



Santeria Enthroned: Art, Ritual, and Innovation in an Afro-Cuban Religion

David H. Brown

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Ever since its emergence in colonial-era Cuba, Afro-Cuban Santería (or Lucumí) has displayed a complex dynamic of continuity and change in its institutions, rituals, and iconography. In *Santería Enthroned*, David H. Brown combines art history, cultural anthropology, and ethnohistory to show how Africans and their descendants have developed novel forms of religious practice in the face of relentless oppression.

Focusing on the royal throne as a potent metaphor in Santería belief and practice, Brown shows how negotiation among ideologically competing interests have shaped the religion's symbols, rituals, and institutions from the nineteenth century to the present. Rich case studies of change in Cuba and the United States, including a New Jersey temple and South Carolina's Oyotunji Village, reveal patterns of innovation similar to those found among rival Yoruba kingdoms in Nigeria. Throughout, Brown argues for a theoretical perspective on culture as a field of potential strategies and "usable pasts" that actors draw upon to craft new forms and identities—a perspective that will be invaluable to all students of the African Diaspora.

American Academy of Religion Award for Excellence in the Study of Religion (Analytical-Descriptive Category)

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