

A group of people in traditional African attire are performing a drumming ceremony. They are wearing colorful, patterned robes and headwraps. In the background, there is a large, abstract, reddish-brown structure that resembles a stylized building or a large sculpture. The scene is set outdoors with trees and foliage in the background.

African Drumming Folklore

By Ty Vandenberg, Dylan Alvarez, and Willis Bocock

A group of people, likely from a traditional African community, are gathered in a circle on a dirt ground. They are wearing traditional clothing, including red and white wraps. Several individuals are playing large, round, wooden drums with their hands. The scene is outdoors, with some greenery visible in the background.

Topic

Interested in: African Drumming Folklore, Rituals, and Tradition

This designation includes:

- Primarily religious drumming folklore in Nigeria
- We chose to focus on a specific location in Africa as the drumming culture in Africa is too large to cover in full

Inspired by Professor Shabazz's African Drumming course and folklore tales that were told in Professor Levin's Global Sounds course

A photograph of a group of young people, likely from a West African country, wearing traditional red and yellow patterned clothing and tall, pointed hats. They are playing large, round, light-colored drums. The background is a stone wall and some greenery. The image is darkened to serve as a background for the text.

Methods

Interviewees: Hafiz Farel F. Shabazz, Richie Loftus, and Jack Harvey

Used semi-structured in-depth interviews to gather our information

Followed Wilson's process of collection and Dundes' "Context, Text, and Texture" framework as instructed



Folklore Item: Bata Drums and Orishas

Informant Data:

Hafiz Farel F. Shabazz- Master drummer and Director of the World Music Percussion Ensemble, is an ethnomusicologist, percussionist, performer, and lecturer. He is an initiated member of the Ancestral Shrine of the Ashanti Nation in Ghana, West Africa. Professor at Dartmouth College.

Contextual Data:

Bata drummers share brotherhood IFA culture/society – believe they can invoke spirits that belong to individuals called “Orishas”. For example, the spirit of love can be called upon by one who is linked with the spirit, in order to have an increased chance of love. Three drummers with blessed hands play specific beats and chants that call upon the spirits to come down and hypnotize them.

Item: Bata drummers are gifted sacred drums called Bata Drums. These drums can not be touched under any circumstance by anyone other than its owner or the drum will bring bad luck upon each hit. The drums are warmed up by the rubbing and scratching of the drumhead and the spirits are awoken. Shabazz told a story of a Bata Drum being turned upside down on the drumhead. That drum brought the Bata drummer that owned it bad fortune for years.



Analysis:

Forms:

Sacred Bata Drum – Folk instrument; folklore around the powers that these drums harness

- Bad luck if non-owner touches sacred drum – Magic superstition; if someone else touches your sacred drum, you will have bad luck
- Bad luck if drum is turned upside down – Magic superstition; if you set the drum down upside down, you will have back luck

Folklore Item

Informant Data: Professor Shabazz (same informant as last slide)

Contextual Data: Professor of African Drumming

Item: Before starting ceremony to invoke spirits by drum rhythm, you need to make “sacrifices” in order to feed/hydrate and awaken the spirit you are trying to call

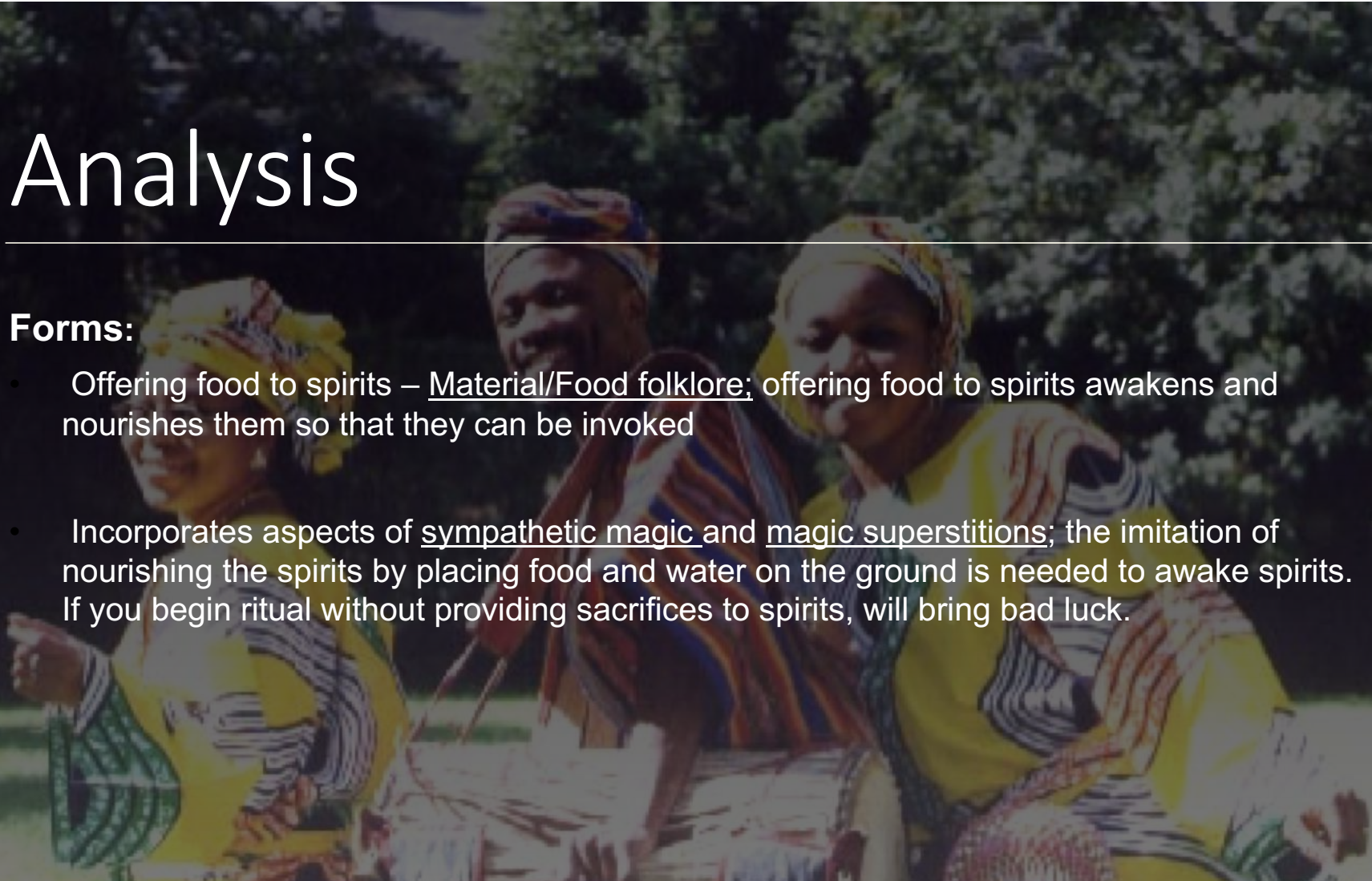
Offer water, alcohol, and food (often will decapitate chicken as sacrifice)



Analysis

Forms:

- Offering food to spirits – Material/Food folklore; offering food to spirits awakens and nourishes them so that they can be invoked
- Incorporates aspects of sympathetic magic and magic superstitions; the imitation of nourishing the spirits by placing food and water on the ground is needed to awake spirits. If you begin ritual without providing sacrifices to spirits, will bring bad luck.





Folklore Item

Informant Data: Richie Loftus is an '18 at Dartmouth. He is from Dallas, Texas, and does not have a musical background.

Contextual Data: Richie took African Drumming from Professor Shabazz in the spring of 2016. He looks back on his time in the class as one of his favorite memories at Dartmouth.

Item: (Traditional African Folktale) There is a story about the origin of African drumming in which a boy named Kofi sees a lion beating a powerful drum in the middle of a clearing in the forest. Kofi runs back to his village to tell his elders, but no one believes him. In order to regain their trust, he sneaks back to the clearing and steals the drum from the lion before it can stop him. He brings it back to the village where they rejoice in his truthfulness, and from then on whenever Kofi played the drum his people danced.



Analysis:

- **Form:** Traditional African Folktale
- **Propp's Functions:**
 - Violation: Kofi seeing the secret drumming practices of the lion
 - Villainy: Kofi's elders attempting to ban him from the village for his supposed deceit
 - Pursuit: The lion chases Kofi back through the forest to get his drum back
 - Transformation: When Kofi returns with the lion's drum, he is hailed as a hero and recognized as eternal player of the drum for the village



Folklore Item:

Informant Data: Jack Harvey is an '18 at Dartmouth. He is from New York City and plays on the Squash team here at Dartmouth.

Contextual Data: Jack is also a former student of Professor Shabazz's African drumming course.

Item: (Tradition) African drums were originally built as a language form, and it is said that the "talking drums" were originally used to communicate and signal between villages. The original role of the drums to communicate between villages eventually morphed into a story-telling role, and the drummers began using the drums to entertain villages with traditional tales. The talking drummers, or "griots," held a sacred role in their societies and guarded the stories they told through the drums very carefully.

Analysis:

- **Form:**

“Talking drums” - Material Folklore/myth; the talking drums were item lore specific to the IFA people, and the story about the role and power of the drums is a myth

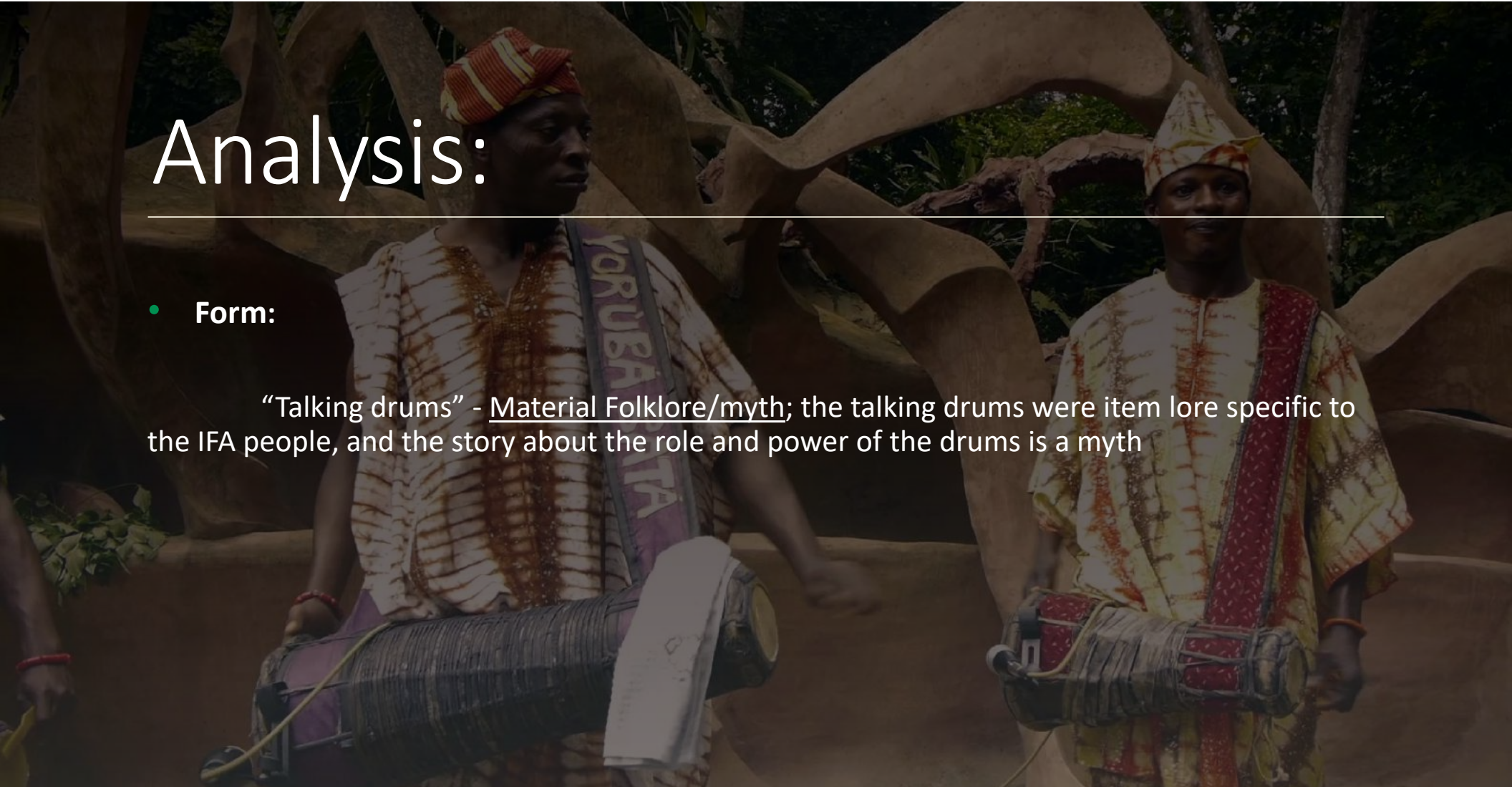


Image credits

Image 1: <https://www.shutterstock.com/video/clip-33413224-stock-footage-african-drumming-session-friends-playing-music-together.html>

Image 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ag6y6jz7bQQ>

Image 3: <http://www.thinkersnewsng.com/2016/04/1-states-50-countries-to-storm-ogun-for-nigerian-drums-festival/>

Image 4: <http://islapercussions.blogspot.com/2010/12/isla-bata-drums.html>

Image 5: <http://islapercussions.blogspot.com/2010/12/isla-bata-drums.html>

Image 6: <http://islapercussions.blogspot.com/2010/12/isla-bata-drums.html>

Image 7: <https://www.nigerianbulletin.com/threads/nigeria-6-important-drums-of-the-yoruba-people.218853/>

Image 8: <http://televisionafrica.com/2016/05/nigerian-drums-festival-bursts-onto-the-scene/>

Image 9: <http://photography-on-the.net/forum/showthread.php?t=711643>

Image 10: <https://campus-services.dartmouth.edu/>

Image 11: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34088550>