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Boletin Martiano

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Editor: Denis Rey, Ph.D.

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Message from the Editor

By Denis Rey, Ph.D.

The 2023 NEH Summer Institute was a great success, thanks to the impressive class of NEH scholars and the accomplished team of lecturers that amassed at our campus for the month-long program. James, Adolfo, and I have been blessed to have spent part of our summer with such a wonderful group who shares the passion for the history of the Cuban émigré communities of Florida and New York. The professional connections and friendships that were made will go a long way in helping the CJMSA achieve its mission of promoting the work of José Martí and studying the immigrant communities that struggled for Cuban independence. Thank you for helping us promote the legacies of these important actors. We look forward to continuing this cooperative effort. It is also hard to believe that fall is here. This issue of El Boletin Martiano exemplifies the collaborative spirit of our academic community, as some of the contributors were also participants in the NEH Summer Institute. Our first article is an excerpt from Dr. Lisandro Perez's book, The House on G Street, which tells the fascinating story of his own family. Dr. Perez serves as Professor of the Department of Latin American and Latina/o Studies at John Jay College of the City University of New York. You can use the coupon code: NYUAU30, to purchase the book at https://nyupress.org/. The second article, "Key West: From Cigars, Immigrants, and Revolution to Tourism, Gays, and Real Estate," written by Dr. Robert Kerstein, describes how Key West evolved over the last 150 years. Dr. Kerstein is Emeritus Professor of Government and World Affairs at the University of Tampa and served as Tampa's official historian. The third piece, "Un paseo por el método de José Martí," written by Dr. Steven Dike, provides an in-depth analysis of Martí's storytelling. Dr. Dike is an Associate Teaching Professor in the Honors Program at the University of Colorado at Boulder. I hope you enjoy reading this issue of El Boletin Martiano as much as we have.

Excerpt from: The House on G Street: A Cuban Family Saga (New York University Press, 2023) by Lisandro Pérez.

Lisandro Pérez

In The House on G Street the author tells Cuba's story through the lens of his own family, writing a microhistory that serves to illustrate the forces that led to the rise and fall of the Cuban Republic. The following excerpt is Chapter 8 (pp. 126-142), entitled "General Cigar," which details how the author's paternal grandfather and namesake operated his tobacco leaf processing and exporting business. The account is pieced together with interviews of persons knowledgeable with the process as well as the grandfather's personal notebook in the author's possession and represents a detailed chronicle of one of Cuba's traditional industries.

The 1920s roared into Cuba. With the price of sugar reaching new heights, the country was flush with money, enjoying what became known as "The Dance of the Millions." US investments multiplied, creating opportunities for many Cubans to profit handsomely.

The business partnership of Rogelio Echevarría and Lisandro Pérez flourished during the 1920s, but it faced a welcomed challenge. The demand for their product continued to grow as more US cigar manufacturers sought to acquire the leaf from the central region of Cuba. More land was converted to vegas, especially in the regions of Placetas, Cabaiguán, and Zaza del Medio, areas farther away from the hub of Echevarría y Pérez in Camajuaní. To keep up with demand, the partners had to territorially expand their operations across a wide swath of Las Villas, and that was the challenge. In their business, broadening the area of operations required significant investments in infrastructure. While Camajuaní was the nerve center of the operations, with the largest warehouse and direct shipping connections to Havana,

all of the company's functions could not be centralized there. The initial warehousing and processing of the leaves had to be a local operation not far from the vegas where the leaves were collected. At that time, the transportation of the product from the vega to the company's facilities was done using large oxcarts that had to lumber their way through roads that were often narrow and unpaved. The distance from Camajuaní to the area around Zaza del Medio, where some of the most distant vegas were located, is fifty miles. The leaves collected from the veguero were not packaged in a way that could withstand such a long trek without some damage, given the hot and possibly rainy conditions. It was therefore necessary to have a facility in each of the towns near the vegas, towns with rail connections, where the leaves would be processed and packed for the trip to Camajuaní, and eventually to Havana.

There were also labor considerations. The most labor-intensive phase of the operation was the stemming of the leaves (the process of removing the middle rib of the leaf), for which a large female labor force was seasonally employed. This required a decentralization of the processing functions, since Camajuaní, or any other single locality, could not provide the necessary number of women to work as *despalilladoras* (stemmers) if the company's operations were concentrated in one facility. It was necessary to tap into different local labor markets, especially since the women, who were employed seasonally and compensated on a piecework basis, and most no doubt had traditional domestic obligations as well, could not be expected to relocate or commute a long distance to a central facility.

Before the 1920s, Echevarría y Pérez had already acquired or built, and staffed, casas de tabaco in several localities. But the increasing demand and the extension of vegas throughout the region required that many more be established if they were to keep ahead of the competition in purchasing the best vegas. A substantial investment had to be made.

It was at that critical moment that an important American cigar manufacturer made the decision to enter the Cuban market as a buyer. The General Cigar Company, with corporate offices at 119 West Fortieth Street in New York, was the producer of the popular brands Robert Burns, Van Dyck, White Owl, and William Penn, all manufactured at the time with tobacco leaves from Pennsylvania and Connecticut. It had its primary processing and manufacturing facility in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, near some of its tobacco fields in that county. Its corporate precursor, United Cigar Manufacturers Company, dates to at least 1909. It changed to General Cigar in 1917, the year that name first appears in the corporate annual reports.

The company's incursion into Cuba was its first attempt to internationalize the sources of its raw material. Its 1921 annual report lists all the company-owned manufacturing, warehouse, distribution, and retail outlets, and none were located outside the US. They discovered, however, that the pungent leaves from Las Villas, when blended with their own Pennsylvania leaves, produced a better smoke.

The customers of the processed leaves sold by Echevarría and Pérez, such as the House of Bernheim, were typically family-owned businesses that were involved only in manufacturing, purchasing leaves ready to be rolled into a cigar. General Cigar was a bigger company, with experience not just in manufacturing but in all aspects of cigar production, including growing and processing the leaves. Their business model led them to decide on a more far-ranging presence in Cuba than as simple buyers of the processed leaves. The company set out to do what Echevarría y Pérez was doing: purchase from the *vegueros*, process the leaves, and ship them to the United States. In their case, the leaves would be shipped to New York and then on to Lancaster, where they would be blended with their Pennsylvania leaves to form the filler that was then encased in Connecticut wrappers, also from their farms. Although General Cigar was also a grower in the United States, they knew that in Cuba that function was best left up to the *vegueros*, but their corporate profile predisposed them to engage in the processing of the leaves.

The company had two alternatives in Cuba. One was to invest in building the infrastructure and in recruiting the personnel needed to compete with the Cuban companies, such as Echevarría y Pérez, that had years of experience and contacts in Las Villas. The other, the smarter move, was to just buy one of those companies and acquire their facilities and their experienced personnel. Isaac Bernheim, who was starting to wind down his business as he contemplated retirement, placed the executives of General Cigar in touch with my grandfather. The company made an offer to acquire all the facilities of Echevarría y Pérez, including the warehouse in Havana, and to retain its full-time employees, that is, Lisandro and the administrative, clerical, and skilled employees.

My grandfather had misgivings about selling what he had worked so hard to build. Still in his mid-fifties, he was in his prime as a businessman and was looking forward to more years of running an operation to which he had devoted his life and developed so many personal and working relationships, most of whom depended on Echevarría y Pérez for their livelihood, from the *vegueros* who loyally sold their *vegas* to him to the employees in each of the *casas de tabaco*. It seemed as if he was abandoning them for an uncertain future in the hands of foreigners. But there were compelling reasons favoring the deal. To stay competitive, Echevarría y Pérez had to make significant investments to expand its operations. If the offer from the Americans was refused and General Cigar, with its capital, became a competitor, then it could have spelled the end of Lisandro's business. And then there was the situation of Rogelio Echevarría. Echevarría y Pérez had built a roster of loyal recurring buyers such as the House of Bernheim, so Rogelio's job as the salesman of the product had become practically obsolete. More than a decade older than my grandfather, he was already in effect a silent partner. By 1919, Lisandro was managing the entire operations of the company from Havana, where he had moved with his family. Rogelio was ready to cash out and retire, so he strongly favored selling out.

At some point in the negotiation process, Isaac Bernheim passed on to the President of General Cigar, Fred Hirschhorn, the critical piece of advice that persuaded Lisandro to the deal. Bernheim and Hirschhorn were probably well acquainted: both were sons of German Jewish immigrants, contemporaries who started in the tobacco business as teenagers, and active in New York cigar manufacturing and philanthropy circles. Bernheim made his colleague realize that the most important asset General Cigar would be acquiring in the deal were not the facilities but rather Lisandro's expertise and deep contacts in the region. No manager sent from Pennsylvania to Camajuaní was going to be able to match the deep knowledge and extensive network my grandfather had built over decades. "Give him full authority in managing the entire operation," Isaac advised.

That is precisely what General Cigar included in the deal, offering to hire Lisandro to be completely in charge of the company's operations in Cuba, naming him as President of the newly incorporated General Cigar Company of Cuba, Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of the General Cigar Company. Lisandro accepted on one condition: while all the other employees would receive a salary or wage, he wanted to be compensated by commission based on the amount of tobacco shipped to New York. Ever since he bought the general store in Vueltas when he was a teenager, Lisandro made a living based on what he produced, not on a wage, so the arrangement with General Cigar suited him best and was consistent with the autonomy he was given to manage the entire business.

Working on a commission basis was also meant as an assurance to the Americans that he would continue to devote himself to running a profitable business that produced a quality leaf. The agreement read, "L. Pérez commits himself to dedicate all his time to the business of the General Cigar Co. of Cuba Ltd. in the warehouse, the despalillos, and everything related to the business in Cuba." He was now

working for the Americans, but the job remained the same: managing the operations involved in taking the tobacco leaf from the vega in Las Villas to the docks in Havana for shipment to New York.

Lisandro received $2.50 for every *tercio* of tobacco leaves that he shipped to New York. *Tercios* were the packages used to transport the leaves at various stages of their processing, including the final shipment to General Cigar. It was a unit of volume rather than weight: a cube with sides measuring about three feet, packed with carefully laid layers of tobacco leaves and wrapped in yagua, the thick woody sheathing leaf base of the royal palm, and then sewn tight with burlap. A *tercio* could weigh as much as one hundred and thirty pounds if it contained leaves that had not been stemmed, or as little as eighty-eight pounds with stemmed leaves.

In 1933, Lisandro's commission came to $27,303. He still managed to make that sum in the depths of the Great Depression because the tobacco he shipped that year had already been maturing in the Havana warehouse for several years. The year before, however, General Cigar ordered Lisandro not to buy any tobacco because the company faced a loss of profits and had enough inventory given the depressed market. Essentially all field operations were to cease, with personnel placed on unpaid leave. Lisandro could not do the latter. A great part of his success was due to the cadre of administrators he had trained and who worked for him all their lives managing the operations in the major tobacco houses, men such as Abelardo Cangas in the Havana warehouse, Higinio González in Camajuaní, and Antonio Barquín in Cabaiguán. With the acquisition of Echevarría y Pérez, they had become General Cigar employees with salaries ranging from $2,500 to $3,500, and the company ordered them furloughed. Lisandro met with the employees and proposed paying them half of their annual salary for working on a drastically reduced schedule managing the minimal processing operations of the tobacco that had already been purchased years before. He paid

those reduced salaries out of his pocket. Apart from his loyalty to those lifelong employees, he could simply not afford to lose them if they went elsewhere for employment.

General Cigar invested in the necessary expansion of facilities across the tobacco-producing regions of Las Villas. Even before that expansion, managing all the operations was a complicated task. It had now become even more complex, with more facilities, more employees, and more inventory. By the late 1930s, the General Cigar Company of Cuba, under Lisandro's management, was operating out of fifteen tobacco houses spread throughout central Cuba, in addition to the warehouse in Havana. Some of those facilities were only large enough to serve as the places where the newly purchased tobacco was brought in from the nearby *vegas*, sorted, initially processed, packed, and provisionally stored, that is, the process known as the *escogida*. Those smaller houses were given the name of that process, *la escogida*. The larger facilities, seven of them, functioned as both *escogidas* and stemmeries (*despalillos*). They were larger because they carried out both functions, and eventually all the inventory was funneled through them for final processing, including stemming, which required space for all the desks where the *despalilladoras* performed the delicate task of removing the stem from each leaf. Camajuaní was the largest of the *despalillos* and the nerve center of all field operations.

The process of taking a leaf from the *vega* to the dock in Havana involved a multitude of steps in which the leaf was sorted, packed, shipped to Havana, aged, shipped back to Las Villas, unpacked, fermented, stemmed, repacked, shipped again to Havana, and stored before it was finally loaded on a ship to New York. A leaf's journey through that process normally took seven years. Adding to the complexity of the operation was the management of both a permanent and temporary workforce that during peak periods could exceed a thousand workers in the tobacco-processing facilities scattered throughout the region. All this required an efficient cargo transportation network linking those facilities with one another, with the

vegas, and with Havana. And then there was the maintenance of the facilities and the purchase of all the ancillary supplies needed to process and pack the leaves, such as the yaguas for *tercios*, which were purchased directly from individual farmers. It was a business that was no less complex, perhaps even more so, than any of the industries involved in processing an agricultural commodity into a fine product with a worldwide reputation, such as wine or distilled spirits. The operation Lisandro managed was perhaps more intricate than those of his competitors, for he took no shortcuts, managing a system he had developed that produced a processed leaf with the quality that established his reputation and attracted General Cigar as a buyer.

The process started while the leaf was still on the plant, in the *vega*. Lisandro had buyers in the field whose job was to keep a running account on each of the tobacco farms in their assigned territories. They were to record the date the *veguero* planted the seedlings, the provenance of the seedlings, and the changes in temperature and levels of precipitation in the area. Since the tobacco plant is harvested in stages, depending on the maturity of the leaves in each plant, the buyers would also record the dates of the first cut, second cut, third cut, and so on. Once the entire *vega* had been harvested and the *veguero* had hung the leaves in stitched bundles in his curing house, the buyer would estimate the size of the *vega*, the adequacy of the curing conditions, and the quality of the leaf. All this information, plus the farmer's reputation, was factored into the decision on whether or not to make an offer on the crop.

To meet the volume of tobacco that General Cigar expected from its investment, Lisandro had to rely on the reports of those carefully chosen buyers to make decisions on those *vegas* with which he was personally unfamiliar. He was now operating in an expanded region, and he did not have firsthand experience with all the new *vegueros* that could potentially supply him with inventory. However, those

vegueros who were his long-standing suppliers were not scouted by a buyer. Lisandro knew their reputations for producing quality leaves and would every year buy their crop without inspection.

The trickiest part was setting the price and deciding when to offer it. Prices generally ranged from eighteen to twenty-five pesos per *quintal* (100 kilograms or about 220 pounds). Lisandro considered not only the buyers' reports but also the trends in the world tobacco market and the size of his inventory from previous years. In terms of price, some years the constellation of factors favored him, and other years they favored the *veguero*, but he knew that since this was an annual process and he wanted to keep buying from the best *vegueros*, he had to settle on a fair price, one that would not be exploitative when it was a buyer's market. This is why some *vegueros* were his loyal suppliers, trusting that the price he set was a fair one, and why his competitors looked to him as the standard when setting their own purchase prices in the region.

There were years in which some of his competitors would start making offers to a few *vegueros* at a price that Lisandro considered unreasonably high. They wanted to drive up the price because they had a glut in inventory and had no intention of buying much of the new crop but did not want that inventory devalued with a lower price that year. This would usually set off panic buying from others who were concerned that the best *vegas* would be bought up. One year, that panic reached the boardroom in New York, and General Cigar sent Lisandro a telegram ordering him to start buying at the higher price. But Lisandro knew the game and held fast, telegramming the Americans, in Spanish, that if they wanted to buy at those prices, they were welcome to go down to Cuba and do it themselves, because he was not going to do it. He was in charge of operations, he reminded them, and he would decide when to buy and at what price. New York backed down, the panic subsided, and he made offers that year that were in line with the actual market. The suits in the offices on Fortieth Street never meddled again.

Once the *veguero* accepted the price Lisandro and his buyers offered, the deal was sealed with a handshake. It was an irrevocable oral contract. Neither party could afford to damage its reputation by trying to go back on it. A date would be set, sometime between May and September, the season for the *escogidas*, to pick up the crop and pay the farmer. The calendar was set calculating it would take an entire day to load the vega and then unload it at the tobacco house. Some ambitious *vegueros* produced crops that could take two or three days to load and unload, but such large *vegas* were the exception.

On the appointed day, the oxcarts (eventually replaced by trucks) would arrive at the farmer's property, along with the personnel from General Cigar, to start the *escogida* process. The oxcarts were owned and operated by independent contractors, and the number hired for that day would depend on the estimated volume of the crop. At the farmer's curing house, as the *matules* (bundles) of leaves were unhung from their perches, batches of them would be stacked on a large scale to weigh them. The buyer's workers would then form a line from the curing house to the oxcarts, passing from person to person the *matules*. When the loading was over, the amount owed was calculated, and the *veguero* was handed a voucher that showed both the volume he produced and the amount he was due. It was then customary for the farmer and his family to invite all who had worked that day to a lunch of either *arroz con pollo* or a roasted pig that had been slaughtered for the occasion. The *vega* was then transported to the *escogida* plant and carefully unloaded.

The next day the *veguero* would go to the company's tobacco house in town and redeem his voucher for a check payable at the City Bank branch in that same locality. Starting in 1907, when it entered the Cuban market, City Bank expanded rapidly throughout the island, so that by the 1930s it had established a ubiquitous presence, making possible the transfer of funds from the United States to almost any locality in Cuba. In anticipation of the *escogida* season, Lisandro's office would send a detailed breakdown to

General Cigar of funds that needed to be deposited in each branch in the region, based on estimates of the monies they anticipated would be disbursed to *vegueros* in each locality. The office in New York would then wire the money to City Bank in Havana, with instructions on the distribution of those funds among its branches in Las Villas. The pervasive presence of US companies in Cuba, including banks, made it possible for a *veguero* somewhere in central Cuba to form part of an international financial system.

In the *escogida* house, the *matules* were disassembled and the leaves were laid on the floor, sprinkled with water to prevent brittleness, and then sorted by color, size, and quality into one of seven descriptive categories. The leaves in each category were retied together in circular bundles of about 160 leaves each and carefully packed in *tercios* made of yagua for shipment to the warehouse in Havana, where they would be cured for two or three years. The logic of shipping them to Havana was that the warehouse there had ample space and the optimal environmental conditions for curing the leaf. The *escogida* houses did not have the humidity requirements nor the space to store two or three years of inventory.

Each *vega* was processed separately so it could be tracked. Every *tercio* was stamped with the name of the *veguero* and the date the *vega* was picked up. Those identifiers would remain in place in subsequent packaging throughout the entire process so that the *tercios* that eventually arrived in Pennsylvania could be identified by their exact provenance in Cuba.

Once the *tercios* had spent enough time in Havana, they were shipped back to Las Villas, but not to the original *escogida* house. They were redirected to one of the seven *despalillos*, mostly to Camajuaní, where they would be unpacked, the leaves moistened again, and then the bundles hung on a structure made of hollow poles, with thermometers protruding from the end of each pole. Those structures were then completely covered with several heavy blankets so the leaves would “sweat” and run a “fever” for several days, and the thermometers would be checked periodically. It was akin to a fermentation process designed

to enrich the flavor of the tobacco. On the day the blankets were removed, only the employees handling the operation could be inside the *despalillo*. The fumes that were dispelled had a potent smell similar to ammonia that could be detected as far as Camajuaní's park. Evacuating the personnel on those days was a practice adopted after several *despalilladoras* working in the big room on the farthest end of the facility fainted from the fumes.

The next step was the stemming of the leaves. Stemming was seasonal piecework done by women, using only their fingernails to remove the central rib or vein, leaving the leaf with a sort of double kidney shape. Each woman would disassemble her assigned bundle, stem each leaf, and then retie the bundle again and attach her distinctive tag. The days, weeks, and months when stemming was taking place was when the *despalillo* in Camajuaní turned into a lively, bustling place, with as many as five hundred *despalilladoras* on the main floor. On those days, Regina Depestre, the tall black woman who ran the cafeteria in the central patio of the *despalillo*, made a hefty profit turning out batches of the incomparable cod fritters that everyone just had to have for lunch.

The final step was to pack the leaves into *tercios* again, in carefully laid out layers separated by kraft paper. For this last packaging, the yagua *tercios* were wrapped tightly with a layer of burlap that was handstitched in place. They would go back to Havana to be stored and cured for another two or three years before they were transported to the port and shipped to New York.

This complex processing regime that Lisandro had instituted for his business was followed every year in every one of the facilities in Las Villas by a loyal and experienced administrative cadre that had worked for him their entire lives. The process was so routine that it was almost a ritual. Once he moved to Havana, Lisandro could have delegated the field operations to those administrators. But he could not conceive of the idea of running his business exclusively from his office in the warehouse in Havana. The

quality of his product was determined by what happened on the ground in Las Villas, in the *vegas* and the tobacco houses, and if he had personally guaranteed to General Cigar that he would uphold those quality standards, then he had to remain active in the field.

For more than three decades after moving to Havana, he followed a weekly routine from which he very rarely deviated. Every Wednesday around five in the morning, he would descend the stairway from the terrace of the house on G street to the driveway carrying a small briefcase with papers and his inseparable notebook. The black Buick was waiting for him at the bottom of the stairs with César holding open the door to the back seat. César was his chauffeur for all business-related automobile travel, and his services, as well as the Buick itself, had been negotiated in the deal with General Cigar. Lisandro never learned how to drive, and so it was critical to have a chauffeur, especially for the weekly two-hundred-mile jaunt to Camajuaní. César was an employee of the company, and the Buick was owned by General Cigar.

After a stop in Colón, Matanzas, for breakfast, Lisandro arrived in Camajuaní at eleven in the morning, but not directly to the *despalillo*. Lisandro arranged to rent an enclosed parking space adjoining a private residence in a quiet area of town near the *despalillo*. César would park the car there, and Lisandro would walk to his office in the tobacco house. During his entire stay in Camajuaní, he would walk everywhere, and the Buick would stay sequestered. Lisandro did not want to give an image of ostentatiousness by being driven around the town in a luxury car.

Lisandro would conduct business from his office in the *despalillo* in Camajuaní, although occasionally he would go out to Placetas or Cabaiguán to check on the situation in those tobacco houses. Some of his administrators in other facilities would go to Camajuaní to see him regarding any issues they were encountering. He would stay in Camajuaní until midday on Friday, when César would drive him back to Havana. Lisandro slept the two nights in a dormitory he had set up on the second floor of the *despalillo*.

It was so austere it looked like a hospital ward, with six single white metal beds arranged along the walls and a small adjoining bathroom. César also slept there, as well as any guests. When they were older, my father and his brother Rubén accompanied him on these weekly trips, and they would sleep there as well. Lisandro did not afford himself the luxury of a private room. He indulged in some luxuries in Havana, as evidenced by the house on G street, but in Las Villas, where he had lived most of his life in fairly humble conditions, he never allowed himself any ostentatious display that could be interpreted as showing off the wealth he had acquired. My grandfather may have moved to the glittering capital, but his essence was still that of an orphaned boy from Remedios, and he never wanted to do anything that would alienate him from that environment that had been the key to his success.

Nevertheless, everyone knew he was a wealthy man and the town's largest employer, so there was the expectation that he might use some of that wealth to improve the lives of people in Camajuaní, and he did not defraud that expectation. Every Wednesday when he walked up to the *despalillo* after his trip from Havana, there would invariably be a small queue of people waiting for him outside the entrance to ask him for help in meeting some urgent need: money for a critical medicine, a job, rent money so as to avoid eviction, and so on. He usually helped those he felt were deserving. His notebook has several lists, written at different moments in time, with names of people and money amounts. The lists are headed "defaulted loans." Some amounts were thousands of dollars.

His greatest single contribution to the town's welfare, however, was the expansion and refurbishment of the local public school, located in the center of town, on the highway from Santa Clara. Public schools, especially those outside Havana, received minimal financial support from the government. Lisandro's contribution made a big difference, but it was an ongoing commitment on his part. Whenever the school needed repairs, maintenance, or painting, the principal would contact Lisandro, and he would send

over his maintenance crew from the *despalillo* to take care of any issues. To acknowledge his beneficence, the town council issued an official proclamation naming him an "adoptive son" of Camajuaní and naming the school in his honor. It remained "Grupo Escolar Lisandro Pérez" until its name was changed in 1961.

Part of Lisandro's weekly routine was to start his Mondays in the Havana warehouse by sitting down at his desk, taking out a legal pad and a pencil, and writing out longhand and in Spanish a report to General Cigar on whatever he wanted to report on (inventory, the cost and quality of the *vegas*, overhead costs, etc.). He would then fold the sheets, place them in an envelope, put a stamp on it, and mail it to New York. General Cigar had on staff in their main office a translator who would render the report in English and circulate it to the board of directors.

The purchase of Echevarría y Pérez by General Cigar was one of many takeovers of Cuban businesses by US corporations during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Many Cuban historians and writers of the period bemoaned the trend, arguing that Cubans were losing control of their wealth and economy. To be sure, it was a disquieting trend with far-reaching consequences, but the case of General Cigar and its relationship with my grandfather provides an example of how even with US ownership, there was Cuban agency. Lisandro in effect made all the management decisions for the US company that had bought him out. Perhaps it was an uncommon case, but it was probably widespread in sectors of the economy in which the Americans relied on Cuban expertise to maximize the profits from their investments.

The House on G Street is available at: https://nyupress.org/ Use coupon code NYUP30 for a 30% discount.

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Key West: From Cigars, Immigrants, and Revolution to Tourism, Gays, and Real Estate

Robert Kerstein

Situated on an island two miles wide and four miles long, bounded by the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean, Key West, the southernmost city in the continental United States, has long been described as unique and one of America's most intriguing places. During the last several decades, tourism promoters have drawn upon this reputation to attract massive numbers of tourists. As early as the mid-1930s, when Key West first attracted large numbers of visitors, some Conchs (i.e., Key West natives) and newcomers argued that the influx of tourists would dramatically change its composition and character, making it similar to other tourist destinations. Nearly a century later, the island still offers what many perceive to be a unique environment, but economic trends have limited opportunities for Key West to be "One Human Family," the motto it adopted at the turn of the 21st Century.

Post-Civil War Era: Cigars and Revolution

In the decades following the Civil War, many observers found the island enchanting in a variety of ways. In 1884, the author of a guide to fishing and camping in Florida called it a "quaint and charming city, full of oddities and incongruities." Four years later, Jacksonville's Florida Times-Union, wrote that "Nowhere within the boundaries of the United States can be found a place resembling [Key West], with its row of frame-built buildings, its hundreds of cigar factories, its cosmopolitan population, and its thousand and one other peculiarities which claim the attention of the stranger." A woman visiting Key West in 1886 also emphasized its uniqueness, calling it "an odd and novel place, and the more interesting on that account. There are peculiarities here that strike a stranger very forcibly. Key West is intensely unlike any other place in the Union" (Kerstein, 28-29).

These visitors were reacting to the island's remote location, its maritime enterprises, its vernacular architecture, narrow streets, and sizable immigrant population. In both 1870 and 1880, roughly half of Florida's foreign-born population lived in Monroe County, where the overwhelming share of the county's population lived in Key West. In the decades prior to the Civil War, Bahamians, including both whites and Blacks, were the most numerous immigrant group. They were employed in the wrecking industry that recovered ships and their cargo that had wrecked on the coral reefs adjacent to the Florida Keys and in other maritime industries (see Viele). Following the Civil War, Bahamians still outnumbered other immigrants and increasing numbers moved to Key West due to economic hardship in the Bahamas. The wrecking industry soon ebbed due to a variety of factors, including ships' access to more accurate charts, additional lighthouses, and an increase in steam-powered ships, so most worked in the island's sponging and other maritime industries. In addition, immigrants arrived from other locations, including the Canary Islands and several Eastern European countries from which a Jewish population emigrated (Haskell; Stebbins).

After the start of the Ten-Year War for Cuban independence from Spain (1868-78), Cubans, including Afro-Cubans, began arriving in large numbers. They were employed primarily in the thriving cigar industry and several Cuban enclaves developed near the cigar factories (López, Westfall). In 1880, the U.S. Census recorded that more Bahamians than Cubans lived on the island, but an 1885 census found that the number of Cuban immigrants exceeded Bahamian immigrants. In fact, the number of Cubans in Key West during this era ebbed and flowed, due to many leaving the island during cigar strikes and sometimes returning, and cigar factories relocating, primarily to Tampa, West Tampa (which incorporated as a city in 1895) and the Ocala area (Cook, López, Ronning, Westfall). The influx of Bahamians and Cubans contributed to Key West's population being the largest of any city in Florida in 1880 (9,890) and 1890 (18,080). And the

combined immigrant population from these two countries exceeded 50% of the island's residents (Stebbins).

Due to its large Cuban émigré population, José Martí visited Key West several times beginning in 1891. Martí, born in Havana in 1853, was primarily based in New York City by the 1880s. He referred to the island by such names as "The noble Key…the exemplary Key [and]…the generous Key" (Ronning, 4). Martí, however, was much more than a visitor casually experiencing the flavor of the island. His goal was to build support for the Cuban Revolutionary Party, which was mobilizing for a rebellion against Spain. His Key West speeches included those given from the balcony of the home of cigar manufacturer Teodoro Perez, a strong supporter of Cuban independence. Located on Duval Street, the island's main boulevard stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic, the home became known as "La Terraza de Marti" (The Balcony of Martí). He also met with leaders of Key West's Cuban community at the San Carlos Institute, a center for much of the Cuban social and political life in Key West. Martí had to cope with numerous strikes in the cigar industry, the wrath of some in the Anglo community, conflict between Spaniards and Cubans that were related to the cigar industry and the organizing for Cuban independence, and the exodus of thousands of Cubans from the island as cigar factories relocated (Poyo, Ronning, Westfall). His efforts ultimately launched the Cuban revolution against Spain in 1895, during which he was killed by Spanish troops.

By 1910, the cigar industry was still prominent in Key West, but it had declined, with its number of cigar factories significantly lower than in Tampa (Westfall). The sponging industry also weakened as Greeks from Tarpon Springs using more advanced techniques became the center of Florida's sponging industry. The once prominent turtle industry continued, but also declined, due partially to the overharvesting of the turtles in the Keys. Although it was no longer the largest city in Florida, Key West's population in 1910 (19,945) was higher than in previous decades.

Tough Times: The Beginning of Tourism

Many expected that Key West would change dramatically with the arrival of Henry Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway (the Key West Extension) in 1912. The hope of many in the island's business community was that when the Panama Canal was completed, Key West would prosper as freighters traveled to and from the Canal. More tourists would find their way to the island city on the railroad and accommodations would be built to provide for them. At the banquet held in his honor after the railroad reached Key West, Flagler predicted Key West's population would reach 50,000 within a decade. Not all, however, welcomed this trajectory, raising the concern that "The whistle of the locomotive will be heard in the land and another queer corner of the earth will be put on the civilized map" (Standiford, 215). The theme that the uniqueness of Key West was threatened due to tourism and development was to recur throughout the rest of the century and to the present, although the Key West the critics wanted to preserve is far different from the island that others wanted to preserve decades earlier.

The railroad actually had limited commercial impact, primarily the initiation of car ferry service between Key West and Cuba carrying railroad cars with cargo (Standiford). From 1910 to 1920 the island's population decreased from 19,945 to 18,748 as the cigar industry continued its decline. Although tourism increased due to the railroad, its increase was far less than the island's tourism promoters had expected.

During the 1920s, the Key West Chamber of Commerce offered a picture of a unique, exotic atmosphere to lure tourists: "The architecture of the houses…gives an old-world charm and foreign atmosphere to Key West…The place has as much personality as New Orleans, an atmosphere intangible and indefinable." And the daily newspaper, the Key West Citizen, prophesized approvingly that advertising Key West's unique atmosphere would contribute to luring tourists. New hotels opened during the decade,

including the Casa Marina and La Concha, both of which still operate today. More commonly, however, developers purchased land and announced grand projects that came to naught (Kerstein).

During the first half of the 1920s, Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Palm Beach, and nearby communities in South Florida tripled their population and more. Key West, however, moved in the opposite direction, attracting fewer immigrants and witnessing the departure of many of its residents. Key West's population dropped dramatically during the decade, from 18,748 in 1920 to 12,831 in 1930, with many moving to the growing Miami area. The decline was not confined to one segment of the population but was most pronounced for the Black population. The vast majority of the island's Black population at the start of the Civil War were slaves, in part because white Key Westers purchased slaves to lease them to the U.S. Army to build Fort Zachary Taylor (Wells). After the war, however, many Black Bahamians and Afro-Cubans moved to the island, and Key West developed a reputation for relatively tolerant race relations. For example, a reporter for Florida's most widely distributed African American newspaper noted in 1895, "we know of no other city in the United States where the Negro enjoys his liberty to a greater extent than in Key West." And several Backs were elected to public office, sometimes forming electoral alliances with Cubans. No Blacks, however, served on Key West's city council from 1908 until 1971 (Brown, Jr.). And the island's reputation for tolerance was not always borne out in practice, a factor that might have contributed to the departure of Blacks from Key West. For example, in June 1920, Monroe County officials had to request assistance from naval officers to head off the efforts of a "well organized" Key West mob to remove a black man charged with the attempted rape of a white woman from the county jail and lynch him. And the KKK had an active organization in Key West during the 1920s (see Chalmers, Duong, see Gómez).

The primary reason, however, for the departure of residents, white and Black, from Key West was likely the island's weak economy. By 1930, the cigar industry employed only about 700 workers. Although

this exceeded any other employment category, it represented a dramatic loss from the roughly 2,400 cigar workers in 1905 (Westfall, 64). And no other industry replaced its loss.

The economic and population decline during the decade did not detract from Key West's allure to many visitors. In fact, it likely contributed to its attraction to those who viewed the island as a unique place, outside of mainstream America (Barnett). As writer Emer Davis wrote in 1928, Key West offered a "peculiar languid charm…a fusion of the old Southern leisureliness with Latin ease; utterly unlike…the frantic flurried life of the mainland" (Barnett, 22). Writer and inventor George Allan England wrote in 1928, Key West is "different from all other cities, filled with beauty and with curious, unique pictures…somewhat a state of mind, unique and unapproachable…save by those who love and understand the tropics" (Kerstein, 37). Ernest Hemingway arrived in Key West in 1928 after spending much of the decade in Paris. He wrote in a letter to a friend, "It's the best place I've ever been anytime, anywhere, flowers, tamarind trees, guava trees, coconut palms…Got tight last night on absinthe and did knife tricks" (Kerstein, 56). Hemingway was so attracted to the island that he and his wife, Pauline Pfeiffer, purchased a home in 1931, and Hemingway lived on the island for most of the decade.

The Great Depression: Key West as the "Bermuda of Florida"

The Hemingways could afford a house and lifestyle far different from most Key Westers. By the early years of the Great Depression, Key West's economic base had been decimated, and it continued to lose population. Both Key West and Monroe County lacked the resources to pay their workers and provide services for their population, so the Key West City Council and the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners on July 2, 1934 abdicated the operation of government in Key West to the state of Florida.

Florida's state government, however, was in no position to assist the financially plagued community. Instead, Governor David Sholtz asked Julius Stone, Jr., the head of the Florida operations of

the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), to act as the governor's agent. Stone concluded that the only hope for economic revival in Key West was to make it a tourism destination. In his view, Key West should become the "Bermuda of Florida." His "Key West Administration (KWA)" rehabilitated homes to rent to tourists, built cabanas on the beach and advertised widely, sending out postcards and brochures, featuring alluring pictures of the island. As during the previous decade, these promotional efforts emphasized that tourists would find a unique environment where visitors could "forget the cares of city life… its endless hurry and complexity" (Kerstein). He described those he was trying to lure to the island as "People who…are attracted by an Old-World charm…who are seeking a change from a standardized tourist city" (Barnett, 25).

During the 1934-35 tourist season, the number of tourists visiting Key West far exceeded earlier years. Although the devastating Labor Day hurricane of 1935 demolished the Key West Extension of the Flagler Railroad, which never resumed service to the Keys, the number of tourists arriving in Key West by steamship, plane, or car (which necessitated a car ferry for part of the trip) during the 1935-36 season was greater than the years preceding the New Deal initiatives.

Many observers continued to praise Key West, including some of the many well-known writers who visited the island. After journalist and author, Martha Gellhorn, who was to become Hemingway's third wife, arrived on a visit to Key West in 1937, she wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt, "I'm in Key West: to date it's the best thing I've found in America." And Tennessee Williams, following his first visit to Key West in 1941, noted, "This is the most fantastic place that I have been yet in America." But just as one reaction to the Flagler Railroad was that it would dampen the uniqueness of the island, some offered a similar response to Stone's initiatives to promote tourism. The poet Wallace Stevens, for example, bemoaned in 1935 that "Key West is not longer quite the delightful affection it once was." Hemingway also was critical. A Hemingway biographer noted that "Hemingway always resented what Roosevelt's program had done to

Key West. The quiet fishing village which was Ernest's haven…was transformed into a tourist resort." In 1937, a reporter for the New York Times predicted that increased tourism would bring "modern hotels and apartments and bungalows," as well as nightclubs and theaters. But, he asked, "what, then, will become of the Old Key West"?

Neither the literary figures who praised Key West for what they considered to be its unique aura nor those who criticized its shift towards a tourist town that diminished the island's uniqueness focused on the conflict between workers and New Deal administrators in Key West, a conflict that harkened back to the labor strife in the cigar industry and which clearly indicated that Key West meant different things to different people. Stone's tourism strategy might have brought more visitors to Key West, but it did not create Key Westers eager to conform to their representation in KWA's tourist brochures as content, exotic islanders.

The FERA was succeeded by programs of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) that by November 1935 hired 1,400 men and women. Some of the WPA projects were directly related to the tourism strategy of the Key West Administration. For example, the WPA created botanical gardens on Stock Island, located just east of Key West, which opened in February 1936 during Key West's second La Semana Alegre (The Week of Joy). This festival was initiated to attract more tourists to Key West, but it also celebrated Key West's Cuban heritage and the Cuban fight for independence from Spain. The festival incorporated the celebration of El Grito de Baire, the start of Cuba's revolution against Spain on February 24, 1895 in the town of Baire, which Martí and others had been organizing during his numerous visits to Key West.

In early December 1935, WPA workers in Key West went on strike after their call for higher wages was rejected. Florida's WPA administrator responded by suspending work on almost all the city's WPA projects and emphasized that none of the workers would be paid until they returned to work. The workers

voted to continue the strike, prompting about thirty "robed and hooded men," some carrying guns, to "guarantee protection to any workman who desires to return to work." Many of the WPA workers then signed petitions asking WPA officials to resume the projects and the head of the strike committee agreed, citing the possibility of bloodshed should the strike continue. The strike ended about a week after it started, with workers accepting an offer that they had rejected just a few days earlier (Kerstein, 50-51).

The War Boom and Post-War Economy and Culture

Key West continued to attract tourists during the later years of the decade, an effort buttressed by the completion of the Overseas Highway from Miami in 1938. It was the military however, that became the mainstay of the island's economy during World War II. The military presence became so strong that by the winter of 1943 the Key West Chamber of Commerce urged tourists to stay away, because the military filled all of the available accommodations. By early 1945, more than 13,000 Navy personnel were stationed at three facilities in and near Key West (Kerstein, 62). This military buildup was the critical factor in Key West's population increasing from 13,323 in 1940 to 26,433 a decade later.

Commercial fishing, which had long been a component of Key West's economy, surged in 1949 after the finding of "jumbo" shrimp (known as pink gold) in the Gulf of Mexico. Several hundred shrimp boats dominated the Key West Bight, located off of Caroline Street on the Gulf of Mexico. Shrimpers primarily slept on their boats when they were not out at sea, adding to the diversity of Key West's population. Several rough and tumble bars characterized the area, including one commonly known as "the bucket of blood."

Tourism, although not as dominant a component of the island as in the mid-1930s, was still sought after by the Chamber of Commerce and some public officials. The national attention that President Harry Truman brought to Key West during his eleven "working vacations" at his "Little White House" on the

Naval Station from November 1946 to March 1952 undoubtedly made more people aware of the island. And, as had been the case for decades, the Chamber distributed tourism brochures emphasizing the uniqueness of the island, including its architecture and the diverse heritage of the citizens. The brochures also emphasized the beautiful climate that "brought relief from sinus problems, arthritis and jittery nerves." Further, "the island attracts interesting people, permanent residents, and visitors – writers, painters, sportsmen, scientists…because it has so much that is off the beaten track and out of the usual resort routine." Estimates vary, but likely about 200,000 visitors came to Key West annually during the 1950s and the early and mid-1960s, with perhaps a 30 percent increase by the end of the decade, the vast majority driving to the island on the Overseas Highway (U.S. 1).

Some of these tourists, as well as others who moved to Key West, were likely attracted by the culture that Dorothy Raymer, a newspaper columnist for the Key West Citizen, described as laissez faire, or live and let live. This ethos contributed to widespread political corruption and illegal gambling. The Navy estimated that sailors lost about ten percent of their monthly payroll to bolita peddlers, dice tables, roulette wheels and other gambling activities (Kerstein, 85).

This same laissez faire culture, however, translated into a general tolerance of differences. In 1956, the Florida State Legislature authorized the Johns Committee to investigate the influence of communists and the presence of gays in Florida. The committee published pamphlets to "prepare…children to meet the temptation of homosexuality lurking today in the vicinity of nearly every institution of learning." Key West's diverse population included those who were sympathetic to the Johns Committee, and some who ran for political office articulated anti-gay sentiments, but this attitude did not dominate the island's culture or public discourse.

Numerous authors chose to live in Key West, at least during the winter months, in part due to its perceived uniqueness and tolerance. For example, James Kirkwood, the co-author of the play, A Chorus

Line, suggested the island was "not Florida, maybe not even America, but a country and a state of mind. It's the end of the line, even the world." Kirkwood also emphasized Key West's tolerance: "There was never a stigma attached to anything you did in your private life. Key West has always had a great attraction for people who are a little tilted, a little crazy…a little off-center, even kinky."

Still, like the strikes in the cigar industry in the late 19th century and early 20th century, and the WPA labor strife during the Great Depression, the island experienced significant discord, not over labor issues, but over tourism and development, conflicts similar to many other communities. In 1950, Key West resident Esther Chamber wrote a letter to a poet who had spent the 1944-45 winter in Key West complaining, "The old island is sure not what it used to be due to Harry [Truman] I think, damn him. Motels are sprouting up all over the place, new beaches pop up where there was only a small sand pile." In 1953, the author and Key Wester Colin Jameson noted that some Key West residents fit into the "Abandon-Ye-All Hope" group. Jameson wrote that according to them, "Key West has gone to Hell and soon won't be distinguishable from Miami Beach and I hate it." A friend of novelist and playwright Jose Yglesias offered a different indicator of the island going to Hell. The friend, who had lived in Key West for a few years after the Second World War, responded to the restoration Yglesias described during the 1950s and 60s on Front Street, near the Gulf, "When the madams started moving their houses over to Stock Island, I knew it was all beginning to go."

In 1973, two observers stated that Key West was not facing the same development pressures as other places and suggested that this is an element "that makes Old Key West different from all other cities." In fact, however, developers were planning projects similar to those of other towns, and, as in other communities, citizens mobilized to oppose them.

One of the major controversies surrounded a 1973 proposal by a Key Biscayne developer to build a 75-unit condominium, necessitating a zoning change. William Westray, a civic association president,

opposed the change, as did many other activists who displayed yellow bumper stickers on their cars proclaiming “No High Rises on the Keys.” Opponents contended that the high-rise condominium would tarnish the existing character of Key West’s built environment, detract from the Island's “laid-back” climate, and decrease its appeal to tourists. Although the city commission voted to approve the zoning and density changes the developer had requested, legal action ultimately blocked the proposal and resulted in the city commission adopting a proposal limiting the height of multi-family units to four stories.

Other conflicts related to development were not always confined to the city commission chambers or the courtroom. After a successful effort by Westray and others in 1978 to block a proposed development, Westray’s car had acid poured over it and its tires slashed, and tar was poured over his house. Westray, a former military officer, readied himself for a recurrence by keeping several loaded pistols and rifles in his house. Key West’s famed laid-back, live-and-let-live attitude was apparently not universal, especially when the opportunity to make significant profits was at stake (Kerstein, 152-54.

By the mid-1970s, the military’s presence on the island ebbed due to the closing of its largest Naval Station in 1974, which had been renamed Truman Annex in honor of the former president. Likely more than commercial fishing and tourism, the drug trade became the primary economic driver of the community during the remainder of the decade and into the next. It was common for those making money in the trade to buy cars, boats and other big-ticket items with cash. And, for some, drugs were involved in bartering for favors. For example, one aspiring actress who was a newcomer to the island exchanged cocaine for the promise that the recipient would cast her for the lead in his next play (Troxel. The drug trade continued during the ensuing decades, but to many it was clear that tourism would need to be the key driver of Key West’s economy.

Welcoming Outsiders: The Gay Tourist Economy

As had been the case since early in the century, most activists in the Key West Chamber of Commerce supported efforts to enhance tourism. However, to a significant extent, it was Key West's growing gay population that renewed tourism initiatives and merged the quest for tourists with a unique island allure. As Manuel Castells found in his study of gay neighborhoods in San Francisco, gay Key Westers created a community in Old Town (encompassing several blocks east of Duval Street) not only by residing in that particular neighborhood but also by opening businesses, meeting in bars, inventing celebrations, and engaging in politics (Castells). In 1983, Key West elected Richard Heyman, the first openly gay mayor in the United States, and he was overwhelmingly elected again in 1987. Many gay Key Westers became directly involved in the tourism business by renovating buildings and converting them into guesthouses that attracted primarily gay tourists. The prominent gay writer Edmund White concluded in State of Desire: Travels in Gay America that in the late 1970s Key West had "more and better gay accommodations for tourists than any other resort." One notable destination was La Te Da, which was labeled by one observer as "probably the most decadent place in Key West." Where once José Martí had spoken from the balcony ("La Terraza de Martí") urging Cubans to unite and fight for Cuban independence from Spain, now it was common for guests to be "greeted in their rooms with a line of coke and a houseboy placed at their disposal" (Kerstein, 163).

The organization of the first Fantasy Fest in October 1979, primarily by several gay businessmen, was a harbinger of things to come. Fantasy Fest was a several days event that culminated in a parade held on the Saturday night before Halloween. While the parade provided entertainment for the locals, it was primarily aimed at attracting tourists to Key West. Over time, Key West's version of Mardi Gras came to attract tens of thousands to the island.

Mass Tourism

The desire to enhance tourism also motivated Key West's infamous secession from the Union. On April 23, 1982, Mayor Dennis Wardlow proclaimed Key West "The Conch Republic." He surrendered a few minutes later and asked for $1 billion in foreign aid, but not before the Conch Republic's Minister of Defense hit a U.S. Navy officer with a loaf of Cuban bread, his version of having "fired a volley."

Key West initiated this mock secession to protest a U.S. Border Patrol roadblock near Florida City on U.S. Route 1 that ostensibly had been established to search for illegal aliens, but that also searched for drugs in cars driving north on the only road connecting Key West with the mainland. The motivation for the "secession" was that the roadblock was hurting the island's tourism business. Tourists were unlikely to drive to Key West knowing they would face long delays driving home. The fact that Key Westers chose this strategy to express disdain for the federal action indicated that Key West was not a typical town. Although the island's protest strategy was unique, the rationale for the protest was one increasingly pursued by many communities - to enhance tourism.

During the remainder of the 1980s, tourism increased and it continued to do so during the following decade and into the new century. The Tourism Development Council, funded by the "bed" tax on overnight visitors that was adopted by a city referendum in 1980, advertised widely for tourists to "Come as You Are" to an island that was "Close to Perfect – Far from Normal." As they had always been, tourists continued to be drawn by the weather, fishing, and boating in what some perceived as a unique American island in the Caribbean. The election of Captain Tony Tarracino as mayor in 1989, who, as described by the Washington Post, "had been a …gambler, gunrunner, saloonkeeper, fishing boat captain, ladies' man and peerless raconteur," reinforced the "far from normal" image. And the music and lifestyle of Jimmy Buffett, who arrived in Key West in 1971, reinforced the image of a laid-back visit to "Margaritaville."

Many were attracted by an island featuring buskers, chickens, and the Sunset Celebration on Mallory Pier. Fantasy Fest and newer festivals attracted more tourists. The island's historical heritage also offered reasons for tourists to visit, such as the Harry S. Truman "Little White House," the Hemingway House, and the Key West Museum of Art and History in the Custom House. Writers and those interested in literature were attracted by the Key West Literary Festival. The island's gay and lesbian residents sponsored Women's Week, PrideFest and other activities that added to the town's tourism draw.

Several sections of Key West transformed to accommodate a new economy based upon short-term tourism, as well as an increasing number of wealthy out-of-town purchasers of second (or third or fourth) homes. The Key West Bight, once home to shrimp boats and other commercial fishing vessels, became the "Historic Seaport," the new name sanctioned by the city, featuring charter fishing and sightseeing boats that catered to tourists. On Caroline Street, across from the bight, rough-and-tumble bars gave way to boutiques and mainstream restaurants. Duval Street changed to accommodate tourists' desires, gaining restaurants, chain stores, T-shirt shops, and art galleries, in place of the neighborhood-based businesses that had long served residents. Bahama Village, the traditional Black neighborhood west of Duval Street that the city renamed in 1979 to ostensibly benefit from the tourism economy, gentrified and transformed from a primarily Black to a predominantly white neighborhood.

Cruise ships represented a significant trend in Key West's transition to mass tourism. In 1986, 46,000 passengers disembarked in Key West, wandered around for five or six hours, then returned to their ships. In both 2002 and 2003 more than one million cruise ship passengers arrived. Indeed, Key West's volume of cruise ship traffic increased to rank among the highest in the world, with one estimate placing Key West as the world's fourth busiest port in 2003. In 2019, before the Covid epidemic, the island's 964,795 cruise ship passengers constituted almost a third of the estimated 3,052,473 tourists that visited Key West.

Opposition to increased cruise ship traffic intensified during the 1990s and into the new century. Some who called for restrictions on cruise ship traffic were represented by Last Stand, a grass-roots group that organized during the late 1980s. Its spokesperson argued that the throngs of cruise ship passengers diminished the experience of Key West's overnight visitors, who valued a relaxed island environment. Reef Relief, organized around the same time "to preserve and protect living coral reef ecosystems," emphasized that large cruise ships stirred up contaminated sediments that damaged the coral reef. They were unsuccessful in influencing the city to limit cruise ships. However, a new group organized in 2020, the Key West Committee for Cleaner, Safer Ships, was successful in its initiative to place three referenda on the ballot to limit the size and number of cruise ships in Key West. Key West voters passed all three in the November 2020 election, and although negotiations and perhaps legal actions persist, it appears that meaningful reductions in the number of cruise ship passengers wandering around the island might result (Scheckner).

Key West's increased tourism, especially cruise ship traffic, contributed to the perception that the island had lost its unique appeal. For example, In March 2004, National Geographic Traveler magazine characterized Key West as a tourist destination gone bad. The magazine's "destination scorecard" ranked 115 tourist destinations from around the world as "Good," "Not so Bad," or "Getting Ugly." Key West ranked third from the bottom in the "Getting Ugly" group. Key West received a rating of "bad" for both its tourism management and its likely future outlook, and a "warning" for its aesthetics.

Several of Key West's literary figures wrote critically of changes in the community. Joy Williams, in the 2003 edition of her popular Travel Guide to Key West and the Florida Keys, concluded that the island had achieved "the critical mass of a totally tourist-based economy." A "business-development oligarchy prevailed" on the island, she continued, regardless of the "promoted carefree image." Rosalind Brackenberry, another Key West author, observed that in earlier decades the island had displayed the

"charm of the unexpected, the irregular, the slightly decrepit, the sun-worn…chickens, eccentric people." Now, Key West's atmosphere had changed for a variety of reasons, including rapid development and mass tourism. Greed had led to more tourism, development, and overcrowding, "giving in to the lowest common denominator, ignoring any sense of scale, from cruise ships to… monstrous concrete development..."

However, responses to Key West's trajectory were mixed. The same week the critique in the Traveler appeared, The New York Times travel section praised Key West. The writer heralded the range of activities available to visitors: "A Key West vacation means different things to different people. For some, it's one long bar crawl. For others, Key West is all about the water: fishing, snorkeling, sailing, jet skiing, parasailing…. Then there's cultural Key West, with an extraordinary collection of Victorian houses and a rich literary history." In March 2004, the Island magazine website also praised Key West, including it among its "Top 10 island picks" in the world, along with such destinations as Tahiti and Martha's Vineyard.

Upscale Tourism and Its Discontents

Whichever of these perspectives is more persuasive, it is clear that the island was moving upscale. This was manifested in the both the cost of housing and in the price and character of new tourist accommodations. Since the 1990s, real estate investment has rivaled tourism promotion and local color as a shaping force of the community. The island increasingly attracted wealthy purchasers of homes and condominiums. It had become fashionable and comfortable, rather than bohemian, to move to Key West, if only for a few months of the year. Gentrification had begun in Old Town during the late 1970s, but housing prices soon skyrocketed in virtually every neighborhood.

The U.S. Census recorded that in both 1960 and 1970 the median value of homes in Key West was lower than the median for the state of Florida. By 2009, however, the median home value in Key West had risen to three times that of the entire state. Key West's culture and amenities encouraged many to

purchase seasonable homes in Key West, fueling rising home prices. In addition, apartments were converted to expensive condominiums and large numbers of homes and apartments were offered not for purchase or rent but for vacation rentals. Many, including creative younger people attracted to the town's history and ambience, were unable to become residents due to Key West's high costs and limited opportunity for economic mobility. Others left the island because they were unable to afford the high costs of housing. The poet Richard Wilbur, then a Key West resident, remarked in an interview after winning his second Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1989, "I hope it (Key West) always remains a place where you can live without being rich." Increasingly, however, Wilbur's hope for Key West was dashed.

Tourist accommodations also increased in price. And new luxury accommodations challenged the character of the island in the same manner as did increasing housing values. For example, Atlantic Shores, a motel on South Street by the Atlantic Ocean, opened as an inexpensive motel in the 1950s. It was renovated in the mid-1990s, but continued to offer relatively inexpensive rooms and catered primarily to gay and lesbian visitors and locals. It included a clothing-optional pool whose sign read, "We don't discriminate against heterosexuals." Atlantic Shores closed in May 2007 and was sold to Southernmost Hotels & Resorts, which razed the motel and constructed new upscale rooms on its site. A drag queen who had performed at Atlantic Shores concluded, "It's the end of an era."

One Human Family?

In 2000, the Key West City Council adopted "One Human Family" as the city's official philosophy, noting "We want to proclaim that the truth, as we see it, is that there is no 'them', there is just 'us'…together as ONE HUMAN Family, now and forever." In endorsing this motto, the commission proclaimed its acceptance of equality among those of different sexual orientations and suggested that Key West was, more generally, a unique, open, and egalitarian community. After one of his visits to Key West,

José Martí noted "There along the same road, the worker, the man of color, the lawyer, the merchant, the ex-president of the Republic" were lending support for Cuban independence (Ronning, 81). Martí was expressing the aspiration for unity, although he was well aware of the obstacles he faced. Eventually, however, the quest to overthrow Spanish rule in Cuba succeeded. The ONE HUMAN FAMILY motto was perhaps likewise aspirational, but the economic trends on the island have placed dramatic limits on fulfilling this ideal.

Key West's attributes still offer much that is attractive to those who value a different and unique experience, but the island's flavor lies within a different context than before the transition to a tourism and vacation-home community. Increasingly, people are aware that one aspect of the new context is the fear of intense storms and flooding that are related, at least in part, to global warming. Water temperatures around the island have been increasing, and the coral reef, which potentially offers some protection against storm surge, has been degrading. And these environmental trends have contributed to higher housing costs due to skyrocketing insurance rates. Still, for now, the island has managed to maintain a sense of place. This place, however, is open to a far smaller cross-section of the population than it was in earlier decades. The tensions between mass tourism, outside money, and a local culture that evolves with the influx of newcomers continues. The island provides a welcome environment for many residents and visitors. Others, however, including past and present residents, both Conchs and transplants, as well as visitors to the island in earlier decades, bemoan the Key West that is gone.

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Un paseo por el método de José Martí

Steven Dike

¡Quién sabe si sirve, quién sabe el artículo de la Exposición de París! Pero va a suceder como con la Exposición, que de grande que es no se la puede ver toda, y la primera vez se sale de allí como con chispas y joyas en la cabeza, pero luego se ve más despacio, y cada hermosura va apareciendo entera y clara entre las otras. Hay que leerlo dos veces: y leer luego cada párrafo suelto...

–José Martí, La Edad de Oro

My first substantial introduction to José Martí came in Summer 2023 at an Institute of the National Endowment for the Humanities hosted by the Center for José Martí Studies Affiliate at the University of Tampa.[1] During an intensive course of study all of Martí's life, his writing, his influences, and his historical context, multiple speakers lamented that we have never really been able to discover Martí's original sources and methods. This article begins to do that—to show the sources that Martí used and the way that they helped him to create one of the most impressive bodies of work in the history of Latin American letters. I will use what may seem at first to be an unlikely source, a work of children's literature, La Edad de Oro (The Golden Age). It was not widely known in Martí's lifetime, but the work became a beloved piece of Latin American childhood reading. Analyzing one article from the

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In Summer 2023 I attended the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute, "The Immigrant Communities of Florida and José Martí in Cuban Independence and the Dawn of the American Century," hosted by the center for José Martí Studies Affiliate at the University of Tampa. This article began as a project there. Special thanks to Professors James López and Denis Rey for creating the Institute, and to the guest speakers and my fellow attendees. Special thanks as well to Dr. Stephanie Contreras, who introduced me to *La Edad de Oro* and shared her thoughts about Martí's purposes. Finally, thanks to Mike Stabler for editorial assistance.

collection, “Un paseo por la tierra de los Anamitas,” we can see how Martí used contemporary journalism and reference books, along with a series of French tour guides, to create a romantic but loving portrait of the Vietnamese people.

La Edad de Oro was a monthly magazine in 1889. Martí intended it to be a long-running periodical, but the magazine lasted only four issues. A falling out between Martí and wealthy Brazilian funder and publisher Aaron Da Costa Gómez ended it.[2] Martí wrote it while living in New York City, where he spent the most productive 15 years of writing in his life. The magazine was sold as children’s literature, but it is more than that. The collection brims with nationalism, and scholars have suggested that Martí skillfully transmitted his most potent ideas about a new world for colonized peoples through children’s literature because it was not taken seriously by censors and colonial administrators.[3] La Edad de Oro predated his more widely known essay " Nuestra America" by two years. La Edad de Oro has some charming children’s stories, but it is also an instruction manual for young people making their way in a wonderous new technological age of possibility that still had profound injustices of nation and class and race. And it is not at all hard to imagine that Martí hoped there would be some adults reading bedtime stories and coming to their own revelations.

[2] Salvador Arias, *Un Proyecto Martiano Esencial: La Edad de Oro* (Centro de Estudios Martianos, La Habana, 2001) 42-44.

[3] Armando García de la Torre. “The Contradictions of Late Nineteenth-Century Nationalist Doctrines: Three Keys to the ‘Globalism’ of José Martí’s Nationalism.” Journal of Global History 3, no. 1 (2008): 67–88.

Explaining Martí's seemingly encyclopedic knowledge

When I first opened La Edad de Oro, I hit instantly upon one essay: "Un paseo por la tierra de los Anamitas" (An Excursion Through the Land of the Annamese). I have been teaching The Vietnam Wars at the University of Colorado for about a decade now and was stunned to learn that Martí had written about Vietnam (Annam is a dated term for Central Vietnam, and the terms Annamese and Annamite were once used for the Vietnamese people). Martí never traveled to Asia, much less to French Indochina—the French colonial regime that at that time ruled over modern-day Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam (which the French had divided into three regions: Cochin China, Annam, and Tonkin). But here was a brief and romanticized, albeit at times strangely detailed, description of the Vietnamese people and their land. It covers religion, arts, material culture, and history, among other topics.

In "Un paseo por la tierra de los Anamitas," Martí writes about two Vietnamese women leading a rebellion against Chinese occupiers: "The battles of two women, Cheng Tseh and Cheng Urh, who dressed like warriors, mounted on horseback, and were generals of Annam, and threw the Chinese from their trenches."[4] It is an interesting and accidentally revealing piece of writing. Search for the women "Cheng Tseh" and "Cheng Urh" in modern sources and you will find nothing. But Martí did not make these women up. They are the founding sisters of the modern Vietnamese sense of nationhood, commonly known in English as the Trung Sisters, or, in Vietnamese, Hai Bá Trung. What explains the appearance of these women under what seem to be such different names? Martí was using a dated and unusual transliteration

[4] José Martí, "Un Paseo por la Tierra de los Anamitas," in *La Edad de Oro: Publicacion Mensual de Recreo y Intruccion Dedicada á los Niños de América*, Aaron Da Costa Gómez, ed. (New York, 1889). Hereafter noted as *La Edad de Oro.* Because the original print run of the publication is a very rare item, I've used one of the many reprints for reference. Page numbers in this piece will come from (Editorial Gente Nueva: Ciudad de La Habana, 1959) 166. Spanish original: "…los combates de las dos mujeres, Cheng Tseh y Cheng Urh, que se vistieron de guerreras, y montaron a caballo, y fueron de generals de la gente de Anam, y echaron de sus trincheras a los chinos…"

of the Chinese version of their names—written ancient sources about the rebellion exist only in Chinese. There was a source contemporary to Martí, however, that used this transliteration as well: the article on "Tong-King" in the 9th edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica, by Robert Kennaway Douglas.[5] And here we have the first clue as to Martí's source material.

Martí's description of the Trung sisters probably draws from Douglas's article, though there is no obvious direct textual comparison. At another point, however, Martí describes events known as the Tayson Rebellion, an event that had happened over a century before Martí wrote La Edad de Oro, and that was virtually unknown outside of Southeast Asia and, maybe, France. And here, Martí draws very directly from Douglas:

> En una de esas peleas de reyes andaba por Anam un obispo francés, que hizo creer al rey vencido que Luis XVI de Francia le daría con qué pelear contra el que le quitó el mando al de Anam: y el obispo se fue a Francia con el hijo del rey, y luego vino solo, porque con la revolución que habia en Paris no lo podia Luis XVI ayudar; juntó a los franceses que había por la India de Asia: entró en Anam; quitó el poder al rey nuevo; puso al rey de antes a mandar.[6]

[5] Robert Kennaway Douglas, "Tong-King," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 9th edition, Vol. 23 (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1889) 439. Most of the 9th edition of *Encyclopædia Britannica* has been digitized into a searchable wikisource—it was there that I found this article. Douglas was a more than qualified author. He was head of the British Museum's Oriental Printed Books and Manuscript department and also a professor of Chinese at King's College London.

[5] The *Encyclopedia Britannica* hired Douglas to write several articles in the 9th edition, including the entry on Tonkin—then the northernmost region of Viet Nam as it had been divided in French Indochina (written as "Tong-King" in the encyclopedia.) See: Yu-Ying Brown, "Sir Robert Kennaway Douglas and his Contemporaries," *The British Library Journal* 24 (1) 122-129.

[6] Martí, *La Edad de Oro*, 161.

Here is an English translation, by Elinor Randall:

> A French bishop was traveling through Annam during one of those battles between kings, and he convinced the defeated king that Louis XVI of France would help him fight the one who took the rule of Annam away from him. The bishop went to France with the king's son, who returned alone because the revolution in Paris prevented Louis XVI from keeping his promise. So the bishop joined the French who were in India: Entered Annam, seized power from the new king, and installed the former king as ruler.[7]

Now compare the Martí original with the description of the Tayson rebellion from Douglas's Encyclopædia Britannica article (slightly shortened for the sake of space):

> A successor of Nguyen invaded Annam, captured the imperial city of Hue, and dethroned the king, Gia Long… It happened, however, that at this time (1787) the Jesuit establishment of Bangkok was presided over by Bishop Pigneaux de Behaine, who thought he saw in the political condition of Annam a means of establishing the power of France in the eastern portion of Indo-China. With this object he proposed to Gia Long that he should accompany him to Paris to enlist the aid of Louis XVI. for the recovery of his throne. This the king declined to do, but as a

[7]Martí, *La Edad de Oro*, Primera edición bilingüe, Elinor Randall, trans. (La Habana: Centro de Estudios Martianos, 2017) vol.4, 19. The Centro de Estudios Martianos in Havana has published a wonderful bilingual edition of *La Edad de Oro*, although it is currently very difficult to find in the United States.

> compromise he sent his eldest son. But…the political uprising which finally brought the French king to the scaffold made all interference in the East impossible. In these circumstances the bishop determined to raise a sufficient force from the French and other adventurers who then frequented India and the neighbouring countries, and, with an army so recruited, he landed in Annam. The Annamese resistance was of the feeblest kind; the usurper's power was broken at the first encounter, and Gia Long once again ascended his throne.[8]

Martí clearly got the basic details of the Tayson Rebellion from this original source. A French bishop, Behaine, offered assistance to Gia Long to regain his throne. Behaine took the king's son with him to Paris, where aid from the French king, Louis XVI, was promised. That aid did not materialize because of the French Revolution. Behaine then turned to French irregular forces already in Asia to accomplish the task. Finally, Gia Long reclaimed his throne.

Martí left out the names of Gia Long and Pigneaux de Behaine and greatly abbreviated the story. Revealingly, Martí repeats this major error in Douglas's article: Gia Long was not the king of Vietnam before the Tay Son Rebellion. He was Nguyen Anh, a member of the Nguyen clan, which controlled southern Vietnam during the Le Dynasty. Nguyen Anh proclaimed himself Emperor Gia Long only after he defeated the Tayson rebels, thus inaugurating the Nguyen Dynasty—the final imperial dynasty of Vietnam.[9]

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[8] Robert Kennaway Douglas, "Tong-King," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 9th edition, Vol. 23 (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1889) 439.

[9] Douglas's article contains at least one other error: Hué was not the imperial capital of Vietnam until *after* the rebellion, when Gia Long proclaimed his rule there.

What are we to make of Martí's uncredited use of an encyclopedia for his writing? In this age of Wikipedia, encyclopedia research seems a lazy person's vice. But several factors should lead us to a different, more nuanced, understanding. First, encyclopedias were in some sense in their original golden age. The Encyclopædia Britannica in particular had a reputation as one of the finest English-language sources of general knowledge. Many of the articles were written by experts, like Douglas here. It was an age where real knowledge about distant corners of the world was hard to come by. It becomes an interesting question as to where Martí even accessed the encyclopedia—the set was expensive, with two dozen leather-bound volumes on fine paper. It was the sort of resource that only the rich would have in their homes. Public libraries were rare; the New York Public Library would not be founded for six more years after Martí penned La Edad de Oro. There was a New York City reading library open to the public, however, the Astor Library, about two miles from Martí's lower downtown offices, 77 William Street, where he edited La Edad de Oro.[10]

There was no real standardized system of citation nor standards for what we might call "fair use" in this era. If someone reads the encyclopedia entry and judges Martí a sloppy scholar, or, worse, an outright plagiarist, that person is missing the point and applying modern scholarly standards to writing that appeared in an earlier time with different rules. Finally, Martí was writing children's literature here, and there is no good reason to lard that up with scholarly citations.

[10] https://www.nypl.org/help/about-nypl/history; https://archives.nypl.org/nypla/5975; Mirta Ojito, "Retracing a Cuban Patriot's Path Through His Productive Exile," *New York Times*, May 10, 1998, Section1, Page 31. Rosa Miriam Elizalde, "Walking New York with Cuba's Revolutionary Poet," *The Nation*, August 12, 2015.

La Edad de Oro was not the first time that Martí wrote about Vietnam. He penned a feature article, "A Chinese Funeral" in October 1888—published December 16, 1888 in the Buenos Aires newspaper, La Nación. The article describes a funeral procession for a man Martí calls Li-In-Du. Martí identifies him as a general of the Black Flag mercenary army, which Vietnam's kings hired to fight for them against the French in what the French called "Tonkin," now the northern part of Vietnam.[11]

We have likely sources for this article as well. The New York Sun carried a front-page article October 30, 1888, describing the funeral, headlining it with the sensationalist "Buried with Pagan Pomp—General Li Yu Doo followed to the grave by 1000 Chinamen." The paper also identified him as the "Leader of the Black Flags." The Sun described a "cosmopolitan multitude gather[ing] to witness the barbarous ceremonies." Martí was far more tolerant: "Let us go with a curious New York to listen."[12]

The claim, in both sources, that Li was a great general of the Black Flag Army is dubious. According to ethnographer Stewart Culin, who, in 1890, studied what both The Sun and Martí referred to as "Chinese freemasonry," Li-In-Du was actually "a poor clerk who had won the regard of the entire Chinese community by the probity of his character."[13] The Black Flags did have a founding general, Liu Yongfu, who died nearly 30 years later. Also, Li-In-Du had evidently lived in New York for at least some time. The combat in Vietnam was likely too recent for him to have fought there, though it is possible he had participated in earlier combat in China during the Taiping rebellion, where the Black Flag Army also

[11] José Martí, "A Chinese Funeral," in *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), December 16, 1888. All the English translations used here come from Esther Allen, *José Martí: Selected Writings* (New York: Penguin, 2002) 237-243; notes on 432-433. Allen cites an article in the *New York Herald*, Oct. 30, 1888, as another possible source for Martí's article.

[12] "Buried with Pagan Pomp," *New York Sun* October 30, 1888, pg.1.

[13] Culin, Stewart. "Chinese Secret Societies in the United States," *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 3, No. 8, Jan-Mar 1890, 39-43.

fought. Also, though the Black Flag Army's combat against the French is an interesting story, it only forestalled the French conquest of northern Vietnam for a few years. The event is a footnote in modern Vietnamese histories. Also, although there is no direct textual comparison, it is certainly interesting that Douglas's "Tong-King" Encyclopædia Britannica article contains a lengthy section on the Black Flag Army.[14]

Li-In-Du was, however, a significant local member of a group that outsiders called "Chinese freemasons"—a Chinese mutual aid society, in essence. These existed in China, and in expatriate communities in the US and other places. They were known by various names such as Hong Men, Tiandihui, Chee Kung Tong, and Lun Gee Tong. The Sun uses "Lun Gee Tong" to describe the New York group, as does Martí the only time he identifies it as something other than freemasons.

Martí praised his heroism: "Li-In-Du was a man of valor: he drove France out of Tonkin and used his prestige to help the friends of liberty…" and connected his feats in battle to his religious salvation: "He who has done one thousand three hundred good deeds, is he not immortal in the heavens, according to the law of Tao? The defeat of the Frenchman was more than three hundred good deeds, which is all that is required to be like a deputy of immortality, immortal on earth!" The enumeration of the good deeds comes from a classic Taoist text, the Thai-Shang Kan Ying Phien. A translation of the relevant passage reads: "He who would seek to become an Immortal of Heaven ought to give the proof of 1300 good deeds;

[14] Robert Kennaway Douglas, "Tong-King," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 9th edition, Vol. 23 (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1889) 439.

and he who would seek to become an Immortal of Earth should give the proof of three hundred."[15]

Martí's Taoist commentary tells us a lot. Martí had a hostility toward the Catholic Church that raised him, opposed as he was to its conservatism, dogmatism, and hierarchy. But he was not hostile to spirituality generally. The main text considered for this article, Un paseo por la tierra de los Anamitas, opens with the Buddhist parable (there attributed to Hinduism) of several blind men investigating an elephant, each feeling only one part of it but thinking he understands the whole; by extension, people tend to behave much the same, believing their own limited experiences and talents to be representative of all human existence. Martí deploys the parable slyly as an indictment of colonialism and racism—the rest of the article relates Vietnamese accomplishments and history and the refusal of Europeans to recognize them as meaningful. Other Asian religions, such as Hinduism, mattered to Martí too. For example, Martí admired the American transcendentalists, especially Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Martí's obituary of Emerson highlights the Hindu inspiration for Emerson's philosophy several times.[16]

Buddhism is a major focus of Martí's Vietnam article, and once again, we find the likely inspiration in the Encyclopædia Britannica. Here reads Marti's description (in English translation by Elinor Randall) of a formative moment in Buddha's early life:

> But one afternoon, while riding in his silver and pearls carriage, he saw a poor old man dressed in rags and he returned from his ride sadly: And on

[15] Thanks to the Fordham East Asian History Sourcebook for their searchable text: https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/eastasia/1000laozi.asp The translation there is from: Charles F. Horne, ed., *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*, (New York: Parke, Austin, & Lipscomb, 1917), Vol. XII, Medieval China, pp. 235-242.

[16] José Martí, "Emerson," in *La Opinión Nacional* (Caracas), May, 19, 1882. English translation in Esther Allen, *José Martí: Selected Writings* (New York: Penguin, 2002) 116-129.

> another afternoon he saw a dying man, and no longer wanted to go riding: And on another afternoon he saw a dead man and his sadness was very great: And on another he saw a monk begging for alms, and his heart told him that he must not go riding in a silver and pearls carriage, but instead think about life which has so many afflictions, and live alone where he might think and ask for alms for the unhappy men, like the monk.[17]

Now here is the relevant text in the Encyclopædia Britannica:

> ...driving to his pleasure-grounds one day, he was struck by the sight of a man utterly broken down by age, on another occasion by the sight of a man suffering from a loathsome disease, and some months after by the horrible sight of a decomposing corpse. Each time his charioteer, whose name was Channa, told him that such was the fate of all living beings. Soon after he saw an ascetic walking in a calm and dignified manner, and asking who that was, was told by his charioteer the character and aims of the ascetics.

Shortly following this in both Martí's article and the encyclopedia, Buddha makes the difficult decision to leave his wife and son for the life of a poor monk. And in both, he is visited by the demon Mara, who tries to stop him from setting out on this new life. Mara initially tempts him with

[17] Martí, *La Edad de Oro*, Primera edición bilingüe, Elinor Randall, trans. (La Habana: Centro de Estudios Martianos, 2017) vol.4, 23. Spanish original: "Pero una tarde que salió en su carro de perlas y plata a pasear, vio a un viejo pobre, vestido de harapos, y volvió del paseo triste: y otro tarde vio a un moribundo, y no quiso pasear más: y otra tarde, vio a un muerte, y su tristeza fue ya mucha: y otra vio a un monje que pedía limosnas, y el corazón le dijo que no debía andar en carro de plata y de perlas, sino pensar en la vida, que tenía tantas penas, y vivir solo, donde se pudiera pensar, y pedir limosna para los infeclices, como el monje." Martí, *La Edad de Oro*, 164.

promises of power and wealth, but, failing in that moment, consoles himself with the belief that Buddha will succumb to evil thoughts, as all men do, and in that moment, Mara will come to control him. Mara speaks in the Encyclopædia Britannica: "Sooner or later some lustful or malicious or angry thought must arise in his mind; in that moment I shall be his master." Martí relates much the same wisdom: "they call demons the bad counsel that comes from the ugly side of the heart and tells man that he lives for his fancies rather than his duties." In both sources Buddha comes to reject the life of extreme poverty and embraces moderation, discovering eventually the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism. Martí relates these Four Truths in typically florid language:

> Salvation is only in knowing the four truths that tell one that life is sorrow, and that sorrow comes from desire, and that to live without sorrow one must live without desire; and that sweet nirvana, which is beauty like the light that unselfishness gives to the soul, cannot be attained by living, like a madman or a glutton, for the sake of material things; and for accumulating fortune and power by dint of hatred and humiliation, but only by understanding that it is wrong to live for vanity, or covet what belongs to others, and to bear spite.

It is less certain that the Encyclopædia Britannica is the inspiration here than it is with the stories of the Trung Sisters and the Tayson Rebellion. The Buddha's ride to discover the sorrows of the world in the "Four Sights" of men in decay; the decision to leave his family and live a life of total poverty; his visitation by the demon Mara; the eventual embrace of a path of moderation; the Four Noble Truths

—all are basic elements of the Buddhist tradition. However, given that we know that Martí was reading Encyclopædia Britannica, the closely similar ordering of events, and similarities in description, it seems a reasonable supposition that this was the source. It bears mention here as well that, although translations of Buddhist works had been made into English, French, Spanish, and other languages, still few people outside of Asia in the 1880s knew much about Buddhism. The encyclopedia, once again, was a terrific way for a seeker of knowledge to acquaint themselves with the broader world.

A Day at the Fair

Much of "Un paseo por la tierra de los Anamitas" covers Vietnamese material culture and Vietnam's nationalist theater, things not widely known outside of Southeast Asia and its major colonizing power, France, in 1889. Martí, however, read French, and La Edad de Oro appeared in the same year as one of the most important cultural events in French history: Paris's 1889 World's Fair (L'Exposition Universelle de 1889). The fair is popularly remembered for the debut of the most remarkable building of the new industrial age—the Eiffel Tower. Contemporary visitors marveled at a Gallery of Machines that showed the wonders of the new industrial age. The fair also featured a series of colonial pavilions supposedly duplicating in miniature the colonized world for metropolitan Parisian citizens and other fairgoers. Indigenous people from France's empire came to Paris to build and staff these pavilions, and to interact with tourists from France and elsewhere. Indochina was well represented, with a Cochinchinese pavilion, a joint pavilion for Annam and Tonkin, a re-creation of part of Angkor Wat, and an Annamite Theater. Fair

organizers hoped to convince the people of France that the empire was benevolent, useful to the nation, and a sign of France's grandeur. [18]

In 2001, Salvador Arias analyzed another article—"La Exposición de Paris"—in La Edad de Oro and suggested that Martí may have used one of the guides cited here in this article, L'Exposition de Paris—as he described the fair's attractions. The extraordinary similarity in the titles of the two pieces is the first giveaway, of course! Arias theorized that the Vietnam article also came from the Paris fair but did not go into any further detail about either piece regarding its source inspiration. My research confirms Arias's suspicions--Martí used popular tour guides from the Fair to write the sections of the Vietnam article dealing with artisanship, theater, and other cultural descriptions of Vietnamese life. In so doing, he demonstrated a skilled ability to read subtext—using what was an imperial celebration of France's colonial world to paint a far different picture of French rule over Southeast Asia than the Fair's organizers intended.[19]

At the Indochinese pavilions, a group of Vietnamese rickshaw drivers whisked fairgoers around the grounds. Images made clear the colonialist nature of the attraction, as a comfortable white man in a white suit, as below, relaxes in the cart while a Vietnamese porter, in stereotypical conical hat and garb prepares to pull the wagon, while another European looks on smiling.

[18] Brooks, Michael D. "Civilizing the Metropole: The Role of the 1889 Parisian Universal Exposition's Colonial Exhibits in Creating Greater France." *The Pegasus Review: UCF Undergraduate Research Journal*, Volume 6, Issue 2, Article 3, 2012.

[19] Salvador Arias, *Un proyecto martiano esencial: La Edad de Oro* (Centro de Estudios Martianos, La Habana, 2001), 167.

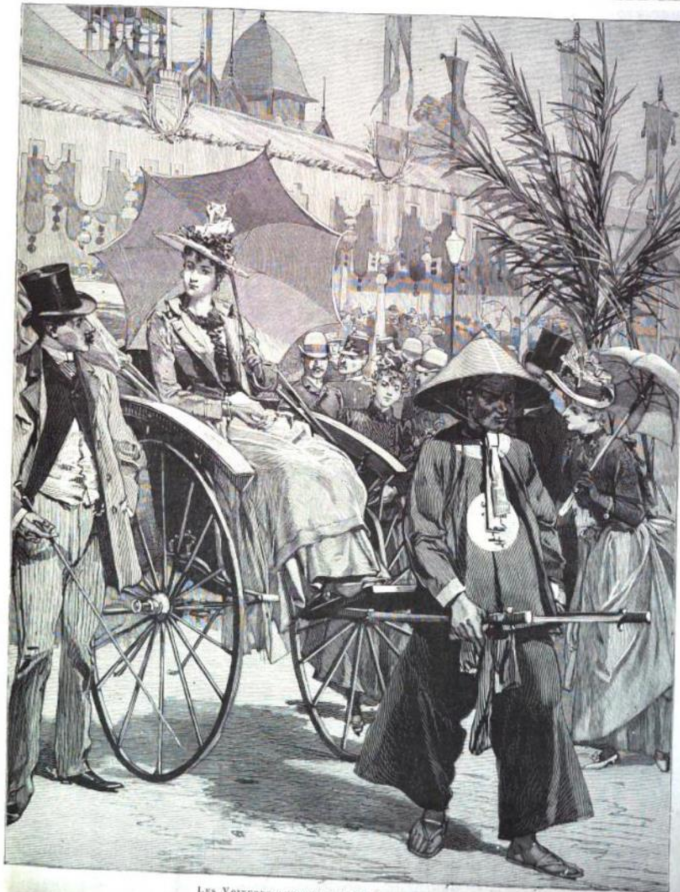
[20]

The image matches almost exactly Martí's description of rickshaw drivers in Vietnam (Martí misspells the Japanese "jinrikisha" as "dijirincka." "Rickshaw" comes from "jinrikisha"):

> Those blue blouses fastened at the neck with a yellow glass button: And for shoes they wear rope soles tied around the ankle with ribbons…This is the dress of the poor coolie who dies young, worn out from hauling the dijirincka, the two-wheeled carriage hauled by the Annamese poor… Inside sits a man, comfortable and shameless: Later, the poor coolies die, like the horse, from so much running.[21]

[20]https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/annamite-rickshaw-paris-the-world-fair-1889-news-photo/55751638

There were also numerous tour books that supplied images of the fair, including the rickshaw drivers, as below: [22]



L'EXPOSITION DE PARIS

DE 1889

Prix du numéro : 50 centimes.
ABONNEMENTS. — PARIS ET DÉPARTEMENTS : 20 FR.
Adresser les mandats à l'ordre de l'Administrateur.

Journal hebdomadaire. — 20 juillet 1889.
N° 21
BUREAUX : 8, RUE SAINT-JOSEPH. — PARIS

Prix du numéro : 50 centimes.
LA PUBLICATION SERA COMPLÈTE EN 40 NUMÉROS.
Adresser les mandats à l'ordre de l'Administrateur.

LES VOITURES ANNAMITES A L'ESPLANADE DES INVALIDES

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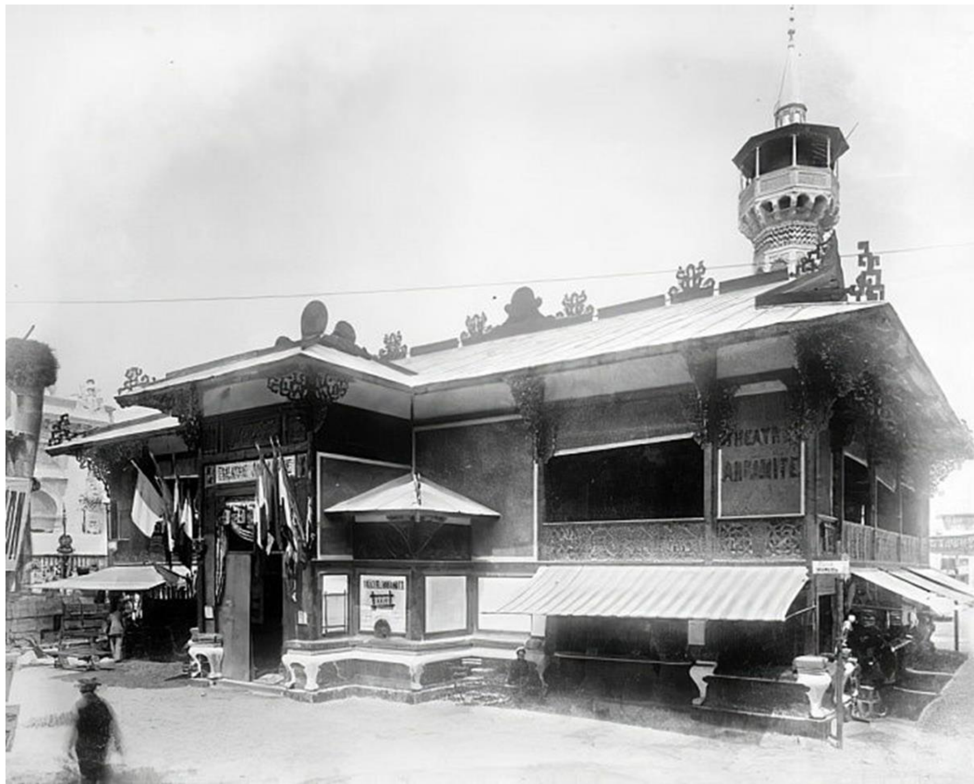
[21] Spanish original "…la blusa azul, sujeta al cuello con un botón de cristal Amarillo: y por zapato lleva una suela de cordon, atada al tobillo con cintas…ése es el traje del pobre cargador, que se muere joven del cansancio de halar la *djirincka*, que es el coche de due ruedas, de que va halando el amanita pobre: trota, trota como un caballo: más que el caballo anda, y más aprisa: ¡y dentro, sin pena y sin vergüenza, va un hombre sentado!: como los caballos se mueren después, del mal de correr, los pobres cargadores.Martí, *La Edad de Oro*, 160. English Translation: Martí, *La Edad de Oro*, Primera edición bilingüe, Elinor Randall, trans. (La Habana: Centro de Estudios Martianos, 2017) vol.4, 17.

The article following this illustration describes a performance at the Theatre Annamite, another fair attraction. Vietnamese theater fascinated Martí, and he had a keen sense of its nationalist meaning. In "Un Paseo…" he wrote: "They go to the theater so the strength of their hearts will not be exhausted. There are no French in the theater! There the actors tell them the histories of when Annam was a great country, and so wealthy that its neighbors wished to conquer it."[23] Martí's sense of the nationalism of Vietnamese theater was correct, but he came upon it in an indirect way, through a skillful reading of the subtext playing out at the Theatre Annamite at L'Exposition Universelle.[24]



[22] *L'Exposition de Paris (1889)* 161-163.

https://books.google.com/books?id=EK9AAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA162&lpg=PA162&dq=%22Bo+hou+tiac%22&source=bl&ots=Pn3OkmBCL7&sig=ACfU3U0OX70y2yhRJhofUFQtlAyMHtFZsg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj419GfqvT _AhXsFFkFHT2-AO8Q6AF6BAgZEAM#v=onepage&q&f=false

[23] Martí, *La Edad de Oro*, Primera edición bilingüe, Elinor Randall, trans. (La Habana: Centro de Estudios Martianos, 2017) vol.4, 17. Spanish original: "Y al teatro van para que no se les acabe la fuerza del corazón. ¡En el teatro no hay franceses! En el teatro les cuentan los cómicos las historias de cuando Anam era país grande, y de tanta riqueza que los vecinos lo querían conquistar…" Marti, *La Edad de Oro*, 166.

[24] *Theatre Annamite, Paris Exposition*. Paris France, 1889. Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/item/94500822.

The Theatre Annamite was a leading attraction at the Fair, with several performances staged daily for months, attendees paying prices equivalent to Paris orchestra performances. French music theoreticians and critics lauded the performances.[25] The play that Martí writes about was *Le Roi de Duong* (King of the Duong). We know this because, as with the Trung sisters, he used a name to refer to the lead role in the play, Ly-Tieng Vuong, which shows up only in certain contemporary sources for this performance of Vietnamese Hat Boi (also known as Hat Tuong, depending on Northern or Southern Vietnamese dialect), or old style opera at the Exposition Universelle in Paris 1889.

Martí, as he describes the scene of the Vietnamese theater for his young readers, tells us about the treachery at the heart of the play: "…the relatives of Prince Ly-Tieng-Vuong wanted to give him a cup of poisoned tea."[26] A French report on the fair, *L'Exposition chez soi 1889*, reveals the story in similar language:

> Chien-Su is the traitor, brother-in-law of the noble father Ly-Tieng-Vuong, the king of Duong: on the advice of four perverse mandarins…he resolved to get rid of his rightful sovereign. His plan is very simple: he will invite him to dinner and gently poison him with a cup of tea.[27]

[25] Pasler, Jann. *Composing the Citizen : Music As Public Utility in Third Republic France*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 573-576. Accessed August 10, 2023. ProQuest Ebook Central.

[26] Martí, *La Edad de Oro*, Primera edición bilingüe, Elinor Randall, trans. (La Habana: Centro de Estudios Martianos, 2017) vol.4, 29. Spanish original: Martí, *La Edad de Oro*, 169. "Los parientes del príncipe Ly-Tieng-Vuong querían darle a beber una taza de té envenenado."

[27] *L'Exposition chez soi 1889*. "Théâtre annamite. — Le père noble : Ly-Tieng-Vuong." Paris, 1889. English translation from Google Translate. French original: "Chien-Su, c'est le traître, beau-frère du père noble Ly-Tieng-Vuong, le roi de Duong : sur les conseils de quatre mandarins pervers qui s'appellent Thiet- Iloai, Thiet-Ho, Thiet-Longet Thiet-Phuon, et aussi sur les conseils de sa propre ambition, il a résolu de se débarrassorde

Martí appears to have reconstructed the story of Le Roi de Duong from reading various French tour sources from the fair. Martí's language closely mirrors this one here describing the instrumentation of the opera: "The musicians play without ceasing, with their cymbals and drums and bugles and small violins…,"[28] which compares closely to an English translation of the French original: "the tom-toms storm, the gongs thunder, the trumpets wail, the iron shudders, the violin creaks…"[29] The musical instruments line up nearly one for one. Another passage describing the stage effect of blowing alcohol across a flame checks out as well. Martí writes: "When the scene is going to change, an important person comes out… blows some alcohol over a lighted torch, denoting a fire…"[30] A French guide wrote: "…He holds in one hand a torch of petrol, in the other a bottle of brandy, from which he drinks a large swig. His cheeks puff out, he crouches down, and…he blows the alcohol onto the flame of his torch; the stage ignites, the fire falls back into luminous dust…"[31]

There is an amusing little detail to Martí's romantic vision of the Vietnamese theatre as the site of Vietnamese nationalist resistance: it appears the opera in question, *Le Roi de Duong*, is based on a Chinese, not Vietnamese, source. Nguyen Duc Hiep and Nguyen Le Tuyen provide details: "Duong" is the way that the Vietnamese (and their French colonizers) transliterated "Tang" from the Chinese Tang

[28] Martí, *La Edad de Oro*, Primera edición bilingüe, Elinor Randall, trans. (La Habana: Centro de Estudios Martianos, 2017) vol.4, 27. Spanish original: "….y la música toca sin parar, con sus platillos y su timbalón y su clarín y su violinete…"Martí, La Edad de Oro, 167.

[29] L'Exposition de Paris "Le Theater Annamite"—translated at https://en.worldfairs.info/expopavillondetails.php?expo_id=6&pavillon_id=1987 (7/5/23)

[30] Spanish original: "…sopla el alcohol que trae en la boca sobre una anotrcha encendida, lo que quiere decir que hay incendio." Martí, La Edad de Oro, 168-169.

[31] French original: "Un figurant se présente, il tient d'une main une torche de pétrole, de l'autre une bouteille d'eau-de-vie, dont il boit à mème une large lampée. Ses joues se gonflent, il s accroumpit, et, tout à coup, à un signal du régiseur, il souffle l'alcool sur la flamme de sa torche; la scène s'enflamme, le feu retombe en poussière lumineuse." *L'Exposition de Paris: (1889).* Édition enrichie Paris, 162.

Dynasty, which ruled China for about 300 years in the 600 to 900s AD. In the play, King Duong Minh Hoang—now usually transliterated as Xuanzong—survives an assassination and coup attempt launched by his mandarins along with treacherous members of his family. The Chinese origin is not surprising: Chinese sources informed much of Vietnamese high art like Hat Boi opera, illustrating what is maybe the central dynamic of Vietnamese history--Chinese cultural influence coupled with a resistance to Chinese political domination.

Nguyen Dong Tru, only about 25 years old at the time, led a troupe of 40 actors and musicians to Paris for the show. He was the only French speaker in the group. The group put on as many as eight performances a day, each lasting roughly an hour. The crowds were curious and generally appreciative. The Vietnamese musical sensibility and instrumentation, however, differing so much from European classical traditions, jarred many of the spectators. But in a legendary bit of musical crosspollination, Claude Debussy attended both the Theatre Annamite and the Javanese pavilion at the Exposition Universelle and found Asian influences that he used to create new styles of European music.[32]

The richly detailed costumes and makeup of the performers impressed fairgoers, and there are many photos of the cast and musicians, such as this one here:

[32] Nguyen Duc Hiep and Nguyen Le Tuyen, "Hat Boi, Don Ca Tai Tu and the Formation of Cai Luong from the late 19th century to the early 20th century (part 1)" https://www-vanchuongviet-org.translate.goog/index.php?comp=tacpham&action=detail&id=19645&_x_tr_sl=vi&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_ pto=sc

[33]

Martí closes his section on the Vietnamese theater, and his article, with an inspiring story of Vietnamese mental resistance to French domination:

> On leaving the theater the Annamese do much talking, as if annoyed, as if wanting to start running, and it seems they want to convince their cowardly friends, and as if they threaten the[m]. They leave the pagoda quietly, head lowered, hands in the pockets of their blue blouses. If a

[33] *Three actors from Theatre Annamite, full-length portrait, in costumes, Paris Exposition*. Paris France, 1889. Photograph. https://www.loc.gov/item/94500834/.

> Frenchman asks them a question on the road, they tell him in their own language: "I don't know." And if an Annamese talks to them about something in secret, they say to him: "Who knows!" [34]

The theater is for excitement, the pagoda is for solemnity. Once again, we can trace Martí's language to the French tour guides. The phrase "Bo hou tiac!," translated by the guide as "We don't know!" appears several times in *L'Exposition de Paris*. And, in both sources, the Vietnamese use the phrase to deflect the French who are watching them. As the Vietnamese leave the pagoda, they are solemn, and they ignore the French (as in Martí's piece):

> 'Bo hou tiac!' That is what they seem to say, these poor out-of-towners whom we see standing under the portico of the painted plaster pagodas, or crouching, with their chins in their hands, between the stretchers of their two-wheeled carts. They feel nothing but absolute indifference to the crowd around them, and the onlookers, who huddle together to watch for the slightest of their movements, are all, before their eyes, as if they were not!

But then everything changes when the moment for the theater arrives:

> The Exhibition, the domes, the golden dome of the Invalides, that royal pagoda where the great Mandarin of France lies, our

[34] Spanish original: "Al salir del teatro, los anamitas van hablando mucho, como enojados, como si quisieran echar a correr, y parece que quieren convencer a sus amigos cobardes, y que los amenazan. De la pagoda salen callados, con la cabeza baja, con las manos en los bolsillos de la blusa azul. Y si un francés les pregunta en el camino, le dicen en su lengua: «No sé».Y si un amanita les habla de algo en secreto, le dicen: «Quién sabe!»"

> theatres where they have been taken, Paris where they are taken for a walk, all this, Bo hou tiac! and they remain there, following in the sky, with an eye of boredom, some flight of imaginary storks. So it was a great surprise when the Annamite Theatre gave its first performance the other evening in front of the press.

And then follows a vivid description of the noise, drama, and excitement of the play, which Martí also borrowed from, somewhat earlier in his own piece.

But even this does not get the real origin of this phrase. *L'Exposition de Paris*, trying to comprehend the bored disdain that the Indochinese pavilion workers showed to the French, gives us the original source. *L'Exposition de Paris* invoked "Dr. Harmand, who, better than any other and before any other, has traveled through their country…" After he tried to impress—and/or threaten them—with "the things that usually strike savages, i.e., the rifle, the revolver, the spyglass, and a magnet," he found that "They were content to murmur with an expression marked by disdain: "Bo hou tiac! We don't know that!" The reference is to an article, "Le Laos et les Populations Sauvages de L'Indo-Chine," ("Laos and the Savage Populations of Indochina") that Dr. Jules Harmand, a medical doctor, explorer, and colonial official wrote for a popular journal of French imperial exploration, Le Tour du Monde: Nouveau Journal des Voyages (*The World Tour: New Journal of Voyages)*.

Harmand recalls finding a small Vietnamese colony within Laos. The Vietnamese there frustrate him with their obstinate replies to his queries: "The usual refrain of bo mi, bo day, bo hou tiac (there isn't one, it's impossible, we don't know) doesn't take long to take off. Mountains? Bo hou tiac! The Khas? Bo

mi! The road to the lead mines? Bo day!"[35] The phrase "Bo hou tiac" repeats several times in Harmand's article, as indifferent Vietnamese ignore and deflect him. Martí's reformulation of the statement as a question closes his piece. The French might rule Indochina now, but in some future time? Who knows.

Much of the rest of the article relies as well on a variety of French tour guides. To give one clear example: "Coffins – this essential piece of Indo-Chinese Buddhist furniture, which the son offers to his parents…," reads the Guide Bleu du Figaro et du Petit Journal as it describes the woodworking crafts on display at the fair. Martí, with his fascination with death, picked up readily on this: "Good sons present their father with the gift of a luxurious coffin…"[36]

Moving to architecture, the Guide Bleu describes one building: "the Pagoda of Illustrious Men, placed on the edges of the road that connects Saigon to Cholon." [37] Martí further romanticized these "Illustrious Men." His version reads: "On the Saigon-Cholon road we have built a pagoda where under a crown of fretwork towers sleep the poets who sang of patriotism and love, the saints who lived pure and kindly lives among men, the heroes who fought to free us from the Cambodians, the Siamese, and the Chinese."[38]

[35] M. Le Docteur Harmand, "Le Laos et les Populations Sauvages de L'Indo-Chine," in Edouard Charton, ed., *Le Tour du Monde: Nouveau Journal des Voyages,* 251. French original: "Le refrain ordinaire du *bo mi, bo day, bo hou tiac* (il n'y en a pas, c'est imposible, nous ne savons pas) ne tarde pas à aller son train. Les montagnes? Bo hou tiac! Les Khâs? Bo mi! La route des mines de plomb? Bo day!" (translated with Google Translate)

[36] Martí, *La Edad de Oro*, Primera edición bilingüe, Elinor Randall, trans. (La Habana: Centro de Estudios Martianos, 2017) vol.4, 21. Exposition de 1889. Guide Bleu du Figaro et du Petit Journal (Imprimerie Chaix, 1889) 271. French original: "…Cercueils—ce meuble essentiel du bouddhiste indo-chinois, que le fils offre à ses parents…" Spanish original: "Los hijos buenos le dan al padre como regalo un ataúd lujoso. Martí, La Edad de Oro, 162.

[37] *Exposition de 1889. Guide Bleu du Figaro et du Petit Journal* (Imprimerie Chaix, 1889), 266.
French original: "la pagode des Hommes illustres, placée sur les bords de la route qui relie Saigon à Cholon."

[38] Martí, *La Edad de Oro*, Primera edición bilingüe, Elinor Randall, trans. (La Habana: Centro de Estudios Martianos, 2017) vol.4, 17. Spanish original: "... hemos hecho, en el camino de Saigón a Cholen (sic), la pagoda donde duermen, bajo una corona de torres caladas, los poetas que cantaron el patriotism y el amor, los santos que vivieron entre los hombres con bondad y pureza, los héroes que pelearon por libertarnos de los cambodios, de los siameses y de los chinos." Martí, *La Edad de Oro*, 159-160.

Martí's love of romance and heroism shows in his use of the Guide Bleu's description of the Indochinese pavilions. It is worthwhile here to consider a somewhat longer passage:

> "Why do we need to have bigger eyes?" ask the Annamese. "And why must they be closer to our noses?: With these almond shaped eyes of ours we have fashioned the Grand Buddha of Hanoi the bronze god, whose face seems to be alive, and is high as a tower; we have built the Angkor pagoda, in a palm grove, with corridors two leagues long and lakes in the courtyards, and inside the pagoda a house for every god, and fifteen hundred columns and avenues lined with statues.[39]

Before getting into the sources for this passage, let us stop and admire Martí's anti-racist writing here. Europeans might have large wide eyes and Vietnamese smaller almond-shaped eyes, but this, Martí told his readers, was meaningless. What matters is what people do. And, after listing some of the accomplishments of the Vietnamese people, he informs them that nothing shines so brightly as Vietnamese silk. It's quite a statement in the context of its day.

[39] Martí, *La Edad de Oro*, Primera edición bilingüe, Elinor Randall, trans. (La Habana: Centro de Estudios Martianos, 2017) vol.4, 17. Spanish original: "«¿Y para qué necesitamos tener los ojos más grandes», dicen los anamitas, «ni más juntos a la nariz?: con estos ojos de almendra que temenos, hemos fabricado el Gran Buda de Hanoi, el dios de bronce, con cara que parece viva, y alto como una torre; hemos levantado la pagoda de Angkor, en un bosque de palmas, con corredores de a dos leguas, y lagos en los patios, y una casa en la pagoda para cada dios y mil quinientas columnas, y calles de estatuas." Martí, *La Edad de Oro*, 159-160. As with the actual history in other spots here, Martí does have a false sensibility regarding Vietnamese heroes fighting to liberate themselves from Cambodians. The southernmost part of Vietnam was once part of Cambodia, but it was conquered during the Vietnamese southward expansion that occurred over several centuries.

Returning to the Grand Buddha of Hanoi, a smaller replica was a main attraction of the Annam and Tonkin Pavilion. The Guide Bleu described it: “This statue is a cast of the great Bouddah of Hanoi (Tonkin), one of the most colossal works ever produced by Indo-Chinese founders.”[40] The guide then goes on to reveal that the statue was hidden in darkness in a basement of the pavilion and viewable only by matchlight. So Martí had to imagine some of the details. There were no pictures.

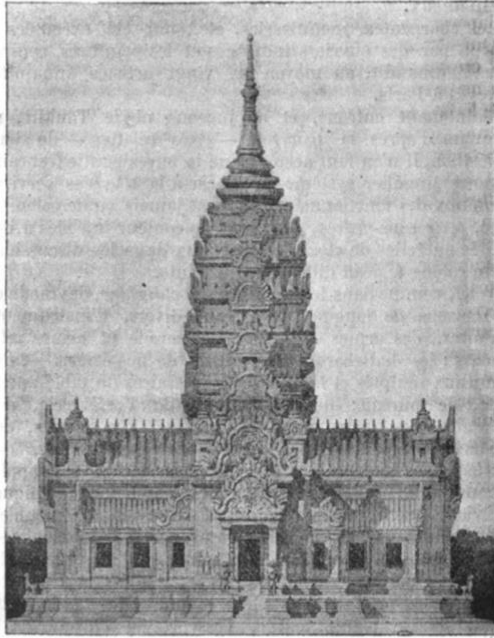
There are many pictures, however, of a small recreation of Angkor Wat that was made for the Cambodian pavilion. The Guide Bleu’s coverage of Angkor Wat--which follows immediately after its coverage of the Tonkin and Annam pavilion—includes the photo below. And Martí’s description seems to be inspired by it. Compare his “corridors two leagues long” (equivalent to six miles) with the guide’s “the real sanctuary that we wanted to recall and symbolize here-occupied nearly six thousand meters.”[41] There are other sources probably at work here too. We return once again to the Encyclopædia Britannica, which, in its article on Cambodia, highlights the “artificial lakes enclosed by walls of cut stone” (compare to Martí’s “lakes in the courtyards”), and a note that the complex’s walls measure “8 ½ miles in circuit.”[42] Finally, “In this temple alone are as many as 1532 columns,” (compare to Martí’s “fifteen hundred columns”) wrote Henri Mouhot, the first Westerner to sketch and describe the temple of Angkor Wat, in a long section of his book describing in precise terms the dimensions of the entire site. One can imagine

[40] *Exposition de 1889. Guide Bleu du Figaro et du Petit Journal* (Imprimerie Chaix, 1889) 269-270. French original: “Cette statue est la moulage du grand Bouddah de Hanoï (Tonkin) une des oeuvres les plus colossales qu’aient jamais livrées les fondeurs indo-chinois.” English translation from: https://en.worldfairs.info/expopavillondetails.php?expo_id=6&pavillon_id=1005

[41] *Exposition de 1889. Guide Bleu du Figaro et du Petit Journal* (Imprimerie Chaix, 1889) 273-274. French originals: “le véritable sanctuaire que l’on a voulu rappeler et symbolyser ici – occupait près de six milles mètres.” English translation from: https://en.worldfairs.info/expopavillondetails.php?expo_id=6&pavillon_id=1006

[42] Colonel Henry Yule (as H.Y.), “Cambodia,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 9th edition, Vol. 4 (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1889), 726.

Martí, inspired by the guide's description of the Angkor Wat replica, heading to the library for more sources to romanticize the site for his young readers.[43]

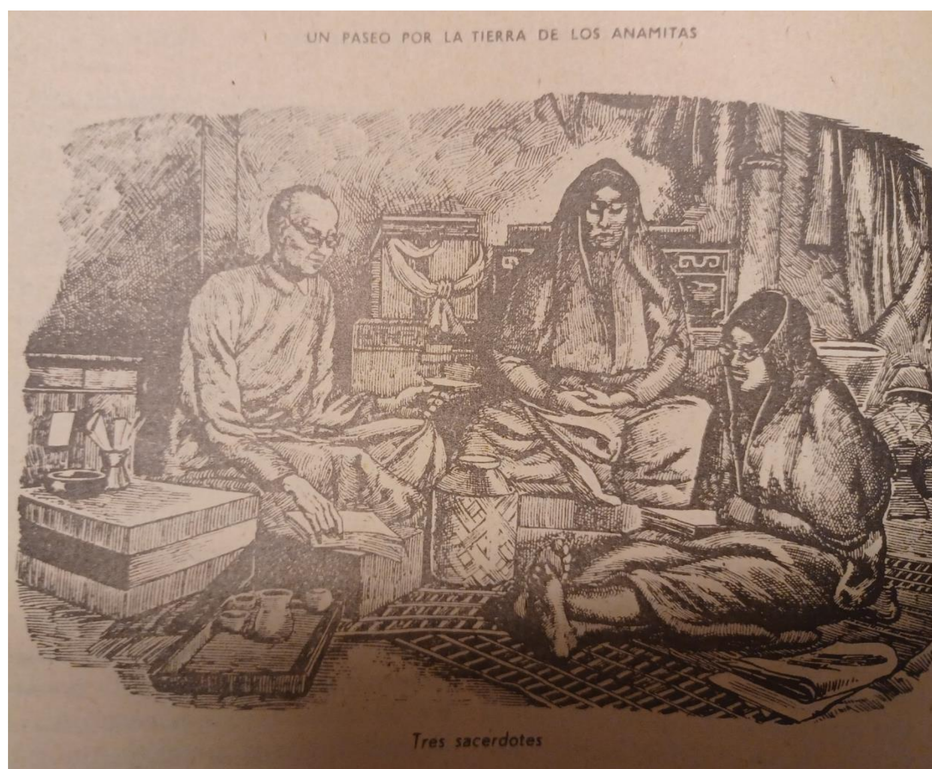


Pagode d'Angkor-Wât.

Any doubt that the French guides are the source for Martí's writing about Vietnam is absolutely erased by the illustration that appears titled as "Tres sacerdotes" (Three Priests) in Martí's article. The same illustration appeared as Les Prêtres Annamites in *L'Exposition de Paris*. [44]

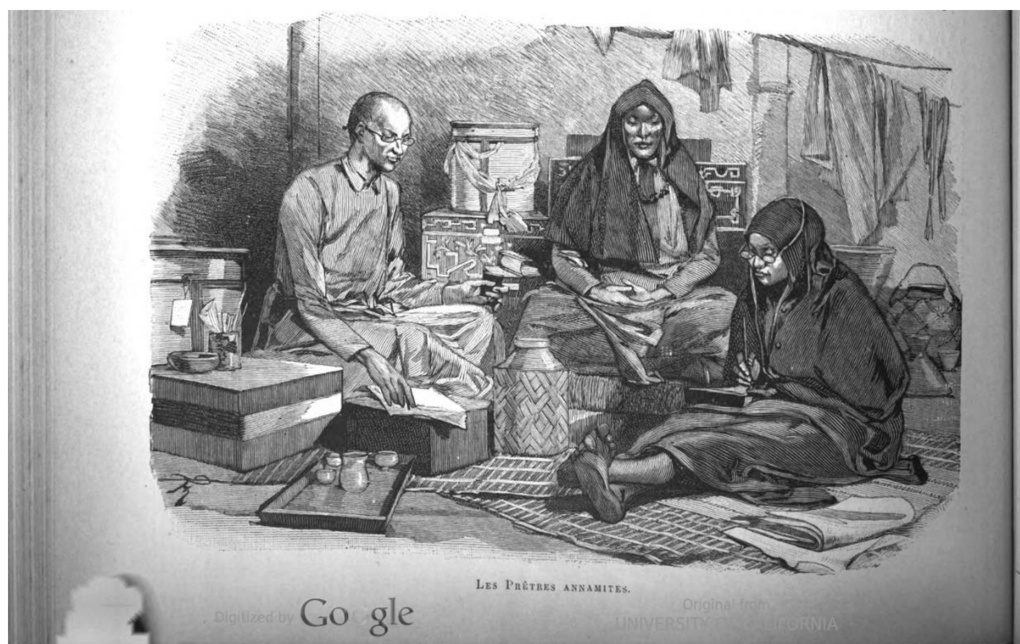
[43] M. Henri Mouhot, *Travels in the central parts of Indo-China (Siam), Cambodia, and Laos, during the years 1858,1859, and 1860* v.1 (London: John Murray, 1864), 299.
[44] *Exposition de 1889. Guide Bleu du Figaro et du Petit Journal* (Imprimerie Chaix, 1889), 272.

Here is the illustration in La Edad de Oro:



Tres sacerdotes

And here is the original image Les Prétres Annamites from *L'Exposition de Paris:*[45]



Les Prêtres annamites.

L'Exposition de Paris (Paris: Édition Enriche, 1889) 164.

They are obviously the same illustration, but then again, they are not exactly the same. Look closely and you will start to notice some differences. The original is sharper in every respect. The hatching (the parallel line effect that gives shadow and depth to the images), is different. It runs diagonally from upper left to lower right, and is all straight in the original; and is somewhat mixed and includes crosshatching (with the lines intersecting) in the copy in La Edad de Oro. The original has greater detail in the jug sitting between the three priests in the crates in the background, and indeed all the items in the illustration. All the major characters are more cleanly done in the original.

Why is this? This was an age when illustrations had to be printed from cut engravings. We do not know if Martí and his collaborators had permission to use the image, or if they just copied it without permission, but regardless, it would have had to be recreated for a new publication, unless the printer had the original engraving, likely on a woodblock, used for the French printing. Clearly, they did not. What appears in La Edad de Oro is a copy—a skilled, but imperfect one.

Beginning with the funeral of Li-In-Du, Martí cobbled together an assortment of newspapers, encyclopedias, religious texts, and tour guides to gain an informed sense of Vietnamese history and culture. These primary sources were in at least two languages foreign to Martí's own native Spanish. He transmitted that knowledge in romanticized form to the young readers of La Edad de Oro in a memorable article. Studying this, we get a glimpse of his method at work.

Martí's writing about Vietnam tells us so much about him. He was a nationalist, and he found fellow nationalists in Vietnamese workers, actors, craftsmen and others, laboring at the Paris World's Fair. Martí wrote and also read subtext. Without ever visiting the fair he sensed the colonial tensions–the

anger that rickshaw drivers must have felt as they carted around rich Europeans, and as Vietnamese actors and musicians performed for French gawkers. But it was not just anger he perceived. It was also pride—an intense sense of Vietnamese cultural identity that could not be squashed by a foreign conquest. He found in Vietnamese history a fellow people who had lived so long under the rule of others, and who, he sensed, would be waging their own struggle for independence as he hoped Cuba soon would as well. And all was not bad—the technological wonders of the fair, the cultural expositions there, and the growing sense of a global community that Martí felt reading reports from the fair made clear that he was living in the dawn of something important. Martí was a modernist, and he found in the Exposition Universelle a new age, a cosmopolitan age, an age to celebrate old heroes and to inspire new ones, an *Age of Gold*.

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