

Introduction

One day in August 1962, the renowned American folklorist Alan Lomax visited Levera, St Patrick, a mountainous village in the northeast of Grenada, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Lomax, who had a long interest in the region, was in the Eastern Caribbean to conduct a survey of the island's traditional music.¹ In Grenada, he captured images and songs associated with Orisa worship – a religious tradition which involves the veneration of deities, called orisas, and practices such as dance, music, healing, divination, animal sacrifice, spirit manifestation, and feasts. Originating in Yorubaland, in present-day south-western Nigeria, Orisa worship had been taken across the Atlantic by recaptured Africans around 100 years previously. This tradition has adapted over time and is known as 'African work' in Grenada (Figure I.1).

Lomax identified several members of the McQueen family among the adherents and noted they were of Yoruba ancestry.² Indeed, the lyrics in the song sung to him by the family matriarch, Lena McQueen, captures a tumultuous period in the history of the Yoruba peoples. This song, 'Ogun Maa Se Sile Wa [War is going on at our homes]', presumably passed down from her forebears, suggests they were themselves refugees, or in close contact with refugees, fleeing from the civil wars that erupted within Yorubaland from the early nineteenth century onwards.³ Some of

¹ 'Caribbean 1962', *Association for Cultural Equity*, <https://archive.culturalequity.org/field-work/caribbean-1962>.

² 'Levera 8/62', *Association for Cultural Equity*, <https://archive.culturalequity.org/field-work/caribbean-1962/levera-862>.

³ Morton Marks and Kenneth Bilby, 'Grenada: Creole and Yoruba Traditions', liner notes for *Grenada: Creole and Yoruba Voices*, recorded by Alan Lomax (Cambridge, MA: Rounder Records, 2001), digital CD.



FIGURE 1.1 An African work ceremony in Levera (1962).

Lena McQueen is pictured to the right of centre holding a bell. Her son, Babsy McQueen, is the second drummer from the left. Christine McQueen, Lena McQueen's daughter-in-law and wife of Babsy McQueen, is in the centre, wearing a floral dress. From the Alan Lomax Collection at the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress. Courtesy of the Association for Cultural Equity.

these displaced peoples, captured and sold into enslavement, joined an unprecedented number of Yoruba speakers during the nineteenth century who were trafficked across the Atlantic.

The Yoruba Are on a Rock explores the origins, settlement experiences, and cultural legacies of these and other nineteenth-century Africans upon Grenada between 1836 – the year the first ship arrived – and the twenty-first century. Destined for the slave markets of Brazil and Cuba, 2,709 African men, women, and children were recaptured at sea by the Royal Navy's West Africa Squadron anti-slave trade patrols and were disembarked in Grenada between 1836 and 1863. They were among the approximately 3.2 million African peoples transported to the Americas between 1807 and 1867, almost a quarter of the estimated total sent during the whole trade.⁴ The campaign against the transatlantic slave trade launched after British

⁴ David Eltis, David Richardson, Stephen D. Behrendt, and Manolo Florentino, *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: An Expanded and Online Database*, 2009, www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/YvqDsQa.

legislative abolition in 1807 resulted in the recapture of around 181,000 African peoples at sea by the West Africa Squadron, until the suppression of the Cuban slave trade in 1867. These African peoples came to be known as ‘liberated Africans’ or ‘recaptives’ by English colonial officials, and as *emancipados* by Cuban and Brazilian administrators.⁵

This book contends that African work in Grenada is not, as has generally been supposed, a residue of recaptive Yoruba peoples but emerged from exchanges within and beyond Grenada. By bringing this often overlooked island into the mainstream of recent historical treatment of liberated Africans, this book connects and complicates the study of the British Caribbean and African Atlantic religions in the Americas. Grenada is important because of its size, location, and cultural and political history. One of the smallest islands in the British Caribbean, Grenada received the greatest number of recaptives after the larger territories of British Guiana, Jamaica, and Trinidad. A disproportionately high number of recaptive Africans disembarked in nineteenth-century Grenada, some of whom carried with them Yoruba religious cultures, which greatly influenced African work. Notably, unlike recaptives landed in these territories, their Grenadian counterparts were not offered return passages home, and there is no evidence that any returned to Africa, making their presence even more significant.

Lying in a southerly position in the Eastern Caribbean Sea, Grenada was well-positioned to interact with several religious cultures: the Nation Dance on Grenada’s sister island, Carriacou, and the Spiritual Baptist Faith from Trinidad and Tobago and St Vincent, and the Orisa religion from Trinidad and Tobago. The blending of Nation Dance traditions – a danced practice celebrating several African ‘nations’ – makes Grenada’s African work distinct from its Trinidad and Tobago counterpart. A further distinction is that in Grenada, African work and the Spiritual Baptist Faith do not enjoy official recognition and legitimate status as in Trinidad and Tobago. These particularities allow this book to address a lacuna in the literature on African-derived religions of Grenada, which are absent from the religious histories of the Atlantic world.

⁵ Richard Anderson et al., ‘Using African Names to Identify the Origins of Captives in the Transatlantic Slave Trade: Crowd-Sourcing and the Registers of Liberated Africans, 1808–1862’, *History in Africa* 40, no. 1 (2013): 166–7; Rosanne Adderley, ‘New Negroes from Africa’: *Slave Trade, Abolition and Free African Settlement in the Nineteenth Century Caribbean* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 3; Daniel Domingues da Silva et al., ‘The Diaspora of Africans Liberated from Slave Ships in the Nineteenth Century’, *Journal of African History* 55, no. 3 (2014): 349, 348.

‘WAR IS GOING ON AT OUR HOMES’: THE
DISPLACEMENT OF YORUBA PEOPLES
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Yoruba Are on a Rock investigates the geographical origins of recaptured Africans, including the circumstances that led to their capture in the Western African hinterland. The McQueen family, who were among the cultural workers observed by Lomax in 1962, were likely descended from Yoruba peoples displaced from their homelands, following a series of wars in the nineteenth century that devastated Yorubaland, destroying key states of Oyo and Owu, and displacing peoples from north of Yorubaland to the south. The Oyo kingdom in northern Yorubaland expanded and dominated the region during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, mostly due to its participation in the Atlantic slave trade. However, from the late eighteenth century, Oyo’s mighty status began to collapse; civil wars (including the revolt of Ilorin around 1796 and the Muslim rebellion of 1817), and attacks throughout northern, southwestern, and western regions, along with European traders’ insatiable demand for Africans, culminated in the disintegration of the Oyo kingdom between 1817 and 1836. The capital of Oyo and neighbouring Yoruba areas, largely protected from raids during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, became the principal targets for captured Africans who were taken to the coast to await transportation.⁶

Oyo’s fragility was acutely felt in southern Yorubaland. In the early nineteenth century, a series of events led to the destruction of Owu, Oyo’s ally, and the establishment of Abeokuta. Oyo’s decline reduced the number of captives brought to Apomu, an Ife market town in southern Yorubaland. To augment slave trading activities at Apomu, Ijebu traders raided Apomu area, even kidnapping travelling Oyo agents. Enraged, Oyo rulers entreated their ally Owu to suppress the kidnappings, sparking warfare with Ife and Ijebu, who formed a coalition with displaced Oyo refugees, and eventually destroyed Owu in 1822. Driven by the imperative to amass firearms, the coalition subjugated and plundered several Egba towns, taking away captives to be exchanged for weapons.⁷ Fleeing the destruction of their lands, the Egba and some displaced Owu moved southwest, before secreting themselves in a hilly terrain of

⁶ Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire, c.1600–c.1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 245–75, 297.

⁷ Ibid., 273–5.

Abeokuta known as Olumo Rock, ‘under the rock’.⁸ Their numbers were eventually added to by others, men, women, and children in search of peace and security. They built homes around the rock, created townships, protected from enemies by a wall they constructed around their settlement, though the wall could not prevent famines and invaders. Yet still, by the early 1840s, Egba recaptives from Sierra Leone found shelter among the community at Abeokuta, testimony to the diversity of the settlement, which was organised according to the origins of the displaced residents.⁹

Olumo Rock became a focal point of worship for orisa devotees and was associated with the hill deity, Oke Olumo, who provides shelter for the distressed.¹⁰ The annual animal sacrifice carried out at the shrine at Olumo underscores its spiritual significance. As a shelter for refugees, Olumo Rock symbolised resilience, solidarity, and sovereignty among the Egba who created new futures there among the hillsides.¹¹ Outside the community’s walls, other Egba and Owu peoples feared less well; unable to escape the warfare, many were captured, forced to march long miles to the coast, where they joined an unprecedented number of northern and southern Yoruba peoples. At the coast, they were forcibly trafficked, under degrading, insufferable, and inhuman conditions, across the Atlantic to enslavement in the Americas.

In this book, African peoples who were forcibly taken across the Atlantic on vessels intercepted by the Royal Navy are interchangeably referred to as liberated, recaptive, and recaptured Africans. The latter two terms are more accurate descriptors of their status, having been captured and enslaved in Africa, and then recaptured by Royal Navy patrollers at sea.¹² Present-day, the descendants of liberated Africans

⁸ Alfred B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa: their Religion, Manners, Customs, Laws, Language, etc.* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1894), 2; Saburi O. Biobaku, *The Egba and Their Neighbours, 1842–1872* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 17.

⁹ *The Church Missionary Gleaner* (London: Seeleys, 1850), 4; Biobaku, *Egba and Their Neighbours*, 17–26.

¹⁰ Peter McKenzie, *Hail Orisha!: A Phenomenology of a West African Religion in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 23.

¹¹ Patrick Ogunshakin, *Olumo: An Illustrated Account of the ‘Olumo’ Rock Sacred in Abeokuta’s History as the Place where the First Settlers found Protection ‘Under the Stone’* (Lagos: Inway Publishers, 1992), 28, 74.

¹² See also Richard Anderson, *Abolition in Sierra Leone: Re-building Lives and Identities in Nineteenth-Century West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), xiii and Sharla M. Fett, *Recaptured Africans: Surviving Slave Ships, Detention, and Dislocation in the Final Years of the Slave Trade* (Chapel Hill: University of North

in Grenada do not use these terms but instead refer to their ancestors as ‘Africans’ who escaped the indignity of enslavement on the island. Yet, though liberated from enslavement, these African peoples were not at liberty to decide where and how they lived. Rather than returning recaptives to their homelands, the British Navy sent Africans to the nearest Caribbean territory, where they were presented with two options: enlisting in the West India Regiments or signing a contract of indentureship.

Recaptives were also sent to Sierra Leone, where they were given similar choices: indentureship, enlistment, or migration to the Caribbean. More than half chose to settle in Sierra Leone, fearing another traumatising passage across the Atlantic. While some recaptives voluntarily emigrated to the Caribbean, others did so under duress; coercion, deception, and sometimes force were commonly employed to recruit plantation labourers.¹³ This was especially acute after 1849, when newly arrived recaptives in Sierra Leone were particularly sought after for recruitment to Caribbean plantations and were denied settling-in allowances and isolated from resident Africans and missionaries who might discourage emigration. Africans recaptured south of the equator were sent to the South Atlantic island of St Helena, where life expectancy was short – one-third of those who landed perished.¹⁴ A small number of survivors found work as domestic labourers or as recruits in the British military, but most were embarked on emigrant vessels to the Caribbean.¹⁵

Approximately 52,000 Africans were conveyed to the British Caribbean between 1807 and 1867, with the Bahamas, Trinidad, Jamaica, and British Guiana receiving the majority.¹⁶ For the 2,709 recaptured Africans, who arrived in Grenada, only two options were possible: enlistment into the

Carolina Press, 2017), 4. Monica Schuler reserved the term ‘recaptives’ for recent arrivals at reception depots who were forcibly sent to the Caribbean, while the term ‘liberated Africans’ is used in her study to refer to those settled at Freetown who migrated voluntarily: see Monica Schuler, *‘Alas, Alas, Kongo’: A Social History of Indentured African Immigration into Jamaica, 1841–1865* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), 5.

¹³ Ibid., 26, 12.

¹⁴ Andrew Pearson and Helen MacQuarrie, ‘Prize Possessions: Transported Material Culture of the Post-Abolition Enslaved – New Evidence from St Helena’, *Slavery & Abolition* 37, no. 1 (2015): 47.

¹⁵ Andrew Pearson, *Distant Freedom: St. Helena and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1840–1872* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 209, 239–40.

¹⁶ Domingues da Silva et al., ‘Diaspora of Africans’, 347, 369.

West India Regiments, or indentureship for periods of six months, one, three, or five years, mainly on plantations. Arrivants between 1834 and 1838 worked alongside formerly enslaved African Grenadians who were themselves under the restrictions of the apprenticeship system. Major sugar plantations in the parish of St Patrick, such as Levera Estate, recruited the majority of the newcomers. In time, the recaptives formed new communities on and off the estates but carried with them the memories of their traumatic displacement through stories and songs such as ‘Ogun Maa Se Sile Wa’.

At the time of Lomax’s visit, an estimated 1,000–1,500 Grenadians were practitioners of African work.¹⁷ This modest number may reflect the smaller number of orisa-practising Yoruba recaptives who arrived in Grenada, rather than a fall in adherent numbers. As this book argues, the creation and endurance of African work reflects the timing of the arrival of Yoruba recaptives – some thirty to forty years after 1807 – and how their respective cultures were embedded and redefined by local and regional actors within the Eastern Caribbean. The surviving members of the McQueen family are among the few practitioners. This included Christine McQueen (b. c.1923–2016), daughter-in-law of Lena McQueen (seen wearing a floral dress in Figure I.1). During our conversations in 2013, Christine McQueen recounted that her forbearers were born in Africa, although she did not know which part.¹⁸ Perhaps Christine McQueen’s ancestors were among the sixteen African men, women, and children indentured at Levera Estate, or the twenty indentured labourers at the nearby La Fortune Estate in the mid nineteenth century.¹⁹ Some recaptives were also sent to Carriacou, a smaller nearby island, which today, along with Petite Martinique, forms part of the tri-island state of Grenada. In Levera and other Grenadian villages, Yoruba recaptives blended their beliefs and practices with the Nation Dance and Roman Catholicism, derived from the formerly enslaved population, as well as cultures belonging to non-Yoruba recaptives who also arrived in the nineteenth century.

¹⁷ Myrna Martineau, ‘Afro-Religious Cults in Grenada with Specific Reference to Shango’, unpublished paper, Marryshow Library, The University of the West Indies, Grenada, c.1960.

¹⁸ Christine McQueen, interview with author, Levera, St Patrick, 25 April 2013.

¹⁹ Parliamentary Papers [PP] 1850 (643) XL.271, Correspondence Relative to Emigration, ‘Allotment of African Immigrants, per “Brandon,” from Sierra Leone’, 21 December 1849; Office of the Governor General [OGG], St George’s, Grenada, 1850–1852 Demographic, Table B St. Patrick, ‘Return of African Immigrants for the Half of the year ended 31st December 1853’.

‘THE YORUBA PEOPLE ARE ON AN ISLAND, MAMA.
THE YORUBA PEOPLE ARE ON A ROCK’

The Yoruba Are on a Rock offers a new way to interpret the making of an African Atlantic religion. The principal intervention offers a radically novel perspective on African work, which this book argues to be a dynamic and multi-layered confluence of local, regional, and global historical processes arcing across the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries. A verse in an African work song performed by practitioners in 1990, captured by David Franklyn, the late Grenadian sociologist, serves as a metaphor for understanding the ways in which the recreation of Yoruba religious cultures unfolded over time and place. The singers vocalised their ancestors’ new islander status in their chants: ‘The Yoruba people are on an island, mama. The Yoruba people are on a rock.’²⁰ This plaintive song is redolent with yearning for a home the chanters had likely never seen. Their ancestors, however, were intimately acquainted with Yorubaland and may have drawn parallels between the rocky, hilly topography of Grenada and their homeland’s sacred, rock-strewn sanctuaries, such as Olumo Rock.²¹ For these Yoruba recaptives, encountering Grenada’s similar rocky terrain may have been instrumental in the articulation and remembrance of their homeland, as well as offering ritually significant spaces to continue their religious beliefs and practices.

However, rather than a literal symbol of their African homeland, the rock in Grenada was distinctive from that the recaptives may have known at Abeokuta. The subtle difference between ‘on a rock’ (Grenada) against ‘under a rock’ (Abeokuta) suggests that rather than a place of shelter, the Yoruba exiles perceived the island as a bounded yet exposed, elevated place, marked by its expansive watery surroundings. Perhaps for the newly landed Africans, their search for homeland and belonging started with the sea.²² The Eastern Caribbean Sea and the adjacent North Atlantic Ocean, which surrounded Grenada, were conduits for the movement of ideas, peoples, and goods. From Grenada, the chanters could view neighbouring islands in the southern

²⁰ David Omowale Franklyn, ‘The Experience of the Slave Trade and Slavery: Slave Narratives and the Oral History of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Part II’, 2007, *Big Drum Nation*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200204022303/http://www.bigdrumnation.org/comments/slavetrade2.html>.

²¹ McKenzie, *Hail Orisha!*, 23.

²² The Caribbean writer Jan Carew asserts that ‘on an island your cosmos of the imagination begins with the sea’, see Carew, ‘The Caribbean Writer and Exile’, *Journal of Black Studies* 8, no. 4 (1978): 469.

Grenadines, including Carriacou, on which they would be dependent for their economic and cultural sustenance. Through inter-island migration, Carriacou, St Vincent, and Trinidad and Tobago would invigorate African work traditions from the mid nineteenth century. From the early twentieth century, European magic literature from across the North Atlantic Sea would also imprint African work. One may comprehend the making of African work, as one understands the geological transformations of coastal erosion and deposition that islands endure; over time, the churning movements of the sea eroded some sediments but also left new deposits, akin to the transformation of Yoruba religious cultures into African work.²³

The Yoruba Are on a Rock makes four key interventions: first, in engaging with the scholarship on Grenada, it employs a historical approach to the study of its African-derived religious cultures; second, it addresses a lacuna in the history of Grenada and the wider British Caribbean, in that scant attention has been paid to nineteenth-century African arrivals; third, it revises the conceptualisation of African work enriching our understanding of African Atlantic religions in the Americas; and fourth, it proposes a new regional zone of cultural and political exchange and production, the Eastern Caribbean Sea, which has been overlooked in the study of African Atlantic religions.

AN HISTORICAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF GRENADA'S AFRICAN-DERIVED RELIGIOUS CULTURES

African-derived religious cultures have received limited attention from historians of Grenada, although anthropologists have shown greater interest, focusing particularly on the Nation Dance, a tradition rooted in the enslavement period.²⁴ Nation Dances are held to commemorate important life events, requests for a bountiful harvest, to overcome sickness, cast off ill-fortune, as a staging for political celebrations, or welcoming tourists or visitors. Modern-day ceremonies are conducted within a

²³ The fluid, watery surroundings of the Caribbean islands and its rhythmic tidal waves reflect the multiple migrations and cultural flows, challenging essentialist and linear perspectives of culture through incorporating both terrestrial national 'roots' (origins) and the dynamism and fluidity of transoceanic 'routes', see Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), introduction.

²⁴ Eleven scholarly works are dedicated to the Nation Dance, while just three focus on African work.

circle formed by a crowd, within which male drummers, female singers and dancers are enclosed. Warm-up songs open the proceedings, followed by special songs to appeal to the ancestors for forgiveness for wrongdoings. Following this, the songs and dances of nine nations are performed in turn, along with libations and scatterings of corn and rice offered to the ancestors. These nine nations represent the ethnic backgrounds of Grenada's enslaved peoples. During the intermission, a *saraka* – a food offering – is held. Guests share food among themselves, and a portion of this food, which has been prepared separately without salt, is offered to ancestors. The ceremony closes with performances of 'secular' dances, mainly for entertainment.²⁵

Studying the Nation Dance allows scholars to trace how African cultures and identities were reinterpreted and transformed in Grenada and Carriacou.²⁶ On the latter island, the Nation Dance retained popularity as the main African-derived tradition, but at the turn of the twentieth century, mainland Grenadians adopted Yoruba-based cultural forms.²⁷ Anthropologists maintain that liberated Yoruba were not sent to Carriacou following emancipation, hence the absence of any related cultural prints on that island.²⁸ That said, drawing on these anthropologists' ethnographic studies, this book details the influence of Yoruba traditions in Carriacou by examining the dialogic relationship between that island, Grenada, and Trinidad and Tobago. In Carriacou, multiple African-derived expressions exist simultaneously as African work practitioners often operate within the much larger, more creolised Nation Dance.²⁹ For instance, on various occasions, African work practitioners from the mainland intervened, modifying the Carriacou Nation Dance. Mirroring this praxis, this work puts the Nation Dance, formerly largely discussed in the context of enslavement, into conversation with African work of the post-emancipation era.

²⁵ Lorna McDaniel, *The Big Drum Ritual of Carriacou: Praisesongs in Rememory of Flight* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1998), 19, 21, 77; Annette C. Macdonald, 'Big Drum Dance of Carriacou', in Susanna Sloat (ed.), *Making Caribbean Dance: Continuity and Creativity in Island Cultures* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), 290–3.

²⁶ Edwina Ashie-Nikoi, 'Beating the Pen on the Drum: A Socio-Cultural History of Carriacou, Grenada, 1750–1920' (PhD diss., New York University, 2007), 15.

²⁷ M. G. Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 34–5.

²⁸ M. G. Smith, *Kinship and Community in Carriacou* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 9; Smith, *Plural Society*, 34; McDaniel, *Big Drum Ritual*, 121, 101.

²⁹ For a similar process in Jamaica, see Monica Schuler, Mary Karasch, Richard Price, and Edward Kamau Brathwaite, 'Afro-American Slave Culture [with Commentary]', *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 6, no. 1 (1979): 152.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY AFRICANS IN CARIBBEAN HISTORY

The experiences of enslaved peoples whose greater numbers and forced labour fuelled the plantation enterprise has received considerably more attention in Caribbean historiography than the experiences of nineteenth-century liberated Africans. A 2001 journal article by the late historian Edward Cox dedicated to liberated Africans relied solely on secondary materials and archival evidence to chronicle their experiences and legacies in Grenada and St Vincent. Cox documented eleven of the twelve vessels which brought recaptives to Grenada, discussed their working conditions, and stressed their determination to shape their lives. Referencing M. G. Smith's 1950s anthropological work, Cox emphasised how indentured Africans 'rekindled the faint and fading recollection of Africa' through forming communities where they could continue Yoruba cultural practices.³⁰

However, Cox's methodological approach offers limited knowledge about the ethno-linguistic backgrounds of recaptives and few insights into the realities of the descendants or their cultural legacies. In an earlier 1984 study of free coloured peoples in Grenada and St Kitts, Cox had relied on archival documents to conclude that African-derived religions, such as 'Shango, myalism, voodoo, santería, rada', were 'effectively syncretised with or subsumed under the Judeo-Christian tradition and thereafter became virtually non-existent'.³¹ Aside from the fact that some of these practices were specific to certain islands – Myalism to Jamaica, voodoo to Haiti, and Santería to Cuba – 'Shango', also known as African work, was, in fact, still practised at the time of Cox's study.³²

Beyond the work of Smith, much remains to be uncovered of the cultural imprints of liberated Africans, their relationships with the Creole population, and the African world view of their descendants. This leaves the impression – as nineteenth-century officials assumed – that recaptives and Creoles had

³⁰ Edward L. Cox, 'Indentured African Laborers to Grenada and St Vincent, 1836–1863', in Serge Mam-Lam-Fouck, Juan Gonzalez Mendoza, Jacques Adélaïde-Merlande, Jacqueline Zonzon, and Rodolphe Alexandre (eds.), *Regards sur l'histoire de la Caraïbe, Des Guyanes aux Grandes Antilles* (Cayenne, Guadeloupe: Ibis Rouge, 2001), 432.

³¹ Edward L. Cox, *Free Coloreds in the Slave Societies of St Kitts and Grenada, 1763–1833* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 131.

³² 'Shango' originates from the Yoruba orisa, Sango. Anthropologists and non-practising residents commonly use the term 'Shango' to refer to African work. It can also be used by African work practitioners themselves to identify individuals or specific practices of which they disapprove but which are nonetheless considered to be part of African work, that is, traditions derived from Yoruba religious practice. In this book, 'Sango' will be used explicitly in reference to the Yoruba god, and 'Shango' will be used to refer to African work when it is described as such by practitioners and non-practitioners alike.

seamlessly blended.³³ Indeed, the very first study to treat liberated Africans in the Caribbean as a distinct social group deserving of attention from historians drew on official sources to conclude that the new arrivals had assimilated so well into Jamaican society that their contributions were ‘virtually unidentifiable’ from those of the Creole population.³⁴ More recent historical scholarship on the British Caribbean have acknowledged the shortcomings of the traditional colonial archives, instead, finding in their explorations of oral history, language, ritual, and belief, a wealth of sources about the recaptives and their descendants. These studies underline the methodological problems of retrieving the material realities of enslaved and free African peoples, filtered through the biased lens of the colonisers. In particular, this newer scholarship has highlighted the distinct and indelible cultural inputs of liberated Africans to Caribbean societies. This is the most original and critical element of African-based cultures in the British Caribbean, and this book foregrounds the memories, words, songs, and languages of recaptives and their descendants to situate Grenada to the forefront of understanding of the histories of liberated African immigration to the Caribbean.

Monica Schuler is among those scholars who centred the experiences and perspectives of recaptive descendants. Her 1970s research linked contemporary religious practices among African heritage Jamaicans to the religious cultures carried by Yoruba and West Central African recaptives. Schuler also captured the experiences of liberated Africans in Jamaica, and stressed their social, political, and religious relationships with former enslaved peoples. Notwithstanding, Schuler concluded that the recaptives’ relationships with the Creole population were not as strong with those forged with each other, and they organised their society without much reference to the non-recaptive African population.³⁵ Schuler went on to examine British Guiana in the 1980s and demonstrated how West Central Africans were shaped by Creole cultures as they reinforced ethnic divisions and cultures established during slavery.³⁶

³³ Beverley Steele, ‘Grenada, An Island State, Its History and Its People’, *Caribbean Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1974): 24.

³⁴ Mary Elizabeth Thomas, *Jamaica and Voluntary Laborers from Africa, 1840–1865* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1974), 197, 200.

³⁵ Schuler, ‘*Alas, Alas, Kongo*’, 63, 65, 104, 107–8.

³⁶ Monica Schuler, ‘Liberated Central Africans in Nineteenth Century Guyana’ (paper presented at the Harriet Tubman Seminar, York University, 24 January 2000), http://tubman.info.yorku.ca/files/2013/07/schuler_2000.pdf. See also Schuler, ‘Liberated Central Africans in Nineteenth Century Guyana’, in Linda M. Heywood (ed.), *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1.

Rosanne Adderley, also a historian, conducted fieldwork in the Bahamas and Trinidad in the 1990s. Like Schuler, Adderley's research revealed how recaptive Africans influenced Creole society, adding new and renewing African influences, while forming their own cultural practices and institutions.³⁷ Adderley, however, placed more emphasis on the influences of the Creole population on shaping the cultures of new African arrivals: though they brought with them a 'late infusion of African inputs' into African Caribbean culture, liberated Africans in Trinidad and the Bahamas were, in turn, influenced by this Creole Caribbean culture.³⁸ For example, in Trinidad, Adderley stated that liberated Africans were not responsible for introducing Orisa worship or the Spiritual Baptist Faith, nevertheless they encouraged and reinforced such traditions. They also strengthened the Creole practice of obeah.³⁹

Citing the small numbers of Yoruba arrivals during slavery in Trinidad, historian David Trotman and religious scholar Dianne Stewart are quite clear that recaptured Africans introduced Orisa worship as an identifiable system.⁴⁰ Stewart emphasised that recaptured Africans adopted Creole practices, such as the Afro-Catholic *palais* (French Creole: palace) and embedded it into their Yoruba devotional practices.⁴¹ Religious scholar Tracey E. Hucks similarly illustrated how recaptured peoples added a 'new texture' to the cultural landscape of post-slavery Trinidad, and in doing so, were also indelibly shaped by Afro-Creole practices.⁴² Hucks showed how the religious lives of liberated Africans were disrupted by accusations of obeah practice, and how some successfully challenged such prosecutions in court.⁴³

Grenada offers new and more nuanced ways in which to understand the cultural histories of nineteenth-century arrivals, beyond the traditional narratives of addition to or the adoption, renewal, reinforcement, and displacement of Creole cultures. Two unique processes are discernible in

³⁷ Adderley, 'New Negroes', 2.

³⁸ Ibid., 90.

³⁹ Ibid., 177, 202.

⁴⁰ David Trotman, 'Reflections on the Children of Shango: An Essay on a History of Orisa Worship in Trinidad', *Slavery & Abolition* 28, no. 2 (2007): 211; Dianne Stewart, *Obeah, Orisa, and Religious Identity in Trinidad. Volume II Orisa: Africana Nations and the Power of Black Sacred Imagination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 15.

⁴¹ Ibid., 27–31.

⁴² Tracey E. Hucks, *Obeah, Orisa, and Religious Identity in Trinidad. Volume I Obeah: Africans in the White Colonial Imagination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 48, 49.

⁴³ Ibid., 141.

the Grenadian case: first, the intricate interweaving of Yoruba cultures with several African Grenadian cultures. In mainland Grenada, Smith stressed that liberated Africans introduced worship of the orisas and displaced the pre-existing Nation Dance tradition. Contrary to Smith's assertion, though, while the Nation Dance on mainland Grenada no longer enjoyed prominence as in Carriacou, it was not fully displaced by liberated Africans. In Carriacou, ethnographic evidence shows the Nation Dance continued *with* post-emancipation Yoruba influence. Through a series of interventions, mainland African work practitioners introduced a range of specialist services in Carriacou, such as animal sacrifices and exorcisms. Second, rather than simply renewing African Grenadian cultures, the book moves beyond land-bound analyses to show how Yoruba-based cultures were invigorated by African Caribbean cultures via the Eastern Caribbean Sea. The Spiritual Baptist Faith fanned out from St Vincent, transforming Yoruba-derived practices in the region. This was made possible by inter-island migration between Carriacou, Grenada, and Trinidad and Tobago, underscoring the importance of the Eastern Caribbean Sea as a space of exchange, intervention, and transformation.

This book shows that ideas and cultures in circulation were not exclusively 'African' or 'European' in origin, but instead were also reflective of the heritages of post-slavery Indian arrivals, mainly via the Eastern Caribbean Sea. While the cultural practices of recaptured Africans were undoubtedly influenced by African Caribbeans, Schuler and Adderley argued that the process of creolisation – the speed at which African arrivants adopted American cultures and identities – was slow due to their late arrival, large numbers, and regional clustering. Trinidadian and Tobagonian sociolinguist Maureen Warner-Lewis also supported a protracted creolisation process. Drawing from songs and family histories in Trinidad gathered during the 1960s and 1970s, Warner-Lewis's research explored the linguistic heritage and unique cultural traditions of African heritage populations throughout the region, emphasising links between African and Creole cultures. Warner-Lewis observed that well into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Yoruba, Kongo, and Hausa descendants in Trinidad continued to speak their respective languages, asserting their cultural resistance to European languages. However, in the second half of their lives, they adopted French and English Creole as their primary languages to communicate with wider society.⁴⁴ An example of

⁴⁴ Maureen Warner-Lewis, 'Trinidad Yoruba: Its Theoretical Implications for Creolisation Processes', *Caribbean Quarterly* 44, no. 1 & 2 (1998): 50, 52–3.

this adoption is seen within the Yoruba-based Orisa worship; although the Yoruba language was regarded as conveying greater spiritual power, French Creole also became a sacred language as it was perceived as more powerful than English.⁴⁵

Liberated Africans also established durable ethnic-based communities, which remained visible during Schuler and Warner-Lewis's fieldwork. In Jamaica, Schuler argued that their sustainability was achievable among the West Central Africans of St Thomas-in-the-East, and to a lesser extent, the Yoruba of Westmoreland, because of regional clustering and numerical superiority. West Central Africans, who arrived later than Yoruba peoples and in larger numbers, developed the religious and cultural tradition of Kumina, which was particularly strong in St Thomas-in-the-East, where they forged close-knit communities, within which they elected heads of West Central African subgroups.⁴⁶ In 1971, Kumina was referred to as 'African dance' or 'African work' by the descendants of recaptured West Central Africans and other adherents.⁴⁷

Sometime after 1841, the Yoruba formed the village of Abeokuta, in Westmoreland, Jamaica – which took its name after the town of Abeokuta in Yorubaland, where many Yoruba had found refuge during the civil wars. In Jamaica, they referred to themselves as 'Nago' – an ethnonym for Yoruba – and also the name of their 'country dance', performed at funerals, weddings, and dinner feasts.⁴⁸ As the lands on which they settled proved unfavourable for cultivation, the Yoruba remained reliant on plantation labour to supplement their returns from their provision grounds, facilitating greater contact with the Creole population. A confluence of factors – their relationships with the Creoles, their comparatively smaller numbers, intense proselytisation by missionaries in Jamaica (and the possibility that some Yoruba had been converts of Nigerian missionary societies) – meant they experienced early creolisation, which rendered some of their cultural and religious practices obsolete. By the time of Schuler's fieldwork in the 1970s, the Nago dance still bore some references to specific orisas but had lost its religious function.

⁴⁵ Maureen Warner-Lewis, *Trinidad Yoruba: From Mother Tongue to Memory* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996), 80–1.

⁴⁶ Schuler, 'Alas, Alas, Kongo', 69–70, 83. For Kumina and its West Central African influence, see Kenneth Bilby and Fu-Kiau kia Bunseki, 'Kumina: A Kongo-based Tradition in the New World', *Les Cahiers du CEDAF* 8, no. 4 (1983): 1–114.

⁴⁷ Schuler, 'Alas, Alas, Kongo', 71, 73.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 9, 69–70. For Nago, see Robin Law, 'Ethnicity and the Slave Trade: "Lucumi" and "Nago" as Ethnonyms in West Africa', *History in Africa* 24 (2007): 208.

Schuler concluded that the Yoruba of Abeokuta ‘appeared indifferent to the customs of their ancestors’.⁴⁹

The religious utility of the Yoruba-influenced African work is prominent in Grenada. In her Jamaican study, Schuler called for further studies on liberated Africans; in the Grenadian case, she emphasised that an even smaller number of Yoruba peoples were ‘capable of survival and influence’ and left a ‘remarkable’ impact on the island’s religious landscape.⁵⁰ Liberated Yoruba experienced creolisation comparatively late in Grenada: the independent communities they built enabled the transmission and recreation of their cultural traditions. Further, this book demonstrates that the adoption of Christianity among recaptive Africans was a gradual process, as evidenced by several magistrate reports. Of the Christian religions, Roman Catholicism was the preferred church, which as David Trotman and Dianne Stewart suggested was conducive and meaningful to Orisa devotion in Trinidad.⁵¹ This work agrees with Schuler, Stewart, and Trotman but extends their arguments by considering interactions within the Eastern Caribbean Sea, where exchanges with Trinidad and St Vincent, were critical in the making of Yoruba-influenced African work.

In British Guiana and Trinidad, Yoruba, Rada, Hausa, and Kongo captives organised their communities along ethnic lines, preserving hometown associations, shared sociolinguistic similarities, and practised their respective cultural traditions.⁵² Dianne Stewart similarly recognised the role of regional clustering in the formation of Yoruba and West Central African national groupings in Trinidad, noting that these factors could also be present in Grenada and Martinique, which also received large numbers of captives. Stewart broadens understandings of the concept of nation, urging scholars to understand these national groupings as archives of trauma, loss, grief, and creativity, rather than reducible to ethnicities or ethnonyms.⁵³ In the Bahamas, the Yoruba’s main legacy was the largest Methodist chapel on the island, founded in the 1840s; a century on, several early Methodist members and leaders were described as being of the ‘Nago’ ethnic group. Adderley concluded that Yoruba

⁴⁹ Schuler, ‘*Alas, Alas, Kongo*’, 80–2, 84.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵¹ David Trotman, ‘The Yoruba and Orisha Worship in Trinidad and British Guiana: 1838–1870’, *African Studies Review* 19, no. 2 (1976): 9; Stewart, *Orisa*, 68, 76.

⁵² Schuler, ‘Liberated Central Africans’, 3–4; Maureen Warner-Lewis, *Guinea’s Other Suns: The African Dynamic in Trinidad Culture* (Dover, MA: The Majority Press, 1991), 36, 79; Adderley, ‘*New Negroes*’, 120, 159.

⁵³ Stewart, *Orisa*, 146, 19.

people in the Bahamas combined their African heritage with a ‘celebration of Christian conversion’.⁵⁴

The largest footprint left by the Yoruba in Trinidad was Orisa worship, which spread throughout the island, fusing with Rada and West Central African traditions, Catholicism, and the Spiritual Baptist Faith.⁵⁵ Drawing on two decades of archival and field research, Stewart reveals that from the 1960s the radical civil rights Black Power Movement (BPM) propelled the Orisa faith to the forefront of political activism; as devotees supported BPM protests, performing public libations, and numerous BPM members were involved in the faith. Women worshippers were central to Orisa’s public presence; they led the movement for religious freedom and legitimisation, organising the island’s first Orisa wedding ceremony in 2002, and helped to successfully secure the formal recognition and legitimation of Orisa as a religious affiliation on the census from 2011.⁵⁶ Grenada is unique from Trinidad and Tobago in that lack of official recognition and stigmatisation persists into the twenty-first century. Discriminatory treatment and the struggle for recognition in Grenada gives its practice their unique character, an illustration of the Eastern Caribbean as a site of difference: paradoxically, Grenadians shaped the struggle for Africana religious freedom in neighbouring Trinidad and Tobago, yet at home, practitioners continued to face hostile conditions.

Oral narratives have been crucial to understanding liberated African communities, particularly the formation of an African world view among descendants. Schuler, Warner-Lewis, and Adderley all captured and documented oral traditions practised by descendants of recaptured Africans which illustrate the enduring persistence of an ‘African world view’. They learned, for example, of the belief common to African immigrants and their descendants that the consumption of salty foods – reminiscent of the salty foodstuffs and water of the middle passage – blocked one’s spiritual power, leaving the afflicted person bereft of the ability to fly back to Africa.⁵⁷ In these narratives, salt is inexorably related to the Africans’ condition of exile;

⁵⁴ Adderley, ‘*New Negroes*’, 168, 170, 172. For further work on the Bahamas, see Howard Johnson, ‘The Liberated Africans in the Bahamas, 1811–1860’, *Immigrants and Minorities* 7, no. 1 (1988): 16–40.

⁵⁵ Warner-Lewis, ‘Trinidad Yoruba’, 50–1; Warner-Lewis, *Guinea’s Other Suns*, 23–4; Stewart, *Orisa*, 44, 125.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 104, 117, 186, 160, 203.

⁵⁷ Schuler, ‘*Alas, Alas, Kongo*’, 93–6; Schuler, ‘Liberated Central Africans’; Adderley, ‘*New Negroes*’, 213, 220–1; Warner-Lewis, *Guinea’s Other Suns*, 28, 120, 178; and Maureen Warner-Lewis, *Central Africa in the Caribbean: Transcending Time, Transforming Cultures* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2003), 133, 148, 271.

it is held responsible for their largely unfulfilled longings to return home to Africa. At the same time, abstinence from the mineral demonstrates their opposition to the raw harshness of existence in an alien environment. As a case study, Grenada further evidences the process of creolisation and questions the utility of corroborating American traditions with African counterparts: some African work practitioners re-interpret this tradition within a Christian framework, using biblical references to explain the theological significance of salt abstinence rather than a specific African antecedent. Understanding, for example, of the salt taboo, and by extension, an 'African world view', must go further by questioning the ways in which its interpretation is spatially and historically contingent.⁵⁸

I draw on oral narratives to consider ways in which liberated African descendants developed group consciousness of membership of and belonging to a vast African diaspora. Descendants of liberated Africans displayed and continue to display a diasporic consciousness; their narratives are informed by an awareness of their distinct culture and roots, and retained and passed down in memories and traditions, in 'myths' of return, and a deep-seated sense of community solidarity in liberated African settlements.⁵⁹ In parts of the diaspora, recaptive Africans and their descendants describe this distinct culture and identity as 'African'. Among liberated Africans in the multi-ethnic Sierra Leone, becoming African was a process that involved the adoption of English as a lingua franca, and the fusion of European Christianity with African cosmologies. Here, creolisation was innately linked to the process of Africanisation.⁶⁰ A similar process is evident in the British Caribbean where, as Warner-Lewis has shown, French Creole language as well as Christianity became an integral aspect of African work – a Yoruba-inspired tradition that evolved to become known as 'African'.⁶¹

RE-CONCEPTUALISING AFRICAN WORK

Kamau Brathwaite, the Caribbean poet, historian, and cultural theorist, developed the concept of creolisation, defining it as a cultural process involving the absorption and multi-linear exchange of several cultures.

⁵⁸ Stephan Palmié, *The Cooking of History: How Not to Study Afro-Cuban Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

⁵⁹ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1997), 24. For the myth of return, see William Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora* 1, no. 1 (1991): 91.

⁶⁰ David Northrup, 'Becoming African: Identity Formation among Liberated Slaves in Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone', *Slavery & Abolition* 27, no. 1 (2006): 6–8, 19.

⁶¹ Warner-Lewis, *Trinidad Yoruba*, 80–1.

Brathwaite also stressed its spatial and temporal dimensions, recognising the ‘complex historical factors’ involved in the creolisation process.⁶² This book similarly understands creolisation as a historically informed process, and pays particular attention to the ways individuals and groups within the Eastern Caribbean engaged with ideas and other peoples across spatial and temporal frames. Anthropologist Richard Price stressed: ‘Human beings meet and engage each other; cultures do not.’⁶³ Price along with Sidney Mintz in the 1970s raised instructive questions concerning human encounters and creolisation: in what ways and how soon did African arrivants begin thinking and acting as members of their American societies? In what ways did African captives continue practices and ideas from Western Africa? How did their African ethnic background and the local American demographics and social conditions influence this process?⁶⁴ Based on Price’s fieldwork among the Saramakan Maroons of Suriname, Mintz and Price argued that creolisation occurred rapidly as Africans organised their cultures less in alignment with their ethnic affiliations but more in accordance with the social and demographic environment of the Americas.⁶⁵ This position is generally termed the ‘creolization model’; however, when employed, the label runs the risk of ‘hypostatizing’ it, neglecting to interrogate its manifestations over time and place.⁶⁶ Indeed, Mintz and Price called for greater historicisation and contextualising of creolisation.⁶⁷ For instance, they present Trinidad’s Orisa and Cuba’s Yoruba religions as two exceptions where significant continuities from Africa – such as deity names, priestly roles, and spirit possession – are discernible. Mintz and Price attribute these to the late arrival of ‘free’ Africans (as with recaptured Africans in Trinidad) or the proximity between when enslaved Africans landed and the abolition of slavery (as in Cuba).⁶⁸

⁶² Edward Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the Caribbean* (Mona, Jamaica: Savacou, 1974), 5–6; Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770–1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 296, 306–7; Nigel Bolland, ‘Creolisation and Creole Societies: A Cultural Nationalist View of Caribbean Social History’, *Caribbean Quarterly* 44, no. 1/2 (1998): 1–32.

⁶³ Richard Price, ‘Créolisation, Creolization, and Créolité’, *Small Axe* 21, no. 1 (2017): 216.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁶⁵ Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976), 1, 43–4 and Richard Price, *The Guiana Maroons: A Historical and Bibliographical Introduction* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 17–20.

⁶⁶ Richard Price, ‘The Miracle of Creolization: A Retrospective’, *New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 75, no. 1–2 (2001): 43.

⁶⁷ Price, ‘Créolisation’, 215.

⁶⁸ Mintz and Price, *Birth of African-American Culture*, 56–60.

African work and its enduring Yoruba legacies offers a third exception. In the 1950s, some ten years before Lomax arrived in Grenada, Smith observed and interviewed several African work adherents on the island. Smith would write extensively on its social and cultural life.⁶⁹ Based on his anthropological observations, Smith suggested African work originated with the nineteenth-century arrival of a large, ethnically homogenous group of liberated Yoruba emigrants, leading to Smith's interpretation of African work as a Yoruba cultural survival.⁷⁰ Smith's assessment resonates with Mintz and Price's analysis of the Trinidad and Cuban religions, and finds consensus with the pioneering work of Melville Herskovits, an anthropologist. Herskovits argued that enslaved Africans organised their lives according to their cultural heritages they brought with them. The strength of an 'Africanism', as Herskovits termed them, was in direct relationship to the demographic dominance of a specific African group.⁷¹

Similarly, large numbers of 'free' Yoruba peoples introduced their respective cultures into Grenada, which later evolved into African work. This book, however, complicates the view that African work was solely a survival of these Yoruba recaptives. Through an examination of social and historical conditions of recaptured Africans, *The Yoruba Are on a Rock* probes similar questions posed by Mintz and Price in the 1970s. First, it traces the trafficking of enslaved peoples from African coastal ports, across the Atlantic Ocean to Grenada during the nineteenth century. This book dismantles some long-held assumptions about the ethnic heritages of these newcomers, revealing a more complex picture, with a smaller number of Yoruba than previously thought. It discusses the rich dynamics between Yoruba, West Central African, and Ewe cultural forms, which characterised the development of African work from the mid nineteenth century. Second, in the tradition of numerous historians

⁶⁹ See Smith, *Kinship and Community*; M. G. Smith, *Dark Puritan: The Life and Work of Norman Paul* (Kingston, Jamaica: Department of Extra-Mural Studies, University of the West Indies, 1963); Smith, *Plural Society*; M. G. Smith, *Stratification in Grenada* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

⁷⁰ Smith, *Plural Society*, 34–5. See also Angelina Pollak-Eltz, 'The Shango Cult and Other African Rituals in Trinidad, Grenada, and Carriacou and their Possible Influence on the Spiritual Baptist Faith', *Caribbean Quarterly* 39, no. 3 & 4 (1993): 12; Patrick Polk, 'African Religion and Christianity in Grenada', *Caribbean Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (1993): 73–4.

⁷¹ Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941), 50, 113. For a similar pattern in Bahia, see J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 46.

of Africa, it contends that Africans formed *new*, yet ethnically identifiable group alliances in the Americas. Historical and anthropological writing on African Atlantic cultures has expanded the narrow focus on African cultural survivals and creolisation, illuminating how such cultures were ‘recreated’ or ‘reconfigured’ over time through experimentation, exchange, and negotiation.⁷² In doing so, historians of Africa have troubled the notion of ‘creolisation’, arguing that it obscures the variations between African ethnic groups, instead homogenising and generalising African backgrounds and American experiences.⁷³

Possessing greater degree of autonomy over their social and cultural lives than enslaved Africans, liberated Africans and their descendants in Grenada recreated cultures and identities that were specific, salient, and enduring. For instance, by the 1950s, their descendants forged communities based on their national affiliations, such as ‘Shango’, ‘Anango’, both denoting Yoruba origin, and ‘Congo’, a West Central African ethnonym.⁷⁴ Further, African work evolved from a confluence of local, regional, and global influences. These factors revise the African cultural survival model, demonstrating that cultures and identities were reformulated as Africans drew inspiration from an array of ideas and practices of Grenada, the Eastern Caribbean region, and the wider Atlantic world.

Thirdly, heeding David Scott’s call to investigate various significations of ‘Africa’ by Black actors, this book challenges previous conceptual framings of African work, moving away from the notion of a static

⁷² Scholarship on the persistence and recreation of African ethnicities and culture is vast, but for examples see: John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Douglas Chambers, “‘My Own Nation’: Igbo Exiles in the Diaspora”, *Slavery & Abolition* 18, no. 1 (1997): 72–97; Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Paul Lovejoy, ‘Identifying Enslaved Africans in the African Diaspora’, in Paul Lovejoy (ed.), *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery* (London: Continuum, 2000), 1–29; James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441–1770* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the Links* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 56–7; Jason R. Young, *Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the Era of Slavery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 185; and Luis Nicolau Parés, *The Formation of Candomblé: Vodun History and Ritual in Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2013).

⁷³ Chambers, “‘My Own Nation’”; Michael A. Gomez, ‘African Identity and Slavery in the Americas’, *Radical History Review* 75 (1999): 111–20; Lovejoy, ‘Identifying Enslaved Africans’.

⁷⁴ M. G. Smith, Unpublished Field Notes, ‘MGS Grenada 1953, Field Notes’, April/May 1953, unrecorded location, 58.

or pure ‘Africa’.⁷⁵ Using oral narratives gathered from practitioners and descendants of liberated Africans reveals how ideas about ‘Africa’ were reworked over time and place to suit the exigencies of American conditions. As Stephan Palmié has shown with Santería, terms such as ‘Yoruba’ and ‘Africa’ are locally and historically contingent; what is considered ‘Yoruba’ or ‘African’ varies across time and across space. ‘Yoruba’ is more than a biological descriptor, and Palmié questions the nature of the emergence and the varied purposes of Yoruba identities. In that sense, Santería is likened to an ‘ever-revolving dish’ as numerous actors, including scholars, remake their version of this Afro-Cuban faith.⁷⁶ Similarly, this work looks beyond verification, considering how practitioners ascribe a multiplicity of methodologies and theological meanings to constitutive elements of African work, such as animal sacrifice.⁷⁷ It pays attention to other cultural elements commonly neglected in a search for ‘Africa’, including South Asian traditions and European ‘book magic’, all of which fashioned African work by the early twentieth century.⁷⁸

THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN SEA: ‘UN- ISLANDING’ ORISA WORSHIP

The recreation of Black Atlantic religious cultures operates over multiple sites of diaspora and involve dialogic relationships across the Atlantic world, disrupting the notion of a linear flow from Africa to the Americas. Cultural and social theorist Paul Gilroy’s seminal work emphasised the ongoing circum-Atlantic criss-crossing of ideas among Black actors

⁷⁵ Kristina Wirtz, ‘Divining the Past: The Linguistic Reconstruction of “African” Roots in Diasporic Ritual Registers and Songs’, in Stephan Palmié (ed.), *Africas of the Americas: Beyond the Search for Origins in the Study of Afro-Atlantic Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 145, 169, 173; David Scott, ‘That Event, This Memory: Notes on the Anthropology of African Diasporas in the New World’, *Diaspora* 1, no. 3 (1991): 270, 278–9.

⁷⁶ Palmié, *Cooking of History*, 29, 45–54.

⁷⁷ J. Lorand Matory, ‘From “Survival” to “Dialogue”: Analytic Tropes in the Study of African-Diaspora Cultural History’, in Ingrid Kummels, Claudia Rauhut, Stefan Rinke, and Birte Timm (eds.), *Transatlantic Caribbean: Dialogues of People, Practices, Ideas* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2014), 38.

⁷⁸ Alexander Rocklin, ‘Imagining Religions in a Trinidad Village: The Africanity of the Spiritual Baptist Movement and the Politics of Comparing Religions’, *New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 86, no. 1 & 2 (2012): 57, 70; Stephan Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity and Tradition* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 207.

between Africa and the Americas.⁷⁹ In a similar vein, J. Lorand Matory, a leading anthropologist of Afro-Brazilian culture, demonstrated how the Brazilian Candomblé was recreated through long-distance on-going exchanges among urban commercial and religious elites between Africa and Brazil.⁸⁰ Encouraging a rethinking of Black Atlantic religious practices as land bound, these analyses are critical to understanding African work in Grenada, which has been shaped by peoples, commodities, and ideas within and across the Atlantic.

This book places a spotlight on an underexplored sub-section of the Black Atlantic – the Eastern Caribbean Sea. African work in Grenada developed in ways that were quite distinctive due to its location – situated between the Eastern Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, north of Trinidad and Tobago and south of St Vincent. Martiniquan theorist Édouard Glissant proposed an archipelagic approach to creolisation, focusing on relations between a network of Caribbean islands, stressing their interconnections as well as differences.⁸¹ Such a view allows for a more nuanced understanding of the evolution and transformation of African work. For Yoruba exiles and the inheritors of their traditions, Grenada's island location fostered an archipelagic relationship with their African homeland; 'Africa' was imagined and redefined through the interconnected Eastern Caribbean space.⁸² Grenada and its immediate islands were highly relational spaces, separated by relatively short distances, which in turn encouraged the frequency of inter-island movements.

Tessa Murphy's study of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Eastern Caribbean archipelago conceptualised this area as an interconnected, creolising space, formed by the coming together of Indigenous, African, and European peoples.⁸³ This book extends our understanding of this often neglected regional zone by centring African-derived religious cultures in the mid nineteenth century and beyond. Homing in on this smaller region enables a focus on rural, non-elite practitioners who are

⁷⁹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 15; Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London: Routledge, 2004), 117, 78–9, 16.

⁸⁰ Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*.

⁸¹ Michelle Ann Stephens and Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel (eds.), *Contemporary Archipelagic Thinking: Towards New Comparative Methodologies and Disciplinary Formations* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2020), 4–11.

⁸² 'Call for Papers', *Archipelagic Memory*, <https://archipelagicmemory.wordpress.com/call-for-papers>.

⁸³ Tessa Murphy, *The Creole Archipelago: Race and Borders in the Colonial Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021).

frequently overlooked in research on free movements across large bodies of water. These devotees – mostly agricultural workers and small-scale traders – initiated and participated in circulatory, inter-island migratory journeys across the Eastern Caribbean, and intervened in and transformed religious practices as they went, and on returning home, rejuvenated local practices. As such, this book conceptualises the Eastern Caribbean Sea as more than a creolising space; it was at the same time an Africanising territory, for what was ‘African’ at any given moment was imbued with fresh meaning as practitioners interacted with other ritual experts and cultural forms. The Grenada case demonstrates creolisation and Africanisation as non-linear and multi-sited processes of exchange, engendering cultural transformations across bodies of water.

Paul Johnson’s study of the New York Garifuna, a Black Carib people from Honduras, showed that within the ‘multiple sites’ of African diaspora, religious meanings and practices are reconfigured. The Garifuna of Central America originally derived their ‘authentic religious practice’ from St Vincent, their former homeland and site of ethnogenesis.⁸⁴ Only after they migrated to North America in the late twentieth century did Africa, rather than St Vincent and Honduras, become their dominant ‘horizon of authenticity and roots’ and source of religious power.⁸⁵ Here, the Garifuna religion was transformed into a practice ‘consciously and declaratively of the African diaspora’.⁸⁶ In New York, they encountered new religions, such as Santería, elements of which they incorporated into their own religious practice.

Unlike the Garifuna, Grenadian African work adherents operate largely outside of broader Black Atlantic religious networks. Commercial, migratory, and other exchanges between the neighbouring island of Trinidad have fostered a close relationship with Grenada. Trinidad operates as, what Stewart called, a ‘site of African spiritual heritage for many Eastern Caribbean religious custodians who share entangled histories with Orisa shrines and Spiritual Baptist houses of worship’.⁸⁷ Although Stewart cited the incorporation of a Guyanese deity into Trinidad’s Orisa worship and the St Vincentian and Grenadian roots of Trinidad’s Spiritual Baptist Faith, there remains much more to be said about these shared histories.⁸⁸ Notably absent from the historiography of Orisa worship in

⁸⁴ Paul Christopher Johnson, *Diaspora Conversions: Black Carib Religion and the Recovery of Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 7.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7, 96.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁸⁷ Stewart, *Orisa*, 249.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 249, 88.

the Caribbean is a comprehensive study of the Eastern Caribbean Sea as a relational space. I expand upon Stewart's notion of Trinidad as a site of African spiritual heritage by charting the intersecting histories, adherents, beliefs, and practices of religious cultures from neighbouring islands, namely the Nation Dance of Carriacou and the larger Orisa community in Trinidad and Tobago from the mid nineteenth century, and the Spiritual Baptist Faith of St Vincent and Trinidad and Tobago from the early twentieth century. This book situates the Eastern Caribbean as a site of authenticity, inspiration, and exchange which has reconfigured African-inspired religious practices over time. I argue that this was also a space marked by difference: Grenadian immigrants were critical in the struggle to secure the legitimisation of Trinidad's Spiritual Baptist and Orisa religions, though paradoxically, in Grenada both faiths are afforded little official recognition, and have yet to secure legitimate status from the government.

SOURCES AND METHODS

The Yoruba Are on a Rock achieves these aims through critical analysis of oral narratives, religious practices, expressive cultures, and colonial accounts from traditional archives. The colonial archive is fraught with silences, omissions, and prejudices about the experiences and thoughts of African-descended individuals. As Saidiya Hartman and Christina Sharpe contend, the archives are more revealing of the excessive violence of enslavement, rather than insights into the material and psychic realities of African-descended peoples.⁸⁹ For instance, the writings of Hesketh Bell, an English colonial officer in nineteenth-century Grenada, reveal the violence of colonial writings. Writing extensively about the 'superstitions' of African-descended peoples, Bell failed to mention individuals by name, including an elderly Black woman who provided him critical cultural intelligence (this situation is explored in Chapter 1). In some cases, individuals were given the appellations such as 'Sambo', which, as Shirley Anne Tate articulated, signifies their colonial subjugation and negation.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ See Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007); Saidiya Hartman, 'Venus in Two Acts', *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12, no. 2 (2008): 2; Saidiya Hartman, 'The Dead Book Revisited', *History of the Present: A Journal of Critical History* 6, no. 2 (2016): 211; Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

⁹⁰ Shirley Anne Tate, *Decolonising Sambo: Transculturation, Fungibility and Black and People of Colour Futurity* (Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2020), 2.

This unnamed Black woman is representative of millions of other African-descended peoples who are routinely silenced throughout the production of the historical archive.⁹¹ Consequently, the name of the Black woman as well as her perspectives are not known. This book centres enslaved and liberated Africans in Grenada by adopting Marisa Fuentes' approach that encourages a reading of colonial documents 'along the bias grain', recognising how the documents silence and misrepresent marginalised individuals.⁹² This methodological approach 'stretches' archival fragments to draw out marginalised voices and experiences of individuals, often unmentioned and/or unnamed within archival sources, and asks what historical insights might emerge when archival biases are addressed. For instance, what can be learned of African-derived cultural practices and experiences by shifting 'the archival language and gaze' away from white men, such as Bell, to this unknown elderly Black woman?⁹³

Documentary evidence about recaptured Africans is limited as the greater number of records focus on enslaved peoples. Parliamentary investigations into the conditions of the enslaved population between 1807 and 1834 generated plantation reports, sometimes referencing enslaved cultural practices.⁹⁴ However, after 1834, such parliamentary investigations are rare for Grenada, leaving few observations about recaptured Africans in Parliamentary Papers. The apprenticeship period (1834–8) also produced correspondence from officials, but overall, documentary sources on Black cultures are fewer for the post-slavery period; the decline of sugar production and the resultant withdrawal of many enslavers from Grenada from the mid nineteenth century, mean that there is very little archival evidence from plantation owners after 1834. Writings by travellers, missionaries, and pro- and anti-slavery individuals partially fill the vacuum and are useful sources on post-emancipation society. Examining the biases and recovering marginalised voices and experiences in these records provides glimpses of community building and other forms of survival and resistance.

The main documentary sources used in this study are housed at the National Archives in the UK. These include records of the Colonial

⁹¹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 26.

⁹² Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 11, 153n16, 156n32.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 4, 146.

⁹⁴ Barry Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807–1834* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 1995), 6.

Office – some of which are duplicated in the Office of Governor General records, St George, Grenada – the Foreign Office, the Admiralty, and the Blue Books. Parliamentary Papers and medical and travel journals have also been useful in detailing mortality and morbidity rates, and the locations where recaptured African settled in Grenada. Reinterpreting such colonial narratives, which are concerned with protecting social and financial interests of various elite parties, at times offer glimpses into *how* liberated Africans experienced ‘liberation’, such as their physical condition at recapture and during transportation, and their visions of freedom.

Digital methodologies present new ways to interpret the colonial archive. The website *Slave Voyages 2.0* (thereafter *Voyages*, launched in 2009) details 36,000 slave voyages across the Atlantic between the sixteenth and nineteenth century.⁹⁵ It is a valuable starting point to trace the routes of captives from their African hinterlands into the Americas. The African Origins Database housed in this digital collection provides personal information of 91,491 Africans, including their African name, gender, origin, body markings, country, and places of embarkation and disembarkation.⁹⁶ Clerks recorded African names phonetically and seldom noted the linguistic origins of names. However, identifying the modern counterparts of these names provide vital clues into the possible ethno-linguistic origins of liberated Africans. Culled from the registers for liberated Africans in Freetown and Havana at the Sierra Leone National Archives and the National Archives at Kew, the African Origins Database represents about half of those recaptured by the British in the nineteenth century. These surviving records do not include those sent from Sierra Leone after 1849, those sent via St Helena, nor those recaptured at sea and sent directly to Grenada. Of those documented, around 15 per cent were sent as indentured servants on emigrant vessels to the British Caribbean.⁹⁷

On the other side of the Atlantic, the African names of recaptives received into the colony of Grenada were sporadically recorded. Three surviving lists detail African names of recaptives who arrived on the *Negrinha* (1836), the *Sierra del Pilar* (1839), and the *Brandon* (1849). The clerks of these latter ships captured the ethnic designations of the liberated Africans. For the *Negrinha*, it is possible to deduce the ethno-linguistic origins of their African names by comparing names with

⁹⁵ *Voyages* Database, www.slavevoyages.org.

⁹⁶ *Voyages*, African Origins Database, www.slavevoyages.org/past/database/african-origins.

⁹⁷ Anderson et al., ‘African Names’, 167–78.

those that appear on the African Origins Database or modern-day counterparts. However, for the other ships disembarking in Grenada, either the European names of recaptives are provided, as with the case with *Phoenix* (1836), or there remains no list at all.⁹⁸ This makes it acutely difficult to trace individual liberated Africans.

Due to the constraints of the colonial archive, *The Yoruba Are on a Rock* emphasises oral narratives, religious rituals, healing practices, dance, songs, and music as repositories of historical knowledge.⁹⁹ Songs such as ‘Ogun Maa Se Sile Wa’ and ‘Yoruba people are on an island’ record the responses of the dispossessed to the chaos of warfare, the anguish of enslavement, and the disorienting experience of relocation.¹⁰⁰ This book also utilises the unpublished field notes, tape recordings, and publications of anthropologist M. G. Smith; these materials represent an invaluable and hitherto underutilised source of rich data illuminating the social and cultural life of Grenada in the early 1950s. There are roughly 353 pages of observations and interviews, mostly handwritten, and over nineteen hours of recordings of folklore, songs, and interviews recorded in 1953.¹⁰¹ Smith’s collection of oral narratives gathered from the descendants of liberated Africans and African work practitioners, represents an unparalleled source on Yoruba-inspired African work in Grenada. Included within the collection is *Dark Puritan*, one of Smith’s published works, on the life and work of Norman Paul, a twentieth-century African work specialist. Over a period of six weeks in 1953, Paul spoke with Smith about his practice – including accounts of possession and direction by the orisa, Osun – and recounted his experiences in Trinidad, described liberated African communities, and shared memories of his involvement with Grenadian political movements.¹⁰²

Supplementing Smith’s oral sources, I conducted over thirty interviews with cultural workers and descendants of recaptured Africans and

⁹⁸ The National Archives, Kew [TNA], CO 101/82, ‘Return of Captured Africans per “Phoenix” slaver’, Joseph Clarke, Acting Collector, and Thomas Challenor, Controller, 14 October 1836, encl. C in Doyle to Glenelg, 8 October 1836.

⁹⁹ Anthony Bogues, ‘Writing Caribbean Intellectual History’, *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 26 (2008): 175, 171; Colin Dayan, *Haiti, History and the Gods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), xvii; David Scott, ‘Introduction: On the Archaeologies of Black Memory’, *Small Axe* 26, no. 6 (2008): v–xvi; Catherine A. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery: Representing Race in the Federal Writers’ Project* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 60.

¹⁰⁰ See Dayan’s consideration of Haitian Vodun as history, specifically a history that relates the enslaved responses to the terror of slavery, in Dayan, *Haiti, History and the Gods*, xvii.

¹⁰¹ Smith, Field Notes, 1953; British Library (BL), SoundServer, ‘Grenada Folklore’ (1953).

¹⁰² Smith, *Dark Puritan*, 2–3.

observed several African work ceremonies over a period of five months between 2009 and 2015, and in 2024. However, these Grenadian oral sources are limited in the amount of detail they offer about the ethnicities of recaptives, as compared to British Guiana, Jamaica, and Trinidad. The first research on liberated Africans to incorporate oral narratives were conducted in the mid to late twentieth century – Warner-Lewis in the 1960s and 1970s in Trinidad, and Schuler in Jamaica and British Guiana in the 1970s and 1980s. Importantly, both were able to capture detailed recollections from the descendants. In addition, perhaps due to their larger numbers, the lives of liberated Africans in the plantation colonies studied by Warner-Lewis and Schuler were closely monitored by officials, and thus better documented than in Grenada. Nevertheless, the persistence of the historical memories of Grenada's liberated African descendants into the twenty-first century attest to the enduring legacies of recaptives.

Chapter 1 establishes the local context for the introduction of liberated Africans into Grenada, outlining the emergence of a plantation society built on unfree African labour. By emancipation in 1838, the formerly enslaved Africans became a peasantry closely associated with Roman Catholicism, and had developed Creole French, the Nation Dance, obeah, and saraka from their multiple African heritages and American experiences. They had survived and resisted enslavement through practising these cultures, and by withdrawing fully or partially from plantation work, cultivating provision grounds, acquiring land, forming villages, and for some, migrating to Trinidad. These strategies and cultural practices were drawn upon by liberated Africans to refashion their own lives and cultures.

One-fifth of recaptives landing between 1836–7 were involuntarily enlisted in the West India Regiment in Trinidad. The rest of the recaptives were required to sign contracts of indenture, most commonly on sugar and cocoa plantations. The contractual obligations of indentured Africans were shaped by the same terms of apprenticeship imposed on the formerly enslaved following emancipation, and their survival and resistance strategies similarly recalled those previously enacted by African Grenadians. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the various indentureship schemes on the island, including the experiences of the recaptured at reception depots, and their contractual requirements. It also explains the preference for African as opposed to South Asian labourers, and how the ideas about civilising Africans informed the campaigns and arguments of both supporters and opponents of the scheme.

Chapter 3 challenges long extant narratives about the ethnic homogeneity of Grenada's liberated Africans. Using archival evidence and Smith's

unpublished field notes, it provides a demographic profile of liberated Africans detailing their age, gender, ethnicity, linguistic groups, and geographical origins. The chapter argues that examining their backgrounds provides an understanding of their cultural legacies, specifically those African cultures that were carried to Grenada, and how these impacted the formation of African work.

Liberated Africans sought freedom and solidarity during enlistment and indentureship which impaired the process of creolisation. Chapter 4 draws out their experiences from several documentary accounts, which often neglect the physical and emotional trauma endured during the crossing. It examines the coercive nature of enlistment, allocation to the estates, the nature of work regimes, and how recaptives wrestled with these conditions. This chapter stresses the restricted freedom liberated Africans experienced, the ways local and imperial forces sought to 'civilise' them, and how recaptives drew on shared African histories and experiences in the homeland and the Caribbean to pursue freedom.

Chapter 5 examines the myriad ways Africans contested their indentureship, arguing that these cultural and economic choices by first-generation recaptive Africans shaped the formation of African work on the island. Like the actions taken by enslaved Africans, recaptured Africans left estates temporarily or permanently to establish and maintain bonds with shipmates or those of similar 'nations'. For the majority, African languages were spoken along with French and church attendance was irregular. Moreover, a preference was expressed for Roman Catholicism for it was compatible with their religious cultures. While many of these choices indicate adaptation to a creolised society, they also demonstrate that this adaptation was gradual and measured.

Following their indentureship, some Africans continued to exercise economic and cultural autonomy by migrating to Trinidad for higher wages – establishing relationships with the larger Yoruba community there, impacting the local development of African work. Liberated Africans in Grenada also practised African-derived traditions and organised themselves into ethnically defined communities. Rather than assimilating into the African Grenadian population and losing their separate histories and identities, Chapter 6 maintains that liberated Africans remained a distinctive category from the descendants of formerly enslaved Africans, in part because of their post-indenture experiences. In their resolve to resist plantation labour, recaptured Africans formed autonomous communities, pursued independent economic activities, migrated to Trinidad for higher wages, and practised and recreated

African cultures. These strategic decisions along with sugar's decline after 1834, ultimately led to the failure of the African immigration scheme and laid the conditions for the establishment of African work.

In modern day Grenada, African work is the most enduring and significant cultural inheritance of both enslaved and liberated Africans. Using oral narratives, collected by this author between 2009 and 2023, and produced by Smith in 1952–3, the following three chapters complicate Smith's early twentieth century conceptualisation of African work as a surviving cultural practice of a large group of Ijesha-speaking Yoruba recaptives. Chapter 7 delineates Yoruba aspects of African work, arguing that some Yoruba influences can be located beyond the Ijesha. Yoruba cultures appealed to a diverse audience, leading to the Yorubisation of various African beliefs. Eventually, Yoruba-derived religious cultures came to be known as 'African', as a response to local circumstances, such as the rejection of exogenously imposed labels by practitioners and the appeal from the broader African-descended population.

Chapter 8 troubles two assumptions within liberated African scholarship. First, it shows that liberated Africans did more than renew and displace pre-existing African Caribbean cultures. Second, it argues that rather than being a survival of a homogenous group of Yoruba speakers, African work in Grenada has been shaped by interactions with pre-existing Creole cultures. By foregrounding exchange, intervention, and stigmatisation within and outside the Eastern Caribbean Sea, this chapter shows the ways in which Yoruba cultures were cross-fertilised with the Nation Dance, Roman Catholicism, obeah, saraka, and Indian cultures, contributing to the making of African work from the mid nineteenth century. From the early twentieth century, African work was reshaped by the emergence of the Spiritual Baptist Faith. Chapter 9 focuses on border-crossing devotees who spread this new religion throughout several locales in the Eastern Caribbean, returning to Grenada with a reworked version of the Spiritual Baptist Faith marked by South Asian and non-Christian European characteristics. The incorporation of the Spiritual Baptist Faith into African work practice indicates some ways in which liberated African cultures were renewed by African Caribbean practices.

Chapter 10 considers how descendants of nineteenth-century Africans remember their forebearers. I build on Chapter 6's discussion on the distinctiveness of liberated Africans by recovering some individual biographies, exploring how they constructed alternative narratives of return, and how they remained close to Africa through an awareness of

indentured histories and cultural traditions. These memories form a diasporic consciousness, shared with the descendants of a liberated African ancestor, the great-grandfather of Malcolm X.

I end by reflecting on some stark differences between Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago's religious climate and recent efforts to revive Yoruba culture in Grenada, reiterating the ways African work within the Eastern Caribbean Sea is co-constructed and interrelated, while marked by difference. Ultimately, *The Yoruba Are on a Rock* provides a study of Africans who, arriving decades after the abolition of the British slave trade, radically shaped the religious and cultural landscape of Grenada. It argues for a need to move beyond an emphasis on unidirectional culture flows, characteristic of the creolisation-survival debate, to examine the historical processes by which African work has been recreated, reconfigured, and rejuvenated by local factors, as well as the movement of peoples, goods, and ideas around the Eastern Caribbean Sea and beyond.