



The Library of Congress
Endangered Music Project

The Yoruba/Dahomean Collection
Orishas Across the Ocean

THE ENDANGERED MUSIC PROJECT

Entering the Main Reading Room of the Library of Congress, one feels the power of an encounter with the wealth of human history, the sum of human knowledge. That knowledge lies encapsulated not only in the written word—books, journals, magazines, manuscripts—but in millions of sound recordings, photographs, films, and all other media which the 20th century revolution in communications technology has produced.

Our new technologies are part of a powerful civilization which is rapidly transforming the world around us. It changes the environment, often in ways that endanger the delicate ecological balance nature has wrought over the millennia. It also brings radical change to other cultures, many of which are part of that same delicate ecological balance. Sometimes the change is empowering. But all too often it endangers precious human ways of life, just as surely as it endangers the environment within which those ways of life flourish.

On the floor below the Library's Main Reading Room is an office concerned with the conservation of these cultural traditions, the American Folklife Center. Its Archive of Folk Culture contains fifty thousand recordings from the earliest wax cylinders to the latest digital field tapes, featuring folk music from every corner of the globe. The recordings in the Archive comprise an oral and spiritual history of cultures which are changing or disappearing at an alarming rate.

The Endangered Music Project unearths from the Archive's holdings unique field recordings spanning the world and dating from the turn of the century to the present. This series is dedicated to the hope that with education, empathy, and assistance imperiled cultures can survive. Proceeds from the project will be used to support the performers and their cultures and to produce future releases.

Mickey Hart and Alan Jabbour



Laura Boulton recording in Haiti

ACROSS THE OCEAN: WEST AFRICAN GODS IN THE AMERICAS

by Kenneth Bilby

Santería, Lucumí, Candomblé, Macumba, Nago, Xangô, Shango: words that speak volumes; words that tell of enduring spiritual bonds between people scattered across oceans.

This compilation of Afro-American sacred music rooted in the traditions of the Yoruba people of West Africa (and to a lesser extent, their Dahomean neighbors, the Fon) bears witness to the special power of music and dance as vehicles of the spirit. The Cubans, Brazilians, Haitians, and Trinidadians whose voices mingle on this CD are separated by hundreds of miles of water and differing colonial pasts, yet they sing and drum to African gods from a single source. These divinities can be traced to a specific stretch of the West African coast running a few hundred miles from western Nigeria into Benin and Togo. Here dwell the Yoruba.

The Yoruba present serious problems to those who would persist in referring to African peoples as "tribes." With a population of some twenty million, the Yoruba are larger than many member states of the United Nations. Their long history has seen the rise of numerous powerful kingdoms, the boundaries of which are still recognized internally. Today the Yoruba are heirs to a rich and complex religion and mythology which, despite regional variations, serve to unite them as a people: the ancient faith of the sacred city of Ife.

Also heirs to this tradition are those whose ancestors were swept across the ocean by the tidal wave of the slave trade (as well as the many "liberated Africans" who were recruited as "voluntary laborers" after the abolition of slavery). Just how many came to the Americas may never be known, but they arrived by the thousands. In areas where Yoruba-speaking people predominated and where conditions permitted—in parts of Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, Trinidad, and elsewhere—the Yoruba gods flourished, continuing to offer guidance, hope, and spiritual nourishment in a new and often treacherous world. These deities—the *orisha* (*oricha*, *orixá*, *orisa*) of Yorubaland—often assumed new faces in the Americas, sometimes fusing with Catholic saints, Dahomean gods, or each other, but they remained recognizable. What attracted them across the ocean and kept them here were the signs of devotion offered to them. Among the most important of these offerings were sacred music and dance designed to merge performers and their gods in a communion of body and soul.

This compilation is unique in several ways. Not only does it bring together in a single collection closely-related traditions from various parts of the Americas that have usually been treated separately, but also it brings rare and historic field recordings out of the archive and to the listening public. The recordings made by eminent anthropologist Melville Herskovits in Trinidad (1939) and Bahia, Brazil (1941-42), with help from the Archive of Folk Song of the Library of Congress, are among the earliest recorded examples of Afro-American religious music from this part of the world. Those from Bahia are drawn from the same collection that was used to produce a classic album in the Archive's *Folk Music of the Americas* series, *Afro-Bahian Religious Songs from Brazil*, which has served generations of scholars; but the selections presented here have not previously been released. The music recorded in Cuba by Josefina Tarafa in the 1950s—under the guidance of one of the foremost students of Afro-Cuban culture, Lydia Cabrera—comes from various locations in the province of Matanzas, and represents an older variant of Afro-Cuban religion whose music (unlike that of Havana's Santería practitioners) has seldom been heard outside. Tarafa donated copies of these rare recordings to the Library of Congress shortly after she made them, in 1958, with the intention of preserving them for future generations. Also present is the hand of Venezuelan poet and literary critic Juan Liscano, who donated the early recording of Cuban Lucumí music heard here to the Archive in 1950, along with some of his Afro-Venezuelan recordings. Laura Boulton is here as well, and her recordings from Haiti, made during her second expedition there (1947), demonstrate as well as any the strong Yoruba presence in a religion otherwise dominated by the Vodou gods of the Fon of Dahomey. The selections presented here include a well-known song to the Yoruba-Fon guardian of the gates, Papa Legba (Elegba, Elegbara, Eshu), sometimes sung at the opening of ceremonies, and another to Saint-Jacques, the Catholic saint who is identified with Ogun, the Yoruba god of iron and war.

Some of these recordings preserve older forms of music and worship no longer performed as they once were. Yet, in each of the countries represented on this disc, the larger traditions to which these older forms belong continue to flourish and expand, maintaining their vitality while moving with the times. Indeed, orisha worship—largely because of its extensions in the Western Hemisphere—is now considered by many a world religion. Among the places that have felt its impact most profoundly is the United States, where it was introduced by Cuban and Puerto Rican immigrants several decades ago. Although still associated primarily with Latino communities in large urban centers such as New

York and Miami, the variant of orisha worship known as Santería now claims North American devotees of all backgrounds.

As Yoruba-influenced popular music from Brazil, the Caribbean, and Latin New York continues to win converts around the world, it is important to recognize the roots from which these newer styles have sprung. Some of the deepest and most vital of these root traditions, seldom exposed to non-practitioners, are featured on this collection. As listeners around the world marvel at the grace and power of the sounds heard on these historic recordings, the orisha and the musicians who serve them will know, once more, that they have not been forgotten.

THE YORUBA/DAHOMEAN COLLECTION

by Morton Marks

The music on this disc brings together ritual songs and drumming from four religions of the Yoruba/Dahomean diaspora: Haitian Vodou, Brazilian Candomblé, Cuban Santería, and Trinidadian Shango. Coming from the same sources, they are linked to each other in ways that cut across national boundaries and connect back to West Africa via the transatlantic slave trade. Places and ethnic designations from the Dahomean and Nigerian coast turn up again and again in the music of these Afro-Atlantic religions: Ketu, Gêgê, Rada, Ijexá, Mahi, Nagô and Savalú—the list goes on and on. But evidence of the diaspora does not reveal itself only in these names. It emerges from this collection of field recordings in a very immediate way: working independently and at opposite ends of the Caribbean, Lydia Cabrera and Melville Herskovits, two of the towering figures in the anthropological investigation of African continuities in the Americas, recorded variations of the same Yoruba song in Cuba and in Trinidad (tracks 15 and 21).

This New World presence bears witness to the warfare between Yorubas and Dahomeans, already underway by the time the French established a foothold on the Dahomean coast in 1700. Captives from both sides, including members of the priesthood, were sold into slavery to waiting Europeans. In the Americas, the former West African neighbors often found themselves side by side, and the dynamic exchange between their religions continued to evolve. By the early 19th century, Dahomean attacks on the western Yoruba increased in intensity, and the fortunes of the Yoruba people became even more intimately linked to the other side of the Atlantic. The crumbling of their Oyo Empire coincided with the last decades of the slave trade to the Americas in the first half of the 19th century.

Although treaties suppressing the slave trade were signed between Britain, Spain, Portugal, and an independent Brazil in the early 19th century, more slaves were sent from ports on the Bight of Benin to the Americas between the years 1815-1851 than at any time since the beginning of the trade in that area. In this period of illegal trading, many Yorubas arrived in northeastern Brazil. During the years 1820-1840, Yorubas formed the majority of slaves arriving in Cuba. They also came to Trinidad and nearby Grenada in the southeastern Caribbean. Among the last Yorubas to arrive in the Americas were

those who came to Trinidad after slavery had ended, between the years 1838-1867. The late arrival of large numbers of Yorubas and their concentration in specific parts of the Americas are some of the reasons why their religion survived intact.

HAITI

Dahomeans had been arriving in Haiti in great numbers after 1700, bringing with them not only their own spirits, known as *vodun*, but also the *orishas* of the conquered Yoruba, and elements of the culture of the Mahi people to the north. Already syncretized in West Africa, the Dahomean and Yoruba spirits met again in Haiti, and underwent a third level of identification with Catholic saints. Parts of the Dahomean/Yoruba pantheon, as well as the drum styles associated with them, came to form a branch of Haitian religion known as Rada, named for the city of Allada in Dahomey. As in all Afro-Atlantic religions, Vodou drum orchestras call the *lwa* (spirits), inducing possession trance by the master drummer's ever-changing manipulation of the rhythmic pulse. Each branch of Vodou has its associated rhythms: *yanvalou*, *zepaule* and *mayi* (Mahi) are the foundations of the Rada style of drumming, and the first two are heard in this collection.

Laura Boulton, who spent 35 years recording traditional music around the world, had first visited Haiti in 1938, just four years after the long occupation by U.S. Marines had ended. Perhaps because she was an American visiting the country so soon after a period of intense persecution of Vodou practitioners, she was assured by government officials that the religion no longer existed in Haiti. The nine years separating her first trip and her return in 1947, when these recordings were made, were momentous ones for Haitian culture. The late 1930s saw the birth of *noirisme* (a movement that extolled the country's African heritage). After the "anti-superstition" campaign of the early 1940s, a popular culture that recognized Haiti's African roots began to blossom. One of its major expressions was painting, some of whose earliest practitioners were Vodou priests. An exhibit of Haitian painting organized by UNESCO that toured Europe and the U. S. in 1946-1947 may have influenced Boulton's decision to return to Haiti.

During the 1947 trip, Boulton befriended Horace Ashton, a retired American who stayed on in Haiti after serving as a cultural officer in the American Embassy. Through Ashton's contacts, Boulton was able to gain entry to many ceremonies not open to foreigners, including *manje-lwa* (feast of the

gods), an elaborate week-long service she witnessed in a remote mountain village. Boulton recorded a wide variety of ritual and recreational music on this trip, and the recordings are notable for their superb sound quality and extensive documentation.

It seems fitting that this collection should start with a song to Legba (*Papa Legba, ouve baye*, track 1), the Haitian guardian of the crossroads and mediator between the world of the *lwes* and humans. The rhythmic setting is the 12/8 *yanvalou*, danced with the body bent forward, hands on the knees. The singers ask Papa Legba to open the gate and let them pass. *Zepaule* is another 12/8 rhythm of the Rada style of drumming, and the dance it accompanies emphasizes rapid shoulder movements. Here, it is the setting for *An nou mache, Papa Pie'* (track 3). The texts of many Vodou songs often speak in metaphors, and may seem elliptical and somewhat obscure. According to Boulton's informant, the singer here is calling on Papa Pie' (Father Peter) to accompany him on his vengeance quest. Boulton also notes: "The assertive tone indicates that it is a fellow *lwa*, St. Jak, who is making the invitation." St. Jak is Ogou Ferraille, a three-way fusion of the Fon Gū, the Yoruba Ogun, and the Catholic St. James, warriors from West African and European folk traditions.

Perhaps in recognition of his Yoruba origins, one of Ogou's important rhythms in Haiti is *Nago*, a word applied by the Dahomeans to the western Yoruba. But the setting of the song *St. Jak pa la* (track 2) is *ochan*, whose name comes from the French *au champs*, meaning, roughly, forward march. Derived from European military drumming, its martial overtones are in keeping with Ogou Ferraille's warrior nature. And there is another way by which the song's meaning is reinforced by its rhythmic setting. *Ochan* is a processional rhythm played to honor dignitaries, in both ritual and non-ritual settings. It is simultaneously a salute and an appeal for protection and patronage. In this case, *ochan* accompanies a parade of petitioners going to Papa Ogou's house, finding him away (only his snarling dog is there to greet them), and leaving. The rhythm suggests the procession while at the same time appealing to the power of Papa Ogou.

TRINIDAD

Melville Herskovits consistently emphasized the importance of music for Afro-American studies. He had already made field recordings among the so-called Bush Negroes of Suriname, in Haiti, and in Dahomey before going to Trinidad in 1939 and to Brazil in the early 1940s. Perhaps influenced by his

early field work in Suriname, Herskovits was sure he would find Africanisms in the rural areas of Trinidad. There he recorded a variety of genres: Shango songs, dances such as *belé*, wake-keeping songs, and Baptist shout meetings.

Just before he was about to leave the island, he came upon a Shango center in Port of Spain, Trinidad's capital, thus confounding his earlier ideas about where to look for "Africanisms." Herskovits's assumption that Trinidad's Yoruba and Dahomean religions must have dated back to the pre-Emancipation period was also disproven by later research. In the early 19th century, many of the African-born slaves in Trinidad were Yorubas, but they continued to arrive after Emancipation in 1838. They were among the thousands of Africans liberated from slave ships by the British navy and settled on the island, or else brought there as indentured workers. These late-arriving Yorubas established communities in several parts of Trinidad, where they practiced the Shango religion. The Rada cult was not founded until 1855 by a free African from Dahomey. This reinforces the idea of the relatively recent introduction of Yoruba/Dahomean religions into parts of the Americas.

By the mid-1800s, Yorubas and other African peoples had settled on Laventille Hill at the eastern edge of Port of Spain. There, Herskovits recorded ceremonies at a Shango temple that he vividly described in his journal: "The compound itself is on the side of the hill near the top, and commands a magnificent view of the city, the harbor and the distant Venezuelan Andes....The chapelle and the 'tent'—which by the way are connected in a rough thatched flat shelter—are, of course, the important ceremonial parts of the compound. The former is hardly more than 6 x 10 feet, and has red and white curtains over the entrance which show the wooden door is opened. The 'altar' which is there...reminded me strongly of Haiti, with candles and paper flowers and pictures of the saints....The dancing space (much like the Haitian *tonnele*) is roofed in 'galvanized' and has benches about its four sides. The drummers face the 'chapelle'; spectators not in with the group press against the railings outside a little up the hill, while only those participating in a ritual are seated along the other sides....Suspended from the roof as we began to record were eight drums of various sizes, from which the three that are played at any given time are selected for tone, etc."

After a quick trip to the southern part of the island, Herskovits returned to Port of Spain and the Shango temple. This time, he got the names of the drums, which appear to be a mix of Yoruba, Kongo, and European influences: "These drums are headed on both sides and are rather more like the

European type than the African hollow-log drum, though they are played as the latter are [on one head only]. The largest, on which they talk to the gods, being the Ogu' (or to St. Michael, it was insisted, the 'English' name of this god) or the Shango (St. John the Baptist) which also talks. Besides these two larger ones, there was a second Ogu' drum, two Congo drums (the smallest ones, that give out the rhythm), and three Omele drums, the medium sized ones." In Toco, the village where Herskovits carried out extensive research, some Shango songs are accompanied by a box drum and rattle (track 21).

These Trinidadian drum styles are not nearly as well known as their Cuban, Haitian, and Brazilian counterparts, but they are an important branch of possession-inducing percussion in the southeastern Caribbean (tracks 22 and 23): "The priestess was possessed by 'Amanja' [Yemanjá], her own god, and therefore the ruling deity of the *chapelle*....She danced toward the drums, and then circled about the dancing space, being joined by her husband who had come down from the house to correct the singing, but had also become possessed. He danced opposite the priestess for a little, disappearing, and reappearing shortly from the chapelle with a red kerchief tied about his head, and two sashes hanging diagonally across chest and back, a red one over the left shoulder, looped over his right hip, and a white one over his right, fastened over the left hip. In his left hand he carried a tall shepherd's crook, raised above his head, and from it too, streamers in the color of his god, Shango, were fastened."

The layout of the Shango compound in Port of Spain reminded Herskovits of Haiti, and the cries of *ababo* and *lababo*, which call or signal the arrival of possessing deities (Invocation, track 24), are almost identical in form and function to the *ayibobo* of the Rada rites of Haitian Vodou. But there are also echoes of Cuba in the Yoruba music of Trinidad ("Yariba-Oshun," track 21) and in the names of Shango drums. Although *batá* drums are not found in Trinidad, *omele* is the name of the middle drum in the *Lucumí* (Cuban Yoruba) *batá* ensembles recorded by Lydia Cabrera and Josefina Tarafa, as it is in Nigeria. And while there are no *batá* drums in Brazil, there are Candomblé rhythms called by that name.

The diaspora echoes back and forth across the Caribbean and down to Brazil. The similarities in musical styles and in the pantheons of Afro-Atlantic religions led Herskovits's wife, Frances, to a realization of their common source at once: "These [Shango] people, with their gods, mingle Yoruba and Dahomean deities so there is much justification for Fann's idea that they must be descended from people who came from the border between these two."

Compared to Herskovits's field recordings in Brazil, his material on Trinidad's Shango religion seems relatively sparse, coming as it did at the end of his field work and done more or less on the fly. The recordings from Bahia are another story. Herskovits was in Brazil in 1941-1942, and his main focus was on Candomblé, whose temples have been described as "Africas in miniature."

Urban centers have traditionally been the strongholds of African-based religions in Brazil. Perhaps remembering his experience in Trinidad, Herskovits realized the importance of this for his research: "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 form as in northeastern Brazil, and especially in this city of Salvador."

Candomblé had been a focus of scholars since the earliest days of Afro-Brazilian studies. In 1900, soon after the end of slavery in Brazil in the 1880s, Nina Rodrigues began a serious investigation of it in Salvador, which in his day was practically a Yoruba city. He was the first researcher to call attention to the identification between the *orixás* and Catholic saints, and also the first to recognize possession trance as the central element of West African religion in an Afro-Brazilian setting, although Rodrigues saw it as a form of pathology. Herskovits himself is credited with recognizing the ritual nature of trance behavior in Candomblé, probably because of his earlier work in West Africa and other parts of the Americas. Like Pierre Verger after him, Herskovits was constantly able to draw parallels between Yoruba/Dahomean rituals on both sides of the Atlantic.

In Salvador, Candomblés are divided according to "nation," or African origin, and in Herskovits's day the Ketu houses predominated. Other important houses or styles of Candomblé were Ijexá named for the Ijesha, another Yoruba-speaking group from what is now southwestern Nigeria; Gêgê, or Dahomean; and Kongo-Angolan. Since the early 1940s, much historical research has been carried out on the origins of Candomblé. It has been established that the first Candomblé houses were founded by Ketu Yoruba women during the first one-third of the 19th century. The Ketus were from a western Yoruba kingdom that sat astride the present-day border between Nigeria and the Benin Republic, formerly Dahomey. After their capital city of Ketu, today in Benin, was destroyed by the king of Dahomey, many Ketu captives were sent as slaves to Brazil, especially in the years between 1815-1851. In the early years of the 19th century, they formed a majority of the Yorubas in Salvador.

Most of the music recorded by Herskovits and chosen for this collection is from Ketu Candomblé, said to have preserved Yoruba traditions with the greatest fidelity. Herskovits himself, like many researchers after him, was struck by the detailed observance of African ritual in Salvador, and perhaps this is nowhere more clearly seen than in initiation rites. As in West Africa, initiation into Candomblé follows several stages. The first step is the "call" by an *orixá*, often experienced as a strong upset during a ceremony when the drums are playing. The next stage is called *bori*, marked by a ceremony in which animal sacrifices are made to the head (*ori*) of the *abian*, or future initiate. These are meant to strengthen the relationship between the destiny that resides in the initiate's head, and his ruling *orixá*. Herskovits gives us a rare glimpse of the songs of the *bori* rites (track 5), which, unlike the music of the public ceremonies, are not known to outsiders. The accompaniment alternates hand-claps, often found in songs of sacrificial rites, and drumming, typically found in the public ceremonies called the *orô*, in which the *orixás* are invoked.

Combining song, drum orchestra, and dance, the *orô* is divided into two parts: the call to the *orixás*, followed by the presence of the African gods. The first part of the *orô* consists of a sequence of songs, known as the *xirê*. While the order of the songs to the different *orixá* may vary, it always begins with Exú (the Brazilian Papa Legba), and ends with Oxalá. During the *xirê*, the role of the master drummer is crucial; his rhythmic variations are intended to induce possession among the dancing initiates. If possession hasn't occurred, he plays a special rhythm that brings it on among the initiates. After possession takes place, the initiates are taken away and dressed in the clothing of their *orixá*, and then return to the dance floor holding symbols that represent their *orixá's* domain. Their entry is accompanied by a processional rhythm called *agolonã* (track 6), which opens the second part of the *orô*. This version has a stately and solemn quality that befits the appearance of the African gods.

During Candomblé ceremonies, the *orixás* dance to their special rhythms: Xangô has his *alujá*, Oxóssi his *aguerê*, and Omolú his *opanije*. Herskovits recorded a sequence of four styles of *opanije*: Ketu, Ijexá, Gêgê or Dahomean, and Kongo-Angolan (track 7). This track highlights the skill and extensive repertoire of Candomblé drummers. One situation where they would be required to know rhythmic variations such as these would be in the break or interval between the two parts of the *orô*, when the initiates are being dressed in the clothing of their *orixás*. During this break, visitors from other Candomblé houses would dance according to their "nation," and the drummers would have to be able

to switch between their different styles.

This track is also a good illustration of the intra-African connections within Candomblé. Equations were made not only between orixás and Catholic saints; the gods of the different African nations in Salvador were also equated with each other. As Herskovits himself put it, "The nations have different rhythms for deities they hold in common, in addition to the rhythms they have for such deities as each nation may worship by itself." Here the Yoruba Omolú, orixá of smallpox and the earth, is equated with the Dahomean Sakpata, and with the Kongo-Angolan Quinongo (whose name means smallpox), and Cajanja.

Herskovits recorded many song cycles for various orixá, which in the Ketu style heard here are sung in *nagô*, the ritual Yoruba of Salvador. Included in this collection are songs for Osain, Dadá, and Oxalá. Osain is the orixá of medicinal and liturgical plants, and no ceremony can be carried out without his presence. Unlike their West African counterparts, his Brazilian "children," or initiates, enter trance, but this does not imply they have knowledge of herbs, the most secret part of Candomblé. The rhythms of his songs, from the "cycle of leaves," are rapid, with an almost breathless quality. This part of the cycle (track 4) includes songs for the leaves associated with Ogum and Xangô. Dadá is the elder brother of Xangô, and like him was also a king of Oyo. His *roda*, or song cycle (track 8), is considered among the most rhythmically demanding for Candomblé drummers. Oxalá, "king of the white cloth," is the eldest and most venerated of the orixás, with sixteen "paths" or manifestations. His songs (track 9) always come at the end of the *xirê*, and close off the Candomblé ceremonies as well. One of Oxalá's "paths," Oxalufá, appears after all the other gods have danced, an elder surrounded and supported by other orixá, who hold the hem of his white robe so he doesn't trip over it.

When several orixás are present in the second part of the *orô*, they frequently interact with each other, and act out elements of Yoruba mythology. Herskovits once commented on the disciplined nature of trance behavior, especially dance. During ceremonies for Dadá, trance dance is not only disciplined; it enacts a scene from Yoruba history. A Dadá initiate dances, wearing a crown. Soon after, Xangô possesses another initiate, who takes the crown and places it on her own head. After dancing for a while with the crown, she returns it to Dadá. This ritual detail seems to be a reenactment of the dethroning of Dadá by his brother Xangô in the Nigerian city of Oyo, and his return to power seven years later.

One of the paradoxes of Afro-Atlantic nature religions is that from the city of Porto Alegre in southern Brazil to the Bronx, they are typically practiced in urban settings. In Cuba, Lydia Cabrera, whose years of documenting Afro-Cuban cultures in the Havana area led to the publication of *El Monte* in 1954, extended her research into rural Matanzas province, the heart of a sugar-growing region. Her goal was to investigate these same cultures as practiced by the descendants of Africans who had worked the local sugar mills, called *ingenios* or *centrales*. Together with her friend, Josefina Tarafa, they made a series of privately issued recordings that they donated to the Library of Congress in 1958. While they made some recordings in Havana, the majority were made in Matanzas province.

Cabrera has written that going from Havana to Matanzas was like passing back to the 19th century, which, in Cuba, was the peak of the sugar boom. Cabrera found in the sugar-growing areas of Matanzas, and in towns such as Cárdenas, a piece of Africa. Many elders still spoke *bozal*, an Afro-Cuban creole full of African words, and many of the elders remembered stories of the wars with the King of Dahomey that brought their ancestors to Cuba. In the countryside, Cabrera also found an Africanized landscape: lakes, rivers, streams, woods and savannas transformed into sanctuaries sacred to Yoruba orishas and Dahomean vodun.

Josefina Tarafa's family still owned a *central* in Matanzas, where they stayed while conducting research. The *centrales* were more like small, self-contained industrial townships than "plantations." About 80 percent of newly arrived slaves, who continued coming to Cuba well into the 19th century, were sent to the sugar mills, many of which became centers for specific African "nations." In Matanzas, for example, the central owned by the Baró family, Santa Rita de Baró, had a concentration of Dahomeans. Descendants of these slaves, bearing the same family name, formed an association called Ojun Degara, which still functions in the town of Jovellanos. There was also a very strong presence of Yorubas, known in Cuba as Lucumí, in the surrounding area.

Befriending many Lucumí priests and priestesses, Cabrera and Tarafa were able to record numerous *orús*, sequences of songs dedicated to the various orisha, in a number of styles. Some are sung unaccompanied, some with batá drums, while *bembé* drums, which are cylindrical and single-headed, accompany others. These are typically played by *aráoko*, black people living in the countryside. Whatever their style and no matter how the song sequences may vary, the *orús* always begin with a

salute to Eleguá (Eshu, Elegbara, Elegbá), as they do in the other New World Yoruba religions.

Juan Liscano, a Venezuelan journalist and poet who started documenting his country's folk music in 1939, recorded the song that opens the Cuban segment of this collection. Among his Venezuelan recordings accessioned by the Library of Congress in 1950 were some selections made by a group of touring Cuban musicians, the Conjunto El Niño, led by Guillermo Regueiro (El Niño). This song to Eleguá features a full ensemble of three double-headed batá drums, shaped like tapered cylinders (track 10): the master drum, called the *iyá*; the *itótele*, which follows the *iyá*'s patterns; and the *okónkolo*, which plays ostinato patterns. It is sung in Lucumí, the ritual Yoruba of Cuba, as are the remaining Cuban songs, all recorded by Cabrera and Tarafa. The unaccompanied *orú* (tracks 12-14), and the songs with batá drums (tracks 17 and 18) are from Havana, the rest from Matanzas.

It appears that each sugar mill in Matanzas had its resident orishas, who continued to be honored in festivals organized by the descendants of the Yoruba slaves who worked them. The song to Naná Burukú (track 11) is performed by a group led by Marcos Portillo Dominguez, whose forebears were from the sugar mill called Mariategui in the town of Pedro Betancourt. Known as Nanábulukú in Dahomey, this orisha is the mother of Obaluaiye/Omolu (see track 7), and ancestress of the Yoruba gods who entered the pantheon of the Fon people of Dahomey. Her cult is widely diffused across West Africa. In Cuba, she is believed to live in rivers or among stands of bamboo, sacred to Naná Burukú.

Cándido Martínez, a Lucumí priest from Havana, and his group perform an unaccompanied *orú cantado* (sung oration), from which these three songs are taken: Ogún, orisha of iron and warfare (track 12 - cf. tracks 2 and 3); Dadá (track 13 - cf. track 8); and Yemayá, orisha of the sea (her name means "Mother whose children are fishes") (track 14). The texts of the songs consist of *patakinés*, oral histories that relate stories from the lives of the different orisha. In Cuba, Yemayá is identified with the Virgin of Regla, a suburb of Havana. Along with her son Changó and Ochún, she is one of the most venerated orishas on the island.

In Cuba, Ochún is the mulata saint, identified with the Caridad de Cobre. Ochún Talade, a Yoruba praise term meaning worthy of queenship (track 15), is the same song heard in the Trinidad segment (track 21). Alberto Yenkin, known as Yin, and his group perform it here. Yin was considered one of the most traditional *olorín* (singers) of Matanzas, with a style said to be like those from *tiempo España*, the slavery era. It is interesting that an *akpwón* (song leader) and *ankorí* (chorus) perform the Cuban version of this song, while the Trinidad variant is performed by one singer who provides her

own responses.

The two songs to Yemayá are in contrasting drum styles, one a sort of "country" version with bembé drums (track 16), and the next, from Havana, with batá drums. A group led by Inés Sotomayor, an elderly priestess and *akpwón*, very well known in her day in the town of Jovellanos and the surrounding area, performs the bembé style. She was in charge of the annual festival celebrated by descendants of slaves at the old Arrati sugar mill, which honored the ancestors and the resident orishas of that ingenio. Sotomayor herself was a "daughter," or initiate, of Babaluayé (Omólú), one of the most venerated orishas on that sugar mill. It is worth noting that the Havana song to Yemayá (track 17) is well known in New York City, and can be heard there at bembés organized by practitioners of Santería. The same Havana group also performs a song for Changó, owner of the batá drums in Cuba, as in Nigeria (track 18).

Some of the most remarkable recordings made by Cabrera and Tarafa are of funerary rites, known as *itutu*, which are performed to fulfill the wishes of the deceased Lucumí priest, priestess or diviner and of their orishas prior to burial. These rites are performed so that their spirits can enter the next world *tutu*, "cool," or at peace. The music heard here is from an *orú* to the *egun* (spirits of the dead), part of a ceremony known as *levantamiento del plato* (raising of the plate), during which a dinner plate belonging to the deceased is broken on a street corner. This is meant to free the *egun* from earthly needs. This *orú* also begins with a song to Eleguá, and the two extracts heard here (tracks 19 and 20) come soon after the opening. The song is led by Fernando Hernández, a member of the Sotomayor group heard above (track 16), with whom he has spiritual ties. As in Brazilian Candomblé, initiation into Santería creates a network of kinship-like relationships, here shared by descendants of the slaves of the Arrati sugar mill.

ORISHAS ACROSS THE OCEAN

The music in this collection is part of a much larger system of religious belief and ritual practice that became re-established in the Americas by Yorubas, Dahomeans and their descendants, and since then has broadened out to a wider ethnic base. In some cases, this music changes our notion of what life during the slave era was like. The Cuban recordings open a window onto a vibrant African religious culture, including initiation, which managed to flourish despite the grueling labor of the sugar mills. The Herskovits recordings point to the complexity of Candomblé, and to the way the cultures of

many "nations" were compressed into these miniature Africas. They also demonstrate the Afro-Brazilian ingenuity in harmonizing different African systems of belief, the same process that took place in Haitian Vodou. Herskovits's Brazil and Trinidad recordings became the focus of study for a generation of ethnomusicologists, and are the basis for many of our assumptions about the transmission and reinterpretation of African musical elements in a New World setting. This ritual music and the life that went on behind it are a testament to the tenacity of the human spirit through the hardships of the middle passage and of slavery. The music itself, and the orishas it brought across the Atlantic, are what helped people endure.

HAITI

1. **Papa Legba ouve baye**
Performers unknown
Recorded in Haiti 1/25/47
Solo, chorus, two drums, *tia tia* (rattle), *ogan* (iron bell)
2. **St. Jak pa la**
Performers unknown
Recorded in Haiti 1/25/47
Solo, chorus, two drums, *tia tia*, iron bell
3. **An nou mache**
Performers unknown
Recorded in Haiti 1/25/47
Solo, chorus, two drums, *tia tia*, iron bell

BRAZIL

4. **Ketu songs for Osain**
Manoel's group
Recorded in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil 1941 or 1942
Leader, chorus, two drums, iron bell
5. **Bori songs (initiation rites)**
Manoel's group
Recorded in Salvador 1941 or 1942
Leader, chorus, hand-clapping, drums, iron bell
6. **Agolonā (entry of the orixás)**
Manoel's group
Recorded in Salvador 1941 or 1942
Leader, chorus, two drums, iron bell
7. **Opanije (rhythms for Omolú)**
 - a. Ketu-drumming with sticks
 - b. Gêgê-drumming with sticks
 - c. Ijexá-drumming with hands
 - d. Congo-Angola-drumming with hands
Shimiya's group
Recorded in Salvador 1941 or 1942
Two drums (rum, rumpi), iron bell

8. **Ketu: Roda de Dadá (song cycle)**
Manoel's group
Recorded in Salvador 1941 or 1942
Leader, chorus, two drums, iron bell
9. **Ketu songs for Oxalá**
Vidal's group
Recorded in Salvador 1941 or 1942
Leader, chorus, two drums, iron bell

CUBA

10. **Song for Eleguá**
Conjunto El Niño, led by Guillermo Rigueiro
Recorded by Juan Liscano in Venezuela before 1950
Leader, chorus, trio of batá drums
11. **Song for Naná Burukú**
Performed by M. Portillo Dominguez and Group
Recorded by Cabrera and Tarafa in Matanzas, Cuba ca. 1957
Solo, chorus, bembé drums, *guiro* (beaded gourd rattle),
iron rod, *guataca* (hoe blade)
12. **Song for Ogun**
13. **Song for Dadá**
14. **Song for Yemayá**
Performed by Cándido Martinez and group
Recorded in Havana, Cuba ca. 1957
Solo, chorus
15. **Ochún Talade**
Performed by Alberto Yenkin (Yín) and group
Recorded in Matanzas, Cuba ca. 1957
Solo, chorus, bembé drum, *guataca*
16. **Song for Yemayá**
Performed by Fernando Hernandez with Inés
Sotomayor group
Recorded in Matanzas, Cuba ca. 1957
Soloist, chorus, bembé drums, *guiro*,
iron rod or spoon on bottle

17. **Song for Yemayá**
18. **Song for Changó**
Performed by Cándido Martinez with ensemble led by
Miguel Santa Cruz and Juan Gonzalez
Recorded by Cabrera and Tarafa, Havana, Cuba, ca. 1957
Leader, chorus, batá drums
19. **Itutu song (funerary rites)**
20. **Itutu song**
Performed by Fernando Hernandez and group
Recorded in Matanzas, Cuba ca. 1957
Leader, chorus, bembé drums

TRINIDAD

21. **Yariba-Oshun**
Performed by Margaret Buckley (vocal and rattle)
and Joe Alexander, percussion
Recorded in Toco, Trinidad, 1939
Solo vocal, rattle, box drum
22. **Shango ceremonial music**
Recorded in Port of Spain, Trinidad, 1939
Solo male voice, mixed chorus, three drums, iron bell
23. **Shango ceremonial music**
Recorded in Port of Spain, 1939
Solo male voice, mixed chorus, three drums, iron bell
24. **Invocation (Shango)**
Performed by Andrew Biddle (lead vocal), with female
chorus and vocalizations.
Recorded in Port of Spain, 1939

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Cuban Yoruba Priestesses, Matanzas, Cuba.



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THE WORLD



1. Papa Legba ouve baye 1:24
2. St. Jak pa la 1:43
3. An nou mache 1:41
4. Ketu songs for Osain 4:06
5. Bori songs 3:55
6. Agolonā 2:11
7. Opanije (rhythms for Omolú) 4:01
8. Ketu: Roda de Dadá (song cycle) 4:12
9. Ketu songs for Oxalá 4:19
10. Song for Eleguá 3:22
11. Song for Naná Burukú 4:15
12. Song for Ogun 1:33
13. Song for Dadá 1:01
14. Song for Yemayá 1:18
15. Ochún Talade 2:26
16. Song for Yemayá 4:14
17. Song for Yemayá 3:05
18. Song for Changó 3:05
19. Itutu song (funerary rites) 1:39
20. Itutu song 1:49
21. Yariba-Oshun 2:07
22. Shango ceremonial music 3:40
23. Shango ceremonial music 2:09
24. Invocation 2:37



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