migrants who move to Spain are women from poor backgrounds, pointing to gender as a further complexity in migration patterns to add to diversity in socio-economic backgrounds. Other European countries, notably Switzerland, Holland, Italy, Germany, Greece, and Turkey are the destination of Dominican women recruited by international prostitution rings and the sex industry, a rising concern of domestic and international human rights organizations. Since 1991 more than 50,000 Dominican women have worked in the sex industry abroad[12]. These migrants, from the poorest rural communities, are actively recruited in their home neighbourhoods by

*buscones* (scouts) in buses that go from house to house in rural areas, advertising work abroad as waitresses or dancers. One migrant woman from a rural *campo* near Monte Cruz described her experiences:

> On my first trip to Greece, a man got together a group of women. A good businessman, he told me: I'll send you to Greece, you are going to work and earn a lot of money. . . For the three months I was there, he wouldn't pay me, we had an argument and he hit me and even cut my back with a knife and then threw me to the police. Migration gave me three months in jail and I lost everything I had.
>
> Laura, Santo Domingo[13]

Laura's narrative reflects the vulnerability of women with few resources in foreign countries, who face the risk of being stranded without money, family or friends and are forced to prostitute themselves. With no language skills, discrimination because of their status by nationals, and fear of the police, they suffer mistreatment and abuse. Baní and San Cristóbal, a town nearby, are two of the main source communities for women in the international sex trade, according to the Dominican *Secretaría de la Mujer* Estella Mendez Soto (interview, July 2003)[14]. Young women in Monte Cruz make up part of this group; young women will take 'vacations' to Switzerland with men they have met at tourist beaches nearby, spending several months there. Some of the women in the community have married German and Swiss men they met in the Dominican Republic and have moved to Europe permanently.

Despite the hardships of migration evident by Laura's narrative, conditions have left the rural poor with little choice. In the latter 1990s and the first years of the twenty-first century, Montecruzeños have found it increasingly difficult to live in the Dominican Republic with prices constantly rising. Between February 2003 and January 2004, the peso-to-dollar rate changed from 23/1 to 51/1 and one of the country's oldest and largest banks, Baninter, went bankrupt. In the space of a year the price of bread quadrupled, cooking oil and milk have nearly doubled in cost, so that people now buy cheaper unpasteurized milk directly from farmers rather than through large distributors such as Parmalat. The national debt grew from $3.7 billion at the end of 2000 to $7.6 billion in December 2003 (Dodds 2004). Clearly, people are disillusioned about living on the island and express the desire to join family abroad.

While Montecruzeños with few resources may have found it easier to work in Spain, a growing number have started to arrive in the northeast U.S. in the past two decades, following the Banilejo migratory wave to Boston that began in earnest in the 1980s. In Monte Cruz, Boston is the preferred international migrant destination and has the largest number of Montecruzeños concentrated in one place abroad. Even though the U.S. is a more difficult and dangerous destination to reach, the risk is preferable over the problems encountered in a foreign land with few Dominican support networks, as Laura's narrative illustrated.

*Destinations*

Why do Montecruzeños prefer Boston and other northeastern U.S. cities as a migrant destination? Looking at the networks already established by Dominicans may provide insight into why Montecruzeños have attempted the more difficult challenge of migrating to the United States, and why they have chosen to live in Boston. People living in rural communities around Baní such as Monte Cruz use the same networks to migrate, live in the same communities abroad and characterize themselves as Banilejos even if they are a heterogeneous group composed of many different cultural backgrounds and socio-economic sub-groups. While Piore's claim that middle class migration paves the way for migration of the poor rural sectors (1979:219) may not have applied to early Dominican migration, as Bray argued (1984:232), the contemporary case of Monte Cruz would seem to follow this model. Whether Monte Cruz is an exception or part of a growing trend throughout the country can be confirmed only in a more extensive and broad-reaching research project.

Networks are a crucial aspect for many migrant groups, but especially Dominicans in the short and long term, for whom integration and language acquisition does not come easily. In a study of Dominican, Colombian and Salvadoran immigrants in four US cities, Alejandro Portes found that 'paradoxically, the cultivation of strong networks with the country of origin and the implementation of economic and political initiatives based on these networks may help immigrants solidify their position in the receiving society and cope more effectively with its barriers' (2001:188). As the present study illustrates, those with a precarious position in the

*sending* society (which later translates into a precarious position in the receiving society) also rely on strong networks to solidify their position both at home and abroad. Boston originally became a popular destination for Banilejos and then Montecruzeños because of networks of family and friends who have already established themselves in the United States with jobs and apartments, which provide a home base for newcomers. Through these networks Montecruzeños find jobs, housing, and new friends.

In Boston, previously established Latino[15] migrant communities provided an important Spanish-speaking base for Dominicans when they began arriving in large numbers in the 1980s. The Latino population in the Boston metropolitan area[16] makes up 31% of the foreign born population. The largest group is Puerto Ricans (38.3% of Latinos), followed by Dominicans (13.9%), Central Americans (10.3%), South Americans (7.6%) and Cubans (2.3%)[17]. On the South Side which includes the neighbourhoods of Jamaica Plain and Dorchester, there is a population density of nearly two and one half times the city average, populated primarily by people of colour, including African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and a growing student population (Hidalgo 1997).

The first Latinos were Cuban refugees and the working classes who followed them and formed in the 1950s, fitting into the context of a city of 'ethnic' neighbourhoods of nineteenth and early twentieth century European migrants (predominately of Irish and Italian origin). In Jamaica Plain today, remnants of a past Cuban identity exist in closed down Cuban variety stores with newspaper clippings in the window dating from the 1950s. Among the newer Dominican *chimi* (barbeque) cafes, there are a few remaining Cuban restaurants, established by people who migrated over forty years ago. Murals of Celia Cruz on Centre Street evoke memories of New York-inspired salsa crazes of the 1950s.

While Cubans were significant in number, it was the Puerto Rican community that historically formed the most substantive part of Latino Boston. Puerto Ricans began migrating to the northeast U.S. in the 1960s due to factors resembling the Dominican situation: industrialization displaced *campesinos* in the rural areas and left many looking for work. Similar to the Dominican Republic, where the U.S. had established many private interests as a major

importer of Dominican products since the early twentieth century, Massachusetts employers located branches of their companies in Puerto Rico. In schemes supported by the Puerto Rican government, these companies recruited agricultural and industrial labourers to work on fruit and vegetable farms outside of Boston (where present day cities of Springfield and Brockton have very established Puerto Rican communities) (Uriarte et al 1993). Potential workers in Puerto Rico were also contacted through religious and community leaders in Boston. In the 1980s the Spanish-speaking population expanded greatly, with Dominicans arriving in greater numbers and Central American refugees escaping from wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala.

Spanish speakers migrating to the United States in the 1950s and 1960s found Boston at the end of a prosperous era of industrialization. Uriarte et al argue that the city was 'less welcoming' of Latino migrants that it had been of earlier migrants because the manufacturing industry was crumbling (Ibid). Latinos filled jobs in the growing service industry—today the primary employer in Boston-- of hotels, transportation, retail, and maintenance of high-rise office buildings, but the majority of Latinos were not able to rise above the poverty line[18]. Moving into neighbourhoods left vacant by upwardly mobile African Americans moving out of the city, early Latino migrant communities were to some extent scattered and un-unified.

Over the past decade this scattered composition of the Latino community has changed as thousands of new migrants have expanded and developed neighbourhoods. While the Latino community faces disadvantages compared to native populations as the poorest population in Boston (Puerto Ricans and Dominicans being the poorest[19]), they nevertheless find ways of supporting themselves and their families in their home countries at the same time. The long-time existence of other Spanish speakers living in Boston makes moving here easier than in other places, a fact made painfully clear upon comparison to other contemporary Spanish-speaking migrations in the U.S.: Mexican agricultural labourers, for example, migrate by the thousands every year to rural towns in southern U.S. states that are completely unequipped to meet health, educational and legal needs for these newcomers. By contrast, Boston school systems are already prepared to deal with an influx of non-English speaking immigrant children and hospitals have

bilingual interpreters. Not just basic services but businesses and grocery stores cater to the many different Latino tastes.

The larger dynamic of the Latino community has implications for Montecruzeño settlement patterns and identifications, raising questions such as, how do people see themselves racially in North America? How do people think of themselves nationally? How does the Dominican community enforce nationalistic ties? How does the proliferation of Latino organizations provide education for youth? What is the nature of efforts to integrate the larger Latino community? The receiving society offers the freedom to associate with many different groups, allowing migrants to escape from home society stereotypes and possibly explaining why once-marginalized social practices can lose their stigma. These questions will be addressed more fully in chapter six.

Apart from the support of the 'Latino' community, Montecruzeños have profited from the transnational networks of Banilejos, which have established a large infrastructure of businesses serving the needs of Banilejos in Boston. Portes and Guarnizo documented the success of Dominican small enterprise development operating through transnational networks (1991). In Boston, businesses cater to Banilejo tastes but also allow migrants to carry out daily contacts with home. These many Dominican businesses employ others knowledgeable in the area; for example, Dominican politicians in Santo Domingo hire migrants in Baní to canvas houses in Boston during election times, Banilejo bakeries employ Montecruzeños who know how to make Baní's trademark sweets and cakes, and the Banilejos in the upper tiers of the narcotics industry pay young men from poor backgrounds to sell drugs throughout northeastern U.S. cities. When Montecruzeños want to call home, send a package or physically travel, they are able to do so at a much lower cost because of the high competition between the many Banilejo companies well established in Jamaica Plain.

**Section III: Contextualizing Dominican migration studies**

Just as Dominicans in Boston have found themselves in a city with a significant history of migration, the field of Dominican migration studies must be contextualized in the larger body of

literature and history of the discipline that is a reflection of these migrant predecessors. The anthropology of migration in the U.S. began in earnest with the onset of European migration to North American cities in the early 1900s. Assimiliation and acculturation were some of the first models used to examine migration in the U.S. by sociologists of the Chicago School, notably Robert Park (1928). Assimilation theory assumed that migrants did not maintain their own cultural practices or connections with the homeland but instead adopted behaviours and practices of the receiving society. Assimilation became the dominant paradigm in academia for decades, appearing in popular discourse as the 'melting pot theory'.

After World War II, mass migrations to Western Europe and North America and the increasing population movement from colonies to colonial centres in Europe changed the focus in anthropology from static models of cultures, tribes, and ethnic groups (exemplified in Radcliffe Brown's closed models of 'structural functionalism') to societies as more complex, unbounded phenomena. Anthropologist Robert Redfield's idea of great and little traditions was important because it stressed the importance of contextualizing a small village within a larger system—in his case, he was talking about world religious systems (1956). Many anthropologists switched their focus from 'islands' and remote fieldsites to cities in their home countries, discovering that migrants did not necessarily assimilate to the receiving society, but maintained linguistic and cultural practices of the homeland. Notable for this discovery was Oscar Lewis' research (1951) on migrants from poor rural backgrounds in Mexico City, which established that *campesinos* maintained home kinship networks and social practices, rather than assimilating to urban life. Glazer and Moynihan's *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1963) argued that the assimilation model was outdated. With contributions from the Manchester School and Rhodes Livingston Institute, urban anthropology and the study of ghettos, enclaves, and ethnic groups in cities developed (Vertovec 1995:314).

In the 1970s, migration scholars embraced a Marxist approach to examining the political and economic dimensions of migration. For Meillassoux, migration was tied to colonial exploitation of labour and resources among indigenous peoples (1981). This approach became influential in Dominican migration studies, as we will see.

With a shift away from societies as bounded groups rooted in specific geographical locations, urban anthropologists and sociologists began to look at different organizational structures of increasingly 'complex' societies where social actors maintained existing relationships in sending societies rather than assimilating or acculturating to receiving societies. Clyde Mitchell (1969) and J. Barnes (1954) pointed to the importance of networks as social structures that link friends, family and neighbours over national boundaries. Importantly, they theorized that networks allowed social structures to endure and be perpetuated in the absence of face-to-face interactions (Mitchell 1969:335).

*Transnational theory*

A move *away* from society as a bounded entity contained by a nation state and dependent on physical proximity and geographical location has contributed to the development of transnational migration theory over the past two decades. The term transnational was defined by Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton-Blanc as 'a social process in which migrants establish social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. . . . Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns within a field of social relations that link together their country of origin and their countries of settlement' (1992:348). Transnational theorists have conceived of society as a 'social field' spanning international borders and comprised of individuals connected by networks. 'We define social field as a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed' (Glick Schiller & Levitt forthcoming:6).

Transnational theorists argue that the characteristics of contemporary international migration call for a new approach to migration theory. In 1991, Roger Rouse wrote, 'We live in a confusing world, a world of crisscrossed economies, intersecting systems of meaning, and fragmented identities. Suddenly, the comforting modern imagery of nation-states and national languages, of coherent communities and consistent subjectivities, of dominant centres and distant margins no longer seems adequate' (Ibid.:8). The world is experiencing an unprecedented expansion and velocity of international migration movements in a globalized context that differ

from the mass migrations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century from Europe and Asia to the Americas (Held et al 1999). Improvements in communication and transportation technologies have only intensified existing links and created new ways for migrants to maintain contacts with homeland. The idea of a multi-cultural society has gained hold in the popular imagination and in institutional rhetoric (even though social theorists identified the weaknesses of assimilation and acculturation theories decades ago and promoted multi-culturalism in the 1970s). Migrants encounter a political climate in the U.S. today that contrasts with the comparatively greater pressures to 'Americanize' that prevailed in the nationalistic era of the first half of the twentieth century (DeWind et al 2004:566).

A focus on the activities, relationships and connections that migrants maintain with the homeland has become fundamentally important for transnational theory. Instead of looking at sending and receiving societies as two distinct entities, transnationalists investigate the processes and activities that link the two, including the back and forth movement of people, cultural products, money, and communication. Theorists explore new ways of being and belonging that do not always correspond with one geographical location (Glick Schiller & Levitt forthcoming). 'As a theoretical construct about immigrant life and identity, transnationalism aptly suits the study of population movements in a world where improved modes of transportation as well as the images that are transmitted by means of modern telecommunications have shortened the social distance between sending and receiving societies' (Brettell 2000:104). As Vertovec points out, transnationalism does not apply to migrants alone but also to the cross-border transactions of governments, corporations, criminal organizations, and a variety of other social actors and institutions (2003:642).

Criticisms of transnationalism have pointed to oversights of the role of state and state politics in shaping migrant activities (Waldinger & Fitzgerald 2004:1178). While transnationalist scholarship abandons a focus on society *contained by* nation state, it does not deny the fact that migrants can have nationalistic identifications, or that the larger macro-structures of nation state policies influence migration patterns. As Glick Schiller and Levitt have argued, 'incorporation in a nation state and enduring transnational attachments are not binary opposites'; the existence of a

transnational social field does not necessarily negate the influence that the state (forthcoming:8). Transnationalism and assimilation to a new society (necessary to some degree for dual citizenship) are not necessarily contradictory.

Other criticisms claim that 'transnational' activities (such as the maintenance of strong links with homeland and eventual return) are not new among migrants and refugees. These criticisms have been responded to by Portes et al, who point out that 'while these activities of immigrants and refugees across national borders reinforced bonds between the respective communities, they lacked the elements of regularity, routine involvement, and critical mass characterizing contemporary examples of transnationalism' (1999:220). Clearly, we encounter changing modes of travel, communication, identification, and orientation in the contemporary world, and the theoretical frameworks through which we shape our understanding of these phenomena should reflect these changes. At the same time we should acknowledge that theoretical frameworks of transnationalism are founded upon decades of migration scholarship.

Other criticisms have pointed out that scholars are not rigorous enough in their application of the term 'transnational' (Portes et al 1999, Fitzgerald 2004). Fitzgerald argues that migrants identify with many different local regional and national levels in the receiving society, so that the trans*nation*alism may be too broad a concept to effectively capture the nuances of migrant social phenomena (2004:243). Levitt attributed lack of clear analytical concepts to the newnewss of the field and the lack of broader comparative work (2001b:196). In response to earlier criticisms, there has been much productive work on transnationalism since the early 1990s distinguishing between different types of transnational phenomenon (see, for example, Vertovec 1999, Itsigsohn et al 1999, Levitt & Glick Schiller forthcoming, Robotham 1996, Smith & Guarnizo 1998). Encompassing these specifications, transnationalism should be viewed as a general framework for migration studies that can be applied to a number of different processes.

The transience of transnational phenomena is yet another point of debate. Researchers are investigating how exclusive transnational practices are to first generation migrants. For example, *The Changing Face of Home* debates the long-term effects of migration on the children of immigrants and examines in detail their transnational activities (Levitt &Waters 2004). The

present study supports evidence that transnational practices are adopted by second generations who grow up socialized to the receiving society but may also maintain an identification with an ancestral homeland or even regularly visit relatives in their parents' birthplace (Goldbert 2001, Wessendorf 2004).

*Dominican Migration Studies*

The field of Dominican-U.S. migration studies has made significant contributions to transnational theory. When Dominican-U.S. migration studies emerged in the 1970s, the Marxist influence was prominent in the social sciences. Dominican migration was largely analyzed in terms of core-periphery models, post-colonial dependencies on the U.S. and international markets and resulting instability of the economy. For example, Patricia Pessar evaluated Dominican migration to the U.S. in terms of historical interdependencies between core and periphery societies bound by 'an unequal system of exchange of commodities, capital and labor . . . .' (1982:343). Eugenia Georges argued that the demand for cheap labour in the global capitalist system has pulled agricultural populations from rural peripheries to national and international urban centres of capitalist production (1990) (see also Bray 1984). Later studies have engaged with and challenged Marxist theories (Portes and Guarnizo 1991)[20].

Early research and subsequent studies also identified the use of networks of family, neighbours and friends as migration strategies. The study of these networks and the study of how migrants maintain homeland ties provided important empirical evidence for the development of transnational theory. Glenn Hendrick's early study of Dominicans in their homeland communities and in New York in the 1960s argued that links between the two places were crucial for success in the receiving society (1974). Garrison and Weiss emphasized the importance of extended kin networks in the migration process, arguing for a reformulation of the INS definitions of 'family' (1979:274). In *Visa for a Dream*, Pessar emphasized homeland connections by looking at Dominican migration as a chain with links of real and fictive kinship ties sustained across national borders (1995).

The increasing mobility of migrants, an important consideration of transnational theory, has also been well documented in literature on Dominican-U.S. migration. Ugalde et al. described the 'back and forth' behaviour of migrants from urban areas: '. . . international migration is characterized by a back and forth movement, migrants returning to their country of origin only to migrate again a few months or years later' (1979:249). Georges made it clear that '. . . migrants regarded the home community as a locus of investment as well as of eventual return' (1990:151). Singer and Gilberton's study of migrants living in New York City originally from the Cibao region finds that Dominicans live a 'sojourning lifestyle', unwilling to commit to a permanent residence in the Dominican Republic or in the United States (1998:8). Portes and Guarnizo showed how migration has led to small enterprise development in New York City. Enterprises that rely on migration as a circulation of labour, money, and capital have led to the establishment of a 'class of international informal labourers who buy and sell in New York and in the Dominican Republic' (1991:122). Guarnizo has shown how migrants' income strategies rely upon a high degree of physical mobility as well as connections between people at home and abroad (1997:281). The present study also finds many Montecruzeños to a follow a very mobile lifestyle that involves eventual homeland return, and those who are able make several trips a year between Boston and Monte Cruz to see family or operate a transnational business.

Works on transnational theory refer to these cases for supporting evidence. In fact, many typologies of transnationalism (outlined by Vertovec 2004, for example) have been formulated using Dominican empirical evidence to which the present study contributes. These studies include Smith and Guarnizo's 'transnationalism from above and below' theories, which contrast global institutional flows of capital over national borders with more local grassroots activities (1998); Itzigsohn et al's 'narrow vs. broad' transnationalism contrasting a high involvement in activities over national borders with an identification with the homeland with less frequent transnational activity (1999); and Levitt's elaboration on Guarnizo's 'core transnationalism' which describes patterned, predictable transnational activities (2001b:198).

The transnational lens has been used to explore a number of contemporary Dominican migratory phenomena. As previously mentioned, Eugenia Georges' ethnography, *The Making of a*

*Transnational Community,* looked at rural Dominican migration to the U.S. in terms of labour flows, emphasizing investment in and eventual return to homeland (1990). Sørensen used a transnational framework to deal with the complexities of Dominican migrant identifications (1997). Robotham's 1996 study looked at the cultural manifestations of transnationalism in the Caribbean, concluding that Caribbean migrants have appropriated national symbols through the practice of informal transnational activities. Austerlitz argued that merengue music has become transnational, with 'high return rates and high volume mass media communication between home and host societies' a contributing factor (1997:124). Guarnizo has concluded that Dominicans have 'a dual frame of reference' in respect to home in sending and receiving society (1997). These studies have established that Dominican migration involves heterogeneous groups, frequent movement over national boundaries, and strong connections between sending and receiving societies. The present study emphasizes the diversity of backgrounds and experiences among Dominican migrants. Montecruzeños share the same migration networks with their Banilejo neighbors; in fact, middle class Banilejos paved the way for Monte Cruz migration to Boston. Yet Montecruzeõs have very different backgrounds, from their income level and cultural practices to racial classification and linguistic patterns.

Peggy Levitt's 2001 ethnography, *The Transnational Villagers,* is particularly important to the present study because it examined migration from a small community outside Baní to Boston and has provided a solid foundation upon which the present study was conducted. While Levitt's informants were more affluent and come from a higher social class than Montecruzeño migrants, their migration (in addition to migration from Baní) helped establish the networks and support community abroad that has made it easier for Montecruzeños to live in the U.S. Levitt's theory of social remittances, which involves the 'ideas, behaviors, identities and social capital that flow from host to sending-country communities' through individuals (2001a:54) was important because it illustrated how migration brings about social change in home communities, a topic that will be explored further in the present study.

*Social Change and Transformation*

The above examples illustrate the wide variety of social contexts which transnationalism has addressed and provide some important examples of how transnationalism has been applied to Dominican migration studies. Having reviewed how transnationalism fits into the larger context of anthropology of migration, the chapter will now identify the place of the present study in the growing field of transnational theory.

The present study supports Levitt and Glick Schiller's vision of transnationalism as a 'social field' spanning international borders and comprised of individuals connected by networks. Montecruzeños are a highly mobile group who have taken advantage of the extensive migrant networks between the Dominican Republic and the United States. They have also created their own local networks directly linking Monte Cruz to Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. The localities where Montecruzeños live have been transformed into transnational social spaces in which businesses are oriented to people *aquí y allá* (here and there), families move fluidly between two nations, communicate extensively and send goods and services back and forth. Money earned *aquí* easily flows *allá*. In Montecruzeños' conceptualization of this transnational social space of 'Aquí y Allá', we find Guarnizo's 'dual frame of reference' (1997). On a more formal, institutional level, we find other factors that push and pull Dominican migration to the U.S. The initial establishment of Dominican migrant communities in the U.S. is linked to political conflict involving the U.S. government: after the assassination of Trujillo, the U.S. opened its borders to the first Dominican families. These families established the first Dominican communities in the northeast U.S. Labour markets in the U.S. welcome unskilled migrant labor and a devalued peso create an unstable Dominican economy already dependent on U.S. markets. These larger factors also play a role in the 'transnationality' of Dominican migrants.

Apart from generally supporting the transnational optic as a more accurate description of how immigrants conceptualize social spaces, on a more specific level, the present study advances certain typologies of transnationalism. Working with a very broad description of social activity that can now be potentially used with every human group that migrates, scholars have attempted to delineate various degrees, types and settings of transnationalism, some of which have already

been touched upon (see, for example Portes et al 1999, Vertovec 2004 and Mahler 1998). The present study concerns the expressive cultural practices of religion and music in the transnational context and how they become de-stigmatized in the sending society. Broken down into two key areas, it addresses: 1) how cultural practices of religion and music operate in transnational contexts and 2) how these transnational cultural practices erode and reconfigure home social hierarchies. While the economic and political dimensions of migration were once the primary focus in migration studies, transnational theorists are increasingly analyzing the cultural dimensions of migrant experiences, acknowledging that other factors also contribute to migration such as reunification of family, the cultural popularization of the migration experience, and migration as a strategy to heighten social status in home communities (Levitt 2001, Gill 2002, Brettell 2000). The thesis offers a unique perspective by exploring the nexus of popular music, religion, and transnationalism. In the transnational social sphere where migrants move between geographical destinations and the social categories in which they have traditionally been trapped, migrants gain the 'space' and flexibility to interpret cultural practices in new ways. A number of syncretizations have taken place between bachata music, música de palos, and the religion of Vodú.

The thesis goes on to explore how cultural expressive practices in the context of transnational migration contribute to social change. The potential for migration-driven social transformation has been addressed in the literature by Vertovec: 'Social change, in migrant transnationalism studies, tends to be gauged by the ways in which conditions in more than one location impact upon such forms of social organization and the values, practices and structures that sustain them' (2004:6). Migration has transformed home societies for centuries, notably by removing important social actors from communities, but with the ease in which migrants can now return and the increased contact between home and receiving society, social change occurs in different ways. Levitt, for example, showed how ongoing frequent contact between migrants and home societies, whether physical in the form of repetitive trips home, or virtual/spoken in the form of email or telephone, creates social change in home village life (2001). Ted Conover's journalistic 'ethnography', *Coyotes,* illustrated how migration to the U.S. has changed social

values and status markers in the Mexican town of Ahuacatlán (1987). While from an individual perspective the act of sending a remittance, buying a house in the migrant's hometown, or traveling there on occasion have purely personal consequences, in the aggregate they can modify the fortunes and the cultures of these towns and even of the countries of which they are part. Portes identified how the amassed effect of many individuals sending remittances or traveling home 'can modify the fortunes and the cultures of these towns and even of the countries of which they are part' (Portes 2003:876). As Vertovec points out, 'in this cumulative way migrant transnational practices can modify the value systems and everyday social life of people across entire regions' (2003:9). The idea of an aggregate effect is key in the present study.

The distinction between 'change' and 'transformation' is important. 'Change' associated with migration is conceived of here as a more temporary phenomenon, while 'transformation' is used to describe the broad-reaching and potentially long-term effects of transnational migration (Vertovec 2004:6). There are many well-documented ways in which migrants *change* their behaviour. Occupation, language, and consumption patterns may change abroad, for example, and not necessarily for the purposes of integration into the receiving society. These changes may only be only temporary; migrants may attempt to learn English so they can speak it at a job, but forget it as soon as they return home. Nevertheless, changes have the potential to create social transformation on a larger scale. Transformation is inherent in Held et al's definition of globalization, which specifically refers to social change among groups, classes, and collectivities: 'Globalization may have considerable consequences for the distribution of power and wealth within and between countries' (1999:18). Vertovec argues that Held et al's transformationalist thesis of globalization (which posits that globalization brings about long-term social changes) can be applied to transnationalism (1999). It is applied specifically to the ability of networks stretched across the globe to allow events in one location to have repercussions in another locality and that the speed of global interchanges allows resources and information to provide immediate feedback.

*Mobility*

Mobility plays a key role in social change and potential transformations in home societies. Dominican migrant groups even from the same geographical area have very heterogeneous backgrounds and differing habits of international movement. Unlike Banilejos, Montecruzeños are often 'confined' to the United States by their undocumented status and are thus unable to make frequent trips home, going years without seeing families. Itzigsohn et al point out, 'there is a difference between those who engage in constant travel and business in both countries and those who see themselves as Dominicans in the United States and long for the homeland that they may never have seen' (1999:323). Nevertheless, the community of Monte Cruz, which is comparatively less mobile and therefore has fewer face-to-face interactions than that of Baní, has experienced social change as well. Studies that have examined mobility have found that a population can still be highly 'transnational' in certain senses even if they do not return home frequently, as Mahler has illustrated among Latin American hometown associations (1998).

For migrants with little mobility yet a substantial involvement in transnational practices, how are changed behaviour and new perspectives transmitted to and consumed by home populations? While there is a great deal of interaction between Monte Cruz and Baní so that return migrants (typically those of sufficient financial means) are constantly moving between the town and the *campo*, globalized communication technology plays an important role in sustaining migrant-homeland contacts when face-to-face interactions are scarce in Monte Cruz. Globalized technology like cheap phone cards, video-recordings, internet, and satellite TV have allowed Montecruzeños to stay highly involved in home religious practices and household decisions, and profit financially from the marketing of their cultural practices. Held et al provide a useful way of thinking about the modes through which global cultural diffusion take place that are not necessarily dependent on face-to-face contact: '. . . Growing extensity and intensity of global interconnectedness may also imply a speeding up of global interactions and processes as the development of worldwide systems of transport and communication increases the potential velocity of the global diffusion of ideas, goods, information, capital and people' (1999:15).

As the migrant population matures in a globalized context of 'time/space compression', changes that take place in migrant communities abroad are more swiftly integrated into home communities. For this reason, the daily phone dialogues of migrants with families in the Dominican Republic constantly reinforce new English expressions, so that 'Spanglish' phrases like 'está ready' are used in Baní as much as in Boston. Not only are changes more swiftly integrated because migrants constantly communicate with home or use their resources to alter the home landscape by improving a house, building a clinic, or voting in a particular candidate in the hometown or country, non-migrants are more apt to incorporate the changed behaviour and new tastes into their own lives because migrants have such a revered status in the Dominican Republic[21] (Levitt 2001:55). As chapter six will illustrate, this status can be maintained through the manipulation of global communication networks, which can 'distance' as much as they can connect.

*Analyzing small-scale interactions*

Looking at small-scale interactions as the instigators of cultural diffusion and social change should not obscure the fact that many daily activities are constrained or shaped by larger corporate or political structures. It has already been illustrated that the migration laws of receiving societies limit face-to-face interactions between migrants and their families at home by restricting travel. Additionally, public opinions and tastes for cultural products are to some extent shaped by what is widely available and disseminated by powerful multi-national corporate structures. Music broadcasts on radio stations or newspaper/television news reports are also controlled by nation states that privilege certain types of music and censor potentially damaging information. However, individuals and communities find ways of circumventing these structures and getting what they want anyway by operating in creative ways within these structures or interpreting information in different ways. For example, while North American music was banned from Cuba and the Dominican Republic, people still listened to contraband radio frequencies in secrecy (Austerlitz 1997). Similarly, the many Montecruzeños who cannot afford cable tv attach wires to neighbour's cables. And while U.S. and Dominican laws deny the right to migrate to only those

in secure financial situations, thousands of the poorest find their way to the United States successfully. For the most marginalized, most of life involves 'breaking the rules'—i.e. getting around these larger structures—to survive. For this reason, it is appropriate to look at Monte Cruz migration using a 'bottom up' approach advocated by Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt or the small-scale approach of individuals and their support networks as 'the most viable point of departure in the investigation of this topic'(1999:217).

*Religious 'channels'*

In the absence of face-to-face interactions, telecommunication channels become the locus of social interactions between migrants and homeland. This shift in the way people interact changes the way that music and religion have traditionally been practiced. Channels of communication, which include internet, radio, satellite TV and mobile phones, connect people on two continents instantaneously through unseen 'virtual' networks that can seem magical to all but the most savvy IT professionals in any society. Migrants use channels to transmit changed perspectives and new experiences to people back home, potentially shaping home communities' worldviews. But the transformative effects of migration can be passed through channels in a much more literal sense, when it comes to religion. Dominican migrants have conceptually and tangibly linked this 'magical' quality of telecommunications channels to another type of metaphysical 'channel': spiritual channels of Vodú. To give just one example of many that will be explored later, rituals of Vodú are increasingly conducted by migrants using cell phones: a client in the United States speaks directly with the spirit possessing the body of a human medium back home. Other mediums or 'channels' of cultural transmission have changed; the sacred music of palos is now recorded and commoditized, not just performed live.

Two points are important here. One, religion is used as a part of migrant strategy, the subject to which an entire chapter (four) is devoted. Religious practices—inserted into these largely 'unseen' global communication networks—have become instrumental in the migration process by allowing people to obtain citizenship documents, travel, escape from incarceration, and find work. Secondly, and more pertinent to the present discussion on forms of migrant social

interaction, global communication channels enhance the agency of Vodú ritual. By using transnational channels, migrants have expanded and strengthened the personal agency they hold in the spiritual contracts made with saints to bring about changes in their lives.

It is important to emphasize the individual aspect of agency in Vodú rituals, which are shared by a community for the purpose of helping an individual's personal problem, or to bring about change in the life of a single person or family. Change is explicit here, evident in the statements of practitioners such as 'Please, San Antonio, change my bad luck with the visa officials. Bring me a visa to go *allá'*, as one informant petitioned. But Vodú is a potent medicine used to seek relief for only the *symptoms* of a deeper social marginalization. We cannot extrapolate the existence of a larger, collective agenda of social change from transnational migrant activities but we can talk about the aggregate efforts of individual migrants (facilitated by global communication technology) which contribute to changes in religious cosmologies, imagery and ritual practice.

Researching Dominican Vodú, its related musical practices and migration, provides important data on how religion operates in the transnational sphere, and provides interesting contrast and comparison with the relatively small amount of literature on the topic (Brodwin 2003, Van Kessel 2002, McAlister 2002). DeWind, Levitt and Vertovec wrote:

> Religion, for example, is salient in many migrants' day-to-day lives and exercises significant influence over the ways in which migrants are incorporated into host societies and stay attached to their homelands. Yet, until recently, most studies ignored the role of religion in transnational migration (2003:567).

In many ethnographies of Dominican migration, only cursory attention has been given to Vodú, which is more commonly referred to as a popular folk Catholicism. While completing research in Washington Heights, Pessar observed that in a large Dominican neighbourhood of New York City:

> Many homes feature small altars devoted to Catholic saints, such as the Virgen de Altagracia, patron saint of the Dominican Republic. Like other Hispanic Catholics, many Dominicans believe that the saints will protect them from harm and help on their social advancement (1995:28).

Describing religion of Dominicans in Boston, Levitt wrote,

> Mirafloreños developed their own private, personalized worship style, combining official and folk rituals, which they practiced in their homes and at informal gatherings. Though Dominican Catholicism generally synthesizes African, Haitian, and Catholic rituals, in Miraflores these outside elements were weaker because the Spanish and Canary Islanders who settled the area resisted contact so adamantly with their black neighbors (2001a:163).

Part of the reason that Vodú is not addressed in most of the literature on Dominicans in the U.S. is that poor rural communities like Monte Cruz are not as commonly represented in the northeastern U.S. as other migrant groups of significantly lighter skin and with greater resources. Low (or no) income migrant groups like Montecruzeños find it easier to go to Spain or Latin America rather than the United States, and so it is not surprising that the literature on Dominican migrants in the United States has such little mention of Vodú. Montecruzeños are those 'black neighbors', to quote Levitt, who have been marginalized by lighter-skinned Dominicans of high socio-economic status. In Boston, Vodú is also not immediately visible and people do not commonly talk about it with non-practitioners or outsiders. Work on Dominican migrants in Spain, on the other hand, notes the prominence of Vodú as a religious practice. In her work on migrants from Barahona (a rural area to the west of Baní) in Spain, Cristina Sanchez notes their practice of giving *fiestas de palos* (rituals of Dominican Vodú) along with spirit possession, using recordings of *palo* drums rather than live music (2004). The CDs of palo musicians from Monte Cruz living in Boston were circulating and being used in palo fiestas in Madrid.

*Summary*

The aim of this chapter has been to ground the thesis in historical and scholastic context in order to advance to the ethnographic data of the following chapters. In terms of historical background, what is relevant to this thesis are the colonial and post-colonial factors behind the establishment of social hierarchies in the Dominican Republic. These marginalizing factors have shaped Montecruzeño migration to the U.S. and the strategies they employ to overcome socio-economic disadvantages. The marginalization of Monte Cruz as a community by mainstream

Dominican society and the stigmatization of their cultural practices must be established before we can understand how transnational migration erodes these social hierarchies.

In terms of scholastic context, the field of Dominican migration studies has been influenced by early migrant predecessors of Dominicans in the U.S., while the more recent phenomenon of Dominican-U.S. migration has provided valuable empirical evidence for migration scholars encountering a contemporary world of global systems, 'complex' societies, and changed political climates regarding nationalism and migration. As a theoretical 'optic' grounded in Manchester and Chicago Schools of sociology and urban anthropology, transnationalism provides promising analytical frameworks for examining the social and cultural aspects of Dominican international migration. Within the field of transnational studies, the thesis engages in literature on the effects of migration in home societies, relating specifically to the role of religious and musical practices, exploring an area of research that presents great potential in the field. The next chapter provides a more in-depth ethnographic understanding—core to any anthropological thesis—of how hierarchies of class, race and religion have shaped cultural practices and social institutions in Monte Cruz, a matter of great relevance for international migration.

## Chapter Two

## The Transnational Community of Monte Cruz

| | |
|---|---|
| Ga-ga pa' Nueva York[22] | Ga-ga for New York |
| | |
| Mañana me voy | Tomorrow I'm going |
| Yo me voy pa' Nueva York | I'm going to New York |
| Yo me voy con Dio' | I'm going with God |
| En yola o avión | In yola or airplane |
| Pa' come' hot dog | to eat hotdogs |
| Yo me voy me voy | I'm going, I'm going |
| Que lo' amigo y lo' primo' | Friends and cousins |
| Me lo ivan a da' to' | They would give me everything |
| Que me tiraba en el subway | I would throw myself in the subway and |
| y pidiendo vivía yo | would live by begging |
| Que en lo' campo de mi Viejo | In my father's land |
| El tiempo perdia yo | I was wasting my time. |

Ga-ga song by Edis Sanchez, Santo Domingo

We have considered the larger population movement of Dominican international migration to the U.S., Europe and Latin America, in order to provide the background for the present discussion of contemporary Monte Cruz migration patterns. Moving from the previous analysis of migration on a national scale, this chapter will look at specific local factors contributing to migration in Monte Cruz. The chapter will also explore social institutions of kinship, political groups, economy, residence patterns, and racial identity in the sending community, illustrating how transnational migration has affected these social institutions. It will examine the motivations for migration from Montecruzeño perspectives, and show how socio-economic and racial marginalization places limitations on migrant options. This chapter defines Monte Cruz as a community and illustrates, ethnographically, how it is located within the social hierarchies of Dominican society.

### *Social Geography*

Monte Cruz is a rural community (known as a *campo*) located in south central Dominican Republic just outside the town of Baní. Monte Cruz has a population of 500-700 people and occupies roughly 25 hectares. Baní, on the other hand, is a much larger town of 56,300 people

living in an area of 796 km² and is one of the more prosperous towns in the impoverished southern region of the country[23]. As a *campo* of small farmers, seasonal agricultural laborers, and small business owners, Monte Cruz contrasts in many ways with the larger town of Baní where elites and middle classes[24] live. Not only does income level define Montecruzeños as marginal, their cultural practices are stigmatized by mainstream society, which perceives Vodú, dark skin colour, and music genres uncomfortably close to what is popularly perceived as 'Haitian'. Indeed, Montecruzeños as a class of rural poor have much in common with their rural Haitian migrant neighbours living in sugar cane plantations in the area, and identify with their desires for a better life, as the opening song, 'Ga-ga pa' Nueva York' illustrates. The characteristics that define Monte Cruz as a community—geographical location, subsistence strategies, kinship structures, religious beliefs, and political bodies—define the community and also mark its inhabitants as members of the poor rural class.

In terms of geography, Monte Cruz is delimited from Baní by the physical borders of the river and the highway. North of Monte Cruz, an area known as 'Río Arriba' ('upriver') describes smaller scatterings of palm-thatched houses and increasingly hilly, rural land that eventually turns into the 10,000 ft. mountains of the Cordillera Central. The palm-lined highway to the capital divides Monte Cruz from another *campo* and the Caribbean coastline less than ten kilometres to the south. Here the *motoconcheros* (motorcycle taxis) wait in packs in the shade for potential passengers getting off the *guagua* buses coming from the capital. Farmers living in rural *campos* bring in corn and sugar cane to sell on the street corners in this high trafficked area.

The riverbed to the west that divides Monte Cruz from Baní is dry for most of the year and filled with scrub trees and bushes. The dry climate is connected to centuries of deforestion caused by poor Dominicans burning trees for fuel. While it is a short walk from Monte Cruz to Baní through the riverbed, people do not like to go to town by this route for a number of reasons. The border is considered a sort of 'no man's land' full of dangers—snakes, bee nests, and scorpions, as well as *tigres* (hoodlums) waiting to rob any who dare wander this path. Haitians live in some stretches of the riverbed, providing another disincentive for crossing, according to one Montecruzeña named Diomedes. 'Don't go down to the *río*, the *haitianos* are down there and

they are all *tigres'*, she warned me. Her brother-in-law had been robbed one evening on his way to his mother's house on the Baní side of the river. To get to Baní (and what her brother-in-law *should* have done, Diomedes insisted), Montecruzeños prefer to take the longer route over the main bridge, which adds an extra mile or more to the trip and thereby increases the physical distance between the two places. In recent years this bridge has fewer and fewer pedestrians as people have come to regard walking as too dangerous. Older residents of Monte Cruz remember the days when everyone walked everywhere and farmers let their goats wander freely; this custom has changed as crime has risen in the area in the past two decades.

To reach the bridge crossing over the river to Baní, one follows the only paved road in Monte Cruz. This main thoroughfare in Monte Cruz is lined with houses, which range from very basic wooden structures with palm thatches to concrete houses with corrugated iron roofs renovated with remittance money. The population of Monte Cruz varies greatly due to migration to the northeast U.S., and a number of the houses stand empty. Many homes also serve as small businesses that sell fruits and vegetables, clothes, or other supplies. Behind these houses are the more private outdoor cooking spaces, latrines, chicken coops, pigpens, and garden plots. Moving north along the main road, one soon reaches the largest *colmado* out of seventeen in the *campo*, a store that sells basic provisions and cold drinks. These stores also have a variety of phone cards and products from the U.S. such as *macarones y queso* (macaroni and cheese), cornflakes, and American *Miller* beer. People buy most of their food there, supplementing their daily meals of rice, beans, chicken, and plantains with vegetables from their gardens[25]. This particular *colmado* is the social centre of Monte Cruz because it has a covered dance floor, good speakers, and a large supply of Presidente beer.

At any time of the day there is a group of men, sometimes women, sitting in plastic chairs and socializing with passers-by. Catering to the crowds that come to the *colmado* is a cafe nearby to buy sandwiches, fried chicken and fruit drinks. Further up the road to the north is Monte Cruz' primary and secondary school, which is often closed due to teacher strikes over pay. Felipe, the butcher, lives next door and sells meat from the front of his house. The neighbourhood's meal for the following day is normally tethered to a post out front.

A number of smaller dirt roads lead off the main paved road in Monte Cruz. Along these are more houses as well as an evangelical church built two decades ago. While there are services twice a week, no more than a handful of community residents attend them. Another road leads to the more popular community *ermita* (a small religious chapel) dedicated to Monte Cruz' patron saint, Santa Elena, which is used for Vodú fiestas. The caretakers of the *ermita,* descendants of the Montecruzeños who had the first vision of Santa Elena in their community over one hundred years ago, live next door to the church. The *ermita* is used sporadically for large community events, processions, funerals, and the patron saint fiesta each August. More frequently, people worship in small groups in their own houses, which have altars in small *ermitas* located out of sight in back. Chapter four explores in greater detail the religious life of the community.

*Social Interaction*

Montecruzenos in Boston often say that the slow pace of life is one of the things they miss most about home. Indeed, there are many aspects of life today in Monte Cruz that are unchanged from past. Responding to the agricultural rhythms of ancestors, the community cultivates the same fruits and vegetables, eats salt fish *bacalao* and still dances the *mangulina*, which has celebrated the annual abundance of the famous Baní mango since its creation 150 years ago. However, the *tranquilidad* (peace) and timelessness that many migrants attach to their birthplace is to a large extent idealized, as transnational migration has brought a number of changes to the community conveniently forgotten in nostalgic reminiscences.

The extent to which migration is affecting this community is evident in a typical day in Monte Cruz, during which there are many references to *la gente allá*—the ones who have moved away. The first sounds to break the quiet of early morning are mopeds zooming down the main road, waking up the dogs that guard houses containing the many precious gifts that relatives have brought back from Boston: stoves, refrigerators, music and video equipment, and televisions. Each morning, padlocks come off the doors and the TV is flipped on for the morning news in the U.S. and in the Dominican Republic. During fieldwork, the war in Iraq was an issue of great

concern for many who felt their families abroad were in danger in large cities like Boston and New York.

After a breakfast of plantains and green bananas, women, wearing jeans and the latest fashions from Los Angeles, make the purchases at neighbourhood *colmados* and kill the chickens for the daily meal so that they do not have to leave the house when the sun is strong. Women rise early and do most of their work in the morning, which consists of sweeping out the dust that accumulates on every surface inside the house, buying the groceries, cooking the midday meal, and getting laundry washed and up on the clotheslines to dry in the noon sun. A fair number of women also leave early to go work in the *zona franca* and do not return until late at night. Sometime in mid-morning, cars with loudspeakers begin cruising the roads advertising their wares for sale: plastic goods, tools, fruits, or the latest pirated *bachata* album from New York. At 12 pm everything stops for a two-hour lunch break. People come home from the fields or from work in Baní to eat the largest meal of the day. Then, sometime in the afternoon, the *colmados* begin blasting *bachata* music through thousand-dollar speakers bought with remittances, which have come to be status symbols in the community.

When not working, Montecruzeño men and women hang out with family and neighbours, passing hot afternoons in the shade of fruit trees and sitting in plastic chairs. *Convivir con queridos* (hanging out with friends) is an activity that many migrants in Boston say they miss the most. In general, 'hanging out' is not an activity segregated by sex, although men more frequently hang out at *colmados* drinking beer, while women stay in their family's or neighbour's houses. Women who are self-conscious about getting *mala fama* (a bad reputation) rarely drink alcohol in public. A favourite custom is the *visita* (social call), in which people make the rounds of their neighbourhood to catch up on gossip, have a coffee or fruit juice with family or neighbours. Upon arrival, children must greet all elders by asking for their blessing. Many of the community's young men and women have moved to Boston, and they are often the topic of conversation.

The evenings, before the *novellas* begin (soap operas also aired in Boston), are time for talking to relatives abroad, who take advantage of cheap international phone cards bought in

Boston to call their relatives back in Baní. Phone lines were installed in Monte Cruz fifteen years ago (an event coinciding with migration to the U.S.), and many of the younger Montecruzeños have cell phones but they are expensive and more of a status symbol than a frequently used method of social interaction. On some nights the television show 'Aqui y Allá' airs, an extremely popular cable program that shows social events of Banilejos in Boston and Baní that are filmed by a crew in both locations. People crowd around their TVs, phones in hand, waiting to see someone in Boston that they know. Anyone that is filmed must speak directly to the camera a greeting to missed family members: 'I just want to say to Mamí, Papí, *abuelita*, my little sisters Yacalyn y Rosita, Tía Carmen, my cousins Nobert and Mochy, I love you and I miss you.' In the late afternoon, people begin congregating in the *colmados* to socialize, drink Presidente beer so frosty that it is said to be 'dressed like a bride' (if they can afford it), and dance bachata and merengue well into the evening.

*Music*

Music is an important part of 'hanging out' and is such a part of the background that its absence means trouble —most often that someone within earshot has died and that their family is in mourning. In addition to listening to recordings, Montecruzeños play music. Young people play *güiras* (metal scraping instruments), drums and guitars and sing the latest bachata hits. A favourite pastime of older women is to sing *chuine*, a traditional music genre that expresses lament. The ability to play and create good music is a way of gaining status in Monte Cruz. Among the community's more popular and respected members is a young man named Roni, who has a CD burner on his computer. When anyone gets a new bachata album or the latest palo CD that Montecruzeños have made in Boston, he makes people copies for a small price. Roni also downloads bachatas from the internet (he has a dial-up connection through the telephone company and a generator to keep the computer going during the frequent blackouts) and makes mix CDs for the man who owns the *colmado* down the road, who reimburses him with free *Presidente* beer. Whenever migrants go to Boston, their friends in Monte Cruz go to Roni to make a mix CD to send back with them, full of favourite bachatas that they can listen to whenever they miss home.

Before Roni's older brother was arrested for dealing heroin in Boston, he used to send bachata CDs back to Monte Cruz. Even the CD burner that Roni used was acquired in Boston and brought back piece by piece, the monitor arriving several months after the hard drive. Roni also acquired a small video recorder from a relative in Boston, and goes around filming palo fiestas in the community for a charge.

Roni's savvy with communications media, his ability to reproduce music and the fact that he has very loud and powerful speakers makes his house a popular hang-out among the young people of the community. There are always people sitting under the jasmine tree across the street from his house or in his house, which is two storeys, spacious and comfortable after his older brother's remittances were used to renovate it. Late at night, young people gather to socialize here, drink beers, or play on their grandfather's palo drums.

*Kinship*

Kinship structures define Monte Cruz as a community. Most Montecruzeños can trace their ancestors to one of three main families who settled the area in the 1800s. These families were largely made up of African slaves who took the names of their colonial owners (and still carry those names today). Following the Spanish custom of patrilineal descent, most Montecruzeños use the last name of the father (as a shortened version) or the hyphenated name of both families as a surname[26]. Affinal relationships are largely endogamous to Monte Cruz or nearby *campos* so that extended families of consanguineal kin make up most of the community's population. Even though the land has not been able to support a system of primogeniture, families have preferred to stay close for safety reasons, building their houses around centralized extended family homesteads. In this way population density has risen sharply over the past half century, filling in agricultural land with residential housing as farming has ceased to bring in a viable income and people have turned to finding work in Baní or the capital.

Kinship networks play an important role in facilitating migration abroad and helping the migrant settle in the U.S. For Montecruzeños who have citizenship or resident visas, they can take advantage of U.S. migration laws favouring family reunification and sponsor children,

parents and spouses to come to the U.S. When legal naturalization is not an option, Montecruzeños already living in Boston raise the money necessary for paying a coyote to bring over family members, as in the case of the Pérez family. The father, Ramón, migrated to Boston at the age of 45 through Venezuela and across the Mexican border. In two years he had earned enough to pay a coyote to bring over his wife Mirielli. Their ten-year-old son Junior stayed at home with his mother's sisters and his grandmother, who raised him with the help of his parents' remittances. At the age of seventeen, Junior and a group of Montecruzeños attempted to enter the U.S. through Mexico after their visa applications had been turned down at the American consulate. He was caught by the INS in El Paso and sent home. Nevertheless, he succeeded in reaching New York on his second attempt and went to live with his parents in Boston. After working a number of undocumented jobs in Boston, Providence and New York City, Junior married a Puerto Rican woman and is now in the process of applying for a resident visa. Like many other migrant families, the Pérez case illustrates how networks of consanguineal kin that form the basis of households provide the support needed for individuals to leave home and migrate to the U.S. for extended periods of time.

The Pérez family is also a typical case of how migration involves many generations of a family. Many of the first migrants who left Monte Cruz two decades ago and have settled in Boston now have the resources to bring over younger family members such as grown children who have spent most of their lives with their grandparents, aunts or uncles. Migrants may also return to take young children back to the U.S., or sponsor a *compadre* or blood relative to bring the child up to Boston. For example, Fredy, a neighbour of the Pérez family, left his partner and baby in Monte Cruz to go to the U.S. illegally. After several years in Boston, he married a Puerto Rican woman who had the mobility to travel to Baní and collect the child (using forged papers for the child). Many of these migrants have also been saving up for their return to Monte Cruz, directing resources towards the gradual building of a new house in the community or in Baní. Other migrants have married again in the U.S. and have American children, and it is a common practice for the children to maintain close contact with any half brothers and sisters in the Dominican Republic.

*Fictive kin*

Fictive kin are also an important part of Montecruzeños' social networks at home and in Boston. The *comadre* (godmother of ego's child) and *compadre* (godfather of ego's child) system forms the basic structure of intimate relationships of non-consanguineal kin. For every child born to a woman and man, there are several friends in the parents' age range chosen as *compadres*. *Compadres* are expected to give gifts at various important stages of the child's life: birth and baptism, the important *quinceañeros* birthday (fifteen), and marriage. In return, the child is obligated to visit the godparent periodically, and is always welcome in his/her house for meals. If a woman has asked a friend to be the godparent of her baby, they will forever after greet each other as '*comadre*' or '*compadre*'. Every adult man or woman has a network of *comadres* and *compadres* who are always available for support during difficult times. One woman who had split up with her husband and was raising her children alone got regular visits from her *compadre*, who generally watched out for her safety and helped with odd jobs around the house.

These strong relationships are maintained in Boston, where *compadres* and *comadres* look out for each other, take turns caring for each others' children while working, and socialising together on weekends. If a woman's husband goes abroad, her husband's *compadres* make sure she is safe and provided for until he returns. The case of Nimela illustrates how *compadre* networks provide support for migrant families. Nimela's husband Edy left Monte Cruz to work in Boston when she was still pregnant with her second son. Nimela's younger sister came to live with her, but the two expressed fear over there not being a man in the house. 'People know that you are alone here, and they'll take advantage of that. You have to be careful'. Nimela kept a loaded gun under the counter in her *colmadito* (little colmado) and complained to her husband frequently during their phone conversations. Finally, Edy phoned two of his *compadres* living in a different *campo* and asked them to come over and check on Nimela periodically. 'The presence of a man around is always good. And he can keep an eye on his *mujer* (woman) . . .' Edy told me in Boston.

*Residence Patterns*

A central social unit in Monte Cruz is the extended family homestead of bilateral kin. By contrast, many households in Baní are composed of nuclear family units. Monte Cruz homesteads consist of several houses located in close proximity to one another around a courtyard that serves as the social centre of each extended family. Here meals are cooked, games are played and the latest gossip from Boston is exchanged. Close proximity and homesteads surrounded by fences or gates are preferred for security reasons as well; people feel that isolation from trusted family makes one vulnerable to crime. In the homestead, families make decisions and share resources, from meals to childcare to remittances from Boston. For example, when Montecruzeña migrant Delia sends her mother $100 home from Boston, she divides it among her two daughter's families who live in her homestead, or she uses it to pay bills on the electricity and services they all share. Many migrants leave children behind in Monte Cruz, where this family unit will care for them while they are gone. In Boston, limitations on space and cost have greatly varied residence patterns; some migrants live with siblings, parents, affines, or just friends.

In Monte Cruz, the homestead may contain nuclear families with married or unmarried couples, or single mothers, their siblings and children. If the man's status in an affinal relationship is in any way permanent, i.e. the couple is married, he is the father of any children living there, or he has lived there for years, he will usually take the role as the head of the household. More commonly, household heads are women who live alone with their children and rely on intermittent money payments from the fathers of their children. Women between the ages of eighteen and thirty often have several children by a father living in Boston or New York, who may or may not send home money to support them. Also common is the situation of women having several children by different men in Monte Cruz or surrounding *campos*. Young men may stay with their *mujeres* (women) for a time, but this living arrangement is often dependent on their conduct and fidelity if a woman is financially self-sufficient. More commonly, women are completely dependent on their partner to financially provide for their children. While the law decrees that men must make child-payments, it is not enforced in Monte Cruz. In times of

domestic conflict, men often use their sister's or mother's houses as home bases—here they always have a meal or a bed available.

Migration and family separation contribute to great variation in residence patterns in Monte Cruz. Georges' study of a rural migrant community in northern Dominican Republic found that migration had a 'strong effect on household organization and was directly responsible for the great diversity in household composition observable in the community' (1990:19). While children in Monte Cruz often live with their mothers, today the large numbers of absent mothers and fathers have shifted child-raising responsibilities to grandmothers, aunts and cousins. Often resources are more indicative of where people live rather than other social residence rules; the decreasing numbers of couples that do get married go to live with whatever side of the family has the most resources and space. For example, as Nimela's cash flow from Edy's remittances increased, two more of her siblings moved in. They bought a new bed and began construction on a second room added on to the back of the house.

*Affinal ties*

Domestic partners are typically chosen from within the community or from surrounding *campos*. While migrants—men and women—do form relationships abroad and some men even have completely separate families in the U.S., a large number continue to have children with partners from their home community. The low incidence of endogamous *marriage*, on the other hand (only one took place in Monte Cruz in eight months) is related to many factors. Expense is a reason that few get married, and marriage is usually associated with higher-class aspirations. Among 'upper classes' (*clase alta*) in urban areas like Baní—people who belong not only to a higher-earning bracket of the population but also to cultural practices of Catholicism—marriage is more common and young couples often live on their own. In Monte Cruz, on the other hand, there is a weak grasp of Catholicism, the main proponent of marriage and monogamous relationships in the Dominican Republic. The one evangelical church that preaches monogamy here has an even weaker following, with no more than five people typically attending the weekly service.

People have become very disillusioned about the institution of marriage and monogamous relationships. Many migrants have established new lives in Boston and found romantic partners there, leaving others behind at home. Extreme forms of this discourse emerge in conversations among women who essentialize all Dominican men as womanizers. Men, on the other hand, blame women for their promiscuity and repeatedly claim that 'monogamy is not natural for human beings'. Moreover, having many children by different women is a sign of social prestige in Monte Cruz that certainly discourages marriage. Sexually transmitted disease is another element of transnational migration that has social implications, especially in heavily populated urban cities like New York and Boston from which migrants return. Women in Monte Cruz voice their concern over the health implications of multiple sexual partners, revealed in nervous gossip about neighbours or friends who have contracted HIV (on the rise in the area and in the country).

Monogamy is far from the ideal in Dominican society and even further from the practice. While Catholic teachings emphasize the importance of one partner and women express a desire for a man who does not 'run around', the reality is that polygamy is a widespread and accepted practice not only in places like Monte Cruz where a wedding is not affordable, but also in urban 'middle class' Dominican life. Sexual exploits are important to male identity and are a celebrated theme in popular music, literature and politics. Public figures (assassinated president Trujillo being notorious) have highly visible affairs and exhibit *machismo*. Men tell a favourite anecdote of former president Hipólito Mejia: once at a public event someone pointed out to him that his zipper was down and his response was 'Cuando la yucca es grande, abre la tierra' (when the yucca is big, the earth parts). Men reason that because there are more women than men in the Dominican Republic it is necessary for men to have multiple partners. Migration has made a tendency to break monogamous relationships even greater: couples separated for years with little physical contact find new partners. There exist a couple of expressions for these relationships: 'amores de lejos es amor de pendejos' (long-distance lovers are fools) and 'amores de lejos es mejor por los cuatros' (long distance relationships are better for all four).

Access to women's conversations, an advantage for the female anthropologist, revealed that women, on the other hand, are more cynical. In Monte Cruz, marriage has become rare

among the younger generations because it is an additional financial strain for families and also because women are disillusioned about monogamous relationships. The intense connections between communities in the Dominican Republic and Boston allow people to know the details of others' lives whether they like it or not, and little can be concealed. The popular TV show 'Aquí y Allá', which has production and filming crews in the U.S. and in the Dominican Republic, broadcasts Dominican events in Boston like birthday parties and weddings on Banilejo televisions and vice versa so that migrants in Boston can see what is happening at home. After the broadcast every Sunday night, phones in Monte Cruz start ringing so that people can gossip about whom they saw and whom they were with. The sight of a friend's husband/father of her children with another woman usually begins conversations on the 'unfaithful' character of Dominican men.

As HIV becomes more and more prevalent in this community, with a 2.5% infection rate of the total population in 2001[27], women view multiple sexual partners in an increasingly negative light and express frustration over partners who refuse to wear condoms.

> I told my husband to get something to stop me from getting pregnant, since the doctor told me it would be dangerous if I got pregnant again. He refused, even got mad. He said that he didn't want to wear a condom. So I got pregnant, and I almost died, I had a blood pressure problem and they had to put me in the hospital. That was when I decided to leave him.
>
> Tania, Monte Cruz

While curious about barrier methods against sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy, women are largely unaware of how HIV is transmitted. Peace Corps healthcare workers living in this area target HIV preventive education as one of their most important objectives. As traditional marriage becomes rarer, the institution is acquiring a different meaning. Migration has not only separated couples and caused a lot of disillusionment about marriage, but has also changed its purpose. Today marriage is more often seen as a strategy for migration rather than a sacred institution in the Catholic sense. Marrying a Puerto Rican or an American is a common strategy of reaching the U.S. and obtaining a green card, and is often viewed as an arrangement for businesses purposes. This perspective is clear by the fact that many long-term couples from Monte Cruz living in Boston are not married to each other but to U.S. citizens, and feel no pressure to change their legal status for the sake of their 'real' partner.

*Community and Race*

Continuing to choose affinal partners from Monte Cruz has maintained the sense of community, even abroad in Boston. The idea of 'community' in Monte Cruz is also enforced by a group consciousness of being *pobre y moreno* (poor and dark-skinned), similar to Hannerz' ethnography of a Washington D.C. ghetto, in which he explains how the 'community' is in part defined by a consciousness of being low-income and black (1969:12). A similar consciousness of enduring hardship unites the members of Monte Cruz. As in the urban U.S. ghetto, external forces ('the white outside world') make it difficult to live elsewhere (Ibid.:11). An ethos of poverty is exemplified by one *palo* tune called 'Here we've got nothing', ('Aquí nadie tiene nada'), which is commonly sung by members of the community and serves the purpose of calling the spirits' attention to a humble place.

While the two main colonial social classes of white Spanish upper class and black African lower class have disintegrated as Dominicans have intermarried and a 'middle class' has grown significantly in the twentieth century, racial categories remain and cultural markers still hold their associations, especially in Baní. As Chapter one made clear, many regions in the Dominican Republic have been historically segregated, and state policies of discrimination against rural populations of African descent have pushed people of darker skin colour into marginal *campos*. Music such as ga-ga and palo, for example, are marginal because they represent a connection with an African past and a Haitian present. Skin colour still corresponds to class; the darker someone's skin, the more socially disadvantaged s/he is. The Baní region was no exception; Levitt argues that anti-Haitian sentiments have always been especially strong among Canary Island Banilejos who have maintained their segregation from people of African descent (2001a:34).

This segregation is ongoing. In Paya, a town ten kilometres down the road (settled by Canary isleños), there have always been implicit rules about *rubios* (light-skinned people) who live in one part of the town marrying *morenos* (dark-skinned people) in the other part of town[28]. One informant recalled that when he moved to the community in 1956, a young *rubia* was ostracized for dancing merengue with a *moreno*. In this town people of Spanish descent have

kept their traditions separate as well; the annual fiesta of their patron saint has always been celebrated in two ways. There is a very 'Spanish' fiesta that includes horse racing and corralling in the Spanish tradition and there is a separate fiesta of the *morenos* in a different location that incorporates drumming and Vodú activities.

Terms of racial classification, used in everyday language, also illustrate a legacy of division. In terms of skin colour going from dark to light, the darkest people are called *prieto/a* or *moreno/a,* (often Haitians are described with these terms), then *indio/a,* then *indio claro* ( a light-skinned indio), and then *rubio/a*, which is a very broad category that could be applied to anyone with the combination of light skin and 'eyes of colour,' (*ojos de colór*) light skin and 'good' hair of any colour, or 'eyes of colour' and 'good' hair. Hair is classified as 'good' or 'bad' corresponding respectively to straight/curly vs. coarser 'afro' hair. It is standard in Dominican hair salons to use chemical hair-straightening treatments, blow dryers, and curlers for straightening. It is common for women to apply 'lightening' creams on their faces at night, and some wear 'bought eyes' (*ojos comprados*): contact lenses of colour if they are concerned about their appearance. It must be emphasized, however, that strict rules and racial division have not prevented people of Spanish, African and indigenous descent from mixing genetic and cultural information for centuries in the Dominican Republic, and Dominican salons, for all their business straightening hair, are nevertheless famous in New York for being able to handle any type of hair—a testimony to the phenotypical diversity of the Dominican Republic.

A consciousness of being *pobre y moreno* (poor and dark-skinned) emerges in jokes and songs in Monte Cruz. When babies are born, there is great conversation and anticipation about what their 'colour' will be. This preoccupation may occur for many reasons, but it is obvious that people prefer babies to be lighter-skinned, if only because they will have an easier life. A couple weeks after one baby was born in the neighbourhood, her grandmother commented, 'Poor little *negra*, she'll be as black as me'. The term 'negra' (black) is commonly used as a term of endearment, regardless of someone's colour. Paradoxically, being dark-skinned in Monte Cruz is not equated in any way with African roots from the perspective of most community members. While Montecruzeños consider themselves dark-skinned, Haitians—those most 'African'—are

always considered darker, the *prietos*, a somewhat derogatory term that is also used for pans that get burnt black in fires. There are generally very few Haitian families in Monte Cruz, and most Haitians in the area spend dry seasons in temporary houses in the dry river bed, while more permanent dwellers live in the *bateyes*, sugar cane camps with no electricity in isolated rural settlements several miles away.

Banilejos also label Monte Cruz as the place where *gente morena* or *gente negra* (black people) live. This 'blackness' is also equated with *tigueraje* (toughness, hoodlooms), and many people in Baní confess they are afraid to venture into the campo where they expect to be robbed or shot. When I interviewed people in Baní, they would often ask me where I lived, and when I told them, I sometimes got a response of horror or disgust, followed by the question, 'why do you live there with all those black people'? The labelling of Monte Cruz as 'moreno' or 'black' does not correspond with the physical reality of skin colour, however. Many people in Baní are just as dark-skinned as Montecruzeños, and many Montecruzenos are just as dark-skinned as Haitians. Not only do *morenos* live everywhere, skin colour is also very changeable, often determined by a person's job (which corresponds to socio-economic status and home location). The worst jobs are those that force people to labour in the sun and maintain their dark skin colour: these include agricultural workers (Haitians) and to a lesser degree motorcycle taxis, who spend all day in the sun driving people around. People with office jobs have the luxury to stay indoors in air conditioning, and do their best to protect themselves from the sun. These examples illustrate how place, not just physical skin colour, defines 'race' in Dominican society; the *campo* is equated with a race whether it physically corresponds to this label or not.

*Politics and Community Decision Making*

In Monte Cruz there are structures present for decision-making that affect the whole community both home and abroad. While the highest authority is the nation state and then the provincial governments, rural communities like Monte Cruz are marginal to national concerns, and outside political bodies have little involvement in daily life or decision making. Public services are the responsibility of municipality of Baní, but the presence of the *ayuntamiento* (town

hall) is limited. While the town government will install a streetlight, Montecruzeños must pay to have it changed when it burns out, and as a result there are few working lights over roads kept in poor condition. Electricity is provided by private companies, but if a line is damaged, neighbours must pool together money to have it fixed. Since cash is scarce, many young men attempt to fix it themselves, risking the commonplace event of electrocution. There are daily power outages and outrages over the unreliable electricity, and people claim that the previous presidential administration, which privatized the electric company, is responsible for the poor services.

While Monte Cruz is not politically autonomous and must ultimately bend to national and provincial political bodies, the bulk of decision making regarding the community as a whole is facilitated through two organized groups in Monte Cruz. The first group is the *junta de agricultores*, a group of landowners who cultivate the land in the community. This group meets every Sunday in Monte Cruz' one-room school house to organize work teams (since a lot of the heavy labour can only be accomplished by many men working together) and socialize. Women landowners (often older women) are also invited to this meeting and are 'supposed' to be there, but rarely go. Those who own land have the strongest ties to the community, and even though agriculture is no longer a viable income strategy due to land fragmentation, these individuals have significant clout in the community.

A different and more visible group is responsible for community social events and the spiritual well being of Monte Cruz. This group consists of elder women (often the wives, sisters or close relations of the predominately male *junta de agricultores*) and is known as the *cofradía* (brotherhood) of Santa Elena. The head of this group is a woman who is the eldest in her family and hereditary keeper of the *hermita*. Generations ago, as the story goes, her ancestor witnessed the coming of Santa Elena, and was told that Santa Elena would be the protector of the community from then on. The head of the *cofradía* lives next door to the church and is responsible for its upkeep which includes sweeping the dirt courtyard around the church, maintaining lit candles on the altar, and keeping the ceramic figures of the saints clean of dust. This woman's family is also very strongly involved in the *cofradia*, and several of her sisters are spirit mediums with the ability to communicate directly with the *misterios* of Dominican Vodú.

Other members of the *cofradía* are elder women (and some men) living in Monte Cruz descended from one of the four main families that settled the area in the 1800s. Palo groups are also part of the cofradía.

When someone in the community is having trouble and seeks spiritual intervention to solve her problems, the *cofradía* organizes an afternoon procession and spiritual gathering. Today, these processions routinely occur as another community member prepares to go to the U.S. or when a family member abroad is arrested. The procession starts in the homestead of the petitioner, where the cofradía members lead the community in Catholic Hail Marys, prayers to La Virgen de Altagracía and Santa Elena. The procession then leaves the homestead and moves through the community's main roads, singing *salves* (religious songs) to other saints such as San Antonio and San Miguel. The procession appears to be Catholic—people clutch their rosaries, sing Hail Marys and carry a statue of Santa Elena on a litter—except for the fact that along the way people become possessed with the different saints who have entered their bodies to communicate with the crowd. Taking on the personality of the saint who has possessed them, old women of the *cofradia* will smoke cigars, swear and speak a spirit language while the procession patiently waits.

Besides ensuring the spiritual well being of the community, the *cofradía* makes decisions about social events. The major event of the year for Monte Cruz, as for all other communities in the Dominican Republic, is the *patronales* (referred to in the plural form), the fiesta of patron saint Santa Elena that takes place for nine days at the end of August every year. The organization of this fiesta is a huge effort, involving money-raising, negotiation of the site where the fiesta will be held, and coordination of religious activities that launch every evening's festivities. Most of the money raising for the *patronales* comes from the donations of Montecruzeños abroad, who often coincide their visits with the fiesta. It is a tradition that on each of the nine nights a different member of the *cofradía* provides bread, candy, and sodas for those involved in evening prayers—some two hundred people or more. The *cofradía* must also organize the dozens of vendors that sell Presidente beer, sausages, fried yucca, plantains, and chicken. Since Montecruzeños have begun migrating, the celebration has grown increasingly elaborate and expensive each year, so

that in addition to the traditional dancing and feasting, there is also a ferris wheel and fifteen six-foot stereo speakers stacked on top of each other that will blast merengue, bachata and salsa so loud it can be heard miles away. A measure of the extent of migration from a community can be determined by the expense of its *patronales*, which has become a matter of pride for many *campos*. The *cofradía* must maintain strong contact with Montecruzeños abroad in order to ensure the success of the community's most important celebration.

With little representation in the local, provincial and national government (elected representatives are overwhelmingly 'white' or light-skinned) Montecruzeños learn to be politically self-sufficient and rely on the *junta de agricultores* and the *cofradía* for making larger community decisions. In terms of police services and safety, Montecruzeños have attitudes ranging from disgruntled acceptance of their marginality to vocal opposition towards government structures that ignore the community's safety, electricity and maintenance needs. Occasionally, however, conditions become intolerable and community members must engage with the outside political world. This engagement takes the form of strikes and demonstrations, which are often the only way to express discontent. When Montecruzeños organized a collective protest against the frequent power outages in 2001, police attempted to quell the demonstration by firing rubber bullets and tear gas at participants. Informants enjoy telling the tale of the police chasing the strike leader:

> They shot him with a rubber bullet when he got to the river, and he fell over because he thought he was dead. But when someone yelled it was just a rubber bullet, he got up and started running again. They chased him through the neighbourhood to the main street where he climbed and hid in the jasmine tree. The police couldn't find him and they looked for him all night. Finally, they gave up and left two policemen behind to stand watch. They stood for the rest of the night under the jasmine tree without any idea he was above their heads! They never got him, either.
>
> Nelio, 17-years-old, Monte Cruz

This story, which is always accompanied by a great deal of laughter in Monte Cruz, is not told with a tone of outrage or victimization, but with a sense of humour and even resignation. It illustrates the strained relationship between the police enforcement—located in the town of Baní—and the young men of Monte Cruz. When Banilejo officials do venture out to Monte Cruz, it is usually because of a violent crime. National and local police see Monte Cruz and other

outlying *campos* as havens for delinquents, drugs (predominately marijuana and cocaine) and *tigres* (hoodlums), and have concentrated their criminal search efforts in these locations. This opinion is shared by townspeople. The image of the *campo* as a lawless place had led to police crackdowns in the community; after an especially violent period of robbings and murders in Baní in 2003, the police began nightly round-ups of men out after dark, targeting *campos* like Monte Cruz in particular. In Monte Cruz, many men were locked up overnight in the *fortaleza*, the regional prison, until morning, whether guilty or not. Every day the queue of Montecruzeño families bringing lunch plates to prisoners would fill the parking lot and pavement outside the gates.

The police of Baní and the province of Peravia are feared for their powers of *carta blanca* 'which allow them to do whatever they want', as one informant put it. More often bullets are real rather than rubber, and police drug raids in Monte Cruz and neighbouring *campos* have more than once turned out to be lethal when neighbourhood members were caught in the crossfire. Community members of Mata Gorda to the south were bitter towards police for a recent shooting in which two children were killed. During fieldwork I witnessed the shooting of a neighbour by police in front of my house; he was wanted for selling cocaine. No account of this event ever appeared in a newspaper. These incidents leave homesteads in a frenzy of fear and suspicion and largely account for the high distrust of strangers. At the same time, there is an eerie acceptance of violence and crime, and few make the effort to investigate and publicize events to the larger community, a real indication of Monte Cruz's place on the margins of a more literate mainstream society. The news of violence is spread in the Baní area through rumours, which further marginalize Monte Cruz by enforcing its reputation as a dangerous place of thieves and murderers. When the provincial police force (whose headquarters are located between Monte Cruz and Baní) employs Montecruzeños as guards or officers, it creates tension in the community. This is not surprising considering the fact that the police have authority and exercise it on the marginal groups in which *tigres* are commonly believed to be hiding.

Because families live together, conflicts between individuals have the potential to start family feuds, and a number of violent confrontations have occurred. These conflicts and feuds do

not stay within national boundaries but are played out in Boston. Conflicts in the U.S. also cause tensions between families in Baní and Monte Cruz, as the following chapter will illustrate in more detail.

*Exchange*

Monte Cruz has traditionally operated on a system of balanced reciprocity, and systems of exchange and neighbourly obligation have endured in the migration process to some extent. Neighbours, who are often consanguineal or fictive kin, are part of important exchange and support networks; those in need in the community are provided for, knowing that they will reciprocate this assistance at some time in the future. For example, the children of sick neighbours are always cared for and fed, and women who 'borrow' anything from petrol to plantains from a neighbour spend the morning cleaning her house in return. A woman who owns land will ask several trusted men in her neighbourhood (most often her *compadres*) to help sow peas or corn and promise them a portion of the harvest. All men help to build a house or other structures expecting that they will need help some time in the future. Most exchanges take place between people of the same age cohort and are not restricted to same sex. These networks of exchange and reciprocity endure in the migration process, so that a favour owed a neighbour in Monte Cruz can be reciprocated by relatives abroad in Boston. Although economic transactions between migrants and the home community can be complicated and rely on family intermediaries and long time periods, migrants often prefer to make certain purchases in the Dominican Republic, such as musical instruments, medicines, and special Dominican products such as salami, cheese, and rum. Intermediaries also facilitate business transactions such as collecting rent on a property in Monte Cruz for the migrant owner living abroad.

When migrant earnings create larger income disparities between community members, the reciprocal tradition of helping those in need loses its 'balanced' nature; households that receive migrant remittances end up sharing some portion of their resources with the entire neighbourhood, since denying a plea for help from one's neighbours is not customary. When migrants come home, they often distribute money and resources throughout the community,

giving a terminally ill neighbour twenty dollars, for example. This money is often not repaid nor expected to be repaid, but this unequal dynamic contributes to an elevation of return migrants' and migrant families' social status. Migrants who return home or remit money earn great respect, and migrant homesteads become social centres where community members are constantly making social calls, bringing over buckets of fruit or other food or providing labour in an attempt to reciprocate assistance.

*The limits of income-generating stategies: A macro-perspective*

While people rely on each other for a large variety of goods and services, Monte Cruz cannot function autonomously and has been made dependent on the larger structures of the Dominican nation state, the U.S., and global economic markets, all factors contributing to migration. As the previous chapter outlined to some extent, macro-economic factors like dependencies on the world market play a significant role in propelling Dominican out-migration (Grasmuck & Pessar 1991:9). As a poor community, Monte Cruz is in a precarious position within the economy of the Dominican Republic, shaky due to decades of economic and political crises. The macro-level perspective is not only important in understanding the obstacles that Montecruzeños face in their everyday lives but also in informing how transnationalism has been constructed and maintained. These factors include the historical military dominance of the U.S. over the Dominican Republic, the position of the Dominican Republic in the global economy, and immigration quotas imposed by the U.S. government.

How have relationships between the U.S., the Dominican nation state and the rest of the globe shaped transnational migration? According to Wallerstein, the modern world-system is driven by a global capitalist economy that is "larger than any juridically defined political unit" (1974b: 15). This 'world economy' consists of militarily strong states exploiting semiperipheral states for a profit. Dominican Republic/U.S. relations are a model example of Wallerstein's theory. U.S commercial interests in the Dominican Republic have a long history of domination; in the late nineteenth century American countries began to invest in Dominican sugar cultivation, which became the island's major export crop. Since then most arable land of the Dominican

Republic has been devoted to cash crops, creating a dependency on world market prices and imported foodstuffs. U.S. sugar companies increased their investment in sugar and increasingly bought land in the Dominican Republic, they created an infrastructure for transportation, sanitation, education, and banking that established and fortified links between the two countries. U.S. commercial interests in the Dominican Republic also proliferated in the 1960s after Trujillo's death and the subsequent U.S. military occupation opened the island's borders to the outside world. At this time the U.S. government allowed Dominican political dissidents to immigrate, who formed the first Dominican immigrant communities in the northeast. 'Close economic ties between sending and receiving countries . . . imply well-developed transportation and communication links between them' (Massey 1991:26). These networks are essential for the constant back and forth movement that Dominican transnationals maintain in their business practices and home country commitments.

Decisions to move to the U.S. have not only been made in the context of an unstable economy and job loss, the demand for unskilled labor in the U.S. (and also in Spain and other European countries) has also created an incentive to emigrate for many Dominicans from poor communities such as Monte Cruz. While the quantity of migrants legally allowed to enter is set based on quotas, labor demand---a reflection of global market forces and how U.S. businesses remain globally competitive by using low-paid labour—ensures that there will always be a steady stream of Dominicans entering the U.S. undocumented.

Dominican dependence upon the U.S. and global economies has produced negative consequences that have contributed to emigration. For example, in the 1980s protective tariffs on sugar imports and reduced quotas in the U.S.—the result of lobbying by U.S. agricultural producers—devastated the Dominican economy. To curtail debt, the administration of Salvador Jorge Blanco (1982-86) made structural adjustment negotiations with the International Monetary Fund. The result of rescheduling debts with foreign investors and imposing other austerity measures meant higher food prices and harder times for the country's poorest, which included communities like Monte Cruz. Montecruzeños recall the food riots in the capitol during the Blanco administration and the surge in migration to Venezuela during the 1980s.

When originally created, these connections formed networks for later migrations by not only establishing transportation and communication infrastructures, but by inscribing "America" into Dominican popular imaginations. The craze of baseball, introduced to the Dominican Republic in the early 1900s, has since become a national institution to the extent that U.S minor and major baseball leagues recruit heavily in the Dominican Republic. Today the lure of a U.S. baseball contract is the dream of many young Montecruzeño boys. American consumerism has also been exported to the D.R. through these long established communitcation and transportation networks, creating material appetites that can only be sustained through by working in the U.S. Looking even farther back in history, the colonial legacy of the Dominican Republic has also influenced contemporary value systems that propel migration. U.S. and European systems of racial classification that founded slavery in the Americas and Middle East still maintain a 'black' underclass of *morenos* today. It is common knowledge that in the Dominican Republic (and throughout the Caribbean), the 'darker' a person's skin color, the fewer the opportunities he/she has access to. A large quantity of undocumented Dominicans in the U.S. are descended from African slaves--Montecruzeños being one example.

*The affects of global processes in Baní and Monte Cruz*

Coffee was grown in the Baní area in the past two hundred years, and cultivation and processing efforts were concentrated in Monte Cruz and settlements to the north. When coffee declined in the early twentieth century because of competition from Colombia and Brazil, Monte Cruz lost its most viable source of income. Moreover, deforestation of the region affected rainfall and has made the climate too arid for coffee trees, which enjoy a cooler, wetter environment (Vega 1987:153). Hurricane George in 1979 devastated what was left of the region's trees. The industry has since only recovered slightly and many farmers with the skills to grow coffee have continued doing so, but they lose most of their profits through middlemen who sell the coffee to large companies in the capital[29]. In contrast with more prosperous times, the coffee industry today provides only limited seasonal employment for the small group of women and children who pick through and clean the beans in processing warehouses every September.

In Monte Cruz, the cash crop economy has become less viable as the population has increased, fragmenting plots of farmable family land that once provided the bulk of diets. Even if the minority of families have small parcels of land on which they might harvest fruits and vegetables such as pigeon peas, plantains, bananas, yucca, tomatoes and yams, they must buy basic staples such as cooking oil, rice, and cooking gas from Baní or from small *colmados* who purchase these items in Baní. There is little firewood left; hundreds of years of settlement have deforested the area and left the hills with only scrub vegetation, so that propane gas is currently the most available cooking option[30]. A large amount of farmable land in Monte Cruz is owned by the government but goes unused. Cash is needed for drinking water, which must be purchased from one of the two water factories in town that deliver five gallon tanks (*botellones*) to the *colmados*. If people do not have a well (ground water is not plentiful in all places and the river is usually dry), they must purchase even larger tanks of non-drinking water (used for bathing, washing dishes and cooking) from a company that makes monthly deliveries. In the common situation that people do not have cash, they must drink well water or bathing water. Water-born illnesses such as typhoid and intestinal parasites appear in the population from time to time and are expensive to treat. Prices for daily necessities such as drinking water constantly fluctuate with the U.S. dollar, making monthly budgeting extremely unpredictable.

This dependency on global market forces is manifested in the community of Monte Cruz as the need for a cash income to buy goods such as petrol, cooking oil and rice. Seeking ways to earn cash, Montecruzeños have been part of the rural-to-urban migratory flows affecting the rest of the Republic. Many have sought work in the city of Baní, which offers some employment in sales retail, auto-mechanics, and the transportation industry. Women work in the *cabañas tentación*, a hotel catering to illicit couples down the road. There is an Industrial Free Trade Zone southwest of Baní in which multi-national U.S. corporations have production and assembly facilities. It is located relatively close to Monte Cruz, so that people have worked there while continuing to live in Monte Cruz.

Migration to the U.S. and reinvestment in Baní have created some job opportunities for Montecruzeños. Banilejos have returned home in large numbers and have greater mobility than

Montecruzeños between the U.S. and the Dominican Republic. They have reinvested their migrant savings in the town of Baní, creating markets for entertainment, consumer goods like music and televisions, and clothes. Montecruzeños have attempted to enter those markets, selling pirated CDs burnt on home computers or bought in Santo Domingo and clothes made at home or bought at a cheaper price in Haiti. The growing construction industry provides sporadic work in wealthier neighbourhoods of Boca Canasta and Villa Fundación as migrants return home, refurbish their houses and build new ones. Montecruzeña women find domestic work as cooks and cleaners in the homes of wealthier migrants.

The transportation industry has also increased with the influx of returned Banilejo migrants. There is now a great demand for motorcycle taxis known as *motoconchos*, which cost ten pesos—about fifty cents—to travel wherever the customer wants. As Banilejos have more spending money and muggings have increased (spreading fear of *tigres*), people walk less and take *motoconchos* more. Some fifteen to twenty men (most Montecruzeños) serve the corners of the two roads that enter Baní from Monte Cruz; with forty to fifty more working inside the town of Baní (men from different parts of the Baní area). In Monte Cruz, most homesteads have a man who works as a *motoconchero*. Transporting people on a motorcycle all day under a Caribbean sun behind trucks belching with exhaust is a job left to those desperate for money, typically the young men from the peripheral rural communities like Monte Cruz. Returning Banilejos also commonly invest in *guaguas*, small buses that transport up to forty people to the capital and back several times a day. The Banilejo owners hire young men from *campos* like Monte Cruz to drive the *guaguas*. This job has become a notorious occupation due to the dangerous road and high number of traffic fatalities as well as the vulnerability that a person with large sums of cash faces (most *guagua* drivers carry guns). As in other Latin American countries, *guaguas* display a large variety of religious paraphernalia such as crosses and saint effigies.

A small income can be gained through businesses located in the home, but it is usually not sufficient to support a family. Nearly every house in Monte Cruz is sells something or uses the home as a business. People place random assortments of fruit and vegetables on pieces of cardboard in front of their houses to sell to passersby. There are seventeen *colmados* selling basic goods such as cooking oil, rice, plantains, candles, and salt. Some people earn money by

preparing meals for people who come home from the fields or from work in Baní at noon every day. Tables go up in front yards for potential customers and large pots come out for cooking a forty *peso* meal of rice, beans and chicken. Night is the time for fried food, and many women have glass cases where they pile up fried plantains, chicken, potatoes, and yucca for sale.

A good number of houses also advertise clothes, cosmetics, and costume jewellery for sale. This merchandise is made by seamstresses in Monte Cruz, purchased in Haiti or imported from Los Angeles or other U.S. locations by crate[31]. There are many hairdressers and barbers as well, who work out of their houses but rarely advertise. Hairdressing is one of the most common occupations for young women in Monte Cruz and Baní. People make money in a more mobile way by selling products such as plastic goods, tools, fruits, or the latest pirated *bachata* album from New York out of their vehicles.

However, their skills and labour are not invested in Monte Cruz, but Baní instead, and income is too small to provide a significant cash flow to the community[32], evident by loud complaints of people and search for more profitable jobs. At the *zona franca* and in other occupations the pay is small; working ten or twelve hours a day in a sweatshop brings in 600 pesos a week in difficult, hot conditions, barely enough for a family's expenses. The activities of transnational migrants are more profitable than working in sweatshops because people work for themselves, their families, and their friends, avoiding corporate and government structures.

General agreement that these cash-generating strategies are simply not sufficient for many families is evident in the conversations of people and in a number of daily sights in Monte Cruz. Insufficient cash is also evident in the custom of people who struggle each day to make ends meet; women walk to the corner *colmado* to buy one *peso* of tomato paste, two *pesos* of shampoo or one *peso* of cooking oil for the largest meal at midday. One U.S. Peace Corps worker wrote that in February 2004 when the peso tripled in just one year from sixteen to fifty pesos per U.S. dollar, the people in her neighbourhood of Baní 'hardly ever buy meat now, most meals are not much more than rice and beans, yucca with oil, boiled *platanos*'[33]. Narratives of people are also a strong indication of financial hardship, as Nigiele, a 37-year-old Montecruzeña, made clear: 'They've increased the price of bread again; rolls are five pesos now! And oil, and rice, too—it's

all more expensive. We are already *los pobres* (the poor), I don't see how we are going to make it. I can't even make my *cheles* (pocket change)'. Financial hardship also makes travel difficult, since the price of petrol is always the first commodity to rise. Mariza, a Montecruzenã in the process of applying for a U.S. visas (even though she did not expect to receive one), voiced her frustration over her education, 'I was enrolled in an accounting course in the capital. I completed one year, but now the bus fare is too expensive to go to Santo Domingo and I can't finish it. I have started and stopped the course four times now over the past two years'.

When the U.S. dollar is high and prices for basic necessities like rice and oil increase, the desperation of the poorest is evident by the increase of muggings and robberies. During one period of high inflation during fieldwork, I was instructed to sew inside pockets for hiding money inside all of my clothes. Muggings became commonplace and the adage, 'you'll get slapped if your pockets are empty' was jokingly repeated to those who left valuables at home. The town coroner, Walter Lopez, attributed increasing violence to the economy: 'when people can't buy food and men spend money on alcohol and there isn't enough for food for the family—conflict results. When alcohol is involved, it's worse'. Only those who have dollars—migrant families—can weather periods of high inflation. The lack of steady income and an unpredictable economy along with low earnings from the few jobs that are available for Montecruzeños are major factors contributing to the current Montecruzeño migration to Boston. Even wealthier Banilejos, who are comparatively better off, state that they move to Boston for economic reasons, finding migration a better alternative to earning an income in the Dominican Republic.

As Portes et al point out, 'under the conditions set by global capitalism at present, mobilization of social networks for engagement in transnational ventures offers to Third World workers and immigrants abroad a superior alternative' (1999:230). While cultural practices and racial stereotypes marginalize Montecruzeños and define them as underclasses, the necessity of migration for many Montecruzeños also distinguishes it from what Bray has called 'middle class migration'[34]. Bray argued in 1984 that it was this class of people from which the majority of Dominicans in the U.S. originated. This category includes people living in rural areas, but of a different status than the majority of Montecruzeños because they own medium and large-sized

farms. Most Montecruzeños, on the other hand, as this chapter has illustrated, have very little land of their own and migrate because they had no viable income (Ibid.:221). In general, the majority of people living rural areas are impoverished, lacking electricity, paved roads and viable income strategies.

*Summary*

This chapter has illustrated how migrants face marginalization because of racism, geographic location, lack of viable income generating strategies, and a label as lawbreaking *tigres*. These identifications are imposed externally by mainstream society, while a consciousness of being poor and black is internalized by Montecruzeños as well. From a global prespective, their social institutions have been informed by the constraints of colonial and neo-colonial powers, from religious institutions to rural subsistence strategies borne of agricultural subservience. The socio-economic disadvantages that result from historical marginalization are important factors influencing migration processes; they determine the access that a group has to a particular destination, the method by which they get there, and the ease with which they can settle in new place. While Montecruzeños use their own kin networks as well as Banilejo networks to live in the U.S., these networks are not enough; they must first get past the barriers of the sending and receiving nation states which set visa regulations favouring educated, wealthier Dominicans. The next chapter will look at the strategies that Montecruzeños employ to circumvent national migration controls and the limitations they inherit as *pobres y morenos*. How do these strategies bring risk, danger and unpredictability into migrants' lives, and how do migrants deal with these challenges?

## Chapter Three

## 'Breaking the Rules': migrant strategies and their risks

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Señor Consul' | 'Mr. Consulate' |
| Yo me voy<br>Por que aquí no tengo na'<br>Por que aquí no quiero nada<br>Y ya no me importa na' | I'm going<br>Because here I have nothing<br>Because here I don't want anything<br>And I don't care anymore |
| Nadando, Yo me voy<br>Volando<br>Corriendo<br>Cantando<br>Riendo y llorando<br>Mi tierra, dejando | Swimming, I'll go<br>Flying<br>Running<br>Singing<br>Laughing and Crying<br>Leaving my home |
| Tengo mi tike'<br>Sí, señor, y mi papele'<br>E'toy bonito para e'te viaje | I've got my ticket<br>Yessir, and my papers<br>I'm good for this journey |
| Tengo un colmado<br>Y cuarto en el banco<br>Y do' casita<br>Y mi trabajo | I have a colmado<br>and money in the bank<br>and two little houses<br>and my work |
| Yo soy muy serio<br>E'toy casado<br>Tre' muchachito, E' procreado<br>Tengo do' casa<br>Y tre' colmado<br>Y a'ta un carrito<br>Ya me e'comprao | I'm really serious<br>I'm married<br>Three little kids and more<br>I've got two houses<br>and three colmados<br>and a car<br>already bought |

Palo, Edis Sánchez 2000

This palo song neatly captures a major point of the previous chapters, which analyzed the historical conditions that have marginalized the community of Monte Cruz. The lyrics 'I'm going [to the U.S.] because I have nothing, I don't care anymore' are one expression of how Montecruzeños lack resources and have faced considerable disadvantages compared to other Dominican migrant groups in their attempts to migrate to the United States and other countries. Because visas are most commonly given to middle and upper classes, Montecruzeños have had to invent creative strategies for getting to the U.S. that often 'break the rules', as the popular Dominican bachata band Aventura puts it. In 'Señor Consul', the singer declares s/he will get to

the U.S. by a number of desperate measures: 'swimming', 'flying' or even 'running', alluding to the various means of undocumented entry by sea, land and air that poor Dominicans attempt. This chapter will look at migrant strategies for entering the U.S., finding employment and settling in expensive northeastern cities. Some migrants are successful, finding the means to remit money back home, while others have more difficulty. The consequences of these migration strategies—exposure to risk, insecurity and even violence—are not limited to migrants alone but to all Montecruzeños at home and abroad who share the transnational social field. This chapter will analyze the challenges of entering the U.S., settling in a city, and finding a job. Often these challenges are expressed in the lyrics of popular Dominican music, which will be included along with migrant vignettes.

*Reaching the U.S.*

The national and global contexts that shape transnational migration have very local effects on communities like Monte Cruz. For example, the palo song that opened this chapter reflects how national quota systems impact everyday lives. The fact that the palo song is directed at a consular official is a joke, because the chances of a poor person getting a legitimate visa are extremely slim. By the end of the 'Señor Consul', the man realizes the futility of his efforts, and in trying to persuade the consular official that he has the requirements for his visa, tells lies about his financial means that become increasingly absurd. He goes from owning one colmado to owning three colmados, a car and two houses. Despite his efforts to migrate legally, it is obviously a joke that someone of his status could do so, hence, the necessity of undocumented entry. As this song illustrates, legal migration to the U.S. favours Dominicans with financial means. Information supplied by the United States Embassy indicates that in the six-month period between 1 October 2002 and 31 March 2003, a total of 11,858 resident visas and 21,190 travel visas were issued to Dominicans. These visas were issued to people who could present proof of substantial funds in the bank, residence, property and business ownership and a marriage certificate. 'More than 90 per cent of US "permanent" visas for employment based immigration are targeted at well educated and skilled immigrants and their families' (Kaye 2003). The

assumption of U.S. migration policy makers is that the more resources a person has in the Dominican Republic, the more likely s/he will return and not over-stay the visa. Because U.S. immigration law favours family-reunification, visas continue to be given to middle and upper classes, reinforcing social class selectivity.

Taking a broader look at the institutionalization of migration policy in transnational societes, we might look at John Meyers neo-institutional theory, which he defines as a ". . .macrosociological theory of the effects of education as a system of legitimization. Education restructures whole populations, creating and expanding elites. . .' (1977: 2). Individuals migrate, but the process has a much larger sociological effect: the process of migrating is in itself a legitimizing process, where those chosen are respected in a way that makes others want to emulate their actions. But it is a self-perpetuatung process of selection; those legally allowed to migrate come from privileged backgrounds.

In Monte Cruz, where even marriage is not common because of the expense, simply paying the application fees for a visa (DR$4,400—more than US$100) is a large financial investment. In a process where the potential migrant must convince the Immigration and Naturalization Services officer at the U.S. embassy, physical appearance and confidence level make a big difference (Pessar 1995:7). Acquiring a legal non-immigrant student, work, travel visa, or a resident visa (acquired through a lottery, family member or work contract) through standard protocols with the U.S. consulate is not a possibility for many. And even if people do manage to scrape together the necessary resources, very few tourist visas are given out. Many have applied multiple times with the right requirements but have never received any type of visa. As Pessar notes in her ethnography of Dominican migration to the United States, 'the expenses, social skills, and social contacts involved in acquiring a visa are beyond the reach of many of the very poor' (Ibid.:6).

*Undocumented entry*

For the many not lucky enough to be granted a visa, there remains the option of undocumented entry. The U.S. embassy estimated that in 1996 there were roughly 75,000

undocumented Dominicans in the U.S[35]. While strategies of entry are numerous, undocumented entry through Puerto Rico is extremely common and the topic of a well-known merengue by Wilfredo Vargas:

| | |
|---|---|
| Puerto Rico queda cerca | Puerto Rico is nearby |
| pero móntate en avion | but board an airplane |
| y si consigues la visa, | and if you get your visa, |
| no hay problema en Inmigración. | then there's no problem with Immigration. |
| Pero no te vayas en *yola*, | But don't go by *yola*, |
| no te llenes de ilusioniones | don't be filled with illusions |
| porque en el Canal de la Mona | because in the Mona Canal |
| te comen los tiburones. | the sharks will eat you. |

(Vargas:2000)

Dominicans (typically young men who go this route) pay around U.S. $500 (as of May 2003) to take a *yola* boat leaving from the town of Miches on the northern coast of the island. The journey can take up to ten hours and crosses the Mona Passage, a 70-mile body of water separating the two islands. This popular method of migration to the U.S. by boat from Miches to Puerto Rico is dangerous. The U.S. Coast Guard picked up 1,700 Dominicans in illegal voyages to Puerto Rico in the one-year period between September 2002 and 2003. More than 300 Dominicans have died or gone missing in the past three years, according to U.S. Border Patrol records (James 2003). In January of 2004, there was a huge surge in people attempting to cross the Mona Passage by boat; estimates of 1,500 people were intercepted in *yolas* in January, up from the 180 caught in December of 2003 (Ibid.). This increase is attributed to the downturn in the economy and severe dollar inflation that has affected the poorest Dominicans most severely and stimulated desires to earn money in the U.S (Dodds 2004). One Montecruzeño farmer reflected on travelling to Puerto Rico by *yola*:

> Sure, it's scary to go in those *yolas*, I've gone twice and thanks to God I made it. I have friends who haven't made it, bless their souls. But what are you going to do? People can't go by plane, obviously, who has the money for that? And that's only if you are lucky enough to get a visa. They are really stingy with their visas, you know, they don't give them to *pobres* (poor folks) like us.

One day while in the bank in Baní, I heard the noon national news channel reported that several Dominicans had been killed when their *yola* capsized. A Banilejo bank clerk commented,

> Those poor desperate people, they cram themselves into those tiny boats that they build out of nothing. They go all night in those things, and most of the time they capsize or get caught by the Coast Guard. All those *pobres* out there in Villa Nueva, Fundación, Monte Cruz [*campos* outside Baní or low-income areas on the periphery of Baní] do drastic things like this, it's like when they try to reconnect their power lines by themselves and get electrocuted. I guess they have no choice.

In the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico, Dominicans earn money as agricultural labourers or work other temporary jobs until they can purchase a social security number and passport for travelling to the U.S. Work in Puerto Rico is difficult and low-paid, and Dominicans are often targets of discrimination and mistreatment. While in Puerto Rico, many attempt to marry a Puerto Rican (an American citizen) to obtain a green card and entry into the United States.

One migrant who decided to take his chance on a *yola* to Puerto Rico was José, a nineteen-year-old with two older brothers in the U.S. who were both serving three year sentences for possession and sale of drugs in Boston. As one of six children, his father's small *conuco* (farm plot) could not support more than one family, which was partly why his brothers migrated. After they were arrested and their remittance money stopped coming in, he knew he had to find work. He had found temporary work stints building houses for return migrants in Las Marias, a wealthy neighbourhood in Baní, but knew that it could not sustain himself or his family. He felt that his choices were limited in Monte Cruz. 'I knew that if I could get to Nueva York and see my people, I would be ok', he said. 'They said they would hook me up with a job. My uncle had a garage in Dorchester [a neighbourhood of Boston], and I could help them out for a while'. One of his brothers had a girlfriend in Jamaica Plain who offered him a place to stay. Even though his mother begged him not to take a *yola*, he decided it was the cheapest and only way of getting to the U.S. His brothers had applied for visas and were denied, and he did not want to waste the considerable amount of money on rejection. He would try his luck in Puerto Rico.

Much to his mother's relief, José crossed the Mona Passage safely in the small boat, and in Puerto Rico, he stayed with Dominican friends who had found work picking oranges for an agribusiness. José joined them and stayed in Puerto Rico several months. While there, he met and married a Puerto Rican woman who also wanted to go to the U.S. 'It was an arranged marriage for papers (*boda de negocio*) but we were really good friends, and have since remained

friends' (at the time of this conversation they were no longer living together). 'Her sister worked in a fake flower-making factory, and they lent us tons of flower arrangements to put in the wedding photos. All of her family came and we have pictures and videos of everything'. Married to an American citizen, José was able to apply for a permanent visa. In Boston, friends and family helped them get started, and José was able to find under-the-table work as a mechanic in his uncle's garage, as he had originally planned. He has not returned to Monte Cruz since he left four years ago, but has regularly sent remittances. In the meantime, his brothers were released from jail and deported home, where they have gone back to working on their father's *conuco*.

*Crossing the Mexican Border*

Another method for reaching the U.S. is by crossing the Mexican border, a journey that often starts in Venezuela. It poses a greater physical challenge and is more often attempted by men. If women go, they wait until they can make the journey with a trusted male companion. To reach the U.S.-Mexican border, Dominicans fly or take a boat to Venezuela, cross into Colombia and then travel north through Mexico. In Venezuela, Dominicans may stay if they find work. Many Banilejos travelled and worked in Caracas two decades ago, and some have stayed, providing contacts for Dominicans passing through on their way to the U.S.

Crossing the Mexican border has become significantly more difficult and dangerous in the past two years. Increased security at the border due to the perceived threat of terrorism has tripled *coyotes'* (human smugglers) fees from $500 to $1500. The cost of crossing the Mexican border for Dominicans in July 2003 was RD$350,000 (U.S.$1,000). This border patrol has not stemmed the flow of undocumented immigrants, but only forced them to attempt to cross in riskier locations in a 'rechanneling effect' through the desert in Arizona (Cornelius 2001:667). The human smuggling business operating on the Mexican-U.S. border has become even more lucrative than the drug smuggling business, so that migrants now face a new danger of being kidnapped *from* coyotes by gangs called *polleros* ('chicken-handlers') to be held at ransom and killed if the money is not paid (LeDuff 2003). There have even been reported cases of women forced to pay off *coyote* passages by prostituting themselves. Some 1.5 million migrants each year

are arrested on the U.S.-Mexican border and deported. Between 1998 and 2001, more than 1,500 migrants died while trying to cross the border (Kaye 2003).

Rosa, for example, was a 26-year-old Montecruzeña living with her parents (who were married) and two unmarried sisters in Monte Cruz. Leo, the father of her two children had migrated to Boston and would send money home periodically, but money was scarce and her two children needed school uniforms, medicine, and decent food. He had entered the U.S. by getting a contract to play baseball for a minor league team and had stayed when they did not renew his contract. Rosa's father had a small plot of land in which he grew and sold plantains, yucca, and other vegetables but this was not sufficient, even with remittance money. Rosa wanted to join Leo in Boston, and the family decided this would be a good way to have more income. They had friends in Jamaica Plain who told them she could work in their family business, at least temporarily, until she could find another job. She had Leo send her money to apply for the visa, and produced the necessary document claiming she owned her father's house. Nevertheless, with all the requirements met for the visa, she was denied. One year later, she applied again but was still denied. 'Things were getting tight and I was dying to go', she said. 'I knew I had to go without papers, because I would never get there any other way'. Determined to migrate and join Leo abroad, she decided to try to enter through Puerto Rico and then Venezuela. She knew of a man in the northern Dominican town of Moca who had helped several of her friends get to the U.S. She contacted him, and he arranged her plane ticket to Venezuela and connected her with friends there who could take her up through Mexico and across the border with the help of Mexican *coyotes*. Rosa's children would stay with their grandparents.

After landing in Venezuela, it took several weeks to get from Caracas up to northern Mexico, but Rosa and her friend stayed with Dominican acquaintances along the way who had married or settled in Mexico and Venezuela. 'Crossing the border was the hardest part of the trip', she said. 'We walked through the desert for many days, it was horrible and we didn't have enough water but we finally made it. I was so afraid that even after all that, *la migra* [INS] would catch us'. When they had successfully crossed the border and made it into Texas, they stayed with the coyote's family in El Paso until Leo could drive down from Boston, pay the *coyote*, and

pick her up. As Rosa acknowledged, at the U.S.-Mexican border there is the risk of being caught by migration authorities.

This risk is also very real for those who fly to Canada first and attempt to cross through the northern border, a method of entering the U.S. that also involves paying smugglers. A popular entry point is Evans, New York, west of Buffalo, where migrants arrive after crossing Lake Ontario by sailboat (Sun Media: 2002). Illegal entry into the United States is a misdemeanor that can bring up to six months in prison followed by deportation. This process lasted two months for Delia, a 35-year-old Montecruzeña who had forged papers to attempt entry:

> When I got off the plane in Canada, they got me at immigration and threw me in a women's jail. I had bought fake papers and I had to mortgage my house just to come here. I couldn't speak English so I never knew what was happening. In jail, I didn't know you could drink the water from the tap; I thought it was bad so I never drank it until I was so desperate that I didn't care if I got worms. They told me I was only going to be there for a month but then it ended up being two months. We had to pay so much money, thousands of dollars for a lawyer. Everyone here in Monte Cruz had to find the money. They didn't have enough. So the bank took my house, that's why I live with my mother now, and I owe money every month to pay back the lawyer.

Like many migrants, Delia lost more than she gained out of migrating. In particularly bad situations like hers, migrants lose the house or a family business that they have mortgaged to pay for their passage to the U.S. Her story is not uncommon and reinforces the reality that migration is a risky endeavour. Nevertheless, many still are willing to attempt it. Even after Delia suffered the worst luck possible for her migrant endeavour, the debts she incurred only made her more keen to go abroad. Two years later, Delia managed to secure a visa to Spain, where she is now working cleaning apartments in Madrid and sending remittances back to Monte Cruz to pay off her debts for the first failed attempt.

*'Beisbol' as migrant strategy*

The baseball industry also provides opportunities to Montecruzeños wanting migrate to U.S. Baseball has been the most popular sport in the Dominican Republic for nearly a century, appearing in Baní in the 1920s. Dominicans have a strong presence in major and minor league U.S. teams, which have recruiting offices in the Dominican Republic. Periodically, talent scouts

will make visits to *campos* (rural areas) in and around Baní to look for new recruits. If a player is selected, the signing bonus alone can range between U.S. $100,000 and $200,000. After signing, the player competes in the 'Summer Games' in Santiago and then travels to the United States to play on a one-year work visa. Many who are signed on (*afirmado*) to a baseball contract stay in the U.S. even if they are not re-signed for the next year. Because of the attractiveness of this offer and the incredibly elevated status that baseball players hold in Baní, playing baseball is the dream of many young boys here. *Beisbol* is a way for anyone, regardless of his family's socio-economic status, to become 'rich', even if only temporarily.

As a result, there are as many baseball 'schools' (*escuelas*) as there are baseball fields (*playes)* in the province—a total of seven in Baní and surrounding *campos* in the summer of 2003. The *escuelas*, open to all boys of all ages, are run by coaches who have played in U.S. minor leagues. They are not paid for their coaching, and profit only when one of their players is signed, at which point they receive thirty percent of the player's contract. The high stakes position of the coaches means that they invest a great deal of time, energy and resources into training the boys. Hoping to maximize the potential of boys with few resources, coaches provide food and water during practices and even equipment and uniforms to players. Players take practice very seriously, realising that it is often their ticket out of poverty. One eighteen-year old *pelotero* (ball player) named Yasaél had been practicing at a baseball school for five years in hopes of being signed. 'You have to treat this seriously, like a profession, if you want to be signed'.

In the Baní area, about five players are signed each month by major and minor leagues, a fact that people constantly refer to when a new SUV drives by (often the first purchase made with sign-on money). In Monte Cruz, baseball was one of the first opportunities that enabled migrants to become established in the United States. One baseball player from Monte Cruz named Aneudi brought over his two brothers and then his two sisters, supporting them in Boston until they could find jobs and their own apartments. The sisters settled in Boston, married Puerto Ricans for visas and then sponsored their Dominican boyfriends to come to the United States. Their children, born in the United States, are U.S. citizens. The family invested in Monte Cruz, refurbishing their mother's house and building a large two-story building on the main road, which has now been

made into a radio station with a *colmado* underneath. Even though Aneudi had lived in the United States for over twenty years, he was respected and powerful in the community and had several children by different women in the community, an indication of high social status. Those signed on to legal contracts have a far better situation than migrants entering the U.S. undocumented by Mexico, Puerto Rico or Canada, a fact that reinforces the popularity of baseball.

In terms of gender and modes of entering the U.S., the opportunity to enter the U.S. legally by playing baseball is obviously limited to young men. More young men go to Puerto Rico by *yola* as well. Montecruzeña women more frequently take advantage of foreign contacts with tourists made in the Dominican Republic; a number of women had married German, Swiss or European men they had met at tourist resorts they were visiting or worked at, and lived part of the year abroad and part of the year at home in the Dominican Republic. Apart from these differences, women and men use similar strategies for reaching the U.S., whether overland through Venezuela and Mexico, seeking out a Puerto Rican or other U.S. national as a marriage partner, or flying to Canada and attempting to enter from the northern border. Because of the difficulty and vulnerability of crossing the Mexican border, women seek out trusted friends and family for companionship during the journey.

*Living in the U.S.*

As José, Rosa and Delia's stories illustrate, migrants rely on networks of family, friends and acquaintances to help them reach their destinations. But once entry to the U.S. is achieved (by legal or illegal means), the insecurity of migration is far from over. Montecruzeños 'organize' their arrival far in advance in terms of whom they will stay with and how they will earn money, and these plans almost always revolve around already-established friends or family in the U.S. These networks play a major role in helping to settle the newcomer into Boston.

Living and becoming established in Boston and other northeastern urban areas requires considerable resources and is extremely difficult for a newcomer who does not speak English, even in heavily Spanish-speaking areas like the Northeast. Apart from linguistic barriers, there are many expenses and it is difficult to find a one-bedroom apartment for less than U.S.$800 in

Boston or in any of the surrounding towns. People live together to cut costs or apply for housing stipends from the Massachusetts government that can cut costs down to $300 a month for a small two-bedroom apartment. The majority of Dominicans occupy 'Section 8' public housing because their income level is low enough to qualify. Because the Dominican community is well established in Boston, migrants are familiar with the application process and beaurocracies associated with public services that may seem confusing for newer groups arriving. Some have a savvy knowledge of the system and take advantage of lax reinforcement of public housing rules by becoming 'landlords' in a sense and renting many apartments under different identities, which are in turn rented out to other Dominicans for a profit. This strategy is public knowledge but poorly funded housing authorities lack the means to prosecute these 'landlords'. The high cost of living in Boston has pushed many Dominicans out to the suburbs or towns nearby such as Lawrence or Lynn, Massachusetts, where rents are cheaper.

Juan is an example of a Montecruzeño who took advantage of migrant networks to settle in Boston. When he first arrived after having crossed the Mexican border, hitchhiked to New York, and transported to Boston by a Dominican taxi service operating in the Northeast, he moved in with his brother, Franky, in Jamaica Plain. Franky had entered the U.S. on a baseball visa several years earlier and lived with three friends and a cousin from Monte Cruz. They lived in a building with a number of other Dominican families from Monte Cruz and Baní, and Juan had brought them letters, cards and small packages from their families at home. Franky and his cousin worked for the MBTA Boston transportation system driving vans for disabled persons. He was able to save money and send remittances home because his rent, split between several people, was only $200 a month. Part of this money had enabled Juan to save up enough to come to the U.S. Juan found work stayed in Boston for seven months until his *mujer*—the mother of his three children in Monte Cruz—was able to buy a new house and move out of her parents' homestead to Baní.

After housing, employment is another significant obstacle. While already established family and friends can help out in the beginning and provide connections to potential jobs, this arrangement may be temporary and employment is not easy to find, especially for undocumented

migrants. There are a variety of occupational opportunities, but without a social security number options are limited; for this reason undocumented migrants purchase numbers from Puerto Ricans or contacts in the well-developed black market of identity cards. While under-the-table jobs provide additional income for migrants and may be seen as taking advantage of the government system by not paying taxes, migrants do not receive health insurance and social security benefits—all factors that contribute to the status of Latinos as the poorest group in Massachusetts and in the United States (Census 2000, Bustos 2003). This disadvantage is present even when migrants work for large companies as well, demonstrated in the November 2003 exposure of Wal-Mart's policies of hiring migrants and taking advantage of their undocumented status to withhold overtime pay and benefits.

Banilejos have concentrated their businesses on Centre Street in Jamaica Plain, which has dozens of Banilejo-owned restaurants, bakeries, *colmados*, money exchanges, clothing stores, and music stores. On this street, one can run any type of errand and never have to speak English. Package shipping businesses will send boxes to any location in the Dominican Republic more cheaply than the post office. Barbershops cut hair in the same styles that are popular in the Dominican Republic. Clothing stores sell outfits made by family members in Baní. These businesses are operated by families who circulate between Boston and Baní, and sometimes offer jobs to Montecruzeños as well. Ana, a 29-year-old newcomer from Monte Cruz who had left four children behind with her mother, took on a job making cakes in the bakery of a friend's great-grandmother's in Jamaica Plain as soon as she arrived. Ana had gone to primary school in Baní, and knew her friend from childhood. Even though the bakery was barely making a profit, they still made room for Ana and gave her a small wage. Some Montecruzeños are also self-employed as well, but not as many as the more-established middle class Banilejos who have spent a longer period of time in the U.S. and have the security of legal migrant status.

In Boston the majority of Montecruzeños—women and men—work in small Dominican-owned businesses and in the poorly paying service industry for downtown hotels, which do not scrutinize ID cards despite the penalties of hiring undocumented migrants. When Wilmo, a thirty-

three year old migrant arrived from Monte Cruz, his cousin was working at Marriot Hotels as a housecleaner at one of their downtown hotel locations.

> When I got here, *primo* [cousin] was working at the Marriot. He always drove his *gua-gua* down there full of people. Primo knows a little English, and he told his *americano* supervisor that I was coming and needed a job. I'm an electrician, so they put me on maintenance. But then they laid me off after a couple of months; they said it was only a temporary thing. That was rough, I didn't have any money and my grandmother needed surgery and they kept asking for money at home. Finally, my Aunt Lisa got me a job over there at Macy's downtown. I worked in deliveries, receiving and loading packages and that lasted for a few months. On the side I made a little pocket change playing the *güira* in my aunt's palo band when they needed an extra musician.

These jobs, along with other employers who will pay migrants regardless of their undocumented status, are not always available, or are not reliable, as in Wilmo's case. Montecruzeños must be inventive in finding an income. The range of under-the-table non-taxed occupations in which people are employed is a testimony to the difficulty of finding liveable wages and inventiveness of migrants. These occupations include entertainment and performing music, as in the case of the many palo, merengue and bachata bands that migrants have formed to play at festive occasions in Boston. Women cater out of their home kitchens, making cakes for parties and selling their food in the shops of friends. Many women also work as nannies or in childcare centres. Men work temporary construction jobs for cash. Construction jobs—notably work on the site of Boston's 'big dig', one of the largest urban construction projects in the history of the U.S.— find labour almost entirely by word of mouth so that on a typical site there will be men from the same extended family and even neighbourhood back in Monte Cruz. Construction work provides temporary work and is not reliable due to harsh winter conditions.

*Illicit Activities*

There exist other options for Dominicans to earn an income in one of the most expensive cities in the U.S. Undocumented entry is only the first aspect of 'breaking the rules' for the migrants who become involved in the underground economy, a lucrative and very visible way of doing business in Jamaica Plain. The underground economy consists of the sale of stolen goods, pirated music, and illicit drugs including crack and powder cocaine, marijuana, and heroin. While many migrants work long hours at legal jobs, the minority who do participate in illicit activities

have a great impact on society at home and abroad and are responsible for the stereotypes of Dominicans as 'drug lords' that persist in popular U.S. culture.

As we have seen, migrant occupational choices are greatly constrained by visa status and financial means. Geographic location of settlement is also a factor that shapes migrants' experiences. Finding no alternative but to live in neighbourhoods that are affordable because of the crime rate, migrants begin their U.S. experience in an environment of poverty and insecurity and must work low-paid, difficult jobs to escape it. For those who cannot find employment elsewhere, employment in the underground economy is an easily accessed and seemingly lucrative option. While long-time residents and business owners of Jamaica Plain comment on how the neighbourhood is safer than it used to be in the 1980s and early 90s as a result of police clean-up efforts and a general increase in the national crackdown on drug trafficking and distribution, police interviewed in Jamaica Plain precincts report that Jamaica Plain is still 'the drug capital of Massachusetts, controlled by Banilejos'.

A ride down the main street with a police officer with an insider's knowledge reveals a great deal about illegal occupational strategies. Certain corner stores appearing to sell phone cards, snacks and drinks also serve the purpose of laundering money generated from gambling, drug sales, and other 'under the table' transactions. These stores are also nighttime centres of drug activity with dealers hanging out on the sidewalks. People will tell stories about the triple-decker house behind the grocery store on Centre Street that burned down several years ago; 'that place was a hellhole, prostitutes and drugs every night', commented one long-time Dominican resident. Police will identify apartments where major drug busts took place by FBI sting operations and which businesses were closed after several pounds of cocaine were found on premises. At night, many stay indoors as black-market vendors cruise up and down the main street attempting to resell stolen merchandise. Muggings are so common that people do not wear high-quality gold jewellery or carry valuables.

Even if the migrant is not involved in criminal activity, he or she is often surrounded by it. The Dominican community is very concerned about drugs in schools. *El Mundo*, the Spanish language newspaper of Jamaica Plain carries headlines such as 'Drugs dominate in our schools'

(11-17 December 2003). The article reported that 'one in ten Hispanic juveniles in the United States reports to having consumed illicit drugs during the last month, and among students of the eighth grade, Latinos tend to show the highest rates of drug use, including marijuana, cocaine, and heroin' (Ibid.:4). Studies note the link between socio-economic situation and drug involvement. 'Stresses associated with what are often more constrained economic conditions, combined with lower educational attainment, a generally higher degree of drug availability, and the possible impact of racism on self-esteem make Hispanics particularly vulnerable to alcohol, drugs and other associated problems' (Delgado 1995).

Migrant perspectives, offer their own explanation of how people become involved in illicit activities. 'It's obvious that kids can't get away from drugs around here. Every day, after school, the kids hang out behind the T stop dealing to college kids from Medford who come over here to buy pills', commented Diana, a teacher at afterschool program in Jamaica Plain. She was referring to teenagers attending English High School in Jamaica Plain (a large percentage of which are Dominican). For people living in urban poverty, the link between poverty and drugs does not have to be justified through sociological research; it is an internalized knowledge expressed in many different forms through media and through cultural expression.

*Cultural expressions of poverty and crime*

Themes concerning poverty and vulnerability to drugs and criminal activity have been mythologized in the popular music, literature and expressions of Dominican and Puerto Rican migrant communities. Junot Díaz, whose literature is popular among second generation Dominican American teenagers, writes of characters living in urban U.S. neighbourhoods of crime and how they become 'experts' at illicit activities simply by observing them take place everyday (1996:56)[36]. Music is a particularly salient form of expression; a popular bachata sung by the Dominican-American group Aventura tells the story of a mother forced to prostitute herself to pay the bills, while the son gets involved in illicit activities of dealing drugs, which leads to a violent confrontation and his eventual imprisonment (translated from the Spanish):

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Amor de Madre' | Mother's Love |
| Ya los conflictos comienzan,<br>el welfare no alcanza y ya,<br>nadie queria ayudar<br>solo le importa entender que su<br>hijo necesita comer<br>y la renta le faltan dos meses<br>la plata que entra no alcanza pa nada. | The problems are already beginning,<br>the welfare is running out and no one<br>wants to help<br>all that's important to her is that<br>her son needs to eat.<br>She has missed two months rent; the<br>money she earns doesn't pay for anything. |
| Decisiones tomo aquella madre<br>la prostitución la llevo a progresar. . .<br>algunas veces cometemos errores<br>y esa pobre mujer no tuvo otra opción. | That mother decided that prostitution would<br>save them. . .<br>sometimes we make mistakes<br>and that poor mother had no other option. |
| Diciembre 16 del año 2003, ya no es<br>un niño ya tiene 23<br>La madre llorando, su hijo a cambiado.<br>Tiene mala amistades y hasta drogas<br>también,<br>consejos le dio y nunca a su madre<br>escucho.<br>Un día tocaron la puerta oficiales buscando<br>un asesino con su descripción . . . | December 16, 2003,<br>a boy no longer, he's already 23<br>His mother cries, her son has changed.<br>He makes bad friends and even does drugs,<br><br>but he wouldn't listen to his mother's<br>advice.<br>One day the police knocked on her door<br>looking for a killer with his description . . . |
| Le importaba un comino las pruebas<br>su hijo era inocente en su corazón<br>Mientra el hijo sufría en la cárcel mas<br>sufrió su madre y murió. | She didn't give a damn about the proof;<br>in her heart her son is innocent.<br>While the son suffered in prison,<br>she suffered more and died. |

Hector Lavoe, a Puerto Rican salsa legend in the 1970s, has also written music with these themes, reflecting his own personal struggles with drug addictions and murders of close family members after moving to New York City. Although he is Puerto Rican, his music was extremely popular among Dominican communities.

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Consejo de Or' | 'Golden Advice' |
| Yo era un muchachito cuando murió mi viejo<br>Fue tanta la miseria que mi viejita y yo<br>comíamos llorando el pan mugriente y duro<br>y en años de miseria mi mano mendigó . . . | I was a little boy when my father died<br>It was so miserable that my mother and<br>I ate dirty hard bread, crying,<br>and in the years of misery I begged . . . |
| Por míseras monedas con qué calmar<br>las penas, las crueles amarguras de<br>nuestra situación.<br>Fui creciendo a la bartola y en mis años<br>juveniles<br>agarré por el camino que mejor me pareció,<br>me codeé con milongueras me acodé<br>con copetines<br>y el mejor de mis amigos cuando | Miserable money eases the pain,<br>the cruel bitterness of our situation.<br><br>I was raised in the street and in my youth<br><br>I took to the path that seemed better,<br>I got along with the rough folks who gave<br>me hand-outs<br>My best friend's brother-in-law sold me |

pudo me vendió.
Engreído me hice el guapo me encerraron entre rajas.

when he could.
I got conceited and they put me behind bars.

(re-released 2001)

The music presents idealized perspectives that migrants are the victims of poverty, that they are driven to become prostitutes, steal and sell drugs because they have no other option. As Phillipe Bourgois notes, however, those involved in the drug industry may not be as passive or 'victimized' as they present themselves; second and third generation Puerto Ricans in Spanish Harlem in New York City have alternatives to selling crack but make an active decision to enter illegal underground economies because legal low-wage jobs are demeaning (1997:64). 'Employment in the underground economy accords a sense of autonomy, self-worth, and an opportunity for extraordinarily rapid, short-term upward mobility. . .' (Ibid.:71). Undocumented migrants, on the other hand, do not have the option of working even minimum wage jobs because they lack legal status; working a 'legal' job would mean breaking the law to buy a fake social security number.

These narratives of life in the urban U.S. have been influenced by American black genres of jazz, rap and hip hop, in which crime and violence serve not only as central themes lyrically, but also in the lives of the musicians, many of whom have become notorious for their involvement in gang-related violence or even murdered because of it. Crime and the relatively dangerous life of the urban U.S. has not only figured prominently in the music of migrant artists but has also spawned an entire genre of Latin music called *reggaeton*, a blend of Latin rhythms, strong bass beats, and Spanish lyrics that are controversial due to explicit and violent content. Many *reggaeton* artists are Puerto Rican but sing about Dominicans [such as 'Dominicana' by Tego Calderon and 'Pa' las Dominicanas' ('For Dominican girls') by Don Chezina] and the music is extremely popular in the Dominican Republic[37].

Themes of urban crime and incarceration are not new among Latino migrant musics in the U.S. The song 'My Lucky Day' that introduces this chapter was written by New York born musician Hector Lavoe and Willie Colón (1973). Older salsas by Latino artists about crime and imprisonment have resonated with later generations of Dominican migrants  Contemporary artists

such as Dominican bachatero Luis Vargas recently included a song from the Colombian group *Fruko y sus tesos* called 'El Preso' (The Prison) in his 2003 album 'D'pelicula':

| 'El Preso' | 'Prison' |
|---|---|
| Condenado para siempre | Forever condemned |
| En esta horrible celda | In this horrible cell |
| Donde no llega el cariño | Where there is no warmth |
| Ni la voz de nadie | or voice of anyone |
| Aquí me paso los días | Here the days pass me by |
| Y la noche entera | and the night comes |
| sólo vivo del recuerdo | I live alone with the eternal memory |
| Eterno de mi madre. | of my mother. |

As younger generations of migrants like Montecruzeños and Banilejos join urban communities in the U.S., they fill the occupations at the lower tier of the drug business once dominated by Puerto Ricans, Colombians and Cubans in the times of Hector Lavoe and Willie Colón. The revival of some of these old musical classics by Dominican singers illustrates in part the shift in occupational composition among urban migrant groups. Old songs about the difficult life of the barrio in New York take on new meaning for younger generations in Boston.

*The limits of measuring crime*

Measuring the extent of Dominican involvement in the narcotics industry is a difficult endeavour since migrants are unevenly distributed throughout many different levels of operation from pushing to management, and mixed with many other native and non-native groups. Statistics give some indication, but should not be considered completely accurate. In June 2003, Massachusetts correctional facilities reported that there were 330 self-claimed Dominicans (born in the Dominican Republic) and 1072 Puerto Ricans incarcerated in the Massachusetts Correctional Facility system. The Federal Bureau of Prisons reported 3,411 inmates, or two percent of the total 2001 inmate population in the United States as having a Dominican citizenship. They also reported that the most 'dramatic' demographic shift in prison populations is the rise of Hispanic inmates, changing from twenty-one percent of the total population in 1992 to 27% in 2001 (Massachusetts Department of Correction 2003:24). 'A total of 2,470

Dominicans were deported from the U.S. in 1998, after serving sentences for drug-trafficking and other crimes in US prisons'[38]. These numbers on Dominicans are almost certainly low and point to the difficulty of measuring the scope of migrant drug involvement. Requests to Boston police for data on numbers of arrests made of Dominicans annually are responded to with apologies, as 'most Dominicans arrested say they are Puerto Rican'. Because of the widespread purchase of Puerto Rican social security numbers, many Dominicans can easily pose as Puerto Ricans. It takes an officer fluent in Spanish and familiar with slight linguistic differences between the two neighbouring islands to challenge someone's claim of identity.

It must be emphasized that this thesis does not attempt to establish Montecruzeño and Banilejo involvement in the drug industry in a quantitative sense, but instead a qualitative, intensive look at how illegal occupational strategies have affected a particular community in the Dominican Republic. Perhaps the most compelling evidence of Montecruzeños' involvement in drug trafficking in Boston can be found at home. In one neighbourhood in Monte Cruz, at least fifteen household compounds out of forty had one member or more of the family who had been or was presently incarcerated in the U.S. for drug-related activities. Sometimes, family members did not even know of incarcerations of relatives. One woman's three sons, daughter-in-law, and grandchild had been arrested and sentenced to over a decade in prison after an FBI sting operation uncovered their involvement in a heroin distribution ring. Two years into the sentencing, she still believed they were 'stuck' in Boston, unable to return because they did not have the money for a ticket and did not want to risk undocumented re-entry once they were in the U.S.

Arrests were not the only manifestation of crime and violence; many families had lost members because of homicide abroad. This was the case not just in Monte Cruz, but in the town of Baní and other surrounding communities. In the three months of March, April and May 2003 alone, the coroner of Baní received eight homicide victims repatriated from Boston who had died in drug-related disputes. In Monte Cruz, the overwhelming majority of requests that *servidores* (Vodú spirit mediums) receive concerning crime indicates a deep preoccupation and involvement. I found out this information in a warning:

> Be careful about asking questions. It's dangerous for you and it's dangerous for us. Don't ask for people's names. People will think you are some kind of undercover agent. Even though people give palo fiestas when they are sick or need their visa, here, 99% of the fiestas are given so that people can ask forgiveness for dealing drugs *allá*. Around here, it's hard to find a guy who goes to Boston and doesn't sell drugs. They can't resist, they've never seen so much money before. That's no excuse, though, and that's why I got out of it.
>
> Benito, return migrant

Despite an involvement in the trafficking and selling of drugs, rates of drug abuse and addiction by Dominicans have been surprisingly low compared to other Latino and North American populations[39]. This was illustrated by a common saying among police departments of Jamaica Plain, 'of 100 Cubans in drugs, fifty sell and fifty use. Of 100 Puerto Ricans, one sells it, ninety-nine use it. Of Dominicans ninety-nine sell it and one uses it'. The low percentage of Dominicans using drugs, according to the perspective of a Boston police officer, reflects the fact that Dominicans occupy the upper tiers of the industry. The ability to sell without abusing drugs has made this occupation a viable source of income, sustainable over time and subject to upward mobility—impossible if someone is 'eating their profits'.

Cocaine is the most widely sold drug in Boston, but this is now changing with cheaper heroin prices, and there is some indication that addiction rates may be increasing among Dominicans. While police reported that in the spring of 2003, Dominicans sold drugs more than they used them, follow-up interviews in November of 2003 indicate that Dominicans arrested increasingly need substance abuse treatment for addiction to cocaine and heroin. Nevertheless, Dominicans' reluctance to use drugs, while changing, is remarkable considering high rates in other groups involved in the drug market; among Puerto Rican groups, for example, drug use by dealers is high. In most recent data from the National Health Service on Drug Abuse, Puerto Ricans were more likely to be current drug users (10.1%) than their counterparts in the general US population age twelve years and older (2001).

The abhorrence of drug abuse has very strong origins in the Dominican Republic, where a strong social taboo may be an important reason for why addiction rates are so low. Even spirit mediums of Dominican vodú, who help people shorten prison sentences and avoid arrest, will not do consultations for 'drogadictos' or 'tecados'. The Catholic Church has a strong influence in

promoting the anti-drug stance, and a generation of migrants who were involved in drugs in the 1980s have become infamous and shunned as 'Dominican Yorks'. Movies depict these migrants as negative influences on society, such as the 1994 Cigua Films' 'Nueva Yol, A funny way of saying New York'[40]. In this film, the protagonist becomes the hero because he resists the bad influences of a crack-dealing friend, who eventually becomes addicted to drugs and shot by a dealer.

*Historical drug routes*

Dominican historians trace the roots of U.S.-Dominican drug involvement to conditions during the Trujillo regime[41]. For decades before Trujillo's assassination, pockets of resistance—notoriously in the Cibaeño city of San Francisco de Macorís—were recruiting and training a resistance movement of young men. Facing a society whose economic interests were completely owned and regulated by the government, these opposition groups participated in robberies and other criminal activities (Tejeda Ortiz 2003). The CIA supported many of these resistance groups to aid in the overthrow of Trujillo, who was becoming increasingly unpopular in the 1950s in the United States. When he was finally assassinated, a five-year period of political turmoil followed involving the struggle of various parties for power. The U.S. supported Joaquín Balaguer, the Loyalist candidate for president (who later continued many of Trujillo's policies) and invaded the island to restore order for democratic elections on April 28, 1965. Upon U.S. invasion, these anti-Trujillist groups rebelled, leading to a popular uprising in which young men threw stones and shot at U.S. tanks in the streets of Santo Domingo (Grano de Oro 1999:622). Hoping to diffuse tensions of the uprising, the U.S. removed many of these young rebels and gave them visas to the United States. A generation of angry young men accustomed to secrecy and violence, with military training instead of professional or technical education, resumed their illegal activities in the United States. Many were deported and re-commenced similar activities in the Dominican Republic (Tejeda Ortiz, interview 2003)

Violence and crime also grew with the creation of an industry of illicit entertainment venues catering to migrants continued to grow in the late 1970s and 80s, when early Banilejo

migrants began returning from Venezuela (whose economy was declining) with greater spending power. Many began migration to New York and Boston in the late 1980s. During this time there was a proliferation of bars and cabarets in the Dominican Republic, several located north of Baní. These places became public centres, since at the time there were not any clubs or discos and the *colmado* scene was not as extensively developed. Prostitutes worked at the cabarets, and in these places drugs and money were exchanged. Bachata was the music of these venues and reflected the risqué lifestyle of cabaret culture. Community members remember this time as being particularly violent, and compare contemporary times to the seventies and eighties:

> People who moved to Boston from Baní in 1987 were highly involved in gangs, drugs, and criminal activity. Many were deported from the US for selling drugs. They moved back here, and accustomed to the behaviour, there were killings, arrests, hold-ups and drug use. The minority who did drugs were not accustomed to respecting officials and were used to making money fast. The end of the 80s was the worst, but in the past five, six or seven years these cases are becoming more evident again (Dicén 2003).

*Global drug networks*

Crime and violence in Baní and Boston have global origins. As a stopover on the international drug trade route, the Dominican Republic was always vulnerable to globalized drug trade. The largely un-policed southern coast of the Dominican Republic from Baní to Barahona lies along the narco-trafficking sea route from Colombia, which goes through the Western Carribean. Jamaica, the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic and Haiti are often points of entry. These smuggling routes throughout the Caribbean involving the Bahamas, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic were established during the late 1970s and the 1980s by Colombian drug lords from Medellin and Cali. 'Smuggling scenarios included airdrops of 500-700 kilograms in the Bahamian Island chain and off the coast of Puerto Rico, mid-ocean boat-to-boat transfers of 500 to 2,000 kilograms, and the commercial shipment of multi-tons of cocaine through the port of Miami' (Marshall 1998:2). Advances in telecommunication and transportation technologies have made it easier to conduct transactions and conceal locations; now smugglers use cell phones instead of radio transmitters to avoid detection, and use new 'go-fast boats'—speedy fishing or recreational boats. Wooden *yola* boats used in transporting people from the Dominican Republic

to Puerto Rico are also used because they are low-lying in the water and more difficult to detect (Ibid).

Today, more informally organized groups have replaced the centralized Colombian drug organizations of the 1970s. 'These groups . . . tend to be smaller and less organized, however, they continue to rely on fear and violence to expand and control their trafficking empires'. This 1998 DEA drug report[42] illustrates the changing nature of Dominican involvement in narco-trafficking:

> In the past, the Dominicans' role in illegal drug activity was limited to being 'pick up crews' and couriers who assisted the Puerto Rican smugglers in their drug smuggling ventures. Much of this has changed with the evolution of the drug trade over the last three years. This new breed of Dominican trafficker functions as smuggler, transporter, and wholesaler in many U.S. cities on the East Coast . . . . Dominican groups are now a major force all along the drug trade spectrum in major East Coast cities. From Boston, Massachusetts to Charlotte, North Carolina, well-organized Dominican trafficking groups are controlling and directing the sale of multi-hundred kilogram shipments of cocaine and multi-kilogram quantities of heroin for the first time.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and crime, an estimated eighteen million tons of cocaine goes directly to the United States from the Dominican Republic each year. A larger quantity is transported to other islands like Puerto Rico and the northern islands of the Eastern Caribbean before entering the US. Authorities turn their heads the other way; three years ago Dominican police arrested a ring of twenty Banilejos with 200 kilos of cocaine and they have since been released from jail before their sentence was filled. 'In the Dominican Republic, the drug trade generates 850 million US dollars, or 5.3 percent of the Gross Domestic Product. The Dominican Republic shows an annual cocaine flow of sixty metric tons'.[43] The bulk of the cocaine distributed and sold in Boston is transported from New York City by courier service rather than arriving directly from the Caribbean, demonstrating that there is not a significant direct link between trafficking in Baní and Boston. Nevertheless, the violence and conflict involved in separate trades crosses over to both locations.

In the northeast U.S., the drug route goes along highway 95 from New York to Jamaica Plain and north of Boston to the city of Lawrence via highway 495. The drugs are smuggled in

vans that double as taxis for airport transportation[44]. One of the courier services currently under investigation by police is the 'Baní transportation' of Jamaica Plain:

> They move big shipments like 10 to 20 kilos up from New York. From there they work with a lot of people; they'll cut it, called 'stepping' it from say 100% pure to like 80% pure, then the next dealers step it again with a baking powder-like chemical. By the time it gets down to the bottom dealers (who are not Dominicans but blacks, whites and Puerto Ricans), it might not even be cocaine anymore, and those people are usually the addicts who often 'eat' their profits. It was $33,000 for a kilo. If you step it four times, that's $150,000 all together, making, roughly, a $120,000 profit for the guys at the top.
>
> Sergeant Olmez, Boston Police department, 2003

*The role of migrants*

The drug industry relies on the vulnerability of new, predominately male migrants to recruit fresh 'pushers' in their operations. Young men from communities like Monte Cruz, too poor to afford the expensive trip to the United States, are ideal candidates, and a large and well-organized narco-trafficking scheme involving migration and indentured labour was exposed in the 1990s by federal and state law enforcement agencies. In this scheme, the heads of drug operations in Jamaica Plain paid Mexican *coyotes* to bring young men to Boston. In return for the passage, the migrant would 'work' off his debt to the drug head, joining the lower tiers of 'pushers' already selling cocaine, marijuana, and heroin in Massachusetts. The newcomer was given a fake social security number, bought on the black market from Puerto Ricans, and then sent to one of the peripheral cities around Boston such as Providence, Worchester, Dedham, Lawrence, Lynn or Springfield. There he would sell drugs until he paid off his debt or was arrested. In Massachusetts, drug offenders can avoid jail terms if it is their first offence. Deportation occurs when the judge sentences the offender to 365 or more days of probation. Even if deported, the migrant could (and did) enter the U.S. again under a new identity. If not deported, the drug head would pay the migrant's $1000 bail. While 'free' from the American court system, the offenders were further indebted to their employers.

At this point, the organization would simply move the migrant to another town, buying him a new identification and a fresh record. When arrested in the next town, the whole process was repeated. Free again, these indentured low-level drug pushers continued to move around the cities outside Boston in a counter-clockwise direction so they could avoid recognition by the same

police involved in their previous encounters. Police have files full of re-entry cases; despite fingerprinting and other identification measures, many migrants slip through the system. When debts were paid off, there was always a steady supply of other recruits in the Dominican Republic more than happy to move to the United States. What if the migrant wanted to get out of this system? 'They kill you if you try to leave. Or if they don't kill you, they threaten or kill your family, because they know exactly who is related to who and where everyone lives in Baní', said Sergeant Olmez of the Boston police department. Strong kinship networks are not always helpful to migrants; they can be a liability.

While this scheme was widespread in the 1980s and 1990s and has been exposed and broken up, poor newcomers still owe migration debts and are selling drugs to pay them off. Migrants desperate to reach the U.S. may not realize the high stakes situation that they have put themselves and their family in. As recently as the spring of 2003, there were a series of fatal conflicts in Monte Cruz and Baní that originated in drug disputes in Boston, reflecting how violence that surrounds activities in the underground economy can be carried out on an international scale.

*Organization of the drug industry*

Like other Latin American and Italian migrant crime organizations, Dominicans operate in family units, with higher-up positions co-run by brothers, cousins, or father-son partnerships, to give a few examples (women participate to a lesser extent than men but are still involved). As a result, drug busts have the potential to be devastating to a family that loses many members at one time. The many Banilejo organizations are not yet unified or resemble the corporation-like institutions (with one head) of more established Colombian and Italian organizations, or even older organizations of Dominican migrants from San Pedro de Macorís. However, many Montecruzeños, being poor and relatively powerless, operate in lower tiers of the industry and work for Banilejos. There is significant competition between the Baní groups, a source of much conflict, violence and internal struggle. The relative newness of these organizations on the drug scene is apparent in large expenditures on flashy items like sports utility vehicles or houses

bought with cash—an easy way to attract the attention of the police and one reason that they are perceived as 'disorganized' and 'amateur' by law enforcement agencies in comparison to the older, well-establish Colombian or San Pedro de Macorís organizations. [45] Also common is the practice of opening 'front' businesses to launder money; more than ten currently operating businesses in the Jamaica Plain area were established with income generated by the sale of illicit drugs (Olmez 2003). Other strategies for expanding profits include buying 'section 8' public housing referred to earlier in the chapter. Public service agencies communicate with the law enforcement agencies and are aware of the problem but lack the resources to make major changes.

Kinship-based networks of crime organization involve the entire family, whether willing or not. Not just consanguine kin are involved; migrants call upon fictive kin networks as well. Business conducted from the home implicates friends and family members who are arrested for collusion. The inability of family members to stop illegal activities is often a result of fear of authorities because of undocumented status or dependence on drug income. Living with multiple family members in cheap public housing also surrounds people with crime. Hundreds of Dominicans in Jamaica Plain live in ten-storey high-rise public housing projects, which have a design that allows for easy concealment, ideal police vantage points, and continual exposure of residents to drug transactions taking place in high-traffic entryways. High-rise projects, once the vogue of urban planners in the seventies and eighties, are now being torn down by city governments in other high-crime cities like Baltimore and replaced with smaller, semi-autonomous home units.

*Challenges at home: Repercussions of violence*

The community of Monte Cruz shares the insecurity that migrants face in their journeys, settlement and occupational strategies in Boston. Migration brings risk and danger to migrants as well as their families at home, illustrating that violence operates through transnational networks, while personal and family crises have international scope. Aspects of globalization such as high speed communication and transportation technologies play a major role in fanning the flame of transnational violence; a score can be settled in a matter of hours when direct flights go to Santo

Domingo from Boston or New York several times a day. Accelerated connections only make vengeful acts easier to carry out and do little for diffusing anger. Mobile phones spread intimidation: one informant living in Washington Heights explained how he had received death threats on his answering machine from his girlfriend's ex-husband in the Dominican Republic. When the informant went back to the island, he was able to secure a restraining order from the Dominican authorities who perceived these threats as serious even though the two men were thousands of miles apart. They undoubtedly realized that in the contemporary era of globalization, distance does not prevent bloodshed.

Because of the transnational character of Banilejo migration, events that happen in Boston have inevitable repercussions in Baní and Monte Cruz, and the threat of violent retaliation against people involved in drugs and crime is very real for Dominican migrants and their families. While drug organizations in Jamaica Plain primarily operate in the United States and a separate, local drug trade exists within the Dominican Republic, unresolved drug disputes of a very mobile population are inevitably, and even strategically, carried 'home' from the U.S. During the spring of 2003, tragic events unfolded in Baní with a direct causal link to the drug trade in Boston. The following excerpt from my fieldnotes gives an indication:

Monte Cruz, March 1, 2003

> This morning a man was shot in the middle of the vegetable market in Baní. Within minutes, the news of his death had spread by cell phone to his family's house two miles away, here in Monte Cruz by the main road, as well as to the rest of the town. Everyone at the house dropped their hoes in the fields and left breakfast boiling on the stove, following the normal protocol for dramatic events. In only a few more minutes, Baní's Codetel telephone office on the corner was filled up with people calling their families in Boston . . . . The killer was long gone by the time the police arrived. He escaped to the capital and then got on a flight to the United States, where he will most certainly disappear into Boston or New York given the relative lack of communication between Dominican and U.S. authorities.

March 6, 2003

> Another victim today: it's obvious that last week's killing has not escaped the consciousnesses of the victim's kin. This morning, a *guagua* drove by the house of the killer in town, opening fire on the people sitting out front. A neighbour had been cleaning fish; he was killed, and a relative was injured. Crowds gathered; again, everyone was calling their relatives in Boston immediately. The local cable television channel

> interviewed the injured man getting his arm wrapped up in the clinic and filmed the dead body to be broadcast at noon that day, both in Baní as well as on cable access televisions of Dominican migrants in Boston.

A week later, *Listín Diario*, a prominent national newspaper, reported:

> One of the tragedies that has most alarmed and shaken the communities of this area involves the families of the Santos Hernández . . .the Carrascos, known as the 'Chiguas' . . and the Montero Sotos, which has given rise to the murder of two persons, one last Saturday who lost his life from a shot to the head. This death provoked the reaction of his relatives who, in an act of vengeance, attacked the residence of the Chiguas in Pueblo Abajo on the morning of Thursday the 6th, launching a drive-by shooting at everyone there, causing the death of a neighbour . . and the wounding of another. . .
> (Dicén 2003)

The two men—the first victim and his murderer—had been acquaintances in Boston, where they had migrated from Baní to find work and reunite with friends and family already there. The first victim had been arrested on drug charges in the U.S. and been bailed out by the killer. When he did not pay him back for the bail and skipped town, returning to Baní, he was pursued and killed.

The scene, witnessed on the second day of fieldwork, was played out in several different versions in the year I lived in Monte Cruz, contributing to a pattern that has developed in the last several years. Each time, a variation on a common theme: an argument or dispute that began between two individuals over drugs in Boston was 'resolved' in Baní. Killers could take advantage of the rogue state that Baní has become and use their transnational mobility to immediately escape to the US. The blood spilled between two men extended to their families, and soon bitter feuds had claimed several lives. The death toll due to incidents of this sort climbed to over seven people in a period of two months. Coroner's reports and the local news channel were the only official indication of disputes. However, everyone knew what had happened by word of mouth, and extensive communication networks spread the news of each incident by mobile phone to Boston within minutes of its occurrence.

These incidents were accompanied by other stresses and crises in the community related to a complexity of factors that included migration. In the same three-week period of the Chigua conflict, twenty-five people died in the Baní area; seven were the homicides mentioned above while the rest were household and traffic accidents. These accidents were widely blamed on

ostentatious behaviour of return migrants and young men emulating return migrants by combining alcohol with driving recklessly. Additionally, the high dollar, inflated thirty percent in the spring of 2003, raised prices of bread and gasoline, which created desperation among the poorest in society. Many simply could not afford eating meat, buying milk, or paying electricity bills. Muggings and robberies increased, and people started locking their doors during the days against individual thieves and bands of robbers. As the majority of people carry a firearm in their belts, robberies had the easy potential to be lethal and often were. Walter Lopez, Baní's medical examiner, felt that the increasing violence and homicide was a result of these economic fluctuations. 'People can't buy food, and when men spend money on alcohol there isn't enough for food for the family. Conflict results and when alcohol is involved, it worsens'. Migration affects the economy, even if indirectly in this situation; the fact that so many of the wealthier Dominicans can weather periods of high inflation by relying on U.S. dollars remitted at a moment's notice may lessen the urgency of financial crisis.

While this was a particularly violent time, people felt that it was part of a general escalation of conflict that had been building in the last years, even a return to the crime-ridden years of the late eighties in this area. Instead of walking the twenty minutes to Baní which was the norm five or ten years ago, people in Monte Cruz and other outside communities began to take *motoconchos* into town, and hordes of young men sitting on their motorcycles became a common sight on most major street intersections. Any woman wandering around by herself or even doing errands alone was severely reprimanded by most females she passed. The Codetel office (a prominent telephone company) was robbed five times in one week and became the source of many uneasy jokes. Trust disappeared and a simple walk to a neighbour's house became a project involving recruitment of several individuals, hiding of money in secret trouser pockets, and topping up the mobile phone.

*Chapter Summary*

This chapter has analyzed the insecurity that permeates Montecruzeño communities at home and abroad, a development strongly influenced by the strategies migrants employ in order

to enter the U.S., find employment and affordable housing. Migrants' options are severely constrained by lack of resources; after trying legal routes to migration and encountering barriers, they turn to illegal routes. In Boston, many find work, but for those who do not, the drug trade provides a lucrative income. Their strategies 'break the rules' of the receiving society and expose the migrant to substantial risk, danger and unpredictability along the way. Strategies have high stakes and create enemies but also tighten friendships and kin structures. Networks help a migrant enter the U.S., become established and find work. When networks and family connections are strongly maintained across national borders, conflicts that arise in Boston do not stay there, but have repercussions in home communities as well. The case of Monte Cruz illustrates how the danger and insecurities of migration may be unequally distributed among individuals and groups but still have great impact throughout the transnational social field. The violent acts of individuals affect many, and in this way small-scale events have wide-reaching impacts on communities.

How have Montecruzeños responded to the violence, risk and danger of migration occurring in the transnational social field stretched between Boston and the Dominican Republic? Apart from the very visible efforts of the national newspaper *Listín Diario,* which made a plea to the government to send in law reinforcements, and the response of the Baní police department of hiring a new chief of police[46], religious organizations in particular have proven to be an effective structure for carrying out collective action. Marches and protests were organized by the Catholic Church in Baní, and in Boston, congregations responded to the many incarcerations of members in the community: every Sunday, groups would fill up vans with trays of *espagettis*, *tostones*, and sweet coffee to take to Dominican inmates in Massachusetts prisons after services.

While the Catholic Church in Baní addressed community problems, Vodú practitioners in Monte Cruz also dealt with insecurities of migration. As the following chapter will illustrate, migrants have revitalized and adapted their practices of Dominican Vodú using transnational communication networks. Vodú plays a key role in protecting the community from the unpredictabilities of migration and facilitates the process of entering the U.S., settling and finding an occupation there.

# Chapter Four: Vodú Religion and transnational migration processes




Figure 4-1. Marimba at a *fiesta de Vodú* in the Province of Peravia

*¡En Baní, hay más brujos que comida!*

'In Baní, there are more witches than food'!

*servidor*, Monte Cruz

The week after the market killing that initiated the Chigua conflict, Yenia, a cousin of one of the victims in Monte Cruz, began to receive death threats along with the rest of her family. Frightened, she called Soraya, a local *servidora* (spirit medium), for help. Soraya prepared a special bath made with powders known to give protection and prayed to San Antonio, offering him gifts of food and rum to strengthen the protective bond of his relationship with her client. In Monte Cruz, community members gave *fiestas de palo* and petitioned the saints to stop the violence in the community. How Yenia and her family responded to these threats is just one aspect of how Vodú plays an instrumental role in the migration experience. As the last chapter illustrated, danger, risk and unpredictability are all the results of socio-economic restraints conditioning Montecruzeño migration to Boston. What historical conditions and contemporary transnational processes have made religion a particularly salient expressive cultural form for

dealing with insecurities of migration? Why has Vodú practice increased over the last two decades? This chapter will address how Montecruzeño migrants use Vodú as a tool to access networks and resources that provide protection, income, and material objects such as citizenship documents. As a faith abhorrent to mainstream society, Vodú has endured as a symbol of Montecruzeño marginality throughout Dominican history. It is this marginality, however, that gives Vodú its power to negotiate the danger inherent to migration.

At the same time, the global context has enhanced religious potency even when congregations are scattered over international geographical locations. The fact that transnational communities in Boston have extensive communication, economic and travel networks allows them to maintain strong spiritual networks and reinforce homeland religious traditions abroad. In a sense, Vodú has become one of the most 'transnational' aspects of Montecruzeño migrant communities: while the spiritual and human agents of Vodú transcend national boundaries, they are dependent upon homeland connections to maintain the potency and effectiveness of their relationships.

This chapter will first outline the history and cosmology of Vodú, showing how religious categories of Vodú reflect social hierarchies in Monte Cruz and Baní. Religion, like cultural practices of bachata music and racial typologies of dark skin colour, has come to stand as a marker of marginalization. The second section explains how Vodú is used as a tool in the migration process—a large factor in its revitalization in the Dominican Republic—and will feature several case studies of Montecruzeños. Finally, the chapter will explore how mainstream perceptions of Vodú are changing in home societies because of transnational religious activities.

## Section I: History and Cosmology of Vodú

*Religious contexts in the Dominican Republic*

A 1997 report by the *Instituto de Estudios de Población y Desarrollo* in Santo Domingo reported that almost seventy percent of Dominicans are Roman Catholic and eleven percent are Protestant Christian, which includes Evangelical groups, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and

other Protestants (twenty percent reported they had no religion in this study)[47]. These numbers change depending on whom one asks; the Catholic Church claims that over eighty percent of the population is Catholic. However, statistics cannot capture the complex gradations and multiple affiliations of religions, a common practice in the Dominican Republic whose origins go back to colonial times, as past chapters have demonstrated. Many Dominicans who practice Vodú use Catholicism as the public face of their faith, while their more private rituals contain many elements of West African religions.

Pentecostal Evangelicals, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormon missionaries from the United States arrived after WWII and are currently the most visible Protestant groups in the Dominican Republic, if only because of the conspicuous cost of their facilities. A multi-million dollar Mormon temple and educational facilities were recently constructed on Avenida San Nicolas Pensón in Santo Domingo, and serves as the main Mormon centre in the Caribbean. Despite its visibility, even in Baní, which has two centres and a dozen missionaries going door to door in pairs, Mormonism has not been embraced in Monte Cruz. In Monte Cruz, informants expressed a great deal of resentment towards American missionaries, who were often considered intrusive and socially awkward. The one Protestant Church in Monte Cruz does not draw a large following either; its biweekly services are never attended by more than a handful of people.

The limited influence of Protestantism in Monte Cruz reflects its weak grasp on the country in contrast to other Latin American and Caribbean nations. Protestantism has been spreading in Latin America since the nineteenth century, and countries such as Chile, Haiti and Puerto Rico have experienced a greater penetration than in the Dominican Republic (Martin 1990). There are a number of reasons that Protestant's reach may have been limited in the Dominican Republic. During the 1903 and 1965 occupations of the island by U.S. military, anti-American sentiment was strong and the connection of Protestantism to North America may have limited its appeal. Additionally, during Trujillo's thirty-one-year dictatorship, outside influences were very restricted (strict laws governed the flow of people, media and goods in and out of the island) and the Catholic Church initially played a dominant role in the regime at the expense of other religious groups (Vodú included). Today there are financial rather than political

disincentives for foreign missionary groups coming to the island, who must pay high prices for resident status of their members (U.S.$35,000 or RD$ 577,500 in 2002)[48].

As Catholicism has, Mormon and Pentecostal missionaries have attempted to eradicate important parts of rural Dominican and Afro-Caribbean culture, but have had limited effect. Mormonism prohibits alcohol, tobacco, tea, coffee and any kind of sexual display. These doctrines contrast greatly with Vodú, as rum, coffee and tobacco are considered sacred consumables for Vodú spirits. The low incidence of marriage as a social institution in lower-class Dominican society[49] also contrasts greatly with Protestant and Catholic doctrines of monogamy. The importance of dance, music and festivities, all scorned under Mormon and other strict Protestant doctrines, also present great contrast with traditions of Vodú.

Protestant antipathy towards Vodú has only become more vocal as Montecruzeños increase their rituals for migration purposes; a scattered handful of protestants in the community have started to hold sing-along gatherings in the middle of the street, broadcasting their rejection of 'idol-worshipping' and 'witchcraft' through audio equipment. These hours-long outdoor gatherings of ten people at most often provoke complaints from neighbours, who feel that the Protestants not only have unrealistic lifestyle expectations but also misunderstand the faith. In the words of one Montecruzeña, 'They don't understand; what we do is not idol worshipping. We believe in one God like they do; it's just that the *santos* help God out and are also powerful'. Though far from a widespread practice, protestant religion contributes to the stigmatization of Vodú.

*The development of Vodú in Santo Domingo*

Vodú has a much longer presence in the Dominican Republic than Protestantism. The cosmology and history of Vodú must be explored in order to understand how the religion operates in a transnational context. Vodú is a Dominican variant of folk religion derived from West African practices, which are evident in contemporary Vodú rituals of ancestor worship and payment to spirits for their help in solving life problems (Davis 1996). The word Vodú (sometimes spelled 'budu' among its practitioners) is from the West African language of Ewe and

means 'spirit' or 'deity' (Megenney 1990:192). Dominicans have many names for the popular religion of Vodú, which include 'la Fé en la 21 divisiónes' (faith in the 21 divisions), 'Fé en los misterios' (faith in the 'mysteries'), and to many non-practitioners, 'brujería' (witchcraft). 'Vodú' is not commonly used among practitioners.

In the practice of Vodú in its many variations throughout the Dominican Republic today, we see the influences of Spanish, native *Taino* and West African traditions, which would have first come into contact in the early years of the colony of Santo Domingo. Resembling folk religions in other Caribbean and Latin American countries like Puerto Rico, Cuba and Brazil, Vodú is a product of Spanish Catholicism imposed on African polytheistic ancestral systems to create a new, distinct faith in the colony of Santo Domingo.

Even in the 1500s, an era of scant communication and contact compared to present day, the high volume of people in Hispaniola from many different parts of the world led to a great mixing of cultural and genetic information. At this time the island was not nationally divided, and many of the contemporary similarities between Haitian and Dominican cultural practices can be traced to the mixing of West African tribes brought to the island as slaves during this time. Although many records that would have revealed slaves' origins were destroyed after slavery was abolished, words in Dominican vernacular are helpful in suggesting specific African origins. Words that originate from Kikongo, Mende, Swahili, Yoruba, Tshiluba, Kiluba, Zulu, Ewe, Lingala, and Wolof appear most often in religious contexts and suggest that slaves originally came from the present day countries of Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Gabon, and Cameroon (Megenney 1990). Inter-Caribbean migration and mass movements of Haitians into the eastern side of Hispaniola in the early 1800's may have brought words from other African countries. Some scholars argue that many African remnants of language among contemporary Afro-Dominican originate from contact with Haitians (Lipski 1994). Whether Haitain-derived or not, the fact that the majority of African words surviving in Dominican Spanish today are religious points to the penetration of West African slave cosmologies in sacred and profane life (Megenney 1990).

Upon arrival in the Dominican Republic, slaves were organized by African tribe or origin in religious organizations called *cofradías*. Over time, origin began to play a much lesser role in the membership of the *cofradías*, many of which banded together, culturally and religiously assimilating the slave population. 'Time slowly erased the tribal differences and replaced them with solidarity among members of the *cofradías'* (Hoetink 1982:183).). As mentioned in chapter two, *cofradías* have remained to this day important leadership and organizational structures in communities such as Monte Cruz. They are responsible for the spiritual health of the community as well as for maintaining links with migrants abroad.

Elements of West African religions such as ancestral cults, polytheism, contagious and imitative magical practices, spiritual possession, and divine healings remained in groups of slaves working on plantations. These elements were also important for freed slaves in the capital as well as escaped slaves (*cimarrones*) living in communities in the mountains, known as *manieles*. These elements of distant homeland traditions were retained but against colonial rule; Spanish forced slaves to convert to Catholicism and gave them mass baptisms. 'In the Catholic colonies [of the Caribbean], conversion was involuntary' and little religious instruction was given to the slaves. The *Código Negro Carolino*, written in the early 1500s, consisted of laws that allowed colonials to restrict slave behaviour, such as 'religious beliefs, activities, and other such considerations' (Grano de Oro 1999:621). Even as late as 1943, the Dominican congress passed a series of laws directed at Haitians against 'exotic newcomers in the country secretly practicing orgiastic shows known by the name of "voudou" or "luá", which are absolutely foreign to the customs and tastes of Dominicans without exception' (Lockward 1993:534). These laws allowed the government to incarcerate individuals for up to two years for practising Vodú, even if in private.

The rejection of West African religious practices put pressure on African groups to conceal their activities or convert to Catholicism. The two traditions had many similarities: an almighty but detached Creator, saints/spirits-as-helpers for the problems of everyday life, complex symbolism and rituals. Africans filled their altars with images and figures of Catholic Saints, virgins, and crosses. They included Hail Marys and Catholic *salves* in their rituals (sung

prayers originating in Spain). Over time, the new religion of Vodú developed, incorporating elements of these traditions.

*Contextualizing Vodú*

A close scrutiny of Vodú practices today reveals a very complex relationship with Catholicism. Trying to define the 'religion' of Vodú and even Catholicism in the Dominican Republic from an emic perspective is a difficult task, since centuries of slaves and their descendents have perfected the art of evading doctrinaire rules and definitions. It must be noted that cosmological interpretations vary widely among practitioners of Vodú. An explanation of how definitions can shift depending on context becomes important when considering how Montecruzeños position themselves in social hierarchies, a practice further informed by changing migrant perceptions towards religion. Defining Vodú presents many challenges, since there are so many grades and variations of practice that are related to the region in the Dominican Republic, proximity to Haitian migrant labourers, as well as comfort level of the priest/practitioner with religious activities often perceived as 'Haitian'. McAlister offers a helpful way to conceptualize 'belief' among Haitian vodouists:

> In practice, it may be more helpful to imagine these two traditions occupying either end of a continuum, with Roman Catholicism on one end and Vodou on the other. Any given actor in Haiti falls somewhere along the continuum, some as Catholics, some as Vodouists, and the vast majority living their lives in the middle (2002:137).

While Haitians migrant labourers living in the Dominican Republic have their own variant of *voudoun* and accompanying music called 'rara' or 'ga-ga', few urban, wealthy Dominicans are aware of any difference (or that these traditions exist at all). How a person explains the organization of deities in the religion is often based on this comfort level, so that the importance or centrality of *Dios* (considered 'safe' because the monotheist notion of God resembles Christianity) varies in prayer and possession rituals. Sometimes *Dios* is petitioned; other times there is no mention of *Dios* in the whole ritual.

In the town centre of Baní, which has historically been predominately Catholic, migrants have moved from rural areas since the 1960s, bringing Vodú practices. Here, where people are sensitive to racial and class differences, African and Spanish words are used interchangeably and interpretations of Vodú vary, even though one hears *Dios* invoked with a greater frequency than in communities like Monte Cruz. The following conversation with a spirit medium known as 'La Prieta' ('the black one') in Baní illustrates her discomfort with *brujería*.

*Anthropologist*: What do you call your religion?

*La Prieta*: People say lots of different things. We say 'faith in the twenty-one divisions' or 'faith in *los misterios*'. But we believe in God. God is all-powerful. The saints help him carry out his work.

*Anthropologist*: Do people ever call the religion Vodú?

*La Prieta:* That's *brujería*, Vodú. We don't do that around here. That's when the *misterios* are used to hurt others. Didn't you see the news last night, where that 15-year-old girl did a *trabajo* (magical work) to kill that man's wife because she was in love with him and wanted to get him all to herself?

*Anthropologist*: Yes, I saw that. But what about the luás and the petroses [a type of *misterio*]? I see you have Black Changó [classified as a *luá* in *la banda negra*] here under your altar.

*La Prieta*: That stuff, *la banda negra*, is *brujería*. There are people who do that stuff, mostly Haitians, but we don't here. I don't use Chango for harm, only good things.

In the more rural communities on the outskirts of Baní, such as Monte Cruz, *servidores* are much less defensive about their work than those in Baní; they do not immediately distinguish themselves from *brujos* (witches) or emphasize that they work with the *banda blanca* (the white band) only. They refer to the *misterios* in the pantheon as *luás*, using the African rather than the Spanish saint's name. For example, the following exchange occurred with a spirit medium living in a remote *campo* north of Monte Cruz:

*Anthropologist*: What do you call your religion?

*Informant*: This is the 'faith in the twenty-one divisions' or also called Vodú [he pulls out a *marimba* (large wooden thumb piano) that has the words 'fiesta de budu' painted in red on the front].

*Anthropologist*: Why do some people say that using the *luáses* and *petroses* in the *banda negra* is *brujería*?

*Informant*: (Laughs) The *luáses* are the most important part of this faith, if you really want to get something done, you have to use *la banda negra*. It's not *brujería* as long as you don't use it for evil.

Alternatively, many *servidores* who reject using *la banda negra* (African-derived *misterios*) because of their potentially dangerous potency are verbalizing a mainstream social rejection of Vodú in attempt to distance their own works from what is popularly held as 'witchcraft'. Variations also exist between the south central coastal region where I conducted fieldwork and other regions in the Dominican Republic[50]. Certain *luás* and *santos* unheard of in Baní and Monte Cruz are more common near the Haitian border, where the typologies of 'Haitian' and 'Dominican' are meaningless when applied to Vodú. The complexity of Vodú cosmology warrants the following descriptive section, which will outline elements of the religion important in the migration process.

*Cosmology of Dominican Vodú*

Vodú provides actors with a highly ordered and active protocol for carrying out change in their lives, involving the manipulation of magical materials and the implementation of lengthy and complex rituals. Vodú rituals are centred on the *promesa*, or spiritual pact, with the saint, and services must be repaid with detailed attention. An ethos of spiritual retribution and punishment is characteristic of Vodú. Moreover, punishment for transgressions occurs within a human's lifetime, as opposed to the afterlife in protestant and Catholic doctrines. The agency of the *promesa* is of primary importance for migrants, who have gone to great lengths to keep communication channels open that facilitate agency between sending and receiving societies.

In Vodú, *misterios*, *luás* or *santos* (saints) are deceased people turned into spirits in a pantheon organized into twenty-one divisions (*La 21 Divisiones*) under a supreme God. *Luá* comes from the West African Fon-ewe *lua*, or *loa*, which means spirit, and is also used in Haiti. The word *luá* is used generically to mean 'spirit' but is sometimes distinguished from Spanish *santo*, a more 'Catholic' terminology[51]. The *misterios*, who ultimately answer to God, have personalities, preferences in music, drinks and colours, and ritual kin relationships with other

*misterios*. They are manifested in male, female, and ambiguous gender and work together for the sake of humans. The *misterios* can intervene in the lives of people and possess the bodies of human spirit mediums referred to as *servidores*, *curanderos* (healers) or *caballos* (horses).

*La banda blanca*

Informants in southern regions commonly used two different basic categories to discuss the *divisiones*: *la blanca* (the white) and *la negra* (the black). Interaction with *la division blanca* is perhaps the most 'Catholicized' variant of Dominican Vodú, found in more 'Hispanicized' areas such as the town proper of Baní. Catholic saints correspond to West African-derived *radas* spirits (the 'white' spirits), who are known for their sweet-tempered nature. Some important saints include San Miguel, San Antonio, San Francisco and Santa Elena, who also have the role of patron saints of the many small communities around Baní (see figure 4-2).

Figures of the saints are all found on personal altars in people's homes. For some people, the division *blanca* is characterized by only those *santos* who appear in the Bible. *Servidores* who only work with this division often appeal to God through prayer only (as opposed to becoming possessed or performing magical rituals) and refer to spirit mediums who work with lower/other divisions as *trabajadores del demonio* (workers of the devil). If Catholicism and Vodú are conceived in terms of a continuum, these *servidores* are much closer to Catholicism.

Figure 4-2: *La banda blanca*



By contrast, in Monte Cruz and other traditionally African communities, the *misterios* in divisions under *blanca* may be called upon by *servidores* to manifest themselves in more potent forms in order to serve a more active role in the lives of their worshippers. This transformation is facilitated by a priest who becomes possessed (*en cabeza*, or 'inside the head') in order to communicate with the spirit world. These possessions take place during community rituals and in private consultations with clients, which involve spirit mediums performing *trabajos*, spiritual 'works' that involve the manipulation of certain materials using imitative and contagious magic. When a *misterio* possesses the body of a spirit medium, s/he takes on an African form with a corresponding African-derived name. For example, when San Miguel possesses a *servidor*, he loses his 'saintly' status and becomes the luá *Belié Belcán* (see appendix I for *santo/luá* correspondences). When possessed the bodies of humans, *misterios* can communicate directly to humans and intervene in magical ways to manipulate realities.

*La Banda Negra*

*La banda negra* is the 'black band' consisting of *misterios* in the categories of *guedés, legbas,* and *petroses*. The *guedés* are the caretakers of the underworld and often have 'Baron' in their names. *El Baron del cementerio* is the leader of this division, and is said to be found in the spirit of the first person buried in every cemetery. *Guedés* are also known to be jokesters and partygoers. These *misterios* can be called upon for more powerful deeds of sorcery, but in the end demand more from their worshippers and punish more harshly if the favours they grant are not appropriately reciprocated in the form of fiestas de palo, rum, cigars, and prayer. One *servidor* commented on spiritual punishment from the *guedés*:

> *Guedés* give a lot. But they can be dangerous; if you don't fulfil your promesa, they kill you. There was a guy who came to me who wanted to go to New York. He wanted his uncle to lend him the money so he could go. So I did a trababjo with Ghede limbo for the uncle so that he would lend him the money. Well, he did lend him the money, and this man was able to go to New York, make a lot of money, buy a house down here, and get a car. But he never filled his promise to Ghede limbo. When he came back here I told him he had to fulfil his promesa, or Ghede would punish him. Well, he didn't, and his uncle came looking for him, got in a fight with him, and killed him. That was Ghede.

Worth note is the *Agua* division, or *Indios*, which consist of water spirits considered wild (see figure 4-3). They represent indigenous Taino spirits and are classified apart from *la banda negra*. Nevertheless, they can manifest strongly and are considered as violent as spirits in *la banda negra*.

*Dichotomies*

Integral to Vodú is the dichotomy between black and white, which is the result of syncretizing processes in the racialized context of Dominican society. Black, equated with 'bad', 'polluting', 'low' and 'powerful', is contrasted with white, which symbolizes 'good', 'purity', and 'high'. This contrast is apparent by the labelling of the categories in which *misterios* have places. The most potent saints are in *la banda negra*, the 'black band', and are most often referred to by their African and Haitian-derived names. They contrast with 'white' harmless saints that appear in the Bible referred to as *la banda blanca*, the 'white band'. The placement of ceramic *misterio* figures on altars illustrates the tension between white and black domains integral to Vodú. While individuals vary in their preferences of *misterios* as well as how they arrange them visually on the altars, certain patterns reveal the racial and political dynamics of Vodú versus Catholicism, especially how it relates to the Baní area. Most of the misterios are depicted visually in the Catholic, white-skinned form as portraits or ceramic figures. Some *misterios*, on the other hand, are depicted as black. These include Santa Marta, Santa Bárbara Africana (see figure 4-4), and Changó, who commonly appears as a twelve inch black ceramic figure with a head scarf (see figure 4-3). In Baní, where Vodú practitioners that work with the *banda negra* are closer and therefore more of a threat to the Catholic mainstream, these black *misterios* are largely hidden under the altar table out of sight. The white saints, on the other hand, are prominently displayed on top of the altar table. In Monte Cruz, where the community has a much stronger following of Vodú, the black figures are sometimes placed on top of the table next to the white figurines. As a rule in both locations, saints with 'Indian' personalities are placed in corners on the floor. In general, there are far fewer visual representations of the *luás* in *la banda negra*.

Figure 4-3. Black Changó and the Indios

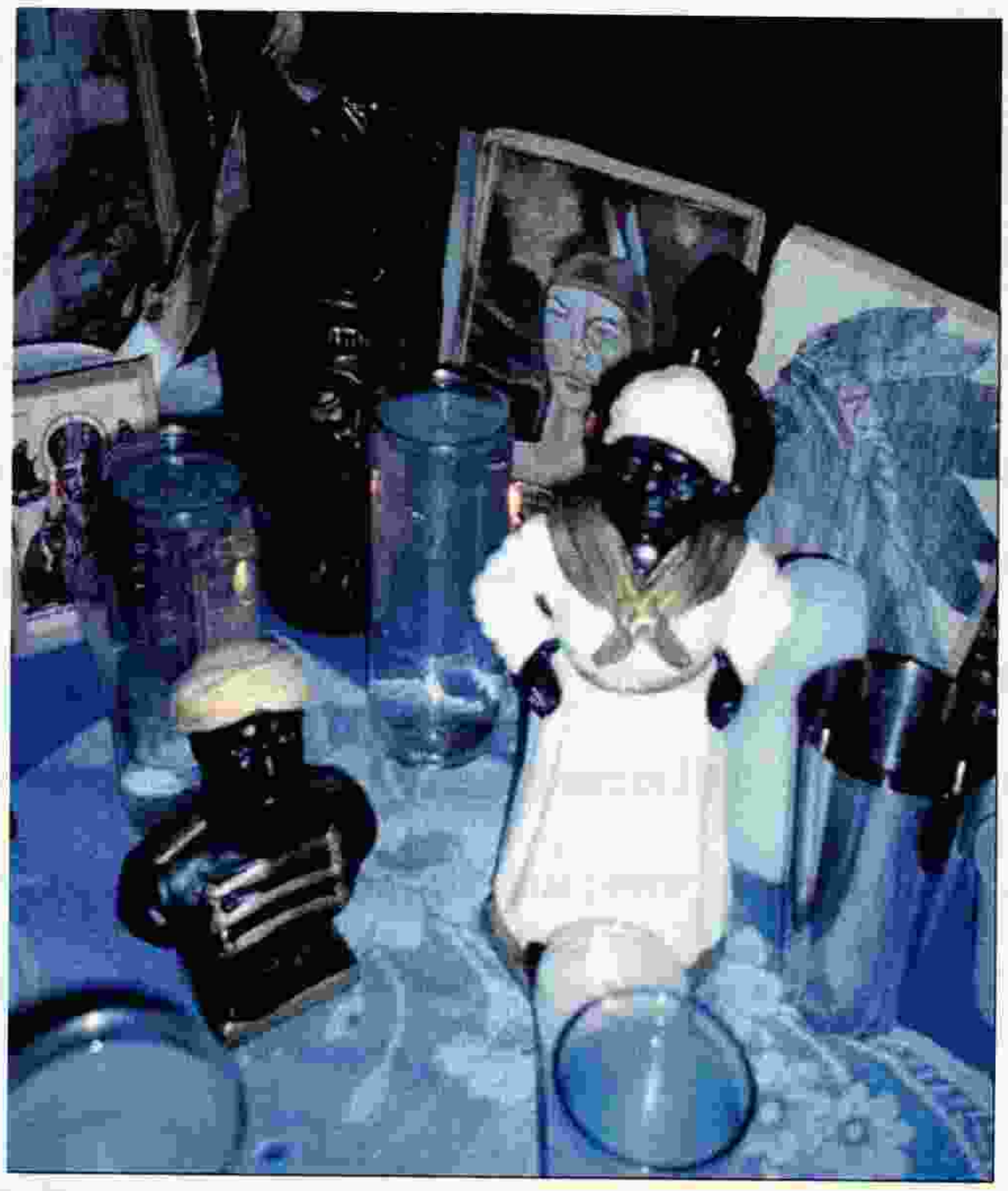


Figure 4-4. San Lazaro, San Miguel, Changó (Santa Bárbara Africana).



While Vodú practitioners subscribe to this dichotomy and its moral implications of marginalization in their daily, unreflexive lives, they use its power to their advantage during ritual. When people become possessed and receive powers of predication, they are possessed not by San Miguel of Catholic affiliation but by his alter ego Belié Belcán, who is a more potent (and stigmatized) African-derived personality. What is marginalizing is also power giving. In this way, religion reflects hierarchies but through ritual has the power to overturn those hierarchies, even if only indirectly or temporarily. This almost contradictory quality of Vodú can be illustrated in the *promesa* made to get out of jail (a literal escape from a marginal status); this is a difficult job that only the *banda negra* can handle. The stigmatized side of Vodú is used to release a person from a marginalized social position. The true power in this faith rests in the more African manifestations of the *misterios*, not the Catholic saints.

*Servidores and Curanderos*

Faith in *La 21 divisiones* has a very personal dimension. Every human has an affinity with a certain *misterio* upon birth, and has the potential to be possessed by this *misterio*. *Servidores* are not the only ones who can communicate with the spirit world, even though they cultivate their abilities and are often better able to become possessed upon demand from a client (see figure 4-4). Often people 'discover' their *misterio* through the help of a *servidor*, through a dream or after a serious illness, in which their *misterio* appears in some form. Humans cultivate their spiritual relationships, expressing thanks by offering tobacco, rum, candy, bread, and candles on the altar and honouring them with *fiestas de palos* every year. The strength and duration of this relationship determines the effectiveness of prayers or spiritual pacts known as *promesas*.

While everyone has the potential to cultivate a relationship with a particular *misterio*, some have better communicative powers than others. These people are usually women, twins, homosexual men, or people disabled physically or mentally from birth in some way. In other words, those individuals most marginalized in society. These people often take on the role of *servidores* in their communities. While the *servidor* has been linked to the metaphor of a bridge or channel for communication with a *misterio*, they are also called *caballos* (horses), a reference

that sometimes has sexual overtones. These connotations are illustrated in the saying 'montado' (from the verb *montar*) meaning possessed in this context, as well as when spirit mediums are said to be *caballos montados* 'horses mounted by misterios'. This metaphor can be traced to West African religious practices; J. Lorand Matory writes that in the Oyo Kingdom in Nigeria, 'Not only do gods "mount" (gùn) possession priests, but "riders" mount horses and males 'mount' females in the sexual act' (1993:65).

The reversal of gender relations in Vodú rituals (the *fiesta de palos*) is unmistakable; in these fiestas of celebration, homosexual behaviour, such as men dancing *palo* with other men, is acceptable (though laughed at) when it would be banned in any other public context. The following comment by a *servidora* presents these perspectives:

> 'Los gays' are 'locos', they are 'malos'(messed up). They are born different and most are born with the ability to *trabajar con santos* (become possessed). And if they aren't born with it, they develop their abilities; they work on it, and invite the *santos*. They are like us women, they like to 'montar el caballo' (winks and laughs).
>
> Ani, 54 *servidor*, Monte Cruz

Additionally, it is common for a male *luá* to possess a woman's body and 'fall in love' with another woman present at the fiesta. In this case, there is a great deal of flirting, dancing and attention given to the object of the *luá's* attraction. By all outward appearances, however, a woman appears to be in love with another woman.

Palo fiestas also attract the marginalized of society who are normally hidden from the public eye: crippled individuals, orphans, and homosexuals all have a place, if not a more important place, in ritual fiestas of *Vodú* because they are powerful channels for spirit communication. In a sense, the fiestas are among the only public events in which the most marginalized of society have a place. Many of the *misterios* have an ambiguous sex: Santa Marta is said to have no genitalia, yet when possessed she emerges as a snake representing a penis with venom of life and death's mysteries, according to one *servidor* in Baní.

Even though there is no formal training process, spirit mediums learn how to do *trabajos* ('works') and *recetas* ('magical preparations') from older relatives, even though mediums claim that the *misterios* instruct them and communicate with them directly through dreams. 'San

Antonio told me to do this', said one elderly *servidor*. 'I certainly would never have chosen to do it myself'. *Servidores* may have other jobs, since traditionally pay was very low for their consultations. Some express unhappiness that they have been 'chosen' to perform this role; others have certainly profited from their fame as a servidor. Raoulito, a 60 year old *servidor* from Monte Cruz who had been practicing for over thirty years was unhappy in his profession: 'I tried to stop but *ghedes* punished me; I have broken my arm and my collarbone. Guedé limbó did that to me when I told him I wanted to stop being a brujo'. Luis, another *servidor* in Monte Cruz, expressed his lack of choice in his profession, 'My family disowned me when I started doing this. They don't like what I do. But I can't help it; this started twenty years ago when the *misterios* came to me in a dream'.

The term *curandero*, or 'curer' is another name for spirit mediums that refers to the element of healing traditionally incorporated into religious practices. People increasingly use the term *servidor* and *caballo* to describe spirit mediums because curing humans and animals is no longer their primary occupation today. In Monte Cruz, while people still call upon traditional

Figure 4-5. *Servidora* of Santa Marta



knowledge of herbs to make preventative and curative remedies, serious illnesses are usually taken to the hospital or the clinic first. If they cannot be helped at the clinic, only then do most people call upon the *curandero*. This situation often occurs for the rising number of Dominicans infected with HIV, even though many *curanderos* assert that AIDS is the one disease they cannot cure. Moreover, the curing of animal/livestock maladies—another important skill of the *curandero*-- is also decreasing in importance as people leave rural areas to work in more industrialized urban centres. A further significant factor in the decline in *curanderos'* role as healer is the fact that priorities have changed: the overwhelming majority of clients today request help with some aspect of migration abroad or trouble that has developed because of living abroad.

*Consultations (Consultas)*

The *servidor* gains most of her income from consultations with clients, which take place in a private location, most often in *ermitas*, small chapels that contain altars located behind houses. During *consultas*, a client makes a request for something, called a *promesa*, and the *servidor* contacts the *misterios* for help. When consultations take place in their homes, *servidores* deal with the requests of their clients in different ways. Each has her own *recetas* and rituals but there are certain food, colours and materials that are commonly used for the same purposes, such as candles, rice, plates, ribbons, cooking oil, rum, and sugar. Colours used correspond to the preferred hues of the participating *misterio.* For example, San Miguel's colours are red and green, while Santa Marta prefers yellow. Common herbs, flowers and fruits used as well. These materials can be found in the Dominican Republic and in the United States in *botánicas,* stores that sell Vodú paraphernalia such as already prepared incense, baths and powders (see figure 4-12) that *servidores* buy when they cannot make their own. There are *botánicas* in the United States that cater to practitioners of Cuban *santería*; these are different from the Dominican variety.

Various methods of divination are employed during consultations, including the reading of cigar ashes (see figure 4-6) and coffee cups. Depending on the request of the client, the

*servidor* may prepare *trabajos*, or 'works' of imitative magic that bring about a desired outcome. There are standard protocols as well; the plate that contains the *trabajo* typically contains the names of the people involved. These methods of divination are also common among Vodú practitioners in Boston.

If a client is making a *promesa*, s/he must take part in a second and very crucial step following the consultation that involves the community. Public rituals called *fiestas de palos* follow consultations. The fiestas must take place over a nine-day period (*novena*), one planned for each afternoon culminating in a day-long fiesta on the ninth day, in order to have the desired effect for the client. If the *trabajo* works, the client is obligated to pay the *servidor* a more substantial sum in a system called 'pay upon proof' (*paga con prueba*). Some *servidores* have contracts for their services, for example, if they are trying to get someone out of jail and it happens within a certain amount of predetermined time, the client has to pay the *servidor*. Client and *servidor* will negotiate the price and amount of time that client waits for the *trabajo* to work before they consult a different *servidor*. In Boston, where migrants work longer hours than in the Dominican Republic, the nine-day fiestas are sometimes shortened.

*Palo fiestas*

Rituals of Dominican Vodú are referred to as *fiestas de palos* because of the drums called *palos* that are a crucial part of the festivities. There are several varieties of palo fiestas. The most public, large-scale palo fiesta takes place during the time of the year called *patronales*, the nine-day large-scale annual celebration of the patron saint of each town. Town fiestas tend to be the most elaborate and expensive, costing up to RD$5-10,000 (US$250-500). Nine-day private fiestas called *novenas*, mentioned above, may also celebrate the patron saint, an individual's personal saint, or, a deceased loved one (see figure 4-7). They happen on the anniversary of death or the saint's day each year. Most common for the purposes of migration are the more spontaneous *fiestas de promesas*, which occur when someone is experiencing a problem or difficulty in his life and wants help in resolving it from a *misterio*. In these rituals, an individual, assisted by a *servidor*, makes a pact (*promesa*) to his/her *misterio* in front of a community

gathering of witnesses. The pact agrees that in return for help granted by the *misterios*, the person is obligated to show thanks by giving another *fiesta de palo* in honour of the *misterio* and also by appropriately paying for the services of the *servidor*. These fiestas are the locus of individual and collective agency in Dominican Vodú, as people are able to take action into their own hands with the help of their community.

Figure 4-6. *Consulta* with San Miguel (possessing the woman) with cigar. Baní, D.R.



Fiestas take place during the day and begin with an *hora santa*, an hour long period of prayer recitation and Hail Marys, followed by a group of women *rezadores* (prayers) singing of three sacred *salves* (Catholic hymns). Men rarely participate in this part and the singing is unaccompanied, although the last *salve* may be accompanied with a few beats from a *palo* or *tambor* (drums). Following the *salves*, people will sing more festive, 'semi-sacred' songs, at

which point the *misterios* are invited to the party with an announcement of the fiesta's host. All *servidores* present are anointed with holy water on their forehead. The *dueño* (host) of the altar says a prayer, followed by ritual cleansing of all people present, which is done with *agua florida* (florida water) poured into people's hands along with liberal application of a holy spray and incense. People begin singing 'A lavalos, a lavalos, a lavalos mi corazón', which means 'let the flood cleanse my heart of sin'.

Figure 4-7. Fiesta de palo for a deceased loved one



The palo musicians enter, who until this point have been outside the *ermita* warming the skins on the drums at a fire[52] (see figure 4-8). They begin to play the requests of the invited *misterios* who have now possessed the host, other *servidores*, and even guests. The *dueño* is the person who

owns and takes care of the altar and is sponsoring the fiesta. S/he is often accompanied by one or more *servidores* who will attend to her should she become possessed and not be able to 'control' her possession. While she herself may be a powerful *servidora*, there is often another experienced *servidor* present to exorcise any harmful spirits that may possess a member of the party. In fact, there may be many *servidores* present at the fiesta, all working together.

During this time, people may approach the altar and make private or public *promesas* even if the fiesta was not given specifically for them. Rum and beer, common sacred drinks of the *misterios*, are passed through the crowd (refusing it is considered an insult to the *misterios*) (see figure 4-9). People begin the dance of *palos*, a pair dance performed with hunched shoulders, dizzying twirls that enhance a state of possession, and shuffled steps. Often dancers are possessed with *misterios*, in which case the host will attend to them, providing holy water dousings, privacy should they do something potentially embarrassing such as remove their clothes, and protection against hurting themselves. Often more than one *misterio* is present at a fiesta, and two people possessed with different *misterios* interact, speak in tongues that include words in Haitian creole, and dance.

Like music, food offerings are important at the fiesta because each *misterio* has a different food preference. In Baní, people prepare cashew-nut sweets (*dulce de cajouil*), pineapple and coconut sweets. Rum, beer and sodas of specific colours are provided. Food for the saints must be left on the altar along with cakes, candy, cigarettes, and flowers. These foods and materials are either transported to Boston for fiestas there or made in the U.S.

*Adopting new misterios*

In Vodú cosmology, new *misterios* can be added to the pantheon, while others are reinvented and borrowed from other religions and change in importance. New *misterios* added to the pantheon are often popular martyred political figures, such as Olivorio Mateo Liborio, a messianistic figure who was murdered by the Dominican military in the early 1900s. A figure known as the 'doctor' is a popular *misterio* consulted for illness and health problems in Monte Cruz and is claimed to have been a famous healer by informants.

Some of the *misterios* have been borrowed from Cuban *santería* or Haitian *voudoun*. Cuban *misterios* have become popular in the twentieth century with the music of Cubans 'Celina and Reutilio', whose *sones*[53] with religious themes became dance hits in the early 20th century. Some of these Cuban *misterios* who also appear in the Dominican Republic include Ochún, Elegua, Orula, María de la luz, and the Virgen de las Mercedes. Dominican contact with Cuban santería practitioners in New York reinforces the presence of the Cuban *misterios*. Migration has also made some *misterios* more popular than others, as the next section demonstrates.

Figure 4-8. Children of migrants in Boston preparing palos for playing in Monte Cruz.



Figure 4-9. Brugal, the preferred rum of the spirits.




**Section II: Vodú and Migration**

Of the ninety-two *fiestas de palos* for *promesas* that I attended in Monte Cruz, Baní and Massachusetts between February and October of 2004, only two were not directly related in some way to migration, a significant fact considering that *promesas* were traditionally used for a wide range of motivations, from obtaining luck in love to the healing of illness. Out of twenty-six *servidores* interviewed, all reported an increase in requests relating to migration over the last twenty years and saw between twenty-five and forty people a week for consultations relating to visas, imprisonment, drug charges in the United States, or protection for journeys. 'Vodú is on the rise, particularly in the last twenty years' (Davis 1996:25). What explains this increase?

Martha Ellen Davis attributes the increase to factors that include the suspension of persecution towards Vodú in the Dominican Republic, a general Africanization of Dominican culture due to rural to urban movements, an increased Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic, and the rise in economic problems in the modern world due to unfulfilled material

expectations, aggravated by media advertising and return emigrants (1996:25). Notably, all these factors are related to migration. The present study adds to these factors the increased use of Vodú as a strategy for reaching the U.S., a risky endeavour increasingly attempted by migrants of lower class status.

The *misterios* play a large role in helping Montecruzeños migrate, and the many different personalities are called upon for different aspects of the migration process. Certain *misterios* have become very popular in Baní, Monte Cruz, and Boston, communities of migrants with very specific needs. Unsurprisingly, those *misterios* who have powers well suited to migration are most called upon and honoured in the *fiestas de palos*. In the following section, I will illustrate how religion plays a role in the acquisition of passports and visas, the journey to the U.S., and finding jobs once the migrant arrives. Vodú is crucial in managing the unpredictabilities and dangers inherent in these migrant strategies.

*Visas and the journey: San Rafael*

Chapter Three illustrated the difficulty of obtaining a visa. Vodú is used to facilitate this process and combat danger. San Rafael, known as *Tinyó Alawé* when he possesses a spirit medium (*en cabeza*), is a commonly used *misterio* for obtaining visas or citizenship papers. This process occurs in consultations, which differ from palo fiestas by involving only the spirit medium and the client instead of the whole community. During the consultation, the servidor often does a *trabajo* (magical work) to obtain visas for clients, and citizenship documents such as passport photos, birth certificates and visa applications are placed in contact with these other magical materials such as teas made with a variety of herbs. While some *servidores* work with San Rafael/Tinyó Alawé, others claim that 'only God can grant a visa, you must pray to God for that'. In Chapter three, we looked at the story of Nimia, who applied twice for a U.S. visa. At the same time, she also paid a *servidor* to perform a *trabajo* that asked San Rafael to help her obtain her visa. She described the experience:

> I have a really good relationship with San Rafael. I don't ask him for every little thing, only the big stuff, like my visa because he helps *pobres* like us who need our papers. I went to Raoulito, who has an *ermita* over on the hillside. He sees everyone for this kind

of stuff. I went over there, paid him fifty pesos, and he made a tea out of all kinds of stuff, I don't know what it was, he'll have to tell you. He lit some candles and got *montado*, and San Rafael spoke to me. He said he would protect me on my journey there, but said that only God could help me get my visa, and that I might have to find another way. We placed a copy of my identification papers and my birth certificate on this plate with flowers and stuff on it, and he lit candles around it and said I had to light a candle to San Rafael for nine days. We still didn't get the visa, and I thought I hadn't prayed enough, or we did something wrong, or that I was being punished for something. But I kept my faith, and in the end, San Rafael got me to New York.

Raoulito, the *servidor* who assisted Nimia with her spiritual consultation, had a different description of the event.

> She wanted her visa, and Tinyó Alawé, San Rafael, is the best *misterio* for that. See that altar over there, the bowls at eye level? I prepared a common *receta* for a *servicio de té* [recipe for a preparation of tea]. To make the tea you need: patchuli root, *romero*, *mejorana* [oregano], *yerba luisa, flor de libertad, gengibre, especies dulces* [sweet ginger]. You throw in *alsucena*, grate it and sweeten it with honey. You put everything in a *copa* [a vessel] with the name of the person, you add cooking oil, and the tea and place it on the altar as an offering. Then you invite him to *trabajar,* or become possessed with San Rafael as Tinyó Alawé. We put on a *novena*, which is nine days of prayer. On each of those days, you say prayers in the evening and in the morning and you have to light a candle and make sure that he has fresh flowers and enough anis liquor, because that's what he likes. You have to follow the protocol exactly or it doesn't work.
>
> *Raoulito,* servidor, *Monte Cruz*

Chapter three also demonstrated how journey by yola or overland through Mexico is a dangerous endeavour. San Rafael is also important to people who are travelling to Puerto Rico by boat, as the driver of a bus in Baní explained: 'See this chain with San Rafael on it? [pointing to an amulet of San Rafael around his neck]. I carried it all the way to Puerto Rico and he protected me'. *Servidor* Raoulito explained why San Rafael was important for water journeys:

> San Rafael helps people who are travelling, especially in water, since he is of water (and Dominicans travel over water in *yolas*). His story is about a young boy who was praying for a cure for his mother's blindness--San Rafael came to him beside a river and told him to take the eyes of a fish, make them into a powder and give them to his mother. He did and she was cured. He is drawn to people who make water journeys, so most Montecruzeños around here call upon him when they go to Puerto Rico.

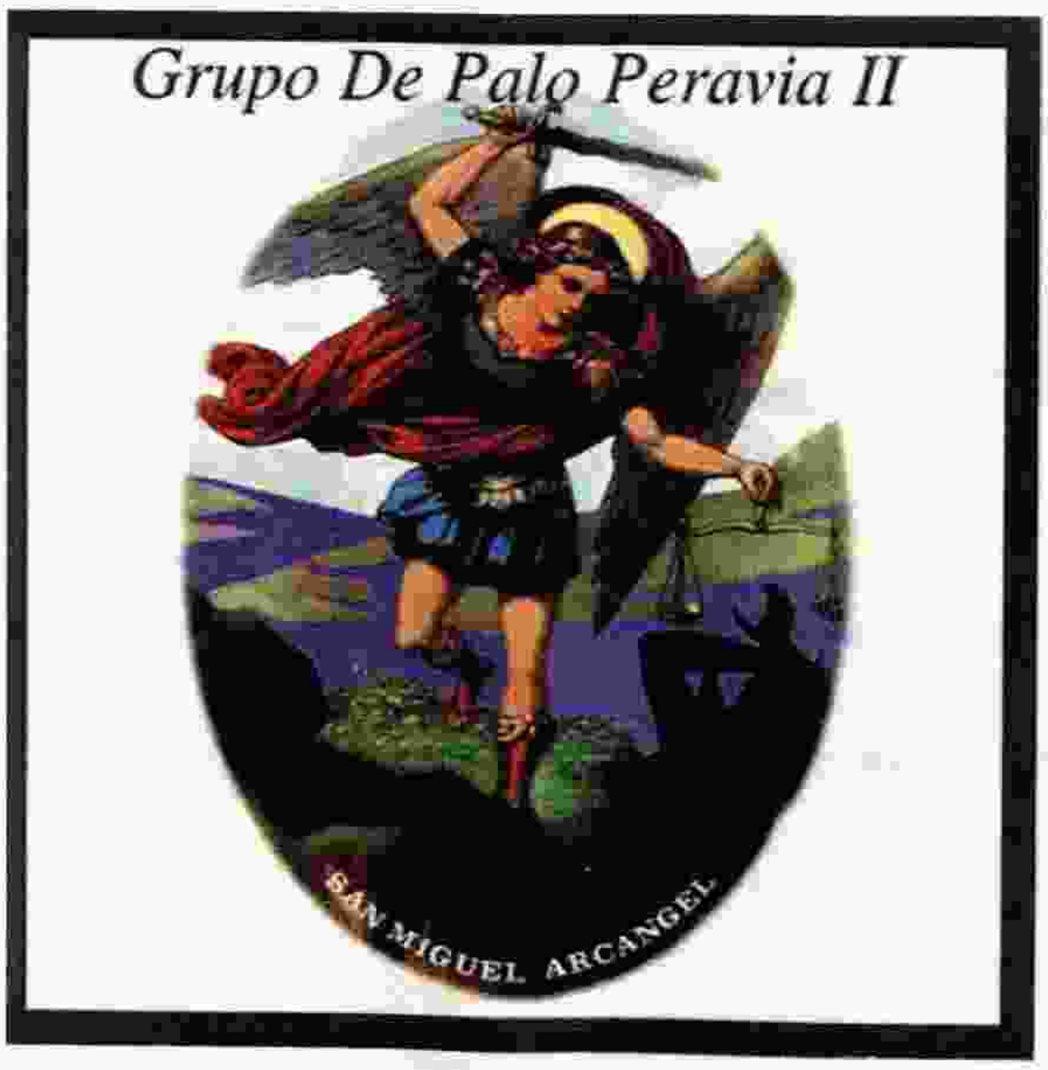
*San Miguel*

San Miguel, manifested *en cabeza* as 'Belié Belcán', is one of the most common *misterios* seen in Baní and Boston (see figure 4-11). San Miguel, the devil-vanquisher, 'works for

everything', but especially people who are looking for work and fighting against witchcraft or enemies. Some call him *El Jefe del Corte*, the court chief, because he has the ability to influence the decisions of judges. San Miguel is commonly seen in amulet form around the necks of men in Boston and in Baní. Men tend to have an affinity for him.

Perfilio, a Montecruzeño, was unemployed and had few options due to his undocumented status when he arrived in Boston. He called upon San Miguel to find a job. Instead of finding a *servidor* in Boston, however, he chose to maintain a link with his home *servidor* Raoulito, in Monte Cruz, who could conduct spiritual transactions with San Miguel over the phone. Perfilio contacted his brother in Monte Cruz, who went over to Raoulito's homestead and paid him one hundred pesos. Perfilio called Raoulito in Monte Cruz, who went to his altar and called San Miguel down to possess his body in the form of Belié Belcán so that he could communicate with Perfilio over the phone. Belié Belcán spoke to Perfilio, telling him to put on a *novena*—nine days of prayer and lit candles—to give him spiritual aid in his search for a job. He told him to wear certain colours of undergarments (red and green, the colours of San Miguel) and encouraged him to take a bath in a special preparation of powders he could purchase at the *botánica* in Jamaica Plain. He also knew of someone who would be travelling to Boston soon, and promised Perfilio that he would send some of his own bath powder preparations with him.

Figure 4-11. San Miguel on the cover of a palo CD



*San Antonio*

San Antonio is one of the most common *misterios* seen in Monte Cruz and is used generally as well as for specific aspects of the migration experience. San Antonio is also considered 'a fighter of evil' and has especially keen powers of predication. Toni, a Montecruzeño who has been coming home from New York for three or four months every year now for fourteen years, explained that he tries to give a fiesta to San Antonio whenever possible, and always immediately before a trip back to the U.S. When he first moved to New York, it was San Antonio who helped him find work in a grocery store. Toni was very quick to assert that he is not involved in any 'bad business', and said he did not have a lot of money with his job, although a green card allows him to be mobile. He part-owns an apartment in New York and when he comes home to Baní he stays with the mother of his two children.

> When I first left the U.S., I didn't have time to throw a palo fiesta, I had a last minute opportunity to go. So I just prayed to San Antonio that the journey would go well, and that I would have luck in work and love and find people with open hearts and no obstacles in their paths. Now, in this last palo fiesta, I first asked for world peace and better politicians in the world. Then I asked for personal things; luck with work, the best luck ever with love and finding good people, good North Americans, and learning English. But a lot of people ask for help in avoiding bad situations abroad, like getting put in jail or messed up with drugs or the mafia. Dominicans get into *negocio malo* (bad business), they don't want to take the time to learn English and find an honest job, they want to make money quickly and then come back to the DR. But I can't really talk much about this because I don't have friends involved in this.
>
> Toni, 55 Monte Cruz

*Ernesto's promesa, Part I*

An example of a migrant who called upon the *misterios* (San Rafael and San Miguel in particular) for help in getting to the U.S. is the family of Ernesto, a forty-two-year-old Montecruzeño who left the island by *yola* in hopes of reaching Puerto Rico and finding a job. The day before Ernesto left Monte Cruz, his family threw a palo fiesta for the entire community to ensure that he would have a safe trip. This fiesta was the first step of the *promesa*, that he would make with San Rafael and San Miguel to arrive safely in Puerto Rico, and from there enter the U.S.

He planned the fiesta to take place at his mother's house north of Monte Cruz, located in front of the large wooden warehouses where generations of Ernesto's family had picked and cleaned coffee plants to export to American markets. Around four pm neighbours gathered in his mother's small house for the *hora santa*, the prayer hour. Outside, the palo musicians had already lit a small fire and were warming the skins on their palo drums in front of it. His mother, Virtudes, had prepared the house for the event with the little money she had. She had purchased new red, white and green candles for the altar, which had well-worn ceramic figures of San Miguel, San Antonio, Anaísa, San Rafael, La Virgen de Altagracia, and a large cross in the middle attached to the wall. Underneath the table on the floor were figures of Black Changó, and Santa Marta, *misterios* of *la banda negra*. On the altar were bowls of hard candy, two bottles of *Brugal* rum, a bottle of Presidente beer, and a bottle of anis liquor—the preferred drinks of the *misterios*. Raoulito had already prepared bowls of rice, flowers and herbs that were part of a *trabajo* (magical work) dedicated to San Rafael with the purpose of safe travel, and a large basket of rolls that would be passed around to the crowd following the *hora santa*. Because Virtudes could not have afforded all of food and materials needed to sponsor a fiesta, her extended family had contributed various things. Some brought the customary two litre soda drinks, ice, and cups to give to people along with the rolls and hard candy. A cousin had brought *pastelitos*, small meat-filled pastries.

After the *hora santa* and communal prayer finished, Virtudes made her *promesa*, speaking to the altar and to the gathering: 'We pray to the Virgen that my son arrives safely, and that he bears his dangerous journey well. We give you great thanks, we offer you what we have to show our thanks. O San Miguel, O San Rafael, we ask you to help us in our plea'. This prayer initiated the festivities, and although she prayed to the Virgin de Altagracia, Ernesto and others later approached the altar and made private prayers to San Rafael and San Miguel. After the prayer, the palo musicians entered the house and began to play their drums by the side of the altar. Each song was dedicated to a specific *misterio*, and called that *misterio* down to possess one of the people present. The space in front of the altar was reserved for the Raoulito the *servidor* to

attend to people who become possessed with the *misterios*, and for people to dance to the palo music. At this particular fiesta, Virtudes, who was busy running back and forth from the kitchen to the back patio, refilling drinks and attending to her guests, suddenly dropped the tray of drinks she was holding. She had become possessed with Belié Belcán (San Miguel). Meanwhile, Raoulito was possessed with Tinyó Alawé (San Rafael), who had announced his arrival in the Haitian 'Bonswa a la societé'! The two *misterios* in the heads of Virtudes (Belié Belcán) and Raoulito (Tinyó Alawé) communicated with one another in the midst of the drumming, dancing and general activity of the fiesta. 'What does this woman want'? asked Belié Belcán to Tinyó Alawé. They motioned to a woman—the sister of Ernesto, in fact, and told her to come forward. They embraced her, made the sign of the cross on her and clasped her hand as she talked. In a hushed transaction, she gave the name of Ernesto, and repeated their prayer that he arrive safely in Puerto Rico. Virtudes/Belié Belcán requested a cigar, which s/he lit and began to smoke, examining the pattern of the ashes on the end of the cigar after each drag, which foretells the future. S/he called Ernesto over and spoke to him in a voice inaudible to the rest. Ernesto told us later that s/he had been giving him advice for his impending journey. Over the next hour, the *misterios* also attended to others present, who made their own *promesas* or asked for spiritual advice.

Ernesto later said that Tinyó Alawé (San Rafael) had told his mother to keep a candle burning on the altar and make sure it was well stocked with the things he liked. He told Ernesto that he had been a faithful servant over the years and that he would do his best to help him get safely to Nueva York, but that it was a difficult task. Ernesto made the journey to Puerto Rico, worked there until he could buy the documents needed to enter the U.S. He passed, undetected by authorities, through immigration in Miami and was met by relatives there, who drove him back up to Boston. Ernesto was overjoyed to have reached the U.S. and attributed his success to the *misterios*. He also realized that he was now obligated to reciprocate his thanks to San Miguel and San Rafael in a second fiesta de palos:

> I was so happy to have reached the U.S., and I have God and the *misterios* to thank for that. But I was broke, in debt even, with no money to throw another fiesta. But it's ok,

> the misterios know you are tight and can wait. But you don't want to wait too long, as soon as you can afford it, you have give a proper one.

*Ernesto's promesa: Part II*

*Promesas*, or spiritual pacts, are structured so that humans must reciprocate in the form of a second *fiesta de palos*, which honours the *misterio* after a spiritual work is successful. Once someone has asked favours of a *misterio*, he has engaged in a relationship that cannot be neglected or abandoned, even if he leaves the country. Migrants have brought their tradition of the fiesta de palo to Boston, where they fulfil their *promesas* once they have been able to amass enough resources to give the fiesta.

Ernesto planned his second fiesta for six months after he arrived, planning to have saved enough with the construction job he found through a friend. But six months later, he still could not afford it, so he postponed it until he could have a 'proper' fiesta to express his thanks to the *misterios*, which would be more lavish than the one that Ernesto's family had originally given a year earlier. Word went around Jamaica Plain that this fiesta was not to be missed. In the year since he had moved to Boston, several of his friends had also made the journey to the U.S. overland. Several others had attempted and failed. He had moved from a friend's house in Jamaica Plain to save on rent by living with his niece (who had lived in the U.S. since the age of two) and her husband in their small apartment in Lawrence, a town thirty minutes north of Boston.

Because Ernesto was in Boston, there were certain challenges involved in giving a palo fiesta that had not existed at home. Sponsoring a 'proper' fiesta in Boston is no small task. There must be women *rezadores* to pray, palo drummers, participants knowledgeable of palo dances and songs, and appropriate spiritual materials such as incense, candles and an altar—essentially, an intact community of Dominicans. Furthermore, people must find a location for a fiesta that can handle fire-lit floors, very loud volume, alcohol, and crowds. In Boston, tiny rental apartments, icy winter weather and the fact that people have long work hours are complicating factors to the organization of palo fiestas. Because he lived in an apartment with other Dominicans from Monte

Cruz and Baní, he knew there would not be many complaints about large crowds. Ernesto planned to have his fiesta in the summer, when school was out and people had more free time. In Jamaica Plain, summer is the season for palo, when migrants from all parts of Monte Cruz come together for fiestas in people's homes or in Dominican-owned clubs and bars.

On a warm Saturday in June, Ernesto gave the second *fiesta de palos*. Ernesto and his niece Carmela invited the fifty-odd Montecruzeños they knew living in Jamaica Plain and Boston, as well as friends from Baní that Ernesto had made working on construction jobs in downtown Boston. He invited the filmmakers of *Aquí y Allá,* the television show that airs on Sunday nights in Baní and Boston featuring Banilejos in both locations, so that his mother could see the fiesta at home in Monte Cruz. He also asked a friend to videotape the event with his home camera in case *Aquí y Allá* could not make it.

At one of the Dominican *bótanicas* in Jamaica Plain, Carmela bought candles, incense, holy spray, and flowers. She bought a dozen red roses from a flower vendor downtown to go on the altar. Here Ernesto also obtained the phone number of a local *servidor* to help facilitate the fiesta, as well as information about a palo bands. He hired a palo group originally from Monte Cruz to play at the fiesta, and several members were friends from home. From one of the local Dominican bakeries in Jamaica Plain, she ordered a cake for the fiesta, decorated in honour of the *misterios* and made with the same pineapple-frosting recipe used in Monte Cruz. They stocked the refrigerator with Presidente beer and called up a Dominican restaurant to cater for seventy-five people a meal of *pollo guisado* (a chicken dish), rice, beans, salad, and ripe fried plantains. Ernesto was annoyed that they would not be able to have the array of traditional sweets that individuals sell on tables outside palo fiestas in Monte Cruz. Instead, they ordered several large 'three-milks' cakes (*dulce de trés leches*) from the bakery. They decorated the altar with ribbons, candles, and offerings of candy for the *misterios* that would later be passed around to guests. Anticipating a rowdy fiesta, they removed all furniture in the living room where they had set up the altar, took pictures off the wall, and laid plastic down on the floor. None of this was necessary in Monte Cruz, where his mother's house had concrete floors, furniture covered in plastic to keep

out the dust, and a dirt courtyard. And instead of lighting the incense on a wood fire outside the house as is customary in Monte Cruz, they placed it in a tin can on the electric burner of the stove, which caused the smoke detector to go off.

The guests arrived around 2 pm bringing children, neighbours, and friends in the typical Dominican fashion and dressed in their best. Someone had just been to Santo Domingo and had brought several bottles of Brugal rum, which caused great excitement among the guests. In addition to Dominicans from Monte Cruz, there were people from all parts of the island, including Samaná and Santiago. A Guatemalan and a Mexican woman were also present, and the attendance of a white anthropologist (assumed to be someone's girlfriend) was not as noteworthy as it had been at Ernesto's first fiesta in Monte Cruz.

Despite the significant change in location, the fiesta was carried out in much the same manner that it had been in Monte Cruz. The same salves were sung and the same prayers were spoken during the *hora santa*, followed by an introductory prayer spoken out loud by Ernesto's niece Carmela and directed at the altar:

> O San Miguel, we thank you for everything you have done for us. We ask that you continue to help those in need, especially all of our people imprisoned here (*la gente presa*) [several members of the audience yelled out 'Ay, sí' at his point]. We honour you and will continue to honour you always.

Ernesto approached the altar and made a private prayer to thank the *misterios* for fulfilling his *promesa* to reach the U.S. Soon after, the palo band began playing the customary songs in honour of the *misterios*. Older Montecruzeños danced the palo shuffle step and younger, American-born teenagers joined in perfect step without hesitation. While people danced, San Miguel and Anaísa arrived, possessing Ernesto's sister and Eufremio, the spirit medium present. Outside the altar room, the guests ate their *pollo guisado*, drank their *Presidentes*, and talked of the latest news of family at home with people who had just returned from a visit. Children ran around playing, many speaking English that their parents could not understand. They discussed whether *Aqui y Allá* television crew would arrive. One of the guests had seen the producer in the barbershop that morning and he said he was coming, as they had done in the past with other palo fiestas. It was a shame they had not showed yet, remarked one guest looking in the altar room at

the dancers, 'Mamá and the folks back home would have liked to see a fiesta as good as this one'. In the end, the camera crew did not show, but a friend of Ernesto had videotaped everything. His mother and all the neighbours watched the fiesta two weeks later on tape in Monte Cruz. At the same time she talked to Ernesto, who was also watching a copy of the tape in Lawrence and narrating it over the phone.

The palo fiesta was important, but not enough. Ernesto knew that he would have to remain faithful to San Miguel and San Rafael for the rest of his life, maintaining an altar, offerings of rice, rum and cigars, and lit candles for the *misterios*. Without this continual affirmation of their presence and gratitude for their gifts, he knew that they would grow resentful and perhaps take away what he had been given. Like most Montecruzeño migrants who practice Vodú, Ernesto started an annual custom of holding a fiesta de palos on the day of San Miguel every year.

As this account of the dual-part nature of the palo fiesta, both in Monte Cruz and in Boston, has illustrated, the receiving society is also the locus of homeland-oriented religious activity. For Dominican Vodú practitioners, the source of success in migration lies in carefully tended relationships with the *misterios* and pacts that must be honoured even if outside the homeland. If one does not continually cultivate his/her relationship with a *misterio*, a task that involves personal efforts and the migrant community as a whole in palo fiestas, *misterios* can take away what they have given to someone. When looking for why homeland connections are so strong, an obvious reason is that the migrant may feel s/he has no choice in the matter. The migrant is risking all s/he has gained by 'forgetting' Dominican roots.

*Vodú and extra-legal occupational strategies*

Apart from protection during the journey and help in obtaining a visa, Vodú plays a crucial role in migrant settlement in the receiving society. We have seen how migrants appeal to San Antonio for help in finding employment; in this section we will investigate the relationships between Vodú and crime, and transnational channels of communication.

While *servidores* interviewed in Monte Cruz and throughout the province concurred that the request for a visa and protection during the journey abroad is extremely common among clients, all twenty-six *servidores* interviewed emphasized that the most common requests from clients were 'to help people in jail in the United States' or to ask for spiritual protection while involved in the selling of drugs:

> The mothers call me when their children are involved with drugs or in jail—that's the majority of the cases I get. People call me from Boston, all the time, these *fulanitos* want me to pray for them because their 'friend' is into drugs or needs to get out of prison fast. They try to pretend it's not them, they say 'what can you do for someone involved in this situation. . . .' But I've seen some miracles—there was this guy I prayed for who was going to be in there for 17 years—he got out in six months.
>
> Marciela, *Servidor* in Baní

An indication of how often Vodú is used for this purpose can be witnessed in the *hermitas* (chapels) of *servidores*, where altars are littered with *trabajos* containing candles on top of scraps of paper with the names of judges and police officers written on them. A name is necessary to identify the person the *trabajo* is working against. La Virgen de las Mercedes is a favourite *misterio* because of her ability to 'break chains' (*rompe cadenas*), handy for problems related to arrests or incarcerations. Others pray to San Lazaro, known as 'El Patron de las drogas' (the drug chief), whose enduring quality in life was faithfulness as Jesus' friend even after he was arrested and condemned, which was rewarded by resurrection along with Jesus. Those who have committed crimes appeal to San Lazaro in hopes that he will be faithful to a condemned man, as he was in life.

According to *servidores*, these common *trabajos* for freeing someone who is imprisoned tend to use a lock and chain and a key placed in a far away place. Wili, a *servidor* in Baní, described the *trabajos* he does for the families of migrants arrested or imprisoned in the U.S.:

> When you've got someone in jail, you can do a *servicio* with corn and a new pot that has never been used, a chain and an open lock. You put the key far away and pray for nine days, lighting the candle on the *servicio*. You can pray to La Virgen de las Mercedes or San Lazaro, both can be effective. On Friday the judge will alter the sentence—for example, he'll get nine years instead of twenty in jail. The person who is doing this will pay the *servidor* if and when he gets out of jail.
>
> Wili, *Servidor* in Baní

A different *servidor* in Monte Cruz explained his *trabajo*, which uses many of the same symbols and elements of sympathetic magic, such as a lock, key and chain:

> If you were in jail and you wanted to get out, you would need to send me a pound of rice, a pound of *ajonjolis* [an herb], a new lock with its key, a length of chain, and the name of the person. In a big white plate, you put the *ajojolis* and the rice. You put the name of the person under the rice and the *ajonjolis*. Then you put the chain around the plate with the lock closed. You add a white candle in the middle and light it. Open the chain and the lock and put the key high above. Make a *novena* to La Virgen de la Mercedes, who breaks chains. Repeat the prayers throughout the *novena*, and even if the *fulano* [migrant] gets freed before the end of the *novena*, you still have to have the fiesta each night.
>
> Raoulito, *Servidor* in Monte Cruz

When Fani, a sixty-five year-old Montecruzeña, discovered that her son was arrested on drug charges in Providence, she immediately consulted Raoulito. It was imperative that his court date, set for the following month, go well. Not only did she pay Raoulito for a consultation with La Virgen de las Mercedes, she organized a palo fiesta in honour of the *misterio*, and the community gathered in support of Fani's son. Despite her effort, her son was convicted for possession of cocaine with the intent to sell and received a one-year sentence. Fani was relieved he did not receive a longer amount of time, and attributed his relatively short sentence to the *misterios* (her neighbour's son was currently serving a much longer sentence for a similar charge). However, because he was not released as she had originally asked, Raoulito did not ask her to pay him any more fees for his work.

Another example of migrants using Vodú in conjunction with illegal occupational activities is the use of amulets for protection. One return migrant in Monte Cruz who had lived in Boston explained how some of his friends had protected themselves (making very clear that he had nothing to do with these activities):

> When those *fulanos* go over there [to Boston] and sell drugs, they have to learn how to take care of themselves fast. There's always a *lío* [trouble] involving a lot of *tigres*. They make *promesas* to the *misterios* to protect themselves, and they put up these life-sized statues of San Miguel in their apartments. They've got altars and they pay good money to a *servidor* to stay lucky, fight off their enemies. They wear all kinds of stuff, special-coloured underwear and socks—San Miguel's colours, red and green, and they wear chains around their necks . . .
>
> Robinson, Monte Cruz

A Dominican jewellery storeowner in Jamaica Plain spoke of her sales of necklaces bearing the images of San Lazaro and San Miguel:

> San Miguel is our most popular necklace. San Lazaro, too, *El Patron de las drogas*. We get a lot of young men in here buying those. Kids, it's sad, they are all into drugs these days. It's popular with gangs around here, they think it will protect them from people wanting to hurt them. You better buy one yourself! A young lady wandering around here alone, you could probably use some protection with all the *tigres* in this neighbourhood.

In *botánicas* in Boston, New York, and Baní, one can buy incense preparations for two dollars called 'caso de corte' (court case), or 'justo juez' (for the alleged). These preparations are burned at palo fiestas (see figure 4-12).

Police in Boston, often Spanish-speakers themselves, are very aware of the efforts that migrants employ to evade or escape arrest and incarceration and speak of their experiences with Vodú. One police officer from Cuba (himself a practitioner of Santería) spoke of arrests made despite the many *trabajos* that had been performed against him:

> One guy I was looking for went down to the *brujos* in Haiti. He was trying to get rid of me, you see? But I told her I wasn't worried because I have God on my side. I also have Saint Lazarus to protect me [he showed me an amulet around his neck]. It's a Cuban thing. *Brujería* is witchcraft. *Santería* is different, it's sort of like 'fighting' *brujería*. I see altars all the time. People stash drugs in their altars and when I come in to seize the drugs, they say 'don't touch it or you will be punished!' But I take it and nothing happens. If I am looking for drugs, the first place I go to is the altar. They are usually stashed behind Changó'.
>
> Officer Olmez, Jamaica Plain

This police officer's comments illustrate how Vodú is used to both protect practitioners and fight back against threatening agencies such as law enforcement officials, who themselves engage in related Afro-Caribbean religious practices as a form of protection.

Figure 4-12. Incense wrappers used to release prisoners or receive acquittals.







*Ethical considerations*

Some *servidores* encounter ethical problems in 'helping' people who they know are involved in illicit activities. Eva is one example of a *servidora* uncomfortable in such a situation:

> *Eva*: I don't help people who are *ladrones* [thieves] involved with *drogas* or *tecatos* [dug addicts/sellers]. People who sell drugs use drugs.
>
> *Anthropologist*: But how do you know that they are telling the truth?
>
> *Eva*: [Smiles] Oh, I know. I help people who are arrested for bad papers or mistaken identity. A man once called me from New York; someone had used his identity to travel, but they arrested him, the rightful owner, instead. I prayed for him and he was released from his jail sentence. If someone works in a factory or earns their living honestly, I help them. You have to earn your bread. But if it's another reason that they are in jail and they are really guilty, I know it. They can't lie—I know the truth. Their culpability is between them and God.

Although others remain ignorant about details and reason that a person's guilt is between him and God, sometimes internal conflicts are too great to be resolved. One woman told the story of her grandmother, a *servidor* who stopped practicing shortly after her three sons and daughter-in law were arrested as part of a heroin smuggling ring in Boston:

> After Papi and Mami were arrested, Abuelita stopped everything. She used to be strong in this, neighbours would always come over with their problems. She was strong with the

> misterios, and she still knows what's going to happen in the future sometimes. But she stopped lighting her candles--I guess she felt like she couldn't help Papi because he was really guilty, because maybe he really deserved to be in jail. But then, about two years later, a neighbour living in Boston had a dream in which San Antonio appeared and told her that Abuelita had stopped lighting candles to the misterios. The woman called Abuelita and told her to start lighting candles again or the misterios or San Antonio would not be pleased, so she started lighting candles again.

The fact that many people are learning *recetas* and setting up 'spiritual centers' in response to migrants' and their families' needs for spiritual services is met with distrust and negativity by many older *servidores*, who claim that these newcomers are taking advantage of migrants in trouble and practicing black magic. These feelings are well expressed by one informants' disgusted statement that 'now there are more *brujos* (witches) than food in Baní'. All *servidores* interviewed who have been practicing Vodú for more than twenty years were emphatic about the increase of *brujos* in the past decade:

> (Three *servidores* talking about the host of a fiesta de palos):
>
> She's rich now, she certainly can't complain. Me, I've been working in this profession for 30 years and I'm still poor. It's bad how today, people just don't know what they are doing. There are just too many people, and they think they can do it but really, they don't know how. Everyone is *montado*, charging 100, 150 pesos. There's a ton of *brujeria* [witchcraft], that's what it is. Everyone is out to get everyone else. It's all the drugs.

The power of Vodú to bring about changes that may be negative for others has always existed, and for that reason so many *servidores* emphasize that they only work 'for good' and not 'black magic'. However, when it comes to life in the United States, what is good and bad or legal and illegal becomes ambiguous, as will become clear in the following sections.

*Transnationalism and religious 'channels'*

How do migrants use global communication technologies for the purposes of religious transactions with the homeland? *Servidores* traditionally worked with clients face to face. But now that people are migrating with such frequency, it is becoming difficult to see clients in person, many of whom live in Boston and New York. Although there are Dominican *servidores* working in Boston, migrants also have ties to *servidores* back in Baní or Monte Cruz and remain loyal to them if they have worked well for them in the past. The potential problem of

communicating in person has been circumvented by using the telephone, so that now *servidores* receive calls from abroad for help and actually perform consultations over cell phone connections.

> People call me from allá; and I say, call me back in five minutes. Then I go to the altar and 'montar' San Pancraso, and then they call me back and they are speaking to Prin Ghede on the phone.
>
> Raoulito, *servidor* in Monte Cruz

The use of internet is used increasingly to facilitate consultations between *servidores* and clients. Some *servidores* offer spiritual readings through email or instant messenger, claiming to 'montar' and providing photos of spirit possession as proof. Other *servidores* do not actually perform the consultation via email but use the internet as a way of advertising their services and phone number through web pages. Payments are made via credit card, Paypal, or check; one *servidor* charged $US 41.00 for a consultation after a 'free trial'[54]. Internet is becoming more popular, although still limited primarily to young, second generation Dominican Americans living in the U.S. who are savvy users of information technology.

Phone use is common and internet is a growing practice, but people still travel far distances for consultations in the Baní region. Any Vodú activity is considered more potent in the homeland, but primarily because of the ease and the affordability of giving a fiesta. For example, migrants in Boston reminisce happily about baptisms that take place in rivers instead of cramped apartments, and spiritual herbs that come from fields instead of plastic bags of *botánicas* or the grocery store. Clients who travel to the Dominican Republic for Vodú consultations and fiestas are not just restricted to Dominicans; citizens of Venezuela, Colombia, the United States, Spain and Italy come to Baní having heard about the powers of certain well-known *servidores*. One Italian client had travelled to the Dominican Republic from New York City, where he lived in the Dominican neighbourhood of Washington Heights. There he had learned of Santa Marta from Dominican friends and had set up an altar to her to ask for help with citizenship papers and protection from enemies.

Global telecommunications such as mobile phones and internet allow *servidores* to carry out transnational consultations, as in the case of one Dominican-American *servidor* practicing in

the United States, who is able to sustain an international clientele through website publicity and travel. His website, entitled 'Dominicanvodou.com' provides an email address, which initiates contact and the exchange of phone numbers for the purpose of a phone consultation. On his website, he gives his biography, which illustrates his connections with the Dominican Republic as well as the international extent of his practice:

> My friend Gloria who was an older *caballo* of the 21 divisions was punished by the lwas. I helped her to get back on her feet, and she had recommended me to a Dominican woman named Claudia in the capital of the Dominican Republic. In 1997 I went to the Dominican Republic to meet Claudia. She had taken me to an old man in Saint Marc north of Haiti who is the *caballo* of Candelu. I learned many things from this man. When I returned back from Haiti I grew many ties specially in Boston, Connecticut, Maryland, Virginia and Philadelphia etc… helping and teaching others with what Papa Bondye gave me. . . In the summer of 2002, I extended my practice to Puerto Rico. I am running a well functioning *bayi* (altar/practice) in the United States, working for many clients, providing guidance[55].

In order to continue the practice of Vodú abroad, migrants have also substituted recordings made by groups at home or in Boston for live performances of sacred palo drums. In her work on migrants from Barahona (a rural area to the west of Baní) in Spain, Cristina Sanchez notes their practice of giving *fiestas de palos* in which spirit possession is facilitated using recordings of *palo* drums rather than live music[56]. The fact that migrant communities in Spain are overwhelmingly female makes palo musicians (typically male) scarce, a factor that may contribute to use of recordings.

In the absence of face-to-face communication, the use of phone, email, and recordings to carry out rituals illustrates how telecommunication channels and other media facilitate religious interactions between migrants and homeland. Yet even though migrant rituals of Vodú persist despite the absence of the homeland with its sacred geographies of rivers and pilgrimage sites, the physical presence of the *servidor* and the live performance of sacred music, there is still a great deal of 'magic' that is added to the transnational interaction absent in traditional performance. Channels of satellite and internet communication connect people on two continents instantaneously through unseen 'virtual' networks that can seem magical to all but the most savvy IT professionals in any society. In another sense, the intanglible aspects of telecommunications channels have become metaphors for spiritual channels of Vodú. Lacking the traditional intense

physical interaction between *servidor*, *misterio* and client (anointments of holy water, embracing, tracing the shape of a cross over the client, for example), *misterios* can still transmit their potency through mobile phones or even the internet. As one informant in Jamaica Plain put it (in English), 'The *misterios* are like internet, they are everywhere. It's just a matter of getting access to them'.

Further transnational connections between *servidor* and client are maintained by remittances. Clients not only send payments to *servidores* through Dominican money wiring services operating out of Boston and Jamaica Plain, Western Union and by purchasing money orders at the post office, they also continue to provide monetary support to the *servidor*, who in a sense is 'managing' their life abroad. Migrants credit any gains they make to *misterios* and invest a lot of resources into making sure their spiritual relationships are in order, for negligence or ingratitude infuriates the *misterios*, whose punitive measures are feared by humans. Many stories tie misfortune to spiritual punishment, offering fitting explanations for the seemingly miraculous flood of wealth brought by jobs in the United States (especially in the drug trade) and the characteristic violence and misfortune that accompanies it. Neighbourhood gossip illustrates these beliefs: 'You see that house up there, brand new? Everyone knows that is drug money. You bet that they are sending good money to their *servidor* so that no one takes it away from them' (Liana, 29 returned migrant in Monte Cruz). 'Everyone here knows who is involved in drugs by how nice their house and their SUV is. The baseball players don't make *that* much money' (Eduardo, 34 Monte Cruz).

The more that migrants come to rely on the *misterios*, the more they support their local *servidor*—who in turn is able to shower this wealth upon the *misterios*. *Servidores* are increasingly able to afford lavish offerings of top quality rum and cigars for their altars. They buy life-size ceramic figures of the *misterios* and crowd their multiple altars with dozens of effigies and portraits. Some *servidores* in Baní have built entire houses with rooms devoted to their altars, which stand conspicuously next to the one-room corrugated iron shacks of their neighbours. These *servidores* throw extravagant parties, with a different elaborately decorated cake for each day of the *novena* and enough goat meat (a delicacy) for seventy people. Besides remittances, the price for releasing someone from jail is high; *servidores* charge US$400--$500 when a *trabajo*

releases someone from jail. In Baní and Monte Cruz, this is more money than can be made working in the *zona franca*, transporting people in *motoconchos*, or in many retail jobs. In a sense, some migrants establish a sort of religious dependency on home *servidores* to propagate their success while living abroad. In this way, migrant strategies are maintained, from home, even when the migrant is abroad.

*Religious structures*

We have seen how religion becomes 'transnationalized' through the use of communication technologies such as mobile phones and the internet. Religion operates in the transnational context in other ways. Looking at religion from the more etic standpoint of social organization, we ask, how is religion an important organizing structure in transnational migrant life? As Levitt has pointed out, religious organizational structures can vary in their formality, ranging from relatively informal interpersonal organization of individuals to more structured, institutional organizations involving larger scale and more wide-reaching activities (2004). In the case of Montecruzenos, a number of 'structures' inform religious involvement in the transnational social field. In the Dominican Republic, kinship structures determine religious leadership; the hereditary head of the *cofradía* of Santa Elena is responsible for maintaining contacts with migrants abroad and securing a financial inflow invested in the annual patron saint's fiesta (an event that results in community development, repair of structures, schools, and houses—all in the name of Santa Elena). The religious *cofradía* is also responsible for the spiritual well being of Montecruzeños abroad and organizes palo fiestas when a member is arrested, imprisoned, journeying to the U.S. or otherwise in trouble. At these fiestas, money is raised for families experiencing hardship because of a migrant member's absence or misfortune abroad.

Additionally, the structure of the *servidor*/client relationship, although intimate and small-scale (but consisting of an extensive system of two-person relationships), also establishes a flow of remittances to Monte Cruz and Baní and 'locks' a migrant in a *promesa* (spiritual pact) ensuring homeland loyalty, involvement, and eventual return. The role of the spirit medium in facilitating transnational migration (i.e. migration that maintains strong ties to homeland) has

already been emphasized. Like the Marabout religious leaders of Senegalese Muslim brotherhoods, spirit mediums of Vodú provide the moral backing and blessing for migrating, which is reciprocated through the financial support of migrants (Riccio 1999:8).

The activities that migrants engage in to facilitate religious practices have wide-reaching repercussions throughout society, allowing them to stay connected politically and socially with home communities, and maintain a consciousness of the home community as Monte Cruz. There are a number of other examples of how religion is used to carry out transnational practices in other social spheres. In Boston, Catholic Church congregations of Montecruzeños and Banilejos organize trips to the state penitentiary every Sunday so they can bring Dominican food to inmates and cards and letters sent from family in Monte Cruz. Levitt has shown how Catholic churches in Boston provided social services to new migrants to help them settle (2001a). Religious affiliations to the *misterios* provide an identification for migrants in Boston: a number of stores are named after personal saints, such as *San Miguel* Auto Repair, Colmado *San Antonio*, *Santa Elena* drug store. Religious holidays celebrating the different saints bring migrants dispersed throughout Jamaica Plain and South Boston together. These events are not just for religious worship; they are social occasions in which the latest gossip is exchanged and economic transactions take place (arrangements for child care and organizing trips back to Monte Cruz, for example). In terms of communication networks, the global channels of internet and telephone that migrants routinely use for religious purposes also maintain communication and intimacy between families and friends, while the payments that clients remit to their *servidores* for managing their spiritual relationships invest in the development of Monte Cruz. Religion is also commoditized and therefore an income strategy: the increase in Vodú practice has created a market for palo musicians, who increasingly make recordings for entertainment, not just spiritual purposes. These examples are some of the ways in which transnational religious structures serve as the framework around which other social activities are organized.

*Ritual and agency*

Through transnational networks of communication, religious activity proliferates abroad and at home. How does this affect Vodú's historical place at the lowest strata of Dominican social hierarchies? Increased visibility normalizes Vodú and erodes hierarchies, while ritual may indirectly shift a migrant's marginal status. The relationship of religion to society has interested anthropologists since Durkheim argued in *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* that ritual is a direct representation of society (1915). Notable to the present study is Tambiah's exploration of the relationships between ritual and local social hierarchies, which concluded that rituals 'index' social hierarchies (1985). He emphasizes that ritual reflects social hierarchies and social class relations are integral to cosmology (Ibid.:121). He refers specifically to how the resources expended on rituals reflect the social position of the practitioners. In the migration context, studies have shown how migrants use religious practices to display a changed status in home societies. Katy Gardner shows how religion is a social marker among Muslim Sylheti migrants who use income earned in Britain to fund 'prestigious religious activities' at home, such as making lavish sacrifices or building a Mosque in the home village. For Sylhetis, spirituality and economic status are tied together in the emic notion of *bidesh*. The material possessions acquired through migration increase a family's *bideshi* status in the community (1993:4). Robin Palmer's study of Italian migrants in London noted the use of religious symbols for status back home in Italy. 'By investing heavily in ecclesiastical monuments, migrants symbolize their success and financial security abroad' (1977:261).

In the Dominican context, we have seen how religion reflects social hierarchies when people strategically use terminology to manoeuvre within value-laden categories. While the thesis concurs with McAlister (2002:148) that Afro-Caribbean religious practices fall more into a continuum between Catholicism and Vodú, how people have always talked about their faith has presented it in more polarized terms of good vs. bad/evil/witchcraft. For example, by using the African word *luá* instead of the Spanish *misterio* in mainstream society (i.e. outside the campo), one is inviting a negative label of *brujo* (witch). When people want to sound more 'Catholic', they use the word *santo*. In Dominican social hierarchies, Vodú is one marker of the rural

underclasses. Religious rituals reflect social hierarchies in other ways, as we have seen. For example, social hierarchies of colonial dominance are manifested in the representation of black and white *misterios*, who are positioned in spatial hierarchies with the black saints of *la banda negra* literally under the altar table. *Indios* (Indian *misterios*) are also marginalized in the corner, while the 'white' saints of *la banda blanca* are in clear view on the top of the altar.

Religion not just reflects but also challenges social hierarchies in the transnational migration context. As Van Gennep has illustrated, rituals present the world reversed, inverted in liminal time (1909). Turner further elaborated on Van Gennep's 'rites of passage' in his concept of *communitas*, which proposes that ritual temporarily eliminates social hierarchies and creates social bonding (1969). Turner's 'anti-structure'—the reverse of everyday social rules—is evident in Dominican palo fiestas where men are allowed to dance with men, handicapped people become valued individuals with special powers of divination, and the black saints are the most powerful and important figures. Turner's example of European carnival time as 'anti-structure' finds much in common with Dominican *carnaval*, which has a variety of customs that people call 'a revés' (upside down). The most notable custom of this type is the presence of the *carnaval* leader known as 'roba la gallina' ('he who has robbed the hen'), a man dressed in the caricature of a woman. In the transnational context, carnival is also celebrated in New York City, Boston, and even Raleigh, North Carolina, where a small Dominican community is growing.

A crucial question for the ability of ritual to 'challenge' social hierarchies becomes 'how far does this "challenge" extend beyond sacred time'? In Vodú, when *promesas* are made to create changes in everyday life, the sacred/profane boundary is blurred. Others have explored the political implications of the reversal of social hierarchies associated with ritual. Abner Cohen interprets the Notting Hill Carnival as a ritual of social change, not just a temporary reversal of social hierarchies. He shows how the carnival contests ethnic differences but at the same time defines ethnic 'difference' and gives actors a medium for asserting political agendas (1993). Jean Comaroff argues that ritual can be seen as a form of resistance against domination in the South African colonial context. Yet she emphasizes the *implicit* rather than explicit nature of resistance in Tshidi Zionist rituals:

> . . . the form of such resistance is largely implicit. I have argued that, while the colonial encounter objectivized the Tshidi perceptions of the dominant power-relations in their universe, this has not given rise to an explicit consciousness of class or to modes of strategic class action . . . they remain largely unselfconscious in any literal sense of the counter hegemonies they construct (1985:261).

Ritual, removed from more unreflexive activities, provides a context in which actors can object to the injustices of their society, but is not expected to remove these injustices. 'For all its inability to change the brute structures of dominance, Zionism as a sociocultural form has proven remarkably durable . . . .' (Ibid.:251). Auslander, in (the Comaroffs' edition) *Modernity and its Malcontents*, shows how Zambian native rituals are 'less about giving voice to shared values than about opening fields of argument' (Comaroff, J&J xxiii).

Paul Brodwin shows how poor Haitian migrants in Guadeloupe use religion more explicitly to contest their 'marginalized status by the dominant society: restrictive immigration policies; the threat of deportation; and the uncertainties of poorly paid, exploitative employment' (2003:85). To counteract their status as threats to society, argues Brodwin, they have portrayed themselves as morally self-righteous Pentecostal church members. 'The ethnography from Guadaloupe suggests how religiously based moral schemes become social operators in the improvised and unfinished zones of transnationalism' (Ibid.:85). Similarly, Ghanaian migrants use Pentacostalist faith to contest their marginal status in the Netherlands, successfully accessing and controlling the media in order to spread moral messages throughout society. They do so in an attempt to re-establish the dignity, pride and self-esteem taken away in the migration and settlement experience (Van Kessel 2002).

The Haitian and Ghanaian ethnographies illustrate how marginalization takes place not only in the sending but also receiving context, and how religion influences status and mainstream perceptions of marginal groups in the new land. In this context, religion may also operate as an ethnic identifier in receiving community, used to distinguish migrant groups from stigmatized native groups. McAlister shows how Haitians emphasize the 'Catholic' element of their religion to distance themselves from African Americans, a marginalized group in the U.S. 'By continuing to participate in Catholic congregations and public feasts, Haitian Americans distinguish

themselves further from African Americans, whom they generally view as members of the black Protestant church establishment' (2002:148).

While not wanting to romanticize resistance, the Dominican ethnography presents some relevant factors to a discussion of ritual and social change. Montecruzenos believe that ritual and the *promesa* will enable migration, whose ultimate goal is to improve life. Ritual is a tool used to achieve this goal. While rituals are temporary and the world rights itself again from time 'a revés', they put into motion a process of permanent change, whether it is the acquisition of a passport or the safe arrival of a migrant. Palo fiestas have an everyday applicability for the migrant seeking change in his/her life: they allow him/her to acquire visas, attract an American marriage partner, receive a sentence of 'not-guilty', shorten a jail term, find employment, travel over water, and journey over land. While ritual may not be an explicitly conscious form of resistance against the community's marginalization as a whole, it is a way to change life on a personal level. When *promesas* get desired results that are manifested in everyday life, ritual challenges of the status quo extend beyond sacred time.

*The Growing visibility of Vodú*

The previous section argued that Vodú rituals indirectly challenge social hierarchies by changing the lives of individuals, through enabling migration to occur. In addition to the personal agency of ritual, the sheer quantity of religious activity and increased visibility of Vodú also erodes social hierarchies. As we have seen, the legacy of a dominating colonial class has endured in prejudices against people who practice Vodú, and the traditional secrecy of rituals is one result of Vodú's rejection. Historically, palo fiestas have been clandestine in nature (consultations are completely private) because they have been prohibited throughout colonial history and publicly condemned. Up until only recently (the last twenty years, according to informants), people were sent paper invitations to palo fiestas, which gave the date and the location only. Even today, Vodú is a mystery to many townspeople in Baní, who regard palo fiestas as 'just something people do out there in the campo' ('you don't really want to see that, do you'? I have been asked) while many people living in the capital have never even heard of palo fiestas, or would not

recognize palo music. At town *patronales* festivals each year, the palo fiestas are not immediately visible. Besides the private fiestas that take place in people's homes, the *public fiestas de palo* that occur on every evening of the nine days are often removed, even hidden in covered, sheltered places removed from the main event of the festival in the public square. Not everyone knows where they take place.

Since the onset of Montecruzeño migration and the proliferation of religious activity, however, this 'secrecy' is disappearing in Baní and in society at large. There is a rise in demand for spiritual services reflected in the increase of stores selling spiritual paraphernalia; while ten years ago there was only one *botánica* in the market of Baní, there are now eleven. The materials in the *botánicas* are now mass-produced and come from a manufacturer out of New Jersey rather than hand-prepared in the Dominican Republic. Haitian migrant labourers, the poorest of society, are finding a niche in Baní as spiritual advisors as well. The growing demand for Vodú services has created a market for spiritual goods and services, in a sense, commoditizing religion.

There are now public palo fiestas and dancing in the central square of Baní, officially sponsored by the town government in celebrations known as *fiestas folkloricos* (folklore fiestas). Instead of hiding Vodú, the town government is helping it become more visible and is even starting to incorporate it into dialogues of Dominican cultural 'roots' (*raíces*), a significant development considering that Dominican national identity was shaped by Trujillo based on Spanish, white identity. An official of the town hall of Baní said, 'We try to sponsor a number of activities that show the culture and history of our people. Palo music is an important part of the history of *los pobres* and also Dominicans as a whole'. Certain patron-saint fiestas well known to the community are becoming increasingly well known throughout the country, such as the *fiesta de la vereda* to honour San Juan that takes place in Río Arriba northeast of Baní every year. At this fiesta in 2003, photographers from the capital drove two hours to take pictures for a public photo exhibition in Santo Domingo. The national secretary of culture was also present with a number of foreign guests from Cuba.

The proliferation of religious activity at home and abroad for purposes of migration is changing how people speak about religion, so that line between white magic (*magía blanca*) and

black magic (*magía negra*) is increasingly blurred. In this way, religion comes to resemble more of the continuum that it is in practice rather than the dichotomy that it has traditionally embodied in popular rhetoric. Accusations of *brujería* applied to traditional healers in the previous narratives of *servidoras* like Eva must be taken with a grain of salt. A large source of 'moral outcry' is none other than resentment towards new competition forcing older spirit mediums to work harder. And despite some moral objections lingering in the community, there is evidence of a general breakdown of traditional values of 'right' and 'wrong'. Arrests and deportations of Dominicans abroad are viewed with growing tolerance, and people cite 'misunderstandings' and cultural ignorance as the reasons that so many are incarcerated. Informants describe how a decade ago children in Banilejo schools were taunted by their classmates if their father was deported for selling drugs, while today teens instead brag of the exploits of older brothers, cousins and uncles. People rationalize selling drugs with comments like 'it's ok as long as it's not to Dominicans'. Others sympathize with the temptation to make money quickly for family back home who are in need of medicines, baby formula, or other basic expenses. These changes are worth brief mention here but are explored in more depth in chapter six.

Vodú practices are proliferating in the context of migration, becoming more public for commercial, not just ritual purposes, and are gaining recognition as a part of Dominican 'culture'. As an increasingly normalized religious practice, I argue that Vodú is losing some of its stigma and is becoming less marginal in the Dominican Republic.

*Chapter Summary*

This chapter has explored how religion operates in a transnational context. For Montecruzeños, migration is the deliverance from economic marginalization, and religion provides a safe vehicle for flight. Yet 'flight' is contingent upon return; it is the desire for an augmented status in homeland that provides the impetus for migration in the first place. Religious practices—inserted into the 'magical' networks of global communication technology—have allowed migrants to keep the channels open that will facilitate their homecoming and reinforce their stories of success abroad. From an etic structural standpoint, we have seen how social

activity is patterned on religious structures when the organization of homeland *cofradías* maintains economic and political connections between migrants and home communities. From an emic standpoint, performances of religious rituals are not only temporary reversals of marginalization but instrumental components of the migration experience that allow people to obtain citizenship documents, travel, find work, and cope with the risk inherent in all of these processes. Moving from the level of social change in the life of an individual to larger scale social transformation, there is evidence that religion challenges the hierarchies of home societies. Increased visibility of Vodú, a greater ambiguity regarding the definition of witchcraft, and a changing moral landscape are all indicators of the erosion of these hierarchies.

The proliferation of religious activity leads to a rise in related cultural practices such as musical performance, the subject of the next chapter. The rise in popularity of palo and bachata music provides compelling examples of how transnational migration changes mainstream perceptions of stigmatized cultural products.

## Chapter Five

## From Margins to Mainstream: Palo and bachata music

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Súbele que súbele' | 'Sing, let her sing' |
| Llegó Mamá, llegó Papá | Our mother is here, our father is here |
| O Anaísa, Venga ver | O Anaísa, come see us |
| Venga ver, O estes paleros | Come see us, Oh these paleros |
| aprenden el cielo aquí en Nueva York | Are about to set the sky on fire here in New York |

(Boni Raposo y La 21 División 2001)

'When a people immigrate they bring everything they have. What more do you have than your music—your identity'?

Dominican bachata singer Teodoro Reyes in *Santo Domingo Blues* (Wolf 2003)

The previous chapter demonstrated how religious practices of Dominican Vodú have proliferated in the transnational context and argued that heightened visibility of ritual and religious activity erodes social hierarchies. Religious activity contributes to a revitalization of other types of related cultural activities, notably musical performance, and a similar process of erosion and de-stigmatization occurs for music when 'mainstream' is redefined to include genres that were once marginal. This chapter will illustrate how sacred palo music and secular bachata music—both genres of poor rural Dominicans—have been popularized by transnational migrants and are increasingly consumed by wealthier and more 'mainstream' audiences. While transnational migration erodes home society social hierarchies in other ways (the subject of Chapter 6), the richness of the musical material warrants a whole chapter to itself. Musical practices are a particularly telling indicator of the extent of social change, as music is an important medium for cultural expression and the dissemination of information, as well as a core element of national and regional identities in the Dominican Republic and throughout Latin America.

## Section I: Música de palos

*History*

Fiestas of Dominican Vodú could not occur without the sacred music of palos, whose purpose is to call down the *misterios* and honour their presence. A brief description of the genre is needed to understand the role of music in the religious activities surrounding migration. *Palos,* the colloquial word for *atabales* (drums), are technically long drums of various sizes made of avocado or almacigo (*Bursera Simaruba)* wood with one membrane, open at the bottom and painted bright colours. Besides the palo drums, musicians use other percussive instruments that include the *güira*, a metal scraping instrument, and the *congo*, a smaller drum that has two parchments. The *balsié* is a drum played on the lap by rubbing the fingers over the membrane or between the knees and struck with a stick. The *pandero* (similar to the tambourine) is a hand instrument made of goat hide and wood (see figure 5-1). Songs are fairly simple lyrically, often including repetitive praise or summoning of the *misterio* which follows a call and response pattern.

Palo drum playing varies regionally in the Baní area and throughout the Dominican Republic. In Monte Cruz, people play three large *palos* (struck with the hands), the *güira* and *pandera*. North of Baní in the rural communities of Río Arriba, Limonal and Pueblo Arriba, the *cofradía* of San Juan Bautista is strong, and instead of palos people play the *balsier*, *tambores*, *güira* and *pandera* in a style known as *sarandunga*. In the area north of the capitol of Santo Domingo, people play *palos grandes*, larger and taller drums that attach around the waist at the head and go between the legs. More rare is *priprí* music, which is played with palos and also the marimba and accordion in both religious and non-religious contexts.

Traditionally palo groups were associated with the various *cofradías*. Today, however, most palo groups have no more than a rough affiliation with a *cofradía* and will perform for friends in other communities or towns, not just at fiestas honouring the cofradía's patron saint. Palo musicians are organized in groups under the leadership of one manager who is often the oldest or most skilled musician. Anyone can contract these groups to play at fiestas—which range from four hours to nine days in duration—and are paid anywhere from RD$500-$2,000 (US$20-

$80), depending on the duration of the fiesta and the resources of the sponsor. A growing demand for palo music for fiestas has increased the pay for musicians. Pay also depends on the reputation and skill of the musicians; one especially well known palo group was invited to play all over the region even though their prices were higher. This group, members of the *cofradía* de San Juan Bautista, play full time at fiestas and live solely on their income as musicians, while other groups divide their time between other jobs and playing at palo fiestas.

Palo music not only welcomes the *misterios*, it is necessary for dancing, another important element of the fiesta. There are different regional styles of palo dancing, and in Baní and Monte Cruz the dance consists of a side-to-side shuffle step with exaggerated hip movement. Couples face each other and always maintain eye contact, left hand behind the back, right hand swinging in rhythm with the steps, and dancers maintain a bent- over-at-the-waist stance. When the drums increase in tempo periodically in the song, dancers turn in a circle, maintaining eye contact. One partner may also spin the other, rapidly, as many as ten successive times which produces the result of dizziness and loss of control (states that facilitate spirit possession). Couples may be same sex pairs (two men dancing is very rare but not unseen) or male-female pairs.

Palo music is not always religious in content; sometimes musicians write music about their position in life or even the migrant experience, such as the palo song that opened Chapter four called 'Señor Consul'. Palo music identifies with poverty, being dark-skinned and from the *campo*, as one stanza of the following song, performed by Boni Raposo y la 21 División illustrates:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Dejala que hable' | 'Let her speak' |
| O morena | Oh dark-skinned girl |
| Que le duele, dejala que hable | How painful, Let her speak |
| Dejala hable por madrugada | Let her speak until the break of dawn |
| Que cuando le canse ella no habla más | So when she's tired she won't talk any more |

Figure 5-1. Percussive instruments in Baní. From left to right: palo drum, *güira*, *pandera* and *balsié*.



Figure 5-2. *Servidor* and palo musicians from Baní seated on a yola in front of the *Museo del Hombre*, Santo Domingo.



In the following palo tune, Raposo sings of a woman who dies because she is so poor:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Mamá Ela' | 'Mama Ela' |
| Mamá Ela se murió por que no tenia comida | Mama Ela passed away because she |

| | |
|---|---|
| No te apure, estoy pariendo la' habichuela' | had no food<br>Don't worry Mama Ela, I'm stirring the beans |
| Mamá Ela se murió por que no tenia zapatos | Mama Ela passed away because she had no shoes |
| Tengo a mandersela uno aunque sea hecho de cuerda de gato | I will send you to make some, even if they are made of cat skin |
| Mamá Ela se murió por que no tenia cuarto | Mama Ela passed away because she did not have any money |
| No te apure, Mamá Ela, que te va caer del cielo | Don't worry Mama Ela, it will soon fall from the sky. |

'Dejala que hable' and 'Mama Elena' are concerned with two women in situations of poverty and hardship and connect race (the 'dark-skinned girl') to their situation.

*Transnationalism and mass production of music*

As Chapter four illustrated, there has been a rise in the practice of Vodú in Monte Cruz and in Dominican migrant communities in Boston. How has this increase in spiritual activity related to migration influenced the performance and production of palo music? The integral role of palo music in fiestas means that an increase in religious activity has led to a revitalization of musical practices. Palo fiestas have become an important element of the migration experience and are given at least once a week in Monte Cruz. In Baní and in other *campos*, fiestas also take place regularly. As *servidores* receive remittances for their services and are able to build grand, lavishly decorated altars, their reputation spreads as well as requests for fiestas, which create a demand for palo bands as well.

This revitalization of musical activity is illustrated by a number of phenomena. In the past decade, the number of organized palo bands has increased in Monte Cruz and Baní from four in 1994 to more than twelve today. When I first arrived and told people I was studying palo music, people told me, 'You too? It seems like everyone wants to learn how to play palos now'. Palo groups tend to work with the same *servidor* or within their particular neighbourhoods (three groups are made up of members living in Monte Cruz). When a person trains to be a *servidor*, s/he usually finds a palo band to work with. In some cases, *servidores* help organize new bands, as in the case of 'El Jefe', the nickname of a young Haitian-Dominican man in a neighbouring

campo who started practicing Vodú to release a friend from jail in the U.S. When he realized he could make a living off of his practice, he recruited some musician friends to form a group to play at his Vodú fiestas.

Palo groups are now more formally organized, another indicator of palos' rise in popularity: whereas before, music groups were informally chosen (often based on who was around for the fiesta) and lacked an official name, today musicians seek out players for specific instruments and name their groups, such as 'Palos San Miguel', 'Palos Bienbé', or 'Palos San Antonio'. This practice is occurring in Monte Cruz, Baní and throughout the region. Each group has a head who takes primary responsibility for organizing the music, transporting instruments and distributing payment to the other musicians. Assigning identities to groups and maintaining a consistency with musicians allows groups to gain reputations as the market for palo groups becomes increasingly competitive.

Finally, palo performance is gaining respect as an occupation among Montecruzeños. Conversations of informants reflect this revival of musical interests. At one fiesta in Monte Cruz, where children and young boys were mimicking the drumming of their older *paleros* and begging to take a turn at the *güira*, the two elder men took notice, and one commented, 'Take a look at that. The kids are burning to play those drums. They all want to be *paleros* now'. When not playing baseball, young boys borrow their parents' palo drums and try to play the songs of the fiestas. Older palo musicians train younger brothers, cousins, or nephews how to play, and there is a demand for these teachers among young people. Rafael, a professional musician and widely known as the best in the area, observed that he now had more people wanting palo drum lessons. 'In the past five years, people have started to play palo music more. More palo bands are forming, here and allá [the U.S.]. I imagine it's because we have more palo fiestas now with all these *fulanos* [guys] going to New York'.

Members of palo groups from Monte Cruz have migrated to Boston and continued playing there for the many fiestas given in thanks to the *misterios* when their own *promesas* of reaching the U.S. are granted. Currently, Boston has three Dominican palo groups that play at fiestas; *Palos Peravia, Palos San Miguel*, and *Palos Santa Elena*. Members of these groups were

originally part of one group organized by migrants from Monte Cruz in the late 1980s but have since split into three different groups and added members. The groups are made up of members who made their own *promesas* to reach and settle in Boston, and found that other Montecruzeños needed their musical skills for their own fiestas. Over the past decade and especially in the last three years, the groups have enjoyed a great demand for performing at private fiestas in the area. They receive requests to perform for cultural events, such as the Dominican festival in Jamaica Plain every August, a parade that features merengue dancing, Dominican food, and thousands of people. Their reputation has spread through Dominican social networks throughout the Northeast, and they are invited to perform at private fiestas in Lawrence, Massachusetts; Providence, Rhode Island; New York and Connecticut.

These Montecruzeño groups also perform in public spaces, marking a significant change in context for palo music. For example, Dominican-owned clubs in the Boston area such as the Casa del Sol, Macumba and Mirage sponsor series of weekly palo performances. The groups have performed in restaurants and concert venues that normally feature popular Latino musicians of bachata, salsa and merengue music.

On Wednesday nights during the Spring of 2003, La Casa del Sol, a Latino nightclub in Lawrence, put on a series of palo band performances. Bands from Monte Cruz performed for several weeks, transporting their instruments and band members in a van from Jamaica Plain to Lawrence thirty miles away. The concerts usually started around 9 pm and went after midnight. Even though the band played from their religious repertoire of music dedicated to the *misterios* and a temporary altar was normally constructed for the event, the religious aspect of the performances was significantly lessened in the nightclub context for a variety of reasons. The event was advertised on the sign outside as a musical concert and it was evident that the club had hired the band to provide music to bring in more people on slow Wednesday nights. Unlike typical palo fiestas, there was no food passed out and no hour of prayer before the music began. The band, located on a stage in front of an audience, was the focal point of the event rather than the altar, which was typically small and in the corner or on the side rather than in the middle of the audience, as it is traditionally located in Monte Cruz.

On one particular Wednesday night, a woman set up the altar after the performance had begun. 'I just got off work', she apologized, setting up a card table and placing the figures of Anaísa, La Virgen de Altagracía, San Miguel and San Antonio on it. She lit three candles and placed a vase of roses on the table. She and two other women she had arrived with began to dance palos, but there was no *servidor* present and they were the only ones who danced the whole night. The audience did not participate or stand around and sing with the musicians as they would have in a palo fiesta. The twenty-four other people present sat at their tables, ordering drinks from the waiter and watching the band perform onstage. During breaks, the club DJ played bachata and merengue music and people danced then.

The palo music assumed a larger presence not only because they performed on a stage, but also because it was amplified, making the drums so loud that conversation was futile and many band members wore earplugs. Had a *servidor* been present, possessed by a *misterio* and been asked to communicate with a client, his verbal exchange would have been inaudible. The instruments were also different; one of the players performed on a commercially made conga drum bought in the U.S., which contrasted greatly with the homemade instruments of the rest of the band. The fact that the performance took place in a nightclub, not in someone's private residence or a church, was also a major change. All these factors made this performance far less sacred than usual and more for the purposes of entertainment.

People's motivations for attending the concert were not religious. In this context, the audience was full of strangers, North Americans, and other Latin Americans who had little knowledge of what the songs meant. While the performances are frequented predominately by Montecruzeños, Dominican migrants from many different socio-economic backgrounds also attend and react to the practices in a variety of ways, ranging from scepticism at spirit possession to respect for their 'homeland culture'. An employee at La Casa del Sol (originally from Baní) expressed his opinion to me about a palo concert taking place on the premises: 'Do you actually believe that stuff? I don't, it's all witchcraft. But I like the music—it's from my country, and the drums are good'. Another employee originally from Baní made the following observations regarding the demand for palo music among Dominicans in the Boston area:

> People are starting to get into palo more and more. We get requests for palo from lots of people, not just Dominicans, so we thought it would be a good idea to start the Wednesday night thing. It's good music, it's good entertainment. Dominicans really connect to this music . . . it's in their blood, and even if you aren't in Santo Domingo [meaning the Dominican Republic], people still have that connection. This is music of *campesinos*, and those are the people who are coming here now.
>
> Edy, Lawrence, MA

*Palos in New York City*

The palo music scene in New York City is also very active. There are many Dominicans from other regions of the island who have also recorded CDs of palo music. Groups called 'Palo Mayor', 'Claudio y sus Guédeses', y 'Boni Raposo y la 21 Division' are three well-known bands out of a dozen or more established and recording in New York City. Their albums are labelled as 'folkloric' music, and are endorsed by major Dominican cultural centres in New York City, such as the Dominican Studies Center at the City University of New York, the Museo del Barrio, and the Dominican Cultural Center in Washington Heights. These groups perform in schools during African-American History weeks, Dominican Independence Day and during Latino heritage month. The groups emphasize the 'African' nature of their music. Boni Raposo y la 21 División, for example, made a CD entitled 'Iluminando El Tesoro Escondido' (Illuminating the Hidden Treasure). The CD insert reads: '. . . the members are committed to educating others about the "hidden treasure": the African diaspora in the Dominican Republic'.

For established migrant communities in New York City, palo enters discourses of 'authenticity', which identify music traditionally performed live in rural areas of the island as being the 'roots' of contemporary Dominican American culture. Diego, a resident of New York City who comes from a family in Santo Domingo he described as working class ('más o menos pobres'—'more or less poor') spoke of palo music at a concert: 'This is my culture, this is what the people listen to and believe. I mean, we listen to merengue and bachata and all but this is what the *pobres* listen to. Palo is in the blood'.

*Reverse remittances: homeland support*

Palo bands in Boston rely upon family members at home to support their groups abroad in a variety of ways. Transnational networks allow palo musicians to perform outside their home country. For example, members of the home community must serve as intermediaries for ordering new instruments with drum makers in Monte Cruz when the old ones wear out or get damaged in Boston. Musicians prefer getting their instruments in the Dominican Republic because it is cheaper and the wood is 'the right wood for palos'. The instruments must be carried to Boston, a process that involves finding a friend, neighbour or family member travelling back who can carry the items. More care is put into the transport of instruments than the average item sent abroad: the drums are often blessed and sprinkled with a special powder preparation which prepares them to travel long distances safely. Montecruzeños at home are also important aids for advertising and selling CDs made by groups abroad. Palo bands in the U.S. who have made CDs send copies home to be sold and distributed in the home community through kin and *compadre* networks. In this way migrant musicians can informally advertise their music.

Recording and mass-producing palo music have become common transnational practices for a number of reasons. To begin, recordings allow fiestas to take place when live music is not available. Among Dominicans in Madrid, a predominately female migrant group working primarily as domestic workers, exotic dancers, and prostitutes, male palo musicians are scarce[57]. Migrants in Madrid use recordings of the music of palo groups originally from Monte Cruz (who now live and record their music in Boston), such as Palos Peravia, during their palo fiestas in Madrid. These CDs are purchased in the markets of Baní (one of the largest cities near the town of Barahona to the west)[58] and find their way to Spain in migrant suitcases. It should be noted that the circulation of the same music recordings (see figure 4-11) cover three international destinations: Spain, the U.S. and the Dominican Republic, with Baní being the primary location in which all transnational social networks intersect (there are fewer direct connections between Madrid and Boston).

Besides the fact that recorded music is important in facilitating religious activities abroad, the growing practice of making CDs reflects the fact that migrant palo musicians are able to earn a

viable income through performance, mass-production and sale of their music. Sacred music is increasingly commoditized. Playing music at palo fiestas—although seasonally limited to non-winter months—is a job for many Montecruzeños in Boston, where other work may be scarce or require documentation. In Boston, the Dominican community's response to the formation of these palo groups has been very enthusiastic to the point that musicians can make a living off their performances; each member of five person group may earn between $75 and $100 a night at a palo fiesta or club performance. This popularity and an increased competition among groups have encouraged palo bands to begin recording CDs and selling them for a profit. The CDs are recorded by one of three Dominican home-based recording and producing studios in the area that cater to Latino clients. They charge on average about $50 an hour for their services, which are advertised through word of mouth. *Palos Peravia* has sold hundreds of CDs at performances, record stores in Jamaica Plain, and in the Dominican Republic when band members travel home or ask family to help sell copies (see CD cover, figure 4-11). The fame that *Palos Peravia* has gained in the Dominican community in Boston is a source of pride for community members at home in Monte Cruz, who play the CDs in religious and everyday contexts.

*Palo and second generations*

One reason that palo music is growing in its visibility in the Dominican transnational social field is because mass production of music allows access to a greater diversity of people. The exposure and commoditization has not only carried palo back to home communities but has also put the music in a packaged format that can be consumed outside ritual contexts. This change has been important for second generation Dominican-Americans in cities and outside major northeastern urban areas. The parents of this generation have been settled in the U.S for a more lengthy time period—not the typical case of more recent Montecruzeño newcomers. Among the second generation, palo has gone from an obscure rural practice in the parents' home country to a known and admired cultural phenomenon. This is evident in secondary schools and colleges in New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts where there is a strong presence of Dominican families. Here, dance troupes of Latino youth have incorporated palo dances in their

routines, mixing the shuffle steps and hip movements of palo dancing with the trademark moves of mainstream musicians Ricky Martin and Michael Jackson. These teens learned the dance from participation in palo fiestas in the U.S. and also from occasional visits to the Dominican Republic. Yolany, for example, is the eighteen-year old daughter of Banilejo parents; she was born and raised in New York City and goes to Tufts University near Boston. As a member of the Explosion Latina Dance Troupe at her university, she has used palo in choreographing their dances. She remembered the first time she saw palo dancing:

> Palo is *chulo* [Dominican slang for 'cool']. I think it's fascinating how they move their hips like that. The first time I saw a palo fiesta, I was like, 13 and it was in Lawrence [Massachusetts]. My parents took me to the fiesta. It was some friends of theirs. We didn't really do the vodú thing in my house so I was kind of scared at first, but when I saw how they can dance like that I wanted to try it. I decided to incorporate the moves into our end-of semester show, and a lot of the students were really into it.

For these young Dominican Americans, lacking the long-term experience of living in the Dominican Republic has meant that palo does not have the same stigma that it receives in its original context; instead, it is 'chulo' and worthy of reproduction.

When second generations like Yolany return to the Dominican Republic to visit their families, they bring changed values and perspectives to their home communities. As an obvious foreigner, I was often approached at palo fiestas in Monte Cruz by visiting teenagers from the U.S. They frequently gave their impressions of Vodú in their parents' homeland. Aní, a young Dominican American teenager from Providence, Rhode Island, attended a fiesta in Monte Cruz with her Dominican cousins. She explained:

> It's pretty amazing to see this in Santo Domingo [the Dominican Republic]. I mean, we have palo of course in Providence but here it seems more real, almost. Mamí and Papí make me come to palo fiestas here because they don't want me to forget my roots. I don't mind, I like palo, and even though I was born in America I still have palos in my blood.

*Popularizing a sacred music*

We have seen how palo music performed in nightclubs and choreographed with pop music icons removes the genre from its traditionally sacred context. In other ways palo music has become 'popularized' and commoditized. The performance, commercialization and consumption of palo music in the United States have attracted the attention of mainstream Dominican

musicians, who have begun to incorporate the sacred music into their songs. This process is also facilitated by the mass production of palo CDs played in a variety of non-religious contexts. Kinito Mendez, an internationally famous *merenguero* from the Dominican Republic, has been instrumental in the last five years in promoting palo music as 'a part of Dominican culture'. As a child, Mendez' parents would take him to their birthplace in the hills of the *maniel* [escaped slave] community of La Siembra outside the capital for *noche de vela* palo fiestas. 'As a little child I knew this music. I always wanted to learn how to play palos', he explained in an interview (2003). Because of his background, palo musicians from Monte Cruz and Baní consider him 'authentic', even though he has made no major effort to include this genre of sacred music in his CDs until very recently. The leader of one palo group from Monte Cruz in Boston discussed Mendez' music, and was quick to 'claim' him as fellow *campesino* even though Mendez is a very wealthy musician. 'I really like Kinito Mendez' music. It's really palo, he has the palo is in his blood. He is from San Juan, you know, which is the *campo* outside of Baní', he said.

If Kinito has palo 'in the blood', he has only recently acknowledged it, dedicating a large part of his professional life until present performing and recording mainstream merengue music. Mendez' first experiment in fusing the genres of merengue and palos was in the late 1990s with 'Suera de Amor', accompanied by women *rezadores* (religious singers) from Villa Mella, a neighbourhood north of the capital. Despite the very prominent use of palo rhythms and instruments, this song was nevertheless acclaimed as a merengue, winning 'merengue of the year' in the Latin American Cassandra Awards in 1998. Encouraged by his success, he continued incorporating palo into his music, making 'A Palo Limpio', a CD that continues this fusion of merengue music with palo drummers and singers from Villa Mella (Mendez 2001). In the introduction of the present thesis, Mendez described the overwhelming response to his palo-merengues in New York and Boston when he performed there. The quote is included in full here:

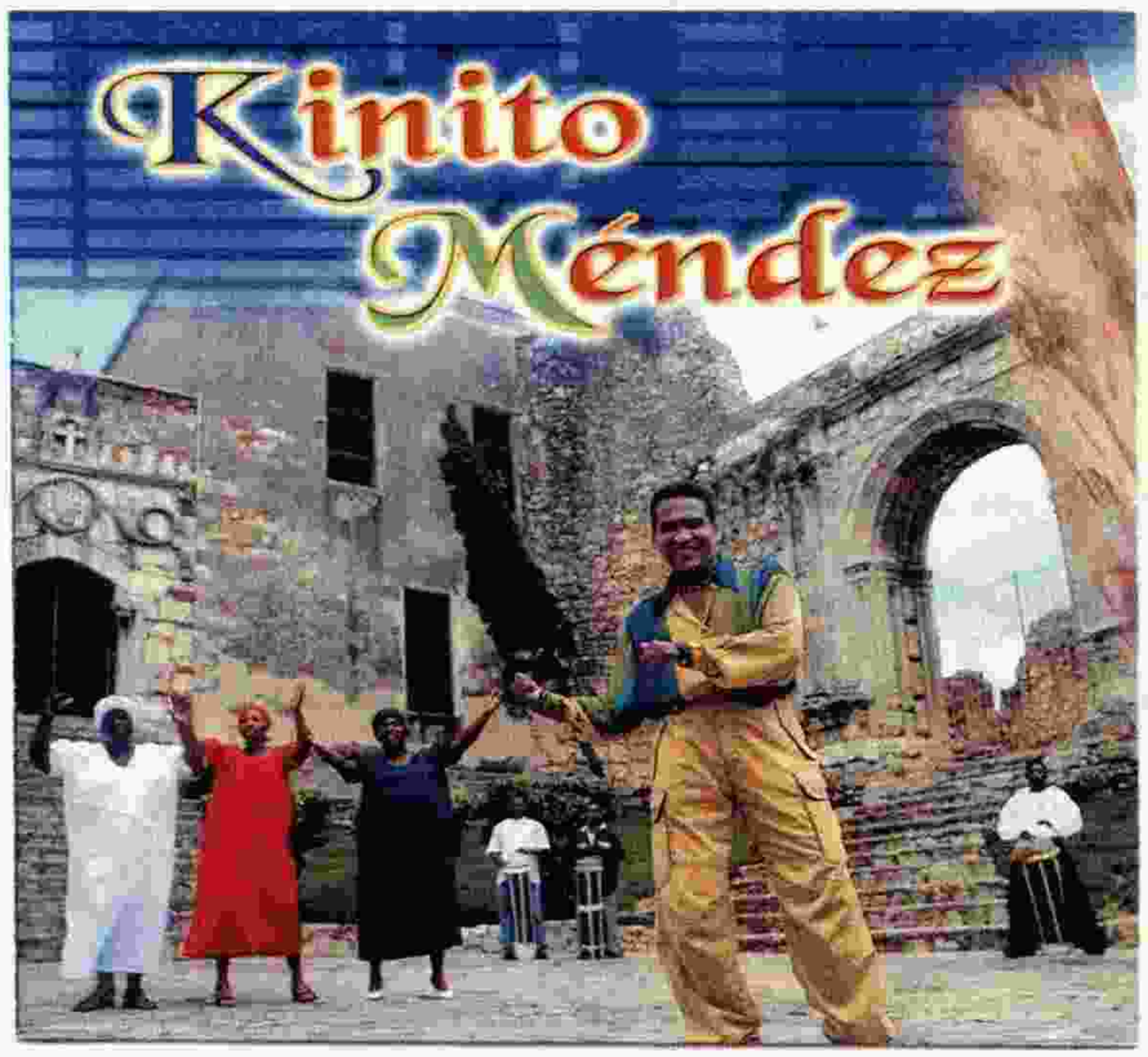
> When our audiences in New York—mostly Dominicans who have not been to their towns or their country for a long time—see their music performed live, they go crazy, hugging and kissing each other, telling you they love you. I have a lot of songs but if they ask for the palos, I have to sing them . . . often I will be singing and people will be *montado*, that is, possessed by the spirit, which enters the body and then they fall on the floor. This has happened a lot in Boston and in New York. They seriously are possessed by Anaísa, Belié Belcán. This is a cultural thing, these are religious rituals.

(interview, February 2003)

Giving the rhetoric of 'Dominican cultural roots', Mendez capitalizes on Vodú as homeland 'culture' rather than homeland stigma. He calls upon popular appeal (and an expanding market) rather than subscribing to official discourses of rejection of 'brujería' and the music that accompanies it. He went on to describe how palo is crossing the boundaries of what he refers to as 'class':

> Sometimes I am at a private concert where there are lots of upper class and rich people, and the spirit enters their body and they fall, too! It's because this is a music that people feel inside of them. The whole of New York knows this music. We perform in Europe, where there are people that aren't even Dominican; Italians, Europeans—and they love *musica de palos*. This is the music of our culture.

Figure 5-3. The cover of Kinito Mendez' CD, 'A Palo Limpio'




What does Mendez mean here by '*clase alta*', 'upper class'? He is referring to traditional audiences who have become upwardly mobile through migration. However, his comments point to the fact that palo music is getting converts from other social groups, including more wealthy Dominican elites who own successful businesses in the United States. To some extent, these 'new' consumers of palo are loyal members of Mendez' fan base (established by fame as a *merenguero*), but their participation is nevertheless an important part of the de-stigmatization of

this music, its associated religion, and the people who practice it. As Mendez indicates, the ability to become possessed is not restricted to 'class' or even citizenship status as a Dominican; among new converts of palo and Vodú are 'Italians' and other 'Europeans'. And while some members of Mendez' audiences interpreted the music religiously by becoming possessed, new audiences of palo may interpret the music in a very different way. Fans may enjoy the music as a novel style of merengue with a catchy palo rhythm. In this way palo loses its sacred quality, similar to when Montecruzeño palo recordings are played in very secular contexts, such as out of car stereos, in houses while people do their cleaning, and at non-religious fiestas.

**Section II: Bachata**

Migrants from rural backgrounds also identify with and listen to other genres, notably bachata music, which once took the form of pirated copies of taped cassettes bought in New York and Santo Domingo. 'Country people were the first people who left our country and started to immigrate. They are really the ones responsible for bringing bachata to the United States', claimed Bachatero Teodoro Reyes (Wolfe 2003). Today, as bachata audiences living in the U.S. have gained more financial security, settled throughout the Northeast, and raised a second generation, they have been able to develop and support their musical traditions. Similar processes are occurring with poorer and more recent migrant groups like Montecruzeños, whose tastes, supported by their new disposable income and disseminated through globalized media, are stimulating new music markets. In promoting his *A palo limpio*, Kinito Mendez has both recognized a niche in migrant communities with rural backgrounds of African origin (and recruited new audiences in the host society as well as other socio-economic sectors of the Dominican Republic). The overwhelming enthusiasm with which his palo music has been received illustrates the substantial presence of rural populations abroad as well as the potential crossover of this music genre into wealthier segments of the migrant population[59]. Merengue is now losing its grasp on Dominican migrant and Dominican American audiences as more marginalized genres gain currency.

As the most popular new Latino music in the United States, bachata is also becoming more mainstream in the Dominican Republic as well. The two music genres of palo and bachata share many rhythmic and instrumental elements as well as a common social history. Bachata, which has been likened to the blues because of its melancholy themes of lost love, uses guitar as its primary accompaniment to a crooning voice. According to Leonardo Paniagua, a well known bachatero, 'the bachateros incorporate the original drum beats [of palos] and transfer them to the guitar. So each region develops a musical identity' (Wolfe 2003). According to Paniagua, the rapid and staccato strumming of a guitar in a bachata evokes the pounding of a palo drum. Both music styles make use of similar, cheap-to-construct instruments like the metal-tubed *güira* and *tambores*, which require aluminium cans and goat hides.

While palos are traditionally played in religious contexts and bachata is strictly a popular music, the two genres originate from similar socio-economic backgrounds and have traditionally involved the same actors (*los pobres*, as many informants were quick to point out). Like palo, bachata music was once another very marginal music, socially stigmatized not because of its pagan religious association but because it was traditionally played in bars, cabarets and brothels of Santo Domingo—in effect, the music of society's most disadvantaged. While bachata has always been far more popular than anyone ever admitted (Pacini Hernandez 1995), the social stigma associated with the music and the official political support of merengue was enough to keep bachata underground, with little radio time on prominent Dominican stations over the past half-century. Instead, bachata was distributed primarily in record and cassette form by small street vendors in the capital.

It is common for popular music to refer to Vodú, with which audiences often have an intimate connection. As the music of vodú worship, palo songs and *salves* (religious songs) contain a rich cultural content of references to many different spiritual figures and religious stories. These references emerge in the music—palo, salsa, bachata, or merengue—of all who are close to this faith. Many bachateros, being of Afro-Caribbean background, include imagery of the *misterios* in their lyrics. An excerpt of a merengue by Raulin Rodriguez (a singer known for his bachatas) appeals to the *misterios* for help in migrating:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Merengue a los amigos' | 'A merengue for friends' |
| Me lo dijo Jivi, | Jivi told me, |
| Me lo dijo Jivi, mañana me voy | Jivi told me, tomorrow I'm leaving |
| Me llevo mi hembra para Nueva York | I'm taking my woman to New York |
| Oyelo Cacique , | Listen, Chief, |
| Oyelo Cacique, oyelo mama | Listen, Chief, listen, mama |
| Este merenguito viene pa'goza | This little merengue is for enjoyment |
| Me lo dijo Bárbara | Bárbara told me |
| Me lo dijo Bárbara, mi amiga Cubana | Bárbara told me, my Cuban friend |
| ¿Quien me va lleva a tocar a La Habana? | Who is going to take me to Havana? |
| Oyemelo Bárbara | Listen to me, Bárbara, |
| Oyelo Camilo, oyelo mama | Listen, Camilo, listen, mama, |
| Quiero que lo baile por la madrugada | I want to dance until dawn. |
| | (1996) |

The song is sung to friends, some of whom are in New York, where life is imagined to be a non-stop party—for that reason, the singer wants to take his woman to New York. In the next line, 'Bárbara', a *misterio* of Vodú, is addressed in the hope of getting to the party in New York or Havana. 'Bárbara' refers to Santa Bárbara, the Cuban *orisha*[60] who became very popular in the Dominican Republic in the early twentieth century because of Cuban *soñeros*[61] Celina and Reutilio. The Dominican variant of Santa Bárbara is sometimes referred to as *Santa Bárbara-Changó*. Ceramic figures of Santa Bárbara-Changó commonly appear on altars of Vodú in Baní and Monte Cruz.

*Bachata Explosion*

In the past two years, bachata has exploded into the mainstream as the hottest new music in the international Latino music market. This move to fame and legitimacy is due to a variety of factors, with the younger second generation factoring prominently in this social transformation. 'The penetration of bachata has caused some with extreme views to predict that the rhythm will displace merengue in the major markets' (Jiménez 2003). In the month of September 2002 alone, there were four major bachata concerts at Dominican venues. Monchy y su Orquesta Capricho, la Bachata de Henry Castro played at Club Mirage (with a cover of twenty dollars), Aventura

performed at Latino Night in Fenway Stadium and at Club mirage, Magic Juan, a merengue/ hip hop band from Santo Domingo living in New York played, and Aventura performed again at the Roxy (charging thirty dollars for tickets) at the end of the month.

Bachata received international attention in 1991 when Juan Luis Guerra, educated at the Berklee School of Music in Boston, made a bachata album called *Bachata Rosa* which was so successful that it sold over 3.5 million copies worldwide (Pacini Hernandez 1995). Because he was from a respected, upper class background, his music cast bachata in a new and more favourable light. The success of Juan Luis Guerra's *Bachata Rosa* did for the genre of bachata what Mendez' *A Palo Limpio* has done for palo; respected singers introduced a stigmatized genre to mainstream audiences and got a positive response. The latest explosion of bachata, however, is largely the result of the past five years as young second generation Dominican Americans have adopted and mixed the genre with urban U.S. musics such as hip hop and rap.

Bachata singers, once the poorest musicians on the island, have now been joined by young musicians from New York and elevated to star status. Bachata attracts an affluent crowd now in cities such as New York and Boston, or perhaps people who enjoy the music enough to spend a significant part of their weekly earnings on it. Bachata concerts take place every weekend in Boston at private venues for twenty to thirty dollars a head (see figures 5-7 and 5-8). Community festivals in Boston, such as the Jamaica Plain World's Fair and the Dominican festival in August, feature bachata bands and are attended by thousands (see figure 5-9). Even Dominican president Hipólito Méndez has been seen in public dancing the bachata—making a huge statement in a country where seven decades of Dominican politicians and leaders have endorsed merengue alone at the expense of other genres such as bachata.

Now part of the Dominican international music industry, the most well-known new bands, such as Aventura, Monchy y Alexandra, and Yoskar Sarante, have dizzying tour schedules which take them back and forth across North and South America and Europe. More-established bachata musicians such as Raulin Rodriguez and Luis Segura who have been playing for decades have expanded their international touring circuits as well. The scale of their mobility is an

indication of how the genre has become transnationally mobile in a short amount of time; before the 1990's, the pinnacle of performance venues might be a bar on the outskirts of Santo Domingo.

Figure 5-4. The cover of Aventura's CD 'We broke the rules'.

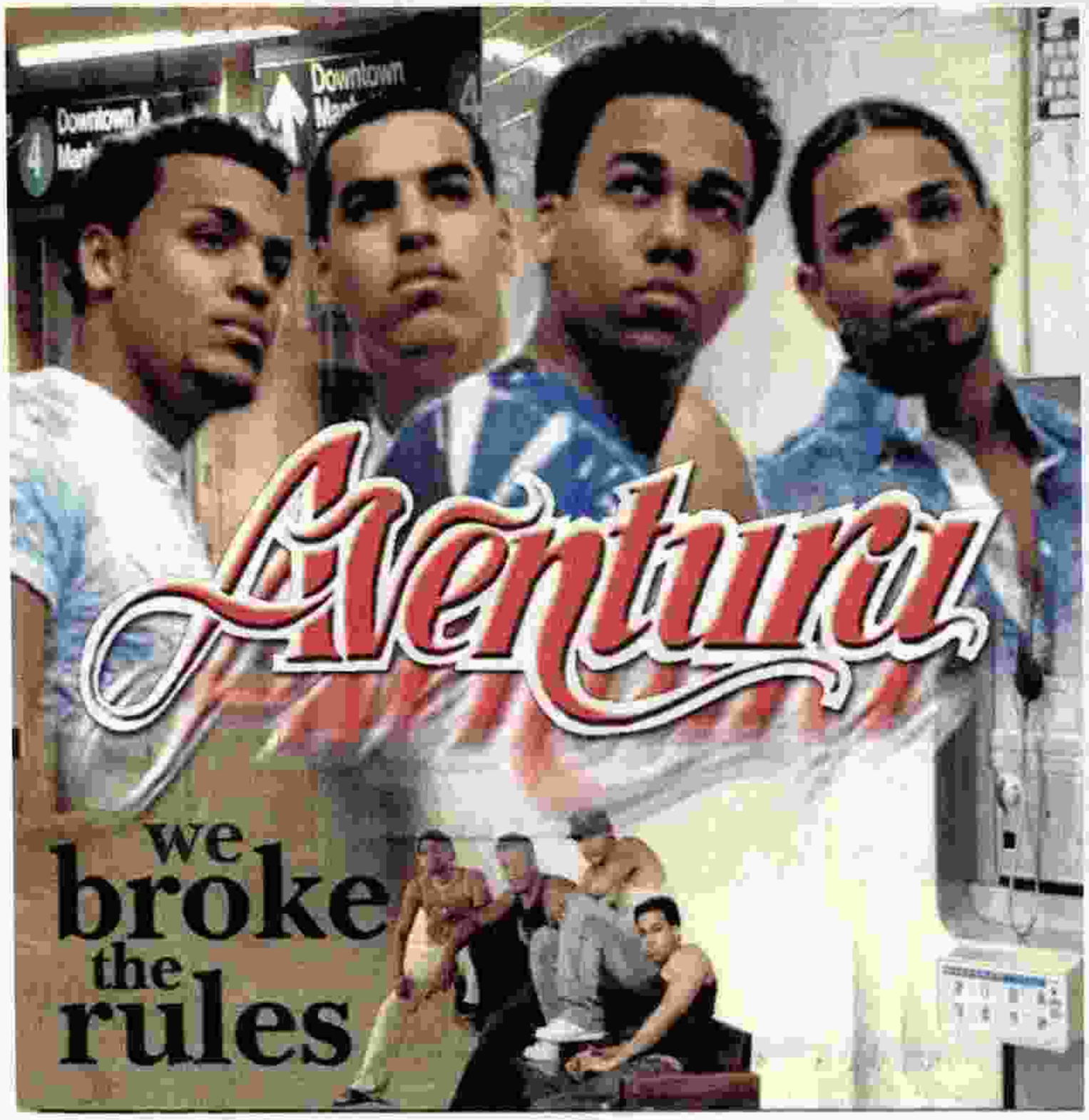



Figure 5-5. Aventura's Mikey Santos and fans following a concert at Mirage in Boston, MA.



Figures 5-6 and 5-7. Bachata concert posters in Jamaica Plain.



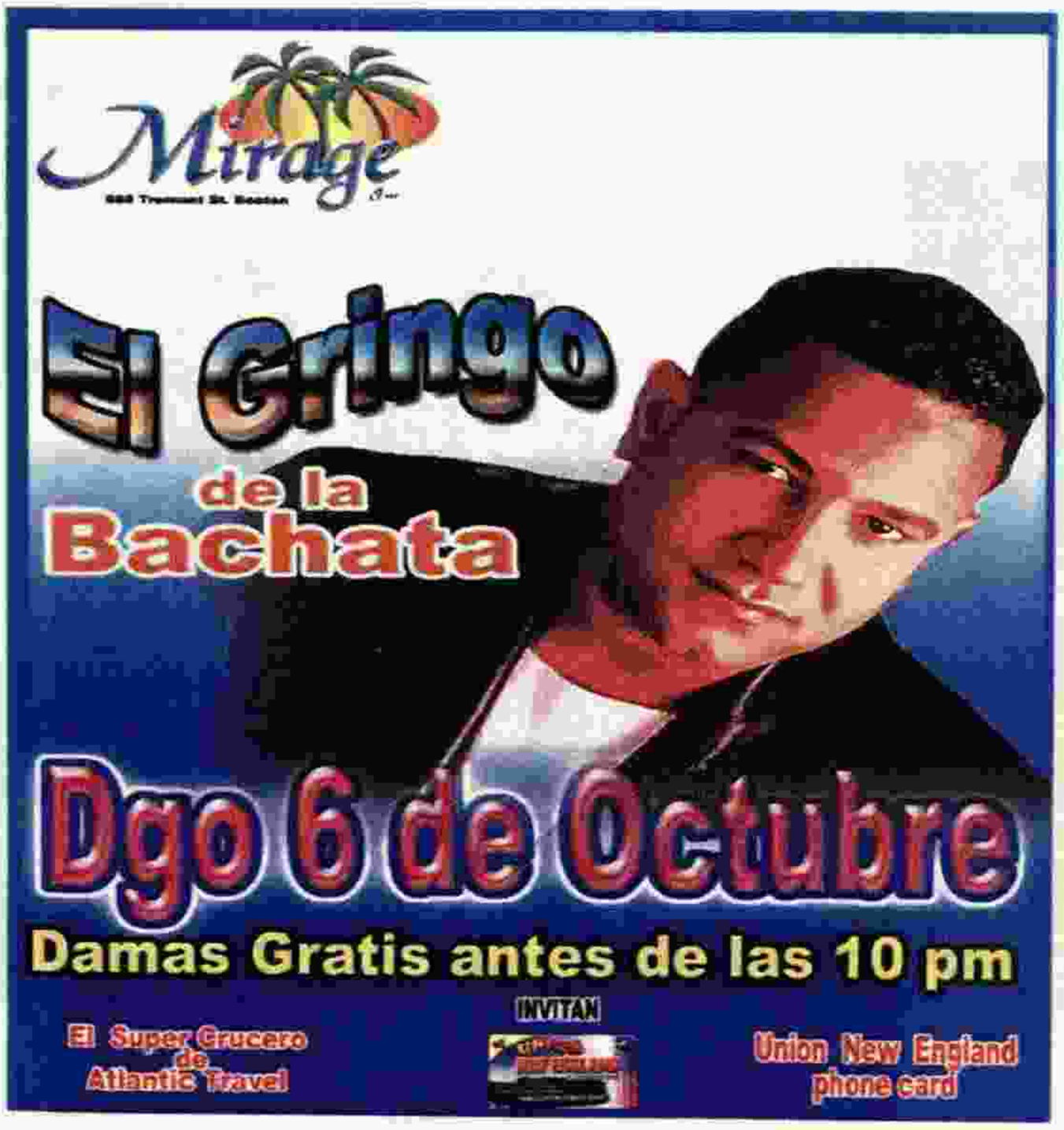



Figure 5-8. Dominicans dancing bachata at the Jamaica Plain World's Fair.



Figure 5-9. The author with Monchy and Alexandra in Boston, 2003.



Now, it is not uncommon for the bands to be in New Orleans one day, Santo Domingo the next, and New York City the next. In the following week, the band might fly to Spain or Venezuela to give a series of concerts there. Band members complain of the exhausting nature of their international performance circuit. And members also have their choice of residence. While a lot of band members live in New York City or share their time between Santo Domingo and the U.S., many of the older *bachateros* remain permanently in the Dominican Republic when not on tour.

Aventura is one of the most popular new bachata groups (see figure 5-4). The four teenage band members, Anthony Santos, Leny Santos, Max Santos, and Henry Santos Jeter (Leny and Max are brothers, Anthony and Henry are cousins), were born in the New York City of Dominican parents with the exception of Henry, who moved to New York from the Dominican Republic at the age of fourteen. Their parents were not from an upper class background and they grew up listening to bachata. Carlos Anduval, the brother of Anthony, described coming to the U.S.:

> We played bachata as kids, anywhere we could; we started small, playing in school, at churches. It was hard making it. . . . I was born in Canada, my mother went into labor the day she tried to cross the border into the US. They gave me my grandmother's last name because my parents weren't legal at the time and my father didn't want to risk me being linked to someone illegally in the US. They didn't know; they were scared. Now my family is naturalized, I am a Canadian citizen. The rest of my three brothers were born in the US.
>
> (Interview, Boston 2003)

As friends, they put together a band and performed at school, establishing a reputation as innovative singers blending hip hop and bachata in their community in the Bronx. Their reputation spread and they were signed on to BMG Records in 1999. Their second album 'Breaking the Rules' was a huge hit, played multiple times a day on every Latino radio station on the East Coast. Their tour schedule was extensive; they travelled all over the U.S., Europe, the Dominican Republic, and the rest of Latin America.

When Aventura came to Boston in September of 2002, they received an enthusiastic welcome. They were invited to appear at a Red Sox game in Fenway Stadium for 'Latino night' and then performed the next day at the Roxy nightclub in downtown Boston. Earlier in the day, before the concert, there was an autograph signing at a local music store in Jamaica Plain. A large

crowd of over a hundred people showed up, mostly young women hoping to get their photograph taken with one of the band members. At the concert that evening, they performed with Elvis Crespo, an internationally famous Puerto Rican salsa musician. The concert proved to be a gala affair, far from bachata's humble roots. The tickets cost thirty dollars and a dress code was in effect, judging from the appearance of the audience: men wore suits and women wore semi-formal dress with stiletto heels and faux diamond-encrusted halter tops. Couples sat at small tables with vases of red roses and buckets of champagne on ice. Photographers for *El Mundo*, Boston's Spanish language newspaper, roamed the crowd taking pictures of the Latino community in its finest.

Aventura arrived in a coach bus filled with over thirty-five support staff and went in the back door, far removed from the hundreds of people queued in the front to get tickets. Backstage before the concert, the band and support staff had assembled, making the importance of family members immediately evident. Apart from the sibling and cousin connection of the band members, the mother of a band member was present, taking on a managerial role. Anthony's brother Carlos was directing security, and the rest of the staff were also family or friends with ties back to the Bronx or hometowns in the Dominican Republic.

When they went out on stage, they addressed the audience in typical fashion, in half English and half Spanish. 'Let's give a shout out to the Boricuas, los Colombianos, los Guatemaltecos!' They left 'Dominicanos' for the end at which point the audience erupted into screaming and cheering, making it obvious that there were mostly Dominicans present. As they opened with a popular song, everyone started dancing bachata.

After the concert, a number of excited teenage fans sneaked backstage over protests from the mother. They got autographs and pictures taken with the band members. They spoke Spanish; two of the girls were from Moca, Henry's hometown. The band did not stay long; they had a tight schedule to keep; that night they had to fly back to New York to catch a flight to New Orleans first thing in the morning for the next concert. The following day they would fly to Miami, and after that come back to perform in New York. In the next two weeks they would go to Madrid, Barcelona, and Frankfurt.

*Themes*

Part of Aventura's appeal lies in the fact that they are young and that they have written bachatas that also show an influence of hip hop and rock music, music of second generation migrants growing up in the U.S. But their appeal is also due to maintaining traditions: Bachata music's traditional ethos of sadness over separation lends itself well to a migrant music, finding commonalities with the merengues of previous decades. Younger bachata singers find that older bachata themes of family separation, as well as the break up of lovers, ring true with their contemporary experiences living in the U.S. A new bachata hit of the young Dominican singers Monchy y Alexandra (see figure 5-9), entitled 'When one cannot forget', is ambiguous: have the lovers simply parted ways, or were they separated over longer distances, such as oceans?

| 'Cuando no se puede olvidar' | 'When one cannot forget' |
|---|---|
| Ha pasado tanto tiempo | Too much time has passed |
| Desde el dia en que nos despedimos | Since the day we said goodbye |
| Y una misa se llevo el vestido | and a wedding dress at mass |
| Y un amor que parecia eterno | and a love that seemed eternal. |
| | |
| Y si pudieras escribirme en una carta | If you could write me a letter about |
| Que has hecho pa'olvidarte de mi vida | what you have done to forget about me |
| Si pudieras enviarme la esperanza | If you could send me hope |
| De llorar porque regresa algún día. . . | of crying upon your return one day. . . |

The lyrics are appropriate for a *música de amargue* (music of bitterness), bachata's other name, but also with a *música de emigración*.

*Breaking the rules*

At the same time bachata finds commonalitites with past styles it is also breaking from tradition by redefining what music is acceptable, who listens to it, and who performs it. In the hierarchy of Dominican music in which bachata was at the bottom, Aventura and other bands' successes in mainstream markets have created social change at home and abroad. Part of the success of the new bachata has been its inclusion of more relevant themes in the lives of bachata audiences abroad with rising income levels. The release of the album 'We Broke the Rules' by Aventura has smashed stereotypes of the *bachatero* as an old and bitter drunk with a lost love, replacing the image with that of a young, educated, heartthrob band. Aventura represents the

thousands of second generation Dominican Americans who live in migrant communities and maintain strong connections to homeland even if they have only spent their summers there at most. After 'We Broke the Rules' was released in 2002, their hit song 'Obsession' became a constant background anthem in Jamaica Plain for six months, and has since come to stand for how the rules of musical privilege have changed because of migration processes (bachata musicians now enjoy a very privileged and desired status in the United States and increasingly in the Dominican Republic). The idea of 'breaking the rules,' according to lead singer of Aventura Antony Santos, refers to 'a break from past traditions of merengue' and 'not being afraid to try new things, new music styles' (Interview, 2003). Bachata has now gained an official voice and visibility in New York, nurtured by a generation of young people who are breaking the rules.

> Bachata is like country music up here, ya know what I mean? People listened to it on the island but it wasn't really accepted. In Nueva York, people could listen to it and not worry about what people thought. It got popular up here. We always played bachata, that's what we liked. We didn't care, we always sang this stuff at school when we were kids, 'cause the people loved it. Once bachata got major in New York, it was like *pegao* (a hit) in the D.R.
>
> Wilmo, drummer, Aventura. Interview (in English), 2003

> The experiences of a generation that has grown up in the United States are reflected in new bachata music, especially that of Aventura: Aventura made bachata popular and added to it an urban style; they made the transition, musically they changed bachata to a more Latin-American sound (as in American) by adding rap and hip hop urban sounds. It's got more base and different voice sounds which gives it more edge, even more rock. A whole new wave of young kids are listening to this now.
>
> Danny, Dominican Record Producer, Boston 2004

The incorporation of English in songs was a somewhat of a risk for the band, even though songs with English are common in mainstream 'Latino' artists such as Cristina Aguilera and Ricky Martin. Their choice to use English is more than a marketing strategy; it reflects the reality of many first and second generation Dominican Americans who have always lived in the United States.

There have been changes not just in the language of contemporary bachata but also in the thematic content. Older bachateros sang of betrayal, bitterness, and overtly sexual double entendre, while those themes are largely absent from contemporary bachata music, which is concerned with issues of migration, family disintegration and inevitable romantic break-ups.

Aventura and other contemporary bachateros continue the tradition of *musica de amargue*, but with less bawdiness, preferring instead more tasteful romantic themes. Young Dominican Americans feel that the new bachatas apply to their lives, while merengues had lost their appeal: 'bachata actually says something; merengue doesn't', said one informant. 'Merengue is just too much; it's getting really offensive', said another. In an interview, Ramon Rijo (Monchy of *Monchy y Alexandra*) commented on this change in bachata:

> Our goal is to create a more international bachata. We sing of positive, inspirational things. Romanticism is the most important thing now; *doble sentido* is for the past generation. Bachata is a style of life that people interpret in music; the new generation is changing from our parents'.
>
> (Interview 2003, Boston)

And while older merengues evoked nostalgia for the homeland, the ethos of exile is not as overt or prevalent in contemporary bachata. This change may be due to the fact that the extensity and intensity of transnational migration networks allow many Dominican families to go back to the Dominican Republic twice a year at the least, while many Dominicans have more frequent contacts in their transnational businesses. 'Middle class' life also emerges in music videos of contemporary bachata—Bienvenido Rodriguez, for example—in scenes of well-dressed Dominicans cruising down New York streets in cars and SUVs. These scenes are a far cry from bachata videos of past decades that depicted singers in brothels pursuing prostitutes.

Artists have also mixed bachata with other genres of music in creative ways that appeal to teenage audiences. Younger generations reinterpret their parents' cultural practices and transform them into new styles with new meanings. Urban U.S. music has been mixed with Latin music by creative musicians who are constantly experimenting with new sounds in their studios in Santo Domingo as well as in New York and Boston. La Mega, Boston's most popular Spanish speaking radio station, often plays 'bachatarengue', a fast-paced bachata-merengue mix. In Studio *On Time* in Santo Domingo, a recording studio owned by bachatero Luis Segura, sound technician Roberto Francisco summarized current musical trends and offered a glimpse into a new project:

> It's all about creativity, new projects, new sounds. That's what the music companies are looking for now. *Juan y Nelson* want fresh stuff, that's why Aventura hit so big. Listen to this and tell me what you think [placing headphones on my ears]. No one else has heard this yet. It opens with the characteristic opening twangs of bachata guitar, but changes—when the drums kick in with base. It's the first ever bachata-rap.

The overall climate of acceptance towards 'mixed' music in the Dominican Republic reflects the profusion of different styles and genres currently penetrating Dominican media via satellite and migrant suitcase. This is apparent not just in the new bachata but in many emerging music genres such as *reggaeton* that blend hip hop, rap, merengue and salsa. The desire for 'new sounds' and the dizzying pace to create new musical hybrids reflect the many different music genres currently circulating in the transnational worlds of Dominican migrants.

*Changing Audiences*

Bachata musicians are singing not just to Dominicans but also to a larger Latino audience that makes up a significant part of their community in Boston and New York. This was evident in how Aventura and other bachata musicians address the many different nationalities of their audiences at concerts in Boston. The change in thematic content—which traditionally criticized women for causing only heartbreak, misery and deception—has also expanded audiences to include more women. Commenting on her role as a woman in a traditionally male-dominated music, the singer Alexandra Cabrera de la Cruz (of *Monchy y Alexandra)* was quick to assert 'I feel comfortable in this music; it doesn't matter now that I am a woman. They all take really good care of me. Our lyrics are different—they are romantic; they appeal to women, not just men' (interview 2003). The absence of sexually-explicit lyrics—something that Cabrera alludes to in her comments—as well the greater inclusion of women in the industry that she represents are factors that have contributed to bachata's expanding audiences.

Women migrants have found a place in other traditionally male-dominated genres such as merengue. An older Dominican artist, Milly Quezada, who grew up in New York City and has enjoyed the relative freedom usually restricted to her gender in the Dominican Republic (Hanly 1991). After years of performance in New York and the Dominican Republic, she became the 'Queen of Merengue' in a predominately male-dominated music genre. She offered female audiences an alternative merengue that differed from traditional styles that feature women as the object of explicit sexual double entendres. Her music focuses on migration and pride for

Dominican artists, while also commenting on women's empowerment outside of the Dominican Republic, a departure from *machistic* society back home. Women are now her largest fans and flock to her concerts, singing along to lyrics about relationships, such as 'I'm not going to die without you' (Ibid.:1991).

Bachata's acceptance into mainstream society is not happening without some major changes in its lyrical content and performance context. Because economic marginality is fundamentally what bachata is all about, its move into the mainstream arguably erases a core part of its identity. Unlike U.S. rap music, which has kept its edgy focus on crime, poverty, and 'keepin' it real, despite the multi-million dollar fortunes of its singers, bachata themes have proven more malleable. Economic hardship is a less prominent theme than it once was and the contexts in which bachata music is now performed illustrate that financial worries are not immediate concerns of audiences. This shift in weight on context and content was never more blatant than when a 'bachata sinfónica' (bachata symphony) concert was given in the National Theatre in Santo Domingo in 2003, replacing the traditional cheap guitar, *güira* and forty-peso bottle of rum with a full symphony, audio-visual special effects, and champagne. Featured bachatero Luis Vargas commented afterward in an interview in *Listín Diario*, 'it's not bad that bachata has come to the National Symphony, but I observe that there still exists a large rejection of the genre by some social classes, because the ideal would be to present bachata *as it really is* [my italics] in this hall' (Cruz Hierro 2003). In this quote, Vargas implies that even though it is an honour to be part of the National Theatre, something 'essential' is lacking from a presentation of bachata in symphonic context. When bachata takes on glamour and privilege, it loses a key component of identity.

*Changing Audiences in the Dominican Republic*

Bachata's fame in the U.S. has spread to the Dominican Republic, where it is increasingly marketed to more elite audiences. While the music can still be found in pirated form, it also appears in mainstream music stores in the touristy, upper class *zona colonial* (the old colonial

city) of Santo Domingo. Concerts take place in elite venues such as the National Theatre and public, state-sponsored festivals in the capital feature bachata musicians.

For all the international travelling of high profile bachata musicians, many groups still find time to tour the rural locales of Santo Domingo where they and their original audiences came from. Bachata has always been popular in Baní and especially in Monte Cruz, and a prominent musician performs in the area every month or so. However, the higher profile of musicians has increased the prices of these concerts to as much as RD$500 (US$20), so that many Montecruzeños cannot afford to go. When bachata musicians like Raulin Rodriguez or Jose Vargas perform in Baní, the performance venue, known as the *piscina* (the pool), has a high cover charge. Financial constraint has in no way tamped enthusiasm for bachata; in place of live performances, people listen to recorded music, which can be heard blasting from every colmado all night. On the outskirts of the capital, there are still a number of venues such as *Jetset* that feature new and lesser-known bachata artists. In Monte Cruz, people never miss the lunchtime dance shows featuring couples from all parts of the Republic competing in the bachata. Bachata is still enjoyed live in free, informal gatherings. On some evening nights in Monte Cruz, Racha, a talented guitarist, sits in a white plastic chair under the jasmine tree in the baseball field and takes bachata requests from the dozens of people who gather to listen and socialize. The owner of the house opposite the field rigs up a light and brings out his palo drums and *güiras* to accompany the bachatas. Bachata is a beloved genre until death: at funerals, the deceased are lowered into the ground while their favourite bachata, merengue, or palo song is played, and a bachata is increasingly the request.

*Transnational networks of music*

The bachata industry operates through formal and informal transnational economic and social networks. On a formal organizational scale, an artist will be more successful if s/he is signed on by a major record label, many of which have offices in the Dominican Republic and the U.S. as well as in other international locales. Record companies have relationships with radio stations and in the Dominican Republic, supply radio stations with free music, and pay for

advertisement slots on air. An artist's CD is promoted through these advertisements publicized on radio stations. These 'promos' are important for helping bands get gigs, which can be really lucrative at $5-6,000 per night in some U.S. venues.

Apart from their contracts with music companies, the bands can promote themselves and gain more income through concerts, which are organized separately from music company contracts. Concerts of Dominican bachata, at this early phase of the genre's international popularity, operate along more informal structures of Dominican migrant networks and are separate from record company dealings. Concerts take place in the Dominican Republic, the United States, and other international locations and rely on Dominicans to organize venues, transportation, hotels, and promotional events in all of these places. In Boston, bachata concerts and tours are set up by a very complex network of *promotéres* or managers, who organize concerts at Dominican venues that are sponsored by local Dominican businesses, music stores and Spanish-speaking radio stations (many of these venues also sponsor palo concerts). There are two main venues frequently booked for high-profile bachata concerts that feature not just Latin music but a diversity of groups, and advertise their concerts on glossy posters on shop windows throughout the Dominican neighbourhood of Jamaica Plain. Smaller, Dominican-owned venues also sponsor bachata concerts by lesser-known bachata bands and palo groups. These smaller venues are more commonly restaurants or nightclubs unlisted in the phone book but well known among Dominicans.

There is a small community of well-connected Dominican business owners in Jamaica Plain who control bachata's outreach to the public and are present at every concert. They advertise their businesses on concert posters displayed in the windows of every Dominican business in town, and buy radio time as well. The large majority of advertisements on La Mega, Boston's Latino radio station, are local Dominican businesses. These business owners communicate with band managers in the Dominican Republic or in New York City and make travel and overnight arrangements for the bands when they come to Boston. From the owners of the clubs to the bus drivers who carry Dominican musicians back and forth from New York to

Boston and elsewhere, many people involved in the industry are Dominicans connected through hometown or family ties; many Banilejos or Montercruzeños.

Distribution of music also makes use of transnational networks. A defining feature of the operations of the music business is its crossover into other businesses both in Boston and in Baní. For example, Dominican music stores in Boston sell other goods like clothes (that have been made or assembled by families in the Dominican Republic) and may also have remittance-sending services. They may organize the purchase of lottery tickets in the Dominican Republic and even sell a neighbour's Dominican *bizcochos* (cakes) and *empanadas* from glass cases in a corner. We have already seen how palo instruments and palo CDs are transported from Monte Cruz to New York in the suitcases of migrants. In the U.S., bachata CDs are also reproduced using cheap, widely accessible CD-burning technology. They are transported to the Dominican Republic to be sold.

While the majority of bachata music is distributed through these variety stores, some Dominican businesses in the U.S. have become successful enough to attract the attention of the multi-national music industry, a key development in the mainstreaming of bachata as a genre. One example is *Juan y Nelson*, a major producer of Dominican bachata music that started very modestly with two brothers owning a small store in New York in 1981. The business grew along with its consumer base, and in 1997, Sony recognized a potential new market and offered the brothers a pressing and distribution deal. Now J&N records have offices in Santo Domingo, Venezuela and in several United States cities. They work with all the new and most famous bachateros: Monchy Y Alexandra, Magic Juan, Frank Reyes, Yoskar Sarante, Alex Bueno, Eddy Herrera, and Wilfredo Vargas. Through multi-national companies like Sony's J&N records, bachata has hit the artery of the popular music world. In 2003, Dominican bachata albums began appearing in Virgin Megastores, Tower Records, Wal-Mart, and Best Buy stores. People can find bachata in the United States even if they do not live near Dominican migrant communities.

Many of the top bachata bands record their music in the Dominican Republic in local studios that have contracts with these multi-national 'disceras' (record companies), in L.A., Miami, Florida, NY, California, Puerto Rico, and Colombia. These *disceras* include Sony

Tropical, the new RCC Records, J&N Records, and BMG. Album contracts are heavily negotiated; the payment is dependent on the type of music (*el genero*) to be recorded. In a sort of hierarchy of music genres based on demand, merengue was traditionally the most lucrative contract. This is changing, however, so that bachata contracts are swiftly overtaking merengue as the highest paid music, according to industry professionals in Santo Domingo. Top bachata bands in 2003 earned around RD$200,000 for ten songs—about US$20,000—from their contracts.

Apart from contracts with the record companies, bands have their own *equipo de promoción* (press offices) that advertise and distribute their music to a transnational public in Boston, New York, and in the Dominican Republic. Their agents send their discs to the *record pool*: an association of Dominican disc jockeys in discos, clubs, car washes and *colmadones* (corner stores). They also send free demos to television and radio stations, although now radio stations can get music off the internet. It is the record companies, however, rather than the promoters, who have a tremendous power of access to the public. In a system called *pautar tema* (rule of the song) record companies can buy airtime on a radio station and play the music of their latest artists. As money still controls a song's exposure, this system is similar to the *payola* system, the traditional under-the-table payment scheme for buying airtime on a radio station.

*Payola* is unregulated and illegal, while the *pautar tema* system is sanctioned by the music industry and is therefore considered more 'legitimate'. The system of is a source of frustration to deejays in Santo Domingo, who must balance the call-in requests of audiences with the pre-paid air slots of large music companies. 'Everyone knows that the Latin Grammys are fixed', commented one sound technician in a discussion of how music is disseminated to the public and becomes popular in the mainstream. 'The artists who win have contracts with the largest music companies'. While bachata was always a popular music, evident by the demand for cassette recordings on the street, its endorsement by powerful companies and constant radio airtime has been the key to crossing over socio-economic divisions into mainstream tastes.

*Piracy*

Bachata artists have always depended on cheap reproductions of cassettes to disseminate their music. Piracy both preceded and now follows in the wake of multi-national music companies. The small-scale but extensive industry of piracy feeds on the market demand created by Sony, J&N and other companies' promotion and exposure of bachata. Pirated bachata CDs can be found in all major northeastern U.S. cities and in most Dominican cities at one-tenth of a record store's price. Taking the form of burnt CDs, pirated music is sold through the same small-time vendor system that once distributed bachata cassettes on the streets in New York City, Miami, Santo Domingo and Boston. Ironically, piracy was once encouraged by bachata musicians without major record company contracts, because it made their music available to a huge portion of the population. They relied on performances for income, not royalties on albums sold, which is not a realistic system in the unregulated music industry of the Dominican Republic. Hence, popularity and word of mouth was what booked gigs. For the new bachata artists entering the mainstream world of multi-national music companies, pirated CDs are a major threat in their eyes among audiences already savvy in the black market of music. Luis Segura, one of the best known older *bachateros* who once relied on piracy to establish his reputation, addressed what he felt was a significant problem: 'Our number one threat is *la pirata*. It's a really bad problem among bachata artists. You see pirated CDs everywhere. No one enforces the restrictions against copying our CDs and selling them' (interview February 2003).

*Chapter summary and conclusions*

The process by which bachata has been transformed from a bawdy, 'lower class' drinking music to an internationally popular mainstream music is directly linked to the transnational character of Dominican migration. Bachata has clearly become more legitimate to a diversity of audiences extending beyond its original fans in marginal and rural areas. This de-stigmatization is evident in the fact that bachata has been adopted by Dominican elite who sponsor symphonic converts in esteemed national performance halls, Dominican American second generations who creatively mix it with other music genres, and growing audiences in Europe, the U.S. and other

parts of Latin America. Bachata owes its international popularity and continuing exposure to the support of its original fan base, whose migrant networks connect Baní to the U.S. and facilitate the organization of international concerts (which takes place even as musicians hold contracts with multi-national music companies like Sony). As these migrants have been successful in earning incomes in the U.S., they have remained loyal to bachata.

While palo has not become as popular as bachata, it is becoming more visible for many of the same reasons that bachata's status has changed. Dominicans reuniting with family and seeking better economic situations have migrated to the US and have found that their cultural practices do not hold the same stigma they possess in the Dominican Republic. Additionally, other Latino migrants who consume the music become new audiences with fewer prejudices regarding the music. Migrants increasingly have the buying power to support these new markets; before, musicians and fans of bachata did not have the money to mass produce or buy the music. Migrants from Monte Cruz in Boston can afford to buy the recording equipment necessary to make and mass-produce palo CDs. Their religious practices take advantage of existing transnational networks, while creating new ones that facilitate population movement.

In this chapter, I have argued that palo is involved in the same transnational processes that have transformed bachata from a marginalized music to a mainstream genre. While palo may not yet have attained the same recognition and fame as bachata, a number of de-stigmatizing processes are taking place and worth note. Kinito Mendez' attempts to cater to traditionally lower-class audiences illustrate their growing socio-economic status in Dominican society, made possible by the financial gains of transnational migration. The presence of palo on prominent Dominican radio shows (made possible by Mendez' huge contributions to the media industry) amongst popular merengues is another indication of a growing acceptance of palo music in Dominican mainstream society. The fact that palo music is played abroad more frequently in non-religious contexts such as clubs, concert halls, high school dance troupes and car stereos indicates that the meaning of this music is changing for Dominicans at home and abroad. Palo's contexts are diversifying from sacred to popular.

As bachata and palo music have left the margins and changed contexts, stylistic and thematic content have shifted. Syncretic processes create fusion musics like *palo-merengue* and *bachatarengue* and represent identifications with homeland as well as the destination society. New themes in older genres reflect migrants' and their families' preoccupations with their experiences abroad: bachatas now concern a younger generation in Nueva York rather than a poor *campesino's* lament, while palo music is used in Vodú fiestas attempting to overcome the new obstacles of migration to the U.S.

In both types of music, we see the persistence of homeland identity continually reinforced by globalized technology. Narratives of romantic separation phrased in Dominican slang are broadcast around the world by radio stations, palo music can be listened to on Vodú websites, and palo CDs made in Boston honouring the patron saint of Monte Cruz in Boston find their way to Spain and back to Baní. The circulation and commoditization of music is dependent on migrant family networks that sell and promote migrant CDs at home and continually supply musicians abroad with the transport of instruments. These networks allow palo fiestas to take place among Montecruzeños in Boston and maintain strong connections with spiritual leaders at home.

## Chapter Six

## Social Transformations: latitude and the erosion of social hierarchies

'El Día de mi Suerte'
Aunque sé regla en esta sociedad
a la cárcel se ciñe mi amistad
no te apures que tu suerte cambiará,
oye verá.

'My Lucky Day'
Although I know the rules in this society
I write you from jail, my friend
Don't worry, your luck will change,
listen, you will see.

(Willie Colón and Hector Lavoe 1973)

We have seen how marginal religious practices facilitate migration and how music genres have become more visible (and even mainstreamed) in the transnational context. Vodú religion, palo and bachata music have less stigma and are consumed by a greater diversity of people, eroding the social rules governing what cultural products are 'low class' or 'elite'. The transnational processes involved in the de-stigmatization of music and religion operate in other spheres of society, the subject of the present chapter.

Through transnational migration, Montecruzeños have obtained economic resources and/or achieved a more respected status, which has given them the latitude to reposition themselves in levels of social strata of Monte Cruz, Baní, and Boston, communities inextricably linked in the transnational social field. This latitude is key to an understanding of how migration brings about social transformation in the transnational social field. Like their cultural products, migrants increasingly occupy elite social spaces and at the same time redefine and blur the boundaries of those social spaces, making membership criteria more ambiguous. In the Dominican Republic, return migrants and their families are able to stay and invest in their own community, attracting people to Monte Cruz for services and entertainment, or move to Baní where they can afford to buy houses in traditionally upper class neighbourhoods. Both choices break down the centre-periphery arrangement of the *campo* and *pueblo*, and Montecruzeños become more visible—i.e. less marginal—in mainstream society. After they position themselves, their behaviour determines how the new neighbourhood accepts them, and we will see several examples of how Montecruzeños have been received after settling in Baní.

What is the result of these transnational processes that increase underclass visibility and destigmatize their social practices? Not only do these processes 'break the rules' defining what cultural products are 'elite' and expand audiences, they also create social transformations by eroding social hierarchies of race, class and morality. This erosion and reconstruction of racial and class categories, although informed by different value systems in the U.S. and in the Dominican Republic, is nevertheless part of the same process operating throughout the transnational social field.

*Latitude*

In the transnational migrant context, there is significant variability in how the perception of expressive cultural practices and the people they are associated with have shifted. I have chosen the word 'latitude' as a shorthand term for capturing the enabling but varied effects of transnational migration that include recognition, respect, legitimation, and visibility. Merriam-Webster's online definition of latitude includes 'freedom of action or choice' and 'angular distance from some specified circle or plane of reference'. Both definitions are helpful in application to transnational processes. In one sense of latitude, migration gives Montecruzeños the freedom of action or choice to stay in their *campo* or to move out and pursue acceptance into elite classes. In another sense, their original underclass position is the plane of reference they are able to distance themselves from and the perspective from which they evaluate their new place in society. For example, a large quantity of migrant music continues to incorporate the perspective of the *pobre campesino*. And even after migrants are successful, they maintain their religious ties because of their memories of poverty and the fear that the spirit world can take away their material possessions at any moment.

Terms such as recognition, respect, legitimation, and visibility also capture these transnational processes at work, yet these terms alone are limited in a broader discussion of religion, music, and occupation/morality. For example, bachata is now *respected* and even *legitimized* in mainstream society. The strongest evidence of this is in bachata's appearance in the National Theatre in Santo Domingo, a venue reserved to the most prestigious of musicians. It has

become a legitimate and respected occupation, one that young people aspire to achieve by forming bands and writing adoring letters to musicians. Fans respect musicians for bringing in more contemporary themes and cleaning up lyrics of *doble sentido*. This respect is directly connected to bachata's popularity in the U.S. Palo music still falls short of being a 'legitimate' mainstream music in the Dominican Republic, however. Even though palo music is becoming more recognized and visible in Dominican society, it is still limited in its reach and public exposure compared to bachata. To turn the discussion to the perception of social groups of *people,* terms such as legitimacy and respect may also fall short when describing social transformations in underclasses. Return migrants from poor *campos* such as Monte Cruz are more visible and have the potential to gain respect and a place among elites, as this chapter will show, but many are also viewed with ambivalence and given the ambiguous label of *tigres* or *nuevo ricos* (migrant hoodlums or *nouveaux riches*).

Latitude is a more general term that encompasses all of these processes of recognition, legitimacy, respect, and visibility that operate in different ways in Dominican transnational society. Latitude is an appropriate concept to describe Dominican migrant phenomena because it indicates movement through levels of society but not necessarily upward movement, distinguishing it from processes of social mobility. As we will see, migration enables Montecruzeños to 'break' traditional rules of society and make shifts on many different levels depending on context. Latitude also differs from social mobility because acquiring resources and connections *erodes* and *reconfigures* hierarchies, rather than *conforming to* and therefore *preserving* already established social trajectories. Gaining latitude is a process of *positioning,* not perception; whether migrants are successfully accepted into higher social levels or not depends on other factors such as their behaviour and community values, which also shift in the transnational social field. Latitude provides, rather, 'a foot in the door' of upper class society or 'freedom of action or choice'.

*Rompe cadenas: the role of remittances in social latitude*

Social latitude is the result of a confluence of migration processes and strategies, although a leading factor is the increase of resources acquired abroad. For Montecruzeños, the expression *rompe cadenas* (breaking chains) is sometimes used as a metaphor for overcoming the constraints of poverty and making economic advances, a first step in gaining social latitude. The expression *rompe cadenas* is also used in a religious context, literally referring to the ability of *La Virgen de las Mercedes* to unlock handcuffs or free a migrant from imprisonment. For example, as one informant expressed it, 'if you want a break from life's problems (*rompe cadenas de tu vida*), you have go *allá* (the U.S.). When asked why they migrate, Montecruzeños consistently reply that increasing their income will improve their life (this finding is supported by other studies, see Duany 1994). When migrants are free of the economic limitations that have historically locked them into social hierarchies and marginalized them in remote *campos,* migrants may attempt to reposition themselves in different social levels.

In a literal sense, migrants use their resources to move from the margins to the centre. With remittances and homeland investment, migrants can move to Baní and are increasingly able to buy land and build new houses in developments being cleared in response to this demand. For example, in the spring of 2003, roughly two hectares of land bordering Monte Cruz on the south were cleared and given a name as an *urbanización* by the city of Baní for development. On the day that bids opened for the plots (sold cheaply by Dominican standards), several migrant families in Boston wired two thousand dollars to their families in Monte Cruz, told them to go check out the land and put a deposit on quarter-acre and half-acre plots. A number of Montecruzenõs armed with video cameras and mobile phones filmed the future building sites for their relatives in Boston and vied for the best spots on hills overlooking a view to the sea ten kilometres away. Fifteen families from Monte Cruz have bought land here and are building new houses, a long process that can only progress when the remittance cheque arrives. These homeland investments would not have occurred without the extensive financial networks connecting Boston to Monte Cruz. Nor would they have occurred without transnational communication networks that secure the intimacy needed to facilitate major decision-making.

Instead of leaving the margins, some migrants opt to stay in Monte Cruz. Remittances and returning migrants redefine the marginal quality of the lower class 'latitude' they have traditionally occupied by developing and investing in their *campo*. In Monte Cruz and in other *campos,* migrant remittances have paved roads, painted public buildings and established medical clinics. Families who receive remittances from abroad have been able to make improvements on their houses such as enlarging living spaces and installing indoor plumbing and toilets.

Remittances, which can be sent so quickly and efficiently now through any number of the dozen Banilejo money-sending businesses in Jamaica Plain, make it easier for families when they do need to go to Baní for services—such as when a family member needs medicine or surgery. When a neighbour's son contracted typhoid, for example, she contacted her mother in Boston, who wired her money for his hospital bill through the Western Union in Jamaica Plain. Migrant investment has attracted the attention of the town government of Baní, which has now planned to clear the local baseball field and surrounding *monte* (scrub-covered hills) and build a new housing development with running water and electricity.

Increased development blurs the centre-periphery dichotomy long existent in the province, so that people from Baní and other communities increasingly travel to Monte Cruz to seek growing services or entertainment. For example, one *colmado* owner in Monte Cruz built a large dance floor and installed huge speakers with money he had saved by working in Boston. The *colmado* became a popular night venue in the region, attracting people from Baní, which lacks a *bachata* venue with so much space. Responding to the crowds of late-night partygoers, people living nearby began to prepare fried yucca, plantains and chicken and sell it from their houses. A sandwich shack opened and enjoyed a brisk business in ham melts and cherry juice squeezed from the trees hanging overhead. Houses began to stock their refrigerators with beer to sell to people when the *colmado* had its inevitable sell-out around 12 am. The rise in religious activity and the increase in private spiritual consulting centres have also brought people out to Monte Cruz, not just from Baní and other parts of the country, but even from the U.S., where migrants testify to the effectiveness of Dominican spirit mediums. In these cases, Montecruzeños not only have the latitude to shift their residences to more elite neighbourhoods, they are also able

to bring elites into their own *campo*. In this way they begin to erode social traditions that have kept elites segregated in town, and diversify a geographical space historically equated with *los pobres.*

*The illusion of wealth*

The *illusion* of wealth also gives migrants latitude. Montecruzeños who have acquired resources abroad provide compelling examples of how migrants are able to break out of their social marginalization (*rompe cadenas).* For this reason, the tangible gains of migration, measured in *campesinos'* access to basic services like clean water, medical care and a better diet[62], more land and investment in income-generating enterprises in the community, become the goals of many in the community. A very high value is placed on financial success, so that even if migrants are struggling to make ends meet, they will go to great lengths to *appear* as if they have money by strategically spending resources on material goods that have become markers of 'wealth' and status. A preoccupation with material goods pervades the behaviour of all migrant groups in this area, and is not restricted to the Montecruzeños whose increased resources are particularly conspicuous.

In her ethnography of Miraflores, a small town southwest of Baní, anthropologist Peggy Levitt remarks on how migration has greatly increased material consumption: 'The depth of material appetites and the pressure to succeed in satisfying them cannot be underestimated. Whereas in the past, community members were admired for their hard work and community service, people now look up to those who have acquired the most things' (2001a:87). Indeed, the first sounds to break the quiet of early morning in Monte Cruz are the barking of dogs that guard houses containing the many precious gifts that relatives have brought back from Boston: stoves, refrigerators, music and video equipment, and televisions. Local Banilejo writers of older generations have reflected on this new preoccupation with appearances and material goods:

> Today the individual who 'shines' in our society and town is the one who reaches the borders of the United States and is suddenly turned into someone with resources . . . . Many Banilejos 'new-york-icized' who yesterday were nobodies, today give themselves the luxury of living in Las Marías [a wealthy neighbourhood in Baní]. A considerable amount of Banilejos who have been able to amass a fortune in the United States preferred to return to their hometown, announcing their prosperity and exhibitionism. (Suazo 2001:59)

The importance of material possessions as status indicators is reflected in the conversations of women in Monte Cruz and Jamaica Plain, who talk of an ideal man who must be rich and be able to support her financially, wear nice clothes and drive a nice car as the most important qualities. Some typical comments overheard include: 'I don't care if he's perfect in every other way, if he can't buy the baby's pampers I don't want him' (Yesica, 30 Monte Cruz); 'I want a good man, but it helps if he can bring home the bacon' (*ganarse su pan*)' (Ani, 29 Monte Cruz); 'There is nothing more pitiful than a broke guy' (Nigieli, 35 Monte Cruz). Men are very aware of women's desires for a man with resources: 'Women want a guy who has nice clothes, drives fast cars, and has a loud sound system' (Angel, 50, Baní).

*Visibility: dress codes and 'passing' as rico*

The esteem placed on those who can afford certain material goods has changed consumption patterns and created a desire for appearing *rico* (rich) in Banilejo society. The markers of success take the form of conspicuous trappings of fashion and entertainment products. Clothing and physical appearance ('looking good') is one very important way of gauging respectability, and the care that men and women both put into self-maintenance is considerable. Women spend disproportionate amounts of their income on expensive hair straightening treatments if they can afford it while men sport close-shaved hairstyles that must be maintained bi-weekly. Preferred clothing brands include Tommy Hilfiger and Kangol Hats, which cost U.S.$25 each, an amount that would feed a family of five for several days. Men and women do not go out to socialize unless they have stylish clothes that are cleaned and well pressed, and hair done, a lengthy process involving a trip to the hairstylist. Anyone who can pass this 'dress code' of sorts can socialize in the centre of Baní and at elite social clubs. It may be temporary, but it

gives people a foot in the door and allows them to make contacts. In this way the illusion of wealth gives people social latitude.

Money is also spent on different vehicles of latitude when migrants buy mopeds or trucks to replace donkey carts or bicycles. Only 'broke people' walk. Larger and louder high-speed motorcycles give prestige to their owners. Having a car as opposed to a moped, the most common form of transport, is also a desired commodity, partly because cars can accommodate powerful sound systems. The *carpa,* a word that refers to 'stereo speakers', is also a prominent status indicator. The bigger the *carpa* (and therefore the louder the bass beats), the better. Speakers cost thousands of dollars; some houses have *carpas* up to six feet tall in size, while any business that hopes to be successful must invest in a powerful set of speakers. Music is commonly played at extremely high volumes even though people cannot dance anywhere near the speakers and people have to yell during conversations. A car with a powerful set of speakers is a status symbol, a way to sneak a *tigre's* girlfriend away to a cabaña (illicit hotel for couples) or visit friends at night in style.

A typical Saturday night involves a great deal of movement, cruising, and display from *campo* to city in the same night, and music broadcasts this movement. Montecruzeño men and women begin the evening in the local colmado, where they socialize with neighbours, friends and family. As the night progresses, groups of young men who can afford the entrance fees for clubs in town leave the colmado in cars or on motorcycles. Music blaring the latest bachata, merengue, and reggaeton hits, they cruise the three kilometres to Baní's nightclubs, a short ride stretched out by detouring through the central park, a popular hang-out spot. The cars of the Montecruzeño men often contrast with the brand-new SUVs of wealthier townspeople (successful return migrants) parked in the *avenidas*, doors open and music blaring, with their owners reclining in sunglasses, new baseball hats, and new trainers (although Montecruzeños who have minor league baseball contracts will also own SUVs). They check out the scene, passing by restaurants where people are hanging out. Even if Montecruzeño and Banilejo migrants have not been successful abroad, they go to great lengths to perpetuate the myth that they have bottomless pockets when they are visiting from Boston. They buy new clothes, or rent Tommy Hilfiger or other expensive

brands from stores in Baní set up for this very purpose. Everyone knows of this practice and a number of jokes make fun of the migrant who rents clothes and gives the illusion of being well set-up upon returning home.

There are other ways that migrants perpetuate the illusion of 'wealth' and are thereby able to portray themselves as *rico*. When migrants return home, they throw palo fiestas with expensive goat meat, rent cars to go 'touring', an almost unheard of and unaffordable pastime, and distribute twenty dollar bills throughout their community. 'The act of mythologizing life and struggles in the United States is a social and cultural construction that immigrants, returnees, and those who are left behind create and perpetuate' (Grasmuck & Pessar 1995:16). Grasmuck and Pessar's observations about Dominican migrants were confirmed early during fieldwork in Monte Cruz after I spent eight hours driving around in a van with a family and their just-returned niece, who was looking for another vehicle to rent for the week, even though the family already owned one—a rarity for the community. Car after car was turned down for not being beautiful enough: 'an ugly car makes an ugly driver', was continuously stated in front of very decent-looking cars, vans and jeeps. After several hours had passed, no car was ever deemed suitable, but not because they were all too 'ugly'. I discovered later that the woman was unemployed and living on welfare in Massachusetts and could not have afforded to rent a car for a week even if she had wanted to. The point was that she successfully gave the impression that she had resources, and used the latitude given to return migrants to engage in the very elite pastime of renting a car.

This preoccupation with conspicuous consumption and looking good is not always positive for migrants and illustrates the sometimes very temporary quality of migrant repositioning. Giving the impression that one is well off encourages family at home to take advantage of this perceived wealth by constantly requesting money. Lili, a Montecruzeña, had been living in Boston with her two children (born in the U.S.) and long-term boyfriend, Manolino, in public housing projects. She was able to return home about once every two years and re-enter the U.S. with little difficulty on the resident visa she acquired when marrying a Puerto Rican. On these trips home, she brought as many suitcases as possible, filled with clothes, toys, and other gifts for family. She wore clothes of expensive brands, sported a trendy hairstyle and manicured

nails. During the two weeks that she was home in Monte Cruz, she paid for all meals in her mother's homestead, feeling responsible for all the people who were constantly over to see her and needing to be fed. In the evenings, she sent kids up to the *colmado* to buy dozens of *Presidente* beers to offer guests. On one occasion, she replaced her mother's refrigerator, which had broken between visits.

When she lost her part-time job at Macy's in Boston, times became tough, but the demands for support from home did not cease. She, Manolino and the children lived off her unemployment cheque and Manolino's construction wages. But during that time, while she expressed her frustration to friends in Boston, she never voiced her complaints about remittances to family at home:

> Everyone expects you to keep up the money coming home. They have no idea what it is like here; they think we can just get money and send it home as easy as that. Christmas is always the worst. I have to send $25 to everyone: to Mama, Elena, Margerita, the folks across the river, Juanita, Aní, Yolany, you know, all of them. I can't forget anyone or people get really upset. I spend over six hundred dollars on Christmas money alone. And then Elena's boy got typhoid last month.

Six months later back in Monte Cruz, Elena, the niece of Lila, commented on her aunt's ability to send remittances:

> Lila has always been good to us, she doesn't forget anyone. When I needed money for my accounting course, she always sent it. When *Abuela* needed medicine, Lila sent us the money. We call her whenever we need something. She's earning good money at her job *allá*.

Because of her low funds, Lila was not able to make the trip back to Monte Cruz in the summer as she had originally intended. She told family at home that her girls had to go to extra summer school for English in Boston, but later confessed to me, 'If you can't go back right, it's better to not go back at all', meaning that one had to return home 'in style'. As Lila's story illustrates, migrants can be considered elites at home even when they are members of the poorest groups abroad. This illustrates how latitude encompasses shifts taking place throughout the transnational social field, not just in the Dominican Republic. Every time an individual returns home and then goes back to the U.S. s/he shifts social as well as geographic latitudes delineated by both national

borders and economic constraints. The next section will further illustrate how migrants in Boston manipulate transnational networks to achieve status and gain 'latitude' in the Dominican Republic.

*Global communications technology and deception*

Ostentatious behaviour gives the illusion of success and perpetuates the myth that migration equals wealth. We have seen how migrants attempt to appear rich when back in Monte Cruz. How are people able to pull off the impression of wealth from afar, a practice that gives migrants latitude at home? It is important to consider, first of all, that 'success' is a slippery label that changes in Boston and Baní, since being 'successful' in the Dominican Republic is so frequently dependent on living in poverty in Boston; migrants send their money home. 'Success' is also ambiguous because it can be manipulated through media that intervene between the two places. People want to appear that they are doing well. Thousands of miles away from the difficult life of surviving and making money in Boston, the glamour of the migrant life is compelling.

Apart from the ostentatious behaviour of return migrants, communication channels such as satellite, phone, TV and email can be used to fuel dissatisfaction and perpetuate the illusion of wealth. Channels of auditory and visual communication, manifested in various media forms, create intimacy and connectedness because they allow information to flow regularly and cheaply across long distances. On the other hand, this connectedness is deceptive because the actors on either end of the channel are still separated by thousand-mile divides. Mediating channels can be used to obscure as well, and migrants create certain images about their lives abroad that can never be validated by people at home. Dominican migrant men will commonly put together a highly stylized video or photo album of their life in Boston that consistently includes photos of themselves (well-groomed and wearing fashionable clothes) in front of a sports car (whether it belongs to them or not), in their apartment in front of their stereo systems, and next to as many nice-looking dressed up women as possible. It is not uncommon to see photos of migrants

holding fistfuls of cash. These albums are sent home and adorn the coffee tables of Montecruzeño homes.

The U.S. is depicted as the land of easy opportunity in popular music, illustrated by *Pochy y su cocoband's* merengue: 'Everyone congratulates you, when you come from over there. He came with seven suitcases, the man arrived loaded. . . . What has New York got, that makes everyone look so good?' and by the bachata from the Dominican film 'Nueba Yol' that goes, 'there are mountains of money' [in New York]. These practices are by no means new: migrant groups have sent home photographs and written letters of their success and accomplishments in the new land for a century. With cheap and widely accessible digital and satellite-broadcasted media, on the other hand, images are clarified, reinforced and sustained with an unprecedented intensity.

People can be deceived about other aspects of migrant life, notably romantic relationships. Montecruzeños at home are well aware of opportunities for deception, and scan media critically. For example, when the television show *Aquí y Allá* airs every Sunday night on Cablevision featuring Montecruzeños and Banilejos filmed at social events in Boston, families at home are excited to see friends and relatives but also use the show as a way of keeping tabs on boyfriends and girlfriends. Telephones in hand, they ring friends with news such as 'Did you see that girl he was hanging out with? I knew something was going on'. Or, 'I didn't realize that so and so was in Boston now. She told me she had moved to the Bronx'. Or 'Did you see what your brother's braided hair and what he was wearing? He must have picked that up from all those *morenos'* [Black Americans]. As the previous chapter demonstrated, bachata has retained this theme of bitterness over deception in love, even if new artists have changed themes in other ways. Betrayal and deception reinforce the ambiguity of the migrant life; what appears one way may not be the case.

*Vodú channels and deception*

Vodú religion also operates through channels that can deceive and obscure to give migrants the promise of 'latitude'. As Chapter four illustrated, communication channels are also

used to transmit spiritual potency from the homeland to the new land, enabling migrants to use their religion to cope with dangerous and risky migrant activities. Instrumental manipulation is at the very heart of vodú practices that use magical objects to bring about results. Using religion in this way, humans have a great deal of agency in determining their fates. Accompanying the proliferation of spirit mediums, an increasingly lucrative occupation in Monte Cruz, there is a fear of 'fakes'—people who appear to have the ability to communicate with the spirits but do so only for material gain. These individuals manipulate channels to their benefit by pretending to be possessed and doing *trabajos* (spiritual works) for profit. In the same way that communication 'channels' obscure actors on either end, the client cannot see the *misterio*; s/he can only hear the voice of the *misterio* as it is communicated through the spirit medium, who emerges as the more powerful actor in the relationship. The other fear accompanying the increase of spirit mediums is of their perceived inexperience with channels; they are *brujos* who mishandle a potentially dangerous situation or misuse vodú to harm others. In the end, a *brujo* can only be proved a fake over the long term, which is determined by whether his/her *trabajos* are consistently effective or not.

Deception, a central concern of Montecruzeños, comes in many guises in the transnational context, from appearing wealthy because of income abroad, practicing false spiritual powers, or betraying a romantic partner from afar. As mentioned earlier, ostentatious behaviour and appearing well off is motivated by the desire to *rompe cadenas* and break out of poverty, while forms of spiritual deception are carried out for personal profit. It has been assumed by migration theorists subscribing to utilitarian theories that people migrate to improve their economic situations and liberate themselves from a dismal future, and that they would not engage in such risks unless they would ultimately profit from them financially. The assumption that migration persists because its net result is monetarily beneficial is now being reconsidered by migration scholars (DeWind et al 2003:567). Montecruzeño migrant experiences call these assumptions into question, for while some succeed in making money and securing financial security, many do not. For those who do make a profit and can return home to live comfortably, they must pay a high price. Most Montecruzeños live in poverty by U.S. standards, at times

working 80+ hours a week and going without seeing family for years. Moreover, financial 'security' can be short-lived; those who make lucrative profits in black market occupations run the high risk of being arrested and losing everything. When considering the economic benefits of migration, we must consider costs that are not necessarily measurable or even immediately realized.

People migrate for many reasons, including reunification with family and friends abroad (Brettell 2000) and, as the case of Montecruzeño migration, for prestige and status in the home community. Rather than being guaranteed financial success, a Montecruzeño man or woman knows that the act of entering the U.S. *by itself* is a way to gain a reputation as a *tigre* and some latitude. The difficult journey of reaching the U.S., settling in Boston, and coming back home again has become a rite of passage for Montecruzeño young men, in a sense. Maintaining the illusion of success, even if it is deceptive, gains the return migrant latitude in his/her home community and in this way perpetuates migration. Shirley Grasmuck and Patricia Pessar comment:

> . . . international advertising and communications bring modern consumer culture to both urban and rural areas, increasing awareness of and appetites for modern consumer goods; obtaining even a small fractions of these goods, however, remains beyond the reach of all but a small percentage of the population. The increased desire for modern living only aggravates the dissatisfaction already felt by those who have benefited little from growth in their country's economy (1991:6).

Opportunities for gaining latitude may also offer an explanation for why migration continues to be so compelling when it involves so many risks, unpredictabilities, and dangers.

*Using latitude*

When migrants place themselves and their cultural products in elite social spaces, how are they perceived and accepted in these contexts? With the contacts they make and the relationships they form with elites, they have the potential to become accepted in upper classes. Acceptance partly depends on behaviour, but is also affected by changing rules of what is acceptable. Negativity towards migrants does exist, and a number of derogatory terms are used by

townspeople towards *campesinos* moving to Baní and buying up all the old homes. They are sometimes regarded as rural, uneducated *Dominican Yorks* and *nuevo ricos*; people without 'class' who have made a lot of money but waste it through conspicuous consumption. They are also labelled as criminals, *tigres*, and conflict and violence such as the Chigua murders (discussed in Chapter three) reinforce this stereotype. 'The *tigre* is a charmer who talks his way into places he doesn't belong through verbosity, charlatanism [and] . . . a false lyricism. The *tigre* is not given prestige, he steals it. The *tigre* can operate outside the rules of society. . . ' (Derby 1999). Movement into higher strata such as an upper-class neighbourhood does not guarantee acceptance. On the other hand, Montecruzeños can gain respect from elites and membership into their social groups when they make investments in the neighbourhood and maintain migrant connections. In these cases they are seen as *buena gente*: people of good, upright character.

*Tigres: Fredy and Milagros*

Fredy left Monte Cruz in 1995 and emigrated to Boston where his parents had already been living for five years. Without money or a job, he was quickly recruited by relatives already living there to sell heroin. His job was to process or "cut" and package heroin for street sale. The money he made and remitted to his family in Monte Cruz gave his sister Milagros the means to improve her living situation: she could refurbish the family homestead in Monte Cruz or move. She chose to move to Baní, buying a house by the older colonial homes near the central park, an upper class area with domestic servants and family crests of Canary Island Spanish displayed outside. Among her new neighbours, there was great speculation about the source of their wealth, and when Fredy was finally arrested in Boston by an FBI sting operation in which several of his family members and neighbours were implicated, suspicions were confirmed to Milagros' neighbours; he was indeed a *tigre*. Yet when Milagros—a *campesina* outsider from a convicted family of *tigres*—set up a successful *colmado* that brought business into the new neighbourhood, neighbours eventually warmed up to her. After several months they began inviting her to birthday parties and exchanging plates of food at mealtimes in the traditional Dominican custom. Although she was now living in a neighbourhood of people who called themselves Catholics and

frowned upon Vodú, Milagros maintained an expensively decorated altar in her new house with dozens of effigies, and she gave lavish *palo fiestas* in order to shorten her brother's prison sentence, which were attended by all of her old neighbours in Monte Cruz and some of the more open-minded (or perhaps curious) new neighbours. While she was from a lower class background and persisted in identifying with it, her neighbours tolerated her presence. As recently as the 1960s she would have been ostracized for mixing with light-skinned upper-classes.

However, when Fredy's sentence ended and he was deported home, Milagros sold the house and moved back to Monte Cruz. 'It's hard to explain', she said, 'but I missed my *gente*. And with Fredy's situation, all people knew was that he was in jail; they didn't understand his situation. One of the women who lived down the street was rude about him; she said she didn't want her children to live near *tigres*'. The ambivalence with which Fredy and Milagros were regarded—somewhat grudgingly accepted but also feared—demonstrates the blurring of what is 'acceptable' in Baní. Some degree of *tigueraje* is acceptable if it contributes to the well-being of the neighbourhood or community, but people are also uncomfortable around newcomers with dubious backgrounds.

*Buena Gente: Morena and Niña*

*Niña*

In contrast with the label of the *tigre*, *campesinos* may be labelled as *buena gente*, 'good folks'. Montecruzeña Niña had a different experience from Milagros. She lived with her husband Carlos in Boston for five years, undocumented and making money by selling coconut and pineapple *bizcocho* (cake) in a friend's pizza restaurant in Jamaica Plain. Niña also made some money as a spirit medium in Boston, and when they returned to the Dominican Republic they had saved up enough to move out of Niña's mother's house in Monte Cruz. They built a ranch-style home in a new housing development in Baní, where a number of migrants from Monte Cruz and other areas in the province were building new homes. Although Niña and Carlos now had as much money as their neighbours, they did not adopt the tastes of what they called the *clase alta* (upper-class). Niña attributed their success to hard work and Santa Marta and she gave thanks to

the *misterio* with a beautiful altar in their new house. When the home was built, her fiesta in honour of Santa Marta was extravagant, with four huge and expensively decorated cakes, goat meat for sixty people, and real roses, a hard-to-find luxury in the Dominican Republic. The neighbourhood was already home to established Banilejo families, and bordered another neighbourhood known for being a pocket of 'rubio' (light-skinned) residents. Many Banilejos—white collar professionals working as journalists, bank clerks or town council employees—regarded this neighbourhood as the *nuevo ricos*; *campesinos* without 'class' who had made money fast by practicing *brujería* (witchcraft). Like Milagros, Niña and her husband soon gained the respect of their neighbours when they invested in a grocery store that was not only successful but also became a source of employment for neighbours. On one occasion a neighbour commented, 'they are *buena gente* (decent people); hard-working *campesinos,* even if they are *brujos*'. Niña and her neighbours would frequently take turns looking after each other's grandchildren, while Carlos spent evenings socialising with neighbours under the mango tree by the main road.

*Morena*

Morena, a 27-year-old Montecruzeña, gained latitude and respect through migration even though she never left the country. Her parents had emigrated to the U.S. ten years before and had faithfully remitted money to her and her four siblings, earned for the large part by selling drugs in Boston. She used the money to buy a sewing machine and cloth, and built up a successful and eventually self-sustaining tailoring business out of her house. Her ability to sustain herself and her family and be called upon by neighbours in times of need gained her respect in the immediate neighbourhood in Monte Cruz, while her reliable business started to attract customers from Baní. After a couple years of self-employment, high volume orders (such as the customary purple outfits for funerals) became so frequent that she began to call on her *comadres* and neighbours for help. She was also able to renovate her house, making it the largest in the neighbourhood. Able to afford the tastes usually associated with the wealthy, Morena began to get manicures and frequent hair-straightening treatments. She hired neighbourhood boys to do her shopping, asking that they buy non-traditional foods like macaroni and cheese and lasagne that migrant relatives always

brought back when they visited. She refined her language of what she considered *campesino* 'vulgarities', and tried to teach her five-year-old son to speak with an accent similar to that of more highly educated people of urban areas. Her sister read Mexican and Brazilian fashion magazines specially purchased in the capital and spoke constantly of wanting cosmetic surgery. Finally, she denounced Vodú, saying that it was a rural and uneducated practice of 'idol-worshipping'.

Morena's house became a social centre filled with friends from all parts of the province whom she had met through transnational and local business transactions. She had a friend who frequently travelled to Los Angeles to buy clothes cheaply; he always brought her a box of clothes, which she sold out of her store. Her friends represented a variety of occupations and backgrounds: accountants, doctors, musicians, drug dealers, farmers, and many unemployed. Most had spent some time abroad in Boston and knew her family living there. She threw grand parties and invited everyone she knew, making enough *espagettis* for fifty people. Without physically moving, she positioned herself in an upper class stratum and was perceived as a 'woman of class' by both neighbours and wealthier friends. She knew this, and spoke of it often: 'a lady (*señora*) of class (*buena fama*) must be respectable and take care of herself. There are certain things that others must do for her: go to the *colmado*, run errands in the afternoon, and buy drinks. Never buy yourself a drink, a man must do that'. Not only was Morena respected within her own neighbourhood, which profited from her investments, but also by outsiders, who invited her in to their social circles.

Although Morena conformed to more mainstream tastes, Niña illustrated how she could be accepted in a wealthy, light-skinned neighbourhood even though she still practiced Vodú and came from a rural background—an identity that remained with her despite her neighbours' acceptance. Morena, on the other hand, was successful in attracting elites to Monte Cruz. She chose to remain in a place historically associated with geographical marginality but used her latitude to make friends and build trust with elites through business transactions. Increasing financial resources and connections through migration was an important part of breaking out of their marginal background, and was a leading factor of both Niña's and Morena's social

advancements. Both invested in their communities, one in Monte Cruz and the other in Baní, creating opportunities for others and establishing that they were exceptions to *campesino* stereotypes. Milagros had a more negative experience due to the labelling of *tigre* that her family received, and eventually moved back home to Monte Cruz.

*Education*

It is important to emphasize the role of investment rather than education as the most effective way to decrease marginality. The overwhelming majority of informants in Monte Cruz did not see that education is a worthy investment for migrants abroad to make for their families at home or for themselves. Incidentally, Niña wanted to take a business course at the university in Santo Domingo but her father refused to fund it, reasoning that it would not 'pay off' as well as an investment in a business. The same applied to Morena; her mother and father in Boston would not support enrolment in a fashion design course and by the time she got to the point where she could pay for the classes on her own, she was a single mother caring for a small child and could not spare the time. Many Montecruzeños are sceptical about higher education; a group of twenty-year-old women aired their doubts about a friend getting an advanced degree in journalism at a university in the capital: 'She's got more education than anyone in town—how many years has she been going to school now? Seven? And where has that gotten her? Her parents still support her and there's no end in sight'.

It is unsurprising that people in Monte Cruz do not embrace higher education in the Dominican Republic. It is largely inaccessible to most because of the cost and the lack of good primary schools in rural areas that are not even effective in teaching community members basic literacy. Racism keeps people of darker skin colour out of higher-paying occupations[63].

Historically, Montecruzeños' seasonal work patterns of moving to the hills to process coffee plants made sustained education impossible. In Baní, education is not highly valued for different reasons. Banílejos are known throughout the republic as being the hardest workers (many businesses in the capital are owned by Banilejos) and self-employed businesses are the most

common form of income besides remittances. Owning a business is one of the best ways to get ahead in the Dominican Republic as well as a way to secure respect. The government located a vocational school in Baní where Dominicans from all parts of the Republic come to take free courses in hairdressing, sewing, auto mechanics, baking, and a number of other trades. Professional occupations requiring higher education on the other hand are not well paid (a person can earn far more by working in the U.S.), making education a low priority for many people living in the Baní area[64].

Apart from illustrating the importance of investment and short-term financial goals as opposed to education as a leading factor in migrant latitude, Niña and Morena's situations demonstrate how migrants have flexibility in shifting latitudes. Their experiences, contrasted with the situations of migrants labelled as *nuevo ricos or Dominican Yorks,* map out how social latitude *may or may not* lead to respect and acceptance. What the aggregate effects of these individual movements do contribute to, however, is the normalization of their underclass presence and their cultural products in mainstream society.

Transnational migration gives immigrants the latitude to reconfigure categories of class and race, re-evaluate legal practices, music, informal and formal markets. By unbinding themselves from a geographical location and its accompanying categories, prejudices and social practices, transnational migrants are able to select, choose, or ignore the various value systems the move through. Transnationalism in this way further stimulates Afro-Caribbean sycretization—evident by changing uses and contexts of palo music, for example.

*Normalization*

The thesis has demonstrated a variety of ways in which marginalized migrants have an increased visibility in Baní and throughout the transnational social field. They move their homes and businesses to Baní, and develop Monte Cruz, which brings townspeople out to the *campo*. By appearing to have money, Montecruzeños have access to elite clubs and other social spaces. The previous chapter illustrated how bachata music appears more frequently in mainstream music, while palo music is played in public contexts instead of the private fiestas where performances

were hosted in the past. While it may be going too far to say that underclasses and their cultural products are fully *respected* by mainstream society—some migrants are and others are not—there is evidence that their presence is becoming more familiar and normalized. It becomes normal for *campesinos* and *tigres* to socialize in Baní, make friends or work with Banilejos, and buy new homes in upper-class neighbourhoods. Whereas before the onset of migration, Montecruzeños, their music and their religious practices were largely invisible to mainstream society, now they have become very visible as increasing numbers of the underclass position themselves in elite social spaces. The social movement of diverse groups becomes an increasingly normal phenomenon.

This normalization *de facto* erodes and reconfigures ingrained hierarchies of the colonial and post-colonial system. For example, if a privilege of being upper class is socializing at the exclusive *piscina* (pool), then the entrance of well-dressed *campesinos* breaks that rule. If upper class was implicitly defined as 'Catholic, light-skinned and rich', Niña's acceptance in her neighbourhood again breaks the rules. If merengue is the preferred music of the upper class audiences, then their consumption of *bachata* redefines 'elite' cultural tastes. Traditional status markers of race, religion, and resources have less authority for exclusion and social rules lose their efficacy.

*Race*

Experiences in the U.S. also erode home social hierarchies. Race is one marker of social status that is changing in Baní partly because of the racial dynamics of life abroad in the U.S., where migrants shift identification with and participation in different groups. Baumann demonstrated in *Contesting Culture* the situational and multi-layered quality of migrant identification. Migrants in Southall regard each other as part of several communities at once. 'Co-existing and sometimes contending definitions of communities as cultures result when people define community in terms of common heritage but also by a shared structural position in the new society (1996:191). Similarly, Montecruzeños are part of many 'groups' in Boston such as 'Blacks', 'Latinos', and 'Dominicans'. They self-identify with these groups, shifting loyalties

depending on context and at the same time are labelled and placed into groups by U.S. popular and official discourses. Membership in these groups—whether sought out or imposed—brings together a diversity of people who would normally be segregated in the Dominican Republic. These new discourses on identity in the U.S. erode the social hierarchies of home.

As Baumann found with migrants in Southall, the structural constraints of the receiving society serve as a point of identification of a heterogeneous migrant population (Ibid.:191). In Boston, Montecruzeños *and* Banilejos are still marginal; comparative lack of resources determines where one lives, the schools children go to, and the type of employment available. Boston's public subsidized apartments in high crime areas are often the only affordable housing available to migrants, children must attend under-funded schools with drug problems, and lack of legal documentation means that migrants will receive extremely low wages if any. Economic marginalization persists. On the other hand, Montecruzeños are not alone; along with many Banilejos they become part of a larger dynamic of marginalization that includes migrant and refugee groups from all over the world (not to mention the substantial numbers of U.S. nationals living in urban poverty) who share the same public and private spaces. Many Banilejos who held a more privileged status at home become part of a new underclass of migrants in the U.S. In this more diverse context, Dominican elites who have traditionally shaped what is mainstream in their country lose their high status and control over Montecruzeño social practices. While many Banilejos may still hold prejudices towards their *campesino* neighbours from home, frequently they make friends, work and live alongside Montecruzeños.

In terms of race, migrants are placed into categories by others. Dominicans of light skin colour are often labelled as 'black' by the 'one-drop rule'[65] because of popular American views on Afro-Caribbean ancestry (Bailey 2001:677), putting them on the same racial footing as their darker-skinned compatriots. Their opinions often conflict with these labels. Montecruzeños, on the other hand, subscribe to U.S. ideas of race, so that being 'black' becomes an abstract identification of solidarity with other underprivileged groups from all backgrounds living in the roughest neighbourhoods. A well-known Dominican man who sold refreshments in Mozart Park in Jamaica Plain expressed this solidarity with other *morenos* (dark-skinned people):

> Jackson Square has changed a lot. It used to be all Cubans, then they moved out as they began to make more money; then Puerto Ricans, and now Dominicans. We are all *morenos* together (laughs). At least it's better than New York--but not a lot.

A stronger African ideology and pride for African origins is present among Black Americans, contrasting greatly with the characteristic denial of African heritage among the average Montecruzeño at home. 'Blackness' and associated cultural practices become less of a stigma than they are in the Dominican Republic. One Montecruzeño man observed, 'Here [in Boston], it's not as bad to be a *moreno* or even a *prieto*. You can still have a good job and make a lot of money'. Vodú blends into the dozens of African-derived religions tolerated and even respected in cities like Boston. Montecruzeño religious beliefs are supported by the many other Caribbean groups such as Haitians, Cubans and Brazilians who have similar Afro-Catholic religious practices and buy their religious materials (candles, ceramic saint figures) at the Dominican *botánicas*. Second generations do not pick up as easily on the undercurrents of disapproval and censure that accompany Vodú practices on the island or equate them with 'African-ness', and see these dances/music/ceremonies as 'chulo' (cool) or quaint. Boston public schools observe African holidays such as Kwanza and honour civil rights leaders, as one Montecruzeña woman living in Jamaica Plain explained to me when I enquired about her six-year-old's colouring book picture of Martin Luther King, Junior, displayed in her kitchen. Migrants attempt to educate their families at home, bringing books and videos about Dominican history and Trujillo's mistreatment of Haitians, similar to how Cuban Rastafarians abroad have introduced previously non-existent discourses of pride in Africa origins to family at home through related media (Hansing 2001:736).

*Pan-Latino Identity*

Solidarity results not only from a shared situation of marginalization and race; it can also be created from the shared linguistic and cultural identity of the 'Latino'. In Boston, native Spanish speakers have made attempts to unify all Spanish speakers (regardless of their background) as 'Latino'. There is a political distinction between 'Latino' and 'Hispanic':

'Latino' is used when Spanish speakers want to stress their Latin American and indigenous South American background, while 'Hispanic' identifies with Spanish roots. Dominicans often use the word Hispanic (*hispanos*) rather than Latino to refer to all Spanish speakers, reflecting the national preoccupation with a Spanish identity (at the expense of African heritage).

While there is some debate over whether one can really refer to Spanish speakers in Boston—extremely heterogeneous groups from dozens of different countries—as the Latino 'community', political issues and Latino activists have brought Spanish speakers together for common causes. For example, when the Boston city government threatened in 2002 to eradicate bilingual educational programs in schools that teach migrant children in Spanish as a transition to learning English, Spanish speakers rallied against the effort, assembling in community meetings, staging protests, and writing editorials to the city's papers. At these meetings, Montecruzeños and Banilejos mixed with migrants from all parts of Latin America. 'Latino' organizations such as *La Sociedad Latina*, *La Alianza Hispana,* and the *Latino Professional Network* canvassed neighbourhoods to vote against the motion. In the same year, a three-week strike organized by the Service Employees International Union resulted in better benefits for Latinos working in the hotel cleaning industry. 'Latino' organizations headed by Puerto Ricans, Dominicans and Cubans spearheaded these efforts as well. In Massachusetts, Spanish speakers have been elected to political offices in the state legislature and local municipal offices. These politicians gear their campaigns towards the 'Latino' vote, promoting a sense of solidarity among all who speak Spanish. This is even reflected by non-'Latino' politicians such as current president George Bush, whose re-election advertisements target stereotypes of shared values of 'all' Latinos: Catholic religion, 'family', a hard-work ethic and a desire for U.S. citizenship.

Uriarte argued in 1992 that Latinos in Boston see themselves and act as one community despite diversity and geographic dispersion. While we have seen that this pan-Latino identity applies to Spanish-speakers in largely political contexts, there are also strong nationalistic identifications that splinter the pan-Latino identity in Boston. Dominicans from many different socio-economic backgrounds define themselves in opposition to Puerto Ricans. These nationalistic identifications are present in the displays of Dominican or Puerto Ricans flags in

most storefronts, cars and house windows on Centre Street in Jamaica Plain. Tensions between those who identify as Puerto Rican and those who identify as Dominican emerge in a variety of contexts. *El Mundo*, the free Spanish language publication of Boston, occasionally prints letters to the editor complaining of 'Puerto Rican' or 'Dominican' attitudes or offensive behaviour, which are then responded to by someone appealing to the readers to 'put differences aside' and focus on the commonalities, not the differences, of neighbours. Editors respond with '*somos latinos juntos*' (we are all Latinos together), a rhetoric used to promote social harmony among those who use national identifications. Nationalistic tensions influence social relations within Boston and where people choose to live; migrants may choose to live along Centre Street in a 'Dominican' triple decker house rather than a 'Puerto Rican' house. The nationality of the landlord determines whether the house is 'Dominican' or 'Puerto Rican'. Nationalistic loyalties also form the basis for employment in drug organizations.

Among second generation migrants, being Puerto Rican as opposed to Dominican is often a reference point in conversations. This rivalry surfaces in everyday conversations, like one between two high school students in Mozart Park one afternoon (a Dominican girl and a Puerto Rican boy, both born in the U.S. of foreign parents). The girl offered me some *quipes*, a Caribbean fruit. She looked at her Puerto Rican friend, smiled and said to me, 'try some fruit from *my* country'. The boy responded, '*Your* country? Girl, that's some *boricua* (Puerto Rican) fruit there, you don't know what you're talking about', starting a friendly argument about what items—fruit, music, food, words, for example—belonged to each one's country.

Similar to how a pan-Latino identity is stressed in political contexts, local cultural organizations emphasize nation of origin. The Jamaica Plain arts centre, 'Spontaneous Celebrations', sponsors a Latin American dance program for children, called *La Piñata*. The participants are children of Dominican and Puerto Rican origin but are also from Guatemala, Colombia, Honduras, Bolivia and Costa Rica. The explicit purpose of the program is to introduce children to their own cultural 'roots' by learning the dances of many different countries. The children learn Brazilian samba, Colombian salsa, Dominican maypole dances (see Figure 6-1), and a variety of others. *Viva la cultura* is another cultural program for Spanish-speaking

adolescents living in urban U.S. neighbourhoods with little opportunity to experience their parents' homeland firsthand. As part of a non-profit organization, the program is segregated by sex and holds a social meeting every weekend with a theme from a different Spanish speaking country with the purpose of educating members about the diversity of Latinos.

Similar to the racial identity of 'black', a national identity as 'Dominican' equalizes to some extent Banilejos and Montecruzeños in the U.S. divided by racial hierarchies at home in the Dominican Republic. Light-skinned Dominicans resist being labelled as 'black', but many embrace a national identity as 'Dominican'. This national solidarity is promoted by the Dominican nation state, which has an economic interest in maintaining homeland connections. Dominican media refer to those abroad as *criollos*, a word that was originally used in colonial times to distinguish the powerful Spanish emissaries temporarily living in Santo Domingo (*criollos*) from Spaniards permanently settled in the colony (*Dominicanos*). The term *criollos* is now used consistently to refer to baseball players or migrants in the U.S. The Dominican nation state offers dual citizenship to emigrants and relies upon migrant votes in New York City and Boston, and uses rhetoric of common birthplace in an attempt to establish loyalty and keep investments in the home country flowing. The idea of a united Dominican identity prevailing over internal class divisions is common in popular music, exemplified in the Milly Quezada's lyrics, 'Rich or poor, the land that saw your birth loves you equally':

| | |
|---|---|
| Querido emigrante, tu patria esperará.<br>Allá en el extranjero eres distincto<br>a los demás, pero tu hogar verdadero<br>triste tu nombre siempre llamará. | Dear emigrant, your homeland will wait.<br>In a foreign land you are different<br>from the rest, but your true home<br>will always call your name sadly. |
| Rico o pobre te quiere iqual la tierra<br>que a ti te vio nacer. | Rich or poor, the land<br>that saw your birth loves you equally. |

Figure 6-1. Children from Jamaica Plain's *La Piñata* dancing a Dominican maypole dance at Northeastern University, November 2002.



The spectrum of identifications encountered abroad have an effect on the relationships that migrants form and carry with them back home to the Dominican Republic. Héctor, a return migrant in Monte Cruz, spoke of fight he had been involved in while at a bar one night in Jamaica Plain, revealing the importance of national identity.

> The Puerto Ricans hate us because we always steal their women! Even though they always marry our women. . . I try to stay out of it, but I have to back up my own if they get in a fight with a Puerto Rican, and they are the same. I was at a bar one night and this Puerto Rican jumped one of my friends. In a second every Dominican in the place had jumped up and started fighting against the Puerto Ricans, who had done the same.
>
> Héctor, Monte Cruz

Héctor was originally from Monte Cruz and spent two years living in Boston. He entered the U.S. with a fake identification over the Mexican border and lived with his aunt for several months before moving in with friends from Monte Cruz. With experience as a baseball coach in Monte Cruz, he found an under-the-table job working on a grounds crew at Fenway Stadium, where he met many other Dominicans from Baní and throughout his home province of Peravia. They all had very different situations; some were undocumented and sending money home to support family; others were there legally with minor league baseball contracts. Under the stressful inner-

city environment of crime and low incomes, Héctor formed strong loyalties to these friends. 'They are my *paísanos* (compatriots) and they'll be there for me if I have a problem', he said, indicating how his friends offered protection and had a common background of being from the same country. Their friendships were significant in themselves, as this group would not have mixed at home. Héctor was *moreno* and from a poor single-parent family of seven that lived with and married Haitian squatters in the riverbed outside Baní. Some of his friends in Boston, on the other hand, were from privileged light-skinned Banilejo families who would not under normal circumstances even enter Héctor's neighbourhood. One friend was from an elite, well-educated family in Baní and was trained as a doctor, but thought he could earn more in the U.S. Through relatives living in New York City, he had managed to acquire a visa and had flown to the U.S. Yet even more significant was the authority that Héctor held in this group: because Héctor had worked at Fenway Stadium longer, he was in charge of the grounds crew and earned more. His experience living in Boston had established him as a street savvy *tigre*, and the men looked up to him with respect. Héctor had even arranged for several of the men to get hired.

When Héctor and his friends all eventually returned home, their relationships endured. They continued to hang out together, introducing each other to their families and inviting each other to 'eat goat' on Sundays, a traditional all-day social event involving a large meal among friends and family. Héctor and some of these friends eventually started a baseball training school for young men in a nearby *campo*, turning their friendship into a business partnership. Héctor's experiences are emblematic of other migrants who have formed partnerships, friendships, marriages and other relationships with people of different 'racial' and socio-economic status. These relationships break rules of Dominican society that place lighter-skinned individuals in positions of power and implicitly restrict marriages and partnerships between 'light' elites and 'dark' poor.

*Baseball*

The richest and most respected individuals in Baní are U.S. major league baseball stars, who spend off-seasons in their mansions in Baní. As the most successful members of their home

communities, the handful of these baseball players are, notably, *moreno*, *prieto* (black) and from rural *campos* such as Monte Cruz, rather than from light-skinned wealthy families. Even the most famous baseball players move back home, building expensive houses and investing in businesses and development. They also employ friends and family during the baseball season in the U.S. Miguel Tejada, the Baltimore Oriole's new $72 million shortstop and the American League's Most Valuable Player, came from a poor family in Los Barrancones, north of Baní. In an interview published in the *Baltimore Sun*, he said:

> I want to stay in Bani because I'm close to my family, and my wife is close to her family. Bani is a town where everybody loves me, and it's a small town, and that's where I want to be. I don't want to be in a big city like New York. I don't want to be in that situation. Bani, that's where I want to live my whole life (Christensen 2004).

Other major league players from poor backgrounds in the Baní area include Manny Aybar, who plays shortstop for the Giants and Twins and Cristian Guzman of the St. Louis Cardinals. In an interview, Guzman also expressed his loyalty to his hometown, 'I will always live here, I love this place' (Ibid.: 2003). More than twenty major league players are from the Baní area[66].

Baseball players in Baní are well dressed, wearing designer clothes, sunglasses and diamond jewellery. The superstar status of major league players is constantly on display: kids wear jerseys bearing the names of Pedro Martinez, Miguel Tejada and Cristian Guzman. In off-season Aybar can be seen driving around Baní in his Lincoln Navigator. For all this conspicuous display of material possessions, players like Tejada have made investments in the community that spare him from the disparaging status of a *nuevo rico*. After moving back to Baní, a statement of homeland solidarity in itself, he pressured President Mendez to pave the roads in the neighbourhood, gave more than $1 million to upgrade the baseball practice field, is building a shopping complex outside town, and invested in an Esso station that his father now runs in Baní (Souhan 2003).

Tejada's actions have gained him the respect in all areas of society, even the most elite, who invite him and other well-known baseball players to social functions and state events. Importantly, this respect is not limited to superstars; the twenty-five or more players from the

province who get a contract with a major or minor league team each year are revered in their home communities and in Baní, where Banilejos claim these players as their own. Younger players (also from peripheral *campos* like Monte Cruz or more urban neighbourhoods sprawling out from the town), who have just signed on to contracts for minor league U.S. or Canadian teams are very visible in Baní. They stroll through the main streets of Baní or cruise down the *avenidas*, music blaring in new SUV jeeps bought with sign-on bonuses. Women find players given contracts in minor and major leagues—as well as any man who is successful in earning an income abroad—very desirable. Regardless of social class, Dominican society places a high value on a partner with financial security. Are women paying less attention to background and skin colour when choosing their partners? The following male informant observed, 'Baseball players get all the women. Even if they are *moreno* they can marry who they want. They date *rubias* all the time now'. In a region of racial segregation where up until the 1960's a *rubia* (light-skinned woman) was ostracized for dancing with a *moreno*, people have noticed the ability of baseball players to cross racial barriers of marriage.

While superstars like Tejada and Aybar are anomalies, their accomplishments cast the enterprise of training for baseball in a very positive and respected light. For the substantial number of *morenos* from underclass *campos* in the province of Peravia who do make it to the minor leagues—a significant accomplishment in terms of financial gain—they gain significant latitude in Banilejo society. Even though baseball has not wiped out prejudices towards *morenos* as a racial *group*, entering major or minor leagues gives a migrant resources, a legal ticket to the U.S., and the potential for respect on an *individual* basis.

*Social Venues*

Where people socialize also reflects changing ideas of race and class. In the nearby town of Paya, there were social hangouts in geographically separate areas for the 'African' *morenos* and the Spanish *rubios*, and as recently as the 1960s, *morenos* were ostracized for dancing with *rubias*. Now Montecruzeños with more money (migrants and their families) socialize in

nightclubs in the town of Baní, which traditionally were exclusive social centres of wealthier (and predominately lighter-skinned) young people. These clubs play a wider variety of international music from European techno to Latin pop, instead of the almost exclusive *bachata* featured at *colmados*. At the same time townspeople in Baní have started to come out to Monte Cruz to dance at the *colmado*. One young Banileja who was visiting the Monte Cruz *colmado* one evening gave her reasons for coming: 'It's very rustic out here. We don't have *colmados* this big in town; they are good for dancing. And it's good to get a change of pace and see new people'.

There are other indicators of racial integration brought about by migration. Elite social clubs of Baní such as the *Comité de Peravia*, located in one of the older colonial buildings of the town, used to admit only 'whites'[67] but now admit anyone who has made significant investments in the town and clearly has wealth, and these people are increasingly *moreno* migrants. In terms of internal migration, Baní, a town that was once highly segregated by 'race' and Spanish/African origin, is now more diverse because of migration from rural areas to the centre in the past few decades, as the first section demonstrated. With greater purchasing power, return migrants originally from communities like Monte Cruz buy colonial buildings and homes once occupied by the lighter-skinned upper classes. Many people of all skin colours, aided by migrant remittances, have established businesses or moved to work in the industrial free trade zone south of town. Others have moved from the countryside to be closer to the capital, and the highway between Baní and Santo Domingo is filling in with houses and settlements. The town of Baní has grown, so that peripheral areas like Monte Cruz that were once separated from town by undeveloped land are now connected by sprawling neighbourhood developments.

*The persistence of prejudice*

While racial attitudes show some indication of change, strong race-based prejudices persist in the province of Peravia. Dominican *morenos* may find that migration provides more opportunities to gain respect in their home community, but their own attitudes towards Haitians continue to 'other' blackness. Many Montecruzeños and other dark-skinned Dominicans resemble Haitians and may even have a parent from Haiti; nevertheless, the 'Haitian' still has the least-

respected presence in Monte Cruz and in Baní. Anti-Haitian sentiment has persisted in the most recent two-year economic crisis, in which Haitians have sought refuge and work in the Dominican Republic and are seen by the mainstream Dominican populace as taking jobs away from the unskilled Dominican poor. In the province of Peravia, Haitians live in *bateyes*—sugar cane plantations—in remote locations apart from the towns. A settlement of extremely poor Dominicans and Haitians resides in cardboard shacks built in the riverbed between Monte Cruz and Baní during the dry season. They find work on the various *conucos* (agricultural plots) on the outskirts of town owned by Banilejos and Montecruzeños. The 2003 conflict over the removal of Aristide in Haiti has also brought unwelcome refugees across the border. Many Montecruzeños are careful to distinguish themselves from Haitians, and use race to do so. While Montecruzeños are *moreno*, Haitians are *prieto*—the blackest.

Even if official discourses have not yet completely shifted and prejudice towards Haitians persists, racial hierarchies still become more ambiguous as increasing numbers of *morenos* become elites. Migration has given *morenos* the latitude that they would not have had otherwise because of their race and socio-economic background.

*Tigueraje*

A goal of this chapter has been to demonstrate how the erosion of social hierarchies gives migrants a very ambiguous status in society. This ambiguity can best be illustrated in the emic concept of *tigueraje* mentioned earlier, which has a number of meanings and is used ambivalently by Dominicans. While the term *tigre* has been discussed in terms of its negative connotations, *tigres* are also respected, even though they are not *buena gente*. Montecruzeño men and women aspire to attain *tigueraje*, the quality of being a *tigre*. A *tigre* can refer to a person who is intelligent and knowledgeable. For example, when someone makes a witty and perhaps disparaging comment or joke, they are called a *tigre*. Streetwise people are also *tigres* and are respected for their fearlessness, savvy, and adaptability to a new place. In Derby's quote in the opening paragraph, stating, 'The *tigre* is a charmer who talks his way into places he doesn't belong . . . .', she is referring to elite spaces; the *tigre* is particularly adept in entering these places,

taking advantage of them, and becoming comfortable in them, charming everyone into a grudging acceptance of his charisma and social skills. Montecruzeño men cultivate personal *tigueraje*. *Tigueraje* is necessary in courting women, who value wit, flattery and musical skills. Men who can dance bachata well, sing the popular *bachatas* and play the guitar are considered especially attractive.

On the other hand, *tigre* can mean 'criminal', illustrating the ambiguity in the word. Often being savvy and surviving in the urban U.S. context means being a criminal:

> Dominicans live *tigueraje*. It means you know what's going on. It is the latest word for "cool"; it's like a tough guy, like how the word "bad" used to mean. *Un tigre* listens to bachata, which isn't high society. It's a guy from a poor place who has survived anyway in the city.
>
> Nelsón, 27 Jamaica Plain

*Tigueraje* is also necessary for migrating through particularly difficult means, and the process of migration, the connections made and skills attained increase an individual's *tigueraje*. To many Banilejos, Monte Cruz is commonly known as the '*campo de los tigres*' because of the strategies people employ to migrate. Women can have *tigueraje*—especially if they migrate or engage in extra-legal activities—but to a lesser degree.

When former president Hipólitio Mendez was filmed publicly dancing the bachata in 2002, there was a huge reaction from Dominicans at home and abroad. In Jamaica Plain, people talked about the event for weeks. Jason, a thirty-year-old self-employed Banilejo, felt that Hipólito was asserting his *tigueraje*, exclaiming, 'Can you believe Hipólito did that? What a *tigre*!' This act not only put *bachata* in the public eye, it was also a strategic way to identify with migrant constituents as someone sympathetic to the hip tastes of *tigres*.

*Tigueraje* in its most feared (but also very hip) sense is also the defining quality of the popular music of *reggaeton*, which flaunts a criminal drug culture. While the genre is usually associated with Puerto Rico, *reggaeton* is extremely popular in the Dominican Republic. The *reggaeton* group Tego Calderón is one of the most frequently listened to in Monte Cruz and Baní and in Boston, even though sexually explicit and violent lyrics in his songs were censored and his

concerts suspended in the Dominican Republic on allegations that they promoted drug use. In terms of 'official' nation state discourses, the censorship of this music illustrates a rejection of *tigueraje* in its illegal sense, yet the former president literally and figuratively embraced the bachata—another music of *tigres*. *Tigres* are both feared and respected, and like the *misterios* of Vodú, power is generated from marginality.

*When breaking the rules becomes the norm*

The normalization of *tigueraje* in migrants' attempts to earn a living in Boston has transformed ideas about 'work' and 'legality' in Banilejo society. Activities once considered shameful or morally deviant—i.e. marginal—are increasingly considered to be legitimate ways to earn an income for one's family. For all the risk and negativity associated with the drug industry, it remains a tempting way to earn money quickly. The flood of money that results from the sale of drugs in Boston, used to improve neighbourhoods, rebuild infrastructures at home, and provide food and medicines for family members, continues to appear a reason to run the risks of migrant life that often include illegal activities. While political rhetoric condemns illicit activities abroad because of their negative effects on society at home, the undercurrent of awe and sometimes respect towards those who have improved their financial situations by living abroad is strong in conversations of adolescents, gossip of women and the changing perceptions of 'legality' in the U.S..

Dominican migration illustrates how notions of 'legality' are informed by sending and receiving contexts. As Frank Pieke demonstrates in his research on Fujianese migrants from China, 'legality or illegality is also influenced by the locality that the migrant sets out from and by the immigration regimes of destination countries. . . .' (2004:2). Migrants' many methods employed in strategies for success, which often involve subverting the authority that would have prevented them from migrating in the first place, are seen as necessary and to a certain degree, harmless. 'Since times are hard and possibilities are few, one has to take advantage of the legal and not-so-legal opportunities that present themselves', Levitt wrote in describing Banilejos' very malleable sense of legality (2001a:117). There are many laws in the United States that are viewed

as harsh in the Dominican Republic, including the U.S. drinking age at 21, closed container laws, and corporal punishment viewed as child abuse. Even migration laws are often seen as arbitrary and subject to political whims and powerful lobbies. Heavily televised cases of alleged police brutality towards minorities in the United States contribute to resentment of the law enforcement authorities.

Even in the U.S., definitions of 'crime' change and may appear arbitrary at times. The 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act made it possible for an immigrant to be deported if sentenced to more than 365 days of jail, stating that 'an alien convicted of an aggravated felony shall be conclusively presumed to be deportable from the United States'. The bill added new offenses to the category of 'aggravated felony', so that now possessing an ounce of cocaine is an 'aggravated felony' resulting in a five, ten, fifteen or even twenty-year sentence in U.S. prisons. Since this bill was introduced, 20,000 formerly legal residents of the US have been deported to the Dominican Republic in the past ten years (Brotherton 2003). Migrants regard punishment as unnecessarily harsh:

> What did I do? I sold prescription drugs, I think it was morphine, to an undercover. For that I got seven years and deported to a country I hadn't been to in 20 years. All my family's over there.
>
> Javier, deportee, Santo Domingo (Ibid)

'Breaking rules' that are often perceived as too strict or unfair in the first place is easy to excuse for people attempting to make gains from migrating. These perspectives, added to a baseline distrust of laws in the Dominican Republic that rarely help the poorest (Levitt 2001a: 114), create an environment in which the migrant feels little remorse for minor 'bendings' of rules and infractions in his country or in the United States.

This attitude extends to the selling of drugs. While many informants in Monte Cruz and Boston expressed anger and unhappiness that so many of their compatriots are involved in the drug industry, others hold the opinion that selling drugs is 'okay as long as you don't sell to your own and you don't use them yourself'. 'They legitimize selling drugs by saying that American police is out to get them, that they are bad. People justify it by saying they are only trying to do

something to help their people', commented Ronny, a 25 year-old return migrant in Monte Cruz. A study by the Partnership Attitude Tracking study found that in 2000, 24% of a sample group of Hispanic teens interviewed throughout the United States agreed that 'it's ok to sell drugs to make money' (2001). This study does not address Dominican groups specifically but it gives some idea of attitudes among Latino youth. In informal conversations with Dominican American teenagers in Jamaica Plain, it became evident that marijuana, cocaine and heroin dealing was commonplace in schools. Many kids were de-sensitized to their presence. Some felt that if you could get away with it, it was a good way to make money, according to 16-year-old informant José, the son of Dominican-born parents from a campo outside Baní. 'There's drugs all over this place [English High School] . . . . Everyone sells this junk. It's not that big a deal but you got to stay off that stuff or you get sloppy . . . . The cops will catch up to you if you're not careful'.

Another common justification among migrant discourses is that poverty drives people to desperate measures. In Aventura's bachata entitled *Amor de Madre* (for lyrics, see Chapter 4), the single mother must prostitute herself to support her son. She is excused, even portrayed as saintly in the song, which goes, 'Sometimes we make mistakes and this poor woman had no other choice'. In the movie 'Nueba Yol, A funny way of saying New York', the protagonist is a Dominican migrant who arrives in New York and rents a room from a Cuban woman who was forced into prostitution fifty years earlier when she moved to the U.S., a hard life that had driven her to alcoholism. The irony is that it was prostitution that allowed her to support her family from abroad for so many years. Although she says 'No tengo cara para enfrentar mi familia' (I can't face my family), the movie is sympathetic to her moral sacrifice.

How do home communities view the means by which they receive remittances, which may be acquired through dubious means? To some extent, migrants thousands of miles away can effectively conceal how they acquire the money remitted to families in the Dominican Republic. They can even conceal a period of time in prison, since people are often 'captive' for years in the United States anyway, unable to leave and re-enter without a visa. Again, global communication channels are manipulated to mislead others about life abroad. On the receiving end of remittances, people often have inaccurate perspectives about the ease of making money in the United States

due to the pains migrants take in appearing well off when they return. As previously demonstrated, this not only places a strain on migrants, who find themselves supporting extended family members who believe they have bottomless pockets, but feeds illusions of remittance origins. In one instance, this ignorance of illicit activities led to the outrage of the family of six men arrested in the airport leaving the Dominican Republic for the United States with several pounds of cocaine on them. In Monte Cruz, family members talked of the Colombians who had 'tricked' these unfortunate men into believing their package was harmless:

> They arrested two of my brothers and a cousin this morning and some other guys at the airport. They said they found two pounds of cocaine on them! It's wrong, it's just wrong. Those guys were innocent and now they are going to jail. They had no idea what was in that bag. They thought they were doing a favour for friends. That's why you have to be so careful with Colombians.
>
> Edis, return migrant

Denial and ignorance only go so far when so many people are arrested, however. Some 'look the other way' or even accept that the end justifies the means of their income, as long as the migrant does not abuse drugs (considered much worse than selling drugs). As one informant put it, 'The families tolerate it [selling drugs] because they think that their sons are not taking the drugs'. Rates of drug addiction, incidentally, are low in the Dominican population compared with Puerto Rican and Cuban migrants in Jamaica Plain (see Chapter Three). The practice of 'looking the other way' prevails when the outcome of illegal activity increases the quality of life for families, enabling the purchase of nice houses and SUVs but also better medical care, indoor plumbing, and meat at meals. Writing about the drug trade, Levitt commented:

> This against-the-law stance is buoyed by the small but highly visible number of Dominicans who succeed at the drug trade. Since these 'Dominican Horatio Algiers leave the island poor and return rich, their example sends a clear message to other Dominicans that exploiting the system is a smart way to get ahead (2001: 121).

*Deportees*

The social acceptance of deported *tigres* in Monte Cruz suggests that attitudes are changing in Monte Cruz and Baní about how people make money abroad. Official discourses and Banilejo elites may criticize criminal behaviour and deportation, but in practice, these individuals are treated with respect mixed with fear in Baní. In Monte Cruz, on the other hand, *tigres* are

welcomed home by the community and treated with warmth after their 'ordeal' in prison. This more positive perception is a change from a decade ago when deported migrants were shunned in Monte Cruz and many moved to different neighbourhoods:

> Before, if a kid in school was teased about the fact that his dad or family was involved in drugs, he would be ashamed. Now, that is changing. People don't care as much any more, they tolerate it. The fiestas are all about drugs, now. The majority of men who go to Boston get involved in drugs and crime. They are offered the opportunity to make more money than they have ever seen, and that is hard to resist. They want to help their families.
>
> Yason, return migrant, Monte Cruz

Because migrant occupational networks are kin-based, families and neighbours are arrested together and serve time together. When someone is released and deported, he brings news home to the community of neighbours and family members still serving time. One 47-year-old informant arrived in Monte Cruz one day after having served five years in federal prison in Massachusetts. One of the first things he did upon return was visit the family of a friend he had left behind in prison, telling the three teenager children (who had not seen their parents in ten years):

> Wow, you kids were just babies when I last saw you. Your father is doing well. We served together in the same unit and we did a lot together. He's really *gordo* now, strong. He wanted me to bring this to you (shows a letter) and tell you all how much he misses you and loves you. They say it's not long now. You never know, sometimes people get out earlier.

Among young people, it is very evident that older brothers, fathers and uncles abroad are role models, even if they have been convicted of selling drugs. In Monte Cruz, overheard conversations of boys sitting under acacia trees elaborate on various methods such as wire-tapping by which family members' operations were busted by the police. There is always news of recent 'events' in Boston, such as the latest arrest, shooting, or fight, to feed the conversation of teenage boys who talk about friends and family who have gone abroad, how they got there, and how they want to follow them. These narratives illustrate how the means through which a migrant helps his or her family are excused provided that the end result is favourable.

*Religion and morality*

From observance of religious activities, we can see that the community is clearly preoccupied with drug activities abroad, as Yason's statement demonstrated. To re-emphasize the points of chapter four, fiestas are increasingly publicized, enabling the whole community of Monte Cruz to participate in rituals explicitly meant to interfere with a Boston judge's sentencing of a family member, or to 'sacar del carcel' (liberate someone from jail). The growing popularity of certain *santos* like the *Virgen de las Mercedes,* who has the power to 'rompe cadenas' (break chains), illustrates the community's desire to help family abroad and themselves. *Botánicas*, part of a growing industry now, commercialize magical solutions, incense and *baños* (bath powders) for release from jail on the internet. They sell a high percentage of paraphernalia dealing with *La Virgen de las Mercedes*, *San Miguel*, and other *misterios* who aid in releasing clients from jail. The fact that a large part of these ritual activities was once highly secretive but is now open to the public indicates a decreasing self-consciousness and sense of stigma. There are more *botánicas* in Baní now, a dozen or more compared to the three that existed ten years ago. Rather than conduct business through word of mouth only, they advertise their services with prominent displays and signs blocks away from the town's Catholic Church in the central park. *Botánicas* increasingly appear in upper class neighbourhoods. Additionally, the town council (the *ayuntamiento*) of Baní has started sponsoring public performances of palo dancing and music which take place in the plaza in front of Baní's oldest and largest Catholic Church. The events are performed by school children and called 'folklore' (*folklorico*) demonstrations. This visibility, which can be attributed in part to commercial motivation, further normalizes the presence of marginalized cultural products in mainstream spaces.

*Negativity and anti-migrant discourses*

With the normalization of *tigueraje* comes a number of anti-migrant discourses that address the visibility of marginalized groups and reflect an objection to the advancements of migrants who pose a significant threat to the status quo. Although violence and crime are part of a complex cycle linked to poverty, substance abuse and a vulnerability to U.S. and world market fluctuations, some feel that these problems are just one manifestation of a general 'breakdown of

social solidarity' caused by migrant life. There exists an opinion that living in the U.S. corrupts traditional Banilejo values of hard work and respect toward family and elders. These perspectives usually represent the more conservative perspectives of white-collar townspeople and are rarely heard from young people, migrants, or families who have profited from migrant remittances, although the Chigua murders mentioned in Chapter three caused popular outrage and fed *tigueraje's* most negative stereotypes.

Public figures in Baní identify the problems that migrants bring to home communities. In an interview with Mariano Made Ramirez, the regional director of the National Police (an appointed office that controls police activity in Baní and surrounding towns of Haina, Ocoa, Villa Altagracia, and San Cristobal), he attributed the increase in violence in Baní to the economy and to 'delinquents deported here in the last twenty years who cause a great social breakdown in moral education'. The stigma towards deportees hinders their ability to get a good job, making it difficult to stop engaging in illicit activities as a way of income. Javier, a deportee from Santo Domingo stressed his frustration with his situation. 'I'd like to get a better job but you need a *nota de buena conducta* (good conduct letter). If you're a deportee it's stamped all over it so as soon as the employer sees that, it's all over' (Brotherton 2003).

Dominican journalists also write of 'social breakdown' in Banilejo society that is linked to migration and crime:

> The young people today—the children of the first generation who migrated in the 80's—are growing up without values and traditions. These are the reasons we have crime and violence; it's the loss of values, of the value of hard work. Now everyone just wants to get rich fast. People are exhibitionists now with their clothes, their gold necklaces and their cell phones. The number of violent crimes this year is double that of this time last year.
>
> Fausto Soto, journalist, *El Peraviano*

Domestic violence in particular has been linked to the behaviour of return migrants. Although fidelity is the pursued ideal for many partners, it is not common in Dominican society, and the 'other life' of migrants in a different country makes multiple partnerships not only common but often expected, especially since marriage to a US citizen is one strategy for obtaining a visa. In Monte Cruz it is common for young women to have a child or children of a man currently living

abroad. Often their partners are also married to and have children with women living in the United States. Viviana Lara, director of the province's domestic abuse prevention program located in Baní, spoke of cases of domestic abuse she deals with every week:

> Two different situations are typical for the man who has left the Dominican Republic specifically for countries like the United States, Boston and New York: while he is in the United States, he may not assault women because he knows that there the laws are powerful and he knows that it only takes one telephone call for the police to arrive. This man is not abusive towards women in the foreign country. But when he comes to the Dominican Republic, he doesn't come back with the economic situation that he had before; he comes with a different and better economic situation. He arrives with the attitude that he has been abroad and feels he has the right to mistreat, discriminate against, insult, and physically and psychologically abuse women. Men who come back from over there feel like they are great and powerful. However it's not just the wife who has received physical violence but also those minors who receive physical abuse. They seduce minors 13, 14, and 15 years old. We have had many cases of young girls age 13, 14, 15 and 16 who live with a Dominican York, as they call them—those who come from the US, most often without papers, and illegal—they impress them with their cars and their houses, and afterwards hit them. We have had many cases of this.

Lara estimates that in the last year and a half, thirty to forty percent of an estimated fifteen weekly cases of domestic violence involve a return migrant abusing an adolescent young woman. She emphasizes that these are cases reported; there are many unreported incidents.

Migrant behaviour is perceived as a threat and danger by some for other reasons. Exhibitionism that encourages reckless driving, paired with the tradition of inviting old friends to the *colmado* for Presidente beers (a common activity of a return migrant), results in a high incidence of fatal accidents due to impaired driving, one of the major factors involved in the three-week period of violence and death in the community:

> When migrants return, they are viewed as the top-dogs. They are turned into a type of hero, with an attitude that they are the bosses in town. They don't take nothing from no-one and are used to a rough lifestyle. They bring all this here, driving really fast up and down the streets to show off their cars, sound systems, and women, often consuming drugs or alcohol. All of this contributes to the increase in car accidents. They know that they can buy their liberty—they can get the right lawyers and influence politicians because of their status and money.
>
> José, journalist *Listín Diario*

*Literature*

The loss of morality is a theme in the literature of Dominican migrant writers such as Julia Alvarez, whose novel *How the Garcia girls lost their accents* tells the story of sisters sent back to Santo Domingo over the summer so they would learn proper Dominican values and unlearn their disrespectful American habits. Dominican films also reflect a preoccupation with learning 'proper Dominican values' and the corrupting quality of the U.S. The 1994 film called 'Nueba Yol, A Funny Way of saying New York' presents a number of stereotyped characters in highly propaganda-ed story about the dangers of migration (Cigua films). The characters fall into a number of set 'types'. The main character, Balbuena, is a happy-go-lucky guy whose wife has just died, leaving him conveniently free to try out his fortune in the U.S. He is ecstatic about finally starting the journey that he has always dreamed of, to 'Nueba Yol', the place his friend promises him is like heaven, with money flying around the streets, a place where one can make five thousand dollars in a week. As a very 'green' migrant, he falls prey to a number of unsavoury characters along the way. His best friend becomes a junkie and is shot and killed in New York. Balbuena, on the other hand, is the model of moral behaviour and stays out of drugs and crime despite many hardships. He is contrasted with the many other 'types': the homosexual and 'crooked' document forger, the Cuban prostitute driven to a life of crime to support her family back home, and the beautiful young Dominican woman betrayed by an American man.

It must be emphasized that these negative discourses on migration represent the perspectives of a privileged minority of the population and not the perspectives of most Montecruzeños or even Banilejos, who generally regard migration as a more positive than negative phenomenon. When these perspectives do emerge, however, it is in the popularly inaccessible form of print, such as in a book, film or a newspaper article. These discourses are faint because of the importance of migrant transnational activities for the country's economy, but they do exist and attribute social ills and the corruption of values to migration. More commonly in informal situations among Montecruzeños and Banilejos, people comment on how remittances and investment—money that originates in a variety of legal and illegal activities—have improved services by installing medical clinics, opening businesses, repairing and improving homes and

sanitation and increasing access to electricity. The same exhibitionism that some find offensive only encourages others, who see cars and expensive clothes as the trappings of a better life offered by migration. The inclusion of these anti-migration perspectives in this chapter is more important for illustrating how the latitude that migration enables is normalizing to the extent that some elites are threatened. Their criticism points to the growing integration of marginal groups like Montecruzeños into mainstream society, physically and culturally.

More recent literature has presented perspectives on morality and living in the U.S. more sympathetic to the migrant. *Raising Victor Vargas* (2002) is a quasi-documentary that uses a real-life Dominican family as actors in their neighbourhood of Washington Heights, New York. The story tells the struggle of a Dominican grandmother raising her three grandchildren in New York City. She is strict with them and even throws out the 16-year-old because he continually breaks the rules. Yet the movie is ultimately sympathetic to the children, illustrating how the demands of the grandmother—and by extension all migrant parents—may not always be reasonable in her expectations of the second generation. The characters in the short stories of Dominican migrant writer Junot Diaz feature Dominican American kids sent back to the 'homeland' for a moral education from their grandparents or extended family; however, Diaz' characters tend to get into even more trouble when they go to the island. He is realistic about the problems that Dominicans face in their home country and does not try to idealize the homeland as Muñiz does in *Nueba Yol*. These perspectives are more forgiving towards the moral compromises that migrants make to survive in the U.S.

Migrants and stereotypes of *tigres* are thus viewed in ambiguous ways, which is the result of their abilities to shift latitudes and erode social hierarchies that have traditionally been determined by economic resources, skin colour, and religion. Reflecting the fact that these latitude shifts are part of the same transnational process, resources give migrants latitude to shift levels in home society and opportunities to move abroad, changing latitudes in a different sense. Rebecca Golbert finds a similar situation occurring among Ukrainian Jewish youth: 'Embedded in a complex institutional and interpersonal web of cross-border relationships and networks, the Ukrainian Jewish youth community is fluid and mobile. Young people are leaving Ukraine all the

time; they are weighing possible choices from all sides' (2001:719). Montecruzeño migration strengthens and multiplies the strands of transnational networks, opening up possibilities for new migrants. As often as remittances are used to move within the home country, they enable a family member to join his people in the U.S.

The stories of Morena and Niña gave some idea of the range of ways in which migrants have the potential to move through social hierarchies. In Morena's case, she denounced Vodú and adopted upper-class tastes such as manicures, lasagna and housecleaners. Niña, on the other hand, retained her 'marginal' tastes even though she was well-off financially and moved out of the neighbourhood. Niña's situation was much more common; when Montecruzeños acquire resources, they invest in businesses rather than education, a practice of the historical elite upper classes. They embellish their altars rather than deserting them, and they continue to consume cultural products like *bachata* that have always been marginal. Money earned is spent on conspicuous items such as clothes, cars and house renovations. Just as significant as a shift in latitude—Morena's intention—is the choice to stay within one's group. For Niña, maintaining a connection with Vodú allowed her to safeguard the economic advances that migration had achieved and was made possible by the *misterios*. For the *tigre*, success and respect comes from skill in living on the margins. To be successful making money, the *tigre* enforces his marginality by engaging in illegal strategies.

In these cases, identifying with marginality maintains religious potency and a sort of 'street credit'. Instead of embracing middle class tastes, many migrants continue to live in Monte Cruz and identify with *los pobres* long after they have achieved economic equality with upper classes and have moved to wealthy neighbourhoods. In this way it can be unclear which social level Montecruzeños belong to or identify with. Bourgois' study of Harlem crack dealers demonstrates how Puerto Ricans with social capital and a high income stay in the *barrio* when they could financially afford to move out. The respect they are 'in search of' is sought from their own people, not from the rest of society (1995). Ironically, by working for themselves and maximizing their profits they are living the middle class capitalist American dream. Similarly,

the informants in Hannerz' study of impoverished Washington, DC, ghetto culture argues that moving out of the ghetto would be to 'sell out' to white middle class society (1969).

*Conclusions*

This chapter has reviewed the social transformations that transnational migrant activities have contributed to in the inter-related hierarchies of economic status, perceptions of race, and morality in Monte Cruz, Baní, and Jamaica Plain. While Montecruzeño migrants are sometimes labelled as *nuevo ricos* and *tigres* by upper classes in Baní when they engage in ostentatious behaviour and continue to practice Vodú, at the same time, migration has given Montecruzeños more opportunities—or the latitude—for gaining respect. By developing their own community with migrant remittances and by moving to new locations, they lose marginality in an economic sense. When they invest in the community and work or live in Baní, they are able to gain the respect of their new neighbours and business partners. As we have seen, migrants can both obscure and elucidate the content of their life abroad through global technologies and through the acquisition of material resources. With the latitude gained from migration, *campesinos* can move or set up businesses in new neighbourhoods and occupy space once belonging to people of light skin colour and Catholic religion. They can also embark upon the challenging journey of moving to the U.S. to reunite with family. When migrants perpetuate the illusion of wealth with ostentatious behaviour, they assert their latitude, even if wealth is only temporary. Visibility plays a key role in economic latitude; the display of material resources indicates that one has connections and resources, and gains them the recognition of neighbours.

The two very different trajectories of Niña, who left Monte Cruz but maintained a religious identity associated with being poor and rural, and Morena, who stayed in Monte Cruz but changed her behaviour to accommodate more 'middle class' tastes, represent the diversity of ways that migrants resettle, as well as the response to their actions by the rest of the community. Morena's case, however, is more rare, for the overwhelming majority of Montecruzeños maintain their loyalties to the *misterios* of vodú, since ignoring them will result in the reversal of fortune as

spiritual punishment. While some migrants are perceived as *nuevo ricos* and not considered a part of elite society despite financial gains, many more are respected and admired as *buena gente* for their investments in the community.

When these shifts become commonplace, once-marginalized groups and their social practices are normalized in mainstream society, whereas before, they were hidden, unacknowledged or rejected. Numbers have cumulative effects, and when the presence of an increasingly successful underclass placing themselves and their cultural products in elite spaces in Baní becomes a visible pattern, what was once marginal becomes widely recognized, normalized, and in some cases legitimized. 'Back stage' cultural performances take the front stage: Vodú loses its secrecy, palo and bachata music enter the mainstream, and breaking the rules becomes the norm. The normalization of economic development of home *campos*, changing residences and businesses to the town centre diversifies Baní's population. Visibility and normalization erodes the boundaries of social hierarchies, so that morality, race, occupational strategy and religion in Baní attain an ambiguity previously absent. Class, race, and occupation are no longer as strictly regimented or stratified because of transnational migration, not just modernization alone. Through latitude shifting, migrants contribute to potentially long-lasting social transformation in their home communities. And because this process takes place throughout the transnational social field, the effects of latitude are registered internationally among Dominican migrant communities in Jamaica Plain, Washington Heights, Madrid, and Caracas.

## Conclusion

In Monte Cruz, emigration is seen as the most effective strategy for improving life. The preceding chapters have demonstrated how emigration, though potentially rewarding, is challenging for an impoverished rural community such as Monte Cruz that has historically been marginalized because of the stigma placed on African ancestry. A number of obstacles confront the Montecruzeño migrant, making legal entry to the U.S., settlement and finding an occupation difficult. The strategies that migrants devise to circumvent these obstacles expose them to risk, danger and unpredictablility, from crossing Mexican deserts on foot to selling drugs in Boston to pay off *coyote* debts. Homeland religious practices of Dominican Vodú play a crucial role in dealing with the insecurities and risks of these strategies: ritual is used instrumentally for attaining the resources (passports and visas) and spiritual protection to facilitate voyage, settlement and the occupational hazards of extra-legal activities.

The proliferation of religious practices in the transnational social field has also led to a revitalization and recontextualization of palos, the music that accompanies rituals of Dominican Vodú. Instead of being played in a religious context, however, Montecruzeño musicians have started to perform in popular music venues in Boston and New York. They have also changed the performance context of their music from a live form to a recorded commodity, responding to a new consumer niche of upwardly mobile audiences. These changes in how palo music is consumed have attracted the attention of more mainstream, internationally known musicians, who are starting to incorporate the genre into their own music. In this way palo is becoming more visible to mainstream audiences.

Similar processes are occurring with bachata, a different genre of music popular among practitioners of Vodú and rural poor in the Dominican Republic. Bachata is not only more visible, it has become internationally famous and respected in elite circles. Like the cultural products of religious transactions—music, spiritual paraphernalia and remittances exchanged between client and *servidor*—bachata is created, distributed and performed transnationally on formal and informal levels. Informal kin networks that sponsor and support the new migrant also

serve as the conduits through which ritual and musical materials are sent from the homeland. These networks provide the structures through which bachata performances are organized and carried out in the U.S. They circulate contraband copies, which widely disseminate music and spread popularity. On a more formally organized level of the multi-national music industry, mainstream trend-setting companies like Sony have tapped into the new economic niche created by Dominican migrants in the U.S., while popular music icons such as Kinito Mendez incorporate palos in their music and elevate the genre to new heights. The commoditization of religion and music provides a viable income to those who take advantage of transnational communication technologies such as the internet, mobile phones, and satellite television.

Free of their 'African' stigma in the U.S., migrants' religious and cultural practices proliferate and are adopted by second generations, who have their own perspectives and musical innovations to offer. In this way we see expressive cultural genres continue to be influenced by processes of syncretization that factored importantly in the creation of the music centuries ago.

The increase in resources that has created new consumer niches of migrant groups originally from poor backgrounds has created a number of other changes in home communities of Monte Cruz and Baní. Not only has migration de-stigmatized and shifted the *cultural products* of rural campesinos from margins to mainstream, it has given Montecruzeños the latitude to move through social class hierarchies. The economic advances that have allowed Montecruzeños to mass produce their music and lavishly decorate their altars have also provided them with the means to invest in home community development, afford the material trappings of the elite and move to historically segregated neighbourhoods in Baní. Return migrants enjoy the prestige of having lived in the U.S. and often have the resources to move to upper class neighbourhoods or improve their own community. Even if their increased income causes elites to label them as *nuevo ricos* or *tigres*, Montecruzeño return-migrants have options for gaining the respect of their new economic contemporaries through community investment and migrant connections.

*Social Transformation*

The confluence of these transnational processes of de-stigmatization and social latitude contributes to potentially long-lasting or even permanent social transformation in the home society and throughout the transnational social field. Transformation is an erosive process in which social hierarchies based on class, race, geographical location, and morality are worn down and reshaped by an aggregation of changes in the lives of community members.

The criteria of income, race, and occupation that once constituted social class are becoming more ambiguous. Wealth does not necessarily go along with light skin colour anymore or a 'professional' occupation. In terms of race, migration has created more opportunities for people of dark skin colour. The wealthiest Banilejos are no longer colonial elites but *morenos* from poor backgrounds who have achieved star status as baseball players. While people like Miguel Tejada may be viewed as anomalies, their status has provided inspiration for dozens of young Montecruzeño boys, who seek minor league contracts that provide a salary surpassing that of most elite Banilejos. Racially based marriage customs that have privileged lighter-skinned individuals now favour those with resources and migrant connections. Elite social clubs in Baní increasingly admit darker-skinned individuals, and once-segregated neighbourhoods of Baní diversify as migrants from rural areas move to the city. While racism against Haitians persists, migration has provided opportunities and prestige for many dark-skinned individuals.

Migrant occupations in the underground economy are increasingly tolerated on many levels of Dominican society. Perceptions of morality have shifted so that 'legality' takes on a very flexible definition. The means by which migrants acquire resources abroad are overlooked or rationalized, and desired occupational skills include the urban savvy of the *tigre*, a feared but also respected character type that has taken the place of the traditional hard-working farmer. How migrants make their money abroad is not as important as what they do with resources in respect to their home communities. Morality is also shifting in terms of religious tolerance; while Vodú was shunned by mainstream society for its idol-worshipping 'immorality', today it has been recognized by professionals and elites as part of national heritage and folklore, performed in

public celebrations in Baní's main square and national parades in Boston and New York. As previously stated, contemporary sycretizations occur as sojourning migrants find themselves free of the spaces that once locked them into social hierarchies of class, race, gender, morality, legality, and formal and informal markets. Migrants engage in the active process of reshaping social hierarchies by picking and choosing from values in the U.S. and in the Dominican Republic.

A number of questions remain. *How permanent are these shifts in perceptions of class, race and morality?* While the answer will become clear in time, we are already seeing how these shifts in the perception of marginalized groups have crossed generational (to the English-speaking second generation in the U.S.), national (back to the Dominican Republic and also to migrant communities in Spain), and class (from poor to elite) divides. Not only has the composition of social hierarchies changed, but also what criteria determine positions of privilege and marginality: one's migrant status, not necessarily one's race, determines social position.

*Have Montecruzeños benefited from migration?* DeWind, Levitt and Vertovec posed a similar question regarding transnational migrants:

> Some early writings on transnational migration assumed that transnational lifestyles would imbue migrants with the resources and power they needed to challenge the class, gender and racial hierarchies that had constrained them. A political project was implicit in this orientation, and the questions guiding some of this early work had this bias embedded within them. More recent research and writing calls into question these assumptions and asks a more nuanced set of questions about who transnational migration benefits, under what circumstances, and why? (2004:567)

This thesis directly addresses these questions. First, it has demonstrated how the cultural and social de-stigmatization of Montecruzeños is not an explicit political project but an indirect benefit of transnational migration. Secondly, the nature of migrants' 'advances' does not fit into preformulated categories; Montecruzeño migration is about eroding and reconfiguring hierarchical categories. They do not strictly conform to existing definitions of elite but change definitions to include their own expressive cultural products. A notable example of this change is when migrants move to upper-class neighbourhoods and they continue practicing Vodú instead of

adopting the more orthodox Catholicism of their neighbours. A third point is that Montecruzeños do not always benefit from migration in an economic sense, but may enjoy increased status and prestige in their home community for successfully completing the journey to the U.S. alone. This point illustrates the importance of looking beyond the traditional indicators of status to determine how a community has 'benefitted' from migration. By contrast, we should also weigh the *problems* related to migration: when crime and mistrust pervade a community and wealth leads to blood feuds, have people's lives really improved?

*Will transnational connections remain or dissipate?* Discourses of marginality may also provide an answer to the important question of whether transnational contacts will endure or dissipate. Karsten Paerrregaard found that even though Peruvian migrants strengthened their patron saint brotherhoods in the U.S., Spain, Argentina and Japan, contacts with the mother church in Lima seldom endured. There was little evidence of coordination between brotherhoods in the same receiving country or between different host country contexts. Instead, Paerregaard argued, members used brotherhood memberships to establish themselves in the host society and to differentiate themselves from other minorities rather than pursue enduring homeland ties (2001).

Montecruzeños, on the other hand, have little choice in maintaining their homeland connections, from the perspective of a religion that has built migration into its cosmology. When a migrant loses spiritual connection with the homeland or does not fulfil the *promesa*, s/he is effectively negating the spiritual contract for success abroad. In this way the migrant invites spiritual retribution, which often consists of losing what one has earned by living abroad. In other ways religion reinforces transnational migration: sacred and profane transactions operate through the same communication channels, while a variety of social activities in the migrant context share the same transnational structures. The simultaneous use of religion and migrant communication networks ensures that contacts will remain strong. Religion plays an important role in many other contexts, providing employment for migrants, the motivation to record CDs of music and demand for palo instruments, which bring in revenue for migrant musicians and craftsmen in home communities.

*How permanent is the mainstreaming of bachata music?* Four years into the explosion of bachata in the international Latin music scene, it remains to be seen if the genre is any more than a current fad in an ever-changing industry, even though its popularity has been well established for decades among rural Dominicans. While palo music is appearing in mainstream context, we shall see if other musicians incorporate *palo* drums into their music as Mendez has done, or if Montecruzeño *palo* CDs begin circulating outside practitioners of Vodú.

If Montecruzeños are enabled by the economic mobility of successful migration, why did they not instead shed their 'marginal' tastes, trading Vodú for orthodox Catholicism and bachata for other musics without stigma? While some migrants do choose to adopt a new identity, leaving their rural practices behind in exchange for 'middle class' tastes and de-emphasizing the role of the *misterios*, these migrants are a minority. The key point here is *not* that Montecruzeños shed their social practices in exchange for mainstream tastes and behaviours, but instead that mainstream perceptions of their social practices change. Ironically, migrants themselves—though socio-economically advanced—may continue to reproduce an ethos of marginality in their expressive cultural practices. In a culture of poverty, people behave in certain ways because of constraints and lack of alternatives (Hannerz 1969). Expressive cultural genres formed over decades among people who have lacked choices reflect and are defined by their experiences of poverty and marginalization. Therefore, even though Montecruzeño migrants have expanded their options because of migration, a sense of marginality still forms a core identity of rural *campesino* musics like bachata and palo. While bachata's audiences shed their status of poverty, millionaire *bachateros* still sing of heartbreak and separation, the classic themes of the unfortunate and marginalized. This continuing identification explains *bachatero* Jose Vargas' disappointment in performing his music with the Dominican national symphony; it robbed the music of its meaning even though it was a very prestigious, elite event. Like North American rap and hip hop music, still concerned with themes of its audiences on the margins, there is evidence that bachata may retain an identity as the music consumed by society's most disenfranchized. The fact that gansta rappers in the U.S. have become millionaires does not mean the music genre lost its violent image—a marginalizing discourse in itself.

Practitioners of Vodú also retain a connection to marginalization for more pragmatic reasons, from an emic perspective. There is a fundamental quality of Vodú that prevents migrants from completely abandoning the *misterios:* one's social status is contingent upon loyalty to potent but marginal spirits. A sense of marginality cannot be lost because it is what guarantees the efficacy of Vodú; the black *misterios* are hidden under the altar because they are stigmatized but also because their power must be contained and managed. Similarly, the *tigre* is defined precisely by this marginal, criminal identity—a tough savvy that enables him to overcome the challenges of migration and an urban life of crime by not being afraid to 'break the rules'. Bourgois' crack dealers in Harlem chose a life of crime partly because they could gain respect in their community, whereas working a low-paying, legal job would be embracing the middle class American dream and 'selling out' (1995). An identity as a marginal *tigre because of* but also *despite* mainstream oppression elevates a Montecruzeño's respect within his community, while success and consequent investment in island commerce may earn the acceptance of elite classes.

Seeking to escape marginalization yet continuing to identify with it is one of the many apparent contradictions of transnational migrant populations. How can migrants both identify with a nation state as 'Dominicans' yet emphasize their differences from its hegemonic ideals? Why do communities continue to esteem return migrants even though they bring their unresolved conflicts home to resolve in often lethal ways? Glick Schiller and Levitt do not see these situations as contradictory, 'incompatible or binary opposites', even when migrants assimilate to a host country and maintain transnational ties to the homeland at the same time (forthcoming). Rather, they see these identifications as part of multiple, shifting positions; a 'gauge' to be adjusted to the many different contexts of migrant life. Global channels of communication and media provide migrants with the ability to make so many 'shifts'; through the manipulation of these channels, they present an image of wealth to home communities that sometimes conflicts with the reality. Expressive cultural genres like music and religious practices capture the many strands and conflicts of transnational experience. In this way merengue both praises and disparages the homeland, bachata presents 'middle class' values but also retains a 'marginal' identity, and stigmatized religious symbols of Vodú are hidden under lavishly decorated altars

betraying a wealthy owner. Global media and migrant networks mass disseminate these cultural products to a wide range of social groups in the homeland and the new land.

Migration has transformed world societies for centuries; but with the intensity and extensity of transnational ties facilitated by high-speed global communications technology, these transformations are able to occur in a relatively short time. In the case of Monte Cruz, three decades of transnational migration have contributed to transformations in social hierarchies and ways of achieving status, not only in the diaspora but also in the home society. Even if expressive cultural products enter the mainstream temporarily, they have played a vital role in migrant strategies over the past three decades. Increased tolerance and recognition of once-marginalized cultural practices by elites in the Dominican Republic, even if short-lived, are welcome to Montecruzeño migrants even if not their original intent. In addition to economic prospects and family reunification, migration is perpetuated by the status conferred upon those who successfully accomplish it. Removal is a form of integration: by leaving the home community—one locale in a larger transnational social field—the migrant is given the opportunity to be a more important member in it, or as Kinito Mendez emphasized, 'a part of our culture'.

*Implications for migration research*

The documentation in this thesis of how migrants use up-to-date communications technology to maintain and carry out socio-cultural expressive practices across national borders offers comparative data for research on other migrant groups. By demonstrating that transnational practices create social changes that may be more than just transient phenomena, the study reinforces the validity of transnationalism as a focus in contemporary migration studies and advocates intellectual and financial investment in transnationalism as a theoretical framework in future research. The thesis provides a model for more nuanced research of migration and social change by establishing that transformation is not always beneficial; migration provides opportunities for marginalized communities but at the same time can have negative impacts, as in the case of crime in Baní. Moreover, individuals take advantage of opportunities in very different ways, shifting class affiliations or retaining marginalized identifications. Finally, the thesis has

shown how expressive cultural practices such as music and religion provide a rich locus of study for the migration scholar, as they both reflect and disseminate social change *and,* in the case of Vodú, serve as instruments through which change is orchestrated and negotiated. In the narratives, prayers, and artistic creations of migrants we gain an intimate understanding of their experiences that cannot be captured in census surveys, economic remittance analyzes, or other traditional migration research methods.

**Notes**

[1] Joseph Caceres, Yaqui Núñez Del Risco, and Wilfredo Vargas are quoted from the CD insert of 'A Palo Limpio'.

[2] 'Monte Cruz' is a fictitious name.

[3] http://www.world-gazetteer.com/. 12 May 2004.

[4] The U.S. census counted 799,768 people of Dominican origin living in the U.S. in the year 2000, a
number that does not factor in the thousands of undocumented Dominicans living in the U.S.

[5] The CIA World Factobook estimated the population of the Dominican Republic at 8,715,602 (July 2003 est.) http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/dr.html#People. 6 July 2004.

[6] Spanish visas are easier to acquire and the Spanish government has even recruited domestic workers from the Dominican Republic.

[7] Out of all fifty households interviewed in a one-mile square neighbourhood of Monte Cruz, all reported having a consanguine or affine deported, killed, or incarcerated in the U.S. because of violence or crime-related incidents. Although some households share kin and may be referring to the same people, these numbers are still significant for a small community.

[8] From the AAA webpage, 'Statement on Ethics', http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/ethstmnt.htm. 12 March 2004.

[9] Two are still in operation today but on a smaller scale, and development organizations such as the U.S. Peace Corps have sent volunteers to this area to revive the *cooperativos*.

[10] http://www.migrationint.com.au/news/perth/mar_2002-07mn.asp. 1 May 2004.

[11] http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/index.php?id=0. 16 August 2004.

[12] This reference first appeared in the journal *Quehaceres*, of the Centro para la Investigación y Acción Feminina, CIPAF in July 1991, then reappeared in the pamphlet 'Tráfico de mujeres desde la república dominicana con fines de explotación sexual', published by the IOM, Santo Domingo, RD 2001.

[13] From a pamphlet of true narratives of migrant women entitled 'Ni color de rosa ni color de hormiga. . . Mujeres migrantes cuentan su historia', published by the Centro de Orientación e Investigación Integral, Inc (COIN) Santo Domingo, RD.

[14] Higüey, Samaná, Espiña, San Juan de la Maguana, Elias Piña are the other major source regions for Dominican prostitutes in Europe.

[15] 'Latino' is the preferred term of reference for people from Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America (or of descent); 'Hispanic' is a term referring to people who identify with a Spanish origin.

[16] The area includes the Boston urban area and Lawrence, MA.

[17] Statistics were taken from Census 2000 data.

[18] Poverty line is defined by the 1993 Persistent Poverty Project of the Boston Foundation as 'Any member of the household whose income falls below 125% of the federal poverty line'.

[19] Finding of the Boston Persistent Poverty Project, 1993.

[20] Portes and Guarnizo challenge orthodox Marxist theory with economic sociology, placing emphasis on the 'variability of migrant outcomes', not the Marxist view that the poor are exploited and the rich benefit.

[21] Refers to migrants who stay loyal to and support home communities, not 'Dominican Yorks' who retain wealth for themselves, 'forget their roots' and are viewed negatively.

[22] *Gaga* is a palo-related music genre of Haitians living in the Dominican Republic. This song was performed by Dominican folklorists and palo musicians in Monte Cruz.

[23] http://www.world-gazetteer.com/. 12 March 2004.

[24] Bray defines 'middle class' as the rural and urban petty bourgeoisie, clerks, managers, professionals, sales and outreach workers in the state and private institutions, independent professionals, and university students' (1984:218). Underclasses such as many Montecruzeños often have very little or no education, are unemployed or work temporary jobs for day wages in agricultural labour or construction work. Some subsist on small land-holdings or are self-employed *colmado*/small business owners.

[25] While everyone has palm, banana, and plantain trees around their houses, the few people (less than 1/10 of houses) with a plot of land around their houses larger than a quarter acre plant pigeon peas, corn, and root vegetables such as sweet potato (batata) and yucca. These food staples grow throughout the region.

[26] Whether born of a married couple or not, all children take the patrilineal surnames of their father and mother. Because many women do not get married, their surnames never change.

[27] Statistics taken from the center for HIV information, University of California San Francisco. http://hivinsite.ucsf.edu/global (22 August 2004).

[28] A person of 'darker color' often distinguished by hair characterized as 'bad' (*pelo malo*), which is described by Dominican hairstylists today as 'hair that needs a chemical straightening treatment'.

[29] In an attempt to retain profits and skip middlemen, dairy farmers in the province of Peravia have begun selling raw milk directly from the cow without pasteurizing it at one of the large companies of Parmalat, Nestlé and Rica. A liter of raw milk is significantly cheaper at RD $22 than a brand-named quart of processed milk selling for over RD$40. *El Caribe*, Santo Domingo 8 March 2004.

[30] Even propane gas is not always a viable option; propane shortages in March 2004 resulted in long queues at the Credigas and Propagas companies in Santo Domingo. *Diario Libre*, Santo Domingo 9 March 2004

[31] There is nine-hour bus that runs between Baní and the Haitian-Dominican border. The bus was established for making purchases.

[32] Daily wages of 100-200 pesos (U.S. $5-10) have been estimated from informal household surveys (incorporated into interviews) of Montecruzeños for ten hours of work. These wages cover the cost of transportation and maybe food for a family of four (rice, beans, chicken) for one day.

[33] Correspondance, Nora Malikin, U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer for Baní, February 2004.

[34] See page eight for Bray's definition of 'middle class'.

[35] See http://uscis.gov/graphics/shared/aboutus/statistics/illegalalien/illegal.pdf. 14 March 2004.

[36] Diaz was well received at Tufts Uinversity in October of 2002, when he read to an audience full of Dominican and Latino college students.

[37] The song 'Guasa, guasa' by Tego Calderon was the most commonly heard song played in Monte Cruz in July of 2003.

[38] Lexus Nexus Academic. 1999 Latin American Newsletters, Ltd. Latin America Regional Reports; Caribbean and Central America. January 19, 1999. The term 'illegal aliens' has been used to demonize migrants of undocumented status when many are knowingly employed, even recruited in their homeland, by U.S. companies. With that in mind, the intent of linking 'crime' and 'migrants' is not to give the impression that all or even the majority of migrants are involved in crime.

[39] Puerto Rican immigrants as a group sustain one of the highest abuse rates in New York City (Deren et al. 2003)

[40] Themes concerning drug abuse are explored in more detail in chapter six.

[41] Sociologist Dagoberto Tejeda Ortíz and jounalist Jose Dicén, personal correspondences 2003.

[42] Given by Donnie Marshall, Acting Deputy Administrator of the DEA before the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee Subcommittee on National Security, International Affairs, and Criminal Justice, 1998.

[43] http://www.unodc.org/pdf/barbados/caribbean_trends_2000-2001.pdf. 1 March 2004

[44] In a 1997 article in the *New American*, William Grigg cites a Drug Enforcement Authority report observing that both the DEA and state police in New Jersey and Massachusetts 'have all made numerous money and drug seizures from Gerardo's Transportation and Juan's Express vans', Dominican car transportation services between Philadelphia, New York and Boston.

[45] San Pedro was the seat of the anti-Trujillist movement, shaping a generation of young dissidents trained in guerrilla tactics and firearm operations. These groups were among the many political dissidents given asylum in the United States when the pro-Trujillo Balaguer administration came into power in the 1960s. These migrants lacked other education, were accustomed to the underground economy and police-subversion tactics, and have resided for a longer period of time in the U.S., all factors contributing to their relative 'expertise' in narcotics dealings.

[46] Police efforts included training new police to patrol the back roads and main highway near Monte Cruz, picking up young men and locking them up overnight. The police chief general Made Ramirez claimed in an interview in July of 2003 that 'violence has decreased since I have come to office'; however, these efforts only drove gangs of robbers and muggers elsewhere. After

they moved out of Baní to neighbouring towns, the community of San Cristobal to the east became a target of violence. Four homicides occurred in San Cristobal at the end of March 2003 involving armed muggings of and gang disputes over drugs. See Uribe, Domingo 2003.

[47] http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2002/14041.htm International Religious Freedom Report 2002. Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. 11 May 2004.

[48] http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2002/14041.htm International Religious Freedom Report 2002. 10 March 2002.

[49] See chapter two for a discussion of marriage customs.

[50] Refer to the 1971 PhD thesis of Martha Ellen Davis for a detailed description of regional variations in misterios. It should be noted, however, that the regional variations and popularity of certain misterios have changed in the past decade.

[51] I refer to spirits generically as *misterios* (mysteries) throughout the remainder of the text, using the word most common in Monte Cruz.

[52] Musicians are paid around $RD 400 ($US 20) each, a price that is steadily rising along with the prestige of palo musicians.

[53] *Son* is a guitar-style music that greatly influenced the development of *salsa* in Cuba.

[54] See http://www.dominicanvodou.com. 5 June 2004.

[55] See http://www.dominicanvodou.com. 5 June 2004.

[56] From a lecture given in December of 2003 at the Real Colegio Complutense of Harvard University.

[57] While women do play palo drums, the genre has traditionally been performed by men. Women sing *salves*.

[58] Barahona is a town in an area from where many Dominicans in Spain originate.

[59] The observation of this 'crossover' is still very tentative; it remains to be seen if palos become popular among the historical elite.

[60] Broadly speaking, *orishas* are the Cuban equivalent of Dominican *misterios*.

[61] *Soñeros* are singers of the music genre *son*, a precursor to salsa.

[62] By a 'better' diet I refer to increased protein, the consumption of more meat, the ability to afford milk for children and clean, bottled water—all improvements in health that migrants make with remittances.

[63] The *secretaria de la mujer*, a government appointed position, ran as a representative of Baní and attributed her loss to her dark skin colour.

[64] There is evidence, however, that a low value placed on education may be changing as Montecruzeños and Banilejos in the U.S. discover that education is a route to upward social mobility. Even more education on a basic level—being literate in a native language—greatly improves migrants' ability to learn English, which is a huge advantage towards getting jobs

abroad. Recognizing the need for this very specific education, a number of schools in Baní advertise English classes. Whether these changing perspectives on education will spread to Monte Cruz remains to be seen.

[65] According to American folk taxonomies, one 'drop' or any ancestor who was 'black' makes all descendants 'black', regardless of the individual's skin colour.

[66] Some of these players include Martire Franco of the Reading Phillies in the Easter League Baseball Series, Pitcher Luis Vizcaino from Bani, Mario Soto of the Cincinati Reds (now retired), Nerio Rodriguez of the Cardinals, Deivi Cruz of the San Diego Padres (from Nizao de Baní), Izzy Alcantara of the Milwaukee Brewers from Baní, Jesus Sanchez of the Cubs, Timo Perez of the New York Mets, Mario Encarnacion of the Cubs, Vladimir Guerrero of the Expos, Julio Mateo of the Mariners, Juan Uribe of the Rockies, Rafael Silvialdo (Santana) Landestoy of the L.A. Dodgers, Juan Melo of the San Diego Padres and Carlos Valdez of the San Francisco Giants.

[67] This information on membership policies of 'whites' (*blancos*) only was supplied by a sixty-six year-old Banilejo journalist but was not confirmed by club members. Racial segregation may have been more implicit; statements such as 'only *rubios* and *blancos* are members of the *Comite de Peravia'* were common among informants.

## Appendix 1: Tables of the *misterios*

| **Table 1: Most common *misterios* in Baní and Monte Cruz** | |
|---|---|
| ***Santo/Misterio*** | **Name *en cabeza*** |
| San Miguel | Belié Belcán, 'El Viejo' |
| San Antonio | Papá legbá |
| Anaisa | Anaisa Pie |
| Santa Marta | Ghedé liá, Filomena loubana, 'La Culebra' (the Serpent) |
| Santa Barbara | Changó (female) |
| San Juan | El Bautista |
| La Virgen de la Mercedes | Ofelia Balendyo |

| **Table 2: Less common *misterios* in the province of Peravia** | |
|---|---|
| San Pancraso | Prin Ghede |
| Santa Clara | (rarely seen 'en cabesa') |
| San Pedro | Ogún Fegayo |
| San Rafael | Tinyo alahuey |
| San Carlo Bartolomeo | Papa Candelo |
| La Virgen Dolorosa | Metresili |
| San Espiritu | Ghedé limbó |
| San Elia | Baron del cementerio, 'El Rey Elia' |
| San Felipe | bakau bak |
| Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria | Candelina |
| San Patricio | Damballah |
| San Martin de los Caballeros | Ogun Obatala |
| San Lazaro | Baba luayende |

| | |
|---|---|
| San Santiago | Ogún balenyo(brother of Changó and husband of Metresili) |
| | Chango (considered 'African', a legendary Yoruban king of the city of Oyo in Nigeria) |

| **Table 3: *Indios* seen in the province of Peravia** |
|---|
| Anacaona |
| El Indio de la Paz |
| Tinyo alahuey |
| El Indio Guerrero |

| **Table 4: 'Cuban' *misterios* seen in the province of Peravia** |
|---|
| Ochun |
| Elegua (San Antonio) |
| Orula |
| Maria de la luz |
| Yemayah (La Virgen de la Regla) |

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