7

'They Call Them the Yarriba People, It Was African Dance'

Becoming Yoruba, Becoming African

> When I was going to school once … I heard drums were beating a little way off at neighbour Munro mother … they say they were having Yarriba dance; later when I got older I got to know the meaning of Yarriba, was African Dance. That dance is just the very dance that I am doing … The African people used to be making Yarriba, the very Shango dance, you know, but they did not call it Shango at that time. They call them the Yarriba people, it was African dance…[1]
>
> —Miss Clive, quoted in Smith, Unpublished Field Notes

Around the year 1913, following the birth of her child, 20-year-old Miss Alice Clive (1893–unknown) begun acting out of character.[2] One night, Miss Clive had awoken and risen from her bed to gather corn, flowers, a branch, a cutlass, and a calabash filled with water. For twenty-one days, Miss Clive refused to eat or drink; she could be heard repeatedly singing a song, and as far as could be discerned, the lyrics referred to Ogun, an orisa. Concerned, Miss Clive's husband called upon the Africans at the village of La Mode to visit their home, to observe and, hopefully, to diagnose and treat his wife's bewildering behaviour. One of those Africans was Papa William, headman of the Africans in La Mode, who had arrived in Grenada from Africa as a child with his parents and apparently spoke

[1] Smith, Field Notes, 'Miss Clive/MGS', September 1953, La Tante, 20.

[2] Ibid. Miss Clive was sixty years old when she was interviewed by Smith in 1953. I interviewed a close associate of Clive who informed me that Clive had died shortly before Hurricane Ivan in 2004. This would have meant Clive was a supercentenarian of 111 years old at her death (Ms Little, interview with author, Rose Hill, 1 November 2009).

no other language but an 'African language, Yarriba'.[3] Perhaps that is why he sent in his stead an elderly lady, Fantaisie, who informed Miss Clive that the calabash, flowers, and cutlass were evidence of a calling from Ogun, the orisa of iron, warfare, and hunting. A series of rituals followed, including eating a ritual food called *agidi* (Yoruba for cornmeal), during which the young Miss Clive learnt from Fantaisie that she was to adopt a second spirit, Sango, the deity of thunder, lightning, and fire. Significantly, Miss Clive had heard about African work as a child, but had had no prior association with Yoruba-inspired religious cultures, nor was she descended from Yoruba recaptives.[4] So it was quite a momentous occasion when, at the age of twenty, Miss Clive was called upon by Ogun; encouraged and inspired by Papa William and other Africans, she adopted 'Yarriba' practices and in time became a renowned leader of African work.

Miss Clive's childhood memories of the 'Yarriba' dance, and her introduction and initiation into African work complicate previous scholarly conceptualisations of the practice. The anthropologist M. G. Smith proposed that African work in Grenada represented the survival of a large and ethnically homogenous group of Ijesha-speaking Yoruba recaptives who settled in the villages of Munich, Concord, and La Mode. Miss Clive's experience indicate that African work was in fact a product of the reworking of Yoruba traditions by diverse local, regional, and global actors – who in turn impressed their own cultural stamps onto those Yoruba traditions. As part of that reworking, the villages' Yoruba-speaking recaptives from a variety of sub-ethnic backgrounds and their descendants became known as 'Yoruba' and their practices identified as 'Yoruba'.[5] Indeed, speaking in the 1950s, Miss Clive retrospectively described early twentieth-century practitioners as 'Yarriba' and their practice as 'Yarriba dance'.[6] Non-Yoruba devotees such as Miss Clive who adopted their practices became Yoruba culturally.

Testimonies of practitioners that I collected between 2009 and early 2023, and those compiled by Smith in the 1950s, detail the Yoruba components of African work and the ways in which Yoruba cultures were recreated over time by diverse actors. They indicate the wide

[3] Smith, Field Notes, 'Miss Clive/MGS', September 1953, La Tante, 24.
[4] Ibid., 20–1, 24, 25, 27; ibid., 'Gene 1 – Miss Clive's Genealogy', 1953.
[5] Claudia Rauhut has shown that through initiation into Yoruba Atlantic religions, initiates 'become and consider themselves Yoruba', see Rauhut, 'Transatlantic Restoration', 182.
[6] Smith, Field Notes, 'Miss Clive/MGS', September 1953, La Tante, 20.

appeal of Yoruba cultures, culminating in the Yorubisation of various African beliefs. Through examining the various labels applied to African work by practitioners and non-practitioners, oral testimonies can be read to chart how Yoruba-derived practices eventually became generically known as 'African'. Ultimately, ascriptions of 'Yoruba' or 'African' are spatially and historically contingent: their uses, meanings, and associations altered over time and were inflected by local, regional, and global factors.

THE ORISAS OF GRENADA: BEYOND THE IJESHA AND THE YORUBA

In the West African hinterland, the worship of orisas was common among Yoruba-speaking peoples, Edo peoples to the southeast of Yorubaland, and Gbe speakers (including Ewe, Fon, and Aja) where it was known as *vodun*.[7] Displaced from their homelands and transported through the Bight of Benin, captured and recaptured peoples carried representations of Orisa worship to Sierra Leone and beyond, to the Americas. Today, these deities may be observed to varying degrees within Cuba's Lucumí/Santería, Brazil's Candomblé and Umbanda, Haiti's Vodun, St Lucia's Kele, Jamaica's Kumina, the United States's Orisa-Vodoo, and Trinidad and Tobago's and Grenada's Orisa or African work.[8]

Smith's ethnographic fieldwork, carried out between 1952 and 1953, led him to propose that African work originated with the 1849 arrival of over 1,000 recaptured Africans. Smith claimed that those Africans were an ethnically homogeneous group of Yoruba speakers. They settled in the villages of Munich, Concord, and La Mode. He specifically identified the 1849–50 cohort of recaptives as peoples originating from 'Ijesha' in Yorubaland, though neither in his published work or in unpublished field notes did he offer any explanation of how or why he was certain of his identification.[9] Smith did not cite a specific source for his claim, but

[7] Barnes and Ben-Amos, 'Ogun', 49–51; Peter Mercier, 'The Fon of Dahomey', in Daryll Forde (ed.), *African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 210, 215.

[8] McKenzie, *Hail Orisha!*; Peter F. Cohen, 'Orisha Journeys: The Role of Travel in the Birth of Yorùbá-Atlantic Religions', *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 117 (2002): 17–36; Renato Ortiz, 'Ogum and the Umbandista Religion', in Sandra Barnes (ed.), *Africa's Ogun: Old World and New* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 90–102.

[9] Smith, *Plural Society*, 34.

he supplemented his rich ethnographic research with archival data.[10] Colonial Office records largely confirm that a total of 1,060 recaptives were sent to Grenada between 1849 and 1850. However, as I have shown in Chapter 3 and will reiterate in this chapter, not all recaptives were Yoruba. Recaptured Africans entering Grenada at that time were from multiple geographic and ethno-linguistic communities. Yoruba speakers may have been well represented on the *Atlantic* (1850), but this was not the case with the *Clarendon* (1849) or the *Brandon* (1849). The latter two emigrant ships conveyed a variety of Yoruba sub-ethnicities, 324 Mende speakers, eighty-five West Central Africans, and an unspecified number of Hausa speakers.

It is known, however, that Ijesha was one of several Yoruba dialects spoken by the liberated 'Aku' in Sierra Leone, where those Africans began their journey towards Grenada. In the late 1840s, the German missionary S. W. Koelle documented several languages and dialects among Sierra Leone residents, many of whom were liberated Africans. One of his informants originated from the Ijesha kingdom and had been in the colony for six years with 'a great many of his countrymen'.[11] Among the descendants of Africans in nineteenth-century Trinidad, the Ijesha coexisted alongside other Yoruba subgroups, namely the Egba, Ijebu, Egbado, and Ajase.[12] In his study of Ijeshaland, anthropologist John Peel documented the presence of the Ijesha in Brazil.[13] In fact, a distinct 'Ijexa nation' was formed within the African-inspired Brazilian Candomblé.[14]

Confirmation of the presence of Ijesha peoples in Grenada can be found in oral evidence. Warner-Lewis interviewed a woman in Trinidad in 1968 and again in 1972 whose maternal grandmother, Amosu, was an Ijesha. Amosu had migrated to Trinidad after serving a period of indentureship in Grenada.[15] Benedict Andrew, who had observed African work as a child during the 1950s, recounted that a song called 'Ijesha' was sung by the African peoples of Munich, and identified Ijesha as an 'African

[10] Smith, *Stratification in Grenada*, 236.

[11] Sigismund W. Koelle, *Polyglotta Africana; or A Comparative Vocabulary of Nearly Three Hundred Words and Phrases, in More Than One Hundred Distinct African Languages* (London: Church Missionary House, 1854), 5. See also Northrup, 'Becoming African', 10.

[12] Warner-Lewis, *Guinea's Other Suns*, 20.

[13] J. D. Peel, *Ijeshas and Nigerians: The Incorporation of a Yoruba Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 76, 281n3.

[14] Stefania Capone, *Searching for Africa in Brazil: Power and Tradition in Candomblé* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 21, 266; Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*, 77.

[15] Warner-Lewis, *Guinea's Other Suns*, 75.

saint'.[16] Intriguingly, this possible memory of homeland is entangled with both African and Roman Catholic resonances. The identification of African deities with Roman Catholic saints, a general feature of the worship of orisas in Grenada and many parts of the Americas, indicates some ways in which Yoruba-identified traditions were influenced by local exigencies, and accordingly reworked.

A significant Ijesha presence was visible throughout the British Caribbean, Brazil, and Sierra Leone – the result of external warfare in Ijesha kingdom and internal rivalry in its capital, Ilesha. From the 1820s to the 1870s, relations with Ilesha and its neighbours, especially those to the north, placed pressure on its frontiers and weakened the Ilesha's control over larger subordinate towns. In the early 1820s, warfare between Oyo and Ilorin led to several incursions into Ijesha by Ilorin, as well as the settlement of Oyo refugees in the northern towns of the Ijesha kingdom. Several wars in the north and south of Ilesha occurred from the 1820s to the 1850s. Ilesha's status as a regional power experienced a significant blow when, after the collapse of Oyo, Ibadan pursued expansionist policies and started wars to assert its own power as it sought to fill the void left by Oyo's collapse. Ibadan's territorial expansion occurred across northern parts of Ijesha kingdom, diminishing Ilesha's power in the region in the 1840s, and capturing Ilesha in 1870. These disturbances continued into the late nineteenth century; by the 1860s, Ilesha had not only lost control over most of the northern part of the Ijesha kingdom but gone were also most of her inhabitants, many of whom were lost to enslavement. These pressures were compounded by internal strife among Ilesha's chiefs, especially after the 1840s, when European-supplied guns considerably transformed the nature of warfare and by extension, the regional balance of power.[17]

Smith's findings suggest that the creolisation of the cultures of these 1849–50 arrivals from Ijeshaland occurred slowly; nineteenth-century Africans and their descendants 'preserved' significant aspects of Yoruba culture, such as language, kinship elements, and 'Shango' (African work).[18] For example, in African work in Grenada and orisa veneration in Yorubaland, orisas are communicated with by means of animal sacrifice, commonly on altars or stools, as well as divination and possession (manifestation).[19] Among those orisas, Ogun was prominent – on both Grenada

[16] Benedict Andrew, interview with author, Munich, 8 December 2009.
[17] Peel, *Ijeshas and Nigerians*, 77–81.
[18] Smith, *Plural Society*, 34.
[19] Smith, *Dark Puritan*, 7; Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs*, 35.

and Trinidad.[20] On Grenada, in early 1953, diviner and healer Norman Paul explained that during a seven-day African work feast, the first day was reserved for Ogun and feeding his spiritual children. Individuals known as Ogun's children received visits in their dreams from the orisa, who manifested as a tall officer bearing a sword. Ogun was the patron of those warriors who carried out specific tasks for Ogun.[21] In 1990, Patrick Polk, a scholar of Caribbean religions, observed such a three-day feast in Grenada. The leader informed Polk that, unlike other orisas, Ogun was not worshipped by adherents, but was regarded by them as an ancestor and they were considered members of his 'familial cult'.[22] Similarly in Yorubaland, Ogun's followers spoke of being 'children' of that orisa. There, Ogun and Ifa were the most common patrons and were represented directly or symbolically in names given to children at birth.[23]

In the liberated African village of Concord, it is remembered that practitioners erected an 'Ogun stool', a permanent altar for Ogun.[24] In his yard, Bishop Peters, a well-known leader of African work, has an Ogun stool, materialised in the form of a walled structure (see image in Chapter 1). Behind it, coloured flags flutter from bamboo sticks. In the 1880s, the colonialist Hesketh Bell described a comparable altar on which lay a broken cutlass, surrounded by bamboo that bore long, flag-like strips of red or white cotton material.[25] The colours are symbolic, for they are associated with specific orisas: red and white represent both Ogun and Sango, Yoruba deities. Green is usually associated with the deity Oya, wife of Sango and the orisa of tornadoes and storms. Many of these colours are also symbolically used by adherents of the African Caribbean Protestant Spiritual Baptist Faith (which will be explored in Chapter 9).[26]

[20] Frances Michel, 'African Powers in Trinidad: The Shango Cult', *Anthropological Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1957): 48–9, 53.
[21] Smith, *Dark Puritan*, 134, 110, 108, 112.
[22] Polk, 'African Religion', 77.
[23] Peel, *Religious Encounter*, 102.
[24] Alexandris Williams, interview with author, Concord, 28 May 2013.
[25] Bell, *Obeah*, 46.
[26] Stephen Folaranmi, 'Art in the Service of Sango', in Josh E. Tishken, Toyin Falola, and Akintunde Akinyemi (eds.), *Sango in Africa and the African Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 177; Henry John Drewel, 'Art or Accident: Yoruba Body Artists and Their Deity Ogun', in Sandra Barnes (ed.), *Africa's Ogun: Old World and New* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 252; Frances Henry, *Reclaiming African Religions in Trinidad: The Socio-Political Legitimisation of the Orisha and Spiritual Baptist Faith* (Kingston, Jamaica: The University of the West Indies Press, 2003), 23, 25; Kenneth A. Lum, *Praising His Name in the Dance: Spirit Possession in the Spiritual Baptist Faith and Orisha Work in Trinidad, West Indies* (Amsterdam:

Ogun came to occupy an elevated position in Yoruba-inspired practices for several reasons. The orisa was a major deity in several Yoruba kingdoms, as well as among the Edo peoples of the kingdom of Benin and the Fon of Dahomey, where he was known as Gǔ.[27] Representing iron, warfare, and state-building, Ogun was an icon shared among those militaristic states through trade, migration, intermarriage, and war, especially through the movements of its main followers – hunters, warriors, blacksmiths, and roadworkers. Ogun's fame as an orisa was easily diffused throughout those territories.[28] Furthermore, Ogun's reputation as a quick-witted problem solver would have made him a particularly compelling deity.[29] According to Yoruba belief, supplicants in difficulty appeal to Ogun because it was Ogun who helped the orisas to survive when they first descended to earth.[30] Ogun's prominence might also be related to his reach within eastern Yorubaland, particularly in Ijesha kingdom.[31] If the homeland of Grenada's 1849–50 Yoruba arrivals was the kingdom of Ijesha, as Smith asserted, then it seems logical for Ogun to feature prominently in their worship.

Along with reverence of the orisas, a typical feature of ceremonies in Grenada and Yorubaland is beating the *boli*, a hollowed-out calabash covered with beads, and drumming on leather-topped drums with curved sticks (see Figure I.1).[32] The *boli* (Ewe), instrumental in African work ceremonies among Concord village residents in the 1950s,

Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000), 108, 121, 124; Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 236.

[27] Sandra T. Barnes, 'Many Faces of Ogun: Introduction to the First Edition', in Barnes, *Africa's Ogun*, 41.

[28] Barnes and Ben-Amos, 'Ogun', 39, 51–2; J. Lorand Matory, *Sex and the Empire That Is No More: Gender and the Politics of Metaphor in Oyo Yoruba Religion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 6, 15–6. For the transformation of Ogun into a deity of the state, war, and royal authority in sixteenth-century Yorubaland, see Akinwumi Ogundiran, *The Yoruba: A New History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), 214–8.

[29] Akintunde Akinyemi, 'The Place of Sango in the Yoruba Pantheon', in Josh E. Tishken, Toyin Falola, and Akintude Akinyemi (eds.), *Sango in Africa and the African Diaspora* (Bloomington University Press, 2009), 39.

[30] `Bade Ajuwon, 'Ogun's Iremoje: A Philosophy of Living and Dying', in Barnes, *Africa's Ogun*, 196, 173; Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs*, 31.

[31] John D. Y. Peel, 'A Comparative Analysis of Ogun in Precolonial Yorubaland', in Barnes, *Africa's Ogun*, 266–7.

[32] Samuel Akpabot, 'The Talking Drums of Nigeria', *African Music* 5, no. 4 (1975/76): 38; Toyin Falola and Akanmu Adebayo, *Culture, Politics and Money among the Yoruba* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 37; Warner-Lewis, *Trinidad Yoruba*, 223.

has been described by former resident Carl Romain, who recollected that devotees in Concord interacted with other adherents around the island.[33] One of those practitioners was likely to have been Miss Clive who resided in St Patrick and held Yoruba-derived religious ceremonies in Concord.[34] Practitioners in charge of ceremonies in Concord invited devotees from St Patrick, who came carrying with them the *boli* and the drums.[35] The former instrument is known as *sekere* among the Yoruba, and is thought to be sacred to Yemoja, the Yoruba deity of coastal waters and lagoons.[36]

That the Ewe name has been retained within this Yoruba-inspired belief necessitates a rethinking of African work as the sole provenance of Yoruba recaptives. While Yoruba immigrants were the earliest known contributors to African work, the Ewe label strongly gestures to inspiration from beyond that group. The Ewe influence possibly originated among enslaved or other liberated African groups in Grenada, but it could also be the case that Grenadian returnees from Trinidad carried Ewe elements to the island. Both possibilities suggest Yoruba traditions 're-encountered' beliefs of the Ewe and other West African cultures in the Caribbean.[37] Thus, African work is better understood as a multi-sited and multi-ethnic development formed through a confluence of influences within and beyond Grenada.

Possession of the *boli* and other sacred musical instruments marked Munich as the 'center of Shango' on Grenada.[38] Munich resident Benedict Andrew (1946–2013) (Figure 7.1), who as a child witnessed African work, recollected that at the dances, his uncle held the *boli*, and Papa Roberts, leader of the Munich Africans, held the 'sacred drum'.[39] People from all over Grenada went to Munich to procure the musical instruments essential for African work ceremonies. Andrew was proud of

[33] Ibid., 90; Carl Romain, interview with Gemma Romain, London, 10 and 12 July 2015.
[34] Ms Elutha, interview with author, Concord, 28 May 2014.
[35] Carl Romain, interview with Gemma Romain, London, 10 and 12 July 2015.
[36] Warner-Lewis, *Trinidad Yoruba*, 90.
[37] See Emmanuel Kwaku Senah, 'Trinidad and the West African Nexus during the Nineteenth Century' (PhD diss., University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad, 1999), as cited in Olabiyi Yai, 'Yoruba Religion and Globalization: Some Reflections', in Jacob K. Olupona and Terry Rey (eds.), *Orisa Devotion as World Religion: The Globalization of Yoruba Religious Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 237.
[38] Smith, Field Notes, 1953, 'Diary 4, African Dance at Beeton', near Perdmontemps, 12–13 February 1953, 76.
[39] Benedict Andrew, interview with author, Munich, 8 December 2009.

FIGURE 7.1 Benedict Andrew (d. 2013), Munich, St Andrew. Descendant of a liberated African. Photo by author, Munich, 8 December 2009.

his village's role in facilitating these dances, stressing that '[it] is Munich you had to come for the drum and *boli* … anywhere they [are] having the dance it's Munich they [are] coming for it.'[40] Recipients of the drum and the *boli* were in return required to bring gifts, such as a fowl or rum.[41] The village is also uniquely remembered for its practice of animal sacrifice: resident Mark Felix described how the people of Munich used to 'kill animals without starving [them]'.[42] This refers to the practice where a fowl or another animal was fed before it was sacrificed. Rather than being a Yoruba cultural remnant, this custom may reflect the devotees' care towards sacrificial animals, perhaps in light of animal cruelty charges that can be found elsewhere in the Americas.[43]

The kola nut, indigenous to Western Africa and transported to the Americas during the transatlantic slave trade, was a requisite item for divination in African work.[44] For most practitioners, it is known by the

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Mark Felix, interview with author, Munich, 25 November 2009.

[43] Bishop Peters, interview with author, Moyah, 3 June 2013; Smith, *Dark Puritan*, 16. I have found no reference to pre-sacrificial animal feeding in the literature on Yoruba religion. For the special care of animals, see J. Brent Crosson, *Experiments with Power: Obeah and the Remaking of Religion in Trinidad* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 155.

[44] Judith Carney, 'African Plants in the Columbian Exchange', *Journal of African History* 42, no. 3 (2001): 377–96. For its transfer to Brazil, see Pierre Verger, 'Cartas de un Brasileiro estabelecido no século XIX na Costa dos Escravos', *Anhembi* 6 (1952): 212–53 and Robert A. Voeks, *Sacred Leaves of Candomblé: African Magic, Medicine, and Religion in Brazil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997). In the late 1890s, Grenada was one of the British Caribbean territories that began exporting the nut to North America, United Kingdom, and other locations in the Caribbean (TNA CO 106/93, Blue Books, Exports, 1899).

Yoruba word *obi*, and the tree bearing its nuts is called an 'Oguntree' after the orisa Ogun. In the 1950s, Smith noted that when an initiate did not own land but desired to venerate Ogun on their premises, an Oguntree was planted as an alternative to a conspicuous concrete shrine. Smith also observed drummers masticating kola nuts during African work ceremonies.[45] The primary use of the kola nut was for divination, a method of communicating to the gods for help or spiritual answers. Benedict Andrew noted the use of *oti* (Yoruba for rum) and *obi* in divination – the latter which 'you can't work without' because they determined the nature of a response from the orisas.[46] *Obi* divination is known as 'the breaking of the *obi*' or 'begging question with [the] kola nut' and was captured by several of Smith's recordings.[47] In his interview with Smith, Paul described the use of the *obi* following a goat sacrifice: 'I have to get the *obi* and ask the Powers if they are satisfied. I use four *obi* – two whole ones, and you open them in half. When you throw them down, if two pieces turn up and two pieces down, he say Yes.'[48]

A similar method is observable in Yorubaland. A diviner will split a single whole kola nut into four lobes, hold them in their cupped hands and ask a question for which they require a response. They then cast the lobes on the ground or onto a divining board. The diviner interprets the message based on how the lobes fall, relaying a message to the client. A favourable outcome is indicated if the kola lobes fall with their insides facing up, if three lobes have their insides up, or if there is an equal number of lobes turned either way.[49] Differences are discernible in the species of kola employed: in Yorubaland, only the four-lobe kola nut (*cola acuminata*) is used for divination because it can be split into four sections.[50] In Grenada, where the two-lobe variety (*cola nitida*) is primarily grown, two whole kola nuts are needed to obtain the required four lobes. Grenadian kola nut divination, then, displayed a technique

[45] Smith, Field Notes, 'MGS Grenada 1953, Field Notes', April/May 1953, unrecorded location, 74; ibid., 'Diary 4, African Dance at Beeton', near Perdmontemps, 12–13 February 1953, 17.

[46] Benedict Andrew, interview with author, Munich, 8 December 2009. The *obi* also features on the personal altar of orisa leader Universal Empress Iya Ifatokie (Universal Empress Iya Ifatokie, interview with author, Corinth, St David, Grenada, 29 August 2023).

[47] BL, 'Grenada Folklore', C438/14, 'Unaccompanied Shango Songs and Explanations', unrecorded location, 1953.

[48] Smith, *Dark Puritan*, 86, 134.

[49] N. A Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba* (Ibadan: University Press, 1970), 274.

[50] Ibid., 276.

similar to its Yoruba counterpart, but was pragmatically adapted due to the unavailability of the traditional variety.[51]

Within African work, space is organised in accordance with the four cardinal points in Yoruba and Fon cosmology.[52] Munich residents Mark Felix and Benedict Andrew recounted a salutation to the four cardinal points of the earth in Yoruba, Creole, and English, in the specific order: 'East, West, North, South'.[53] This was the order observed by Smith's informant, Miss Clive, as she rotated candles in a 1953 ceremony and by Paul during animal sacrifices and other African work rituals.[54] Interestingly, these cardinal points are also observed during the saraka ritual and the Nation Dance ceremony in Carriacou (the Nation Dance is discussed at length in the following chapter).[55]

English and Creole are the languages of African work; Yoruba, however, remains a sacred language of African work song and ritual, although by the 1950s, it was noted that the tonality of the Yoruba language had been lost.[56] Recordings carried out in 1953 by Smith and in the 1960s by the folklorist Alan Lomax, that are compiled in *Grenada: Creole and Yoruba Voices*, highlight the legacies of Yoruba cultures in language and song. Both collections contain songs dedicated or referring to deities such as Sango, Ogun, Yemoja, Orunmila (orisa of divination), and Shakpana (the Dahomean deity of smallpox).[57] Munich resident Mark Felix could not remember much of the Yoruba language spoken in the village but was able to recite part of a song in Yoruba in 2009: 'Papa Elegbara! Mo se ibara re o' (Papa Elegbara! I salute

[51] In Grenada, I have only encountered the *cola nitida* variety, which is also found in Jamaica, see TNA AY4/198, 'Kola Nuts: Sources and Processing Methods', A. J. Feuell to W. H. Davies, Research Manager, Messrs. Alfred Bird & Sons, Devonshire Works, Birmingham, 4 June 1958 and James Neish, *On a New Beverage Substance. The Kola Nut, a Product of Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica: DeCordova & Co., 1887), 5.

[52] Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs*, 171. This order was observed in Orisa songs in Trinidad: see Funso Aiyejina, Rawle Gibbons, and Baba Sam Phills, 'Context and Meaning in Trinidad Yoruba Songs: Peter Was a Fisherman and Songs of the Orisha Palais', *Research in African Literatures* 40, no. 1 (2009): 133. Cardinal directionality was also noted in the Rada community in Trinidad: see Andrew Carr, 'A Rada Community in Trinidad', *Caribbean Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1953): 42.

[53] Mark Felix, interview with author, Munich, 25 November 2009; Benedict Andrew, interview with author, Munich, 8 December 2009.

[54] BL, 'Grenada Folklore', C438/11, 'Explanation of Calling of Death Prayer', Syracuse, 1953; Smith, *Dark Puritan*, 114.

[55] Hill, 'Impact of Migration', 287; Ashie-Nikoi, 'Beating the Pen', 107.

[56] Smith, Field Notes, 'Diary 4, African Dance at Beeton', near Perdmontemps, 12–13 February 1953, 17; Smith, *Stratification*, 236.

[57] BL, 'Grenada Folklore' (1953); Lomax, *Grenada*.

thee).[58] Called 'Esu-Elegba' among the Yoruba and 'Legba' among the Fon, this deity acts as a mediator to whom the first sacrifices and invocations must be offered. As such, Legba holds the power to trick followers into offending the gods through sacrificial acts but also aids the gods in their vengeance on humans. Legba is thus known as a cunning trickster deity of mischief.[59] The theological meaning of Legba at times differed from its Yoruba counterpart: according to Mark Felix, the song referred to the devil. In his 1953 interview with Smith, African work leader Norman Paul ascribed a negative meaning to Legba, referring to the deity as the 'prince of darkness'.[60] Smith noted this was because association with the devil was simpler than the duality of the Yoruba conception of the deity, suggestive of the ways in which quite complex concepts have been simplified in the reworking of Yoruba-based traditions.[61] By contrast, however, Esu-Elegba is imbued with positive connotations; in Belmont, Carriacou, several residents affectionately remembered a renowned 'Sango lady' called Mother Eshu.[62]

Benedict Andrew's observations of African work as a child in the 1950s provide further evidence of the persistence of the Yoruba language in African work. He recollected devotees used to say *'ago nana'*, which signalled preparation for an act, or an entrance.[63] This phrase is derived from the Yoruba *'ago lana'* (*l* and *n* are interchangeable in Yoruba dialects) meaning 'clear the way' or to give permission to enter the path or roadway.[64] One of Smith's interviewees translated *ago* for Smith as meaning 'do not pass below there'.[65] Another example of Yoruba words in African work is the ritual food, *agidi*, made of cornmeal. As mentioned earlier, Miss Clive was instructed by an African work practitioner sent by Papa William, the twentieth-century leader of the Yoruba-speaking peoples at La Mode, that she should eat *agidi* during her initiation.[66]

[58] Mark Felix, interview with author, Munich, 25 November 2009.
[59] Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*, 166; Joan Wescott, 'The Sculpture and Myths of Eshu-Elegba, the Yoruba Trickster: Definition and Interpretation in Yoruba Iconography', *Africa* 32, no. 4 (1962): 337.
[60] Mark Felix, interview with author, Munich, 25 November 2009; Smith, *Dark Puritan*, 114.
[61] Ibid., 137–8.
[62] Lenny Bedeau, interview with author, Belmont, 24 June 2014; Faithina Alexander, interview with author, Belmont, 24 June 2014; Winston Fleary, interview with author, Belmont, 23 June 2014.
[63] Benedict Andrew, interview with author, Munich, 25 November 2009.
[64] Warner-Lewis, *Trinidad Yoruba*, 217.
[65] BL, 'Grenada Folklore', C438/11, 'Chatter/Preaching', St David, 1953.
[66] Smith, Field Notes, 'Miss Clive/MGS', September 1953, La Tante, 21, 26–7.

Mark Felix recalled in 2009 that Munich people were thought to be unique because they used to 'speak [the] African language'.[67] In 2014, Ms Antoine, at that time a 90-year-old resident of Munich, recalled that her father had been born in Africa, and was an African work practitioner in their village. She was able to recite songs in Yoruba and Creole although she did not know the precise meaning of the words.[68] Benedict Andrew remembered hearing his paternal grandfather use the word *kete-kete* – Yoruba for donkey – and could recall other Yoruba words including *oti*, *omi* (water), and *obi*.[69] Most likely, his grandfather was Yoruba-speaking, or had acquired some of the language from Yoruba speakers during transhipment, or perhaps while in Munich itself.

As discussed previously, Miss Clive recalled that Papa William had lived in La Mode and arrived in Grenada from Africa as a young child and spoke only 'Yarriba'.[70] There is no further information on William, the leader of the La Mode Africans; he was still alive in the second decade of the twentieth century, and if he had been taken to Grenada as a child, he would have been extraordinarily advanced in age. Arriving in Grenada in childhood makes it likely that William spoke Yoruba, along with Creole French or English. That William's sole language was said to be Yoruba suggests the reverence of Yoruba as a spiritual language – reinforcing the cultural and religious expertise of African work practitioners.

Also held sacred by Munich Africans was the masked tradition of *egungun*. Norman Paul, whose father had lived in that village, recollected that Papa Roberts used to control *egungun* with a coconut broom:

> He said that spirit, when it remain this side of the house, it grow till it reach over there. They call that spirit Egungun. And he said when it have to go, Mr Robert would whisper it, and when it coming it would whisper, and Mr Robert know the whisper, and when it come it take the broom and it would stand up. If it touch anybody, in three days they dead. That is the reason why the Africans were wicked in those days; everybody 'fraid Egungun, if anybody saying something evil about them, they call them in the yard, he just touch them, and in three days they dead. He told me one night when it came, the old man wasn't expecting it, and it came, it reach inside the house, every man have to hide under the bed, let it

[67] Mark Felix, interview with author, Munich, 25 November 2009.
[68] Ms Antoine, interview with author, Munich, 13 June 2014.
[69] Benedict Andrew, interview with author, Munich, 25 November 2009. Smith's 1953 recordings similarly noted several Yoruba words, including some for animals, such as *ewure* (goat), *agutan* (sheep), and *aja* (dog): see BL, 'Grenada Folklore', C438/5, 'Yoruba-English Vocabulary', unrecorded location, Grenada, 1953.
[70] Smith, Field Notes, 'Miss Clive/MGS', La Tante, September 1953, 24.

pass, because it can hurt anybody. That was the Papa Robert who was the head of Munich African Dance.[71]

In southwestern Nigeria and southern Benin, *egungun* is both the materialised form of an individual and the collective spirit of deceased ancestors and provides an opportunity for the living to revere and remember their ancestors. Masked to conceal their identity and covered from head to toe, *egungun* is dressed in cloth of various colours sewn together and decorated with several items which may include carvings, skulls, beads, mirrors, cowries, and animal skin. *Egungun* primarily appears in two contexts: during funeral ceremonies and at festivals. During a funeral, *egungun* will imitate the deceased and bring news from the dead to the family; sometimes, during the celebration that follows the death of an elderly relative, the *egungun* performs funerary rites. During annual festivals, *egungun* masqueraders appear in the streets representing several spirits of the dead.[72]

Paul described *egungun* as a powerful force and evoked memories of the feared Papa Roberts who controlled *egungun*. Across the Atlantic in Yorubaland and southeastern Benin, *egungun* is a formidable spirit possessing the ability to chastise descendants and polices masquerades during festivals using a stick or whip.[73] Formerly, it was considered fatal for the uninitiated to touch *egungun*.[74] Paul recounted the belief that if someone touched *egungun* they would be dead within three days. In West Africa, *egungun* can perform rites for the well-being of the community, for example, during periods of hardship or social emergencies.[75] Further, *egungun* possesses powerful anti-witchcraft attributes: senior *egungun* can identify witches and are known to have executed them in former times.[76]

In the Ijesha kingdom, before *egungun*'s introduction by chiefs in the 1890s, the anthropologist John Peel concluded that *egungun* was 'almost

[71] Smith, *Dark Puritan*, 10–11.

[72] Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs*, 65–6; Oludare Olajubu and J. R. O. Ojo, 'Some Aspects of Oyo Yoruba Masquerades', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 47, no. 3 (1977): 253, 258–9; J. S. Eades, *The Yoruba Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 124; P. Morton-Williams, 'The Egungun Society in South-Western Yoruba Kingdoms', in *Proceedings of the Third Annual Conference of the West African Institute of Social and Economic Research* (Ibadan, Nigeria: West African Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1954).

[73] Marilyn H. Houlberg, 'Egungun Masquerades of the Remo Yoruba', *African Arts* 11, no. 3 (1978): 22.

[74] Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs*, 66.

[75] Olajubu and Ojo, 'Oyo Yoruba Masquerades', 255.

[76] Eades, *Yoruba Today*, 123–4; Olajubu and Ojo, 'Oyo Yoruba Masquerades', 259; Robin Poynor, 'The Egungun of Owo', *African Arts* 11, no. 3 (1978): 65.

alien to Ijesha religion like Jesus or Mohammed'.[77] So how did *egungun* come to be revered in Munich among descendants of liberated Africans who were identified as 'Ijesha' by Smith? The reverence of *egungun* by Munich Africans may speak to their geographic diversity as it suggests they were drawn from peoples beyond the Ijesha. Non-Ijesha groups, therefore, may have contributed to the evolution of Munich's *egungun* tradition. Perhaps Munich's *egungun* originated as a product of inter-island exchange, rather than from the arrival and regional clustering of Ijesha peoples. Indeed, Paul's knowledge of Roberts's *egungun* practice was derived from a man in Trinidad who had known Roberts while he had lived on that island.[78] It is likely that the Munich leader Roberts incorporated *egungun* from the larger Yoruba-descended community in Trinidad.[79] The possibility of a Yoruba imprint derived from interactions within the Eastern Caribbean Sea region troubles Smith's African survival thesis, including the importance of regional clustering in the persistence of Yoruba traditions. Ultimately, Robert's *egungun* practice foregrounds the circulation of ideas around the Eastern Caribbean Sea that sustained the remaking and longevity of Yoruba cultures.

Yoruba-descended residents of La Mode were physically distinct from other Africans. Miss Clive remembered that the Yoruba residents of La Mode all had their 'face[s] marked', denoting facial scarification that suggests the persistence of that cultural practice beyond the first generation of recaptured Africans.[80] In the 1950s, Miss Clive recalled that in La Mode 'you get all those creole African', referring to the descendants of Africans settled there.[81] Miss Clive's designation of 'creole' here is significant; although born in Grenada, descendants of recaptured Africans were considered African, culturally and biologically. As Dianne Stewart stressed for Trinidad, labels such as 'Yaraba Creoles' likely referred to descendants of recaptured Yoruba, revealing how facets of Yoruba customs were transmitted over several generations and the role Yoruba cultures played in forming new identities.[82] Creole appendages could also be

[77] Peel, *Ijeshas and Nigerians*, 165.
[78] Smith, *Dark Puritan*, 10–11.
[79] For *egungun* in Trinidad, see Warner-Lewis, *Trinidad Yoruba*, 141, Henry, *Reclaiming African Religions*, 122–4, 184–5, and Stewart, *Orisa*, 177–8. It has been argued that the mask-wearing, shortknee tradition in the Grenadian carnival has its origins in the *egungun* masquerade: see 'Suelin Low Chew Tung ShortKnee: Descendant of a Lost Tribe', 16 July 2012, http://artstung.blogspot.co.uk/2012/07/shortknee-descendant-of-lost-tribe.html.
[80] Smith, Field Notes, 'Miss Clive/MGS', La Tante, September 1953, 33–4.
[81] Ibid., 24.
[82] Stewart, *Orisa*, 43–4.

indicative of the embrace of Creole identities and cultures by recaptured Africans and their descendants. For example, as mentioned, William and other Africans who settled in Grenada practised Yoruba traditions but also embraced Roman Catholicism. The addition of Yoruba appellations to European names provides another indication of the adoption of Creole cultures: one resident was named 'Oya Madeleine', after the orisa Oya.[83]

Although strong Yoruba cultural resonances remain in African work, what was known as 'Yoruba' was reworked and revered by devotees from Grenada, Trinidad, and Western Africa, and cannot be understood by its Yoruba provenance alone.

BECOMING YORUBA: THE PRESTIGE OF YORUBA-INSPIRED RELIGIOSITY

Yoruba identity was an expansive and overarching identity formed in the diaspora in the nineteenth century. As recaptured peoples from Yorubaland who belonged to various subgroups, political identities, and customs encountered other Africans in the diaspora, they became aware of their shared languages and religions, including orisa veneration. They came to self-identify as Yoruba in the villages of Munich, Concord, and La Mode, hence that new identity was shaped under the conditions of enslavement and indenture.[84] Miss Clive's narrative points to the formation and prestige of distinctive Yoruba identity by the early twentieth century: 'They call them the Yarriba people.'[85] As Yoruba cultures spread, these traditions formed a distinctive and integral aspect of the mainland's African-derived religious landscape. Alongside that, the inheritors of Yoruba traditions culturally became Yoruba. Both processes occurred gradually.

Smith's published and unpublished research indicates that the cultures of the Ijesha-speaking Yoruba who settled in the three villages were slow to absorb external influences and their descendants continued to 'preserve' several aspects of their Yoruba culture.[86] Smith argued

[83] Smith, Field Notes, 'Miss Clive/MGS', La Tante, September 1953, 33.

[84] Matt D. Childs and Toyin Falola, 'The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World: Methodology and Research Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World', in Childs and Falola, *Yoruba Diaspora*, 5; Robin Law, 'Yoruba Liberated Slaves Who Returned to West Africa,' in ibid., 360.

[85] Smith, Field Notes, 'Miss Clive/MGS', La Tante, September 1953, 20. On the prestige of Yoruba identity in Brazilian Candomblé and role of Afro-Brazilian travellers, see Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*, 61–4, 265.

[86] Smith, *Plural Society*, 34.

that creolisation among those Yoruba speakers was a slow process and proposed several reasons for that. First, the arrivants were large in number and ethnically homogenous; second, their arrival was concentrated within a short period of time (between March 1849 and January 1850); third, they were clustered within a few regions (Munich, Concord, and La Mode); fourth, those communities were 'closed', by which Smith meant that residents practised intermarriage and valued community solidarity – conditions that favoured the reproduction of Yoruba traditions.[87] Smith went on to show that liberated Africans and their descendants began to move away from Munich, Concord, and La Mode, and that 'Shango' radiated out from those three centres; evidently, the African Grenadian community displayed 'great receptivity to their cult'.[88] The orisa Sango's reification was inscribed as 'the representative form of African ritual' among Grenadians, 'marked by syncretism of form and content' because it absorbed African Grenadian cultural forms such as the Nation Dance and Roman Catholic traditions.[89] Smith's work is therefore central to the African survival thesis, because like anthropologist Melville Herskovits, he drew a direct relationship between the strength of a particular African culture in the Americas and the numerical dominance of that particular culture.[90]

The assumed relationship between Yoruba-based traditions and the homogeneity of liberated African arrivals in Grenada has remained unchallenged and is reproduced more broadly in scholarship on nineteenth-century African arrivals in the Caribbean.[91] It has been established that not all recaptives sent to Grenada between 1849 and 1850 were Yoruba. This is significant when considering the recreation of Yoruba religious traditions in the villages in which those liberated Africans settled: if their homogeneity, sizeable numbers, and group cohesiveness were thought to be factors in the survival of Yoruba-based traditions, then, in light of new information about the likely ethno-linguistic origins of Grenada's recaptives, this thesis requires critical revision. If the continuity of Yoruba-based traditions was not necessarily a result

[87] Ibid.
[88] M. G. Smith, *A Framework for Caribbean Studies* (Kingston, Jamaica: Department of Extra-Mural Studies, University of the West Indies, 1955), 22.
[89] Smith, *Plural Society*, 34; Smith, *Framework for Caribbean Studies*, 22.
[90] Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 50, 52.
[91] Cox, 'Indentured African Laborers', 421–36; Adderley, *'New Negroes'*; Schuler, *'Alas, Alas, Kongo'*, 125n26; Warner-Lewis, *Guinea's Other Suns*; Warner-Lewis, *Trinidad Yoruba*.

of the ethnic homogeneity of liberated Africans, why then did Yoruba religious traditions become the pre-eminent form of African ritual in Grenada? One possibility is that Yoruba speakers were clustered in the key villages of Munich, Concord, and La Mode, where they were indeed numerically significant. This raises the likelihood that a smaller number of Yoruba than previously thought may have had a dramatic impact within those areas, and in time also spread to surrounding towns and villages. There, regional clustering, group cohesion within closed communities, and the short space of time in which immigrants arrived may have been more decisive than group size. An alternative possibility is that within those closed communities, the Yoruba may have been culturally, rather than numerically, influential, and hence may have had greater impact on the wider religious landscape of Grenada. As sociolinguist Maureen Warner-Lewis has cautioned, numerical superiority is not necessarily a factor in cultural longevity; it does not follow that because there were more Africans settled in a certain place, their cultural influence in the area was stronger.[92]

Rather, it is important to consider how a small number of Yoruba asserted their cultural influence over others. As historian David Trotman argued in the case of Trinidad – an argument which he extends to Grenada – the 'survival' of Yoruba traditions 'depended on the ability of the Yoruba to impose their cultural stamp' on other cultures and attract 'converts from among both Africans and Creoles'.[93] Hence, a 'sympathetic community' that appreciated such religious forms was needed for the recreation of Yoruba religious traditions.[94] Even if the communities of Munich, Concord, and La Mode, and other liberated African settlements were formed from a heterogeneous group of liberated Africans – including a smaller number of Yoruba than previously thought – Yoruba religious traditions were adopted over time within those communities. Indeed, as anthropologists Mintz and Price have argued, the cultural diversity of African populations in the Americas encouraged 'additivity' or the 'tendency to borrow creatively from numerous cultural traditions rather than to preserve any particular cultural traditions exclusively or purely'.[95] Hence, rather than being specific Yoruba cultural retentions, Yoruba-based traditions were possibly recreated by a diverse group of Africans who drew parallels with their own cultural backgrounds.

[92] Ibid., 35–6.
[93] Trotman, 'Yoruba and Orisha Worship', 14–15.
[94] Ibid., 6.
[95] Mintz and Price, *Birth of African-American Culture*, 10.

An alternative possibility suggests that it is entirely conceivable that a more esteemed ethnic or sub-ethnic identity, such as Yoruba or Ijesha, was adopted by members of those communities. The latter possibility weakens the African survival thesis because rather than attributing African work as evidence of Yoruba cultural survival possessing considerable 'direct resemblance to original forms', there may have been borrowing by peoples of other cultural heritages.[96] Among the culturally diverse Africans, not all were able to organise themselves sustainably in terms of ethnic affiliation or specific cultures.[97] The *Sierra del Pilar* (1839) was the only ship to supply a Grenada emigrant vessel (*Louise Fredericke*) from the Bight of Benin for which the names of its recaptives have been analysed for clues to their ethno-linguistic origins. On the *Sierra del Pilar*, Oyo, Ijebu, Egba, Ekiti, and Ondo are among the dialects identified from an analysis of liberated African names; such analysis gestures to the array of Yoruba sub-ethnicities, who became known as 'Yoruba' in twentieth-century Grenada.[98] The diversity among the Yoruba or the larger African clusters supports the thesis, which has been convincingly argued in the case of Brazilian Candomblé, that over time there occurred a 'Yorubisation' of various African beliefs.[99]

Arriving on Grenada's shores in significant numbers were West Central Africans, constituting 17.4 per cent of liberated Africans. It has been argued that due to their Creole culture, their impact on the African diaspora has been viewed as less dramatic.[100] However, the absence of evidence concerning the Creole culture of Grenada's West Central Africans does not allow for such a conclusion. Other factors must be considered. For example, West Central African traditions may be less visible due to the earlier arrival of liberated Yoruba and other West Africans. Yoruba speakers were brought to the island in significant numbers as early as 1836 and their cultures may have been well established when the majority of West Central Africans arrived in the 1860s (and perhaps well entrenched by the time Yoruba speakers arrived during

[96] Smith, *Framework for Caribbean Studies*, 12.
[97] As Richard Price has argued in *Guiana Maroons*, 19.
[98] *Voyages*, African Origins Database, www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/IhWIJ44c.
[99] Yai, 'Yoruba Religion', 237; Luis Nicolau Parés, 'The "Nagoization" Process in Bahian Candomblé', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs (eds.), *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 185–208.
[100] Heywood, introduction to Heywood, *Central Africans*, 13; John K. Thornton and Linda M. Heywood, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1586–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

the second wave in 1849–50). Furthermore, the establishment of West Central African traditions may have been hampered by the group's allocation to estates in small groups and their relatively long period of indentureship (up to five years).

Despite these factors, the cultural legacies and memories held by the descendants of West Central Africans are recognisable in Grenada. Notably, it is very likely that the 'Congo cult' reported by Smith in 1953 was a post-slavery phenomenon because it appears to be separate from the West Central African Kongo nation in the Nation Dance.[101] Although not elaborated upon in his field notes, Smith also referred to the 'Congo Dance' – presumably the same as the 'Congo cult' – and noted that it visited 'special places' and displayed 'group organisation'.[102] That Kongo group does not appear to have persisted into the twenty-first century. African work was itself also shaped to some degree by non-Yoruba features: 'Kongo', who is described by an African work practitioner as a 'guardian', is sometimes called out before the ceremony commences.[103] West Central African influences within Yoruba traditions have also been observed elsewhere in the Americas.[104] In some instances, what is Yoruba and what is West Central African may not be easily distinguishable: for instance, cardinal directionality, an important aspect of African work, is found among the Yoruba but is also integral to Kongo cosmology.[105]

In the process of Yorubisation, non-Yoruba elements and heritages were incorporated and sometimes remained identifiable. The reverence of a 'Kongo' guardian within this Yoruba-based tradition suggests that African work attracted a diverse audience. Indeed, African work practitioners claim a variety of African heritages. In 1953, Smith recorded the genealogy of Miss Clive: her mother was head of the 'Ibo-Manding' nation and her father's group was 'Ibo-Coromanty'.[106] Another prominent practitioner Norman Paul revealed that his grandmother in Grenada was of the Igbo nation.[107] As Chapter 1 has shown, over one-third of enslaved peoples originated from the Bight of Biafra; it is then no surprise that the Igbo would feature prominently in the heritages of African work adherents. Two further African work

[101] Smith, *Stratification in Grenada*, 236.
[102] Smith, Field Notes, 'Grenada Notes 9', Tivoli, October 1953, 84.
[103] Keron Stafford, interview with author, Moyah, 23 July 2014.
[104] See Yai, 'Yoruba Religion', 237.
[105] Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*, 108.
[106] Smith, Field Notes, 'Miss Clive/MGS', September 1953, La Tante, 20–1; ibid., 'Gene 1 – Miss Clive's Genealogy', 1953.
[107] Smith, *Dark Puritan*, 14.

practitioners divulged that they descended from the Zulu people of South Africa and from the people of modern-day Ghana.[108] Perhaps these national origins are invented because Zulu people were not known to have been present among the enslaved or liberated African populations in Grenada and people descended from Ghana may have referred to specific ethnic groups, where remembered, rather than the modern-day country. What these origins do indicate are the diverse affiliations of recaptured Africans, their descendants, and the African Grenadians who were involved in the making of Yoruba-based African work by the mid nineteenth century. Involving group membership, a form of leadership through its 'priesthood', and the permanent worship of a particular deity, the prestige of African work attracted recaptives, their descendants, and Grenadians at large.[109] In short, non-Yoruba speakers culturally became Yoruba, and Yoruba cultures came to characterise their African religious expressions.

There is no direct evidence that indicates whether Yoruba immigrants were able to assert Orisa worship among a heterogeneous group of peoples in the nineteenth century, or whether Yoruba immigrants maintained these traditions until they began to propagate across the island. Probably, the number of Yoruba speakers was smaller than previously thought, yet their relative cultural autonomy, their appeal to diverse audiences, along with inter-island dialogue with the larger Yoruba community of Trinidad were formative in the making of a nascent African work. Over time there occurred, as elsewhere in the Americas, a Yorubisation of various African beliefs and today, Yoruba-based traditions have become the main form of African ritual and belief on mainland Grenada. As Yoruba-inspired traditions came to characterise the landscape of Grenada, they became highly responsive to local conditions as seen in the various appellations the practice attracts.

BECOMING AFRICAN: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

African work, and its past and present designations – 'Yarriba Dance', 'Shango' (Sango in written Yoruba), and 'African Dance' – were applied by practitioners and non-practitioners alike. These descriptors highlight the imbrication of Yorubisation and Africanisation in the making of African work and identities in twentieth-century Grenada. Oral narratives indicate

[108] Bishop Andrew and Mother Elias, interview with author, Moyah, 23 July 2014.
[109] Smith, Field Notes, 'Grenada Notes 9', Tivoli, October 1953, 84; Smith, *Dark Puritan*, 35.

that Yorubisation and Africanisation were sometimes overlapping processes: becoming African was associated with becoming Yoruba, and what was known as African was related to Yoruba cultural facets. By the mid twentieth century, the Yarriba Dance became known as African Dance – with the label 'Shango' used by anthropologists and non-practising residents. In the early decades of the twentieth century, when Miss Clive was of school age, African work in Grenada was known as 'Yarriba dance' by practitioners and non-practitioners: 'They say they were having Yarriba dance.'[110] Miss Clive explained: 'They call them the Yarriba people, it was African dance.'[111] Interestingly, both the designation and spelling of 'Yarriba' originate among the Hausa, where Yoruba described Oyo peoples, a term which later spread to southern Yorubaland. Additionally, Smith's spelling in his transcribed interviews was likely influenced by his fieldwork in Hausaland beginning in 1949 and his engagement with the writings of travellers and bureaucrats in Hausaland, who were responsible for the spread of 'Yarriba' and its variants in early nineteenth-century Britain.[112]

Anthropologists working in Grenada used another appellation. Smith and Pollak-Eltz, in the early 1950s and the late 1960s respectively, mostly used the terms 'Shango' or 'Shango cult'.[113] It is clear from Smith's field notes that 'Shango' was a term often employed by the anthropologist, and that he was frequently corrected by his practitioner-interviewees. Significantly, in 1953, Miss Clive remarked that the 'African people did not call it Shango at that time [early twentieth century]'.[114] Miss Clive understood 'Shango' as a descriptor of God. She stressed to Smith: 'Christ alone is the Shango, Jesus, He only that is pure, God. You must be very righteous to be Shango.'[115] In 2009, Miss Rutie adamantly rejected the label of 'Shango' for her spiritual work, insisting that it was called African work. She was often referred to by non-practitioners as a 'Shango woman' but insisted 'only ignorant people described her rites as Shango'.[116] Smith and Polk recognised that devotees referred to their practice as 'African Dance', 'African feast', or 'African work'. The words 'dance' and 'feast' indicate the importance of these forms of ritual.[117]

[110] Smith, Field Notes, 'Miss Clive/MGS', La Tante, September 1953, 20–1.
[111] Ibid., 20.
[112] Peel, *Religious Encounter*, 283.
[113] Smith, *Plural Society*; Smith, *Dark Puritan*; Pollak-Eltz, 'Shango Cult'.
[114] Smith, Field Notes, 'Miss Clive/MGS', La Tante, September 1953, 20.
[115] Ibid., 21.
[116] Ms Rutie, interview with author, La Poterie, 1 November 2009.
[117] Smith, *Plural Society*; Smith, *Dark Puritan*; Polk, 'African Religion'.

Today, practitioners describe their practice as African work rather than 'Yarriba', with the term 'Shango' mainly used by non-practitioners and several anthropologists.

The use of 'Shango' merits some consideration because it sheds light on the process of Africanisation. Why has African work generally identified specifically with 'Shango', and how did the word for the orisa Sango develop into one referring to an entire religion?[118] In Trinidad, the anthropologist Frances Henry observed in 1956 that 'Shango' was the usual designation for the religion; certainly, some of its leaders referred to it as such. 'Shango' was also used by non-practitioners and earlier anthropologists, such as Melville Herskovits, George E. Simpson, and William Bascom, and in the earlier work of Frances Henry.[119] Indeed, it is argued that in Trinidad, several anthropologists introduced and universalised the term 'Shango', whereas informants identified themselves as followers of the orisa Sango.[120] However, some prominent leaders rejected the term 'Shango' as a descriptor of their faith and by the late 1990s, had begun to de-emphasise the significance of Sango, instead describing their work as African work or Orisa work. Arising from the process of legitimation and calls for authenticity and interaction with global Orisa practitioners, by the 1990s, it became officially known as Orisa religion or Orisa work in Trinidad and Tobago.[121]

The influence of Sango in Yorubaland may also illuminate the prominence of the deity in the Americas. Among the Oyo in Yorubaland, Sango was the favoured orisa. As the fourth ruler of the Oyo empire, Sango was known for his military might and became the official cult of the Oyo empire. As a result, Sango became associated with royalty and the institution of kinship.[122] Although Sango's influence spread southwards from Oyo to the Egba and the southwest, before the late nineteenth century, it was alien to Ife and the eastern Yoruba, including the Ijesha kingdom.[123]

[118] Stephen D. Glazier, 'Wither Sango? An Inquiry into Sango's "Authenticity" and Prominence in the Caribbean', in Tishken et al. (eds.), *Sango in Africa*, 234; William Bascom, *Shango in the New World* (Austin: African and Afro-American Research Institute, University of Texas at Austin, 1972), 10, 12; Smith, *Plural Society*, 33–4.

[119] Henry, *Reclaiming African Religions*, xv, 115; Simpson, *Black Religions*, 82–6; Herskovits and Herskovits, *Trinidad Village*, xiii, 321–39; Glazier, 'Wither Sango?', 234.

[120] Stewart, *Orisa*, 31.

[121] Henry, *Reclaiming African Religions*, xv, xiii–xiv, 115.

[122] Akintunde Akinyemi, 'The Place of Sango in the Yoruba Pantheon', in Tishken et al., *Sango in Africa*, 24, 27.

[123] Peel, *Religious Encounter*, 109.

If, as Smith believed, the recaptives of 1849–50 were Ijesha peoples, and Sango was alien to them, why was Sango so revered among the Ijesha and their descendants in Grenada? Perhaps other Yoruba groups, such as the Oyo and the Egba, were more influential in moulding African work. Indeed, the Oyo were well represented among Grenada's recaptives: on the *Sierra del Pilar* (1839), the most common origin of recaptive names belonged to the Oyo sub-language group.[124]

In the first half of the nineteenth century, large numbers of enslaved Yoruba people arrived in Brazil from Oyo, carrying their devotion of Xango (Sango). The deity's association with royalty, justice, his control of thunder, lightning, and fire, and the zeal of Xango priests and priestesses, drew many adherents to the veneration of this orisa. As a result, the Xango cult played a central role in the development of Bahian Candomblé.[125] Elsewhere in the Americas, Sango was recognised as a royal protector and was known for his ability to deliver devotees from the strictures of bondage, and the veneration of Sango developed as a strategy for sovereignty, survival, and freedom.[126] Perhaps Sango's qualities were a more significant factor than Oyo numbers in shaping African work. As historian David Northrup posited, Yoruba exiles living in Sierra Leone reinvented parts of their religions by de-emphasising aspects of belief systems, such as the use of shrines and ceremonies that were specific to particular groups or regions in Yorubaland, in favour of shared elements that would draw them closer together with other Yoruba speakers, such as the veneration of Sango and Ogun.[127] Perhaps Sango's appeal was widespread and embraced by many Yoruba groups, thus facilitating its increasing use as a nomenclature for an entire religion. This undermines Smith's assertion by suggesting that African work was an invention of peoples beyond the Ijesha.

What is the difference, if any, between 'Shango' and African work? And why is the latter's use preferred today among practitioners? As Orisa adherents described and interpreted their practices to colonial officials, 'Shango' became popularised during the nineteenth century. Stewart explained that their reverence of the orisa Sango could have represented

[124] *Voyages*, African Origins Database, www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/IhWIJ44c.
[125] Luis Nicolau Parés, 'Xango in Afro-Brazilian Religion: "Aristocracy" and "Syncretic" Interactions', in Josh E. Tishken, Toyin Falola, and Akintunde Akinyem (eds.), *Sango in Africa and the African Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 249, 251.
[126] Akinyemi, 'Place of Sango', 34–5.
[127] Northrup, 'Becoming African', 14.

the 'practice of something more legitimate than the sorcery automatically associated with obeah to Christian outsiders who also worshipped a central deity'.[128] 'Shango', however, became a pejorative label in colonial discourse, and the term 'African work' was adopted by devotees to replace 'Shango'. Paul's account confirms that by the mid twentieth century, 'Shango' was well recognised yet abhorred by the Trinidadian constabulary. In an interview with Smith in 1953, Paul recounted that he had applied to the police in Trinidad for a permit to use drums at a feast. When a sergeant enquired whether the permit was for a 'Shango feast' or an 'African feast', Paul replied that the permit was required to hold an 'African feast' and denied any knowledge of 'Shango'.[129] The sergeant responded with a reminder of the law against 'Shango' before advising Paul that he was permitted to proceed with an African feast. The sergeant then produced a logbook and read from it the description of a 'Shango' feast: the use of chalk marks, invoking of evil spirits, 'throw[ing] somebody down', 'beat[ing] up themselves', 'roll[ing] in the mud' and remaining there – the last four practices, the sergeant cautioned, could cause the death of participants.[130] There was no actual law against 'Shango' in Trinidad, but the use of chalk marks and the violent shaking of the body were cited in the 1936 *Trinidad Constabulary Manual* as evidence of Shakerism (the Spiritual Baptist Faith) which was outlawed under the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance of 1917.[131]

Paul confirmed the sergeant's description of 'Shango' worship, from which he distanced himself, insisting that his African work was 'something quite different'.[132] As he told Smith, unlike 'Shango' and Nation Dance practitioners, he himself did not participate in the practice of preparing sacrificial food for ancestors, or as he termed it, to 'feed people's dead'.[133] It is very likely that by the 1950s, there were convergences between African work (the veneration of orisas, dance, music, healing, divination, animal sacrifice, spirit manifestation, and feasts) and 'Shango', but in response to the codification of 'Shango' practices (chalk marks and spirit possession as described by the sergeant), practitioners adopted African work as a nomenclature in preference to 'Shango'. Evidently, the term 'African work' does not carry the same negative connotations of

[128] Stewart, *Orisa*, 270–1n117.
[129] Smith, *Dark Puritan*, 98.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Herskovits and Herskovits, *Trinidad Village*, 342–5.
[132] Smith, *Dark Puritan*, 98.
[133] Ibid., 134.

'Shango'. A similar process of disassociation and renaming could have unfolded in Grenada, causing practitioners to either de-emphasise the significance of the orisa Sango or oppose the use of 'Shango' as a label.

Over time, the descendants of indentured recaptives and those who practised Yoruba-inspired customs experienced and forged a cultural shift towards Africanisation, that is, the process of a community becoming aware of itself as 'African' and consciously creating a 'African' identity. This identity was distinct to that held by the wider Black population, defined by the veneration of gods, and the use of language and instruments associated with the Yoruba. In Munich, for instance, some residents claim an African identity for themselves and their ancestors, and attribute specific cultural elements such as an 'African' language as a marker of an African identity. Moreover, an assumed African identity was broad and came to override a narrower Yoruba identity. In her 1953 interview with Smith, Miss Clive repeatedly conflated Yoruba and African, as in her references to African Dance as 'Yarriba Dance', and African people as 'Yarriba people'. Crucially, she recollected that, during her grandmother's time, practitioners described their practice as 'Yarriba'.[134] In contrast, six decades later in present-day Grenada, practitioners describe Yoruba-derived religious traditions as 'African Dance' or 'African work' and the language of rituals as 'African'.

Northrup linked Africanisation in nineteenth-century Sierra Leone to the process of creolisation. A similar development is seen in Grenada: liberated Africans of varied ethnicities interacted with each other, eventually adopting French Creole as their lingua franca, and intermingling Christianity and African traditions.[135] Years ago, Paul's father told him that some of the 'African people from Africa' settled in Munich.[136] Paul repeated this origin story of the African residents of Munich to Smith, who defined Africans as people of African birth, descent (African parentage), or ritual inheritance (adopting African spiritual belief systems). Wanting to underline the distinctiveness of Munich Africans, Paul described the village as the 'head' of 'those real African people' in Grenada. Indeed, when Paul performed African work in Munich in the early 1950s, the 'old heads' confirmed it was 'real African work', which they told him that they had not seen since the 'African people' had died.[137] Recaptives in

[134] Smith, Field Notes, 'Miss Clive/MGS', September 1953, La Tante, 20, 24, 34.
[135] Northrup, 'Becoming African', 8.
[136] Smith, *Dark Puritan*, 10.
[137] Ibid., 10n1, 112–3.

Grenada became conscious of themselves as African – culturally distinct from white, Indian, and other Black residents. African identity was partially constructed in the process of creolisation as Yoruba traditions were rebuilt using aspects derived from their new surroundings.[138]

There are further reasons why Grenadians prefer the term 'African work' over that of 'Shango'. First, the term recognises the diversity inherent in African work; from the orisas venerated (beyond Sango), and the cultural leanings (Roman Catholicism and the Spiritual Baptist Faith) and declared heritages (Zulu, Ghanaian) of its believers. African, rather than 'Yarriba', was possibly more attractive and more inclusive, with a broader diasporic pan-Africanist appeal. Second, African work may have been settled on because it empowers its Christian believers to celebrate the tradition openly amid efforts to criminalise and deny its legitimacy (discussed in Chapter 9). Thus, it has been seen as a cultural tradition, a 'way of life', rather than a distinct and competing religion.[139] Further, the designation of 'work' recognises the labour – the physical, spiritual, and intellectual exertion of African work rituals (food preparation, animal sacrifice, healing, dance, drumming, dress, and spirit deliverance). These are 'alternative' forms of labour unrecognised by the colonial state.[140] African work practitioners carefully plan and execute costly ceremonies, most often alongside forms of wage labour or self-employment.[141]

Substantive evidence of Yoruba cultural elements in African work from the mid twentieth century to the present day may be discerned in the veneration of the orisas Sango and Ogun, colour symbolisms, kola divination, *egungun*, language, and musical instruments. Yet the reverence of Sango and the *egungun* are indicative of influences beyond the Ijesha arrivants of 1849–50, including possibly earlier recaptives who arrived in significant numbers from Yorubaland in the 1830s, and the ongoing dialogue with the Trinidadian Yoruba. By the 1950s, African work bore evidence of convergence with the larger Trinidadian Yoruba, but influences from the Ewe, West Central Africa, Creole languages, and Roman Catholicism were observable. By that time, Yoruba traditions also was attracting devotees of various cultural heritages, including non-Yoruba

[138] Northrup, 'Becoming African', 8.
[139] Bishop Peters, interview with author, Moyah, 2 September 2023.
[140] Hucks, *Obeah*, 166–7.
[141] For example, Mother Annie of La Poterie (see Figure 8.1) was a talented seamstress. Bishop Aberdeen fondly remembered attending Mother Annie's residence for a dress fitting during her childhood. (Bishop Aberdeen, interview with author, Grand Anse, 25 August 2023.)

peoples, such as Miss Clive, who would shape the nature, membership, and leadership of African work.

Yorubisation was interrelated with Africanisation. In response to local circumstances, such as the rejection of exogenously imposed labels by practitioners and the appeal from the broader African-descended population, Yoruba practices were further reworked, eventually becoming known as 'African'. 'Yarriba', 'Shango', and 'African' are spatially and historically contingent terms with their uses, meanings, and associations by anthropologists and adherents shaped over time by local, regional, and transatlantic dimensions. The remaking of practices known to be 'Yoruba' in origin was also clearly inspired by the Nation Dance, Roman Catholicism, obeah, and South Asian influences.