Definitions starting with F

Folklore

The folklore of the Bahamas, like other aspects of its culture, has its roots in both Europe and Africa and is closely related to that of both the American South and the Caribbean proper. The Bahamians' RABBY or B' RABBY has his counterpart in Br'er Rabbit on the mainland and other cunning rabbits from Suriname to Sierra Leone, while ANANCY is well known from Belize to Ghana. While the origin of many folktale characters and their names can be found in Africa (e.g. RAMAKANSA and BOOKY), others are also found in European fairy tales (e.g. the King and the Princess) and seem to represent a convergence. However, the source of many such characters remains uncertain, e.g. U-SANGE-WILEY, BLOOCHEL, and JENERAT.

The OLD STORIES usually open with a rhyme similar to the following:

> Once upon a time, and a very old time
>
> Monkey chew tobacco and spit white lime.
>
> Bullfrog jump from limb to limb
>
> And Cuckero tell the time.

Likewise, they have a closing formula like "BE BO BEN, my story end". These tales may have a SING or chant repeated at intervals, sometimes with words whose significance is unknown. A narrator who can TALK OLD STORY well will act out the tale and elaborate it as he goes along to the appreciative cries of "SUNDAY r from the audience. There are other tales of various supernatural beings such as JACK O'LANTERN, CHICKCHARNEYS, the LITTLE RED MEN, YEHO, GREASY MAN, and the fire-breathing, chain-dragging ghost, ERROL FITZGERALD. There are even Indian Spirits, the ZEMI, and ghosts of the African EBOS, who walk the beaches at night, as well as assorted HAGS, HAUNTS, and DUPPIES.

Less traditional but very lively are the tales of SHINE, favored by teenage boys, recounting the exploits of a "super nigger" who outwits those who try to manipulate him. Another aspect of folklore has to do with beliefs, ranging from the cause of asthma (the TISSICK BAG) and albinism (MOONLIGHT), to why people can't catch their breath (SPERIT PASSING), how to interpret dreams (KING TUT), and the powers of the SOUNDING ROD. The liveliness of the folktale tradition is attested by a tale told recently about the devil-king Hitler and the good king Churchill.

See Edwards 1895, Parsons 1918, Crowley 1966, Glinton 1974.

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