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TANGLED ROOTS: KALENDA AND OTHER NEO-AFRICAN DANCES IN THE CIRCUM-CARIBBEAN

In this article I investigate the early history of what John Storm Roberts (1972:26, 58) terms “neo-African” dance in the circum-Caribbean. There are several reasons for undertaking this task. First, historical material on early Caribbean dance and music is plentiful but scattered, sketchy, and contradictory. Previous collections have usually sorted historical descriptions by the names of dances; that is, all accounts of the widespread dance kalenda are treated together, as are other dances such as bamboula, djouba, and chica. The problem with this approach is that descriptions of “the same” dance can vary greatly. I propose a more analytical sorting by the details of descriptions, such as they can be gleaned. I focus on choreography, musical instruments, and certain instrumental practices. Based on this approach, I suggest some new twists to the historical picture.

Second, Caribbean people today remain greatly interested in researching their roots. In large part, this article arises from my encounter, during ethnographic work in Martinique, with local interpretations of one of the most famous Caribbean dances, kalenda.¹ Martinicans today are familiar with at least three versions of kalenda: (1) from the island’s North Atlantic coast, a virtuosic dance for successive soloists (usually male), who match wits with drummers in a form of “agonistic display” (Cyrille & Gerstin 2001; Barton 2002); (2) from the south, a dance for couples who circle one another slowly and gracefully; and (3) a fast and hypereroticized dance performed by tourist troupes, which invented it in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition, there is a line dance known as mabelo that is identical to a 1796 description of kalenda on Martinique, as well as a danced martial art, danmyé, that recalls the stick-fighting kalendas of other islands (though on Martinique it is done without sticks).

1. Kalenda is spelled kalinda, calenda, or calinda on different islands. For the sake of simplicity I will use the Martinican Creole spelling, except in quotations.

The problem of making historical sense of these kalendas and kalenda-cognates is made more complex by the ideas that surround them. In Martinique, members of a politically inclined cultural revival movement see aspects of Martinican identity in what they view as the Africanity of the solo kalenda and of danmyé, as well as in the African-European hybridity, or *créolité*, of the southern kalenda. The island's tourist troupes claim their own dance as authentic. Some local scholars, oddly enough, advance a historical image of kalenda quite similar to that of the tourist troupes, resurrecting unfortunate stereotypes of black eroticism and prerationalism (e.g., Rosemain 1990, 1993). My effort to understand what may actually have happened in early Caribbean dance is partially a correction of such representations.

In this article, I will not dwell on Martinique's contemporary interpretations of dance history. I have discussed these elsewhere in the contexts of an ethnography of musical revival and political ideologies in Martinique, and white representations of black Caribbean identity through dance (Gerstin 2000, in press). Instead, I concentrate on historical material. Some of this may be familiar to readers, as it has appeared in several well-known collections (e.g., Epstein 1977; Emery 1988). Other material is more obscure, although I hasten to add that I am an ethnographer, not a historian, and have worked largely from secondary sources.²

2. In tracing streams of musical influence and the spread of early transculturated dances, this article may recall the diffusionist studies that were prominent before World War II in anthropology and ethnomusicology. These studies often proved inconclusive, and fell out of favor as researchers turned towards deeper, "thick" explorations of single cultures. Recently, as new approaches to investigating oral cultures have created stronger bodies of evidence, a few researchers have returned to diffusionist/historical methodology (e.g., Thompson 1993; Kubik 1994).

Among these latter, a trenchant article by Samuel Floyd tackles widespread patterns in circum-Caribbean music. Floyd (1996:2-3) sensibly warns against easy conclusions: "in studying this music, its constitution as a large, complex, and tangled array of musical genres ... becomes apparent ... quite distinctive but identically named genres reside simultaneously in [different] geographical locations." Floyd's approach to sorting through the material is by a combination of rhythmic motif (the "cinquillo-tresillo complex"; see Pérez Fernández 1986) and name (the "calenda complex"). In effect, his approach seems to distinguish, respectively, the music of the large, Spanish-speaking islands from that of the smaller, creole- and English-speaking eastern Antilles. Floyd seems to base this distinction as much on contemporary music as colonial, dwelling on son in the Hispanic islands and calypso in the others. I am not sure that the result is either historically or musically justified. However, I admire Floyd's collecting and sorting through rhythmic motifs, and his overall project – establishing criteria for a reliable comparative approach – is akin to my own.

DANCE: CHOREOGRAPHY AND SEXUALITY

One of the best-known descriptions of early black Caribbean dance was published by the priest Jean Baptiste Labat in 1722, and describes Martinique:

What pleases them most and is their most common dance is the kalenda, which comes from the Guinea coast and, from all appearances, from the kingdom of Ardá [in Dahomey]. The Spanish have taken it from the blacks, and dance it in all America in the same manner as the blacks ... The dancers are arranged in two lines, the one before the other, the men to one side, the women to the other. Those are the ones who dance, and the spectators make a circle around the dancers and drums. The most skilled sings a song that he composes on the spot, on such a subject as he judges appropriate, and the refrain, which is sung by all the spectators, is accompanied by a great beating of hands. As regards the dancers, they hold up their arms a little like those who dance while playing castanets. They jump, they spin, they approach to within three feet of each other, they leap back on the beat, until the sound of the drum tells them to join and they strike their thighs, [the thighs of] some beating against the others, that is, the men's against the women's. To see this, it seems that they beat their bellies together, while it is however only their thighs that support the blows. They back away immediately, pirouetting, to recommence the same movement with completely lascivious gestures, as often as the drum gives them the signal, which it does several times in succession. From time to time they interlace their arms and make two or three turns while always striking their thighs together, and they kiss one another. We see enough by this abridged description how this dance is opposed to decency. Despite this, it has not ceased being really the rage of the Spanish Creoles of the Americas, and so strong in use among them, that it forms the best part of their divertissements, and even enters their devotions. They dance it in their churches and in their processions, and the nuns hardly stop dancing it even on Christmas Eve upon a raised theater in the choir, behind a railing, which is open, so the populace have their part of these good souls giving witness to the Savior's birth. It is true that they do not admit men with them to dance such a devout dance. I would even believe that they dance it with a very pure intent, but how many spectators would one find who would judge them as charitably as I? (Labat 1972:401-3; my translation)

Compare another description of kalenda, as well-known as Labat's and as often cited, written in Haiti in 1796 by the scholar and politician Médéric-Louis-Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry (1976:54-55).³

A dancer and his partner, or a number of pairs of dancers, advance to the center and begin to dance, always as couples. This precise dance is based on a single step in which the performer advances successively each

3. Another report from a traveler to Haiti in 1799-1803 also mentions kalenda (Descourtiz, in Emery 1988:23).

foot, then several times tapping heel and toe, as in the Anglaise. One sees evolutions and turns around the partner, who also turns and moves with the lady ... The lady holds the ends of a handkerchief which she waves. Until one has seen this dance he can hardly realize how vivacious it is – animated, metrical and graceful.

Moreau de Saint-Méry's choreography of a couple or couples within a ring of onlookers who also sing, clap, and take their turn in the ring is common for entertainment dances in West and central Africa. It is quite different from Labat's formation, men and women in separate lines. This formation is not unknown in central Africa (J.H. Weeks 1882, in Cyrille 2002:229, 238). However, the line dancing observed by Labat was very likely the slaves' adaptation of the latest Parisian craze, *contredanse*, brought to the colonies in the mid to late seventeenth century. Several contradance styles continue to exist in Martinique today. On the island's North Atlantic coast, a distinctive musical region, they are considered part of the *lalin klé* or "full moon" genre (so-named because they used to be enjoyed on nights of the full moon). One of these dances, *mabelo*, as noted above, fits Labat's description of *kalenda* exactly (Bertrand 1966b; AM4 1992b:51, 77).⁴ It is no coincidence that Labat observed this particular dance. Labat managed a large plantation on the North Atlantic coast, just north of the town of Ste.-Marie. He portrayed a scene from his own slave quarters.

In addition to Labat and Moreau de Saint-Méry's reports from, respectively, Martinique and Haiti, *kalenda* is noted in 1881 newspaper article from Port of Spain, Trinidad, on the pre-emancipation Carnival of the 1830s (Cowley n.d.:8). Anthropologist and choreographer Katherine Dunham (1947:6-7) watched a *kalenda* in Trinidad in 1932; she described it as similar to Moreau de Saint-Méry's graceful couple dance, which she cited by way of comparison. *Kalenda* is also mentioned in a 1933 account from St. Croix (U.S. Virgin Islands) (Cowley n.d.:17). Dances called Old *Kalenda* and Woman *Kalenda* are part of Carriacou's contemporary Big Drum ceremony (McDaniel 1992:397, 1998a:19). The *sicá* style of Puerto Rican *bomba* includes, in its twelve variations, one called *calindá* (Vega Drouet 1998:937; Barton 2002:189).

In the United States, Antoine Simon Le Page de Pratz noted *kalenda* in Louisiana in 1758 (Epstein 1977:32). A better-known description is by George Washington Cable, in a celebrated article on dancing in New

4. Today's dance may have acquired its name from its most popular song, also called "Mabelo." The song is an extended pun on the game of marbles ("mabelo" in Martinican Creole). The words praise the prettiness of the "marble" and invite you to flick yours into the circle: "vini meté adan" (come put it inside).

Orleans' Congo Square. Cable's 1886 article includes much colorful (not to say stereotyped) language. Here is his description of kalenda dancing in its entirety:

it was the favorite dance all the way from [Louisiana] to Trinidad. To dance it publicly is not allowed this side of the West Indies. All this Congo Square business was suppressed at one time; 1843, says tradition. The Calinda was a dance of multitude, a sort of vehement cotillion. The contortions of the encircling crowd were strange and terrible, the din was hideous. (in Katz 1969:42)

Cable's description echoes Labat's in his mention of "cotillion," a popular contradance style. The word "multitude" also suggests a contradance, i.e., two lines of multiple dancers.⁵ However, we should not make too much of this. Cable's description of kalenda is both brief and, it appears to me, fanciful. Neither Cable nor his illustrator, Edward Windsor Kemble, were eyewitnesses to Congo Square's dancing, which was banned in the early 1840s (Southern & Wright 2000:34).⁶

CHICA, AND A POTPOURRI OF SIMILAR REFERENCES

Another widespread early dance was chica, which appears in Moreau de Saint-Méry (1976:61-62):

This dance consists mainly in moving the lower part of the torso, while keeping the rest of the body almost motionless. To speed up the movement of the Chica, a dancer will approach his danseuse, throwing himself forward, almost touching her, withdrawing, then advancing again, while seeming to implore her to yield to the desires which invade them. There is nothing lascivious or voluptuous which this tableau does not depict.

Bremer (in Emery 1988:26) also mentions chica in Cuba in the 1840s or 1850s.

5. Another reference to kalenda as a line dance may be found in Allen, Ware, and Garrison's 1867 *Slave Songs of the United States*, which includes a "calinda" annotated: "the 'calinda' was a sort of contra-dance, which has now passed entirely out of use" (Cowley n.d.:7). However, this is not really a separate and corroborating source; the song was contributed to *Slave Songs* by Cable.

6. On the other hand, Cable was among the group of white folklorists and scholars who, during Reconstruction, initiated serious research into black American culture. Besides contributing to the first major study of African American music, *Slave Songs of the United States* (see note 5), Cable collaborated with two other New Orleans writers-cum-folklorists, Lafcadio Hearn (who also lived and wrote in Martinique) and Henry H. Krehbiel (Katz 1969:31).

A number of later commentators equated *chica* with *kalenda*. Cable (1969:42) wrote that New Orleans' Congo dance, "called Congo also in Cayenne [French Guiana], *Chica* in San Domingo, and in the Windward Islands confused under one name with the *Calinda*, was a kind of *Fandango*." I am not certain where this equation got its start; it is repeated almost verbatim – not always with a reference to Moreau de Saint-Méry, but as self-evident fact – by Sully Cally-Lézin (1990:81), Janheinz Jahn (1961:81), and Jacqueline Rosemain (1990:38, 40). Similarly, a writer publishing in Haiti in 1889 equated Haitian *bamboula* with *chica* and quoted Moreau de Saint-Méry's description of the latter in lieu of his own description (Spencer St. John, in Emery 1988:26). Moreau de Saint-Méry (1976:60, 64–65, 67) indeed makes broad assertions about *chica*: it was found in the Windward Islands and Saint Domingue; it was also found in Curaçao, where it was danced by black women; it was widespread in Africa, particularly the Congo; it was a favorite of white society women; it (rather than *kalenda*, as in Labat) was the dance performed by nuns at Christmas; and, brought by the Moors from Africa to Spain, it was identical to *fandango*. But Moreau de Saint-Méry offers no corroborating evidence for these claims.⁷

Without implying that the following dances are identical, this is nonetheless the place to gather additional descriptions of flirtatious couple dances utilizing pelvic isolation and, in some instances, physical contact. Roger Bastide (1971:174–76) mentions three: an unnamed Mexican dance recorded in 1766 (which involved four couples: a *contradance*?); an unnamed line dance from Peru, which included belly bumping *à la* Labat's *kalenda* and was reported in both 1747 and 1791;⁸ and, in Uruguay, *kalenda*, *bamboula*, and *chica*. Brazilian *batuque* (Fryer 2000:95–102) and the rural *samba de roda* (ring *samba*), which is "simply the *batuque* under a different name" (Fryer 2000:102), both feature the belly/pelvic thrust, called *semba* in Angola (one hypothetical source of the word "samba") and *ombigada* (*umbigada*) in Brazil (Crowell 2002:17).⁹

7. Moreau de Saint-Méry (1976:56, 60) may have intended to portray differences between these dances as racial rather than choreographic. His discussion of *kalenda* is in a section devoted to black dances, while *chica* appears in a passage on creoles. In this context, "creole" could mean either whites born in the Caribbean (the original sense of the word), people of mixed blood, or perhaps people of Spanish descent; see Bremer's reference to *chica* in 1840s–50s Cuba (in Emery 1988:26). Moreau de Saint-Méry does not state which meaning he intends.

8. Nathan Hamilton Crowell, Jr. (2002:16) cites a similar account from Peru in 1763.

9. Kazadi Wa Mukuna (1978:74) lists sixteen styles of Brazilian dance with *ombigada*, including *lundu*, *samba de roda*, and *batuque*. Some are simply different regional versions of others. Mukuna considers these dances to be of Bantu origin, a point to which I will return.

In the contemporary circum-Caribbean, a major example of this type of dancing is the Cuban rumba complex. Rumba guaguancó can include contact: the man attempts to give the woman a *vacunao* (vaccination), gesturing toward her groin with his hand, foot, or pelvis. In another rumba dance for couples, *yambú*, the *vacunao* is suggested but not given. (A common lyric is “*yambú no tiene vacunao*” [*yambú doesn’t have a vacunao*]). The older Cuban dance *yuka*, considered the predecessor of rumba, includes a noncontact pelvic gesture called *ndoki*.¹⁰

Also in the contemporary circum-Caribbean, Martinican North Atlantic *bèlè* includes flirtation up to and including pelvis/belly contact, called *zabap* or *wabap*. On neighboring St. Lucia the same movement, found in the *jwé dansé* genre, is called *blotjé* (Guilbault 1993, 1998:943). There are photographs of dancers doing this move in a *bamboula* dance on St. Thomas in the 1940s (Leaf 1948:138-39). The *tambu* of Curaçao (Christa 2002:295-96), the *baile de tambor* of Congo dance groups in Panama (Smith 1985:192-95), and *baile de palos* in the Dominican Republic (Davis 2002:136) all feature sexy couple-dancing without contact. In the Panamanian dance the woman uses her long skirt as a prop, and in a photograph accompanying Davis’s description of *baile de palos*, a woman gestures with a handkerchief, as in Moreau de Saint-Méry’s *kalenda*. Finally, perhaps the paradigmatic modern example of pelvic isolation (usually without contact) is Trinidadian and Jamaican “*winin’*.” As recently as 1932 and 1953, newspaper reports from Trinidad described *kalenda* as consisting of “windings and contortions of the body” (Crowley n.d.:8-9). Still, there is no guarantee that modern *winin’* descended directly from *kalenda*.

EROTICISM EXAMINED

A remarkable feature in the history of writing on dance in the circum-Caribbean is how authors focus on eroticism obsessively, while reducing it to a single sensational image: frenzied black dancers revolving their loins and bumping together. This image appears to have formed fairly early. For example, Diderot’s encyclopedia (1751-72) followed Labat in depicting “*calinda*” as an erotic line dance (cited in Rosemain 1993:111). Moreau de Saint-Méry’s rather different description, as well as others, were ignored. In numerous works since, compilers have lumped Labat’s, Moreau de Saint-Méry’s, and other descriptions together as if they were the same, ignoring their variety and

10. Judith Justiz, personal communication. *Yuka*’s claim to rumba ancestry is based on the similarity of the choreography and musical ensemble (one-headed barrel drums played with the hands, i.e., *congas*). According to Vélez (2000:65), *makuta*, a dance related to *yuka* in that both are considered Congolese, also uses the pelvic thrust.

focusing, in the main, on sensational eroticism (Emery 1988:25). Kalenda is often the focus of this approach, and (at least in French Antillean writing) seems to have garnered a reputation as *the* proto-Caribbean dance.¹¹

The historical reasons for such reductionism seem straightforward enough. White colonials created an image of black identity that embodied both their own forbidden desires and their fears.¹² More recent Caribbean writers – political, literary, scholarly, and popular – tracing their own roots, have often sought the specific African provenance of one or another custom, or have attempted to designate a single neo-African dance as the source of today's welter of styles. This is understandable: the search for origins can easily become a search for a singular, definite beginning; a desire to say, "*this is my ancestry.*"

But eroticism is a broad and variable realm. Given the tendency to lump descriptions together, it is worth reexamining such concrete details as we can find.

Labat's and Moreau de Saint-Méry's descriptions differ not only in their choreography but in their sensibility: Labat's kalenda is "lascivious," Moreau de Saint-Méry's "vivacious" and "graceful."¹³ It is difficult, however, to know exactly what to make of these adjectives. To my eye, for example, the movements of Martinique's southern belair genre (*bèlè du sud*, which includes the dance *kalenda du sud*) are graceful, minimalist, and reserved; dancers circle one another slowly, there is little pelvic isolation or overt flirtation, and no contact. Yet some Martinicans find the dance "*très lascive et sensuelle*" (AM4 1992b:58-59). This recalls Moreau de Saint-Méry's "lascivious or voluptuous" *chica*, yet that dance, with its flirtatious advances and retreats, seems more like Cuban rumba than *bèlè du sud* – or, for that matter, more like Martinique's North Atlantic belair dances, which are full of flirtatious play.

11. Even in Lynne Emery (1988) and Dena Epstein (1977), *kalenda* is treated first and in the most depth, though the erotic fetishism is lacking. See Bill Maurer 1991 for a discussion of some issues of problematic stereotyping in Caribbean dance scholarship.

12. It is worth repeating that a focus on eroticism in black New World dance and music was an obsession of white observers rather than of the performers themselves. In a parallel article to this one (Gerstin in press), I examine ways in which dance served white hegemony as a key trope of black identity, a way in which blackness could be delimited and to a certain extent controlled – although an important aspect of the trope is that black eroticism cannot be entirely controlled. See Barbara Browning (1998) for an insightful study of recent ways in which this trope has resurfaced. Another aspect of the trope is its reductionism, that is, the extent to which black people became visible to whites only as carriers of dance and music.

13. The cosmopolitan traveler, Moreau de Saint-Méry, was not afraid to describe eroticism when he saw it; he called *chica* "lascivious" and "voluptuous." He simply did not see *kalenda* as outstandingly erotic.

A distinction may be drawn between pelvic isolation (typically rotation) and contact per se. Not all dances using isolation proceed on to contact: Moreau de Saint-Méry describes *chica* dancers as “almost touching,” but does not say they actually touch. Today’s “winin” movement of Trinidad and Jamaica seems similar. In Martinique’s category of *lalin klé* dances, to which the line dance *mabelo* belongs, there is also a ring dance called *ting bang* that employs the *zabap* bumping movement, but the dancers do not meet. Cuban *yuka* also employs a bumping movement (*ndoki*) without contact.

In addition, there may be contact without pelvic isolation. In *mabelo*, partners grab one another’s hips and pull themselves together, with full contact from belly through thighs. Labat is clear about this: “it seems that they beat their bellies together, while it is however only their thighs that support the blows.” It is actually everything from bellies through thighs, but Labat comes very close for someone who in all likelihood never tried the dance himself.¹⁴

Moreover, there are varying manners of signifying erotic contact. It is not always pelvis to pelvis. In Cuban *rumba guaguancó*, the *vacunao* may be given by the man’s hand or foot to the woman’s groin, or simply in her general direction.

Yet another distinction is whether contact is prescribed or optional. In Labat’s *kalenda*, bumping was a set part of the dance, as it is in today’s *mabelo*, occurring regularly on the main beats. Likewise, St. Lucian *débòt*, *yonbòt*, and *fwé pòté* are ring dances similar to Martinican *ting bang*, but with obligatory contact (Guilbault 1998c:943). However, in most contemporary Caribbean dances that include contact, the man pursues, and the woman simultaneously entices and avoids him; whether they will make contact is left to their inspiration. Martinique’s North Atlantic *belair* genre (described further below) is of this latter type. In *rumba guaguancó* the *vacunao* is not obligatory; neither is it in the *ombigada* or *semba* in Brazilian *samba de roda*.

Finally, there are degrees of sexual intent. In Martinique’s North Atlantic *belair*, flirtation and even pelvic contact are usually treated as pleasant fun. One is rarely really pursuing one’s partner, unless there is some serious flirtation going on outside the dance as well. All kinds of games may be played with eyes, hands, and body, with approach and evasion, and with props such as skirts and hats. Even in *mabelo*, where body contact is prescribed, partners signal their willingness to interact through meeting or avoiding one another’s eyes, by withholding themselves tensely or thwacking solidly, and so on.

14. Martinican dance instructors are specific about the contact: it should be strong, not timid, so the force of the blow must be distributed, and this means it is not simply a pelvic thrust. As one teacher, Pierre Dru, puts it, “if you go around thrusting your pelvis at people you’ll hurt yourself.”

STICK-FIGHTING DANCES

Another form of kalenda in the Caribbean is a stick-fighting dance, done almost exclusively by men.¹⁵ It is not clear how the name shifted from dance to stick fighting, but stick-fighting calinda was part of Carnival in Trinidad and Grenada from the nineteenth well into the twentieth centuries (Hill 1972:23-31; Cowley 1996:2, 14, 45, 78, 85). It spread to the Carnival of nearby Carriacou in the twentieth century (Pearse 1955:30, 1956:6; Hill 1980:9; Anon 1994:156).¹⁶ It was also known on St. Thomas (Leaf 1948:190). Harold Courlander (1960:133) refers to a Haitian stick-fighting dance called *mousondi*, but identified by older Haitians as *calinda*. Courlander also mentions a stick-fighting “*bomba calindán*” in Puerto Rico.¹⁷ Jocelyn Gabali (1980:91, 109) lists a Guadeloupean stick-fighting art called *calinda* or *konvalen*.¹⁸ For Martinique I know of a single reference to a stick-fighting *calinda*, from the late nineteenth century (Hearn 1923:146). But though several styles of *kalenda* exist today on Martinique, none involve stick fighting.¹⁹

15. The subject of stick-fighting *kalenda* leads to the larger theme of martial art dances throughout the Caribbean world: *maní* in Cuba – said to be of Congolese origin (Veléz 2000:64-65; Daniel 2002:35); *mayolè*, *sovéyan*, and *bénaden* (three different forms of stylized wrestling) in Guadeloupe (Bertrand 1966a:21; Gabali 1980:137-38; Uri & Uri 1991:79-90; Guilbault 1998b:876); *danmyé* (a.k.a. *ladja*) in Martinique, *kokomakaku* in Curaçao (Christa 2002:298), *broma* in Venezuela, “knocking and kicking” from the Sea Islands of the southeastern United States (Fryer 2000:29). In Brazil there is both a stick-fighting dance, *maculelê*, and a combat dance without sticks, *capoeira*.

16. Lorna McDaniel (1998a:19) lists three *kalendas* in Carriacou’s Big Drum: Old Kalenda, Woman Kalenda, and Trinidad Kalenda. Of Trinidad *kalenda*, Andrew Pearse (1956:6) writes, “this is a Trinidad stick-fighting song appropriated to the Big Drum Dance, when it is not, of course, used for stick-fighting.”

17. According to Halbert Barton (2002:189) the name of Puerto Rican stick fighting, which is one variation of the *sicá* style of *bomba*, is *cocobalé*.

18. Actually, Gabali (1980:91, 109) mentions a Guadeloupean stick-fighting art twice, one time calling it *calinda* and the other time *konvalen*. Perhaps Gabali is simply assimilating Guadeloupean stick fighting to the better-known Trinidadian style.

19. The Martinican dance *larivyè léza*, which used to be performed at communal house-raising, may have been a stick fight, but it may simply have been work music (AM4 1992b:59; see the song “*La Rivyè Léza*” on Gerstin & Cyrille 2001). On the other hand *larivyè léza* was found along Martinique’s North Caribbean coast near the city of St.-Pierre, an area of which Hearn often wrote; this lends Hearn’s brief mention some credence. Recently, cultural activists in Martinique have reconstructed distinct *larivyè léza* substyles for stick fighting and house-raising, as well as forms of *kalenda* for both stick fighting (*jé baton* or *konbat baton*) and mimed stick fighting (AM4 2003; Pierre Dru, Daniel Bardury, Maria Vincente-Fatna, personal communications). However even among these researchers, these reconstructions have been controversial.

BAMBOULA, DJOUBA, AND BELAIR

An 1881 newspaper article on Trinidadian Carnival of the 1830s reports, “at carnival time our mothers and grandmothers have even danced the *belair* to the African drums whose sound did not offend their dainty ears, and our fathers and grandfathers danced the *bamboula*, the *ghouba* and the *calinda*” (Cowley n.d.:8). All of these dances were widespread in the circum-Caribbean. We will begin with bamboula.

Bamboula forms the centerpiece to Cable’s article on New Orleans’ Congo Square. As noted above, Cable did not see the dancing, and his writing tends toward the exotic. Here is a representative example from his passage on bamboula:

Yonder brisk and sinewy fellow has taken one short, nervy step into the ring ... He moves off to the farther edge of the circle, still singing, takes the prompt hand of an unsmiling Congo girl, leads her into the ring, and leaving the chant for the throng, stands her before him for the dance ... Now for the frantic leaps! Now for frenzy! Another pair are in the ring! ... And still another couple enter the circle. (Cable 1969:38)

Assuming there is some truth to this, the basic choreography was a couple or couples within a circle. However, compare Benjamin Henry Latrobe’s 1819 account of Congo Square (an eyewitness account, this time). Latrobe (1905:180) describes the square filled with a large crowd and a number of dance rings; in most of the rings he observed “two women dancing. They each held a coarse handkerchief, extended by the corners, in their hands, and set to each other in a miserably dull and slow figure, hardly moving their feet or bodies.” Again the basic choreography is couples in a circle, but Latrobe depicts a same-sex version, the handkerchief recalls Moreau de Saint-Méry’s *chica*, and the dancers are reserved rather than frenetic.²⁰

Bamboula was also reported in Trinidad in the 1700s (Cowley 1996:7, 45) and in St. Lucia in 1844 (Breen, in Abrahams & Szwed 1983:267; Emery 1988:27). In Guadeloupe bamboula is considered the predecessor of today’s *gwoka* (Lafontaine 1986:85-90; Rosemain 1986:22, 53; Uri & Uri 1991:38-39).²¹ Bamboula existed within living memory in St. Croix (Oliver

20. Latrobe does not name the dances he saw, which he happened upon by accident when out for a walk. Another report on Congo Square dancing, from 1808, names the dance done there as bamboula (Laussat, in Epstein 1977:84).

21. Rosemain (1986:50-51, 53) is vague as to whether the term “bamboula” was used in Martinique as well as Guadeloupe. The only specific reference I have found to bamboula in Martinique is from the contemporary research group AM4, which describes bamboula as a drumming competition (AM4 1992a:96). AM4’s citation is taken from an anecdote recounted by Hearn (1923:82), who claims to have heard it from an old drummer. I would prefer more supporting evidence than this.

2002:208-10), and on St. Thomas is either recently extinct or recently reconstructed.²² Earl Leaf states that the St. Thomas version was danced by pairs of women, like the dance Latrobe saw in New Orleans (Leaf 1948:136-43). The name is also found in Haiti for a dance performed "on the occasion of building a new house" (Courlander 1960:136); in the Samaná region of the Dominican Republic (bambulá), where it is considered to be derived from Haiti (Davis 1998:856, 2002:142); and as one variation (bambulé) of the sicá style of Puerto Rican bomba (Barton 2002:189). An alternative name for one of Carriacou's Big Drum dances, quelbe, is boula, a shortened form of "bamboula" (McDaniel 1998a:19).

Djouba (djuba, juba, yuba) is another frequently reported dance. On Haiti, djouba is also called tanbou matinik (Martinican drum) or simply matinik, indicating the importance of cultural ties between the French colonies. The newspaper article quoted on page 15 on Trinidad Carnival mentions "ghouba." According to Roberts (1972:157, 223), djouba existed at one time in Guadeloupe. Juba is one of the Creole dances of the Big Drum ceremony in Carriacou (Pearse 1956:4; Hill 1980:8; McDaniel 1998a:19).²³ Yubá is one form of bomba in Puerto Rico (Vega Drouet 1998:937; Barton 2002:186). One of the dances of tumba francesa, a contradance style brought to eastern Cuba by the slaves of planters fleeing the Haitian Revolution, is yuba (Alén Rodríguez 1986:169; Szwed & Marks 1988:30; Armas Rigal 1991:29-32).

Cable (1969:48) briefly mentions djouba in New Orleans: "The *guiouba* was probably the famed *juba* of Georgia and the Carolinas." But this seems to me to be a case of one name being used for very different things. Djouba as performed in Congo Square would probably have been a drum dance, whereas the juba of the rural South was a solo body-percussion style, "patting Juba" (Epstein 1977:141-44).²⁴

22. Courlander 1954:Band 21, liner notes 4; Bilby 1985:188; Lieth-Philipp 1988:8; Sheehy 1998:973.

23. McDaniel (1998a:185) mentions that one Juba song, "Le Oue Mwe La," is danced by two women, like Latrobe's dance and the bamboula of St. Thomas. Perhaps Carriacou's Woman Kalenda is also a female couple dance.

24. Patting juba often accompanied buck dancing, a solo male competitive/display style. The minstrel entertainer William Henry Lane billed himself as Master Juba, and, since minstrel dancing was based on buck dancing, Lane perhaps took his stage name from that source. But Juba may also have been a character of folklore; he appears, for example, in a 1793 ballad (Hamm 1979:110). This does not clarify the connection between southern U.S. patting juba and the Caribbean drum dance djouba.

A similar conundrum is posed by Cuban friends who have suggested to me that the "yuba" of tumba francesa derives from the Yoruba word *moyuba* (praise), as in a Santería song to the deity Elegguá that begins, "moyuba, moyuba orisa." However, since yuba belongs to the tumba francesa complex, a derivation from "djouba" seems more likely. I will argue in this article for a central African (Congolese) rather than West African origin for many of the early Caribbean musical traits, including both djouba and tumba francesa.

A recent publication cites Moreau de Saint-Méry's description of kalenda – a couple dance – to illustrate Haitian djouba (Frank 2002:111). However, several older works depict djouba as a line dance. Dunham (1947:45-46) describes the Haitian version as “a ‘set’ dance of several men and women facing each other in two lines, with movement and attention directed to a partner.” The yuba of Cuban tumba francesa is a contradance (as are the other tumba francesa dances). And in French Guiana, djouba is a contradance (Blérald-Ndagano 1996:179).

The final dance complex I will discuss is belair.²⁵ This dance is found today on Martinique (the Creole spelling is bèlè), St. Lucia (bélé) (Guilbault 1993:1, 3), Dominica (bélé or, according to Phillip n.d., bèlè),²⁶ and on Trinidad, Tobago, and Carriacou (bélé, bele, or belair).²⁷ Puerto Rico's bomba complex includes a style known as belén. Belair formerly existed in Grenada (Pearse 1955:31; McDaniel 1998b:865); St. Thomas, where it was danced only by women (Leaf 1948:184-90); and French Guiana (Beaudet 1998:437). In the latter case, the contemporary kaseko dance complex is considered belair's direct descendant (Blérald-Ndagano 1996). In most of these places belair features couple flirtation in the center of a circle.

A number of authors describe belair as “creole.”²⁸ I take it they mean to depict belair as a fully Caribbean synthesis.²⁹ In fact, I do not find references to belair before the late 1700s and early 1800s. Women's costume for belair suggests this creolization, as it is most often based on the French creole outfit of long skirts and petticoats, plaid waistcloth (madras), lace-trimmed blouse, and madras headscarf. (Men's costume varies more widely, but often includes the madras worn as a belt, and a high-crowned straw hat.) In Trinidad, as in Martinique's North Atlantic, belair uses quadrille or contradance choreography (Herskovits & Herskovits 1964:158-59). On Carriacou, the dances of the Big Drum ceremony are grouped into three major categories: nation dances, creole dances, and frivolous. The belairs

25. Here I use the French spelling, since the various creole orthographies are so different.

26. Caudeiron 1988:27; Honychurch 1988:36-37; Guilbault 1998a:841; Phillip n.d.

27. Pearse 1955:30-31; Herskovits & Herskovits 1964:158-59, 1956:4; Roberts 1972:117; Anon 1994:156; David 1994:162, 164; McDaniel 1998a:19, 1998b:865, 1998c:959.

28. For example, for kaseko in French Guiana, Blérald-Ndagano 1996; for Trinidad and Tobago, McDaniel 1998c:959.

29. Here we might distinguish Roberts's term “neo-African” from “creole”: “neo-African” suggests dance and music synthesized by slaves from African sources, retaining an identification with Africa if not with specific African ethnic groups; “creole” indicates dance and music that has been further indigenized, and which is identified as local. All the dances known as belair have taken this second step.

belong to the creole category, along with Old Kalenda, juba, and quelbe (boula) (McDaniel 1998a:19). Such details lend credence to the idea that belair was associated with the spread of French creole culture somewhat after the period of initial neo-African transculturations. The use of “kalenda” as a name for stick fighting may also be a later accretion, as may be the link of both kalenda and belair to satirical songs, discussed below.

CHALLENGE/DISPLAY DANCING

Challenge dancing (Crowell 2002:12) involves “agonistic display” (Barton 2002) between a dance soloist and a lead drummer, in which the drummer tries to mark the dancer’s movements in sound. I would expand the category of “challenge dancing” to include virtuoso solo display as well as challenge per se. This is a widespread African type, and it surely traveled to the New World, although I have found only a few colonial descriptions. An unnamed, men-only competitive display was performed in the Bahamas in the late nineteenth century (Edwards, in Emery 1988:29), while an 1844 account from Cuba tells of a woman dancing competitively with a succession of men (Wurdeemann, in Emery 1988:27). Southern U.S. buck dancing also fits the type.

Modern examples include Cuban rumba colombia, Puerto Rican bomba, and at least two Guadeloupean gwoka dances, toumblak and kaladja. Dunham described djouba as “primarily a competitive dance of skill” (Emery 1988:27). In addition, some dances in the contemporary kalenda and belair complexes are competitive. Of Old Kalenda, one of the creole category of dances in the Big Drum of Carriacou, Pearse (1956:6) writes, “the dance, which now often incorporates some of the eccentric and violent movements of stick-fighting,³⁰ is by a man or a woman, and is a dramatic duel between the drummer and the dancer, in counterpoint. The drumming is extravagant and complex.”

There may be elements of sexuality in challenge/display dances – the moving human body is almost always erotic – as well as dimensions of challenge in erotic dances, that is, flirtation/avoidance between partners, or competition between men for a female dancer. But most dances seem to emphasize either challenge/display or eroticism, not both. For example, Cuban rumba guaguancó is clearly a couple/flirtation dance, while rumba colombia is a virtuoso solo display by a series of men (nowadays women as well), with some degree of dancer/drummer challenge.

30. Old Kalenda, a dance incorporating some stick-fighting movements, is distinct from Trinidad Kalenda, which incorporates a Trinidadian stick-fighting song (see note 16).

The style of kalenda danced in the North Atlantic region of Martinique, particularly in rural settlements surrounding the town of Ste.-Marie, clearly fits the challenge/display description.³¹ The dance is performed by successive soloists in the center of a circle, until recently always men. Some movements are fixed by tradition, but many dancers develop their own signature variations, which may be spectacular and acrobatic. Dancer and drummer (only one drummer plays at a time) match movements and drum rhythms together; there is an element of improvised reciprocity as well as competition. A well-known Martinican dancer from the North Atlantic region told Dominique Cyrille and me,

you make a turn around the circle before presenting yourself in front of the drum ... Now when you arrive before the drum and the drum goes *tipitip* and immediately marks for you whatever it is you have done. You come and the drum works with you; you come back and the drum is with you. Whatever you have done the drum works with you. (Vava Grivalliers, interview)

This is as neat a synopsis of the challenge/virtuoso aesthetic as any.³²

SATIRE AND SECULARISM

By the nineteenth century, kalenda and belair had become, in certain places, the vehicles of topical, satirical song. Cable (1886; in Katz 1969:43) writes, "in Louisiana, at least, [kalenda] song was always a grossly personal satirical ballad ... it has long been a vehicle for the white Creole's satire; for generations the man of municipal politics was fortunate who escaped entirely a lampooning set to its air."³³ Cowley and others describe both stick-fighting calin-

31. Martinique's North Atlantic coast is the part of the island closest to Guadeloupe, and there may be an historical connection between Guadeloupean gwoka and the North Atlantic kalenda (AM4 1992a:77).

32. In southern Martinique there may also have been a solo-display kalenda close to that of the North Atlantic, and distinct from the kalenda du sud dance of the southern belair genre. However, if this dance existed, it is "scarcely remembered" (AM4 1992b:58).

33. Cable's discussion of satirical kalenda songs and musical instruments is extensive (unlike his very brief account of kalenda as a dance) and he seems to have been familiar with these songs firsthand. Cowley (n.d.:10) notes that the calinda song transcribed by Cable for Allen, Ware, and Garrison's 1867 *Slave Songs of the United States* may also be found in Henry Edward Krehbiel's 1914 *Afro-American Folksongs* and in a 1930s collection, Irène Thérèse Whitfield's *Louisiana French Folk Songs*. These versions differ from one another, suggesting that they were collected from multiple sources. This, in turn, lends credence to the idea of calinda as a widespread creole/African American song form.

da and belair songs as predecessors of calypso (Hill 1972:11, 34, 63; Cowley 1996:7, 45). Similarly, in Martinique and Guadeloupe, we find references to nineteenth-century belair as “improvisations” or satirical songs of domestic slaves (Cally-Lézin 1990:69-70) and of urban free blacks (Hearn 1977:84; Rosemain 1993:53-54). H.H. Breen (in Abrahams & Szwed 1983:263-65), in 1844, described St. Lucian belairs as songs sung without dancing by the La Rose and La Marguerite societies. In Martinique, belair songs provided the melodic basis for biguine (Rosemain 1993:139-41), just as kalenda and belair songs did for calypso in Trinidad. In this context of emergent nineteenth- and early twentieth-century dance-band music, kalenda and belair were a vital part of urban, proletarian culture in the creole-speaking islands.

All of these dances – kalenda, chica, bamboula, djouba, and belair – appear to have been secular.³⁴ Apart from Labat’s and Moreau de Saint-Méry’s nuns, I am aware of very few references to kalenda that specifically involve religion. Epstein (1977:135) cites an 1885 report from New Orleans of a vodoun ceremony that included “the weird and strange ‘Danse Calinda.’” Courlander (1960:132) notes, “the word Calinda appears sometimes in songs of the Vodoun cult” in Haiti and also mentions the reputed existence of a Calinda secret society, though he is dubious about the latter’s reality. Finally, he mentions that the Haitian stick fight mousondi or calinda is associated with the Congo “nation” of vodoun (Courlander 1960:133, 166-67).

Funeral wakes are sometimes the setting for Haitian djouba (Courlander 1960:135), Carriacouan stick-fighting kalenda (Anon. 1994:156), and belair in both St. Lucia and Dominica (Guilbault 1998a:841). In Trinidad, belair is performed to honor ancestors (Herskovits & Herskovits 1964:158-63). However, occasional performance at wakes does not necessarily mean that a dance is religious. In Martinique and Guadeloupe, storytelling (kont) and vocalized percussion songs (mizik djel, boula djel) are associated with traditional wakes, yet are not considered sacred music.³⁵

The issue of religion is important because those who have attempted to counter the stereotype of hypersexuality in black dance have frequently

34. In light of the connection of these dances to the central African region, to be discussed below, it is worth noting Bastide’s (1971:11, 105-6) contention that Bantu influence in the New World survives more strongly in secular folklore than in organized religion. By and large, I have omitted discussion of the many central-African-derived religious groups and quasi-religious “nations” scattered throughout the New World and named Congo; they have little to do with the kalenda, bamboula, djouba, chica, or belair dance complexes, which are primarily secular.

35. Marie-Céline Lafontaine (1986) suggests that at Guadeloupean wakes, kont, and boula djel exist in symbolic opposition to the sacred: they are performed outside by men, in contrast to hymns sung indoors by women.

insisted on the art's spiritual, ritualistic quality. The "sacred fertility dance" trope finds its origins in European Romanticism, animates *The Golden Bough*, resurfaces in negritude, and continues today in New Age invocations of "spirituality" in regard to virtually everything. There may be truth in this idea, but too often it seems to be just another exoticizing, primitivist projection. Kalenda, chica, bamboula, djouba, and belair do not need such apology.

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT: TRANSVERSE HEELED DRUMMING

So far we have looked at dancing per se. Links between styles proliferate further if we take into account musical instruments and methods of playing them.

The name bamboula (often shortened to boula) recurs on several islands as a term for supporting drums in percussion ensembles. The small drum in Labat's (1972:401-2) report on Martinican kalenda was called baboula; that in Moreau de Saint-Méry's (1976:52-53) Haitian kalenda was called bamboula. A 1798 account from Puerto Rico mentions drums called bamboula, as well as drums called bomba (Roberts 1972:42). Today, the smallest supporting drum of today's Haitian vodoun ensemble is still called boula, as are the large supporting drums in Guadeloupean gwoka, Carriacouan bele (McDaniel 1992:397; David 1994:167-68; 1998a:82), and Dominican bèlè (Phillip n.d.:5). In Cuba, one of the drums used in tumba francesa is called bulá (Alén Rodríguez 1986:169; Armas Rigal 1991:6). An exception to the supporting role of drums of this name is found in Grenada, where baboula was the lead drum for nineteenth-century belair (McDaniel 1998b:865).

Djouba, bamboula, and sometimes belair are associated with transverse drumming – that is, the drums are played lying on their side, the drummers sitting astride them, sometimes pressing one heel on the drumhead to change the pitch. Latrobe's (1905:180-81) New Orleans journal of 1819 describes drums played transversally and includes a sketch (reproduced in Epstein 1977:98); later, Cable's (1969:34) article and Kemble's accompanying engraving reiterated this information. A 1707 painting from Suriname includes two drummers playing transverse drums (Price & Price 1980), and there is a transverse drum in an 1835 engraving of Brazilian capoeira (Fryer 2000:28).

In many of these same traditions, a second percussionist plays a supporting ostinato with sticks on the side of the drum, behind the seated drummer. This accompanist can be seen in the 1707 Surinamese painting and possibly the Cable/Kemble engraving, although in the latter case it is hard to discern whether the man kneeling behind the drummers is playing sticks or another drum (Southern & Wright 2000:36). A 1796 report from Barbados mentions a drummer who, "sitting across the body of the drum, as it lies lengthwise upon

the ground, beats and kicks the sheep skin at the end, in violent exertion with his hands and heels, and [another man] sitting upon the ground at the other end, behind the man upon the drum, beats upon the wooden sides of it with two sticks" (Pinckard, in Abrahams & Szwed 1983:294; Epstein 1977:62).

Contemporary styles using transverse drumming include: Martinican *bèlè* and *kalenda* (in all their varieties); Guadeloupean *gwoka*; Haitian *djouba* (or *tanbou matinik*) as played by certain drummers (Courlander 1954: Band 21, liner notes 4; Fleurant 1996:30); *balsié* drumming for the dance *pripi* in the Dominican Republic (Davis 1998:852); *kanmougé* in French Guiana (Blérald-Ndagano 1996:60; Beaudet 1998:437); *chanté siay* in St. Lucia (Guilbault 1993:2); *kumina* and *tambo* in Jamaica;³⁶ *bamboula* in St. Thomas (Leaf 1948:136-43); *batuque* and *jongo* in the states of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Espírito Santo, and Minas Gerais, Brazil (Kubik 1990:149-50; Fryer 2000:104); Venezuelan *mina*, *cumaco*, *tambor grande*, and *burro* (Brandt 1994:271, 1998:526-28; Garcia & Duysens 1999:57-59); Cuban *yuka* (Veléz 2000:66); sometimes Cuban *tumba francesa* (Alén Rodríguez 1986:170); and on occasion *bomba* in Puerto Rico.³⁷

Contemporary examples of accompanying sticks on the side are Martinican North Atlantic *bèlè* and *kalenda*, in which the sticks are known as *tibwa*; *kanmougé* in French Guiana (also *tibwa*); Haitian *djouba* (Courlander 1954: Band 21, liner notes 4); Jamaican *kumina* and *tambo* (*catta* or *kata*) (Carty 1988:20; Lewin 2000:171, 243-44; Roberts n.d.:Side 2, track 1); St. Thomas *bamboula* (*catta*) (Leaf 1948:137); Cuban *yuka* (Veléz 2000:66) and *tumba francesa* (Armas Riga 1991:5-6) (the sticks are called *catá* for both styles); and the Venezuelan styles listed above (*palos* or *laures*).³⁸

Belair as played outside of Martinique (St. Lucia, Dominica, St. Thomas, Trinidad, Tobago, Grenada, and Carriacou) uses upright drums; however sticks are often played on the drum side or rim. As an alternative to sticks-on-the-side, sticks may be played on a piece of bamboo or hollowed wood. This occurs in Martinique (the bamboo idiophone is still called *tibwa*) and occasionally Guadeloupe;³⁹ Puerto Rican *bomba* (*cuá*); Cuban *rumba* and some-

36. Bilby 1985:187-88; Carty 1988:20; Lewin 1998:898, 903, 2000:171, 243-44; Roberts n.d.:Side 2 track 1.

37. Hal Barton, personal communication.

38. In the Barlovento area, the tall *mina* drum is leant against a wooden support and the drummer stands to play, in the manner of Ewe *atsimevu* drumming in Ghana, but *palos* are still played on the side (Brandt 1994:271, 1998:526-28).

39. Some Guadeloupean musicians say the practice was recently copied from Martinique, and some Martinican musicians say the opposite. I have seen *tibwa* played on bamboo in the Martinican work music *gran son* (part of the *lasoté* communal work party) and the merry-go-round tradition *chouval bwa*, so I believe it is traditional on that island.

times yuka (paila, guagua or catá) (Hill 1998:198); and in Jamaica among the Maroons (kwat) and in gumbay drumming of the west of the island.⁴⁰

Above, I noted a connection between belair and djouba, in that Haitian djouba is also known as tanbou matinik, and is played in the style of Martinican North Atlantic belair with transverse drumming and sticks on the side. A similar overlap is found in Trinidadian bele, which is also known as juba (Herskovits & Herskovits 1964:159). Bélé juba is one of several belair dances in Dominica (Honychurch 1988:36-37; Guilbault 1998a:841).⁴¹

ACCOUNTING FOR DISCREPANCIES

I have only scratched the surface of this tangle of names, places, and practices.⁴² It is obvious that certain dances were (and are) widespread but that

40. Kenneth Bilby, personal communication. Sticks may also be played as accompaniment on various other objects. One traveler to the British West Indies wrote, in 1793, "in general they prefer a loud and long-continued noise to the finest harmony, and frequently consume the whole night in beating on a board with a stick. This is in fact one of their chief musical instruments" (Edwards, in Abrahams & Szwed 1983:292). Another describes a kitty-katty, "nothing but a flat piece of board beat upon by two sticks" (Lewis 1815-17, in Abrahams & Szwed 1983:295; Emery 1988:18). The term "kitty-katty" may be a form of catta or kata. Similarly, a 1790 report from Jamaica mentions "a cotter, upon which they beat with sticks" (Beckford, in Abrahams and Szwed 1983:289).

I also have references to sticks played on a piece of wood for the Haitian stick fight mousondi/kalenda (Courlander 1960:131-32); and on a board (kwakwa) among the Aluku of French Guiana (Bilby 1989:57) and the Surinamese Maroons (Herskovits & Herskovits 1969:522). The Herskovits's note repeats a reference from Suriname in 1796 to a "quaka" board played in conjunction with transverse drumming (Stedman, in Abrahams and Szwed 1983:283-84). A bench or stool (tibwa) is used for kanmougé and kaseko among urban Creoles of French Guiana (Agarande 1989:100); a bench (kwakwa) by urban Creoles of Suriname (Herskovits & Herskovits 1969:522). In Jamaica, a bamboo bench or building support (kwat) may be used when a free piece of bamboo is unavailable (Kenneth Bilby, personal communication).

41. One last example of a connection between djouba and belair: Haitian djouba/tanbou matinik is the dance of the peasant *lwa* Zaka, who typically presents himself in farmer's clothing and carries a machete. In Martinique the dance mabelo, described below as the contemporary form of Labat's kalenda – a line dance with pelvic contact – is sometimes performed in Carnival and by tourist troupes under the name *négryé* or *danse de la canne* (dance of the cane): the dancers appear as cane-cutters, the men carrying stalks of sugarcane and machetes. In Cuba, the Congolese-derived yuka dance is sometimes done with sugarcane stalks and machetes (Vélez 2000:65).

42. Additional circum-Caribbean dance and music terms that would expand upon this article, but that I have not yet had the opportunity to collect systematically, include La Rose (léwoz), masón, ka, cata (catá, catta, cotter, cutter), piké (pitché), graj (grajé), gombay (gumbay, goombay), and tumba. Other terms such as shak-shak (Crowley 1958) and banjo (Epstein 1977) have already received such treatment.

observers' reports of them differ, sometimes quite drastically. We have various forms of dances with the same name: for example, *kalenda* as a line dance (Labat), as couples within a dance ring (Moreau de Saint-Méry), as stick fighting, as a type of satirical song, and in contemporary Martinique as a challenge dance (the North Atlantic version) and as a dance for multiple couples *sans* dance ring (the southern version). We have eroticism of many shades: graceful, voluptuous, lascivious, frenetic; as full-frontal contact, as pelvic isolation without contact; contact prescribed or optional. The historical records mix and match these features with bewildering complexity.

There are several possible reasons for such overlaps and discrepancies. The slaves often used a single term for multiple purposes. Breen (in Abrahams & Szwed 1983:266), writing of St. Lucia in 1844, states that any outdoors dance was called a *bamboula*, any indoors dance a *ball*. Such polysemy remains common in the Caribbean today. For example, *graj* (*grajé*), which means "grate" or "scrape" in French Creole, is both a dance and a dance step in southern Martinique, one of the *gwoka* dances in Guadeloupe, a contradance (Blérald-Ndagano 1996:125-28) or perhaps another form of dance (Beaudet 1998:437) in French Guiana, and in Haiti both a musical instrument (a metal scraper) and a method of strumming guitar (by analogy to scraping). Also, as dances spread from island to island slaves adapted and altered them, resulting in quite varied styles with the same name.⁴³

White colonials' written testimony constitutes the bulk of the historical record, but white observers were not necessarily accurate. Having heard the name *kalenda* or *chica* in reference to one dance, they may have applied it indiscriminately to others. "It is evident," writes Courlander (1960:127), "that writers tended to use a single name, such as *Chica* or *Bamboula*, to cover virtually any kind of dance festivity, much as many white Cubans refer today to all sorts of Afro-Cuban cult dances as *Bembé*." I have already discussed how Moreau de Saint-Méry is often relied upon in such conflation, even today.

Many white writers were condescending towards black dances, while others found them offensive. Either of these attitudes could well have led to careless and superficial reporting. Even white observers who took the task of describing slave dances seriously may have lacked the cultural knowledge needed to discriminate between dances, musical instruments, the African provenance of

43. Folk etymology compounds the problem of polysemy, but researchers cannot seem to resist tackling the subject. For example, does the Guadeloupean term *gwoka* derives from French *gros ka* (big barrel) the rum barrels from which *gwoka* drums are made (Rosemain 1986:102), or from Bantu *ngoka* or *ngoma* (drum, drum dance) (Gabali 1980:91-96)? Does "*bèlè*" come from French *bel air* (pretty tune) or Kongo *boela*, a dance, or Kikongo *mbele* (sword) (Cyrille 2002:241)? Controversy over the provenance for Caribbean names often reflects, as in these examples, a desire to stress either European or African heritage.

slaves, the variety and meanings of African eroticism, and so on. "White commentators," Gordon Rohlehr (1990:15) points out, "tended to view Blacks as a single undifferentiated mass, and only a few would or could distinguish between nation and nation, let alone between dance and dance." Both sympathetic and antipathetic white chroniclers approached black dance with strongly held preconceptions and stereotypes that affected their accounts.

In the end, we may not be able to sort these dances by name. The surviving names have too broad a sweep of referents, and doubtless there were a great many other names that have vanished. But we can be assured that several basic choreographic styles existed: successive couples in a ring, line dances, challenge dances, and martial arts dances; and that these utilized various degrees of eroticism, from none (the martial arts dances), to light flirtation, to improvised or prescribed contact.

If the widespread recurrence of names and practices does nothing else, it provides evidence of the spread of creole culture from island to island in the Caribbean, from Brazil to New Orleans. I believe that we can use this fact to advance two hypotheses. First, slaves from Bantu-speaking central Africa played a large role in forming these early styles. Second, four of the five dances I have discussed – kalenda, djouba, bamboula, and belair – were particularly associated with the routes of French colonialism. Only *chica* seems to have been linked to Spanish rather than French slavery.

CONGOLESE/ANGOLAN INFLUENCES

A central African (Congolese, Angolan) connection is postulated for much of the dancing and drumming of the types described here.⁴⁴ Reports from New Orleans in the 1820s, for example, state that the Sunday afternoon dances of slaves were called "the Congo dance" (Epstein 1977:132-33), and, of course, the square where dances were held was known as Congo Square. Two of the choreographies discussed here – couple dancing in the center of a circle with flirtation, pelvic isolation, and sometimes contact; and challenge dancing between dance soloist and lead drummer – have also been associated with central Africa. The former, according to Brandel (1973:46), is "an integral part of many Central African dances" (see Crowell 2002:17; Fryer 2000:95-102).⁴⁵

44. For general studies discussing central African contributions to New World music, dance and other arts, see Bastide 1971; Kubik 1990, 1994; Thompson 1993; Crowell 2002.

45. Apropos of a possible Congolese etymology for *chica*, Kenneth Bilby (personal communication) suggests, "in KiKongo, the verb usually used to mean 'play' (as in to play an instrument) is *sika*. (In the Jamaican Kumina Kongo language, '*sika ngoma*' means 'to play the drum; to hold a dance' ...) The word-initial phonological shift from /s/ to /sh/ is fairly common in New World creole languages." *Sicá* is also the name of a major Puerto Rican bomba rhythm.

Transverse drumming with sticks on the side is of central African origins according to several authorities.⁴⁶ Photographs show the BaAka (Kisliuk 1998:91, 188) and BaBenzélé (Arom & Tourelle n.d.:Plates 4 and 5) of the Congolese rainforest performing in this fashion, and Tracey provides a good recorded example from southern Zimbabwe (Tracey n.d.:Side 1 track 5).

A second type of drumming associated with central Africa is open-bottom barrel drums played upright with the hands. Again, dances of the kalenda, bamboula, and belair complexes are associated with this style. Good contemporary examples are Puerto Rican bomba, Trinidadian bele, French Guianese kaseko, and Cuban rumba. The rumba complex includes both circle/couple/erotic choreography (yambú, guaguancó, yuka) and challenge (Colombia), both types being associated in Cuba with Congolese origin (Veléz 2000:64-65; Daniel 2002:35).⁴⁷ And, of course, one name of the drum used for these dances is conga (although the usual Cuban term is tumba).⁴⁸

The case for Congolese influence would be made stronger if it can be demonstrated that slaves from that area were important in the history of the places where kalenda, bamboula, djouba, and others existed and exist. To examine this issue, I turn to the history of the French slave trade.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

Although the Spanish were the first to bring African slaves to the New World, their main interest lay in precious metals from the mainlands of Central and South America, and they used mostly Amerindian slaves to work their mines. It was the Portuguese who instigated the African slave trade in earnest, beginning in the early 1500s in the Senegambia and the Slave Coast (present-day Benin), then moving south to the kingdoms of Kongo by 1510 and Angola by 1550 (Reader 1997:379-80; Thomas 1997:221). Even so, the trade remained relatively small until the Dutch developed the sugar-plantation system in the early 1600s. The Portuguese and Dutch continued to domi-

46. Bilby 1985:187; Alén Rodríguez 1986:170, 1998:825; Szwed & Marks 1988:32; Kubik 1998:678; Lewin 1998:898.

47. Rumba, yuka, and makuta are distinct in Cuban thought from dances of Yoruban origin, e.g., those of the Santería religion. Drums for the latter include double-headed, hourglass-shaped batá drums and small, stick-played Arará drums, both of Yoruban origin and quite different from the congas used in the Congolese dances.

48. The drums used in the Haitian stick fight mousondi/kalenda are also called congo, and mousondi is associated with the Congo nation of vodoun (Courlander 1960:131-32, 133). Trinidadian belair, known also as djouba, is considered to be Congolese (Herskovits & Herskovits 1964:159, 284). The baile de tambor of Panama is performed by dance groups known as Congo (Smith 1985:192-95).

nate slaving through the 1600s, with the Portuguese controlling most shipments to Brazil and the Dutch those to the Caribbean (Thomas 1997:256; Fage 1999:244-48).⁴⁹ The Dutch system was soon copied by the British and French, who established their own plantations and slaving operations by the mid-1600s (Shillington 1995:174; Fage 1999:250-51).

According to Hugh Thomas (1997:189) Angolans and Congolese formed the largest percentage of the slave population in the 1600s and early 1700s, mainly because of Portuguese involvement. Virtually all Portuguese slaves went to Brazil, however, and may not have had much direct impact in the Caribbean. The British concentrated mainly on obtaining slaves from the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana and Togo) and Slave Coast, later drawing also from the Bight of Biafra (southeastern Nigeria) and Angola (Thomas 1997:247; Eltis 2000:252).

The French entered Senegal in 1539 and controlled the Senegambian trade through the 1600s – this was to remain the only area in which they had their own forts and trading centers (Rawley 1981:111; Thomas 1997:153; Fage 1999:249). However, this area was never a major source of slaves for the French, or any other European nation (Eltis 2000:164-69).⁵⁰ Even during the early years, 1650-1700, French slaving from the Bight of Benin outstripped that from the Senegambia, with 2,372 persons arriving in the New World from the former and 1,385 from the latter. In 1701-25, 9,547 arrived from the Senegambia and 38,411 from the Bight of Benin. By then, too, the French had moved into Congo-Angola, from which 9,690 slaves arrived (Eltis *et al.* 1999).⁵¹ Through the rest of the 1700s, Congo-Angola and Bight of Benin accounted for a decided majority of French slaves – the Bight of Biafra provided more than all the rest of West Africa together, 218,364 to 158,090, and

49. Over the course of the slave trade as a whole, the Portuguese brought a total of 3,646,800 Africans to the New World, the British 1,665,000 to the Caribbean and another 399,000 to North America, and the French 1,600,200 to their Caribbean colonies (Curtin 1969:268).

50. According to Eltis *et al.* (1999), the first slaves brought to the New World on French ships were from the Bight of Benin, not Senegambia, in 1670.

51. Other authors do not place the French in West Africa until about 1710 (David 1973:61; Stein 1979:78-79) nor in the Congo-Angola area until about 1730 (Rawley 1981:130; Thomas 1997:228). According to some authors (Rogozinski 1994:125; Fryer 2000:5-6), the center of slaving activity moved north again to the Slave Coast and the Bight of Benin in the late 1700s and early 1800s, but this may be more accurate for British than French slaving, as data on the French trade from Eltis *et al.* (1999) does not bear it out. My Eltis *et al.* (1999) data was generated by searching for numbers of slaves disembarked from French ships, by twenty-five-year period. Note that this is not the total for all ships arriving at French destinations, nor does it include interisland trade between French possessions.

central Africa still more, 333,013.⁵² In the Congo-Angola region, “although Portugal theoretically controlled maritime commerce along this section of the African coast, the French usually managed to conduct their business ... unhindered” (Stein 1979:79). During 1751-90, 258,240 slaves arrived from the region, including 68,399 in 1786-90 alone (Eltis *et al.* 1999). The French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars disrupted French slaving in the 1790s, but even so the 38,800 taken from Angola in 1791-1800, according to Curtin (1969:170), were the most from any region for that decade.⁵³ The policy of mercantilism meant that slaves were sold mainly to colonies of a ship’s mother country. (Apart, of course, from illegal trading.) Until 1730 French slavers almost always sailed first to Martinique; after 1730 Saint Domingue became the primary destination.⁵⁴

Additional factors should guide an interpretation of this data, including the importance of early and late arrivals and the conditions slaves encountered on different islands. I will treat only the matter of early versus late arrivals here.

Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price (1992), in their reconstruction of the dawn of Caribbean culture, write that adaptations and transculturations arose quickly, spread rapidly through commerce between islands, and laid down a basis for creole culture.⁵⁵ The speed of innovations was indeed remark-

52. Regional totals from Eltis *et al.* (1999) for slaves arriving in the New World on French ships in 1701-1800 are: Senegambia 52,169, Sierra Leone 22,192, Windward Coast 10,370, Gold Coast 34,502, Bight of Benin 218,364, Bight of Biafra 38,857, west central Africa (Congo-Angola) 333,013, southeast Africa 23,073.

53. Figures from other authors differ from those of Eltis *et al.* (1999). For example, according to Stein, in 1711-20, French traders took 10,300 Africans from the Senegambia and 3,200 from Angola (1979:12). However, other authors agree that the number of Senegambian slaves declined steadily while the Angolan trade increased. The best totals I have discovered from other authors place the total of slaves taken by the French in 1711-1800 at the following: Senegambia 77,100, Windward Coast 160,800, Gold Coast 146,700, Bight of Benin 175,500, and central Africa 342,300 (Curtin 1969:170; see also Stein 1979:23, 26, 211; Rawley 1981:129). Note that these are figures for slaves departing Africa, while my figures from Eltis *et al.* (1999) are for slaves disembarked in the New World.

54. Stein 1979:107, 109; Rawley 1981:105; Rogozinski 1994:125; Thomas 1997:192.

55. John Storm Roberts (1972:58) makes a parallel suggestion specifically regarding early musical transculturations: early musical adaptations spread rapidly and “provided the basis for the enduring elements in many mainstream Afro-American forms.”

The question of whether African retentions or New World creolizations account for various black New World culture traits has been of long-standing interest. The model of creative adaptation (creolization, transculturation) has dominated in recent years (see, e.g., Mintz & Price 1992). David Eltis (2000) makes a case for a greater homogeneity of African point of origin, and thus a greater likelihood of direct retention, than previously thought. It is not my intention to get involved directly in this debate, but rather to look for

able. In Martinique, for example, slavery began in the 1630s, an ordinance passed in 1654 prohibited slave dances, a second ordinance in 1678 mentioned kalenda by name, and the 1685 Code Noir extended the prohibition to all French possessions (Epstein 1977:27-28).⁵⁶

Recent data for the earliest arrivals (Eltis *et al.* 1999) again suggest the importance of the Bight of Benin and Congo-Angola in French possessions, in contrast to the Senegambia. The two earliest dance accounts cited here – Labat’s description from Martinique, and the Surinamese painting of 1707 – feature, respectively, belly contact and transverse drumming, which are purportedly central African in origin. By 1700, 2,171 captives had departed the Bight of Benin for Martinique, against 144 from the Senegambia. The figures for Suriname as of 1705 are 10,817 from the Bight of Benin, 9,360 from Congo-Angola, 5,688, and none from Senegambia.⁵⁷ Here the evidence for early central African influence remains inconclusive, especially for Martinique, where early arrivals appear to have been predominantly from the Bight of Benin.

The importance of French colonialism in spreading early Caribbean culture seems undeniable. Throughout the 1700s Saint Domingue, Martinique, and Guadeloupe were France’s richest colonies. They influenced one another, and other islands as well. For example, in 1776-77 New Orleans imported 2,500 slaves from Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Haiti; the city’s population was only 6,500 at the time – a 40 percent increase. Another 3,000 free black Haitians fled to New Orleans during the Haitian Revolution, and another 10,000 ten years later during the Napoleonic Wars. By 1810 New Orleans’ population had swelled to 24,500 (Fiehrer 1991:24; Washburne 1997:64). If these were the glory days of Congo Square – the dances there were shut down in 1840 – many participants would have been recent French Caribbean black and creole immigrants. The Haitian Revolution also sent thousands of slave owners, slaves, and freemen to eastern Cuba, resulting in the tumba francesa style, and to Puerto Rico. In Puerto Rican bomba, songs for the

references to music and dance connections, and, having found these, to treat them carefully. My thesis draws from both sides of the debate: I view early neo-African dances as creolizations, but also see some evidence for specific central African origins.

56. However, in these cases kalenda may have been a generic French label for multiple dances. And it is well to remember that French contradance spread just as quickly during the same time period, and was as quickly shaped into creole versions.

57. In addition, the Martinican figures include 293 captives from undetermined areas; the Surinamese include 954 from Bight of Biafra, 688 from the Gold Coast, and 4,046 from undetermined areas. Note that these are numbers for slaves leaving Africa, not arriving in the New World. These figures were generated by searching Eltis *et al.* (1999) for numbers embarked to Martinique, Suriname, and other countries by African region, by five-year period from 1661 to 1710.

figures yubá, leró, and corvé are still often sung in French Creole (Barton 2002:186; see Roberts 1972:42).

In addition, France exerted a strong influence on white fashion. Then as today, Paris was a world center of style. Dance crazes originating there included contredanse (contradance) in the late 1600s, quadrille in the mid to late 1700s, and various couple dances (polka, mazurka, waltz) in the 1800s. Such fashions were copied by the slaves, sometimes fairly strictly, sometimes in combination with neo-African traditions.

We should also consider the importance of late arrivals, including Africans brought after the end of slavery. In certain cases, late arrivals were able to use the already established basis of creole culture as a foundation for their own practices, preserved fairly directly. For example, Cuban batá drumming is a reconstruction of Yoruban practices instigated in the 1830s by recently arrived African drummers and woodcarvers (Ortiz 1952-55 vol. 4:315-17). In Jamaica, Congolese indentured laborers arriving in the 1800s, after the end of slavery, are linked to the development of kumina (Carty 1988:20; Lewin 2000:243-44). In other cases, however, it is difficult to be sure of the influence of latecomers. About 10,000 Congolese indentured laborers were brought to Martinique in the 1850s and 1860s, after the end of slavery (1848). These immigrants left the plantations behind as quickly as they could and founded their own communities, largely in the south of the island, which retained a distinct identity until very recently. Yet the southern belair style does not feature either the pelvic isolations and contact, or the challenge dancing, associated with Congolese dance. Martinique's North Atlantic dances seem to exhibit those features to a greater extent, yet most of the North Atlantic dances existed before the end of slavery.

Despite such obstacles, my thesis remains that French slavery was instrumental in spreading the dance complexes kalenda, bamboula, djouba, and belair. The places that recur in mentions of these dances were French colonies: Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Lucia, Dominica, Trinidad, Grenada, Carriacou, French Guiana, Louisiana. Though some of these places are usually associated today with British dominion, each was colonized by the French before the British, and remained French until lost or ceded to the British in the Napoleonic Wars. In Trinidad, for example, French planters were the first Europeans to settle in large numbers, in the late 1700s. They brought slaves from Martinique and Guadeloupe with them, and kalenda, bamboula, djouba, and belair began appearing in Trinidadian records at this time. Although the British took over in 1797, French Creole speakers remained the largest population group, and the Franco-Creole cultural basis was refreshed by a wave of French Antillean immigrants in the 1840s and 1850s. Creole remained a living language until quite recently. Trinidad's small neighbors, Carriacou and Grenada, were also settled early on by the French and their slaves from Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Haiti (Hill 1998:185).

SUMMARY AND CAVEATS

To summarize, I suggest the following scenario: slaves from the Congo-Angola region or, possibly, the Bight of Benin, brought to the New World dances of successive couples within circles, sometimes using pelvic isolation and contact, as well as challenge/display solo dancing. Both of these types were accompanied by transverse drumming with sticks on the side, or by upright barrel drums played with the hands. The slaves adapted these practices into early transculturated forms known variously as kalenda, bamboula, djouba, and chica. Transported by the French, they carried the first three of these dances widely around the Caribbean. Kalenda, bamboula, and djouba may have been names for the same or similar dances; there is a wide range of variation in the historical material. Chica may have been similar to the others but was possibly associated with Spanish settlement, or with creole (mulatto) rather than black slaves. Some of these styles, for example, kalenda and chica, were popular among white and creole as well as black dancers. In Brazil, batuque and lundu appear to have been the early Congolese/Angolan syntheses.⁵⁸ The first dances laid a basis for later developments, some idiosyncratic and others widespread. The latter include kalenda stick-fighting dances, belair dances, and topical, satirical songs also known as kalenda and belair. Large numbers of Congolese/Angolan slaves arrived throughout the

58. Peter Fryer's (2002) study of Brazil may serve as a model for examining origins without reductionism. Fryer traces the spread of batuque, an early Brazilian dance that was Congolese-derived and featured couples in a circle, pelvic isolation, and touching. By the late 1700s batuque had spread to Brazil's poor white population and began to appear in a cleaned-up version in the salons of major cities, under the name lundu. Lundu became so popular that it is widely described as Brazil's first "national" dance (Fryer 2000:98, 102, 119-21, 142-47, 154, 155-57). During the nineteenth century lundu acquired a new sung component, the modinha, which had developed in Lisbon as well as Brazil. The dance then incorporated aspects of new salon dances arriving in Brazil from abroad, polka after 1845 and Cuban habañera after 1860, emerging as the late-nineteenth century dance craze maxixe, which in the early twentieth century became a dance craze in Europe and the United States. Maxixe, re-Africanized through popularization among the poor and through recordings, and by the reincorporation of a primarily percussive orchestra, became modern samba.

The history of batuque/lundu/modinha/maxixe/samba is not only one of transatlantic and cross-racial fusion, fascinating though that is. It is also a demonstration of the limits of claims for singular origins. Fryer makes the case that batuque was a neo-African fusion similar in its derivation, choreography, and instrumentation, to many other black dances of the New World; and he demonstrates that batuque was tremendously important to later dance developments. He does not, however, claim that batuque was the sole direct ancestor of all later dances.

1700s, and still later arrivals, even after the end of slavery, reinforced central African influences.

We should treat this scenario cautiously. Although certain dance styles and musical practices appear Congolese/Angolan in nature, I can find little hard evidence of linkages. The history of each Caribbean island is complex and includes various waves of migration and influence. A few examples, in no particular order, should suffice to show the degree of caution necessary.

Pelvic isolation may be considered diagnostic of Congolese/Angolan influence, but Gerard Kubik (1994:38-39) warns that different dances in central Africa focus on different parts of the body, not always the pelvis. People in other African regions also practice sexy couple dancing. I have spoken of challenge dances as Congolese yet, surely, the impulse to competition exists in other places.⁵⁹ Very specific dancer-drummer interaction, as is found in challenge/display dancing, is certainly not absent outside the Congo.

Elements from different parts of Africa blended in the New World. In Cuba, the Yoruban sacred dances are usually played on the Yoruban-derived *batá*, but may be performed instead by an ensemble combining *shekere* gourds (West African) with a *conga* drum (Congolese). Transverse drumming with sticks on the side occurs in Cuban *abakuá* ceremonies (Vélez 2000:18-19), but *abakuá* is considered to be from the area of northwestern Cameroon and southeastern Nigeria, not Congo/Angola. Intra-African streams of influence are also important. I am aware of one style of transverse drumming from outside the Congo/Angola area, *gome*, from Ghana. (In this case the drum is square rather than barrel-shaped, and sticks are not played on the side.) However, *gome* is said to have been brought to Ghana by Liberian Kru sailors, who, in turn, may have picked up the idea from their travels to the Congo/Angola region.⁶⁰

We should beware of first impressions. Martinican choreographer Josy Michalon (1987:39) visited Benin, saw young men doing a form of wrestling called *kadjia*, and decided this was the origin of the martial art/dance *danmyé*, which also features wrestling and which is also called *ladja*. Yet wrestling is a popular young men's sport throughout West and central Africa. Michalon offers no evidence, apart from the coincidence of the similar name, that Benin was the specific source.

Nor should we neglect European influences. I have spoken of African antecedents of martial arts dances but have omitted the old French kick-boxing form, *savate*. Southern U.S. buck dancing appears to fit the African solo male challenge/display type, but what about flat foot, its white counterpart? Some square dances in the United States include a counter-clockwise, circular pro-

59. See Chernoff (1979:81) on musical "cutting" in Ghana.

60. Kofi Anang, personal communication.

cession by partners, similar to the counter-clockwise circles of West Africa. In Martinique's North Atlantic *belair* each couple in turn performs a *monté tanbou* (approach to the drum) as a dramatic climax to the dance. Trinidadian Carnival *calinda* also contained (in mid-twentieth-century accounts) such moments: "men and women 'hook' dancing up to a stage where the drummers were playing. The partners bowed three times, danced back and wound down to the ground" (Cowley n.d.:9). Such approaches to the drum are seemingly African moments, yet European and American contradances may also include a salute to the musicians, performed by each couple in turn.

Conversely, what appears to be European influence may not be. I have suggested that the line formation of Labat's *kalenda* stemmed from French contradance, yet a very similar dance – lines of dancers bumping bellies – was reported from the Bakongo area in the late 1800s (J.H. Weeks 1882, in Cyrille 2002:229, 238). Of course, by that date European contradances may have reached central Africa as well.

I especially want to avoid the impression that a single proto-Caribbean dance gave rise to the rest. This notion informs a great deal of popular literature, tourist performance, and even scholarship throughout the circum-Caribbean. *Kalenda* in particular, with its many historical references and its eroticized, romanticized re-creations by tourist troupes, is put into this role (e.g., Rosemain 1990, 1993). But we should not jump to the conclusion that every time we see the name "*kalenda*" we are reading about the same dance. A fresh approach would treat the labels attached by early chroniclers (*kalenda*, *chica*, etc.) with caution, and look instead at the details of the descriptions. If all mentions of circles and lines, or of sexuality, are not assumed to be the same, then we may begin to track a range of expression, a welter of creativity, that passed from island to island and was adapted into distinctive forms. The result might be less conclusive, but more accurate, and liberating in a different fashion.

The web of names and descriptions in the historical record is indeed striking and begs for an interpretation. I hope that this article has made a start, as well as shown the complexity of the project.

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