

ŞÀNGÓ

*in Africa and the
African Diaspora*



EDITED BY JOEL E. TISHKEN,
TOYIN FÁLÓLÁ, AND
AKÍNTÚNDÉ AKINYEMÍ

ŞÀNGÓ

*in Africa and
the African Diaspora*

EDITED BY JOEL E. TISHKEN,
TÓYÌN FÁLỌLÁ, AND
AKÍNTÚNDÉ AKÍNYEMÍ



Indiana University Press
Bloomington and Indianapolis

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ix

- ONE. Introduction / JOEL E. TISHKEN, TÓYÌN FÁLQILÁ, AND AKÍNTÚNDÉ AKÍNYEMÍ 1

PART ONE. DEFINING ŞÀNGÓ IN WEST AFRICA

- TWO. The Place of Şàngó in the Yorùbá Pantheon / AKÍNTÚNDÉ AKÍNYEMÍ 23
- THREE. The Practice and Worship of Şàngó in Contemporary Yorùbáland / ARÌNPÉ GBÉKÉLÓLÚ ADÉJÚMÒ 44
- FOUR. Şàngó's Èḡrindinlógún Divinatory System / GEORGE OLÚŞOLÁ AJÍBÁDÉ 63
- FIVE. Yorùbá Thunder Deities and Sovereignty: Àrá versus Şàngó / MARC SCHILTZ 78

PART TWO. REPRESENTATIONS OF ŞÀNGÓ IN ORAL AND WRITTEN POPULAR CULTURES

- SIX. Şàngó and the Elements: Gender and Cultural Discourses / DIEDRE L. BÀDÉJÒ 111
- SEVEN. Reconfiguration of Şàngó on the Screen / DÚRÓTOYÈ A. ADÉLÉKÉ 135
- EIGHT. Art in the Service of Şàngó / STEPHEN FOLÁRÀNMI 157

- NINE. The Ambivalent Representations of *Şàngó* in Yorùbá Literature / AKÍNTÚNDÉ AKÍNYEMÍ 187

PART THREE. *ŞÀNGÓ* IN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

- TEN. The Cultural Aesthetics of *Şàngó* Africanization / KAMARI MAXINE CLARKE 213
- ELEVEN. Wither *Şàngó*? An Inquiry into *Şàngó*'s "Authenticity" and Prominence in the Caribbean / STEPHEN D. GLAZIER 233
- TWELVE. *Xangó* in Afro-Brazilian Religion: "Aristocracy" and "Syncretic" Interactions / LUIS NICOLAU PARÉS 248
- THIRTEEN. The Literary Manifestation of *Xangó* in Brazil: Esmeralda Ribeiro's "A procura de uma borboleta preta" / LAURA EDMUNDS 273
- FOURTEEN. Drums of *Şàngó*: *Bátá* Drum and the Symbolic Reestablishment of *Ọyó* in Colonial Cuba, 1817-1867 / HENRY B. LOVEJOY 284

PART FOUR. THE VOICES OF *ŞÀNGÓ* DEVOTEES

- FIFTEEN. *Şàngó* beyond Male and Female / OLÓYÈ ÀÌNÁ ỌLỌMỌ 311
- SIXTEEN. Searching for Thunder: A Conversation about *Changó* / MICHAEL ATWOOD MASON AND ERNESTO PICHARDO 323

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS 339

BIBLIOGRAPHY 343

INDEX 359

Acknowledgments

Chapter 5 originally appeared as Marc Schiltz, "Yoruba Thunder Deities and Sovereignty: Ara versus Sango," *Anthropos* 80, nos. 1-3 (1985): 67-84.

Portions of chapter 10 appear in Kamari Maxine Clarke, *Mapping Yoruba Networks: Power and Agency in the Making of Transnational Communities*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004.

Chapter 12 has also been printed as Luis Nicolau Parés, "Shango in Afro-Brazilian Religion: 'Aristocracy' and 'Syncretic' Interactions." *Religiões e Societá* 54 (2006): 20-39.

Introduction

JOEL E. TISHKEN, TÓYÌN FÁLỌLÁ
AND AKÍNTÚNDÉ AKÍNYEMÍ

There are not many deities in the world that are truly international in the scope of their worship. The Yorùbá *òrìṣà* Ṣàngó is one such deity. Worshipers of Ṣàngó may be found everywhere the Yorùbá people have had a cultural or demographic influence, and even beyond. Such influence encompasses several nations of West Africa and a good many of the nations of the Americas. Whether by trade associations, imperial expansion, the Atlantic slave trade, cultural exportation, or immigration, the Yorùbá people have left an undeniable and permanent imprint on many parts of the world.¹ This imprint includes Yorùbá religion and its pantheon of deities.

The Yorùbá religious system itself is extremely complex. Therefore, we can attempt only a tentative and exploratory treatment of it here. The religion is associated with some objects of worship known individually and collectively as the *òrìṣà*. There is a commonly accepted tradition among the Yorùbá people that there are 401 of these deities, although the count should be viewed as a sacred metaphor and not a scientific fact. If allowance is given for duplication of some deities in different localities under different names, the total number of recognized Yorùbá objects of worship would not be more than 200. Most of these *òrìṣà* are deified ancestors or personified natural forces classified into two broad groups by Drewal et al. as the cool, temperate, symbolically white deities (*òrìṣà funfun*) and the hot, temperamental deities (*òrìṣà gbìgbóná*).² The former, such as Ọbátálá, Ọṣun, Yemoja, Olókun, and Ọsófósi tend to be gentle, soothing, calm, and reflective. On the other hand, many of the

hot temperamental gods, such as Ógún, Šàngó, Ọsanyin / Ọbalúayé, and Ọya, are more harsh, demanding, aggressive, and quick-tempered.

This characterization of the *òrìṣà* Yorùbá into "cool" and "hot" has nothing to do with issues of good and evil. All Yorùbá deities, like humans, possess both positive and negative values. Furthermore, the deities are not ranked in any hierarchy. But, even so, the issue has been addressed by a good number of scholars, although they all have opposing views on the subject matter. The relative importance of any *òrìṣà* in any given part of Yorùbáland reflects the deity's relative local popularity, reputation, and influence. However, some of these deities are nevertheless worshipped globally. Among such deities are Ógún, Šàngó, Èṣù, Ifá, Ọbátálá, Ọṣun, and Ọya to mention just a few. Šàngó is among the mightiest of deities within the Yorùbá pantheon, and this collection of chapters addresses the nature of Šàngó worship within Africa and from various perspectives within the African Diaspora.

The Cult of Šàngó

Šàngó is the most powerful and the most feared Yorùbá deity both in Africa and in the Diaspora. For instance, Ahye claims that Šàngó devotees in Trinidad speak of him affectionately as "Papa Šàngó." This, according to her, is not unconnected with the military might and prowess of the deity, and his association with two dreadful forces of nature, thunder and lightning. The cult of Šàngó is controlled by a set of priests known collectively as the *mogbás* among the African and diasporic worshippers of the deity. By virtue of their relationship with the deity, the *mogbás* are responsible for officiating at Šàngó rituals and for the selection and upkeep of his ritual paraphernalia. For instance, the worship of Šàngó in each of the modern Nigerian cities of Ede and Ọyó is administered by a council of twelve *mogbás*, with the *ònà-mogbà* as their leader. He is ably assisted by both the *ótún-mogbà* and the *òṣì-mogbà*. Below these two *mogbás* are the other nine with the titles of the *ẹkerin-mogbà*, the *ẹkarúún-mogbà*, up to the ninth. In addition to the *mogbás*, there are other lesser priests of Šàngó, called the *adòún* and the *ẹlégún*. These priests are charged with the responsibility of performing magical feats aimed at astonishing and enticing people into the cult; they also serve as mediums through which *òrìṣà* Šàngó is revealed and accessed.

Šàngó's paraphernalia, including charms and replicas, are kept by his devotees and placed as treasures on his altar. It is through these personal objects that Šàngó's devotees believe that they can commune with him, for they are of the view that he hears their supplications through

these religious objects and blesses them. Usually, Šàngó's seat, a mortar (*odóo Šàngó*), and a fairly big pot (*ikókò àgbélé*) are at the center of the arrangement, and where the pot is absent, the mortar is positioned at the center with other personal items of Šàngó, such as double-edged axe (*osé*), thunderbolts (*edùn ará*), kola nut (*obí*), gourd rattle (*séfré*), sixteen cowries (*owó gya*), and other items, placed around it. A shrine custodian, usually a priest or priestess, often lives in the vicinity of the shrine, so that suppliants and devotees who call from time to time to consult Šàngó would meet him or her there. Ordinarily, whenever a Šàngó devotee is faced with any spiritual or physical problem that she or he cannot solve, the concerned individual consults the Šàngó Eḗrindínlógún divination system for a solution. This stems from the ability of Šàngó to resolve all kinds of human problems through his mysterious and mystical power.

There are two types of ritual processes among the devotees of Šàngó in Africa and the Diaspora, namely, periodic and annual rituals. The periodic ritual is usually very brief and takes place occasionally, usually once a week. This falls on Thursday or Friday in the Diaspora and on Jákúta day (the last day of the traditional Yorùbá four-day week) in Africa, a day well known as Šàngó's day, when he fights with stone. The weekly ritual is mainly for singing praises to Šàngó (*Šàngó pípé*) and cleaning his shrine. The annual ritual, which is more elaborate, is a form of thanksgiving as well as a reactivation of the power of the deity. It lasts seven days, of which the first, the third, and the seventh days are the most important. The annual ritual of Šàngó takes place in early December in the Diaspora and anytime during the rainy season among the West African Yorùbá people. The choice of the rainy season for the annual worship of Šàngó probably stems from the attendance of thunder and lightning. However, the actual week for the annual festival is chosen by Šàngó devotees and their priests after consultation with Šàngó's Eḗrindínlógún diviners in their respective city. The celebration during the rainy season gave birth to the popular Yorùbá proverb: *ìgbà ara lá n' b'ára, a k'í í bú Šàngó l'èrùn*, meaning "one should do the right thing at the right time, for Šàngó cannot be invoked in the dry season [when there is no thunder and lightning]."

On the first day of the annual celebration of the Šàngó festival in modern-day Oyo, for instance, the calabash containing the various paraphernalia of the *òrìṣà* is taken outside in preparation for the ceremonial religious bathing of *òrìṣà* Šàngó (*òrìṣà wéwé*). The cleaning is done with the herbal preparation made from the leaves of *eísún* (*Penisetum purpureum* Schum), *tètè* (*Amaranthus hybridus* Linn), *òdún-dún*

(*Bryophyllum*), and fresh water taken from the *ofúbo* (the altar). This is done with incantations and praise songs to Šàngó. The calabash is also washed and painted with camwood powder (*asún*). The paraphernalia are then put back into the calabash and placed on the mortar (*odóo* Šàngó). A sacrifice of a cock and a ram is made. The blood of those animals is allowed to pour on the paraphernalia. The essence of this blood, according to Drewal and others, is to feed and reactivate the power, which is the *òrìṣà* in them.³ The flesh is then cooked for the devotees present to eat.

On the third day, referred to as *íta*, another feast is made. On the seventh day, known as *ije*, after feasting, the devotees dress up in any dress of their choice—usually the dress is specially sewn for the annual festival—with their red and white neck beads. The *elégún* puts on a reddish-purple tunic with appliqués of cowries called *iwú owó*. The *wàbí*, the paneled skirt, is made from cloths of warm colors, and the *yírí-owó* (cowried skirt) is worn on top of the *wàbí*. The *elégún* carries the double-headed axe (*osé*) of Šàngó and a gourd rattle (*séjéjé*). She or he might put on a tiara or a cap, however; whether the *elégún* is male or female, the hair is plaited and exposed so even the male devotee looks like a woman; the devotee rarely wears shoes or sandals during the celebrations. The *elégún* is referred to as Šàngó when he is possessed by the spirit of the deity and is greeted by everybody saying “*ká wóó!*” or “*kábíyès!*” (your majesty or royal highness). The devotees carry with them different symbols of the Šàngó cult, including a magical box. They go around the city singing melodious songs accompanied by *bátá* drummers. Prayers are said to the ancestors by the *elégún* to bless their leaders (the *magbás*), other priests and devotees of Šàngó, and the town at large. The celebration may be crowned with magical presentations by the *elégún* to entertain the spectators in an open place.

The Direction of This Study

This Šàngó collection contributes to knowledge in several meaningful ways. First, it builds upon a growing body of scholarship on Yorùbá-based religions and on the African Diaspora in general. In particular, it builds upon similar collections on the deities Ògún and Òṣun. The central purpose of each of these texts is to reveal the multidimensional nature of each of these *òrìṣà*.⁴ This collection also echoes this theme of complexity regarding the multiple definitions of Šàngó. Prismatic definitions of a god or goddess are an intrinsic part of polytheistic religions, and there is nothing peculiar about Šàngó or any of the Yorùbá *òrìṣà* in this regard. However, as the worship of Šàngó has grown increasingly

widespread and international, such definitional complexity has grown with it, as all of these contributions discuss.

Second, this collection contributes to a growing body of scholarship on so-called neopagan religions. Whether Yorùbá-based religions fit this category or not is a debatable point; the term "neopagan" is an elastic one that eludes easy definition.⁵ But what appears unquestionable is that there is a growing interest in polytheistic religions throughout many parts of the world that were once predominantly Christian. Whether it is the worship of Thor from Norse religion, Diana from Roman religion, or Šàngó from Yorùbá religion, people throughout the Americas, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand are rediscovering a variety of polytheistic religions. The Yorùbá *òrìṣà* figure prominently in this growth of polytheistic religions, particularly among peoples of African descent—in this volume, Clarke, Glazier, Lovejoy, and Parés note the growth of Šàngó worship in the Diaspora. The worship of Šàngó has hardly disappeared in West Africa, but neither is it growing. The strength of Christianity and Islam is militating against an increase in formal Šàngó worship, though the presence of the *òrìṣà* is constant within many facets of life in Nigeria, as revealed in this book by Adéjùmò, Adélékè, Bádéjò, Fọlárànmí, and Ajíbádé.

Third, this collection integrates two contributions from worshippers of Šàngó. This is certainly not customary practice within the academic study of religion and reflects the history of religious studies. Academics have tended to have a distrustful view of the faithful. Atheist and agnostic scholars have tended to see them as ignorant people who will worship anything that comes their way, while scholars of religion have tended to see them as uneducated rabble who cannot adequately express their religion within an academic setting as the trained scholar can. Neither of these perspectives does justice to those of faith in any religion and neglects the complex factors that lead a person to be faithful to any religion. The faithful are more than a herd of people gathering around an illusion, as some classic theorists of religion such as Freud, Durkheim, or Marx would have us think. And the faithful are quite capable of intelligent expressions of what their religion means to them without acquiring a Ph.D. Some works on Afro-Christianity in South Africa have recently begun to integrate the perspective of Afro-Christian leaders.⁶ Integrating the perspective of worshippers does not turn an academic work into an exercise in religious propaganda. Rather it brings about a fuller view of the religion in question by making it a lived reality, in conjunction with the traditional approach of an intellectual abstraction. The reader thereby gains knowledge from both the inside and the outside in a much

richer way than could be gained from a strictly academic perspective. Two contributions from a priestess and priest of Šàngó, Oloṃṃ, and Pichardo and Mason, provide us with just such a perspective on Šàngó.

Defining Šàngó within a Polytheistic Milieu

Attempting to define a deity with worship as widespread as that of Šàngó is no easy task. Within Yorùbá religion and Yoruba-based religions, Šàngó demonstrates a variety of definitions, or “many faces.”⁷ All the contributors in this volume in some way grapple with the complex definitions of Šàngó. In broad terms, such definitions of Šàngó include the mythic Šàngó, the historical Šàngó, and the syncretic Šàngó. These three general images of Šàngó reveal only a fraction of the complexity of the way in which Šàngó is defined, particularly in the Americas, as further pluralism is evident even within these categories. This introductory chapter will present the essentials of each of these categories to provide the reader with a basic understanding of Šàngó and his worship.

Deities with “many faces” are part of any polytheistic religion, and there is nothing peculiar about Šàngó in this regard. Within Greek religion, for instance, Zeus (literally Sky Father) was known as Zeus Kataibates (Descending, or of the Lightning), Zeus Kappotas (Downpourer), Zeus Anax (King), Zeus Herkeios (of Order), Zeus Eleutherios (Liberator), Zeus Ktesios (Protector of Property), Zeus Polieus (of the City), Zeus Gamelois (God of Marriage), Zeus Telaios (Giver of Completeness), Zeus Xenios (of Oaths), and Zeus Heraios (of Hera).⁸ Zeus is most commonly known as the father of the gods or the dispenser of lightning, but his epithets indicate he is far more than this alone; he is also associated with the rule of law, society, and civilization as well.

Such variations in the definition of a deity stem from two central features of polytheistic religions. The first feature is the apportionment of the universe amongst a multiplicity of deities. Within polytheistic religions each god or goddess is assigned a particular domain. For instance, Zeus and Šàngó were both “in charge” of lightning according to Greek and Yorùbá mythology. However, the boundaries of these domains overlap, which means that the domain of one deity traverses a variety of other domains. Lightning intersects with thunder and air and even comes to earth and affects the terrestrial domain as well. Thus, lightning deities such as Šàngó and Zeus cannot do their “job” as the dispensers of lightning without also impacting other aspects of the universe. The other domains they impact are given varying degrees of importance depending upon the desires of the worshippers in different geographic locations.

The second feature of polytheism that encourages the development of a deity's "many faces" is the fact that polytheistic religions lack a center of orthodox enforcement. In other words, polytheistic religions lack a mechanism by which one region can regulate the theology of another. A local variation in the way in which a god or goddess is defined can flourish even when it is at odds with the definition of the deity in its place of origin. Even when a god or goddess has a central temple, like Zeus did at Olympia, the Japanese goddess Amaterasu did at Ise, and Šàngó did at Kòso, the priests and priestesses of that shrine lack the power to enforce beliefs on the population. That does not mean they lack any power over the population; they may be able to request sacrifices or rituals on behalf of the deity. But that power does not generally extend to policing the minds of the populace and enforcing a particular definition of the deity upon them, such as the power of excommunication provides the Catholic Church, for instance.

As the Schiltz article demonstrates, concerning the western reaches of Yorùbáland, Šàngó was defined in a much different way among the Kétu-Yorùbá and Sábẹẹ-Yorùbá. Here Šàngó was defined as the wife of another thunder deity, Árá. There was nothing that the priests of Šàngó at Kòso, or anywhere in the Oyo heartland, could do to rectify the disjuncture between the definitions, presuming they even wished to. Polytheistic religions, because they believe that divinity exists in a multiplicity of forms, have historically been very accommodating to the ways in which a community defines gods and goddesses. Though one community may have different deities, or different definitions of well-known deities, than another, within polytheistic cultures that does not make them "wrong." Within a polytheistic milieu, worshippers would assume that the deity has chosen to reveal him/herself in that way for a reason, or perhaps that community has discovered a deity, or a facet of a deity, of which others were unaware. The concept of heresy, beliefs that are at variance with the most commonly accepted dogma, is largely a feature of monotheistic religions.⁹ Polytheistic religions are not free of internal tension, but that tension rarely leads to purges within the same religion against "improper belief."

Thus, within a polytheistic mindset, there is nothing "right" or "wrong" in the multiple images of Šàngó; all Šàngó worshippers have been free to define Šàngó in the way most meaningful to them. However, though there may not be anything "right" or "wrong" about these definitions, there do exist tensions. This entire collection is dedicated to exploring the many ways in which Šàngó has been defined historically within Africa and the Americas. Let us now explore the basic

characteristics of each on these "faces," and the tensions, as well as peaceful coexistence, among them.

Irúnmòlè: The Mythical Šàngó

According to oral literature contained in the *Šàngó pípè* and the *odù ifá*, the mythical Šàngó is a primordial divine entity. This Šàngó descended to earth from heaven with the rest of the *òrìṣà* and is said to have grown up with other primordial *òrìṣà* like Odùduwà, the creator of humans. Mythic Šàngó is the embodiment of thunder, lightning, and the fierceness of atmospheric power. So great was his power that other *òrìṣà* named one of the four days of the week in his honor, Jákúra. So mighty was his power, and so great his virility, that Šàngó stole the goddess Oya from Ogún, and Ọṣun from Ọrúnmilá. This Šàngó was never reported dead but simply disappeared from earth en route to Àtìbà. The mythic Šàngó was worshipped at Ilé-Ifé as Ọràmfé before the founding of Ọyó; therefore the worship of this Šàngó probably has its roots in the formation of Yorùbá culture. In short, the image of the mythical Šàngó is grounded in his primordial nature that is equivalent to mighty *òrìṣà* such as Odùduwa, and perhaps greater than that of other *òrìṣà* such as Ọgún and Ọrúnmilá. The divine power of Irúnmòlè Šàngó would then derive from his pedigree of being among the original *òrìṣà*.

But as the contributions by Adéjùmò and Akínyemí note, this image of Šàngó has become less powerful than the historical image in the modern era. They argue that the historical image of Šàngó became the dominant image in popular culture because the historical Šàngó was textualized in writings by Yorùbá scholar Samuel Johnson and missionary A. L. Hethersett.¹⁰ As the power of the written word came to dominate the oral one through Westernization and Christianization, so too did the image of Šàngó from written sources come to dominate that from oral sources. If one focuses solely on written sources, the mythic Šàngó is virtually invisible within them, aside from the role of dispenser of lightning.

Yet, Johnson and Hethersett did not make up the historical Šàngó. Both the mythic and the historical Šàngó are based on Yorùbá religious beliefs. In other words, both portray inherited historical images of Šàngó. Let us now examine the essentials of the image of the historical Šàngó.

Ọba Alááfin: The Historical Šàngó

The historical Šàngó, the Ọba Alááfin, is the more common image of Šàngó today due to the impact of a number of seminal publications

on Yorùbá religion. In addition to Johnson and Hethersett, a number of other written works also reveal the historical Šàngó. This includes explorer A. B. Ellis, scholar J. Omòṣadé Awólàlú, and anthropologists/folklorists Judith Gleason, Harold Courlander, and Ulli Beier.¹¹ All of them focus upon Šàngó as a deified ancestor (what is typically called a hero in many mythologies), rather than as a primordial entity, as with the image of the mythic Šàngó. Like in many other polytheistic religions, the worship of heroes is perfectly ordinary among the Yorùbá, and these deities were viewed as being as efficacious as any others.

Most historical traditions are in agreement that Šàngó was the fourth Aláàfin (emperor) of the Old Òyó Empire.¹² The first ruler of Òyó was held to be Odúduwà while the second was his son, Òrànmiyàn. The third was Òrànmiyàn's eldest son, Àjàkà. Àjàkà was deposed by the Òyó Mèsi (group of seven nobles) who chose exile as the more cautious route, due to Àjàkà's temper, and replaced him with Òrànmiyàn's second son, Šàngó.¹³ There are some common themes one can identify concerning the sort of ruler the historical Šàngó was said to be. First, many tales tell of Šàngó's magical powers, particularly his ability to breathe fire (which he gained from a medicine created by Èṣù and carried by Oya). Second, Šàngó's personality is repeatedly described as "hot," or in other words powerful, virile, and volatile. Many of the tales related to the historical Šàngó are not particularly flattering. Some stories have often been deemed false by Šàngó devotees, who insist it is Šàngó's jealous enemies who have spread such slanderous tales of his tyranny and violence. Šàngó's devotees insist Šàngó represents justice and fairness.¹⁴

Awólàlú has identified three variations in the story of Šàngó's deification. The first version states that Šàngó discovered a charm by which he could call down lightning. While testing the charm from a hilltop, Šàngó called lightning down atop his own palace through his own ignorance of, and inexperience with, the charm's power. So horrified was Šàngó that he had killed his own wives and children that he took his own life by hanging. The second account says that Šàngó was suffering from domestic troubles (quarrels among his wives Oya, Oṣun, and Obà) and constant complaints from his subjects about his heavy-handed rule. Weary from this constant squabbling and tension, he mounted his horse in anger and rode into the forest, where he ascended a chain into the sky. When his subjects tried to call him back, he declared, "I will not come back to you; I will now rule you unseen." Ever since, he has asserted his kingly rule through lightning and thunder. The most popular of the three tales of deification, however, tells of Šàngó as a powerful and tyrannical ruler versed in magical arts. When two of his

courtiers, Timì and Gbònnkà, had grown too powerful, Šàngó craftily devised a plan where they were forced to fight one another. Šàngó's hope was that both might die in the struggle. Gbònnkà killed Timì but survived himself. When Gbònnkà continued to be an irritant to Šàngó, Šàngó had him tossed into a fire. However, Gbònnkà came from the fire unharmed and challenged Šàngó's right to rule. Šàngó was forced to abdicate the throne and flee the kingdom, and his followers slowly abandoned him, including his wives, except ever-loyal Oya. To preserve his remaining honor, Šàngó decided to "play the man" and hung himself from a tree.¹⁵

In a more detailed version of this deification story of Šàngó, Samuel Johnson reported that some time after Šàngó's death, a few of his supporters went to his maternal home land in Ibàribá (Nupeland) to acquire magical charms so they could use them, as Šàngó did. Upon their return, these followers of Šàngó ravaged the community with their newly acquired power, invoking thunder and lightning on Šàngó's detractors. Each time the lightning and thunderstorm abated, Šàngó's devotees would tell the people that the misfortune was caused by the wrath of Šàngó, whose demise was announced with contempt. As a remedy, the victims were often told to contact the *mogbàs* (Šàngó's friends, who had constituted themselves into his high priests) to prepare sacrifices to Šàngó. The victims were not allowed to cry or weep over their loss, but were made to chant Šàngó's praises instead. The *mogbàs* soon became so powerful that all the people were afraid of them, resulting in many of the people seeking protection from the attacks of Šàngó from the *mogbàs*. The Šàngó rituals were, therefore, a panacea—although in the first instance, they were meant to be punishment for Šàngó's detractors. The cult later gained more devotees, and, as time went on, Šàngó rituals become firmly rooted and institutionalized in Òyó. They were no longer seen as punishment, but rather as a re-enactment with gestures of supplication and gratification.

Therefore, as Akínyemí argues in the opening chapter of this collection, the celebration of the deity Šàngó, at Old Òyó and modern Òyó, is not just an important religious festival; it is essentially associated with royal power. According to Akínyemí, the shrine in modern Òyó is considered to be a royal mausoleum where any Alááfin-elect goes to worship Šàngó as an integral part of the installation rites. Each Alááfin is also expected to participate actively during any Šàngó ritual or festival, as such Šàngó rituals are treated as state religion in Òyó. In Old Òyó, where Šàngó was used as an instrument of governance, his lesser priests (*adósù* or *elégùn*) were sent as envoys of the Alááfin to different villages

to maintain the king's jurisdiction. Through these priests, the worship of Šàngó spread north, south, east, and west of Old Òyó, and thus it was established mostly in those Yorùbá areas that were under the imperial rule of Òyó before its collapse in the nineteenth century. This explains why the religion is principally confined to present-day Òyó town and its environs up to Ìbàdàn, Òyó north, and Òsun regions of Yorùbáland. Later, Šàngó rituals spread to the New World and the United States of America through the Òyó Yoruba slaves brought to the Americas during trans-Atlantic slavery.

As we have seen, many of the stories of the historical Šàngó do not assign terribly flattering characteristics to Šàngó. Tyranny and sorcery are generally not attributes one would expect devotees to assign to their deity. Akínyemí argues that the tales of the historical Šàngó are largely legends of the fourth Alááfin of Òyó, and over time the human Alááfin was conflated with the primordial Šàngó revealed in oral literature. Thus, contrary to Isola's claim, tales of the historical Šàngó cannot be simply dismissed as the erroneous recordings of foreign observers who did not truly understand Yorùbá religion, or as propagandist efforts by Christians to present traditional Yorùbá religion in an unflattering manner.¹⁶ Tales of the historical Šàngó do represent the Šàngó of the Yorùbá political past, but they likely do not represent the Šàngó that emerged in the early roots of Yorùbá culture. This Šàngó, the mythic Šàngó, seems best represented in oral literature.

Syncretic Šàngó

Today, we see the manifestations of Šàngó among the descendants of the Yorùbá in the Diaspora: Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, Trinidad, Puerto Rico, and the United States. Therefore, the worship of Šàngó is global in the sense that it is transnational. As Šàngó worship spread, both within Africa and to various parts of the Americas, Šàngó was combined with a variety of new, often non-Yoruba, characteristics. Among his Brazilian worshippers, for instance, the deity has two sacred numbers, four and six. This tradition is completely absent in Africa. Also, Šàngó's favorite meal among his Nigerian worshippers is *amúlá* and *gbégbiri*, but in the Diaspora his offerings consist of cornmeal, okra, green banana, and red apple. However, the same Šàngó carries his double-headed axe (*osé*) on both sides of the Atlantic, where he dances to the rhythm of *bátá* drum music in a virile, warlike, dignified, and kingly fashion. Šàngó devotees in general are also not allowed to touch *sésé* seeds (*phascolus lunatus* Linn), as it is believed that the seed will negate the *àṣẹ* Šàngó (Šàngó's power) vested in them.

The *elégùn* and the *adòsù* should also not eat certain types of animals, such as *òkétí* (big bush rat), *àdógó* (a kind of bush rat), *òkèrín* (squirrel), and *èníró* (antelope).

The process of syncretism, or religious blending, is a ubiquitous feature of religions. All religions change across both time and space and become influenced by other religions as they spread.¹⁷ Catholicism, for example, is practiced differently in Gabon, Mexico, Poland, and the Philippines. The variations in practice may be attributed to syncretism as Catholicism became combined with local religious practices in each of those locations. The essence of Catholicism remained, but worshippers adapted the religion to best suit their religious and cultural needs and local milieu. So too is the same process evidenced in Šàngó worship. The essence of Šàngó as a deity of lightning remains in all locations. However, regional variations due to syncretism are demonstrated.

Even within Yorùbáland itself, syncretism can be found. Schiltz demonstrates how the definition of the historical Šàngó was closely tied to the power of Òyó. In the border kingdoms of Sábèè and Kétu, a compromise was created between the royal cult of Šàngó and that of the preexisting thunder deity, Àrá. But just as the control of Òyó over Sábèè and Kétu was not total and complete, so too did the dominion of Šàngó over Àrá remain incomplete. In Sábèè and Kétu, Šàngó was defined as the wife of Àrá, a religious marriage of convenience precipitated by Òyó imperialism.

But it is within the African Diaspora that the greatest syncretism may be observed. In Brazil and various parts of the Caribbean (and later in other parts of the Americas as African-derived religions such as Santería and Candomblé spread beyond their place of origin) Šàngó has been combined with Saint Barbara. According to legend Barbara lived near Nicomedia in Asia Minor at a time when Christianity was still outlawed within the Roman Empire. She had converted to Christianity against the wishes of her jealous father, Dioscorus, who had previously imprisoned her in a tower. Around 235 CE, Dioscorus learned of her conversion and brought her before the prefect, who decreed that she be tortured and decapitated. Dioscorus carried out the decapitation himself, and was struck by lightning on his way home and his body consumed by fire. Barbara later became the patron saint of towers and fortifications (due to her imprisonment) and the protector from thunderstorms and fire.¹⁸

Scholars disagree over the reasons why Catholic saints were combined with African deities in the Americas. But as Clarke indicates, the most commonly accepted explanation asserts it was due to the criminalization of African deities within plantation societies. Peoples of African descent in places like Cuba, Trinidad, and Brazil practiced their religion on two

stages: the public stage where they appeared to honor Catholic saints, and the private stage where they continued the worship of various African deities, particularly Yorùbá *òrìṣà* like Šàngó. In time the lines separating the two practices became blurred, and soon Catholic saints and Yorùbá *òrìṣà* became viewed as two names for the same divine beings. Saint Barbara, because of her association with lightning, was associated with Šàngó. That one being was female and the other male was not of significance, as divine beings are not limited by form. It is also possible, as Glazier discusses, that syncretism was due to the religious needs of the worshippers, who knowingly and willingly engaged in the practice of two religions simultaneously. Ultimately, asking the question of why syncretism occurred may reveal more about the agenda of the researchers asking the question than it will reveal of the religious past. Perhaps we might be better off asking how syncretism transpired than why.

Šàngó played such a significant role in the process of syncretization that the African-based religion of Trinidad became known as Šàngó. As Glazier examines, there is an effort among some practitioners of Afro-Trinidadian religion today to refer to general "Òrìṣà work," rather than Šàngó. Nonetheless, Šàngó continues to hold a very prominent place in many shrines across Trinidad, and may in fact be increasing in popularity. Šàngó was equally popular in Brazil. Parés discusses all of the "qualities" that Šàngó manifests across Afro-Brazilian religions, thereby illustrating Šàngó's prominence in a variety of forms.

There appears little question that the historical Šàngó had a more profound influence on the Americas than the mythic Šàngó did. As Clarke, Glazier, and Parés all reveal, the Šàngó of Òrìṣà, Afro-Trinidadian religion, and Afro-Brazilian religions is known for his violence, fierceness, and impulsiveness, just as is the historical Šàngó. However, as these authors discuss, there is interest among some contemporary devotees of Šàngó in the Americas to create a more authentically Yorùbá, more "African," definition of Šàngó. To these worshippers, that means purging Šàngó of his syncretic associations with Saint Barbara. The perspective here is that removing the Catholic elements from deities such as Šàngó will reveal the "proper" Yorùbá *òrìṣà* beneath. Yet interestingly, this process of Africanization that is evident within African-derived religions of the Americas is not advocating a return to a definition of Šàngó more like the mythic one revealed in the *Šàngó pípè* and the *odù ifá*. It may be that the discontinuity in Yorùbá oral literature and language in the Americas largely militates against that.

However, in her contribution, Šàngó priestess Olóyè Ainá Oloṃo advocates an emphasis on Šàngó as a divine essence. She denies the image of the historical Šàngó and attributes tales of his virility and violence

to patriarchy and male stereotypes. Since men glorified these attributes, they assigned them to their male deities. But Olomó insists that this distorts the true fundamental nature of Šàngó as a deity of lightning and thunder. She instead says that the real Šàngó is naturally manifested around us. We perceive Šàngó as light (lightning), sound (thunder), and even in our bodily processes (libido, or sexual impulses, and the electrical impulse that is life). Olomó advocates an image of Šàngó that only partly depends on Yorùbá mythology. This “face” of Šàngó is not syncretic or historical but is based on Šàngó as a divine natural essence.

Rectifying the Many “Faces” of Šàngó

Among the many images of Šàngó one can find both tension and peaceful coexistence. No one image is more “correct” or “authentic” than another because no group of Šàngó worshippers is more “correct” or “authentic” than another. Every image of Šàngó is legitimate because there are worshippers who pay reverence to that image. As discussed in the first section, Yorùbá and Yorùbá-based religions lack a means to police orthodoxy. This means that worshippers are free to define deities in the way that is most meaningful to them. However, even though worshippers have the ability to do this, this does not mean that worshippers agree with the images that other groups of worshippers have created.

Theological tension can even be identified in the common phrase *Ọba kò sọ* (The king did not hang), one of the most commonly uttered phrases of Šàngó worship that can be found on both sides of the Atlantic. According to the legend of the historical Šàngó, the beleaguered Šàngó decided to “play the man” by hanging himself. The enemies of Šàngó, those who had suffered at the hands of his tyrannical rule, defamed his reputation by repeating that he was a hung king. Šàngó’s supporters countered with the phrase *Ọba kò sọ*, to show that, for them, Šàngó the great king did in fact not hang, but became deified and ascended into the heavens. Thus, the phrase reveals tension between Šàngó as a mere defeated historical actor and Šàngó as a glorious defied hero. Every contributor to this volume in some way addresses the multiple definitions, or the many “faces,” of Šàngó.

This collection begins with the contribution of Akintundé Akinyemí on the place of Šàngó in the Yorùbá pantheon. The chapter discusses the prestigious position occupied by Šàngó among the Yorùbá, and postulates reasons why the deity is still worshipped and admired by devotees on both sides of the Atlantic to the present day. Akinyemí argues that the elevated position of Šàngó stemmed from the deity’s association with Ọyọ kingship institution and royalty, his ability to resolve human

problems, spiritual and physical, through a specialized system of divination, his commitment to social justice, his supernatural power and association with thunder and lightning, his military might, and his pursuit of the two main themes of a warrior: prowess and honor.

The first part of Àrìnpè Adéjùmò's chapter questions the validity of the popular myths surrounding the historical Šàngó. She reveals that the historical Šàngó was the image of Šàngó reflected by written accounts from A. I. Hethersett and Samuel Johnson, not the image of mythological Šàngó presented in Yorùbá oral literature like the *ṣe ifá*. In the second section of her contribution, Adéjùmò discusses the worship of Šàngó in present-day Nigeria. The section reveals that Šàngó is not a god of the past but that he is still relevant in the contemporary Yorùbá society, where the worship of the deity is still nearly as potent as it was in the past. Because of Šàngó's popularity in present day Yorùbáland, Adéjùmò submits that many literary works are being created regularly around his myths and history.

Olúṣolá Ajibádé investigates the Šàngó Eḗrindinlógún divination system, and his conclusions are twofold. First, Ajibádé asserts that even with the growth of Islam and Christianity, divination among the Yorùbá is alive and well. Diviners are agents of memory who preserve history and reshape the present and future through their use of the past. Because diviners address such a vital concern of the community, the practice of divination has continued to the present. Second, the *odù* of Šàngó place a great deal of emphasis upon Šàngó's masculinity. In this way, the virility of the image of the historical Šàngó is reinforced.

Alternative representations of Šàngó within Yorùbáland are examined in the chapter of Marc Schiltz. Schiltz argues that the worship of Šàngó was tightly connected with the power of Òyó. The worship of Šàngó, as the patron deity of Òyó royalty, was seen as a statement of loyalty by conquered communities. In essence, the worship of Šàngó was imposed upon border communities, such as Sábèḗ and Kétu, that were outside the Òyó heartland. However, a compromise was created between the royal cult of Šàngó and that of the preexisting thunder deity, Àrá. In Sábèḗ and Kétu, Šàngó was defined as the wife of Àrá, a religious marriage of convenience precipitated by Òyó imperialism. In this way Sábèḗ and Kétu could demonstrate their loyalty to Òyó through their worship of Šàngó, yet simultaneously maintain a sense of their own religious, and thereby political, autonomy through the continued worship of their indigenous thunder deity Àrá.

Diedre L. Bádéjo considers the gender relationships of Šàngó mythology. She argues that the Šàngó embodied in Yorùbá oral tradition demonstrates the contradictory, though complementary, nature of the human

condition. Tales of Šàngó demonstrate both dominance and submission, patriarchy and matriarchy. Such contradictions are an inherent feature of the universe, and one part of the pairing cannot exist without the other. Male cannot exist without female, just as Šàngó cannot live without his wives. This is naturally manifested as lightning and thunder (Šàngó) goes with rain and wind (Oya). While Šàngó may be dominant at some moments, at other moments it is his wives who preempt him. One may see this in nature as rain and wind precede lightning and thunder.

The contribution of Dúrótoyé Adélékè examines images of Šàngó through the medium of film. Dúró Ládipò's *Oba Káso*, Wálé Ógúnymí's *Šàngó*, Afólábí Adésányà's *Osí(e) Šàngó*, and Léré Pálmò's *Lákúayé*, represent both the mythic Šàngó and the historical Šàngó on the big screen. Adélékè interprets these counter-images as evidence of Šàngó's duality in accordance with Yorùbá cosmological thought. He argues that Šàngó can embody benevolence and destruction or justice and healing simultaneously. Thus, perhaps the mythic Šàngó and historical Šàngó can coexist simultaneously as well, without tension but rather complementation.

The art of Šàngó is investigated in the chapter by Stephen Fólàránmí. Fólàránmí illustrates the centrality of Šàngó in Yorùbá artistic production, both past and present. In precolonial and colonial Yorùbáland, Šàngó was among the *òrìṣà* whose shrines were overflowing with sacrificial objects, statuary, wands, ritual pots, mortars, and other symbols. This sort of ritualistic artistic production has continued in the post-colonial period, though on a reduced scale. In recent decades Yorùbá art has expanded into new media and found new non-ritualistic purposes. Numerous examples of such art can be found on both sides of the Atlantic, featuring Šàngó as the central, or sole, object of depiction. That Šàngó continues to inspire artists, even those who do not practice Yorùbá religion, is a testament to the importance and power of Šàngó.

The ambivalent images of Šàngó are addressed in another contribution from Akíntúndé Akínyemí through an examination of the *Šàngó pépè* and *adé ífá*. He concludes that the Šàngó represented in Yorùbá oral literature is the mythic Šàngó whose definition goes back to the roots of Yorùbá culture. Stories of the tyrannical and violent historical Šàngó do not come from Yorùbá oral mythology but are rather tales of the historical figure and Oba Šàngó. This individual so identified with Šàngó that he adopted the name and attributes of his patron deity. Because of the *Oyó* custom to deify an Aláàfin upon his death, the deified Aláàfin Šàngó was conflated with the deity Šàngó. This conflation became even deeper through the power of the written word when figures such as Johnson and Hethersett recorded tales of the historical Šàngó as that of the mythic one.

Yorùbá revivalism is evident within the religious practices of Òyótúnjì Village in the United States and is discussed in the chapter of Kamari Clarke. Clarke asserts that the Internet is playing a central role in how religious practitioners define authenticity and their religious practice. The syncretic Šàngó of Santería has had a significant impact on the image of Šàngó in the United States. But the transnational linkages brought by Internet communities have led to a process of Africanization within the United States. This process of Africanization has led some practitioners to purge Šàngó of his syncretic associations with Saint Barbara, arguing that this is not in compliance with the original and "true" definition of Šàngó within Yorùbá religion. This "sanitized" image of Šàngó can be reified through Internet contacts with Africa, something that people of African descent in the Americas were unable to do in previous eras.

The position of Šàngó in Trinidad is the subject of Stephen Glazier's contribution. Glazier demonstrates that Šàngó is becoming less significant in Trinidad than general "Òriřà work," or at least this is how it might appear in the public image of Trinidadian Òriřà worship. However, within the shrines themselves, a resurgence of Šàngó worship is in evidence. The issue of authenticity and syncretism has grown increasingly important. While scholars have debated the nature of New World African syncretism for decades, the tone and forum for such debate has shifted in recent years. Now worshippers themselves are heatedly debating what is the "purest" and most "authentic" image of Šàngó, what syncretic associations are acceptable, and which must be purged.

Šàngó, as Luis Nicolau Parés analyzes, is a central part of Afro-Brazilian religion for several reasons. First, because of the large number of Òyó Yorùbá who were brought to Brazil, the *òriřà* most favored by the Òyó Yorùbá became the most important deities in Brazil. Second, the priests and priestesses of Šàngó demonstrated a great deal of initiative and charisma in their dedication to Šàngó in Brazil. But third, one cannot discount the important theological issue of Šàngó's associations. Many Brazilians were, and continue to be, drawn to Šàngó because of his control of thunder, lightning, fire, justice, and royalty, which appeals to many worshippers. Within Afro-Brazilian religion Šàngó is said to have many qualities—some say twelve in accordance with his sacred number.

Laura Edmunds's chapter discusses the literary manifestation of Šàngó in Esmeralda Ribeiro's short story titled "A procura de uma Borboleta Preta" (In search of a black butterfly), published in a collection of short stories written by eight Brazilian women writers. According to Edmunds, a specific set of signs associated with Šàngó, such as the color red, stone celts or thunderbolts, and a double-headed axe, are well represented in

Esmeralda Ribeiro's story. For instance, she argues that the manifestation of Šàngó's association with the color red is symbolized in the red blouse, red sandals, red braids, and the flowing of blood down the legs of Leila, the lead character in the story. As for the importance given to the butterfly in "A procura de uma Borboleta Preta," Edmunds interprets this as an artistic representation of Šàngó's double-headed axe, which has a butterfly shape, as well as the thunderbolts used in his worship in Bahia.

Henry B. Lovejoy discusses the importation of *bátá*—Šàngó's favorite drum—to Cuba by West African Yorùbá slaves. The time frame for his study begins with the uprising at Ilorin circa 1817 and ends when the last documented slave ship arrived in Cuba in 1867. Lovejoy contends that the twenty years before and after Òyó's disintegration (c. 1836) coincided with many Yorùbá wars, shifting political alliances, and a continuous movement of people from West Africa to Cuba. He argues further that the largest influx of slaves of Yorùbá descent leaving the Bight of Benin for the Americas occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century. According to him, a sizable proportion of those enslaved Yorùbá who went to Cuba arguably came from Òyó, which can be demonstrated on the basis of surviving cultural practices and historical evidence associated with *bátá* drums. Consequently, Lovejoy submits that, as an artifact and a cultural icon, the sizes, shapes, and components of the *bátá* drum genre can be documented rather systematically. He concludes that, directly or indirectly, *bátá* drums can serve as a model that can be projected backward into references of terms, such as *drum*, *batuque*, or *tambour*, found in early nineteenth-century documentation from Cuba and West Africa.

Šàngó priestess Olóyè Àiná Oloṃṃ provides us with a worshipper's perspective from the modern African Diaspora. Oloṃṃ argues that it is human-generated mythologies that have added false images to the true divine essence of Šàngó. Patriarchy has caused men to assign tales of virility to Šàngó's oral legends. In turn, this affects the gender roles of Šàngó's worshippers and priests/priestesses. However, we perceive Šàngó's divine might as light, sound, and bodily processes, and these natural manifestations of Šàngó occur outside of human social constructions. Oloṃṃ argues that tales of Šàngó's virility and womanizing should be rejected for the patriarchal stories they are.

In an interview with Michael Mason, Šàngó *nláshá* (priest) Ernesto Pichardo discusses his views of Šàngó and the *òrìṣà*. Pichardo has played a historic role in the development of *òrìṣà* worship within the United States. Pichardo argues that one may not truly know Šàngó. His mighty divine nature reflects manifestations beyond our counting. One's

understanding of Šàngó is an ongoing process that can never cease as Šàngó continues to develop new ways to reveal himself. In this way, many definitions of Šàngó are superficial, Pichardo contends, because they are based only upon glimpses of Šàngó, not upon detailed nuanced understandings accumulated over an extended period of time. Even then, such a long-term understanding still remains incomplete.

As all our contributors reveal, the many images of Šàngó have produced an intense discussion among both scholars and practitioners. The mythic, historical, and syncretic Šàngó coexist in both peaceful and contentious fashions on both sides of the Atlantic. What is at stake in the debate is the quest for authenticity and legitimacy as peoples grapple with the legacy of slavery, colonialism, changes in identity, and the spread of Islam and Christianity. One might also say that it is a quest to (re)define the ambiguous terms of tradition and modernity and challenge common understandings of progress and stasis.¹⁹ That a resurgence of polytheism is underway across the Atlantic world seems unquestionable, and Yorùbá religion figures quite prominently in this. As both our scholars and practitioners assembled here demonstrate, the worship of Šàngó is increasing and is truly global in scale. This is a testament to the strength of Yorùbá religion on both sides of the Atlantic and to the importance of Šàngó within it.

NOTES

1. Tóyín Fálólá and Matt D. Childs, eds. *The Yorùbá Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

2. Henry John Drewal and John Pemberton with Rowland Abiodun, *Yorùbá: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought* (New York: Harry N. Abrahams, 1989), 26.

3. *Ibid.*, 26.

4. Sandra T. Barnes, ed., *Africa's Ògún: Old World and New* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 3, and Joseph M. Murphy and Mei-Mei Sanford, eds., *Ògún across the Waters: A Yorùbá Goddess in Africa and the Americas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 1.

5. Joyce Higginbotham and River Higginbotham, *Paganism: An Introduction to Earth-Centered Religions* (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 2002), 6–7.

6. See I. Dlamini, "Zionist Churches from the Perspective of a Zionist Leader," in *Religion Alive*, ed. G. C. Oosthuizen (Johannesburg: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986), 209–10, and I. Dlamini, *Speaking for Ourselves* (Braamfontein, South Africa: Institute for Contextual Theology, 1985).

7. Barnes, *Africa's Ógún*, 1–26, uses this phrase in the introduction to her edited collection.
8. Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. John Raffan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 126–30, and C. Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks* (1951) (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 116–17.
9. Jonathan Kirsch, *God against the Gods: The History of the War between Monotheism and Polytheism* (New York: Viking Compass, 2004), 7–12.
10. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbá: From Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate* (1921), O. Johnson, ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 34–36; and A. L. Hethersett, *Ìwé Kíkà Èkẹrín Lí Èdè Yorùbá* (Lagos, Nigeria: Church Missionary Society, 1941), 50–55.
11. A. B. Ellis, *The Yorùbá-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa: Their Religion, Manners, Customs, Laws, Language, Etc.* (1894) (Oosterhout, Netherlands: Anthropological Publications, 1970), 46–56; J. Omósádé Awóláńlú, *Torùbá Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites* (1979) (Brooklyn: Athelia Henrietta Press, 2001), 33–38; Judith Gleason, *Òrìshá Yorùbáland* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), 58–78; Harold Courlander, *Tales of Yorùbá Gods and Heroes* (New York: Crown, 1973), 79–82, 91–100, 193–95; Harold Courlander, *A Treasury of African Folklore* (New York: Crown, 1975), 201–10; and Ulli Beier, *Torùba Myths* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 20–32.
12. Some traditions do not count Odúduwà as the founder of Òyó, thus making Šàngó the third Alááfin. See Funso Afolayan, “Kingdoms of West Africa: Benin, Òyó, and Asante,” in *Africa: vol. 1, African History before 1885*, ed. Toyin Falola (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2000), 171–72.
13. Gleason, *Òrìshá*, 60–61.
14. Awóláńlú, *Torùbá Beliefs*, 35.
15. *Ibid.*, 34.
16. Akínwúńmí Ìsòlá, “Religious Politics and the Myth of Šango,” in *African Traditional Religion in Contemporary Society*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona (New York: Paragon, 1991), 93–99.
17. Joel E. Tishken, “Ethnic vs. Evangelical Religions: Beyond Teaching the World Religions Approach,” *History Teacher* 33, no. 3 (May 2000): 315.
18. St. Barbara was removed from the Catholic calendar and her cults suppressed in 1969 in acknowledgment that “pious fiction was mistaken for history.” Catholic Community Forum, “Patron Saints Index: Saint Barbara,” N.d. (Jan. 30, 2005) <http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/saintbo1.htm>.
19. Jacob K. Olupona, “Introduction,” in *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religions and Modernity*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona (New York: Routledge, 2004), 2.

PART ONE

Şàngó in West Africa



The Place of Šàngó in the Yorùbá Pantheon

AKÍNTÚNDÉ AKÍNYEMÍ

*Ọ̀ṣà tí Šàngó ọ̀ lẹ̀ nà
Aré kó ló lẹ̀ sá;
Ó móbí f' Ọ̀lúkòsò ní
Ajà 'nbá, ọ̀ba àwọn ọ̀ṣà*

If any deity would escape being thrashed by Šàngó
It would not be because s/he was fast in running away
It must be because s/he knows how to appease Ọ̀lúkòsò
The mighty ruler, king of all (Yorùbá) divinities.

The above excerpt may be so ambiguous that it will be necessary right from the beginning of this chapter to define what I do *not* intend to do in this work, and then explain what I am really interested in doing. The purpose of this chapter is not to present Šàngó as the most important deity in Yorùbáland; neither is it my intention to determine the seniority of the Yorùbá deities. That issue has been addressed by a number of scholars, although they all have opposing views on the subject. For instance, while Bóláji Idowú holds the view that Ọ̀ṣà-ńlá is the "supreme divinity" of Yorùbáland, N. A. Fádípè sees Ifá as the "most universal . . . ọ̀ṣiṣe in Yorùbáland."¹ Bádé Ajúwòlò, for his part, presents Ọ̀gún as "First Among Equals" in the Yorùbá pantheon.²

If, on the other hand, one asks the worshippers of each of the other major Yorùbá deities which is the most popular of all Yorùbá deities, one finds that each group claims that its own deity is the most important

one. Unfortunately, there is no common saying among the people which designates a particular divinity as the most important, except for the claim of their mythological stories that some sixteen Yorùbá divinities descended to earth.³ Having said that, however, there are certain Yorùbá divinities which are generally acclaimed as more important than the others, and these might be called the major deities. According to Fadipe, the following divinities are universally worshipped everywhere in Yorùbaland on an annual basis: Èṣù, Ifà, Ọbátálá, Ọ̀gún, Ọ̀rìṣà Ọ̀ko, Ọ̀ṣun, Ẹ̀ṣàngó, Ẹ̀ṣànpónná, and Yemoja.⁴ Since the order of seniority among these major deities is not very clear, I do not intend to contribute to the controversy by presenting Ẹ̀ṣàngó as the supreme Yorùbá deity.

What I intend to do, instead, is to discuss the elevated position occupied by Ẹ̀ṣàngó in the pantheon of the Yorùbá, and explore the reasons why the deity has been so popular not only in Nigeria but also among diasporic Africans in the New World. The chapter argues that the prestigious position that Ẹ̀ṣàngó occupies among the Yorùbá people stemmed from his association with Ọ̀yọ̀ royalty and the institution of kingship, his specialized divination system made of sixteen sacred cowries (known as Èṣ̀rindínlógún), his commitment to social justice, his association with thunder and lightning, his military might and pursuit of the two main themes of a warrior culture—prowess and honor: the former being his attribute and the latter his aim—both of which his devotees believed were part of the reason he did an enormous variety of things toward their improvement and for humanity in general.

Ẹ̀ṣàngó is so much a part of Yorùbá life in general that, whether one likes it or not, one comes across his influence every day, in spite of his recognition as a purely Ọ̀yọ̀ Yorùbá hero-deity. Leo Frobenius argues that the association of the deity with thunder and lightning is largely responsible for this, claiming that the deity is fearfully eulogized as “the Hurler of thunderbolts, the Lord of the Storm, the God who burns down compounds and cities, the Render of trees and the Slayer of men.”⁵ The evidence of Ẹ̀ṣàngó’s dreadful nature is further documented in the following Yorùbá saying, which describes the sociopolitical position of the deity among the people:

*Túlààni la fi ì fẹ̀ràn-an Ẹ̀ṣàngó,
Túlààni la fi ì fẹ̀ràn
enì tó bá ju ní lẹ,
Enì tó bá binú osùn,
Àfí tó bá fẹ́ kun ata.*

It is by force that one loves Šàngó,
 It is by force that one loves a person
 greater than oneself.
 One who hates camwood ointment,
 Is left with no other choice than to rub pepper over his/her body.⁵

Šàngó must have acquired this enviable position because of his strong link with Òyó royalty and kingship. For instance, Šàngó was the state religion of the Old Òyó Empire and the guiding deity of its political head, his royal majesty, the Alááfin. Even in present day Òyó, the relevance of Šàngó to the success of the Alááfin's administration cannot be overlooked. The Alááfin himself is the chief celebrant in the daily worship of the deity as well as during the annual Šàngó festival.⁷ The importance of the deity in Òyó town compels every reigning Alááfin to keep priestesses and priests of Šàngó in his palace, where the deity is regarded as the "father" of the king. For instance, the incumbent Alááfin is praised by his royal bards as the "offspring of Šàngó":

Ajùwòn, ọmọ Šàngó
Alááfin, èlè.
Ọba ọmọ Adéyemí,
Ọmọ ọ̀sà.

Ajùwòn, offspring of Šàngó
 Alááfin, gently.
 Child of Adéyemí is the king,
 offspring of the deity [Šàngó].⁸

The association of Šàngó with Òyó royalty has thus spread the cult of the deity across the entire territory under the control of the Alááfin, where he is regarded as a sacred and divine king. There is a clear similarity between the sacred and divine power of the Alááfin, as epitomized in this aspect of his eulogy: *Ikú, bába-yéyè, aláṣe, èkejì ọ̀rìṣà* (Death, the-almighty-ruler, commander-and-wielder-of-authority, next in rank to the divinities) and the royal status of Šàngó, documented in the following excerpt of his praise names: *Olúwaà mí ọ̀, ọ̀ba nírúnmọ̀lẹ̀ ọ̀ ọ̀, ọ̀ba tílẹ̀ pọ̀báà jẹ* (My lord, this deity is a king, a king who has power to kill other kings).⁹

There is also the line of chiefs in the political setup of Òyó town, under the Alááfin, who are closely connected with the cult of Šàngó. At the head of the line is one of the high chiefs of Òyó—the *ótún ẹ̀fà*. The chiefs have dual roles: they are politically responsible to the Alááfin,

and, at the same time, they are fully involved in the affairs of the cult of Šàngó.¹⁰ There is also a special priestess of Šàngó in the palace of the Alááfin—*iyá náso*—who is charged with palace worship of the deity, and her assistant—*Íyá Aáfin Ikú*—who is responsible for Šàngó's sacred ram (the horns of which are poetically compared to the thrust and parry of the thunderbolt).¹¹ According to Thompson, these palace customs reach climax at the annual *Beeré* festival¹² when a masked priest, said to represent Šàngó's own ancestral spirit, *Alákoró*, "perambulates the palace walls while gesticulating and, his robe of blazing red and shining mask of polished brass, looking like a crimson ghost. Before each of the main gates to the Alááfin's palace he gestures to heaven and then to earth, to heaven and earth again, and moves on to the next point of blessing."¹³

Apart from those chiefs and royal priestesses of the Alááfin, there are also the proper Šàngó title holders who are, strictly speaking, not politically connected with Òyó royalty directly, but who are nonetheless highly respected in the community. They are the priests and priestesses of the deity—known generally as *adósù*—who handle all matters connected with Šàngó worship. Their leader, who is the chief priest of the cult, is known as *baálé Šàngó*. There is also the *Odéjìn* (known also as *Ayòhà* in some Yorùbá communities) who represents the deity Šàngó on earth. It is pertinent to note that the exclusive royal greeting of the Alááfin—"Kábyèsè"—(meaning literally: no-one-dare-challenge-or-question-your-authority) is also used for the *Odéjìn* when he walks in the streets of Òyó.

Even in the Diaspora, where Šàngó is syncretized as Saint Barbara (as in Cuba) or as Saint Jeronimo (as in Brazil), his association with Òyó royalty is still recognized, and he is subsequently accorded royal respect.¹⁴ Šàngó is one of the most important Yorùbá divinities that has survived in the Diaspora up till today. He is regarded as a divinity of thunder and lightning in the Diaspora as in Nigeria, and he dances to the rhythm of *bàtá* drum beaten in a virile, warlike, dignified, and kingly fashion. Wande Abimbólá has rightly observed that the cult of Šàngó dominates the Brazilian pantheon of divinities in Bahia.¹⁵ According to him, the fact that the title of *iyá náso* (high priestess who keeps the royal temple of Šàngó in the palace of the Alááfin at Òyó) was taken to Brazil and borne by several of the original Brazilian devotees of Šàngó clearly shows that the Šàngó that the Yorùbá slaves took to Bahia was from the palace temple at Old Òyó. The prominent divisions of the Bahian devotees of Šàngó—*Ópó Àṣe Afonjú* and *Ópó Àṣe Aganjú*—also emphasize the Òyó origin of the Brazilian Šàngó. For instance, Aganjú was a prominent Alááfin in Old Òyó who strongly promoted the worship of Šàngó

during his reign. In Brazil, the deity is hailed as "Kábísiilé" like all the kings of Òyó:

Káwo, Kábísiilé
Emire mire soroó be
E jé kába bẹnà wò.
Omire baba
E jé kába bẹnà wò.
Ìlú ilú soro ó bé
E jé kába bẹnà wò.
Omire baba
E jé kába bẹnà wò.
Káwo Kábísiilé!

All hail your royal majesty
 A strange land is difficult to live in
 Let the king keep watch over the streets.
 The good father
 Let the king keep watch over the streets.
 This city is difficult to live in
 Let the king keep watch over the streets.
 The good father
 Let the king keep watch over the streets.
 All hail your royal majesty!¹⁶

The integration of the cult of Šangó into the political system of Òyó probably dates back to the reign of the fourth ruler of Old Òyó, Alááfin Ọ̀sókú Olúfínràn also known as Alááfin Šangó. This highly impetuous and warlike king was said to be responsible for the effective consolidation of the nascent Òyó kingdom.¹⁷ First, he refused to pay tribute that the Olówu of Òwu had demanded from his predecessor in office (Alááfin Àjàkà). Instead, he routed the Òwu army and proceeded to destroy the Òwu kingdom. Thereafter, Alááfin Šangó moved the capital of the emerging Òyó kingdom from Òkò to Òyó-Ilé. This powerful king was described as a strong adherent of an earlier Yorùbá solar divinity, to whom lightning and thunder have been attributed. The name of that deity is Jákúta, which means, "one-who-fights-with-stones" or "one-who-hurls-stones." It might be difficult to state categorically how Šangó eventually became a Yorùbá divinity because of the discrepancies in the various versions of legends surrounding its deification. For instance, a reconstructed version of some of these legends claims that Alááfin Šangó

was a powerful, self-willed, cruel, and tyrannical ruler, who was very well respected by his subjects.¹⁸ In the end people became tired of his tyranny: his authority was challenged and his purpose thwarted by two of his courtiers. Out of frustration and annoyance, that version of oral tradition claims further, the king committed suicide by hanging himself on an *ááyán* tree. His opponents then taunted his supporters that the king had hanged himself. This led the supporters to seek the means of saving their faces: they went and procured some preparation by which lightning could be attracted. They set to work with this, with the result that lightning became frequent in and around Òyó: compounds and houses were often in conflagrations, and there were losses of lives and property. People became panic-stricken, and so were prepared for the next move by the supporters of Alááfin Šàngó, who then came out with the story that the Alááfin did not hang himself, he had only ascended to heaven, and that the resulting calamities from lightning were vengeance which Šàngó sent upon those who slandered him by saying that he hanged himself. As a consequence of this, a shrine was constructed for him, and later a temple was built for his worship on the traditional spot where he was said to have hanged himself, which was renamed Kòso (He-did-not-hang).

However, Šàngó devotees and the priestly house of Kòso in Òyó have always argued against the version of oral tradition reconstructed above. Their own version of the deification of Alááfin Šàngó states that the Alááfin ascended to heaven by a chain which sprang from an *ááyán* tree in reaction to a few complaints from his subjects concerning his tyranny and high-handedness. They argue that, from heaven, Alááfin Šàngó has since manifested his kingly authority with lightning and thunder. One may argue, therefore, that it was by a clever stroke that the identification between Jákúta and Šàngó was registered in such a way that Alááfin Šàngó practically usurped the place of Jákúta in the Yorùbá pantheon. Some priests of strong, imposing character, perhaps someone who found a chance of replacing an indigenous divinity with an imperialistic one, must have been working upon the credulity of the people. Today, the sacred day of Jákúta is still observed regularly by the devotees of Šàngó in Òyó, although this is done in connection with the worship of the deity Šàngó.

The cult of Šàngó was probably introduced to other parts of Yorùbáland from Òyó during the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries with the expansion of the Alááfin's control. The Òyó kingdom expanded steadily during the reigns of four succeeding Alááfin (Àjàkà, Aganjú, Olúàso, and Kòrì), even though the internal conflict that Old Òyó experienced later stopped the expansion abruptly. However, that was not until the kingdom had reached the banks of the river Niger in the north and

extended a hundred miles south to Benin. When Old Òyó was eventually invaded, the reigning Alááfin Onígboḡi and his people fled northward; and finally found refuge among friends in the Borgu region. Many others dispersed southward, where they established or augmented several towns throughout the Upper Ògùn river valley. Thus began approximately seventy-five years of exile, during which six Alááfin reigned; a period that Smith has carefully reconstructed.¹⁹ Repeatedly harassed and brought to their wits' ends while in exile, the Òyó rulers realized that to survive amidst hostile neighbors, they must depend on their fighting strength and diplomatic alliances. Òyó therefore developed a cavalry force which, by the late sixteenth century, had become the most important characteristic of its army. From this time until early in the nineteenth century, Òyó kingdom expanded to its greatest power and size despite extreme internal political instability. It conquered portions of Borgu and the Nupe to the north and Dahomey to the southwest, and extended its influence over many southern kingdoms. The army directed its attention southwestward into the grassland, where it imposed the authority of the Alááfin on the people of Ègbádó, Ègbá, Kétu, Weme, and Àjàsẹ̀ (Porto Novo). The early eighteenth century witnessed the subjection of the Fon kingdom of Dahomey to tributary status. By the 1750s, even the Asante kingdom came to feel the impact of the Òyó imperial push. In northwestern Yorùbáland, the army of the Alááfin also invaded the Ìbòlò and the greater part of Ìgbómìná. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the new Òyó Empire had reached its zenith of power. According to J. A. Àtandá, the empire was "territorially the largest and politically the strongest kingdom ever established by a Yoruba potentate."²⁰

The power of the Alááfin thus transcended the city of Òyó to the numerous provincial towns and villages in the expansive empire, where all his political and economic policies were regressed in religious terms. In this sense, the Alááfin made leaders of the conquered towns and villages to realize that they derived their political authority from his divine power as the head of the empire. The cult of Šangó, the state religion of Òyó kingdom and the patron deity of the Alááfin, its leader, must have been imposed on the provincial towns during the conquest. That was probably how the worship of Šangó spread to other parts of Yorùbáland from Òyó, its original home. But for the extensive power of the Alááfin and his control over the numerous provincial towns and villages, Šangó might have remained an ordinary Òyó historical figure, or at best, a little domestic divinity of Òyó.

One other factor that enhanced the popularity of the cult of Šangó in Yorùbá society was the ability of the deity to resolve human problems

through a system of divination known as *Èḡrindínlógún*, which involves the casting of sixteen sacred cowries.²¹ The Yorùbá are a deeply religious people and therefore have a strong belief in the existence of supernatural powers. These supernatural powers are believed to affect the everyday life of humans for good or ill. The Yorùbá conceive the supernatural powers as being of two types, good and evil. The good supernatural powers aid humans in their daily lives. They are, however, sometimes angry with a human if he/she neglects his/her duty either to his/her fellow human or to the supernatural powers. Therefore, to the Yorùbá people, the only way to find out when and for what reason the supernatural powers are angry is through divination. When the supernatural powers are angry, they can always be appeased with one form of sacrifice or another as prescribed by trained diviners.²²

Ifá is the most popular Yorùbá system of divination.²³ With his great wisdom, knowledge and understanding, it is believed that Ifá coordinates human daily activities and the work of all the divinities through divination. In other words, Ifá serves as a middleman between the other divinities and the people, and between the people and their ancestors. If a man is being punished by any of the divinities, it is believed that the most logical thing to do is to turn to Ifá diviners for assistance. If a whole community is to make sacrifice to one of the divinities, this can be revealed only by Ifá. On the contrary, however, whenever a *Ẓàngó* devotee is faced with any problem that she/he cannot solve, she/he consults the *Èḡrindínlógún* divination system of *Ẓàngó*, not Ifá. The *Ẓàngó Èḡrindínlógún* divination system is very similar to the Ifá in several ways. It has its own *odù*, twelve in number, and each *odù* has its many verses (known as *ḡṣṣ*). Although the whole corpus of *Èḡrindínlógún* is not as large as the Ifá corpus, the services are nevertheless as effective. Compared to Ifá divination with its manipulation of sixteen sacred palm nuts or even the casting of its divining chain, sixteen-cowry divination is much simpler. However, memorizing the verses is as difficult and time consuming as learning those of Ifá.

Sixteen-cowry divination (*Èḡrindínlógún*) is also popular among the descendants of Yorùbá slaves transported to the New World during the trans-Atlantic slave trade period. Although the system of divination is simpler than Ifá and held in less esteem among the West African Yorùbá, it is more important, more widely known, and more frequently employed than Ifá in the New World, where it is known as *Dínlógún*. This may be due to its relative simplicity; to the popularity of *Ẓàngó*, *Yemoja*, *Ọṣun*, *Èṣù*, *Ọya*, *Ọbà*, and other Yorùbá deities with whom sixteen cowries is associated, and to the fact that it can be practiced not only by men, but by

women, who outnumber men in these cults in the New World, whereas only men can practice Ifá in West Africa. The cowries are cast on a woven tray (*atẹ*) by the diviner, and the number of shells facing mouth-up are counted to determine the right *odù* through which Šangó has decided to communicate with the client. Once the *odù* has been determined by the first toss of the cowries, the diviner begins to recite the verses that are associated with it. The verses contain the predictions and the sacrifices to be made, based on the case of a mythological client which serves as a precedent. Unless the diviner is stopped by the client, she/he recites all the verses that she/he has learned for that *odù*. As in Ifá divination, it is the client who selects the verse that is applicable to his/her own case; and, as in Ifá, more specific information can be obtained by making additional casts of the cowries to choose between specific alternatives (*ibò*)²⁴ on the basis of the rank order of the *odù* that appeared.

Each of the various types of Èrindinlógún systems of divination follows a tripartite process of prognostication, explanation, and control, which corresponds to the modern medical practice of diagnosis, prescription, and medication.²⁵ Through the Èrindinlógún divination system, Šangó is also able to resolve the crises and conflicts brought about on his devotees in particular, and humanity in general, by the interactions of benevolent and malevolent spiritual beings. Thus, he has the spiritual capability and competence to make great achievements in a way that would surpass the Ifá's. Through this divination practice, it is believed, Šangó can manipulate, capture, and condense the complexities involved in the ordering of the universe. This is attested to by this aspect of *Šangó pépé* (Šangó praise poetry):

Atáyẹfe-bi-olú,
N à rí o lóde, n ó jẹ ródé.
Iré há mí dólé,
Ire n mo wá toro.
Ire lemi wá toro lódò Šangó.
Ire gbogbo tí n ó ní láyé
N bẹ lódò Šangó
A-lánà-tééré-wáyé
A-lánà-tééré-kòrun
Èyẹ ọsúpá lójún sánmò ló wá.
Jẹ kó yẹ mí, Šangó, Baálẹ Kòm.
Àrémú, Baálẹ Agbòrándián;
O ó gbòrán mí dùn,
Dákun má yá mí.

*O-tóò-rera-níjé-han-ipónjù,
 Ójá igbàlá o fí pón mí, má mà tú u.*

One-who-mends-the-world-as-the-creator,
 I cannot embark on a journey without you.
 Success abides with me,
 Success is all I am here for.
 I am here to plead for success from Sàngó.
 All the good things of life that I will have
 Are within the reach of Sàngó
 He who makes a narrow path to the earth
 He who makes a narrow path to heaven
 The beauty of the moon dominates the sky.
 Let me be favored, Sàngó, lord of Kòso.
 Àrémá, the great avenger;
 Avenge for me,
 Please do not forsake me.
 It's you alone who can perfectly protect me in my trouble days,
 Please do not remove the protection with which you covered me.²⁶

The ability of Sàngó to resolve all kinds of human problems (both spiritual and physical) through his mysterious and mystical power is well documented in many verses of Eḡrindínlógún and Ifá. In the *Odù Òdí Mejì* of the Eḡrindínlógún corpus, for instance, a verse recalls how the Crocodile who could not deliver her children herself consulted Sàngó for assistance.²⁷ Sàngó shouted and all the children were born sooner than later. Another verse of the same *odù* recalls how Sàngó drove away the mysterious animal that had been killing the citizens of Ijagbà town, and became the deity that the people of Ijagbà worship today. Also, in *Odù Èjilá Sèbora* of the same Eḡrindínlógún corpus, it was reported that Sàngó opened the door of water a little and rain fell for seven days, causing leafless trees to sprout, dry rivers to flow again, and the people of Irè to prosper.²⁸ The following verse, taken from *Odù Irosùn Mejì* of Ifá literary corpus, confirms the extent to which Sàngó will go to protect his followers. The verse summarizes how the deity helped a man known as Ológ-bun Àyíkú to conquer his enemies by throwing thunderbolts at them:

*Irinó eḡn,
 Egbèrin iwo;
 Ònlénú eḡn
 Níi rìn wàràwàrà létt opa.*

A alá fún Ológbun Àyíkú.

Wón ní kí ó rúbó;

Wón ní àwọn ọ̀tá ẹ̀

Fẹ́ pa á lédún náà.

Wón ní ó lẹ́ dí mó Šàngó.

Ó sù sẹ́ gbogbo rẹ.

Ibi tí àwọn ọ̀ta rẹ́ gbé ń pètèpèrò

Pé àwọn ó pa á,

Ní Šàngó bá lẹ́ sọ ẹ̀dùn àrà

sí ààrín wọn.

Ìgbà tí ó ẹ̀gun àwọn ọ̀tá rẹ́ tán,

Ó wá ń jó,

Ó n yó.

Ó ní bẹ́ẹ̀ gẹ́gẹ́

Ní àwọn awo dún wí:

Irinó ẹ̀fún,

Ẹ̀bírín iwo;

Ọ̀nlénu ẹ̀fún

Ní rìn wáwáwàrà léti ọ̀pa.

A alá fún Ológbun Àyíkú;

Ẹ̀yí tí ó d'Ológbun Àyílá,

gbírighiri lóri ọ̀tá

Èrò Ẹ̀pa,

Èrò ọ̀fá,

E wá bá ní láíkú kangiri.

Àíkú kangiri láà bóbé.

Four hundred bush-cows,

Eight hundred horns;

Two hundred and eighty bush-cows

Walk confidently near a snare.

Divination was performed for *Ológbun Àyíkú*.²⁹

He was asked to perform a sacrifice;

He was told that his enemies

wanted to kill him during that year.

He was told to go and cling to Šàngó for protection.

And he did everything.

As his enemies were conspiring together

In order to kill him,

Šàngó went and dropped thunderbolts

in their midst.

After he had conquered his enemies,
 He started to dance
 He started to rejoice.
 He said that was exactly
 what his diviners had predicted:
 Four hundred bush-cows,
 Eight hundred horns,
 Two hundred and eighty bush-cows
 Walk confidently near a snare.
 Divination was performed for *Ológbun Ayikú*;
 Who would become *Ológbun Ayilá*.²⁰
 on top of stone.
 Travellers to *Ípo*
 Travellers to *Ofit*
 Come and meet us alive and in good health.
 One always finds the hill alive and in good health.²¹

The protective power of Šàngó is also well recognized and appreciated by his devotees in the Diaspora. Since Šàngó worshippers in the New World developed from a background of slavery in an atmosphere of bondage and suffering, the deity is often called upon in their chants as an instrument of deliverance. Thus we have in the following excerpt, a call to Šàngó by descendants of African slaves in Brazil for help:

Èniyè ọba sàré wá.
Olúwa mi àrùsèṣè.
Tòkò tòkò lómódèè Rísé,
Ọba sàré wá.
Olúwa mi àrùsèṣè.
Tòkò tòkò lómódèè Rísé,
Ọba sàré wá.
Sàré wá bà mí o
Èrùjéjé, ọba sàré wá.
Káábéṣí,
Emire mire joro bé e
E jé kọba bẹnà wò.
Ọréré baba,
Ilú ilú joro ó bé.
E jé kọba bẹnà wò.
Ọréré baba,
Káábéṣí.

O king, hasten here
 My lord of the ceaseless rain
 Come with thunder stones to the aid of the children of *Ìrèsé*,
 O king, hasten here
 My lord of the ceaseless rain
 Come with thunder stones to the aid of the children of *Ìrèsé*,
 O king, hasten here
 Come and deliver me,
 The fearful king, hasten here,
 Your royal majesty,
 A strange land is difficult to live in
 Let the king keep watch over the streets.
 The good father,
 This city is difficult to live in.
 Let the king keep watch over the streets.
 The good father,
 Your royal majesty.²²

Ẓangó is presented in the above as an agent of deliverance of a people who have been deprived of their freedom but whose faith in the power of the deity to shelter and care for his own followers remains unshaken even in a foreign land. The worship of Ẓangó in the New World has thus become a strategy for survival and for freedom. Therefore, the deity is seen in the Diaspora as a national heroic symbol as well as a protective spiritual leader.

The absolute control that Ẓangó has over two forces of nature—thunder and lightning—and his ability to spit out fire from his mouth without being hurt have also contributed to his elevated status in the Yorùbá pantheon. Ẓangó's magical power and association with fire is very well captured in the following lines of his praise name:

Iná lójú, iná lénú;
A-ḡbéná-jó
Adójúlé-kán-já-lógun
Abo ló monú é, kó wá wí
A-kunté-polé.

He who spits out fire in his mouth and eyes;
 He who dangles a touch of fire while dancing
 One-who-singles-out-a-house-to-wage-war-with-it

If there is a woman who understands you, let her say so
 One-who-burns-down-the-house-to-kill-the-thief.²⁵

Also, in the Diaspora, the image of a metaphoric fire balanced on the head of devotees of Šàngó traveled with Yorùbá slaves to the New World, where actual dancing with loads of fire has been reported in Bahia, Brazil, by Vivaldo da Costa Lima:

In the cycle of festival for Šàngó in the shrine of Sao Goncalo there is an impressive ceremony, only realized there, wherein the daughters of Šàngó, possessed by their orisha, dance with a vessel that contains material in flames, upon their heads. The fire does not harm them, nor does it burn the hands with which they secure the burning vessel. Later, while still moving in the dance, they eat flaming balls of cotton dipped in oil.²⁶

Thompson has described the above comments as "miracles" to convince followers of Šàngó that spirit possession of his priests and priestesses is actual, not a sham.²⁵ Šàngó is a particularly powerful but difficult Yorùbá deity. An excerpt of his praise poetry testifies to his turbulent, violent, and unpredictable nature this way:

Lásán là ò bá ọ rìn
A ọ moná.
Ako ló moná ẹ, kó wá wí;
Adójúlé-kan-jà-lógun.
Abo ló moná ẹ, kó wá wí;
Akunlé-pòlè.

We are merely moving with you
 We do not know your thoughts.
 If there is a man who understands you, let him say so;
 One-who-singles-out-a-house-to-wage-war-with-it.
 If there is a woman who understands you, let her say so;
 One-who-burns-down-the-house-to-kill-the-thief.²⁶

These aspects of Šàngó's nature demonstrate to his devotees as well as other members of the community what kind of deity he is, and therefore what he would normally expect of his followers. However, laws are not laws unless they are enforced. Only very few people would voluntarily obey laws the breach of which carries no reprisals. So, Šàngó's attributes

show his ability to enforce his own laws. Hence, we come across many of Šangó's epithets such as the following:

Ọ́kọ̀n à ẹ̀ ẹ̀ kọ́jù ọ́jà sí
Ẹ̀nàlẹ̀ mí,
Ta lí ẹ̀ kọ̀ Šangó lójú?
Èmi à ní kò ẹ̀ lójú;
Ọ̀dù-úlá-ńń-ìgbónígòrè-ẹ̀jateja.
Alámọ̀rẹ̀-ńń-ẹ̀gún;
Agbọ̀mọ̀-lójú-yọ̀kún-nímú;
Alímí-falágbède-bágbán;
Èyà, abijúwára.
Atúnfun-ájé-je-lágbán,
Afítimọ̀-bejú-íkí-wò.

No one can confront the ocean
 My lord,
 Who can confront Šangó?

I dare not confront you;
 The-mighty-river-that-drowned-the-master-fisherman-along-with-his-catch.
 He-who-pursues-a-child-like-the-Masquerade;
 He-who-slaps-a-child-violently;
 He-sacrifices-the-blacksmith-to-the-deity-Ọ̀gún-out-of-annoyance;
 The-snake-that-is-quick-to-fight.
 He-who-quickly-rearranges-the-intestines-of-the-witches,
 He-who-uses-lightning-to-expose-the-lair.³⁷

The above is a conscious attempt by Šangó praise singers to lift their deity into a realm that would make him higher than other Yorubá divinities.³⁸ He is presented, therefore, as a deity that is so powerful that no other divinities can share in his privileges. This is also a calculated attempt to make Šangó's superhuman nature more complex.

This superhuman nature of Šangó is further demonstrated in his military might and the ability to provide physical protection for his followers. The deified Alááfin Šangó was said to be a military genius. Oral tradition recalls that he personally led numerous military expeditions to expand the territory of his kingdom.³⁹ Being a great warrior, Alááfin Šangó never attacked his enemies when he was underprepared, and never attacked when on equal terms with them. He took time to train his own soldiers before leading them into the battlefield, and with every victory he was more

firmly established on the throne. Nothing, however, could show Sàngó's military excellence and fame better than this aspect of his attributes:

Obaa Kòso!

Bó bá fojú kan ogun,

Gbàù, ni ó yinbon je.

Èrú tán, èrú ó tán

Obaa Kòso,

Máa dàgòò yinbon.

Ò-fagada-bùdì-jagun.

Bó bá jí, ara ogun níi pa.

Ò-fagada-buwòjà-mòdò;

Agada péhpe

ní sí bóégún Alápiti lóri;

Oníìkèrè oògùn.

A-bita-móra-bi-ahéré;

Fáì-bá-won-já-kòni-lòmíná;

A-di-zaka-píhì-lpòbì-ìjá;

Okúnrin-jògun-ó-nsiní;

A-dé-kògun-ó-rò.

Kò mọ̀yàn nígbà ìjá.

Abílérí-béí, omọ Yemoja.

Obalúfẹ-tí-dọ̀yín-ta-gbagbo-won.

Ọ̀wàrà-òjò-tí-ì-pẹ̀gbẹ̀je-éyàn.

The king who reigned at Kòso!

When he is confronted in war,

He becomes a marksman.

He's not bothered about the availability of gun-powder or the non-availability of it

The king who reigned at Kòso,

Just continue to take your shots.

He-who-stuck-cudgel-in-his-side-waist-to-wage-war.

When he wakes up, he prepares for war.

He-who-swings-cudgel-to-fight-in-war;

He uses a short cudgel

to cut off the head of the *Alápiti* masquerade;

One-who-has-his-charms-in-the-rattle.

One-who-has-charms-and-armlets-stuck-all-over-his-body;

You don't need to wage a war to create fear in the minds of your enemies;

One who is fully armed when going to battle;
 The mighty man who silenced the war;
 One whose arrival in battle changes the course of war.
 He has respect for nobody when in war.
 He who helps to behead, child of Yemoja.
 The great fighter who stings everyone like bees.
 The mighty storm that soaked fourteen hundred people.⁴⁰

While we may trace the enormous achievements of Šangó in the military and spiritual spheres to his natural endowment, his pursuit of justice and fairness on earth was the result of his love for honor. To him, human existence on earth involved more than spiritual satisfaction and military protection. The most important article of need, worthy of being possessed by everyone on earth, is moral power—which one uses to strike a balance in all of one's social relations with the other members of the community to guarantee honesty, peace, and harmony on earth. It is for this reason that Šangó is said to forbid lying and stealing, two offences that are against the Yorúbá ethical system. Šangó loves the truth, but he hates liars, thieves, and other criminals. It is this ability of his to enforce truthfulness and good behavior that makes him a force to be reckoned with among the Yorúbá up till today. This is because people respect more readily any deity that can deal with practical problems quickly, efficiently, and effectively. Perhaps, it is only Ógún who shares this attribute with Šangó in the Yorúbá pantheon.⁴¹ Šangó's commitment to truthfulness is presented by one of his praise singers this way:

*Ebi sọjọ ní je léyìn asódodo,
 Oko iyá mí.
 A-kò-má-tíkà-léyìn,
 A-kò-má-gbẹgbẹ-éké-rú.
 A-fágbàná-rúnwó-éké-dànù;
 A-kunlé-polé;
 Ogirigiri,
 Ekún-a-şéke.
 Onímú ò şimó, ihé ò sá.
 Šangó, a-kò-má-tíkà-léyìn.*

He stands solidly behind a truthful person,
 My lord.
 He who refuses to support the wicked,
 He who refuses to accept the sacrifice offered by the liar.

He-who-makes-the-liar-bankrupt;
 He-who-burns-down-a-house-to-kill-the-thief;
 The terrible, rumbling one;
 The leopard that devours the liar.
 The owner of the nose turns up his nose, the liar trembles.
 Šàngó, he-who-refuses-to-support-the-wicked-ones.⁴²

It is a fact that has been proved often enough in Yorùbá society that Šàngó priests still have the secret power of directing lightning to identify and strike a thief or criminal. Therefore, today, people still use the secret power of Šàngó on critical occasions. For instance, if something very important is stolen, and every effort to locate the item through conventional means has failed, some people often go to Šàngó priests for help and quick resolution of their problems. Even when it comes to swearing or taking an oath in contemporary Yorùbá society, many people will think twice before using any of the symbols of Šàngó or Ògún. Such people will probably be more comfortable using either the Qur'an or the Bible. This is because only Šàngó and Ògún rule the minds of this people when it comes to swearing about serious matters in Yorùbá society. One may conclude therefore, that Šàngó will continue to retain his prestigious position in the Yorùbá pantheon for as long as he continues to rule and guard the conscience of those who believe in him.

What I have done in this chapter is to discuss the elevated position occupied by Šàngó in the Yorùbá pantheon. I have shown that Šàngó is one of the most powerful and universally worshipped Yorùbá deities both in Nigeria and in the Diaspora. The chapter has argued that the divinity owes this popularity to a number of variables. This has included, but has not been limited to, his association with Òyó royalty and the institution of kingship, his magical power and ability to resolve human problems through a specialized divination system which involves the manipulation of sixteen cowries, his pursuit of justice and fairness, and ability to enforce truthfulness and good behavior, his military might and prowess, and his association with two dreadful forces of nature—thunder and lightning. These factors, and many more, have made Šàngó one of the foremost and highly respected Yorùbá divinities not only in Nigeria but also among descendants of African slaves in the Diaspora.

NOTES

1. See E. B. Idowu, *Olódùmarè: God in Yorùbá Belief* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publisher, 1963), 71; and N. A. Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yorùbá* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1970; reprint 1991, 262).

2. Bádé Àjúwòtì, "Ògún: Premus Inter Pares," in *Proceedings of the First World Conference on Orìṣà Tradition*, ed. Wàndé Abimbólá, held at the University of Ifè (now Obáfémí Awólówò University, Ifè-Ifè, Nigeria June 1-7, 1981), 449.

3. Oral traditions often give a confusing impression of the exact number of Yorùbá divinities: sometimes they speak of *Èrúnlófá irúnmólé* (700 divinities). We are told also that there are *ìgbà irúnmólé ojùkátún*, *ìgbà irúnmólé ojùkòsì* (200 divinities of the right hand, and 200 divinities of the left hand—making 400) or *òkánlèwá irúnmólé* (401 divinities). There are still *òpílélégbéje irúnmólé tí wá n lu ẹ̀dán fún* (1,440 divinities for whom metal rods are sounded). See Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 67-68.

4. Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yorùbá*, 261-62.

5. Leo Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa*, vol. 1 (London: Hutchinson, 1913), 205.

6. Excerpt from Šàngó chant collected by the writer in Òyó town, Nigeria, between 1989 and 1990.

7. See Akintùndé Akinyemí, *Yorùbá Royal Poetry: A Sociobistorical Exposition and Annotated Translation*, Bayreuth African Studies Series (BASS), number 71 (Bayreuth, Germany: University of Bayreuth, 2004), 62-66, and Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbás from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate* (London: Routledge, 1921), 34-36 and 149-52.

8. Excerpt taken from the praise names of the Aláàfin in Akinyemí, *Yorùbá Royal Poetry*, 368.

9. Excerpt from Šàngó chant collected by the writer in Èdẹ town, Nigeria, between 1989 and 1990.

10. See J. A. Atanda, *The New Òyó Empire* (London: Longman Group, 1973), 20-21.

11. See Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbás*, 65, and Akinyemí, *Yorùbá Royal Poetry*, 70.

12. *Beṣẹṣẹ* served as an annual festival to commemorate the re-thatching of the Aláàfin's palace. *Beṣẹṣẹ* itself is a common savannah grass (*anadelphia arrecta*), but the ceremony by that name became an annual festival in Òyó as a result of the need for leaders of provincial towns and villages to re-thatch the Aláàfin's palace annually as a symbol of their obedience to the authority of the Aláàfin. For details on the festival, see S. O. Babayemí, "Beṣẹṣẹ Festival in Òyó," *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* 7, no. 1 (1973): 121-23.

13. Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 85.

14. According to Christine Ayorinde, in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., *The Yorùbá Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (Bloomington: Indiana University

Press, 2004), 219, "Chàngó . . . is linked to the virgin Santa Bárbara" in Cuba. She argues that an examination of the saint's legend reveals the logic behind this: Santa Bárbara chose martyrdom, and her father was struck dead by lightning as a punishment for killing her when she refused to give up her Christian faith. Catholic lithographs depict Santa Bárbara wearing a red cloak and crown, and carrying sword. The author concludes that the saint's connection with royalty and valor identifies her with the Alááfin of Òyó, among whose attributes are the color red, a sword, and a lightning stone.

15. Wande Abimbola, "The Yorùbá Traditional Religion in Brazil: Problems and Prospects," in *Seminar Series*, Number 1.1 (Ifé-Ifé, Nigeria: Department of African Languages and Literatures, University of Ifé, 1976-77), 15.

16. *Ibid.*, 33-34.

17. Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbás*, 149.

18. Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 90.

19. R. S. Smith, *Kingdoms of the Yorùbá* (London: Methuen, 1969), 25-58.

20. Atanda, *The New Òyó Empire*, 12-13.

21. For details on this system of divination, see William Bascom, *Sixteen Cowries: Yorùbá Divination from Africa to the New World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).

22. See Wande Abimbola, *Ifá: An Exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Oxford University Press, 1976), 151-94.

23. For more information on *Ifá*, see Abimbola, *Ifá*, and William Bascom, *Ifá Divination: Communication between Gods and Men in West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969).

24. The *ìbò* are used by diviners to translate their broad pronouncement into concrete details. The *ìbò* are mere lots based on the two opposite alternatives of "yes" and "no." It is the belief of the diviners that their client's inner *orí* (destiny) will make the right choice of alternatives for him/her when lots are cast. The commonest and simplest form of *ìbò* is a pair of cowry shells tied together and a piece of animal bone. Generally speaking, the cowry shell stands for "yes" while the piece of bone stands for "no."

25. David Ogungbile, "Èḗrindínlógún: The Seeing Eyes of Sacred Shells and Stones," in *Ọ̀sun across the Waters: A Yorùbá God in Africa and the Americas*, ed. Joseph M. Murphy and Mei-Mei Sanford (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 190.

26. Excerpt from *Ẹ̀ngó* chant collected by the writer in Òyó town, Nigeria, between 1989 and 1990.

27. Bascom, *Sixteen Cowries*, 582-665.

28. *Ibid.*, 733-36.

29. This name literally means "the owner of the deep pit into which one rolls and dies."

30. The new name literally means "owner of the deep pit into which one rolls but not to perdition." The ability of *Ẹ̀ngó* to protect his devotees is reflected in

the name change when he saved his client, Ológbun Àyíkú, who was going to be killed by his enemies. To commemorate that, Ifá changed the name of the man to Ológbun Àyilá.

31. Abimbola, *Ifá*, 155-56.

32. Abimbola, "The Yorùbá Traditional Religion in Brazil," 34-35.

33. Excerpt from Šangó chant collected by the writer in Èdè town, Nigeria, between 1989 and 1990.

34. Quoted by Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*, 87.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Excerpt from Šangó chant collected by the writer in Èdè town, Nigeria, between 1989 and 1990.

37. *Ibid.*

38. This is a common trend in polytheism, i.e., Yahweh's ascendancy in Jewish religion and Hare Krishna in Hinduism.

39. Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbás*, 149.

40. Excerpt from Šangó chant collected by the writer in Òyó town, Nigeria, between 1989 and 1990.

41. Ajuwon, "Ògún: Premus Inter Pares," 441-44.

42. Excerpt from Šangó chant collected by the writer in Òyó town, Nigeria, between 1989 and 1990.

The Practice and Worship of Šàngó in Contemporary Yorùbáland

ÀRÌNPÉ GBÈKÈLÓLÚ ADÉJÚMÒ

The Origin of Šàngó

Šàngó, the god of thunder, is one of the major deities worshipped among the Yorùbá people of southwestern Nigeria and their descendants in the diaspora. According to Isola,¹ different types and modes of worship of Šàngó have emerged as the deity has been transported from one region of the world to another. The myth of the origin of Šàngó itself is controversial. The first school of thought about the origin of Šàngó claims that Šàngó was one of the primordial deities that descended from heaven. Notable among scholars in this school of thought are Adeoye² and Isola.³ Adeoye asserts that Šàngó's origin cannot be pinned down to mortal parentage but to the Ifá divinatory verse, *Ọyèkú-Méjì*, that brought Šàngó to the earth.⁴ Adeoye claims that the primordial Šàngó is also referred to as *Ayilègbècè-Ọrun*, who is worshipped on *Jákúta* day, the fifth day of the Yorùbá traditional week.

The second school of thought claims that Šàngó was a human being deified as a god. Notable among scholars in this school of thought are Herthersett, Johnson, Ogunbowale, Daramola, Ladipo, and Canizares. They claim that Šàngó was the fourth *Aláàfin* of *Ọyó*, who later hanged himself, and as a result, he was deified by his followers. This was *Aláàfin Itiolú*, the son of *Ọrányàn*.⁵ According to Isola, Herthersett's position about Šàngó, which was later embraced by almost all scholars who wrote after him, was born out of Christian sentiment. Though Adeoye

highlights eight major differences between the primordial Şangó and Alááfin Ítíolú who was later deified as Şangó, in Öyó many people still mix up the two.⁶ Isola brings to the fore the reasons why Alááfin Ítíolú was deified as Şangó.⁷ In his own account, Alááfin Ítíolú of Öyó-Ílé (Old Öyó) had the same disposition to life as the primordial Şangó, hence, the name Şangó became his cognomen. However, it is apparent through our findings that Herthersett's meaning of *Ọba Kò so* (the king did not hang) is quite different from the devotees' meaning of *Olúkòso*, that is, Olú of Kòso, an area where the Alááfin later departed to the world beyond.⁸

Herthersett's opinion about Şangó's myth seems sentimental, probably because of his status as a missionary of the Christian Missionary Society (C.M.S.), whose main aim was to propagate Christianity and present anything that is opposed to Christian doctrines as evil. Hence, in order to present Şangó as evil, Herthersett perhaps distorted the myth to bring out his own view. Thus, Baba Canizares, commenting on the worship of Şangó in Cuba, also claims that the fourth Alááfin of Öyó, who was apotheosized as a deity, is being worshipped in Cuba as "Chángó."⁹ But in Nigeria where Şangó takes its root, our research findings show that Şangó, the god of thunder, predated Alááfin Ítíolú, the fourth Alááfin of Öyó.

Şangó is worshipped all over Yorúbáland, but the data for this research were drawn from four major towns where he is still worshipped as a prominent or the most prominent deity. The towns are Öyó, Ede, Íbàdán, and Íşéyín. In an interview with one Şangó priest, the *Elégún* of Öyó, Chief Şangórinde Ibúomọ, it was claimed that the two mythologies about the origin of Şangó are true, but he opined that the worship of Şangó, the god of thunder, predated the birth of Alááfin Ítíolú who later was deified as Şangó. According to all our informants, the primordial Şangó came with other primordial gods. He was worshipped on Jákúta day, the day assigned to him by the assembly of Yorúbá gods. The primordial Şangó was a troublesome and fierce god.¹⁰ He was in charge of justice. He fought the mischievous and the wicked ones with stones, which Olódùmarè (God, the Creator) gave to him as his own power. Though our informants claimed that the primordial Şangó was in charge of lightning, the control of thunder and lightning was later hijacked by the deified Şangó, to whom everybody now ascribed the power to rain thunder and brimstone on his perceived enemies.¹¹ The chief priest of Şangó, interviewed at Öyó, claimed that the use of thunder and fire to combat an enemy came as a result of the attempt made by Alááfin Ítíolú, the apotheosized Şangó, to stop Şangó's enemies from spreading the rumor

that Šàngó hanged from a tree. As Šàngó's friends retaliated by sending thunder and fire to his enemies, enemies in turn ran to the friends for help, and the usual slogan then was *Baba, ẹgbà wá ol* ("Father, save-us"), which was later nominalized as "*Baba mọgbà*." Even today, the priests of Šango are referred to as *Baba mọgbà* in all Yorùbá regions where Šàngó is worshipped.

Origin of Šàngó Worship: Our Submission

From the foregoing, it is apparent that there are some beliefs about a primordial Šàngó and his status as a god. First, it is believed that Šàngó is the god of thunder and lightning. Second, there was a primordial Šàngó in the mythologies, who came with a chain from heaven to earth in the midst of other gods and goddesses. If the myth of the creation of the earth reported by Adeoye¹² is to be considered, each of the primordial gods, including the primordial Šàngó, has his or her own devotees allotted to him or her by Ọrúnmilá. Third, the myth about the relationship of Šàngó with the other gods such as Ọrúnmilá, as narrated in *Odù Ọtúá-Oríkò*, *Ọwọnrínyékú*, *Ìkà-Méjì*, and *Ọkànràn-Méjì*, shows that Šàngó had something in common with the other primordial gods. This corroborates the fact that Šàngó as a god predated Alááfin Šàngó, referred to by Herthersett and other scholars in the same school of thought with him. For instance, the myth about the relationship between Šàngó and Ọrúnmilá says that there is a covenant between Šàngó and Ọrúnmilá. Similarly, the myth about the enmity between Šàngó and Ọgún regarding how Šàngó deceitfully snatched Ọya, Ọgún's favorite wife, because of Šàngó finesse, corroborates the fact that Šàngó existed before Alááfin Ẹfólú. This myth also encapsulates the source of Šàngó's power over lightning.

The fifth point to be considered about the origin of Šàngó is the existence of Alááfin Šàngó. All our informants agreed that one Alááfin Šàngó existed in Old Ọyọ and that he was a devotee of Šàngó. The general belief is that the Alááfin exhibited the attributes of Šàngó; hence, he was given the *oríkì inagbẹ* (sobriquet) Šàngó.¹³ But the controversial issue about this myth is the mystery behind his death. Herthersett, Canizares, and Ogunbowale, in their individual accounts, say that he died hanging on an *àáyán* tree in Kòso before his friends deified him.¹⁴ But according to oral tradition, Alááfin Šàngó never hanged himself, but simply disappeared mysteriously because he could not bear the shame of being rejected by his relatives and subjects.

Be that as it may, the myths about all Yorùbá gods and goddesses

always associate them with one particular Yorúbá town or another at a point in their life. For instance, the Yorúbá will always trace Oya to Irá town, while Ógún is traced to Irè. Hence the saying,

- i. *Oya wplé nllé Irá*
- ii. *Irè kí í péle Ógún*
Ó yá débè mọmu ní
- i. Oya disappeared into mother earth in Ira
- ii. Irè is not Ógún's home of origin
He only stops there for palm-wine

One may infer, therefore, that while the primordial Şàngó sojourned on earth, he was in Óyó at a particular time, where he was worshipped as the royal god of the Alááfin. Even today Şàngó is still one of the famous gods being worshipped and linked to the Alááfin royal lineage. Because of this, one Alááfin who took after Şàngó's attributes is now metaphorically addressed as Şàngó. He also was a devotee of Şàngó. Considering the fierce attitude of the fourth Alááfin and the circumstances surrounding his death, it is not surprising that he too was deified and turned to an object of worship. The above action finds a corroboration in Adelugba's view that man has the tendency to anthropomorphize and that the defensive impulse of man is to concretize and make the invisible visible.¹⁵

From the foregoing, the argument about Óyó as the origin of Şàngó the god of thunder could be perceived in two ways. One, the primordial Şàngó perhaps ended his sojourn on earth at Óyó. Two, the fourth Alááfin, who was later deified as a devotee of Şàngó, was the one who later made the worship of Şàngó to become more elaborate because of his control over lightning, fire and thunder, and the use of weapons against his enemies after he was deified. Hence, the opinion that Şàngó could not be worshipped without being linked to Alááfin Şàngó will be upheld.

However, the practice and worship of Şàngó differ from place to place. One of our informants, Chief Şàngórindé Ibúomọ, has this to say: *E mò pé mo sọ pé Şàngó kaulé máa ń lọ fara. ban elégún pé obun ti ẹ ó se nìyí. Bí ó se ń fara ban ẹnikòòhàn ní ilú kòòkan yàtò.* ("You know I have said that Şàngó deliberately reveals himself to his spirit-carrier and tells him what to do. The way he reveals himself to the spirit-carrier in each town is different.") This statement accounts for some of the noticeable differences in the mode of practice and worship of Şàngó in places where he is worshipped today.

The Worship of Šàngó

The annual worship of Šàngó takes place in a shrine, which is believed to be sacred to Šàngó worshippers. It is worthy of note that both the initiates and the non-initiates can worship Šàngó. But the non-initiates are mere spectators who are felicitating with friends and loved ones who are Šàngó devotees. The sacred aspect of the worship of Šàngó is restricted to the *adóni Šàngó* (Šàngó priest / priestess). The *adónis* are initiated into the cult of Šàngó, and they are usually dedicated worshippers. Therefore, they are normally referred to as *iyámó Šàngó* (Šàngó's wives). At all levels of worship, an ordinary devotee cannot take active part in the worship of Šàngó. He or she could only be a nominal participant.

Šàngó could be worshipped at five different levels, namely: the early-morning worship, the Jákúta-day worship, the revelation worship, the twenty-one-day worship, and the annual Šàngó festival. The early-morning worship is essentially an individual affair. A priest who has a shrine in his house does this with his family members. The Jákúta-day worship is done every fifth day, also by individual priest, but in a more elaborate way than the early-morning worship. The twenty-one-day worship is also an elaborate worship which marks the day that primordial Šàngó disappeared from Ifè Oòyè en route to Àrìbà.¹⁶ The revelation worship is another form of individualized worship. Šàngó may decide to reveal himself to someone through dream or in his or her adventure on earth. If this happens, it is compulsory for such an individual to worship Šàngó. Šàngó will dictate the items of sacrifice to the individual, and when the objects should be sacrificed to him. The annual festival is an event that brings together all Šàngó worshippers in a particular town. Our research has also revealed that Šàngó could be personalized. For instance, in each of the royal families of Èdè town, Ilé Dádùdù, Ilé Dúròdólá, Ilé Ọ̀jẹ̀timí, and Ilé Bábáńlá, the Šàngó shrine is erected in the family compound. The generalized objects usually found at the shrine are:

1. *apírí*, a wooden bowl in which thunderbolts are kept;
2. *adó*, a mortar;
3. *arugbá*, a carved female figure, in kneeling posture carrying a bowl;
4. *esé*, a wooden axe having two blades;
5. *ihókò*, an ornamented clay pot;
6. *síṣíṣí*, a small long-necked gourd containing seeds of the *awwa* plant, used as a rattle; and
7. *iwá*, a horn.

We, however, observed that the objects of worship vary from shrine to shrine. For instance, at the shrine of Ọbabinrin Şàngó, Kẹhinde Ọjó, a priestess of Şàngó based in Ịbàdàn, we also noticed the following objects in addition to the items previously listed:

1. *ere akúhẹ*—a carved cock;
2. Şàngó's painting on the wall;
3. mat;
4. different types of mask;
5. a magical box;
6. red cloth;
7. bottles; and
8. gourd of water.

Personalized Worship

The personalized worship of Şàngó is peculiar to Şàngó priests, priestesses, and devotees. Each *mogbá* and priest/priestess makes sure he/she worships Şàngó every day with *orógbó* (bitter kola). Although the daily worship is not elaborate, it always involves chanting (*Şàngó pípẹ*).¹⁷ The priest/priestess salutes Şàngó and pays homage to him during this time, and hands over his/her life and all that he/she is going to do daily to Şàngó. An account is given by Isola¹⁸ of Ọdẹjìn, a priest of Şàngó at Ọyó, who worshiped Şàngó in his presence:

O gbọ Şàngó

Bá a bá jí, Olá lá á kí
Bàbáyèyè!
O jìre omọ Ọṣàáńṣẹ
O jìre, Şàngó
O jìre, Bàbáyèyè . . .
Ìbà è é hunmọ
Má jẹ́ kó hun mé o
Àṣe iná níná fí é mágí o
Fáṣe sí mí lẹnu Şàngó
Àṣe ọ̀rùn lòrùn fí é lẹ
Fáṣe sí mí lẹnu omọ Ọ̀ṣàáńṣẹ.

I trust you are hearing me, Şàngó
 When we wake up, we salute the Lord

The Almighty
 Good morning, son of Òṣàásè
 Good morning Šàngó
 Good morning, the Almighty . . .
 He who pays due homage is safe
 May I be safe too.
 It is by its peculiar power that fire consumes the wood
 Put the magic power of utterance—fulfillment
 On my tongue, Šàngó
 It is by its peculiar power that the sun rises
 Put the magic power of utterance—fulfillment
 On my tongue, son of Òṣàásè.¹⁹

After the homage, sacrifice of *orógbó* will be offered to Sango, and then the priest can continue the day's activity, believing all is going to be well. But when a Šàngó priest invites other priests and devotees to come and worship with him, the audience will be feasted with Šàngó's favorite food: *ámálá* (yam flour pudding) and *gbégbiri* soup (peanut soup) with *àkùkò* (rooster). The personalized worship of Šàngó can also extend to the worship made on behalf of the child of a devotee who is getting married. Even in contemporary society, there have been cases of such worship, especially in the Òyó-speaking area of Yorùbáland. This act of worship transcends the educational status of such devotees.

The Revelation Worship

Adeoye claims that if Šàngó has revealed himself to a particular individual, such a revelation can lead to a type of Šàngó worship.²⁰ Šàngó devotees also can provoke a revelation appearance or visitation through worship. This type of worship is peculiar to some parts of Òyó-speaking areas of Yorùbáland. For instance, in Òtu, a town in Òyó north, the devotees believe that Šàngó visits his devotees every three years. Therefore, at a certain period, the *Èlégùn* will be secluded in a thick forest.²¹ There, he will make sacrifices and worship Šàngó. The *Èlégùn* will be there for seven days, during which Šàngó might reveal himself. On the seventh day, the devotees will now go and receive the *Èlégùn* at the entrance of the forest; they will then dance round the town for seven days as the *Èlégùn* prays for everybody he meets on his way.

Jákúta-Day Worship

According to our findings, the Jákúta-day worship is always very elaborate. This takes place every fifth day. In the worship of Şangó on a particular Jákúta-day which I participated in, the different aspects of worship were painstakingly performed by the priestess of Şangó, Obabinrin Şangó, Kéhindé Òjó. It should be stressed that it is an abomination for a devotee to pass through the shrine of Şangó without paying homage to the god of thunder. The mere sight of the shrine and object that symbolize Şangó calls for salutation and homage. Therefore, the first aspect of worship on Jákúta-day entails salute or homage to Şangó, followed by prayer or supplication. The excerpt below is a priestess's salute to Şangó at the time of this research:

Bòmọ ó bá labán

Baba ní kọ perí

Mọ júbá baba mi Olúòso

Ọna-mọ nilagbá ikú

Elégbèrún ábáábá

Kábiyèsí, ọkọ mi

Şangó, Olúkòso arẹkújẹ

O ó jàre bí ọ?

Şangó, gbé mí lóníl ọ

Ewéléré, ọkọ mi

Má júde ọni ó hun mí

Jé ó yẹ mí kalẹ tọmọtọmọ.

If a child wants to talk

He first calls on his father

I salute you my father Olúòso

One-who-beats-a-child to death with the *ilagbá* whip

The one with one thousand charmed padlock

Kábiyèsí, my husband

Şangó, Olúkòso who wears the mask all-about

Good morning

Şangó be in my support today

Ewéléré,²³ my lord

Do not let me fall into trouble today

Let it be well with me and my children.

Immediately after this, the priestess throws nine pieces of *orogbó* on the floor as a way of knowing whether she should continue with the sacrifice or not. The moment Šàngó confirms that the sacrifice should continue, other aspects of the ritual performance then follow.

The metamorphosis stage is the second phase of the salute/homage aspect of worship. The sacrificial items will be picked and shown to Šàngó one after another. Libation now follows as the priest slaughters the sacrificial ram, and its blood poured on the thunderbolt in the *apèrè*. The blood is to appease Šàngó. The belief is that Šàngó visits his devotees during worship and that the moment he sights the blood of the ram, he will be pleased to bless them.

The theatrical aspect of worship is the stage when the spirit of Šàngó is seriously invoked through the chanting of *Šàngó pípè*. This aspect of worship brings to the fore the glamorous attributes of Šàngó. As Šango is praised, the *Èlégùn* (spirit-medium) will be possessed. There are times that a non-initiate may be possessed, but usually if a non-initiate is possessed, palm oil will be given to him or her as an antidote. Dancing and drumming of *bàtá* music also form an integral part of this theatrical stage. The Jákúta-day worship usually ends with a time of music, dancing, and feasting. As the people are dancing, they always remember to bring their heart's desires to Šàngó in form of prayer.

The Annual Worship

The annual worship takes place during either the dry season or the rainy season. However, the most elaborate is the rainy season festival. There are six features of the annual festival as highlighted by Isola:²³

1. The period of the festival is long.
2. Sacrifices are offered at the different shrines.
3. There are sumptuous feasting.
4. There is prolonged chanting of *Šàngó pípè*.
5. There is elaborate dancing to *bàtá* drums.
6. There is usually a magical display by the *Èlégùn*.

The period of the festival differs from one place to another. For instance, the annual worship of Šàngó at Òyó, which normally takes place over a long period, has been subsumed to a day. A week is now dedicated to the worship of all deities in Òyó, and Šàngó is given just a day. One thing that is common to the worship, whether it is going to be for a day or longer, is that the worship must start on a Jákúta day. The annual worship of

Şàngó in Íşéyìn and Òyó takes place in a location called Kòsò, the place where the apotheosized Şàngó departed from the earth.

Contrary to the above, the annual worship of Şàngó is still elaborately celebrated in Ede town. The celebration runs through a week. The announcement of the annual worship usually takes place twenty-one days before the festival. The long notice allows Şàngó devotees and their relations in the Diaspora to come home for the festival. Apart from this, there are some preparations that must be made by the *baálè* or *mágbáji* of every compound in the town. The preparation involves all the high chiefs, clan chiefs (*mágbáfi*), and the Timi, the paramount ruler of Ede himself. The *mágbájis*, on behalf of members of their compounds, must go and present gifts in cash and kinds to the king. Food items and rams are usually part of such gifts.

Stages in the Annual Worship of Şàngó in Present Day Ede

Day 1: The Dipping Day

This is the beginning of the festival. The *mágbá* goes to River Oşun and dips a calabash into it to fetch water. The River Oşun is specifically chosen because Oşun was one of the wives of the primordial Şàngó. This act is usually referred to as *Oşó íşagbè bódò* ("The day of dipping the gourd into the river"). There is the belief that rain will fall only after this ceremony. The fetched water is medicinal. Immediately the water is brought to the shrine of the *Íyápo* (spirit-medium), who is possessed on the first day of festival; women who desire children from Şàngó will come and drink of it.

Day 2: The Sacrifice Day

The second day is earmarked for a more elaborate worship of Şàngó. This day is set aside for priests and priestesses to offer sacrifices to Şàngó in their respective shrines situated in their compounds. The day is dedicated to making rituals to one's father and mother. Generally, Şàngó is believed to be their father, while Oya is taken to be their mother. Hence, the praise of Oya is also a major component of the epithet rendered in praise of Şàngó.

The various aspects of sacrifice on Jákúta-day worship are religiously followed, but rams are killed, and their blood poured as libation on *edùn ará*, the symbol of Şàngó. Salutation/homage, metamorphosis, chanting of *Şàngó pípi*, and rhythmic dancing to a *bátá* ensemble always accompany the worship. After the individual worship by the priests, the priests

now proceed to the palace. The paramount ruler of the city, the Timi of Èdè himself, will receive them in his palace, and give them lots of rams and cows to be sacrificed on behalf of his subjects. After being slaughtered, the cows and rams given by the Timi will be roasted, and all the devotees will partake in the eating of the roasted meat. The significance of this is the belief that once you have been a partaker, no curse or ill wishes will have effects on you. This notable aspect of Sàngó's annual worship is the *aképe* (curse-negator) ceremony. The feasting of *aképe* meat marks the end of day two ceremonies.

Days 3-7: Feasting, Dancing, and Magical Feat Days

The third to the seventh days are for feasting, dancing, chanting, and performance of magical feats. The devotees, priests, and priestesses will assemble at the front of the palace to dance to *bátá* music. Songs depicting the physique, nature, and attributes of Sàngó are sung. Such songs include the following:

1. *Ewéléré, obaa Kòso*
Má má jáyè ó paré
Má má jáyè ó paré
Má má jáyè ó paré
Ewéléré, obaa Kòso
Má má jáyè ó paré.

Ewéléré, the king of Kòso
 Do not let the world go into oblivion
 Do not let the world go into oblivion
 Do not let the world go into oblivion
 Ewéléré, the king of Kòso
 Do not let the world go into oblivion.

2. *E bá n gbé Sàngó*
Òsà ení láá gbé gge
E bá n gbé Sàngó o
Òsà ení láá gbé gge.

Lift Sango up
 It's one deity that one lifts up
 Lift Sango up
 It's one deity that one lifts up.

3. *Sàngó dé*
Orò, ọkọ Oya
A-gbèná-gèngé
A-fíkè-lénu ya.

Sàngó is here
 The bullroarer, husband of Oya
 One-who-carries-the-fire-high-up
 One-who-tears-the-mouth-of-the-mischievous-person.

As the devotees dance and jubilate, the *Ẹlégún* is distinctively recognized through his costume. He dresses in a red blouse and skirt known respectively as *gbèrí* and *lábá*. Two carved images are usually in front of the *gbèrí* and a carved image at the back. The hand props on the *Ẹlégún* are *asé Sàngó* (Sàngó wand) and a big red handkerchief called *òdòdò-Sàngó*. The neck/ankle prop is *kulé* (a mixture of red and white beads which are alternatively sown together). According to Canizares,²⁴ the mixture of white and red is a sign of Ọbàtálá's cooling effect on Sàngó's red hot temper. But one of our informants, a Sàngó princess, claims that it is a depiction of Sàngó's finesse and fierceness. The red symbolizes Sàngó's fierceness and heartlessness, while the white is cooling down the fierceness and danger associated with the wrath of Sàngó. The *Ẹlégún* now sits on *adúo-Sàngó* (Sàngó mortar), which is the stage prop. The moment he is on the mortar, he is referred to as Sàngó, because he is now the god-hero.

Chanting and a dancing spree now fill the air. The following excerpt is a recorded text of performance on an annual festival of Sàngó:

Sàngó o o o
Olákóori o o o
Olájú orágbá
Elééké obi o o
Kábiyèsì, Ewélèrè ọkọ mí
Subúlutú tí jí mu tábá oògùn
Iná lój'u
Iná lènu
Iná lóóléc páànu
Jagbo bí Orò o o
Jagbo bí orágbá o o
Elééké obi o o o
Ó pègábon, ó gbé e rùbàrò

Ó pàyàwó ó gbé e riyáálé
Iránmọlẹ abijàwàrà
Ó há baálé jiyàn igàngàn ràn
Ó pọmo è sloro
Ó ní háa bá jeni lóoré
Opé láá dá
Abẹmọlórí fi iyókú jinni
Áyánràn iná
Àkàtá yeryeri
Ewe e e e e e
Ewéléré o ò
Sàngó
Olúkoórí.

The-man-with-the-bitter-kola-eye
 The-man-with-the-kola-nut-chin
Kábiyèré, Ewéléré my husband
 Subúlitú²⁵ that snuff medicinal tobacco
 Early in the morning
 His eye emits fire
 His mouth emits fire
 He is the fire in the roof
 He is as bitter as the bullroarer
 He is as bitter as the bitter-kola
 The man with the kola nut chin
 He kills the elder brother and put his corpse
 On his younger brother's head
 He kills the young wife and put her corpse
 On the elderly wife
 One-thousand-demons that fight scowlingly
 He eats pounded-yam with the head of a compound
 And kills his son at the forecourt
 He says when you are kind to someone
 You must give thanks
 One-who-beheaded-a-child
 And left the corpse
 The mighty fire, the great lightning
 Ewé é é é
 Ewéléré.

As the chanting goes on, the spirit of Şàngó will be descending on the devotees. It is therefore a taboo to stand at the entrance of the shrine and obstruct Şango from coming in at will.²⁶ At this point, the *Èlégún* becomes possessed and can also fall into a trance. His movement becomes erratic as he jumps and suddenly becomes dizzy.²⁷ He will then start prophesying.²⁸ This now leads to the next stage of performance, which is the magical feat.

The Magical Performance Aspect of Şàngó Worship

Investigation shows that the metaphysical aspect of performance is that aspect of worship that links *Èlégún* to Şàngó. In his time, Şàngó is believed to have charms, and he could do mysterious things with this magical power. One of the feats he was known for was carrying fire with his bare hands. This is re-enacted again as the *Èlégún*, even in this contemporary time, also carries a bowl of fire with his/her hands. The *Èlégún* can also call forth anything she/he desires, or the devotees desire, through magical power. The magical aspect of performance is an integral part of the annual worship, for without it the festival is incomplete.

The Magical Feat

The stage props for the magical performance are *odóo-Şàngó* (Şàngó's mortar), the magical box, a black wrapper, and *odòtòo-Şàngó* (Şàngó's red handkerchief). At the point of performance, the *Èlégún* sits on the mortar. The magical box, which is rectangular in shape, is drawn close to him/her. The box has both a wooden and a glass cover. The *Èlégún* covers the box with the black wrapper and the red handkerchief. As he covers the box, he begins to make an incantation in order to send the spirit on errand. The spirit will now bring whatsoever is the desire of the *Èlégún*.²⁹

The Ancestral Worship in Şàngó Festival

The ancestral worship is a vital aspect of Şàngó festival in Èdè. The masquerades are called *Egúngún-un Şàngó* (Şàngó's masquerades). *Egúngún* and Şàngó are believed to be brothers, *Egúngún* being the elder one. The reason for this is not far-fetched because, according to two of our informants, the *Odù Ifá* that brought both of them to the earth is *Ọyè kú-Méjì*.³⁰ Therefore, anytime Şàngó is worshipped in Èdè, *Egúngún* is also propitiated. The sacrificial items for *Egúngún* include wine, kola

nuts, and cocks. Investigation shows that the spirit of Egúngún is gentle, so it is necessary to feature it in order to calm the fiery force of Šàngó.³¹

Ridicule: An Aspect of Šàngó Worship

The act of worship of Šàngó by his devotees is beyond the five realms of worship discussed above. The devotees worship with their actions and ways of life because Šàngó hates evil and mischief. No adherent will ever wish to incur the wrath of Šàngó through living an indecent way of life or being an aberrant to the norms of the society.³² Šàngó, according to Idowu, is a "manifestation of the wrath of Olódùmarè" against men and their evil acts.³³ Thus, Šàngó is believed to be the god of justice. He speedily judges anybody that commits a heinous offense. In his attack, he knows no bounds. Thus, he is praised as *a-jà-má-máàlâ* (he-who-fights-without-moderation). In his rage, he does not limit the punishment to the offender. Neighbors and co-tenants may share in such punishment.

Šàngó employs ridicule as one of the weapons of his attack. In the past, and even in recent times, offenders who have stolen or committed evils are openly disgraced by sudden deaths through thunderbolts with the stolen items placed on their chests. Adeoye states that when this happens, the *mogbà* will be consulted immediately. The *mogbà's* role is twofold:³⁴ one, to remove the thunderbolt from the dead, and two, to propitiate the spirit of Šàngó. As the propitiation is going on, satirical songs are sung, and everybody at that spot, including the relatives of the dead culprit, must dance to the song.

The Yorùbá culture values the "shame culture." No one wants to bring shame to his or her family. The family of the deceased has been given a bad name already, and on top of it they must dance to the satirical songs rendered. The excerpts below are examples of such songs:

1. *Šàngó, má pa mí o*
N ò bá wọn pọmọ je
Òvrá-bàbá-sánnọ-láábàrà,
Šàngó, má pa mí o
N ò bá wọn pọmọ je.

Šàngó, do not kill me
 I am not among those that kill children
 One-who-hovers-to-slap, you've arrived
 Šàngó, do not kill me
 I am not among those that kill children.

2. *Kádòsù ó róde lẹ*
Kádòsù ó róde lẹ
Sàngó, rọjò kóo polẹ
Kádòsù ó róde lẹ.

So that the priest might go out to officiate
 So that the priest might go out to officiate
 Sango let rain fall and kill the thief
 So that the priest might go out to officiate.

Although the song is in praise of Sàngó, it is an indirect way of mocking the person that has stolen. However, the butt of the ridicule is no longer the dead but his relatives, who are compelled to dance and praise Sàngó for his acts of justice. This is contrary to the Yorùbá attitude toward death, especially if it is the death of a young person. The occasion that is supposed to be for mourning the deceased will now be a joyous moment, as it is a taboo for the relatives of the victim of Sàngó's attack to mourn. To add more to the ridicule, they must also provide lots of food items (*ámálá* with *gbègiri* soup) and ram for the *adòsù* and *mogbá*. In short, they are at the mercy of the *mogbá*, because any amount demanded from them must be provided; hence, Sàngó is referred to as "*a-lápa-dùpẹ*" (one-that-kills-and-you-still-thank him). This retributive aspect of Sàngó's worship is a subtle way of satirizing the wicked in order to bring sanity to the society. This simple act of worship is so dreadful that no one will want to be a subject of shame in society.

Taboos Surrounding the Worship of Sàngó

There are some taboos associated with the worship of Sàngó. These include the following:

1. A devotee must not smoke, for this may amount to imitating Sàngó.
2. A devotee must eat neither the *ágó* (rat) nor the *ẹjírò* (red flanked duiker).
3. It is an abomination for a female *adòsù* and a male *adòsù* to marry each other.
4. It is forbidden for Sàngó devotees to eat *ẹmá sísé* (cowpeas).
5. It is also a taboo for Sàngó devotees to eat *ẹmi dẹ* (a type of vegetable).²⁸

Different reasons are adduced for not eating *àgò* rat and *ésíró*. They are both portrayed as disloyal beings who betrayed Šàngó, who consequently turned them into animals. In addition, the moment a devotee is initiated as a priest or priestess, he or she automatically becomes Šàngó's wife. Thus, it is an abomination for two of Šàngó's wives to marry. The reason adduced for not eating *éwá òsè* lies in the belief that the fourth Aláàfin ate it, and it caused stomach disorder. Since then, Šàngó devotees abhor it. Also, the taboo on *emi díẹ* is integrated to Šàngó worship from Yemoja worship. Yemoja was Šàngó's foster mother. Yemoja did not eat *emi díẹ*, and Šàngó adopted this habit. It is also discovered that anytime Šàngó is worshipped, it is a taboo for devotees or non-initiates to stand by the door. The reason for this is that as the invocation goes on through the chanting of *Šàngó pípẹ* and throughout the worship session, Šàngó's spirit will be present. Therefore, if he intends to come in, he may not like to be obstructed.

Conclusion

This chapter has elucidated the various aspects of Šàngó worship in southwestern Nigeria. Contributing to the debate about the origin of Šàngó worship, we conclude that though the fourth Aláàfin of Old Òyó was apotheosized as Šàngó, the primordial Šàngó predated him. Therefore, the Šàngó which is worshipped in southwestern Nigeria is the primordial Šàngó, whose fame was spread and is still being spread by devotees who follow him. Also, the satirical aspect of Šàngó worship is still present.

In sum, it is considered that Šàngó, as a god, is not a god of the past but is still relevant in contemporary Yorùbá culture and religion. The practice of Šàngó worship is still as potent in some places as it was in the past. Šàngó is worshipped as ritual performance, and its myth has given birth to many artistic, poetic, and dramatic works. For instance, Bamidele gives an account of the potency of Šàngó worship as he mentions the ways some priests/priestesses make a god-hero of Šàngó.³⁶ According to him, they roam about in streets and markets to pray for people, who in return give them gifts. The people's actions corroborate the fact that they have faith in Šàngó, who, as a god, has not been de-supernaturalized in spite of the activities of radical Christians and Muslims.

Finally, the recent trend of the depiction of the Šàngó myth in literary works, as revealed by Bamidele,³⁷ attests to the fact that Šàngó (as well as his worship) is still real. The list of dramatic works on Šàngó's myth demonstrates his popularity.³⁸ Today, a popular actor is referred to as

Şangó. He always plays the god-hero in his plays as he emits fire from his mouth and engages in all the magical feats which were attributed to the apotheosized Şangó in his days. A feeling of the impulse of his audience shows that the actor is popular because he brings to the fore this fierce god and his supernatural prowess even in this jet age.¹⁰

NOTES

1. Akinwumi Isola, "Èdè-àiyedè tí ó rọ̀ mọ̀ oerun Şangó," in *O Pẹ̀gèdè: Àkọ̀jọ̀ pọ̀ Àwọn Àrìkọ̀ Akadà fún yinyinò ọ̀jọ̀gbọ̀n Adébáyè Babalúá*, ed. Omotayo Olu-toye. (Lagos: Longman Nigeria, 2000), 113-19.
2. C. L. Adeoye, *Ìgbàgbọ̀ àti Èsìn Yorùbá* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Evans Publishers, 1985), 285-88.
3. Isola, "Èdè Àiyedè," 113.
4. Adeoye, *Ìgbàgbọ̀ àti Èsìn*, 285.
5. Isola, "Èdè Àiyedè," 114.
6. Adeoye, *Ìgbàgbọ̀ àti Èsìn*, 288.
7. Isola, "Èdè Àiyedè," 114.
8. *Ibid.*, 113.
9. B. R. Canizares, *Şàngó: Santería and the Orishá of Thunder* (Plainview, N.Y.: Original Publications, 2000), 1.
10. Adeoye, *Ìgbàgbọ̀ àti Èsìn*, 285-86.
11. Akinwumi Isola, "Şangó-pípè: One Type of Yoruba Oral Poetry," M.A. thesis, University of Lagos, 1973, 1.
12. Adeoye, *Ìgbàgbọ̀ àti Èsìn*, 80-85.
13. Adeoye, *Ìgbàgbọ̀ àti Èsìn*, 287, and Isola, "Èdè Àiyedè," 114.
14. A. L. Hethersett, "Ìtàn Şangó," in *Ìwé Kíkà Ẹ̀kerin Lẹ̀ Èdè Yorùbá*, ed. A. L. Hethersett (Lagos: Church Missionary Society, 1941), 51; Canizares, *Şàngó*, 1; and P. O. Ogunbowale, *Àwọn Irinmọ̀lẹ̀ Ilẹ̀ Yorùbá* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Evans Publishers, 1962), 33.
15. D. Adelugba, "Trance and Theatre: The Nigerian Experience," in *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*, ed. Yemi Ogunbiyi. (Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981), 183.
16. Adeoye, *Ìgbàgbọ̀ àti Èsìn*, 296.
17. *Şangó pípè* is one type of Yorùbá traditional oral poetry that is chanted in praise of Şangó.
18. Isola, "Şangó-pípè," 14-17.
19. *Ibid.*, 17.
20. Adeoye, *Ìgbàgbọ̀ àti Èsìn*, 294.
21. The *Èlégún* is the spirit-carrier/medium who is the god-hero. The moment the *Èlégún* is possessed he is no more his person but Şangó.
22. *Ewélére* means "The art of herbal medicine is profitable." It is one of Şangó's sobriquets, to confirm his knowledge of herbal medicine.

23. Isola, "Sàngó-pípè," 21.

24. Canizares, *Sàngó*, 13.

25. Subúlutú is one of Sàngó's sobriquets that has lost its etymological meaning.

26. In the course of this research, one of my research assistants stood at the entrance of the shrine where Jákíta-day worship was being performed. He was possessed and palm oil was given to him as an antidote before he came round.

27. This was witnessed at the worship of Sàngó in the shrine of Oḅabínrin Sàngó, Princess Kèhíndé Ojò at Ibadan.

28. Ogunbowale, *Àwọn Irúnmọlẹ́*, 34.

29. An example of this is a magical feat performed at the worship of Sàngó in the shrine of Oḅabínrin Sàngó in Ibadan. The *Èlégún* used her magical prowess to produce sweets and biscuits for the audience.

30. The information collected from Sàngó's chief priest at Èḍe and Princess Kèhíndé Ojò attests to this. Adeoye, *Ìgbàgbọ́ àti Èsìn*, 288-89, also collaborates the fact that Ọ̀yèkú-Méjì brought Sàngó to earth.

31. The ancestral worship is not limited to Èḍe. Even in Jákíta worship of Sàngó a priest may decide to worship the ancestors. A case of this is recorded at the worship of Sàngó at Oḅabínrin Kèhíndé Ojò Sàngó's shrine in Ibadan.

32. Ogunbowale, *Àwọn Irúnmọlẹ́*, 33; Isola, "Sàngó-pípè," 22-24; and Adeoye, *Ìgbàgbọ́ àti Èsìn*, 300.

33. E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olódùmarì God in Yorùbá Belief* (London: Longman, 1962), 88.

34. Adeoye, *Ìgbàgbọ́ àti Èsìn*, 294.

35. Isola, "Sàngó-pípè," 221, and Adeoye, *Ìgbàgbọ́ àti Èsìn*, 294.

36. L. Bamidele, "Sàngó Myth and Its Challenges in Science, Art and Religion," in *IBA: Essays on African Literature in Honour of Oyin Ogunba*, ed. W. Ogundele and O. Adedot. (Ifè, Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2003), 185.

37. *Ibid.*, 178-86.

38. The list of such works according to *ibid.*, 182-83, include:

a. *Bumgbese Sàngó* by Esinkinni Olusanyin;

b. *Ose Sàngó* by Afolabi Adesanya;

c. *Àrú* by Femi Anikulapo Kuti;

d. *Oba Kò Sò* by Duro Ladipo;

e. *Sàngó* by Wale Ogunyemi;

f. *Ìbínú Sàngó* by Wale Ogunyemi; and

g. *Many Colors Make The Thunder King* by Femi Osofisan.

39. The actor is one of Jimoh Aliu's sons, nicknamed Sàngó. According to Tai Oguntayo's story titled "Èkítì Agog As Àwòrò and Fáyóṣé Get Awards," in *Saturday Tribune*, March 12, 2005, one of the events slated to thrill the audience at the Award Ceremony is the magical feat. He says "Sàngó will again cut into pieces different parts of human beings in the full glare of viewers and then join them together again."

Ẓàngó's Èḗrìndínlógún Divinatory System

GEORGE OLÚŞOLÁ AJÍBÁDÉ

This chapter examines the divinatory system of the cult of Ẓàngó among the Yorùbá of southwestern Nigeria. I discuss the pluralistic nature of the divinatory system in this cult and its place in Yorùbá cosmology in time and space, opening with discussion of the essence of the divinatory system among the Yorùbá and different ways by which they decipher information about futuristic events in order to forestall impending dangers.

Virtually all Yorùbá deities, apart from Ọ̀rúnmilà, use Èḗrìndínlógún to decipher information about futuristic events and to learn what to do to avert ongoing and impending disasters. The deducible reason for this is that Ọ̀rúnmilà is the deity who has given Èḗrìndínlógún divinatory objects and method to other deities through Ọ̀ṣun. This chapter deals with the acquisition of Èḗrìndínlógún divinatory system, the *orí* of Ẓàngó and its general interpretations, and the content of Ẓàngó divination literature, as well as identifies gender traits in the divinatory system of Ẓàngó showing a bias for the masculinity of Ẓàngó. The study concludes with the effects of globalization on the divinatory system of the cult of Ẓàngó.

Divination and Its Essence among the Yorùbá

For most sub-Saharan African peoples, divination rites are an essential part of daily life. An individual casts pieces of a kola nut or addresses questions to a friction oracle in the morning in order to determine what

to do to make his or her way successful through the day. A family may consult a diviner to learn why death is repeatedly taking a mother's newborn children or to know the will of the ancestors for resolving conflicts within the household. A king seeks the knowledge of his diviners to make his position of authority secure. Diviners are agents of memory, the preservers of people's history, or, in times of crisis, the creators of a past or a vision by which the living may endure.¹

To the Yorùbá, divination is an essential part of their normal daily life. Divination among them is in diverse forms. In a traditional Yorùbá society, the type of dreams an individual has, the first person an individual meets when he or she wakes up, repeated occurrence of an incidence, which leg an individual hits on a rock or stump, all these are signs of carefulness, and in short they are passing one message or the other on to the person. From these and many other means, an individual person can know about what is going to happen to him, to befall her. Also, kola nuts are used as a way of knowing the future, and various interpretations are given to each of the results of each cast, that is, when the lobes of kola-nuts are thrown. It all depends on what appears and what interpretations are given to it by the diviner. Through divination, human beings know what they should do and what they should not. They know the deity to offer sacrifice to and when they are to offer the sacrifice. In essence, divination is a cautionary measure which the people employ in order to live a desired and meaningful life of blessings, longevity, prosperity, and sound health. It is the prayer of Yorùbá that "what we are not thinking should not destroy what we are thinking" (*Obun tí a ò ró kó má ba obun tí à ù ró jé*). This connotes that the Yorùbá people plan for unforeseen contingencies, but they are aware that much of the future is menacingly unknown. They have to seek to penetrate the unknown by different means. Prominent among the means used is divination. Hence the saying "*Bóni tí rí òlú kè í rí bíé, lo ñ mu kí babaláwo máa dífà ọpọrún*" (Today's happenings might not be the same as that of tomorrow prompts the diviner to make weekly divination). The Yorùbá believe that the world in which they live is influenced by certain forces—witches, sorcerers, the ancestral spirits, and malevolent forces. Therefore, they believe that it is wise and expedient for them to have these powers on their side for favor and mercies, and they are convinced that the diviner can reveal what these forces are planning and what men can do to forestall, propitiate, and humor them. Thus, divination is a means by which divine will and directives are ascertained.² Through divination, the Yorùbá make effort to find an answer to the mystery of creation.

Yorùbá Divinatory Systems

There are many divinatory systems among the Yorùbá people, and it is not only in the Ifá cult that the issue of divination exists. Divination takes various forms depending on the cult, purpose, and the means by which it is made. Divination has been defined as the art or skill of divining (by the use of divinity or deity) that which is unknown—for example, the future, the identity of culprits, the location of lost items, the best partner for marriage, and so on. Divination could be by dreams, presentiments, body actions, ordeals, animals or parts of the dead animals, mechanical means using objects, patterns in nature, or observing other patterns.³ This is an indication that the issue of divination is not a restricted one. It has been recorded that almost every deity in Yorùbáland has a separate means of divination. Also, there are various divination systems among them. These include Agbigba, Awèrè, Ikin, Ìbò dídí, Òpèlè, Ọwó wíwò, EĒrindínlógún, and so forth.

Sixteen cowries, or EĒrindínlógún, is a form of divinatory method employed by most deities among the Yorùbá to gain an insight into the unknown by looking into some history and myths. It is very popular among the adherents of Şàngó, Ọşun, Yemoja, Ọbàtálá, and many others.⁴ But the focus of this chapter is on the EĒrindínlógún system of divination that is associated with Şàngó. Literally, "EĒrindínlógún" means sixteen. It has its source from "*owó eyi mērindínlógún*"—sixteen cowry shells. Hence, this divinatory method of using the charmed sixteen cowries is called EĒrindínlógún. The users of this method of divination call it *Íránşé Şàngó*—the Messenger or the Servant of Şàngó.

Training of the Diviner

The training of the EĒrindínlógún diviner requires time, patience, and concentration, but it is not as cumbersome and time consuming as the Ifá divinatory system, which takes about sixteen years. The simplicity of EĒrindínlógún makes more people prefer it to Ifá and other means of divination in Yorùbáland. This divinatory method is mostly female-dominated. In most cases the diviner passes it down to his/her children. It requires about three or four years of training. The apprentice begins with the learning of verses (*odù*) and stories associated with each *odù* by heart. The mastery of the *odù* depends so much on retentive and recapitulative stamina, the capability of the apprentice, and also on the years of training. Besides this, many apprentices make use of traditional medicine

to aid their retentive memory. This is called *ògùn ìṣṣẹ̀* (literally, the medicine that wakes people's understanding). At times it may be reciting of a particular incantation known as *gṣṣ ìṣṣẹ̀* (literally, incantation that wakes people's understanding). In most cases, it is the combination of the two. The essence of this is for the apprentice, or diviner in training, to learn many *odù* by heart so that it will be easier to recall when divining for clients.

After it has been observed by the master of the apprentice that the latter has mastered the art, the diviner-in-training will be tested before she or he is allowed to practice. There are two major steps with regard to this. The apprentice will be asked to make divination for the master, the success of which is judged by the ability to toss the cowries, interpret them, and narrate a fitting and appropriate *odù*. When an apprentice has been assessed as a capable diviner, she or he will be given the cowries. This is the second stage. It is called *ifinmawo* (initiation into cult). It takes place in the divining room of the master. On this day, the cowries will be religiously washed. This connotes the purity and sacredness of the cowries because they are no longer ordinary but ritualized. This process gives the cowries the potency to see beyond the physical; they can project into the spiritual and psychological arena in solving the clients' problems. This initiation rite and ceremony is highly significant to our understanding of Yorùbá cosmology and worldview, especially in relation to their deities. During the initiation rites of the apprentice, homage is paid to many deities in Yorùbáland. This shows the interrelation of the deities in the Yorùbá pantheon. The ceremony is witnessed by other invited *Èṣṣrindínlógún* diviners and the relatives of the new initiate. The initiation is also marked with eating and drinking. After this rite the initiate has the freedom to make divination. The initiation process in *Ẓàngó's Èṣṣrindínlógún* is simpler than that of *Ifá*, which takes several weeks and processes. That is why many people, especially women, are found practicing it.

The *Ẓàngó's Èṣṣrindínlógún* Divinatory System

The divinatory system in *Ẓàngó's Èṣṣrindínlógún* could be regarded as a binary pentagon. It centers on positive and negative issues; this could be either good/blessing or bad/evil as illustrated below:

Good/Blessing	Bad/Evil
<i>Owó</i> (Money/Wealth)	<i>Ófí</i> (Loss)
<i>Omy</i> (Children)	<i>Ikú</i> (Death)

<i>Aikù</i> (Long life)	<i>Àrùn</i> (Disease)
<i>Obinrin</i> (Women/marriage)	<i>Ìjù</i> (Fighting)
<i>Ìníjókòó rere</i> (Peaceful settlement)	<i>Òrán</i> (Problems)

Its binary nature has to do with its two focuses of good and evil and negative and positive. This reveals Yorùbá philosophy of their cosmography as a world of binary complementarities; that *tíbi-tíre lá dá ilé ayé*—the world is created with good and evil. Also, the pentagonal attribute centers on the fact that there are five areas of the good/positive side and five areas of the bad/negative side, as arranged above.

Şangó literature provides some insight into the operation of the Şangó divinatory system. It stresses the interrelations of people with the past, that is, the embodiment of humans' past, present, and future. Therefore, Şangó literature, especially the *odù*, cannot be separated from the divinatory system.

When the *odù* has been determined by the toss of the cowries, the diviner begins to chant that *odù*. From the *odù*, predictions, sacrifices to be made, and various taboos are relayed to the client, based on a mythological or historical story that serves as precedent. It is the duty of the client to choose the exact *odù* that is applicable to his or her own situation when recited.

The cowries are cast on a mat (*àtẹ*) which is flat in nature. The tossing of these cowries takes place on this mat (*àtẹ*) to determine the *odù* that apply to each client. The *odù* are historical analogies in a prescribed form. They encapsulate statements of human beings' troubles, wishes, hopes, aspirations, and testimonies to how each historical or mythical client has reacted to these problems, in a time perspective. To the Yorùbá, human vitality in the universe revolves round three things: the blessings of money, children, and longevity. In order to achieve these, they consult diviner to know what to do and what not to do. For instance, the *odù* below is from Èjilá Aşẹbọra, and is the *odù* of Şangó as a deity. It is used in this chapter to illustrate the content of *odù* in Şangó's ÈĒrindínlogún.

Òsà nẹ pé "ire ajé."
Irúnmplẹ nẹ pé "ire omọ."
Òsà nẹ pé "ire àikú."
Níbi tí a tí dá Èjilá Aşẹbọra,
Òsà ní kẹ a lọ bọ Şangó,
Kí a sì lọ bọ òrìşà oko.
Nítorí kín nì?

Fikánfikàn, awo ayé,
 Dúgbédúgbé awo òrun;
 Ló dá fún Ọ̀ni waaka;
 Tò lóyún tí ó lè bí í.
 Tí Ọ̀ni waaka bà lóyún,
 Tò bà tò àkókò ibímo,
 Ní kò bà ní rí oyún mó.
 Ọ̀ni waaka ní báwo loun
 ó tí se é tí òun ó fi dólómọ láyí.
 Ó káwọ́ lérí ó tẹ́ mọ́lẹ́.
 Ọ̀kẹ́ ipònrí rẹ́ ñ gbéjẹ́,
 Ọ̀kẹ́ ipònrí rẹ́n pe ẹ̀rindánlógún,
 Kò rí ẹ̀lómíràn.
 Eni nílá ló rí.
 Wọ̀n ní ẹ̀bọ́ ní kó rí.
 Ó ní hín ní òun yóò rú lẹ̀bọ́?
 Wọ̀n ní kó rú ẹ̀gbàá méjilá,
 Wọ̀n ní kó rú àkùkọ́ adẹ́ méjì,
 Wọ̀n ní kó rú ẹ̀yẹ́ méjì,
 Wọ̀n ní kó rú àmàlá méjilá,
 Orógbò méjilá,
 Wọ̀n ní kó lọ́ fún Sàngó.
 Wọ̀n ní kí Ọ̀ni rú aṣọ́ pátapàta.
 Ọ̀ni kó ẹ̀bọ́, ó rú ẹ̀bọ́,
 Ọ̀ni kó ẹ̀rù, ó tù,
 Ọ̀ni bọ́ ọ̀kẹ́ ipònrí rẹ́
 pélú jìje mímu
 Nígbà tò yá, Ọ̀ni yún bí tí yún.
 Nígbà tò tò àkókò, ní Sàngó bà kẹ́.
 Lẹ̀bà tí Sàngó kọ́ lẹ̀kàn,
 Gbógbo omọ́ Ọ̀ni ló jaá;
 Wọ̀n sí bà àgbàrà lọ́ sínú odò.
 Báyii ní Ọ̀ni bèrẹ́ sí ní bímọ́;
 Ní omọ́ Ọ̀ni kò wá lẹ́ run mó.
 Ọ̀ni ñ jó, Ọ̀ni ñ yé;
 Ní Ọ̀ni wá ní yin àwọ̀n awo;
 Ní àwọ̀n awo náà ní yin Sàngó.
 Pé, bẹ́ẹ́ ní àwọ̀n awo se senu rere wé.
 Fikánfikàn awo ayé,
 Dúgbédúgbé awo òrun,
 Ló dá fún Ọ̀ni waaka,

Tó lóyàn tí ò lè bí ò.
Ó ní, "a gbọ́ rírú ẹ̀bọ́ a rá,"
A gbọ́ ẹ̀rú àtòhẹ̀sà ó nù,
Kò ì pé, kò ì jínà,
È ò rí mí ní jẹ́bátú omọ.
Opélopé Ọ̀sà tí ò bẹ́ lóké
Ló jẹ́ n bímọ.
Níbi tí ará ò pa kí,
Omọ Ọ̀ni tó jade.
Ọ̀sà pé ẹ̀re omọ rí bẹ́ nù un.

The Deity says "blessing of money."

The gods say "blessing of children."

The Deity says "blessing of long life."

Where Èjilá Aşẹ̀bọ̀ra is cast,

The Deity says we should go and sacrifice to Şango;

And we should go and sacrifice to ọ̀rìşà Ọ̀kọ.

Because of what?

Zigzag, the diviner of earth;

Instability, the diviner of heaven;

Were the ones who cast for Crocodile;

She was pregnant but could not give birth.

Whenever the Crocodile was pregnant,

When it was her time to deliver,

She won't see the pregnancy any more.

The Crocodile lamented on what she could

do to have children in my life.

She puts her hands on her head and consulted the Diviner.

His head was showing seven,

His head was showing sixteen,

She didn't see anyone else

She saw an important person [Şàngó].

She was told to offer a sacrifice.

She asked for the materials she would offer?

She was told to offer 24,000 cowries,

She was told to offer two roosters,

She was told to offer two pigeons,

She was told to offer twelve wraps of *àmàlá*,

Twelve bitter kola nuts,

She was told to go and give them to Şàngó.

Crocodile was told to offer a speckled cloth.

The Crocodile gathered the materials and offered them,
 She performed rituals to the deities,
 The Crocodile worshipped her head
 with dining and the wining.
 Later on, the Crocodile was pregnant as before.
 When it was time, Šàngó shouted.
 Sango shouted once,
 All Crocodile's children came out;
 And were carried into the river by a torrent.
 And so, Crocodile began to procreate;
 And Crocodile's Children could not perish anymore.
 The Crocodile was dancing and rejoicing;
 And Crocodile was commending her diviners;
 And the diviners were commending Šàngó.
 That the diviners were speaking the truth:
 Zigzag, the diviner of earth,
 Instability, the diviner of heaven,
 Were the ones who cast for Crocodile,
 She was pregnant but could not give birth.
 She said, "We've been told to offer sacrifice and we offered it,"
 We were told to appease to Èṣù and we did,
 Not too long, not too far away,
 Don't you see me amidst plentiful children.
 Thanks be to the Deity above
 Who made me to bear children.
 That is where the thunder cracks before,
 Crocodile's children come out.
 The Deity says there is a blessing of children in it.

This *odù* reveals many sociological issues, as it were, in the Yorùbá cosmology. In Šàngó divination as seen in the above *odù* (which is a typical one), twelve major steps are identified. They are, firstly, the introductory lines that contain the message of hope for the client, as we can see in lines 1–3. This step could be seen as the summary of the whole text. It prepares the client for a hopeful venture to the diviner and it stabilizes him/her from emotional and psychological trauma that his/her problem might have created. This idea is captured by a Yorùbá proverb that "*A kè ì gbó bíburú lénu aboré?*"—We don't hear any evil from the diviner/priest. The rest of the text could be regarded as the historical narration that authenticates the message that has been conveyed to the client.

The second step is the name of the *odù*, which appears to the client as

seen in line 4 of the above example. What the client should do is in the next step. In the above case, Şangó and Ōrìsàòkò should be worshipped in order to have breakthrough. The fourth step is the names of the mythical or historical diviners. In most cases, this is usually abstract nouns. In the above *odù*, Fikánfikàn (Zigzag) and Dùgbèdùgbè (Instability) (lines 10 and 11), diviners of earth and heaven respectively, are the historical diviners who made divination for the Crocodile. These two are just qualifiers. They are describing the physique of a pregnant woman. Besides the fact that they are abstract ideas, they are used to give a pictorial or imagistic code of pregnancy. It is therefore a prognostic idea of presenting divination literature in ÈĒrindínlogŭn.

The next step (fifth step) is the name of the mythical/historical client that serves as precedent. In the above example, Crocodile is the mythical client (line 12). This method of divination is just revealing the Yorùbá worldview about social interaction and psychotherapeutic ethics. The Yorùbá hold the belief that "*a kì í tojì oníka mǐsán-án ká ò*"—we must not count the fingers of a person with nine fingers in his presence. This is just a way of alleviating the psychological trauma that the problems of the client might have created. Also, a mythical figure that is not a human being was used to create ambiguity and remove suspicion of a client. But, "Crocodile" in this context is used by the diviner as a form of synecdoche to symbolize all clients in the past, present, and the future. The ultimate aim of the client at this moment is to know the outcome of the divination made for the mythical client, putting himself/herself in a similar situation.

The next step in Şangó's divinatory method, after the mythical client has been mentioned, is the reason(s) why the client has gone to the diviner for consultation. The reasons are in diverse forms as the case may be. In the above excerpt from Şangó's ÈĒrindínlogŭn it is the inability of Crocodile to deliver a baby whenever pregnant. In other words she had miscarriages (lines 13–17). She was troubled because of her inability to procreate. It has been observed that one of the major reasons why many women in Yorùbáland consult various diviners is the problem of infertility. This is because a barren woman in the society is condemned and stigmatized. Therefore, every married woman prays and seeks a solution to have children in order to remove the stigma. Whatever might be the physical or spiritual problem of the client who has gone for divination, such a client would feel comfortable that she has taken a right step in consulting the diviner.

After the client has made her problem known to the diviner, the latter will consult the ÈĒrindínlogŭn to know the way out, as seen in lines 17–20. This step is followed by what the client needs to do, as done by

the mythical client, to achieve the desired result. This step involves the articles of sacrifice and rituals. I observed that in most cases, the steps to be taken by the client usually involve rituals and sacrifice as illuminated in the above example (lines 21–29, 31). The step after this reveals the recipients of the sacrifice to be offered. From observation, the prescribed sacrifice is usually attributed to a particular deity or some deities. In the above excerpt, Šàngó is the recipient of the Crocodile's sacrifice and rituals (line 30). The next step is the protagonist or the client's reaction or attitude toward the diviner's prescription (lines 32–34). He/she can obey or disobey. In most cases, the clients do obey the diviner. The way out of the client's problems and calamities rests solely on her obedience to the prescription by the divine and the power of the deity who receives the sacrifice. The diviner's instructions are highly regarded and adhered to because violation hinders the client's requests.

The diviner will then inform his/her client of the mythical client's reaction to the prescribed sacrifice. In the above example, the Crocodile was obedient to the prescription. Therefore, she offered sacrifice to Šàngó and worshipped her head (*orí inú*) too as the diviner had instructed her. At times, the mythical client can disobey or disregard the diviner's instruction, the result of which he/she will regret. Everything is just to forewarn the client that he/she must honor and obey the diviner's prescription. It is important to state that in every condition of any client, the diviner emphasizes the support of one's personal head for good health, long life, and prosperity. This is because, it is believed that one's head is a "god" or deity; and that "good or ill fortune attends one, according to the will or decree of this god; hence it is propitiated in order that good luck might be the share of the votary."⁵⁵ To the Yorùbá, the physical head is the insignia or outer symbol of the inner head (*orí inú*) that must be worshipped for various accomplishments in life. This worldview is also captured in *Odù Ifá Ọ̀ṣẹ̀tùúrà* that "It is the personal head that favors one; it is rather the *orí* that should be worshipped and not gods."⁵⁶

The last step is usually the outcome of the mythical client's reaction to the diviner's instructions and prescriptions (lines 35–41). Obedience to the instructions usually results in alleviation of the client's problems, while disobedience leads to regret and sorrow. In the above example, Crocodile was obedient, and she reaped the fruits of obedience. She was helped by Šàngó through his thunder to deliver her children, and barrenness was removed from her (lines 35–41). This helps to stimulate conformity with the diviner's prescription. Also, the outcome of this obedience made Crocodile to appreciate the diviner, and the diviner in return ascribed the glory to the deity (Šàngó) who did the work (lines 42–56).

This kind of historical excursus in Şangó divinatory literature gives assurance to the client that her problems will be solved. It gives joy and peace to the client so that she puts herself in the position of the mythical client who got a solution to her problem. This *odù* also reveals Şangó as a powerful, brave, and dependable deity. It shows his masculine traits, power, and prowess, which he exhibits through lightning and thunder. One of my respondents, Ifātóògùn Adéboýè Babalolá, even remarked that:

Yàtò sí EĒrindínlogún gégé bí ilànà yémtwò èyè tí Şangóù ló; ilànà síràn àrú pá olè tàbí àwọn òdaràn nínú àwùjò tǎn jé ùkan lára-òrú sí Şangóù gbà láti sàwári ohun tó bá farasin fún àwọn ènìyàn àwùjò. Alágbára àti àkíkánjù lbo ní Şangó jé lánwùjò òrìjà ilẹ̀ Yorùbá.⁷

(Apart from the EĒrindínlogún as a divinatory method used by Şangó; the method of killing thieves and culprits in the society with thunderbolt is one of the ways that Şangó uses to expose the secret things in the community. Şangó is a powerful and brave deity among the Yorùbá pantheon.)

One can link the work of lightning and thunder, and how it exposed the children (fetus) inside the belly of Crocodile in the above divinatory literature, to the ways Şangó exposes thieves and culprits in the society. He has the power of second sight, which he bestows upon his devotees, including the diviners. It is pertinent to say that the steps in this mode of divination are different in structure from that of Ifá divination. That of Ifá has been previously argued to contain three, eight, and seven steps.⁸ But it is clearly evident that there are twelve steps in the structure of EĒrindínlogún divinatory literature.

The *Odù* of Şangó and Their Interpretations

The sixteen cowries are put inside the diviner's right hand palm, and they are tossed at once to determine the *odù* that appears for the clients. In Table 1, "O" represents the cowry shells facing up while "C" represents the cowry shells facing down.

The sixteen *odù* of EĒrindínlogún divination have names, and their names are cognates of names of *odù* in Ifá divination. Each *odù* has its meaning and fits into different situations of various clients. We present below a synopsis of the meaning of each *odù*.

TABLE 1. Codes of *Odù* in Šàngó's Èḡrindinlògùn

<i>Òkànràn</i>	O C C C C C C C C C C C C C C C	<i>Èjì Òkò</i>	O O C C C C C C C C C C C C C C
<i>Ògúndá</i>	O O O C C C C C C C C C C C C C	<i>Ìrosin</i>	O O O C C C C C C C C C C C C C
<i>Òtẹ̀</i>	O O O O O C C C C C C C C C C C	<i>Òbàrà</i>	O O O O O O C C C C C C C C C C
<i>Òdì</i>	O O O O O O O C C C C C C C C C	<i>Èjì Ogbé</i>	O O O O O O O O C C C C C C C C
<i>Òsá</i>	O O O O O O O O O C C C C C C C	<i>Òfún</i>	O O O O O O O O O O C C C C C C
<i>Òwónrin</i>	O O O O O O O O O O O C C C C C	<i>Èjìlá</i>	O O O O
		<i>Asìbora</i>	O O O O O O O O C C C C
<i>Ìkà</i>	O O O O O O O O O O O O O C C C	<i>Òwúrúpòn</i>	O O O O O O O O O O O O O O C C
<i>Èjì</i>	O O O O	<i>Ìyẹ̀tẹ̀</i>	O O O O
<i>Ologbón</i>	O O O O O O O O O O O C		O O O O O O O O O O O O

- Okánràn*—The concave side of one out of the sixteen cowry shells faces up and others are facing down. This *odù* means that there will be an enigmatic success after a series of adversities and opposition, provided the client performs the prescribed sacrifice. The sacrifice for each client may differ, depending on the message from the priest.
- Èjì Òkò*—The concave sides of two cowry shells face up and others are facing down. This *odù* signifies timely success and productivity. It is the *odù* for marriage and productive friendship.
- Ògúndá*—Three cowry shells face up while thirteen face down. This *odù* means that the client will be elevated to a position of honor and authority after much labor and struggle.
- Irosàn*—Four cowry shells face up while twelve face down. If this *odù* appears to a client, it means that he or she will face many difficulties and problems in life. But if the client can adhere to the prescriptions and sacrifices, there will be a prosperous future.
- Òyé*—Five cowries face up while eleven face down. It means that the client will pass through terrible constraint, shocks, adversity, and calamities unless he or she adheres to the prescribed sacrifice. If the *odù* appears to a client, such a person must prepare for hostility, antagonism, and resentment.
- Òbàrà*—Six cowry shells face up while ten face down. This *odù* means that the client or the relations may suffer loss of properties. But if they can offer the prescribed sacrifice, there will be unparalleled prosperity and blessings.
- Òdì*—The convex sides of seven out of the sixteen cowry shells face up and the rest have their concave sides facing up. If this *odù* appears to a client, it means that the client will experience lasting prosperity and abundant riches in a short time. It is the *odù* of success and breakthrough if the client can exercise patience and endurance.
- Èjì Ogbè*—This is the *odù* that appears when the concave sides of eight out of the sixteen cowry shells face up and other eight are facing down. It is the *odù* of sound health and long life. It brings joy and comfort to the client.
- Òsò*—Nine cowries shell face up while seven face down. This is the *odù* of the witches. It means that if the client will succeed in his or her endeavor, the client will work very hard after the prescribed sacrifice has been offered. It is the *odù* to inform the client that he/she needs to get prepared for any form of hardship that might befall him or her.
- Òfún*—Ten cowries face up while six face down. It is the *odù* of giving. The client must sacrifice a lot of things in order to succeed in his or her enterprises in life.

- Ọwónrin*—Eleven cowries face up while five face down. This *odù* calls for patience by the client. All obstacles and calamities facing the client should be seen as “scar that will turn into star” if the client can be patient and obedient to the prescribed sacrifice.
- Èjilá Asfòrò*—Twelve cowries face up while four face down. This is the *odù* of Šàngó. If it appears to a client, he or she needs to be extraordinarily careful so that he or she will not have a bad ending, even when they have a good beginning.
- Ìkà*—Thirteen cowries shell face up while three face down. This *odù* warns against disasters and mishaps. It warns the clients to be very careful of dealing with others so that they will not harm him or her. It also warns the client not to take any rash decisions about anything; he/she must act carefully with great endurance and perseverance. There will be a great success at the end of calamities and struggle.
- Ọtúrúpòn*—Fourteen cowries face up while two face down. This *odù* means blessings of spouse and children. If it appears to somebody, the person should be expectant for the blessing of wife and children after adhering to the prescribed sacrifices and prescriptions.
- Èjì Ọlgbòrò*—Fifteen cowries face up while one faces down. This means that somebody has supplanted the client in order to acquire success. Therefore, the client must be wise in recovering his/her lots or properties besides the sacrifices he/she has to offer.
- Ìrètẹ̀*—All the sixteen cowries face up. If this *odù* appears to a client it means that the person will become rich if he can adhere to the injunction of the diviner. It is all about prosperity, vitality, and fertility. Hence the saying “*Ìrètẹ̀ tẹ̀ méjì látìlẹ̀, ó tẹ̀ méjì ó là ọ̀bẹ̀yẹ̀bẹ̀*” (Ìrètẹ̀ steps on two and becomes very rich, he steps on two and become acutely wealthy).

It is evident that most of the *odù* in Èḡrindínlógún are variants of the *odù* in the Ifá divination system.⁹ The deducible reason is that according to Yorùbá religion, Ifá is the one who taught Èḡrindínlógún divination to the other deities who are using it. Though there are many things common to *odù* in Ifá and Šàngó's Èḡrindínlógún, their presentations are different. The usual opening thematic statement in Ifá is “*a difá fún . . .*”—Ifá divination was made for . . . , but that of Èḡrindínlógún is “*òòpà tọ̀ pẹ̀ . . .*”—the deity says that . . . Also, there is no order of seniority of the *odù* as we have it in Ifá; though most of the *odù* in Šàngó's Èḡrindínlógún revolve round Šàngó.

Conclusion

Divination rites are an essential part of daily life to the Yorùbá people. Šàngó's ÈẸrínđínlogún system of divination cannot be underrated in this humanitarian work. This shows that Šàngó, as a deity, occupies an enviable space and place in Yorùbá cosmography. Šàngó's ÈẸrínđínlogún diviners are agents of memory, preservers of people's history, and in the period of calamities the users of past events to reshape the present and the future. Even in the face of the incursion of civilizations and foreign religions, Šàngó's ÈẸrínđínlogún divinatory system still finds its place in modern Yorùbá life. But this is not to deny the fact that many diviners have abandoned the practice for the new faith. However, some are still faithful to this divinatory system and have many clients, some of whom are even adherents of the new religions, Christianity and Islam.

NOTES

1. John Pemberton III, "Divination in Sub-Saharan Africa," in *African Art and Rituals of Divination*, ed. Alisa LaGamma (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 10.

2. J. Omosade Awolalu, *Yorùbá Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites* (Brooklyn: Athelia Henrietta Press, 1979), 120-21.

3. John Browker, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

4. William Bascom, *Sixteen Cowries: Yorùbá Divination from Africa to the New World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 3.

5. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbá* (1921) (Lagos: C.S.S., Bookshop, 1976), 27.

6. Wande Abimbola, *Ifá: An Exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Oxford University Press, 1976).

7. Excerpt from the interviews held with an Ifé priest/diviner, Ifatogun Adeboye Babalola, on April 16, 2001.

8. Raymond Prince, *Ifá: Yorùbá Divination and Sacrifice* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1964), 2-6, argues that there are four sections in each *ese ifá*; William Bascom, *Ifá Divination: Communication between Gods and Men in West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 122-27, opines that each *ese ifá* consists of three sections; Abimbola, *Ifá: An Exposition*, 43-62, posits eight sections for each *ese ifá*; and Olatunde O. Olatunji, *Features of Yorùbá Oral Poetry* (Ibadan, Nigeria: University Press, 1984), 127-38, maintains that there are seven sections in each *ese ifá*.

9. Compare the above discussion on ÈẸrínđínlogún to that of Ifá in Wande Abimbola, *Ifá: An Exposition*, 150.

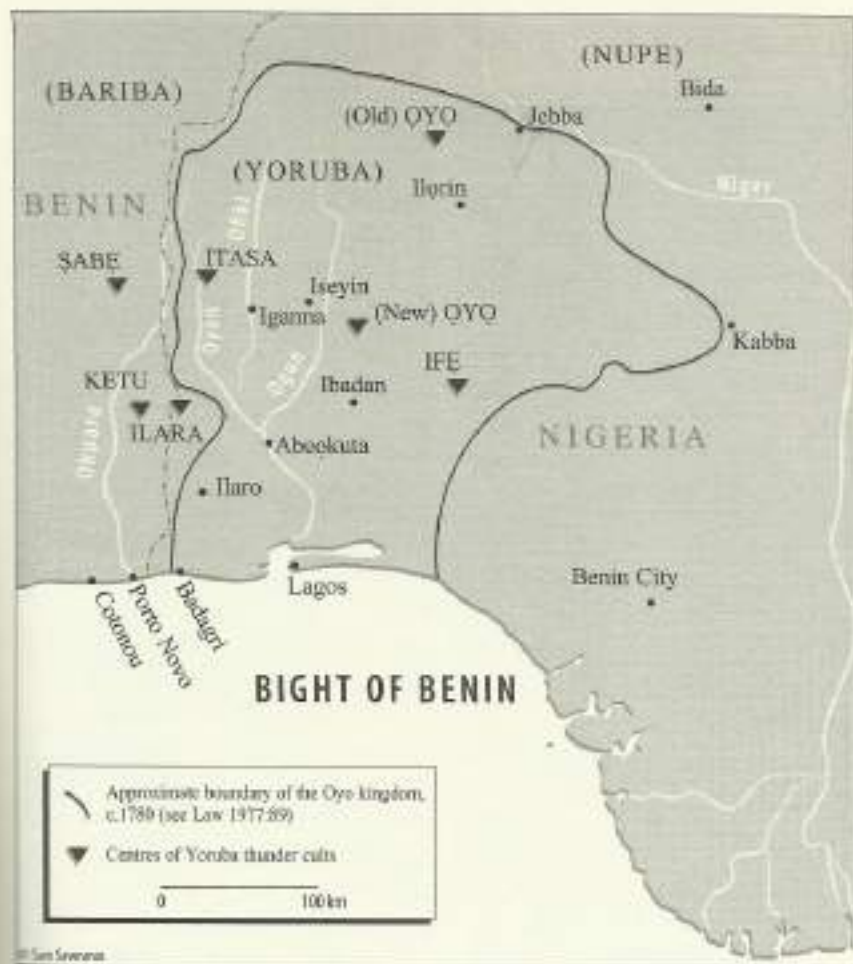
Yorùbá Thunder Deities and Sovereignty

Àrá versus Šàngó

MARC SCHILTZ

One of the most popular and widespread *òrìṣà* cults among the Yorùbá of southwestern Nigeria is undoubtedly that of Šàngó, the deity of thunder and lightning. As a personification of this natural force, Šàngó is said to have been the fourth Alááfin of Òyó.¹ In various myths Šàngó is described as a great magician who could eject fire from his mouth (*oníná-l'ínu*) and kill his enemies with lightning from heaven.² As Òyó's power expanded in Yorùbáland and among various non-Yorùbá-speaking peoples in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Alááfin's control over the Šàngó cult became an instrument for asserting his sovereignty all over the empire.³

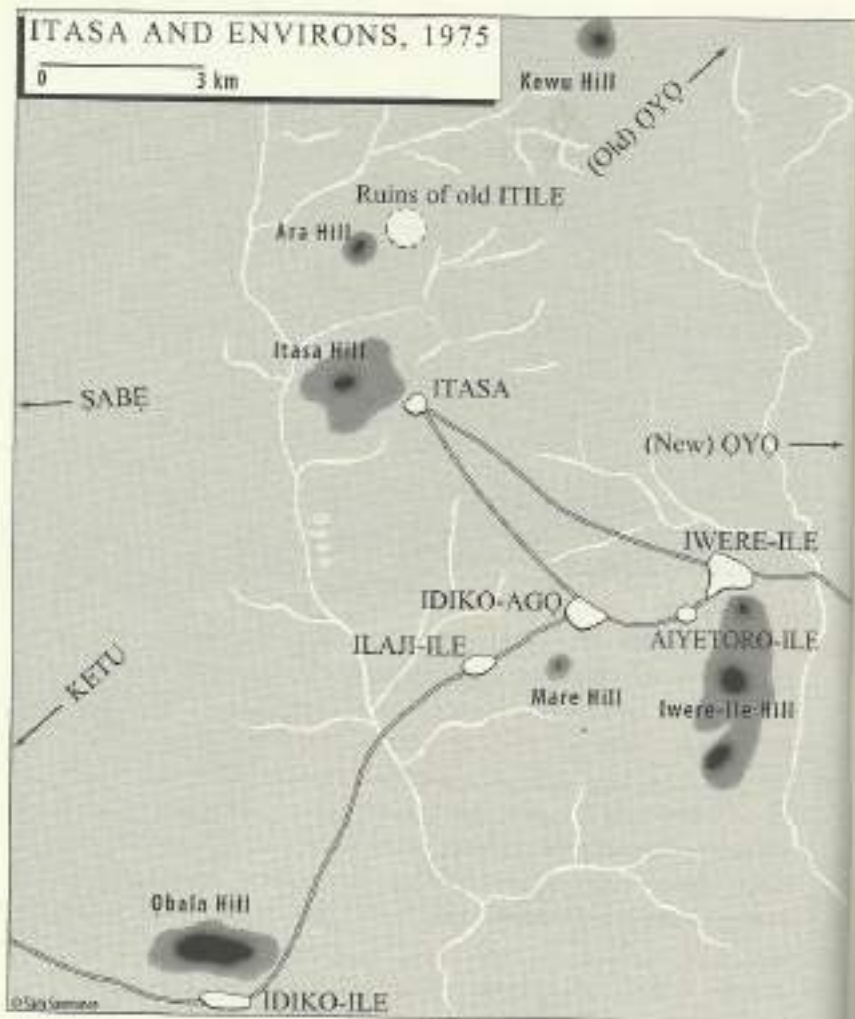
Šàngó is not the only thunder deity among the Yorùbá. *Àrá* is the Yorùbá word for thunder (lightning is *imònànmóná*), and the personification of this force is variously known as the *òrìṣà*, *Òràmfè* in Ifè and *Àrá* or *Àrá-gbìgbóná* (lit., hot-*Àrá*)⁴ in the western kingdoms of Šábé and Kétu (now in the Republic of Benin), as well as in the related town of Ilárá (now on the Nigerian side of the border). Among these western Yorùbá-speaking peoples we note that outside the Òyó kingdom, in Šábé and Kétu, the Alááfin's cult of Šàngó became established alongside the earlier local *Àrá* cults. This cult-diffusion was no doubt linked to the rise of Òyó as an imperial power in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But if such coexistence of the Šàngó and *Àrá* thunder cults was possible outside the Òyó kingdom, should we expect to find the presence of *Àrá* also in Šàngó's own kingdom of Òyó? As far as my investigations in the western Òyó town of Igánná are concerned, I hasten to state that there



MAP 1. Yorùbá thunder cults.

also I found *Àrà* shrines in several compounds. Evidently, these *Àrà* cults functioned only for the benefit of their own lineage members,⁵ whereas the *Ẓàngó* cult with its many devotees, annual festival celebrations, and possession priests (*elégùn Ẓàngó*) functioned for the protection and prosperity of the whole town.⁶

However, in contrast to this typically tolerant Yorùbá attitude toward cultural diversity, I found in the nearby town of *Ìtásá* (thirteen miles west of *Ìgànná*) a most unusual thunder-cult scenario of *Ẓàngó* exclusion and *Àrà* hegemony. It is on this rather perplexing *Ẓàngó* exclusion in *Ìtásá* within the *Ọ̀yọ̀* kingdom, in contrast with the coexistence of *Àrà* and *Ẓàngó* in the *Sìbẹ̀* and *Kétu* kingdoms, that I propose to focus my discussion.



MAP 2. Itasa and environs, 1975.

Studies of traditional Yorùbá religion have often shown a tendency to hyostatize the *òrìṣà* within an overall cosmological model, applicable to the whole of Yorùbáland throughout history.⁷ What this approach overlooks is that the relative rank, social functions, and popularity of the *òrìṣà* are contingent upon scenarios played out by certain individuals and groups in specific historical situations, especially those in which sovereignty was at stake, as in the cases to be discussed here of thunder cults associated with a royal lineage. Consequently, it is in the context of cult organizations in specific localities that we must approach the study of Yorùbá religion, rather than by making generalizations about the *òrìṣà* on

the basis of some formal characteristics abstracted from their sociohistorical contexts. By applying this approach to a comparison of the Àrǎ and Šàngó cults in Šábé, Kétu, Ilárá, and Itàsá, I hope to account for some of the variations in the myths, the cult organizations and the ritual symbolism encountered in these different localities. First, I will comment briefly on the political momentum of the Šàngó cult within the context of the Òyó empire. This will be followed by more detailed discussions of the thunder cults in the Šábé and Kétu kingdoms. Finally, these data will be contrasted with the exclusiveness of the Àrǎ cult in Itàsá.

Šàngó and Òyó Imperialism

Various authors have commented on the important role played by the cult of Šàngó in sanctioning the Alááfin's authority in the Òyó empire.⁸ Biobaku has even suggested that this cult assumed something of the force of emperor worship in the later Roman empire.⁹ Possession priests of Šàngó had to come to Òyó for the final stages of their initiatory training, and wherever a lightning catastrophe occurred, the local king had to go to the spot and pay homage to Šàngó, who was thought to have visited the world.¹⁰ Moreover, for retrieving the *edùn àrǎ* (stone celts taken for thunderbolts) which Šàngó was supposed to have hurled down from heaven on those who had incurred his displeasure, the Šàngó priests were authorized to collect ruinously high purification fees.¹¹ The Alááfin also made use of the powers of Šàngó in the Òyó empire. His strategy of appointing initiated Šàngó priests as governors (*ajélé*) along the Atlantic trade route further illustrates this.

Since lightning was an ever-present danger everywhere (Yorùbáland and adjoining areas are reported to have among the highest lightning frequencies in the world),¹² a royal cult associated with this terrifying natural force was put in possession of an "extremely powerful medium for asserting the king's sovereignty." As attributes of divine kingship, thunder and lightning were in themselves effective symbols for communicating royal wrath, especially as this was coupled with a powerful corporation of Šàngó priests with representatives far and wide, who were capable of interpreting the divine messages and of taking disciplinary action when required.

Obviously, the administration of the Òyó empire depended on more than the Alááfin's control over the cult of Šàngó. Of great importance was Òyó's military strength for the expansion and policing of the empire. At least as important was the Alááfin's diplomatic skill in securing the

loyalty of the provincial kings within the Òyó kingdom, and in making alliances with the rulers of more distant areas.

With regard to the degree of dependence of Kétu and Sábé on Òyó, Law comments that while friendly relations with Òyó prevailed for most of the time during the imperial period, there is conflicting evidence as to whether these western kingdoms ever paid tribute to the Alááfin.¹³ But even if tribute was paid at times, the kings of Kétu and Sábé seem to have retained much of their autonomy in controlling the internal affairs of their kingdoms. Moreover, the fact that the Atlantic trade route to Badagry, the lifeline of landlocked Òyó after 1736, bypassed their territories suggests that the Alááfin could not, or chose not to, depend on their loyalties.¹⁴ For these reasons, I would suggest that the juxtaposition of the Alááfin's cult of Şàngó and the local cults of Àrá in these western kingdoms reflects how sovereignty was divided, and largely the outcome of compromise arrangements, as I will illustrate below.

Within the Òyó kingdom, the Alááfin's rule was established more rigorously. Nevertheless, my own data on the fringe area west of Ígànná and the nearby Atlantic trade route (that is, the area adjoining the Sábé kingdom) reveal that local loyalties were not always guaranteed. This frontier land seems to have been weakly administered. While some local rulers were loyal to Òyó, there were others who lorded it over petty kingdoms in which local interests, rather than those of the Alááfin, often prevailed. The Àrá enclave of Ításá, which I will discuss in the last section of this chapter, was one such place. The ineffectiveness of Òyó's rule there is reflected in the absence of the cult of Şàngó. Moreover, Ításá's Àrá cult differs noticeably from Sábé's and Kétu's, even though it was from these last two areas that the cult spread to the western Òyó towns. This unique identity of Ításá's Àrá is, at least in part, explained by its opposition to Òyó's Şàngó; but before discussing this development I will compare the Àrá cults in Sábé, Kétu, and Ílára, and examine their relationship to the cult of Şàngó.

Àrá, the Wandering Stranger, and Şàngó, the Independent Senior Wife: Two Thunder Deities in a Marriage of Convenience

In the western Yorùbá kingdoms of Sábé and Kétu, where we find the cults of Àrá and Şàngó alongside each other, we note that the formula for their apparent peaceful coexistence was worked out at the cost of a conceptual reversal and compromise arrangements between the two fierce thunder gods. Essentially, this formula consists in a sex change for

Ẹ̀sàngó, who is said to be Ẹ̀ará's senior wife, as well as in a division of labor between the priests of the two cults with regard to the purification rituals after lightning catastrophes. Unlike the cult of Ẹ̀sàngó, which was centralized under the Alááfin's control, neither the Alákétu nor the Oniṣábé seems to have revered Ẹ̀ará as his lineage *oríṣá*, and thus used the powers of Ẹ̀ará directly for buttressing royal authority. The different towns have their own versions of how Ẹ̀ará came to them, and a comparison of these will provide some insights into the local variations of the thunder cult.

The stories of the origin of the cult describe Ẹ̀ará as a wandering man of unspecified abode. They concur in locating a hunter's camp within the kingdom of Kétu as the place where the cult of Ẹ̀ará originated. Eventually this settlement grew in size, and later became known as the "town of Ẹ̀ará," *Ilárá* (from *ilú-ára*). From *Ilárá* the cult spread in various directions, including to the towns of Kétu and Šábé. I will first give a Šábé version of the story of Ẹ̀ará before making a comparison of the cult with Kétu and *Ilárá*.

Ẹ̀ará was introduced to Šábé by a man called Gou. This man, who was a native of Šábé, was afflicted by *ábíkú* spirits, with the result that his children kept dying in infancy. After being told about the cause of the deaths he decided to leave Šábé. He stopped in many hunters' camps along the route he traveled, but none of the hunters he met was capable of curing his affliction. Eventually he reached a camp where he was welcomed by a hunter and his wife. This hunter was a great magician called Ogodo. He promised Gou to solve his problem if he came to live with him. Gou accepted, and his hosts gave him their daughter in marriage, as well as a powerful charm to overcome the *ábíkú* affliction.

A few years later Ẹ̀ará came to their camp. He appeared as an ordinary man, and asked if he could stay. He was welcomed, and Gou immediately became his close friend, always praising him for his mighty deeds. As the reputation of Ẹ̀ará spread, more people flocked to the settlement to join in the worship of Ẹ̀ará. In the end, the place grew to such a size that they called it *ilú-Árá*, or *Ilárá*.

Some years later Ẹ̀ará decided to proceed with his journey, but before leaving he gave to Gou some irons and thunderbolts to remember him by. After Ẹ̀ará left, Gou built him a shrine, in which he placed the sacred objects. Then he prayed to Ẹ̀ará and asked him what he would like to receive. Ẹ̀ará answered his prayer and revealed that at the altar (*ofúḍḍu*) of the sacred objects he wanted to receive a ram, a hen, kola nuts, and cold maize gruel (*ḍéḍé tótù*). Ẹ̀ará also promised to help those who came to worship him.

When Gou had fathered many sons and daughters, and none of them had died, he decided to take them back to Šábé in order to show his people the great blessing that had befallen him. He took with him some of the irons and thunderbolts, and during his stay in Šábé he taught his people there how to worship Árá.

Later he returned to Ìlárá, where he died. But when the news of his death reached Šábé his people went to Ìlárá and brought his body back home and buried it near the Árá shrine.

The main Árá shrine in Šábé is located in an enclosed area. Access to the sanctuary is gained through a small gatehouse along the fence. A thatched-roof building in the center of the open space is the Árá shrine, in which the irons and stone celts that symbolize Árá are kept. Nearby are altars for Ọ̀sọ̀ọ̀sì and Amọ̀dẹ, two hunter deities who in the Šábé tradition are said to be Árá's wives. Another small building within the enclosure serves as a dwelling for the chief priest of Árá and his wife. Once installed as head of the cult, the chief priest lives there for the rest of his life. Also kept within the enclosure are the sacred ram, which is tethered to a post, the Árá drums and gongs, and a large inverted pot, which is adorned with relief designs. Near the Árá shrine is Gou's tomb, while further away is a cooking area used by the *aláárá* (Árá worshippers) on festive occasions.

A comparison of the Árá cult story and ritual arrangements between Šábé, Kétu, and Ìlárá shows that the main differences concern the personages involved in the thunder god's drama, that is, differences in their identities, actions, and peregrinations, and in the way they interrelate with each other. Inasmuch as myth can be rationalized as "a charter for action," one may note local concerns with town, identity, inter-town rivalry over the control of the powers of Árá, and other mundane affairs underpinning these differences.

The stories from Kétu and Ìlárá stated that Árá originally came from Šábé through a man called Agbọ̀n. This man, like Gou in the Šábé version, was said to have left his hometown because he was troubled by *ábíkú* spirits. But whereas Gou met Árá in the hunters' camp that later became Ìlárá, and afterward returned to Šábé in order to introduce the Árá cult there, Agbọ̀n appears as a man who already had Árá before leaving Šábé. This does not affect the fact that Árá himself remains a somehow timeless and mysterious figure whose origin is not probed, and who, after his encounter with the ancestors, goes his way, perhaps to die somewhere in the way other men die, or perhaps to live on. In any event, his power to bless or punish lives on through the ministry of his initiated

followers who guard the irons and the thunderbolts. In the case of Kétu and Ilará, there is the acknowledgment that Árá came to them through a man from Šábé, but that the cult itself began only in a hunters' camp, which later became renowned as the "town of Árá," in Ilará.

At this point, however, the different versions begin to diverge, and local interests prevail. First there is the question of the identity of the lone hunter who invited the Šábé refugee to settle with him, and then saved him from his *ábíkú* affliction. In the Šábé story the hunter was called Ògòdò, and did not belong to any town in particular. Ògòdò is the Yorubá word for yaws, and the name here suggests the *òrìṣà* that personifies this disease. But in one of the Kétu versions the name of the hunter is Adare, and he is identified as one of the royals of the Alákétu's *idilé* (lineage), who had set up his camp on Kétuland. Adare then gave his daughter Kòboḷa in marriage to the Šábé settler. The couple had a son who was named Ewégbèní ("the leaf saves me"), indicating that Adare's magic had overcome the *ábíkú* threat. When Ewégbèní grew up he had a son who became popularly known as Bábá Alààrá ("father of the Árá worshippers"), as by then the cult had gathered a large following.

Our Ilará story also mentions Agbòṅ, who brought Árá from Šábé. But contrary to the Kétu claims that the site of the hunter's camp was on the Alákétu's land, and that the hunter was a royal kinsman, the Ilará version leaves out the question of land ownership and states that the first settlers were two Šábé hunters, Òsòṣòṣì and Ògòdò. As mentioned earlier, these two personages are themselves *òrìṣà*, and in Šábé the former is revered as one of Árá's wives. A look around the shrines in Kétu and Ilará shows, however, that the setup of Árá's household there is different from Šábé's. In Kétu the Árá cult is located in two compounds, Abiya's and Ògòdò's, who worship the deity on different days. Abiya's compound claims to have obtained the cult through Iná-akò, a woman who, after visiting relatives in Ilará, brought back the sacred objects. Later she passed some on to her sister, Afeyin/a-Àyínkè, who lived in the compound of Ògòdò. In these Kétu shrines the *òrìṣà* revered as Árá's wife is Orojafin. Also present, though not as wives, are Òsòṣòṣì and Ábíkú. Both are represented by pots from which the worshippers can draw water to protect themselves from various afflictions. In Ilará the main Árá shrine is located in an enclosed area on the fringe of the town, adjoining a sacred bush. There also, Orojafin is revered as Árá's wife, but the *òrìṣà* most closely associated with them is the ubiquitous Yorubá trickster Èṣù.

Despite these differences which bring out the specific ways in which each town has integrated Árá within its own cult organization, the similarities between Kétu's Árá and Ilará's Árá are greater than those between

either of these and Šábé. This may be explained by the geographical and historical proximity of Kétu and Ìlárá, although now they are located on opposite sides of the international boundary. But if there were such close links, why should Ìlárá's story of origin of the Àrá cult say that the first settlers were hunters from Šábé and fail to mention Adare, the Alákétu's kinsman? I would suggest that the answer here is provided by Ìlárá's concern to control its Àrá cult (and possibly other affairs as well) independently of Kétu. A clue to this can be found in the following two accounts from Ìlárá.

After Agbõn had settled in the hunting camp of Ọsọ̀sì and Ọ̀gòdò, other people also joined the settlement when they heard about the great deeds of Àrá. Some years later, however, death came to the area and Agbõn ran away to Lie-down, another hunter's camp where he had spent some time after leaving Šábé. He stayed there for many years, and during that time the Àrá shrine in Ìlárá gradually fell to ruins. It was not until Agbõn had grown old that he called his son Ewégbèní and told him how he had brought Àrá to Ìlárá, and how from there he had run away to Ìlẹ̀-ẹ̀du. When Ewégbèní heard this he was very grieved that he had been left in the dark about how to worship Àrá. Then suddenly he became possessed by his father's *orìṣà*, and he brought Àrá back from Ìlẹ̀-ẹ̀du to Ìlárá. He did not know how to worship Àrá, but he did as the *orìṣà* directed him. That was why the people of Kétu always sang his praises, saying: "Ewégbèní made the *orìṣà*, Ewégbèní had no *olúwo*." (That is, he had no head of the cult above him). Therefore, all the powers of Àrá to strike with lightning were given to Ewégbèní before his father's death.

From this Ìlárá account, then, it would seem that what gives Ìlárá the edge over Kétu is Àrá's direct intervention in taking possession of Ewégbèní. This headship of the cult, the account states, was fully acknowledged by the Kétu people in the past. But later things changed, and by some accident of history the Àrá worshippers from Kétu managed to pull the wool over the Ìlárá people's eyes and seize control of the cult. This rivalry between the two towns is further expressed in the second Ìlárá account, which deals with the more rewarding aspects of the rights to conduct the purification rituals (*éwátú*) after a lightning catastrophe has occurred.

After the *olúwo* (that is, Ewégbèní) who brought Àrá to Ìlárá died, the townspeople did not know that Àrá had been introduced to Kétu from their town. They thought that it was from Kétu that Àrá had come to

them. Therefore, whenever *Árá* struck anyone or destroyed any property, all the fees collected for removing the thunderbolts were sent to Kétu. This went on for many years, until one day an old man sang a *Gẹ̀lẹ̀ dẹ̀* song in which he told the people that after *Aghon* had gone to *Ilẹ̀-edu* and his descendants had forgotten about the cult of *Árá*, *Ewégbèmi* reinstated the *òrìṣà* through his own bravery and zeal. This song was a real eye-opener for the people of *Ilárá*, and they immediately challenged the Kétus about who was to be in charge of the cult. The dispute was serious, and in the end the *Alákétu* called the *Árá* worshippers from the two towns in order to seek a settlement. After listening to both sides, he ruled that when lightning struck in *Ilárá* the *èrùtù* would be carried out by the people of *Ilárá*, whereas when lightning struck in Kétu the *èrùtù* would be carried out by Kétu *Árá* worshippers.

The implication of this *Ilárá* account is that the *Alákétu* had jurisdiction over the affairs of *Ilárá*, since he could sit in judgment over a dispute involving the *Aláárá* of Kétu and *Ilárá*. But the account implies also that, unlike the *Alááfin*, who could control the *Ẓàngó* cult in every tributary town, neither the *Alákétu* nor the *Aláárá* in Kétu town had overall control of the *Árá* cult. Such control, the *Ilárá* people felt, should have been accorded to their own *olúwa*, hence the reference to *Ewégbèmi*, to whom the Kétu people originally used to address their praise songs. Therefore, the *Alákétu*'s verdict that the *Aláárá* from Kétu could no longer receive purification fees from *Ilárá* victims of lightning was fair, but it fell short of acknowledging *Ilárá*'s claim of supremacy for their *olúwa*.

From the data reviewed so far it is clear that the *Árá* cults in *Sáábé*, Kétu, and *Ilárá* share a common tradition. *Ẓàngó* did not feature at all in this, neither in the stories of origin nor among the *òrìṣà* worshipped in association with *Árá*. Yet in these three towns the *Ẓàngó* cult took root. We have no historical data to ascertain when or how *Ẓàngó* got there; but, as everywhere else, the people acknowledge that the cult came from *Ọ̀yó* and was named after the legendary *Alááfin Ẓàngó*. On the other hand, *Ẓàngó* in these western towns is revered as a female *òrìṣà* who is said to have been *Árá*'s senior wife. How are we to reconcile these apparently incompatible and contradictory claims with what has been stated earlier?

In trying to clarify this I will first examine the claim that *Ẓàngó* is a female *òrìṣà*, and secondly, why she is said to be *Árá*'s wife. From the way people expressed their thoughts on this question it seemed that a neat distinction was made between the name of the cult and the *òrìṣà* that personifies thunder and lightning. One man in Kétu had this version of one of the well-known myths about *Ẓàngó*:

In the old days "Sàngó" was not such a fearsome name as it has become now. Many people bore that name. So it was, until one Alááfin of Òyó called Sàngó fell out with his people. When he realized that they had rejected him he went to the bush and hanged himself from a tree. When the people of Òyó heard that he died, they started spreading the word that he had committed suicide, saying "*ṣba so*, the king has hanged himself." But those still loyal to Sàngó were much incensed when they heard this "*ṣba so*," and tried unsuccessfully to stop the rumor of this ignoble death. Eventually they went to Ìbàribáland, where they obtained a dangerous and powerful charm made with gun powder. At the time of a thunderstorm, any house at which they deposited this charm would attract lightning and burn down. Back home, they planted this charm on the houses of all those whom they wanted to punish. These people then had to pay heavy fines for Sàngó's followers to come and perform the *òrìṣà* and remove the thunderbolts. As fear of punishment spread, the people tried to please the Sàngó followers by retracting the previous rumors, saying instead: "*ṣba kò so*, the king did not hang himself." This is why, to this day, they call Sàngó "Oba Kòso."

This story, then, claims that the power to direct lightning was not really the legendary king Sàngó's, but was imported by Sàngó's followers from Ìbàribáland, west of Old Òyó. Similar stories which trace the origin of the Sàngó cult to that area¹⁵ outside Yorùbáland had already been recorded by Frobenius in the early part of this century.¹⁶ In fact the Àrâ cult may also have originated in Ìbàribáland or elsewhere, but what concerns us here is that ultimately the decision about, or perception of, the sex of an *òrìṣà* rests with the worshippers. In Òyó it is said that Sàngó himself could direct lightning, before his followers learned the secret, therefore he is the *òrìṣà*, and obviously male. However, in this Kétu version of Sàngó the situation is different. Here, the cult that developed in Òyó is specifically named after the legendary Alááfin Sàngó, but the sex of the *òrìṣà* personifying thunder and lightning remains unspecified.

What makes Sàngó a female *òrìṣà* in the Sábé Kétu tradition can best be understood in light of the accounts which describe the relationship between Àrâ and Sàngó as one between husband and senior wife. This is how one Ìlârá man explained it.

This Sàngó was just like any other woman. But when Àrâ learned that she had some powerful charms (*úgàrà*, "medicine") he thought that she might help him in his work. He married her, and whenever his enemies

tried to harm him Šàngó would come to his aid and kill them. She did this for many years and Àrá was very pleased with her. Since he had married many junior wives, he rewarded Šàngó by giving her the freedom to live on her own. She gratefully accepted this, but later she returned to him and implored him to give her his powers. After many requests, he eventually gave her some of his powers. Whenever lightning struck in the places which Šàngó had acquired, Àrá would tell his followers to let her perform the *ètùtù*. But when Àrá struck, only his followers could perform the *ètùtù*. However, even in her own territories Šàngó could not remove the thunderbolts without invoking and honoring (*ijáá*) Àrá.

The main effect of this conceptualization of the relationship between Àrá and Šàngó as a marital one is, *ipso facto*, an acknowledgment of a rank and role differential between two fierce personalities who are essentially equals. In Yorubá society, no matter how wealthy or powerful a woman may be, she is expected to acknowledge her husband's authority in domestic matters (although not in her business dealings), and more generally she must always show respect and praise him publicly. However, this conceptualization of Šàngó as Àrá's senior wife euphemizes in the idiom of ordered domestic relations a pragmatic solution to what appears to have been a potentially dangerous power confrontation at the time the Šàngó cult spread to the Šábé-Kétu areas. What we have, then, is an assertion of the primacy of Àrá, if not politically then at least morally. (Šàngó priests cannot perform the *ètùtù* if they do not first honor Àrá.) Secondly, the story provides a justification for the spatial and organizational separation of the two thunder cults; in each town the shrines of Àrá and Šàngó are located in different compounds, and each cult has its own internal organization. Similarly, senior wives of wealthy polygynists often live away from their husbands and junior co-wives. This arrangement gives such women more freedom and scope to pursue their own business activities. Thirdly, this story accounts for the ritual division of labor between the two cults with regard to the public function of conducting the purification rituals after lightning has struck. How each town practically sorted out this question may have varied, but data from Šábé indicate that formerly divinatory procedures after a lightning catastrophe decided whether the Àrá or Šàngó priests should perform the *ètùtù*.

To what extent the Šàngó cult backed up the Alááfin's sovereignty in the Šábé and Kétu kingdoms in the days of Òyó imperialism requires further investigation. Whether the challenge which the Šàngó cult presented to the preexisting Àrá cult owed its muscle to its grassroots popularity or

to the direct influence of the Alááfin is not clear. What the data reveal, however, is that the conceptual linkage of the two thunder deities in a marital union was the outcome of a marriage of convenience which most likely had been precipitated by the rise of Òyó imperialism.

Ìtásá's Àrá: "When Two Rams Clash, One Must Give Way"¹⁷

Unlike the Kétu and Šábé kingdoms, where compromise arrangements made the coexistence of the Àrá and Šàngó cults possible, Ìtásá presents us with a history in which no such overt allowances were made. In this western outlier of the greater Òyó kingdom, the Alááfin's Šàngó cult was kept at bay by the Àrá, cult which was directly controlled by the local rulers. Clearly, the story of Ìtásá's Àrá is intimately linked to the story of the town itself. I will begin the discussion with the latter story, so as to bring out more clearly the sovereignty issue behind the "clash of the gods."

Ìtlé was the original name of Ìtásá, and *onítilé* was the title of its kings. Ìtlé town was sacked and abandoned in the course of the nineteenth century, and the present village of Ìtásá was rebuilt about 1 1/2 miles south of the site of the old ruins by some returnees after the establishment of Pax Britannica in the 1890s. Under the colonial and post-colonial administrations, the headman of Ìtásá ranked as *baálé* (chief of settlement), whereas in precolonial times the *onítilé* of Ìtlé had established themselves as *àbá* (kings) in the area. In what follows I shall use the name Ìtlé, unless the data indicate that I am dealing with the more recent settlement of Ìtásá.

The starting point of the story of Ìtlé is Old Òyó at a time when two princes were contesting the succession to the throne. The contest must have been a fierce one, and resulted in the defeat of Ilémólà, the junior aspirant to the throne. Rather than pledge loyalty to his senior brother as the new Alááfin, the angered Ilémólà and his supporters decided to leave Òyó and found a town of their own.¹⁸ They trekked over a hundred miles in a southwesterly direction until they settled at a site called Agbolé, near the Òyán river (a tributary of the Ògùn). Many were said to have followed Ilémólà. After they had settled, the chiefs and people of the settlements in the area chose to serve the leader of the Òyó exiles. In one account, 143 towns were involved, but the late Baálé Oyèdòkun gave the more likely figure of seven. When Ìtlé was sacked by the Fulani in the 1830s, and by the Dahomeans around 1880, all its subordinate towns were also destroyed according to the stories. These settlements were probably located to the north and west of Ìtlé (as, for instance, old-Kéwú, whose chiefly descendants now hold the Bášámú chieftaincy

in nearby Iganná). Certainly none of the remaining towns in the area, from Iwéré to Ijío (which were also sacked, but later rebuilt), seems to have been subordinate to the *onitilé*. What the Itásá stories say, then, is that when the Òyó exiles had settled, "Ilémólà ordered the towns in the area to serve the Alááfin no longer, but to serve him alone. Because of this order they called the king of the place where they lived 'the one who owns the land' [*eni t'ó ní ilé*]. This was the meaning of *onitilé*."

This etymology sets up a taunting contrast with the title of Ilémólà's senior brother who acceded to the Òyó throne, that is, Alááfin, which means "the one who owns the palace." And to make sure that the negation of the new Alááfin was not just a one-off angry outburst, Ilémólà is said to have sworn (*búra*) that "He and his senior brother who is king must never again meet each other face to face. If they were to see each other again and Ilémólà too had the great honor of being king, something extraordinary would happen [*gongo yóò sè*]."

Later I will mention one thunderous occasion during the colonial period when the two brothers almost met. Meanwhile, the question about the origin of Itilé that remains unanswered is, when was the town founded? Unfortunately the stories of origin do not provide the information needed to establish this date. From the list of kings, it seems that Ilémólà founded his kingdom in the early part of the eighteenth century. But it is likely that Itilé is older than this, since in stories of origin genealogies often become telescoped and names forgotten. In any event, the Itilé kings must have been ruling over their insubordinate petty enclave in the Òyó kingdom at the time the Alááfin's power was at its highest during the eighteenth century.¹⁰

Itilé is not the only town in Yorubáland whose kings claim descent from the royal house in Òyó. One other case is Idikó (now split into two small settlements, Idikó-ilé and Idikó-àgó), which is situated about eight miles southwest of Itilé. The founder of Idikó is said to have been an Òyó prince who went into exile with his followers after his brother had usurped his right to accede to the Alááfin's throne. The Onidikó (kings of Idikó), however, have no history of a lasting grievance (at least overtly) with the Alááfin. According to custom, shortly after a new Onidikó is installed as king, he must go to Òyó to pay his respects to the Alááfin. Afterward, the two "brothers" are never to meet again face to face. But apart from this personal avoidance relationship, Idikó seems to have been loyal to Òyó, including during the time the Árá cult spread to the area, as I will discuss in the following paragraphs.

What emerges from our Itilé data, however, is that by adopting Árá as their own *òrìsà* the *onitilé* institutionalized their taunting of the ideology

underpinning the Alááfin's sovereignty, namely his rule by the power of Šàngó. This is how Árá is said to have come to Ítílé:

Árá was a wanderer. We heard that before he lived in the land of Saworo [here referring to Šábé]. Wherever he stayed he was in the habit of leaving one or two of his wives as well as some of his power, in order to show the people how strong he was. In the course of his wanderings we heard that he went to Ídíkó and asked if he could stay. They asked him what kind of food he wanted to eat. He told them he liked roasted yams and the meat of dogs and cows. But before eating any of these, he said he had to eat the king's firstborn son. On hearing this the Ídíkó people refused him as a visitor. As Árá did not know where his journey would take him, he was worried that the lack of food would be too great a hardship for the two wives who were traveling with him. He therefore asked the people of Ídíkó to keep one of them. The name of that wife was Obálá.

In Ídíkó the stories of origin confirm that when Árá first called on them the people were afraid and would not allow him to stay. He was put up for the night, but on the second day the Onídíkó took him to Ítílé where he was welcomed and worshipped. Historically, Ídíkó's fear of Árá may have been coupled with fear of incurring the wrath of Šàngó, their Ọyó overlord's *òrìsà*. Another reason why Árá was not welcomed may have been because Obálá was already established as the town's *òrìsà*. This Obálá was not Árá's wife, as according to the Ítílé story, but the deified ancestor of the original inhabitants of the area.²¹ By making Obálá Árá's wife, the Ítílé people seem to imply that Ídíkó became subordinate to them, that is, inasmuch as Árá, the husband, is free to go and visit his wives at any time and in any place. But to the people of Ídíkó this is not at all the case. It is true that adjoining the main Obálá shrine in Ídíkó there is another shrine for Árá, and that whenever they worship the former, offerings will be made also to the latter. This ritual linking of Obálá and Árá is played down, however. The reason why Árá is worshipped, the Ídíkó people explained, is because he once visited them. Then they hastened to say that they had nothing to do with the Árá worship in Ításá (that is, old Ítílé), that they never even attended the annual festival of the thunder deity there. In this way the people of Ídíkó asserted their own local sovereignty vis-à-vis Ítílé, while the fact of simply commemorating Árá's visit, without accepting his cult for the town, could hardly be interpreted as an act of disloyalty toward Ọyó.

The story of Árá's coming to Ítílé continues with his visit to the town of Íwéré. There also the people were afraid and unwilling to meet his

demands. It was afterward that he made his way to *Ìtílẹ̀*. Who the *onitílẹ̀* was at the time is not specified,²¹ but the story says that the king trembled with fear when *Árą́* explained that, in order to stay with him and his people, he demanded the sacrifice of his *áráyímọ̀* (firstborn son). *Árą́* promised that if his requests were met he would assist the king with all his extraordinary powers. The king, however, insisted that he could not give up his son. Finally he called his town chiefs and asked for their advice. The chiefs reminded the king that his firstborn son was mad, and that whenever he was allowed out he wandered from town to town until search parties were sent out to bring him back home. For this reason the chiefs advised the king to sacrifice his son, saying, "It would be better that one heard 'he died' than 'the king's son got lost'" (*ó ká ká sán kí à gbọ́ wí pé ó kú ju omo ọ̀bá nù lọ*). After thinking this over the king finally agreed to allow *Árą́* to stay and to sacrifice his son to him, provided it would be a one and only occasion. This condition was accepted, and they agreed that from that time on they would sacrifice a dog to *Árą́* every year.

The story continues to narrate how after receiving the king's son and the other sacrificial offerings *Árą́* retired to the small hill on the edge of *Ìtílẹ̀* town. Before taking his leave, *Árą́* told the king to come and visit him the following day, but when early in the morning the king called all the townspeople and asked who would go and see the stranger on his behalf, nobody volunteered for fear that *Árą́* would kill and eat whoever went up. Finally, when the king announced that he himself would go if nobody else went, his two affines, *Babalalẹ̀* and *Babẹgbẹ̀*, decided to go. The story continues as follows:

On the way *Babalalẹ̀* walked in front and *Babẹgbẹ̀* followed, carrying the calabash with maize gruel which he wanted to give to the stranger. While they were walking *Babalalẹ̀* looked up and saw in the distance *Árą́*, who was eating the head of the king's firstborn son. *Babalalẹ̀* was struck with fear and fell to the ground. *Babẹgbẹ̀* did not know what had happened, and asked *Babalalẹ̀* what the matter was. But *Babalalẹ̀* was so terrified he could not speak. Instead, *Árą́* raised his voice and shouted to *Babalalẹ̀* "Your chest which has touched the ground, keep it down and come here crawling,²² and let *Babẹgbẹ̀* come to me upright as he is now." That was how *Babẹgbẹ̀* went forward with his calabash of maize gruel. When he came to *Árą́* he was told to put the calabash down. Then *Árą́* began to pluck many different kinds of leaves and put them in the calabash. He explained to *Babẹgbẹ̀* that the calabash would remain as a propitiatory calabash [*koto amẹ̀rọ̀*] whenever a place fell victim to his wrath. Then he ordered *Babalalẹ̀* to stand up from his prostrating

posture and go and sit on a tree near where he was lying, which they had cut short. He did as he was told and that is the reason why, to this day, when *Àrà* strikes somewhere [*jà nibikan*], Babalalẹ must get a stool and sit down until they have removed the *òrìṣà*'s wrath. Finally, *Àrà* gave Babalalẹ a ceremonial staff [*òpá idàsà*]. Then he sent Babalalẹ and Babẹgbẹ back to the king to give him his (*Àrà*'s) promise that in all his needs he would stand by him.

As in the stories from Kẹtu and Sábẹ, here also *Àrà* is characterized as a wandering stranger who did not foist himself upon the local people but always asked to be given hospitality. But what is new in the *Ìtílẹ* account is that on arrival in a town *Àrà* always confronts the sovereignty issue. He goes straight to the king, from whom he demands the ultimate sacrifice, namely the latter's *àrẹmọ*, or firstborn son, in return for his promise of protection and assistance. No such demands on the kings were mentioned in the Sábẹ-Kẹtu traditions. But we should bear in mind that at the time the *Àrà* cult spread to the *Òyó* kingdom, the Alááfin's *Ẓàngó* cult was already organized empire-wide. Therefore it would seem that no provincial king could accept the *Àrà* cult, with its own priests who were specialized in conducting the purification rituals after lightning catastrophes, without bringing into question his loyalty to the Alááfin. In *Ìtílẹ* it is clear that the sovereignty issue was central to the introduction of *Àrà*. Not only did the *onítílẹ* accept *Àrà* as yet another cult in the way that Yorùbá kings used to welcome new *òrìṣà* cults when exiles and refugees asked to settle in their towns,²² but he actually made *Àrà* into his own royal cult and an instrument for asserting his sovereignty in the area over which he ruled.

First, by sacrificing his firstborn son to *Àrà*, the *onítílẹ* entered into a lasting pact with the *òrìṣà*. In this way he was believed to participate in *Àrà*'s power to direct lightning and strike his enemies, in the same way that the Alááfin was said to act through *Ẓàngó*. Before giving up his son, however, the king had consulted his chiefs and followed their counsel. Therefore, in the eyes of the people, his action was not only legitimate but beneficial for all of them. Secondly, having acted on behalf of the people, the *onítílẹ* retained direct control over the *Àrà* cult by having its priesthood vested in the lineages of his non-chiefly affines, Babalalẹ and Babẹgbẹ, rather than in the lineages of town chiefs or non-affinal commoners. The *onítílẹ*'s strategy of relying on his affines to carry out the dangerous mission to *Àrà* is referred to in the following words in the accounts: "Such was our custom in the old days, of entrusting the hardest and most risky obligations to our affines."

Moreover, the fact that they were under such a constant affinal obligation prevented Babalalẹ and Babẹgbẹ from usurping the *onitilẹ*'s right to control the Ẹrą cult, even though as priests they were fully initiated in its secret powers. Normally affinal relations are ego-focused, but in this case we note that this relationship became institutionalized, so that to this day in Ẫrą the lineages of Babalalẹ and Babẹgbẹ stand in an affinal relationship to the royal lineage.²⁴

The *onitilẹ*'s anxiety to be the sole controller of the power to direct lightning can perhaps best be illustrated in the following incidents. In the first two cases, the anxiety concerns the threat that someone else might manipulate this power to harm the king, while the last two cases illustrate the king's anxiety to maintain law and order in the face of threats by townspeople, as well as by strangers.

In 1962 the late Oyẹdọkun Ẫgọnną was installed as *baalẹ* of Ẫrą. During the days preparatory to the installation, the king-elect organized a hunting party so that large quantities of meat could be made available for the coming festivities. One night while he and the other hunters were camping in the bush it started to rain heavily. They all ran for shelter to a hut in a nearby farm. While they were sitting round the fire, Oyẹdọkun narrated stories of his predecessors. Suddenly there was a terrific thunderclap, and a flash of lightning struck a huge tree, which came crashing down on top of the hut. Everybody inside was knocked out, some men being pinned down by the branches on top of the open fire. Oyẹdọkun was also hit on the head, but he managed to bring his entire party out from under the debris. The men spent the rest of the night in the pouring rain, suffering from their injuries and surrounded by lurking hyenas and other wild animals. Throughout that time the *onitilẹ*-elect could be heard praying to his forefathers to save him and his men, and not allow his enemies to rejoice over his death before he was made king.

The king-elect and his men saw this attack by lightning as an obvious challenge to the *onitilẹ*'s sovereignty. But because he and his men survived the attack he proved that Ẫrą was on his side and that no rival had succeeded in turning the *ọrọyọ*'s power against him. Moreover, if the attack had been the work of the Aląąfin's Ẫngọ, he had proof that Ẫrą's power (in protecting him) was stronger. Asserting the supremacy of Ẫrą over Ẫngọ has indeed remained a matter of concern for the *onitilẹ*, especially after the establishment of the colonial administration, when their royal title was no longer recognized and they were made ordinary *baalẹ* under the Aląąfin. It was this demotion which led to the following incident.

When Abióyè was *baálé* of Írásá, the Alááfin ordered that all the kings visit him, including the *onítílé*. The order came notwithstanding the fact that Ilémólà (the founder of Ítílé) had sworn that he and his senior brother (the Alááfin) would never see each other again. As soon as the *onítílé* and his party of followers set out on their journey to Òyó the rain started to pour and there was thunder and lightning. Yet the elements did not affect the king and his party. On arrival in Òyó they stayed at Ísokún. While they were there the thunderstorm continued with increasing intensity for nine days. The Alááfin then enquired who was the king who had arrived in Òyó. They told him that it was the *onítílé*. As soon as he heard this he sent a giant-sized fowl and the following message of apology: That the king who greets with thunder (*àrè*) should not be angry with him, the Alááfin, any longer. Àrà himself has had to chase him away, compulsorily, because the *onítílé* should never see the face of the king of Òyó, and what is more, the *onítílé* should never prostrate to any king.

This incident is now alluded to in a song sung by the women of Babalalè's compound on the day of the annual festival of Àrà in Írásá:

*Àkùkò Àr(á)rà kò d'Òyó-ó,
Gbangba Fa n gbó l'òkú.*

The cock of Àrà crowed as far as Òyó,
The news of it reached all of us in the farm.

In his book *The New Òyó Empire*, Atanda has cogently argued that an unprecedented, authoritarian regime of Native Administration developed in Òyó under Alááfin Ládùgbòlù between 1906 and 1944. Backed by the British Resident, Captain Ross, the Alááfin made visits to Òyó by provincial kings mandatory at the occasion of the annual *hegere* festival.²⁸ Since it demoted the *onítílé* to the rank of one of the many village chiefs within the Native Authority system, the flouting of the age-old avoidance relationship between the Alááfin and the *onítílé* was bound to spark off a "clash of the gods."

For the *onítílé*, the importance of asserting his sovereignty by the power of Àrà centered not only on legitimizing himself in office, or securing his personal protection, but also on playing his role as ruler of his people. From the following two accounts we will see how the Àrà cult functioned in sanctioning certain types of antisocial behavior.

When a man was planning to harm someone by using sorcery (which is different from witchcraft), something would happen so that the king learned of the man's sinister plans, and also about the location in the bush where the sorcerer kept the secret of his evil medicines. First the king would send his messenger through the town to announce to the people that a sorcerer was about to harm someone. Then the sorcerer would be given a warning that if he did not stop his evil plans he would die a certain death and his name would be made public.³⁶ If the man in question did not immediately repent, *Árá* would strike suddenly. The man would be found dead and his secret grove burnt to ashes by lightning, even though not a drop of rain fell from the sky.

If such was *Árá*'s punishment for criminals within the community, his treatment of outsiders who threatened the peace and livelihood of his people was equally devastating. The following anecdote illustrates this:

Árá protected the town also from outside dangers, especially by punishing marauders. One day [in 1957] some thieves came to *Ìtásá* and stole all the property of Chief Jagun and his sons. The theft took place during the night, and the thieves left the town immediately. The following morning the king called some of the hunters and told them that *Árá* had revealed to him that the thieves had taken their loot to one particular bush. Eight hunters went out to the assigned place at ten o'clock, and by three in the afternoon they returned to the town with all the stolen goods. As for the marauders, *Árá*'s wrath had killed them all.

The question of sovereignty not only centers around the cult of the royal *òrìṣà* itself, but includes also the structural arrangements between this and other related cults within a town's social organization, as well as the way in which particular *òrìṣà* are worshipped. The specificity of these arrangements (which defies generalizations about the *òrìṣà* for the whole of Yorùbáland at all times) is tied in with a town's history and gives expression to its identity and claim to sovereignty in contrast with other towns. Earlier I discussed this question by comparing the *Árá* and related *òrìṣà* cults in *Sábé*, *Kétu*, and *Ìlárá*. In the case of *Ìtilé* we are once again confronted with a different configuration of the way in which *Árá* interrelates with the other town *òrìṣà* and the ways in which these deities are worshipped. I will restrict my comments to the *òrìṣà* most directly related to *Árá* in the ritual drama which is enacted at the annual festival celebrated on the *Árá* hill near *Ìtásá*.

Unlike Šábé-Kétu, where the Árá festival is timed as a new yam festival in September or October, Itásá celebrates its Árá festival after the first maize harvest, around June. The day of the festival is the only day in the year when the people are allowed to climb the Árá hill.²⁷ Perched on the rocky outcrop on the top of this hill are three shrines. In the center stands the Árá shrine, consisting of a hut in which the sacred stone celts (*edùn ará*) are kept. Nearest to Árá is a shrine for Ògún, the *òrìṣà* of hunters and blacksmiths. Ògún is said to have wrought the *edùn ará*, and is worshipped as the *onítílé*'s titular deity. His shrine consists of just an upright stone. The third shrine, which stands behind Árá's, is for Ọbájí. According to the *bnáǎǎ* of Itásá, the Babalalé, and the chiefs Sòbalójú and Ìkólábá, Ọbájí is not Árá's wife, as some Itásá people first told me, but Árá's senior brother. He came to visit Árá, and on the invitation of the townspeople agreed to stay. In the Ítílé tradition Árá's wife is Ọsun. Her main shrine is located not on the Árá hill, but in a grove nearer to the present town of Itásá.

This entourage of Árá is different from the ones discussed earlier in the Šábé-Kétu area. Over there no *òrìṣà* was roped in to play the part of Árá's brother, but those that were there in other capacities did not make their reappearance in Ítílé, least of all Šàngó. Structurally, however, the position of Ọsun in Ítílé, as Árá's wife who lives away from her husband, is similar to the position of Šàngó as Árá's senior wife in the Šábé-Kétu tradition. But from the Ọyó point of view Árá's marriage to Ọsun in Ítílé is tantamount to "wife snatching," since many hold that Ọsun is one of Šàngó's wives.

The presence of Ògún, the hunter-blacksmith, on the Árá hill can be seen to parallel the presence of the hunters' *òrìṣà* Ọsòṣòṣì and Amòḍe in the Árá shrine at Šábé. That Ògún should occupy a place of importance in the Ítílé tradition seems logical, as to this day most men devote much of their time to hunting. Nevertheless, unlike hunters in neighboring towns who celebrate their annual festival in honor of Ògún, the Ítílé hunters assert their separate identity by honoring Agemò instead.²⁸

Unknown outside the Ítílé tradition is Ọbájí, the third *òrìṣà* on the hill, who is worshipped by the town chiefs as representatives of the non-royal lineages. This unparalleled appearance of an *òrìṣà* as Árá's senior brother makes Ọbájí look like the joker in the pack. Except, perhaps, when we interpret his presence in the light of Ítílé's story of origin. There we saw that the town owed its foundation to a feud between their ancestor Ilèmólá and his senior brother, who was said to have usurped Ilèmólá's right to become Alááfin. Viewed from this angle, I would suggest that structurally Ọbájí's appearance on the Ítílé scene is a form of

sublimation for the Alááfin's Šàngó. By sacrificing to Obáji, the townspeople (as represented by their chiefs) mediate, subconsciously, between Árá/*onítílé* and Šàngó/Alááfin.

There are both general and specific ethnographic reasons for supporting this structural interpretation. Mediation is pervasive in Yorubá social practices, especially in the context of disputes. Conflict management almost invariably results in triadic arrangements because the parties to the conflict, or other interested parties, will soon call on elders or a chief to help reach a settlement.²⁹ Above all, it is through the medium of sacrifice (following arbitration by the Ifá oracle) that people try to restore peaceful relations with angered *òrìṣà* or other spiritual powers. The *onítílé*'s refusal to honor the Alááfin irrevocably implicated all the people of Ítílé once Árá was institutionalized as town *òrìṣà* and Šàngó was rejected, and created in effect the deadlock situation. Practically, Ítílé could not ignore the Alááfin's overlords. Spatially and politically, Ítílé was still part of the Òyó kingdom, even though it was situated on the periphery. There is evidence, for example, that when the Árá priests conducted purification rituals the Alááfin sent a delegation to receive part of the fees collected. It would seem, then, that the contradiction between negating Šàngó ideologically and honoring him politically by paying tribute to the Alááfin (the *onítílé*'s senior brother) was resolved ritually in the people's sacrifice to Obáji (Árá's senior brother).

Further to this examination of the enigmatic identity of Obáji, I should point out that this *òrìṣà*'s name literally means "the king (Ọba) rose," or "stood up" (*jí*). For example, a boy born after his father has died is often named Babá-tún-jí, "father has again risen." Similarly, Obáji could here be interpreted as a sublimation of the king of Òyó, who has reappeared.

Finally, it is in the rituals that surround Árá, Ògún, and Obáji during the annual festival that Ítílé gives further expression to its separate identity from both Šábé-Kétu's Árá and Òyó's Šàngó. The animal sacrificed to Ògún is a cock (presented by the *onítílé*), while a dog (also presented by the *onítílé*) is sacrificed to Árá. Elsewhere in Yorubáland these animals are considered to be favored by Ògún—the dog, however, more than the cock. But since here Árá takes precedence over Ògún, it seems appropriate that the former receives the dog and the latter the cock. Nevertheless, from the Šábé-Kétu point of view Árá's choice of a dog in Ítílé is most unorthodox, as in their area the thunder god receives a ram. Why Ítílé's Árá wants a dog may have an ad hoc explanation, but what stands out structurally is Ítílé's assertion that its thunder god is unlike Šábé-Kétu's as well as Òyó's, since the ram is also sacred to Šàngó.



FIGURE 5.1. *Árã* shrine, Babegbè's compound, Itasa, 1975.
Photo by Marilyn Hammersley Houlberg.



FIGURE 5.2. *Árã* hill, annual *Árã* Festival, Itasa, 1975.
Photo by Marilyn Hammersley Houlberg.



FIGURE 5.3. Sacrificing a ram to Obaji atop Àrâ hill, Itasa, 1975.
Photo by Marilyn Hammersley Houlberg.



FIGURE 5.4. Sacrificing a dog to Àrâ atop Àrâ hill, Itasa, 1975.
Photo by Marilyn Hammersley Houlberg.



FIGURE 5.5. Babalalé, priest of Ærá, annual Ærá Festival, Itasa, 1975.
Photo by Marilyn Hammersley Houlberg.

The distinctiveness of Ítilé's Ærá is expressed also in the way these animals are sacrificed. In the Ításá area, hunters kill dogs or cocks in honor of Ògún by holding the animal outstretched in midair while one man severs the head with a stroke of the cutlass. In contrast to this method, the cock sacrificed to Ògún on the Ærá hill is killed in the common fashion of killing a fowl at ancestral groves or *òrìsá* shrines: by keeping the head pressed on the ground with the toe and pulling the body away. The second contrast is in the way of killing Ærá's dog, which is actually clubbed to death (without spilling the blood)³⁰ in the way New Guinea Highlanders kill their pigs—a rather unusual method among the Yorùbá. Most disconcerting, however, is the animal demanded in sacrifice by the enigmatic Qbájí. In his honor the town chiefs kill a ram, the sacred animal for thunder gods elsewhere, including Àrànmfẹ̀ in Ifẹ̀. If, as I suggested earlier, Qbájí is here a sublimated representation of Şàngó, then

the sacrificial ram is no longer disconcerting but most orthodox. Also the manner in which the ram is killed is orthodox: first it is smothered, then its throat is slashed with a knife.

One final question: How did Ítílé get away with its taunting of the Alááfin's rule by opposing Árá to Sàngó? Or did it? None of the histories recorded suggests that Òyó ever took disciplinary measures, military or otherwise, against Ítílé. Perhaps it was the sibling relationship between the Alááfin and the *onítílé* which precluded any potentially fratricidal action. Perhaps unruly petty kings such as the *onítílé* were too unimportant for the Alááfin to take much notice of, as long as they did not engage in subversive activities. Perhaps also, as I suggested earlier, the Òyó rulers found it unworkable to secure effective control and loyalties in a frontier area such as the one between the rivers Òfiki and Okpara.²¹

But whatever reasons Òyó may have had for not taking direct action against Ítílé, it is worth noting that when the western frontier began to fall prey to foreign invaders (Fulani ruled Ilorin and Dahomey) in the nineteenth century, the Alááfin did not take special action to protect Ítílé, while in loyal Ídíkó he posted a governor (*ajólé*). This Alááfin strongman set up camp on the Onídíkó's land on the banks of the Òyán river (this town is now known as Ilaji). Ítílé accounts do not mention this development, but they cite an incident that occurred during that period which made the *onítílé* obliterate the last vestiges of his royal Òyó descent. Until that time, boys born into the *onítílé*'s lineage had the same facial marks cut as those of the Alááfin's house (that is, six cuts on each cheek, *ábàjà mífà*). One day when Olúgbolá was the *onítílé*, a catastrophe occurred when 143 boys who had had their faces cut died when the wounds became infected. Afterward Olúgbolá ordered that no one of the royal house be given the *ábàjà mífà* marks.²² The figure of 143 casualties which ends this story is remarkable, because it is the same story that began by stating that, at the foundation of Ítílé, 143 towns in the area decided to serve the *onítílé*. Whatever the number of towns was, the fact remains that eventually all of them, including Ítílé, were sacked and reduced to ruins by Dahomey, never to be rebuilt again. The village of Ításá, rebuilt at a new site at the turn of the century, is the only reminder of this Árá enclave within the Òyó kingdom. So perhaps this abandonment and dispersal was the ultimate price that had to be paid by Ilémólá's descendants for preferring Árá to Sàngó.

This discussion of Yorúbá thunder gods has been largely an exercise in writing ethno-history. Further research will be needed to fill the gaps

in our knowledge, and, possibly, revise our understanding of history in Yorùbáland. Meanwhile, this approach has tried to heed Horton's call to study traditional Yorùbá religion in action.²⁹ This implies, as I have argued, that religious beliefs and ritual symbolisms must be studied in the context of group concerns with identity and the exercise of power. In the case of royal cults, these concerns centered around the assertion of sovereignty in both the internal and the external affairs of the kingdom. We saw that in the western kingdoms where Àrá was not a royal cult, the imposition of the imperial Šàngó cult led to compromise arrangements between the two thunder cults, while local variations in the Àrá cult persisted as a result of the circumstances under which that cult had developed originally. The failure to reach such a compromise in Ítílé could therefore not be explained by the argument that Àrá and Šàngó are in themselves mutually exclusive spiritual forces. On the contrary, what the history of this petty kingdom revealed was that its uncompromising stance toward the Šàngó cult found its rationale in the original feud between their king-founder and his senior brother, the Alááfin of Òyò. Therefore, by adopting Àrá as their lineage *òrìṣà*, the *onítílé* secured for themselves the instrument for asserting their exclusiveness and sovereignty vis-à-vis Òyò's imperialism. Finally, concerning the claim that the cult of Šàngó buttressed the Alááfin's authority empire-wide, our findings in some western Yorùbá towns suggest that historically this was realized only inasmuch as Òyò's rule had already been established effectively in a particular area.

Postscript—"Where is Àrá nowadays?"

Almost two decades after my 1970s fieldwork in the Ításá area, my old friend and lifelong correspondent, Paul Oládélé, wrote to me with a startling question about Àrá's whereabouts. "I often wonder where Àrá is nowadays?" is how he raised the issue. By then, in 1992, he and his family had been living in Lagos for about fifteen years. At that time all his business ventures had come to naught, and his marriage seemed to be heading for the rocks. Returning home to Ításá to farm or do business seemed hardly an option because of his fear of secret enemies (witches/sorcerers). Implied in this perception was an awareness, it seems, that missionary conversion and modernity may have scored a victory over paganism by the demise of the *òrìṣà* cults, including Ításá's royal cult of Àrá. But the backlash has been that, nowadays, in Paul's and other people's minds, any evil-minded man or woman can dabble in witchcraft and sorcery with impunity. Paul's comment on his questioning of Àrá's whereabouts was phrased thus:

In the olden days, if a hunter in *Ìràsá* broke *Àrá*'s taboo and brought gunpowder inside the town near the *òrìṣà*'s shrine, there would be a sudden flash of lightning which would burn down the man's house. Also, when the king learnt that a man was secretly preparing evil medicine [*jùjú*] in the bush in order to harm someone, he would send out his town crier to warn people of the impending danger. And if the sorcerer did not immediately abandon his evil plan, *Àrá* would strike him dead and burn his *jùjú* grove to ashes. However, nowadays things have fallen apart, and everyone just does what he or she pleases.

I know that *Àrá* no longer dwells on the sacred hill near our town. . . . I discussed this with Babalàḗ [the old *Àrá* priest]. He said that civilization had spoiled everything. Anyway, he had no answer to my question where *Àrá* is to be found nowadays. He himself, he assured me, has always carried out the daily propitiatory rites [*ètùtù*] for *Àrá*, and responded to all the *òrìṣà*'s requests throughout his life. Likewise, at every annual festival he has led the townspeople up the *Àrá* hill and offered the sacrifice of a dog on behalf of the king. Yet near the *Àrá* hill, where none was ever allowed to farm, one of our townspeople is now growing tobacco for the Nigerian Tobacco Company. It is pity that the spirit is no longer to be found where he used to dwell. Who is *Àrá*? Where did he come from? Where is he now? No one can answer these questions.

Having known Paul *Ọládélé* for many years, I sensed that this was not an academic question about *Àrá*'s whereabouts, but an existential one. What had prompted it was his awareness of being at the mercy of forces beyond his control in a failed nation state (Nigeria) and in a dysfunctional hometown without *Àrá*. Controlling these occult forces has now become a growing industry in Nigeria, foremost among born-again Christians and Pentecostals, who profess to confront these alleged minions of Satan with the power of the Holy Spirit, often during spectacular show exorcisms in front of thousands of worshippers. However, speaking as a one-time missionary in the Catholic diocese of *Ọyó*, and a belated convert to anthropology, I should caution that preaching such a holy war against the occult powers of evil is not unproblematic. On the one hand, the effect of this war on today's faithful—as Paul *Ọládélé* intimates—is that many of them become even more paralyzed by fear of witches and wizards than their forebears were, in so far as the latter believed that their personal and town *òrìṣà* offered the best protection against occult enemies. On the other hand, whipping up frenzy against witches and wizards, rather than

promoting sociality, trust, and goodwill in one's neighborhood, tends to heighten fear and hatred of the "other," since she or he may, after all, be a witch or a wizard disguised as an ordinary woman or man. Finally, by pinning the blame for people's suffering on satanic agents, this holy war tends to cloud people's vision of the near and long-lasting repercussions of their own actions or failures to act, and, consequently, of how their agency impacts, for better or worse, on other people's lives.

NOTES

The research on which this chapter is based was conducted in the Okéhó-Ìgánná Council area in the Oyo state of Nigeria in 1974-75. For the data on the Árá cult in Itàṣà and in the Republic of Benin I am especially indebted to Mr. Julius B. Oyèsòro of Baalè Agbòjò's compound in Itàṣà. I also wish to express my gratitude to the late Father Mùléró of Kétu, who kindly allowed me to consult his field notes on the Árá traditions in Kétu and Ilàrá, as I was unable to obtain a visa for entering Benin at the time. Mr. Oyèsòro, who did manage to get across the border, was greatly helped in carrying out my investigations, thanks to the letters of introduction Father Mùléró provided in all the Árá cult centers. This I wish to recall as a tribute to a great Yorùbá historiographer and pastor.

The editors wish to thank editor in chief Professor Dr. Othmar Gächter and the Anthropos-Institute for permission to reprint Marc Schiltz, "Yorùbá Thunder Deities and Sovereignty: Árá versus Šàngó," *Anthropos* 80, nos. 1-3 (1985): 67-84.

1. Although *obá* is the generic term for crowned monarchs, it is a Yorùbá custom to refer to a particular *obá* by the title attached to his dynasty (see Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbás*, London: Routledge, 1921), 34. Hence, we speak of the Alákáfin of Oyo, the Onítílé of Ifilé, the Onáńíkò of Idíkò, the Alákétu of Kétu, and the Onšábéé of Šábé.

2. See J. O. Lucas, *The Religion of the Yorùbás* (Lagos: C. M. S., 1948), 104.

3. P. Morton-Williams, "An Outline of the Cosmology and Cult Organization of the Oyo Yorùbá," *Africa* 34 (1964): 255.

4. In Šábé and Kétu, Árá is also associated with the disease of smallpox, which, in Yorùbá, is referred to as *igbóná*, or *ilé-gbígboná*, i.e., "hot earth." Elsewhere, Šòmponná is the *oríṣá* that personifies this affliction.

5. The lineage who owned an Árá shrine in Ìgánná invariably attributed its provenance to a long-dead ancestor who had first erected it. In one case the cult had been brought by refugees from the coastal kingdom of Ájásé (Porto-Novo). In the other cases the origin stories recalled an ancestor who at one time had serendipitously chanced upon an *éṣùn árá* ([pre-Yorùbá] stone celt, believed to be a thunderbolt), and on returning home had erected an Árá shrine in the courtyard where the thunderbolt was kept in an earthen pot.

6. J. Lorand Matony, *Sex and the Empire That Is No More: Gender and the*

Politics of Metaphor in Oyo Yoruba Religion (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

7. See E. B. Idowu, *Olódùmaré: God in Yorùbá Belief* (London: Longmans, 1962), and Lucas, *The Religion of the Yorùbás*.

8. See Morton-Williams, "An Outline," 255, and R. Law, *The Oyo Empire c. 1600-c. 1836* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 140.

9. S. O. Biobaku, *The Ègbá and Their Neighbours 1842-1872* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 8.

10. Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbás*, 35.

11. Morton-Williams, "An Outline," 255.

12. G. J. A. Ojo, *Yorùbá Culture*, (London: University of Ife and University of London Press, 1966), 171.

13. Law, *The Oyo Empire*, 241-42.

14. *Ibid.*, 217-18.

15. Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbás*, 259; 263-71 also mentions the Ìbàribá people as military allies of the Oyo. King Elédùwè, the Ìbàribá war leader, is the hero whose name is still remembered in Ìgànná accounts of the battle of Ilorin prior to the destruction of Old Oyo in the 1830s.

16. Idowu, *Olódùmaré*, 90.

17. Yorùbá proverb: *àgbò méjì kì í kàn kí àkàn má yé*.

18. As in many other foundation stories of Yorùbá towns, the king-founder of Ìtlé is said to have left his town of origin as a result of a succession dispute with a brother. The recurring theme of these stories is that the junior brother usurped the succession right, causing the senior to go into exile in anger. The pattern is so common that some Ìràsá informants told me their story of origin in similar fashion. It was not until I recorded this "more official" account from the *badé* and some chiefs and Àrá priests that to my surprise I noted that the pattern had been reversed: Ilémólá was junior to the brother who became Alááfin. It is in the light of this version that I suggest below my interpretation of the identity of the *òrìsá* called Obáájí.

19. Law, *The Oyo Empire*, 89.

20. Obáájí is the sacred python, worshipped on the hill (Òkè Ilé) overlooking Ìdikó. He is the personified ancestor of the original inhabitants of Ìdikó. Traditionally he was also worshipped as the local smallpox *òrìsá* in the way Àrá is associated with this disease in Kéré and Sábé. In nearby Ìgànná, Órìsáálá was the smallpox *òrìsá* before the foundation of the town.

21. When I asked for the name of the Onitilé who introduced the Àrá cult, I was told it was Ilémólá. Whether or not the beginnings of the Àrá cult coincided with Ìtlé's foundation, the reply underscores the point I made in the beginning, that the story of Ìtlé and that of Àrá are two sides of the same coin as far as the sovereignty issue is concerned.

22. *Àyá rẹ́ tí ó dà dólé nàà ní kí ó máa fi lalẹ̀ bọ́ wá*. From these words, i.e., *lalẹ̀*, to crawl or split the ground in two, is construed the etymology of *babalalẹ̀*.

23. In some towns this resulted in the reduplication of the same *òrìsá* cults,

especially during the nineteenth century wars, when refugees took their ancestral cults with them to the towns where they resettled. In Ìgànná, for instance, we noticed three centers for the Ọ̀sun cult, as well as three different Orò cults.

24. In Ìdíkò the priests of Ọ̀bualá also stand in an affinal relationship to the Onídíkò.

25. Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbá*, 49-51.

26. The punishment for sorcery was thus not just an ignoble death at the hands of Àrà; the stigma of the criminal also became attached to the sorcerer's *idilé* (descent group). His sorcery puts at risk the renown, or "symbolic capital," of his *idilé*. For a discussion of the centrality of this concept in Yorùbá social organization, see Marc Schiltz, "Habitus and Peasantization in Nigeria: A Yorùbá Case Study," *Man new series* 17 (1982): 728-46, and "Rural-Urban Migration in Ìgànná," Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1980.

27. It is said that a long time ago a man returned to the hill after the ceremonies were over in order to retrieve his cap and pipe. On arrival at the top he confronted the *òrìsà* who were holding their own celebrations. They got hold of him and killed him. His skull inside the Àrà shrine is a reminder of the seriousness of the taboo.

28. Agemo occupies a central place among the southern Ìjẹ̀bù (Yorùbá). This cult is not common among the (northwestern) Ọ̀yó. Moreover, Itàṣá's Agemo cult is very different from Ìjẹ̀bù's.

29. K. F. Koch, *War and Peace in Jalemo* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974).

30. Even a few drops of blood spilled on the rock are immediately covered with earth to ensure the entire dog substitute of Ilẹ̀mólá's first-born is Àrà's.

31. I have argued elsewhere ("Rural-Urban Migration in Ìgànná.") that Ìgànná was Alááfin's most western stronghold on the Ọ̀fiki river.

32. Girls, however, are given *pélé* marks in remembrance of an ancestress who was a native of Sábẹ̀.

33. R. Horton, "African Conversion," *Africa* 41 (1971): 99.

PART TWO

*Representations of Sàngó in Oral
and Written Popular Cultures*



Ẓàngó and the Elements

Gender and Cultural Discourses

DIEDRE L. BÀDÉJÒ

A man walks in front of his wife, and he walks behind his mother.

(Okúnrin ní ńwájú aya rẹ̀, tí tán tò 'yáa rẹ̀ lẹ́yìn.)

Oya, the woman who is stronger than her husband.

(Oya, obinrin tó rorò j'okọ́ lẹ̀)

If a man sees a snake, and a woman kills it, it does not matter.

What matters is that the snake is dead.

(Bí okúnrin rí ejò tí obinrin pa á, kí ejò má sàá sí lẹ̀.)¹

Methodologies in Ẓàngó Discourses

Worldview, irony, vision, contradiction, ambiguity, historicism, and cultural wisdom: these are the cornerstones of many African proverbs, including those of the Yorùbá people. In fact, Yorùbá verbal, visual, and performance arts capture part of their historical essence and cultural knowledge in the pithy, metaphorically charged language of the proverb. The pathway, therefore, to discerning a Yorùbá perspective relies, in part, on the intertextuality and discourses found within the cultural nuances of proverbs and expressively articulated among oral, written, and performative resources. Spoken word and performance arts are inscribed on the papyrus of Yorùbá texts, which include drums, clothing, and visual arts. Yorùbá cultural literacy, we may assert, evolves from a knowledge and understanding of a cornucopia of these arts reverberating throughout its icons and polysemic verbal discourses, and, most importantly, within its complex cosmology that orders and re-orders the world and its

inhabitants. Within these concentric spheres is found a distinctive Yorùbá perspective and logic that frames its cultural behavior and the human response to it. It is this Yorùbá sensibility which guides this chapter.

Seeking the Elements

Like most West African perspectives, the Yorùbá worldview is found in the power of the word, which can be spoken, drummed, danced, worn, carved, and inscribed. Yorùbá perspective lies in the accoutrements of art, attire, and verve alluded to in literature and performance; in *oriki* and *isín*; in shrines; and with the keepers of its cornucopia of cultural treasures. Those treasures are inscribed with hyperbole and mystery in the *òrìṣà* narratives and historiographies that intersect Yorùbá knowledge and identity. Like the roads that *òrìṣà* themselves follow, the pathways to that treasure may be cut by Ògún, but can often become obscured at the crossroads of understanding where Èṣù presides. In short, it takes more than one road to reach Yorùbá nirvana. My chapter walks along many roads in its journey toward understanding Šàngó and the elements that shape his narrated existence. One road that we will consider is how his parental, spousal/familial, cultural/spiritual/political elements suggest an engendered discourse with respect to Šàngó narrative space in Yorùbá thought.

The Gender Matrix in Yorùbá Cultural Discourse

In the perambulatory image in the first proverb above, an explicit gender order is implied by the relationship between the wife and her husband. Certainly, in a male-dominated, hierarchal society like the Yorùbá, it may not seem unusual for a woman to walk behind her husband. In today's world, the first phrase of the proverb is undoubtedly disquieting, as we bristle at the way in which it sanctions an apparent gender inequity and subordination of women. Yet, in typical proverbial fashion, this assumption is contradicted by the juxtaposition of the female roles when the husband then follows his own mother. We are told that the wife, *ayá*, *éyíwá*, follows the husband, *òkò*, who then follows his own mother, *àyá*, the wife of his own father, in what conceptually may be the natural, infinite, and circuitous order of things Yorùbá. It may appear that the wife is subservient to the husband until we consider the husband's perennial position as a son who walks behind his own mother. It is also possible to surmise that women surround men in their more pedestrian activities. In fact, we may suggest that this unusual proverb seems to subvert male

dominance in this very patriarchal culture by suggesting that women are the agents of men's mobility: that is, their comings and goings in the world. The prominent roles of Oya and Ọṣun in Yorùbá cosmology, as well as the wives to Şàngó, seem to suggest that there may be an element of truth here.

We may ponder through these gendered paradoxes until we consider the second quote from an *oriki Oya*, which suggests that Oya is stronger than Şàngó. In this case, we now are faced with yet another dilemma, which arises when we consider that Şàngó in his manifestation as deity of thunder and lightning precedes Oya as deity of strong winds and torrential rainfalls. To fully appreciate this, a brief retreat to Nigeria's climatic realities is necessary. My days in Zaria during the Harmattan season sensitized me to the symbiotic relationship between Şàngó and Oya. From my family room window, I overlooked a valley to my right and the expansive boundaries of the savannah to my left, between which meandered the various footpaths and roads that snaked through Ahmadu Bello University's campus and our living quarters. Often, from my sunny kitchen, I could hear the boisterous crack of thunder in the distance although there was no rain in sight. Its approach was, nonetheless, so awesome and processional that one could almost gauge its distance from the length of intervals between its echoing sounds. Without the sun abating, the thunder and lightning strikes would continue, and I would wonder which trees had been struck by Şàngó's ire. This phenomenon of thunder and lightning performing while the sun shone brightly reminded me of my New York childhood. From that kitchen window where the sun also shone brightly during its summer thunderstorms, my Maryland-born great-grandmother, Nana, would say that the devil was beating his wife with a hambone. I can hardly imagine Oya suffering the same fate! On the contrary, it was the roaring winds of Oya that sent my children in search of their parents as we hurriedly secured the windows and the doors. It was Oya's pounding rains whipped around by her furious winds that caused us to gather in a huddle in the middle of the house. That is how I understood that Oya was, at least metaphorically, stronger than Şàngó. As an element of nature, Oya follows Şàngó across the Sahelian terrain as his most loyal and equally fearsome companion. Truly, she too walks *behind* her husband as her *oriki* below states, and as Ládipò captures in *Oba Kòso*.²

And yet, the supposedly unyielding posture of gender hierarchy is challenged in the third proverb as we weigh the matter of familial security. In considering the danger posed by a snake in their midst, the clear purpose of preventing catastrophe seems to override the purported gender

hierarchy in favor of more tangible problems of survival. The response to this dangerous situation seems less a function of some specious notion of propriety and more a sense of need and circumstance. The third quote above also suggests that the wife is not expected to feign timidity or weakness, but she is expected to attend to the business at hand with strength and authority. No time for fainting or the faint of heart here! From this we may glean that strength of character and of action is a human rather than a gender-specific expectation captured in the notion of *iwà-pílẹ̀*. Arguably, the consternation regarding gender ideology in Yorùbá thought is again confounded in the term *iwà-pílẹ̀*, which is usually associated with the female deity *Ìwà*, but applicable to both male and female. So from a critical point of view, it seems that there may be some circularity surrounding the question of gender itself. But I propose that this is not so. Rather we are faced with a gender ideology that dances to its own polyrhythmic philosophical constructs. The key principles in the rhythm of that construct rest upon a set of perspectives that can be broadly defined as functionality, shaped by a Yorùbá notion of wisdom as articulated by seniority or age, and biological sex. With respect to the later, the productive and reproductive realities of male and female function in an esoteric meta-language as metaphors for social-cultural and economic-political engagement. Yorùbá cultural caretakers, therefore, are viewed as the interpreters and specialists of that esoteric knowledge. Through their guardianship or covenant of Yorùbá hermeneutic gender concepts, the corporate body, at diverse levels and under fluid circumstances, are organized, deconstructed, and reconstituted as the need arises. This constant dynamic is apparent in the plethora of mythic narratives and contradictions that are embedded in Yorùbá oral traditions.

Sociocultural Reconstruction and the Yorùbá Body Politic

The counterpoising dynamic between women and men alluded to in the first quote demonstrates that Yorùbá gender ideology and its conceptual framework have their own logic. Obviously, that logic defies linearity and directness in favor of circularity and commutability, a matrix whose mantra is transformation and adaptability.⁸ Yorùbá logic intimates a certain predilection for the rotund—like the womb, the earth, and the *opón Ifá*, all of which hold its most profound esoteric secrets, the *awo* of life and death. Envisioning the womb of *Ọṣun* as matrix, Yorùbá logic infuses the inscrutability of *Èṣù*, the fallibility of *Obàtálá's* hands, and the *àṣẹ* of *Olódùmarè*. Within this worldview inheres a dynamic archetypal vortex or vibrant black hole, a drawing in of the stuff of life, gestating its

disparate parts within the Yorùbá cultural *àṣẹ* before birthing a newly adorned *orí* in its own unique cultural modalities, attire, and accoutrements.⁴ Within that matrix lies the cultural logic that sorts out and rearranges the roles and responsibilities of the human beings, *èniyan*, and deities, *òrìṣà*, who occupy and define its essences. The logic of that sorting and rearranging is found in the last proverb above, which emphasizes *what matters*: that is, that life continues unabated.

The dynamic relationships among mother, son, and wife exemplify this deep reverence for circularity as a metaphor of immortality and eternity. The inversion, transformation, and transmutability of gender roles envisioned here plays out in a plethora of Yorùbá rituals, festival dramas, fine arts, and oral narratives. It is obvious in Şangó's cosmogenesis, for example, that Oya and Ọṣun function as metaphors of such transmutability and mythico-political power. When we (re)place the subject in Yorùbá discourse, it becomes evident that with Oya as the *iyálé* of Şangó's court, and Ọṣun as his political and spiritual countervailing ruler, Şangó's narrative articulates an indigenous model of power transfer and cultural transformation that dominated West Africa for almost a thousand years. Oya, Ọṣun, and Ọbà as Şangó's wives, along with Yemojẹ as his mother, elevate his role in Yorùbá political and cosmological systems. Their presence in his narrative links the patriarchal legitimacy bequeathed to him by his father, Ọrányàn, to the reproductive metaphor of political power and empire building ascribed to him by his mother and wives. From this perspective, Şangó's meta-narrative enshrines key concepts in Yorùbá gender ideology as well as the role of this "King of the Mightiest Kings" within its cultural and historical universe.

Cosmology and the Transformation of Power: Şangó and Oya

This proverbial inversion and transmutability of gender roles suggests a more complicated meaning in the relationship between Şangó and Oya. Again in the second proverb, we are made to be swayed by the winds of Oya, who, it seems, can displace the unnamed husband, Şangó. In a bit of coyness and irony, this *oríkí* implies that the thunderous voice and awesome lightning strikes of Şangó are nothing compared to the tumultuous winds and rains of Oya. This is quite a claim since in the following excerpt from an *oríkí Şangó*, it is Şangó who inspires fear. Certainly, if one lives in the Harmattan regions of northern and western Nigeria as noted earlier, Oya's elemental forces are particularly relevant, especially since the Saharan winds whip up blinding dust and pour down torrential rains. In some ways, Şangó's thunderous cracks and lightning

strikes seem to pale by comparison. However, we are confounded to again consider how the third quote disarms the first two, and speaks to the immediacy, sensibility, and essence of the male/female relationships; that is, the preservation of the home or community. One could posit that together these proverbs and the *oríkì* present a logical endoskeleton of roles, responsibilities, and engendered associative metaphors interlocked by cultural nuances, beliefs, and practices. That logical endoskeleton lies in a spatial matrix symbolized ideologically by the womb, a space defined by awe and mystery (*aròò*). As I wish to reveal in this chapter, the cultural logic expressed by these proverbs is critical to understanding Šàngó's mythical and historical relevance in Yorùbá thought, where we find three elements of his story—parentage, conquest, and gender ideology.

Šàngó's Parentage as an Element of Cultural Historicism and Identity

Šàngó owes much of his intricacy to his parentage. According to oral traditions, Šàngó was the son of Ọrányàn, a son or grandson of Odùduwà, and of Yemọja, a Nupe princess and daughter of Elénpe, a powerful chieftain north of the Niger river bend. Apparently, Ọrányàn was sent on an expedition to secure Ifẹ's influences and territories, which led him to the Nupe kingdom. Although the details are sketchy, tradition does confirm that the birth of Šàngó was one tangible outcome of Ọrányàn's ventures. Briefly, according to Idowu, Šàngó grew up in Nupe, and later traveled across the Niger into his fatherland.⁵ After proving himself in warfare, he became the ruler of Ọyó North, that is, Old Ọyó, which was located in close proximity to Nupe itself. Although Nupe and Ọyó North were literally separated by the Niger river, we should point out these areas were united by the river as well. Historically speaking, the relationship between the territories north and south of the Niger river reaches far back into the earlier empires of Kanem-Bornu, Borgu, and Nupe itself. Trade and resettlement of communities affected by drought, wars, and population growth were among those factors that affected the interactions between these regions. In fact, Šàngó's grandfather/grandmother, Odùduwà, was an explorer and leader of the Yorùbá people in Ilé-Ifẹ, a fact that further implicates these north-south, and indeed east-west, ties.⁶

It seems that Šàngó's parentage, especially in this era, indicates a vision of the region's leadership that included expansion, unification, or perhaps cooperation among its various entities. This is certainly the case with Šàngó's grandfather, Odùduwà, and his father, Ọrányàn. Viewing this with respect to the history of West African regional migration

and resettlement, we can suggest that, at least metaphorically speaking, Sàngó walked behind his northern-born Nupe mother, Yemoja, and in front of his cosmo-political wives, Oya and Oṣun. Regardless, it is crucial to remember that it is Orányàn who gives Sàngó legitimacy among the Yorùbá crowned princes. The *oriki* *Orisà Sàngó* from S. A. Babalola's classic work on Yorùbá Ìjálá,⁷ along with the *oriki* *Sàngó Oko Oya*; and the *oriki* *Oya* from the Oṣun shrine in Oṣogbo,⁸ open the way to comprehending Sàngó's mythico-political and spiritual configuration. Together, the oral narratives below inundate us with references to, and images of, Sàngó that reinforce a reputation for fierceness in his rule of Òyó, as well as his connection with the lands to the north and south of the Niger River. The several allusions to Oya and Sàngó in their reciprocal poems are particularly noteworthy in this regard.

Oriki Rising: Construction and Reconstruction in the West African Body Politic

The mythology and historiography of Sàngó is emblematic of the shifting political intrigues and realities of the West African region. In this *oriki* (praise poem) to Sàngó, we are first introduced to a series of praise names, also known as *oriki*, which allude to his rulership of Kòso. Other place names such as Ówu, Ifè, and Gudugbu town indicate political alliances or conquest. The poem also gives us an indication of Sàngó's relationships among townspeople who feared him. Allusion to his wife, Oya, is expressed in two lines which are discussed below. This brief *oriki* collected by Babalola introduces us to the element of fear that Sàngó inspired among his subjects, and I daresay, his family members.⁹

Oriki Orisà Sàngó

Olúfínràn,
Oba Kòso
Oba Asàngiri
Alàgiri Olàgirikakaka-komòkúnrin-bi.
Sàngó.
Ekuru gbàgbá Pàdàà.
Ilẹ̀ gbogbo àkùrò V'òjò
Èniyàn tí a bú lẹ̀lìn t'ò sí mọ.
Èniyàn tí a bú lẹ̀lìn t'ò sí gbọ
Ogunlálí
Èsì lù kára bí ajere
Má bú u

Má sá a
Má s'òpò rẹ̀ lẹ̀hìn.
Baba Bámkólé.
N ọ̀ lẹ̀ l'omà ibẹ̀un
Şàngó o!
A-ru-òwú-r'Òwu.
Ó-ru-fẹ́fẹ́-ru'Ifẹ́.
Ó-ru-gudugbu tà ní Gudugbu.
Láì jòmò eranko kelebe
Şàngó o!
Dégòké!
Àrẹ̀mú!

Salute to Şàngó

Olúfinràn, the king did not hang himself.
 The king who cracks the wall.
 Who splits the wall.
 He who splits the wall here and there and curls up young men.
 Şàngó.
 Dust, dust, and dust again in the dry season,
 Every inch of ground like marshy farm soil in the wet season.
 A man who comes to know who has spoken ill of him behind his
 back.
 A man who hears all that is said of him behind his back.
 Ògúnlabi.
 There are ears all over his body like holes in a colander.
 Don't abuse him.
 Don't hack him.
 Don't back bite him.
 Father of Bámkólé.
 I'll say more of him.
 O Şàngó!
 The man who carried raw cotton to Ówu.
 The man who carried *fẹ́fẹ́* [fresh?] yam flour to Ifẹ́.
 The man who carried *gudugbu* yam tubers and sold them at
 Gudugbu town.
 Whereas he wasn't a small goat.
 O Şàngó!
 Dégòké!
 Àrẹ̀mú!

The allusion to Oya in this *oriki* draws our attention to Şangó's interrelationship with the northern region, transformation, and powerful women. "*Dust, dust, and dust again in the dry season, / Every inch of ground like marshy farm soil in the wet season,*" alludes to the long reach of the Harmattan winds, which blow from the northeastern regions of Africa across the Sahara Desert into the western reaches of the continent and across the Atlantic Ocean. Read in the context of West African regional and cultural history, the allusion also refers to trade and migration patterns as well as cultural and religious ideologies that moved across the region in a similar pattern. Certainly, the Muslim traders and jihadists who migrated to the area during the early days of the Ghana, Mali, and Songhai empires as well as the Hausa and Kanem-Borno empires are implicated here. As these kingdoms evolved and disintegrated, scattered remnants of their people migrated around the region, often closer toward the fertile forest regions and trading centers of the West African hinterland. The movement of Odúduwà and his/her descendants across the savannah to Ilé-Ifè, then to Nupe, and later to Old Oyo represents the dynamics of empire-building and political reconstruction that dominated the region well into the eighteenth century.

Şangó's relationship to Oya, while mystical and dramatic on one hand, more significantly reveals the role of intermarriage in the formation of regencies in the expansion of the Yorùbá empirical network. While Orányàn's bloodline validates Şangó's Yorùbá identity, it is the marriages of both father and son to Yemoja and Oya respectively that help to expand the Yorùbá empirical reach. There are two possible perspectives here—first, as Olupona suggests,¹⁰ the transfer of political power from female to male, as intimated in both marriages, reestablishes and expands the authority of the royal lineages; and second, given the frequency of these marriages in the oral narratives, such exogamous arrangements are a paradigmatic of regional expansion of political power. In either case, these marriages had the effect of consolidating enough power and force to forestall the Hausa-Fulani intrusion from the upper northern regions of the Niger-Benue confluence as well as to hedge the European intrusion from the Atlantic region in the south until the collapse of Oyo in the nineteenth century.

In comparing the two lines referring to the transition from the dry to the wet season, we glean not only a change in seasons which affect farming cycles, but also a readiness of the soil for planting that points out the significance of fecundity as a theme in the poetry. Unfortunately, while we acknowledge this theme, little or no attention is paid to it because

it is read solely as a female concern without placing it within its proper cultural context. A good life for the Yorùbá is defined by children, good health, wealth, and longevity. Here, fecundity implies fruitfulness and abundance, which speaks to longevity, sustainability, a good life, and independence. By contrast, in agricultural as well as the urban communities, the dry seasons brought certain drought and hunger, which frequently ushered in local land feuds, pawning, and feudal oppression. The allusions to times of feast and famine, of overlordship and dependency, are couched in the references to Òwu, whose town is also the name for cotton, to Ifẹ̀, which is the cradle of Yorùbá civilization, and to Gudugbu town, which, as Babalola notes, Šàngó provoked into war.¹¹ Indeed, we should consider the vacillating periods between peaceful reigns and political upheavals as characteristic of the Western Africa region between the tenth and the nineteenth centuries. Such vacillation created, and was created by, trade and expansion, enslavement, drought, and disease, all of which affected the population of the region. In the case of Old Òyó, these allusions refer to a shift of power from Òwu to Ifẹ̀ and then to itself. As Atanda notes, Šàngó completed the task of his father by liberating Old Òyó from the grip of Òwu and creating a rivalry between itself and Ifẹ̀.¹²

We may add that in Šàngó's case, trade is less explicit than political expansion as a thematic element in his narrative. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that Òyó grew under his tutelage, in part because of its control over such outposts as Òšogbo, the home of Òšun, to its south, and as Nupe, his motherland, to its north. Furthermore, as Law notes, the introduction of horses from the north into the Òyó military made the regency a formidable foe.¹³ Women controlled much of the regional marketplaces as *iyálójà* (lit., mother of the marketplace or president of the marketplace), and in conjunction with, and with the support of, the *iyálóde* (lit., mother of the outer spaces or chief ambassador for the Ògbóni). In conjunction with powerful military men, they maintained the regional trade routes and wielded considerable power in the political stability of the region, thus implying that marriage was more than a social-cultural contract. In fact, it may imply that marriage, especially among the ruling classes, was intentionally a more political and economic contract. The fact that Šàngó's mother was a Nupe princess and his father was an Ifẹ̀ prince substantiates this assertion, and contributes to our understanding of his ability to forge cooperation between both sides of the Niger river bend. Oya's role as *iyálóde* underscores her ambassadorial role in the region. Her role as *iyálé* in Šàngó's house and court, as well as her influence among his sub-regions and within its marketplaces, elevates her significance in his life.

Transformation as Sociocultural Paradigm for Political Reconstruction

With respect to Oya, we should also consider her own mythology and apotheosis. Like Şangó, Oya is a multidimensional entity whose characteristics are human, spiritual, natural, and animalistic. She is, at once, the River Niger, the Buffalo Woman, the Tornado, and the Torrential Rains of the Western Savannah region. Her manifestations as the River Niger and Buffalo Woman link her to the regions to the north of Old Òyó around Mali, Burkina Faso, and Senegal. As Buffalo Woman, she recalls the prophecy of the Buffalo Woman, the wraith of Songolon, who became Sundiata's mother in the Malian epic.²⁴ This *oriki* to the buffalo from Babalola's work on *ijálá* alludes to a Yorùbá connection to the Malian hero king.

Oriki Efùn

Efùn, ò lé o.

Babaláàbá inú òdàn tíí-máa-í-fò láíj'ara kan beęę.

Odó-ndo, agbégí-gbé'jú.

Eran tí a à fẹmọ lẹwọ rẹ tí ù gb'ánná lẹwọ eni.

Ókè erin l'á í-ké

Taa ní' ó k'ókè efùn abeegunlóríwakaka.

Olóogun àtérín, padà lẹbín eran.

Eran yó fí soko jẹ

Efùn l'ovò tíí lé omọ ođe gun'gi wàràwàrà

Órọ r'ó l'ábẹ nígbéni iwo.

Efùn agbo omọ akúmárá.

Salute to the Buffalo

Greetings to you, O buffalo.

Butterfly of the savannah, flying about without touching the grass.

Corpulent beast, at home both in the heavy forest and in the savannah woodland tracts.

Animal from whose hands the hunter has not received a wife,

Yet who receives self-prostration homage from the hunter.

Hunters do stand ceremonially on the head of an elephant that they have just killed.

Who would stand ceremonially on the head of a buffalo that has just been killed.

The buffalo who aggressively carries projecting bony growths upon his head.

Let the hunter whose medicinal charms are but last year's
 Turn back from pursuing the buffalo.
 Otherwise the beast will eat him up like grass as if by mistake.
 The buffalo is the demon who frightens a young hunter,
 Forcing him to climb up a thorny tree post haste.
 A demonic animal who has razors at the tips of his horns.
 O buffalo, ancient beast that rumbles like rain but produces no
 precipitation.¹⁵

Several lines and images above tie Oya to Songolon, and imply a more regional historicity between the peoples of Òyó and Malí, and between trade and expansion in the savannah and forests. I am not suggesting a direct link between them as much as a regional association among them. For example, the following four lines reflect the praise names for both mythico-historical women.

Butterfly of the savannah, flying about without touching the grass.
 Corpulent beast, at home both in the heavy forest and in the savan-
 nah woodland tracts.
 Animal from whose hands the hunter has not received a wife,
 Yet who receives self-prostration homage from the hunter.

The buffalo's comfort in the forest (Òyó) and the savannah woodland (Nupe/Mali) traces its movement across the region into those territories. The reference to the hunter who has not received a wife alludes to the wraith of Songolon, the mother of Sundiata, and her mythical royalty as the estranged daughter of an earlier Soso king. The appearance of the wraith embodies ancestry and metamorphosis, both of which underlie Òyó's mythical images in the Yorùbá texts. The hunter dare not stand on the head of a royal woman, lest he lose his own.

In the following *oriki*, Oya's dominion and power to influence Šàngó on behalf of petitioners is well established. Those who seek her must do so with reverence lest they incur the wrath of Šàngó. The mutual respect and reciprocity between Oya and Šàngó models the significance of gender balance in the social and cultural order, a pairing that is symbolized in the *Edan Òyígbló* or *Ògbóni* staff of authority.¹⁶ Šàngó's dominion over Òyó and her environs again are reinforced by allusions to Oya as one with fire in her eyes and fire in her mouth. In the last line, the chanter begs Oya not to fight her/him, especially in the dry season, when the land is vulnerable to droughts and soil erosion, the antithesis to the Yorùbá concept of fecundity and longevity:

Oriki Oya

Éyàn tí ò bá tí b'Ọya se
Sàngó ò bá a se!
Arugbá-àyàn¹⁷ wò-bí-òdòdò;
Mò b'Ọya se, Sàngó sì bá n se.

Arugbáayàn wò-bí-òdòdò,
È r'Ọya mi, à b'è ò rí i?
Ìkólàbà, àjà títí jì,
Tí t'ọkọ è lẹ́bín!
Ajagún-joóje

Oya tii ya wò paní bí Poolo!
Poolo tii p'ori èké mọ!
Oya ò kúkú sè f'ọrọ́ ijà bí!
Iná l'ọjá, iná ní enu!
Asipónulá-bori-èké.

Oya ò kuku sè f'ọrọ́ ijà bí!
Oya o! Ọrírí!
Èkín aséké!
Asipónulá-bori-èké.
Oya má bá n já lẹ́kàn!

Asipónulá-bori-èké.
Oya má bá n já lẹ́rùn gangan-an-gan!¹⁸

Praise Song for Oya: English Translation

People who have no dealing with Oya,
 Sàngó has no dealing with them.
 She who carries a calabash of pounded yam like a flower.
 I deal with Oya, and Sàngó deals with me.

She who carries a calabash of pounded yam like a flower.
 So you see that Oya is [working] for me, or do you not?
 Ìkólàbà,¹⁹ the dog that wakes up,
 The one that very closely follows her husband.
 Ajogún-joóje²⁰

Oya who swiftly kills like Poolo!²¹
 Poolo who chops off the heads of the deceitful.
 Oya is certainly not the one to be challenged to a fight!
 She with fire in the eyes, with fire in the mouth!
 Aṣípònnlá²² who overcomes the dishonest.
 Oya is certainly not the one to be challenged to a fight!
 She with fire in her eyes, with fire in her mouth!
 Aṣípònnlá who overcomes the dishonest.
 Oya is certainly not the one to be challenged to a fight!
 Oya o! Oríri!²³

The terror of the dishonest.

Oya, please fight not with me anytime.

*Aṣípònnlá-bori-éki.*²⁴

Oya, please fight not with me in severe dry season!²⁵

Among its tightly woven lines, we find Oya, the fierce woman, carrying Šàngó's favorite food, *àmálá*, gently like a flower in order to serve him. Except for its references to Šàngó, this *oriki* Oya is itself fierce, and its images connote strength and awesome power. Oya, it claims, is not one to challenge to a fight. In fact, her closeness to her husband is reiterated when she is described as one with fire in her eyes and her mouth. Like Šàngó, she too is a warrior, albeit one who seeks justice, as suggested by the references to her distaste for dishonest people. Her justice is swift like Poolo, the executioner, and yet she protects those who worship her and her husband. In spite of her prowess, Oya walks quickly behind Šàngó when in his court, not out of subservience but out of respect and deference to his role as the "King of the Mightiest King." As will become clearer in the following praise poem from the Òṣun shrine in Òṣogbo,²⁶ the imagery of Šàngó and that of Oya are inextricably intertwined, suggesting a gendered model of social discourse and harmony.

Gender as a Function of Cultural Political Development and Yorùbá Historicism

The subtleties of Yorùbá praise poetry are well illustrated in the *oriki* *Šàngó oko Oya* which follows. The title of the poem itself indicates that Šàngó and Oya are defined in temporal and metaphysical terms. References to towns where Šàngó and Oya are most notably present map the bend of the Niger river in such places as Kòso and Ówu, mentioned

above. Many of their images are woven throughout the fabric of the *oríkí*, with frequent evocations to "my husband/my lord" as reminders of Şangó's familial and empirical roles. Coupled with their domestic roles, the chanter invokes the image of camaraderie, marital companionship, and a fusion of their more bellicose tendencies. Together, Şangó and Oya symbolize the spiritual and political warriors of Oyo, with Oya sometimes depicted as wearing a beard, an image which sharply contradicts her purported gentleness with her husband, Şangó. In some ways, the poem codifies the ways in which Oya reinforces Şangó's image by placing him within a husbandly as well as kingly context. Indeed, because of her loyalty, we are apt to be more sympathetic to Şangó's demise than we may have been toward a more virulent and singular warrior such as Ógún.

From a literary perspective, the praise poem itself reflects the undulating flow of Óşun's watery sway punctuated by the repetition of key images and praise names. It is chanted a cappella by Mrs. Şangótúndún Aşábí, a trained praise singer in Óşogbo, who embodies both her devotion to Óşun and her relationship to Şangó as intimated by her given name, Şangótúndún. Its highly stylized tonal and melodic rhythms mime the vacillation between the awesome silence that precedes Şangó's lightning bursts and his terrifying claps of thunder. Its poetic language produces the sweet sounds found in its alliteration, excerpted below, that speak to the poetic sophistication and literary artistry of Yoruba *oríkí*. The repetition of certain lines reinforces Şangó's repudiated fierce and cavalier manner. Here, his spiritual authority is unquestionable, and his presence is potentially fatal whether he resides in the heavens or on earth. His spoken words appear as hail and his look is as powerful as death, we are told. In fact, even Death runs in order not to confront him.

Iná lójú, iná lenu

Okò mí, òrò íjókadé lèrè!
Múnànmóná fojì òrun tòn-ò-bònná; yanàn!
Şangó l'èbó òkè tí f'edùn-àn sòrò!
Ajébí-òjá-kú,²⁷ irin méjì gbèdú²⁸
Şangó t'ò bá budú jiyán-àn gángán tón,
Orínbógúnjé,²⁹ t'ò p'omò rẹ sí iloró!
Jé kó yé mí,³⁰ baba ẹni ní pé ní kó yẹni.
Şangó ní ànikànsoró
T'ò kò'kú lóná tí ò yá!
Ikú l'ò kò ó ló sá,

You, with fire in the eyes, fire in the mouth,
 My Husband, with provocative words on the lips
 The lighting that causes the sky to tremble and to lighten
 Šàngó whose pugnacity is at its highest,
 Who is the master of the skies,
 Whose nature is hostility.
 Who rebounds like the fortitude of death
 (Hostility and Death resembling the hitting sticks of the *gbéḍḍḍ*
 drum).
 Šàngó, who eats pounded *igbángán* yam with the master of the house,
 Activator and Protector,
 Who kills his child on the porch!
 Who shields his child in seclusion!
 Protect and keep me.
 Jékóyemí! It is one's father [ancestors] who brings good fortune.
 Šàngó is the sole celebrant who personifies himself.
 Whom Death will not confront.
 Death retreats in order not to meet him!⁸¹

Couched masterfully in hyperbole, the beauty and power of Yorùbá poetic language, nevertheless it warns us to regard seriously the threat posed by Šàngó's earthly ferocity as Alááfin of Òyó. The consolidation of power under his reign partially explains this reputation, which is bolstered by his war-mongering generals.⁸² His crimson gaze terrified most courtesans and commoners, who withered before him—that is, except for his generals Timì and Gbòṅkà. In fact, his fierceness is mirrored in his cruelty and indifference toward his subjects, who, we are told, are simultaneously victimized by his experimentation with lightning and the unpredictability of his thunder strikes, while also being protected by his efficacious medicinal powers. These factors allude to Šàngó's ascension to power as exemplary of transformation in Yorùbá cultural and political historiography and praxis. For in both his manifestations, Šàngó's life represents a pattern of migration, resettlement, conquest, consolidation, and transformation that seems to dominate Yorùbá history and culture. His lineage, as noted previously, establishes his credentials as warrior/conqueror in the tradition of his father and grandfather, and these, in turn, dominate his narrative and shape his tragic persona.

As is characteristic of Yorùbá praise poetry, many notable predecessors are mentioned in the work, along with several cognomens for Òṣun and Oya. But therein lies a dichotomy as well; for as Òṣun rejoices at giving and seeing children, Šàngó, and indeed, Oya, behave most callously

toward them. Where Ọşun praises and protects children, in the fierceness of their raging storms, Oya and Şangó kill and maim them. The interrelationship between Şangó, Oya, and Ọşun poses a dilemma for Yoruba thought, which simultaneously accepts carnage in the name of conquest and longevity in the name of children. It may also explain why there are few indications of Şangó producing children with Ọşun in the oral tradition. This problem also exists in the references to *eré*, or slaves, as well as *éby*, or sacrifice, and continues to challenge the fundamental principles of *ire* and *iwàpẹ̀lẹ̀* in Yorùbá thought until today.

Oriki Şangó oke Oya

In-In: Erinfulámi⁵⁵ oo!
Ìwọ́ tún fi gbogbo ara k'ápò!
Ọlórọp Koso!⁵⁶
Èéfin l'á n dá láyé
Ta ni ò mò píná n bẹ́ l'ádọ́ Şangó?
Ọkọ́ Ọlógbón-ńńá Ịbityemi Alcaleku!
Iná n bẹ́ l'ádọ́ okoò mi.
Ịbityemi,⁵⁷ ajájúmọ́'ni k'ò tóó fi'ni sọmọ!
Şangó là n háá wí!
Aráa Moleyo!⁵⁸
Ọrọ́ Ọkè,⁵⁹ ab'ónilẹ́pẹ́lẹ́'le-e-mo-bevbe!
Kò mọmọ s'fni tí ò lè há lóri jé!
Şangó, mómọ há mi lóri jé!
Kele ò kúku tán l'órún-ún mi.
Ịbityemi tí sori burúku d'oriire,
Sọ'bánújé omo e dayó!
Sọ'bánújé mi dèrin, oke Alógbón n nù
O gbè fún mi
Bí ò jájẹ ò solé dayọ́ nilèè mi.
Ịbityemi, omo lójú jẹbọra!
Èéfin là n dá láyé!
Ta ni ò mò bíná n bẹ́ l'ádọ́ Wòrú?
Wèrè là n p'Ewégbèmi.
Eni olá bí!
Ori ní pé ni k'ògùn ò jé!
Bẹ́ ni ò tii bu'ni jé!
Iná lójú, iná lẹnu!
Ọkoò mi, ọrọ́ ijáhadí létí!
Mómámómá s'ojú ọrun tán-ò-bónnà-ránín!
Şangó l'èébó okè tí f'edun-ún sọrọ!

Ajébi-ojú-kú,³⁸ irin méjì gbèdu
Sàngó tó bá baálé jiyàn-àn gúngán tán,
Orimóogúnjé, tó p'omọ rẹ sí iloro!
Jé kó yẹ mí, baba eni ní pé sí kó yẹ'ni.
Sàngó ni enikàn-ṣoso
T'ó ko'kú lónà tí ò yà!
Ikú l'ó kò ọ ló sá,
Olórọ Káso!³⁹
Okoọ mí, ààrùn l'ó kò ọ, ló yà.
Apa'ni má mògúnún já,
N ló kò ọ, ló kúkú dapo
Dofú silé, o mò yáa lọ.
Erinfolámi oo!
Árà ẹ'pwojéjà láláálá!
Orimóogúnjé,⁴⁰ nibo l'ó wà, n ò rí í!
Agbénákari Elédáá!
Ìbìyemí, nibo l'ó wà? N ò rí í!
Ori ẹlẹ wọn sí gbé gúnýán léyàn.
Olórọ Káso!
Ori ẹlẹ wọn sí gbé roká lóká.
Ori ẹlẹ wọn sí gbé p'òko l'álé.
Oba Káso, tí ò gbọdọ s'òkanran,
Ání, tí ò gbọdọ dojú dé!
B'ó há dojú dé,
Opa ajá oba ní pa wọn jẹ
Opa ajá oba má má j'árúgbó ó kú,
Omo ẹlẹgbá,⁴¹
Má j'árúgbó ó kú, ẹlẹgbá Káso.
Ìwo n mo gbójú lé, Olórọ Káso!
Okoọ mí, ẹwo n mo mò f'àyà tí.
Ìwo n mo mò l'emi sí jì se "l'oo gbó?"
"Oo gbó" nì sí ò máa se Gbólákànbí.⁴²
Ìbìyemí tí mo gbénlá rù gígé bí ọjẹ.
Erinfolámi Sàngó, irin méjì gbèdu!
Dákan-lúkan, n nù oho aláwo.
Okoọ mí, òrò-jẹ-nnkan-mólá,
Fi-nnkan-mólá-bora-sùn!
Sàngó, t'ó bá baálé jiyàn igángán tán,
Erinfolámi o!
Ìbìyemí, t'ó p'omọ ẹ sí'loro!
Agbáàwẹ-má-kásámá,

Abónmále-íé'ónu!
Ìbíyemí tíí kó'áán rúgádú bọ abé asọ!
Okọ́ mí, mómọ́ gbá mí,
Abomimipura-ní-gòkòtó!
Erínfolá mí, Şàngó, irin méjìí gbèdú!
Eni t'ó ní kó o wáá kú
Şe bí Ifú fi kọ páráá rẹ
Okọ́ mí, mómọ́ gbá mí,
Okọ́ mí, òpèlẹ́ fírí pọ́ lójá!
Òdà kékèkèké fi í pọ́ l'ágbèdẹ⁴³
Alo-ikú-lọ-gborí, amoo Yemoja
Odú-mi-ò-lówó, ò zé rò, o ò lówó o ó jẹgbó.

The Praise Name Of Şàngó, Husband of Oya

The gargantuan one who is above reproach!
 You who uses your whole body to destroy.
 Grand Patron of Kòso town!
 It is mere smoke we are making on earth.
 Who does not know that the real fire is with Şàngó
 The Very Clever Husband of Royal Birth,
 Whose hostility confronts even to death's end!
 Yes, fire is my husband's name!
 Ìbíyemí, your hostility is meant to call us to love you
 Before you take us as your children.
 It is Şàngó we are talking about!
 Native of Mọleyò!
 We crave your attention Şàngó.
 King of the Sky who spears no landlord,
 I beseech you and adore you
 Because there is definitely no one he cannot ruin.
 Şàngó! Please do not ruin my future,
 For reverence is my constant demeanor toward you.
 Ìbíyemí, whose ferocity has turned my misfortune
 Into prosperity.
 Please turn my sadness to joy, My Very Clever Husband.
 Don't be unhappy, one with joyful thoughts.
 Who will be unhappy when fortitude remains
 Even while wisdom is failing.
 Ìbíyemí, whose ferocity stopped the witches from being
 Victorious in my home.
 Ferocious and Mysterious One!

It is your praises that we are singing
 Who doesn't know that fire
 Is beneath your intense heat.
 Yet we regard Ewégbémi as a lunatic,
 One of Royal Birth!
 It is one's goodwill that dictates the efficacy of medicine.
 You, with fire in the eyes, fire in the mouth.
 My Husband, with provocative words on the lips.
 The lighting that causes the sky to tremble and to lighten.
 Šàngó whose pugnacity is at its highest,
 Who is the master of the skies,
 Whose nature is hostility.
 Who rebounds like the fortitude of death
 (Hostility and Death resembling the hitting sticks of the gbèdu
 drum).

Šàngó, who eats pounded *igangán* yam with the master of the house,
 Activator and Protector,
 Who kills his child on the porch,
 Who shields his child in seclusion!
 Protect and keep me.
 Jékóyemi! It is one's father [ancestors] who brings one good fortune.
 Šàngó is the sole celebrant who personifies himself always.
 Who death will not confront.
 Death retreats in order not to meet him!
 Grand Patron of Kòso town!
 My lord, as you met me, my sickness disappears.
 If you don't meet him [properly], would you too not retreat?
 He who kills without medicine is the one who is dancing.
 If you are going to the farm, be prepared,
 Put down your weapons and go with Oya [Šàngó's wife].
 O king of all the mightiest gargantuan kings!
 Thunder strikes and all fall in respect!
 He who determines everything, where is He I do not see Him!
 O king of all the mightiest gargantuan kings!
 Where is He I do not see him! Where will he go unnoticed?
 A big gourd sits on the wine tapers head!
 Ìbíyemi! Where is He I do not see Him!
 Unique one! Where would you go and be unnoticed?
 Grand Patron of Kòso town!
 It is inside the mortar that pounded yam is pounded and pounded,
 It is inside of the cooking pot that mixes are mixed,

It is inside of the mixer that they turn corn gruel every night.
 Yes, King of Kòso who must never waver!
 He who must never fall.
 If he falls,
 The roofs will collapse and kill many,
 Let the roofs not fall and kill the Elderly.
 You, son of the mighty Savior!
 Do not let the Elderly die, the savior at Kòso!
 It is you I look up to, my lord; grand patron of Kòso town!
 My Husband, you are my lasting hope.
 It is your confidence,
 That strengthens my resolve unto the end.
 It is the Elderly who always know the start of things.
 Mightiest One who cleanses the world like soap,
 O King of the mightiest gargantuan Kings,
 Šangó, Doubly Strengthened with your thunderous sounds like the
gbédu drum,
 Stumbling and Falling is what makes the farm rows,
 My Husband shower prosperity on me,
 And remain prosperous till my old age, until death.
 Šangó, who had lunch with the master of the house,
 Eating his specially prepared pounded yam.
 You, King of the Mightiest Kings!
 Unique one who grants protection to his children.
 One who causes us to miss meals without proper prayers.
 Only to eat his meals after sunset [like fasting Muslims].
 Special one whose pounded yam is always wrapped.
 My Husband, please grant my wishes, deliver me,
 The one who carries the shower of blessings in his pants.
 King of the Mightiest Kings, Šangó
 Doubly Strengthened with your thunderous sounds like the *gbédu*
 drum,
 Anyone who confronts him seeks his/her own death.
 Everyone knows that adding palm-oil to Ifá is for Peace,
 My Husband, please grant my requests, deliver me!
 My Husband, whose call to the house upsets the market!
 Let the lesser gods give respect to blacksmithing!
 Sudden appearance of Death kills,
 Child of Yemoja!
 My *adú* is not one of poverty,
 That will be adjusted from above for my own good!⁴⁴

A Few Final Thoughts

More than for the other male *orisa*, Šàngó's mythology and historicism live at the dynamic epicenter of Yorùbá transformation in cultural and mythical ideology. The evocation to powerful Šàngó priests and the allusion to both Oya and Ošun in his praise poem confront us with the image of a very powerful ruler whose awe-inspiring ferocity embraces the challenges and dynamics of changing political realities. The dominance of his wives in his mythology suggests his concurrence with the *Èdan Òyùgbá*, which represents the necessity for balance and coordination between the genders for the purpose of sustaining the human community and the very essence of life itself. Their conflicting personas acknowledge the objective realities of human contradiction, which for the Yorùbá is oftentimes the quintessential *àṣẹ* of existence. Moreover, the oral narratives intimate that, despite the presence of his wives, his generals, his advisors, and his royal lineage, Šàngó, after all, reflects man himself. Šàngó is, nonetheless, susceptible to the foibles of humankind and is mirrored by the divine, beloved only to those who believed in him. It is for this reason that his apotheosis is heralded by chanting, *Ọba Kò so!* Truly, the King did not hang.

NOTES

1. Isaiah O. Adegbile, *Yorùbá Names and Their Meanings plus Proverbs with English Translations* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Taa Printing and Publishing Co., 1999), 10.
2. Duro Ladipo, *Ọba Kò so (The King Did Not Hang)* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Institute of African Studies at the University of Ibadan, 1972).
3. Diedre Badejo, "Methodologies in Yorùbá Oral Historiographies and Aesthetics," in *Writing African History*, ed. John Edward Phillips (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2004).
4. Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 1-60.
5. E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olódùmarè: God in Yorùbá Belief* (London: Longmans, 1962), 92.
6. Christopher Ehret, *The Civilizations of Africa: A History of 1800* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002). See also I. A. Akinjogbin, "The Expansion of Oyo and the Rise of Dahomey, 1600-1800," in *The History of West Africa*, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), and J. A. Atanda, *An Introduction to Yorùbá History* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1980).
7. S. A. Babalola, *Content and Form of Yorùbá Ijálá* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 222-23.

8. Diedre L. Badejo, *Field Notes*, 1982.
9. Babalola, *Content and Form*, 222-23.
10. Jacob Olupona, *Kingship, Religion, and Rituals in a Nigerian Community: A Phenomenological Study of Oñdó Torùbá Festivals* (Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1991), 3.
11. Babalola, *Content and Form*, 222-23.
12. Atandá, *An Introduction to Torùbá History*, 9-12.
13. Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire, c. 1600-1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 41-71.
14. D. T. Niane, *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali* (London: Longman Group, 1965), 4-12. See also John William Johnson and Fa-Digi Sisoko, *Son-Jara: The Mandé Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 3-62.
15. Babalola, *Content and Form*, 104-105.
16. Henry John Drewal, John Pemberton, and Rowland Abiodun, "The Yorùbá World," in *Torùbá: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought* (New York: Center for African Art in association with Harry Abrams, 1989), 13-42.
17. *Arugbá-ááyán* can be translated as "The sacrifice of the ááyán tree." It refers to the fact that Şangó hung himself on the ááyán tree, which is now sacred to him.
18. Badejo, *Field Notes*, 1982.
19. A title, probably from the Ìjẹ́bú area. Chief Jákúta states that Ìkólábá is one of the titled houses where Şangó chiefs are trained and selected, but it is not the title of the chief priest of Şangó. See also R. C. Abrahams, *Dictionary of Modern Torùbá* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1962), 498.
20. Although it is unclear, the term possibly refers to a gathering of malevolent forces against whom the petitioner seeks the protection of Oya and Şangó as warriors.
21. Abrahams, *Dictionary*, 498. Abrahams defines Poolo as an executioner of the guilty, who lives in a cave. He also notes that there is a relationship between Poolo and Òrìşá Oko, the deity of the farm.
22. According to Chief Jákúta of Oyo, *arópánlá* was a Şangó priest as well as an Ifá diviner. Personal correspondence, 1982.
23. Òrìfíri refers to Oya's great powers in bending tree and their branches when she is annoyed.
24. According to Chief Jákúta, this praise name means one who covers the head of a liar with Ifá tray, indicating that he is offended by the person being a liar. This also means that he was a great diviner who knew many Ifá verses.
25. Transcription and translation by Professor Yíwólá Awéyálé.
26. Badejo, *Field Notes*, 1982.
27. Ajéhtí-òjú-kú is one who acts like he has a blind eye.
28. According to Akin Euba, *gbédu* belongs to the family of *dùndún* drums, which are associated with royalty. Euba argues that the *dùndún* ensemble probably migrated to Oyo around the fifteenth century from Hausaland, and *gbédu* itself is often referred to as *gbédu* Mecca, or royal drums of Mecca. He notes that

gbidu denotes "single-headed, fixed-pitched pedestal drums of the *igbtu* type," which most certainly predate the *dùndún*. See Akin Euba, *Yorùbá Drumming: The Dùndún Tradition* (Bayreuth, Germany: African Studies Series, 1990), 37-60.

29. Orimóogúnjé is a powerful Šàngó priest. His name literally means "It's the head that makes medicine strong." Field notes, 1982.

30. Jékóyemí is a much loved and handsome Šàngó priest. (See *ibid.*)

31. *Ibid.* Transcription and translation with assistance from Professor Yiwólá Awóyalé and Apèná Tàiyéwò Ògúnadé.

32. Atanda, *An Introduction*, 9-18.

33. A notable Šàngó priest who came from Óyó-Ilé (Old Óyó), according to Chief Jákúta. (See Badejo, Field Notes, 1982.)

34. The hot-tempered, much feared one from Kòso, according to Chief Jákúta.

35. *Ibiyemí*, meaning a befitting birth, refers to the status of the lineage to which a child is born. Peter Badejo, Personal Communication, 2004.

36. *Moleyo*, according to Chief Jákúta, refers to "one who sees children and becomes happy; that is, *Ọṣun*." (See Badejo, Field Notes, 1982.)

37. *Òrò Okè* refers to the *òrìṣà* of the hills.

38. *Ajébi-òjú-kú* is one who acts like he has a blind eye.

39. The hot-tempered, much feared one from Kòso, according to Jákúta, a reference to Šàngó and his birthplace. Badejo, Field Notes, 1982.

40. Orimóogúnjé is another very powerful Šàngó priest, whose name means "It is the head (destiny) that makes medicine to be effective." *Ibid.*

41. Chief Jákúta states that Omo Elégba is one of the great sons of one of the chief priests of Šàngó at Óyó.

42. Chief Jákúta notes that Gbólákanbi belonged to the Mògbà ruling house, which was very well-known for its peace and gentility.

43. The line refers to the little *òrìṣà* who are left at the blacksmith's forge, the site of Ógún.

44. Badejo, Field notes, 1982. Transcription and translation with the assistance of Professor Yiwólá Awóyalé and Apèná Tàiyéwò Ògúnadé.

Reconfiguration of Šàngó on the Screen

DÚRÓTOYÈ A. ADÉLÉKÈ

With the unalloyed support and assistance of Ulli Beier, who made Samuel Johnson's *The History of the Yorúbás* available to him, Dúró Ládípò was able to put *Ọbá Kòsò* on the stage in 1963 to mark the first anniversary of Mbàrí-Mbáyò at Ọşogbo.¹ Notwithstanding the flaws in this premiere as reflected in the simple costumes donned by the actors/actresses and the poor craftsmanship on the stage, *Ọbá Kòsò*, in Beier's words, "had the impact of an explosion," so receptive was the audience. Ever since, Dúró Ládípò not only has been linked to the god of thunder, he is also synonymous with Šàngó, as he was able to popularize and configure the awesome figure of Šàngó on the stage within and outside Nigeria. His constant production of *Ọbá Kòsò* provided an avalanche of materials which many scholars have since utilized for critical works. One then begins to wonder what more is to be written or discussed on Šàngó. On a long look, one discovers that Dúró Ládípò's production largely focuses on intrigues between Šàngó and his warlords, and his eventual apotheosis. Besides, Dúró Ládípò was unable to have a film production of the play before his demise in 1978. Perhaps in order not to create a vacuum, some film producers fashioned their production along the lines of Dúró Ládípò's, while some alluded to Šàngó's conflict with other gods. In sum, Yorùbá videographers have been able to touch on more aspects of Šàngó's life, ranging from mundane to sacred motifs. His spirit is visible in the worldview of the Yorùbá. This chapter therefore attempts to give a general overview of the portrait of Šàngó and the belief held by his acolytes and the general members of the public, using semiotics and

mediumship as our analytical tools. It becomes apparent that Šàngó has become a living character in Yorùbáland, and despite the seeming explosion of the two major religions, Islam and Christianity, some people still find solace in Šàngó, while others are caught in religious conflicts.

More often than not a number of works find their ancestry in an earlier one. This is why any dramatic piece on Šàngó always finds its antecedent in Dúró Ládipò's *Ọ̀bá Káwó*, a play which brought both national and international recognition to the Duro Ladipo Theatre Troupe.² After the premiere on stage in March 1963 to mark the first anniversary of Mbúrí-Mbáyò at the Yorùbá city of Ošogbo in Nigeria, the play became the most dominant production in Dúró Ládipò's theater repertory since it "had the impact of an explosion" that constantly put the ecstatic audience on the edge wishing for a repeat performance.³ This constant production of the play shaped and fine-tuned the various dramatic elements—the actors and the actresses, the costumes, the craftsmanship on stage—to the extent that the new production was always a better one than the previous. Until Dúró Ládipò's demise, the play kept evolving on stage. This means that *Ọ̀bá Káwó* evolved for a good fifteen years. Yemi Ogunbiyi claims that the play had been performed more than two thousand times before Dúró Ládipò died.⁴ Thus Dúró Ládipò, who played the role of Šàngó, was venerated as the god of thunder while his wife, Abiodun Ladipo, who took on the role of Qya, was, and remains, synonymous with Qya, the goddess of the Niger river. As a result of "Duro's towering stage presence"⁵ and the indelible footprints he had left on the sands of time, several other actors who attempted to revive the role of Šàngó in the theater world "had neither the commanding stature nor the imposing stage presence of the late Duro Ladipo."⁶ Yemi Ogunbiyi blamed the failure of Dúró Ládipò's successors as Šàngó's icon on the inability to possess that "tremendous and awe-inspiring power,"⁷ which could enable them to display what Robert Armstrong calls *brío ad élat* that was inherent in Dúró Ládipò's performance.⁸ In other words, theater practitioners, artists, critics and theater-goers have used, and continue to use, Dúró Ládipò's *Ọ̀bá Káwó* to judge other productions featuring a Šàngó character. Thus, Dúró Ládipò, as the icon of Šàngó on stage, has therefore become the standard barometer to measure other performances.

Though there were several stage performances both at home and abroad, it was unfortunate that *Ọ̀bá Káwó* could not be filmed before Dúró Ládipò's death. Before his demise a plan was in the making to have the play as an optical film, as Yemi Ogunbiyi was "convinced more

than ever, of the need to document Dúró Ládípò's works on film.⁹⁹ It is important to say that he had had a stint with mass media, whether it be print or electronic. For instance, he had had *Ọba Kòsò* both as *atọka* (a Yorùbá photo play) and as a textbook—published by Macmillan Nigeria. Also with regard to the electronic media, Dúró Ládípò had excerpts from *Ọba Kòsò* and *Èdà* on discography in 1965. The complete editions of the discs being shipped from the United States to Nigeria were lost in transit, and Curt Wittig had to do a new recording at Òşogbo on reel-to-reel tape.¹⁰ At the instance of Ulli Beier, *Ọba Kòsò* was recorded on two Nagra tape recorders by Curt Wittig of Washington, D. C., then a worker at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ibadan. Decca (Nigeria Ltd.) published *Ọba Kòsò* as Nigerian Cultural Records NCR 1/2 as recorded by the Institute of African Studies, Ibadan. Apart from the discography, there are excerpts of the play in motion pictures. Armstrong observes that a part of *Ọba Kòsò* is on at least one color film: *New Images' Documentary of Óşogbo*, made by Frank Speed and Ulli Beier in 1964. The scene of Timi's appearance at Èdè is on the clips.¹¹ That aside, Dúró Ládípò was one of the theater practitioners to appear in the first Yorùbá feature film, *Àjàní Ojúń*, by Ola Balogun, in 1976. He later took part in another film, *Ijà Ominira*, produced by Adeyemi Afolayan (aka Ade Love); he plays the role of Olúmokò, the feudal monarch of Óyó. Being one of the pioneering actors in the Yorùbá film industry, Dúró Ládípò could have been desirous to have his *Ọba Kòsò* on film as he had warmed himself to the heart of his various audiences drawn from far and near. But this he could not do, thereby creating a vacuum for some of his contemporaries: Hubert Ogunde, Moses Olaiya Adejumo (aka Bábáa Sálá), Adeyemi Afolayan, and Akin Ogungbe, who were able to put some of their stage plays on film. Others, such as Oyin Adejobi, who could not afford the financial outlay of celluloid, had to make do with video. By the mid-1980s, the reality of economic recession dawned on the Nigerian film producers, and they could not afford to produce celluloid films. Since then, the video culture has been thriving and flourishing in Yorùbá society, where today the video industry churns out well over ten video films daily. This enormous production has given rise to low quality in its totality—themes, costume, dialogue, choreography, and other aspects.

Nevertheless, the Yorùbá videographers attempt to cover different aspects of Yorùbá life and culture in their video productions. They therefore allow their artistic lens to catch different aspects of the mythical and historical Šangó. Thus, unlike Dúró Ládípò, who dwells on the motifs of intrigues, stubbornness, impatience, and apotheosis, the video

filmmakers are able to extend their coverage of Šàngó's life—ranging from mundane to sacred themes. Our data therefore derive from different Yorùbá video films but largely from Wálé Ógúnymí's *Šàngó*, Afólábí Adèsànyá's *Osé(e) Šàngó*, Adebimpe Adekola's *Ìhinú Oláhòò*, and Léré Páimó's *Lákáayé*. These four films serve as our primary sources, while other films where allusion is made to Šàngó's name or spirit make up our secondary sources. Different written texts and documents also fall under our secondary sources.

It is important to place on record that there are copious critical materials on *Ọba Kòsò*. Philip A. Ogundeji's 1988 doctoral thesis, at the University of Ibadan, is on Dúró Ládipò's mythico-historical plays, while Ulli Beier, Dúró Ládipò's mentor, also has a text titled *The Return of Šàngó: The Theatre of Duro Ladipo*. There exist so many other articles, reviews, and notes—within and outside our reach—on Šàngó that one begins to wonder what else one can say on him that all these scholars, critics, reviewers, and writers have not already written or discussed. For instance, Ogundeji takes a global look at Šàngó's image in three plays of Dúró Ládipò: *Ọba Kòsò*, *Ọbátálá*, and *Ọjun àti Ọbà*. In these three plays, Šàngó assumes the position of a king, or Aláàfin. Ogundeji, having considered his behavioral pattern, then concludes that Šàngó's personality verges between femininity and masculinity, that is, "weakling" and "warlikeness."¹² Ulli Beier's text dwells on the growth and development of Dúró Ládipò's theater. He then gives a synopsis of the play before presenting an English version of *Ọba Kòsò* and *Morèni*. Yemi Ogunbiyi's tribute to Dúró Ládipò also sums up Dúró's theater career, and he includes a resume of *Ọba Kòsò*. He does not forget to include the idea being nursed of having *Ọba Kòsò* on celluloid. Robert Armstrong gives an insight with regard to different unsuccessful attempts made to have *Ọba Kòsò* on the electronic media, considering the inherent problems associated with translation from one language to another, with special reference to the poetry. Oludare Olajubu, in his own contribution, draws attention to various sources from which Dúró Ládipò must have drawn his materials for *Ọba Kòsò*. He mentions Samuel Johnson's *The History of the Yorùbás*, A. L. Hethersett's *Ìwé Kíkà Èkẹrin Lá Èdè Yorùbá*, and Olunlade's *Edẹ: A Short History*. However, Olu Obafemi sees Dúró Ládipò's *Ọba Kòsò* as a text that aims at fostering social harmony after the turbulence. I have gone this far so as to make it abundantly clear that much has been written on Šàngó in writing on Dúró Ládipò.

Semiotics and Mediumship

To facilitate my discussion on the image of Šàngó on screen, I hinge it on semiotics (like Ogundeji) and mediumship, as this seems to be the preoccupation of two films, *Osé (e) Šàngó* and *Ibíńú Olúkúso*. As observed by Ogundeji, any actor who plays the role of Šàngó is Šàngó's icon on stage. And Šàngó is frequently iconized at different levels and phases. Aside from human iconization, Šàngó may be iconized through his paraphernalia, which Ogundeji calls identificatory features. The list includes: *asú* (Šàngó's tuft), *yẹri* (skirt), *ọ́jána wábi* (girdle flaps of leather stuff), *osí* (wand), *irúkẹrẹ* (whisk), *gbéeri* (vest), *iná* (fire), and *aso pupa* (red attire). Sometimes he may be emotionally iconized, and this Ogundeji refers to as behavioral features, which include humility, love, consideration, weakness, power, and irascibility. In fact, the Yorúbá videographers iconize Šàngó in both identificatory and behavioral ways, as will be highlighted below.

With regard to trance, it borders on spirit possession or spirit mediumship.¹³ It is a common religious institution and is not exclusive to Yorúbá society. The *borí* spirit mediumship in Hausaland is another good example, which Horn has written on. The gods usually enter their mediums and acolytes when performing private or public ritual; and more importantly, spirit possession cuts across the gender divide.¹⁴ It is through possession by the deity that the deity himself or herself becomes anthropomorphized; hence the saying: *òòsáá gún ńń* ("the spirit mounts the person," or "the person mounts the spirit")¹⁵ or *ẹ̀mí ọ̀ọ̀pá* ("animating spirit of the deity").¹⁶ Such an individual possessed with the spirit of the deity is normally imbued with the powers of such a deity. Hence Horn affirms: "The medium has now become the spirit which has mounted her and is treated as the spirit, not as herself, her own familiar personality suspended for the duration of the trance."¹⁷

Mediumship provides ample opportunity for human beings to relate with the spirit, thereby establishing communicative relationships with the spirit, which is possible only through what Horn calls "multiple personality."¹⁸ It is through trance or mediumship that the existence of a permanent dualism in the human being—that is, the power of being oneself and the spirit at one and the same time—is brought to the fore. The spiritual communion is thus achieved in trance, as the entranced person, who has been imbued with "an extra-human entity," now provides a direct link between the terrestrial world and the ethereal world. And, in actual fact, Šàngó does constantly ride his mediums and acolytes, as it will be shortly explicated below.

Şàngó Persona

It is necessary to give a précis of the different films that present the character of Şàngó and his mediums, or "containers" as Drewal calls them.¹⁹ It is in *Şàngó* and *Lákáayé* that Şàngó is physically iconized on the screen. The film titled *Şàngó*, to a very large extent, corresponds with Dúró Ládípò's *Ọba Kòro*, but it goes a little farther than Dúró Ládípò's themes.

In Wálé Ọgúnycmí's *Şàngó*, Prince Şàngó has to come all the way from Nupeland to ransom Alááfin Àjàkà from the Olówu's bondage, at the instance of the Ọyómèsi. As the Ọyómèsi can no longer tolerate a weakling who allows the Alááfin's status to be challenged by the vassal towns, they ask Alááfin Àjàkà to be in exile at Ìgbòho. Thereafter, Prince Şàngó, whose blue blood runs through his veins from both the maternal and paternal sides, is recalled and made the next Alááfin. As part of his character to always challenge any Alááfin, the Olówu challenges Alááfin Şàngó for not according him due respect and honor by extending an invitation to him during his coronation. Alááfin Şàngó, who has been imbued with mystic power at Nupeland, and coupled with the support of his were-animal wife, Ọya Ọrírí, is able to rout and subdue Ọwu's war and constant aggression. However, his two warlords, Èlírí and Olúndẹ, are poised for more wars. The yearning and urge for more wars triggers an uprising in Ọyó, especially among the widows and orphans. The people are of the opinion that the leadership seems to "abandon the hope, or stop making the effort to grow and improve the quality of life of the people."²⁰ Alááfin Şàngó's attempts to call his two warlords to order degenerates into a series of conflicts—conflicts between Alááfin Şàngó and the two warlords, between Alááfin Şàngó and the Ọyómèsi, and between Olúndẹ and Èlírí. There seems to be a "moral crisis" as every citizen and denizen has realized that "[t]here is in fact, a feeling of moral chaos, of total loss of values and lack of respect for human life."²¹ The dominant themes in Wálé Ọgúnycmí's *Şàngó* are intra-class and inter-class struggles. The uprising from the townspeople who are tired of war is an example of inter-class struggle between the ruler and the ruled. Olówu's invasion is precipitated as a form of inter-class struggle, while the conflicts between Alááfin and the Ọyómèsi and Èlírí and Olúndẹ fall under intra-class struggle. Having discovered the Alááfin's sinister game plan to eliminate him, Èlírí, who now considers himself too powerful to curtail, asks Alááfin Şàngó to abdicate the throne if he does not want to be shamed. In his anger Alááfin Şàngó utilizes his emotive charm, which he thought was no longer potent, while facing his

ṣúkú hairstyle plaited on his head by Oya instead of using the carved *agògò* as the iconization of Šàngó's hairdo as in *Oba Kòso*. This can be taken as a symbol of his femininity, showing love and affection for Oya, his wife who has been supportive in his prosecution of wars. We notice further that Aláàfin Šàngó dons the ceremonial crown, which is the symbol of power and authority—that is, the iconization of his political power. His chiefs, the *Ọyómèsi*, were properly clad in well-embroidered *agbádá*, *gbáriyè*, and *dàndógò*, made from traditional *asò òkè* stuff, with different caps either of *abètí ajá*, or *kòrì* style.²³ The chiefs in *Òwu* put on outfits similar to the *Ọyómèsi*, and they wear beads round their necks and wrists to symbolize their political authority.

As noted above, *Šàngó* is more loaded in terms of content, setting, and characterization than *Oba Kòso*. Just as the indebtedness of *Oba Kòso* to Hethersett's *Ìwé Kíkà Èkèrin Lì Èdè Yorùbá* is very high, so too is *Šàngó*'s indebtedness to Samuel Johnson's *The History of the Yorùbás*. The content in *Šàngó* covers: Aláàfin Àjàkà's reign, Olówu of *Òwu*, Prince Šàngó in his maternal home (Nupeland), the domestic life of Šàngó—as husband of *Obà*, *Ọṣun*, and later *Oya*, *Oya*'s mythology as a were-animal—oracular consultations on different occasions by the *Ọyómèsi* and Aláàfin Šàngó, the prosecution of wars in the open fields and between the hills, the protest by the townspeople, *Olúndẹ*'s appearance at *Ede*, the rituals performed by the Olówu of *Òwu* and *Òwu*'s warriors, rituals performed for Prince Šàngó including his coronation as the Aláàfin of *Ọyó*, the fights between *Èlírí* and *Olúndẹ*, the inadvertent destruction of the palace with the emotive charm, and his final transfiguration on his way to *Tapaland*. But *Oba Kòso* focuses on Šàngó as the Aláàfin, the ruler of *Ọyó*, *Oya* and other unnamed wives, the *Ọyómèsi* as the chiefs-in-council, *Timí*'s appearance at *Ede*, the fights between *Timí* and *Gbònúkà*, the consultation with the witches in the forest, and Šàngó and *Oya* in the open field on their way to Šàngó's maternal home. Though my explication of the two texts, *Šàngó* and *Oba Kòso*, touches more on the settings of the film and the stage play, a close look at the macro settings reveals that *Wálé Ọgúnycemí*'s production has Old *Ọyó*, *Ọyó Koro*, *Òwu*, *Ilé-Ifè*, *Ede*, and *Nupeland*, whereas *Dúró Ládipò*'s production has just *Ọyó* and *Ede*. The film production is able to establish the extended kin group of Šàngó. We are able to know that Olówu and Aláàfin are cross-cousins. According to *Ogunmola*, "The Olówu was a descendant of *Akèšán*, the grand-daughter of *Dàdà*, who reigned before and after Šàngó; . . . This was about 1669."²⁴ Perhaps Olówu's insurgence is aimed at challenging the patrilineal culture that gives exclusive rights of paternal children to

the institution of Alááfin, while maternal children of Alááfin are denied the same rights. This is taken as part of the social discriminations and injustice in gender issues. The consanguine and affined kins of different categories are also established through these macro and micro settings. The film brings to the fore that Šangó and Dáda Ájàká are brothers, and this is firmly established in one Yorùbá proverb: *Dáda kò lé já, sùgbón ó ní àbúrò sí ó gbójú* ("Dada might not be able to fight, but he had a brave younger brother").²⁵ This is an allusion to Šangó's valor in ransoming Ájàká from Olówu's claws. Oba Eléńpe of Nupeland is Šangó's maternal uncle, hence Šangó is venerated as *Šangó omọ Eléńpe* (Šangó offspring of Eléńpe). The Hẹ trip to the grave of Oránmiyàn, his father, by Šangó, only confirms the omnipresence of the dead among the living and the willingness of the ancestral spirit to render support. This extended kinship firmly confirms him as a true heir to the stool of Alááfin. The movement to Òyó Koro depicts Šangó as a trickster who guiles the Oba of Òyó Koro, the royal princes, and the chiefs of Òyó to have Èyọ marks cut all over their bodies. While these people are in pain, Šangó and his subjects move in and seize the palace of Òyó Koro. Some people may see this trickery as a kind of war strategy, thereby calling him a "war strategist."

At the level of characterization, we have six kings: Alááfin Ájàká, Olówu of Ówu, Alááfin Šangó, Oba Eléńpe of Nupeland, Oba of Òyó Koro, and Timi of Èdẹ (that is, Olúńdẹ, who has been installed as a king) in the film, while we have just two kings, Alááfin Šangó and Timi of Èdẹ, in the stage production. Dúrò Ládípọ can lay claim to Oya and other unnamed wives of Šangó; Wálé Ógúnycmí categorically mentions Obà, Óşun, and Oya as the Alááfin Šangó's wives, thereby establishing the affined kinship between Šangó and these three women as husband and wives and as co-wives. Šangó, however, takes Oya as his favorite for the obvious reason that she complements his magical powers. Oya evokes the rain, which in turn enhances the switch movement of the lightning and thunder, which he controls. He is so immersed in his love for Oya that he allows Oya to touch his head, thus permitting Oya to commit an abominable offence. Both Obà and Óşun, who are senior to Oya, are bewildered that the Alááfin's head is being touched. Their astonishment may have even been more premised on co-wife envy rather than genuine concern for the tradition. He is thus portrayed as a partial husband, for he even sends away Obà and Óşun on account of their having quarreled with Oya. This co-wife rivalry has since precipitated this saying:

Ọsun gba iyàwó
Ọ gba lékélèkè
Ọ gba Oya tí á yoní lénu
Ọ gba Oba tí á báni mólé

Ọsun has co-wives
 She has oppressors
 She has Oya who troubles one
 She also has Oba, who torments one²⁶

Co-wife rivalry is a common phenomenon in Yorùbá society, and a good husband does not take sides. Besides, the husband will endeavor as much as possible to rotate bed-sharing as appropriate and adequate among the number of women in his harem. Šàngó is unable to do this in Wálé Ọgúnymí's film.

Furthermore, unlike Dúró Ládipò's production, where all Ọyómèsi are lumped together, Wálé Ọgúnymí's text identifies the Ọyómèsi by their traditional titles, such as Başòrun, Aláptinni, Sàmu, and Àgbàakin. Instead of adopting the title name of the one warlord, the Gbònkà, Wálé Ọgúnymí settles for Èlírí, as contained in Samuel Johnson; he cuts off part of the compound name.²⁷ The full name is Èlírí-Onígbańjo, the Gbònkà. Rather than use Timí as Dúró Ládipò had, Wálé Ọgúnymí opts for Olúńdẹ and only refers to Olúńdẹ as the Timí after he has been installed as the Oba of Èdẹ.

Wálé Ọgúnymí portrays Šàngó as a being obsessed with magic powers. He is immersed in metaphysics right from his prime age and has supernatural support from his maternal community, Tapaland. Even when he is installed as the Alááfin, the ghost of his father, Ọránmíyàn, acknowledges the magical prowess of the Nupe people. This is why he directs Šàngó to Tapaland. He obtains his *osé* (axe wand) and *ẹdún àrà* (thunderbolt) from Nupe. The Tapa subtly fosters the theory of binary complementarity by encouraging Šàngó to work with Oya if he wants his metaphysics to be emotively potent, because Oya herself is also a numinous being. It is through Oya's support that the Ọwu warriors are subdued. Oya stirs the storm while Šàngó sends the lightning and thunder. He has implicit faith in oracular consultations; hence he frequents the Ifá priest to seek direction from Ifá on major issues, such as ransoming Alááfin Àjàkà and prosecuting the Ọwu war. He has a strong belief in ancestor worship, as demonstrated in his visit to his father's grave. More importantly, he takes along the Egúngún to prosecute the Ọwu war. This is the metaphor of the "dead" supporting the living. It equally

confirms the dependence of the living on the dead. His earlier exposure and constant renewal of his metaphysical charms appears to prepare him for his imminent transmogrification, instead of hanging as concluded in Dúró Ládípò's text. It is also evident that Šangó utilizes his metaphysical powers for both positive and negative ends. Šangó consumes all the enemies of Ōyó, and his own enemies, such as Tàmèdù, an assassin (role played by Kayode Odumosu), and Gbònríkà, but in his anger he destroys his own home. Thus in the film, Šangó symbolizes power, authority, violence, and destruction. The film audience may not be wrong then to conclude or infer, "that things go bad for anyone who cannot master his bad temper, and that magic should not be used for negative ends. Temper as well as evil magic must be balanced . . . a certain morality must be pursued."¹⁸

Before I draw curtains on Wálé Ōgúnymí's *Šangó*, a passing comment is necessary on the narrator used. The film makes use of a narrator, who gives brief information to a particular scene. You may wish to liken it to the stage direction in a written text. For instance, when the film is about to begin after the usual preliminaries—listing of film title, the production studio, casts and characters, writer, director, and other production crews—the film narrator says, "Long time ago around fifteenth century, the old Ōyó empire of the Yorùbá was faced with crises and wars." Thereafter, the warriors appear on screen chanting war songs:

Ojú ogun là ù ló
Ìba ẹni la pè, igha ẹni ló jé.

To the battlefield we march
Few were invited and many responded.

Though his information may be effective and appropriate, sometimes it sounds absurd for the information to be presented by voice-over when it has already been captured by the lens of the camera. The director or producer has forgotten that the film medium has its own language and grammar. The film medium relies heavily on images and symbols, not too many words. The narration almost mars the film. The film could still have been enjoyed without the voice-over from the narrator. The narrator at one level, therefore, constitutes a noise.

Šangó in Wálé Ōgúnymí and Dúró Ládípò's text is the historical Šangó, the fourth Alááfin of Ōyó.¹⁹ Léré Páimó, a former prominent member in the Dúró Ládípò's theater troupe, presents Šangó as a deity in his film *Lákúayé*. In this film Léré Páimó highlights the feud between

Ògún Lákáayé (the god of iron) and Šàngó (the god of thunder), the role of Èṣù (the trickster god or god of fate) in fanning the embers of that conflict, and the mediating role of Òrúnmílà. Oya is Ògún's wife, but Šàngó (played by Tunji Ojeyemi) snatches Oya away (a part iconized by Abiola Paimo). Ògún (iconized by Léré Páimó himself) is worried, and Èṣù (played by Hammed Oduola, aka Deinto) reveals to Ògún that Oya is in Šàngó's home and that Šàngó is boasting that Ògún cannot do anything about it. This report infuriates Ògún, and it leads to a great clash between Ògún and Šàngó in the open field. Òrúnmílà then has to intervene by asking the combatants to go to the gateway to heaven and propitiate. Šàngó, a resilient character, is able to perform the sacrifice, while Ògún fails. Thematically, love, which seems minor in Wálé Ògúnycé mǐ's production, is accentuated in *Lákáayé*. In fact, it precipitates the conflict between Šàngó and Ògún. In this film, Šàngó is portrayed as a wife snatcher and a promiscuous man. Just like Wálé Ògúnycé mǐ, Léré Páimó presents to us an energetic Šàngó who is "the epitome of masculine beauty and a male of gargantuan appetites, both gastronomical and sexual."³⁹ Aside from exhibition of quick tempers, promiscuity, and abuse of charisma, Páimó's Šàngó is a great dancer. It is at one of his dancing sessions that he sights Oya as a good dancer; and there and then he becomes entranced by her dancing steps. Šàngó is also iconized as a cocky and proud god who ceaselessly boasts about his primeval power when he is confronted in the open field by Ògún:

Ògún: *Àyánrán-iná?*
O gbà mí lóbinin!
 Šàngó: *Èmi ní mo létú*
Èmi ní mo létá
Èmi ní mo ní iná
Lóòótó, iwọ lo làdà
Táwa Irúnmọlẹ fi wá sáyé
Ìwọ lo làdà
Ìwọ lo níbọn
O gbàgbé? Mo jù ó lẹ.

Ògún: *Àyánrán-iná?*
 You snatch my wife!
 Šàngó: I own the firearms
 I own the bullets
 I own the fire
 Though you own the cutlass

That we all deities relied on in paving way to the terrestrial plane.
 You own the cutlass
 You own the gun
 Have you forgotten? I'm your superior.

He then emits fire before they both clash. Furthermore, *Lakáayé* offers us another myth as to how Oya became Šàngó's wife. In Wálé Ògúnnyé-mí's *Šàngó*, Oya is a were-animal whom Šàngó has to chase into her abode in the wild forest. Having seized her slough, Šàngó is able to enter Oya with his magic charms, and Oya becomes his wife. A significant incident worthy of note that occurs during this encounter is the curse uttered by Oya in nudity that whosoever has seized her animal should have "a tragic end." In Yorùbá mythology, it is always dangerous for one to be cursed by someone nude,²¹ especially by a woman, as it is believed that the curse will come to pass. Though Oya retracts the curse after having been commanded by Šàngó to do so, it is rather belated as the curse eventually materializes in Šàngó's life. The bottom line in the two films is that Oya was Šàngó's wife, hence Šàngó is praised in Wálé Ògúnnyé-mí's film as:

Šàngó ooo

Olurékù
Arékújáyé
À-kò-tagiri ikúnrin
A-jé-lilé
A-fa-lilé
A-kù-wéris
A-rin-già-già wofà
Olówó-orí Oya
Oha kò sooo

Šàngó ooo

He-who-puts-on the mantle
 He-who masks-for-pleasure
 The awesome man that gives jitters
 He-who-thunders
 He-who-compounds [troubles]
 He-who-swifly-plunges
 He-who-hastily-enters the marketplace
 Husband of Oya
 The king does not hang.

This song seems to sum up the personality of Šàngó in its totality as explicated above.

Myths and Myth Making

There are other myths pertaining to Šàngó apart from the earlier ones highlighted. It is the Šàngó in *Lákáayé* who once more offers us an explanation of why he takes *orógbó* (bitter kola), and not *obí* (kola nut). He explains to Oya that he, Šàngó, was born under the kola nut tree. He therefore believes that he would be an ingrate to consume kola nuts, the fruits of the protective tree at his birth. It may not be out of place to regard it as the "Šàngó manger tree." With regard to the bitter kola, it helps to pacify him when enraged. Hence, I term it the "antidotal nut." His devotees render in their chants:

Orógbó ni é mi wá o
Šàngó i i jobi o

Bitter kola should be offered
Šàngó does not chew kola nut

We also notice that Šàngó can decide to pick on a non-initiate as his plenipotentiary. This is the lot of Chief İbiyemí Adélékè, who is entranced by the *osé* in the film titled *Osé(e) Šàngó*. He is enthralled in merely seeing it:

Osé(e) Šàngó rè é!
Olúbánbí
Arígbá-ota ségun
Ó lágiri-háká
Okúnrin alágbára inú aféfé
Tíi sibi gegele bókè já
Šàngó i i jobi
Orógbó ni fi i dónu.

Here is the Šàngó's wand!
Olúbánbí
He-who-possesses-enough bullets to rout enemies
He-who-splits the wall open
An awesome man in the wind
That goes to the high rif to attack the hills

Šangó does not chew kola nut

It is the bitter kola he takes for his refreshment.

His wife, who is bewildered by this empathy, asks him why he wants to turn to an *abòrísà* ("paganism"). In *Ošé(e) Šangó*, by Afólábí Adésányà, the iconization of Šangó through human agency and symbolic objects dominates the motif of the film. Chief Ìbiyemí Adélékè (played by Kolá Oyéwò), a lover of culture, stumbles on *asé Šangó* while purchasing other artifacts in Oyo—incidentally the ancient city of the historical Aláafin Šangó—on his way to Lagos. Unknown to Chief Adeleke, Oya has transformed herself to an ordinary human being (perhaps an allusion to her anthropomorphic nature earlier captured by Wálé Ógúnjẹ's *Šangó*), who now sells the *asé* to him, which is already imbued with Šangó's spirit. Chief Adeleke is able to realize this during his encounter with the traffic wardens, who wanted to check his vehicle. In his anger at being insulted, he curses them, by saying, "*Šangó ní ó pa yin*" (Šangó will strike you down dead). Almost immediately, the two wardens and his driver are struck by lightning. Chief Adeleke is able to revive his driver by the spiritual powers already bestowed on him as Šangó's empathizer. It then dawns on him that he is a Šangó novice. He now begins to use the wand to settle scores with anybody. Even the members of Šangó cultic group are not spared (perhaps an allusion to Šangó's own self-destruction of his home). While testifying in a murder case against Chief Adeleke, a non-initiate, the Šangó worshippers say he is a parasite. The cultic head of Šangó, known as Baba Mọgbà, sets in motion various machineries to dispossess Chief Adeleke of the *asé*, yet is unable to achieve his aim. Later, Chief Adeleke is reluctantly and formally initiated into Šangó cultic group. The conflict between Baba Mọgbà and Chief Adeleke persists, and in their physical combat Chief Adeleke is able to eliminate Baba Mọgbà. He also dies in his house, where he asks his wife to take proper care of the newborn baby boy Šangó-wá-n-wá, and ensure that he is not as irascible in his actions. Chief Adeleke's and Baba Mọgbà's behaviors confirm what Canizares aptly observed: "Šangó-type persons may exhibit quick tempers, over-indulgent appetites, sexual promiscuity, abuse charisma."⁵⁷

The film *Ošé(e) Šangó* highlights a number of mysteries which defied any scientific explanation. One astonishing incident is that Chief Adeleke's newborn baby has the *asé* mark on his left hand. This is a rare honor from Šangó, whose spirit has been constantly hovering around Chief Adeleke's house. Chief Adeleke therefore names the baby Šangó-wá-n-wá (Šangó-has-come-to-me) to reciprocate the honor his patron

god has given him.³⁸ By implication, the boy has become Šàngó's icon from his birth. He might have to face trouble if later in life he decides not to be one of Šàngó's votaries. In fact, it is Šàngó-wá-n-wá's birth that aggravates the existing feud between the *mogbá* and Chief Adeleke. Some of the symbol-objects of Šàngó are used for healing sickness or other ailments. An impostor who is not entranced by the spirit medium is often punished, like Alàrán-án, who is struck by lightning. He goes blind after stealing Šàngó's magical wand of Chief Adeleke when disguised as a priest. The thunderbolt or stone (*edùn àrà*) is searched for in his house. He is able to regain his sight after the *mogbá* has immersed the thunderbolt in the water. The role of the *mogbá* in appeasing on behalf of the offended is also highlighted. Anywhere Šàngó strikes, it is his priests who propitiate.

The mystery behind Šàngó's lightning power still defies any scientific proof. When Chief Adeleke is accused of murder with his *osé*, the laboratory test carried out by the nuclear physicist at the university fails to confirm the electric energy in the axe wand. Chief Adeleke is then discharged and acquitted of murder, as the wand has been taken as mere decorative wood. We may need to refresh our memory that Alááfin Šàngó in Wálé Ògúnyemi's production kills many Òwu warriors with his magical wand. In other words, one of the symbol-objects of Šàngó is employed for malefic ends by his votaries.

Ìbinú Olúkòsò, by the late Adebimpe Adekola (aka Ìrètí), highlights the issues of "possession" or "mediumship" and the dilemma of a votary in the face of strong proselytizing through the new religion of Christianity. Kémi (Šàngókémi) was born after her parents had offered prayer to Šàngó. The *mogbá* instructed the parents that Kémi must always come back home to participate in the annual Šàngó ritual festival. The mother, who is now a Christian, sees it as a fetish act. Since Kémi happens to be the alter-ego of the god Šàngó, anytime she is provoked she becomes possessed. Her incessant trances are taken as a fit, which explains why she did not have a steady suitor. Nevertheless, she is able to build up a relationship with Timiléyìn, an indigent car-wash boy, who is honest enough to return the expensive trinkets she had forgotten at the car wash. Her father, who normally revives her with red palm oil whenever entranced, is now worried. He has to tongue-lash his wife, who is a Christian fanatic, when she will not agree that Kémi should appear at the Šàngó festival:

Ìyá Kémi: Dádúy, ẹ ọ nígbàgbọ́ nínú Olórún rárá ọ!
Báà Kémi: Mọ daddý mí,
Mọ daddý mí.

Èyìn yí lè gbà wèrè mèsín.
È tí sọ Jesù dí nàkàn málàrán.
Ki àwọn great-grandfather rẹ
Ki wọn tò délé ayé yí
Nàkankan ní wọn sì sìn o
Nígbà tí kírístíyéní dé
Kíríyó, ẹ sí gbà gbàgbò rẹ sódí

Kémi's Mother: Daddy, you do not have faith in God at all

Kémi's Father: Don't daddy me at all

Don't daddy me

You have combined malady with religion

You have turned faith in Jesus into something else

Before your great-grandfather existed

Before they appeared in this world

They were worshipping something

When Christianity emerged

"Kíríyó,"²⁴ you now misconceived everything.

Thereafter, Kémi is taken to her country home to perform the necessary ritual at the Šangó shrine. The *magbá* tells her that she will have to be in religious sanctuary for few days. Before her returns, her spouse, Timilé yin, and Tólá, who is one of her bosom friends, have already eloped. On returning to Lagos, they now poison her and dump her body into the bush, where she is rescued by a Christian brother named Káyòdé. Her parents then take her back to the Šangó shrine, where she is reimbued with Šangó's metaphysical power. As a plenipotentiary of Šangó, she kills Timiléyin and Tólá with lightning. She is eventually married to the Christian brother (Káyòdé), who now delivers her from being the medium of Šangó. The iconization of the god of thunder enables her to exhibit some of the personality traits of Šangó, such as hot-temperdedness and the metaphysical entrancement of enemies. The final entrancement of Kémi by the new religion, Christianity, seems to validate that only the spirit can confront the spirit. Man cannot subdue the metaphysical realm with mere mortal powers. The Christian brother has also become the icon of Jesus, and therefore he is able to dispossess her of Šangó's spirit.

This issue of entrancement by Šangó still exists, as highlighted in passing in a number of Yorùbá films. Olajubu is right to say Šangó is "a living character among the Òyò Yorùbá," as his spirit and name are constantly invoked to either punish or discipline evil-doers.²⁵ For instance, Oleyo, a minor character in *Lákáayé*, invokes the spirit of Šangó to punish him if

The children also feel the impact of Šangó. It is noticed that some parents when scolding do curse their children and wards by using Šangó's name. *Òkò Irésé* does this in the *Òkérè* film. It is brought to the fore too that the remnants of the feud between Šangó and Gbòńkà still linger on unabated among the descendants of Oniřangó and Gbòńkà. It is taboo or sacrilege for any child from "Šangó lineage" to marry someone from "Gbòńkà lineage." If the lovers contravene the taboo and go ahead with the marriage, it is believed that the wife would always have stillbirths. This is strongly demonstrated in the video *Òkérè*, where Baba Mògbà refuses her daughter permission to marry her heartthrob from Gbòńkà's household.

Conclusion

Yorùbá videographers acknowledge Šangó's temperament, fieriness, awesomeness, and metaphysics in their productions. They equally present the duality of his being as an embodiment of beneficence and destruction, healing power, and justice. His portrait on the screen confirms him as the provider of synergy for other lesser gods. The principle of communality and essence of binary complementarity in Yorùbá thought are strengthened in his configuration. He is configured as both the historical-hero and a sacred figure. Despite the explosive expansion of the foreign religions, Šangó's spirit still has a strong hold on his followers, to at least a certain extent. Though his arrogance stemming from primeval mystical power intoxication is highly visible in his alter-ego, the hold may be on the wane as the urban-bred followers are now being entranced by another, if not more powerful, spirit. His mystical power that entrances or electrifies, which his acolytes often misuse in settling scores with their enemies, is still beyond the knowledge of scientists. Notwithstanding this numinous nature, Šangó still remains a living deity, especially among the *Ọyọ* Yorùbá who frequently consult him for quick justice dispensation. The Yorùbá videographers give Šangó a better and more honorable place on the screen than the ignominious existence given him on the stage.

NOTES

1. The Mbáń-Mbáyò Club, at Ibadan, served as a theater club, and Dúró Ládipò had the opportunity of performing there. He asked Ulli Beier to assist in establishing one at Ořogbo; thus the Popular Bar owned by him was converted to Mbáń-Mbáyò. The word *mbáń* is an Igbo word signifying "creation" but eventually turned into a Yorùbá expression, "When we see it, we'll be happy."

See Ulli Beier, *The Return of Shàngó: The Theatre of Duro Ladipo* (Bayreuth, Germany: University of Bayreuth Press, 1994), 15–23.

2. It might be plausible that Dúró Ládipò's *Ọ̀ba Káso* also find its ancestry in the Shàngó sketch of the Apidán Theatre repertoire. Citing the example of the Ayélabólá performance of Shàngó drama, Gotrick writes: "[A]n adult entered, dressed like the Shàngó. On his head he had a wooden hair-do; a red cloth mask covered his face. He was dressed in a brown vest with cowries attached to it and a 'skirt made of strips.'"

For a comprehensive explanation, see Kacké Gotrick, *Apidán Theatre and Modern Drama* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1984), 53, 96–99.

3. Beier, *The Return of Shàngó*, 26.

4. Yemi Ogunbiyi, *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book* (Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981), 345.

5. Beier, *The Return of Shàngó*, 23.

6. Beier, *ibid.*, 70. See also Oludare Olajubu, "The Sources of Duro Ladipo's *Ọ̀ba Káso*," *Research in African Literatures* 9, no. 3 (Winter 1978): 327–62; Philip Adedotun Ogundeji, "The Image of Shàngó in Duro Ladipo's Plays," *Research in African Literatures* 29, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 57–75; and Philip Adedotun Ogundeji, "A Semiotic Study of Duro Ladipo's Mythico-Historical Plays" (Ph.D. diss., University of Ibadan, 1988).

7. Ogunbiyi, *Drama and Theatre*, 345.

8. Robert Armstrong, "Traditional Poetry in Ladipo's Opera *Ọ̀ba Káso*," *Research in African Literatures* 9, no. 3 (Winter 1978): 366–67.

9. Ogunbiyi, *Drama and Theatre*, 333.

10. Beier, *The Return of Shàngó*, 221.

11. Iwálewá-Haus, Bayreuth University, Bayreuth, Germany has in its possession at least a copy (if not more) of Dúró Ládipò's *Ọ̀ba Káso* film clips. In 1967, there was a film made by America Educational Television in the series *Creative Person*. The film highlights the Duro Ladipo Company on tour. The film also contains an "interview with Duro Ladipo and excerpts from performances including one, that was held in the palace of Ọ̀yọ́ in the presence of the Alááfin and Timi Laoye of Èdẹ́" (Beier, *ibid.* 222). Western Nigeria Television (WNTV), later the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), had a complete production of *Ọ̀ba Káso*. I am uncertain if the copy still survives, for the Nigeria Television Authority has no durable storage facility as such. Besides, they often wipe off programs from tapes so as to make use of such tapes for other programs. All these productions, print and electronic, might have not been able to match the quality of *Ọ̀ba Káso* had it been put on celluloid before Ladipo's death in 1978. Who could have known?

12. Ogundeji, "Image of Shàngó," 69.

13. Andrew Horn, "Ritual, Drama and the Theatrical: The Case of Bon Spirit Medium," in *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*, ed. Yemi Ogunbiyi (Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981), 181–202. See also Margre-

Thompson Drewal, *Yorùbá Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

14. Drewal, *Yorùbá Ritual*, 180–90. See also Oyeronke Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 100.

15. Dapo Adelugba, "Trance and Theatre: The Nigerian Experience," in Ogunbiyi, 203–18.

16. Drewal, *Yorùbá Ritual*, 100.

17. Horn, "Ritual," 190.

18. *Ibid.*, 187.

19. Drewal, *Yorùbá Ritual*, 180.

20. J. F. Ade Ajayi, "Development Is about People," in *Humanity in Context*, ed. Ayo Banjo (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Academy of Letters, 2000), 24.

21. *Ibid.*, 24.

22. We are referring to the Nigerian theater artists who perform in English mainly for the literate members of the public. They are usually university based or standing artists for different electronic media, especially television stations.

23. All these clothes are traditional outfits of the Yorùbá. *Agbádá* is a voluminous outfit like *dàndógó*. *Ghàríyí* is not as voluminous as either the *agbádá* or *dàndógó*.

24. M. O. Ogunmola, *A New Perspective to Òyó Empire History: 1530–1944* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Vantage Publishers, 1985), 5.

25. *Ibid.*, 65.

26. *Ibid.*, 66.

27. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbás* (Lagos: CSS Ltd., 1921), 157.

28. Gotrick, *Apidán Theatre*, 84.

29. There seems to be a contradiction as to whether he was the fourth Aláàfin or not. The narrator in the film said Šàngó was the fourth Aláàfin, but Gotrick, *Apidán Theatre*, 95, says that Šàngó was the third Aláàfin and not the fourth as claimed by Johnson in *The History*, 149. This is always the problem with oral history. Historians need to resolve this contradiction as there seems to be a gap. In Johnson's account—Òránmiyàn's rule was followed by that of Àjàká and then by Šàngó. However, Chief Moses Oyedele Ogunmola, who doubles as the Ašiwájú and Otún of Òyó, provides a seeming solution in his text, *A New Perspective*, 165–66: Appendix III, List of Aláàfins and Bašòrun of Òyó (Showing Dates of Advent or Succession)

Alaafin

1. Odùduwà, AD 782

2. Òrán-án-yàn, AD 892

3. Àjàká Dàdà, AD 1042

4. Šàngó (Àfónjá), 1077

5. Àjàká Dàdà, 1137

6. Aganjú, 1137

Başòrun

Olòrun-fùn-mi

Èfíufí kò-fé-orí

Èrindínlógún-Agbòn

Sale-ku-odi

Sale-ku-odi

Banija

His list ends on the reign of Alááfin Bello Gbadégesin Oládígbolù II, 1956–68, most likely the 43rd Alááfin. In this same text he says: "Traditionally, the Alááfin was the head of Sàngó worship. Sàngó was the third Alááfin in Oclùduwá dynasty. The list reveals that the first Alááfin was, Orán-án-yán the Great, then Dáda Ajáká Ajúwón and Sàngó, King Sàngó also had the appellation of Olúfinràn."

30. Baba R. Canizares, *Sbàngó: Santeria and the Orishá of Thunder* (Plainview, N.Y.: Original Productions, 2000), 18.

31. In most Yorùbá communities, when people are fed up with the reign of a particular monarch, women are sometimes to parade the whole town in nude to symbolize rejection of that king. The king may abdicate the throne or go into exile or he may commit suicide.

32. Canizares, *Sbàngó*, 18.

33. It is a commonplace tradition among the different African traditional religious devotees to name their children after their patron gods or goddesses. For instance, the Ifá worshippers name their children as Fáléti, Fágbémí, etc. The Egúngún devotees call their children Eégúnriánti, Òjéníyí, etc.

34. *Kíríyó* is a corrupt name for the Christians by the non-Christians, who believed that the Christians moved from one house to another to feast at any Christian festival—Christmas, Easter, and the Harvest season.

35. Olajubu, "The Sources," 354.

36. Ogunmola, *A New Perspective*, 20.

37. Olajubu, "The Sources," 358, and Akinwumi Isola, "Orin Edeyeri" (unpublished paper), 2.

38. Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature, and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 8.

39. Drewal, *Yorùbá Ritual*, 99.

ŞÀNGÓ

*in Africa and the
African Diaspora*



EDITED BY JOEL E. TISHKEN,
TÓYÍN FÁLOLÁ, AND
ARÍNTÚNDÉ AKÍNYEMÍ

Art in the Service of Šàngó

STEPHEN FOLÁRÀNMÍ

Šàngó, the deified king of ancient Ōyó, is one of the fearsome, malevolent *òrìṣà* among the Yorùbá. Šàngó's devotees and worship, however, extend beyond the Yorùbá of Nigeria, and can also be found in Benin Republic, Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, Mexico, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The role of art in the devotion, religious rites, and worship of the hundreds of *òrìṣà* among the Yorùbá has been severally identified. It will therefore not be out of place to find numerous images and art forms as religious paraphernalia in the service and decoration of Šàngó shrines all over the world. This study identifies the varieties of art objects, their uses, and their importance as it relates to Šàngó worship. It also examines the uses of these art forms and motifs in contemporary times, be it for decoration, identification, or veneration of the *òrìṣà*. It is very interesting to experience contemporary paintings or other art forms, especially that of Adémólá Olúgébéfolá, where icons and images are used as codified forms to represent the forces and powers of Šàngó as a revered, deified king of Ōyó. Series of visual signs and signifiers are also used to elucidate the concept of Šàngó. Representations such as these are similar to the numerous shrine paintings in Yorùbáland, where emblems and symbols are used to represent the deity.

Šàngó is one of the most colorful personalities of the Yorùbá pantheon. It may have been that an earlier form of thunder worship was once known in the Yorùbá country, but in Ōyó the worship of thunder soon became associated with Šàngó.¹ Šàngó's cult played an important role in securing the people's loyalty to the Alááfin in the days of the Ōyó

Empire. In many Yorùbá towns, most especially in Òyó, Ìbàdàn, and Èdè, the worship of Šàngó is a principal festival which lasts for as long as seven days, the end of which marks the annual circle of festivals. The fierceness of Šàngó and his volatile nature put him in the "exalted position to be so identified with the Yorùbá conception of the manifestation of the wrath of Olódùmarè."² Rev. Samuel Johnson, Bolaji Idowu, Owosade Awolalu, N. A. Fadipe, and Ulli Beier all gave both historical and legendary versions of how Šàngó became a deified king and hero among his people.³ History has it that Šàngó ruled over the Yorùbá, including Benin, the Popos, and Dahomey, and his worship continues in all these places to this day. Šàngó was a strong man, a powerful hunter, and was very skilled in the use of various magical arts. Obstinate, cruel, and oppressive, he ruled with an iron hand and sought to keep everybody under his thumb. Šàngó fought and won many battles with many surrounding settlements and neighboring towns. He was said to have established the supremacy of Òyó over many other groups by defeating the mighty town of Òwu.⁴ His reign was restless and warlike. When the people of Òyó became tired of continuous warfare, they entreated him to cease fighting: "[W]e have suffered much and our sons have died in great numbers and the farms are neglected."⁵ Šàngó thus accepted their plea after much consideration; he left the town for exile, where he was believed to have hung himself. Another version had it that his authority was threatened by the popularity of two of his courtiers (Timi and Gbò nńkà). Being weary of this, Šàngó craftily set these courtiers against each other, and one of them (Timi) was killed in the process. The surviving one (Gbò nńkà), realizing Šàngó's tricks, went after him. Overcome with grief, Šàngó found the only way left was to "play the man" by hanging himself.⁶

Worship of Šàngó

In spite of his tempestuous and cruel character, Šàngó commanded the loyalty of many friends. It was therefore not too long after he disappeared or died (whichever version of the story we choose to believe) that his friends repaired the site of his supposed suicide, and there originated his worship. They then returned to the city proclaiming, *gba kò sò, gba kò sò*, meaning, "the king did not hang, the king did not hang." Their implication in saying this was that Šàngó was not dead but was still alive and now possessed supernatural divine powers to take vengeance on his enemies. Whenever a man is struck dead or a house is struck and damaged by lightning and thunder, it is generally believed to be the visitation of the

wrath of Šangó on the residents. A house struck by lightning and thunder can therefore not be used until the necessary propitiation sacrifice has been offered.⁷ To appease Šangó, an act of confession and submission, the payment of propitiation fines in the form of rams, sheep, fowls, kola nuts, and palm oil soon followed. Later a shrine was erected, and after that a temple, for the purpose of the worship of Šangó at the site where he was believed to have hung himself, which was renamed Kòso.⁸

Those who had originated the worship of Šangó became the first priests of Šangó; they held the exalted positions of the *mogbá* (advocates of Šangó). More typical of the nature of Šangó are the *adósù*. They were the ones that the *òrìṣà* had personally chosen to join or be initiated into the cult. They were often recognized by their large protruding eyes and, irrespective of their sex, their hair that was elaborately plaited and decorated, especially during festivals, as a mark of identification of their *orìṣà*. The *adósù* also had their own hierarchy; the senior chief among them being the *Baálé Šangó*, usually followed by *Jagun Šangó*; the most important among them being the *plógùn*,⁹ specially trained dancers of the *Láàṣíkù* dance.¹⁰ In full performance at festivals times, they chanted,



FIGURE 8.1. Raba Šangólere holding *wé Šangó*, in a ritual dance. Photo courtesy of Department of Fine Arts, Obáfẹmí Awólówọ University, Ilé-Ife. 2005.

sang, and danced, and became possessed by Šàngó by displaying some magical feats.

With the evolving worship of Šàngó and the setting up of a shrine, objects of worship, identification, and decoration of Šàngó shrines were also created. From these beginnings the worship of Šàngó spread all over Yorùbáland and beyond.¹¹

Shrines of Šàngó still abound in many Yorùbá towns and villages. At one such shrine one can find images of a man (representing Šàngó) surrounded by three smaller figures probably representing his wives Oya, Ošun, and Obà; the image of a man holding a ram's head and horns and the handle of the double-headed axe (*asé*), which is the most significant symbol and identification of Šàngó (*osé Šàngó*). Other common material symbols of Šàngó include: gourd rattle (*séjéjé Šàngó*), inverted mortar used as pedestals, a big pot used as a receptacle for thunder celts, and in some cases a tray or bowl holding celts and polished stones believed to have been hurled by Šàngó. Apart from these, other items used in worship also included animals such as ram (*àgbò*), tortoise (*ìjápá*), snail



FIGURE 8.2. Šàngó altar pieces and *lábá* (Šàngó bag) hung on the wall at Akuru compound, Agbeni Ibádán. Photo courtesy of Department of Fine Arts, Obáfémí Awólówó University, Ilé-Ife. 1990.

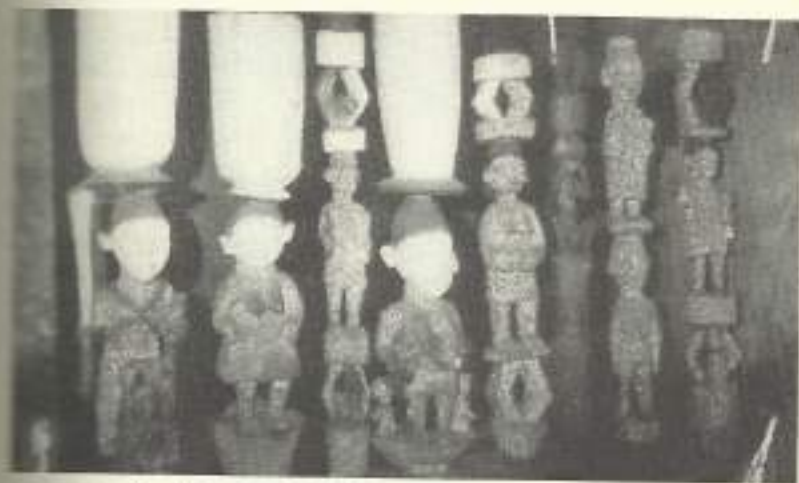


FIGURE 8.3. Carved and brightly painted veranda posts. Šangó shrine at Akuru compound, Agbeni Ibadán. Photo courtesy of Department of Fine Arts, Obáfemi Awólówò University, Ilé-Ife. 1990.

ogbón), water bird (*osin*), red tail of parrot, shea butter (*òrì*), guinea fowl (*awò*), *tètè* (*Amaranthus hybridus*), *pèrègún* leaves (*Dracaena mannii*), *alé-ai* (devil's razor), and heads of cowries.¹²

This dedication to the power over life and death and creativity is reflected in Šangó's shrines, such as the one found at the compound of Balé Kòso in Òyó, which overflows with carvings, pots, and other artworks. A well-carved mortar, ritual container, figure, or dance staff (*asé*) is believed to be able to better focus the worshipper's attention on the important attributes of the god and to better lure the spirit to the shrine.¹³ A shrine of Šangó is usually referred to as *gbón-gán* with the altar being an upturned mortar (*odó*), often carved in high relief, supporting a wooden tray of thunderbolts (stone celts or erosion-weathered pebbles [*yán ará*]). The mortar may be decorated with votive carvings on a great variety of themes, such as worshiping women, or priests in their regalia mounted on horses. The shrines contain ritual pots decorated with moldings in high relief; hanging on the wall is a leather bag (*lábù*) carried by the priest when visiting a place where lightning has struck. It is in this bag that stone celts/thunderbolts and other ritual objects are kept. The rattles (*éjé-éjé*) are shaken to accompany worshippers in rituals and in the praise song of Šangó.¹⁴ All the aforementioned items are specifically required during the processes of initiation and worship of Šangó, and thus form the core materials for appeasing Šangó's wrath. In 1910, when Leo Frobenius took a photograph of an interior of a Šangó shrine

in Ibadan, he wrote that "a lofty, long and very deep recess made a gap in the row of fantastically carved and brightly painted columns. These were sculptured with horsemen, men climbing trees, monkeys, women, gods and all sorts of mythological carved work. The dark chamber behind revealed a gorgeous red ceiling, pedestals with stone axes on them, wooden figures, cowrie-shell hangings."¹⁵ This account by Fröbenius is a testimony to the presence of several art objects used in the service and decoration of Šàngó shrines. This remains true all over the world, as Šàngó has a strong following beyond the shores of Yorùbáland.¹⁶

Yorùbá Figurative Sculpture

Among African art forms, Yorùbá wooden figurative sculpture has received a great deal of attention from Western cultures. Wood is the material typically used throughout sub-Saharan Africa because it is practical and available. The human figure is most commonly represented in sculptural form. Animals, such as birds, antelopes, monkeys, and leopards, are also depicted. Figures are represented standing with bent knees or seated on a circular stool. Few sculptures depict figures in movement. Yorùbá sculpture is very balanced and symmetrical. A common device used to create a sense of balance is the repetition of shapes within different parts of the body. While a sculpture is meant to be understood from a continuous view, by walking around it, most African sculpture does not have a predetermined direction for viewing; some figures were never intended for display, and therefore will not stand on their own. Usually being modest in size, the sculptures are made to be portable and easily handled, while figures may be made for various purposes. In giving a graphic representation of these sculptures, Leuzinger wrote:

In spite of the multitude of themes and form of the carvers' art, it must be affirmed that the style of carving has maintained an astonishingly unified character down the centuries, so that a Yorùbá work can usually be easily recognised. Its characteristics are a naturalistic human round style, a heavy head with massive coiffure, horizontal full lip, and cut off vertically at the sides, large bulbous eyes and eye brows marked in a fleshy nose, heavy hanging breast and dazzling color.¹⁷

Some figures represent a deceased twin, carved upon its death. The mother would then care for the twin figure (*ibéjì*) as though it were her child, washing and feeding it, to ensure the health of the surviving twin.



FIGURE 8.4. *Ere Ibeji*. Collection of the Department of Fine Arts, Obáfémí Awólówò University, Ilé-Ife. Photo by Stephen Fóláránmi. 2004.

The wood surface of the figures often shows wear from the constant rubbing and use.

Figurative sculpture is widely used in divination practices. Many of the diviner's instruments are elaborately carved with heads, faces, and figures. There exist other paraphernalia which are associated with Šàngó worship and devotion. Some of these art objects have been intricately created by artists over centuries, while others have been created in recent times, not for use by Šàngó devotees, but as a means of decoration or documentation of one of the most feared of Yorùbá kings. They have been made not just for religious use but as objects of beauty to be admired and revered. We have earlier mentioned the widespread worship of Šàngó all over the Yorùbá country and beyond. Large varieties in the objects of worship of Šàngó are in evidence throughout these many regions.

Osé Šàngó

Osé Šàngó is Šàngó's most pervasive symbol; it is so distinguished by the double-headed axe motif, a stylized reference to the thunder celts believed to have been hurled by Šàngó during thunderstorms or lightning and unearthed by his worshipers. It is the primary symbol of Šàngó's presence and power. The double axe-head is said to also signify "my

strength cuts both ways," meaning that no one, even the most distant citizens of Ọyó, was beyond the reach of Šàngó's authority or immune to punishments for misdeeds.¹⁸ This double-axe motif is the most important element associated with Šàngó. It represents Šàngó's destructive side and his ability to hurl thunder celts into the residences of his enemies and those who incur his wrath. Staffs are carried, and danced with, by the priestesses and priests in the Šàngó cult. It is also used as a badge of membership in the cult. The Yorùbá carvers have created many pieces of this single symbol of Šàngó; it is thus held in high esteem. The wand is fashioned in several varieties, and the style of design varies more than any other Šàngó art object. Some of these have in fact been classified into certain localities and schools, identifying them with those who carve them or with important Yorùbá towns. It is also said that the amount paid a carver for an object like this will determine how elaborate or intricate the design and emblems on the object will be. Šàngó wands have been carved in many simple forms: smooth-surfaced representations of the axe with the lightly decorated handle and markings, as to be able to serve its primary functions.

Others have been elaborately carved, revealing a great deal of skill and humanistic tendencies. These staffs most often depict a single female figure, whose head, carved in elaborate coiffure, supports a double axe.

There are also examples of metal Šàngó wands; these are not as elaborate as the more common carved wooden wands. An exhibition of Yorùbá art in 1980 at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta revealed a great deal of these varieties. According to Henry Drewal, some of the wands on display were identified with the Bangboye school style, some of which may have been carved by the master's hand in the 1920s or 1930s. Characteristics include deeply cut eyebrow, broad nostrils, long nose, low position of the mouth, and long sharp jaw line.

Some are described as having a heavy textured headdress, large starred eyes, and stylized celts surrounding the stem of the wands. This was identified as a wand possibly carved by Toibo from the Maku School in Ọyó.

Leo Frobenius was said to have collected some wands in Ìbàdàn around 1912, and some of these were identified as having been carved by an Ìbàdàn artist, Àmòó Láfià, of Ìdí Aró, who was said to be about age twenty in 1912.¹⁹ The Ìbàdàn style is characterized by a long slender shape of the double-blade axe and incised designs of alternating zigzag and straight lines on the shaft and base.

From the Ìgbómìnà region comes a distinctive rendering of the *asir Šàngó*, a Janus composition, which when viewed in profile surmounts a frontal head and translates as the double-axe form.

most distant
 or immune
 most impor-
 destructive
 of his ene-
 nced with,
 as a badge
 any pieces
 The wand
 more than
 classified
 who carve
 the amount
 or intri-
 and have
 ations of
 be able to

of skill and
 female fig-
 are.

as elabo-
 Yorùbá
 deal of
 on dis-
 which may
 Character-
 position

starred
 was iden-
 at Oyo,
 Ibadán
 carved
 be about
 slender
 zigzag

of the *osé*
 mounts a



FIGURE 8.5. Simple and less decorated *osé Šangò* without any image.
 Collection of the Department of Fine Arts,
 Obáfèmi Awólówò University, Ilé-Ife. Photo by Stephen Fóláránmí.



FIGURE 8.6. A breastfeeding woman. Surmounting her coiffure
 is a stylized double axe. By Lamidi Fakeye. Photo by Dele Fakeye.



FIGURE 8.7A. Wood, pigment, 26 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches high: Ekiti, Odo Owa, Bamgboye school. Illustration by author.



FIGURE 8.7B. Wood, 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches high: Ōyó, Erin, Maku school, possibly Toibo (?). This wand is similar to work attributed to Toibo (cf. Beier 1957: pl. 3). Illustration by author.



FIGURE 8.7C. Wood, 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches high. Ōyó: Idi Aro quarter Ibádán (?), possibly by Amos Lafia. They may date to the late 19th or early 20th century, for Frobenius collected four in an identical style in 1912 (cf. Krieger 1956). Illustration by author.



FIGURE FIGURE 8.7D. Wood, pigment, 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches high. Igbómìnà, Oro area. A Janus composition, viewed in profile, surmounts a frontal head and translates as the double-axe form. De Havenon collection (Museum of African Art 1971: pl. 157). Illustration by author.

It must be mentioned that the Janus-styled wand has been carved in recent years by a renowned Yorùbá traditional carver, Lamidi Fakeye.

Some of these also show fine horizontal striations across the brows, on the wands, and on the faces of the figures. (Striations, or facial marks, are a form of facial decoration or identification. They are also a means of distinguishing the various Yorùbá families and towns.²⁰ This tradition is now only minimally practiced in some rural Yorùbá towns.)

The Èkítì-style wands have more cubistic handling of planes and angles in the double blade, shoulders, and breasts, which also suggest affinity with other traditional carvings from Èkítì.²¹

A common feature found in many *asé Šàngó* is the representation of a regal female figure holding a bowl, probably a receptacle of celts. The woman may also represent a worshiper of Šàngó. Many wands done in this particular style are very large, suggesting they may have been used as altar pieces and decoration and not as part of the dancing paraphernalia during festivals.



FIGURE 8.8. *Asé Šàngó* by Lamidi Fakeye, 1987. Here the thunderbolt appears as human faces in Janus composition. Photo by Lamidi Fakeye.



FIGURE 8.9A. Wood, 14 inches high. Èkítì. Fine horizontal striations suggest Ìgbómìná, but the entire composition reflects Èkítì. Illustration by author.



FIGURE 8.9B. Wood, 14 3/4 inches high, Èkítì: eyelids, ears, and cubist planes and angles on shoulder, breast suggests affinities with some Èkítì work. Illustration by author.



FIGURE 8.10. *Osé Sàngó* by Lamidi Fakeye. Photo by Lamidi Fakeye.

Some varieties of *osé Sàngó* also show kneeling women holding their breasts in respect, offering a bowl in thanks, or holding a bowl filled with kola nuts, all popular subjects in Yorùbá art. Figures in this pose are known as *alùmòyè*, meaning "one who knows honor."²² They are found on the altars of many Yorùbá deities, with hair elaborately dressed in a traditional crested style called *agògò*, strands of waist beads signifying virginity. In this respect, the *osé Sàngó* can be said to be similar to the *iróké ifá* divining tapper in its iconography. Both are important objects in invoking Sàngó and Òrúnmìlà respectively. The *iróké* is the divining tapper with the clapper, used to invoke Òrúnmìlà during divination by gently striking the pointed end against the *opún ifá*. A long slim form, usually carved in ivory, ranges from twenty to sixty centimeters in length, and is a combination of three parts. But unlike the *osé*, the topmost part, which is very important, is without decorations.²³ Its similarity with Sàngó's wand is most vivid in the middle section, which is most commonly a human head or a kneeling half-nude woman figure holding her breast. Here again we notice that humanity is represented by the female figure because of her effectiveness in the act of honoring and saluting the gods, who all possess the surname *àkúnlẹ̀bò* (the-one-who-must-be-worshipped-kneeling-down). This is the greatest reverence that can be shown to any *òrìṣà* in the Yorùbá tradition.²⁴ As a decorative support at the entrance to a Sàngó

shrine, the female may be depicted as a priestess wearing beaded dance panels (*làbàa Šàngó*).²⁵ There is little suggestion of movement or activity, other than being reflective of intense concentration, and perhaps energy. Judging from its indispensability and the frequency of its use in the service of Šàngó, *osé Šàngó* would appear to be the most important of all the items or objects used by Šàngó devotees. *Osé Šàngó* is carried, cradled, waved, and thrust by devotees during dances in honor of Šàngó. Once the carved object leaves the artist's workshop, it ceases to be ordinary wood; it has become the earthly physical symbol of Šàngó's existence and presence since he "departed to the heavens."

Šàngó Ritual Pots

The design of a pot is generally determined by the purpose it is to serve. Function is taken into account when the potter makes his or her pots. Unlike utilitarian pots, whose surfaces are usually not decorated, Yorùbá ritual and ceremonial pots are easily identified by their decorative motifs. Pots are important items in any Yorùbá shrine, where they are used as containers for storing water and pebbles and other ritual materials. In some cases they serve as musical instruments or as containers for storing a medicinal or magical preparation.²⁶ There are pots used in purely commemorative ceremonies connected to rites of passage. Sites of shrines have often been revealed by the presence of a pot placed under a tree, or as part of altar items, as in the case of Šàngó shrines. Ritual pots are characteristically decorated with anthropomorphic symbols as well as other instruments and emblems of traditional worship.²⁷

There are several varieties of Šàngó pots that vary in size and decoration, but all are put to the same uses. The majority of Šàngó pots are elaborately designed in very high relief, showing emblems of Šàngó mingled with those of other deities.

Aawé Šàngó is a shallow cylindrical pot with flat bottom and a ring for base. It is used for the storage of water at a Šàngó shrine in Šaki town. Another *aawé* pot from Òkèihò depicts emblems and symbols of Šàngó, including snakes, bitter kola (*orógbò*), gourd rattles (*šéšéšé*), *Ifá* divination tappers (*irókéšé*), and divination chains (*épešé*). Although made for Šàngó worship, it is also used in the veneration of other deities, hence the variety of designs. The mingling of symbols of various deities on one pot exemplifies their mutual interdependent relationship. In Abèòkùta, during Šàngó festivals, female worshippers dance around the town singing and dancing to Šàngó's honor. They carry with them pots containing Šàngó emblems, including ones with phallic symbols called *okóo Šàngó*.²⁸



FIGURE 8.11. Šàngó pot showing a stylized *wé*. Ifè Museum of Antiquities. Photo by Stephen Fóláránmí. 2004.



FIGURE 8.12. Šàngó pot with high relief mould of a Y-shaped *osé*, flanked by rattles and other ritual apparatus. Ifè Museum of Antiquities. Photo by Stephen Fóláránmí. 2004.



FIGURE 8.13. Šàngó pot with images of snake, tortoise, and rattles. Ifè Museum of Antiquities. Photo by Stephen Fóláránmí. 2004.



FIGURE 8.14. Sacrificial urns similar to the ones also used in Erinlè cult. Ifè Museum of Antiquities. Photo by Stephen Fóláránmí. 2004.



FIGURE 8.15. Šàngó pot with four pairs of breast in high relief mold. Collection of the Department of Fine Arts, Obáfèmi Awólówó University, Ilé-Ife. Photo by Stephen Fóláránmí. 2004.



FIGURE 8.16. *Olo Sàngó* from Abeokuta—southwest Nigeria.
Illustration by author.

Pots dedicated to Erinlẹ are similar to the Sàngó pot in the lid structure; the strap-like forms that serve as the body can be perceived as a crown, referring to the royal status of Sàngó (see Figure 8.16).²⁹

Ère Ìbejì (Twin Figures)

Twins (*ère ìbejì*) are sometimes called “children of thunder” and are thus consecrated to Sàngó. Twin figures are likely to be found in many Sàngó shrines, as legend states that Sàngó was himself a twin. Figures are created to venerate the spirit of deceased twins, and carved for the home. The Yorùbá perceive them as spirited, unpredictable, and fearless, much like their patron *òrìṣà* (Sàngó). Seen as spirit beings with exceptional abilities, they bring affluence and well-being to those who respect them, and their lives are filled with sacred acts.³⁰ The Yorùbá twin cult is only indirectly concerned with the cult of the *òrìṣà*, yet it forms an important element in Yorùbá cosmology. They are likened to the *àbíké* spirits who lure children from their parents because they have the propensity toward dying (*àbíké* means “born to die”). *Ìbejì* usually forms part of a domestic cult, limited to the immediate family, and is connected to the well-being of a limited number of persons. The great majority of the *ìbejì* are standing nude figures; some, however, do have apron-type garments. The head is usually large in proportion to the body, with an oval face containing prominent eyeballs, lips, and broad nose. Male and female genitals are carved well developed, and the general proportion is bigger than that of an infant. *Ìbejì* figurines have different scarification marks and a great variety of hair styles (see figure 8.4).³¹

Mortars (*Odó Sàngó*)

Mortars, known as *odó Sàngó*, are placed on altars dedicated to Sàngó. These carved inverted objects are decorated with relief carvings of Sàngó rattle, thunder stones, or rams, which are his favorite sacrificial animal. Other noticeable emblems are Sàngó's dance wand, lizard, or crocodile. These two animals are said to attract thunder. In other words, according to Nasiru,²² they are provoking agents behind the anger of Sàngó. There are several varieties of these objects, and are all extremely heavy, of very dense wood, only slightly hollowed out on the bottom. *Odó Sàngó* are said to be repositories of Sàngó's *àṣe*, or spiritual powers.

In some Sàngó shrines, *arugbá* (calabash carrier)²³ takes the place of the upturned mortar typically found in shrines in central and western Yorùbáland. An example of an *Arugbáa Sàngó* was documented and photographed in 1964 by John Picton at Òkè-Onígbiin. It was reported as the centerpiece of a shrine to Sàngó belonging to Sàngódiran, the Balógun of Oyátédó, an Ìgbómìnà village in the Òrò Àgò district of Ilorin Emirate.

The *arugbá* is among the furniture of a Sàngó shrine characteristic of the Ìgbómìnà region and eastward. The name, according to Picton, denotes a role for virgins, who in some cults (though not specifically Sàngó) carry a calabash containing sacred emblems and may experience possession by the deity. (In Òṣun worship, the role of the *arugbá* is very vital during the annual Òṣun festival). In this example, the *ṣùlùn ará*, the axes/thunderbolts, were kept in the bowl (carved with a leopard in the relief upon its lid) placed upon the *arugbá*.²⁴



FIGURE 8.17. *Odó Sàngó* from Ede. Collection of the Department of Fine Arts, Obáfẹ̀mi Awólówọ̀ University, Ifẹ̀-Ifẹ̀. Photo by Stephen Folaranmi.



FIGURE 8.18A. *Arugbáa Sàngó* carrier of Sàngó's calabash, illustrated atop pieces from a shrine of Sàngó belonging to Sàngódiran, Balógun (war chief) of Oyátédó, an Igbómìnà village near Orò Agò. From a photo by John Picton, 1964. Illustration by author.



FIGURE 8.18B. *Sèrè Sàngó* (gourd carrier). Illustration by author.



FIGURE 8.18C. *Làbá Sàngó* Sàngó leather bag. Illustration by author.

Sééré Sàngó

The Sàngó gourd rattle (*sééré*) is frequently decorated with incised designs or covered with leather and is shaken when prayers are being made or offered to Sàngó. The rattle is used to call the attention of the *òrìṣà* to the supplication of his devotees.²⁵ In his 1912 expedition, Leo Frobenius also recorded metal gourd rattles, which may have been made of brass.

Sàngó Costumes

Sàngó initiates adorn costumes complete with red and white beads; red (*pupa*) or maroon is the special color of Sàngó. A warm color speaks of Sàngó's malevolence (as it does with other Yorùbá gods with that attribute), volatility, and vengeful spirit.²⁶ The costumes are usually worn during Sàngó festivals and are decorated with cowry shells, miniature gourds (*àdó*), and many other Sàngó emblems. The costume may also include a Sàngó "royal crown," referred to as priest's tiara. The tiara is a semblance of a king's crown, alluding to Sàngó's reign as a king. The tiara is made of leather and cloth and elaborately embroidered with cowry shells, which are symbols of wealth and well-being. The Sàngó costume is also not complete without the priest or priestess carrying the *lábà Sàngó*. Sàngó priests' apparel whirls out from the waist when they dance. These brightly colored, fringed leather bags hang from the rear wall of Sàngó shrines. They bear four appliqué panels with the images of Èṣù and are used by priests to transport thunderbolts from a site visited by Sàngó's wrath to the altar of Sàngó.

Sàngó Shrine Painting

Shrine painting among the Yorùbá people is very widespread; however, it is almost limited to certain deities whose shrines have a long history of wall decoration, such as Ọbàtálá and Olúorogbo. Ulli Beier²⁷ did the pioneer study of these in 1960 and brought out the artistic beauty found in the tradition of shrine painting in Yorùbáland. Since then a good amount of writing and research has been done on shrine painting.²⁸ Yorùbá wall paintings are mainly restricted to *ilé òrìṣà* (shrines), and they usually adorn the walls to the entrance. Such shrines are dotted all over Yorùbáland, but are mostly situated in secluded areas, and are not specifically in the public arena.

Campbell wrote that "Yorùbá religious belief system produces in its wake a plethora of richly decorated histograms known as shrine

paintings."³⁹ Although almost on the verge of decline, the art of shrine painting is still practiced in Ōgbómòšó, Ilé-Iḗ, Ōšogbo, Iléšà, Ōfà, Èbàdán, Ōyó, and various parts of Lagos. The art of shrine painting is traditionally the exclusive preserve of women in Yorúbáland, and this tradition is still well kept by the *Ōrišà Ìkirè* painting school in Ilé-Iḗ and Ōgbómòšó.

It is not very common to see painting in the shrines of Šangó in Yorúbáland. The walls may be painted in flat red and white spotted colors, but not with any other imaging. However in Ede, the first Šangó shrine painting was commissioned in 1990 by the Šangó Festival Committee under the auspices of Timí of Ede⁴⁰ (the King of Ede), born out of the desire for deep spirituality. The images are representations of Šangó worshippers and devotees. The aged priestess described the images as those who have been visited by the wrath of Šangó, while the artists express a contrary view. This situation is common and due to the interpretation of the artists, who may not necessarily be worshippers of Šangó.

The importance of this painting is like other Yorúbá shrine paintings; they are more than mere decorations. They are intended to "create an atmosphere, a feeling of heightened reality which is conducive to worship, they assist the worshipper to achieve the state of concentration and the condition of receptiveness that is necessary if the *orišà* is to manifest himself during the ceremony." They also mark out the shrine as a sacred place meant to be respected and revered.

The following factors are identified as the reasons for this new innovation of the mural painting on a Šangó shrine. First, according to the Šangó priestess in Ede, is Timí of Ede's exposure to other towns, cultural settings, and Yorúbá shrines with mural decorations (*Ōrišà Pópó*, *Ōriš à̀kírè*, Olúorogbo shrines). The young artists Olaniran Teslim, Olániran Ahmed, and Olálékan Ōšúnsoko, who executed the paintings, said they were influenced by the decoration of the Ōšun grove in neighboring Ōšogbo, where the shrine grove has been transformed with extensive and exotic artistic designs with the assistance of Suzanne Wenger (*Àdùnní Olórisà*). The inventive endeavor was supported by the supervisor of the painting, Ōšúnsoko Olábíran. A talented artist who received art training up to college level, Ōšúnsoko was in his late sixties when the painting was executed in 1990. The attendants in the palace of Timí and other worshippers view the painting as a materialization of the deities' inspiration and presence among his people.⁴¹ This painting was done on the eve of the Šangó Festival in 1990 in a bid to add color to the festival unlike that of all other Yorúbá shrines.

The painting was executed in enamel paints, which is a medium now



FIGURE 8.19. Young painters of Sàngó shrine in Ede. Photo courtesy Department of Fine Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. 1990.



FIGURE 8.20. A section of Sàngó shrine painting in Ede depicting priests, devotees, and other dignitaries of Sàngó worship. Photo courtesy Department of Fine Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. 1990.

being used in the decoration of some shrines in Yorùbáland (such as in the Ògbóni Repository in Iléṣà). The images to be painted were dictated by the worshippers while the painters served only as a tool in the execution.⁴² These images include leaders of the cult of Sàngó, *arughá olóòdù* (Sàngó calabash bearer), *agbájere* (*ajere* carrier), *andú* (royal masquerade), *Ìyá Ọ̀ṣun* (Ọ̀ṣun priestess), and *Èlégùn Sàngó*. These are all represented along with the composition of the legend about Sàngó.

The Colors of Šangó

Red (*pupa*), a color of great modulation, is a sign of war and revolution. It symbolizes love and danger at the same time. Used along with black, its dominant tendencies become erratic. *Pupa* in Yorùbá cosmology is mostly used in relation to Ògún and Šangó. Among Šangó worshippers, *pupa* represents fire. Fire for them can be domesticated so it can destroy. *Pupa* to the Yorùbá is masculine in nature; it represents boklness, bloodshed, nobility, and dignity.⁴³ The Yorùbá have a polychromatic sensibility to color revolving around red-*pupa*, black-*dúdú*, and white-*funfun*.⁴⁴ *Pupa* is the most inviting color of the three and is very symbolic of Šangó attributes.

Funfun (white) is another color symbolic of Šangó, though not as prominently used as *pupa*. It is the color of Ọ̀bàtálá (Yorùbá god of Creation) and can be found on Šangó objects. The images and painting symbolize his good pride because he is a provider of children to his devotees. This goodness and significance of *funfun*, however minute, is represented by the pigeons that are common to Šangó shrines.⁴⁵ In addition, in a line of one of the numerous Šangó praise names, Šangó is referred to as:

šéšé jobi, ọ̀kọ̀ mí
ọ̀mọ̀ ọ̀lómí títé jé Yemoja

(*šéšé jobi*, my lord
Son of the water goddess, called Yemoja)⁴⁶

One may then identify the *funfun* in Šangó shrines as a relationship with his supposed mother. Yemoja's color is symbolically white.

Šangó Art in the Diaspora and Contemporary Times

The fact that Yorùbá culture is rich in the arts cannot be overemphasized. This is evident in their sculpture in different media, which has been an inexhaustibly fertile ground for academic research. With a rich cultural background and highly developed skill in sculpture, the Yorùbá trace their ancestral origin to Odùduwà and regard Ifé-Ifé as their spiritual or ancestral home.⁴⁷ It is believed that there are many *òrìjá* to which the Yorùbá people hold their allegiance, worship, pray, and make sacrifices of appeasement. However, the introduction of the two major religions (Christianity and Islam) among the Yorùbá came with several changes. While some changes were positive, such as in the area of education and the development of a modern environment, others were very

destabilizing, especially in the area of the rich artistic tradition. Many art pieces were destroyed by overzealous devotees. The religious landscape has changed so much, it is having effects on the continuation of many of these rich artistic traditions. Despite the different religious affiliations of the contemporary artists (whether Christian or Muslim), they are still able to produce art works that reveal their traditional beliefs, past religious systems, and societal values. In contemporary times both academic and traditional artists have used religious themes in their artistic production; these are done either for the service of the *òrìṣà* or as mere expressions of their religious heritage. They use their art to tell stories and tales of Yorùbá gods and heroes, and in some cases the art pieces are acquired by those who still have strong affiliations to a Yorùbá god.

One of the best examples of these are fantastic traditional wood carvings from a great Yorùbá master carver, Lamidi Fakeye, a fifth-generation Yorùbá wood carver from the northeastern Yorùbá city of Ilá Òràngún. His middle name, Olónádé, means "the carver has come," signifying that he hails from a family of carvers. His father and great-grandfather were both carvers. Lamidi, however, got his full training under George Bámídélé Ar'owóóg'un at the Roman Catholic workshop organized by Father Kevin Carroll in Oyé Èkiti. It was there that Lámidí first came to the wider public eye.⁴⁶ Fakeye joined the services of the University of Ifè, now Obafemi Awolowo University Ilé-Ife, in 1978, where he taught traditional carving. Fakeye, who retired from the department in late 2002, lives presently in Ilé-Ife. He is now an associate researcher in the Institute of Cultural Studies of the same university. His carvings in relief (doors and panels) and three-dimensional figures (veranda posts and figures) illustrate Muslim and Christian themes, as well as traditional Yorùbá religious and secular themes. A significant portion of Fakeye's works is derived from the canon of traditional imagery, while others reflect a cultural heritage of ritual usage, with their iconography stemming from both religious and societal roots. This is reflected in objects such as the doors and veranda posts, which are both decorative and utilitarian.⁴⁷ Being a Muslim has not in any way deterred Lamidi from carving objects that are related to *òrìṣà* worship; it is therefore not strange to find such objects as the examples we have here in his numerous carvings (see figures 8.6 and 8.8).

The infusion of cultural forms and ideas in Nigerian art began with many of the students trained by Kenneth C. Murray.⁴⁸ The most prolific of these artists was Professor Benedict Enwonwu (1921–94). Enwonwu experimented by transforming traditional African forms with the aid of Western training. The result of such synthesis evolved into a personal style in which Enwonwu worked throughout his artistic career.⁴⁹ Although



FIGURE 8.21. "Šàngó." Larger-than-life bronze statue of Šàngó at the headquarters of the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) in Lagos. Photo by Stephen Fofàrànmí.

Enwonwu came from an Igbo background (Onitsha, Anambra state), he explored artistic traditions, themes, and ideas from other ethnic groups in Nigeria. It was perhaps for this reason that he was commissioned to sculpt a statue titled Šàngó to be erected at the new office of the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) in Lagos. NEPA must have recognized Šàngó's affinity with lightning and thunder in addition to the exalted position and reverence which is accorded him by the Yorùbá.

In this larger than life bronze sculpture, the *asé* double axe wand was chosen as the central symbol, held in the hand of the monumental sculpture. According to Kojo Fosu the facial features of the muscular male statue bear the expressive influence of the classical Ifẹ̀ style.²² The right hand holding the double-axe emblem is slightly overstretched to emphasize the symbolic strength of Šàngó's power. Through this sculpture Enwonwu reflects the traditional implication of Šàngó, the Yorùbá god of thunder and lightning, and by its undercurrent of scientific truth, the Šàngó wand becomes an appropriate modern adaptation for the energy supply.

Another artist who has drawn so significantly from the rich Yorùbá cultural background is Tunde Nasiru, an academic artist, and a Christian,



FIGURE 8.22. Giant Šàngó pot by Tunde Nasiru—a six-step assemblage pot. Collection of the Department of Fine Arts, Obafemi Awolówó University, Ilé-Ife. Photo by Stephen Fóláránmí. 2004.



FIGURE 8.23. "Romance of the Gods" (1994) by Stephen Fóláránmí. Oil on canvas (61 x 122cm).

whose father happens to be a pastor. In 1989 he produced two nine-foot (six-step) assemblage Šàngó pots, probably the largest and tallest pots ever seen in this part of the world, and a high-relief plaque. These pots and plaque are elaborately decorated in high relief with Šàngó's symbols and emblems. Nasiru had been a student of Raphael Ibigbami, a former lecturer at the Department of Fine Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University Ilé-Ife. Ibigbami's interest in the areas of traditional pottery in Yorùbáland generated very fruitful ideas as a result of the several workshops on traditional pottery he organized in the late 1970s and the early 1980s.

In the area of painting, the study of Yorùbá mural painting has a high influence in my own works; I share the same ideology as the *Oná* group of artists in Ilé-Ife. The artistic philosophy of representing in modern materials and forms the rich tradition and culture of the Yorùbá people, and embellishing the surfaces and the entire content of the artistic expression with rich symbolic motifs and symbols, takes a prominent place with these artists. The Yorùbá believe in the supremacy of the almighty God, Olódùmarè, who is the creator of all. He is accompanied

by lesser gods, *òrìṣà*, in the work of the creation and administration of the earth. They act as intermediaries between man and almighty God. In their roles in the lives of men, they interact and work together (like Èṣù and Ọ̀rúnmilá). This whole phenomenon becomes the subject matter in the oil on canvas, "Romance of the Gods":

Mythical stories become symbolic representations. The chain and calabash represent the Yorùbá creation myth, the *osé Šàngó* and thunder represent Šàngó, while the divination tray, *opón Ifá* with *odù* markings, represents the oracle of Ifá. The water and soil in the lower part of the painting represent the earth, where all is taking place. Therefore, my "Romance of the Gods" is a pictorial symbolic representation of the traditional religion of the Yorùbá and a testimony to the importance and position of Šàngó in the pantheon of the Yorùbá gods.

The Fon in the neighboring country of Benin Republic used art to praise and reinforce royal authority and to address superhuman forces. Artists were organized into palace guilds and were responsible for the decoration and production of material for state use and religious

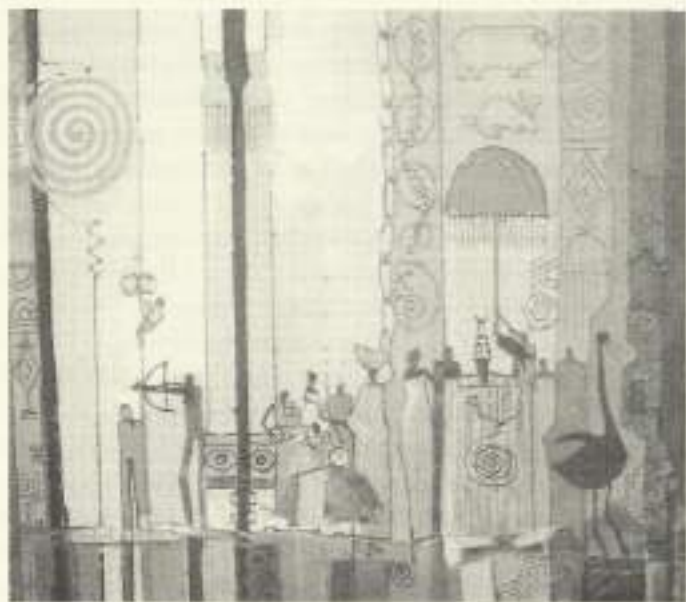


FIGURE 8.24. "Obas Court" (1999) by Stephen Fajáránmí. An adaptation of the symbolic images on the walls of the Alááfin's palace in Oyo, showing the dominant *osé Šàngó*. Oil and tempera on canvas (92 x 102 cm). Photo by Stephen Fajáránmí. 2004.

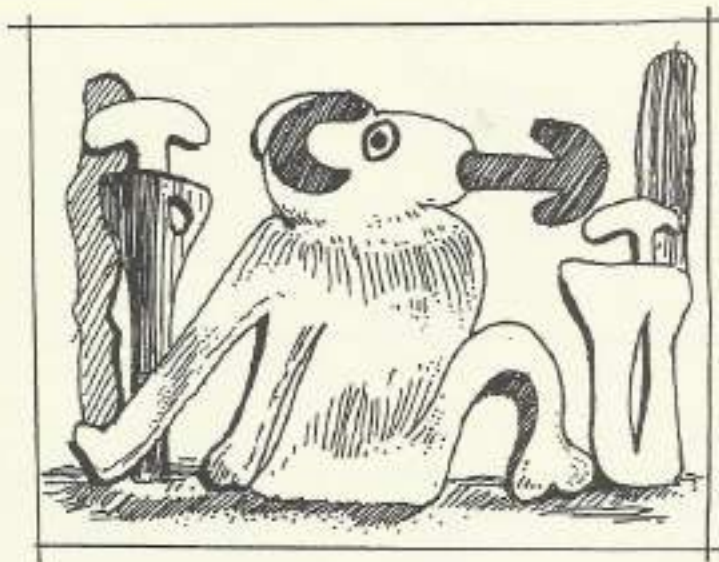


FIGURE 8.25. Abomey clay relief, Republic of Benin. Illustration by author.

activities. For example, the exterior walls of the palace were ornamented with painted clay relief that heralded the exploits of the king and referred to the pantheon of the gods, many of them shared with the Yorùbá. Historically the kingdom of Old Òyó, where Šàngó once reigned as the supreme king, extended as far as Dahomey in the country we now know as the Republic of Benin, the influence of which is still much felt and practiced, as evidenced in figure 8.25, which depicts a ram-headed figure with a double-headed axe issuing from its mouth, an image that portrays the Fon god of thunder, Herogun.

The two double-axe forms in the background are reminiscent of the dance wands used by the worshipers of the Yorùbá thunder god Šàngó.

Apart from the neighboring West African countries of Nigeria, Togo, and Benin, the worship of Šàngó transcends the African shores into the Americas. Africans, especially from West Africa, were taken into slavery and shipped across the Atlantic from early in the sixteenth century until the second half of the nineteenth century. Seventeen million Africans survived the Atlantic crossing, and though they left their material culture behind, they carried with them the various ways of approaching and interpreting life. Therefore, in their new homes, they formed new communities reminiscent of their African origin. Those who spoke the same languages were sometimes kept on the same plantations, especially in the Caribbean and Brazil. There they revived their traditional practices, religious beliefs, and value systems.⁶³ It has been proven beyond reasonable doubt that culture is dynamic; new circumstances and outside forces

have an effect upon artistic expressions and all other cultural practices. It is therefore not strange to find shrines and altar places dedicated to Yorùbá gods in several places in the New World. Here the African ways of doing things was combined with European or Native American ideas and practices, which automatically led to new expressions. Practices such as placing broken pottery as a mark of respect and identification on grave sites show African customs adapted to the new setting. The Yorùbá *òrìṣà* are among the most popularly revered and worshipped deities in the Diaspora. There are variations in the emblems, content, and art objects, and the shrines in the new homes wear new looks, beautiful to behold, with sparkling floors and walls. There, the significant emblem of Šàngó (*asè Šàngó*) takes its pride of place in the worship of the *òrìṣà*.

The twentieth century witnessed the development of several talented African American artists, creating memorable works of art using the forms, materials, and aesthetic tradition of European Americans. One of the early artists to explore the ideas behind African forms was Adémó lā Olùgébéfolá. He was born in the Virgin Islands and was a member of a group of artists in New York called *Wéusí*, a Swahili word for blackness. In Olùgébéfolá's painting, Šàngó is evoked as the deity of thunder, represented by the exciting color of red. He included cowry shells, a traditional element of monetary exchange in West Africa, in various sections of the painting, alluding to sacrificial offerings made to deities. The axe form is surrounded by a rich blue field, suggesting that Šàngó is a deity associated with sky forces, but the lower portion of the figure shows roots reaching toward some deep subterranean fire. As with most African art, the deity is not imagined naturalistically. Instead, a series of visual signs and signifiers elucidate the concept of Šàngó.²⁴

Conclusion

The Yorùbá people have been described as the largest producers of art in Africa. Their sculpture is better known than other artistic endeavors such as pottery, woven fabric, and wall paintings. In Bascom's words, "most African art appears to have been associated with religion."²⁵ This statement is not farfetched; the hundreds of divinities to which the Yorùbá people hold their allegiance facilitated the large production of these numerous artworks and objects used in the service of the various *òrìṣà*. Some deities are not represented by any art objects, but have enjoyed more patronage in the decoration of their shrines. In some cases the objects are found overflowing from the altar of such an *òrìṣà*. Šàngó, the Yorùbá god of thunder and lightning and the deified king of Òyó, falls

within the ranks of such deities; his shrines are filled with numerous worship and sacrificial items in his honor and employed for his service. He has been so honored and respected in death probably because he ruled with an iron hand as the king in Old Òyó. The fact that his emblems, symbols, and art forms are still being used in contemporary art production, not in any way connected to the ritual services, testifies to Sàngó's importance and position whether in Yorùbáland or in the African Diaspora.

NOTES

All the photographs of pots were taken personally by the writer with special permission granted by the curator of the Ifè Museum of Antiquities, Mr. Bode Adesina. This gesture is deeply appreciated.

1. Ulli Beier, "A Year of Sacred Festivals in One Yorùbá Town (EDE)," *Nigerian Magazine* (Special Production), 3rd ed. (1959): 72.

2. Bolaji Idowu, *Olódùmarè: God in Yorùbá Belief*, rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Longman, 1996), 88.

3. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbás* (Lagos: CSS Bookshop, 1976), 33; Idowu, *Olódùmarè*; J. O. Awolalu, *Yorùbá Belief and Sacrificial Rites* (London: Longman Group, 1979); and many other authors have documented several versions of the stories and myths surrounding the deification of Sàngó.

4. Beier, "A Year of Sacred Festival," 72.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 88.

7. Awolalu, *Yorùbá Belief*, 36.

8. *Ibid.*, 36-37.

9. Beier, "A Year of Sacred Festival," 72.

10. Wande Abimbola, "Introduction," in *Yorùbá Oral Tradition, Poetry in Music, Dance and Drama*, ed. Wande Abimbola (Ifè-Ifè, Nigeria: Department of African Languages and Literature, University of Ifè, 1975), 65-66.

11. Idowu, *Olódùmarè*, 88.

12. Johnson, *History of the Yorùbás*, 33.

13. John Pemberton gave an account of the shrine when he visited and took the picture of the shrine in 1971.

14. J. R. O. Ojo, *A Short Illustrated Guide of the Museum of The Institute of African Studies* (Ifè-Ifè, Nigeria: University of Ifè, 1969), 9.

15. See L. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa: An Account of the Travels of the German Inner African Exploration Expedition in the Year 1910-1912*, vol. 1, trans. Rudolf Blind (London: Hutchinson, 1913).

16. See also M. B. Visona (with introduction and preface by Rowland Abiodun and Suzanne Blier), *The History of Art in Africa* (New York: Harry Abrams, 2000), 254, for the same account by Frobenius.

17. E. Leuzinger, *The Art of Black Africa* (London: Cassel and Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1976), 174.

18. Harold Courlander, *Tales of Yorùbá Gods and Heroes: Myths, Legend and Heroic Tales of the Yorùbá People of West Africa* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1973), 79.
19. Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa*.
20. Johnson, *History of the Yorùbás*, 106.
21. H. Drewal, *African Artistry: Technique and Aesthetics in Yorùbá Sculpture* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1980), 29-31.
22. K. Carroll, foreword by William Fagg *Yorùbá Religious Carving: Pagan and Christian Sculpture in Nigeria and Dahomey* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), 32.
23. R. Abiodun, "Ifa Art Objects: An Interpretation Based on Oral Tradition," in *Yorùbá Oral Tradition: Poetry in Music, Dance and Drama*, ed. Wande Abimbola (Ilé-Ife, Nigeria: Department of African Languages and Literature, University of Ife, 1975), 438.
24. *Ibid.*, 446.
25. L. Fakeye, M. Bruce, and H. David, *Lamidi Olanode Fakeye: A Retrospective Exhibition and Autobiography* (Holland, Mich.: De Pree Art Center and Gallery, 1996), 8, 17.
26. *Ibid.*
27. A. K. Fatunsin, *Yorùbá Pottery* (Lagos: National Commission for Museums and Monuments, 1992), 43.
28. *Ibid.*, 57.
29. Visona, *History of Art in Africa*, 252.
30. *Ibid.*, 255.
31. R. Brain, *Art and Society in Africa* (New York: Longman Group, 1980), 204.
32. B. Nasiru, "Šàngó Ritual Pots," unpublished M.F.A. thesis, Department of Fine Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ilé-Ife, 1989, 127.
33. *Arugbáa Šàngó* (calabash carrier) is a figural representation of a maiden with a calabash containing objects of sacrifice. In Šàngó shrines, these images with a calabash holds the thunder celts and other important items of Šàngó worship.
34. J. Picton, "The Horse and Rider in Yorùbá Art: Image of Conquest and Possession," *Nigerian Field* 67, no. 2 (Oct. 2002): 132.
35. W. Bascom, *African Art in Cultural Perspective: An Introduction* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1973), 88.
36. Awolalu, *Yorùbá Belief*, 36-37.
37. Ulli Beier, "Yorùbá Wall Paintings," *ODU: Journal of Yorùbá and Edo Related Studies* 8 (1960): 36-39.
38. See Moyo Okediji, "Ọ̀rìṣà Ẹ̀kírè Painting School," *Kurio Africana: Journal of Art and Criticism* 1, no. 2 (1989): 116-26; Moyo Okediji, "Yorùbá Paint Making Tradition," *Nigerian Magazine* 54, no. 2 (1986): 19-26; S. Adebisi, "Shrine Painting in Ilé-Ife," unpublished B.A. long essay, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ilé-Ife, 1986; V. B. Campbell, "Comparative Study of Selected Shrine Paintings in Ilé-Ife and Ilésà," unpublished M.F.A. thesis, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ilé-Ife, 1989; V. B. Campbell, "Continuity and Change in Yorùbá

- Shrine Painting Tradition," in *Kurio Africana: Journal of Art and Criticism* 1, no. 2 (1992); V. B. Campbell, "Images and Power in Sixteen Yorùbá Sacred Paintings," in *Ifé: Annals of the Institute of Cultural Studies* 6 (1995): 25-38; S. Folaranmi, "Orìṣà Pópó Shrine Painting in Ògbómòṣó," unpublished B.A. long essay, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ilé-Ife, 1995; S. Folaranmi, "Ọyó Palace Mural," unpublished M.F.A. thesis, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ilé-Ife, 2000; S. Folaranmi, "Ọyó Palace Mural, A Symbolic Communication with Symbols," in *Journal of Art and Ideas* 4 (2002): 93-103; and S. Folaranmi, "The Importance of Oríkì In Yorùbá Mural Art," *Ijele: Art e-journal of the African World* 2, no. 4, available at www.africaresource.com.
39. Campbell, "Images and Power," 27.
40. P. A. Ladipo, "Ṣàngó Shrine Painting in Èdẹ," unpublished B. A. long essay, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ilé-Ife, 1992, 20.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, 22.
43. O. O. Addie, "Colour Symbolism, with Special Reference to Ṣàngó Shrine in Ibadan," unpublished B. A. long essay, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ilé-Ife, 1990, 8-9.
44. Okediji, "Orìṣà Ìkirè Painting School," 122.
45. Addie, "Colour Symbolism," 23.
46. A. Isola, "The Rhythm of Ṣàngó Pipè," in *Yorùbá Oral Tradition: Poetry in Music, Dance and Drama*, ed. Waide Abimbola (Ilé-Ife, Nigeria: Department of African Languages and Literature, University of Ife, 1975), 792-93.
47. C. A. Alade, "Aspects of Yorùbá Culture in the Diaspora," in *Culture and Society in Yorùbáland*, ed. Deji Ogunremi and Biodun Adediran (Ibadan, Nigeria: Rex Charles Publication and Connel Publication, 1998), 203.
48. Fakeye, Bruce, and David, *Lamidi Olonade Fakeye*, 3.
49. *Ibid.*, 8.
50. Kenneth C. Murray was a colonial education officer who had a very great impact on the development of style in Nigeria art. Kenneth arrived in Nigeria in 1927 and later became an art teacher of contemporary art and taught many students. Because he was an ardent believer in the preservation of Nigerian culture through art, he encouraged his students to learn from traditional artists, and in addition to draw their inspiration from their culture. Furthermore, Murray's philosophy that modern art should of necessity be based on traditional art puts him at the threshold of the modernist movement in Nigeria.
51. D. Osa Egonwa, "Patterns and Trends of Stylistic Development in Contemporary Nigerian Art," *Kurio Africana: Journal of Art and Criticism* 2, no. 1 (1995), 6.
52. K. Fosu, *20th Century Art of Africa*, vol. 1 (Zaria, Nigeria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1986), 29.
53. Visona, *History of Art*, 500.
54. *Ibid.*, 514-15.
55. Bascom, *African Art*.

The Ambivalent Representations of Šàngó in Yorùbá Literature

AKÍNTÚNDÉ AKÍNYEMÍ

Šàngó is the most popularized Yorùbá hero-deity in literary forms. Apart from his representation in the corpus of oral praise poetry known as *Šàngó pípé* (intoning Šàngó), salient information about the deity's personality is well preserved in several verses of Yorùbá divination poetry (*odù ifá*). Various myths and stories associated with the deity have also inspired the creation of a number of literary works, such as Dúró Ládipò's trilogy, (*Oba Káso*, *Obátálá*, and *Ọ̀sun àti Obà*), Oládejo Òkédiji's *Šàngó*, and five movies: Wálé Ọ̀gúnnyemi's *Šàngó*, Afólábi Adésànyà's *Osé(e) Šàngó*, Adébiimpé Adékolá's *Ibinnú Olúkòso*, Ajíléye's *Iyá(a) Šàngó*, and Léré Páimò's *Lakáayé*.

Contrary to Ọ̀gúndèji's assertion that there are three types of distinct and yet overlapping Šàngó—the mythical, the historically deified, and the literary Šàngó—my position in this chapter is that the dialectical relationship between the three is enough to prove that there is just one Šàngó.¹ Therefore, the premise on which I will argue is that the unpredictable, violent, and tyrannical nature and pattern of life of the mythical Šàngó influenced his historical and literary representation. For instance, there is little or nothing to differentiate Dúró Ládipò and Oládejo Òkédiji's representation of literary Šàngó from Hethersett's version of historical Šàngó. As Ọ̀gúndèji himself rightly observes, Dúró Ládipò created his literary Šàngó out of the written and unwritten sources available to him about the mythical and historical Šàngó. I intend to use the ambivalent character of the mythical Šàngó to prove the inseparability of mythical Šàngó from historical Šàngó. I also intend to show that the ambivalent

representations of Šàngó in Yorùbá oral tradition symbolize the universal contradiction of human nature in general.

The present observation on the multidimensional representation of Šàngó is not completely new in Yorùbá scholarship. It was Leo Frobenius, a German ethnologist, who first called attention to it when he was unable to reconcile the ambivalent attributes of Šàngó as a reckless and cruel ruler and a loving and just divinity.² Frobenius attributed the disparity to the representation of two different deities with the same name among two of the Old Òyó northern neighbors—the Nupe and the Borgu peoples of central Nigeria. Writing much later, Bolaji Idowu agrees with the suggestion of Frobenius on the probability of two different deities sharing a common name, but disagrees with the idea of ascribing the variation to two different sources—the Nupe and the Borgu.³ Rather, he postulates that in all probability, Jákúta, the Yorùbá mythical divinity associated with lightning and thunder, is the one represented as the just and loving Šàngó. Using historical information provided by Johnson and Hethersett as a basis, Idowu argues further that, much later, an Alááfin of Old Òyó and a devoted worshipper of Jákúta adopted the attributes and names of the divinity during his reign. Both Johnson and Hethersett claimed that although this tyrannical and cruel Alááfin later hanged himself, his supporters successfully deified him and popularized his ambivalent attributes. Thus, they created a historical Šàngó as opposed to Jákúta, the mythical Šàngó. To Idowu, therefore, it is the adoption of the attributes of a loving and just divinity by a cruel and reckless ruler that can account for the contradictory representations of Šàngó in Yorùbá literature.

C. L. Adéoyè later identifies the name of the Alááfin who usurped the attributes of Šàngó as Sálù Babáyemí Ítíolú. According to him, this Šàngó was the son of Òrányàn (also known in oral tradition as Oḍédé or Jẹgbẹ), the founder of Old Òyó and the first Alááfin. There are two versions of the story of this historical Šàngó. Although both agree that Alááfin Šàngó hanged himself as a result of some form of shame and frustration, and that his supporters later deified him, each version gives different reasons for the king's decision to hang himself. There are actually no other points of similarity between the two apart from the deification of the king after the purported suicide.

In his own version of the story, Johnson describes Alááfin Šàngó as "of a very wild disposition, fiery temper, and skilful in sleight of hand tricks."⁴ Johnson also records that "that particular Alááfin had the habit of emitting fire and smoke out of his mouth, by which he greatly increased the dread his subjects had for him." Johnson recalls that one

day Alááfin Šàngó decided to try out his newly acquired charm that could attract lightning and fire at Òkè Àjàkà, the hill at the bottom of which the Alááfin's palace was built. The story claims that the Alááfin's assumption was that the preparation was useless and ineffective. Therefore, he directed the experiment toward his palace. Unfortunately for him, the preparation took effect and lightning struck the palace, killing most of his wives and children. King Šàngó became distressed and dismayed at what happened, and therefore he decided to voluntarily abdicate his throne and return to the court of his maternal grandfather, Elépe of Nupe kingdom. The Alááfin had expected that his chiefs, slaves, friends, and supporters would follow him. Consequently, he decided to wait for them outside the city. But, contrary to his expectation, no one followed him. Even those few slaves who had earlier followed him later returned to the city of Òyó. Deserted by all, Johnson records, Šàngó became frustrated and decided to commit suicide. He climbed a shea butter tree and hanged himself. The story concludes that on hearing of the tragic death of the Alááfin, his supporters hurriedly buried his remains under the tree where he committed suicide and deified him afterward.

The second version of the story of deification of Alááfin Šàngó is credited to Hethersett.⁵ According to him, Šàngó came from Ìgbèrì hill in Òyó country to found the city of Old Òyó. He had two courtiers who were very strong in might and in the use of charms. The first courtier, Timi Àgbalé, had a special arrow that, whenever it was shot, caused fire on the body of whomever it hit. As for Gbònúkà Èbìrì, he was versed in charms and there was nothing anybody could do to hurt him. In fact, this historical account claims that the two of them were already terrors to the community in general and the Alááfin in particular. Therefore, the Alááfin and his chiefs decided to set the two warlords against each other. When Gbònúkà eventually killed Timi, he accused Alááfin Šàngó of supporting Timi during their fight. The powerful Gbònúkà therefore mandated Šàngó to leave the city of Òyó within five days. The story concludes that Alááfin Šàngó quietly left the city of Òyó for his mother's town in Nupeland.

At the outskirts of the city of Òyó, the Alááfin observed that only Oya (his favorite wife) and few of his slaves were with him. Therefore, he decided to wait at Ìpèsì for his friends and supporters who had promised to follow him. When no one was forthcoming, Oya and the few slaves who were with Šàngó also deserted him. Hethersett claims that out of frustration, Alááfin Šàngó then decided to hang himself on a shea butter tree located at Kòso. When the news of the tragedy got to the supporters of the Alááfin that *páa so ní Kòso* ("the king hanged himself at Kòso")

they were ashamed of themselves for not following him. Therefore, they decided to deify the dead king after he was hurriedly buried at Kòso, where he hanged himself, and subsequently they changed the phrase "the king hanged himself at Kòso" to "the king did not hang" (*oba Kò so*). According to Hethersett, supporters of the Alááfin later decided to redeem their patron's image by causing lightning and thunder to strike through evocation of mysterious powers, leaving the houses of the enemies of the Alááfin devastated.

These stories look very much like deliberate propaganda by early Christian missionaries to discredit Yoruba indigenous religious practice. We would remember that both Johnson and Hethersett were ordained ministers of the Church Missionary Society in Yorùbáland. One finds it illogical that the followers of the Alááfin would deify him as *Ẹ̀gàngó* only after the king hanged himself. The truth of the matter is that in *Ọ̀yọ̀* tradition every Alááfin must be deified at death. But to be eligible for deification, a dead Alááfin must be buried at the *Barà*, the royal mausoleum.⁶ Babayemi, who was fortunate to have witnessed the rituals that accompanied the burial of the late Alááfin Gbádégeṣin Ládùgbòlù in 1968, writes that

when an Alááfin died in the present *Ọ̀yọ̀* . . . [t]he *Ọ̀nà-míṣé-awo*, the *Babuàyaṣi* and the eunuchs did the necessary rituals to the corpse. They then planned for the symbolic burial at the dead of the night. This symbolic burial is what the people of *Ọ̀yọ̀* believe to be the actual burial. . . . On the night that the ritual burying of the late *oba* was to be done, none of the Alááfin's sons or closest relatives were to be around while the dressing of the supposed corpse took place. The coffin was to be borne by the rank and file of the *Aláarè* family. Sons and relatives of the Alááfin who were brave enough were to follow at a distance. Rituals were performed at stopping places (on their way from the palace to where *Barà* is located) until they got to *òkiti jénjù* (*jénjù* mound) in front of the *Alááfinni*'s house (mid-way between the palace and *Barà*). Here, everybody had to retreat. . . . By this symbolic burial, the spirit of the dead Alááfin was believed to have been removed from the palace and made to join the other royal ancestors. The spirit had thus become deified, and could be invoked.⁷

The fact that, as both Johnson and Hethersett claimed, Alááfin *Ẹ̀gàngó* was buried at the spot where he hanged himself and not at *Barà* is enough to disqualify him from becoming a hero-deity by the tradition of *Ọ̀yọ̀*.

Secondly, the story itself seems unreal for a culture that forbids the termination of one's life by hanging.⁸ While it is not unusual for a tyrannical or wicked Alááfin to commit suicide in Òyó tradition, such suicide is almost always by self-inflicted poison and not by hanging. For instance, once the council of chiefs decides to remove an Alááfin, their leader, the Bašòrun, would pronounce the following formal statement of rejection: *àwòn dàjà kò ó, ilú kò ó, àwòn ayé kò ó* (The gods have rejected you, the people have rejected you, the witches have also rejected you). This, in essence, is a euphemistic call on the erring Alááfin to commit suicide. All the nine Alááfin who reigned between 1658 and 1754 were rejected in this way. According to Samuel Johnson, the cause of the rejection was said to be tyranny, immorality, or both on the part of individual Alááfin.⁹ A more specific case is that of Alááfin Jáyin, who committed suicide by poison when he was implicated in the death of his own son (Olúsi), who had apparently become too popular for the Alááfin's comfort.¹⁰ It is therefore very unlikely that a society such as Òyó, which considers suicide by hanging as a serious offense, would permit the deification of a king who hanged himself, no matter how powerful he might have been. Yorúbá custom stipulates that the remains of a person who hanged himself or herself must not be buried decently at home but at the spot where she/he hanged, in order to prevent a reoccurrence of such an incident. Moreover, the dead body may not be removed from its dangling position until after certain rituals have been performed to ward off evil spirits associated with the incident.¹¹

Akinwùmí Ìṣòlá has also called attention to the inconsistencies in the historical accounts presented by Johnson and Hethersett and the misrepresentation of the title of the Alááfin in question by Hethersett.¹² Ìṣòlá argues that the activities of Timì and Gbònúkà, which Hethersett associated with the reign of the Alááfin who adopted Šangó's attributes, actually happened much later in the history of Òyó, precisely during the reign of Alááfin Kòrí.¹³ According to Johnson's historical account, after the death of the Alááfin who adopted the attributes of Šangó, Alááfin Àjùwòṅ Àjàkà was installed. It was after his demise that Alááfin Kòrí reigned. Ìṣòlá also observes that the phrase *òbaa Kòso* (the king who reigned at Kòso), used for Alááfin Šangó, has been translated wrongly by Hethersett to be "the king did not hang." He stated further that if the word "Kòso" is broken down into two separate syllables, then it will be correct to translate the phrase *Òba Kò So* etymologically as "the king did not hang." But why would Hethersett intentionally distort historical facts? Akinwùmí Ìṣòlá thinks that Hethersett might have thought that the

popularization of a degrading myth about Šàngó would do enough damage to the image of the hero-deity to cause a decline in adherence.¹⁴ One may conclude, therefore, that it is very unlikely that the word "Kòso" has anything to do with the hanging of an Alááfin. Rather, I see Kòso as the name of the place where an Alááfin who adopted the attributes of the deity Šàngó reigned. To further support the royal majesty of that Alááfin as the king who reigned at Kòso, he is also addressed as *Olúkòso* (the lord at Kòso). I should also mention that the incumbent chief priest of Šàngó (*Baba magbá*) lives in Kòso quarters in present day Òyó and that the bulk of the high-ranking priests and priestesses of Šàngó still reside at Kòso.

The mythico-historical representation of Šàngó in oral tradition has thus created a problem of identity for the deity. This prompted Adéoyè to conduct further research into the subject matter. The result of that research led him to identify eight features that differentiate the mythical Šàngó—Jákúta—from the historical Šàngó-Alááfin Sálú Babayemi Itólú.¹⁵

Apart from the mythico-historical representation of Šàngó discussed above, Ògúndèjì has recently identified the third representation of Šàngó, which he describes as "the literary Šàngó."¹⁶ According to him, this Šàngó was popularized by the late Dúró Ládipò, one of the first generation of Nigerian professional dramatists, through three of his plays, *Oba Kò Sò*, *Òyun*, and *Obátálá*, of which *Oba Kò Sò* is the most successful. *Oba Kò Sò*, was very popular in and out of Nigeria in the 1960s. It was successfully staged in different parts of Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas. The international recognition won by this play led to its performance at the International Theater Competition in Berlin, Germany, in 1965, and at the Commonwealth Arts Festival in London in the United Kingdom the following year. Ògúndèjì observes that the ambivalence of Dúró Ládipò's presentation of literary Šàngó "is deeply rooted in deliberate juxtaposition of the historical and mythical Šàngó."¹⁷

The plot of *Oba Kò Sò* is based largely on Hethersett's account, with minor alterations by Dúró Ládipò. In the play, Dúró Ládipò presents the partly historical and partly mythological Šàngó as a fire-spitting, tactless, hot-tempered, and weak ruler who cannot control two of his war generals, Timi and Gbòńfíkà. Therefore, he consults with his council of chiefs on the best way to get rid of one or both of them. On the advice of the council and that of his wife, the king sends one of the war generals, Timi, to Ede to check the incessant raids on the area by the Ijèsà, a mission that they think will lead to Timi's death. Contrary to their calculation, Timi is made the king of Ede in recognition of his military might and metaphysical power. This prompts the Alááfin and his council of chiefs to order

Sàngó (Irúnmolẹ̀)

Ó rọ̀ láti ọ̀de ọ̀run sí ọ̀de ayé ní bíi tí àwọn Irúnmolẹ̀ ggbé rẹ̀ yáákú.

Sàngó Ayilégbèé-ọ̀run àti Odúduwá jọ lo igbà láde ayé ní.

Irúnmolẹ̀ ní Sàngó yí, ó ju gba lá, gégé bí ọ̀pá ọ̀rọ̀ pé "gba ní ó ní ayé, ọ̀rìsá ní ó sí ní gba."

Sàngó Irúnmolẹ̀ yí ní àwọn ggbé rẹ̀ fi ojú Jákúta dá lálá ní Ifẹ̀ Oòyè.

Sàngó yí ní ó gba Oya lówó Ọ̀gún, tí ó fi ẹ̀ iyáwá. Ọ̀sun kan náà ní ó tán gba Ọ̀sun, iyáwá Ọ̀rúnmílá.

Ayilégbèé-ọ̀run ní orúkọ irúnmolẹ̀ yí, ábúrò ní ó jẹ̀ fún Baáyánní láde ọ̀run.

Sàngó yí gba ọ̀nà Àtìbà jáde kúrò ní Ifẹ̀-Oòyè, ó sí wọ̀ ilẹ̀ lẹ̀ ní, kò kú.

Odú tí Sàngó yí bá rọ̀ láti ọ̀de ọ̀run sí ilẹ̀ ayé ní Ọ̀yékú-Méjì.

The Mythical Sàngó (the divinity)

He descended like other divinities to the terrestrial plane.

This Sàngó (also known as Ayilégbèé-Ọ̀run) and Odúduwá grew up together.

This divinity is greater than a king. Hence, the saying "the king owns the world, but the divinity owns the king."

This Sàngó was honored with the Jákúta day by other divinities in Ifẹ̀-Oòyè.

It was this Sàngó who deprived both Ọ̀gún and Ọ̀rúnmílá of their respective wives (Oya and Ọ̀sun).

The other name of this Sàngó is Ayilégbèé-Ọ̀run. He was the younger sibling of Baáyánní.

This Sàngó was never reported dead. He disappeared in Ifẹ̀-Oòyè en route to Àtìbà.

The odú (Ifá corpus) Ọ̀yékú-Méjì talks about how this Sàngó descended.

Sàngó (Ọ̀ba Alááfín)

Ẹ̀yí kò rọ̀ láti ọ̀de ọ̀run, Odéde, (ọ̀mọ̀ Ọ̀kànbí) tí àdápè rẹ̀ ò jẹ́ Ọ̀rúnyàn ní ó bí i. Ọ̀rìsá àkúnlébo àdáyéyàn ní.

Ní àtíkò yí, Odúduwá kò rii bí Ọ̀kànbí ẹnì tí ó bí Odéde, bááa Sàngó.

Ọ̀ba ní Sàngó yí, kó i ẹ̀ ọ̀runmolẹ̀. Lẹ́yìn tí ó pa ara rẹ̀ tán ní Kòso ní ó di ọ̀rìsá Adáyéyàn.

Sàngó yí kò gbé Ifẹ̀ Oòyè rí. Aboro Ọ̀kò ní ó gbé.

Sàngó yí kò tii dé ilẹ̀ ayé ní àtíkò tí Oya àti Ọ̀run rọ̀ sóde ayé. Ọ̀mọ̀ bíbí inú àwọn irúnmolẹ̀ lẹ̀ méjèjì yí ju Sàngó yí lẹ̀ lẹ́yìn ari.

Ìtíolú ní orúkọ Sàngó yí, kò gbónjù mó Baáyánní bẹ́ẹ̀ ní kò sí bá a tán wárá.

Sàngó yí pokun-so ní, ní ilú kékere kan ní iwájú Igbétí lóná Ọ̀yọ̀-Ilẹ̀. Ilú náà ní wọ̀n à pé ní Kòso

Sàngó yí kò rọ̀, ẹ̀yígbón Odú ẹ̀yékúyẹ̀ rẹ̀ ní Ọ̀kànrán-Méjì.

The Historical Sàngó (the Alááfín)

He did not descend from heaven. He was the child of Odéde (or grandchild of Ọ̀kànbí). He was only deified.

Odúduwá had not given birth to Ọ̀kànbí, grandfather of Sàngó, by then.

This Sàngó only reigned as a king; he was never a divinity. He was deified after he hanged himself at Kòso.

This Sàngó never lived in Ifẹ̀ Oòyè. He lived in Ọ̀kò village.

This Sàngó was not alive when Oya and Ọ̀sun descended to the earth. The children of both deities were older than this Sàngó.

The name of this Sàngó is Itíolú. He never got to know Baáyánní. They were not related at all.

This Sàngó hanged himself at Kòso near Igbétí in Old Ọ̀yọ̀. The town is known as Kòso.

This Sàngó did not descend. His deification is recorded in the odú (Ifá corpus) Ọ̀kànrán-Méjì.

the second war general, Gbônńkà, to go down to Èdẹ to arrest Timì, in the hope that one of them will die in the process. To their dismay, rather than killing Timì, whom he has mesmerized with charms, Gbônńkà brings him as captive to the Alááfin at Òyó. Still bent on getting rid of one of the two warlords, the Alááfin orders a repeat of the fight in his presence at Òyó. Gbônńkà cuts off Timì's head during the rescheduled fight and orders the Alááfin to vacate the throne within four days. Having been deserted by his friends, chiefs, and trusted wife, the Alááfin decides to hang himself. When the news of his hanging reaches his friends and chiefs at Òyó, they are ashamed and sad. They then decide to deify him to remove the stigma that the incident has put on the name of Šàngó and the office of the Alááfin. The play ends when the voice of Šàngó is heard from heaven assuring his people of his eternal vigilance over them.

Writing under the title "The Sources of Duro Ladipo's *Oba Kò Sò*," Oludare Olajubu gives a catalog of thirty-four episodes of similarities in Dúró Ládípò's literary creation of Šàngó and Hethersett's account of historical Šàngó before he concludes that

of the 8 acts in *Oba Kò Sò*, approximately 7, or 51 pages out of 62, are based on the first part of Hethersett's story, which covers about 4 pages of prose writing of about 1,200 words. Duro Ladipo follows Hethersett rather faithfully for a large portion of the play. He seems to depart from him only in Act(s) 2 . . . and . . . 6. These 2 acts do not advance the story—they only show what has been reported. . . . Ladipo makes a number of minor alterations even in parts where he is following Hethersett's story. For instance, the advice to send Timì to Èdẹ, which Hethersett attributed to the Òyó-Mìsì is attributed to Oya by Ladipo. And, in the closing parts of the story, where Šàngó hanged himself, Hethersett says that Oya deserted Šàngó leaving Beri, his trusted eunuch, behind and that it was Beri who was with Šàngó till the end. Ladipo makes Oya decide to leave and she is actually on her way, but not too far away to prevent her from hearing her husband and king declare: "Ah! I will hang myself!" to which she shouted entreatingly:

Šàngó, don't hang! . . .
How will it sound to hear
That Šàngó hanged at Kòso.¹⁸

My concern in the remaining part of this chapter is to reconstruct the history of mythico-historical Šàngó with the hope of showing its ambivalence

representations in Yoruba oral poetry. The desire of the Yorùbá people to find a mythical origin for their religious beliefs and the existence of the *òrìṣà* is encouraged them to formulate different kinds of myths, legends, and stories around the origin, the superhuman nature, and the extraordinary powers of their objects of worship. All the Yorùbá *òrìṣàs* are said to have been either divinities that descended from heaven and lived like human beings or famous individuals deified as gods or goddesses after their death in recognition of their supernatural deeds, outstanding wisdom, and perseverance. All Yorùbá devotees attribute the same qualities of generosity, life-giving power, destructive power, and personal magnificence to their *òrìṣàs*. Karin Barber argues that while the beneficent power of the *òrìṣàs* gives children, wealth, health, and peace to the devotees, their destructive power protects devotees from the attacks of enemies.¹⁹ She also observes that, although not all the deities have these qualities in the same proportions, the qualities ascribed to them by their devotees when praising them are much the same for all of them.

This study will benefit tremendously from *odù ifá* divination poetry and *Šangó pípè*, the praise poetry (*oríkì*) normally rendered in honor of Šangó. The relevance of the Ifá divination poetry to this work rests on Iṣolá's observation that "any myth of a Yorùbá deity that cannot be found in *ese ifá* is not authentic."²⁰ To buttress Iṣolá's claim, *odù Ọṣẹ rúúrú* discusses how Šangó descended to the planetary earth with some fifteen other divinities, *Ọyékú Mèjì* tells of the source of the deity's supernatural power, *Ọkànrán Mèjì* talks about how Šangó acquired the habit of spitting smoke and fire from his mouth, *Ọtúá Oríkò* sheds lights on the story of Šangó's initiation into divination, and *Ogbètúrú* documents his movement from Ifè to Ọyọ-Ilé (Old Ọyọ).

My decision to use *oríkì* as the second resource material in this work is hinged on the fact that each Yorùbá divinity has its own origin, personality, special attributes, taboos, and observances, which are preserved in the form of *oríkì*. *Oríkì* are attributive epithets that are equivalent to names. Because they are name-like in form and vocative in address, *oríkì* are seen as being in some way the key to a subject's essential nature. Karin Barber argues that by uttering a subject's *oríkì*, one is calling upon or unlocking hidden powers; the activity of naming is thought of as being effectual.²¹ Human subjects react to the utterance of their *oríkì* with deep gratification and with an enhancement of their aura, which is sometimes actually visible in their physical behavior.²²

The Yorùbá recognize the fact that *oríkì* can be used as a vehicle of communication between man and these deities, as Barber observes:

[I]t is in *òrìṣà pípè* that the relationship between devotee and *òrìṣà* is established. *Oríki* are the means of communications through which the relationship, which is the essence of the religion is kept alive . . . in *òrìṣà pípè*, as in all *oríki*, the subject is always paramount and the relationship between addresser and addressee is more important than the subject's place in overall historical, genealogical or cosmological scheme of things.²³

Barber argues further that the overwhelming importance of the *òrìṣà*-devotee bond of mutual benefit is demonstrated in two aspects of the use of *oríki* in Yorùbá traditional religious literature. First is that the devotee can be saluted through the *oríki* of his or her *òrìṣà*, and secondly, that the *òrìṣà* can also be saluted through the *oríki* of his or her devotee. By so doing, the devotee is identified with her/his *òrìṣà* and she/he gains status from her/his association with the *òrìṣà*, while the *òrìṣà* is thought of as belonging to certain devotees. Therefore, it is in the religious poetry that a relationship is established between the devotee and her/his *òrìṣà*. The relationship is further demonstrated when the devotee is acclaimed the "offspring" of the *òrìṣà* that she/he worships:

Eégún ilé Àjàní,

Má jé wón ó gbàṣeè rẹ ẹ.
Ọjísẹ ayé babaa Déótí,
N ó máa júbàa babaa mi ni;
Àdàṣe nni hunnò, ihà ó leè hùnmò.
Ọkánláwón la rí la dásáa Sàngó.
Bí Sàngó ó tètè já,
Ọdẹjàn a kó Sàngó ẹ lówó.
Amúnúpláílé, babaa Láyánnre;
Omúnú gbé wóròkò,
Babaa Sàngowéúdé.
OníSàngó Ipo, oníSàngó Ọfá,
Ọdẹjàn tó papò mó t'Òró.

The ancestral spirit in the home of Àjàní,
 Do not allow them to take over your responsibility.
 Representative of his own people, father of Déótí,
 I will continuously pay homage to my father;
 Lack of homage hurts, but homage does not.
 We all copy Ọkánláwón in the worship of Sàngó.
 If Sàngó fails to act in good time,

Odéjin will refuse to worship his Šangó.
 He-who-shares-out-part-of-the-family-wealth, father of Lágánre;
 One who is not predictable,
 Father of Šangówéádé.
 The Šangó worshippers of Ípo and Òfá,
 Odéjin who combines his Šangó with that of Òró.

Attributes as such associate the devotee with her/his *òrìṣà*, and the devotee benefits from that association. One may conclude therefore that, since a reasonable portion of *Šangó pipè* is made up of the *oriki* of the deity Šangó and those of his devotees, the constant juxtaposition of the attributes of the mythical Šangó and those of the former Aláàfin, an adherent of the deity who was later deified as historical Šangó in recognition of his devotion to the *òrìṣà*, is equally inevitable.

An Ifá myth presents Šangó as one of the most powerful spirits of the Yorùbá pantheon. *Odú ifá Ọ̀ṣẹ̀tùúrà* claims that Šangó was as powerful as the other primordial deities such as Odúduwà, Ọ̀rúnmilá, Ọ̀gún, Ọ̀bátálá, Èṣù, and Ọ̀ṣun, and that they all worked together at the founding of the world. The corpus recalls how Olódùmarè (the Creator God) sent sixteen *òrìṣà* from his abode in Òde Ísálòrun (the primordial heaven) to establish Òde Ísáláyé (the primordial earth) for human habitation, with specific instruction on what they should do as soon as they arrived the earth in order to make the young earth a pleasant place to live:

Kọ̀mù-n-kọ̀rò,
Awo Èwí nílẹ̀ Adó;
Ọ̀run-mù-dẹ̀dẹ̀-kanlé,
Awo óde Íjẹ̀sá;
Alákán-ni-ń-bẹ̀-lódò,
Tí-ń-telẹ̀-tátù-rin-rin-rin;
A díá fẹ̀rindinlógún irúnmoḽé;
Wón ń tìkòlẹ̀ ọ̀run rẹ̀ wá sí tayé.
Wón dẹ̀lẹ̀ ayé,
Wón yẹ̀gbó Orò;
Wón yẹ̀gbó Ọ̀pa.
Wón gbímò wón ó fí r'Ọ̀ṣun je.

The-one-who-gathers-women-and-wealth,
 The diviner of Èwí in the town of Adó;
 The-sky-is-overcast (as of the threatening of rain),
 Their diviner in Íjẹ̀saland;

The-crab-is-in-the-river,
 And-crawls-on-an-extremely-cold-ground;
 They all made divination for the sixteen Divinities;
 They were descending from heaven to earth.
 When they arrived in the world,
 They cleared Orò grove;
 They cleared Opa grove.
 They planned and never consulted with Ọṣun.²⁴

Although the *Odù Ọṣùnàrà* did not specifically mention the names of the male divinities that descended to the planetary earth at the time of creation, another *odù ifá* verse, however, claims that Ọṣun, the only female divinity at creation, married Šàngó at a point. *Odù Ogbèrà* tells us that Ọṣun first got married to Ọrúnmilà before she divorced him to marry Šàngó. The *odù* records that in one of the regular visits of the *òrìṣàs* to Olódùmarè, they encountered a group of wicked cannibals in heaven who started to kill and eat up the *òrìṣàs* one after the other. But Ọṣun miraculously saved Ọrúnmilà by hiding him from the cannibals, and substituting goat meat for his flesh, which the cannibals had planned to eat that very day. The story concludes that Ọrúnmilà later decided to marry Ọṣun in appreciation of what she did for him:

Báyí ní Ọrúnmilà àun Ọṣun bá sùn mọra.
Ọrúnmilà ní trú oore tó je fún mí nijelá,
Kò sírú oore kan tó tún lé tó èyíun mọ.
O wá ro obun tó lé je fún un . . .
Ní Ọrúnmilà bá fí Ọṣun níyáwó
Nífá bá dí oko Ọṣun.

This was how Ọrúnmilà and Ọṣun became close.
 Ọrúnmilà said that the good turn which she did for him,
 Was an exceptional one.
 He wondered what he should do in turn for her . . .
 Ọrúnmilà then got married to Ọṣun
 That was how Ifá became Ọṣun's Husband.²⁵

Another story narrated by Adéoyè reveals that Ọṣun eventually divorced Ọrúnmilà to marry Šàngó much later. The following excerpt of the *orùkò* of Ọṣun attests to the fact that Ọṣun was the favorite wife of Šàngó:

*Ọ̀ṣun m̀erindinlógún ní ñ bẹ̀ lóòdẹ̀ Šàngó;
 Ibi ká sánpá, ká sántan Ọ̀ṣun fi gbọ̀kẹ̀
 lówọ̀ gbogboo won.
 Àáyọ̀ Šàngó, baráá gbosin bí aye.
 Iyá, a-bóbinrin-gbátò;
 Ládekojù, abòtunrin gbásẹ̀.*

There were sixteen goddesses [wives] under Šàngó's roof;

Ọ̀ṣun became their husband's favorite
 as a result of her majestic walk.

The favorite wife of Šàngó, who is adorned with camwood.

Mother who helps women to collect Semen;

Wearer of a veiled crown, who helps men to collect menstrual flow.²⁶

The fact that Ọ̀ṣun, Šàngó, and Ọ̀rúnmílà lived about the same time, and that they even intermarried, should prove to us that the deification of Šàngó as a Yorúbá divinity predates the demise of the fourth Alááfin, whom some scholars claim is the deified Šàngó. If we want to demystify this story, we may argue that Ọ̀ṣun, Šàngó, and Ọ̀rúnmílà were among the first set of extraordinarily powerful human beings, to be deified after their death in Ilé-Ifẹ̀, where they once lived. I will be discussing the connection of the mythical Šàngó to Ọ̀yọ̀ royalty later. But for the moment, I need to discuss the picture of Šàngó as painted in his *oriki*.

The behavioral nature of mythical Šàngó is well represented in his *oriki* preserved in *Šàngó pipẹ̀*. Of particular importance is the ability of Šàngó to regularly spit out smoke and fire from his mouth. This probably stems from his herbal and metaphysical knowledge, which enables him to strike his enemies with thunderbolts. Šàngó's magical power and association with fire is very well encapsulated in the following lines of his *oriki*:

*Iná lójú, iná lẹnu;
 A-gbéná-jò,
 A-gbéná-yan;
 Kẹ̀ù bí iná jò láàrò.
 Èéftu là ñ dá láyẹ̀,
 Iná ñ bẹ̀ lóòdẹ̀ okuò mi lẹrun.
 Fẹ̀rẹ̀-bi-iná-jò-láàlà.
 Ako-iná-tii-bádoo-rin-pò.
 N à molun tí jii jókòò,
 Bí iyàn bíi sẹ̀gi;*

*Bí esórà, bí erépe;
 Akáákí òyà tí fawọ kaninkansin jókòò.
 Ológún-un dānidāni lápò.*

He who spits out fire in his mouth and eyes;
 He who dangles a touch of fire while dancing,
 He who also dangles a touch of fire while walking leisurely;
 One who sets himself ablaze like fire in the hearth.
 It is mere smoke that we ignite in this world,
 Real fire abides with my lord in heaven.
 Swiftly spread like a glowing fire,
 The tough fire that burns in the river.
 I cannot explain what his seat is made of,
 It looks like a combination of the coral beads and the blue tubular
 beads;
 It is equally sharp and deadly;
 The mighty deity whose seat is made of fly-skin.
 One who has dangerous charms in his pouch.

The representation of the behavior of Šàngò in his *oriki* goes beyond his magical power, to include his irrational and violent nature, his toughness, his restlessness, and his unpredictability. The way this aspect of Šàngò's nature has been presented in his *oriki* makes him look more like a tyrant than a culture-hero. Indeed, *Šàngò pipè* aims at projecting Šàngò as an extraordinary superhuman; and this the poets achieve mainly through their artistic use of language. To enhance the superhuman nature of Šàngò, the poets sometimes present him as a controversial deity. An enigma of some sort is thus brought to the fore; and the audience becomes unsure as to whether the results of the actions attributed to him are beneficial or rather detrimental. The excerpt below helps to clarify the point I am making:

*A-bọ-lumo-bi owá.
 Fàibá won já kọni lóminú.
 A-kòbò-kòbò-já.
 A-yánni-lónvó-bi-oni-gbígboná;
 A-márin-je-lójú-onirin;
 Ò-bárin-jenu-òbẹ-yàngá.
 Akọ-áparò-tí-ké-tijátijá.
 Kò mọ onilé, bẹẹ ni kò mọ àlejò.
 Ókun ò sé kọjújá sí.*

Baálè mi, ta ló lè ko Šàngó lójú?
Èmi ò ní kò f' lójú,
Agbadagbúdù odò tí gbónigèrè tẹ́jẹ́jẹ́.
A-lémò-rerẹ-bí eégún;
A-gbámọ-lójú-yokun-nímú;
A-binú-falagbèdẹ-bògún;
A-binú-bàràbà-wó, obaa Kòso.
A-binú-fàròhò-tu
A-binú-tomọ-owú-fẹ́.
Kò mọ́raa rẹ nígbà ibinú bá dẹ.
A-pá-wóm-je-bí-eranko;
Ófiki-damọ-nú-tẹrùtẹrù.
Binú bá tí bí Šàngó, obaa Kòso,
A ní kanlẹ sù kànrún.
Mọ̀nà mọ̀nà ọ̀jù ọ̀rún yẹrìyẹrì.
Èlùbò ẹ̀ ló daniú tó fì pẹgbẹ́je tẹ́yàn.

One-who-falls-on-a-child-as-the-blacksmith's hammer.

One-who-nurses-no-grudge-with-them-and-still-instills-fears.

One-whose-fight-is-deadly.

One-who-burns-like-boiling-water;

One-who-destroys-metal-in-the-presence-of-its-owner;

He-also-devastates-the-knife-violently-as-he-walks.

The-male-bush-fowl-that-cries-belligerently.

He-cares-for-neither-residents-nor-visitors.

The-ocean-that-cannot-be-confronted.

My-lord,who-can-confront-Šàngó?

I-will-not-confront-you,

Mighty-river-that-sweeps-off-the-fisherman-and-his-catch.

He-who-pursues-a-child-like-the-masqueraders;

He-who-slaps-child's-face-as-to-force-out-mucus;

He-who-in-rage-sacrifices-the-blacksmith-to-the-deity-Ògún;

The-king-at-Kòso,who-falls-the-white-silk-cotton-tree-out-of-annoyance.

He-also-uprooted-the-African-teak-in-annoyance

He-who-in-rage-destroys-the-blacksmith's-hammer-by-stepping-on-it.

He-has-no-control-over-his-annoyance.

He-devours-people-like-ordinary-animals;

The-river-whose-wave-is-enough-to-sink-a-canoe.

Whenever-Šàngó,the-king-of-Kòso,is-annoyed,

He makes the cloud to cover the sky.
 Accompanied with constant lightning.
 He ended up killing fourteen hundred people
 Just because his yam flour trickled away.

Şàngó is presented in the above excerpt as a tactless and highly impatient person. For instance, his irrational behavior is presented figuratively in his decision to kill as many as fourteen hundred people because of his yam flour that had poured away. His violent attitude is also encapsulated in the analogy of the mighty river that sweeps off the fisherman and his catch and the shout of the male bush-fowl. Furthermore, the fact that Şàngó is highly impatient is reflected in the description that "he has no control over his annoyance." However, despite the poets' frightening presentation of Şàngó, the implication that the deity is at the same time magnetically attractive to his devotees is reflected in other sections of the same corpus of the *oríkí*, where the devotees are pleading for Şàngó's protection:

Şàngó, bọ́ bọ́ doyin, mọ́ ta mí.
Bọ́ bọ́ dólápá, má yá lù mí.
Bọ́ bọ́ dódò, mómò gbé mí lẹ.
Má fẹ́rẹ́ àbọ ná mí,
Má fẹ́rẹ́ àbọ namọ́ mí.
Şàngó, dákun má fi jinni-jinni kàn mí;
Má gbá mí lẹti àgbámọ́giri.
Şàngó, dákun má pa mí nípa o pa
Kúmólá Oluogbó;
Şàngó, dákun má pa mí nípa o p'Àfàbí
Olúmọ́gún.
Má fàgbàná runwóo tìyàá mí.
A-şhúnrin-dábi-iyàwó.

Şàngó, when you turn into a bee, please do not sting me.
 Whenever you become a dilapidated building, please do not fall on me.
 When you become a river, please do not drown me.
 Do not chastise me,
 Do not chastise my child.
 Şàngó, please do not frighten me;
 Do not strike me with your lightning.
 Şàngó, please do not kill me as you have killed
 Kúmólá Oluogbó;

Šangó, please do not kill me as you have killed
 Ašáhi Olímógùn.
 Do not hypnotize my mother to squander her Money.
 He who though man but looks like a bride.

Can one be secure in a relationship with such a deity then? Will it not be more difficult to approach him since one can never be too sure when one will incur his annoyance? The violent character and the unpredictability of Šangó should not be taken to mean wickedness at all. Rather, it is a conscious attempt to lift the deity onto a realm where he will be different from mere mortals. He is presented as a deity that is so strong and powerful that no one can share in his privileges. It is a calculated attempt to make his superhuman nature more complex. Šangó thus becomes all the more extraordinary when his actions remain unpredictable.

If we relate the picture of Šangó painted in the above excerpt to Johnson's historical account mentioned earlier, one may be tempted to ascribe the violent aspect of the *orílé* to the Alááfin who, Johnson claimed, had the habit of emitting fire and smoke out of his mouth. That same Alááfin was also said to have mistakenly burned down his palace while testing his newly acquired charm that could attract lightning and fire. But what the *odù ifá* corpus records on the source of Šangó's metaphysical power and his knowledge of herbal medicine invalidates that line of thinking, since the mythical Šangó himself was equally violent and knowledgeable in herbal medicine. For instance, the *Odù ifá Oyékú Méjì* claims that before the divinities that created the planetary earth left Òde Isálórún for Òde Isáláyé, they consulted Ifá oracle individually to know what the journey had in stock for them. When divination was made for Šangó, Ifá instructed that he should offer sacrifice of pieces of dilapidated mud-wall, a sheep, and two thousand cowries, to prevent death. Šangó complied, and in return, Orúnmilá gave him some quantity of mud powder already empowered metaphysically to rub on his entire body. The *odù* concludes that, after that, Šangó started to spit smoke from his mouth.

*Kí a kú wọn rígidí,
 Kí a fíbón tì wón,
 A dífá fún Ayálégbé-òrun (Šangó)—
 Tí yó fi àlápá sègun òtá é;
 Nígbà tí Šangó ñ bẹ lárín òtá;
 Nígbà tí ọ̀sírí òtá kojú sí í.
 Orúnmilá ní bí ikú bá ñ m egbé rẹ pa,
 Ọ̀tá ní Oyékú yó maa yé é sí.*

*Bí àrún bá ò segbé rẹ,
 Ọ̀tọ̀ ní Ọ̀yẹ̀kú yóò máń yẹ́ ẹ́ sí.
 Gbágbá àlámẹ́ obì ní ikú sí pa,
 Ọ̀tọ̀ ní Ọ̀yẹ̀kú yẹ wófúá obì sí.
 Ifá ní pé Ọ̀yẹ̀kú, ikú yẹ lóri rẹ.*

Fold them firmly,

And put a gun by their side,
 Divination was made for Aylégbéé-òrun (Şàngó)—
 Who will defeat his enemies with dilapidated mud-wall;
 When Şàngó was surrounded by enemies;
 When several enemies confronted him.
 Ọ̀rúnmìlá assured him that even when his mates are being killed.
 Ọ̀yẹ̀kú will keep him safe from death.
 When his mates are being inflicted by infirmity,
 Ọ̀yẹ̀kú will keep him safe from illness.
 There is no segment of kola nut that cannot be killed,
 Except the wófúá which Ọ̀yẹ̀kú will keep him safe from death.
 Ifá says that with Ọ̀yẹ̀kú, you will not die.

Although Şàngó was very popular among his contemporaries, *Odù Ifá Ọ̀kànràn Méjì* recalls that he was still looking for extra sources of supernatural power in order to be more famous. Therefore, he decided to consult Ifá, once again, for assistance:

*Oríkì olóríkì kí í gbasàn;
 Bí wọ́n tí ò pariwo rẹ̀ nílẹ̀,
 Bẹ̀ẹ̀ ní wọ́n ò pariwo rẹ̀ lógun;
 A dífú fún Ọ̀bílájá Şàngó,
 Tó ní òun kò ní òkíkí.
 Ó ní yẹ òun lẹ̀ náyí?
 Ọ̀rúnmìlá ní ó lẹ̀ náyí,
 Bí ó há tójá ọ̀rúko méjì
 Pẹ̀lú isasùn tuntun ;
 Tí ó sí tójá ewé Ifá.*

You don't acclaim another person's *oríkì* in vain;
 Just as they acclaim him at home,
 They also acclaim him in war;
 Divination was made for Ọ̀bílájá Şàngó,
 Who was complaining of not having enough fame.

He wanted to know if he could be famous?
 Ọ́rúnmilà said that he could be famous,
 If only he can provide two he-goats
 With a new clay pot;
 And some Ifè herbs.

Šangó provided the ritual elements prescribed by Ọ́rúnmilà, and he was given a specially prepared meal to eat, after which he started to spit out smoke and fire from his mouth. Šangó's ability to emit smoke and fire out of his mouth simultaneously increased his fame greatly, a fact attested to in this excerpt of his *oriki*:

*Eni à á fíbòòsì se lálejò bórún bá dé;
 Iwo lo m̀̀dàà ibòòsì wáyé;
 N ó kébòòsì r̀̀.
 Dájò-kusilé, omop Yemoja.
 Bó bá ti dé nílúú bó yé yé yé,
 Ariwo r̀̀r̀r̀ níjò a gbéyàwò;
 Ariwo ní mojàn ní m̀̀ro.
 A-ẁ̀tí-tílú-tariwo;
 A-dé-kogun-ó-r̀̀j̀;
 Ọ́wàrà-òjò-tí-sù-pegbèje-èd̀̀yàn.*

One who is dignified with thunderous praises every four days;
 That is because you love to be proclaimed;
 And I will proclaim you.
 He who pre-announces the setting of a house on fire, child of Yemoja.
 His arrival in the city is announced with uproar,
 The wailing cries that follow the wedding (the striking of the
 thunder);
 One who causes wailing cries all over the city.
 One whose arrival in the city is accompanied with blast;
 One whose arrival sends warriors packing;
 The mighty rain that can soak thirteen hundred people.

From the foregoing, therefore, it will not be entirely correct to associate the fame of Šangó and the source of his metaphysical power solely with the fourth Aláàfin of Ọ́yó, as Johnson and Ọ́gúndèj̀ would want us to believe, but with the mythical Šangó himself. The various verses of *adù ifè* and excerpts of Šangó's *oriki* already cited have shown the possibility of Šangó existing at Ilé-Ifè long before the founding of Old Ọ́yó.

Although it is also possible that an Aláàfin who was a strong adherent of Šàngó followed the footsteps of the deity by acquiring charms that also made him emit fire and smoke out of his mouth during his reign.

What then is the relationship between Šàngó and the fourth Aláàfin of Ōyó? When, how, and why did Šàngó move out of Ifè Oòdáyé to Ōyó? How did the Aláàfin become an adherent of Šàngó? Why is it so difficult to separate the story of the deification of Šàngó from that of the death of the fourth Aláàfin of Ōyó? I intend to rely on another verse of *Odú ifà Ogbètúrá* to provide answers to these questions:

*Igi ilá ní òrò nínú igbè;
A nàgò fànfá silé nitorí ifànfá ojúgun;
A díá fún Jègbè;
Tí n ló oko ode*

The mighty tree that stands straight in the Forest;

Which has a protruding root that people must watch out for because of their shin;

They made divination for Jègbè;

Who is going on a hunting expedition.

The story recalls how a prince of Ilé-Ifè moved out of his father's domain to found a new city at Ōyó-Ilé (Old Ōyó), and how the prince took with him symbols of Šàngó, his guiding deity on his departure. According to the story, the rite of passage into adulthood in Ilé-Ifè of old demanded that the king, Odùduwà, must give necessary tools to every prince or princess to establish a trade or chosen profession. Jègbè, one of the princes, wanted to be a hunter; therefore, his father gave him guns and gunpowder. Unfortunately, Jègbè experienced some difficulties in his numerous hunting expeditions, and his father lost faith in his ability to excel in his chosen profession. Out of confusion and frustration, Jègbè consulted Ifà oracle for guidance, and he was instructed to make a sacrifice of burnt offering in the heart of the forest, which he did. Incidentally, the smoke of his burnt offering attracted the attention of a group of kings and warlords who had gone to war but were lost in the forest with their spoils of war. They eventually traced their way to where Jègbè was and requested his assistance. Jègbè led the people to the city and reported the incident to his father. The king, who could not easily believe the story of Jègbè, asked him to lead the people to wherever he wanted and be their king. But before sending Jègbè out of Ilé-Ifè, the story concludes, the king gave the thunderbolt, the symbol of Šàngó,

to Jẹgbẹ as representative of his guiding deity. Jẹgbẹ thereafter led the people to establish the city that later became Ọyọ-Ilẹ (Old Ọyọ).

This Ifá story is similar to the most popular oral tradition of the origin of Old Ọyọ, which associates it with a warlord, Ọráníyàn, who was believed to be either the son or the grandson of Odùduwà, the hero-progenitor of the Yorùbá people. That tradition states that Ọyọ, like every other Yorùbá town, came into being as a result of the legendary dispersal of people from Ilẹ-Ife. To fully establish the Alááfin dynasty in and around Ọyọ-Ilẹ, Ọráníyàn fought and conquered various neighboring communities. Oral tradition also states that Ọráníyàn, as the first king in Ọyọ, fully integrated the worship of Šangó into his new government and made it the state religion, with himself being the chief celebrant and Šangó incarnate. Even in present day Ọyọ, the relevance of Šangó to the success of the Alááfin's administration cannot be overlooked. Apart from the Alááfin's daily worship of Šangó, he also visits the shrine of the deity during the annual Šangó festival to pay homage. There, the Alááfin "prostrates before the god Šangó and before those possessed with the deity, calling them father."²⁷ The importance of the deity in the socio-political setup of Ọyọ necessitates that the Alááfin keep priestesses and priests of Šangó in his palace even till today.

During installation, it is also mandatory for a new Alááfin to visit the shrine of Šangó that is located at Kòso quarters for official crowning. At Kòso, the *òtún ẹfà*, the *baálẹ́* (chief) of Kòso, the *omo-ni-nàrès*, and the *ìyáwàs* would attend to the new king. There, the *iyákere* would place the great crown on the head of the new Alááfin, while the *òtún ẹfà* would put the royal robes and *ẹjigbá* beads on him. Babayemi gives a precise account of what happened during the coronation of the incumbent Alááfin in 1971:

One saw in the new Alááfin a changed person after he stood at the *Èsà* mound before he entered the *Kòso* shrine. He was blindfolded and led to where he sat until his face was ritually washed. He was then asked to face the objects of *Šangó*. Before the ceremony, a statue of the new Alááfin was carved by the royal carvers. The black dress the Alááfin wore to the shrine, his cap, his upper garment (*agbádá*), and his sandals were removed and put on the statue. The Alááfin was then dressed in white *sányán*, white beaded sandals, white beads and a white crown. By the time the Alááfin was being dressed everybody avoided his direct gaze. By design, the fringes of the crown veiled his face. He was then led to the waiting crowd who burst into thunderous *Kábíyèsé* at his appearance.²⁸

Thus, the wearing of the beaded crown by the new Alááfin at the Kòso shrine of Šàngó, which emphasized the eternal divinity of the new king, may be said to have depersonalized him in human terms. For instance, it is believed in the society that the Alááfin assumed the power and magic of Šàngó by wearing the crown of the turbulent deity at Kòso. In other words, the Kòso ritual was expected to transfer to the new Alááfin the supernatural and superhuman power of the deity Šàngó. This fact comes out clearly in Babayemi's accounts when the Alááfin transferred what was temporal in him—his dress—to the statue, to put on what was regarded as an eternal "garment"—the crown—that belongs to Šàngó. This procedure is what Thompson describes as "a synthesis of the world of the dead and the world of the living [depicting . . .] the king as a living ancestor."²⁹ Consequently, Šàngó, the Alááfin in heaven, and the new Alááfin on earth are now one. The new Alááfin is believed to assume the power and magic of the turbulent deity, which he derives from the wearing of the crown.

This view is meant to enhance the command of the king, his power of authority, and his royal majesty. This explains why contemporary Òyó royal bards would acclaim the incumbent Alááfin as *omo Šàngó* (offspring of Šàngó) and adopt for him *aròjò-múnná-léjò* (One-whose-rain-is-accompanied-by-fire), one of the attributes and praise names of Šàngó. The association originates from the choice of Šàngó as the state religion of Òyó and the guiding deity of the Alááfin, evidently shown in the elaborate religious rituals surrounding the installation of a new Alááfin. If it is true that the first Alááfin had the symbol of Šàngó with him at the foundation of Òyó, then it will be difficult to accept the theory of Johnson and Hethersett associating the origin of the deity to the fourth Alááfin of Òyó.

This chapter has reviewed the multidimensional representation of Šàngó in Yorùbá literature with a view of reconstructing the history of the deity. In the course of this study, I have discussed the two levels at which previous scholars have explained the origins of Šàngó: the supernatural and the human. But this work has shown that the two types of traditions—mythological and historical—can be collapsed into one. While the supernatural aspect of Šàngó brings protection, peace, and prosperity to his devotees, his human nature authenticates and legitimates the authority of every Alááfin who has to adopt Šàngó as his patron deity. As a result, every Alááfin incarnates Šàngó on accession to the throne, and when dead, he is deified and he becomes Šàngó. This practice has no doubt brought about the proliferation of Šàngó worship in Yorùbá society, most especially in Òyó town, where we have "different

Šangós" named after different Alááfin. For instance, we have Šangó Àtìbà and Šangó Aganjú, both named after two of the past Alááfin of Ọyọ. We also have Šangó Afonjá, named after the chief of army staff of Alááfin Olúewu; and Šangó Tíml, named after one of the warlords of Alááfin Kọrí, who was later enthroned as a king at Èdẹ. The creation of literary works around the personality of Šangó has further complicated the ambivalent representations of the deity rather than helped in resolving it.

By Ọyọ tradition, every Alááfin must be deified at death. However, because at one time Alááfin was committed to Šangó to the extent that he adopted Šangó's names and attributes, his deification tends to be generally confused with the mythical Šangó. Unfortunately, it is the story of the historical Šangó that creative writers have adopted as the basis for their literary depiction of Šangó. With the exception of Léré Páimò, who focused on mythical Šangó in his movie, other literary works are based on the story of the historical Šangó as presented by either Johnson or Hethersett. Although writers occasionally superimpose some aspects of the nature of the mythical Šangó on their literary creation of historical Šangó, neither the literary nor the historical representation of Šangó must be confused with the mythical Šangó, which we have shown in this chapter to have been in existence before the establishment of the institution of the Alááfin at Ọyọ.

NOTES

1. Philip A. Ogundeji, "The Image of Šango in Duro Ladipo's Plays," *Research in African Literatures* 29, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 57-75.
2. Leo Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa*, vol. 1 (London: Hutchinson, 1913).
3. Bolaji Idowu, *Olódùmarì: God in Yorùbá Belief* (London: Longman, 1962).
4. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbás* (Lagos: C.S.S. Bookshops, 1921; reprint, 1960), 149.
5. A. L. Hethersett, "Ìtàn Šangó," in *Ìwé Kíkà Èkẹrin Lá Èdẹ Yorùbá*, ed. A. L. Hethersett (Lagos: CMS, 1941), 50-56.
6. Johnson, *History of the Yorùbás*, 54-57.
7. Samuel Babayemi, "The Fall and Rise of Ọyọ c. 1760-1905" (Ph.D. diss., University of Birmingham, 1979), 178-79.
8. C. Laogun Adeoye, *Àṣà àti Ìṣe Yorùbá* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 324-25.
9. Johnson, *History of the Yorùbás*, 69-77.
10. *Ibid.*, 170-72.
11. Adeoye, *Àṣà àti Ìṣe Yorùbá*, 342-45.

12. Akinwumi Isola, "Religious Politics and the Myth of Šango," in *African Traditional Religion in Contemporary Society*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona (New York: Paragon, 1991), 93-99.
13. Johnson, *History of the Yorùbás*, 156-58.
14. Isola, "Religious Politics," 93.
15. C. Laogun Adeoye, *Ìgbàgbò àti Èsìn Yorùbá* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Evans Brothers, 1985), 287-88.
16. Ogundeji, "The Image of Šangó," 63-4.
17. *Ibid.*, 64.
18. Oludare Olajubu, "The Sources of Duro Ladipo's *Ọbá Kò Sò*," *Research in African Literature* 9, no. 3 (1978): 350-51.
19. Karin Barber, "How Man Makes God in West Africa: Yorùbá Attitudes towards the Ọrìsà," *Africa* 51, no. 3 (1981): 735.
20. Isola, "Religious Politics," 95.
21. Karin Barber, "Yorùbá Ọrìkì and Deconstructive Criticism," *Research in African Literature* 15, no. 4 (1984): 503-505.
22. Adeboye Babalola, *The Content and Form of Yorùbá Ọ̀jálá* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 24.
23. Karin Barber, "Oríkì in Ọ̀kukù: Relationships between Verbal and Social Structures" (Ph.D. diss., University of Ifè, 1979), 351.
24. David O. Ogunbile, "Èérìndinlógún: The Seeing Eyes of Sacred Shells and Stones," in *Ọ̀sun across the Waters: A Yorùbá Goddess in Africa and the Americas*, ed. Joseph M. Murphy and Mei-Mei Sanford (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 191-93.
25. Wande Abimbola, "The Bag of Wisdom: Ọ̀sun and the Origins of the Ifá Divination," in *Ọ̀sun across the Waters: A Yorùbá Goddess in Africa and the Americas*, ed. Joseph M. Murphy and Mei-Mei Sanford (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 142.
26. Adeoye, *Ìgbàgbò àti Èsìn Yorùbá*, 287.
27. Johnson, *History of the Yorùbás*, 65.
28. Babayemi, "The Fall and Rise," 179.
29. R. F. Thompson, "The Sign of the Divine King: An Essay on Yorùbá Beaded-Embroidered Crowns with Veil and Bird Decorations," *African Arts* 113 (1970): 10.

ŞÀNGÓ

*in Africa and the
African Diaspora*



EDITED BY JOEL E. TISHKEN,
TÓYÍN FÁEQLÁ, AND
AKÍNTÚNDÉ AKÍNYEMÍ

PART THREE

Şàngó in the African Diaspora



The Cultural Aesthetics of Šàngó Africanization

KAMARI MAXINE CLARKE

This chapter outlines a theory of contemporary religious revivalism that makes explicit the relevance of globalization in the resurgence of African religious occult movements outside Africa. I demonstrate that what we are witnessing are shifting conceptualizations of national belonging through which new forms of legitimacy of Yorùbá belonging are conceptually possible through a de-territorialized notion of spiritual linkage. To understand the particularities of change in Yorùbá *òrìṣà* revivalism in this regard, and to make sense of these growing forms of de-territorialized and denationalized institutions of knowledge developing in the West, this chapter explores how meanings of ritual iconography reflect historically constituted ways that people see linkages and reflect the order of particular modernities of late capitalism, in which the globalization of *òrìṣà* practices is leading to increased social autonomy by which new interpretations and ritual practices are becoming widely institutionalized. In this regard, this chapter is about the making of a new authorial imaginary of personhood within particular fields of historical power. By charting the uses of divination in the globalization of an *òrìṣà* economy and the contestations over the representation of Šàngó and that *òrìṣà*'s various divinatory interpretations, I demonstrate how the black Atlantic world is providing alternate models of *òrìṣà* translations, formations, representations, and meanings. These highlight the nodes, assemblages, and range of domains from which formations about Yorùbá *òrìṣà* imagery have taken shape.

One of the primary locations for this inquiry, Òyórunjì Village, is neither a local West African village, a neighborhood of a larger community,

nor a homogenized population that can be reduced to a single location. It represents a regionally diverse transnational network of people and practices within and outside the nation. Indeed, *Ọyótúnjì* is a small rural community that the sociological literature often refers to as an "intentional community," describing an intended creation of a separate domestic arena. However, it is as much ideological as it is geographic. It is a reconstructed Yorùbá village in the rural region of Beaufort, South Carolina, that operates within a de-territorialized network of Yorùbá occult revivalists throughout the United States who are committed to the re-Africanization of Yorùbá traditional practices that were transformed by enslaved Africans transported to the Americas during the transatlantic slave trade.¹

The Yorùbá people of southwestern Nigeria were popularly classified as an ethnic group by twentieth-century sociologists and anthropologists. Described as having established their roots in West Africa, where they developed deeply complex *òrìṣà* veneration and communication practices between God, known as Olódùmarè, and humans, Africanist scholars continue to highlight West Africa as the "originary" home of the Yorùbá people. Yet, though *òrìṣà* practices were historically entrenched in the former Ọyó Empire and with the language became standardized in the making of the modern Nigerian state, major changes in the spread and reformulation of *òrìṣà* practices have taken place over the past centuries. With the history of the Yorùbá kingdom and the encroachment of the Ọyó Empire onto other West African regions as well as the dispersal of enslaved captives across the Atlantic throughout the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, groupings of Lukumi/Yorùbá and Bantu speakers inside and outside the African continent contributed to the standardization and spread of varieties of Yorùbá *òrìṣà* practices.

As African religions moved with the spread of African captives into transatlantic slavery, there developed a repressive sphere of plantation slavery that led to the transformation of *òrìṣà* ritual practices in the Americas. These vast numbers of practitioners, who trace their lineage to predecessors in West and Central Africa, were transported as captives to the Caribbean and North and South America, where they participated in the transformation of ritual and religious practices that have endured over centuries. These changes have led to the reconfiguration of *òrìṣà* ritual practices, including the reconfiguration of ways that the *òrìṣà* were represented. In Brazil, the spaces of interpretive production led to the development of a variation that became Candomblé; in Cuba, it became Santería; in Trinidad and Tobago it became Šàngó; and in the United States, among black American cultural nationalists interested in

Africanizing *òrìṣà* practices, it became *òrìṣà*-voodoo or a return to the Yorùbá *òrìṣà*. These variations reflect the encounter between the West and the non-West in the making of the modern world;² and increasing numbers of these *òrìṣà* adherents are contributing to the growth of multiple networks of *òrìṣà* knowledge outside of the African continent.

The late twentieth- and twenty-first-century proliferation of groups of *òrìṣà* practitioners outside of West Africa continues to be expansive, ranging in the millions of adherents of *òrìṣà*-voodoo, Santería, and Candomblé religious practices. And today, practitioners in the Caribbean and South America are increasingly in conversation with practitioners from the West. Now, more than ever, vast numbers of Americans in the United States are reclaiming or converting to Yorùbá religious practices and playing central roles in reshaping how *òrìṣà* traditions are to be practiced.

The widening constituencies of changing Yorùbá *òrìṣà* practitioners, though not mutually exclusive, can be classified in four significant groups. The first are the *òrìṣà* practitioners, principally in Nigeria and Benin as well as various surrounding West African countries; they tend not to be educated in the West, have limited financial resources, and claim *òrìṣà* worship as their religious faith. The second are *Òrìṣà*/Santería/Lukumi practitioners in the Americas, who constitute the largest group of religious worshippers and in varying degrees tend to accept the hybridization of *òrìṣà* practices. Practitioners in this group span regions throughout Cuba, Haiti, Trinidad, Puerto Rico, Brazil, and the United States. The third are *òrìṣà* worshippers and Yorùbá or *òrìṣà* revivalists, who are part of a relatively new (post-1960s) *òrìṣà* economy of practitioners who are interested in the return to a more orthodox traditional practice. This return sometimes includes the purging of whiteness, but, more fundamentally, it is manifest through the reconfiguration of changes to the religion that were important because of the criminalization of the religion during conditions of enslavement. The fourth, *òrìṣà* modernists, are a relatively new (post-1980s) group of initiates, led by predominantly white American and European practitioners, who are part of a growing movement interested in the transcendence of racial membership through the emphasis of ancestral lineage. These four groups constitute multiple networks of *òrìṣà* practitioners that have produced *òrìṣà* institutional practices throughout the Americas and reflect, to a greater or lesser extent, the African origins of *òrìṣà* practices. Nevertheless, these relations are neither equal in impact, influence, and prestige, nor evenly distributed. Though the roots of Yorùbá traditions are seen as emerging from West Africa, Nigerian *òrìṣà* practitioners are, in comparison, few in number. As interest in the practice and acquisition of lifelong

apprenticeships declines, New World practitioners' de-territorial participation in *òrìṣà* rituals, the emergent group of Western practitioners, continues to outnumber those self-professed traditionalists in various West African regions. The disproportionality of claims to ongoing *òrìṣà* practices reflects the prominence of the globalization of Yorùbá religion and the de-territorialization of *òrìṣà* practices in the West. And these numbers are growing as a result of the electronic circulation of divinatory knowledge, in which new technologies are leading to the transmission of a plethora of interpretations and representations.

As Olabiyi Yai has argued, in an attempt to describe how local practices are becoming increasingly transnational, the "*òrìṣà* tradition has its foot in Africa and its head in the Americas."² The same Yorùbá practitioners who hold the symbolic roots of Yorùbá practices are becoming marginal to the production of new standards of practice in the global age. This has led to particular asymmetries in which West African *òrìṣà* practitioners, who have limited access to electronic technology and forms of mobility, are having declining significance in their social worlds, which are increasingly dominated by the popularity of Christian Pentecostalism and Islamic brotherhoods. This is unlike earlier periods in the 1960s and '70s, when West African *òrìṣà* traditionalists dominated the production of Africanized interpretations of divinatory meanings, in which numbers of Nigerian Yorùbá were successful in procuring clients from the Americas and extolling the symbolic capital of the origins of *òrìṣà* worship. Today, West African *òrìṣà* practitioners are becoming increasingly limited in their ability to directly influence the revitalization and interpretation of *òrìṣà* divinatory practices in the Americas.

This chapter, then, is an attempt to explore one interpretive practice, known as divination, which operates within particular Yorùbá cosmologies and forms of logic. I explore how new knowledge technologies are building on old ideological divisions in worship and producing new spaces for the development of *òrìṣà* expansion. Through divinatory production and the invention and reinvention of the verses of the divinatory corpus, *òrìṣà* practices are becoming increasingly autonomous from West Africa and becoming re-inscribed into new nodes of knowledge. By focusing on the recent revival of African occult practices and heritage identities in the West, I demonstrate that these forms of spiritual awakenings produce linkages that are relying less on physical birthplace as the domain of interpretive authority and more on ancestry as a form of spiritual authority. And though race in such occult imaginaries continues to be a metaphor for expressions of Africanness, it becomes manifest only through alternate spatial and temporal articulations of descent that

foreground the centrality of ancestry in the development of what Jean and John Comaroff refer to as an "occult economy."⁴

By exploring how the globalization of divinatory ritual is leading to disparate authoritative domains in which new representations are taking shape, I focus on one *òriṣà*, that is Šangó, as a metaphor for the transformation of Yorùbá-Lucumí practices. I will explore the ways that divinatory ritual established in three contexts—one in West Africa, one among one strand of Santería practitioners, and one among black religious nationalists—produces varying interpretations and representations of the *òriṣà* Šangó. As I will demonstrate, variation in what constitutes the terms of meaning linked with different historical particularities around the production of religious belonging shapes different rules that govern how we understand the iconic meaning of Šangó masculinity and racial politics. For, unlike earlier periods, in which *òriṣà* practices were imported from the former Òyó Empire (which fell in the 1830s with the encroachment of British colonial governance, which in 1914 would become modern Nigeria), the forms of religious resurgence that we are seeing today are fundamentally connected to a new heritage-based economy in which the globalization of religious practices is leading to new domains of interpretive power. Such uses of particular *òriṣà* mythologies in transnational domains highlight the inter-relationship between religious revivalism, innovative technologies of knowledge and transmission, and new occult economies.

Information Networks and Transnational Linkages

In 2002 a keyword search on the Internet using "òriṣà practitioners," "Santería," "Yorùbá," and "divination" yielded over seven thousand web sites. Such a vast index reflects the range of transnational *òriṣà* institutions that could be called upon for obtaining online divinatory readings, information about the history and culture of Yorùbá practices, and adaptations of *òriṣà* rituals by Africans in the Americas. They provide organizational missions and divinatory services, packages of divinatory knowledge, forms of redemption, and individual and community empowerment through which iconic representations and meanings of membership are shaped. Practitioners in these religious networks limit themselves to neither one school or affiliation nor one territory of influence. Instead, these various packages of knowledge operate within an "occult economy." In the context of the globalization of an *òriṣà* occult economy, new variations of *òriṣà* practices and meanings are being increasingly supported by more books, videos, and packages of ancestral validation produced

for mass conversion and religious reproduction. As they engage in the consumption of *òrìṣà* practices, participants reformulate *òrìṣà*-based religious practices along racial imaginaries, where *òrìṣà* practices are being distinguished by crosscutting forms of social distinction such as lineage, race, and forms of aesthetic and ritual practice. Characteristic of the globalization of divinatory practices are the ways in which transnationally relevant events are invoked to make sense of modern problems. This, the modernity of the occult is a critical feature of contemporary religious revivalism. New divinatory mechanisms, such as “readings” of the year, readings conducted annually on January 1, are posted online by large numbers of *òrìṣà* organizations in the United States. Once posted over the Internet, they are available for public consumption and provide modern mechanisms for the circulation and rethinking of older versions of *òrìṣà* practices and representation.⁵ The challenge, however, is that as centrally interpreted in locally demarcated spheres of power, the meanings vary from region to region, and alliances are shaped within particular historical nodes of influence. And because there are fundamental differences in how different groups represent various mythic, spiritual, and historical aspects of *òrìṣà*, divinatory representations and interpretations are sites of tremendous contestation over spiritual signs and their meanings. As a result, new forms of affiliation, knowledge networks, and membership categories are being transformed by varied categories of ancestry legitimated through ritual practices. And membership in varied religious networks is often understood in relation to packages of ancestral knowledge that crosscut national belonging.

Differences in Šàngó Interpretations

In West African contexts, historical depictions of Šàngó in ancient Yorùbáland often represent him as a heroic man who reigned in the late 1700s as the fourth Alááfin of Òyó and was immortalized after his death. Mythic narratives describe his central prominence at the height of the Òyó Empire until lightning descended on his palace and destroyed it and his family. So horrified was he that, as a symbol of manliness, he hanged himself. The second narrative describes Šàngó with spiritual powers, in which he was magically inclined and able to breathe fire and smoke through his nostrils. However, according to the mythology, his wives were so quarrelsome, and he so angered by this, that one day he angrily mounted his horse and threatened them, and others who were embattled, with thunder, lightning, and destruction. Ultimately, both narratives reflect a description of Šàngó that highlight his historical leadership, virility, and



FIGURE 10.1. "Chango drawing." Public domain.

bravery. Although he was feared for his tyranny, after his deification the renditions of historical Šangó represent him as revered for his bravery and fairness and his tremendous powers to "call lightning from heaven."⁹ And thus, after his death, when thunder and lightning struck, people called out, "*Kábíyèsi!*" (as if to hail his majesty) in order to recognize his ongoing thunderous presence in their lives.

In *Ọyọ* contexts, Šangó is often presented as wearing a cotton red top with many cowry shells, charms and symbols of Šangó, and carrying a double axe. The representations of *bètí* drums, singing, and drumming are ways that devotees revere the deity. The nobility of the historical Šangó as a symbol of the prestige of the *Ọyọ* Empire is fundamentally embedded in the revitalizations of Šangó imagery by black American revivalists making claims to the authenticity of Šangó and Šangó as the king of kings.

In contrast, however, Šangó in Santería mythology, referred to as *Changó*, is popularly represented as a virile, stealthy, sexual, and promiscuous man with three wives: "Ọya, who is represented as having stolen Šangó's secrets of magic; Ọchun, the river goddess represented as Šangó's favorite; and Ọbà, who tried to win his love by making the ultimate sacrifice—offering her ear to him to eat." These mythic representations of Šangó are coupled with the imagery of him as the God of thunder, lightning, and fire.

On Cuban plantations, the flow of ideas about civilization and purity, racial hierarchies, and legitimate ritual practices pushed underground

the worship of Šàngó, and more generally, African-based religious practices. Alongside the criminalization of African religions was the crime of miscegenation, in which inter-mixing between whites and blacks was outlawed. This led to increasing regimentation of race relations and the introduction of various forms of Christianity in the iconic representation of *orishá* practices. The word, "Santería," for example, was derived from the Spanish *santo*, or saint, and means the worship of saints—as in Catholic saints and in the history of the formation of Santería. Yoruba *orishás*, once outlawed on plantations in Cuba, led to the production of two stages in the development of *orishá* transformation. The first stage, the establishment of the *regla de ochó*, occurred during the first generation of African slaves in Cuba, when the Spanish colonial government encouraged enslaved Africans to create mutual aid societies.⁷ The second critical moment took place during the second and third generations of enslaved Africans, who adapted *orishá* practices based on their social circumstances, producing new hybrid representations of *orishá* icons in which Catholic symbols came to stand in for them in *Santería*, as a reflection of Afro-Cubanness.

In relation to Ọyó-Šàngó's parallel, therefore, it is the Catholic icon Saint Barbara that became the point of departure for understanding the mythic power of Šàngó. The legend popularly represented and, of late, reproduced throughout the Internet describes Saint Barbara as the "extremely beautiful daughter of a wealthy heathen named Dioscorus, who lived near Nicomedia in Asia Minor." Because of her beauty, and fearful that she would marry and leave him, he jealously locked her in a tower to protect her from the outside world. Shortly before embarking on a journey, he commissioned a bathhouse to be built for her. During the building, Barbara heard of the teachings of Christ, and while her father was away she looked out upon the surrounding countryside and marveled at the growing things; the trees, the animals, and the people. She contemplated their beauty and decided that all these must be part of a master plan, and that the idols of wood and stone worshipped by her parents must be condemned as false. Gradually she rejected the occult and accepted the Christian faith.

As her belief became firm, she directed that the builders redesign the bathhouse her father had planned, adding another window so that the three windows might symbolize the Holy Trinity. When her father returned, he was enraged at the changes and infuriated when Barbara acknowledged that she was a Christian. He dragged her before the prefect of the province, who decreed that she be tortured and put to death by decapitation. Dioscorus himself carried out the death sentence, and

on his way home he was struck by lightning and his body consumed by the electric fields. This legend of the lightning bolt which struck down Saint Barbara's persecutor caused her to be regarded as the patron saint to be called upon in times of danger from thunderstorms, earthquakes, fires, and sudden death.

Nevertheless, this memory of Šangó-like features in the imagery of saints is being undermined by African-centered movements, which are interested in eradicating the memory of slave adaptations and reclaiming and returning Santería to its *orishá* roots. And although at various times Santería leaders have been allied with *orishá*-voodoo practitioners, there is a growing divide between those practitioners who use the Catholic imagery that constituted Santería as a Cuban religion and *Ọyótúnjì* *orishá*-voodoo orthodoxy. In the context of the Africanization of *orishá* icons, the imagery and meaning of Šangó represents the disaggregating of Christian influences from *orishá* iconography and a return to the grandeur of the historical Šangó.

Given these histories of both grandeur and regulation of African practices, the development of *orishá*-voodoo Yorùbá revivalism was self-consciously driven by the growing tide of black nationalism in the 1960s, in which black Americans reconceptualized Santería in order to disentangle it from its Spanish and Christian influences. Ultimately, these changes meant symbolically "blackening" Santería and referentially indexing the West African empires and kingdoms that preceded the colonization of Nigeria by the British Empire. *Ọyótúnjì* Village practitioners are one such example of practitioners interested in Africanizing Christian influences of Santería iconic meanings, thus returning Šangó imagery to its historical and mythic origins.

The Africanization of Šangó in *Ọyótúnjì* Village Networks

Ọyótúnjì revivalists often highlight the bringing of *orishá*-voodoo to the United States as the event in which Afro-Cubans were called on by the gods to give their secrets back to black people. They often recall it through the following narrative told to me by the leader of *Ọyótúnjì*, known as the *aba* (or king). This took place in 1959, when the soon-to-be founder of *Ọyótúnjì* Village, then named Serge King, and his friend, a Cuban American man named Chris Oliana, were the first two U.S. Americans to be initiated into the Afro-Cuban priesthood cult of Šangó in Matanzas, Cuba. This ritual moment is seen as critical because the diviner identified King as being protected by the patron *orishá* *Ọbátalá* but, in a negative configuration, (*Ọsẹ̀ Mèjì* in *asóbá*). He told King that

he should not assume positions of leadership. So rather than initiating King into the Obátalá cult, the diviner initiated him into the Šàngó secret society and warned that he was to be careful to not share the secrets of Africa's gods with others.

Relegating the divinatory interpretation of the *adù* to white Cuban racism, King noted that white Cubans are afraid that black Americans would enter the Santería priesthood and Africanize it. He disagreed that Šàngó powers were uncontrollable and instead wanted to interpret the powers of Šàngó as fundamentally about royal grandeur, manly governance, and responsibility. As explained to me by King, now *oba* (king) of Òyótúnjì, the central reason he entered the Santería priesthood was so that he could gain the necessary ritual training in order to return Santería practices to their "purest African form." King began his loyal collaborations with his Santería alliances in New York City and tried to abide by the basic cultural and political rules of secrecy and discretion—central legacies from the disguising of Yorùbá religion during conditions of slavery.⁸ King and Oliana together established an *òrìṣà* religious organization and named it the Šàngó Temple. During this period, increasing numbers of Santería networks began to proliferate. They ranged from ritual products—thousands of saint candles, and packaged herbs and remedies—to *òrìṣà* objects, witchcraft protection, and good luck charms. However, by the mid-1960s, King had incorporated into his practice the fundamental principles of Black Nationalism that had been circulating within artistic and political circles of the time. He renamed his new version of Santería *òrìṣà*-voodoo, naming the new temple the "Yorùbá Temple," emphasizing the African origins of Santería and not the conditions of slavery that led to the creation of Santería from Yorùbá-*òrìṣà* practices.⁹

In an attempt to symbolically Africanize what is popularly referred to as the European features of Catholic saints, they substituted the white faces of the saints with brown faces, painted pictures that emphasized thick lips and broad noses, and changed the spelling of Spanish/Lucumi ritual words as well as the pronunciation of ritual objects, creating a landscape that referenced the symbolic prestige of precolonial *òrìṣà* life. The imagery of Šàngó was transformed from that which emphasized his sexual cunning to that which foregrounded his extravagant rule.

On a basic level of signification, therefore, Òyótúnjì practitioners argued for the need of re-Africanizing Santería as fundamentally Yorùbá and visibly "African." Therefore, in order to "purify" Santería from what they saw as its problematic psychology of slavery and residual colonial hegemony, Yorùbá revivalists engaged in actively re-signifying Santería within racial discourses of African origins. Spurred by ideological clashes over

the "whitening" of Yorùbá ritual practices in Cuba, and the incorporation of Catholic saints, Yorùbá revivalists in the U.S.—black American nationalists—renamed their version of Yorùbá-Santeria "*orishá*-voodoo," substituting Spanish-language words and pronunciations with African words. Using representations that incorporated the mythic visual imagery of the old empire from which Yorùbá people are known to have descended, the founders created landscapes that resembled Nigerian Yorùbá religious and political institutions thought to be more "authentically" African. They substituted their Anglophone names with Yorùbá names, producing performance cartographies of Yorùbá membership. For example, Serge King, the *pha*, changed his family name to Adéfúnmi.

Through routine practices that emphasized the African origins of Yorùbá practices—from Africa to the Americas—Yorùbá revivalists recast Santería through the signs of African grandeur and performed nobility. Adéfúnmi and other prominent *orishá*-voodoo leaders changed the Santería saint-like representations of deities, replacing them with symbolic objects from the earth. The membership officially adopted the principles of Black Nationalism and began wearing West African *dánšékés* and *àwùbás*, with afros, and adopting what they saw as either African names in general or Yorùbá names in particular. Arguing that such Eurocentric vestiges needed to be shed, he emphasized the aesthetic return to African forms, even while he emphasized the need to pursue such goals in the Americas. These aesthetic interventions into religious representation were embedded in values connected to differences between whiteness and blackness, Christianity and Santería-based practices, and reflected King's attempts to re-signify the meaning of Santería through a temporal return to a precolonial period and in referentially African spatial and aesthetic terms. These reformulations of Africanness not only declared a narrative of race as the modality through which new authorial conceptions of Yorùbá belonging were lived, it also established the realm of spiritual ancestry, and not simply biological birthplace, as the basis for black American claims to a precolonial African past, yet a heritage traceable with the phenotypic establishment of racial belonging.

How *orishá* practitioners make and remake the imaginary within particular boundaries of hegemonic conceptions of reality is deeply embedded in the institutionalization of what is "authentically African." In the case of Yorùbá revivalism, the sign of Šangó as a metaphor of particular forms of manhood represents struggles over religious meanings and their histories of power. The ideological domain of de-territorialized Yorùbá aesthetics is embedded in the production of particular relations of value. And the relations of value to which I am referring are influenced by

particular racial hierarchies in which the historical meaning of the black body became the basis for the development of racial discourses concerning the degeneration of African peoples in the making of the modern world.¹⁰ Therefore, how the racial body is read and transformed into a sign of membership and how it is connected through the historical production of modern subjectivities is as much about the institutional representation of racial belonging as it is about the historical, mythical, and spiritual roots that constitute their differences in interpretations. However, it is also linked to new chronotopic logics of transmission and authority, in which spiritual means are temporally and spatially reconceptualized in the archaic precolonial past and the physicality of geography rendered secondary. Here, we see that the imaginaries and domains of authority in which interpretations of *Ẓàngó* are rendered legitimate are shaped by institutional ideologies that legitimize Africanness in particular ways.

Understanding ritual and representational transformations means understanding the workings of power and agency in the making of new interpretive meanings. Michel Foucault, in an attempt to understand the conditions of arranging social life so that agents create domains of knowledge which are ordered in relation to hegemonic power, emphasized that though state regulations work to shape the structure of order, it is conceptual ordering through particular institutions and ultimately through individual participation that leads to the reproduction and cultivation of particular types of subjects.¹¹ Seen thus, the force of state governmental power is its ability to influence meaning and order, not so much through overt force, but through understanding the effects of the state (Cuban criminalization of *Santería*, or U.S. Jim Crow regulations, for example); it is the "governmentality" of power, the regimes of knowledge, and forms of ordering that are embodiments of the institutional effects of new classifications of modern knowledge. Following this roadmap for thinking about the apparatuses of regulation and the historical and contemporary politics through which practitioners participate in the regulation of meanings, it is critical to approach the making of the Yorùbá-*Ẓàngó* imaginary in terms that call on the recognition of various techniques of knowledge that are used to re-narrate belonging, to create distinctive spaces, values, and practices within it.

The production of specific meanings from which to read landmarks does not just represent the making of signifiers of Africanness in and of themselves; they become signs of territorial attachment, and their meanings are produced in ways that differentiate between state citizenship and new domains of authority in which alternate innovations for

understanding belonging are possible. Therefore, representations of Šangó in relation to African origins, Cuban transformations, or nonracial but spiritual lineage highlight how various practices are ultimately about how sites, people, things are imbued with particular ideological meanings. As such, iconic representations and the practices inhabited by them are shaped by ideological units from which people produce boundaries, enact social distinctions, and call on institutions to derive the authority from which to rearticulate meaning. As we shall see, new domains of legitimating Yorùbá belonging through ritual made possible spiritual linkages to West Africa and led to new ways of configuring belonging as a result of de-territorialized spiritual connections.

Back to Africa: Re-Africanization and the Spiritual Making of Ọyòtúnjì

By the early to mid-1970s, the development of Yorùbá revivalism benefited from both the rising tide of black history institutions in the United States and the development of different urban networks from which to disseminate knowledge of Yorùbá cultural history.¹² And by the late 1970s, the membership of the growing Yorùbá movement, an outgrowth of Santería, comprised hundreds of U.S. voodoo practitioners spread throughout the United States and Canada. This form of Yorùbá transnational religious nationalism, as well as the proliferation of Afrocentricity and African American cultural movements, can also be seen as a sort of culture industry, in which the production of local aesthetic forms is today part of the globalization process;¹³ as such, it is within particular nodes that we need to understand the channels and circuits for the global circulation of *òrìṣà* aesthetics of various kinds,¹⁴ as well as the ways that particular events contribute to particular imprints.¹⁵

Combined with attention to the need to obtain and read African-centered textbooks, Ọyòtúnjì Yorùbá revivalists, in establishing the fundamental mission of Yorùbá revivalism, focused on the educational and ritual development of Ọyòtúnjì's Archministry. With the task of recasting Santería as not sufficiently African and recreating a social organization that would resemble their African-centered alliances, the formation of Yorùbá traditionalism, a new intentional community in the bushes of South Carolina—absent of lived or historical knowledge about the particularities of Yorùbá cultural practices—had a difficult institutional beginning.

As a result of increasing transnational travel made possible by the increasing affordability of travel for middle-class Americans interested in experiencing life elsewhere, thousands of black nationalists embarked

on pilgrimages to the Middle East and heritage tours to various parts of Africa. To strengthen their ties to Nigerian Yorùbá clan groups and to gain the ritual legitimacy of Nigerian rituals, in 1972 Adéfúnmi joined many of those voyagers by traveling to Nigeria. While there, he embarked on a ritual initiation and returned to South Carolina with the symbolic power of having undergone West African rituals. With the goal of studying and learning about Yorùbá ritual processes, Adéfúnmi lived among families for a four-month period and learned the Yorùbá language in order to study the organization and history of Nigerian Yorùbá practices. There he was initiated into the cult of Ifá (a ritual cult group) in Abòkùta—which provided him with the legitimacy that he sought.

The ritual process clarified for him the 1959 Santería interpretation of his initiation *adù*, *Ọsẹ̀ Mèjì*. In responding to his request that they clarify the symbolic meaning of *Ọsẹ̀ Mèjì* in *asòbá*, his new Nigerian advisors told him that his configuration of *Ọsẹ̀ Mèjì* did not represent someone who would be a dangerous leader. Rather, the Abòkùta-based Yorùbá priest who initiated him explained that the divinatory *adù* represented a highly powerful leader who would do many things that could have honorable consequences for his family. Herein was reinstated a predominantly *Ọyó* interpretation of *Ẓàngó* as leader, as responsible monarch.

In *òrìṣà* spheres of practice there are both divinatory rules produced for personal purposes and sociopolitical rules for civic purposes. The primary source of Yorùbá religious rules is derived from verses from the divinatory corpus, and the application is based on the diviner's interpretation of the verses (*adù*) to give personal advice or to explain issues of larger social relevance. It is believed that the divinatory sources—the stories of ritual knowledge—are sacred because they were communicated in the form of stories/verses (*ṣeṣe*) from *Olódùmarè* (the Yorùbá god) through intermediaries known as *òrìṣà*. These stories, manifest in proverbs and songs, represent characterizations of *òrìṣà* believed to have once been kings, heroes, and soldiers with human imperfections. Upon death, these figures are believed to have transformed themselves and reentered the human world in the form of the sky, sea, and earth. In their symbolic form they are represented by various colors, environmental conditions, and personality characteristics. Today, those who follow the teachings of *Olódùmarè* do so by interpreting verses through various divinatory oracles, such as Ifá. These forms of divinatory teachings are constituted in the verses of the Ifá oracle and describe the life-worlds of the *òrìṣà*, seen as *Olódùmarè*'s messages to his sons and daughters and therefore timeless and a reflection of *Olódùmarè*'s divinity. Ultimately, divinatory knowledge is the gateway into the cosmic world, and it is through such

forms of ritual that narratives of ancestry are concretized. Diviners are critical, thus, for not only are they key intellectual producers, but they possess the power of interpretation, thereby producing knowledge about the past, present, and future (destiny) and, in so doing, using divinatory sources to shape, enforce, and rethink social rules in everyday life.

Nevertheless, differences in the interpretation of the divinatory corpus reflect differences in the field of cultural production within which practitioners are situated. For when, at the end of 1972, Adéfúnmí completed his travels, he returned to Òyótúnjì, where his constituency crowned him as *oba* (their king), endowing him with the official Yorùbá title *kábíyèsí*. *Kábíyèsí*, often translated to mean “Long Live the King” or “Your/His Royal Highness,” a marker of a leader—an *oba* or king—signaled the temporal and spatial power of Yorùbá governance, establishing symbolic codes which set the terms of particular social relations. Since his ascent to the throne, *Kábíyèsí* became the leader of Òyótúnjì, a democratic dictatorship governing Yorùbá revivalists in the United States. With symbolic as well as ultimate power, his leadership set the terms for particular assertions of Yorùbá social memory which worked within the historical workings of race.

As community leaders established political structures,¹⁰ legal codes, Yorùbá language training, and the physical spatial design in a way that represented Yorùbá social life, members interested in developing religious and ancestral and *òrìṣà* worship organized social and religious cult groups and constructed a physical plant that was organized around a large palace courtyard called the *Ààfin* (palace) in order to replicate images of African kingdoms. Unlike the social organization of Santería as a covert practice that incorporated the structure of paternal and maternal descent (*madrino* and *padrino*) in relation to “houses,” and that initiated neophytes into a multiplicity of *òrìṣà* domains, the founders of Òyótúnjì attempted to re-Africanize *òrìṣà* worship by creating a structure of *òrìṣà* cults in their own towns with chieftaincy structures and by initiating neophytes into only one *òrìṣà* domain. In the case of the making of distinct Yorùbáland towns, this created a public sphere in which the Africanization of *òrìṣàs* such as Šangó could be revered as an extension of the modernity of African membership. The transformation of multiple *òrìṣà* initiations is believed to have transformed with the multiplicity of enslaved Africans in highly concentrated areas and, therefore, the need to equip practitioners with the skills to work with a more diverse array of *òrìṣà* practitioners.

However, with the 1990s’ proliferation of the *òrìṣà* commodities on the Internet, the commodification of spirituality and the availability of religious packages of *òrìṣà* knowledge became controversial. What was

new in the 1990s was the contestation over the explanations for ritual policies and differences in the representation of the *òrìṣà* and *òrìṣà* life. Electronic technologies such as the Internet and mass technologies of knowledge circulation are providing the engines by which religious interpretive meanings are being played out. And if technology is providing the engine, then what is particular about the global revival of these forms of autochthonous religious claims to homelands is that the domains of authorial determination are becoming increasingly autonomous and reproducing spheres of logic that produce particular ideological investments. With such cultural underpinnings, Yorùbá religious revivalism is being transformed by a modernity of religious heritage in which we are seeing the innovation of cultural meanings that are being called on to address social exclusions and institutional failures. And as a result, capitalist modernity reflects corporate climates in which corporations today are increasingly transnational and less loyal to nationalist projects. Today, capitalism of the early twenty-first century is centrally allied with new heritage claims and working alongside rights and democratization movements toward the circulation of new transnational imaginaries. Charting these linkages enables us to recognize that the new cultural politics—as it's being played out in religious terms—must be understood in relation to particular modernities of interpretive power which are complexly historical and produced within contexts of difference.

In the end, the modernity of Šàngó revivalism, in this age in which new technologies are used to publicize particular renditions of Šàngó worship, continues to employ the logics of various divinatory interpretations in order to explain new forms of inequalities. Using varied forms of modernity for understanding the processes of reinterpreting how signs—racial, national, regional, spiritual, mythic—are constituted through the simultaneous conjunctures of institutions of power, new global markets, and the precariousness by which people participate in the reproduction of norms allows us to detail various regulatory orders and the contexts in which they become manifest.

Conclusion: The Realm of the Transnational

As new forms of social organization are negotiated between religious houses, credentialing institutions, and market pressures, we see that how *òrìṣàs* are represented or their mythology translated is an attempt both to rectify social inequalities and to become a discourse on power that gives local meaning to the functioning of power in the nation, transnational spheres, and the world. In understanding these processes of producing

meanings, meanings of the iconic signs of Šangó, it is not just the regulatory power of the state, its laws, or its codes of subjugation that are at play. The role of agents and their moral imaginaries coupled with the globalization of a new industry—that of occult markets spread through a heritage and culture industry—that enable practitioners to re-signify meanings according to historically constituted modernities of power. For in ritual arenas, spaces of occult transformation exist within the vestiges of hegemonic order. These seemingly contradictory connections between Christianity, Spanish and British cultural hegemonies, and colonial laws in the expression of Yorùbá revivalist religious practices are fundamental to the reformulation of Yorùbá revivalism in Òyótúnjì. They are part of the encounter with European colonial pasts, American expansionism, and the demise of the West African empires and must be understood in relation to contemporary modernities of subjecthood.

NOTES

This chapter originally appeared in Kamari Maxine Clarke, *Mapping Yoruba Networks: Power and Agency in the Making of Transnational Communities* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004).

1. I neither locate it as only a physical place or a marginal site, which relies on black-white dichotomies, nor take its unit of analysis as a demographically small community as the end of the story. Rather, I treat it as the middle of an ongoing story about the cultural production in which religious interpretations are struggled over, contested, and produced in particular regional zones.

2. Ultimately, there is no clear separation between the religious ritual system that shapes Yorùbá knowledge and the customary rules that frame which practices are acceptable. They operate in overlapping institutions of knowledge and vary in hierarchy of sources. The differences in application lie in three domains: the interpretive authority of particular divinatory forms that shape the legitimacy of *orishá* logic, the recognition of those forms of logic by others, and the methodologies by which practitioners achieve such logic.

3. Olabiyi Babalola Yai, "Yorùbá Religion and Globalization: Some Reflections," *Cuadernos Digitales* 15 (Oct. 2001): 1–21.

4. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming," in *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism*, ed. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, 1–56 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001).

5. Take, for example, this reading of the year for Year 2004, in which Šangó is centrally figured in a Santería reading: *Governing Mpungo/Orishá this Coming Year 2004*.

SHANGÓ—*Siete Rayos*. Path: War, Disrespect, Tragedy, Financial Recovery and Prosperity. Flag: Red with Yellow or Gold Border. To be placed at the

Highest Point in Your Home, or behind front door. *Banderá* / Flag for the Year 2004—Marks War and Chàngó get Involved!

1. Avoid conflicts between Elders and Juniors. Prepare for continued battles and war.
 - As the past few years have indicated, war continues. This year Shàngó get involved. Shàngó comes to help "his people."
 - Avoid any and all battles and wars between Elder and Junior.
 - Junior members must act with total respect towards their Elders.
 - Elders must not give away their work for free this year. Junior members must pay all "*derewokó*" complete and placed at the foot of Muerto/Eggun or Òrìsà, or as described by Elder.
 - Elders must take their responsibility seriously and stand firm this year with their godchildren and other junior members, although the Elder must continue to be compassionate and understanding.
 - Avoid unnecessary battles and wars (conflicts) be it, in the work place, social gatherings, religious gatherings, in family matters and in the home. Show respect to others.
 - Clarify misunderstandings by demonstrating patience and respect for one another.
 - Continue to be a person of Good and Morale Character.
 - Do not drink alcohol this coming year.
2. In this year's reading there is contradiction.
 - Prosperity comes but war continues.
 - Receive and follow advice from one source this coming year to avoid confusion.
 - There will be grave consequences in places where there is uncertainty.
 - Avoid traveling abroad to preserve your safety. Stay close to home and stay close to your family.
 - *** Shàngó comes this year to take over the disarray of worldly matters that plagues us.
 - Elders should dress up Shàngó with as much red fabric as possible or place him in an altar. He must be located near the front door of the home or facing the front door for everyone to see. Do not hide Shàngó this year. Reveal him to the World.
 - If you are a *palero* and not crowned in Ocha, dress up your *prendas* with red colored fabric or place red fabric around the *prenda*.
 - **** Shàngó must not eat separately this year. Whenever Shàngó gets fed, Eggun must eat with him.
 - Shango and Eggun must be fed White Roosters this Year, and every three months.
 - Eggun can be fed separately all year long, but when Shàngó eats, Eggun eats. Note: Shàngó can be fed rooster alongside any *prenda*.
 - ***** This year give Òchun offerings of very sweet pastries along side of Eggun.

- Do not disperse of Ọchun's and Eggun's offerings at the river this year.

- Do not ask for favors of Ọchun this year. Give Ọchun thanks for your blessings once this coming year and that's it.

- Avoid going to the river this coming year to prevent accidents, drowning, misfortune, and other problems occurring there. Do not give any offerings at the river this year.

3. Personal Prosperity etc.

- Make every effort to progress this year in business and other employment.

- Do not reveal your secrets or knowledge to friends, family or co-workers.

- Keep all your private matters, private. Keep all business matters private as well.

- Try to learn as much as possible from others this coming year and use to your advantage in business or other employment. Be subtle.

- This year give an offering after every blessing received, to seal the blessing and protect it. The process is: first an offering, then a blessing, then an offering again. If you receive more blessings after the last offering, give another offering again to bless it and protect it.

- Do not lend out money and do not give money away. Keep all your blessings for you and your immediate family (if married). However, pay all your debts and properly maintain your finances.

- For those who have been advised to receive their warriors this year must do so within the first three months of the year.

- The reception of *reguardos*, other objects and *adánmá ọrísá* that has been previously divined must be completed as soon as possible.

4. Šangó says that this year there is not sitting on the fence!

- This year is a decisive year. Those who have received blessings from Ocha must at least receive their warriors and *elékes*. There is no sitting on the fence. You must decide whether or not you want to adhere to the "*reglas*" (laws) that govern our way of life or move on with your life. This applies to all ways of life, including Palo and Ifá.

- Elders must take a stand this year and demand compliance with all *reglas* of our way of life.

- Junior members must continue respecting their Elders in every facet of our culture.

6. J. Omosade Awolalu. *Yorùbá Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites* (Brooklyn: Athelia Henrietta Press, 1979), 34.

7. It is believed that the *regla de ochu* was encouraged in order to avoid slave uprisings.

8. Santería regulations required that ritual initiations had to be presided over by Babalawos (the highest ranking priest—that of the Ifá *ọrísá*), and as a young priest without a congregation of qualified African-centered priests, it was difficult for the king to function in Santería religious circles without their support.

9. The consequence of developing an African-centric orientation was that over time he lost his constituency and therefore potential economic power when most of the Santería consultants refused to support his increasingly race-centered approach and Oliana severed ties with him.

10. Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), 4.

11. Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991).

12. By 1970, five families moved with Adéfúnmi to Beaufort, South Carolina, some sixty miles southwest of Charleston, with the goal of establishing a black separatist community in the bushes of South Carolina. The members decided that Adéfúnmi, as the former spiritual leader of the Yorùbá temple, should become the leader of the entire Òyótúnjí establishment. The significant years of formulating the structure and layout of Òyótúnjí Village began after their second move in 1972, when they were forced to relocate from their initial rented site on Brays Island Road to the new ten-acre site on Route 17, which they purchased collectively. Nevertheless, constructing a community that undermined Santero racism, yet had minimal access to Nigerian Yorùbá traditionalists, meant that practitioners had to depend on the scant publications about Yorùbá religious practices available to them. Unlike the intergenerational training of Santería, deeply entrenched in the social memory of families, the òrìṣà-vooodoo movement drew its strength from the deployment of educational institutional knowledge.

13. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

14. Ariana Hernandez-Reguant, "Radio Taino and the Globalization of the Cuban Culture Industries," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2002.

15. Anna Tsing, "The Global Situation," *Cultural Anthropology* 15, no. 3 (2000): 327-60.

16. Joined by the arrival of over a hundred residents throughout 1974 and 1975, the growing members of Òyótúnjí had to contend with implementing their visions of Yorùbá social organization. They set up a traditional decision-making council, referred to in Yorùbá as the Ògbóní society, a council of landholders and chiefs. With the Ògbóní, designed to replicate the organization of Yorùbá customary towns, establishing continuities in ancestral governance and contemporary governance, village leaders were able to implement practical decision-making rules and procedures.

Wither Šàngó?

An Inquiry into Šàngó's "Authenticity" and Prominence in the Caribbean

STEPHEN D. GLAZIER

Many twentieth-century studies of African religions in the Caribbean focused on correspondences between members of the Yorùbá pantheon and Catholic saints. On Trinidad, Grenada, and St. Vincent the major associations are between Šàngó and Saint John. In Cuba, however, the main correspondence is said to be between Šàngó and Saint Barbara. This contrasts with other Caribbean islands (notably Haiti and Dominica) and Brazil, where major associations are between Šàngó and Saint Michael, Saint Jerome, and/or Saint Peter.

Associations with Catholic saints are widely known, and informants—if asked—are both able and willing to provide detailed information on the topic. But judging from the tone of their responses, such correspondences seem to have been a major focus for earlier generations of researchers, but are not a major concern for believers. Devotees are increasingly concerned about personality traits and relationships between various members of the *òrìṣà* pantheon; especially in terms of hierarchies and "family" relationships. The most exhaustive compilation of *òrìṣà*-saint correspondences is provided by William Bascom.¹ *Òrìṣà* devotees found Bascom's chart—borrowing a phrase from nineteenth-century existential theologian Søren Kierkegaard—"interesting but not edifying." Nevertheless, the comprehensive and elaborate nature of these correspondences bespeaks an urgently felt need on the part of those who created them.

With respect to Šàngó shrines in the English-speaking Caribbean, Melville J. Herskovits, George Eaton Simpson, William Bascom, and

Frances Henry documented extensive Šàngó devotion, especially on the island of Trinidad, where all forms of Yorùbá religion were reported as "Šàngó worship." Bascom reports only two Caribbean islands—Trinidad and Grenada—where Šàngó is the name of the cult and *òrìṣà* worship is identified primarily with Šàngó.²

Recently, leaders within various African religious communities in Trinidad have attempted to deemphasize the significance of Šàngó, labeling all African-derived religions as "Òrìṣà work." At the Ninth International Òrìṣà conference, which was held in Port-of-Spain in 1999, Šàngó was not featured even by his own priests and priestesses. For example, in the address given by Šàngó priestess Patricia McLeod—Ìyá Šàngó Wùmí—the *òrìṣà* religion was treated in general, but she did not deal with Šàngó in particular. Nevertheless, a recent survey of Šàngó shrines indicates a resurgence of Šàngó. Šàngó stools are well maintained, there is evidence of fresh sacrifices, and Šàngó appears to have attracted a new generation of devotees in Trinidad—both male and female. It is of interest that among new devotees, Šàngó is increasingly identified with Saint Barbara.

In *The Encyclopedia of Contemporary Latin American and Caribbean Cultures*, a brief unsigned entry on "Šàngó" states: "According to historians, Šàngó in Trinidad acquired its name from the observation of some European, who mistakenly attributed one òrìṣà's name to an entire religious system. In the late twentieth century, many practitioners promoted the use of the more accurate term 'òrìṣà' worship, but the term Šàngó remains in common usage."³

The actual situation, of course, is much more complex. The term "Šàngó" was not introduced by "some European" but by four prominent American anthropologists: Melville J. Herskovits, Francis Henry, William Bascom, and George Eaton Simpson. And it was not a mistake. Herskovits, Henry, Bascom, and Simpson dealt with informants who saw themselves primarily as followers of Šàngó. While many of their informants' public rituals were open to other members of the *òrìṣà* pantheon, their personal (house) altars were dedicated solely to Šàngó.

Researchers never deal with religions in the abstract. They come to understand religions as mediated through a number of key informants. George Eaton Simpson's description of Šàngó as "mild, calm, understated, and sympathetic" is more in keeping with the personality of his major informant, Fitzroy Small, than it is of traditional descriptions of Šàngó. As the Yoruba god of thunder, Šàngó is often described as quick to anger and is seldom portrayed as "mild and understated." Fitzroy Small, who served as Simpson's introduction to Šàngó, worked as a doorman at

the Trinidad Hilton. Small took Simpson to *òrìṣà* ceremonies in Lavenille (the same neighborhood fictionalized in Earl Lovelace's 1972 novel, *Dragon Can't Dance*). Fitzroy's soft-spoken congeniality—along with his ability to function as a culture broker and ambassador of Şàngó—made him an ideal informant. He was also host to William and Bertha Bascom during their time in Trinidad. Small died in 1982. He took me to feasts at his *palais* during the summers of 1978 and 1979. To his dying day, Fitzroy thought of his religion as "Şàngó" and identified himself as a "Şàngó Baptist." This was not merely a label imposed by outsiders. It was the way a prominent and knowledgeable believer articulated his faith.

According to Tracey E. Hucks, *òrìṣà* worship in Trinidad is divided into two main groups: "Ọpa Ọriṣà" (Şàngó) and "the Ọriṣà Movement."⁴ But there are other important distinctions. A small number of "Ọpa Ọriṣà" followers identify exclusively with Şàngó. While other *òrìṣà* may be present at their feasts, they personally are possessed only by Şàngó. Some Şàngó devotees claim to have no connections with Catholicism at all, while others emphasize primary ties with a number of *òrìṣà* (Ọgún, Èṣù, and so on) and with Roman Catholicism. These devotees consider themselves primarily Catholics who are also involved in *òrìṣà* work. Such distinctions, of course, are largely matters of personal choice and self-definition.

A large percentage of *òrìṣà* devotees maintain secondary ties with the Spiritual Baptist faith, while others ("Şàngó Baptists") see themselves primarily as Spiritual Baptists who also attend *òrìṣà* feasts. Since *òrìṣà* feasts are held only once or twice a year and Baptist services are held at least twice a week, Baptist churches provide the major organizational nexus for Şàngó Baptists. In addition, some *òrìṣà* devotees and Spiritual Baptists sponsor yearly "banquets" in the Kabala tradition.⁵ But Şàngó devotees who claim no connections to Christianity seldom sponsor Kabala "banquets."

My own experiences with Fitzroy Small contrast markedly with Frances Henry's encounter with her chief informant, Pa Neezer—also a devotee of Şàngó. Henry portrays Şàngó as "irascible and unpredictable." Her depiction is more consistent with Yorùbá mythology and the literature surrounding Şàngó. But it is also more consistent with Pa Neezer's reputation. Neezer was both feared and revered.

Early in their research, Melville and Frances Herskovits incorrectly believed that the "purest" and most "authentic" forms of African religion were to be found away from major urban areas. This proved unfortunate, because Yorùbá religion in the New World is primarily an urban phenomenon. As William Bascom points out, the Yorùbá have a long

tradition of urban life in Africa, and "more knowledgeable priests may have moved to urban areas in order to attract a larger and wealthier clientele."⁶ In addition, rural-urban distinctions do not mean as much in the Caribbean as in Africa, especially on islands such as Trinidad, where one can get almost anywhere within a day.

The Herskovitses ended up in the remote Trinidad village of Toco, where, to their great disappointment, they found no evidence of Šàngó religion at all. Contemporary residents of Toco emphasize that Šàngó was indeed present during the Herskovitses' fieldwork, but somehow the followers of Šàngó managed to elude the Herskovitses. Melville and Frances ended up studying Toco's Spiritual Baptists instead.

Even today, Toco remains an isolated community. One does not just end up in Toco, one has to want to get there. But as Kevin Birth points out in *Any Time Is Trinidad Time*, "the poor quality of the roads discourages outsiders from coming, but the roads do not discourage residents from leaving."⁷ There is considerable outmigration. For example, Toco's Šàngó Baptists regularly hold joint worship services (known as "pilgrimages") with other Šàngó Baptist and Spiritual Baptist churches throughout the island.

The Herskovitses (and later George Eaton Simpson) also worked with King Ford, a prominent Šàngó leader in Tunapuna, Trinidad, a suburb of Port-of-Spain. Ford was a devotee of Ògún, but his center was frequented by followers of Šàngó. While Ford remained a forceful, disciplined, and proud devotee of Ògún, it was Šàngó—and not Ògún—who dominated his center.

These early ethnographic studies are of greater than passing interest. From these studies, one gets a feel for the growth of the *òriṣà* movement over time. Contemporary followers of *òriṣà*—such as Rawle Gibbons—consult these and other anthropological texts.⁸ In addition, Simpson and Bascom are highly reliable and refreshingly candid about the limitations of their research. Both attempt to separate descriptions from their interpretations, which makes many of their observations useful—even when they are based on theoretical assumptions that are incorrect or out of fashion.

All researchers, of course, bring their personal agendas, shortcomings, and perspectives into their research. Melville Herskovits and William Bascom, for example, did their initial fieldwork in Africa and later went to the Caribbean. This colored their impressions of Trinidadian Šàngó. George Eaton Simpson went to Africa long after completing his Caribbean fieldwork, and Frances Henry has examined the *òriṣà* movement only in Canada and the Caribbean.

African languages constitute a major barrier for some researchers and some informants. Many difficulties Simpson encountered while compiling a list of *òrìṣà* in Trinidad stem from his lack of familiarity with the Yorùbá language. In reproducing a list of *òrìṣàs*, for example, Simpson names "Adoweh?", "Ahmeeoh?", "Airecahsan?," and "Aireclay?"¹⁰ He cautions the reader that he is unsure if these names represent a single *òrìṣà* or four separate *òrìṣàs*. Only recently have scholars begun to utilize linguistic analyses to document the religious significance of Yorùbá retentions in the Caribbean.¹¹

At the time Herskovits, Bascom, Simpson, and Henry conducted their research, religious knowledge was transmitted orally. Past generations of *orisa* leaders in Trinidad (e.g., Fitzroy Small and King Ford) knew little Yorùbá aside from the opening songs they had learned by rote. Ford provided me with rough English translations of some songs. Small knew the African names of only six or seven *òrìṣàs* and referred to other *òrìṣàs* exclusively by their saint names. This contrasts with contemporary *òrìṣà* leaders—such as Rawle Gibbons and Patricia McLeod (Iyá Šàngó Wámi)—who have formally studied Yorùbá.

Of earlier researchers, only Frances Henry gives much attention to personal relationships between individual *òrìṣàs* and their followers. Earlier research focused on public feasts to the exclusion of private (household) rituals. This may have skewed perceptions of the religion. Public ceremonies are held infrequently, but private rituals are an everyday occurrence. Followers of Šàngó, for example, maintain personal altars to Šàngó in their homes, and the *òrìṣàs* play pivotal roles in all family, financial, and community interactions.

Many of the shrines mentioned by Simpson, Bascom, and Henry are still in operation, and most are in their original locations. Even when a property has changed hands and/or has been purchased by someone who is not a follower of the *òrìṣàs*, new owners have allowed ceremonies to continue. This is seen as a way to gain the favor and protection of the *òrìṣàs*.

Rawle Gibbons—who is both a follower of the *òrìṣàs* and one of the leading scholars of the movement—claims that there are now over eighty active shrines in Trinidad.¹¹ James Houk estimated that there are about seventy-five shrines.¹² Houk also estimated that the *òrìṣà* movement has between eight thousand and fifty thousand adherents in Trinidad. My own survey suggests that a more accurate number may be between forty and sixty shrines. One reason for discrepancies is that a number of shrines are used by multiple sponsors at different times. Often, ceremonial sites are given different names depending on who is utilizing them. Even my

lower figure represents a substantial increase in activity. Between forty and sixty shrines is nearly twice the number of shrines reported by the Herskovitses.¹³

European historians usually trace the beginnings of the *orisha* movement in Trinidad to the arrival of free African Americans following Emancipation in 1838.¹⁴ But this ignores over three hundred years of Spanish rule. Eighteenth-century Spanish immigration policies had a tremendous impact on the development of African religions in Trinidad. In 1776 the Spanish Crown opened Trinidad to settlement by French Catholics from other Caribbean islands. As a result, between 1777 and 1797 the population of Trinidad increased from about three thousand to seventeen thousand—a majority of immigrants arriving from the islands of Martinique, Dominica, and Grenada.¹⁵ Under the “Cedula for the Population of Trinidad of 1783,” the Spanish Crown extended generous land grants to planters from other Caribbean islands, and, in 1793, a contingent of French plantation owners (and their slaves) migrated to Trinidad from Santo Domingo. A large percentage of Santo Domingo slaves were of Fon origin, which may, in part, account for the prominence and persistence of *Şàngó* in Trinidad as well as for differences between *Şàngó* veneration in Trinidad and elsewhere in the English-speaking Caribbean, especially in Grenada.

Connections to Santo Domingo continue to influence the spread of *Şàngó*; for example, the presence of Haitian cane workers in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Cuba influenced spread of *Şàngó* traditions in Cuban Santería, and subsequently, the spread of *Şàngó* traditions in the United States and Canada. Similar migration patterns—or lack of migration—may account for some places in the Americas where no *Şàngó* traditions have been identified; examples include: Jamaica, Guyana, Paraguay, Bolivia, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Colombia, French Guiana, the Bahamas, and Bermuda.¹⁶

Much early research addressed the concept of syncretism, which was first introduced into anthropology in 1947 by Melville J. Herskovits.¹⁷ This was the same year that Herskovits also published *Trinidad Village*. Syncretism is an attempt to merge religious traditions and/or establish analogies between originally discrete religious and/or mythological traditions. At various times and places, religions have embraced syncretism, while at other times these same religions have rejected the practice as lacking in “authenticity.”¹⁸ Syncretism is sometimes seen as a devaluation of real, salient religious distinctions.

A number of conceptual shortcomings have been identified in Herskovits's original formulation.¹⁹ Nevertheless, most contemporary anthro-

pologists agree that it may be more valid to look at syncretism in terms of power relations. With respect to Šangó, it may be more useful to examine syncretism from the perspectives of the "syncretizers." When seen from the perspectives of syncretizers, syncretism appears as a series of individual acts rather than as an abstract and impersonal process.

Central to this discussion is the perceived relationship between African-derived religions and Roman Catholicism. It has been suggested that Catholic elements within the *òriṣà* movement were brought in to mask or hide African forms of worship under the cloak of Christianity. This explanation is not altogether satisfactory. As David Trotman astutely observed, if early followers of the *òriṣà* wanted to disguise their religion by incorporating elements of Roman Catholicism, it would not have been a very good disguise because no one could have confused *òriṣà* and Catholic rituals. Trotman also correctly contended that if devotees identified Catholic saints and Yorùbá deities in attempting to disguise the latter, any saint would have provided an equally good disguise.²⁰ But such was never the case. Only *some* saints became identified with a limited number of *òriṣà*, and many Catholic saints were neglected altogether. Ultimately, Trotman concluded that in the case of Trinidad it is most likely that the *òriṣà* religion and the veneration of the Catholic saints evolved together.

No one suggests that syncretism does not exist. Obviously, cultures that come into contact influence one another. But the term "syncretism," as it has been applied to the *òriṣà* movement, assumes too much passivity on the part of slave populations. As Morton Klass opined:

[I]n a universe where gods can do anything, theological studies are manifestly more important and interesting than the study of history, biology, geology, and astronomy put together. It follows that if a god is alleged to create the entire universe in the blink of an eye and knows all that has happened, is happening, and will happen—any inkling of that god's plans, whims, or preferences are of the utmost concern to humans.²¹

Caribbean slaves had more than a passing interest in the religion of their masters. They had an urgent need to incorporate European gods (and the powers of those gods) into their own lives. This urgent need, too, is perhaps at the root of perceived correspondences between Šangó, Saint John, Saint Jerome, Saint Peter, and Saint Barbara.

Some contemporary followers of the *òriṣà* have expressed a desire to "liberate" the *òriṣà* from Catholicism and to reassert what they see as its fundamental Yorùbá elements. They seek to emphasize Yorùbá elements at shrines and expunge Catholic ones. As I have noted elsewhere, such

attempts on the part of African American religious leaders have met with varying degrees of success elsewhere in the New World.²²

Funso Aiyejina and Rawle Gibbons underscore a major difference between *òrìṣà* ceremonies held in Africa and *òrìṣà* ceremonies held in the New World: "Among the Yorùbá of Nigeria, each individual/family/community is associated with a particular *òrìṣà*. . . . In Trinidad, all or as many of the *òrìṣà* as possible are represented in the yard."²³ Aiyejina and Gibbons interpret this as the "unification of *òrìṣà* under one roof." This may be an oversimplification, but it is nonetheless an important distinction. *Òrìṣà* feasts in the Caribbean tend to be inclusive rather than exclusive.²⁴

Ẓàngó feasts in Trinidad tend to attract participants from within extended families and neighborhoods. Trinidad devotees sponsor feasts once or twice a year. Feasts can last from a week to two nights. Cost is a major consideration since a well-attended feast costs their sponsors as much as 1200 TT (about \$400 US) each day. In 1986, I attended a feast in Tunapuna that lasted for six consecutive days and nights. This is uncommon. A majority of feasts last for three days and four nights, with the highest attendance and most major rituals occurring at night. Most frequently, ceremonial spirit possession and major sacrifices happen in the early morning and after midnight. As in all ritual, researchers need to document daylight activities in order to get a better sense of the preparations and expenses involved.²⁵ I have witnessed occasional daytime possessions and observed numerous private sacrifices during daylight hours. These, too, are an integral part of the ceremony.

Feasts begin with a flag raising (red and white for Ẓàngó). Christian prayers are usually part of the preparations. Again, if Catholic elements were intended only as disguise for *òrìṣà* worship, they would occur throughout the feast and not merely at the beginning, when few participants are in attendance.

The most important element of any feast is the drumming. Drummers are almost always followers of the *òrìṣà*, but, unlike other attendees, they are usually paid for their services. One of the most difficult responsibilities of feast sponsors is to secure enough drummers for the duration of a ceremony.²⁶

Following songs to Èṣù (who opens the gate for the other *òrìṣà*), Ẓàngó, Oya, Ogún, Oṣun, and other major *òrìṣà*s possess their devotees. A typical one-night ceremony consists of eight to ten concurrent possessions. On the other hand, often many hours pass before the *òrìṣà*s arrive. I have attended feasts in which there is no spirit possession on the first night. Sometimes, this pattern continues for the first two nights of the ceremony, but there is almost always possession by the third night.

As noted, most spirits arrive well after midnight. This underscores devotees' lack of control over the *òrìṣàs*. Sponsors do not direct the *òrìṣàs*. The *òrìṣàs* come and go according to their own whims. As Fitzroy Small pointed out, individuals cannot choose to follow a particular *òrìṣà*. It is always the *òrìṣàs* who choose their followers and not vice versa.

In some respects, feasts are highly organized. Yet in other respects, they lack centralized authority. Individual sponsors determine the times and the dates; they are responsible for all preparations. Sometimes sponsors obtain help from others; other times, they do everything themselves. Attendance varies. Feasts attract devotees and onlookers from nearby, but also attract followers from other parts of the island who may have experienced their first possession at that shrine or know the feast's sponsor through Spiritual Baptist or other religious connections.

According to Henry, some active Šangóists attend twenty to thirty major feasts a year.²⁷ This, too, assures high attendance. In addition, each ceremony attracts a large number of onlookers. The number of onlookers is important for sponsors because they are required to provide food and beverages to all who are present.

A notable trend is for fewer and fewer different *òrìṣàs* to be represented within any given feast. Simpson²⁸ lists over forty *òrìṣàs* and suggests that his list be compared to the lists of Herskovits and Herskovits²⁹ and Mischel.³⁰ In my experience, however, only eight or nine different *òrìṣàs* manifest within a typical ceremony. Among the most popular are: Emanjah, Ògún, Òṣun, Oya, Obátálá, Šànkpaná, and Šangó. A number of *òrìṣàs* listed by Simpson, Herskovits, Bascom, and Henry are no longer represented at all. In Trinidad, as in Haiti,³¹ the Yorùbá pantheon is shrinking. For example, different aspects of Šangó are combined with traits once associated with other *òrìṣà*. Šangó is sometimes merged with other *òrìṣàs* (e.g., Šangó/Obátálá; Šangó/Šànkpaná; Šangó/Èṣù). According to followers, this is to be expected since each *òrìṣà* possesses multiple personalities and attributes, only some of which are manifested at any given time. The merging of Šangó/Šànkpaná, for example, gives Šangó an opportunity to display aspects of his/her personality that are usually associated with Šànkpaná. From an organizational standpoint, it is politically advantageous for would-be leaders in the movement to be associated with the most powerful members of the pantheon. For example, individuals possessed by Šànkpaná alone are accorded lower status than one who follows Šangó/Šànkpaná or Ògún/Šànkpaná.

Contemporary Šangó yards look very similar to the yards described by Herskovits, Bascom, Simpson, and Henry. A typical yard consists of two major areas, the *palaís* (an open-aided area with cement or packed

earth floor and an aluminum or *tapia* roof; this is where drumming and ceremonial possession takes place) and the *chappelle* (an enclosed building where ritual implements are stored and three to four altars to the saints are maintained). In addition, each center has between five and twenty stools devoted to individual *òrisàs*. Each yard is presided over by an *iyá* (female leader) and/or a *mogbá* (a male leader). It is of interest that the words for buildings continue to be referred to in French, while leadership titles are expressed in African terms.

Female leaders (*iyá*) have always existed within the *òrisà* movement. Earlier researchers, who were predominantly male, did not seek them out. Today, a majority of the Trinidadian leadership is female. Rawle Gibbons estimates that over 50 percent of *òrisà* shrines are owned by women.³¹ Tracey Hucks claims that female members are among the most prominent, for example, "Ma Diamond" and "Mother Gerrald" (a Sàngó Baptist).³² Hucks points out that the head of the *òrisà* movement in Trinidad and Tobago is also a female, Melvina Rodney. Rodney is a Catholic, but her first husband was a prominent Sàngó Baptist leader.

The status of women in Afro-Caribbean religions is changing rapidly. In exploring gender roles, it is important to keep in mind the contributions of John K. Thornton, J. Lorand Matory, and Ruth Landes. Thornton, in *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641-1718*, underscores the changing nature of African politics and religion at the height of the slave trade.³⁴ It has been common for scholars to focus on syncretism in the formation of New World societies but to lose sight of the fact that such syncretism and a great deal of religious change was going on in Africa at the same time. Many of the same forces that led to the formation and expansion of *vudun* in Haiti were also at work in the Kongo.

In *Sex and the Empire That Is No More*, J. Lorand Matory takes this argument one step further.³⁵ Matory not only underscores syncretic and innovative aspects of *Oyó* religion, but emphasizes the general malleability of sex roles and religious leadership in African society and religion.

Ruth Landes's *City of Women*—based on fieldwork conducted in northern Brazil during the late 1930s—challenged prevailing notions of Afro-Brazilian religious leadership as well as shedding light on the roles of women in these organizations.³⁶ Her work was first published in 1947. Both the work and its author were largely ignored and never entered into the mainstream of Afro-Brazilian studies then dominated by Melville Herskovits, Pierre Verger, and Roger Bastide. Some critiques of Landes's book took the form of personal attack.³⁷ She was accused of going to Bahia primarily "to have sex with the natives." The charges against her were unfounded since the focus of her research was on celibate, female religious orders.

Treatment of Landes's work has been redressed, at least in part, by the reissue of *City of Women* by the University of New Mexico Press, with a new introduction that gives a history of the anthropological reception to the work. In 1947, Ruth Landes established once and for all the malleability of sex roles and leadership in Afro-Brazilian religious organizations, and—by implication—in Caribbean religions as well. But it has taken scholars fifty years to recognize her role.

Malleability of sex roles is apparent in New World religions such as Šangó. In Cuba, and now in Trinidad, Šangó has become increasingly identified with Saint Barbara. In attempting to account for Šangó's identification with Saint Barbara, Šangó leaders (both male and female) emphasize that *orixás* are not limited by human categories and attributes. All *orixás* have the potential to be male and female; black and white; and young and old. In Trinidad, for example, Šangó is often depicted as a mulatto. Trinidadian followers of Šangó, like Šangó devotees in Cuba,²⁶ argue that Šangó may wear the clothes of a woman, but he is the epitome of maleness because of his many wives and love affairs. It is emphasized that Šangó has many names because he used different names as he went from town to town seeking out amorous adventures. Erika Bourguignon, herself a student of Melville Herskovits, suggested to me that Herskovits did not foreground transvestitism and homosexuality in his depictions of African and African American rituals because he believed it would be detrimental to the cause of blacks in the United States.²⁷

Landes concluded *City of Women* by noting that women occupy dominant positions within supposedly patriarchal structures. Her findings for Bahia indicate that surface male authority hid real female authority. But it is not an either/or situation. Males and females have different conceptions of power and authority. Is power centered on getting one's own way (as Thomas Hobbs conceived it) or in re-creating and/or re-defining one's situation (as Nietzsche conceived it)? Few followers of African American religions enjoy power in the Hobbsian sense.

The real question is whether or not scholars have grasped the true nature of female religious authority in the Caribbean. Women constitute the overwhelming majority of adherents in all of these faiths. The anthropological literature characterizes these religions—following Vittorio Lanternari²⁸ and I. M. Lewis²⁹—as “peripheral” cults. But what is meant by “peripheral”? Are these religions considered “peripheral” because they are predominantly composed of females (which is Lanternari's assertion), or are females attracted to these religions because they are seen by women as providing an alternative source of power (which is Lewis's argument)? The relationship between gender, power, and

authority is always complex. I. M. Lewis's original research on spirit possession and gender wars in Somalia concluded that spirit possession provides a mechanism by which the weak can appropriate symbols of power. But as Erika Bourguignon has pointed out, Lewis's theory is predicated on a shared understanding and acceptance of how the world works.⁴²

Unlike many issues in the academic study of religion, debates about gender and authority can be resolved empirically, with attention to denominational structures and the place of women within these structures. For more than twenty years, I have examined the position of women among Trinidad's Šàngó Baptists. The results are clear. Women constitute the overwhelming majority of participants in all Šàngó Baptist ritual, and women own the vast majority of Šàngó Baptist religious structures (Baptist churches, *palais*, and *chapelles*). How could this not affect the status of Šàngó Baptist women? It should be emphasized that while women may own the buildings outright, they do not always own the land upon which these structures rest. But even if we do not count cases where men actually own the land, women still own over 58 percent of the buildings (28 out of 46 in my sample of Šàngó structures in Trinidad), and they sponsor more than half the feasts.

Previous generations of researchers looked for male dominance within Šàngó Baptist organizations, and they found it. The trappings are there. Almost all paramount leaders and bishops are male. Only males are allowed to perform the Baptist sacraments; only males are allowed to preach from a raised pulpit in the front of the church; only males are allowed to "line-out" hymns and direct readings from the Bible; and only males can initiate prayer. In a number of Šàngó Baptist churches, participants are segregated according to sex (males sit on the right, females sit on the left). On the other hand, males are usually *invited* (by females) to officiate at religious ceremonies. They do not own the churches. They are guests. And if the predominantly female congregation is not pleased, they will not be invited back. This suggests that power relations between males and females are not what they at first appear to be.

Contrary to the desires of some leaders within the *òrìṣà* movement, Šàngó's popularity and prominence may be on the rise. A number of Trinidadian informants have expressed preference for Šàngó over Ògún (who is generally thought to be more powerful within the Yoruba pantheon). In a multiracial society like Trinidad, one factor may be that Šàngó is frequently depicted as a mulatto, while Ògún is invariably portrayed as black. Another explanation may be that Šàngó is perceived as being much "easier" on his followers. Followers assert that Šàngó is "more approachable." He understands human limitations and is acquainted with sorrow.

Šangó was once a king, but he lost his kingdom. His magic failed him; and he was betrayed by those he trusted. While Ògún (and his consort Ọṣun) demand absolute obedience and military precision from devotees in all areas of life, Šangó is said to be slightly more flexible. Šangó is unpredictable and quick to anger, but is believed not to hold a grudge. Sometimes, he does not punish as severely as Ògún/Ọṣun or even Šangó's loyal wife, Oya. "Thunder gets your attention, but lightning and wind kills." Moreover, there are strong associations between Šangó and electronics. Many of Šangó's devotees work in electronics and computers, and Šangó's websites are among the most frequented in the Caribbean.⁴³

Frances Henry, who has conducted research on Šangó for nearly fifty years, concluded her entry to *The Encyclopedia of African and African-American Religions* by noting that contemporary leaders in the *orisha* movement are attempting to create centralized structures along denominational lines (e.g., to establish an "Orisha Council of Elders").⁴⁴ Adherents want the *orisha* movement to be recognized as a "legitimate" religion by the Trinidadian government so that their *iyá* and *mogbá* can officiate at weddings and funerals. Henry also documented a concerted effort to "Africanize" *orisha* rituals.⁴⁵ While scholarly debates surrounding the origins and authenticity of New World African ritual are far from new,⁴⁶ current debates are more significant because the major participants are themselves members of the religions in question. This establishes a different tone to the debate, and there is greater perceived urgency. Another major change is that the forum of debate has shifted. Debate is no longer carried out exclusively within the domain of books, conferences, and paper presentations. It occurs in heated arguments taking place within the context of worship itself.

NOTES

1. William Bascom, *Šangó in the New World* (Austin: African and Afro-American Research Institute, University of Texas at Austin, 1972), 16-17.
2. *Ibid.*, 16.
3. The same encyclopedia has an entry on "Shouter Baptists," without acknowledging that members of the group prefer to be called "Spiritual Baptists" and that many adherents find the term "Shouter" derogatory.
4. Tracey E. Hucks, "Trinidad, African-Derived Religions," in *Encyclopedia of African and African-American Religions*, ed. Stephen D. Glazier (New York: Routledge, 2001), 342.
5. See James T. Houk, *Spirits, Blood, and Dreams: The Orisha Religion in Trinidad* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Kenneth Lum, *Prising His Name in the Dance: Spirit Possession in the Spiritual Baptist Faith and*

Orishá Work in Trinidad, West Indies (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000); and Stephen D. Glazier, ed. *Encyclopedia of African and African-American Religions* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

6. Bascom, *Shàngó in the New World*, 19.

7. Kevin Birth, *Any Time Is Trinidad Time: Social Meanings and Temporal Consciousness* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 6.

8. See Stephen D. Glazier, "Responding to the Anthropologist: When the Spiritual Baptists of Trinidad Read What I Write about Them," in *When They Read What We Write: The Politics of Ethnography*, ed. Caroline B. Brettell (Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey, 1993), 37-48.

9. George Eaton Simpson, *Religious Cults of the Caribbean: Trinidad, Jamaica, and Haiti* (Rio Pedras: Institute of Caribbean Studies, University of Puerto Rico, 1980), 17.

10. See Maureen Warner-Lewis, *Trinidad Yorùbá: From Mother Tongue to Memory* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996), and David B. Welch, *Voice of Thunder, Eyes of Fire: In Search of Shàngó in the African Diaspora* (Pittsburgh: Dorrance Publishing, 2001).

11. Rawle Gibbons, "Introduction and Welcome," paper presented at the Ninth International Òrìshá Congress, Port of Spain, Trinidad, 1999.

12. Houk, *Sprits, Blood, and Drums*, 223.

13. Melville J. Herskovits and Frances Herskovits, *Trinidad Village* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947).

14. See Donald Wood, *Trinidad in Transition: The Years after Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), and Bridget Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad, 1870-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

15. Linda A. Newson, *Aboriginal and Spanish Colonial Trinidad: A Study in Culture Contact* (New York: Academic Press, 1976), 184.

16. Bascom, *Shàngó in the New World*, 19.

17. Melville J. Herskovits, *Culture Dynamics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947).

18. See Stephen D. Glazier, "New World African Ritual: Genuine and Spurious," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 35, no. 4 (1996): 420-31.

19. Sidney M. Greenfield and Andre Droogers, *Reinventing Religions: Syncretism and Transformation in Africa and the Americas* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

20. David Trotman, "The Yorùbá and Òrìshá Worship in Trinidad and British Guiana, 1938-1970," *African Studies Review* 19, no. 2 (1976): 1-17.

21. Morton Klass, "When God Can Do Anything: Belief Systems in Collision," *Anthropology of Consciousness* 2 (1991): 32.

22. Glazier, "New World."

23. Funso Aiyejina and Rawle Gibbons, "Òrìshá (Òrìshá) Tradition in Trinidad," paper presented at the Ninth International Òrìshá Congress, Port of Spain, Trinidad, 1999.

24. One of the more dramatic expressions of inclusiveness is to be found in the Nation Dance—one of the most studied of Caribbean rituals. See Lorna

McDaniel, *The Big Drum Ritual of Carriacou: Praisesongs in Rememory of Flight* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998).

25. Ronald Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).

26. Stephen D. Glazier, "The Religious Mosaic: Playful Celebration in Trinidadian Šangó," *Play and Culture* 1 (1988): 231.

27. Frances Henry, "The Ōrišà (Šangó) Movement in Trinidad," in *Encyclopedia of African and African-American Religions*, ed. Stephen D. Glazier (New York: Routledge, 2001), 223.

28. Simpson, 17–19.

29. Herskovits and Herskovits, *Trinidad Village*, 331–33.

30. Frances (Henry) Mischel, "African Powers in Trinidad: The Šangó Cult," *Anthropological Quarterly* 30 (1958): 53–59.

31. Elizabeth McAlister, *Rava! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and the Diaspora* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

32. Gibbons, "Introduction and Welcome," 196.

33. Hucks, *Spirits, Blood, and Drums*, 342.

34. John K. Thornton, *The Kingdom of the Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641–1718* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983).

35. J. Lorand Matory, *Sex and the Empire That Is No More: Gender and the Politics of Metaphor in Ōyí Yorùbá Religion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

36. Ruth Landes, *City of Women* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994).

37. See James Walter Wafer, *The Taste of Blood: Spirit Possession in Brazilian Candomblé* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).

38. Bascom, *Šangó in the New World*, 14.

39. Erika Bourguignon, "Relativism and Ambivalence in the Work of M. I. Herskovits," *Ethos* 28, no. 1 (2000): 103–14. For another perspective, see Randy E. Conner and David Hatfield Sparks, *Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions: Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Participation in African-Inspired Traditions in the Americas* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2004), 22–24.

40. Vittorio Lanternari, *Religions of the Oppressed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963).

41. I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1971).

42. Bourguignon, "Relativism and Ambivalence," 103–14.

43. Nicole Castor, "Virtual Community: The Ōrišà Tradition in the New World and Cyberspace," paper presented at the Ninth International Ōrišà Conference, Port of Spain, Trinidad, 1999.

44. Henry, "Ōrišà Movement," 256–58.

45. Henry, *Reclaiming*, 108–36.

46. Glazier, "New World," 420–21.

ŞÀNGÓ

*in Africa and the
African Diaspora*



EDITED BY JOEL E. TISHKEN,
TÓYÍN FÁLQĀ, AND
AKINTÚNDÉ AKINYEMÍ

Xangô in Afro-Brazilian Religion

"Aristocracy" and "Syncretic" Interactions

LUIS NICOLAU PARÉS

Some Preliminary Historical Antecedents

In his analysis of Church Missionary Society (CMS) records from Yorùbáland in the second half of the nineteenth century, John Peel found that, except for Ifá, Šàngó "is mentioned far more often in the journals than any other orisa."¹ Similarly, in the satirical newspaper *O Alabama*, published in Salvador, Bahia, from 1863 onward, the African deity most often cited is Xangô.² In Recife, as in Trinidad, Xangô became the local name for the religious institution derived from African practices. The evidence suggests that the Òyó imperial thunder deity simultaneously enjoyed an equal popularity on both sides of the Atlantic. This socioreligious success may be explained in part by historical antecedents.

The existence of thunder god cults is reported with different regional variations and names in the Gulf of Benin from the late sixteenth century, and is probably far older than that.³ In Yorùbáland, there were several thunder deities,⁴ the most important of these being Šàngó, a deity of probable Nupe origin⁵ who was appropriated by, and closely associated with, the ruling dynasties of Òyó-Ilé. Òyó was the capital of an empire that dominated most of Yorùbáland from the seventeenth century until the early decades of the nineteenth century. As Ajayi observes, the long Òyó hegemony in the region favored the expansion of the cult of Šàngó, which, as a centralized emblem of royal authority, became fused with Òyó's imperial administration.⁶

Controlled by a titled eunuch called *òtún iwéfá*, the Šàngó cult, with a staff of *ajélè* (the king's resident overlords or viceroys) and *ilári* (the king's messengers and tax collectors), was closely involved with the empire's administration. Šàngó priests from the provinces traveled to the metropole for final initiation and instruction by the *mogbá* priest at the royal shrine in Kòso. Thus, the dangerous cult of thunder and lightning identified with the Aláàfin's authority sanctioned the unity of the empire.⁷ Curiously enough, the same dynamic was reproduced in Abomey, capital of the kingdom of Dahomey, where the thunder *vodun* Hevioso, the Adja-Fon counterpart of Šàngó, was also associated with royalty and the kingdom's ideology of conquest and expansion.⁸

Peel provides several further reasons for Šàngó's success in spreading throughout Yorùbáland, and particularly after 1820, during the period he labels the "Age of Confusion" which ultimately resulted in the fall of Òyò. Besides the cult's distinct organization, with its powerful leader in each town, its *mogbá* (possession priests) and many active devotees of both sexes, the cult priests enjoyed important privileges, such as the right to impose heavy sanctions on any compound struck by lightning (understood as an expression of Šàngó's anger) and exemption from municipal toll taxes. Their public displays were spectacular, particularly such fire ordeals as the *ajeré* ritual, in which they paraded around town carrying bowls of fire on their heads. As noted by Peel, "confident in the power of their fearsome god, Šàngó's devotees conducted themselves in public far more assertively than any other cult," allowing them to demand heavy sacrifices from the population.⁹

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Šàngó worship became one of the most well organized and dominant cults in the region, especially in the western and central zones of Yorùbáland. This was also the time when the greatest number of Yorùbá-speaking slaves were shipped to Brazil, where they were known as Nagô and, from the 1820s onward, constituted the majority of the African population in Bahia. Beyond the fact that the Šàngó cult was spread throughout many Òyò provinces, Òyò slaves accounted for the largest contingent of Bahian Nagô, especially after the civil wars of the "Age of Confusion."¹⁰ It is therefore only logical that the Xangô cult would have played a central role in the ongoing formation of Bahian Candomblé—and indeed, it was instrumental in that process. Yet, as I will argue, Xangô's Brazilian preeminence was more than a question of mere demographics.

The Foundation of the "First" Candomblés by Xangô Priestesses

Xangô devotees figured prominently in the foundation of a number of important temples in both Bahia and Maranhão; a factor that was significant in ensuring the god's social visibility and religious centrality. The famous Axé Ilé Iyá Nassó Oká, in Salvador for example (also known as Casa Branca and Engenho Velho), is considered by both contemporary oral traditions and Afro-Brazilian studies to be "the oldest *terreiro* (Candomblé cult house) in Brazil."¹¹ Despite controversies over its founders and foundation process, it is widely acknowledged that one of the key figures in that process was a priestess by the name of Iyá Nassó, who after freeing herself from slavery, is said to have returned to Africa, and later back to Bahia to lead her religious congregation there.¹² As reported by Johnson, "Iyá-Násó" is the title of the high priestess of the cult of Šangó in Ōyó, responsible for the private sanctuary of the Alááfin. Costa Lima maintains that in nineteenth-century Bahia, with its large numbers of people from throughout Yorùbáland, including Ōyó, no one would have dared use the title of Iyá Nassó were they not authorized to do so.¹³

This Ōyó liturgical link poses some problems as regards the current identification of the cult house as belonging to the Kétu "nation." In a recent paper, Renato da Silveira attempts to reconcile this contradiction by suggesting that the temple was originally founded by Kétu worshippers of the hunter *òrìshá* Ōsòòsì, and that only in the 1830s would Iyá Nassó have arrived to give new force to the Šangó cult. According to some versions, Iyá Nassó would have been accompanied by Bamboxê (Bámgbóshé), who, as the name indicates, may himself have been a Šangó priest.¹⁴ These facts would explain why today the spiritual owner of the *terreiro* (i.e., the land) is Oxóssi, while the spiritual owner of the *barracão* (i.e., the house) is Xangô.

The critical agency of Xangô priests in the founding of Brazilian temples is echoed in São Luis in the northern state of Maranhão, where the local Afro-Brazilian religion is known as Tambor de Mina (Mina Drum). The two oldest existing cult houses there, both founded by Africans in the late 1840s, are the Casa das Minas and the Casa de Nagô. While the former is famous for the cult of royal *voduns* from the Dahomey kingdom, the latter, inspired by the Yorùbá traditions of *òrìshá* worship, became the major referent or ritual model for the organization of Tambor de Mina as a distinct religious institution.

According to its late high priestess, Mãe Dudú, the Casa de Nagô was founded by four women and a man, including the first leader, Josefa

de Nagô, and Joana, who succeeded her. They were assisted by Maria Jesuina, founder of the Casa das Minas. Josefa may have been of Angolan origin, yet was a devotee of Xangô or, according to another version, of Badé, a thunder *vodun* in the Jeje (i.e., Dahomeyan) tradition (see below). Joana is also said to have been a devotee of Xangô.¹⁵ Hence, Xangô is referred to as the spiritual "owner" of the cult house, although sometimes Badé is also mentioned. We see here the tendency to install as spiritual "owners" of the temples the deities consecrated to its founders.¹⁶

A further sign of the Casa de Nagô's influence on other temples and of the consequent spread of Xangô's centrality is the use of the *abatá* drums, this being one of the ritual features that most distinguishes Tambor de Mina from other Afro-Brazilian religious traditions. *Abatás* are two hollowed sections of tree trunks covered with leather skins on both sides and played by hand. The term *abatá* recalls the Yoruba *bátá*, the special *Șangô* drum also characterized by two skins. Although the *bátá* is smaller and is hung with a leather band around the player's neck, rather than supported on trestles like the *abatá*, the compelling phonetic similarity of the two terms and the basic structural similarity of the two instruments strongly point to a common origin.

This evidence indicates the critical role of Xangô in the early institutionalization of Afro-Brazilian religion. As noted by Karin Barber, an *orishá*'s life and success depend upon the active worship of his or her devotees.¹⁷ Thus, while demographic factors may have made it more likely for *Șangô* priests to arrive in colonial Brazil, it was the initiative and charisma of some of those priestesses and priests that underlay the *Șangô* cult's persistence and subsequent expansion.

Xangô's Symbolic Attributes: Justice and Royalty

It is also likely that beyond the fascination inspired by *Șangô*'s frightening natural manifestation in the form of lightning, thunder, and fire, his appeal to devotees was mainly due to his primary symbolic association with royalty and justice. To begin with the latter, we have seen that in West Africa *Șangô* was represented as a god of justice who punished robbers and liars with lightning.¹⁸ Like the *orishá* *Ògún*, *Șangô* is identified as a "hot" warrior but, unlike *Ògún*, who is reputed to be instinctively impulsive and violent, the "judge" *Șangô* is said to listen to all parties before acting, and to be a skilled negotiator. Yet, in accordance with the characteristic ambivalence of all *orishás*, *Șangô* can also be a fearsome and vengeful deity.

Roger Bastide maintains that the sociocultural conditions of slavery tended to emphasize and privilege those attributes of African deities that

were most relevant to the slaves' situation, while ignoring those that were less so. In this light, the justice-seeking character of Xangó, with his warrior nature, would have contributed to transform him into a popular emblem of resistance and an allied spiritual force in the struggle against slavery.¹⁹ This sociological interpretation may explain some of Xangó's appeal, but a critical role in his capturing the imagination of his devotees may also have been played by his symbolic representation as a king, and hence an icon of power, aristocracy, and leadership, capable of confronting all sorts of enemies and adversities.

After the famous double axe (*osô*), one of Xangó's most important emblems in Brazil is his crown. In Ilé Iyá Nassô, a huge highly decorated crown presides over the center of the dance hall in homage to him.²⁰ In Maranhão, he is sometimes referred as "Rei Nagô" ("King Nagô"). It is well known that representations of *orishàs* and *voduns* are often inspired and shaped by images of royalty. In Candomblé, for example, a number of *orixás*, including the *ishás* (female *orixás*, such as Iemanjá, Ojá and Oxum) use the *asê* or royal beaded crown of the Alááfin. Myths recount how some *orishàs* were kings during their original human lives (Ogún, for example, was king of Irê). Šangó, however, as symbolic king of the Ôyó empire, was king par excellence, a true king of kings.

Before further exploring the implications of this royal theme, I will briefly comment on the historicity of this legend. The first author to mention Šangó's human reign was Bowen, who stated in 1858 that Šangó, also called *Djákúta* ("The Stone Thrower"), was king in Ikôso (or Kôso, a village near Ôyó-Ilé). These same details were reproduced and expanded upon by Father Baudin and Colonel Ellis in 1884 and 1894 respectively. In 1921, Johnson conferred on the myth some historical legitimacy when he listed Šangó as the fourth king of Ôyó and included him among the "mythological kings and deified heroes."²¹

Baudin's version of the story, allegedly told to him by "fetich-priests," states that Šangó was a cruel, wicked, tyrannical king. In order to stop his despotism, and in accordance with an old custom, the town's elders ritually invited him to commit suicide. He refused and escaped into exile in Nupe territory, his mother's homeland. Deserted by his wives and favorites, he ultimately committed suicide by hanging himself from a shea-butter tree. After the news reached Ôyó, his political allies quickly installed a shrine near the tree, but there was a great controversy over whether he had transformed himself into an *orishà* and descended into the earth or simply committed suicide. When a violent thunderstorm set Ôyó on fire and killed many, this was interpreted as a sign of Šangó's rage against those who insisted on his suicide. People began to say, "Oha

kò sò ("the king did not hang") and Šàngó's shrine, which was slowly transformed into a city, became known as "Kòso." Similarly, "Ọba Kòso" became a new title of Šàngó. It is worth noting that Baudin considers this legend "of more recent date."²²

Bowen had already reported that together with Šàngó's royal "humanized" form, what we might call the historical Šàngó, there coexisted an "abstract" non-human form, what we might call the mythical Šàngó, in which he was the son of Yemoja and Ọrunfa, and grand-son of Aganju. His brothers were Dàda and Ọgún, and his wives Ọya, Ọshun, and Ọbà.²³ Baudin reproduces and expands upon this story, adding that Ọrunfa was the son of Yemoja and Aganju (both children of Ọbàtálá and Odùduwà), and that he had an incestuous relation with his mother from which Šàngó and all the other *orishàs* were born. Baudin's more elaborated narrative apparently intended to promote a unified and hierarchical Yoruba pantheon. In any case, he explicitly states that the mythical Šàngó "of the negro theogony" was more ancient than the historical Šàngó "that is now venerated."²⁴

One may speculate that this relatively modern narrative identifying Šàngó as king of Ọyó was elaborated during the "Age of Confusion" following the fall of Ọyó, perhaps as a mythical expression of the old bond between the Šàngó cult and the Ọyó sovereign. This may have served the Šàngó priests and their political allies in reaffirming their status in a time of conflict and social instability. The narrative's episode of Šàngó's desertion by his wives evokes the myth of Šàngó's marriage to the river deities Ọya, Ọshun, and Ọbà, first reported by Bowen in 1838. That myth may have resulted from the actual juxtaposition of their respective cults, a process likely to have occurred during the heterogeneous gatherings of displaced war refugees in the 1830s and 1840s, particularly in the Yorùbáland's new southern cities, such as Abẹ̀òkúta and Ìbàdán. It was from this southern area that many Nagó people were enslaved and shipped to Brazil. The topoi of Šàngó and Ọya's marriage were already circulating in Bahia in the 1860s, suggesting that these interwoven narratives may have been introduced in Brazil during the slave trade period prior to 1850.²⁵

Regardless of this possibility, the euhemeristic interpretation (attributing a human origin to deities) was one of the arguments used by Protestant evangelists in Yorùbáland in the second half of the nineteenth century as a strategy to discredit "pagan" myths and gain new converts. As reported by Peel, the *orishà* who was most conspicuously subject to this treatment was Šàngó.²⁶ The story of Šàngó's human existence and suicide was reproduced—with a few clerical distortions, as noted by Verger—in

a Yorùbá text of the CMS entitled *Ìwé Kíkà Èkẹrín Lì Èdè Yorùbá* (*The fourth primer in Yorùbá language*).²⁷

Atlantic commerce facilitated the circulation of this didactic clerical literature and other English publications such as Yorùbá-English dictionaries. By the end of the century, Nina Rodrigues had access to the work of Alfred B. Ellis and a copy of the *Ìwé Kíkà Èkẹrín* brought to him and translated by his informant, the *babalao* (diviner) Martiniano Eliseu do Bomfim, who had lived in Lagos for some years. Rodrigues remarks that, in Bahia, local people of Yorùbá origin who were under the instruction of English Protestant missionaries in Lagos (most likely referring to Bomfim) criticized certain versions of myths attributing a past human life to the thunder *òrìshà* Šàngó.²⁸ Besides Rodrigues, who at that time had little direct influence on the religious community, these texts also reached a small circle of Yorùbá-Anglophone literate religious experts such as Bomfim, and through them some religious ideas were further propagated through oral transmission.

As far as we can infer from the evidence, this euhemeristic interpretation of Šàngó probably dates from the first half of the nineteenth century. By the end of the century however, it was filtered, disseminated, and reified, along with other myths (like that of Yemoja as mother of all other *òrìshàs*), by Christian missions into the Nagô religious circles in Bahia. Despite Bomfim's early erudite criticism, the representation of Šàngó as a king must have quickly spread among Candomblé devotees, and Bomfim himself used the myth some years later to justify the creation of the *Obás de Xangô* (see below). My assumption is that the royal aristocratic expression of the *òrìshà* might have engendered the imagination of a royal "court" that helped galvanize Candomblé's liturgical structure as a multi-divinity cult, while at the same time favoring on the social level the formation of a local Nagô religious elite.

Multi-Divinity Cults and the Imagery of the Royal Court

Andrew Apter argues that in Yorùbáland ritual organization co-varies with political organization. According to him, "the ritual system *in abstracto* highlights the complementary principles of Yorùbá government, which are horizontal opposition between corporate political units (*àdùgbò*) and their vertical inclusion within the kingdom (*ìlẹ̀*) at large."²⁹ In Òyó's religious context, Šàngó occupied the Alááfin's position, at the vertex of the social pyramid. Yet below him, there existed a plurality of concurrent and relatively autonomous *òrìshà* cults, which in social terms represented corporate lineage groups promoting rival interpretations of power

within the kingdom. In that sense, ritual mediated between hierarchical unity and horizontal fragmentation. It is my argument that the organizational model of the Yorùbá royal court, comprising the *ọ̀bá* and his *àarọ́fá* council of civil chiefs, was somehow replicated in Candomblé, involving a similar integration of heterogeneous and potentially conflictive multiethnic groups and their cults under the unifying leadership of a single religious congregation. Şangô, with his "aristocratic" credentials and Oyô connections, was particularly well positioned to play a leading role at the mythical-ritual level.

I have argued elsewhere that the religious organization of Candomblé, consisting of the worship of multiple deities within the same temple and the organization of serial forms of ritual performance allowing for several deities to dance in a single ceremony, was not necessarily a New World innovation. In West Africa, and especially in the *rodun* area of the present Republic of Benin, there were clear antecedents of such forms of multi-divinity cults that may have significantly influenced the reproduction of this model in Brazil.³⁰ The Nagô diasporic priests, in part inspired by the Jeje model already in place, used their own referents to organize their multi-divinity cults.³¹ In the Nagô context, the "king" Xangô was one of the *wrixás* best suited to gather around him a "court" of other deities—although, as we shall see, he was not the only one.³²

As previously noted, mythical narratives dating from the mid-nineteenth century recount Şangô's polygamous marriage to three wives: Oca, Oshun, and Obá.³³ Present-day Bahian oral testimonies also recount that Xangô had several children with Oia, such as Iroco and the two Ibêjis. In some cult houses, Xangô is further associated with other deities, such as Oranyian (his father), Iamacê and Baiâni (different names for his mother), and Dadá (his older brother).³⁴ On the mythological level therefore, and frequently expressed via kinship metaphors, Xangô essentially functions as a node aggregating a constellation of deities (sometimes referred to as the "royal family") and configuring a particular "ritual field"—a fact that favored the development of multi-divinity worship. The organization of multi-divinity cults may have at the same time reinforced Xangô's centrality within the new aggregates.

In the public festivals of Ilê Iyá Nassô, the *Xirê*, or opening song sequence, celebrates and summons the deities in a particular order: (1) Ogum, (2) Oxóssi, (3) Oçãnhim, (4) Logunedê, (5) Oxumarê (Aguê), (6) Obaluaiê, (7) Xangô (before the *iabás* or female deities), (8) Oxum, (9) Oia (Iansã), (10) Iemanjá, (11) Nanã, (12) Obá, (13) Euá, and (14) the "Roda de Xangô" (after the *iabás*) with new songs for Xangô. The "Roda de Xangô" (the dance circle of Xangô) is the crucial moment

in which the *orixás* manifest and incorporate their devotees (except for occasional devotees who cannot resist and are "possessed" earlier in the ritual).³⁵ Xangô thus plays a central role in presiding over and orchestrating the mediation between this world (Ayê) and the "other" world (*Oruns*), facilitating the manifestation of the deities. While in private rituals other *orixás* may figure in more prominent positions, public ceremonies, even when held in honor of other deities, fall under the "reign" of Xangô.³⁶

As regards ritual calendars, a great variability is found in Candomblé, depending upon the specificities of each cult house. In the hegemonic Nagô-Kétu model begun by Ilé Iyá Nassô and followed by such *terreiros* as Gantois or Axé Opô Afonjá, whose founders had been initiated in that house, the ritual calendar opens with the feast of Oxóssi, the day of Corpus Christi, and is followed by the Xangô cycle, starting on the 29th of June (Saint Peter's Day in the Catholic calendar), and lasting for twelve days (the sacred number of Xangô). In Ilé Axé Opô Afonjá, the Xangô cycle comprises homages to Odudua, Oranyian and Iamacé during the first day—manifesting only female *orixás* in the festival—and to Baiâni on the last day. The Xangô cycle is followed by a three-month interruption of public activities until September, when the Oxalá cycle begins with the ceremonies called "Águas de Oxalá" (the waters of Ôshálá). It is worth noting that the first Xangô to be celebrated on June 29 is Xangô Airá, a "quality" of Xangô who dresses in white and is associated with Oxalá (see below), and that Odudua, who is often associated with the white or *funfun orixás*, is also praised along with Xangô. Xangô also has a feast during the Oxalá cycle.³⁷

Despite this interpenetration of the Xangô and the Oxalá groups of *orixás*, the structural division of the calendar between the Xangô and the Oxalá cycles is significant. This division is often referred to as the "red" and the "white" parts. While the "dynamic" Xangô is associated with red and hot attributes and receives "red" offerings of *denlé* palm oil, the "static" Oxalá is associated with white and cool attributes and receives white corn meal.³⁸ This symbolic opposition establishes two distinct ritual fields that seem to be at the base of Candomblé's structure. Even cult houses of other nations, such as the Jeje Bogum house in Salvador, use this division of red and white ritual segments—although in this case the order is inverted and the calendar starts with the Oxalá (*Lisa*) part and is followed by the Xangô (*Sogbo*) part. It may be noted that in this house, *Sogbo's* thunder pantheon is considered to be the "royal" family.

Apter, following Beier, has analyzed this Šàngó-Ọbàtálá myth in its Ifón variant (in which Ọbàtálá is known as ỌbalúfỌn) and in relation to a particular ritual performed in an Ọbàtálá festival in Ede, once a southern Ọyó military outpost. In this ritual, an Ọbàtálá priest (Ajagemo) is expelled from the palace and taken prisoner by a concurrent priest (Olunwi), and finally liberated and returned to the palace by the king. Beier interprets this ritual as a "passion play," showing that "the ability to suffer and not to retaliate is one of the virtues of every Ọbàtálá."⁴¹

Apter proposes a more thought-provoking interpretation with historical and political implications. In analyzing the Ọyó founding myths and those of neighboring kingdoms, he identifies a major opposition between the official Ọyó-centered royal genealogies and the Ifẹ-centered ones, the latter usually reflecting the counter-hegemonic standing of vassal kingdoms. This tension is also expressed at the mythological and ritual levels, configuring an Ọyó-centric ritual field around the figures of Šàngó and Èshù and a concurrent Ifẹ-centric ritual field around the figures of Ọbàtálá and Ifá.⁴² According to Apter, the Ede ritual evokes and preserves the myth, and the myth evokes the historical rivalry between Ọyó and Ifẹ as well as the compromise through which Ifẹ, after having been politically conquered, was restored to a position of official power, but only in a sacred sense. Apter reads the myth's imprisonment of Ọbàtálá as "a euphemism of Oyo conquest," concluding that "Obatala, a paradigmatic white deity, or *orisa funfun*, is thus the *orisa* of political displacement: his ritual power, cool and controlled, dignifies surrendered political authority and discourages rebellion."⁴³

Would these religious expressions of political tensions have been preserved in the New World? Silveira argues that in the first half of the nineteenth century, Ilé Iyá Nassó became the center of political organization of the Bahian Nagó community, where secret societies like Ogbóni and Gẹlẹdẹ would have operated, albeit in an adapted form, in an attempt to recreate the Ọyó social power structure.⁴⁴ While the existence of a conscious political agenda in this sense seems doubtful, the Ọyó-Ifẹ polarity may nevertheless have reemerged in the gathering of a plurality of Yorùbá ethnic groups under the same roof; a possibility that the Xangó-Oxalá ritual division would seem to confirm. Although the "hot" warrior Xangó may have succeeded as an emblem of political authority, encouraging resistance and rebellion, Oxalá's more peaceful tactics of passive resistance also appears to have gained its supporters, and it is by now well established that in slave societies, conflict and negotiation intermingled as alternative strategies for the empowerment of Africans and their descendants.⁴⁵

This Oxalá-Xangó equilibrium, imbued with conflictive tension, finds

another ritual expression in the Olórógun festival held the first Sunday after carnival, marking the end of the annual ritual calendar. In the Olórógun, "the *court* of Oxalá and the *court* of Xangô, fight in the *terreiros* to the sounds of drum beating and religious songs." In other words, the devotees from one group try to capture members of the other group until one of them becomes the first to be "possessed" by the *orixás*, thus signaling the defeat of her/his group.⁴⁶ The war game ends and the *orixá*, holding his flag, gathers all devotees in a procession. It is believed that after the Olórógun the *orixás* return to Africa for the Lent period, and some say that "the *orixás* go to war."⁴⁷ Although Xangô exerted a critical ritual aggregation role, we should not forget, however, that under his unifying reign there coexisted a plurality of often contradictory and counter-hegemonic interests that somehow managed to be integrated and reconciled in the multi-divinity structure of Candomblé.

The *Obás de Xangô* and Political Aristocracy

Yet the popularity of Xangô never ceased to increase. In 1910, Eugénia Ana dos Santos, or Mãe Aninha, a Xangô devotee (*filha de Xangô*) who had been partially initiated at Ilê Iyá Nassô, founded her own *terreiro*, Ilê Axé Opô Afonjã, under the auspices of her spiritual owner (*dono de cabeça*), Xangô Afonjã. Mãe Aninha, who enjoyed wide social recognition, was one of the first high priestesses to cultivate friendships with intellectuals. In the 1930s, she hid in her *terreiro* the communist Edson Carneiro from police persecution, and in 1937 she received in her house the participants of the Second Afro-Brazilian Congress, organized by Carneiro. Mãe Aninha once expressed her dream: "I want to see my spiritual grandchildren with doctor's rings, prostrated in front of Xangô."⁴⁸ This dream began to become reality when, with the collaboration of *imbalaô* Martiniano Eliseu de Bomfim, she founded, also in 1937, the institution of the *Obás de Xangô* (Ministers of Xangô). The *Obás* were a series of twelve dignitaries, six "of the right" and six "of the left," in charge of assisting the high priestess in her religious leadership.

Despite his earlier criticism of the myth of Xangô's suicide, Bomfim used this very myth to justify the new institution, identifying the *Obás* with the Ministers of Sàngô, the council of elders that had installed Sàngô's shrine in Kôso after his death.⁴⁹ As several authors have demonstrated, the institution of the *Obás de Xangô* was inspired by the political organization of the Oyo kingdom and the Yorùbá logic of left and right division.⁵⁰ In fact, the Brazilian institution of the *Obás* was a creative adaption of the Sàngô priesthood hierarchy in Oyo. Father Baudin,

who Martiniano may have read, described it as consisting of a chief, the *magba*, attended by twelve assistants: "the first calls himself *Oton* (the right arm); the second, *Osin* (the left arm); the third, *Eketu*; the fourth, *Ekerin*, etc. The chief and his assistants live at Oyo."⁵¹ Yet, as constituted in Bahia, the *Obás* institution was a rather original arrangement which did not find any counterpart in Yorùbáland.

Conceived as legitimating an imagined African orthodoxy, the *Obás de Xangô* could be interpreted as a self-conscious attempt to invest a "disturbed past" (as Sidney Mintz qualifies the past of any Afro-American culture) with continuity and moral significance, and, in that sense, it offers a textbook example of a Hobbsbawmian "invented tradition."⁵² Ultimately, the initiative served wide political goals of black self-determination and empowerment, but also served as a marker of distinction vis-à-vis concurrent religious congregations, such as Ilé Iyá Nassô. The "ideology of prestige" founded on the conceptual triad "Africa-purity-tradition" had been promoted within Candomblé since its beginnings and was part and parcel of the institution. Direct contacts with West Africa, such as Bomfim's, provided strategic elements and additional resources in an otherwise local dynamic of legitimacy and authority.

The *Obá* titles were first granted to reputed religious experts (*agbás*). Under the leadership of Mãe Senhora (1940-67), however, their number was increased to thirty-six (with each of the twelve original *Obás* now having his own "left" and "right" representatives) and offered to several eminent figures of Bahian intellectual society; such as writer Jorge Amado, painter Carybe, musicians Dorival Caymmi and Gilberto Gil, photographer-ethnographer Pierre Verger, sociologist Roger Bastide, and anthropologist Vivaldo da Costa Lima—many of them already Xangô devotees. As noted by Sansi, the *Obás* of Xangô "were people of social value, who could help build a 'court society' in the temple and increase its value and fame, the *axé*."⁵³

Indeed, the royal court model was again reproduced, not on the mythical level, but on the human social level, with the high priestess—herself representative of Xangô—surrounded and supported by an entourage of ministers. Beyond increasing the *terreiro*'s social visibility and prestige, the "court" symbolic imagery further contributed—whether consciously intended or not—to the establishment of this particular religious congregation in an "aristocratic" position in relation to the wider Candomblé community.

In 1952 Pierre Verger, who was then working to reestablish the communication between Bahia and West Africa, brought from Nigeria to Mãe Senhora two central emblems of the Xangô cult, a *sesé* (Xangô's

tronic) and an *edun ara* (Xangô's sacred stone or thunderbolt supposed to be fallen from the sky), along with a letter from the king of Oyô conferring upon the high priestess the title of Iyá Nassô.⁵⁴ Through these means, Xangô's ritual centrality as a hierarchical superior unifying the plural horizontal diversity became by extension an instrumental icon for the consolidation of a Nagô-Kétu religious elite in Bahian Candomblé. Herein lies what may be the true key to Xangô's political importance in twentieth-century Bahia.

In the opening ceremony of the *Semana Cultural de Herança Africana na Bahia* (Cultural week of the African heritage in Bahia), or *Alaiandê Xirê*, held in Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá in August of 2003, the new minister of culture in the Lula's government, Gilberto Gil, reminded the audience that he held the title of *Obá*, or Minister of Xangô. Accepting his new job in Brasília, he said, had been greatly facilitated by the fact that he already was a minister "at the spiritual level" long before his current position as a minister of state. In front of TV cameras and a responsive audience, he praised Xangô, that "great saint," and expressed his deepest respect and the respect of all the ministers and members of Parliament in Brasília to the high priestess Mãe Stella and to the Candomblé community. The opening of the *Alaiandê Xirê* ended with a presentation of "Xangô Awards" to people whose outstanding support for the community was seen as deserving of special mention.⁵⁵ The *Semana* proceeded with an international seminar that gathered intellectuals, artists, and cultural agents, most of them, including myself, starting their interventions by paying homage and respect to Xangô, the house spiritual leader, and patron of the event. Mãe Aninha's dream had been fulfilled.

One can perceive from the preceding discussion that the case of Xangô involves a complex set of interactions or correlations between practice and myth, and more specifically between the political and the religious spheres. In imperial Oyô, for example, the royal political system provided a model for the hierarchical organization of the *orishá* cults, while the *Aláàfin* inspired a particular mythological expression of Šàngó as a human king. It is interesting to note that Šàngó's "humanization" was a later process that was accreted to his existing role as thunder deity, a fact that calls into question the hypothesis according to which *orishás* originate from the deification of prominent ancestors and suggests the quite contrary possibility that heroes may also be created from deities. Still other political events and social changes seem to have shaped the mythological level, such as the Šàngó-Óshálá narrative reflecting the Oyô conquest of Ifê, or the myth of Šàngó's wives, which quite probably expressed the gathering of diverse cults during the "Age of Confusion."

These examples would in some sense support the Durkheimian idea that religious concepts tend to be products or expressions of social facts. Yet in the Brazilian case, one also finds the reverse process, in which symbolic or conceptual religious motives seem to have determined both ritual practice and the political sphere. Xangô's royal status and mythical position as an aggregating node, for example, seem to have favored the consolidation of multi-divinity cults and informed the development of a type of socioreligious organization with strong political connotations (i.e., the Obás de Xangô.) Such examples tend to support a more Weberian vision in which social action is oriented by religious ideas. Even in imperial Ōyô, the dangerous thunder *òrìshà*, with his attributes of justice and strength, already served to sanction and project a public image of the Alááfin's power. Thus we see that—as both Weber and Durkheim themselves recognized—social practice and religious ideas (including those expressed in ritual and myth) tend in practice to form a continuous feedback interaction or dialectic, making it ultimately impossible to determine the preeminence of one over the other.⁵⁶

Xangô's Diversity and Syncretic Interactions

Up until now, I have mostly referred to Xangô as a generic category. Yet, like other *òrìshàs* in Bahia, Xangô is said to have many "qualities." Some people list twelve, in accordance with the *òrìshà's* sacred number, although there is no clear consensus on this. Some of these "qualities" may have originally been distinct entities, and some of them were already worshiped in the Ōyô palace as Šàngó's "siblings," such as Ōráníyàn (the legendary founder of Ōyô and father of Šàngó), Dàda (his eldest brother), and Aganju (a later king of Ōyô, considered the youngest Šàngó). Some of these "qualities" may derive from the deification of historical characters, such as Áfònjá, the rebel military dignitary of the Ōyô empire. Some may have been praise titles, like Djákúta ("the Stone Thrower") and Ōba Kòso. Others may be explained as regional variants of thunder deities, such as Ogodó, reputed to be of Nupe origin, and Oloroké, probably of Èfò origin. The above-mentioned Airá, is said to have three variants, Airá Intilé, Airá Igbònan, and Airá Mofé, all quite "old" Šàngós. Some say that the Airás were originally from Sabe (a western Yorùbá kingdom), although the association with the white (*funfun*) *òrìshàs* suggests they may have a more ancient eastern origin. Still other names are Ōba Lúbé, Baru, and Ōrunḡa (the "Middle of the Day," "Master of the Sun," in some myths considered the incestuous father of Šàngó). Finally, Biri,

or Èshù Biri (translated by Baudin as "darkness") is one of of Šàngô's Èshùs, or "slaves."⁵⁷

At the same time, Xangô finds equivalents in the pantheons of the other Candomblé "nations." In the Jeje "nation," thunder *voduns* such as Sogbo, Badé, or Akolombe, belonging to the Hevioso family, are compared with Xangô. In the Angola "nation," the *enguice* (*nkisá*) Zaze Luango is also related to Xangô. Beyond these African internal correlations there are external associations with Catholic saints. Aganju is usually praised on June 24 (Saint John's Day), St. John being represented as a child with a ram (Xangô's sacrificial animal). Afonjá is honored with the Airás on the 27th of June (Saint Peter's Day). On the Iberian Peninsula, the summer solstice feasts were celebrated with bonfires, a tradition perpetuated in colonial Brazil. The fire element would explain the association between these saints and the thunder-lightning-fire African deities. In Bahia, however, Xangô's most widespread Catholic syncretic association is with Saint Jeremy, a saint who in Catholic iconography appears beside a lion, the king of animals, just as Xangô is the king of men and gods.⁵⁸

In Maranhão there emerges a more complex situation. Given the importance of the Jeje *voduns* in the area, Noche Sogbo, here a female deity, is identified as the patroness of Tambor de Mina and related to Saint Barbara (who in Bahia is associated with Oiá). Yet the closest association of Xangô is established with the "young" *vodun* Badé, often honored on Saint John's Day. As I have mentioned, in the Casa de Nagô, Xangô and Badé are both ambiguously identified as the spiritual owners of the cult house (*donos da casa*) and, when further queried, some devotees will even include in this role the female Sogbo.⁵⁹ These interconnections—some of which may have been already established in Africa—also suggest an early Maranhese juxtaposition of religious practices of various Nagô and Jeje groups.

Besides the proper African *voduns* (and *orixás*) in Tambor de Mina, there are a number of other categories of non-African spiritual entities, such as the *gentis* (Gentiles), representing members of the European nobility, or the *caboclos*, including the Turks and other categories of "Brazilian" entities. To further complicate the picture, some African entities may manifest as *gentiles* or *caboclos*, depending upon the "line" (*linha*, or song sequence) through which they chose to manifest themselves. In the Casa de Nagô, for example, Badé can "come down" through the Nagô "line" (as a form of Xangô), in which case he will be treated as the "owner" of the house. Yet he can also manifest through the bush "line," in which case

he will merely be *cabocto* Badê. Similarly, Rei Nagô ("King Nagô") and Toi Azezinho—often referred as forms of Xangô—also manifest as *gentiles*.

There are several other *gentiles* and *caboctos* who are said to be "types" of Xangô, or "to come through the irradiation of Xangô," such as Dom Luis Rei da França. Some of these hide their "true" identity behind the Catholic name of Xangô's syncretic counterparts Saint John and Saint Peter, such as Dom João (also known as "Rei da Mina"), João Soeira, Pedro Estrela, and Pedrinho ("Little Peter"). The latter was a nickname for Xangô Ogodô, one of the main spiritual entities of Mãe Anastácia, founder of the famous Terreiro da Turquia.⁶⁰ Entities like Pedro Anção and Toi Ajahunto, both evolutions of different "qualities" of the Dahomeyan panther *vodun* Kpo (Agassu from Abomey and Ajahunto from Allada), are also referred to as types of Xangô.⁶¹ Finally, the *vodun* Averekete, belonging to the Hevioso family, and the *vodun cambinda* Jan de Arauna (or São Miguel de Arauna), both of whom generally "come in the front" to open the way for other deities, may also manifest as forms of Xangô.⁶²

This brief overview suggests that in Afro-Brazilian religion, Xangô became something of a broad category, or an ideal-type in Weberian terms, used to describe and classify the diversity of the spiritual world. Yet different kinds of "syncretic" interactions can be distinguished. Xangô's relationship with the Jeje *voduns* was due to a great extent to previous African geographical diffusionism that resulted in a fluid continuity of correspondences of both conceptual and ritual attributes. The association with Catholic saints is of a different nature and was established through discrete symbolic elements and their correlations with the Catholic calendar (e.g., the bonfire in the June festivals) or by metaphoric analogies derived from the iconography (e.g., the lion or the ram). The associations with Catholic saints seem to be mostly formal and do not necessarily imply a deeper correspondence of qualitative values. As regards the interactions with the *gentiles* and *caboctos*, the inverse would seem to be the case. This is where Xangô may be seen to operate more clearly as a class, a label or mental image used to rationalize a wide semantic field that includes ideas of power, strength, royalty, virility, dynamism, fighting, justice and so on. The new "Brazilian" entities may share with Xangô some ritual attributes, such as colors, emblems, and food offerings. Yet what is really "translated" in calling them "Xangô" is a particular sort of qualitative character, some personality features and moral values that may more readily express in behavior. Thus, despite the great creative eclecticism of Afro-Brazilian religion, "old meanings" may be seen to have managed to replicate themselves under new forms and to be inscribed in new expressions.

I have shown how Xangô's "power," as expressed in his natural forms of thunder, lightning, and fire, and his moral attributes of justice and royalty (another of these, virility, not being discussed here), may have been decisive in the consolidation of his ritual centrality and functioning as an aggregating force in the multi-divinity dynamics of Candomblé. I have further suggested that Xangô's ritual significance expanded beyond the religious field into the wider social domain, becoming intimately interwoven with the fabrics of political power, ultimately transforming him into a central emblem of the aristocratic Nagô-Kêtu religious elite. Finally, I suggest that it was precisely this socioreligious preeminence and visibility that permitted Xangô to become an ideal-type, a generic conceptual "brand" typifying a wide and diverse field of representational forms within the Afro-Brazilian spiritual universe. All this without mentioning his iconic reproduction in art and popular culture in the form of carnival groups, orchestras, T-shirts, postcards and so on. But this is already the subject for another essay.

NOTES

Following the editors' suggestion, in this essay the names of deities are spelled in Yorùbá when mentioned in relation to the West African context (i.e. Šangô, *orishá*). However, when dealing with the Brazilian context the Brazilian-Portuguese spelling is used (i.e. Xangô, *orixá*). Similarly, for institutions and formal titles, I use the local Yorùbá or Brazilian spelling as appropriate. When quoting other sources, I observe the original spelling. I would like to thank Peter Cohen for the English revision and for his comments.

This chapter originally appeared as Luis Nicolau Parés, "Shango in Afro-Brazilian Religion: 'Aristocracy' and 'Syncretic' Interactions," *Religiões e Societá Rivista de Scienze Sociali della Religione*, no. 54 (2006): 70–98.

1. John D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yorùbá* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 109.

2. Xangô is explicitly mentioned three times, and in one of them referred to as "the great Xangô" ("o grande Changô"). He is also mentioned under his Jeje (i.e., Dahomeyan) name, Sogbo. In this particular case, Ojá is identified as "the wife of the greatest saint Sogbo" (*a mulher do santo maior—Soubô*). See *O Alahama*, December 24, 1863, and May 2 and 19, 1869, 3.

3. For an overview of historical references on the thunder cults in the Gulf of Benin, see Luis Nicolau Parés, "Transformations of the Sea and Thunder Voduns in the Gbe-Speaking Area and in the Bahian Jeje Candomblé," in *Africa and the Americas: Interconnections during the Slave Trade*, ed. José C. Curto and René Souloffre-La France (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 2005), 69–93. Based on the work of Colonel A. B. Ellis, Nina Rodrigues, *Os Africanos no Brasil* (1906) (São Paulo, Brazil: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1977), 225, recalls that one of

Xangô's names is Dzakúta, "the thrower of stones," and refers to the deity as a lithological manifestation associated with the cult of meteorites and stone axes, and hence dating back to the Stone Age. In colonial Brazil, there were similar Amerindian cults.

4. For example, Òrámfè in Ifè, Àrì [Aírà] in Kétu and Sábèḗ. See Peel, *Religions*, 111–12.

5. Paul Baudin, *Fetichism and Fetish Worshipers* (1884) (New York: Benziger Bros., 1885), 23, followed by others, such as Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbás* (1921) (Lagos: C.S.S. Bookshops, 1976), 36, reports that the mother of Šàngó was from Nupe.

6. J. F. A. Ajayi, "The Aftermath of the Fall of Òyó." In *History of West Africa*, ed. J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder (London: Longman, 1974), 133, writes explicitly about the dissemination of Šàngó's cult with the expansion of Òyó. Another discussion on this theme may be found in J. Lorand Matony, *Sex and the Empire That Is No More: Gender and the Politics of Metaphor in Òyó Yorùbá Religion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 13–22.

7. Andrew Apter, *Black Critics and Kings: The Hermeneutics of Power in Yorùbá Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 24–25; P. Morton Williams, "An Outline of the Cult Organization and Cosmology of Old Oyo," *Africa* 34, no. 3 (1964): 258; P. C. Lloyd, *The Political Development of Yorùbá Kingdoms in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, Occasional Paper no. 31 (London: Royal Anthropological Institute, 1971), 10; and Johnson, *History of the Yorùbás*, 59–62. In 1885, Baudin, *Fetichism*, 25, stated that "the new sovereigns of Yorouba come to Ikoso on the day of their consecration to receive the sword of Chango, the insignia of their executive power."

8. Parés, "Transformations," 18.

9. Peel, *Religions*, 106, 112.

10. João José Reis, *Rebelião Escrava no Brasil: A história do Levante dos Malês em 1835* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003), 336–37. Reis also holds that in 1820 and 1830 the majority of males in Bahia (responsible for the revolt of 1835) were Yorùbá Muslims from the Òyó kingdom, many of them gathered in Ilorin.

11. The founding date of Ilé Iyá Nassó Oká is uncertain. Some authors speculate that it could be the end of the eighteenth century, while conservative hypotheses suggest the early decades of the nineteenth century. Regardless, oral tradition and Afro-Brazilian studies have regularly insisted that on the Candomblé origin myth that attributes to Ilé Iyá Nassó the privileged role of oldest *terreiro* in Brazil. For a critique of such an assumption see Luis Nicolau Parés, "The Nagôization Process in Bahian Candomblé," in *The Yorùbá Diaspora in the Atlantic World*, ed. Toyin Falola and Matt D. Child (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

12. For different versions of the foundation process, see Edison Carneiro, *Candomblés da Bahia* (1948) (Salvador, Brazil: Ediouro, 1985), 48; Pierre Verger, *Orixás* (Salvador, Brazil: Corrupio, 1981), 28–29; and Roger Bastide, *Sociologia*

de la Religion [Les religions africaines au Brésil] (1960) (Gijón, Spain: Ediciones Jucar, 1986), 323. For a recent interpretation, see Renato da Silveira, "Jeje-Nagô, Iorubá-Tapá, Aon Efan, Ijexá: Processo de constituição do candomblé da Barroquinha—1764–1851," *Cultura Visés* 6, no. 94 (2000): 80–100.

13. Johnson, *History of the Yorùbás*, 64, and Vivaldo da Costa Lima, *A família-de-santo nos Candomblés Jeje-Nagô da Bahia: um estudo de relações intra-grupais* (Salvador, Brazil: UFBA., 1977), 24.

14. Silveira, "Jeje-Nagô," 83–89; Bastide, *Sociologia*, 323. In a recent work, Vivaldo da Costa Lima, "Ainda sobre a nação de queto," in *Farraimará—o caçador traz alegria: Mãe Stella, 60 anos de iniciação*, ed. Cléo Martins and Raul Lody (Rio de Janeiro: Pallas, 2000), 75, suggests that Iyá Nassô may have come from a small village called Kétu near Òyó, rather from the more famous city of Ilé Kétu in Dahomey. The name Bamboxé or Bámgbòshé would translate as "help me to secure the *asé*," referring to the ceremonial double axe (*asé* in Brazilian Portuguese) used in Šangô worship; Lima, "A família," 25; Peel, *Religions*, 102.

15. Maria do Rosário Carvalho Santos, *O Caminho das Matriarcas Jeje-Nagô. Uma contribuição para a história da religião afro no Maranhão* (São Luís, Brazil: Func, 2001), 26, 48, and 87. For a slightly different version, see Maria Rosário Carvalho Santos, and Manoel Santos Neto, *Bomboromina: Terras de São Luís—Uma interpretação sócio-cultural* (São Luís, Brazil: SECMA/SIOGE, 1989), 52. Another version would assign a Nagô-Tapa origin to Josefa and a Cabinda origin to Joana; Jorge Oliveira Itacy, *Orixás e voduns nas terras de Mina* (São Luís, Brazil: VCR Produções e Publicidades, 1989), 31.

16. Another example involves Mãe Anastácia L. Dos Santos (Akciobená Obá-Delou), who founded the Terreiro Fé em Deus (Nifé Olorum), known as Terreiro da Turquia, on June 23, 1889, a year after the abolition of slavery. The spiritual "owners" of that cult house are Vò Missã (Nanã), Pedrinho (Xangô), and Navé (Oxum), while the spiritual "guide" is the *caboclo* Rei Turquia. Both Xangô (under the nickname of "Pedrinho") and Rei Turquia were the main spiritual entities of Mãe Anastácia.

17. Karin Barber, "Como o homem cria Deus na África Ocidental: atitudes dos Yoruba para com o *orìṣà*," in *Meu Sinal está no teu corpo*, ed. C. E. M. Moura (São Paulo: EDICON-EDUSP, 1989), 142, 144.

18. See Rev. T. J. Bowen, *A Grammar and Dictionary of the Yorùbá Language*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1858), 16; Pierre Verger, *Notas sobre o culto aos Orixás e Voduns na Bahia de Todos os Santos, no Brasil, e na antiga Costa dos Escravos, na África (1957)* (São Paulo, Brazil: Edusp, 1999), 343; and Johnson, *History of the Yorùbás*, 35–36. In Dahomey, see Frederick E. Forbes, *Dahomey and the Dahomeans* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1851), 1:102–104, and Francesco Borghero, *Journal de Francesco Borghero, premier missionnaire du Dahomey (1861–1865)* (1865), ed. Renzo Mandirola and Yves Morel (Paris: Karthala, 1997), 129–34. The association of Šangô with justice may also derive from the fact that the Ilári, Òyó's royal messengers, who

were often Šangó priests, also acted as judges to settle legal disputes in the neighboring kingdoms: Apter, *Black Critics*, 20.

19. Bastide, *Sociologia*, 120-21. Bastide believes that in Brazil, forced labor on the plantations propitiated the disappearance of agricultural gods like (*òrìṣà*) Oko, who were no longer of benefit for the slaves, while the oppressive social asymmetry of slavery favored the hegemony of justice gods like Šangó, war gods like Ógún, or entities ruling the dynamics of communication like Èṣhù.

20. The crown is for Xangó Ogodó, the "king of the house" and its spiritual owner (*dono da casa*). Ogodó is reputed to be of Nupe origin. According to family members of Bamboxé (one of the religious experts involved in the house's foundation), Xangó Ogodó was Bamboxé's *orixá*, and he would have been responsible for the construction of the first crown (Renato da Silveira, personal communication to Luis Nicolau Parés, May 3, 2004).

21. Bowen, *A Grammar*, 16; Baudin, *Fetichism*, 20-26; Ellis, *The Yorùbá-Speaking Peoples* (London, 1894), 46; and Johnson, *History of the Yorùbás*, 34, 149-52.

22. Baudin, *Fetichism*, 20-25. For variants of the same story see Verger, *Notas*, 308.

23. Bowen, *A Grammar*, 16.

24. Baudin, *Fetichism*, 17-20 and 25-27, followed by Ellis, who also was responsible for publicizing the tale of Oya and Šangó's acquisition of fire from Obàrálá (here considered Šangó's father), as well as the tale of Šangó's titanic fight with Huisi near Porto Novo while persecuting Oya for stealing his fire. All these myths were reproduced in Brazil by Rodrigues, *Os Africanos*, 222-25.

25. For the Oiá-Xangó (Sogbo) reference in Bahia, see note 2. It must be noted that the mythical marital relationship between Šangó and Oya may date from the early period of the Oyo empire, when Šangó's cult expanded north toward the Niger river and Nupeland, where Oya was worshiped. My suggestion is that only the myth of Šangó being married to the three river deities was a late elaboration, probably coinciding with the early nineteenth-century civil wars.

26. Peel, *Religions*, 296. Peel's evidence is in D. Williams, *Journal*, 29 Dec. 1878, and S. Johnson, 18 Apr. 1881.

27. Verger, *Notas*, 345-46. The stories of Xangó were published in the *Ívê Kíkà Èkèrín* as *Ìtàn Oba Šangó* by A. L. Hethersett (no date).

28. Rodrigues, *Os Africanos*, 133, 224.

29. Apter, *Black Critics*, 21.

30. Luis Nicolau Parés, *A Formação do Candomblé: História e Ritual da Nação Jeje na Bahia* (Campinas, Brazil: Editora Unicamp, 2006), and "Transformations."

31. Andrew Apter, "Notes on Orisha Cults in the Ekiti Yorùbá Highlands," *Cahiers d'Études africaines* 35, nos. 138-139 (1995): 373, 392-93, 396-97, has argued that the cult of multiple deities was also common in Yorùbáland. My view is that the cults of multiple deities in Yorùbáland became significant only after

the fall of Oyô and therefore that they could have not influenced the formation of Candomblé as the older vodun cults may have.

32. Idálsio Tavares, *Xangô* (Rio de Janeiro: Pallas, 2000), 68 also maintains that "the *terreiro* flourished as a zone of aggregation, mobilization, and cohesion around the king."

33. It is worth noting that this mythical kingship configuration is unknown in Maranhão.

34. For Baýáni in West Africa, see Peel, *Religions*, 106, 343. In 1873, the goddess's "idol" is described as "a cap made of cowries, with strings of cowries hanging from the rim with a bell on the end of each one, which was also part of the Sangô regalia." For Baiáni in Bahia, and a description of her ritual in the Axé Opô Afonjá, see Deoscóredes Maximiliano dos Santos, *História de um terreiro Nagô: crônica histórica*, (São Paulo, Brazil: Carthago and Forte, 1994), 52. Baiáni is sometimes considered the wife of Xangô Afonjá, and in other cases the mother of Xangô.

35. After the Roda de Xangô, the "possessed" (*adivés*) are dressed in their deities' ritual clothes and return to the *barracão* for new dances. The ceremony ends with songs for Oxalá. The pattern is reproduced in most of the Nagô-Kétu *candomblés*, which "descend" from Ilê Iyá Nassô, such as Gantois, Axé Opô Afonjá, Pêlo de Prata, and others. A similar pattern is found in the Casa de Nagô in São Luis and the houses that follow its model. In the Tambor de Mina the *Xiré* may be called Roda de Alaué.

36. I thank Rafael Soares, *ogã* from Ilê Iyá Nassô, for information on the Roda de Xangô.

37. Santos, *História de um terreiro*, 46–59, 63. Airá's position at the beginning of the Xangô cycle may be due to his seniority (since he is considered the eldest Xangô) but it may also indicate his founding role in the Ilê Iyá Nassô. Verger, *Orixás*, 28, 140, reports that an old name of this cult house was Iyá Omí Ase Airá Intilé. He also reports three qualities of Airá: Airá Intilé, Airá Igbôñán and Airá Mofé (See Verger, *Notas*, 326). Baudin, *Fetichism*, 20, refers to Àrà (thunder) as Sangô's messenger "who sends forth with loud noise *manamana* (the chain of fire)."

38. Tavares, *Xangô*, 46, 121–22. For Xangô's food offerings see Raul Lody, "O rei come quiabo e a rainha come fogo. Temas da culinária sagrada no Candomblé," in *Leopardo dos Olhos de Fogo: escritos sobre a religião dos orixás VI*, ed. C. E. M. de Moura (São Paulo, Brazil: Ateliê Editorial, 1998), 155–157. For a comparative study of the *orixás* attributes (colors, food offerings, sacrificial animals, etc.), see Claude Lépine, "Análise formal do panteão Nagô," in *Bandeira de Alairá: outros escritos sobre a religião dos orixás*, ed. C. E. M. de Moura (São Paulo, Brazil: Nobel, 1982), 13–70.

39. Verger, *Notas*, 428–30, reports two versions collected in Bahia. Lydia Cabrera, *El Monte* (1954) (Miami, Fla.: Ediciones Universal, 1983), 491, reports a similar story in Cuba. Another Brazilian version, by Tavares, *Xangô*, 77, reports

that Oxalá initiated his journey looking for his wife Nanã, who had been seduced and abducted by Xangô. Seu Geninho (Cachoeira, 2002) told me another version in which Oxalá starts his journey in search of his son Oxaguiã. Once he is released from prison, Xangô orders one of his generals, Airá, to accompany Oxalá forever, which would explain why Xangô Airá dresses in white. In one of Verger's stories, Airá is considered a slave rather than a general. For the West African Ifon antecedents see Apter, *Black Critics*, 28; Ulli Beier, *A Year of Sacred Festivals in One Yorùbá Town* (Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1959), 14; and J. A. Adedeji, "The Place of Drama in Yorùbá Religious Observance," *Odu* 3 (1966): 88-94.

40. Verger, *Notas*, 430-34. The Águas de Oxalá have a certain parallelism with the Lavagem do Bonfim, a popular feast held in January in Salvador. The stairs of the church of the Senhor do Bonfim (Jesus Christ syncretized with Oxalá) are washed by Afro-Brazilian women (*batanas*) who, as in the Candomblé ritual, bring the water on vessels on their head. As suggested by Roger Bastide, *Imagens do nordeste místico em noir et blanc* (1945) (Paris: Pandora Editions, 1978), 108, "derrière la façade Catholique est bien célébrée, en réalité, une cérémonie fétichiste."

41. Beier, *A Year*, 14.

42. Apter, *Black Critics*, 25 and 15-17, convincingly demonstrates the political intent of mythical narratives. In the face of Òyó-centric founding myths, Ifê-centric rival traditions were restricted to esoteric ritual knowledge. By means of the hidden meaning of their symbols, rituals have the ability to "preserve" subversive founding myths in the face of coercive censorship and repression (22). The opposition Şàngô-Òbatalá is somehow confirmed by Peel's analysis of the regional distribution of the former's cults in the central-western zone of Yorùbáland, neighboring the Ifê eastern region, where the cult is less prominent (see Peel, *Religious*, 110).

43. Apter, *Black Critics*, 30.

44. Silveira, "Jeje-Nagô," 89-93. According to Verger, *Orixás*, 73, in the *padê* ritual the founders of the Kétu *terreiros* are praised as *isô*. Verger gives the names of seven of these, including the *isô* *Obowro*, who, according to Silveira (93) is a devotee of Xangô Airá. For the *isô* see also Júlio Braga, *Ancstralidade Afro-Brasileira: o culto de babá egum* (Salvador, Brazil: CEAO-Ianamá, 1992), 221-22, and Juana Elbeim dos Santos and Deoscóredes Maximiliano Santos, "O culto dos ancestrais na Bahia: o culto dos eguns," in *Olorisa: escritos sobre a religião dos orixás*, ed. C. E. M. de Moura (São Paulo, Brazil: Ágora, 1981). In Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá, the *Arafêma* is a council of six elder men "with posts in the Oxossi house" who receive the title of *isô*: Santos, *História de um terreiro*, 46, 64, 97, and Silveira (92) claims that the *Arafêma* was a Bahian adaptation of the *Ìwàrífá*, the council of six ministers leading the Ògbóni male secret society in Òyó that would have operated in Salvador since the early nineteenth century.

45. See, for example, João José Reis and Eduardo Silva, *Conflito e negociação. A resistência negra no Brasil escravista* (São Paulo, Brazil: Companhia das Letras, 1989). Reis, *Rebelião*, 100, 102 also suggests that two Bahian slave rebellions in 1826, one initiated in a *candomblé*, may have been linked to the Xangô cult.

46. “[A]s cortes de Oxalá (Senhor do Bomfim) e Xangô (São Jerônimo) lutarão nos terreiros de candomblé ao som dos atabaques e cânticos religiosos. Perderá a luta o grupo que primeiro deixar ‘baixar’ um orixá no terreiro.” (See Francisco Viana, “Ritual da Guerra Fecha Candomblés após o Carnaval,” *A Tarde*, February 27, 1973).

47. In the 1860s the Olórôgan held before Lent was known as the feast of *fechar o balasto* (literally, “to close the basket,” an expression alluding to sexual abstinence) and gathered big crowds: *O Alabama*, March 6, 1867, and February 26, 1869.

48. “Quero ver meus netos espirituais com anéis de doutores, aos pés de Xangô.”

49. Martiniano Eliseu do Bomfim, “Os Ministros de Xangô,” in *O Negro no Brasil: trabalhos apresentados ao 2.º Congresso Afro-Brasileiro, Bahia 1937* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1940), 233–36. Although published in the proceedings, the text was not presented at the Congress. A version (ed. Edson Carneiro) was first published in the local newspaper *Estado da Bahia*, on May 19, 1937; Vivaldo da Costa Lima and Liza Earl Castillo, personal communications, February 14, 2004.

50. Vivaldo da Costa Lima, “Os Obás de Xangô,” *Afro-Ásia* 2–3, June–Dec. 1966: 5–36; Júlio Braga, *Na Gamela do Feitiço, Repressão e Resistência nos Candomblés da Bahia* (Salvador, Brazil: EDUFBA, 1995), 47–49; Stefania Capone, *La quête de l’Afrique dans le candomblé: Pouvoir et tradition au Brésil* (Paris: Karthala, 1999), 260–66.

51. Baudin, *Fetichism*, 73–74.

52. Sidney Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (1974) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 14; Stefan Palmié, “Against Syncretism: ‘Africanizing’ and ‘Cubanizing’ Discourses in North American Orishá worship,” *Counterworks* (1993): 93.

53. Roger Sansó, *Fetishes and Monuments: Afro-Brazilian Art and Culture in the 20th Century Bahia* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 69.

54. Santos, *História de um terreiro*, 18–19. Mãe Senhora, who was consecrated to Oxum, claimed to be both a spiritual and kin descendent from the Iyá Nassô founder of Ilê Iyá Nassô.

55. This event is also commented by Mattijs van Deport, “Candomblé in Pink, Green, and Black: Re-scripting the Afro-Brazilian Religious Heritage in the Public Sphere of Salvador, Bahia,” *Social Anthropology* 13 (2005), 3–26. The year 2005 was declared Xangô’s year in Brazil. Besides the Alalandê Xirê held at Ilê São Opô Afonjá, the “V Congresso de Umbanda e Candomblé de Diadema a Grande São Paulo” was also held in the state of São Paulo. The patron of that event was Orixá Xangô, Vodum Badé, Nkisi Zaze/Luango; among many other activities, it included the book signing for *Xangô, O Tronô*, by academic sociologist Reginaldo Prandi.

56. For an analysis of Weber and Durkheim, see Bastide, *Sociologia*, 4–8.

57. For different lists of Xangô “qualities” in Bahia, see Verger, *Natas*, 326, and Tavares, *Xangô*, 81–82. For the legendary figures of Oyó, see Johnson,

History of the Yorubás, 143-48, 155, and 189-200. For Dáda, "god of Nature and vegetables," see Baudin, *Fetichism*, 28; Rodrigues, *Os Africanos*, 222; and Peel, *Religions*, 261. For Airá (or Ará), see Baudin, *Fetichism*, 20; Verger, *Notas*, 140, 326-27; and Silveira, "Jeje-Nagô," 85. For Aganju, see Verger, *Notas*, 32, and Tavares, *Xangô*, 69. For Orunga, see Baudin, *Fetichism*, 17; Rodrigues, *Os Africanos*, 222-23; Verger, *Notas*, 343; and Tavares, *Xangô*, 76. For Biri in West Africa, see Baudin, *Fetichism*, 28. Tavares, *Xangô*, 136, mentions Yanguí, the first Exu or proto-Exu, as linked to Xangô.

58. In the early 1980s, Mãe Stella, current leader of Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá, initiated an anti-syncretic movement against Catholic imagery, but in the time of Mãe Aninha, the shrine of Xangô was presided over by an image of Saint Jeremy. See Donald Pierson, *Branco e Preto na Bahia* (São Paulo, Brazil: Editora Nacional, 1971), 322. In Cachoeira (Bahia), although "identified" with Saint Jeremy, Xangô is also celebrated in some domestic cults together with Saint Benedict: Louis Heins Marcellin, "A Invenção da Família Afro-Americana. Família, Parentesco e Domesticidade entre os Negros do Recôncavo da Bahia, Brasil" (Ph.D. diss., Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 1996), chap. 5. In 1904, in Rio de Janeiro, João do Rio relates Xangô with Saint Michael: Arthur Ramos, "Os mythos de Xangô e sua degradação no Brasil" in *Estudos Afro-Brasileiros: trabalhos apresentados ao 1er Congresso Afro-Brasileiro reunidos no Recife em 1934* (Rio de Janeiro: Ariel Editora, 1935), 54.

59. The Nagô identity of Badé and Sogbo may have been an influence from the Casa das Minas. It is to be remembered that Maria Jesuina, founder of the Casa das Minas, participated in the foundation of the Casa de Nagô. In the Casa das Minas, Badé and Sogbo are said to belong to the Kevioso family, which is also known as the Nagô family.

60. Pai Euclides Menezes Ferreira, interview with Luis Nicolau Parés, June 25, 2003. For more details about the Terreiro da Turquia, see note 16.

61. It is to be noted that in the Jeje *terreiros* of Bahia, Kpo, or Kposu, belongs to the Hevioso thunder pantheon and is sometimes considered the father of Sogbo.

62. The Maranhese and Bahian data about spiritual entities derives from my fieldwork in both Brazilian states between 1992 and 2003.

The Literary Manifestation of Xangô in Brazil

Esmeralda Ribeiro's

"A procura de uma borboleta preta"

LAURA EDMUNDS

In 2001, Níyi Afolábi's "Beyond the Curtains: Unveiling Afro-Brazilian Women Writers" addressed the movement in Afro-Brazilian writing that calls for a new way of seeing Brazil's racial past and present. This movement, particularly amongst Afro-Brazilian women, moves forward steadily, and its latest success is the 2005 publication of *Mulheres Escrevendo*, or in English: *Women Righting*. The collection of eight short stories by Afro-Brazilian women writers is the follow-up project to *Enfim Nós (Finally Us)*, a collection of poetry published in 1995, and the short story collection takes the next steps in liberating and recovering identity from a literary history in which, described by Afolábi: "dating from the era of slavery, the Afro-Brazilian woman has been portrayed as a slave, domestic servant, black mammy, and at best, a 'mulatta,' a sexual object whose function is to satisfy the perverse pleasures of the master without any hesitation."¹ The first story in this bilingual collection is Esmeralda Ribeiro's "A procura de uma borboleta preta," or, "In Search of a Black Butterfly," a story which fulfills Afolábi's assertion that the Afro-Brazilian woman, who is often "fulfilling the roles of mother, lover, provider, spokesperson, encourager, nourisher, . . . becomes fragmented in an effort to assert her individuality in the midst of social conventions and racial stereotypes."² Ribeiro's story demonstrates this fragmentation by way of a complex narrative voice. The story is told almost exclusively in dialogue by three separate narrators. The search for the butterfly is undertaken by all three narrators, and it is the primary concern of the story. The story also addresses "the metaphor of the 'absent protagonist'"

expressed in Afolábi's article, in that the "Search" becomes a literary one by way of the mystical butterflies, who ultimately are the still fleeting and unrealized authentic identities for which Afro-Brazilian women writers search. It's best though, to understand this search through a Yorùbá worldview, for a reading conducted through this particular religious and historical framework reveals the complex forces of Xangô, Yorùbá god of fire, thunder, lightning, and justice.

Reading the story in this way, and emphasizing the importance of Xangô, also addresses one of Ribeiro's major aesthetic concerns in all Afro-Brazilian writing: that women and men work together in developing and critiquing an Afro-Brazilian literary tradition.² The butterfly, conventionally a symbol of Yansan (Oya), Xangô's most loyal wife and goddess of the wind that precedes Xangô's thunder and lightning, simultaneously invokes Xangô himself. Ribeiro's use of the butterfly symbol demonstrates a development in the diasporic tradition, for it invokes two Yorùbá deities, but does so in a Brazilian social context for the purpose of developing Afro-Brazilian aesthetics. Yansan (Oya) and Xangô's unique place in the Yorùbá pantheon makes them the guiding force behind this story as well the entire collection. Xangô's justice is not always blind or democratic, and he also is a fragmented figure, having a history as both mortal and *orixá*, and manifesting a complex articulation of gender and social relations in his worship, but in Ribeiro's story, the complex and paradoxical forces associated with Xangô are community-forming and revolutionary.

The story itself covers fewer than ten pages, and the narrative is constructed in the form of a recounted telephone conversation. An operator at a crisis center overhears the pleas made by Leila to Baby, asking her to help find her black butterfly. The operator then relates the story, secretly, to the reading audience. The depth of the friendship between Leila and Baby is somewhat uncertain, as Baby tells Leila, "Friend? I've never known that much about your life."³ Leila's pleas are the result of the loss of her black butterfly, who is described as the child Leila is carrying: "When I went to the doctor . . . found out I was carrying a butterfly inside of me. I've never told anyone although I was happy. It would be a beautiful butterfly like the boys."⁴ Following the conversation, the operator and the reader learn that the butterfly was lost one night in a violent confrontation between Leila and her neighbors. After Leila was seen by a neighbor's child while she was riding a Ferris wheel with her lover, Jean, who is of French ancestry, the community suddenly appears, and both she and her lover are violently attacked. The boy is the child of one of Leila's neighbors, and he had threatened Leila previously, not liking her "foreign" lover. The neighbor is vocal about this dislike and publicly

promises other neighbors to "find a way to fuck [Leila]."⁹⁶ When Leila comes down from the Ferris wheel after the child has already revealed her presence in a public place with a soldier-with-French-ancestry lover, the community begins to attack Leila and Jean, throwing rocks at the couple. Leila manages to escape, but is taken to the hospital with blood running down her legs. She is told by a doctor that her butterfly had miscarried, and he did not know where it went. Eventually the "operator" loses the connection and is no longer able to hear the conversation between Baby and Leila. Part of the operator's daily routine is to go to the amusement park every morning, following her night shift at the crisis center, but in the closing scene of the story, she tells her readers: "I've slept poorly since that day. That conversation, I don't know, moved me."⁹⁷ Her experience in the park in the mornings is forever changed by the conversation, because she observes "how many girl-butterflies there are sleeping on the rocks," and she wonders, "what kind of future they will have when they become women."⁹⁸

There are a few clues in the story indicating that Leila was dreaming this episode. The time of the phone call is 11 PM. Baby is about to take a shower and wait for her own husband/lover/boyfriend, Tiago, to return home. Her alarm clock is playing music, and she comments on the need to turn it off: "Wait a minute, Leila, I have to turn off my radio-alarm clock. It must be broken since it only works with music."⁹⁹ All three women seem to be on the night shift, since at 11 PM, Baby's alarm clock has just sounded and the night operator has just begun her work. Leila's general disorientation and rapid narration of events throughout the story reads like she is trying to recount a dream that was so vivid she must share it with someone else in order to bring herself back to reality. Moreover, when she tells the story, the sudden appearance of the entire stone-throwing neighborhood at the amusement park also indicates a dreamlike quality. She remembers, "I closed my eyes. When I opened them, the park had been taken over by my neighbors."¹⁰⁰ We all know that a dream demands our interpretation. What conditions of society determine Leila's dream? What events contribute to the subconscious formation of the symbols at work in the dream and the narrative? What is the nature of the fear expressed in the dream, and what does it mean to have that fear overheard, hijacked, and relocated into storytelling by another narrative voice?

Yorùbá philosophy and oral tradition can construct a useful methodology through which to explore these questions. Though Xangô's presence is left unnamed in Ribeiro's story, it is dynamic and well documented in Brazil. However, he still emerges from the language of Leila's dream in a

collection of rather ordinary symbols accumulated during the recounting of the story. These symbols, and potentially the concepts behind them, are ultimately passed to the operator, whose life is forever changed by Leila's narration. Scholars of history, religion, and art have pointed to the mobility and inclusive nature of the Yorùbá worldview as the principal characteristic that enabled it to survive and flourish through the middle passage and in the New World, but since my concern here is literary, I would simply point to Wole Soyinka, who describes this tendency toward accommodation in *Myth, Literature and the African World*. Soyinka describes how new experiences are absorbed into a deity's agency, and how their interpretation is left to intermediaries who are not bound by the dogma that constrains monotheistic religions like Christianity and Islam.

[A]n attitude of philosophic accommodation, is constantly demonstrated in the attributes accorded most African deities, attributes which deny the existence of impurities or "foreign" matter, in the god's digestive system. Experiences which, until the event, lie outside the tribe's cognition are absorbed through the god's agency, are converted into yet another piece of the social armoury in its struggle for existence, and enter the lore of the tribe. This principle creates for society a non-doctrinaire mould of constant awareness, one which stays outside the monopolistic orbit of the priesthood, outside any claims to Gnostic secrets by special cults. Interpretation, as it does universally, rests mostly in the hands of such intermediaries, but rarely with the dogmatic finality of Christianity or Islam. The principle function is to reinforce by observances, rituals, and mytho-historical recitals the existing consciousness of cosmic entanglement in the community, and to arbitrate in the sometimes difficult application of such truths to domestic and community undertakings.¹¹

It is from this kind of inclusive and accommodating perspective that I wish to approach Leila and eventually the operator in Ribeiro's story, for they are engaged in precisely the cosmic and communal entanglement mentioned above, and the outcome is still uncertain.

Generally, Xangô is easily identifiable. The Yorùbá God of thunder, lightning, fire, justice, and electricity, he is always associated with the color red, and is often portrayed wielding his double-headed axe. However, it can be more difficult to identify him in literature, as his signifiers are sometimes rather ordinary and can easily be associated with unrelated concepts. But in "A procura de uma borboleta preta," a specific set of signs limits the possibilities for interpretation. Leila's wearing of the color red and the blood flowing down her legs is combined with the subject of the butterfly,

and a recurring presence of stones. When Leila describes her date with Jean, she tells Baby that she "was wearing jeans and a red blouse, red sandals with high heels, a red pocketbook, and also a red bandana to tie my braids."¹² Later, in describing the attack, Leila tells Baby, "I was taken straight to the hospital because there were clots of blood running down my legs."¹³ The prominence of the color red certainly is a potential signifier for Xangô, and it is also associated exclusively with Leila.

Leila is also the character engaged in the search for the black butterfly. The butterfly is also a potential sign pointing to Xangô's presence, as his double-headed axe has a butterfly shape, as do the thunderstones used in his worship in Bahia. Robert Farris Thompson makes the connection between the *osê Sàngó*, a dance wand used in ritual ceremonies, in *Flash of the Spirit*, writing that

the balancing of twin bolts of meteoric fire on the head of the devotee is also meant to convey a promise of moral vengeance. This powerful dual metaphor spread to the far corners of the Atlantic Yorùbá world. It appears with particular strength in Bahia, where in the late nineteenth century the butterflylike shape of the thunderstones balanced on the represented worshipper's head revealed influence from Ketu, where thunder axes frequently are shaped this way.¹⁴

The butterfly, as the main symbol of question in Ribeiro's story, can be interpreted through Yorùbá-inspired Afro-Brazilian religious art as an allusion to Xangô and therefore all the forces associated with him. Though Leila describes the butterfly as her unborn child (she is literally "pregnant" with a black butterfly), a reading assisted by a Yorùbá set of signifiers and images can begin to penetrate its function. If Leila, in her dream, subconsciously associates the butterfly with Xangô, then she has been pregnant with justice. The search for the black butterfly, then, is not a quest for a miscarried child, but for miscarried justice. Leila wears red and "loses" her black butterfly on the same evening. By alluding to Xangô and all his power, Leila's subconscious operates in an appeal to Xangô and his forces. As Soyinka explains, "in what primary sense a deity is thought upon in a community of worshippers, the affective ends towards which he is most readily invoked. In Sàngó's case, it is as the agency of lightning, lightning in turn being the cosmic instrument of a swift, retributive justice."¹⁵

Also operating in Leila's subconscious is the recurring presence of stones. Leila first encounters the stones rather unremarkably when she arrives at the amusement park and has to remove her red sandals because

the "ground at the park is all gravel."¹⁶ While Leila and Jean ride the Ferris wheel, she notices that the Ferris wheel operator is distracted by "butterflies perching on the rocks."¹⁷ Later, when the neighbor child sees her and the community appears to judge her, Leila and Jean are assaulted with stones and are severely injured. As the operator recounts this scene, she is incredulous, but eventually she develops new way of seeing, because she goes to the park every morning following her shift at the crisis center, and after hearing Leila's story, she sits in the park, "observing how many girl-butterflies are sleeping on the rocks."¹⁸ She develops a concern for the butterflies, wondering "what kind of future will they have when they become women."¹⁹ This final scene is the second one in which butterflies and rocks appear together. Taken as single occurrences, none of these colors or objects would be enough to defend Xangó's presence in the story, but taken together they can only point to Xangó and all the intricacies associated with him. Given the position of this story as first in the collection and the fact that it is transparently a metafiction introducing all the stories that follow, a Yorùbá reading of this story effectively situates the Xangó/Yansan partnership as the *orixá* of the collection, and potentially of Afro-Brazilian literature and gender discourse.

If interpreting the butterfly as a signifying shape for Xangó seems to take much of a leap of faith, one can build a stronger association with him through the story by looking at his relationship to stones. This requires looking deep into Xangó's history and discovering some of the many myths that establish his divine status and explain how he came to be associated with fire, thunder, and lightning. First, how did Xangó become an *orixá*? There are too many stories associated with Xangó's deification to review here, but a popular and concise version of the myth states that one day, Xangó

was recklessly experimenting with a leaf that had the power to bring down lightning from the skies and inadvertently caused the roof of the palace of Òyó to be set afire by lightning. In the blaze his wife and children were killed. Half crazed with grief and guilt, Sango went to a spot outside his royal capital and hanged himself from the branches of an *ááyín* tree. He thus suffered the consequences of playing arrogantly with God's fire, and became lightning itself.²⁰

His connection to stones derives from his somewhat esoteric relationship to Jákúta:

Mythologically, Šangô is a dynamic personality whose name is recorded in any literature concerning the Yorùbá. It is believed that Šangô is not strictly of Yorùbá origin, introduced from the Niger territory north of Old Ōyó. The derivation of the òrìṣà is obscure. Jákúta, a common epithet, is spoken of as a separate deity by some, but this is generally not accepted. The probability is that Jákúta is the ancient name for the Yoruba solar deity, and when Sango was deified he was identified with the *òrìṣà* who had been formerly called Jákúta.²¹

Welch effectively introduces Xangô's position as outsider, and he also suggests that at some point, an ancient syncretization with another God occurred, foreshadowing Xangô's many syncretizations with Catholic saints in the New World. Welch also points out that most people consider Xangô and Jákúta to be the same *òrìṣà*. Strengthening this position is William Bascom, who writes:

Šangô lives in the sky and hurls thunderstones to the earth, killing those who offend him or setting their houses on fire. Because of this he is called Jákúta, one who fights (*já*) with stones (*ákúta*). His thunderstones are prehistoric stone celts, ground like those of the European Neolithic period. When farmers find these stone axes in the field they take them to Šangô's worshippers, who keep them at his shrines as the symbols through which Šangô is fed.²²

Here we can begin to establish Xangô's connection to stones. They derive from the sky, and Yorùbá thought held that the stones were formed when lightning struck the earth. All "thunderstones" are sacred, but the most prized are those that resemble the doubled-headed axe form. The stones are Xangô's tools of punishment, as well as spiritual symbols used in his worship. Bascom also introduces the beginnings of Xangô's role as administrator of justice. This idea may have gained power in the New World, especially in Bahia, a possible setting for Ribeiro's story. Xangô's power is expressed in stones, as explained by Thompson:

[T]he power of Sango streaks down in meteorites and thunderstones, stones both symbolic and real. The *áṣé* of Šangô is found within a stone, the flaming stone that only he and his brave followers know how to balance unsupported on their heads. Flaming stones have become a metaphoric burden . . . the balancing of twin bolts of meteoric fire on the head of the devotee is also meant to convey a promise of moral vengeance. This powerful dual metaphor spread to the far corners of

the Atlantic Yoruba world. It appears with particular strength in Bahia, where in the late nineteenth century the butterflylike shape of the thunderstones balanced on the represented worshipper's head revealed influence from Kétu, where thunder axes frequently are shaped this way.²⁵

Thompson refers here to the common practice in Brazil of representing Xangô and/or his worshippers in sculpture with a butterfly-like shape atop his head. According to Thompson, this shape shows, in artistic form, the force of the stones, which are flaming, bolts, or meteoric in nature. In this way, the butterfly in "A procura de uma borboleta preta" becomes an even more powerful symbol. It embodies not only the double-headed axe of Xangô, but also the "bolts of meteoric fire." By naming this shape "butterfly," as Ribeiro does in both symbol and title in her story, she enlivens the image, making a living, breathing force. The visual qualities of the *asé Sàngô*, the dance staff used in worship, are creatively transposed into literature.

Yet something is out of place. Leila is nearly killed with stones. Her community appears suddenly out of shadows to exact punishment upon her. The stones they throw kill her black butterfly, and cause her to suffer. When she asks for help in searching for the butterfly, she cannot get it. Why does Xangô not protect Leila? In this scene, Ribeiro effectively invokes Xangô's passionate nature, revealing his ability to act outside of reason. This is an important departure from previous treatments of Xangô in Brazilian literature, in which well-meaning and well-informed white authors attempted to recreate Xangô as a rational figure, as in Jorge Amado's *Tent of Miracles* and Zora Seljan's *The Story of Oxáldá*. If indeed Leila is relating a dream to her friend Baby, then it is likely that she expresses fear in that dream of having somehow offended Xangô and incurring his displeasure. Leila worries, as does Baby, about the relationship with the soldier with French ancestry: "We couldn't hold hands on the streets because we were afraid people would stare at us."²⁶ Baby also worries about appearances: "Has anyone seen you, Leila?"²⁷ While this is more than likely not a direct offense to Xangô, Leila's relationship is an offense to her community. In the introduction to the collection, Maria Helena Lima describes a common thread that unites all the works in the collection: "for if there is a commonality of spirit in these stories, it lies in their creation of a space in which the socially prescribed myth of a Brazilian 'racial democracy' is questioned, problematized, and subverted."²⁸ This is precisely the tension that Leila tries to untangle in her dream, and is explored throughout the remaining stories in the collection. Is it an offense to date a soldier with French ancestry? Does she create or

undermine the ideal of racial democracy by creating mixed-race children? The community that hurls stones at Leila and Jean does enact a retributive justice, even if it is a racist retribution. The action of the community may also be merely a reflection of Leila's own worries. An effective way to interpret this story is to see the community mastering, for a moment, a morally neutral force. This force can be mastered again and employed by others who wish to exact vengeance, and it is a faithful transmission of the nature of Xangô, known in Yorùbáland as a "hothead" and a god of short temper and acts of passion. However, when read in a strictly allegorical sense, the story shows that Ribeiro is effectively killing off the literary image of the *mulatta*. Leila's child, if born, would be of a mixed-race heritage. As Afólábi points out, the Brazilian literary tradition has for years characterized the *mulatto* woman incompletely and with racial and gender bias. Ribeiro revises the literary tradition by killing the existing literary image of mixed-race women in her own fiction.

The remastering of Xangô's force is eventually accomplished by the formation of a new community: one comprised of women, and one deeply concerned with the fate of female black butterflies. The women who take part in the telephone conversation, as speakers or listeners, are sharing a set of signifiers, even if they do not know it. These signifiers point to Xangô, but they can also be supported with an examination of the form the story takes. By situating the story as a telephone conversation, Ribeiro privileges the oral mode. The entire story is composed of dialogue, with only a few short lines that reflect the editorializing of the Operator: ". . . what an absurd story I'm thinking . . . Leila calls Baby telling her about a Black Butterfly that flew from her womb . . ." and later: "why doesn't Leila bang the phone in this bitch's face . . . great friend she is . . . if Baby really wanted to help her, she would have put her coat on and gone straight to the amusement park."²⁷ The Operator, however, is really in conversation with the reader, addressing him or her as "you": "You'd better call me Operator."²⁸ The oral mode of history and storytelling kept Xangô's stories alive for centuries before they were written first by Europeans and then by Nigerians. The oral mode also sustained Xangô and Yansan (Oya) through the middle passage and the experience of slavery in the many countries of the New World where Yorùbá people were made to work and live.

The women also meet in Xangô's realm. As Soyinka points out, the accommodation at work in the Yorùbá worldview does not pollute the nature of the *orixá*: "[T]his accommodative nature, which does not, however, contradict or pollute their true essences, is what makes Xangô capable of extending his territory of lightning to embrace electricity in

the affective consciousness of his followers."²⁰ To accommodate even further, one can infer that Xangó is also to be found in any force that needs wires or cables. This would make him the *orixá* of cable television, of the Internet, and also of telephones. In the Brazilian context, Ogun is more likely to be considered the *orixá* of technology, but it is Xangó's energy that provides the power to run that technology. Indeed, in emphasizing Xangó's flashing quality, Thompson writes that "the Yorùbá realize a vision of his spirit in poetry charged with flashing images" and quotes a poem collected by Pierre Verger which contains a line stating that Xangó "makes a detour in telegraphic wire."²¹

Understanding the butterfly shape at work in Ribeiro's story as a literary manifestation of the forces of Xangó also uncovers significant connections between "A procura de uma borboleta preta" and other stories in the collection. *Orixá* appear or are referred to in at least two other stories, "Foram Sete/Lucky Seven" and "Abajur/Nightlamp." In these stories, the *orixá* act as forces of justice and as protectors. The inspiration for a young woman to kill the man who molested her sister in "Lucky Seven" comes as a thunderbolt, another of Xangó's manifestations, and in "Nightlamp" the guardian is a protector of secrets, like a benevolent *orixá*. Establishing these connections reveals that Ribeiro's story can also be read as metafiction that introduces the stories that follow. This fleeting female community then, in both "A procura de uma borboleta preta" and the collection as a whole, is formed through Xangó, whether or not any of the community members are consciously aware of it. This process can also be seen as a possible way that African and specifically Yorùbá influences and philosophical stances become occluded in New World settings. The butterflies also become embodiments of the black female literary identities that have yet to be realized in Brazilian literature. In the final scenes of Ribeiro's story, the Operator reveals how much she has been affected because of her involvement in this conversation. She says that she has not slept well since that night, and: "I sit there, observing how many girl-butterflies there are sleeping on the rocks."²² This observation leaves the reader with the powerful assemblage of Xangó's signifiers, and it is also something new, a sight the Operator would not have thought important or even noticed prior to her meeting Leila and Baby on the telephone. In the Operator's New World, as well as the audience's, there is an increased awareness of the fate of the butterflies, and the *orixá* are present, their forces at work, guiding a course of literary action.

NOTES

1. Niyi Afolabi, "Beyond the Curtains: Unveiling Afro-Brazilian Women Writers," *Research in African Literatures* 32, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 117.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Esmeralda Ribeiro, "A escritora negra e o seu ato de escrever participando." In *Criação crioula, Nu elefante branco* (São Paulo: Impr. Oficial do Estado, 1987), 65.
4. *Ibid.*, 29.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, 35.
7. *Ibid.*, 39.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, 35.
10. *Ibid.*, 33.
11. Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 54.
12. Ribeiro, "A procura de uma borboleta preta," in *Mulheres Escrevendo: Uma Antologia Bilingüe de Escritoras Afro-Brasileiras Contemporâneas*, ed. Miriam Alves and Maria Helena Lima (London: Mango Publishing, 2005), 31.
13. *Ibid.*, 33.
14. Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit* (New York: Random House, 1983), 87.
15. Soyinka, *Myth*, 8.
16. Ribeiro, "A procura," 31.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, 39.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Thompson, *Flash*, 85.
21. David B. Welch, *Voice of Thunder, Eyes of Fire: In Search of Shàngô in the African Diaspora* (Pittsburgh: Dorrance Publishing, 2001), 39.
22. William Bascom, *Shàngô in the New World* (Austin: African and Afro-American Research Institute, University of Texas at Austin, 1972), 4.
23. Thompson, *Flash*, 86-87.
24. Ribeiro, "A procura," 31.
25. *Ibid.*, 35.
26. *Ibid.*, 22.
27. *Ibid.*, 29, 37.
28. *Ibid.*, 27.
29. Soyinka, *Myth*, 54.
30. Thompson, *Flash*, 85.
31. Ribeiro, "A procura," 39.

Drums of Şàngó

*Bátá Drum and the Symbolic Reestablishment
of Òyó in Colonial Cuba, 1817-1867*

HENRY B. LOVEJOY

Most of Yorùbá music, and perhaps the most exciting, is associated with religion. Yorùbá secular music has been strongly influenced by Islam, while another modern influence on secular music is that known by the Yorùbá as "Spanish music," which is in large part Afro-Cuban. . . . *Bátá* are a special type of two-toned drums, believed to be found only among the Yorùbá, and used only for religious music.¹

This study of *bátá* drums is specifically concerned with an examination of Òyó and the process of ethnic reconfiguration under slavery revealed in the emergence of Lucumí culture in Cuba.² While Yorùbá were being taken to Cuba before the nineteenth century, they arrived in small numbers. In the nineteenth century, large numbers of Yorùbá arrived in Cuba, perhaps as many as 85,000 people. As is argued here, the presence of *bátá* drums, an important cultural icon, suggests that a large number of these Yorùbá, and certainly an influential segment, were from Òyó, which experienced internal revolt and collapse between 1817 and 1836. Moreover, it is argued that closer attention to specific cultural features can lead to a better understanding of the linkages across the Atlantic during the period of slavery and indeed afterward. Easily identifiable cultural icons, such as *bátá* drums, can reveal the conscious efforts of people to reestablish institutions of their homeland, even if only in symbolic and ritualized forms associated with religion, in this case *òrìşà* worship. Furthermore, the use of *bátá* drums reveals a vision of Òyó paradigms symbolically interconnected across the Atlantic world.

The largest number of slaves of Yorùbá descent left the Bight of Benin for the Americas in the first half of the nineteenth century. David Eltis has estimated (based on an analysis of shipping records) that between 1801 and 1867, perhaps a million people from the Bight of Benin, many of them Yorùbá, were moved.³ He has further estimated that roughly 96,200 enslaved Yoruba left the Bight of Benin for the Hispanic Caribbean, of whom probably 80–85,000 actually arrived in Cuba. Between 1801 and 1825, there were only an estimated 5,600 African departures from the Bight of Benin for the Hispanic Caribbean. Thereafter the number increased dramatically, with an estimated 65,600 Yorùbá leaving West Africa for Cuba between 1826 and 1850, which is the most important period for this chapter. From 1851 until the trade ended in 1867, another 25,000 Yorùbá are estimated to have departed. The numbers dropped steadily with the British blockade of the slave trade off the West African coast.⁴

The time frame for this study begins with the uprising at Ilorin in 1817, before which probably very few Òyó entered the trade, and ends with the last documented slave ship unloading in Cuba in 1867. Despite British abolition in 1807, a regenerated slave trade forced the migration of Yorùbá slaves to Cuba, which overlapped with the disintegration of Òyó. The collapse was associated with the Muslim uprising at Ilorin in 1817, the Òwu War (c. 1820–25), and the declaration of Ilorin as an emirate within the Sokoto Caliphate (1823), and coincided with the destruction of many towns and settlements and even the abandonment of the capital district of Old Òyó (c. 1836).⁵ As Paul E. Lovejoy points out, the attempt to estimate how many Yorùbá were forcibly moved, including when and where they went, “raises questions of which Yorùbá are in question, and what the concept of ‘Yorùbá’ and related terms [such as Lucumi] may have meant.”⁶ The twenty years before and after the final collapse of Òyó was at a peak in the slave trade; it coincided with the many wars and shifting political alliances in Yorùbáland and thereby affected the continuing movement of Yorùbá people from Africa to Cuba.

Sources and Methodology

Bátá drums were chosen as a means of examining the process of Yorùbá migration for the following four reasons: First, they are easily identifiable in physical terms, in that there are at least three membranophones of different sizes. Second, *bátá* drums have certain spiritual affiliations, specifically in relation to *òrìṣà* (deity) worship, and the Šangó cult. It must be

emphasized at this point that the Šàngó cult was the principal religious organization of the Òyó Empire, and *bátá* drummers occupied roles within its political administration. Third, the collapse of Òyó at a peak in the transatlantic slave trade set in motion major demographic, political, and social changes affecting both West Africa and Cuban societies. And finally, the "trans-culturation" of Òyó practices shaped Lucumí culture in Cuba, in which *bátá* drums demonstrate a clear historical connection across the Atlantic world.⁷

General patterns and specific elements of data surrounding *bátá* drums and drumming can be projected into historical interpretation. The oral sources specifically related to *bátá* drums are extensive. One of the most accepted versions of a myth of origin is that "*bátá* drummers once occupied the lowest status among drummers, until Šàngó, at a competition, selected *bátá* as his personal ensemble."⁸ Despite variations in myth, Šàngó was supposedly one of the earliest Alááfin (kings) of Òyó (in some traditions the third, while others say the fourth or even fifth).⁹ After his death, Šàngó was deified, and in turn a cult developed in his honor and memory. As Robin Law has demonstrated, there is insufficient historical data to date his exact reign, which would have been before the sixteenth century.¹⁰ Later patterns in oral traditions show that powerful and successful rulers were sometimes raised locally to the level of *òrìṣà*; so there may be elements of truth in those oral traditions. Nevertheless, oral traditions in both West Africa and Cuba have maintained that the mythical Alááfin Šàngó sanctified *bátá* drums. Whether or not Šàngó was actually a person, he became recognized as a powerful mythological figure that had a strong and important historical relationship with *òrìṣà* worship in Òyó, but also with *bátá* drums.

The first written reference to *bátá* drums in West Africa, albeit a brief one, appeared in the work of Reverend Samuel Johnson (d. 1901), who was originally from Òyó. His early life clearly exposed him to the cultural and political patterns associated with Òyó. Although liberated by the British Navy and taken to Sierra Leone, he was always exposed to other refugees from Òyó. However, when he became an Anglican missionary, he consciously identified with conversion to Christianity and rejection of religious practices associated with *òrìṣà* worship, such as the use of *bátá* drums in ritualized settings. The references to drums and *òrìṣà* in his masterpiece, *The History of the Yorùbás*, should be understood in the context of his association with the Church Missionary Society (CMS). From 1881 he was stationed in New Òyó, where many refugees had settled, and it can be reasonably assumed that he regularly heard the sound of *bátá* drums. Johnson examined and recorded political, social, and cultural traditions

of his countrymen. He mapped out the political hierarchy of Òyó, starting with the Alááfin (king), and also recorded aspects of ritual culture that involved royal drummers. The association of drums with the political and spiritual administration of Òyó is clearly spelled out in his work.¹¹

As Law demonstrated methodologically, Johnson's descriptions of Òyó's political administration can be confirmed, as the observations of Hugh Clapperton (1788-1827) have shown.¹² While Clapperton never directly referred to *bátá* drums, he correctly recognized the importance of drumming in Òyó politics, society, and culture. However, there is a problem in identifying *bátá* drums specifically with references to drumming. Methodologically, therefore, it is assumed that the interconnection between *bátá* drums, Òyó politics, and Sàngó has remained unchanged in the transposition from West Africa to Cuba, although the relationship to power, and the ability to implement cultural practices in a meaningful way, did change. An examination of this cultural icon supplements material derived from written records in helping to understand the nature of Yorùbá culture in Cuba in the nineteenth century. In short, it is assumed that the symbolic continuity in cultural expression in Cuba can reveal patterns of historical change.

Bátá drums were not mentioned specifically in the documentation that has survived from the early nineteenth century in West Africa and Cuba. Clapperton and his servant Richard Lander provided, however, the earliest written record relating to drums from Òyó. In January 1826, Clapperton was in the capital, "Eyco," and observed the use of drums without providing specific details of *bátá* drums.¹³ At the court, for example, "they kept drumming and singing all night." As he surmised, "the only instruments were drums and horns & whistles which were blown and beaten without intermission." Clapperton also observed, "their attendants were so numerous ['horse & foot' inserted in the margin] that every corner was filled with them and they kept drumming & singing all night." And "warriors and drummers the last well executed conveying the expression and attitude of a man vain and well pleased with his own music and wearing his head and cap on one side his eyes half cast up."¹⁴ Later in the nineteenth century, *bátá* drums were used at these occasions, and there is every reason to assume that Clapperton heard and saw *bátá* drums. Clapperton's observations included *bátá* drums because of their importance to Sàngó worship in Òyó. There is no question that *bátá* drums existed before Johnson and Fernando Ortiz actually described them. Based on oral data, Clapperton's journal, and references to *tambor*, one can reasonably assume that *bátá* drums were long associated with Òyó, and as chronicled in Johnson's work, long before 1817.

In Cuba, Fernando Ortiz (1881–1968) provided the first written reference to *bátá* drums and those only appeared well into the twentieth century. Ortiz undertook what was the earliest and arguably the most extensive study of *bátá* drum culture to date. Between 1952 and 1955, Ortiz published a five-volume series called *Los Instrumentos de la Música Afro-Cubana*, wherein *bátá* drums were truly represented.¹⁵ His conception of ethnic reconfiguration in Cuba's multiracial society was groundbreaking for the time in which he was publishing. He conducted numerous interviews of former slaves and/or their direct descendents. Based on oral sources recorded by Ortiz in Havana and Matanzas, "a Yorùbá named Añabi (son of Aña or Àyàn) was brought to Cuba who was an *oluaña* and *olésanin* (had Aña and Òsanin), and he consecrated the first *bátas* in 1830."¹⁶ However, references to his oral data were often left imprecise.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Ortiz's extensive collection of oral data related to *bátá* drums and drumming from Cuba is extremely pertinent to this historical discussion.

Unfortunately, written documentation which specifically identifies *bátá* drums in Cuba during the era of slavery have not been located. Written references to African drums, however, are sporadically found in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century documentation. In Spanish colonial records, for example, African drums were referred to as *tambor* (drum) and in *bailes de tambores* (dances with drums). But these references refer to any type of drum, drumming, and dancing of any African origin and do not provide detailed descriptions about actual drums and dances. The word *tambor* is referred to in colonial sources as an identifiable icon representing the quest for African autonomy and therefore implicitly the target of regulation. The term was codified into law at least as early as 1842 in Cuba. In the *Reglamento de Esclavos* (Slave Code), 3 of the 260 articles directly referred to drums or dancing, specifically in relation to an annual festival known as the Día de Reyes (Day of Kings).¹⁸ More detailed descriptions of *bailes de tambores* on the Día de Reyes began to emerge after the middle of the nineteenth century.¹⁹ Despite the absence of any direct mention of *bátá* drums in the first half of the nineteenth century, Ortiz collected oral data tracing *bátá* back to the 1830s that coincide with written references to *tambor* in colonial documentation.

It is therefore proposed that Law's methodology can also be used within the Cuban context because the earliest evidence of Changó's presence in Cuba is displayed on the Lucumi *bandera* (banner). It reads, LA SOCIEDAD DE SOCORROS MUTUOS NACION LUCUMI DE SANTA BARBARA, AÑO 1820. David H. Brown states, "Historically, *banderas* were time-honored markers of political units, institutions, and

regions, as well as religious mutual aid, and occupational societies in the Iberian-Atlantic world.²⁰ As early as 1820, therefore, Lucumí slaves had already organized into a *cabildo* (brotherhood or mutual aid society) in Havana, which was centered on Changó. Changó is the Cuban spelling of Sàngó, and the use of Santa Barbara established that slaves of Yorùbá descent had begun to worship Changó from at least the 1820s onward. *Bátá* drums in Cuba also have an important relationship to Changó in that they "belong" to him. Furthermore, Ortiz's work on oral traditions claims the first *bátá* set were consecrated in the 1830s.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to ascertain exactly when the first set was consecrated in Cuba or when the first *bátá* drummers arrived. It is argued here that sizes, shapes, and components of the *bátá* drum genre can be documented systematically when projected backward into early-nineteenth-century references to *drum* or *tambor*. *Bátá* drums as a model, in conjunction with this plethora of circumstantial evidence, raises many questions related to the Yorùbá in the Diaspora. Rituals and ceremonies involving *bátá* drums enable a comparative assessment of the influence of *bátá* drum culture in West Africa and Cuba.

Physical Complexion and Modes of Transference

In examining the influence of *bátá* drums in the Atlantic World, four characteristics are prominent: first, the unique physical complexions and modes of transference of *bátá* drums in West Africa and Cuba are identical; second, the relationship between *bátá* drums and the Sàngó cult were a part of the political administration of Òyó; third, the fate of *bátá* drummers during Òyó's collapse resulted in the transference of *bátá* drums from West Africa to Cuba; and finally, the functions of *bátá* drums in annual festivals are comparable in both West Africa and Cuba. A consideration of these manifestations of *bátá* drum culture reveals a symbolic reestablishment of the spiritual and even political structure of Òyó in Cuba, while providing the illusion of "integration" or "submissive subordination" to the colonial state.

Bátá drums have maintained identical physical characteristics in both West Africa and Cuba since the 1950s. This can be seen in a photograph of *bátá* drums taken by William Bascom near the city of Old Òyó in 1951²¹ and another taken by Fernando Ortiz in Havana about 1954.²² Only since the mid-1980s have Cuban and Nigerian *arisa* devotees had any real direct contact with one another, though effectively occurring on a rather perfunctory level, save a mere handful of exceptions.²³ These two images have received much acclaim by themselves, but presented

side-by-side they prove how *bátá* drums from West Africa have a physical identity indistinguishable from *bátá* sets from Cuba.

Darius L. Thieme's dissertation best described the physical characteristics of *bátá* drums found in West Africa: "The *bátá* drum family includes a homogeneous group of double membrane drums whose hollow wooden bodies are carved in the shape of a truncated cone. On each drum, membranes cover the opposite ends of the drum body, and thus each instrument has one large and one small membrane."²⁴ Thieme's physical description is identical to Ortiz's descriptions of what he found in Cuba. In terms of physicality, *bátá* drums are, therefore, easily identifiable. It is argued that sizes, shapes, and components of the *bátá* drum genre can be documented rather systematically and that their physical development has remained relatively consistent over long periods of time.

During fabrication the drums undergo a physical as well as a spiritual construction. While the drums are being fabricated, they must also be consecrated.²⁵ According to Pedro Pérez Sarduy, the secret of making the sacred drums of the *orishás* in Cuba is passed on from generation to generation, to our time. Juan Benkomo has inherited the secrets and is today a maker of *bátá* drums in Matanzas, and he revealed some of those secrets to Sarduy.²⁶ Benkomo states, "This drum has to come into being by hand, not on a lathe. That's how it has to be. The sacred instrument has to be a hand instrument."

In terms of their construction process, the best soundbox for any drum is made from a solid piece of wood hollowed out with a hammer and chisel. Staved drums are also a possibility, as seen in Brazil, but are generally less solid and are regarded by most professional drummers as inferior in terms of sound quality. Many different types of hardwoods have been used, such as African satinwood tree, apa wood, caoba, cedar, almond, and mahogany.²⁷ Even today, the carving and hollowing out of a soundbox requires meticulous dedication and untiring patience. After the general shape of the body is carved, hollowed, and smoothed, there is often a process of applying and tightening the drumhead. Up to ten laces are used to fasten, stretch, and tighten the drumheads. In West Africa and Cuba, uncastrated male goats or rams provide the ideal animal membrane. In both regions bulls, cows, female goats, and sheep are generally avoided. Drumheads are also made from animal hides, such as antelope, and when necessity dictates, rope is a convenient substitute. These animals are often sacred and sacrificed to the gods and the drums.

During the spiritual construction process, ritualistic elements are literally sealed inside the chamber of the largest drum. The drums are said to "house" *Àyàn*, or in Cuba, *Aña*, a goddess of drumming. *Bátá* drums

are believed to represent the embodiment of the *òrìṣà* Àyàn, and when these drums are played her voice is heard. Because the hides used for the drumheads often come from the sacrificed animals, the spiritual connection establishes how *bátá* drums should be thought of as religious icons embodied within the physical nature of an historical artifact.

In both West Africa and Cuba, the largest drum is considered to be female and is generally called *iyá ilú* (mother drum) and Àyàn. The name for the ensemble is *bátá*, and the largest drum, *iyá ilú*, has remained constant between regions. The names for the smaller drums differ between Africa and Cuba, as well as within Africa and within Cuba. The smaller drums in any given *bátá* ensemble have a number of names. Thieme, in accordance with LáoYè I. Timi of Èdè, a former Oba (king) of Èdè, an ethnomusicologist and a drum master, "give[s] the names of the instruments as: *iyá'ílú*, *omele akp*, and *omele abo* or *omele kudi*."²⁸ In the Republic of Benin it is also called *omele abo*.²⁹ In West Africa, the middle drum is also called simply the *omo* or *omole*. In Cuba, the middle drum is called *okonkoló*.³⁰ In Havana and Matanzas the smallest drum is called *itótele*, while in Santiago de Cuba, and also Matanzas, it has been known as *secundo*.

The Timi of Èdè and Thieme have defined the standard ensemble size as consisting of four membranophones, whereas Ortiz states, "This orchestra is only comprised of three drums and not one instrument more or less." Bascom defined a *bátá* ensemble as having only three drums. But debates related to *bátá* drums of this nature are not the focus here. Besides, what does it matter if the parts of the *bátá* genre have different names in different places or that there may be four or three membranophones in a given ensemble? Without sufficient historical evidence to date these linguistic or technical transformations, the process whereby ethnic reconfigurations occurred from one "temple-house" of Yorùbá belief to another remains unclear.

The names of the individual drums have comparable meanings related to their physical size and gender—small (male or female), medium (male), and large (mother drum). What remains important in these examples of linguistic deviation is not the change of oral expression, but the incorporation of new languages, such as Spanish, into the continuance of traditions conveyed through a trend in meaning. For the purpose of this paper, *bátá* drums are only to be considered at the very least as a drum trio of membranophones. In circumstances when other percussion instruments join in, the added instruments should be considered as a separate liturgy, even though they may be played in unison.³¹

An examination of the form and physical complexion of *bátá* drums only goes to demonstrate that these drums must not be confused with

other drums found in Yoruba culture. In discussing the complexity of categorizing drum genres in Yorùbáland, the Timi of Èdè has observed that "the drums that the Yorùbá use are not completely exclusive. Many [drums] have equivalents between other tribes from the Nigerian occidental region. Possibly they have a common historical origin. Each tribe has its own traditional genre of drums, which look like one to the other in their form, in the manner of their fabrication and in the style of playing."²² Contemporary musicologists and anthropologists have agreed that *bàtá* and *dùndún* drums share qualities in their physical structure because they are both membranophones of approximately the same size, shaped like an hourglass or a truncated cone. They are also both used in various forms of *òrìṣà* worship.

Furthermore, both *bàtá* and *dùndún* drums are classified as "talking drums" because they encode structural properties of Yoruba speech. As Bascom has observed, "there is a true drum language and the drums actually 'talk,' reproducing the melody and the rhythm of the sentence, and approximating the quality of consonants and vowels by fingering the head with the left hand."²³ Johnson described the duties of a royal drummer in New Òyó:

The Aludùndún or the Dùndún drummer knows the names, praises and attributes of every family of note, and they are experts in eulogizing and enlarging the praises of any one they wish to honour, *speaking* it with their drums. If for one instance a white man enters the palace, the drummer would strike up: "Òyìnbó, Òyìnbó, ań òkun ẹ̀ ọ̀nà" (the white man, the white man who makes of the ocean a highway).²⁴

Yorùbá is a tonal language, in which tone or pitch is used to distinguish words which otherwise share the same consonants and vowels. Johnson continued, "[H]aving learnt how to make their instruments, they then begin to learn how to *speaking* with them, an operation to which the Yorùbá language readily lends itself, as it consists chiefly in modulation of the voice; this the instrument tries to imitate." When played, complex poly-rhythms are said to reconstruct basic phrases, proverbs, metaphors and/or religious praises. However, to understand this drum language invariably requires prolonged study of Yorùbá language and frequent exposure to this form of drum culture.

Bàtá drums differ from their *dùndún* cousins when examined in more detail. The *dùndún* construction is far more complex than *bàtá* drums because it can change pitch when the drum is squeezed with the elbow. Quite possibly, the earliest written reference to *dùndún* drums can be

The mere presence of *bátá* drums in different historical contexts across the Atlantic reveals the diffusion of widespread and diversified cultural systems of Yorùbá belief. *Bátá* drums in both West Africa and Cuba possess spiritual associations that have nearly identical cultural tendencies. A number of Yorùbá religious practices from West Africa and Cuba involve *bátá* drumming. They are represented in initiation rituals, consecrations, coronations, annual festivals, and Egúngún (ancestral spirits) ceremonies—all of which center upon the worship of *òrìṣàs*. The importance of *bátá* drums in Šàngó and Changó worship, therefore, is an additional key element to their unique identity.

Bátá drums can be further distinguished from the numerous drum genres found in West Africa because they are associated with specific cultural connections to the *òrìṣàs* Àyàn and Šàngó. The *bátá* drums are sacred objects with spiritual potency. The drums are said to “house” Àyàn, a goddess of drumming, embodied by the ritualistic materials (*àṣe*) sealed inside the *iyá ilú*. Àyàn is the *òrìṣà* portrayed as the female patron deity of drumming and also associated with *bátá* drums. Àyàn’s symbol is a drum, which serves as both a repository of divine power and literally as a vehicle to give a voice to god. In *òrìṣà* worship, drums “with” Àyàn are consecrated in a series of rituals and considered to be sacred objects. In West Africa and Cuba, there are many different types of percussion instruments, ranging in size and shape from the maracas to larger drums, as well as the *bátá*, capable of encapsulating Àyàn. These rituals and ceremonies involve prayer, preparations of special herbs, and the sacrifice of animals, much as the Cuban *bátá* maker, Benkomo, has described. In Cuba, *bátá* drum masters, such as the *olúbátá*, possess *Aña* and are the only ones qualified to place the spirit of *Aña* inside the chamber.

In Yorùbá culture, specific drum genres are associated with the worship of particular *òrìṣàs*.²⁷ *Bátá* drums are religious icons and sacred objects said to “belong” to Šàngó, god of war, thunder, lightning, and drumming. Leo Frobenius wrote in 1913, “A special drum, the *Bátá*, is beaten. The Šàngó dances are not, however, ordinary amusements, but sacrosanct and profoundly significant ceremonial. Šàngó descends on some man or woman dancer’s head.”²⁸ Šàngó devotees and *bátá* drummers played active roles in the Šàngó cult, which was directly tied to Òyó’s political administration.

The Šàngó cult, much like other Yorùbá cults, is remarkable for its elaborate ritual and abundance of symbols, which had specific functions in the kingdom. *Bátá* drums are also a spiritual and cultural symbol of Šàngó. The cult was certainly an important prop of royal power in Òyó. As a sign of acceptance into the Šàngó cult in West Africa, a priest, for

example, is required to have a *lábá* (beaded bag). The *lábá* is worn when the priest travels to officiate at some rite away from his shrine. According to descriptions related to the function of the *lábá*, "[t]he bag itself is used to contain ritual objects, and is carried by the priests when purifying a spot where lightning has struck and, also, when in full panoply they join the procession of the priesthood at the main annual rite of the god."³⁹ It is never worn when the priest is in a state of possession. Sàngó priests, adorned with a red and white *lábá*, would have been easily recognized as coming from Òyó in past historical contexts. The Sàngó cult had centralized organization most likely modeled after Òyó's political structure. As Law argues, "[t]he Sàngó cult played an important role in securing the loyalty of the provinces of the *Aláàfin*. . . . The organization of the Sàngó cult in the provincial towns was controlled from the capital, and Sàngó priests in the provinces had to travel to Òyó to receive instruction and initiation from the *Mogbà*, the Sàngó priest of the royal shrine."⁴⁰ Since Òyó was under the rule of the *Aláàfin*, the Sàngó cult consciously promoted Òyó culture and political policy.⁴¹ A unit of *bátá* drummers in nineteenth-century West Africa would have been identified as having direct ties to Òyó.

The most important figure in the political system of Òyó was the *Aláàfin*. According to oral tradition, the *Aláàfin* has sometimes been portrayed as a "divine king." Frobenius argued that the *Aláàfin* was regarded specifically as the incarnation of Sàngó, and one of the "earliest" *Aláàfin*. But there is no evidence that the *Aláàfin* was ever worshipped as an *orishá*. According to Law, "[the *Aláàfin*'s] power was limited by the need to retain public confidence, and in particular he was expected to take account of the advice of the *Baṣòrun* and the other *Òyó Mési*." They were a council advisory to the *Aláàfin* composed of free-Òyó and non-royal lineages. Still, many important officers of this political administration were members of high-ranking Òyó lineages,⁴² which would have required devotion to Sàngó.

Òyó's political organization centered on the town (*ilú*). Òyó city was where the *Aláàfin* resided and ruled over a federation of lineages. According to Law, "the empire over which the *Aláàfin* rules was comprised of territories which were subjected to Òyó control in different ways and to varying degrees."⁴³ Peel states:

In the center of every town was the *àfin* (palace). An *ilú* was both "town" and "polity," with typically the latter named after the former. The political field of Yorùbáland, though involving territories and border posts and "sub-tribal" identities, should still be conceived as a

system of relations between *ilú* as point sources of power, like a galaxy of stars of greater or lesser magnitude with shifting fields of gravitational pull between them.⁴⁴

The largest towns, such as *Ìbàdàn* or *Abèòkúta*, which began to grow exponentially in the years after *Òyó*'s collapse, were estimated to have had populations of up to 100,000 by the mid-nineteenth century. These towns were recent products of the wars, and most *ilú* were much smaller, in the 5,000-20,000 range. The total area of the *Òyó* kingdom at its greatest extent cannot be calculated with any precision, but must have been something on the order of 18,000 square miles.⁴⁵

The *Aláàfin* controlled a large administration which carried out political and ceremonial tasks connected to the city of *Òyó*. In all probability, palace slaves numbered several thousand. The three principal royal slaves were eunuchs called the *òtun iwéḡfá* (eunuch of the right), the *òná iwéḡfá* (eunuch of the middle), and the *ìsá iwéḡfá* (eunuch of the left). These three were in charge respectively of religious, judicial, and administrative matters. Furthermore, the *Aláàfin*'s principal officers included the master of the horse, his *mgbá* (*Ṣàngó* chief priest or chief diviner), various lieutenants, youth leaders and the *isúgbins*. The *isúgbins* were members of the palace orchestra and numbered "about 210 persons." *Bátá* drums were more than likely represented here because they "belong" to *Ṣàngó*.

Although *bátá* drummers played an important role in the political administration of the *Òyó* Empire, they were quite separate from most official or political matters. In terms of a hierarchy with the *Aláàfin* sitting on top, *bátá* drummers and common priests would have ranked fairly low in the overall structure, and most likely did not have direct interaction with the *Aláàfin*. The drummers would travel away from the city center, accompanied by priests, in order to promote *Ṣàngó*. As Law's work demonstrates, based in large part on Johnson, the decline of *Òyó* after 1817 inevitably affected the royal cult of *Ṣàngó*, and therefore *bátá* drummers and their knowledge were brought over with them to Cuba.

Transference of *Bátá* Drums to Cuba

As Law's work demonstrates, based in large part on Johnson, the decline of *Òyó* after 1817, inevitably affected the royal cult of *Ṣàngó*. Being reminded of *Òyó*'s collapse at a regenerated peak in the slave trade suggests the spread of the *Ṣàngó* cult accelerated in the Diaspora through the 1830s. The resulting migrations and displacement that occurred with

the decline and destruction of Òyó in the first third of the nineteenth century continued to mix up the Yoruba population. Àfònjá, the *àáré-ò má-kakánfò*, or commander of the military, though not a Muslim himself, decided to enhance his support by calling up the growing Muslim interest. He invited to Ilorin an influential Fulani cleric, known to the Yorùbá as Alimí (Uthman dan Fodio), who soon proclaimed *jihad* against "pagan" Òyó. The Muslim uprising won widespread support among Muslims in Òyó, provoking revolt among Òyó's cavalry and slaves of northern origin. Àfònjá's war-bands, known as *jama'a*, spread further and deeper into the Òyó kingdom. The displacement of Òyó southward pressured by the Fulani-led *jihad* meant that "pagans" of Òyó decent were more than likely targets for enslavement.

According to Peel, around 1823 Àfònjá was killed and Alimí's son Abudusalami took charge of Ilorin, declaring his allegiance to the Sokoto Caliphate.⁴⁶ By this time, Òyó's eastern provinces had fallen apart. Refugees migrated east and south beyond the borders of the old kingdom. In 1831-33, a last attempt to throw off the Fulani failed when the Alááfin Oñewu was killed and Òyó's remaining habitants fled further south (c. 1836). The Fulani of Ilorin finally overran nearly all the provincial towns in the north and west and reduced Òyó to tributary status.

Bolanle Awe acknowledges that many Òyó citizens who were unwilling to submit to Fulani rule, in consequence of the *jihad*, fled southward and

joined in a fray involving the three powerful kingdoms in the south—Ife and Ijẹ́bú on one side, and Òwu on the other. Òwu and its Ègbá neighbours were destroyed, and the Òyó-Yorùbá refugees and some of their Ijẹ́bú and Ifẹ́ allies took over their homes; by the 1830s they founded new settlements for themselves at Ibádán, Ijáyẹ́, and modern Òyó; most of the Òwu and the Ègbá at the same time created a new settlement for themselves in the southeast, at Abẹ̀òkúta.⁴⁷

A son of Alááfin Abiòdún named Àtibá, who had once professed Islam at Ilorin, secured enough support from Òyó's surviving senior chiefs and warriors to be recognized as Alááfin and established himself well to the south at a place called Àgò Òjà, commonly known as New Òyó. Here he and his successors recreated as much as they could of the Old Òyó. But in the face of threat from Ilorin, practical measures were also needed, and Ibádán exemplified Yorùbá militarism during this period. Astutely recognizing the new centers of power, Àtibá conferred high Òyó titles on the principal warlords: Ofúyòlé of Ibádán was made Başòrun, and Kúrúnní

of Ijaye was made Aare-Ona-Kakanfo.⁴⁸ According to Awe, "the slaves who stayed around the compound served as messengers, drummers and praise singers."⁴⁹

In the 1840s, the politics of Yorubaland faced a radically new agenda. In the post-*jihad* and the establishment of an emirate at Ilorin, Christianity appeared to the Yoruba as the epitome of modernity. The vacuum left by Old Oyo's collapse provided plenty of internal political struggles.⁵⁰ Ibadan was the main producing power of the interior because it was also the main military power. It was community of a very different social character, which sought to establish regional hegemony. Mainly derived from Oyo traditions and political administrations, it came to control the savanna/forest divide, but it did not have access to the coast. Oyo's coastward rivals, Abeokuta and Ijebu, often cut trade routes between the coast and the interior, causing additional problems. Oyo continued southeastward, radically affecting their ethnic balance and consequently their religious and cultural complexions. After the British annexed Lagos in 1861, Yoruba politics eventually had to respond to the end of the slave trade.

Yorubaland in the first half of the nineteenth century was a "triangular encounter of religions." Islam and "traditional" religion had been in contact with one another long before the arrival of Christian missionaries in the 1840s.⁵¹ It is assumed that *jihad* principles would have sought to destroy non-Islamic religious practices and male lineages. Peel argues that "Islam moves through a trajectory of three stages: quarantine, mixing, and reform. These stages are not rigid, and one society might yield examples of all three orientations at the time. The Yoruba Islam encountered by the missions was overwhelmingly and conspicuously of the "mixing" kind, with "reform" only at its edges."⁵² *Jihad* would be an extreme example of reform. As male-cultural icons, a *basa* trio, or priests with *laba* bags, were easy targets for cultural suppression because they were identifiable.

Jihad principles would have sought to destroy non-Islamic religious practices and male lineages. Lovejoy argues, "Generally the [slave] trade involved more males and especially more boys."⁵³ In most Yoruba-based societies, drumming was a male-dominated institution. Music was not only a pastime, but also an occupation for many men and boys. Based on contemporary observations of Yoruba drum families, the teaching process consisted of a mentor/apprentice relationship, often father/son. Moreover, professional drummers in Yoruba culture, whether in Africa or the Americas, typically formed patriarchal guilds or complex social performance groups. Drummers had to learn how to manufacture their instruments, so that each drummer could repair damaged drums.⁵⁴

Drumming guilds often identified themselves by adding prefixes to their surnames, such as Aludundún or Alukósó, as recorded by Johnson.³³ According to the research of Ortiz, “the high *bátá* masters have the rank known as *alú bátá*, a status that many excellent percussionists do not attain. The repertoire was learned through years of hard study, which was achieved through living in the environment of the religion.”³⁴ Yorùbá drummers, starting at very young ages, dedicated their lives to learning the art, history, and religious philosophy associated with every aspect of the musical instrument.

Documents from the Mixed Commission in Havana recorded that the Cuban slave ship *Ingadadora* was “bound from the River Lagos on the Coast of Africa to the Island of Cuba.”³⁵ The British Schooner *Speedwell* caught the notorious slave ship off the Isle of Pines on July 23, 1832. According to Mixed Commission reports, the notorious slave ship had made an average of two crossings a year to Lagos since 1827.³⁶ According to a registry of all items on board, Commander Don Bartolomé Alemany of the *Ingadadora* had on board at the time of her detention 22 men as crew, and 134 “Negroes” as cargo. Out of the 134 Negroes, 109 were men, 12 were women, and 19 were boys, nearly all of whom were classified as “*nación Lucumí Oylo*.”³⁷ In Cuba, slaves of Yorùbá origin were generally identified as Lucumis, but also it was also common to use distortions of *Ọyó* (*Aylo* or *Eyó*). The example of the *Ingadadora* also reinforces the likelihood that men and small boys from *Ọyó* were targeted for enslavement. It is argued here, speculatively, that *bátá* drummers were among those who were targeted.

Bátá drummers and their instruments were an easily identifiable cultural representation of Šangó worship and hence loyalty to “pagan” *Ọyó*. As Šangó is a god of war, *bátá* drums were most likely involved in warfare to mobilize troops on the battlefield and provide morale.

The “Trans-culturation” of *Ọyó* in Cuba

By focusing on the term *tambor* as it appears in colonial documentation, one can examine colonial attitudes toward African drumming in Cuban slave society. These drums have been described in colonial documentation as “*tambores* made out of hollowed tree trunks and covered on one end by a patch of ox-hide tempered by fire.”³⁸ We now know that this reference does not refer to *bátá* drums because this does not conform to the type of hide used in the “proper” consecration of a *bátá* set. As a means of identification, a drum’s physical complexion is a viable cultural indicator of African ethnicity. It is clear that in the decades after the *Ọyó*

Yorùbá began to arrive in Cuba, enslaved Yorùbá had little, if anything, to do with Christianity. The nominal commitment of Cuban officials and church authorities was conversion by baptism. By 1846, Regino Martín, a Cuban official, noted that "it is not necessary to have lived very long in our countryside to know that with few, but very honorable exceptions, the slaves have hardly more religion than the stupid idolatry which they brought from their country of birth."⁶¹ That "idolatry" would have involved drumming.

In 1827, one of the earliest known references to the term *tambor* appeared in the colonial countryside. On January 7 of that year, Juan Martínez wrote to D. Cícilio Ayllón, governor of Matanzas, that nine *negros* from a group of thirteen *cimarrones* (runaways) had been captured. They were accused of uniting with the *dotación* (plantation) of Francisco Prieto and making a lot of noise, "with the beating of three *tambores*, that was heard over a wide region."⁶² According to the first section of *penal del reglamento de la finca rural*, a fine of twenty-five pesos was imposed on the owner.

The evidence described how *tres tambores* were used that night. Although *bátá* drums can be a trio, this document does not specifically indicate what type of drums they were, nor does it specify from which *nación* those slaves came. In Cuba, there were other genres of drum trios, which may or may not have been membranophones, such as *tambores hembé* or *gangá*. Although this document appears in a paper about *bátá* trios, it cannot be used to establish, on its own, what type of drums were used that night. However, what is most important to note is the date on the letter. It was written the day after the Día de Reyes.

This document proves that African slaves had already begun to take advantage of the relative freedom associated with this colonial festival as early as 1827. Initially, the Día de Reyes owed its inspiration to Catholic Corpus Christi processions, certainly brought over to Cuba by the Spanish. According to Brown, "Epiphany marked the moment on the Catholic sacred calendar when the Three Magi, or Kings, traveled to present gifts to the baby Jesus."⁶³ These processions, often compared to pageantrics by theater historians, appeared as early as the fourteenth century across Western Europe.⁶⁴ At some point, and for whatever reason, January 6 became a colonial holiday, and an unsupervised group of runaway slaves from two different plantations had assembled on that night to play "three drums" mentioned in the 1827 document.

By 1839, slave revolts had become endemic on the island of Cuba, and drumming was often associated with civil unrest. A consensus emerged that some allowance had to be made for religious and cultural expression,

including the use of *tambores*, but that such practices should be strictly controlled. On July 23, 1839, Joaquín de Ezpleta wrote a report on behalf of the office of the governor general of Cuba about the role of *los bailes de tambores* on plantations. Despite the potential for organizing resistance, Ezpleta noted that many plantations allowed the "continuation of the slave dances known by the name *tambores*" as a means of allowing slaves some autonomy.⁶⁵

As Elsa Goveia has argued, West Indian slave laws reflected the climate of opinion.⁶⁶ By examining the changes in the policy toward drumming, it is possible to glean information about changes in attitudes toward African music in Cuban slave society. Ezpleta expressed the opinion of the governor general that it was acceptable "to permit to the slaves of farms in the country the diversion of dances to the custom of their country on holidays." The instructions permitted slave dances with drums, but they were supposed to be supervised. The decree was first introduced in Havana and then circulated to the other provinces, reaching Matanzas by early August of the same year.⁶⁷

It appears that this policy of permitting *tambores* on plantations on holidays was disputed the year before it was codified. In 1841, the Inspección de Policía del Cuartel de Fernando Séptimo wrote to the governor of Matanzas prohibiting "negros" from being able to go out in the streets with *tambores*. José María de Torres signed the communication on the fifth of January 1841, the day before the Día de Reyes. It read, "In your utmost compliance, I am prepared, that which orders your office, related to not permitting *negros* from going out onto the streets with *tambores* tomorrow."⁶⁸

The following year, the infamous *Reglamento de Esclavos* was implemented across the island as the legal code to control the slave population.⁶⁹ Of the 260 articles in the code, 3 were related to the Día de Reyes festival. Article 51 was identical to the 1839 document and stipulated that "slave dances with *tambores* could be permitted at fiestas during afternoon hours provided they are supervised by some white person, and no slaves from any other estate attend." Article 87 stated, "Negro *cabildos* should only be held on Sundays and on other days of important fiestas." Finally, Article 88 declared "that the Negroes require special permission to march with flags and native costumes. Such marches can be held twice a year, and during daylight hours." One is once again reminded of the significance of the date of 1820 on the Santa Barbara *cabildo* banner.

The process of the symbolic reestablishment of the Ɔ̀yó Empire in colonial Cuba was complex. Brown examines Havana *barrios* (neighborhoods)

in two spatial contexts, the spaces within Havana's fortress walls (*intramuros*) and the spaces outside the walls (*extramuros*). *Cabildos* were located within the *intramuros* until 1792, when they were banished outside the walls. From then on, *barrios extramuros* were "dangerous incubators of *la hampa cubana* [the Cuban underworld] and its *mala vida*, or socially unhygienic 'bad life' of *delincuencia* [delinquency]."70 On the Día de Reyes, carnival processions were granted permission to enter the fortress gates of the *intramuros*. Brown states, "They marched through the business and residential thoroughfares of Mercaderes, Obispo, and O'Reilly Streets toward the central Plaza de Armas, the site of the palace, as at other stops along the way, procession members performed dances, ritually demanded and received *aguinaldo* (money gratuities), and then returned home."71 Drumming would have been performed, and the 1820 *bandera* suggests that the Cabildo Santa Barbara or Changó was involved in this procession. Brown continues: "*Cabildo* processions took over the main thoroughfares of the Old City's *intramuros* to such an extent that bourgeois families stayed inside. Genteel spectators watched and delivered *aguinaldo* from balconies or from behind barred windows. The ritualized exchange of *aguinaldo* exemplified the ways in which carnival could be an arena of contested meanings."

Those "meanings," as I have now interpreted beyond what Brown has intended, lead back to Africa and the annual rites and rituals associated with Òyó. The Alááfin was subject to a number of ritual restrictions, mainly in his confinement to the palace within the city walls of Òyó. He appeared in public only on three major annual festivals: the *Beere*, the *Mofé*, and the *Órun* festivals. In all three, *bátá* drums and *Şàngó* were heavily involved. *Bátá* drums serve as an excellent model that can be projected backward into early-nineteenth-century references, such as "the chief was seated outside of his house, surrounded by about a hundred of his wives, and musicians with drums."⁷² I will now examine an important annual festival in Òyó where *bátá* drums were heavily represented.

According to Johnson, the *Beere* festival took place toward the end of the agricultural year, between late February and early March. It was an important annual festival for three reasons: First, the *beere* grass was a form of tribute paid to the Alááfin. The grass was used to thatch the roofs of houses and to feed the horses of the royal cavalry. According to Babayemi, "from the middle of the nineteenth century till around 1936, there are traditions that almost all Yorùbá speaking peoples brought tributes to Alááfin during *Beere* festival."⁷³ Second, it marked the new agricultural year for the *beere* grass. And third, it marked the time of year when the king would add another year onto his total reign.

As noted by Law, the earliest firsthand observation of the festival appears to be in Clapperton's journal. He described a festival in Òyó in 1826 that was held just before March. Clapperton's entry was dated February seventeenth, which conforms to the time and place of the agricultural New Year in and around Òyó: "A number of people arrived from different parts to pay their annual visit to the king."⁷⁴ This passage refers to the *Bẹ̀ẹ̀rẹ̀* festival. His simple description, however, provides cultural historians with clues to identify and compare aspects associated with Yoruba cult ritual, such as his description of the royal courtyard. It was here where *bátá* drums would have been used during the processions associated with the *Bẹ̀ẹ̀rẹ̀* festival and the ceremonial burning of the fields, because fire was representative of Šàngó.

In Cuba, fires were set at the sugarcane harvest, which took place near the Christian New Year around the beginning of January, coincidentally close to the Día de Reyes. Fires had become endemic and a popular form of resistance used during the many slave revolts in the first half of the nineteenth century. According to Friginals:

Canefields in the Cárdenas area were in fact being set on fire so persistently around 1840 that something had to be done, and the extent to which the maintenance of discipline figured in this decision is shown by the Real Consulado's advice to the *hacendados*. A commission to study these problems reached these conclusions: The best way to avoid canefield fires was to feed the slaves better, and the bagesse-shed fires could be stopped by turning the immediately surrounding areas into corrales where the slaves could raise pigs.⁷⁵

Bátá drums are a noisy and an easily identifiable icon of Òyó culture. No matter where they were found, *bátá* drums definitely belonged to Šàngó. They had to be in some way consecrated with *Ayán* and were presumably a large part of annual festivals, specifically *Bẹ̀ẹ̀rẹ̀* and Día de Reyes. *Bátá* drums have played a central role to honor the Alááfin because by design they are easy to carry. The differences in detailed aspects of the material culture of *bátá* drums, such as differences in spelling, legends, and the like, demonstrate that people of Òyó descent were prominent among *Šorubá* subgroups.

I have hypothesized that the Día de Reyes was appropriated in the symbolic reestablishment of the Òyó Empire in Cuba in the late 1820s and 1830s, which had particular meanings to slaves of Òyó descent. Òyó slaves apparently perceived the Día de Reyes as the *Bẹ̀ẹ̀rẹ̀* festival, especially when fields were set on fire before what appears to have been

nothing more than a big party. Ortiz portrayed the Día de Reyes as "an orgy of rites, dances, music, song, and liquor," with noises "of their bells, their drums, and the rest of their primitive instruments."⁷⁶ The Día de Reyes and colonial attitudes toward drumming were integral to the transference, accommodation, and trans-culturation of *bátá* drums in Cuban slave society.

This study has been concerned with understanding the process of ethnic reconfiguration under slavery and what was meant by the emergence of Lucumí Aylo culture in Cuba, and the extent to which *Ọyọ* was a factor in this cultural transformation. In order to achieve a better historical understanding regarding the absence of closer linkages to Africa, more attention to cultural artifacts, such as *bátá* drums, has yielded a vision of *Ọyọ* paradigms symbolically interconnected across the Atlantic world. This study attempts to identify the cultural tendencies of *Șàngó* or *Changó* worship as revealed through the trans-culturation of rituals and ceremonies involving *bátá* drums in West Africa and Cuba. My research into *bátá* drums has enabled the "symbolic" identification of *Ọyọ* entrenched in Lucumí culture in Cuba and demands further comparative studies with other places where Yorùbá were concentrated, especially Brazil and Trinidad.

Unfortunately, there appears to never have been any direct references to *bátá* drums in early-nineteenth-century documentation; however, oral data, nineteenth-century written references to *drums* and *tambores*, the collapse of *Ọyọ* during a regenerated peak in the slave trade, and the existence of comparable forms of *bátá* in West Africa and Cuba have demonstrated the symbolic reestablishment of *Ọyọ* in Cuba. *Bátá* drums, or "talking drums," have tremendous implications in association with oral sources and traditions because they are mnemonic devices. More research into those traditions will help to further substantiate the hypothesis I have presented here.

NOTES

I would like to thank David Trotman, Michael Marcuzzi, Andrew Apter, Judith Beitelheim, Edward Alpers, Gad Heuman, Jane Landers, Oscar Grandio, Tóyin Fálólá, José Curto, Adrián López Denis, Mariza Soares, Ernesto Valdés Janet, and my father for their discussions, revisions, suggestions, criticisms, and time. I also want to acknowledge Robin Law, whose contributions to Yorùbá history inspired the ideas presented in this chapter.

1. William Bascom, *Drums of the Yorùbá of Nigeria*, CD liner notes (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Folkways Records, 1992).

2. "Lucumi" was used in Spanish-speaking colonies to refer to those now identified as "Yorùbá." See Robin Law, "Ethnicity and the Slave Trade: 'Lucumi' and 'Nago' as Ethnonyms in West Africa," *History in Africa* 24 (1997): 205-19. The spelling of Yorùbá-related terms differs between West Africa and Cuba. In a West African context, I have tried to use the spelling from West Africa, for example, Šàngó. In the Cuban context I have tried to use spelling from Cuba, for example, Changó. Changó is the Cuban spelling of Šàngó.

3. The majority of the one million Yorùbá went to Brazil. Unfortunately this study does not address Brazil or other places, such as Trinidad and Tobago, where large concentrations of Yorùbá ended up.

4. David Eltis, "The Diaspora of Yorùbá Speakers, 1650-1865: Dimensions and Implications" *The Yorùbá Diaspora in the Atlantic World*, ed. Toyin Falola and Matt Chikis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 17-39, especially table 2.5.

5. J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yorùbá* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 34.

6. Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Yorùbá Factor in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade," *The Yorùbá Diaspora*, 40-55.

7. Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, trans. Harriet de Onis (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 98. Ortiz, a Cuban scholar, defines the term *transculturation* to express the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the complex transmutations of culture that have taken place. This reference to "trans-culturation" highlights an insight of Ortiz, whose detailed study of drums, and *bátá* drums in particular, was a feature in the development of his theories of cultural change in Cuban society. As is implied here, Ortiz failed to appreciate the historical significance of *bátá* drums as part of a process in which people from Ōyó symbolically attempted to recreate facets of the Ōyó Empire in colonial Cuba, although he clearly recognized the influence of Yorùbá culture.

8. Akin Euba, *Yorùbá Drumming: The Dàndún Tradition* (Bayreuth, Germany: Bayreuth African Studies Series, 1990), p. 33.

9. Fernando Ortiz, *Los Tambores Batá de los Yorùbá* (Havana: Publicigraf, 1934). See also Robin Law, *The Ōyó Empire, c. 1600-c. 1836* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 31, 32, 36, and 37.

10. Law, *Ōyó Empire*, 33-34.

11. Rev. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbás from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, ed. O. Johnson (London: Routledge and Sons, 1921).

12. Law, *Ōyó Empire*, 62.

13. Hugh Clapperton, *Hugh Clapperton into the Interior of Africa: Records of the Second Expedition, 1825-1827*, ed. Jamie Bruce Lockhart and Paul E. Lovejoy (Boston: Brill, 2005), 53-60.

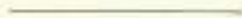
14. *Ibid.*, 57, 139, 140, and 167.
15. Fernando Ortiz, *Los Instrumentos de la Música Afro-Cubana*, 2 vols. (Havana: Letras Cubanas, 1995).
16. Ortiz, *Tambores Batá*, 16.
17. Mauricio A. Font, "Introduction: The Intellectual Legacy of Fernando Ortiz," in *Cuban Counterpoints: The Legacy of Fernando Ortiz*, ed. Mauricio A. Font (Baltimore, Md.: Lexington Books, 2005).
18. Franklin W. Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba during the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 128-34.
19. For such descriptions of the Día de Reyes please refer to Judith Bettleheim, *Cuban Festivals: A Century of Afro-Cuban Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001).
20. David H. Brown, *Santería Enthroned: Art, Ritual, and Innovation in an Afro-Cuban Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
21. Image was taken from Bascom, *Drums of the Yorùbá*. A digital copy of the liner notes is also available online through Smithsonian Folkways.
22. Ortiz, *Tambores Batá*, 176. Note that it is considered sacrilegious to stand consecrated *bátá* as displayed in this photo.
23. Michael D. Marcuzzi, "A Historical Study of the Ascendant Role of *Bátá* Drumming in Cuban *Orisha* Worship" (Ph.D. diss., York University, 2005), 34-35.
24. Darius L. Thieme, "A Descriptive Catalogue of Yorùbá Musical Instruments" (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1969), 173-214.
25. As quoted, "*Abérinkùlá* refers to drums shaped like *bátá* which have no spiritual affiliation. In West Africa, there is no such term for non-consecrated *bátá* drums." John Mason, *Orin Orishá: Songs for Selected Heads* (Brooklyn: Yorùbá Theological Archministry, 1992), 19.
26. For a complete description of the construction and consecration process of *bátá* drums in Cuba refer to Juan Benkomo, "Crafting the Sacred *Bátá* Drums," in *Afro-Cuban Voices: On Race and Identity in Contemporary Cuba*, ed. Pedro Pérez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 140-46.
27. Ortiz, *Tambores Batá*, 34.
28. *Ibid.*, 174.
29. Marcos Branda Lacerda, "Yorùbá Drums from Benin, West Africa," in *Yorùbá Drums from Benin, West Africa*, CD liner notes (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 1996).
30. Victoria Eli Rodríguez, "Tambores Batá," in *Instrumentos de la Música Folclórico-Popular de Cuba*, ed. Victoria Eli Rodríguez, 2 vols. (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1997), 1319-43.
31. Olavo A. Rodríguez, "Introduction," in *Sacred Rhythms of Cuban Santería*, ed. Olavo A. Rodríguez, CD liner notes (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 1995).
32. Laoye I. Timi de Ede, "Los Tambores Yorùbá," in *Actas del Folklore Boletín Mensual del Centro de Estudios del Folklore* 1 (1961): 17 (my translation).
33. Bascom, "Drums of the Yorùbá."

34. Johnson, *History of the Yorùbá*, 58.
35. John Whitford, *Trading Life in Western and Central Africa, 1877*, 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass, 1967), 72.
36. Bascom, "Drums of the Yorùbá."
37. Morton Marks, "Introduction," in *Rhythms and Songs for the Orishas: Havana, Cuba, ca. 1957*, CD-liner notes (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 2001).
38. Leo Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa: Being an Account of the Travels of the German Inner African Exploration Expedition in the Years 1910-1912*, trans. Rudolf Blind, 2 vols. (London: Benjamin Bloom, 1968), 204-27.
39. Joan Wescott and Peter Morton-Williams, "The Symbolism and Ritual Context of the Yorùbá *Láà Shàngó*," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 92 (1962): 23-37.
40. Law, *Ọ̀yá Empire*, 104.
41. Bruce Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 501.
42. Johnson, *History of the Yorùbá*, 57-60.
43. Law, *Ọ̀yá Empire*, 83-85.
44. Peel, *Religious Encounter*, 31.
45. *Ibid.*, 90.
46. *Ibid.*, 33.
47. Bolanle Awe, "Militarism and Economic Developments in Nineteenth Century Yorùbá Country: The *Ìbàdán* Example," *Journal of African History* 14, no. 1 (1973): 65-77.
48. Peel, *Religious Encounter*, 34.
49. Awe, "Militarism and Economic Developments," 67.
50. Peel, *Religious Encounter*, 35.
51. *Ibid.*, 187. "Traditional" religion should not be treated as a purely indigenous cultural baseline, but sometimes as an entity not wholly independent of Islam, Christianity, or both.
52. Peel, *Religious Encounter*, 190.
53. Lovejoy, "Yorùbá Factor," 47.
54. Euba, *Yoruba Drumming*, 66.
55. Johnson, *History of the Yorùbá*, 57.
56. Ned Sublette, *Cuba and Its Music from the First Drums to the Mambo* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2004), 229.
57. Signed statement by William Marren, Havana, July 11, 1832, National Archives, London, Foreign Office (hereinafter FO), 84/128.
58. Other slave voyages were mentioned in similar affidavits between July 1828 and December 1830, FO, 84/80, FO, 84/91, and FO, 84/107.
59. Slave Schooner *Ingodadora*, Signed statement by Juan Franco Cascales, July 31, 1832, FO, 84/128.
60. Fernando Ortiz, "La Antigua Fiesta Afro-Cubana del Día de Reyes," *Ensayos Demográficos* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1984), 43-78.

61. As quoted in Gwendolyn M. Hall, *Social Control in Slave Plantation Societies: A Comparison of St. Domingue and Cuba* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 45.
62. Juan Martínez por D. Cicilio Ayllón, Matanzas, January 7, 1827, Archivo Histórico Matanzas (hereinafter AHM), Gobierno Provincial "Cimarrones," legado 12, número 17. Document taken from the *Conde de Lagunillas*, which were property registries and manuscripts from *haciendas*.
63. Brown, *Santeria Enthroned*, 35.
64. Phyllis Hartnoll, *The Theatre: A Concise History*, 3rd ed. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 45.
65. Joaquín de Ezpeleta to Gobierno General (hereinafter Ezpeleta), Havana, July 23, 1839, Archivo Nacional de Cuba (hereinafter ANC), Havana, Gobierno Superior Civil "Esclavitud," orden 33102, legado 998.
66. Elsa Goveia, "The West Indian Slave Laws of the Eighteenth Century," *Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 4 (1960): 75-105; see also Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba*, 124.
67. Ezpeleta, ANC, Gobierno Superior Civil "Esclavitud," orden 33102, legado 998 (my translation).
68. Comunicación al Gobernador Político y Militar de Matanzas, José María de Torres por la Inspección de policía del cuartel de "Fernando" [*sic*] Séptimo, Matanzas, Jan. 5, 1841, AHM, Fondo Provincial Religioso Africana, expediente 1, legado 1 (my translation).
69. Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba*, 128.
70. Brown, *Santeria Enthroned*, 29.
71. *Ibid.*, 35.
72. Clapperton, *Journal*, 57.
73. Cited July 1959 in S. O. Babayemi, "Beere Festival in Oyo," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 7, no. 1 (1973).
74. Clapperton, *Journal*, 158.
75. Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *The Sugarmill: The Socioeconomic Complex of Sugar in Cuba, 1760-1860*, trans. Cedric Belgrave (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 100.
76. Fernando Ortiz, "La Antigua Fiesta Afrocubana del Día de Reyes," *Ensayos Etnográficos* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1984), 41-78. Originally published in 1921.

PART FOUR

The Voices of Şàngó Devotees



Ẓàngó beyond Male and Female

OLÓYÈ ÀÌNÁ OLQMỌ

If you are willing to be lived by it
You will see it everywhere
Even in the most ordinary things.

—LAO TZU

The divinities of Yorùbá spirituality have aspects that are seldom discussed or taught. These aspects are what I consider their essential features. Yorùbá deities are not merely invisible entities or long-dead historical characters of legends and myths; they are the divine forces of nature that compose the planet Earth. The divine existence and power of *òrìṣà* permeate all living things on the earth including the sky, wind, and waters. I will delve specifically into the power of the divinity Ẓàngó and examine how he demonstrates his existence as a primary force in nature and actively participates in the physical processes of the human body. Ẓàngó's reign does not stop there; it continues to effect humanity. As a social icon his mythology affects the gender roles of his priests and priestesses. What has been overlooked is his divine nature. It is the cosmic consciousness of Ẓàngó that is the unity of opposites, the power of having two parts that can be used individually, in combination, and interchanged without notice.

In this chapter I explore the ways in which Ifá-Òrìṣà communities apply the social context of gender to the spiritual and celestial power of the Yorùbá divinity Ẓàngó. As a divine consciousness, the divinity of thunder and lightning has been bogged down by the historical antics of men of

power on both sides of the sea. In the societies of Yorùbá-based traditions Šàngó is narrowly considered to be the driving force behind men who are womanizers, cruel leaders, and unscrupulous scoundrels. The energy of this *àrísá* is primarily understood as being demonstrated within the context and experience of society's masculine roles. These predominately male actions and activities are assigned to and expected of a person not because of the individual's spiritual development, but because of the individual's biology. This gendered distinction is also true of men and women who are consecrated to Šàngó. Men are often encouraged to be highly visible, promiscuous, aggressive, and domineering. In contrast, women who are consecrated to the god-king Šàngó are encouraged *not* to be leaders, *not* to speak out, and to develop a demure demeanor in the company of men.

There are two primary ways in which a devotee experiences the physical, natural, and social expressions of Šàngó. One is an internal individual process and the other is the external communal rite; one is knowledge-based and the other is grounded in participation. The divinity of light and sound is most deeply perceived spiritually and mentally, and this divinity also manifests his energy in the bodily functions of humanity. His visual symbol is the double-edge axe, and his character traits also come in pairs. Those who know and comprehend the nature of the dialectic space between the spiritual and the physical easily understand this ideology. This theme of dualism is visible in the artifacts that have become symbols of the divinity; his primary weapon is the double-edge axe, which swings both ways as a weapon of offensive attacks and resistance to injustice.

Šàngó as a Primary Force of Nature

Šàngó as a divinity of most Yorùbá-based traditions has been primarily mythologized through stories and artistic representations of masculine power and leadership. Šàngó of the Old World *and* Šàngó of the so-called New World are regarded as male forces that dominate and take advantage of the people under his care or within his domain. Is this divinity a character driven by the need to expand his domain, and by his unquenchable urge to acquire territory? Or is this divinity a source of male and female leadership that we have drawn from in times of persecution, oppression, and slavery, when the leaders of the people have to step away from the crowd to speak out and bring forces together for reasons that are larger than the individual and the apparent? If the focus is on the qualities of this charismatic deity as the human warlord and the womanizer in Yorùbá spiritual mythology, the power of Šàngó as a force of nature is being dismissed.

In contrast, the energy of the *òrìşà* Şàngó as it manifests in nature approaches the human realm in the form of thunder, lightning, fire, electricity, and sound. The divine consciousness and true character of Şàngó exists in the appearance of his power, his movement, and his display of natural phenomena as his divine force moves from the ground to the sky through the layers of the earth's atmosphere. The celestial power of Şàngó is not generated by humanity. The turbulent movement of the *òrìşà* as he travels from the heated clouds, gathering the wind of his mate, *Ọya*, arrives on earth as sound and light. Şàngó's displays of power include the thunder that intrudes upon the quiet of the earth, bellowing its being out of the silence of the other-world; it is loud, interrupting, and more often than not, it is a bit frightening.

Once again, it is the dual nature of this divine force that moves from the sky and strikes the earth as he gathers positive and negative electrical charges in the clouds above and from the earth below us. Then the space between the positive and negative becomes large enough for Şàngó to make his move. His energy reaches down toward earth from the sky and up from the earth. When his earthly and heavenly self meet, the collision causes the sky to suddenly light up with zigzag streaks of light. His exhibition turns the darkness of the night into the celestial light generated from the earth and the sky. Lightning is electricity, and it is the electricity in our bodies that distinguishes the brain from the mind. When Şàngó's energy is moving through the universe it illuminates the landscape just as the electricity in our bodies illuminates our consciousness and creates human inspiration.

Although Şàngó has been characterized as a man who likes many women and has short sexual relationships with them, in nature he attracts, absorbs, and is absorbed by those elements of nature that are fluid, receptive, and consequently characterized as female divinities. The barometric pressure of the earth's atmosphere swells the air because of the god-king's interaction with wind (*Ọya*), water (*Ọşun*), and the distance from the sea (*Yemọja-Olókun*). When the electricity and water buildup exceeds the capacity of the clouds, fluids are forced out, and rain falls upon the earth.

Light and Sound

In *Core of Fire: A Path to Yorùbá Spiritual Activism*, I wrote, "Àlà (white light) is the dimension where electromagnetic radiation produces visual sensations and can open our consciousness, expanding our awareness. Despite the fact that light is an electro-magnetic energy it is experienced

by humanity internally and externally. The domain of light is not only an external reality; it is also an internal power that often invades our state of mind with thoughts that resemble flashes of light or moments of cognition. The amount of light that we can extract from this dimension connects us to the tools we can use to develop our character, and our understanding, enlarging our interpretations of the world.¹¹ Šàngó's light and sound intrudes upon our thought processes and supplies the necessary energy for the earth's vegetations that feed *òrìṣà* and us. Light is a form of energy that is visible to the human eye and experienced by the consciousness in the form of understanding, cognition, and inspiration. The only reason that the human eye can perceive it is because it is made visible due to the movement through the different realities. Light begins in the otherworld and gathers particles from the atmosphere as it makes its way to earth. It is the movement of particles in the atmosphere that brings light into our physical realm in the form of waves or sunlight. Like Šàngó, these particles are always on the move; they are not sedentary. For the earth, light provides the necessary energy for the vegetation to grow; it lifts the veil of darkness, slowly revealing what shares our physical space. When the external light finally penetrates our internal world, the seeds of inspiration that have lain hidden in the recesses of our mind are illuminated. It is this internal light that can ultimately guide us toward true spiritual wisdom. Lightning is a form of light that holds 10 to 100 million volts of electricity, and its heat is six times hotter than that of the sun. As it heats the air it causes it to expand. The illumination of the celestial consciousness of Šàngó moves from the earth to the sky, abruptly affecting us internally and externally. Šàngó is an *òrìṣà* of expansion; this expansion is not limited by territorial boundaries; his presence, as lightning, moves in an unrestrained manner across the landscape.

Once we understand the metaphysical impact of light we must, when exploring the power of Šàngó, also encounter thunder. The power and energy of sound is also an important aspect of Šàngó. Sound is important to our spiritual and physical lives because everything comes into being as a result of sound. The sound of thought and human desire and the resonance of creative inspiration whispered inaudibly by the divine consciousness of the Infinite Mystery penetrates and diffuses through the universe. Whether or not our thoughts are made audible to another human ear through speech, our thoughts produce waves of energy. This is one reason why the elders of our traditions have always told the young to be careful of what they think and what they say. Our thoughts make sounds that we cannot see; these thoughts create waves of energy that are invisible to the naked eye. The reason we cannot see these waves is

that their frequency is very high and fast moving, beyond the scope of ordinary human perception. Although invisible, the geometric patterns created by sound waves carry information from its source out into the universe and affect all dimensions as they move from their origin toward infinity.

The exhibition of the thunder-god's power of light, and the induction of nonhuman sound into the physical realm, is another form of Şangó's dualism. The duality of this *òrìṣà* is expressed in the verbal history of this divinity; it tells us he is the father of twins because of his fertility, the *òrìṣà* of truth, and the *òṣe* who can make a lie become a reality. While he has gained popularity as the god of justice and truth, there are those who also accuse him of being a liar. He is the king of debate, one who is always articulate, and able to defend both sides of an argument. Şangó is the ultimate lawyer.

Instead of masculine stereotypes, how do we more thoroughly and accurately experience the energy of Şangó within the physical realm? It is possible to see the manifestations of Şangó in the human expression of charisma, in the expansive and intoxicating forces that draw together opposites, and attract us irresistibly to the sustaining, yet dangerous, forces of fire. From the passion of the erotic to the energies that compel us to adore, venerate, and follow our leaders, Şangó's power can be found. In the physical realm, Şangó is charm, the irresistible intoxicant, the earthly phenomena of desire and attraction that passes only briefly through the intellectual realm of logic, and settles the super-rational logic of humanity's need to reproduce. Şangó is the carrier of passion but is not an emotional divinity. There is a definite difference between the passion for truth, the passion for living, and the instinctual passion to reproduce. Let me be clear that there is a precise distinction between passion and the emotion of love.

Şangó and the Physical Processes of the Human Body

How do we understand Şangó within the everyday male/female relationships that we all, at one point or another, experience? Şangó expresses not only the passion that humans innately have for living, but also the passion that leads to sexual attraction; it is this passion that is known as the sex drive, the libido, and the drive to fulfillment of sexual desire. Şangó brings people together despite his reputation for being a divinity that displays cruelty, aggressiveness, and tyrannical behavior toward his subjects. It is his energy that plays the music that leads the ritual dance and precedes the unification of spirit with the physical body. The

outcome of sexual activity between men and women is born from the unity of opposites; this unity creates the potential for new life.

Most of us experience the energy of Šàngó in our lives; if we are sexually active, we accumulate knowledge or skill that results from direct participation of his energy sexually, spiritually, and intellectually. Šàngó is the energy we feel the moment just before ejaculation and orgasm. When all of our nerve endings are vibrating, and we are immersed by the waves of heat, fluids, and the involuntary responses of our body, we know we are fully alive. Those who engage in sexual activity, both metaphorical (erotic, flirting, or suggestive behavior) and literal, tap the divine force that is Šàngó. Hence, Šàngó has been called the rain god and the god of fertility, because ejaculation, similar to the rain, is the result of interacting with the energy force known as Šàngó. Ejaculation is the body's rain; like rain these fluids create new life.

In nature, Šàngó's copulation with air and water causes fluids to be released on the earth. The same process happens in humanity's copulation. The electrical impulses of the brain signal the body fluids to gather. These fluids fill the genital vacuums in the body.² When these vacuums begin to exceed their capacity, like the clouds, the body releases fluids. And then BAM! . . . ejaculation and orgasm.

The electrical energies that travel through our physical bodies determine whether or not the spirit, body, and intellect are still integrated. In other words, it is the electricity in our bodies that determines if we are still alive. The body's brain stem measures electrical activity. These are the impulses that cardiologists and the electroencephalogram equipment monitor when we are sick and physically in-between worlds.

Šàngó as a Cultural Yorùbá Icon

Šàngó has been memorialized as becoming a divinity after the reign and demise of the fourth king of Nigeria's ancient city of Òyó. It was this Yorùbá king who became known as Šàngó. Just as thunder, lightning, sound, and fire existed before the fourth king of Òyó, so did the divine consciousness that is Šàngó. Šàngó as a force of nature existed before the fourth king of Òyó. There are human personality traits that can tap the energy-base divine consciousness of the thunder-god Šàngó. These traits, even when they are clearly given to people as a result of their relationship with the divinity, are only a micro-fraction of Šàngó's divine power and consciousness. There are many opinions as to the character and effect of the fourth king's rule on Yorùbáland. Some Yorùbá born on the soil of Nigeria say that this king was ruthless, without compassion,

and warmongering. The Alááfin who is attributed with being Şangó ruled Ọyó with a force that unified the ethnic groups that lived within Yorùbáland, using many of the same techniques that Shaka Zulu used to unify the Zulu people. Both rulers had one thing in common: they were able to rule the day and command legions of warlords because of the qualities expected from their gender, such as aggression and a lack of emotion. These "masculine" techniques belong to humanity, and are not the traits of a divine force. They do not express the totality of the divine consciousness of Şangó.

Although the Alááfin, the fourth king of Ọyó, embodied *some* of the traits of the divine force of Şangó, the *divine* consciousness of Şangó has traits and abilities that surpass those of the warlord and the womanizer. Additional attributes of this divine consciousness are primarily displayed in the number of female priests in Africa and the "New World" who have been consecrated to Şangó. It is the dedication and submission of women to Şangó on both sides of the Atlantic that opens the way for the mysteries and more complex behavior of Şangó as divinity. In the African diaspora of the "New World," most women consecrated to Şangó have been victims of male brutality and societal isolation, and/or have been blessed with the curse of social leadership.

Females consecrated to Şangó learn the complex power of their divinity and understand that it goes far beyond sexual alliances and promiscuous behavior. Şangó as divinity is concerned with female issues, women's relations to men, and occasions of abuse. He could be called the champion of the underdog. This unique relationship between Şangó and women may be the reason that males in Africa must braid their hair and dress as women in order to attain status and approach the divine force that we call Şangó. J. Lorand Matory made a clear distinction between Western notions of "transvestitism" and the cross-dressing of male initiates of Şangó. He wrote, "Instructed by the semiotics of dress itself, we must assume that not all crossings dressed up in 'gender' are essentially about men and women. Indeed, the overwhelming authority of men in a cult that valorizes 'brideliness' in its priests seem to lie in the fact that transvestites are the most permanent emblems of the god's own dressing across boundaries—in the bodies of human beings."² Although it is more common to hear about the sexual exploits of Şangó, Şangó also rescues women from harm. In order to understand Şangó as a divine force embodied on the physical plane, we must look beyond the social limitations imposed upon male and female practitioners of Yorùbá-based spirituality, and look to Şangó's movement through the skies and storms of the cosmos. Without an examination of Şangó in nature, an

understanding of Ẓàngó is limited to historical characters and social conditions that can be and have been manipulated and constructed to suit the outcomes of those in positions of power and control.

Gender Constraints of Ẓàngó Worshippers

Slavery and colonization imposed Western thought upon Yorùbá people, and redefined roles and designated new roles of males and females. This shift away from African identification and classification moved the defining principles for male and female away from lineage, intellect, and achievement to a reliance on physicality as the basic component of maleness and femaleness. In essence, the experience of gender moved from invisible or spiritual acuity to the realities of biology. The Westernization of Yorùbá tradition has changed the experience of gender and how we relate to each other as spiritual communities. Colonized gender roles are a primary example of how this transformation has altered our course.

Seekers of Yorùbá spirituality in the Western world have maintained an eagerness to incorporate Yorùbá language into their ceremonies and daily communications. Despite this eagerness, most Yorùbáists in the West are not aware of how many Yorùbá words reflect the societal structures of cultures other than Yorùbá. Bishop Crowther documented many cultural intrusions on the Yorùbá language by other groups in his book, *Yorùbá Vocabulary*, written in 1843.⁴ Crowther translated one of the earliest books documenting the Yoruba language for Yorùbá speakers in Freetown. He translated prayer as *irony* (*iron*), the Muslim term for communal prayer, but by 1850, in his translation of *The Book of Common Prayer*, he had decided that its specific connotations could not be transferred to Christian practice and settled on another Muslim term, *ádárá*, which denotes individual petitionary prayer.⁵ There are many other words that are now considered as having a Yorùbá origin, but they actually come from the Hausa and Arabic languages. For example, there was no Yorùbá word to describe "evil." Therefore, when discussing the Yorùbá *òrìṣà* Èṣù, the closest word decided upon was *túláásí*, in a word imported from the Hausa language, meaning "trouble." This word was used interchangeably with other Hausa words such as *bílṣi* (Satan).⁶ The connection between words, actions, and status incorporated into Yorùbá language has not been explored by the Western faithful. Women, men, and the youth of "New World" traditions continue to be limited in their experience of the spirituality and culture of Yorùbá beliefs before colonialism. Consequently the current applications of Yorùbá language in

the West do not support many of the gender designations now applied in Yorùbá spiritual communities.

Our spiritual communities mirror the societies that house them, and in the United States male energy is dominant; men determine the application of ritual and law. Men in the West have primarily been the ones who interpret the sacred texts and set the standards that communities must follow. Women can do most of the fundamental ritual work that prepares men and women to become the new adherents of the tradition, but they must do this work according to the interpretations and policies set by men. When the understanding of these men is grounded in biological realities, the theological and philosophical participation of the women is limited. In other words, men *and* women in Western populations should assume more responsibility for cultural *and* theological correctness. There is spiritual uniqueness to both sexes, and one gender should not bear the sole responsibility of having to dictate the *official* word on theological conformity. When one group dominates or suppresses another, the growth of the community-at-large is stunted. Both genders will need to come together to create a long-term vision that is more inclusive, and more reflective of the ways of nature.

Practitioners of the various traditions agree that the sacred texts, or *ada*, of Ifá tell us the destiny we chose before being born, the talents we carry, and the lessons we must learn. This theological principle is not grounded in gender-biology. When practitioners of Yorùbá-based traditions visit an elder for a spiritual consultation, the interpretations of the sacred text of Ifá can be totally dependent on biological gender. This difference in interpretation not only affects the individual, it also affects, by extension, the life of the community of which the person is an integral part. For example, there are verses of Ifá oracle known as *odù* that clearly state the person consulting should continue on their spiritual journey and become an initiated devotee of Ifá. However, in some lineages, Ifá initiation for a woman is not an option. Instead women in such lineages receive taboos that preclude them from taking on spiritual students. They can also be forbidden to use the technologies of divination, even of the *oripè* they are consecrated to, making them indefinitely dependent on male skill and interpretation.

On the other hand, men who receive these same *odù* are also forbidden to have students prior to being initiated into Ifá, but their restriction is only temporary. Once they have been initiated into Ifá, their status in the tradition takes a major leap forward. Not only may they have students, but they may also be permitted to be policymakers of the tradition, based

on their gender. This creates a state of imbalance that is solely based on gender-biology.

Among the Yorùbá, red is the color of power and strength. It is no mistake that the colors attributed to Šàngó are red and white. White is the color that represents the desired state of "coolness." Without the cool and cunning acts of diplomacy that evolve from the "hot" desire of courage and the "coolness" of those who assume leadership roles, it would be difficult to correct the injustices of society. Themes of "hot" and "cold" run throughout Western and Central Africa and the spiritual beliefs of various tribes. Women are viewed as "hot" because they contain the menstrual blood that ultimately forms an embryo, and men who commit sexual acts outside of the tribal social sanctions are also considered hot and dangerous to the tribal norms. Women are considered to be biologically "hot" because they can bear children. The capacity that human beings have for channeling and releasing the energies of Šàngó has propelled human development forward and been the fuel for elevating the human consciousness. Šàngó awakens our innate passion for living and loving against the odds. Šàngó's irresistible and intoxicating method of presenting the truth causes our bodies to overpower the intellect, discard logic, and step away from the crowd, creating heroes and heroines.

Šàngó as a divine force is neither male nor female; he remains neither "hot" nor "cold." Šàngó's "hot" power as expressed by fire and his ability to be the calm cool master strategist during war conveys the dual nature of some of his attributes. Eugenia W. Herbert describes fire and the mastery of it in the following way: "[F]ire was so often identified with the force of life itself and with prosperity. The method of making fire by friction has commonly had explicit sexual overtones, paralleling those of iron smelting."⁷ Fire is essential and problematic. Fire is a tool that humanity has learned to use to improve the quality of life, but fire can also start on its own, rage out of control, and destroy human life. Because of the two-sided nature of this divine consciousness, Šàngó should never be taken for granted; nor should humanity take for granted what direction he might take next. The dualities of Šàngó's manifestations are ever-present.

Because of gender-based interpretations of the spiritual texts, the contributions that men and women can make to the larger community are limited. This is true primarily because of biology and culture, not because of their character or spiritual development. Women will need to develop more confidence in their ability to sustain culture and widen their comfort zone in terms of their connection to spirit. The desired ritual state

among those who follow Yorùbá spirituality is a "cool" head. Females as a gender are thought to be "hot" more often than males; consequently they are barred from participating in most rituals during their menstruation. Women are restricted because some practitioners believe they radiate heat. Others say it is because women are infertile during the time of their menses. Eugenia W. Herbert argues "that any process where these exclusions and taboos are operative implies that the process is seen within a reproductive paradigm."⁸

Unfortunately, in Western society the usual way to capture and restrict our understanding of the essence of fire and sound is to gird its loins with restricted notions of gender. When we limit the understanding of Şangó to mere "masculine traits," his duality is never fully explored. Despite the fact that male and female initiates of Şangó have been taught that Şangó is the womanizer of the goddesses of Yorùbá tradition, he is truly the lover of women. This restricted understanding diminishes the depth of the potential relationship that we can have as we participate in Şangó's energy internally and communally. The nature-based force of Şangó cannot be adequately interpreted through these distorted notions of gender. One thing becomes very clear when natural law is applied to the movement of Şangó through the universe: Şangó's energy is not static, nor can it be contained. Its very nature causes the darkness to be illuminated, even when it is the darkness of our prejudices and ignorance about gender roles—Káwo Kábié Yésí, Oba Kóso—Hail the king, he is not dead.

Şangó obùn tíń dún nínú aginjù
Şangó tó ń la òpè l'òjú
Şangó tó ń gbé imólé fún òpè
Şangó olúfà òkúnkún
Şangó tó ń fún àwọn omọdébírín rẹ
ní okun okúnrin mọwáá
Àti igboya òpó ènìyàn
Şangó obùn Olódúnarẹ
Şangó ẹnì tí iná kò kẹ ń jò

Şangó husband of Mother Nature
 Şangó brings light to the ignorant
 Şangó brings light to the ignorant
 Şangó the dispeller of darkness
 Şangó who gives his daughters
 the strength of ten men,

And the courage of the multitudes
 Šàngó the voice of Olódumare
 Šàngó who does not burn

NOTES

1. Aina Olomo, *Core of Fire: A Path to Yorùbá Spiritual Activism* (Brooklyn: Altheia Henrietta Press, 2003), 101.
2. Èṣù Èlẹ̀gbá is also involved in copulation. He is the erect penis, or the promise that leads to sexual fulfillment. He is always ready whenever the opportunity presents itself. While Èṣù Èlẹ̀gbá is the promise, Šàngó is the release and completion.
3. J. Lorand Matvey, *Sex and the Empire That Is No More: Gender and the Politics of Metaphor in Òyù Yorùbá Religion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 215.
4. J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yorùbá* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 195.
5. For Crowther's input on Yorùbá language and importation from other cultures, see J. F. A. Away, "Bishop Crowder: An Assessment," *Odu* 4 (1970): 3-17.
6. Peel, *Religious Encounter*, 195.
7. Eugenia W. Herbert, *Iron, Gender, and Power: Rituals of Transformation in African Societies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 119.
8. *Ibid.*

Searching for Thunder

A Conversation about Changó

MICHAEL ATWOOD MASON AND ERNESTO PICHARDO

The Lucumí religious tradition emerged in Cuba and came to the United States with Cuban immigrants beginning in the 1950s. Its practice revolves around devotion to the *orichas* (divinities who embody one aspect of God).¹ In the tradition, people routinely assume and assert that the children of a particular divinity or *oricha* know more about their own *oricha* than anyone else. Ernesto Pichardo is a child of Changó, initiated as an *olocha* (priest or priestess dedicated to a particular *oricha*) in 1971. Since that time, he has studied the religion and the *orichas* in a wide variety of contexts. Widely recognized as an *abú oriató* (ritual expert, master of ceremonies, and cowry-shell diviner) by both younger generations of priests and elders, he, with his family, started the Church of the Lukumí Babalú-Ayé in 1974.

When the church opened a public venue in 1987, the City of Hialeah, Florida, moved to close it down. Pichardo led the fight and the federal litigation that resulted in a Supreme Court ruling in 1993 providing constitutional protections for *oricha* religion in the United States. Pichardo has earned a position of public prominence in the *oricha* community in the United States and Cuban Diaspora in Latin America. Since the court battle, Pichardo continues to lead ceremonies around the world, teach students of the religion, and provide guidance to academics and believers alike.

Pichardo and I met in 1994 at a conference on the religion in Puerto Rico. Soon thereafter he became my teacher in the religion and later my friend. In 1998 he became my godfather when he "gave me" the

oricha of illness and healing, Babalú-Ayé. A great deal of my practical and theoretical understanding of the tradition comes directly from conversations with him over the years. In the beginning, he would call me out of the blue, drill me with questions till he found one that I could not answer to his satisfaction, then say, "That's your homework," and hang up. I never had the nerve to call back until I had some kind of answer, however incomplete. Now I tend to call him to ask specific questions about theology, practice, history, or politics—all key aspects of the religion. These interviews convey some of the back-and-forth conversations among scholars such as Dwyer, Hastrup, and Jackson that characterize the transfer of knowledge within the Lucumí *oricha* tradition and anthropological research.

When Pichardo and I discussed the possibility of collaborating on these interviews, we agreed that we would try to go beyond the generalized characteristics usually used to describe the *orichas* in general and Changó in particular. Instead we have tried to explore Changó as he affects individual people's lives and manifests in specific circumstances, which change according to personality, historical epoch, and regional location. We hope to provide a philosophical approach to Changó that is completely in line with the practice of the religion and beyond what most academic writing has presented.²

The Text

MASON: It is important for people to understand who you are and how you became so involved in the religion.

RICHARDO: It all started with my mother, who was supposed to avoid getting pregnant to stay healthy. Changó through her godfather Felix—he was a Changó [priest]—said she was going to have another boy and he would be a son of Changó. When I was born, my mother was fine and I had no health issues. One day at Felix's house, when I was still a baby, he got possessed by Changó, and his Changó took me and threw me into the air. He raced all over the house and kept saying I was his son. Then came the Cuban Revolution, so our access to Felix and the island was cut off because we had to leave.

In Miami, no one knew those stories. In 1971 when I was sixteen, Romelio Pérez, who was later my *oyubona* [second ritual sponsor at initiation], got possessed by his *batá* Obatalá [cool-headed *oricha* of creativity] and picked me out of 300 people. He threw the *collar de mazo* [multi-stranded beaded necklace used to make sacred vessels] over my head, picked me up, and danced all over the house. He said I could

assistant principal had already done the paperwork to expel me from school. I was already sixteen, and, under the policy there, he could do that. I went through half the eleventh grade. So there I was out of school. People in the neighborhood saw me in the street dressed in white and knew what it was, they knew I was an *iyawó* [new initiate, who dresses in white]. Neighbors would hide or not say anything. Zero contact. People—parents would call their kids indoors when I came out. My social life went away! Gone! All that was replaced by the religious community. That became the family . . . the friends . . . the all. It was a new life, for sure, even the surroundings and the people.

It [my life] became the religion twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. As an *iyawó*, you're restricted and cannot go out after 6. After the first three months, I had to be home by midnight. My elders were very strict. There was so much religious activity going on, I could just go and work and learn. Now of course, early on, the *babalawos* said I had to pass to Ifá, going back to the first *udu* they had cast. So, three-fourths of the time I was with the *oricha* people learning and working, but everything that related to the work of the *babalawos* I was called over to see. The first ceremony I learned was with a *babalawo*, feeding the front door and the corners of the house, the street corners, the roof, and the garbage. It was not, "Hold this water." It was, "Grab that rooster."

My religious education early on took place in the house. There were daily religious activities with group participation. I was part of this small group of *iyawós*, and new ones were coming in rapidly. We were learning in a group how to respond to the needs of the day. It was a constant. Plus I was getting additional tidbits here and there. We were making another *ocha* [initiation], and Romelio would show me the making of the clothing and buying cloth for the thrones.⁷ I was learning to make the *collares* [necklaces for the *orichas*] and sitting down and stringing stuff. Learning the art was part of it. It was a constant. If you were there, you were doing something. They would say, "You're here. Work." So there was constant practice. Practice, practice, practice. Learn, learn, learn. I would participate in the preparations prior to the initiation ceremonies, building the throne and preparing the room and making the *machuquillo* [crushed sacred herbs used for the initiation]. Romelio was training me on that, but others were not. The *babalawos* would call me over to work the *matanza* and have me open the animals. I learned that whole process.

In that period I was learning everything—through observation—with Ocha Inlé, the only *obá* present in Miami at the time. A few years

later, my true in-depth apprenticeship began with Jimagua [Roque Duarte]. I can point to specific people that I have learned things from: Romelio, Ocha Inlé, Jimagua, my mother. What have I learned from Changó, *bata* Obatalá, Elegguá, Yemayá? Now, who has been the real teacher? Life. Life and the community.

MASON: I remember you had some interesting remarks about the Ogún and Ochún books that came out over the years. Could you comment on the notion of a book about Changó?

PICHARDO: When some Yorùbá elders began to come to Miami and see our Cuban model in the 1970s, they were amazed to find that our ordination leads to about six *orichas*, because theirs generally only leads to one. The remarks I heard early on showed they were confused by what they saw. They said, "We can worship our head *oricha* for an entire lifetime and not fully understand him. How then is it possible to focus on six and understand them all?" These remarks I heard as an *iyawó* from two Yorùbá priestesses in 1971. As an *iyawó*, we went home from our ordination with six sets of physical objects representing different *orichas* and a consuming, overwhelming amount of information—only to learn later that all we had learned did not even scratch the surface.

We must realize that we can learn generalities and interpretations from *odus*. We can learn rituals, procedures, ceremonies, songs, chants, and the so-called paths of certain *orichas*. We can go out and learn the sequences of the different paths. We can concern ourselves with all of that. If we do it intensely, ten to fifteen years later we feel like we know something, until we ask ourselves, "What do I know? Who is Changó? What is Changó? Or any other *oricha* for that matter?"

We find ourselves then trying to answer this bigger question. The more we try to answer, the more we realize that we know nothing. To say that we know Changó is to say that we know with precision all the possible characteristics of Changó and how they manifest in every life circumstance as characterized in 256 *odus*. That does not include Changó's association in all those circumstances to other *orichas*. So then, after over three decades of priesthood, I ask the question, "Who is the human expert in these matters?" Nobody. I haven't met him yet. I have not met that person yet. I doubt that anyone will ever reach a level where we can say, "This person is an expert on this subject." Such claims of expertise are not appropriate. We can say that this person knows more about this particular *oricha* than I do. I go back to what those priestesses said. We can and do spend a lifetime trying to understand who and what our head *oricha* is. At the end the question is "How much did you learn?"

How much do you still have to learn?" Claims to expertise are irrational, because when we are speaking of these character traits and their manifestations, it's a fact that they evolve over time. So then you have to learn its new manifestations as they appear.

Since fire is associated with *Changó*, take that as an example. Fire has not changed. Fire is fire, but its manifestation has changed and will continue to change: fire on plastic, fire on fiberglass, fire from explosive devices. These sorts of fire and many more did not exist a hundred years ago. But the fire is still fire. How has fire evolved over the centuries? During one lifetime, we can look to the past and to the present situation to understand how fire has manifested. Yet a week from now, a new explosive device is created by some scientist, and we are forced to learn again about fire and how it manifests in that new context. So it is impossible to fix it, to nail it down once and for all. You can never master it because it is always taking on new forms that make you go right back to square one. You start over. Trying to answer, "Who is *Changó*?" or "What is *Changó*?" is like going to a university and never being able to graduate in this lifetime.

MASON: As we have talked over the years, you have often made a distinction between thinking about the *orichas* and living with the *orichas*. This idea seems widespread among elders in the religion. Could you explain this notion?

PICHARDO: We have been laying out the philosophical basis for what the thought process should be, but we still have not made it individual. We need to take it from the broad, abstract view to the narrow, where the individual person lives with the *oricha*. Within the life of the individual, we have to look at matters beyond the home and matters in the home. Why? Although in American culture we tend to see ourselves as individuals, we are losing track of a larger reality. The individual is born into a world of already existing complexity. In this culture, the tendency is to view ourselves starting with matters of the home and moving outward. This religion says it is the opposite. It is the individual emerging into the larger world outside. What will that individual face day in and day out for a lifetime? "Individual" here means preservation within a huge, broad, and already extant complexity that constantly places the individual in harm's way and makes him or her vulnerable to danger. So it is about preservation and perseverance.

In principle, this means that accessing *orichas*—whether through divination or trance possession or any other form where there can be communication and the exchange of information—becomes most relevant to the all, everything outside the individual. The individual is a

compound of physical and spiritual realities as she faces her journey on the earth in this lifetime. The divination sign given at initiation by the principal, crowned *orichu* shows the person's destiny and fate. That compound sign is lived by the individual, and she must survive that journey and make the best of it that she can. Although as a priestess, an individual may have an *itá* that reveals *odus* from various *orichus*, which are fixed and unchangeable—those are our DNA—it is how all of that applies and is connected to her head *orichu*.⁴

There is another component to this. While we can spend a lifetime trying to learn the relationship between ourselves, our head *orichu*, and ever-evolving manifestations of the *odu*, we also have the short-term divination readings that we do. These narrow down time, space, and circumstances, so we can better understand the moment. Once we modify or change behavior, whether an outright change or a ritual, and once we take some action to remedy our situation, we have already changed the circumstances and how it manifests. We can actually look at those transitory readings addressing the here and now, but the teachings can be linked to our original *itá*. Why? Because they are just small fractions of the same, larger picture. So when we say Changó, then we must ask ourselves, who and what we are talking about? Not only in our *itá* at ordination, but in that long lifetime, accounting for every circumstance that ever arises where we need to go back to divination for a narrower understanding of how to micro-manage the circumstances. Once we act, we are able to learn a little more about the domain of Changó.

How can we address and characterize Changó, when to truly do so with any justice we would have to understand that force in the life of an individual—in his or her *itá*—and how, in that life journey, each circumstance was handled and what the outcome was for every individual for the full lifetime from life to death? Thinking in this way moves us out to other individuals and the *odus* from their *itás*, the components of their *odus*. We would want to measure that by gender, by profession, by different age groups and their different problems, by geography. Add to that the social and economic conditions.

In other words, we could have two individual sons of Changó with the same identical *odus*, born in the same city and country, but in two different generations, and the outside conditions would not be identical, and therefore the manifestations of the *odu* would not be the same, even though it is still the same *odu*.

MASON: If I understand you correctly, you are talking about Changó's actions in a given situation. This leads to the key questions

here. What are you really dealing with when you engage Changó? What is the agency called Changó?

PICHARDO: Where is the formula to understanding this equation? This is the philosophical side that is not taught or documented. When we speak of any *oricha*, we have to understand its complexities: what are the common, known *odas* associated with its traits and in what contexts do they appear? Then we begin to review that context and see the *oricha*'s manifestations. That moves us to begin to understand who they are or what they are or what they stand for. You have to approach it from the thought process we use in divination. The *odas* explain the roles of the *orichas* in context and give us the formula to understand the equations. That's what I do when I do *itá*. Let's say the reading comes *iré elesé Changó* [with blessings from Changó],³ but in what *oda*? To contextualize it, you have to know what the sign is. The influence of Changó's blessings will vary from *odu* to *odu*, not in principle but in form. Its cause and effect change. Take the principle of gossip. What *oricha* deals with gossip? Something moved to produce gossip, and that gossip has the potential to manifest in many ways, constructive and destructive. And that's when we have to find where Changó is. And who else is working there? Is he working alone or with one or more other *orichas*? We take that simple thought and then ask, "What does it evolve into?" Discord? Quarrels? If so, what does that new thing turn into?

In understanding *oricha*, we must look at their generalized traits in each *oda*, but we must also consider their *iré* and *asobo* possibilities. Each idea or value has its polarity. Gossip can be constructive or destructive. The opposites are built into these words. Take quarrels. They are not always negative. In the divination sign Eyioco,⁶ from quarrels comes *iré*: With a heated debate, truth is revealed. The quarrel was necessary to find the truth and establish a new peace. There are circumstances where we can look back and say that *asobo* brought forth resolution and truth.

If we take the same idea and move it into the divination sign *Obara*,⁷ you have what? You have gossip, which is common in *Obara*. You have discord, quarreling, misunderstandings, and confusions. All that is *Obara*. But *Obara* is a sign that moves you to face the *asobo* and reveal its truth, and so then it becomes *iré*. The negative things could become other things which are much more destructive. If gossip becomes quarrels and it does not get resolved, then it can become hostility and violence and hatred and rancor. It can escalate to tragedy. To best understand how to describe who and what an *oricha* is in its manifestations—how it functions, affects life, and becomes real in everyday

PICHARDO: You look at characteristics that are natural to the *odú*, and you can condense them into keywords. Then you ask, "Where is Changó" in each case. You also begin to see where his presence or action may include one or more other *orichas*, where he is working in concert with others as well.

What is basic to *Iroso Meyi*? The sign is life difficulties, obstacles, and obstructions. It is deception, falsehood, hypocrisy, and indiscretion. It is disillusionment, it is curiosity. There is also slander and aggression, stubbornness and revenge. What do we have there? We have very common life situations reflected in these keywords with a very specific negative feeling. To look at this, we would ask, "What about Changó is revealed to us as we try to understand these key words?" We could look at it from the point of view of Changó's fire or thunder and lightning. When thunder and lightning appear in human life, it has a sudden effect on us. It forces us to focus on it all of a sudden, and it certainly catches our attention. It impacts our awareness. It is a sudden realization and sudden fear. It gives us a sense, a sudden sense of this mess we are in and the power that is beyond our human control. So it suddenly changes how things are at the moment that it appears. It changes how we see the situation. Thunder and lightning are very powerful symbols that show how massive danger presents itself very quickly. So we look at this power and we look at the key words, and we ask, "Where is that power present in the various life difficulties surrounding these key words?"

MASON: Can you talk it through using the specific example of disillusionment?

PICHARDO: Disillusionment is key to *Iroso Meyi* because the sign deals with the unknown. The person sees the world in a particular way that is not realistic. He does not see things as they really are. So *Iroso* is falling through a trap door, where the individual was far from thinking it was a trap door. Otherwise he would have paid attention and not fallen through it. Once he falls through, here comes the disillusionment. How can people be so cruel? How could he deceive me? I thought this person was my friend. So Changó comes in and says, "I represent fulfillment, realization, satisfaction, honesty, integrity, discretion. I stand for truth and praise." So the presence of Changó here says, "You may be in *osobo* living one of these negative experiences, but I represent the opposite of these negative experiences and I have the ability to show you that opposite and put you in a position to live out the *iré*."

Now in general terms, if we find Changó in the *osobo arayé* [negativity from malefactors], then we will find him in these key words. What is fundamental to Changó is the difficulties commonly found in human

life and in human relationships. He is less about plants or the challenge of building a bridge. Instead, he is more about what is natural to humans and the dynamics of their relationships. When we read about Changó, what do we find in these *pataki*s [mythic narratives associated with specific *odú*s]? There is always a human difficulty that relates to another person or city or people. It is not Ogún where he pulls out his machete and cuts the way through for everyone. Ogún is cutting a path for people, which is not typical of Changó. Changó is always in the way of direct human conflict. In the case of *Irosó*, it is also common for people to fall into deep depression. Disillusionment can easily move a person into depression. Then we have Babalú-Ayé and illness. The human relationship brings out disillusionment, which is Changó. This brings on the depression, which is Babalú-Ayé. This is where they meet. Changó can show the individual realization and satisfaction, and Babalú-Ayé can remove the depression. They combine to reverse the negativity.

MASON: This is reflected in the myths of Changó and Babalú-Ayé working together, but you seem more concerned with how they work together, how they function to change a person's situation.

RICHARDO: We know that is true. We are not so concerned with the question, "Who is Changó?" We can break it down to value, power, and order. In the *pataki*s we will look at virtues and morals in order to stay in sync with the *aché* of the ancestors.¹¹ We can look at power and ask what is power in this story? The power we look for is the power of resolution. Where is the resolution? Where does it come from in the story? And then how does this relate to the spiritual world and the dynamics? We know that everything that exists is linked to a particular divinity. What the story gives us is the means to take in an *odú* that allows us to rationalize the situation, so we can [have] the difficulty or misfortune or chaos and find a sense of order to it. This understanding gives us the tools to bring back order and stability to the individual. So in *Irosó*, we ask, "What is the power of disillusionment? How did we get there? What experiences got us to the point that we felt disillusioned?" It does not just happen. There are actions that precede it. All these aspects are in the *odú*. It tells us how the person was a victim or victimizer, or how he has become both. And so we can then address the power of disillusionment in all its complexity. Though its essence does not change—it is what it is—its power has a broad range of manifestations. And we have to figure out how it is manifesting here and now in a particular person's life. We have to understand how disillusionment is manifesting in this specific situation.

MASON: Following this example of disillusionment and then working with Changó, what do you expect after the sudden change begins?

FICHARDO: First you have to cause a realization. The diviner is the interpreter. As the diviner, you have the knowledge of the sign and present it to the client in an orderly conversation. You have the capacity to talk about the *odu* in language that allows the person to move through the confusion and see the light. It is just like a psychologist who takes in information, processes it, and restates it in an orderly way. They learn to think about it in that way, and the person walks away with a sense of order and control. The person is less confused. The first step is the realization.

The proverb of *Obara* says, "He who knows does not die like he who does not know." This means realizations. If you are confused and don't understand the situation, you don't have the capacity to change. We also find depression in *Obara*. That's the lightning bolt. It says, "Wake up!"

If you worked Changó against disillusionment, what would you expect after realization? First realization has to cause acceptance, in the sense that if you were outfoxed, what is the use in becoming aggressive and seeking revenge? Where does this acceptance come from? This becomes the *odu Oché* that says, *Perdiendo se gana* ["losing you win"].¹² It says, "So everyone makes mistakes. Move on. What did you learn?" There it is another sign, *Ogbé-Sá*,¹³ that says, "Don't repeat your past mistakes and you'll be okay. What did your life *pataki* teach you that it drew you into this disillusionment? So learn from it and don't repeat the mistakes. That's your responsibility. Accept it and learn from it." That's the result of realization. That's the importance of the value. We ask, "Where is the value here?"

Are we concerned with the legend or myth? Is it literally telling us about a character? Is it Changó or another character? We are not concerned with the literal. What are we really talking about? We are talking about symbols. What do we associate with Changó or his leopard?

The best way to understand what we are saying is this: Our ancestors left us a story, but today we can look at it and see a whole conversation contained in that story. We end up with a story, but when we consider it carefully, we just see a progression of symbols, one after another. We don't get bogged down with the storytelling or the form. While an outsider will do that, an insider will start interpreting it. There is meaning to these stories. We read a story and find a character, we try to understand the significance of the character—not the character itself—the significance of the character.

Changó falls down and breaks his arm. Do we know that is true? In *Irosu*, Orula [*oricha* of Ifá divination], or his son, falls in the pit. Do we know that Orula fell in this pit for a fact? No, we don't. We can classify it as a myth or legend or a folktale and then discuss our interpretations. But we don't know if the story is true. What we know is true is when we interpret its meaning. We are talking about an authority figure and his child and the fact that people fall into pits. It does not really matter to me that it was Orula, except that I ask, "Why was it Orula? What does that add to the moral of the story?" It says that we have a respected authority figure that has certain human characteristics, and those characteristics drew him to fall into this pit out of his ignorance. While in the pit, people walk by, and no one will help him to get out. What we see there is how certain human beings—because they are in a position of authority—become so selfish and self-centered and greedy that they create their own sense of reality. They become indifferent to the rest of the world to the point that they become isolated. Only when they experience something like this fall do they become vulnerable and have the opportunity to realize that we all rely on someone else to exist. Here the powerful becomes powerless, and he has to rely on those "beneath him" to pull him out.

Now what happens? Depending on the *iré* or *asobó*, the diviner must determine if the client is represented by Orula or is the client someone else in the story? You have to place the client in the story. You see if the person is the victim, the victimizer, or both. Those who do nothing to help him are acting out their revenge. That's in *Irosu*. Being hardheaded is part of *Irosu*. Orula is in the hole demanding to be pulled out, acting like he always does. He is hardheaded, and unless there is a change and he gets humble, no one will throw him a rope. Those looking at his arrogance might be pleased to see him down there. They enjoy seeing him powerless and they enjoy feeling powerful: "We don't have to throw you a rope." Kindness comes in, saying, "We can help. We can throw you a rope." Each character is a symbol. Many stories include animals. We ask, "What is the significance here of the elephant? The leopard?" The turtle came in contact with the snake. Everything that lives has its own *elédá* [spiritual essence from the Creator] and its own *asobó*. That is what we look for and that is what we interpret and that is what we apply to the here and now for the client. It is the symbol and its character—and not the specific identity or name of the character—that becomes important. In the story, we are not concerned with Orula. We ask, "What character did Orula display that got him in the hole and what did it take to get him out of the hole? What did he sacrifice to get

out?" Aspects of his bad character got him in the hole in the first place, and the client is likely going through something very similar.

We have to step back. We can characterize Changó, which happens a lot. *Alejos* [uninitiated people] come and ask, "Who is Changó?" Academics too. That is fine, but the real question is "What is Changó known for? How does he manifest in the *adus* in the here and now?" You can look at Changó. Why does he have red and white associated with him? What does that mean? Why not pink? Why are some *orichas* associated with red and white and others are not?

MASON: Since we have come back around to the uninitiated, I want to pose some simple questions. How would you describe Changó to someone new to the religion?

PICHARDO: I hate the superficial definitions. How can you describe in a paragraph a divinity that represents such a broad aspect of human life? How do you do that? Aside from what others have already done, that does not do it justice. Thunder and lightning. Justice and truth, warrior and king. Dancer, owner of the sacred *bata* drums, original diviner who gave up the divination board to Orula. Excellent strategist in warfare. Excellent governor of people. Always present where there is injustice. Brings order where there is confusion. These are the ways people describe him, but they are a simplistic injustice to his depth.

MASON: Why is Changó called the king of the religion? Why do you think he is so adored by so many people? Why is he so central to the religion?

PICHARDO: First there is the historical fact that he was the King of *Oyó*. It starts there. When people are in serious trouble, they know that this *oricha* deals with that realm of difficulties, and he comes in and brings peace and order. So he is known to take on the challenging human issues of conflict and difficulty. At the same rate, there is the image of Changó as a true, just leader of a prosperous community. He is the counterbalance to *Ochún*. They were married and she was his queen. Changó is associated with overcoming difficulty, which makes the rest possible. Imagine a community dominated by poverty and trouble and vicissitudes. Changó is the one who comes in and takes that on head on, breaks it down, so the merriment and riches of *Ochún* can come in. Changó makes the change possible. In essence, they remove the difficulty and allow the prosperity to take over.

MASON: In the famous story where Changó becomes an *oricha*, he plays with lightning, destroys his palace and his family, and then hangs himself in a tree in the forest. Only the *oricha* *Oyá* remains loyal to him,

and she says that he did not hang but rose up to heaven. How would you help someone understand this story?

PICHARDO: We say, "*Obá Koss*. The king did not hang." This story shows that an individual must be completely at one with his destiny above and beyond anything else. The "I Am" becomes the identity of the person and teaches that our identity in some way includes the surrounding world. It teaches about self-identity and shows that who you are includes those around you. It is not an individual alone in the world, but rather an individual as a part of the world. It teaches many things regarding leadership, such as the role of leadership in the context of community. In essence, that individual identity is community. There is no separate entity. If you analyze the story with this principle in mind, you will find that it lasts even after death. After death, Changó becomes deified. That link to community does not end at death. Death becomes the start of something else, a new kind of community.

People expect that identity of the person to reflect the identity of the *orisha*. So in my case, they expected me as a child of Changó to be concerned with issues in the community. My family and I started the Church of the Lukumí Babalú-Ayé to provide some education and some legal protection. Then the City of Hialeah tried to close us down, and we took the case to the Supreme Court. Ever since the church battle, some of the old folks I have met ask, "You did all that? What *orisha* do you have? Changó? That figures." Changó takes us back to community, confronting the hard issues that need to be addressed and pushing against those things that need to be changed. Changó is always looking for improvement. He is the idea of justice beating back injustice, but as we discussed, the fight against injustice will manifest in different ways at different times for different individuals.

NOTES

1. See Miguel "Willie" Ramos, "Afro-Cuban Orisha Worship." In *Santería Aesthetics in Contemporary Latin American Art*, ed. Arturo Lindsey (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), for a good concise introduction to the religion.

2. We held these conversations via telephone over several weeks in late 2004 and early 2005. I posed questions and Pichardo responded. Through transcriptions, I recreated the conversations as a single text, adding parenthetical and footnoted clarifications. Pichardo then read and edited the text to be certain that it accurately reflected his thinking.

3. The initiation ritual requires two sets of ritual clothing for the initiate,

and it requires a large three-dimensional cloth altar in which the initiate lives during most of the week-long ceremony. For detailed descriptions of these forms, see David H. Brown, *Santería Enthroned: Art, Ritual, and Innovation in an Afro-Cuban Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). For a detailed description of the initiation process, see Michael Arwood Mason, *Living Santería: Rituals and Experiences in an Afro-Cuban Religion* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), chapter 4.

4. *Isá* refers to any divination reading that is expected to pertain to the long term of an individual's life. It is most commonly applied to the reading that is done as part of an initiation ritual, but it is also used to describe when an *oricha* receives a large offering—usually a four-legged animal—and then speaks to an individual.

5. In practice, all divination readings determine if the client is experiencing the blessings (*iré*) or negativity (*asóbó*) of the given sign. This kind of binary thought process pervades the ritual workings and practices of the religion.

6. In cowry shell divination, *Eyíco* is the name of the sign that appears when two cowries land with their serrated "mouths" up. Like all divination signs, it evokes a wide array of allegorical stories, proverbs, sacrifices, prayers, and potential ceremonies. For a fuller description of cowry shell divination, see William Bascom, *Sixteen Cowries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980) and Mason, *Living Santería*, chapter 1.

7. *Ohara* is the name of the divination sign when six cowries appear "mouth" up.

8. *Candela* is a Spanish word that literally means "fire," but in Cuba, it is used figuratively to mean "trouble." This discussion merges those two meanings in an inventive way.

9. Notice here that the word *oricha* is used sometimes as a descriptor for a specific deity, sometimes as a name for the religion, and sometimes as reference to the more abstract quality of divinity itself.

10. *Inso* is the divination sign generated when four cowries land "mouth" up. *Eyílá* is twelve cowries "mouth" up.

11. *Aché* is one of the most essential concepts in the religion and one of the hardest to define. It usually refers to the power to make things happen, especially in relation to the spirits. It sometimes refers to a specific talent, knowledge, or style that an individual possess; one often hears things like "He has *aché* for singing to the *orichas*." So taken together, *aché* implies performative knowledge and expertise. See Mason, *Living Santería*, chapter 5, for an extensive discussion of *aché*, including Pichardo's remarks on it.

12. *Oché* is name of the divination sign when five cowries land "mouth" up. *Meyí* means "two" and denotes a compound *odu*. Although often contemplated as single signs, in divination ritual, the signs come in a composite form, with one sign following another.

13. *Ogbé-Sá* is the name of a composite sign, where the first cast brought eight cowries "mouth" up, and the second cast brought nine.

Contributors

Àrìnpé Gbèkèlólú Adéjùmò is a senior lecturer in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Her academic background and research interests include studies in satire, gender, and folklore.

Dúrótoyè A. Adélékè is a senior lecturer in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. His area of research includes Yorùbá film studies, mythology, material culture in literature, and peace and conflict management studies.

George Olúşolá Ajibádé is a senior lecturer in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages at the Obáfémí Awólówò University, Ilé-Ife, Nigeria. Ajibádé's research interests are in African cultural studies, critical social and literary theories, and folklore. He has recently published a book titled *Negotiating Performances: Orson in the Verbal and Visual Metaphors* and is preparing another book manuscript on "A Socio-cultural Study of Yorùbá Nuptial Poetry."

Akíntúndé Akínyemí is associate professor of African and Asian Languages and Literatures at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida. He is author of *Yorùbá Royal Poetry: A Socio-Historical Exposition and Annotated Translation*, a book on the oral historical tradition of the famous city of Oyo.

Diedre L. Bádéjò is professor and dean of the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences at California State University East Bay. She is author of *Ọ̀sun Ẹ̀gẹ̀gẹ̀: The Elegant Deity of Wealth, Power, and Femininity*.

Kamari Maxine Clarke is associate professor of anthropology at Yale University, senior research scientist at Yale Law School, and director of the Center for Transnational Cultural Analysis at Yale University. She is the author of *Mapping Yorùbá Networks: Power and Agency in the Making of Transnational Communities* and *The International Criminal Court in Question: Beyond Legal Pluralism*, and editor of *Globalization and Race: Transformations in the Cultural Politics of Blackness*.

Laura Edmunds is a Ph.D. candidate in comparative literature at the University of Georgia in Athens. Her dissertation applies Yoruba analytical paradigms to Black literatures of Brazil and the Anglophone Caribbean. Her research interests also include Anglophone and Lusophone Africa and Diaspora, Black literary aesthetics, and Black science fiction and fantasy.

Tóyìn Fáláṣá is University Distinguished Teaching Professor, University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of various books, including the edited collection *The Yorùbá Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (Indiana University Press, 2005).

Stephen Fọláránmí teaches drawing and painting at the Ọ̀báfẹ̀mí Awólówọ̀ University, Ilé-Ife. His research interests include African traditional murals and architecture. He has participated in several exhibitions in Nigeria and London, and recently co-curated the traveling exhibitions "Ifé Art School in Retrospect" and "Faces of the Gods," an exhibition of photographs by Ulli Beier.

Stephen D. Glazier is professor of anthropology and graduate faculty fellow at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. He served as general editor of *The Encyclopedia of African and African American Religions*. His other publications include *Marchin' the Pilgrims Home: A Study of the Spiritual Baptists of Trinidad*; *Caribbean Ethnicity Revisited*; and *Anthropology of Religion: A Handbook*.

Henry B. Lovejoy is a doctoral student in Latin American history at the University of California, Los Angeles. He studies the relationship

between African drums and drumming and the political, religious, and cultural composition of slave society in Cuba, Brazil, and Suriname.

Michael Atwood Mason is an anthropologist and exhibit developer at the Smithsonian Institution. He has studied the cultures of the African diaspora since 1987, when he began his field research on Afro-Cuban religious traditions. He is author of *Living Santería: Rituals and Experiences in an Afro-Cuban Religion*.

Olóyè Àiná Ọlómọ is a Yorùbá priestess of Ifá and Šàngó, is an ordained interfaith minister, and has been installed as Chief Àjídakin of Ilé-IḞ, Nigeria, Oloye Iyagan of Trinidad, and Her Excellency, Igbo Iyalase for Agba Kosare, Republic of Benin. She is currently the spiritual leader for Orilé Olókun Sányà Awópéjù of Texas and Trinidad, and she is author of *Core of Fire: A Path to Yorùbá Spiritual Activism*. She is committed to social change and interfaith sharing of Yoruba universal theological concepts. In addition to decades of spiritual work, Olóyè Àiná currently teaches Yoruba religious studies at the John L. Warfield Center for African and African American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, and is a faculty member of the Women's Theological Institute.

Luis Nicolau Parés is a professor in the Department of Anthropology at the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil. A specialist in the history and anthropology of African and Afro-Brazilian religions, he is author of *A formação do candomblé: história e ritual da nação jeje na Bahia* and co-editor of the journal *Afro-Ásia*.

Marc Schiltz is visiting senior research fellow at Queen's University, Belfast. He earned his Ph.D. in sociocultural anthropology at University College London. He has carried out long-term fieldwork among the Yorùbá, the Kewa of Papua New Guinea Highlands, and "rascal" gangs in Port Moresby, New Guinea.

Joel E. Tishken is assistant professor of African and world history at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington. His research interests include Central and Southern Africa, African religious history, prophecy, Christianity, and the theory and pedagogy of religion.

Bibliography

- Abimbola, Wande. *Àwọn Ojú Odù Mírìjèrindinlógún*. London: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- . "The Bag of Wisdom: Ọṣun and the Origins of the Ifá Divination." In *Ọṣun across the Waters: A Yorùbá Goddess in Africa and the Americas*, ed. Joseph M. Murphy and Mei-Mei Sanford, 141-54. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.
- . *Ifá: An Exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- . *Ijínlẹ̀ Ọ̀bìnrin Èninn Ifá*. Glasgow: Collins, 1973.
- . "Introduction." In *Yorùbá Oral Tradition, Poetry in Music, Dance and Drama*, ed. Wande Abimbola, 11-48. Ilé-Ife, Nigeria: Department of African Languages and Literature, University of Ife, 1975.
- . *Proceedings of the First World Conference on Ọ̀rìṣà Tradition*. Ilé-Ife, Nigeria: Ọ̀báfẹ̀mí Awólówọ̀ University, 1981.
- . "The Yorùbá Traditional Religion in Brazil: Problems and Prospects." In *Seminar Series*, number 1.1, ed. O. Oyelaran, 1-64. Ilé-Ife, Nigeria: Department of African Languages and Literatures, University of Ife, 1976-77.
- Abiodun, R. "Ifá Art Objects: An Interpretation Based on Oral Tradition." In *Yorùbá Oral Tradition: Poetry in Music, Dance and Drama*, ed. Wande Abimbola, 421-66. Ilé-Ife, Nigeria: Department of African Languages and Literature, University of Ife, 1975.
- Abrahams, R. C. *Dictionary of Modern Yorùbá*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1962.
- Addie, O. O. "Colour Symbolism, with Special Reference to Sàngó Shrine in Ibadan." Unpublished B.A. long essay, Ọ̀báfẹ̀mí Awólówọ̀ University, Ilé-Ife, 1990.

- Adebisi, S. "Shrine Painting in Ilé-Ife." Unpublished B.A. long essay, Obáfèmi Awólówò University, Ilé-Ife, 1986.
- Adedeji, J. A. "The Place of Drama in Yorùbá Religious Observance." *Odu* 3 (1966): 88-94.
- Adegbàlè, Isaiah O. *Yorùbá Names and Their Meanings plus Proverbs with English Translations*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Taa Printing and Publishing, 1999.
- Adelugba, D. "Trance and Theatre: The Nigerian Experience." In *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*, ed. Yemi Ogunbiyi, 203-18. Lagos: *Nigeria Magazine*, 1981.
- Adeoye, C. Laogun. *Asá àti Ìsè Yorùbá*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- . *Igbágbò àti Èsìn Yorùbá (Yorùbá religious belief systems)*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Evans Brothers Nigerian Publishers, 1985.
- Afolábi, Niyi. "Beyond the Curtains: Unveiling Afro-Brazilian Women Writers." *Research in African Literatures* 32, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 117-35.
- Afoláyan, Funso. "Kingdoms of West Africa: Benin, Òyó, and Asante." In *Africa: vol. 1, African History before 1885*, ed. Tóyín Fálólá, 161-89. Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2000.
- Ahyc, Molly. "Şàngó in Trinidad: Its Survival and Retention." In *Proceedings of the First World Conference on Òrìşà Tradition*, ed. Wande Abimbola, 130-91. Ilé-Ife, Nigeria: University of Ifè, June 1-7, 1981.
- Aiyejina, Funso, and Rawle Gibbons. "Òrìşà (Òrìshà) Tradition in Trinidad." Paper presented at the Ninth International Òrìşà Congress. Port of Spain, Trinidad, 1999.
- Ajayi, J. E. Ade. "The Aftermath of the Fall of Òyó." In *History of West Africa*, ed. J. E. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, 129-66. London: Longman, 1974.
- . "Development Is about People." In *Humanity in Context*, ed. Ayo Banjo, 1-31. Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Academy of Letters, 2000.
- Ajuwon, Bade. "Ògún: Premus Inter Pars." In *Proceedings of the First World Conference on Òrìşà Tradition*, ed. Wande Abimbola, 425-50. Ilé-Ife, Nigeria: Obáfèmi Awólówò University, 1981.
- Akinjogbin, I. A. "The Expansion of Òyó and the Rise of Dahomey, 1600-1800." In *The History of West Africa*, vol. 1. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972.
- Akinyemi, Akintunde. *Yorùbá Royal Poetry: A Sociohistorical Exposition and Annotated Translation*. Bayreuth African Studies Series (BASS), number 71. Bayreuth, Germany: University of Bayreuth, 2004.
- Alade, C. A. "Aspects of Yorùbá Culture in the Diaspora." In *Culture and Society in Yorùbáland*, ed. Deji Ogunremi and Biodun Adediran, 203-22. Ibadan, Nigeria: Rex Charles Publication and Connel Publication, 1998.
- Apter, Andrew. *Black Critics and Kings: The Hermeneutics of Power in Yorùbá Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- . "Notes on Òrìshà Cults in the Èkiti Yorùbá Highlands." *Cahiers d'Études africaines* 35, nos. 138-39 (1995): 369-401.
- Armstrong, Robert. "Traditional Poetry in Ladipo's Opera *Obá Kòso*." *Research in African Literatures* 9, no. 3 (Winter 1978): 363-81.

- Atanda, J. A. *An Introduction to Yorùbá History*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1980.
- . *The New Òyó Empire*. London: Longmans, 1973.
- Awe, Bolanle. "Militarism and Economic Developments in Nineteenth Century Yorùbá Country: The Ìbàdán Example." *Journal of African History* 14, no. 1 (1973): 65-77.
- Aweda, Sangodara (*Èṣrindinlógún* priest). Interview conducted by the author at Alubátá Compound, Èkòsin, Odó-Òtin Local Government, Òṣun State, Nigeria, 2002-2003.
- Awolalu, J. Omosade. *Yorùbá Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites* (1979). Brooklyn: Athelia Henrietta Press, 2001.
- Babalola, S. A. *Content and Form of Yorùbá Ìjálá*. London: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Babayemi, S. O. "Èṣere Festival in Òyó." *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* 7, no. 1 (1973): 121-23.
- Babayemi, Samuel. "The Fall and Rise of Òyó c. 1760-1905." Ph. D. diss., University of Birmingham, 1979.
- . "The Myths of Òráníyàn in Yorùbá Historiography." M.A. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1976.
- Badejo, Diedre L. *Field Notes, Nigeria*, 1982.
- . "Methodologies in Yorùbá Oral Historiographies and Aesthetics." In *Writing African History*, ed. John Edward Phillips, 348-73. Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2004.
- Balderson, David, Mike Gonzalez, and Ana M. Lopez, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Contemporary Latin American and Caribbean Cultures*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Bamidele, L. "Sàngó Myth and Its Challenges in Science, Art and Religion." In *IBA: Essays on African Literature in Honour of Oyin Ogunba*, ed. W. Ogundele and O. Adeoti, 178-86. Ilé-Ife, Nigeria: Òbáfémí Awólóyò University Press, 2003.
- Barber, Karin. "Como o homem cria Deus na África Ocidental: atitudes dos Yorùbá para com o òrìṣà." In *Men Sinal está no teu corpo*, ed. C. E. M. Moura, 142-73. São Paulo, Brazil: EDICON-EDUSP, 1989.
- . "How Man Makes God in West Africa: Yorùbá Attitudes towards the Òrìṣà." *Africa* 51, no. 3 (1981): 724-45.
- . "Oríkì in Òkukù: Relationships between Verbal and Social Structures." Ph.D. diss., University of Ife, 1979.
- . "Yorùbá Oríkì and Deconstructive Criticism." *Research in African Literature* 15, no. 4 (1984): 501-29.
- Barnes, Sandra T., ed. *Africa's Ògún: Old World and New*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Bascom, William. *African Art in Cultural Perspective: An Introduction*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1973.
- . *Drums of the Yorùbá of Nigeria*. CD liner notes. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Folkways Records, 1992.

- . *Ifá Divination: Communication between Gods and Men in West Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969.
- . *Shingó in the New World*. Austin: African and Afro-American Research Institute, University of Texas at Austin, 1972.
- . *Sixteen Cowries: Yorùbá Divination from Africa to the New World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980.
- Bastide, Roger. *Images du nord-est mystique en noir et blanc* (1945). Paris: Pandora Editions 1978.
- . *Sociología de la Religión [Les religions africaines au Brésil]* (1960). Gijón, Spain: Ediciones Jucar, 1986.
- Baudin, Paul. *Fetichism and Fetich Worshipers* (1884). New York: Benziger Bros., 1885.
- Beier, Ulli. *The Return of Shingó: The Theatre of Duro Ladipo*. Bayreuth, Germany: University of Bayreuth, 1994.
- . *A Year of Sacred Festivals in One Yorùbá Town*. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1959.
- . "A Year of Sacred Festivals in One Yorùbá Town (EDE)." *Nigeria Magazine* (Special Production), 3rd ed., (1959): 72-79.
- . *Yorùbá Myths*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- . "Yorùbá Wall Paintings." *ODU: Journal of Yorùbá and Edo Related Studies* 8 (1960): 36-39.
- Benkomo, Juan. "Crafting the Sacred *Batá* Drums." In *Afro-Cuban Voices: On Race and Identity in Contemporary Cuba*, ed. Pedro Pérez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs, 140-46. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000.
- Bettelheim, Judith. *Cuban Festivals: A Century of Afro-Cuban Culture*. Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001.
- Biobaku, S. O. *The Ègùà and Their Neighbours 1842-1872*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Birth, Kevin. *Any Time Is Trinidad Time: Social Meanings and Temporal Consciousness*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999.
- Bomfim, Martiniano Eliseu do. "Os Ministros de Xangô." In *O Negro no Brasil: trabalhos apresentados ao 2º Congresso Afro-Brasileiro, Bahia 1937*, 233-36. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1940.
- Borghero, Francesco. *Journal de Francesco Borghero, premier missionnaire du Dahomey (1861-1865)* (1865). Ed. Renzo Mandirola and Yves Morel. Paris: Karthala, 1997.
- Bourguignon, Erika. "Relativism and Ambivalence in the Work of M. J. Herskovits." *Ethos* 28, no. 1 (2000): 103-14.
- Bowen, Rev. T. J. *A Grammar and Dictionary of the Yorùbá Language*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1858.
- Braga, Júlio. *Ancstralidade Afro-Brasileira: o culto de babá egum*. Salvador, Brazil: CEAO-Ianamá, 1992.
- . *Na Gamela do Feitiço, Repressão e Resistência nos Candomblés da Bahia*. Salvador, Brazil: EDUFBA, 1995.

- Brain, R. *Art and Society in Africa*. New York: Longman Group, 1980.
- Brereton, Bridget. *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad, 1870-1900*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Browker, John, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Brown, David H. *Santería Enthroned: Art, Ritual, and Innovation in an Afro-Cuban Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Burkert, Walter. *Greek Religion*. Trans. John Raffan. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985.
- Cabrera, Lydia. *El Monte*. 1954. Miami, Fla.: Ediciones Universal, 1983.
- Campbell, V. B. "Comparative Study of Selected Shrine Paintings in Ilé-Iḩé and Ilésà." Unpublished M.F.A. dissertation, Obáfúnmi Awólówọ̀ University, Ilé-Iḩé, 1989.
- . "Continuity and Change in Yorùbá Shrine Painting Tradition." *Karin Africana: Journal of Art and Criticism* 1, no. 1 (1992): 110-23.
- . "Images and Power in Sixteen Yorùbá Sacred Paintings." *Ifé: Annals of the Institute of Cultural Studies* 6 (1995): 25-38.
- Canizares, B. R. *Shingó: Santería and the Orishá of Thunder*. Plainview, N.Y.: Original Publications, 2000.
- Capone, Stefania. *La quête de l'Afrique dans le candomblé. Pouvoir et tradition au Brésil*. Paris: Karthala, 1999.
- Carneiro, Edison. *Candomblés da Bahia (1948)*. Salvador, Brazil: Ediouro, 1985.
- Carroll, K. With foreword by William Fagg. *Yorùbá Religious Carving: Pagan and Christian Sculpture in Nigeria and Dahomey*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967.
- Castor, Nicole. "Virtual Community: The Orishá Tradition in the New World and Cyberspace." Paper presented at the Ninth International Orishá Conference, Port of Spain, Trinidad, 1999.
- Catholic Community Forum. "Patron Saints Index: Saint Barbara." N.d. (accessed Jan. 30, 2005) <http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/saintbo1.htm>.
- Clapperton, Hugh. *Hugh Clapperton into the Interior of Africa: Records of the Second Expedition, 1825-1827*. Ed. Jamie Bruce Lockhart and Paul E. Lovejoy. Boston: Brill, 2003.
- Clarke, Kamari M. *Mapping Yorùbá Networks: Power and Agency in the Making of Transnational Communities*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff, eds. *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001.
- Conner, Randy P., and David Hatfield Sparks. *Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Participation in African-Inspired Traditions in the Americas*. New York: Harrington Park Press, 2004.
- Courlander, Harold. *Tales of Yorùbá Gods and Heroes: Myths, Legend and Heroic Tales of the Yorùbá People of West Africa*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1973.

- . *A Treasury of African Folklore*. New York: Crown, 1975.
- Daramola, O., and Jeje, A. *Àwọn Àjà àti Òrìṣà ilẹ̀ Yorùbá*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Onibon-oje Press, 1967.
- Dlamini, I. *Speaking for Ourselves*. Braamfontein, South Africa: Institute for Contextual Theology, 1985.
- . "Zionist Churches from the Perspective of a Zionist Leader." In *Religion Alive*, ed. G. C. Oosthuizen, 209–10. Johannesburg: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986.
- Drewal, Henry John. *African Artistry: Technique and Aesthetics in Yorùbá Sculpture*. Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1980.
- Drewal, Henry John, and John Pemberton III, with Rowland Abiodun. *Yorùbá: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*. New York: Center for African Art in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1989.
- Drewal, Margaret T. *Yorùbá Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.
- Dwyer, Kevin. *Moroccan Dialogues: Anthropology in Question*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.
- Egonwa, D. Osa. "Patterns and Trends of Stylistic Development in Contemporary Nigerian Art." *Kurio Africana: Journal of Art and Criticism* 2, no. 1 (1993): 1–15.
- Ehret, Christopher. *The Civilizations of Africa: A History of 1800*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002.
- Ellis, A. B. *The Yorùbá-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa: Their Religion, Manners, Customs, Laws, Language, Etc.* (1894). Oosterhout, Netherlands: Anthropological Publications, 1970.
- Elis, David. "The Diaspora of Yorùbá Speakers, 1650–1865: Dimensions and Implications." In *The Yorùbá Diaspora in the Atlantic World*, ed. Toyin Falola and Matt Childs, 17–39. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.
- Euba, Akin. *Yorùbá Drumming: The Dúndún Tradition*. Bayreuth, Germany: African Studies Series, 1990.
- Fadipe, N. A. *The Sociology of the Yorùbá*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1970; reprint, 1991.
- Fakeye, L., M. Bruce, and H. David. *Lamidi Olonode Fakeye: A Retrospective Exhibition and Autobiography*. Holland, Mich.: De Pree Art Center and Gallery, 1996.
- Falola, Toyin, and Matt D. Childs, eds. *The Yorùbá Diaspora in the Atlantic World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.
- Falola, Toyin, and Ann Genova. *Òrìṣà: Yorùbá Gods and Spiritual Identity in Africa and the Diaspora*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2005.
- Fatunsin, A. K. *Yorùbá Pottery*. Lagos: National Commission for Museums and Monuments, 1992.
- Ferreira, Pai Euclides Menezes. Interview with Luis Nicolau Parés. June 25, 2003.

- Folaranmi, S. "The Importance of Oríkì in Yorùbá Mural Art." *Ijèlè: Art e-journal of the African World* 2, no. 4 (2002). Available at www.africaresource.com.
- . "Orìsà Pópó Shrine Painting in Ògbómòsò." Unpublished B.A. long essay, Obáfèmi Awólówò University, Ilé-Ife, 1995.
- . "Òyó Palace Mural." Unpublished M.F.A. thesis, Obáfèmi Awólówò University, Ilé-Ife, 2000.
- . "Òyó Palace Mural: A Symbolic Communication with Symbols." *Journal of Art and Ideas* 4 (2002): 93–105.
- Font, Mauricio A. "Introduction: The Intellectual Legacy of Fernando Ortiz." In *Cuban Counterpoints: The Legacy of Fernando Ortiz*, ed. Mauricio A. Font, 1–27. Baltimore, Md.: Lexington Books, 2005.
- Forbes, Frederick E. *Dahomey and the Dahomeans*. 2 vols. London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1851.
- Fosu, K. *20th Century Art of Africa*. Vol 1. Zaria, Nigeria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1986.
- Foucault, Michel. "Governmentality." In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller, 87–104. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.
- Fraginals, Manuel Moreno. *The Sugarmill: The Socioeconomic Complex of Sugar in Cuba, 1760–1860*. Trans. Cedric Belfrage. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976.
- Frobenius, Leo. *The Voice of Africa: Being an Account of the Travels of the German Inner African Exploration Expedition in the Years 1910–1912*. Trans. Rudolf Blind. 2 vols. London: Hutchinson, 1913; Benjamin Bloom, 1968.
- Gibbons, Rawle. "Introduction and Welcome." Paper presented at the Ninth International Orìsà Congress, Port of Spain, Trinidad, 1999.
- Glazier, Stephen D. *Marchin' the Pilgrims Home: A Study of the Spiritual Baptists of Trinidad*. Salem, Wis.: Sheffield, 1991.
- . "New World African Ritual: Genuine and Spurious." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 35, no. 4 (1996): 420–31.
- . "The Religious Mosaic: Playful Celebration in Trindadian Shàngò." *Play and Culture* 1 (1998): 216–35.
- . "Responding to the Anthropologist: When the Spiritual Baptists of Trinidad Read What I Write about Them." In *When They Read What We Write: The Politics of Ethnography*, ed. Caroline B. Brettell, 37–48. Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey, 1993.
- , ed. *Encyclopædia of African and African-American Religions*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Gleason, Judith. *Orìshá: The Gods of Yorùbáland*. New York: Atheneum, 1971.
- Gotrick, Kacke. *Apidin Theatre and Modern Drama*. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1984.
- Goveia, Elsa. "The West Indian Slave Laws of the Eighteenth Century." *Revista de Ciências Sociais* 4 (1960): 75–105.

- Greenfield, Sidney M., and Andre Droogers. *Reinventing Religions: Syncretism and Transformation in Africa and the Americas*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002.
- Grimes, Ronald. *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994.
- Hall, Gwendolyn M. *Social Control in Slave Plantation Societies: A Comparison of St. Domingue and Cuba*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Hartnoll, Phyllis. *The Theatre: A Concise History*. 3rd ed. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998.
- Hastrup, Kirsten. "Writing Ethnography: State of the Art." In *Anthropology and Autobiography*, ed. J. Okely and H. Callaway, 116-33. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Henry, Frances. "The Orishà (Shàngó) Movement in Trinidad." In *Encyclopedia of African and African-American Religions*, ed. Stephen D. Glazier, 221-23. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- . *Reclaiming African Religions in Trinidad: The Socio-Political Legitimation of the Orishà and Spiritual Baptist Faiths*. Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2003.
- . See also Mischel (Henry), Frances.
- Hernandez-Reguant, Ariana. "Radio Taino and the Globalization of the Cuban Culture Industries." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2002.
- Herbert, Eugenia W. *Iron, Gender, and Power, Rituals of Transformation in African Societies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.
- Herskovits, Melville J. *Culture Dynamics*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947.
- Herskovits, Melville J., and Frances Herskovits. *Trinidad Village*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947.
- Hethersett, A. L., ed. *Ìwé Kùà Èhèrin Lì Èdè Yorùbá*. Lagos, Nigeria: Church Missionary Society, 1941.
- Higginbotham, Joyce, and River Higginbotham. *Paganism: An Introduction to Earth-Centered Religions*. St. Paul, Minn.: Llewellyn Publications, 2002.
- Horn, Andrew. "Ritual, Drama, and the Theatrical: The Case of Bori Spirit Medium." In *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*, ed. Yemi Ogunbiyi, 181-202. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981.
- Horton, R. "African Conversion." *Africa* 41 (1971): 83-108.
- Houk, James T. *Spirits, Blood, and Drums: The Orishà Religion in Trinidad*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995.
- Hucks, Tracey E. "Trinidad, Africa-Derived Religions." In *Encyclopedia of African and African-American Religions*, ed. Stephen D. Glazier, 338-43. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Idowu, E. B. *Olùdumàré: God in Yorùbá Belief*. London: Longman, 1962; New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publisher, 1963; rev. and enlarged ed., London: Longman, 1996.

- Ifaogun, Adeboye Babalola (*Ifá* priest). Interview conducted by the author in Ilobáú, Oṣun State, Nigeria, in 2001.
- Isola, Akinwumi. "Èdè-àiyedè tí ó rọ̀ mọ̀ ofrun Sàngó." In *O Pẹ̀gèdè: Àkọ̀jọ̀pọ̀ Àwọn Àrìkò Akadà fún yìyònbó Ọ̀jọ̀gbón Adéboye Babalolá*, ed. O. Olutoye, 113-19. Ikeja, Nigeria: Longman Nigeria Plc., 2000.
- . "The Living Power of Sàngó." *Proceedings of the First World Conference on Orishá Tradition*, ed. Wande Abimbola, 338-46. Held at the University of Ifé, Ilé-Ifé, Nigeria, June 1-7, 1984.
- . "Orin Etiyeri." Unpublished paper.
- . "Religious Politics and the Myth of Sango." In *African Traditional Religion in Contemporary Society*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona, 93-99. New York: Paragon, 1991.
- . "The Rhythm of Sàngó Pipè." In *Torùbá Oral Tradition: Poetry in Music, Dance and Drama*, ed. Wande Abimbola, 762-93. Ilé-Ifé, Nigeria: Department of African Languages and Literature, University of Ifé, 1975.
- . "Sàngó-pipè, One Type of Yorùbá Oral Poetry." M.A. thesis, University of Lagos, 1973.
- . "Yorùbá Beliefs about Sàngó as a Deity." *Oriṣa: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* 11, no. 2 (1977): 100-20.
- Itacy, Jorge Oliveira. *Orixás e voduns nas terras de Mina*. São Luís, Brazil: VCR Produções e Publicidades, 1989.
- Jackson, Michael. *Minima Ethnographica: Intersubjectivity and the Anthropological Project*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Jakuta, Chief. Personal Communication to Diedre Badejo, 1982.
- Johnson, John William, and Fa-Digi Sisoko. *Sen-Jara: The Mande Epic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003.
- Johnson, Samuel. *The History of the Yorùbá: From Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate (1921)*, O. Johnson, ed. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966; Lagos: C.S.S., 1960, 1976.
- Kerenyi, C. *The Gods of the Greeks (1951)*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2000.
- Kirsch, Jonathan. *God against the Gods: The History of the War between Monotheism and Polytheism*. New York: Viking Compass, 2004.
- Klass, Morton. "When God Can Do Anything: Belief Systems in Collision." *Anthropology of Consciousness* 2 (1991): 3-34.
- Knight, Franklin W. *Slave Society in Cuba during the Nineteenth Century*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970.
- Koch, K.-F. *War and Peace in Jalemo*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974.
- Lacerda, Marcos Branda. "Yorùbá Drums from Benin, West Africa." In *Torùbá Drums from Benin, West Africa*. CD liner notes. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 1996.
- Ladipo, Duro. *Ọ̀ba Káso (The King Did Not Hang)*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Macmillan Nigeria, 1970; Institute of African Studies at the University of Ibadan, 1972.

- Ladipo, P. A. "Sàngó Shrine Painting in Èdè." Unpublished B.A. long essay, Obáfémí Awólóyṣṣ University, Ilé-Ife, 1992.
- Landes, Ruth. *City of Women* (1947). Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994.
- Lanternari, Vittorio. *Religions of the Oppressed*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963.
- Law, Robin. "Ethnicity and the Slave Trade: 'Lucumi' and 'Nago' as Ethnonyms in West Africa." *History in Africa* 24 (1997): 205-19.
- . *The Oyo Empire, c. 1600-1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, 1977.
- Lépine, Claude. "Análise formal do panteão Nágó." In *Bandeira de Alaird: estudos escritos sobre a religião dos orixás*, ed. C. E. M. de Moura, 13-70. São Paulo, Brazil: Nobel, 1982.
- Leuzinger, E. *The Art of Black Africa*. London: Cassel and Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1976.
- Lewis, I. M. *Ecstatic Religion*. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1971.
- Lima, Maria Helena. "Introduction." In *Mulheres Escrevendo: Uma Antologia Bilingüe de Escritoras Afro-Brasileiras Contemporâneas*, ed. Miriam Alves and Maria Helena Lima, 17-23. London: Mango Publishing, 2005.
- Lima, Vivaldo da Costa. *A família-de-santo nos Candomblés Jeje-Nagô da Bahia: um estudo de relações intra-grupais*. Salvador, Brazil: UFBA., 1977.
- . "Ainda sobre a nação de queto." In *Favasmará—o caçador traz alegria: Mãe Stella, 60 anos de iniciação*, ed. Cleo Martins and Raul Lody, 67-80. Rio de Janeiro: Pallas, 2000.
- . "Os Obás de Xangô." *Afro-Asia* 2-3 (June-Dec. 1966): 5-36.
- Lloyd, P. C. *The Political Development of Yorùbá Kingdoms in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*. Occasional Paper, no. 31. London: Royal Anthropological Institute, 1971.
- Lody, Raul. "O rei come quiabo e a rainha come fogo. Temas da culinária sagrada no Candomblé." In *Leopardo dos Olhos de Fogo: escritos sobre a religião dos orixás VI*, ed. C. E. M. de Moura, 145-64. São Paulo, Brazil: Ateliê Editorial, 1998.
- Lovejoy, Paul E. "The Yorùbá Factor in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade." In *The Yorùbá Diaspora in the Atlantic World*, ed. Toyin Falola and Matt Childs, 40-55. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.
- Lucas, J. O. *The Religion of the Yorùbás*. Lagos: C. M. S., 1948.
- Lam, Kenneth A. *Praising His Name in the Dance: Spirit Possession in the Spiritual Baptist Faith and Òrìṣà Work in Trinidad, West Indies*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000.
- Marcelin, Louis Heins. "A Invenção da Família Afro-Americana. Família, Parentesco e Domesticidade entre os Negros do Recôncavo da Bahia, Brasil." Ph.D. diss., Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 1996.
- Marcuzzi, Michael D. "A Historical Study of the Ascendant Role of Bâta Drumming in Cuban Òrìṣà Worship." Ph.D. diss., York University, 2005.

- Marks, Morton. "Introduction." In *Rhythms and Songs for the Orishas: Havana, Cuba*, ca. 1957. CD liner notes. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 2001.
- Mason, John. *Orin Orìpá: Songs for Selected Heads*. Brooklyn: Yorùbá Theological Archministry, 1992.
- Mason, Michael Atwood. *Living Santería: Rituals and Experiences in an Afro-Cuban Religion*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002.
- Matory, J. Lorand. *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Trans-nationalism, and Matriarchy in the Brazilian Candomblé*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- . *Sex and the Empire That Is No More: Gender and the Politics of Metaphor in Orin Yorùbá Religion*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
- McAlister, Elizabeth. *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002.
- McDaniel, Lorna. *The Big Drum Ritual of Carriacou: Praisongs in Rememory of Flight*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998.
- McLeod, Patricia (Ìyá Sàngó Wúmi). "World Congress—Caribbean Report." Paper presented at the Ninth International Orìṣà Congress, Port of Spain, Trinidad, 1999.
- Mintz, Sidney. *Caribbean Transformations*. 1974. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.
- Mischel (Henry), Frances. "African Powers in Trinidad: The Sàngó Cult." *Anthropological Quarterly* 30 (1958): 45-59.
- Morton-Williams, P. "An Outline of the Cosmology and Cult Organization of the Ọyó Yorùbá." *Africa* 34, no. 3 (1964): 243-61.
- Murphy, Joseph M., and Mei-Mei Sanford, eds. *Ọyá across the Waters: A Yorùbá Goddess in Africa and the Americas*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- Nasiru, B. "Sàngó Ritual Pots." Unpublished M.F.A. thesis, Department of Fine Arts, Obáfẹmi Awólówọ University, Ilé-Ife, 1989.
- Niane, D. T. *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*. London: Longman Group, 1965.
- Newson, Linda A. *Aboriginal and Spanish Colonial Trinidad: A Study in Culture Contact*. New York: Academic Press, 1976.
- Obafemi, Olufemi. *Contemporary Nigerian Theatre: Cultural Heritage and Social Vision*. Bayreuth, Germany: Bayreuth African Studies Series, 1996.
- Ogunbiyi, Yemi. *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981.
- Ogunbowale, P. O. *Àwọn Irínmọlẹ̀ Ilẹ̀ Yorùbá*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Evans Publisher, 1962.
- Ogundeji, Philip A. "The Image of Sàngó in Duro Ladipo's Plays." *Research in African Literatures* 29, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 57-75.
- . "A Semiotic Study of Duro Ladipo's Mythico-Historical Plays." Ph.D. diss., University of Ibadan, 1988.
- Ogungbile, David. "Èṣẹ̀rindinlógún: The Seeing Eyes of Sacred Shells and

- Stones." In *Ọ̀run across the Waters: A Yorùbá God in Africa and the Americas*, ed. Joseph M. Murphy and Mei-Mei Sanford, 89-121. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- Ogunmola, M. O. *A New Perspective to Ọ̀yọ̀ Empire History: 1530-1944*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Vantage Publishers, 1985.
- Ojo, G. J. A. *Yorùbá Culture*. London: University of Ife and University of London Press, 1966.
- Ojo, J. R. O. *A Short Illustrated Guide of the Museum of the Institute of African Studies*. Ilé-Ife, Nigeria: University of Ife, 1969.
- Okeḍijí, M. "Oríṣá Ìkírè Painting School." *Kuria Africana: Journal of Art and Criticism* 1, no. 2 (1989): 120-31.
- . "Yorùbá Paint Making Tradition." *Nigerian Magazine* 54, no. 2 (1986): 19-26.
- Olajubu, O. I. "Iwí: Ègúngún Chants in Yorùbá Oral Literature." M.A. thesis, University of Lagos, 1970.
- Olajubu, Oludare. "The Sources of Duro Ladipo's *Ọ̀ba Kùu*." *Research in African Literatures* 9, no. 3 (Winter 1978): 327-62.
- Olatona, Oyeḡbade (*Ifá* and *Eḡrindinlòḡún* priest). Interview conducted by the author with the Ojùḡbṣeṇá Awo of Oṣogbo in Nigeria in 2001-2003.
- Olatunji, O. Olatunde. *Features of Yorùbá Oral Poetry*. Ibadan, Nigeria: University Press, 1984.
- Olomo, Aina. *Core of Fire: A Path to Yorùbá Spiritual Activism*. Brooklyn: Altheia Henrietta Press, 2003.
- Olunlade, Chief. *Edé: A Short History*, ed. Uli Beier, trans. J. A. Akinjogbin. Ibadan, Nigeria: G. P. S. Ministry of Education, 1962.
- Olupona, Jacob K. "Introduction." In *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religions and Modernity*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona, 1-19. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- . *Kingship, Religion, and Rituals in a Nigerian Community: A Phenomenological Study of Onádó Yorùbá Festivals*. Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1991.
- Ortiz, Fernando. *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*. Trans. Harriet de Onís. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995.
- . "La Antigua Fiesta Afrocubana del Día de Reyes." *Ensayos Etnográficos* (1921). Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales (1984), 41-78.
- . *Los Instrumentos de la Música Afrocubana*, 2 vols. Havana: Letras Cubanas, 1995.
- . *Los Tambores Batú de los Yoruba*. Havana: Publicigraf, 1954.
- Oyewumi, Oyeronke. *The Invention of Women*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Palmié, S. "Against Syncretism: 'Africanizing' and 'Cubanizing' Discourses in North American Oríṣá Worship." *Counterworks* (1993): 73-103.
- Parés, Luis Nicolau. *A Formação do Candomblé: História e Ritual da nação Jeje na Bahia*. 1st ed. Campinas, Brazil: Editora Unicamp, 2006.

- . "The Nagôization Process in Bahian Candomblé." In *The Yorùbá Diaspora in the Atlantic World*, ed. Toyin Falola and Matt D. Child, 285–298. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.
- . "Transformations of the Sea and Thunder Voduns in the Gbe-speaking Area and in the Bahian Jeje Candomblé." In *Africa and the Americas: Interconnections during the Slave Trade*, ed. José C. Curto and René Soudré-La France, 69–93. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 2005.
- Peel, John D. Y. *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yorùbá*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- Pemberton, John, III. "Divination in Sub-Saharan Africa." In *African Art and Rituals of Divination*, ed. Alisa LaGamma, 10–21. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000.
- Picton, J. "The Horse and Rider in Yorùbá Art: Image of Conquest and Possession." *Nigeria Field* 67, no. 2 (Oct. 2002): 111–38.
- Pierson, Donald. *Branco e Preto na Bahia*. São Paulo, Brazil: Editora Nacional, 1971.
- Prince, Raymond. *Ifá: Yorùbá Divination and Sacrifice*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1964.
- Ramos, Arthur. "Os mythos de Xangô e sua degradação no Brasil." In *Estudos Afro-Brasileiros: trabalhos apresentados ao 1er Congresso Afro-Brasileiro reunidos no Recife em 1934*, 49–54. Rio de Janeiro: Ariel Editora, 1935.
- Ramos, Miguel "Willie." "Afro-Cuban Orisha Worship." In *Santeria Aesthetics in Contemporary Latin American Art*, ed. Arturo Lindsey, 51–76. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996.
- Reis, João José. *Rebelião Escrava no Brasil. A história do Levante dos Malês em 1835*. São Paulo, Brazil: Companhia das Letras, 2003.
- Reis, João José, and Eduardo Silva. *Conflito e negociação. A resistência negra no Brasil escravista*. São Paulo, Brazil: Companhia das Letras, 1989.
- Ribeiro, Esmeralda. "A procura de uma borboleta preta." In *Mulheres Escrevendo: Uma Antologia Bilingue de Escritoras Afro-Brasileiras Contemporâneas*, ed. Miriam Alves and Maria Helena Lima, 26–39. London: Mango Publishing, 2005.
- . "A escritora negra e o seu ato de escrever participando." In *Criação crioula, Nu elefante branco*. São Paulo: Impr. Oficial do Estado, 1987.
- Rodrigues, Nina. *Os Africanos no Brasil (1906)*. São Paulo, Brazil: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1977.
- Rodriguez, Olavo A. "Introduction." In *Sacred Rhythms of Cuban Santeria*, ed. Olavo A. Rodriguez. CD liner notes. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 1995.
- Rodriguez, Victoria Eli. "Tambores Batá." In *Instrumentos de la Música Folclórico-Popular de Cuba*, ed. Victoria Eli Rodriguez, 2 vols., 1:319–43. Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1997.
- Sansi, Roger. *Fetishes and Monuments: Afro-Brazilian Art and Culture in 20th Century Bahia*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2007.

- Santos, Deoscóredes Maximiliano dos. *História de um terreiro Nagô: crônica histórica*. São Paulo, Brazil: Carthago and Forte, 1994.
- Santos, Juana Elbeim dos, and Deoscóredes Maximiliano Santos. "O culto dos ancestrais na Bahia: o culto dos eguns." In *Olorisa: escritos sobre a religião dos orixás*, ed. C. E. M. de Moura, 153-88. São Paulo, Brazil: Ágora, 1981.
- Santos, Maria do Rosário Carvalho. *O Caminho das Matriarcas Jeje-Nagô: Uma contribuição para a história da religião afro no Maranhão*. São Luís, Brazil: Func, 2001.
- Santos, Maria Rosário Carvalho, and Manoel Santos Neto. *Bomboromina: Terras de São Luís - Uma interpretação sócio cultural*. São Luís, Brazil: SECMA/SIOGE, 1989.
- Schultz, Marc. "Habitus and Peasantization in Nigeria: A Yorùbá Case Study." *Man new series* 17 (1982): 728-46.
- . "Rural-Urban Migration in Iḡanná." Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1980.
- Silveira, Renato da. "Jeje-Nagô, Iorubá-Tapá, Aon Efan, Ijexá: Processo de constituição do candomblé da Barroquinha—1764-1851." *Cultura Vozes* 6, no. 94 (2000): 80-100.
- . Personal communication to Luis Nicolau Pires. May 3, 2004.
- Simpson, George Eaton. *Religious Cults of the Caribbean: Trinidad, Jamaica, and Haiti*. Río Piedras: Institute of Caribbean Studies, University of Puerto Rico, 1980.
- Smith, R. S. *Kingdoms of the Yorùbá*. London: Methuen, 1969.
- Soyinka, Wole. *Myth, Literature and the African World*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- Sublette, Ned. *Cuba and Its Music from the First Drums to the Mambo*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2004.
- Tavares, Idálsio. *Xangô*. Rio de Janeiro: Pallas, 2000.
- Thieme, Darius L. "A Descriptive Catalogue of Yorùbá Musical Instruments." Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1969.
- Thompson, Robert Farris. *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*. New York: Vintage Books, 1984.
- . "The Sign of the Divine King: An Essay on Yorùbá Beaded-Embroidered Crowns with Veil and Bird Decorations." *African Arts* 113 (1970): 8-17.1.
- Thornton, John K. *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641-1718*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983.
- Timi de Ede, Laoye I. "Los Tamborea Yoruba." *Actas del Folklore Boletín Mensual del Centro de Estudios del Folklore* 1 (1961): 17-31.
- Tishken, Joel E. "Ethnic vs. Evangelical Religions: Beyond Teaching the World Religions Approach." *History Teacher* 33, no. 3 (May 2000): 303-20.
- Trigger, Bruce. *Understanding Early Civilizations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Trotman, David. "The Yorùbá and Òrìshá Worship in Trinidad and British Guiana, 1938-1970." *African Studies Review* 19, no. 2 (1976): 1-17.

- Tsing, Anna. "The Global Situation." *Cultural Anthropology* 15, no. 3 (2000): 327-60.
- Van Deport, Mattijs. "Candomblé in Pink, Green, and Black: Re-scripting the Afro-Brazilian Religious Heritage in the Public Sphere of Salvador, Bahia." *Social Anthropology* 13 (2005): 3-26.
- Verger, Pierre. *Notas sobre o culto aos Orixás e Voduns na Bahia de Todos os Santos, no Brasil, e na antiga Costa dos Escravos, na África* (1957). São Paulo, Brazil: Edusp, 1999.
- . *Orixás*. Salvador, Brazil: Corrúpio, 1981.
- Visonà, M. B. With introduction and preface by Rowland Abiodun and Suzanne Blier. *The History of Art in Africa*. New York: Harry Abram, 2000.
- Wafar, James Walter. *The Taste of Blood: Spirit Possession in Brazilian Candomblé*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.
- Warner-Lewis, Maureen. *Trinidad Yorùbá: From Mother Tongue to Memory*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996.
- Welch, David B. *Voice of Thunder, Eyes of Fire: In Search of Shàngò in the African Diaspora*. Pittsburgh: Dorrance Publishing, 2001.
- Wescott, Joan, and Peter Morton-Williams. "The Symbolism and Ritual Context of the Yorùbá Lábá Shàngò." *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 92 (1962): 23-57.
- Whitford, John. *Trading Life in Western and Central Africa, 1877*. 2nd ed. London: Frank Cass, 1967.
- Wood, Donald. *Trinidad in Transition: The Years after Slavery*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- Yai, Olabiyi Babalola. "Yorùbá Religion and Globalization: Some Reflections." *Cuadernos Digitales* 15 (October 2001): 1-21.
- Young, Robert J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Index

Italicized page numbers indicate illustrations.

- Abẹ̀òkuta, 296
 Adẹ̀kòlá, Adẹ̀bimpe, 150-151
 Adẹ̀lẹ̀kẹ, Chief Ibẹ̀yemi, 149-150
 Adẹ̀sanya, Afọ̀lábí, 16, 149-150
adun (priest/priestess of Šàngó), 2, 10-11, 12, 26; origins of, 159-160
 Afọ̀njá, 262
 African Diaspora, 4, 11-14; and art, 182-183; creation of, 214, 298-299; and identity politics within Šàngó worship, 221-223, 226-229, 259-260; and *orisa* modernism, 215, 228; and *orisa* revivalism, 215, 219, 221-223, 228; and Šàngó worship, 33-35; and varieties of *orisa* worship, 214-216, 221-223; and West Africa, 26-27, 30-31, 182-183, 225, 255-256, 260-261, 284-285, 302. *See also* Brazil; Cuba; Trinidad
 Africanization, 13, 16; and Brazil, 259-260, 272-278; and tension between *orisa* worshippers, 217, 221-223; and Òyúnjì Village, 221-223, 225-229; and Trinidad, 239-240
 Afro-Brazilian religions, 13, 17, 164-165. *See also* Brazil; Candomblé; Tambor de Mina; Xangô
 Afro-Trinidadian religion, 13, 17; and gender, 242-244; and identity politics, 239-240, 245; origins of, 238; as "Orisa work," 234; and place of Šàngó within, 233-235, 244-245; reduction of pantheon, 241; research of, 237; ritual spaces of, 241-242; rituals of, 240-241; shrines of, 233-234, 237; syncretism within, 238; and use of informants, 235-236. *See also* Trinidad
 Alááfín, 9, 25-26; institution of, 27-29, 190-191, 207-208, 294-296; and Òyó imperialism, 81-82, 98-99; and regional diplomacy, 81-82, 98-99, 102-103; and sovereignty, 94-96, 98-99, 102-103; and suicide, 190-191. *See also* royalty
 Alááfín Šàngó (historical Šàngó), 6, 8-11, 16, 126; attributes of, 193, 251-254; debates over, 187-190, 191-192, 208-209; origins of, 27-28, 46, 248-249, 252-254; and portrayals on film, 137-138, 140-141, 142, 145; and Šàngó's popularity, 37-39
 ancestors, 4, 333; and Šàngó ritual, 57-58
 Aninha, Mãe, 259-261
apiré (a wooden bowl), 48
 Ará, 12, 15; and Alááfín's authority, 91-92; in contemporary Itásá, 104-106; festival of, 96, 98-99; justice of, 96-97; origin stories of, 82-87; and regional variation of Šàngó worship, 90-99, 102-103
 art, 16; and African Diaspora, 182-183; contemporary, 157; Èkibi style, 167;

- Ibádán style, 164; Ifé style, 179; Igbómìná style, 167, 172; and ritual paraphernalia, 157, 167-168; and Šàngó worship, 157, 167, 169, 183-184. *See also* painting; pots; sculpture
- arugbá* (calabash carrier), 48, 172, 173, 176
- Asante, 29
- Àtìbá, 8
- Àyán/Ànà, 290-291, 294
- Badagry, 82
- Bahia, 249; and West Africa, 260-261; and Xàngó, 250-251, 255-256, 257. *See also* Brazil; Candomblé; Tambor de Mina; Xàngó
- Barbara, Saint, 12, 13, 16, 26, 41-42, 114; and relation to Šàngó, 220-221, 289
- bàtá* drums, 4, 11, 18, 285-286; and Brazil, 251; and Cuba, 287-289, 294, 300-304; and *orìṣà* worship, 286-287; and Oyó, 294-296; physical characteristics of, 285-286, 289-290; and Šàngó, 289, 294-296; and slavery, 296-297, 300-301; sources concerning, 285-289, 299-300; spiritual properties of, 290-291, 293-294; and trans-Atlantic linkages, 284-285, 287-288, 289-290, 294, 302-304; transmission of, 298-299
- Beier, Ulli, 9, 235
- Benin, Republic of, 181-182
- Brazil, 21, 22, 17, 26; literature of, 273-274, 281-282; and origins of Afro-Brazilian religions, 249, 264-265; and West Africa, 260-261. *See also* Afro-Brazilian religions; Bahia; Maranhão
- Candomblé, 249; and Catholicism, 263, 272, 258; contemporary worship, 261; and cult houses, 250-251; diversity within, 259, 262-264; and Ilé Axé Opò Afonjá, 259, 261; and Iyá Nassô, 250, 258, 266, 111; and Obàs de Xàngó, 259-262; Olórégún festival, 258-259; organization of, 255; rituals of, 255-256; and Xàngó, 250-251, 258
- Catholicism, 12-13; saint correspondences with *orìṣà*, 220-221, 233, 263, 289
- Chàngó; concept of, 219-220, 336-337; as divine essence, 327-328, 329-331, 334-337; duality of, 331; origins of worship, 289; taboos of, 325; worship of, 294, 302-304
- Christianity, 5, 8, 19, 45; and changes in art, 177-178, 179-180; conjoined with Šàngó worship, 77, 238; and discrediting of Yorùbá religion, 190, 191-192, 253-254; and film, 150-151; and Santería, 225; spread of, 298
- Church of the Lukumi Babalú-Ayé, 323, 337
- colonialism, 96, 318-319
- color symbolism. *See* redness; whiteness
- "coolness," 1-2, 55, 174, 320, 324. *See also* whiteness
- costume, 174, 207-208
- Cuba, 11, 12, 18, 26; and Christianity, 299-300; festivals in, 300-304; revolution, 324; and slave laws, 300-301; Yorùbá in, 284, 286, 293-294, 296-297, 299-300, 302-304. *See also* Chàngó; Santería
- Dàdà Àpàkà, 143, 262
- Dahomey, 29, 103, 181-182
- dance, 159-160, 159, 169; in Brazil, 255-256
- divination; meaning of, 65-65, 333-334; training for, 65-66. *See also* *ohí ifá*; Šàngó Èṣrindínlógún
- drumming, 240; and festivals, 301-304; study of, 290-292; talking varieties, 292-293; types of, 291-293. *See also* *bàtá* drums
- Ede, 2, 45, 48; and annual Šàngó ritual, 53-58, 175, 258; and shrine painting, 175-176, 176; Timi of, 175, 291, 292
- Èlégún*, 2, 10-11, 12; origins of,

- 159-160; and revelation, 30; and Sàngó worship, 32, 276
- Enwonwu, Benedict, 165, 167, 178-179
- Èsà, 9, 24, 30, 174, 240; and film, 146
- Fákéye, Lamidi, 167, 178
- film, 16; and bilingualism, 141-142; and morality, 145, 151-152; and myth-making, 148-153; and narration, 145. *See also* *Ìbíná Olúkòsò* (film); *Láàdayí* (film); *Oba Kòsò* (film); *Osé(e) Sàngó* (film); *Sàngó* (film)
- fire: and Sàngó, 17, 35-36, 199-200, 313, 328, 331
- Foláránmí, Stephen, 180-181, 180, 181
- Foot, 181-182. *See also* Dahomey
- Fulani, 297
- ghèrì* (blouse, usually red), 35
- Gbónnà, 10, 126, 189; and film, 141, 153
- gender: and complementation, 15-16, 125-127, 132, 263, 278, 313; and distortion in defining Sàngó, 311-312, 313, 315, 317-318, 320-321; and divination, 63; and film, 141-142; and impact on mythology, 89; and masculinity, 15, 138, 222, 312, 321; and patriarchy, 13-14, 18, 311-312, 321; and patrilineality, 142-143; and praise poetry, 224-231, 232; and regional definitions of Sàngó, 87-90, 221, 223; and Sàngó worship, 311-312, 315, 317-318, 318-321; and Trinidad, 242-244; within Yoruba culture, 112-114, 114-115, 132
- globalization: and identity politics, 225; and varieties of *òrìsà* worship, 213, 216-217
- Haiti, 11
- Hausa, 129, 318
- Hethersett, A. L., 8, 16; and images of Sàngó, 189-190
- ills, 93, 98-99
- "hotness," 1-2, 9, 35, 174, 231, 320. *See also* redness
- Ìbàdán, 45, 175, 296; style of art, 164
- Ìbíná Olúkòsò* (film), 150-151
- Ìbòlò, 29
- Ibúomò, Chief Sàngórinde, 45, 47
- Ìdíkò, 91, 92, 103
- Ìfá: as deity, 24, 181; as divination system, 30, 32, 57, 203, 204, 319-320. *See also* *osù ifá* (divination poetry)
- Ìgànnì, 82
- Ìgbómìnà, 19
- Ìjàgbà, 31
- Ìkòkò (clay pot), 48
- Ìlára, 82-87
- Ìlè-Ìfè, 8, 78, 116, 199; and art, 175; and origins of Sàngó, 205-207
- Ìlèsà, 175
- Ìlorin, 285, 297-298
- internet, 16
- Ìrú, 47
- Ìrè, 47
- Ìrúnmplé* (mythic Sàngó), 6, 8, 13; attributes of, 193, 199-202, 203-205, 205-207; and contemporary worship, 60-61; debate over, 192, 208-209; and film, 137-138, 145-146
- Ìsèyìn, 45
- Islam, 5, 19; and art, 177-178, 178-179; conjoined with Sàngó worship, 77; and film, 152; and *Ọyó*, 296-298
- Ìràsà, 79; history of 90-92, 107-118; and regional definitions of Sàngó, 91-94, 98-99, 102-103; and ritual, 99-102; and worship of *Ará*, 91-94, 98-99, 102-103, 104-106
- Ìrìlè. *See* *Ìràsà*
- Ìwéré, 91-93
- inu*, (horn) 48
- Jákúta, 8, 188, 192, 278-279. *See also* *Ìrúnmplé* (mythic Sàngó)
- Jákúta day, 3, 28, 44; and Sàngó worship, 51-52
- Jègbé, 206-207
- Jeronimo, Saint, 26
- Johnson, Samuel, 8, 10, 16, and images of Sàngó, 135, 188-189
- justice, 17; and morality, 58-59; and

- Sàngó as dispenser of, 33-34, 37, 40, 45-46, 151-152, 279; and Sàngó as embodiment of, 45-46, 152-153; as thunderbolts, 150, 161, 279-280. *See also* lightning
- Kanem-Bornu, 116
- Kétu, 12, 25; and Brazil, 250; and origin stories of Ará, 82-87; and regional definitions of Sàngó, 88-89, 98-99, 102-103
- King, Serge (Adéfúnni), 221-222, 226
- kola nut, 3, 148; bitter, 49, 148
- Kòsò, 7, 28, 192; as shrine center, 124-125, 159, 192, 207
- lábà* (leather bag), 55, 161, 173, 295
- Ládipò, Dürò, 16, 135-137, 187, 192, 194; scholarship on, 138
- Lákáayé* (film), 16, 145-147, 148, 151-152
- lightning, 6, 8, 16; and film, 152; and gender, 115-116; as justice, 33-34, 37, 158-159; as manifestation of Sàngó, 313-315, 320, 332; and origins of Sàngó, 206-207; and Oyo imperialism, 88; and popularity of Sàngó, 24-25, 35-36; and purification rituals, 94. *See also* justice, thunder
- literature, oral, 8, 11, 13, 16; and attributes of Sàngó, 193, 199-201, 203-205; debates over Sàngó in, 46, 192, 104-206, 209; divinatory, 73-77; nature of, 195-197. *See also* *odù ifá* (divination poetry); *Sàngó pipé*
- literature, written, 10-11, 15; and attributes of Sàngó, 193, 253-254; and Brazil, 273; and contemporary worship, 60-61; debates over Sàngó in, 187-188, 188-190, 209; and Dürò Ládipò, 192, 194; Sàngó imagery in, 17-18, 187-188, 209, 253-254; Xangó imagery in, 273-274, 277-278, 279-282. *See also* Ribeiro, Esmeralda
- Lucumí. *See* Cuba; Santería
- magic: and mythology of Sàngó, 144, 199-202, 203-205; and ritual, 54-55, 57
- Mali (empire), 119, 121, 122
- Maranhão, 263
- mass media, 137; and varieties of *oríṣá* worship, 216, 217-218, 227-228; and video, 137-138, 153
- McLeod, Patricia (Iya Sàngó Wúrní), 234
- modernity, 19
- ogbúrú* (priests), 2, 4, 10, 295; and film, 150; origins of, 159; as Sàngó's "wives," 60
- Nasiru, Tunde, 179-180, 180
- neopaganism, 3
- Niger River, 28-29, 121
- Nigeria. *See* Yorùbá, Yorùbáland
- Nupe, 29, 116
- Obà, 9; and film, 143-144; as wife of Sàngó, 115
- Òbá lú sò*, 14, 132, 357; debate of, 191-192, 316-318; and deification of Sàngó, 16, 25, 188, 189, 190, 262
- Òbá Káò* (film), 16, 135-137, 192, 194
- Obáji, 98-99, 102-103
- Obàlì, 92
- Obàrálá, 1, 24; and art, 174; and color, 177; as Oxalá, 257-258
- osá* (mortar), 3, 4, 48, 172; and Sàngó shrines, 160, 161
- osù ifá* (divination poetry), 13, 16, 76, 187, 319-320, 327, 330; and Changó, 331-332; and identity politics, 226-227
- Odùduwá, 8, 9, 116, 119, 177, 206, 207
- Òfá, 175
- Ógbómòṣò, 174, 175
- òghóní*, 222
- Ògún, 2, 4, 8, 24; and film, 145-146; and Irè, 47; and Iràṣí, 98-99, 102
- Ògún River, 29
- Ògúnṣemí, Wàlé, 16, 140-145
- Òjó, Priestess Kéhindé, 51
- Olábiran, Òsínsòkò, 175
- Olàna, Chris, 221-222
- Olódumarè, 45, 180-181, 197, 198; and divination, 226

- Olókun, 1, 313, 325
 Olugébéfolá, Adémóla, 183
 Olúorogbo, 174, 175
onísílá, 94-96, 98-99, 102-103. *See also* Írísá
 Oránmíyán, 9, 116, 207, 262
orichas. *See* *orísá*
oriki (praise poetry), nature of, 195-197. *See also* *adú ifá* (divination poetry); *Osun*; *Oya*; *Ẹ̀ṣàngó pipé*
oríjá, 66; and authority, 97; classification of, 1-2, 258, 262; correspondences with saints, 210-221, 233, 263; debates regarding, 23-24, 268-269n31; as divine essence, 311-312, 327-328, 328-329; duality of, 332-333; and *oriki*, 195-197; scholarship of, 80-81; types of worshippers, 214-216
oríjá fẹ́nfún, 1-2, 258, 262
orísá gbígbiná, 1-2
oríṣá-voodoo: founding of, 221-222; and identity politics within Ẹ̀ṣàngó worship, 221-225, 226-229; and Oyóranjí Village, 221, 222; and tension with Santería, 221-223
 Oránmílá, 8, 63, 203; and film, 146; and *Osun*, 198-199; worship of, 168
 Osanyin/Obaluyé, 2
osé (double-edged axe), 3, 4, 11, 179; in Brazil, 252, 277; carving of, 163-164; and film, 149-150; and ritual, 48, 168-169; and shrines, 160; symbolism of, 18, 163, 164, 165-166, 167-168
Osé (film) *Ẹ̀ṣàngó* (film), 16, 149-150
 Osogbo, 120, 124; and art, 175; and film, 135; and *Osun* worship, 175
 Osóṣòṣò, 1
 Osun, 1, 4, 8, 9, 24, 30; as compliment of Ẹ̀ṣàngó, 125-127, 132, 135; and film, 143-144; and Írísá, 98; and Oránmílá, 198-199; praise poetry of, 198-199; as wife of Ẹ̀ṣàngó, 115, 117; worship of, 120, 124, 174, 175. *See also* Osogbo
 Ota, 30
 Owu, 120, 124-125; and film, 150
 Oxalá, 256; and Xangó, 257-259
 Oya, 2, 8, 9, 30; as compliment of Ẹ̀ṣàngó, 15-16, 115-116, 122, 124-127, 132, 278, 313, 332; definition of, 121-124; and film, 136, 143-144, 147; and gender concepts, 123-124, 119-120; and Írísá, 47; and Niger River, 121; praise poetry of, 117-118, 121, 124-131; as wife of Ẹ̀ṣàngó, 115, 117, 189, 190, 274, 313, 336-337. *See also* winds
 Oyó (city and environs), 2, 17, 25, 27-29; and art, 175; contemporary, 3, 10, 45, 207; and Ẹ̀ṣàngó worship, 49-50; and slavery, 284-285
 Oyó (empire), 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 82; administration of, 81-82; and *batá*, 294-295, 296, 302-304; and Dahomey, 103; disintegration of, 18, 284-285, 296, 297-298; and eunuchs, 296; imperialism of, 15, 25-26, 81-82; founding of, 120, 125, 188; and origins of Ẹ̀ṣàngó, 205-207, 238; and regional diplomacy, 81-82, 98-99, 102-103; and spread of Ẹ̀ṣàngó worship, 24-26, 28-29, 78, 81-82, 248-249, 258; and support of Ẹ̀ṣàngó worship, 90-99, 102-103, 137-138, 207-208, 253-254, 294-295; succession in, 27-29, 191-192, 209, 286, 297
 Oyó, New, 297-298
 Oyómésí, and film, 144
 Oyóranjí Village, 17, 213-214; and identity politics within Ẹ̀ṣàngó worship, 221-225, 226-229; and leadership, 226-227; founding of, 221-222. *See also* King, Serge (Adéfinmi)
- Páṣòṣò, Léré, 16, 245-247
 painting: medium of, 175-176; of shrines, 174-176, 176. *See also* Fofáranmí, Stephen; Olugébéfolá, Adémóla
 Pichardo, Ernesto, 18-19; as *obá oriaté*, 323; and Supreme Court, 323, 337; training of, 324-327
 polygamy, 143-144

- Santería, 16; and *cabildos*, 301-302; challenges to, 221-222; discrimination against, 325-326; worshipers of, 225. *See also* Cuba; United States
- sculpture: Èkìtì style, 167; Ìbàdàn style, 164; *ibeyi* figures, 162-163, 163, 171; Ifè style, 179; Ìgbómìnà style, 167; mediums of, 162; of Sàngó, 179; style of, 164, 167-168. *See also* Erwonwu, Benedict; Fákéyè, Larnidi; *osé* (double-edged axe)
- şéşé* (gourd rattle), 3, 4, 173; in Brazil, 260-261; and ritual 48, 169, 174; and shrines, 160
- shrines (*şròngbà*): and ritual paraphernalia, 169; painting of, 174-176, 176; of Sàngó, 160-161, 160, 167
- slavery, 11; and Africanization, 214, 218-229; and Brazil, 249; and Cuba 18, 284-285, 296-297; and gender, 318-319; and law, 300-301; and *òrìṣà*, 251-252; and *Oyò*, 298-299; and revolts, 300-301
- smallpox, 10406
- Sokoto Caliphate, 285, 297
- Songolon, 121
- spirit possession: in Brazil, 255-256; and film, 139, 150-151; and Sàngó, 36, 37, 160; in Trinidad, 235, 240-241
- Spiritual Baptists, 235, 244
- Sundjata, 121
- syncretism, 12-14, 219-220; saint-*òrìṣà* correspondences, 220-221, 235, 263; and Trinidad, 238-239
- Tambor de Mina, 250, 265-264; and Casa das Minas, 250; and Casa de Nagô, 250-251, 263
- thunder, 6, 8, 16; as manifestation of Sàngó, 313, 314-315, 320, 332; and popularity of Sàngó, 24-25, 35-36, 45-46; as thunderbolt, 150, 162, 174, 260-261, 279. *See also* lightning
- Timi, 10, 54, 126, 189; and film, 137, 142
- trade: in West Africa, 119-120
- Trinidad, 2, 11, 12, 17; urban vs. rural, 235-236. *See also* Afro-Trinidadian religion
- United States, 11, 16; Cubans in, 323; and Sàngó worship, 319; Supreme Court of, 323, 337
- Verger, Pierre, 260-261
- whiteness (*flou/lan*), 53, 174, 177, 256, 295, 320
- winds, 113, 115-116
- Xàngó, 26-27; conception of, 250-253, 255-256, 273-274, 275-276, 276-277; diversity of, 262-263; as king, 260-261; in literature, 273-274, 277-278, 279-282; origins of worship, 255-256, 257-259, 278-279; spread of worship, 259-261, 264-265. *See also* Brazil; Candomblé; Tambor de Mina
- Yemòjà, 1, 24, 30, 116, 117; and color, 177
- Yorùbà, 1; and art, 162-163, 183-184; binary philosophy of, 115-116, 115-127, 153, 188; and Christianity, 298; and color symbolism, 177; culture of, 58-59, 195-197, 293; and divinization, 63-65; and gender, 112-114, 114-115, 132; indigenous religion of, 80-81; and painting, 175-176; philosophy of, 67, 70-73, 111-112, 119-120, 194-195, 281-282; and suicide of kings, 190-191; taboos of, 147, 155; and twins, 171; vocabulary, 318-319
- Yorùbaland, 2, 7, 11, 12, 248-249, 268-269, 321, 293; and contemporary Sàngó worship, 15, 48-61, 215-216. *See also* Kétu; Sábèc; *Oyò*
- Zeus, 6

Sàngó's Impact on the Atlantic World

"From religion, history, and sociology, to culture and literature, this volume appeals to multiple disciplines as *Sàngó* is interrogated on several levels of complexity."

—NITI APOLABI, UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS, AMHERST

"Elucidates the variety of views in circulation about *Sàngó* both in Nigeria and in the Yorùbá diaspora."

—OYEKAN OWOMOYELA, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

Sàngó in Africa and the African Diaspora is a multidisciplinary, transregional exploration of *Sàngó* religious traditions in West Africa and beyond. *Sàngó*—the Yorùbá god of thunder and lightning—is a powerful, fearful deity who controls the forces of nature, but he has not received the same attention as other Yorùbá òrìsà. This volume considers the spread of polytheistic religious traditions from West Africa, the mythic *Sàngó*, the historical *Sàngó*, and syncretic traditions of *Sàngó* worship. Readers with an interest in the Yorùbá and their religious cultures will find a diverse, complex, and comprehensive portrait of *Sàngó* worship in Africa and the African world.

The contributors are: Arinze Gbojólólu Adéjún, Dúrótoyé A. Adélékè, George Oluwásá Aybádé, Akintundé Akínyemí, Dieter L. Bailey, Kánná Marín Clark, Laura Edmunds, Tóyín Fálolá, Sèpphen Fólátánni, Stephen D. Glazier, Henry B. Lovejoy, Michael Atwood Mason, Olóyè Ànà Ojúá, Luis Nicolán Pares, Marc Schiltz, and Jod E. Tishken.

JOEL E. TISHKEN is Assistant Professor of African and World History at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington.

TÓYÍN FÁLÓLÁ is University Distinguished Teaching Professor, University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of various books and co-editor of *The Yorùbá Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (Indiana University Press, 2005).

AKINTUNDÉ AKÍNYEMÍ is Associate Professor of Yorùbá Language and Literature in the Department of African and Asian Languages and Literatures at the University of Florida in Gainesville. He is author of *Yorùbá Royal Poetry: A Socio-Historical Exposition and Annotated Translation*.

African Expressive Cultures

Patrick McNaughton, editor

INDIANA
University Press

Bloomington 3 | Indianapolis

www.iupress.indiana.edu

1-800-842-6796

Casa de Estudios Avanzados of Department of Fine Arts,
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

ISBN 978-0-253-22094-3



9 780253 220943