

Transnational Yoruba revivalism and the diasporic politics of heritage

ABSTRACT

This article explores the making of social membership in U.S.-based deterritorialized contexts and interrogate the ways that black-Atlantic diasporic imaginaries are intertwined to produce transnational notions of linkage. In charting a genealogy of a transnational orisa movement that came of age in a moment of black-nationalist protest, I pose questions about how such a study should be understood in relation to ethnographies of global networks. I argue that, despite their seemingly thin representations of broad forms of linkage, transnational orisa networks produce culturally portable practices that articulate important transformations: They shape institutions through which new forms of religious knowledge are producing significant breaks with older forms. [*ethnographies of global networks, African diasporic movements, black Atlantic, racial politics, Yoruba orisa practices*]

If an anthropological study of a “village,” however rendered, can provide a statement about the world writ small, what message can the world at large offer to a small community constructed on the historical abyss of the triangular slave trade? Oyotunji African Village is a Yoruba community in South Carolina created by black Americans who, although born in the United States, have set the goal of reclaiming the orisa-vooodoo spiritual practices of Nigeria as their own.¹ Although the site typifies the very small rural community that the sociological literature often refers to as an “intentional community,” in the sense of providing a separate domestic arena both within and outside of a nation-state, it is neither a local village with regional community ties nor a homogenized population reducible to a single location.

In this article, I discuss the significance of Oyotunji Village as a site within networks of Yoruba revivalism throughout the United States and as a manifestation of contemporary global mobilizations of orisa spiritualism. The village becomes both a lens through which to examine the localization of meaning produced and distributed remotely and is deployed by agents in the transformation of cultural and religious forms that circulate within interconnected, global networks spanning the rural and urban, regional and national, and international and transnational. The ethnographic field becomes, in this case, a dynamic terrain of changing religious practices refracted through complex time-space configurations. A mapping of black-Atlantic networks through the case study of orisa production provides an analytic framework for rethinking the political economy of diasporic formations and the linkages (or breakages) between sub-Saharan African and U.S. communities.

The African American orisa practitioners in Oyotunji African Village tend to believe that spiritual ancestral connections, symbolized through racial blackness and shared oppression (e.g., African colonialism and black American enslavement), link them with Yoruba people across the waters. This genealogy of transnational linkage highlights an impetus to create “African” communities in the New World even as the very process of formation and articulation necessarily creates new forms of exclusions.

These formations call for an understanding of the ways that transnational networks of alliance and innovation are being deployed—both in relation to and in the absence of the state apparatus—to reconfigure commonsense meanings of place, practice, and membership. Such formations call for a shift in articulating conceptions of “diaspora”—a shift that will productively critique the central fetishization of African culture by various re-Africanization movements and, in so doing, account for the economic globalization of African heritage in the Americas in complex time-space reconfigurations. “African” cultural production is taking place through the political economy of cultural-heritage markets, in which new reclamation movements are being developed to denationalize practices from their perceived sources and to legitimate them in some of the most unexpected places.

My inquiry here builds on these insights to demonstrate how various institutions of African diasporic orisa practices take shape, converge, and become rearticulated in often haphazard ways—through what Anna Tsing (2005) refers to as “friction”—and, in so doing, create networks of transnational linkages with nodes of practitioners throughout the Americas, acting within and in relation to orisa’s African origins. However, I show that the development of these networks has less to do with contemporary West African origins than with the spread of capitalism globally with its particular post-Cold War formations in various U.S. global cities. To understand the reclassification of meanings of orisa practices outside of African homelands, scholars need to engage the realities of simultaneous continuities and discontinuities that explains the nature of such forms of global change and the related politics of creating the conditions for what can be seen as cultural legitimacy. In so doing, we can understand how global religious social movements are, through the production of deterritorialized practices in New World contexts, seen by their adherents as “authentic.” As I demonstrate, particular forms of cultural variation are connected to the perceived legitimacy of the “originary” condition or set of relations. Through the formation of a “poor” African village in the richest country in the world, perceived continuities (shared African ancestry as lived through blackness, spatial aesthetics, and traditional organizing practices) are used to legitimize discontinuities and to obfuscate politicoeconomic configurations that splice class, race, and geographic belonging into new forms of inequality, complicating claims of collective heritage. Framing social change within such simultaneous relations of continuities and discontinuities involves locating two spheres of interaction, which anchor my argument.

The first interactive sphere highlights the ways that individuals code and reproduce meanings in everyday life. It encompasses practices that borrow from earlier forms and circulate within particular orders of knowledge and power. The second sphere is connected to the first but comprises the ways individuals and groups access discrepant pasts and

resignify their meanings in new social arenas. Both highlight the always unfinished articulations of practices that shape social space making in particular ways and that produce new lines of inclusion and exclusion.

The data for this study were gathered over a ten-year period (1991 to 2001) in multisited fieldwork contexts: orisa religious communities in New York City; Oyo and Abeokuta, Nigeria; Oyotunji Village; and various cities throughout the United States that form sites within the Oyotunji Village network of connection. I do not locate any one of these sites as marginal, and I do not view Oyotunji Village, a demographically small community, in isolation. Rather, I treat the village community as a focal point in an ongoing, multilocal story about the cultural production of religious forms exchanged through deterritorialized institutions of global capitalism (Clarke 2004). Ultimately, I explore the challenges to ethnography raised in studying people and spaces linked to other, remote spaces—some of which are only symbolically related and others of which directly impact daily material forms of innovation and contestation. My intervention is an attempt to demonstrate how anthropologists might chart field sites through the controversies and contestations that bind people across time and space.

To understand new cartographies of linkage in the making of transnational and diasporic formations, we must map the ways that networks operate as contingencies, as forms of linkage that take shape not just through friction but also the absence of encounter—through particular preexisting formations—institutional and historical, arbitrary, or unembodied. It is important not to simply presume linkage through physical interpersonal encounters but to acknowledge it as also arising through the ways that people actively separate themselves from others and in that process reconceptualize their relations to new spaces through re-Africanized heritage movements that emphasize difference. Here, I refer to the ways people produce, deconstruct, and engage in complex social continuities in their lived worlds—the way that, through discontinuities and distance, cartographies of linkage are produced. Such approaches to understanding relationships have not been central to the core of the anthropological discipline. Thus, recasting networks of connection through the spatial articulations of distinction provides a framework for critically reassessing the ways that we study transnational and more circumscribed geographies as they relate to human relatedness.

Anna Tsing’s *Friction* (2005) represents one such reassessment but locates the space of linkage in the encounter—in the rubbing up together of difference and sameness. In the present case study, I map conflicts around the circulation and enactment of religious products and knowledge forms among related, although often disparate, groupings of practitioners within the black-Atlantic world and demonstrate that, through messy encounters, linkages are made and global connections articulated. Nevertheless,

in the absence of ongoing encounters between U.S. practitioners and those in the African “homelands,” for example, or as a result of the failure of different groups to resolve particular ideological differences, various encounters take place outside of the conditions for actual engagement but still within the continuum of interconnection—transnational or local. Given this, I demonstrate why it is important to articulate a theory of transnational networks that explores the ways that the absence of encounters or even the formation of radical networks of exclusions gain power through the production of spheres of influence that are designed to construct self-sufficient transnational movements that delimit contact with opposing groups but are nonetheless imbricated alongside them in the process. These forms of linkage through active disengagement may very well be the basis of articulating friction, as Tsing points out; however, like human-rights mobilizations, in the making of complicated religious movements, the ideologies that produce the politics of difference and that enable the absence of direct encounters are, in most cases, part of the same historical spectrum, the same networks of linkage. Articulating interconnections through transnational networks—whether religious institutions of obligation and cultural heritage or based on other forms of connection through obligation or disengagement—involves examining the ways that particular spheres of power and inclusion produce engagements even as they undermine other possibilities of contact.

To contextualize these complicated patterns—and to anticipate the article’s conclusions about the challenges of transnational ethnographies—I first review anthropology’s historical role in constructing “traditional culture” as embedded in relatively static spaces and then demonstrate how new ethnographies have begun to theorize global connections in increasingly deterritorialized, innovative, and interconnected ways.

Traditional ethnography and the making of “culture” within and outside of the borderlands

On December 20, 2006, as one of various efforts to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of Nigeria, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Japanese government signed a trust-in-fund for the safeguarding of the Ifa divination system central to Yoruba orisa religious practices. Ifa, the mystical figure regarded by the Yoruba as the deity of wisdom, makes use of an extensive divinatory corpus of sacred texts and calculations to forecast the future and explain the past. This corpus is derived from a deeply sophisticated religious communicative practice between God, known as Olodumare, and human beings (Bascom 1969a). This UNESCO project is one of many global initiatives outside of West Africa aimed at preserving and, in some cases, promoting Ifa divination and the religious practices surrounding it. For example, Ifa divina-

tion and other divinatory and religious forms help constitute the North American practice of orisa-vooodoo by Afro-Cuban, black American, and white practitioners. What historical constructions underlie these contemporary, transnational heritage patterns?

The Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria, whom diasporic practitioners regard as the guardians of “traditional” orisa, were classified as an ethnic group by sociologists and anthropologists of the 20th century (Peel 2000). Studies documenting the people, their origins, and their cultural practices often involved the use of intensive fieldwork in which researchers lived with informants and documented their life cycles, ritual practices, ceremonies, and death rituals (Apter 1992; Bascom 1969b; Matory 2005; Morton-Williams 1968). Over extended periods, scholars monitored the annual cycles of subjects to uncover constituent practices of group identity. Tracing the travels of African kinsmen and kinswomen was often secondary to the anthropological aim of charting the social reproduction of settlements. Such settlements were imagined as linked to precolonial, bounded cultures, repositories of the “original” and “traditional” practices of an ethnic community. Over time, even as anthropology (influenced by human geography) began to place greater emphasis on documenting people on the move, popular ethnographic approaches continued to privilege single-sited fieldwork.

Thus, anthropology’s village studies of the early 20th century contributed to inscriptions of territorially and biologically distinctive peoples and cultures in relation to nation-states. These notions of territorial placement worked with governmental and social-scientific institutions to reinforce conceptions of belonging in relation to bodily signs, spatial boundaries, and notions of legitimacy. Anthropology’s original focus on local communities as isolated microcosms failed to capture social worlds that were becoming interconnected in increasing fields of interaction. The spatial domains within which these articulations were presumed to be “natural” were shaped just as much by ideologies of seeing connections as they were by actual connections. In this sense, 19th- and 20th-century histories of African migration—of cultural change over space and time—have reflected similar motivations and preoccupations.

At the turn of the 20th century, anthropologists at the forefront of locating studies of African groups in the early development of the anthropological canon witnessed rapid change connected to European contact, colonial governance, and transformations to settlements. As a result of these changes, early anthropological questions were inspired by the search to discover rules of change in relation to detailed studies of locality, often shaped by the anthropologists’ own ideologies of seeing locality. Scholars of Nigerian peoples, such as S. F. Nadel (1942) writing about the Nupe, articulated particular identities in relation to their association with ethnic homelands. Sociologists writing about

the Yoruba, such as Samuel Johnson (1921) and the late N. A. Fadipe (1970), used these popular taxonomies of identification to articulate belonging through particular idioms of locality. These articulations represented one way of attending to the relations between the autochthonous individual seen as native to a given region and the perceived stranger whose lineage may have been articulated as distinct. Yet, despite these taxonomies of “insider” and “outsider” articulated by early scholars in relation to locality or geography, other conceptions, such as ethnicity, totem group, marriage alliance, and ancestral connections, actually defied attempts to articulate autochthonous linkages to place. These other formulations involved thinking about conceptions of belonging that went beyond that of the land, articulating forms of kinship that were often nonlinear and tended to link individuals’ relations to seemingly abstract spirits, to the occult, and to pasts, presents, and futures not easily translatable in terms of taxonomies of place and belonging. Despite these various ways of conceptualizing subjectivity, taxonomies of place and belonging as articulated by early- to mid-20th-century scholars continued to shape autochthonous geographies of belonging that would eventually come to define the terms of late 20th-century notions of belonging.

Departing from these earlier formulations of identity related to place-based belonging, anthropologists such as Roger Bastide (1971, 1978) attempted to understand the rearticulation and detachment of identity from place through the movement of various African captives to the Americas and, in doing so, articulated Yoruba linkages through the movement of enslaved Yoruba Dahomean captives during the late 16th through late 17th centuries. This history represented a period of transatlantic slavery in which millions of African captives were sold into slavery and transported to the regions of the world that would eventually become Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, and Trinidad.

With the movement of Africans to the Americas, the enslaved populations, diverse in languages, regions of origins, and ritual interpretive practices, popularized a Kwa-descended language known as Lukumi and collectively adapted their diverse religious practices to produce various forms of orisa worship or voodoo. In those new locales, however, the first Yoruba-related Kwa-speaking settlements were also sites of plantation slavery. In the New World settlements of Yoruba Dahomean Africans, an economy of plantation slavery developed that led to transformations of Yoruba Dahomean ritual practices as increasingly hybridized with related African religious practices (Barrett 1974). But the outlawing of African occult religious practices in various regions also led to their eventual regimentation (Clarke 2004). As a result of both the hybridization of orisa-voodoo and the eventual illegalities related to it, therefore, a range of religious practices developed. In Brazil, the new spaces of interpretive production shaped the development of a variation of orisa practices that became known as Candomblé (Matory 1994,

1999, 2005); in Cuba orisa became Santería (Brandon 1993; Brown 2003), which spread throughout the United States and elsewhere; in Trinidad and Tobago it became Sango (Henry 2003); and in the United States, among black American cultural nationalists, it became part of what came to be known as orisa-voodoo, a revivalist form of Yoruba orisa religious practices (Apter 1992; Clarke 2004).

In New Orleans, there were large numbers of voodoo-practicing ritualists, some of whom came from Haitian plantations. Not until early 1959 and throughout the 1960s and 1970s, however, did voluntary immigrants from three distinct groups of people with long histories of orisa popular cultural heritages begin settling in the U.S. South. The first group moved from Cuba and Puerto Rico and settled in southern Florida, especially in Miami and Fort Lauderdale. Hundreds of thousands with a joint African Yoruba and Cuban heritage migrated after Fidel Castro took over the Cuban government and became prime minister on January 1, 1959. The second group comprised some thousands of Yoruba from southwestern Nigeria, who, in the 1980s and 1990s, migrated to the U.S. South in search of improved quality of life. These recent arrivals settled in Atlanta and Savannah, Georgia; parts of North and South Carolina; Houston and Austin, Texas; Nashville, Tennessee; and Jacksonville, Florida. They are mostly Christian or Muslim, and many still hold Nigerian citizenship, claiming a Yoruba identity in the United States. The third group comprised a small number of black revivalists who, in the spirit of the black-power movement of the 1960s, moved from the U.S. North to the South and established Oyotunji African Village, thereby developing a religious movement toward the reclamation of African, specifically Yoruba, religious traditions. This third group, the focus of this article, poses a challenge to ethnic classification systems because it claims autonomy and traces legitimacy through ancestral spirituality, which can only be experienced, not “scientifically” tested.

Lying 5,000 miles from the westernmost tip of Africa, outside of the geographic boundaries of African nation-states, Oyotunji Village (re)constructs the symbolic imagery of Yoruba people from the past, prior to the colonial conquest of the Oyo Empire and the formation of nation-states. Practitioners have created a deterritorialized kingdom situated on the outer perimeter of Beaufort, approximately 65 miles southwest of Charleston, South Carolina. Using concepts of nationalism and invocations of transnational racial alliance, members of the Oyotunji leadership have decentered the significance of territory to imagine an “African” political community in the United States. But this African village represents a nonstate mode of civic governance; it is the base of a network of religious revivalists that took shape at the height of the U.S. race wars and came of age at the end of U.S. Cold War politics.

Born of complex controversies over the conditions of slavery from the 16th to the mid-19th century, Oyotunji Village took shape as a result of black American claims to the

African heritage—the “Africa”—they were denied. Through particular imaginings of belonging to the nobility of African empires of the past, members of the movement engage in the active construction of narratives of African descent that detail the framework for their own revival of West African political and religious governance. However real or imagined this construction, in question here is the play of power by which the cultural logics of race serve as a basis for legitimizing black American claims to African identities. These conceptualizations are fundamentally tied to a rejection of citizenship as territorially embodied and to the belief in an “African ancestor” animated by contemporary religious agents.

Meanwhile, Santería practitioners are worshipping in New York City and various other locations throughout the United States and Cuba. Santería, a Cuban form of Yoruba orisa worship, is deeply enmeshed in the history of plantation slavery and the racialization of labor; it provides a symbol for mixed nationhood and demonstrates the power of innovation in the religious social order. Various practitioners—some claiming Hispanic roots, others with Afro-Cuban national identities, and still others tracing U.S. or African heritage—are active participants in the production of Yoruba-based practices in the United States.² They, too, “travel”—sometimes in body, sometimes through ritual, sometimes by e-mail—to, through, or against Oyotunji and its claims of African Yoruba origins.

Loyal to the history of black nationalism in the United States, some black Americans have rejected many Santería cultural translations, reconceptualizing the spiritual practice to disentangle it from its history of Spanish and Christian regulation. These changes have involved “blackening” Santería icons and referentially indexing West African empires and kingdoms that preceded the colonization of Nigeria by the British Empire. As a result of the belief that they have a right to control the African territory that was their homeland prior to European colonization, and spurred by ideological clashes over the “whitening” of Yoruba ritual practices in Cuba, Yoruba revivalists in the United States renamed their version of Yoruba Santería “orisa-vooodoo,” substituting African words for Spanish-language words and pronunciations. Oyotunji practitioners have argued for the need to Africanize Santería as fundamentally Yoruba and visibly “African.” They are producing performative cartographies of Yoruba membership: replacing Anglophone names with Yoruba names and incorporating the mythic visual imagery of the old empire to create landscapes that resemble Yoruba religious practices. These reformulations of Africanity help shape the terms of U.S. contestations between early black nationalists and new Cuban immigrants, whose representations of orisa practices range from Catholic aesthetic symbols to those seen as traditionally Yoruba—thus, more “authentically African.”

Nevertheless, West African Yoruba traditional religious practitioners are not always in agreement with this U.S. claim

to West African descent and authentic practice, and there exists widespread rejection of black American embodiments of African ancestry. The vast majority of Nigerian Yoruba are self-professed Christians or Muslims; few are orisa worshippers. Even in the heartland of the Yoruba—the city of Ile Ife—at the palace of the king of the Yoruba people, practices seen as customary and traditional are being transformed in radical ways—through the language of born-again Christian Pentecostalism; and the sacred kingship is being reclassified in a language of the ordinary and the mundane (Olupona n.d.). It is within this contemporary context that black (“African”) American identities, positioned in a relatively privileged location in the global political economy, come to exert powerful, even hegemonic, influence on indigenous Nigerian practice.

The widening constituencies of orisa devotion today can be classified into four significant groups: (1) orisa practitioners principally located in Nigeria and Benin as well as surrounding West African countries; they tend not to be educated in Europe and the Americas, have limited financial resources, and claim orisa worship as their religious faith; (2) orisa–Santería–Lukumi practitioners in the Americas, who constitute the largest group of religious worshippers and can be found in urban and rural sites throughout Cuba, Haiti, Trinidad, Puerto Rico, Brazil, and the United States; (3) orisa worshippers and Yoruba or orisa revivalists who are part of a relatively new (post-1960s), deterritorialized economy of practitioners interested in the return to a more orthodox traditional practice; and (4) orisa modernists, a relatively new (post-1980s) group of initiates, led by predominantly white U.S. practitioners, who are part of a growing transnational movement interested in the transcendence of racial belonging through the emphasis of ancestral lineage. Some groups claim their distinctiveness as a result of the modernization of religious principles, others recognize the relevance of transatlantic slavery in the substantive revision of Yoruba practices, and still others, like Oyotunji practitioners, use the history of slavery to leverage a new and radical transformation of Yoruba orthodoxies. Members of the different groups generally have not interacted extensively. And they do not always see themselves as part of the same continuum; however, they remain imbricated in the same networks—historical and contemporary—of global interconnection.

The contours of the transnational: Producing communities of interconnection and exclusion

Founded in 1970 and, by the late 1970s, boasting a residential population of 191 residents, Oyotunji is home to black people whose ancestors were captured, sold to traders, and transported as slaves to the Americas. The development of religious revivalist movements as part of a counterculture often reflects people’s attempts to respond to and correct particular unfair historical injustices. In this case, the

community comments on a 300-year history of slavery by articulating separation from the U.S. politicocultural imaginary and claiming Africa as its homeland.

Today, Oyotunji practitioners follow a racially exclusive orthodoxy. Oyotunji remains a small community built to accommodate up to 25 housing compounds with a potential capacity of around 500 people. It is structured around three main sectors: religious ritual and organization, political governance, and a small-scale market economy within which religion and politics are played out. In re-creating the kingdom of Oyo through Oyotunji, the leadership established strategies of governance intended to replicate “prestigious” forms of community embedded in the premodern hegemony of the Yoruba nation. In keeping with the nobility of empire and the archaic symbolism of Ile Ife as the birthplace of the Yoruba, Oyotunji is hierarchically divided into various levels according to notions of grandeur and social status, ranging from the political leader—the *oba* (king)—to lesser chiefs, priests, and nonpriest practitioners. The apex of governance is located within the palace, a signifier of ancient ancestral leadership. Adéfúnmi II, the sophisticated and learned *oba* of Oyotunji, is the son of a Yoruba father of dispersed Africans. He claims a constituency of thousands of African Americans in the United States, hundreds of whom have lived and trained in Oyotunji. Clearly setting the terms for the use of racial continuity to forge prestatehood claims to African nobility (empires and rulers), his governance in South Carolina is organized into four central spheres of social life—political, religious, cultural, and economic. Embracing these symbols of Yoruba institutional power, the formation of Oyotunji governance marked the development of a new kind of black-nationalist governance that claimed a direct and privileged relationship with African counterparts.

Transnational diasporic relations, however, are neither equal in impact, influence, and prestige nor evenly distributed. The 20th- and 21st-century proliferation of groups of orisa practitioners outside of West Africa continues to be expansive: Adherents of Yoruba and Santería religious practices now number in the millions. Although the roots of Yoruba traditions are seen as emerging from Africa, major changes have taken shape over the past two centuries and expanded to disproportionately reflect the popularity of orisa practices outside of West Africa. Thus, Nigerian Yoruba practitioners—who hold the symbolic roots of orisa—are becoming marginal to the production of new standards of “traditional” practice in the current age of information globalization. The industry of ritual knowledge and training services is proliferating with the institutionalization of European and U.S. distribution and cultural production networks. These networks have promoted and facilitated the widespread availability of self-help books and videos, by which people with differing levels of familiarity with Yoruba practices are attaining the knowledge to become orisa

worshippers. Through the support of “packages” that offer a purchase of ancestral validation—for instance, electronic technologies, films, and membership in new societal institutions that focus on orisa religious and cultural practices, ritual initiation, and learning—orisa transnational religions in North and South America and in England are growing with revivalist fervor.

Thus, increasing numbers of orisa adherents are contributing to the growth of multiple networks of knowledge outside of, rather than inside, the African continent.³ Accordingly, African orisa traditionalists are themselves becoming increasingly dependent on the patronage and resources of practitioners from elsewhere, black and white alike. This power–authenticity reversal, reflecting material inequalities, has led to particular asymmetries in which West African orisa practitioners who have limited access to electronic technology are experiencing declining significance in their social worlds. Such new formations call into question the place of Africa and its symbolic utility for understanding what many scholars refer to as “African diaspora studies.” They highlight the ways that Africa’s representation as a repository of the origins of the black-Atlantic past must be interrogated in terms of the continent’s power as a symbol, which diverse communities (incl. academic theorists) mobilize to authenticate contemporary New World practices as “African” in heritage and meaning. One of the most explosive programs underlying the study of transnational and diasporic formations is the search for African roots. At the base of this trend are practices, (re)invented and conducted outside of “homelands,” that become embodiments of those root traditions in new spaces. Given the political, economic, and cultural transformations both inside and outside of the African continent, it is becoming more critical than ever to resituate Africa within African diasporic debates. This can be achieved by examining the ways that discontinuities are taking shape alongside the manufacture of intentionally incorporated, “ancient” continuities.

In the context of globalization and post-Cold War restructuring, the African continent is engaged in new strategies for addressing economic disenfranchisement and state collapse. The growth of new religious and social mobilizations, such as the rise of Pentecostalism, has promised to provide the African rural and urban poor with individual and community strategies for moving communities through “development” and into “modernity.” Among black American revivalists, the rejection of mainstream Christianity as a product of European imperialism and of slavery anticipated the appropriation of orisa-voodoo practices as the basis for a more “primal,” “back to the land,” return to “African roots” approach to contemporary problems. Coupled with post-Fordist consumer patterns of New Age practices, the global spread of orisa religious revivalisms—like many religious revivalisms worldwide—has proceeded alongside the perceived failure of the state to address, for

example, racism and consequent black economic and political disenfranchisement.

Central to understanding these patterns is a fundamental story of historical fields of change in an increasingly global economy. Migration from the Global South to Europe, the Americas, and other global nodes signifies the expansion of modern capitalism and its rearticulation in new locales. Such realities demand analyses that move scholars beyond investigating “unitary kinship groups” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997) linked to territorial attachments and that, instead, move us toward the incorporation of multisited explorations through which to rethink how field sites need to be understood (Marcus 1995). In attending to such shifts, we encounter yet another layer of engagement that is becoming increasingly critical. For now, more than ever—whether in African diasporic contexts, Latin American, or South or East Asian—ethnographic methodological approaches must take up the challenge of understanding cultural production not simply through multisited contexts within the nation-state but in more complex transnational mappings of connections being forged in new institutional and deterritorialized formations that involve transient people, multiple places, and the movement of things as well as the ways that their articulations are simultaneously continuous and discontinuous. In this context, the deterritorialization of group practices from “homelands” is shaping new ways of understanding power and subjectivity, but literatures that designate black studies as fundamentally about the African diaspora have yet to critically disaggregate cultural origins from destinations.

Instead, because of the marked attempts by cultural producers to reclaim African roots as a project once denied them, scholars have attempted to address and anchor these dynamic processes in terms of identity, creating an analytic situation in which identity as a performed construct becomes the central problematic, without sufficient attention to its multiple applications in complex, transnational fields of power (for examples, see Gates and Appiah 1996, 1999; Walker 2001). In response to the need to reconfigure identity studies, Jean-Loup Amselle’s monograph *Mestizo Logics: Anthropologies of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere* (1998) challenges assumptions about “origins” in terms of posing questions about who defines “ethnicity” or “difference.”

In considering the heritage economy, such queries about the authors of identity must be further extended to ask who profits from the distribution of such constructions. The answers may challenge the very symbology on which the heritage industry depends. Notions of biological succession from singular black ancestors have shaped the parameters for legitimizing racial ideologies about African identities as traceable to shared origins. Yoruba revivalism stands at the imaginary crossroads of the enslaved African body, which represents the forced migration of Africans to the Americas and the redemptive hope of an ideological return to

black governance. This approach into the realm of fantasy is critical to the ways agents become other through their own construction of cultural institutions. Oyotunji, an example of such a social construction, should be understood not as a bounded, isolated site but as a strategic actor within a network of linkages brought to life through transnational society–cult groups.

From village to nation to global networks of interconnection: Oyotunji societies as satellite networks

In the mid-1980s, the population of the Oyotunji community in South Carolina plummeted from 200 to 70. Compared with past numbers, fewer revivalists than ever resided in Oyotunji in the 1990s.⁴ There are many ways to explain the decline in the number of on-site residents as a statement of failure and demise. As I demonstrate, however, the decline in numbers is in reality part of a larger reconfiguration of diasporic imagination. During this period, practitioners left the community for urban opportunities, leading to the establishment of more radical orisa-vooodoo cult groups in U.S. inner cities.⁵ These migrations laid the seeds for the spread of new institutional forms within an enlarging network of practitioners.

New autonomous institutions, such as an Ogboni society (governance council), a men’s society (Egbe Akinkonju), and a women’s society (Egbe Moremi), formed in U.S. cities (such as Milwaukee, Miami, New York, Dallas, San Francisco, Atlanta, and Gainesville), rendering revivalist practices more accessible. Although outside the physical space of Oyotunji, the institutionalization of Egbe Moremi and Egbe Akinkonju made possible the independent formations of satellite temples with their own practitioner clients and membership practices while also allowing for the maintenance of affiliations between satellite locations and Oyotunji villagers.

I interviewed a range of Oyotunji practitioners about the ways that various societies are able to function both in Oyotunji and outside of it. Olufemi explained that

Spiritual mothers (orisa deities) are related to everyone else so our organizations must be as well. When I joined the priesthood I joined a spiritual institution that connected me to Americans, Africans, South Americans and Cubans. We all are related with the same spiritual forces but in Oyotunji we have used a select group of societies to mark our special kinship with others of the same ancestral clan group. Today the societies that you see are merely societies of the ancient past being called up again to help us with the redemption of black Americans.

Ifabunmi added, “And we use our societies to work underground and over-ground. We are doing the spiritual cleansing of our ancestors and trying to find ways to bring their children back home.” Chief Omara interrupted:

Yes right, cause Oyotunji is an ideal. It is a state of mind, which means that whether we're here or on the (African) continent, our societies are connected spiritually and we use them so that we can identify the necessary work we have to do with and for Africans in America. So you could be a member of the Egbe Akinkonju and live in New York City but you would still have obligations to fulfill as a result of the blood rituals that bind you to the society.

As these informants emphasize, Oyotunji societies are fundamentally spiritual institutions that are concretized through rituals productive of relationships of obligation. Both spiritual and social ties are manifest through multiple groupings of organizations that constitute lateral networks. Because of the primacy of such ritualized spiritual linkages—connected to the larger symbol of belonging to an African past—it is not just Oyotunji organizational governance that shapes community membership. Organizational relations within and among satellite groupings extend the networks of governance and belonging.

Table 1 lists the main societies operative within and outside of Oyotunji; their webs extend well beyond the current population of 50 within the intentional community. Their webs extend within and outside of the U.S. nation-state and are productive of significant transformations of the dwindling Nigerian orisa practices in which the sacred kinship is being either fetishized as a heritage institution or transformed into a born-again phenomenon.

Two of the most widespread and transnationally far-reaching societies founded by Oyotunji residents are the Egbe Akinkonju men's and Egbe Moremi women's societies. The Egbe Akinkonju is a society of males of African descent. Its mission is described as organizing and developing males

to grow to be dedicated men committed to the work of orisa revitalization and black empowerment. The society uses the iconic symbol of the deity Ogun—warrior, pioneer, and advocate for justice. Since the late 1980s, the national appeal of this society has been its male initiation rites programs. Boys join at young ages and over time accomplish various tasks toward their “manhood rites” tests. At puberty they undergo a series of rites; after passing them, they are admitted for life to the Egbe Akinkonju.⁶

Interested practitioners in various U.S. cities can establish affiliations with Oyotunji through membership in the Egbe Akinkonju's men's society. As members, they must pay dues, viewed as important to group cohesion and to the support of group activity and productivity. For example, funds may be used to assist members in traveling to or living in Nigeria, by which they reaffirm their belonging to a larger pantheon of spiritual practitioners that is both deterritorial and atemporal.

In both London and Birmingham, England, there are also Oyotunji-allied practitioners who have undergone Egbe Akinkonju rituals and maintain affiliation through the payment of dues, yearly rites, and occasional attendance at meetings. Male members of Oyotunji also join other male societies based in England, Benin, Nigeria, and Brazil, among other places. Their ritual initiations in men's societies in these various sites further concretize their claimed spiritual affinities with African societies.

Similarly, the Egbe Moremi women's society boasts widespread membership in a range of institutional networks within and outside the United States. Its mission is to educate and train girls and women to understand and transmit traditional African values. The Egbe Moremi society celebrates womanhood each June through the figure of the patron orisa Yemoja Moremi. This annual Yemoja festival includes the celebration of affiliated members of Egbe Moremi. To become members, girls must undergo a yearlong female rite of passage; grown women follow an adapted version of the training rituals and ceremonies. With the successful completion of such rites, girls and women are admitted to the society and considered members for life and even in death. In Abeokuta, parts of Oyo, and Ile Ife, Nigeria, and elsewhere, Nigerian practitioners have created contexts for the extension of Oyotunji rites and forms of alliance and association to make possible the growth of a heritage economy in which Nigerians can be a part. These Oyotunji relations with Nigerian orisa adherents and ongoing heritage tourism to Oyotunji and to southwestern Nigeria do not imply a continuity of orisa practices that reflect an African religious form and its institutions as they have traveled and returned to West African contexts. Rather, these relations reflect continuities in imaginations of connections but discontinuities in structure and form of practices. This is because such cult groups as the Egbe Moremi and Egbe Akinkonju societies reflect the needs and association of those diasporic subjects

Table 1
Oyotunji Societies

Society	Purpose/Constituents
Igbimogboni	Ogboni society; lawmaking body composed of chiefs/landowners worshippers
Igbimolasha	Council of priests/priestesses
Egbe Moremi	Women's society, composed of females from puberty onward
Egbe Akinkonju	Men's society, composed of males from puberty onward
Egbe Ifa	Society of Ifa priests
Egbe Obatala	Cult of Obatala worshippers
Egbe Oshun	Cult of Oshun worshippers
Egbe Eshu	Cult of Elegba worshippers
Egbe Ogun/Oshosi	Cult of Ogun/Oshosi worshippers
Egbe Yemoja	Cult of Yemoja worshippers
Egbe Shongo	Cult of Sango worshippers
Egbe Olokun	Cult of Olokun worshippers
Egbe Oya	Cult of Oya worshippers
Egbe Obaluaiye	Cult of Babaluaiye worshippers
Egbe Egungun	Secret society of ancestor worshippers

who, in relation to their own marginality in the Americas, have sought out and made possible the building of heritage artifacts and their institutionalization.

In both of these examples, the spiritual and social converge to create alliances of membership, obligation, and affiliation that cannot be understood in relation to territorialized belonging alone. Society members pay yearly fees to their local and transnational member associations, they participate in voting and decision making well outside of their regions, and they refer clients to each other throughout the society network. The growth of a national and international membership that is mobile and intersects with other orisa sects has led to a need to develop institutional infrastructures to coordinate interrelated satellite communities globally.⁷ As a result of these alliances, it has become more important than ever for practitioners to claim membership in the growing network of deterritorialized Yoruba revivalists. And by association, southwestern Nigerian traditionalists have participated in these cultural economies not through their prescriptive design of religious ritual purposes (insofar as their ritual acts reflect local causes and concerns) but through their accommodation of these transnational ritual contexts. Such contexts have often taken shape for the purposes of cultural and economic alliance, and this engagement has served to symbolically “authenticate” Oyotunji-related practices.

The relationships between and among transnational orisa cultural producers reflect disjunctures and conjunctures in cultural production. They reflect what I have referred to as “discontinuities” and “continuities” that are simultaneously operative and form the basis for contemporary transnational heritage movements that involve a physical or spiritual or symbolic “return” to a homeland. For these “returns” are made possible through far-reaching networks of imagined belonging that defy multisite study within the nation-state and render impossible intellectual trajectories that highlight linear histories of interchange and influence. Rather, such formations highlight the impossibility of studying the peoples and cultures of Oyotunji simply in relation to the geographic boundaries of Oyotunji. I have returned, thus, to the village and its institutional sites not to reinstate village studies in the center of anthropological work but, instead, to locate the village as a metaphor for and node within networks of Yoruba-orisa invention. Today, it is the circulation of revivalist practices performed by transient or nontransient populations, not territorial location alone, that constitutes membership and alliance in Oyotunji village societies, but Nigerian traditionalists, Santería practitioners, and New Age modernists are also outliers in the production of Oyotunji distinctiveness, separateness. Herein lies the need for articulating these deterritorialized networks in relation to their complex networks of continuities and discontinuities. For, indeed, conceptions related to the cultural production of space and related diasporic formations are not new to 20th-century social theory, but relatively little schol-

arly attention has gone into exploring the complexities of how various ritual networks enable the perception of legitimate continuities, especially in the midst of discontinuities.

Transnational ethnographies through thick and thin: Outliers and their imbrications

In transnational orisa-vooodoo contexts, the production of referential meanings takes on indexical values in Africa and its “elsewheres.” Through use, these objects take on different meanings (Caton 1985; Dominguez 1989; Silverstein 1976), and, for this reason, codes are contingent and productive of new forms of innovation as well as constantly interpolated within larger codes. Continuities and discontinuities work to generate meanings that reorder socially important relationships. In analyzing the resignification of meanings embedded in transnational networks of membership and ritual performance, scholars require measurements that can accommodate political forms of marginalization that are manifest in spiritual, rather than straightforwardly empirical, registers.

Charting the spirituality of ritual, the moral geography of slavery, and the structuring of social relationships vis-à-vis human practice, I approach an understanding of continuities and discontinuities by recognizing that, in the process of enacting social relationships through the performance of “tradition,” individuals effectively transform themselves into particular subjects who require alliances and regulatory models through which to create new meanings, and, to this end, they maintain, reinforce, and sometimes subvert the categories that compel and shape them. Such patterns in time and space are both recursive and transformative. Agents cultivate socially relevant relationships and classify forms of difference or sameness in terms of particular values of scale—race, ethnicity, religion, or gender—values that travel and are often innovatively incorporated in “new” ritual spaces, such as Birmingham or Ile Ife.

Today, with new knowledge techniques employed by orisa practitioners engaged in deterritorialized networks, new meanings of place and practice are being produced and time-space distance is being compressed for the sake of a major religious revival-reproduction. In 2006, a search of the Internet for the key words *Orisa practitioners*, *Santería*, *Yoruba*, and *divination* yielded over 7,000 websites. Such a vast index reflects the range of transnational institutions that one could call on to obtain on-line divinatory readings, information about the history and culture of the Yoruba and the history of slavery, and adaptations of orisa rituals by Africans in the Americas as well as a range of ritual societies in which adherents can participate, either within or through organizations in competition with the Oyotunji networks.

The World Congress of Orisa Tradition and Culture was established in 1981 in Ile Ife to study and celebrate the global spread of orisa traditions, but it has traveled throughout the

black-Atlantic zones—from Brazil to the United States to Trinidad, back to Nigeria, and to Cuba. It serves as a central institutional base for orisa organizing throughout the black-Atlantic world. Those interested in searching the Internet, however, might find orisa web links to cultural marketplaces in their own locales. The key players in the proliferation of orisa practices in the United States maintain websites that not only produce knowledge about orisa rules and practice but also provide services that can be procured and consumed.

For example, the website for the Awo Study Center, run by Awo Fálókun Fatunmbi (<http://www.awostudycenter.com>), boasts a mission statement, a welcome-salutation in English and Yoruba, an invitation to join the center's mailing list, a comments area, updated postings related to the meanings of Yoruba words, divinatory interpretations, and general knowledge study material. The site for Santería Batá Drumming (<http://www.ochemusic.de/linklist.htm>) provides a road map for a wide array of orisa practices as well as music forums and listings of academic books and institutions—including a link to the School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, which provides a gateway to research on scholarly information on African and U.S. Yoruba-Santería-Candomblé practices. Some sites serve network groupings, and others provide information about the particular practices of a given group in the larger alliance. For example, the Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye (<http://www.church-of-the-lukumi.org>), run by Oba Ernesto Piccardo, is one forum for information about Afro-Caribbean religion; OrishaNet (<http://www.orishanet.org>) is another popular Santería site dedicated to providing information on La Regla Lucumí. It provides postings for the divination reading of the year as well as general information about orisa ritual practices. And the Oyotunjí African Village website (<http://www.oyotunjiafricanvillage.org>) provides general information about the community's schedule of monthly orisa festivals as well as postings outlining the list of societies that one can join, places for general principles of Yoruba traditions, and the results of the divinatory reading of the year.

The temple known as Ile Afolabi is a traditional house of Lukumi orisa worship headquartered in the Detroit area, with members principally from the Midwest.⁸ It is another African-centered orisa site that provides updates of orisa practices for its constituency and whose members are related to various Oyotunji members. The Alliance of Yoruba Organizations and Clubs, USA (<http://www.yorubaalliance.org>), representing Nigerian Yoruba constituencies, was set up to foster the unity of all Yoruba societies and religious groups through collaborative activities in the United States and around the world. Established to promote the economic, social, cultural, and political empowerment of all Yoruba organizations, including information sharing, this site, more than the others listed

above, is concerned with both religion (esp. Islam and Christianity) and the governmental politics of Africa.

Ifá College is another example of a new transnational institution that makes available and reinforces particular conceptions of appropriate local and transnational religious practices. It is in competition with Oyotunji networks, however, as it provides orisa religious training to a new generation of practitioners formerly excluded from participation in African ritual practices because its leader is a white American. Boasting a wide spectrum of faculty members from the United States and Africa, Ifá College is increasing horizontal linkages across Africa and the United States. With its stated mission the dissemination of the "wisdom of ancient Africa to the Modern world" (see <http://www.ifacollege.com>), the college is opening the parameters of orisa membership to a broader clientele—predominantly white U.S. students and professionals—thereby creating a university mechanism for the teaching and accreditation of orisa practices as well as an Internet resource for potential converts. Any approach to understanding the transnational matrix of Yoruba cultural formations must recognize the various geopolitical zones of interaction within which these practices have taken shape; it must also examine how the institutional networks of linkage—whether "imagined" or "real"—are propelled over time.

Since the early 20th century, research on the circulation of Yoruba practices has moved from the study of the enslavement and transport of captives from West and Central Africa to the Americas (Lovejoy 2000) to the survivals of orisa practices in the Americas in places like Brazil and Cuba (Bascom 1980; Bastide 1971, 1978) to the ongoing contemporary investigation into the processes by which practices are being (re)produced in Africa and the Americas (Apter 1992; Brandon 1993; Cosentino 1995; Matory 1994, 1999, 2005; Palmié 2002).⁹ Recent work has tended to emphasize how orisa cultural practices perform in global contexts (Capone 2005).¹⁰ Anthropologists have, thus, moved from conducting the bulk of their research in what were imagined to be "small-scale, face-to-face" societies to investigating issues in "complex" societies. In this regard, there is a need to further complicate research methodology and develop theories of continuities and discontinuities in cultural practices that take into account the politicoeconomic processes by which such rapidly growing religious movements are transforming communities and alliances.

Since Carl Hunt's 1979 publication of *Oyotunji Village: The Yoruba Movement in America*, the first fieldwork-based account of Yoruba communities in the United States, there have been significant changes in the form and content of orisa worship. Today, practitioners in the Caribbean and South America are increasingly allied institutionally with practitioners from Europe and Central and North America. More than ever, vast numbers in the United States are converting to Yoruba religious practices and playing central roles

in reshaping the practice of orisa traditions outside of the African continent. The processes of social change that are occurring today are connected to late 20th-century reconfigurations of global spaces in the wake of decolonization and the end of the Cold War. The new millennium is witnessing an intensification of economic and technological development and commodity regimes, with particular patterns of unequal consumption and production—patterns that have further contributed to shifts in the migration of people from rural to urban locations, from former colonies to former colonizing countries, and from poorer to richer nations. Economic disparities and institutional reconfigurations in governments, corporations, and localities are influencing why and where people move. The reorganization of the management of states and their citizens is also producing more mobile populations in new networks of cultural production requiring creative ways of mapping social units that explore the institutional ties that bind the members and the units of organization (networks, sites of linkage) that constitute groups. For just as the organization and ways of seeing peoples and places have changed over time and as new techniques and scopes of ethnography have transformed anthropologists' expectations, so too have the purposes, uses, and wider meanings of the ways in which we understand subjects on the move.

Today, the globalization of orisa religious practices has produced well over two million practitioners—from Brazil to Cuba to Trinidad to West Africa to Europe to the United States. This phenomenon is being driven by new heritage economies in West Africa through which the coherence of the resultant practices is being challenged and redefined in multisited, interdisciplinary, and transnational terms. Late 20th-century and early 21st-century processes have presented new developments, such as distance learning and “mobile” computer databases for divinatory interpretation across scales of use. As anthropology has expanded its scope of what constitutes the ethnographic field to accommodate, for instance, practices that incorporate electronic technologies and virtual communities, it is becoming critical to interrogate multisited networks and trace how people are using linkages to compress space and time and, in so doing, are creating discontinuities and continuities in practices taken to be “traditional.” Such an approach highlights the problem of understanding formations of racial communities in terms that presume straightforward cultural connections between African and diasporic communities and points to the political economy of the heritage industry as one mechanism that makes the processes of authentication possible.

Propelled by increases in society initiation fees, the heritage industry operates through a variety of circuits and strategies. Clients can shop on-line or off-line at shops or markets in search of self-help books, African clothing styles, and ritual trinkets. Many websites refer practitioners to botanicas, which offer “traditional” herbs

and other materials used in ritual medicine (e.g., see <http://www.afrocubaweb.com/elegguaproject.htm>). More and more U.S.-based practitioners are leaving their jobs in corporate sectors to become priests and priestesses, participating full time in this economy through the patronage of increasing numbers of religious adherents (e.g., see <http://www.geocities.com/priestmemorial/living.htm>).

Ironically, contemporary Africans have become socially displaced from, and materially reliant on, these expanding networks of symbolic production and material consumption, which are aimed at signifying markers of ancient African belonging. Today more than ever, as violent crises shake the African subcontinent, further reinforcing stereotypes of violence and underdevelopment, it is imperative to reinstate Africa in the debates about “Africanness” that contemporary heritage politics largely shapes. Heritage pilgrims display histories of trans-Atlantic slavery and of 19th-century plunder and violence through the circulation of Christian missionaries and Islamic conquests to bridge Africa's past with communities of slave descendants and voluntary migrants. In so doing, however, they elide Africa's contemporary realities. This article reframes the significance of Africa in diasporic institutional formations by highlighting the importance of recognizing not the centrality of Africa in the world of its “diaspora” but the frequent exclusions of Africa's realities to the global circulations of “its” practices.

Interestingly, contemporary Africanist scholarship on this subject has responded to these complications by rendering silent such diasporic scholarship. Much of the more politicized work interested in poverty and disenfranchisement has, instead, focused on the effects of modernity, structural adjustment, neoliberalism (Ferguson 2006), religious modernities (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003; Geschiere 1997), and agrarian economics (Worby 2001a). By contrast, contemporary anthropological diasporic scholarship has tended to engage with postmodern approaches to identity as being fundamentally about hybridity and the politics of difference. Given the nature of social changes today, it is becoming critical that we connect these two literatures to understand both the uses of “Africa” as a metaphor for particular forms of mobilization and the material inclusions or exclusions of contemporary Africans in such processes.

What anthropologists of place and space often miss in their rearticulations of diasporic analyses is the centrality of contemporary neoliberal capitalism—how its technologies of control and devastation shape new mechanisms of difference and racialization within which denationalized group formations are brought into being, even through the display of anger and mourning over the tragedy wrought by earlier forms of capitalist exploitation (the slave trade, colonialism, etc.). To understand the particularities of change in orisa revivalism, and to make sense of widening networks of deterritorialized institutions of knowledge developing in Europe and the Americas, we need to recast our understanding of

linkages—national and racial. We need to look not to constructions of diasporic identity but to the ways in which horizontal linkages across social institutions and spaces are allied through stories of historical devastation, nodes of institutional practice, and webs of economic obligation. Such a study of the political economies of black heritage projects involves shifting the focus from “Africa” as repository of black origins to situating African groups in relation to other sites. This means rethinking the referential uses of the sign of Africa through which a larger economy of diasporic cultural production has taken shape.

Notes

Acknowledgments. Special thanks to the following for their reading of or engagement with the piece during its many stages of revision: Kristina Weaver, Eric Worby, Paul Gilroy, Rebecca Hardin, Feyi Koya-Adunbi, Lucia Cantero, Virginia Dominguez, Jacob Olupona, Chief Alagba Olaitan, Pashington Obeng, Jaime Saris, Chandana Mathur, Mihri Inal-Cakir, Lena Sawyer, Stephan Palmié, Andrew Apter, Naomi Pabst, Steve Small, Barnor Hesse, Steve Caton, Carolyn Martin Shaw, Ken Little, Donald Brenneis, Lisa Rofel, and Jennifer Burrell.

1. An orisa is a sacred object of worship, otherwise known as a deity, believed to be ruled by a supreme being.

2. There are nodal Santería communities throughout the United States, including the Caribbean Cultural Center, whose long-time director, Marta Vega, brought Santería institutions to national attention. Other centrally critical communities are those of John Mason and his Yoruba networks in the U.S. Northeast, Ernesto Piccardo in Miami, and many other Yoruba Santería houses known for their drumming networks and ritual-possession power from the Bronx to Brooklyn, San Francisco to Seattle, Houston to Detroit, and New Orleans to Buffalo.

3. The declining numbers of orisa practitioners in Nigeria represent the fundamental tension between Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria and Yoruba revivalist heritage travelers from, predominantly, Europe and the Americas. My research findings highlight Nigerian Yoruba renderings of Oyotunji claims to the Oyo homeland as inauthentic. And, ironically, Oyotunji practitioners reject as comical Nigerian adoption of Western clothing—pants, suits, and hats—as well as Christian and Muslim religious practices.

4. Many practitioners have lived in Oyotunji at one time, and others have pursued ritual initiations there over a period of time. I conducted a population tabulation of residents every three months over a one-year period and found that over that period the population shifted from 57 to 48 residents.

5. At one time, many residents were able to supplement their household income with government assistance payments. In the late 1980s, however, the Oyotunji Ogboni council outlawed federal and South Carolina state government assistance. This new law, as well as the increasing power of the crown, made it increasingly difficult for many practitioners to make an adequate living on their religious trade alone. Unable to make ends meet and in need of more political agency, hundreds of practitioners moved to U.S. cities, forming Yoruba satellite communities from which to continue their religious practices.

6. Older men also go through varied forms of ritual initiations and, on acceptance, are expected to maintain their allegiance throughout their lifetime.

7. Some of these linkages extend to transnational religious communities in England and France, Benin and Nigeria in West Africa, Brazil, Cuba, Trinidad, and beyond.

8. The link to the Ile Afolabi website (<http://www.yemoja.com>) was active during the period of my research but had become inactive as of June 2007. All of the other web links I provide were active as of June 2007.

9. For literature on local embodiment and cultural survival, see Tylor 1865, 1871, 1958; Frazer 1922; Herskovits 1941; Turner 1969; Bascom 1969a, 1969b, 1980; and Bastide 1971. For new work on displacement and mobility, see Nadel 1942; Mitchell 1956; Middleton 1966; and Colson 1971.

10. See, for example, Mintz and Price 1976; Williams 1991; Olupona 1991, 1997, 2000; Apter 1992; Akinnaso 1983, 1995; Clarke 2004; Matory 1999; Piot 1999; Worby 2001b; and Capone 1999a, 1999b.

References cited

- Akinnaso, F Niyi
1983 Yoruba Traditional Names and the Transmission of Cultural Knowledge. *Names* 31:139–158.
1995 Bourdieu and the Diviner: Knowledge and Symbolic Power in Yoruba Divination. In *The Pursuit of Certainty: Religious and Cultural Formulations*. Wendy James, ed. Pp. 234–257. London: Routledge.
- Amselle, Jean-Loup
1998 *Mestizo Logics: Anthropologies of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Apter, Andrew H.
1992 *Black Critics and Kings: The Hermeneutics of Power in Yoruba Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Barrett, Leonard E.
1974 *Soul-Force: African Heritage in Afro-American Religion*. New York: Doubleday Anchor.
- Bascom, William Russell
1969a *Ifa Divination: Communication between Gods and Men in West Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
1969b *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
1980 *Sixteen Cowries: Yoruba Divination from Africa to the New World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Bastide, Roger
1971 *African Civilisations in the New World*. Peter Green, trans. Foreword by Geoffrey Parrinder. New York: Harper and Row.
1978 *The African Religions of Brazil: Toward a Sociology of the Interpenetration of Civilizations*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Brandon, George
1993 *Santería from Africa to the New World: The Dead Sell Memories*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Brown, David H.
2003 *Santería Enthroned: Art, Ritual, and Innovation in an Afro-Cuban Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Capone, Stefania
1999a *Les dieux sur le Net: L'essor des religions d'origine africaine aux Etats-Unis*. *L'Homme* 151:47–74.
1999b *La quête de l'Afrique dans le candomblé: Pouvoir et tradition au Brésil*. Paris: Karthala.
2005 *Les Yoruba du Nouveau Monde: Religion, ethnicité et nationalisme noir aux Etats-Unis*. Paris: Karthala.
- Caton, Steven C.
1985 The Poetic Construction of Self. *Anthropological Quarterly* 58(4):141–151.

- Clarke, Kamari Maxine
2004 *Mapping Yoruba Networks: Power and Agency in the Making of Transnational Communities*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Colson, Elizabeth
1971 *The Social Consequences of Resettlement: The Impact of the Kariba Resettlement upon the Gwembe Tonga*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Comaroff, John, and Jean Comaroff
2003 Reflections on Liberalism, Policulturalism, and ID-ology: Citizenship and Difference in South Africa. *Social Identities* 9(4):445–474.
- Cosentino, Donald J.
1995 *The Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou*. Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History.
- Dominguez, Virginia
1989 *People as Subject, People as Object: Selfhood and Peoplehood in Contemporary Israel*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Fadipe, N. A.
1970 *The Sociology of the Yoruba*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press.
- Ferguson, James
2006 *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Frazer, James George
1922 *The Golden Bough*. New York: Macmillan.
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., and Kwame Anthony Appiah, eds.
1996 *Dictionary of Global Culture*. New York: Knopf.
1999 *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*. New York: Basic Civitas Books.
- Geschiere, Peter
1997 *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Post-colonial Africa*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Gupta, Akhil, and James Ferguson
1997 *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Henry, Frances
2003 *Reclaiming African Religions in Trinidad: The Socio-Political Legitimation of Orisha and Spiritual Baptist Faiths*. Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press.
- Herskovits, Melville J.
1941 Some Comments on the Study of Cultural Contact. *American Anthropologist* 43(1):1–10.
- Hunt, Carl M.
1979 *Oyotunji Village: The Yoruba Movement in America*. Washington, DC: University Press of America.
- Johnson, Samuel
1921 *The History of the Yoruba: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*. London: Routledge.
- Lovejoy, P. E.
2000 *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery*. London: Continuum.
- Marcus, George E.
1995 Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24:95–117.
- Matory, James Lorand
1994 *Sex and the Empire That Is No More: Gender and the Politics of Metaphor in Oyo Yoruba Religion*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
1999 *The English Professors of Brazil: On the Diasporic Roots of the Yoruba Nation*. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41(1):72–103.
- 2005 *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Middleton, John
1966 The Resolution of Conflict among the Lugbara of Uganda. *In Political Anthropology*. Marc J. Swartz, Victor W. Turner, and Arthur Tuden, eds. Pp. 141–154. Chicago: Aldine.
- Mintz, Sidney Wilfred, and Richard Price
1976 *An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past: A Caribbean Perspective*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Mitchell, J. Clyde
1956 Urbanization, Detribalization and Stabilization in Southern Africa: A Problem of Definition and Measurement. *In Urbanization in Africa South of the Sahara*. C. D. Forde, ed. Pp. 693–711. London: UNESCO.
- Morton-Williams, Peter
1968 The Tulani Penetration into Nupe and Yoruba in the Nineteenth Century. *In History and Social Anthropology*. I. M. Lewis, ed. Pp. 1–24. London: Tavistock.
- Nadel, S. F.
1942 *A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Olupona, Jacob K.
1991 *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*. New York: International Religious Foundation.
1997 Report of the Conference “Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity,” March 28–31, 1996, University of California, Davis. *Numen* 44(3):323–345.
2000 *African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings, and Expressions*. New York: Crossroad.
N.d. *The Changing Face of the City: Royal Narratives and the Palace Contested Space*. Unpublished MS, Department of African and African American Studies, Harvard Divinity School.
- Palmié, Stephan
2002 *Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity and Tradition*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Peel, John David Yeadon
2000 *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Piot, Charles
1999 *Remotely Global: Village Modernity in West Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Silverstein, Michael
1976 Shifters, Linguistic Categories, and Cultural Description. *In Meaning in Anthropology*. Keith H. Basso and Henry A. Selby, eds. Pp. 11–56. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Tsing, Anna
2005 *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Turner, Victor
1969 *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine Transaction.
- Tylor, Edward Burnett, Sir
1865 *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization*. London: J. Murray.
1871 *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*. London: J. Murray.
1958 *Religion in Primitive Culture*. Gloucester, MA: P. Smith.
- Walker, Andrew, ed.
2001 *Resourcing Community: Case Studies from the Asia-Pacific*. Special issue, *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 2(2).

Williams, Brackette

1991 *Stains on My Name, War in My Veins: Guyana and the Politics of Cultural Struggle*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Worby, Eric

2001a *The End of Modernity in Zimbabwe? Theorizing Power from the Margins*. Copenhagen: Centre for Development Research.

2001b *The New Agrarian Politics in Zimbabwe*. Oxford: Blackwell.

accepted February 21, 2007

final version submitted March 20, 2007

Kamari Maxine Clarke
Department of Anthropology
Yale University
Box 208277
New Haven, CT 06520-8277
kamari.clarke@yale.edu