

**Changing Cultures in  
Latin America" VILLA  
Seminar, Sept 26th 2008**

Redefining the Mulatto  
Nation: The Emergence  
of Afrocubanismo in 1930s Cuba

A presentation by Miguel Arnedo-  
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- Development of an elite European-derived Cuban culture within dominant white society and parallel development of Afro-Cuban culture amongst black lower classes.
- Yemayá, the Goddess of the sea in Afro-Cuban religion *Santería* (syncretised as the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre).
- The *solares* (open patios inside tenement buildings in lower-class urban neighbourhoods)
- The *danzón* was the most popular dance amongst the 19th century Cuban upper classes and it had African musical influences.

# The Situation of Cuban Blacks and Afro-Cuban Culture in the Cuban Republican Period

- Cuban War of Independence against Spain (1895 to 1898). Participation of Cuban blacks was decisive.
- Cuba's transition to an independent republic (1898-1902).
- First independent Cuban government led by President Tomás Estrada Palma (1902-1906).
- Black protests against the ban of the black political party PIC.
- 1912 massacres.
- Repression of cultural traditions of African origins through police raids in the early Republican period.
- Persecution of Afro-Cuban practices escalated due to growing fear of *brujería* (witchcraft). 3

# The Rise of the Afrocubanista Movement

‘El triunfo de la rumba’, by Eduardo Abela

([http://www.galeriacubarte.cult.cu/g\\_obraexpo.php?item=11&tema=1&tipo=&page=2&lang=sp](http://www.galeriacubarte.cult.cu/g_obraexpo.php?item=11&tema=1&tipo=&page=2&lang=sp)).



This is a recording of Nicolás Guillén reading his poem 'Canto Negro':

<http://www.elortiba.org/sounds/guillen.mp3>

## CANTO NEGRO

A García Caturla

¡Yambambó, yambambé!

Repica el congo solongo,  
repica el negro bien negro:  
congo solongo del Songo  
baila yambó sobre un pie.

Mamatomba

serembe cuserembá.

El negro canta y se ajuma,  
el negro se ajuma y canta,  
el negro canta y se va.

Acuememé serembó,

aé,

yambó,

aé.

Tamba, tamba, tamba, tamba,  
¡tamba del negro que tumba;  
tumba del negro, caramba,  
caramba, que el negro tumba:  
yamba, yambó, yambambé!

## **Reasons behind the Rise of AfroCubanismo**

- Leo Frobenius, Guillaume Apollinaire and, in particular, Oswald Spengler.
- Picasso, Juan Gris, Stravinsky and Cendrars.
- Platt Amendment.
- These poems are mulatto. They are made of the same elements that make up the Cuban ethnicity... And the two races on this island that rise up to the surface of the water extend an underwater hook to each other, like those deep bridges that join together two different continents without anyone knowing. For the moment, it is clear that the Cuban soul is mulatto. Our definitive colour will come to our skin from our soul. One day, people will say "Cuban colour". These poems want to make that day come sooner.