The music of Elvin Jones has been called cacophonous and disorienting by some, yet also "beautifully logical and coherent" by other critics throughout the world.[1] His playing is polyrhythmic and dense, and frequently creates the illusion of several drummers performing at the same time.[2] Due in large part to the pervasive influence of the music of Elvin Jones, drums are no longer restricted to a time-keeping role in jazz; instead, the drummer is an active participant in the musical conversation with the soloist.[3] This new way of playing set the stage for avant-garde, fusion, and a new generation of rock drummers. However, despite his remarkable influence, most of the available pedagogical material and analysis on his drumming provides only a limited view of his music, ignoring possible influences, such as African and Cuban music, that have shaped his playing.[4] Understanding these influences can help drummers perform in the style of Jones with more musicality, rather than merely regurgitating a bunch of memorized patterns. The logic and coherence behind Elvin Jones's drumming has strong similarities to, and was perhaps influenced by, Cuban batá music.

Elvin Jones's playing has been referred to as an "African drum choir incarnate," and he is often known for bringing the drums back to their African roots.[5] It is not a contradiction to note both Cuban and African influences in the music of Elvin Jones,

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[1] Richard Cook, *Jazz Encyclopedia* (New York: Penguin Group, 2005), 320.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Barry Kernfeld, *2ed., The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2002), 440.
[4] Rick Mattingly, *The Drummer's Time: Conversations with the Great Drummers of Jazz* (New Jersey: Modern Drummer Publications,1998), 27.
[5] Peter Erskine, "We who are about to drum, salute you: Kenny Clarke, Max Roach, Elvin Jones, Ed Blackwell & Tony Williams," *DOWN BEAT, Jazz, Blues &* Beyond, July 1999, 52-53.

because there are many forms of African music; it is not a monolithic, uniform music. In addition, African-like music is found throughout the Caribbean, including in Cuban batá music. Both Cuban batá music and African music share certain characteristics, such as the use of polyrhythm, bell patterns, call-and-response, and swing.[6] However, despite these similarities, Cuban batá music is different from African music because of the unique intermingling with other cultures that took place in the African Diaspora; each group of slaves that came from Africa has their own unique history.[7] Cuban batá music sounds very African, but is uniquely Cuban. In regards Cuban and African music, Jones stated that he does not try to perform the rhythms exactly, since it is too difficult to do so being an outsider to their culture—there are hundreds of rhythms, each for different purposes and ceremonies.[8] Thus, while we note that African music is the root from which Cuban music grew, Elvin Jones's music will be compared specifically to Afro-Cuban batá ideas, transcriptions, and recordings.

Cuban Batá Music and Elvin Jones

The Cuban batá drum is an hourglass-shaped drum that sits across the lap of the musician, who then plays each side with one hand.[9] The larger side of the drum is called the *enu,* which produces a low, open or muted sound; the smaller side is called the *chacha*, which produces a dry, "slap" sound.[10] Batás are played as part of a batá ensemble comprised of three musicians, each playing one of the three batás: the

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[6] Paul Austerlitz, *Jazz Consciousness: Music, Race, and Humanity* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2005)*,* 29.

[7] Ina Frandrich, "Yoruba Influences on Haitian Vodou and New Orleans Voodoo," *Journal of Black Studies* 37, no.5*,* (March 2007): 779.

[8] Loren Schoenberg, *Interview with Elvin Jones*, Private Recording (CD), 1998.

[9] John Amira and Steven Cornelius, *The Music of Santeria: Traditional Rhythms of the Báta Drums* (Indiana: White Cliffs Media Company), 32

[10] Ibid.

Onkonkolo, which is the smallest, the *Itotele*, which is the mid-size drum, and the *Iya*, the largest drum of the ensemble.[11] These drums each require a different technique, produce different sounds, and they each hold different functions within the music.[12] Although they are separate drums, they function as one unit.

Elements of Batá: Swing

Cuban batá music swings.[13] In batá, especially in the folkloric context, the swing lies between a triplet and an eighth note.[14] This same swing feel occurs in jazz between the bassist and the drummer, but uniquely, this happens with the timekeeping feel of Elvin Jones. Jeff "Tain" Watts, a student of Elvin Jones, states that,

> Roy Haynes pretty much introduced the triplet feeling in drumming, and Art Blakey and Philly Joe Jones had a portion of it in there. But the thing that Elvin did was change the spacing, open up the spacing similar to what happens in African or Afro-Cuban music using it to stretch the beat, emotionally.[15]

In opening up the spacing, Jones transforms swing from a quasi sixteenth-note-triplet feel to a more open eighth-note-triplet feel. This propelling swing feel, rooted in Afro-Cuban music, opens a new palette of music ideas and phrasing that are strikingly similar to batá music. Below is a sound wave comparison of typical batá triplets and triplets played by Elvin Jones. The arrows indicate the first, second, and third of note of the triplet. The

[11] John Amira and Steven Cornelius, *The Music of Santeria: Traditional Rhythms of the Báta Drums* (Indiana: White Cliffs Media Company), 32
[12] Ibid., 26
[13] Katherine Hagedorn, *Divine Utterances: The Performance of Afro-Cuban Santería* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 131.
[14] Lincoln Goines and Robby Amen, *Afro-Cuban Grooves for Bass and Drums: Funkifying the Clave* (Florida: Manhattan Music, 1990), 4.
[15] Robin Tolleson "Force of Nature: Elvin Jones: 1927-2004," *Down Beat, Jazz, Blues, and Beyond 71*, August 2004, 60.

dashed line indicates where the second note of the triplet would have landed if it was played evenly.[16]

Figure 1.1 Batá triplets taken from “Ellegua” performed by Grupo Ilu Aña.[17] 0 min. 16 sec.

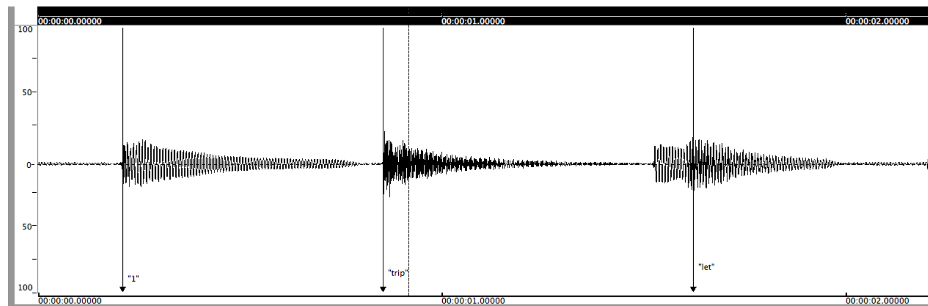


Figure 1.2 Jones’s triplets taken from “Three Card Molly.”[18] 4 min. 58 sec.

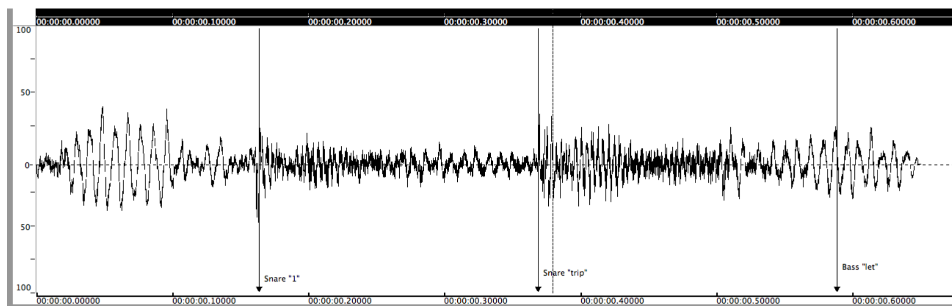
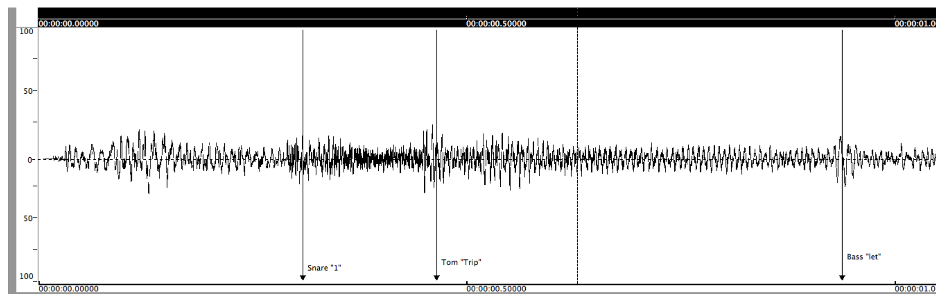


Figure 1.3 Jones’s triplets taken from “Vigil.”[19] 0 min. 22 sec.



In figures 1.1 and 1.2, Jones’s swung triplets are almost identical to batá triplets: specifically, the second note of the triplet is closer to the first note. In figure 1.3, Jones’s

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[16] Figures 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 Sound wave analysis created using Peak LE 5 by Nucleo Vega

[17] Ilu Aña, *Sacred Rhythms,* “Ellegua,” Bembe, iTunes MP3, 2001.

[18] Elvin Jones Jazz Machine, *The Truth (Head Live at the Blue Note)*, “Three Card Molly,” Half Note Records, iTunes MP3, 2004.

[19] John Coltrane, *Kulu Se Mama,* “Vigil,” The Verve Music Group, iTunes MP3, 1965.

triplet has a quasi-sixteenth-note-triplet feel, which is similar to the music of Batá Trio, "Havana, Cuba, ca. 1957: Rhythms and Songs for the Orishas."[20] The example below is how this triplet figure is applied to drum set.

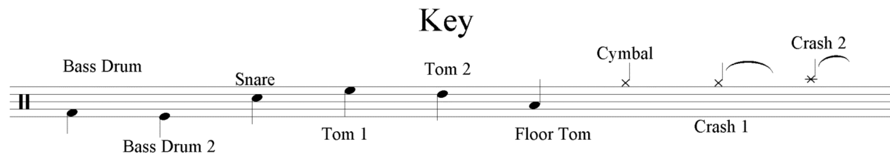
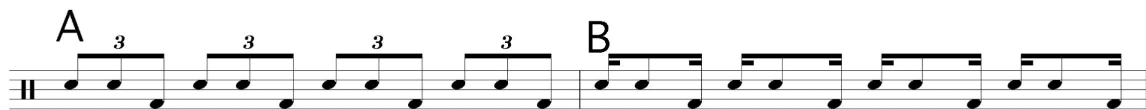


Figure 1.4 A= triplet feel B=sixteenth note feel



Jones's playing fluctuates between figures 1.4 A and B, creating an uneven spacing between a triplet and a sixteenth note pattern, which is at the heart of Jones's signature Afro-Cuban, batá-like swing.[21]

Elements of Batá: Clave

Clave is the backbone to most Afro-Cuban music, including batá music, and Elvin Jones frequently arranged his music around a type of clave.[22] Clave, which means "key," is a generally a two-measure rhythm with a strong side and a weak side—usually in the ratio of 3:2—on which all patterns of rhythm, melody, harmony are based. According to

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[20] Batá Trio, *Havana, Cuba, ca. 1957: Rhythms and Songs for the Orishas*, "Elegua", Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, iTunes MP3, 2001

[21] Mokhtar Samba, *African Rhythms and Independence for Drumset* (New York: Music in Motion Films Ltd, 2001), 6.

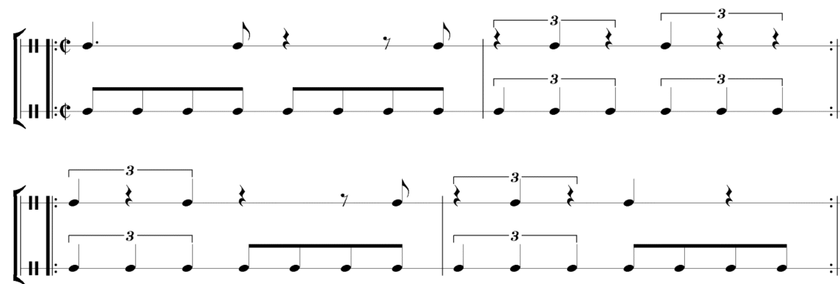
[22] Steven Cornelius, "Afro-Cuban Music," in *Garland Encyclopedia* Vol. 3, ed. Ellen Koskoff, Alexander Street Press, http://glnd.alexanderstreet.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/View/328455/Highlight/afro-cuban#afro-cuban1, 2008, 783.

Cuban drummer, Horacio Hernandez, “The clave is present in the music, even if it is not actually played.”[23] The main claves in bata music are the rumba clave and the 6/8 clave.

Figure 2.1

Rumba clave is a derivative from the 6/8 clave, as is clear from the 3:2 per measure similarities.[24] Moving between the 6/8 clave and rumba clave creates elasticity in batá music, which resists attempts to be notated in standard Western notation. As Oscar Rousseaux, a batá teacher in the Washington, D.C., area, once said of this elasticity, “This is not written music.”[25] In Hernandez’s rhythmic analysis of the clave, he shows how the clave moves in and out of quarter note triplet to straight, eighth-note feels.[26] This is shown in the example below.

Figure 2.2[27]



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[23] Horacio Hernandez, *Conversations in Clave: The Ultimate Technical Study of Four Way Independence in Afro-Cuban Rhythms* (Florida: Warner Brothers Publications, 2000) 13.

[24] Ignacio Berroa, *Groovin’ In Clave: Combining Rock & Funk with Afro-Cuban Rhythms for Drum Set* (New York: PlayinTime Productions, 1999), 54.

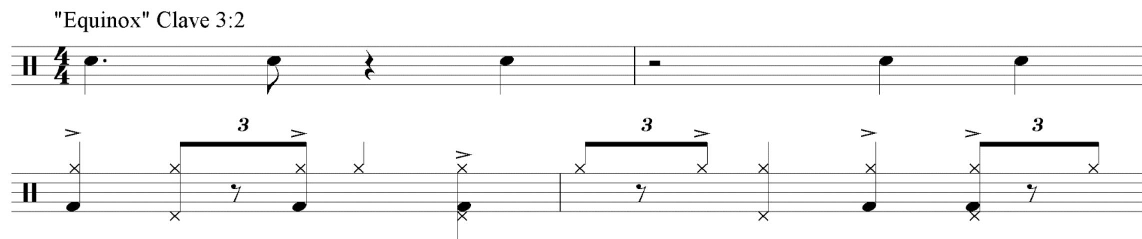
[25] Oscar Rousseaux, *Bata Class in Joe’s Movement Emporium*, in Maryland, 2008.

[26] Horacio Hernandez, *Conversations in Clave: The Ultimate Technical Study of Four Way Independence in Afro-Cuban Rhythms*, 16.

[27] Ibid.

A particularly clear example of Jones's use of the clave comes in "Equinox," recorded with the John Coltrane Quartet.[28] The pattern alternates between accented measures, a 3:2 ratio.

Figure 2.3[29]



The clave used in "Equinox" is not a precise rumba clave, but Jones's ride pattern hints at this modified clave, and the drum fills Jones incorporates throughout the piece are based around the clave. His playing in this recording clearly recalls a rumba clave.

Elvin Jones also frequently made of use of Afro-Cuban bell patterns, which accentuate the clave and provide unity and logic in the deeply polyrhythmic music.
He used both popular- and folk-based Afro-Cuban bell patterns in his music, which differ mainly in the presence of swing in the eighth notes.[30] Batá music shows more influence from the more folk-based patterns, which are rooted in African, rather than Latin, music, and Jones's tendency towards these same patterns renders him more as African-influenced than Latin-influenced.[31] Even when he performs the more Latin-based, popular-influenced patterns, he still manages to superimpose triplet rhythms that are

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[28] John Coltrane, *Heavy Weight Champion: The Complete Atlantic Recordings,* "Equinox," Atlantic Recording Corporation, iTunes MP3, 1959.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Lincoln Goines and Robby Ameen, *Afro-Cuban Grooves for Bass and Drums: Funkifying the Clave* (Florida: Manhattan Music, 1990), 4.
[31] Peter Manuel, Kenneth Bilby, and Michael Largey, *Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music from Rumba to Reggae* (Pennsylvania: Temple University Press), 20-22.

reminiscent of batá playing. In "Acknowledgement," Jones uses a bell-pattern that highlights the 3:2 rumba clave used in batá music.[32] An example is shown below.

Figure 2.4[33]

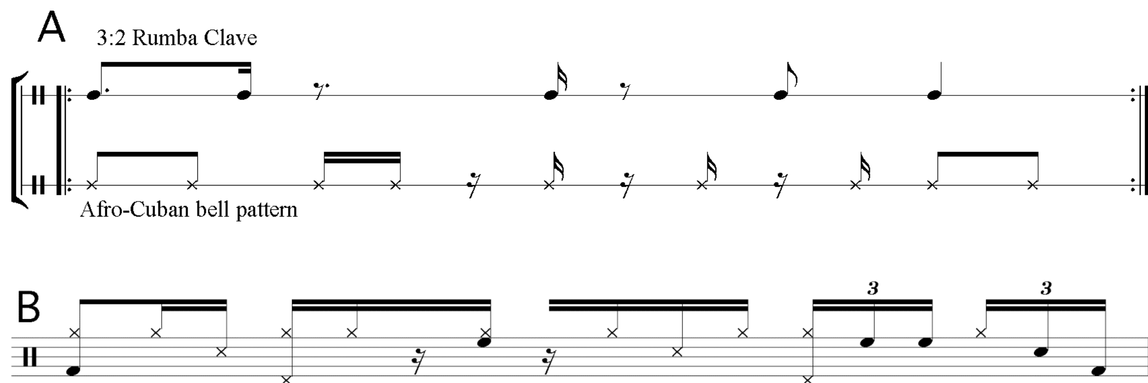
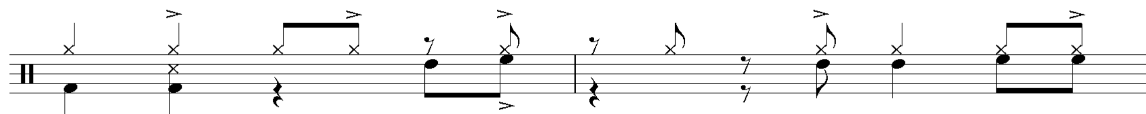


Figure 2.4 A is the basic bell pattern that Jones embellishes throughout "Acknowledgement," which lines up with 3:2 rumba clave. In figure 2.4 B, Jones's embellishments highlight the bell pattern and the rumba clave. In addition, the end of the phrase is frequently ornamented by a batá-like triplet idea—the accentuation of the bass drum on the last note of the triplet, which will be discussed later.

In another recording shown below, "Mr. Knight," Jones performs an Afro-Cuban bell pattern, accompanied by an Afro-Cuban conga pattern between his snare and toms.[34]

Figure 2.5[35]



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[32] John Coltrane, *A Love Supreme (Deluxe Edition)*, "Acknowledgement, Pt.1," The Verve Music Group, iTunes MP3, 1964.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Goines and Ameen, *Afro-Cuban Grooves for Bass and Drums,* 12.
[35] John Coltrane, *Coltrane Plays the Blues,* "Mr. Knight," Atlantic Recording Corp., iTunes MP3, 1960.

This pattern also implies the 3:2 rumba clave—accentuating the "and" of beats two and four in the first measure, followed by beats two and three in the next measure. He then uses the ideas derived from the bell pattern to embellish the swing ride pattern.

Jones switches between a straight, Latin feel and a swing feel in figure 2.6, shown below. The broken-up nature of the swing pattern is a marked difference from drummers that had come before him, who tended to use an unchanging ride cymbal pattern. Jones provides coherence for these alternating patterns through his use of the bell pattern.

Figure 2.6[36]

Similar to the other examples, many of the accents and notes recall the bell pattern. Also, like in "Acknowledgement," Jones frequently ends the phrase with a batá-like triplet pattern. Even though Jones is performing swing, his embellishments are consistent with the clave structure.

In "Afro Blue," Jones uniquely uses a 6/8 bell pattern found in batá music on his ride cymbal.[37]

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[36] John Coltrane, *Coltrane Plays the Blues,* "Mr. Knight," Atlantic Recording Corp., iTunes MP3, 1960.

[37] Frank Malabe and Bob Weiner, *Afro-Cuban Rhythms for Drumset,* 17.

Figure 3.1[38]

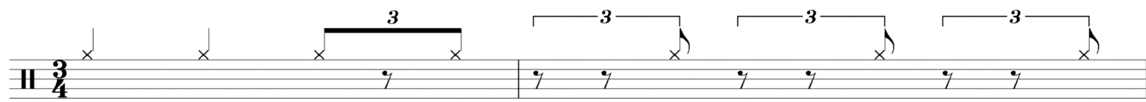

Figure 3.2[39]

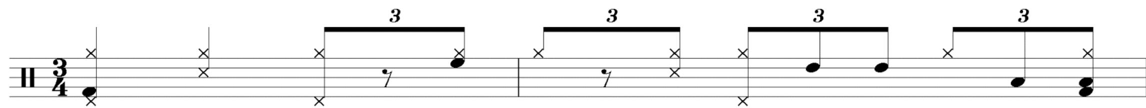

Figure 3.1 shows the 6/8 or 3/4 bell pattern acting as a backbone that influences the swing patterns he uses throughout the piece. In figure 3.2, Jones applies the bell pattern to his swinging ride cymbal pattern, and underneath his cymbal, he plays the batá 3:2 6/8 clave with his drums.[40] Once again, Jones uses batá-like triplets at the end of the phrase.

Three Batás, but One Unit: Creating the Illusion

Elvin Jones is frequently described as being able to create an illusion of three drummers playing at once, which is an idea seen throughout the structure of batá music. As mentioned earlier, batá drumming, though polyrhythmic, is logically held together by clave, but it is also structured by the roles each batá drum plays in the ensemble. In batá music, there are three drummers, playing on separate batás, which function as one unit. Marvin Smith discusses this relationship found in African drumming, the "parent" of batá drumming:

> …you also have to hear the relationship of your part to other parts. That's African. It's not about meter and always giving the '1.' Having to hear the '1' is the Western/European concept. In Africa, it's not about where '1' is. It's the relationship between different parts. One you understand the relationship…that's when you've got it.[41]

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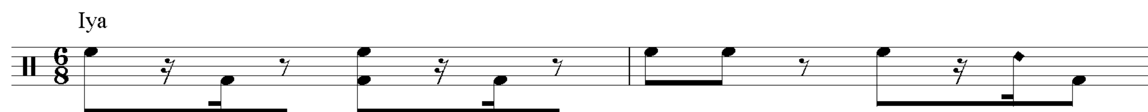
[38] Frank Malabe and Bob Weiner, *Afro-Cuban Rhythms for Drumset,* 17.
[39] John Coltrane, *Live In Seattle,* "Afro-Blue," UMG Recordings, iTunes MP3, 1965.
[40] Ned Sublette, *Cuban and It's Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo* (Illinois: Chicago Press, 2004), 230.
[41] Mattingly, *The Drummer's Time*, 68.

Smith believes that one has to hear how each rhythmic part in African music fits into the whole. If one were to listen to each batá part in isolation, the result would be a loss of beat "one" or meter. Many critics call this disorienting effect "rhythmic displacement."[42] In order to make the music make sense, one has to understand the relationship between the parts, and adding to Smith's ideas, in Afro-Cuban music, their relationship clave.[43]

Elvin Jones viewed the drum set in a remarkably similar way, claiming that the drum set should be looked as "one instrument," not a collection of instruments, and that "your body is one, even though you have two legs, two arms, ten fingers, and all that. But, it's still one body…all those parts add up to one human being [one unit]."[44] Jones structured his playing in this manner, valuing the relationship between the voices on the drum set over the presence of barlines, allowing him great freedom in using polyrhythms and rhythmic displacement.[45] An example of this is the common batá polyrhythm, 2 against 3, which implies two meters simultaneously, shown below. This polyrhythm is created between the 6/8 clave, batás, and within the individual drum patterns them themselves.

Figure 4.1

Ellegua: Entrance to Section 4



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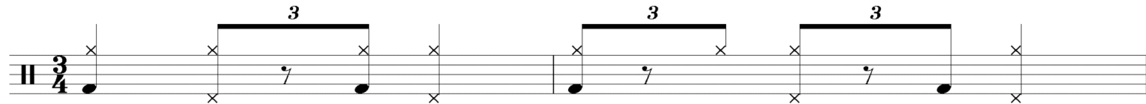
[42] Frank Kofsky, *John Coltrane and the Revolution of the 1960s: The Expanded and Revised Second Edition of Black Nationalism and Revolution in Music* (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), 359.
[43] Amira and Cornelius, *Music of Santeria,* 26.
[44] Mattingly, *The Drummer's Time,* 26.
[45] Rick Mattingly, "A Tribute to Elvin Jones" *Modern Drummer Vol. 28,* October 2004, 50.

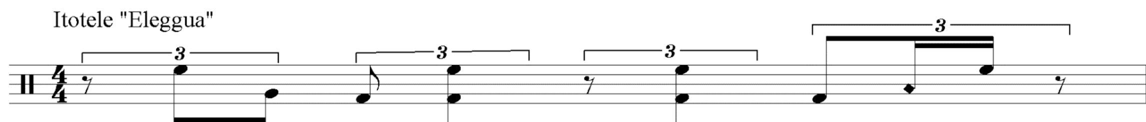
In “Ellegua”, the Iya uses the bass tone to accentuate the implied duple feel.[46] Similarly, Jones uses 3 against 2, which is reminiscent of the rhythms of the *Iya*, throughout “Afro Blue”. [47]

Figure 4.2



In figure 4.2, the polyrhythm gives the impression of two meters occurring simultaneously, and Jones is not subtle about this—he performs the duple pattern loudly on the bass drum, like the *Iya* does in “Ellegua.”

Rhythmic displacement within the triplet is another musical trait of batá music that Elvin Jones often utilizes. In “Ellegua,” the *Itotele* begins its melodic patterns on the second note of the triplet. To create more displacement, the notes tend to be evenly spaced, occurring on the same second note of the triplet, giving the impression that the strong beat is shifted one eighth-note triplet over.[48]



Similarly, Elvin Jones accents the tom—medium voice, or *Itotele*—in “Vigil,” which is also the second note of the triplet, as in figure 5.1 H. Jones plays this tom part jarringly and repeats the accentuation on the second note of the triplet several times, creating a feeling of displacement and the loss of beat one. Similarly, in batá music, if one were to

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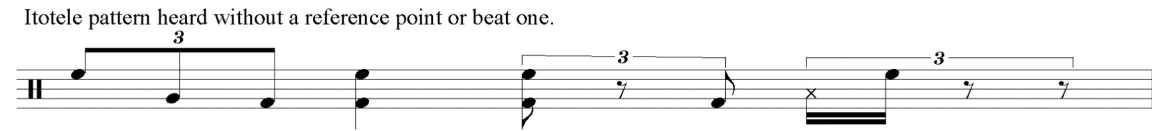
[46] Ilu Aña, *Sacred Rhythms,* “Ellegua,” Bembe, iTunes MP3, 2001.
[47] John Coltrane, *Live In Seattle,* “Afro-Blue,” UMG Recordings, iTunes MP3, 1965.
[48] Amira and Cornelius, *The Music of Santeria,* 51. A transcription of “Ellegua”

hear the *Itotele* separately, without knowledge of beat one, the pattern would sound like this:



It is important to notice that this pattern could be heard differently, depending on the reference point. As Menes Yahudah, a well-known African drum instructor in the Baltimore area, said in reference to rhythmic displacement, "You could be playing a same pattern for a half-hour straight and then all of a sudden wonder, 'Are we playing the same pattern?'"[49] *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* describes Jones's uses of polyrhythm:

> Jones played several metrically contrasting rhythms simultaneously, each of which was characterized by irregularly shifting accents that were independent of the basic pulse. Of particular note is his ingenious mixture of playing irregularly half-, quarter-, eight-, and 16th-note triplet subdivisions over an extended period as a means of generating a wide array of polyrhythms.[50]

This "ingenious mixture" of subdivisions and polyrhythms are seen throughout batá music, but these polyrhythms are not executed haphazardly. Like the clave, each drum in the batá ensemble has a specific role.

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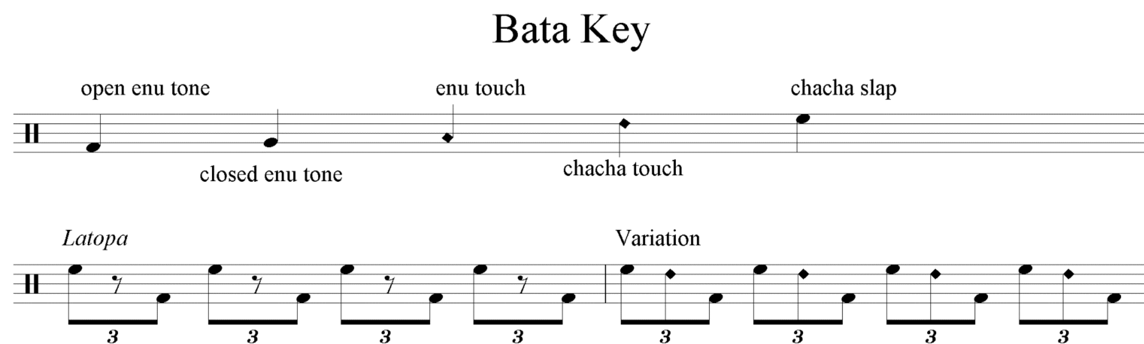
[49] Menes Yahudah, in African Drum Class in which the author of this paper was a participant, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, Fall 2008.

[50] Kernfeld, *2ed., The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz,* 440.

Roles of Batás: Shuffle and the Latopa (Ostinato), Conversation (Polyrhythm)

Jones organizes much of his music around a pattern that is a staple of batá music, called the *Latopa* pattern, which is similar to a shuffle.[51] The *Latopa* pattern is played by the *onkonkolo* drum, the smallest drum in the ensemble. This is one of the most common ostinato patterns found in batá music, and functions as the glue that holds the batá ensemble together.[52] This pattern is frequently used in 6/8 batá music, such as "Ellegua."

Figure 4.1[53]



In the *Latopa* pattern, the high tone of the *onkonkolo* is placed on the downbeat and the low tone is placed on the last note of the triplet. This shuffle-like pattern is unique because the low tone is accentuated before the strong beat; this off-beat accentuation is essential for creating the batá-like swing found in Elvin Jones's playing.[54] Kofsky discusses the Jones's use of this triplet pattern:

> What Jones often does instead of playing the figure as it appears in Example 4-a, however, is to move the two left hand triplets forward by an eighth-note triplet, and then intensify the before-the-beat accent by delivering it not with a snare drum, but with a bass drum...By thus inserting it *before* the beat, as in Example 4-b, Jones takes advantage both of the instrument's volume and the listener's

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[51] Katherine Hagedorn, *Divine Utterances: The Performance of Afro-Cuban Santeria* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 131.

[52] Michael Faue. *A Guide to Batá: 30 Different Rhythms* (California: Hit This Music, 2003), 8.

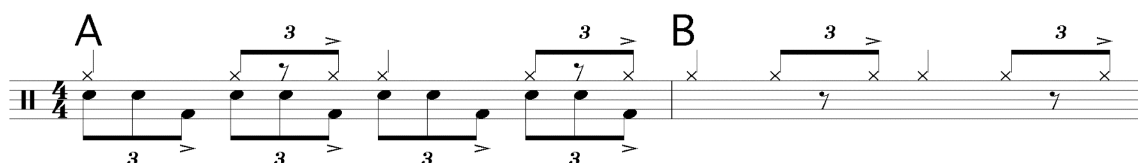
[53] Amira and Cornelius, *Music of Santeria,* 49.

[54] Jeff "Tain" Watts, Jazz clinic at which the author of this paper was present, Towson University, Towson, MD, Summer 2008

expectation of hearing the bass drum on the strong beat to create maximum rhythm dislocation.[55]

Kofsky is unknowingly describing Jones's frequent use of the *latopa* rhythm. See figure 4.2 A. Jones often plays the *latopa* literally, but he also implies throughout his drumming. *Latopa* is implied in Elvin Jones's ride pattern, figure 4.2 B, by the accentuation of the last note of the triplet instead of the downbeat.

Figure 4.2[56]



In figure 4.2 B, the last note of the triplet is usually accented in Jones's ride pattern, implying the *latopa* feel. To add more unity to the polyrhythmic scheme of the music, the *latopa* mirrors the accents of the three side of the rumba clave. Jeff Ballard, a world-renowned jazz drummer, offers insight to how this batá ensemble playing can be applied to drum set. He argues that this style is not pattern drumming, instead, "it's more vertical...highlighting different parts of the drum ensemble as you keep time."[57] Jones applies these patterns weaving in and out of other patterns within the structure, and unlike most Latin music, he does not play the patterns note-for-note throughout the whole piece. In doing so, Jones is free to improvise with the soloist and he creates the illusion of multiple drummers.

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[55] Kofsky, *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s*, 359.
[56] Kofsky, *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s*, 360.
[57] Jeff Ballard, a private lesson on Afro-Cuban bata drumming applied to drum set with the author of this paper in New York, Summer 2008.

Batá: Call-and-Response

The *onkokolo* functions as the ostinato "glue" in the batá ensemble, but the other two drums have equally as important roles as well. The *iya* leads the ensemble by initiating different call-and-response sections, and initiating when the patterns need to change. In Elvin Jones's music, it is clear that the bass drum, also the largest drum in the drum set, is the "leader" of his drum set. In listening to "Transition," the bass drum provides the main accents in Jones's drumming, while the figures played on the other drums lead towards each accent, thus creating a hierarchy in the drum kit, with the largest drum leading the group. The *itotele* batá*,* the medium drum in the batá ensemble, can be seen as the inner voices of the drum kit, much like the tom-toms that Jones tends to use in the middle notes of triplets.

In batá music, the *iya* and the *itotele* are in conversation with each other while the *okonkolo* keeps the music together.[58] This conversation is seen as call-and-response between the drums and is most apparent in Jones's solo in "Vigil."

In "Vigil", two distinct voices are present in Jones's playing, each with two to three pitches. The pitch-groups in each of the two voices replicate the double-pitched sounds of batás, each of which have two playable sides: a low side, called *enu*, and a high side, called *chacha*.[59] In the figure 5.1 A, the "entrance" is performed by the lower voices of the drum set. The bass drum is like the batá's *enu*, and the snare is like the batá's *chacha*. Parallel to batá music, the *iya* provides the entrance, which sets the tempo and brings in the ensemble.[60] Section one of the conversation begins in figure 5.1 B: the

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[58] Hagedorn, *Divine Utterances:The Performance of Afro-Cuban Santería,* 92-95.
[59] Amira and Cornelius, *The Music of Santería,* 32.
[60] Ibid., 37.

lower voices begin the call, adding a tom to the snare-and-bass-drum mix. In figure 5.1 C, the response is performed by the higher voices of the snare drum and hi-hat cymbals, in the same manner that the *itotele* drum continues the conversation using both the *enu* and *chacha* sides. The conversation continues in D, the answer to the response by the low voice followed by a stated crash. This concludes section one of the conversation. Equating the *enu* and *chacha* with the way Jones uses the instrumentation on the drum set does not provide a literal "rule" for how he organizes his playing, but it is important to see that the general patterns he uses to create different voices clearly mirror those used in batá music. See figure 5.1.[61]

[61] John Coltrane, *Kulu Se Mama,* "Vigil," The Verve Music Group, iTunes MP3, 1965.

Figure 5.1

"Vigil" by: John Coltrane Transcription by: Nucleo Vega

poco accel.

Solo Continues...

Section two of the conversation begins with a batá-like accelerando, incorporating call-and-response, as in figures 5.1 E1 to E4.[62] In E1, the call by the lower voice, the tom on beat one—is accented, followed by E2, the answer, by the higher voice, the snare accented on the “and” of beat one. In E3 and E4, the intensity increases as there is more frequent call-and-responses by E1 and E2. The section finishes with a definitive crash. Section three of the conversation, F1-F3, gives the illusion of slowing down. In F1-F3, the call is by the high voice, the snare and floor tom. In F4-F5, Jones’s response is in the lower voices—tom and floor tom. As the energy settles, Jones introduces a batá rhythm

[62] Bata music can change rates as well, as seen in Milton Cardona*, Bembe,* “Yemaya,” American Clave, iTunes MP3, 1985.

quote from “Inle.”[63] He then he follows the quote with a flurry of triplets, implying a three-part batá ensemble. In figure 5.1 I, Jones ends section three by bringing the music back to jazz with a quote from a popular Jazz song, “Now’s the Time” by Charlie Parker. All of this music—an entrance and three sections of conversation—happens in the first 25 seconds of the piece!

Elvin Jones does not always stick to the rule of the low voice as the sole caller and the medium voice as the responder, but he uses this technique quite frequently. Notice that *Latopa* is hinted at throughout his solo; the first note of the phrase is high pitched and the last note is low. The result is the illusion of a full batá drum ensemble. Jones creates three voices that work together logically as a whole

Call-and-response is more apparent between the drums and the soloist. As Oscar Rousseaux states, “this music is cause-and-effect.”[64] Rousseaux was describing how the batá responds to the actions of the singers and dancers; the batá is involved in the whole musical conversation, and does not operate separately from the ensemble. A very clear example of Elvin Jones using call-and-response appears below, in “Deluge.”

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[63] This quote can be heard on Ilu Aña, *Sacred Rhythms,* “Ellegua,” Bembe, iTunes MP3, 2001. 0 min. and 6 sec.

[64] Oscar Rousseaux, Bata Class given at Joe’s Movement Emporium to the author of this paper, Mt. Rainier, MD, Fall 2008.

Figure 5.2

Figure 5.2 is a straightforward example of Elvin Jones and Wayne Shorter, on tenor saxophone, involved in a call-and-response form.[65] Shorter plays a two-note call, followed by an answer by Jones. Jones also creates call-and-response within the drums by playing the call on the cymbals and answering the call with different voices on the drums.

A more complicated example of this is in "Vigil," wherein Jones and John Coltrane not only engage in a call-and-response form, but they do so with no other instruments present, creating a dense, polyrhythmic, call-and-response duet. In "Vigil", Jones creates call-and-response with Coltrane as well as keeping the illusion of multiple drummers performing at once. This duet scenario is common in batá music where the singer and the batá are the only musicians performing—no piano, bass, or any other accompanying instrument.[66]

Elvin Jones brilliantly crafted a new style of drumming through the use of elements present Afro-Cuban batá music. In taking a closer look at Jones's cacophonous drumming, his dense, polyrhythmic ideas are organized logically, not randomly, and

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[65] Wayne Shorter, *JuJu (The Rudy Van Gelder Edition Remastered)*, Blue Note Records, iTunes MP3, 1999.

[66] Ilu Aña, *Sacred Rhythms,* "Oya," Bembe, iTunes MP3, 2001.

many of his ideas are rooted in Afro-Cuban music. Understanding the logic behind Jones's music can benefit the music community: drummers can build from his ideas, other performers can learn how to comfortably perform with a drummer who plays as dense and polyrhythmic as Jones, and all listeners can gain a deeper appreciation of Jones's music and Afro-Cuban batá music. In addition, people who write instructional books may, eventually, decide to change their focus from exercises and teaching isolated ideas, so-called "Elvinisms," to instead teaching the underlying logic behind Jones's music. Like so many great musicians who came before him, Elvin Jones was shaped by the music to which he listened and the musicians with whom he interacted. With a greater understanding of the force of Cuban batá music in his playing, we now have a more nuanced perspective when considering the genius in his music, and the modern role of the drum set in jazz music.