Outline

Preface

1. Introduction – Insides into a New World
   1.1 The Object of Investigation
   1.2 The Dissemination of Santería in Dominican Society
   1.3 Data Acquisition – Approaching the Object of Investigation
   1.4 The Difficulty of Translating Experience into Written Expression
   1.5 The Scope of the Study

2. Syncretism Studies versus African Diaspora Studies
   2.1 Introduction
   2.2 Ethnological Syncretism Studies
   2.3 African Diaspora Studies
   2.4 African Diaspora and Dominican Republic – A Special Case

3. The Historical Background of the Formation of Dominican Santería
   3.1 Introduction
   3.2 The Kingdom of Spain in the Gold Fever
   3.3 The Time of Sugar
   3.4 Cattle Breeding as a Strategy of Survival
   3.5 Slavery in Santo Domingo
   3.6 The Origin of the Slaves being transplanted into Santo Domingo
   3.7 The ,Cimarrones’
   3.8 Slaves and Church in Santo Domingo

4. The Formation and Background of Dominican Santería
   4.1 Introduction
   4.2. The American Indians’ Religious Beliefs in Hispañola
4.3 Catholicism and Lay Piety in Spain during the Early Modern Period
4.4 Religions of West and Central Africa
4.5 Formation of Identities and Ethnicity in the New World
4.6 Syncretistic Processes in the Formation of Dominican Santería

5. The Numinous World of the Dominican Santería
5.1 Introduction
5.2 The World of Deities and Saints
5.3 The 21 Divisions
5.4 The World of the Dead
5.5 About ‚Galipotes‘, ‚Bacás‘ and other Beings

6. Deities in Person
6.1 Introduction
6.2. Examples of Important Deities
6.3 An Overview of the Dominican Pantheon

7. Times, Places and Means of Interaction with the Numinous World
7.1 Introduction
7.2 Calendar of ‚Deities Days‘ and Times of Worship
7.3 The Altars as a Place of Interaction with the Divine World
7.4 Paraphernalia and Devotional Articles of Santería
7.5 Expression of Devotion: The Offerings
7.6 ‚Botánica‘ – More than just a Shop

8. Objects, Words and Sounds as Expressions of Religious Devotion
8.1 Introduction
8.2 Material Donations for the Divine World
8.3 The Power of Words
8.4 Musical Entertainment for Deities and Human Beings

9.1 Introduction
9.2 Spiritual possession – An Excursus
9.3 Spiritual Possession in the Context of Dominican Santería
9.4 The Consultations – Or: Good Advice doesn’t have to be Expensive
9.5 Ritual Purifications
9.6 Protective Charms
9.7 ‘Baños’: Magical Baths
9.8 Magic too is Work
9.9 You Should be Doomed – The Dark Side of Dominican Magic
9.10 ‘Fiesta de Palo’
9.11 Rhythm of Life in Dominican Santería: Birth, Marriage and Death

10. The Priests – Between Magical Services, Spiritual Guidance und Healings
10.1 Introduction
10.2 The Vocation or the Revelation of Interest by the Divine Beings
10.3 The Instruction of the Priests
10.4 The Baptism-Ceremony
10.5 The Role of the Priests in the Daily Life of the Believers
10.6 Priests versus Healers

11. The State of Things and Glancing ahead
11.1 Introduction
11.2 The Findings
11.3 The Dominican Santería in Differentiation to other Afro-American Belief Systems
11.4 A Glance into the Future
ABSTRACT

The object of this paper is the religious syncretism that is wide-spread in the Dominican Republic in addition to Catholicism. It has hardly been examined before. Similar to Haitian Voodoo, Brazilian Candomblé or Cuban Santería, this belief system is an Afro-American religion. Believers do use periphrases rather than any specific name to describe their belief.

This form of religion originated in 300 years of colonial rule and slavery on the island of Hispaniola. In addition to demographic, social and economic structures, religiousness on the island was strongly characterised by the forceful settlement of African slaves. This brought religious knowledge made up of different autochthonic African religions to the colony. The colonisers, in contrast, introduced both orthodox Christian teachings and many folk-religious and folk-magical practices into the country, while the indigenous Taino mainly continued to practice their own beliefs.

These different religious ideas merged over time to form a new belief that plays an important role in the lives of people in the Dominican Republic to this day.

The religious practice of Dominican syncretism is particularly characterised by interaction with many anthropomorphic deities. They are associated with certain catholic deities or their chromolithographies and have many human characteristics. They have their own significant appearances, relationships and individual preferences.

The deities frequently reveal themselves to humans in dreams or manifest in the bodies of believers whose physical shells serve as a speaking tube to them in trance states. Each deity represents specific tasks and can do good or, if not honoured sufficiently, harm to people.

The pantheon comprises the so-called 21 divisions, each consisting of deities with similar characteristics. Believers assume that a remote creator god, a 'deus otiosus', placed control of daily human matters in the hands of the deities. He represents the last instance of all things and is associated with the Catholic God in the Dominican Republic.

In particular specially trained priests know a large number of practices to affect individual deities in a way that will cause them to employ their powers to the benefit of people. These priests are visited to perform protective spells, spiritual cleansings or magical rituals to fulfil specific desires. In addition to financial improvement or amorous success, destructive damage spells are also a frequent focus of the magical practices.
The data for the present paper is based on 16 months of field research the author conducted on site.