

B/N

REYNOLDS, Mallica

Song and Dance Worship 'Breaks

the Barrier'

'Pocomania'

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— A Jamaican Artist's

Wild Religion

NEW YORK — (AP) — Dancing, singing and breathing heavily to overoxidize their blood, the worshipers gradually work themselves into a trance-like peak of exultation.

That's when "the barrier is broken," says Mallica (Kapo) Reynolds, a Jamaican artist and the high priest of a religion called Pocomania.

"It's when we're delivered of our darkness, our load, and we're free. We're free to speak and we see the light and the weight is gone. It's the moment of spiritual revelation."

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KAPO, as he is called by his followers, was here for an exhibition of his sculpture and paintings at the Center for Inter-American Relations, garbed in his varicolored robe and turban, carrying his tall shepherd's crook.

"Our religion is spiritual, the old-time religion of Christ and the Apostolic age," he said. "We don't believe in sitting in church and letting the pastor do all the preaching and praying. The unity with God comes when the

people find what's in themselves and show it."

Pocomania, a name given to the faith by its devotees, means a sort of holy madness or release from ordinary mortal shackles. It was started by Kapo, which means leader, when was a young man. He's now 57.

"The spirit overflowed in me at the age of 12," he said, and he began preaching at once. At first in regular churches, but in about five years he developed his own following, with their rapturous ways.

IN THEIR RITES seeking a close communion with the divine, he said, there is clapping, gyrating and shouting.

"It makes us happy," he said. "There's a feeling of joy that God is with us and is doing something good in the world."

He said that at the moment of breaking-the-barrier, a sort of semiconscious blissful state, "we know that man is not alone, that Gods dwells in us and is moving in us."

"It's a time when believers are inspired to "speak in


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tongues," he said. "Even the uneducated are able to speak as if they were educated when that power is on, to tell about Christ and how to live."

They also give forth with what Kapo calls "the spiritual sound," a kind of deep-bodied "hmmph," or groan, which he said stems from the groan of Jesus in distress over the dead Lazarus in his tomb.

Kapo, now acclaimed in Jamaica and by many art lovers in this country for his painting and sculpture, said his artwork derives from religious inspiration.

"I pray. It comes up out of the spirit," he said.

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WHEN HE FIRST started turning out his unusual works in wood and stone, with their aura of mysticism, many Jamaicans, including some of his own followers, strongly objected, he said, accusing him of practicing voodoo.

"Now everybody is doing this kind of thing," he said. "They like it now."

Some Jamaican churches also used to be critical of his particular approach to Christianity.

"They believed I was violating God's laws with this kind of art," he said. "It was strange to them." Twice they had him arrested and fined. But that attitude has also undergone a turnabout.

"They were against it at first," he said. "But since I've become popular, everybody's my friend."

He was in New York with his wife, Norma, and their young daughter, Christine Marjorita.

In West Kingston, Jamaica, he maintains a combination studio and church, where worshippers gather on Sunday evenings, dressed in bright multi-colored gowns, for their ardent services. There are about 300 members.

The religion he leads has resemblances to American Pentecostalism with its emphasis on exuberance and glossolalia (tongues). But, he said, it also is akin to ancient mystery cults, whose heady ritual induced trances.

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