

Two Sides to a Drum: Duality in Trinidad Orisha Music and Culture

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2013

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**This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
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Abstract

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Adviser: Professor Peter Manuel

This dissertation presents an ethnographic and historical study of music and culture in the Yoruba-derived Trinidad Orisha religion in Trinidad and New York City. Its objectives are: (1) to provide description and documentation of Trinidad Orisha music, an understudied music genre in the African diaspora; (2) to shed light on the historical, cultural, and demographic factors contributing to the development of Trinidad Orisha music by its practitioners; and (3) to provide substance for meaningful comparisons between Trinidad Orisha music and other Yoruba-derived musics.

Based on four years of fieldwork (2008-2012) in Trinidad and in Brooklyn, NY, the study explores Trinidad Orisha as a neo-African musical and religious practice at a crossroads of often oppositional transnational and postcolonial forces. The history of the religion includes criminalization, ridicule, and recent valorization as part of a middle class revival, and is emblematic of larger social and political transformations that have occurred since Trinidad's independence and the development of New York as an essential locale within the Trinidadian diaspora.

The analysis is based on data gathered from field recordings of Trinidad Orisha ceremonies; formal interviews and informal conversations with Trinidad Orisha musicians, priests and others; and the author's own observations made while drumming during Trinidad Orisha rituals, including subjective insights into his experiences of the music, as both performer and listener. Musical performance is the main context for the practice of the Trinidad Orisha religion, and so the dissertation privileges music, and the experiences of musicians, as a central means of understanding the religion's history and present.

The thesis of the dissertation invokes the physicality of a Trinidad Orisha drum – double-sided and thus approachable from more than one angle – as a metaphor for a basic duality in a complex cultural practice that is simultaneously Yoruba and Trinidadian. The conception of duality in Trinidad Orisha music and culture also refers to the push and pull between preservation and innovation; marginalization and revivalism; diaspora and homeland. The dialogue between these various forces is at the heart of understanding Trinidad Orisha music and its contextualization among musics of the African diaspora.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to my advisor, Professor Peter Manuel, for guidance in determining Trinidad Orisha music as my dissertation topic – including encouraging me to take my first trip to Trinidad back in 2008 – and for sustained support throughout the dissertation process. Thanks also to Professor Stephen Blum, for many helpful suggestions, especially in the more analytical sections of my drafts; to Professor Jane Sugarman, for a careful and thorough reading of the manuscript and for pointing out important theoretical considerations; and to Professor Maarit Forde, for excellent and thoughtful comments on the current work as well as its future developments.

Partial funding for this dissertation was provided from several sources at the CUNY Graduate Center, including the Baisley Powell Elebash Fund, the Franziska Dorner Fund for Musical Research, and Graduate Student Research Travel Grants.

Thanks to my Trinidadian friends, for your teachings, guidance, understanding, friendship, and openness. Without you, this dissertation would not be possible. I owe a special degree of thanks to Earl Noel, my drum teacher and friend. Others include Junior, Small Junior, Redman, Shem, Eddie, Shaka, Brooks, Amoy, Dedan, Walter, Gordon, Andy, Karl, Father and Mother Aston, Selwin Wilkinson, Mother Daphne, Mr. W.C. Burton, Crow, Michelle and Lashelle, Sono, Lester, Sugar Aloes, Mr. Johnson, Singing Sandra, Skatey, Rat, Mother Rhonda, Fishman, Andrea, Roshawn, Big Junior, Burton Sankerelli, Iman, and Erin Fulami.

Thanks to Marilyn Graf at the Indiana University Archives of Traditional Music for being very helpful in sending me copies of the Melville and Frances Herskovits 1939 Trinidad field recordings. The quality of these recordings is remarkable, and their relevance to the current study

cannot be overstated. Thanks to Indiana University for keeping them well-preserved, and, well, thanks to the Herskovitses for making the recordings to begin with.

Thanks to Angelina Tallaj and Ozan Aksoy for reading many early drafts, not to mention moral support and friendship along this journey towards the dissertation. Thanks also to my partners-in-travel to Trinidad – my brother-in-law, Eric Monsonis, who went with me in 2008, and my grandfather, Bob Lamarre, who went with me in 2010. You helped to make a foreign country not feel so lonely. Thanks to Cathy and Tip for giving me a Brooklyn home way back when I began my graduate studies. Thanks to Amy Green and the Interdisciplinary Studies Program at John Jay College for providing the adjunct office where I sat and finished this dissertation. (Thanks also for creating an intellectually stimulating undergraduate program in which I love to teach.)

Thanks to Leo, the best son a dad could ask for: you were born the same year that I started graduate school, so you have been a very present reminder of how long this degree has taken! If you ever read this, you'll see exactly what I was up to for the first seven years of your life. Thanks for being such a cool kid, and for always making me take time out to play.

Thanks to all of my terrific family – blood relations and in-laws – for continuous support, love, and friendship, without which life might be rather gloomy.

Last but not least, thanks most of all to my wife, Sara: for reading drafts; for taking care of Leo while I was in Trinidad or in my office writing; for being amazingly relaxed about me coming home at 6am after drumming at Orisha feasts; and, in general, for keeping this family functioning, especially the last couple of years. I love you.

Table of Contents

<i>Index of Images, Musical Examples, and Charts</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Glossary</i>	<i>xiv</i>
<u>Chapter One</u>	
Introduction	1
Driving with Earl	3
Brief Introduction to Trinidad Orisha Religion and Music	6
Shango Baptist vs. Trinidad Orisha (Baptist)	9
Literature Review	10
Background of the Study: Contexts, Race, and Gender	14
Dance, Movement, and the Roles of Non-musicians in Trinidad Orisha Ritual	25
Some Notes on Notation	27
Chapter Summaries	29
Conclusion	33
<u>Chapter Two</u>	
History and Background of Trinidad Orisha Music	34
Trinidad Slavery Demographics	35
The French Connection	40
Black Americans and the Baptist Religion in Trinidad	43
After 1838: Immigration in the Post-Emancipation Period	48
The Liberated Africans and the Trinidad Yoruba	51
Understanding the Yoruba Assimilation into Afro-Trinidadian Society	59
After 1870: Yorubas, <i>Jamettes</i> , and Criminalizing African Culture in Trinidad	60
Orisha in the Early Twentieth Century	70
Papa Neezer	74
Folklorizing Shango: Beryl McBurnie and the Little Carib Theater	80
The Repeal of the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance	83
Conclusion	85
<u>Chapter Three</u>	
The Songs of TOM	87
The Trinidad Orisha Song Repertoire	87
The Litany	94
The Rotation	103
Examples of Ogun, Osain, and Shango Rotations	109
Dismissal Songs	116
Song Form in TOM	118
Melodic and Harmonic features of TOM	121
Summary	129

<u>Chapter Four</u>	
Drums and Drumming in TOM	131
From <i>Bembe</i> to Orisha	131
Trinidad Orisha Drum Names and Performance Practices	135
Trinidad Orisha Drum construction	138
Respecting and Mounting the Drums: Orisha Drums as Sacred Instruments	140
Flat Sticks and Curved Sticks	143
The Rhythmic Bed: Rhythms for the <i>Umele</i> and <i>Bo</i> Drums	150
The (Poly)Rhythmic Foreground: Rhythms for the Center Drum	154
Responsibilities of the Center Drummer	167
Summary	172
<u>Chapter Five</u>	
From Polyrhythmic to Syncopated Swing	174
Herskovits 1939	176
Polyrhythms in the 1939 recordings	184
Trinidad Hemiola and Trinidad Clave	191
Understanding the Increased Prominence of Certain Rhythms in TOM	199
Impact on the Songs Today	205
Assessing the Changes: Creolization vs. Centralization	210
<u>Chapter Six</u>	
Trinidad Orisha Music in an Era of Revival	212
No Longer a “Voodoo Something”	212
Trinidad Orisha, Creole Nationalism, and Black Power	215
Transforming Shango in the 1980s and 1990s	219
Lester “Ogunbowale” Osouna	224
The Orisha Revival and Orisha Song Recordings	234
Ella Andall	237
Sugar Aloes	244
Aloes vs. Andall	250
De-Christianization, Language, and TOM	253
Understanding the Orisha Revival in the Context of Ritual TOM	258
<u>Chapter Seven</u>	
Transnational Orisha: Music and the Trinidad Orisha Community in Brooklyn	264
Immigration Patterns and Overview of the Community	266
TOM in NYC	276
Field Journal: A Flag Planting and a One Night Feast	286
Negotiating the Diaspora: Locking the Doors and Accessing the Earth	288
Michael Manswell and Brooklyn Orisha in the Public Sphere	299
“Reality” Television Goes to Church: Trinidad Orisha and Mass Media in NY	303
Brooklyn Orisha in a Hybrid Environment	308

<u>Chapter Eight</u>	
TOM in the Orisha Atlantic	313
Cognate Songs	314
Cognate Practices	318
Cognate Aesthetics: TOM and Simultaneous Multidimensionality	331
Creolization, Neotraditionalism, and Cultural Change	336
Conclusion	345
<u>Appendix</u>	
Song performance lists	348
<u>References</u>	
Bibliography	378
Discography	389

Index of Images, Musical Examples, and Charts

Chapter One

1.1 Orisha drummers in Brooklyn	7
1.2 The author drumming	20

Chapter Two

2.1 Paraphrasing of selected articles from “Cedula of Population”	36
2.2 Post-emancipation immigration to Trinidad, 1839-1917	49

Chapter Three

3.1 Four Orisha Litanies: East Flatbush, Canarsie, Mausica, and Febeau Village	96
3.2 “Ye Irawa, Irawa O”	99
3.3 The call to the <i>orishas</i> , “Baba O”	100
3.4 Four Orisha Litanies: Order of <i>orishas</i> named during the “Baba O”	102
3.5 Order of spirits sung for by two Orisha congregations, Brooklyn and Trinidad	106
3.6 Complete Orisha Song Rotation by Leader Gordon and Congregation, 2011	107
3.7 Outline of the annual four day Orisha feast	108
3.8 Three Ogun Rotations: East Flatbush, Bushwick, and Laventille	110
3.9 The Opening Ogun Rotation	112
3.10 Three Osain Rotations: East Flatbush, Bushwick, and Mausica	114
3.11 Three Shango Rotations: East Flatbush, Bushwick, and Mausica	115
3.12 Example of emphasized flat 3 rd scalar degree: “Ogun Kayamba”	122
3.13 Example of emphasized major 3 rd scalar degree: “Yemanja De Wa Babawa”	122
3.14 Modulation from minor to relative major: “Emi Oya” and “Oya, Oya”	123
3.15 “Oshun Ma Te Kumare”	125
3.16 “Kiriko Awo A Nangwe Na Jare”	126
3.17 “Shakpana naiye”	127
3.18 Songs with the same melody: “Papa Elegba” and “Aylande Nite Wa”	128
3.19 “When I Dead, Bury Me Clothes”	128

Chapter Four

4.1 Nigerian <i>bembe</i> drummers	132
4.2 Variations in Trinidad Orisha drum names	136
4.3 Curved sticks	144
4.4 Margaret Buckley and her son, Joe Alexander, in Toco, Trinidad, 1939	147
4.5 Laventille drummer in 1948	148
4.6 <i>Bo</i> ostinato in straight Orisha (SO) rhythm	151
4.7 <i>Umele</i> ostinato in straight Orisha (SO) rhythm	152
4.8 <i>Umele</i> and <i>bo/kongo</i> ostinatos in rada/kankan (RK) rhythm	153
4.9 Alternate <i>bo</i> beat, RK rhythm	153
4.10 Alternate <i>umele</i> beat, RK rhythm	154
4.11 Examples of center drum (poly)rhythmic figures	155
4.12 Transcription of basic Ogun <i>hand</i> for “Ogun Bewele”	156
4.13 Transcription of basic Shango <i>hand</i> played for “Shango o, Babawa”	159
4.14 Transcription of basic Osain <i>hand</i> played for “Osain Ade”	160

4.15 Transcription of basic Oshun <i>hand</i> played for “Oshun Talade”	162
4.16 “Ogun Masa Laye,” polyrhythmic drumming	163
4.17 “Vigoyana Samidona,” TOM 2013, SO Rhythm with <i>Trinidad Clave</i>	165
4.18 “Ada Ogun,” TOM 2013, in RK rhythm	166
4.19 Shango, manifesting on a young man, dances in front of the Orisha drums	172

Chapter Five

5.1 Songs in Trinidad Yoruba (TY) language on 1939 Herskovits recordings	181
5.2 Rhythm A, “Iwala Mefa,” Herskovits 1939	188
5.3 Rhythm B, “Kokode Maboriko” Herskovits 1939	189
5.4 Rhythm B, 12/8, “Newe Se Sa,” Herskovits 1939	190
5.5 “Trinidad clave,” Herskovits 1939	191
5.6 “Obatala Okere,” TOM 2013	192
5.7 “Trinidad Hemiola”	193
5.8 “Korikoto Milodo,” Herskovits 1939, with hemiola hoe pattern	194
5.9 “Erilay-rilay,” Herskovits 1939, <i>chantwell</i> and hoe	195
5.10 “Iwala Mefa,” Herskovits 1939, <i>chantwell</i> and hoe	195
5.11 Ogun Medley, Herskovits 1939	198
5.12 “Ajaja Erilay” Herskovits 1939	201
5.13 “Ogun Onire,” Herskovits 1939	206
5.14 “Ogun Onire,” TOM 2013	206
5.15 “Shakpana Naiye,” TOM 2013	207
5.16 “Baba O,” TOM 2013	207
5.17 “Shango O, Babawa,” TOM 2013	208
5.18 “Ogun Lalala Urele,” TOM 2013	209
5.19 “Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa,” TOM 2013	209

Chapter Six

6.1 Timeline of events in the changing social status of Orisha-Baptists in Trinidad	222
6.2 Lester Osouna in Santa Cruz, Trinidad	226
6.3 Inside the <i>orule</i> at Lester Osouna’s Orisha shrine in Febeau Village, Trinidad	228
6.4 Sugar Aloes performing “Who Am I?”	246

Chapter Seven

7.1 Selected Population Profiles, Ethnic Groups in New York	267
7.2 Earl Noel outside of Yoruba-Orisha Baptist Church, Nostrand Avenue, Brooklyn	273
7.3 Earl Noel and Michael Ettienne	283
7.4 Ogun’s sword	293
7.5 Haitian Vodou ceremony in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, August 2010	296
7.6 Trinidad Orisha prayers in Prospect Park, June 2011	297
7.7 Bethenny Ever After	304

Chapter Eight

8.1 “Eshu Baragbo,” Trinidad Orisha song to Eshu	315
8.2 “Ibaragó Moyuba,” Cuban Lucumí song to Echú	315
8.3 “Korikoto Milodo,” Herskovits 1939 in Trinidad	316

8.4 “Korikoto Oggue,” song from Cuban <i>oru cantado</i>	316
8.5 Ogun <i>hand</i> beginning on initial downbeat	333
8.6 Ogun <i>hand</i> beginning on third downbeat	334

Glossary

bembe: The lead drum of the Orisha ensemble; also called center drum, or big drum. Played with combination of one curved stick and bare hand.

bo: The bass drum in the Orisha trio. Also called *kongo*. Played with combination of one curved stick and bare hand.

chantwell: Lead singer in Orisha song performance.

chappelle: A small house or room containing the sacred objects used in the Orisha feast.

crook sticks: Common name for curved Orisha drumsticks.

doption: Percussive grunt-singing performed by Spiritual Baptists. The effect is created by drawing air in sharp bursts in and out of the mouth, and has been described as hyperventilating. *Doption* presumably began as a substitute for drumming, perhaps during the period of the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance (1917-1951).

hand: Common drummer's parlance for a particular rhythmic phrase.

Litany: The plaintive, free meter songs performed at the beginning of an Orisha feast.

mongwa: Orisha priest. Pronounced various ways, including "mongba," "mambwa," "amambwa," and "amongwa."

orisha: A spirit, power, or saint, such as Ogun, Oya, or Shango. I spell *orisha* in lowercase to distinguish between the spirits and the religion, Orisha.

palais: The main location of Orisha ritual events.

straight Orisha (SO): The most common foundational rhythm in TOM.

rada/kankan (RK): The secondary foundational rhythm in TOM, used in less than 20% of songs, and very often used to "send spirits away" – to end spirit possessions.

Rotation: Made up of the songs for *orishas* which are sung in rhythm, with drum accompaniment, and which bring on spirit possession. "Rotation" refers to the cycling of songs, as certain songs are sung for each *orisha* in certain order, and successive *orishas* are sung for in order as well.

Trinidad Orisha music (TOM): The drum-and-vocal music accompanying the Yoruba-derived Orisha religion (also known as Shango) of Trinidad.

umele: The high pitched accompanying drum in the Orisha trio. Played with two curved sticks.

Chapter One

Two Sides to a Drum: Duality in Trinidad Orisha Music and Culture

In this dissertation, I present an ethnomusicological study of Trinidad Orisha music (TOM), the drum-and-vocal music accompanying the Yoruba-derived Orisha religion (also known as Shango) of Trinidad. Drawing on some four years of ethnographic research in Trinidad and New York City, I describe the repertoire, instruments, and practices of TOM, and trace its historical development from the nineteenth century to the present day. Above all, I seek to give voice to the West Indian musicians who served as my teachers, band mates, and friends during the course of my research. This is their story, their music.

The argument of this dissertation grew out of the following concerns. From a certain ethnomusicological perspective, TOM is part of a broad category of musics that might be called neo-Yoruba, in that they derive from Yoruba¹ culture but have developed in unique ways. In the Americas, in addition to TOM, the other major neo-Yoruba musical practices can be found in Cuba (e.g. in the music for Santería) and Brazil (e.g. in the music for Candomblé). Neo-Yoruba musics stand out among Afro-American musics for their distinctiveness and connectedness, and studying them can reveal much about the history of African people in the Americas.

Accordingly, one aim of this study is to provide a foundation for necessary cross-cultural research on musics in the Yoruba diaspora, and by giving attention to repertoires, instruments, and practices across the diaspora, I hope to suggest areas for future research.

From another perspective, however, a neo-Yoruba genre like TOM can only be understood as rooted within its local context, marked by particular historical patterns,

¹ The word “Yoruba,” and other Yoruba words, are written without accent marks throughout the dissertation.

geographies, and systems of political economy. In that sense, a lens framed by the term “neo-Yoruba” might sometimes be much less useful than a lens of “West Indian” or “Trinidadian.” Therefore, in my exploration of TOM, I intend to account for more than one perspective, invoking the double-headed Trinidad Orisha drum as a metaphor for the duality inherent in Trinidad Orisha music and culture.

I use the concept of duality to refer to more than one dimension of TOM. On a basic level, duality refers to contexts and influences, namely West African and West Indian. I argue that there are two main streams of influence in TOM, and though the discussion of influences might be problematic in certain ways (e.g. a preoccupation with influences runs certain risks involving the reification of “roots” and the stultification of lively cultural practices), it is nonetheless theoretically useful, I argue, to conceptualize TOM structure and substance as imbued with a basic duality of (neo-)Yoruba and Trinidadian, neither of which need be seen as static. Indeed, the reason they are not static is because there are living people involved in making TOM, and it is their agency which is encompassed in my second meaning of duality, referring to process. Therefore, and to broaden the inquiry beyond mere influence, I employ duality to refer to the dialogic relationship between individuals and the social systems in which they operate (cf. Giddens 1986), in other words the “dialectical interactions through which humans shape their history” (Sewell 1992, 27). This sense of duality, which I invoke to point to the processual nature of culture, is at the heart of the evidence presented in this dissertation. The structure of TOM might be rooted in Yoruba and Trinidadian contexts, but it is the actions and decisions of individuals – many of them described in the pages to follow – that reconfigure those contexts in unique ways over time. As this dissertation shows, the actors who shape (and have shaped) TOM navigate social forces including postcolonialism, middle class revivalism, and transnationalism,

and that process leads to the subtle (and often not so subtle) transformations in the substance of the cultural and musical practices of TOM.

In this introductory chapter, I give a brief overview of Trinidad Orisha religion and music, followed by a review of the major literature relevant to the study. After the literature review, I describe my methodology, including the contexts and locations in which my research took place, and the significance of my status as an outsider to the Trinidad Orisha community in terms of my race (white) and gender (male). Next, I describe my catalog of Orisha songs, give an overview of the chapters in the dissertation, and describe issues related to my music notation strategy and terminology. But first, I give a brief snapshot of a moment from my fieldwork, a car ride conversation with my Trinidadian drum teacher in Brooklyn, in order to suggest some of the complexity of TOM which my research revealed to me, and to illustrate my thesis that, when it comes to understanding TOM from an ethnomusicological perspective, there are two sides to a drum.

Driving with Earl

I was driving in my car one afternoon in 2011 with my drum teacher and friend, Earl Noel. Earl is a master of Trinidadian Orisha drumming. As it happens, much of my fieldwork was spent driving around New York with Earl, either to a drumming gig, or to a drum lesson out in Far Rockaway, or to a favorite roti shop in Crown Heights. While driving, we always listened to music, generally of some Trinidadian variety. Sometimes, we listened to the Brooklyn pirate FM station 103.9, which plays nearly nonstop soca. Other times, we listened to CDs of Trinidad Orisha music, either field recordings that I had made in Brooklyn, or the studio versions of TOM by Ella Andall, whose Trinidadian produced recordings feature, on drums, Earl's older brother,

Donald, and his good friend, Redman. I have never known Earl to get sick of listening to Trinidadian music.

On this day, I decided to play a CD of Afro-Cuban Santería drumming (*batá*), curious to see what Earl thought of it.² Trinidad Orisha and Cuban Santería have both been linked to mid-nineteenth-century immigrants (both free and slave) to the New World. These immigrants were Yoruba-speakers, a conglomeration of West African ethnic groups in the dominion of the Oyo Empire and known for religious practices venerating a group of spirits called *orishas*. Such common cultural origins should presumably make the drumming music for *orishas* in Cuba and Trinidad similar, and indeed, the two traditions each rely on three drummers playing a trio of double-headed drums, and the two traditions share several cognate songs. As it turned out, however, Earl was rather unimpressed by the Santería drumming, commenting to me that it sounded very “simple,” a surprising comment given that, in my experience listening and attempting to play it, *batá* drumming is anything but simple. After listening for a short period, Earl asked me to turn off the CD, and to put on some Trinidadian music. I turned on 103.9 FM, and we continued on our way.

The exchange left me wondering: how could these two musical styles, which would appear to have much in common historically, seem so different to a well-qualified insider? The fact is, Orisha drumming in Trinidad and Cuban *batá* drumming are very unlike stylistically and aesthetically. Earl’s comment about simplicity was probably not so much a technical critique than was it stemming from unfamiliarity. *Batá* sounds exceptionally foreign compared with Trinidad Orisha drumming, from an insider’s perspective. *Batá* is based on tightly interlocking

² The CD had been given to me by my *batá* teacher, Mick Santurio, to practice with. *Antología Yoruba. Vol. 1, Oru Seco. Vol. 2, Oru Cantado* (2000). Julio Davalos and Adrian Coburg. Bern, Switzerland: A. Coburg.

structural polyrhythms built from the six discretely pitched heads of the trio of hourglass-shaped drums; the drums are struck by bare hands; the music is played in a variety of tempos; and the lead drum plays polyrhythmic melodic rhythms in the bass register of the ensemble. Trinidad Orisha drummers play only one head at a time on their cylindrical drums; they beat them with curved sticks; the music is played at one of two unchanging breakneck tempos; and while the lead drum plays polyrhythmic patterns, it occupies the middle register, not the bass. The three Trinidad Orisha drums do not play interlocking structural polyrhythms. Rather, the two accompanying drums encircle the lead drum with a driving, readily discernible beat, for example with the high-pitched five-stroke roll of the double-sticked *umele*, and the bass register heartbeat of the *bo*, punctuating each downbeat with a resounding thump. All of this makes for very different Cuban and Trinidadian drumming styles, and in fact, though I find Cuban *batá* musically interesting and impressive in a cerebral way, when it comes down to it I'm quite in agreement with Earl: I'd much rather listen to Trinidad Orisha drumming, which makes my body move.

The comparison of these drum genres is a reminder that, despite the persistent cliché, music is not a universal language. There are of course many similarities among musics of the Yoruba diaspora, yet each group within this diaspora – in the New World and in West Africa – faced unique circumstances and processes of development. Focusing only on the likenesses, we would miss half the story – including the fact that Earl Noel justifiably finds little in common between his drumming and what goes on in Cuba. While TOM owes much to its cultural ancestors, its history and present are also (and equally) imbued with the specificities of Trinidadian culture and history. Just as Trinidadian Orisha drums have two sides, which can be alternately played depending on the needs of the drummer, so too does Orisha music and culture

have a double-sided history, simultaneously West Indian and part of the African diaspora. This dissertation aims to account for both sides, to give an accurate picture of a complex music culture which cannot be described from any one angle, perspective, or history.

Brief Introduction to Trinidad Orisha Religion and Music

The coastal West African Yoruba-derived Trinidad Orisha religion originates a century and a half ago with about 10,000 Yoruba-speaking indentured immigrants in Trinidad. Until the last decades of the twentieth century, it was commonly known as Shango in Trinidad, and since at least the 1970s, Trinidadians have been practicing Orisha in New York. The religious practice involves a music-centered worship service, in which collective singing and drumming accompany spirit possession and animal sacrifice (typically goats, sheep, and fowl). TOM consists of leader-chorus call-and-response singing of Orisha songs to the accompaniment of drum trio and (usually) *shac-shac* (a calabash filled with seeds). The drummers play with curved sticks, on drums called *bo*, *center drum*, and *umele*, while seated, holding the drums between their legs. These double-headed drums, made from hollowed out logs and covered with two goat-skin heads, derive from Yoruba *bembe* drums.



1.1 Orisha drummers in Brooklyn (l-r): *shac-shac, bo, center drum, umele*

Trinidad Orisha is a minority faith in the small dual island nation of Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago's total population is 1.3 million, with 40% of East Indian descent, slightly less than that of African descent, and the rest comprising small numbers of European, Chinese, Syrian, and mixed groups. The major religions include Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, and Islam. In the 1990s, anthropologist James Houk estimated Trinidad Orisha practitioners, who are mainly Afro-Trinidadian, as roughly one percent of the total population, about half of whom were also members of the West Indian Afro-Protestant Spiritual Baptist faith (Houk 1993 and 1995). Practitioners combine the ritual practices of the Spiritual

Baptist and Trinidad Orisha religions, creating a wide range of eclectic spiritual practices, and a visitor to a Trinidad Orisha house of worship is also likely to find iconography related to Hindu, Buddhist, and Kabbalistic cosmologies.³ Describing this eclecticism, Houk (1995) termed Orisha an “Afro-American religious complex” that combines African (Yoruba), Catholic, Protestant (Spiritual Baptist), Hindu, and Kabbalah spirituality.

Despite its small size, the Orisha religion has a strong presence in Afro-Trinidadian culture and in Trinidadian society generally. One gauge of that influence is the increasing number of prominent middle- and upper-class Trinidadians who publicly identify with the religion (Henry 2003). Also telling is the number of Trinidadian popular songs, such as calypso and soca, that use the religion as thematic material. For instance, Denise Belfon’s popular 2011 soca tune “Dingolay” included the line, “I wanna shake it like a Shango.”

I witnessed the mainstream nature of Trinidad Orisha in the twenty-first century during the 2012 “Interfaith and Thanksgiving Service” in Queens, NY, sponsored by Trinidad and Tobago’s Consulate General in New York in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Trinidad and Tobago’s independence. The evening featured five segments: Muslim, Hindu, Orisha, Christian (Catholic and Spiritual Baptist), and “Cultural Fusion.” The segments included some speech-making, but were primarily devoted to musical performance, notably the “Fusion” section, which was a multicultural jam session bringing together steelpan, tassa, tabla, and Afro-Trinidadian hand drums. By displaying Trinidad Orisha cultural performances alongside Hinduism, Islam, and mainstream Christianity, the Consulate presented Orisha as a pillar of the multicultural Trinidadian nation, underscoring the idea that Trinidad Orisha is an important part

³ The Trinidad Kabbalah is not related to Jewish mysticism. Rather, it is a kind of West Indian séance drawing on European grimoires such as the Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses (see Davies 2009).

of the Trinidadian spiritual imaginary. This performance is a reminder that an understanding of Trinidad Orisha should be an important aspect of studies of the Anglophone Caribbean and its diaspora. This dissertation serves to further understanding in that regard.

Shango Baptist vs. Trinidad Orisha (Baptist)

Throughout this dissertation, I refer to the religion as Trinidad Orisha, which is my own particular configuration (it is shorter than Trinidadian Orisha, and just calling it Orisha might lead to confusion with other *orisha*-based spiritual practices in the African diaspora).

Practitioners are more likely to just say Orisha, but Orisha is a term only adopted widely since the 1980s. As the former Orisha drummer Mr. Burton (b. 1929) told me, in earlier decades people would call the religion

...Shango, most time they say Shango. Orisha? That is new to the older people. They more talk about Shango. Or “I’m going to a feast.” Orisha is, a lot of them die and they didn’t know about that. If you asked them about Orisha, they wouldn’t know. (*pers. comm.*)

When I first went to Trinidad, I stayed at a guesthouse in Woodbrook, Port of Spain. I mentioned my interest in Orisha to the proprietor, who didn’t seem to understand, until I explained a bit more, and he said, “Oh, you mean the Shango Baptists.”

Dislike of the term Shango Baptist was nearly unanimous among my Orisha and Spiritual Baptist informants, and I never heard somebody refer to themselves as a Shango Baptist. When I asked Mr. Burton about it, he told me, “No, it hadn’t Shango Baptists. I don’t think it have anything as a Shango Baptist. If you is a Spiritual Baptist, you is Spiritual Baptist” (*pers. comm.*). Similarly, the Spiritual Baptist Pastor Hills told me, “That word go around all the time, but they don’t have Shango Baptists. Shango is Shango, Baptist is Baptist” (*pers. comm.*). The Orisha drummer Selwin “Crow” Harvey told me, “When they have the Shango Baptist ... the

Spiritual Baptist there, they don't mention the Orisha, so they are never the same. Never, they can't come here with that" (*pers. comm.*). And the Spiritual Baptist Mother Daphne told me, "Well, they say Shango Baptist, but there is nothing that is called Shango Baptist. Shango is a power that manifests on man. And most of the time when people have feasts, he is the last power to come. So it's either you are Orisha or Spiritual Baptist" (*pers. comm.*).

Still, not everyone was hostile to the term. Rev. Andy, the Brooklyn Orisha and Spiritual Baptist leader, told me that Shango Baptist is a term for "groups that have both administration." Along those lines – and in a nod to the disuse of the name Shango – in this dissertation I occasionally refer to groups using the descriptor "Orisha Baptist." I don't claim to have invented that phrase; for one thing, it is in the name of a Trinidadian church on Nostrand Avenue in Brooklyn: Yoruba-Orisha Baptist Church. In general, I have found terminology to be somewhat fluid in my research, and in this dissertation I have tried to follow the conventions used by my informants as much as possible.

Literature Review

The first anthropological study of Afro-Trinidadian culture was undertaken by Americans Melville and Frances Herskovits, conducted mainly in 1939, and culminating in *Trinidad Village* (1947). Melville Herskovits, interested in cross-cultural comparisons of New World Africanisms, came to Trinidad in large part to study Shango and the Shouters (now more commonly known as Spiritual Baptists). Herskovits believed that the greatest number of Africanisms would be found far from the most urbanized areas, and so he and his wife set out for Toco, in the far northeast corner of the island, where they conducted the bulk of their research. Unfortunately, there was no Shango in the area, and while *Trinidad Village* offers a rich portrait of village life in early-

twentieth-century rural Trinidad, it was not until the very end of their trip that they encountered Shango, as they travelled back to Port of Spain before leaving the country. While in Port of Spain, the Herskovitses made extensive recordings of Shango song and drumming, recordings which show significant musical continuity as well as change compared with current TOM, and have thus proven invaluable in the research for this dissertation. The 1939 Herskovits recordings are housed at the Indiana University Archives of Traditional music, from which Rounder Records has released two commercial CDs, one of Spiritual Baptist music, the other covering a variety of genres (see discography).

Herskovits's student at Northwestern University, ethnomusicologist Richard Waterman, used the 1939 Herskovits field recordings as the basis of his 1943 doctoral dissertation on "African Patterns in Trinidad Negro Music." Waterman usefully identified many African retentions in the music (such as structural polyrhythm), though he failed to identify several key features of Shango drumming, making the value of his observations somewhat limited. For instance, he did not realize that the Port of Spain Shango drummers used two foundational rhythms for all of the songs they played, and he wound up analyzing them in several different meters, making them seem practically unrelated to each other. He also failed to note the prominent hemiola rhythm in the recordings.

Another of student of Herskovits, George Simpson, began anthropological work in Trinidad in the late 1950s, spending six months meticulously documenting activities at over twenty Shango and Spiritual Baptist worship centers, and producing a concise monograph (1965) and field recordings (1961) detailing important aspects of Afro-Trinidadian religion and music in the mid-twentieth century. Also in the 1950s, American anthropologist Frances Henry (née Mischel) went to Trinidad (in 1956) to study Shango for her graduate field research, and was

taken under the wing of the most prominent Orisha priest at the time, Ebenezer “Papa Neezer” Elliot. Henry’s publications include an important article on the African “powers” in Trinidad (Mischel 1957), a book on the socio-political legitimization of Orisha and Spiritual Baptism in the 1990s (Henry 2003), and a biographical memoir of her time with Papa Neezer (Henry 2008). Recent anthropological monographs on the Trinidad Orisha religion have built on the prior ethnographic work of Herskovits, Simpson, and Henry, focusing on syncretism (Houk 1995), spirit possession (Lum 2000), and comparisons of trance practices between Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians (McNeal 2011).

Aside from the aforementioned 1939 Herskovits recordings, another collection of Spiritual Baptist songs, recorded by the former Baptist leader Stephen Glazier in 1980, is available on Folkways Records. Glazier also wrote a monograph on the faith (1983). Other scholarly works on the Spiritual Baptists include a Master’s Thesis by Williams (1985) cataloging song types in Spiritual Baptist worship (hymns, Sankeys, trumpets, and intoned prayers), and Maarit Laitinen’s ethnographic study of creolization in the Spiritual Baptist faith on Tobago (2002). A comprehensive study of Spiritual Baptist music should be a focus of future ethnomusicological research.

Notable Trinbagonian researchers of Afro-Trinidadian culture in the twentieth century include Andrew Carr (1989 [1955]), who published a short pamphlet on the Rada community in Trinidad, a group originating in the West African kingdom of Dahomey (currently the country of Benin), their name referring to the Dahomean city Allada. Their religious practice is centered on the worship of a pantheon of spirits known as *vodunu*, and has much in common with other Dahomey-derived religious practices such as Haitian Vodou, or the practices of the Gêge of Bahia, Brazil. In 1953, Carr recorded 33 tracks of Trinidad Rada songs with iron

accompaniment, of poor sound quality and which are now housed at the Indiana University Archives of Traditional Music. Alan Merriam (1956) analyzed these recordings, cataloging aspects such as meter, tonal range, and tempo changes to generate comparisons with recordings of Dahomey, Gêge, Ketu, and Cheyenne drumming. A complete ethnomusicological study on Rada music has yet to be done. J.D. Elder, who worked with Alan Lomax as he made recordings in the West Indies in 1962,⁴ published the only academic articles on the stickfighting music known as *kalinda* (1964; 1966). Another significant work is Elder's article on an Orisha community, which he called a Yoruba ancestor cult, in the town of Gasparillo (1970).⁵ The work of Trinidadian historian David Trotman offers insights into the place of Yorubas in Colonial Trinidad (1986; 2007) as well as comparing the situations of Yorubas in Trinidad and the former British Guiana (1976). Recently, University of the West Indies professors Rawle Gibbons and Funso Aiyejina have written influential short papers on Trinidad Orisha, including the potential influence of Shango drumming on steelpan (Gibbons 1987) and Yoruba language in TOM (Aiyejina *et al.* 2009).

Among the most important works on the history of Yoruba people in Trinidad is that of Trinidadian Maureen Warner-Lewis (Warner 1971; Warner-Lewis 1991, 1994, & 1996), who interviewed second- and third-generation descendants of Africans in Trinidad between 1966 and 1972, focusing on declining competence in the obsolescent "Trinidad Yoruba," a language she referred to as a dialect of Yoruba. In doing this linguistic work, Warner-Lewis recorded data on a variety of Afro-Trinidadian cultural practices, including music, food, family life, and other

⁴ The 1962 Caribbean field recordings of Alan Lomax are available at: <http://research.culturalequity.org/get-audio-ix.do?ix=session&id=CA62&idType=abbrev&sortBy=abc>.

⁵ Elder's wide-ranging folkloric writings will be showcased in an archive soon to open on Tobago.

African languages in Trinidad. Warner-Lewis did not work directly with Orisha leaders in Trinidad, instead seeking out individuals whose language retention was based on family inheritance rather than ritual song. Her *Yoruba Songs of Trinidad* (1994) includes some Trinidad Orisha songs, as well as a wide range of secular Yoruba songs, revealing some of the lost diversity and complexity of Yoruba music in Trinidad.

Background of the Study: Contexts, Race, and Gender

My field research was mainly based in Brooklyn, supplemented by short trips to Trinidad between 2008 and 2013. Between the two locations, I attended over eighty music-centered events of various types – mainly Orisha, but also Spiritual Baptist, Carnival, and formal concert occasions. I first went to Trinidad in 2008, followed by two trips in 2010, and single trips in 2011, 2012, and 2013 for a total of more than eight weeks. My research methods included formal and informal interviews, archival research, and above all participant observation, which truly began for me in late 2009, when I moved to Brooklyn, met drummer Earl Noel, and began weekly drum lessons with him. Beginning in 2010, Earl brought me along to the many Orisha and Spiritual Baptist events in Brooklyn. Since I had a car and Earl did not, I essentially served as Earl's personal transportation to and from his drumming jobs, an advantageous situation for both of us – for me due to the access this gave me to the main drummer in the Brooklyn Orisha community (and his accompanying approval of my presence at events), and for Earl so that he didn't have to walk or take public transportation all over Brooklyn.

For that first year, my role at these events was sometimes as photographer, though I was never allowed to film the private Orisha feasts that take place indoors, in the middle of the night, with the doors locked – due to restrictions in New York on killing animals for consumption.

With Earl's permission I was, however, able to record the music, which I did with a small Sony digital voice recorder, unexceptional for its sound quality, but highly convenient in that it is small and is capable of recording for upwards of thirty hours with just a pair of AAA batteries. (This high volume capacity was very important, because Trinidadian spiritual events can go on for hours.) In addition to taking photographs and video (when possible), and recording the music, I also spent 2010 learning the songs, singing and clapping along with the congregation (a perfectly natural thing to do since all participants sing and clap in such contexts).

The following year, in 2011, my role in Brooklyn Orisha ceremonies became more active, as I played the small accompanying *umele* drum at Orisha ceremonies throughout that season, usually alongside Earl Noel on center drum and Michael "Obicey" Ettienne on *bo*. I continued to record the music, setting up my recorder and letting it run, but as an Orisha drummer I found myself at the heart of the music-centered Orisha ceremonies. Not only did I now have a front row seat for the spirit manifestations and animal sacrifices that usually happen right in front of the drummers, I also experienced the high degree of stamina needed to drum for hours. (I found the fast *umele* five-stroke drumroll, played with two thin sticks, to be particularly physically challenging; throughout the 2011 season I experienced a swollen tendon in my right forearm due to the constant pressure of the drumroll.)

Several Brooklyn Orisha drummers are also performers with Natural Expression Carnival percussion group, a twenty-plus member Trinidadian "rhythm section" combining iron idiophones, shakers, congas, snares, and bass drums. At their invitation, in addition to drumming at Orisha ceremonies, in that 2011 season I also became a bass drummer with Natural Expression. The music of Natural Expression mainly consists of percussion adaptations of calypso, soca, and other popular songs (such as the 1950s American rock and roll song,

“Tequila,” or Michael Jackson’s “Thriller”), though the repertoire also included an Indo-Trinidadian tassa-inspired piece (titled “Indian”), as well as a piece titled “Orisha,” based on the main rhythms for the *orisha* Shango. Throughout the summer of 2011, with Natural Expression I played various street parties and concerts around New York. Particular highlights for me were opening for Steel Pulse at the Prospect Park band-shell, playing at Lincoln Center’s Out of Doors series, and playing in J’Ouvert, the all-night street parade that leads into the West Indian American Day parade down Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn on Labor Day.

In important ways, my Brooklyn research contacts facilitated my research in Trinidad. For four consecutive years, I joined the Brooklyn-based (Spiritual Baptist) Immanuel Spiritual House of Prayer, along with drummer Earl Noel, at their thanksgiving ceremony in Fyzabad, Trinidad (in June). While in Trinidad with the church, Earl and I connected with his brother, Donald, and friend, Redman, Orisha drummers who brought us to Orisha ceremonies in various parts of the island. Separately from Earl, I attended more middle class Orisha festivals in Trinidad. I also attended a 2010 four-day International Conference on Orisha/Ifa tradition, which included several international dignitaries (e.g. the Nigerian Minister of Culture) and Wande Abimbola as a keynote speaker. I did not drum at Orisha feasts in Trinidad, though I did make several field recordings.

A main part of my research was cataloging the Orisha song repertoire. In all, my database includes over 160 different songs, which can be broken into two broad categories: Litany and Rotation (see chapter three).⁶ Songs in my database are linked to the following *orishas*: Ogun, Shango, Osain, Oya, Shakpana, Mama Leta, Raphael, La Divine, Palara, Gurum, Yemanja, Oshun, Erilay, Eshu, Ibaji, Alina, Vigoyana, and Obatala/Abatala. There are many songs for

⁶ The TOM repertoire is considerable, though it is smaller than the body of *Santería* songs in Cuba: Altmann’s book of *Santería* songs (1998) contains 262 examples.

certain *orishas* (Ogun, Shango, Osain) but just a few for others (Gurum, Alina, Vigoyana). Through analysis of this database, I hope to show differences between *orisha* veneration in Trinidad and elsewhere in the diaspora, for instance in the existence of certain spirits in particular locales which demonstrates local idiosyncrasies (e.g. Mama Leta may be an *orisha* “native” to Trinidad).

My study of TOM, in my various roles as drummer, photographer, recorder, or just observer, took me to a variety of ceremonial contexts in Trinidad and Brooklyn, which I categorize below:

Feast: The main Orisha event. It lasts from two to four days, starting on either Tuesday or Thursday and lasting until Saturday morning. The feast must be held in a large space, as the event draws a large crowd (often up to one hundred people). The ceremonies – characterized by spirit possession, animal sacrifice, and nearly constant drumming and singing – happen in the middle of the night, starting a little before midnight and ending between 4:00 and 6:00 am. Each morning, the activities end with a communal meal. On the last night, Friday, there are no animal sacrifices, and ceremonies continue until late on Saturday morning, often into midday.

Pilgrimage: A pilgrimage usually happens on the Sunday following a feast. An all-day event, sometimes the ceremonies are exclusively Spiritual Baptist, sometimes Orisha. The locations are typically outdoor public spaces like parks and beaches.

Flag Planting: Trinidad Orisha shrines and houses usually display long poles with colored fabric on the ends, with different colors representing different *orishas*. A red flag, for example, represents Ogun, while red and white represents Shango. Each year, in preparation for the Orisha season, these flags are replaced with new ones. The ceremony

includes drumming, singing, spirit possession, and animal sacrifice is held. (Spiritual flags are also used by Indo-Trinidadians, and one can see a variety of flags, Indo- and Afro-, brightly dotting the landscape across Trinidad.)

Orisha Prayers: Sometimes called a “one day” or “one night” feast, Orisha Prayers might be held weekly by some congregations, occasionally during the day. The ceremonies include ritual TOM and spirit possession, but not, typically, animal sacrifice.

Forty Nights: Sometimes called the “return,” this event is held forty nights after the end of an Orisha feast. It happens late – starting just before midnight – and is essentially a one night feast.

Thanksgiving: This Spiritual Baptist day-long event is essentially a standard Spiritual Baptist worship service, including hymn-singing, Scripture-reading, and catching the (Holy) Spirit, followed by a communal meal and the handing out of fruits to congregants. The music includes hand drums (usually a *djembe*) instead of Orisha drums (though not all Spiritual Baptist churches use drums).

Mourning: In this Spiritual Baptist ritual, an initiate is blindfolded with a cloth which has symbols written on it, spending from a few days up to a week on the “mourning ground,” deep in prayer. Baptists believe that the “mourner” spiritually travels to various places, such as Africa or India, and receives gifts from the Holy Spirit. Church members participate by singing Baptist songs, often accompanied by a drummer.

Hindu Prayers, Chinese Prayers, Jewish Prayers: These are all Spiritual Baptist events (and they demonstrate the inclusiveness and eclecticism of the faith). A Hindu

prayers⁷ (also called sit-down prayers or *puja*) is presided over by a Spiritual Baptist *pundit*, and includes an altar set up for Hindu deities along with readings about Hindu deities. Congregants dress in bright Indian fabrics and head-ties. The music is Spiritual Baptist, accompanied by hand drums, emphasizing “Indian” rhythms and melodies and performance of Indian-type glossolalia. A Chinese prayers is much like a Hindu prayers, but may include tea and Chinese food such as pork buns and lo mein, decorations such as paper fans and paper lanterns, and custom outfits for congregants. For instance women might wear the body-hugging one-piece dresses known as *cheongsams*, in bright silk Chinese prints. Lastly, hand drummers (if present) may play a rhythm evocative of the so-called “Oriental riff” used in many Hollywood movies and Western popular songs. There is also at least one congregation (in Brooklyn) who holds a Jewish prayers during the Passover season.

Kabbalah Banquet: A kind of West Indian séance, Kabbalah banquets begin around midnight, and focus on the invocation of so-called underground spirits such as Mr. Steel and the Prince of Darkness. A select group of individuals sits around a large table, while the congregation sits further back. Small drinks of brandy – referred to as “smiles” – are sipped, while passages are read from the Lesser Key of Solomon and other books of magic. Congregants sing Christian hymns, though drums are generally not present.

Orisha Festival: The Orisha Festival is a Nigerian-influenced reinterpretation of the Trinidad Orisha feast, held in honor of one particular *orisha* (such as an Ogun

⁷ The formulation “a prayers” is consistent with Trinidadian phrasing, and I reproduce that term here.

Festival or Obatala Festival). The Orisha Festivals I attended in Trinidad were held during the day.



1.2 The author playing the *umele* in Prospect Park (left and center), and bass drum with Natural Expression

In the various situations listed above, an obvious fact of my participant observation was my presence as a six foot four inch white man, conspicuous because I was nearly always the only white person in attendance at the various events I went to. (In fact, I was usually one of the few white people in the neighborhood, whether I was in East Flatbush, NY, or in Laventille, Trinidad, and I was often reminded of the realities of social segregation when friends, learning where I did research, either raised an eyebrow or told me directly that it was dangerous for me to go where I went.) Trinidadians typically call people by nicknames – Michael Ettienne is Small Junior, Donald Noel is Junior or Fatman, while others I only know as Shaka, Boogie, Jinx, Skatey, Rat, and so on – and my nickname, inevitably, was White Man. Or people just referred to me as “the white guy.”

For his part, Earl always assured me that skin color was not an issue, asking me, “If we bleed, do I bleed red, and you bleed blue?” The *bo* drummer Michael Ettienne, on the other hand, took the opportunity of my moderately proficient drumming to berate Afro-Trinidadian drummers whom he thought should apply themselves more. He told me:

You see like you? We were surprised. Y'understand? Hear what they say, Where this white boy come out from and playin' drum better than me? Nigga? The white boy could take in and learn everything. Y'understand? He didn't do like you, you learn two riddim and you feel you're big, and you're walkin' and your chest up and you can't even play nothing again. I say, the white boy come and he get the nourishment and he still nourishing heself. He didn't do like allyuh, playin big and only walkin' up and down the line while you can't play. Come on man, don't fool people. (*pers. comm.*)

While my whiteness was a clear and present marker of my outsider status, it was in many ways true that becoming an Orisha drummer alleviated any obstacles I faced as an outsider, white or otherwise. Firstly, I believe that being a drummer gave people a necessary context for my presence. I was Earl's drum student, there to play drums and not simply stand and watch. Secondly, Orisha drummers have status; they are necessary to the ceremony, and so they are respected and appreciated. On one occasion, following three straight nights of drumming at the Mount Moriah feast along with Earl and Ettienne, *mongwa* (*i.e.* priest) Sugar Aloes approached the sponsor of the feast, Mother Ashton. He said to her, "See them three boys there? Them your faithful soldiers. Hold it down whole week, you know. Never get weary yet." As the former Orisha drummer Mr. Burton told me, reminiscing on his days drumming for Papa Neezer in the 1950s:

Drummerman is a big man you know. He play the music to dance, and they always need you, because not everybody could play that drum. So they respect you. They always had a great amount of respect for the man that beating the drum. (*pers. comm.*)

As a small example of this respect for drummers, immediately after an Orisha service a meal is usually served, and the drummers eat first. Someone would shout, "Bring food for the drummers now," and plates would appear for me, Earl, and whoever else was playing drums.

My research was also facilitated by the fact of my gender. Women in Orisha-Baptist events are required to follow a strict dress code including floor length skirts, long sleeve blouses, and wrapping their hair in head scarves. While these outfits are typically handmade and

beautiful, the dress code often made the women, for me, indistinguishable from one another, and when I met these women for the first time outside of the ceremonial context, I often did not recognize them. Men are not held to such standards, though *mongwas* and *chantwells* typically wear flowing robes in the Spiritual Baptist or Nigerian fashion. More to the point, drummers dress as they choose, typically in jeans and t-shirts, some even wearing baseball caps as they play. As an example of this gender regulation, a Trinidad Orisha shrine in Queens, NY includes the following sign posted near the entrance, raising concerns about women's dress and also menstruation.⁸

ALL LADIES: PLEASE COVER HEAD BEFORE ENTERING GATE. LADIES
PLEASE DO NOT ENTER IF MOTHER NATURE IS VISITING YOU.

Aside from these regulations on women attendees at Trinidad Orisha events, Trinidad Orisha drummers are virtually all men, and for that important reason my research would have been very different if I was a woman. During more than four years of research, I never witnessed a woman play Orisha drums during an Orisha ceremony, though at one Brooklyn feast in 2011 I saw a young woman try. The woman, who happens to be an excellent drummer (she is a member of Natural Expression), took advantage of a break in the feast to pick up an unoccupied drum. She barely played two beats before an older woman sitting near the drums shooed her away.

⁸ In her dissertation on *bata* in Nigeria and Cuba, Amanda Vincent notes that *orisha* shrines in Nigeria and Benin generally do not interrogate women about whether they are menstruating before entering ceremonies. However, in 1995 she and two female companions were asked just that when entering Akan shrines in Ghana and Celestial Churches in Benin (2006, 163, note 71). In Nigeria, Vincent says “menstruation provides no impediment to women playing Àyàn-laden *bàtá*,” while the “Cuban situation is altogether different” (2006, 187). For the Cubans, women are not permitted to play consecrated drums – it is taboo – specifically because of their ability to menstruate. Vincent lists several objections to women drumming commonly offered by Cubans, such as “the *orichas* eat blood and may not be able to distinguish between a menstruating woman and a sacrificial animal. Therefore a woman may bleed to death” (2006, 187). Other arguments suggest that women are not physically strong enough to play. Vincent suggests that Cuban attitudes towards menstruation are a “diasporic innovation” (2006, 190), given that such taboos do not exist in Nigeria.

There are two well-known women drummers in Trinidad, though I never met them. One of these, who plays center drum, is reputed to look and dress like a man, and she plays very well. She is known as Man Molly. The other is Mother Jean, who plays the accompanying *bo* drum. The subject of these two women, and women drummers generally, came up during a live call-in radio program in which I participated in January 2012, on the Brooklyn-based web radio station Shango Radio. I was there to play drums with Earl Noel and Michael “Obicey” Ettienne, and during a call-in segment a woman from the Brooklyn Orisha community called with a question about women playing Orisha drums. The caller raised the names of Molly and Jean as evidence that “it is not a taboo for woman to be playing drum. Is just the cause of the society where it is male dominated that you don’t usually see woman playing drum.” Though challenging the patriarchy inherent in Trinidad Orisha drumming, during her call she also agreed that a woman in her menstrual period should not touch the drums or enter a shrine.

In response to the caller, the host of the program asked drummers Earl and Ettienne to describe their experiences as Orisha drummers and the conventions that they know regarding women drummers. They both agreed that women cannot touch a drum during menstruation, and further pointed out that they simply have never seen women playing drums, except for Molly and Jean. (During the conversation, the engineer running the soundboard also jumped in with an observation.)

Earl: And the caller is saying how she know Mother Jean, and how she know Molly. Mother Jean does just play the *bo* drum. And sing. But Molly does play this drum [center drum]. Mother Jean don’t play the center drum. Mother Molly must be to seventy years now. Mother Jean could be in she sixties now.

Ettienne: Yeah but in Trinidad and Tobago it hardly had female drummers.

Earl: It only them two woman.

Ettiienne: These two elder ladies we talking bout is history to us, as woman playing drums. I wouldn't say I didn't see it abroad because I see women play congas, in musician band. But the whole thing about what we talking about is the Orisha ceremonial drums. I have never seen that. Because if you go into the steelband it have young women playing traps and timbalitas [timbales] and things, but in the Orisha faith, I have never seen three women sit down and play a Orisha drums. In a feast. In my life.

Earl: Yeah, I never see that.

Host: So you, being the master drummer, are gonna have to find that out, because I have went to the Lokimi [sic] and them and see, the Santería, and I have seen men playing the drums.

Earl: I see Cuban, I see Brazilian...

Ettiienne: Yeah, but they was all male...

Host: Male, male, male.

Ettiienne: Alright, even though in Trinidad, right, look the Hosein [i.e. Hosay, the Indo-Trinidadian festival of Muharram], have you ever seen a woman play drum in Hosein?

Earl: Na, you never see woman play drum for Hosein.

Ettiienne: No, no, right? So, it's very rare, as we saying again, it's two person we know, in playing the drums, and still, they get involve in it from young, way back. ...

Engineer: What usually I see woman playing is in the [Spiritual Baptist] church.

Host: You gonna see they playing the djembe, and these other hand drums.

Earl and Ettiienne: Yeah, hand drums.

As an observing bystander, it was interesting to me that the panelists brought up comparisons with other drumming traditions, categorizing them as secular genres that include women drummers (congas, steelband), versus sacred genres (Santería, Hosay). At the same time, the engineer interjected that women play hand drums during Spiritual Baptist services – an example of women playing in a religious service that complicated any neat bifurcation between spiritual and non-spiritual drums. What this conversation makes clear is the extent to which

Trinidad Orisha is an oral tradition in which behavior of participants tends to be dictated by convention, and yet the woman caller's challenge to the rhetoric of taboo is also evidence of the process of tradition and the potential fragility of convention. While these middle-aged men have never seen three women playing Orisha drums, things might change for the next generation. In any case, my own research into TOM included mainly male subjects, as all of the drummers and (nearly all of) the singers were men.

Dance, Movement, and the Roles of Non-Musicians in Trinidad Orisha Ritual

Though my main interlocutors were select male drummers and *mongwas*, who hold prominent leadership roles in ceremonial activities, it is important to note that TOM is collectively produced through the combined energies of Orisha congregations. Incidentally, it is often the case that the majority (Maarit Forde, *pers. comm.*) of participants at Orisha (and Spiritual Baptist) events are women, who participate in the production of the TOM soundscape through singing choral responses to the song leader, clapping their hands, shaking *shac-shacs*, or leading the songs themselves. An unresponsive congregation could stop an Orisha ritual in its tracks just as surely as a bad drummer, and a different research design might have focused on the variable musical power of varying Orisha congregations in terms of participation and coincident musical production.

An important aspect of the role of non-musicians at Trinidad Orisha ceremonies is physical movement, encompassing a range of activities such as handclapping, individuals moving or swaying side to side, or vigorous movements which might be more properly categorized as "dance." The latter category would include the rhythmic motions of the feet, arms, and torsos of individuals manifesting *orishas*, who typically dance before the drums in time to

the drum rhythms – as opposed to non-possessed individuals who do not, as a rule, approach the drums to dance.

A “manifestation” in Trinidad Orisha occurs when an individual congregant becomes possessed by the spirit of an *orisha* who, having been attracted by the music, overwhelms the personality and actions of the individual in question, using the individual’s body to dance and commune with the congregation. From an outsider’s perspective, the possessed individual appears to be “acting out” the role of, say, the warrior Ogun (swinging a cutlass) or the water spirit Oshun (pouring water in the ritual space), but individuals, after a manifestation, typically disavow any memory of the event. While spirit manifestations very often take place on the body of drummers or *mongwas*, it is also often the case that a manifestation will occur on some other individual participant, driving home the idea that collective action is needed for the successful production of Trinidad Orisha rituals, and the central role of movement, including dance, in the behaviors of the collectivity.

George Simpson describes various movements and dancing at Orisha (Shango) ceremonies in the following passage. Simpson made his observations at various Orisha shrines throughout Trinidad, and many of the same movements can be seen in Orisha practice today:

At an annual Shango ceremony, the participants “dance” by moving back and forth within a short range, marking time, bending the knees and straightening up rapidly, clapping hands, swaying, and, at times, circling the “palais” in single file with a springing step. When a “power” manifests on him, the “dancing” of a follower becomes more lively. He marches to and fro in the palais, bows and whirls in front of the drummers, dances to the rhythms played by the drummers in honor of the power that has possessed him, thrusts the lower half of his body forward and backwards, shakes his shoulders vigorously, runs from the palais to the chapelle to kneel or to throw himself on the floor, embraces other participants whether or not they are possessed at the moment, pours water from a jar at the four corners of the palais, waves the “implement” (sword, broom, oar, etc.) of the possessing power, sings, speaks the “unknown” tongue, throws his head back and forth, groans, flings his arms, falls to the ground, and seizes and shakes both hands of another person. Dancing at special healing and conjuring ceremonies consists mainly of

circling the palais first in a counterclockwise, then in a clockwise, direction. Individual “dancing,” as in the annual ceremonies, also occurs. (Simpson 1961, 2)

Similar descriptions can be found in Houk (1994), Lum (2000), and McNeal (2004). However, while many of the movements described by Simpson (et al.) could clearly be thought of as dance, and typical movements can be observed at a variety of Orisha ceremonies in various locales, it is debatable the extent to which there exists any formalized *dance tradition* in Trinidad Orisha – in the sense that I describe the Trinidad Orisha *music tradition* in this dissertation. The lack of a dance tradition can be contrasted with Cuban Santería, in which participants routinely perform coordinated group dances in response to certain songs during the ritual event. (An obvious exception to the “group dance” phenomenon in TOM is the clockwise procession mentioned by Simpson, but this circular march is typically limited to a single ritual moment – see chapter 3.)

Some Notes on Notation

Notating unwritten music is at best a strategy to somewhat objectively create visual representations of music, from which it is possible to make textual characterizations and comparisons on the written page. At worst, it serves to obfuscate and stultify rich and lively musical practices. In any case, such notations involve choices, and I could have chosen to write TOM in a number of different ways. However, I have devised an approach that, I believe, makes most sense in terms of accurately representing what it is that Trinidad Orisha musicians do, as I have come to understand it. Like all approaches to musical notation, mine has its quirks, and I offer an explanation of some of these in the paragraphs below.

There are two foundational rhythms in TOM, which I call (using the terminology of Earl Noel) straight Orisha (SO) and rada/Kankan (RK). I have chosen to notate SO in 12/8 meter, and RK in 4/4, for the following reasons. I believe that the different meters reflect important

differences in the two rhythms, which might be loosely compared to the contrast between “swing” and “Latin” feel in jazz music. SO has a feel of swinging sixteenth notes punctuated by offbeat accents, leading me to describe it using the adjective “syncopated swing.” Due to this swing feel, writing it in 4/4 would require nearly constant triple bracketing, or performance notes indicating “swing feel.” Like SO, RK is syncopated, but it does not swing – its sixteenth notes are played straight, and it fits quite nicely into a 4/4 meter.

SO and RK are also differentiated by different tempos. (Tempo in TOM is essentially invariable: songs begin at a certain speed and any change is only a gradual speeding up.) Both of the foundational rhythms have a clear, underlying four-beat pulse, emphasized by the bass tone of the *bo* drum. In the SO 12/8 notation each pulse is a dotted quarter note, while in the RK 4/4 notation each pulse is a quarter note. Both tempos are fast, as the tempo of SO is ♩ = 120, while the RK tempo is an even faster ♩ = 180.

In terms of standard Western music notation, the 12/8 SO notations might seem somewhat awkward, and might be more easily read in 4/4 time in certain cases. However, as mentioned above, the latter meter would necessitate triple bracketing, while 12/8 requires no such thing. However, in 12/8 meter TOM prominently features dotted eighth notes, and so the reader should be aware of that notational configuration. Also, the *bo* drum figure *eighth-dotted eighth-sixteenth* is a prominent organizational rhythm, as many rhythms in the vocal melodies reflect that pattern.

Chapter Summaries

In a broad overview, all of the chapters in this dissertation combine musicological and socio-historical concerns, but to be precise, chapters two, six, and seven deal mainly with history and culture, while chapters three, four, and five focus on musical analysis of TOM.

In chapter two, I present a history of TOM from 1783 up to the mid-twentieth century. Relying mainly on secondary sources, the chapter establishes several important factors relevant to the background of TOM's development in Trinidad: the relatively short duration of slavery in Trinidad; the establishment of a predominately French and Catholic Afro-Creole population in Trinidad by the early nineteenth century; and the arrival of several hundred African American Baptists. Next, I describe the key moment in the origins of *orisha* veneration in Trinidad: the emancipation of slaves in 1838, and the ensuing immigration of some ten thousand African indentured laborers between 1841 and 1867, an immigrant group that included significant numbers of coastal West Africans from the former Oyo Empire, whose inhabitants had in common the practice of *orisha* veneration through drumming, singing, and spirit possession, as well as a common tongue that came to be called Yoruba. In Trinidad, these Yorubas became gradually integrated into the broader Afro-Creole population, adopting elements of Catholicism and French language while also maintaining their religious and musical practices. The Trinidad Yorubas' close proximity to Creole society in the late nineteenth century was thus a strength, yet it also meant that practitioners of the nascent Trinidad Orisha religion experienced the same criminalization and persecution of their cultural practices by elite Trinidadian society as did the other members of the marginalized lower classes.

Continuing with chapter two, I next trace this persecution to the twentieth century, when calypsonians directed ridicule at Shango religious practices. This public perception of derision is

contrasted with the rise of the first well-known leader of Shango, Ebenezer “Papa Neezer” Eliot, whose story is informed, in part, by my 2012 interview with one of his drummers. The chapter closes by presenting evidence of the changing status of Shango in mid-twentieth-century Trinidadian society, beginning with the staged folkloric presentations of Shango song and dance by Beryl McBurnie in the 1940s, and continuing with the repeal of the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance in 1951.

In chapter three, I present the Trinidad Orisha song repertoire. This repertoire includes two main categories of songs – the Litany and the Rotation. Drawing on the song database I made from my field recordings, I compare examples of various Litanies and Rotations, as sung by different song leaders, showing both the temporal progression of TOM, and the way song type controls Orisha ritual (e.g. songs proceeding from long to short; the singing of “dismissal songs” to bring a spirit possession to an end). I end the chapter with a discussion of song form, melody and mode, and harmonic features of TOM.

Picking up from chapter three’s focus on the songs, in chapter four I discuss the drums and drumming in TOM. I begin with a discussion of the organology of Trinidad Orisha drums and sticks, showing that they derive from *bembe* drums in Yoruba territories of West Africa (particularly among Ijesha and Egba groups). Next, I clarify inconsistencies in the literature regarding Trinidad Orisha drum names, and I describe the construction of Orisha drums as well as their status as sacred instruments. In the second half of the chapter, I give an extended treatment of TOM drum rhythms, describing the relationship between the center drum and the two accompanying drums (*bo* and *umele*) as that of a foreground and a rhythmic bed. In present-day TOM, the rhythmic bed is established at a fast tempo during the singing of Rotation songs,

after which it does not vary, while the center drummer has the responsibility of engaging in a (poly)rhythmic dialogue with the other drums, the singing voices, and the manifesting *orishas*.

Chapter five offers an analysis of change in TOM from historical perspective, comparing present-day TOM with the oldest extant recordings of Shango music: the 1939 recordings made in Laventille by Melville and Frances Herskovits. Until now, these important recordings have been neglected by researchers. In my analysis, I show that there are important continuities connecting the drumming of today with that of 1939, most especially in the perpetuation of core rhythms such as the Shango *hand*, the five stroke *umele* roll, and the Trinidad clave. At the same time, TOM in 2013 departs significantly from Shango drumming in 1939, including the disappearance of three key elements (structural polyrhythms, hemiola, and iron percussion) and the addition of faster tempos. There has also been an important change in drum register: while the lead drum was previously the lowest in pitch relative to the accompanying drums, today the center drum is between the frequencies of the accompanying drums, and the lower accompanying *bo* drum creates a steady and audible four beat in the bass register, making today's drumming sound very different from 1939.

In chapter six, I move away from primarily musicological concerns, focusing on the post 1970s Orisha Revival and its impact on TOM. Trinidad's independence in 1962 was linked with a nationalist ideology which valorized locally created (Creole) Afro-Trinidadian cultural practices such as the steelpan (while alienating groups such as Indo-Trinidadians). A lagging economy in the late 1960s led to general unrest and a rejection of Creole nationalism, most dramatically in the Black Power protests of 1970. In the aftermath of Black Power, many middle class Trinidadians appropriated "Shango" religion as emblematic of their own African "roots," and were at the forefront of socio-political legitimization that included promotion of the name

“Orisha religion” instead of Shango. Next, I present ethnographic accounts of three prominent figures in twenty-first-century Orisha – Lester “Ogunbowale” Osouna, Ella Andall, and Michael “Sugar Aloes” Osouna – whose sometimes oppositional and overlapping views help to elucidate the complexities of the Orisha Revival and its impact on TOM, including issues of de-Christianization and re-introduction of Yoruba language.

Chapter seven looks at the Trinidad Orisha community in Brooklyn, which was at the heart of my field research. I begin by situating Trinidad Orisha practitioners in Brooklyn within the broader pattern of post-1965 West Indian immigration to New York, describing the development of specific Orisha shrines and leaders centered primarily in the neighborhoods of East Flatbush and Crown Heights. As an example of the Brooklyn Orisha scene, I present an excerpt from my field journal, describing the first two Orisha events I attended with Earl Noel in Brooklyn. Next, I examine issues related to the changed contexts of Trinidad Orisha worship in New York, including the necessity of locking the doors before animal sacrifice and the limited opportunities for accessing physical earth. Next, I discuss two examples of the intersection of Brooklyn Orisha with the public sphere in New York: the folkloric choreographer Michael Manswell, and a 2011 reality television show episode filmed at Yoruba-Orisha Baptist Church on Nostrand Avenue. Finally, I suggest that the hybrid environment of New York City is not dissimilar to the conditions of Trinidad Orisha’s retention and perpetuation by practitioners in nineteenth-century Trinidad up to today. It is the desire of Trinidad Orisha practitioners to continue their musical and religious practice that allows for Trinidad Orisha’s transmission through history and transnational space.

In chapter eight, I offer summarizing thoughts, suggesting areas for future research as well as conclusions to be drawn from the current work. The focus of the final chapter is to situate

TOM within the diaspora of Yoruba-derived musics, giving attention to cognate songs, practices, and aesthetics. The chapter concludes with a discussion of creolization, neotraditionalism, and cultural change.

Conclusion

Somebody once said, set in order that which is in front of you, and the rest will fall into place. My aim in this dissertation is to present a fair reporting on that which was before me during the course of my research – the songs, drums, ceremonies, and above all the people and their oral histories. While I don't claim to have learned everything there is to know about TOM, I hope that my work will have some value for the TOM community as a record of their oral history. The musicians that I have come to know are involved in a busy and vibrant worship community, and I feel fortunate to have been privy to their cultural and musical worlds, and thankful for the openness they have shown me as they have shared their knowledge. My goal is that this dissertation does justice to that knowledge, not only out of respect for my informants, but also because I believe their knowledge holds great potential for the expansion of scholarship on musical cultures in the African diaspora. Writing a dissertation is a certain kind of task, with important responsibilities concerning research, reporting, and contextualization, but it is also a privilege. TOM is remarkable music – aesthetically beautiful, socially meaningful, and historically relevant – and it is an honor to share it, in the pages to follow, with those who might not yet know it.

Chapter Two

History and Background of Trinidad Orisha Music

The history of Trinidad is marked by several overlapping waves of immigration. Some immigration was forced (e.g. African slaves), and some voluntary (e.g. European colonialists, East Indian indentured laborers). In the formation of the Trinidad Orisha religion, the most significant immigrants were the roughly 10,000 liberated Africans – West Africans captured and sold into slavery, but rescued by (mainly British) anti-slaving naval vessels – who came to Trinidad as indentured workers in the mid-nineteenth century. Among these several thousand liberated Africans were a high proportion of ethnic groups speaking dialects of the language which, nowadays, is called Yoruba – or “Yaraba,” as they were known in Trinidad. These Trinidad Yorubas⁹ are largely responsible for establishing, in Trinidad, the main features of “Shango cult worship,” or the Trinidad Orisha religion as it exists today, above all the veneration of a pantheon of deities known as *orishas*. The Yorubas brought songs to the *orishas*. They brought knowledge of African drums, establishing the cylindrical, double-headed *bembe* type as Shango/Orisha drums, played with curved *bembe* sticks. They brought a music-focused worship style that centered on collective singing, drumming, and dancing to achieve spirit possession, or manifestation of the *orishas*, assuring that they maintained connections with their spiritual world

⁹ Calling mid-nineteenth-century Africans “Yorubas” is anachronistic, given that the term didn’t become widely used to refer to speakers of a similar cluster of dialects (now called Yoruba) until the late-nineteenth century, and then it was used initially by Europeans, who borrowed the term from the Hausa people’s designation for inhabitants of Oyo (Matory 2005; Warner-Lewis 1996). However, I use the term, following Warner-Lewis (1994; 1996), to refer to a more or less homogeneous ethnic group in Trinidad, united by linguistic, religious, and musical practices, as well as referring to connections with similar populations in Cuba and Brazil.

and musical practice (not to mention social cohesion) even far from the coastal West African homeland.

Despite the unquestionable importance of indentured Yorubas in the formation of Trinidad Orisha, the central premise of this dissertation is that Trinidad Orisha music and culture are multidimensional, and so I argue that Yoruban influence is but one dimension of Trinidad Orisha music and culture. Just as there are two sides to Trinidad Orisha drums, there are multiple perspectives and influences which must factor into any thorough accounting of Trinidad Orisha music and culture. Keeping such multidimensionality in mind, this chapter sets out, first, to outline the historical and cultural contexts in Trinidad prior to the arrival of the liberated Africans, focusing especially on the late eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century Afro-French Creole cultural milieu and the arrival of several hundred free African American Baptists beginning in 1816. Next, I examine the conditions of the liberated Africans themselves. Then, I describe the post-emancipation (1838) rural to urban migration, and the ensuing formation and criminalization of *jamette* culture in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Trinidad. Finally, the chapter considers key moments and individuals in the first half of the twentieth century in terms of the changing public perception of Trinidad Orisha and the transmission of Trinidad Orisha as oral tradition.

Trinidad Slavery Demographics¹⁰

In the larger context of the transatlantic slave trade, slavery in Trinidad was small in scale. It didn't truly begin until the 1780s. Prior to that, the indigenous Arawak population having been decimated by Spanish colonists, Trinidad was, in the words of historian Bridget

¹⁰ Wood cautions that population data in nineteenth-century Trinidad “are few, conflicting, and unreliable; not until 1851 was there a census with any pretension to accuracy” (1968, 44).

Brereton, a “deserted island” (1981). In 1783, the Spanish – who had first claimed the country when Columbus landed there in 1498 – decided to implement measures to counteract the prospect of a British invasion. As a defense against the British, Spain issued a Cedula of Population, attempting to turn its neglected, backwater colony into a populated plantation economy, offering cheap land in the colony to French settlers and their slaves. The Cedula contained twenty-eight articles laying out the dictates of the proposed immigration, but the most significant were numbers I through IV and VI:

Article

I	All foreigners must profess to be Roman Catholic
II	All foreigners must pledge allegiance to Spain
III	Each white person (man or woman) will be granted thirty-two acres of land, and another sixteen for each slave he or she owns.
IV	Immigrants who are free negroes or mulattoes, along with their own slaves, will be given land one half the quantity of the whites.
VI	White immigrants will live tax-free for ten years, and then taxed at a fixed low rate

2.1 Paraphrasing of selected articles from Spanish "Cedula of Population," 1783¹¹

According to historian Bridget Brereton (1981), these articles had several important consequences in Trinidad’s history. First, the Catholic requirement assured that immigrants to Trinidad would be French, and not Protestant English. Second, in articles III and IV, the huge incentives for slaveholders quickly transformed Trinidad from a sparsely populated territory into a slave plantation society and economy; article VI provided further incentives, in the form of tax

¹¹ Source: The Caribbean History Archives by Paria Publishing Co. Ltd., Gerard A. Besson. <http://www.caribbeanhistoryarchives.blogspot.com/2012/03/code-noir.html>. Accessed June 2, 2013.

breaks for slave owners. Article IV gave “free coloured¹² property-owners fuller civil rights than they enjoyed anywhere else in the West Indies” (ibid., 14).

The Spanish hoped they could prevent the British from taking Trinidad by allying themselves with the French, an ultimately unsuccessful effort when the British invaded in 1797. The Spanish did, however, succeed in transforming Trinidad into a plantation economy based on slave labor, with a slave population over ten thousand by the time of the British takeover, and a society that was French and Roman Catholic, with a diversity of white and black, slave and free. The new settlers arrived from Martinique,¹³ Guadeloupe, St. Lucia, and the island of Hispaniola (comprising present-day Haiti and Dominican Republic), with the French Revolution accelerating the urgency of emigration for slave holders in the French Caribbean. “In a sense,” writes historian Donald Wood,

Trinidad is as much a legacy of the Revolution and Napoleon as the *départements* of France and the decimal coinage of Europe. For a period of thirty years Trinidad became an asylum for French-speaking refugees of all classes and colours who were forced to flee as the fluctuating course of events made one faction and then another temporarily ascendant in the islands. Royalists and revolutionaries, aristocrats and *petit blancs*, those who believed in liberty and the rights of man, and those who wanted the old order to continue unchanged, free men of colour all came to Trinidad and with them came their black slaves. (Wood 1968, 32)

At least one song of the Africans in Trinidad from this period reflects the revolutionary tenor of the late eighteenth century. In 1805 (the year after the culmination of Haiti’s revolution), French planters in Diego Martin overheard blacks singing the following, in French-Creole:

Pain c’est viande béqué, San Domingo! The bread is the flesh of the white man, Haiti!
Vin c’est sang béqué, San Domingo! The wine is the blood of the white man, Haiti!

¹² The term was first used by the French, with their phrase, *gens de couleur libres*, used to distinguish free blacks from African slaves. “People of colour” could refer to individuals of mixed race, or full Africans who had purchased their freedom.

¹³ The overall records of inter-island migration are not available, but the historian Wood reports that, in 1792 between three and four thousand slaves came from Martinique alone (1968, 32); Trotman asserts that many slaves brought in from French islands were Dahomeans (1976, 11).

<i>Nous va boire sang béqué, San Domingo!</i>	We will drink the white man's blood, Haiti!
<i>Pain nous mange est viande béqué</i>	The bread we eat is the white man's flesh
<i>Vin nous boire c'est sang béqué.</i>	The wine we drink is the white man's blood. ¹⁴

Though the text of this song could be considered a literal description of the Catholic sacrament of the Eucharist, the French planters considered the song a threat of rebellion – a reasonable fear, one might argue, considering their experiences in the revolutionary French Caribbean. Under torture, blacks told of an uprising being planned for Christmas Day of 1805, and revealed an extensive black underground, “a network of secret societies through which the slaves created an existence entirely separate from the world of the plantation,” with African kings, queens, and associated decorum (Brereton 1981, 48). The idea of an “entirely separate” world, a “microcosm” of African society in which Africans in Trinidad recreated customs of royalty (and sang at least one revolutionary song) is tantalizing for its suggestion of a rich cultural life external to the purview of Colonial authority, and it indicates the ways that African culture was active during the pre-emancipation period.

Pre-emancipation era black musical life was not all (potentially) revolutionary, and it is clear that Afro-Creoles in early-nineteenth-century Trinidad held dances for socializing and entertainment purposes. One observer in the 1820s attended “a Negro ladies’ ball” in the suburbs of Port of Spain, describing “a spacious shed, rudely thatched with palm branches... At the head of this dingy salon de danse were five huge Negroes, thumping might and main on casks, the tops of which were covered with parchment. Ranged on one side were twenty Negresses roaring a chorus, each being in motion, turning half round alternately without moving from the spot. ... The whole scene was truly African” (in Ottley 1974, 127). The type of dance at this “ball” could well have been the *bele*, a song and dance genre popular among blacks in Trinidad and

¹⁴ Text and translation in Brereton 1981.

throughout the French Caribbean isles of the Lesser Antilles, and which entered Trinidad with the post-1783 French immigration. (The *bele* is still performed as an Afro-Trinidadian folk dance today.)

In total, slavery in Trinidad lasted about fifty years, ending between 1834 and 1838 (the four-year period was known as an “apprenticeship,” essentially a concession to slave owners to allow them to prepare for the aftermath of slavery). In addition to its relative brevity, slavery in Trinidad was small in overall numbers: in the years 1781 to 1810, Trinidad imported 12,400 slaves from Africa.¹⁵ Compare this with Jamaica, which imported nearly 250,000 slaves during the same period (Curtin 1969, 140). Also, at its height slaves numbered only 67 percent of the population in Trinidad, compared with 90 percent in places like Jamaica. In 1813, for example, the total population of Trinidad was 37,833, with 25,717 being slaves.

Trinidad was not dominated by large rural plantations with many slaves. In 1803, the small island of Trinidad (roughly 1800 square miles) contained 479 “very small” estates (Ottley 1974, 21), on which slaves cultivated sugar, coffee, cocoa, and cotton. The model of many small plantations persisted in Trinidad, so that by 1834, only one percent of slave owners had over one hundred slaves; the average number was seven slaves per owner. In 1827, there were 16,927 plantation slaves, “while some 6,303 slaves were domestics residing with their masters in Port of Spain” (Ottley 1974, 40). This “pronounced urban orientation was to be important for the development of post-emancipation society” (Brereton 1981, 55), setting the stage for the large-scale rural to urban migration after 1838.

¹⁵ Recall that, in addition to Africa itself, many African slaves came from other West Indian islands – especially French colonies. Interisland immigration included non-French as well: Ottley reports 3,664 slaves were imported to Trinidad in the years 1813-1821 from Antigua, Barbados, Bermuda, Dominica, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Bahamas, St. Vincent, and St. Lucia (1974, 154).

The Yoruba presence during Trinidad's slavery period was very small. According to an 1813 census, only one percent of the African population in Trinidad was Yoruba (John 1988), amounting to just a few hundred out of the total slave population of 25,717. The main African ethnic groups in pre-emancipation Trinidad included Igbo¹⁶ and Ibibio (from what is now southern Nigeria), Bantu (from areas around Gabon), Kongo, Malinke, Allada, Chamba, Popo, and Hausa (Trotman 1986, 26), as well as Dahomeans from the French Caribbean (Trotman 1976, 11). A plurality of Trinidad's African-born slaves came from the Bight of Biafra¹⁷ (39.4%). According to folklorist J.D. Elder, in Trinidad today, "So dominant is Yoruba culture in Trinidad that many people use the word interchangeably with African. In fact Yoruba religion is even practiced by those who term themselves Hausa, Ibo and Congo" (1988, 22). Considering this fact, it is clear that there were marked distinctions in the ethnic makeup of Afro-Trinidadians in the pre- and post-emancipation periods.

The French Connection

It is well-known that, in Brazil and in Cuba, Yoruba religion mixed with Catholicism, resulting most notably in the confluence of *orishas* with Catholic saints. Similarly, in Haiti the *lwa* (spirits) of Vodun are associated with certain Catholic saints. Such syncretism is also apparent in Trinidad, where, for example, Ogun is interchangeably called St. Michael and Shango is called St. John. Moreover, Trinidad Orisha rituals typically begin with the recitation of

¹⁶ According to Elder: "In terms of traditional culture, the Ibos of Trinidad can be said to have been completely swallowed up by the other Africans" (1988, 30).

¹⁷ The designation "Bight of Biafra" (also called the Bight of Bonny) indicated a point of embarkation east of the Bight of Benin, and encompassed the present-day countries of Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. Following the Bight of Biafra, the other points of embarkation were out of "Central Africa, Senegambia, the Gold Coast, the Bight of Benin, the Windward Coast, and Sierra Leone, in that order of proportional representation" (Trotman 1986, 26).

the Catholic Rosary (see appendix examples A-II, A-XIV, B-I, and C-I). The Catholic influence in Trinidad derives, as I have mentioned, from the late eighteenth century influx of French Catholic planters and their slaves – the latter of whom were christened Catholics and speakers of French-Creole – creating a cultural milieu in early nineteenth-century Trinidad that was dominated by French language and religion, despite British control of the colony from 1797. In other words, prior to the arrival of liberated Africans in the mid-nineteenth century, British Trinidad was, in large measure, culturally French and Catholic,¹⁸ creating hospitable conditions for the establishment of *orisha* veneration in Trinidad (*cf.* Tanenbaum 1947), as well as for the cultivation of the pre-Lenten Carnival for which Trinidad is well known.

Today, the French-Creole linguistic influence on Trinidad Orisha is readily apparent. The main ritual structures in a Trinidad Orisha compound are called *palais* and *chapelle*. The song leader is known as a *chantwell* (or *chantuelle*), a Creole term widely used in Trinidad for a lead singer. An Orisha priest is known by the Yoruba word *mongwa* (Warner-Lewis 1996), but a priest in training is called *petit mongwa*. Furthermore, during a Trinidad Orisha ceremony, when an individual is possessed by the spirit of an *orisha*, the possessed individual will often speak in French-Creole,¹⁹ and thus French-Creole serves as a kind of glossolalia, indicating the authenticity of a spirit manifestation through the speaking in a foreign tongue. For instance, manifesting *orishas* typically greet the congregation by saying “bonswe, tout monde,” or “good

¹⁸ The slaves in Trinidad were taught Catholic religion by their French and Spanish masters: “on most estates and in all the homes, the Negroes were instructed in the Roman Catholic faith every Sunday evening. They were taught the Lord’s Prayer, the Belief, the Litany...” (Ottley 1974, 60).

¹⁹ French still permeates working class Trinidad creole language. Speakers punctuate their English sentences with interjections of “oui” such as “I real vex, oui” (or “I’m really annoyed, yes”).

evening to you all.” Some Trinidad Orisha songs include French-derived words, such as the Oshun song which I have heard sung in the following way: “L’arriver Oshun, sabeko.”

The prominence of French-Creole words in Trinidad Orisha merits some comment. On the one hand, such linguistic remnants could be seen as evidence of the influence of Haitian Vodou religious practices, which could have entered Trinidad in the post-1783 French Caribbean immigration, then becoming incorporated into the religious practices of the Trinidad Yorubas upon the arrival of that latter group in Trinidad. On the other hand, it could be that the Yorubas continued doing things their own way, without adopting practices of the local French-Creole blacks, but as Trinidad Yoruba fluency died, they simply borrowed terms as substitutes. Historian David Trotman suggests the latter scenario, pointing out that the Trinidad Yorubas were quick to adopt the local *lingua franca* (Trotman 1986, 252). The Trinidad Yorubas were not alone in their adoption of the language: among the lower classes, French-Creole/patois was spoken by most (Wood 1968, 39), serving as a common tongue for the various ethnic groups in Trinidad, and “by the end of the nineteenth century English was still not the dominant language in Trinidad” (Trotman 1986, 253).

No doubt, the Trinidad Yorubas met other African ethnic groups in Trinidad who shared similar religious-cultural practices. When anthropologist Melville Herskovits went to Port of Spain in 1939, he remarked that a Shango (Orisha) altar looked “Haitian” to him. Though we cannot assume influence either way based on Herskovits’s remark, his perception does point to the fact that Yorubas, French-Creole slaves, and others shared sympathetic cultural practices, the combined energies of which likely contributed to the development of the Yoruba-based religion and music known as Trinidad Orisha.

Black Americans and the Baptist Religion in Trinidad

Trinidad Orisha ceremonies today typically begin with the recitation of Christian prayers and the singing of Christian hymns. For example, see the first item in my appendix of song performance lists: before any Orisha songs are sung, the congregation spends more than 40 minutes on Christian songs and recitations. As the appendix shows, the prayers include the Catholic Rosary (“Hail Mary,” “Our Father,” and “Glory Be”), the Apostles Creed, and Psalms 1, 4, 23, 24, and 121. Such prayers are evidence of the Afro-French Catholic base in early nineteenth century Afro-Trinidadian society.²⁰

Aside from the inclusion of spoken prayers, this ceremony (item one in the appendix) began with eight sung hymns. The first group of four, sung in free meter (without drumming accompaniment), derive from Methodist hymnals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²¹ These hymns seem to have been brought to Trinidad during the 1815 immigration of several hundred freed African American Methodists, who were promised their freedom by the British if they crossed over to the other side and fought against America during the War of 1812.²²

These African American settlers formed a group that was distinct and, in large part, isolated from the other Africans and Afro-Caribbeans in early nineteenth-century Trinidad. Recruited by the British to fight against their American masters during the British-American War

²⁰ Other prayers in this appendix example are from the Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses (see appendix, A-II-k), an esoteric text associated in Trinidad with the mystical séances (banquets) of the Trinidad Kabbalah (see Houk 1995; Lum 2000). Kabbalah in Trinidad is discussed later in this chapter.

²¹ John Wesley, *A Collection of Hymns, for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (1779); Ira D. Sankey, *Sacred Songs and Solos: With Standard Hymns, Combined: 750 Pieces* (ca. 1890).

²² The first mention of the word Baptist in a government document in Trinidad is from 1825 (Hackshaw, qtd in Henry 2008, 7)

of 1812²³, the ex-slaves were rewarded with land in a British colony. The British Vice Admiral Alexander Cochrane issued the following proclamation in April 1814, for distribution along the coast of the Eastern U.S. (in Weiss 2002, 6):

Whereas it has been represented to me, that many Persons now resident in the UNITED STATES, have expressed a desire to withdraw therefrom, with a view of entering into His Majesty's Service, or of being received as Free Settlers into some of His Majesty's Colonies.

This is therefore to Give Notice,

That all those who may be disposed to emigrate from the UNITED STATES will, with their Families, be received on board of His Majesty's Ships or Vessels of War, or at the Military Posts that may be established, upon or near the Coast of the UNITED STATES, when they will have their choice of either entering into His Majesty's Sea or Land Forces, or of being sent as FREE Settlers to the British possessions in North America or the West Indies, where they will meet with all due encouragement.

As a result of this policy, "Nearly four thousand American slaves took their freedom" (Weiss 2002, 2). The Americans were recruited mainly from Louisiana, Alabama, Spanish Florida, Georgia, Maryland, and Virginia, whence they were brought to either Nova Scotia or Bermuda, then on to Jamaica, the Bahamas, Trinidad, and Sierra Leone. From Nova Scotia and Bermuda, nearly 800 men, women, and children²⁴ were brought to Trinidad, where they came to

²³ Other histories occasionally cite the American settlers' involvement in other wars. In an article in the *Trinidad Express* newspaper, historian Bridget Brereton writes: "It's often thought they were former slaves who had fought for the British in the American War of Independence (1776-83), which isn't correct – though many enslaved men did, in fact, serve with the British troops in that war. An article in this newspaper published earlier this month had the Merikens coming to Trinidad 'following the defeat of Britain and her allies in the Civil War.' Wrong again. Britain wasn't directly involved in the Civil War (1861-65) In fact, the Merikens came here after a rather obscure war between Britain and the young United States known as the war of 1812." *Trinidad Express*, Mar. 28, 2012. http://www.trinidadexpress.com/commentaries/The_Merikens-144753025.html. Accessed June 2, 2013.

²⁴ The population of the American settlers was heavily male, and liberated African women, arriving beginning in the 1830s, were sent to live in the Company Villages in order to rectify the sex imbalance (Wood 1968, 38; Henry 2008, 8).

be called Merikens, or “the Meriken Baptists.”²⁵ The Merikens settled mainly in two locations: Laventille and Caroni – working class areas in the north – and in villages in the south (around Princes Town) which came to be called the “Company Villages.” The Laventille/Caroni Baptists have linked with the group called the Shouters (nowadays known as Spiritual Baptists), while those in the south are more closely associated with the Independent or London Baptists (Hackshaw 1992). Today, the London Baptists, the Independent Baptists, and the Spiritual Baptists make up the three main groups of Baptists in Trinidad. (And it is the Spiritual Baptists who are most closely associated with Trinidad Orisha.)

In the United States, African American involvement in the Baptist faith stems in large part from the evangelism of the so-called Second Great Awakening, a Protestant movement at the turn of the nineteenth century. This movement was characterized by large week-long “camp meetings,” which brought together thousands of Americans, white and black, for preaching, praying, and – the ultimate goal – mass conversions. An 1802 meeting organized by Methodists at Cane Ridge, Kentucky included 20,000 people, and featured worship characterized by “weeping, shouting, fainting, or the ‘jerks’” (Towns and Porter 2000, 52). By the early nineteenth century, a common term for this type of worshipper in the U.S. was “shouting Methodist,” suggesting that the word Shouters in Trinidad was introduced by migrants from the United States. For instance, in Stith Mead’s 1807 songbook, *A General Selection of the Newest and Most Admired Hymns and Spiritual Songs Now in Use*, a hymn praising the spirituality of the Methodists ends with the lines, “I’m bound to march in endless bliss, and die a shouting

²⁵ There are traces of memories of the Americans among Trinidadians living in the Company Village areas. I met a septuagenarian man in Indian Walk, south Trinidad, who grew up in Sixth Company, who said his ancestors remembered that they came from Texas and Louisiana (*pers. comm.*, June 17, 2012). Another man, from Third Company, in his eighties, told me his grandmother would speak “American” in certain expressions, such as usage of the phrase “y’all” (*pers. comm.*, June, 20, 2012).

Methodist” (quoted in Hudson 1968, 73). Another hymn from that book included the following lines, apparently poking fun at the group: “The Methodists were preaching like thunder all about / At length I went amongst them, to hear them groan and shout / I thought they were distracted, such fools I’d never seen / They’d stamp and clap and tremble, and wail and cry and scream.”²⁶

A story in the *Farmer’s Gazette* from 1807 describes an interracial Methodist camp meeting in Hancock County, Georgia. According to the *Gazette* author, Jesse Lee, the meeting lasted from Tuesday night until Saturday morning, was attended by about 3,000 white and black people, and featured preaching with conversions lasting all through the night. Lee describes the first night, during which the white folks went to bed while “the meeting was continued by the black people.” On subsequent nights, however, the meetings went on “all night, both by the white and black people, and many souls were converted before day. ... three of the preachers fell helpless within the altar; and one lay a considerable time before he came to himself... It is thought by many people that they never saw a better Camp Meeting in Georgia” (quoted in Phillips 1910, 284-286). Such accounts, of people “falling,” “groaning,” and “shouting” during the course of worship, suggests a normalization of ecstatic religious practice as well as possession by the (Holy) Spirit, which would have been familiar to (and probably influenced by) the African cultural heritage of American slaves, and helps explain the adoption and perpetuation of this style of Christianity by African Americans.

In 1843, the British Baptist Missionary Society entered Trinidad, under the leadership of the Englishman George Cowan, with the aim of standardizing the Baptist faith there, weeding out “unruly” – read *African* – elements. The groups that accepted BMS leadership became known as London Baptists. Another group, rejecting that leadership, became the Independents.

²⁶ <http://lexloiz.wordpress.com/2010/02/18/hilarious-hymns-that-need-to-be-read-again-if-not-sung/>

The third group of Baptists, considered more African than the others, practiced a form of worship that was referred to in the 1890s as “Candle” or “Wayside” Baptism (for the tendency to hold roadside services with lit candles), and which laid the foundations of what would become “the Shouters,” or the Spiritual Baptist religion (Hackshaw 1990; Gibbs de Peza 1999). Shouting having been established among African American Baptists in the early 1800s, by the time Cowan arrived under the mantle of the BMS, he was complaining about worshippers’ “shouting and the manifestation of spirit possession” (Gibbs de Peza 1999, 22). Chronicles of Cowan’s BMS mission in Trinidad note the “difficulties” related to reining in the “African customs” of the Trinidad Baptists, described as backward and owing to a lack of European ‘civilization,’ such as the following 1952 recounting from the *Baptist Quarterly*, the journal of the UK-based Baptist Historical Society:

Many difficulties were encountered in the early days, due to the fact that for many years these settlers had lived in very isolated districts, and as a result, African customs and superstitions became incorporated in their religious belief. Camp meetings were occasions of much disorder and drunkenness, the all-night shouting meetings had also become a common feature. The nature of these meetings consisted in singing and clapping, while many would work themselves up in excitement, and begin to jump up violently and shout until they passed into a kind of epileptic fit and at length fall exhausted to the ground. (Poupard 1952, 234)

Despite potentially dubious accusations of drunkenness (the Trinidadian Baptists I know are very conservative about their consumption of alcohol), the description is very similar to Jesse Lee’s 1807 account of the Georgia camp meeting, including the practices of worshipping through the night and spirit possession behavior. It is ironic that some of these so-called “African customs” may have derived, in part, from the teachings of white Methodist preachers during the Second Great Awakening in America.

The full extent of the Yoruba-Baptist historical connection is not clear, but the two were linked at least from the 1930s (when Melville Herskovits noted an informant in Toco who

referred to Shango-Baptists). Certainly, the “Wayside” Baptists formed a component of the urban lower classes known as *jamettes* in post-1870 Trinidad (discussed later in the chapter).

Moreover, anthropologist Frances Henry claims that liberated African women were sent to the Company Villages in the 1830s, suggesting Yoruba-Baptist intermarriage existed early on. Papa Neezer, the Shango leader in south Trinidad in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, claimed his Yoruba lineage from a local elder named Ma Diamond. By the time of the first mention of a Shango-Baptist in scholarly literature, then, Yorubas and Baptists may have been connected for over one hundred years. At any rate, it is unsurprising that the two groups are intertwined in Trinidad’s past and present, given their similar musical/religious practices (spirit possession caused through singing and dancing), a similar place in the social order (the marginalized urban black proletariat), and each group’s combination of African and Christian spiritual practices.

After 1838: Immigration in the Post-Emancipation Period

Trinidad’s plantation network was less extensive than those of its Caribbean neighbors, and yet the island’s economy was based on agriculture, primarily sugar; thus emancipation portended a labor crisis, as suddenly Trinidad’s already under-utilized land was now without a captive laborer class. According to Ottley, the labor shortage in post-emancipation Trinidad was typical of the century, as “the evolution of Trinidad’s social structure and economic pattern, rests on the fact that there was an abundance of good land and little labor during the entire nineteenth century” (1974, 39). The dynamic – more land than available labor could handle – led to creative measures on the part of the plantocracy to introduce new laborers to Trinidad.²⁷ After

²⁷ During slavery, hampered by the British Empire’s slave trade restrictions, Trinidad planters smuggled slaves into the colony or otherwise circumvented regulations by exploiting loopholes. A similar land-over-labor situation existed in Guyana (Schuler 1991, 2).

emancipation, the planting class put pressure on Colonial authorities to encourage immigration of free laborers from several different sources. More Afro-Caribbeans were brought in, chiefly from other British West Indian islands, complementing the dominant French-Creole base with speakers of English-Creole. Next the British authorities imported free Africans, mainly recaptives from Sierra Leone, including the Oyo and surrounding ethnic groups who would make up the Trinidad Yoruba (discussed below). In smaller numbers, Europeans came from France, Germany, and Portugal, and Chinese as well. All of these groups were dwarfed by the numbers of East Indians immigrated as indentured laborers from 1845 to 1917.

Immigrant group	Years of entry	Number of immigrants
Liberated Africans	1837-1867	10,000
British West Indians	1839-1849	10,278
French and Germans	1839-1840	1,732
Portuguese from Madeira	1846	1,298
Chinese	1853-1856	2,645
East Indians	1845-1917	143,939
		<i>169,892 (total)</i>

2.2 Post-emancipation immigration to Trinidad, 1839-1917

As the numbers suggest, Trinidad experienced significant population growth in the nineteenth century. Post-Emancipation immigration transformed Trinidadian society: the numbers of immigrants – especially East Indians – vastly outnumbered the island’s total population in 1813 (37,833). By 1901, the total population of the country had grown to 255,148.²⁸ In addition to new streams of immigration, a key development in post-Emancipation Trinidad was a rural to urban migration, as former plantation workers sought work in urban centers around Port of Spain and San Fernando. From 1839 to 1851, for instance, the population of Port of Spain increased by 47 percent, from 11,701 to 17,205, and by 1891 it was 33,782 (Trotman 1986, 43 & 152).

²⁸ Today, the population of Trinidad and Tobago is around 1.3 million.

Given that East Indians comprised the largest ethnic group entering Trinidad in the nineteenth century, one might expect that they had some impact on nascent Trinidad Orisha culture (and some comment is warranted in that regard). However, East Indian influence on Trinidad Orisha seems to have been minimal, and in the research for this dissertation I have found no evidence of East Indian influence on Trinidad Orisha music (though East Indian rituals and ritual objects have been adopted by Orisha practitioners at least since the 1950s). The separateness of Afro- and Indo-Trinidadians was apparently the rule until the twentieth century (Clarke 1993). In the nineteenth century, according to Yelvington (1993, 7-9), though the East Indians faced an “extreme shortage of women,” the Afro- and Indo- populations did not intermarry²⁹ and they remained separated by occupation, geography, and negative stereotypes about each other.

The various immigrant groups created a remarkable level of diversity in nineteenth-century Trinidad. By the middle of the century, a contemporary observer wrote:

In fact, the population of Trinidad may be characterized as a heterogeneous collection of inhabitants of different countries – Congoes, Yarrabas, and Kroomen from Africa; Coolies and Chinese from Asia; Americans from the United States; Spaniards from Venezuela; emigrants from the British and French colonies, with a limited number of natives of Trinidad. (Verteuil 1858, 313-314)

In the following sections, I discuss the immigrant group whose cultural legacy is most deeply embodied in the Trinidad Orisha religion today: the “Yarrabas.”

²⁹ Wood writes, “As late as 1871 Dr. Henry Mitchell believed that no single instance existed among 9,000 male and female indentured laborers of cohabitation with a Negro,” an assertion supported by court records which “showed no cases in which sexual rivalry was the predominant motive for crime, although breaches of the peace caused through theft or drunkenness often took place between members of these groups” (1968, 138).

The Liberated Africans and the Trinidad Yoruba

The Orisha we have in Trinidad now, is not what they have in Nigeria now, because it comes from the grandfather, great grandfather.

Donald “Junior” Noel, Trinidad Orisha drummer (*pers. comm.*)

From 1837 to 1867, roughly 10,000 liberated African settlers came to Trinidad as indentured laborers in the post-emancipation labor vacuum.³⁰ A slightly higher number went to Jamaica, and nearly 14,000 went to British Guiana. Trotman asserts that a majority of these immigrants were Yoruba (1976, 2). In Trinidad, the new immigrants, arriving direct from Africa (after stopovers at colonies in Africa or the Caribbean), exerted a powerful cultural influence on the Afro-Creole population (Elder 1988). It is these immigrants to whom scholars have pointed as responsible for the development of Trinidad Orisha (Warner-Lewis 1991; Houk 1995; Trotman 2007).

A note about numbers: There is some discrepancy in the literature regarding the total number of liberated Africans arriving in Trinidad in the three decades or so after emancipation. Asiegbu (1969, 189) gives a detailed table for places of origin of liberated slaves and other Africans introduced into the West Indies between 1841 and 1867, showing a total of 36,120 arriving in British Guiana, Jamaica, Trinidad, and “Other Colonies.” His totals for Trinidad are 8,385 (including 879 arriving from Rio and Havana). Henry writes that “as many as 8,000 free Africans arrived in the country between 1841 and 1861” (2008, 3), while Brereton and Wood report that 6,581 liberated Africans came to Trinidad from Sierra Leone and St. Helena between the years of 1841 and 1861 (1981, 98; 1968, 80). But Asiegbu cautions against underestimating

³⁰ An Act of the British government in Grenada in May 1856 defined the term “liberated Africans” as follows: “For the purposes of this Act, the words ‘liberated Africans’ shall mean and include all persons dealt with or detained as slaves who heretofore have been or hereafter may be seized or taken under any of the Acts for the abolition or suppression of the Slave Trade by Her Majesty’s ships-of-war, or otherwise....”

the numbers (1969, 91), and so I follow both Trotman (1986, 26) and Warner-Lewis (1991, 14), who take a broader view and give larger numbers, each reporting figures over 10,000. Trotman and Warner-Lewis both take into account the total number of liberated Africans who arrived in Trinidad during a larger period under discussion (1837 to 1867), and acknowledge that the Africans came from various sources, some listed as “of unknown origin,” some “in ways which were marginally connected to the Sierra Leone-St. Helena traffic, if at all” (Warner-Lewis 1991, 14).

The emigration of liberated Africans to the West Indies is a combined result of changing economic priorities in the British Empire (Williams 1964; Asiegbu 1969), the abolition movement in Britain, and the impact of abolition in creating intense demand for fresh labor in Britain’s colonies. Prominent Trinidadian politician and historian Eric Williams (Prime Minister from 1956-1981) argued that Great Britain only seriously considered abolition after it lost America in 1783, and thus no longer controlled the economy of the Atlantic (Williams 1964). Ending its own slave economy in 1807, Britain had a commercial interest in blocking the slave trade of its European colonial rivals. Indeed, once Britain hatched its scheme of “free” African emigration, those rivals accused Britain of abolishing slavery only in word, not in actual fact, as the liberated Africans often had as little choice over their fates as slaves did.

Sierra Leone entered the picture as a result of the abolition movement. In 1787, British abolitionist activists (with the support of the British crown) acquired land in Sierra Leone for the resettlement of free blacks resident in London. In 1792, the settlement would be moved to the coastal city that became Freetown. Eventually added to the original black London settlers were American slaves who fought with the British in the American Revolution, and Jamaican Maroons from Nova Scotia. After the British outlawed the slave trade in 1807, the territory in

Sierra Leone became a landing place for slave-trade refugees. The liberated Africans, or “recaptives,” were intercepted by the British Naval Preventative Squadron in West Africa and the Caribbean. After 1807, anti-slave trade vessels³¹ halted 1,799 of 6,921 total known slaving voyages, freeing 160,000 Africans in the process.³² The Africans liberated off the coast of West Africa were settled in Sierra Leone and, after 1840, St. Helena; those intercepted in the Caribbean were brought to Cuba or Brazil,³³ where they were known as *emancipados*. Trinidad received over 2,000 *emancipados* from Cuba and Brazil between 1833 and 1849. (The *emancipados* were liberated Africans from Africa, not Cuban or Brazilian slaves³⁴.)

In the Sierra Leone settlement, the liberated Africans were housed in wooden buildings in an area called the King’s Yard, “the gate of which bore the inscription ‘Royal Hospital and Asylum for Africans rescued from slavery by British Valour and Philanthropy’” (Asiegbu 1969,

³¹ The British Navy was eventually joined by French, American, and Portuguese fleets, but the British were responsible for all but a few slaver interceptions.

³² The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, “The Abolition of the Slave Trade.” abolition.nypl.org/essays/suppression. Accessed Aug. 22, 2012.

³³ Brazil received Yoruba refugees in the nineteenth century (Drewal 1989), and by 1860 11,000 “recaptives” – slaves on “illegal” ships intercepted by the British Navy after 1807 – had been sent to Cuba (Cohen 2009, 208).

³⁴ Regarding the somewhat peculiar situation of the *emancipados*: Following its 1807 abolition of the slave trade, Britain pursued treaties with rival nations to suppress the slave trade internationally. The British government paid Spain and Portugal each several hundred thousand pounds to stop slave importation, then forced them into signing treaties agreeing to end illegal slave trading. To enforce the treaties, the British, Spanish, and Portuguese set up bilateral mixed commissions in Rio de Janeiro and Havana. These commissions, “established to judge illegal traffickers in slaves, would also have the power to liberate Africans found aboard the ships which it condemned” (Conrad 1983, 51). According to Asiegbu: “Worried that these *emancipados* might be enslaved again if left in Cuba, Britain agreed in 1832 for Trinidad to receive and apprentice them, with great care for their welfare and proper treatment” (1969, 50). As Britain accelerated the importation of liberated African labor into its West Indian colonies, the other European powers charged the British with continuing slavery, only under a different name. Fed up with what they thought of as hypocritical anti-slaving treaties, Cuba and Brazil cancelled the mixed commission courts, ignored the treaties, and ramped up slave importation in the 1850s.

25). Between 1808 and 1830, according to census data, 33,595 Africans had been liberated and resettled in Freetown (Asiegbu 1969, 28). After 1840, the British also sent liberated Africans (over 15,000) to its newly acquired south Atlantic island, St. Helena.

Though intercepting slaving vessels began as an effort to stop the import of Africans to the Americas, British plans for the liberated Africans changed in the 1830s. Given the large numbers of liberated Africans in its African colonies, and the sudden labor vacuum in the Caribbean created by full emancipation in 1838, West Indian planters pressured the British to import the liberated Africans as a source of West Indian labor. By the 1830s, the British government developed a formal plan to emigrate the African recaptives to the West Indies. Jamaica, British Guiana, and Trinidad all had recruiting agents stationed in Sierra Leone. In the first few years of this emigration, the Africans were enticed to move to the West Indies by being offered a return trip to Africa following a period of indenture lasting from one to three years (Trotman 1976, 6). The indenture period was later extended to five years (Asiegbu 1969, 154). In practice, repatriation of the liberated Africans was rare. In Guyana, the government paid for the repatriation of only 573 Africans between 1843 and 1853 (Schuler 1991, 12). The Trinidadian government apparently paid for no return voyages from Trinidad (Warner-Lewis 1991, 15). As the years went on and the residents of Sierra Leone and St. Helena became skeptical of the agents' promises of return, British authorities moved from a policy of enticement to coercion, and by 1844 the liberated Africans were no longer settled in Sierra Leone but rather, in many cases, transferred directly to the West Indies upon recapture.

Maureen Warner-Lewis writes that many of the liberated Africans brought to the West Indies were:

... adepts of the Yoruba imperial religion. This indicates that they hailed from Oyo itself, as well as from other royalist sub-groups closely incorporated into a brotherhood of

Yoruba kingdoms acknowledging Oyo as their political center. ... Clearly, with the intensification of internal power struggles among these confederate sub-kingdoms, their own citizens increasingly became captives in internecine wars and sold into slavery. (Warner-Lewis 1991, 6)

Oyo was known for its worship of the spirit Shango, making clear the importance of Shango worship in Trinidad.

The Oyo Empire originated at some point in the thirteenth century and continued through to the eighteenth. The Oyo people and surrounding ethnic groups (e.g. Ijesha, Ijebu, Egba, and Egbado) spoke similar dialects that came to be grouped under the unifying label “Yoruba” in the nineteenth century (Matory 2005). The term “Yoruba” or “Yaraba” was “the Hausa designation for the Oyo people. That term later came to be used by Europeans to describe speakers of the cluster of languages which were recognizably cognate with the Oyo dialect” (Warner-Lewis 1991, 20).³⁵ Beginning in the sixteenth century, Oyo developed a dominion over most surrounding peoples, and the height of its power came when it established dominance over its chief rival Dahomey in the middle decades of the 1700s. The Oyo had a king, called an Alafin (the *orisha* Shango is said to have been the third Alafin), who ruled from an elaborate palace structure in Oyo Ile, which at its height had a population of perhaps 50,000. Ironically, most of the Alafin’s wealth came from the collection of trade tariffs on slaves (Lloyd 1971), and it was the collapse of the slave trade that helped bring about the Oyo’s decline.

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, around the time that the British established Freetown in Sierra Leone, the Oyo suffered several military defeats at the hands of rival African groups, including the Borgu, Nupe, Egba, Fulani, and Hausa. When the English and French curtailed the slave trade in 1807, depriving Oyo of its major source of income, the empire crumbled. The final

³⁵ Other European names for these peoples included Lucumí (Cuba), Aku (Sierra Leone), Nagô (Brazil). In Trinidad they were usually called “Yaraba.”

nail in the coffin came in the 1830s when the Fulani destroyed the, by now, nearly deserted capital of Oyo Ile. In the aftermath, Oyo subgroups splintered into three main rival states, Ibadan, Abeokuta, and Ilorin. The latter of these became dominated by Muslim groups of Hausa and, especially, Fulani, and by the end of that century the English had instituted a colonial government in present-day Nigeria (see Lloyd 1971).

In Trinidad, the free African immigrants tended to form ethnic enclaves where they were able “to attempt to transfer and to recreate some of their cultural institutions,” including “kinship, religious, and secular patterns” (Trotman 1986, 27). The recreation of such patterns led to the development of Trinidad Orisha music and culture. Brereton describes the Africans who came directly from Africa to Trinidad, writing that:

... they were not Christians and their tribal customs and culture were still strong. Since they spoke no English and knew little of European life, they tended to settle with their own countrymen in African settlements in Trinidad, and these Africans remained separate and distinct from the Creole population all through the nineteenth century. (Brereton 1981, 98)

By 1858, there were “at least two Yoruba-speaking villages” among the African settlements (Cohen 2009, 212). Later, Yoruba villages included Caratal, Carapichaima, Gasparillo, Oropuche, Princes Town, Third and Fifth Company Villages, Claxton Bay, Couva, Freeport, Arouca, Tunapuna, St. Joseph, Cocorite, Carenage, Petit Valley, Sierra Leone Village, Laventille and East Dry River (Warner-Lewis 1994, 7).³⁶

The word Yarraba was used at least by the 1850s in Trinidad, when they were described by a contemporary observer, Louis A. de Verteuil. A French-Creole born in Trinidad, educated as an M.D. in France, de Verteuil wrote a book in 1858 titled *Trinidad: Its Geography, Natural*

³⁶ Also, in 1855, the Antoine family of Rada people (from Dahomey) had settled in Belmont.

Resources, Administration, Present Condition, and Prospects,³⁷ which included a chapter on Trinidad's people, including attempts at ethnography. Discussing the new arrivals, de Verteuil wrote:

Newly imported Africans are, generally speaking, industrious and laborious, but avaricious, passionate, prejudiced, suspicious, many of them still adhering to heathenish practices. The Yarrihas or Yarrabas deserve a particular notice. They are a fine race, tall and well proportioned; some of them with fine features, intelligent, reflective, and can appreciate the benefits of civilisation and Christianity. They are laborious, usually working for day-wages on estates, but preferring job-work. The women are mostly occupied in petty trade and huckstering; some also in the culture of ground provisions: their houses are comfortable, and kept in perfect order within. In character they are generally honest, and in disposition proud, and even haughty; so that the cases are rare where a Yarraba is brought before the magistrate for theft, breach of contract, or other misdemeanor. They are besides guided, in a marked degree, by the sense of association; and the principle of combination for the common weal has been fully sustained wherever they have settled in any numbers; in fact, the whole Yarraba family in the colony may be said to form a sort of social league for mutual support and protection. (Verteuil 1884, 158-159)

The “Yarrabas” clearly stood out among the immigrant groups, and notwithstanding the essentialist and biological descriptions above, they appeared to set themselves apart by their sense of community and their “proud” disposition, especially in relation to other African ethnic groups. Similar stereotypical features were mentioned about Yoruba communities by Colonial observers in nineteenth-century Sierra Leone and Bahia, Brazil (Cohen 2009, 211-212), and in Guyana (Schuler 1991, 4). Warner-Lewis refers to the Trinidad Yorubas’ “ethnic prejudice,” which “appears to be in some measure related to the political complexity of Yoruba imperial organization.... The Yoruba also possessed a deistic pantheon of a complexity which finds no equal on the African continent” (1991, 22-23). The newly-arrived Yoruba would have remembered belonging to a great civilization, one believed to have ruled over its neighbors in West Africa for centuries; they were proud – apparently to the point of condescension – of their

³⁷ Donald Wood calls de Verteuil's work “The only important book to come from a Trinidadian during this [post-Emancipation] period” (1968, 250).

society which distinguished itself with highly developed religion, music, and art (on the latter, see Thompson 1983). It is likely that Yoruba parents imbued their children with a sense of superiority from birth.

The sense of distinction and separateness was undoubtedly a key factor in the Yorubas' ability to make such a profound and lasting impact on several New World societies, from Cuba, to Brazil, to Trinidad. The timing of their arrival, within the context of the vicissitudes of the Atlantic slave trade, was also important: Yorubas were among the last Africans to arrive in the New World, they came in relatively large numbers, and they came largely as free people. Thus, their success at continuing several important aspects of their culture, especially – for the topic here at hand – their music, most importantly the sacred drums, rhythms, and songs for their spirits, the *orishas*.

In the 1950s, some Orisha leaders in Trinidad traced their lineages back to liberated African settlers, such as Mother Bea (in Couva) and Ma Diamond (in Fifth Company Village) both of whom had grandmothers reputed to be liberated African settlers in nineteenth-century Trinidad (Henry 2008). Many of Warner-Lewis's informants between 1966 and 1972 spoke of Yoruba grandparents who came to Trinidad as free people (1991). Some of these informants remembered hearing their elders speak about a place called "sa lion" (presumably Sierra Leone) though they didn't know what it meant (1991, 8). Today, the Yoruba loom large in the Afro-Trinidadian cultural landscape and imagination. If you drive east of Port of Spain, for example, upon entering Laventille, you will be greeted by a sign that reads "Welcome to Yoruba Village," a visible reminder of the people who settled in Trinidad in the nineteenth century, enriching a culture with their musical, religious, and other cultural practices.

Understanding the Yoruba Assimilation into Afro-Trinidadian Society

While the Yorubas formed ethnic enclaves, it is also clear that they intermarried with other Afro-Trinidadian groups in Trinidad. These intermarriages are the source of syncretism and creolization of Yoruba and Christian practices (Warner-Lewis 1996). As shown above, the Afro-Trinidadian culture was French-Creole and Catholic before the arrival of the liberated Africans, and Yoruba-Catholic marriages provide an explanation for the linking of *orishas* and saints. Henry (2008) suggests that Yorubas married Baptists early on as well. It is also possible that Yorubas allied their religion with Catholicism out of pragmatism, given Catholicism's cultural dominance. However, the Yorubas were proud of their Oyo religion (Warner-Lewis 1991), and they adopted Catholicism *in addition to* Orisha veneration, not to its exclusion. When Shango became St. John the Baptist, Shango did not disappear.

Additionally, it is clear that the Yorubas came from a proud musical tradition marked by a well-defined repertoire of songs, call-and-response singing, and polyrhythmic drumming. Based on the key Yoruba elements in Trinidad Orisha music today (see chapter five), I believe that the Yorubas were able to adopt aspects of dominant Afro-Trinidadian culture (e.g. Catholicism and French-Creole language) while simultaneously retaining important aspects of their own cultural practices. By allying themselves with the French-Creole masses in Trinidad, the Trinidad Yorubas created a cultural flowering much greater than the seeds of a few thousand liberated African immigrants scattered over three decades of the mid-nineteenth century.

In the next section, I discuss the formation of the marginalized lower class – the *jamette* – of which the Trinidad Yoruba formed a key component.

After 1870: Yorubas, *Jamettes*, and Criminalizing African Culture in Trinidad

Scholars point to roughly 1870 as yet another key turning point in Trinidadian history (Wood 1968; Trotman 1986; Cowley 1998). In the 1860s British administrators began relinquishing control of the island to local elites (i.e. large property interests: planters and merchants), for example, in 1862 Trinidad's Legislative Council granted a majority to the so-called Unofficials – basically local private citizens in the plantocracy. Shaped by this increased political involvement of local elites, the post-1870 political landscape in Trinidad was characterized by the opposition of, at various times and in multiple ways, white and black, French and British, elite and proletariat. As local elite society moved forward with a conception of national culture based on models of European civilization, blacks in Trinidad were pushed into slums around Port of Spain, forming a large urban proletariat whose living conditions were marked by violence and increasing criminalization. This urban proletariat became known as the *jamette*, or *diametre*, referring to their status at the margins of society.

According to John Cowley's history of Carnival, the marginalization of these lower classes, and the attendant increasing violence, was due in large part to an "economic depression in the Eastern Caribbean." Cowley writes that this depression

... encouraged migration from smaller islands (including Barbados) and increased pressure on accommodation, jobs and all other aspects of survival among the poor in Trinidad. Unfortunates were seen as an incomprehensible underworld, and feared and loathed accordingly. Thus the *diametre* came to be made up of stickmen, singers, drummers, dancers, prostitutes (another meaning of *jamette*), *bad johns* (swashbucklers), *matadors* (madams), *dunois* (*jamette* rowdys), *makos* (panders), obeahmen (practitioners of magic) and corner boys. All were associated with a culture that revolved around the barrack-tenement yards of Port of Spain and similar locations elsewhere in the island. Migrant groups competed with one another, and more established settlers, for territory. At the same time, the *diametre* flaunted themselves (especially during the masquerade) to sustain their identity and draw attention to their plight in a society in which they were decried. (Cowley 1996, 72)

As Cowley suggests, elite interaction with the *jamettes* was most pronounced during the annual Carnival (the “masquerade”), and the social mixture often resulted in explosive violence, most exemplified by the Carnival-time rioting of 1881 and 1884 (the so-called Canboulay and Hosay Riots). Due to elite fears of the *jamette*, and the disruption they represented to elite conceptions of “social order,” the last three decades of the nineteenth century are marked by legislation aimed at regulating the lives and cultural practices of the lower classes, including laws against Obeah (1868) and restrictions on drumming (1883). And though the Orisha religion was never explicitly banned in Trinidad, there were two main areas of legislation that could have impacted its religious and musical practices. The first concerned laws restricting the practice of Obeah, while the second was related to restrictions on public processions and late night drumming.

Obeah, which predates Orisha in Trinidad, was likely introduced into Trinidad by Afro-Caribbeans from other islands in the post-1783 immigration discussed earlier, and the restrictions against it began long before the class restrictions at the end of the nineteenth century.

Throughout the Anglophone Caribbean, Obeah³⁸ was a general term for various folk religious and medicinal³⁹ practices, and it was explicitly prohibited by various Slave Codes. Trinidad’s first British Governor, Thomas Picton (Governor from 1797-1802), modeled the Trinidad Slave Code of 1800 on Jamaican law, stipulating the following regulations (quoted in John 1988, 215):

Any Negro who shall assume the reputation of being a spell-doctor or obeah-man, and shall be found with an amulet, a fetishe, or the customary attributes and ingredients of the profession, shall be carried before the Commandant of the District, who will take cognizance of the accusation; and provided the crime be not capital, inflict proper punishment; but should it appear probable that the culprit has been the cause of death of any person by his prescriptions (as very frequently happens), the Commandant will then

³⁸ According to Elder, “The Ashanti are held to have introduced *Obeah* (Obayifor) or witchcraft and divining with sensey (*asense*) fowl and the Anancy tales (Spider) into the Caribbean” (1988, 35). The Ashanti origins of the term have been challenged, though (see Bilby and Handler 2004).

³⁹ See Handler 2000.

transmit him to the common gaol, as a criminal, to be prosecuted and dealt with according to law.⁴⁰

In *The Loss of El Dorado: A Colonial History*, Naipaul writes that the French planters in Trinidad feared African “sorcery” more than anything, a terror of “the African darkness that might overwhelm them all: powder turning to insects to ravage a plantation, charms killing the canes, money turning to dung, Negroes dying in convulsions, the world ending in blood and flames” (1969, 184). European fears about obeah and African religious practices lasted well into the twentieth century, when even supposedly objective scholars published folkloric accounts which sensationalized second- and third-hand accounts of blacks snatching white children for cannibalistic rituals (e.g. Udal 1915).

Obeah laws in the Caribbean are closely tied to Colonial fears of rebellion. For instance, the 1760 Jamaican law against Obeah came on the heels of a slave revolt on that island – “Tacky’s rebellion” – and was in concert with a new policy of “de-Africanization” on the part of planters, at least one of whom destroyed the musical instruments of his slaves in connection with that policy (Burton 1997, 26). Trinidadian planters were no doubt fearful of a similar revolt on their own territory. Moreover, we should remember that most of those planters came from the revolution-engulfed French Caribbean islands, where, especially in the years 1789-1793, slaves and free blacks in Martinique, Guadeloupe, Saint Lucia, Dominica, Louisiana – and most notably Haiti – staged revolts that served as ominous reminders of the fragility of European rule in the Caribbean.⁴¹

⁴⁰ The Code contained sixteen Articles in total, including gruesome instructions for punishments: floggings were to be limited to thirty-nine lashes per day, unless the “crime” of the slave “be of a nature to deserve a severer chastisement” (John 1988, 214).

⁴¹ See table in Geggus 1997, pp. 46-49.

Obeah was still a concern of Trinidadian elites by the 1860s, when the Legislature's new local majority – which represented the interests of the merchant and planter classes – passed Ordinance 6 in 1868.⁴² This bill made it illegal for “every person who by the practice of Obeah or by any occult means or by any assumption of supernatural power or knowledge shall – obtain or endeavor to obtain any chattel, money or valuable security from any other person” (quoted in Forde 2012, 216-217). Following the 1868 law, Trotman reports that arrests for Obeah between 1875 and 1899 totaled thirty-nine persons, with the highest concentration (fourteen) being arrested between 1885 and 1889 (1986, 300). The 1868 Ordinance remained in effect and enforced into the twentieth century, and Forde counts another forty-five people charged with the offense from 1900 to 1930 (2012, 217 n.28).

Anthropologist Maarit Forde (2012) makes the case that Obeah in Trinidad must be understood as firmly situated within the developing industrial capitalist economy. Indeed, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the primary reason Trinidadians sought out (and paid for the services of) Obeah-men was for help with “work-related worries and aspirations” (Forde 2012, 203).⁴³ In the context of the economic depression and related marginalization of the black proletariat around 1870 in Trinidad, Obeah can then be seen as closely connected with money in two ways: in terms of the economic and labor concerns of Obeah clients, and in terms of Obeah as a viable profession for practitioners. Considering that convictions of Obeah

⁴² Guyana had passed a similar legislation in 1855 (Schuler 1991, 9).

⁴³ For example, on September 2, 1917 the *Trinidad Guardian* ran a story titled “Magic Out of a Hat: Another Obeah Case; Tobago Man's Visit to a Wizard.” The article describes the case of two men charged with “larceny” when a third man paid them a few dollars allegedly to improve his work prospects. Inspectors on the scene of the obeah house found a candle in a sardine tin, a small piece of paper with three names and \$634.18 written on it, a box of cards, a “book of hypnotism,” and a white handkerchief with red spots on it. The two defendants were charged with six months of hard labor, and lectured that they should know how to “keep out of the Obeah Ordinance.” (Source: University of the West Indies at St. Augustine, West Indiana and Special Collections Room, newspaper microfilm archive.)

practitioners were usually related to taking money under “false pretenses” (i.e. larceny), the late-nineteenth century preoccupation with Obeah on the part of the Trinidadian criminal justice system can be seen as an attempt at regulation of the emerging labor economy in Trinidad.⁴⁴

It is likely that nineteenth-century Orisha practitioners faced some level of official harassment due to Obeah legislation, even if Orisha itself was never explicitly outlawed. As Trotman points out, nineteenth-century authorities “made little distinction between formal African religion and Obeah when trying to eradicate the latter. In the process, they criminalized and undermined all African⁴⁵ religious practices” (1986, 223). For example, the culturally similar Radas (of Dahomean derivation) had several members who were “prosecuted and often convicted of obeah” following the 1868 Obeah legislation (Breton 1981, 134).

A notable Obeah case (Trotman 1986, 224-226) was brought against John Cooper (né Hon Quervee), who happened to be the brother of Papa Nanee, the prominent leader of the Radas.⁴⁶ On November 25, 1871, a police Constable found Cooper carrying a bag with two chickens, a bottle of rum, a bottle of sweet oil, a piece of bone, some powder, and some shells; the Constable arrested Cooper “on suspicion of fowl stealing.” He was brought into police custody, where a higher official dropped the theft charge and instead accused Cooper of Obeah, and a judge sentenced him to “six months of hard labor and twenty strokes of the cat-o’-nine tails,” the latter of which he received within two days. The punishment of hard labor he was able

⁴⁴ For more on the topic of Obeah, see Maarit Forde and Diana Paton, eds. 2012. *Obeah and Other Powers: the Politics of Caribbean Religion and Healing*. Durham: Duke University Press.

⁴⁵ Obeah was a broad legal category concerned with the procurement of payment for a range of “supernatural” services, not restricted to Afro-Trinidadian cultural practices; many Indo-Trinidadians were also prosecuted under this legal framework (Forde 2012, 205).

⁴⁶ The Radas, who lived on the outskirts of Port of Spain in the neighborhood of Belmont (which is adjacent to the Yoruba areas of Laventille and East Dry River), were among the liberated Africans arriving in nineteenth-century Trinidad. In Trinidad, their most prominent leader was ‘Papa Nanee’ (né Abojevi Zahwenu; French name: Robert Antoine).

to appeal and have dropped. Trotman writes: “There were no witnesses at the trial or at Cooper’s interrogation. The police claimed that Cooper voluntarily and repeatedly confessed that his father practised Obeah and that he was himself a practitioner and was looked upon by his countrymen as an Obeah man” (1986, 225-6). Perhaps Cooper did claim these things, in defiance of his arrest, or in honesty, or perhaps the police fabricated the confession. Either way, it is clear that openly practicing African religion in Trinidad in the latter decades of the nineteenth century could be perilous, and that, for blacks, post-emancipation life in Trinidad, with its cultural repression and corporal punishment, must have often seemed somewhat undifferentiated from slavery.

The 1868 Obeah legislation in Trinidad went hand in hand with laws restricting other African cultural practices. Total arrests and convictions in the final decades of the nineteenth century were dominated by offenses in the category “Social Order,” involving the behavior of individuals in Trinidadian society. In addition to Obeah arrests, these offenses were categorized as “indecent behavior,” “obscene and profane language,” “drunk and disorderly,” “disturbing divine worship,” “carnival regulations,” “incorrigible rogues,” “gambling,” “prostitution,” and crimes associated with drumming and dance. Between 1880 and 1889, one hundred eleven persons were arrested for the offence of “dancing to and beating drum” (Trotman 1986, 300).

An ultimately unpopular piece of legislation referred to as the “Music Bill” was passed by Governor Sir Stanford Freeling in 1883 and severely restricted drumming. Gov. Freeling was responding to complaints about East Indian drumming around the St. James Barracks (reminding us that Indo- and Afro-Trinidadians alike were part of the lower class “problem” in elite eyes). Drums were prohibited after 10pm and could legally only be played between 6am and 10pm by applying for and receiving a permit. European instruments, such as violins, “could be played

freely between 6am and 10pm, and by license after 10pm” (Brereton 1979, 161). This law was repealed due to public opposition, notably from the *Port of Spain Gazette*, and later in 1883 was replaced by Ordinance 11. The new Ordinance allowed drumming after 10pm, but only after acquiring a permit.⁴⁷ Another provision in the new Ordinance made illegal the assembly of individuals who had already been convicted of a crime, which “virtually prohibited the assembling of the lower classes” (Trotman 1986, 265) due to the fact that so many people had been previously convicted in the colonial system of justice. “With this weapon in their hands,” writes Trotman, “the police could raid even religious gatherings, especially those like Shango that required drums, and be sure of holding in their nets a fair number of participants” (1986, 267).

Thus while the Orisha religion itself was never explicitly banned or made illegal, authorities had many tools at their disposal to harass and disrupt a gathering of lower class Afro-Trinidadians, perhaps explaining why Trinidad Orisha practitioners often say “it used to be illegal” when discussing Orisha’s history. One conversation I had with an Orisha drummer is revealing of this sense of repression in Trinidad Orisha’s past. Talking with Jeff, a middle-aged drummer who lives in Port of Spain, I mentioned that Orisha drums in Trinidad look like the *bembe* drums used by the Yoruba in Nigeria, suggesting a possible point of origin for the Trinidadian drums. Jeff agreed, saying “yeah, but they [the Nigerian drums] are bigger.” He went on to explain that Trinidadians made their *bembe*-style drums smaller than the ones in Africa so that they could be easily hidden. If word came that police were planning a raid, the drums could be buried in the backyard, or hid in a closet, and recovered again when the danger had passed.

⁴⁷ An informant named Mr. Burton told me that Papa Neezer had to request a permit to hold his feasts in the 1940s and ‘50s – yet Burton noted the process was fairly routine, and that Neezer never had any trouble with authorities (personal interview, June 2012). Neezer is discussed later in this chapter.

Given stories in the Caribbean of blacks having their instruments smashed by slave masters and others (Burton 1997, 26), Jeff's explanation points to valid concerns about protecting instruments which are, on the one hand, sacred, and also time-consuming to make (hollowing out a log for a drum takes many hours, as does drying goat skins for the heads), and which could also have an individual taken into police custody for lack of a permit.

Following on the heels of the 1883 music legislation, in 1884 Trinidadian officials would pass legislation that effectively ended street processions with drumming, largely in response to the Canboulay riots of 1881 (in Port of Spain) and 1884 (in Princes Town), which were followed by the Hosay⁴⁸ riots of 1884 (in San Fernando). Canboulay was a pre-Carnival procession in which *bands* (i.e. groups, or gangs) of lower class men and women, often affiliated along ethnic lines, according to neighborhood, or other affiliation, would march through the streets of cities and towns with lighted torches, playing drums and singing songs. The Yorubas banded together, for instance, as did the Congos, Dahomeans, and West Indians from other colonies (Trotman 1986, 168-9). When rival bands met, violent clashes ensued, giving stickfighters the chance to show off their fight-dancing skills, and *chantwells* (singers) the chance to demonstrate their own adeptness at the verbal dexterity needed to poke fun at their rivals, a technique called *picong* in Trinidad. When police intervened in these rivalries, they were often attacked as well, as happened most famously when police Captain Arthur Baker instigated riots by setting out to restrict the Canboulay processions in the 1880s. The Canboulay Riots of 1881 and 1884 are currently commemorated each year in a dramatic reenactment on Carnival Friday in Trinidad.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Hosay is an Indo-Trinidadian reinterpretation of the Muslim holiday of Muharram.

⁴⁹ In 2010, for instance, I witnessed the Canboulay reenactment on Piccadilly Street in Port of Spain, which included a score of drummers, led by Donald "Junior" Noel, along with dozens of actors performing a script by the cultural activist Eintou Pearl Springer, and a young white man with blond hair in the role of the story's villain, Captain Baker.

Following the 1881 Canboulay riots against police repression, the masses actually received public support from anti-government segments of elite society, and the editors of all four major newspapers in Trinidad came out against Captain Baker. Brereton writes:

Though the editors, and the people they spoke for, generally disliked many features of the “jamette carnival,” including Canboulay, they strongly resented any attempt by the colonial government to interfere by force. This was especially the view of the French Creole elite and the mixed-race Creoles, who recognized that Carnival, with all its perceived objectionable elements, was a core expression of Trinidad’s “creoleness.”⁵⁰

The apparently unlikely alliance of French Creole elites with the Afro-Trinidadian masses points to the Anglo/Protestant-French/Catholic struggle for cultural dominance in nineteenth-century Trinidad. While British officials attempted to establish the English language and Protestant values in Trinidad, the majority of the population spoke French or French-Creole and was Catholic. The French elites felt the need to defend the Catholic-derived Carnival against Anglicization efforts, hence their defense of the right of the *jamettes* to parade through the streets. Trotman (1976) posits that such French-African alliances may help to explain why Orisha flourished in Trinidad, whereas Yoruba religion never developed among the more numerous Yorubas in the mainly Anglo-Protestant Guyana.

Despite the momentary alliance of elites and lower classes, the violence of Canboulay continued after 1881. Private homes were occasionally pelted with rocks and other projectiles as singing, dancing, and drumming *jamettes* moved through the streets, and Baker eventually gained the support necessary to stop Canboulay in 1884 – even as rioters clashed with police one last time in the southern Princes Town. Though French-Creole elites might temporarily side with the poor masses for certain political ends (e.g. opposition of English cultural hegemony), in the

⁵⁰ Trinidad Express, “The Captain and the Canboulay” (Feb. 1, 2012): http://www.trinidadexpress.com/commentaries/The_Captain_and_the_Canboulay-138535149.html. Accessed June 2, 2013.

end the elites felt that the “therapeutic value and the social-control possibilities of carnival took second place to the very real potential of class and race revolt in the nineteenth-century plantation society” (Trotman 1986, 269).

The legislation sounding Canboulay’s death knell was the 1884 Peace Preservation Ordinance. This legislation “empowered the Government to prohibit by proclamation torch processions, drumming, dances, and assemblies of ten or more persons with sticks” (Stuempfle 1995, 22). In terms of its impact on music, this law negatively impacted public displays of percussion, especially Carnival drumming and stickfighting music (known as *kalenda*); creative percussionists soon began stamping and striking bamboo tubes, known as *tambooo bamboo* (and such ingenuity would eventually lead to the invention of the steel pan). Meanwhile, ethnomusicologist Stephen Stuempfle claims that these laws did not eradicate non-public musical events, as some drumming “continued to exist, particularly at more private sacred and secular occasions such as *Orisha (Shango)* feasts and *beles*” (ibid., 23), though they required a permit. Likewise, stickfighting continued in private yards, while it was now largely kept off of Trinidad’s streets (ibid.).

Trinidad Orisha may have been insulated from more overt repression due to several factors, including its associations with Catholicism (giving it the defense of the Afro-French alliance), which is a key reason for the perpetuation of Yoruba-derived religion and music, in the form of Trinidad Orisha, into the 20th century (and beyond). Additionally, Orisha ceremonies took place in private yards, in the middle of the night. For elites concerned with maintaining law and order in post-1870 Trinidad, private ritual drumming was not nearly as threatening as bands of stickmen roving through the streets, drumming and throwing rocks at “respectable” houses, and the contrasting contexts may explain why Orisha was, comparatively speaking, left alone.

Orisha in the Early Twentieth Century

In this section, I outline selected historical moments and key individuals related to Trinidad Orisha music and culture in the twentieth century, in order to demonstrate a shift in social attitudes, in Trinidad, towards African-derived culture generally, and more specifically Orisha, or Shango as it was more commonly called at the time.⁵¹ First I describe the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance (1917-1951) as a continuation of criminalization policies of the previous century, and the derogatory attitudes of Trinidad's popular singers (calypsonians) towards African religious practices in the 1930s. But if the century began with mainstream ridicule directed towards Orisha, attitudes eventually became more respectful, as represented by the work of local folklorists (Beryl McBurnie) and musicians (Andrew Beddoe), and foreign scholars (Melville and Frances Herskovits, Frances Mischel, and George Simpson).

Additionally, I explain how key individuals assured that Trinidad Orisha music and culture were transmitted via oral culture, connecting the history of Trinidad Orisha, as described above, with the present era as I have studied it in the ethnomusicological research for this dissertation. Though it might be assumed that the relatively largest cultural groups have the most cultural impact on a society, it can often be the case that certain charismatic and influential individuals are responsible for large-scale cultural dissemination.

The Shouter/Spiritual Baptist faith was banned outright from 1917 until 1951 under the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance, a legislation modeled after the 1912 Shakers Prohibition Ordinance on the nearby island of St. Vincent. As reported in the *Guardian* on Saturday, Nov. 17, 1917, the Trinidadian Attorney General "declared it was very far from the desire of the Government to do anything which interfered with the liberty of the subject or the right of the

⁵¹ Considering the historically rooted nature of this chapter, I generally use the term Shango to refer to Trinidad Orisha.

individual to choose the way in which he should worship,” but the alleged “shouting and singing and noise” of Baptist services led to complaints that “rest or occupation was made absolutely impossible” anywhere near such a meeting. The *Guardian* reporter went on to explain that, in addition to noise disturbances, the ban arose also from “the fact that from information the speaker [the Attorney General] had received the practices indulged in are not such as should be tolerated in a well-conducted community.”⁵² Some of the “complaints” and “information” offered to the government may have come from other Trinidadian Baptists (those not of the Shouter/Spiritual Baptist variety): according to Rommen, the London and Independent Baptists “convinced the government of Trinidad and Tobago to pass the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance ... to reduce the public visibility of the Spiritual Baptists” (2007, 178, n. 24).

In terms of the historical narrative presented here, the Shouters ban serves as a clear continuation of policies criminalizing Afro-Trinidadian cultural practices by Trinidad’s government in the late nineteenth century. While those policies of the previous century were aimed at social control and the prevention of lower class rebellion, the language of the Shouters ban – and Rommen’s suggestion of the role of other Baptists in pushing for the ban – suggests a different focus, one more concerned with “respectability” than with potential social revolution. In the racist ideas of the time, “African” cultural practices were seen as savage and backward – not fitting of “a well-conducted community” – to such an extent that even related Baptist groups apparently felt strongly compelled to distance their own (ostensibly more “European”) worship style from that of the Shouters.

This mainstream attitude of scorn and misunderstanding towards perceived “African” practices is well-represented in the popular music of the time, calypso. According to calypso

⁵² Source: University of the West Indies at St. Augustine, West Indiana and Special Collections Room, newspaper microfilm archive.

historian Gordon Rohlehr (1990, 152), there were many calypsos of the 1930s that either referenced “Shango” in title or subject matter, by artists such as Lion (“Shango Dance”), Beginner (“I Didn't Know She Was Queen of the Shango,” 1937), and Tiger (“Yaraba Shango,” 1936). While calypsonians often poked fun and directed ridicule at Shango, Rohlehr also points out that many of these calypsos were not necessarily portraying Shango in a negative light. Often, the songs simply present Shango as exotic, such as Cobra's “Shango Song” (1937), in which Cobra, quoting Orisha chants such as “Oken Onie Ray” (“Ogun Onire”) and describing spirit possessions, “is not hostile towards Orisha worship, but shows little understanding of it” (ibid., 154).

Rounder Records' *Shango, Shouter, and Obeah* is a compilation of calypsos from 1934 to 1940 dealing with the three eponymously named subjects. Most of the 26 tracks deal with one of the three, though the song “Three Friends' Advice” (1937) by The Executor lightly mocks all three, describing the ritual implements and practices of Shango, Shouter, and Obeah in exoticized terms. In addition to revealing the attitudes directed at these practices by calypsonians (and by mainstream society in general), Executor's calypso also suggests the extent to which Afro-Trinidadian cultural practices such as Shango, the Shouters, and Obeah were considered to be related in 1930s Trinidad.

Another song on the compilation, “Shango” (1938) by The Caresser, is much more forceful in its condescension, echoing the derogatory language of the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance. For Caresser, Shango is more than uncivilized: it is evil:

Oy-oy-oy-oy-oy, Shango
Ai-ai-ai-ai-ai, Shango
All about you go is Shango
Before the cock crow is Shango

I don't know why some black people
Indulge in nothing but evil
Plungin' themselves below the level
Boasting they could invoke the devil

Caresser's lyrics reflect derision toward the practice of Shango as something shady, "below the level," but, significantly, they also point to the ubiquity of Shango in 1930s Trinidad (at least around Port of Spain). As Caresser puts it, Shango is "all about you"; it is everywhere. In a sense, even if hostile, calypso lyrics from this period are valuable as a means of understanding at least some aspects of Trinidad Orisha (Shango) in the early twentieth century (though that understanding should be tempered by the knowledge that calypsonians are famous for double-speak). Among other things, the calypso verses make clear that Yoruba-derived religious practice had a name by the 1930s – Shango – that the practice occurred in the middle of the night ("before the cock crow"), and that, though it may have been thought of as part of the underworld by respectable society, it was well-known.

In part, these calypsos serve as a kind of ethnography, important because no scholars studied Shango until Melville and Frances Herskovits came to Trinidad in 1939. Even then, their study is of limited use because (as mentioned above) the Herskovitses spent most of their time in the remote village of Toco, where they found no Shango groups, rather than in Port of Spain, which was the main center of black lower class social life. If nothing else, it is clear that the Herskovitses should have listened to calypso music before they chose their research location. (The Herskovitses' 1939 expedition to Trinidad is discussed more fully in chapter five.)

In the following section, in order to outline more fully the cultural world of Shango in the historical era at hand, I offer a profile of Ebenezer "Papa Neezer" Eliot (1901-1969), the most well-known Shango leader in twentieth-century Trinidad. My narrative of Neezer is interwoven

with the remembrances of one of his drummers, Wilfred C. Burton, who spoke with me at his home, in Fifth Company Village, in June 2012.

Papa Neezer

“Shango is evil,” Mr. Burton told me. “It’s fallen angels. The *orishas*, it is fallen angels.”

When I sat down with Mr. Burton, a former drummer for the famous “Shango King” Papa Neezer (Henry 2008), one of the first things he made clear to me is that he no longer attends Shango feasts due to his conviction that his Christian faith is incompatible with the practices of Shango. Burton’s words reflect the lyrics of The Caresser’s 1938 calypso, “Shango.” At the same time, Burton expressed ambivalence towards Shango and its music, and showed pride in his high level of knowledge of the religion (“I could do anything in Shango”). He expressed to me his respect of the power of Shango, and particularly its music:

I like it [Shango]. And I admire it. I enjoy it. ... It don’t come out of you. Sometimes I catch myself, you know you always catch yourself singing... It stay with you. It live with you. You don’t get outta it. Because, it was years, I tell you, I didn’t go to a Shango feast, and I, I was singing song, Shango song. (*pers. comm.*)

For Burton, Shango is not something to be taken lightly, and his time with Papa Neezer in Shango feasts left a strong impression on him.

Wilfred C. Burton was born in 1929, just a few houses from his current home in Fifth Company Village, in south Trinidad. His parents raised him as an Independent Baptist, but Mr. Burton started playing drums at Shango feasts at the age of fifteen, due to the influence of his relative Ebenezer “Papa Neezer” Elliot, who lived down the road. Burton describes Neezer as a powerful man, a “big” man, one with a special power over others. As Burton says, “When Neezer want to plant rice, he had about twenty of them go and plant the rice. He just sit down and look at them. He was big.”

Part of Neezer's power over others, according to Burton, was due to the fact that he was highly regarded as spiritually knowledgeable. People came to see him for help with their medical ailments and other problems (he was commemorated as an "Obeah-man" in several popular songs). To illustrate Neezer's knowledge, Burton described Neezer's ability to give prayers in Latin, despite the fact that he was not a Catholic, and was minimally educated.

He was really something else. I've never seen nobody like him, after that fellow dead and gone. He had something. I don't know what type of power it is, but he had something. ... Neezer used to pray in Latin. Like for maybe a hour and a half. Just like the Catholic mass. I don't know where he learned it, because he only went to elementary school. He never went to any secondary school. That kinda man he was. When he die, they cement his grave, mix concrete on it, full up. Why? Cause they don't want somebody to get the skull! (*pers. comm.*)

According to anthropologist Frances Henry⁵³ (2008), Ebenezer Elliot was born at Third Company Village on Dec. 12, 1901, and he was a descendant of two original settlers of the Company Villages: an American named George Blackwell, who came to Third Company in 1816, and another named George Elliot, who came in the same year to Second Company. Blackwell was one of five founders of the Mount Pleasant church in Fifth Company. Papa Neezer, as he came to be known, inherited land from his Company Village ancestors, and then invested some money in more land, resulting in a total property of between fifty and sixty acres by the time of his death (*ibid.*, 71). Neezer kept Orisha feasts at his yard on Lengua Road in Fifth Company Village, two every year, as Mr. Burton recalled. One of Neezer's drummers, Montiljo, became a famous Orisha drummer across the island. Another, Nulci Amat, was Neezer's adopted son (*ibid.*, 12). Additionally, the well-known Shango drumming brothers Andrew and Jeffrey Biddeau, important ambassadors of Afro-Trinidadian culture and eventual icons in the Orisha faith themselves, spent time at Neezer's yard in their younger days (Elder 1987, 3). Thus, it

⁵³ Frances Henry, née Mischel, lived with Papa Neezer in the 1950s as part of the research for her dissertation through Ohio State University.

seems clear that Neezer's yard was an important locus for the development of Trinidad Orisha music in the twentieth century.

As Mr. Burton pointed out, after Neezer's death in 1969, his grave was cemented, suggesting the kind of spiritual power that he was supposed to have. Neezer claimed that his knowledge of Trinidad Yoruba religious practices came from an old Yoruba elder in the Company Villages, a woman named Ma Diamond (whose lineage traced back to the liberated Africans), and he was also apparently an intellectually inquisitive person. In addition to his impressive display of Latin, Neezer kept books in the Yoruba language, including a translation of the Holy Bible, a book called *Yoruba Composition* from 1923, by de Gaye and Beecroft, and a Church Missionary Society Yoruba grammar book, published in 1948⁵⁴ (Warner-Lewis 1996, 67). Neezer also actively used a book called the *Home Physician and Guide to Health* (Evans *et al.* 1923) in his role as healer in his community, and combined its medicinal techniques with his knowledge of folk medicine, using herbs and roots. People came from all over Trinidad to see him.

Mr. Burton told me that Neezer's reputation as a healer and Obeah-man often made things quite easy for him, for instance in the obtaining of a drumming license. Due to drumming regulations, Neezer was required to apply for a permit at the Warden office in nearby Princes Town. However, Mr. Burton makes it clear that Neezer never had any trouble getting a drumming license, saying that, in fact, the Warden officers used to send the license for Neezer prior to his feast. Neezer's work as an Obeah-man helped him greatly in this regard, because "A lot of them, these big boys in these offices, they coming to him [for spiritual work]. The police coming to him. So he had no problem getting a license."

⁵⁴ An older version of the latter book was also found in Bahia, Brazil by Nina Rodrigues by 1903, along with "Yoruba-English dictionaries and other didactic literature" (Parés 2005).

Papa Neezer embodies some of the complexities of the Orisha-Baptist connections in Trinidad. Neezer was simultaneously a prominent leader of Shango and a leader of the London Baptist church in Fifth Company. Most often it is the Shouter/Spiritual Baptists who are thought to be affiliated with Orisha, but keeping in mind that London Baptists are distinct from Shouter Baptists – even hostile towards their beliefs and practices (Rommen 2007) – requires us to take a broader view in assessing the links between the Orisha and Baptist faiths. Papa Neezer himself espoused a nuanced position, while remaining critical of the so-called Shango-Baptists, who combined Shango with the Shouter/Spiritual Baptist faith. According to Henry (2008, 51):

Pa therefore believed that there were two separate systems, one stemming from Africa and supplying the ancestral links and the other Christianity, in his case, in the form of orthodox Baptism – London Baptism – which also led to the divine. That they came together at some level was clear because each Orisha was identified with a Catholic saint and Christian prayers were recited at Orisha ceremonies, but they were not the same thing. Shango Baptists, according to Pa Neezer believed that the two were the same and could be practiced interchangeably and accordingly he would have nothing to do with them. (*pers. comm.*)

In part, Neezer's distancing from the Shouters may have been part of a rhetorical strategy of making clear that both sides of his own spiritual practice were orthodox: when he went to Mount Pleasant, he followed the same protocols he had learned from a young age; when he held a Shango feast, he practiced a form he believed was pure and authentic, all the while complaining to interested parties (e.g. Frances Henry, J.D. Elder) about Trinidadians making Shango too "mixed up." In this way, Neezer solidified his own reputation as a pillar of Afro-Trinidadian religion. He also may have been attempting to deflect negative stereotypes associated with the phrase "Shango-Baptist" in Trinidadian society. By essentially saying, "I know who those people are, and they do not represent what I do; I scorn them too," Neezer separates his own brand of religion, adopting the stereotypical attitude and directing it elsewhere.

Remember, too, that the Shouters were banned when Neezer rose to prominence; he may have been a Baptist, but he wasn't *that* kind of Baptist.

According to Mr. Burton, during the 1940s and 50s Papa Neezer had one main rival, the Shango leader known as Francis. As Mr. Burton describes it, Francis's work with Shango was very eclectic, including work with the "underground spirits" or "invocations" associated with the mystical practices of the Trinidad Kabbalah:

Francis, he have some powers, like Mojunta, Parala. Those are underground spirit. You ever hear about invocation? Kabbalistic. That type of power. These fellas is big boys from the cemetery. When they manifest, they out the light. You can't see nothing. In the dark. That is Mojunta. You can't see him because the place dark, so you hearing him dancing in front of the drum, but you don't know what he doing. But what he do, when he start to dance he come with a black fowl, a black chicken, cock, and he come with it, and when he come with that he will start the dance with it, and when the drum finish and he finish dance, you would never see that chicken again. I don't know where it go. Just disappeared. (*pers. comm.*)

The Trinidad Kabbalah is not to be confused with Jewish mysticism, and it is a very complicated cultural practice in need of more attention than I can give it here. In sum, the Trinidad Kabbalah derives from European occultist books on communicating with the dead, casting spells, and hypnosis.⁵⁵ Such books circulated for centuries in the Caribbean, but their wide circulation and accessibility can most likely be traced to a Chicago publisher, Delaurence, Scott and Co., who ran a mail-order business marketed heavily to black communities in the West Indies, the U.S., and West Africa, consisting mainly of the (dubiously copyrighted) reprinting of

⁵⁵ Trinidad Kabbalah can be compared to *Espiritismo* in Puerto Rico and Brazil. For more on Kabbalah-like practices in the Caribbean, see Lum 2000, Glazier 2008, Forde 2002, Davies 2009, and Putnam 2012. Similar magic books have been used by practitioners of "hoodoo" in the southern United States.

old books of magic. The books were so widely known that the Jamaican and Trinidadian governments banned Delaurence publications in the 1940s (Glazier 2008, 180).⁵⁶

At any rate, in the twentieth century, the Trinidad Kabbalah seems to have coalesced into a perceived powerful system of spiritual knowledge, one that overlapped with Shango in the figure of Francis. In addition to the overlappings of Francis, when considering that Papa Neezer combined Catholic Latin prayers, Baptist faith, and Shango, it is clear that Shango was rather eclectic by the 1940s in south Trinidad. Today, this eclecticism continues. For instance, the present-day Orisha leader Sugar Aloes simultaneously leads Spiritual Baptist prayers, Orisha feasts, and Kabbalah “banquets,” as those ceremonies are called. In this way, my interview with Mr. Burton shows clear connections between Trinidad Orisha’s past and present.

Though it may be assumed that cultures flourish due to demographic “weight” – large population numbers and widespread dispersion – scholars have shown the opposite often to be true. According to Vincent, “ethnic groups which are numerically dominant do not necessarily have the largest cultural and musical influence” (2006, 55). Given that Orisha springs from just a few thousand Yorubas, such a theoretical underpinning is important to keep in mind. Along those lines, scholars suggest that cultural transmission is often the result of select charismatic and/or knowledgeable individuals (Weber 1947; Vincent 2006; Kubik 2008). Perhaps more importantly, Yorubas came to Trinidad very late in the history of African immigration to the island, and the fact that they came later may be the key factor which allowed for the influence of knowledgeable individuals to persist into the twentieth century.⁵⁷ For instance, Warner-Lewis’s research (1991; 1994; 1996) shows that there were certain individuals in Trinidad knowledgeable about Yoruba

⁵⁶ One of Herskovits’s informants in Toco in 1939 mentioned his interest in books by Delaurence, including the *Sixth Book of Moses*, *Hindoo Magic*, and *Man Know Thyself* (1939).

⁵⁷ This late arrival factor can be compared to the Yoruba in Cuba, and the mostly Congolese indentureds to Jamaica who generated *kumina* (Peter Manuel, *pers. comm.*).

language, religion, and song well into the 1960s, that knowledge having been inherited from grandparents and great-grandparents who were among the original Yoruba indentured immigrants. Even so, Warner-Lewis also shows that such knowledge was not uniformly handed down through the generations, and very often older generations explicitly refused to pass on what they knew of their culture (1991). It is in contexts such as these that a charismatic individual such as Papa Neezer can exert strong influence on the shape of cultural development. Vincent makes the argument regarding neo-Yoruba culture in Cuba that “it is the authority seized by and invested in particular individuals which has largely shaped *Regla de Ocha*” (2006, 56), and the same can be said for Trinidad in considering the influence of individuals like Papa Neezer, Ma Diamond, Francis, and Sugar Aloes on Orisha.⁵⁸

Folklorizing Shango: Beryl McBurnie and the Little Carib Theater

Folkloric representations of local music and dance practices can be thought of as symptomatic of twentieth-century cosmopolitan cultures. For example, the well-known African American dancer and choreography Katherine Dunham studied Afro-Caribbean dance and brought it to concert hall stages around the world. While these representations must be understood as mediated through elite and sometimes condescending lenses, in many ways such performances in the twentieth century marked the first positive exposure of vernacular cultural practices in upper class contexts.

In Trinidad, the most prominent figure in the folkloricization of Afro-Trinidadian music and dance is dancer and choreographer Beryl McBurnie (1915-2000), who opened the Little

⁵⁸ Neezer can be compared to the leader of the Trinidad Rada people, Papa Nanee, who settled his Dahomean family in the Port of Spain suburb of Belmont in the nineteenth century, and their cultural practice continues in Belmont today. The culture of the Trinidad Rada people is an area greatly in need of future study. See Carr 1955 and Merriam 1956.

Carib Theatre in 1947 in Woodbrook, Trinidad, which continues to be a venue for local music and dance to the present day. McBurnie's life is given a biographical treatment in Molly Ayhe's *Cradle of Caribbean Dance* (1983). Known as "La Belle Rosette," McBurnie was born in Woodbrook, and learned local music and dance through her work with local artists, such as Andrew Beddoe (one of the Shango drummers recorded by the Herskovitses in Laventille in 1939). McBurnie was a peer of Katherine Dunham (with whom she worked, teaching Dunham West Indian folk dances) and Pearl Primus (another Trinidadian), and like her peers, McBurnie wished to rediscover the folk dances of the black diaspora and give them a place in the art world alongside European masterpieces. McBurnie wrote choreography for dances based on Obeah, Shango, bele, kalinda and other Afro-Trinidadian dances. She studied dance in New York at Columbia University under Martha Graham in the 1930s and 1940s, traveling back and forth between her home country and New York. In 1945, McBurnie took the position of Dance Instructor within Trinidad's Education Department, in which capacity she introduced local folk dances into the public school curriculum.

McBurnie's first professional production in Trinidad was *Trip through the Tropics* in 1940, which combined European classical music and dance with Afro-Caribbean dances. A reviewer (in Ayhe 1983, 6) described the show as

a composite one ranging from classical items such as an abstract fantasy to music by Wagner, Beethoven and Bach and Mendelssohn through *Impressions of New York* to creative dances of the West Indies featuring *Shango*, *Cuban Conga*, *Haitian drama*, *Brazilian Bambu* and island fancies of Dominica, Martinique and Guadeloupe.

By 1943 her group (performing under the direction of Boscoe Holder while McBurnie was in New York) performed a show for the U.S. soldiers stationed at various bases in Trinidad during World War II. Promotional materials (ibid., 12) for the concert read:

The varied programme will include calypsoes of all the various periods of Trinidad's history, the calenda, drumming, the leggo, the bongo, stick-playing, the belaire, the singing of African religious songs from the Shango, as well as samples of the West Indian Negro spirituals as sung by the 'Shouter' cult, the gayap and work songs, and a few pure African chants.

Considering the existing ban on the Shouters in Trinidad, this 1943 production for American soldiers could be seen as quite political.

Another show, 1945's *Spirit of Shango*, "had the audience," according to one reviewer, "actually on its toes as she and her group gave an exhibition depicting the practices of the African in the fields, and in the Shango tent" (in *ibid.*, 19). The image of middle class Trinidadian theater-goers, in 1945, getting up on their toes to the rhythms and dances of "Shango" suggests a certain level of acceptance of African-derived religious practice in mainstream society even during the period when the Shouters (Spiritual Baptists) were banned.

McBurnie's work coincided with a growing nationalist push among Trinidadian intellectuals for acceptance of the steel band as an indigenous, unique, and legitimate musical style representative of twentieth-century Trinidad and Tobago (see Stuempfle 1995). (McBurnie often employed steel bands in her performances.) At the forefront of this push was Albert Gomes (1911-1978), a Trinidadian of mixed Portuguese and West Indian descent. Gomes, a politician and public intellectual, was a most vocal proponent of local Trinidadian culture, particularly the steel band, but also folkloric groups like Beryl McBurnie's, whose work he said was "forged in the furnace of our own indigenous and ethnic background" (in *ibid.*, 16). Further, Gomes said that, for McBurnie, "It is Africa that is her inspiration; and the immediate fount from which she draws is the tradition of song and dance that persists tenaciously in Trinidad, despite all efforts to overlook or to besmirch it" (in *ibid.*, 18).

The Repeal of the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance

In 1951, Trinidad lifted the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance. The Trinidadian journalist Peter Hanoomansingh (2011) links the lifting of the ban to the 1947 publication of the Herskovitses' *Trinidad Village*, but it is clear that larger forces of social acceptance were afoot, represented for example in the folkloric representations of Shango music and dance by Beryl McBurnie. Such representations mark a significant transition from the ridiculing calypso lyrics of only a decade prior. If the 1951 repeal signaled changing conceptions of local culture in Trinidad, by the time of the country's independence in 1962 those changes greatly accelerated. Eric Williams, the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, praised the Little Carib Theater as "a monument to our West Indian culture" (Ayhe 1983, 70). Soon after independence, Williams instituted the "Best Village"⁵⁹ program, an annual state-sponsored music and dance performance competition among the various villages of the nation. Best Village is a thriving program today, and it is an important venue for the perpetuation of Indo- and Afro-Trinidadian drumming cultures in Trinidad and Tobago.

In the context of the affiliations and overlaps between the Orisha and Spiritual Baptist faiths, it is significant that the 1951 repeal may have led to the mutual invigoration and coordination of both groups over the course of the 1950s. Frances Henry did her initial anthropological fieldwork in Trinidad in 1956 and 1958, noticing a marked increase in Shango/Baptist activity between those two years, including the adoption of the self-labeling term "Shango-Baptist" among her research subjects. Henry believes that Shango-Baptism was a "newly developing" faith in the 1950s (2008, 51), and gives as evidence the marriage⁶⁰ of an

⁵⁹ It was originally called "Better Village."

⁶⁰ Henry goes so far as to assert "that the mixed form of Orisha called 'Shango Baptist' was actually created by Tanti and her husband Shepard in the late fifties" (2008, 113), a claim that

Orisha leader, Tanti Silla – a spiritual child of Papa Neezer – and a Baptist from the Fifth Company Village, Shepherd Breton, which took place in the 1950s (Henry 2003). Henry says that Papa Neezer (1901-1969), of the older generation, was so opposed to the Shango Baptists that he disowned any of his spiritual children who began practicing it, including Tanti Silla, whose feasts he stopped attending (2008, 51).

In my own research, the nearly eighty year old Orisha drummer Crow told me a similar story of a marriage in the 1950s between a Baptist and an Orisha practitioner which brought together the two congregations. Like Neezer, Crow also did not approve of the mixture, telling me: “Orisha is not Baptist.” Similarly, the drummer Wilfred Burton told me that there were no “Shango Baptists” when he played with Papa Neezer in the 1940s and 1950s, and he furthermore stated: “I don’t think it have anything as a Shango Baptist. If you is a Spiritual Baptist, you is a Spiritual Baptist.”

George Simpson, who did fieldwork in the early 1960s, pointed specifically to the repeal of the Shouters’ Prohibition Ordinance as a reason for the ostensible rise in Shango-Baptists. According to Simpson, after the repeal, the Shouter/Spiritual Baptists “thrived,” but the Shango groups were losing members, and so:

to retain the interest of their old followers, and to gain new ones, some ‘orisha’ people now conduct Spiritual Baptist rites from time to time, or they mix Shango and Shouters procedures. Likewise, to broaden the appeal of their ‘work’ some leaders among the Shouters have added elements from the more (culturally) African cult to their beliefs and practices. Some of the older ‘orisha’ people denounce the borrowing of Spiritual Baptist traits by the younger people in this cult, and conservative Spiritual Baptists condemn their confreres for combining aspects of Shango with the tenets and practices, including healing procedures, of their faith. Despite the laments, the two-way borrowing continues. (Simpson 1965, 79)

seems overstated given that the Herskovitses noted informants using the term “Shango Baptist” in 1939, though the marriage *may* have helped make the Spiritual Baptist-Orisha intermixtures more formalized than they would have been in previous years.

While Orisha and Baptist mixtures certainly extend further back than the 1950s, the fact of Simpson's cited Shango elders denouncing Spiritual Baptist incursions in the faith does suggest at least a new intensification of the union of the two practices, and such lamenting is consistent with the sentiments of my informant, Crow. Just like the Yoruba-Catholic interweaving, cultural affinities and social proximity led to intermarriages, resulting in partially creole religious practices.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to describe the social conditions most salient for the development of Trinidad Orisha music, including the solidification of Afro-French Catholic culture after 1783; the immigration of "Meriken" Baptists; large scale rural to urban migration; the tumult of liberated African immigration; the development of *jamette* culture; criminalization of Afro-Trinidadian culture; the role of folkloricization in changing popular attitudes towards Shango music and dance; and the role of key individuals in the history of Trinidad Orisha.

As a final thought in this chapter, I would like to make some comments on the drummer Andrew Beddoe, because he serves as a kind of glue tying the various strands of my narrative together. I first learned about Andrew Beddoe from my Trinidad Orisha drumming informants, who hold Beddoe in high regard as an important elder in Trinidad Orisha music – Donald "Junior" Noel and Michael "Small Junior" Ettienne both knew the much older Beddoe in their childhoods. Donald Noel remembered Beddoe's severity towards younger drummers, saying, "long time when you go around Andrew Beddoe and thing, you couldn't play their drums, so you had to listen" (*pers. comm.*). But Michael Ettienne remembered lessons, saying, "We took plenty

seminar with Andrew Beddoe” (*pers. comm.*). Donald Noel sang for me the following song one evening in Port of Spain, after I had mentioned Papa Neezer:

*She gone Moruga Road, she gone, she gone to look for Papa Neezer.
How far she gone? She gone Moruga Road.
She gone Moruga Road, she gone, she gone to look for obeah-man.
How far she gone? She gone Moruga Road.*

Donald explained that Andrew Beddoe used to sing that song in his group’s Best Village folk performances, the song referencing the road you have to take to get to Fifth Company Village, if you want to find the Obeah-man known as Papa Neezer. Songs like this keep alive the memory of the elders – Papa Neezer and Andrew Beddoe – and assure that the past remains a part of the present.

I next encountered the Beddoe family when I met Andrew’s younger brother, Jeffrey, roughly one week before his death in 2010. As I write this dissertation now, this meeting seems significant. Andrew Beddoe was recorded by Melville Herskovits in Laventille in 1939. The Beddoe brothers played with Papa Neezer, the Shango King of the mid-twentieth century. Andrew Beddoe aided Beryl McBurnie as she brought Shango to the folkloric stage in Trinidad, and he performed on those stages himself. Finally, Beddoe passed on his knowledge to the young generation of Trinidad Orisha drummers. All of these moments suggest strong links, across Trinidadian society during certain periods (from the Laventille slums to elite concert stages), and through time, connecting past and present. These connections show us that, due to the presence of influential individuals like Andrew Beddoe, history is not as far off as it seems, offering a window into the workings of oral traditions.

Chapter Three

The Songs of Trinidad Orisha Music

This chapter and the next two focus on description and analysis of Trinidad Orisha Music (TOM). In this chapter the focus is the songs of TOM. Topics of consideration include: song repertoire; the role of Orisha songs in preserving the Trinidad Yoruba language; description of Orisha ritual sections known as “the Litany” and “the Rotation”; the function of song types such as “dismissal” songs; and issues of mode, melody, harmony, and form.

Prior to the discussion of song repertoire, it is important to point out that my analysis mixes emic and etic terminology. On the one hand, I refer to “songs” in much the same way that members of the Trinidad Orisha community do – each song is a short call-and-response phrase, often consisting of very minimal text (to be explained further below). On the other hand, the designation of song titles is based on my own decisions and approach. During my research, I did not hear participants refer to songs by titles – rather, they would simply sing them. Therefore, the use of song titles is purely for my own categorization and analytical purposes, and I most often name a song based on its refrain.

The Trinidad Orisha Song Repertoire

During the research for this dissertation, an important task was to build a database comprising the bulk of the Trinidad Orisha song repertoire. In pursuit of this goal, I recorded Orisha religious events in Trinidad and in Brooklyn, listening back to them and transcribing and categorizing the music according to song text, associated spirit, rhythm, major/minor tonality, song length, relation of songs to other traditions or other recordings, and use in the ceremony as

either “Litany” or “Rotation” (these categories will be explained in subsequent sections). All told, the database includes roughly 160 Rotation songs, with nearly 40 more belonging to the Litany. Each Trinidad Orisha “song” is typically very short, and might be more properly thought of as a musical phrase. For instance, when I refer to a “one-bar song,” I mean a song that consists of a one-bar phrase, repeated ad infinitum.⁶¹ The Orisha song leader (*chantwell*) puts the short song-phrases together to make longer song-suites. To be precise, 40% of the songs in my database are four bars in length, and another 25% are two bar songs. One-bar and eight-bar songs are each around 14% of the total. The remainder comprises assorted exceptional songs of medium length (a few six-bar songs, for example) and a few long songs. In this latter group are some prominent Trinidad Orisha songs: “Ogun Bewele” and “Eshu Baragbo” are each twelve bars, and are among the first songs sung at an Orisha feast. A few very long songs (more than twenty bars each) could be thought of as comprised of several short, one bar refrains, and are broken up into smaller units for my analysis. However, these long, composite songs are nearly always sung in the same way, and so in my database I categorize them singly. The Shango song “Odi Ogbo” and the Erilay song “Yawe Yawe” are in this group.

The language of the songs is what Maureen Warner-Lewis calls Trinidad Yoruba, “a dialect of Yoruba, though outside the approximately twenty metropolitan varieties located in Nigeria and neighboring countries” (1996, 14). As a spoken language, Trinidad Yoruba is “obsolescent, its residual active vehicle being largely that of song, and its residual domain being confined to religious ritual” (ibid., 4). During Warner-Lewis’s research on Trinidad Yoruba retentions in the late 1960s and early 1970s, one of her informants expressed regret over not being able to speak her forebears’ language better (ibid., 175; italics and brackets in original):

⁶¹ By “bar” I am speaking in terms of how I have chosen to notate songs, which is, in most cases, 12/8 meter, though occasionally 4/4.

I don't want to speak it out of the way [badly]. ... You see, in the twang of the changing of the words sometime, I forgot that ... so long ... haven't nobody to speak to. All my people [friends] is English [speaking] people. ... But the real, *my* language, I cannot unfold it as I should.

It is safe to say that, were it not for the continued active performance of TOM, the Trinidad Yoruba language would by now have disappeared completely. Today, Trinidad Yoruba exists as a ritual language. Trinidad Orisha songs have been retained through memorization and repetition, passed on through generations in Trinidad as an oral tradition. To be sure, calling Trinidad Yoruba a "ritual language" is not to suggest a total loss of linguistic meaning. Most obviously, practitioners of Trinidad Orisha understand the various names of *orishas* called out during TOM performance. Additionally, Trinidad Yoruba language comprehension is implicit in certain behaviors associated with TOM songs and phrases.

One example is the word "sababo," shouted by the song leader during moments of excitement in the performance of TOM. In response to this exclamation, the congregation responds by putting hands to lips and ululating. According to Warner-Lewis, in Yoruba the phrase *sè ababo* means "yodel, ululate" (1996, 94). Likewise, some Trinidad Orisha songs feature the word "egbo," and in Yoruba, *ekpo* refers to the "palm oil used in religious rites" (ibid., 220). These egbo-songs are generally used in TOM during moments of the ceremony when olive oil is used for various ceremonial activities in the *palais*, such as in the song "Sheri Egbo." When *mongwa* Sugar Aloes sings this song, he repeats it several times while congregants sprinkle olive oil around the *palais*: in the four corners, at the doorway, and by the *chappelle*. Sugar Aloes told me this song refers to "sharing the oil. You're sharing the oil around the place" (*pers. comm.*). Leader Walter sings the song "Egbo Duro Duro Du" for the same purpose. Another song in this group, "Egbo Rokoto," can be used for blessing the animals to be sacrificed.

The Nigerian Funso Aiyejina and the Trinidadian Rawle Gibbons published a short paper in *Research In African Literatures* on song meanings in TOM, and found that the ritual activities associated with songs for Eshu are “the visual representation of the linguistic meanings of the songs” (2009, 135). The Eshu activity involves bringing two calabashes outside of the *palais*, to the gate of the yard (or beyond), accompanied by the singing of songs which, translated, refer to Eshu as the “gatekeeper.” Aiyejina and Gibbons write that “many of the rituals that accompany these songs also give indications of their meanings and spiritual roles,” suggesting that investigations of song meaning must take into account the actions associated with those rituals (ibid.).

Given the fact that Trinidadians no longer speak Trinidad Yoruba, it is unsurprising that considerable variation exists in the pronunciation of song “texts.”⁶² Different Orisha *chantwells* often sing the same song differently, for example the song “Ogun Bewele,” which is alternately pronounced “Ogun Berele.” A related fact is that, due to differing interpretations of song lyrics, it occasionally happens that angry *mongwas* berate their congregations for singing the songs “incorrectly.” For example, I observed Sugar Aloes singing a song for Osain, which I have usually heard people sing as “Osain ade, ere rele koko,” which is also the title song of Ella Andall’s Orisha CD, *Osain Ade*. Aloes was not singing “Osain ade,” however; he was singing “Osain lawde.” When the chorus was not repeating his words, he angrily stopped the music, saying, “I ent [did not] say ‘ode,’ I said ‘lawde.’” He then started singing again, and this time the congregation sang the text as he preferred. Interpreting song texts can thus function as a means of control for an Orisha leader, as was also the case for Papa Neezer (1901-1969), the unofficial

⁶² While “text” in the written sense would be a misnomer, because Orisha songs are not written down, I believe it is appropriate to speak of *Orisha song texts* in that the words to songs do exist in the minds of practitioners.

head of the Orisha religion in the mid-twentieth century. At one feast in the 1950s, during which Neezer was particularly displeased with the behavior of the devotees, anthropologist Frances Henry observed that Neezer “deliberately sang songs that people did not know ... to show them how ignorant they were and how knowledgeable he was.” Henry says that she had never before heard those songs Neezer sang (2008, 64).

It is also often the case that participants at Orisha feasts simply do not know the words to certain songs (see *e.g.* Lum 2000). My informants tell me as much, such as Marcus, a Spiritual Baptist Teacher who complained that “everyone is always singing something different” at Orisha feasts; he said if songs were in English (like Baptist hymns), then he could at least know what he was singing, and whether it was right or wrong (*pers. comm.*). For example, there is an Orisha song for St. Raphael with the words, “Raphael o ma de kuta / Raphael o ma de so.” During one performance of this song, I made a comment about the words to Andy, a drummer who would manifest Shango later in the feast. “No, he’s not saying ‘Raphael’,” Andy said. “The words are ‘Aveo ma de kuta...’” I was confused. “Really, though,” he continued, “you should ask a *chantwell* about the words.” The interchange left me unsure whether I had gotten the words right, and I asked my teacher, Earl, about it later. He confirmed that the song is for Raphael.⁶³ The exchange suggests a certain fluidity of understanding for many in the performance of Orisha songs, and also the essential corrective role of *mongwas* like Papa Neezer and Sugar Aloes.

Sometimes participants also like to have fun with their lack of song-language comprehension. For example, anthropologist Keith McNeal reports the irritation of one Orisha leader when her congregation willfully changed the words to the song “Ibai Solo, Ibai Laroye.”

⁶³ When he manifests, Raphael dances with a gun, either wooden or real (though not loaded). “It’s amazing to see,” Earl said when he described Raphael to me, but added that while Raphael used to come when Earl was first in New York, he hasn’t come in a long time.

Inspired by the popular Trinidadian soft drink brand Solo, they were singing “you buy Solo, I buy lemonade” (McNeal 2004, 190). Such moments are lighthearted, but they are reminders nonetheless that Trinidad Orisha songs are performed in a linguistic context far removed from their Yoruba language origins. Due to the several generations of distance between current Trinidad Orisha practitioners and the original Yoruba-speaking immigrants to the island, considerable loss, transformation, and evolution have taken place within the song repertoire. As Orisha *mongwa* Leader Gordon (*pers. comm.*) puts it, “Plenty songs have been lost. Not some: plenty.”

Indications of such loss can be found through analysis of my database of Orisha songs, for instance, the generally short length of the majority of Trinidad Orisha songs. The original Yoruba-speakers in Trinidad knew long poetic verses (Warner-Lewis 1994; 1996), but over the years that poetry became reduced to the remembered fragments that predominate in the current TOM repertoire. Examples of these longer verses among the Trinidad Yoruba can be found in the work of Warner-Lewis, and also in the 1939 recordings of the Toco woman, Margaret Buckley (born ca. 1870), made by Melville and Frances Herskovits. Buckley’s mother (ethnically Egba) and father (ethnically “Yarriba,” i.e. from Oyo) had been born in West Africa, and likely came to Trinidad as indentured laborers (Hill *et al* 1998). As an adequate Yoruba speaker (Warner-Lewis 1996), Buckley sang many songs for the Herskovitses⁶⁴ which were much longer than the typical Trinidad Orisha songs, such as “Enyin Olowo,” a song about the fleeting nature of life:

⁶⁴ The recordings of Buckley and the Herskovitses are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Enyin olowo	You rich people,
Maa na o	Spend your money
Enyin alasho	You who own many clothes,
Maa mu lo	Wear them
Awa o mojo	[Because] we don't know the day we go
a mi lorun alakej'i	to an untimely death
Ye, a mu lo mej'i	Oh! someone wears two [cloths]
A mu lo meeta	Another wears three [cloths]
Gbangba meein	Four wide [cloths]
Ikpo a la n kato i ma	The work/path a person carves out for himself and pursues is not known [to another] ⁶⁵

Verbose poetry such as the above is not known in today's TOM, which is marked, instead, by short repetitive song fragments, easily sung in call-and-response fashion. As the TOM repertoire became verbally constricted over time, the relatively long songs in the repertoire that have managed to survive have a special appeal and favored status. For example, as mentioned above, two of the longest songs in the TOM repertoire, "Ogun Bewele" and "Eshu Baragbo," are also two of the most prominent, sung during the early part of Orisha rituals.

Another potential indicator of musical loss is the fact that several Orisha songs use identical melodies for different lyrics, for example the Shakpana song "Karankada Wo" and the Ogun song "Ogun Masa Laye," or multiple songs with a melody identical to that of the *canboulay* song "When I Dead, Bury Me Clothes" (discussed at the end of this chapter). On the other hand, melody-sharing is a common phenomenon in many cultures, and so definite conclusions about loss are not possible. Even so, such sharing of music may suggest a possible restriction in the original melodic repertoire, and if Leader Gordon is right that "plenty songs have been lost," it is likely that melodies were lost with them.

⁶⁵ Yoruba lyrics and English translation are from the liner notes to *Peter Was a Fisherman*, made by Olabiyi Yai and Maureen Warner-Lewis. See Hill *et al* (1998).

The Litany

The singing of Orisha songs during Trinidad Orisha ritual has two main sections: “the Litany” and “the Rotation,” the first of which I will explain presently. Following an opening section of Christian hymns and spoken prayers in English, the Orisha ceremony begins with the Litany, the call-and-response singing of a specific group of Orisha songs. In truth, the Litany is made up not so much of *songs* as of *sung prayers*. The singing is done in free time, meaning it does not conform to a musical meter or regular beat; the intended purpose of this Litany approach is to create a mood of solemnity. The Orisha Litany gets its name from the Catholic “Litany of the Saints,” which is a prayer invoking the names of the Holy Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), the Virgin Mary, and all the saints. In a similar manner, the Orisha Litany invokes the *orishas*, one after the other, through prayer-songs devoted to each one. Brooklyn Orisha *mongwa* Leader Gordon makes the connection between the Orisha and Catholic litanies explicitly, referring to it as a “rosary”:

The Litany is a form of doing the rosary, where you call the *orisha* one by one. It’s a prayers, a form of worship. If something isn’t right in the feast, you’ll go back to the Litany, do prayers for Yemanja or Oshun. Them children want to turn it into soca business. The Litany, they want to rejoice it. It’s not a soca business; I see it as more solemn. It’s a form of paying respects, paying obeisance. (*pers. comm.*)

In addition to mentioning the Catholic connection, Gordon also points to the “solemn” mood of the Litany, saying it is “not a soca business,” soca being the main popular music of Trinidad, and associated with the rhythmic and sexually suggestive dance known as *wining*.

The plaintiveness of the Litany is achieved largely through the free meter singing approach, eschewing a regular meter that might encourage handclapping and lively drumming. Drummers play during the Litany, but this drumming consists of equally free meter, accented strikes during the chorus response to the calls of the *mongwa*. During the *mongwa*’s call, the

drums are silent. *Mongwa* Sugar Aloes reiterates that the Litany should be approached in a calm and humble manner, appropriate because the point is to request the presence of the *orishas* themselves at the Orisha service:

Litany is not to be jovial. When you're doing the Litany there's a sort of calmness. Not melancholy, but devotion, calmness, humility about it. Because you are asking that they put their presence in. So it's a supplication. You are asking with reverence. And when you are through that part, you call, and you glorify. And it's through the vibration now, you get a connection to the outer world, where the spirit world is, and they could come forward. So when you doing a Litany, you don't have drum and glorifying. No. (*pers. comm.*)

For Aloes, “glorifying” refers to the “jovial” clapping and drumming that comes later in an Orisha feast – when the spirits begin to manifest – and such joyful attitudes are inappropriate during the Litany.

Litanies vary from *mongwa* to *mongwa*, with differences including overall length as well as number of verses. Fig. 3.1 compares four litanies sung by four different *mongwas*. I recorded two of these in Brooklyn, and two in Trinidad. These four Orisha Litanies show a range of approaches in performance practice, varying in time, place, and the individual *mongwa*. Of the four Litanies, the shortest (in number of verses as well as overall length) was recorded in Febeau Village, with seven verses sung over a period of fifteen minutes. (The small number of verses over a relatively long period of time belies the multiple repetitions of certain verses, explained more fully below.) The longest of the four was recorded in East Flatbush, with twenty verses sung in twenty-eight minutes.

Date	June 2011	June 2011	June 2011	Sept. 2008
Location	East Flatbush, Brooklyn	Canarsie, Brooklyn	Mausica, Trinidad	Febeau Village, Trinidad
Mongwa	Sugar Aloes	Leader Walter	Leader Baker	Lester Osouna
Length	28 mins	19 mins	20 mins	15 mins
Verses:	“Ye Irawa, Irawa O”	“Shileku”	“Ye Irawa, Irawa O”	“Shileku”
	“Mmm, Laye, Mmm, Layo”	“Ye Irawa, Irawa O”	“Babawa, Ji ni je ni jo”	“Ye Irawa, Irawa O”
	“Babawa, Ji ni je ni jo”	<i>“Ode Kimiwa Shire Dilogun o”</i>	“Mmm, Laye, Mmm, Layo”	“Babawa, Ji ni je ni jo”
	“Sheke Olo Afa Olo Ori”	“Babawa, Ji ni je ni jo”	“Sheke Olo Afa Olo Ori”	“Mmm, Laye, Mmm, Layo”
	“E Ilokuo”	“Mmm, Laye, Mmm, Layo”	“E Ilokuo”	“E Ilokuo”
	“Ekuo, Akiri Ama”	“Sheke Olo Afa Olo Ori”	“Ekuo, Akiri Ama”	“Ekuo, Akiri Ama”
	“Baba O”	“E Ilokuo”	“Baba O”	“Baba O”
	“Oni Awa, Baba Iwo”	“Ekuo, Akiri Ama”	“Ogun Masa Laye”	
	“Ogun Masa Laye”	“Baba O”	“Yemanja Wele, Omi Lodo”	
	<i>“Kumaba Biniba Biniba”</i>	“Kaya Kaya Kuma” ⁶⁶	“Emi Ama Visani”	
	<i>“Ere Kumaba Batala”</i>	“Ogun Masa Laye”	“Oya Riwo Oya”	
	“Ekuo Oni Awa Bayinghi”	“Oni Awa, Baba Iwo”	<i>“Shango Riwo O”</i>	
	“Emi Ama Visani”	“Yemanja Wele, Omi Lodo”		
	“Yemanja Wele, Omi Lodo”	“Emi Ama Visani”		
	“Oya Riwo Oya”	“Oya Riwo Oya”		
	“Olodo, Babawa, Mofije, Moye, Oye, Olo Shango”	“Olodo, Babawa, Mofije, Moye, Oye, Olo Shango”		
	“Awaye Awa Abakuso”	<i>“Shango Mani Kote”</i>		
	“Obatala o Kere”	“Awaye Awa Abakuso”		
	“Kaya Kaya Kuma”			
	“Sheri Egbo”			

3.1 Four Orisha Litanies: East Flatbush, Canarsie, Mausica, and Febeau Village

⁶⁶ Leader Walter sang this verse during the “Baba O,” between the naming of Shakpana and Oya.

Comparison of the four Litanies reveals certain trends. Each of the four *mongwas* draws on a similar repertoire of verses, as nearly all verses in each Litany are repeated by one of the other *mongwas*. In fact, there are only five unique verses on the above chart, indicated by italicization: two by Sugar Aloes, two by Leader Walter, and one by Leader Baker. The two verses indicated in bold on the chart serve as markers in the overall structure of the Litany: “Ye Irawa, Irawa O” is sung at the beginning (preceded by the song “Shileku” in two cases), and the “Baba O” is sung about halfway through (at the end in the short Febeau Village example). Between those two signpost verses, each *mongwa* sings the same verses in, more or less, the following order: “Babawa, Ji ni je ni jo,” “Mmm, Laye, Mmm, Layo,” “Sheke Olo Afa Olo Ori” (except in the Febeau Village example), “E Ilokuo,” and “Ekuo, Akiri Ama.” Three of the four examples continue with similar verses following the “Baba O”: “Ogun Masa Laye,” “Yemanja Wele Omi Lodo,” “Emi Ama Visani,” and “Oya Riwo Oya.”

The following pages will focus more closely on the two signpost songs, “Ye Irawa, Irawa O,” and “Baba O.” The song “Shileku,” sung prior to “Ye Irawa, Irawa O” in two of the above examples, is a recent introduction to the Litany, and (as my chart of four Litanies suggests) it is only sung in certain congregations. Based on its recent incorporation into the Trinidad Orisha Litany, I argue that, even when “Shileku” is sung, it is structurally unimportant to the performance of the Litany. Rather, it is simply added to the beginning of the Litany, as a kind of prelude to “Ye Irawa, Irawa O.” “Shileku” will be discussed further in chapter six.

“*Ye Irawa, Irawa O*”

Whether or not “Shileku” is sung, all of the Litanies I observed included the song, “Ye Irawa, Irawa O.”⁶⁷ The song itself dates back at least to 1939, when Melville Herskovits recorded a version of it in Laventille, Trinidad, though the recording does not specify the ritual function of the song. The song text of “Ye Irawa, Irawa O” comprises five lines of poetry, making it long in the context of TOM song repertoire. The song might be an example of a Westernized TOM melody, in its outlining of a typical C major scale (including an emphasis on the note B and prominent C major 7 arpeggios), unusual in Yoruba and Yoruba-derived music.⁶⁸ The song also stands out in the TOM repertory for its melody, which spans a major 9th, a wide range considering that most Trinidad Orisha songs stay within a perfect 5th. As soon as the *mongwa* begins this prayer, all the congregants rise to their feet and face him. With everyone standing, the prayer is performed as follows: the *mongwa* recites the five-line stanza, which is then repeated exactly by the congregation.

I have divided the following notation (fig. 3.2) into five segments to correspond with the five lines of text. I reiterate that the rhythms are free flowing, and so the notation is only an approximation, but I have endeavored to show relative note durations, and the overall rhythmic and melodic tone of the piece. Some important details include the way that the final word of each line is held out, as well as a suggestion of triple meter, or at least triple subdivisions, in the rhythm of the melody. The five line “Ye Irawa, Irawa O” is as follows:

⁶⁷ The Nigerian poet Funso Aiyejina interprets this song as “Please come, please come, let our journey be blessed” (Aiyejina *et al* 2009, 133).

⁶⁸ Though “Ye Irawa, Irawa O” may be a Westernized tune (and thus reflect a Western major tonality), in general, when I say “major” and “minor” I am referring to the 3rds (and sometimes 7ths), not to be confused with Western major and minor tonalities.

3.2 “Ye Irawa, Irawa O”

The musical score consists of four staves of music in a single system, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff contains the lyrics 'Ye i ra wa i ra wa o Ye i ra wa'. The second staff contains 'Ku de gi ni wa ji re di lo gu o...'. The third staff contains 'A du lo jo ni je ni jo ni ra wa'. The fourth staff contains 'Ku de gi ni wa ji re di lo gu o'. The music is written in a simple, melodic style with various note values and rests.

The stanza is repeated four times total (four calls and four responses). For the first repetition of this song, the congregants face the singing *mongwa*. For the second repetition, the entire congregation turns their bodies to face to the back. For the third, they face to the right. For the final repetition, the assembled face to the left. This physical alignment is meant to recognize the four cardinal points, north, south, east, and west. The four directions are also commemorated by lit candles, flowers, and other sacred implements in each corner of the Orisha *palais*. Each of these corners is given attention during the Ogun Rotation (which will be described below).

Following the four repetitions of the opening prayer, congregants remain standing but face the *mongwa* once more, who continues the Litany by singing new verses in free meter, to which the assembled respond, usually by simply repeating exactly that which has been said, though occasionally with a different corresponding phrase. In the Litanies outlined in fig. 3.1,

each *mongwa* sang about five more verses before coming to the next important phase of the Litany, and its functional purpose: the call to all the saints, which begins with the song “Baba O.”

The “Baba O” is a nine-line stanza outlining a pentatonic major scale (5 6 1 2 3 5), and featuring prominent arpeggiations and melodic leaps including several thirds, a descending fourth, and two descending sixths. In the following notation (fig. 3.3), I have divided the free meter verse into six phrases, with phrase-endings determined (as in “Ye Irawa, Irawa O”) by a long-held final note. At the end of the second phrase, note that this melody includes an example of melisma, rare in the mostly syllabic TOM.

3.3 The call to the *orishas*, “Baba O”

The musical notation consists of two staves. The first staff contains the first two phrases of the song. The first phrase is 'Ba ba o mo jig be re le...' with a long-held final note on 'le...'. The second phrase is 'Ba ba o ni wo lo e ri ja ja'. The second staff contains the remaining three phrases. The first phrase is 'O ri sha roko ari mo le'. The second phrase is 'Ba ba o mo jig berele'. The third phrase is 'Ye... sho le a ba ku so' with a long-held final note on 'so'.

The “Baba O” stanza serves as a kind of template into which the *mongwa* inserts the names of each *orisha*: repeating the stanza, the word “baba” is replaced with the name of one *orisha*, such as “Oshun” or “Oya,” and the verse is repeated in this manner until all *orishas* have been named. For instance, the “Baba O” sung for Ogun is as follows:

Ogun o
Mojigbe rele e
Ogun o, ni wolo, eri jaja
Orisha roko arimole
Ogun o, mojigbe rele
Ye shole abakuso

Returning to the “Four Litanies,” in the following chart (fig. 3.4) I offer a breakdown of the order in which *orishas* were named during each of the four “Baba O” sections. Sugar Aloes sang for the greatest number of *orishas* (contributing to the overall greater length of his Litany), while Leader Baker sang for the fewest. Sugar Aloes reflects the syncretism of Trinidad Orisha, as he sang for the La Divina Pastora, the statue of the Black Virgin (Mary) in the southern Trinidad town of Siparia, which is venerated by Catholics (in the annual festival of La Divina Pastora) and Hindus (who call the statue “Sipari Mai,” Mother Sipari). Conversely, Lester Osouna reflects a move away from Christian influences that has been practiced by a small number of Trinidad Orisha groups since the emergence, in the 1970s, of identity politics centered around Afrocentrism (some scholars refer to this movement as “Africanization” – see chapter six). Osouna’s *orisha* order stands out from the others because he sang for Eshu right before Ogun (Eshu is traditionally thought of as the Devil in Trinidad, and is not praised during rituals), while also naming Orunmila, the Nigerian Yoruba divinity associated with Ifa, the divination system. Orunmila and Ifa were typically sung to in Trinidad prior to the Africanization movement.

Date	June 2011	June 2011	June 2011	Sept. 2008
<i>Location</i>	<i>East Flatbush, Brooklyn</i>	<i>Canarsie, Brooklyn</i>	<i>Mausica, Trinidad</i>	<i>Febeau Village, Trinidad</i>
<i>Mongwa</i>	<i>Sugar Aloes</i>	<i>Leader Walter</i>	<i>Leader Baker</i>	<i>Lester Osouna</i>
Verses:	“Baba O”	“Baba O”	“Baba O”	“Baba O”
	Ogun	Ogun	Ogun	Eshu
	Mama Leta	Mama Leta	Shango	Ogun
	Ibaji	Ibaji	Erilay	Orunmila
	Erilay	Alina	Osain	Abatala
	Shakpana	Yemanja	Oya	Oshun
	Alina	Oshun	Yemanja	Yemanja
	Oshun	Osain	Oshun	Shango
	Yemanja	Shakpana		Oya
	Osa	Oya		Osain
	La Divina	Shango		Shakpana
	Oya	Abatala		Poporisha
	Abatala			
	Shango			

3.4 Four Orisha Litanies: Order of *orishas* named during the “Baba O”

In the various cases, as each *mongwa* sang, each verse was repeated by the congregation, including the drummers, who improvised soft drum rolls and short, sharp accents. In addition to simply repeating the words, during the “Baba O,” congregants accompany the song texts with sounds and actions that express their recognition or endearment towards the particular *orisha* being named. For instance, when the *mongwa* sings the name of Mama Leta – Trinidadian Creole for Mama La Terre, the mother of the earth – congregants might bend down briefly to touch their fingers to the ground, in acknowledgement of Mama Leta’s connection with the earth. When Shango’s name is called, congregants call out with the ululations known as *sababo*.

After the “Baba O” call, the *mongwa* may exert his personal preferences, inserting differing verses as he sees fit. In the “Four Litanies” example, the first three *mongwas* sang verses directed towards individual *orishas* (Ogun, Oshun, Yemanja, Oya, Shango, Abakuso, and Abatala), and included some free time versions of songs commonly heard in the Orisha rotation

(“Ogun Masa Laye,” “Oya Ariwo”). The fourth example (Lester Osouna) simply ends after the “Baba O.”

Usage of the Orisha Litany has evolved in Trinidad, perhaps within the last half century. In 2012, I interviewed eighty-two year old Mr. W.C. Burton, a former drummer for Papa Neezer. I asked him if Papa Neezer performed the Litany prior to his Orisha services. Burton said that Neezer only said prayers in Latin, and then went straight to the Orisha song rotations. Wanting to be sure he knew the repertoire of which I spoke, I sang the opening of the Litany as I have learned it. He stopped me, saying:

I know it. [*singing*] “*O, irawa, irawa o. Oke kibo wand jire o. O yi gun o. Ode kibo wand, yi Ogun o. Ku baba Shakpana o. Kude kibo wand jire i Ogun o.*” You call the powers and them there. That song is ... when a power doin’ a work. A big work. The power tending to somebody, and everything stop and they sing that song. But very rare. Maybe every five years you might hear they sing that once. (*pers. comm.*)

Like much else in Trinidad Orisha music and culture – for instance, the use of curved drumsticks, as discussed in chapter four – the current Orisha ritual which begins with the Litany outlined in the above pages is likely the result of decades of consolidation, transformation, and shifting norms. What appears to us today as an unchanging “tradition” is in many ways but an instance, a moment in historical cultural process. The introduction of new elements, such as the song “Shileku,” shows that process in motion.

The Rotation

Immediately following the free meter Litany, groups of songs (medleys or suites) are sung for each *orisha*, in tempo, to drum, *shac-shac*, and handclapping accompaniment. These songs are known as the Rotation. Together, the Litany and Rotation form a dual prayers/songs

structure in Orisha ritual.⁶⁹ Like the Litany songs, the songs of the Rotation utilize call-and-response, whereby the *chantwell* sings either entire lines that are repeated verbatim, or half-lines that are finished by the chorus. The Rotation songs, which are much more numerous than those for the Litany (there are about 160 Rotation songs in my database, compared to just over 20 belonging to the Litany), are usually associated with a particular *orisha*, and batches of songs for specific *orishas* are sung together, one after the other in a group. This medley-approach to Trinidad Orisha singing – putting short phrase-songs together to create long songs out of phrase-chains – has a corollary in the *tradados* of *oricha* (Santería) song in Cuba. The word “Rotation” refers to this progression from one song to the next, and it can have two meanings: 1) the group of songs for a single *orisha* (e.g. “the Ogun Rotation”), or 2) the overall progression of song medleys, moving from one *orisha* to the next.

Drummer Junior Noel explains the Rotation like an alphabet – and he also emphasizes that the job of the center drummer is to follow the songs:

When you playing Orisha drum, you have to listen to the *chantwell*, and you follow where he go. It have some *chantwell* who could lead. Then, you know, you have some who can't; they really don't know where to go. It's like the alphabet, from A to Z. You have a Rotation. (*pers. comm.*)

The imagery of an alphabet, going letter by letter, points to the fact that there are certain conventional song orders, as well as conventions for the order of singing to each *orisha*. I will

⁶⁹ The *litany/rotation* duality mirrors that of Afro-Cuban *Santería*, which begins with *rezos* (prayers) and moves on to *cantos* (songs) organized into medleys. The full *Santería* “rotation” of songs is known as the *oru cantado*. Unlike *Santería*, Trinidad Orisha has no instrumental version of the songs (in *Santería* this is known as the *oru seco*). Given the close parallels between Cuban and Trinidadian ritual song performance, one might posit a Cuban influence. However, there is not much evidence of Cuba-Trinidad connections in the nineteenth century, except for references to some African re-captives who were transferred from Cuba to Trinidad (Asiegbu 1969). However, these re-captives seem to have simply stopped over in Cuba, potentially limiting their interaction with any Afro-Cuban cultural practices (such as *oricha* worship). Even so, very little detail is known about the actual details of these re-captives’ experiences in their transfer from captured slave ships in the Atlantic to various ports in the Americas.

use the examples below to explain some of the conventions and variations in Orisha song Rotations.

The basic underlying logic in the progression of Orisha song performance is that, over the course of a ritual event, all of the *orishas* will be sung for. The Litany adheres to this logic in the calling out of the name of each *orisha* in turn. The Rotation accomplishes this goal by extended periods of singing for just one *orisha*, then another, continuing on until each has been venerated. “Singing for” each *orisha* does not imply the manifestation of all these *orishas* – most spirits do not manifest during any given ceremony – and thus a congregation might sing briefly (*e.g.* 1-2 minutes) for one *orisha* and move on without interacting with that spirit again. Depending on the ritual context, the overall progression of songs for all of the *orishas* can be performed over a more or less extended period of time, the longest period being the four-day Orisha feast, and the shortest being a single afternoon or evening.

Individual congregations vary in the order in which they sing to the *orishas*. However, in my recordings and observations there is a certain general pattern that is followed, as illustrated by fig. 3.5, showing the order of *orishas* sung for in the song medleys of two Orisha congregations. The left side is from a flag planting in Bushwick, Brooklyn, in April, 2011. The right side is from an Orisha Prayers in Laventille, Trinidad, in June, 2011. Both of these examples are single-day Orisha events (as opposed to the week-long feast). For each spirit listed, at least one song (and usually more than one) was sung, before the *chantwell* led the congregation on to songs for the next *orisha* on the list. In both congregations, the *chantwell* began the Rotation with songs for Ogun. (I should note that, in the context of the Orisha Atlantic, the exclusion of Eshu in the song order is noteworthy. In Trinidad, Eshu was traditionally

equated with the Christian Devil, and so songs and rituals for Eshu happen earlier in ceremonies.)

Congregation 1 April 2011, Brooklyn	Congregation 2 June 2011, Trinidad
Ogun	Ogun
Mama Leta	Mama Leta
Shakpana	Raphael
Erilay	Shakpana
Ibaji	Abatala
Yemanja	Vigoyana
Oshun	Erilay
Osain	Osain
Oya	Yemanja
Shango	Oshun
	Oya
	Shango

3.5 Order of spirits sung for by two Orisha congregations, Brooklyn and Trinidad

Comparing the two Rotations, the overall song order can be broken into sections. Songs for Ogun, Mama Leta, and Shakpana are generally grouped together at the beginning of the song cycle. Songs for Erilay, Yemanja, and Oshun (all spirits who are associated with water) are grouped in the middle, as are songs for Osain. Finally, the Rotation ends with songs for Shango, preceded by those for his wife, Oya. Congregation 2 added in songs for two more spirits, Vigoyana and Raphael, showing some of the differences and idiosyncrasies between Orisha congregations.

In fig. 3.6, I look more closely at the songs performed by “Congregation 1,” considering the number of songs sung for each spirit, and the amount of time devoted to singing for each spirit. The *chantwell* at this event was Leader Gordon, and the event was an annual “Flag Planting” ceremony held at his home in Brooklyn. Following an opening Litany, Leader Gordon led the congregation in a song Rotation lasting just under three hours, singing for Ogun, Mama

Leta, Shakpana, Erilay, Ibaji, Yemanja, Oshun, Osain, Mama Leta (again), Shakpana (again), Oya, and Shango.

<i>Orisha</i>	Number of songs	Time (in minutes)
Ogun	19	21
Mama Leta	11	15
Shakpana	16	13
Erilay	6	13
Ibaji	2	2
Yemanja	24	32
Oshun	17	22
Osain	16	25
Mama Leta	1	4
Shakpana	3	5
Oya	9	7
Shango	16	11

3.6 Complete Orisha Song Rotation by Leader Gordon and Congregation, 2011. Annual “Flag Planting” in Bushwick, Brooklyn. 12:53-3:43am.

Fig. 3.6 shows a number of salient features of Trinidad Orisha song performance. First, the songs are most often just short phrases, and they can be performed rather quickly: 19 Ogun songs take only 21 minutes. Second, certain *orishas* are regaled with long song Rotations (Ogun, Oshun, Osain), while the song Rotations for others are very brief (Ibaji, Oya). Third, *orishas* are often sung for more than once over the course of a ceremony; in this case Leader Gordon actually sang for two *orishas* more than once, returning to sing for Mama Leta and Shakpana prior to moving on to Oya and Shango. Fourth, Orisha songs are often repeated in varying order within a single *orisha* Rotation in order to lengthen the time sung for a particular *orisha*. For example, in the above example, there are 24 “songs” sung for Yemanja, but in reality these comprised only 9 unique song-phrases, which were repeated in varying order, lengthening the time sung for Yemanja despite a limited repertoire (in my Orisha song database, there are only 10 different songs for Yemanja).

Explanation of the logic of song order at the annual four-day feast

The four day annual Orisha feast is the main ritual event in the Trinidad Orisha calendar. The feast begins on a Tuesday night (into Wednesday morning), continuing on until Friday night (into Saturday morning). Each night of the feast is devoted to particular *orishas* and activities.

Feast night	Associated <i>orisha</i>	Animal sacrifice/offering	Songs included in the overall Rotation
Tuesday	Ogun	Goat and fowl	Ogun, Mama Leta, Shakpana
Wednesday	Osain	Goat, fowl, morocoy (turtle)	Ogun, Mama Leta, Shakpana Erilay, Yemanja, Oshun Osain (emphasis on Osain)
Thursday	Shango	Sheep	All (emphasis on Shango and Oya)
Friday	All the <i>orishas</i>	None	All

3.7 Outline of the annual four day Orisha feast

The songs performed during each night of the feast correspond with the associated *orisha* for that particular night. Keeping in mind the general order in which *orishas* are sung for, the songs for the opening night of the feast, known as “Ogun night,” are limited to the first part of the overall Rotation: Ogun, Mama Leta, and Shakpana. For “Osain night,” songs include the first part of the Rotation (Ogun, Mama Leta, and Shakpana) while adding the middle part (Erilay, Yemanja, and Oshun) as well as Osain, whose songs are given extra emphasis. For “Shango night,” the songs include all of the *orishas*, with special attention to songs for Oya and Shango.

The emphasis on Ogun, Osain, and Shango in the four-day feast is reflected in the overall song repertoire. Ogun and Shango have the most Orisha songs, with over 30 each, while songs for Osain are the next most numerous, numbering over 20. In West Africa, certain *orishas* are associated with certain geographic areas and Yoruba-speaking subgroups, and thus the songs may offer clues into Trinidad Yoruba demographic history. According to Warner-Lewis, the numerically dominant Yoruba groups in Trinidad were likely Ijesha, Ekiti, and above all Oyo, and that

Oyo preeminence dictated that the deities whose worship has continued in Trinidad are those whose worship constituted a cultural denominator throughout Yorubaland – such as Ogun, Oya, Oshun, Shokponno, Osanyin, Orunmila, Yemoja, and those of Oyo origin like Shango, Dada, and Bayanni. ... By comparison, the specifically Ife deities or the Ife nomenclatures of Oyo divine counterparts are less well known, so that Oduduwa, Olokun, Oranyan, and Oramfe or Jakuta do not survive in the generally recognized Trinidad *orisha* pantheon. (Warner-Lewis 1996, 25)

Examples of Ogun, Osain, and Shango Rotations

As the above examples show, regardless of the night or the ritual context, Ogun is always sung for during TOM performance. The Rotation of songs for Ogun is sung directly after the Litany (except for certain congregations that sing for Eshu before Ogun – see chapter eight). Given the prominence of Ogun songs in TOM, it is unsurprising that Ogun songs are among the most numerous in the Orisha repertoire, and that Ogun Rotations are fairly standardized, especially in comparison with Rotations for other *orishas*. The following chart (fig. 3.8) depicts Ogun Rotations as sung by three different congregations: two in Brooklyn, one in Trinidad. The consistencies between them are striking, especially during the early part of each of the Rotations. All three *chantwells* begin with either “Ogun Bewele” or “Ogun Onire” – and Sugar Aloes sings both to begin. Next, the following four songs are sung in succession: “Ajaraja Ogun O,” “Feregun Abami,” “Ogun Lalala Urele,” and “Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa.” Following these initial songs, each *chantwell* leads his congregation towards the one-bar songs “Ije Kolamina,” “Gaile,” and “Alaye,” increasing the overall intensity in the Orisha *palais* (this progression from long- to short-bar length songs is discussed more below). The three Ogun Rotations are as follows:

Date	June 2011	April 2011	June 2011
Location	East Flatbush, Brooklyn	Bushwick, Brooklyn	Laventille, Trinidad
<i>Chantwell</i>	Sugar Aloes	Leader Gordon	Leader Baker
Length	22 minutes	12 minutes	14 minutes
Songs:	Ogun Bewele	Ogun Onire	Ogun Bewele
	Ogun Onire	Ajaraja Ogun O	Ajaraja Ogun O
	Ajaraja Ogun O	Feregun Abami	Feregun Abami
	Feregun Abami	Ogun Lalala Urele	Ogun Lalala Urele
	Ogun Lalala Urele	Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa	Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa
	Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa	Ogun Karankade	Ogun Masa Laye
	Mai Law Kere Kere	Ije Kolamina	Baba De, Ogun Yeyeye
	Ibako Ibambole	Eshu Mayaya	Ye Agun Aye A
	Ije Kolamina	Ibako Ibambole	A Gaile, Etuma Gaile
	Ibako Ibambole	Ije Kolamina	Gaile
	Ije Kolamina	Ye Agun Aye A	Mai Law Kere Kere
	Alaye	A Gaile, Etuma Gaile	Ije Kolamina
	Ije Kolamina	Gaile	A Laye
	Ay Jankwana Ogun Dede	A Gaile, Etuma Gaile	Ibako, Ibambole
	Ije Kolamina	Gaile	Isama, Isama
	Alaye		
	Ije Kolamina		
	Ogun Karankade		
	Ye Agun Aye A		
	A Gaile, Etuma Gaile		
	Gaile		
	A Gaile, Etuma Gaile		
	Gaile		
	A Gaile Etuma Gaile		
	A Du Laye		

3.8 Three Ogun Rotations: East Flatbush, Bushwick, and Laventille

Aside from its prominence, the Ogun Rotation stands out in TOM because congregants perform a kind of circle-dance during the beginning section. This dance consists of roughly twelve members of the congregation approaching the area of the drums, where ritual objects have been placed on the ground – honey, milk, water, oil, candles, and so on. Each member takes up an object in his or her hands, and then the group begins a single-file marching dance, forming a large circle in front of the drums. When the *chantwell* changes the song-phrase (usually after around a minute) the dancers spin around, touch the ground, and continue to march in an anti-

clockwise direction. This circular march goes on for at least the first five songs – the circle changing direction with each new song – before the dancers begin a procession to the four corners of the *palais*, where they sprinkle some of the contents of their ritual objects. Apart from this initial Ogun Rotation, no other group of Orisha songs has a coordinated group dance or movement (unlike Cuban *Santería*, which features several of these coordinated group dances).

Fig. 3.9 extends over the next two pages, showing my 12/8 notations of *chantwell* and chorus vocal melodies for the typical opening Ogun Rotation, beginning with “Ogun Bewele” (“Ogun Onire” would be interchangeable here – as the above examples show, either can be used as the first song) and continuing through “Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa.” Each song is labeled in the transcription. I have shown all verses with a single repeat; in reality, each verse is repeated many times, per the discretion of the *chantwell*. “Ogun Bewele” occupies the first six bars, and following the first repeat, the chorus sings the entire verse (“Ogun bewele amio...”) while the *chantwell* rests. Song two begins at bar 7; song three at bar 9; song four at bar 10; and song five begins with the pickup (eighth notes e-f) going into bar 14. Note the minor-to-major modulation between song four and song five, accomplished by raising the e-flat to e-natural.

3.9 The Opening Ogun Rotation

1. "Ogun Bewele"

Chantwell

O gun be we le a mi o O gun be we le O gun

Chorus

Chorus sings entire verse on repeat, chantwell rests

Chw

be we le a mi o O gun be we le a ta man de

Ch

Chw

1. 2.

— a ma ban gwe le O gun be we le a mi o

Ch

O gun be we le a mi o

2. "Ajaraja Ogun O"

Chw

O gu ro jo ka bai le

Ch

A — ja — ra ja — O gu ro

3.9 The Opening Ogun Rotation (continued)

3. "Feregun Abami"

Chw: O gu ro

Ch: Fe re gun a ba mi

4. "Ogun Lalala Urele"

Chw: O gun la__ la man de

Ch: la__ la__ la u re le O gun

5. "Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa"

Chw: O gun la__ la man de

Ch: la__ la__ la u re le O gun ye__ ye__ a re ma le sa__

Chw: ye ye o lo mi__ ye ye she ku o__

Ch: a ma__ bo swe__ a re mi so O gun

In the following chart (fig. 3.10), I present three examples of Osain Rotations – again, two from Brooklyn and one from Trinidad. The three examples comprise a similar repertoire, but, in contrast to the Ogun Rotations, the Osain Rotations are not marked by identical five-song passages. Certain similar patterns are evident, for instance both Bishop Dedan and Leader Baker

direct their congregations towards the one-bar “Ode” refrain. Otherwise, the three Rotations are quite distinct.

Date	June 2011	April 2011	June 2010
Location	East Flatbush, Brooklyn	Bushwick, Brooklyn	Mausica, Trinidad
<i>Chantwell</i>	Bishop Dedan	Leader Gordon	Leader Baker
Length	18 minutes	25 minutes	17 minutes
Songs:	Osain Jawela Orisha Wele	Ye Rani Bada	Ye Rani Bada
	Kitimande Osain De Powa	Osain Jawela Orisha Wele	Abalumbaye Ariwo
	Osain Jawela Orisha Wele	Karele Osain, Karele	Yingiyingi A Bababiye
	Kitimande Osain De Powa	Olorile Ojo Saina	Abalumbaye Ariwo
	Aylande Nite Wa	Amabitu Are	Olorile Ojo Saina
	Ojo Roko, Roko Roko	Kiripiti	Karele Osain, Karele
	Ode	Amabitu Are	Olorile Ojo Saina
	Ye Rani Bada	Osain Tuco Du Oloro	Amure Osa Betilo
	Osain Tuco Du Oloro	Amure Osa Betilo	Amabitu Are
	Amure Osa Betilo	Arusa Matalo	Kiripiti
	Wonko Iworilo	Eru Jagba Papa Palara	Kiripiti Osain De Mole
	Aylande Nitewa	Osain Ade Ere Rele Koko	Ode
	Karele Osain, Karele	Osain Jawela Orisha Wele	Kiripiti Osain De Mole
	Ode	Kitimande Osain De Powa	Ode
	Kiripiti Osain De Mole		Olorile Ojo Saina
	Ode		Aylande Nitewa
	Osain De Mole Mariwo		Karele Osain, Karele
	Karele Osain, Karele		Orijareta Orijaja
	Ode		Osain Jawela Orisha Wele

3.10 Three Osain Rotations: East Flatbush, Bushwick, and Mausica

Just as the Osain Rotations share repertoire but do not reveal a standardized song order, so too with the Shango Rotations, as shown in three versions below (fig. 3.11). An interesting feature of these is that the longest, Leader Baker’s in Mausica, contains the fewest songs, while the shortest, Leader Gordon’s, contains the most. Also of note is the incorporation of songs for Oya into the Shango Rotation – making the first two examples, effectively, Shango/Oya Rotations. While the Ogun Rotations showed a high degree of similarity in terms of song order, and the Osain Rotations showed (in part) similar song order trends, these three Shango Rotations are mostly different, similar only in a few overlapping songs.

Date	June 2011	April 2011	June 2011
Location	East Flatbush, Brooklyn	Bushwick, Brooklyn	Mausica, Trinidad
Chantwell	Sugar Aloes	Leader Gordon	Leader Baker
Length	54 minutes	19 minutes	2 hours, 5 minutes
Songs:	Abakuso, Alado Kai Bai	Kirianka Da Oya	Korikoto Milodo
	Odi Ogbo	Oya O Ologbo Orode	Aladoye Shango Wori Loye
	Eruna, Shango Kolona	Oya O Di Ariwo	Aladoye
	Ferekun Fere Shango	Oya O Ologbo Orode	Baba De Erona
	Eruna, Shango Kolona	Oya O Di Ariwo	Alado Nadi Wolo Alado
	Odi Ogbo	A Oya Kwemi O	E Dawona
	E Dawona	E Oya, Emi Oya	Shango De
	Shango O, Babawa	Kirianka Da Oya	Ari Jan Kija
	Naiye O, Naiye Bada	Dada O Kimabo Mibo	Amasa Kuma
	Oya, Emi Anka Rele	Ode Ma Orisha	E Dawona
	E Oya, Emi Oya	Odi Ogbo	Alado Nadi Wolo Alado
	Oya O Ologbo Orode	Ferekun Fere Shango	Ye Ye Aniro
	A Oya Kwemi O	Eruna, Shango Kolona	Kwemi Ama La Viche
	Kirianka Da Oya	Ari Jan Kija	
	Amabu Shango Yeye	Koriwo Amasakuma	
	Ama Jagba Emi Abakuso	E Dawona	
	Ariwo Ariwo Yeye	Naiye O, Naiye Bada	
	Ari Jan Kija	Shango O Tete Malaw	
	E Dawona	Ye Ye Aniro	
	Shango Babawa, Olodo	Shango O Tete Malaw	
	Mother Jerio Lavwe Se	Ye Ye Aniro	
	Emi Alada So A Viche	Shango O Tete Malaw	
	Ibai La Mefa	Ye Ye Aniro	
		Shango O Tete Malaw	

3.11 Three Shango Rotations: East Flatbush, Bushwick, and Mausica

The above discussion of song Rotations for the three most prominent *orishas* in Trinidad Orisha (Ogun, Osain, and Shango) reveals a combination of standardization and variation in TOM performance. On the one hand, all of the Rotations draw on a limited repertoire, meaning that overall song choice is very similar from performance to performance. However, the order of songs displays great variance, with individual *chantwells* deciding how best to organize Orisha song-phrases into large-scale suites. The greatest standardization occurs in the Ogun Rotation (identical first half dozen songs, progression towards certain one-bar songs) while the least

standardization occurs in the Shango Rotation. Considering the high degree of variation between individual Rotations, each *chantwell* plays an important role in directing TOM performance, for instance in the leading of dismissal songs, discussed next.

Dismissal Songs

In a Trinidad Orisha ceremony, the primary, explicit goal of TOM is, typically, to encourage a spirit manifestation, which is the complete embodiment of an *orisha* by one of the congregants. The individual who manifests (which is an emic term) the *orisha* might be a drummer, a priest, or simply one of the congregation, and s/he surrenders control of his/her bodily movements and speech to the *orisha*. In this capacity, the *orishas* visit the ceremonies of Orisha worshipers, where they might give a brief sermon, give blessings to the ailments of the faithful, and/or dance in front of the drums. A full *orisha* manifestation can last well over one hour, and the musicians (*chantwell* and drummers) help to determine the conclusion of the manifestation by performing songs to send the spirit away, known as dismissal songs.

Dismissal songs are mostly in the rhythm known as “rada” or “kankan” (RK), though not all RK songs are dismissal songs: early in the rotation, non-dismissal songs for Ogun and Mama Leta are sung in RK. See “Ashton Tuesday Night, 2011” in the appendix, in which the final song of the entire ceremony was “A Da Ogun” in RK. The song was initiated to send away the *orisha* Ogun, manifesting on Sugar Aloes. Aloes/Ogun danced to the song for less than two minutes before collapsing on the ground, and the music stopped at the same moment. The service was done.

It is the responsibility of the *mongwa* to decide when to sing a dismissal song, but very often the spirits themselves indicate that they are ready to go. A spirit might simply announce

his/her departure, saying, “me go,” or wave to the congregation in an obvious gesture of departure. Then the *chantwell* starts a dismissal song, the spirit and the congregants wave to one another, and the spirit dances until the dancer falls on the ground, or into someone’s arms.

At a Brooklyn feast in June 2011, for example, Osain manifested on a man during a group of songs for Osain in “straight Orisha” rhythm (the main foundational rhythm in TOM, explained in chapter four). Attendants dressed him with a white and yellow sash about the waist, and gave him a whisk broom – all emblems of an Osain manifestation. After Osain had been at the feast for some time, going around and doing spiritual work, for example feeding olive oil to patrons at the feast, he threw the whisk broom to the *chantwell*, who signaled for the drummers to stop the music, and immediately started singing “Kiripiti Osain De Mole” in RK rhythm in order to dismiss the spirit. The drummers began in RK, and Osain started a circular dance in the area just in front of the drums. The *mongwa* and attendants moved in close to catch him, anticipating his impending fall. After a short time dancing, the man fell straight back, into the waiting arms of one of the attendants. Having accomplished their task of “dismissing” Osain, the *chantwell* and drummers stopped the music.

On another occasion, June 2011 Thanksgiving in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, several spirits came: Osain, Oshun, Yemanja, and Shango. As darkness approached in the park, it was time to wrap things up, and so the *chantwell* began singing dismissal songs for the *orishas*, one by one making them fall. After singing for Shango, Osain, and Oshun, Yemanja was nowhere in sight. “Don’t we have one more spirit?” the *mongwa* asked. “Where’s Yemanja?” Yemanja had gone away from the center of the ceremony, and was doing spiritual work among people in the park – giving them blessings, speaking messages into their ears, and so on. Once the Yemanja-dancer was called back in, the *chantwell* began singing “Yemanja Mile Ariwo, Akoko,” a Yemanja

dismissal song in RK rhythm. After a brief dance, Yemanja left.

Song Form in TOM

Roughly 60% of the songs in my TOM database have a mirror call-and-response structure, in which the chorus repeats exactly what is sung by the *chantwell*. “Ogun Bewele” is among this type (refer to fig. 3.9): the choral response is the same as the *chantwell*’s sung verse. The remaining 40% of the songs in my database are made up of songs in which the *chantwell* and chorus sing something different (such as “Ajaraja Ogun O,” referring to fig. 3.9 again), as well as two songs sung in unison.

Twelve songs in my TOM database feature an *aaba* poetic structure, showing an affinity with song form in Christian hymnody. There are many common Spiritual Baptist choruses using this *aaba* form, such as the following three examples:

- I. See me through, Lord Jesus, see me through
 See me through, Lord Jesus, see me through
 It’s a long way to go, and a victory to be won
 See me through, Lord Jesus, see me through

- II. There’s a meeting here tonight
 There’s a meeting here tonight
 Go and tell them
 There’s a meeting here tonight

- III. Ready or not, the Lord is coming
 Ready or not, He’s coming again
 Trim your lamp, and keep it burning
 Ready or not, He’s coming again

The above verses were probably once choruses to longer Christian hymns, but Spiritual Baptists simply repeat them over and over, so that one verse becomes an entire song performance. During the repeated verses, participants might begin to clap and shout, and, eventually, to perform the

wordless rhythmic grunting known as *doption*. These verses are commonly sung prior to an Orisha ceremony (see the appendix for examples).

This *aaba* verse structure occurs in several Trinidad Orisha songs, for instance the following songs for Ogun (I and II), Osain (III), and Oshun (IV):

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| I. | Ogun bewele amio, ogun bewele
Ogun bewele amio, ogun bewele
Awa mande ama bangwele
Ogun bewele amio, ogun bewele | <i>Ogun asks for me, Ogun asks
Ogun asks for me, Ogun asks
We children, weak children
Ogun asks for me, Ogun asks</i> ⁷⁰ |
| II. | (Ogun) karankade
Ogun karankade
Yeye olomi
Ogun karankade | <i>The mighty one has arrived</i> ⁷¹ |
| III. | Ye rani bada
Ye rani bada
Osain de rele amabo
Ye rani bada | |
| IV. | Oshun me ba betilo
Oshun me ba betilo
Betilo, Mama Oshun
Oshun me ba betilo | <i>Oshun accompanied the twins</i> ⁷² |

A relatively small number of Orisha songs use this *aaba* formula (less than 7% of the total in my database), and given the prominence of the structure in the Christian hymns sung by Orisha-Baptists, this verse form in TOM may be evidence of borrowing from Baptist music. Still, *aaba* stanza structure are likely found in many diverse world song cultures, tempering any definite conclusions about influence one way or the other. Whether coincidence or connection, it is clear that, for both Spiritual Baptist and Trinidad Orisha song performance, the *aaba* verse is a useful form for inducing trance. Unlike the long and verbose *orikis* (praise poems) of *orisha*

⁷⁰ Warner-Lewis 1994.

⁷¹ Aiyejina, Gibbons, and Phills 2009.

⁷² Warner-Lewis 1994.

devotion in West Africa, or the long poetry of the Toco woman Margaret Buckley, mentioned at the start of this chapter, or, say, ballad forms of Euro-American folk music, in which the focus is on exegesis of a text or story, these short, repetitive *aaba* verses serve the purpose of elevating the music beyond linguistic meaning, transforming song lyrics into a kind of mantra. Repeating short verses allows for group participation, increasing the collective spirit (referred to by participants as a “vibration”) in the ceremony, and building towards the ultimate goal of Afro-Trinidadian Orisha (and Spiritual Baptist) musical contexts: spirit possession.

Another feature of Trinidad Orisha song structure which promotes spirit possession is the overall progression of songs sung by the *chantwell*, beginning with songs of multiple bar lengths and progressing towards songs of only a single bar. In the Ogun Rotation examples above, all three *chantwells* lead their congregations in a progression from longer-to-shorter songs, culminating in one-bar song-phrases such as “Ije Kolamina,” “Gaile,” and “Alaye.” To illustrate this regressive-bar structure, the following chart shows the bar lengths of two Ogun song-phrases: “Gaile” and the song which leads into it, “A Gaile, Etuma Gaile”:

<i>Chantwell’s call</i>	<i>Choral response</i>	Number of bars
A gaile, etuma gaile	<i>A gaile, etuma gaile</i>	4
Etumale	<i>Gaile!</i>	1

This type of song progression has the effect of making the music seem as though it is getting faster. The practical reason for this speeding-up is related to the overall function of TOM: induction of spirit possession. Shorter songs often generate much excitement within the congregation, and may lead to spirit possession. A *chantwell* who notices congregants in a pre-possession state (individuals experiencing tremors, holding their heads, shouting out exclamations) might choose to begin a song sequence progressing toward a song with short

phrase lengths, thus maximizing the feeling in the *palais*. Or, the *chantwell* might simply repeat the one-bar song over and over, unrelenting until the manifestation is complete.

These long-to-short song progressions are not limited to the Ogun Rotations. Examples can be found in Rotations for Shakpana (the eight-bar “Karankada wo” leading to the one-bar songs “Koriwo” and “Shakunama”) for Osain (the four-bar “Karele Osain, Karele” and the two-bar “Kitimande Osain De Mole” can both lead to the one-bar “Ode) and for Erilay (the song “Yawe Yawe” is a series of two-bar phrases culminating in the one-bar exclamatory phrase, “Erilay!).

A common Yemanja Rotation uses the one-bar refrain “Yemanja kwemi / *awayo*” interspersed between four-bar songs, as follows:

<i>Chantwell's call</i>	Choral response	Number of bars
Wele wele, nite su se woyo Yemanja wo	<i>Wele wele, nite su se woyo</i> <i>Yemanja wo</i>	4
Yemanja kwemi	<i>Awayo!</i>	1
Yemanja de wa babawa, Yemanja de wa ariwo	<i>E kwemi o, Yemanja de wa</i> <i>babawa</i>	4
Yemanja so kwemi	<i>Awayo!</i>	1
Yemanja duwe ikoko	<i>Koria, koria</i>	4

In this Yemanja rotation, three different songs for Yemanja are interspersed with the one-bar “awayo” chorus. The *chantwell* exerts total control over the length of time each song is sung, switching to the next song when s/he feels it is the right time (keeping in mind the energy considerations mentioned above by Leader Gordon).

Melodic and Harmonic Features of TOM

In my Orisha song database, I categorize more than 70% of the repertoire in major modes, the rest minor. Determination of major or minor modality is clear to me, due to the nearly ever-present third scalar degree in relation to resolution to a stable resting place which I define as

the tonic. In addition to the use of thirds, some Trinidad Orisha songs feature a major or minor 7th as a leading tone (“Osain Jawela, Orisha Wele”) or neighbor tone (“Soye Soye Ariwo,” “Oshun Ma Te Kumare”). Others use the 2nd scale degree as an upper neighbor tone (“Ogun Bewele”). Other common cadences include $\underline{6}$ to 1 and $b3$ to 1, both typical of much African music.

In the following two examples, I present two Orisha songs which emphasize the 3rd scalar degree, creating a feeling of minor tonicity (in the first example) and major tonicity (in the second). These songs are well-known in the current TOM repertoire. The first example, “Ogun Kayamba” (fig. 3.12) outlines the minor tetratonic mode 1 $b3$ 4 5. The song has a pronounced flat 3rd scalar degree – the first part of the song alternates between 1 and $b3$, exemplary of the “pendular thirds” common in African music (Van der Merwe 1992). I categorize the second example (fig. 3.13) in a major tetratonic mode, outlining $\underline{6}$ 1 2 3. This example, “Yemanja De Wa Babawa,” has a pronounced major 3rd degree – the song opens on the 3rd, resolving down to 1. In fact, each repetition of the 3rd degree resolves quickly down to 1, and the final cadence is $\underline{6}$ to 1.

3.12 Example of emphasized flat 3rd scalar degree: “Ogun Kayamba”

3.13 Example of emphasized major 3rd scalar degree: “Yemanja De Wa Babawa”

In addition to being well-known in current TOM, these two songs were also recorded in Grenada by Alan Lomax in 1962.⁷³ On those recordings, they are sung with essentially the same melodies as in current TOM practice, which suggests a certain amount of stability in the TOM melodic repertoire.

Certain songs modulate from minor into relative major, for instance “Emi Oya Tigidi” (minor tetratonic 1 b3 4 5) which might transition into “Oya, Oya, emi a karele” (major tetratonic 6 1 2 3) the latter song beginning on the minor third as the new tonic in major. In fig. 3.14, the first four bars are one song, “Emi Oya,” shown here in a minor mode ending on A. The *chantwell* might sing this song for some time in call-and-response fashion with the chorus, after which he could transition to the song shown in the two bars on the bottom line, “Oya, Oya,” depicted here in a major mode ending on C.

3.14 Modulation from minor to relative major: “Emi Oya” and “Oya, Oya”

The image shows three staves of musical notation in a minor mode. The first staff contains the melody for "Emi Oya" with lyrics: E mi O ya__ ti gi di__ e mi O ya__ ka ga na__. The second staff continues the melody with lyrics: Ba ba o ri sha__ mi la da__ e mi O ya__ ti gi di__. The third staff shows the transition to "Oya, Oya" with lyrics: O__ ya__ O__ ya e mi a__ ka__ re le__. The notation includes treble clefs, a key signature of one flat, and various rhythmic values such as quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, along with rests and repeat signs.

⁷³ These recordings are available at [culturalequity.org \[http://research.culturalequity.org/rc-b2/search-keyword-audio.do\]](http://research.culturalequity.org/rc-b2/search-keyword-audio.do). See references for full citation.

Another minor-to-major modulation occurs in the previous two-page example, the “opening Ogun Rotation” (fig. 3.9). In that example, the minor “Ogun Lalala Urele” suddenly transforms into the major “Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa,” achieved by raising the third scale degree e-flat to e-natural.

These kinds of major/minor modulations are not explicitly discussed by practitioners of TOM. Rather, singers intuitively shift between major and minor modes, perhaps recognizing a shift in the musical mood as a result (and such modal fluidity might be likened to the rhythmic fluidity of Orisha drummers, discussed in the next two chapters). In my own subjective opinion, the performance of one of these minor-major shifts in an Orisha feast comes as a kind of plateau, elevating a (while beautiful) dark and heavy melodic mood into something bright and airy – though that perception could be due to my Euro-American enculturated ears. Even so, Trinidad Orisha congregations often implicitly recognize the plateau-effect of these modulations: in the Ogun Rotation on “Mount Moriah Friday Night, 2011” (see appendix), Gordon sang the first four songs of the Ogun Rotation for only about a minute each, while resting on “Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa” for nearly four minutes.

In terms of range, most Trinidad Orisha cover the span of a perfect fifth – for example, the two Oya songs above – while many cover just a major third. Some exceptions stand out as spanning an octave or more, such as the opening song of the litany, “Ye Irawa, Irawa O” (spanning a ninth), and the Oshun song, “Oshun Ma Te Kumare” (octave), presented in fig. 3.15, and both of these songs outline the Western diatonic major scale, a peculiarity in terms of West African melodic convention, suggesting a possible Westernization in some Trinidad Orisha songs.

3.15 “Oshun Ma Te Kumare”⁷⁴

Ye ye ye ye o O shun O shun

o a re mi O shun ma te ku ma re

The image shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef. The first staff contains the lyrics 'Ye ye ye ye o O shun O shun' with notes corresponding to each syllable. The second staff contains the lyrics 'o a re mi O shun ma te ku ma re' with notes corresponding to each syllable. The notes are mostly quarter and eighth notes, with some rests and ties.

Melodic direction in Trinidad Orisha songs might be interpreted as retaining some of the tonal qualities of Yoruba language. Yoruba speakers, for instance, pronounce Shango with an ascending second syllable, indicated using diacritics as *Shàngó*. Referring to my notation examples, in the Orisha song “Shango Babawa,” the opening melodic line might be seen as mirroring the ascending intervallic relationship on the second syllable of the word Shango in the opening interval of a major third. (On the other hand, this upward interval is followed by a descending fourth, and so it is difficult to be sure of speech-tone relationships.)

Shan go o ba ba wa

The image shows a single staff of musical notation in treble clef, 12/8 time signature. The lyrics 'Shan go o ba ba wa' are written below the notes. The notes are quarter and eighth notes, with a tie over the 'o' syllable.

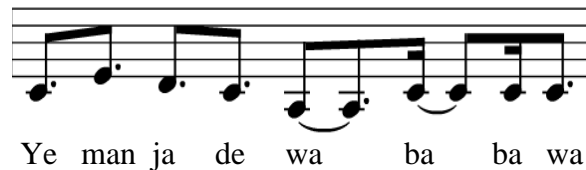
Similarly, an ascending minor third is used on the first instance of the word Ogun (pronounced *Ògún* by Yoruba speakers) in the opening line of “Ogun Bewele.”

O gun be we le a mi o

The image shows a single staff of musical notation in treble clef, 12/8 time signature. The lyrics 'O gun be we le a mi o' are written below the notes. The notes are quarter and eighth notes, with a tie over the 'O' syllable.

⁷⁴ According to Aiyejina, this songs means “Mother, mother Oshun / Oshun, this is a play / Come and stay with your child” (Aiyejina *et al* 2009).

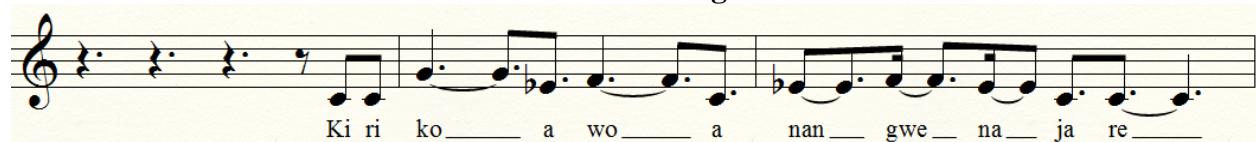
In other cases, melodic direction of *orisha* names does not correspond with spoken Yoruba, suggesting an alteration of the speech-tone relationship. For example, in the song “Yemanja De Wa Babawa,” the name Yemanja is spaced out over a 1-3-2-1 major scale sequence (in spoken Yoruba, the three syllables of “Yemoja” are spoken with the same tone):



Such speech-tone deviations might suggest Western or other outside influence,⁷⁵ but on the other hand Nketia has shown that, in African song, the musical representations of speech-tones is not invariable, for instance in the fact that “musical considerations” can take precedence over strict adherence to speech intonation, and that “modifications form part of the stylization of intonation that creative performers allow themselves and that become established as melodic usages” (Nketia 1974, 186-187).

Typical of Yoruba and neo-Yoruba musics, the singing is nearly always syllabic rather than melismatic, and melodic movement in TOM often features leaps and non-stepwise motion. The above Oshun song features prominent leaps of fourths and thirds. In another example, “Kiriko Awo A Nangwe Na Jare” (known as a “pleasure song” for Ogun), the first interval is an upward leap of a fifth, which is followed by a downward third, a downward fourth, and a final downward third.

3.16 “Kiriko Awo A Nangwe Na Jare”

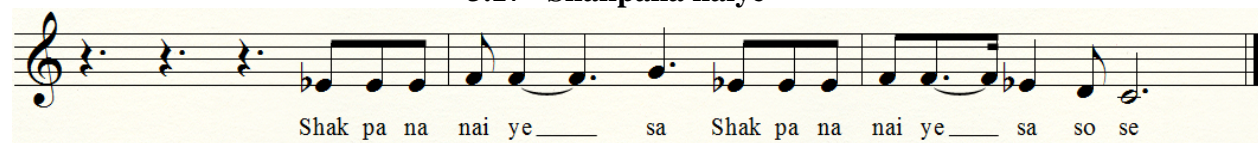


⁷⁵ Cf. the Santería song “Yemayá Asesú.” See Manuel and Fiol (2007, 55).

Similar to fig. 3.16, an opening fifth is also used in the following songs: “Eshu Baragbo Mojuba”; “Ogun Bewele”; and “Oya O Di Ariwo.”

Unlike in *Santería* (Manuel and Fiol 2007) or other Yoruba-derived music, diatonic stepwise scalar passages using four or even five notes in succession are not uncommon in TOM. As mentioned above, certain Trinidad Orisha songs outline the diatonic major scale, and “Oshun Ma Te Kumare” (fig. 3.15) ends with a five note descending diatonic sequence from G to C, or 5-4-3-2-1. This same sequence occurs in the minor key Osain song, “Amabi Tu Are,” as well as in the minor key “Ogun Bewele.” Similarly, “Shakpana naiye” (fig. 3.17) ends with a stepwise minor descent from F to C, a note sequence which can be characterized as 4-b3-2-1. This four note sequence, in both major and minor modes, is also present in the Shango song “Aniro ai St. John,” the St. Raphael song “Raphael o ma de kusa,” the Ibaji song “Dere dere a,” the Oya song “Kirianga de Oya,” and the Eshu song “Eshu baragbo mojuba,” among others.

3.17 “Shakpana naiye”⁷⁶



In addition to the apparent diatonicization of some Trinidad Orisha song melodies, other melodies might be seen as borrowed from outside of Trinidad Yoruba practices. Melody sharing between TOM songs was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, in the case of “Karankada Wo” and “Ogun Masa Laye.” Another melody employed for multiple songs is the one found in the Eshu song “Papa Elegba Yeye” and the Osain songs “Aylande Nite Wa” and “Olorile Ojo Saina.” The first two of these are compared in fig. 3.18 (since the third uses a slightly different rhythm, I have chosen to leave it out). In the actual performance of these two songs, there is a

⁷⁶ According to Aiyejina, this songs means “We seek shelter under Shakpana” (Aiyejina *et al* 2009).

measure of rest after each measure of the songs – I have condensed the songs for the purposes of the present analysis, and show a double bar line to indicate what would be a rest:

3.18 Songs with the same melody: “Papa Elegba” and “Aylande Nite Wa”

Pa pa E leg ba ye ye Pa pa E leg ba ye ye

Ay lan de nite wa Ay lan de nite wa

These two songs show a clear melodic sequence in which the melodic motif in the first measure is repeated in the second measure one full step down. The melody of fig. 3.18 is very similar to one of the most recognizable melodies in Trinidad, that of the popular *canboulay* song known variously as “When I Dead Bury Me Clothes” or “Fire Brigade, Water the Road.” In fig. 3.19, I notate “When I Dead, Bury Me Clothes” in 4/4 meter:

3.19 “When I Dead, Bury Me Clothes”

When I dead bu ry me clothes when I dead bu ry me clothes

Due to their irregularity in terms of TOM, it is possible that the above Orisha songs (fig. 3.18) adopted their melody from the *canboulay* song in 3.19 – though of course it is impossible to say which came first. In any case, Van der Merwe (1992) shows that this type of sequence is very common in African music generally.⁷⁷ Given that *canboulay* was a Carnival-time practice of lower-class urban sectors in nineteenth-century Trinidad, the incorporation of a popular *canboulay* melody into TOM might be seen as cultural assimilation into the dominant Afro-

⁷⁷ See Van der Merwe 1992, p. 133: the Ghanaian song in example 25 (“Kuro’i nye mo dea”) is nearly identical to my examples 3.18 and 3.19.

Creole community in Trinidad, which is consistent with other Creole incursions into TOM, such as French-Creole terminology (e.g. *palais, chapelle, bonswe mi pikney* – see chapter two).

The presence of potentially non-Yoruba melodies in the TOM repertoire, along with other melodic features of TOM (commonness of stepwise melodic motion, occurrence of diatonic melodic modes) suggests at least partial influence of musical practices foreign to the original Trinidad Yoruba. Given the decline of the Trinidad Yoruba language, such incorporations have likely been important as practitioners maintain TOM as a vital practice. At the same time, the melodic and harmonic features of TOM show typically coastal West African aspects, including common cadences, melodic motion by leaps, pentatonic scales, syllabic singing, as well as potential retentions of the tonal properties of Trinidad Yoruba language. This combination of retention and innovation are a reminder of the duality in Trinidad Orisha music and culture, as articulated in the main argument of this dissertation.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the song repertoire of TOM, including prayers sung in free time (the Litany) as well as songs in tempo with percussive accompaniment (the Rotation). I have outlined the typical order in which *orishas* are sung for, as well as given examples of song suites for certain *orishas*. Finally, I described key formal, melodic, and harmonic aspects of TOM. All the while, I gave indications that the current practice of TOM has not always been in its current state, but that it is rather in a process involving turbulence, consolidation, and change, including creolization with outside musical influences. TOM is an oral tradition, transmitted to subsequent generations through use – through the singing of Trinidad Orisha songs. My informants have told me that Orisha songs have been lost, and evidence of that loss is reflected in

the song repertoire of TOM. For example, evidence suggests that the song repertoire performed during preliminary sections of Trinidad Orisha ceremonies has been best preserved, for instance the Ogun songs, which are generally the first group to be sung after the Litany. Further, I showed that the Ogun Rotations in three different congregations were nearly identical, in contrast to the song choices in Rotations for Osain and Shango, sung later in the ceremony, varied widely from congregation to congregation. Similarly, some of the longest songs (“Ye Irawa, Irawa O,” “Baba O,” “Ogun Bewele,” “Eshu Baragbo”) are performed at the beginning of the Orisha ceremony, perhaps suggesting that early placement in the ritual leads to greater repetition, and thus greater preservation of these songs. In any case, it seems that longer songs have taken on a favored status as Trinidad Yoruba language comprehension has become restricted.

Chapter Four

Drums and Drumming in Trinidad Orisha Music

While the previous chapter looked at Trinidad Orisha song repertoire and attendant issues, this chapter deals with Orisha drums. The current chapter examines issues including: connections between Yoruba *bembe* drums and Trinidad Orisha drums; description of drum names and functions; drum construction type; the sacredness of the drums; the use of curved drumsticks; rhythms for all three drums; and the role of the center drummer.

From *Bembe* to Orisha

Linguistics researcher Maureen Warner-Lewis, who studied Trinidad Yoruba language survivals in the late 1960s and 1970s, recorded songs and poems of the descendants of Yoruba-speakers in Trinidad. One of her informants, Lucretia Williams, a third generation Trinidad Yoruba woman, remembered the following song about *bembe* drums:

Ìbèmbé n kùn bí òjò	The <i>bembe</i> drum is thundering like rain
O wà lórùn oba	It hangs from the neck of the king

A *bembe* is a type of drum used in Yoruba-speaking areas of coastal West Africa, slung over the shoulder (or neck, in this case) and beaten with a curved stick, and it is also the name of the center drum in the Trinidad Orisha drum trio.

Bembe drums in Yorubaland, associated with Egba and Ijesha areas (Thieme 1969), share fundamental features with Trinidad Orisha drums: they are double-headed cylinders with a crisscross chording pattern, with ropes that are strung through the punctured drum heads, and are played with a combination of curved stick and hand. These organological features, along with the historical record of immigration into Trinidad of Yoruba-speakers (including those from Egba

and Ijesha locales) point clearly to the conclusion that Trinidad Orisha drums derive from Yoruba *bembe* drums. A turn-of-the-twentieth-century coconut carving from ca. 1900 in Benin (Roth 1968) shows – according to musicologist Darius Thieme (1969) – a *bembe* player holding a curved stick while apparently standing (an evident shoulder strap indicates a standing posture). Based on facial scarification (Thieme 1969), the drummer in the coconut is Yoruba. The following picture (fig. 4.1) shows *bembe* drummers in a recent street procession in Nigeria.



4.1 Nigerian *bembe* drummers. Photo courtesy of Amanda Villepastour.

Just like in TOM, the Yoruba *bembe* drummers in the above-described images play double-headed drums with a crisscross cording pattern, and they use curved sticks. Some differences stand out as well. For instance, Trinidad Orisha drummers sit, holding the drums between their legs, while these African drummers stand with drums slung over their shoulder (or slung “from the neck of the king,” as in Lucretia Williams’ above verse). Thus, it seems that the seated *bembe* style was a Caribbean innovation. Trinidad Orisha drums also differ from present-day *bembe* drums in that the latter are typically snare drums (a cord is stretched across the bottom head to produce a buzzing sound), while the former are not. However, there is evidence that non-snare *bembe* drums have been used in Africa: in 1969 Thieme noted that non-snare types were also in use in Ijesha country (155). Another difference is that the drums in Villepastour’s picture are considerably larger than the Orisha drums in Trinidad today. Regarding drum size, one Trinidadian informant told me that Orisha drums were made small by necessity: when the authorities came to break up a ceremony, small instruments were easier to hide.

In the Orisha Atlantic, the Trinidad Yoruba were not alone in their retention of the *bembe* drum type, as evidenced by the Iyesá *cabildos*⁷⁸ in Cuba.⁷⁹ As their name suggests, the Iyesá people in Cuba trace their lineage to the Yoruba-subgroup Ijesha of current-day Nigeria. In Cuba, the Iyesá use an ensemble of four drums that are very much like Trinidad Orisha drums in type and in performance practice. Two of the drums (the high-pitched *primero* and *segundo*) are

⁷⁸ Mutual aid societies.

⁷⁹ Aside from these Iyesá drums, there are drums in Cuba called “bembe,” which are played with either one or two sticks. However, these Cuban *bembe* drums are constructed with single drum heads affixed with pegs, and according to Vincent, “Cuban *bembé* drumming does not appear to be cognate with or derived from Nigerian *bèmbé* drumming” (2006, 34, note 21). It is also worth noting that “bembe” is used in yet another way in Cuba: to refer to a Santería ceremony (also called a *tambor*).

held horizontally across the lap, and held in place with the left hand while struck with a stick in the right hand. However, the other two (low-pitched) drums are held upright, between the legs of the seated drummer (just as in Trinidad). Of these two, the *baja* is played with bare hands, while the lead drum, *caja*, is played with a combination of stick and bare hand, similar to the center/lead drum in Orisha. Ethnomusicologist Kevin Delgado studied Iyesá drumming in Cuba in the 1990s, and described a tradition in decline, with only one active *cabildo* on the island. The drummers at that *cabildo* played their drums in the manner noted above, but using straight sticks. However, Delgado notes that a now-defunct *cabildo* from Sancti Spiritus was known to use curved sticks (Delgado 2001, 306, note 2). As I will demonstrate below, former generations of Orisha drummers in Trinidad used straight sticks (calling them “flat stick”), before the curved stick became solidified as the norm across Trinidad.

Considering the differences with present-day African *bembe* drumming conventions, Trinidad Orisha and Cuban Iyesá drums may well represent a consolidation of formerly varied types of *bembe* in organology and performance practice. In light of Ms. Williams’ verse about the drummer-king, it is possible that standing styles of *bembe* drumming once existed in Trinidad. Despite differences, it is important to recognize the connections between *bembe* drums in Africa and the Caribbean. In a similar way, Amanda Vincent writes about the relationship between *bátà/batá* drumming in Nigeria and Cuba. She says the relationship is like that of twins in Yoruba society, who often argue about who was born first. “Yet,” she writes,

both traditions are continuations of the same root 500 years ago, and the same point of separation 150 years ago. I argue that, in their geographical and cultural separation, the twin brothers developed divergent bata traditions which nevertheless remain deeply connected, as if by a common DNA. The contrasting social and cultural forces in Africa and the Caribbean, within which these two traditions have continued to evolve, have stimulated divergent creative processes as well as organological and musical change. (Vincent 2006, 194)

Given the organological and linguistic linkages, including evidence such as the song by Lucretia Williams, above, one can make the case that Trinidad Orisha and Cuban Iyesá drums (and their attendant practices) derive from Yoruba *bembe* drums (and their attendant practices) and are the result of divergent points of separation 150 years ago, similar to the separation that occurred with the *bata* in Nigeria and Cuba.⁸⁰

Trinidad Orisha Drum Names and Performance Practices

Previous researchers have published conflicting accounts of terminology regarding Trinidad Orisha drum names, and one reason for this is that those researchers were not focused mainly on music, and so mention of the drums came as a kind of afterthought. A second reason for the inconsistency, related to the first, is that there are variations in Trinidad regarding practices and terminology in the religion. Sometimes differences are related to regionalism, other times it is simply that individuals use different words. Researchers working with different groups of informants at different times heard a variety of names for Orisha drums, leading to confusion. Fig. 4.2, showing the relative sizes of the three drums,⁸¹ represents the basic divisions in terminology as I have learned from my informants. The chart encompasses the most commonly used drum names in Trinidad, and hopefully clears up some of the confusions in the literature.

⁸⁰ This double-headed cylindrical drum-type is found in several regions in the Caribbean. To illustrate the point: Brooklyn-based Orisha drummer Earl Noel makes miniature Trinidad Orisha drums, giving them as gifts and selling them for decorative purposes. He gave me one to hang from the rearview mirror of my car. Recently, a friend of mine – ethnomusicologist Angelina Tallaj, who is originally from the Dominican Republic – noticed it in my car, saying, “oh, you have a *tambora!*” In addition to the Dominican Republic, similar drums are found in north-central Venezuela (*culo e’ puya, redondo, tambora*); St. Lucia (*tanbou manman*); and Cuba (*Iyesa* in Matanzas; *bata* in Guantanamo). The same drum type is also used for the bass drum in Indo-Trinidadian *tassa*.

⁸¹ I should add that, since these drums are made from hollowed-out tree trunks, the size and exact shape of each drum can vary considerably.

The top row of the chart includes the names I most often hear used by my main group of informants. As such, these are the names I most commonly use in the dissertation.



Bo	Center Drum	Umele
Kongo	Bembe	Umbele
	Mother Drum	Omele
	Big Drum	Amalie

4.2 Variations in Trinidad Orisha drum names

The words “kongo,” “bo,” “bembe,” and “umele” (in its various configurations) all derive linguistically from Yoruba. In Yoruba language, omele/omole/emele is a broad term designating an accompanying drum⁸², often followed by a gender marker such as “ako” (male) or “abo” (female). Thus “omele abo” is a female accompanying drum.⁸³ While it is possible that the name “kongo” was inspired by that African ethnic group (prominent in Trinidad along with the Yoruba), according to Warner-Lewis (1996) *kòngó/kònongó* is also a Yoruba term for a type of drum. The English drum names on the chart (e.g. “big drum”) came into use once English became the native tongue of former Yoruba-speakers. It is of course likely that other names have existed for these drums (one wonders, for instance, if the Yoruba term *iya* was used, given the

⁸² In Afro-Brazilian ritual music, the term *lê*, for the smallest accompanying drum, is likely of similar derivation as the Trinidadian *umele*.

⁸³ Amanda Villepasteur. E-mail message to author. 19 May 2010. Also see Villepastour 2010.

use of the English “mother”), and the names on my chart are simply those that have become normalized for various reasons.

Considering the performance practice of each drum in turn, the *bo* is the bass of the ensemble. Its pattern is always steady, and practitioners refer to it as the “heartbeat” of the ensemble. It is played with one thick stick, about ½ inch in diameter and fourteen inches long, referred to as a “*bo* stick.” The last two or three inches of the stick are bent in at a right angle. The bent end strikes the drum. The *bo* player also uses his free hand to strike the drum. A typical *bo* is about eleven inches tall with a twelve inch diameter⁸⁴. The center drum, positioned to the left of the *bo*, is the most challenging of the ensemble, requiring a vast knowledge of rhythms, called “hands,” of which specific ones must be played for each of the orishas. The center drum also requires an ability to improvise, as the different “hands” are only a schematic on which to elaborate. The center drum is the largest in the ensemble, and is tuned to sound higher than the *bo*. The center drum is played similar to the *bo*, by using a *bo* stick and free hand. The *umele* is the smallest drum of the ensemble, and also the highest in pitch. A typical *umele* is about eight inches tall with a six inch diameter. The drum is played with two thin sticks. A typical *umele* stick is about fourteen inches long. The sticks are about ¼ of an inch in diameter. The *umele* is played by performing fast drumrolls, unrelenting for the long hours of an Orisha feast, making it a physically demanding drum. Due to these fast drumrolls, many drummers say that the *umele* is the most difficult drum to master.

During Orisha rituals, the three drums are accompanied by *shac-shac* (calabashes filled with seeds called “jumbie bead”), and it is very rare to find any more than three drums in

⁸⁴ Given that Trinidad Orisha drums are made from hollowed out trees, coming in a variety of shapes and sizes, the actual measurements of Orisha drums vary. These measurements are from a set in the researcher’s possession, and they can, nonetheless, be considered representative.

Trinidad Orisha drum performance. At drum class one day, a fellow student named Shem asked Earl, our teacher, about the idea of adding other drums to the Orisha battery, and what those other drums might play. Earl replied that the three drums – *bo*, *umele*, and center – are like the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Each of them is important to make up the whole, and they are complete – there’s no room for any more. Even so, Earl admitted that, like much else in Trinidad Orisha, there is no hard and fast rule on this. Indeed, during a June 2011 trip to Trinidad, I saw a congregation in Laventille which added a *djembe* to the drum trio. In this configuration, the *djembe* doubled the *bo* pattern, effectively reinforcing the bassline – breaking up the “Trinity,” but nicely filling out the sound in the process, suggesting a privileging of aesthetics over convention. This example of flexibility with the drum ensemble may be exceptional, but it is indicative of the thesis of this dissertation: though TOM derives from certain types of West African musical conventions and practices, Trinidadian practitioners make changes based on preferences that reflect their current realities.

Trinidad Orisha Drum Construction

Trinidad Orisha drums are typically made out of *zavoka*⁸⁵ or cedar wood, though many drum builders say that any lightweight wood will do. The Port of Spain drummer Selwin “Crow” Harvey is unequivocal: “*Zavoka* and cedar is the two best sounding drum” (*pers. comm.*). The Orisha drummer Seitu sells a typical set of Orisha drums, with sticks, for TT2500.00 (a little over US \$400.00). Once the shell is prepared, the traditional way of setting up Orisha drums involves puncturing holes in the drum head, and running a rope through the holes so that they drop down in loops (similar to Yoruba *bembe* drums). These loops are called “ears.” After this is

⁸⁵ Local term for avocado tree.

done on both heads, another rope is run between, to tighten up the tension. This can only be done once, and if the drum needs to be “pulled up,” the rope needs to be completely retied. In the traditional style, the rings which hold down the drum head are made of pessy vine. This wood is flexible but firm, making it pliable for fashioning into rings. It is also the material used for Orisha sticks. (Indo-Trinidadian *tassa* drummers traditionally use pessy vine for their sticks – though today they much more commonly use plastic.)

A more recent style of Orisha drum construction uses a set of four welded metal rings, rather than puncturing holes in the drum head. This style of construction is similar to that of a typical West African *djembe* drum – indeed, some drummers call this construction “*djembe*-style.” (The *djembe* was not introduced into Trinidad until the 1970s or 1980s where, according to my informants, it was brought by Senegalese drummer and cultural performer Mor Thiam,⁸⁶ who worked with American choreographer Katherine Dunham; today, *djembes* are a favorite of Trinidadian folk-style drummers, such as those that perform at the Best Village drum-dance showcase competitions across Trinidad and Tobago). According to Brooklyn-based drummer Earl Noel, this iron-style allows for more tuning flexibility, which proved to be important when he moved to New York with its temperature extremes, compared with the consistently humid Caribbean climate in Trinidad. The elder drummer Crow (b. 1929) recognizes the greater tuning opportunities with the *djembe*-style constructions – he says it will hold the drum in tune for a longer time – but he objects to the steel rings:

The steel ring ain’t good for Orisha drum. It too heavy. Now, if you use the steel ring, you have to lace it like a *djembe*, so you could tighten it. But you should make the ring with the pessy. It’s nice that you do it like the *djembe* style, but not the steel ring. The *djembe* style go hold it longer, but not the steel ring. (*pers. comm.*)

⁸⁶ Mor Thiam’s son is the American hip hop recording artist Akon.

In response to such critiques from the older generation, Orisha drummer Redman (b. 1957) gives a theological justification for the use of iron rings: the use is warranted because metal belongs to Ogun, the orisha of iron.

Respecting and “Mounting” the Drums: Orisha Drums as Sacred Instruments

Orisha practitioners routinely emphasize the “seriousness” of Orisha worship. While informants acknowledge the sense of joyousness cultivated during Orisha ritual (as one drummer said, “It’s a happy thing; no Orisha people I know is unhappy people”), they are steadfast that Orisha worship and music has a spiritual function, contrasting it with popular musical-cultural practices (“this ain’t no soca business,” in the words of one Orisha leader). The musical purpose in Orisha is to “call” the orishas to join in the ceremony. As drummer Donald “Junior” Noel puts it, “when you go play drum at feast, you ain’t going for joke. You going to call. You play keg⁸⁷ to call. You hitting drum to call.” Such seriousness, and sense of distinction, also applies to the drums themselves, and governs respectful attitudes towards the drums. Just as Orisha music is different from popular musics such as soca, so too are Orisha drums different from other drums. Drummer Michael “Small Junior” Ettienne explains it thusly:

You see, the Orisha drums is a different drums. The Orisha drums and them, not supposed to be on no ground, in no backyard, in no room where your sexual activities is going on and all them things. These drums supposed to be so mighty, because these orishas and them was high people. The drums *is* the power. You supposed to have them drums on a shelf. Away from people’s eyes too. The only time them drums supposed to come out is when you’re having your feast. If you say you love the ancestors and them, well if you don’t respect the drum, you can’t respect the ancestors. Catch meh? Because that is the heartbeat. I look at these drums as so sacred that I doesn’t want to play around them. Because is a time to play, and a time for seriousness. And as young fellas growing up, we learned to cherish these orishas, because they was old people [who] would toil and help certain avenues open. And the spirits appreciate the drums, because that is part of them! The very same animals that we offer to these people and them, is the very same

⁸⁷ *Keg* is a common slang for “drum” in Trinidadian Creole.

animal skin we take and make these drums. So that's why they cherish it. Sometime when a spirit come he take the drum, he oil it, he hug it up, he spin it, he give you back it. That is appreciation. (*pers. comm.*)

For Michael, the drums are part of the *orishas* themselves – described here as ancestors and “old people” – and therefore respecting the drum is equivalent to respecting the *orishas*. Drummers are careful not to put Orisha drums down on end, but rather lay them down so that the drum heads are not on the ground. The drums should be walked around rather than stepped over, and are often stored suspended from the ceiling, preferably, for Michael, away from an “unclean” space such as a bedroom where lovemaking occurs.

Part of the sacredness of the drums implies that they are imbued with a living energy, similar to the concept of *Àyàn* and *Añá* found among *bata* drummers in Nigeria and Cuba, respectively (see Villepastour 2013, forthcoming). The attitudes of Trinidad Orisha drummers towards their instruments may be a retention of principles related to *Àyàn/Añá*. In Nigeria and Cuba, *Àyàn/Añá* is an *orisha* that inhabits the drums, but Trinidad Orisha drums are not associated with any particular *orisha*; rather, they are considered to have their own power. As one drummer put it: “it’s like a light switch: once you turn it on, the whole place lights up.” Orisha drum skins are regularly “fed” with olive oil. When Earl Noel sets up a drum for the first time - whether an Orisha drum or a *djembe* - he pours oil on the head and rubs it in.⁸⁸ During an Orisha feast, drummers often call a *mongwa* or other attendant over to put oil on the skins of all three drums of the battery. It is thought that the drums sound better once they’ve been “fed,” and that they are better able to call the spirits when they’ve “eaten.”⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Aside from the “feeding” convention, the oil is good for the drum skin, keeping it from drying out and cracking.

⁸⁹ At about 3:05 on Saturday morning of the 2011 feast at Mount Moriah Church in Brooklyn, Oshun manifested on a middle-aged woman, who was given a wooden anchor to carry around, and moved throughout the church giving “blessings” to people with water, oil, and honey. (She

Another aspect of the living energy of Orisha drums has to do with a concept known as “mounting the drums.” As Drummer Donald “Junior” Noel told me, “Drummers used to *mount the drum*, so other drummers can’t play the drum. That’s something you have to learn too. That is something I used to do sometimes, too” (*pers. comm.*). As Donald uses the phrase, *to mount* an object means to imbue it with a spiritual force to ward off competition from other drummers. Such terminology also applies to an individual, who is said to be “mounted” by Ogun, say, during an Ogun manifestation. The process of *mounting* objects extends beyond Orisha to other realms of Afro-Trinidadian spirituality, such as in the stickfight dance known as *kalinda*, in which the *poui* stick of the fight-dancer can be *mounted* with a powerful force through a process of, for example, burying it in a graveyard. The stick then becomes deadly to whosoever it is wielded against.

In the case of Orisha, the drums are mounted by placing objects inside of them when the drum skins are changed. The objects placed inside the drums are often those which are used in Orisha ritual, and they thus have ritual significance, for instance, “dry food,” which is a mixture of rice, dried beans, dried corn, cornmeal, brown sugar, cloves, bay leaf, and spices. This mixture is usually displayed on tables during Orisha and Spiritual Baptist ceremonies. Brooklyn drummer Earl Noel, for example, takes three pieces of each ingredient in the dry food, along with a piece of silver, such as a coin. Earl says the silver gives the mixture “a charge.” These elements are then put together inside a small bag which is then nailed to the inside of the drum (so that it doesn’t rattle around). The drummer Crow describes the small bag as a form of “protection” from potentially jealous drummers:

rubbed oil and honey on my head, and I was glad I keep my hair cut short.) Significantly, she approached the drums, rubbing oil on the drum heads one at a time, and then feeding oil to the drummers as well.

Yeah, because you have wicked fellas coming, if they find you playing good. ... You have to protect yourself. The drum does have a bag, with dry food, a piece of silver, a ten cents, a twenty-five cents, so long as it's silver. That is protection. (*pers. comm.*)⁹⁰

While north Trinidad drummers such as Crow might use the small bag as a protective device in their drum, conventions differ elsewhere. The south Trinidad drummer Wilfred Burton did not put a bag inside his drums. Rather, he says, on the instruction of Papa Neezer, “when you change the skin on a drum, you put two piece of *obi* seed [kola nut] in the drum.” The kola nut is used in Trinidad Orisha ritual for divination purposes. Different from the dry food bag, the kola nut is not for protection, but is rather used as a nod to the divinity of the drums and the orishas they serve. Yet another variety of (and motive for) the object-inside-the-drum convention was mentioned to me by Port of Spain drummer Jeff, who says he has heard of drummers putting an entire *jack spaniard*⁹¹ nest inside the drum; then, with each strike of the drum, dancers jump and jerk as though they are being stung by wasps.

Flat Sticks and Curved Sticks

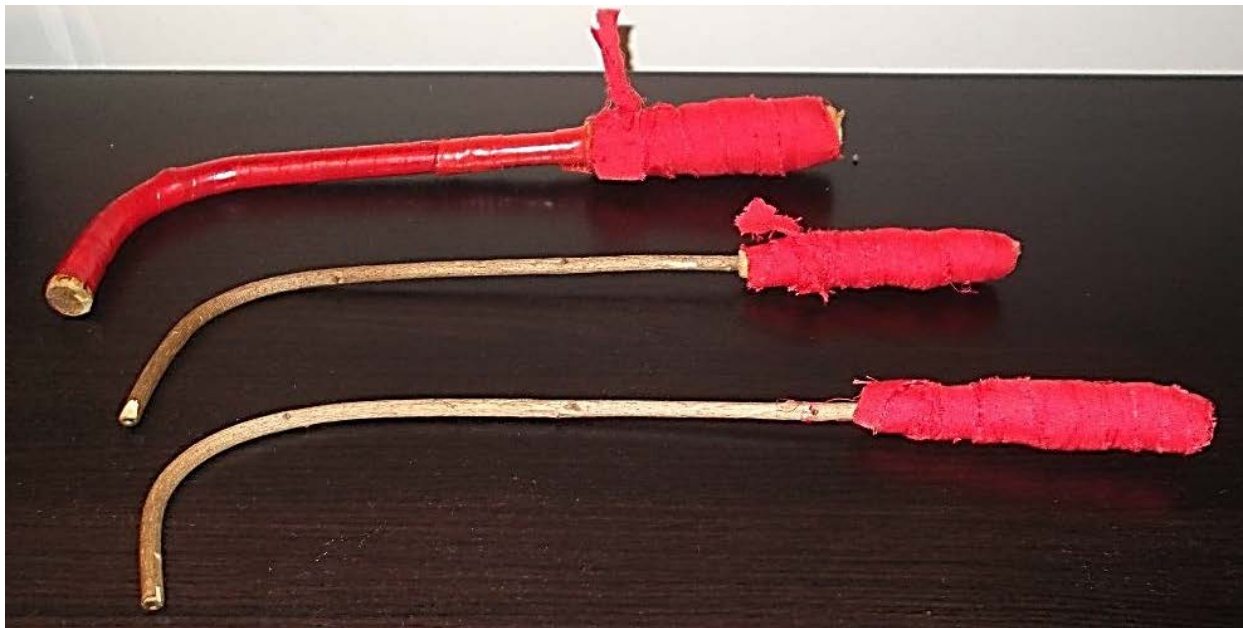
One aim of this chapter is to give evidence of some of the changes that have taken place in TOM, transforming, over time, a range of heterogeneous practices into the standard and largely homogeneous genre that is TOM today. The changing usage of drumsticks in TOM is exemplary of this transformation. Evidence suggests that, historically, some Trinidad Orisha drummers used straight sticks, while others used curved sticks, but today's drummers all use

⁹⁰ The small-bag-as-protection is a parallel practice to that found in the *hoodoo* of the south United States, immortalized in countless blues songs, in which individuals describe the power of their “mojo.” The mojo is known to be a small bag with a variety of elements – a black cat bone, the hair of a lover – kept on the person of an individual and meant to enhance the sexual attractiveness or fighting prowess, for instance, of the wearer.

⁹¹ A type of wasp found in Trinidad and Tobago.

curved sticks. In the following pages, I describe the current stick type, as well as evidence suggesting how, when, and why stick conventions in TOM may have changed.

As noted above, in current practice, Trinidad Orisha drummers use a curved stick, also called a “crook” stick.⁹² Two drummers in the ensemble use a single stick (commonly referred to as a “*bo* stick”) plus hand, while the *umele* drummer uses a pair of thin sticks. The sticks are traditionally made from the vine plant in Trinidad known as *pessy*, but other types of wood can also be used. (Earl Noel has made these curved sticks using thin branches of trees found in Brooklyn, such as oak.) Once the builder cuts the wood, he ties a string to the end, and ties it again halfway down the stick to hold a bend in it. Next he puts the stick in a warm place (such as near a fire) and after several hours the stick has cured into its curved shape. Some drummers wrap the sticks in tape for added weight, and presumably for style, as in the picture below of a drumstick taped in red.



4.3 Curved sticks. *Bo* stick wrapped in red tape, pair of *umele* sticks, *au naturel*.

⁹² According to linguistics researcher Warner-Lewis (1996), the Yoruba word for the curved stick is *kókóró*, though that word is not used in Trinidad.

Other drummers wrap the handles with foam and fabric. According to former drummer Mr. Burton, wrapping the handle makes the drummer more comfortable, and it is a necessary precaution given the physical stress on a drummer's hands. Still, for Burton, the wrapping wasn't enough, because,

... no matter what you do with that handle, the shock with that stick, when you beating that big drum – because you hit the drum hard – it will affect your finger. And my hand always soft, no matter how hard I work. So it does be very hard for me. All of that make me stop beating Shango drums. (*pers. comm.*)

Mr. Burton's quote calls to mind the intense *physicality* of playing Orisha drums; I experienced similar difficulties when my right forearm tendon swelled up after playing the *umele* for a few hours (described in chapter one).

The history of the drumsticks reveals that use of the curved stick was not always the norm that it currently is in Trinidad Orisha, suggesting the kinds of consolidation and normalization processes that occur in transplanted cultural practices such as Trinidad Orisha. The Orisha drummer Crow, born in Laventille, Trinidad, in 1929, says that in the north, around Port of Spain, drummers used to play "flat stick." He says that he was among the first generation of north Trinidad drummers to embrace the curved stick, and he says that he did so for reasons of musical aesthetics: he believes the drums sound better played with the curved stick. As he says:

When I came in they were still using flat stick in the north. I don't know who, but I believe the stick with the curve, I believe that come from south, somewhere after the 60s or 70s. It was the south was the first people I see using curved stick. When it came, a lot of the north people was playing with flat stick, and when that came up, they couldn't play with it. Not a lot of them are still using flat stick, because a lot of them die. But the curved stick is really better. Far more efficient. Because the tone, to get the drum tone, flat stick can't give you that tone. When I started seeing the curve stick, I come and get one early. I get understanding because you couldn't get the tone you were looking for. (*pers. comm.*)

Crow's hypothesis – that curved sticks were used in the south of Trinidad before they were used in the north – is corroborated by Mr. Burton, whose drumming experience in the south dates to the 1940s and 50s, and who says drummers there used curved sticks.

Several of my informants report remembrances of older generations of drummers in north Trinidad who preferred the straight sticks, but those drummers have by now deceased. Fairly recently, then, a mixture of straight and curved stick practices was known in the north, as one drummer says that, when he was first playing drums (in the north) in the 1970s, “an old man sitting down at the *bo* would want to use a flat stick.” Others recall seeing old men turn the curved stick around to use it as a flat stick, such as Orisha and Baptist Leader Walter, who told me, “Some of the old drummers, I think they would've probably died out by now, they turn the stick around” (*pers. comm.*).

More evidence for the use of straight drumsticks in Trinidad can be found in documentary sources from the first part of the twentieth century. In 1939, the Melville Herskovits met and recorded musicians playing Orisha songs in Toco (in northeast Trinidad, where there was very little Orisha practiced), Laventille, and St. Francois Valley Road, all in the north. Herskovits noted drummers using sticks, but made no mention of curved sticks, either in his book (*Trinidad Village*, 1947) or his field notes. Further, Herskovits and his wife purchased a set of Orisha drums, “a good set of three, with sticks cut to order from Mrs. Bennett's lime-tree, this being the wood they use” (Herskovits and Herskovits 1939, 115). The Herskovitses make no mention of these sticks being curved, but lime wood is very different from the flexible vine *pessy*. The researchers took photos of Orisha drummers with sticks in two different locations. One photo, from September 25, 1939, shows two drummers seated in an Orisha *palais*, with their drums between their legs, and more drums hanging from the ceiling above. The drummers

appear to be using a combination of bare hands and sticks, but the photograph is badly out of focus. (The picture location is either Laventille or St. Francois Valley Road, because the Herskovitses had left Toco on Sept. 1.)

A second picture (fig. 4.4), in better focus, is of Toco drummer Joe Alexander and his mother, Margaret Buckley, whom Herskovits referred to as an “old Yoruba woman.” This pair performed Orisha songs for Herskovits, who was impressed with Buckley’s knowledge of Yoruba language. A photograph of the pair shows Buckley, standing with a *shac-shac*, while Alexander sits, drum on his lap. Alexander’s right hand is bare, resting on the drum skin, while his left hand holds a straight stick.

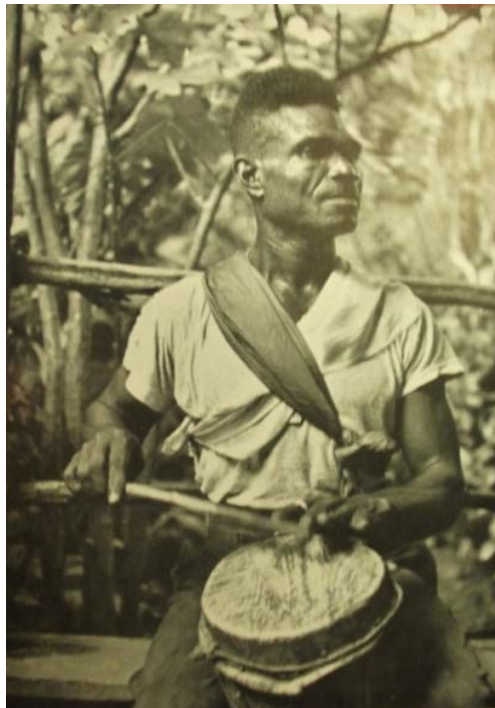


4.4 Margaret Buckley and her son, Joe Alexander, in Toco, Trinidad, 1939. Photo by Melville and Frances Herskovits. Courtesy of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Some comment is warranted on Joe Alexander’s horizontally placed drum (versus the standard vertical placement). Such a placement might not be that significant – today, often at the

beginning of a ceremony, Trinidad Orisha drummers rest their drums across their laps and play them that way, before placing them “properly” in the vertical position. Also, Alexander was apparently not a drummer for an actual “Shango” group (Herskovits 1939), and thus his practices might be misleading. (And in the recordings the Herskovitses made of Alexander, the drummer does not play typical Yoruba-derived rhythms. See chapter five.) Considering these facts, perhaps Alexander’s use of a flat stick does not merit attention at all, but other photographs from the mid-twentieth century show straight stick usage (as explained below), and so Alexander’s usage does seem typical in that regard.

For example, a decade after the Herskovitses took their pictures, the photographer Earl Leaf published a picture of Orisha priest and drummer Sidney Earle from Laventille in his 1948 book, *Isles of Rhythm*, showing the use of flat stick and hand (fig. 4.5).



4.5 Laventille drummer in 1948. From Leaf, *Isles of Rhythm* (1949, p. 177). The original caption read: “The Shango Ogun crossed the sacred sashes over his shoulders and played the old rhythms on the ceremonial drum.”

In contrast to these pictures of straight stick-using drummers, Alan Lomax photographed Shango (Orisha) drummers in 1962 in Levera, Grenada playing with curved sticks. The drummers he photographed played in a group of three, and all three used the stick-hand combination, rather than one drummer playing with two sticks as the umele drummer does in Orisha. The date of Lomax's photos would seem to suggest that Grenadian Shango drummers used curved sticks prior to drummers in north Trinidad (though Lomax's evidence must not be considered representative of all of Grenada).

Unfortunately, none of these photographers – neither Herskovits, Leaf, nor Lomax – travelled in south Trinidad, meaning we are without photographic evidence in corroboration of the testimony of Crow and Burton that drummers in the south used curved sticks prior to drummers in the north. It remains a mystery as to why the straight stick has apparently vanished completely (despite Crow's aesthetic explanation, other factors may have been involved). Still, the oral and documentary sources show that stick-usage in Trinidad Orisha drumming has undergone a normalization process from heterogeneous (combination of straight and curved) to homogeneous (exclusively curved).

Given the evidence for longstanding usage of curved sticks in *bembe* drumming in West Africa (such as the coconut carving pictured above), it is likely that the curved stick was originally brought to Trinidad by the nineteenth century indentured Africans. In Trinidad, there would likely have been a multiplicity of drumming approaches: some playing flat stick and some playing curved, some using single sticks while others used a pair. Some may have used no sticks at all, as was the case for certain Iyesá *cabildos* in Cuba (Delgado 2001). Each of these approaches may have originally been linked with a particular Yoruba-speaking subgroup (or other ethnic group), retained in Trinidad as a marker of cultural distinction or perhaps simply

conventional preference. Though it may be unclear why the curved stick eventually won out over the “flat stick” in Trinidad Orisha drumming performance practice, along with the particular configuration of double- and single-stick usage, the examination of Trinidad Orisha drumsticks offers insight into the inter-Yoruba consolidation which occurred not only in Trinidad but no doubt across the Orisha Atlantic.

The Rhythmic Bed: Rhythms for the *Umele* and *Bo* Drums

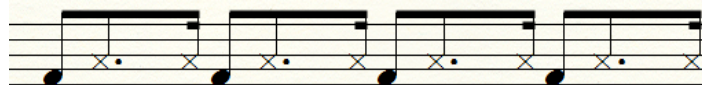
In an article analyzing Cuban *batá* drumming, Robin Moore and Elizabeth Sayre suggest that it is important for listeners to be aware of multiple levels or planes in the overall percussive soundscape. On one level, the aggregate ostinato of the accompanying drums forms a “rhythmic bed” (a term Moore and Sayre borrow from *batá* drummer Orlando Fiol). This rhythmic bed serves as the “background,” while the more expressive percussion patterns, especially of the lead drum, create a secondary plane, the musical “foreground” (2006, 126). This concept of percussive layering – foreground and background – is useful for my own analysis of Trinidad Orisha drumming. I will first analyze the rhythmic bed created by the accompanying drums in TOM, and in the following section I will describe the rhythmic foreground created by the lead (center) drum.

Cuban *batá* differs from Trinidad Orisha drumming in that, in the former, the accompanying drums (*okonkolo* and *itotele*) respond to the rhythms of the lead drum (*iya*) with altered rhythmic patterns, therefore creating shifts and overlaps in the layering of rhythmic bed and foreground. In Trinidad Orisha drumming, by contrast, the rhythmic patterns of the accompanying drums (*umele* and *bo*) do not change, regardless of what the center drum plays. The *umele* and *bo* rhythms play one of two basic rhythmic beds, creating an aggregate ostinato

that is unchanging for the duration of the musical performance. I call these two rhythmic beds “straight Orisha” and “rada/kankan.”⁹³

The first of these rhythms – straight Orisha – is by far the most commonly used, featured in more than 80% of the songs in my Orisha song database. I analyze straight Orisha (SO) as a compound quadruple meter in 12/8 time.⁹⁴ The underlying pulse for SO is a dotted quarter note, moving at a fast tempo between 120 and 130 bpm. The pulse is clearly marked by the ostinato of the low-pitched *bo* drum, which features a three stroke pattern: a stick strike on each of four downbeats, followed by two bare hand strikes. (Recall that the *bo* drummer plays with one stick and one bare hand.) “X” indicates that an open hand strikes the drum, at a slightly higher pitch relative to the stick hits, indicated by solid note heads.

4.6 *Bo* ostinato in straight Orisha (SO) rhythm

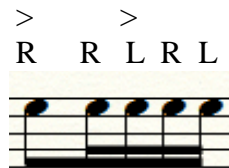


This *bo* ostinato, with its heavy emphasis on the four downbeats, generates a strong 4/4 feeling in the rhythmic bed of the SO rhythm, particularly because each of the four beats is played by the deepest pitch in the percussive soundscape of TOM (the *bo* is, effectively, the bass drum of the Orisha ensemble). Practitioners refer to the *bo* pattern as “the heartbeat,” due in part to the low pitch of the drum, and also because of the heartbeat-like double-beat produced by the stick-strike followed by hand-strike.

⁹³ Naming conventions for the rhythms vary, but I refer to them with the names used by my drum teacher, Earl Noel.

⁹⁴ My choice of 12/8 meter for the straight Orisha rhythm in TOM raises certain notational and analytical issues. On the one hand, in 12/8 TOM prominently features dotted eighth notes, making the notations somewhat awkward and difficult to read. On the other hand, 4/4 notation would necessitate awkward triplet bracketing nearly constantly. See the Introduction of this dissertation for more discussion regarding my choice of 12/8 versus 4/4 notation.

While the *bo* drum creates a steady four-count in the bass register, the ostinato of the highest pitched drum, the *umele* – played with two thin sticks – is a very fast five-stroke drum roll. For a right-handed drummer, the alternation of right hand versus left hand strokes for the drum roll looks like this:



In one full measure of 12/8 time, the above drum roll is performed four times, with accents on the first right hand and first left hand drum strokes. This particular accent pattern creates a definite swing feel, and it serves to reinforce the downbeat (as played by the *bo* drum), and also to emphasize the halfway point of each group of notes, implying an underlying dotted eighth note pulse.

4.7 *Umele* ostinato in straight Orisha (SO) rhythm



Considering the particular accents and emphasis of the aggregate ostinato created by the *bo* and *umele* drums in the SO rhythm, the implied feel of this rhythmic bed is a 4/4 rhythm played in swing feel. At the same time, the eighth and sixteenth note groupings still imply an underlying 12/8 rhythm.

One can see from these notations that the *umele* and *bo* patterns in SO interlock to form a steady, swinging, syncopated foundation, which is the rhythmic basis of the vast majority of TOM. The center drummer plays ostinato patterns that are based on this syncopated swing, but he has the freedom to improvise beyond the above ostinatos – indeed, he is expected to (the ostinatos of the center drummer are known as *hands*, which will be discussed more below).

Moving on from SO, the secondary rhythmic bed is called the “rada” rhythm (this name does not seem to be connected with the Trinidad Rada people in Belmont). Drummers also call this rhythm “the kankan.”⁹⁵ The rada/kankan rhythm (RK) is used much less often than SO – in less than 20% of the songs in my database. It is used primarily during songs for the spirit Mama Leta, or in the context of the song-type known as “dismissal song” – a song whose purpose is to “dismiss” a spirit manifesting on an individual, to send the spirit away from the Orisha service. Though I describe SO with the term syncopated swing, RK is rather marked by straight eighth notes in a very fast tempo (one quarter note = 180), giving it a contrasting feel and sound to SO. In the following notation (fig. 4.8), the *umele* ostinato is on the top line, while the *bo* is on the bottom. These are the basic ostinatos for the RK rhythm as played by drummers like Earl Noel, Junior Noel, and Redman. In the *bo* ostinato, the double stick strike on every other downbeat produces a pattern that sounds, in onomatopoeia, like “kan-kan, kan-kan.”

4.8 *Umele* (top) and *bo/kongo* (bottom) ostinatos in rada/kankan (RK) rhythm



The *bo* rhythm shown in the above notation is one of two common ways of playing the RK rhythm, and it is the version taught to me by my teacher, Earl Noel. An alternate form of the RK rhythm on the *bo* drum is just a straightforward pattern of four quarter notes, is shown in fig. 4.9.

⁹⁵ Warner-Lewis (1996) reports that *kankan* could also refer to a type of dance, and the word derives from the Yoruba *gangan*, meaning type of large drum.

4.9 Alternate *bo* beat, RK rhythm



Just as there are (at least) two ways of playing the *bo* ostinato in the RK rhythm, at a 2008 ceremony in Trinidad, I also heard the following alternate version (fig. 4.10) of the RK *umele* ostinato.

4.10 Alternate *umele* beat, RK rhythm



This pattern, written as triplets in 4/4 time, is actually suggestive of 12/8 time, and I believe it is very rare nowadays in TOM. (The subjects of polyrhythms and binarization are the focus of chapter five, and will be discussed further there.)

Both of the rhythmic beds in Trinidad Orisha drumming – *straight Orisha* and *rada/kankan* – can be characterized by their fast, unchanging nature, with a pulse clearly marked out by the bass tones of the *bo* drum, and a high degree of rhythmic density due largely to the fast patterns of the high-pitched *umele*. Thus, in either of the main rhythmic contexts – SO or RK – the rhythmic bed of TOM is fast, steady, dense, and largely suggestive of 4/4 time. On top of this foundation, the center drum creates a syncopated foreground with polyrhythmic aspects. The rhythms of the center drummer are the subject of the next section.

The (Poly)Rhythmic Foreground: Rhythms of the Center Drum

Unlike the rhythms of the accompanying drums (*bo* and *umele*), the center drum is not generally restricted to ostinato repetition. Rather, the center drummer utilizes certain basic

rhythmic motifs or patterns (called *hands*⁹⁶) and intersperses these with improvised figures. Though Trinidad Orisha drumming is not strictly polyrhythmic, the center drum patterns in TOM display a polyrhythmic sensibility based on the juxtaposition of contrasting syncopated rhythmic figures that correspond with 4/4, 6/8, and 3/4 metric organization. These multiple meters are expressed through combinations of dotted eighth note pairs, eighth note trios, and quarter notes, as in fig. 4.11:

4.11 Examples of center drum (poly)rhythmic figures



In the following notations, it should be clear that the above schematic represents the core underlying logic of the center drum rhythms.

Certain center drum rhythmic motifs are associated with particular *orishas*, or, more specifically, with groups of songs associated with each *orisha*. To return again to the words of Papa Neezer’s former drummer, Mr. Burton:

You might sing about five or six songs and you have one beat for that. But then when you change, like you sing for Abatala, you have a different beat. You sing for Ogun, you have a different beat. (*pers. comm.*)

In other words, in TOM a group of songs has a corresponding “beat,” or rhythm, usually a two bar rhythmic motif accenting a combination of duple and triple subdivisions. In the common Trinidadian drummer’s parlance, this motif is referred to as a “beat” or a “hand,” such that, during Ogun songs, the center drummer plays “the Ogun *hand*.” *Hand* is a common term among West Indian drummers for a specific rhythm. Indo-Trinidadian *tassa* drummers, for instance,

⁹⁶ The *hands* as I have learned them – and as I present them here – derive from my drum teacher, Earl Noel. His basic *hands* derive from his teacher, Selwin “Crow” Harvey, who taught many drummers, including Donald “Junior” Noel and Everaldo “Redman” Watson.

refer to multiple *hands*, or rhythms, that they play on the *tassa* drums. In the following pages, I give examples of *hands* for the center drum.

The Ogun *hand* is one of the most oft-used rhythmic motifs in Trinidad Orisha drumming, unsurprising given that there are more songs for Ogun than for any other *orisha*. Fig. 4.12 shows notations for the *chantwell* and the three drums in the 6 bar song, “Ogun Bewele.” (In song performance, the chorus repeats the entire song after the *chantwell* is finished.) In the notation, it is clear that the three Orisha drums mostly align with each other – rather than creating polyrhythmic cross-rhythms – except for during certain parts of the center drum rhythm, such as at the beginning of bar 5, when the center drum momentarily suggests 3/4 time through ternary phrasing of eighth note subdivisions.

4.12 Transcription of basic Ogun *hand* for “Ogun Bewele”

The musical score for "Ogun Bewele" is presented in four staves. The top staff, labeled "Chantwell", uses a treble clef and 12/8 time signature. It contains the melody with lyrics: "O gun be we le a mi o O gun". The second staff, "Umele", uses a drum clef and 12/8 time signature, showing a steady eighth-note pattern. The third staff, "Center", uses a drum clef and 12/8 time signature, featuring a more complex rhythm with a ternary phrasing of eighth notes in bar 5. The bottom staff, "Bo", uses a drum clef and 12/8 time signature, showing a pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks indicating specific drum strokes.

4.12 Transcription of basic Ogun *hand* for “Ogun Bewele” (continued)

2

Chw

be we le O gun be we le a mi o O gun

U

C

B

4

Chw

be we le a ta man de

U

C

B

5

Chw

a ma ban gwe le O gun be we le a mi o

U

C

B

As written in my fig. 4.12 transcription, the key phrase in the Ogun *hand* is a one bar motif that is repeated roughly every other measure:



Looking closely at this one bar phrase, one can see that it is an asymmetric rhythmic pattern, in that one half of the pattern is on the beat, while the other is syncopated. Following the first two dotted eighth notes, the final five notes fit with the *bo* ostinato in the rhythmic bed (though the pattern of bare hand/stick hand strokes differ, generating rhythmic movement even as the two phrases coincide).

Referring to fig. 4.12, the chart of examples of center drum (poly)rhythmic figures, it is possible to characterize the one bar Ogun *hand* motif in the following way:



In this schematic version, it is easy to see that this pattern is a combination of duple subdivisions (the first two dotted eighths, implying simple 4/4 time) and triple subdivisions (the next five notes, implying 6/8 time), and such duple/triple juxtapositions are the basis of the center drummer's *hands* (and improvisations), as the following examples show.

There is a close connection between center drum rhythms and sung melodic rhythms in TOM. Given this fact, it is unsurprising that the combinations of duple and triple rhythmic figures found in the center drum *hands* are also found in the song melodies. In this way, Orisha song melodies can be seen as generative of the syncopated rhythms in Trinidad Orisha center drumming. For instance, the melody in the following song, "Shango O, Babawa" (fig. 4.13) is made up of two pairs of dotted eighth notes followed by a trio of eighth notes, and the center

drum ostinato – the Shango *hand* – follows suit with a complimentary duple/triple juxtaposition. (Note: the Shango *hand* is nearly identical to the Ogun *hand*.)

4.13 Transcription of basic Shango *hand* played for “Shango o, Babawa”

The musical score is arranged in five staves. The top two staves are for vocal parts: Chantwell and Chorus. Both are in 12/8 time and use a treble clef. The Chantwell part begins with the lyrics "Shan go o ba ba wa" and features a melodic line with a long note on "o". The Chorus part begins with a rest and then enters with the same lyrics. The bottom three staves are for percussion: Umele, Center, and Bo. The Umele part is a continuous, high-speed rhythmic pattern. The Center part has a melodic line with rests. The Bo part has a rhythmic pattern with 'x' marks indicating specific strokes.

This Shango *hand* is important for multiple reasons. For one, variations of it are used in many Trinidad Orisha center drum *hands*, for instance in the well-known suite of songs for the *orisha* Erilay that begins with the song, “Erilay, rilay.” For another, this Shango *hand* connects the past and present of TOM, since it is audible on field recordings from 1961 (Simpson) and 1939 (Herskovits). It is also a favorite dance rhythm for a manifesting Shango (see below). On the whole, the Shango *hand* is simply one of the most distinctive rhythms in Trinidad Orisha music.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ I believe that the Shango *hand* may be a permutation of the following seven-stroke Yoruba timeline pattern: XOXOXXOXOX.

Another important center drum ostinato is the *Osain hand*, which is based, again, on a combination of eighth note trios and dotted eighth note pairs. In fig. 4.14, there is also a section of quarter notes, suggestive of 3/4 time (as in the *Ogun hand* above), but offset one eighth beat so as to further heighten the rhythmic activity. The center drum, as usual, closely tracks the vocal melody (in this transcription, the *chantwell* sings the first two bars, while the chorus response is on bars 3 and 4).

4.14 Transcription of basic *Osain hand* played for “Osain Ade”

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the piece "Osain Ade". Each system consists of a vocal line and three drum parts labeled U, C, and B.

System 1:

- Vocal (Chw):** The melody is in 7/8 time. The first two bars are: "Ye re le ko ko" (notes: quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter). The next two bars are: "Ye re le ko ko" (notes: quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter).
- Drum U:** Features a continuous ostinato of eighth-note triplets.
- Drum C:** Features a pattern of quarter notes and dotted eighth notes.
- Drum B:** Features a pattern of eighth-note pairs and dotted eighth notes.

System 2:

- Vocal (Chw):** The melody continues. The first two bars are: "O sain a de" (notes: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter). The next two bars are: "e re re le ko ko" (notes: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter).
- Drum U:** Continues with eighth-note triplets.
- Drum C:** Continues with quarter and dotted eighth notes.
- Drum B:** Continues with eighth-note pairs and dotted eighth notes.

Another ostinato, related to but slightly different than the above examples, is the Oshun *hand*, shown in fig. 4.15 accompanying the song “Oshun Talade.”⁹⁸ The transcription shows the *chantwell*, chorus, and center drum parts, in a four-bar repeating fragment. Similar to “Ogun Bewele,” the center drum rhythms in “Oshun Talade” track very closely the rhythms of the song melody. This Oshun *hand* combines the dotted eighth (duple) and eighth note (triple) figures which give a polyrhythmic feel to the center drum rhythms. The Oshun *hand* is as follows:

4.15 Transcription of basic Oshun *hand* played for “Oshun Talade”

The image shows a musical score for a four-bar repeating fragment. It consists of five staves labeled Chw, Ch, U, C, and B. The time signature is 12/8. The Chw staff contains the vocal melody with lyrics: "O shun ta la de ___ Oshun ta la de ___ o lo ___ do ___ O shun". The Ch staff contains a chorus part with lyrics: "O shun ta la de ___". The U staff shows a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes. The C staff shows a rhythmic pattern with dotted eighth and eighth notes. The B staff shows a rhythmic pattern with eighth notes and dotted eighth notes.

⁹⁸ This song means: “Oshun, the mistress of the river, is fit to be queen” (Warner-Lewis 1994), and this song is also sung in Cuba. See the Smithsonian Folkways compilation recording, *The Yoruba/Dahomean Collection: Orishas Across the Ocean* (1998).

4.15 Transcription of basic Oshun *hand* played for “Oshun Talade” (continued)

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Oshun Talade". It consists of five staves. The top staff, labeled "Chw", is a vocal line in treble clef with lyrics: "ta la de ___ Oshun ta la de ___ o lo ___ mi ___ O shun". The second staff, labeled "Ch", is another vocal line in treble clef with lyrics: "O shun ta la de ___". The third staff, labeled "U", is a percussion line for the Udu drum, showing a continuous pattern of eighth notes. The fourth staff, labeled "C", is a percussion line for the Conga drum, showing a pattern of eighth notes with some rests. The fifth staff, labeled "B", is a percussion line for the Bata drum, showing a pattern of eighth notes with some rests. The score is divided into two measures by a vertical bar line.

Similar to the Osain *hand* above, the final bar of “Oshun Talade” emphasizes quarter notes, suggestive of 3/4 time. Using quarter notes at the end of an ostinato pattern is a common technique of a center drummer in TOM, and such patterns serve as a kind of rhythmic turnaround, while also displaying the polyrhythmic virtuosity of the center drummer. These syncopations contrast both the previous center drum rhythms, as well as the rhythms in the rhythmic bed, generating tension, excitement, and connecting TOM to its polyrhythmic past. The following transcription (fig. 4.16) of “Ogun Masa Laye”⁹⁹ shows a particularly long string of quarter notes, beginning in the penultimate bar and extending through the entire length of the final bar.

⁹⁹ While the other examples were played by Earl Noel in Brooklyn, the transcription of “Ogun Masa Laye” is from a recording I made in Laventille, Trinidad in 2011.

4.16 “Ogun Masa Laye,” polyrhythmic drumming

The first system of the musical score consists of four staves. The top staff, labeled 'Chw', is a vocal line in treble clef with lyrics 'O gun ma sa la ye' and 'O gun ma sa la wa yo'. The second staff, labeled 'U', shows a complex polyrhythmic pattern with many small notes. The third staff, labeled 'C', shows a rhythmic pattern with some rests. The bottom staff, labeled 'B', shows a rhythmic pattern with 'x' marks indicating specific drum hits.

The second system of the musical score also consists of four staves. The top staff, labeled 'Chw', has lyrics 'O gun ma sa la ye' and 'la ma sa la ma sa la ma wa yo'. The second staff, labeled 'U', continues the polyrhythmic pattern. The third staff, labeled 'C', shows a rhythmic pattern with some rests. The bottom staff, labeled 'B', continues the rhythmic pattern with 'x' marks.

Another rhythmic motif for the center drum is based on a rhythmic motif similar to what is known in Cuba as the *clave*. The *clave* pattern is very common in TOM, for example in the melodic rhythms of the songs “Obatala Okere” and “Ogun Lalala Urele,” and also in drum rhythms in the SO and RK rhythmic beds. The *clave* is such a key rhythmic motif in TOM that I refer to it as the “Trinidad *clave*” – though it should be obvious that Trinidadian musicians do not use the Spanish word *clave*. By using the term *clave*, I do not wish to give the impression that the rhythm in Trinidad somehow results from Cuban musical influence, which is not the

case. Rather, I use the term to point out the rhythmic pattern is nearly identical to the 3-2 Cuban *clave*, in which three initial strokes are followed by two strokes played close together.¹⁰⁰

The *Trinidad clave* is the rhythmic foundation for the Vigoyana *hand* played on the center drum, transcribed in fig. 4.17 for the song, “Vigoyana Samidona.”¹⁰¹ In the first measure of the center drum line, accent marks indicate the 3-2 *clave* pattern. Interestingly, the rhythm to the melody of “Vigoyana Samidona” does not outline the *Trinidad clave* rhythm (making this song a rare instance in which the center drum and vocal melody are not in sync with one another). In the notation, the *chantwell*’s call is indicated by text above the melody, while the chorus lines have text written underneath.

¹⁰⁰ My notations of *Trinidad clave* look slightly different from Cuban *clave*, which is usually written in 4/4 time, requiring a brief explanation. In 4/4 notation, there are 16 subdivisions, and within those subdivisions, the Cuban *clave* looks like the following (the Xs indicate drum strokes, while the numbers below indicate the four downbeats, on beats 1, 5, 9, and 13):

X-O-O-X-O-O-X-O-O-O-X-O-X-O-O-O
 1 2 3 4

In 12/8, there are 24 subdivisions, and in that context the *Trinidad clave* looks like the following (in this case, the downbeats occur on beats 1, 7, 13, and 19):

X-O-O-O-O-X-O-O-O-X-O-O-O-O-O-X-O-O-X-O-O-O-O-O
 1 2 3 4

As the two graphs show, in overall scheme the patterns are similar. Stroke one occurs on the first downbeat, while stroke two occurs just before the second downbeat. Stroke three occurs halfway between downbeats two and three. Stroke four occurs halfway between downbeats three and four, while stroke five occurs on the fourth downbeat. The difference between the two notations is in the first two strokes: while the first two strokes of the Cuban *clave* occur in an equal amount of time (3+3), the first two strokes of the *Trinidad clave* are slightly uneven (5+4).

¹⁰¹ Most Trinidad Orisha practitioners consider Vigoyana to be a spirit related to the “medicine man” Osain, and perhaps the most well-known Orisha song for Vigoyana is “Vigoyana Samidona.” My informant Mr. Burton (b. 1929), who was a drummer for Papa Neezer, told me that, in his day, there was no spirit known as “Vigoyana.” He knew the song, “Vigoyana Samidona,” and told me, “That is a song for Osain. It have no spirit Vigoyana.”

4.17 “Vigoyana Samidona,” TOM 2013, SO Rhythm with *Trinidad Clave*

The first system of the musical score features five staves. The top staff, labeled 'Chw', contains a vocal line with lyrics: "Vi go ya na sa mi do ma Vi go ya na ma se we le". The second staff, labeled 'Ch', is a vocal line with rests. The third staff, labeled 'U', shows a dense rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The fourth staff, labeled 'C', features a complex rhythmic pattern with accents and rests. The fifth staff, labeled 'B', shows a rhythmic pattern with 'x' marks indicating specific notes or rests.

The second system of the musical score features five staves. The top staff, labeled 'Chw', is a vocal line with rests. The second staff, labeled 'Ch', contains a vocal line with lyrics: "go ro ma sa go ro Vi go ya na sa mi do na". The third staff, labeled 'U', shows a dense rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The fourth staff, labeled 'C', features a complex rhythmic pattern with accents and rests. The fifth staff, labeled 'B', shows a rhythmic pattern with 'x' marks indicating specific notes or rests.

While all of the above *hands* – for Ogun, Shango, Osain, Oshun, and Vigoyana – are for the SO rhythmic bed, the *Trinidad clave* also serves as a center drum *hand* in the RK rhythmic bed. The next example (fig. 4.18), the RK song “Ada Ogun,” illustrates the *Trinidad clave* in

both center drum rhythm and the rhythm of the vocal melody. While the center drummer plays the *clave* pattern throughout the song, as a recurring ostinato, the vocal rhythms articulate the pattern mainly during the phrase “ada wada umale.” As in the above notation, the chorus response is indicated by text written underneath the melody.

4.18 “Ada Ogun,” TOM 2013, in RK rhythm

The first system of the musical score includes five staves. The top staff, labeled 'Chantwell', is in 4/4 time and contains a vocal melody with lyrics: 'A da O gun a do a me i fa a da o mi a da'. The second staff, labeled 'Chorus', is empty. The third staff, labeled 'Umele', shows a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The fourth staff, labeled 'Center', shows a complex rhythmic pattern with accents and rests. The fifth staff, labeled 'Bo', shows a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with rests.

The second system of the musical score includes five staves. The top staff, labeled 'Chw', is in 4/4 time and contains a vocal melody with lyrics: 'wa da u ma le a da wa da u ma le'. The second staff, labeled 'Ch', is empty. The third staff, labeled 'U', shows a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The fourth staff, labeled 'C', shows a complex rhythmic pattern with accents and rests. The fifth staff, labeled 'B', shows a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with rests.

Responsibilities of the Center Drummer

The center drummer is the leader of the ensemble, and as such his task is to play the most complex rhythms, a task that involves a combination of experience, improvisational flair, and musical ear. The main responsibilities of the center drummer include: 1) awareness of the correspondence between drum rhythms and sung melodic rhythms; 2) knowledge of the core repertoire of ostinatos for certain songs and *orishas*; 3) ability to improvise and forge a distinctive style; and 4) ability to properly accompany the dances of the manifesting *orishas*.

Firstly, it is of utmost importance that the center drummer listens to the song being sung by the *chantwell* and congregation, and that his drum rhythms reflect the rhythms of the singing. “The drummerman,” says drummer Mr. Burton, “he beat the song according to what you sing.” And, “The big drum, that is the one that plays the music, that the powers would dance.” Another drummer, Redman, elaborates further:

As a drummer when you listen to the song, you play along with the song. In other words, your middle drum, your *bembe*, or your big drum, is actually speaking the language of what the song says. You could actually hear the song in the drumming. (*pers. comm.*)

The words of these drummers make clear that the center drum rhythms correspond closely with the rhythms of the melodies of Orisha songs – the center drum is the one that “plays the music.” In the connection between drum rhythms and song, Redman links the rhythmic patterns of the lead drum explicitly to speech – the drum should sound as if it is “speaking.” This relationship between drum rhythm and song text is among the primary considerations for the center drummer, and this relationship may, further, be seen as a reinterpretation of the West African preference for “talking drums.”

The most well-known talking drum among the Yoruba people of West Africa is the hourglass-shaped *dùndún*, which has cords attached to both drum heads. These cords are

squeezed during performance, changing the drum pitch and allowing the instrument to imitate the tonal properties of Yoruba language. Yoruba connections between speech and drum are not limited to the *dùndún*, and ethnomusicologist Amanda Villepastour (2010) has shown the *bàtá/batá* drums of Nigeria and Cuba to be effective “speakers” as well. In fact, “Most sacred Yorùbá drums are used as instruments of speech surrogacy, although none are as highly developed as the *dùndún* and the *bàtá*” (Villepastour 2010, 21). Trinidad Orisha drums, deriving from the Yoruba *bembe* drums and not *dùndún* or *bàtá*, are currently used in a way which suggests a prior function as surrogates for speech. The examples of center drum *hands* in the previous section – “Ogun Bewele,” “Osain Ade,” “Ada Ogun,” “Oshun Talade” – show the close connection between drum and speech in TOM.

Center drummers in TOM consider it very important to know the difference between the *hands* for different *orishas*. Redman speaks to the importance of knowing the “basic” *hands*:

There are some drummers who would sit down [to play the drums], and do not know the basic *hand*. There are some guys who would sit down and they sing for Osain, and they would play Shango’s *hand*. Some guys would sit down and sing for Oshun, and they would play Erilay’s *hand*. It is important for the drummers to know the differentiation in *hands*, which *hand* belongs to which spirit. (*pers. comm.*)

A young drummer must learn the basic *hands* by watching and listening to more experienced drummers, and despite discourses about unknowledgeable drummers, evidence suggests that Trinidad Orisha drummers have been able to transmit the “basic” repertoire to an impressive degree, for example the above-mentioned fact that the Shango *hand* can be heard on the earliest field recordings of TOM. The continuity of these rhythms is undoubtedly due to the emphasis, as explained above, on a connection between center drum *hands* and the rhythms of the melodies of the Orisha songs – as long as songs are preserved by Orisha congregations, then so too are drum rhythms maintained. As Redman said, “you could hear the song in the drumming.”

Another important consideration for the center drummer is the expectation that each drummer will have his own style, his own ability to sound unique. As Redman says, “When you’re young you sound like your teacher. But it is for me now to take that, and add my own little feel to it. After you get the basic, you put in the flavor which comes from your heart, which comes from within you. You start with your basic, and you start to improvise.” Consider, for example, the above notation of the center drum *hand* in “Ogun Bewele.” The center drummer will not simply repeat that rhythm over and over (as I have notated it). Rather, in the words of Redman, he will add his “own little feel to it.” He might keep that *hand* in mind as a basic rhythmic schematic, playing it (or fragments of it) from time to time as an anchoring device in the musical performance, but the emphasis on personal style and improvisation means that each drummer sounds distinct.

The approach of the center drummer is rather like that of a jazz saxophonist performing a solo to a 32 bar song, using the song’s chord progression as a framework within which to create something original. More to the point, the polyrhythmic improvisations of the center drummer evoke the soloists described by Peter Manuel in his article on “Improvisation in Latin American Dance Music,” who create a “continuous flow” through the “sequential presentation of discrete contrasting phrases” (1998, 142). The center drummer’s phrases, suggesting either 6/8, 3/4, or 4/4 time, articulate contrasting syncopations and generate the overall rhythmic excitement in Trinidad Orisha drumming, as well as the unique personality of the particular center drummer who is playing.

Variations in center drummer style derive in large part from the conversational qualities of TOM center drumming. This conversational quality is common in African music, in which it is often the case that “the highest praise that a performer can be given is that he makes his

instrument ‘talk’” (Van der Merwe 1992, 36). To this point, while listening my teacher Earl Noel to a recording I had made of TOM center drummer Brooks, I said to Earl, “Brooks sounds like he’s having a conversation when he plays the center drum.”

“Like he’s talking,” Earl replied, smiling.

“Yeah.”

Earl said, “Yeah, that’s how it’s supposed to sound.”

A final key responsibility of the center drummer is to please the spirits themselves, the manifesting *orishas* who dance in the Orisha *palais*. According to Redman, drumming for the *orishas* “is the test” of a drummer’s overall competence, making Orisha drumming an entirely different entity from other “traditional drumming” genres such as Afro-Trinidadian folk drumming. The reason for this, in Redman’s words, is that

...you could play other styles of our traditional drumming, and you could play wrong, and you might just get criticism from people. But in the Orisha if you sit to play for spirit and you don’t play the right *hand*, the spirit is gonna take the drum from you, and give it to another drummer. So that is the test. And they would look at you and show you, watch my feet, keep your eyes on my feet, and you do what the foot does. (*pers. comm.*)

Indeed, during an Orisha feast, when a spirit manifests on someone, that person (manifesting the spirit) will commonly approach the drummers and make direct eye contact with the center drummer (“...they would look at you and show you...”). The spirit-dancer will then perform a number of dances – a series of high, hard steps; a twirl facilitated by quick tiptoes; or a stomp accompanied by a swinging elbow – all the while watching and listening to be sure that the center drummer’s beats correspond with “what the foot does.” Elsewhere in the Caribbean, such drummer-dancer interactions are common, as in Puerto Rican *bomba* or Guadeloupean *gwoka*, and serve as moments of enhanced social interaction within the musical context. In the case of TOM, the interaction transcends the interpersonal, as it encourages interaction not only between

people but between human and *orisha*, thus providing an opportunity to develop and strengthen social as well as spiritual relationships.

A good example of the drummer-spirit-dancer relationship in TOM is the Shango *hand*, notated above: an individual who is manifesting Shango will often perform a specific set of dance steps which coordinate directly with the rhythm of this *hand*. To begin the dance, the Shango dancer approaches the drums, usually holding a wooden shepherd's rod to signify the syncretism of Shango with John the Baptist. Looking directly into the eyes of the center drummer, the dancer performs a series of steps that can be shown to correspond with the drum rhythm as follows:



This Shango dance consists of an initial three foot stomps (*left, right, left*) over the course of the first measure, followed by a controlled clockwise spin in the first half of the second measure, performed with short tiptoes and culminating in another foot stomp (*spin ... left*) on the final drum hit of the two bar Shango *hand*. The Shango dancer usually performs the foot stomps by raising each foot high in the air, bringing it down hard in unison with the strike of the center drum, and the effect is one of power: *Shango has come. Shango is in charge of the feast*. The spirit-dancer expects that the center drummer will perform the Shango *hand* during this dance, and if the drummer doesn't comply, then the Shango dancer may demand a new center drummer.



4.19 Shango, manifesting on a young man, dances in front of the Orisha drums. Video still from “Interfaith Service” at York College, Queens, New York, April 2012.

Summary

This chapter shows the aspects of drumming in TOM related to current practice and historical change. The chapter presents the typical rhythmic features of current-day Trinidad Orisha drumming, with its dual rhythmic beds in 12/8 syncopated swing (SO) and straight eighths (RK). The chapter shows how the center drum creates a secondary (poly)rhythmic layer on top of the rhythmic beds in TOM, combining rhythmic patterns implying 6/8, 4/4, and 3/4 time. These polyrhythmic tendencies in the center drum rhythms preserve some of the structural polyrhythms lost over the last 150 years in TOM. The chapter also shows the relationship between center drum rhythms, song, and dance, as well as the important role of the center drummer in TOM. The chapter investigates the organology of Trinidad Orisha drums, arguing that they derive from the *bembe* drums of Yorubaland. The drumsticks derive from *bembe* practices as well, and the evidence presented in this chapter shows a process, in Trinidad, of normalization regarding usage of curved sticks. Further, attitudes toward the drums reveal that

Trinidad Orisha drums are treated as special and sacred, and “mounting” practices might be retentions or reinterpretations of *Ayan/Aña* principles regarding divinity in the drums. Similarly, the relationship between center drum rhythms and the rhythms of song melodies may be retentions of speech surrogacy in West African drumming. In the following chapter, I assess the contours of some of the important changes that have taken place in the history of TOM.

Chapter Five

From Polyrhythmic to Syncopated Swing: Historical Perspectives on Rhythmic Change in TOM

Having described the song repertoire and drums of Trinidad Orisha music (TOM) in the previous two chapters, it is now possible to look more closely at salient aspects related to rhythm in TOM. Specifically, the focus here is on historical changes in TOM between the 1930s and today. The comparative analysis is made possible due to the 1939 field recordings of Melville and Frances Herskovits, which I analyzed thanks to compact disc copies of the original recordings sent to me by archivists at the Indiana Archives of Traditional Music. I read Herskovits's field notes at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. In addition to the 1939 Herskovits recordings, this chapter also makes reference to TOM recordings made in 1960 by George Simpson.

In essence, this chapter shows that the rhythms played in TOM today are basically the same as those played by Shango drummers in 1939, though certain important elements (such as the performance of a bell pattern on iron percussion) have been lost, resulting in music that sounds different. The music today retains a polyrhythmic character, though it is no longer based on structural, simultaneous polyrhythms. The musical links connecting 1939 with 2013 thus suggest that, though the Trinidad Orisha religion is highly syncretic, incorporating Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, and other eclectic influences (Houk 1995), the music itself may have been somewhat insulated from such creolization. The primary factor in the present configuration of TOM, therefore, appears to be the musical practices of the Trinidad Yoruba (Warner-Lewis 1996), the West African Yoruba speakers who came to Trinidad as indentured laborers in the

nineteenth century. The relatively heterogeneous musical practices of the Trinidad Yoruba have come to be streamlined into a unified TOM practice over time.

The historical recordings referenced in this chapter (Herskovits 1939 and Simpson 1960) need not, for the purposes of this chapter, be considered representative samples of total Trinidad Orisha musical practices in their respective eras. Rather, they are presented, chiefly, to establish certain actualities: 1) TOM in 1939 was much more heterogeneous than it currently is, exhibiting a greater variety of rhythmic approaches and instrument usage than in current practice, while still containing germinal forms of today's TOM; and 2) in at least one congregation (that recorded by George Simpson), TOM in 1960 sounded essentially the same as it does today, suggesting a process of homogenization in TOM between 1939 and 1960, and subsequent stabilization of the musical style.

On the other hand, to the extent that the 1939 and 1960 recordings *can* be seen as representative samples, evidence in support of this possibility includes the fact that Andrew Beddoe, an influential Orisha drummer throughout the twentieth century, performed on the 1939 recordings, negating the chance that the sample is from a group of musicians marginalized in the TOM community (such as, say, the recordings of Margaret Buckley or Allan Lovelace *et al.*, as described below). Regarding the 1960 recordings, it is indeed possible that Simpson recorded but one among many styles of TOM in that year, but such a possibility would be a remarkable coincidence: what are the chances that Simpson recorded an outlier group of Trinidad Orisha musicians in 1960, whose style also happens to coincide perfectly with TOM practice today? Based on my research, it seems much more likely that some combination of musical and social forces led to the streamlining and consolidation of TOM style between 1939 and 1960. Still, even if the 1939 and 1960 recordings are not perfect representations of contemporaneous TOM

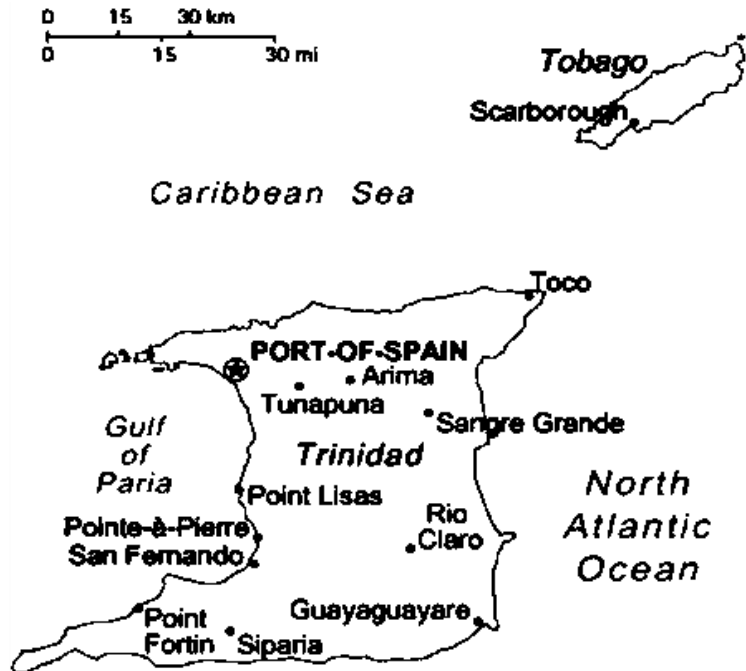
practice, it remains the case that TOM in 2013 is practiced in essentially one style; that style is consistent with what Simpson recorded in 1960, but significantly different (though connected in important ways) with what the Herskovitses heard in 1939.

Herskovits 1939

In 1939, Melville Herskovits and his wife, Frances, went to Trinidad for the field research that would ultimately result in the book *Trinidad Village*, published in 1947. Using state of the art equipment – a dual turntable Soundsciber acetate disc recorder with a Western Electric “salt shaker” microphone (Hill 2003, 13) – the Herskovitses recorded a wide variety of local Trinidadian music, comprising both sacred and secular genres. Considering the relative newness of portable recording technology in 1939, the sound quality of the Herskovits recordings is very good. The field recordings are now housed at Indiana University’s Archives of Traditional Music.¹⁰²

For the majority of their field research, spanning the summer of 1939, the Herskovitses stationed themselves in the village of Toco, located in the remote northeastern part of Trinidad. Melville Herskovits chose the location of Toco precisely because he believed he would find the most “Africanisms” far from the busy urban centers of Port of Spain and San Fernando.

¹⁰² Rounder Records has released two commercial CDs out of the Herskovits collection: *Rastlin’ Jacob: The Music of the Spiritual Baptists of Trinidad*, and *Peter Was a Fisherman*, which includes folk dances (bongo, bele), Spiritual Baptist songs, and songs in the Trinidad Yoruba (TY) language. Neither of these CDs is representative of the main body of Shango/Orisha songs recorded by the Herskovitses in Laventille, Port of Spain in Sept. 1939. Another compilation (*The Yoruba/Dahomean Collection: Orishas Across the Ocean*) includes four tracks from Herskovits 1939: 3 from Laventille, and 1 by Margaret Buckley.



The Herskovitses had first learned about Trinidad Orisha (Shango) in 1929, when they stopped in Port of Spain en route from Guyana to the United States, and read a letter in the Trinidad *Guardian* newspaper, in which a resident of Port of Spain was complaining about Shango. When they finally made it back to Trinidad ten years later, Herskovits thought that if Shango was in the city, it would be even stronger in the countryside. At the beginning of *Trinidad Village*, he wrote the following explanation:

Because Shango worship was so near the capital, we thought it evident that this cult, and the African ways of life we assumed to be associated with it, would be met in greatest purity in the districts remote from this center of European contact. ... Contrary to all our expectations, however, the remote community where we worked [Toco] proved to be without Shango worship – without, indeed, any more Africanisms than would be found in almost any rural Negro community in southern United States. (Herskovits 1946, v-vi)

The urban-rural dynamic – in which urban areas translated to industrialization and the stamping out of African traditions – had been true on Herskovits’s previous trips to Haiti and Dahomey, but Trinidad was different. In fact, the urban centers in Trinidad had long been important loci of *orisha* veneration, featuring neighborhoods with prominent populations of Trinidad Yoruba. The

population in Toco, though mainly Afro-Trinidadian, was actually marked by conservative Protestantism, and while the Herskovitses collected African-derived oral history (folk tales, bush medicine, and the like) there were no Shango congregations in Toco at that time. Herskovits wrote of his disappointment with the lack of overt African-derived culture in Toco. Even so, the researchers persisted, and recorded, in Toco, Trinidad Yoruba songs sung by an old woman named Margaret Buckley, and some Shango/Orisha songs performed by a group of musicians led by the young folk singer, Allan Lovelace.

Margaret Buckley – whom Herskovits called an “old Yoruba woman” – was a second generation Yoruba, and the Herskovitses recorded her singing which displayed a fairly high degree of competence in Trinidad Yoruba language (Warner-Lewis 1996). Buckley performed more than fifty songs with her son, Joe Alexander, accompanying on a drum. The songs that Buckley sang for the Herskovitses are totally separate from the main body of Trinidad Orisha songs, except for one example (“Oshun Talade”). Despite her facility in the language, Buckley was isolated from the majority of Shango worshippers in Trinidad. She told the researchers that she participated in just one annual event, with six or seven other individuals. Buckley’s singing was not representative of TOM in 1939, but rather of her own personal knowledge, passed down by her Yoruba-speaking grandparents. This type of personal knowledge of Trinidad Yoruba language has disappeared in Trinidad (Warner-Lewis 1996), and, at the time, Herskovits wrote that Buckley’s was “a dying tradition” (1939, 101).

In addition to the songs of Buckley, the Herskovitses recorded a second group of Shango songs in Toco, which were sung not by practitioners of the Orisha religion but “by a team which knew them merely from having visited Shango cult-rites” (Waterman 1943, 60). These songs were sung by various configurations of the singers and percussionists Allan Lovelace (who sang

a few of the songs solo), George Roberts, Henry Williams, Carl Monseguí, and Emile Paul. These men sang a wide variety of songs for the Herskovitses, including calendas, bongos, beles, Baptist songs, carnival songs, cocoa-dancing songs, wood-pulling songs, fisherman's songs, and others.¹⁰³ In the liner notes to *Rastlin' Jacob: The Music of the Spiritual Baptists of Trinidad*, anthropologist Donald Hill gives some insight into the lives of these Toco musicians:

George Roberts, Allan Lovelace, and Henry Williams were frequently recorded together, and seem to have been friends. ... The only thing Herskovits tells us in his notes about Allan Lovelace is that one night he danced so much that his feet were sore. Henry Williams was one of a large number of people arrested for participating in an outlawed Spiritual Baptist ceremony, singing the very sort of songs that he and his friends so eloquently performed for the pair of anthropologists. ... Carl Monseguí was possibly from a well-off family; one of his relatives had an automobile. Emile Paul's father and grandfather were both Baptists and used to "shout." George Roberts was a Tobagonian and was about seventeen years old. (Hill 2003, 12)

Of the 17 Shango/Orisha songs performed by Allan Lovelace *et al*, 12 are still sung today in TOM, suggesting that, unlike Margaret Buckley, these singers performed some of the most common Trinidad Orisha repertoire. At any rate, these recordings of Allan Lovelace *et al* are of limited use for my own purposes because the men did not play Orisha drums. Instead, they accompanied the songs with only "a box which is used as a drum" (Waterman 1943, 60).

When the Herskovitses finished their research in Toco, they decided to spend a few days in Port of Spain before they left the island, arriving there on Sept. 1, 1939. It was there, during their last days in Trinidad, that they were finally able to visit an active Shango congregation at a compound in Laventille, a working class black neighborhood set into the hills overlooking Port of Spain. Herskovits's descriptions outline a typical Trinidad Orisha compound: there were several structures, with a "tent" and "chappelle" as the main ceremonial areas. The large "tent" had a crucifix over the door and colored banners on the ceiling, but few ritual objects inside. The

¹⁰³ These are various Afro-Trinidadian secular folk genres.

“chapelle” was a small building with a red and white curtain over the door, and Herskovits remarked that the altar inside looked “Haitian” to him, with its potpourri of candles, paper flowers, pictures of saints, and implements for the spirits including a wooden sword, long broom, and calabash.

At the ceremonies the Herskovitses would witness, spirit possessions “ended by those possessed rushing to the ‘chapelle,’ leaping into it head-foremost in a dive-like procedure, and lying prostrate on the floor, their feet protruding out over the steps, until they had recovered ...” (1939, 108). They described the manifestation of Oshun on a young man who was dressed in a green kerchief, his shoes removed and pant legs rolled up. A woman, manifesting “Osha-roko,” danced violently with a water jug on her head for thirty-five minutes spilling hardly a drop. Ogun danced with a sword, swinging it in each of the four corners. “In the main,” wrote Herskovits, “the pattern that has been preserved here is quite that which we have seen in Guiana and Haiti, and conforms to what would be required of rituals to a high degree African in character” (ibid., 114).

On September 6th, 1939, the Herskovitses arranged an on-site recording session with the singers and drummers at this Laventille shrine, led by three *chantwells* (lead singers). In Herskovits’s notes, the *chantwells* were named as Andrew Biddle, Sidney Bourme, and Mr. Frederick. Unfortunately, very little is known about these Laventille musicians, though the first man seems to be Andrew Biddeau (sometimes spelled Beddoe), who is well-known in Trinidad as a cultural ambassador for Afro-Trinidadian culture, and who died in the late 1980s.¹⁰⁴ About the recordings, Herskovits wrote, “We got some excellent songs, with the three drums, iron (but

¹⁰⁴ Biddeau worked with Trinidadian dancer Beryl McBurnie when she researched folklore to bring Afro-Trinidadian culture to the stage in the 1950s (Hill *et al* 1998). In 2010, I met Biddeau’s younger brother, Jeffrey, shortly before his death in September of that year, at his home and Orisha shrine in Matura, Trinidad.

no rattle, which isn't especially necessary, apparently, since none has been used in the two ceremonies we've witnessed) the leader and a real chorus, and a cordial invitation to come back that night to see the dance, which we did" (ibid., 107).

The Laventille musicians performed 47 Shango/Orisha songs on the Herskovitses' Soundscriber, 45 of which are still sung today by the groups I studied for this dissertation. As fig. 5.1 shows, the Laventille recordings stand out from those made in Toco in terms of the continuity of both repertoire and instrument usage with the TOM of today.

	Location	Instruments	Songs recorded	Songs still in use in TOM
Margaret Buckley and Joe Alexander	Toco	Single drum and calabash	52	1
Allan Lovelace group	Toco	Box drum and calabash	17	12
Andrew Biddle and chorus	Laventille	Drum trio and hoe	9	9
Mr. Frederick and chorus	Laventille	Drum trio and hoe	21	19
Sidney Bourme and chorus	Laventille	Drum trio and hoe	7	7

5.1 Songs in Trinidad Yoruba (TY) language on 1939 Herskovits recordings

Unlike any of the songs recorded in Toco, the Laventille performances include leader-chorus singing and a full Orisha drum trio including an iron hoe. Even though today's Trinidad Orisha drummers no longer beat the iron hoe during TOM performance (more on which below), the 1939 Laventille drummers played many of the same rhythms that are still a part of TOM, including variations on the key foundational rhythms outlined in chapter four. Given the important connections between these recordings and TOM today, the Herskovitses' 1939

Laventille recordings play a pivotal role in understanding the development and evolution of TOM.

According to Herskovits’s descriptions, at the start of their recording session, the Laventille drummers selected three drums from a total of eight that were suspended from the ceiling – off the ground as is still the convention today (see chapter four). The names of these 1939 drums are mostly consistent with those today, though Herskovits confused the issue by writing down two sets of names. The following list shows the drum names as my informants call them, and the two sets of names reported by Herskovits:

Common drum names today	bo/kongo	center/bembe/mother/big drum	umele
Herskovits set 1	boula	maman	seconde
Herskovits set 2	congo	Ogu’/Shango	Omele

At first, Herskovits wrote that the drums “are called as in Haiti; the boula, the seconde, and the maman” (ibid., 108). Later, Herskovits learned a different set of drum names, “Congo,” “Omele,” and, for the lead drum, “Ogu” or “Shango” (ibid., 115). Noting the names of set 2, he wrote that “earlier statements are not so” – though it isn’t clear whether he blamed his informants or himself for the confusion.¹⁰⁵

More important than the drum names, Herskovits’s descriptions show that the performance style of these drums was very consistent with current performance practice: three drums, all played with sticks, including a lead drum that “speaks.” Describing the trio using the first set of names, Herskovits wrote that “all three are played with sticks, the seconde being played either with one stick and one hand (as is the boula) or two sticks. The maman, as would

¹⁰⁵ Given his predilection toward finding connections between African-derived religions, one might speculate that Herskovits offered the Haitian terms “boula,” “seconde,” and “maman” – which are in fact common Trinidadian-Creole names for folk drums – and received an affirmative nod from an informant, only later coming to realize that these names were inaccurate.

be expected, is the one that ‘speaks’ to the gods, and the rhythms from it follow the dancing while also keeping time to the songs” (ibid., 108). Describing the drums with name set 2, Herskovits characterized the “largest” as being that “on which they talk to the gods” (ibid., 115).

The use of an iron hoe as a percussion instrument is the most obvious difference between the performance practice of the 1939 Laventille drummers and Trinidad Orisha drumming today. However, the use of iron percussion seems not to have been the norm for these Laventille drummers. “They know the trick of keeping the beat with the ‘irons,’” Herskovits wrote in his notes, “but though they got it for us, it wasn’t used during the ceremonies we saw” (ibid., 109). The “trick” to which Herskovits refers is the performance of a repetitive pattern suggestive of polyrhythm, common to West African percussion, and often described as a “bell pattern,” or, more precisely, a timeline pattern (Nketia 1974; Kubik 1979). This type of bell pattern is clearly performed in the 1939 recordings, suggesting that, even though the Laventille drummers apparently did not play the iron hoe during typical ceremonies, it was still part of their percussive vocabulary at least to some degree.

Regarding the anomaly of the iron – the drummers knew the “trick,” but they didn’t play the iron during the actual ceremonies – it is possible that, by 1939, the iron was only used for certain sections of TOM performance. One of my informants suggested such compartmentalization of the hoe performance. The drummer Selwin “Crow” Harvey (b. 1934), from Port of Spain, told me that he remembered drummers playing the iron hoe during a preliminary section of the feast, when the orisha Eshu was sung for. “When they *eshu-ing*,” Crow said, “they *eshu* with a hoe. And they play the hoe, or the iron. That is for Eshu. You understand? After they done *eshu-ing* I don’t see they doing that [playing iron].” The performance of iron percussion during the singing for Eshu could conceivably have allowed for

the retention of timeline pattern performance, as captured by Herskovits in the 1939 recordings. Outside of Port of Spain, the retention of iron percussion performance seems to have varied. Indeed, the drummer Mr. Burton (b. 1929), from south Trinidad,¹⁰⁶ did not recall the use of iron percussion during any part of an Orisha ceremony.¹⁰⁷ It is my contention that the loss of iron percussion has played an important role in the degradation of polyrhythms in Trinidad Orisha drumming.

Polyrhythms in the 1939 Recordings

One of Melville Herskovits's students, the anthropologist Richard Waterman, studied the 1939 Trinidad recordings during the research for his dissertation on *African Patterns in Trinidad Negro Music*, writing that "The polyrhythms of this group are complex and consist essentially of patterns of combination of duple with triple time which include the simultaneous and coterminous duple and triple measure, duple accent applied to triple meter, and triple accent applied to duple meter" (1943, 172). In a later article, he wrote:

The musicians use three drums. The rhythm of the first or medium-sized drum is a steady 4/4, weaving in and out of the multiple-metred percussion pattern. The second, high-pitched drum plays quavers [eighth notes] in 6/8 time, measure for measure with the first metre. The third pattern is fundamentally a 3/4 beat, measure for measure with the other drums, but frequently accented on alternate beats in such a manner that its metre could best be described as 12/4 The individual parts of the Shango cult drum-rhythm complex are conceptually very simple, often involving merely the beating of time in the

¹⁰⁶ Differences in the retention of iron percussion performance between north and south Trinidad may be attributable to the music of the Rada people in Belmont, who play the iron hoe during their drumming up to the present day. Belmont is close to Laventille (it is also a working class black neighborhood in the hills east of Port of Spain), and the historical proximity of Rada and Orisha people in Trinidad meant that Orisha practitioners in north Trinidad would be occasionally exposed to iron percussion performance. There has never been a documented Rada community in south Trinidad.

¹⁰⁷ Mr. Burton did, however, tell me the hoe was played sometimes during Kabbalah banquets – but it is important to remember that Kabbalah music – which mainly consists of *a capella* Baptist hymns – is very different from Orisha.

particular metre associated with the particular drum. However, the resulting combination is of baffling complexity, since the rhythmic focus shifts from one drum to another – either because of an actual increase in amplitude of the drum emphasized or because the melodic rhythms correlate for a time with that particular percussion beat – and since the drummers frequently depart from the strict ostinato in favor of variations on their fundamental rhythms. (Waterman 1948, 35)

The “baffling complexity” in the drumming of the 1939 Laventille drummers derives from the shifting of “rhythmic focus,” as well as the use of multiple meters (4/4, 6/8, 3/4); Waterman described this phenomenon as “hot” rhythm.

In his dissertation, Waterman gave transcriptions of six of the Laventille songs from Herskovits’s recordings (1943, 195-206). Unlike my transcriptions in the pages below, Waterman’s are notated in a variety of meters: 6/8, 4/4, 4/4 with 12/4 in parenthesis, 2/4, and 4/4 with 12/8 in parenthesis. Waterman’s use of multiple meters is problematic, for example when he transcribes the same pattern in different ways, such as in quarter notes in 4/4 ($J=220$) and in dotted eighths in 6/8 ($J.=100$). While Waterman’s multi-metered approach did reflect the different rhythmic emphases of the 1939 Laventille drummers, I argue that he made an understanding of the music more complicated than it needed to be, and missed basic underlying structures connecting the songs that Herskovits recorded. In my analysis, the Laventille drummers use two basic rhythmic foundations (rhythmic beds) for all of the songs – one in 12/8, and one in 4/4 – and these two rhythmic beds correspond with the two rhythmic beds used in TOM today (as explained in chapter four). Waterman was not aware of this basic dual division.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, the hoe player in the 1939 recordings frequently played a clear hemiola pattern, which Waterman missed as well.

¹⁰⁸ Here we are reminded of some of the problems with exclusively etic (as opposed to emic) approaches to ethnomusicology (and other ethnographic disciplines). Waterman’s approach, though valuable in its own way, could be described as “armchair ethnomusicology” – he did not conduct his research in Trinidad, or consult with Trinidadian drummers, but, rather, simply

While Waterman's musical transcriptions of Herskovits's 1939 recordings are of limited use for my own purposes, the important point is that Waterman correctly described the 1939 Laventille drumming as possessing the characteristic traits of West African structural polyrhythm. Today, such structural polyrhythms are gone in TOM. Multiple meters are found not across the three drum parts, but only in the contrasting syncopations of the center drum patterns. While Waterman noted that all three drummers in 1939 played variations on the basic ostinatos, today the *umele* and *bo* are unchanging; only the center drummer plays variations (which he does nearly constantly).

In order to paint a precise picture of the differences between Trinidad Orisha drumming in 1939 and today, in the following pages I outline the specific contours of the use of polyrhythm in 1939. To begin, I describe the "rhythmic bed" – the composite rhythmic approach of the accompanying drummers – as well as the basic rhythms of the lead drum in 1939. In all cases, the transcriptions are my own.

Just as in TOM today, the 1939 Laventille drummers used two main foundational rhythms (rhythmic beds) for all 47 songs they performed for the Herskovitses. To demonstrate these rhythms, the Herskovitses recorded two tracks of drum rhythm demonstrations. In each of these recordings, the song is sung by a solo voice, and each drum is played solo for several seconds, showing the ostinato clearly. Then, all three drums are played together, while the *chantwell* keeps singing. The first rhythm is accompanied by the song "Iwala Mefa" (*cf.* database

studied Herskovits's recordings at Northwestern University in Illinois. Though all ethnographic analysis, whether emic or etic, runs the risk of misrepresentation, ethnography from a distance is fraught with hazards ranging from the inaccurate to the absurd (*cf.* Horace Miner, "Body Ritual among the Nacirema" [1956]).

“Ibai La Mefa”¹⁰⁹). This rhythm is used in all but two of the songs on the 1939 recordings, and it is the precursor to the primary rhythmic bed used in TOM today, the “straight Orisha” (SO) rhythm described in the last chapter. The second 1939 rhythm is accompanied by the song “Kokode Maboriko.” This rhythm is used in two of the songs on the 1939 recordings, and in the tape index to the recordings, both are marked “Yoruba (Rada song).” As this clue from the tape index suggests, this rhythm is the precursor to the secondary foundational rhythm used in TOM today, the “rada” or “kankan” rhythm (RK) described in the last chapter.

In the following notations, to avoid confusion with the names I use for current TOM rhythms (SO and RK), I call the two rhythms simply A and B, with the understanding that Rhythm A corresponds with SO, and Rhythm B with RK. Similarly, I label the drums simply 1, 2, and 3. Drum 1 is the lead and the lowest in pitch, while the other two higher-pitched drums play the accompanying rhythms (in the recordings, both accompanying drums sound similarly pitched, making my guesses at which drum is the *umele* or the *bo* merely that – speculation). Rhythm A, in 12/8 meter,¹¹⁰ is as follows:

¹⁰⁹ This Trinidad Orisha song is also sung in Cuba, during the Santería songs for Ochosi, in the refrain “Iwa la o mefa.” See Davalos and Coburg (2000), Vol. 2, “Oru Cantado,” track 3.

¹¹⁰ This “Rhythm A” example might be easier to read in 4/4, with triplet bracketing on Drum 2. However, 12/8 meter serves my purposes for two main reasons. First, in later “Rhythm A” examples, the hoe plays a clear 12/8 hemiola pattern, and I do not wish to write the drum parts in different meters. Second, I wish to make the connection between Rhythm A and the 12/8 *straight Orisha* (SO) rhythm of today’s TOM. Thus, writing this example in 4/4 might make reading the music easier at the moment, but it would potentially obfuscate a larger and more important point about the basic underlying logic of Trinidad Orisha music: that key elements of TOM have remained unchanged since 1939.

5.2 Rhythm A (♩. =100): “Iwala Mefa,” Herskovits 1939 (95a1)¹¹¹

The image shows a musical score for 'Iwala Mefa' in 12/8 time. The score consists of four staves: Chantwell, Drum 1, Drum 2, and Drum 3. The Chantwell staff is in treble clef and contains the melody with lyrics: 'i wa la me fa me fa me fa i wa la me fa o gu me fa'. Drum 1 is in a 12/8 time signature and features a pattern of eighth notes and rests. Drum 2 is in a 12/8 time signature and features a pattern of groups of three eighth notes. Drum 3 is in a 12/8 time signature and features a pattern of dotted eighth note pairs.

In my transcription, Rhythm A is a compound quadruple meter with a rhythmic variety deriving from the polyrhythmic interplay of the accompanying drum patterns. In the 12/8 notation above, the “drum 3” pattern is a stream of dotted eighth note pairs, four pairs per measure. The first beat of each pair is an open tone drumstick hit, while the second is a strike with dampened pitch, presumably created by pressing the fingers of the free hand down on the drum head while the stick strikes the drum. The “drum 2” pattern, meanwhile, is made up of groups of three eighth notes.

Looking closely at the interplay of the rhythms of the two accompanying drums in fig. 5.2, it becomes clear that a structural polyrhythm exists in the simultaneous cross-rhythms of Rhythm A. Given that three eighth notes occur horizontally in the same time as two dotted eighth notes, the two drums create a common West African 3-against-2 polyrhythm. Another way of representing the rhythm is as follows:

¹¹¹ The parenthetical numbers following the Herskovits 1939 examples correspond with the original accession numbers on the Herskovits 1939 field recordings.

Drum 2: X O X O X O
 Drum 3: X O O X O O

While drums 2 and 3 each play one side of the 3:2 equation, the lead drum (“drum 1”) pattern freely combines the two, as in the first bar of fig. 5.2 above: a pair of dotted eighth notes, followed by an eighth note trio.

As mentioned above, Rhythm A is heard in all but two of the songs recorded by the Herskovitses in Laventille. While I show Rhythm A in a 12/8 meter, I notate the Rhythm B “Kokode Maboriko” in 4/4 meter, though, in truth, the meter is somewhat ambiguous to me due to the rhythmic fluidity of the drummers, for instance the center drum rhythm which suggests 12/8. (The metric fluidity of the 1939 drummers is shown further in the notation of a second Rhythm B example – “Newe Se Sa” – below.) Nonetheless, I depict Rhythm B as 4/4 in order to make clear the connection between this rhythm and the RK rhythm of today, which features virtually identical accompanying drum patterns (see chapter four).

5.3 Rhythm B, 4/4 (♩=140): “Kokode Maboriko” Herskovits 1939 (95b2)

The musical score is presented in four staves. The top staff, labeled 'Chw', is a vocal line in 4/4 time with lyrics: 'Ko ko de ma bo ri ko de ma bo ri sha'. The second staff, 'D1', shows a drum pattern with eighth notes and triplets. The third staff, 'D2', shows a drum pattern with eighth notes. The fourth staff, 'D3', shows a drum pattern with quarter notes.

In Rhythm B, a 3:2 cross-rhythm is created in the interplay of the lead drum (drum 1) and one accompanying drum (drum 2). This differs from Rhythm A, in which the two accompanying drummers played a cross-rhythm between the two of them. Thus, the rhythmic beds for Rhythms A and B are quite different. The second 1939 Rhythm B example, “Newe Se Sa” (fig. 5.4) is better regarded as being in 12/8 rhythm (this Herskovits recording was not a drumming demonstration, but rather a regular song performance). In this example, the meter is clearly compound quadruple, and unlike in the 4/4 version, the vocal melody, drum 1, and drum 2 all articulate triple subdivisions.

5.4 Rhythm B, 12/8 (J. =140): “Newe Se Sa,” Herskovits 1939 (99b1)

The musical score for "Newe Se Sa" is presented in 12/8 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 140. It consists of four staves. The top staff is for the vocal melody (Chw), written in treble clef, with lyrics: "ne we se sa bo ku ne we sa so ti ye". The second staff (D1) shows a lead drum pattern with a 3:2 cross-rhythm. The third staff (D2) shows an accompanying drum pattern with a steady eighth-note pulse. The fourth staff (D3) shows a drum 3 part with a steady dotted quarter-note pulse. The score is divided into two measures by a vertical bar line.

Given the differences between the two Rhythm B examples, one might argue that they are, in fact, different rhythms. However, I believe they are more alike than not, and are simply reflective of fluid approaches to rhythm on the part of Trinidad Orisha drummers in 1939. First of all, they are both marked “Rada” in Herskovits’s recording notes, suggesting an affinity between them, presumably in the terminology of the musicians themselves. No other recordings received that marking. Secondly, the drum 3 beats provide an identical underlying pulse. A key

difference lays in the drum 2 patterns, one outlining duple subdivisions and the other outlining triple subdivisions. However, both drum 2 patterns can be seen as slightly different articulations of the same three-stroke drum roll. In TOM today, in the *rada/kankan* rhythm, the drum 1 and drum 2 patterns with triple subdivisions are not often heard (in four years of research, I heard the *umele* play the triple subdivisions of drum 2 only once), suggesting a kind of binarization process as the fluid meters of the 1939 Rhythm B evolved into the clearly 4/4, present-day RK rhythm.

Trinidad Hemiola and Trinidad Clave

To return to the “Kokode Maboriko” example (fig. 5.3), an asymmetric pattern – in which the first half of the rhythm articulates a different metric sensibility from the second half, thus creating asymmetry – is created by the *chantwell’s* melodic rhythm. In Cuba, this pattern is known as the *clave*, and I refer to the rhythm in TOM as the *Trinidad clave*. As discussed in chapter four, the *Trinidad clave* is a common rhythmic motif in TOM today, used prominently in center drum rhythms such as the Vigoyana *hand*. Given this centrality, the *Trinidad clave* is an important aspect of the overall rhythmic makeup of TOM, lending the music polyrhythmic aspects even with the degradation of true structural polyrhythm. As the 1939 Herskovits recordings show, this *Trinidad clave* extends well into the past history of TOM performance. In fig. 5.5, I show the alignment of the *Trinidad clave* with the melodic rhythm of “Kokode Maboriko,” in 4/4.

5.5 “Trinidad clave,” Herskovits 1939

The image shows two staves of music. The top staff, labeled 'Chantwell', is in 4/4 time and contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes. The bottom staff, labeled 'Trinidad Clave', is also in 4/4 time and shows a rhythmic pattern with 'x' marks above the staff, indicating specific rhythmic events. The two staves are aligned to show their relationship.

An example of the *Trinidad clave* in a current song melody is in the song, “Obatala Okere.” In the following straight Orisha (SO) 12/8 notation (fig. 5.6), the first bar is sung by the *chantwell*, while the second is the choral response. The clave pattern is particularly strong during the response:

5.6 “Obatala Okere,” TOM 2013,¹¹² *Trinidad clave* in SO rhythm

The image shows a musical score for the song "Obatala Okere" in 12/8 time. It consists of three staves. The top staff, labeled "Chw", is for the Chantwell and contains the lyrics "O ba ta la o ke re" under the first two bars. The middle staff, labeled "Ch", is for the Choral response and contains the lyrics "o ke re o ri sha" under the second bar. The bottom staff, labeled "Trin. Clave", shows a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, representing the Trinidad clave pattern.

While the above examples trace the *Trinidad clave* pattern from its usage in 1939 to its prominence in TOM today, another asymmetric rhythmic pattern from the 1939 recordings – a pattern I call the *Trinidad hemiola*¹¹³ – is no longer part of TOM. The disappearance is almost certainly related to the discontinued playing of iron percussion. In the 1939 recordings, the hemiola pattern was played on the iron hoe during the 12/8 Rhythm A (it was not played during the two Rhythm B examples in the 1939 recordings), and occasionally on the lead drum (drum 1) as well. This 12/8 hemiola pattern is, like the clave pattern, another common West African rhythmic motif. Van der Merwe writes:

¹¹² In this chapter, I distinguish Herskovits’s 1939 recordings from present-day music with the marker “TOM 2013.”

¹¹³ I use the term “Trinidad hemiola” in an effort to be very specific. Though this rhythm is found in standard West African timelines, it is so ubiquitous in the 1939 recordings – and to the overall points in this chapter, regarding changes in TOM since 1939 – that it merits receiving its own invented name. I could not simply call it “hemiola,” for that could imply a variety of rhythmic patterns. With the term *Trinidad hemiola* I am referring to a very specific distillation of a hemiola-type rhythm.

The hemiola, and more generally “two against three” is of almost proverbial importance in African music. From infancy Africans are trained to hear the six-pulse unit as interchangeably 3+3 and 2+2+2, beginning with the lullabies they hear from their mothers. In some styles there are long stretches of two-against-three rhythm, performed with such a balance of emphasis that it is difficult for the outsider to know which of these patterns qualifies as the beat. (Van der Merwe 1992, 158)

As shown in fig. 5.7, the pattern articulates contrasting meters: the first four strokes suggest 6/8, while the final three quarter notes articulate 3/4 time.

5.7 “Trinidad Hemiola”



The *Trinidad hemiola* is played on the hoe in 10 of the 47 songs performed by the 1939 Laventille drummers. In the other 37 songs, the center drummer sometimes plays the pattern, while the hoe pattern simply doubles the triple-eighth note subdivisions of the *umele* rhythm. Other times, the rhythm is not played at all. The melodic rhythms on the 1939 recordings often align closely with the asymmetric pattern. For example, in the song “Korikoto Milodo” (fig. 5.8), the vocal line rhythms coincide tightly with the *Trinidad hemiola* pattern. The following transcription shows the *chantwell*, chorus, hoe, and drum trio from 1939. Note that drums 2 and 3 play the Rhythm A patterns, as identified above, and the lead drum, once again, plays a pattern that combines the triple and duple phrasing of the accompanying drums.

5.8 “Korikoto Milodo,” Herskovits 1939, with hemiola hoe pattern (97b1)

The musical score is arranged in five staves. The top two staves are vocal parts: 'Chw' and 'Chorus'. The bottom three staves are drum parts: 'Hoe', 'D1', 'D2', and 'D3'. The time signature is 12/8. The lyrics are: 'ye ko ri ko to mi lo do ye ko ri' for the Chw part, and 'o ri sha we le mi lo do' for the Chorus part. The Hoe part shows a hemiola pattern of eighth notes. D1 has a pattern of quarter notes. D2 has a pattern of eighth notes. D3 has a pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks above some notes.

Another example of the close connection between rhythms of the song melodies and the *Trinidad hemiola* in the 1939 recordings is the song “Erilay-rilay” (fig. 5.9). Note in particular the ternary phrasing of the eighth notes in the last two measures of the vocal melody, coinciding with the three quarter notes of the hoe rhythm and creating, for me, a distinct feeling of (momentary) 3/4 time, while at the same time demonstrating the rhythmic flexibility of the drummers.

5.9 “Erilay-rilay,” Herskovits 1939, *chantwell* and hoe (101b1)

The musical score for "Erilay-rilay" consists of two systems. The first system features a Chantwell part in 12/8 time with a melody of eighth notes and a dotted quarter note, with lyrics "E ri lay ri lay" and "E ri lay ri lay o". Below it is a Hoe part with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and quarter notes. The second system features a Chw part with a melody of eighth notes and a dotted quarter note, with lyrics "ba ba ti man de e ru ma ya" and "ba ba ti man de i le o". Below it is another Hoe part with a similar rhythmic pattern.

Yet another example of hemiola in the 1939 song melodies is the song “Iwala Mefa,” a different version of which was used for the drumming demonstration of Rhythm A, above (fig. 5.2). In that previous “Iwala Mefa,” the vocal melody rhythm closely tracked the dotted eighth subdivisions of the drum 3 pattern. In the following version of “Iwala Mefa” (fig. 5.10), the rhythm of the vocal melody coincides with the *Trinidad hemiola* pattern:

5.10 “Iwala Mefa,” Herskovits 1939, *chantwell* and hoe (94b1)

The musical score for "Iwala Mefa" consists of two systems. The first system features a Chantwell part in 12/8 time with a melody of eighth notes, with lyrics "I wa la me fa me fa me fa" and "i wa la me fa me fa me fa". Below it is a Hoe part with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and quarter notes.

The two different versions of “Iwala Mefa” were both sung by Sidney Bourme, and the slight differences between them illustrate, once more, the fluid rhythmic approaches of the musicians in the 1939 recordings. In the previous example (fig. 5.2), the hoe was not part of the

performance. In the latter version (fig. 5.10), the polyrhythmic hoe pattern was present. Thus, the two versions of “Iwala Mefa” suggest that singers can alter vocal rhythms depending on the presence of a particular polyrhythmic drum pattern (the *Trinidad hemiola*) versus its absence.

As mentioned above, in the 1939 recordings the *Trinidad hemiola* was sometimes played on the lead drum, and was thus not limited to vocal and hoe rhythms, showing that the pattern was well integrated into the musicians’ vocabulary. In the next example, in which the hoe pattern marked out simple 6/8 subdivisions, the lead drummer (drum 1) played the hemiola pattern for most of the performance, showing the way that the rhythmic approaches of the lead drummer exerted a profound impact on TOM in 1939, similar to the role of the center drummer today. The example (fig. 5.11) is an extended transcription of the 1939 vocal melodies and center drum rhythms for a 4:20 medley of four Ogun songs: “Maiwo, Kere Kere,” “Ogun Onire,” “Bai Law Bogbo Onire,” and “Ajaja Oguro.” In the notation, each song is offset by double bar lines. In the actual recorded performance, songs were repeated several times, but for space considerations in the transcription, I kept the repetitions to a minimum.

In this example, the final song of the medley (“Ajaja Oguro”) is given an extended transcription (measures 16-25) due to a change in the lead drum rhythm that I wish to highlight. In the first 15 bars, the lead drum rhythms are variations on the *Trinidad hemiola* pattern. Beginning on bar 17, however, the lead drum pattern resembles the binary dotted eighth subdivisions of drum 3 in Rhythm A. The lead drummer’s bar 16 transition involves a transformation of the polyrhythmic timeline pattern to regular pulsation, notated as groups of eight dotted-eighth notes. Towards the end of the transcription, the lead drummer breaks up the simple dotted-eighth pattern with the introduction of syncopated quarter notes.

5.11 Ogun Medley, Herskovits 1939 (98a1)

1. "Maiwo Molo Kerekere"

Chantwell
Te te mo lo sog bo og bo mo lo sog bo og bo mai wo

Chorus
mai wo___ mo lo ke re ke re mai wo

Drum 1

2. "Ogun Onire"

Chw
___ mo lo ke re ke re Ya wa O gun o ni re i lo de i lo muo___ O gun o ja re i lo

Chorus
___ mo lo ke re ke re

D1

8

Chw
de___ ba O gun o

Chorus
Ya wa___ O gun o ni re i lo de i lo muo___ O gun o ja re i lo

D1

5.11 Ogun Medley, Herskovits 1939 (98a1) (continued)

12 3. "Bogbo Onire"

Chw
Bai law bog bo o ni re bai law bog bo o ni re

Chorus
de ba O gun o bai law bog bo o ni re bai law

D1

Detailed description: This system contains the first three staves of the 'Bogbo Onire' section. The Chw staff (top) has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics 'Bai law bog bo o ni re bai law bog bo o ni re' are written below the notes. The Chorus staff (middle) has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics 'de ba O gun o bai law bog bo o ni re bai law' are written below the notes. The D1 staff (bottom) has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The measure numbers 12, 13, and 14 are indicated at the beginning of the respective staves.

16 4. "Ajaja Ogun Ro"

Chw
gu ro jo ru ro jo gu ro jo gu ro jo

Chorus
a ja ja o gu ro a ja ja o gu ro

D1

Detailed description: This system contains the first three staves of the 'Ajaja Ogun Ro' section. The Chw staff (top) has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics 'gu ro jo ru ro jo gu ro jo gu ro jo' are written below the notes. The Chorus staff (middle) has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics 'a ja ja o gu ro a ja ja o gu ro' are written below the notes. The D1 staff (bottom) has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The measure numbers 16, 17, and 18 are indicated at the beginning of the respective staves.

20

Chw
gu a ro jo ka bai le gu ro jo gu ro jo

Chorus
a ja ja o gu ro a ja ja o gu ro

D1

Detailed description: This system contains the first three staves of the continuation of the 'Ajaja Ogun Ro' section. The Chw staff (top) has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics 'gu a ro jo ka bai le gu ro jo gu ro jo' are written below the notes. The Chorus staff (middle) has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics 'a ja ja o gu ro a ja ja o gu ro' are written below the notes. The D1 staff (bottom) has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The measure numbers 20, 21, and 22 are indicated at the beginning of the respective staves.

24

Chw
gu ro jo gu ro jo

Chorus
a ja ja o gu ro

D1

Detailed description: This system contains the first three staves of the continuation of the 'Ajaja Ogun Ro' section. The Chw staff (top) has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics 'gu ro jo gu ro jo' are written below the notes. The Chorus staff (middle) has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics 'a ja ja o gu ro' are written below the notes. The D1 staff (bottom) has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The measure numbers 24, 25, and 26 are indicated at the beginning of the respective staves.

In the first fifteen bars of fig. 5.11, the *Trinidad hemiola* serves as the organizing force holding the music together, as noted above. From bar 16 on, however, there is no more hemiola rhythm, and so there must be new organizing principles. One of the “new” principles is speed: the stream of dotted eighth notes has a greater rhythmic density (i.e. more notes per measure) than the hemiola pattern, making the music seem faster. Another factor is that, in the place of the polyrhythmic *Trinidad hemiola*, the center drummer creates rhythmic momentum through the introduction of syncopated quarter notes. Given that the second half of the medley (from bar 16 on) sounds more like current Trinidad Orisha drumming than the first part, it seems that, at some point in history, Trinidad Orisha practitioners developed a preference for the faster, more rhythmically dense, and syncopated type of TOM, leading to a decline in certain aspects of the music, including the *Trinidad hemiola*.

Understanding the Increased Prominence of Certain Rhythms in TOM

So far in this chapter, I have shown that Trinidad Orisha drumming in 1939 exhibited polyrhythmic features in the simultaneous interaction of duple and triple subdivisions (the accompanying drum patterns in Rhythm A; the center drum against the accompaniment in the 4/4 Rhythm B) as well as in the asymmetric timeline patterns that I refer to as the *Trinidad clave* and the *Trinidad hemiola*. I also showed that the 1939 center drum patterns implied successive polyrhythms in the performance of contrasting duple and triple subdivisions. In this way, polyrhythms in 1939 Shango drumming were implicit in the center drum rhythms, a situation that applies today. A further aspect of the polyrhythmic drumming from 1939 is metric flexibility and fluidity, caused by the ability of the drummers to intersperse polyrhythmic with non-polyrhythmic patterns, ternary with binary, compound duple with simple duple and triple metric

patterns. Much of the drumming techniques from 1939 remain a vital part of Trinidad Orisha drumming today, but important aspects have declined or disappeared completely (e.g. the *Trinidad hemiola*), and binary aspects in TOM have become emphasized over time.

Additionally, the music has become faster. In 1939, Rhythm A songs were generally around 100bpm; today, the corresponding SO songs are around 120-130bpm. The 1939 Rhythm B songs were around 140bpm; the corresponding RK songs of today are around 180bpm.

In TOM today, hemiola and structural (simultaneous) polyrhythms have declined, as organizing principles, and other rhythmic features have replaced them in prominence. Among these “other” features is the aforementioned *Trinidad clave*, as well as other syncopations, such as the ternary phrasing of duple meters (i.e. quarter notes in 6/8 time). Two other distinctive features of TOM today are the Shango *hand* and the five-stroke *umele* roll, both of which are evident in the 1939 Laventille recordings. For example, both rhythms are present in the 1939 recording of “Ajaja Erilay,” described next.

The following transcription of “Ajaja Erilay” (fig. 5.12) shows just three measures of what is a more-than-four-minute recording. The measures are important, because they show the evolution of the rhythmic bed created by the accompanying drum rhythms, and the effect of its transformation on the surrounding instruments. In the first two measures, the accompanying drums – combined in the line labeled drum 2 – work together to create a four-stroke pattern, which is doubled by the percussionist playing the iron hoe. In the third measure (occurring about 1:15 into the recording), one of the accompanying drummers begins to play the five-stroke roll as it is played by the *umele* today. The increased rhythmic density immediately makes the music feel faster, and, indeed, the drummers do actually speed up slightly, from around 95 bpm (dotted

quarter notes) to about 100 bpm. Additionally, once the five-stroke roll begins, the hoe player switches as well, playing a dotted-eighth-note pattern.

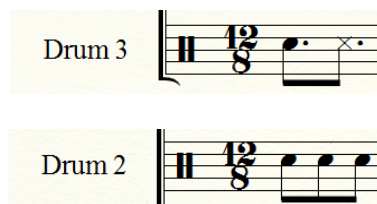
The lead drummer (drum 1), meanwhile, plays the Shango *hand* (as the rhythm is called currently in TOM) for all three bars of the transcription, but a change occurs between bars 2 and 3: while, in bar 2, the lead drum articulates the accompanying patterns – a dotted eighth followed by an eighth note trio – in bar 3, the second group of notes played by the lead drum articulate the sixteenth notes of the fast *umele* roll, a pattern which foreshadows the *bo* ostinato (eighth, dotted-eighth, sixteenth) in current TOM. Just as the last transcription showed the impact of the changing lead drum rhythms on the entire performance, so does this example show how a changed accompanying pattern was capable of altering the complete rhythmic character – foreground and background – of Shango drumming.

5.12 “Ajaja Erilay” Herskovits 1939 (98b1)

The musical score for "Ajaja Erilay" is presented in five staves. The top staff, labeled "Chw", contains the vocal melody with lyrics "A ja ja" repeated three times. The second staff, labeled "Chorus", contains the vocal melody with lyrics "E ri lay" repeated three times. The third staff, labeled "Hoe", shows a complex rhythmic pattern with many notes. The fourth staff, labeled "D1", shows a rhythmic pattern with quarter and eighth notes. The fifth staff, labeled "D2", shows a dense rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 95 for the first two measures and quarter note = 100 for the third measure.

The five-stroke drum roll is played with two drum sticks, and its minimal use in the 1939 recordings (occurring on only 3 of the 47 songs) is most likely due to irregular stick usage by the drummers: the accompanying drummers sometimes used one stick, sometimes two (Herskovits 1939; Waterman 1943). Perhaps the Shango drummers in Laventille had only recently begun using two sticks, and so the stick usage was heterogeneous (which would parallel the homogenization of curved stick usage in twentieth-century TOM).

Before the introduction of the five-stroke roll, the patterns of the 1939 Rhythm A accompanying drums were as follows:



With the transformation in Trinidad Orisha drumming, those Rhythm A figures have metamorphosed into the following ostinatos for the accompanying drums (*umele* and *bo*) in the SO rhythm:



I contend that the five-stroke roll grows out of the drum 3 dotted eighth note stream of Rhythm A in the 1939 Herskovits recordings. The five-stroke roll mainly emphasizes those binary (dotted eighth) subdivisions, suggesting that the introduction of two sticks simply allowed for a faster, denser elaboration of the dotted eighth stream.

It follows, then, that the present-day *bo* ostinato (in SO) evolved out of the triple eighth notes of drum 2. The relationship between the two patterns is easy to see: at some point in

history, the *bo* drummer simply shifted the final of three strokes slightly later in time, coinciding with the new beats generated by the five-stroke *umele* roll. Given the evidence, above, of the transformational properties created by altering a drum rhythm in the moment of musical performance, it is a plausible argument that the *bo* pattern changed over time as a result of the faster *umele* pattern, perhaps out of a need of the *bo* drummer to keep up with the *umele*. Perhaps the faster musical context required a new approach for the *bo* drummer, and the *bo* deftly accents certain beats of the *umele*: the initial downbeat and two upbeats, emphasizing the syncopation and swing. Due to the shifting of the third beat in the *bo* ostinato, it is now the case that the main rhythmic bed for TOM does not include the articulation of uninterrupted eighth note trios.

Furthermore, the *bo* drum is currently the lowest pitched of the Trinidad Orisha drum trio; the lead drum occupied the bass register in 1939, but it now occupies the middle register. With the current *bo* pattern – referred to by drummers as the heartbeat – in the bass frequency, the emphasis of the rhythmic bed in 2013 is decidedly on four steady downbeats (in 12/8 time, each of these “downbeats” is a dotted quarter). This four-beat bass pattern marks a major difference in TOM between 1939 and 2013, in the sense of a shift in the audible beat relative to the lead drum rhythms, what Van der Merwe calls the “melodic interest”:

Even when the beat is present as a regular, audible pulse, it is usually relatively soft. In the West African drum ensembles, it is generally also high-pitched, low pitches being left to the solo, or ‘master’ drum. Like West Indian reggae musicians, but unlike Europeans, these African drummers like to put the melodic interest in the bass and the backing in the treble. (Van der Merwe 1992, 157)

In addition to the West African drumming and reggae examples mentioned above, Cuban *batá* drumming is consistent with Van der Merwe’s description in that its lead drum (*iyá*), responsible for the melodic interest, not delineation of beat, is the lowest in pitch. In that sense, the development of a clear pulse playing the beat of TOM in the bass register, on the *bo* drum,

and the concurrent raising in pitch of the center drum, represents a significant departure from both West African drumming style as well as TOM in 1939. In 1939, the beat in TOM was more felt than audible in the cross-rhythm interplay of the three drums. Today, the beat is audible in the bass frequency with the low pitch of the *bo*.

In addition to the decline of iron percussion, I believe that the introduction of the five-stroke *umele* roll was a key moment in the transformation of TOM, from polyrhythmic to syncopated swing. The *umele* roll hastened the erasure of triple eighth-note patterns from the rhythmic bed of TOM, where they have been replaced by the four-beat bass pattern of the *bo*. Additionally, the disappearance of the *Trinidad hemiola* means that there are no longer any rhythms in TOM suggestive of triple meter (i.e. 3/4 time). The loss of these two triple patterns – the triple eighth notes of Rhythm A, and the triple quarter notes of the *Trinidad hemiola* – and their eclipse by a four-beat rhythmic feel, are the essence of what I describe as a process of binarization in TOM.

What remains is a music that, while polyrhythmic at times, is no longer based on structural polyrhythm as a fundamental rhythmic foundation. In the place of polyrhythms, TOM features the heartbeat pattern of the *bo*, over which the five-stroke *umele* roll serves as the glue holding together vertically the rhythmic bed of TOM, and horizontal patterns – the center drummer *hands*, including the *Shango hand* and the *Trinidad clave* – as vehicles of rhythmic momentum and motion. Today the music has become more homogeneous than it was in 1939, with remnants and retentions of polyrhythm in the center drum hands. This overall process of change is essentially the same thing that happened with the change in stick type, from a mixture of flat and curved sticks to exclusively curved sticks: a former heterogeneousness giving way to homogeneousness.

Even so, if my investigations in this chapter show differences between 1939 and 2013, the question remains: when did the changes in TOM occur? Was there a sudden break, or did the music gradually evolve? Considering the 1960 field recordings of George Simpson, it seems that the changes may have occurred quickly, and it appears at least that the transformation of TOM was completed between 1939 and 1960. In 1960, Herskovits's student George Simpson recorded Shango cult music in Trinidad.¹¹⁴ The 1960 example "Shango O, Babawa" shows the main timeline features of today's TOM: faster tempo (125bpm), the four-beat *bo* pattern, the five-stroke *umele* roll, and the Shango *hand*. The Simpson recordings contain no evidence of hemiola, ternary subdivisions, or iron percussion. They sound virtually identical to TOM today, suggesting that, while the music changed in substantial ways in the two decades before 1960, the five decades since have been marked by remarkable stability.

Impact on the Songs Today

As shown above, Trinidad Orisha congregations sometimes change the rhythms of the melodies to Orisha songs, depending on the drum rhythms – the performance of the *Trinidad hemiola*, on the hoe or on the center drum, might influence the way a song is sung. A significant question concerns what impact the degradation of structural polyrhythms has had on Trinidad Orisha songs. Have sung melodic rhythms become less polyrhythmic and more syncopated along with the drums? Or do the songs operate in some ways independently from the drums, and are they thus insulated from rhythmic changes in the percussion?

¹¹⁴ Simpson, George. 1961. *Cult Music of Trinidad*. Folkways Records FW04478 FE 4478.

On the one hand, there is evidence that melodic rhythms have been impacted by the binarization of rhythms in TOM. For instance, consider fig. 5.13, showing the first two bars of “Ogun Onire,” from 1939.

5.13 “Ogun Onire,” Herskovits 1939 (94a1)

The score for Figure 5.13 is in 12/8 time. The Chantwell part (treble clef) has lyrics: "Ya wa_ O gun o ni re i lo de i lo". The melody consists of eighth notes and quarter notes. Drum 1 (snare) plays a simple eighth-note pattern. Drum 2 (bass) plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Drum 3 (cymbal) plays a dotted-eighth note pattern.

In that performance, the sung melodic rhythm closely tracks the triple eighth note subdivisions of drum 2. In contrast, the following transcription (fig. 5.14) shows the way the song is currently sung. While, in 1939, the opening words (“Ya wa...”) outlined eighth notes, in 2013 those same words clearly articulate the dotted-eighth notes that have become so common in TOM rhythms.

5.14 “Ogun Onire,” TOM 2013

The score for Figure 5.14 is in 12/8 time. The Chantwell part (treble clef) has lyrics: "Ya wa_ O gun o ni re_ kilo de_ kilo". The melody features dotted-eighth notes. Umele (bass) plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Center (snare) plays a dotted-eighth note pattern. Bo (cymbal) plays a dotted-eighth note pattern.

On the other hand, though the first two notes of the melody in fig. 5.14 are altered to what could be interpreted as a new, simple binary metric, the rest of the melody remains unchanged, still articulating the triple subdivisions that it did in 1939.

Indeed, there are many Trinidad Orisha song melodies that use triple subdivisions. Some, like fig. 5.15, “Shakpana Naiye,” are completely based on triple subdivisions, lacking even the momentary binarization of the above “Ogun Onire” example:

5.15 “Shakpana Naiye,” TOM 2013

Shak pa na nai ye sa Shak pa na nai ye sa so se

Most of the Litany songs, which are sung without drumming accompaniment (limiting any potential influence of the binarized drum rhythms) exhibit ternary features. Though the Litany songs are sung in free meter fashion (see chapter three), their rhythms fall quite clearly into triple groupings, for example in the song “Baba O”:

5.16 “Baba O,” TOM 2013

Ba ba o mo jig be re le... Ba ba o ni wo lo e ri ja ja

O ri sha roko ari mo le Ba ba o mo jig berele Ye... sho le a ba ku so

Though the above examples show mainly triple subdivisions of the beat in song melodies, many other Trinidad Orisha songs feature the prominent asymmetric rhythmic patterns of TOM – namely, the *Shango hand* and the *Trinidad clave*. These songs feature the combination of

dotted eighths and triple eighth-note groupings. Fig. 5.17 shows a typical present-day performance of “Shango O, Babawa,” which opens with four dotted eighth notes followed by a trio of eighths, demonstrating the contrasting duple and triple subdivisions that are still the hallmark of rhythmic approaches in TOM, even as structural polyrhythms are not part of the music anymore.

5.17 “Shango O, Babawa,” TOM 2013

The musical score for "Shango O, Babawa" is presented in five staves. The top two staves, Chantwell and Chorus, are in treble clef with a 12/8 time signature. The Chantwell staff begins with four dotted eighth notes followed by a triplet of eighth notes, with lyrics "Shan go o ba ba wa" underneath. The Chorus staff begins with a whole rest followed by the same rhythmic pattern and lyrics. The Umele staff is in a tenor clef and features a continuous eighth-note pattern. The Center staff is in a tenor clef and features a pattern of dotted eighth notes and eighth notes. The Bo staff is in a tenor clef and features a pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating a specific rhythmic pattern.

As mentioned earlier (in this chapter and the last), the *Trinidad clave* pattern features prominently in the rhythmic character of TOM today. Just as song melodies reflect combinations of duple and triple, so too do they reflect the clave pattern. Two examples are back-to-back songs from the opening Ogun Rotation (see chapter three): “Ogun Lalala Urele” (fig. 5.18) and “Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa” (fig. 5.19).

5.18 “Ogun Lalala Urele,” TOM 2013

Musical score for "Ogun Lalala Urele" featuring two vocal parts: Chw (Chorus) and Ch (Chorus). The Chw part has a rest followed by a melodic line with lyrics "O gun la__ la man de". The Ch part has a melodic line with lyrics "la__ la__ la u re le" and "O gun". Below the Ch part, there are seven rhythmic accents (>) corresponding to the notes.

5.19 “Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa,” TOM 2013

Musical score for "Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa" featuring three vocal parts: Chw (Chorus), Ch (Chorus), and Chw (Chorus). Above the first Chw part, there are five rhythmic accents (>). The first Chw part has a rest followed by a melodic line with lyrics "ye ye o lo mi__". The Ch part has a melodic line with lyrics "ye__ ye__ a re ma le sa__" and "a ma__". The second Chw part has a rest followed by a melodic line with lyrics "ye ye she ku o__". The second Ch part has a melodic line with lyrics "__ bo swe__ a re mi so" and "O gun".

If definitive conclusions cannot be made regarding the impact of rhythmic changes on Trinidad Orisha songs today, it is certainly the case that songs retain such important rhythmic features as hemiola and triple subdivisions. The songs also show the fundamental interplay and contrasting syncopations of dotted eighth and triple eighth note patterns in TOM, which have been important at least since 1939. One potentially important fact is that the Litany songs exhibit triple subdivisions but do not feature the dotted-eighth (duple) rhythms. Since the Litany songs

are performed without drumming accompaniment, it could perhaps be the case that they have been insulated from rhythmic changes in the drumming. This finding may imply that dotted eighth note rhythms, suggestive of simple 4/4 meters, are relatively new innovations (or formerly minor features) in TOM melodies that have come to supersede triple features.

Assessing the Changes in TOM Rhythms: Creolization vs. Centralization

Virtually all of the main elements of today's TOM were present in the Shango music of 1939, as recorded by the Herskovitses in Laventille. To wit: the employment of two main rhythmic beds, one primary and one secondary; the use of the drum trio with sticks; the *Trinidad clave*; the Shango *hand*; the five stroke *umele* roll; the juxtaposition of duple and triple subdivisions; ternary phrasing of duple figures; leader-chorus call-and-response singing; and, last but certainly not least, the song repertoire itself.

For reasons that are probably unknowable, the polyrhythmic variety of 1939 – including the *Trinidad hemiola* and the simultaneous polyrhythms of the accompanying drum cross-rhythms of Rhythm A – became restricted sometime between 1939 and 1960, with the four-beat *bo* heartbeat, the faster *umele* roll, the Shango *hand*, and the *Trinidad clave* coming to predominate. Perhaps Orisha musicians simply developed a preference for the faster rhythms of TOM. One reason for the decline in hemiola is almost certainly connected to the disappearance of iron percussion in TOM performance – when the pattern was no longer regularly played on the hoe, it became forgotten. The center drummer in 1939 sometimes played the *Trinidad hemiola*, but as we have seen, the center drummer displays rhythmic flexibility, changing rhythms (*hands*) to coincide with changing songs. Considering the changing rhythmic context created by the fast *umele* roll, the hemiola pattern may not have fit with the music anymore, and

so the pattern became diminished in the center drum repertoire. What this means is that a kind of binarization process took place in TOM, involving a move away from polyrhythmic variety and toward a single, unified, syncopated swinging approach that nevertheless bears traces of the former polyrhythmic elements.

In 1939, Melville Herskovits contended that the Shango religion in Trinidad was “highly African,” while Richard Waterman (1943) showed that the music exhibited classic West African polyrhythmic features. Given that the musical elements of today’s TOM are on display in the 1939 Herskovits recordings, the evidence suggests that the types of rhythmic changes undergone in TOM since 1939 came from *within* TOM itself. In other words, the rhythmic changes I have been describing do not appear to be the result of syncretism or creolization with outside influences – say, Kongolese or East Indian musical practices. Rather, I contend that the changes were the result of a sort of centralization process, a streamlining or consolidation of elements already inherent in TOM, elements connecting TOM with its origins in the musical practices of nineteenth-century coastal West African Yoruba speakers. In that sense, the changes in TOM might be considered “neotraditional” (see chapter eight). However much syncretism exists within the Trinidad Orisha religion today – the association of *orishas* with Catholic saints, ceremonial contexts borrowing from East Indian religion, Spiritual Baptism, and European esotericism – I believe that the evidence presented in this chapter shows that Trinidad Orisha music belongs firmly to the cultural heritage of the Trinidad Yoruba.

Chapter Six

Trinidad Orisha Music in an Era of Revival

In chapter two, I examined social conditions in Trinidad from the late 1700s up through the mid-twentieth century, relying chiefly on secondary sources to outline contexts related to the development of Trinidad Orisha music. I also considered connections between the history of Trinidad Orisha music and the cultural practices of the Trinidadians I worked with in the research for this dissertation. In the current chapter, I focus on primary sources – interviews, conversations, music recordings – in order to examine Trinidad Orisha music and culture mainly at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, during a new epoch for Trinidad Orisha that I describe as the Orisha Revival.

This chapter considers Trinidad Orisha music and culture in relation to two main themes. First, the criminalization of African cultural practices in Trinidad (as outlined in chapter two) is contrasted with the relative respect which is now accorded members of the Orisha religion in Trinidad. Second, the chapter juxtaposes the simultaneously oppositional and overlapping impulses to innovation and tradition. To begin, I discuss the religion's newfound respect in Trinidadian society, emerging out of changing socio-political conditions in twentieth-century Trinidad.

No Longer a “Voodoo Something”

As I showed in chapter two, the Trinidad Orisha religion (or Shango, as it was more commonly known until recent decades) was never explicitly banned in Trinidad. However, by the late nineteenth century, practitioners of the religion were generally marginalized as members

of the black urban proletariat – referred to as the *jamette* (Cowley 1996) – and thus their cultural practices were likely impacted by legislation that was hostile to the activities of Trinidad’s (black) lower classes. Such legislation included anti-Obeah regulations (1868), anti-drumming ordinances (1883), and the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance (1917-1951).

For my informants, the former criminalization of black culture in Trinidad – and, by extension, of Trinidad Orisha – looms large, as does the former (and sometimes current) social stigmas attached to perceived African cultural practices. In the conversations I had while conducting my dissertation research, Trinidad Orisha practitioners expressed a strong sense that their predecessors in the religion were persecuted for their religious beliefs. For example, during the 2010 Orisha feast at Mount Moriah church in Brooklyn, *mongwa* Sugar Aloes stopped the music to give a brief sermon, in which he connected an Orisha song, which thanked Shango for visiting the feast, with gratitude to the elders for going through martyrdom:

...we were trying to sing “Ari jankija.” “We glad you’re here, and we want you to stay and finish the work.” This is what we were saying. This is the meaning of that song. And we thank God that he [Shango] could share his presence with us. Because let me tell you something: there might be a time to come, we wouldn’t see one *orisha* manifestation. We wouldn’t see one. And it is not a nice thing. So, cherish what allyuh have. Allyuh spiritual parents does go through martyrdom for allyuh. And when I say martyrdom, I mean martyrdom. (*pers. comm.*)

Similarly, the *bo* drummer Michael “Obicey” Ettienne described to me the difficulties in Orisha’s past, when practitioners had to hide while carrying on feasts, and when mainstream Trinidadians would say:

...that our heritage was a voodoo something, a witchcraft something. Because they never take the time to say, well these people ain’t kill nobody, they just praising. Plenty people used to say it’s this, and it’s voodoo, and Obeah, and they watching you with scorn. (*pers. comm.*)

According to Ettienne, “voodoo” and “witchcraft” are synonymous with “Obeah,” the set of spiritual and medicinal practices made illegal in Trinidad in 1868, and these things are different

from Trinidad Orisha, which is “just praising,” and thus no different from more accepted religions in Trinidad.

Another drummer, Everaldo “Redman” Watson, told me a story which relates to this idea of acceptance of Orisha as *just another kind of religion*. Redman describes how he was raised Catholic, and so his mother was disapproving of his involvement in Orisha – which he began in his twenties. However, as he and his mother got older, Redman explains that she came to see his involvement in Orisha as simply another way to pray, and so she became more accepting. For Redman, this maternal acceptance meant a great deal. His story follows:

In Trinidad you could not, even today it happens, you could not belong to Orisha, what they call Shango. It was considered as Devil worship. Evil. So my parents were Catholic at the time, and my mother didn't want to hear me going around in the Orisha feast. My father, he died when I was about fourteen years. I couldn't tell my mom that I was going to Orisha feast and stuff like that. That was a no-no. But it was only when I got like, probably twenty-five, when I could move around on my own and stuff, let's say became my own man, that I could go to Orisha. Even then I still didn't tell her much about what I was doing and where I was going. And for some years I kept Orisha prayers at my home. She was living in America at the time. And I kept planting flags, and I kept up thanksgivings. And my brother and sister weren't for it. But I did what I had to do, and I called my mother, and she said to me, “I'm not a Baptist. So I don't support it. But then I'm here, it's what you choose, and it's a spiritual side of things, so just make sure there's order in my house, make sure people don't misbehave, and that everything is cleaned up and all right at the end of it.” And even when she came back to Trinidad, when she saw me every evening at six o'clock dutifully going to put my light, and say my prayers, kneel in front of my stools, and say my prayers to the *orishas*, she sort of, actually, she boil down a little bit. Because she realized then, okay, he's not getting himself into anything bad. I'm actually seeing him pray. So she settled into it eventually. And even up to when she died, she died a year ago, she was supportive of me in it. I mean not totally, she wouldn't come to the prayers, she would still say that “I'm a Catholic,” but I didn't get any stigma from her. She wasn't opposed to it. My mom being accepting of what I did, made me feel a little more calm, so that I could go into it and get organized. (*pers. comm.*)

The above quotes show that, for practitioners of the religion, the sense of stigma against Orisha includes the claim that elders faced persecution and even martyrdom, and also, on the individual level, recognition that understanding of the religion might be necessary for personal

acceptance within one's own family. In the pages below, I will describe some of the larger social changes leading to the lessening of the stigmas attached to Trinidad Orisha, and implications for the music. And notwithstanding larger social forces, it is important to note the pride that Trinidad Orisha musicians express in relation to their musical tradition, and their sense that persevering persecution has given strength to them, their music, and their ability to pass on their music to the next generation. As drummer Michael Ettienne told me, Trinidad Orisha has now reached "a nice time," with a vitality cultivated in the toil and trouble of prior years:

We don't born with no gold spoon in we mouth to have this. We toil for this, and we get it in a nice time, after the elders done fight and get their head buss and get lock up and all them thing. And now the youths, we children now, get it better. Because we suck in all the sauce, ya dig? So we could nourish them now. We come like the nourishment. You know how you had to take your vitamins? Eh? Well we come like the vitamins of drum.
(*pers. comm.*)

Trinidad Orisha, Creole Nationalism, and Black Power

Trinidad and Tobago became an independent nation in 1962. The movement for national independence in Trinidad, coalescing with the rise of Eric Williams and the People's National Movement (PNM) party, is interwoven with important developments in Trinidadian politics and culture beginning mainly in the 1950s. The first of these developments is the decline of leftist labor politics in Trinidad, replaced by a black middle-class politics. In the early decades of the twentieth century, labor union activists organized several large-scale workers' strikes, most notably the June 19th, 1937 oil workers riot led by Uriah Butler, commemorated today in Trinidad as "Labor Day." In the mid-1950s, however, Trinidad experienced a post-World War II oil boom, and the development of the oil industry helped Trinidad become relatively prosperous in the Caribbean. This economic prosperity buoyed a developing middle class, and in politics, "...the divisions in the union movement, the decline of Butlerism and the disintegration of left-

wing groups combined to clear the way for a middle-class, nationalist party” (Brereton 1981, 231). That middle-class party was Eric Williams’ PNM, which rose to leadership in Trinidad’s parliamentary government in 1956, and oversaw independence in 1962. Afro-Trinidadian middle-class support propelled Williams to a long political career as Prime Minister from 1956 until he died in 1981.

Economist Scott MacDonald defines the middle classes in Trinidad as “politically ambitious middle groups that are characterized by the crucial aspects of urbanization ..., class re-stratification, movements toward national unification, technological innovation, and the spread of ‘Westernized’ education” (1986, 4). For Trinidad’s black middle classes, the erudite Eric Williams – Trinidadian-born and with a doctorate from Oxford – was highly appealing, and his rhetoric of cultural nationalism coincided with an Afro-Trinidadian cultural renaissance in 1950s Trinidad (Brereton 1981). The period was marked by increased interest in local folk culture (as exemplified by the career of Beryl McBurnie, described in chapter two), and this inward cultural focus would form the basis for the conception of national culture as Afro-Creole (see Brathwaite 1971), symbolized in the trinity of carnival, calypso, and steelband. By the 1960s Creole nationalism was ascendant, indicated, for example, in the fact that the steelband movement was at its peak, widely adored in Trinidad and supported by government and business sponsorship (Stuempfle 1995). But despite its apparent success and acceptance, the model of Trinidadian national identity as (Afro) Creole had an important weakness, alienating non-Afro-Creole groups in multi-ethnic Trinidad, particularly the growing population of Indo-Trinidadians (which was slightly less than that of Afro-Trinidadians at independence). Creole nationalism, which involved a renunciation of “roots” in exchange for national unity, was also alienating for Afro-Trinidadian groups that did not identify their cultural practices as “Creole,” such as practitioners of the

Yoruba-derived Orisha religion. Trinidadian independence under the PNM mantle thus coincided with racial polarization in Trinidadian national politics, which perhaps served as a bellwether of the political radicalization at the end of the 1960s.

By the late 1960s, economic, cultural, and political shifts were afoot in Trinidad. Rising inflation and unemployment led to general unrest and instability. Many young black Trinidadians became disillusioned with Creole nationalism, and they began to see the symbols of Creole nationalism as corrupt reminders of the failed promises of an independent Trinidad and Tobago. For example, ethnomusicologist Stephen Stuempfle describes how young Afro-Trinidadians of this period rejected the Creole nationalist steelband as a neocolonial cultural formation, turning against it and towards cultural practices more associated with African “roots,” such as African drumming, Rastafarianism, and Black Power ideology (Stuempfle 1995, 171). The “Black Power” movement in Trinidad was partially inspired by the global Afrocentric consciousness of the time, and especially by militant American Civil Rights groups like the Black Panthers (see Ryan and Stewart 1995). “Black is beautiful” ideologies were generally embraced by Afro-Trinidadians in the late 1960s, for instance in the calypso song of the same name by the Mighty Duke. Duke’s song won the national Calypso Monarch competition in 1969, and its lyrics emphasize the “natural” beauty of African ethnicity, celebrating a move away from hair straightening and skin bleaching. The lyrics also reference Martin Luther King, Jr. (“we have achieved what once was thought a dream”) and James Brown (“say I’m black and proud”), showing the influence of African American icons on Afro-Trinidadian cultural politics in the late 1960s.

The more militant aspects of the Trinidadian Black Power movement spearheaded major demonstrations in 1970. Beginning in February of that year, Afro-Trinidadians held protests in

Port of Spain for 56 continuous days, ending in April when Prime Minister Eric Williams declared a National State of Emergency. As Stuempfle writes, the 1970 protests were led by the National Joint Action Committee,

a loose coalition of students from the University of the West Indies, radical trade unionists, activists, and the urban unemployed ... [who] argued that the present government in effect perpetuated the colonialism of the past, since the nation remained highly dependent on foreign capital. Multinationals, the local white elite, and the PNM leadership were held responsible for producing an economic system that was not responsive to local needs and that did not benefit the population as a whole. There was also a sense that the PNM had not been successful at fostering a truly independent cultural identity for the nation. ... From NJAC's perspective, Trinidad was being strangled by a 'White Power Structure' that included not only foreign and local white businessmen but their collaborators: 'Afro-Saxons.' (Stuempfle 1995, 150-151)

The charge of "Afro-Saxon" was, in part, leveled at Eric Williams, who responded by trading his usual Western-style business suit in public appearances for an open shirt and kerchief, prompting jokes that the Prime Minister was "playing mas" (Selwyn Ryan, quoted in Stuempfle 1995, 155).¹¹⁵ Williams also gave public speeches in support of the rhetoric of Black Power, even as he cautioned against militant extremism.

Between 1973 and 1975, the Arab Oil Embargo created an increased demand for Trinidadian oil, easing the economic stagnation that contributed to the instability of preceding years in Trinidad. The economic recovery, combined with the "radicalization of the period 'pushed' the Afro-Creole and Indo-Trinidadian middle sectors together in their support for the Williams government, which favored capitalist development programs" (MacDonald 1986, 8). While the Afro- and Indo-Trinidadian middle classes ultimately united with the Eric Williams and the PNM in opposing the radicalism of Black Power, the ideology of Afrocentricity would persist in ensuing decades, becoming appropriated by the black middle classes and leading to

¹¹⁵ *Playing mas* refers to putting on a masquerade costume for Carnival in Trinidad.

heightened middle-class interest in Afro-Trinidadian religious practices and newfound socio-political legitimacy for both the Orisha and Spiritual Baptist faiths (Henry 2003), discussed next.

Transforming Shango in the 1980s and 1990s

The history of political legitimization of African religions in Trinidad and Tobago is the topic of anthropologist Frances Henry's *Reclaiming African Religions in Trinidad: The Socio-Political Legitimation of the Orisha and Spiritual Baptist Faiths* (2003). Anthropologist Keith McNeal also gives the subject considerable attention in *Trance and Modernity in the Southern Caribbean* (2011). In the aftermath of Black Power, Afrocentric influence led to what McNeal describes as a transformation "from Shango to Orisha" (McNeal 2011). Whereas older members of the religion generally called it Shango, today the name Orisha is accepted widely (and in fact, during my research, I was corrected by members of the faith nearly every time I referred to the religion as Shango, even though older informants conceded that, in the past, people wouldn't necessarily associate "Orisha" with the religion).

According to McNeal, four main factors influenced the transformation and resurgence of Shango in the 1970s. First, Black Power created new avenues for political consciousness, and young black Trinidadians (many of whom were University students) embraced Shango in the 1970s as a political act. This embrace of Shango led to the second factor, the change in "class composition," with many new middle class members who were college educated and otherwise outside of the marginal historical class context of Shango. Frances Henry (1983) estimated that ten percent of the Shango membership in the 1970s was middle class (quoted in McNeal 2011, 288). Third, increasing numbers of Indo-Trinidadians became involved with Shango in the 1970s (a development which complicated the Afrocentric movement). Fourth, the Catholic and

Anglican churches became decidedly less anti-African, retracting their prior denials of religious rites to known Shango members, and reportedly allowing the singing of songs to *orishas* during some Church services (ibid., 288-289). These factors built on the post-1951 Shango-Shouters alliance that I described in chapter two, conspiring to produce the heterogeneous and vibrant practice of Trinidad Orisha as it exists today.

Of all the factors mentioned above, perhaps the key issue generative of controversy for my informants is related to the changed class composition of Trinidad Orisha. On the one hand, the grassroots Trinidadians practice a highly syncretic Trinidad Orisha as handed down through oral tradition. On the other hand, the new members of the Orisha Movement – to borrow Keith McNeal’s phrase (2011) – are fueled by Afrocentric political ideology and middle-class values, and they seek a reinterpretation of Orisha that often clashes with longstanding Trinidadian practices. Regarding this clash of innovation and tradition, McNeal (ibid., 287) writes that:

Building a national Orisha Movement upon the grassroots shoulders of Shango has hardly been straightforward. Whereas Shango embodies the persisting subaltern significance of African cultural behavior, it also embodies hybridity with Christianity and other forms of creolization. Framing these as contradictory, the strategy of the Orisha Movement has been twofold: first, raise consciousness about and contest discrimination against African religiosity in politics and national culture; second, reform and revitalize popular ritual praxis through processes of de-Christianization and re-Africanization.

If the consciousness-raising and anti-discriminatory aspects of the Orisha Movement have been embraced widely in Trinidad Orisha – as indicated by my informants’ comments at the start of this chapter – the strategies for reforming ritual practices have been much more divisive and controversial. Somewhat benign types of “Africanization” include the adoption of Nigerian-style clothes (suggesting that the Orisha Movement might be seen more accurately as

Nigerianizing the faith, not Africanizing it).¹¹⁶ More problematic are attempts to purge Christianity from Orisha, which have had “limited success” (Henry 2003, 114). For my study on music, a significant change in ritual praxis is that new middle-class members tend to focus less on spirit possession – Henry notes several times throughout her book a marked decrease in “manifestations” at Afrocentric shrines – which has been partially replaced with emphasis on Ifa, the Nigerian Yoruba divination practice. Aside from the tensions produced between new and old members of Trinidad Orisha, I argue that this lessening of interest in spirit possession also entails a decreased importance of Trinidad Orisha music (TOM) for members of the Orisha Movement, because spirit possession goes hand in hand with communal music performance in Trinidad Orisha.

According to Henry, activists in the Orisha Movement made political inroads in the 1980s with the government registration of the Orisha and Spiritual Baptist faiths. In 1988, the Trinidad government sponsored a visit to Trinidad of Nigeria’s Ooni of Ife, the spiritual leader of the Yoruba people. McNeal writes:

Greeted by government officials upon his arrival, the Ooni traveled the country ... The Ooni declared himself pleased with TT [Trinidad and Tobago], claiming that local tradition might in fact be *more authentic* than that contemporaneously practiced in Nigeria (Frances Henry, pers. Comm., 1999). He urged local religionists to organize a centralized apparatus for administering affairs and also advocated for a National Council of Orisha Elders with representation from major local shrines. (McNeal 2011, 272)

¹¹⁶ In 2010, I went to a conference in Trinidad on Ifa and Orisha traditions. Nigeria’s Minister of Culture was in attendance. In his comments, to the great delight of the crowd, he referenced the Nigerian-style clothes worn by Afrocentric Trinidadians: “When I was coming with my spouse, I saw a lot of regally dressed, colorful, good-looking Nigerians. When I spoke to one of these beautiful, colorfully-dressed Nigerians, and I heard a Trini accent, I was jolted. And when I sat down [at the conference], I forgot that I am here in Trinidad, because when I look at the array of princes and princesses and the kings we have here, it was only when one of the ladies here who was bringing greetings spoke and she was speaking Trini that I realized I am in Trinidad.”

Following the Ooni’s recommendation, the newly formed National Council of Orisha Elders helped promote “Orisha” as the official name of the religion in the 1980s (McDaniel 1998a). From the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, the religions received government recognition in the form of a public festival day (Orisha), an annual national holiday (Spiritual Baptists), and an Orisha Marriage Act publicly recognizing Orisha marriages. Today, the membership of Trinidad Orisha includes prominent figures in Trinidadian society, including singer Ella Andall, activist Eintou Pearl Springer, playwright and UWI professor Rawle Gibbons, calypsonian David Rudder, and painter Leroy Clarke.

In the following timeline, I have listed key events contributing to and indicative of the increasing sociopolitical legitimacy of Trinidad Orisha, as described by Henry (2003) and McNeal (2011), as well as important popular music recordings: the 1969 Afrocentric calypso of Mighty Duke, and the 1999 release of Ella Andall’s first Orisha CD. (Andall is discussed later in this chapter.)

1951	Repeal of the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance
1969	Mighty Duke wins Calypso Monarch competition with “Black is Beautiful”
1970	56 days of Black Power protests, February to April
1981, 1990	Two Orisha groups registered with the government
1988	Formation of the Orisha Council of Elders, who help promote the use of the name “Orisha” for the religion, rather than “Shango”
1989	Visit to Trinidad by the “Ooni” of Ife, Nigeria – the spiritual leader of the Yoruba people in West Africa
1995	UNC wins national elections
1995	Both Spiritual Baptists and Orisha practitioners are granted separate public holidays: a public “festival day of celebration” for Orisha, and an annual national holiday for the Spiritual Baptists
1999	Passage of Orisha Marriage Act recognizing marriages conducted in the Orisha religion
1999	Trinidad hosts the meeting of the Sixth World Congress of Orisha Tradition and Culture, an international organization founded by Nigerian Wande Abimbola
1999	Ella Andall releases her first CD of Orisha songs, <i>Oriki Ogun</i>

6.1 Timeline of events in the changing social status of Orisha-Baptists in Trinidad

A key political change in 1980s and 1990s Trinidad was the transition away from the dominance of the PNM party. Eric Williams' death in 1981 coincided with a decline in the oil industry, and the economic turmoil again led to political upheaval. In 1986, the PNM lost national elections, briefly regaining power in 1991 under the leadership of Patrick Manning. In the 1990s, Henry describes how the opposition UNC party, which garnered most of its support from Indo-Trinidadians, allied itself with Afrocentric activists, in a symmetrical shared challenge to the Afro-Creole hegemony that demanded a multiculturalism inclusive of both Indo-Trinidadianness as well as Orisha (also see McNeal 2011). This alliance had the effect of turning middle-class Afro-Trinidadians, once a mainstay of PNM support, against the PNM. During the 1995 campaign, for example, activists printed the following broadside (in Henry 2003, 70):

ATTENTION: Manning and ALL PNM Members of Parliament are against THE ORISHA and LORD SHANGO: All PNM Members of Parliament voted against LORD SHANGO DAY; All PNM Members of Parliament voted against the Spiritual Baptist Deliverance Day; They are denying the AFRICANS. We want our day. Wake up AFRICANS!! Wake up NOW!!

Henry notes that African religions “have become a source of synergy between the Indo- and Afro-Trinidadian segments of the society, providing a means of coming together symbolically to achieve their ends”; but, at the same time, Afrocentricity is fuelled, in part, as “a buffer against the growing Indo-Trinidadian hegemony in this society” (ibid., 197).

In addition to the work of Henry and McNeal, the late twentieth century changes in Trinidad Orisha have been given scholarly comment by James Houk, an anthropologist of religion, in his book *Spirits, Blood, and Drums* (1995). Houk describes a growing trend of what he calls “Africanization” in Trinidad Orisha, in which perceived non-African elements are being expunged from the religion. Like Henry, he connects Africanization to several significant historical events, such as the ending of prohibitive laws on African religious practices in the

1950s; Black Power movements begun in the U.S. in the 1970s; and in general a new Afrocentric consciousness throughout the diaspora. Part of this process means that Catholic prayers, for example, are no longer part of “Africanized” services, while, on the other hand, the Yoruba language is being actively cultivated and studied. Houk seems troubled by the Africanization movement, which he views as a conservative trend, and worries that if “the Africanization movement becomes a major force in the religion ... its restrictive and anti-assimilative nature will eventually give rise to a religious system that, in comparison with the existing one, is highly specialized and narrowly focused” (1995, 208).

What Houk (1995), Henry (2003), and McNeal (2011) have noted – the attempted “Africanization” of Trinidad Orisha by middle-class “innovators” who comprise an Orisha Movement – is a new chapter in the history of Trinidad Orisha, with new implications for the religion’s music and culture. I refer to this new epoch as the Orisha Revival, and it signifies a distinct departure from the history of persecution and marginalization of Afro-Trinidadian cultural practices in Trinidad, a transition from perceptions of Orisha as “a voodoo something,” in the words of Michael Ettienne, to the current “nice time.” In the remainder of this chapter, I will interrogate the impact of the Orisha Revival on Trinidad Orisha music, beginning with a description of a Trinidad Orisha shrine at the heart of the Orisha Revival.

Lester “Ogunbowale” Osouna

At the beginning of my dissertation research, on my initial research trip to Trinidad in 2008, I attended my first Trinidad Orisha ceremony, held by Lester Osouna in Febeau Village, a small town just outside of bustling San Juan. What I did not realize at the time was that, in the larger context of Trinidad Orisha history – as laid out in chapter two – as well as in the majority

of current practice as I have experienced it in my dissertation research, Osouna's event was quite atypical. (For an outline of the music at Osouna's event, see the appendix, "Ogun Festival, Febeau Village.")

Missing from this event were any tables with statues representing the Catholic saints. Instead, there was an altar with Nigerian Ifa divination beads, and Yoruba religious books from Nigeria. Also missing was any kind of spirit possession, or virtually any dance at all. Chairs were laid out, arranged into rows, and congregants simply sat and watched, some clapping their hands lightly, while the musicians performed. (Osouna himself danced a little.) The ceremony happened between 5:00 and 8:00pm, much earlier than the typical 12:00 to 5:00am timing of Trinidad Orisha feasts. The event was called the Ogun "festival," a term borrowed from Nigerian Yoruba practice, instead of the common Trinidadian expressions *feast* or *prayers*. And while much of the music was typical TOM, several newly composed songs were included. There was no animal sacrifice, and when a meal was served, towards the end of the evening, it was a vegetarian offering of rice, vegetables, and the meat-substitute soya. About an hour into the service, the music was stopped for a lesson – Osouna gave a reading from a Nigerian book of Odus (sacred texts of Nigerian Ifa) and then interpreted the reading using a whiteboard as a visual aid.

In sum, though I didn't realize it at the time, Osouna's Ogun Festival featured a high degree of elements adopted recently from Nigeria, and the replacement of local traditional practices (late nights, spirit possession, animal sacrifice) with practices which might be thought of as more suited to a middle-class membership (earlier hours, seats, vegetarianism). Even so, it should be noted that Osouna and the Febeau Village location have longstanding ties to Trinidad Orisha, through Osouna's aunt Hilary. The main drummer at the festival was Lion, a bona fide

TOM drummer, who is Osouna's cousin (and Sugar Aloes' brother). And even though the music included non-traditional songs, the ceremony followed the typical progression of Litany to Rotation, including the two main TOM rhythms (even though more talking, such as the lengthy Ifa lecture, left much less time for music overall, compared to a typical Orisha feast). It is thus the case that Osouna's Ogun Festival highlights important issues at play in twenty-first-century Trinidad Orisha culture and music, and complicates any easy dismissal of the Orisha Movement's Afrocentric innovations as, perhaps, appropriation by outsiders.



6.2 Lester Osouna in Santa Cruz, Trinidad

I first met Lester Osouna in 2008. I was introduced through Erin Fulami, a seventy-something member of the Trinidad Orisha faith who is closely involved with the Orisha Revival in Trinidad. A retired Trinidadian police officer, Fulami has been to Nigeria on multiple occasions, where he was initiated as a Yoruba priest. Fulami is very vocal about his religious opinions, especially his opposition to Christianity in Trinidad Orisha. He was very gracious to me in facilitating the beginning of my research into Orisha, and, shortly after I first met him, he brought me to meet Lester Osouna (and later, Ella Andall, discussed below). On a Sunday afternoon, Fulami met me at Independence Square in Port of Spain, where we took a series of route taxis and maxi taxis to get to the small village known as Febeau, where we attended the 2008 Ogun Festival.

Febeau Village is quiet, with many homes set along winding, hilly streets. The house at Osouna's shrine is fairly large, set a full story off the ground upon pillars, and his fenced-in yard is lush with vegetation, from bushes to tall palms. Just inside the fence are small altars for Eshu and Ogun, known as *peroguns*, or stools. The space below the house holds an outdoor kitchen and stacks of plastic chairs. Just beyond the house is a recently built open-air, thatched-roof structure that Osouna calls an *orule*; this is the main ceremonial space. This type of building in Trinidad Orisha is usually known by the French-Creole word *palais*, reflecting the French impact on Colonial Trinidad's culture. *Orule* is a Yoruba word, meaning roughly "house of spiritual power," and Osouna's use of the word is an example of the integration of Yoruba language into Trinidad Orisha.



6.3 Inside the *orule* at Lester Osouna's Orisha shrine in Febeau Village, Trinidad

The compound in Febeau Village was originally the home of Osouna's aunt, Hilary Katgrant George (né Osouna, 1913-1996), who began doing Orisha work there around 1945. According to Osouna, Hilary held a feast at the Febeau Village shrine each year in the first week of October, and did so up until her husband died in 1986. Hilary herself died in 1996. Osouna decided to resume public Orisha activities at the shrine in February 2006, when he hosted an event celebrating his ancestors. In October of that year, he hosted an Ogun Festival. Since then, Osouna has registered the shrine with the National Orisha Council of Elders, the body that was created in 1988. Osouna told me his compound is also the headquarters in Trinidad of the International Council for Ifa Religion, an organization located in Nigeria, with members such as Chief S.S. Popoola, a prominent figure in the global Yoruba religious movement.

Osouna has overseen several construction projects on the property, expanding the original house to nearly twice its size, re-grading the landscape, and building the thirty-by-fifty feet *orule*. Despite the fact that Osouna had many siblings and cousins who conceivably could have carried on his aunt's legacy, Osouna told me that he always felt closely connected to his aunt and her shrine, especially since she was the midwife who delivered him as a baby. As Osouna got older, he moved away from Febeau Village, but he regularly returned to visit his aunt (often so late at night, he says, that she started calling him the "midnight robber"¹¹⁷). Later, Osouna moved to Canada for a time, where he was not part of a regular Orisha congregation. At this time, he says his spiritual practice became a personal affair. Osouna had learned the Orisha drums as a child attending feasts, and he credits the music with allowing him to keep up his "spiritual work":

I kept up the tradition because I always had a drum in my house. Without the *palais*, or without somewhere to go, I played the drum on my own in my house, and sang what I knew. The Litany. And I would sing some songs for Ogun, Oshun; whatever I remember, I sang it. To myself. Or to Olodumare, in praise of the *orishas*. So I kept up my own spiritual work. (*pers. comm.*)

When Osouna returned to Trinidad in 1997, he joined an Orisha group in Petit Valley he credits with helping him to relearn the practice of the religion.

As mentioned above, in 2004 Osouna went to Nigeria (a trip that, according to its frequency among my middle-class informants, has become something of a rite of passage for Afrocentric members of the faith). He was one of thirteen to travel to Ile Ife as part of a mission called "Sacred Journey to Africa." The mission was organized through the Orisha congregations Osouna was part of in Diego Martin and Petit Valley. Once in Nigeria, the Trinidadians were housed at the University of Ife, from where they toured Yorubaland, participated in an Ifa

¹¹⁷ The midnight robber is the name of a popular masquerade costume in Trinidad's Carnival.

Festival, and underwent spiritual initiations. Osouna himself was initiated into the Ogun shrine in Ile Ife, and given the title Oloye Ogun Iyola of Ife (Chief Ogun who walks into wealth and honor) designating him a Chief of the Ogun lineage. Osouna says that the Nigerian Yoruba priests determined his personal connection to Ogun because, in Nigeria, an Ogun Festival takes place in October, around the same time that his aunt traditionally kept her own Orisha feast. Osouna now hosts an Ogun Festival each October at Ifebo. After his trip in 2004, Osouna returned to Nigeria the following year.

As I mentioned above, at Osouna's Ogun Festival I heard several Orisha songs that I haven't heard anywhere else, leading me to believe that they are idiosyncratic to Osouna's shrine, and have likely been adopted from Nigeria. These included songs for Olodumare (the highest deity in the Yoruba pantheon) and *egungun* (the Yoruba term for ancestors).¹¹⁸ One of the newly adopted songs that I heard at Osouna's ceremony, the Litany song "Shileku," has persisted, sung by many Trinidad Orisha congregations. According to Lester Osouna, "Shileku" was taught to Trinidadians by Nigerians following the visit by the Ooni of Ife in 1989. Osouna explained to me the song's origin and meaning as follows:

And you find that some Nigerians will come and teach you some songs that they know. And we learned, "Shileku, fuwa ..." That is not one that was passed on by our ancestors here in Trinidad. Africans came over and they taught us that. It is an opening prayer, that says "open the door for us, oh Lord, open the door for us, don't give up on us, oh Lord, open the door for us." A simple prayer. That's something that has been added. (*pers. comm.*)

The song has by now become fairly well established, being sung by many Orisha congregations during the Litany section of the Orisha ceremony (see chapter three). The Orisha *mongwa* and

¹¹⁸ See the appendix, Example I, "Ogun Festival, Febeau Village." During an interview with an Orisha *chantwell* of the grassroots persuasion, I sang a few of these new songs which I heard in Febeau Village. My informant had never heard them either, and assumed they came from Nigeria.

Spiritual Baptist Leader Walter (born ca. 1980) tells me he “grew up singing that song” in Trinidad (*pers. comm.*), having learned it from his spiritual father, Fitzroy Emmanuel, a prominent leader in the Orisha religion from the 1990s to today. In addition to Fitzroy, the song was often sung by another leader of the religion from that same era, Iya Melvina Rodney. One of Rodney’s spiritual “children,” Erin Fulami (who introduced me to Lester), gave a speech in Trinidad in 2010 at a conference on international Ifa and Orisha practice. In the speech, Fulami said that “In Trinidad and Tobago, we normally start our prayers with a particular song,” and dedicated a singing of the “Shileku” to the deceased Iya Rodney. While some congregations might embrace new songs such as “Shileku” and others may not, the song is an example of the Orisha Revival’s impact on Trinidad Orisha music.

Osouna’s rebuilding and reopening of the Febeau Village shrine highlights important features of the Orisha Revival in Trinidad. One of these is the de-Christianization of both appearance and ritual process, as noted by scholars (Houk 1995; Henry 2003; McNeal 2011). Osouna emphasizes the conscious shift among some Orisha practitioners who, he says, “...have gone back to authentic African traditional [practice] which does not include Christianity. Authentic” (*pers. comm.*). Osouna’s shrine has no Christian iconography, whether crucifixes or pictures of saints, and Orisha ceremonies there exclude Christian prayers. De-Christianization is also related to the rejection of European words for Yoruba ones, such as Osouna’s swapping of “palais” for “orule.” Osouna also discovered that “Ifebo” is a Yoruba term meaning “love returns,” and so he now refers to the Febeau Village location by the Yoruba word, and he calls the house itself Ile Isoka, meaning “house of unity.”

A second feature important to the Orisha Movement, and one that I noticed at Osouna’s shrine, is intellectualization of the religion. Osouna stresses the importance of books, teaching,

and learning over what he calls “ritualistic” aspects, such as collective music performance. When Osouna reopened the Febeau Village shrine, the practice of Orisha there became

...a little more educational. It wasn't just ritualistic, and people just drumming, and chanting, and dancing. You started to get lectures, and people talking Ifa. And there were books starting to come on the market [about Yoruba religion and cosmology]. (*pers. comm.*)

Education is also important in Osouna's personal life, as he is a physical education teacher at the University of Trinidad and Tobago, where he is also pursuing a Master's degree. During the course of his studies, he has also taken classes in the Yoruba language. As in many other countries, a degree in higher education is a common goal for middle-class professionals in Trinidad and Tobago, and the educational and intellectual component in the Orisha Revival can be seen as related to Anglo middle-class social values, and an example of the intended socio-political legitimization of Orisha (Henry 2003).

The move away from ritual aspects of Trinidad Orisha – possession, animal sacrifice, collective singing – and towards a focus on education deserves some consideration. Given that music is the engine driving ritual in Trinidad Orisha, one could argue that, in the absence of ritual, music might become merely ornamental. If congregants aren't impelled to participate in the music to create a “vibration” (to use a word my informants so often use to describe the energy in the *palais*), then TOM becomes an observed activity, rather than one that involves everybody and is thus collectively produced.

John Blacking (1973, 50) distinguishes two main types of music, music for having (occasional music) and music for being (music that enhances human consciousness¹¹⁹). At its best, TOM is both: it serves the basic function of driving worship and encouraging spirit

¹¹⁹ Here Blacking was building on Durkheim's idea of “collective consciousness,” the ways individuals become attuned to the values and norms of society, which Blacking termed a “suprapersonal” awareness (Sager 2006, 144).

possession, and it is also for “being” in the sense that participating in TOM brings people together by enhancing consciousness of the spirit world (*orishas*) which the faithful believe binds them together. It also enhances consciousness of one another, creating strong interpersonal bonds, as collective musical performance can do (Levitin 2008; McNeill 1995). As Earl Noel told me, for a successful ceremonial experience, “everybody had to be as one” (*pers. comm.*). (See chapter seven.) Part of the function of the *chantwell* or *mongwa* is to encourage participation in the music, and during my research I often witnessed the song leader stop the music and berate the congregants if they weren’t singing and clapping. For instance, at the Mount Moriah feast in Brooklyn in 2010 (see appendix), at a little after 4:00 in the morning, Sugar Aloes (who is Lester Osouna’s cousin) stopped the drummers and reminded the assembled that it was not appropriate or spiritually effective for Aloes to sing alone while they carried on conversations:

I understand, and I’m in sympathy with you... But it is sacrilegious for I to be busting my throat and all allyuh doing *macoing*.¹²⁰ Leave that to Facebook. When you’re on Facebook, allyuh could mind people’s business there. But oh god. This is our upliftment. For allyuhself you know. (*pers. comm.*)

As Sugar Aloes says, Trinidad Orisha music is aimed at spiritual upliftment, attained to greatest effect by the participation of everyone assembled. (And as Aloes warned in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, there may come a day when the *orishas* no longer come.)

TOM as ornamental, as something removed from the core of Trinidad Orisha worship, does perhaps serve to enhance human consciousness (in Blacking’s sense) in that it reminds participants of their shared cultural traditions, but I argue that, in such a context, it is merely a relic, something which serves as a nostalgic reminder of heritage with little functionality in present contexts, and thus something that can be sometimes left out altogether and replaced by

¹²⁰Trinidadian slang for gossiping.

other activities, like lectures. By contrast, in its typical context, at the Orisha feasts of the working class practitioners who might be termed *grass-roots* (Stuempfle 1995), Trinidad Orisha music is indispensable, in that it encourages the coming-together-as-one which musicians like Earl Noel recognize as essential to Orisha religious practice.

The Orisha Revival and Orisha Song Recordings

In the chapter so far, I have outlined the history and salient aspects of a new era in Trinidad Orisha that I refer to as a Revival, marked by, as McNeal (2011) puts it, a middle-class Orisha Movement built on the shoulders of grassroots Shango worship. To give a clear example of a shrine at the heart of the Orisha Movement, I described part of my first visit to an Orisha shrine, at Lester Osouna's 2008 Ogun Festival in Febeau Village. In this section, I describe the Orisha Revival with respect to CD recordings of Trinidad Orisha music, first mentioning documentary recordings and then discussing commercial Orisha recordings, especially those of Ella Andall.

In the early part of the twentieth century, the only documentary recordings of Shango music were made by foreign (American) scholars: Melville and Frances Herskovits in 1939, Emery Cook in 1956, George Simpson in 1960, and Alan Lomax in 1962. However, in 2005, the UWI professors Rawle Gibbons (a playwright) and Funso Aiyejina (a poet from Nigeria), in collaboration with the Council of Orisha Elders in Trinidad, recorded a double-CD of Orisha songs titled *Songs of the Orisha Palais*. Recorded in Trinidad, the music is sung by the Orisha elders Melvina Rodney and Sam Phills (both now deceased) and their respective congregations, including the well-known center drummer Fitzroy Emmanuel. The recordings are intended to be faithful approximations of the music one might hear during a Trinidad Orisha ceremony,

beginning with the “Litany” and moving through the Rotations (song cycles) for important *orishas*.

The liner notes to *Songs of the Orisha Palais* are written by Gibbons and Aiyejina, and they open with an explanatory “Preamble” that touches on several issues at the forefront of the Orisha Movement, among them: the “black is beautiful” ideology that grew in Trinidad in the 1970s; increases in travel to and from Africa, especially Nigeria; the importance of education about African-derived culture; the formation of legitimate organizations; and the formerly negative attitudes towards Orisha in the media and calypso music (in Aiyejina and Gibbons 2005):

This double volume is the first in a series intended to provide Orisha devotees and other interested persons with information on the practice of the sacred Orisha tradition in Trinidad. That the elders of the Council have seen it fit to place this material in the public sphere is itself a sign of the changes occurring within and around the religion. They have not forgotten the ridicule to which all African religious practices were subjected in the public media and in the popular art form, calypso. However, over the past decade or two, people – in particular, young people – from all walks of life have been seeking more information about the tradition and their own spirituality. Those born black are becoming less ashamed of identifying with ancestral Africa. Increasing contact between devotees on the Continent and in the diaspora has produced changes in the practice, organization, social visibility of the tradition and in the self-confidence of practitioners. The incorporation of the Council of Orisha elders in 1988 was itself an outcome of this awakening. Participating in this change and in the acknowledgement of the temporary nature of their own trusteeship, the elders are passing on the tradition as they received it.

The notes make clear that *Songs of the Orisha Palais* is presented as a kind of documentary source of “information” for “young people” who would seek out spirituality by connecting with “ancestral Africa.” The writers assert that contact with Africa has effected change within Orisha, including the practice of the religion, and the CD is offered as a kind of cultural preservation, a way of transmitting Trinidad Orisha music to future generations. The liner notes also point out the change that this recording signifies when compared with the

“ridicule” of early calypso, such as Lord Caresser’s “Shango” (1938) as discussed in chapter two.

While it is true that early calypsonians expressed scorn and a lack of understanding of Shango (Rohlehr 1990), in the past several decades calypsonians have adopted positive attitudes towards Trinidad Orisha, such as Lord Nelson’s 1978 recording, “Shango,” which is an autobiographical sketch of Nelson’s spiritual journey towards discovering that his religion comes from the knowledge of his “foreparents,” and which is based on the Orisha song “Aladoye Ayanba Shango Wari Loye.” In the last verse, Nelson warns those who might mock Shango (is he speaking to Caresser?) to wait until his “power come”:

Now I know Shango is me culture, Yoruba me tongue.
Me gods, me *orisha*, Oshun and Ogun.
Me calabash, me obi, me candle, and me oil.
That is what they hand me, and say, ‘son, go back now and toil.’
You may laugh and shun me, and treat me with scorn.
I know who go help me, since I was reborn.
So when you hear me chanting and knocking me drum.
All who stood there mocking, wait till me power come.

Similarly, in 1983 Calypso Rose sang a calypso titled “Livere Oshu Tabu Koo” which uses, as a chorus, an Orisha chant for Oshun, and treats Orisha in a positive light. Calypsonian Black Stalin (b. 1941), whose mother was an Orisha-Baptist *chantwell*, told ethnomusicologist Jocelyne Guilbault that Orisha was “my primary music school” (Guilbault 2007, 95). In 2003, Singing Sandra referenced Orisha in her embrace of Afro-Trinidadian rhythm titled “Ancient Rhythm,” while in that same year, Sugar Aloes performed a calypso about his dual persona of calypsonian and *mongwa*, “Who Am I?” (this song is discussed further below). While all of these calypso recordings indicate a new relationship between popular music and Orisha in Trinidad, no popular singer is more intertwined with the Orisha Revival than Ella Andall, who is the topic of the next section.

Ella Andall

As noted above, Erin Fulami, who introduced me to Lester Osouna, arranged for me to interview the singer Ella Andall at her home in Arima. On the day that I met her, Andall was wearing flowing African robes in bright blue, including a large head scarf of the same color covering her apparently voluminous hair – the hair-filled wrap extended, in a tubular shape, about two feet above her head. I couldn't see much of her hair, but I did see some black and gray wisps sticking out of the scarf, and she seemed to be perhaps around sixty, a little younger than Fulami. She invited us in, then gave us each three sips of water from a calabash, along with blessings. Next, we sat, and she gave us each a spoonful of the cornmeal concoction known in the Caribbean as *coo-coo*. Once we were settled in, she allowed me to record a 90 minute interview. In the years since this first conversation, I have met Ella several more times, and I have come to understand her as the most well-known figure in Trinidad Orisha music, and as an important figure in the Orisha Revival.

Ella Andall made her first record in 1973 (*Waiting For You*), and her early soca and calypso recordings such as “Bring down the Power,” “Rhythm of a People,” and “Awake” touched on Afrocentric themes. Despite her long tenure as a popular singer in Trinidad, her solo career didn't really take off until 1999, when she began recording the musical repertoire of the Trinidad Orisha religion. Ella is a Spiritual Baptist and Orisha practitioner in Trinidad.¹²¹ Beginning with a CD for the orisha Ogun (Andall 1999) – the spirit of iron and war – she has released CDs for six separate orishas, most recently with *Iba Yemoja* (Andall 2010). Her recent discography marks the first time the traditional chants of the Orisha religion have been given such comprehensive attention in professional recording studios.

¹²¹ Ella Andall belongs to the St. Helena shrine that many of my informants come from: Rev. Andy, Sugar Aloes, Leader Walter, Seitu, and others.

Two of Ella's regular musicians are TOM drummers Donald "Junior" Noel and Everaldo "Redman" Watson, who are often responsible for Ella's musical arrangements (Noel, *pers. comm.*). On a recent trip to Trinidad (in 2012), I asked Ella Andall's drummer, Redman, about the experience of playing with Andall. In addition to playing on Andall's recordings, Redman and fellow drummer "Junior" Noel frequently perform with Andall at her concerts. Redman told me that, despite occasional criticism against Ella's singing of Orisha songs, in general he is fulfilled by the experience of sharing and teaching people about, as he says, "our tradition":

It has been fulfilling in the sense that we are able to carry on our tradition. We are able to keep the tradition alive. And there are still some people who ask Ella to come and perform, and they say well I don't want the Shango stuff. But we are able to represent who we are. We are able to give of it. And there are people who come to ask about the drums, and the tradition of the *orisha*, and the types of drums, and what is the sense of this stick drumming versus the hand drumming. We are able to talk a little more freely about it. So it is fulfilling for me in that sense. (*pers. comm.*)

The presence of Redman and Junior gives Ella's recordings an authentic quality – the drum rhythms are accurate representations of TOM, of the tradition that Redman mentions.¹²² The recordings themselves are excellently recorded and mixed, with a rich sound quality that prominently displays the Orisha drums and Ella's powerful voice. Her CDs also feature cameos by prominent figures in the religion, such as Brother Oludari Massetunji.

In the context of the Orisha Revival, it is clear that Ella Andall has come to be associated with "authentic" African music in Trinidad, via her recordings of TOM. I first heard about Ella when, in 2008, I inquired about Orisha music at the Ministry of Culture in Port of Spain, and a clerk there referred to her simply as "the voice." In a 2007 article for the Caribbean Airlines

¹²² Though the songs and arrangements on Ella's recordings are most often true to typical TOM performance, it is occasionally the case that she includes an original reinterpretation of an Orisha song, such as a track which features her singing with electric bass, or sometimes electric guitar and keyboard, or with a backup choir *a capella*. Though somewhat rare, these reinterpretations allow Ella to exercise creative license as an artist.

magazine *Caribbean Beat*, journalist Caroline Neisha Taylor wrote that Ella's recordings have "become the soundtrack for every context calling for an authentic African vibration" (2007). For instance, her music was used by Trinidadian film producer Yao Ramesar as a soundtrack in his film *Sista God* from 2007. Furthermore, Ella's CDs are often played at middle-class Orisha gatherings. For instance, at an Obatala Festival held in Woodbrook (a neighborhood of Port of Spain) in 2009, I arrived early to find rows of chairs lined up behind a small barrier, on the other side of which was an open space where the Orisha drums were waiting to be played. Similar to the music-audience divide at Lester Osouna's shrine, this arrangement created a distinct feeling of the stage-seated-audience setup of a standard concert hall. As I took my seat in one of the white folding chairs, I noticed that a small PA system had been set up, and some background music was being played over it. In a moment, I realized that the music was Ella Andall.

Beginning with her second Orisha CD, for Shango (*Sango Ba Ba Wa* 2004), Ella has worked with contemporary Yoruba speakers to provide English translations of the Orisha songs in the liner notes, alongside the texts written in standard Nigerian Yorùbá orthography (her Ogun CD is the exception, simply listing songs as track numbers). On *Sango Baba Wa*, Ella enlisted the help of the Nigerian-born UWI professor Funso Aiyejina, mentioned above in his writing of liner notes for *Songs of the Orisha Palais*. On *Sango Baba Wa*, Aiyejina translated the song lyrics and wrote a few paragraphs in the liner notes, explaining the background of the deity Shango and the "Yoruba" language in Trinidad, and also praising Ella as a symbol of "the new confidence with which [Orisha] devotees now publicly practice the faith" (Aiyejina 2004).

In my 2008 interview with her, Ella told me she was born in Grenada, but came to Trinidad as a young girl. She comes from a musical family, with a grandfather who played guitar and drums, and a mother with a "great" singing voice, although "everybody sang" when she was

growing up. Her father's side of the family was Congolese, while her mother's side was Yoruba, and she was constantly reminded by her family of this African heritage. Andall stressed her lineage repeatedly, and offered it as the reason she is now a singer, telling me that she didn't choose her profession. (During the interview, Ella sat to my right while Erin Fulami sat to me left. Throughout the interview, Fulami would respond to Ella's words, usually saying "ashe," the Yoruba word referring to "life-force" or "energy." I've included Fulami's voice in the transcription below.)

Ella Andall: So I grew up in the tradition and it was not told unto me that it was a religion. It was a way of life, it's what you do. When you get up in the morning, you go to the bathroom and you cleanse yourself, you go and you salute the six directions...

Erin Fulami: Ashe.

EA: ...and then you offer your thanksgiving to the earth...

EF: Ashe.

EA: ... and my understanding of the tradition is that you give thanks for everything that is there for you. And if there is something else that you're wanting, you ask for it very respectfully...

EF: Ashe.

EA: ...so I was born in the tradition. So my singing and my voice comes from there. It was not a choice of mine. I didn't make a choice and say, "you know what?" Matter of fact, I didn't want to be a singer at all. I always wanted to heal people. So I always wanted to be a doctor, so I would take care of people and make people better. But, respect of that, I am still doing the same thing with the music.

Ella went on to say that she had always sung, that her voice was a gift, and that it was thus her destiny to be doing what she does. Since she was young, she said, she's been making up songs, and was always walking around singing, so much so that her elders would sometimes shoo her away for making too much noise. Growing up in Grenada, she says that traditional songs were in Yoruba, and that adults would speak Yoruba to each other, but they did not teach the language to the children (cf. Warner-Lewis 1996). She mentioned that sometimes she will sing an Orisha song she remembers from her childhood in Grenada, and Trinidadian Orisha elders will react, saying, "oh, that's an old one." (Ella's comments are a reminder of the need for

a comprehensive study comparing *orisha* music in Trinidad with other historically related islands, especially Grenada.)

Ella told me that she doesn't choose the songs on her albums, she simply sings the Orisha songs that exist. When I asked her how many Orisha songs exist, if one could say that there are, perhaps, one hundred songs, she said "no," and insisted that one could never put a number on the songs, because there will always be "one more." Fulami then interjected, claiming that his own mother knew four thousand Orisha songs. Ella sometimes writes new Orisha songs, as with the title track to *Osun Bamise* (2008), a phrase which means "help me, Oshun." Further, she said that one could write an *oriki* (Yoruba praise song) on the spot for a multitude of occasions, such as if she saw Fulami walking down the street.

EA: I can do *oriki* on my Baba here. When he coming to my house, I could hail him with my drums outside the gate, and I would say, um, [singing] "Baba Erin Fulami-ohhhh, wale, wale baba, waliye."

EF: [translating] Come, Baba. Ekabo. Welcome, welcome...

EA: And I would also say, well, who he is, and what he means to me, and it is such an honor to have him here. When he comes and he leaves, he leaves so much energy, and I'm so happy and I wish him long life...

EF: Ashe.

For Ella Andall and Erin Fulami, the conversation offered them a chance to demonstrate facility in Yoruba language, which neither of them speak, but which both have studied – Ella in the preparation for her CDs and translations, Fulami during multiple trips to Nigeria. Ella and Fulami thus show the importance of speaking Yoruba language in the Trinidad Orisha Revival.

Ella Andall is a popular music performer, not an Orisha *chantwell*. That is, she does not lead the singing of Orisha songs during Trinidad Orisha ceremonies. When I interviewed her, rather than speak about Orisha ceremonial song, she was much more interested in discussing her international concerts (such as, at the time, recent performances in Venezuela and San Francisco) her acting, and her various other artistic exploits, saying "I am the *artiste*." She told me that her

music extends beyond the Orisha community, as in the following, when I asked her who her audience is.

EA: Everybody. I go to every part of the world, and everybody. Because Yoruba songs I do, and I add it in much of my songs, but I do English-speaking songs too. In this culture, in Trinidad, I did calypso, I did what they call the dance soca, I was a finalist in that, I was a finalist in the soca competition. I did songs for pan, pan played my songs. I was very happy to hear in Laventille festival, the big bands played my songs, choirs played my songs, everybody. I suspect Ogun is clearing the pathway.

While Ella certainly appeals to some audiences through her non-Orisha recordings and performances, it remains the case that she is best known for her Orisha repertoire. Though Ella still performs songs in English at performances, including the Soca and Calypso Monarch competitions in Trinidad, where she performed in 1994, 1996, and 1997, she often opens and closes her sets with Orisha songs. And these praise songs apparently attract the faithful to her concerts. Taylor (2007) describes a concert in Rio Claro, in which Ella's closing performance of a song for Shango, the *orisha* of thunder and lightning, brought on spirit possessions among members of the crowd, potentially blurring the line between staged performance and Afro-Trinidadian religious service.¹²³

Several themes came up throughout our conversation in 2008, including the importance of what Ella called “naturalness” and the “organic” in music. (Actually, the Orisha Revivalists I met seemed very interested in all things “organic” and “natural,” including food; when I bought some fruit as a gift to Ella as thanks for the interview, Fulami told me to get pineapple, not grapes, because the latter were not local.) Ella derisively referred to “cut and paste” techniques

¹²³ Similarly, Earl Noel told me (with some pride) of a drumming performance he gave in the Best Village Grand Stand in the 1990s in which members of the crowd were manifesting spirits one after another. Along those lines, in the comments section of a Youtube video of Trinidad Orisha drumming, commenter “shjakes” wrote the following: “I used to love ‘Best Village’ just for this and even remember a time when many in the Grand Stand ‘ketch power’. This was after some drummers (in the spirit) refused to stop playing. (They had to cut the electricity to restore order!)”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enkgTkD-1q0>. Accessed June 2, 2013.

of the recording studio. I pointed out that she records in a studio, and so asked her if this means that she prefers to record everything live, but she explained that she means that the musical performances on her CDs are performed with a sense of spontaneity in mind:

EA: Not all [live], totally, because the keyboard still got to play another time, and I would add the nice effects, that have some drum effect that I like too. But, I will not be a cut and paste person. At all. I don't do backing track. I will do *a capella*. Or I do drummers and singers, and myself, and then if you want the full ensemble, I do the whole band. But I believe music supposed to *affect* and *effect* people. Music supposed to pass through. When I sing a note you should want to play something on your guitar that you never played before. And it must happen live. That kind of music [i.e. cut and paste] may carry us to a place where we will regret. You see, if I sing [singing] "Orisha Oriwa, kwame ja ja," a man with a drum have to feel me to play exactly that. You can't go [playing like a computer metronome on the table] from a computer, because it can't get that kind of feel. And not nothing knocking it, but I will do live music. And I believe that's why people react, and respond to the music I do, because it's organic music.

As I mentioned earlier, Ella's recordings not only sound great, but they are very good approximations of ceremonial Trinidad Orisha music – they feel, if I may, *authentic* – and that is perhaps what Ella means when she refers to her music as "organic."

Ella also raised the issue of music connecting people throughout the diaspora, due to their common ancestors. She frequently spoke of her ancestors – presumably meaning her forebears of African ancestry – after which Fulami always responded with "ashe," and she and Fulami invoked Nigeria on multiple occasions, as in the following, in which Andall mentioned a connection to the late Nigerian drummer Babatunde Olatunji.

EA: Well the music is me. And when I say the music is me, I mean music is my ancestry. When I get up to pray, it is the music, it is this voice I call out with. So it is not a thing separates, it can't be separated. And from my understanding from meeting and talking to different people, that everything is a little different.

EF: Even in Nigeria...

EA: ...even in Nigeria. I think that's so wonderful...

EF: ...a little different, but, you recognize it immediately...

EA: ...same thing, same thing...

EF: ...same thing, slightly different, but same thing...

EA: Say, "Ah! Where you get that word from, Ella?" Babatunde, before he pass, you know Babatunde Olatunji? We went to breakfast, you know, down in Manhattan. I met

him, I went to his show, and Sanga of the Valley [a Trinidadian drum student of Olatunji's] and we went to breakfast. And then he started like, um, going [singing a rhythm] and I went like [another rhythm]. And he said to me, well you know the call of the spirits then. And I said, well I hope so.

For Ella Andall and Erin Fulami, Afro-Trinidadian music is a thing connecting Afro-Trinidadian people with Africa, specifically Nigeria, and Ella validates this claim by pointing out that Babatunde Olatunji, the master Nigerian drummer, recognized the common ancestry and spirituality in her singing of Afro-Trinidadian music.

In the following section, I discuss another prominent figure in Afro-Trinidadian music, the calypsonian Sugar Aloes. Aloes serves as a foil to Ella in his performance of an Orisha-inspired calypso (“Who Am I?”), and also because, unlike many who valorize Ella, he considers her work to be equivalent to, in his words, the “desecration” of Trinidad Orisha music.

Sugar Aloes

Michael Osouna is the brother of the Orisha drummer Lion and a cousin of Lester “Ogunbowale” Osouna. I first met Michael at an Orisha feast in Brooklyn, in 2010. Using the sobriquet Sugar Aloes, Michael Osouna has won the annual calypso competition in Trinidad twice, putting him in select company: only twelve others have accomplished the feat. In typical calypso fashion, Aloes’ songs are often about Trinidadian national electoral politics, such as his anti-UNC¹²⁴ “Reflections,” from 2008. In addition to being a calypso singer, Aloes is an Orisha *mongwa*, and in such capacity he carries on Orisha ceremonies, leading the singing, carrying out ritual sacrifices, and manifesting the spirits of, for example, Oshun and Ogun. In 2003, a year

¹²⁴ The United National Congress (UNC) is the political party founded by Indo-Trinidadian Basdeo Panday in 1988, and is the party of Trinidad’s current Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

removed from winning the calypso competition, Aloes performed a song called “Who Am I?” Following in the mold of Lord Nelson’s “Shango” (1978), Aloes’ song is an autobiographical sketch of his connections with the Orisha religion, which incorporates three chants for the *orisha* Shango, the spirit of thunder: “Shango Babawa” “Mother Jeriyo,” and “E Dawona.” The chorus is built around “Shango Babawa.”

Aloes is an active *mongwa* in Brooklyn. He lives most of the time in Trinidad, but regularly comes to New York – which is not uncommon among Trinidadians – and in both places Aloes does work for his calypso career as well as for the Orisha religion. For instance, in September 2010 Aloes performed in the calypso tent on Fulton Street, in Brooklyn, as part of the West Indian American Day Carnival festivities. While there, he also performed ceremonial duties at various Orisha events. This “dual career” – Orisha priest and calypsonian – was on display in Aloes’ performance of “Who Am I?” in 2003. In the following analysis, I rely on the videorecording of the performance, available on YouTube.com. The performance took place on a massive outdoor stage in San Fernando, in south Trinidad, before an audience of thousands. Aloes’ onstage band, made up of drum kit, backup singers, horn section, marimba, and bass guitar, included a quartet of hand drummers – one of whom was Donald “Junior” Noel – who started the song with a percussion-heavy, Orisha-based rhythm, and after a short intro Aloes joined them onstage.



6.4 Sugar Aloes performing “Who Am I?” from YouTube.com

While onstage Aloes normally wears a Western-style suit and hat, but in the performance of “Who Am I?” he dressed in the traditional clothes of an Orisha priest. He wore a long yellow tunic that stretched to below his knees, with matching yellow pants and a small cap on his head. (This tunic and cap combination is very much after the style of dress found in present day Nigeria, called there *dashiki* and *kufi*, respectively.) Over this outfit, Aloes wore plenty of gold jewelry: earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and rings, typical of Sugar Aloes’ normal public appearance. In his right hand he carried a yard-long wooden staff, carved in the shape of a hoop at the top. In his left hand, he held a wireless microphone.

As he entered the stage, Aloes said hello to the crowd and invoked the name of the highest deity in the Yoruba pantheon, calling out, “Greetings in the name of Olodumare, the one living god.” Olodumare is not a deity historically praised in Trinidad, but has rather been recently introduced from Nigeria. Following his greeting, Aloes connected his performance to Trinidadian social conditions – a typical move in calypso – stating, “Our nation need prayers, so we have to call on the ancestors.” Aloes then proceeded to sing a chant for the *orisha* Shango (“Mother Jeriyo”) in call-and-response fashion with his three female backup singers.

In this first 45 seconds of the song, a combination of elements in Aloes’ performance – dress, rhythm, drums, words, and song – could leave little impression for the San Fernando crowd but that this was a performance influenced by and paying tribute to the Trinidad Orisha religion. At the same time, in pointing out the existence of problems in “our nation” – Trinidad – Aloes was also keeping his performance within the context of calypso and the genre’s tradition of commenting on current events and political issues. Thus, Aloes established the performance as at once within the worlds of Orisha and calypso, like his own dual persona. As in most calypsoes, the theme of the song is introduced right away in the first verse, in this case an autobiographical sketch regarding how Aloes discovered Yoruba ties in his last name, “Osouna.”

Yes I have heard that my ancestors were from Nigeria
And that is why I’m carrying the name “Osouna”
Deep inside of me I just wasn’t satisfied
So I did some soul searching and asked myself, “who am I?”
Then I found out John African was my great-grandfather
And he was from an African tribe called Yoruba
The Dollies from Febeau Village, yes that was my great-aunt
So in the name of Orisha I greet you all with this chant

While Aloes’ total performance combined innovations (Nigerian dress, Olodumare) with markers of longstanding Trinidad Orisha musical practice (Trinidad Orisha songs, the TOM drummer Donald Noel), in the first verse Aloes made explicit his own connections with the

Trinidad Yoruba people. Aloes explains that he traced his own great-grandfather back to the Yoruba people, and that his great-aunt was Hilary Katgrant George from Febeau Village (known as “the Dollies”¹²⁵), where Lester Osouna now keeps his Orisha shrine.

This first verse leads to the chorus of the song, “Shango Babawa,” which is, in melody, rhythm and words, a well-known Orisha song for Shango.¹²⁶ The melody of the song is doubled by what sounds like a marimba, and the high register and clear timbre of that instrument serve to help the Orisha melody stand out in the arrangement. Evocative of typical TOM performance, the lines are sung in call-and-response fashion with the women singers onstage, who add countermelodies in the interest of harmony.

In the second verse, Sugar Aloes introduces the religious practices of Orisha, and also mentions prejudices against the religion. He lists important ritual objects that were “taken” (presumably by authorities), and contrasts the practice of Orisha with Obeah, the Afro-Trinidadian folk spiritual and medicinal practices banned by the government in 1868. In this distinction, Aloes sounds like Michael Ettienne at the beginning of this chapter, who distinguished Obeah and “witchcraft” from the “praising” of Orisha.

Now that I know the calabash, me oil, and me obi
These were just among the things taken from me
So when you see me in feasts I not looking for Obeah, no suh,
I come to chant and pay my respects to the *orisha*

These lines seek to combat stigmas against Orisha that have considered it in derogatory terms, giving authorities cause to harass practitioners. (The fact that these lyrics deflect prejudices away

¹²⁵ Aloes told me his great-aunt’s yard was known as “the dollies” because people used to say she looked like a voodoo doll.

¹²⁶ The entire song is in a common 4/4 calypso rhythm. Though I notate TOM in 12/8, the ease with which “Shango Babawa” fits into the 4/4 context is a good illustration of the strong 4/4 feel of TOM. See chapters 3, 4, and 5.

from Yoruba practice and onto Obeah also shows some of the limitations and challenges involved in Orisha's changing social status.)

In verse three, Aloes explains that his patron saints are Oshun and Osa, and that through "manifestation" he can "reach the other side / To meet with me ancestors and visit the River Nile." (This sense of spiritual journeying through spirit possession, often to Africa, is common in the Spiritual Baptist practice of "mourning.") Aloes boasts – in true calypsonian form – that his voice is so powerful it can cause manifestations, and he sings, "I could touch your soul both spiritual and carnal ... I am an Orisha priest, they call me the *amongwa*." The reference to "both spiritual and carnal" again highlights the duality of Aloes and his music. Meanwhile, his proud affirmation of his status as a priest in the religion shows how far attitudes towards Orisha have come since the difficulties alluded to in verse two.

In the final verse, Sugar Aloes ends his song by referring, again, to his dual persona of calypsonian and *mongwa*, explicitly separating his two roles. According to the words, popular song is a way of earning a living – feeding one's family – while sacred song is aimed at spiritual concerns – paying homage to the deity. Thus Aloes claims a distinction between the economic and spiritual facets of his life.

So when I sing kaiso that's to feed me family,
But when I sing Orisha it's to pay homage to the deity
'Aladoye,' 'abakuso,' that's my tribal cry
I'm so proud I could stand and explain to you, who am I

Once again, Aloes shows pride in the Orisha religion, and in the fact of being able to sing about it. (This echoes the improved "self-confidence of practitioners" noted by Aiyejina and Gibbons in the liner notes to *Songs of the Orisha Palais*, mentioned above.) Aloes leaves the stage while saying "thank you" and "ashe, ashe, ashe," the Yoruba word which was used (over and over) by Erin Fulami during my interview with Ella Andall, above.

By placing Orisha chants, musicians, imagery, and subject matter within the conventions of calypso music (instrumentation, boasting themes, backup singers harmonizing), Sugar Aloes has created a fusion rich in meaning and aesthetic interest, very much after the approach of Lord Nelson in his 1978 “Shango.” “Who Am I?” is a successful amalgam of calypso and Orisha, and considering the antagonistic attitudes towards Orisha in calypso’s history, the song (along with others like it) is indicative of fundamental positive changes in the social status of Orisha and its music, within calypso and also in Trinidadian society at large.

Aloes vs. Andall

Sugar Aloes has not sung “Who Am I?” since that 2003 performance. Last December, I spoke with him about this song, and asked him why he hasn’t performed it again. In answering my question, he brought up concerns about “intoxicated” Trinidadians dancing to a sacred Orisha song, and about what he feels is a division between music for worship and music for “monetary gains.” He also brought up Ella Andall:

I was planning to use it in competition, and then for some spiritual reasons I don’t think I should have. Because, there is something that offend me, and it does bother me a lot: when I watch people in the clubs and the snackettes, and they’re playing Ella Andall’s song, excerpts, and they’re drinkin’ liquor, and gyrating to it and thing. I don’t appreciate it. So this is what made me never even think about going to competition with the song. And I remember when I first did it, when we released the album, I did a show for Rhand Credit Union, in Trinidad, and a woman, very intoxicated, remembered the song and, “sing ‘Who Am I?,’ sing the Shango song!” It was a turnoff then. Strange enough, I understood how the Hindus felt, when Shorty had sung “Om Shanti Om.”¹²⁷ Because they was against it, they said well no, people will drink liquor and gyrate to it, and things that they don’t know the meaning of it. And it was very concern for them. And I felt, I understand how they felt, by that instant, and so I never sang the song nowhere. And I’m very much *not* in agreement with Ella. I’m not in agreement with Ella. Ella is a artiste, she is a calypsonian. And she been singing songs with meaning. Alright, she has her style

¹²⁷ “Om Shanti” is a song released by the soca pioneer Ras Shorty I (né Garfield Blackman) in the mid-1980s that caused a controversy among Indo-Trinidadians due to Shorty’s commercial use of a religious theme.

and everything else. But don't tell me you run out of lyrics, you run out of creativity, and you just decide to just take Orisha music, and put it on a CD now and sell it. That is not yours to sell. And as I ask the question, "Is she the original writer of these lyrics? Does she have the copyright to these things?" She didn't invent these lyrics. And as far as I understand, she's prostituting the whole thing. And I'm still wondering, and waiting and watching to see, well, when she reach to the last deity, let me see who she gonna sing after that. Because she gon run out. And she was behind me saying that I must make a CD I say well no, that is not mine. That is not mine. Calypso is mine, I will create my songs, create my melody, create my lyrics, write my songs, sing, perform it. Orisha, as I say in "Who am I?", is to pay homage to my deity. When I sing calypso it's to feed my family. When I sing Orisha it's to pay homage to my deity. That's different, that is worship. You have to be able to separate them. Because, I don't mind giving you a interview, I don't mind you recording one or two songs, because you are doing research, and you are on a different wavelength. But when you're doing it for a bacchanal-ish attitude, like you put it on Facebook and Youtube and all. Come on. That is desecration. As far as I'm concerned. And well I look at Ella efforts as that: desecration for monetary gains. And I could afford to tell you, and this is honesty, if Ella were to stand up in a *palais*, and I were to be *chanting*, and I hand over to her, she don't know where to take off at where I left her. She would continue right where I hand her. Until she get tired, exhaust, and just let it die down. She don't know where to go from there. So all in a sudden she's this big, female *chantwell*? What cut has she done as Mama Orisha? Imposters! (*pers. comm.*)

On a basic level, Aloes is clearly annoyed by Andall's prestige as an Orisha singer, considering that she is not a *chantwell*. Aloes speaks from a position of authority on the matter, since he is a *mongwa* and *chantwell* well-known for his large knowledge of the TOM repertoire (indeed, Aloes knew more songs than any *chantwell* I heard during my research). One might interpret Aloes' comments as potentially tinged with jealousy at Ella's success, but still, he raises issues related to the relationship between the spheres of sacred, secular, traditional, and popular musics. In his comparison of "Who Am I?" with "Om Shanti," and the fear of sexual dancing to a spiritual song, Aloes echoes similar controversies throughout the history of popular music, for instance when, in the 1950s, Ray Charles popularized African American gospel songs by

replacing the lyrical references to God with references to women, in the process launching the American popular music genre known as soul.¹²⁸

Similarly, Aloes raises the question of musical ownership, asking if Ella owns the copyright. From the perspective of copyright law, Trinidad Orisha songs are clearly public domain, meaning they are fair game for any musician who wants to record them. But Aloes' protests seem to have less to do with the technical legality of recording TOM than they do with unease about commodification of religious songs in general, as well as, perhaps, an apprehensiveness about well-known prior appropriations of West Indian music, such as the Andrews Sisters' version of Lord Invader's calypso, "Rum and Coca-Cola" (1945) and Harry Belafonte's enormous success with Jamaican (public domain) folk songs, especially "Banana Boat Song" (1956).

Obviously, one cannot separate economics from the performance of TOM in its traditional ceremonial context. After all, in chapter two my informant Mr. Burton explained that he stopped drumming at Shango feasts because he received no money while the *mongwa* "got rich." My drum teacher, Earl Noel, is always paid (however modestly) for his services as a drummer. And to be sure, Sugar Aloes is paid for his work as a *mongwa*. However, it should also be obvious that a difference exists in the commodification of labor (e.g. as drummer, as *mongwa*) versus the commodification of *the music itself*, as a thing to be sold (e.g. on CDs). This direct commercialization of TOM is something new in the history of TOM. (And to be clear, Ella's goal is to sell CDs – on her Facebook page, she declares: "Support the artiste. Buy original CDs. Say no to piracy!!!")

¹²⁸ On sacred and secular in American popular music, see Harris 2010; Ritz and Charles 1978.

In defense of Ella, drummer Redman points to the hypocrisy of those who criticize while also recording Orisha songs.¹²⁹ Furthermore, he compares Ella's Trinidad Orisha recordings to those of others in the Orisha Atlantic, suggesting, perhaps, that the world of commercial music recordings is an ineradicable aspect of life in the twenty-first century, and might thus be embraced.

A lot of the people who criticize it are people who slip Orisha into their songs as well. Sugar Aloes has a song where he sings Orisha as well too. When you go into the Santería, and the Candomblé from Brazil, and all the Vodun from Haiti and stuff, there are CDs with full bands playing. So while she's probably looking to make a dollar off of it, you could look at it in a sense as the *orisha* sent her on a mission, because it's important to keep it alive, 'cause it will eventually be swept under the carpet. And there's a time now when nobody would know about it anymore because I tell you something today Ryan, right now the Pentecost, the Anglican, the Catholic, the Seventh Day Adventist, the Jehovah Witness, the Bahai, everybody could sing Orisha songs. That's because of Ella. And because of that it helps to keep it alive. You may look at it in the sense of, you know, marketing and stuff, but I can tell if someone goes today to one of the shrines and says I want to do a CD here at your shrine, and we will market this CD and the money will go to help your shrine, you are going to do it. Mainly because the money helps them to stay about their shrine, and people are going to hear it and they could safely say 'that's us, that is our group.' so then how different is that from what Ella is doing? If we get rid of that issue of marketing, and what Ella is doing, and we come together, it would become something more organized. Because I'm saying again I have loads of CDs home from Brazil, and Cuba, with bands that are playing *orisha* stuff, to Yemaya, and Oshun, and all these kind of things. And we buy these CDs. We listen to these songs. And I don't hear us complaining about that. (*pers. comm.*)

De-Christianization, Language, and TOM

For my informants, two contentious issues related to the Orisha Revival are the eradication of Christian elements in Trinidad Orisha, and the (re)introduction of spoken and written Yoruba language to Trinidad. Considering first the issue of language, music recordings of Trinidad Orisha music have an inherent problem, in that recording Orisha songs and writing

¹²⁹ In addition to "Who Am I?," Sugar Aloes also sang Trinidad Orisha chants ("Naiye O, Naiye Bada," "Ye Ye Aniro," and "Shango Tete Malaw") in his recording of the song "Power of Prayers," on his CD *Victory* (2009).

liner notes requires decisions about song lyrics, which is contentious given the variations in song texts which I described in chapter three. Ella Andall's strategy to deal with the language of TOM has been to work with speakers of current-day Yorùbá when she puts together her albums of Orisha songs, translating lyrics in the liner notes, occasionally putting together new songs, and even correcting song texts to make sense in terms of contemporary Yoruba. Sometimes these corrections can clear up misconceptions.

For example, in a song for the feminine water spirit, Oshun ("Yeye olomi ayagba"), Lester Osouna told me he grew up believing he was singing about "bhaji," a Trinidadian Creole word for chopped vegetables (mostly greens), fried or stewed.¹³⁰ An Ella Andall recording included a translation of the lyrics: the word is "ibeji," meaning "twins" – Oshun is the patron saint of twins.

You know, you're singing, *ibeji*. I used to wonder if they're talking about "bhaji." Ibeji is twin. Oshun is the mother of twins. She pays homage to twins. And we used to be singing about ibeji, [but] we didn't used to say ibeji. Now we recognize, if we used to say, i-bhaji, and now we will say ibeji. It got lost somewhere along the line. (*pers. comm.*)

Similarly, Leader Walter – an Orisha *mongwa* and Spiritual Baptist based in Brooklyn – talks about how some word meanings got jumbled over the years. For instance, the song "Eshu Baragbo Mojuba" is traditionally sung in Trinidad when Eshu is being put outside, at the beginning of a feast. For a long time, "going to mojuba" was a term used in Trinidad for singing to Eshu, but it was a term which had negative connotations, akin to, Walter says, "doing voodoo," or dealing with "juju" (*pers. comm.*). But now Trinidadians know that, in Yoruba language, "mojuba" means "giving praise." As Walter put it, the old folks must not have known what they were singing, because they didn't want to praise Eshu – they wanted him to leave.

¹³⁰ The word *bhaji* derives from East Indian Hindi speakers in Trinidad.

Walter told me that learning Yoruba can help to fix wrong words, but that really changing the language of Trinidad Orisha songs might be limited due to the entrenched nature of Orisha songs in Trinidad Orisha, and also due to the fact that practitioners are spread out across Trinidad and in the diaspora, in New York:

I guess before, a few years back people would leave it alone. Now, more people are reading, edifying themselves on the religion, and the Yoruba, the language and all of that. They realize that these words doesn't make any sense. So now some people are researching and they're probably changing. In their own personal shrine they would go through that process. But to really change everything, and that correction? It can happen, but it will take a very long time. My personal view, it's gonna take some time to really change those words. That's a whole long process to change that and, I guess, probably the *orishas* accept it and you just leave it alone until probably the next generation. But it's gonna be really difficult. You would have to visit all these shrines in Trinidad, and come to this country, and really get to people. And old habits die hard, eh? Old habits die hard. (*pers. comm.*)

Despite the process of change that Walter describes, he also told me that Trinidadians who have been to Nigeria need to be sensitive about criticizing Orisha practitioners for singing a “wrong” word here or there. He said “just because you took a trip to Nigeria” doesn't mean you can come back and tell people that what they've been doing for generations is wrong.

Walter's notion that “old habits die hard” was illustrated well in my interview with Sugar Aloes when he said, regarding the study of Yoruba, “I is 55. You think I going to learn that now?” During our interview, I played for Aloes CDs of the 1939 Herskovits recordings of Shango drummers in Laventille. Aloes listened closely to the song lyrics, and then said it sounded the same as what is sung today in TOM, wondering why there is an impulse to correct the songs at all:

From 1939 I ain't hearing nothing strange that I don't understand. Why you want to change up and correct pronunciation now? You know like one time, I was singing something and somebody tell me I was singing it wrong. I say well, in the days when I was singing it wrong I used to see spirit. Now I singing it right and I ain't seeing no spirit. I ain't seeing no manifestation. So, may I continue to sing it wrong? (*pers. comm.*)

For Aloes, singing TOM as it has been taught through oral tradition in Trinidad, is more important than proper pronunciation. After all, the ultimate goal of singing Trinidad Orisha songs is manifesting the spirits of the *orishas*.

In that same vein, Aloes wondered about the purpose of teaching English-speaking Trinidadians to speak or say prayers in Yoruba, when the ultimate goal of Trinidad Orisha – communion with divinity – transcends language. Our interview took place in Brooklyn, and Aloes compared the language rupture in the history of Afro-Caribbeans with the diversity of ethnic groups in America who have managed to retain their dialects.

God doesn't understand me if I'm talking in English? This is a people that was deprived of their culture. Their language was taken away from them. In this America here, the Jewish still could talk English, and they could talk their language. The Arab could talk English and he could talk his language. The Hindi could talk his language and he could talk English. The Chinese could talk English and he could talk his language. The Italians could talk their language, and English. The Mexicans, same thing. The Latinos, same thing. The only people can't talk, well I can't say they can't talk their language because Caribbean people talking Caribbean language! But we were excerpt. We were taken away. Had we grow up in Africa we would have said prayers in African. Or in Yoruba. Or in Swahili. Or whatever language it takes us to say our prayers. But it all boils down to the same meaning. (*pers. comm.*)

During an interview with Michael Manswell, the director of the Brooklyn-based folkloric dance group Something Positive, I discussed with him the 2005 CD *Songs of the Orisha Palais* (the double CD was mentioned earlier in this chapter). Manswell was born in Trinidad, discovered Trinidad Orisha as a college student, and took the reins of Something Positive when Cheryl Byron died (see chapter seven). Manswell objected to the liner notes, which offered strict Yoruba spellings of the names of Trinidad *orishas* Shakpana and Yemanja as Soponna and Yemoja. He defended the former terms as appropriate to the English syntax and rhythm of Trinidadian speech, saying, for instance, “Shakpana is a completely acceptable term. There's nothing wrong with saying that.” Manswell went on to eloquently explain that while the study of

Yoruba may have its merits, the native form of Trinidad's Orisha songs and practices must not be invalidated:

I think it's lovely, to a certain extent to know that this is a way of saying it, and this is a way of saying it. But also, have the integrity to say "this is the way *we* say it." And there's nothing wrong with that. Because I thought, "Soponna"? Who the hell is Soponna? You know, nobody will know. Because the word in that way, in that syntax, does not exist in the songs. So unless you want to go back and learn all these songs over in a different way, what are you trying to do? Do you not have the faith in your ancestors that they kind of knew what they were, what was happening? It just doesn't sit well. It just doesn't sit well with me. (*pers. comm.*)

The discussion of language changes in TOM is closely related to de-Christianization efforts, such as those mentioned by Lester Osouna in my interview with him, and that I observed at his Ogun Festival. As Lester put it, "going back" to a religious practice without Christianity is often perceived as "authentic" in the context of the Orisha Revival. However, in an interview with me, the Orisha and Spiritual Baptist Reverend Andy complicated such a straightforward notion connecting Africa with non-Christianness and thus, "authenticity."

Andy told me that, on a trip to Nigeria, he coincidentally ran into Brother Oludari, a prominent Orisha Revivalist in Trinidad Orisha. They happened to be staying in the same spiritual house. After spending some days there, and preparing to finish their trip, Oludari told Andy that when he returns to New York, he should drop the Baptist work and just teach the people about Orisha. Andy took offense to that point of view.

"It's not like I'm going to Africa to be introduced to Orisha," he said. "I already knew Orisha before I went to Africa. If I am to stop being a Baptist minister, the people here will have to tell me that." Andy's steadfastness was reinforced when, on their last day in Nigeria, all the initiates were taken to the Great Hall of the Ooni of Ife, the spiritual leader of the Yoruba people. In the hall were four foot high portraits of important people, such as Martin Luther King and the prophet Mohammed. Right in the middle was a portrait of Jesus Christ. Andy looked at Oludari

and asked, “If they don’t want to deal with Christianity in Africa, then why do they have big picture of Jesus? Don’t tell me another thing about dropping Christianity.” According to Andy, all of the spirits coexist, and so the only theological conflicts are created by people. “There is no dispute between Ogun and Jesus. The conflict is in the minds of men” (*pers. comm.*).

Understanding the Orisha Revival in the Context of Ritual TOM

Important aspects of the Orisha Revival have been well documented by scholars (Houk 1995; Henry 2003; McNeal 2011), who note the rise of an Orisha Movement beginning in 1970s Trinidad, which includes a focus on the “Africanization” of Orisha due to the innovations of new middle-class members in the faith. What these anthropologists largely ignore is that ritual TOM performance is not a central aspect of the Orisha Movement, which is why, I argue, the impact of the Movement on TOM is limited (notwithstanding the occasional addition of a song like “Shileku,” discussed above). The lessening of manifestations, and the emphasis on literature over ritual drumming and trance, means that music is often left out. To give an example: at one middle-class shrine (in Santa Cruz, Trinidad), an inner room houses a trio of Nigerian *bata* drums, but there is nobody to play them. These drums symbolize, all too well, the place of music for many in the Trinidad Orisha Movement – it is ornamental, kept in an empty room that is rarely used. From this perspective, music is of limited use to the larger goals of Yoruba language acquisition and the study of ritual knowledge.

As I have shown throughout this dissertation, TOM is deeply connected to coastal West African musical practices, and marginalized Afro-Trinidadians have retained this essentially African musical and social practice through oral tradition, despite the persecution of African-derived social practices in colonial Trinidad. The Orisha Movement, on the other hand, is an

approach to Trinidad Orisha that is influenced by Anglo middle-class social values. It is cerebral, focused on the study of texts rather than on collective, ritual, ecstatic drumming and dance. It is ironic that anybody thinks of the Orisha Movement as focused on “Africanization.” As McNeal puts it, “...preoccupation with purity and the effort to standardize Orisha Worship seems to reflect historically Eurocentric models of what a legitimate ‘religion’ is In a certain ironic, nontrivial sense, then, what many refer to as ‘re-Africanization’ may also be viewed as a sort of *de-Africanization*” (2011, 289). Or as Rev. Andy said, “I already knew Orisha before I went to Africa.”

All the same, the interactions between the innovators and the grassroots are complex and overlapping, and it is not as if the two sides are somehow opposites, occupying separate spheres. To the contrary, they both represent integral components of a total cultural process in which Trinidad Orisha and TOM have a place in twenty-first century, cosmopolitan Trinidad and Tobago. To give an example, the name change (from Shango to Orisha) was initiated by innovators, but is now accepted by grass-roots Trinidadians. Another example is the continuation of staged, folkloric productions in the mold of Beryl McBurnie’s Shango dances (see chapter two). I myself am organizing a performance in Manhattan featuring the Trinidad Orisha musicians I have worked with for this dissertation. The performance is certainly an innovation in that it takes TOM out of its ritual context – the music will (probably) not lead to spirit possession, but all the same, the musicians are excited for the opportunity to share their art form, and I believe the experience will be positive for all involved (including me). We cannot escape the social conditions in which we live, and TOM in a Westernized context that values education and presentation over collective music performance will perhaps inevitably be impacted by it. Still, TOM is a fundamentally non-Western cultural practice. Given that fact, it is unsurprising to

find that it is often incompatible with Westernization efforts, whether the nineteenth-century social upheavals in Trinidad that resulted in the criminalization of drumming, or the bookish middle-class revivalism that treats TOM as incidental to Trinidad Orisha.

Another important point about the Orisha Revival and Nigerianization is that my own informants display diverse degrees of Nigeria-centrism. At one end, Erin Fulami (along with Brother Oludari) says that Christianity must be expunged from Trinidad Orisha. Somewhere further down this spectrum, the Reverend Andy has been to Nigeria, but maintains that his own Trinidad Orisha practice – including his status as a Spiritual Baptist leader – is valid due to longstanding traditions in Trinidad. Along those lines, drummer Earl Noel has told me, “We come from Africa, but we are not Africans.” The various viewpoints of Trinidad Orisha practitioners contribute to the makeup of a dynamic range of cultural practices with all fall under the purview of Trinidad Orisha in an era of Revival.

As presented in this chapter, Trinidad Orisha culture and music in the twenty-first century have a marked duality, described perhaps most clearly as innovation versus tradition. This duality evokes the thesis of this dissertation, that TOM is like a Trinidad Orisha drum: double-sided and thus approachable from more than one direction. In keeping with that thesis, I wish to reiterate that it is the actions and decisions of individuals that reshape the contexts of Trinidad Orisha culture and music. Those actors ensure that tradition and innovation exist in dialogue with one another, frequently overlapping and blurring the conceptions of where one begins and the other ends. To take a prominent example from this chapter, duality abounds in Sugar Aloes’ “Who Am I?” performance, most obviously in his explanation of his dual persona of calypsonian and Orisha *mongwa*. Beyond that, Aloes uses the song to claim connections to Trinidad Orisha heritage and tradition, and yet he freely incorporates innovations (*e.g.* his mention of Olodumare,

his Nigerian-style dress). The performance of “Shango Babawa” in a calypso context is a kind of innovation, though one with a long history in Trinidad, as evidenced by the calypsonians Lord Nelson and Calypso Rose, among others. Further, Aloes’ subsequent pivot, from his performance of the song to his subsequent rejection of the performance of TOM in commercial contexts as “desecration,” suggests the complex relationships between sacred and secular, as well between local vernacular musics and commercial commodifications.

Important juxtapositions are also apparent in my descriptions of the cousin Orisha priests, Lester (Ogunbowale) and Michael (Sugar Aloes) Osouna. Though they both share the same family origins in Trinidad Orisha, their spiritual paths have diverged in important ways. Lester represents the Orisha Movement, with his renunciation of Christianity, incorporation of new songs, and partial replacement of ritual drumming and dance with the study of Yoruba texts. Michael represents the traditional Trinidad Orisha *mongwa*, leading the singing of a vast repertoire of TOM, and manifesting the *orishas* due to the communal music making of Orisha ceremonial. Even so, Michael wears Nigerian-style clothes, and gives a nod to the importance of spoken Yoruba (saying “ashe” at the end of his “Who Am I?” performance), even if he claims to be too old (“I is 55”) to learn a new language. It is these sorts of contrasting relationships that are, I argue, at the center of a complete understanding of Trinidad Orisha music and culture in the twenty-first century, and that I wish to highlight in my conception of two sides to a drum.

As a final note, it is also important to point out that the sociopolitical consciousness-raising of the Orisha Revival has generally had a positive impact on the way that the Orisha religion is viewed within Trinidadian society. At the beginning of this chapter, I quoted the drummer Redman, who explained that it took years for his Catholic mother to accept his involvement in Orisha. In another comment, Redman points directly to sociopolitical recognition

as a cause of the loosening of stigmas towards Orisha in Trinidadian society, and the transition of Trinidad Orisha's place in society, from ridicule to respect:

Even then when I was coming up in the Orisha, as a younger guy, if I would go anywhere and I had to fill out a form and they asked religion, I would put Catholic. And it was a stigma then because you put Orisha and people may not take you on. They may refuse you. Now that we have become more recognized, I am proud to say that I could put Orisha. (*pers. comm.*)

Redman also points out that stigmas still exist against Orisha. For instance, he works as a drum teacher in a Catholic high school, and he told me that his supervisor forbids him to teach TOM rhythms to his students. Moreover, it may still be the case that African-derived religions in general do not receive the same respect as other religions in mainstream media portrayals (see, for example, the discussion of *Bethenny Ever After* in the next chapter). Even so, the social perceptions and sociopolitical realities of Trinidad Orisha have changed dramatically in Trinidad, which is why drummer Michael Ettienne believes Trinidad Orisha has reached a "nice time."

While chapter two outlined the history of Trinidad Orisha music and culture through the examination of, largely, secondary sources suggestive of Trinidad Orisha's history, in this chapter I privilege primary sources in order to highlight some of the complexities of Trinidad Orisha as I have come to understand it in four years of dissertation research. Key historical trends which resulted in the Orisha Revival discussed in this chapter include the development of a national cultural identity around independence in 1962; the Black Power movement of the 1970s; the establishment of connections between Trinidad and Nigeria since the 1980s; and changing political and legal structures more accommodating to Orisha (and Spiritual Baptists) as a recognized, valid religious practice in Trinidad. Another important trend to impact Trinidad Orisha during this period is the creation of a Trinidadian diaspora, largely moving between the

three locations of Trinidad, Toronto, and New York City. In the next chapter, I focus on one point on that triangle: New York, and especially Brooklyn.

Chapter Seven

Transnational Orisha: Music and the Trinidad Orisha Community in Brooklyn

The most public aspects of Trinidadian culture in New York are probably steelpan, soca, and calypso, which are showcased during the Labor Day Carnival in Brooklyn, or perhaps the Trinidadian roti shops that line the streets around Crown Heights and East Flatbush. A less visible part of Trinidadian culture in New York, but one that is very much present, is the Trinidad Orisha religion. In Bedford-Stuyvesant, on Nostrand Avenue, even out in the Rockaways, practitioners of the Trinidad Orisha religion keep flags and shrines for the *orishas*. This chapter gives an account of the development of the Trinidad Orisha religion and music in New York City. Since 1965, West Indian immigration to New York has exploded. There are currently around 50,000 Trinidadians in Brooklyn, a number equaling the municipal population of Trinidad's capital, Port of Spain. Like other West Indian immigrants, Trinidadians in Brooklyn have been remarkably successful at recreating a number of aspects of their culture, and especially notable among these are the music and religion known as Orisha. Practitioners of Trinidad Orisha are closely linked with Spiritual Baptists in Brooklyn, and due to this linkage I use the term "Orisha-Baptist" occasionally in this chapter to refer to what is in many ways a homogeneous community of worshipers, even though I wish to emphasize that, despite overlaps in practitioners and even in some rituals, the two religions are distinct.

The members of this Trinidadian Orisha-Baptist community employ a multitude of techniques to reconstruct home in the diaspora, transforming apartments, backyards, and church basements into sacred spaces worthy of their spiritual practice. This chapter will examine these methods of transformation, and the ways that music is at the forefront of such processes. In

addition to giving historical sketches of Trinidadian emigration patterns, Orisha's emergence in Brooklyn in the 1980s, and ethnographic episodes in my Brooklyn field research, the chapter will briefly assess connections between Trinidad Orisha and other African-based religions in New York. I also consider challenges faced by Orisha practitioners in Brooklyn, as they recreate an Afro-Trinidadian cultural practice in the context of New York City, which includes legal structures restrictive of ritual animal sacrifice, and potentially problematic interactions with New York-based mass media.

This discussion of the Trinidad Orisha religion in diaspora is grounded in the theory of cultural movement or "traveling," as articulated in James Clifford's influential essay, "Traveling Cultures" (1992). Clifford's theory is useful because it envisions culture as not simply a stable, unchanging object rooted in a particular location, but rather, "as much a site of travel encounters as of residence" (*ibid.*, 101). In "Traveling Cultures," Clifford describes the Moe family, an extreme example of cultural travelers. Performers of "traditional" Hawaiian music, the Moe family wound up on the road for a total of fifty-six years, performing as exemplars of Hawaiian culture all around the world. When they returned to Hawaii, they were praised for their "authentic" Hawaiian music. Of this family, Clifford asks, "How did they compartmentalize their Hawaiianness in constant interaction with different cultures, musics, and dance traditions ...? How, for fifty-six years in transient, hybrid environments, did they preserve and invent a sense of Hawaiian 'home'?" (*ibid.*, 101-102). Though Trinidad Orisha music (TOM) in Brooklyn is buoyed by a significant Trinidadian cultural context and community, thus differing from the situation of the Moes, Orisha in Brooklyn resembles the Moes' story in that, in both cases, music allows for a reconstruction of home in a foreign context. Clifford also argues that those we think of as "natives" are often actually "travelers," reminding us that culture is a process no matter the

geographical and social context. Put another way, “cultural dwelling cannot be considered except in specific historical relations with cultural traveling, and vice versa” (ibid., 115). Culture doesn’t exist in a vacuum, but is rather subject to tensions between stability and change, stasis and motion.

A theory of culture in motion is important in considering the case of Trinidad Orisha for several reasons. First, the historical circumstances in which Orisha developed were specific to Trinidadian history, and that history is inscribed in the music and culture of the religion. Second, the growth of Trinidad Orisha in New York City highlights crucial concerns of Caribbeans in diaspora, including the challenge of remaking culture in new locations. Third, the tensions between innovation and tradition – as described in the previous chapter – generate a kind of movement within Orisha in the process of making and remaking it in Brooklyn as well as in Trinidad. Further, New York provides opportunities for interactions between Trinidad Orisha practitioners, other practitioners of African-based religions, and other immigrant groups. Trinidadians must navigate these new cultural encounters and “transient, hybrid environments” (Clifford 1992), negotiating and redefining their own identities vis-à-vis other ethnicities, cultures, and religions.

Immigration Patterns and Overview of the Community

In Caribbean New York, Kasinitz describes three waves of West Indian immigration to the United States, the third and largest of which began in 1965. In that year, the U.S. passed the Hart-Cellar Immigration Act, the results of which were dramatic: “In the ten years after the Hart-Cellar reforms went into effect, West Indian immigration exceeded that of the previous seventy years, and the numbers continued to grow after that” (Kasinitz 1992, 27). Prior to this law,

immigration to the U.S. was dominated by Europeans, but after Hart-Cellar, more immigrants came from other locations including the Caribbean. According to the U.S. Census of Population, in the U.S. in 1960, the foreign-born black population was 125,322, but by 1980, the number had increased to 815,720. In 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, the non-Hispanic foreign-born black population was 2,785,000, or slightly less than 1% of the U.S. population. Around 60% of that population came to the U.S. after 1990.

Population Group	New York City	Brooklyn	NY-NJ-CT-PA Combined Statistical Area
All groups reported	8,349,630	2,552,082	22,127,741
All non-Hispanic West Indians	610,838	313,103	941,750
Jamaican	224,374	82,958	357,569
Haitian	126,533	73,221	249,687
Trinidadian and Tobagonian	77,722	48,274	100,319
Puerto Rican	785,618	191,952	1,396,548
Dominican (Dominican Republic)	561,932	88,343	814,873
Cuban	42,377	n/a	145,843
Brazilian	n/a	n/a	74,798

7.1 Selected Population Profiles, Ethnic Groups in New York¹³¹

Behind Jamaicans and Haitians, Trinidadians are the third largest non-Hispanic West Indian group in Brooklyn (see Fig. 7.1).¹³² Since Trinidad is a relatively small nation, the

¹³¹ All data taken from 2007-2009 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates. (www.census.gov/acs). The groups shown in Fig. 2 represent the population groups most closely associated with African-based religion in New York – Santería (Cuba and Puerto Rico), Vodou and Vudú (Haiti and Dominican Republic), and Candomblé (Brazil) – and Jamaicans, the most numerous non-Hispanic West Indian group in New York. Population numbers less than twenty thousand are reported as not available (n/a). The NY-NJ-CT-PA Combined Statistical Area is given to show the greater presence of Cubans and Brazilians in the larger metropolitan area, as well as the concentration of Trinidadians in Brooklyn in comparison with other groups (*i.e.* nearly 50% of the total population of Trinidadians in the metropolitan area live in Brooklyn).

numbers of Trinidadians abroad make up a significant percentage of Trinidadians worldwide. Trinidad and Tobago has a population of just over 1.3 million, according to 2000 Trinidad Census data. In New York City, based on self-identified ethnicity, there are 77,000 Trinidadians, and nearly 50,000 of those live in the borough of Brooklyn. These numbers make clear the importance of “diaspora” in a discussion of Trinidadian culture. As Kasinitz puts it,

Few societies on earth have been as shaped by the movement of their people as those of the Caribbean. Subject to the chronic overpopulation, scarce resources, seclusion, and limited opportunities of small island nations, West Indians have utilized migration as a survival strategy whenever they were free to do so. In much of the Anglophone Caribbean, migration has become a normal and expected part of the adult life cycle, a virtual rite of passage. (Kasinitz 1992, 19-20)

Since migration to New York is “normal and expected” for many Trinidadians, an overall portrait of a people in motion begins to take shape. Kasinitz points to economic “survival” as a cause of immigration, but once those immigrants arrive, cultural survival is unquestionably important as well. The term “survival” is not meant here in a reactionary sense. Rather, as Trinidad Orisha practitioners travel in diaspora, they recreate Trinidad Orisha ceremonies and the communal performance of TOM, thus reconfiguring the diaspora and New York as well.

The majority of Trinidad Orisha ceremonies in Brooklyn take place in Trinidadian Spiritual Baptist churches,¹³³ most of which are located along Nostrand Avenue in the

¹³² In New York City overall, there are more Guyanese than Trinidadians. However, there are more Trinidadians in Brooklyn, while the Guyanese are mainly concentrated in Queens.

¹³³ There are other types of Spiritual Baptists in New York, e.g. those from St. Vincent who call themselves “the Converted” (see Zane 1999). Also, though the Orisha-Baptist community in Brooklyn is mainly Trinidadian, anecdotal evidence suggests there is some presence of other West Indians, including those from Grenada, Jamaica, and Guyana. For instance, an informant from Immanuel Spiritual House of Prayer on Eastern Parkway is Grenadian, and he came to New York in 1986. He told me that many people came to New York from Grenada during 1983-1990, when that country faced multiple conflicts. As another example, a prominent member of the Yoruba Orisha Baptist Church on Nostrand Avenue is Jamaican. A full survey of the

neighborhood of East Flatbush – though there are also regular services at locations in Flatbush, Bushwick, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Canarsie, and Crown Heights. (There is also one well-known Orisha shrine in Queens, at the New York home of calypsonian Lord Nelson.) In varying degrees, all of these neighborhoods have been transformed by post-1965 Caribbean immigrants to New York City. Crown Heights, encompassing several blocks on either side of the long multi-lane road known as Eastern Parkway, is perhaps the most distinctly West Indian area of Brooklyn, transformed in part due to a post-WWII white exodus related to the G.I. Bill. Since 1969, Eastern Parkway has been the setting for the annual West Indian American Day Parade during Labor Day weekend (before that, the parade was held in Harlem from 1947-1965). Today, Crown Heights is distinguished by a majority West Indian population and a minority Lubavitch Jewish community, the latter of which originally settled there in the 1940s. Though sharing the same neighborhood, the West Indian and Jewish groups live largely segregated from one another on adjacent blocks .

Stretching south from Eastern Parkway, Nostrand Avenue comprises the heart of the neighborhood of East Flatbush. In *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*, historians Jackson and Manbeck write that the addition of West Indian immigrants to the neighborhood of East Flatbush has generated “tremendous growth” since the 1980s (2004, 103). Today, the flavor of East Flatbush is decidedly Caribbean, in terms of food and also religion:

One of the most obvious changes in East Flatbush during this recent period of development has been the appearance of additional churches. Every block seems to hold at least one church: stores, homes – even movie theaters and meeting halls – have been transformed into houses of worship. During the summer months, many of these churches hold tent revivals in local parks, parking lots, and private homes. The music of these celebrations can be heard for blocks. (Jackson and Manbeck 2004, 105)

nationalities of the community might prove insightful in more accurately describing the Brooklyn Orisha-Baptist community, though it was beyond the scope of my research.

Within the West Indian neighborhoods of Brooklyn, it is easy to feel as though one has left New York City and arrived on a Caribbean island. The neighborhood residents express a strong sense of community and national pride, displaying the flags of their home countries especially as the Labor Day Carnival approaches. And the development of Caribbean restaurants, churches, and community musical organizations like steelpan yards shows the extent to which residents have recreated West Indies culture in Brooklyn. For example, as my drum teacher Earl Noel has told me, he doesn't need to go back to Trinidad for doubles (a favorite Trinidadian street food), because "I'm getting it right here!" On a more macro level, it is important to note that the development of West Indian neighborhoods in Brooklyn fits into residential patterns of black-white racial segregation across New York City. Nancy Foner points out that West Indians in New York face racial discrimination just as African Americans do, which impacts where they live, what types of jobs they do, where their children go to school, and in general what their social world looks like:

West Indians' lack of access to white neighborhoods – and the inevitable racial turnover that takes place when middle-class 'pioneers' move into white communities – confines most to areas with inferior schools, relatively high crime rates, and poor government services, and limits their informal contacts with whites. Outside of work (and sometimes at work as well), most West Indians find themselves moving in all-black, or largely black, social worlds. (Foner 2001, 12)

In terms of work, newly arrived West Indians have typically been involved mainly in the service and labor sectors of the New York economy (*ibid.*). My drumming informants do not, by and large, support themselves and their families with their music careers. Rather, they supplement any income (which is often very small) from music performances with work as sub-contractors and day laborers, painting apartments, and doing custodial or building maintenance work. Others work in social services, as nursing aides for the elderly at private homes or in

assisted living communities. Some of the church leaders I know make a living through the support of their churches, though one prominent Orisha-Baptist leader has recently opened a storefront in Bedford-Stuyvesant specializing in imported African goods, such as cowrie shells, fabrics, and other suchlike. Work is a constant concern in New York, and as one informant said, “You live in a country now where if you don’t get up to make your daily bread, you might end up out on the street to live.” Due to the mostly low-income work of my West Indian informants, compared with high living costs in New York City, communal living is the norm.

Compared with Trinidad, the Brooklyn Orisha community is small. One Orisha *mongwa* told me that he estimates there are currently twelve Orisha congregations in Brooklyn, and I have witnessed eight different men perform the functions of *mongwa* in Brooklyn. In the 2011 Orisha season (roughly from May to October) there were five scheduled feasts in Brooklyn, while there were four in 2010. For the sake of comparison, Houk counted 146 feasts in Trinidad during his year of fieldwork there (1995, 213). My own research in Trinidad leads me to believe that Houk’s estimate is high – at least for full feasts in recent years – and that the number is now closer to fifty. The Orisha scene in Brooklyn is clearly just a fraction of that in Trinidad, but the Brooklyn scene should not be viewed as a mere miniature of what goes on in Trinidad. Rather, the development of Orisha in Brooklyn is part of the broader culture in motion that is Trinidad Orisha. Orisha practice in Brooklyn is closely connected to the religion in Trinidad, due largely to the transnational movements of drummers, singers, and *mongwas* between Trinidad and New York, and the leaders of the Brooklyn Orisha community were all born in Trinidad, coming to New York after they had already begun their spiritual work in Trinidad.

Multiple informants have told me that the first Trinidadian to carry on Trinidad Orisha feasts in Brooklyn was the now-deceased Horace Pear, though I have not been able to find much

information on him. Aside from Pear, early leaders in Brooklyn Orisha were Selwyn Wilkinson, Reverend Andy Edwards, and the husband and wife Bishop and Mother Ashton, all of whom still constitute the senior leaders in the Orisha-Baptist congregations in Brooklyn. Selwyn Wilkinson, of Yoruba-Orisha Baptist Church, in fact often claims that he was the first to hold Trinidad Orisha feasts in Brooklyn. He began Sunday Spiritual Baptist services at his Trinidadian church in New York in 1974 on Carroll Street, and later moved the church to its current location on Nostrand Avenue. In addition to Spiritual Baptist activities, he began holding Orisha feasts there in the 1980s. During a February 2011 sermon at his church, Selwyn proclaimed, “I was the first to beat drum in America. ... Yuh think it easy? Come to America and beat drum, kill goat? And people say it’s evil, Shango people drink blood. I’ve never seen these things.”¹³⁴ His comments suggest a linkage with the stigmas against Trinidad Orisha that I described in chapters two and six, and serve as a reminder that when cultures travel, adversity is not necessarily left behind.

¹³⁴ Selwyn Wilkinson. Sermon at Yoruba-Orisha Baptist Church. 13 February 2011.



7.2 Earl Noel outside of Yoruba-Orisha Baptist Church, Nostrand Avenue, Brooklyn

Another Orisha pioneer and current leader in Brooklyn is known as Reverend Andy, a man whose short stature belies his powerful voice, a piercing and distinctive high tenor that makes him an excellent Orisha *chantwell*. Rev. Andy Edwards arrived in the United States in 1977 at the age of 19, having been initiated in Trinidad as a Spiritual Baptist and Orisha *mongwa* by the age of 16. Andy runs the Brotherhood of Man Church on Quincy Street in Bedford-Stuyvesant. On moving to the U.S., he first lived in New Jersey, where he carried on Orisha-Baptist activities starting in 1978, holding his first Baptist Thanksgiving in that year. In 1995, he began holding full Orisha feasts at the Brotherhood of Man location in Bed-Stuy every October, and annual “pilgrimages to the wilderness” every June. (Pilgrimages will be discussed later in the chapter.)

In the 1980s, around the same time that Selwyn Wilkinson began holding his Orisha feast on Nostrand Avenue, husband and wife Bishop Ashton and Mother Ashton started holding their feast annually in the basement of their Spiritual Baptist church, Mount Moriah, which is located on Nostrand Avenue, right at the heart of the Brooklyn Orisha scene. The Ashtons' feast is a mainstay in Brooklyn Orisha, and a brief snapshot of their church will help to outline a typical Spiritual Baptist and Orisha worship context in Brooklyn. Mount Moriah church is housed in an old brick apartment building, the bottom floor and basement of which have been converted for church use, while the Ashtons live on the upper two floors. The outside of the church is marked with a red and white sign, and a red painted iron fence encircles the perimeter. Inside the fence, to the left of the building, is a driveway stretching the length of the property. directly to the left of the gate, just inside the corner of the yard, a large clay pot holds a red flag on a pole for Ogun. There is also a space by the gate for Eshu, who is known as a messenger and a trickster. Prior to the feast, "sweet water" and ashes are brought outside in a ceremony to appease Eshu and keep him outside of the feast. Moving further down the driveway, there is a bulkhead which opens to the basement during a feast, and just outside this entryway a black pot is kept lit with glowing charcoal embers. The fire at the entrance purifies the air, important in case anyone brings any negative energy with them into the feast. The church houses a Spiritual Baptist congregation, and their main Orisha event is the feast in early June which lasts from Tuesday night to Saturday morning, and is followed by a pilgrimage on Sunday.

Brooklyn Orisha events generally happen in an annual pattern which could be thought of as a calendar. The last event on this calendar of events is typically the October feast at Rev. Andy's Brotherhood of Man Church, mentioned above. The first event, which is said to open the Orisha season in Brooklyn, is the single-night flag planting at Leader Gordon's Bushwick home

in May. (Some events might be held slightly earlier or later than these two; see, *e.g.*, my ethnography below). Gordon lives in a mainly residential neighborhood, and he says he doesn't keep a week-long feast out of respect for his neighbors. Leader Gordon moved from Trinidad to Brooklyn in the 1980s, where he joined Selwyn Wilkinson's congregation, and practiced as a *mongwa* under him. While he was growing up in Trinidad, Gordon's mother tried to keep him away from Orisha and Spiritual Baptist activities (though his godfather performed an Orisha offering for Gordon as a child). When his mother first found out that he is an Orisha *mongwa* in Brooklyn, Gordon told me that she

...started to bawl. She said, since you a baby, a little boy from small, I tried to keep you away from this. It takes you to leave your homeland, to come here and end up in the same thing I tried to keep you away from. Because it was what? As you would say, your destiny. You can't keep someone from a destiny, so you might as well teach your children. (*pers. comm.*)

Following Gordon's event each year, in early June there is a full Orisha feast put on by the Ashtons. After this, the next Brooklyn Orisha feast is held at the home of a man named Karl (a spiritual child of Rev. Andy), followed by Selwyn Wilkinson's feast at Yoruba Orisha Baptist Church, and finally, the feast at Rev. Andy's church. These feasts are interspersed with regular single-day (or night) events, most of which occur during the warm summer months.

Trinidad Orisha and Spiritual Baptist events require music – drumming, singing, or both – and so there is a stable group of musicians in New York who provide this support. Some of these drummers and singers split their time between New York and Trinidad, making the Orisha-Baptist music scene in New York transnational in terms of the physical movement of peoples between the two locations. Contrasting such transnationality, the main drummer on the New York Orisha scene – in terms of being most active – is Earl Noel, who lives with his wife, daughter, and stepson in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Earl occasionally goes back to Trinidad to visit, or

to work as a drummer, but lives full-time in Brooklyn where he drums at most of the main Trinidad Orisha events in Brooklyn. Earl Noel and the Brooklyn Trinidad Orisha music scene are the topics of the next section.

TOM in NYC

I first went to Trinidad in 2008, where I observed Trinidad Orisha services and interviewed Orisha members mainly from the perspective of the middle-class Orisha Movement (see chapter six). However, it was not until I moved with my family to Brooklyn, in 2009, that my field research began in earnest. In the spring of 2010, I met Earl Noel, who took me under his wing as a drum student. Earl took me to Trinidad Orisha events in Brooklyn throughout 2010 and told me that I would simply observe the drumming for that first year, with the expectation that I would perform as a drummer the following year. Earl wanted me to focus on learning the small *umele*, the drum which is played with a pair of sticks in a fast drumroll pattern. The following year (2011), at the behest of Earl I became a regular *umele* drummer at Trinidad Orisha ceremonies in Brooklyn, logging invaluable hours of ethnomusicological participant observation. I owe Earl an enormous debt of gratitude for introducing me to the Trinidad Orisha and Spiritual Baptist community in Brooklyn, and for giving me the experience and opportunity to learn TOM from a drummer's perspective.

Born in 1967, Earl Noel is from a Trinidadian neighborhood known as Gonzalez, a small urban section that is part of the black lower class communities east of Port of Spain, where Trinidad Orisha was mainly developed (see chapter two). Earl, of stout build and with dreadlocks extending past his waist, is the youngest of twelve children, six brothers and six sisters. One of his older brothers is Donald "Junior" Noel, a Trinidad Orisha drummer in Trinidad known for his

work on the Orisha recordings of Ella Andall. In Trinidad, Earl was part of a drumming crew that included Donald, and he learned and performed Orisha and hand drumming from a young age, bringing his drumming skills with him to New York in July of 1990, while on a tour as a drummer in a dance group. He got a one month visa, and decided to stay, eventually establishing legal residency in the United States. As he tells the story, “I just migrated here to America, and decide to stay one time. I just said, ‘what sense I going back Trinidad for? Let me stay and try and better myself here.’ There are more opportunities here. You know? So I just jump on the opportunity one time and come out here. They say America is the land of the free. You know? And a lot of opportunities in America here for each and every one. You just got to use it wisely” (*pers. comm.*). In 1996, Earl met his wife, Michelle, who is also from Trinidad (from close to where Earl grew up). Their teenage daughter Lashelle was born in New York, and in the past year Michelle’s twenty-one year old son Nigel (from a previous marriage) migrated from Trinidad to come to live with them, where he is studying to get an electrician’s license. Earl’s family unit, typical of West Indians in New York, encompasses various stages of transnationality.

When Earl initially came to Brooklyn in 1990 he found a small but busy Trinidad Orisha and Spiritual Baptist scene, with a lot of “older heads” who have since died, such as the Orisha drummers Dan, Perry, and Ruben. Earl participated in his first Brooklyn Orisha event in 1991, at Mother Ashton’s feast at Mount Moriah Spiritual Baptist Church, where he met other drummers his age, including Shaka, Boogie, Andy, and Eddie, and so Earl became an active participant from the start. Aside from his Brooklyn TOM performances, Earl also re-formed his Trinidad Carnival drumming group, Natural Expression, as a Trinidadian “rhythm section,” a large ensemble of drummers performing mainly calypso and soca-inspired drum pieces on an

assortment of snare drums, congas, timbales, iron percussion (mostly old automotive brake parts), steel drums,¹³⁵ and bass drums (fifty gallon steel barrels covered with animal hide and played with mallets). Each year Natural Expression performs all summer long at a “yard” (a parking lot between two houses) on Nostrand Avenue in East Flatbush, whence they venture out to play gigs around Brooklyn, culminating in the all-night J’Ouvert parade and subsequent West Indian American Day Parade on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn. Earl’s work as an Orisha and Carnival drummer entails many days and nights with odd hours, but he says, “Michelle [his wife] understands me being out drumming all the time, because I ent have no nine-to-five. But even if I did have a nine-to-five, I’d still be doing this, because I is this, and this is me” (*pers. comm.*).

In addition to his work as an Orisha drummer and with Natural Expression, Earl’s various drumming activities include building Trinidad Orisha drums (and sticks) and *djembes*, teaching drumming in an after-school program at a Brooklyn middle school, and performing as the regular hand drummer for Sunday services at a Spiritual Baptist church on Eastern Parkway. The leader of that church, Mother Daphne, told me the following story about hiring Earl as her regular Sunday drummer:

So Earl didn’t know me. He came into the church, with dreads, he had this drum [a *djembe*] in some sack, and just come and he opened the sack, pull out the drum, and he just start to beat. And that prayers is when I saw the light. I finish up the prayers, I ask him what is his price. He told me give him whatever, because in those days they didn’t use to pay drummers. I think they were abused. I’m the champion of abused people. So I give him sixty dollars, and that was a lot of money for him then. And that was the respect that I showed him. And after, everything I was gonna do, I always keep his number, and I kept him all this time. (*pers. comm.*)

¹³⁵ These rhythm section steel drums are not the chromatic tenor pans associated with the major steel bands in Trinidad, but are rather usually the drums known as *dudup*, oil drums hammered into two low pitches and played in a simple ostinato with a felt-covered mallet.

Earl's total musical activities keep him quite busy, but they don't necessarily add up to enough income to cover living expenses in New York, so he also does maintenance work in a school as well as in an apartment complex. Additionally, Earl recently secured a job as a superintendent in his family's apartment building, easing monthly rent concerns. Though working class life in West Indian Brooklyn is not necessarily easy from a financial point of view, Earl is comfortable in Brooklyn and has no intention of moving back to Trinidad. He told me, "I done make a life for myself here. Plus my family and all is here, Lashelle and Michelle. I done make a name for myself here already. A lot of people hear about me back in Trinidad you know! I here to stay. I like going back to visit" (*pers. comm.*).

Earl's main Trinidad Orisha drumming partner in Brooklyn is the *bo* drummer Michael "Obicey" Ettienne, who goes by the nickname "Small Junior." Ettienne (b. 1963) and Earl grew up together in Trinidad, as Ettienne was good friends with Earl's older brother Donald, and the three drummed together at Orisha feasts and Best Village competitions. Ettienne points to teachers like Andrew Beddoe and Selwin "Crow" Harvey as helping to develop their drumming, though he also makes the case that, when they were young, elder drummers were in no hurry to share their knowledge with the younger generation, and thus much of their learning was self-guided. Ettienne used to wear long dreadlocks like Earl, but he now keeps his hair closely shaved, preferring to cover his head most days with a New York Yankees cap. Ettienne comes from a musical family. His father Andre started the Andre Ettienne Dance Company in Trinidad, a folk performance group that is still operational in Trinidad despite Andre's death. Michael Ettienne's son, Levi, is a prominent tenor pannist with the BP Renegades Steel Orchestra in Trinidad. A younger son is currently learning to play the traps.

Ettienne first came to New York in 1982, but he went back to Trinidad, later returning and settling in Brooklyn in 2000, first in East New York and then in Flatbush (right around the corner from Earl), though he did not initially know that there was an active Trinidad Orisha community in Brooklyn. In an interview in 2012, Ettienne told me about his experience of going to his first feast in Brooklyn, in 2001:

When I meet Earl, my first feast was by Ashton [in 2001]. I didn't even know they used to have feast and thing in America, and I coming out here since '82, but I ain't hearing about that. Because they never bring it out in the open. I going in Prospect Park years, and I never see a Baptist prayers in the park. I know they had Baptist church, and I did know Leader Selwyn [Wilkinson], because my mother, my aunt, all of them used to attend that church. But up to now I didn't know they used to have Orisha feast and them thing going on. Killing, and goat, and fowl, and them thing. I didn't know that until I bounce up there [with Earl] and he said let we go a feast. When he said let we go a feast I thought it was a Thanksgiving. I didn't know it was animal killing, and Orisha drum playing, and people catching power. It was amaze to me. So it was so good and feel good to me, well, yo, what? It had feast? Well now I ain't going no party. That is my party. And me and he [Earl] going whole week. (*pers. comm.*)

Ettienne is now deeply involved in the Trinidad Orisha community in Brooklyn. When Sugar Aloes comes for the feast and Labor Day season in Brooklyn, he stays at the Flatbush home of Michael Ettienne. And each year Ettienne holds a one-night Orisha prayers at his home. He keeps the annual prayers, he told me, because of spiritual messages he received from the *orishas* themselves. He told me that, in Trinidad, when he was seventeen years old (ca. 1980) he went to an Orisha feast and was told by a manifesting spirit that he should keep an Orisha prayers. He never did, until he came to Brooklyn and received the same message again from another manifesting *orisha*, which, for Ettienne, proved the validity of the manifestation (it was “no joke spirit”) and impressed upon him the importance of holding his prayers in Brooklyn:

So you see I was supposed to do it on my 18th birthday. Never did. All that time passed, never study that. Came out here, the third night of the feast, this spirit come and tell me, yo, ting ting ting. The same prayers that the spirit in Trinidad they give me to do, the

same prayers they come to tell me about again you know. So which part that proves that wasn't no joke spirit. Because that spirit don't know me. I don't know that person. And that was since seventeen years old. So I say look, let me put myself together and get myself together and do this, because it's for them. I not doing it for me, or the neighbor, or my friend, I doing it for me and the *orishas*. (*pers. comm.*)

In our conversation, Ettienne told me that he thanks “God for the elders like Sugar Aloes and certain ones, these people and them who bring it out and cross the waters with it, in America, they pave the way.” He also credits Earl Noel with “crossing the waters” with Trinidad Orisha drumming, making a point that his drumming comes direct from Trinidad, saying “Earl is a man come up here with he culture.” According to Ettienne, the work of Earl (and of Ettienne himself) now allows for the education of the next generation of drummers in Brooklyn:

I was glad to see Earl still carrying on the drumming out here. It does have people out there [in Brooklyn] say they is drummer and Earl, Earl is the man had them out there playing drum. Because when he come out here it hardly had drummers. It hardly had drummers. So when people talking about this and that and that, Earl is a man come up here with he culture, nobody never teach he nothing here. He never go to no school here to learn nothing. We come with we natural talent here. And eh! If we was selfish people we keep we talent to weself and don't show nobody how to play a drum. Allyuh fight up on allyuhself! Because is so we get it. Nobody ain't take the time and show, and even though we had money to pay, nobody wouldn't have no time to sit down and teach we nothing. Y'understand? And people getting it real nice here. (*pers. comm.*)

Ettienne points out that the Trinidad Orisha drummers in Brooklyn are a main reason that TOM in New York City is consistent with the music as practiced in Trinidad. Earl and Ettienne learned drumming in the black working class neighborhoods east of Port of Spain, along with Donald Noel, who now drums in Trinidad Orisha feasts and on the Orisha recordings of Ella Andall, and who often comes to Brooklyn as well. In 1998, Earl paid for part of a plane ticket so that Donald could come to Brooklyn to play Orisha drums during the summer feast season as well as in the Natural Expression rhythm section for the Labor Day Carnival. Donald came each year after that (though due to various reasons he hasn't been back since 2010). As I showed in

chapter two, the transmission of TOM as oral culture has relied to a large degree on the contributions of and connections between certain prominent musicians and other important individuals. The testimonies of Earl Noel and Michael Ettienne, and the connections between Earl, Ettienne, and Donald, and elders like Andrew Beddoe and Crow, show the importance of prominent individuals not only in the transmission of oral culture through history, but also in its reconstruction through (transnational) space, from Trinidad to Brooklyn.

In the next section, I present an excerpt from my field journal concerning the first Brooklyn Orisha events I attended with Earl Noel and Michael Ettienne. At that point, my role was as observer, not drummer. Happening in April, these events were early in the Orisha calendar – they both occurred before Gordon’s May flag planting – and thus they show some of the flexibility of Brooklyn Orisha community events. The excerpt can be compared to my description of the 2008 Ogun Festival at Lester Osouna’s Orisha shrine in Febeau Village, Trinidad. While that experience was representative of the middle-class Orisha Movement (McNeal 2011), the following Brooklyn experiences included, to borrow Ettienne’s words: “animal killing, and Orisha drum playing, and people catching power.”



7.3 Earl Noel and Michael Ettienne

Field Journal: A Flag Planting and a One Night Feast

In April 2010, Earl Noel asked me to pick him up at 10:00 p.m. to go to a “flag planting.” He told me to try and wear a red shirt, but above all else not to wear black, which is associated with evil in an Orisha context. Earl wore a short sleeve red button down shirt, baggy long jean shorts, bright white Adidas sneakers and an oversized red Yankees cap to fit over his thick, dreads, which were tied up in a white cloth, and he got in the car and directed me to *bo* drummer Michael Ettienne’s house, just a few blocks away. Ettienne got in the car, wearing jean shorts and sneakers as well, and a bright white t-shirt. Over his closely trimmed hair, he wore a black skull cap, and over that a navy blue Yankees cap. We then picked up a third drummer, Eddie, who wore jeans and a plaid button down shirt, with no cap over his shaved head.

Once assembled, we went to the flag planting ceremony at the apartment of a man named Kelvin. A flag planting is an annual ceremony with music, food, and prayers, in which flags are planted for the “saints” (Earl’s terminology). Normally, the flags would be planted in the earth outside, but this ceremony took place in an apartment building where all of the furniture had been removed, and the flags would be planted in four big flower pots filled with several bags of organic potting soil. There might normally be lots of flags at such an event, but at this ceremony there were only four – one each for Ogun, Shakpana, Debok/Vigoyana, and Oshun. Earl played the lead Orisha drum, Ettienne the *bo*, and Eddie the *umele*. Led by *mongwa* Leader Gordon, the service started around 10:30pm, with some Catholic prayers (in fact, we said the Rosary), then Baptist hymns, and then the Litany of *orishas* (in which each *orisha* is called out in order, in non-metered time), and then Rotation songs in straight Orisha rhythms. Leader Gordon, with a long black beard and braided dreads, was dressed in long brown priestly robes, and he sang in a distinctive, gruff, loud voice with a tight and fast vibrato.

During the flag planting, the following actions took place: each wooden flag pole was held off the ground and rubbed down with oil, while specific drum rhythms were played for the particular *orisha*. For each flag, a chicken was sacrificed (there in the apartment) by quickly cutting through the neck with a sharp knife, and the blood and feet were put in the pot along with the dirt. The flag – solid red fabric with esoteric white symbols drawn on – was then slid onto the pole, and planted in the pot. At about 1:00am, the ceremony was over, and we ate a meal. Though the event started off small, with only about fifteen people to begin, by the end there were roughly twice as many, filling the apartment with Trinidadians young, old, and in between. After eating, we left this event to go to another one, a one-night feast at Mount Moriah Church.¹³⁶

When we arrived at Mount Moriah at about 2:00am, there were some people milling around outside. Especially distinctive were two women standing out front dressed in long sleeve blouses, floor-length skirts with aprons, and headties, all in matching bright fabrics. We entered the open gate to the driveway, where more people were standing, and headed to the bulkhead leading to the basement, outside of which a small black pot of coals was burning. We went down through the bulkhead, I trying not to hit my head on the low door frame by doing a sort of limbo maneuver backwards. At the bottom of the stairs was another small pot of coals, and a doorway on the right leading to a kitchen, a bathroom, and a little room off to the side which contained an impressive array of ritual objects: a trio of Orisha drums; statues of the Virgin Mary, Jesus, St. Francis, and St. Michael; candles and goblets; several sharp-looking cutlasses; plates holding mixtures of dried beans and rice; flowers; a turtle shell; and a whole host of objects for the *orishas* when they manifest, such as whisk brooms, wooden swords, daggers, axes, and anchors. This room serves as the *chapelle*.

¹³⁶ This event was not the annual Mount Moriah feast put on by Bishop and Mother Ashton. Rather, the church space was rented for the occasion by the organizer, *mongwa* Brooks Baker.

Coming back to the entryway, to the left was a hallway about fifteen feet long, after which opened the main room for the feast, a low-ceilinged space about thirty feet by forty feet, with a tile floor. At the far end of the room, against the wall, were the drummers, surrounded by dozens of people clapping and singing under the direction of the *mongwa* Leader Brooks. On the floor in front of the drums were various objects: a calabash with some grains in it; another with water; several candles; bottles of olive oil, Manischewitz wine, honey, and Puncheon rum; Florida water and other perfumes; and a clay goblet. When we got there, I counted roughly 80 people packed in this basement, and more people came in over the next hour or two, so there must have been over 100 people. This feast consisted of nearly nonstop singing, occasionally interrupted by the recital of Catholic prayers, and it was still going on we left at 6:00am. Leader Brooks stalked about the room, making sure everyone was clapping and singing, calling out the songs with a strong raspy voice that reminded me of James Brown. There was an Oshun manifestation (on Brooks' wife, I found out later) which continued the entire time I was there, so there were lots of songs for Oshun. Oshun did various things, including carry a wooden cutout of an anchor to the four corners of the room, move about in fish-like motions (like a mermaid, Earl explained), and pour water over herself. The anchor, mermaid, and water symbolize that Oshun is a water spirit.

The congregation had a pretty even mix of men and women, and consisted of a wide range of age groups. Old women sat in chairs against the walls, often with babies and small children on their laps. There were many teenagers and young adults singing and clapping vigorously. Except for the elderly and small children, most everyone stood for the entire ceremony, resting occasionally by sitting or going outside for air. All of the women were dressed in floor length skirts, long sleeve shirts, and headties. Most wore Spiritual Baptist clothes, solid

color fabrics with wide collared blouses and aprons over skirts, while some wore bright colored African fabrics. The men were less uniform in their dress. Some wore the Baptist long sleeve shirts with loose fitting pants in solid colors, while a couple wore Nigerian style dashikis with matching pants. Others, like Earl, wore jeans or shorts with white or red t-shirts. People did not dance in a coordinated fashion (such as the group dances one might see at a Santería ceremony), but rather danced in their own personal style, or simply stood and clapped, as most were wont to do.

In addition to Leader Brooks there were two other *chantwells* – a man named Dedan and a woman named Amoy (Brooks' sister) – who took over for long stretches as well. Their singing was very good, each *chantwell* with a distinctive style – in terms of timbre, ability, and also melodic variation. Dedan, with his long cornrow dreads, sang from deep within his chest, his head tilted up toward the ceiling. Amoy, dressed in a matching pink dress and headtie, sang in a powerful and deep alto with a slight vibrato. I'm not sure exactly how many songs were sung, but there were lots, all in the Trinidad Yoruba language. Some songs were repeated throughout the night, many which I had heard previously in Trinidad. But everyone in the place knew the songs.

After I dropped Earl at his apartment building, a little after six in the morning, I reflected on the cultural world I had just been invited to. While most of Brooklyn was asleep, devoted groups of Trinidadians were spending the night gathered in communal music making, which brought them into contact with the spirit world in the form of *orisha* manifestations, and linked them with the cultural practices of their friends and relatives in the Caribbean, some of whom were no doubt singing and drumming the same music at the very same time.

Negotiating the Diaspora: Locking the Doors and Accessing the Earth

One of the main differences between the practice of Orisha in Trinidad and in Brooklyn is the necessity of locking the doors during the “blood offering” – animal sacrifice. Prior to this type of offering, a *mongwa* will often warn the congregation, giving people a chance to leave if they so choose. For instance, at the 2011 Mount Moriah feast in Brooklyn, at 2:40am on Friday morning (the offering usually happens around 3:00am), Sugar Aloes addressed the congregants, warning them that the door would have to be closed, but also urging people to stay, saying, “At this time, if anybody want to leave, allyuh could leave now because we going and close the door. No me ain’t tell allyuh go you know!” The reason for locking the door is related to restrictions on killing animals in New York. While Trinidad has minimal government regulations, in the U.S. one must obtain a license with the Department of Agriculture in order to kill animals for consumption. Orisha practitioners in New York are thus wary of interactions with authorities (even though I have heard no reports of people actually being fined for killing animals without a license).

Michael Manswell is artistic director of the Brooklyn-based Afro-Trinidadian dance group, Something Positive, and he is also part of the Orisha scene in Brooklyn. (Manswell is discussed later in this chapter.) He told me:

I’ve been to a feast where we were slaying the sheep for Shango and the police were all around. I didn’t even realize that they were there, and my friend, he’s now ibaye [i.e., deceased], Ernie, says ‘you’d better have your ID on you this morning.’ I said, ‘why?’ He says, ‘look up!’ I looked up and there they were, because the neighbors had complained. They [said they] heard children crying [which was the sound of the sheep]. And we had locked the door. And so they couldn’t get in. We were in the back, they were in the front. We couldn’t hear them. It was happening, they came ‘round. ... And so people are concerned always, about that. And so it’s generally indoors. (*pers. comm.*)

At the same time, Manswell acknowledges that, for the most part, the police leave Orisha practitioners alone in New York, surmising that there could be a “greater tolerance” for diverse cultural practices than there once may have been. Along those lines, Leader Gordon told me that when he began holding his annual May flag planting (which begins at about midnight) neighbors would call the police, but the police might only ask “when all you finishing, and they might say, well, play the drums a little bit softer” (*pers. comm.*). Gordon says the Brooklyn police are, for the most part, respectful.

Walter, an Orisha-Baptist Leader in Canarsie, also talks of attending a feast in Brooklyn and experiencing neighbors throwing full cans of food at the house because of the drumming. Walter describes problems with Orisha worship in Brooklyn as related to a lack of “freedom.” He says “it doesn’t have that freedom, where you can freely go out to your front yard, or your backyard, or wherever, your *perogun* or stool, as some people refer to, where you have your flags and do your offering. You would have to be confined to the basement. You have to lock the doors” (*pers. comm.*).

Walter’s phrasing – confined to the basement – suggests a certain level of resentment at the position of being Orisha in New York. Some Trinidadians feel persecuted by the notion of having to hide, not being able to practice their religion as openly as they can in Trinidad. On many occasions, I have heard Trinidad Orisha practitioners in Brooklyn compare themselves to the Lubavitcher Jews in Brooklyn, whom they see as receiving preferential treatment from authorities. According to this narrative, the Lubavitcher group in Brooklyn holds an annual blood sacrifice out in the street while the police look on, doing nothing to interfere.¹³⁷ The implication

¹³⁷ Trinidadians are probably referring to *kaparot*, a ceremony in which a live chicken is killed as a carrier for sins right before Yom Kippur. Lubavitcher Jews block off a street in Crown Heights for the performance of this ceremony. Many Jews simply give to charity instead.

is that Trinidadians are wrongfully persecuted, perhaps because they are black. (Afro-Trinidadians are clearly not immune to the racial politics of the United States, a subject touched on earlier.) Such a narrative may hold truth, but it is also symptomatic of the close contact between ethnic neighborhoods in Brooklyn. In Crown Heights, particularly, Lubavitchers and West Indians are the main population groups, and they have had a mercurial history living side by side. Perhaps the most famous flare-up of tensions occurred in August 1991 when a driver in a Lubavitcher motorcade ran over and killed a 7-year-old Guyanese boy, which led to West Indian rioting (see Scher 1999; Logan 1991).

Trinidad Orisha practitioners are thus faced with feelings of persecution and confinement, of competition and tension with other ethnic groups, of struggles navigating the regulations and rules of a foreign land – in essence, problems common to the situation of being immigrants. One important strategy for dealing with these issues is in harnessing the perceived spiritual power of the natural elements – especially dirt – and music to bring about spirit possession. Another strategy is by traveling, whether spiritually, as in spirit possession, or physically, in pilgrimages to public spaces and back home to Trinidad; musicians are among the most common travelers. Such strategies help to reconstruct home in the diaspora.

In Brooklyn, a formal Orisha compound is usually found in a Spiritual Baptist church basement (although there are exceptions). This is different from Trinidad, where a typical Orisha compound is mostly outdoors, and consists of three main ritual areas: A *palais*, a structure with a roof and open on the sides, where the main ceremonies take place; a *chappelle*, where ritual objects are stored and certain sacrifices are performed; and an area for “stools,” shrines to the *orishas*, sometimes called a *perogun*, where flags are planted in dirt and libations are made for the *orishas*. By contrast, in Brooklyn, the *palais* is usually the basement, and this is where blood

sacrifices happen. There is usually a small room somewhere in the church that serves as a *chappelle*, and the “stools” might be in the backyard or simply combined in with the *palais*.¹³⁸

Due to restrictions in America on killing animals, a full Orisha feast must take place in a private, often constricted space. Orisha practitioners deal with this situation by coming as close to the “natural” elements as possible. Rev. Andy points out that the four elements, “earth, wind, water, and fire,” are present at Orisha feasts, such as in a calabash of water and candles used in Orisha feasts. Andy says, “When you going to the most high, you get as natural as you can” (*pers. comm.*). Orisha drums are an important aspect of such naturalness. The drums and sticks are never factory made, and Orisha drummers debate the introduction of new building materials in making them. Two drummers in Trinidad illustrate the point: Crow, an older drummer, will only use a drum made with wooden rings. Redman, a younger drummer, uses drums with metal rings, which are much more durable. Still, Redman justifies the usage of metal rings by pointing out that metal is the domain of Ogun, and so it is consistent with the natural energy of the *orishas*.

In chapter six, I noted how Ella Andall (the Trinidadian popular singer who has been recording Trinidad Orisha songs since 1999) told me that in her music making she emphasizes the *natural* and the *organic*. In a similar way, people at feasts often discuss the “natural vibration” created by the Orisha drums. (Earl Noel’s percussion group name of Natural Expression extends the “natural” trope further.) It is this “vibration” that brings on a spirit possession. Earl Noel refers to this vibration as the creation of a feeling of “joy.” He says,

It’s like a joy. The singing and the drumming have to come as one for you to pull spirit. The drumming pull spirit. Sometime the singing alone pull spirit. ... The singing and the drumming, it had to be as one. If it’s not as one, nothing ain’t bound to come. You could

¹³⁸ The names of these buildings serve as a reminder that French-Creole was the common language of Africans in colonial Trinidad.

play drum whole night and sing and nothing ain't come. Everybody had to be as one.
(*pers. comm.*)

“Pulling a spirit,” as Earl puts it, thus requires the creation and maintenance of the right atmosphere.

A key element in the creation of that natural, organic atmosphere is in making contact with the earth, which Orisha practitioners do in various ways during ceremonies. For one, congregants reach down to touch the ground at their feet during key points in Orisha services, such as whenever the name of Mama Laterre – “the mother of the earth” – is called. Also, before a feast begins on Tuesday night, a sword for the orisha Ogun must be placed directly in the ground, which can be accomplished in New York by digging up a basement floor tile (fig. 7.4). The sword has a special role in the ceremony. It is placed just a few feet in front of the drummers, and the feast cannot conclude on Saturday morning until Ogun manifests on an Orisha devotee and pulls the sword out of the ground.



7.4 Ogun’s sword, planted in the ground in front of the Orisha drum trio at Mount Moriah in Brooklyn. Note the section of floor tiles that has been removed in order to expose the earth.

In addition to digging up a floor tile, reaching the earth while indoors can also be accomplished by digging up all or part of the concrete in the basement. For instance, at the Brotherhood of Man church the basement floor is intact except for a small area reserved for initiations and mourning. Even simply holding a ceremony in the basement is better than on upper floors, because of the closer proximity to the dirt. I asked Leader Walter about this, and he explained it as follows:

Walter: Even though you're standing on the concrete, it's like you're still standing on the earth.

RB: You're closer to it.

Walter: You're still closer to the earth. It's more difficult. The preparation has to be more because you're pulling, to get that real strength of the *orisha*. It's a little more work.

RB: Manifestations come more easily when you're standing directly on the ground?

Walter: Yeah, when you're standing on the ground. Because remember that we are, *orisha* is of the earth. And our body is made of the earth. So you find that the *orisha* try to come and sit and settle, and it doesn't happen because of the fact that they are not getting on the earth properly. So even though when people go fasting and praying, mourning, the first time, you always hear that old rumor that your first time you must go on the earth. And if they don't probably eventually go to Trinidad they find somewhere where they can at least lay on the earth. For that connection, where the force is stronger. (*pers. comm.*)

Another strategy for connecting with the earth, and also for dealing with feelings of confinement, is in taking pilgrimages¹³⁹ to public parks. In June 2010, Mount Moriah Spiritual Church organized a pilgrimage that included six chartered buses to Croton Point Park on the

¹³⁹ A *pilgrimage* is a formal Orisha event, and usually happens on the Sunday following a feast. An all-day event, sometimes the ceremonies are exclusively Spiritual Baptist, sometimes a mix of Baptist and Orisha. The location varies, but it is usually held in a public park, often in either upstate New York or Long Island. Often the church will charter buses and sell tickets to congregants.

Hudson River, just north of New York City, on the Sunday following its annual Orisha feast. The gathering of around 300 people arrived at the park at 2:00 pm. and held a Spiritual Baptist service for the rest of the day. The service was strictly Spiritual Baptist – rather than Orisha – but participants were dressed in their full Baptist/African clothes, and the singing was accompanied by the Orisha drummers from the feast, albeit on hand drums. The public park was very busy that day, and the Trinidadians in their beautiful and brightly colored clothes certainly stood out visually as well as aurally, showing a way that the Orisha-Baptist community in New York maintains a public presence.

Public Orisha pilgrimage ceremonies have a precedence in Trinidad going back at least to 1990, when a nationally televised “Oshun Festival” was carried out on a beach in the northeastern town of Salybia by members of a prominent Orisha Movement group. About this event in Trinidad, anthropologist Keith McNeal writes,

Drawing practitioners from multiple shrines in the bright light of day, the Oshun Festival established a new local tradition of offering a federated public ‘table’ for the feminine orisha or beauty, fertility, and water, including cakes, fruits, olive oil, flowers, and so on, to be washed out to sea at high tide. (McNeal 2011, 272)

A very similar event was held by Rev. Andy’s Brooklyn-based Brotherhood of Man Spiritual Church, which led a pilgrimage in commemoration of the *orisha* Oshun to Hempstead State Park in Long Island in July 2010. With roughly 150 people present, the pilgrimage was an Orisha affair, beginning with a water ceremony for Oshun in which flowers and other offerings were launched on floats out into the lake, to the accompaniment of Orisha drumming and song, and then followed by a full Orisha service with Orisha drums (played by Earl Noel, Donald Noel, and Michael Ettienne) and spirit possessions (though there were no animal sacrifices).

Aside from these elaborate field trips involving the chartering of buses and transporting food and drink for hundreds of participants, a more common public Orisha activity for West

Indians in Brooklyn is holding services in Prospect Park in Brooklyn. In the summertime, Prospect Park is a common gathering place for practitioners of African-based religions in New York. For instance, the following picture (fig. 7.5) shows a Haitian Vodou ceremony I attended in August 2011. The event was a commemoration of the Haitian revolution, and included drumming, singing, and spirit possession.



7.5 Haitian Vodou ceremony in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, August 2010. Photo credit: Calvin Hennick.

Trinidadians likewise hold Spiritual Baptist and Orisha events in Prospect Park during the summer, reserving covered areas or simply setting up a table in an open space, as in the following picture (fig. 7.6). At a one day Orisha prayers presided over by Bishop Dedan, I played *umele* and *bo*, and the event featured multiple manifestations of the *orishas* Osain, Oya, and

Yemanja, including an Osain (manifesting on Dedan) who danced fiercely with the sharp end of a cutlass in his mouth. The event went on while other park-goers milled around engaged in their own activities, or coming close to watch the ceremony.



7.6 Trinidad Orisha prayers in Prospect Park, June 2011. Photo credit: Sara Monsonis.

Another kind of pilgrimage is made by traveling back to Trinidad. A Brooklyn-based Spiritual Baptist congregation, Immanuel House of Prayer, has held a Thanksgiving in Fyzabad, Trinidad for three consecutive years, from 2010 to 2012, and is currently preparing for another pilgrimage in 2013. For this pilgrimage, Mother Daphne, the leader of the church, has bought plane tickets for several members of the church as well as their regular church drummer, Earl Noel. Mother Daphne says that hiring Earl for this pilgrimage is imperative, because the music is

very important to her; with Earl, she knows that she will have high quality drumming (see her comment earlier in this chapter, about hiring Earl as her church drummer). Mother Daphne says that she received instructions to hold this Thanksgiving from the Holy Spirit, and thus the common diaspora motivation to connect with the homeland is given spiritual weight.

Aside from group trips, many Trinidadians in New York return to Trinidad individually, most frequently for Carnival, but also for spiritual reasons. Leader Walter, for instance, spent the entire month of July 2011 in Trinidad, attending two major feasts and working with his home congregation in St. Helena. Walter says:

Some people go so far as to make yearly trips to Trinidad, because you find that they want to get that “current,” so to speak. So they make these yearly visits, and they go down there where they could probably go and fast and pray, probably by laying on the earth. Or they could do their ceremony and they know that they’re standing on the earth. They recharge themselves. They would go, come back, and you find that they would probably last for a year, so to speak, and then they go again and they keep recharging, at least one person, maybe the head [of the church], whoever is the main person. They recharge themselves and then they come back again. (*pers. comm.*)

“Recharging” one’s spiritual energy is cultivated by connecting with the natural, the earth in Trinidad, and these examples show how connecting with natural elements – in Trinidad and in Brooklyn – is considered spiritually powerful for Trinidad Orisha practitioners.

A typical West Indian community in motion, physical travel is a reality for many Trinidad Orisha practitioners, so long as they can afford it. Certain Orisha drummers and singers travel frequently between New York and Trinidad, for instance the calypsonian and *mongwa* Sugar Aloes, and the drummer Donald Noel (Earl Noel’s older brother). Unlike the musicians I have described who work solely in New York, both Aloes and Donald earn their livelihoods by performing back and forth between the two locations, participating in Trinidad’s Carnival in February, and Brooklyn’s Carnival on Labor Day. And since Trinidad holds a spiritual power in

the minds of Orisha practitioners, these transnational musicians have a certain cachet when they participate in feasts in New York. Even for individuals in New York who cannot travel to Trinidad regularly, twenty-first century communication technologies of the Internet and cell phones makes Trinidadian family and friends very close. Facebook “friends” share pictures of their Orisha and Spiritual Baptist events in New York and Trinidad, and cheap international cell phone plans make calling between the two locations as affordable as a domestic call. For example, Earl Noel regularly talks on the phone to his Trinidadian Orisha drumming compatriots, his brother Donald, and his friend Redman. These physical and electronic transnational connections help to keep Trinidad and Brooklyn closer than the miles separating them might suggest.

Michael Manswell and Brooklyn Orisha in the Public Sphere

As in Trinidad, the comprehensive world of Brooklyn Orisha music and culture goes beyond the private ritual singing, drumming, and trance at Orisha feasts, extending into public and secular spheres such as lectures and staged folkloric dancing. I first met Earl Noel after seeing him perform with Michael Manswell in a lecture on Shango at the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCCADI), on 58th Street in Manhattan.¹⁴⁰ (When Earl first came to New York, he used to play drums in Manswell’s folkloric dance group, Something

¹⁴⁰ Founded in 1978 by Dr. Marta Moreno Vega, CCCADI is a non-profit group “dedicated to promoting and promulgating the cultures of people of African Descent ... [t]hrough concerts, gallery tours, workshops, performances, conferences, professional development sessions, spiritual gatherings, and teaching artists residencies” (<www.cccadi.org>). Organizations such as CCCADI help foster a positive environment in New York for African-based religions such as Trinidadian Orisha, through their efforts at education and promotion. A main goal of CCCADI is the unification of the various African-based religions in New York and throughout the African diaspora, as demonstrated by frequent events such as the “Gathering The Houses of Traditional African-Based Religions & Belief Systems,” bringing together leaders and practitioners of Cuban Santería, Haitian Vodou, and Brazilian Candomblé, among others.

Positive.) Manswell's CCCADI lecture, titled "Shango," was a short history on the music of the Orisha religion in Trinidad, and his lecture was punctuated by musical interludes, in which he sang Orisha songs while Earl played Orisha rhythms.

Michael Manswell is an important public face of Afro-Trinidadian music and culture in Brooklyn. He is a singer and performance artist who promotes Afro-Trinidadian music and dance through lectures as well as through his work as director of the folkloric dance group, Something Positive. By his own account, Manswell grew up in a middle-class family in northwest Trinidad, and after discovering at age 8 that he had a knack for performance (especially singing), he became something of a child prodigy, qualifying in various arts competitions in Trinidad, impressing audiences with European operatic singing (he mentioned Handel's "Where'er You Walk" as a favorite piece), and later touring Europe as a teen. In his late teens, one of Manswell's dance instructors took him and several other students to a Shango feast, Manswell's first real exposure to the ceremonies of the Orisha religion; in his middle-class background, attending Catholic schools in Trinidad, he'd only had passing contact with Orisha before then. Now, seeing the music and dance of the Trinidadian African-based faith, Manswell says that his artistic vision began to take shape:

After that I just became totally interested because this seemed to be where all the training was leading. It seemed to be leading to this form, at least for now, because I was finding a place where I was amazed at the quality of the dance. Coming from that typical classical training of modern and ballet, you come to a folkloric form, done by people that have no training, and they're not thin, they're not concerned with their body structure, they're just in it. There's all this marvelous music, all this drumming, all this singing, and then there's dancing *as well*? So I came to that in that way. (*pers. comm.*)

Manswell's comments suggest an aesthetic interest in the religion – much like Beryl McBurnie decades before in Trinidad – as he calls Orisha a "marvelous," "folkloric form," and through such interest Manswell also discovered in himself a spiritual awakening: "Eventually,

not only was I interested in the form, but I was also interested in the religion, and so in 1987 I was initiated, and soon after initiation I came to live in New York.”

Something Positive was founded by the Trinidadian performing artist Cheryl Byron, a Spiritual Baptist and former student of Pearl Primus who was also a pioneer of the Trinidadian *rapso* music genre. Byron migrated to New York as a student at the New School and then City College. Manswell took over Something Positive’s direction following Byron’s death in 2003. The Facebook page for Something Positive states that the group is “a vibrant, intergenerational, community based, not-for-profit arts and education organization dedicated to the art and culture of the African Diaspora and its cross-cultural influences through performance and education.” While emphasizing generally the “African Diaspora” in their promotional information, Something Positive’s performances usually highlight specifically Afro-Trinidadian music and folkloric dance, including calypso, bélé, and Orisha drumming.

To give an example of a Something Positive dance performance, on June 6th, 2010, the group put on a program in tribute to Cheryl Byron (d. 2003) at Long Island University’s Kumble Theater for the Performing Arts, on Flatbush Avenue, in Brooklyn. The show began with a piece called “Ritual Invocation,” in which Manswell sang some praise-songs for the “ancestors,” including Byron (in Yoruba-based philosophy, those who die become ancestors). He was accompanied by a quartet of percussionists: three Orisha drummers, and one drummer playing various percussion instruments, including calabash (gourd filled with seeds). The second piece was titled “Saracca,” inspired by the Caribbean phenomenon of a nation dance,¹⁴¹ in which Something Positive performed multiple rhythms and dances, each one representing a particular African ethnic group. Following this, the group performed a dance set to four songs by the

¹⁴¹ Similar to the Big Drum ritual in Carriacou (see McDaniel 1998b).

African American jazz singer and pianist, Nina Simone. After an intermission, a piece called “Ancestral Chant” featured Trinidad Orisha music and dance: the drumming and songs were typical of an Orisha ceremony, and the dancing simulated spirit possession dances, such as a Shango dancer who stomped his feet and carried an ax. The final piece of the night featured three Afro-Trinidadian folkloric drum-and-dance genres which Manswell referred to as “staples of anyone from Trinidad and Tobago”: bélé, congo-bélé, and piqué.

The above description of a Something Positive dance performance shows multiple aspects of the Brooklyn Orisha scene. For one, the performance connects the Trinidad Orisha scene in Brooklyn with a long history of folkloric Shango performances in Trinidad, beginning with Beryl McBurnie (see chapter two). The description also shows how Manswell’s group combines Afro-Trinidadian with Afro-American music in an overall Afrocentric approach to music and diaspora. This Afrocentricity recalls the chapter six discussion of 1970s post-Black Power Trinidad, which saw the beginnings of the Orisha Revival and sociopolitical legitimacy of Trinidad Orisha. As Frances Henry (2003) argues, part of the legitimacy of Orisha has come from its association with several “notables” in Trinidadian society, such as musicians, professors, and artists. Michael Manswell’s relationship with Orisha – private and public – and his status in the Brooklyn arts community reflect the dynamics of the Orisha Revival, for instance his connections with grassroots musicians (e.g. Earl Noel) as well as societal notables like calypsonian David Rudder. Rudder, for example, lent his presence and support in 2011 to a Something Positive fund-raising event (the organization is a non-profit, after all) which not only raised money but also displayed the extent to which Manswell is well-connected in the Brooklyn and Trinidad performing arts worlds. In addition to Rudder, the fund-raiser, at an upscale bar in Brooklyn, included a special guest appearance by the African American actor Danny Glover, and

Afro-Trinidadian music performances directed by Manswell. Such events show how Trinidad Orisha in Brooklyn is integrated into networks of mainstream patronage and elite social sectors.

“Reality” Television Goes to Church: Trinidad Orisha and Mass Media in New York

If the connections between Brooklyn Orisha and a dance director like Michael Manswell might be generally positive, other Orisha-Baptist interactions with the public sphere could be seen as more ambivalent. In early 2011, an episode of the cable network reality-television show *Bethenny Ever After* showed the main character, Bethenny Frankel, taking her newborn baby to the Trinidadian church of her child’s nanny for a baptism. The church was Selwyn Wilkinson’s Yoruba-Orisha Baptist Church, on Nostrand Avenue in Brooklyn. In the televised footage, the trip to the church ends when Bethenny becomes upset and rushes out of the service with her baby in her arms. The incident became a bit of a sensation within the Orisha-Baptist community in Brooklyn.

Bethenny Ever After follows the lives of Bethenny and her new husband, Jason Hoppy, and their new baby, Bryn, a white family living in a wealthy section of Manhattan.¹⁴² In the second season of the show, the couple hires an Afro-Trinidadian nanny, named Gina, who suggests they come to her church – Yoruba Orisha Baptist Church, in Brooklyn – so that baby Bryn can receive a “blessing.” The events involving the church are played out in the season’s

¹⁴² The television show is on the cable network Bravo, specializing in the television genre known as “reality,” in which, ostensibly, non-actors allow video cameras to follow them around, chronicling events in their daily lives or, often, while they participate in some sort of competition. Producers then turn this material into a thirty- or sixty-minute episode. Previous Bravo shows have included *America’s Next Top Model* and *Pregnant in Heels*. Bethenny Frankel, star of *Bethenny Ever After*, has a history with Bravo,¹⁴² as she was also in the original 2008 cast of *The Real Housewives of New York City*, a show that claimed to show television viewers the private lives of upper class married women in New York City.

fourth episode, titled “It’s My Baptism and I’ll Cry If I Want To.”¹⁴³ In an early scene, Bethenny, Jason, and Bryn are home with Gina, who invites them to the church. Jason jokes about hoping the service is not a baptism, and Gina firmly states that “it is not a baptism.” Gina then describes to Bethenny and Jason what the services are like, mentioning that people are “gonna manifest and dance in the spirit,” prompting Bethenny to ask for a demonstration. Gina says that “it depends,” but proceeds to close her eyes and swing her arms loosely at her sides, while rocking her head and torso back and forth. In a voiceover, Bethenny says, “I don’t want to dance involuntarily. It made me worried about what’s gonna go down at church.” But Jason gets up to dance along with Gina, and in his own voiceover says, while wearing a broad grin, “I’m so anxious to see what’s gonna go on in Gina’s church. I can’t wait.”



7.7 Bethenny Ever After. “It’s My Baptism and I’ll Cry if I Want To.” BravoTV.com. Bethenny holds baby Bryn, next to Jason. The baby’s nanny, Gina, is pictured at far right.

¹⁴³ Clips of the show are available at www.bravotv.com/bethenny-ever-after/season-2/videos. Accessed June 2, 2013.

When Bethenny, Jason, Bryn, and Gina finally do go to the church, the cameras pan over the church interior, with its elaborate altar, covered in gold objects of various religious affiliation, posters, shrines for saints on the walls, and the gold candelabra in the shape of a ship's wheel suspended from the ceiling in the middle of the room. The couple meets Bishop Selwyn Wilkinson, head of the church, and Bethenny comments on how nice the women look in their colorful gowns and head scarves. Bethenny, meanwhile, is wearing a short dress, high heels, and her own head is not covered, so some of the women give her a scarf and tie it on her head for her. The show then cuts to clips of the service, in which three drummers beat djembes, and participants sing and recite prayers. Selwyn introduces the family, and praises them for coming to the church, saying "the family that prays together stays together." Next, Selwyn invites the couple to come forward with the child, where they stand before the altar while congregants gather closely together, and a woman reads at the pulpit, saying, "...that she may be baptized with water, and conceived into Christ's holy church." Upon hearing this, Bethenny and Jason look at each other with surprise and apparent panic in their eyes, and begin asking Gina to reassure them that this is not a baptism. While they speak with Gina, Selwyn moves to Bethenny and takes the baby, Bryn, from her arms. The camera then shows Selwyn putting oil on Bryn's head, then passing Bryn to another woman, and then Bethenny saying, "I want my baby." Gina retrieves the child for Bethenny, who then heads straight out of the church, with Jason and Gina close behind. Out on the sidewalk in front of the church, the couple explains to Gina that they didn't want to be rude, but that they didn't expect a baptism, and felt uncomfortable with the situation. Gina maintains that it was not a baptism. This scene is the last one shown in the church, and later in the episode the couple arranges a baptism at the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Peace in Manhattan, which is attended by the couple's family.

In a later scene, Bethenny discussed with her therapist her trip to the Trinidadian church: Bethenny to therapist, saying “My child is a Trinidadian Baptist now. No, it’s not even funny. I have a baby nurse named Gina, and she has become part of our family. She invited us to go to her church, so we went to the church. It was all, you know, a lot of music, and drums, and it was all fun, and the Bishop came over and said, ‘now let me have the baby, we’re going to do a blessing.’ I don’t know this man, okay? I don’t like people even that I know holding the baby sometimes.”

I first heard about this television show while attending a service at the Yoruba Orisha Baptist Church, when Bishop Selwyn brought it up. At the very beginning of the service, after all of the congregants arrived and had been seated, Selwyn announced his displeasure with the television episode. Specifically, he objected to the editing, which showed the couple leaving the church in the middle of the service and not coming back. According to Selwyn, Jason convinced Bethenny to come back into the church and stay through the entire service, which they did. He described the situation as a misunderstanding that was resolved, and felt that the show did not show that resolution. Rather, in the narrative of the television program, the resolution is the couple’s decision to have a Roman Catholic baptism.

I later spoke about this incident with an Orisha drummer, who questioned Selwyn’s decision to allow the television show into the church, suggesting that a mainstream cable television show was unlikely to portray the church in a positive light. (Other Trinidadian informants said that Selwyn consented to the filming because he is a “poppyshow,” which is Creole slang for an exhibitionist.) Still, the same drummer objected to what he felt to be the portrayal, in *Bethenny Ever After*, of the Roman Catholic baptism as “normal,” while the Trinidadian service was depicted as frightening to the couple, when both services involved

essentially the same ritual action: anointing the child's head with oil. (In the Catholic service, the priest tells Bethenny that "the whole purpose of the oils ... is that the baby will be strong in the fight against evil in the world.") Indeed, this situation reflects the comments of the drummer Redman in the last chapter, who pointed out that he cannot teach TOM rhythms to his Catholic students, and suggests that African-based religions are still not held in the same esteem as those of European derivation.

In the production of the television show, one could certainly argue that producers attempted to highlight perceived "exotic" elements of the Spiritual Baptist service, such as the drums, dancing with the Spirit, and colorful dress, rather than taking the opportunity to show connections between Catholic and Spiritual Baptist baptism rites. One of the show's producers admitted to this exotic factor in a video commentary available on the television network website, explaining how producers loved "that Jason and Bethenny were obviously fish out of water."¹⁴⁴ Such exoticization was probably inevitable in a television show depicting the meeting of the social worlds of upper-middle-class Manhattanites and working-class West Indians in Brooklyn, as told from the perspective of the Manhattanites, and condensed into a one hour television show for a middle-class American audience. Perhaps the incident highlights the challenges and limitations of publicity and visibility with respect to Afro-Trinidadian religion. On the other hand, over the course of *Bethenny Ever After*, the Trinidadian nanny, Gina, emerges as a sympathetic character, and so does, perhaps, the Trinidadian community in New York City in general. It should be noted that Bethenny and Jason repeatedly stated that they thought the church was full of "nice people," and that it was their own misunderstanding of the situation that got in the way. The Spiritual Baptist faith was handled with a modicum of respect on *Bethenny*

¹⁴⁴ www.bravotv.com/bethenny-ever-after/season2/videos/producers-commentary-fish-out-of-water. Accessed June 2, 2013.

Ever After, and the implied strangeness of the faith compared with Roman Catholicism is a far cry from the ridicule expressed in the history of the faith's interactions with mainstream society, for instance in the Shouters' Prohibition Ordinance of 1917.

Brooklyn Orisha in a Hybrid Environment

New York City is a meeting point for many traveling cultures, as people and traditions come into contact with each other in ways not possible in the homeland, creating cultural encounters in need of negotiation. As shown in the Prospect Park example above, practitioners of Trinidad Orisha in Brooklyn interact with other Afro-diasporic religious practitioners, sharing public spaces and even attending one another's events. In an interview at his home in Canarsie, Brooklyn, I asked Leader Walter about this new Brooklyn context, with multiple Africa-derived religions, and if it might be related to the social context of the first indentured Yoruba immigrants to Trinidad in the mid-nineteenth century, who reconstituted their religious practices in a foreign land. Walter told me the following:

It's somewhat how I look at it as, like when our fore-parents left Africa and they crossed the waters, of course Orisha would have left some of its originality there. It's the same way I look at it, like you left Trinidad and you come, you cross the waters again, and you leave some there, but some people are trying to see if they can bring back the original, the originality of the religion, and not cross bounds. All due respect to the Santería, the Candomblé, the Haitian Vodou, and all these people, but the Orisha, they are somewhat different. (*pers. comm.*)

In responding to my question, Walter articulates the thesis of this dissertation, that there are two sides to a drum, and also to Trinidad Orisha; it may have connections with other diaporic musics due to common African origins, but there are other qualities which make Trinidad Orisha unique. The Trinidad Orisha religion is related to but distinct from anything else found in Africa

or the African diaspora. Trinidadians like Walter are concerned for holding onto the “originality” of this faith, for not “crossing bounds,” as he puts it.

It is instructive to consider some demographics related to practitioners of African-based religions in New York (fig. 7.1). Population groups from Spanish and French Caribbean islands, representative of Santería and Vodou, respectively, outnumber Trinidadians in New York, while Brazilians have a relatively small demographic presence. Trinidadians are aware of these groups, although such awareness is not necessarily reciprocal. During the August 2010 Haitian Vodou ceremony in Prospect Park (fig.7.5), I was surprised to meet a few Trinidad Orisha drummers there, observing the proceedings. Two weeks later, I went to a Cuban Santería *tambor* in the basement of a botánica in Bushwick, Brooklyn, and was again surprised to meet a Trinidad Orisha priest, Rev. Andy, and some members of his congregation there with him. I have not seen Haitians or Cubans – or Brazilians, for that matter – at a Trinidad Orisha ceremony. Still, there are some efforts at a kind of unification in the religions. For instance, drummer Earl Noel often talks about a circa 2003 concert he played in at the Caribbean Cultural Center in Manhattan that showcased Santería, Brazilian Candomblé, and Trinidad Orisha, giving a group of drummers and singers from each tradition thirty minutes onstage to showcase their art form. Earl remembers it as a great success, and recalls the Cubans and Brazilians coming close to the stage to watch his hands as he played.

Walter believes that Trinidad Orisha is “more sacred” than other *orisha*-based practices in the diaspora, and says he has heard *santeros* say as much. Drinking alcohol and smoking are not generally permitted at Trinidad Orisha ceremonies, and a *mongwa*, in preparation for a feast, is supposed to abstain from these things, and fast, for weeks in advance. (Such conservatism is not necessarily the case for drummers; the elder drummer Crow always likes a little *puncheon*

rum before he plays in a feast; others like their ganja.) At other Afro-diasporic services, such as Dominican Vudú, participants often drink alcohol during the service itself, and Walter says that Trinidadians will not tolerate such behaviors in Orisha. “Even though other religions are practicing it,” Walter says, “that is not what we were taught, so let’s just leave it, let’s just do what we were taught. Let’s do the right thing.”

In contrast, Rev. Andy has a much more laissez-faire attitude regarding connections between the faiths, viewing the spiritual energies as the same, but simply with different names. His congregation is close with a Ghanaian Akan congregation in Brooklyn, and the two groups attend one another’s events. Whoever is hosting these events gives their guests time to “call down their powers.” He mentions that other Akan groups do not share this reciprocal attitude, and are not pleased if outsiders call their own spirits. Still, Andy asserts, “I go to Vodou, I go to Akan, I go to Santería, and I act the same. I am who I am.” Such are the tensions between cultural stability and change. As James Clifford asks, “What stays the same even when you travel?” (1992, 115).

The calypsonian Mighty Sparrow answers Clifford’s question by suggesting that, for cultures in transit, it is music that stays the same. In “Mas in Brooklyn,” Sparrow sings: “Even though I feeling homesick / Even though I tired roam / Just give me meh calypso music / Brooklyn is me home.”¹⁴⁵ These lines articulate how music creates a sense of home in a foreign land, and more specifically, Mighty Sparrow shows that Trinidadians make Brooklyn their home through the performance of Trinidadian music. In the case of Trinidad Orisha in Brooklyn, singing Orisha songs accompanied by Orisha drumming creates Trinidad in Brooklyn, as the music helps Orisha travel throughout the diaspora. The music thus contributes toward

¹⁴⁵ Mighty Sparrow. 1969. *More Sparrow More!!* RA2020. LP.

reconfiguring place in Brooklyn, one important factor in the transformation of New York City neighborhoods into West Indian cultural worlds. For Trinidad Orisha, a culture in motion – a traveling culture – music provides cultural stability in the face of upheavals involving migration and struggles for economic and cultural survival.

Reconfiguring and reconstructing places and spaces within diasporas relies in part on the flexibility of cultures, and the complexity of identities within Trinidad Orisha has contributed toward its ability to travel well. In important ways, the transient and hybrid environment of West Indian New York can be compared to the social environment in nineteenth-century Trinidad. The indentured Yorubas who first introduced the worship of *orishas* to Trinidad were largely successful in their recreation of coastal West African musical and cultural practices, but the long term perpetuation of their culture, beyond the several thousand immigrants spread out over several decades, required accommodations and the forging of alliances with other groups in Trinidad, including the Afro-French Creoles of urban *jamette* society, American Baptists, and more recently with the plurality of East Indians in Trinidad. The ebb and flow of cultural process – the tension which Clifford refers to as that between “native” and “traveler” – continues on, as the discourse of “crossing bounds,” raised by Walter, suggests. Andy admits to freely traveling between cultures. Walter is wary of the same. The negotiation between the two attitudes is where culture exists. As Walter says, you have to find your way as “you cross the waters.”

In this chapter, I have shown how Trinidadians have come to Brooklyn as part of large scale West Indian immigration to New York City. The development of Trinidad Orisha in New York follows closely those immigration patterns, as demonstrated by the testimonies of my informants in the pages above. I have shown that individuals, *mongwas* and drummers, are the linkages connecting the diaspora of Trinidad Orisha worshipers in time and space, and I have

also described some of the methods those individuals use to create Brooklyn Orisha, such as accessing the earth in various ways, or bringing Orisha into the New York public sphere in folkloric dance performances. I also indicated some of the challenges faced by Trinidad Orisha practitioners in Brooklyn, including limitations on killing animals and the exoticizing lenses of U.S. mass media reality show television cameras.

When they leave Trinidad to come to New York City, Trinidad Orisha practitioners recreate their religion in large part through the performance of music. It is music that Orisha practitioners use to call their spirits. It is music that takes up the vast majority of the time spent at an Orisha worship service. And it is music that keeps the people together during worship, even for periods lasting up to eight hours, in the middle of the night, in a church basement in Brooklyn. For Orisha practitioners, music is social life; music is culture. As the *Mighty Sparrow* suggests, Trinidadians use music to help make Brooklyn home.

Chapter Eight

TOM in the Orisha Atlantic

This dissertation has been an extended investigation into the cultural practices and historical development of Trinidad Orisha music (TOM). My thesis is that TOM is like an Orisha drum – double-sided – and thus it must be understood from more than one perspective, and as imbued with a complexity deriving from the choices made by practitioners as they have made and remake their cultural practices. The duality of my title refers, on a deep level, to the dialectical relationship between individuals and their histories (Sewell 1992). On another level, I have also argued that TOM can be understood as constituted by a basic duality of influences. TOM is fundamentally West Indian in its evolution during various socio-historical moments, including Trinidad’s colonial period, postcolonial independence, and the development of a Trinidadian diaspora in New York. At the same time, TOM is a cultural practice with clear Yoruba origins, and a high degree of consistency in the music over the past century and a half has resulted in a vibrant neo-Yoruba music in the twenty-first century. In this final chapter, I consider the conclusions suggested by my research, and I analyze the place of TOM in the Yoruba diaspora, a cultural locus that has been called the Orisha Atlantic.

Orisha Atlantic is a term which acknowledges “the heterogeneous peoples involved in the array of orisha religious expressions” (Vincent 2006, 49), as well as the fact that *orisha* worship in the New World has by now transcended the several thousand Yoruba immigrants to the Americas. The Orisha Atlantic perhaps most prominently includes Trinidad Orisha, Cuban Santería and Brazilian Candomblé, but Yoruba people influenced many places and religions in the New World. Haitian Vodou, for instance, is most prominently of Dahomean derivation, and yet it bears the imprint of Kongolese and Yoruba cultures as well, a mixture that has led Robert

Farris Thompson to call Vodou “Africa *reblended*” (1983, 164). Along those lines, it is important to keep in mind that nowhere in the New World did Yoruba people exist in a vacuum, isolated from other African or non-African ethnic groups. For instance, Béhague describes the “cultural pluralism” of Brazilian Candomblé, arising from the lack of a homogenous African population in Brazil. Accordingly, Candomblé “does not refer in Bahia to a particular nation but is rather a generic term designating all religious groups of African derivation” (2006, 92). Further, West African Yoruba speakers themselves did not practice a homogeneous culture, and, in Cuba, Yoruba music is not limited to the *batá* drums, but also includes *bembe* and *iyésá*. The Orisha Atlantic conceptual framework accounts for such pluralism.

In the following pages, I conclude this dissertation by considering connections between Trinidad Orisha music and other musics of the Orisha Atlantic, a heterogeneous group of cultural practices that nonetheless have many linkages. Along those lines, I begin by discussing cognate songs, moving on to cognate practices as well as musical aesthetics, all of which demonstrate strong links between TOM and the Yoruba diaspora, connecting present-day practitioners of the faith with nineteenth-century indentured Yorubas in the New World.

Cognate Songs

My research suggests that cognate songs across the diaspora are very rare, unsurprising given the separateness of groups of Yoruba people in time and space. There are some exceptions, such as two versions of a song for the water spirit Oshun, recorded by Melville Herskovits in Trinidad in 1939 and Lydia Cabrera in Cuba in 1958.¹⁴⁶ I was introduced to the possibility of cognate songs early in my research, when, in 2009, I went to a lecture-demonstration in

¹⁴⁶ See tracks 15 and 21, *The Yoruba/Dahomean Collection: Orishas Across the Ocean* (1998). Various artists. Smithsonian Folkways HRT15020.

Manhattan about Trinidad Orisha, led by Michael Manswell – the head of Brooklyn dance group Something Positive (see chapter seven) – who was accompanied by my future (at the time) drum teacher, Earl Noel. Manswell started off by singing a song that, he said, is known throughout the Yoruba diaspora. The song was “Eshu Baragbo,” which I have notated in fig. 8.1. True to Manswell’s words, Thomas Altmann’s book of 275 Lucumí songs includes “Ibaragó Moyuba,” which has a very similar lyric and melodic structure to the Trinidadian version (fig. 8.2, transcription adapted from Altmann 1998).

8.1 “Eshu Baragbo,” Trinidad Orisha song to Eshu¹⁴⁷

E shu ba rag bo___ mo ju ba a re a re E shu ba rag bo___ mo ju
 ba ata man de ko ri E shu ba rag bo___ mo ju ba E leg ba E shu lo na

8.2 “Ibaragó Moyuba,” Cuban Lucumí song to Echú (Altmann 1998, 15)

I ba ra go o___ mo yu ba I ba ra go o___ A go mo yu ba ra O o
 mo de ko ni ko si ba ra go o A go mo yu ba ra E le gua E chu lo na

An even closer match can be found with the Cuban song “Korikoto Oggue,” which is virtually identical to a song recorded by Herskovits in Trinidad in 1939, “Korikoto Milodo,” and

¹⁴⁷ According to Warner-Lewis (1994, 37), the lyrics translate as: “Eshu, Lord Aragbo, I pay homage to you / I am here, I have come / Eshu, Lord Aragbo, I pay homage to you / Your child has come to sing / Eshu, Lord Aragbo / I pay my respect to Aragbo / Eshu, Lord.”

which I recorded at an Orisha feast in Trinidad in 2011. As shown in the following transcriptions (both of which are my own), in each case the song is shown as a pair of two-bar phrases. In practice, each phrase is repeated several times. The Trinidadian example (fig. 8.3) and the Cuban example (fig. 8.4) have slightly different lyrics, but the versions are remarkably similar.

8.3 “Korikoto Milodo,” Herskovits 1939 in Trinidad

Chantwell $\text{♩} = 85$
Ye ko ri ko to mi lo do Ye ko ri

Chorus
O ri sha we le me lo do

Chantwell
ko Ye ko ri ko

Chorus
she ri eg bo she ri eg bo

8.4 “Korikoto Oggue,” song from Cuban *oru cantado*¹⁴⁸

Akpwon $\text{♩} = 95$
Ko ri ko to mi lo do e to ri

Chorus
O ri sha e we mi lo do

Akpwon
o e bal si e le

Chorus
ay an o e lan yo

¹⁴⁸ Transcription of track 8 from *Antologia Yoruba. Vol. 2, Oru Cantado* (2000). Julio Davalos and Adrian Coburg. Bern, Switzerland: A. Coburg.

Notwithstanding the above examples of close song matches, it is more often the case that cognate words and phrases appear in the various Orisha Atlantic repertoires. The phrase “Dada ma se kuma,” in a song to the *orisha* Dada, is found (accompanied by differing melodies) in Trinidad, Cuba, and Brazil.¹⁴⁹ The Trinidad Orisha song “Obatala O Kere” includes the refrain “o kere orisha,” in a distinctive *clave* rhythm. That refrain, in similar rhythm, is also sung in Santería.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, the refrain “ibai la mefa” is used in Trinidad and in Cuba.¹⁵¹ Also, the phrase “yeye olomi ayagba” is sung in Oshun songs in Trinidad and in Brazil.¹⁵²

Though these scattered examples suggest an impressive degree of retention in neo-Yoruba song repertoires, it should be obvious that much has changed in neo-Yoruba music since the nineteenth century, and I have already shown definite changes in TOM since 1939 (see chapter five). As ethnomusicologist Amanda Vincent (2006) points out, parallel rhythms and songs across the diaspora are remarkable examples of retention, considering the years and miles isolating these neo-Yoruba musics. Songs have clearly been lost, and if a handful of melodies, rhythms, words, and other fragments still exist in multiple places, there were surely many more cognates 150 years ago. Neo-Yoruba musics may bear a sibling relationship to a parent Yoruba culture, but they are distant, long lost siblings, obviously related but grown far apart in intervening years.

Of course, music in West Africa has changed as well, as demonstrated, for example, by Amanda Vincent, whose dissertation comparing *bata* drumming in Nigeria and Cuba (2006)

¹⁴⁹ See Altmann (1998, 119), song 108, “Omo Luwe Yo,” which includes phrase “dada ma sokunma”; Barros (1999, 190) song 12, “Dada ma sokun (mo).” According to Warner-Lewis, the phrase means “Dada child, don't cry anymore,” and Dada “was an elder brother of Shango and himself a king who abdicated in favour of Shango.” (1994 58-59).

¹⁵⁰ Altmann (ibid., 225), song 223, “Okere Orisa.”

¹⁵¹ See track 3, from *Antologia Yoruba. Vol. 2, Oru Cantado* (2000). Julio Davalos and Adrian Coburg. Bern, Switzerland: A. Coburg.

¹⁵² Barros (1999, 221), songs 59 and 60, “Yeye ye oloomi o” and “Ayaba bale.”

shows that “preservation” and “transformation” marked both traditions in her investigation, thus undercutting notions of African cultures as somehow “older,” “purer” traditions than those in the diaspora. Vincent exposes as myths the idea that Yoruba culture in Nigeria is conservative and more connected to the past than New World Yoruba culture by giving several examples in which the opposite is true. For example, evidence suggests that Nigerians, not Cubans, have expanded the *bata* ensemble in size from three to five drums. Similarly, the Nigerian practice of striking the *bata* drum with a rawhide strap known as *bilala* is a fairly recent innovation. Also, Nigerian drummers have apparently begun playing one or more drums in the ensemble in the upright, vertical position, while Cubans have retained horizontal *bata* practices. Such examples challenge prevailing notions about “roots” by demonstrating a “conservative, less-changing diaspora, and a dynamic, inventive homeland” (ibid., 217).

Systematic, cross-cultural comparisons like Vincent’s are important, because they have the potential to greatly expand our understanding of the contours of cultural process and change. Though my own project did not include such a broad comparative scope, in these pages I offer a step in that direction, suggesting the types of change that have taken place in TOM, and the linkages that make TOM part of the Yoruba diaspora.

Cognate Practices

In the Orisha Atlantic, one New World innovation is the practice of singing songs to multiple *orishas* in one location and time. A convention in Trinidad, Cuba, and Brazil, this practice differs from that in Yorubaland, where one *orisha* is usually associated with one village, and that village focuses its attention, and songs, mostly on that spirit during festivals of praise. During my research, Trinidadian informants often offered anecdotes about this song convention

as a main difference between *orisha* veneration in Trinidad and in Africa. For instance, *mongwa* Sugar Aloes told me the following:

I remember 1988, the Ooni of Ife came to Trinidad, we entertain him, we played drum, had choir. He says that in Nigeria you don't have the different orisha deities under one tent. It could be a bloody situation. Fight. So it means if you go to Africa, and you reach to the village of Shango, and they have feast in there, whole week, that feast is Shango feast. It didn't have no Osa, it didn't have no nuttin' nuttin'. Just one person. And if you go further, and you go to a village of Ogun, and it have a Ogun feast, the whole week is Ogun. It have nothing else, the only deity you're singing for is Ogun. He say he was amazed, to come to Trinidad and see so many different banners, representing so different other deities under one palais. Without any fight, or any disturbances and things like that, and so he wonder how we manage to accomplish that. (*pers. comm.*)

For Aloes, this diasporic difference is a source of pride, in the sense that Orisha practitioners in Trinidad had, through their ingenuity, managed to keep the peace among different *orishas* – and, presumably, their devotees. Regarding that latter point, inter-Yoruba consolidation is likely the cause of such peace-making among *orishas*, as diverse Yoruba communities met in diaspora, finding a common bond in their newfound status as ethnic minorities.

The consolidation of “deities under one tent,” in Aloes’ phrase, includes cognate practices throughout the Orisha Atlantic. For instance, Eshu-Elegba and Ogun are generally sung to at the beginning of ceremonies. In Trinidad, the first group of Orisha songs, sung either for Eshu or Ogun, includes an accompanying circular dance performed in front of the drums, the circle changing direction with each new song introduction. Likewise, in Igbogila (Nigeria) and Bahia (Brazil), a circular dance also accompanies the songs which begin the *orisha* rituals, after honoring Eshu-Elegba (Drewal 1989, 227), and a similar dance is done among the Iyesá in Cuba during songs for Echú (Delgado 2001).

Throughout the diaspora, Ogun is sung for in the beginning of the rituals because he is said to “open the way” (Drewal 1989). Eshu, meanwhile, is a trickster spirit associated with crossroads, and, according to Parrinder, an African devotee of Eshu-Elegba (Yoruba) or Legba

(Ewe/Fon) would begin his day by standing in front of the spirit's shrine and asking "for evil to be turned away from himself and his family during the day" (Parrinder 1970, 57). Trinidad Orisha practitioners historically considered Eshu to be equivalent to the Christian Devil, a reinterpretation of the African trickster mythology.

When I asked the eighty-three year old Mr. Burton about Eshu, he laughed, sitting on his front porch, and asked me, "Where you get these things?" He then proceeded to explain, singing the same song that Michael Manswell sang in Manhattan in 2009, and describing how practitioners move in a circular dance, in rings.

You call that juba-ing Eshu. Like when the feast start, you sing "Eshu barackpo mojuba, are are." And then you beat the drum. Then people would make the rings, and then they walk around the rings you know. And after a certain time you have to feed him. Eshu is the Devil. Satan. You have to feed he first, and you have a bowl, a calabash with his food in it, you have a bottle of sweet oil, and the feast keeping here, you might reach down to that house down there, like to the back of that car, and you have a special place you put it. And you throw sweet oil, and you walk backward, and you leave it. That keep him out. (*pers. comm.*)

Because of the association of Eshu with the Devil, it was important to keep Eshu out of the Orisha feast, and informants told me that the phrase "going to *mojuba*" (from the lyrics of "Eshu Baragbo") took on a bad connotation, as in "going to deal with a bad business." In actual translation, "mojuba" means to give homage.

One explanation of putting Eshu down the street, at a crossroads, was to warn Orisha practitioners ahead of time if any police were coming down the road. As *mongwa* Gordon explained to me:

The olden people, before when you used to get beat and thing and it wasn't modernize, they used to carry Eshu in the crossroads, away, that is the knowledge and the wisdom they had, and when they set Eshu on the crossroad, maybe half mile or mile away from where the feast going on, and they put his thing before twelve, because they feast going and start twelve, where they going an sing for everybody. So when you put Eshu before twelve, and they go by the crossroad and they set Eshu, if police and anybody did come

in, somehow, they used to know. Somehow, somebody woulda manifest and say, they coming. We don't see those things no more. (*pers. comm.*)

For Gordon, Eshu is connected with the West African conception of a crossroads deity, and to a spiritual power which earlier generations of Orisha practitioners had. Those earlier generations of practitioners most certainly reinterpreted the idea of Eshu to be relevant in their own social realities, as they practiced a religion with syncretic Yoruba and Christian theologies in a hostile legal environment.

In addition to song repertoire and song order, it is also important to situate the drumming practices of Trinidad Orisha within the Orisha Atlantic. As I showed in chapter four, the cylindrical, double-headed Trinidad Orisha drums derive from the Yoruba *bembe* drums, and can be contrasted with other religious percussion ensembles in the New World. Like Trinidad Orisha drummers, the Rada people in Trinidad also use the combination of hand and curved stick, though their drums are of open-ended peg-style construction, similar to those of Arará people in Cuba and Rada people in Haiti.¹⁵³ Drums for Brazilian Candomblé, on the other hand, are tall, open-ended, and barrel-shaped – similar to a Cuban *conga*.¹⁵⁴ The hourglass-shaped Cuban and Nigerian *bata* drums are played on two differently tuned heads – with only bare hands – while laid across the lap.

¹⁵³ Rada in Trinidad, Rada in Haiti, and Arará in Cuba are all related groups deriving from the West African Dahomean kingdom.

¹⁵⁴ Drums in Afro-Brazilian ritual music are called *atabaques*, *tabaques*, or *ilus*. The drums undergo a ritual baptism, one style of which is described in Herskovits's "Drums and Drummers" (1944). Béhague also witnessed different kinds of baptism rituals. Typically, there is a battery of three different-sized drums, accompanied by iron gong or rattle; Ketu and Gêge groups play with sticks called *aghidavis*; Ijesha, Angola, *caboclos* and *umbandistas* use hands mostly. Ketu call the largest drum *rum*, and it is played by a master drummer. Medium-size (*rumpi*) and smallest (*runlê* or *lê*) drums "repeat a single steady rhythm. As a contrast, the *rum* (also the lowest in tone) varies its beats, determining the various changes in the choreography and producing some of the complex rhythms typical of Afro-Brazilian musical styles" (Béhague 1975, 78).

Trinidad Orisha drums are nearly identical in organology and performance style to Cuban Iyesá drums, as described in Kevin Delgado's dissertation (2001), which offers important insights into the multiplicity of neo-Yoruba cultures and musics. Focused on the *Cabildo Iyesá Moddu San Juan Bautista*, a mutual aid society for the Ijesha ethnic group founded by free Africans in Matanzas, Cuba in 1830, Delgado's work offers evidence of the "multicultural nature" (ibid., 15) of the music and culture of the Lucumí (the name used for all Yorubas in Cuba) and of the broader Yoruba diaspora. Unlike the Oyo-derived *batá* drums used in Santería, the drums of the Iyesá are double-headed cylinders, played with a combination of stick and hand, deriving from the Yoruba *bembe* drums in both organology and performance practice.¹⁵⁵ Similar to Trinidad Orisha, practices of Iyesá drummers include sitting while holding the drums vertically between the legs (in the Matanzas *cabildo*) and use of a curved stick (in the now defunct Sancti Spiritus *cabildo*). Further, just as Ogun and Shango are among the most prominent *orishas* in Trinidad, Ogún is the primary *orisha* of the Matanzas *cabildo*, while Iyesá *cabildos* at Sancti Spiritus and (coincidentally named, apparently) Trinidad were known for veneration of Changó. Delgado describes a 1981 photograph of Iyesá drums from the Trinidad *cabildo* as being painted red and white for Changó. Red and white are Shango's colors in Trinidad as well.

Given that *bembe* in Africa have been linked to Ijesha and Egba regions (Thieme 1969), and that both of those locales were represented in the Yoruba immigration to Trinidad (Warner-Lewis 1996), Delgado's research combined with my own suggests the consideration of a dual

¹⁵⁵ There are also drums in Cuba which are called *bembe*, but these, rather confusingly, do not derive from Yoruba *bembe* drums (Vincent 2006; Delgado 2001).

bata/Oyo and *bembe*/Ijesha/Egba *orisha* drumming complex¹⁵⁶ when examining music in the Orisha Atlantic. While the first part of this complex acknowledges strong connections between the *bata* of Nigeria and Cuba, the latter part recognizes the equally pertinent similarities between the *bembe* in Cuba, Trinidad, and “Ijeshaland” (Delgado 2001), West Africa. Musics along the *bembe* axis may have less in common with one another than do the *bata* traditions of Cuba and Nigeria, which have remained remarkably similar despite significant divergences over the past 150 years (Vincent 2006). The relative discontinuity of the *bembe* may be linked to the flexible nature of *bembe* drumming in Ijesha and Egba territories, where, at least in the twentieth century, it was used for a variety of secular and sacred occasions in Africa (Thieme 1969, 156), compared to the *bata* which up to today has been used only in religious contexts, a fact that also might be part of the reason for the *bata*’s decline in Nigeria (Vincent 2006). Therefore, *bembe* drumming in Cuba and Trinidad may have been inherently more open to musical change and flexibility compared with the conservatism of *bata*, creating greater discrepancies over time. More study is needed in this regard, and urgently: when Delgado did his research, he found just one Iyesá *cabildo* still in operation.

The *bembe* axis expands a conception of drumming praxis in the Orisha Atlantic, serving as a reminder of cultural pluralism, and also complicating any easy connections between musics in the Orisha Atlantic. For instance, in chapter one I recounted my experience of playing a CD of *batá* drumming for my teacher, Earl Noel, and his expressed disinterest. Considering the difference in drums, Earl’s reaction is unsurprising: Trinidad Orisha drums are very different from *batá*, in sound, structure, and performance practice.

¹⁵⁶ Here I am drawing again on Delgado’s work. He found evidence of differing Iyesá traditions in two regions of Cuba, thus offering a conceptual framework of a “western and central Cuban Iyesá complex” (2001, 453).

Throughout the Orisha Atlantic, a fundamental goal of drumming and the collective singing of songs in worship is to bring on spirit possession. In Trinidadian parlance, spirit possession is known as catching power, or catching the spirit, and this terminology is used in Orisha, Spiritual Baptist, or East Indian trance ceremonies (McNeal 2011). One Spiritual Baptist leader in Trinidad, Pastor Hills, told me that, from his perspective, “catching power” is the same thing that happened in the Bible, to the Apostle Paul when he received the Holy Ghost:

Yeah well, we call the word “catch the spirit,” it just a Trini, or a West Indian word, it not really “catch spirit” we just use that to cover the whole... When we sing and shout we entertain the spirit of god. And while we entertain by singing, you get deeper into the spiritual form, which mean the anointed of god fall on you, the anointed of god, what we call “catching power.” Or catching spirit. That is the anointed of god. Sometimes some people get the anointed of god and they look different from somebody. Some people may get it, and sit down right in a seat, their eye just full of water, they may cry. They have a extra joy. Some may clap. Some may bawl. Some cannot contain the spirit of god. Some fall down. Some may stand. Some shout for joy. Is a joy. Is a inward joy. Is a feeling that you cannot really explain. That is the reason that Paul was talking about the joy, unspeakable and full of glory. It is a unspeakable joy. It is the anointed of god that we call the down pouring of the Holy Ghost. And a lot people get it in different ways. (*pers. comm.*)

As Pastor Hills describes it, catching power is acted out in various ways according to the individual involved, and his descriptions – some sit, some cry, some fall down, some shout – is a good description of the range of spirit possession practices one sees during Trinidad Orisha ceremonies. However, a full Trinidad Orisha possession involves the full transformation of an individual into a particular *orisha*. The person *becomes* Oshun, Yemanja, or Shango, and dances, speaks, and acts like that deity.

Manifesting *orishas* throughout the diaspora are given certain “implements” to dance with or to do work with, such as a whisk broom, an anchor, or an axe. A wooden oar represents feminine water spirits in both Trinidad and Cuba, though this implement is associated with Yemanja in Trinidad and Ochún in Cuba. In Trinidad, Ogun dances most often with a cutlass,

until the final day of the feast (Saturday morning) when he pulls the sword out of the ground and dances – fiercely – with that. Ogun commonly dances with a sword in Brazil, though in Nigeria he might “also carry iron pincers, spades, flywhisks, or miniature guns” (Drewal 1989, 227). In Trinidad, a manifesting St. Raphael dances with a gun – either wooden or real – while devotees sing, “Raphael o ma de kuta, Raphael o ma de so.”

Spirit possession terminology is connected throughout the diaspora, for instance in the fact that congregations of the Orisha Atlantic in Cuba, Brazil, and Trinidad all refer to *orishas* as “saints” (*santos* in Spanish and Portuguese). Likewise, an *orisha* medium across the Orisha Atlantic is generally referred to as a “horse” – someone who is “ridden” by the spirit in question. The French-Creole term *hounsi*¹⁵⁷ is used in both Haiti and in Trinidad. A devotee in Trinidad might be a horse/hounsi for several different *orishas*, or for different “sides” (or “brothers”) of the same *orisha* as they are sometimes called. Shango, for instance, comprises several variants: St. John of the Cross, St. John the Divine, Abakuso, among others. The situation is similar with Cubans, who speak of *caminos* – literally, roads (Sublette 2004, 214).

A notable aspect of Trinidad Orisha spirit possession is the *rere* (pronounced ray-ray) possession. The *rere* is a child-like spirit that sometimes comes on an *orisha* horse after the *orisha* leaves, serving as a kind of intermediary stage between the individual’s possession and post-possession condition. Simpson (1965) reported ten beliefs about *rere* in Trinidad, such as: *reves* are afraid of *orishas*, for whom they might serve as messengers; *reves* in Trinidad have names like Frankie, Big Boy, or Moon; and individuals under *rere* possession generally speak in

¹⁵⁷ According to Metraux (1959, 69), *husi* derives from Fon language of Dahomey, and it means “wife of the spirits” (quoted in Lum 2000, 228). The use of the term in Trinidad (potentially deriving from Haitian vodun or other Afro-French Caribbean sources ca. 1800) might suggest that TOM incorporated some actual elements from an existing neo-African tradition that was there when the Yoruba arrived, as opposed to merely borrowing a few French words (like *palais*) to replace Yoruba words that were forgotten. See chapter two.

high-pitched voices, ask for sweets, and enjoy playing tricks on other feast attendees. I have observed Trinidad Orisha practitioners sing children's songs during *rere* possessions, such as “Frankie's in the ring-a-ready.”

In the Nago region of southeast Dahomey (now Benin), Verger noted a “secondary spirit” manifesting on the body of a Shango *elegun* (medium), which

...makes the *elegun* behave like a little child or simpleton who smiles foolishly at every turn. When the man is in this state the worshippers treat him with a familiarity and amusement very different from the respectful attitude they adopt when he is possessed by *Shango* himself. ... Among the Nago-Yoruba this being is addressed as *inu eru de* – “the one who arrives with the luggage.” This label indicates his position as associate of the *orisha* himself. (Verger 2004 [1969], 53)

The *rere* phenomenon has been noted in Brazilian Candomblé rituals by Herskovits (1943), Landes (1947), and Bastide (1958), though apparently not in Cuba. The Rada people in Trinidad also have *re-res*, which they call *were* or *nubioduto*. The child-like playfulness of these spirits is also found in Brazil, where individuals under “êre” possession are given “small pieces of wood, rags, and ribbons, that then become dolls, boats, or kites” (Cossard 1970, 165, quoted in Rouget 1985, 47). The *rere* concept is apparently linked to the Yoruba *emere*, a child who frequently comes and goes between heaven and earth (such as a child who dies shortly after birth).¹⁵⁸

Divination is also important in practices across the Orisha Atlantic. The most well-known divination practice associated with Yoruba spirituality is the elaborate Ifa/Fa ritual found in Cuba and among Yorubas and Dahomeans in West Africa. However, this practice has apparently not been retained in Trinidad (Lum 2000). Instead, Trinidad Orisha practitioners perform divination through a range of locally innovated practices, including the use of books of magic. For example, anthropologist Lum noted that the use of grimoires and other magical texts (e.g. in the Kabbalah

¹⁵⁸ However, such *emere* do not, to my knowledge, manifest on *orisha* devotees in Nigeria or in Cuba.

banquet) may be a reinterpretation of West African divination practices (ibid., 238). It is worth noting that such books are popular among a variety of Afro-diasporic communities; for instance, Davies (2009) points out that magic books published by Delaurence, Scott and Co., marketed out of Chicago in the early twentieth century, were enormously popular in West Africa and the southern United States, as well as the Caribbean.

During Trinidad Orisha feasts, kola nuts – called “obi seed” in Trinidad¹⁵⁹ – are used to ascertain the will of the *orishas* during pivotal moments, for example before killing an animal. In many Trinidad Orisha feasts that I observed, before a sacrifice (or most any other important action) the kola nut must be thrown on the ground and its “answer” read before proceeding. Also, kola nuts may be fed to the congregation as a kind of blessing, as in one Shango manifestation I witnessed during which Shango fed small amounts of grated kola nut mixed with olive oil to each member of the congregation on Saturday morning. (A sip of Manischewitz wine was offered patrons to wash down the mixture.) Generally speaking, kola nuts are considered to be possessive of spiritual power by Trinidad Orisha practitioners, and I noted in chapter four that Papa Neezer’s drummers used to put kola nuts inside a new drum, in the context of the general way in which Trinidad Orisha drums are viewed as sacred objects. Outside of any divinatory concerns, it should be mentioned that the sacredness of Orisha drums, and the practice of putting spiritually charged objects inside of them, may be seen as a retention of the Ayan/Aña, the spirit of the drums in Nigeria and Cuba. (I have heard of no such spirit in Trinidad.)

Trinidad Orisha initiation rituals have corollaries throughout the Orisha Atlantic, though often in different forms, and with less standardization. The former Orisha drummer Mr. Burton

¹⁵⁹ In Santería, “obi” refers to four pieces of coconut thrown on the floor to be “read” (Delgado 2001, 157), in a manner very similar to the throwing of kola nuts in Trinidad Orisha.

played for many manifesting, dancing *orishas*, in the 1940s and 1950s, though he was opposed to the idea of experiencing a manifestation himself:

Shango people don't baptize. You don't join Shango you know. You like Shango, and you go to Shango. You go to dey, and you sit down you know? And you enjoy it. And some people, this power might manifest on them. I don't really know how they feel. Because I beat the drum, and they dance. I really don't know, because this power never manifest on me, because they couldn't manifest on me. I always tell them: if one manifests on me, I will break this whole place down. When you come offa me I'll break this thing down. I don't want that. I beat the drum. I like beating drum. (*pers. comm.*)

According to Mr. Burton, Shango (Orisha) is something you go to if you like it, requiring no formal initiation, even to become possessed by an *orisha* – it was only his oppositional vehemence, in his description, which kept the *orishas* from manifesting on him. This situation is different from Santería, in which members of the faith must be initiated (to “make” or receive *ocha/santo*) in order to dance in front of the drums. While Trinidad Orisha does not formalize initiations in this way, among Trinidadians there is an emphasis on purification, and some informants told me that in order to manifest *orishas*, individuals must purify themselves by fasting, refraining from sex, and reading scriptures from the Bible for a week prior to an event. Orisha rituals do not typically take place during times of cultural revelry, such as Carnival (February in Trinidad, and September in Brooklyn). As drummer and Shango horse Michael Ettienne told me, “I don't mix Carnival with Orisha” (*pers. comm.*).

In Trinidad, individuals who are mounted by a spirit might later undergo a head washing ritual, known as *lave-tête* or *dusunu* (Simpson 1965; Aiyejina and Gibbons 1999; Lum 2000). Mr. Burton called this ritual a “wash-your-head” (*pers. comm.*). Sometimes, during a Trinidad Orisha feast, an elder Orisha priest (often while manifesting an *orisha*, such as Ogun) will make incisions on the head of a priest-in-training. Newly possessed devotees might be given a series of

tests by the *mongwa*, in order to identify the *orisha* (and sometimes to gauge the veracity of the possession); similar methodologies are practiced in Afro-Brazilian religions (Béhague 1975, 72).

For some Trinidad Orisha devotees, the Spiritual Baptist *mourning* ritual serves as a form of Orisha initiation. During *mourning*, an individual spends from a few days to a week on the “*mourning* ground,” secluded, blindfolded, and deprived of food, a situation that usually leads to spiritual visions. Through this process, *mourners* also receive spiritual gifts, which might be related to the practice of Orisha. For instance, when I was interviewing Orisha *mongwa* Sugar Aloes, he showed me a picture of himself, in which he looked to be about twenty years old. In the image, he had just finished *mourning*, during which he was given the gifts to become an Orisha leader – a drum, goblet, shepherd rod, and candles.

You see that picture there? That is me in that picture. That is me and my spiritual mother. Just came up from the mourning ground. And you notice what in my hand? A drum. And a goblet. With a shepherd rod. And my next hand have some candles. It was given to me spiritually to give feasts, to carry on feasts. So it is not something I get up one morning and I say, “I gonna learn this, and I gonna learn this.” One thing I could tell you, some day I leave me bed, and I have a prayers to carry on and my intention is to go and boycott it. [But] I reach there and I cannot do it. It’s embedded in me. I go all the way. It’s not by choice. I don’t have a choice in the matter. It’s by commitment. I didn’t choose to be an *amambwa*. (*pers. comm.*)

In this case, the *mourning* process confers a kind of spiritual legitimacy, and also obligation – Aloes does not see it as a choice to carry on feasts, but as a spiritual calling.

Mourning is a kind of resurrection ritual, and in that sense it serves as an interesting parallel to the practices described by Drewal of *orisha* devotees in Nigeria and Brazil, whose initiatory procedures involve “symbolic death and rebirth, seclusion ... and embedding medicines to stimulate possession trance” (1989, 227). *Mourning* may also be preceded by the taking away of clothing and ritual washing (Laitinen 2002), a practice in initiations in Brazil, Cuba, and Yorubaland, though Trinidadians do not typically shave their heads or other body hair

as is common in those other locations.¹⁶⁰ In fact, many Trinidad Orisha practitioners wear long dreadlocks, which, in part, they grow out of a reverence for Rastafarianism, thus creating a decided propensity against hair cutting.

Typically, there is no initiation or special ceremony to become a Trinidad Orisha drummer. However, one drummer, Michael Ettienne, told me the following story about how he became a *bo* drummer and a Shango *horse*, roles conferred on him by the power known as Abakuso. (Abakuso is considered to be a “side” of Shango.)

Ettienne: When I start playing feast, I was about 18 years. But this drum that I does play was given to me by the *orisha*. I didn't just come, like a friend say, a come and take a play. No. I was minding my business when this power by the name of Abakuso come, and these big men was playing the drum, and he come from nowhere and pull me out of the crowd. And I watch him, and he do what he had to do. He give me the drum, and he put me to sit down there. And from that time to now, mind you nobody ever showed me, you know, hold my hand to play nothing. From that time to now, that *orisha* spirit had me playing that drum as perfect as possible

RB: When you got the drum from Abakuso that first time, did you get a manifestation?

Ettienne: Yeah, that was the first time. I feel something, it rest on the body.

RB: So he didn't just give you the drum?

Ettienne: No! He give me the drum and whatever he had on him too! Y'understand? I tell yuh, I didn't have the experience to know, well look, here what going on. but within man, you must feel something different in you. and I feel. because after my thing he band my head, and put me to sit down there. And Junior [Donald Noel] is the one what turned around and tell me, “He put Shango on yuh, boy.” I say what do you mean? What are you talkin' bout? He say well, “He seal yuh.” So I was part of he now. And from there, boom boom boom, it had one time I coming from school, I get this bad feeling now. But it was not bad feeling like to vomit or to faint. And I start to feel like my body, my inside body

¹⁶⁰ An exception comes to mind: in June 2010 I attended a four-day international “Ifa/Orisa” conference at a shrine in Santa Cruz, Trinidad. Several people there were undergoing initiations, including a young American woman from California, who told me that her body hair would be shaved; as she said, “all of it.” The practices at this shrine are heavily influenced by current international trends in Yoruba cosmopolitanism, and procedures and practices are modeled largely after Nigerian modes of ritual – that have themselves been modeled on Cuban practices (Villepastour, personal communication). The shrine keeps a set of Nigerian *bata* drums, for instance (see chapter six).

shaking, and no drum I telling yuh, I ain't playing no nuttin' you know. And I just feel like my foot and them it start to move. And I start to dance in the road. And people must be passing and watching me and they send and call Miss Bernice, and tell her that I down on Hermitage Road there, dancing away. You know what going on. And Miss Bernice come, and whatever was happening there, she come and dismiss that. It was days after she feast and thing, and she come and tell me yo, Shango was manifesting on you. I say, how you mean manifesting? Allyuh trying to tie up my brain? No drum, nuttin', no palais, nuttin'. We was just on the block limin' and singing and thing, but I just start to get this weird feeling. And from there, well, I get into it now. And watch meh: I never mourn you know. And people say when you mourn you does get certain gifts. But it come like I mourn, y'understand? Because I get my gift direct. (*pers. comm.*)

Ettienne's story makes clear the individuality of Trinidad Orisha initiation. Though some might go on the *mourning* ground to receive spiritual gifts, Ettienne got his "direct" – the manifesting Abakuso gave him the *bo* drum, which he plays with unquestioned authority, and the capacity to manifest Shango. In the context of the Orisha Atlantic, Trinidad Orisha initiations are related to other diasporic initiation practices, and might be seen as reinterpretations of African traditions. On the other hand, the ability of *orishas* themselves to intervene in the initiation process (as Abakuso did with Ettienne) shows that this aspect of Trinidad Orisha – like other practices including divination, song order, spirit possession, and drum organology – is securely rooted in local convention.

Cognate Aesthetics: TOM and Simultaneous Multidimensionality

Throughout this dissertation, I have striven to portray TOM as unique in the Yoruba diaspora, from Earl Noel's dislike of Cuban *batá* drumming, to the *bembe* type Trinidad Orisha drums, to the songs for local *orishas* such as Mama Leta. In chapter five, I showed some of the changes that have taken place in TOM since 1939, by comparing present-day music with the Laventille recordings of Melville and Frances Herskovits. Insofar as we can assume that the Herskovits recordings are representative of general TOM practice, then my analysis shows that

specific and significant changes have taken place in TOM, and yet important aspects of the music remain consistent, essentially unchanged. I believe that an integral element of that consistency is the maintenance of a certain kind of African drumming aesthetic, embodied in the term *simultaneous multidimensionality*, which also links TOM to other musics of the Orisha Atlantic.

Simultaneous multidimensionality is a conceptual framework used to describe the shifting textures in much African music, characterized by David Locke as “the creation of a musical surface that can be heard from multiple perspectives at the same time,” and which is “achieved through systematic means; that is, through the workings of a musical syntax” (2011, 70). In chapters three through five, I outlined the musical syntax of TOM as consisting of two main layers: a rhythmic bed (the interlocking ostinatos of the accompanying *bo* and *umele* drums) and a rhythmic foreground (the polyrhythmic phrases played by the *center drum*). I also described two foundational rhythms, straight Orisha (SO) and rada/kankan (RK). In SO, which comprises the vast majority of TOM, the rhythmic bed consists of the bass frequency heartbeat of the *bo*, accentuating each downbeat of the four-beat cycle, and the high-pitched, rapid-fire, five-stroke *umele* roll, both of which combine to encircle the mid-frequency *center drum* that accents offbeats with syncopated phrases called *hands*. The overall affect is one that I call syncopated swing. In RK, the three drums interact in a similar way, though the tempo is faster and the swing is replaced by evenly accented notes.

The simultaneous multidimensionality of TOM is created by the interplay of the rhythmic bed and foreground. While the accompanying drums create a stable, unchanging foundation, the lead drum creates instability, alternately aligning with the accompaniment or playing against it, shifting emphasis and altering the rhythmic perspective. It is this interplay – on beat and off, with

and against – which is most desired in the playing of a *center* drummer, and which is said to make the drum sound as if it is talking. This talking is considered most effective when the lead drummer adheres to the musical syntax of TOM. When playing for Shango, a drummer should play the Shango *hand*. Osain must have the Osain *hand*.

The various *center drum hands* in TOM typically have an asymmetric structure, meaning that simultaneous multidimensionality is built in to the lead drum rhythms. Further, the *center* drummer can generate multidimensionality through “phrase reconfiguration” (Locke 2011): by displacing the various *hands* within the space of the TOM metric cycle. For instance, in chapter four I described the Ogun *hand* as beginning on the initial downbeat, which is how Earl Noel first taught it to me (fig. 8.5). However, Earl very often plays the Ogun *hand* beginning on the third downbeat (beat 7 in 12/8 meter), thus shifting the emphasis of the phrase as well as the overall feeling of the musical cycle (fig. 8.6).

8.5 Ogun *hand* beginning on initial downbeat

The musical score is set in 12/8 time and consists of four staves. The top staff, labeled 'Chantwell', contains a vocal line with lyrics: 'O gun be we le a mi o O gun be we le O gun'. The second staff, 'Umele', shows a complex, high-speed rhythmic pattern. The third staff, 'Center', features a melodic line with some rests. The bottom staff, 'Bo', displays a rhythmic pattern with 'x' marks indicating specific drum strokes.

8.6 Ogun *hand* beginning on third downbeat (beat 7 in 12/8 meter)

The musical score is set in 12/8 time. The Chantwell staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: "O gun be we le a mi o O gun be we le O gun". The Umele staff shows a fast, continuous roll starting on the third downbeat. The Center staff shows a lead drum pattern with a syncopated rhythm. The Bo staff shows a bass drum pattern with a consistent four-beat pattern.

I believe that simultaneous multidimensionality is a useful concept in understanding the differences between Trinidad Orisha drumming today and the drumming recorded by the Herskovitses in 1939, and thus important to understanding musical change in TOM. Key differences between the past and present drumming examples include the former use of structural polyrhythm, as well as lead drum patterns in the bass register, making the 1939 drumming sound somewhat akin to neo-Yoruba ceremonial drumming in Cuba, or at least more so than current Trinidad Orisha drumming. Today, the bass drum in TOM is the accompanying *bo*, which, as mentioned above, plays a relentless four-beat pattern, while the lead (*center*) drum frequency has shifted upward, changing the overall feeling of the beat in TOM. However, if simultaneous multidimensionality can be seen as a primary aesthetic goal of African (and neo-African) drummers, then it can also be seen that structural polyrhythms and current *center* drummer approaches in TOM (displacing *hands*, e.g.) are simply different devices to achieve such multiplicity. For unclear reasons, after 1939 Trinidad Orisha drummers developed a preference for the current rhythmic bed/foreground interplay, with a clear and consistent bass beat accentuated by fast *umele* rolls and a syncopated *center drum*, but in the context of simultaneous

multidimensionality, TOM today is based on musical aesthetics very much related to those appreciated in 1939 (and, presumably, earlier).

It is also based on essentially the same musical syntax. Despite the aforementioned shifting of drum frequency ranges and changed accompanying drum preferences, the basic elements in the structure of the language of TOM – the Shango *hand*, the *Trinidad clave*, and the five-stroke *umele* roll – were all part of the drumming in 1939. If TOM syntax has evolved, it has done so much in the way of a language dialect, developing local accents and flavors, yet still clearly connected to the parent language from which it was born. Music may not be a universal language, but each music may be said to have its own internal language, its own deep structures, and a key organizing principle of a consistent TOM vocabulary is simultaneous multidimensionality, as it has been, we can assume, since the initial development of Trinidad Orisha music in nineteenth-century Trinidad.

Assessing the musical changes in TOM requires an understanding of processes of cultural change and development. As Maureen Warner-Lewis put it, in her study of Trinidad Yoruba language loss and retention:

What we are dealing with is the dialectical relationship between dynamism and homeostasis – in nature, human society, and culture. Dynamism suggests the capacity of an entity to generate new ideas, new institutions, new speech forms; on the other hand, homeostasis allows a community to absorb new features while retaining enough of its conventions to allow the community to recognize itself as the same as, or similar to, what it was before it admitted innovation. (Warner-Lewis 1996, 208)

In TOM, certain features, such as general musical aesthetics and specific rhythms, have no doubt allowed the community of Orisha practitioners “to recognize itself,” even as aspects of those musical features have been modified, over time, by forces of dynamism. The dialectical nature of stability and change are constitutive of the complexity of the “two sides” of Trinidad Orisha music and culture.

Creolization, Neotraditionalism, and Cultural Change

If, at the end of this dissertation, one conclusion is that TOM has surely changed in the last one hundred fifty years, that should not be surprising. One way that scholars explain cultural change in the Caribbean is with the concept of creolization, an idea originating in linguistics (drawing from older uses of the word) and used to describe a new (Creole) language growing out of the source material of two or more older languages. For instance, Mintz and Price, in a seminal work on the subject, compared processes of cultural change among Afro-Americans to the development of creole languages, urging social scientists to look beyond the particularities of linguistic (or cultural) character, and consider “by what social processes such a language became standardized, was taught to newly imported slaves, could be enriched by new experiences, invested with new symbolic meanings, and attached to status differences” (1992 [1976], 21). In these terms, the religious and musical practices of Trinidad Orisha practitioners constitute a uniquely created cultural “language,” and the social processes of that creation occupy a large part of the current inquiry. Mintz and Price suggest that creolization is a dynamic process, marked by creativity on the part of cultural practitioners. Creolization in that sense includes aspects of innovation, and it was surely the innovations of Trinidad Orisha musicians who created the unique language of TOM.¹⁶¹

Alternately, other scholars suggest that there can be innovation without creolization, as in the case of neotraditional musics. In *East Indian Music in the West Indies* (2000, 10), Peter Manuel argues that the North Indian-derived tassa drumming ensembles in the West Indies

¹⁶¹ There is another common conception of creole as national culture (see Brathwaite 1971). In this sense, creole practices have no roots, for example the steel pan in Trinidad, which is a unique invention of Trinidadian musicians. Such rootlessness is clearly not the case with TOM – as I have shown in this chapter, and throughout the dissertation – which is why I argue for a duality in the understanding and analysis of TOM.

combine North Indian rhythms as well as “neotraditional Caribbean creations.” TOM is rather like *tassa*, in that it has been cut off from the parent culture for many generations, and yet it continues to exhibit elements which connect it strongly to West African musical practice. The innovations of Trinidad Orisha musicians seem to have occurred mostly along neotraditional lines – according to conventions of African musical aesthetics (e.g. simultaneous multidimensionality, particular *hands*) and performance practices (e.g. curved stick usage, lead drum improvisations). Additionally, it is important to clarify that there doesn’t seem to have been a conscious spirit of innovation in TOM, but rather a conservatism, as in most New World African-derived religious music traditions. Unlike music genres like calypso or steelband, TOM is not celebrated for its innovativeness, but rather for its connections with longstanding conventions and histories.

Creolization (in standard uses of the term) in TOM would imply not just innovation but also incorporation of elements from other, wholly distinct cultural sources, such as from calypso or East Indian musical practices. While, in chapter three, I suggested that some diatonic passages in Trinidad Orisha melodies could be evidence of Westernization, and while Trinidad Orisha practitioners do sometimes sing Spiritual Baptist songs and in Baptist ways (e.g. *doption*) during Orisha ceremonies, on the whole there is little evidence of this sort of musical syncretism. TOM has changed and evolved over the generations, even in ways which one can witness and document (e.g. curved stick usage), but these changes do not necessarily seem to have involved creolization.

The neotraditionalism of TOM is, in fact, striking in the context of the Trinidad Orisha religion more broadly, in which practitioners freely combine elements from a plethora of religious practices, including Catholicism, Spiritual Baptism, Hinduism, and the Kabbalah. In

this sense, the case can be made that music is a key avenue through which Trinidad Orisha practitioners have managed to maintain African culture in the context of multicultural Trinidad and Tobago and its diaspora. The two sides of Orisha – which might be broadly conceived as Trinidadianness and Africanness – temper one another in dialogic fashion. Music plays a primary role in that dialogue. If creole aspects of the Trinidad Orisha religion have been and continue to be moderated by practitioners' strong impulses toward retention and maintenance of tradition, an important conclusion to the findings presented in this dissertation is that creole aspects of the religion have been buffered by neotraditional music practices.

As described in chapter two, the particular contours of social development in the Trinidad Orisha religion grew out of the marginalization of Trinidad Yorubas along with black lower class *jamette* society, and the subsequent assimilation of the Yorubas into that cultural milieu.

Assimilation accompanied a certain kind of openness on the part of Trinidad Yorubas to the dominant Afro-French Catholic underclass, seen today in the French-Creole terminology in Trinidad Orisha ritual (*palais, chantwell*) and the syncretism of *orishas* with Catholic saints. Assimilation also involved intermarriage, given the relatively small numbers of Yorubas arriving in the larger Afro-Trinidadian ethnic pool in Trinidad. Trinidad Yorubas mixed with other African and Afro-Creole ethnic groups in Trinidad, negotiating the dual and often oppositional pressures of assimilation and preservation, and establishing a place for themselves in contemporary West Indian society while maintaining ties to the past and present Yoruba diaspora. The situation of Yorubas in nineteenth-century Trinidad can be contrasted with that of indentured laborers from the Bhojpuri-speaking region in India, who came in much greater numbers (nearly 150,000) and remained endogamous well into the 1960s, preserving Bhojpuri folk musics such as *chowntal* even as Bhojpuri language use declined.

The case of the Trinidad Yorubas can also be compared to the Trinidad Radas, who were among the liberated Africans arriving in Trinidad from the 1840s to the 1860s, and who have been described as a “closed group” in terms of their assimilation with outsiders (Elder 1988). There is some crossover between the Trinidad Rada spirits (called *vodunu*) and the *orishas*; they have in common the spirit of war and iron (Ogū and Ogun, respectively), and the thunder god (Sobo and Shango). Over all, their type of religious practice is very similar to Orisha, giving the Rada a “cousin relationship with the larger ethnic entity” (Warner-Lewis 1991, 23). Local scholar Andrew Carr recorded Rada songs in 1953, and at least one of these is now part of the Trinidad Orisha song repertoire.¹⁶² Additionally, one of the main rhythms in Orisha is called “rada.” It is certain that some level of syncretism happened between the two groups, though the exact contours of that mixture are unclear.

The founder of the Rada religion in Trinidad is believed to be Abojevi Zahwenu (ca. 1800-1899), who immigrated to Trinidad as a free man circa 1855 (Carr 1989 [1952]), taking the French name Robert Antoine. He established a settlement for the Rada community in Belmont, a neighborhood in East Port of Spain. In Trinidad, Antoine was more popularly known as Papa Nanee. The Radas built a compound in Belmont for the practice of their religion, including a chapel for the gods, a cemetery (where Papa Nanee is now buried), and a tent for singing, drumming, and dance. The compound had gone dormant by the time of anthropologist Kenneth Lum’s visit in 1986 (2000, 209), though annual rituals have since been restarted.¹⁶³

¹⁶² “Ogun a Nangwe Na Jare.”

¹⁶³ Today, some members of the Antoine family still reside at this original location (though the family patriarch, Henry Antoine, lives in Montreal, Canada), where they continue to hold religious services at various times throughout the year. In fact, a member of the family set up a website to organize a large family reunion in August 2012, with all the Antoines who now live in various countries. The website (<http://antoinefamilyreunion.blogspot.com>) includes examples of

Rada presents an interesting contrast with Orisha in terms of syncretism with the wider Trinidadian community. Rada ritual was always confined to the Belmont neighborhood, compared with Orisha's presence across Trinidad (and now in America). The practice of Rada has weakened over the years, and it is unclear to what extent the young members of the group may be able to revive the culture. Folklorist J.D. Elder wrote that the Radas are exemplary of "the process by which African cultural traits transported by migration of culture-bearers can resist syncretization" (1988, 33). Elder referred to the Rada as a "closed group" in terms of endogamy, and thus they are a group whose "numbers have declined dramatically while maintaining strict orthodoxy in their religious practices" (ibid., 32) – suggesting a contrast with the exogamous history of Orisha, and one with consequences for survival. (It is possible that the Radas were simply fewer in number than the Yorubas in Trinidad, thus making the widespread propagation of their religion and music less likely.)

Similar to the Radas, the Iyesá in Cuba have, historically, also been closed off. According to Delgado (2001), while Santería houses are generally open to interested parties, membership in Iyesá *cabildos* is generally restricted to family members. When Delgado did his research, all but one Iyesá *cabildo* had closed, and lackluster attendance marked the rituals of the one that was still in operation. Accordingly, there may be benefits to openness and flexibility for neo-African religions.

Such openness is a hallmark of Trinidad Orisha, most notably, perhaps, in the closeness between Orisha and the Spiritual Baptism. Inter-marriage has been posited as the source of the close connections between Trinidad Orisha practitioners and Spiritual Baptists (Simpson 1965; Henry 2008), and if the memberships of the Orisha and Spiritual Baptist faiths can both be seen

Rada ritual drumming recorded at ceremonies in August and November of 2011, and in general is an impressive archive of information about the history and culture of the Radas.

as practicing marginalized proletarian Afro-Trinidadian religions, each featuring worship through singing and spirit possession, it is perhaps not unexpected that State repression motivated the two groups to band together in mutual support. During my research, my informants regularly noted the close links between the two faiths, particularly in their mutual persecution, as in the following quote from Michael Ettienne.

I feel in all the faiths, that the Baptist and the Orisha had it more harder than any other religion, where they always have us like nobodies, like we praising a different god to all the gods who a dem pray. But this is our heritage, this is our, I wouldn't even call it culture, this isn't our culture, this is a way of life. We born to that. Come like the Muslim. They pray five times a day. That's a way of life. So we go feasts. We play drum. That is our way of life. (*pers. comm.*)

It is important to point out that, though Orisha-Baptist connections are important in understanding the historical development of TOM, in many ways the two religions – Orisha and Spiritual Baptism – are separate, operating in a parallel relationship to one another. The membership of both faiths is heavily overlapping, and certain aspects of ritual practices occasionally overlap as well. For instance, practitioners in an Orisha feast might spontaneously begin singing *doption*, the distinctive percussive grunting vocalizations associated with Spiritual Baptists, or Orisha practitioners might shout in a Spiritual Baptist way at the beginning of a spirit possession.

In the main, though, this overlap is limited, and it is instructive to remember the reticence of my informants when confronted with the phrase “Shango-Baptist” (see chapter one). For one thing, spirit possession is distinct in the two faiths – Baptists manifest the Holy Spirit, while Trinidad Orisha practitioners manifest *orishas*. Another main difference is ritual blood sacrifice, which is not a part of Spiritual Baptist ceremonies. As the Spiritual Baptist Mother Daphne told me,

Orisha is different than Spiritual because they believe in the blood offering. That is one. And number two, they believe in a lot of saints. Spiritual Baptists, we have the same saints, but the saints have different name. And they will build stools and these things for all the different saints. But in my religion, we deal mostly with Christ. Yes, there are the saints there, they are there to guide us, but we are not supposed to worship them. So I cannot have a statue of St. Michael and worship him. (*pers. comm.*)

A third difference, most important from my ethnomusicological perspective, is the fact that the musical repertoires are distinct from one another. Spiritual Baptists sing Christian hymns in English, with occasional hand-drumming accompaniment, while TOM consists of Trinidad Yoruba songs with drum trio accompaniment. Due to the differences in song repertoire and instruments, along with the other differences listed above, I believe it is important to take seriously the idea of practitioners themselves that the two faiths are distinct. If cultural change is a process, then it is important to consider the ways these distinct religious practices aid practitioners as they define one religion versus the other, even as members move fluidly within the two contexts.

In the Orisha Atlantic, the Spiritual Baptist connection makes Trinidad Orisha unique. On the other hand, Trinidad Orisha is not alone in its syncretism of *orishas* with Catholic saints – described well by Mother Daphne, above – a Yoruba-Christian convergence that has historically been quite common in the New World. The Orisha-Catholic convergence may help to explain why Trinidad Orisha stands out as the lone Yoruba-derived religion to have thrived in the Anglophone Caribbean,¹⁶⁴ though more Yorubas went to other British colonies (Jamaica and British Guiana) than to Trinidad (Asiegbu 1969). Trinidad differed from those other Anglo colonies because of its French-Catholic social base, and in that sense it fits a general pattern of

¹⁶⁴ It should be noted that there is a Shango tradition in Grenada (see Simpson 1978), and based on Alan Lomax's recordings there in 1962 (featuring several songs which are identical to TOM), as well as geographical and historical proximity to Trinidad, that tradition seems connected to TOM. Shango in Grenada merits further study.

greater African survivals in a Catholic colonial context, as noted by Frank Tanenbaum (1947), who argued that African cultural practices in Catholic colonies fared better than those in Protestant ones due to different values and cultural histories on the part of the European Colonial masters. Tanenbaum's position has been criticized – e.g. from Marvin Harris's historical-materialist perspective (1964) – as a “pure fantasy,” irresponsibly perpetrating the Myth of the Friendly Master. Even so, the fact remains that neo-Yoruba culture in the Americas never thrived in the absence of Catholicism.

Guyana (formerly British Guiana) offers an interesting contrast with Trinidad, because *orisha* worship was never established there, despite the aforementioned larger numbers of liberated Africans, and the fact that they arrived in very similar conditions (e.g., post-emancipation). Historian David Trotman (1976) compared the historical contexts of Yorubas in Guyana and Trinidad, finding that better economic, ecological, and social conditions allowed homogeneous Yoruba communities to thrive for much longer in Trinidad than in Guyana. The Yoruba in Trinidad had labor opportunities outside of the plantation, including peasant farming and small-scale trading, whereas in Guyana the Yoruba were blocked from the latter by the numerous Portuguese settlers (*ibid.*). Yorubas in Trinidad had good land available, and developed Yoruba settlements across the island. In Guyana, on the other hand, Yorubas were practically imprisoned “along a thin coastal strip of approximately ten to thirty miles wide between the Essequibo and Courantyne Rivers” (*ibid.*, 8).

Moreover, the society of nineteenth-century British Guiana was dominated by Protestant British culture, while the important difference in Trinidad was “a belief system in the host society [Catholicism] that was compatible with Yoruba religious ideas” (*ibid.*, 10). Whereas, for Yorubas in Cuba, Brazil, and Trinidad, *orishas* merged easily with the Catholic saints, “These

intermediaries [saints] were not important in Protestantism, where the emphasis was on direct communication with God” (ibid., 13). While, in Trinidad, Catholicism was marked by “complacency and reduced Catholic missionary zeal,” in Guyana, “Protestant missionary activity in the post-emancipation period was extremely intense” (ibid., 14). Even today, Catholics might remain more amenable to African-derived religious practices than Protestant evangelicals, for instance in Brazil where “the Protestant missionary movement has become a truly socio-political threat to Candomblé” (Béhague 2006, 102). In any case, it is clear that differences existed in colonial societies which allowed the retention of significant aspects of Yoruba religious practices in Trinidad, Cuba, and Brazil that did not occur to as great an extent elsewhere. In effect, the Catholic influence in Trinidad, solidified by the 1783 Cedula of Population, may have been the saving grace of Trinidad Orisha, mitigating the effects of what was unrelenting British Protestant rule elsewhere in the Anglophone Caribbean.

Aside from the Catholic and Spiritual Baptist connections, it is also clear that an understanding of the processes of development in Trinidad Orisha involves recognition of several more recent factors. One is the post-Eric Williams government promotion of local drumming culture in Trinidad, connected with the rise of steelpan as national music (see Stuempfle 1995), and particularly with the creation of the State-sponsored Best Village competition. All of my main drumming informants are not only Orisha drummers but also hand drummers with many years of experience performing local folk music – such as *bele*, *kalenda*, and *tambo bamboo* – on concert stages. In addition to steelpan and folk drumming, the Trinidadian government also sponsors local popular musics soca and calypso. In part due to this government patronage, drumming (and music performance generally) is a respected activity in Trinidad, and Orisha drumming is but one among many styles my informants are proficient in.

Another important factor is multiculturalism in Trinidadian politics, as exemplified by the 2012 Interfaith Service (sponsored by the Trinidadian Consulate in New York) that I described in chapter one, and connected with the increasing sociopolitical legitimacy of Afro-Trinidadian religion described in chapter six. More and more, Trinidad Orisha and Spiritual Baptism are seen as mainstream faiths in Trinidad, alongside Hinduism, Islam, Catholicism, and Anglicanism. This mainstream respect of Trinidad Orisha, combined with the social acceptance of Afro-Trinidadian musical performance, gives performers of TOM a space in twenty-first-century Trinidadian society, in Trinidad and in New York, a marked change from the history of marginalization and criminalization.

TOM is rooted in these specifically Trinidadian contexts. And yet, I have shown in this chapter that it is fundamentally part of the Orisha Atlantic. This duality is at the heart of my thesis, and TOM is constituted by the push and pull of individuals negotiation stability and change, retention and innovation. As Maureen Warner-Lewis explains, these apparently oppositional forces, of dynamism and homeostasis, exist in a “dialectical relationship,” and it is the process of that dialogue in which culture is created and maintained.

Conclusion

In *Callaloo Nation* (2004), anthropologist Aisha Khan writes that Trinidadian religions should be viewed, in historical perspective, as “forms of knowledge that are imbued with special significance, the nature of which is contingent on time, place, and power. As such, these forms of knowledge symbolize, and summarize, particular conventions and tensions among groups of people with long histories of mutual dependence and animosity” (ibid., 26). In seeing TOM in this way, as a “form of knowledge” contingent on a range of circumstances, it becomes possible

to more closely track the specificities of “time, place, and power,” and the choices of individuals within those contexts. Trinidad Orisha musical culture may spring from Yoruba origins, but it could have developed in any number of ways. I have tried to show how and why it was shaped in specific ways, and how it continues to grow. In demonstrating this progression, I have explained TOM as basically dual – Yoruba and West Indian – on the level of cultural influence. Both of these contexts imply certain forms of knowledge. My conception of duality extends to a deeper level, as individuals navigate those forms of knowledge in certain ways. Thus, I seek to privilege the agency of individuals in shaping the practice of Trinidad Orisha music and culture, and such agency may be seen as the primary reason for differences in cultural practices across the Orisha Atlantic.

This dissertation began with an example of the problems involved in making connections between historically related musical practices, when I described playing a CD of Cuban *batá* drumming while driving in New York with my drum teacher, Earl Noel, who showed little interest in the Cuban music. Trinidad Orisha drumming is related to *batá* (as well as other neo-African musics), but it has its own unique logic, its own unique history, because Trinidad Orisha music and culture developed, and continue to develop, in Trinidad according to specific historical circumstances, and those circumstances are inscribed within the music. As Earl Noel once told me, on another car ride across Brooklyn, “We come from Africa, but we are not African. We are Trinidadian.” In this study of TOM, I have tried to acknowledge African origins as well as the West Indian present, and the roles of individuals reshaping their social worlds, in order to foreground the complexity of cultural practice, invoking the image of an Orisha drum’s duality as a metaphor for these relationships, at their various levels. Just as musicians themselves

navigate a range of choices in performing music and passing their knowledge on to others, there are also, after all, two sides to an Orisha drum.

Appendix

Orisha Song Performance Lists

A. Mount Moriah Tuesday Night, 2011. Led by Sugar Aloes. Brooklyn.

- I. Hymns sung in rubato time, no drumming, 11:50pm
 - a. “Be Thou My Guardian and My Guide” (Isaac Williams, 1842)
 - b. “O God, Our Help in Ages Past” (Isaac Watts, 1719; Wesley hymnal)
 - c. “Jesus My All to Heaven is Gone” (John Cennick, 1743)
 - d. “Spirit Divine, Attend Our Prayer” (Andrew Reed, 1829)

- II. Spoken prayers, 12:08am
 - a. “The Apostles’ Creed” (“I believe in God, the Father Almighty...”)
 - b. “Our Father”
 - c. “Hail Mary” (3 times)
 - d. “Glory Be to the Father”
 - e. “O My Jesus, Forgive Us Our Sins, Save Us from the Fires of Hell...”
 - f. Psalm 23 (“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...”)
 - g. Psalm 24 (“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof...”)
 - h. Psalm 121 (“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills...”)
 - i. Psalm 1 (“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly...”)
 - j. Psalm 4 (“Hear me when I call, o God of my righteousness...”)
 - k. Prayers from the Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses
 - l. “Hail, Holy Queen”
 - m. “Glory Be to the Father”

- III. Hymns sung with drumming and hand-clapping, 12:15am
 - a. “O Yes, the Water is High Over Me” (6/8 meter) (author unknown)
 - b. “Ready or Not, the Lord is Coming” (author unknown)
 - c. “Praising the Lord, Together Again” (author unknown)
 - d. “See Me Through, Lord Jesus, See Me Through” (author unknown)

- IV. Orisha Litany, *rubato* singing and drumming, 12:32am

- V. Ogun Rotation with drumming in SO, 1:00am
 - a. “Ogun Onire”
 - b. “Ajaraja, Ogun o”
 - c. “Feregun Abami”
 - d. “Ogun Bewele”
 - e. “Yeye Olomi Ogun Karankade”
 - f. “Ogun Lalala Urele”
 - g. “Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa”
 - h. “Ogun Masa Laye”

- i. “Ogun Lalala Urele”
 - j. “Kiriko Awo, Anangwe Najare”
 - k. “Ye Ogun Aye A”
 - l. “A Gaile, Etuma Gaile”
 - m. “Gaile”
 - n. “A Gaile, Etuma Gaile”
 - o. “Ibako Ibambole”
 - p. “Ije Kolamina”
 - q. “Adangwana, Ogun Dede”
 - r. “Ije Kolamina”
 - s. “Ibako Ibambole”
 - t. “Alaiye”
 - u. “Ije Kolamina”
 - v. *Brief pause*
 - w. “Ibai Solo Ibai Laroye”
 - x. “Soye Soye Ariwo Ogun”
- VI. Ogun and Mama Leta Rotation with drumming in RK, 1:29am
- a. “Ada Ogun, Ado Ame Ifa”
 - b. “Ada Wada Umale”
 - c. “Balogun Jelegbe”
 - d. “Naiye Bojule”
 - e. “Koriko Korikoko”
 - f. “Naiye Bojule”
 - g. “Koriko Korikoko”
 - h. “Ogun Kerekere”
 - i. “Onile Aladoye”
 - j. “Masewa Onile”
 - k. “Amabenu Kaiye”
 - l. “Piniko Nana Bini”
 - m. “Naire, Naire, ‘Ama Leta Orisha”
 - n. “Mama Leta Ikoko”
 - o. “Mama Leta O, Mama Leta”
 - p. “Amabenu Kaiye”
- VII. Mama Leta and Shakpana Rotation with drumming in SO, 1:43am
- a. “Mama Leta Koriko Kara”
 - b. “Iworo Iworo”
 - c. “Odelá Bami Aiyaroko”
 - d. “Shakpana Naiye Sa”
 - e. “Ada Rubida, Eruna, Shakpana Saiye”
 - f. “Karankada Wo”
 - g. “Shakpana Korikoriwo”
 - h. “Koriwo!”
 - i. “Shakpana Korikoriwo”
 - j. “Koriwo!”

- k. “Shakunama!”
 - l. “Koriwo!”
 - m. “Karankada Wo”
- VIII. Ogun Rotation in with drumming in SO, 1:59am
- a. Similar to Section V, above
- IX. Ogun Rotation in RK, 2:11am
- a. Similar to Section VI, above
- X. Mama Leta Rotation in RK, 2:18am
- a. Similar to Section VI, above
- XI. Shakpana Rotation in SO, 2:26am
- a. Similar to Section VII, above
- XII. Ogun Rotation in SO, 2:35am
- a. Similar to Sections VI and IX, above
- XIII. Hymn to begin the Offering of the animals, no drumming, 2:45am
- a. “To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
- XIV. Spoken prayers during the Offering, no drumming, 2:53am
- a. Prayers to the Archangel St. Michael
 - b. “Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Have Mercy on Us” (3 times)
 - c. “The Earth is the Lord and the Fullness Thereof”
 - d. “Hail Holy Queen”
 - e. “Forever Here My Rest Shall Be”
 - f. “Psalm 23” (congregation repeats the line “Thou anointest my head by oil” 13 times, because they are in the process of washing the heads of the animals to be sacrificed, they the psalm is finished)
- XV. Ogun Rotation in SO during the Offering, 3:01am
- a. “Ogun O Mogba”
 - b. “Ogun Bewele”
 - c. “Ogun Lalala Urele”
 - d. “Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa”
 - e. “Kiriko Awo, Anangwe Najare”
- XVI. Mama Leta Rotation in RK during the Offering, 3:11am
- a. Similar to above
- XVII. Ogun Rotation in SO during the Offering, 3:17am
- a. Similar to above

XVIII. Mama Leta Rotation in RK during the Offering, 3:28am

XIX. Sugar Aloes addresses the congregation as Ogun, 3:29am

XX. Ogun Rotation in SO during the Offering, 3:40am

XXI. Ogun Dismissal Song in RK, 3:48am

XXII. End, 3:50am

B. Mount Moriah Thursday Night, 2011 (Shango night). Brooklyn.

I. Christian Prayers and Hymns, 11:59pm

- a. 11:59:40 Saint Marco, Saint Marco delia... defend us in all our ways
- b. 12:00:55 Hail holy queen
- c. 12:01:03 St. Michael, chief prince...
- d. 12:01:25 Most sacred heart of Jesus
- e. 12:01:30 Glory Be to the father...
- f. 12:01:45 (hymn) "Through All the Changing Scenes of Life" (Wesley)
- g. 12:05:50 (hymn) "To Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the God who we Adore" (same tune as last; it is the last line of the Isaac Watts hymn "How Bright these Glorious Spirits Shine")
- h. 12:06:40 (prayer) "Our Father"
- i. The Lord is My Shepherd Psalm 23
- j. 12:07:25 My soul magnifies the Lord (Magnificat)
- k. 12:08:00 I lift up mine eyes to the hills (Psalm 121)
- l. 12:08:30 Thank you dear Jesus
- m. 12:08:40 (hymn) "Spirit Divine" (Andrew Reed)
- n. 12:12:30 (song) "One Man and One Man Alone" (Source unknown)

I. Litany, 12:14am

- a. 12:14:30 Ye irawa irawa o x4
- b. Mmm laye, mmm layo
- c. Jini je niyo
- d. Sheke odo afa odo ori
- e. Jini je niyo
- f. E ilokuo ilokuo, e ilokuo, ama kiri ama, ilokuo
- g. Ye ekuo, akiri aremi ado re, ekuo adaroye, isole a di afa, ekuo a re re mio x2
- h. 12:20:30 "Baba o" (Ogun, Mama Leta, Ibaji, Erilay, Shakpana, Alina, Oshun, Yemanja, Osa, La Divina, Oya, Obatala, Shango)
- i. 12:29:45 Oni awa, baba iwo, ogu olaye, oni awa, baba iwo, ogun oloye, oni awa
- j. Ogun masa laye
- k. ...Kumaba binibabiniba... x2
- l. ...ere kumaba batala ... x2
- m. Ekuo ani awa, ani awa... bayinghi yinghi e x2

- n. Emi ama visani, amabo swe osho shile, emi ama visani, amabo swe abatani x2
- o. Ye, yemanja ile ile ile, Ye yemanja ile, Yemanja ele, omi lodo x2
- p. Yemanja ile, omi lodo x2
- q. Ye e, ye a, omi wo, omi wo, yemanja ile (yemanja ile, omi lodo) x2
- r. Yemanja ile, omi lodo x4
- s. Oya riwo oya, oya riwo oya, oya kama koriwo, oya riwo oya (AABA) x2
- t. Olodo, babawa, mofije, moye, oye, olo Shango, mofije, moye, babawa, oye, olo, olo shango x2
- u. Ye e, ye a, awaye awa, awaye awa, awaye awa abakuso x2
- v. Obatala o, obatala o, obatala o, kere x2
- w. Ye e, ye a, kaya kaya kuma bekua, dela orisha x2
- x. 12:40:20 Sheri egbo, sheri egbo, iyelegbe iyelegbo iyelegbe x8
- y. 12:42:00 Glory Be to the Father...

II. SO Rotation for Ogun, 12:42am

- a. 12:42:15 Ogun bewele (very good singing in this one)
- b. 12:46:10 Ogun Onire
- c. 12:47:15 Ajaraja Ogun o
- d. 12:47:55 Feregun Abami
- e. 12:48:40 Ogun lalala Urele
- f. 12:50:00 Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa
- g. 12:51:30 Mai Law Kere Kere Kere
- h. 12:52:35 Ibako Ibambole
- i. 12:53:20 Ije kolamina!
- j. 12:53:35 Ibako Ibambole
- k. 12:54:00 Ije kolamina!
- l. 12:54:15 Alaye!
- m. 12:54:30 Ije kolamina!
- n. 12:56:50 Ay jankwana Ogun dede, Ogun dede, Ogun bada
- o. 12:55:45 Ije kolamina!
- p. 12:56:05 Alaye!
- q. 12:56:20 Ije kolamina!
- r. 12:56:35 Ogun Karankade
- s. 12:59:00 Ye wagan aye a
- t. 1:00:10 Agaile, etuma gaile
- u. 1:00:45 Gaile!
- v. 1:01:00 A gaile, etuma gaile
- w. 1:01:30 Gaile!
- x. 1:01:45 A gaile etuma gaile
- y. 1:02:20 (Abanike kumase ogun) A du laye
- z. 1:04:00 stop: Aloes: Those who have seats, if you feel to sit down, you could sit down. But please do not sit on your lips, do not sit on your hands. We are in dire need of them. Wet all your whistle, wet all your whistle.

- III. RK Rotation for Ogun and Mama Leta, 1:05am
- a. 1:05:00 Ada Ogun, A do a me ifa, ada omi, ada wada umele
 - b. 1:06:30 Ada wada umale
 - c. 1:06:45 naiye naiye naiye naiye futule
 - d. 1:07:15 Korikoko
 - e. 1:07:30 Naiye futule
 - f. 1:07:50 Korikoko
 - g. 1:08:00 Bompo de iye a, bompo de o
 - h. 1:09:00 Bailogun Jelegbe
 - i. 1:10:00 Ogun o, Ogun kerekere [Dedan chanting now]
 - j. 1:11:30 Ariwo, nide ada n... awiro
 - k. 1:12:00 Ye mina wata waluje amabenuka
 - l. 1:13:20 Andire andire ama leta orisha
 - m. 1:14:00 Mama leta o, mama leta
 - n. 1:15:20 Arimole Ikoko
 - o. 1:16:30 Ye mina wata waluje amabenuka
 - p. 1:17:30 Aduyeye Onile aladoye
 - q. 1:18:00 Wa se fa onile
 - r. 1:19:00 stop. Aloes: Alright, we had offering for Ogun, Mama Leta. We have for Shakpana. We have for Oshun. We have for Yemanja. We have for Osa. And that is as far as we go. [Ajaja!] Yes, Peter too. Ibaji. So allyuh could ceremony here, pay a little homage to them.
- IV. SO Rotation for Raphael, Shakpana, and Gurum, 1:19am
- a. 1:19:50 Raphael oma de kusa, Raphael o ma de so
 - b. 1:21:45 Ibai Solo Ibai Laroye
 - c. 1:23:10 Iroro iroro, shakatu ana iroro
 - d. 1:24:00 Ala rubida, eruda shakpana saiye
 - e. 1:25:00 E la sandiwa
 - f. 1:15:10 Shakpana naiye se sa, shakpana naiye sa so se
 - g. 1:27:45 E la sandiwa
 - h. 1:28:15 Shakpana kori koriwo
 - i. 1:29:45 Koriwo!
 - j. 1:30:15 Shakunama!
 - k. 1:30:40 Koriwo!
 - l. 1:30:45 Shakunama!
 - m. 1:31:50 Buyeye buyeye buyeye
 - n. 1:34:45 Abalumbaye aye (ye Gurum bashiba)
 - o. 1:35:20 Dere dere a
 - p. 1:37:00 Emi abo sha demi
 - q. 1:38:40 stop
- V. SO Rotation for Erilay, 1:44am
- a. 1:44:00 Erilay-rilay
 - b. 1:47:30 Yawe yawe
 - c. 1:50:45 Piri piri piri amo, alado mofe ferilay

- d. 1:52:00 E, feri alado
 - e. 1:54:00 Piri piri piri amo, alado more ferilay
 - f. 1:55:15 E, feri alado
 - g. 1:57:30 Ayagba rekeke ariwo
 - h. 2:00:00 Koriwo
 - i. 2:00:30 Erilay-rilay
 - j. 2:03:40 stop, 'our father who art in heaven', psalm 23, glory be
- VI. SO Rotation for Erilay and Oshun, 2:05am
- a. 2:05:45 Yawe yawe
 - b. 2:11:30 Ye ye, ye ya, lagbe oshun akoko
 - c. 2:14:00 Lafijare
 - d. 2:15:00 Oshun talade
 - e. 2:16:00 Oshun me ba betilo
 - f. 2:17:30 stop
- VII. SO Rotation, 2:19am
- a. 2:19:00 Alangala fia fi oshun
 - b. 2:20:30 Ayagba, yeye olomi ayagba
 - c. 2:21:30 Alangala fila fu oshun
 - d. 2:23:00 Ayagba yeye olomi ayagba
 - e. 2:25:00 Afijare
 - f. 2:26:00 Ode Oshun talade
 - g. 2:27:30 Oshun me ba betilo
 - h. 2:29:00 stop
- VIII. SO Rotation, 2:31am
- a. 2:31:20 Eku ala wala misa, Eku ala wala misa, yerude ori ade, Eku ala wala misa
 - b. 2:33:00 Osain Ade ere rele koko
 - c. 2:34:30 Gurum gurum mande ariwo, Osain de mole ariwo
 - d. 2:36:00 Kiripiti Osain de mole
 - e. 2:36:30 Ode!
 - f. 2:36:45 Kitimande Osain de mole kitimande
 - g. 2:37:40 Kiripiti Osain de mole
 - h. 2:38:20 Roko rook ... Osain ade
 - i. 2:39:00 ... abanike... Matalot
 - j. 2:39:46 Ode!
 - k. 2:40:00. Aloes: At this time, if anybody want to leave, allyuh could leave now because we going and close the door. No me ain't tell allyuh go you know!
[laughter]
- IX. Preparation for the offering, 2:42am
- a. 2:42:30 (hymn) Be Thou My Guardian and My Guide (Isaac Williams)
 - b. 2:46:30 (hymn) How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds (John Newton)
 - c. 2:50:25 (hymn) Lord of Our Life and God of Our Salvation (Mattaus Loewenstern)

- d. 2:52:25 (prayer) The lord is my shepherd (Psalm 23)... thou annointest my head with oil x8 My cup runneth over...
 - e. 2:54:20 (hymn) "Lord of Mercy and Compassion"
 - f. 2:56:25 (hymn) According To Thy Gracious Word (James Montgomery, 1825)
 - g. 2:58:45 stop. Aloes: Allyuh helping to feed, come forward, because it have things to hold. Mother ... have the dry food, it have things to hold. The oil, it have milk, it have honey, it have wine, and it have the goblet.
- X. RK song for blessing the offerings, 2:59am
- a. 2:59:30 Egbo Egbo Rukutu, mai egbo mai
 - b. 3:08:00 stop
- XI. SO for the slaying, 3:02am
- a. 3:02:30 Aniro, miwaro, aniro ai St. John
 - b. 3:08:00 Ye sakweta bewe koima, koima
 - c. 3:09:00 Dada wo, kimabo mibao, aja shakime ... Shango rekefa
 - d. 3:10:00 Aloes stops music to yell at someone on a cell phone, resumes 20 seconds later
 - e. 3:11:30 Ode ma wo, ode ma orisha
 - f. 3:12:00 Abaluba ode
 - g. 3:13:00 Abakuso, alado la ba eru....
 - h. 3:13:30 Odi Ogbo
 - i. 3:14:30 Ferekun fere Shango babawa
 - j. 3:15:00 Baba eruna, eruna, Shango kolona
 - k. 3:15:30 Odi Ogbo
 - l. 3:16:45 Baba eruna, eruna, Shango kolona
 - m. 3:18:00 Koriwo/Amasakuma!
 - n. 3:18:15 Arija rija! ... Arija arija!
 - o. 3:18:40 Amasakuma!
 - p. 3:19:20 Aladoye!
 - q. 3:20:30 Naiye o, naiye bada, naiye o
 - r. 3:22:30 Oya o, ologbo
 - s. 3:22:50 Oya o di ariwo oya o di tocolo
 - t. 3:23:00 A Oya kwemi o
 - u. 3:23:30 Kiri anka da oya
 - v. 3:24:45 Ariwo, ariwo yeye
 - w. 3:25:20 Ama jagba emi abakuso
 - x. 3:25:40 Ariwo, ariwo yeye
 - y. 3:26:00 Ama jagba emi abakuso
 - z. 3:26:10 Ariwo, ariwo yeye (Andy chanting)
 - aa. 3:26:20 Ama jagba emi abakuso etc.
 - bb. 3:28:30 Shango o babawa
 - cc. 3:30:00 Ye dawona!
 - dd. 3:32:00 Shango o babawa
 - ee. 3:35:00 Aniro miwaro aniro ai st. john
 - ff. 3:36:30 Fere kun fere Shango lafiye babwa (Big Junior chanting)

- gg. 3:36:45 Odi Ogbo
- hh. 3:37:00 Shango rele o, ariwo Shango bewele, baba wele o, Shango bewele
- ii. unknown song... nobody else knew it either... Big Junior shouted 'voices man!']
- jj. 3:38:30 Oya o, ologbo orode ayanba (Aloes chanting)
- kk. 3:38:50 Oya o di ariwo
- ll. 3:39:10 A Oya kwemi o
- mm. 3:43:00 Emi Oya tigi
- nn. 3:40:15 A Oya kwemi o
- oo. 3:41:00 A Oya emi oya (Big Junior)
- pp. 3:41:10 Oya, oya, emi anka rele
- qq. 3:41:40 Kiri anka da oya
- rr. 3:42:10 E Oya emi oya
- ss. 3:42:40am, 4:01:40 stop. Aloes: I not walking around to get no rejection. I'm not walking around to anybody for they to tell me 'don't put that on me.' For those of you who want will come forward.

- XII. Blessing with the blood of the lamb. 3:43am
 - a. 3:43:00 Shango babawa, Shango olodo karele
 - b. 3:44:00 Shango o babawa
 - c. 3:45:00 E dawona
 - d. 3:47am, 4:06:25 stop

- XIII. Song of thanks, 3:47 am
 - a. Adupwe, adupwe Olodumare, adupwe x3
 - b. Papa Ogun, Mama Leta, Papa Peter, Papa Ajaja, Mama Oshun, Papa Shakpana, Papa Osa, Mama Yemanja, Mama Oya, Papa Shango, Pop Orisha x3
 - c. Ashe ashe ashe
 - d. 3:49am. (4:08:40). We thank the lord.... By the saving grace of our lord and savior jesus Christ, Good morning everybody

- XIV. Final songs, 3:50am
 - a. 3:50:40 Karankada wo, Shakpana ...
 - b. 3:53:00 stop. Aloes to Mother Ashton: See them three boys there? Them your faithful soldiers. Hold it down whole week, you know. Never get weary yet.
 - c. End, 3:56:14am

C. Mount Moriah Friday night, 2011 (Beginning 12:24am Saturday morning). Brooklyn.

- I. Baptist Prayers and Songs, 12:24am
 - a. 12:24 (hymn) "How Bright These Glorious Spirits Shine" (Isaac Watts 1707)
 - b. 12:28:00 (song) "Ready or Not, the Lord is Coming... trim your lamp and keep it burning"
 - c. 12:30:20 (prayer) psalm 23
 - d. 12:30:45 The Magnificat
 - e. 12:31:25 Psalm 121

- f. 12:31:50 I thank you dear jesus
 - g. 12:32:00 (song) “Hallowed Be Thy Name”; upbeat RK version of Lord’s Prayer
 - h. 12:34:30 stop
 - i. 12:34:35 (song) “Lord Prepare Me (to be) A Sanctuary”
 - j. 12:36:00 (song) transition into “Put on my lily white robe”
 - k. 12:36:40 “My Shepherd Will Supply My Need” (Isaac Watts ca. 1700)
- II. Litany (Kil), 12:38am
- a. Ye irawa, irawa o x4
 - b. Mmm laye mmm layo x4
 - c. Babawa (jini je niyo) x2
 - d. Sheke olo afa olo ari x2
 - e. Ji ni je ni jo x2
 - f. E ekuo...ekuo x2
 - g. Ekua.. arere mio x2
 - h. 12:54:15 Baba o, Ogun, Mama Leta, Ibaji, Shakpana, Erilay, Osa, Oshun, Yemanja, Oya, Shango
 - i. 12:51:20 Emi ama visani, amabo swe osho shile, emi ama visani, amabo swe abatani x2
 - j. Sheri Egbo x10
 - k. Glory be to the father, son...
- III. SO Rotation for Ogun, 12:55am
- a. 12:55:00 Ogun Onire (Kil)
 - b. 12:59:30 Ajaraja Ogun o
 - c. 1:01:00 Feregun abami
 - d. 1:02:00 Ogun lalala Urele
 - e. 1:03:00 Ogun yeye arima lesa
 - f. 1:07:00 stops with Kil coughing, totally hoarse, can’t sing, Aloes is pissed, storms out... he can’t sing, need a helper to help, Gordon steps in
 - g. 1:09:00 Ogun Berele
 - h. 1:11:00 Ajaraja Ogun o
 - i. 1:12:00 Feregun abami
 - j. 1:13:00 Ogun Lalala Urele
 - k. 1:14:00 Ogun yeye arima lesa
 - l. 1:17:45 Ogun Karankade
 - m. 1:18:45 Ije Kolamina
 - n. 1:19:45 Etu ma lai lai, etu ma lai
 - o. 1:21:00 Ibako Ibambole
 - p. 1:22:00 Etu ma lai lai, etu ma lai
 - q. 1:22:30 Ibako Ibambole
 - r. 1:23:00 Ije kolamina
 - s. 1:23:45 Ye aguna ye a ... walojo
 - t. 1:24:00 A gaile, etuma gaile
 - u. 1:25:00 Gaile!
 - v. 1:25:45 A gaile, etuma gaile

- w. 1:26:20 Gaile
 - x. 1:26:40 stop. Spirits beginning to manifest.
- IV. SO Rotation for Alina, Oshun, and Yemanja, 1:28am
- a. 1:28:40 Ye Alina ye powa dey (Sugar Aloes)
 - b. 1:30:00 Ye Alina papa ladoye
 - c. 1:32:00 (Oshun) Ye yeye ye o, oshun oshun o aremi oshun ma ta kumara
 - d. 1:34:00 Alangala fila fu oshun
 - e. 1:36:00 Ye ye ye a, lagba osho sabeko
 - f. 1:38:00 Oshun Talade
 - g. 1:38:00 Ode Oshun Talade
 - h. 1:39:00 Oshun me ba betilo
 - i. 1:41:00 Karele, karele o, karele Osho mini awa
 - j. 1:42:00 Mini awa, lagbe Osho mini awa
 - k. 1:45:00 Oshun me ba, me ba visani, arubida, buyeye
 - l. 1:46:45 (Yemanja) E Kwemi o, Yemanja de Wa babawa
 - m. 1:51:30 Koria, koria! ... koria, koria!
 - n. 1:52:30 E Kwemi o, Yemanja de Wa babawa
 - o. 1:55:00 Awayo!
 - p. 1:56:30 Oshun Badiyo, ye badiyo
 - q. 2:00:00 Ye badiyo ayagba
 - r. 2:00:30 Oshun badiyo, ye badiyo
 - s. 2:03:00 Lagbe Osho Sabeko
 - t. 2:05:00 Oshun Badiyo
 - u. 2:07:00 Ye badiyo ayagba
 - v. 2:08:00 stop. Aloes: Some singing, some talking. Some trying to sing, some chewing. Allyuh help now. Don't sit down on allyuh hand, on allyuh mouth. Little claphand, and little singing does help, right?
- V. SO Rotation for Yemanja and Erilay, 2:09am
- a. 2:09:00 Yemanja Saiye Saiye
 - b. 2:11:00 Sablaye
 - c. 2:12:00 Yemanja Saiye Saiye etc.
 - d. 2:18:00 Oshun me ba betilo
 - e. 2:19:00 Yawe Yawe (Erilay)
 - f. 2:23:00 Erilay-rilay
 - g. 2:25:00 Piri piri piri amo, alado mofe ferri alado
 - h. 2:26:00 E ferrialado
 - i. 2:28:00 Powa are kan powa
 - j. 2:28:15 stop. Aloes: That about the easiest song we have for to sound for the night, and allyuh make it hard.
- VI. SO song for Erilay, 2:28am
- a. 2:28:40 Oriley we teng gren ariwo (for Erilay)
 - b. 2:30:30 stop. Aloes: We need a bo-man, a strong bo-man. If allyuh don't have a strong bo-man, I retire. [Alright, we have a strong bo-man, let we get one.] I ain't

saying the little fella ain't playing good you know. But we need a little more strong... [yeah well we teachin him.] Where Ettienne? Plenty chief and no Indians?

- VII. SO Rotation for Osain, 2:31am
- a. 2:31:30 Osain ade ere rele kongo
 - b. 2:34:00 Wele, wele orisha, wele wele a, Osain dewela orisha wele
 - c. 2:35:00 Kitimande Osain de mole kitimande
 - d. 2:37:00 Olorilay ojo-Saina
 - e. 2:39:00 Karele Osain karele
 - f. 2:41:00 Ye rani bada
 - g. 2:44:00 Yinghi yinghi a salami ye
 - h. 2:45:00 Wonko iwori lo
 - i. 2:48:00 Amabitu are, shallow mi, amure le
 - j. 2:48:30 Kiripiti
 - k. 2:50:00 Orisha arima ori jaja...marule
 - l. 2:53:00 Eru Jagba Papa Palara
 - m. 2:55:30 Ye yaluba ... matelot
 - n. 2:59:00 Kiripiti Osain de mole (Andy chanting)
 - o. 2:59:35 Ode!
 - p. 2:59:45 Ariwo Osain de mole Ariwo
 - q. 3:00:00 Ode!
 - r. 3:00:30 Kiripiti Osain de mole
 - s. 3:02:00 Kitimande Osain de powa, kitimande
 - t. 3:02:20 Roko roko Roko miaya Osain ade
 - u. 3:03:20 Ode!
 - v. 3:04:00 Ye rani bada....
 - w. 3:06:00 Ore, Osain, tuco tu oloro
 - x. 3:07:00 Osain, ami, moni moni ami, amini ala mi roko...
 - y. 3:08:00 Aylande nite wa
 - z. 3:12:00 Ama pitu are, shallow me, amure le (Dedan chanting)
 - aa. 3:12:45 Kiripiti!
 - bb. 3:13:30 Kiripiti Osain de mole
 - cc. 3:13:50 Olorile Ojo Saina
 - dd. 3:15:00 Aylande nite wa
 - ee. 3:16:00 Ye sesame, moni moni ami, a rere a, re ri koko...
 - ff. 3:17:30 Ode Osain tuco tu oloro
 - gg. 3:18:00 stop. Osain manifestation.
- VIII. SO Rotation for Osain (Dedan continuing), 3:19am
- a. 3:19:00 Wele, wele orisha, wele wele a, Osain dewela orisha wele
 - b. 3:20:00 Kitimande Osain de mole kitimande
 - c. 3:21:00 Wele, wele orisha, wele wele a, Osain dewela orisha wele
 - d. 3:22:00 Kitimande Osain de mole kitimande
 - e. 3:23:00 Aylande Nite Wa
 - f. 3:24:00 Ojo roko, roko roko, roko mi aya Osain ade

- g. 3:25:00 Osain jawela / Ode!
 - h. 3:25:15 Ojo roko, roko roko, roko mi aya Osain ade
 - i. 3:25:45 Ode!
 - j. 3:26:00 Ye rani bada...
 - k. 3:26:45 Ore, Osain tucu tu oloro
 - l. 3:27:30 Amure, amure, amure osa betiko
 - m. 3:29:00 Wonko iworilo
 - n. 3:30:00 Aylande nitewa
 - o. 3:31:00 Karele Osain karele (Andy chanting)
 - p. 3:32:45 Ode!
 - q. 3:33:15 Kiripiti Osain de mole
 - r. 3:33:30 Ode!
 - s. 3:34:00 Gudu gudu kande mariwo, Osain de mole mariwo
 - t. 3:36:00 Karele Osain Karele
 - u. 3:37:25 Ode!
 - v. 3:37:45 stop
- IX. RK songs (Andy still chanting), 3:39am
- a. 3:39:00 Eriwo, iwapu wapu wama, Eriwo, iwapu wapu wama, Orisha roko arima a, Eriwo, iwapu wapu wama [very cool song, good doption going on, hooting and hollering]
 - b. 3:42:40 Adi wawawa, ari wada umale
 - c. 3:44:00 Ye mina wata waluje amabenuka
 - d. 3:45:00 Eruna eruna ...
 - e. 2:45:45 Egbo, Egbo Rokoto (Dedan chanting now)
 - f. 3:48:00 stop
- X. SO Rotation for Shango (Dada, Abakuso), 3:49am
- a. 3:49:00 Ye sakweta bewe koima koima (Aloes chanting) (Shango)
 - b. 3:52:00 Dada wo, kimabo mibo...
 - c. 3:53:00 A Dada Masekuma
 - d. 3:55:00 Ariwo ariwo yeye
 - e. 3:56:00 Ama jagba emi abakuso
 - f. 3:57:00 Ariwo ariwo yeye etc.
 - g. 3:58:00 Abakuso adad.... Erule
 - h. 3:58:30 Odi ogbo
 - i. 3:59:00 stop
- XI. SO Rotation for Shango [Aloes still chanting], 4:00am
- a. 4:00:00 fere kun fere ero lafinse babawa
 - b. 4:02:00 Naiye o, naiye bada, naiye o
 - c. 4:06:00 Arima o, arima (same as next melody)
 - d. 4:06:30 Shango o, babawa
 - e. 4:07:00 Ye dawona
 - f. 4:10:00 stop

- XII. Prayers, 4:10am
 a. 4:10:10 Psalm 23, psalm 24, the magnificat, Glory Be
- XIII. SO Rotation for Shango [Aloes continuing chanting], 4:12am
 a. 4:12:30 Ariwo, ariwo yeye ... ama jagba emi abakuso
 b. 4:22:00 Arijaki ... arija janki ja
 c. 4:24:00 Amasa kuma
 d. 4:25:00 Arijakija ...
 e. 4:25:30 stop. Aloes: I understand, and I'm in sympathy with you... But it is sacrilegious for I to be busting my throat and all allyuh doing macoing [Trini slang for gossiping.] Leave that to Facebook. When you're on Facebook, allyuh could mind people's business there. But oh god. This is our upliftment. For allyuhself you know.
- XIV. SO Rotation for Shango and Oya [Aloes again], 4:27am
 a. 4:27:30 Adire erona
 b. 4:35:00 stop [somebody making chicken/rooster noises]
 c. 4:36:00 Abakuso alado kai bai ero laroye
 d. 4:37:00 Odi Ogbo
 e. 4:38:00 Baba erona, erona, Shango kolona
 f. 4:40:00 Ferekun fere Shango, lafinse babawa
 g. 4:41:00 Baba erona, erona, Shango kolona (Dedan chanting)
 h. 4:42:00 Odi Ogbo
 i. 4:43:00 E Dawona
 j. 4:44:00 Shango o babawa (Big Junior chanting)
 k. 4:45:00 Naiye o, naiye bada, naiye o (Dedan chanting)
 l. 4:47:45 Oya Oya, emi anka yeye (Oya)
 m. 4:49:00 E Oya, Emi Oya
 n. 4:51:00 Oya O Ologbo Orode Ayanba Marule
 o. 4:51:45 A Oya Kwemi O
 p. 4:52:00 stop. Aloes: Don't waste my time, I had a good teacher!
 q. (Dedan again)
 r. 4:52:30 Kirianka Da Oya
 s. 4:54:00 Amabu Shango Yeye
 t. 4:54:15 Ama jagba emi abakuso
 u. 4:54:25 Ariwo ariwo yeye
 v. 4:56:00 Arija rija...
 w. 4:58:00 E Dawona
 x. 4:58:40 Shango babawa, Shango olodo...
 y. 5:00:40 (Mother Jerio, lavwe se) Shango lavwe se
 z. 5:03:00 Emi so, emi alada so a miche miche / a viche viche
 aa. 5:17:00 Ibai la Mefa
 bb. 5:21:15 stop. Shango manifestation on Kil. "Everybody.... Pleasant morning..."
- XV. SO Songs for Shango, 5:23am
 a. 5:23:00 Shango Tete Mailaw

- b. 5:24:00 Emi awa kwemi la viche emi awa
- c. 5:28:00 stop. Aloes: Few of us survived from that clique, the last one got shot in Port of Spain. That was Shaka. But the clique was involving this gentleman here (Andy), meself, little Michael, Moses, Bumpin, and a lot more I could call. And all o' we pass through the hands of the elders. From Fitzroy Small, to Manu, to Popo, Henry White, anybody, just name it. So we learn our lessons. And today, we can't afford to waste we time. And we went through the treadmill. In those days, we have things called provers. But we know about this, because I have took my eyes in Mother Geral yard, and I see that, on a coal pot of fire, with Oshun, Oya, and Yemanja dancing, and when they done they grease down they skin. I have seen these things, I know that oil go keep watch within. And it go save me from committing sin. [somebody says Isaac Lindsey] Yes. And these are the people that we went through. And we pass through, we went through the treadmill. So it's not like we see thing and jump in, because you can't join this, eh? You had to born of this.

It's spiritual knowledge we had to learn. You know when we were small in school? I don't know who went Catholic school, but there was a little hymn after we done prayin. Since Kamla was the minister of education she cut out the prayers and the licks in school. But I remember in school they had us to say prayers. And there was inspection morning, where your nails and your shoes had to be clean. And after every prayer, after we done sing the national anthem, we had to sing, "If I can help somebody as I pass along, If I can help somebody with a word or song, If I can spread God message as I carry on, Then my living shall not be in vain." Don't make allyuh livin be in vain. Don't rise up early and set up late, and say 'this is what Shango is all about.' This is not 'Shango.' This is Orisha. This is a way of life.

This is a blessed morning. And let me explain something to you. When the confusion was going on, I and the brother, we were trying to sing "Ari jankija." "We glad you're here, and we want you to stay and finish the work." This is what we were saying. This is the meaning of that song. And we thank God that he [Shango] could share his presence with us. Because let me tell you something: there might be a time to come, we wouldn't see one *orisha* manifestation. We wouldn't see one. And it is not a nice thing. So, cherish what allyuh have. Allyuh spiritual parents does go through martyrdom for allyuh. And when I say martyrdom, I mean martyrdom.

XVI. SO Dismissal song for Shango [Aloes chanting], 5:39am

- a. 5:39:00 Shango o tete malaw
- b. 5:39:20 Ye ye aniro
- c. 5:41:00 stop. Aloes: Loose he waist, loose he head.....share out the food...organize to clean... so we could get into the dismissal and thing

XVII. Breakfast, 5:45am

XVIII. Preparing for Closing of Feast with Hymns and Prayers [Aloes leading], 7:11am

- a. 7:11:00 (hymn) "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds" (John Newton, 1779)

- b. 7:15:00 (hymn) “Jesus My All to Heaven is Gone” (John Cennick 1743)
 - c. 7:20:45 (hymn) “Spirit Divine, Attend Our Prayer” (Andrew Reed, 1829)
 - d. walter leading]
 - e. 7:24:45 Apostles’ Creed, Our Father, Hail Mary, Psalm 23, St. Michael Chief Prince and Champion of the Heavenly Host, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Psalm 121
 - f. 7:27:30 (hymn) “Be Thou My Guardian and My Guide” (Isaac Williams 1842)
 - g. 7:31:00 Psalm 23
 - h. 7:31:30 Dedan, “Father, we bring this ebo...”; for everyone who brought an offering; people doing Baptist plaintive wordless chants in the background
 - i. 7:35:40. Aloes: Pleasant good morning. [bring the members forward, we are going to wash the implements, take it to carry it back to the chapelle, make allyuself a little brisk and a little lively, you wash, you dry, you pass it to she, right?]. I want a little vibration from allyuh please, and less talking.
- XIX. Washing the Implements, leading into Ogun Rotation, SO, 7:37am
- a. 7:37:00 Egbo duro duro du
 - b. 7:48:30 Ogun Berele [calling Ogun]
 - c. 7:50:30 Ajaraja Ogun O
 - d. 7:51:00 Feregun Abami
 - e. 7:51:30 Ogun Lalala Urele
 - f. 7:52:30 Ogun yeye Arima Lesa
 - g. 7:55:30 Mailaw Kere kere kere [manifestation starting, people shouting, screaming]
 - h. 7:59:30 Ariwo Ogun Ye
 - i. 8:02:30 Yeye Olomi Ogun Karankade
 - j. 8:04:30 Ye wagun aye a, kimabo shile wagun awa lojo
 - k. 8:06:00 Agaile, etuma gaile
 - l. 8:07:30 Gaile!
 - m. 8:08:00 A gaile, etuma gaile
 - n. 8:11:00 Kiriko awo na nangwe na jare
 - o. 8:12:00 stop. Ogun has manifested on Dedan, he speaks to the gathering.
- XX. SO Songs for Ogun, Shakpana, and Abakuso, 8:14am
- a. 8:14:00 Soye, soye, ariwo ogun ogun ye ariwo
 - b. 8:17:30 Ibako Ibambole
 - c. 8:18:00 Ije Kolamina
 - d. 8:18:20 Alaiye! [everyone getting loud – Ogun/Dedan is pulling the sword]
 - e. 8:19:20 Ije Kolamina
 - f. 8:20:00 Alaiye!
 - g. 8:20:30 Ije kolamina
 - h. 8:22:00 Ay jankwana Ogun dede
 - i. 8:23:00 Kiriko Awo na nangwe na Jare
 - j. 8:24:00 Soye soye.. Ogun ye ariwo
 - k. 8:26:40 Etu ma lailai etu malaw
 - l. 8:31:00 Ije Kolamina
 - m. 8:32:00 Etu ma lailai etu malaw

- n. 8:32:30 Ije Kolamina
- o. 8:32:40 Karakada Wo
- p. 8:35:30 Shakpana Kori koriwo
- q. 8:37:00 Koriwo
- r. 8:37:45 Shakpana Kori koriwo
- s. 8:39:45 Ada rubida eruno shakpana saiye
- t. 8:42:00 Shakpana naiye se sa, shakpana naiye sa so se
- u. 8:43:00 Ada rubida eruno shakpana saiye
- v. 8:43:30 Shakpana Kori koriwo / Koriwo! / Masakuma! / etc. (Big Junior chanting)
- w. 8:48:00: Ariwo Ariwo yeye / Ama jagba emi abakuso
- x. 8:49:30 Aladoye
- y. 8:51:00 Arija rija, arija janki ja
- z. 8:51:30 stop. Shango manifesting on Walter: “Bonswe tout monde.”

XXI. RK Songs, 8:54am

- a. 8:54:00 Naiye futule
- b. 8:57:00 Ariwo, ama leta wonke dewo, ariwo
- c. 9:00:25 stop. Aloes: Allyuh don’t go nowhere yet. This is a blessed morning. Don’t move him. Leave him there. He ain’t gone yet. ... [high pitched noises, people singing “Frankie in the house a-ready” Aloes sings “Shango still here a-ready”]

XXII. Final SO Dismissal Songs for Shango[Aloes, then Andy, then Aloes, then a woman chanting], 9:03am

- a. 9:03:00 E Dawona
- b. 9:27:00 Emi ama, emi la viche emi ama
- c. 9:29:00 Ye ye aniro
- d. 9:33:45 end, Shango gone

D. Gordon Flag Planting April 2011. Brooklyn.

- I. 12:34am. Ogun Rotation in SO
 - a. Ogun Onire
 - b. Ajaraja Ogun O
 - c. Fere Gun Abami
 - d. Ogun Lalala Urele
 - e. Ogun Yeye Arima Lesa
 - f. Ogun Karankade
 - g. Ije Kolamina
 - h. Eshu Mayaya Eshu Maya
 - i. Ibako Ibambole
 - j. Ije Kolamina
 - k. Ye Agun Aye A, Ye Ogun Ye, Ba Guno
 - l. A Gaile Etuma Gaile

- m. Gaile!
 - n. A gaile etuma gaile
 - o. Gaile!
 - p. [-stop- 12:45]
- II. 12:46am. RK songs for Ogun and Mama Leta
- a. A do Ogu, ada ome ifa, ada wada umale
 - b. Ada wada umale
 - c. Naiye naiye naiye naiye, bojule
 - d. Korikoko!
 - e. Naiye naiye naiye naiye, bojule
 - f. Korikoko!
 - g. Bai logun jelegbe
 - h. Ogun kerekere, ogun-o, ogun kerekere
 - i. Adu yeye, Onile aladoye
 - j. Yemina Leta Waluje Amabenuka
 - k. stop
- III. 12:53am. SO songs for Ogun
- a. Kiriko Awo, na nangwe na jare
 - b. Karankade, yeye olomi ogun karankade
 - c. Ogun yeye arima lesa
 - d. Ye agun aye a ... awo loso
 - e. A gaile etuma gaile
 - f. Gaile!
 - g. A gaile etuma gaile
 - h. Gaile!
 - i. Ibako ibambole
 - j. Ije kolamina
 - k. A laiye
 - l. Ije kolamina
 - m. Ibako ibambole
 - n. A laye
 - o. Ije kolamina
 - p. Ay jankwana, Ogun dede, ogun dede ogun bada
 - q. Ije kolamina
 - r. Ogun masa laye
 - s. Ogun lalala urele
 - t. 39:30: stop
- IV. 1:14am. RK songs for Mama Leta
- a. Ye mina wata waluje amabenuka
 - b. Ama wela lawa luje, amabenukaye
 - c. Gatire gatire, ama leta orisha
 - d. Aruyeye Onile aladoye
 - e. Gatire gatire, ama leta orisha

- f. Amaleta Ikoko
 - g. Mama leta o, mama leta, ... waluje
 - h. Adu yeye, Onile aladoye
 - i. Ye mina wata waluje amabenuka
 - j. Ama wela lawa luje, amabenukaye
 - k. 50:00 stop
- V. 1:24am Pleasure song for Mama Leta
- a. Aloes: let we take a little pleasure for her
 - b. Mama Leta Koriko Kara
- VI. 1:29am. SO Songs for Shakpana
- a. Karankada Wo
 - b. Iworo irowo, shakatuana irowo
 - c. Ode la bami aya roko
 - d. Shakpana naiye sa, Shakpana naiye sa so se
 - e. A la rubida, eruna, Shakpana saiye
 - f. E la sandiwa
 - g. A la rubida, eruna, Shakpana saiye
 - h. Shakpana korikoriwo
 - i. Koriwo
 - j. Shakpana korikoriwo
 - k. Koriwo!
 - l. Shakunama!
 - m. Shakpana korikoriwo
 - n. Buyeye, buyeye, buyeye
 - o. Karankada wo, karankada woye...
 - p. Pitiko, pitiko, pitiko Shakpana kere
- VII. 1:42am. SO Songs for Erilay and Ibaji
- a. Erilay-rilay, Erilay-rilay-o
 - b. Yawe, yawe!
 - c. Piri piri piriarmo, alado monfe ferilay
 - d. Ye, ferialado
 - e. Piri piri piriarmo, alado monfe ferilay
 - f. Ye, ferialado
 - g. Ye, babadi, baba gere, Gere gere a
 - h. Emi abo sha demi (la viche)
- VIII. 1:57am. SO Songs for Yemanja
- a. Ye, kwemi o, Yemanja de wa babawa
 - b. Karankado wo Yemanja, karankada wo yemanja
 - c. Ye, kwemi o, Yemanja de wa babawa
 - d. Awoye!
 - e. Yeye wele wele Yemanja wo
 - f. Yemanja saye saye

- g. Sablaiye
- h. Yemanja saye saye
- i. Sablaye
- j. Koria, koria
- k. Erumina! Erumina! Erumina! Erumina!
- l. Ye kwemi Yemanja de wa babawa
- m. Yemanja saiye, saiye
- n. Sablaiye
- o. Yemanja saiye, saiye
- p. Sablaiye
- q. Awayo!
- r. Wele wele, kude ko Yemanja
- s. Awayo!
- t. Yemanja saiye, saiye
- u. Sablaiye
- v. Ariwo Yemanj-wo
- w. Yemanja saiye, saiye
- x. Sablaiye

- IX. 2:29am. SO Songs for Oshun
- a. Yeye, yeya, lagbe oshun sabeko
 - b. Lagbe osho, sabeko
 - c. Yeye, yeye, yeyeye, yeye a, lagbe osho, sabeko
 - d. Lagbe osho sabeko
 - e. Karele, karele o, karele ojo miniawa
 - f. Miniawa, lagbai osho miniawa
 - g. Karele, karele o....
 - h. Miniawa, lagbai osho miniawa
 - i. Alangala fila fi oshun....
 - j. Ayagba, yeye olomi ayagba
 - k. Alangala fila fi oshun....
 - l. Ayagba, yeye olomi ayagba
 - m. Oshun me ba me ba, visani, Arubida buyeye
 - n. Alangala fila fi oshun....
 - o. Ayagba, yeye olomi ayagba
 - p. Marule!
 - q. Ye yeye ye o, oshun oshun o, aremi oshun ma te kumara
 - r. [stop: 2:15:50]

- X. 2:51am. SO Songs for Osain
- a. Ye rani bada, Osain de rele amabo, ye rani bada
 - b. Wele, wele orisha, wele a, Osain de wela orisha wele
 - c. Karele osain karele
 - d. Olorile ojo saina
 - e. Amabituare shallow me, amurele
 - f. Kiripiti

- g. Amabituare shallow me, amurele
 - h. Kiripiti
 - i. Amabituare shallow me, amurele
 - j. 3:04am Ore, osa, tuco tu oloru
 - k. Amure, amure, amure osa betilo
 - l. Arusa yerusa, arusa matelot, Abanike aka korile, arusa matalot
 - m. Baba orisha erude, era jagba papa palara!
 - n. Osain ade, ere rele koko
 - o. Wele, wele orisha, wele wele a, Osain jewela orisha wele
 - p. Kitimande Osain de powa kitimande
- XI. 3:16am. SO Song for Mama Leta
- a. Mama korikorowo, mama leta koriko kara
- XII. 3:20am. SO songs for Shakpana, Oya, and Shango
- a. Karankada wo
 - b. Shakpana korikoriwo
 - c. Karankada wo
 - d. 3:25am Kirianka da Oya
 - e. Oya o ologbo orode ayanba marule
 - f. Oya o di ariwo oya o di tocolo
 - g. Oya o ologbo orode ayanba marule
 - h. Oya o di ariwo oya o di tocolo
 - i. A Oya kwemi o
 - j. E Oya, emi Oya
 - k. Kirianka da Oya
 - l. Ye sakwepa bewe Ko-ima, koima,
 - m. 3:32am Dada O, Kimabomibo.... alado rekefa
 - n. Ode ma o, ode ma orisha
 - o. Odi ogbo....
 - p. Fere kun fere Shango, lafiye babawa
 - q. Baba eruna, eruna, Shango kolona
 - r. Arijankija ... kolo oloro
 - s. Koriwo, Amasakuma!
 - t. Ye, dawona!
 - u. Naiye o, naiye bada naiye o
 - v. Shango o, tete malaw
 - w. Ye ye aniro
 - x. Shango o, tete malaw
 - y. Ye ye aniro
 - z. Shango o, tete malaw
 - aa. Ye ye aniro
 - bb. Shango o, tete malaw
 - cc. 3:43am. Stop.

E. Laventille Orisha Prayers June 2011. Trinidad.

- I. 4:59pm. SO songs for Ogun
 - a. Ogun Bewele Amio [someone blowing conch shell, doption going on]
 - b. Awa bangwele! (1 bar)
 - c. Ogun bewele
 - d. Ajaraja Ogun o!
 - e. Feregun abami
 - f. Ogun lalala urele
 - g. Ogun yeye arima lesa
 - h. Ogun masa laye
 - i. Ogun masa laye (Ayaya!), ogun masa la woyo (oyoyo!)
 - j. Ogun masa laye!
 - k. Baba de, ogun ye ye ye, bab
 - l. Ye agun aye a, ye la bogun ye agun awa lo jo
 - m. A gaile, etuma gaile
 - n. Ye agun aye a, ye la bogun ye agun awa lo jo
 - o. A gaile, etuma gaile
 - p. Gaile!
 - q. Mai law kere kere kere
 - r. Ije kolamina
 - s. A laye!
 - t. Ibako, ibambole!
 - u. Isama isama! (isaba misaba)
 - v. Stop

- II. 5:13pm. RK songs for Mama Leta
 - a. Mama Leta o, mama leta
 - b. Aduyeye Onile aladoye
 - c. Masefa Onile
 - d. Mamale (Arimole) ikoko
 - e. Adure adure ama leta orisha
 - f. Ama wela lawa luje amabenukaye
 - g. Orisha roko, orisha yaga [16 bar song]
 - h. Egbo duro duro du, ego dero dero de, egbo o,
 - i. Egbo, egbo rokoto, ayaba ma abu ma lase laroye
 - j. Baba se laroye!
 - k. Egbo, egbo rokoto, ayaba ma abu ma lase laroye
 - l. Baba se laroye!
 - m. Stop

- III. 5:37pm. SO songs for Raphael, Shakpana, Abatala, and Vigoyana
 - a. Raphael o ma de kuta, Raphael o ma de sa
 - b. Ibai solo, ibai laroye
 - c. 5:40:00 (Shakpana)
 - d. Iroro iroro, shakatuana iroro

- e. Ode la bami ayaroko
 - f. Ye la sandiwa
 - g. Shakpana korikoriwo
 - h. Koriwo!
 - i. Shakunama!
 - j. Shakpana Naiye Se, Shakpana naiye sa so se
 - k. Monia monia, sakotia loye, monia monia Shakpana...
 - l. Ye, la sandiwa
 - m. Monia wa! monia wa sekwete!
 - n. 5:45:40 (Abatala) Okere orisha
 - o. 5:46:30 Adulaye! Adulaye!
 - p. 5:48:10 (Vigoyana) O masa goro, Vigoyana Samidona
 - q. Wele wele ganga urele
 - r. A vigoye, a vigode! [2 bars, 1345 4321]
 - s. A fa, ferilay!
 - t. 5:52pm. Stop.
- IV. 5:53pm, pleasure song
- a. Ye sapeta pewe koima, koima...
 - b. 5:56 (Erilay)
 - c. Yawe, yawe!...
 - d. Erilay-rilay...
 - e. Ye ferilado
 - f. 6:04. Stop. Erilay speaks to the congregation
- V. 6:13pm.
- a. Ferilado, alado mofe ferilado
 - b. Ye ferilado
 - c. Ferilado, alado mofe ferilado
 - d. Ye ferilado
 - e. Powa are kan powa
 - f. Ferilado, alado mofe ferilado
 - g. Ye ferilado
 - h. Erilay-rilay...
 - i. Ferilado, alado mofe ferilado
 - j. Ye ferilado
 - k. Powa are kan powa
 - l. 6:36:00. stop
- VI. 6:39pm. pleasure song
- a. Yawe, yawe!
 - b. 7:01:00 [I left to go outside, and they were still singing it]
 - c. 7:14:00 Ye rani bada, Osain de rele amabo
 - d. Ode Osa, Tuco Tu Oloro
 - e. Ode!

f. 7:23pm. Ojo roko, roko roko, ojo mi aya Osain ade

VII. End tape. Songs continued for Yemanja, Oshun, Oya, and Shango

F. Mausica Feast 2010, 6/16-17/10 (Wed. night, Osain night) Trinidad.

- I. SO songs for Osain, 3:01am
- a. Ye rani bada Osain de rele amabo...
 - b. Abalumbaye ariwo
 - c. Yinghi yinghi a baba bi ye, yinghi yingi a baba bi yo, osain de wa baba mi yaya, yingi yingi yingi a baba bi yo.... (aaba)
 - d. Abalumbaye ariwo
 - e. 3:05am Oloro rile ojosaina
 - f. Karele Osain karele
 - g. Roko roko, roko roko, roko mi aya Osain ade
 - h. Oloro rile ojosaina
 - i. Karele Osain karele
 - j. Oloro rile ojosaina
 - k. 3:07am stop
- II. SO songs for Osa/Osain, 3:08am
- a. Amure amure, amure osa betilo
 - b. Amabitu are, shallow me, amure
 - c. Kiripiti
 - d. Kiripiti Osain de mole
 - e. Ode
 - f. Kiripiti Osain de mole
 - g. Ode
 - h. Oloro rile ojosaina
 - i. Aylande nite wa
 - j. Karele Osain karele
 - k. Orijareta orijaja, Ama leta, laroye
 - l. Mama leta, laroye
 - m. Wele orisha, wele wele a...
 - n. 3:18am stop
- III. SO songs for Osain, 3:36am
- a. Osain jawela orisha wele
 - b. 3:55am Ode
 - c. Eri osa oya lamefa
 - d. 4:08am Babalumbaye, aye
 - e. 4:14am Ode Oshun Talade
 - f. 4:19am Oshun me ba betilo
 - g. Dere dere a
 - h. 4:27am Emi abo sha demi (E Akuba)
 - i. Dere dere a

- j. 4:30am Erilay-rilay
 - k. Yawe yawe
 - l. 4:39am E kwemi o, yemanja de wa iya wa
 - m. Awayo
 - n. Koria, koria – yemanja da ikoko – koria, koria
 - o. Sablaye
 - p. Koria, koria – yemanja da ikoko – koria, koria
 - q. 4:46am Piri piri piri amo, alado mo fe ferilay
 - r. E ferialado
 - s. Piri piri piri amo, alado mo fe ferilay
 - t. E ferialado
 - u. Powa are kan powa
 - v. E ferialado
 - w. 4:52am Alanga rekeke ariwo
 - x. Baba do ilay, kitimande, papado
 - y. 4:53am stop
- IV. 4:54am RK songs
- a. Aruye, aruye, adoya!
 - b. Ama ridi kidiki ye, ye amabu mande
 - c. Ye amanibode
 - d. 5:00am stop
- V. Final Osain Dismissal song, 5:01:00 RK
- a. Nananana, nananana, nananana, nananana
 - b. 5:05am: finished
- VI. Final Psalm Recitation
- a. Psalm 121
 - b. 5:07am end

G. Mausica 2011, “Thursday night” (Shango night, 3:25am Friday morning, 6/17/11) Trinidad

- I. Litany, 3:25am
- a. Ye irawa, irawa x4
 - b. Babawa, jini je ni jo
 - c. Mmmm, laye, mmm layo
 - d. Jini je ni yo
 - e. Sheke alo afa alo ari
 - f. Mmm laye, mmm layo
 - g. Ji ni je nio
 - h. Ye lokuo, ye lokuo, ama kiria kiriyama lokuo x4
 - i. Ekuo, ekuo a kiria ma... ekuo ada mande.. sole ifa... ekuo are remio x4
 - j. Baba o.... Ogun, Shango, Erilay, Osain, Oya, Yemanja, Oshun
 - k. Ogun Masa Laye x4
 - l. Ye, Yemanja ile ile, ye Yemanja ile, Yemanja wele, omi lodo x4

- m. Yemanja wele, omi lodo x4
 - n. Kiriama, visani, amabu she abatani, kiriama visani, amabo swe abatani x2
 - o. Oya riwo oya, oya riwo oya, oya kama koriwo, oya riwo oya x4
 - p. Shango riwo, ... oba Shango baba koriwo Shango riwo o x2
- II. SO songs for Shango, 3:45am
- a. 3:45:00 Korikoto milodo, orisha wele milodo
 - b. 3:56:00 Aladoye, Aladoye, Shango wori loye
 - c. Aladoye!
 - d. 3:57:00 stop
- III. SO songs for Shango 4:41am
- a. Baba de, erona!
 - b. Alado, nadi wolo, alado!
 - c. 4:44:30, stop
- IV. SO songs for Shango, 4:45am
- a. 4:45:00 E dawona (e mani Shango dawona!)
 - b. 4:54:30, drums stop, people keep clapping, same song singing, then drums resume
 - c. 5:04:30 Shango de!
 - d. 5:05:00 Ye agun aye a, ye la bogun ye, wagon a wa loso
 - e. A gaile, etuma gaile
 - f. 5:08:00 Moniawa, moni awa sekwete
 - g. 5:13:00 Yema sekwete pewe koima, koima, yema sekwete koima koima...
 - h. 5:18:00 Arijan rija, ari ri kolo oloro, arija arija
 - i. Amasa kuma
 - j. 5:21:00 E dawona
 - k. 5:22:00 stop
- V. SO songs for Shango, 5:23am
- a. 5:23:00 Alado, nadi wolo, alado
 - b. 5:32:00 Yeye aniro
 - c. 5:43:00 Kwemi ama, kwemi laviche, kwemi ama
 - d. 5:50:00 done

H. Leader Walter Prayers, 6/4/11, Canarsie, Brooklyn

[2 hours of Baptist prayers/songs before the orisha part]

- I. Shileku, fuwanu, 8:58pm
- II. The Litany, 9:00pm
 - a. Ye irawa, irawa o x4
 - b. Ode kimiwa shire di logun o
 - c. Babawa, kini de ni yo x2
 - d. Mmm laye, mmm layo x2
 - e. Sheke alo afa alo ari x2

- f. Ji ni je niyo x3
- g. E iloguno, ama kiria o loguno
- h. Ekuo... ekuo a re re mio
- i. 9:04:00 Baba O, Ogun, Mama leta, Ibaji, Alina, Yemanja, Oshun, Osain, Shakpana (Yeye ma, yeye fa, kaya kaya kuma) Mama Oya, Shango, Abatala
- j. Ogun masa laye, ogun masa laye mande x2
- k. Oni awe, baba iwo, ogun alaye, oni awe, Oni awe
- l. Ye, Yemanja yele ... omi lodo
- m. Kimi ama, visani, amabo she osho shile...x2
- n. Oya riwo oya, oya riwo oya, oya kama koriwo, oya riwo oya
- o. Olodo, Baba wa, ... Mofije, moye, babawa... alo Shango
- p. Shango mani kote, Shango mani kote
- q. Kolodo, baba wa, mofije, moye, babawa....
- r. Ye ye, ye ya, Awaye awa, awaye awa, awaye awa, abakuso

III. The oil/circle dance, 9:17pm

- a. Egbo Duro Duro du, egbo ye, egbo duro duro du
- b. 9:21:00 Ogun bewele
- c. Ajaraja Ogun o
- d. Feregun abami
- e. Yewe, yewe Ogun a, Ogun kayamba
- f. Nati ewe
- g. Yewe, yewe Ogun a, Ogun kayamba
- h. Nati ewe
- i. Ogun yeye arima lesa
- j. Kiriko awa anangwe na jare
- k. Yeye olomi ogun karankade
- l. Babade, Ogun ye, goye baba
- m. 9:26:00 Koriko kara! [*Mama Leta*]
- n. 9:28:00 Emi abo sha demi! [*Ibaji*]
- o. Dere dere a!
- p. 9:31:00 E kwemi o, Yemanja de wa babawa
- q. Wele wele, wele kuda ke Yemanja
- r. Awayo!
- s. Koria koria
- t. Yemanja saye saye
- u. Sablaye!
- v. Koria koria
- w. Sablaye!
- x. 9:34:00 Karele, karele o, karele oso miniawa
- y. Miniawa, lagbe osho minawa
- z. Ye minia, ye miniawe, ama milodo
- aa. Monia la la milodo
- bb. 9:35:30 Ye Alina Papa Ladoye
- cc. 9:37:00 Monia monia, shakotialoye, monia monia
- dd. Iroro, iroro, shakatuana iroro

- ee. Ode la bami aya roko
- ff. Shakpana naiye sa, Shakpana naiye sa so se
- gg. Alarubida eruna Shakpana saiye
- hh. Ye la sandiwa
- ii. Shakpana, korikoriwo!
- jj. Koriwo!
- kk. Shakunama!
- ll. Shakpana para ti goye, para ti go
- mm. 9:41:00 Yeye, yeye, yeye o, yeye a, lagbe osho, sabeko
- nn. Yeye yeye o, oshun oshun o, aremi, oshun ma te kumara
- oo. Lafijere
- pp. Oshun talade
- qq. Ode oshun talade
- rr. Marule
- ss. 9:43:30 Emi Oya, omi Oya o, marule, emi Oya nati oya o, marule
- tt. 9:46:30 Aladoye (Shango wori loye)
- uu. E Dawona
- vv. Arima o, arima! (same melody as next)
- ww. Shango o, babawa!
- xx. 9:49:00 Abatala o kere, O kere Orisha
- yy. 9:51:30 stop

IV. RK Songs 9:51pm

- a. Aduye, ye, aduye, aduya
- b. Ama ridi kidi kiye ye amabu mande
- c. Wonko de worilo
- d. Wele wele ganga u wele
- e. 9:58:00 – stop

V. SO song, 9:58pm

- a. Oshala wa!
- b. 9:59:20

VI. Song of thanks, 10:00pm

- a. Modupwe papa ogun, Olodumare, olokun, mama oshun, mama (ye)manja, obatala, abakuso, papa Shango, mama oya, poporisha, poporisha
- b. Ashe, ashe, ashe
- c. 10:02:00 end

I. Ogun Festival, Febeau Village, Sunday, Sept. 28th, 2008. Trinidad (* indicates a song that I only heard at this shrine.)

I. Litany, beginning about 5:00pm

- a. 00:3:00 Shileku, fu uwa ududuwa, Shileku, fuwa u
- b. 00:5:04 Irawa, Irawa O 3x
- c. 00:7:19 Babawa, jini je ni jo
- d. 00:7:35 Mmm laye, mmm layo

- e. 00:7:45 Jinijenijo
 - f. 00:8:22 E lokuo, e lokuo, ama kiri awa kiri lokuo
 - g. 8:55 Ekuo, ... ekuo arimole, isole ari baba, ekuo are remio, (facing four directions – front, back, left, right, touching the ground each time)
 - h. 10:40 Baba o [Lion starts drumming here], Eshu, Ogun, Irunmila, Obatala, Oshun, Yemanja, Shango, Oya, Osain, Shakpana, Pop Orisha,
- II. SO songs
- a. 18:05 Ogun Masa Laye, in SO
 - b. 19:20 Ogun Osa Mawo, Ogun Osa Mawo Eshawe*le*
 - c. 21:40 stop. So, we have reached a point where we have opened the door, asked that Olodumare open the door, welcome us, and that we have opened up the door, and welcomed Olodumare. [then he organizes everybody to take up the oils and things off the floor]
- III. RK song for taking the offerings to the corners
- a. 23:30 Olodumare Ashe, Iorisha Ashe*
 - b. 28:40 stop. Having invited the orishas, having invited Olodumare, the one god, into our midst. We have a little chat in between. So we could mix the music in with the talk.
- IV. SO song
- a. 30:30 Baba Orisha, Mojuba Ile (Mojuba, mojuba o!)*
 - b. 36:50 stop. We gonna do Iba to Olodumare. Iba, we pay homage. To our ancestors, to our elders, to our fathers and mothers, to our children, those born and those unborn. [Iba, Olodumare, Prayers, etc.] That we are alive... That we will never die. That we will live to see more and more African festivals celebrated not only at Ile Isokan, but in IrieKirie Trinidad and Tobago.
- V. Lesson into Eji Ogbe
- a. add one hour
- VI. SO song
- a. 42:00 [Lester gets butterfly on him, enjoys it a lot
 - b. 42:45 Onibe Talade*
 - c. 46:35 stop
 - d. 47:10 Awo miwo, awo awa*
 - e. ==break in tape==
 - f. 54:00 Ogun Bewele
 - g. 55:00 Ajaraja Ogun o
 - h. 56:30 Feregun Abami
 - i. 57:45 Ogun Lalala Urele
 - j. 59:20 stop
 - k. == break in tape==
 - l. 59:45 E, eshu de, eshu da, eshu leya*
 - m. 1:01:00 Amarukiki*

- n. 1:02:00 E, eshu de, eshu da, eshu leya*
- o. 1:03:00 stop

VII. Meal

- a. ==break in tape for meal==

VIII. Post meal songs in SO

- a. 1:03:45 Oshun Talade
- b. 1:05:00 Ode Oshun Talade
- c. 1:06:45 Oshun Badiyo
- d. 1:09:00 end of tape

J. Continuing Ogun Festival in Santa Cruz, one week later, Oct. 4th

I. SO songs

- a. 1:09:00 Aruru Kiki*
- b. 1:10:20 E, kude, kuma, ode o*
- c. 1:11:10 A a a egungun, a a a egungun, a a a egungun*
- d. 1:12:00 Egun araba, egun araba, egun araba o, egun araba*
- e. 1:12:30 Baraba egungun, baraba egungun, etc.*
- f. 1:14:00 Egunegunegun a laje, egunegunegun a nico laye*
- g. 1:19:20 stop. Altar with odu chart from Lagos, cowrie chain, fruit, books, puncheon, hot sauce, dry food, manischewitz, calabash with water, bird cage in corner, picture of Hilary Katgrant George (nee Osouna) Jan.12 1913-Feb 4 1996, "Founder 1945"

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