

GRENADA: CREOLE AND YORUBA VOICES

Morton Marks and Kenneth Bilby

CARIBBEAN VOYAGE: THE 1962 ALAN LOMAX RECORDINGS

Series Editors: Kenneth Bilby and Morton Marks

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**Previously unreleased.*

Remastered to 24-bit digital from the original field recordings.

GRENADA: CREOLE AND YORUBA TRADITIONS

By Kenneth Bilby and Morton Marks

Apart from its brief moment of notoriety in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the charismatic socialist leader Maurice Bishop and his New Jewel Movement overthrew the eccentric premier Eric Gairy, and the Cold War games of Cuba and the United States thrust the island into the international spotlight, Grenada has received little attention from the outside world. Today, for most people outside the Caribbean, it remains a tourist destination and the location of an offshore medical school. Yet, like its neighbors in the Lesser Antilles, Grenada is the site of a vibrant and distinctive creole culture, of which music forms a prominent part.

Along with its dependencies Petite Martinique and Carriacou, Grenada is the southernmost of the Windward Islands. Carriacou, whose musical traditions are extensively documented in this series, is part of a chain of small islands known as the Grenadines that link Grenada with St. Vincent to the north. Called Camerhogne by its original Carib inhabitants, Grenada was sighted on his third voyage by Christopher Columbus, who named it Concepción Island and claimed it for the Spanish crown. The island was not settled by Europeans until the seventeenth century, and in 1650 it came under French rule. The ensuing armed conflict with the indigenous Carib population led to the death or expulsion of most of the island's original inhabitants. Like Dominica, Grenada has a checkered colonial history, with the island passing between French and British rule several times. The French ruled Grenada until 1763, when it was ceded to Britain under the Treaty of Paris, an agreement that, in ending the Seven Years' War, also redrew the colonial map of the Americas. Under the terms of this treaty, France lost most of its American holdings to Britain, from the Caribbean islands of Grenada and Dominica to its vast territories in Canada. But while Dominica remained a British colony until independence in 1978, Grenada reverted to French rule in 1779. It was reclaimed by the British in the Treaty of Versailles of 1783, which formally recognized the independence of the young United States of America. Grenada remained a British colony until 1974.

As in the case of Dominica and St. Lucia, two other islands that seesawed between French and British rule, Grenada's complicated colonial history seems to have enriched its folk culture. And as in these other islands, much of the music of nominally English-speaking Grenada has a strong French Creole feeling to it – or at least it did when these recordings were made in 1962. The presence of patois (Grenadian French Creole), which is now dying out in Grenada, is especially evident in the work songs and in the game songs in this collection, and to an extent in the songs for Carnival. In the older, African-style masked Carnival in Grenada, known as *mas*, the Pierrot clown, a stock figure of French mime, was transformed into the Pierrot Grenade, a character covered in dried banana or plantain leaves who recited soliloquies and historical narratives. Although in recent years Trinidad-style steel bands and calypso have dominated Carnival in Grenada, in 1962 Lomax found and recorded a Carnival song partly in the local French Creole (“Roule, Roule,” # 19).

What sets Grenada off from the other Franco-English islands, though, is the presence of a third language, the ritual Yoruba of the Shango religion, also called African Work. Grenadian Shango is probably the least known branch of the Yoruba diaspora in the Americas, and these recordings may be the only documentation in existence of its music.

During the slave trade, many thousands of Yoruba from the Ijesha kingdom of Nigeria were sent to Brazil and Cuba, where they became known as *ijexá* and *yesá*, respectively. But the Yoruba in Grenada are part of the history of Africans in the post-emancipation Caribbean. In 1849 (eleven years after full emancipation in the British colonies), about one thousand Ijesha Yoruba workers arrived in Grenada, becoming part of the indentured workforce that replaced former slaves who had migrated. The Grenadian Yoruba formed closely knit communities in particular villages, including Munich, Black Bay, Laura, and Rose Hill, and their influence then spread to other parts of the island.

The African presence in Grenada had begun under French rule, long before the arrival of the Yoruba in the middle of the nineteenth century. Slaves were chiefly involved in the cultivation of sugar and indigo. Africans liberated from slave ships by British anti-slavery ships were sometimes landed in Grenada as well as in Trinidad, and there was considerable migration between the two islands. Prior to the arrival of the indentured Yoruba after the end of slavery, Afro-Grenadian ritual expression appears to have been somewhat similar to that of Grenada's nearby sister island, Carriacou. Before Shango was established on Grenada, the island's chief form of African ritual was the Nation Dance or Big Drum Dance, which is still found on Carriacou.

A major difference between the Nation Dance complex and Shango is the emphasis on spirit possession in the latter. Like its cognate religions in the Americas, Grenadian Shango includes possession as a central element in its rituals. In fact, some elderly Trinidadian informants have stated that Grenadians originally introduced Shango into their communities, and the appeal of possession in the Shango religion may have helped it supplant the Saraca ritual complex in parts of Trinidad early in the century. In Trinidad, Saraca is a ceremony that honors the ancestors and does not involve possession. In Grenada, however, long Shango ceremonies are called by the same name (Saraca). And although it is acknowledged that Shango replaced the Big Drum Dance in Grenada, the rituals of African Work on the island often coincide with the agricultural cycle, just as the Big Drum Dance does in Carriacou. The connection between agriculture, the ancestors, and Shango rites on Grenada is exemplified in "Baba Ori O" (# 20 in this collection).

The *orishas* (deities) are invoked by drumming, and when spirit possession comes to the Shango initiates, it follows stereotypical patterns that reflect the personality of the possessing *orisha*. During the Lomax recording sessions, a possession took place right after the song "Se E Gberin O" (# 24). Drums are often accompanied by the *boli*, a large calabash rattle covered with a network of buttons. The word *boli* is of Ewe/Fon origin, and means gourd. This instrument is a local variant of the beaded gourds called *ágbe* and *güiro* in Cuban *orisha* worship and called *afoxê* and *xequerê* in Brazilian Candomblé. The Grenadian *boli*'s closest relative is the *shekbe* or *boli* of Trinidad, also a calabash

covered with a network of buttons. In Trinidad, it is played in Rada, or Dahomean, rites.

A late-nineteenth-century account by an English traveler in Grenada describes the *boli* as follows: “Three or four men carried in their hands large empty gourds, covered over with a loose network of small porcelain shirt-buttons, which they kept continually shaking, thus making a loud rustling sound, serving as an accompaniment to a wild sort of song or refrain, yelled out in the most minor of minor keys by the whole of the assistants.” A *boli* made in exactly the same way was photographed by Lomax in 1962, and it is probably the one heard here. A handbell, similar to the *adyá* or *adjá* of Cuba and Brazil, also plays a role in invoking the *orisha* in Shango ceremonies.

Throughout the Americas, Yoruba deities are often identified with Catholic saints, and Grenada is no exception. Oshun’s counterpart is Saint Mary, Emanyá’s (Yemayá / Iêmanjá) is Saint Anne, Shango’s is Saint John, and Ogun’s is Saint Michael, to name a few. As in related Yoruba-based religions in the African diaspora, the *orishas* are also associated with specific activities, colors, emblems, and days of the week, and with food offerings called *carurú*, a term also known in Brazil. Oshun still receives offerings on the banks of a crater lake or river, and early descriptions of Shango in Grenada include pilgrimages to sacred springs. The importance of water in Grenadian Shango is not surprising, considering that the Ijesha Yoruba were from the home region of Oshun, *orisha* of the river bearing her name that flows past Oshogbo, the site of Oshun’s principal shrine.

But the syncretisms with Catholicism that resemble those of Brazilian Candomblé and Cuban *regla de ocha* (Santería) are only part of the ritual process in Grenada. Shango was further syncretized with an Afro-Protestant religion, the Spiritual Baptist Church of Saint Vincent, which came to Grenada around 1900. When not affiliated with the Catholic Church, practitioners of Shango are often members of this Afro-Protestant sect, and there has been an ongoing exchange between the rituals of African Work and the Spiritual Baptists. Some Shango priests require novices to be baptized in the Baptist Church before becoming Shango initiates. In Shango temples, Yoruba ritual objects can be found side by side with lithographs of Catholic saints, bibles, and Protestant prayer books, and Shango cult leaders, or “queens,” may incorporate Catholic and Baptist rituals. Going in the other direction, the *boli* has found its way into the music of the Spiritual Baptists, as has the handbell used in Shango rites. There are two Baptist groups on Grenada called Shango-Baptists that acknowledge the existence of the Yoruba *orishas*.

While the music of the Yoruba religions in Brazil and Cuba has been exhaustively studied, its counterparts in Trinidad and Grenada have received much less attention, and the recordings Alan Lomax made in 1962 are possibly the only ones extant of Grenadian Yoruba music. Listening to the combined sound of gourd rattle, handbell, and hand drumming, also found in the *ijexá* style of Brazilian Candomblé, one is perhaps reminded more of Salvador, Brazil, than of Cuban Yoruba music. In the choruses of “Yeye Ba ’Beji Ro” (# 22) and “Se E Gberin O” (# 24), there are echoes of what Gerard Béhague has described as the characteristically “hard, metallic quality” of the female voices, with a preference for the upper range of the voice, in Brazilian Candomblé song style. It should

be emphasized that despite the syncretisms that developed in Grenada between African Work and Afro-Protestant elements, the Shango song texts presented here, in excellent translations by Funso Aiyejina and Maureen Warner-Lewis, remain closely tied to the traditional Yoruba religious beliefs and worldview. “Wele, Wele” (# 27) may even make reference to the *egungun* masquerade, representing dead ancestors, of Yorubaland.

As interesting as Grenada’s multifaceted musical culture is, it remains one of the least documented in the Caribbean. Several of the old Afro-French creole genres and forms featured here – those going back to the period of slavery – were apparently already moribund when Lomax recorded them in 1962. It is not clear how much of this older stratum remains today, although it is known that some of these older genres have fallen completely out of use, while others appear to have been absorbed into more recently introduced traditions such as Shango (African Work), Spiritual Baptist music, or the modern Grenadian versions of Carnival and calypso. In any case, Lomax’s coverage of the island was not exhaustive, and certain traditions that form an important part of Grenada’s musical history, such as the quadrille and lancers dance, are not heard on this CD. Just how much of the older, pre-emancipation layer of the island’s creole musical inheritance is still there cannot be known without further research.

What we do know is that Grenada has had a substantial impact on music in other parts of the region, particularly Trinidad, where large numbers of Grenadians have been migrating since the nineteenth century. Along with other islanders possessing Afro-French cultural traditions, such as Martinicans, Guadeloupeans, and Dominicans, the Grenadian laborers who began to pour into Trinidad after final emancipation in 1838 contributed much to the complex creole mix that was to evolve into the modern calypso in Port of Spain and the surrounding area toward the end of the century. Grenadian influence has continued to be important, if subtle, in more recent times. Grenadians today point out with pride that Sparrow (Slinger Francisco), felt by many to be the greatest calypsonian of all time, was born in Grenada. And a number of other Grenadians have achieved renown as calypsonians in Trinidad – most notably Bomber (C. F. Ryan), who won the Calypso King title in Trinidad in 1954, and the great Small Island Pride (Theophilus Woods). Providing a glimpse of both the deep Afro-French creole foundation and the more recent Yoruba overlay upon which the island’s distinctive musical culture has been built, the selections on this CD hint at the complex history of exchange that lies behind the creative expressions of outstanding Grenadian popular artists.

SONG NOTES

Note on song texts:

Transcriptions are provided for every original line of text but not for all repetitions. Translations are provided when possible. Transcriptions and translations of songs in call-and-response form (leader and chorus) suggest all variations but do not include all repetitions. Transliteration of Creole is controversial. We have used a simplified orthography to reflect changes in pronunciation, which is becoming progressively less nasal and more Anglicized.

CREOLE

1. ROLL, ROLL, ROLL AND GO (Maroon song)

Performed by Irene McQueen (lead vocal), with chorus and hand claps.
Recorded on August 5, 1962, in La Fortune, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

In Grenada and some of the other Windward Islands, *maroon* is the name given to a tradition of cooperative labor similar to what is known as “lend hand” or “jollification” in other parts of the Anglophone Caribbean and as *kombit* in Haiti. A maroon is a festive occasion in which those who come together to give a helping hand are rewarded with food and drink. Most maroons are held for purposes of cultivation. (In Carriacou, the term *maroon* has an additional sense, sometimes being used to refer to a kind of ritual feast in the Big Drum tradition.) In Grenada, work songs have traditionally played an important role in maroons, being used to coordinate various tasks and to make hard work more enjoyable. As in other parts of the Caribbean, work songs in Grenada have been drawn from diverse sources. The example that follows appears to have started out as a sea chantey.

Chorus:

Roll, roll, roll and go!

- *Oh, roll and go, lewi [let we] roll and go way.*
- *I spend my money and I kyan [can't] get ashore.*

2. CASSIÈNNE (Cocoa lute)

Performed by Norris Welsh.
Recorded on August 5, 1962, in St. George's, Grenada.

Grenada is one of a very few Caribbean islands where a mouth-bow tradition is documented during the twentieth century (another being Curaçao in the Netherlands Antilles). This ancient instrument is widespread in Africa and also formed part of various Amerindian musical cultures. Mouth bows and related one-string instruments were once found across Afro-America, from the southern United States down through the Caribbean and into Colombia, the Guianas, and Brazil. Today, outside of Brazil, where the *berimbau* remains a vital part of the *capoeira* tradition, they survive in only a few locations.

The gourd resonator on the Brazilian *berimbau* attempts to duplicate the vocal effects of the mouth bow, which uses the mouth cavity as a kind of natural resonator to produce the *wah-wah* effects heard here on the Grenadian cocoa lute. The wah-wah pedal on the electric guitar, developed some thirty-five years ago, is likewise an attempt to produce similar effects from a string instrument, albeit in a more sophisticated way.

In his notes, Lomax described the mouth bow that he saw and recorded in Grenada, locally known as *cocoa lute*, as follows:

The bow is about four feet long, made of cocoa wood (said to be particularly resonant) with a tuning peg (a modern feature), a nylon string (modern), a notch to show where the fourth is located (the only place where the [bow] is fretted). The narrow end of the bow is held lightly against [the] partly opened mouth, which is widened and narrowed while the player hums, to make pitch changes. The thing is stroked with a twig held between the fingers of the playing hand.

The tune played here on the cocoa lute, in triple meter, is clearly of European origin and nicely illustrates how in the Caribbean context, where creolization was the norm, European musical elements such as scales or even particular Western European melodies could be transposed relatively unchanged to non-European instruments, although the opposite transposition, African-influenced music played on European instruments, however, occurred more often.

3. WAY-O, WAY-O (Cocoa-tramping song)

Performed by Daniel Alexander (lead vocal), with Sonny Francis, Norman Miller, and Saville Greenridge (chorus) and hand claps.

Recorded on August 7, 1962, in La Floretta, Grenada.

In this song, sung in patois, there are echoes of Grenada's early plantation economy.

In 1528, Hernán Cortés returned to Spain from Mexico, bearing the Aztec recipe for *xocolatl* (chocolate drink) with him. Initially received unenthusiastically, the drink became highly popular in the Spanish courts once sugar was added to it. Initial attempts to satisfy Spanish domestic demand by planting cacao in Spanish territories such as Santo Domingo (now the Dominican Republic and Haiti), Trinidad, and Fernando Po (now Bioko), an island off the West African coast, came to nothing. Only in the late seventeenth century did cultivation of cacao on a large scale by European mercantile nations begin in earnest. France introduced the crop to Martinique and St. Lucia in 1660 and to Grenada in 1714. Since then it has been one of the island's principal exports.

Before shipment for processing, the cocoa fruit is harvested and cut open and the cocoa beans extracted. After fermentation, the beans are placed in trays called "cocoa drawers," and workers "tramp" or walk through them to speed the drying process.

4. THIS IS THE SMOKE, FIRE BEHIND (Piké [Piqué])

Performed by Ralph George (lead vocal), with male chorus and two drums.

Recorded on August 4, 1962, in Gouyave, St. Johns's, Grenada.

Piké is an Afro-French genre of drumming and dance, variants of which were once found in many parts of the Lesser Antilles, including Grenada, Carriacou, Dominica, St. Lucia, and Trinidad. An erotic dance featuring vigorous pelvic movements, *piké* was linked to the larger Afro-Caribbean musical complex that included genres such as *kalinda* and *belair (bélé)*. In Grenada it formed part of the local Nation Dance repertory. The drumming in this selection bears some resemblance to the Kongo-related drumming styles found in various parts of the Caribbean, such as Martinican *bélé*, Guadeloupean *gwoka*, Trinidadian *kalinda*, French Guianese *cassé-co*, and especially Jamaican *kumina*. *Piké* is believed to have died out in Grenada, perhaps as recently as two decades ago. Thus this recording by Lomax may be the only reliable indication we have of what this once important Afro-Grenadian genre sounded like.

Chorus:

This is the smoke, fire behind!

- *Informer-oh, informer-eh.*
- *Yes, what I never do.*
- *Yes, sa mwen jamen fê* [what I never do].
- *Yes, mama, what I never do.*
- *Wi mama, sa mwen jamen fê.*

Shouting: “*tanbou, tanbou!*” [“Drum, drum”]

5. CARNIVAL SONG

Performed by Irene McQueen (lead vocal) and Claude George (banjo), with Simpson Jeremiah, Claudius Andall, and Alexis George (chorus).

Recorded on August 5, 1962, in La Fortune, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

This recording was made at a critical time in the history of Carnival and calypso in Grenada when older forms were being supplanted by newer traditions imported from Trinidad. Up to the late 1950s Grenada was home to a distinctive, local Afro-Caribbean Carnival based on folk traditions and featuring such costumed characters as Shortknee and Pierrot Grenade (some of which had earlier influenced the Carnival of Trinidad). Local calypso singers such as Papa Edmund and Lord Roamer usually performed with village string bands featuring some combination of banjo, guitar, cuatro, and chorus singers. These calypsonians were still known, as elsewhere in the French-influenced Caribbean, as “chantwells.” In the late 1950s, the Grenadian chantwells Lord Melody (a different individual from the better-known Lord Melody of Trinidad) and Quo Vadis introduced organized calypso tents and formal competitions based on the Trinidadian model. Calypso in Grenada, as in the other Anglophone islands, soon came to be dominated by the sounds emanating from Trinidad, a trend that continues today.

The older string-band sound heard in this selection has almost disappeared from Carnival in Grenada, having long ago been displaced by the more “modern” strains of steel band

and soca music. The song lyrics reflect the subversive spirit of Carnival, which humorously overturns the norms of “proper” everyday social life. Temporarily freed from normal constraints, the “Saga Gals” (young girls in fancy dress) leave their watchful mothers at home and venture out on their own to take over the town.

Chorus:

Mami, way, ay.

Saga gal step out on the road (town).

When saga gal come to rule the town (road) (day).

When we step out on the road,

All de young gal leaving their mommy home.

Ey, oh, those saga gal going to rule the day.

Soon as we step out on the road,

All de young gal leaving their mommy home.

6. LAMIZÈ (Maroon song)

Performed by Norman Miller (lead vocal), with Daniel Alexander, Sonny Francis, and Saville Greenridge (chorus) and hoeing sounds.

Recorded on August 7, 1962, in La Floretta, Grenada.

This work song (like 11 and 16 below) was recorded in context. The sound of the cultivators’ hoes hitting soil is as much a part of the music as their voices. Lomax, a veteran recordist of African-American prison gangs in the southern United States, was much moved by these Grenadian work-song performances. The jottings he left on this particular session provide a vivid glimpse of his hands-on recording style – his close involvement with and active encouragement of, the performers – and give some idea of the emotional pull this work-song genre exerted on him:

Five men, alternating leader’s parts, sang magnificent maroon songs while ripping up the earth with their hoes, drinking, laughing, sweating, linked by the beauty of rolling away the mother earth, all together, and with proudly, loudly joined voice. . . . The singers were quickly my intimates and became very relaxed. I lay in the furrows ahead of them, trying to keep the mike warmly close but just out of the way of their impetuously flashing hoes. Stayed until after dark, lost light meter, almost missed boat.

This particular song appears to be one of the better-known maroon songs in Grenada; audio engineer Emory Cook recorded it in a different part of the island (see *Grenada Stories and Song* (Cook, 1957).

Call:

Mwen tini . . .

Response:

Lamizè!

Calls:

Papa-mwen pale ou

Manman-oute pale ou

Mwen pa manman-i

Anba kann-na

Translation:

Call:

I have...

Chorus:

Misery! [poverty]

Calls:

My father told you

Your mother told you

I am not their mother

Under the sugar cane.

7. ANTO-GWÉ-GWÉ-NO (Lullaby)

Performed by Irene McQueen.

Recorded on August 5, 1962, in La Fortune, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

Although the performer told Lomax that this is a "French Creole lullaby," the lyrics appear to be in some language other than Grenadian French Creole and may include vestiges of an unidentified African language (or languages).

An to gwe gwe u ya

Shay bon kon bon ko no

Bon kon bon on kon

So no ko no ko

Pam na ka si ke si ke an to

An to gwe gwe u ya

U ya u ya shay bon kon

Bon kon bon kon

So no ko no ko

Pam n ka si ke si ke an to

8. LITTLE BABY CRYIN' (Lullaby)

Performed by Irene McQueen.

Recorded on August 5, 1962, in La Fortune, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

With the almost Gershwin-like quality of the rising melody of its opening line, this lullaby is an example of how a song from a folk tradition can sound as sophisticated as anything in a composed folk opera.

*Little baby crying, what you crying for?
Thief must be stole away your heart.
Little baby crying, sleep and go to bed,
Don't you cry.*

9. LEMME GO MY JUMBY (Cocoa lute)

Performed by Alstead McQueen.

Recorded on August 5, 1962, in La Fortune, St. Patrick's, Grenada

Distinctive individual performance styles are discernable even on seemingly simple instruments like the one-string cocoa lute, making its players immediately recognizable, as in jazz. Here, Alstead McQueen displays a more aggressively rhythmic attack than that of Norris Welsh heard above (# 2), who employed subtler vocal and melodic effects.

10. HOORAY, IRENA (Launching song)

Performed by Jean Glaud (lead vocal), with male chorus.

Recorded on August 4, 1962, in Gouyave, St. John's, Grenada.

Boat building has long been an important part of the traditional maritime economy of coastal Grenada. Chanteys and launching songs went hand in hand with the seafaring way of life in this and other islands of the Lesser Antilles.

Chorus:

*Hooray, Irena,
Hooray, Irena,
Before you go to jail,
I want you lend me you crochet hat.*

*Irena, public garage is yours,
I telling her, put your motor inside,
And before you go to jail,
I want you lend me you crochet hat. (repeat)*

*Irena, big water we in,
I telling her big water you in,
And before you go to jail,
I want you lend me you crochet hat.*

*Irena, let's pull for the shore,
I telling her pull all for the shore,*

*And before you go to jail,
I want you bring me you
crochet hat.*

*Irena, put your motor inside,
I telling her put your motor inside,
And before you go to jail,
I want you lend me you crochet hat. (repeat)*

*Irena, let's put the boat inside,
I telling her put the boat inside,
And before you go to jail,
I want you lend me you crochet hat.*

11. KANGO (Maroon song)

Performed by Saville Greenridge (lead vocal), with Norman Miller, Daniel Alexander, Sonny Francis, and Saville Greenridge (chorus) and hoeing sounds.

Recorded on August 7, 1962, in La Floretta, Grenada.

Saville Greenridge, the lead singer here, was in the chorus of “Lamizè” (# 6 above), illustrating another typical feature of Afro-Caribbean performance style: namely, the essentially egalitarian nature of the leader-chorus relationship, in which anyone singing “backup” can potentially take over the lead as well. Work and music are inextricably joined, as the chorus swells in what almost sounds like a religious song.

12. YOU DON'T KNOW TOMORROW (Stone-game song) (Fire, Fire)

Performed by John Phillip (lead vocal), with chorus.

Recorded on August 5, 1962, in La Fortune, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

As in many other parts of the Caribbean, stone-passing games were once regularly played at wakes in Grenada, where they are known as “pound stone.” The players sit or kneel in a circle, passing stones from one to the other in time with the songs. The object of most stone games is to keep one's movements tightly synchronized with the rhythm of the song so as to avoid having one's hand pounded by one of the stones making their way around the circle.

*Fire, Fire!
You don't know tomorrow,
Fire, Fire!*

*Three white horses in the stable,
Get them out and cut the navel.*

13. JOHN GONE AWAY (Fishermen's wake song)

Performed by Simpson Jeremiah (lead vocal), with chorus and struck metal.

Recorded on August 5, 1962, in La Fortune, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

The Grenadian tradition of fishermen's wake songs documented here is similar to what is called "breaking the barrel" in neighboring Carriacou. In both cases, fishermen honor a deceased colleague by walking around a barrel or keg (used to represent a sloop or schooner) and singing sea chanteys, keeping time by hitting the side with sticks or other objects. Lomax described the version he recorded as follows:

Four seamen march round a barrel, pushing crosspieces in front of them, which are attached to a pole (representing the mast) upright in the barrel. The action is like tramping round the capstan. As the walls sound, they beat rhythm on the side of the barrel and sing a chantey in honor of their dead comrade.

14. LUNDI-MARDI (Kalinda)

Performed by Ralph Mitchel (*coupé* drum and vocal) and George Hille (*oulé* drum and vocal).

Recorded on August 6, 1962, in Petit Bacai, Grenada.

Like many other Caribbean islands, Grenada had its own version of *kalinda*, a neo-African dance-drumming genre once performed as part of its Nation Dance complex. The style of drumming heard in this Grenadian selection is similar to Trinidadian *kalinda* drumming. In both Trinidad and Grenada, *kalinda* was closely associated with stick-fighting, and was incorporated into Carnival early on. In Grenada, it was also used to accompany a variety of other games. The day Lomax made this recording, the performers decided to use the occasion to play a "chicken game." His brief notes convey the exuberance of the performance:

Sunny Sunday afternoon. Village green. A little meadow beside a country road. A tree at one end. A crowd of fifty people gathered for amusement. The drums are going. A cock lies in the grass. A game is being organized for which the cock is the prize. A green stalk of banana is buried with about two inches showing above the grass. The player is blindfolded carefully and led 30 yards away down the slope. He has a long stick in his hands. When the drums begin, he starts to dance, kalinda style, and capers his way toward the drums, guiding himself by sound and by what his bare feet can make out of the terrain. He has only one chance at the simulated cock's head. When he feels sure he has found the spot, he sweeps across the grass with his stick, as if to knock off the cock's head. The young fellows bragged mightily, paid their dollars, missed [by] a mile. A couple of the older men won every try. Laughter. Joy.

Smoke, smoke, fire brigade.

Lendi, madi [. . .] [Monday, Tuesday . . .]

Lendi, madi [. . .] [Monday, Tuesday . . .]

15. MY LOVE I LOST, FIND HER, AWAY SHE GO (Cocoa lute)

Performed by Norris Welsh.

Recorded on August 5, 1962, in St. George's, Grenada.

Here Norris Welsh develops the rhythmic drive of an entire pan ensemble, all on a one-string instrument.

16. WORK SONG (Maroon song)

Performed by Norman Miller (lead vocal), with Daniel Alexander, Sonny Francis, and Saville Greenridge (chorus) and hoeing sounds.

Recorded on August 7, 1962, in La Floretta, Grenada.

Chorus:

[. . .] *sa la ba mwen ki Mennen.*

*I call the gal with the sweet sapodilla,
Then come see you daughter [doctor (?)],
perform you duty.
Come, gal, and let me speak to you.
Oh, mwen te di ou [Oh, I told you].
Oh, darling, let me talk to you.
Call the gal with the sweet sapodilla,
Daughter, is you daughter.*

17. DOLLY MAN ROKO (Stone-game song)

Performed by Lena McQueen (lead vocal), with Samuel McQueen, Irene McQueen, and Simpson Jeremiah (chorus).

Recorded on August 5, 1962, in La Fortune, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

The melody of this game song is similar to "Eliza Kongo," # 25 in *Dominica: Creole Crossroads* in this series.

*Dolly man, roko, tim bam,
Dolly man, do what all you don't know.*

18. THERE'S NO ONE TO LAY MERCY ON ME (Lullaby)

Performed by Irene McQueen.

Recorded on August 5, 1962, in La Fortune, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

Irene McQueen, who performs what is probably an African lullaby on # 7 above, delivers this song whose melody and theme bear the strong stamp of having originated in the British Isles.

*Oh, once I was happy and young.
Oh, once I was happy and free.
For the babes on my lap
I shall perish and then,
There's no one to lay mercy on me.*

*Oh, mother and father, don't cry.
Come forth and open the door.
For the babes on my lap,
I shall perish and then
There's no one to lay mercy on me.*

*Oh, why should I leave my dear home?
Oh, why should I leave my dear home?
For the babes on my lap
I shall perish and then
There's no one to lay mercy on me.*

*Oh, mother and father, don't cry.
Come forth and open the door.
For the babes on my lap
I shall perish and then,
There's no one to lay mercy on me.*

19. ROULE, ROULE (Shortknee Carnival song)

Performed by Simpson Jeremiah (lead vocal) and Claude George (banjo), with Claudius Andall, Alexis George, and Irene McQueen (chorus).

Recorded on August 5, 1962, in La Fortune, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

Here, a typical village band of the kind that once accompanied calypso singers in Grenada, performs its version of a Shortknee song. Shortknee is the name of a masked character with a long history in Grenada. Descended from an older Carnival figure known as Pierrot Grenade (believed to have first appeared on the island in the seventeenth century), Shortknee is an aggressive character who roams the countryside during Carnival, dressed in a distinctive costume typified by baggy trousers tied above the knee. Chanting loudly as he goes, he makes belligerent motions, jabbing at the air and sometimes throwing white powder at those who cross his path. Some Shortknees stop from time to time to recite elaborate speeches combining French Creole and English. Competitive speechmaking and boasting may lead to fighting, and in some areas the Shortknee and stick-fighting traditions have merged. In the past, bands of Shortknees from different villages and districts would often meet and clash, sometimes resulting in lasting feuds.

The lyrics of the song featured here, in a mixture of French Creole and Grenadian English Creole, mention the rival villages of Chantimelle and Mount Rueil, which are famous for being at the center of Shortknee feuding. When the lead singer speaks of "me bull jumping," he is likely referring to the long stick, called a "bull," used as a whip by Shortknee (and by Pierrot Grenade before him), to punish those who arouse his ire. Because of the unruly demeanor of Shortknee bands and the perceived potential for violence, there have been periodic attempts since colonial times to suppress this and other local masquerades (thus the references in this song to being detained in the police station). Continuing attempts to curb the boisterous behavior of such masked performers

– culminating in the Carnival Regulation Act of 1990 – have led to the decline of Grenada’s indigenous Carnival, which has been largely replaced by a tamer, institutionalized version modeled on the present-day Trinidad Carnival. But the unregulated Shortknees made something of a comeback in the 1980s and remain active, particularly in St. Patrick’s, where Lomax made this recording.

Chorus:

Mama, roule, roule, roule, roule, roule. Di Rose Hill sa.
[Mama, roll, roll, roll, roll, roll. Tell that to Rose Hill.]

Ah, mama, I quite in the station.

Mama, look me bull jumping.

Mwen te di Rose Hill sa [I told that to Rose Hill],
Mwen te di Chantimelle sa [I told that to Chantimelle].

Ah, mama, I quite in the station.

Mama, look me bull jumping.

Ah, mama, I quite in the station.

Mama, police touching me.

Ah, mwen te di Rose Hill sa [Ah, I told that to Rose Hill].

Mwen te di Mount Rueil sa [I told that to Mount Rueil].

Mama, I quite in the station.

Mama, police man touching.

Ah, mwen te di Mount Rueil sa [Ah, I told that to Mount Rueil].

Mama, sa ba lane pase [Mama, that wasn’t last year].

YORUBA (Shango songs)

In Grenada it is common to hold seasonal celebrations called Shango (thanksgiving feast), which coincide with the agricultural cycle. These recordings were made in early August, which is very close to the time of year when this kind of ceremony would normally be held. If this Shango was staged for the purposes of the recording session, it nevertheless turned into ritual, since a spirit possession happened during the session (see notes to 23 and 24).

NOTE ON THE ANNOTATIONS, TRANSLATIONS, AND TRANSCRIPTIONS

The annotations that appear in italics in the following section were supplied by Maureen Warner-Lewis, who, together with Funso Aiyejina, also provided the Yoruba texts and translations.

An underlined s (s) is pronounced *sh*, as in English.

An underscore under a vowel (e.g., a, e) indicates that it is nasalized.

20. BABA ORI O (Prayer for water)

Performed by Babsy McQueen (lead vocal), with female chorus and drums.

Recorded on August 6, 1962, in Levera, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

The singers told Lomax that this was a prayer for water; the song accordingly invokes the ancestors and the earth as a sustainer of life.

This is a hymn of invocation to one's destiny. The Yoruba consider the head the seat of individual fortune, and it is therefore accorded worship and sacrifices. The final line may either be a reference to the beads that distinguish worshipers of particular deities, or it may be an acknowledgement that Earth, herself a deity, being a sustainer as well as final home, deserves to be invoked as well to ensure a good destiny.

*Baba ori o
Ori o ije ko dide
Iya ori o
Ori o ije ko dide
Ileke orisa
Ile s(un) ori sa*

Translation:

*Father of my head,
My destiny, eat [the offering] and rise.
Mother of my head,
My destiny, eat [the offering] and rise.
Beads of the orisha,
Earth surely prospers one's fate.*

21. RAGBA RAGBA YE

Performed by unknown male lead vocalist, with female chorus, drums, and boli.

Recorded on August 6, 1962, in Levera, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

Many dances require circular movement. The song, with its insistent and joyous rhythm, asserts the fulfillment that comes from communal activity, perhaps in this case worship, since dance is an integral aspect of Yoruba religious expression.

*Ragba ragba ragba ye
(A maa) sun waju
A maa maa fi a yo*

Translation:

*Round and round, round and round, oh.
By moving forward dancing
We shall be fulfilled and happy.*

22. YEYE BA 'BEJI RO (Song for Oshun)

Performed by Christine McQueen (lead vocal), with female chorus, handbell, drums, and boli.

Recorded on August 6, 1962, in Levera, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

The goddess Oshun is associated with motherhood, and fertility is abundantly expressed in the gift of twins. The 'yeye' of the first line refers to Oshun. It is however unclear why Shoponno, the god of smallpox, enters at the second line.

Yeye ba 'beji ro
Sakpana ba 'beji ro
'Beji lo dara wa rOsun o
Iya lo dara wa rOsun o

Translation:

Mother, stand by the twins.

Shoponno, stand with the twins.

It is good for the twins to succeed in finding Oshun.

It is good for [the twins'] mother to seek and find Oshun.

23. BRING ME WATER FOR LILLY

Performed by Irene McQueen (lead vocal), with female chorus, drums, and boli.

Recorded on August 6, 1962, in Levera, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

“Bring Me Water for Lilly” is perhaps the most complex song in this collection, in terms of form and meaning. Just as Catholicism, Protestantism, and Yoruba religion have been syncretized to various degrees on Grenada, so have languages. This song is a perfect illustration of the interplay of the three languages on Grenada: French Creole, English, and Yoruba.

Maureen Warner-Lewis's interpretation is as follows:

[This song] is an intriguing instance of a Yoruba song in the transitional stage of becoming an English and French Creole one. Ma in the first stanza could represent mother, or Yoruba maa (I will), also expressed as English Creole (“I go”), as in the last line of the first stanza. In the second stanza, the French Creole word for first person, mwe, substitutes for Yoruba first person, mo. The congruence of sound between Lilly, the female name, and Yoruba ile / ule (house) is a further aspect of semantic shift from a Yoruban context to a Caribbean one.

The context is problematic: as a sacred song, it appears to assert the spiritual authority of the “I” persona who knows the rituals of the “ile awo” (house of mysteries or shrine). Water is part of such rituals, and ceremonies for Lilly require the use of water. The Yoruba word ewo is a caution to avoid a particular place and is used when water, ritual or otherwise, is being thrown. But the word here may also contain a veiled threat against those who order the life of the abused “I” persona. The change in the second stanza to

awo (spiritual secret), if intentional, suggests a sacred reading of ile /ule (house). Or the initial Ma may refer to a water goddess, such as Yemoja, who is being supplicated to bring her waves to take away the food offerings made by Lilly and left on the shoreline. The song may be a secular one, or it may be a sacred song transitioning to a secular theme, in which relations between servant or slave and master or mistress are being exposed. Such an interpretation is supported by the self-referent 'nigger,' which was normative in the plantation and colonial eras.

In the original sequence as recorded by Lomax, a song to Shango comes just before the one below to Dada, which immediately precedes a possession. The singer of "Bring Me Water for Lilly" may have sensed that a possession was imminent, and this song may contain yet another veiled allusion to that event.

*Ma, bring the water for Lilly.
Maa, bring the water for Lilly, ewo.
The water, the water for Lilly.
Nigger, go bring the water for Lilly, ewo.*

*Mo j(e) agba mama nule.
Mwe j(e) agba papa nule.
Mwe j(e) agba mama nule awo.*

*Mo j(e) apala [apar_o] mama nule.
Mo j(e)apala papa nule.*

Translation:

*Mother, bring the water for Lilly.
I will bring the water for Lilly, have a care.
The water for Lilly –
The black (wo)man will bring the water for Lilly, beware.*

*I am the female elder in the house.
I am the male elder in the house.
I am the senior priestess of the shrine.*

*I am the female bushfowl in the house.
I am the male outcast in the house.*

24. SE E GBERIN O

Performed by Babsy McQueen (lead vocal), with female chorus, drums, and boli.
Recorded on August 6, 1962, in Levera, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

Dada is the mythical King of Oyo who abdicated in favor of his brother Shango. Dada was famous for his matted and curly hair; hence, he is the patron god of children born with such hair.

Immediately after this song, the drumming stopped – there had been a spirit possession during the ceremony. Since Shango is invoked in Grenada to bring rain and a good harvest, and since this song cycle may have been recorded during a thanksgiving feast tied to the agricultural cycle, the *orisha* who has “come down” may very well be Shango. Dada is not usually given in lists of known *orishas* for Grenada, but he is the brother of Shango, and the two are often mentioned in the same song, as they are here and elsewhere in the Caribbean.

Se e gberin o
E ma n je a riya, baba wa
E ma (ma) je a ri
Dada lo ni wo ye
Sango lo ni wo ye
Iya lo ni wo ye

Translation:

Will you sing the chorus?
May we not see suffering, our father,
May we not see it.
It's Dada who is making joyful noises.

It's Shango who is making joyful noises.
It's Mother who is making joyful cries.

25. KARI WALE, IBABA O (Prayer)

Performed by Babsy McQueen (lead vocal), with female chorus.
Recorded on August 6, 1962, in Levera, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

This song may also be related to the agricultural cycle.

A maa pe ibale
Kari wale, ibaba o
N ya ma pe ibale
Kari wale, ibaba o

Translation:

We are chanting earth's homage
All over and back home, oh, father.
You had better chant earth's homage
All over and back, oh, father.

26. OGUN MAA SE SILE WA

Performed by Lena McQueen (lead vocal), with female chorus, drums, and boli.
Recorded on August 6, 1962, in Levera, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

“‘Ojo ko mení owó’ is a proverb, and rain functions here as a metaphor for war. The

internecine wars that fractured the Oyo Empire toward the close of the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth were the cause of many Yoruba-speaking people being captured and diverted to the transatlantic slave trade.”

It is interesting to note that even though the Yoruba who came to Grenada were not part of the slave trade, the Yoruba wars would have been raging at the time of their arrival in 1849.

*Ka rele
Ya wa
(O) 'jo ko meni awa [owo]
Ogun maa se sile wa
Ogun maa se, tele wa*

Translation:

*Let's go home.
Come on.
The rain is no respecter of persons.
War is going on at our homes,
War is going on, follow us.*

27. WELE, WELE (Offering to death)

Performed by Babsy McQueen (lead vocal), with female chorus.
Recorded on August 6, 1962, in Levera, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

This is likely a chant to Oya, the most loyal of the wives of Shango, once King of Oyo, the political center of the Oyo/Yoruba Empire, and after his death deified as god of thunder and lightning. The chant asserts that since Oya has awoken in health, all will be well.

This song was described to Lomax as an “offering to death.” Oya is viewed in Nigeria and in the Americas as having a close relationship with the dead; in Cuba, it is said that “*Oyá parió a la muerte*” (Oyá gave birth to death).

*Wele wele ni toji te o
Ayaba ti de loni
Aba (oba) ule, iba ko se
Ayaba ma jire*

Translation:

*Wayward is the lot of one who wakes into disgrace.
The queen has arrived today.
Queen, may our pleas be granted.
The queen certainly has woken well.*

28. YEYE OKU O (Cantique)

Performed by Babsy McQueen (lead vocal), with female chorus.

Recorded on August 6, 1962, in Levera, St. Patrick's, Grenada.

This address to the dead elders who appear in dreams asks for their intervention in the world of the living, since it is the living not the dead who are the dangers to existence. Another interpretation locates the dirge at "ijeje oku," the sixth-day anniversary after a funeral or after the egungun parade of masquerades embodying dead ancestors. In this interpretation, the second line would read "alaami se beru araye/alaye" and would refer to the distinctive costumes of the various masquerades, emblems of the eventual passing of each of the living onlookers and reminders of the present danger posed by the living who engineer the death of their fellow human beings.

*Yeye oku o
Ala mi se
Beru awaye
Baba lode oku o
Mama, iya la mi je o, beru*

Translation:

*Dead mothers,
My dream has come to pass,
Be afraid of the living.
Ancestors in the realm of the dead,
Mothers, we are suffering, be afraid.*

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