

FOLK MUSIC OF THE AMERICAS

Music Division

Recording Laboratory AFS L13



Songs of the African Cult Groups

From the Archive of Folk Song

Edited by Melville J. and Frances S. Herskovits

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INTRODUCTION

The music of the Negro cult groups of Bahia follows the fundamental patterns of West African and New World Negro music everywhere. In listening to the songs included in this album, a selection from a much larger series of recordings made in Brazil during 1941-42,¹ these patterns must be kept in mind if the values in this music are to be adequately appreciated.

The elements that enter into this patterning can be summarized briefly. The melodic phrases are usually short, the brevity of the statement being pronounced in most of the songs where there is alternation between leader and chorus. Where the entire song is a solo, as in B1, the melodic line is long and complex. At rituals the phrases of the leader-and-chorus alternation are repeated many times more than will be heard on any of these records. The soloist not only begins a song, but he also ends it, a procedure at variance with the Euramerican feeling that repetitions should be balanced and the chorus should sing the final phrase. It is a mark of accomplished musicianship for the leader to play with his phrase, introducing ornaments and variations so that no two repetitions, certainly no two successive repetitions, are the same. The chorus, however, does not vary from the initial statement. The timbre of the women's singing voices is of a characteristic hard, almost metallic quality, and the falsetto is often employed by the principal singer or chorus, or both.

This music is to be thought of as polyrhythmic rather than polyphonic. Percussion takes on such importance, indeed, that the singing is to be thought of as an accompaniment to the drumming rather than the contrary, which is taken for granted by listeners trained to hear Euramerican music. Drums and iron gongs play the rhythms for the West African and Congo-Angola rites, while Caboclo groups employ the large calabash and the rattle. The calabash is often heard in the rituals of all groups, however, since at the time these recordings were made police regula-

tions forbade the use of drums in Afro-Bahian ceremonies except by special permission. The reason why Congo-Angola songs in this album (B3) employ calabash and rattle percussion is that the singers were from a Caboclo cult house.

Percussion instruments are played in batteries. Drums are usually heard in threes, though two can be employed if a third one is lacking, since the two higher-toned ones beat in unison. The smaller duo beat a steady rhythm that contrasts with the more intricate notes of the large drum whose deeper tone can readily be distinguished in the recordings. The fundamental beat is set by the gong (or rattle), customarily the first instrument to be heard. In the rites of the groups of West African derivation, drums will play unaccompanied at certain points. Such unaccompanied drum music is to be heard on A6.

The cult groups who employ these songs and drum rhythms in their worship are designated as "nations," according to their tradition of African origins. Today the "nations" most widely represented are the Ketu and 'Jesha groups of southwestern Nigeria, belonging to the Yoruba tribe, the Gêge of Dahomean origin, from French West Africa immediately to the west of the Yoruba people, and the Congo and Angola groups whose ancestors were derived from the southern and eastern fringes of the Congo basin. Still another group of growing importance is the Caboclo, which incorporates in its worship deities and practices associated with indigenous Indian gods and deified persons thought to have been supernaturally endowed. Its ceremonial practices follow the Angola pattern of worship, but stress is laid on the use of the Portuguese language in many ritual songs, and influences of both church liturgy and secular Iberian melodic patterns are found interspersed with the musical idiom of the Congo-Angola group.

The recordings in this album may now be described individually before we consider the ritual setting of this music, the training and standards that govern its performance, and the criteria of musicianship that are found among the Afro-Bahians.

This text was originally published to accompany 78 rpm album XIII which was released in 1947.

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A1—KETU: FOR ESHU. Leader and chorus with two drums and iron gong.

The three songs on this side are sung at the opening of "public" ceremonies, to "send away" the trickster-deity Eshu (Elegbara) who must open the way for the other gods to come and possess their devotees. As in all these records, the virtuosity of the percussion is apparent in its cross rhythms in 6/4 and 3/4, with a 6/4 pattern in the gong. The words to the songs, in the Yoruban language of Nigeria, follow with a free translation.

Ibarabo-o mojuba
Iba koshe omo deko
Elegbara
Omojuba
Ileba Eshu lona

Odara kolori onejo
Sho-sho-sho abe
Kolori eni-ijo

Eshu tiriri
Bara abebe
Tiriri lona

O great one, I pay obeisance,
A young child does not confront
The powerful one;
I pay obeisance
To Eleba Eshu, who is on the road.

The good one, who has no head for dancing,
The stubborn knife
Has no head for dancing.

Eshu the awesome,
O powerful knife!
The awesome one, on the road.

A2—KETU: FOR OSHOSSI. Leader and chorus with two drums and iron gong.

These songs for the god of the hunt were recorded by a priest of the Ketu cult at his cult house. The falsetto employed by him is to be noted. Members of his group of initiates composed the chorus. The irregular beats of the large drum, which do not, however, interfere with the marked syncopation of the rhythm, are

likewise worthy of remark. It is in this way that this drum "calls the gods" or, later in the dance as "the voice of the god," signals the proper choreographic movements to the possessed dancing initiates.

Odire-e odire
Arere bare-o
Bare are-o
Arole (g)barajo

Oke
Okeke ode
Oke

Agogo olese
Olesa, elese kuta

The family, the family,
The worthy and friendly,
All the relations,
The head of the house gathers them together.

He calls,
He calls like a hunter,
He calls.

The bells on his feet,
Feet, feet of stone.²

A3—KETU: FOR OSAIN (Cycle of Leaves).

Leader and chorus with two drums and iron gong.

These three songs, for one of the forest gods, are a part of the "cycle of leaves." The length of the melodic line in the third song on this side is unusual for leader-and-chorus progressions.

Pelebe mi tobe-o
Pelebe mi tobe-o
Obe pelebe
Aku pelebe
Ku aku pelebe

Ere kanbi oje
Arere ife-i
E weti-ayo

² Idiom for being firm, not easily dislodged.

Irere ijeje
Bakuroba
Ibaribaba
Barisha
Ibari yeye
Ibaba yeye
Mama aro
Aji kawa da she
Omo 'Batala

Flat is my knife,³
Flat is my knife,
The knife is flat;
Dull it is flat,
Dull or not it is flat.

Ere makes a noise like a bullroarer,
The sound of the whistle
Will go into his ears beseechingly.

The kindness of the seventh day,
Never to leave the king,
The worshiper of the father,
The worshiper of the god,
The worshiper of the savior,
The father savior;
Without a hearth,
We ourselves make ourselves
Children of Obatala.

A4 and A5—KETU: FOR YEMANJA AND NANA. Leader and chorus with two drums and iron gong.

Yemanja, goddess of the sea, is one of the most beloved deities of the Afro-Bahians. In the two songs for her given here, the manner in which the soloist, a famous Bahian cult singer, varies his phrases makes his performance a noteworthy example of Afro-Bahian musical tradition. His harmonizing against the chorus in the first song is somewhat unusual. The drum rhythms, in 4/4 against the 3/4 of the melody, are characteristic of the songs for this deity. The complexity of the different rhythm in the third song, which is for Nana, the mother of the earth deity, is also to be noted.

³ This is a proverb that means a Yoruba remains one whatever happens to him.

Ba uba-a
Ba uba-a
A woyo
Sarele
Yewashe

Awade
Iyade lode
Bu uba

Obi Nana yo logbo
Nana yo
Elohi Nana yo

If we do not meet her,
If we do not meet her,
Though we look for her long,
We shall hasten to humble ourselves
Before our mother the lawgiver.

We have arrived,
Our mother is outside.
Should we not meet her?

[If] the Kola nut of Nana satisfies the cat,⁴
Nana is satisfied;
And I say Nana is satisfied.

A6—KETU DRUM RHYTHMS. Two drums (Hun and Hunpi) and gong.

These rhythms are played without accompanying song. The first one, the *Adahun*, which "calls" the gods, brings on possessions by these beings in the space of a few seconds. Its exciting quality is largely the result of the repeated unaccented beats of the gong, about which the drums play complementary and counter rhythms. The *Apanage* of Omolu, the *Aguere* of Yansan, and the *Aluja* of Shango are rhythms to which the gods of the earth, the wind and thunder, respectively, dance.

B1—GEGE: FOR GBESEN. Solo singer with two drums and iron gong.

This song is in the purest Dahomean (West African) style. It is so superbly rendered that it would call forth admiration in Dahomey itself.

⁴ Felines are sacred to the earth gods.

Noteworthy are the complexity of the phrasing and of the melodic line, the controlled and calculated acceleration of the tempo (which begins at 162 beats per minute and ends with 235), and the economy of primary materials achieved by the use of only four principal notes. The drumming was done by some of Bahia's most distinguished virtuosi, and its 3/4 rhythm is the more interesting in that it has no seeming relationship with the rhythm of the melody. The keening (women's cries) heard after the shouted interpolated demand of the singer is in honor of the deities named at those points in the song. The text could not be obtained, but analysis of those words that can be discerned show that it is in Fõn, the language of Dahomey, and that it honors other gods as well as Gbesen, the deity for whom it was especially sung.

B2—'JESHA: FOR OSHUN. Leader and chorus with two drums and iron gong.

The 'Jesha group, of Yoruban derivation but from another part of Nigeria than the ancestors of the Ketu cult members, worships Oshun, the goddess of fresh water, as its particular deity. The regularity of the strongly syncopated rhythm is an outstanding trait of these three 'Jesha songs for Oshun. No satisfactory rendering of the words to the first song was obtained.

Oba-e
Oba godo godo
Ba misare kutu
Ebaba montimi
Shaworo

Barewa lele
Umale
Arele umawo

Alabe Oshun
Oshun mirere-o

The beautiful one emerges,
 The spirit-god,
 One of the family reincarnated.

Honor to the knife of Oshun,
 My good Oshun.

B3—CONGO-ANGOLA: FOR

DANDALUNDA. Leader and chorus with calabash and rattle.

On this and succeeding sides, the calabash and rattle replace the drums and gong. The songs on this record were sung by two men, the second taking the part of the chorus; it is often difficult to distinguish between their voices. Dandalunda, the goddess worshiped in the three songs of this side, is the Angolan equivalent of the 'Jesha Oshun. The "jazzy" quality of the songs characterizes much of Congo-Angola music, and gives us a clue to a likely dominant African regional influence on American Negro music. Translations of the words could not be obtained.

Erere danda
Dandalunda
Danada

Dandalunda
Mayinbanda
Koke
Koke-a

Dandalunda laizo
Danda-o laizo

Ei-si-si o akoke aya
A koke mi Dandalunda
Gongoro zana

B4—GUARANI: FOR KAYUBANGANGA.

Leader and chorus with calabash, drum, and rattle.

The first song of this group is preceded by an invocation to Kayubanganga, a counterpart of the Ketu earth deity, Omolu. This is accompanied by steady unison beats in the percussion, which are continued in the three songs that follow by the rattle, while the calabash and drum (in most cases it would be a calabash alone) play a more complex rhythm. The words were said to be in the language of the Guarani Indians, but the names Aluwaye (from Obaluwaye "Lord of the World") and Shapana are Yoruban designations for the earth deity, while Banganga is derived from one of the Bantu dialects of the Congo. The final words repeat the opening lines of the invocation.

[Invocation]

Egwa tembala ajunsuru

Waye takapi

Di gunga (A-bobo!)

Tupan inayisia

Iyena 'junsura bambai

Guarti unraijo

Sale unbanda di gunga tupan moyasi

Ela seketria bokoyu

Sumba katesara simbira

Ajunsuru isumba (A-i bobo!)

Uwa takara

Baranganga

Kayu banganga

Abuye dile

Savo kamuya Aluwaye (or Shapana)

Voya mi ganga

Aye kayu banga

Egwa (Ewa) tembala (a) junsuru

(Wa) ye takapi

Aluwaye (or Shapana or Baranganga)

B5—CABOCLO-TUPINAMBA: FOR SANTO

JUREMEIRO. Leader and chorus with calabash and rattle.

Words of most songs sung in the Caboclo cult are in Portuguese. Many of the deities of this group are spirits that inhabit various aspects of their surroundings. "Saint Juremeiro" is the spirit of the *jurema* tree, which yields a ceremonial drink that has a narcotic effect. This being is believed by his worshipers to be the patron saint of Bahia. The influence of Catholic litany on Caboclo music is apparent in the invocation, which is accorded the same unvarying beat of calabash and rattle heard in the preceding side as accompaniment.

[Invocation]

Iye-a ye-a

E-atakwara e-a

E-a jurema

E-a etc.

Tupinamba veze

Tupinamba veza

Ande ande la na ruanda

No sertão do Ceara

Tres pedras, tres pedras

Dentro desta aldeia

Uma maior

Outra menor

A mais pequena

Que nos alumeia

Seu Tupi, o Seu Tupi

Seu Tupi-a

Elle anda

Kamie Kamiare

Kamie Kamiara

Kamie sesenta leguas

Mas cheguei na canzua

Tupinamba is our second father,

Tupinamba is our second father,

He walks and walks about

In the backwoods of Ceara.

Three stones, three stones

In this hamlet;

One is larger,

One is smaller,

(But) the smallest

Lights our way.

Sir Tupi, O Sir Tupi,

Sir Tupi-a,

He went about,

And he walked, and walked,

Walked, and walked,

Walked sixty leagues

But arrived at the house of worship.

* * * *

Salvador, or "Bahia," as it is more popularly known, is a city of many distinctions. It has a beautiful natural setting, a wide range of the finest in baroque and colonial art, a history of intellectual leadership during the colonial period and after, and a fine reputation for gentle manners and good living. Equally recognized is the adjustment in human relations achieved by the descendants of the Africans, who shared so importantly in the history of this region. But for us it is especially important because, of all the regions in the New World where African musical forms have been retained, there is none where the music has persisted in so rich a vein as in northeastern Brazil, and especially in this city of Salvador.

Today Negroes and those of partial African descent enter fully into the life of the city, even though more of them find employment as casual rather than skilled laborers, and not many are engaged in the professions or individual enterprise. Of this group, those who, by reason of traditional conservatism or some turn of good or ill fortune, hold to the belief that ancestral deities are active in the affairs of men become associated with cult centers called *candomblés*, where African or African-like worship is carried on. These cult centers are so numerous and their ceremonies so renowned throughout Brazil that Bahia is often spoken of as "the Rome of the *Africanos*." In some of the *candomblé* houses, indeed, rituals are carried on with such nicety of African detail that they reproduce the worship of the areas of Africa which the Bahians identify as their "nations."

Worship in all these groups is based on the world view that the destiny of the universe is in the hands of deities that are everywhere the same, though the names they bear vary from region to region and from people to people according to the language that is spoken. The destiny of man, who is but a modest part of this universe, is ruled by the same gods, but man enjoys the intercession of a hierarchy of ancestral dead, who in death as in life continue to be preoccupied with the well being of the family to which they belong. Indeed, the gods appear to have given the ancient dead a certain autonomy in regulating the moral code of their descendants in the interest of human well being, though they have not abrogated their own powers to regulate the conduct of the living members of each family. On the contrary, each individual has his or her god as a personal spirit.

Man is not, however, a passive agent in relation to his destiny, for through divination he can discover the secrets of that destiny, and learn how to cause it to favor his ventures, his well being, and his status in the group with which he lives. Thus the outcome of a journey, a marriage, a business undertaking may be threatened by the active disapproval or the indifference of his particular deity, or another of the powerful gods, or of ancestors. The diviner will reveal whether these can be undertaken with safety and success by some act of propitiation of any of these forces to enlist active and favorable cooperation, and he will name the form this propitiation is to take.

Initiation into the cult, the ultimate of several possible degrees of participation, demands a period of retreat in the cult-center for from more than a year for the intransigently orthodox Gêge, to from four to six months for the Ketu and 'Jesha and Angola. It is only a matter of weeks, or even one week, for the Caboclo groups, though as the individual Caboclo center becomes more established, and the reputation of its cult head grows, the term of initiation is extended, and many features of training are borrowed from the more orthodox "African" cults.

In each cult group, mastery of esoteric knowledge is achieved over many years. The proverb, "One climbs a ladder rung by rung," is heard often in this connection. But whether extended training is given under initiation rites, in cult language, in cult song repertory, or in dancing, and whether the many complex rites that mark successive stages between the symbolic death and rebirth as a vehicle of a god are performed, certain "preparation" is mandatory. The head must be ritually dedicated to the god so that he may descend there and take "possession" of his devotee. She will have a new name, and for seven years will be known as *yawo*, "bride," or young initiate of the god. She will know the colors of her god, the foods he favors and abhors, and certain rules governing sexual continence in relation to this worship. She will understand the place of her god in the hierarchy of deities, and learn his emblems, his functions, and his powers. The Catholic saint with whom each god is equated in the thinking of all cult worshipers will be her special saint, and she will have chromolithographs of his saint at home. The tasks that may be performed by male gods and by female gods, the etiquette toward senior initiates, cult officials, and the cult head will all be taught her.

Above all, however short her training, and how lacking in the valued mystical preparation which characterizes the orthodox cult houses, the initiate will know the drum rhythms of the god who rules the house she is associated with and especially the rhythms of her own god that demand possession of her. With this will go an appreciable repertory of songs for all the gods, though not necessarily the more esoteric ones. For it is the rhythms identified with each god, and the songs that praise him that are a primary instrument in summoning him and enlisting his favors. It can well be said that in these cults

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no worship of the gods is possible without the rhythms and accompanying songs that call and speak for the god.

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The attention of spectators at Afro-Bahian rituals accustomed to Euramerican musical and dramatic art tends first of all to center on the dancers. Concerning the music, the singing attracts most attention from such persons. But interest soon shifts back to the dancers, for the repetitions that are so important a part of African musical style tend to make the music monotonous to ears accustomed to changes in musical line.

But, as pointed out, the music of the drums is central to the entire performance; and to their rhythms, in a very real sense, the melody of the song is but the accompaniment. It is not chance, then, that in all New World Negro music the rhythmic elements are the most typically African. This is as true of jazz and swing as it is of these Afro-Bahian songs, or as it is of the Haitian *vodun* cult songs or the music of Africa itself. The role of the drummer in the setting of the dance, and his position as a recognized musician reflects this emphasis on percussion rhythm. He takes over the drums with the assurance of one who knows he is the focal point of this public ritual, even though the attention of the spectators may be drawn from his flying hands by the movements of the possessed dancers.

The drums he uses are usually three in number: the *hu*, which is the largest, the *huñpri*, or medium-sized one, and the *le*, or the smallest member of the *terno*, or "trio," as the set is called. Drums are of two types, either made of hollow logs, or built up out of barrel staves. The hollow-log type are today rare. They are carefully made and are painted with designs after the purchaser's fancy, with their names often inscribed on them. More customary is the barrel type, which, after being built up by a cooper, is varnished rather than painted. Interestingly enough, it is explained that the varnish gives to the instrument a more brilliant tone—a principle that is applied to the violin. The "power" and control of the drums arise out of their "baptismal" rites, which combine African and Catholic features. This power is renewed annually, when the drums are ritually "fed."

Since each deity of each "nation" has its own

particular rhythms, it is clear why the drummer is the musician par excellence of the Afro-Bahian scene. The place of song in this musical complex is best shown by indicating the Bahian definition of what constitutes a good singer. This has little to do with voice quality. A good singing voice is appreciated, of course, and some cult centers place special emphasis on the training they give their cult members in singing, but in a song leader knowledge of the songs is of far more importance than competence in their rendition. An elderly priest or priestess, with a voice almost completely destroyed by long years of effort to be heard over the drums and against the chorus, is nonetheless thought a fine singer if able to enunciate without hesitation the proper song for any given god of any "nation" when this is called for.

The finest musician is the drummer who can also lead the singing. Such a person is an *alabé huntor*, a "drummer-singer." Not only must he know the full repertory of songs for each of the gods of the house, but he must be able to bring into play the rhythms and melodies for the gods of other "nations" that possess visiting devotees from other cult houses. Here he faces a difficult test, for an initiate who has performed a seventh-year ceremony names her own songs, and he must not alone satisfy her as to rhythm, but he must take over the lead of the melody she has introduced. Add to this the fact that every rhythm has several parts, and it is to be seen why the musical competence of the drummer, the most important musician in the minds of the people, must, like his rhythms, be kept in mind by all who listen to the music in this album.

* * * *

African speech has been more extensively retained in Bahia than anywhere else in the New World. The best-preserved language is Nago, the speech of the Yoruban peoples, of which considerable vocabularies can be collected. On one occasion, at the funeral of a priestess, we heard a cult head, born and raised in Bahia, deliver an extemporaneous address in Nago, with the fluency of one accustomed to think in the language. Aside from the vocabularies which cult initiates are taught for expressing commands and naming cult objects, cult rituals, cult food and cult raiment, as well as the titles of what the Bahians call the "general staff" that directs the rituals of

the cult house, the use of Nago is today limited to interpolations of proverbs and aphorisms in the speech of old people. Other African languages encountered—the language of Dahomey and some Congo and Angola dialects—are less widely known, being heard chiefly in the words to songs, in invocations, or as names of deities. How authentic the “Guarani” of the priest who gave us songs in this tongue is cannot be said without further research into the indigenous language. Words to songs are understood in only the most general way by all but a restricted number of elders. Certain of the cult heads can give more detailed translations, but they show no eagerness to do this, preferring to explain the choreography that is related to the song rather than the words themselves. The degree to which the translations we have given approach any literalness, indeed, is due to the fact that we were fortunate in finding, on our return home, a native Yoruban, a student in an American university, who was able to check some of the translations.

Though songs are sung on all occasions, they are heard by those who are not cult members only at the “public” ceremonies or when undergoing some cure at a cult house. Thus, except for the death-rite songs (*achêche*) or those sung when sacrifices of various types are offered, or when the rite of propitiating the power that resides in the head (*bori*) is carried out, most Bahian cult songs are known to those who frequent rituals open to the general public. All those included in this album are in this category, but neither in rhythmic nor melodic patterns do they differ from the songs heard at the private ceremonies.

A sense of the setting in which the songs are most often heard can best be given by describing a dance. This is at a Ketu house, let us say, and the songs are sung in Nago. In the more prominent centers, the dancing space is large, well lighted, often by electricity, even when the cult house is located some distance from the center of the city. The floor is of hardwood, often inlaid, and flanked by benches in tiers, one side reserved for women and the other for men. The ceiling is decorated with paper streamers, with the color of the god in whose honor the dance is being given predominating, though many complementary colors are included to represent those deities said to “accompany” him. Suspended from beams or hung against walls are gilt and silver ornaments;

a bird of silver for the god of the hunt; a fish, golden or silver, depending upon whether it is the symbol of the goddess of fresh water or of the sea; a silver dove, emblem of the father of the gods. An altar is there for the Catholic saint who corresponds to the African god being honored.

There is a ceremony in the annual cycle of rites which honors Yansan, the goddess of the wind. Her metal is burnished copper and her color, flame. She is equated with “Santa Barbara.” Many gods accompany her. She is fiery, a warrior-goddess, lover of many of the gods. Before dusk all the seats are filled, and outside many persons are crowded about the open windows. Later more will join them to listen to the singing and to hear the drumming. Inside, chairs are set out for distinguished visitors. At all such rites it is good form to send invitations to the ranking cult houses, and friendly houses send representative delegations which, on important occasions at prominent houses, will include the cult heads themselves. They occupy the reserved places of honor which are to one side of the drums—the focus of the ceremony for the gods come to dance before the drums.

As night approaches, and the private rites of propitiating the trickster-god, Eshu, guardian of roads and entrances, are completed, the cult head, gong in hand, takes his seat on a chair or a low stool beside the drums and begins the *shiré*, the opening of the “play” wherein three songs are sung for each deity. There is some deviation in detail from “nation” to “nation” in this sequence, but at a Ketu cult center the following can be taken as typical. First Ogun, god of metal and of war, who “opens the way,” is sung for; then Oshossi, god of the hunt and principal god of this particular house. Next, songs for Osain, god of leaves and healing, are heard; then for Oshunmare, the serpent-god of the rainbow; for Omolu, god of the earth, who is sometimes followed by Oba Oluwaye, his old father. Next in the sequence are songs for the “queens”—the female deities—Nana, the oldest, and mother of the earth-god, Omolu; Yemanja, goddess of the sea; Oshun, goddess of fresh water; Yansan, Oba, and Eowa, the three warrior-goddesses. Then Shango, the god of thunder, and last of all Oshala, father of the gods, are summoned with songs sacred to them.

By this time this cycle has ended; several possessions may have taken place among the danc-

ers; and other possessions follow rapidly as the drums, unaccompanied, play the *adahun* (A6), the rhythm that compels possession, "The voice you have got to say 'yes' to." In less than a minute the dancers, each in turn, sway to the rhythm or spin about, then right themselves, their fixed, rigid facial expressions showing that their gods have now "descended" to their heads, as this possession experience is described.

The possessed initiates are then led out of the dancing space and robed as gods. They back out and only turn when they have crossed the threshold that separates the dancing floor from the next room, since a god may not turn his back on the drums. During the interlude, any visiting initiate of another "nation" who has joined in the circle dance now comes forward to hear the "voice" of her god expressed in the rhythms of her own "nation." Then, under possession, she too will be robed for her god in one of the appropriate costumes of the center giving the dance.

After perhaps an interval of half an hour, the best drummers assume their places at the drums while the cult head, or the principal drummer, takes over the gong. Confetti and sometimes flowers are passed around. Then the march that heralds the coming of the gods begins. The spectators stand as they sing. The timing is handled with professional sureness of dramatic effect. The song is repeated several times. Then the gods enter in single file.

Ogun, as a male god dressed in green, wears lace-edged pantalettes to the ankles under a short wide skirt, a bodice, and the cap of an African prince. He carries a dagger. There may be several initiates for Ogun following by order of seniority of initiation. Next comes Oshossi in

turquoise blue, horse's switch in one hand and miniature bow and arrow in the other; then Osain, god of leaves, with a raphia crown, Oshunmare the rainbow and Omolu the earth-god, all with elaborate raphia woven headdresses, the latter wearing one that completely covers his head and face with strands of raphia hanging thickly to his waist. The "queens" are splendid—white and pale blue silk for Nana and Yemanja, respectively; gold for Oshun; Oba and Eowa in paler colors; crimson for Yansan. Their costumes, as that of Shango, god of thunder, follow the chromolithographs of the saints of the church with whom they are identified. Oshala, aged and stooping, is in white with a cloth falling over his head, silver staff surmounted by a dove in hand. Three times the gods circle the dancing space while the confetti is thrown at them and, since it is Yansan's day, the flowers at Yansan. The ritual cries for the individual gods are shouted, and the gods step out of line to embrace the cult head, and anyone in the audience they select to honor.

Then the gods, beginning with Ogun, come forward to dance before the drums. Here is a display of such skill as gives fame to a cult house. Again three songs are sung for each god—though some spirits beg the cult head to allow them more and would dance interminably if not stopped—and then there is singing and dancing that specifically honors the gods whose day it is. Later other deities, those of the visitors whose gods are not among the ones worshipped in the center giving the dance, are given their turn. And when, in the early hours of the morning, the gods no longer show by their tension a further need to dance, the rite comes quietly to a close.



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