

Migration, Race and Identity: Arab Migration and its Impact on Cuban Society

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Abstract

Extant research on the history of Cuba has focused mainly on the experiences of the Afro-Cubans (former African slaves) brought into the country as a consequence of the Atlantic Slave Trade and their impact on Cuban society. In terms of migration, therefore, very little research exists on the history of the Arab migration into Cuba, which occurred between 1860s and the 1940s. This study focuses on Arab migration into Cuba. Using historical documents and the visual arts of contemporary Cuban-Arab artists I discuss their impact on the socio-economic, political, and cultural aspects of Cuban society. This is an attempt to examine the effects of this migration on race relations, assimilation, and class and identity formation within Cuba.

Section I

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of Arab migration into Latin America and the Caribbean from the 1860s to the 1940s. Specifically, it will focus on Arab migration into Cuba through an analysis of historical documents and the visual arts of contemporary Cuban and Cuban-Arab artists. The objective of the study is two-fold. First, it examines the causes of this migration and its impact on the Cuban society in terms of race relations, assimilation, socio-economic concerns, and class and identity formation. Second, it analyzes the visual art representations of Cuban-Arab artists, regarding the history and cultural identities of Cuban-Arabs within the Cuban society.

Statement of the Problem

Human migration into new environments alters the established categories of social institutions and the racial and ethnic relations of the societies in which the immigrants resettle. This is the result of the pre-disposed ideas of race, ethnicity, and religious beliefs, as well as identity formation held by the immigrants, which tend to clash with those of the host societies. Cuba was initially composed of indigenous ethnic groups, whose numbers were vastly reduced, leaving a very small population. This, however, produced the introduction of African slaves, Spanish, Chinese, Italians, Austrian, and Swedish among other races into Cuba. The historical contexts of these diverse racial groups, stemming from the Atlantic Slave Trade, Spanish imperialism, U.S. political interference in Cuban affairs, and ties with the former Soviet Union, have created a complex racial composition and identities within the Cuban society. Despite the Cuban Wars of Independence from Spain pioneered by Céspedes and Maceo, in the 1860s and based on the ideology of José Martí's "Cuban-ness" which sought to unify all the different races of the country into a homogenous group of one Cuban people, racial and identity formation continues to exist in Cuba today. While a substantial body of literature is extant on the Afro-Cuban experience in Cuban history, little research exists on the history of the Arab migration into Cuba and on the visual arts of the current generation of Cuban-Arab artists and their impact on the Cuban society as a whole. This study aims to fill in the gap left by earlier studies on Cuban history and art.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is two-fold. First, it contributes to the body of knowledge on migration, race relations, identity formation and the use of art as a vehicle of record keeping. Second, it hopes to benefit the Cuban-Arab community and visual artists, Art historians, the Cuban government and the people, U.S.-Cuban relations, and African scholars of the Atlantic Slave Trade. It will also benefit historians and researchers on Caribbean history, as well as the educational research institutions and universities specializing on the subject of migration and identity formation.

Hypothesis

Arab migration into Cuba from 1860-1940s has impacted race relations, created new socio-economic and political hierarchies, and added a new dimension of visual art to the cultural mosaic of Cuban society.

Methodology

Data collection for the study included library resources, such as books, journal articles, newspaper reports, films, and documents at the Pennsylvania State University. In addition to data from the author's field research conducted in Cuba from May to August 2012, at the University of Havana, La Casa Árabe (The Arab House), and La Unión Árabe (The Arab Union), plus interviews with Cuban-Arab artists, and information from Internet sources were used.

Research questions

What are the major causes of human migration?

What are the effects of human migration on the societies in which immigrants resettle?

What were the reasons behind the Arab migration into Cuba beginning in the 1860s?

How did the Arab migration impact Cuba's racial, political, economic and other social relations and institutions?

Are there any continued effects of this migration on the Cuban society and its peoples today?

How do Cuban-Arab visual artists portray their heritage within the Cuban culture?

Interview Questionnaire:

1. Why did the Arabs migrate to Cuba?
2. How are Cuban-Arabs perceived as a racial group within Cuban society?
3. Has the Cuban government ever stopped Arab migration into the country? If so, why?
4. Is the Cuban-Arab culture a part of the recognized national cultural heritage of the country? If not, why?
5. How has the Cuban-Arab visual art of the post-1959 Revolution differed from the earlier periods?
6. What are some of the major challenges facing Cuban-Arab artists in contemporary Cuba?

Section II: Literature Review

Theories of Migration, Race and Ethnicity, and Art as a Medium of Historical Record

Introduction

This section reviews the literature on migration, race and identity formation, and the use of art as a medium of historical record to preserve the history and culture of a given people. It is divided into two main parts. The first part discusses the definition of migrant, the theories of migration, and race and identity formation while the second part focuses on the discussion of the literature on the use of Art as a medium of preserving culture and history.

The Definition Problem

The definition of *migrant* has become a complex and contentious issue due to the ever-changing causes of migration and the new experiences and categories of migrants around the globe. For example, since the 1960s, the United Nations has defined a *migrant* as "someone living outside their own country for a year or more."¹ Conversely, Koser rejects this definition, arguing that the term *migrant* encompasses a large variety of people in a multitude of situations, making it difficult to find the amount of data that informs on migrants and determines the length of stay abroad.² Furthermore, he asks the question, when does a migrant cease to be a migrant? He argues that the migrant status ends when the person involved decides to return home or becomes a citizen of another country. However, it is evident that both definitions advanced by Koser and the UN appears parochial thus limiting the various identities that migrants may possess. For instance, it is clear that location alone is inadequate criterion to offer as a broader definition of a *migrant*, while Koser's definition, based on citizenship, fails to take into account the enduring psychological impact of being a migrant on those who return to their original countries, as well as those who become citizens of another country. In many ways, those who

¹ Khalid Koser, *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 16.

² Koser, *International Migration*.

return to their countries are sometimes perceived by those who stayed either as traitors; strangers or foreigners hence do not truly belong to the society anymore, while those that become citizens of other countries continue to suffer the psychological effects of the longing to return home as well as the cultural and racial discrimination in the new country. Citizenship alone, therefore, cannot be used as the broader definition of the term *migrant* – the psychological impact must be considered in the discourse. In addition, the generations that come after a migrating family in the new country are equally affected by the connections to their ancestral homeland which addition further complicates the search for a single definition of the term. The definition of *migrant*, therefore, appears to encompass a broader spectrum than just location and citizenship as presented above by Koser and the United Nations.

Furthermore, globalization has also created new types of migrants due to the creation of transnational communities or diasporas. According to Koser, diaspora is a broad term historically meaning a forced displacement and inability to return to one's homeland coupled with a yearning to do so.³ He juxtaposes this definition with Gabriel Sheffer's concept of "having strong ties to the homeland via sentimental and material exchanges, in spite of living in other host countries".⁴ Sheffer's definition creates a more inclusive idea of modern theories around diasporas. Another layer to add to these concepts of diasporas is that of psychological borders. Michael Humphrey suggests that, for example, defining an Arab identity involves much more than just a physical inhabitation of space or land, but rather a psychological conversation between past and present.⁵ He discusses the potential reasons why, for instance, descendants of Lebanese in Australia, feel a connection and a sense of exile to their homeland, never having been there, or necessarily having a desire to go.⁶ The strong adherence to family customs, traditions, and essence of cultural heritage has been stamped into the psychological and nostalgic places of one's psyche occupying a large component of their being. It is these emotional connections, through family and history that move us to have a connection to former lands of our ancestry, all of that being an impact of migration.

According to several scholars including Andrea O'Reilly Herrera, Gloria Anzaldúa and bell hooks, these psychological spaces expand through multiple experiences and analyzed through compilations of stories, testimonies, and visual arts and artists, of individuals on the fringes of borders, whether physical or psychological or both. All of these categories are blurred and overlapped and the labels of *a migrant* can change at any time due to any of these reasons. The complexities of these terms and categories therefore, are layered definitions of one's experience and the globalization of these migratory patterns. It is evident therefore, that there is no single universal definition of the term *migrant* due to the complexities of the conditions involved. The notion, concept and causes of migration and the production of the migrant continue to evolve as dictated by social, economic and political concerns of nations and the international community.

This study defines a *migrant* as "someone living outside their own country legally or illegally, and practicing a minority culture, language and affiliated with a distinct ethnic minority group or community."

³ Koser, *International Migration*, 48.

⁴ Koser, *International Migration*, 25.

⁵ Michael Humphrey, "Lebanese Identities: Between Cities, Nations, and Trans-Nations," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 26 (2004): 31-50.

⁶ Humphrey, "Lebanese Identities."

Theories of Migration

Two main theories underlie the concept of migration, namely, the *push and pull* migration factors and the *coercive* migration theory.

The Push and Pull Migration Factors

The literature on migration advances three main theories on the subject: the voluntary, involuntary, and the coercive migration models. The voluntary migration theory focuses on the “push and pull” factors dictated by the rational choices of migrants, and based primarily on wage differentials between countries.⁷ Higher economic incentives elsewhere, are capable of pulling migrants into that economy, while depressing economic conditions at home rather push migrants to flee such conditions for a better life elsewhere. The depressing economic conditions in a country’s economy are the result of a lack of adequate capital accumulation for local or domestic investments to expand the economy to create more jobs for the growing workforce of that country. This situation creates high unemployment rates among the workforce and with no assurances of a better future, migration to other promising economies becomes the only option left for the citizens involved, with the belief that they will be able to return home someday after accumulating some capital for themselves and their families, or have the means to be able to send in remittances to assist their families back home. For example, Cuban-Americans often send money to their families in Cuba to assist with their living expenses in the depressed Cuban economy. The push and pull migration theory, is thus premised on what Massey has termed “bearable conditions of life.”⁸ He explains this concept to mean the supply of basic needs of life such as healthcare, food, shelter, employment, and access to good education.

The *involuntary* migration theory, on the other hand, argues that migrants leave their own countries of origin, or cross international borders based on their own accord. Those who leave voluntarily and acquire proper documents to enter the new country are termed *legal* migrants, while those who enter other countries without proper documentation and permission through the established legal channels are termed *illegal* migrants. This model thus creates two distinct groups of migrants defined mainly, by their legal status in the new country rather than by the fact that they live outside their own countries.

The Coercive Migration Theory

The coercive migration theory determines two types of migrants: the reactive fate groups and the purpose groups. The reactive fate groups are those who leave their countries with no plans on how they will return, as in the case of civil and ethnic war victims or victims of an environmental disaster, such as a volcanic eruption or flooding caused by a tsunami or dams. The purpose groups, on the other hand, are those who leave their countries of origin to organize resistance for eventual return, using the host country as a base. Several freedom fighter groups around the globe thus making the theoretical suppositions of migration and migrants a historical consideration have used this migration model.

A study of the two theories indicates that both are similar in the causes that underline migration and the production of a migrant. While severe domestic economic conditions act as levers to push and pull desperate migrants into the more stable and developed economies of the

⁷ T. Faist, et al (eds), *International Migration Immobility and Development*. New York: Berg Publications, 1997.

⁸ Douglas S. Massey, Joaquin Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci, Adela Pellegrino and J. Edward Taylor, *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

industrialized societies of North America, Europe and Japan, from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, including Cuba, other migrants whose countries are afflicted by war and natural disasters are also desperately trying to migrate into more stable societies to have a better life.

Theories of Ethnicity and Race

On the topic of race and ethnicity, Castles and Miller advance a framework of theories and migratory processes that analyze race, gender and class, and citizenship in relation to ethnicity and racism.⁹ Migration and settlement are closely tied to other themes of economic, political, and cultural linkages being formed between countries throughout the process of globalization. The most common outcome of migratory movement is the establishment of communities of ethnicity and minorities in the new country. The term *ethnicity* is a complex one with many varying definitions across multiple interdisciplinary spheres. However, Castles and Miller, conclude that regardless of the varying definitions of ethnicity, the implications are:

[Ethnicity] leads to identification within a specific group, but its visible markers-phenotype, language, culture, customs, religion, behavior may also be used as a criteria for exclusion by other groups. Ethnicity only takes on social and political meaning when it is linked to process a boundary between dominant groups and minorities.”¹⁰

Ethnic *minorities* and the process of their formation are two parts, according to Castles and Miller, namely, their own self-definitions (consciousness of group members) and their “othered” definitions (ascription of undesirable characteristics as an inferior people), by the host country. Self-definition also has two parts within it being assertion of ethnic identity based upon pre-migration cultural symbols, practices, and traditions/norms *or* seeks inclusion in the new host country by assimilation and the interpretation of these cultural symbols and practices. This can be highly politicized when the re-settlement and ethnic minority identity formation is taking place during economic and social crisis.¹¹

This ethnic impact is not only for the settler, but for the host society as well. Issues of identity, culture, and community come to light in order to form a common space with incoming migrants. For example, the communities of Arab migrants in Cuba have established close-knit groups to identify with their homeland, and introduced Arab foods, traditions, and customs into the Cuban society. However, this practice by the new migrants may in turn challenge the established homogenous norms in the host society. An order of racial, class and gendered hierarchy may be established, as seen with Africans coming into Cuba as slaves, and such migrants are automatically placed into the ‘othered’ social group by the dominant majority due to their slave status.

However, a question that needs to be answered is: why do some migrants take on the character of *ethnic communities* as opposed to *ethnic minorities*? According to Castles and Miller, phenotypical differences are a general factor as a marker for minority status.¹² The two authors provide four potential reasons, namely: phenotypical difference may coincide with recent arrival, cultural distance, socio-economic position or target for racism. Depending on the given

⁹ Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. Second Edition. (London: MacMillan Press LTD, 1998).

¹⁰ Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*.

¹¹ Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*, 46.

¹² Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*.

environment, an individual will either ally with ethnic *communities* that share a common bond or become an ethnic *minority*, as they are unable to find a space in the community to bridge the gap.

From the four categories of the rationales of migration stated previously, *permanent settlement* evolves the *ethnic community*, seen as part of a multicultural society, or *ethnic minorities*, whose presence is widely disregarded. The first, *ethnic community*, would be established by the migrant and their descendants as an integral part of society, willing to reshape its culture and identity, while the second, *ethnic minorities*, migrants are excluded and marginalized, living on the fringes of a society via a homogenous identity. They have been ‘assigned’ a subordinate position in society by the dominant groups, and have some degree of collective consciousness.¹³

The concern of dominant groups has been the threat of being outnumbered by in-coming migrants. The formation of these ethnic *communities*, that offer solidarity and a sense of community for the migrants, is viewed as a challenge to the homogenous society, or as regressive. However, ethnic *minorities* may be seen as resisting the homogenous identity by actively engaging in a collective consciousness. For instance, linguistic and cultural maintenance may be seen as proof of this but the host society may view this as an opposition to national identity formation.

Castles and Miller, define racism as “[M]aking and acting upon predictions about people’s character, abilities, or behavior on the basis of socially constructed markers of difference.”¹⁴ Racism or *institutional racism* is upheld in society by the national and local structures that support it, such as laws, policies and administrative directives that discriminate against the dominated group.¹⁵ Institutional and informal discrimination has largely contributed to the migrant’s disadvantage in the work place, further marginalizing groups into low-status work, high unemployment, negative working conditions and lack of opportunities. The exclusion of certain groups in mainstream society is an example of marginalization. If culture is defined, as Castles and Miller explain, in terms of language, religion, and values this will have a bearing on the cultural distance of the settler in their host country.¹⁶

Phenotypical difference coincides with socioeconomic status, as some migrants from less-developed countries will lack the skills and education found in industrialized economies. Low socioeconomic status is a result of marginalization and a cause of minority status. The most significant reason then for the cultural distance and minority formation is that the dominating population and the state (nation/country) of the host country are causing the discrimination. Castles and Miller refer to this as *racism* and the results as *racialization* of minorities.¹⁷ The practice of racism and discrimination against migrants compels such groups to develop survival methods in attempts to preserve their cultures using various methods, including art.

Migrants and the Use of Art in the Diaspora

The formation of ethnic minority communities in the host country resulting in the creation of a diaspora outside the migrant’s original country or homeland encourages the introduction of new cultural practices, music and dance, cuisine, customs and various forms of art into the new country. The migrant community uses this enclave within their host society as an

¹³ Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*.

¹⁴ Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*, 38.

¹⁵ Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*.

¹⁶ Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*.

¹⁷ Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*.

opportunity to establish their identity and cultural heritage which also provides them with a form of cultural capital in their new country. They desire to continue to remain attached to their original homeland and this remembrance manifests in various ways, including the use of art.

In her book, *Art on My Mind*, bell hooks, discusses the importance of art in culture and society, as well as the weight it carries not only as a vehicle of expression but also as a means to offer a pool of reflection, and a space for dialogue and activism.¹⁸ She emphasizes the point that the importance of art lies not only in the act of creating art but of also discussing, experiencing and having access to art; it is a realization that art is *needed* for our well-being. She speaks about art being shown in segregated spaces, not in inclusive public spaces. This, according to her, has been evident, for example, in African American culture, where African or African-American art has not been incorporated into mainstream society but designated its own enclave within a segregated space. Furthermore, she notes that in U.S. history, African art was displayed in segregated black communities, but this, she argues, is not enough to make an intervention or revolutionized collective art experience. According to her, we, as human beings, come to recognize the familiar in life, and if art - visual art - is not the familiar, it can leave us dissatisfied. She contends that in order to identify with art, a shift must occur that changes the way we see and look at art. One of the ways she proposes for this to occur, is through critical education that the creation and public sharing of art is essential to the practice of freedom, as she states "... we must set our imaginations free."¹⁹

Bourriaud, explains the process of identity formation in the context of modernism through art. He states that the fundamental concepts of twentieth century avant-garde art have the commonality of a 'passion for radicality,' being the elimination of everything in order to return to the 'first beginnings or principles.'²⁰ The fundamental concept that modern art "elaborates a metaphysics of the root or a desire to go back to the beginning, and to start again and create new language, free of its detritus" is precisely the starting point in order to establish the connection to today, in twenty-first century globalization.²¹ The *radical* is thus implicit of eliminating, subtracting, and creating a clean slate in its simplest form, while a *radicant*, is a *system of roots*. This differentiation is critical to Bourriaud as he contends:

And yet the immigrant, the exile, the tourist, and the urban wanderer are the dominant figures of contemporary culture. To remain within the vocabulary of the vegetable realm, one might say that the individual of these early years of the twenty-first century resembles those plants that do not depend on a single root for their growth but advance in all directions on whatever surfaces present themselves by attaching multiple hooks to them, as ivy does.²²

In keeping with Bourriaud's definition of a *radicant* and also that of the *migrant* above, the definition of art thus must encompass a wider psychological framework to include not only the experiences of the artist but also of his/her psychological past and present. In other words, an artist working in the present time, may also be creating a new dimension of culture, past or present, because of the psychological spaces that he/she may be inhabiting as they are

¹⁸ bell hooks, *Art on My Mind: visual Politics* (New York: The New York Press, 1995).

¹⁹ Bell Hooks. *Art on My Mind Visual Politics*. (New York: The New Press, 1995), 4.

²⁰ Nicolaus Bourriaud. *The Radicant*. (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2009).

²¹ Bourriaud. *The Radicant*, 44.

²² Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, 51.

interacting between worlds and cultures. This hyphenation or hybridity is a form of mapping and expands beyond what Bourriaud (2009) explains with geography as *psycho geography*. His definition of a *radicant* as working within a structure of roots, conforming and adapting to various geographical surfaces as a means of connecting with its environment and any forces of uprooting it encounters, confirms the nature of the artist working within this realm. This would then imply, according to Bourriaud, “a negotiation of identity” and the ‘other’ as translations are given and received within geographical and psychological spaces. It is within these spaces that the diasporic artist is born and who establishes the ties to his/her family’s cultural heritage and ancestry using their work to record, collect and add threads of memory and desire to connect to what was and the remnants of what is.

Art in the Diaspora

Benítez-Rojo likens multiple and ‘erratic’ readings of the Caribbean, as similar to Columbus and his judgments, which are mostly filled with foreign purposes and depicted as fragmented and inconsistent.²³ He revisits with new lenses that would suggest a paradigm shift in the way we view the islands geographically and historically. He further explains, that his observations are more closely akin to the scientific research discipline of *Chaos*.²⁴ This un-linear concept of analyzing history and its effects, the disorganization, as compared to nature, offers a dynamic of the possibility of repeating itself, in spite of the disorder, just as seen through nature. Benítez-Rojo explains:

Chaos looks toward everything that repeats, reproduces, grows, decays, unfold, flows, spins, vibrates, seethes; it is as interested in the evolution of the solar system as in the stock market’s crashes, as involved in cardiac arrhythmia as in the novel or in myth. Thus Chaos provides a space in which the pure sciences connect with the social sciences, and both of them connect with art and the cultural tradition. Of course, any such diagrammatic connections must suppose very different languages and a communication that is hardly ever direct, but for the reader who is attuned to Chaos, there will be an opening upon unexpected corridors allowing passage from one point to another in the labyrinth.²⁵

The analyses of these cultural phenomena are not for the purposes of finding ‘answers’ or end products but for the processes that develop throughout and within marginalized and diverse communities.

Herrera created and developed the term, *Cubands* as an elastic inclusive word interweaving Cuban and exile discourse.²⁶ The terminology recognizes the multitude of nations that create the Cuban culture, allowing for complex identities. Antonio Benitez-Rojo concentrates on the study of “the poly-rhythmic cultural repetitions” or constant, specifically with Cuba, that has occurred outside the island.²⁷ *Repetitions*, is a term meaning ‘aftershock’,

²³ Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. Second Edition. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996).

²⁴ Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 2.

²⁵ Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 3.

²⁶ Andrea O’Reilly Herrera. *Remembering Cuba: Legacy of Diaspora* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001). First Edition.

²⁷ Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*.

and in this context, Benítez-Rojo uses it to describe the post-production of art and Nicolas Bourriaud expands on this meaning:

[T]he work of art is an event that constitutes the replication and reply to another work or a preexisting object: distant in time from the original to which it is linked, this work nonetheless belongs to the same chain of event.²⁸

Herrera builds upon this concept of Benítez-Rojo's, by adding the British Romantic concept of 'the spiral return,' which posits that during a voyage we are permanently altered, and unable to return to a place of origin in the exact psychological, emotional or physical state.²⁹ The experiences that have marked, transformed and evolved us have done *something*. What do these alterations mean? What impact do they have on art? Bourriaud states, "...works are in dialogue with the contexts in which they are produced."³⁰ Therefore taking into account the contexts that have influenced the artist and their creations is essential in understanding the current conditions in which they are created. We can also infer that the formation of culture and society is in flux because of these migrations, travels and mixtures of cultures, thus creating spaces that are new.

Similarly, Humphrey discusses the potential reasons why, for example, descendants of Lebanese in Australia feel a connection and exile to their homelands, despite the fact that they have never been there, or necessarily having a desire to go.³¹ It is these emotional connections through family and history that move us to have a connection to former lands of our ancestry. These psychological borders that exceed physical space are akin to the mapping of the self or identity.

Identity and Mapping in Art

The concept of mapping oneself is not singular, it may feel singular as the body which produces the art, or experiences the pain, the isolation and the estrangement, but it is multiple, as it overlays in a variety of interwoven realities as a form of mapping one's identity. Mapping has historically been used to categorize or locate places, resources, or ways to get from point A to point B; it would have a scientific maritime premise to its core, in order to have complete accuracy in navigation, or as a locator of resources and for war tactics.³²

Mapping is a form of interweaving of the past, the present and the potential future of the human race. As an individual work, mapping one's self is what the artist does in isolated places for one's identity but also as a collaborative work. It is the process or means of connecting through various forms, or *inter-forms*, that link together, as Bourriaud explains:

The cultural object-larval, mutant, letting its origin appear under the more or less opaque layer of its new use or of the new combination in which it happens to be captured-no longer exists except between two contexts.³³

²⁸ Bourriaud, *The Radicant*.

²⁹ Andrea O'Reilly Herrera, *Cuban Artists Across the Diaspora: Setting the Tent Against the House* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).

³⁰ Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, 8.

³¹ Humphrey, "Lebanese Identities"

³² Arthur Hunt, "2000 Years of Map Making," *Geography* 85, No.1 (2000): 3.

³³ Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, 156.

This multiplicity of contexts exceeds any pre-determined category while on the other hand it is a singular experience, at a given time in history, which will not recur.

An example of ‘mapping’ oneself and invisibility in art culture may be found in the works of Ana Mendieta (b.1948-1985), a Cuban-American performance artist, sculptor, painter and commonly referenced as a leading artist in “earth-art.” Although her works have become more widely known posthumously, Mendieta’s work stands as a form of documentation and mapping of identity, cultures, dislocation and negotiations in the in-between places. Her series, *Siluetas*, on exhibit at the Museo de Bellas Artes, edificio de Arte Universal in Havana, were found to evoke conversations, as observed by the author during her field research in Cuba. Her images conveyed feelings of displacement and tension between the lost and the search for the reclamation of her identity. Her performance and pieces of photographs in her birth country, Cuba, offers a connection of earth, body and displacement themes as documentation of her consistent attempt to mapping herself.³⁴ Mendieta’s personifications through geography, as she carves, burns, builds, and uses her body to mark the earth, encompass the spiritual and psychological connections to the land and “[H]er art still bears the cultural imprint of her motherland, but for the artist it resulted in a continuous form of loss and not a claim of the original culture.”³⁵ Her varied attempts to connect through Cuban legends and myths, imprinting her physical body on the earth (as mother), creating art throughout her various places of residency in the U.S. and abroad, speak to her uneasiness and yearning for her homeland of Cuba, from which she was exiled.

In a similar fashion, the artwork of Luis Álvarez Pupo titled *Caminos Errantes* (*Wondering Ways*) displayed at the La Unión Árabe in Havana was also observed to speak of themes of migration and identity. Through photographic pieces his works compile scenes and data that speak to migration and the back and forth movement of individuals. Close up photographs in black and white large prints line the walls of the gallery, as it takes a minute to decipher the cropped images of water, views through chain-linked fences, footprints, and hair and skin. The photographs allude to the struggles of migration and migrants and the harsh realities of the elements that are experienced by the migrant, and the uncertainty of these moments.

Conclusion

This section reviewed the literature on the theories of migration, race and identity formation. It was discovered that based on the evolutionary nature of society and national and global economies, there can be no single universal definition of a migrant. Instead, such a definition should encompass a multitude of perspectives inclusive of physical location, psychological and legal status. Additionally, it was ascertained that migrants created ethnic communities, as a form of solidarity and also for cultural preservation. It is also the retention of the values and connections to the original ancestral homelands. This preservation is achieved through several ways, including the use of art. While the dominant or host society could also perceive these communities as ethnic *minorities*. The creation and use of the term of ethnic

³⁴ Amanda Boetzkes, *The Ethics of Earth Art* (City: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

³⁵ Muge Ozbay, Inci Eviner, Tevfik Akgun, “Aesthetics Bridging Cultures: Deterritorialization, Performative Identity and Uncanny Representation of Woman’s Body in the Works of Ana Mendieta,” *Congress of Aesthetics* (Istanbul: Yildiz Technical University, 2007).

minorities could then develop into dominant/subordinate or superior/inferior racial groupings, within the host country and migrant groups.

The next section discusses the Arab migration, Arab communities and its impact on Cuban society.

Section III

Arab Migration into Cuba and Its Impact on Cuban Society

Introduction

This section discusses the Arab migration into Cuba and its impact on the Cuban society. The topics discussed include a brief history of Cuba, the development of Arab migrant communities, the classification of Arab migrants, and an analysis of the visual art contributions of Cuban-Arab artists.

A Brief History of Cuba

Cuba is the largest island country in the Caribbean, with a population of over 11 million people. Havana is the capital city, followed by Santiago de Cuba as the second largest city. It is a racially diverse country formed by Spaniards, indigenous groups, African descended peoples, and migrants including Chinese, Europeans and Arabs. In 1492 Christopher Columbus claimed Cuba as a colony of Spain, and this claim lasted until 1868 when Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and Antonio Maceo began the Cuban Wars of Independence through 1878, which finally, led to the Spanish-Cuban War of Independence in 1898. The United States allied itself with Cuba in the latter's fight for its independence which also marked a significant shift in Cuba's Independence because U.S. took over Cuban government. In 1902, the U.S. sanctioned the Platt Amendment and the Cuban Constitution was implemented until 1930, that year Gerardo Machado overturned it, marking an end to the neo-colonialism by the US concerning Cuba's Independence. Following a succession of 'puppet' presidents, the Cuban Constitution of 1940 was instated and Fulgencio Batista, the first non-white president of Cuba was elected. However, in 1959, Batista fled into exile as a result of the Revolution staged by Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro and Che Guevara. Since 1959, the Cuban political philosophy has been based on Communism and Socialism. The country's economy is based mainly on the export of nickel, mattes, raw sugar, cigars, medicaments, and alcoholic preps for beverages while it imports rail locomotives, soybean, wheat, meslin, and corn seed. Its trade partners include China, Venezuela, Brazil, Canada, Argentina and Spain.³⁶

Arab Migration into Cuba: 1860-1940s

At the beginning of the 1860s, Arabs began to migrate into Cuba from Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Turkey, and Egypt. By 1900, over two thousand Arabs had migrated to Cuba. During the period 1920-31, the government census report indicated that there were over 9,000 Arabs migrants in Cuba from the Mediterranean region.³⁷ According to Menéndez-Paredes, these

³⁷ Rigoberto Menéndez-Paredes, "Parentesco y tradición: un estudio étnico-social de los inmigrantes árabes de Cuba (1870-1957)," *Misceláneas de estudios árabes y hebraicos. Sección Árabe-Islam* 49 (2000): 89-103.

migrations were caused by the economic decline of the period as consequence of the fall of the Ottoman Empire.³⁸ It is important to note that before 1910, the national identities of the migrants entering Cuba were classified as either Syrian or Turk, at the point of entry into Cuba, but this changed into Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian after 1910. In 1892, Q. Gallostra served as General Ottoman's Consul in Cuba. He was the first to document both the Arab and Turkish migrants that entered Cuba during this period and which later developed the need for such continuous documentation of in-coming Arab migrants.³⁹

According to Alfonso Farnos and Sonia Catusus, Arab migration occurred in three stages. The first wave occurring during the period 1860-1930, the second wave from 1930-58, which marked a balance of net migration and coincided with the neocolonial Cuban crisis. The third wave occurred following the changes introduced by the 1959 Revolution.⁴⁰ From the period 1923-25, a high influx of Arab migrants entered Cuba, especially due to the tightened immigration laws of North America. During the second stage of the migration in the 1940s, the numbers were low but it increased towards the beginning of the decade primarily, because of agriculture and the commercial activities of the Shiites of Southern Lebanon who migrated to Cuba for economic reasons, as they felt less privileged within independent Lebanon.⁴¹

The main entry ports for the migrants were Santiago de Cuba, Cienfuegos and Havana. In 1906, the country's immigration law remodeled the ports that existed to put the incoming migrants into zones where agricultural labor was needed. During the period of 1940-50s, a third wave of Arab migration occurred with most of them coming from the Middle East. Therefore, three main waves of migration occurred during the period of 1860-1940s, marking an influx of Arabs migrants coming into Cuba.

Categories of Arab Migrants

Euridice Charon classified the migrants from 1902-36 as Arab, Turkish, Syrian and Egyptian thus concluding a quantitative demographic categorization to ascertain migration from the Middle East into Cuba.⁴² However, the unpublished census of 1931 report, which revealed the time period when actual origins of migrants were recorded. They were from Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Arabia.⁴³

However, this classification of migrant origins becomes problematic. Initially most Arab migrants into Cuba were seen as Syrian. This was due to the geography of the region before it was divided into separate states that today indicate Lebanon, Syria, and the territories of Egypt and Turkey, as a consequence of European colonization. Therefore, those born before this time were in a region governed by Syria.

A further complication of the issue is that the travel and archival classification documents were designated as Lebanese, Syrian, Asiatic, Turkish, Nazarian, and Asia Minor.⁴⁴ The only exception was that of the Egyptians, where no border identification occurred to infringe upon

³⁷ Rigoberto Menéndez-Paredes, *Los árabes en Cuba* (La Habana: Publicaciones de la Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad, 2007).

³⁸ Menéndez-Paredes, *Los árabes en Cuba*.

³⁹ Menéndez-Paredes, *Los árabes en Cuba*.

⁴⁰ Menéndez-Paredes, *Los árabes en Cuba*, 70.

⁴¹ Menéndez-Paredes, *Los árabes en Cuba*.

⁴² Charon Euridice, "El Asentamiento de Emigrantes Árabes en Monte (la Habana, Cuba), 1890-1930," *Awraq: Estudios sobre el mundo árabe e islámico contemporáneo* (1992).

⁴³ Menéndez-Paredes, *Los árabes en Cuba*, 45.

⁴⁴ Menéndez-Paredes, *Los árabes en Cuba*, 58.

national identity. These classifications are complex because there may have been various denominators involved in order to determine Arab migrants' identities. For example, their citizenship, residency, religion, or ethnic identity could all or partly be used as a means of identification. Furthermore, these classifications correspond with the geographical regions of the Ottoman Empire that was in existence until 1918. Amin Maalouf explains how these identifications can be very complex. For example, a migrant's status could be recorded as: State: Turkey; Language: Arabic; Province: Syria; Country: Monte Lebanese (Monte Libano).⁴⁵ They were further classified through the registry of last name, and the translations from the Arabic language to that of Spanish could have had potential errors in the translation process.

The Development of Arab Migrant Communities

The growth of Arab migrant communities occurred in Monte, Havana where they set up community centers, businesses and stores and established themselves as merchants, jewelers, and doctors, and members of Cuban society. This also created future opportunities for the second generation Cuban-Arabs, enabling them to secure professional status, especially in the sciences, medicine, law and politics. The first generation of migrants were merchants who could afford better education for their children.⁴⁶ The most common fields of study of second-generation Cuban-Arab migrants at the University of Havana have included law, medicine, pharmaceuticals, and journalism. The Arab migration into Cuba also introduced new goods into the country resulting in the transformation of the living standards and fashion of Cubans. Migrants began to import into Cuba Arab-inspired products, including textiles, photographs, news, music, arts, and cuisine. These have become an integral part of the Arab-Cuban community and culture and the entire Cuban society. As discussed in Section II, this infusion offers validity to ancestry and the formation of ethnic minority communities. It represents the introduction of migrant ancestry as a form of nostalgia and connection to their home country.

The Arab migrant communities soon began to form groups based on cultural heritage. La Union Oriental (1904) and the La Sociedad Suriana were the first two groups to come into existence in Santiago de Cuba. During the period 1928-30, other Arab groups were also established in Havana including La Unión Libanes Siria de Bejucal, la Sociedad Palestina-Árabe de Cuba, and la Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana. These sociedades organized events, published magazines and collaborated throughout the year, but each one of them held very specific ethnic identities within the community. Consequently, there were over a dozen published magazines/literature by these groups. More than 70 percent of Arab migrant communities in Cuba was Christian and a little more than 20 percent being Muslim.

The only institution which integrated both Arab migrants and Cubans was the Masonic Lodge called the Chuada el Arabh (Arab martyrs), which was affiliated with the Gran Oriente Nacional de Egipto/ National Grand Orient of Egypt, when it was first established in Havana in 1932. One of the membership requirements was the ability to speak both Spanish and Arabic.⁴⁷

The Arab community maintained a powerful position as a lobbyist group, which pressured the government, and other sociopolitical Cuban groups for their support for the autonomy of their countries of origin.⁴⁸ The *Pan Árabe de Cuba* thus emerged in 1947, specifically for these efforts of solidarity and advocacy for the homelands of the Arab migrants.

⁴⁵Menéndez-Paredes, *Los árabes en Cuba*.

⁴⁶ Menéndez-Paredes, *Los árabes en Cuba*, 90.

⁴⁷ Menéndez-Paredes, *Los árabes en Cuba*, 166.

⁴⁸ Menéndez-Paredes, *Los árabes en Cuba*, 177.

This coincided with the time frame of the United Nations' actions regarding the Palestinian and Zionist tensions which resulted in the nationalist action among Arab-Cuban groups and their descendants, regardless of their nationality. This also led to the formation of the Centro Palestino, and the creation of the Comité Panarábigo para la Liberación de Palestina/ Liberation Panarabigo Committee for Palestine in 1947, by Mario Tabraue in the effort to halt the balkanization of Palestine. This is an example of the political and socio-economic power established by the Arab-Cuban community, underscoring the political and economic weight of the Arab population, through elite privileges and also in Cuban politics and government. They supported the numerous examples of anti-Zionist manifestos originating from the Arab-Cuban fundamentalists in prestigious positions of power within Cuban society.⁴⁹ This is further evident through the founding of el Comité Nacional Pro Defensa de la Independencia del Libano/the National Committee of Pro Defense for the Independence of Lebanon, in Havana in 1958 and in 1961. They also founded the la Unión de los Libaneses en el Mundo/The Union of the Lebanese in the World (ULM) in direct affiliation with the Lebanese Embassy in Cuba. The main objective of these two groups was to establish ties between the Lebanese migrants in Cuba and their home country in Lebanon, through collaborative efforts in culture, tourism and economics. This was an illustration of a collective sentiment regarding the emotional and psychological ties held by the migrants to their original homeland.⁵⁰ In 1979, the unification of all Arab associations in Cuba was achieved by the formation of La Unión Árabe.

Cuban society perceives Arab migrants as “white,” in terms of racial classification, as well as a “shrewd” business group. Furthermore, they are regarded as a group that has access to better educational facilities and resources and that holds high positions in Cuban politics. During the field research, the author observed, the amount of cultural capital that the Arab migrants held in the society as doctors, lawyers and businessmen, placed them in a middle class status and eventually into a privileged class status within the society. Arab migrant merchants dealt in such goods as silk, clothing, perfumery, imported knit textiles, silverware, and served as tailors and outfitters, carpenters, and toy and hardware store owners.⁵¹ This socio-economic hierarchy within Cuban society emphasized the historical difference in the perception accorded to the Cuban-Arabs as opposed to the Afro-Cubans brought into the country as slaves. This distinction is important in understanding the discourse on race and ethnic relations in Cuba.

The cultural impact of the descendants of Arab migrants on Cuban society is evidenced in various areas including art, poetry, music and acting. Prominent among such cultural iconic figures include Fayad Jámis, sculptor, painter and poet; Nola Sahig, singer; Kemal Kairuz, pianist; and Raúl Camayd and Baz Tabrane (Taicuba Trio), lyricists; as well as television actors Luis Felipe Bagos, Paula Ali, Felix and Omar, Yamil Jaled and Ibrahim Apud. These individuals are celebrated in Cuban society and culture. They offer meaning to the term *Cuband* or the inclusion of nations that compose Cuban culture through diverse genres of art forms, including visual art.⁵²

⁴⁹ Menéndez-Paredes, *Los árabes en Cuba*.

⁵⁰ Michael Humphrey, “Lebanese Identities: Between Cities, Nations, and Trans-Nations,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 26 (2004): 31-50.

⁵¹ Menéndez-Paredes, *Los árabes en Cuba*, 77.

⁵² Andrea O’Reilly Herrera, *Remembering Cuba: Legacy of a Diaspora* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001). First Edition.

Impact of Cuban-Arab Visual Artists

Cuban visual art has been influenced by several external forces, which have helped to shape both the processes and the production of art in the country. These forces have included European avant-garde movements, surrealism, and socio-realism. Additional influences have included the cultural heritage of migrants, slavery, exile, and imperialism. Visual art is comprised of painting, sculpture, photography, multi-media, drawings, installations, and a montage-collage of these artistic representations. Cuban-Arab visual art forms have been historically invisible within Cuban society, though this situation has been changing in recent times. Cuban-Arab cultural impact is seen through religious observance, individual and collaborative art, and in the education sector where reforms demand the inclusion of Islam and Arab influence in Cuban culture.

Contemporary Cuban artists draw on their pluralistic concept of identity to bridge and illustrate the transformative dimensions of art and history. In particular, both art and history must be made from the stories of experience, which includes the artists' interpretation of his/her personal experience as partial and ongoing.⁵³ Within a global context, contemporary artists work with a complexity of spaces as layered structures that enact processes of translation. For example, spaces consist of interactions between mental and physical domains. Some artists have explored space as organized by identity, hybridity, religion, and psychology by composing autoethnographies.⁵⁴ When artists use their personal histories in their works, their *testimonio* is revealed. The intention by the artist is for the observer to recognize the artist's personal experience as narrative.

Despite the myriad obstacles facing Cuban artists in Havana they have successfully organized exhibits, conferences, dance ensembles, and cultural events in the community and national sectors.⁵⁵ Cuban artists, Jorge Elías Gil and Francisco Fernández, and Cuban-Arab artist, Lissy Sarraf strive to represent a part of Cuban society that is marginalized.

Cuban and Cuban-Arab artists share a common denominator-- they have a unique connection with Cuba- *a Cuband*.⁵⁶ The postmodernist world has an enmeshed culture of constant change and transformation. More than physical; it also encompasses psychological spaces of exchange.⁵⁷ Moreover, the visual culture of migration that artists produce consists of a fluid and less linear definition. This culture is closely akin to a *radicant*, meaning no single origin, because the artist is simultaneously changing and negotiating.⁵⁸ This fluid identity is entangled with the concept that "geography is always also psychogeography"- a connection that expands beyond geographical borders.⁵⁹

Lissy Sarraf: Cuban-Arab Visual Artist

Lissy Sarraf, is of Lebanese descendant and member of La Union Árabe (The Arab Union). She works with various media, primarily, painting and calligraphy. Her Arab-inspired artwork is one of the few Arab representations in Cuban culture but she makes her living through

⁵³ bell hooks, *Art on My Mind Visual Politics* (New York: The New Press, 1995).

⁵⁴ D. Smith-Shank and Karen Keifer-Boyd, "Editorial: Autoethnography and Arts-Based Research," *Visual Culture & Gender* 2 (2007): 62-71.

⁵⁵ Mario González, *Los árabes* (Havana, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2003).

⁵⁶ Andrea O'Reilly Herrera. *Remembering Cuba: Legacy of a Diaspora*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001). First Edition.

⁵⁷ Humphrey, "Lebanese Identities."

⁵⁸ Nicolaus Bourriaud. *The Radicant*. (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2009).

⁵⁹ Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, 57.

her artwork without the Arab inspiration. In her work, the ideology of inclusivity into Cuban culture is limited and segregated.

Sarraf is an instructor at the prestigious Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA) in Havana (Institute of Superior Arts), and holds a Master's degree in Education. Her thesis is entitled, "*Educando a través del Arte. Lo Árabe e Islámico en la Cultura Cubana*" (Educating through Art. The Arab and Islamic in Cuban Culture). It is layered with personal story, studio art, and suggestions for curriculum reform in higher education. Sarraf's work, both academic and artistic, is considered a testimonio through autoethnographic. It is not quantitative, scientific, nor linear.⁶⁰ It is an expression of creativity. Something lived and felt mingled with oral stories from family members as a form of biomythography.⁶¹

Sarraf's work encompasses images that are highly intricate in pattern and design using Arabic calligraphy as her structure. The complexities of her paintings and drawings lure the viewer into a reflective state. Her color palate in general is saturated with rich tones of reds, blues and gold, echoing the color palette often found in Middle Eastern cultures. Textiles and geometric use throughout her work are similar to Islamic mosaics and patterns present in Islamic art. The narrative spirit of her work is intrinsic of Islamic culture, as story telling.⁶² Her fluid, smooth and endless line work envelopes a sense of movement while her interlacing images and Arabic script throughout space, create a push and pull of light and darkness.

Sarraf's series, *AL Kalimat* is composed of seven paintings. One of these paintings, discussed is the "Untitled" (image #1), an oil on canvas painting with dimensions of 60 x 80 cm. Her work is dense in Arabic calligraphy and script taken from the Quran or phrases that either eludes to religious values or a way of living. In "Untitled", the light blue horizontal brush strokes with gaps of white offer a backdrop to the large calligraphy forms that create a boat shape, carrying calligraphic smaller forms that seem to be holding the oars of the ship, and moving through the sea. The blue-hued color palette eludes water, and fluidness, as if the ship is being carried in spans of ocean.

Sarraf's use of horizontal lines in the background, contrasted with the roundness of the ship's form, offers an environment of tranquil water and reflection. The ship, formed out of calligraphic symbols, carves out a vessel that is enclosed into itself, as if cocooning in safety as it is atop of the water. "Untitled" embodies the vocabulary that Sarraf uses in much of her work, with calligraphy and Quranic verses, as she is nostalgic of her ancestry, their travels to a new country, and a new beginning. Her identity is shaped by the choices of those that have come before, her life largely impacted by the psychological traces of her family's homelands, and the transition into Cuba. She grew up in a home where cultural heritage was present through stories, history, spirituality and profession. This painting illustrates the voyage to new lands, the taking of identity and culture and moving with them.

Jorge Elías Gil: Hybridity, Religion, and Resources

The framework of Jorge Elías Gil as a Cuban scholar and artist is vastly impacted by cultural and religious hybridity and the complexities of gender in Cuban culture. These offer a

⁶⁰ hooks, *Art on My Mind*.

⁶¹ Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name A Biomythography*. (Freedom: The Crossing Press, 1998).

⁶² Titus Burckhardt. *Art of Islam: Language and Meaning*. (London: World Wisdom, 2009).

space of habitation for the physical and the psychological.⁶³ His Bachelor's Degree in Theology and Master's thesis on Women and Islam add to the complexities of gender roles in Cuban culture and religion within the Arab community in Cuba. Gil's artwork includes drawings, paintings, and sculpture, with a new developing body in collage-montage and short film. His use of a combination of found materials, acrylics, pencil, charcoal, and plaster lend themselves to diversified yet cohesive bodies of works.

Gil's artwork is extensive and spans two decades. The focus on his collage-montage piece, "Templo" (2006, image #2), a mixed medium collage work on canvas, measuring 70 x 60 cm, exemplary of the hybrid creation of his art. Its dark coppered earth tones of background colors offers the illusion of distance, as it lures the viewer into the small square 'window' opening into an illuminated scene of a religious nature.

Gil's framing of the window in *Templo* is accentuated with rusty nails running parallel to the imposed scene depicting *The Old Testament Trinity* painted by fifteenth century Russian iconographer Andre Rublev. These three feminine figures in the painting are situated opposite from a partial framing of thin wood perhaps, insinuating where a trim once stood, as if to try to encase or symbolize the Trinity of God. The title of this piece, "Templo", translates to *Temple*, and the window's image in the bottom-center echoes the subject. The picture plane is highlighted in white and at the right hand bottom corner the capital letters "XPAM" give it weight, as if the three nails are grounding the capital letters which spell out 'temple' in Russian. The sacrificing of the Son of God, Jesus, the temple, through the symbolism of the three nails is magnified. Gil's collage-montage piece holds in conversation the hybridity of religion historically, and the fragmentation of identity through three divine figures that are equivalent to one.

Francisco Fernández: Religion and Resources

Fernandez creates iconic symbols from the Islamic world into works of art that deal with the social and economic conditions conducive to his daily surroundings and life in Cuba. He illustrates his reality of life as a Cuban through the medium he uses in his works of recycled paper components, as mosaic tile pieces. He takes iconic architectural symbols, such as *The Dome of the Rock*, and creates them on cardboard with recycled pieces of cardboard which he salvages, cuts up into tiny little squares of varying tones and colors, and builds his art pieces. He creates masterpieces that range about two feet by two feet, and larger in size with a spectrum of colorful tiles as in mosaic work, often found in Islamic Art. His pieces echo characteristics of Islamic architecture, the intricate patterned tile work. Although Fernández's mosaics often have figural imagery, which are not typical in Islamic Art, they are narrating a story of history, religion, or culture. His mosaic creations, depicting spiritual themes such as *De la colina de Safa a Yathrib* (From the Hill of Safa to Yathrib), *Cúpula de la Roca* (The Dome of the Rock), *La Mezquita de Kodiamin* (The Mosque of Kodiamin), and *El Árabe* (the Arab), offers yet another connection to religion and Arab roots and interweave with the Cuban-Arab ideal, as common with Islamic Art and culture.⁶⁴

Fernández's paper mosaic, "De la colina de Safa a Yathrib," (2012) (image #3), paper and mixed medium is 150 x 160 cm. This intricate and ornate paper mosaic piece, brightly colored palette, and scroll framing of the image resembles an illustrated manuscript page. The composition of four men with their camels and belongings set up against the sky and hills

⁶³ Behar, Ruth, ed., *Bridges to Cuba= Puentes a Cuba* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Print, 1995).

⁶⁴ Burckhardt, *Art of Islam*.

situates the setting as on a trail, or a journey. Their journey to the Hill of Safa is referencing the story of when the prophet Muhammad went to the city of Yathrib, now Medina. Fernández, through his mosaic pieces, further discusses the connections of the Islamic Religion, Arab culture and the intricate nature of storytelling, illustration, and daily practice. The jeweled attire, of richly designed garments on the men and the camel perhaps allude to a lucrative position in society, as they travel the road. The layers of scarves and clothes with patterning and threads of brightly colored hues, and head wraps depict the colorful Mediterranean culture and the exchanges of textile and merchandise that allow for these possessions.

Safa was once connected to the mountain of Abu Qubays, while Al-Marwah was connected to the mountain of Qu'ayqi'aan. However, during the expansion process in *Al-Masjid Al-Haram*, As-Safa and Al-Marwah were separated from them and became encompassed inside the mosque after having been outside of it. The distance between As-Safa and Al-Marwah is about 400 m, and in the middle of the Mas'a [the place where pilgrims perform *Sa'ee* (walking) between As-Safa and Al-Marwah] and the distance is where Haajar, the wife of Prophet Ibraaheem walked in her search for water. Muslim men, and not women, should fast walk this distance. It was reported in Saheeh AL-Bukhaari on the authority of Jaabir, that the Prophet performed Sa'ee between them seven times during his farewell Hajj. The story of Sa'ee between As-Safa and Al-Marwah can be traced back to the time of Ibraaheem serving to commemorate and honor the story of Haajar's search for water for her child. Allah The Almighty, commanded Prophet Ibraaheem to leave his wife Haajar and their infant son, Ismaa'eel alone in a barren valley, where there were not any water or trees, to test their faith. Ibraaheem obeyed and left his wife and infant with only a few provisions of food and water. Soon after running out of water, the mother was frantic to find water for her son, and so she climbed the nearest hills, Safa and Al-Marwah, she did this seven times with no results. Finally, while she was at Al-Marwah, she looked at her son and saw a spring of water sprouting forth from beneath his feet, thus, the family and valley was revived as Arab tribes settled in it because of its source of water, called ZamZam Well.

This story of hope is but one example of how Islam and expressive art culture meet in a way that offers solidarity of a people, an emotional tie to something larger in an Arab culture that is interfaced with religion, art, traditions, history and story. The Cuban-Arab organizations in Havana are laced with religious themes that Fernández's artwork illustrates, as a spring of hope, perseverance and solidarity. For example, the Casa Arabe house has a 'prayer room' for the Muslim foreign community, and the Islamic League offers religious conferences and observations.

Conclusion

This section discussed the Arab migration into Cuba and its impact on Cuban society. The topics discussed include a history of Cuba, Arab migration into Cuba, categories of Arab migrants, the development of Arab communities, and the impact of Cuban-Arab visual artists. It was discovered that Arab migration into Cuba occurred between the period of the 1860s -1940s, with most of the migrants coming from Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Turkey and Egypt. The main entry ports were Santiago de Cuba, Cienfuegos and Havana. The migrants were classified as Arab, Turkish, Syrian and Egyptian but the migrant origins were found to be problematic as initially most of them were seen as Syrian due to the geography of the region before it was divided into separate states as a result of European colonization. The study found that Arab migrant communities first developed in Monte, Havana were the migrants quickly became businessmen, doctors, and active members of Cuban society. More importantly, the activities of

the first generation migrants created opportunities for the second generation Cuban-Arabs in the sciences, medicine, law, and politics. They were also found to hold influential political positions in the country. It was also discovered that Cuban-Arab artists have contributed a great deal to the Cuban society. The works of three Cuban artists, Lissy Sarraf, Jorge Elías Gil, and Francisco Fernández, were chosen and analyzed for this study. The three artists shared a common denominator referencing Arab heritage and culture.

The next section presents the summary, conclusions, recommendations, and implications of this research.

Section IV

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of Arab migration into Latin America and the Caribbean, specifically into Cuba, from the period 1860-1940s. The methodology for the study employed content analysis of historical documents and books pertaining to the Arab migration into Cuba, the visual arts of contemporary Cuban-Arab artists and data from the author's field research in Cuba from May to August, 2012. The study had two main objectives. First, it discussed the causes underlying the Arab migration and its impact on Cuban society, in terms of race relations, assimilation, socio-economic concerns, and class and identity formation. Second, it analyzed the visual art representations of Cuban-Arab artists, regarding the history and cultural identities of Cuban-Arabs within the Cuban society. The findings of the study confirmed the author's original hypothesis, that the Arab migration into Cuba from the 1860s-1940s, has impacted race relations, created new socio-economic and political hierarchies, and added a new dimension of visual art to the cultural mosaic of Cuban society.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the authors field research work in Havana, visual art analysis and literature review:

1. There is no current single universal definition of migrant
2. Migrants form minority communities in their host society for cultural and group preservation purposes.
3. Migrants use several methods to preserve their cultures, including music, poetry, dance, language and visual art.
4. Cuban-Arabs have impacted the Cuban society in the areas of social, cultural, political, economic, visual art and race relations.
5. Cuban-Arab visual artists have introduced a new dimension of visual art into Cuban society.

Recommendations

Psychological borders and emotional ties to culture and homeland are a significant part of migrant communities and the migration process. Therefore, inclusivity of these varying perspectives and impact on host countries is necessary in order to develop cultural diversity.

1. The definition of migrant needs to be streamlined to include all the various categories of migrants around the globe today.
2. Migrant cultures need to be recognized and included in the host cultures to enable them to feel a part of their new society.
3. The Cuban government needs to encourage Cuban-Arab visual artists in their efforts to add to the cultural diversity of Cuba.

Implications for Further Study

There is a need for further research of Arab migration and its impact on Cuban society and culture, specifically the intersections of class, race and gender and the visual arts.

1. Women and the Visual arts within the Cuban-Arab community.
2. The Arab migration into Santiago de Cuba, and the racialization of this population in comparison to the Arabs who settled in Havana.
3. The Arab-Islamic footprint within Cuban society and the visual arts.

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Image #1

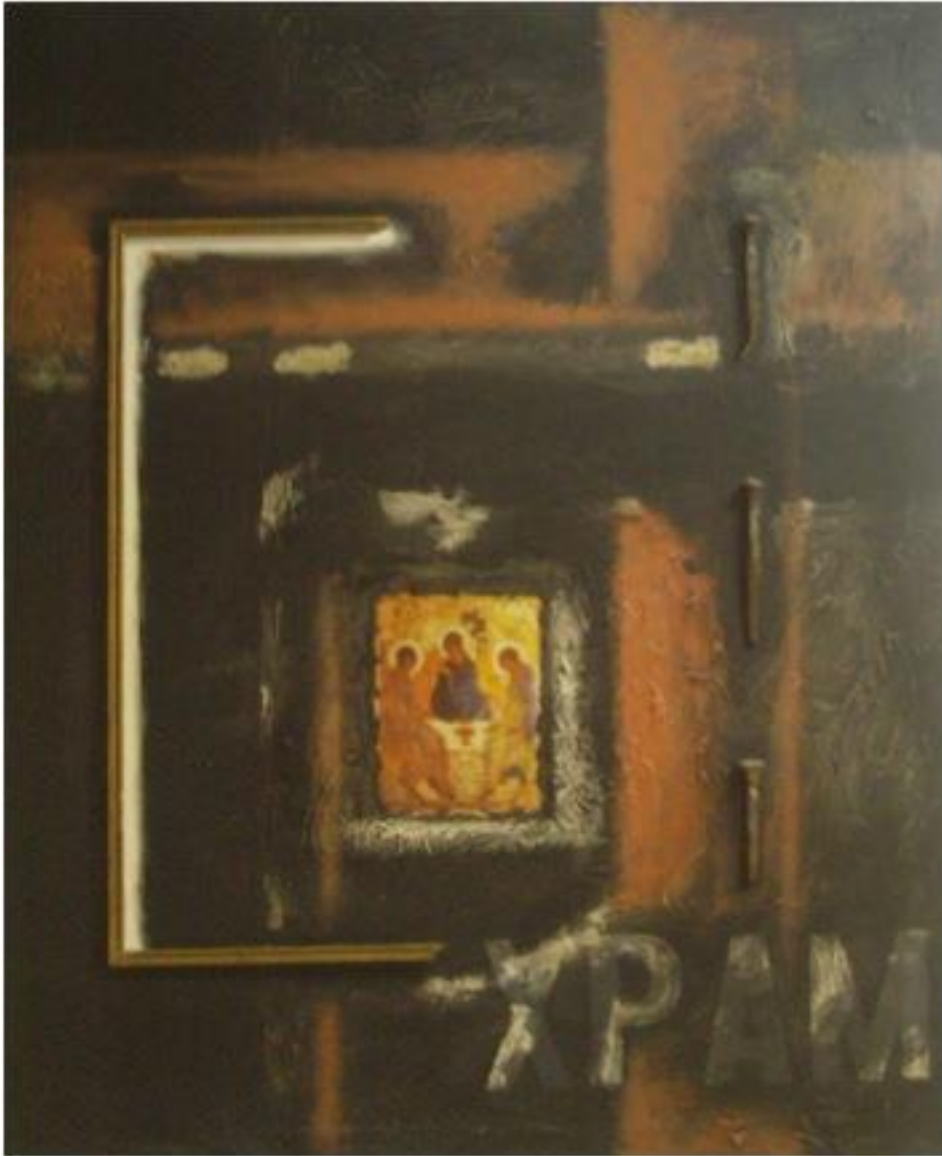


Image #2

Image #3

