

OUR NATIONAL HERITAGE: A JOINT VENTURE

THE COW HORN

The cow horn is and was used in various countries as a musical and signaling instrument. In the Antilles, people used to blow on the 'kachu di supla', as they would on a French horn or trumpet. Take a cow horn, cut it off at a length of approximately 25 centimeters, make a hole of six to eight millimeters in the massive point and a larger hole of two to three centimeters in diameter in the round side, a few centimeters from the point. That's it. Blow through the little hole and vary the tone by making the opening at the end bigger or smaller with the fingers of the left hand. The instrument makes a howling sound and you can also speak into it.

The 'kachu' was often accompanied by the 'agan' or 'heru' (steel). Together they form the 'kachu ku heru'. The 'agan' is originally from Africa. The instrument consists of two pieces of steel, mostly a worn shovel of a plough that is unfit for use and an iron bar, which are beaten against each other. Thus, the 'agan' set the pace and time for other instruments, for example a marching pace in parades, choral dances and harvest festivals, but it was also sounded when transporting a corpse, a sick person in a hammock to the doctor or the hospital in Punda or when heavy work had to be done, like transporting stones. In Bonaire, some fishermen announced that they had arrived with their catch.

Certain sounds on the 'kachu' were meant to inform neighbors and acquaintances of a death, a birth or another important event, or to announce an invitation to a festive meeting. At sunrise the 'kachu' blower would climb to the highest top in his vicinity, but in the event of a death sometimes also in the middle of the night, and howl his message to the four points of the compass. In the event of a death announcement he would speak in the horn the words 'Kredu, kredu, ela muri kaba, rumannan kredu, ela muri kaba' (Believe it, believe it, he is already dead, brothers and sisters, believe it, he is already dead). Not long afterwards, the house of the deceased was full of people who had come to lament the deceased. According to experts, the 'kachu' must be moistened before being used, preferably with some rum. In the meantime the radio has taken over the announcement of obituary notices.

In Bonaire, the 'karkó, a large sea shell, functions as a triton shell ('kinkon'). Put a shell in a tree and the next day the shellfish has left the shell, according to tradition. Then you cut off the point, so that you get a small round opening into which you can blow. 'Karkó' blowers were present at all harvest festivals. The sound is penetrating and has a long range. Little boats from Bonaire often still have a triton shell on board; with it the crew bid farewell and pass on signals. Both at Nikiboko and Nort Saliña the inhabitants were woken up with the 'kinkon' for Midnight Mass, on a melody which is an interpretation of the words: 'Lanta riba, ta ora di misa' (Wake up, it's time to go to church). At Rincon, people used to blow on the 'karkó' when somebody was missing. In no time, the whole population was warned and started searching. The 'kokolishi' or 'kiwa', too, a shell the

size of an apple, was used on the island by way of a horn. With it, children in the fields who stayed away too long were called.

The 'kiwa' is a herbivorous sea slug and is found on rocky coasts where there is a strong movement of the sea. The animal can cause poisoning which has its origin in single-cell algae. Papiamentu also has the 'kiwa indjan', which is supposed to be a synonym for the 'kokolishi indjan'. This is a sea slug that resembles the 'kiwa', but it is somewhat smaller and has a ribbed shell. The shellfish is usually edible, but can also be poisonous. In the latter case prickling of the skin and itching occur. Both names, 'kiwa and kokolishi', have an Indian origin and are reduced to the Aruac language group. The Aruac languages are geographically very widely spread, from the province of Salta in Argentina, the Bolivian lowlands to the Bahamas and from the Atlantic coast of the Guyanas to the eastern mountain areas of Peru. In Aruac languages, words are a description of a number of striking characteristics of the object, plant, animal or thing. The same object can often also be described by mentioning other characteristics. Thus, many synonyms arise.

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Caption:

The cow horn as a musical and signaling instrument: take a cow horn, cut it off at a length of approximately 25 centimeters, make a hole of six to eight millimeters in the massive point and a larger hole of two to three centimeters in diameter in the round side, a few centimeters from the point. That's it.

FRAME

National Archaeological-Anthropological Museum

FRAME:

DI KI MANERA

Di ki manera, ééééh

*di ki manera nos ta biba na mundu
cu pecado di mundu tur
ta desola 'i nos!*

*di ki manera, ééééh
di ki manera nos ta biba na mundu
cu pecado di mundu tur
ta traiciona 'i nos!*

*di ki manera, ééééh
di ki manera nos ta biba na mundu
cu pecado di mundu tur
ta lanta contra nos!
di ki manera ééééh*

HOW

How, ééééh
How do we live in this world
With worldly sinners all
Abandoning us!

How, ééééh
How do we live in this world
With worldly sinners all
Betraying us!

How, ééééh
How do we live in this world
with worldly sinners all
rising against us!
How, ééééh

Pick song, as sung by Teodor Juliana from Zjaro, Curaçao; in: Paul Brenneker: Benta: dos cien cantica dje dushi tempu bieuw. Willemstad, Curaçao: [s.n.], 1959.