
SONGS OF THE KETU CULT OF BAHIA, BRAZIL

by

ALAN P. MERRIAM

In Afro-American studies, within which the following analysis falls, the anthropologist can establish an unusual degree of control over the variables to be considered. Here he has a basis for arriving at an understanding of observed change in that he can establish historical depth, a control situation in which the constant is the common cultural heritage of the African slaves, and dependent variables represented by the different socio-cultural environments which the Negro encountered as a slave in the New World setting. Thus the requirements for a laboratory situation are met insofar as the always unpredictable human element may be counted upon to remain constant.

In this situation, then, the study of African cultures or cultural elements in the New World may be placed against the cultural background of Africa itself, thus giving the anthropologist an opportunity for controlled study of culture change. Further, the various socio-cultural environments of which the African Negro became a part in the New World may be tested and evaluated in terms of their influence on the basic African culture, and thus a better understanding of the processes of acceptance, rejection, and syncretism may be reached.

In the study of these acculturative processes, music is of considerable importance, both because it is less susceptible to direct attack in the acculturative situation than some other aspects of culture, and at the same time is particularly susceptible of objective description. In the first instance, music seems to be patterned and carried on subliminally and thus to be less liable to outside or intrusive conditioning than are, for example, food habits, or the construction of houses. Thus one deals with a phenomenon which, in a cultural situation in which the members of one culture dominate those of another as was the case in New World slavery, probably cannot be stamped out forcibly, and is very likely to be retained in the new situation.

As an aesthetic aspect of culture which can be studied objectively, music is of heightened importance in acculturation studies. While in other branches of the arts, few techniques have as yet been devised for objective study, music can be objectified in many aspects; analysis of time, tempo, interval usage, modal structure, and many other characteristics may be noted quantitatively rather than qualitatively.

Thus, in these two respects music is particularly useful in acculturation studies; its importance is further enhanced, finally, in that it is one of the creative aspects of culture, and its study can therefore lead to an understanding of the basic human problems of creative life, as well as the values, goals and meanings of the culture in which it functions. Through music, then, one may probe the problems of cultural stability, individual variation in performance, the reworking of old values in new situations, and most particularly, the general processes of culture change.

The present study is directed toward establishing the music structure of an African-derived cult group of Bahia, Brazil. Such work is at present of considerable importance to the entire study of the musical relationships between New World and African Negro cultures; to date very few studies have been made. Before ethnomusicology can begin to make its most significant contributions to the study of the New World Negro acculturative problems and the broader questions of cultural dynamics that derive from it, a series of such works as that being undertaken here must be completed, so that factual information will become available for comparative data.¹

I

The question of the provenience of the Negro slaves taken to Brazil poses many problems. For example, Ramos notes that, "from colonial times to the present day, the popular terms of *nago*, *mina*, *Angola* and *Mozambique* have been employed to indicate vaguely the portion of Africa from whence the Negroes came. A still more popular nomenclature developed in which such terms as *India piece*, *Guinea black* and *coast Negro* were used."² To the difficulty of dealing with these vague terms similar difficulties such as poorly kept records and the destruction of previous records must be added. However, in resumé, it is instructive to turn again to Ramos, who sums up as follows:

At the beginning of the slave trade, the largest number of those imported into Brazil were from Angola, the Congo and Guinea. When more active communication began with Bahia³ the leading source of supply was Guinea and the western Sudan. There began a remarkable influx of Yorubas, Minas from the Gold Coast, Dahomans and various Islamized tribes such as the Hausas, Tapas, Mandingos, and Fulahs.

Thus it was that three great Negro peoples entered Brazil. In the first group were the Sudanese Negroes—the Yorubas and Dahomans together with the Ashanti. In the second group were the Moslem Negroes—the Hausas, Tapas, Mandingos and Fulahs. The third group comprised the Bantu family—the Angolas, Congos, Mozambiques and several lesser tribes.⁴

In Bahia, the area with which this paper is concerned, "Negroes belonging to the first and second groups predominated," while the "Yoruba Negroes were preferred."⁵

In view of the concentration of Negro populations in Bahia and in Brazil as a whole, it is predictable that the cultures of these people should have, in great part, survived the geographical transitions of demographic movement, and continued to exist in the New World as a powerful integrating factor in the lives of the Africans. Religious practices, as the cultural focus of West African life, about which centered a host of other complexes including music and folklore among others, have been retained in the New World, and especially in West Indian and South American areas in which the Catholic religion provided a particularly fertile opportunity for syncretism between the two religious traditions. In Bahia, and in other northern Brazilian cities, the African religious system has been retained in particularly strong form to the present time, functioning in cult groups as a living system of beliefs and practices.

The African-derived religious cult group in Brazil is called the *candomblé*, and is based upon an order of *orishas*, or deities—West African gods whose efficacy has been retained in the New World. Some of these gods are *Oshala*, the most powerful deity, *Shango*, the god of lightning, *Ogun*, the god of war and iron, *Eshu*, the trickster and god of evil, *Oshun*, a water deity, *Yansan*, the god of wind and storm, *Oshunmare*, the personification of the rainbow, and many others. These gods are grouped in a pantheon, and each is clearly identified by a complex of traits including sex, symbol, insignia, special foods, colours, beads, bracelets, sacred days, and special calls. For *Shango*, for example, according to Pierson, sex is male, the symbol is lightning, insignia is meteoric iron, lance or hatchet, special or sacred food is cock turtle or he-goat; the colour is red, beads are red and white, bracelets are made of brass, the sacred day is Wednesday, and the special call *bay-ee-ee*.⁶ In addition, the gods of the African pantheon have come to be identified with the Catholic saints—Ogun with St. Anthony, Oshossi with St. George, to name but two. These syncretisms are based both on the function of the deities in the two systems, and upon the supposed functions of the Catholic saints as derived from their pictured representation in chromolithographs.⁷

Seven major, and two minor *candombles* are represented, of which three are supposedly of Indian origin, and the remaining six, of African origin. The ceremony in the *Ketu* and *Jesha* groups, (*Nago* in Portuguese), is derived from the religious practices of the Yoruba people of Nigeria.⁸ The *Congo Angola* group takes its name from the peoples brought from the southern and eastern fringes of the Congo basin.⁹ The *Gége* group is Dahomean in derivation,¹⁰ and the two minor groups, *Egba* and *Efan*, Yoruba.

The *Caboclo*, *Guarani*, and *Caboclo Guarani* groups incorporate deities and practices of indigenous Indian beliefs with those of African origin, particularly of Congo derivation.¹¹

Worship in all these groups is based on the world-view that the destiny of the Universe is in the hands of deities that are everywhere the same, though the names they bear vary from region to region and from people to people according to the language that is spoken. The destiny of man, who is but a modest part of this Universe, is ruled by the same gods, but man enjoys the intercession of a hierarchy of ancestral dead, who in death as in life continue to be preoccupied with the well-being of the family to which they belong. Indeed, the gods appear to have given the ancient dead a certain autonomy in regulating the moral code of their descendants in the interest of human well-being, though they have not abrogated their own powers to regulate the conduct of the living members of each family. On the contrary, each individual has his or her god as a personal spirit.

Man is not, however, a passive agent in relation to his destiny, for through divination he can discover the secrets of that destiny, his well-being, and his status in the group among which he lives.¹²

While marked deviations occur within the ceremonial for each cult group, or "nation", some general terms and forms of ritual may be indicated here. The cult centers found throughout the city of Bahia are called *seitas*, the sacred grounds on which the house of worship stands, the *terreiro*. Each cult center contains several sacred spots, the most important of which is the *pegi*, or altar to the orisha. Each *seita* is presided over by a *pai-de-santo*, or *mae-de-santo*, terms which may be loosely translated as "priest" or "priestess," respectively, although it seems best to retain the original term in discussion. The function of the *pai-* or *mae-de-santo* is to arrange for, and lead the worship for the *orishas*; at the same time, the leader holds the secrets of worship, is an interpreter of tradition, and directs the affairs of the cult group. Various helpers assist with ritual, and these include the *filhos* or *filhas de santo* who are the initiates of the group; the *ogans*—male members of the cult who assist in the ritual in various capacities; the *achogun*, who performs the sacrifices; the musician, and others. In arranging for a public ceremony, the officiating priest or priestess first brings together the initiates of the group and begins the ritual of the particular ceremony in honour of the deity whose feast is being celebrated. The *despacho*, which appeases the trickster deity, *Eshu*, so that, though himself "sent away," he will permit the other gods to come, assures the participants that he will not interfere with the remainder of the ceremony. Dances and songs to the *orishas* follow, leading eventually to the possession of some dancers which indicates that the god has entered into their heads. Possessed initiates are handled with precise techniques throughout their possession and are eventually released from the god with special ritual.¹³ Those possessed dance before the drums to the songs specially reserved for the particular god represented, and finally, when "the gods no longer show by their tension a further need to dance, the rite comes quietly to a close."¹⁴ Animal sacrifice is also an important ceremony in the cult group, as is the ritual which surrounds the entrance of the initiate into full cult participation. These Bahian cult groups have been extensively described by several students.¹⁵

In the worship of the *orishas*, music has paramount importance, since it is by means of songs and rhythms that the gods are "called" to participate in the ceremonies. Percussion instruments play a dominant role in Afro-Bahian cult music; not only are the instruments themselves important, but the musicians who play them fulfil special functions within the hierarchy of the group, and may be regarded as professionals in this particular branch of religious life.

The use of musical instruments tends to split into two patterns depending upon the particular cult groups in which they function. For the Ketu, Gêge, and Jesha groups, the iron gong and drum are most often used, while in the Caboclo, Guarani and Cabocle Guarani groups, rattle, calabash, and guitar, as well as drum and iron gong are employed. Both percussion groupings seem to be used in the Congo Angola songs.

"The drums employed in the cult rituals are termed *bu* ('the largest'), *bunpri* ('the medium-sized one'), and *le* ('the smallest'),¹⁶ and are used in sets of three, termed *terno*. In the recordings at hand, however, the most common unit is two drums and iron gong. At the same time, since the two smaller drums usually play the same rhythmic patterns, the important rhythms are present when only one of the smaller drums is used with the large drum.¹⁷

The drums are ordinarily termed *atabaque*, and are of the African hollow-log type, although at present they are most often made from barrel staves. The preferred material for the drum-head is either deer or calfskin; the head is attached to the drum by means of wooden circlets. The skin is then firmly secured by a special rope which is passed alternately through slits made in the skin and around pegs of hard wood driven into the body of the drum. Drums are played either by hand, or with drumsticks fashioned from hard wood. Before the instruments may be put into operation they receive power through a series of "painstakingly performed rituals." Drums are almost never played by women.¹⁸

The iron gong, or *agogo*, is a piece of iron shaped in most instances somewhat like a cowbell; this instrument is struck with a piece of iron or other metal.¹⁹

In the supposed Indian-derived cult groups, the gourd rattle is an important instrument; this may be covered with netting to which are attached shells or other materials that contribute to the sound. The larger calabash may either be played with sticks or with the hands, the two methods producing very dissimilar results. Finally, the Spanish guitar, played by conventional methods, is widely used.²⁰

The collection of songs from which the sampling is taken was recorded by M. J. and F. S. Herskovits in 1941-42 in Bahia, Brazil; twenty nine of these songs—of the Ketu cult—are analyzed in the following pages. All are of a religious character, including not only songs for specific gods within specific cult groups, but also song cycles and individual songs for various phases of cult ceremony. The analytical method used is based upon the work of von Hornbostel,²¹ which has been elaborated by Kolinski,²² Waterman,²³ and to some extent the present author.²⁴ The approach is aimed toward obtaining as objective a description of a musical style as possible; to this end various quantitative procedures have been adopted, although more subjective evaluations are not completely disregarded. The characteristics, then, of the songs of the Ketu cult group follow.

II

Tonal range

Nineteen of the 29 Ketu songs have ranges of more than an octave, and this wide range may be considered characteristic of the group. Of the remaining ten songs, eight have ranges of nine or more semitones but less than an octave, while one shows an abnormally small range of but five semitones, and another of but seven semitones. In general, however, the wide tonal range characterizes the Ketu group.

Melodic direction

Since 19 of the 29 songs show the final tone from two to fifteen semitones below the beginning tone, it may be concluded that this downward melodic direction is representative of the group. At the same time, eight songs have identical initial and final tones, while in two other songs, the final tone is two semitones above the initial tone.

Of those songs in which the overall direction is downward, the largest number—eight—show the ending tone seven semitones, or a perfect fifth, below the initial tone, while in three songs it is two semitones, and in three songs, five semitones below the initial tone. In single songs, the beginning tone is 3, 10, 12, and 15 semitones above the final.

In eight of the 29 songs no tone is higher than the initial tone; the remaining 21 songs, however, show an upward movement in varying degrees within the songs. In six songs the highest tone is seven semitones, or a perfect fifth above the initial tone; in three groups of two songs, it is two, three, and twelve semitones above the initial tone. In three songs each, the highest tone is five or nine semitones above the beginning tone, and finally, in single songs, it lies ten, 11 and 14 semitones above the initial tone.

The range from beginning to lowest tones is both varied and in general, wide, although two songs show the two tones identical. In the largest single grouping—eight songs—the lowest tone is seven semitones below the initial tone. In two groups of four songs, it is five and twelve semitones lower, respectively, while in two songs each, the lowest tone is three, nine, or ten semitones below the beginning tone. In three songs, the difference of 15 semitones is extremely wide, and finally, in single songs, the two tones are separated by two, or four semitones.

A similar range is found when ending and highest tones are compared. In no case are the two tones identical, although in one song they are but three semitones apart. Eight songs—the largest single grouping—show the highest tone seven semitones above the ending tone; in six songs, it is an octave higher. In four songs, the highest tone is five semitones above the ending tone, and in three groups of two songs each, it is nine, 14 and 15 semitones above the final tone, respectively. In the remaining songs, the highest tone lies 10, 11, 16, and 17 semitones above the ending tone.

In seven of the 29 songs, no tone is lower in pitch than the ending tone; in six songs the lowest tone is but two semitones below the ending tone, and in four songs, three semitones below. Eight songs show the lowest tone five semitones below the ending tone; in one song, it is seven semitones below, and in single songs, four and nine semitones below the ending tone respectively.

Intervals

Of a total of 1,475 ascending intervals, the major second is most frequently used (38.6%), followed by the minor third and perfect fourth (21.3% each), and major third (12.6%). The perfect fifth, minor second, major sixth, minor seventh, augmented fifth, major tenth, and octave combined account for only approximately 5% of the total ascending intervals. Of 2,225 descending intervals, the major second accounts for 39.4%, the minor third for 22.7%, perfect fourth, 19.9% and major third, 14.5%. The minor second, perfect and augmented fifth, augmented fourth, and major sixth together account for less than 5% of the total.

Thus in both ascending and descending intervals, the major second is in highest proportion (39%), followed by the minor third (22%), the perfect fourth (20.6%), the major third (13.5%), the perfect fifth (2.3%), and the minor second (1.3%), while the augmented fifth, major sixth, minor seventh, augmented fourth, major tenth, and octave together account for less than 2% of the total.

Descending intervals are in proportion, 58.5%; ascending intervals, 41.5%. Narrow intervals, those of a minor third or less, account for 32.3% of the total ascending and descending intervals used, medium intervals, the major third, for 13.5% and wide intervals, those greater than a major third, for 24.2%. All songs use wide as well as narrow intervals, although one song utilizes but ten ascending medium intervals, while another uses one perfect fifth as its only wide interval. It is also to be noted that the greatest proportion of skips of more than a perfect fifth is in ascending intervals.

Half-step intervals play a very minor part in the Ketu songs, accounting, as pointed out above, for but 1.32% of the total intervals used. The absence of half-steps indicates the anhemitonic model structures; no *hepta* modes are present, and the bulk of the songs is pentatonic.

Four or more successive tones sung on the same pitch are found in 13 of the 29 songs. Four, five, and six tones are found in two songs, but it cannot be said that these patterns dominate any one song. The repetitive monotone may not be considered an outstanding characteristic of Ketu music.

Combinations of intervals

Twenty different interval patterns are utilized in the Ketu songs. Of these, patterns of thirds appear in 21 songs, and patterns of fourths in 19; no fifth patterns are present while hybrid patterns appear in four songs.

Of the combinations of thirds, the triadic split fifth, Mf, is most often used, appearing in 11 songs.²⁵ Also present are the triadic split fifth, mf, triadic split fifth, mr, triadic split fifth, dim r, triadic split fifth, Mr, pendular thirds, mrfr, and pendular thirds, mfrf. In more extended pattern are pendular thirds, mrfrf, pendular thirds mfrfr, and pendular thirds, mfrfrf.

Of patterns of fourths, that most frequently encountered is two fourths, fr. Also of importance are two fourths, rf, and interlocked fourths, f. Linear fourths, ff, fourths, frf, and interlocked augmented fourth and perfect fourth, f, are found sporadically through the sampling.

The most frequently used hybrid pattern, the interlocked perfect fourth and major third, f, is found in but three songs. The interlocked minor third and perfect fourth, f, and the interlocked major third and perfect fourth, f, each appears in one song.

Patterns of thirds and patterns of fourths seem to be of equal importance throughout the Ketu songs. Both may be considered characteristic of the group.

Meter and melodic rhythm

Meter may be established as "duple", or "triple", depending upon the number of pulses, or accented beats which occur within the measure. Thus 2/4 and 4/4 time are both duple; 6/8 time is also regarded as a duple meter because two major pulses are discernable, although these are subdivided into groups of three. 3/4 time is a triple meter. 6/4 time is equivocal; it may be conceived as either triple or duple depending upon the accent. 12/8 time must probably be considered as duple meter; four major pulses are present in each measure, although they are subdivided into groups of three notes each.

Fourteen of the Ketu songs are in 6/4 time, while ten songs are notated in 4/4 time, three songs in 3/4 time, one in 6/8, and one in 12/8.

Melodic rhythm is for the most part in accord with the established meter of each song, although some notable exceptions occur. In song 64A3, for example,²⁶ the melodic rhythm of two measures is in duple meter against the predominant triple meter established in this case by the percussion instruments. The pattern is as follows:

64A3



Other patterns of similar import are found throughout the collection, although such superimposition of a diverse melodic rhythm upon an established percussion meter never completely dominates a song.

The most common offbeat pattern occurs in the form of syncopation; this device for heightening tension is found in all the songs. However, further extension of the offbeat pattern is also present; three types may be distinguished. Perhaps the simplest type is the consistent anticipation of the established pulse by a fraction of a beat. In this type of offbeat patterning the singer reaches the final note of the phrase a trifle ahead of his expected arrival, giving the entire line a "rushed" feeling. Such a pattern

occurs in song 82A1, in which the anticipation is begun on the third beat of the measure, and not resolved until the last half of the sixth and last beat.



Offbeating of this type is also found in other songs.

A more important form of offbeating is that in which the melodic accent consistently falls between the normal percussion beats over longer phrases than those noted above. This form of offbeating is quite common in the Ketu group, and is clearly illustrated in the following example:



In this case the melodic tension is heightened through the relatively long offbeating which is finally resolved at the end of the second measure.

A device related to offbeat phrasing occurs when entire phrases are moved forward or back in relation to the percussion beat, although the melodic line remains unchanged as an entity. Most common here is the melodic displacement of a beat or half a beat; this may or may not be finally resolved. Song 46A1, however, illustrates the length to which this device may be carried. In this song, the displacement is over half of a 6/8 measure; the two examples below show the melodic line both before and after this displacement.



While this particular example is an extreme case, it serves to indicate the extent to which offbeating may be carried. This general method of increasing interest in the melodic line is utilised fully in the Ketu selections.

Melodic modes

The majority of Ketu songs utilize the pentatonic; 20 of 29 songs or 68% of the sampling fall within this scale. Six of the songs use the *penta sol* mode,²⁷ four the *penta do*, and three each the *penta mi* and *penta la* modes. Three songs employ the *penta re* type, of which one is structured 4:5:2, and one double mode, *penta do re*, is present.

Approximately 25% of the songs utilize the hexatonic scale; of these, four are in the *hexa re* mode, two in the *hexa la*, and one in the *hexa sol* mode.

The two remaining songs are in the tetratonic; one is *tetra re*, and the other, *tetra la*, is structured 3:4:6.

No songs utilize the heptatonic; this has been implied above where the absence of half step intervals in the melodic line was noted.

Of the 29 songs analyzed, 18 show the subjective tonic and duration tones to be identical,²⁸ and in the remaining 11 songs the two tones show definite relationship; in six of these, the duration tone falls on the dominant of the subjective tonic scale, in two songs on the third of scale. In two other songs, it is on the sixth, or relative minor tonic of scale, and in one song on the fourth of scale. In the single double mode, the first duration tone coincides with the subjective tonic. Thus the discrepancy between subjective tonic and duration tones is not as wide as it may first appear; it is entirely plausible that the mediant, subdominant, dominant, or submediant should receive more stress than the tonic tone.

In the rather large proportion of songs in the pentatonic, the Ketu group exhibits a considerable degree of homogeneity.

Relationship of melodic pitch to percussion instrument pitch

It has been suggested by Waterman on the basis of investigation of the African-derived Shango music of Trinidad,²⁹ that there the melodic and percussion instrument pitches show at least a tenuous interrelationship. A similar, and perhaps more consistent relationship seems apparent in the Ketu songs.

It was possible to isolate percussion instrument pitches in 26 of the 29 songs, although it should be pointed out that in the tones of drum and gong, overtones are both numerous and strong, making the isolation of the fundamental a difficult task at best, and in many cases an impossible one.

In those songs in which the subjective tonic and duration tones are identical, a total of 34 percussion pitches could be determined. Of these the majority fall upon the tonic, third, fourth, or fifth of scale in the following proportions: tonic, 9 times; third, once; fourth, 8 times; fifth, 7 times. In one case the percussion instrument pitch falls upon the sixth degree of scale, and in another upon the minor third of scale, but in a minor key. The remaining seven tones are not so easily reconcilable. One falls upon the flat fifth of scale, and one upon the minor seventh. Two pitches are found on the major seventh of scale, and three upon the second degree. In the cases of both major and minor seventh, a leading tone is indicated but it would not seem highly plausible that this tone should be purposely stressed. In connection with these latter seven tones, then, a relationship does not seem to be present. It may be regarded as significant, however, that of 34 tones, 27 are in close relationship to the tonic triad, stressing particularly the tonic, subdominant and dominant.

In those songs in which the subjective tonic and duration tones are not identical, 21 percussion pitches could be determined. Of these, three fall upon the tonic of the subjective tonic scale, two on the major third, and six upon the fifth. One tone is found on the second degree of scale; in other cases the relationship is not so clear. However, of a total of 55 percussion pitches, at least 40 show definite relationship with the melodic pitch; this figure seems too high to allow for a chance relationship. Without field investigation of the problem, however, it is impossible to reach a definite conclusion, although the relationship of percussion instrument pitch to melodic pitch seems to be a distinct possibility.

Modulations and tonality

A well-defined tonality is present in almost all the Ketu songs. This is indicated by the relationship between the subjective tonic and duration tones discussed above. No modulations are found in the Ketu songs.

Harmony, polyphony and solo-chorus alternation

Sporadic harmony occurs in two songs; in other than these instances no harmony is employed. In song 22B1, the harmony appears as the result of the overlapping of two interpretations of the chorus melodic line; in this case, it seems to be accidental rather than purposeful. Much the same case occurs in song 54A3 in which part of the

chorus apparently begins a phrase on the wrong note, causing brief sporadic harmony in fourths. The difference is immediately rectified and is not repeated since its occurrence was due to error rather than design.

All songs are of the leader-chorus type, and overlapping between leader and chorus occurs slightly in 19 songs. In song 22B1 it has already been noted that the overlapping occurs between two parts of the chorus and is thus a special case. It is in connection with these songs that the only polyphony occurs in the Ketu music.

Formal structure

Three formal patterns are used in the structuring of the Ketu songs. Approximately 45% use the AA'A" pattern in which the same phrase is repeated with significant variation. The same percentage of songs use the AAA pattern, in which a single phrase is repeated throughout the song without significant variation. The remaining songs are in the ABC pattern, in which different phrases are utilized. In almost all cases, these phrase patterns may be broken into smaller units, but these units are only significant as they contribute to the larger groupings.³⁰

The shortest phrase is 2 bars in 4/4 time, or eight beats duration. The longest phrase is 16 bars in 3/4 time, or 48 beats. Four songs use two phrase patterns of differing lengths. In song 63A1, phrases of both 8 and 2 bars are present; in songs 63A2 and 63A3, phrases of four and two bars are present. In song 22B1 the normal phrase length is 4 bars, but at one point a diminution of this phrase to three-bar length occurs.

In many of the songs, the leader introduces, or otherwise aids the chorus with its melodic line. In five songs, the chorus phrase is clearly introduced by the leader; in ten songs, the two phrases are identical; in four songs, the leader assists the chorus in the first singing of its melodic phrase; and in two songs the leader's phrase is related melodically to that of the chorus. The leader does not assist the chorus in any way in eight songs. In song 54A2, the two lines are reversed after they have been initially introduced. In this case, the leader sings the opening phrase which is followed by a phrase sung by the chorus. The repetition of the first phrase is then sung by both leader and chorus, and the repetition of the second phrase by the leader. From this point the two phrases have been reversed, and remain in this pattern throughout.

Ornamentation

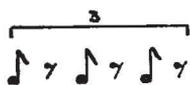
Three ornamental devices are employed in the Ketu songs; these are the rising attack, falling release, and portamento.

A rising attack occurs when the singer begins his intonation below the desired tone, and rises to it in a short glissando. This technique is employed in 18 songs. The falling release is, for practical purposes, the reverse of the rising attack; in this case the singer sings a tone but lets it fall downward in a short glissando. All but one of the songs use portamento in which the singer moves from one tone to the next without making the differences sharply defined; in other words, all pitch gradations between the two tones are employed in a glissando from one to the other. These ornamental devices constitute important singing techniques in the Ketu songs.

Instrumentation

Eleven songs are sung by a male soloist, the remaining 18 songs by a female soloist. In all 29 songs, the leader is accompanied by a female chorus. However, since the sex of the singers usually depended upon the circumstances at the time of recording, undue importance should probably not be attached to these figures.

Further accompaniment is provided by a percussion group in 28 songs. In two songs the rhythmic accompaniment is provided by hand-clapping, and in two songs by two drums. In the remaining 24 songs, the percussion unit is composed of iron gong and two drums.



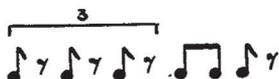
Example 1



Example 2



Example 3



Example 4



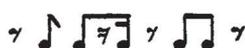
Example 5



Example 6



Example 7



Example 8



Example 9

The duple-triple superimposition is not the only percussion technique employed in the Ketu songs. In those songs in which polymetre is not employed, the basic metric scheme may be, and most often is elaborated extensively without changing the metre. In song 63A1, for example, the following pattern appears:

Gong

Drum I

Drum II

In song 64A3, the following patterns are used, in which the basic triple metre is embellished particularly by Drum I.

Gong

Drum I

Drum II

Some other characteristics of the percussion rhythms, and the apparent functions of the various instruments may be pointed out. Waterman notes that in the Trinidad Shango percussion units "one drum-rhythm is a steady quarternote beat in 4/4 time."³² This drum, by and large, provides the orientation about which the other instruments of the percussive unit, as well as the melodic line, are grouped. In the Ketu songs, this stabilizing factor is instead provided by the iron gong which usually is the first percussion instrument to enter, and which seldom changes its established metre in the course of a song. Drum I usually enters either with the gong or a measure or two later. Most often remaining within the 8/8 ostinato pattern, it may sometimes also play the same rhythmic patterns as does the gong, and occasionally utilize some polymetre. Drum II, on the other hand, seems to provide most of the polyrhythmic patterns, and at the same time may also remain within a single metre elaborating the basic beat. In almost all the songs, Drum II seems to be much freer in its choice of patterns than either the gong or Drum I, varying its beat extensively.

It is clear that the songs of the Ketu group sampled here rely heavily upon the percussion instruments to provide a steady beat about which the melodic lines may be oriented. At the same time, the use of polymetre and the embellishment of rhythmic patterns within one metre are carried to an exceedingly complex degree. The reliance upon percussion and its importance, the use of polymetre, and the embellishment of basic rhythmic patterns may all be considered outstanding characteristics of the Ketu songs.

Summary

The characteristics of the songs of the Ketu group may be summarized as follows. Tonal range is wide; melodic direction is generally downward. The major second is utilized most frequently, followed by the minor third, perfect fourth, and major third. Half step intervals play a minor part in the music; the repetitive monotone is likewise not highly important. Combinations of thirds and combinations of fourths are the outstanding interval patterns. 6/4, 4/4, 3/4, 12/8, and 6/8 time are used, in that order of importance. Syncopation and offbeat patterns of wider extension are very noticeable. Almost 70% of the songs are based on the pentatonic scale; also represented are the hexatonic and tetratonic. In most cases, the subjective tonic and duration tones are identical. The tones of the percussion instruments fall on the tonic, dominant, subdominant and mediant of scale in most songs; this indicates the probability of a definite relationship between melodic and percussion instrument pitch. All the Ketu songs seem to have a well-defined tonality; there are no modulations. Sporadic harmony occurs in two of the songs, overlapping in 19. All songs are of the leader-chorus type. The AAA, AA'A", and ABC formal structures are utilized; the leader introduces or otherwise aids the chorus in singing its melodic line in 21 of the 29 songs. Rising attack, falling release, and portamento are used as ornamental devices. Songs are sung by a male or female soloist, accompanied by a female chorus and a percussion group composed of iron gong, drums, and in some songs, handclapping. Tempi are fairly restricted except in those songs in 6/4 time in which a wide range of variation is noticeable. Acceleration of tempo is common. Percussion rhythms are of extreme importance in the songs, and both polymetre and the extensive elaboration of rhythmic patterns within one meter are employed.

III

While it is by no means within the intention of the present paper to analyse the relationship of Ketu song to the music of the Yoruba from which it is derived, it should be pointed out that, within our present knowledge of the music of West Africa and specifically the Guinea Coast, the relationship seems incontrovertible. The difficulty of making such comparison, however, is manifest in the fact that so far as is known to the present author there does not exist any published analytical study of the structure

of Yoruba music; without such study there is, of course, no basic means of comparing the original musical style—Yoruba—and the derivation from it—Ketu. The importance of such comparison for the study of cultural dynamics needs no further comment here; the anthropological “laboratory situation” noted in the opening paragraphs of this paper provides an almost unparalleled opportunity for the study of culture change and its various manifestations.

At the same time some general comparison can be made on the basis of the five outstanding characteristics of the music of West Africa populated by Waterman.³³ These five characteristics include the metronome sense, dominance of percussion, the use of polymetre, the off-beat phrasing of melodic accents, and the overlapping call-and-response pattern. Without entering into detail, it may be noted that the Ketu songs show all these musical patterns and, in most cases, so strongly as to leave no doubt whatsoever of the relationship between Ketu and West African styles. It is unfortunate that the sharper comparison between Ketu and Yoruba cannot be undertaken at the present time because of the limitations of our knowledge.

FOOTNOTES FOR KETU CULT OF BAHIA

¹For the results of such comparison, see Alan P. Merriam, with the assistance of Sara Whinery and B. G. Fred, “Songs of a Rada Community in Trinidad,” forthcoming in *Anthropos*.

²Arthur Ramos, *The Negro in Brazil*, (Trans: Richard Pattee), (Washington: Associated Publishers, 1939), p. 10.

³Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves*, (Trans: Samuel Putnam), (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p. 311, says: “The proximity of Bahia and Pernambuco to the African coast tended to give to the relations between Brazil and the Dark Continent an especially intimate character.” Later (p. 318) he continues: “It is, moreover, a curious thing to note that down to the end of the nineteenth century the repatriation of Hausa and Nago freedmen from Bahia to Africa took place, and it was such freedmen-repatriates who founded in Ardra a city by the name of Porto Seguro. So intimate did the relations between Bahia and these cities come to be that heads of commercial houses in Salvador received honorary distinctions from the government of Dahomey.” See also: Melville and Frances Herskovits, “The Negroes of Brazil,” *Yale Review* XXXII (Winter, 1943), pp. 266-67.

⁴Ramos, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13. In another source, Ramos discusses the membership in these three groups somewhat more fully. He says: “O primeiro grupo foi introduzido inicialmente nos mercados de escravos da Bahia . . . Desses negros sudanezes, os mais importantes foram os ‘yorubas’ ou ‘nagos’ e os ‘geges’ (‘Ewes’ ou ‘dahomeyanos’) e em segundo lugar, os ‘minas’ (‘Tshis’ e ‘Gas’), os ‘hausas’ os ‘tapas’, os ‘bornus’ e os ‘gruncis’ ou ‘gallinhas’. Com esses negros sudanezes entrarem dois povos de origem berbere—ethiopicã e influencia mohametana: os ‘fulahs’ e os ‘mandes’. Os ‘bantus’ foram introduzidos em Pernambuco . . . , Rio de Janeiro . . . e Maranhão . . . , focos primitivos de onde se intradiaram posteriormente para varios pontos do territorio brasileiro. ‘Bantus’ foram os ‘angolas’, os ‘congos’ ou ‘cabindas’, os ‘benguellas’, os negros de Mocambique . . .” Arthur Ramos, *O Negro Brasileiro*, (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 2nd Edition, 1940), I, p. 23. It may be noted in passing only that Johnston says: “. . . the Portuguese seem even to have introduced Hottentots and Bushmen, obtained probably from the region south of the Kunene River.” Sir Harry H. Johnston, *The Negro in the New World*, (New York: Macmillan, 1910), p. 83.

⁵Ramos, *The Negro* . . . , *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁶Donald Pierson, *Negroes in Brazil*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 282.

⁷For syncretisms of this, and other nature, see Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941³, pp. 213-35, *passim*.

⁸Yoruba religious practices and beliefs are discussed by William R. Bascom, *The Sociological Role of the Yoruba Cult-Group*, (Menasha: American Anthropological Association, Memoir 63, 1944), 75 pp. See also: Edison Carneiro, *Religiosas Negras*, (Rio de Janeiro: Civilizacao Brasileira, 1936), pp. 29-49; and Arthur Ramos, *Introdução a Antropologia Brasileira*, (Rio de Janeiro: Coleção Estudos Brasileiros, 1943), pp. 352-77.

⁹See Ramos, *ibid.*, pp. 433-78.

¹⁰See Carneiro, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-49; Ramos, *Introdução* . . . , *op. cit.*, pp. 378-96. For Dahomean religious life, see Melville J. Herskovits, *Dahomey: An Ancient West African Kingdom*, (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1938), II, pp. 101-308. See also, Herskovits, “The Negroes . . .,” *op. cit.*, pp. 267-68.

¹¹See Melville J. Herskovits, and Frances S. Herskovits, *Afro-Bahian Religious Songs*, (Album Notes, "Folk Music of Brazil," Library of Congress, Album XIII), p. 2. A discussion of "The Coastal and Amazonian Tupi," including the Guarani and Tupinamba, may be found in Julian H. Steward (Ed), *Handbook of South American Indians*, (Washington: Bulletin 143, Bureau of American Ethnology, 1948), III, pp. 57-348. See also: Carneiro, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-100; and Ramos, *Introdução . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-137.

¹²Herskovits, *Afro-Bahian Religious Songs*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹³The treatment of possession is discussed by Ramos, *O Negro . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 249-84.

¹⁴Herskovits, *Afro-Bahian Religious Songs*, *op. cit.*, p. 15. See also, Herskovits, "The Negro . . .," *op. cit.*, pp. 271-79.

¹⁵See those works cited above. See also, for general accounts: Manuel Querino, *Costumes Africaunos no Brazil*, (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1938), pp. 19-127; Ramos, *O Negro . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-247. A comparison with the cult groups of Recife may be obtained from Rene Ribeiro, *Cultos Afro-brasileiros do Recife: Um Estudo de Ajustamento Social*, (Recife: Boletim do Instituto Joaquim Nabuco, Numero Especial, 1952), 150 pp.; with those of Maranhão, from Octavio da Costa Eduardo, *The Negro in Northern Brazil*, (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1948), 131 pp.

¹⁶Melville J. Herskovits, "Drums and Drummers in Afro-Brazilian Cult Life," *Musical Quarterly*, XXX (1944), pp. 480-81.

¹⁷Melville J. Herskovits, Personal communication.

¹⁸Much detail on the construction and playing of drums, as well as the social position held by drummers, is found in Herskovits, "Drums and Drummers . . .," *op. cit.*, pp. 477-92, from which the preceding material has been taken.

¹⁹A very early reference to the gong in Angola may be found in P. Cavazzi, *Relation Historique de l'Ethiopie Occidentale*, (Trans: J. B. Labat), (Paris: Charles-Jean-Baptiste-Delespine, 1732), II, p. 49. "La Longa, est un instrument composé de deux petites cloches de fer, qui ressemblent à peu près aux sonnailles que l'on met au col des mulets ou des bestiaux dont on élève des troupeaux. On les touche avec un petit baton." On pp. 46 and 50 of this work, woodcuts illustrate the gong and other musical instruments.

²⁰Further description of the musical instruments used in Afro-Bahian cult music may be found in: Nina Rodrigues, *Os Africanos no Brasil*, Revisão e Prefacio de Homero Pires), (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1932), pp. 239-41; Querino, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-90; Ramos, *O Negro . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-47; Oneyda Alvarenga, "A Influencia Negra na Musica Brasileira," *Boletim Latino Americano de Musica*, VI (1946), 357-407, and many others.

²¹Erich M. von Hornbostel, "Die Probleme der Vergleichende Musikwissenschaft," *Zeitschrift der Internationale Musikgesellschaft*, VII (1905), 85-97.

²²M. Kolinski, "Suriname Music," in Melville J. and Frances S. Herskovits, *Suriname Folk-Lore*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), pp. 491-740.

²³Richard A. Waterman, *African Patterns in Trinidad Negro Music*, (Unpub. diss., Northwestern University, 1943).

²⁴Alan P. Merriam, *Songs of the Afro-Bahian Cults: An Ethnomusicological Analysis*, (Unpub. diss., Northwestern University, 1951); "The Bashi Mulizi and Its Music; An End-Blown Flute From the Belgian Congo," (forthcoming in *Journal of American Folklore*); Merriam and Linton C. Freeman, "Statistical Classification in Anthropology; An Application to Ethnomusicology," *American Anthropologist*, LVIII (June, 1956), 464-72; Merriam, Whinery, and Fred, *op. cit.*

²⁵Abbreviations used: M—major; m—minor; dim—diminished; r—rising; f—falling. Explanation of the various types of patterns may be found in Kolinski, *op. cit.*, pp. 498-501.

²⁶Numbers used refer to the numbers of the original recordings.

²⁷Explanation of this particular type of modal analysis will be found in Kolinski, *op. cit.*, pp. 491-93. The figures used later in the text in relation to modal structure indicate, in the order listed, the number of tones actually utilized, the number of tones encompassed in the cycle of fifths, and the degree of scale on which the duration tone falls.

²⁸Duration tone refers to that tone which is most heavily weighted throughout the song as defined by actual duration count. The subjective tonic designates the subjective criterion of a key feeling, or tonality, as observed by Western musicians in respect to Western musical traditions.

²⁹Waterman, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-06.

³⁰The designations AA'A', AAA, and ABC, indicate the form used, but not necessarily the extent of that usage. Each is to be considered as capable of infinite extension.

³¹Waterman, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 90.

³³Richard A. Waterman, "African Influence on the Music of the Americas," in Sol Tax (Ed), *Acculturation in the Americas*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, II, Proceedings of the 29th International Congress of Americanists, 1952), pp. 207-18.

Note on the transcriptions and modal analysis:

Each song is headed with pertinent information in abbreviated form. Thus the legend for the first song, "22B1: Yemanja: 2d: 140-168," indicates that the song is number 22B1 of the collection, that it is sung for the god Yemanja, that the original pitch was 2 semitones lower (2u would indicate the original pitch to be 2 semitones higher), and that the tempo ranged from 140 beats per minute at the beginning of the song to 168 at its end. The basis for the tempo figure is the quarter note; the songs are notated in that key in which the majority of notes falls within the limits of the regular staff lines.

The fermata (◌) over a tone in the modal scale indicates that this is the final tone of the song. A reversed fermata (◌) indicates the beginning tone. The asterisk designates the subjective tonic, while the whole tone indicates the duration tone. The sign [] in the modal scale indicates important intervals used in the song; the [] show the direction of these melodic intervals.

