

OF DRUMS  
DEFIANCE



MAROON

MUSIC

FROM THE

EARLIEST

FREE BLACK

COMMUNITIES

OF JAMAICA

# Drums of Defiance: Maroon Music from the Earliest Free Black Communities of Jamaica

Recorded, compiled and annotated by Kenneth Bilby

Some selections on this recording were previously issued in 1981 on Folkways 4027

Tracks 4,8,10 and 30-35 were recorded in 1991 and are previously unreleased.



## MOORE TOWN MAROONS

1. Tambu: *Hear When de Duppy Bawl* 1:47
2. Tambu: *Fire da Bun* 1:49
3. Sa Leone: *Remember Rain, John Warren* 1:36
4. Sa Leone: *Moko Johnny* 1:42
5. Jawbone: *Morning Star* 1:39
6. Jawbone: *See Dem Gyal a Molain* 1:38
7. Jawbone: *Me Ahs Me Dasha Weh Him Min Go* 2:46
8. Jawbone: *Nyam One Day, Bui Sanga* 3:53
9. Mandinga/John Thomas: *Kin an Beri* 1:06
10. Mandinga: *Banda Gone a Wood* 2:03
11. Mandinga/Tambu: *Ya Ya Dempo* 2:00
12. Mandinga: *Wiri-oo Sankoma* 2:02
13. Papa: *Maki Bo* 0:58
14. Ibo: *Jo Leh* 1:39
15. Ibo: *Siyumande* 1:41
16. Abeng (Signalling Horn) 0:56
17. Drum Language 0:26
18. Drum Language 1:04
19. Kromanti (Country): *Shedo* 1:37
20. Kromanti (Country): *Anabo Yedeng* 1:37

## CHARLES TOWN MAROONS

21. Recreational Song: *Falla Me* 1:17
22. Kromanti: *Dede Bi Ankama* 0:56

## SCOTT'S HALL MAROONS

23. Mandinga: *Ba Wiri-oo* 2:07
24. Mandinga: *Oh Duppy* 1:09
25. Mandinga: *Siyumande Yoyo* 1:27
26. Kromanti: *Grandy Nanny* 1:01

## ACCOMPONG MAROONS

27. Kromanti: *A Mini Wai-oo* 0:50
28. Solo Song: *Ingia Mayongo* 0:28
29. Processional Music: *Squire Smith* 4:52
30. Processional Music: *Clear Road* 2:33
31. Processional Music: *Wah Me Gwine Do?* 2:45
32. Processional Music: *Maroon Law* 1:45
33. Processional Music: *Baakini* 2:00
34. Revival: *Fight for War* 2:07
35. Nyabingi: *Medley* 6:56

The spirit of resistance that drives much of Jamaica's popular music began with the Maroons, the first freedom fighters of Jamaica. The potent rhythms that backed their struggle against slavery survive today in the Maroon communities of the Jamaican hills. *Drums of Defiance* is the first compilation to focus on the Maroon communities where Jamaica's deepest African roots live on.



Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings  
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## Credits

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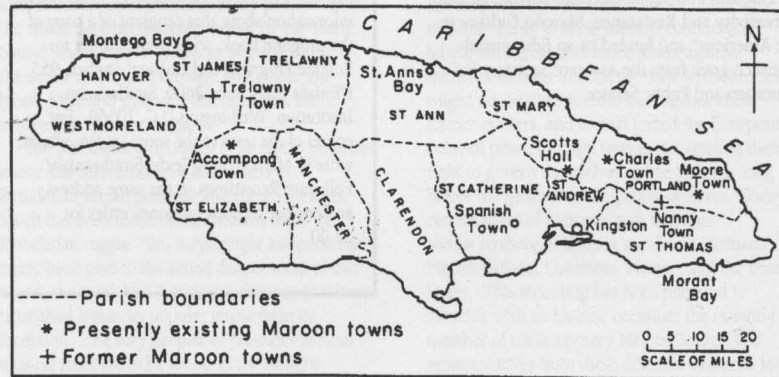
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## 40412 Drums of Defiance: Maroon Music from the Earliest Free Black Communities of Jamaica

Recorded, compiled and annotated by  
Kenneth Bilby

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Some selections on this recording were previously issued in 1981 on Folkways 4027; over 25 minutes of previously unissued material have been added.

Produced in conjunction with the 1992 Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife program "Creativity and Resistance: Maroon Culture in the Americas" and funded by an Educational Outreach grant from the Assistant Secretary for Education and Public Service

This recording includes material Kenneth Bilby released on Folkways Records in 1981, supplemented by an additional 25 minutes of more recent recordings. Items 4, 8, 10, and 30-35 were recorded in 1991 (30-35 were made on digital equipment). All others are analog recordings from 1977-8.

This reissue is part of the Maroon Program of the 1992 Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, entitled "Creativity and Resistance: Maroon Culture in the Americas." For further information about that program or a copy of the program book, write to the Center for Folklife Programs and Cultural Studies, 955 L'Enfant Plaza Suite 2600, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. 20560. For copies of the texts to the songs on this album, write to Maroon Song Texts, Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings, at the same address, and enclose a check or money order for \$2.00.

## Drums of Defiance: Maroon Music from the Earliest Free Black Communities of Jamaica by Kenneth Bilby

Over the last three decades, musicians and record producers in the small island nation of Jamaica have performed a remarkable cultural feat. Not only have they given birth to a vibrant new musical form called reggae, they have overseen its transformation from an obscure local ghetto music to a force to be reckoned with in the arena of international popular music. Many people around the world have been deeply moved by the Word, Sound, and Power of Jamaican popular music -- the subtle melding of message and music, the lyrical force and rhythmic intensity, that are achieved in the best reggae.

The worldwide popularity of Jamaican popular music has been built on a foundation of Rastafarian social, political, and spiritual values. Much has been made of the "African roots" of Rastafarian reggae. Yet, surprisingly, attention has rarely been paid to the actual deeper roots of this music, the rural Afro-Jamaican traditions that have nourished Jamaican popular music from its inception. The very deepest of Jamaica's African musical roots are to be found in the island's Maroon communities. Although many writers have been fascinated by the Maroon saga, few have done extensive first-hand research among

contemporary Maroons. This compilation is the first to focus on the music of Jamaican Maroon communities.

The Jamaican Maroons are descendants of slaves who fled the plantations and seized their own freedom during the 17th and 18th centuries. ("Maroon" is a generic English term for fugitive slaves or their descendants.) This phenomenon was not limited to Jamaica. Between the 15th and 19th centuries, in remote areas throughout the Americas, hundreds of communities of escaped slaves sprang up in blatant defiance of the slave regimes. Many of these maroon communities fought with great skill and courage against tremendous odds to preserve their freedom. Some waged devastating guerilla wars against their former masters, and several forced the European colonial powers to sign treaties recognizing their right to govern themselves as free peoples, long before the general emancipation of slaves. Today communities of Maroons with histories similar to those of Jamaica survive in Suriname, French Guiana, Colombia, Mexico, and the United States. This recording has been prepared to coincide with an historic occasion: the bringing together of contemporary Maroon leaders and representatives from these different countries for the first time ever during the 1992 Festival of American Folklife in Washington, D.C.

### The Jamaican Maroons: Background

Jamaica was once among the most prized of Britain's sugar producing colonies. What lay behind the great wealth produced by this colony was the labor of African slaves, some three-quarters of a million of whom were forcibly imported into the island between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 1969, p. 160). From the very beginning, some slaves took their chances and fled to the unsettled mountains of the Jamaican interior. During the middle of the seventeenth century -- coinciding with the British occupation of the island, which until then had been under Spanish control -- large numbers of slaves escaped to the wilderness and coalesced into organized groups. Over the years these initial bands of runaway slaves were augmented by a continual flow of new fugitives. By the early eighteenth century two major federations of Maroons had formed, those controlling the western interior, who became known as the "Leewards," and those in the eastern Blue Mountains, known as the "Windwards." Until the British sued for peace in the 1730s, the Maroons waged an unrelenting guerilla war against the colonial plantation society. In 1739, treaties were completed with both groups, recognizing their freedom, granting them land and a number of privileges, and allowing them a limited measure of autonomy.

During the nineteenth century the Jamaican government tried through various means, but without much success, to bring about the complete assimilation of the Maroons into the wider society. Although by this time the Maroons for the most part shared the culture and language of other rural Jamaicans, they strongly resisted formal attempts to cancel out their special status and unique identity.

Today there are four major Maroon communities in existence in Jamaica: Accompong, one of the original Leeward villages located in the rugged western Cockpit Country; and in the eastern Blue Mountains, Moore Town, Charles Town, and Scott's Hall, all of them originally settled by Windward Maroons (see map).

One cultural sphere in which the Jamaican Maroons have maintained a clearly distinct tradition is that of music and dance. Traditional Maroon identity is largely rooted (in the three eastern communities) in the ritual complex known as *Kromanti Dance* or *Kromanti Play*. The name "Kromanti" is derived from an historical slave port on the Gold Coast of West Africa, and was used in Jamaica to refer to slaves who originated from this general region, the majority being of Akan background. The Kromanti Dance ceremony, which incorporates a variety of musical and dance styles, revolves around the possession of participants by the spirits of Maroon ancestors who help the living to solve various spiritual problems. Most often the ceremonies are concerned with healing spirit-

caused ailments. In serious Kromanti ceremonies involving spirit possession (*myal*), non-Maroons are barred from attending, except under special circumstances. Much of what takes place during ceremonies is held secret. The esoteric Kromanti language, herbal healing and physical feats which are central to Kromanti Play are seen as being beyond the comprehension of outsiders; it is believed by most Maroons that the powers of Kromanti, derived from the ancestors, cannot be taught or otherwise passed on to those who do not share in "Maroon blood."

This selection of recordings does not pretend to represent a complete survey of Maroon musical traditions. As in other cultural spheres, the Maroons have for years participated in musical and dance traditions that are common to rural Jamaicans throughout the island. A complete view of Maroon music would require attention to a number of those traditions, such as quadrille, *Jonkonnu* ("John Canoe"), and the church music of several Christian denominations. However, the selections appearing on this recording were purposefully limited, with a few exceptions, to music specifically associated with Kromanti Dance, for it is precisely within this tradition that a uniquely Maroon musical heritage is to be found.

The Kromanti tradition represents a crucial link between present-day Maroons and their ancestors, who suffered and struggled courageously for their freedom. The Kromanti Dance contains -- above

and beyond its value as a vital aesthetic creation and its practical problem-solving functions -- the most forceful expression of the unique identity to which the Maroons lay claim. It is the living embodiment of an epic, and is of great importance to those Maroons with a traditional orientation.

The recordings presented here were made as part of an ethnographic study carried out during 1977-78, approximately twelve months of which were spent in the Moore Town area; shorter visits were made to Scott's Hall, Charles Town, and Accompong. Field research was supported by a grant from the Organization of American States. Additional recordings were made in both Moore Town and Accompong in October and November, 1991, with support from the Smithsonian Center for Folklife Programs and Cultural Studies. All recordings were made by Kenneth Bilby, except for items 30-35, which were recorded by Cal Southworth, with the assistance of Kenneth Bilby.

Recordings were made in a number of contexts: major public ceremonies, small private ceremonies, and specially arranged sessions. Since a number of participants in the recordings expressed a wish to remain anonymous, individual performers have not been named.

Finally, a word to all Maroons: na fi di klijn-yai yengkungkun dis, an al bigi suma we tuajina obroni mek in sabi sonti; an na fi unu pikin dem... so wen turo kon, foul futu n'e kil in pikin, konjo siid n'e laas.

## Selections

**Please note** that we have been unable to include song texts in these notes for reasons of space. If you wish a copy of the full texts, please send a check or money order for \$2.00 to: Maroon Song Texts, Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings, Center for Folklife Programs and Cultural Studies, 955 L'Enfant Plaza Suite 2600, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. 20560.

### MOORE TOWN, Items 1-20

Of all the Maroon communities, Moore Town possesses the most elaborate Kromanti tradition, and this is reflected in the rich musical heritage that lives on in this area. In the Moore Town area the music of Kromanti Play is organized into a number of distinct musical categories, each of which is associated with specific styles of drumming and dancing. Categories carry different weights, depending on the relative intrinsic power of the songs included within them. Songs in the "lighter" or less powerful categories (i.e. *Jawbone*, *Sa Leone*, *Tambu*) tend to have words in English or creole (known locally as "patois"); they are used primarily for recreational group dancing. Songs in the "heavier" or "deeper" categories typically have a higher percentage of non-English words; they are used specifically to invoke the spirits of Maroon ancestors, and to accompany the dancing and spirit workings of the ritual specialist known as the *dancer-man* or *fete-man*. (The latter term,

pronounced "feh-tay man," literally means "fight man"; it is derived from an old form of English creole, and bears no relation to the French word "fête.")

The "heavier" categories of songs are named after a number of what Maroons themselves refer to as "tribes" or "nations," which are said to have contributed to early Maroon society. Among these are *Kromanti*, *Papa*, *Ibo*, *Mandinga*, *Dokose*, and *Mongola*. Ideas surrounding these tribes are rather vague in present-day Moore Town. Some older Maroons claim to be descended primarily from one or another tribe, but the majority of people contend that the intermingling of different tribes in past generations has made it very difficult to disentangle the tribal affiliations of present-day individuals. In any case, tribal divisions, as a real feature of Maroon social organization, have long since faded into the past. Today the only context in which the concept of internal tribal differentiation has any significance at all is Kromanti Play. It is believed that in Kromanti ceremonies the songs associated with a specific tribe are particularly efficacious in invoking the spirits of ancestors belonging to that tribe, or in sparking the possession of living dancers descended primarily from that tribe.

The instrumental ensemble normally employed in Kromanti Play consists of a pair -- one "female" and the other "male" -- of long, single-headed, cylindrical drums, each called *printing* (from *Twi*,

*oprenteng*); a length of bamboo tube played with two sticks, called *kwat*; and a machete struck with a piece of metal, known as the "iron" or *adawo*. This instrument is understood to be playing in a paralinguistic mode most of the time, even though it is never actually used to communicate messages through the reproduction of specific speech patterns.

The drummer, known as *okrema* or *printing-man*, is second in importance only to the *fete-man* in Kromanti Play. He should know how to play both the interlocking supporting and lead parts (known as "rolling" and "cutting," respectively), and should possess a sound knowledge of the diverse drumming styles accompanying the different categories of songs. Each category calls for its own drumming style, although songs from one category will occasionally be backed by the drumming style associated with another category. (For example, a Papa song may once in a while, for the sake of variety, be played in Mandinga style).

### 1-2. *Tambu*

The Maroon style known as *Tambu* is particularly intriguing, because of its apparent connections with the music of the Kumina cults that are found primarily in the lowland areas surrounding the eastern Maroon communities. It has often been assumed that the Kumina cults originated among the eastern Maroons. However, a close examination of the Maroon Kromanti

tradition and the Kumina tradition supports the theory that the two belong to different cultural-historical streams, although there has been a good deal of contact and interchange between them. Whereas the Kromanti tradition originated among the Maroons, and goes back to the eighteenth century or before, the Kumina tradition appears to have been introduced to Jamaica during the nineteenth century by post-emancipation Central African immigrants (see Monica Schuler, *Alas, Alas, Kongo*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, 1980). The present-day Maroon *Tambu* style seems to be the product of a syncretization of earlier Maroon styles with post-emancipation Kumina influences.

#### 1. *Tambu* - "Hear When de Duppy Bawl":

This beautiful song is also sometimes heard at Kumina dances. The only instruments being played are two *printing*. "Hear when de duppy bawl," urges the repeating chorus -- hear the spirit crying out. The song comments on the power of Kumina to invoke spirits, which according to some people may be heard wailing as they are attracted to the ceremony.

2. *Tambu* - "Fire da Bun": This is a good example of a song that is known not only to Maroons, but is also commonly sung as a *baïlo* in Kumina. However, the Maroon version differs substantially from the Kumina version in phrasing, melody, and drum accompaniment. There are two

printing being played on this selection. The song is about a young man who fell in love with a woman too quickly, and when they had to part, suffered a burning pain like fire.

### **Sa Leone, Items 3-4**

*Sa Leone* is the name given to another category of Maroon songs and the drumming style used to accompany them. The name "Sa Leone" is derived from Sierra Leone, a country located on the coast of West Africa. Like Jawbone, Sa Leone songs are considered "light" and are sung primarily for recreation during the early hours of Kromanti Play. These songs are often referred to as "woman songs," and their words are in English or creole. As with Jawbone, the songs tend to be topical.

**3. Sa Leone - "Remember Rain, John Warren":** The instruments played in this example are two printing, adawo, and kwat. The man on the kwat plays typical lead drum patterns. The song is about a forgetful and ungrateful man named John Warren. Because he did not properly remember the efforts of his friends, he was soon confronted once again with problems (i.e., the "rain") that they previously had helped him to solve. The song is intended as a warning to others who, like John Warren, tend to be forgetful of favors done them.

**4. Sa Leone - "Moko Johnny":** An example of hot Sa Leone drumming recorded during a public

Maroon celebration. The song is about a Maroon from earlier times named Moko Johnny.

### **Jawbone, Items 5-8**

The term *Jawbone* refers both to a category of songs and a particular drumming style used to accompany these songs. Jawbone is considered to be one of the "lighter" categories of songs -- that is, those songs used primarily for recreational dancing rather than for invoking spirits. Nonetheless, on occasion even Jawbone songs cause possession.

**5. Jawbone - "Morning Star":** This song was composed many years ago, I was told, in remembrance of a Maroon woman who had died a short time before and was missed by members of the community. The instruments used are two printing, a kwat, and adawo. The drummers playing here are considered to be two of the finest living Maroon *printing-man*, and the subtle and complex tone-shifting and interplay between the "rolling" and "cutting" drums attest to their skill.

**6. Jawbone - "See Dem Gyal a Molain":** The sort of long, melismatic drawing-out of vowels heard in the chorus of this song is typical of Jawbone songs, especially when they are played more slowly. It is interesting also to note that the man playing the kwat in this selection is an accomplished printing-man, and the rhythms he is playing on the kwat are typical "cutting" drum patterns.

**7. Jawbone - "Me Aks Me Dasha Weh Him Min Go":** This lovely song is played here in the slow Jawbone style. The part of the "rolling drum" has been somewhat simplified by the player in this case. This example includes only two printing. I was told that this song grew out of an incident that occurred long ago. A Maroon woman suddenly vanished one day from her village and was not seen or heard from again for a number of years. Her lover, friends and family in the village were left to wonder what had become of her. Then one day she returned as suddenly as she had departed. When her loved ones asked her where she had been for so long, she simply greeted them "good morning" and would offer no explanation for her absence. The song goes on to comment on the gossip of some of the villagers who began to spread the story of how the disappearing woman had behaved upon her return.

**8. Jawbone - "Nyam One Day, Bui Sanga":** This selection, recorded during a public Maroon celebration in 1991, gives some idea of the festive spirit and the heat generated in such contexts. The words of the song advise listeners never to use up their resources all at once; a portion should always be saved for tomorrow.

### **Mandinga, Items 9-12**

*Mandinga* refers both to a category of songs and a drumming style that goes with them. The

Mandinga category, along with Papa, Ibo, and Dokose, is one of the more powerful song categories. Each category corresponds to the "tribe" after which it is named, so that, for example, songs from the Mandinga category can be used to invoke the spirits of Maroon ancestors descended primarily from the Mandinga "tribe." Songs of this sort are sung primarily later at night during Kromanti dance, when the ceremony becomes more serious.

The words of the songs in these more powerful categories are often primarily African-derived rather than English or creole. The drumming for these "higher" songs traditionally requires a special stick known as *abaso tick* (stick) or *akani tick*. The lead drummer plays with the abaso tick in one hand and with the fingers and palm of his other hand.

The name Mandinga is derived from *Manding*, the name of a large ethnic group (also known as *Mandinka*, *Maninke*, etc.) in the Senegambia region of West Africa. However, this should not be taken to mean that the songs that go by this name can be traced to this specific region of Africa. The derivations of Maroon musical styles and songs are difficult to pinpoint, and in most cases the songs must be seen as new creations, the end results of a unique process of musical syncretism that long ago began to blend elements from a diversity of African traditions into new styles.

**9. Mandinga/John Thomas - "Kin an Beri"**  
(Skin and Belly): In this selection, Mandinga-style drumming is blended with the "lighter" Maroon drumming style known as *John Thomas*. The abaso-tick can be heard playing the lead part throughout the song. Unlike many songs in this category, the words of this one are in English creole, although it is a deep form. I was told that the song is about a Maroon who was dancing Kromanti one time, and whose body received a "blow" from an outsider spirit. The spirit injury caused a pain in his stomach.

**10. Mandinga - "Banda Gone a Wood"**: Played in typical Mandinga style, this song refers to an "old-time" Maroon man named Banda who left his village and went to live in the woods to protest the negative gossip and accusations of his wife.

**11. Mandinga/Tambu - "Ya Ya Dempo"**: In this selection, the lead drummer has decided not to use abaso tick and plays with both hands instead. The supporting drummer plays his part with a Tambu feel. Toward the end of the example the lead drummer also begins subtly to shift his style of "cutting" from Mandinga to Tambu, so that by the end of the band a complete transition has occurred and the song is being backed by typical Tambu drumming, rather than the usual Mandinga style.

**12. Mandinga - "Wiri-oo Sankoma"**: This is a good example, along with the last selection, of how

Mandinga sounds when played in slow tempo, as it often is. (Compare it with the fast Mandinga on the last two selections). The lead drummer plays in the traditional manner, using the abaso tick.

### **Papa, Item 13**

The category of *Papa*, alternately pronounced "papa," "prapa" or "prapra," includes four primary songs, all of which are backed by the same drumming style. Papa songs are considered to be among the most powerful of Maroon songs. It is traditional, although no longer typical, to open a serious Kromanti Play with these four Papa songs, followed by four primary songs from each of the other "tribes."

The name *Papa* is from the word "Pawpaw," which Europeans used during the slavery era to refer to slaves who originated in the Ewe-speaking area west of the Yoruba country, in what is now Togo and parts of Ghana and Benin.

**13. Papa - "Maki Bo"**: This song opens with the supporting drummer playing alone. Then, shortly after the chorus enters, the lead drummer joins in with abaso-tick, as is proper. The instruments here are two printing, and the adawo, which is playing in speech mode rather than beating a steady rhythm. Ritual specialists state that this song is about three Maroon brothers who lived in the distant past. One of the brothers was called Maki Bo, and another was called Buza. All of the brothers

were Kromanti specialists. The third brother, who was an accomplished drummer, outlived both Maki Bo and Buza. The song recalls a time when this brother was attacked by a spirit power and had to fight desperately for his life. It is said that he used this very song to call on the spirits of his deceased brothers for help. One of his brothers' spirits then possessed him and helped to effect his cure.

### **Ibo, Items 14-15**

The category of *Ibo*, like *Papa*, contains four primary songs, that are also part of the traditional opening song cycle in Kromanti dance. All of these primary songs are backed with the same drumming style. *Ibo* (or *Igbo*) is the name of a large ethnic group in Southeastern Nigeria.

**14. Ibo - "Jo Leh"**: The drumming style used to accompany *Ibo* songs is particularly interesting. As can be heard in this recording, this style is based on a subdivision of the basic pulse into rapid triplets, resembling a rapid-tempo compound duple or quadruple meter. I was given no translation for the words. This song is a personal spirit song; that is, it is the song of a particular Maroon ancestor, that can be sung specifically to invoke his spirit.

**15. Ibo - "Siyumande"**: This song was classified by most specialists as an *Ibo* song,

although it is not one of the four primary songs in this category. The drumming style associated with this song is quite different from that which goes with other *Ibo* songs. The abaso-tick plays a rhythmic pattern that is shared by many styles of contemporary African-influenced music such as salsa, highlife, and calypso. It is the rhythmic pattern that has come to be known in Latin music as the "clave" rhythm after the instrument on which it is typically played. The song is also accompanied by kwat and adawo.

### **Abeng, Item 16**

The *abeng* is an instrument made from the horn of a cow. It is played by blowing through a side hole located near the tip; the thumb is simultaneously used to change pitch by covering another hole at the very tip. This instrument is derived from a West African design, and the name "abeng" is still used in present Ghana as a generic term for wind instruments made from the horn of an animal.

The *abeng* is used primarily as a signalling device. During the days when the Maroons were at war with the British this instrument served as a vital means of communication. Although capable of producing only two basic pitches, the *abeng* was used by the Maroons to send complex messages over wide areas. The "language" of the *abeng*, which is actually a limited repository of set phrases, was essential to the Maroons' military



strategy. By posting a network of *abeng-men* as sentries around their settlements, the rebels virtually ruled out the possibility of surprise attack. Contemporary British accounts of the military campaigns against the Maroons often mention the *abeng* and its strategic value. Today this instrument continues to be used primarily for communication; it is always played in "speech mode," to convey a message, and never merely for musical entertainment. At present it is used not only to forewarn the community of danger, but also to carry news of emergency, as when someone has been lost in the woods, or has drowned. It is also periodically used to call the Maroon council or the wider community to assembly. Finally, it is used to signal the arrival of the Christmas holiday.

**16. Abeng:** This recording was made during the Christmas holiday, the only time of year that the *abeng* can be freely blown. The player is here ushering in the holiday.

#### **Drum Language, Items 17-18**

The Moore Town Maroons are able to communicate not only with the *abeng*, but also with the Kromanti drums (printing). As in many parts of Africa, and also among the Maroons, or "Bush Negroes," of Suriname and French Guiana, drums are used to send complex signals based on a system of discrete tones. During the time of war, it is said, the Kromanti drums, like the *abeng*, were used for strategic purposes. Nowadays, the

drum "language" is used at the beginning of Kromanti Play to invite Maroons from the surrounding area to participate and to let them know that a ceremony is about to commence. The drum "language" is also used to invoke and communicate with the spirits of ancestors.

**17. & 18. Drum Language:** These two selections feature two different printing-man playing *Country* (see below). When *Country* is played independently of a music/dance context a single drum is used.

#### **Kromanti (Country), Items 19-20**

The word Kromanti has several musical meanings. It is often used to refer to the complete corpus of songs, both "lighter" and more powerful, performed at Kromanti Play. But there is also a separate category of songs known as Kromanti, more commonly called *Country*. In terms of spiritual power, the songs of this category are at the very pinnacle of Maroon music. It is said that they can be used to summon the most distant Maroon ancestors, who lived during the time of war, to offer their aid during periods of crisis.

The style of drumming that accompanies Kromanti songs is remarkable. While the singers chant the melody slowly and fluidly, the two printing play in speech mode simultaneously. The rhythm of the drums is controlled by the dictates of speech rather than the demands of interlocking structure that characterize normal musical

performance. The drums "talk" while the singers sing. Much of the time, the drums are not actually "saying" anything, but are simply playing in speech mode, as if they were. Because of this, in performances of *Country* songs there is no shared pulse underlying all the parts. Even the patterns of the *abaso-tick*, that create a steady pulse for brief intervals, constantly shift in such a way as to throw the apparent pulse off. The drumming in this style, thus, approaches free rhythm.

This combination of chant with speech-mode drumming is found also among the Akan-speaking peoples of Ghana, particularly the Fanti, who make use of it in the ceremonies of *asafo*, the warrior associations (Abraham Adzinyah, personal communication).

The Jamaican Maroon Kromanti style constitutes one of the few remaining Afro-American traditions in which the direct linkage between musical structure and an actual, spoken African-derived language-form has been retained.

**19. Kromanti (Country) - "Shedo":** The similarity between the drumming in this selection and the drum "language" of the previous two examples should be readily apparent. The main difference is that the speech mode is here being employed as accompaniment of song and dance, and the "language" is not limited to the signalling of a single drum but is being played on both drums simultaneously, by two different

players. This beautiful song has a deep and poignant meaning for Maroons. It is said by some that the song grew out of an incident that occurred during the days when the Maroons were at war with the British. A Maroon woman by the name of Shedo was running through the forest with her child on her back. Some British soldiers had discovered her presence and were giving chase. During her frantic flight her child dropped off her back and fell into the surrounding foliage. (In some variants of the legend, Shedo drops her child purposefully, for she knows that its cries would give her location away.) She was unable to retrieve her child, for to turn back would have meant certain capture. Although the British finally gave up pursuit, night soon fell, and Shedo was not able to locate the child. For a long time he remained lost in the woods, managing somehow to stay alive. One day the child began to sing out this *Country* song, taught to him by a spirit, and finally was heard by some Maroons passing by. And so, at last, mother and child were reunited. This song is considered one of the most powerful Maroon songs, and serves as an emotionally potent reminder of the trials that faced the Maroon ancestors during their war against the British colonists.

**20. Kromanti (Country) - "Anabo Yedeng":** In this selection, both drums, including the *abaso-tick* on one, are played in speech mode

throughout. The adawo is also played in speech mode, and the kwat is present as well. The words of the song are in Kromanti. The song is associated with a particular legend about a Maroon fete-man who pitted his powers against an escaped slave, a powerful *obeah-man*, or ritual specialist. After the peace treaties of 1739 the Maroons were required, in exchange for the privileges granted them, to track down and capture all later fugitives from the slave plantations. This particular runaway slave, usually said to have been a Mandinga man, was very clever with *obeah*, or spirit power. Whenever the Maroon trackers began to chase him he would run to a particular spot and become invisible. Bullets seemed to pass right through him. One very powerful Maroon specialist wanted to capture this Mandinga man to turn him over to *Bakra* (the British). He decided to use his own power to fight that of his slave opponent. Through divination, he discovered that the Mandinga man kept the source of his power (a small object) hidden in the branches of a particular tree. According to some storytellers, this tree was called "anabo." Whenever he ran to the tree he would disappear. When the Maroon found out about his opponent's trick, he used a charm of his own to counteract it. The next time the Mandinga slave fled from his pursuers to his special spot, his *obeah* failed him. The Maroon specialist was victorious, and the Mandinga man was captured.

#### CHARLES TOWN, Items 21-22

It appears that in Charles Town the Kromanti dance tradition is moribund. Ceremonies are held very rarely, and only a handful of persons are capable of playing the drums properly. The persons performing on these selections were specially assembled for this recording.

Songs were once categorized and named according to the same "tribes" as in Moore Town, and were associated with specific drumming styles. However, this aspect of the Kromanti tradition survives today only in very fragmentary form.

The instrumental ensemble in Charles Town consists of two drums (*grandy* and *gumbe*); a piece of bamboo used for percussion, as in Moore Town, called *kwat*; and a metal implement also used for percussion (usually a machete or a pitchfork), known as *adawa*. The *grandy* is the same in basic design as the printing of Moore Town, and is considered "female." The *gumbe* is shaped something like a stool (quite similar to the *gumbe* of Accompong, except more rectangular, and with two instead of four legs), and is considered "male." Both the *grandy* and *gumbe* are single-headed and played with the hands. The latter functions as the leading drum, and the former provides support.

**21. Recreational Song - "Falla Me":** In Charles Town, as in Moore Town, there is a large group of "lighter" songs that are backed by one and the

same style of drumming. The song is about going to collect *busu*, a type of edible fresh-water snail that can be found clinging on rocks, and that is considered something of a delicacy in rural Jamaica, particularly in Maroon areas.

**22. Kromanti - "Dedi Bi Ankama":** As in Moore Town, the songs that have the greatest power in invoking spirits are Kromanti. Although the actual signalling "language" of the drums has been forgotten in Charles Town, and the spoken ritual language known as Kromanti is remembered only by a very few elders, the Kromanti style of drumming is still very clearly based on a speech mode. The lack of a consistent underlying pulse marks the style as a close relative to the Kromanti (Country) style of Moore Town. The instruments in the selection are *gumbe*, *grandy* and *adawa*. The meaning of the Kromanti words in this song seems to have been lost.

#### SCOTT'S HALL, Items 23-26

Kromanti dance survives in Scott's Hall and continues to carry a good deal of importance there, although it seems to be in the process of declining. It bears many similarities to the Moore Town and Charles Town versions and shares a number of songs with them.

Aside from those in the Jawbone group, songs are said to be connected with four "tribes" (or "countries"): *Prapa*, *Mandinga*, *Ibo* and *Kromanti*.

However, actual classifications of specific songs are even more ambiguous than in Moore Town. The concept of "tribal" affiliation of songs remains strong, yet there is virtually no consensus on which songs belong to which category. Although there are different drumming styles for each of the tribes, the majority of songs in Scott's Hall today are backed by what is usually referred to as Mandinga style. As in Moore Town, there is a traditional song cycle used to open Kromanti Play, but in Scott's Hall the complete cycle contains only four songs altogether, all of them classified as Kromanti.

In Scott's Hall the instrumental ensemble used in Kromanti dance is comprised of two drums (*grandy* and *gumbe*); a *kwat*, similar to the instrument used in Moore Town and Charles Town; and a machete used for percussion, called "iron." The *grandy* (considered "female") is essentially of the same design as the printing of Moore Town, but slightly shorter in length. The *gumbe* (considered "male") is the same in design as the *gumbe* of Charles Town. The *grandy* is sometimes alternatively referred to as "monkey" and the *gumbe* as "salimam." The former is used as supporting drum and the latter as lead drum.

**23. Mandinga - "Ba Wiri-oo":** Although it is generally agreed that the majority of songs from Scott's Hall are backed by the Mandinga drumming style, there is a good deal of disagreement over the categories to which

individual songs themselves belong. In any case, the drumming style in this selection is Mandinga. The instruments played here are gumbe (salimam), grandy and kwat. I was given no explanation of this song's meaning.

**24. Mandinga - "Oh Duppy":** Most persons agree that this is a Mandinga song and, as was the last example, it is backed by Mandinga drumming. The instruments are gumbe, grandy and kwat. During this recording two Maroons were possessed by spirits and their shouts can be heard over the music.

**25. Mandinga - "Siyumande Yoyo":** This is also backed by Mandinga drumming; the players on this recording are different from those on the last two selections. The line-up of instruments remains the same: gumbe, grandy, and kwat. The meaning behind the song is unclear.

**26. Kromanti - "Grandy Nanny":** As in Moore Town, the "highest" songs in Scott's Hall are those in the Kromanti category. The stylistic similarity between the Kromanti drumming of Scott's Hall and that of Moore Town and Charles Town should be apparent. The drumming here is in obvious speech mode, a basic characteristic of the Kromanti style in all of the eastern Maroon communities. As in the Kromanti of both Moore Town and Charles Town, this drumming style lacks a consistent underlying pulse. The instruments in this selection are gumbe, grandy

and kwat. The song invokes the name of Grandy Nanny, a very important female ritual specialist (and, present-day Maroons contend, military leader) among the eastern Maroons during the eighteenth century. No other single figure plays so great a part in Maroon oral tradition as Nanny. Numerous legends have been passed on detailing her awesome spiritual powers. Today Grandy Nanny is the culture heroine of the eastern Maroons. In 1975 the Jamaican government, recognizing her historical importance, declared her a National Hero. Shortly thereafter a monument in her honor was erected in Moore Town. The song presented here is one of the most important Scott's Hall songs. Traditionally it was the very first song to be sung at any Kromanti Play; it was used to formally open such ceremonies.

#### **ACCOMPONG, Items 27-35**

Accompong is the sole remaining Leeward Maroon community in Jamaica. Isolated from the three Windward communities by a distance of more than a hundred miles, it is the home of a Kromanti tradition that clearly differs from those found in the eastern villages.

In Accompong very few traditional ritual specialists continue to practice, and they are not known by the name *fete-man*. Spirit possession, or *myal*, also appears to take a quite different form in Accompong than in the eastern communities. But in spite of the differences marking the traditions of

the Leeward and Windward Maroons, there remain several important links. There are a few songs sung in Accompong that are clearly related to songs still found in the Windward communities. And some of the characteristic rhythmic patterns played on the gumbe drum of Accompong hint strongly at a connection with the Jawbone style as played in Moore Town.

#### **Kromanti, Item 27**

In Accompong, at least at present, Kromanti songs have a very different function than in the other Maroon communities. They are not performed in the context of ceremonial dance, and they are not sung for the purpose of invoking spirits to come and possess the living. For these purposes, the Maroons of Accompong have a different body of songs on which they rely, the same sort of songs used for processions, as in selections 29-32.

The Kromanti songs of Accompong are associated primarily with gravedigging and burial. When a grave is being made for a deceased Maroon it is customary for the gravediggers to stop working at some point, pour libations over it, and sing a number of Kromanti songs. This ceremony is essential to the proper preparation of a grave. It is meant to honor the departed, and to hasten the reunion of his or her spirit with the other Maroon ancestors.

The Kromanti songs are also sung by the wider

community once a year during the January celebrations in honor of Kojo (Cudjoe), the great Maroon hero of the eighteenth century. At this time the songs are sung over the grave of Kojo (some say it is the grave of Kojo's brother, Accompong) in a ceremony that has traditionally been closed to the public.

**27. Kromanti - "A Mini Wai-oo":** Kromanti songs are usually performed a capella in Accompong. The singers in this selection are all gravediggers, but they are not performing here within the normal context. The men were assembled for a special session, during which time this recording was made. I was unable to elicit meanings for any of these words in Accompong. The very same song was heard by the anthropologist and folklorist Zora Neale Hurston during the 1930s, and has been noted by a number of other writers since, such as Patrick Leigh Fermor.

#### **Solo Song, Item 28**

Some people in Accompong remember Maroon songs that were long ago taught to them by older Maroons -- songs that are not part of a public ceremonial tradition, but that have been passed down from individual to individual. Such songs have no explicit ritual or ceremonial function, and they are not known, at least at present, by the general community.

28. **Solo Song - "Ingia Mayongo"**: According to the Zairean scholar Fu-Kiau kia Bunseki, the words of this song are derived in part from Kikongo, the language of the Bakongo people of Central Africa, or a closely-related Bantu language. The presence of a song such as this among the Accompong Maroons is quite significant, for it contrasts with the position taken by most past scholars that the African linguistic component of the Maroon heritage is virtually completely Akan-derived. This song suggests that further research might well uncover a more complex picture.

#### **Processional Music, Items 29-33**

This is the sort of music that is performed at public ceremonial occasions of the Accompong Maroons. It is performed during the annual celebrations that take place every January. The music accompanies the dancing and festivities to which the general public is invited. In recent years, the music has come to be used to entertain tourists and other visitors to Accompong. The instruments used in this music are essentially the same as those used in fife-and-drum ensembles (minus the fife) which accompany Jonkonnu dancing, and also in Revival churches in many parts of Jamaica: a large two-headed bass drum, and one or two smaller two-headed side drums, the former beaten with a padded stick and the latter played with a pair of wooden sticks. There is an important difference, however, in that a traditional Maroon drum, the *gumbe* (or *goombay*)

has been added to the otherwise typical Revival/Jonkonnu ensemble. This instrument, somewhat similar to the *gumbe* drums of Scott's Hall and Charles Town, is shaped like a small, square stool with four legs. The goatskin head is tightened by means of wedges driven into the frame. This drum is played with the palms and fingers of both hands. The drumming style appears to have resulted from syncretism between old European military drumming traditions (with possible influences from Jonkonnu and Revival-style drumming) and African-based elements from an older traditional Maroon style. Against the pulse of the bass drum and the continual rolling of the side drums, the *gumbe* plays a series of "cutting" rhythms that give the music a distinctive flavor.

29. **Processional Music - "Squire Smith"**: This recording was made on the night before the annual celebration that took place on January 6, 1978. The Maroons traditionally gather to dance and sing the old songs for themselves on the night before the celebration. On the following day thousands of outsiders, including foreign tourists, flock to Accompong to witness the old Maroon traditions. The song is topical, a recounting of a past event involving a man known as "Squire Smith."

30. **Processional Music - "Clear Road"**: This is the most frequently performed song during the annual January 6 celebration. The song urges the crowd to make way for the Maroon celebrants as

they dance their way from one end of the village to the other: "clear road-oh, all de force a come."

31. **Processional Music - "Wah Me Gwine Do?"**: Another topical song, referring to a past event.

32. **Processional Music - "Maroon Law"**: This song celebrates independent "Maroon law" -- the Maroons' right to govern themselves, won through years of struggle, and guaranteed by their 1739 treaty with the British.

33. **Processional Music - "Baakini"**: A topical song, backed by a drumming style different from that of the other selections of processional music.

#### **Revival, Item 34**

The Afro-Protestant Revival churches found throughout Jamaica long ago made their way into Accompong, and have gained many Maroon converts. Except for the *gumbe* drum, which is specifically Maroon, the instrumentation used by Accompong Maroons and Revivalist musicians is essentially the same. On occasion, the Maroons perform Revival songs, borrowed from outside, to the accompaniment of their own drums, including the *gumbe*.

34. **Revival Song - "Fight for War"**: This song, which admonishes listeners to fight for their cause, resonates with both Revivalist themes and the militant Maroon past.

#### **Nyabingi, Item 35**

*Nyabingi* emerged among Rastafarians during the 1950s and has since become a pan-African-Jamaican drumming style. Through its influence on Jamaican popular music, from ska to reggae, it has had an international impact. *Nyabingi* is an outgrowth of older Afro-Jamaican drumming styles such as *Buru* and *Kumina*, and is not a traditional Maroon style. In the last few years, however, younger Maroon musicians from Accompong have learned the style while participating in Rastafari gatherings outside the community. Because of the Rastafarian call for social justice and Black liberation, Rastas have often been characterized as "modern Maroons," and so it seems fitting to end this compilation with an example of the Rasta *Nyabingi* style, performed by young Maroons on their own traditional instruments.

35. **Nyabingi**: These young Maroon men are using the traditional Accompong Maroon drums to play the *Nyabingi* style, which is normally played by Rastafarians on three entirely different types of drums, the *repeater*, *funde*, and bass. The *gumbe* player here takes the part of the *repeater*, the Rastafarian lead drum, while the side drummers play the *funde* part, the signature "heartbeat" rhythm of *Nyabingi*. The bass drummer plays the corresponding bass part. In this spontaneous performance, the singers move through a medley of well-known Rastafarian chants.

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## Selected Discography

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Recorded and Annotated by Kenneth Bilby. Lyricord LLST 7394.

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