

Folklore of Jamaica : a survey

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Folklore of Jamaica

A Survey

By *MacEdward Leach*, Philadelphia

Jamaica represents a mingling under close confinement of seven major heterogeneous cultures and ethnic groups. The result is a folklore rich and varied. The first inhabitants (c. 1000 A.D.) were the Arawakian Indians, an agriculture and fishing people. For five hundred years they lived a peaceful life of forest and stream untouched by outside peoples except for an occasional Indian raid from adjacent islands. Then on May 1, 1494, Columbus landed at what was to be called St. Ann's Bay on the north shore and nine years later he spent over a year there. He left a settled community under the protection of his son, Diego Colon. The first crude village soon gave way to a pretentious town laid out on the European pattern. A cathedral with a well and an oubliette sort of dungeon stood facing the sea. From the square on which it was located a broad avenue extended inland, lined on both sides by houses. The city was named Seville. Recently archaeological exploration has uncovered foundation lines, remnants of walls, many remains of tile, glass and the like.

The first activity of the Spaniards was to reduce the Indians to a system of peonage (not exactly slavery) and with their help to clear land and plant food crops. The Indians gave much information concerning indigeneous plants and methods of preparing them. The number of Arawakian words in European languages today attests to this. A few examples in English are: potato, tobacco, maize, barbecue.

The north shore proving very unhealthful, the Spaniards finally moved to what is now Spanish Town on the south shore where they built a new capital and from where their domination gradually spread over the Island and thence to Cuba. The work was done by Indian peons; the Spaniards lived pleasant lives of feudal barons. By the middle of the sixteenth century they became vulnerable to attacks from freebooters, buccaneers, and pirates and to increasing attacks from the forces of the English, French, Dutch, Italian and Portuguese. The constant conflict begot legend and story. Finally in 1655 a considerable English force under Penn and Venables captured Spanish Town and forced the Spanish government to surrender. The Spaniards, however, continued a guerrilla warfare from the interior of the Island with the aid of the Negroes whom they had imported previously as slaves. Around 1670 they were finally defeated and forced to flee overseas to Cuba leaving most of the Negroes associated with them

in the remote mountain fastness of the Cockpits, the rugged limestone mountains of Trelawny.

The English proceeded to establish colonies, but they used the Island also as a base for buccaneering operations against the Spanish in other parts of the Caribbean. Port Royal became the *de facto* capital and the base for all the buccaneer operations. The Island flourished by virtue of the vast treasure brought in by the buccaneers. Eventually the greatest of these, Henry Morgan, was knighted and made governor of Jamaica. When the English failed in their attempts to enslave the descendents of the Negroes brought into Jamaica by the Spaniards they imported Negroes as slaves mostly from the Gold Coast. Soon a plantocracy developed not unlike that of the American south. The proprietors were drawn from the English upper class and retained in Jamaica all aspects of English country culture. Gradually there developed the 'Great Houses', each completely self-sustaining. Some were great cattle ranches; others cultivations producing bananas, or cane, or copra. The proprietors developed a very restricted aristocratic culture. Changes came with the abolition of slavery in the eighteen thirties, though life on the great plantations went on without great modification. The Negroes remained in the quarters and drew supplies from the plantation store-house against script instead of receiving direct allowances. Of course, they could leave, but few did. Where would they go? Something of this system obtains to this day. It was the Negroes in the cities and in the small plantings who changed. Education came to them gradually; slowly an urban Negro society developed.

Around the middle of the century Indians from India were brought in as laborers. They did not prove very successful; however, they remained to become small farmers and goat ranchers. They contributed a store of folklore to the common pool. Over the years Chinese have come into the Island, mostly as shop keepers.

It would be hard to find a more polyglot culture than that which has developed in Jamaica. Indian, Spanish, Ashanti, Buccaneer, Pirate, West Coast Negro, British, English slaves, East Indians, Chinese. Each of these has reacted on the others to produce stories, legends, songs, lore of extraordinary richness. Here indeed is a laboratory of folk culture comprised of a labyrinthian tangle of cross culturization.

But it is the Negro culture that predominates and for two reasons: His rate of culture evolution has been slower, so that his society has remained longer a folk society; and secondly, he is more inclined to borrow and adapt the cultures around him and in doing that he reworks

the alien culture to his pattern. For example, he borrows an English ballad, but rather than keep it intact (even though he speaks English) he 'negroizes' it, works it into his own song pattern.

The Tale

It is logical and convenient to present the folklore of Jamaica by genres, and it is logical to begin with the tale, for tale, with song a close second, is most distinctive.

Though occasionally a European tale is found intact, it is the Anansi tale that is universal. The tale pattern, the main character, Anansi, most of the subordinate characters, many of the plots of these tales ultimately derive from West Africa, where their analogues and variants are still to be found. Anansi, as in West Africa, is spider. There is evidence that spider was an African culture hero. A Congo story, for example, tells of spider stealing fire from the gods and bringing it to man, a story that may survive in America in the Georgia Negro-Indian tale of grey spider trying in vain to secure fire from the gods for man and in his attempt getting burned to the red color the Georgia spider has today. Some of the tribes on the West Coast of Africa consider spider the ancestor of man. Anansi may very likely therefore be totemic.

Today in West Africa, in Jamaica, and in the Caribbean in general, Anansi has become rather the trickster (cf. coyote among the Plains Indians). Trickster Anansi is rapacious, unprincipled, selfish. He gains his desires by thievery and trickery. He is lazy, but he is friendly and cheerful. Often the other characters in the stories treat him with amusement or contempt. According to the tellers of the tales he speaks in a kind of whine. They dramatically reproduce his way of talking by pursing up their lips and pitching their voices in a high register. Other characters commonly found in the Anansi tales are Monkey (often gets the better of Anansi), Tiger (leopard? lion?), John Crow (Vulture), Senake (snake), Woss (wasp), Candlefly (lightning-bug), Assona (elephant?), Trapong (Tarpon), Tacoma (Anansi's son or brother), Gaulin (egret), domestic animals like fowl, donkey, puss, dog.

The tales are usually quite short, developed by way of dialogue with a minimum of description and comment. Unlike many folktales these are usually built around a single motif. This gives them dramatic focus and quick movement. Many of the older tales have a chantable pattern. The song element embodies the climax or a key situation in the story. For example, a story tells of Anansi learning the magic words by which he can get access to Tiger's house. The magic words

are always sung; the remainder of the story narrated. The stories characteristically begin with formulaic opening phrases and likewise close with similar stereotypes. Beginning stereotypes make reference to indefinite time or situation: One day ... Once a long time ago ... Deh was Anansi ... There was dis ooman ... The ending is frequently "Jack Mantora me no choose any", or "Jack man dora" ..., or "me no want none".

Animals in the Anansi stories are given distinct personalities and throughout are dramatically presented. There is little evidence that they are meant to be symbolic. It has been suggested that Anansi is a self portrait of the Negro. If so, it is not a very flattering one, for he is utterly unprincipled; he has no concern or affection even for his own family. By cleverness or trickery he gains his end against foes who are usually more moral, who do live by the rules, and who are stronger.

The Songs

Singing in Jamaica is everywhere and at all times. It is almost always a part of other activity. One sings as he works (digging songs, or work songs); one sings in his games (playparty songs); one sings in church (religious songs, Pocomanian songs). Relatively few songs are solely for entertainment, and those that are like "Sambo Gal", are usually nothing other than work songs given fixed form, usually by sophisticated singers. The work songs are sung to accompany monotonous work, for they relieve tedium. The tunes of the work songs are stable, but the words vary from day to day or even hour to hour. They are sung to accompany monotonous work and sometimes are even functional as the old sea shantys were. Such songs today are the stevedore or loading songs, and the songs sung to the work of cleaning ballast on the railroad. The work or digging songs are usually sung by a leader and a group. The leader sings out the first line or stanza, usually improvised and the group sings the refrain or bobbin. The song rhythm follows the work rhythm, the axes, hoes, picks, falling together on the heavy accent of the bobbin. Once the song is started anyone may pick it up, improvise on it.

A well-known work song is the banana boat loading song. Harry Bellafonte has adapted and arranged this into a song of social protest.

Day oh! Day oh! Dey de light an' me wanna go home.
 Me no wan' no horse with bridle
 Me no wan no house an lan'
 Day oh! Day oh! Dey de light an' me wanna go home

Come Mister Tallyman, come tally me banana
 Me come yah fe work, me no come fe idle
 Day oh! Day oh! Dey de light an' me wanna go home.
 Six hands, seven hands, eight hands—bunch.
 Six hands, seven hands, eight hands—bunch.

Dey de light, daylight. *Tallyman*, the checker who checks the size of the bunch carried. *yah*, here. *fe*, to. *bunch*, nine or more hands.

The text and pattern of such songs as this work song are constantly changing, since good leaders are so considered because of their ability to vary a song and to bring in local allusions. The pronounced rhythms, the wealth of suggestion and innuendo, the symbolism, much of it unconscious, make these songs an important index to the character and culture of the Jamaican Negro.

A number of Jamaican digging songs with a core of narrative have become general and popular and have developed as a consequence more or less fixed form, musical pattern, and language.

The religious songs follow the same pattern as the digging songs. In fact, they are very frequently worked out from digging songs. The pattern of singing is also very similar. This refers to the songs sung by such folk religious groups as the Pocomanians. The songs are indefinitely extended by way of simple repetition and incremental repetition. They are all heavily accented and invariably accompanied by drumming. A bit of one will illustrate.

Where de army go where de army go,
 Where de army go, de angel follow.
 If you follow de army band, de angel follow de army band
 De angel follow de army band
 De angel follow.
 Where de army go, Nanny, where de army go
 Where de army go, Nanny, where de army go
 De angel follow
 De angel follow de army band (repeated four times)
 Where de army go, where de army go
 Where de army go de angel follow.
 etc.

Many entertainment songs—lyric rather than narrative—have come about by words being fitted to the old dancing tunes and to the tunes of the ring games. The waltz, schottische, polka, quadrille in five figures, all furnished tunes for songs on every conceivable subject.

The fifth figure of the quadrille was especially favored, for it was "sweet music". Often today listeners will call out to a singer, "Sing it sweet, man; sing it sweet".

Mummings and Such

Here and there over the Island the old Mummings celebrations held around Christmas time still survive. A good description of these celebrations when they were at their height is to be found in Monk Lewis's *Journal*. The whole reminds one of the Mardi Gras of New Orleans. A 'Queen' is chosen. She is accompanied by 'Set' girls, one group elaborately gowned in blue and the other in red. (They probably represented originally the two divisions of the British navy—the reds and the blues, Scots versus English officers.) The Set Girls and the Queen, The King and the Prince dance in the streets and sing songs mostly of a humorous or satiric character. At this time, Christmas to Twelfth Night, the Negroes were given "freedom". The songs satirized the buckra (boss) and even the plantation owners, and of course, one another.

Associated with the Mummings were The Green Boy and John Canoe. The Green Boy is the English Jack O'Green, a boy clad entirely in greenery. He is probably a character from the old Germanic vegetation rites. In Jamaica he is covered head to toe with cocoanut fronds. John Canoe was a dancer in elaborate costume with an ornate head dress made to resemble a house or a boat. He led the dancers, and there is evidence that along the way, one or more of the party would dash into the houses shouting, "John Canoe", expecting gifts of food, drinks, or money.

The word 'John Canoe' has not been satisfactorily explained, nor has the function or significance of the peculiar head dress. One suggestion is that John Canoe was originally John *inconnu*, the unknown one. Another is that it is John *cornu*, the horned one. Some John Canoes did wear a set of horns. Long in his *History of Jamaica* sees influence of a slave trader on the Guinea Coast c. 1700 whose name was John Conny.

The mummings including John Canoe danced to drums and shakoes (rattles) and occasionally flutes. But some companies simply sang, danced and "capered" with much by-play among the characters. For example, The Prince continually tried to separate The King and The Queen by dancing between them. Others put on street plays drawn from Old English Mummings like St. George and the Turk.

Language Arts and the Proverb

The Jamaican like most Negroes is highly articulate. He loves words and he loves putting them together fancifully and forcefully. And once he gets a telling combination he repeats it at every opportunity and so do others. He likes word games, the kind of verbal exercise to which he has given the name 'toastes', and he likes lying contests and boasting contests.

Occasionally as a form of entertainment two men will engage in a verbal battle, each trying to out-insult the other. The one who gets angry loses. The insults take the form of set speeches filled with long words and with complicated juxtapositions.

As one would expect the proverb is a constant part of everyday speech. It is the storehouse of their philosophy and wit. There are several proverbs for any occasion, making it possible to discourse almost completely in proverbs. Some idea of the frequency of use of the proverb can be had from the fact that one collection alone contains over 7000. Every aspect of life is reflected in proverbial speech.

1. Before a dog go without food him nyam (eat) cockroach.
2. Monkey play fiddle for to make baboon dance.
3. When you go a donkey house don't talk a ears (about).
4. When puss die ratta he come round.
5. De bes (best) fiel hab de bes weed.
6. De dog dat carry de bone here carry bone dar.
7. Greed choke puppy.
8. Lub (love) de cow lub de calf.
9. Nearer to church funder from god.
10. Banana ripe can't green again.
11. When fowl merry hawk catch him chicken.
12. When de rum is in, de wit is out.
13. Dog never nyam (eat) dog.
14. Puss belly full him say ratta sour.
15. Cotton tree fall goat jump him ova.

As one would expect from a people so verbally conscious as the Jamaicans, riddling is a favorite verbal pastime. The riddles are usually short and relatively uncomplicated. They are concrete rather than abstract; most of them are drawn from the characters, qualities, and relationships of the elements in the Jamaican world. In the past it was customary to begin a riddle with a set expression: Riddle me this, riddle me that or perhaps not.

1. Riddle, riddle guess me dis riddle and perhaps not: Me fader send for whole ship of people and all of dem come wi' black head. Ackie (a tree vegetable full of black seeds).
2. Riddle, riddle guess me dis riddle and perhaps not: Old lady slip tore and never can mend. Banana leaf.
3. Riddle me riddle, John me riddle, guess me riddle and perhaps not. Me fader hab a cock in him yard and ebery time him crow, him crow fire. A gun.
4. Wherever de sow go de pig follow. Pumpkin vine.
5. One slice a negro yam sarb (serve) de whol worl. The moon.

Children's Games

Still widely prevalent are the play-party games now becoming rare in America. Nearly a hundred such games have been recorded. Most involve singing and dancing, and most are variations of the pattern of a circle of singers and dancers with individuals breaking in and out of the ring. These games are all originally European and most of them are English. Typical are "Little Sally Water", "London Bridge is Falling Down", "In and Out the Window", "Thread the Needle", "King William". A number of new ring games are made on the pattern of the old ones. Some of the ring games structured in the same way as those derived from England have a great deal more acting. Some even suggest the Buzzard Lope ritual game perhaps from Africa. In the toad game, for example, immediately before each girl is a boy squatting like a toad. He must protect the girl by jumping before the "it" who is trying to capture her. The toads must hop like toads, not run.

In the game "Berry Low" players make a circle two by two with hands clasped before one another. Then they dance with a peculiar shuffle dance one foot flat and the other on the toe, turning around one another.

"Daliman" is very popular, partly for its attractive tune. The tune is often sung separately—as an entertainment song. Twelve or more players sit in a ring each with a stone; the "it" is in the center with a stick. As the song is sung each passes his stone to the right hitting the stone on the floor to coincide with the major beat of the song. Anyone who misses is struck on the knuckles by the "it" with the stick.

A number of games seem to be adaptations of the square dances, lancers, and quadrilles brought to Jamaica by the English. "Turn de Water Wheel, Matilda", "Wheel with a Willing Mind" are examples. In the first the players two by two make a circle. As they sing they rock forward and backward until they reach "Turn de watch wheel",

then each couple swings (wheels) and changes partners with the person on his right.

These games are taught in the schools today and they are also kept alive in the bush districts. Two generations ago they were part of the nine-night ceremonies, the 'wakes' held on the ninth night after the death of a person. At this time there is general entertainment, telling of Anansi stories, riddling, singing and dancing.

Superstition and Belief

The Negroes of Jamaica live in two worlds: the world of airplanes, tractors, rediffusion radio—the world of a 20th century industrial culture—and they live too in the strange spirit world that extends back in time and beyond the seas to the dark west coast of Africa. Truck drivers, laundresses, and cooks go to the Baptist church on Sunday, and on Wednesday they gather at the Pocomanian yard and there, in their vivid multi-colored turbans, they dance and sing for long hours to the drums, in a spiral of hysterical possession. Now and then in a remote corner of a cane or banana plantation when the moon is full they congregate, summoned by the oracle drums for the cumina dance—a dance accompanied by songs in the "unknown" tongues, a dance that spells out a ritual older than the oldest settlement in the new world.

In Jamaica most non-Christian spirit lore centers around the duppy. Duppy has three related meanings in Jamaica: (1) the soul of a dead person, manifest in human form; (2) the soul of the dead manifest in a variety of fabulous beasts, and also in the forms of real animals like lizards and snakes; (3) an order of supernatural beings only vaguely associated with the dead.

The origin of the word "duppy" is difficult. Alice Werner states that "whatever the derivation the name seems to be African". The New English Dictionary lists it as "probably African", but the only reference it gives is from Sloane's History of Jamaica, 1789. The word is certainly African, for it is found today in West Coast African languages. In Sierra Leone, for example, the word "duppy" has two meanings depending on the region and culture group. It means either a child or a ghost. The idea of a duppy or spirit floating around is very African, and is connected with the belief that the spirits of the dead ancestors are always hovering around the village, protecting and watching to see that the tribal laws are well-kept.

The Negro brought the concept of multiple souls from Africa to Jamaica; however, the number of souls possessed by one person is specific; in Jamaica each person possesses just two souls. One is the

good soul, or spirit planted by God, and the other an earthy spirit or a secular one. These spirits can wander away from the body during sleep and then can engage in all sorts of activities as shadows; they consort with shadows of material things like trees, food, and animals. Upon the death of the body the good spirit goes to heaven to await judgment; the earth or secular spirit remains for three days in the coffin with the body. Then, unless proper precautions to prevent its emergence are taken, it leaves the body often as a spiralling blue mist, or as smoke, or as a swarm of tiny flies, or as a shadow. It is now known as a duppy.

It will be convenient to discuss the first two meanings of the duppy together, since they are closely interwoven. Generally the duppy takes human form, and often it takes on the appearance of the body that it inhabited. It is never a ghost in the European sense as something white floating around or as something that "goes bump in the night". One informant in describing the duppy said, "Him look like him dead", another, "Duppy can turn him anything 'cept lamb or donkey". A duppy often takes the form of a dog with red eyes, rollin calf, a three-legged horse, a sea mahmy, or a Bubby Susan. It can at will turn into a shadow and disappear. But usually the duppy is conceived of as a small manlike creature, an homunculus.

The rollin calf (rollin means roaring, not as Beckwith states, roaming), is a calf or calf-like creature that appears at night dragging a long chain and breathing fire or hot air. It chases travelers, chain dragging, trying to kill them by breathing its hot breath on its victims. It is afraid of the moon, except when the moon is directly overhead; consequently its victim can escape by keeping out from under the moon. He can also ward it off by "cutting ten" (making the sign of the cross ten times with a knife). The calf must go ten times around the place where its intended victim cut ten, thus giving him time to escape. It is widely believed that the duppies of butchers become rollin calves, and especially those butchers that give short weight.

Here is a typical rollin calf story; it is from Scots Hall, a Maroon settlement.

I went to a wedding and it was ova an dismiss till late. I want a stop at the 17 mile post and change my clothes and then wear ordinary clothes to go to Scotts Hall. An I change and then reach a place call Dorant Ring. We know a rollin calf live there into an old cart house and when I reach there I never see one ting. It was me and a little boy and we kep on an when we reach Providence Church, I hear ova fifty dogs a barking before me and there was not one in sight. It de rollin calf.

When I reach at de church gate I hear them one fourth ahead of me and I was makin me way, because if a rollin calf is here and is moonshine him cannot move till moon come over him head. Me and Allan walk till we reach Jip Hill and den we hear de whole hillside comin down an you don't see anything, but we was running to head him with the moon. When we get a Jip Hill I say, "Allen, Hell is on; we mus run. The moon is a goin a come over his head and him a goin a catch us." An we run an run an run. Now I know to stop him but I never have it on me or else I would stop him. If you mek a ten in de road and stick up de knife in de ten him cannot move. But we no hab a knife. We run and we come a Mrs. Norther's yard. As she say, "You husband a gone fe (to) meet you, but he come and say maybe you not coming home." Den we see de moon coming over and we run and get home. When we reach a home we cannot sleep in de house. He was like de devil all night round de house, all night round de house roun and roun till about four o'clock. Then we heard nothing more.

When I asked the informant if this rollin calf was the duppy of someone she knew, she said, "That one him always been dere. Him lib there. Him de duppy of a people here before our people here. That's why him chase us."

Occasionally a duppy is seen in the form of a three-legged horse or, as the Jamaicans call it, a three-foot horse. It can gallop faster than any ordinary horse. Like the rollin calf it is seen on moonlight nights, and it kills its victims by blowing its hot breath on them. One can escape it by climbing a tree or by getting on the dark side of the moon.

Here follows another rollin calf story with discussion of the three-foot horse. It is related by Lewis Harries from Cornwall Barracks.

A met a man name Jack Harris and a wake up soon in de morning and a was making up de fire and was crossin de street and I saw a rollin calf, a big white ting. Him is as big as a big goat, long face with fire just gashing out of his eye. It was me and a woman name Gaga Reed that see him. The two of us run in our house back and him run across the road wid de long chain, and him jump right over dat grass piece there ... Every night after as you see de moonshine we always sit down at the back gate and we always see dat light coming through de pasture. Is just so two light like him eyes. And everybody always come and watch it, but I never go after it. But plenty people from the Valley dey go and see if dey can stop dat rollin calf. It goes from house to house and everybody dat have a fowl roost, it go dere and eat do fowl mess at night.

Question: Is it a duppy calf?

Answer: It is a duppy. It is like a calf, big like a goat.

Question: Is he afraid he might get hurt?

Answer: I don't know, Sir. I hear it make with the world.

Question: Have you heard of a three-legged horse?

Answer: Oh, yes Sir. We have one pass from Two River to Orange Valley every November month, a three-foot horse, and him living there when it coming on to most Christmas, and every night we hear it, cut-i-cup, coot-i-cup, coot-i-cup. Him run pon tree foot.

Question: Have you ever seen it?

Answer: De horse, Sir? No, Sir. I never see it because when it pass around tree o'clock or three-thirty. And dat time we in our bed. We never see it but hear.

Jekyll and others attest to the duppy in the form of the whooping boy. This is a boy with long hair and red eyes, who like most duppies prowls on moonlight nights emitting wild whooping noises. Today stories of the whooping boy are rare, though many of the old people have heard of him. The only one I obtained combined the whooping boy with the three-legged horse into a kind of Wild Huntsman story. It is from the Maroons of Accompong.

There is this story. An it is not happening again. When it come to Christmas time there is this drove of cows come up a Rock Riber. This man a drivin and him ridin on a tree foot horse and you hear dis cow man a whooping and a lashin him whip. Always just afore Christmas. After lamp you could no send de pickney out; it was de whoopin boy.

Then there is the duppy known as the Bubby Susan. This is truly a grotesque creature, found without the duppy concept in the folklore of many other peoples. She is a tall woman whose breasts hang down below her knees. When she chases her victims, she throws these pendulous breasts over her shoulders. She kills characteristically by blowing her hot poisonous breath on her quarry.

Finally, the sea mahmy. She is the mermaid of English folklore who has been duppized by the Jamaicans. Unlike these other creatures the sea mahmy is a sweet-tempered duppy who cares for little except sporting in the water and sitting on the bank, combing her gorgeous hair. The most famous is the sea mahmy in the great blue hole near Port Antonio. The only unconventional sea mahmy I found was the one near Mandeville who lived in a lake. Each day she came out and sat on the shore holding an umbrella over herself. A bold young man

succeeded in stealing the umbrella. The sea mahmy begged him to return it. When he would not she disappeared, and the lake dried up.

Such creatures as these just described are not at the center of duppy lore. They are all, I think, like the mermaids, older or borrowed creatures duppized. From African times and continuing, especially among the bush Negroes to this day, duppies are thought of more frequently as humanoid. They are described as looking exactly like some actual person, now dead, or the duppy appears as a revenant, a mannikin, or as a shadow of a person. Any of these may be duppies of relatives or acquaintances. In addition to these, many duppies of a generalized, unidentifiable sort abound. The duppy can always assume any disguise it fancies; it is found, for example, in the guise of toad, snake, lizard, and even the candle fly. A family duppy can be helpful, can be almost a household familiar. He can be set to guard household treasure; sometimes money is buried at the foot of the cotton tree where he likes to stay so that he can guard it. All of the old Spanish jars buried full of treasure at the time the Spaniards fled are guarded by duppies. But he can also be vicious and vindictive. One informant, talking about the unidentifiable duppies, said, "They always been here; they here long before the black man come in and before the white people; some of them are Indian duppies and some are Spaniard duppies and other peoples." Many cite the coolie duppy as a very bad one, one you plant on your neighbor when you want to harm him, and the China duppy as a particularly helpful one.

The nature and habits of the duppy vary considerably, but generally he is malevolent. When I asked about good duppies one informant said, "The good duppy, him the one that don't bother you." Duppies cause accidents, set fires, break bones, cause you to lose your money, or the love of your woman. Often they openly attack you with club, knife, stone, or machete. They are quiescent in the daytime and roam at night, getting back to their hiding places, usually the roots of the cotton tree, before the first daylight. They do issue forth briefly at noon. They always walk in a whirling fashion; "the feets hardly tech de groun, jess de toes and thats' how you tell a duppy what look like a man.» When the duppy rides a donkey he faces the tail.

The following story using characteristically folktale climatic structure illustrates the duppy calling the living to the land of the dead. (I could get no information about the proper names. The binding of the jaw is characteristic treatment of the dead.)

Now dere was a little boy, a out-of-the-way little fellow, trickify. Him will go in de bush all day a ketch bud. Him set calabán ketch pon

Sunday day. So him modder always scold him off a day, say not a do it, but no word at de boy's ears; him keep on. At lenght and at last de modder dead, and when de modder dead him still go on wid dat trade, so de modder turn one partridge and ketch in a him calaban. Him open it; him tek out de partridge; him go fe let him go. But after him turn back and let him go de partridge sing: (a de duppy, yu know, de modder).

"Come tek me out, come tek me out, Simon Tu-tu, me Lemon Boy." And Simon go tek him out de calaban, den him say:

"Kill me now, kill me now, Simon Tu-Tu, me Lemon Boy." Simon kill him, him dead but him say:

"Simon Tu-tu yu Lemon Boy, come pick me now."

The story takes him through the picking, singing, gutting, washing the pot, and boiling.

Then the duppy says:

"Go call coffin maker, go call coffin maker, Simon Tu-tu, yu Lemon Boy."

Simon he cry now but him ha fe do what him de tell him fe do. Him call coffin maker and him say now:

"Come eat me now, come eat me now, Simon Tu-tu yu Lemon Boy."

And Simon lay to him and eat him off. When he eat him off, him say:

"Come go in a room, come go in a room, Simon Tu-Tu, etc." and then him say when yu go in a room, look upon a bed foot der yu see one white piece of clart hard dere. Tek de piece and tie up yu jaw, Simon Tu tu, yu Lemon Boy." And Simon tek the clart and him tie up him jaw. And him say, "Go in a bed, go in a bed; go way, go lie dung yu Lemon boy; pon yu back, yu Lemon Boy." And Simon go in a bed and lie dung pon him back in a de bed and was stiff dead and dat was de end of de story.

Bud, bird. *calaban*, calabash.

Since the duppy is always a potential source of danger and evil, man has worked out ways of controlling and combating it. First, it can be stopped at the source. When a body is buried its duppy can be "planted down"—rendered powerless to leave the coffin—by various ways. One way, still widely practiced, consists in throwing a shovel full of parched peas into the grave. So long as they do not grow, the duppy cannot escape. A shrub planted in the grave upside down, that is, roots out, is also efficacious. Two informants from different regions told me that the limb of the cotton tree placed on the coffin would keep the duppy down. This is interesting and significant, since the cotton tree is the one place where the duppies most frequently gather. A person who

has reason to fear the duppy of a man being buried should get shavings from the coffin or a bit of sod from the first turning of the grave. He must carry these around with him at all times as protection. Incidentally, an obeah man can use these objects to set a duppy on a person. Wives must guard themselves carefully against the duppies of dead husbands. If precautions are not taken, such a one will return to have sexual relations with the living wife; this is very likely to happen during the first nine nights after the husband's death. Such relations will make the wife barren or will produce dead children. The wife can guard against this by renouncing the husband publically and formally at the coffining. The one ceremony of this sort I witnessed took place in the bush not far from Mile Gully. It was very dramatic. The open coffin rested on two chairs. The dead man was dressed in a black suit with a wide purple ribbon crossing from his left shoulder to his waist; his hands were folded across his breast. The widow appeared and all the mourners gathered around stepped back. Then the widow approached the coffin and, looking intently at the dead, she said, "John, I'm trou wi'yu; I'm trou (through) with yu. Don't ever come back." And then she slipped a folded handkerchief under his hands; I was told later that it contained clippings of her pubic hair.

In the following story from Alligator Pond the duppy of the dead husband returns only to find another man already in his place.

Once dere was a lady and her husband died, and she would not light the lamp and I ask her why she would not light the lamp. And she say if she light the lamp, her husband will come in. And, Sir, when we went to bed a night about one o'clock I hear some grumblin in the house. I hear the table shake, all the crockery, de window knock, de door toss, and about half an hour after I feel a ting upon my foot was as cold as cold and I kick and I bawl and I holler and I kick and bawl, and I holler and I kick, and de woman raise up I tell her to light de lamp and she would never light de lamp I run right out of de house de night and come right round a me mudder house an I leave her alone after. She would never light de lamp. Must be she, him was a lookin for and him miss and take my foot bottom. I kick and I bawl and I holler, for I never feel anyting in life so cold, but as I not afraid of duppy I open the door and come right home and leave she alone in de bed. Yes sir, she would never light de lamp. De man was comin to take some relief and him miss her an take me.

But many duppies exist from the past and from uncontrolled burials. Even many Spanish duppies still roam around; they are certain to be found at the places where the Spaniards buried treasure. These hoards

of wandering duppies are a constant source of danger. There are a dozen methods one can use to guard against them. Cutting ten will turn back not only rollin calves but any pursuing duppy. One explanation is that the duppy cannot count beyond nine and, confronted by ten, must start counting over again and so gives his victim opportunity to escape; another is that the white magic of the sign of the cross stops them. Peas, rice, sand cast before a pursuing duppy will stop him because he must halt to count the grains before he can continue. One can turn away and stop a pursuing duppy by shouting at it: "Ig no ring ya no bar ditos doranti placitus." These are powerful words in the "unknown tongue". A duppy in the house can be expelled by burning cow dung mixed with pieces of hoof and horn. Certain magical herbs used in bush teas will also rid one of duppies. One informant, Kathleen Dormond, explained: "If you have a dead and after you wash him down you take the water and wash yourself, not until you dead not a duppy will trouble you."

When these methods fail one can employ as duppy catcher an obeah man or a science man. This latter is a mixture of religious practitioner and the old witch doctor. Sometimes the duppy is caught in a little hexagonal coffin about eighteen inches long. The coffin is left open near the place the duppy frequents; the trap, so to speak, is baited with unsalted rice, or rum. When the duppy enters the coffin, the obeah man slams down the lid, nails it, and then buries it in the graveyard. Obeah men and science men can trap duppies because they can see and recognize a duppy no matter what form it takes. Many of them were born with a caul. Duppies are also caught in bottles and, according to one informant, kept by the obeah man to set on anyone designated. The following bit of conversation between two men from Ginger Piece will illustrate. They did not know they were being recorded. The one has just asked about the other's sick child.

"Me dear man, me see de pickney (child) sit down a nyam (eat) him food, and be damn, how de pickney just turn ova like a convulse. Boy, an obeah man obeah her, put duppy on her. Jesus Christ Almighty, a duppy see yu, dem put duppy pon him. Boy, a duppy dem put pon de pickney.

"See ya (here) yu known what it look like?"

"Him little black man. Nex day, Jesus Christ Almighty, I meet a man, de man good like gold. Yu know what him charge me? Twenty pounds. Boy, de man good, him good, no bitch."

"Yu mean to say him fix yu business?"

"Boy him fix up everything, if you ever see pickney now you fart."

“Den him raise de duppy?”

“Boy, him take him and put him in de bottle.”

Motivation for the payment of fees for catching of duppies, and the superstitious fear in which they are held, is explained by the many stories attesting to the duppy as an avenging force. The shadow of a wronged man is certain to return to work harm on his enemy. Often the living plans for vengeance before he dies. The following story told to me by Arthur Wyles, 67, who lives in the village of Red Light in the Blue Mountains, will illustrate. Wyles is an obeah man and the local undertaker.

This man from Papine him tol me when him dead I should put a knife in him han and a loaf a bread by him side in the coffin. I promise him I do it; I promise him. Then this man move a West Kingston and when him fa dead him woman sen me the word. I dress him in him wedding suit. It was too small; so I slit it down the back and I fix him up nice. Him son say, “You give him the knife?” And I say, “Yes, I did, an the bread.” An him wife look and him say, “That little knife no good; him want a long blade knife.” Him insis’ and I give him in the han a long blade knife. Then this woman see him on the road up by Ginger Piece and this duppy walking along wi the knife. She the woman he lib wi before he marry to the school teacher and this woman and him have four, five pickney and him the woman very mad when he marry to the school teacher and him beat up the school teacher and scratch him. The school teacher arres’ and the court med him (i. e., her) pay. And this night him coming down the road by Ginger Piece and him see the duppy of this man on the road and him have the knife in the hand. And him start screaming and running down the mountain and de duppy right after him stabbin, stabbin and him breathing hot on that woman and stabbin the knife in him ass stabbin and him scream and fall on the groun’ and him die.

I have several stories like this in which a personal feud is carried out through the agency of the duppy. The duppy can be set on another either directly or through an obeah man. The standard charge seems to be three pounds for setting a duppy and six for removing one. Numerous methods for setting the duppy are current in the mountains. A typical one is the following: Take graveyard dirt and mix it with unsalted rice and rum and put it at the root of the cotton tree where the duppies congregate and then go back the next night and tell the duppy what he is to do. “An him do it.”

The following story told me by George Parks, 72, of Irish Town in the Blue Mountains, is typical. Mr. Parks was a bush Negro but he had

spent a number of years as a laborer at the army base posts at Port Royal and at Newcastle.

“This man work wi me a Port Royal. He was an uppity man an he tief from the army; he tief meat and he tief clo and all tings. An the Major say do I do it? An I tell the major it this man. Then the Major discharge him out. Then he do evil to me. Me ooman become sick. I have no good of him. Sick every day. Him can’t go a groun’. This man set duppy on her. That night I rub me yeye (eyes) wi dog’s tears. Then I see the duppy; I enable fe see the duppy. A coolie duppy follow him (his wife) an tech him on de back. Me ooman get sick, sick. Nex day when I see the duppy I go a Spanish Town to consult wi the science man.” (After explaining at some length that the Science man wanted 5 pounds to remove the duppy, he decided to do it himself.)

“Then I go a the old graveyard a Port Royal. An I dig hole in a grave an I put in rice an rota and blood a fowl and I take it up an put it on him back where the duppy tech and the duppy go, and here my ooman now.” He nodded toward Mrs. Parks as she sat nearby. Mrs. Parks added: “Yes, and me feel him go, feel him lettin loose and then him go and neva come back.”

At the beginning of this section I stated that the duppy in Jamaica means three things: (1) the soul of a dead person manifest in human form; (2) the soul of the dead but manifest in any of a great variety of material ways; and (3) an order of supernatural beings only vaguely associated with the dead.

This third concept of the duppy is an evolution from the first and second, developing when the people get a bit more sophistication. The tendency is to separate the duppy and the duppy concept from the spirit of the dead and to make it a new and separate entity. Duppies become a new race of creatures closely resembling the fairy folk found in most cultures.

The duppy is now a citizen of a community where the members conduct themselves pretty much as human beings do. Their cities are in the great silk cotton trees that abound in Jamaica. These trees are enormous with great lateral limb spread and large above ground roots that fasten to the trunk at a height of fifteen or twenty feet. In the compartments between these root structures and on the great branches the duppy folk live. This association with the cotton tree is simply an extension of the old belief going back to Africa that the spirit of the dead takes refuge in the cotton trees. But the duppy is in no sense a tree spirit; it is only parasitical. One should bear in mind this point that the fairy folk wherever we find them are unusually associated with

trees or a tree. All informants described the duppy folk as little people, white, with big heads and big eyes. They have a king and queen and in general their social organization is like that of England. There is evidently marriage and giving in marriage, for there are baby duppies, not duppies of babies. The duppy folk have a language of their own. Various informants told stories in duppy talk—a distortion of Jamaican English made by pursing the lips into a whistling position and then trying to talk. The duppy folk also are fond of singing; duppy tunes abound. These are standard songs like Pocomanian or digging songs sung in the duppy manner; that is, with exaggerated phrasing and intonation. The duppy fairy folk are not harmful, though occasionally mischievous. Since they may be passing one's place at night it is courteous to have a pan of water set out for them, just as today in certain Celtic communities the folk set out pans of milk for the fairies. They are also thankful for little pumpkins left on the doorstep. The duppy fairy not only likes to eat these pumpkins but also to play with them. This type of pumpkin is generally known as the duppy pumpkin. Growing it ensures good luck.

That this fairy duppy is by no means a borrowing from other cultures like Indian or European is, I think, clearly indicated by details certainly vestigial from the earlier duppy tradition. The whole process is a movement from ritual and belief to literature and art. The stories of the fairy duppy are told for entertainment. Joseph Johnson, for example, told a story involving a duppy procession led by the "head duppy". The point of the story turned on a singing contest. Both the story and the songs were very entertaining to the twenty people listening.

The importance of the whole development of duppism in Jamaica lies in the fact that here we have a clear indication that the general idea of the "little people", the fairy folk and the fairy world, can grow out of the belief concerning the spirits of the dead. The formula is the dead becomes animated spirits of the dead manifest in any variety of material forms becomes a separate, though supernatural entity not at all associated with the dead. And I would suggest that this type of evolution is behind much fairy lore.

Obeahism, a form of witchcraft, is still found in the bush sections of Jamaica. The obeah man has power thru his magic to control evil spirits, to plant duppies and generally deal in black magic; he can cause illness and death, induce love or hate, protect property against thievery. Your bananas are being stolen. You go to the obeah man. For a fee he will make you an obeah bag. This is a square of cloth filled

with such things as graveyard dirt, rusty nails, hair, bone from a frog. He ties this up and then hangs it conspicuously at the entrance to the banana walk. No one will bother a place so protected. The obeah man was (is?) king of the bush, dealing out his death charms, charms to bring about any disaster or to protect against any disaster. He often had books filled with cabbalistic designs; he could talk in the "unknown tongues".

Toward the end of the last century the government made the practise of obeahism a serious offense and punishable by hard labor for one year and whipping. But obeahism has not been eradicated.

The myal man was the warden of good spirits. Thru the last century religious movements sprang up here and there led by self-styled myal men who often became cult leaders. One of the most successful of these was the cult that evolved into Bedwardism, now an evangelical healing religion still in existence at Augustown. Myalism was always concerned with healing. The old ceremony consisted in singing and dancing around the ailing person touching him with a fetish, an amber bead, seeds of certain plants, etc.

Myalism today has completely evolved into various evangelical sects by amalgamation with Christian ideas, rituals, subject matter somewhat as voodun has done in Haiti. Pocomanian is one of the strongest of these. A typical Pocomanian service is held in the middle of the week in an open sided shed with a dirt floor. At one end is a table and on the table a Bible and vases of flowers. At one side is the 'seal', a marked square on the floor, where the person to be healed kneels. The presiding 'Mother' or 'Daddy' stands at the head of the table. She is dressed entirely in white with an elaborate white turban on her head. On one side are three 'sisters'; on the other are three 'brothers'; all are clad in white but with different colored turbans. Beyond the seal are two drummers, often women. The service begins with drumming and singing and then the Mother and her attendants shuffle dance back and forth before the table. Finally the Mother leads the group in procession around the sick person touching his body with the Bible. The singing, dancing and drumming continues at an ever higher pitch and faster tempo. Usually the person being treated proclaims himself cured amid general rejoicing.

It would be difficult today to find a culture as varied as that of Jamaica, ranging as it does from the near primitive to high sophistication and representing so many ethnic strains. This survey may show some of the range; but only a large study can show the richness of the material.

Bibliography

A number of large collections of Jamaican folklore have been made in all categories: tales, proverbs, songs, riddles, beliefs. To be sure most of these collections have been done on a hit or miss basis with little attempt to relate the material to the informants or to the culture matrix. More systematic and scholarly collection should be made to serve as a control on what exists. Especially needed are studies by competent folklorists and cultural anthropologists of culture and belief. The material that exists in the collections listed below should be carefully edited and studied comparatively by competent folklorists: We need, for example, the Anansi story studied against its African background.

Manuscript Material

The Institute of Jamaica at Kingston contains much unique and valuable material, both in manuscripts and early and rare books and pamphlets. The Government Archives at Spanish Town has a large collection of documents pertaining to the early history of Jamaica. Much of this contains folklore material. There are diaries, ships' logs, court records, etc. All is classified and easily available for study. (A description of a portion of this material is to be found in an article by me: "Documents in the Archives of the Court of the Vice-Admiralty of Jamaica", in: *Neptune*, 1959.) The Library of the University College of the British West Indies at Mona (Kingston) has a fine collection of books concerning Jamaica: early histories, local legend, books on the flora and fauna hard to find elsewhere. There is some manuscript material. Boston College Library has a large collection of folklore materials, mostly Anansi stories in manuscript. This material was collected by Father Williams, a teacher in Jamaica for many years; it was contributed by school children. The University of Pennsylvania Archives contains several hundred Anansi stories, 5000 proverbs, and much miscellaneous matter. Much valuable early folklore is to be found in the early histories and journals of Jamaica.

Collections and Studies, Selected List

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