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# An Aesthetic of the Cool

ROBERT FARRIS THOMPSON

The aim of this study is to deepen the understanding of a basic West African/Afro-American metaphor of moral aesthetic accomplishment, the concept *cool*. The primary metaphorical extension of this term in most of these cultures seems to be *control*, having the value of *composure* in the individual context, *social stability* in the context of the group.<sup>1</sup> These concepts are often linked to the sacred usage of water and chalk (and other substances drenched with associations of coolness and cleanliness) as powers which purify men and women by return to freshness, to immaculate concentration of mind, to the artistic shaping of matter and societal happening. Coolness in these senses is therefore the purifying means by which worlds are taken out of contingency and raised to the level of aspiration.

Put another way, coolness has to do with *transcendental balance*, as in Manding divination, where good outcomes are signaled by one kola half up, one down, and this is called “cool.” But, before we move to the consideration of detailed instances of the concept in social context, let us review what is known about the linguistic and historical background of the notion.

## *The Lexicon of the Cool*

Language in Europe and in tropical Africa equally reveals, in the term, *cool*, a basic reference to moderation in coldness extended metaphorically to include composure under fire. Thus, in English:<sup>2</sup>

“Cool, composed, collected, unruffled, nonchalant, imperturbable, detached [are] adjectives [which] apply to persons to indicate calmness, especially in time of stress. Cool has the widest application. Usually it implies merely a high degree of self-control, though it may also indicate aloofness.”

Now compare a West African definition, from the Gola of Liberia:<sup>3</sup>

“Ability to be nonchalant at the right moment...to reveal no emotion in situations where excitement and sentimentality are acceptable—in other words, to act as though one’s mind were in another world. It is particularly admirable to do difficult tasks with an air of ease and silent disdain. Women are admired for a surly detached expression, and somnambulistic movement and attitude during the dance or other performance is considered very attractive.”

The telling point is that the “mask” of coolness is worn not only in time of stress but also of pleasure, in fields of expressive performance and the dance. Control, stability, and composure under the African rubric of the cool seem to constitute elements of an all-embracing aesthetic attitude. Struck by the re-occurrence of this vital notion elsewhere in tropical Africa and in the Black Americas, I have come to term the attitude “an aesthetic of the cool” in the sense of a deeply and complexly motivated, consciously artistic, interweaving

of elements serious and pleasurable, of responsibility and of play.

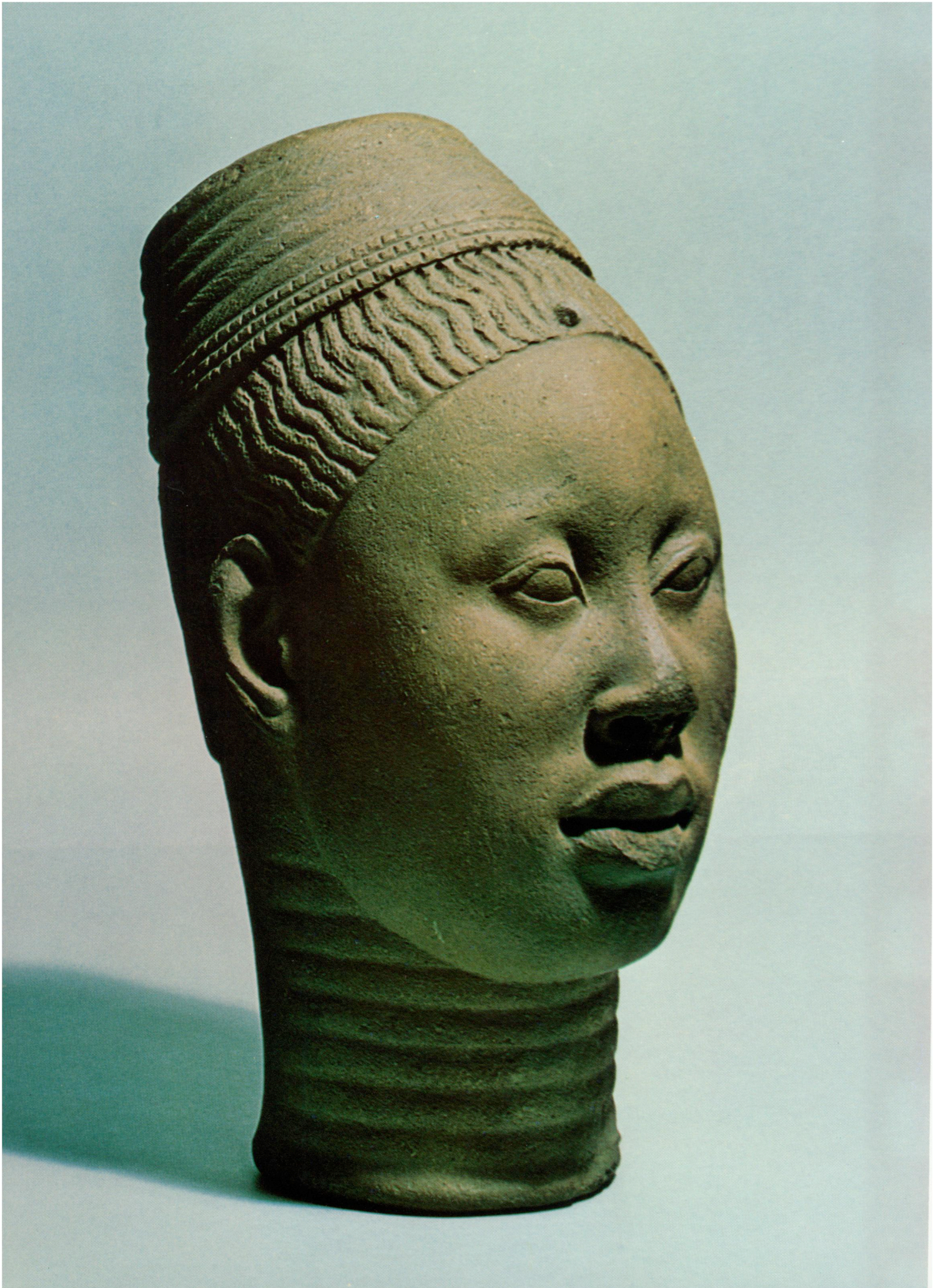
Manifest within this philosophy of the cool is the belief that the purer, the cooler a person becomes, the more ancestral he becomes. In other words, mastery of self enables a person to transcend time and elude preoccupation. He can concentrate or she can concentrate upon truly important matters of social balance and aesthetic substance, creative matters, full of motion and brilliance. Quite logically, such gifted men and women are, in some West and Central African cultures, compared in their coolness to the strong, moving, pure waters of the river.<sup>4</sup> A number of languages in West and Central Africa provide a further basis for these remarks (see Table, pg. 90).

According to these sources, coolness is achieved where one person restores another to serenity (“cools his heart”), where group calms group, or where an entire nation has been set in order (“this land is cool”). The phrase, “this country is cool” (*di konde koto*)<sup>5</sup> is used with the same valence and the same suggestiveness by the descendants of runaway African slaves on the Piki Lio in the interior of Surinam, in northern South America.

Idioms of cool heart and cool territory do not, to my knowledge, communicate in Western languages the same sorts of meanings of composure and social stability unless the phrasing is used by or has been influenced by the presence of black people of African heritage. I think that the African definition of metaphorical or mystical coolness is more complicated, more variously expressed than Western notions of *sang-froid*, cooling off, or even icy determination. It is a special kind of cool. Perhaps the most convenient way of suggesting its specialness and complexity is to allude immediately to further nuances within African usages in addition to valences just discussed of composure, self-control, and social equilibrium. Comparison of the term “cool” in a variety of West, Central, and even East African languages reveals further nuances of (1) *discretion* (2) *healing* (3) *rebirth* (4) *newness or purity*. Compare Yoruba nuances (raw, green, wet, silent)<sup>6</sup> with Kaonde, from Rhodesia (raw, green, wet, silent).<sup>7</sup> Wetness is an inevitable extension of coolness. But silence is not. “Cool mouth” (*enun tutu*, in Yoruba) or “cool tongue” (*kanua kahoro*)<sup>8</sup> in Kikuyu) reflect the intelligent withholding of speech for the purposes of higher deliberation in the metaphor of the cool. This is not the stony silence of anger. This is the mask of mind itself.

Remarkable pursed-lipped forms of African figural sculpture are sometimes formed in this mirror of discretion. Where the teeth are bared, the instance is exceptional and can take the form of a leader or a spirit or a leader-spirit who shows special power in order to confront negative powers of witchcraft and war.<sup>9</sup> The idea of freshness in the cool intersects with visual art, too, in the sense that traditional artists some-

(OPPOSITE) 1. TERRACOTTA HEAD KNOWN AS LAJUWA. 12½" HIGH. IFE MUSEUM.



times (not always) impart a luminous quality of vital firm flesh to the representation of the elders and the ancient gods. Such images thus become ideally strong within their poise, suggesting, within depth of dignity and insight, commanding powers of mind and body.

The blending of muscular force and respectability leads to the appreciation of the fit human body in the cool, a right earned, however, by demonstration of character and right living. I once complimented the elders of Tinto-Mbu in the Banyang portion of the United Republic of Cameroon on the fine appearance of their chief. Whereupon they immediately corrected me:<sup>10</sup> "We say people are not judged by physical beauty but by the quality of their heart and soul; the survival of our chief is a matter of his character, not his looks." However, no matter how ordinary his face, it is important for the chief to dress as beautifully as possible in order to attest his fineness of position in appropriate visual impact. He must consequently prove that he knows and controls the forces of beauty as much as the forces of polity and social pressure. Beauty, the full embodiment of manly power, or the power of women, in feminine contexts, is mandatory where it is necessary to clarify social relations. It would not make sense, in African terms of the aesthetic of the cool, to strike balances between opposing factions without aesthetic elaboration.

Coolness therefore imparts order not through ascetic subtraction of body from mind, or brightness of cloth from seriousness of endeavor, but, quite the contrary, by means of ec-

static unions of sensuous pleasure and moral responsibility. We are in a sense describing ordinary lives raised to the level of idealized chieftaincy. The harmony of the marriage or the lineage ideally reflects the expected first magnitude harmony imparted by the properly functioning ruler to the province or nation at large. Men and women have the responsibility to meet the special challenge of their lives with the reserve and beauty of mind characteristic of the finest chiefs or kings.

More than the benefit of the doubt is extended to mankind in his natural state by this philosophy. Man starts not from a premise of original sin but from the divine spark of equilibrium in the soul which enters the flesh at birth from the world of the gods. To act in foolish anger or petty selfishness is to depart from this original gift of interiorized nobility and conscience. This means a person has quite literally lost his soul. He has "departed from himself"<sup>11</sup> and is in serious danger. The Gã of southern Ghana even say that a person out of harmony with his ideal self can only win back his soul by means of extraordinary aesthetic persuasion: wearing brilliant cloth, eating cool, sumptuous food, keeping important company!<sup>12</sup>

If, therefore, in the cool, wild upsurges of animal vitality are tempered by metaphoric calm, such is the elegance of this symbolically phrased reconciliation that humor and ecstasy are not necessarily denied. Nor is physical beauty itself, a force which brings persons together via saturated expressions of sexual attractiveness and deliberately attractive behavior and charm, excluded from this moral vision. Being charming is also being cool, as suggested by the following interlude among black folk in Florida:<sup>13</sup> "I wouldn't let you fix me no breakfast. I get up and fix my own and then, what make it so cool, I'd fix *you* some and set it on the back of the cook-stove . . ." This man was flirting. But a whole ponderation lies concealed within his phrasing. He had cited the cool in an African sense, a diagram of continuity. He had promised to assume the role of another person in order to earn her love. He had promised to dissolve a difference which lay between them. The charm of what "made it so cool" in these senses suggests he knew, in Zen-like simplicity, the divine source of the power to heal, love. He had thereby identified the center from which all harmony comes.

This highly cultivated, yet deceptively simple, idiom of social symmetrization clearly seems ancestral. Philip Curtin shows that perhaps a fourth of the total 18th century slave imports into the United States derived from the area of the Bantu language groups, principally in the region of Angola.<sup>14</sup> Now when we examine a number of Bantu roots (viz. *-talala*, *-zizira*<sup>15</sup>) combining both the literal and the socially assuaging valences of the African usage of the term, cool, we seem to touch basic roots of black social wisdom. Part of the power of the cool is undoubtedly rooted in just this quality of referral to ancestral custom. The presence of structurally similar idioms of coolness in Central African languages separated by great distances implies their antiquity. As another demonstration of historical depth for the concept we have seen that descendants of 17th and 18th century slaves in Surinam use the expression to "cool his heart" (*koto di hâti f'en*)<sup>16</sup> as an image of restored social tranquility. The precise idiom is used by Akan, Cross River, and some Bantu peoples. Indeed there are other suggestions of the ancientness of the concept.

#### *The Antiquity of the Cool*

Praise names for ancient African kings provide evidence for the presence of this intellectual principle at a time which



2. BRONZE HEAD. BENIN. 8¼" HIGH. NIGERIAN MUSEUM, LAGOS.

might otherwise have seemed inaccessible. During the first half of the 15th century a certain leader was crowned king of the famous Nigerian empire, Benin. He took the title *Ewuare*, meaning literally “it is cool.”<sup>17</sup> This referred perhaps to a conclusion of a period of disorder. In the same century a Yoruba ruler was crowned with the title, Cool-And-Peaceful-As-The-Native-Herb-Osun (*oba ti o tutu bi osun*) at Ilobi in what is today southern Egbado country.<sup>18</sup> The same title was awarded a 16th century Ijebu Yoruba king.<sup>19</sup> Undoubtedly a wider currency of the concept in ancient Yoruba ruling circles remains to be established.

Nigeria seems a fountainhead of the concept cool. Art historical evidence supports this. Superb sculptured heads of important personages at Igbo-Ukwu (Fig. 3), Ile-Ife (Fig. 1), and Benin (Fig. 2), respectively dated to around the 9th century, around the 11th-15th centuries<sup>20</sup> (for the so-called Lajuwa head illustrated), and the 1500’s, suggest abiding interest in facial serenity as the sign, in the company of kings, by which certainty and calm from the past is transferred to the present and, as a phenomenon of mirrored order, from this world to the next. But it is surely more useful to pass from these speculations on origin<sup>21</sup> to the concretely documented instances of the cool concept in certain modern traditional societies in West Africa.

#### *The Contexts of the Cool*

I am attempting identification of some main contexts of cool aesthetic happening in certain West African civilizations and their corresponding, historically related, African counterparts. When these strategies of aesthetic assuagement (what we might term the rites of the cool) are compared, point by point, certain elements of conceptual articulation seem clearly mirrored, suggesting, to this writer, the continuity in change of indelible cultural code.

Let us pursue this possibility with transoceanic pairs—Cross River, Lower Niger/Western Cuba; Dahomey/Haiti; Akan, neighbors/Surinam. The basis for this pairing is the proof of contact through the Atlantic slave trade.<sup>22</sup> Thus for a brief illustration, slaves from the region of Calabar on the west coast of Africa in southeastern modern Nigeria were brought in considerable numbers to the provinces of Havana and Matanzas in Cuba during the first half of the 19th century. Scraps of Efik and Ejagham, two languages of the Calabar area, are still spoken in these parts of Cuba to this day.

#### *Cross River and Lower Niger Cool/ Western Cuba*

The civilizations of the Cross River, where the United Republic of Cameroon and the Republic of Nigeria come together, and the Igbo-speaking people farther west in the Niger Delta, both form an interesting province of the cool. There is, for example, a reference to the ceremony known as “cooling the village” (*lopon lawa*) in Daryll Forde’s study of a lower Cross River society, the Yakö:<sup>23</sup> “Where questioning had elicited specific acts of hostility, obstruction, or other failures affecting rights and duties between patient and a spouse, relative, or neighbor, the loss of supernatural protection would be implicitly attributed to this and the prescriptions then included an explicit moralizing element. In such cases a ‘cooling’ rite was also enjoined at one or more shrines.”

The offending person therefore restored social equilibrium by ritual gifts of money and sacrifice (material amends) or the performance of entire ceremonies (behavioral amends). Diviners were crucial in such instances, for they were what might be phrased specialists in cool, whose own initiation

had, significantly, combined prolonged staring at the sun with training in the lore of soothing herbs and cooling, sacred water. The concern with herbs (green) and the disk of the sun (orange) immediately suggests a vivid sense of contrast in nature harnessed for a higher order. (Yoruba diviners sometimes wear beads of alternating green and yellow color;<sup>24</sup> symbolizing the mystic complementarity of heat and coolness, chaos and order, in the world of divination.)

Richard N. Henderson has written of coolness in traditional Onitsha Igbo culture. The classic example is homicide. The moment that a murder has been committed the land is said to become “hot” and is believed not to be properly assuaged until warriors from the immediate patrilineage of the victim attack the premises of the murderer’s ancestral home, driving off all occupants (who take refuge with their mother’s parents), burning or destroying the house, crops, and animals, and, quite symbolically, cutting down all the shade trees so that the land about the house becomes, in actuality, a “fiery surface.”<sup>25</sup>

The heating up of the land illustrates how the lineage is caused to share responsibility for the transgression of a single member. The killer, if innocent, may later return with his lineage segment to recover the land. But first the lineage must provide compensatory transfer of one of the members of their

*Continued on page 64*



3. BRONZE HEAD FROM IGBO-UKWU. 3¼" HIGH. NIGERIAN MUSEUM, LAGOS.

rules of hygiene, to which the literate classes are more prone to adhere than are the illiterate groups of natives. (Thus *Abikus* are most commonly talked about and held in awe among the illiterate, conservative, medically unschooled, socially unadulterated and less informed traditional folk.) However, even poor hygiene and medically-proved reasons for infant mortality cannot totally explain the hard-to-deny and most-difficult-to-prove facts surrounding the existence of genuine *Abikus*. It must therefore be understood that this facet of Yoruba custom will hold its own for many years, and will only disappear (and this is doubtful) when juju, witchcraft, magic arts and other evil influences are completely unknown in black Africa. □

## An Aesthetic of the Cool

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own family segment to the family of the victim, in order to “cover the abomination and cool the land.” The “fiery surface” then cools down to habitable temperature, after the parties involved have bound their lives and reestablished social purity and coolness in reconciliation.

A person in traditional Onitsha society can acquire a sense of coolness through the learning of appropriate ancient lore. Thus a senior daughter of the patrilineage tests every pubescent child’s knowledge of basic ancestral customs, to cleanse him of “strangeness” to lineage affairs.<sup>26</sup> Purification by conscious acquisition of ancestral lore relates to the purification of the self that pervades the whole notion of mystic coolness in the West African sense.

Personal purity cannot, however, be inherited. Personal purity is achieved. This is done through ceremonial rites in which the individual communes with his ancestors, becoming, in the process, more ancestral.<sup>27</sup> Other sources of ritual coolness, in the quest for purity, include learning to speak with words which bear evidence of diplomacy and high character, learning the “deep” uses of the fan, to enforce peace on disputing non-titled men by fanning them when they begin to argue, and ideally, to transcend arrogance and revenge in favor of situations in which men may move in whole concert with one another.

The essential Onitsha Igbo image of ritual coolness includes permanent lustre or luminosity, that state which, like the eagle feather, “does not tarnish.”<sup>28</sup> People in this society take pains to maintain special neatness and brilliance in their personal appearance, and clay walls are carefully rubbed and polished. Purification of the self also elevates the individual beyond sorrow, close to the divine order of things, if only at the level of performance. Thus a chief confronted with news of death within the lineage indicates his status by absence of facial expression. He appoints others to mourn for him.


There are certain senior women in Onitsha Igbo society who are armed with extraordinary powers to restore coolness. When a person has committed an act which contaminates his compound, the senior priestess of the patrilineage must perform an oath to “quench the fire which makes his presence dangerous.” She beats a fowl around the body of the malfactor, in order that the bird absorb the “heat” of his morally dangerous condition, thus restoring equilibrium and social order.<sup>29</sup>

The quest of the cool in ritual purity reappears among the blacks of Western Cuba who are of Cross River and Igbo extraction. Here, too, a rooster is passed, fluttering and still alive, about the torso of an initiate into the famous all-male, Cross River-derived Abakuá Society (cf. the Abakpa Ejagham of the Calabar area). This act is said to absorb impurity from his body. Another form of mystic coolness in the Afro-Cuban Abakuá Society dramatically emerges during the funeral of a cult elder:<sup>30</sup>

“We arrive at the supreme moment, separat[ing] the soul of the member from the sacred skin of the drum [it is believed the spirit of the departed elder momentarily rests within the skin of a sacred friction drum, *Ekpe*, before leaving this world forever]. Next to the high priest, Isué, stands his helper, Mbakara, who carries a vessel half-filled with water. Isué chants and the soul of the departed member abandons the skin of the drum and travels into the vessel . . . ‘It is going to seek the water . . . Because water has the power of sustaining, within itself, the spirits of the dead and dominating them. Water attracts the souls of the dead; its coolness clarifies them, lends them tranquility . . .’

“The spirit of the departed brother is [thus] dispatched to the mystic river . . . the priest . . . lights the gunpowder sprinkled over the chalked representation of an arrow leading from a circle drawn around the base of the drum within the secret chamber to a point beyond the door. The gunpowder is ignited. It burns immediately along the length of the drawing, expelling, in this way the soul of the dead man [from the drum to the water] . . . the carrier of the vessel of water then chants: May your soul arrive cool at the sacred river, cool as it once existed in union with our sacred drum!”

We shall see shortly that in Dahomey broken pottery at a funeral signifies the shattering of life by death, the anguish of



SIMBAI SHIELD  
FROM NEW GUINEA  
CARVED  
WITH STONE IMPLEMENTS  
ABOUT 1918  
APPROXIMATELY 18 X 40"

**HODGE PODGE**  
PRIMITIVE OBJECTS  
OF ETHNOGRAPHIC SIGNIFICANCE

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which is eased by pouring soothing liquid on the earth and by speaking beautiful phrases and words. By the same token, it seems to me, the use of gunpowder explosions in the Abakuá funeral in Cuba equals the breaking of the pots as a symbolic means of severing death from life. At the same time the use of cool water in the same ritual confronts, as it were, the heat of the explosion and the glitter of its traveling fire. Clearly, the river of the ancestors is attained in Cuba by means of the most dramatically orchestrated equilibrium.

The sign of the arrow as emblem of spiritual transition almost unquestionably derives from the great graphic traditions of the Cross River. In the latter territory there is a kind of pictographic script (*nsibidi*) of which the more public and secular manifestations have to do with love and social unity and the deeper signs with initiation, death, and punishment. This is, we might say, “cool writing,” scripts whose coolness is a function of abiding concern with social purity and reconciliation. Sultan Njoya of the Cameroon Grasslands was influenced by the signs of this script. At the beginning of this century, when he elaborated a new, syllabic form of writing, largely based on *nsibidi*, the old concerns remained:<sup>31</sup>

“When an oral civilization moves to become literate the first items recorded are the texts felt to be important, just as the first printed book in Europe was the Bible. When Sultan Njoya of the Bamun in the Cameroons invented a script, the first materials written down were the royal chronicle and a code of the customary law and the local pharmacopeia.”

What Njoya attempted to make indelible—history, law, and the use of the leaves—combined aspects of leadership with herbalism. We think of the frequent correlation, linking good government with healing, in the concept, cool. Insight into the sorts of custom which bind together individuals and social groups, and which keep them alive and well, also characterizes the corresponding Afro-Cuban script, *anaforuana*, but we will not consider this fascinating continuity here.

#### Dahomey/Haiti

Comparison of funerals in Dahomey and Haiti elicits strongly related ritual strategies of dealing with the end of life. Death in Dahomey is heralded by metaphor, “fire has fallen heavily upon the family roof,”<sup>32</sup> communicating annihilation by heat, and reminiscent of the Igbo concept of the “fiery surface.” The funeral follows. Water is sprinkled three times near the corpse on the ground, there is continuous percussion, and finally comes the moment when the man who digs the grave finishes his work:<sup>33</sup>

“Coming out of the grave, the eldest son gives the grave-digger (a small pot) filled with . . . the residue of the fruit of the palm-tree when oil is made . . . the digger takes the (pot), breaks it, and throws it and its contents into it . . . he re-enters the excavation, gathers up the pieces and takes them away. This ceremony . . . is intended to ‘cool the earth,’ that is, to cause it to allow the dead to lie peacefully in it.”

On the one hand, irrevocable loss has been signaled by smashing pottery. This is widespread as a funeral custom in tropical Africa, and Afro-Americans in coastal Georgia questioned on this point have answered that broken pottery is deposited on their graves to insure that ties between the living and the dead are definitively broken, so that the dead will not return to haunt the house of the living<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, the pouring of oil metaphorically eases the dead into the realm beyond. The soothing oil possibly also eases the return

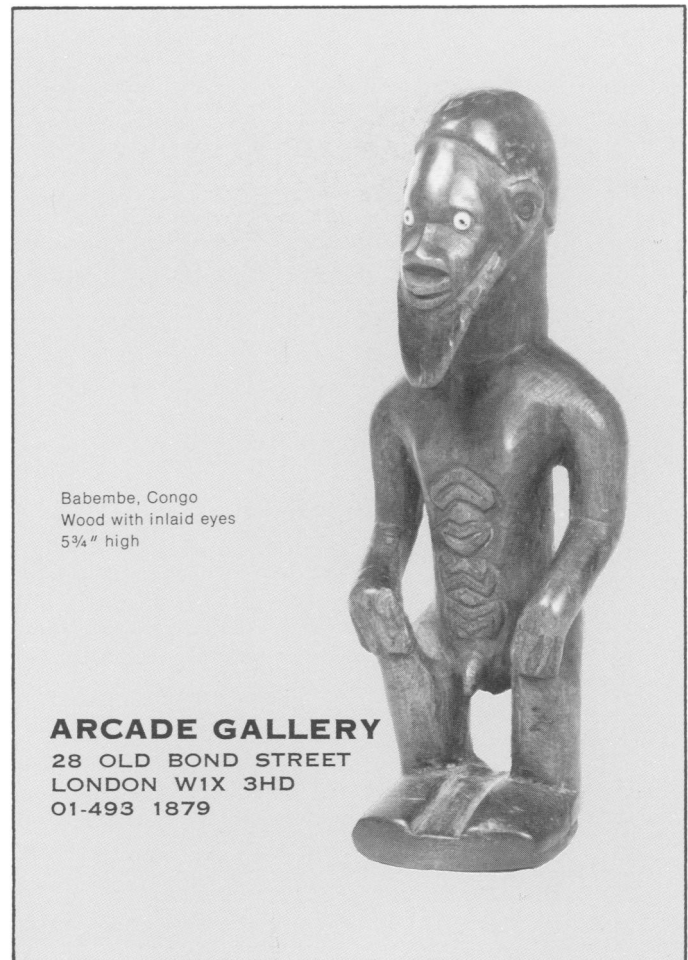
of the living to their normal concerns. The reestablishment of tranquility is underscored by the pouring of cool lubricant (the oil) at the point of intersection.

There is a partial echo of this rite in the culture of the north of Haiti. The custom of *casser-canari*<sup>35</sup> (smash the earthenware jar) marks the formal end of the funeral. When the jar is reduced to fragments, the vodun priest makes a libation of rum (water equivalent) over the shards and dust. The Dahomean synthesis of smashing and soothing, of making the transition both definitive yet easy, remains.

There is another transoceanic relationship to consider here, one that suggests that great heat is sublimated and controlled in Haitian mystic coolness. This relationship is specially manifest in rites of initiation or rebirth.

In Dahomey and Yorubaland a person sworn into the cult of the thundergod, patron of warriors and lord of lightning, must prove upon initiation special mastery of the pain of heat. He must dance with a fire burning in a vessel on his head. He must literally balance heat with ease. He must also thrust his hands into a vessel containing boiling gruel without flinching.<sup>36</sup> He thus proves, by tasting heat with nonchalance, that his control is derived from his god, a possession actual and not feigned. This splendidly dramatic test apparently came to Haiti from the Dahomean and Yoruba cults of thunder to become the means of entrance into the entire vodun religion of the black folk of that important Caribbean black republic.<sup>37</sup>

“She smeared her hands with cold oil, took the novice’s left hand from beneath the sheet and smeared that, too. Scooping



Babembe, Congo  
Wood with inlaid eyes  
5¼" high

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LONDON W1X 3HD  
01-493 1879

a handful of the now seething mixture, she pressed it into the novice's hand and closed the fingers on it, for four or five seconds . . . This is the central moment of initiation, when the novice is made to grasp heat without flinching—a heat which will sear the flesh only if the (gods) are displeased through some lapse on the novice's part . . .”

Thus we come back, at the beginning, as at the end, of life to the purity of self that is an imperative of the cool.

*Akan, neighbors/Surinam*

Akan and the Akan-related ritual patterns, from the old Gold Coast, helped shape the aesthetic of the blacks of the interior of Surinam in South America. The link was forged in slavery, when blacks from the Gold Coast, including Akan, Gã, and other peoples were brought to Surinam in the 17th and 18th centuries.

A source for the understanding of the nature of this influence is the study of the making of a shrine for a northern Akan god: a brass bowl is filled with water and sacred ingredients. The particular objects immersed within the water, and the incantations which accompany the ritual, serve as cultural preparation for the reader.<sup>38</sup>

“A spirit may take possession of a man and he may appear to have gone mad . . . it is some spirit which had come upon the man . . . The one upon whom the spirit has come is now bidden to prepare a brass pan, and collect water, leaves, and ‘medicine’ of specific kinds. The possessed one will dance, sometimes two days, with short intervals for rest, to the accompaniment of drums and singing. Quite suddenly he will

leap into the air and catch something in both his hands (or he may plunge into the river and emerge holding something he has brought up).

“He will, in either case, hold this thing to his breast, and water will be at once sprinkled upon it to cool it, when it will be thrust into the roots pan and quickly covered up.

“The following ingredients are now prepared: clay from one of the more sacred rivers, like the Tano, and . . . medicinal plants and other objects . . . any root that crosses a path, a projecting stump in a path over which passers-by would be likely to trip, also roots and stumps from under water, leaves of a tree called *aya* . . . seen to be quivering on the tree even though no wind is shaking them—the leaves, bark, and roots of . . . the wizard's tree, a nugget of virgin gold . . . (an) . . . ag-grey bead, and a long white bead called *gyanie*. The whole of these are pounded and placed in the pan, along the original objects already inside, while (an) incantation . . . is repeated . . .”

The incantation establishes the meaning of the substance-enriched water: magic intelligence, to be addressed as a virtual person—“If a man be ill in the night or in the daytime, and we raise you aloft and place you upon the head, and we inquire of you, saying ‘Is so-and-so about to die?’, let the cause of the misfortune, which you tell him has come, be the real cause and not lies.”<sup>39</sup>


Divinatory power, activated by placement upon the head, applies to another Akan custom, whereby men carrying a dead man in a coffin on their heads, can be magically directed by the corpse to halt at the house of the witch responsible for his death. When the shrine of the initiate, therefore, is lifted, like a coffin, to the head of the initiate, then to “speak” through him of sources of disorder, the shrine acquires the aura of a living watchful presence, come from the world of the dead. This again communicates what lies within the water: intelligence. A gloss upon this fundamental concept is provided in incantation, repeated after the initiate has placed the various objects which make up his shrine within the water: “O tree, we call Odum Abena, we are calling upon you . . . that we place in this shrine the thoughts that are in our head.”<sup>40</sup>

Water as a metaphor of mind is present in the lore of the Gã of Accra. The Gã traditionally believe that mediation serves right living and that water is its sign. They also maintain that rain establishes balance and communication, between heaven and earth, hence water in a vessel is also divine presence in shared moisture. God appears in water. And from this medium carefully kept in vessels, He reveals his messages to the priestess who relays his words to the world at large.<sup>41</sup>

In Surinam, where the custom of detecting witches by the corpse carried on the head exists as a hardy Akanism, we find that beliefs from the old Gold Coast about the connection between the purity of water and the world of the spirits have also taken root.<sup>42</sup>

“In Saramaka when a person is in serious danger or has a sudden fright, his *akaa* (‘soul’) immediately goes out of him into the river, from which it must later be called or summoned and, after interrogation (divination) about the cause of the problem, ritually reinstalled in the head of the person.”

This custom recalls Akan, Gã, and neighboring sources. The Saramaka summoning of the errant soul from the river recalls in particular in aspect of Gã healing ritual in Ghana. Gã traditional healers coax the soul of an ailing person back into his

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person by means of offering that person an especially cool diet, particularly mushrooms, redolent of shade, coolness, and rain.<sup>43</sup>

Shade can equal coolness in a mystical sense of healing and the assuagement of sorcerous elements of disease and dis-sension in other African cultures. We have seen how Igbo correlate ritual coolness with the adequate presence of shade trees.<sup>44</sup> In the Americas, Saramaka bracket coolness and shade under a single term, *koto*.<sup>45</sup> There is probably more to the frequency of umbrellas at the courts of African kings than mere prestige or physical comfort. In Surinam, where the most important of the black chiefs of the Piki Lio sits under an umbrella, shade in the council house distinctly symbolizes the cool of early morning and, by extension, good judgment: "Cool was their image for peace and health and fairness and deliberation and justice. Inside the council house, then, was a light which 'cooled the heart,' for heart and head are synonymous to the Bush Negro when he speaks of emotional states."<sup>46</sup>

There is another aspect of old Gold Coast ritual that has a bearing on custom in interior Surinam. Among the Brong of the northern Akan there is the *apo* festival, lasting eight days, in which ill health caused by harbored hatred is healed by sanctioned expressions of utter frankness. The *apo* rite is a time "when every man and woman, free man and slave, should have freedom to speak out just what was in their head, to tell their neighbors just what they thought of them, and of their actions, and not only their neighbors, but also the king or chief." This was the rationale: "When a man has spoken freely thus, he will feel his *sunsum* (soul or spirit) cool and quieted, and the *sunsum* of the other person against whom he has now openly spoken will be quieted also."<sup>47</sup> This sophisticated grasp of the consequences of repression was not lost in transit from the Gold Coast to Surinam.

Herskovits has recorded one coastal form of the same ceremony, among the blacks of Surinam, but the Saramaka and the Djuka, of the interior have, Price shows, a more abstract version, called *píuu fiúfiú* ("remove the poison of the hate"), which seems close to the original African custom:<sup>48</sup>

"In Saramaka *fiúfiú* is a state of masked hostility between two people—where people act cordial and friendly but harbor resentment, hurt, or jealousy; it is when people pretend friendship but speak badly of each other in private. The existence of such a state is revealed through divination, when someone, who may be a third party, falls ill."

Clearly, Price adds, this is in part a social mechanism, to keep people in line and prevent bad feelings from building up within a community. Then he says:<sup>49</sup>

"Once discovered, *fiúfiú* must be removed by a rite which has many different technical variations, ranging from a simple procedure to expensive complex ritual. In simplest form, a ritual specialist simply takes a calabash of water plus kaolin (*keéti*), prays that the *fiúfiú* leave, has the two protagonists spray with the ritual solution from their mouths, on the idea that 'what is caused by mouth can be cleansed or removed by mouth.' Some such rites are very complex, with involved symbolism. But all are ceremonies of social purification, or reconciliation."

The striking thing here, I think, is that the spirit or interior spark of divinity within every man, when angered by involvement in hatred or jealousy, can strike down even third parties with illness. Impurity of intent and false cordiality

angers the god within. Social purification, bringing matters into the open, is mandatory.

This great concern with the purity of self can be related not only to Akan sources but, of course, Cross River and Lower Niger custom. In the old Gold Coast the mighty Odwira Festival seems to have projected a thirst for purity in strength to the highest level of national concern. The king takes a golden sword, moistens it with sheep blood and water, from the sacred rivers Tano, Abrotia, Akoba, and Apomesu, and says: "I sprinkle you with water in order that your power rise up again." He salutes the mighty Golden Stool with similar incantation: "I sprinkle water upon you, may our power return sharp and fierce."<sup>50</sup>

There is more than a symbolic reconciliation of the living with the dead. This is an aesthetic activation, turning ancient objects of thought into fresh sources of guidance and illumination. It is possible to argue, although this paper is not the place, that such was the importance of the sword and the throne, as emblems of renewed power in the cooling and purifying of the human royal soul in traditional Akan culture, that their embodied modes of characteristic decorative patterning, widely shared among the Akan and their northern and eastern neighbors, were to influence, partially but deeply, the art of Surinam.

In conclusion, the data, as a whole, communicate their own insight, a notion of black cool as antiquity, for as Ralph Ellison has put it, "We were older than they, in the sense of what it took to live in the world with others."<sup>51</sup> □

Notes, page 89

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4. Rudolf Wittkower, "Eagle and Serpent: A Study in the Migration of Symbols," *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 2, 1938, pp. 293-325.

5. Esther Pasztor, "Hieratic Composition in West African Art," *Art Bulletin*, 52, 1970, pp. 299-310.

6. Douglas Fraser, "The Fish-Legged Figure in Benin and Yoruba Art," in *African Art and Leadership*, eds. D. Fraser and H. M. Cole (Madison, Wisconsin, 1972), pp. 261-294. CATTLE SCULPTURE, Notes, from page 19.

1. Personal correspondence with the authors, April 7, 1973.

2. Jean Brown, "Traditional Sculpture in Kenya," *African Arts*, Vol. VI, No. 1, pp. 16-22, 58.

3. See *African Arts*, Vol. III, No. 4, p. 75 (*à propos*, "The Carvers of Karamoja" by Coates).

4. Melvin J. Herskovits, *Man and His Works* (New York: Knopf, 1948), p. 380.

5. Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer, a Description of Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940).

6. Information from personal correspondence with anthropologists P. H. Gulliver, Rada Dyson-Hudson and Robert Thornton.

7. In the field of primary education more attention has been paid to the importance of the aesthetics of children's art. See Eleanor Leacock, "At Play in African Villages," *Natural History* (New York: the American Museum of Natural History, December 1971), pp. 60ff.

8. John Weatherby, a former art teacher in Moroto, has also attributed these carvings to the So.

9. Colin Turnbull, *The Mountain People* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972).

10. These pressures may have also suppressed or altered previous achievements. For example, there have been interesting archaeological finds including stone carving on Mt. Moroto. There are the remains of rock painting, and slag heaps are to be found indicating iron work although at present no iron is known to be made. It is uncertain as to whether these finds relate to the So or to another earlier group that inhabited the mountain. Yet anthropologist K. A. Gourlay informed us that in the late 1960s he was shown a metal snuff box which the So claimed to have made. It showed a "highly sophisticated knowledge of smelting" but they refused to divulge their method of work. In addition, the So have Kushitic elements in their language. Kushites are known for their skill with stone. Obviously the So have a mysterious, interesting and perhaps by now unknowable history.

11. Two examples of the achievements that can result from such aid are the work produced by southern Rhodesians under the guidance of Frank McEwen (see McEwen, *African Arts*, Vol. I, No. 2, pp. 18-25, 88) and the Canadian government's sponsorship of the Eskimo art cooperatives.

AESTHETIC OF THE COOL, Notes, from page 67.

There are a number of scholars who were kind enough to read and criticize an early draft of this paper: Charles Bird, Leonard Doob, Joseph Greenberg, Richard Henderson, Sidney Mintz, Paul Newman, Richard Price, Jan Vansina, and Frank Willett. I thank them all most warmly, while excepting them from remaining errors, all of which are mine. In addition, Robert Armstrong was kind enough to write a reaction which was so thoughtful that I have decided to incorporate his suggestions as the beginning of another book, *African Art in Motion*. An early version of this paper was read at a symposium, "The Ethnography of Speaking: African and Afro-America" at Burlington, Vermont, on 27 April 1973. At this meeting I profited by further reaction and comments from Karl Riesenman, Dan Rose, Dan Ben-Amos, and, most especially, James and Renata Fernandez. They are all to be thanked most cordially. And I am most pleasurably in debt to Roger Abrahams, John Povey, Alice McCaughey, John Szwed, and Nancy Gaylord Thompson for encouragement and inspiration at the right hour and the apposite place.

1. Personal communication, Professor Charles Bird, 3 April 1973.

2. William Morris, ed. *The American Heritage Dictionary* (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., and Houghton Mifflin, 1969) p. 293.

3. Warren D'Azevedo, "The Artist Archetype in Gola Culture," paper presented at the Conference on the Traditional Artist in African Society, 28-30 May 1965, Tahoe Alumni Center, Lake Tahoe, California; Preprint No. 14, Desert Research Institute, University of Nevada, Reno pp. 31-32.

4. For a good discussion of this concept in Songye culture, Zaire, see Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964) pp. 267-8.

5. Personal communication, Professor Richard Price, 28 November 1972.

6. Reverend Samuel Crowther, *A Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language* (London: Seeleys, 1852) p. 278.

7. R.E. Broughall Woods, *A Short Introductory Dictionary of the Kaonde Language* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1924) p. 159: *tarala* v. be cold, wet, green, raw, unripe: be silent, placid, untroubled (as the surface of the water), be serene, cease to pain, be tranquil.

8. T. G. Benson, *Kikuyu-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964) p. 164.

9. For a Yoruba example, see my "Aesthetics in Traditional Africa" in Carol Jopling's *Art and Aesthetics in Primitive Societies* (New York: Dutton, 1971) p. 377.

10. See Table.

11. The first time I heard this phrase in context was in Butuo (Western Dan), Liberia, Spring 1967.

12. Personal communication, Leith Mullings, 21 October 1972.

13. Zora Neal Hurston, *Mules and Men* (New York: Harper & Row, reprint, 1970) p. 90. Italicization of word, cool, mine.

14. Philip Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1969) p. 144.

15. See Table.

16. Price, *op. cit.*

17. Jacob Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin*, Third Edition (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1960) p. 14.

18. A. I. Ogunbiyi, T. O. Adebowale and other petitioners, *Petition from The Ilobi Tribes of Oke-Odan District, Ilaro Division, Abeokuta Province, to His Excellency The Governor-in-Council, Lagos* (Lagos: The Samadu Press, 1931) par. 12. According to this 'authorized version,' Ilobi was founded by Adekanbi, surnamed Oba-ti-o-tutu, in 1483. This date can-

not be substantiated. By 1553, it is also alleged, the third king of Ilobi was reigning. It would appear that the concept, cool, is at least several centuries old in this district.

19. King *Owa-Otutu-bi-Osun*, king of Idowa, in Ijebu Yorubaland, is believed to have reigned in the 16th century. For details, see "Crowns and Okute at Idowa," *Oyin Ogunba, Nigeria*, No. 83 (December 1964) pp. 249-50.

20. I am grateful to Professor Frank Willett for the photographs which illustrate this point.

21. It is tempting to postulate a partially pygmy origin for cool aesthetics in Africa. For reasons why, see Alan Lomax and Edwin E. Erickson, "The World Song Style Map," in *Folk Song Style and Culture*, by Alan Lomax (Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, Publication No. 88, 1968) p. 95.

22. Curtin, *op. cit.*

23. Daryll Forde, *Yakö Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964) p. 232. There is a wealth of data about "cool" in Forde's excellent set of essays, from which I excerpt another particularly striking example: (p. 251) "... Later the Diviners prepare a new supply of chopped leaves and roots which are essential ritual ingredients in the cooling and healing water that they use. The Head of the Diviners then provides a supply of this sacred water, with which is mixed sacred water of *Korta*, and with this the whole village is ritually cooled, after the other ceremonies, in rites of asperging at every patrician house and at every matrician shrine ... The power of healing and cooling bestowed by Obasi (God Almighty, the Creator) is in these final rites represented as effective and

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necessary for all the other cults. The final rites connected with Obasi not only as is expressly stated, 'cool the village,' that is, remove the implicit danger from the ritual power of the other cults that have been activated; they also place the patrilineans, the matrilineans, the Council of Village Priests, the *Korta* and *Okenka* cults, and the women's cults, under the ultimate ritual power of Obasi the Supreme Being, and support the role of the Diviners as the source of ultimate knowledge of the causes of sickness and of the origins of the human souls that are reincarnated in every generation . . ." This suggests an unsuspected power within the mastery of the arts of ritual coolness: ultimate knowledge of the roots of illness and the origin of human souls. For details, see Forde's "First Fruits Rituals" pp. 234-253.

24. Or opaque tan and light green beads, as reported by William Bascom, *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969) p. 80.

25. Richard Henderson, *The King in Every Man: Evolutionary Trends in Onitsha Ibo Society and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972) p. 151.

26. *Ibid.* p. 155.

27. *Ibid.* p. 251. Henderson elaborates: "In Onitsha the color white is the essence of purity . . . white cloth is a prime symbol of purification. Purity or 'whiteness' also entails both the absence of the 'heat' of anger and aggression." Henderson shows, I think, that sexual 'heat' is a quality which a man 'loses' in old age only to gain the exalted level of ancestorhood. The elder thus eventually assumes the essential attitudes of his patrilineal ancestors: the physical color of whiteness and the avoidance of the contaminating qualities of women. At the end of this process, he will don white cloth, the raiment of the ancestors; his body will be covered with white clay, thus assuming the white appearance of the ancestors themselves. In other words, only a person who has spiritually 'died,' and then come back in ancestral purity, can act as the priest of the patrilineage.

28. *Ibid.* p. 263.

29. *Ibid.* p. 155.

30. Lydia Cabrera, *La Sociedad Secreta Abakuá*, reprint (Miami: Ediciones CR, 1970) pp. 274-6. Translation mine.

31. Jan Vansina, "Once Upon a Time: Oral Traditions as History in Africa," *Daedalus* (Spring 1971) p. 443.

32. Melville J. Herskovits, *Dahomey: An Ancient West African Kingdom*, Vol. I (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, reprint, 1967) p. 354 ff.

33. *Ibid.* p. 357.

34. Quoted in Robert Farris Thompson, "African Influence on the Art of the United States," Armstead L. Robinson (ed.) *Black Studies in the University* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969) p. 151.

35. Alfred Métraux, *Voodoo in Haiti* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972) pp. 252-5.

36. Pierre Verger, *Notes sur le Culte des Orisa et Vodun* (Dakar: I FAN, Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire, 1957) p. 305.

37. Francis Huxley, *The Invisibles* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1966) p. 139. The vodun gods of Haiti test, in fire, the coolness and spiritual commitment of their devotees. For further details, see Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, reprint, 1970) pp. 220-24; Louis Maxmilien, *Le Vodou Haïtien* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'Etat, 1945) p. 110.

38. Capt. R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923) p. 147.

39. *Ibid.* p. 149.

40. *Ibid.* p. 148. For the custom of "carrying the corpse" see Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927) p. 167.

41. Marion Kilson, *Kpele Lala: Gã Religious Songs and Symbols* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971) p. 69.

42. Personal communication, Richard Price, 18 September 1972.

43. Personal communication, Leith Mullings, 21 October 1972.

44. Henderson, *op. cit.* p. 151.

45. Personal communication, Richard Price, 28 November 1972.

46. Melville J. and Frances S. Herskovits, *Rebel Destiny: Among the Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1934) p. 177.

47. Rattray, *Ashanti*, p. 148.

48. Price, *op. cit.* See also W. F. Van Lier, *Aanteekeningen over het geestelijk leven en de samenleving der Djoeka's in Suriname, Bijdragen Tot De Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde Van Nederlandsch-Indie*, Deel 99 ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1940) pp. 179-80.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti*, pp. 137-8.

51. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 1952 edition, p. 497.

## THE CONCEPT, "COOL," IN SELECT WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICAN LANGUAGES

<i>Society</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Semantic Range</i>
1. Abakpa	<i>tebede</i> <sup>52</sup>	in a cool manner; unrushed; not harsh
2. Baguirmien	<i>kulu</i> <sup>53</sup>	to be cold, calm, tranquil
3. Bamana	<i>súma</i> <sup>54</sup>	to cool; to calm
4. Bobangi	<i>tilima</i> <sup>55</sup>	to be cool; to be allayed; become still; be eased; to settle (a quarrel); be sober
5. Bushman	<i>kwerre</i> <sup>56</sup> <i>!! koin an kwerre,</i> <i>!gwa ɛxukan !khou !kai:n</i>	to cool; to be cool; to the sun cooled, the sky turned green
6. Diola	<i>ma-kunkul</i> <sup>57</sup>	coolness; beauty
7. Edo	<i>Ewuare</i> (a title) <sup>58</sup> <i>ofure ekhaor</i> <sup>59</sup>	it is cool; trouble has ceased 'cool heart' (tranquillity of mind; reconciliation)
8. Efik	<i>suk</i> <sup>60</sup>	to cool; exorcise; reduce to quietude and reason; to moderate the strength of anything
9. Ejagham	<i>ekwen</i> <i>ki etok ekwen</i> <i>ki ntea akwen</i> <sup>61</sup>	to cool may the town be cool (peaceful) make your heart cool (be composed, do not be rough, do not make trouble)
10. Fongbe	<i>fifa</i> <sup>62</sup>	cool (water); coolness; peace; tranquillity; calm; placidity; gentleness
11. Gã	(vernacular not given)	to cool; to heal by prescribing a diet of cool food and drink <sup>63</sup>
12. Onitsha Igbo	(vernacular not given)	to cool; to render the land safe <sup>64</sup>
13. Kaonde	<i>tarala</i> <sup>65</sup>	be cold, wet, green, raw, unripe; be silent; placid, untroubled (as the surface of water); be serene; cease to pain
14. Kenyang	<i>bekwen</i> <sup>66</sup>	to cool; to restore order
15. KiKongo	<i>zizika</i> <i>zizila</i> <sup>67</sup>	to make cool calm, patient, tolerant, faithful, brave, firm, courageous, imperturbable
16. Kikuyu	<i>-horo</i> <sup>68</sup>  <i>mundu wa kanua kahoro</i> <i>horoha</i> <i>horohia</i>	inactive, calm, at peace, cool (water), soft (in the sense of cushion or silk) a smooth-tongued person to be reconciled with; be settled atone, pacify, restore to state of ritual well-being
17. Kisongye	<i>kutaala</i> <sup>69</sup>	to be cool; to be calm; to be like the river; to be beautiful (excluding music)
18. Kitabwa	<i>kutalala</i> <i>kyalo kyatalala</i> <sup>70</sup>	to be cool (water); to be silent; to calm oneself the land is cool (at peace)
19. Kuba	<i>hio</i> <sup>71</sup>	coolness; wetness
20. Lala	<i>talala</i> <sup>72</sup>	be cool, silent, still
21. Lomongo	<i>cicimya</i> <sup>73</sup>  <i>cicimyeefe</i> <i>kutsa</i>	to cool; moderate; assuage; calm; compose; pacify; set at ease; soothe; tranquillize to ease pain to cool
22. Lodagaa	(vernacular not given)	to make cool; render safe to inherit; to lessen social danger in crisis situations (e. g. death) <sup>74</sup>
23. Luo	<i>mokue</i> <sup>75</sup>	cool, quiet, peaceful
24. Manganja	<i>kuzizira</i> <sup>76</sup>	to be at peace; to be calm; pacify; appease (quarrel, a child crying); to ease pain;

	<i>mtsikidzi wina wo-zizira</i> <i>lero kwa-zizira</i> <i>chironda changa chaleka</i> <i>cha-zizira</i> <i>mtu wanga wa-zizira</i>		to be cool; to cool; to lack savor, be insipid; to be loose-limbed sweet taste of water from a fresh pot it is calm (cool) today
	<i>Mpinjika ikutuniska zawe</i>		my wound is cool (better) the pain in my head is cool (my headache has stopped) the Cross cools (settles) quarrels
25. Runyakore	<i>kuhoza</i> <sup>77</sup>		to cool; to plead a case
26. Sesuto	<i>phola</i> <sup>78</sup> <i>pholiso</i>		make cool healing; making cool
27. Songhai	<i>yenendi</i> <sup>79</sup>		to "make cool" (provide spiritually insured calm; to cool men by the flash and roar of the thundergod; to cool the spirits by the promises made by men)
28. Tshi-luba	<i>talala</i> <sup>80</sup>  <i>muntu mutalale bu mayi</i> <i>mukele mutalale</i> <i>kutalala mpala</i> <i>kutuya munda kutalala</i>		to cool; pacify; to be cool; humid; become calm; be at peace person cool (peaceful) as water sweet salt (not biting, not hot) to lose coolness from his face (through illness) the heart is entirely cool (at peace)
29. Tumbuka	<i>kutuna</i> <sup>81</sup>		to cool down (anger or inflammation)
30. Twi	<i>dwo</i> <sup>82</sup>		to cool; to be calmed; to relax from a state of excitement; to make quiet, tame; humble (not proud); to come to rest, feel comfortable
31. Xhosa	<i>phola</i> <sup>83</sup>		cool; calm down; heal
32. Woloff	(vernacular not given)		cool; free from quarrels <sup>84</sup>
33. Yakö	<i>lopon fawa</i> <sup>85</sup>		"cooling the village" (ceremony of social purification and reconciliation)
34. Yoruba	<i>tütü</i> <sup>86</sup> <i>enun è tütü</i> <sup>87</sup> <i>ile yii tütü</i> <i>ilè tütü</i> <i>ò finuntütü ba mi soro</i>		cool, green, raw, wet, damp silence (his mouth is cool) verdancy (this land is cool) peace (cool house) he spoke to me pleasantly (lit. made my mind cool by speaking to me)
35. Zulu	<i>phola</i> <sup>88</sup>		heal; be cool; be calm

"COOL" Notes, continued

52. Informant: the *Nididem* of Big Qua Town, Calabar. 14 January 1972.
53. H. Gaden, *Essai de Grammaire de la Langue Baguirmienne* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1909) p. 93.
54. Moussa Travele, *Petit Dictionnaire Français-Bambara et Bambara-Français* (Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner, 1913) p. 242; personal communication, Charles Bird.
55. John Whitehead, *Grammar and Dictionary of the Bobangi Language* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Co., 1899) p. 236.
56. Dorothea F. Bleek, *A Bushman Dictionary* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1956) p. 113.
57. L.-V. Thomas and P. Fougeyrollas, *L'Art Africain et la Société Sénégalaise* (Dakar: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, 1967) p. 34. There is an alternate term, *mahululen*.
58. Egharevba, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
59. I am indebted to Professor Paula Ben-Amos, Temple University, for this term.
60. Rev. Hugh Goldie, *Dictionary of the Efik Language* (Ridgewood: The Gregg Press, reprint, 1964) p. 279.
61. Informant (for the three phrases in Ejagham): Andreas Ako, of Mfoni, Cameroon, near Mamfe, 8 January 1972.
62. Maxmilien Quénum, *Au Pays des Fon*, Second Edition (Paris: Larose Editeurs, 1938) p. 149.
63. I am indebted to Leith Mullings, Yale University, for this information.
64. Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 151.
65. R. E. Broughall Woods, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
66. Informants: the elders of the Ngbe house, Tinto, Banyang country, West Cameroon, 8 January 1972. Their precise phrasing was: "all Ekpe Societies 'cool'—because

they are government."

67. K. E. Laman, *Dictionnaire Kikongo-Français, M-Z* (Hants: Gregg Press, reprint, 1964) p. 1168.
68. T. G. Benson (ed.), *Kikuyu-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964) p. 164.
69. Merriam, *op. cit.*, p. 267.
70. R. P. Aug. Van Acker, *Dictionnaire Kitabwa-Français et Français-Kitabwa*, Publication de l'Etat Independant du Congo, 1907, p. 214.
71. Althea Brown Edmiston, *Grammar and Dictionary of the Bushongo or Bakuba Language* (Luébo: J. L. Wilson Press, n.d.) p. 522.
72. A. C. Madan, *Lala-Lamba-Wisa & English/English & Lala-Lamba-Wisa Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913) p. 238.
73. E. A. and L. Ruskin, *Dictionary of the Lomongo Language* (London: Christian Literature Society, 1928) p. 78.
74. Jack Goody, *Death, Property and the Ancestors*, p. 231. There are further references to the symbolic cooling of objects pertaining to the dead, *viz.* on pp. 69, 89, and 339.
75. R. L. Stafford, *An Elementary Luo Grammar* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1967) p. 116.
76. Rev. David Clement Scott, *A Cyclopaedic Dictionary of the Mang'anya Language* (Edinburgh: Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland, 1892) p. 679.
77. C. Taylor, *A Simplified Runyankore-Rukiga-English Dictionary* (Nairobi: The Eagle Press, 1959) p. 58.
78. A. Mabile, *Sesuto-English Dictionary* (Morija: Sesuto Book Depot, 1911) p. 349.
79. Jean Rouch, *La Religion et la Magie Songhai* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960) p. 223.
80. Em. Willems (ed.), *Dictionnaire Tshiluba-Français* (Leopoldville: Imprimerie de la Société Missionnaire de St.

Paul, 1960) p. 309.

81. Rev. William Y. Turner, *Tumbuka-Tonga English Dictionary* (Blantyre: Hetherwick Press, 1952) p. 148.
82. Rev. J. G. Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language* (Basel: Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, 1933) p. 107.
83. Rev. William J. Davis, *A Dictionary of the Kaffir Language, Part I: Kaffir-English* (London: The Wesleyan Mission House, 1872) pp. 170-1.
84. David P. Gamble, *The Wolof of Senegambia* (London: International African Institute, 1957) p. 67.
85. Forde, *op. cit.*, p. 247.
86. Crowther, *op. cit.*, p. 278. See also p. 166: *itu*, ease, comfort; *tu-ara*, ease, refreshment of a cool breeze; *ituno*, consolation.
87. R. C. Abraham, *Dictionary of Modern Yoruba* (London: University of London Press, 1958) p. 655, *tú*; p. 658, *tütü*.
88. C. L. S. Nyembezi (ed.), *Compact Zulu Dictionary* (Pietermarzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 2nd Edition, 1962) p. 128. TWIN IMAGES, Notes, from page 27.
- I would like to express my appreciation to the Kress Foundation for the grant which supported my field-work in Yorubaland from June 1970 to February 1971. I would also like to thank Ekpo Eyo of the Nigerian Museum, Lagos, and William Fagg and John Picton of the British Museum, not only for making the collections in their care available to me, but also for their help and encouragement. Above all, I want to thank all of the Yoruba people who patiently shared their knowledge with me.
- Olayemi, Val, *Orin Ibeji, Songs in Praise of Twins* (Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, 1969), pp. 62, 63.
  - Ibid.*, pp. 6, 7.
  - Ibid.*, pp. 2, 3.
  - Bascom, William, *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., New York, 1969), p. 2.
  - Olayemi, *op. cit.*, pp. 4, 5.
  - Ibid.*, pp. 30, 31.
  - Thompson, Robert F., "Sons of Thunder" and Mobolade, Timothy, "Ibeji Custom in Yorubaland." *African Arts*, Vol. IV, No. 3.
  - My fieldwork was conducted among the Oyo, Igbomina, Ijebu and other Yoruba subgroups. Since there are variations in some aspects of belief and ritual among the various subgroups, the particular area in which the information was obtained will be specified.
  - Turner, Victor, *The Ritual Process* (Aldine Publishing Co., Chicago, 1969), p. 45.
  - According to E.C. Ngu in *Yoruba Ibeji Carvings* (Ibadan: unpublished seminar report, 1964), p. 2, Taiwo is the abbreviated form of *to aiye wo* meaning "taste the world" or "the first to taste the world." Kehinde is the abbreviated form of *Ko ehinde* meaning "to come behind or after." Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 79, translates *To aiye wo* as "tested the world."
  - Nylander, P.P.S., "The frequency of twinning in a rural community in Western Nigeria," *Ann. Hum. Genet.* (1969), 33, 41-44. According to Nylander, a study carried out over a five year period in Igbo-ora showed a twinning rate of 45.1 per 1,000, four times that of the United States, England and Wales, which is 11-12 per 1,000.
  - Mbolade, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
  - According to the *Area Handbook for Nigeria 1972*, p. 155, "... estimates indicate that in the early 1960's about 50% of all live-born infants (in Nigeria as a whole), died before the age of five." It is of interest in this connection to observe that there are three Yoruba cults having to do with deceased young children, *ibeji*, *abiku* and *egbe*.
  - The meat of the colobus monkey is forbidden to the twins, their siblings, and their parents. In addition, both the wood and the fruit of the *igba* tree are not to be consumed in any way. According to R.C. Abraham's *Dictionary of Modern Yoruba* (London: University of London Press, 1958), *igba* is the African locustbean tree (*Parkia Filicoidea*). As one Ila-orangan man explained: "The *igba* tree is also forbidden to twins—even its wood cannot be used to build a fire over which the twins' food will be prepared because the fruit of the *igba* tree is particularly liked by *edun*." In the Ijebu area the same prohibitions were mentioned for the *aga* tree, but it was stated that it was because the *aga* tree was forbidden to *edun*.
  - Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
  - Abraham, R.C., *Dictionary of Modern Yoruba* (London: University of London Press, 1958), p. 162.
  - Bascom, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
  - Excerpt from an interview with the Igbomina carver, Lamidi Fakeye, in 1971: "When my father would finish the *ibeji* he would wash it in a calabash of water with 'medicine' to make the spirit good. The leaves of a type of bean plant called *oweahun* were used. *Owe* is the young leaf of the culti-