"Iko Iko"—traditional New Orleans Mardi Gras Indian call and response song

Recorded as "Jockamo" or "Jock-A-Mo" by James "Sugar Boy" Crawford and the Cane Cutters (from New Orleans) on Chess Records in1953. Crawford once explained, "Jock-A-Mo' came from two songs that I used to hear the Mardi Gras Indians sing. When I was growing up I lived near the Battle Field where the Indians paraded on Mardi Gras Day."

My grammaw and your grammaw were sittin' by the bayou my grammaw tole yo gramma I'm gonna set you flag On fiyo

talk about hey now (Hey now!)
Hey now (Hey now!)
Iko iko anday
Jockomo feena andan day
Jockomo feena-hay! <sup>2</sup>

[alternate lyrics]
My spy boy to your spy boy,
They were sittin' along the bayou,
My spy boy to your spy boy,
I'm gonna set your tail on fire.

My Grandma to your Grandpa Sittin on' the bayou My Grandma to your Grandpa Gonna fix your chicken wire. <sup>3</sup>

"Iko Iko" recorded by the Dixie Cups (from New Orleans), Red Bird Records (New York 1965). Their version "features percussion performed on metal chairs and a Coca-Cola bottle similar to the Indians' style. The complex rhythm has been part of the Mardi Gras Indians' heritage for well over 100 years."

My grandma and your grandma Were sittin' by the fire. My grandma told your grandma: "I'm gonna set your flag on fire."

Chorus
Takin bout hey now, hey now
Iko! Iko! an de'
Jackomo fe no nan e'
Jackomo fe nan e' 5

Chorus [alternate transcription]: Talkin' 'bout: Hey now! Hey now! Iko, Iko, unday Jockamo feeno ai nané.

Jockamo fee nané. 6

Look at my King all dressed in red. Iko, Iko, unday. I bet you five dollars he kill you dead. Jockamo fee nané *Chorus*:

My flagboy and your flagboy Were sittin' by the fire. My flagboy told your flagboy: "I'm gonna set your flag on fire." Chorus:

See that guy all dressed in green? Iko, Iko, unday. He's not a man; He's a lovin' machine. Jockamo fee nané. *Chorus*:

Sybil Kein: "Interpreting Indian Chants"—a study of New Orleans Black "Indian" Mardi Gras chants, based on the Yoruba tradition of voodoo, Social Science History Association, New Orleans (1991)

## transcribes "Iko Iko":

Eh na, Eh na Ayku Ayku nday Ja ku mo fee na am dahn day Ja ku (ki) mo fee nday

## Yoruba/Creole:

enòn enòn Aìku Aìku nde Jacouman Fi na ida – n – de Jacouman Fi na dè

## English:

Code language!
God is watching
Jacouman causes it; we will be emancipated
Jacouman urges it; we will wait.

<sup>1</sup> http://www.houstonculture.org/laproject/indians.html

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> http://www.offbeat.com/text/davell.html

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> http://www.everydaycompanion.com/lyrics/songs/iko\_iko.asp

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> http://www.houstonculture.org/laproject/indians.html

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> http://www.mardigrasdigest.com/Media/Radio/Iko\_Iko.htm

<sup>6</sup> http://www.guntheranderson.com/v/data/ikoiko.htm