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Title of Thesis:
The orisha faith in Trinidad: a historical experience

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Abstract:

This study seeks to explore and analyse the historical experience of the Orisha\(^1\) faith in Trinidad due to its understudied nature. It primarily focuses on the transportation of the enslaved Yoruba natives to the Caribbean, particularly Trinidad, via the Trans-Atlantic slave trade as well as the journey of faith’s survival and evolution in becoming a systematic creolised religion in Trinidad. Emphasis is placed on the extreme levels of syncretism this religious practice experienced with Roman Catholicism on the plantations and its fusion with the Spiritual Baptist, Kabbalah, Hindu and, to an extent, Vodun, Muslim, Buddhist and Amerindian religions. This project highlights the heavy influence of the country’s multiculturalism, due to previous historical and socio-political systems, on Orisha worship as well as examining its rituals, deities (Ôrîṣà)\(^2\), spirit possession and other practices. It further outlines the reversion of practitioners to the “purest” African Orisha roots, forms of discrimination Orisha followers experienced during pre-Emancipation and post-Independence periods and its pivotal influence on cultural art forms and festivals of the country.

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\(^1\) Orisha- refers to the faith, rudiments, concept and followers

\(^2\) Ôrîṣà- refers solely to deities
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Introduction:

The title of this study is, “the Orisha faith in Trinidad: a historical experience”, which examines the movement and survival of Orisha theology from Africa to the Caribbean. Significant emphasis is placed on the level of syncretism experienced and the investigation of its precepts and Trinidadian traditions. Apart from the exploration of the dynamic evolution of the practice in Trinidad, further research is aimed at the levels of discrimination its practitioners experienced, also the Orisha’s impact on Trinidadian culture. The following points provide an introduction of parameters realised from the information that will be discussed in the literature review.

“Orisha” originally emerged from the Ifa spiritual system in Yorubaland, Africa, with the establishment of the first powerful kingdom, Ile-Ife. Much later, Europeans entered Africa’s coast, enslaving natives who were then transported to the diaspora to labour on sugar plantations. They immortalised Ifa’s principles through memory and orality, transported to the Caribbean where the practice became cults in various Antillean islands. Thus began the emergence of the “Shango cult” or “Orisha work” in Trinidad around 1800s. With the prohibition of African spiritism and European acculturation, Ifa and its deities, Òrìṣà, became syncretised with Catholicism through transculturation, for the sake of survival, creating “Orisha” or “Shango”, a creolised faith (Edmonds and Gonzalez 139-140).

The enslaved were transported to other Caribbean islands and due to acculturation and syncretism, four distinct sects formed: Vodun in St. Domingue (present-day Haiti), Santería in Cuba and other Latin American countries, Candomblé in Brazil and the Orisha, and by extension Obeah, in Trinidad (Simpson 11). Vodun unlike the others, is considered a different version of Yoruba Ifa, and was brought from Benin to St. Domingue. Santería, Candomblé and Orisha however, are Yoruba, sharing similar Nigerian rudiments. Obeah, like Orisha, merged with the practices of other religions such as Catholicism, Spiritual Baptist, Kabbalah, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and even Amerindian rites with African religiosity.

The symbiosis between Yoruba inhabitants and other ethnic groups during colonialism propagated interculturation and creolisation of Ifa, birthing a neo-hybrid “Orisha cult”. Orisha became associated with “Kabbalah”, a masonic practice believed to be of Israeli origin that transferred to Europe. Also becoming deeply intertwined with Spiritual Baptist, an Afro-American
Protestant religion that adopted numerous Yoruba elements, whereby syncretic ritualists are ironically referred to as “Shango Baptists” or “Orisha Baptists” (Edmonds and Gonzalez 139). Additionally, with the settlement of the Indentured labourers in 1845, Hinduism fused with both Orisha and Spiritual Baptist faiths. There has also been a subtle presence of Vodun in Belmont known as, “Rada”, since the 1800s. Mutualism between Orisha and Rada made differentiation of the two difficult by “outsiders”. Finally, recently there has been a resurgence by Orisha radicals to revert to Ifa purism, discarding Catholic paraphernalia and refusal to “dilute” traditions through eclecticism.

The original Ifa pantheon consists of plethora of divinities. However, the eclectic process has incarnated new Òrìṣà as well as developed additional worship methods. The “planting of flags” in honour of the Òrìṣà is a fairly new practice, also including thanksgivings and improvised initiations. Though much has changed among the “syncretic practitioners”, other rituals still maintain an “African purist essence” such as drumming, invocations, libations, ancestor venerations, animal sacrifices, the concept of reincarnation, divination and spirit mediumship. Though the Orisha faith is multifaceted and flexible, its praxis and advocates have faced both severe and subtle attacks by authorities as well as the general public since the colonial era to contemporary society.

Slave laws were designed to control and suppress slaves, interdicting African religiosity, considered “demonic”, and resulted in floggings, lynching and decapitation of rebels who adamantly disobeyed. The *Spiritual Baptist Prohibition Ordinance* in 1917 not only oppressed the Afro-Baptist sect but also further strangled the continuation of the “Orisha way” since both sects have shared ritualistic elements. However, Colonialism still pervades throughout contemporary society with the non-recognition of Orisha weddings as legal, which has only recently been amended, and the denial of a public holiday for the Orisha community. Despite the discrimination of the Orisha in the music industry and education system, calypsonians have acted as revolutionists who composed songs that not only ridiculed the enslavers and the state, but also promotes the culture of “Shango”³. Nevertheless, Trinidadian culture and society have been heavily and

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³ Shango- emblematic deity of the Yoruba descendants
unnoticeably influenced by the Orisha system, evident in percussion, calypso, folklore, Carnival as well as religious festivals.

This research aims to investigate the journey of the Orisha faith to Caribbean and its evolution within Trinidad. The study explores its rudiments and rituals, aspects of eclecticism and reversion to purism, thus emphasising the dynamism of the religion today. Focus will equally be placed on the varying levels of prejudice and discrimination Orisha believers encountered throughout history, as well as its impact on different aspects of Trinidadian culture. The Orisha religion in its entirety is an understudied topic that requires more attention. Thus, this anthropological project, will examine the faith and encourage further investigation, which will aid in bridging the gap of the lack of literature on this topic as well as edifying the public on the religion’s existence, reduce the discrimination incited and demonstrate its rightful place in society.
Methodology:

In order to conduct this study on the existence of the Orisha faith in Trinidad, qualitative research was carried out to obtain the desired information owing to the practice’s multifarious nature. This was achieved by the conduction of interviews among specific citizens of Trinidad, with the purpose of acquiring a deeper understanding of the Orisha liturgy, as well as addressing pertinent issues the tradition would have encountered during its creolisation and subsequent evolvement.

Data collection involved the execution of a total of five (5) interviews which were designed based on the knowledge, involvement within the faith, as well as, in some cases, careers which included contributions toward Trinidadian culture and society, of each respondent. As a result, all questions were open ended, some of which asked the opinions of the informants, in the event of not having prior knowledge of the faith’s aspect being interrogated. Questions were formatted in a very basic and comprehensible way, enabling the interviewees to easily understand the questions and respond efficiently. Themes analysed included demography, discrimination, rudiments of the faith, syncretism and its contributions to society. The interviews were created with the use of Google documents and were carried out physically by arranging a date, time and venue with the proposed subjects and was audio recorded as a cost efficient and time saving method.

For the successful conduction of these interviews, individuals were specifically selected based on basic knowledge of the faith and participation in the religion, whether Orisha or non-Orisha, leadership roles in carrying out rituals and associations with cultural aspects and organisations of Trinidad, such as music, theatre and education. Additionally, “syncretic” and “purist” Orisha practitioners were interrogated in order to comprehend the existing divisions within the religion in Trinidad. Another specification of the study involved the need for the researcher alone to conduct the interviews as well as ensuring no other individuals were present who may have interjected during the proceeding, so as to eliminate any interruptions and biases. Since the interviews were manually realised, there was difficulty in finding an ideal time for meeting in accordance with the informants’ schedules, as well as costly travels to the different residences of each respondent. However, due to the nature of this research, the subjects showed much enthusiasm towards disseminating knowledge on the faith.
The principal reason for the use of interviews is that it facilitates the accumulation of more in-depth research than questionnaires. Though quantitative data would have made tabulation of results easier, it would have also significantly limited the desired information required for the completion of this investigation. Thus, the qualitative research method utilised stimulated a more holistic exploration of the religion. Upon completion, results were then tabulated and presented via tables, graphs and charts with the aid of Microsoft Word and Google Forms.

In conclusion, the necessary information was acquired with the efficient use of interviews. Each interview was individually formatted to obtain specific data from the various respondents and was disseminated physically at the availability of the informants. All questions were open ended and were easily understandable so as to avoid any misinterpretations during the proceedings. Though time consuming and costly, subjects were willing to share as much knowledge as possible for the success of this study. The following section of the literature review further highlights the additional research done on the Orisha faith in Trinidad and its evolution.
Chapter 1

Literature Review:

This chapter offers a review of literature used as the foundation of this study. The following presentation of sources attempts to provide a chronological timeline of the Orisha, beginning with its origins in Yorubaland, transition to the Caribbean, its branches in several Antillean islands, the level of eclecticism it procured, the derision encountered and its impact on Trinidadian culture.

1.1) Historicisation of the Orisha

The Orisha of Trinidad originally descended from the “Ifa divination practice” of Yorubaland, Africa. Though believed to be birthed in the 8th century, around the 13th century, the kingdom of Ile-Ife was prospering and highly populated. This empire ruled over Yorubaland which governed over a plethora of territories, mainly encompassing states of present-day Nigeria. The kingdom represented, “the mythical centre where the world was created,” according to Yoruba mythology (Olupona and Rey 278), an ideology fortified by geological claims that all continents once formed one landmass known as “Pangea”, one of the major regions of which was “Gondwana”, today’s Africa (Ghose 2014).

Presently called “Ifa” in Nigeria, is deeply connected to Western Africa as it was believed the Òrîṣà, “Obatala”, created all landmasses with the assistance of his brother, “Orunmilla”, the diviner of the Òrîṣà, often referred to as “Ifa”, synonymous with “Ile-Ife”. Conflicts later arose which consequently divided the kingdom into several rival nations who carried the practice of Ifa with them, changing several aspects of the faith and making it unique to each tribe. These divisions later facilitated the advent of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The commencement of the 15th century sets the stage for, “the Age of Exploration”. Portugal journeyed to Africa for the purpose of expanding their markets and power, also for the sake of converting “heathens” in the name of the Roman Catholic Church (UNESCO 1979). Spain, France and Britain followed, also wanting to spread their monopoly over Africa. African Enslavement was believed to have existed before Europe’s invasion, with Persian Arabs (Evans
2017). However, slaves were brought to Europe where the demand for such a labour supply grew (Adi 2012). At that time plantations were being established in the Caribbean for the cultivation of tobacco and, much later, sugar, to supply demands in Europe. Due to the aforementioned rivalry among African nations, Europeans paid tribes to abduct Africans from neighbouring villages, assembling them to be led onto the slaver, set for the plantations of the Caribbean. As an act of conversion, the enslavers attempted to suppress the Africans’ heritage and religious practice through acculturation.

*Le Passage du Milieu* by Guy Deslauriers in 1999 exemplifies the initiation of the slave trade and highlights “African betrayal” by the “Razzia”, kidnapping tribes. We see the attack on Yoruba culture with the destruction of African sacred amulets, forced baptism, Catholic re-naming of the enslaved personnel as well as torturous branding and imprisonment on the ship, living among impurities. Numerous victims died by suicide, infanticide and of disease. One scene shows the forced dancing upon the ship deck as exercise. Despite dancing to European percussion, the enslaved transcended spatio-temporality, making rhythmic movements to Òrìṣà drums within their memories, as though being “possessed” by them. Through the valorisation of memories and orality, Ifa’s Òrìṣà came to the Caribbean and were dispersed among colonies⁴.

### 1.2) Syncretic Caribbean Expressions of Orisha

Once captives were loaded unto European slavers, they sailed across the middle passage for the colonies of the Caribbean where the Africans would be auctioned and divided among plantations. The Òrìṣà of the Ifa practice were thus translocated to countries such as the then St. Domingue (Haiti), Brazil, Cuba and Trinidad. The following presentation provides an insight into the chronological arrival of chattel to the colonies and the emergence of syncretic creole Orisha expressions respectively.

An estimated 15,000 enslaved Africans were intercepted at St. Domingue around 1517 to work on sugar plantations due to the rapid demise of indigenous Taino labourers (Arsenault and Rose 57). Victims were brought mainly from Dahomey, present day Benin, bringing their

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spirituality of Vodun\textsuperscript{5}, to the diaspora. Like Orisha, believers served the Lwas/Loas\textsuperscript{6} of the “Rada” pantheon (Deren 60). The assembly of Lwas were categorised into “Nations/ Nachons”; one of which is known as “Nago” which exalts Yoruba Òrìṣà, mainly Ogou/Ogun\textsuperscript{7} along with other warrior spirits. Maya Deren states:

And yet, because Voudoun was a collective creation, it did not exact the abandonment of one tribal deity over another. On the contrary, it seemed rather to delight in as generous an inclusion as possible. (59)

Thus we can deduce the inherent connection between both tribal practices of Orisha and Vodun. Eclecticism occurred significantly on the island between Vodun and Catholicism due to Code Noir\textsuperscript{8}, demonising African worship and imposing regulations against slave practices and gatherings, also reinforcing Catholic baptism and instruction upon them. Consequently, due to this transculturation, the Dahomeans combined Lwas with saints and Vodun invocations with Christian rites, camouflaging the faith. Also assimilating itself with Taino mysticism and Freemasonry of Europeans (Arthur and Dash 255). Rebels were however decapitated, immolated, flogged and lynched for defying colonisers. Vodouisant aspects included belief in a “Supreme God”, ancestor veneration, animism, sigils, animal sacrifices, herbalism, drumming, sorcery and possessions. Due to the significance placed on orality, Vodun does not have “holy scriptures” unlike Ifa. Additionally, we see the fusing together of Haitian Vodun and Cuban Santería cultures within the composition of the song Guede Zaina by Cuban singer, Celia Cruz, petitioning the Lwa of the dead, Ghédé, in Cuban creole\textsuperscript{9}. This is due to the proximity of the countries.

Òrìṣà reached Cuba with the influx of African abductees just after 1517 (Aimes 7), and by extension, Latin America. Like Vodun, Ifa practice inevitably synchronised with Catholicism to mask the tradition from colonisers. As a result of the numerous similarities between the African powers and rudiments and Catholic beliefs and paraphernalia, interculturation was easily facilitated. As such, syncretised Ifa, became a hybrid faith titled Santería\textsuperscript{10}, deriving from Spanish

\begin{itemize}
\item Vodun- Fon’s word for God
\item Lwas/Loas- Congo word for “divinities”
\item Ogou/Ogun- god of war, technology and iron
\item Code Noir- French slave laws
\item Cruz, Celia. “Celia Cruz- Guede Zaina.” Youtube, uploaded by lurbinaq, 16 Aug. 2008.
\item Santería- translation: “worship of the saints”
\end{itemize}
“Santo”, meaning “saint” (Wippler 3). The consequence of which, Catholic iconolatry is heavily used and saints and Òrìṣà are “the same spirits operating differently” (Houk 112).

On the contrary, many practitioners prefer the term *Lucumí* named after a particular Yoruba accent and tribe. Santeros conduct similar practices to Vodouisants with subtle differences. In relation to scriptures, Santería never had a written liturgy and depended solely on oralture. However, Santero priests, Babalawos, introduced a text titled, *The Book of Diagnosis in Ifa Divination*, in 1940 (Waters 2008). Neighbouring Brazil’s Candomblé seems a replica of the previous Afro-Antillean religiosities discussed.

African slaves first entered Brazil around 1530 (Arsenault and Rose 15) which led to the creolisation of their theistic philosophies that syncretised Yoruba, Fon and Bantu customs with Catholicism and possibly Amerindian beliefs. This was the origin of *Candomblé* also termed Batuque and Macuma. Similar in almost every aspect to Santería, Candomblé devotees were also persecuted during slavery till 1970s when the law demanding police’s permission to hold ceremonies was repealed. The worship of Orixás has expanded into minor sects such as Umbanda and other spiritualist groups (Harvard Divinity School 2017). The numen and foundations of Vodun, Santería, Candomblé and Trinidadian Orisha are all the same as calypsonian David Rudder highlights in *Bahia Girl*:

> Then I start to notice, wait, like you is ah Baptist?!
> She say, Darling no no, my darling is not so.
> You see Trinidad and Brazil, we have the same vibrations.
> Ile-Ife! Ile-Ife! She make me to understand. (1996)

Trinidad has a rich history with the settlement of Amerindians from South America and the struggle among the metropole for control of the country. European intrusion paved the way for the shipment of African chattel to work of sugar plantations, projected to have occurred before 1770 (Brereton 2011). The enslaved brought cultures and identities from across Africa, hailing from Nigeria Mandingo, Sierra Leone, Koromantee, Benin, Congo and Mozambique (Lum 205). Such

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11 Santeros: practitioners of Santería
12 Candomblé translated as “dance in honour of the gods (Òrìṣà)” (Santos 2015)
13 Orixá- Portuguese spelling of Òrìṣà
a fusion of ethnicities along with the transculturation and assimilation with Catholicism produced the creolised Yoruba sect, the “Shango cult” or “Orisha way” within the colony (Lum 5), though Houk’s informants found “Shango cult” to be disparaging and preferred the term “Orisha religion”\(^\text{15}\).

In masking Orisha rituals behind Catholic implements, Trinidadian Orisha is almost a replica to the varying Orisha groups throughout the Antilles, with a variety of differences in terms of ceremonies: initiations, feasts, thanksgivings, flag raisings, also the deities venerated and interculturation with Spiritual Baptist, Hindu, Kabbalah and by extension Amerindian, Buddhist and Obeah systems. It has also received attacks from slave laws and planters, resulting in physical punishment or death, also inclusive of legislations suppressing the faith into Post-Independence period, all of which has left a stigma upon the practitioners who still experience discrimination today as a result of the bastardisation of Orisha and Obeah.

\textit{Obeah}, a creolised hybrid spiritual system believed to have surfaced from Ashanti roots, formerly known as “Obeye”, is perceived as a branch of the Orisha lineage. Though not considered a religion, this eclectic practice entails principally two categories of ritualism: sorcery and African herbalism (Gebert and Olmos 155). Like the “Shango cult”, Obeah though criminalised for many decades, is still reminiscent of African ancestrality, slavery and the mélange with other spiritualities.

\subsection*{1.3) Eclecticism between Orisha and other Religions in Trinidad}

Reinforcing the dynamism of Orisha, Yoruba natives and creoles\(^\text{16}\) assimilated and borrowed elements from European Kabbalah, Spiritual Baptist sects of St. Vincent and America, Hinduism and Buddhism of the indentured labourers, and “Rada” of Whydah in the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century. Despite hybridisation, believers have reverted to the “purest” form of Yoruba worship. The following review attempts to construct a chronological timeline of syncretism


\textsuperscript{16} Creoles- persons born in the Caribbean
Orisha devotees dabbled in *Kabbalah*, considered a Jewish esoteric practice centering around the mechanics of the cosmos and mathematical equations to explain theories of God and existence, coming from the Hebrew word *Qabbala* meaning “tradition” (Houk 90-91). It was transported from Israel to Europe where it mixed with local lore, though another theory proposes it originated in Babylon and spread to Ethiopia, Egypt and then Europe. Houk’s interviews with Kabbalists speculate that since the Europeans carried out this masonic tradition, domestic slaves would have witnessed and assisted in the success of these ceremonies; supported by his surveys that show almost 50% Spiritual Baptists and Orishas participate in this “secret society”. This system is kept isolated from Orisha worship over its “ominous nature”, as Mahaba states it is a demonic practice (Ashby 2011); and consists of varying ranks of “entities”, manifestations, banquets and flag raising.

Spiritual Baptists share a profound relationship with the Orisha. There are approximately four theories that postulate the source of the Baptist sect and its prominence in Trinidad. The first claimed after the War of Independence in 1775-1783, America granted freedom to slaves who fought for the country, sending them (Merikins) to Trinidad, many of whom were adherents of various Baptist groups (Houk 74). The second being the migration of Vincentian “Shakers”, similar to “Shouters” or Spiritual Baptists, in 1910 to the island. The third relates to their movement from Grenada to Trinidad, believed to be valid. Concluding with the fourth that the congregation transferred the Baptist faith from Africa.

The first two groups, hypothesised as historically accurate, adopted Yoruba practices, mixing them with their already established Protestant convictions. Eudora Thomas states that “the Spiritual Baptist origin is an off shoot of Orisha” and that it cannot be detached from the Orisha (Edmonds and Gonzales 146), demonstrating their intrinsic connection. Furthermore, Houk divides Spiritual Baptists into two sub-categories: orthodox (fully Christian and non-eclectic) and non-orthodox (mainly Christian but syncretises). As a result, this instigates a level of conflict and discrimination between both groups whereby orthodox Spiritual Baptists express disdain towards the terminology “Shango Baptists” claiming that it is deranged and the fruit of the populace’s ignorance to merge both names (Lum 96). Often a Baptist’s church is found within an Orisha

compound, there is the synchronising between initiation rites of both religions, veneration of similar demiurges, shared custom of thanksgivings and hoisting flags, as well as both practising mourning\textsuperscript{18} and association with Hinduism.

Hinduism, Islam and, to an extent, Buddhism, arrived to Trinidad with the influx of East Indian and Chinese Indentured Labourers in 1845, recruited by the British who colonised India, to toil on sugar plantations after the emancipation of African and Creole slaves. Despite Hinduism in Trinidad being multifaceted with several denominations, the two main classifications identify as “Sanatanist” or orthodox and “Madrasi” or “Shakti worship”, previously acknowledged as the “Kali Mai” sect, which consists of non-orthodox rituals (Mahabir 2010). With the sudden change in the ethnic composition of Trinidad, interactions and mingling among ethnicities were apparent. Thus facilitating the blending of religions, mainly Spiritual Baptist and Orisha with Hinduism and any remnants of Buddhism which only became apparent in 1960 (Houk 87).

Orishas found similarities mainly with the “Kali Mai” sect due to their animal sacrifices, drumming and spiritual manifestations. There existed the syncretism of deities such as Hanuman and Ogun, Lakshmi and Osun, promoting the belief that all energies are the same according to Mongba Edmond David (Houk 113). Mainly seen around the shrine of Osain/ Osayin Òrìṣà are Hindu implements. Despite being an “African power”, he is called the “Indian Man” (Henry 143). Along with Hinduism, Islam also came to Trinidad. There is also a reported case of a relationship between the Yoruba Osain with the Muslim Prophet, “Hussain/Hossein/ Hosein”, grandson of Prophet Muhammad (Simpson 126)\textsuperscript{19}, honoured during “Hosay”\textsuperscript{20}. Nevertheless, another theory suggests Osain is “Indian” being associated with an “Amerindian” deity from South America (Houk 186). Not much is known of the eclecticism between Orisha and Chinese religiosity, though Frances Henry mentions that some Orisha leaders “deal with Chinese powers” as well (143)\textsuperscript{21}. The continued migration of Africans to the country during and after indentureship, prepared the way for the emergence of Vodun in Trinidad.

\textsuperscript{18} Mourning- extended periods of fasting and isolation inducing spiritual travels
\textsuperscript{19} See Photo 1 of perogun that shows Osain’s stool with the moon and star.
\textsuperscript{20} Hosay- a Muslim Shi’ite festival celebrating Prophet Hussain’s martyrdom
\textsuperscript{21} See Photo 2 of Buddha’s sanctum in an Orisha Chapelle.
Vodun, associated with mainly Benin and Haiti, reached Trinidad with the docking of Abojevi Zahwenu, familiarly recognised as Hubono\textsuperscript{22} Robert Antoine or “Papa Nanee” around 1838 from Whydah (Carr 2). In 1868 the \textit{Dangbwe Comme} Vodun shrine was established in Belmont, fully establishing the Vodun tradition, called \textit{Rada}, in Trinidad. Like Orisha, Rada syncretised and assimilated with Catholicism, Carr noted by the existence of a chapelle in the Rada compound (6). It is also equally believed that the Rada influenced Orisha and Spiritual Baptist ritualism (Houk 72).

As previously discussed, neighbouring African nations had shared rudiments. Dahomey being adjacent to Nigeria, both pantheons constituted the same classifications of “powers” with varying names: “Vodun Sobo was the equivalent to Yoruba Òrïṣà Shango,” (Lum 209). Despite the momentous levels of eclectic transformation within the Orisha realm, many of its practitioners have reverted to the purest form of African worship.

The 1970s onward catalysed an anti-syncretic transformative shift with the Orisha, a product reified by the Black Power Movement. There has been an increasing call for the Orisha faithful to recommence placing “emphasis on African “roots”,” by expurgating elements of various religiosities from within the Trinidadian Yoruba practice (Houk 43). The attempts of this emerging group to “Yorubise” the faith by breaking Caribbean eclectic traditions, may also prompt the demise of the Orisha congregations and generate conflict among their groups (Ashby 2011).

Tobagonian folklorist Jacob D. Elder writes:

> Considering the crucial status of religion in African politics there seems to be nothing illogical in our prediction that in time the Shango cult will be embraced by young black radicals in their drive for the creation of a politics whose base is truly African in culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

(McNeal 2011)

\textsuperscript{22} Hubono- Vodunu priest
1.4) Orisha Discrimination Continuum and Counter-Critiques

This sub-section provides a synoptic insight into the varying accounts of prejudice and discrimination enforced upon the Orisha circuit spanning from colonialism’s advent to post-modern society.

Caribbean colonies were each overseered by slave laws which differed among territories, depending on the governing European powers, in the 18th Century, interdicting African spiritualism, congregating, singing, dancing and even drumming. The regulations stipulated the necessity for slave baptisms, Catholic naming, Christian instructions as well as a prologue of punishments for rebels of the above offences, some of which included flogging, for extremities of uprising and mayhem: torture or lynching. Native Yoruba ceremonies were thus carried out in forested areas hidden from the masters’ scrutiny in the hushed hour of midnight. Such ritualists geared these religious meetings to not only pay homage to the Òrìṣà but also to plot the execution of rebellions, counteracting the laws.

A splendid example that epitomises the stringent laws and slave counter attacks is that of Hougan23 Dutty Boukman in Haiti during a Vodun sacrificial ceremony in the high woods at midnight in August 1791. His Vodun prayer to the Lwas states:

God who makes the sun which gives us light, who rouses the waves and makes the storm, though hidden in the clouds, he watches us. He sees all that the whites are doing. The God of the whites orders crime, but our God calls upon us to do good works. Our God who is good to us orders us to avenge our wrongs. He will direct our arms and aid us. Throw away the symbol of the god of the whites, who has so often caused us to weep, and listen to the voice of liberty which speaks in the hearts of us all. (Joseph 4)

Having accomplished the liturgy, revolts commenced and ignited widespread empowerment of chattel, in the name of their faith, to avenge their persecutions. The result: Boukman was captured and decapitated and later deified by his people.

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23 Houngan- Haitian Vodun priest
Transitioning to Trinidad’s Post-Emancipation retrospection, in 1917 *The Spiritual Baptist Prohibition Ordinance* clamped down on the movements of this sect, prohibiting similar offences to slave laws: initiation rites, wakes, ceremonies, chanting, singing, drumming, stomping, head ties, gathering within specific building or outdoors. The act postulates issuing warrants for the arrest of such individuals found guilty by the owner of the land or a police constable. Subsequent to this was the enactment of the criminalisation of Obeah in 1921, outlined in the *Summary Conviction Offences Ordinance* that pertains to “superstitious devices” (Simpson 52). Both Ordinances stipulated that guilty parties ought to be prosecuted and brought before a tribunal. These acts suffocated the practice of the Orisha faith in Trinidad since the precepts of both Spiritual Baptist and Obeah traditions had been integrated into or derivative of the Orisha system.

In countering such intolerance, in 1951 *The Spiritual Baptist Prohibition Ordinance* was repealed. This community was granted a national holiday on 30th March named “Spiritual Shouter Baptist Liberation Day,” inclusive of the granting of land for the construction of a national cathedral (*The Trinidad Guardian Newspaper* 2017). This was done also to the advantage of the Orisha faithful, allowing them to practise Yoruba spirituality freely. However, not sufficient recognition was awarded to them and never received similar aforementioned gifts nor respect like that of the “Shouters” (Boyle and Sheen 151). However, in 1995 they were granted a festival day under the P.N.M. but which was usurped and now hides under the title “Spiritual Shouter Baptist Liberation Day” (Henry 50).

Nevertheless, the surge of the “Black Power Movement” in 1970s revered black ancestrality, pride in black selfhood and unifying the black marginalised. Such agency enforced “an Afrocentric religious awakening” (McNeal 8), promulgated fighting for the decriminalisation of Obeah which succeeded in 2000. Correspondingly, Orisha praxis, being legitimised, gained momentum in pushing for national recognition.

The enactment of the *Marriage Act* in 1754 of the Commonwealth Caribbean stipulated, derivative of the laws of England and to which Lord Penzance asserted, the sole accepted form of marriage must be in Christiandom (Tesheira 32). Governing Trinidad, from the colonial era to Post-Independence, these jurisdictions deemed Orisha marital unions as illegitimate by the state. With the incitation of the Black Power Movement, along with the efforts spear-headed by Iyalorisha Molly Ahye of the *Opa Orisha Shango Organisation*, the committee took to Parliament
with the intention of reversing this prejudice and to acknowledge Orisha weddings as legal in the 1990s (McNeal 6). More than two centuries of discrimination, after the arrival of Yoruba natives upon Trinidadian shores to Post-Independence, Orisha marriages were legalised in 1999 (*Orisa Marriage Act 1999*)\(^{24}\).

With regard the education system, colonialism still endures. There are approximately just fewer than five hundred (500) public primary schools in Trinidad, the majority of which, religious instruction (RI), is obligatory. With an estimated three hundred and fifty (350) establishments being denominational and government assisted (Boyle and Sheen 151). The Orisha students are, for the most part, inducted into religious lectures and not have the option of refusal to attend, unless written indication is sent by the parent/s or guardian of the child to the principal. Such an imposition of one’s religion over another inadvertently is a manner of psychological oppression, mainly on the Orisha circle.

Though the *Education Act*, Chap. 30:01\(^{25}\), unequivocally enshrines the right that no student can be forced to attend religious instructions, the opposite of which has been evidently observed within the education sector. Not only has education prompted discrimination, the music industry has as well towards the Orisha or “Shango”.

The music industry serves as a counter-critique, used as a medium to address and attack social ills. The calypso genre rendered by various icons have addressed the taboo of Orisha in their work in a time when this spiritism instilled fear into citizens by a far greater extent than now. Singers such as Robert Nelson (Lord Nelson), Andre Tanker, David Rudder, Ella Andall, Hollis Liverpool (Chalkdust), Michael Osouna (Sugar Aloeis) and Sandra Millington (Singing Sandra), have all paid homage to the Òrìṣà in various calypsoes, usually beginning with a chant and used as a chorus. These calypsoes not only condemned and highlight problems within society’s framework but also illustrated a pride in the Òrìṣà and ancestrality (Loubon 2012).

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On the contrary, though it be for the intentions of comedy and portraying Trinidadian’s mysticism and its associated stigma, few calypsoes may have incited further discrimination of African based religiosity. Michelle Loubon writes:

… in the past there were negative ideas about the supernatural, which, through an association with obeah and witchcraft, was ridiculed in humorous calypsoes. (2012)

Slinger Francisco (Mighty Sparrow), in his rendition of *Obeah Wedding* in 1966\(^{26}\), creates a plot of an adamant admirer of his, pursuing extreme measures to marry him, which includes visiting the “Obeah man” regularly to assist in achieving the client’s desires. Caldwell Taylor indicates that this song brought negative attention to “Papa Neezer”, a prominent Orisha leader at that time due to his name being mentioned, though “boasted”, in the song (2011), further degenerating the function of Orisha leaders.

### 1.5) Presence of Orisha in Cultural Art Forms

The attempted enculturation and victimisation that beset the Orisha and West African traditions have resulted in the ramification of Trinidadian culture. Its strong yet almost forgotten presence in several aspects of society has duly persisted throughout the centuries, notably in domains such as Trinidadian music: pan, calypso and soca; the infamous Carnival ‘ole mas’; folklore and legends as well as funeral customs.

The steel-pan\(^{27}\) has a legacy usually ignored by its admirers. The pan’s genesis sprouts from the Orisha practice of drumming. Banned during slavery and Post-Emancipation periods, drumming was replaced by “Tamboo Bamboo”, consisting of varying sizes of bamboo tubes being thumped against the earth or struck alongside the axes to produce soprano, alto, tenor and base voices (Taradath 2000). With the intention of amplifying the bamboo orchestra, other objects were included in rhythm sections to heighten the air of festivity. By 1930, metal objects were

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\(^{27}\) The steel-pan: national instrument of Trinidad and Tobago
incorporated which led to the selection of the oil drum. Cut, shaped and tuned, the steel-pan percolated into the music arena, replacing the “Tamboo Bamboo” by 1935 (Taradath 2000).

Orisha leader, Baba Erin Folami, made mention of the connectivity between Orisha and the steel-pan. Furthermore that Òrìṣà Ogun is the patron of the pan and it emerged from his worship, referring to the drums. Additionally he expresses disdain towards the fact that steel bands show utter disregard for the Òrìṣà and proudly wallow in the ignorance of not showing interest in understanding the grass roots of their vocation (Blood 2014). Though generally ignored, the blood line of the Orisha has been concretised in the tunes of the steel pan. The pan’s intoxicating power on revellers has mirrored the Orisha drums. Soca artiste, Alison Hinds in her composition _De Iron have me so Bazodee_, sings:

The music still jamming hard, And ah behaving as if ah mad!

Because de iron have me so **bazodee**.28

Her lyrics reflect the phenomena of spiritual mediumship within the “Shango” where Òrìṣà would mount devotees, making them dance or lose control of their senses. Like the ‘iron’, calypso has also emerged from African storytelling.

Calypso like folklore sprouted from orality. With the lack of written literature in West Africa before Europe invasion, traditions were transmitted to younger generations by _Griots_29 through conversations, dance and song (Hale 250). In this way the Orisha spirituality propagated along with morbid mysticism of ghoulish characters, hailing from Africa and converged with European lore. Legends such as _Bre Anansi_30, _Maman de l’eau_31, _Papa Bois_32 along with numerous other figures, all seem to have derived from West African spiritism (Besson 2011), inclusive of the Orisha.

Apart from storytelling, Griots brought into context creolised _Chantuelles_ who sang during field work and slave celebrations, extending their role to criticising colonisers and addressing issues of religion, sex, hefty labour and obscene entertainment, all of which began as _Kaiso_ during

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29 Griot- male or female storyteller
30 Bre Anansi- the sly spider taught in infant books
31 Maman de l’eau/Mama d’lo- half woman half snake, protectress of the rivers and consort of Papa Bois
32 Papa Bois- guardian of the forest, a faun
colonialism, later developing into *Calypso* (Thomas 2010). Such a music genre became permissible during Carnival celebrations which enraptured wild mythical masquerade representations ‘palancing’ through the streets.

Carnival’s masquerades have been significantly influenced by Orisha culture though disputed that it is mainly the product of European customs. Orisha leader, Oludari Massetungi highlighted in his bid to create an Orisha carnival band in 2001 called *401 meets 2001*, the need to revitalise carnival by reintroducing its lost “sacredness” and Òrìṣà connectivity (Henry 186-187). This point relates to African and creole participation in Carnival in the 1800s bringing their folklore and traditions to life in *Ole mas*. Characters such as *jab jab*33 and *moko-jumbie*34, embodying malevolent spirits, are residual features of West African spirituality that links with the Orisha (Thomas 2010) and Kabbalah, observed by bats, dragons and the *Midnight Robber* (Lum 188-189).

In conclusion of this chapter, for the most part a chronological timeline has been constructed to reveal the evolution of the Orisha faith in Trinidad, beginning in Africa to the Caribbean, its mingling with other religions, the forms of discrimination it encountered and its indelibly etched footprint within various Trinidadian cultural art forms; all of which exudes the unbounded dynamism of this creolised spiritual practice.

33 *jab jab*: a devil-like creature masquerade
34 *moko-jumbie*: a reveller on stilts with long garments, said to be the representation of the spirit of retribution
Chapter 2

This chapter provides an insight into the Orisha praxis spectrum which identifies beliefs and rituals both of Yoruba and eclectic origins. Furthermore, it presents an inventory of Orisha deities of West Africa, not solely Nigerian, as well as neo-demiurges admitted to the existing Ifa pantheon as a result of syncretism. Additionally summarising Orisha festivals held publicly in Trinidad.

2.1) Principal Rudiments of the Orisha Faith

Notion of Theism

Ifa promotes a “High-God” concept known as Olodumare who created the universe. Also called Olorun or Olofi. Though referred to as “He”, Olodumare has no sex nor attributes and does not interfere in the affairs of mankind. Instead, receives the supplications of devotees through the Òrìṣà. In another aspect called “Elofa”, Olodumare transcends all realms, manifesting upon earth and to whom bulls are offered in sacrifice every leap year (Lum 113). Though there is a single God, there is no recognition of a devil within Ifa. Nevertheless syncretic Orishas such as Spiritual Baptists and Kabbalists acknowledge the existence of a “devil” (Lum 51-52).

Role of the Òrìṣà

Subordinate to “God” are intermediaries known as Òrìṣà comprising the first rank of “spirits”, Houk refers to these divinities as gods as well35, totalling four hundred and one celestial beings (Henry 186). All of whom have human-like qualities, such as family and sexual relations, and govern several facets of life pertaining to personifying natural elements. Each Òrìṣà is associated with specific colours, relished sacrificial animals that are cooked and served with

legumes, offerings, behaviours, dances, songs of Yoruba and Patois tongues, implements and seals. Òrìṣà are believed to execute benevolent and malevolent actions.

Creationism theory

All Òrìṣà lived loftily in the high realms under Olodumare around a Baobab. The eldest, Obatala observed an extensive water mass below and sought permission from Olodumare to descend and create land and beings. Diviner Orumilla advised Obatala on properly executing his plan. Having gathered a snail shell with seeds, palm nuts, sand and maize, he made a golden chain from the jewellery of the other Òrìṣà and descended.

Some legends state a ten toed chicken to scatter the sand upon the water mass. Others, that an egg containing the powers of all Òrìṣà was kept near Obatala’s heart and upon reaching the chain’s end, the heart’s rapid palpitations caused the egg to crack, releasing the bird “Sankofá” who dispersed the sand and seeds creating the earth or “Ife”.

On the furnished earth, Obatala saw his reflection in an oasis and fashioned beings in that image. Intoxicated upon drinking palm wine, some humanoids were created handicapped. Olodumare then breathed life into Obatala’s creation with a bolt of fire ignited from gases above which set the world in motion. The first site upon which Obatala moulded the world is considered Ile-Ife, the first kingdom of Yorubaland (Harper 2014). However, Oduduwa plays the role as progenitor of the Yoruba race.

The syncretic faithful often ascribe to the biblical version.

Ancestral Spirits

After death the soul reincarnates or based on one’s holy or righteous lifestyle, can be deified and enter into the realm of the Òrìṣà. While others can be sent to a “hellish-type” realm by Olodumare. There are both negative and positive ancestors who have the ability to “manifest” on the living.

36 Seals : symbols representing Òrìṣà , could be used to invoke them or as talismans
Re-res

Mischievous child-like spirits, noted as children or messengers of the Òrìṣà and would mount a human upon the departure of an Òrìṣà during “possession”. Re-res have individual personalities and histories, are fed sweet foods and are respected though appearing to adepts as disrespectful.

Importance of the Earth

It is the vortex between mankind and the spiritual realm. Divinities can be invoked by making offerings of grains, food and libations onto the bare ground. For this reason, Orisha shrines or “palais”, mainly consist of an earthen floor to allow easier accessibility and free movement of spiritual energy.

Significance of Ifa-Odu

The Ifa-Odu is associated with divination and compiles Yoruba mythology, proverbs, prescriptions for anomalies and predictions. Kept by Babalawos, one of its lessons is narrated to the individual seeking divine intervention, based upon the interpretation of the divination reading called “Odu”, achieved by casting sixteen cowrie shells and kola or palm nuts, or a split obeek seed upon a tray with sand and markings. Other implements are used as well and the procedure may vary (Bascom 26-35). This tradition is significantly upheld by Orisha purists.

Biblical Application

The bible is considerably used by the “eclectic circuit”, referring to Spiritual Baptists (Lum 54). It is believed to have connections to Africa especially the Old Testament, few books of which were removed from the original publication by the Vatican. Syncretic worshippers who identify

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37 Babalawo- Ifa priest
the “Holy Trinity” as the godhead and the Òrìṣà as saints, employ it as a scripture. Resulting from Catholic indoctrination on plantations and mixing with Spiritual Baptists, many Orisha ceremonies begin with biblical recitations, Catholic prayers and songs.

**Orisha Clergy**

Orisha priests constitute a mediatory hierarchy between common man and Òrìṣà. They include men and women and bear titles such as Babalawo, Amambwa, Mongba, Iyalorisha, Oba and others. Spiritual Baptist-Orisha practitioners tend to refer to the Spiritual Baptist clergy profiles, replacing the aforementioned titles. This includes: Bishop, King Shepherd, Mother, Queen Mother and others. Priestly ordinations may vary among congregations.

2.2) **Profile of an Orisha “Yard”**

**Leader’s Residence**

This is the house where the leader of the compound and his family resides, which allows for consistent maintenance of the area and who are usually the main providers for ceremonies financially.

**Significance of the Palais**

Derived from the French word that translates to “palace”, it is a rectangular structured building with an earthen floor and often waist-height walls. This lieu is used principally for feasts/lebo and other Orisha sessions encompasses drumming: use of bembe, congo/bo and omiloy that produce varying degrees of beats; singing to invoke, entertain, praise and/or dismiss deities (Lum 109) called oriki; libations: honey, milk, oil, perfumes, liquor; cereals (Lum 58); candle and tobacco offerings; and manifestations or “catching the power”. Òrìṣà “mount” practitioners due to the ecstatic atmosphere, for the purpose of spiritual mediumship. During such phenomena,
divinities dance with implements, administer herbal remedies to infirmed, teach, give instructions or penalise spectating followers. Kenneth Lum indicates a preference for “manifestation” than “possession” since the latter is associated with suffering induced by malevolent spirits (155).

**Construction of a Chapelle**

A sanctuary, sometimes with an earthen floor, where implements are stored. It also consists of altars or sanctums for Òrìṣà, mainly Catholic saints and even Hindu and Buddhists energies.

**Use of Stools**

Stools are small altars dedicated to demigods and even ancestors venerated by the spiritual head/s of the compound. These are cleaned and repainted each year for the annual feasts. They can also contain implements of each Orisha such as a ‘cutlass’, cocoyea broom, as well as goblets or pottery vases for libations and miniature sanctums for candles or ‘deyas’ - earthen lamps.

**The Perogun’s Section**

An earthen area or corner, usually barricaded, that contains stools for various Òrìṣà, saints, and other avatars. Duly noted, stools may also be called peroguns. Flags mounted on bamboo posts may also be present of varying heights and colours that represent particular deities, nations or other aspects such as prosperity and purity; considered a portal through which an Òrìṣà may enter the earthly realm\(^{38}\). All of which are erected at the “Flag raising ceremony”, often before a feast, while some are hoisted at other times depending on the religion in focus. It is purported this tradition began due to European influence of national and supplementary flags, “and intensified by the flag-flying tradition of the Indians who arrived later,” (Taylor and Case 651). Heads, horns, feathers or even organs of sacrificed animals are also buried here.

\(^{38}\) See Photo 8 for flags
Presence of a Spiritual Baptist Church

In the case of eclectic Orisha practitioners, there may also exist a building set aside solely for Spiritual Baptists services, conducted in the majority of cases, by the same priest performing the Orisha sessions, the “yard’s” proprietor.

Concept of the Mourner Room

This is an enclosed quarters for mourning or fasting for both Orisha and Spiritual Baptist adherents. Not permitted to be frequented by many, it facilitates the spiritual travels of the individual to other planes or experiences with the “spiritual” under the direction and guidance of a pointer, the minister appointed to instruct the wanderer on the journeys.

Several rituals, prayers and rites are performed. With regards Spiritual Baptist “mourning”, it entails the “banning of the head and eyes” with numerous colours and lengths of cloth containing several seals, marching\textsuperscript{39} and doption\textsuperscript{40}, a practice emerging from colonialism when slaves were prohibited from chanting African renditions and thus formulated a vocal beat in tune with their chants to mask the phraseology (Guardian 2015). Following other rituals, the adherent is placed laying down on the floor and tended to by a “nurse”.

In the case of novices, these events precede baptism at the sea. Orisha purists perform “fasting” realised by several methods.

Purpose of a Kabbalah Room or Tomb

A chamber or an outside “tomb” structure, designated for the delivery of Kabbalistic rites and conjuring; kept isolated from other religious structures.

\textsuperscript{39} “marching”- where the devotee sways hands and stomps feet to the rhythm of the songs
\textsuperscript{40} doption- where groans, grunts, humming and deep sounds are articulated, originating within the throat
Relevance of Ponds, Fountains or Pools

Water features such as ponds and pools are situated within an Orisha compound for the satisfaction of “water saints”, inclusive of syncretic deities.\[41\]

2.3) Synopsis of Orisha Ceremonies

Feast/Ebo

Feasts/Ebo are week long with majority of activities commencing at sunset. Each night begins with Christian recitations (optional), then transitioning into the “African way”, Eshu is serenaded first, followed by Ogun, Mama Laterre (Mother Earth), water and forest deities and others, concluding with Shango, Oya and perhaps Obatala (Houk 162). The following is the week’s schedule:

- Tuesday/ “Ogun Night”- new flags are raised, then the sword of protection installed for Ogun in the Palais or at stool to ward off unwanted spirits. Offerings to Eshu and Ogun are carried out. Goats and fowls are ritualistically bathed and sacrificed at Ogun’s stool Wednesday Morning. Divination performed to discover whether the Òrìṣà accepted the sacrifice or not. Carcasses are cooked and meals are later served while the heads are buried at the stool (Lum 147).

- Wednesday- dedicated to the water and forest deities. The same incantations sequence and procedure is observed. Several animals are prepared, beheaded and later cooked and served.

- Thursday/ “Shango Night”- again the same routine is followed. However, Shango and Oya are venerated principally. Sheep and fowls are butchered in the same manner as those previously. Nonetheless, a sheep for Shango can be sacrificed in the Chapelle as well, with the blood collected in a bowl and the half-severed head being wrung off, symbolic of St. John the Baptist’s martyrdom, Shango’s Catholic counterpart.

\[41\] See Photo 3 of Oshun’s pool at St. John’s Spiritual Baptist Church, Laventille.
- Friday- “Feeding of children” and a Spiritual Baptist thanksgiving is conducted and the Orisha litany may be sung. All sacrifices have ceased and the manifestation of Re-res occur at this point. Divination is done to discover if the Òrìṣà are satisfied with the entire feast or not.

- Saturday- all ceremonies have ended allowing Kabbalistic powers to manifest.

- Return- In the North, forty days after a service is held to close off the Ebo till the following year. Nevertheless, Southerners conduct this thanksgiving on the second Wednesday after the culmination and continuing for three days. Purists’ feasts differ in certain respects and generally not always are animals offered, can be replaced with fruits (Houk 164).

Initiation/Desonay

As previously mentioned, mainly eclectic Orisha faithful mourn and are then baptised. After baptism, they undergo the desonay ritual or incising rite. The head is first washed followed by small incisions made into the forehead of the initiate and various herbs or other items, inclusive of grains, are rubbed in the wound. This act implants a specific Òrìṣà into the candidate’s head, who then becomes their patron deity.

Saraca and Egungun

This is an event held in honour of all positive ancestors of different African nations, where the priest invokes the spirits of the forefathers and are then fed and entertained by the hosting family and children are fed. There are performances: dancing and drumming (Lum 136). With the Egungun, masqueraders may be selected to manifest the ancestral spirits, followed by a procession and back to the place of ceremonial origin.
Sailing the Tray

Similar to a miniature wooden boat-like structure, offerings of cakes, flowers, candles, incense are arranged for the water saints and sailed. The devotee may raise flags at the beach before the ritual is done (Lum 135).

Thanksgivings

Seen as a Spiritual Baptist practice, it is also employed by Orisha adepts. It comprises of a table laid with dainties, honey, milk, wine, fruits, vegetables, candles, incense, grains and flowers. Beginning with Christian prayers and surveying\textsuperscript{42}, the service then moves into the Orisha litany with a change in drumming style. Participants circumambulate the altar in clockwise and anticlockwise movements depending on the shift in songs. Thanksgivers may have an “open table”\textsuperscript{43} whereby a plethora of deities of varying rank and creed may manifest, except those of the Kabbalah (Houk 61).

“Sit-down Prayers”

Pertaining to Spiritual Baptist and Orisha adepts who venerate Hindu deities, this ceremony is known as a “sit-down prayers” or “Bedi Pooja” where participants sit before an earthen altar bearing a fig plant in the centre. Also including Hindu images, deyas and other natural offerings. After which flags are raised having colours specific to different deities\textsuperscript{44}. This is usually done by a pundit\textsuperscript{45}, or is performed by the shrine’s leader (Houk 157).

Banquets

Done in closed settings, this event is attended by kabbalists and is of an ominous nature. Usually done at night, participants sit around a table with cutlery, liquors, candles and tobacco.

\textsuperscript{42} surveying: libations offered at corners and around the table
\textsuperscript{43} See photo 4 an open table.
\textsuperscript{44} See Photo 5 of bedi pooja.
\textsuperscript{45} Pundit- Hindu priest
Manifestations are instigated by a conjurer over a medium. Ancient and modern scriptures are cited and certain songs rendered to invite entities. Flags may be raised a stools designated for these powers as well sacrifices may also be conducted (Lum 180-189). Though kept secret it is becoming more known by the public (Houk 96).

Post-Mortuary Rites

Orisha funerals vary based on the practices and last wishes of the deceased (Olubowale 24). Burial or Cremation can be done. All funerals are preceded by wakes where relatives and acquaintances visit the house of mourning to share condolences with the bereaved family, usually from evening until morning. This may also be accompanied by drumming, singing, dancing and other forms of entertainment.

On the day, the coffin is placed in the palais or the premises of the deceased. In the case of syncretic funerals, these can begin with surveying, then Spiritual Baptist rites followed by a pause, and then transition into African chants; while purists remain steadfast to Yoruba recitations alone. Palm fronds, libations, grains, camphors and other ingredients are used at the house of mourning where the body first arrives, along the procession to the final resting and at cremation sites (which may follow a Hindu-type pattern with offerings made into the coffin and pyre)/crematoriums and cemeteries.

Post-funerary rites held to conclude the funeral ceremonies can occur on the fourteenth or fortieth day. Orisha funerals vary according to the practices of the departed and the leaders conducting the ceremonies. This emphasises the pluralistic concept and dynamism of the Orisha.

2.4) Public Celebrations

Shango Day/ Shango Festival

In 1996, the Egbe Onisin Eledumare launched the first “Shango Day” (McNeal 13). At a destination previously selected by the committee, offerings then made unto Òrìṣà, mainly
Shango\textsuperscript{46}. Apart from the exuberant drumming and singing, lessons about the Ifa faith are taught to attendees and literature produced by the organisation is disseminated among spectators to edify and revitalise the practice.

**Oshun Festival**

Started in 1990 by *Opa Orisha Shango* committee, this is conducted yearly, mainly at rivers or sea where Oshun is said to reside. Incantations begin following the Orisha litany sequence along with drumming. Offerings are made at the water’s edge or into the water while singing (McNeal 11). Pink flags, sometimes bearing other colours are raised for specific “aspects” of the deity. Manifestations are likely to occur.

**Egungun Festival**

Held to honour West African ancestrality. It entails parades with masqueraders and possible Trinidadian Ole Mas characters through the streets, ending with drumming, offerings and singing at a Palais. Different African nations’ descendants are all invited to attend and perform. Presumed to have been commenced in Trinidad in the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century by an Iyalorisha in South Trinidad (McNeal 20).

**Obatala Festival**

Relates to a ceremony where all participants are dressed in white in honour of Obatala\textsuperscript{47}, and march through the streets singing and drumming until reaching back to the place of origin.

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\textsuperscript{46} Shango- Òrìṣà of lightning and thunder

\textsuperscript{47} Obatala: creator of mankind and patron of the handicapped
Olokun Festival

This festival is dedicated to Olokun, Òrìṣà of the deep sea/ocean and the African diaspora, showing his link to the enslaved on the middle passage. Adoration is also offered to Yemonja, mother of the sea. Participants are carried via boat to the selected area where offerings, singing and drumming are carried out. This ceremony emphatically reiterates the necessity for marine life protection, the importance of the ocean for human existence and its facilitation of connectivity among nations. The Egbe Onisin Eledumare organisation are the pioneers behind this festival’s inception (Daily Express 2014).

Ogun Festival

Ogun, is venerated at such festival. With a procession filled with drumming, singing and masqueraders, Orisha religionists continue rites at a shrine where it is later culminated.

Soponna/Obaluaye Festival

This feast is staged in honour of Shakpana/Soponna also commonly referred to as Obaluaye/Babalu aye who is a forester, herbalist and mystical healer who can procure remedies for smallpox and mental illness and having the capacity to inflict maladies. The ceremony follows the schedule similar to the above mentioned ceremonies.

International Mother Earth Day

Held in honour of the Mother of the Earth called “Onile” in Yoruba and “Maman LaTerre” translating from French, meaning “Mother Earth”. To be hosted for the first time on Saturday 22nd April, 2017 at San Fernando City Promenade by the Council of Orisha Elders.48

48 See Photo 6 of International Mother Earth’s Day public notice.
La Divina Pastora’s Feast

The Parish of Siparia has a constant annual influx of faithful hailing from various spiritualties who journey to honour the “Black Madonna”, a dark-skinned version of “Mary the Divine Shepherdess”; along with mainly Hindus, who see her as Kali Mai of India, are Spiritual Baptists and Orishas. For major feasts such as Holy week and the patron’s day, the shrine experiences a confluence of religions, practitioners who pray before the statue and offer candles, money, flowers, rice, oils, and jewellery (Dhalai 2013). La Divina Pastora has found a home in Hinduism as “Siparee Mai” and admitted to the hybrid Orisha pantheon, known as “La Divin’” where offerings, flags and Yoruba-Patois mixed hymns are given to her (Lum 125).

Orisha Family Day

Often held in Lopinot, Trinidad, at a headstone established at the historic burial ground of African slaves who suffered at the ruthlessness of a French planter, Count de Lopinot. The Orisha Family Day began in 1998 by the Orisha Council of Elders with the venue being consecrated much earlier by the Ooni of Ife during his 1988 visit and declared an “African Heritage Site” by the then Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday. The event brings together Orisha devotees of differing ranks and traditions as one body annually (McNeal 15-16).

49 See Photo 7 of La Divina Pastora’s Statue at the shrine in Siparia.
### 2.5) **Synopsis of Òrìṣà Energies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Implement/s</th>
<th>Offerings</th>
<th>Equivalents</th>
<th>Miscellaneou-s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Olodumare</strong></td>
<td>God</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>“God the Father”</td>
<td>Names: Olorun/Olofi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elofa</strong></td>
<td>Manifestation of Olodumare</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Bulls offered in leap year</td>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>“Eternal Father”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obatala</strong></td>
<td>Creator of mankind</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>Palm fronds</td>
<td>Snails, white doves, palm wine</td>
<td>-Lord Brahma/ -Lord Ganesh -Our Lady of Mercy</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ogere</strong></td>
<td>Manifestation of Obatala</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>spear</td>
<td>rabbits</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>- Old rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oduduwa</strong></td>
<td>Progenitor of Yoruba Race</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>staff</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orumilla</strong></td>
<td>Diviner</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>Cowrie shells, palm nuts, obee seeds</td>
<td>Goat, yam, fish</td>
<td>St. Joseph</td>
<td>Names: Ifa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eshu</strong></td>
<td>Opener of the way. First to be venerated</td>
<td>Black a/o red</td>
<td>Club in each hand</td>
<td>Water, ashes, biscuits, coffee</td>
<td>-St. Lazarus -Dee baba</td>
<td>Trickster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ogun</strong></td>
<td>Warrior, Protector, Craftsman, technology</td>
<td>-Red, -red &amp; white, -red, white &amp; green, -green &amp; black</td>
<td>Sword/cutlass</td>
<td>Goats, chickens, rum, cigarette, Purists offer dogs.</td>
<td>-St. Michael, -Hanuman baba</td>
<td>Ifa Purists Names: Ogun Lakaye, -Ogun Akirun, -Ogun Alagbede, -Ogun Alara, -Ogun Ikole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ogun Onire</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Red</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ogun Feray</strong></td>
<td>Manifestation of Ogun</td>
<td>Red &amp; green</td>
<td>Sword/cutlass</td>
<td></td>
<td>St. George warrior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mama Laterre</strong></td>
<td>Mother Earth-Onile</td>
<td>Brown/rown plaid</td>
<td>Walking stick, Straw hat, Cocoyea broom</td>
<td>Fruits, Sweet bread, Cakes, honey, wine, perfumes</td>
<td>- Our Lady of Perpetual Help/ Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, - Dharti mata</td>
<td>very old, can barely walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ye ye Oshun</strong></td>
<td>Mother of rivers, sensuality, prosperity.</td>
<td>Pink/white</td>
<td>Mirror, peacock feathers, anchor, sterring wheel</td>
<td>Ducks, wine, milk, honey, perfumes cakes</td>
<td>St. Philomena - Mother Lakshmi</td>
<td>Stool is near a water feature, -Names Syncretic devotees know: Lashe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goloshun/Goul Osun</td>
<td>Manifestation of Oshun</td>
<td>Pink &amp; blue or Pink a/o yellow/ red</td>
<td>Mirror and comb</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Lives in depths of river</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
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<td>----------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oshun Aladeokin</td>
<td>Oshun’s mermaid avatar that cannot speak</td>
<td>Lime green, yellow/ gold</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petite Oshun</td>
<td>Oshun that lives at the river bank</td>
<td>Pink &amp; light blue/ yellow</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oshun Ibukole</td>
<td>Oshun’s aspect</td>
<td>Pink &amp; yellow/ gold</td>
<td>ropes</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemonja</td>
<td>Mother of the Sea</td>
<td>Blue/ navy blue a/o white</td>
<td>oars</td>
<td>Ducks, Goats, hens, molasses</td>
<td>St. Anne</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erinle</td>
<td>Hunter and water deity</td>
<td>Red or blue &amp; white</td>
<td>Sticks, daggers, staff</td>
<td>Drakes, cocks, snails, goats, guinea fowl</td>
<td>- Prophet Jonah - Lord Shiva</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Oshun, Talade Oshun
- Sounds like a whale or screams
- Associated with sun
- Manifests where the river and sea meet
- Considered mother/ sister of Oshun
-"
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Color/Accessory</th>
<th>Symbols/Attributes</th>
<th>Associated Figures/Deities</th>
<th>Domain/Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ajaja/Erinle Abata</td>
<td>- Manifestation of Erinle - Lives in mangroves</td>
<td>Blue &amp; yellow</td>
<td>``</td>
<td>``</td>
<td>- not known to Purists as Ajaja - Water deity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibeji</td>
<td>Divine twins</td>
<td>White a/o sky blue</td>
<td>Keys, arrows, mirror</td>
<td>Drakes, cocks</td>
<td>- Sts. Peter &amp; Paul - St. Cosmas &amp; Damian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olokun</td>
<td>Ruler of the deep oceans</td>
<td>Navy blue a/o green</td>
<td>trident</td>
<td>Cabbage, molasses</td>
<td>- Lord Vishnu/Varun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ochosi</td>
<td>Master of the hunt</td>
<td>Green/ yellow/brown/brown</td>
<td>Bow and arrow</td>
<td>Fruits, cocks</td>
<td>- Lord Ram - St. Raphael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakpana/Obaluaye</td>
<td>- King of the world - Forest deity, herbalist</td>
<td>Brown/red and black</td>
<td>cocoyea broom</td>
<td>Brown goats and cocks</td>
<td>St. Anthony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osayin/Osain</td>
<td>“Bush master” &amp; healer</td>
<td>Yellow / green a/o brown</td>
<td>Cocoyea broom, cutlass, turtle shell</td>
<td>Goats, cocks, morocoy, rum</td>
<td>- St. Francis of Assisi - Lord Shiva (Puspati-nath)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Son of Shakpana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hingy</td>
<td>Manifestation of Osain</td>
<td>Yellow a/o white/green</td>
<td><code>\</code></td>
<td><code>\</code></td>
<td><code>\</code></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurum</td>
<td><code>\</code></td>
<td>Red and black</td>
<td>Fire, cutlass</td>
<td>Fruits, turkey</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palara</td>
<td><code>\</code></td>
<td>Yellow &amp; black or orange</td>
<td>staff</td>
<td>Rabbits, rum, cigarette</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abanike</td>
<td>warrior</td>
<td>Red, white, green, yellow</td>
<td>staff</td>
<td>fruits</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olokbo</td>
<td>Forester-protector of flora &amp; fauna</td>
<td>Red, green, yellow</td>
<td>Grass knife</td>
<td>Wine, fruits</td>
<td>-Lord Murga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oko</td>
<td>Patron of agriculture</td>
<td>brown</td>
<td>Garden tools</td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>St. Isidore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aganju</td>
<td>-Patron of volcanoes and mountains -forester</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Goats, cocks</td>
<td>St. Christopher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shango</td>
<td>Thunder &amp; lightning</td>
<td>Red, red &amp; white</td>
<td>Double-edged axe, staff</td>
<td>Rum, tobacco, sheep, cocks</td>
<td>St. John/St. Barbara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Colors/Patterns</td>
<td>Objects</td>
<td>Attributes</td>
<td>Patron/Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
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<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oya</strong></td>
<td>Wind, storms, death</td>
<td>Green, green &amp; white</td>
<td>hatchet</td>
<td>Sheep, hens</td>
<td>St. Catherine - Goddess Kali, Wife of Shango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Veronica</strong></td>
<td>Oya’s manifestation</td>
<td>Green/ plaid</td>
<td>wheel</td>
<td>Wine, perfumes</td>
<td>St. Veronica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oba</strong></td>
<td>Shango’s first wife</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>sword</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>St. Elizabeth - Not common - patron of household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vigoyanna</strong></td>
<td>- Pygmy hermit - South American origin (Lum 115)</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>Two cutlasses</td>
<td>Rum, cigarette</td>
<td>Guyanese ‘Buck’ - Kal Bhairo - Name: Bogoyanna - violent - syncretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kufe</strong></td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Red, yellow, green</td>
<td>stick</td>
<td>Wine, cocks</td>
<td>- - Rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abatala</strong></td>
<td>Possible manifestation of Obatala</td>
<td>-Red, green, gold - white</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Rabbits, doves</td>
<td>- - Rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Damballah/ Oshumare</strong></td>
<td>Rainbow serpent</td>
<td>White, rainbow</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Ground provisions</td>
<td>St. Dominic - Associated with water and sky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Helena</strong></td>
<td>Mother of all Nations</td>
<td>Rainbow</td>
<td>keys</td>
<td>Wine, milk,</td>
<td>- St. Helen - Name: Elena - syncretic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The dynamism of the tradition has been outlined in this chapter, exploring its rudiments, shrines, significant festivals and numen, acting as an extension of chapter one. Interview data will be presented in the following component based on information provided above.

---

50 List composed by several Orisha believers: Randell Mathura, Kern Marcell, Racquel Modeste, Jeffrey Biddeau, Oba Shango Kemi, Ekundayo Opatola Somorin, Ifasoyin Alves-Bravo, St. John’s Spiritual Baptist Church, Laventille,
Chapter 3
Presentation of Data

This chapter presents the tabulated results of the data obtained from interviews. The statistics are grouped under individual categories, replicating the manner in which the questions were presented to the subjects. Informants are paired or grouped based on questions posed and their religious affiliation: Ifa calypsonian\textsuperscript{51}, purist awo (training priest)\textsuperscript{52}, syncretic Orisha shepherd\textsuperscript{53}, Hindu Madrasi priestess\textsuperscript{54} and Catholic priest\textsuperscript{55}.

Upon interrogation of “personal information”, respondents were first asked their area of residence, all of whom identified different regions, with 80\% highlighting the fact of having lived elsewhere previously. Only 60\% indicated knowing of an Orisha presence in their current districts: Mathura, St. Helena, San Fernando, 40\% of whom linked the demographic to the existence of Orisha shrines in the vicinity while also mentioning a stronger Spiritual Baptist population in said regions.

Following demography, discrimination was addressed. With 40\% being non-Orisha, the remaining 60\% indicated experiencing discrimination during academic formation, because of their religious affiliation, by classmates. Of the three Orisha devotees, only one stated not having encountered prejudice at work which appeared culturally oriented. On the contrary, one being a calypsonian and the other employed at a Roman Catholic high school, both alluded to significant criticism by colleagues. Additionally, 20\% confessed denying the faith and claiming to be Christian, also avoiding religious discussions so as to minimise ridicule, while another 20\% communicated having felt ashamed of the Orisha heritage due to constant harassment from classmates, being called the “obeah boy” during childhood. All 60\% suggested this hate emerged from fear of esotericism: sacrifice and possession, ignorance and the taboo of “Shango”. The 40\% Hindu and Catholic indicated having condemned or was fearful of Orisha worship in the past due

\textsuperscript{51} Andall, Ella. Personal interview. 3 Apr. 2017.  
\textsuperscript{52} Biddeau, Jeffrey. Personal interview. 30 Mar. 2017.  
\textsuperscript{53} Mathura, Randell. Personal interview. 31 Mar. 2017.  
\textsuperscript{54} Ramdial, Neeta. Personal interview. 12 Apr. 2017.  
\textsuperscript{55} Sirju, Martin. Personal interview. 31 Mar. 2017.
to prominent “obeah” rumours influenced by elders but presently have a changed mentality and would like to experience Orisha ceremonies.

Shifting to Orisha concepts, when asked what is “Shango/Orisha Baptist” or simply Orisha, 40% Orishas stated that “Shango/Orisha Baptist” is an oxymoron and contradictory as Baptist is a Christian Sect while Orisha is a West African spiritism. Subsequently, 20% suggested the creation of “Shango Baptist” or “Shango” terms relate to the significant migration of Oyo State natives of Nigeria, where Shango is the presiding deity, to Trinidad. However, solely 20% of Orisha adepts use the term “Orisha Baptist” as a result of considerable syncretism between both faiths while others see it unfit. Two out of three practitioners stated Orisha is a tradition, a way of life and not a religion, contrary to the third respondent. Finally, the 40% non-faithful consider Shango Baptist and Orisha to be the same: African traditions fusing with several cultures to form a hybrid system, while 20% saw no differentiation between Spiritual Baptist and Orisha stating both being very close practices.

An extension of Orisha concepts, Obeah’s representation and its connection to Orisha were investigated. Two fifths diabolised Obeah and claimed it in no way identifies with Orisha, while the majority perceive it as the belief in unseen energies and mysterious ritualism that can be utilised for positive or negative purposes as presented in Figure 1.0. Both the Orisha purist and Catholic priest viewed rituals of other religions as “Obeah” such as wearing a crucifix for protection and lighting candles before saint statues, others did not. The purist also postulated that obeah originated from obee, the seed used in divination.

What is Obeah?
Does it have any connection with Orisha?
Can other religions’ rituals be deemed Obeah in your opinion?
Apart from Obeah, seen as eclectic, all participants were questioned on their knowledge of which religions Orisha has syncretised with. 100% answered Roman Catholicism, Spiritual Baptist and Hinduism, 40% added kabbalah, 30% highlighted Ifa devotees who reverted to purism and only 20% mentioning Buddhism, witnessing a “Chinese service” with green tea, fans, Buddha and ‘Lady Buddha’ statues. The syncretic practitioner highlighted demiurges who epitomise the fusion of cultures: Osain, La Divin’ and Vigoyanna. However, the Ifa calypsonian denoted experiencing eclecticism in former shrine with La Divin’ and Vigoyanna- believed to hail from the Katarina tribe. It must be noted that all interviewees share the belief that divinities of all religions are the same, manifesting in accordance with the cultural context of the region as well as all having the same one God/Creator. Three of five interrogated believed Òrìṣà numen are energies, contrasting with the Catholic priest and syncretic Orisha who viewed them as lesser deities and saints respectively.
Table 1.2 shows the informants’ responses when asked if eclecticism had positive or negative results on the Orisha and if it stimulated the loss of its original African essence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSON</th>
<th>ECLECTIC IMPACT ON ORISHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ORISHA PURIST</td>
<td>Caused the loss of Orisha originality but responsible for keeping it alive throughout Trinidadian history. Nigerian priests visiting Trinidad remarked, in amazement, on upheld ritualism, some which no longer realised in Nigeria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORISHA SYNCRETIC</td>
<td>It strengthened it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORISHA CALYPSONIAN</td>
<td>Dilutes it to an extent but syncretic traditions are based on the practices of each Orisha yard that always vary. Both positive and negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HINDU MADRASI PRIESTESS</td>
<td>Mixing enhanced it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIEST</td>
<td>Syncretism reinforced it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2 highlights impact of intercultural on the Orisha
When asked about Orisha rudiments, 100% identified the most prominent: drumming, flags, sacrifice and possession/manifestation. The Hindu Priestess added spirituous offerings, public worship: beach, river; and bedi pooja/ “sit-down prayers”. The syncretic Orisha contributed to the Hindu’s list, mentioning Spiritual Baptist elements: pointing, mercy seat, mourning, baptism, (open table) thanksgivings; Orisha elements: feasts, divination; and Kabbalah: banquets. 20% purist recorded incising, naming ceremony and saraca. 40% of the interrogated Orisha circuit revealed initiations, weddings, funerals not liturgically fixed and improvised based on hosting party’s worship method, spiritual rank or Òrìṣà instructions. However, 60% mentioned “doption”, vocal grunting and humming, 40% of whom linked it to colonial prohibition ordinances against African religious songs and it being the basis of calypso and soca beats.

Figure 2.2 and 1.4 reveal responses to questions relating to preference for the terms possession or manifestation and reasoning, also perceptions of animal sacrifice.
Figure 2.3 presents the views of each respondent on the practice of animal sacrifice.

40% of Orisha faithful interviewed, consisting of purist and syncretic followers, were interrogated on Orisha precepts for the purpose of understanding the dichotomy within the path as seen in Table 1.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Purist - 20%</th>
<th>Syncretic - 20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Godhead</strong></td>
<td>Olodumare, by extension important numen: Elofa, Obatala, Orumilla, Oduduwa.</td>
<td>Interchange between Christian Trinity and Olodumare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Órìṣà</strong></td>
<td>- Neither male nor female (can assume sex and form)</td>
<td>- Neither male nor female (can shapeshift)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Considered energies</td>
<td>- Considered saints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Celestial and ancestral ranks</td>
<td>- Celestial and ancestral ranks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Number: 401 as stated in an Ifa prayer</td>
<td>- Not sure of number: 1000s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Positive Órìṣà called Ajagun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Negative known as Ajogun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Offerings</strong></td>
<td>Prayer to Eshu states offerings to be made: obee, honey, light, oil, sacrifice.</td>
<td>Offerings of milk honey, oil, liquor, tabacco, perfumes, grains, dainties, sacrifices offered since Órìṣà once walked the earth and enjoyed such savouries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some of other offerings done were introduced due to adaptation in a colonial and culturally diverse society.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Flags | Origin: Odu latasia mentions hoisting a flag for Obatala. However, Hindu emphasis on flags may have influenced Orisha faith. | - Does not know origin  
- Received in dreams, visions, mourning.  
- Symbol of victory  
- Represent Òrìṣà, nation or aspects |
| Drumming | -3 drums: bo, bembe, oumilay  
- used to awaken energies | - 3 drums  
- used to send messages to other realms  
- animate celebrants  
- summon Òrìṣà |

Table 1.4 shows variations and similarities of understanding and performing rituals among purist and eclectic groups.

In analysing Orisha rudiments, investigation was conducted on the Kabbalah practice among both purist and eclectic sectors. Totalling 40% of the Orisha community conversed with, both groups shared mirroring beliefs. 20% believed it was more negative than good while the other 20% believed it was neutral. Nevertheless, both explained, it entailed the veneration of angelic and demonic entities at banquets, flag raising and sacrifice, separate from Orisha, employed for man’s bidding. 40% believed it originated in Egypt, spread to Africa and Jerusalem, influencing Moses and Solomon, transported to Europe via prophets and crusaders, then brought to the Caribbean.

Regarding Trinidadian culture and society, 40% indicated Orisha influencing calypso, soca, carnival (ole mas’), folklore, wakes and their activities, and steelpan. 20% noted its impact in Catholic liturgy such as drumming. Also, historically the church of Vistabella was built on Orisha grounds, named St. Andrew Kaggwa in honour of an African saint; bordering a Salmon tree, under which Orisha naming ceremonies were conducted. The tree was later felled and its trunk used as a tabernacle. 20% was unsure of its impact on culture. In opposition, 100% claimed that the government has not done enough for these people.

The following table portrays further remarks procured by the interlocutors with regards interculturation, Orisha’s historical imprint and future.
### Effects of Orisha progression

| Orisha-Madrasi Alliance | - More intermingling between Orisha and Shakti worshippers within and outside temple ceremonies  
| | - Less discrimination from Sanatanis towards Orisha congregations  
| Orisha and La Divin’ | - Orisha visit La Divina Pastora’s Shrine yearly, making offerings before the statues  
| | - High tolerance by Siparia’s Catholic community of Hindu and Orisha believers visiting  
| | - Unrestricted movement of religionists at shrine viewed as positive  
| Orisha and Theatre (Ella Andall) | - Trinidad and Tobago Orisha Performing Company launched in 2015  
| | - Produced first children and adult’s Orisha choir in the country  
| | - Annual public performances, educate citizens- attitude change  
| | - Ella sang Orisha hymns for the Dalai Lama and Nelson Mandela on a global stage  
| | - More Orisha Cds to be produced, played at Emancipation processions  
| Orisha’s Success with Biddeau Lineage- Chief Anisere Sango Olori Omowale Jeffrey Biddeau (subject’s father) | - Established first shrine “Egbe Onisin Ile Imo Orisa Ni Ojubo Sango” in 1981, second in 1987\(^5\)\(^6\) where Yoruba was taught  
| | - Created Eastern Emancipation and Cultural Committee  
| | - Initiated as Orisha priest in Nigeria  
| | - Dignitary on Council of Orisha Elders  
| | - Member of Orisha Steering Committee- held first Orisha World Conference in Trinidad.  
| | - 2000s became Chief Anisere Sango- powerful clerical rank  
| | - Shrine existing 36 years  

\(^{56}\) See Photo 9 for Chief Anisere Sango Biddeau’s Egbe Onisin Ile Imo Orisa Ni Ojubo Sango shrine.

Table 1.5 shows the progress of the Orisha faith etched in Trinidadian society over the years.

The data obtained from five interviews were presented above in accordance with the different themes addressed, though not in the same order as the literature review, the tabulations will be analysed in the following section with the chronological evolution of the Orisha.
Chapter 4

Analysis of Data

This chapter provides an analysis of the data presented in the preceding section along with literary references to compare and contrast previous studies on the Orisha with data obtained from interviews in contemporary Trinidadian society. Since this study does not propose a problem statement, the tradition will be examined on a holistic level.

In conducting this study, numerous observations were made pertaining to the dynamism of the Orisha faith in Trinidad. Focusing on understanding the Orisha concept, Obeah, discrimination, syncretism, ritualism and rudiments and the impact it has had on the society, we see some differences between past and present as well as variation of knowledge by Orisha and non-Orisha citizens on the sect.

It was first observed upon asking believers to define the term “Orisha”, two of three identified it as a tradition or way of life, not a religion. This opposes the third practitioner’s view who saw it as a religion. Lum in his exposition interchanges between “Shango cult” or “Orisha way”, neither of which was mentioned by the interrogated. Contrarily, Houk recorded interviewees perturbed by the term “cult” suggesting it was disparaging and preferred “Orisha religion”. With mutual understanding of Orisha as a religion by the lone 20% and Houk’s 1995 acquaintances, we can deduce that the general perception of the practice’s status has manoeuvred from cult to religion to tradition. It is plausible that due to the fact there is a minimal population that practises the religion, it is possible to say that this has caused the movement to transform from religion to something more of a traditional nature. Per contra, though both terms are synonymous, it appears the followers consider it more a way of life or organic, not rigid as religion, controlling- restricted by regulations; a transmission of values to younger generations, despite heavy ritualism. This represents a more advanced comprehension of the system, leaving “Shango/Orisha Baptist” to be demystified.

A standing 40% declared “Shango/Orisha Baptist” an “oxymoron”, contradicting itself as Shango/Orisha refers to West African spirituality while Baptist, Christian denomination. Nevertheless, the syncretic Orisha identified with the title due to dual religiosity. Despite the
groups’ eclectic copulation, the respondent indicated disgust by both Orishas and Spiritual Baptists over the term’s usage, in agreeing with Lum’s work, this postulates the fact that such disdain which instigates conflicts among followers, endures within contemporary society. With considerable emphasis imposed on “Orisha”, the “Shango’s” inscription appears faded away. Orisha Purist Biddeau suggested its former prominence with the exodus of Nigerian Oyo State natives to Trinidad, where Shango was the presiding guardian, resulting in Trinidadians believing Shango as Orisha’s main deity, an issue ignored within the literature acquired. Non-Orishas however believed both Orisha and Spiritual Baptists have the same origins, complimenting Eudora Thomas’ idea that “Baptist is an offshoot of Orisha” which Houk proves to be inaccurate with American Baptists fusing Afro-centric elements with their services. This reveals continued misinformation and lack of education on this aspect similar to that of Obeah.

Obeah was perceived evil by both the Hindu and syncretic Orisha, while 60% concluded that it was the belief in unseen energies, invoked to fulfil positive and negative purposes based on the entities’ nature, through ritualism. It could be purported that resulting from the syncretic’s Christianity and the Hindu, influenced by public’s opinion diabolising Obeah, it was viewed malefic, highlighted in Slinger Francisco’s calypso Obeah wedding representing the popular belief of necromancy among citizens, thus instilling fear. Participants encountered discrimination in the education system, work environment and music industry much of which related to national fear of the “Shango” and Obeah as the awo highlighted being ridiculed as “Obeah boy” which provoked a sense of shame of the faith. It can be concluded that this was the product of colonial Obeah prohibition ordinance in 1921 responsible for sparking such fear in representing the faith as demonic. Sharing mutual sentiments, the syncretic Orisha faced criticisms working within a Catholic school which led to denial of the faith and claiming to be Christian. Without a doubt, colonialism has taught society that idiosyncrasies outside the Christian circuit was shunned. Similar to Ella Andall upon entering the music industry, by producing Orisha chants and draped in African wear, creating a sense of discomfort among indoctrinated anti-mysticism citizens.

Referencing purely sorcery, no participant alluded to the paradigm of herbalism as stipulated by Gerbert and Olmos, articulating both sorcery and herbal healing elucidate Obeah. Only the priest, grounded by Hindu backgrounds, seminarian inter-religious instructions and interaction with the free movement of religions at Siparia’s shrine, together with the purist
indicated Obeah and Orisha are connected and inseparable, along with Obeah present in other religions - emphasis on lighting candles for saints in churches and wearing crucifixes for protection were examples provided, justifying Obeah elements in each sect. This underscore reveals the perception of any ritual being Obeah, thus portraying its demonisation as unwarranted due to a lack of general understanding and fear of esotericism. Further compounding this, Gerbert and Olmos suggested Obeah derived from Ashanti origins known as Obeye contrasting Orisha purist awo’s deduction of Obeah emerging from obe- seed used in divination. Thus instead of “casting the obe”, one may have said “doing obe/Obah”, connecting Obah’s framework to Orisha and other religions.

100% conveyed Roman Catholicism, Spiritual Baptist and Hinduism as leading religions syncretised with Orisha with none mentioning Rada which we can conclude results from the lack of education of and interaction with the sect. Additionally, the syncretic practitioner included Buddhism revealing “Chinese ceremonies” where green tea, fans, Buddha and Guan Yin statues were used. Thus supporting Frances Henry’s argument that some Orishas “deal” with Chinese deities. This may have been the first time such a discovery was made since none of the literary sources mentioned this fact. We also witness Osain’s heavy syncretism being called “Indian man”, represented by the moon and star according to the syncretic adept. As suggested by the purist, this may be due to the phonology of the name “Osain” resembling “Hosein”, emanating Simpson’s claim that the Òrìṣà was confused/fused with Prophet Muhammad’s grandson, “Hussain”, locally called “Hosein”.

Another deity that 20% mentioned was Vigoyanna who was admitted to the Orisha pantheon in Trinidad. Acclaimed as the Guyanese “buck” or pygmy of South America, a Trinidadian folkloric figure due to travels between Guyana and Trinidad. It can be deduced that Trinidadian folklore was influenced by many nations but inevitably seemed to osmose with Orisha’s mysticism. Calypsonian, Ella Andall noted Vigoyanna is attached to the Katarina tribe of Brazil, tying the persona to Amerindian spiritualism. Finally, Òrìṣà La Divin’ has no connections with Africa but emerged from the shrine in Siparia, La Divina Pastora’s Church, also called the “Black Madonna”. Both Hindus and Orishas flock to the shrine on feast days as Dhalai’s article mentioned, which was affirmed by 40% Orishas and Catholic priest interviewee- Fr. Sirju who pastored that parish for several years. Orisha’s dynamism has surpassed expectations, combining
intelligences of several cultures into the Ifa pantheon, in adapting to an alien society, found harmony among faiths as Mongba David in Houk’s work stated that all energies are the same seen as the exact response of the interrogated when questioned on the perception of powers of other religions. This encourages mixing of ceremonies.

It was observed that eclecticism contributed to ceremonial transformations within the practice, with subjects highlighting drumming, flags, possession and sacrifice. All of which were similar to the Madrasi priestess’ tradition, facilitating a more solid collaboration between both groups, as insinuated by Mahabir, inclusive of bedi pooja or sit-down prayers in Houk’s work. The “Orisha Baptist” listed Spiritual Baptist’s rites: mourning, baptism, thanksgivings, showing the inseparable integration of ‘Shouter’s Christianity’ into Orisha liturgy. Not ignoring the syncretic’s mention of Kabbalah believed as evil, supported by Mahaba’s message, while the awo purist rendered it neutral based on celestial and infernal interactions, both of whom acknowledged its origination in Egypt, contrary to Houk’s deduction of the cult’s source in Babylon, to which it was added that Moses and Solomon were Kabbalists, transporting the practice to Israel and Babylon, then brought to Europe by crusaders and Europe to the Caribbean. With both syncretic and purist remarks on the Kabbalah, there is an obvious conviction that Spiritual Baptists, syncretic and purist Orishas partake in this society, showing a subtle connection to the Orisha. However, the purist noted a loss of weddings and post-mortuary rites due to slavery and are now improvised based on the host’s practices which may mix Baptist, Hindu and Orisha rites at the burial or cremation. Like the deities, the rituality has incorporated other systems due to syncretism and assimilation but also to compensate for what has been lost, which stimulates the thought of the faith becoming too ‘diluted’.

Jacob Elder addressed this issue confirming the rise of radicals who descended from the Black Power Movement, promoting the necessity of expurgating eclectic aspects in order to return to Ifa purism. Proving to be controversial, 60% reiterated that such fusion of cultures has had positive effects on the Orisha, fortifying its existence and dispelling the dilution argument. Houk’s work concretises this claim by concluding that it encourages harmonious interactions among ethnicities. It can be deduced that though Ifa purists’ practicality existed since the Afro-centric movement to modern era, extracting the eclectic component can disintegrate the dynamism of the Orisha, not giving recognition that as a result of interculturation Orisha has survived through the
centuries, which validates the point of the purist that in some respects, African originality was lost but syncretism was key in Orisha’s momentous imprinting of its complex presence in the country.

Having observed the syncretic-purist dichotomy, only the shepherd and awo were questioned on the differences between both spiritual formations. The purist counted four hundred and one Òrìṣà: two hundred positive on the right of Olodumare: Ajagun; and two hundred negative on the left: Ajogun, with the odd number being Eshu at the centre. The respondent revealed this was discovered in an Odu. This statement was supported by Frances Henry who spoke about Baba Massetungi’s Orisha Carnival band launch titled 401 meets 2001, referring to the number of demiurges. However, the syncretic Orisha believed the total ranged in the thousands. We can conclude that this is as a result of syncretism, adding deities to the existing Orisha pantheon. Germaine to offerings and libations mentioned by Lum, it has been purported by the syncretic Orisha that the Òrìṣà walked the earth as ancestors and favoured such savouries during incarnation. While the purist indicated Eshu’s prayer citing offerings of obe, honey, light, oil and sacrifice. The multifariousness of gifts in creole Orisha reflects its acclimatisation to the New World and intermingling with other religions due to the availability of various implements and ingredients.

Concerning the purpose of flags, both individuals acclaimed it representing deities, nations or aspects. Though the syncretic did not know the origin and highlighted being given flags in visions, the purist mentioned Odu Latasia that acknowledges flags for Obatala. In agreement with Taylor and Case, it was believed the rite was influenced by the Hindu practice of flying flags, and by extension European emphasis on national and supplementary flags.

Regarding sacrifice and spirit-mediumship, informants expressed a minority view accepting such acts as positive, dating practices to ancient civilisations. Only 40% used the term “possession”, as said by the Catholic priest who referenced interactions with exorcists using the term. The syncretic highlighted “possession” associating with evil domination, suffering an individual. This fact links Christianity and colonialism as responsible for the damnation of the faith by the public insinuating Orisha having “possessions” relating it to demonism. While others preferred “manifestation”, representing the movement of a “divinity”. This connects to Lum’s point that possession illustrated maleficence and manifestation appropriately associated with divinity. Based on this deduction, it could be conveyed that spiritualists mainly of non-Christian faiths- that frown upon esotericism, have a higher level of understanding with reference to the
inter-personal relationship between mortals and numen. Despite persecution, Orisha has established its presence within cultural expressions.

Respondents noted Orisha and West African ancestrality impacted Trinidadian culture. 60% identified the steelpan hailing from the Orisha yard which supports Folami’s point of the national instrument emerging from Ogun’s worship and drumming, tying Trinidadian percussion to Orisha. The practice of “doption” or grunting as a result of African hymns being prohibited during colonialism, to which songs were hummed at ceremonies, produced the beat for calypso and soca, also outlined by Adam Pascall on the Guardian, which reiterates Orisha’s influence on music genres. However, the “griot/chantuelle” concept of kaiso/calypso was not recognised among the interrogated, showing a possible portrayal of the lack of knowledge on the topic. This highlights the need for a revitalisation of these proficiencies to be implemented in academic systems, similar to folklore.

Trinidadian folklore fuses European mysticism to African and Amerindian superstition, seen as an effect of the melange between Orisha and other religions which supports Houk’s point. Like griots, allegorical personalities of superstition were not identified, concluding an uncertainty of which spirits are connected to the Orisha, proving to also be an understudied topic. Linked to Orisha, calypso and folklore is carnivals, specifically traditional mas’, as described in Henry’s work. Though not indicated, this draws reference to the implementation of masqueraders resembling mystical characters of West African spiritism as well as Kabbalistic entities, yet again proving to be an understudied aspect that is not taught in schools.

Finally, wakes were mentioned where tamboo bamboo and drumming were done as noted by the syncretic, linking drumming to Orisha ritualism though none of the literature outlined this. It could be proposed that lack of information may be owed to the loss of funerary rites and adaptations to European and modern forms of expression, disintegrating its coalition with Orisha. We also see Orisha making its mark in music with Andall’s growing company and developed by Biddeau’s father’s legacy, along with Opa Orisha Shango, Egbe Onisin Eledumare and Council of Orisha Elders aforementioned in the literature review, all of which continue to publicise and fight for national recognition and acceptance.

The conduction of this study proved that Orisha is not a religion but a West African tradition, also controversially called “Shango/Orisha Baptist”, accepted by some and loathed by
many. From this syncretism, blossomed Obeah, constituting sorcery and herbalism but perceived as majorly negative, encouraging heightened discrimination. Consequently, this taboo procured prejudice within the education system, work place and music industry as emphasised by the data obtained, illustrating the colonial continuum. Nevertheless, Orisha eclecticism expanded among many religions, stimulating the nativity of neo-divinities and sacraments. However, purist adepts have rejected forms of “dilution”, resulting in the loss of African originality, hence siring a division within the practice. Despite internal conflicts, the faith has influenced steelpan, calypso, carnival, wakes, folklore and established renowned organisations upholding the Orisha’s aphorism. Thusly, Orisha’s imprint on Trinidad is impeccable, though not elevated to the rightful pedestal it deserves, it continues to flourish.
Conclusion

This chapter synthesizes this study’s findings, provide recommendations, suggest areas for further research and summarises the limitations incurred during its realisation.

The objective of this study included a holistic investigation of the Orisha faith in Trinidad and its evolution following a chronological timeline. The faith’s journey from Africa to the Caribbean was first analysed in building the foundation of this exposition, aspects such as the Ifa practice’s inception in Nigeria, European intrusion and initiation of slavery were examined. Succeeding the middle passage, the establishment of Orisha, through syncretism, in the Antillean islands was compared, appearing as the backdrop for the main focus of Trinidadian creolised Orisha. Significant emphasis was placed on interculturation, featuring eclecticism with Catholicism, Kabbalah, Spiritual Baptist, Hinduism and by extension Buddhism, Islam and Amerindian spirituality; moulding the faith into a hybrid product. Great attention was owed to the faith’s liturgy: rudiments and ritualism, both African and creole, as well as an exploration of deities and the reversion to purism were conducted.

From colonialism to modernism, the tradition’s presence incurred considerable persecution and continuous discrimination in the education system, music industry and work environment, exemplifying its struggles in adapting to an estranged and misinformed society. Finally, the impact of the practice upon Trinidadian culture was outlined, highlighting its influence on steelpan, calypso, carnival, folklore and the inauguration of several Orisha organisations. The data collection conveyed findings that supported the aforementioned topics.

Based on the results, it was observed that citizens apprehended Orisha as a West African tradition, not a religion that integrated into Trinidadian society by fusing with other cultures. This gave rise to the term “Shango/Orisha Baptist”, considered a contradiction with Orisha being an African spiritual system while Baptist was identified as a Christian sect. Connected to cultural cohesion, Obeah was expounded, to which the minority consensus deemed it malefic, while the majority illustrated its positive-negative polarisation, highlighting practices of other religions as Obeah also. Both Obeah and “Shango” were diabolised since slavery and post-emancipation
which shaped societal norms, leading to derision encountered, as revealed by respondents in schools, employment and at first the kaiso tents, which later developed into a revolution grounds brewing with Orisha fidelity. Though persecuted, the sect persisted, assimilating with neighbouring ethnicities.

This cultural copulation facilitated further syncretism of Orisha with the previously mentioned religions as observed from the data. The findings illustrated the adoption of Catholicism as camouflage, incremental in the survival of the orthodoxy. Further interacting with oriental theologies, encapsulating Sanatanist and Madrasi Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. Additionally, resulting from Guyanese influence, the Orisha blended with Amerindian systems. This amalgamation birthed neo-intelligences and sacraments. Contrarily, it was discovered that followers reverted to the purism, discarding all eclectic elements, grounded in the conviction that it diluted the tradition. Despite the segregation, the Orisha circuit persisted and established various organisations, gaining national recognition.

This research can be applied as a reference for future endeavours investigating the Orisha faith in Trinidad. It is integral that organisations and ministries invent programmes and documentation available to the public, providing edification on the faith, minimising discrimination and stimulating awareness of its influence on society. Further investigation should be pursued on marriage and post-mortuary liturgies, exploration of deities, Obeah and the Orisha-Amerindian and Orisha-Chinese relationship. In realising these investigations, numerous limitations were encountered. Initially a total of eight interviews were designed, however due to the unreliability of some candidates, the proposed conduction failed. Assistance was sought from several practitioners, many of whom agreed to be interviewed or provide information but cancelled at the last minute, ignored all forms of contact and displayed irritation towards the dialogist.

Nevertheless, the Trinidadian Orisha remains an understudied topic that requires more attention.
Appendix I
Sample Interview

Interview with Randell Mathura- Syncretic Orisha

Personal Information

1) What religion do you identify with?
2) Do you also practice the Orisha religion?
3) Were you born into the Spiritual Baptist faith or did you join the religion later on in your life?
4) Why did you join it?
5) When did you begin practising the Orisha faith?
6) How did you become involved with this religion?
7) What area of Trinidad do you reside in?
8) Are there other Spiritual Baptists and/or Orishas living there as well?

Discrimination experienced as a result of religious affiliation

9) Were you ever discriminated against during your schooling by students and/or the administration because of your religion?
10) If so, in what way/s?
11) Have you ever experienced discrimination during your adulthood such as in the workplace and/or your community because of your religious practice?
12) If so, in what ways?
13) Did you ever deny or felt the need to tell others that you were of another religion such as Christian, so as to avoid being condemned by those around you?

Individual perception of both Spiritual Baptist and Orisha faiths

14) What do you think is the difference between the Spiritual Baptist and Orisha faiths?
15) From your knowledge, what similarities are there between both faiths?
16) Very regularly we hear the term “Shango Baptist” and when asked, many individuals do not know the name Orisha. Do you know how did this term, “Shango Baptist”, come about?

17) Do you hold any religious position within both faiths?

18) Which Godhead do you believe in?

19) Who are the Orishas to you?

Rudiments and Practices of both faiths, mainly Orisha.

20) How is a Spiritual Baptist baptised/ initiated?

21) What items are used during rituals?

22) Can you explain how Orisha weddings and funerals are done?

23) Do you carry out animal sacrifices in honour of the Orishas?

24) How does an Orisha practitioner begin offering animals in sacrifice?

25) Can you explain why are alcohol- rum and wine, and cigarettes offered in the Orisha way?

26) Flour or corn starch is used to draw diagrams on the ground before the beginning of various Orisha ceremonies, can you explain what is the purpose of this?

27) What do these symbols mean?

28) Why do Spiritual Baptists and Orishas chanting, hum, groan and moan?

29) Is there a specific name for this?

30) What is the mourning grounds?

31) What is the process through which a devotee undergoes in order to mourn?

32) What does the worshipper experience while on these grounds?

33) Do you know if the ancestors did this same ritual or did they have another method for connecting with these divine entities?

34) Do you prefer he term manifestation or possession?

35) Why do you choose that term?

36) Could you explain what divination is?
Division between the Spiritual Baptist and Orisha sects

37) Why do you think some Spiritual Baptists do not participate in Orisha ceremonies and rituals?
38) Do you believe there is a division between the two communities whereby one discriminates against the other?
39) Syncretic aspect of Orisha worship
40) Apart from the Orisha and Spiritual Baptist faiths, have you attended or do you perform rituals that are of other religions? For example Hindu prayers- “Bedi pooja”
41) Have you ever seen or attended a Chinese prayer ceremony conducted by Orisha devotees or Spiritual Baptists?
42) Can you highlight what you witnessed?
43) What is your understanding of the Kabbalah?
44) Do you know if the kabbalah and Orisha systems can mix?
45) If no, why not?
46) Based on your understanding, is there a reason as to why mainly Orisha worshippers participate in Kabbalistic rituals?
47) Have you ever witnessed the mixing between Orisha and the Amerindian practice?

Trinidadian Society

48) Since the Orisha became popular from slavery, do you believe this faith has impacted Trinidadian culture?
49) If so, in what way or what aspects of the culture?
50) Do you think previous governments have done enough for the Orishas of Trinidad?
51) If so, in what ways? If not, please explain why.
Appendix II

Photos

Photo 1 shows a perogun of St. John’s Spiritual Baptist Church, Laventille with Osain’s moon and star.

Photo 2 showing Buddha’s sanctum in an Orisha Chapelle.

Photo 3 Oshun’s pool at St. John’s Spiritual Baptist Church, Laventille.

Photo 4 “open table” thanksgiving.

57 Citations of images located in “Works Cited”
Photo 5 layout of sit-down prayers altar.

Photo 6 Mama Laterre Festival public notice.

Photo 7 image of La Divina Pastora’s statue in Siparia.

Photo 8 Orisha flags.
Photo 9 Chief Anisere Sango Biddeau’s Shrine, Mathura.

Photo 10 Image of Yoruba Village’s sign in Port-of-Spain.
Appendix III
Hymns to Òrìṣà in Trinidad

**Eshu:**
Eshu baragbo mojuba,
a re a re.
Eshu baragbo mojuba,
a ta monde ko ri ye,
Eshu baragbo ye,
mojuba elegba eshu lona.

**Mama Laterre:**
Mama Laterre o,
Mama Laterre.

**Ogun:**
Baba de, Ogun ye,
Oku/Ogun de ye baba wo.

**Obatala:**
Ye ye Pa,
Ye ye ye Pa.
Obatala ye Pa.

Baba de o, Ogun ye,
Oku/Ogun de ye baba.

**Oshun:**
Alanga la fi la fi Oshun,
Alanga la fi la fu ye ye.
Oshun ga la fi la fu ye ye.

Baba de o, Ogun ye,
Oku/Ogun de ye baba wo.

**Abanike:**
Abanike ku ma she/shay wole yo,
Aju la ye.
Abanike ku ma she/shay wole yo,
Aju la ye.
**Yemonja:**
Yemonja ile a ri wo a ko ko,
Yemonja ile a ri wo a ko ko.
Yemonja ile a ri wo a ko ko
Yemonja ile a ri wo a ko ko.

Monja ile a ri wo,
Yemonja ile a ri wo.
Monja ile a ri wo,
Yemonja ile a ri wo.

Yemonja ile a ri wo a ko ko,
Yemonja ile a ri wo a ko ko.

**Erinle:**
Erinle rinle,
Erinle rinle wo.
Erinle rinle,
Erinle rinle wo.

Baba ti monde ye ru ma ya,
Baba ti monde,
Erinle.

**Ibeji:**
Kere kere ya
Ibeji ibe kere

**Shakpana:**
Oniya oniya,
Shakoti a lo ye,
Oniya oniya Shakpana/Shoponna,
Shakoti a lo.

**Osayin:**
Wole wole Orisha,
Wole wole a.
Osain jahwela,
Orisha wole.

**Ajaja:**
Ajaja o, Erinle,
Ajaja o, Erinle.
Ajaja o, Erinle,
Ajaja o, Erinle.
**Gurum:**
Baba o de ma makiyami,
Gurum makiyami o.
Baba o de ma makiyami,
Gurum makiyami ye.

**Yingi/Hingy**
O Yingi Yingi
Ota o mi o,
O Yingi Yingi,
Ota o mi. x2

Abado Yingi Yingi,
Aba okubo/okumo,
O Yingi Yingi,
Ota o mi. x2

**Palara:**
Ye ru jagba, Ye ru jagba,
Ye ru jagba, Papa/Baba Palara.
Babalarisha ye ru de,
Ye ru jagba Papa/Baba Palara

**Ochosi:**
Ochosi ayi lo da mala mala de
Ya a be ileke iworọ
Ode mata go lona
Shire shire
Ode mata ore ore

**Shango:**
Shango mojuba erinle,
Shango oni kwa lo,
Eri jaja, Orisha Oko, Orunmilla,
Shango mojuba erinle,
ye sulehiwa kuso/koso.

**Oya:**
Omi awa ,
kwe mi la ri she/shay,
Omi awa,
Oya kwe mi la ri she/shay.

Abado Yingi Yingi,
Aba okubo/okumo,
O Yingi Yingi,
Ota o mi. x2

**Veronica:**
Veronica, Veronica kwe,
Shango mini/bini Oya.
Veronica, Veronica kwe,
Shango mini/bini Oya.
**Ogere:**
Ogere Orisha,
Ye Orisha Ogere.

Ogere Orisha,
Ye Orisha Ogere.
Ogere Orisha.

**Vigoyanna:**
Koro masa goro,
Vigoyanna samedona.

Vigoyanna samedona,
Go go yanna sa mi wole.

Koro/goro masa goro,
Vigoyanna samedona.

**La Divin':**
La Divin’ wole se/she ogba
La Divin’ wole,
La Divin wole,
La Divin wole.

La Divin’ wole se/she ogba,
Wole wole wole se/she ogba.

**Mother Helena:**
Ye Helena ke pa wo de,
Ye Helena ke pa wo de,
Mama na ye/ ma ye wo.

Ye Helena ma pa la do aye,
Mama ma pa la do.

**Egungun:**
Egun baraba,
Egun baraba.

Egun baraba o,
Egun baraba o.

Baraba ra,
Egungun!

Baraba ra,
Egungun!

Baraba ra,
Egungun!

Baraba ra...


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