

JALIYA

celebrating African and Caribbean Folklore

Issue Two - February 2023



Guardians of the Forest

compiled and edited by Natty Mark Samuels

Editorial

Dear Reader

In the second issue of Jaliya, we celebrate guardianship of the forest. Because of Rootical Folklore, these characters are of major importance to me.

I first came across the Aziza, via *The Dahomean Narrative*, written by Melville and Frances Herskovits. First heard of Yogbo through that classic also: Yogbo the gluttonous one! The closest counterpart to the Aziza in Trinidad and St. Lucia, is Papa Bwa, who came in with the French and was originally spelt Bois, meaning wood or bush. And as stories generate versions, so the characters in the story. According to *Brazilian Folktales* by Livia de Almeida and Ana Maria Portello, Curupira is usually seen as bald, whereas in other depictions of him, he is seen with a shock of red hair. Returning to Africa, to South Africa, The Nunu alongside the aforementioned Aziza, are among my favourites, high up in my caretaker pantheon; watching over humanity, as well as those of forest and wilderness. And we must remember when passing through, to make sure we bring the correct offering, as we request safe passage: for Hebu, bring him tobacco. From tobacco to star apple, the tree of residence of Gronmama: Green Mother, Mother Earth. Another guardian from Surinam folklore, is Boesimama, who likes the company of silk cotton trees. And talking of that tree, in one of the great stories from the Hausa oral traditions, Zankallala uses a silk cotton tree, to help the frightened boy, running from Dodo the monster. And if Gronmama resides in a star apple tree, Konderong prefers a baobab.

There will be a part two on this theme for sure: possibly a trilogy. As I encounter more of the original icons of conservation, then I shall write of them also. Part two will feature figures such as Fetefete of the Mongo, Queen Fatma Fofana of the Wolof and Iroko Man, of the Yoruba.

When I think of great activists like Wangari Maathai, I think of them as the living embodiment of the Aziza; spiritual descendents, of the earliest of our green space champions.

I stand and salute, Wangari Maathai and David Attenborough.

to Marco Fregnan of Reggaediscography, for his long-time support

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Jaliya is a Mande term for their bardic tradition. The jali is storyteller, musician, historian, geneologist, tutor, advisor and envoy. Jalimuso is the female counterpart of Jali.

Front cover painting of an Aziza from *Paint By Numbers*.

Index

Aziza
FON: Benin

Chant Papa Bwa
Trinidad/St Lucia

Tale of the Sentinels
South America

The Nunu Beatitudes
ZULU: South Africa

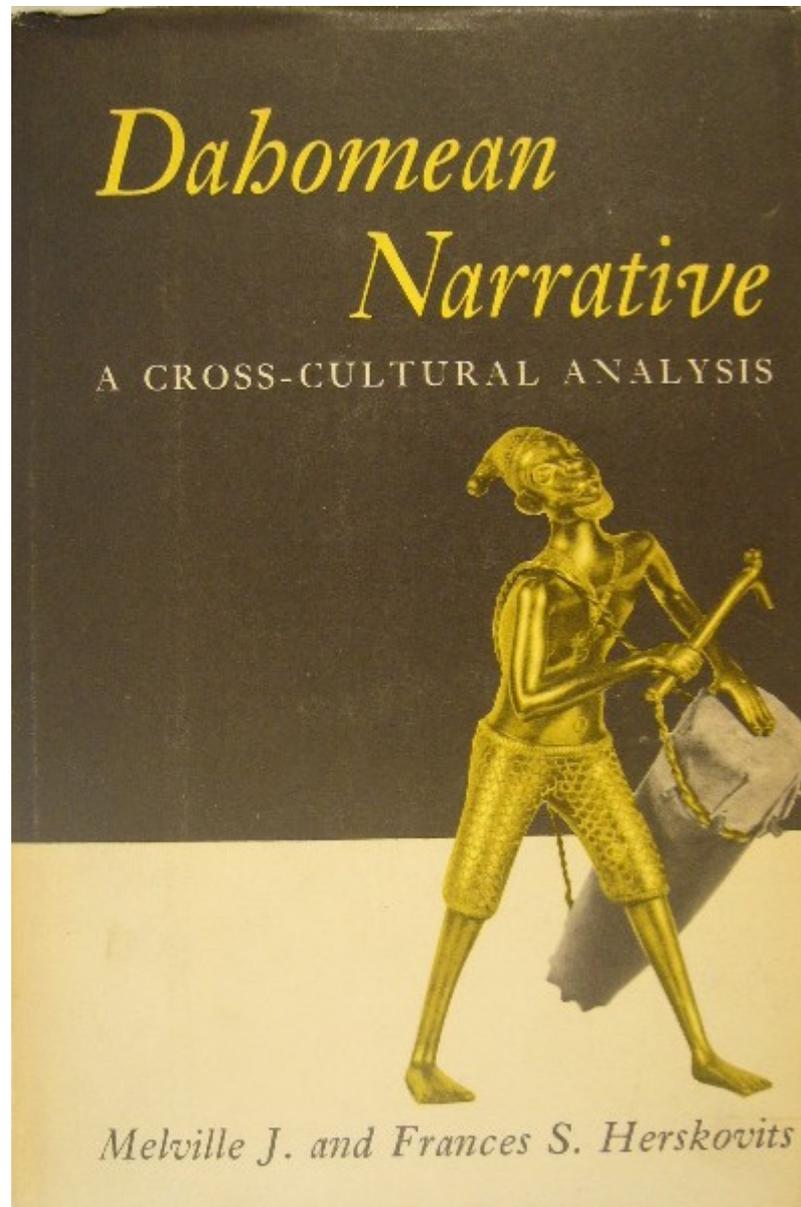
Hebu
CARIB: Guyana

Star Apple Chant
Surinam

Nisser and Zankallala
Petra Bakewell-Stone

Chant Zankallala
HAUSA: Nigeria

Konderong
WOLOF: Senegal/Gambia



from **Freebookpalooza**

Benin

Aziza

A new day dawns, Aziza; what will it hold? I ask you to escort me through unknown terrain, as the golden embroidery, embellishes the azure cloth. I'll take a melody from the morning song of the Copper Sunbird, to accompany us along the way. Bless me with your presence, little one, before loneliness of evening time. I hear you are healing, I heard you are solace, please guide me through the forest.

Ahhh, wish I were winged like you, with airbourne options, surfing the blue when I wish to. I envy Buzzard and his spiral monologue; going higher, slow, easy, going higher: only God sees more than Buzzard. If at the end of the day, my deeds have been good, take me to the top of the mango tree, where green parrots like to be, so I can give thanks alongside them.

Tell me of green cartography, the map in your head, guiding the humans lost in the depths; diminishing his howling, drying her tears. Every wish they made had your name on it, like the young man, first time on adult wing, yearning for protection, as we request you, when trodding through entanglement, where the monsters reside.

Tell me of the medicine of the tamarind and I will tell you of Silimaka. Of the hero who sat on his horse, smoking his pipe, under aforementioned tree; his time of composure, before entering war. Returning after the battles, relighting his pipe atop his steed, in the time to contemplate, gently recuperate, under the tamarind tree. Tell me of medicine, little friend friend, your prescriptions in green and brown.

Now, I understand your care taking of flora and fauna, but why us? So you watch over the buffoon, affectionately known as human, as well as the butterfly. You remind me of the Nunu of the Zulu of South Africa; so I give thanks for the diminutive ones, who watch over all forms of life: the little ones of our living.

Aziza,
We call your name Aziza.
Spirit of the forest,
Aiding the human sufferer.

Chant Papa Bwa

to Ina Vandebroek, David Picking and Amelia Neeley

It doesn't matter,
That he is part of you,
And the other part us;
Bottom half goat,
Top half man;
He is Papa Bwa,
And we love him.

Solo

Bamboo Guava,

Voices

Ibis and red brocket.

Solo

Blue Petrea,

Voices

Kiskedee and porcupine.

Solo

Marouba,

Voices

Heron and opossum.

Solo

Fruta Paloma,

Voices

Hawk and peccary.

He's mammal and man,
Yes he is you and I,
Our guardian;
Animal and tree,
Plant and bird;
He is Papa Bwa
And we love him.

Solo

Bamboo Guava,

Voices

Ibis and red brocket.

Solo

Blue Petrea,

Voices

Heron and porcupine.

Solo

Marouba,

Voices

Kiskedee and opossum.

Solo

Fruta Paloma,

Voices

Hawk and peccary.



Papa Bois

by

Jabari Brown

<https://www.artstation.com/artwork/N54qID>



from *Infoplease*

South America

Tale of the Sentinels

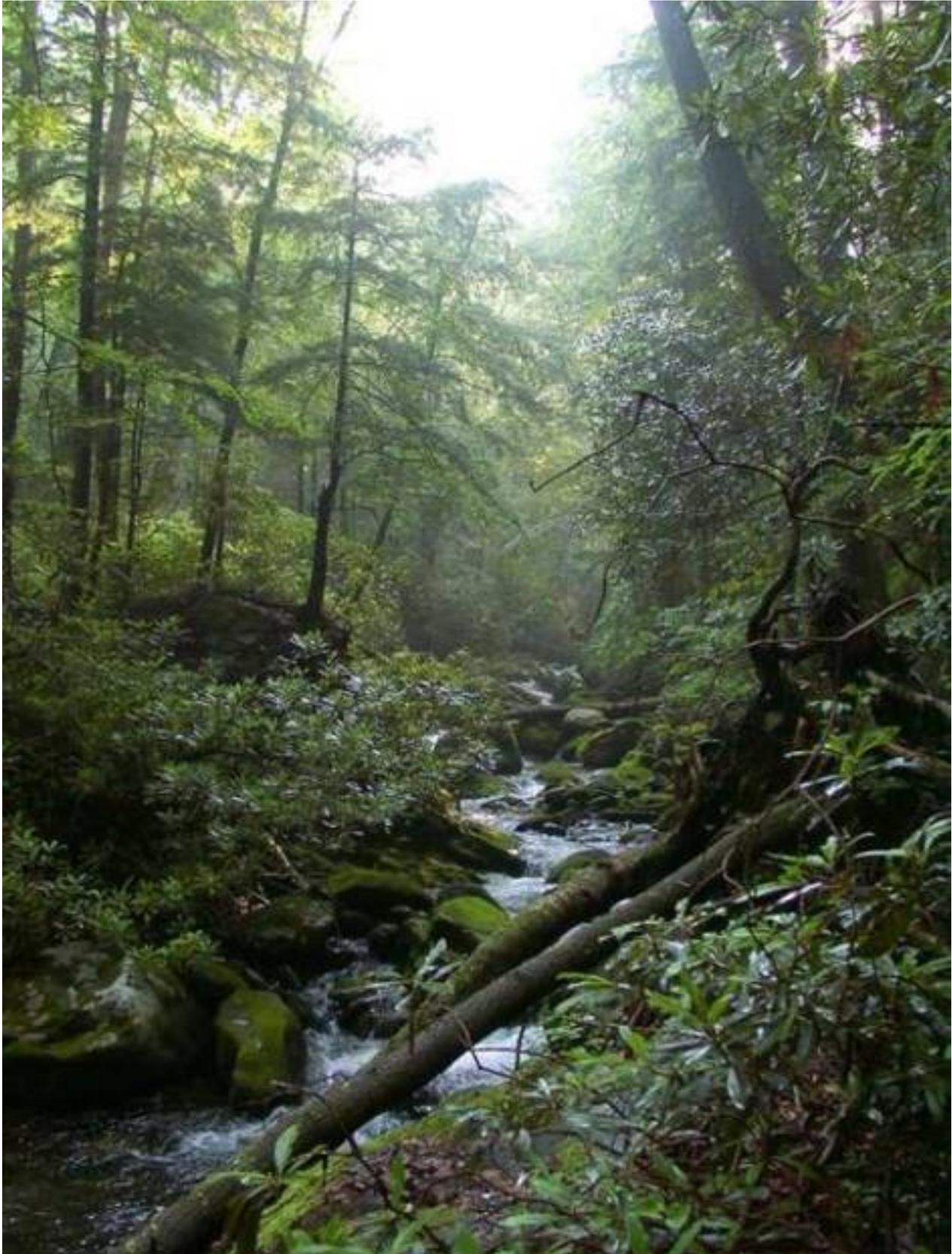
Did you ever trod through South America, while sitting in Jamaica? Now and again Jah Folk took us to Brazil, but usually our South American travels would only include the countries bordering the Caribbean Sea, such as Guyana and Suriname. But in the "Evening of the Sentinels," as that evening in Papine Square became known as, we traversed the continent, while he introduced us to the sentinels of the forest.

Starting from the south, we went to northern Argentina, to meet Chullachaki; onto Bolivia, encountering Epereji; continuing to Peru, bowing to Sachamama; onward to Colombia, saluting La Madre Selva; concluding our sojourn in Brazil, giving thanks with *Curupira Chant*, for the watchman of plants and animals.

Don't worry guarana,
Don't fret maracuja;
I am Curupira,
I shall watch over you.

Don't stress graviola,
Go easy papaya;
I am Curupira,
I am your lighthouse man.

Don't cry carambola,
Raise your head pitanga;
I am Curupira,
Your personal sentinel.



from *Knysna Woodworkers*

South Africa

The Nunu Beatitudes

Blessed are the Nunu,
Menders of the broken wing.
Blessed are the Nunu,
Giving respite to the human sufferer.
Blessed are the Nunu,
Whose remit is a dream called sanctuary.
Blessed are the Nunu,
And the fireflies that brighten the cavern.
Blessed are the Nunu,
Offering a hearth to the homeless cub.
Blessed are the Nunu,
For the lullaby sung during the day.
Blessed are the Nunu,
The carriers of endless compassion.



from *Exemple*

Guyana



© Girendra Persaud - GMediaGY.COM

from *Things Guyana*

Hebu

Solo

Don't bring him papaya.

Voices

No, no.

Solo

Nor aloe vera.

Voices

No, no.

Solo Voice

If you want to appease him.

Voices

Don't sing him a hymn:
Bring him a portion of tobacco.

Solo

Don't bring him ceresee.

Voice

No, no.

Solo

Neither gooseberry,

Voices

No, no.

Solo

To get on his good side

Voices

So thoughts don't collide:
Bring him a portion of tobacco.

Solo

Don't bring him callaloo.

Voices

No, no.

Solo

Nor nut of cashew.

Voices

No, no.

Solo

For good interaction

Voices

So there's no confusion:
Bring him a portion of tobacco.



both photos from *Jamaicans.com*

Star Apple



Star Apple Chant

to Frits Van Toorn

Gronmama

Harm does not breed here,
So come with respect,
I live in this star apple tree.

Voices

Some say Sterappel,
Others Estrella.

Gronmama

I am Gronmama.

Voices

She watches over the land,
All along Surinam River,
Through every tributary.

Gronmama

Bedecked in purple,
A splash of green,
Go easy when you're passing me.

Voices

Called her Purple Star,
And Golden Leaf.

Gronmama

I am Mother Earth.

Voices

She watches over the land,
All along Surinam River.
Through every tributary.



photo by Petra Bakewell-Stone

Birago Day NORWAY

Nisser and Zankallala

To celebrate Birago Diop seven seniors participated in a lively comparative discussion of African, Caribbean and Scandinavian folklore at the Frogn senior citizen centre. After an introduction to the life of this esteemed Senegalese folklorist, the elders took turns reading a selection of writings by Natty Mark Samuels that guided them amongst the Kikuyu of Kenya, the Nuer of Sudan and across the Atlantic to the Arawak of Jamaica. Drawing parallels between the Anansi trickster spider of the Ashanti and the Nisser or little people of Norway, participants described how the mischievous Nisser could be placated with bowls of porridge left outside at Christmas time. A round of applause followed the Chant of Zankallala, which also stimulated stories of the beautiful dances of mating birds. By the end of morning, despite the chill outside and snow in the air, we were warmed by the spirit of Birago as if we had been sharing fireside stories in Africa.

Petra Bakewell-Stone
Ethnobotanist

Chant Zankallala

Solo Voice

They call his name

Voices

Zankallala.

Solo Voice

Wherever he goes

Voices

Zankallala.

Solo Voice

Lavender Waxbill,

Melodius Warbler.

They sing of him

Voices

Zankallala.

Solo Voice

They protect him

Voices

Zankallala.

Solo Voice

Attacking his foes

Voices

Zankallala.

Solo Voice

Tambourine dove,

Woodland kingfisher.

They keep him safe

Voices

Zankallala

Solo Voice

The Dodo can't touch him

Voices

Zankallala.

Solo Voice

No monsters or witches

Voices

Zankallala.

Solo Voice

Indigobird,

Cinnamon Bunting.

They chant his name

Voices

Zankallala



from *ThoughtCo* **Baobab** and *The Capitals Coalition*



Konderong

His mind still caught up in the work of late afternoon; in the preventative, the thought of quarantine, as he checked out all the dogs in a village near Korhogo. A time to check, as no wants the results of zoonosis. Then the singing of the children brings him back to the present, as he hears the song he taught them yesterday, about some little people from Wolof folklore.

Konderong ate ten elephants,
Relieved he's not partial to me.
Glad that he prefers them,
Doesn't partake of humanity.

Chanted

Konderong, konderong,
Watch out as you go along:
Make sure you treat him with respect.

After the pachyderm lunch,
Returned to the baobab tree.
Home to sleep it off,
Before twenty warthogs for tea.

Chanted

Konderong, konderong,
Watch out as you go along:
Make sure you treat him with respect.

from *The Birago Diop Trilogy*

Sources

Zulu Fireside Tales - **Phyllis Savory**
Brazilian Folktales - **Livia de Almeida and Ana Maria Portella**
Folktales of the Amazon - **Juan Carlos Galeano**
Folktales from The Gambia - **Emil A. Magel**
Surinam Folktales - **A.P and T. E. Penard** - and their other writings on Surinam folklore
Dahomean Narrative - **Melville and Frances Herskovits**

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