



Cachita's Streets: The Virgin of Charity, Race, and Revolution in Cuba (Religious Cultures of African and African Diaspora People)

Jalane D. Schmidt

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Cuba's patron saint, the Virgin of Charity of El Cobre, also called Cachita, is a potent symbol of Cuban national identity. Jalane D. Schmidt shows how groups as diverse as Indians and African slaves, Spanish colonial officials, Cuban independence soldiers, Catholic authorities and laypeople, intellectuals, journalists and artists, practitioners of spiritism and Santería, activists, politicians, and revolutionaries each have constructed and disputed the meanings of the Virgin. Schmidt examines the occasions from 1936 to 2012 when the Virgin's beloved, original brown-skinned effigy was removed from her national shrine in the majority black- and mixed-race mountaintop village of El Cobre and brought into Cuba's cities. There, devotees venerated and followed Cachita's image through urban streets, amassing at large-scale public ceremonies in her honor that promoted competing claims about Cuban religion, race, and political ideology. Schmidt compares these religious rituals to other contemporaneous Cuban street events, including carnival, protests, and revolutionary rallies, where organizers stage performances of contested definitions of Cubanness. Schmidt provides a comprehensive treatment of Cuban religions, history, and culture, interpreted through the prism of Cachita.

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