

“Hey, That’s African Music!’: In Search of the ‘African’ in the *Son Jarocho*”

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Primed by Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán’s groundbreaking work beginning in the late 1940s, the past quarter century has seen an explosion of scholarly attention to Mexico’s “Tercera Raíz,” its African mestizo heritage. Musician-scholar Antonio García de León estimates that more than 2,000 books and articles have been written on the topic during this period. The *son mexicano* has been a thread of this cultural conversation, with special attention given to the *son jarocho* of southern Veracruz, an area in which people of African descent have made their home since the sixteenth century.

This short presentation follows the personal journey from a musician/ethnomusicologist perspective, seeking “the African” in the style of the traditional *son jarocho*. I speculate that certain baseline sub-Saharan African organizing musical principles are fundamental to the basic functioning of the traditional *son jarocho*, in contradistinction to the organizing principles of certain other prominent regional son types and to the creations of pseudo-folk urban songwriters of the mid-twentieth century. The story is one of Afro-mestizo musical persistence in the ongoing give and take of an increasingly globalized world.