



BAHAMIAN

Rake -n- Scrape



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

Rake-n-scrape is the deep sound of Bahamian goombay musical tradition, a marker of Bahamian national identity, and a source of joy and community celebration. On this recording, two groups from Cat Island—Ophie & Da Websites and Bo Hog & Da Rooters—take the basic sonorous ingredients of accordion, scraped saw, and goatskin drum to interpret some of the most popular rake-n-scrape melodies in circulation today. 59 minutes, 24 pages of notes with photos.



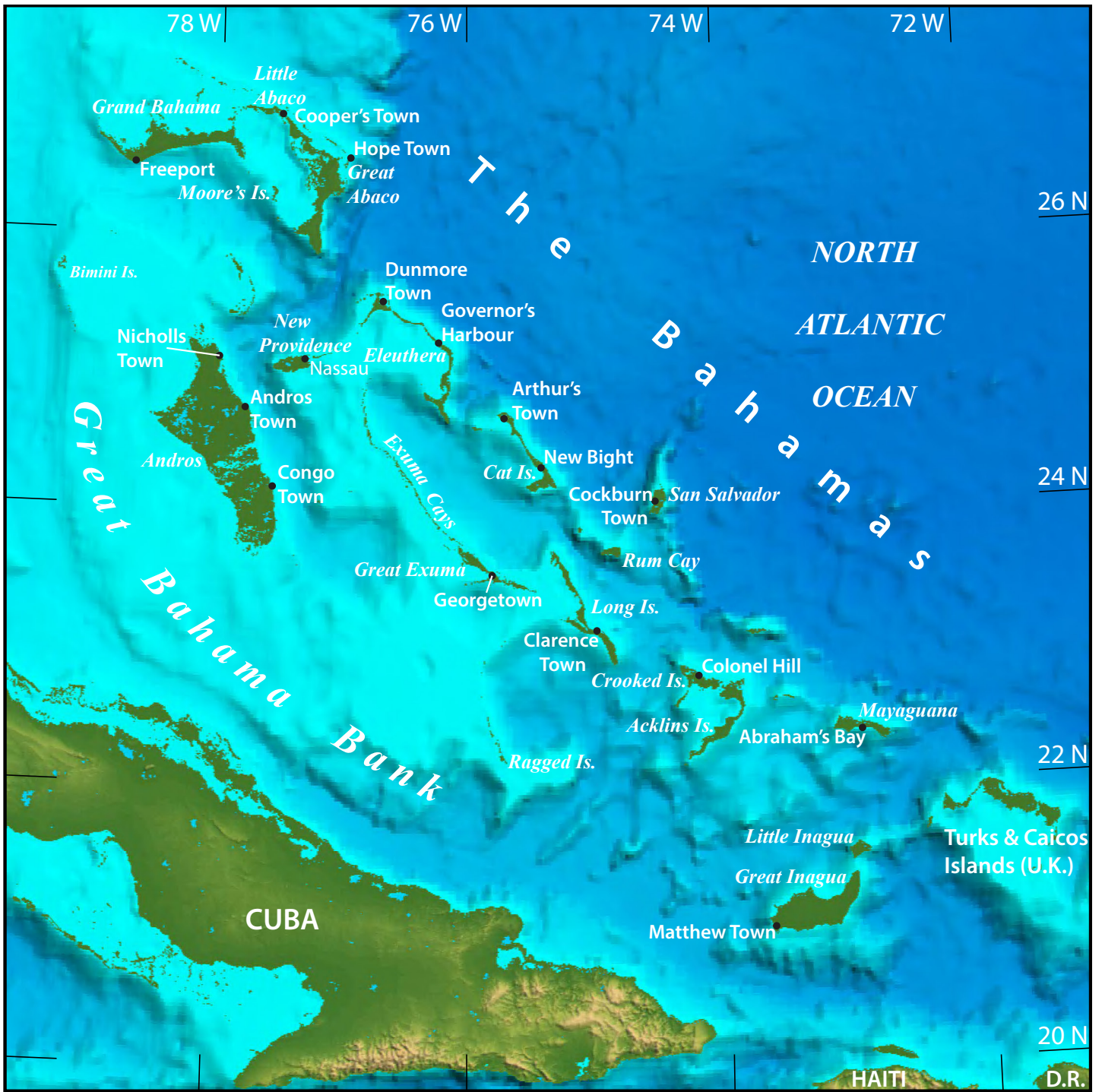
Photo: Ophie & Da Websites (Derek Smith)

Ophie & Da Websites

- 1 **Da River** (round dance) 2:47
- 2 **Emma** (round dance) 2:15
- 3 **When Ya Mama Send You to School** (round dance) 2:41
- 4 **If Ya Touch Dat Ting** 2:26
- 5 **Watermelon Is Spoiling on the Vine** (round dance) 2:11
- 6 **Times Table** (quadrille) 2:20
- 7 **Hog in da Mud** (heel and toe polka) 2:31
- 8 **Mr. Fisher** (quadrille) 2:29
- 9 **Round and Round da Bar Room** (round dance) 3:34
- 10 **Mama, Lend Me Ya Pigeon** 3:34

Bo Hog & Da Rooters

- 11 **For My Own Things** (round dance) 3:28
- 12 **Underneath the Bamboo Tree** (round dance) 1:52
- 13 **Da Gaulin** (round dance) 3:27
- 14 **Down da Road** (round dance) 2:58
- 15 **Emma** (round dance) 2:55
- 16 **Mama, Don't Treat Me So Bad** 2:28
- 17 **Hog in da Mud** (heel and toe polka) 2:31
- 18 **Boy Child/Girl Child** 2:43
- 19 **Muddy da Water** (heel and toe polka) 2:27
- 20 **Da Ole Gray Hound Dog** (round dance) 2:49
- 21 **Irene Goodnight** (waltz) 2:55
(Huddie Ledbetter-John A. Lomax / TRO-Ludlow Music, Inc, BMI)
- 22 **When Ya Mama Send You to School** (round dance) 2:09



Rake-n-Scrape

This compilation presents the musical performances of Ophie & Da Websites and Bo Hog & Da Rooters. Both of these groups are well-known rake-n-scrape bands hailing from Cat Island, The Bahamas. If you've been to The Bahamas, chances are that you stayed in the capital, Nassau, or Freeport, the two major cities that dominate Bahamian life. But The Bahamas is made up of some 700 islands and cays and is spread across about 5,500 square miles where the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea meet.



Photo: Cat Island
(Timothy Rommen 2006)

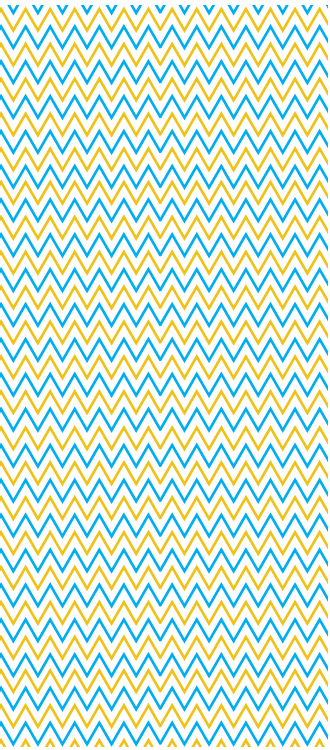
Cat Island, like many of the so-called Family Islands, is thus quite removed from the hustle and bustle of life in Nassau and Freeport. As a result, Cat Island is alive to the past in a way not as readily possible in the capital, though times have certainly changed in significant ways here, too. It is alive to the memory of social dancing at programs where entire villages would participate in all-night entertainment. It remembers the sounds of the saw, the goatskin drum, and the accordion. The songs compiled in this album represent some of that memory, telling some of the stories of life on Cat Island, both yesterday and today.

¹ Some of the materials included in this overview of rake-n-scrape have been excerpted or adapted from Timothy Rommen *"Funky Nassau": Roots, Routes, and Representation in Bahamian Popular Music* (2011).

Rake-n-scrape is a traditional style of music that originally accompanied social dancing like quadrilles, jumping dances, and ring dances in The Bahamas.¹

Rake-n-scrape, however, has not always been known by that name. In fact, from the time of its emergence in The Bahamas in the 19th century and until well into

the 1960s, it was commonly referred to as goombay music. As Edmund Moxey, a veteran rake-n-scrape musician and cultural activist, remembers, “When I was a boy, going to the well for water, we used to have a habit of beating the bucket. And my great-grandmother—if she was living she would be over a hundred and fifty year—but she used to say to us, ‘Edmund, stop beating that goombay music on that drum before you beat hole in it’” (Moxey 2007). The term *goombay*, then, tended to designate the drumming as well as the whole range of music that generally accompanied social dancing all around The Bahamas.



Usually taking place on weekends, to mark special occasions such as holidays, harvests, or other major events, the dances often lasted all night. They were spaces for adults to enjoy themselves after long, hard work; children were there to be seen and not heard, to watch and learn, and to sneak a dance or two when they could. Ophie (Cleophas “Ophie” Webb) remembers being more interested in the music than the dancing, watching his family members playing away and yearning to learn how to play himself someday.

Photo:
Levi “Dodger” Webb
(Timothy Rommen 2006)

By the 1940s, when The Bahamas began to market itself aggressively as a destination for mass tourism, traditional social dance was in precipitous decline throughout The Bahamas. People were leaving places like Cat Island for employment and education in Nassau, Freeport, and abroad in such great numbers that it hindered both systems of tutelage (who could teach dance and music now?) and the will to celebrate (why dance, no one is here?). These demographic shifts had such a devastating impact on communities that goombay fell out of active practice in all the Bahamian islands.

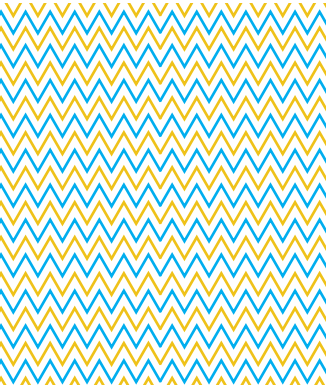


Photo: Cat Island
(Timothy Rommen 2006)

The term *goombay* was, as it turns out, destined for another life within The Bahamas, as nightclub musicians in Nassau seized on it as a means of localizing the musical experience they were offering to tourists. Although this was primarily a symbolic move—the nightclubs

were filled with pan-Caribbean dance band sounds, not the sights and sounds of quadrilles—the appropriation of goombay by nightclub musicians nevertheless shifted the meaning of the term away from traditional practice and toward popular culture, leaving the musical repertory that had been part and parcel of traditional social dance without a clear name or place within Bahamian life. It was during the 1940s and 50s that the musical soundtrack for traditional social dancing became detached from its grounding (see Rommen 2011).

By the 1960s, a new process was beginning to shape the music that was soon to be called rake-n-scrape, for it was acquiring a new function in Bahamian life—it was becoming folklore. In 1969, Charles Carter, a prominent radio host and cultural advocate in The Bahamas, regularly hosted a radio program on ZNS-1 (the main radio station in The Bahamas at the time) that was entitled *Young Bahamians* and was designed to showcase the talents of Bahamians. According to Edmund Moxey, Carter recorded a group of musicians playing traditional goombay music and subsequently interviewed them about their style of music, coining the term *rake-n-scrape* in the course of their on-air conversation. Carter, though, does not take credit for this term, leaving its origins shrouded in myth (Carter 2007).² What can be said for certain here is that the term *rake-n-scrape* emerged right around the time that The Bahamas was pushing for national independence (1969). It also emerged right around the time that the “Out Islands” (understood as anti-modern) became the “Family Islands” (understood as heritage) in the national imagination (1971). What I mean here is that the center (Nassau and Freeport) strategically reconfigured its relationship to the periphery in the run-up to independence. Whereas before

² Unfortunately, there is no way to verify Moxey’s account, because ZNS did not archive their materials, habitually reusing tape (recording over existing programs) and failing to store those master tapes that did survive in appropriate fashion. As a result, no tapes of this landmark radio program have survived into the present.

the periphery was generally and stereotypically viewed as backward and useless (and called the Out Islands), the periphery was carefully reframed as the source of Bahamian heritage, and therefore useful for the national narrative (hence, the Family Islands). And finally, rake-n-scrape emerged right around the time that a new term was needed for the traditional music of The Bahamas; people needed to be able to name the musical past of the (almost) new nation. Rake-n-scrape thus filled multiple needs, not least because it was resituated (along with the Family Islands) at the heart of The Bahamas' cultural heritage at the very moment when the new nation needed to articulate a post-colonial identity (independence was declared in 1973).

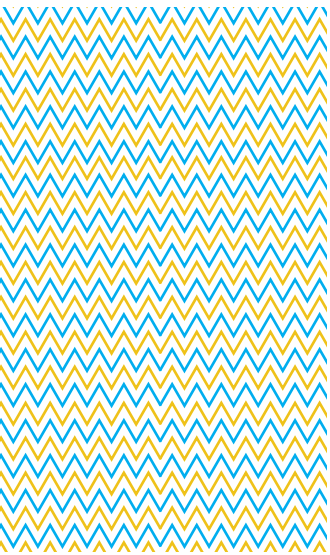


Photo: Ophie & Da Websites
(Eric Rose)

The process of separating the music from its primary social context—of resituating it as entertainment for its own sake and as a heritage music—continued throughout the 1970s, eventually causing traditional rake-n-scrape to stand out in sharp relief as a traditional practice in its own right. Groups such as Bo Hog & Da Rooters, Thomas Cartwright and the Boys, Ophie & Da Websites, and Ed Moxey's Rake-n-Scrape thus found themselves playing music increasingly understood as folkloric within the national imagination. As late as the 1980s, however, traditional rake-n-scrape bands were still not particularly popular among Bahamians, especially in places like Freeport and Nassau. Ophie, for example, remembers vividly that, when he first arrived on Grand Bahama in the mid-1980s, Freeport audiences booed him every time he played rake-n-scrape (Webb 2007).

Since the mid-1990s, however, the sounds of traditional rake-n-scrape have met with something of a revival among Bahamians. There are multiple sources for this renaissance, including the inauguration of an annual heritage-oriented rake-n-scrape festival on Cat Island during the early summer (beginning in 1997) and a new version of Charles Carter's *Young Bahamians* program, now called *Bahamians* and broadcast on Island FM102.9, through which rake-n-scrape has been featured and promoted (also beginning in 1997). A third source has come in the form of roots-oriented rake-n-scrape artists who are now incorporating the sounds of traditional rake-n-scrape bands into their popular music creations (since the late 1990s).

The present compact disc incorporates recordings from two of the foremost traditional rake-n-scrape bands in The Bahamas—Ophie & Da Websites and Bo Hog & Da Rooters. The recordings illustrate a broad range of rake-n-scrape repertory played on accordion, saw, and goatskin drum, the ensemble that has come to define the traditional rake-n-scrape sound. In the following pages are descriptions of the rake-n-scrape ensemble, its repertory, and of the decline of social dancing in The Bahamas.



Left: Bo Hog & Da Rooters (Derek Smith);
Right: Ophie & Da Websites (Eric Rose)

The Ensemble

Though the instrumentation of the rake-n-scrape ensemble in recent decades has come to be standardized around accordion, saw, and goatskin drum, the ensembles that were used on the occasion of social dances, throughout most of the 19th and continuing well into the 20th century, were generally highly flexible, consisting of whatever instruments happened to be at hand. E. Clement Bethel has described the hybrid nature of this music and of the ensembles themselves, stating, “Wooden barrels...were converted into drums; cowbells substituted for African bells; scraped saws, bottles, washboards, and animal jaw-bones replaced the scraped instruments of Africa; and gourds, calabashes and coconut shells filled with dried seeds were excellent surrogates for the shaken rattles of Africa. For playing the melody line, the slaves [and their descendants] used anything they could lay their hands on. Sometimes it was a banjo, guitar or fiddle, sometimes a fife, accordion or concertina” (1983, 85).



Left: 2 row button accordion (Timothy Rommen 2006);
Right: Saw (Smithsonian Institution)



Incidentally, this fluid ensemble, which commonly accompanied a wide range of social dances including both European- and African-derived forms, appears and reappears in various guises and under different names throughout the Eastern Caribbean. The rhythm, altered a bit here and there and played on different instruments—shakers, washboards, squashes (a kind of guiro), and triangles—is called by other names depending on where you happen to be.

In the Turks and Caicos Islands, it is called rip-saw; in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the rhythm is central to scratch bands; in the British Virgin Islands, it is known as *fungi*; and in Dominica, it is called *jing ping*.

In The Bahamas, the central rhythm that carries across dance genres and drumming styles, tying them all together, finds its modern expression on the saw. E. Clement Bethel offers an excellent description of the techniques used by saw players:

It's an ordinary carpenter's saw, but in the hands of an expert player it becomes a musical instrument of great eloquence. With the handle firmly lodged in his left armpit and the blade gripped in his left hand, the player produces a steady, hypnotic rhythm by scraping the notched edge with a screwdriver held in his right hand. From time to time, the instrument moans eerily as the player flexes the blade to and fro in his left hand while continuing to scrape away with his right. (1983, 82)

An alternate technique that players use involves placing the blade end on the ground in front of them and securing it with a foot, but this is only practical when performing in a seated position. The characteristic saw rhythm consists of a continuous sixteenth-note pattern with accents on the off beats of one and two in 2/4 meter (see Example 1). This rhythm is then placed into a context including the goatskin drum and a melody instrument—today, usually the accordion.

Right: Example 1,
Rake-n-scrape
saw rhythms

The image displays two musical staves on a yellow background. The top staff is labeled 'Saw' and shows a continuous sequence of four measures. Each measure contains a rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes with accents on the off-beats (the second and fourth notes of each measure). The bottom staff is labeled 'Alternate Saw' and shows a similar sequence of four measures, but with a different rhythmic pattern, also featuring accents on the off-beats.

The Repertory

The rake-n-scrape repertory itself is characterized by melodies that play out over the course of only two or three short phrases and lend themselves to repetition. A good example is the tune called “Times Table” (track 6). Three short, 8-measure sections, each comprised of two 4-measure phrases, combine to create the overall structure of this particular song, in this case an A—B—A’ form. The drummer generally reinforces the form, executing a single low-pitched stroke on the *and* of the second beat of the second and fourth measures (antecedent) and performing an extended fill starting in the fifth or sixth measure (depending on his improvisatory gestures) that eventually culminates on the second beat of the eighth measure (consequent), thereby emphasizing rhythmically the end of each section. This gesture of rhythmic emphasis is called “hitting the bar” by Levi “Dodger” Webb, who plays the goombay drum for both the Websites and the Rooters. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, when rake-n-scrape (then still called goombay) was inextricably bound to social dancing, the bar was a crucial marker for dancers. Although “hitting the bar” is, in the contemporary moment, a sign that the drummer is cognizant of the long history of the genre and of its connections to social dance, it has lost its grounding in active practice since the middle of the 20th century. Drummers thus no longer feel as bound to mark the bar or to offer dancing cues in the precise ways that were formerly required of them.

As is the case with most of the rake-n-scrape repertory, “Times Table” does have lyrics, though they are incidental to the performance. Song lyrics are generally quite short, focusing on pedagogical or values-oriented messages and on humorous topics. Often growing out of actual events, rake-n-scrape lyrics can be extemporized or extended as the situation warrants. However, many performances of “Times Table,” for example, are completed without ever singing the words (Ophie, in particular, rarely sings the lyrics). Individuals who have grown up with this repertory know the lyrics, but what used to matter most was being able to recognize the rhythms and then to respond with the appropriate dance steps and figures.

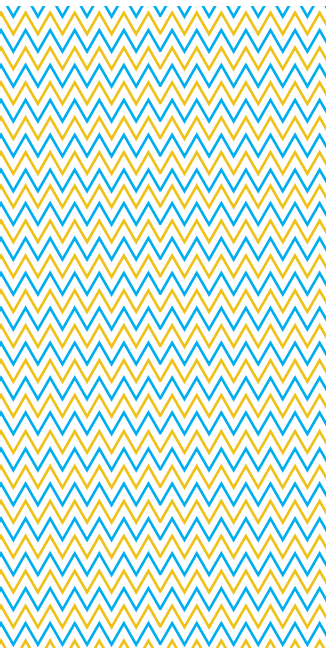


Photo: Quadrille dancing with Ed Moxey's Rake-n-Scrape (Smithsonian Institution)

“Times Table” is called a quadrille by Bahamian rake-n-scraper musicians, a label that indicates not only its connection to the quadrille dance, but also its position as the first in a series of five figures included in a full-fledged quadrille dance. According to Edmund Moxey, the remaining figures include the round (or moon) dance, the heel and toe polka, the waltz, and the ring dance. That said, it is nevertheless very difficult to make any strong assertions about standardized quadrille formats in The Bahamas, as each of the Family Islands seems to have developed its own variations. So, for instance, in Bo Hog’s opinion, the quadrille, when performed in its entirety, includes four quadrille figures followed by a round dance, a heel and toe polka, and a waltz, but no ring dance—making for a total of eight figures, not five. This idiosyncratic approach to the quadrille, moreover, is not unique to The Bahamas, for the quadrille seems to have been readily adapted to local practices and needs wherever it was danced in the Caribbean (see Manuel 2009). Perhaps the most significant obstacle to understanding the multiple shapes of the quadrille in The Bahamas is the fact that, due to the decline of social dancing in the early decades of the 20th century, the quadrille no longer tends to be performed as a set of figures; rather, individual songs are played and selected with a view toward their fit within a given performance as opposed to their fit within the quadrille. Interestingly enough, even the shape of the current compilation betrays this new way of evaluating which songs should be played. You’ll notice that only two of the tracks are quadrilles, whereas most of the remaining tracks are round dances. This would not work in a dance set, but it is perfectly acceptable if the goal is to showcase the sounds of the rake-n-scraper band.

The Decline of Social Dancing

So what happened to the dancing? Quadrille and its associated musical styles, so popular a few generations ago and performed widely though not exclusively in the Family Islands—that is, away from the bigger cities like Nassau and Freeport—has been dramatically affected by successive waves of emigration (Boswell and Chibwa 1981). Many residents of places like Cat Island and Long Island, for instance, have been making the journey first to Nassau or Freeport, and then to London, Miami, and New York, and these itineraries are most often initiated in search of better employment and educational opportunities (Craton and Saunders 1998; Johnson 1991). Ophie himself works in the service industry in Freeport, traveling to Cat Island only when his holiday schedule affords him that luxury. Unlike Ophie, however, many others have left and never returned. This process started in earnest at the beginning of the 20th century and intensified during World War II (due to contract labor offered in the United States) and, again, in the wake of independence during the 1970s.



Photo: Quadrille dancing with Bo Hog & Da Rooters (Derek Smith)

By the 1970s, a dramatic redistribution of people across The Bahamas had taken place. In 1900, some 75 percent of Bahamians lived in the Family Islands. By 1970, that figure had been inverted, with 75 percent of all Bahamians living in New Providence and Grand Bahama. This trajectory toward the center and away from places like Cat Island has continued to this day and has translated into an even more center-weighted distribution of the Bahamian population, some 85 percent of whom live on New Providence and Grand Bahama.

It should come as no surprise, then, that this pattern effectively disrupted traditional systems of tutelage and made it exceedingly difficult to pass on either social dances or goombay/rake-n-scrape music in the Family Islands. Ophie told me that “in the 1950s we used to have big dances in the schoolhouse on weekends and holidays....

But people moved, people died, and by the 1970s we didn't maintain the quadrille dance. No one learned how to dance it. It was like dead. Everyone wanted to dance like James Brown" (Webb 2006). As a result, goombay came to be played in new contexts and for different reasons. The social dances it used to accompany—including circle dances such as jumping dance and ring plays, in addition to the quadrille—fell out of active use, necessitating a new role for goombay. That role has come to be filled by rake-n-scrape.



Photo : Quadrille dancing with Bo Hog & Da Rooters (Derek Smith)

In the contemporary moment, traditional rake-n-scrape is staged alongside popular, roots-oriented rake-n-scrape, and all of these instantiations of rake-n-scrape are receiving radio play and being recorded locally. Although the social dancing that the music initially accompanied is no longer central to its function or meaning within Bahamian life, it seems likely that rake-n-scrape will continue to circulate within this relatively new space of musical entertainment/heritage until such time as a renaissance in social dancing pushes Bahamians toward a new roots movement revolving around quadrilles and round dances.

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Track Notes

The tracks included in this compilation represent some of the most popular rake-n-scrape tunes in circulation today, most of which are round dances. Each performer plays this repertory somewhat idiosyncratically, and each island adapts the lyrics to fit the local scene and environment.

Ophie & Da Websites

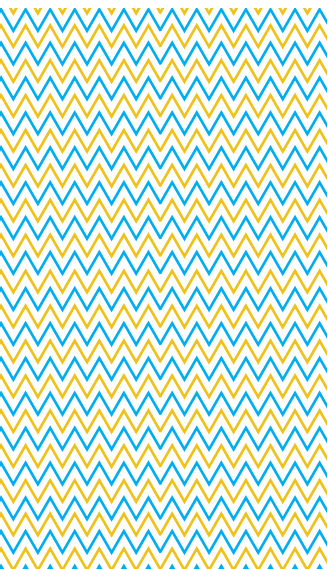


Photo: Ophie & Da Websites (Eric Rose)

1 **Da River** (round dance)

Cleophas “Ophie” Webb, concertina; Lynden Pratt, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

“The river come swallow me.” The story behind this song and this snippet of refrain involve a mother who accuses her daughter of eating her (the mom’s) peas out of the pot. The daughter, however, responds by defending her innocence, claiming that if she took those peas, the river should swallow her for lying.

2

Emma (round dance)

Cleophas “Ophie” Webb, concertina; Lynden Pratt, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This song has a long tradition in Cat Island. Several versions of it exist, and Ophie’s performance tells the story of a girl who couldn’t keep up with her parents as they were walking along. Walking barefoot, she had stepped on some thorns, and the lyrics pick up the action with her parents’ inquiry into her slow pace. “Emma, why you do walk slow?” or “Emma, why you don’t walk fast?” “Prickle in my foot!” This version has replaced an older lyric that you can almost hear on Bo Hog’s version (see track 15). That older version poses a different question: “Emma, where is your lover?” or “Emma, look for your lover!” “Oh, Emma! Oh!” This version explores the fact that another woman has taken Emma’s lover.

3

When Ya Mama Send You to School (round dance)

Cleophas “Ophie” Webb, concertina; Lynden Pratt, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This song, of which only the refrain remains in circulation, implies the consequences of truancy. The girl in the song was sent to school each day but refused to go, choosing instead to hang out with her boyfriend all day. The moral of the story is that she is trading her education for a pregnancy. And thus, the question: “When ya mama send you to school, why you don’t go?”

4

If Ya Touch Dat Ting

Cleophas “Ophie” Webb, concertina; Lynden Pratt, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This song is a gentle reminder that secret romantic escapades will eventually come to light.

If ya touch dat ting, your mama going [to] know.

How she going [to] know? Your belly going [to] grow.

5

Watermelon Is Spoiling on the Vine (round dance)

Cleophas “Ophie” Webb, concertina; Lynden Pratt, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This is a song about fruit that is being wasted because it has not been harvested, and the double entendre humorously extends the metaphor to coupling between people.

6

Times Table (quadrille)

Cleophas “Ophie” Webb, concertina; Lynden Pratt, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This song is pedagogical in that the lyrics are used to practice the multiplication table: “one and one is two, two and two is four, twice three are six, twice four are eight,” and so forth.

7

Hog in da Mud (heel and toe polka)

Cleophas “Ophie” Webb, concertina; Lynden Pratt, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This instrumental explores the question of happiness and compares it to the contentment experienced by a “hog in mud.”

8

Mr. Fisher (quadrille)

Cleophas “Ophie” Webb, concertina; Lynden Pratt, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This song is sometimes called “Every Married Man Got His Own Bonefish,” in reference to the last line of the lyrics. Most people only remember this last line, which is a pun on the plight of a married man with recourse to the bonefish. This fish is not particularly good to eat but is particularly fun to catch and release, because it is incredibly fast and fights hard on the line. The story that this song tells is itself a joke. A man wants to go fishing but does not have any bait. So he asks to purchase some sea crabs from another fisherman to use for bait, saying that “the bonefish is biting but I have no bait.” Uninterested in selling any of his own bait, the other fisherman calls out, “Every married man got his own bonefish.”

9

Round and Round da Bar Room (round dance)

Cleophas “Ophie” Webb, concertina; Lynden Pratt, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This song plays on a popular expression in The Bahamas: “Loose goat don’t know how tie goat feel.” In other words, single men do not understand how married men feel. The truth of this expression is often tested in the bars where, Ophie explains, the (copious) amount of alcohol that Bahamians, and in particular Bahamian women, can consume without “staggering” leads to ample opportunities for “loose goats” to run “round and round the bar room.”

10 **Mama, Lend Me Ya Pigeon**

Cleophas “Ophie” Webb, concertina; Lynden Pratt, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This song is ostensibly about a person who has lost a pet pigeon and is asking to borrow one so that he can have a companion for his remaining pigeon. “Mama, lend me ya pigeon to keep company with mine. My (other) pigeon gone wild in the bush.” As you might suspect, other animals such as cats, roosters, or crabs can be substituted for pigeons to make this song a bit more risqué and humorous. So, for example, “Mama, lend me your donkey to keep company with mine, my ass gone wild in the bush.”



Photo: Ophie & Da Websites (Derek Smith)

Bo Hog & Da Rooters

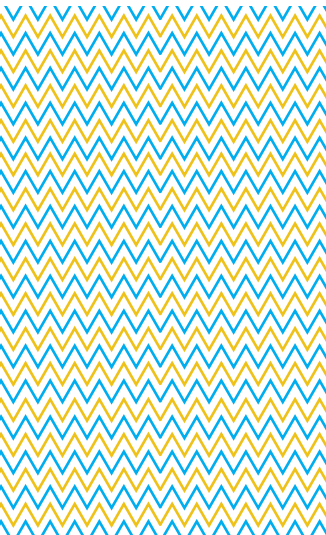


Photo: Bo Hog (Derek Smith)

11

For My Own Things (round dance)

Alfred “Bo Hog” Johnson, concertina; Glen “Money” Hanna, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This song is an exploration of the difficulties inherent in relationships between men and women.

Ah, the young girl vex with me. Oh, that young gal vex with me. La, la, ley! La, la, la, ley!

And I gave her house and land, but I cannot understand why that young girl vex with me.

La, la, ley! La, la, la, ley!

I gave her everything, even gave her diamond ring, but that young girl vex with me.

La, la, ley! La, la, la, ley!

12

Underneath the Bamboo Tree (round dance)

Alfred “Bo Hog” Johnson, concertina; Glen “Money” Hanna, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

The lyrics of this song can be as religious or flirtatious as the occasion dictates:

Underneath the bamboo tree I will pray for you, you will pray for me.

Underneath the bamboo tree, I will go for you, and you will go for me.

Underneath the bamboo tree, I will play with you, you will play with me.

13 **Da Gaulin** (round dance)

Alfred “Bo Hog” Johnson, concertina; Glen “Money” Hanna, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

The Gaulin is a local bird that has a place in Bahamian folklore as the Gaulin wife. The Gaulin wife is a shape-shifter that turns from a woman into a bird and has powers drawn from the practice of obeah. The basic premise is that the Gaulin tricks a man into marriage and only then reveals her true form. Tony McKay, better known as Exuma the Obeah Man, recorded a song about the Gaulin entitled “Damn Fool.”

14 **Down da Road** (round dance)

Alfred “Bo Hog” Johnson, concertina; Glen “Money” Hanna, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This is a traditional love song. A man falls in love with a woman and will do whatever it takes to keep her close to him.

15 **Emma** (round dance)

Alfred “Bo Hog” Johnson, concertina; Glen “Money” Hanna, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This version of “Emma” illustrates well the fluid way that lyrics are applied within the rake-n-scrape tradition. The basic lyric, heard on Ophie’s version (track 2), is intact, but other verses are added, as are vocalizations that are purely fun.

Emma, why you don’t walk fast? A prickle in me foot!

Emma, why you don’t walk fast? Jenny in the house [get in the house]! [a reference to the woman trying to steal Emma’s lover]

Emma, look at your lover, walk, Emma, walk.

La, la, la la, la, la, la la, ley ley, la, la, lay!

16 **Mama, Don’t Treat Me So Bad**

Alfred “Bo Hog” Johnson, concertina; Glen “Money” Hanna, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This song is a complaint with ample room for improvised lyrics. The basics run as follows:

Mama, don’t treat me so bad! You throw my clothes in the yard!

Oh mama, don’t treat me like this!



Photo: Bo Hog & Da Rooters (Derek Smith)

17 **Hog in da Mud** (heel and toe polka)

Alfred “Bo Hog” Johnson, concertina; Glen “Money” Hanna, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This song uses the metaphor of the hog in mud to remind listeners what it’s like to be content in the moment.

18 **Boy Child/Girl Child**

Alfred “Bo Hog” Johnson, concertina; Glen “Money” Hanna, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This song is an exploration of the way that contract work affected family life. Often a father would be away for extended periods in order to secure work.

I am going away, girl, looking for some work.

Say a little prayer, girl, you will be alright.

If you have a boy child, send him off to sea.

If you have a girl child, dance her on your knee.

19

Muddy da Water (heel and toe polka)

Alfred “Bo Hog” Johnson, concertina; Glen “Money” Hanna, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This song is about the local lifestyle of the Family Islands, where there was no running water and people had to take a bucket or pail to a well in order to get water. The complaint here is that a man is dredging up the bottom of the well in the process of getting water, making it unfit to use until the water settles again.

Went to the well to pail [use a bucket to get] the water. Old man, he muddy da water.

Went to the well to pail the water. Fat man, he muddy da water.

20

Da Ole Gray Hound Dog (round dance)

Alfred “Bo Hog” Johnson, concertina; Glen “Money” Hanna, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This song is an homage to the free-roaming dogs that hang around in The Bahamas. Though some of the dogs are identifiably of one or another breed, many of them are of mixed breed and are called potcakes. The afternoon sun often finds these animals lazing around and looking perfectly relaxed.

21

Irene Goodnight (waltz)

Alfred “Bo Hog” Johnson, concertina; Glen “Money” Hanna, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

This standard waltz, written by Gussie L. Davis in 1886, was first made famous by none other than Lead Belly, who recorded it for the folklorists John and Alan Lomax in 1936. Since that time, it has traveled far and wide, and been recorded by popular musicians such as Johnny Cash, the Chieftains, and Jerry Lee Lewis, among others. It has also entered the standard repertory of rake-n-scrape bands in The Bahamas.

22

When Ya Mama Send You to School (round dance)

Alfred “Bo Hog” Johnson, concertina; Glen “Money” Hanna, saw; Levi “Dodger” Webb, drum

See notes to track 3.



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