

# CULTURE SHOCK! An essay by Jennie



The world is a massive place filled with such diversity. Sometimes I believe this is forgotten when we focus on what's around us and not keep our eyes and mind open to the everything else the world has to offer. There are many different cultures and each have unique aspects to them. Join me and let's discover more about our world through a unique aspect of a foreign culture.

This month I've chosen to focus on a unique style of dance that is simultaneously a name of a secret society. It is called abakuá. It is "a mutual aid society for men based on religion, was established by Africans in Regla, Havana, in the 1830s. It represents one of the least known yet most powerful examples of West African cultural influence in the Americas." It is also defined as the "only surviving masked dance/music tradition." There were multiple Abakuá societies and they "are called Ngbè and Ékpè, after the Ejagham and Èfik terms for leopard." secret society. It is called abakuá. It is "a mutual aid society for men based on religion, was established by Africans in

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After Africans were brought to Cuban as slaves, the Spanish

"Everything in the universe has a rhythm, everything dances."

— Maya Angelou

government advocated that cabildos. Cabildos are defined as nation-groups.

"These cabildos became important centers for the conservation of African languages and cultural practices.

Carabalí peoples formed several cabildos in the eighteenth cen-

tury, and titled members of the leopard societies were among them."

Those of the Abakuá societies considered themselves as completely separate nations because they had their own language and laws.

Abakua has influenced America in the world of music and dance. Through the jazz artist, Dizzy Gillespie's collaboration with Chano Pozo, a member of one of the Abakuá societies, we got new interpretations of music and a new instrument. Dizzy and Chano infused Abakuá rhythms with popular American music and "the enduring legacy of the Pozo-Gillespie collaboration is felt in numerous ways. In the late 1940s, conga and bongo drums became symbols for the emerging beatnik movement, and the conga drum is now a standard instrument in the United States."

It's crazy to think that our culture was influenced by a secret society originally from West Africa. This shows the importance of expanding our minds to more than just what we experience day to day.



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzrbVGJ\\_h-A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzrbVGJ_h-A)

See a video of Abakuá.