

three rituals



Shango, the voodoo of

The rare

Tumba Francessa from

Night Hymns
of the Yemenites from

TRINIDAD

CUBA

ISRAEL

Donald Smith



three rituals

A record of rituals will inevitably ask questions as well as answer some. In contrasting on one record three rituals from continents apart we may expect to hear differences . . . and basic similarities . . . which could spell out century old secrets of the ritual impulse.

Here are the rhythmic ingredients which hypnotize and transfix groups of people. Here for the studying or sharing are the hidden well springs of emotional possession. By recording, the ritual experience is exposed to detailed analysis or for varying degrees of actual involvement.

Yet for all the answers revealed, these recordings will ask as many questions. The fantastic power tapped by ritual practice defies dissection and pat intellectual understandings.

Shango

Both the *Shango* of Trinidad and the *Tumba Francessa* from Santiago are special derivations of voodoo. Both spring from deep African roots, origins so obscure and ancient that many of the sung and chanted words have lost all meaning.

The *Shango* here may be considered a present day ritual. Like all rituals it is disturbing, sometimes ugly, always a study in fascination. The human sacrifice it once accompanied is now only symbolized: the rhythmic frenzy leading up to screams of the supposed victim being consumed by flames. But it is more than a mere sublimation; as practiced today it has become a very real extension of the same basic patterns into a new and different world.

BB



Beryl McBurnie

The following notes are written by Sam Eskin:

Yemenite Singers

After almost 2000 years, the Yemenite Jews have returned home. In the course of this long residence on the fringe of an ancient Arab culture some of the Arab characteristics rubbed off on them, much as they resisted it. For example, in the Passover service as rendered by the Yemenites, the famous four questions are first done in Hebrew and then repeated in Arabic.

While the Yemenite songs in this record are not ritualistic in the religious sense, the spirit in which they are conveyed reflects powerful emotional elements.

Tumba Francessa

In those strenuous times from which Haiti emerged as the first Negro republic, there was an exodus from the island, mostly white French, but including a number of Negroes. Some left voluntarily, others under duress. A number of them found refuge in Cuba, easy sailing distance from Haiti, and brought with them their religious and cultural accoutrements, strongly African, but bearing marks of the superimposition of impinging cultural contacts such as Spanish and French.

There exist in Cuba to this day those who have held their culture more or less intact. Their percussions and singing and dancing groups are known as *Tumba Francessa*.

Theirs is a dance with an odd rhythm showing European and African antecedents. One of these dances is known as the *cocoye* which blends African themes with the minuet. During the July carnival at Santiago de Cuba celebrating Santa Christina, Santiago Apostle and Santa Ana, they are wont to gather and celebrate according to their own ancient customs dating back to times unremembered. The setting for these recordings was a large frame room, roughly furnished, in the Negro section of Santiago.

First a group of women come forward shaking rattles, dancing a mincing step and singing. The drums are then heard; three large ones played on a skin head and one laid transversely and played on the barrel with sticks. Then members of the group enter the circle and dance, either singly or as couples, restrained but sensuously expressive. The members of the *Tumba Francessa* groups are always older people and their movements are tempered with this remarkable quality of abandoned tension and containment.

The repetitive quality of this drumming and singing, so prevalent among primitive peoples, becomes hypnotic and the participants are soon in a state resembling possession which carries over to the spectators as well. The ceremonies lasted most of all night, and at one point on this record we slyly montage, and bypass a few hours of the proceedings.

As will be observed by comparison, the quality of *Tumba Francessa* differs much from that other Negro Cuban music known as Afro-Cuban.



Tumba Francessa drums

Side A: SHANGO SACRIFICIAL RITUAL.

Drums & Voices
Beryl McBurnie's Little Carib Group
Soloist: Lorna Pierre

RECORDED IN TRINIDAD
by Emory Cook

YEMENITE NIGHTSONGS

Voices & five-gallon drum
RECORDED IN ISRAEL by Sam Eskin

Side B: TUMBA FRANCESSA

Panorama of a rare ritual of the elders.
RECORDED IN SANTIAGO DE CUBA
by Sam Eskin

another SOUNDS OF OUR TIMES recording by
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