The Bishops of London, Colonialism and transatlantic slavery

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Obeah: Spirituality and Resistance to enslavement in the British West Indies.

This paper seeks to briefly outline the historical impact of Obeah, an African derived cultural practice, to the lives of the enslaved in the British Caribbean. Although the enslaved were packed on ships without any material possessions, the majority had already reached adulthood, and as such took lived experiences from Africa to the Caribbean. Embedded in these experiences was a diverse range of knowledge and skill. There would have been blacksmiths, farmers and merchants, scribes, spiritualists, warriors and all manner of other experts amongst the enslaved. These possessions were invisible, intangible and immaterial, and therefore of no interest to colonisers willing to sacrifice their own spiritual wellbeing for material profit. The enslaved were able to draw on their past experiences in a variety of ways to affect their new lives. Some who carried useful skills which could benefit plantation owners became artisans and craftsmen, who often held elevated positions amongst the enslaved and were sometimes able to take on paid work. Others who had experience marketing goods in Africa (particularly women), sold produce from their provision grounds at Sunday markets or on the docks to sailors and soldiers. Those with leadership experience in Africa were made drivers, responsible for 'gangs' of enslaved plantation labourers. But there were also skills which did not directly benefit colonisers but proved useful to the enslaved. These skills would have made enslaved people better equipped to combat their oppressors, to defend their honour, or to get justice for a wrong done to them. Obeah is the topic of this paper. It is spiritual practice carried out by 'ritual specialists' which could be used either to help or harm individuals.

Obeah:

This paper will answer three questions relating to the practice of Obeah in the Americas. Firstly, what impact did Obeah and Obeah practitioners have on organised resistance by the enslaved? This is perhaps the best-known aspect of Obeah and has shaped the way it has been perceived. Secondly, what was the role of Obeah day-to-day? In what ways did Obeahmen impact their community, outside of organised resistance. Finally, how did someone learn how to practice Obeah- what was the process of selection and training for an Obeahman?

Methodology:

The paper will draw on articles relating to the practice of African religion, particularly in modern day Ghana. I will use these articles to make comparisons between modern spiritual practice and the historical practice of Obeah in the Caribbean. Many of the most distinguished Obeahmen, particularly early on, were Coromantee indicating that they were of Akan

heritage and born in the region now called Ghana. Therefore, the spiritual practice they learnt in their homelands and transported to the Americas was likely similar to the traditions practiced there today. Obeah was no doubt changed through its journey across the Atlantic, and forced to adapt to different surroundings. The hostility of colonial authorities to Obeah, the distrust enslaved Africans held toward their captors, and an impossible work schedule, forced spiritual practice in the Caribbean underground and literally into the darkness. Rituals were carried out almost exclusively at night. This secrecy has narrowed our historical understanding of the practice, given that many of the most sacred parts of Obeah were closely guarded. The intention of using modern Akan spiritual practice, therefore, is to illuminate some aspects of Obeah which are unknowable using only Caribbean sources. The Akan religion, Akom, which I will use comparatively has undoubtedly undergone significant changes in the 300 or so years since Obeah was first brought to the Americas. However, religious practice is in its very nature conservative. Traditions are carefully preserved as they are passed from generation to generation. An example of this is the ancient languages, mastered by Akomfo priests. As such it is my hope that with careful examination, it will be possible to draw some tentative conclusions about some of the most difficult to answer questions relating to Obeah, by using Akom as a guide. I have also drawn on several primary accounts written by colonisers. These all have a tainted understanding of Obeah, and view all African spiritual practice as witchcraft. Nevertheless, by reading against the grain, and drawing comparisons with less distorted accounts, we can gain some insight into the spiritual practice of the enslaved.

What is Obeah?

Obeah is a catchall term applied by British colonisers to the practice of African derived spiritual traditions within the Caribbean. There are several theories about the etymology of the word itself- some argue it has Akan origins, others Igbo or Efik. Whichever language the term is derived from, Obeah itself was made through the combination of various West African cultures which had cognate understandings of spirituality. For example, West African religions hold special reverence for ancestors and believe they have an ongoing influence on Earth. As such there were Obeah practitioners, known as Obeahmen, from across West and West Central Africa. Debate exists amongst historians about whether Obeah was an inherently negative practice or whether it had positive and negative applications. It is important to note that our perceptions are moulded by the illegality of the practice, given that the majority of the primary material was created through legal proceedings against its adherents. This has tainted our historical perspective, as the positive applications of Obeah were unlikely to be reported as crimes. Obeah undoubtedly possessed the power to do harm, given its role in providing justice, which like European legal systems involved serious

punishments for wrongdoing. Obeah therefore can be seen to represent spiritual power amongst the enslaved which was not inherently positive or negative. As it was used in aid of resistance by the enslaved and represented an alternative authority to that of the colonisers, it was made illegal and denigrated by Europeans, a stigma which it has carried ever since.[1]

Obeah in resistance

Obeah was made illegal following its use in the orchestration of the 1760 Jamaican slave uprising Tacky's Revolt (1760). A document housed in Lambeth Palace archives as part of the Fulham Palace papers, gives a good indication of the centrality of Obeah to this uprising. This letter was written by the Anglican rector of the parish of Westmoreland in Jamaica, W. Stanford, to Bishop of London, Beilby Porteus. It states that during the uprising the enslaved were '…under the most powerful influence of Obia or Witchcraft, the fear of which…prevented our best disposed negroes from being faithful in the instant of danger…'.[2] Stanfords equation of Obeah with witchcraft was likely to help Porteus understand the practice given that he would have little or no exposure to African spirituality. It was nonetheless a misinterpretation and shows the negative perception held by Europeans. His understanding of Obeah's influence on the uprising, however, is more accurate. Obeahmen are known to have administered oaths to the conspirators which were intended to guarantee the secrecy of the plot. This involved drinking a mixture of grave dirt, rum and blood, which would cause death to anyone who betrayed their comrades to the colonisers. In an earlier conspiracy among enslaved Akans in Antigua (1736), Obeahmen played a similar role. Conspirators were invited to a feast after which they drank a similarly binding cocktail and made oaths presided over by Obeahmen. The Jamaican Maroons, whose numbers were made up mostly of Akans, are also thought to have used ritual oaths to secure the allegiance of new recruits and create social cohesion.[3] Given the precarious position of enslaved rebels, oaths like these, administered by spiritual practitioners were clearly a powerful tool to create solidarity and trust.

In both Tacky's Revolt, and this earlier Antigua conspiracy, ritual specialists are known to have acted as advisors to the leadership of each plot. In one of the main accounts of Tacky's Revolt written by Bryan Edwards, an Obeahman is described as '…the chief instigator and oracle of the

[1] For a summary of the debate see, Diana Paton, *The Cultural Politics of Obeah: Religion, Colonialism and Modernity in the Caribbean World*, (Cambridge, 2015), 77.
[2] Fulham Palace Papers, XIII, Stanford to Porteus, 22nd July 1788, 67.
[3] David Barry Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels: A Study of Master Slave Relations in Antigua*, (Baltimore, 1985), 245, & Vincent Brown, *The Reapers Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*, (Cambridge, 2008), 212-213.

insurgents…'.[4] Similarly in Edward Long's, *The History of Jamaica*, the same Obeahman is said to have been '…chief in counselling…' the leaders of the uprising.[5] In the Antigua conspiracy, an Obeahman named 'Quawccoo' used '…a notted string in order to identify an auspicious time for the rising to take place.'[6] His name is a corruption of the Akan day name Kwaku, indicating he was likely a Coromantee, born in the Gold Coast. The knotted string was used as a form of divination, from which he could base his guidance. This mimics the role that Akomfo priests play in Ghana amongst the Akan. There they act as '…spiritual advisor to kings, queens, elders and individuals who seek their council.'[7] In this capacity they are responsible for communicating the will of the ancestors and deities concerning matters of state and for predicting future events or the outcomes of actions. The Jamaican Maroons also relied on the spiritual guidance of Obeahmen and Obeahwomen. This group fought a protracted guerrilla campaign against the British between 1655-1740. It ended when the British offered them a treaty, which guaranteed their freedom but also required them to support the colonial authorities against any further rebellions and to hunt runaways. One of their foremost leaders, Nanny, was herself a spiritual practitioner. Like the other Obeahmen mentioned above she would have given not only advice but- through her role as mediator between ancestors, deities and the living- lent spiritual legitimacy to acts of organised resistance. Without this, the support needed for such endeavours, would have been difficult to achieve.

In addition to conducting oaths, giving counsel and legitimizing acts of resistance, Obeahmen in Tacky's revolt lent more practical aid in their provision of a special powder to the rebels '…which being rubbed on their bodies, was to make them invulnerable.'[8] Whether or not this powder would have had the intended effect is perhaps beside the point- those that believed in its power would have entered the early engagements of the uprising as if they were invulnerable. Such methods were also utilized to fight against resistance. In Suriname, a Dutch colony in the Guianas, the mercenary John Stedman joined an expedition between 1773-1774 against the colony's population of Maroons, who unlike the Jamaican Maroons, had not come to terms with colonial authorities. Units of rangers created to support the campaign were made up of enslaved men bought for this purpose. They were supported by Obeahman Graman Quacy who sold them

[4] Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British colonies in the West Indies*, (London, 1801), 113.
[5] Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica, or, General survey of the antient and modern state of the island: with reflections on its situation settlements, inhabitants, climate, products, commerce, laws, and government*, (London, 1774), 450.
[6] Paton, *The Cultural Politics*, 36.
[7] Anthony Ephraim Donkor, Akom: The Ultimate Mediumistic Experience Among the Akan, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 76, (2008), 58.
[8] Long, *The History of Jamaica*, 450.

Figure 1: On the left is an engraving of a Surinamese Maroon, copied from Stedman's sketches. Six major groups who fought against the colonial state have maintained their independence to this day.

Figure 2: On the right is an engraving of a ranger, bought to fight against the Maroons. Soldiers on both sides of the conflict harnessed the power of Obeah to their advantage.

amulets. These had the same effect as the powder utilized during Tacky's Revolt. Stedman wrote '…he sells his obias or amulets [to the rangers], in order to make them invulnerable, and of course to engage without fear…'.[9] The word 'obias' is here used to denote the amulets, which were made from '…small pebbles, sea shells, cut hair, fish-bones, feathers &c. the whole sewed up in small packets, which are tied with string of cotton around the neck…'.[10] These had a significant impact on the morale of the men if not actually

[9] John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, vol.2, (London, 1796), 346-347

[10] Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition*, 347

making them invincible. The fact that those fighting for the colonisers also used Obeah to aid them is very telling.

Fighting fearlessly the men who took part in Tacky's Revolt shook the foundations of Jamaican slave society. When they were defeated, it was only with the combined strength of militia, regular troops and the Maroons

Figure 3: Obeahman Graman Quacy used his spiritual power to support the colonial state and was richly rewarded. Dressed in European finery with a golden medallion gifted him by the Prince of Orange. In the Saramaka Maroon oral tradition he is remembered as a thief who took their knowledge of herbs and used it against them.

who also harnessed the spiritual power of Obeah. This practice, therefore, as well as aiding in resistance to enslavement, was used to fight against it. That this uprising involving Obeahmen- who ensured the plots secrecy, gave advice and spiritual legitimacy, and boosted the morale of the combatants- was only defeated with the help of Maroons who employed similar means, speaks to the power of West African derived spiritual practice in aiding resistance by the enslaved.

Obeah Day-to-Day

Obeahmen and Obeahwomen, also played a significant role amongst the enslaved during more peaceful times. It is in this capacity, and through their various services to the enslaved community, that Obeahmen earned the authority to influence acts of organised resistance. These activities included the use of divination to settle disputes amongst the enslaved, to identify the perpetrator of wrongdoing and administer punishments, the use of herbs to heal individual illnesses, and the use of healing rituals to cleanse communities. An Obeah practitioner would amass fortune and a following dependent on their capabilities. One such Obeahman was, 'Graman [Great-Man] Quacy'. Like the aforementioned spiritual leaders, Quacy -derived from Akan day name Kwasi- was reported by Stedman to have been born in Africa and was likely Coromantee. Using his skills as an Obeahman he had gained his freedom and was able to earn what Stedman described as '…a very competent subsistence.'[11] In addition to supporting the colony's units of rangers, Quacy visited estates in order to settle disputes amongst the enslaved. Stedman wrote that '…no crime of any consequence was committed, especially at the plantations but Graman Quacy…was instantly sent for to discover the perpetrators.'[12] Quacy was appealed to by the enslaved within Suriname to provide justice, which supports the characterisation of Obeah by anthropologist J. Brent Crosson as a 'justice-making technology'.[13]Similarly, in Jamaica, Edwards writes that Obeahmen were consulted for '…the discovery and punishment of the thief or the adulterer…'.[14] As the practice was used to serve justice, it must therefore have had the capacity to cause harm in the form of punishments for wrongdoing. This probably contributed to the belief that the enslaved were afraid of Obeah practitioners. One example of Obeah being used to serve justice is depicted in figure 2. In this image, the Obeahman is carrying out a ritual trial, wherein he has wrapped a branch around the neck of an individual who has been accused of theft. The accused is then called upon to declare his innocence, and if he lies, the branch will tighten itself. Visible on

[11] Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition*, 346
[12] Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition*, 346
[13] J. Brent Cross, What Obeah Does Do: Healing, Harm and the Limits of Religion, *Journal of Africana Religions*, 3, (2015), 151.
[14] Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial*, 109.

the table is a chicken, that has been sacrificed, perhaps as a way to invoke the ancestors or deities. The accused is

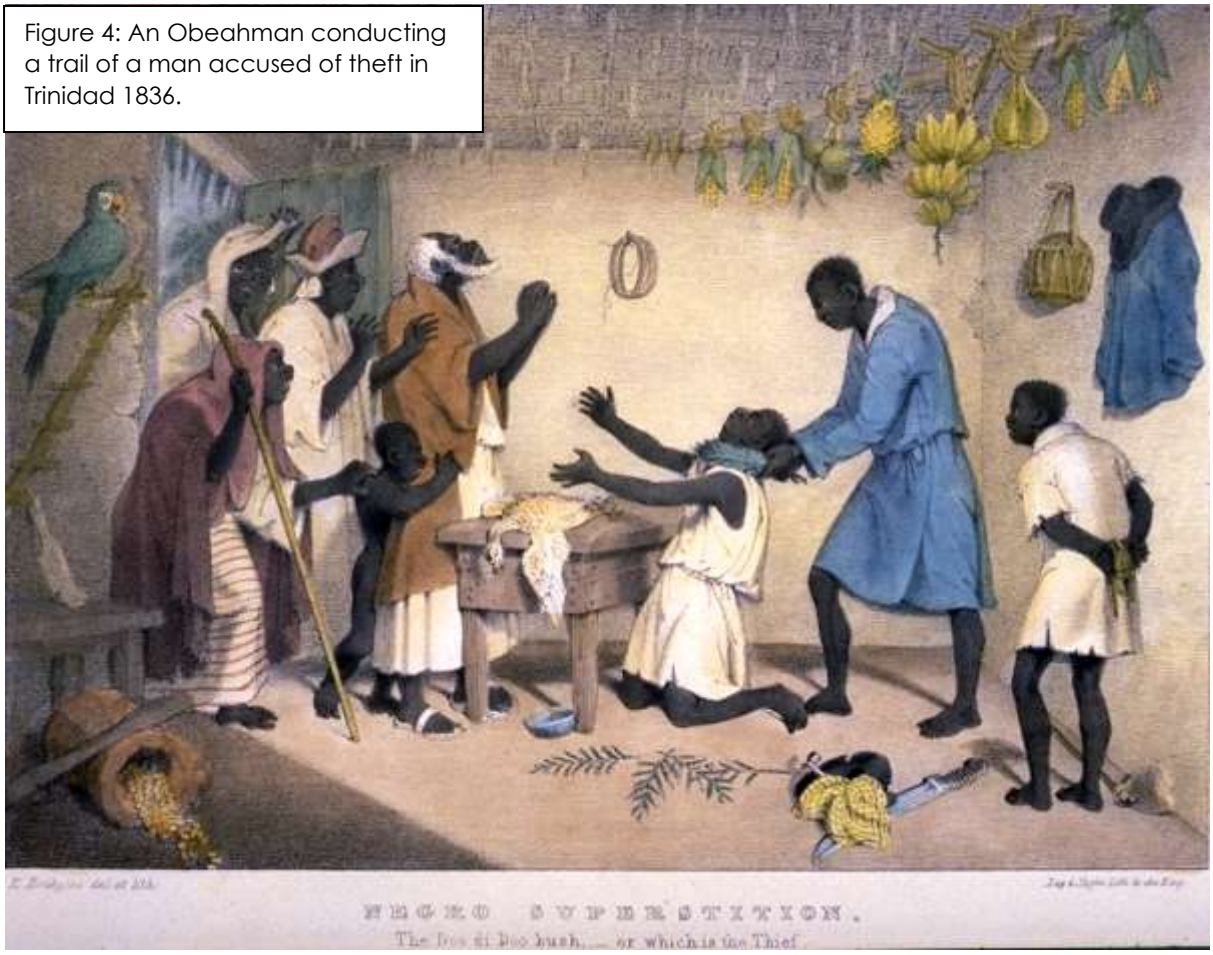

Figure 4: An Obeahman conducting a trail of a man accused of theft in Trinidad 1836.

clearly distressed and fearful as the branch is pulled tighter around his neck. But as well as commanding fear, Obeahmen had a variety of more straightforwardly positive roles, which garnered them respect.

One of the most valuable possessions that ritual specialists brought to the Americas was their knowledge of herbal medicine. This was used to cure all manner of physical ailments, but also to create poisons. Obeahmen most commonly provided herbal remedies to the enslaved, but were known in some cases to cure whites also. Some of the plants used for such purposes may have been smuggled across the Atlantic by African spiritual practitioners. In the Jamaican Maroon oral tradition, there is a narrative relating to the transportation of powerful herbs which had to be swallowed during the middle passage to avoid detection. It reads 'When we find out who left, what we have, obeah dem could kill we for, we start to hide it. And we swallow our own.' Upon arriving in Jamaica and passing the seeds, they were put to use at the first opportunity- 'And him a plant dem. And him a get dem. You no see it? Herbs. Him get herbs.'[15] These powerful herbs

[15] Kenneth Bilby, *Trueborn Maroons*, (Gainsville, 2005), 74.

represented one of the most potent weapons possessed by the enslaved, both to maintain their physical health and fortitude, and to attack their oppressors. Although there was some overlap in the fauna and flora of Africa and the Americas, there was also much difference. Some plants were brought with the enslaved across the Atlantic, however, the indigenous population of Caribs must be credited with sharing knowledge about plants which were not found in Africa and their uses. The Jamaican Maroons are believed to have incorporated the islands indigenous people and likely gained some expertise from them. The knowledge of herbal medicines is one of the most secretive aspects of the training of Akomfo preists in Ghana. Like Obeahmen in the Caribbean, they are consulted by individuals in times of sickness to ascertain the cause through divination, and then to prescribe the correct herbal remedy. [16]

When a whole community was seen to be suffering from sickness, healing rituals could be carried out to purify them all. In one example, an Obeahman was called onto the 'Op Hoop Van Beter' plantation in the Guianas, due to the belief that someone was using 'malevolent spiritual forces…' to cause sickness amongst the enslaved. To solve this, Willem, a creole Obeahman provided individual treatments before conducting a '…collective divination and healing ritual…' intended to identify the cause of harm and remove it. The ritual involved music, dancing and spiritual possession (or alightment), and ended with the death of the enslaved woman believed to be the perpetrator of spiritual harm. The violence used to punish this individual, appears to be a New World addition to the original African practice, and was perhaps influenced by the extreme brutality of plantation life.[17]

These various activities roughly correspond to the responsibilities of Akomfo preists in modern day Ghana, who are specially trained in ritual possession, although this act is more properly understood as spiritual 'alightment'.[18] They serve a priestly role which involves '…purifiying communities (and individuals) during festivities commemorating the ancestors.'[19] They '…offer prayers and libations to ancestors and deities…' and sacrifice animals. In their role as herbalists, they use '…a repertoire of secret herbal knowledge, which they draw upon to aid in the treatment of all kind of illnesses.'[20] They also use divination to provide counsel, not only to leaders but to any that seek their help. Finally, they play an important cultural role, in preserving ancient languages and lyrics, given that each deity has their own associated songs. These are performed, preserved and passed on by the Akomfo, and

[16] Donkor, Akom, 58.
[17] Randy M. Brown, The "Bad Business" of Obeah: Power, Authority, and the Politics of Slave Culture in the British Caribbean, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 68, (2011), 474.
[18] Donkor, Akom, 55.
[19] Donkor, Akom, 58.
[20] Donkor, Akom, 58.

represent an important cultural legacy. Music was often noticed by the colonisers, particularly during funerals, and assumed to be simply celebratory. Understanding the Akom religion, points us towards the conclusion that the music played at funerals may have facilitated spiritual alightment, possibly for the purpose of divining the cause of death.

Becoming an Obeahman

Understanding how Obeahmen were selected and trained from amongst the enslaved community is not straightforward. For those born in Africa and transported to the Americas, they no doubt received training in their native lands. This process would have varied from region to region, however, looking at the process of training for Akan Akomfo priests in the present day can perhaps give us some indication of what it would have entailed. Akomfo clerics can be male or female but are selected from a particular lineage. They must either descend from '…priestly ancestry…', or have been conceived as a result of the intervention of a deity. Each priest is ritually married to one particular deity. They become experts in channelling this deity, through spiritual alightment, enabling them to embody the deity and communicate their will and desires to their community. This alightment is more commonly described as possession, and is initiated through the ritual specialist entering a trance like state, as a result of music, dancing and specific breathing techniques. Their training as a priest is generally begun after 'pscycho-eratic' behaviour, including seizures, tearing of clothes or sudden disappearances. These are understood to be the result of a particular deity calling the individual, with the intention of finding a medium through whom they can interact with the community. These episodes must be diagnosed by another Akomfo, at which point the individual being called by the deity must ritually marry them, by offering '…the deity a dowry, including pieces of cloth, money, liquor, and items specifically demanded...' after which the initiate can begin training.[21]

This takes no less than four years, and is essentially an apprenticeship under an experienced priest. The first year involves the observation of rituals, running errands for their instructor, practice at fasting and the identification and collection of herbs. During the second year the trainee learns breathing techniques- which are the means for entering a trance -dance moves, and the ancient language and songs associated with their particular deity. Once a deity alights on an Akomfo, they may sing their song as an indication that they are now in control of the medium. The initiate is also instructed on taboos during their second year- alcohol, gossip, verbal quarrels and physical fights are all prohibited. In the third and fourth year of their training Akomfo initiates are taught '…water-gazing and divining; how to impregnate charms

[21] Donkor, Akom, 60-68.

with various spirits; how to hear the voices of the trees and the stream and the mmoatia…' who are dwarfish people, believed to dwell in the forests. Those Obeahmen involved in organised resistance in the British Caribbean were often described as Coromantee, which supposedly signified Akan heritage. Their journey to becoming a ritual specialist could have been similar to that of the Akomfo initiate in present day Ghana. However, no spiritual leader in Africa was considered an Obeahman. The journey across the Atlantic, and the experience of enslavement in a plantation colony had a significant impact on West African spiritual practice, and on the practitioners themselves. [22]

The most immediate change was the need to hide spiritual power from the colonisers. This is best exemplified by the maroon story about the middle

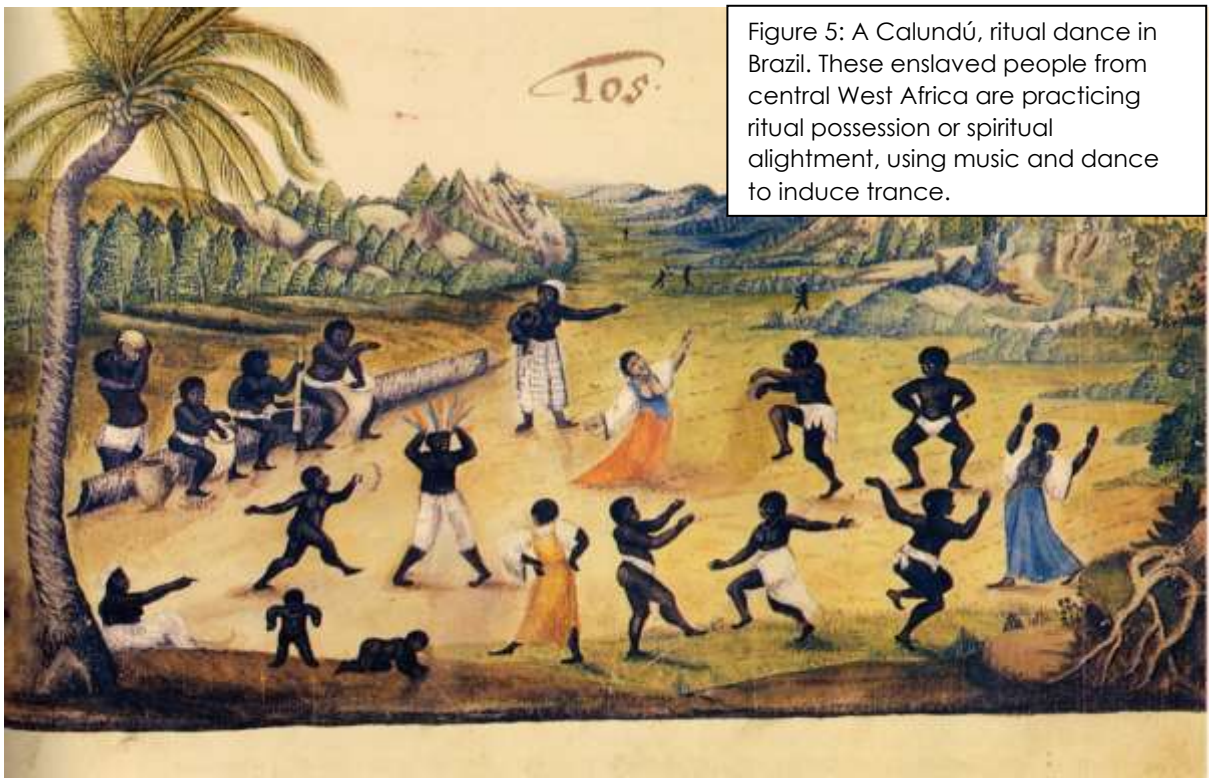

Figure 5: A Calundú, ritual dance in Brazil. These enslaved people from central West Africa are practicing ritual possession or spiritual alightment, using music and dance to induce trance.

passage quoted above. An earlier section of the narrative describes how '…when them reach on de ship, dem starting fe kill de wisest one dem in de midst…'.[23] This indicates that any potential leaders amongst the enslaved, which would have included spiritual practitioners, were targeted by the colonisers. Another legend, relating to Nanny's journey across the Atlantic recounts how her captors '…question her too much. And she don't want dem to know him secret…so therefore she dumb herself, that she can't talk.' It is unclear how she did so, but the narrator explains that '…she have something with her, that when she reach where she going, she have a

[22] Donkor, Akom, 66.
[23] Bilby, *Trueborn Maroons*, 74.

different things now to swallow to mek she talk.'[24] This could point to the use of herbal medicines, to render her mute making it impossible for her to reveal her knowledge and then different herbs to reverse the effects once she was safe. Clearly the practice of spirituality, which in Africa was more open, now had to be guarded. This secrecy was noted by European observers. Edwards writes 'A veil of mystery is studiously thrown over their incantations, to which the midnight hours are alotted, and every precaution is taken to conceal them from the knowledge and discovery of white people.'[25] This secrecy seems to have predated the illegality of Obeah within the British Caribbean, and was a result of the distrust of colonisers who were clearly hostile to the enslaved.

The need for secrecy no doubt affected the transmission of spiritual knowledge across generations. Creole Obeahman Willem was unlikely to have been trained in the same manner as Nanny who learnt her practice in Africa. The scholar Kenneth Bilby, who spent time amongst the Jamaican Maroons to learn the art of mediumship, known amongst the Maroons as 'Kromanti play', described the process of education as extremely elusive. This, in his view, was not due to his status as an outsider, but had become common practice as a way of protecting their spiritual knowledge. He writes '…I discovered that the acquisition of knowledge about their craft, even for Maroons learning their way in the tradition, was a gradual, incremental process of testing and evasion…'.[26] In addition, the spirits of revered ancestors had to be consulted on his suitability as an apprentice. After this, it would have been possible for Bilby to undergo a ritual, which would allow the spirits to communicate with him in his dreams, and through this means he was expected to acquire much of the information needed to become a fete-man or maroon ritual specialist. In both the Akan and Maroon cultures then, the spirits of deities or ancestors play an important role in dictating who can become a spiritual practitioner.

Conclusion

This report has focused on three main questions, namely what was the role of Obeah in organised resistance to enslavement, what was the role of Obeah day-to-day and finally what was the process of becoming an Obeahman? We have seen that Obeahmen were central in the planning and organisation of several uprisings within the Americas. In these early instances, Coromantees were particularly visible in their harnessing of spiritual power to resist colonisers. The use of Obeah in uprisings was so effective, that in some cases spiritual practitioners were used to fight against the enslaved rebels. On a more routine basis, Obeahmen served their community as healers, gave

[24] Bilby, *Trueborn Maroons*, 76.
[25] Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial*, 109.
[26] Bilby, *Trueborn Maroons*, 4.

counsel using divination and provided justice. Though these means, Obeahmen and Obeahwomen were able to earn a living and gain the respect of their community. Finally, using the rituals of Akan Akomfo practitioners as a guide, we have speculated into the process of becoming an Obeahman for those born within Africa. The example drawn upon is modern and has no doubt changed since the era of slavery, however, it gives us some indication of the kind of process initiates would have gone through to train as a spiritual practitioner. The information garnered by Kenneth Bilby in attempting to train amongst the Jamaica Maroons as a fete-man, is suggestive of the changes to African spiritual practice in the Americas, and clearly exhibits the secrecy which shrouded Obeah from the observation of Europeans. The experience of becoming an Obeahman for an enslaved Creole would have been markedly different than for their African forebears, due to the hostile environment of the plantation colony.

To conclude, this report and the accompanying report on Kalenda analysed two African derived cultural traditions, their transportation to the Americas, and their use in resistance to colonialism. When comparing these two, different aspects of Afro-Caribbean culture, there are clear similarities. For pre-colonial Africans, spirituality was an inherent part of conflict. This has been seen in the crafting of spiritual weapons in resistance to enslavement, for example, the use of amulets to confer invulnerability. Similarly, in the practice of martial arts, spiritual armament was used by practitioners to give them an edge against their opponents. These two aspects of African culture therefore, although presented separately, are in fact intimately connected. Both traditions, used music, singing and dance as a ritual context. Seen in this light, the attempts of colonial powers to ban African instruments and gatherings, were a direct attack on the cultural heritage of the enslaved. As such, any continuation of these practices, even if cursory, was a form of cultural resistance against attempts to eliminate the African traditions of the enslaved. Therefore, continuation of these practices is the best way to pay respect to the struggles of enslaved Africans to maintain their identity against the encroachment of a hostile European culture.

List of Figures:

- Figure 1- "Armed Maroon, Surinam, 1770s", *Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora*, accessed September 28, 2022, http://www.slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/item/1264
- Figure 2- "Free Black Soldier, Surinam, 1770s", *Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora*, accessed September 28, 2022, http://www.slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/item/812

- Figure 3- "Medicine Man/Doctor, Surinam, 1770s", *Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora*, accessed September 28, 2022, http://www.slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/item/1530
- Figure 4- "An Obeah Practitioner at Work, Trinidad, 1836", *Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora*, accessed September 28, 2022, http://www.slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/item/1856
- Figure 5- "Divination Ceremony and Dance, Brazil, 1630s ", *Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora*, accessed September 28, 2022, http://www.slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/item/1018

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