Chapter 9. Hebblethwaite and Kulstad’s interview with oungan

Nelson Marcenat

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This Chapter gives the transcribed and translated interviews with a Vodou priest, Nelson Marcenat. The recording was made in 2008 in Belle-Rivière, Haiti, at the home of the oungan Ginèn ‘hereditary priest’ Nelson Marcenat. The interviews cover a wide range of matters relating to Vodou. At 65 years of age at the time of the interview, Nelson had been working as a Vodou priest for 43 years. His main occupations are midwifery, plant and tree-based medicine and psychotherapeutic treatments. He is a farmer and sharecropper, too. As a midwife who has delivered hundreds of babies, oungan Marcenat invites the parents of the children he delivers to visit him a few weeks after the birth to receive a Vodou blessing which he calls the andwaye. The andwaye is a priyè batèm ‘a Vodou baptism prayer’ during which parents publicly name their child.

The interview explores the pivotal role his parents and grandparents had in his calling. Topics of discussion include the kanzo initiation ritual, the forms of psychotherapeutic treatments and services he provides, acceptable and unacceptable possessions by the lwa and his annual Vodou ceremony on December 24th. Nelson discusses the legacy of the anti-superstition campaign of the 1940s and the links Vodou has with politics in Haiti. He points out, with some reservations, that homosexuals have an important role in Vodou; he also suggests that a lwa, Jeneral Piman ‘the Hot Pepper General,’ turns people gay. He reveals some of the differences and disagreements which divide the oungan Ginèn (Rada rite) and bòkò (Kongo-Petwo rite). He talks at length about the proper ways to serve the lwa and he provides insight into the structure and dynamics of the Vodou ceremonies he presides over. As a pikèt liv or pè savann ‘un-ordained Catholic priest,’ Nelson also
addresses how Vodou priests like himself combine Catholic traditions with Vodou ones. Chapter 10 provides some mystical Catholic texts which many oungan, including ounan Marcenat, employ.  

Oungan Marcenat read several passages to me out of his copy and he informed me that many Vodou priests are using it.

Oungan Marcenat also asked me to include here the ‘Sator square’ which is a Latin palindrome that allows one to read the same words top-to-bottom, bottom-to-top, left-to-right and right-to-left. The earliest known source of the Sator square is from Pompeii, 79 AD, the year when Mount Vesuvius erupted and smothered—and preserved—Pompeii in ashes. It has also been found in England, Syria, France and Portugal. The words, rotas opera tenet arepo sator, might mean, ‘The farmer Arepo has works wheels [a plough]’ which is supposed to mean, ‘the farmer uses his plough as his form of work.’ The Sator square is also associated with magic (see Griffiths 1971 and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sator_Square).

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R O T A S
O P E R A
T E N E T
A R E P O
S A T O R
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9. Entèvyou Nelson Masena ak Hebblethwaite epi Kulstad

B. Depi ki lè ou nan domèn Vodou a?

N: O! Mwen nan domèn sila, ane sa fè m karanntwazan (43). Se manman mwen, se te yon manbo Ginen ke l te ye. Grann mwen te yon manbo, li kite l pou manman m. Epi manman m mour. Anvan l mour, m kanzo mwen menm. Li kite l pou mwen. Grann papa m se t on gangan Ginen l te ye toujou, li mouri kite pou papa m, papa m te rejete, kon sa l pa vle fè l; epui se li. M gen je bò manman, je sou bò papa.

B. Lè nou di ‘je bò manman, je bò papa,’ sa sa vle di?

N. Nasyon an, nasyon ki kouv ou. Nasyon Ginen ki kouv ou.

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B. For how long have you been involved in the field of Vodou?

N: Oh! I have been in this domain, this year makes forty-three years. It was my mother, she was a manbo Ginen. My grandmother was a manbo, she left it for my mother. And my mother died. Before she died, I was kanzo myself. She left it for me. The granny of my father was also a Ginen Vodou priest, she died and left it for my father, my father rejected it, like that, he didn’t want to do it; and that was it. I have eyes on my mother’s side, eyes on my father’s side.

B. When you say ‘eyes on my mother’s side, eyes on my father’s side,’ what does that mean?

N. The nation, the nation that hatches you. The Ginen nation that hatches you.
B. Kisa ki kanzo a?

N. Kanzo a, setadikeu, lè on moun bezwen kanzo, w ap jene, san manje, san bwè. Yo gen dwa fèmen ou nan on kay la, yo fè ou fè sèt jou, san manje, san bwè. Epi anmenmtan, yo pa leve ou pou sèt jou sa a. Epi yo gen sèt pelerinaj, yo pral fè ou fè; ranpli sèt bagay sa yo, sa di ou kanzo. Epi mistik la pral konpare sou ou, li pral danse sou ou, en, yo gen dwa limen nenpòt flanbo dife, ou pran men ou pou ou nan dife sa, ou brase nenpòt chòdyè mayi moule k ap kwit, ou brase men ou lan chòdyè cho, ou p ap boule, en. Sa di ou kanzo. Ou pran on ti dife, ou koule l sou moun nan, li p ap boule.

B. Gen moun nan zòn nan ki pase seremoni kanzo a?

B. What is the kanzo?

N. The kanzo, that is to say, when a person needs to be kanzo, you are fasting, without food, without drink. They have the right to close you in a house there, they make you endure seven days, without food, without drink. And at the same time, they don’t wake you for those seven days. And they have seven pilgrimages, they will make you do; fulfill those seven things, that makes you kanzo. And the mystical will take a hold of you, he will dance on you, uh, they have the right to light any fire torch, or take your hand so that you’re in this fire, or stir any pot of ground cornmeal that is cooking, or stir your hand in a hot pot, you won’t get burned, you know. That means you are a kanzo. You take a little fire, you pour it on the person, he or she won’t get burned.

B. Are there people in the area that have passed the kanzo ceremony?
N. Kanzo, wi. Bon, gade m gen yon dam la a, li fí Eliyad, li te fè 24 desanm ki te la, gen on moun la ki wòy la ... dam nan gen yon lwa k antre sou li ki rele Ti Jan. L antre nan dife sa, l ponpe tout moun wè l, li pran on tizon dife, li an kontak ak tout po l, li rale dife a li al chita de pye li lonje nan dife a, li pa gen ti mak! Li pa boule ditou. Moun sa se mada m mwen.

B. Madan ou ki kanzo konsa?

N. Wi, li pa boule, alò setadikeu, mistik la li gen yon pouvwa, apre Bondye, li gen yon pouvwa li menm. Setadikeu gen moun, kèk moun, ki di pa genyen. Eh? Se paske ou poko touve, ou nan on bagay, ou poko konnen bagay, eh? Se kan w ap pran nan on pyëj, ou konn ou pa gen, se lè w a konn genyen, he? Depi ou pa chèche moun kont, eh, se di, la ou pa konn ti ga, men depi ou chèche on moun

N. Kanzo, yes. Well then, look I have a woman here, she is the daughter of Eliyad, she participated in my ceremony this past December 24th, there was a person here who, oh my goodness… the woman had a lwa that possessed her called Ti Jan. She entered in the fire, she jumped, everyone saw her, she took an ember of fire, it was in contact with all of her skin, she pulled the fire, she sat, her feet stretched out into the fire, she didn’t have a little mark! She was not burned at all. That woman is my wife.

B. Your wife is kanzo like that?

N. Yes, she was not burned, that is to say, the mystical has a power; after God, it has its own power. That is to say that there are people, some people, who say it doesn’t have any. Huh? It’s because you haven’t found it yet, or, in a sense, you don’t know things yet, get it? It’s like you’re taken into a trap; you think you don’t have it, that’s when you’ll start to have it, right?

As long as you don’t stir up trouble with
kont w ap konnen genyen. Nou memn nou pa maji nwa isi, se maji blan ke nou fè, konprann mwen, maji nwa sa pèmèt li fè ou fè mal, anpil mal. Maji blan li memn li pa nan mal, li pa fonde nan mal, konprann, pase l ap sove vi e lebyen. Konprann? Se pou sela ki fè mwen memn chak kote m rive, mwen fè zanmi ak tout oungan, men depi m wè se nan kòt mal la ou kanpe, m fè bak sou ou, ou wè, men depi m wè ou s on moun dosilite ki sèvi ak tout moun epi ou renmen fè charite, en, epui se sa ou ye, pase ou gen lafwa. Moun nan malad la li vin bò kote ou, setadikeu, moun lwa achte a li mande li 20, 30, 50 mil dola, moun li memm ki rasin nan dirèkteman, se yon rasin charite li ye, li di ban m mil dola, eh.

B. Pou yon trètman?

people, um, which means, here you don’t know a little fellow, but once you bother a person, you’ll start having trouble. You see, we aren’t into black magic here, it’s white magic that we do; understand me, this black magic allows you to do bad, a lot of bad. White magic itself, it’s not bad, it’s not created from bad, understand, because it saves lives and goods. Understand? It is for this that wherever I go, I make friends with all oungan, but as soon as I see that you stand on the side of evil, I back away from you, you see, but when I see that you’re a docile person who serves all people and that you like to do charity, you see, and, that is who you are, because you have faith. The person, the sick one, goes to you; that is to say, the person who buys and sells lwa, he asks for 20, 30, 50 thousand Haitian dollars, the person who is specifically into the roots, is a root of charity, he says, hey, give me one thousand Haitian dollars, you know.

B. For a treatment?
N. Pou yon trètman, yon soulajman, pou gerizon, epui li di ou mwen pa genyen l non. Se 500 dola m genyen; li di l, ban mwen l non, li pran l, wi. Li vle moun sa fè de jou toujou, men lòt la pal a moun de 30 mil dola li mande a, moun nan devyen mouri. Men wi, paske li pa pran swen l, pase l pa gen lajan. Lè yon gwo rich pou antre se moun sa li pran ka l an konsiderasyon, en, men malere a p ap ka ale. Men mwen s on nonm ki fè tout pwofesyon, en, mwen doktè, mwen oungan, mwen mèt sa, mwen matwòn, m tout pyès nèt nèt nèt, m pa gen anyen m pa fè.

B. Kisa ou fè kôm matwon?

N. Se tankou moun nan ansent la, epui moun nan souf li ap etenn, an plenn... li mèt annik voye rele mwen epui m annik fè l mete chita epui m rale limyè mwen epi m fè sa m fè, m debouch timoun nan kòmsadwafèt. Fè l fè l. Fè li kòmsadwatèt.

N. For a treatment, comfort, for healing, and he tells you, no, I don’t have it. I only have 500 Haitian dollars; he tells him, give it to me then, he takes it, yes. He wants this person to live two more days, but the other speaks to the person of the 30 thousand dollars he asks for, the person will die. Indeed, because he doesn’t take care of him, because he doesn’t have money. When a big wealthy person is coming in, it’s that person’s problems that he takes into consideration, but the poor can’t go. As for me, I am a man who does every profession, you know, I am a doctor, I am an oungan, I can do that, I am a male midwife, I do all types completely, there’s nothing I don’t do.

B. What do you do as a male midwife?

N. It’s like when a person is pregnant here, and the person is short of breath, fully pregnant... she can just send for me and I just have her sit and I grab my light and I do what I do, I birth the child appropriately. What needs to get done gets done. I do it correctly.
B. Èske ou ka pale yon ti kras sou manman ou, papa ou, e grann e granpè ou, sou ki kote yo te jwenn konesans yo?

N. Nan ansyen Ginen, Ginen ki te kite pou yo. Ginen kite pou yo epi yo jwenn yo kite pou manman m, manman m kite pou mwen. Grann papa m se yon fanm li te fè, ki te Filomèn Lwisen, alò Lwisen li menm, li menm se granpapa mwen, li fè Filomèn Lwisen; Filomèn Lwisen kite pou Asonen Masena, Asonen Masena se papa m. Papa m pa vle, li rejete, li kite pou mwen, tout sa k sou li vin jwenn mwen, bagay la se mwen menm.

B. Li sote yon jenerasyon?

N. Wi. Yon jenerasyon. E manman m menm menm, li menm li te on manbo li ye, men papa m, msye pa t dakò a manman m. Yo toutan yo

B. Can you speak a little bit about your mother, your father, and your grandmother and grandfather, where did they get their knowledge?

N. In ancient Ginen, Ginen gave it to them. Ginen always gave them what they needed. Ginen gave it to them, and they found it and gave it to my mother, my mother left it for me. My grandfather, he fathered a woman who was Filomèn Lwisen, thus Lwisen himself, he was my grandfather, he made Filomèn Lwisen; Filomen Lwisen left it for Asonen Masena, Asonen Masena was my father. My father didn’t want it, he rejected it; he left it for me, all that was for him came to me, the tradition came to me.

B. It skipped a generation?

N. Yes. One generation. And my mother, herself, she was a manbo, but my father, he didn’t agree with my mother. They were always
nan batay, nan goumen, poutèt mistik ki danse sou manman m, a, epi li menm, sa k pase la, manman m pral mouri, li wè se mwen menm ki an sante, li kanzo.

B. Sa vle di se li menm ki te ba ou lwa li yo?

N. Wi, li ban mwen yo. B. That is to say that she gave you her lwa?

N. Bon, menm nivo yo ye, men li manke nivo sa ki lakòz depi ou gen lwa achte, ou takine, ou takinè. W ap mache sonde moun ki gen lwa rasin nan. Epi toujou ou fè fot men ou pral tonbe, se ou menm ki viktim, moun ki gen lwa achte a. Li pa viktim, rasin nan gen fòs. Li gen fòs. Sa k gen lwa achte a, li menm li g on lwa ki touye l, oubyen lwa a pati kite l, la li achte ankò, lwa a ap touye l, epi l achte ankò, lwa a pati kite l, li touye l, se konsa, ou wè?

N. Well, they are on the same level, but he lacks the level whenever you have a purchased lwa; you kid around, you are a kidder. You are walking and challenging people who have hereditary lwa. And you always make mistakes, but you will fall, it is you who is the victim, the person who has the purchased lwa. He who has the strength of the roots is not a victim. It has strength. He who has the purchased lwa, he has a lwa that kills him, or the lwa leaves him, then he buys again; the lwa will kill him, and he buys
B. E lwa a touye kisa?

N. Li touye chwal la, moun k achte li a.

B. Lwa achte konn fè mechanste sa yo?

N. Wi, mechanste a, epi e li menm li al pake oungan rasin nan, oungan rasin nan pa fè anyen pou li...

B. Poukisa yon moun ta achte yon lwa ki pral touye têt li?

N. Bon, enben, lè w rive kote a, yo p ap ba w sa bon non. Depi ou rive la se chen k konn manje kabrit la... Chen kapab mòde on trèt; li p ap janm mòd on bon bagay li. Chen k pou gad ou nan lakou a li p ap ba ou, non; se chen k pou devaste ou, eh, se li k pou l ba w. Je nou se nan rasin nan nou menm, setadikeu rasin nan li... 

B. And the lwa kills what?

N. It kills the horse, the person that purchases it.

B. Do purchased lwa do those mean things?

N. Yes, mean things, then he goes to get charms from the roots oungan, the oungan of the roots doesn’t do anything for him…

B. Why would someone buy a lwa that is going to kill him or her?

N. Well, you see, when you arrive at the place, they won’t tell it to you straight. Once you arrive there, it’s the dog that usually eats the goat… The dog can bite a traitor; it will never bite a good thing. The dog that is on watch in the yard will not bite the owner; no, it is the dog that will destroy you, um, it is he that will...
menm. Sa ki lakòz ki fè ou toujou respekte
rasin nan, nanpwen sak vid pa konn kanpe, li
gen lè li pou fonksyone avèk li, pou fè ti
okipasyon bagay sa yo pou l... sa k ap manje
pou l manje, eh? E setadikeu si ou ta sispèk
gen youn ladan yo ki ta on lwa mechan k ap
manje on moun, ou fè on fason avèk li, eh, ou
depataje li an pami sa ki bon yo pou chache on
pozisyon pou ou wè l, ou bezwen on kote.
Pase depi se on bèt ki twò mechan, sa yo fè?
Yo fè on gwo pak, yo fè on chenn, yo
anchennen ! He? Ou wè, paske, ou konnen, yo
pote yo sere li, konprann, pou l pa...
give it to you. Our eyes are in the root within
ourselves, that is to say the root itself. What
makes us always respect the root, there is no
empty bag which can stand up, there is a time
to function with it, to do these small
occupational things so that the one who needs
to eat will eat, you see? And that is to say that if
you would suspect that there is one of them
who is a mean lwa, who will eat a person, you
make a way with him, you know, you split him
among those who are good in order to look for
a position to watch him, you need a place.

Because once there is an animal that is too
mean, what do they do? They make a great pen,
they make a chain, they tie him up! Huh? You
see, because, you know, they carry him off and
tie him up, understand, so that he won’t…

B. Kou on tig?

N. Wi, anchennen, pase lwa rasin nan s on
bon, gen lwa rasin ou pa bezwen... li pa ap
kenbe ou. Li kenbe ou, pase lè ou konn sa l
gen bezwen, yo gen ti afè korèkteman, l ap

B. Like a tiger

N. Yes, chained, because the lwa of the roots is
good, there are lwa of the roots that you don’t
need to… he or she won’t hold you. He or she
holds you, because when you know what he or
travay, fôk li manje. Depi on nonm ap travay, she has need of, they have little matters of
depi ou pa manje, se pou manje. Bon manje... correctness, he or she will work, he or she has
Mwen menm 24 desanm, se chak ane; ane sa fè eat, it’s time to eat. Good food… Me, myself,
35 an; de chak ane m ap fete, le 24 desanm. December 24th, it’s every year; this year makes

B. Ki bò ou fete konsa? B. Where do you celebrate like this?


B. Gen anpil moun ki vini patisipe? B. Are there a lot of people who come to
participate?

N. Ou mèt pèdi on moun e chèche pou chèche N. You may lose a person and have to search to
l. Lè konsa ou rive isi a yo foul! Se yon fèt, yo fè find him or her. By the time you arrive here,
tout pèp la vin manje, vin bwè, ch, bwè sou, they’re overflowing! It’s a party, they send for all
manje, otan batay, pa goumen, pase ou ap pran the masses to come eat, to come drink, and,
anpil baton. drink until drunk, eat, except for fighting, don’t

B. Si ou goumen, w ap pran anpil baton? B. If you fight, you’ll take a big beating?

B. Si ou goumen, w ap pran anpil baton?
N. Anpil baton. M konn voye baton m rèd mwen menm!

N. A lot of beating. As for me, I throw a hard beating!

B. Ki moun ki fè manje? Èske se madanm ou?

B. Who fixes the food? Is it your wife?

N. Non, se mwen menm menm ki fè tout preparasyon pou tout moun. Touye bèf, touye kochon, touye kabrit, bagay sa yo, kwit manje pou moun manje, moun yo tout ak on kwi nan men. Kwi ou, gwo kwi, plen, manje valè ou vle, jete rès la.

N. No, it’s only me who makes all the preparations for everyone. Killing cows, killing pigs, killing goats, those things, I cook food for people to eat, the people all have a calabash bowl in their hands. Your bowl, large bowl, full, eat as much food as you want, throw the rest away.

B. Èske manje nan yon kwi enpòtan?

B. Is the food in a calabash bowl important?

N. Se rasin nan; se ak kwi l sèvi ak rasin nan.

N. It’s the roots; it’s with their bowl that they serve the roots. The roots, the roots, everyone has a bowl in their hand.

Rasin nan, rasin nan, tout moun gen yon kwi nan men yo.

B. Kwi avèk rasin nan gen yon konèksyon?

B. The bowl and the root have a connection?

N. Se menm bagay, se yon konèksyon yo ye.

N. They are the same thing, they are a connection. The roots are the bowl they use,

Rasin nan se kwi, he, yo sèvi. Fèt la sa se bagay ki fòmidab anpil paske lezane si m pa ka fè fèt you see. The celebration is a very incredible
sa a mwen menm, pou sa m pral moun malad. sa a mwen menm, pou sa m pral moun malad. thing because the years that I can't do this
Fòk mwen fè l kanmenm kòm dabitid pase Fòk mwen fè l kanmenm kòm dabitid pase celebration myself, for this, I’ll be a sick person.
tout pèp la konnen ke 24 desanm yo lakay tout pèp la konnen ke 24 desanm yo lakay I have to do it no matter what as a custom
mwen. mwen. because all of the people know that on

B. Tout moun nan zòn nan? B. Tout moun nan zòn nan?

N. Non, pa nan zòn nan, toupatou, moun sòti N. Non, not in the neighborhood, all over,
lwen vini wi, fon! Epi akodeyon ap jwe, eh, lwen vini wi, fon! Epi akodeyon ap jwe, eh, people travel from far to come, yes, crowds!
akodeyon, se pou sela mwen menm m sèvi ak akodeyon, se pou sela mwen menm m sèvi ak And accordions are playing, you know, an
akodeyon, m ap fè yon konmann de yon akodeyon, m ap fè yon konmann de yon accordion, it’s for that reason that I use the
akodeyon. akodeyon.

B. E pou zòn sa, konben gangan pratike nan B. E pou zòn sa, konben gangan pratike nan
zòn Bèl Rivyè a? zòn Bèl Rivyè a? B. And in this neighborhood, how many gangan
practice in the Bèl Rivyè area?

N. Bèl Rivyè, bon, zòn Bèl Rivyè a gen anpil N. Bèl Rivyè, well, the Bèl Rivyè area has a lot
gangan, men gen mafètou tou ki wè gangan ap of gangan, but there are impersonators who see
fè, li di l a fè tou. what the gangan does, they say they’ll do it too.

B. Moun ki imité gangan? B. Moun ki imité gangan?

N. Wi, yo pa fò, gen anpil yo menm; anpil N. Yes, they aren’t strong, there are a lot of
maladi konn mouri lakay yo tou. them; many sick people die in their homes as well.

B. Lè yon maladi mouri lakay gangan èske B. When a sick person dies in a gangan’s house,
kominate a pa vin rekonnette gangan sa pa bon? does the community come to recognize that the
gangan is not good?

N. Bon, se si yo, gangan afèkte, si yo afèkte N. Well, it’s if they, the affecting gangan, if they
gangan an. Si yo pa afèkte gangan, yo pa janm affect being a gangan. If they don’t affect being
fè ka l, eh? Isi a m konn gen, yo mande ankre gangan, they never trouble him, you see? Right
moun fou, ankre moun fou, ankre ak kòd; yo here, I sometimes have, they ask me to tie
mechan, mwen bay tout gaya. Tout bagay. Lè
down crazy people, tie down with rope; they’re
maten m gen on patat, yo nan kòd, larivyè m mean, I return them fully recovered.
benyen yo, kouwè pakèt chwal mwen, epi m Everything. In the morning I have a sweet
vin ak yo. Li jouke ankò, jiskas yo gaya epi m potato, they are tied up with rope, at the river I
met kòd sou yo; tou gaya nèt, nèt, nèt. bathe them, like all of my horses, and I come

B. Li vin kal? B. He becomes calm?

N. Gade, li te mèt fou ap manje wòch, se pou with them. He gets fastened again, until they’re
m fè l vin on moun swa. Gen pa m ki wete rad fully restored and I put the rope around them;
N. Look, he may be crazy and eating rocks, I all fully recovered, entirely, entirely, entirely.
have to make him into an easy person. There
sou yo, yo te toutouni, se lè m pral nan dlo ak yo, se dam fanm yo ye; m annik pran yon twal mouye pou m al lave yo, epu lè m vini m remare yo ankò kòmsadwèt jiskas ou gaya. M genyen pasyans; m toujou g on pasyas avèk yo tou. Mwen ka bat yo men mwen toujou pran swen yo. Mwen ba yo manje, yo k ap manje, mwen ba yo ti gou yo pou ka reprann fôs, epi pou medikaman pou yo.

are some of mine who remove their clothes, they were naked, it is when I am going to the water with them, they are women and wives; I just take a wet cloth to wash them, and when I come I tie them again correctly until you’re fully recovered. I have patience; I always have patience with them, too. I can beat them but I always take care of them. I give them food, those who are eating, I give them their small tastes so that they can regain strength, and for their medication.

B. Èske se yon moun ki nan fanmi moun fou a ki pral vini avèk li?

N. Wi. Se yo menm ki mennen l. Depi moun nan fou yo toujou mennen l nan yon trètman; yo vin mete li. Kèlkanswa lechòz moun fou, chen an fou ka mòde, m ka trete l, wi.

B. Is it a person in the crazy person’s family who will come with him?

N. Yes. It’s them who bring him. Once the person is crazy they always bring him to a treatment; they come and put him in it. Whatever the type of crazy person, the crazy dog can bite, I can treat him, yes.

B. Pwen darè, esplike sa.

B. Healing charm, explain this.
N. Pwèn darè a li menm se lò w fin trete moun nan, he, epi ou ba l on bagay kòm on pwen darè, gwo priyè sou li, pou pèsikisyon toujou pa touen ankò; pase mwen menm m poko met kòd sou moun, se priyè, m ekri priyè, m boule l ba l bwè. M ekri priyè met sou li, he, setadi moun sa gen yon gad sou li, yon gad di kò.

N. The healing charm is when you finish treating the person, you see, and you give him something like a healing charm, a lengthy prayer over him, so that persecution won’t come back again; because me, I haven’t yet put ropes on people, it’s prayer, you know, I write prayers, I burn them and let him drink it. I write the prayer, put it on him, huh, that is to say the person has a guard on him, a body guard.

N. Gen lwa poze, gen lwa batize, men gen lwa fou k konn moute sou moun tou wi.

N. There are calm lwa, there are baptized lwa, but there are crazy lwa that possess people too, yes.

B. Lwa batize?

B. Baptized lwa?

N. Wi, lwa batize, lwa sa batize, lwa rasin se lwa batize l ye; men depi ou wè se yon lwa k ap rele anmwey nan on peyi, se lwa fou li ye, he?
Pase la ou gen dwa parèt bò lakay pa m, m mèt ap travay, ou ap rele anmwey, m reste kal. Men lòt la ap vini rele anmwey, anmwey, kraze kò l, non, sa se lwa fou.

N. Yes, baptized lwa, this lwa is baptized, the root lwa is the baptized lwa; but as soon as you see there is a lwa that is calling for help in some place, he really is a crazy lwa, hey? Because here you might appear near my house, I can be working, you’re calling for help, I stay calm. But the other will come crying help, help, breaking
B. Enben, si pa egzanp ou gen yon fèt Vodou epi gen yon moun ki vini nan fèt la, epi se fèt pa ou a, epi li gen yon lwa ki fou, ki reyaksyon ou pral genyen fas a moun sa a?

N. Si se moun nan, si moun nan apwòch mwen, an menm tan m tou batize lwa a, m toujou batize lwa, si se yo k ap rale atè, m fè l kanpe. M fè l kanpe, Lwa a m ka sikès on lwa fou nèt. Lwa a prale, kòm m vin manyen l, li prale, li p ap rete, li kite chwal li.... M batize lwa epi m fè lwa vin on lwa batize, epi lè sa a se kal, epi l ap tonbe l ap danse, men lòt lwa fou kale kò frap atè, m annik parèt la epi lwa sa a ale. Li kite chwal la. Se yon mal ou vin pou fè.

B. Well, if for example you have a Vodou feast and there is a person who comes to the feast, and it’s your feast, and he has a crazy lwa, what reaction will you have towards this person?

N. If it is the person, if the person approaches me, at the same time I baptize the lwa, I always baptize the lwa, if it is the kind that pulls to the ground, I make it stand. I make it stand. I can be successful over a completely crazy lwa. The lwa is coming, once I touch it, it will leave, it won’t stay, it leaves its horse… I baptize lwa and I make lwa become baptized lwa, and, at that time, it is calm, and they start dancing, but other crazy lwa dance wildly and throw themselves onto the ground, I just appear there and this lwa leaves. It leaves the horse. It’s a bad thing you came to do.

B. Ou wè sa kòm on fòt lwa a, pa moun nan?

N. Si se moun nan, si moun nan apwòch mwen, an menm tan m tou batize lwa a, m toujou batize lwa, si se yo k ap rale atè, m fè l kanpe. M fè l kanpe, Lwa a m ka sikès on lwa fou nèt. Lwa a prale, kòm m vin manyen l, li prale, li p ap rete, li kite chwal li.... M batize lwa epi m fè lwa vin on lwa batize, epi lè sa a se kal, epi l ap tonbe l ap danse, men lòt lwa fou kale kò frap atè, m annik parèt la epi lwa sa a ale. Li kite chwal la. Se yon mal ou vin pou fè.

B. Do you see this as the lwa’s fault, not the person? What happened to you? Did you need to block that lwa?
N. Wi, bloke, pase ou konn kisa l ap vin fè. Ou konn se yon eskandal l ap vin konmèt; ou tou bloke l, ou pare li. Fè dezòd, kraze bagay, gen k enterese pran boutèy ak tout kola, manje boutèy, manje boutèy ak tout kola.

B. Ou pa penmèt sa pase?

N. Non, sa pa ka fèt.

B. Granparan nou tou, yo te gen menm prensip sa a?

N. Wi, prensip sa a. Nou te gen sistèm toujou nan granparan pa nou, si granparan pa n t ap fè yon sèvis on kote, se alepòk sa a, lè ta, te toujou ap vin arete sèvis lwa, lapolis toujou ap vini arete sèvis lwa; epi granpapa m te konn fè yo fè twa jou dòmi, dòmi kouche la, he? Fin fè sèvis li, lè fini li reveye yo fè yo manje pou yo pral mouri la epi met tout kwi yo kont tèt yo; epi tout sèvis kraze, touye difè, bale, al lakay

B. You don’t allow this to happen?

N. No, this cannot happen.

B. Your grandparents as well, did they follow this same principle?

N. Yes, this principle. We always had this system with our grandparents; if our grandparents were having a service at some place, at this time, at a late hour, they always came to stop the lwa service, the police always came to stop the lwa service; and my grandpa was known to make them spend three days sleeping, sleeping laying here, huh? After finishing his service, he woke them up and...
Yo, epilè chèf yo reveye, yo jwenn manje kote yo, yo manje, li fè yo chita, ap kalkile, y ale, yo di yo pa jwenn moun ki t ap fè sèvis. Yo di se tanpèt ki fè y ap dòmi, se Ginen an; e Ginen.

B. Setadi lapolis te gentan debake, men ou jwenn on jan pou fè yo dòmi?

N. Yo fè sèvis korèkteman, tout moun al fin manje al lakay yo, epi la ou pou reveye, e l ap reveye, eh.

B. Nan istwa peyi d Ayiti, m gentan etidye koze kanpay anti-sipèstisyè, koze rejte; sa te pase isit tou?

N. They have their regular service, everyone finishes their food and goes home, and there, you have to wake him up, and he will wake up, um.

B. In Haiti’s history, I have already studied the issue of the anti-superstition campaigns, this matter of being forced to reject Vodou; did it happen here as well?
N. O wi, yo te mele ak gangan anpil, anpil, anpil; alepòk se mache arete gangan k ap fè sèvis, pinga sèvis fès, se an kachèt, en, yo pa ka fowye, se bouyi pou yo bouyi tout bagay, yo pa ka fowye. Y a vin arete ou. Pa gen baay sa yo. Kounyeya moun sèvi yon jan lib. Fè sa ou pito, en?

B. Lè sa a te gen lapolis oubyen moun nan legliz ki te patisipe?

N. Wi, wi, se sa ki lakòz ki fè nou pokoj jwenn ka bon pastè ki pa gen on chans pou l prezidan. Se sa k fè pastè yo, yo toujou rejte yo, yo pa prezidan... yon pastè p ap ka prezidan, depi gen lepap, on pastè pa ka prezidan; yon pè ka prezidan, men yon pastè p ap prezidan.

B. Ou panse pèp ayisyen p ap vote on pastè pou rezon sa?

N. Oh yes, , they really, really, really fought with gangan; at the time they walked around arresting gangan who were having services, services were forbidden, they were done in secret, huh, they could not hide, they had to get rid of everything, they could not hide. They would come and arrest you. There were no such things. Now people serve freely. Do what you prefer, huh?

B. At the time were there police or people in the churches who participated?

N. Yes, yes, this is the reason why we never found a good pastor who had the chance to be president. This is why the pastors were always rejected, they were not president… a pastor can’t be president; as long as there is a pope, a pastor cannot be president; a priest can be president, but a pastor will not be president.

B. Do you think Haitian people won’t vote for a pastor for that reason?
N. Wi, Levanjil pa l se li k ap vote l, men Katolik la plis, Katolik la p ap vote l. Katolik la plis pase Pwotestan.

N. Yes, his Protestant friends will vote for him, but there are more Catholics, the Catholics will not vote for him. There are more Catholics than Protestants.

B. Ou panse Ayiti pare pou yon prezidan Vodwizan?

B. Do you think Haiti is ready for a Vodouist president?

N. Vodwizan, se sa, lè yo pral fè prezidan, Aristid, Jan-Betran Aristid li menm, li te Vodwizan anpil! Anpil, wòy, msye s on mistik nèt li te ye. On mistik msye te ye. Se te on mistik li te ye; se te toutan voye voye leve tout metsen, tout doktè, tout matwon, depi ou konn pase on fèy, li te konn fè ou fèt kote ki rele sou zòn sa yo rele Madjadeya, pou nou ale, al fè fèt pou nou. Rive la pou ou rakonte tout sa ou konn fè, mache ak sa ou konn fè a yo. M fè siwo a bwè, siwo fèyay, m fè tout, m fè yo nan bwa, m konn pete yo, epi m konpoze yo, m mete yo bouyi epi m tire ji a, epi m fini. M travay, m pito fè siwo.

N. The Vodouists, that’s it, when they run for president, the Vodouists give him more value because he, Aristide, Jean-Bertrand Aristide himself, he was very Vodouist! Greatly, whoa, that man was a mystic all the way. That man was a mystic. He was a mystic; it was always send, send for all the herb doctors, all doctors, all male nurses, as long as you knew how to use a leaf, he was known to have a party at a place in this area, they call Madjadeya, so that we would go, go and have a party for us. You arrive there and tell everything that you know about, you go with what you know how to do. I make syrup drinks, leaf syrup, I make them all, I make them in the woods, I usually pop the
B. E sa ou fè ak siwo sa?

N. Siwo sa pou maladi. Pou maladi, nenpôt ke maladi ou soufri, nou genyen medikaman pou ou.

B. A bon?

N. Avèk siwo, bon, avè mwen menm, m pa janm al lopital. Sèl doulè m se sèl doulè senti, epi apre m pa soufri anyen pase se fèy nan bwa sèlman k trete mwen, fèy nan bwa ki trete mwen, fèy nan bwa k pitit mwen, fèy nan bwa k trete madanm mwen, fèy nan bwa k trete tout fanmi, se vre wi pase m konnen kijan m ye pou m itilize l, sa k pou m fè avè l.

B. Se nan granmè oubyen nan granpè ou te

N. This syrup is for illnesses. For illnesses, no matter what illness you suffer from, we have medication for you.

B. Oh really?

N. With the syrup, well, with regard to myself, I’ve never been to the hospital. My only pain, is pain in my waist, and I don’t suffer anything else because its the leaves from the woods alone which treat me, the leaves from the woods treat me, the leaves from the woods for my children, the leaves from the woods that treat my wife, the leaves from the woods that treat my entire family, it’s true indeed because I know how to use it, what to do with it.
pran tout konesans féy nan bwa.

grandfather that you received knowledge about
the leaves from the woods?

N. Nan granmè mwen, nan granpè m; toude se
metsen yo te ye.

N. From my grandmother and from my
grandfather; both of them were herb doctors.

T. Ou gen pitit? Èske ou pral ba pitit ou menm
konesans ou genyen?

T. Do you have children? Will you give your
children the same knowledge that you have?

N. Wi, m gen pitit. Mwen genyen yonn la.

N. Yes, I have children. I have one here. I have
started to prepare them, I have a girl, here, she
is so lazy, she is a girl who, right now, was
supposed to start getting active; suddenly she
started being promiscuous... but I will prepare
the boy instead. I will prepare the boy instead,
to see if he will take the knowledge so that I
can leave him in good stead, they are supposed
to be useful.

B. Se yon dispozisyon w ap chache nan pitit la?

B. Are you looking for a disposition from the
child?

N. Wi, m ap chèche youn, vreman. M pral
moutre msye fè sa, moutre l fè sa; si sila pa t

N. Yes, I am truly looking for one. I will show
the boy how to do this, show him how to do
parez, kounye la se yon metsen pou l te ye, pou l te metsen apre tout travay li, eh? Men pito ou fe parez...

B. Setadike pitit yo gen dwa chwazi metye a yo menm? Yo pa oblije suiv metye gangan oubyen manbo?

N. Bon, eh, gen pitit mwen yo, espesyalman m gen ki di yo ka pral fe pastè, gen ki di yo ka al fe oungan, gen ki di ka al fe dokte, eh? Yo tout chwazi sa yo vle a, men sa ki di li pral fe oungan an, li menm m ap prepare l. M ap prepare l pou m ba l tout konesans mwen yo, eh, epi pou l ka double.

B. E pou seremoni yo rele kanzo a, eske yo pral fe sa nan on peristil oubyen ki kalite kote yo pral fe sa?

B. That is to say that children have the right to chose their professions themselves? They aren’t obligated to follow the profession of gangan or manbo?

N. Well, um, in the case of my children, specifically, I have some who might say they will become pastors, there are those who might say they will become oungan, there are those who might say they will become doctors, you see? They all chose what they want, but the one who says he wants to become an oungan, I will prepare him. I will prepare him so that I can give him all of my knowledge, you know, and so that he can double up.

B. And for the ceremony that they call the kanzo, will they do this in a peristil or in what kind of place will they do this?
N. Non, e, kanzo a li menm, ou fè kanzo a nenpòt kote ou vle, ou g on chanm dirèkteman.

B. Sèlman sa?

N. Wi, ou g on chanm dirèkteman, ou fè ti pewon ou, ti bagay, ti bato, gad... w ap fè kanzo a, epi ou rive la, men se sèt jou, san manje, san bwè, en? Epi ou abiye tou de blan, nèt, ou kouvri anba dra blan, en, epi w ap veye, setadi w ap kanzo.

B. Ou pa ka menm bwè dlo?

N. Non monchè, se kanzo w ap kanzo, kanzo w ap kanzo.

B. Mezanmi, se yon gwo grad?

N. W ap jwenn tout w ap jwenn nan. Tout sa

N. No, um, the kanzo itself, you conduct the kanzo wherever you want, you have your own room.

N. Yes, you have your own room, you set up your small altar, small things, small boat, charms… you will do the kanzo, and you have arrived here, but it’s seven days, without food, without drink, huh? And you dress in all white, completely, you’re covered under white sheets, and you are watching, that is to say you are becoming a kanzo.

N. No sir, you are going to be a kanzo, you are going to be a kanzo.

B. My goodness, it’s a high level?

N. You’ll find all you’re going to find. All that
w ap jwenn, w ap jwenn tout. Kote w ap kanzo a, w ap ranpli ak tout sa k ap vini ou lan. you are going to find, you will fill yourself with it. Where you go to become a kanzo, you will find everything that is coming to you.

B. Pa gen moun ki mouri nan kanzo paske yo tèlman swaf?

N. Non. W ap jwenn, wi. E lany k ap vin ba w bwè, e lanj k ap vin ba w bwè. G on lanj wi ki ba w bwè w, wi. G on lanj, wi. B. Has anyone died in kanzo because they were so thirsty?

N. No. W ap jwenn, wi. E lany k ap vin ba w bwè, e lanj k ap vin ba w bwè. G on lanj wi ki ba w bwè w, wi. G on lanj, wi. N. You will receive, yes indeed. It is the angel who will give you a drink, it's the angel who will give you a drink. There is an angel, yes, who gives you your drink, indeed. There's an angel, yes.

B. Men pa gangan an?

N. Non, pa manje, pa bwè, ou g on lanj k ap dirije ou. B. But not the gangan?

N. No, no food, no drink, you have an angel who is guiding you.

B. Apre kanzo ki lòt grad ki pi wo pase sa?

N. Enben, yo pa gen grad ki pi wo pase l. Pase ounsi badagi, ounsi badagi, setadi ounsi k ap sèvi, ak oungan, setadi bata oungan, lè ou N. Well, there are no other levels higher than that. Because ounsi badagi, ounsi badagi, that is to say an ounsi that serves with an oungan, that
ounsi badagi, se ounsi bata oungan ke ou ye, is to say an apprentice oungan, when you are an
pase si oungan pa ka al nan trètman, l ap voye oungan, because if an oungan cannot perform a
ou. treatment, he will send you.

B. A oke, ou pokò gangan men ou prèske la? B. Oh okay, you are not a gangan yet, but you
N. Ou bata oungan. are almost there?

N. Ou bata oungan.

B. Sa vle di asistan? B. That means an assistant?

N. Wi, ou ounsi badagi, sa di ou menm se ou k N. Yes, you are an ounsi badagi, it is you who
ap sèvi avè oungan sa; oungan gen dwa plim serves with the oungan; the oungan can have
nan ou, eh, alò ou g on fòs; ou gen dwa pa ka feathers in you, and, then you have a power;
al nan yon maladi, li voye ou, eh. you might not be able to visit a sick person, he
sends you, understand.

B. Pou koze vèvè, ki kote yon oungan oubyen B. Regarding vèvè, where is an oungan or a
yon manbo pral aprann tradisyon vèvè? manbo going to learn the vèvè tradition?

N. E bon, tradisyon vèvè li menm, se arive nan N. Well, the vèvè tradition itself, it starts at the
on kafò, tankou la nan kafò kay mwen, epui crossroads, like here at the crossroads by my
se on bagay ke m ap fè, ou gen on sèvis; fò m house, and it’s something that I do, you have a
konmanse trase vèvè m nan kafou a. La nan kafou a. service. I have to start tracing the signs at the crossroads. Here at the crossroads.

B. Poukisa se la ou dwe konmanse? B. Why is it here that you have to start?

N. Trase vèvè a se li menm ki kafou; men, gade bayè la; se pou trase vèvè a nan kafou a anvan. Se li menm pou ou sèvi anvan, se gran chemen ki mennen kafou, epi kafou mennen pa gad baryè sa, li ak Legba. N. Tracing the vèvè is the crossroads itself; over there, look at the gate. It is necessary to trace the vèvè in the crossroads before. You should use this first, it is the great path that leads to the crossroads, and the crossroads are controled by the guardian of that barrier, he and Legba.

B. Se premye vèvè ou sanse trase? B. Is it the first vèvè you are supposed to trace?

N. Wi, nan kafou, epi mennen pa Legba, epi se ak Legba sa pou antre la pou ou vin la a, eh? N. Yes, at the crossroads, and led by Legba, and it is with this Legba for entry that you come here, huh?

B. Konben vèvè konsa genyen pou Legba? B. Roughly how many vèvè are there for Legba? Only one or does Legba have many vèvè that are associated with him?

N. Non, men koute, g anpil vèvè piske tout N. No, but listen, there are a lot of vèvè since
lwa yo se sèt yo ye. Tout lwa yo se sèt yo ye. Legba se sèt Legba k genyen yo. Tout, yo mache pa sèt. Ogou, sèt, Èzili, sèt, Legba, sèt, Danbala, sèt, Bawon, sèt, Azaka Mede, sèt, eh? Kouzen Zaka Mede, sèt, tout se sèt nèt. An sèt yo mache. Lè ou entèpele yon sèl Ogou, si se pou sela ou oblije ou fè sèt mèch koton. Ou gen lwa w ap fè sèvis, premye devwa ou ke pou fè se on chôdyè manje lezanj pou fè, se li ki manje, se li ki rele Marasa a, on chôdyè manje lezanj. Ou al depoze manje Marasa sa yo, pase Marasa sa dwe manje anvan tout granmoun. Timoun li ye, lò timoun ap kriye nan pye ou, sa pou fè, ou rekokiye, men depi vant timoun plen, epi timoun vle ret on kote l ap fè jwèt, epi w ap plen ou, timoun p ap vin gade ki jan granmoun nan ye, pase m te ba ou manje.

B. Lè ou di sèvi lezany sa vle di ofri yon ti manje ba yo?

almost all of the lwa come in seven. All of the lwa come in seven. Legba, there are seven Legba. All of them walk in seven. Ogou, seven, Èzili, seven, Legba, seven, Danbala, seven, Bawon, seven, Azaka Mede, seven, you see? Cousin Zaka Mede, seven, they are entirely seven. They walk in seven. When you call a single Ogou, if it’s for this, you are obligated to make seven cotton wicks. You have lwa that you are serving, your first task is to make a pot of food for the angels, it’s that food which is called the Marasa, that pot of food for the angels. You go and set down that food for the Marasa, because the Marasa need to eat before all of the adults. They are children, and when a child is crying at your feet, what to do, you get moving to help them, but once the child’s stomach is full, and the child wants to play, and you are filling yourself, children won’t come to see how the adult is, because I gave you food.

B. When you say serve angels that means offer some food to them?
N. Wi, Marasa yo, bon, lè fini ou g on kesyon de bagay ki rele tab, tab anivèse l. Tab anivèse l la se bagay ou pral ofri on tab ak tout bwason ladann, gwo gato, gwo biskit, gwo bagay, gwo chanpay, epi ou pral chante on bagay ki rele aksyon de gras, w ap prale Lanj kondiktè; ou pral pal anpil laten sou tab sa, epui lè fini pou rele lwa ke ou bezwen pou tab la, epi pou tout lwa kouvri tab la, ou chita, ou bagay, lè w ap bezwen, gen lwa bò tab la. Li tèlman gwo nèg, fò ou gen gwo savon w, fò ou gen on kivèt, fò ou gen pafen, fò ou gen sèvyèt beny. Lwa sa, anvan l manje, se pou ou kite l, ou kite l lave figi l, lave tout kò li, savonnen l, epi chèche l, flite l ak pafen. W ap toujou nan avantaj, depi y ap manje, tout lwa kanpe kote ou.

N. Yes, the Marasa, well, and then you have a question about things that are called tables, his birthday tables. His birthday table is a thing you will offer, a table with drinks all over it, a large cake, large biscuits, great things, large amounts of champagne, and you will sing something called a thanksgiving song; you will employ the text, L’ange conducteur, you will speak a lot of Latin at this table, and at the end, to call the lwa you need the table, and for all the lwa to cover the table, you sit, you do your thing, when you need them there are lwa near the table. The lwa is such an important man, you have to have your large soap, you have to have a tub, you have to have perfume, you have to have a bathing towel. This lwa, before he eats, you must let him, you let him wash his face, wash his entire body, soap and dry himself, spray himself with perfume. You will always have the advantage, as long as they are eating, all of the lwa stand beside you.

H.C. Kiyès ki chèf la nan mitan yo? H.C. Who is the leader among them?
N. Lwa blan an?

B. Kiyès ki lwa blan?

N. Se non li, granmoun yo fè lwa a, wi, lwa blan li menm se yon lwa ki pa manje menm kote ak tout lwa; sèvis mèt fèt, laksyon de gras se pou l manje e apre sa se on mouton, avè poul blan e pijn pou pral manje apre sèvis fini, eh? Ou prepare sèvis li apre. Pase l pa manje anpami moun, li menm pase tout lwa mèt ap manje, li menm, blan rete ap gade.

B. Lè n ap fè yon sèvis èske n ap fè li pou yon grenn lwa oubyen èske n ap fè li pou plizyè oubyen èske sa depann de jou a?

N. Non, se on sèvis anivèsè, se pou tout nèt ou fè l; ou pa fè eksepsyon. Ou mèt yo pre, pase w apo manje yo, en, lwa pa manje yo; eh, w ap pral manje. Si lwa a monte sou mwen, li p ap goute manje pou ou, li p ap goute manje, non,

N. The white lwa?

B. Who is the white lwa?

N. That is his name, the adults made the lwa, yes, the white lwa himself is a lwa who doesn’t eat in the same place as the other lwa; a service may be in session, the thanksgiving is for him to eat; and after this there is a sheep, along with white chicken and pigeon to eat after the service ends, get it? You prepare his service after. He doesn’t eat among people, as for him, because all the lwa may be eating, he, the white stays watching.

B. When you are having a service are you doing it for a single lwa or are you doing it for many or does it depend on the day?

N. No, it is an anniversary service, you do it for all of them; you don’t make exceptions. You put them close, because you’re eating the food offerings, you know, lwa don’t eat them; rather, you’re going to eat. If the lwa mounts me, he or
li pa goute pou ou; se manje pèp la. she won’t taste the food for you, he or she
won’t taste the food, no, he or she doesn’t taste
for you; it’s the people’s food.

B. Pou fèt sa a ou prepare pou tout moun? B. Do you prepare this party for everyone?

N. Tout moun! N. Everyone!

B. Avèk lwa yo? B. With the lwa?

N. Wi, tout moun, chak vennkat (24) desanm. N. Yes, everyone, every twenty-fourth (24) of
December.

B. Gen moun ki vin bat tanbou ak chante? B. Are there people who come to beat drums
and sing?

N. Wi bat tanbou, chante. Y ape voye chante;
N. Yes beat drums, sing. They are singing
n ape chante, y ape voye chante, n ape chante,
songs; we are singing, they are singing songs,
sa k bezwen chante li gendwa chante—moun
we are singing, he or she who needs to sing, he
sa a—li chante dis chante, lòt la bezwen
or she may sing – this person – she sings ten
chante, li chante senk, lòt la vle chante, li
songs, the other needs to sing, he sings five, the
chante senk, lòt la vle chante li chante senk,
other one wants to sing, she sings five, the
eh? L ap mache, l ap moute anpil.
other one wants to sing, she sings five, huh? It
works out well, it soars high.
B. Kijan moun nan konnen li gen dwa konmanse chante pa l yo?

H.C. Lwa a ba l yo; lwa a ap di l ki chante pou li chante.

N. Wi, enhen, lwa a di l ki chante; avèk tou, si l bon e li konn chante, li di m ap voye tèl chante; li toujou chante yo, lwa a kontan ak chante a, li menm li konn di; n ap voye chante.

N. Tout moun ap chante.

B. E pou rit la? Gen anpil rit ki dèyè chante yo?

N. Bagèt, bagèt, si se akodeyon, se akodeyon, e rit Vodou an gendwa nan yon kote, akodeyon nan yon kote, konprann?

B. Lè ou pale de rit la, tankou yanvalou oubyen

B. How does a person know that he has the right to start his own songs?

H.C. The lwa gives it to them; the lwa will tell him which song to sing.

N. Yes, yeah, the lwa tells him which song; and also, if he is good and he knows the song, he says I will sing this song; he always sings them, the lwa is happy with the song; he himself, he usually says it; we’re singing the songs.

N. Everyone is singing.

B. And for the drum rhythms? Are there many rhythms that go with the songs?

N. Drum sticks, drum sticks, if it is an accordion, it’s the accordion, and the Vodou rhythm can be in a place, the accordion in a place, understand?

B. When you speak of rhythm, like yanvalou or
N. Yo voye tout nèt, nèt, nèt.

B. Lè yon moun tande yon chante èske li konnen trapde oke chante sa bezwen kata, oubyen chante sa bezwen kongo?

N. Wi, depi ou tande, depi kongo ap bagay li yo gentan derape chante kongo a anvan, eh, yo gendwa chante kongo a epi lè fini bagèt dekannte, eh, bagèt li pa menm jan ak tout bagay [...].

B. Pou nou menm, chante yo se bèlte, se selebrasyon, sa bay bon anbyans, men yo gen yon mesaj ladan yo. Pale mwen de mesaj yo; èske se yo menm ki gen enfòmasyon sou lwa yo.

N. Wi, wi, paske ou kapab Ogou, yo voye chante Ogou pou ou, yo ka voye yon lòt chanson pou ou tou, ki pa chante Ogou, yo kapab voye yon chanson Èzili pou ou. Men lè kata, oubyen kongo, ibo, nago?

N. They play them all, entirely, completely.

B. When a person hears a song do they know immediately that the song needs kata, or if the song needs kongo rhythms?

N. Yes, once you hear, once the kongo is doing its thing, they’ve already started the kongo song in advance, and, they can sing the kongo and next the drum sticks start rolling, you know, the drum sticks aren’t like anything else [...].

B. For us, the songs are beauty, they are celebration, it makes good ambiance, but they have a message. Talk to me about their message; is it those songs that have information about the lwa in them?

N. Yes, yes, because you can be an Ogou, they sing Ogou songs for you, they can sing you another song too, that is not an Ogou song, they can sing you an Èzili song. But when the
chantè yo wè yo pa chante chanson Èzili, bon, ou resevwa, yo danse ladan selon rit la ye. Ou danse ladann, alò pou lwa yo, ou voye chante Danbala, enben, gen on lòt, on chante ka vini, li pa pou Danbala, Danbala gen danse ladan. Li se yon bal ke li ye, alò yo patisipe nan tout, alò tout lwa yo, men se pa chanson yo yo sèlman bezwen chante pou l danse, ou voye nenpòt chante, li danse, konprann mwen? Men l fè ou konnen se Ogou ki te parèt; Èzili fò ou konnen se Èzili ki te parèt, Ibo fè ou konnen se Ibo ki te parèt, Azaka Mede fò ou konnen se Azaka Mede ki parèt, Bawon parèt, li di ou se Bawon ki parèt, men se pa sèlman chante Bawon pou ou wè sèlman, gen lòt chante, ou ka chante pou Bawon ka danse ladann.

B. Si w ap chante mizik ki dedye a Danbala, gen on bon chans Danbala pral monte chwal li?

N. Wi, li p ap pè monte y.
B. Oubyen w ap chante pou Bawon, se Bawon ki pral parèt.

N. Bawon pral parèt.

B. Men li posib si w ap chante pou Danbala men Legba parèt oubyen Èzili parèt pandan yon chante pou Ogoun?

N. Bon, koute mwen, lè mizik, lè kout bagèt marc, manman pase bò piti, pitit pase bò papa l; lè kout bagèt marc, pase tout lwa yo vini nan lè a, pase bagèt marc, e lwa k ap tonbe, se lè sa a ou pral di m ki lwa ou yo. E lè sa yo pral di m ki lwa nou ye; setadi, m konnen Èzili te parèt, Ogou te parèt, Danbala te parèt, Ibo te parèt, Bawon te parèt, Alegba te parèt, Gran Bwa te parèt, sa vle di tout lwa di m ki lwa yo ye. se lwa k ap mete devan anvan m chante chante li.

Epui pou Bawon kapab, si se Ogou obyen Bawon, se on wonm m t ap bay Bawon, m pral bay Bawon wonm ni, eh, epi yo fè yon chan pou Bawon, li fè bagay li, epi fini ou fini l, tout Lwa k ap mete devan anvan m chante chante li. 

B. Or you are singing for Bawon, it is Bawon who will appear.

N. Bawon will appear.

B. But is it possible, if you are singing for Danbala that Legba appears or Èzili appears during a song for Ogoun?

N. Well, listen to me, when the music, when the beat of the drum sticks mingle, mothers go to their children, children go to their fathers; when the beat of the drum mingles, it’s for all of the lwa to come at times like that. It’s at this time they will tell me which lwa they are; that is to say, I know Èzili appeared, Ogou appeared, Danbala appeared, Ibo appeared, Bawon appeared, Alegba appeared, Gran Bwa appeared, that is to say that all of the lwa tell me which lwa they are. It’s the lwa who will be in front of me before I sing their song. And for Bawon to be able to, if it is Ogou or the Bawon, it is a rum I would give the Bawon, I
lòt lwa yo, yo vini yo fè yo fè yon chan pou yo; will give Bawon his rum, you see, and they sing
sa k parèt la, si se yon gout gwòg yo, si se yon a song for Bawon, he does what he has to do,
kola w ap ba yo, ba yo, yo fè yon chan pou and as soon as you finish, all of the other lwa,
tout, konnya tout lwa tonbe nan won. Alò lwa they come and they make them make songs for
yo mele kounyeya. Enben ou fini respekte tout, them. Those that appear there, if it’s a taste of
ou fè yon chan pou yo, ou respekte tout, lò ou their grog, if it’s a cola you’re giving them, give
fini respekte tout epi lè sa tout lwa fôme nan it to them, they make a song for all, now all the
won, pou kounyeya la lwa ap danse ak tout, ou lwa start dancing. Then the lwa mix. When you wè?

B. Yon lòt bagay ki fè m kirye anpil se finish respecting all, you make a song for them,
konpòtman lwa yo oubyen chwal yo. Èske you respect them all, when you are finished
chak lwa gen yon konpòtman difera n lè li antre respecting all of them, at that time all of the lwa
nan chwal li? Dapre jan on moun ap danse form a circle, for now the lwa are dancing with
oubyen jan on moun ap aji, èske moun ki all the others, you see?
Vodwizan ka konnen san yo pa janm bay non
lwa a; èske yo ka di, oke, sa se Èzili, lè yo gade
mouvman li, jès li?

N. Non, se li k pou di ki lwa li ye. Pase fò m
B. Another thing that makes me very curious is
non, se li k pou di ki lwa li ye. Pase fò m
konpòtman lwa yo oubyen chwal yo. Èske
the lwa’s behavior or that of their horses. Does
chak lwa gen yon konpòtman difera n lè li antre
each lwa have a different behavior when he or
nan chwal li? Dapre jan on moun ap danse
she enters his or her horse? Based on how a
oubyen jan on moun ap aji, èske moun ki
person dances or acts, can a Vodouist tell
Vodwizan ka konnen san yo pa janm bay non
without giving the name of the lwa? Can they
lwa a; èske yo ka di, oke, sa se Èzili, lè yo gade
say, okay, this is Èzili, when they watch his or
mouvman li, jès li?
her movements, his or her gestures?

N. No, he or she has to say which lwa he or she
poze w yon kesyon, ou tonbe lakay mwen, fò ou di m ki moun ou ye. Fò ou di m se tèl lwa m ye. Epi m ba w on chanson pou tout tanbou yo reponn mwen epi pou yo frape pou li. Yo konn ki rit pou frape.

B. Konsa chak lwa pral anonse ki lwa li ye?

N. Wi. Ki lwa li ye, yo fè ochan pou li epi l pran ochan li e selon ochan ni sa na ap ba li a nou ba li, li resevwa mizik serye. Fini m fini, m pral poze yon lòt lwa kesyon. Pase se pa yon sèl lwa ki sou kont mwen, epi lwa a parèt la, li di se tèl lwa l ye epi mwen fè yo fè yon ochan pou li; kenbe la, lè fini, lè m fin resevwa tout lwa yo tout moun tonbe nan won, epi sèvis la ap manivre.

B. So every lwa’s horse will announce which lwa it is?

N. Yes. Which lwa it is, they make a song for him or her and he or she takes his or her song and, according to the song, we give him or her what we give him or her, he or she receives serious music. As soon as I am done, I will ask another lwa questions. Because I am not only responsible for one lwa, and the lwa appears here and says he or she is such lwa and I make them make a song for him or her; hold on for a bit, then, when I finish receiving all of the lwa, everyone starts dancing, and the service is going well.

B. Gen moun ki pa janm bwè pa egzanp gwòg...
oubyen kleren ki toujou monte tou. white rum, for example, who are still mounted as well?

N. Bon, gen tafya, sa ap ban m traka; m ba l on gwôg plis epi li sou, m a mennen l kouche. N. Well, there is alcohol, that gives me trouble; I give him some more grog and he is drunk, I will lead him aside to sleep.

B. Konsa ou menm ou pa tèlman apresye si yon moun twò sou epi li gen yon lwa? B. So you yourself, you don’t really appreciate it if a person is too drunk and he has a lwa?

N. Non! Non, non, non, m ap mete yo kouche, kite moun ki djanm; depi kò ou pa djanm, al repoze ou, lè w refè w a vini, en? Lè ou refè w a vini. Kounye a ou sou, m p ap kite ou al nan sa, non; m kwè, ou sou! Se tafya ou bwè. N. No! No, no, no, I will put them to rest, let people who are strong dance; once your body is not strong, go and rest, when you are better, you’ll come back, right? When you are better you’ll come back. Right now you are drunk, I will not let you go into this, no; I believe, you are drunk! You drank alcohol.

B. Men yon ti gout p ap anpeche yon moun gen lwa? B. But a small taste won’t hinder a person from having a lwa?

N. Non, non, non. Wi, wi, wi. N. No, no, no. Yes, yes, yes.

B. Gen yon fim sou omoseksyèl ki pratike B. There is a film on homosexuals who practice
Vodou; gen kèk moun ki di Vodou pi toleran pase lòt relijyon, sa ou wè nan koze sa?

Vodou; there are several people who say that Vodou is more tolerant than other religions, what do you see in this issue?

N. Se moun sa yo ki gen lwa ki rele Jeneral Piman sou yo. Lwa sou yo a rele Jeneral Piman, setadi lwa sa, se yon lwa dezaltarab ke lwa sa ye. Pase se yon lwa ki ka rive la li fè san mande; lwa sa gen dwa sou chwal li, li fè sa san mande sou gason parèy li; li se on gason, li gen lwa a sou li, li fè san mande sou gason parèy li a.

N. It’s these people who have the lwa General Piman on them. The lwa on them is called General Piman, that is to say this lwa is a changing lwa. Because it’s a lwa that can arrive here, he acts without permission; this lwa has control of his horse, he does this without asking his male counterparts; it is a boy, he is possessed by a lwa, he does it without the permission of the guy he has mounted.

B. San mande?

B. Without asking?

N. Wi l met men sou li.

N. Yes he puts his hands on him.

B. Se yon lwa ki fè l fè sa?

B. Is it a lwa that makes him do that?

N. Yon lwa. Lwa sa a rele Jeneral Piman.

N. A lwa. That lwa is called General Piman.

Enben li k sou menm fòm madivinèz yo tou.

Well, it’s in the same form for lesbians too.

Enben, se yo menm tou ki gen yon fòs gangan sou yo; si yo parèt la menm on bouldòg Vodou priesthood on them; if they appear here,
gendwa pa vle sòti, pase se masisi sa yo. Pase lè ou rive nan Fètan, Vilbònè, bagay sa dèyè a, Fètan, Ti Sentàn, ey, se masisi sèlman ou wè ak manbo ak divinèz, se yo menm. Pase ou wè, yo danse pase tout moun, en, yo chante pase tout moun, yo bay pi gwo jès pase tout moun, yo menm, lè y ap fè jès pa yo, se laray pou ou wè bagay sa, en, epi tèt yo mare, yo fè perik, yo fè ke l, ou wè cheve yo bat li pou yo mete l kako, ou pa konn si se gason tounen fanm, fanm tounen gason. Si yon fanm yo mete kalson, tout gason yo tou yo mete kako. Men sa di ke se masisi yo tout met kako, tout, tout fanm ki madivinèz la yo met pantalon, sa di li pa mete kako li menm, se pantalon li ye; se fanm li ye, li tounen gason; se gason li ye, se madivinèz li ye. even a bulldog wouldn’t want to come out, because of those gays. Because when you arrive at places like Fètan, Vilbònè, those places back there, Fètan, Ti Sentàn, hey, it’s only gays that you see and Vodou priestesses and lesbians, it is them. Because you see, they dance better than everyone else, you know, they sing better than everyone else, they give bigger gestures than everyone else, they themselves, when they are making their own gestures, it is out of this world for you to see that stuff, you know, and their heads are covered with headscarves, they put on wigs, they make a pony tail, you see their hair, they straighten it so that they can wear it attractively, you don’t know if it’s a male who turned into a female, or a female who turned into a male. If a woman puts on male underwear, all males will also put on dresses. But this means that the gays all put on dresses, all the women who are lesbians wear pants, this means they don’t wear dresses themselves, it’s pants. She is a woman, she turns into a boy. He is a male, he turns into a lesbian.
B. Gen masisi nan tout peyi a?

N. Nan tout bò sa, Miragwàn nan. Miragwàn chaje, Miragwàn chaje! O! Se al yon kote ki rele Tì Chòdyè sou Bèlè! Si ou wè madivinèz avèk masisi byen la; madivinèz bati kay, li mete fanm nan kay la, li marye ak fanm. Masisi a met gason nan kay la, li marye ak gason an. La Tì Chòdyè nan Miragwàn.

B. Are there gays in the entire country?

N. In this entire area, Miragwàn. Miragwàn is full of them, Miragwàn is packed! Oh! Go to a place called Tì Chòdyè sou Bèlè! If you see lesbians and gays, they are comfortable there; lesbians build houses, she puts women in her house, she marries a woman. Gays put a male in their house, he marries the man. There in Tì Chòdyè in Miragwàn.

B. If I understand well, you are saying that they have their own community?

N. Because the place called Tì Chòdyè, once you get there, what you will find there, you will find gays, you will find lesbians, and the oungan who lives there, if he is a gay, he will stay there, because I tell you accurately that the greatest oungan in Miragwàn, he is the biggest gay.

B. Regarding the number of lwa in your tradition, is there a number or is it such a great quantity that you can’t count them?
N. 251 nasyon rasin Ginen ki la nan kan mwen an. Bò manman, bò papa.

B. Ki jan ou konnen se nimewo sa yo? Ou te ekri non yo epi konte yo?

N. Sa rele twoup. E, lè ou tolere lwa sa pèmèt lwa fè ou fè tenten, en, epi l pa konn manje pitit moun, l ap manje pitit ou, passe si ou tolere l twòp, lwa, ou gen on mezi pou ou pran avè l.


N. 251 nations of the roots of Ginen who are here on my side. On my mother’s side, on my father’s side.

B. How do you know these numbers? Did you write their names down and count them?

N. They are called a troupe. And, when you tolerate lwa this allows the lwa to make you act stupidly, you see, and even if he or she isn’t known to eat people’s children, he or she will eat your children, because if you tolerate him or her excessively, the lwa, you have a measure to take with him or her. You baked a sweet potato, you must bake two, you eat one, lay one there, when it’s cold later you eat it. He or she lets you eat it, you know. You boil a few plantains, you need to boil only five; you always reserve only one, he or she was in the path, he or she will pass, it will take a bit, that means he or she will eat at all times, that is to say, he or she is never hungry, you see, as you aren’t mean to him or her, he or she won’t be mean. You
T.K. Si mwen vle konmanse an Vodou, kisa m bezwen fè?

N. Bon, pou koumanse, apenn de koumanse, èske ou ta retouve yon je mistik? Si ou bezwen konmanse, apre ou fin konmanse, ou pral twouve ou resevwa yon je mistik. Se ta grese, o premye moman, ou fè yon pwomès. Après ou fin fè pwomès ou pral fè yon bagay ki rele resevwa, sa se lè w ou fè yon bagay, epi ou depoze nan yon pozisyon epi ou ankadre yo, en, epi ou fè yon bwat ki rele ogatwa; w ap mete ogatwa ou on kote. W al fè chôdyè pa ou, kit Majou, kit Ma Sen Jak, gen Ma Èzili ou, ou mete ladann ni epi ou achte yon kivèt blan, asyèt blan ou, gwo savon ou, pou met la, pou ou mete l la epi toujou gen dlo la. Aprezan kounyeya ou prale fè yon ti lanp letènèl, ou pral mete kote ou ape resevwa a epi moun ki konn priyè, bagay sa yo, l ap priyè ou, liv yo epi always leave something for her or him, you see?

But once you don’t give to him or her, at some point he or she will be fed up.

T.K. If I want to begin practicing Vodou, what do I need to do?

N. Well, to start, just after starting, would you find mystical abilities? If you need to start, after you finish starting, you will find that you receive mystical abilities. It would be greased, at the first moment, if you would make a promise.

After you finish making a promise you will do something called receiving, that is when you make something, and you lay it in a position and you frame it, you see, and you make a box called the ogatwa; you will put your ogatwa in a place. You will make your pot, whether it is Majou, whether it is Ma Sen Jak, there is your Ma Èzili, you put them inside of it and you buy a white tub, your white plates, your big bar of soap, to put there, for you to put there and always have water there. After this now, you will light a small eternal lamp, put it where you
priyè lanj. Kou ou al dòmi epi mistik ou
bezwen pral vin pal avè ou. Landmendijou lè
ou leve epi tab sa a, ou te fè resevwa, se ou
menm ki pral konn sa w ap fè si w ap sèvi,
konprann mwen, w ap bwè, w ap simen, w ap
pran yon ti simay, w ap remet men ou nan on
asyèt pou fè on ti simay epi lè fini ou ap
resevwa bagay sa yo. Sa di ou gentan wè tout
bagay. Yo gen lwa k ap vin di ou mèsi, wi m
wè w fè tout bagay, mwen renmen ou, m
kontan e m di ou mèsi epi m wè tèl bagay ou
bezwen epi mwen menm m nan plas la, nenpòt
lè ou bezwen m w a rele m. Ou annik al nan
ogatwa a, ou fè sa w ap fè a vreman, men
toujou depoze yon boutèy wonm nan ogatwa
ou, on boutèy chanpay, bagay sa yo, nenpòt lè
mistik la bezwen reklame bagay yo.

are receiving and the person who knows how
to pray, and those things, he will pray on you,
the books and angel prayers. Once you go to
sleep, the mystical forces you need will come to
talk to you. On the next day, when you get up,
this table that you made and received, you will
know what you are doing if you are serving,
understand me, you will drink, you will scatter,
you will take a small sowing, you will put your
hands onto a plate to make a small sowing and
when you are done you will receive these
things. This means that you have already seen
everything; there are some lwa that will come
and thank you, yes I see you’ve done all the
things, I like you, I am happy and I tell you
thank you and I see such things that you need
and I myself am in the place, any time you need
me, you’ll call me. You just go in the ogatwa,
you do what you are doing, but always place a
bottle of rum in your ogatwa, a bottle of
champagne, those things, any time the mystical
force needs to demand those things.

B. E tout moun ki nan mistik yo gen ogatwa?
B. And all of the mystic people, do they have
N. Wi.

H.C. Ou menm, ou gen ogatwa?

N. Non, mwen menm mwen gen pewon. M dan lefon mistik; se moun ki pokò nan nivo sa ki gen ogatwa, se rale yo pokò rale. Bon, mwen menm, m gentan prepare onz divinò. M gentan prepare onz oungan, m prepare onz oungan. M prepare yo, m fè yo.

B. Kounyeya yo nan peyi a, y ap pratike?

N. Y ap travay, mwen k prepare yo, mwen k fè yo. Yo vini m fonksyonn anè yo, li gen konsiy mwen, epi yo prepare ak mwen. M ba yo yon pyès al sou tèl maladi, pran sa, fè sa, pran sa, fè sa, epi lè ou vini maladi a pa pi mal. Maladi a vin kote m, m mande si ou an sante, maladi a di li pa pi mal. Epi m mande yo, bay maladi a yon beny lò pou mwen; li bay maladi a

N. Yes.

H.C. You yourself, do you have an ogatwa?

N. No, I myself I have an altar. I am in the mystical depths; it is the people who are not at this level yet who have an ogatwa, they don’t even crawl yet. Well, me myself, I have already prepared eleven oungan. I prepared eleven oungan. I prepared them, I made them.

B. Right now, are they in the country, are they practicing?

N. They are working, I prepared them, I made them. They came and I worked with them, they have my counsel, and they prepared with me. I gave them a job to go to this sick person, take this, do that, take this, do that, and when you come the illness isn’t that bad. The ill come to me, I ask if you’re in good health, the sick says he isn’t that bad. And I ask them to give the
yon beny. M gen moun ki relbete, aprezan ke yo wè liv la, si se yon bèt ki mòde l, ki koupe fè o! Lè m pran liv mwen, m fè sa pou m fè sou maladi a. Setadi ke mwen pran liv mwen, m fè priyè sou li; lè fini m fini, si se priyè m ap ekri, m boule bwa l bwè, m met men sou li epi fin m fini, m di bon kounyeya ou menm se ou k ap priyè trètman ou. Alò pou ankou ra je li, li fè priyè trètman li. Yo ba li ti kòb li, li degaje li; sa di l konmanse pran lajan oungan gou. Lè l ap kontinye l plis, pou l fè pi gwo trètman toujou, se konsa m prepare yo. Men mwen menm, mwen dispoze mwen, depi moun nan se pa on moun ki oungan, se on manbo ki prepare ou.

sick a bath here for me; he gives the sick a bath. I have people who are out of their mind, at the moment they see the book, if it is an animal that bit them, oh that cuts iron! When I take my book, I do what I have to do on the sick. That is to say that I take my book, I pray on the sick; when I am done, if I am writing prayers, I burn wood, he drinks, I put my hand on him and once I am done, I say, well, now you will pray for your own treatment. Then, to encourage him, he makes a prayer for the patient's treatment. They give him some money, he makes his way. That means he's getting an appetite for the oungan’s pay. When he continues it further, to make an even bigger treatment, this is how I prepare them. But me myself, I am available, if the person is not an oungan, it’s a manbo who prepares you.

B. Konben tan sa pran pou yon moun pran fòmasyon oungan? Èske sa depann de moun nan?

N. Non, sa depann konesans ou menm nan.

B. How much time does it take for a person to become an oungan? Does this depend on the person?

N. No, this depends on what you know.
B. Alò w ap tann pou nenpòt moun ki pran antrènman nan men ou pou l gen bon konesans nan menm nivo avè ou?

N. Wi, paske etan lwa m ap toujou ba ou on ti fòs epi ou al eseye fè yon kou. Kou a mache. Kou l fè on lòt kou, li mache, jiska m pral kanpo a epi m pral diplome ou tou. M pral konmanse diplome ou pou ou konprann ke ou gen fòs ou, pou ou degaje ou puiske mwen di ou. Mwen toujou di ou, lè ou rive on kote, ou wè oungan sou maladi, yo rele yo sou li, li p ap arete, pa sou maladi a. Si yo gen mò vandredi a yo pral mete l lakay ba w. W a trete l lakay ou. Pinga ou janm wè on oungan se yon maladi li pral adrès ou. De kòk pa konn mare nan yon sèl pikèt.

N. Yes, because of the lwa I am always giving you a little power and you go to have a try. It works. When he tries another time, it works, until I’m relaxed and I’m going to graduate you, too. I will start your graduation so that you can understand that you have a power on you, so that you can try your best once I tell you. I always tell you, when you arrive at a place, if you see an oungan working with a sick person, they call him to the patient; he won’t stop, not on the sick. If they have a death on Friday they will put him at your home. You will treat him at your home. You should never think that an oungan will make you sick. You can’t tie two roosters on one stake.

B. Èske gangan konn pataje konesans yo ak lòt gangan?

B. Then you are waiting for any person who takes training from you to have good knowledge at your same level?

B. Are gangan known to share their knowledge with other gangan?
N. Mwen konn pataje konesans mwen ba moun. Men oungan yo tèlman konprann afè lajan yo. Mwen menm m renmen pou yon bout m manje, m ta renmen yo manje tou; se sa ki lakòz ki fè lè yon moun mande m e m toujou montre ou li. Demen, si Bondye vle, sa va itil mwen. Se ak konesans sa ou al sove fanm nan.

Men lòt la pa konn sa li menm, li bezwen li menm se li k sèl grenn ki pou viv, men bouch pe pa fè anyen. M pa konsa. Se sa ki lakòz mwen menm mwen deja pi mal pase yo, de jou yo gen machin, yo gen gwo milèt yo men mwen m ap mache a pye. Men an reyalite, apye pa m nan pa di anyen. M ap pati, m ap rive, men yo menm, nan kouri rive, yo tonbe.

B. Kote ou te jwenn lespri pataj sa a?

N. Enben lespri pataj sa a li menm se depi sou zansèt mwen yo, pase manman m li menm te konn rive kèk kote, moun ap kriye de kriye, moun grangou li pral mennen manje pou bay

B. Where did you find this sharing spirit?

N. Well this sharing spirit was from my ancestors, because my mother herself, she arrived at some places, people were weeping and gnashing their teeth, people were hungry,
timoun nan manje. Li malad, yo pa gen anyen a goute. Papa m li menm, li te konn gen yon sè l ki manje lakay li, pou manman l gen dis pitit li pa ka bay yo manje. Papa m te gen dis tou. Li pataje manje avè l. Ou wè, zansèt mwen yo, se konsa yo te viv.

B. Èske mouvman rasin nan vin pi laj oubyen pi piti an Ayiti?

N. Laj non, rasin nan vin pi laj. Sa k fè rasin nan vin pi laj, gen houngan, gen mafètou, gen malfèktè, tout moun vle oungan kounyeya.

B. M konn tande pale de jan Vodwizan konn sèvi avèk imaj Sen yo, Sen Jak, Sen Gregwa, elatriye, kote sa soti?

N. Sa di ke pòtre imaj sa yo soti pa anj! Pa anj piske ou wè gen imaj ki Sent Àn, gen k Sent Ridas, gen yon pakèt, ou pa janm wè l nan

B. Has the roots movement become larger or smaller in Haiti?

N. Larger indeed, the roots movement has become larger. What made the roots movement grow, there are oungan, there are imitation oungan, there are criminals, everyone wants to be an oungan now.

B. I have heard about how Vodouists serve with images of the Saints, Saint James, Saint Gregory, etc., where does this come from?

N. This means that these portrait images come from angels! From angels since you see there are images of Saint Anne, there are those of
legliz, ou wè l sou bwat ogatwa yon moun, ah!  
Saint Ridas, there are many, you never see them  
in Church, you see them on the ogatwa box a  
person has, ha!

B. Men imaj sa yo soti nan legliz, petèt lontan,  
B. But these images come from the Church,  
e petèt legliz katolik an Ayiti pa vle mete imaj  
maybe from long ago, and maybe the Catholic  
sa yo sou mi legliz pase yo pa vle moun ki nan  
Church in Haiti doesn’t want to put these  
legliz panse legliz ap ankouraje sa.  
images on the walls of the Church because they  
don’t want people who are in the Church to  
think the Church is encouraging this.

N. Men isi se lanj; isit se lanj ki reklame imaj sa  
N. But here they are angels; here it is angels  
yo, se Sent Àn, se Sent Iridas, se Nòtre Dam  
who claim these images, it is Saint Anne, it is  
de Pèpetyèl Sekou, Nòtre Dam de Loud, se yo  
Saint Iridas, it is Our Lady of Perpetual  
menm ki nan imaj sa yo ki sou otèl isit.  
Support, Our Lady of Lourdes, it is they who  
are in these images on the altar here.

B. Lè yon moun wè yon imaj ak Sen Jak Majè  
B. When a person sees a picture of Saint James  
sou chwal li avèk tout nepe li, yo wè Sen Jak  
the Major on his horse with his sword, do they  
oubyen yo wè Ogou oubyen yo wè toulede?  
see Saint James or do they see Ogou, or do they  
see both?

N. Bon, tout. Koute, Sen Jak la li menm, se on  
N. Well, all. Listen, Saint James himself, he is  
Ogou li ye, men li reprezante yon mèt, sa k fè  
an Ogou, but he represents a master, what
B. Li konmande Ogou yo?
N. Wi, se li ki konmande Ogou yo, sa se chèf latwoup, se chèf latwoup li ye li menm. Sa di, bann al déyè do li epi raso l nan men li, l ap pote bann li, se li k do a, se li k chèf.

B. Lè ou di Ogou yo, w ap pale de sèt yo. E sèt Ogou yo, yo chak genyen kalite diferan?
N. Diferan, wi. Gen Ogoun Kafou wi, gen Ogou Badagi, gen Ogou Feray, gen Ogou Chango, gen Ogoun Balize, gen Ogou Fe, gen Sen Jak Majè ki fè sèt Ogou.

B. Ou konnen tout sèt lwa yo ki mache ak chak Sen?
B. Ou konnen tout sèt lwa yo ki mache ak chak Sen?

sa se li k konmande Ogou yo, li gen plis fôs, makes this is that he commands the Ogou, he makes this is that he commands the Ogou, he
Sen Jak la gen plis fôs. has more power, Saint James has more power. has more power, Saint James has more power.

B. He commands the Ogou?
N. Yes, it is he who commands the Ogou, this is the head of the troupe; he is the very head of the band. That means that his group follows him and his whip is in his hand, he is carrying his group, it is he who is in charge, he is the leader.

B. When you say the Ogou, you are talking about the seven? And the seven Ogou, are they each different kinds?
N. Different, yes. There is indeed Ogoun Kafou, there is Ogou Badagi, there is Ogou Feray, there is Ogou Chango, there is Ogoun Balize, there is Ogou Fe, and there is Saint James the Major which makes seven Ogou.

B. Do you know all the seven lwa which correspond with every Saint?
N. M konnen yo, pa kè.  

B. E ou konnen relasyon yo?  

N. M konn relasyon yo, wi, yo maryl, yo mel ak lòt, pwason kraze nan bouyon. Lwa sa yo menm, se lwa ki toujou la.  

B. Lwa kapab maryl epi fè yon fanmi tou? Tankou èske Danbala kapab maryl?  


B. “Granmèt” tankou mo yo sèvi pou Bondye nan Legliz la?  

N. Non, Bondye li menm o pli o degré, eh.  

N. I know them, by heart.  

B. And do you know their relationships?  

N. I know their relationships, yes, they are married, they mix with one another, they are very good friends. These very lwa, are lwa who are always here.  

B. Lwa can marry and have a family too? Like, can Danbala marry?  

N. Yes, since, Danbala is himself, his wife is Rèn Siyèt. Rèn Siyèt is indeed a major lwa. Rèn Siyèt is a really, really, really major lwa. You see Jezabèl, it’s her. It is she who is called the great ruler of the earth.  

B. “Granmèt” like the word they use for God in the Church?  

N. No, God himself is at the highest level, you know.
B. Pou ou menm, Bondye konmande tout lwa yo?

N. O pli o degre, konprann, nonm sa a, li menm, wa latè a, li di ou li rele granmèt, eh?

Men li menm, Bondye li menm, li gen on lòt non li menm, eh? Sa se Pè Selès li rele li menm.

Alò, moun sa yo yo lage on non ba yo. Yo rele tèt yo granmèt, se granmèt yo ye, y ap konmande tè yo, puiske se li menm ki te rejete yo, pa de Akanj, Akanj Michèl ak Akanj de Limyè. Akanj Michèl ak Akanj de Limyè, se de Akanj sa yo ki t ap kondi de twoup, lè l t ap kondi de twoup anlè a, epi chak maten, Akanj Michèl di, twoup pare a, se pou tout Bondye a vin salwe l kote l chita. Akanj de Limyè di l non, se Bondye li pral salwe li menm, epi li di, bon, nou menm nou p ap rete la, li pran twoup pa l la, li al bati yon ti kay sou tèt Bondye. Bondye voye Akanj de Limyè li di l al kraze ti kay nonm sa a fè anlè a menm. Li pran on ti poto l rekraze li epi anmenmtan li ba misye sa yo yon bourad lage atè. [...]

B. For you, does God command all of the lwa?

N. At the highest level, understand, this man, he himself, the king of the Earth, he tells you he is called great master, you know? But he himself, God himself, he has another name, you know? He is called Celestial Father. Then, these people they let loose a name on themselves. They call themselves great master, they are great masters, they command their lands, because it was he who rejected them, not the Archangels, Archangel Michael and the Archangel of Light. Archangel Michael and the Archangel of the Light were two Archangels who were leading two troupes, when he was leading two troupes up there, and every morning, Archangel Michael said, troupe be ready, it is necessary for God to come and greet him where he sat. The Archangel of the Light told him no, it was God he would greet himself, and he said, well, as for us, we will not stay here, he took his troupe, he went and built a
house above the head of God. God sent for the Archangel of Light, he told him go and break the house that this man has made right above. He took his wood post and he broke it again and at the same time he gave those misters a shove to the earth. [...]