151st anniversary of the foundation of the Lodge Ekerewá Momí in Itiá Núnkwe (Havana): congratulations to its past, present, and future members.

According to the African treaty, there were three albinos from Efí Ekerewá territory; they were called Ekerewá Momí, Ekerewá Ikanfioró, and Ekerewá Kunanbére. They were family with Sikán — ‘the Great Mother’, who also was from Ekerewá. In Havana in the 19th century, in order to commemorate this great family, the lodge of Carabalí members named Siro Akanabión (that no longer exists) founded two lodges: Ekerewá Momí in the barrio of Jesús María in 1863 and Ekerewá Ikanfioró in the barrio of Belén in 1873. In Matanzas, on 29 March,
1921, the lodge Ekerewá Bongó Masibá was founded, and on 6 February 1944, Ekerewá Bongó Masibá founded the lodge Kunanbére Ekerewá on San Juan de Dios Street.

The title of Ekerewá Momí is: Ekerewá Momí súku bakarióngo, Síro Amako Asíro, Síro Akanabión. In Cuba, when the lodge Ekerewá Momí leaves their temple in procession, they carry the *bakarióngo*, the standard of power that represents the clothes of Sikán, although these days they may use goatskin. In Nigeria and Cameroun, it was common in Ékpè processions to carry a standard with leopard skin.

Abakuá procession with a *bakarióngo* (standard) representing the clothes of Sikán, published by Fernando Ortiz (1954)

Conscious of their history as representatives of the land of Sikán, on 20 July of 2014, the members of Ekerewá Momí celebrated the 151st anniversary of their foundation in a public act in the park of the Church of Jesús María, where they were born at the foot of a Ceiba tree that still exists.

Cuban Abakuá treaties report that Ekerewá was the name of the king of Ekerewá territory in Calabar. The phrase Ekerewá Momí means, “I am Ekerewá!” In the Èfìk language of Calabar, the phrase Èkéñ Èwà mìnò mí means, ‘Èkèñ Èwà is here’. In Calabar, Èkéñ Èwà is known as part of the Nsìdùn community of the Èfìk (see below). Without a doubt, the family of Èkéñ Èwà/ Ekerewá in both Calabar and Cuba are satisfied with the continual fidelity of their members in recognizing their contributions to the culture of Ékpè/ Êkue.
2014 the culture of Ékpè was nominated by the Ministry of Culture of Nigeria to be elected by UNESCO as World Intangible Heritage.

Traditional chief in procession with the standard made with a leopard skin, in Afikpo, Nigeria, by the Nigerian artist D.L.K., Nnachy, 1962.

In Calabar, Èfìk society is organized in Houses, each one with an Etubom or Head. Among the traditional Houses of the Èfìk exist ‘Ewa Eken’ and ‘Eken
Iwatt’, both names being related with ‘Ekerewá’ of Cuba. These names are from the community of Nsidùn, the likely origin of the term Nsíro ‘family’ in Abakuá, while the term Akanabión derives from ‘akaní obio’ or ‘old town’. Neither of these two Houses were strong in the culture of Ékpè, because the chiefs of Nsidùn received their titles from the neighboring lodge of Àtákà, known in Cuba as Natákua [cf. Ivor Miller, Voice of the Leopard, 2009, page 97]. It seems that during the trans-Atlantic slave trade, upon arrival to Cuba the members of the Nsidùn community reinvented themselves. Nevertheless, the lineage of Ekerewá demonstrates the cultural victory of the exiled Africans in maintaining the historic memory of their origins, and the value of their ancestral institution.

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‘Saúmiando’ the Ceiba tree of Ekerewá Momí with incense on their 151st anniversary, 20 July, 2014.