

THE BAOULE OF THE IVORY COAST

NOTES BY DONALD THUROW

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS LIBRARY FE 4476



MALE FIGURE, 20" HIGH, PIERRE VERITE COLLECTION, PARIS

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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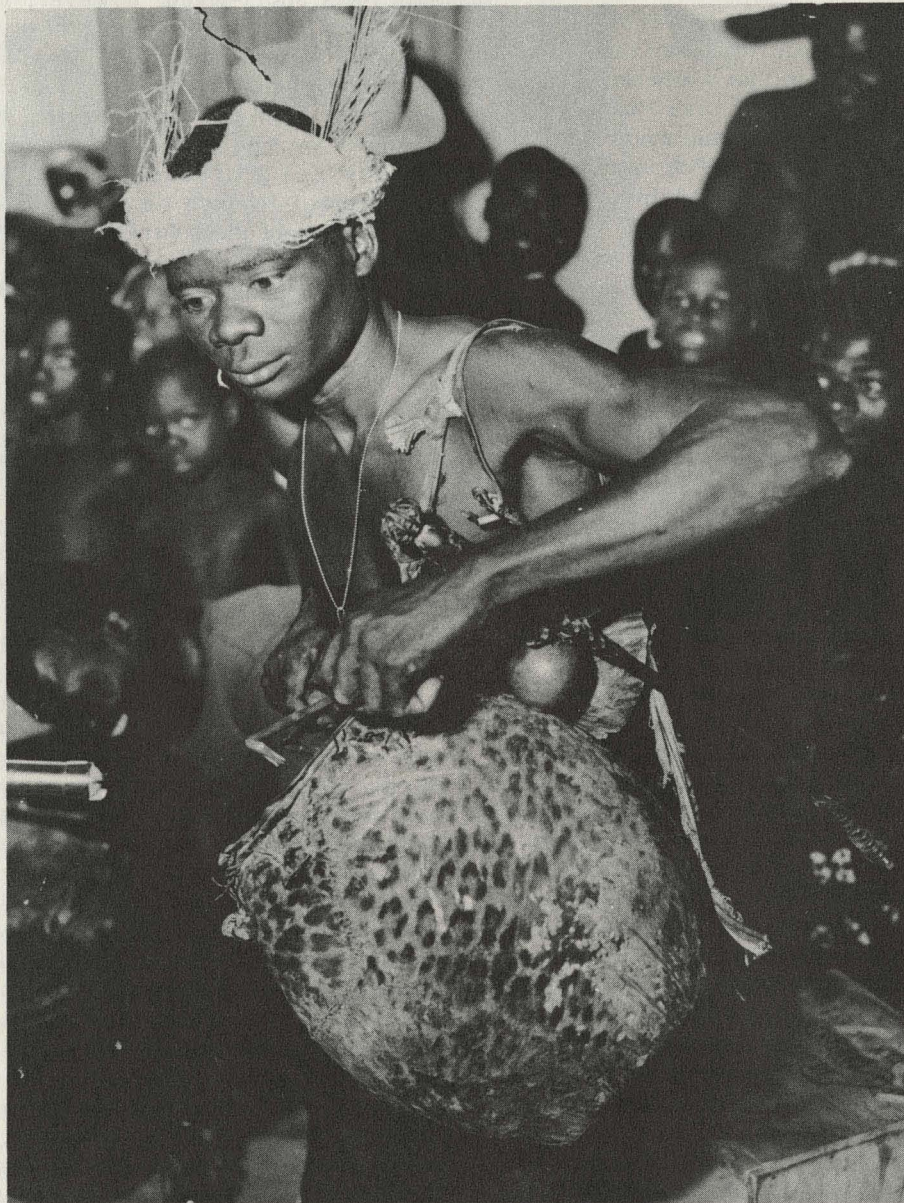
SIDE I

- Band 1. GOLI DANCE
Male chorus, horn, gourd rattles
- Band 2. KLOBO DANCE
Chorus, horn, rattles
- Band 3. HEIRLOOM INSTRUMENTS
Klin Sin, Galy Klin, Ivory horn
- Band 4. (a) DJOUROU HARP & VOICE
(b) DJOUROU HARP AND VOICE
- Band 5. DJOUROU HARP AND VOICE
- Band 6. FLUTE
- Band 7. FLUTE AND DRUM
- Band 8. WOMAN'S SONG
- Band 9. MIN NOUAN DANCE
Chorus, drums, percussion sticks, onlie bells

SIDE II

- Band 1. MAN'S SONG
- Band 2. FLUTE
- Bands 3-6. ANOUGBLE FESTIVAL
- Bands 7-11. XYLOPHONE
- Band 12. FLUTE
- Band 13. VOCAL, WITH CHORUS
- Band 14. VOCAL, WITH CHORUS

THE BAOULE OF THE IVORY COAST



THE BAOULE OF THE IVORY COAST
Recorded by Donald Thurrow

INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
ON THE RECORDINGS
by Donald Thurrow

The Baoule occupied the area between the Bandema and the N'zi rivers, in the Ivory Coast about 1730, after being driven from the Gold Coast by the Ashanti. Today the old men of the tribe explain that while under the leadership of the queen Abra Pokou, the ancestors of the Baoule became involved in a war with the Ashanti. Abra Pokou and her people retreated to the banks of the Comoe river, but here, with the Ashanti in close pursuit, they were stopped by the high waters of the river. At this point a god appeared to Abra Pokou and offered to save her people if she would sacrifice a young boy, dressed royally and adorned with much golden jewelry. The queen requested the child of her brother but he refused. Her sister, however, offered her son. He was duly adorned and sacrificed to the river as the god had instructed. The waters of the river immediately diminished, and the people passed to the safety of the other side. Once across, the queen exclaimed, "Ba Oule" (which means re-birth or deliverance) and so they were named.

While they traveled across the new land the queen parcelled out sections to the various groups of her followers. These were the founders of the tribu which makes up the Baoule people today. Abra Pokou then turned northward and thirty miles south-west of the present town of Bouake she founded the village of Sakasso (which means cemetery). Today this village is a symbol of tribal unity and is looked upon by the people as their tribal capital. As the tribe grew, it infringed upon the territory of the Gourou (who are today immediately west of the Baoule), and adopted many aspects of this culture; they also possess marked affinities with the Ashanti and generalized traits of West African culture.

The littoral forest area of the Ivory Coast has long been a refuge for peoples caught in the power struggles of the larger warring tribes to the north. These wars drove many refugees into the villages of the Baoule. The Baoule also entered into trade with the northerners, exchanging foodstuffs and the necessities of war for slaves which had been captured during the northerners' military operations.

It was apparently during this time of abundant manpower that Baoule culture attained its greatest achievements. The people prospered and further expanded their territory. Baoule artisans developed the crafts of gold-working, wood carving and weaving to a high point of excellence which became known far beyond their own territory. Baoule gold castings were traded throughout the Ivory Coast, and Baoule traders carried their products as far east as Accra where they were sold for British coins. This period was relatively short-lived, however, for with the arrival of Europeans the wars to the north stopped, forced labor was introduced and the dynamism of the tribe was gradually squelched. Today the arts and crafts are all but forgotten. Trade is very localized and slavery, though not forgotten, is also non-existent. Such artisans who remain produce items which are far inferior to those of their forebears; the fine old sculptures and cast gold which still remain in the hands of the people are treated as venerated relics of a past age.

Throughout their two hundred year history the Baoule have never been a unified tribe politically; rather, central political power has been replaced by emotional unity. The "chef superior", who still resides in Sakasso, is known and recognized by all of the people as their chief or king, but he has never possessed an army nor held de facto control over the area. His position is rooted in tradition only, and he has never performed the usual functions of a political leader.

The village is the largest functional political unit among the Baoule, although certain chiefs do, by tradition and common consent, hold a position of judicial superiority over groups of villages within the tribu. The position of the village chief is hereditary. The village is divided into wards or "quartiers", each of which is under control of a chief who is appointed for life by the village chief. The "chef du quartier" deals directly with the head of families in his quartier and is responsible directly to the village chief.

Stemming from the days of slavery, a loose class structure still exists, but it exists virtually in name only. Although completely free in other respects, former slaves and their descendants are still recognized as such and they are not permitted to transmit inheritance in the traditional manner. They may, however, possess both goods and land, and have a full voice in the conduct of village affairs. Though they may become quite wealthy, and the funeral of a former slave may rival that of any man in the village, they will eventually be in-



MASK WORN
AT THE
ANOUGBLE FESTIVAL
IN AUGUST AT
THE CHIEF'S
VILLAGE OF
SAKASSO

tered in that part of the cemetery reserved for slaves, and their inheritance will follow the line of the former masters' family.

The Baoule and his world were created by Gnamienkli, the supreme deity, who, through a pantheon of lesser deities, is still master of good and bad fortune, as well as of life and death itself. Although Gnamienkli is not himself directly adored, an individual may possess as many gods as his psychological needs demand and his economic resources permit. In addition to personal gods there is a small group of public deities who are possessed by the entire village and who function as a force for social control as well as protect the village from whatever external forces are thought to threaten it.

Of lower stature than the gods are a group of spirits who are essentially malevolent and may have far reaching effect on all pursuits beyond the village confines. These spirits are usually confined to specific areas, streams or hills. They are often ill-tempered and capricious and usually demand that certain days be set aside for their personal use on which men are forbidden to cultivate the soil in the area inhabited

by the spirit. A supplication and sacrifice to the local spirits of the land always precedes the cultivation of a new tract of land. Numerous other local restrictions may be established by such spirits and these are always carefully honored. Although these spirits would be a hindrance to working the land from a western viewpoint, for the Baoule they permit and vitalize crop production. They are considered an integral part of the landscape and their control, through offerings of food and drink and by observing the prohibitions they lay on the land, is considered a normal part of agricultural practice.

Sickness and death among the Baoule are not attributed to natural causes, but rather are the result of having incurred the displeasure of some spiritual being. The specific deity offended and the penance he will demand are determined by several forms of divination. Although the faithful may communicate with their deities by prayer and direct supplication, the will of the gods is made known through the intermediary of the diviner, except in the case of several gods who will on occasion "enter" a person who then speaks the god's wishes.



IVORY HORN
AND DRUM,
HEIRLOOMS OF
THE WAR
BETWEEN THE
BAOULE AND THE
ASHANTI IN
THE EIGHTEENTH
CENTURY

In addition to bringing misfortune and death, Baoule gods may also provide their adherents with wealth, children and abundant harvests. The search for these three goods is a dominant motivation among the people. To secure these one must carefully observe the prohibitions prescribed by the deity; he must offer sacrifices on demand; and he must offer prayers, both of supplication and thanks.

Music, song and dance are basic, not only to religious practice among the Baoule, but also as a fundamental to recreation. A rhythmic beat and a vocal chorus are a part of every folktale, and music without dancing is virtually non-existent. Although the music may be categorized as "secular" and "sacred", there is no sharp demarcation. All ceremonial music may also be used in a purely secular fashion. Except for one god who is exclusively adored by women and several who are possessed exclusively by men, any villager of any age may be a spectator to, or dance to the music, regardless of the occasion for which it is performed.

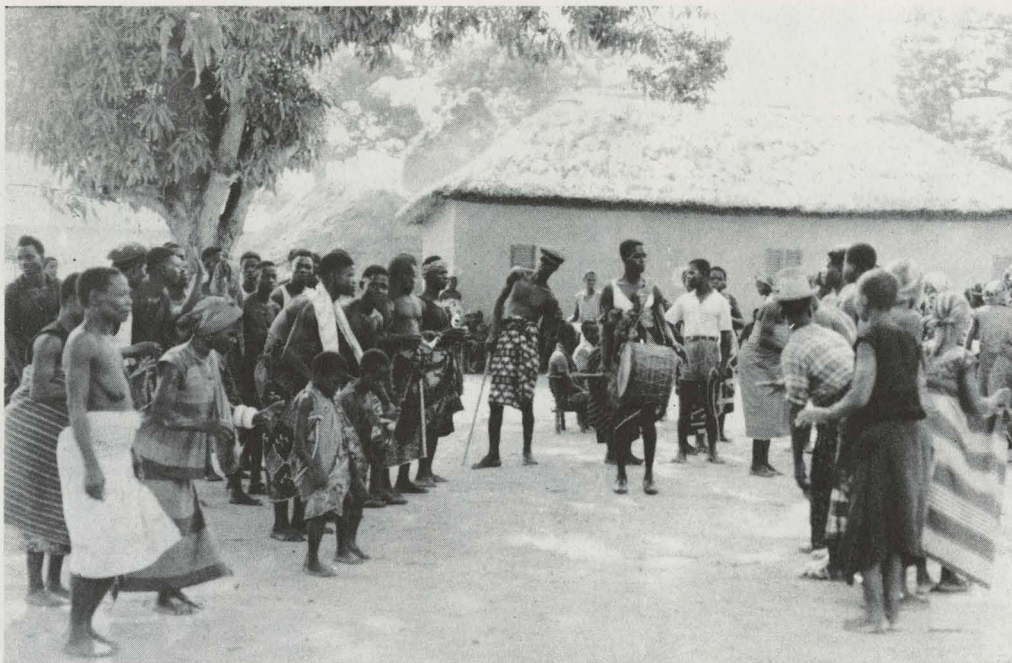
The Baoule do not possess professional musicians, nor does the musician receive special prestige or recognition. The skilled wood

carver or weaver is, in fact, more highly respected for his craft than is the musician; and the musician generally receives no compensation for his performance. Although individuals are recognized as having special talent for a given artistic technique, virtually every male member of the society practices some special religious or artistic skill. Women, on the other hand, are musically limited to rhythmic hand clapping or striking sticks together in a rhythmic chorus, or to singing or dancing in groups; however, a female virtuoso may occasionally sing or dance solo. Women may never become drummers, and, of the entire pantheon of gods, only one is reserved exclusively for women.

Each of the major deities has a special form of music and dance reserved for his adoration. In addition to the more ordinary musical instruments, this sometimes includes a special musical instrument used to produce a sound which is uniquely associated with the deity in question. The bulk of Baoule gods do not, however, have special musical or dance forms incorporated into the ritual of their adoration.

Sacred music is most closely associated with

DANCING
AT THE
ANOUGBLE
FESTIVAL AT
SAKASSO



funeral rites. Music, dancing, traditional drinking and sacrificing may continue for many weeks after the occurrence of death. A great economic expenditure may accompany such rites. To the deceased, these rites are the apex of life, for they are a direct reflection of the economic and social stature of the living man. Beyond the immediate family rites represent a major opportunity for recreation and social pleasure.

Music may also perform a sacred function when the village is undergoing a period of stress or danger from outside forces. In former times the threat of war would bring forth such ritual performances; but today it is more often practiced in conjunction with the conscription of young men into a colonial army, or with legal difficulties in which the village may become involved. Sacred music will also be performed at anytime upon the request of the deity.

Secular music may be performed any time for the mere pleasure of either performers or spectators. Music and dance, without the deity traditionally associated with it, have been adopted by the Baoule from the repertoire of neighboring tribes. Such music is always of a purely secular nature.

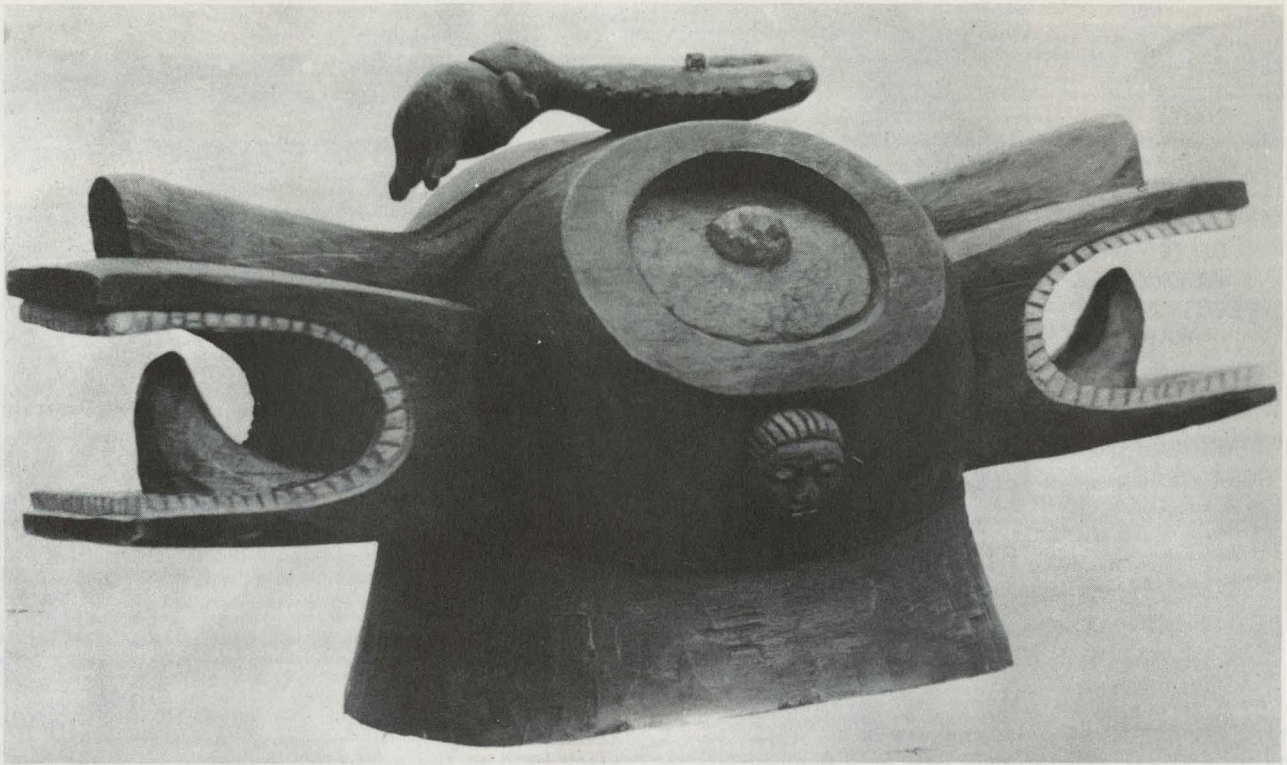
Percussion instruments are the most common among the Baoule. A variety of drums may be struck either by the hands or with sticks. Each type of drum bears a special name, while many are reserved only for certain dances. Metal instruments include the belled anklets, (called

glegni), a bell shaped instrument struck with a stick held in the opposite hand (the cocowa), and a variety of grooved and perforated metal objects which are usually stroked with a stick to give a washboard-like sound.

Among the wind instruments are horns and whistles made of the horn or tusk of wild animals, a wooden flute, and a wooden whistle (called anouman). The djourou is an instrument of five strings attached to a small calabash which serves as a sounding chamber. A special one-stringed instrument is the goly which simulates the call of a panther and is associated with the god Koutoukre. A variety of bullroarer, called yokoli, is also sometimes used. A crude xylophone is played but only for amusement during rest periods while in the fields.

SIDE I, Band 1:

Goli is perhaps the most ubiquitous of Baoule gods, and his dance is much favored. The god is represented by three types of mask. The first of these is a large representation of an animal head. The second is a three dimensional representation of the human face, and the third (which is no longer used) is a flat, one-dimensional representation of the human face. These masks are always used in pairs, and Goli is associated with human fertility. Music is provided by a chorus of men playing beaded gourds called towa, and by a large antelope horn called goli ahoue which produces a single low note. The dancer's costume includes a dried antelope



skin attached to his back and he carries a baton attached to a length of cord. During the dance this baton is swung backward to strike the antelope skin with a resounding crack. The dance is presented for social as well as ceremonial purposes, and after the god has appeared women may join the spectators to watch him dance. After the god has departed both men and women will continue the dance for several hours.

SIDE I, Band 2:

The god Kloro is one of the many gods whom the Baoule consider to be "personal", "male" gods. This group of gods are actually neither personal nor restricted to men. Rather, they serve the entire family with the male head of the family serving as the intermediary who is charged with carrying out the ritual demanded by the god. Women are often forbidden to see the mask and other religious paraphernalia associated with these gods, but they are usually permitted to listen to the music and to participate in the dancing which is a part of the god's ritual. A distinctive sound is often a part of the Baoule concept of the god. Although this is referred to as the "voice" of the god, it is not used as a means of communication. This selection, which is a part of the adoration ritual for the god Kloro, begins with the "voice" of the god. The rite here recorded was held in conjunction with the funeral ceremonies for a village elder who was

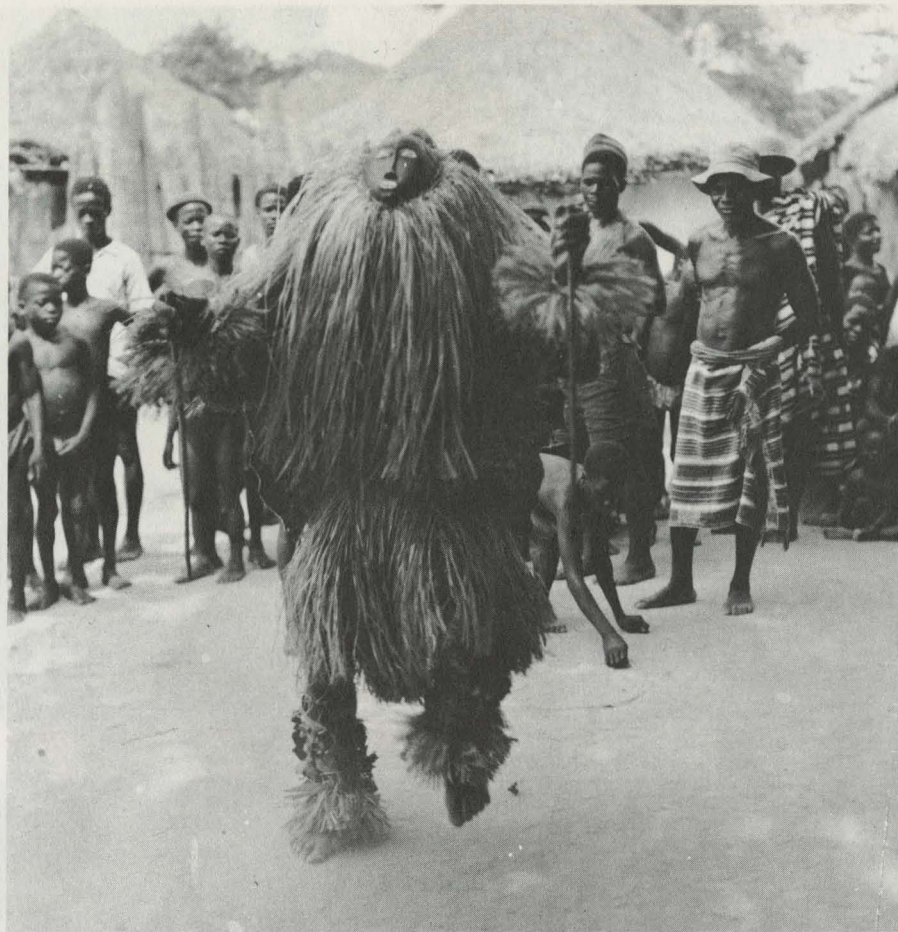
deceased several months previous to the recording. The rite began at 3 AM and continued until dawn when the mask retired to its abode in the forest before the village women arose. At this recording the god Kloro was represented by two masked dancers, one of the masks being a very old one which over the years had been nearly destroyed by the ravages of insects. The other was relatively new, and had been freshly painted a distinctive red, black and white for this ceremony. It is a two-faced mask with the open mouth of an animal at either end.

SIDE I, Band 3:

Three heirloom instruments provide the music for this selection. They are said to have been the property of the man who carried the staff of queen Abra Pokou during the Baoule war with the Ashanti, and so they are today considered to be "war instruments." They have been passed through the line of traditional inheritance to their present possessor. These instruments have no ceremonial or recreational use today (except that the large drum, *klin sin*, is associated with the spirit of the original possessor), and are simply looked upon as venerated relics.

The first of these instruments is an ivory horn, fashioned from the tip of an elephant tusk. The piercing sound of this instrument may be heard for several miles, and it was used to assemble

LEFT:
 MASK FOR THE
 BAOULE GOD
 BOTIWA SUR-
 MOUNTED BY
 A FIGURE OF
 A SNAKE
 EATING A FROG



RIGHT:
 MASKED
 DANCER
 REPRESENTING
 THE GOD
 GOLI

the people during their march from the Gold Coast. The instrument has now turned a dark brown color with age.

The drum klin sin is said to have been used to assemble the Baoule warriors during their conflict with the Ashanti. The strength of the warriors is thought to inhere in the drum, and so women (who are restricted from warfare) may not touch it. The drum head is made of the skin of the deer, and the carved wooden body of the drum is covered with the hard black blood of generations of sacrifices which have been made to the spirit of its original possessor.

The drum goly klin, was used in the front lines of battle. It is not struck in the usual fashion, but rather is stroked with two forked sticks to give a low purring sound. The drum head is of deer skin, but the wooden body of the drum is covered with the skin of a panther.

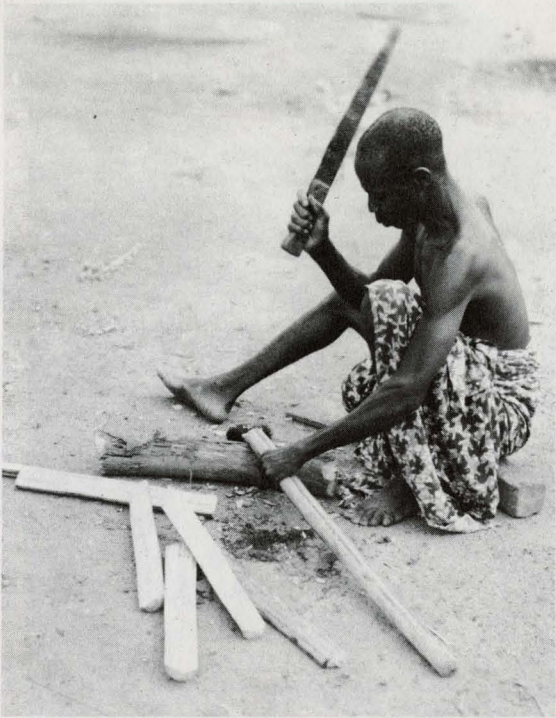
SIDE I, Bands 4 and 5:

Selections four and five are of a harp-like in-

strument called djourou. The five strings of this instrument are stretched across an eight inch wooden arch which is attached to a section of gourd which serves as a sounding board. This instrument is now rather rare among the Baoule, and it is used only for the musicians own amusement or as an adjunct to courting. The musician sings as he plays, telling a brief story which is repeated over and over. These songs are usually concerned with humorous situations or with sexual exploits. For the first of these two recordings (Band 4), the microphone was first placed inside the gourd to capture fully the soft sounds of the instrument. The selection is then repeated with the musician singing to his own accompaniment in the usual manner.

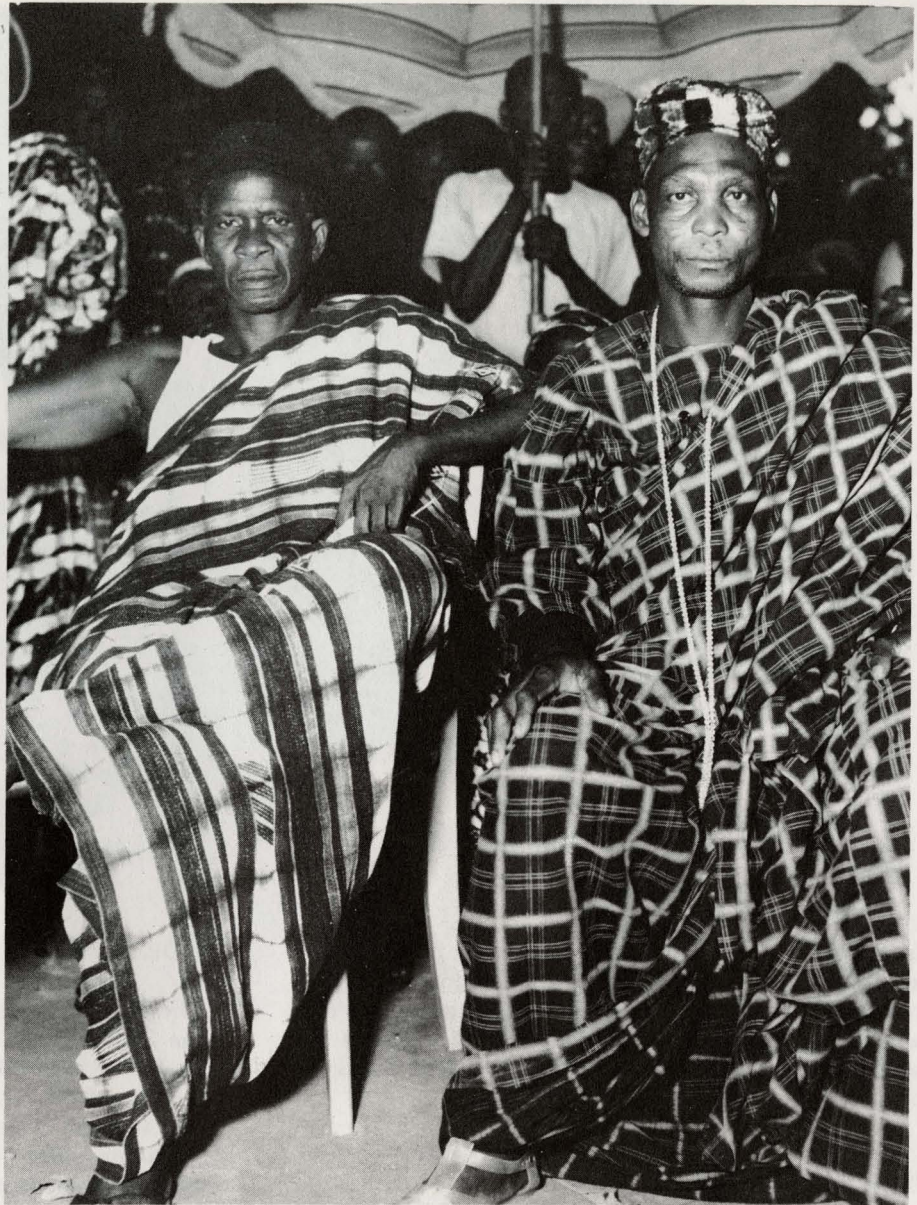
SIDE I, Bands 6 and 7:

The Baoule flute is a six holed wooden instrument about ten inches long. Today flutists are rare. Most of them are old men and their instruments are virtual heirlooms. Flutes are always played in duet and drums are sometimes



CONSTRUCTION OF THE XYLOPHONE (ABOVE)
AND THE FINISHED INSTRUMENT, PLAYED FROM BOTH SIDES

KOUACOU ANOUGBLE,
SUPERIOR CHIEF
OF THE BAOULE
(AT LEFT),
WATCHING THE
FESTIVAL AT
THE VILLAGE
OF SAKASSO



used in conjunction with them. Flute music has no ceremonial use among the Baoule and the instrument is played only for the pleasure of the musicians and listeners who join in singing and dancing to the music. Flute music is similar to that of the *djourou* in that it tells a brief story which may be sung in one or two sentences which are repeated for the duration of the piece.

SIDE I, Band 8:

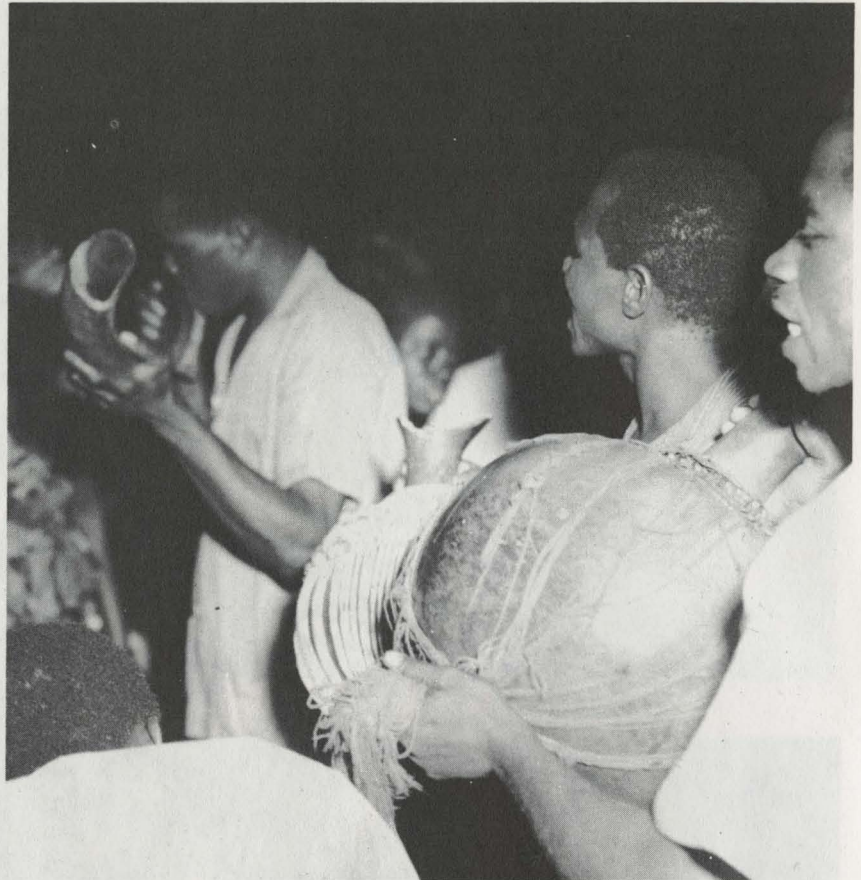
Baoule song is usually in chorus. There are no professional vocalists among the people, and the virtuoso receives no compensation nor special status in the village for his talent.

These recordings are of a woman who is considered such a virtuoso. The tremulo quality of her voice is highly prized but is seldom found among the Baoule. Her songs are presented only for her own amusement and that of the spectators, and they contain no ceremonial significance.

SIDE I, Band 9:

Min Nouan is one of the older Baoule gods and is said to have come with them from the Gold Coast. Two principal dancers perform in a circle (bells attached to their ankles may be heard in this recording). The music is provided by drums played

MUSICIANS
PLAYING HORN
AND LARGE
CALABASH RATTLE
FOR THE
GOLI DANCE



in poly-meter, and by a chorus of women striking sticks together in rhythm. This recording was made in June of 1954 during a ceremony which was a part of the funeral rites for an elder of the village. The dance started at 4 AM and continued until 7 AM.

SIDE II, Band 1:

One will often be told that Baoule songs and music are not composed, but have simply always been. It is indeed very difficult to discover a tune with a known origin, but this song, as sung by its composer, is one of the rare examples of a newly composed song. The following selection tells the story of a young man who became involved in an argument with a European. The young man's mother told him to strike the European, and a great deal of trouble for the young man and the village resulted. The song tells the story of the incident and admonishes the mother for having misguided her son.

SIDE II, Band 2:

Flute. See Side I, Bands 6 and 7.

SIDE II, Bands 3, 4, 5, 6:

The Baoule have no tribal festival, but in 1954 the Superior Chief decided to inaugurate a festival. This celebration lasts three days during the month of August, and outstanding musicians are invited to perform in the chief's village of Sakasso. The festival has no ceremonial significance and is given only for the recreation of the people involved, and to offer additional incentive to Baoule musicians to perfect their artistry. During the first two days of the festival independent groups present the music and dance in which they are most skilled. The last day is given over to capsule performances before the assembled chiefs and elders in a chain of competitive performances. Selections 3, 4, 5, and 6 were recorded during this annual festival in August of 1955.

SIDE II, Bands 7, 8, 9, 10, 11:

Xylophone music has come to the Baoule from the north. The Baoule xylophone is a crude affair of six graduated bars of very hard wood laid across two pieces of split banana trunk. They are struck by hard wooden sticks. The

MIN NOUAN DANCE
 -- A WOMAN
 WIPES THE PERSPIRATION FROM THE
 FACE OF A
 FEMALE DANCER
 WHILE A MALE
 PERFORMER CONTINUES TO DANCE
 IN THE
 BACKGROUND



instrument is used principally to amuse oneself while resting from the arduous field work. It has no ceremonial use, and is generally looked upon as a kind of toy rather than as a serious instrument. The music is similar to that played on the flute and djourou. It is always played by two musicians simultaneously, each using two mallets, and the play is often accompanied by song. The instrument is not preserved as such, but rather a new one is built each time it is needed.

SIDE II, Band 12:

Flute. See Side I, Bands 6 and 7.

SIDE II, Band 13:

This selection is a vocal rendition of the previous flute selection, Band 12.

SIDE II, Band 14:

Woman virtuoso. See Side I, Band 8.

PHOTOGRAPHS, DONALD THUROW

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- FE4417 NEGRO FLK MUSIC OF ALA - 1 (417) Secular field recordings
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- FE4429 FOLK MUSIC OF JAPAN. Work, (429) sea, children, love, dance songs
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- FE4444 ESKIMO MUSIC OF ALASKA & (444) THE HUDSON BAY. Rare record
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- FE4448 FOLK MUSIC OF THE AMAMIS (448) Cross-section from Ryukyu, Jpn.
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