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On peut toujours déplorer que cet hommage vienne trop tard pour Conrad Laforte, qui nous a quittés en 2008. Avouons à la décharge du directeur que le projet était en gestation au moment du décès de cet immense chercheur. Son initiative répare un oubli incompréhensible du CELAT à l'endroit de son réputé collègue. Par leur variété et leurs qualités, ces *Mélanges* confirment l'importance incontournable de cet ethnologue dans l'étude de la chanson folklorique. Son *Catalogue* et la classification qu'il a patiemment élaborée constituent un outil essentiel pour qui veut approfondir la chanson traditionnelle. Un catalogue est une clé qui permet d'accéder aux œuvres, c'est aussi un idiome qui facilite les échanges entre spécialistes d'une même discipline en leur fournissant un langage commun. Telle a été la grande et durable entreprise de Conrad Laforte. Il pourrait se réclamer à juste titre du vieil Horace, qui écrivait voici 2000 ans : « *Exegi monumentum aere perennius* (J'ai achevé un monument plus durable que l'airain) ».

*Joel E. Tishken, Tóyin Fálolá, and Akíntúndé Akínyemí (eds.).
Sangó in Africa and the African Diaspora*

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Several years ago, on my first visit to Cuba, I was approached by a stranger who, upon spotting a line of freckles on my shoulder, insisted that I was a son of Changó. The birthmark meant nothing to me before this, yet upon inquiry I was told that it looked like Changó had hit me with his axe. I soon learned that a second birthmark, a non-descript patch of darkened skin on my outer thigh, was read by some as a mark from Changó's lightning. Apparently, my body belongs to an aggressive warrior spirit, who controls thunder and lightning, carries a double-headed axe, and, in some circles, is seen as a particularly virile, hyper-masculine leader. While attending a Santería ceremony

one night, I saw two people lose control of their bodies and become possessed by òrìsà, the West African dieties Yemayá (protector of the oceans) and Elleguá (guardian of the crossroads). When Elleguá spotted me, he stated with great enthusiasm that I was one of his sons. Yemayá disagreed. The two argued and eventually concluded that I am a son of Elleguá but that I spend much of my time in the house of Changó. I am dedicated to Changó but not owned by him.¹

I begin with this personal anecdote to reveal both my own connections and potential biases to the cult of Sàngó, as well as my desire to give a thorough review of this book. I likewise use it to emphasize the diversity of experiences and interpretations that accompany Sàngó worship, with particular reference to the African diaspora. The editors of *Sàngó in Africa and the African Diaspora* have set out to explain a complex piece of West African history and spirituality, to demonstrate how one deity, associated with the small city of Òyó in the ancient kingdom of Yorùbáland (within the borders of contemporary Nigeria and Benin), has continued to develop as a powerful force in politics and popular culture across much of Africa and the New World. This work blends approaches from history and folklore, as well as religious and literary studies. The authors include both academics and practitioners, some of whom fulfill both categories simultaneously.

Part One, “Defining Sàngó in West Africa,” consists of four essays, each of which mainly focuses on historical narratives and mythologies and the question of the origin and spread of the cult of Sàngó. In chapter two, The “Place of Sàngó in the Yorùbá Pantheon,” Akíntúndé Akínyemí starts by demonstrating the differences of views on the exact order of the Yorùbá pantheon - namely interpretations and debates on the order of deities through various Yorùbá communities. He states up front that his goal is not to argue for the supremacy of Sàngó but

1. Sàngó, is the Yorùbá spelling used throughout this text. Changó is the spelling and pronunciation used primarily within Afro-Cuban Santería. Xangô references its use in Brazil. The different spellings indicate not only shifts in language, but likewise differences in interpretation and understanding of a singular historic and spiritual figure. Keeping with the style of this book’s editors, I vary the spelling according to the vernacular use within each community. I also maintain as much accuracy as possible in the use of accents for Yorùbá terms, some of which do not exist in the Latin alphabet.

rather to explain why Sàngó is such a popular deity both in Nigeria and throughout much of the African diaspora. It is a complex essay, and it is assumed that the reader already has a firm understanding of the context of this debate. Many of these details, however, become clearer in the following chapters. My greatest concern in this essay is Akínyemí's uncritical use of the word "syncretization" in relation to Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian religion (this is covered later on, however, by Glazier in chapter eleven). Regardless, Akínyemí provides a thorough examination of Yorùbá mythology in the New World, along with an explanation of the direct role of Sàngó in the lives of believers through the Eérindínlógún divination system. This system is referenced in several additional chapters, with the greatest practical explanation given by George Olúsolá Ajibádé (chapter four).

Àrinpé Gbékèlólú Adéjùmò, "The Practice and Worship of Sàngó in Contemporary Yorùbáland" (chapter three), takes a slightly more ethnographic turn while building on the same question of how and why Sàngó became such a popular and powerful deity. While the author supplements the study of mythology with ethnographic data on ritual performance, there is only passing acknowledgement of this fieldwork and little detail or personification of the data (from both the fieldworker and informant perspectives). I find this style of writing needlessly abstract, and reflective of an older school of ethnographic writing where the researcher attempts to be subjective through hiding his/her own presence from the reader. Adéjùmò focuses primarily on the debate as to whether Sàngó was a deity that descended from heaven (in accordance with Ifá divinatory verse), or if he was a human that was deified as a god (as such, the fourth Aláàfin of Òyó). Chàngó in Cuba belongs in this second stream, although Adéjùmò argues that Sàngó predated the fourth Aláàfin. Some context is given from the perspective of informants, in that we are told that one's social position influences the interpretation of origin stories. For example, Christian missionaries potentially distorted such myths to present Sàngó as evil. She rightfully concludes that while there are multiple interpretations of the history of Sàngó, he continues to be a significant influence on contemporary life. Additional examples of the role of Sàngó in contemporary popular culture would be invaluable to support this claim. Some of this evidence, however, can be found in part two of the text.

The following essay, “Sàngó’s Eérindínlógún Divinatory System” (chapter four) by George Olúsolá Ajibádé, is a much more straightforward and practical entry, outlining the importance and use of divination systems in Yorùbá spirituality and giving a concise description of Sàngó’s unique system. This is followed by Marc Schiltz’s work, “Yorùbá Thunder Deities and Sovereignty: Àrá versus Sàngó” (chapter five), an essay that, once again, adds context to the preceding material. For Sàngó novices, I recommend reading chapters four and five prior to chapters two and three.

Part two, “Representations of Sàngó in Oral and Written Popular Cultures,” consists of four chapters that tie more closely with folklore, ethnography and performance studies. It begins with Diedre L. Bádéjò’s “Sàngó and the Elements: Gender and Cultural Discourses” (chapter six), a feminist reading of Sàngó and his wives drawing primarily on traditional proverbs. This interpretation is aided by direct reference to fieldwork experiences, in particular the author’s own experiences with Nigeria’s thunder and lightning (Sàngó) and wind and rain (which belongs to one of Sàngó’s wives, Oya). There is a linking between the interpretation of proverb, praise poetry, and mythology to the everyday experiences of life in Yorùbáland. Inclusion of political and historical changes in Yorùbá society makes this a particularly powerful essay in the study of Sàngó as the foremost male òrisà in Yorùbá ideology.

Shifting from literary analysis to performance studies, Dúrótoyè A. Adélékè’s “Reconfiguration of Sàngó on the Screen” (chapter seven) helps fill the popular culture gap that was opened up by Adéjùmô in chapter three. Beginning with the 1963 internationally award-winning play *Oba Kòso* (Sàngó didn’t hang) by Dúró Ládipò, and discussion of how this play went on to influence all aspects of cinema and theatrical performances of Sàngó ever since, Adélékè embraces semiotics and mediumship to support the notion that Ládipò’s performance of Sàngó is the penultimate example of Sàngó, i.e., the actor is not just performing Sàngó but rather he iconizes Sàngó. Based on Adélékè’s description, I would argue that the play should be analyzed as ritual, as it clearly goes beyond theatrical performance. The transference of Ládipò’s character onto film is examined as a seemingly impossible task, demonstrating how the spirit of Sàngó continues to thrive across Nigeria, despite the encroachment of Christianity and Islam.

Written from the perspective of art history, Stephen Foláránmí's "Art in the Service of Sàngó" (chapter eight) is an in-depth look at the material culture of Sàngó from both objects of worship and ritual to objects designed for beauty and admiration (the line between these two is unsurprisingly vague). This work includes a variety of illustrations and descriptions of decorative motifs and their variations as found on historical and contemporary Sàngó statues, double-headed axes, ritual pots, twin figures, mortars, gourd rattles, costumes and shrine paintings. While there is some discussion of the use of colour in these examples (particularly the importance of red and white), it is unfortunate that the images are printed in black and white. Foláránmí also discusses the influence of Christianity and Islam (mostly negative) on Sàngó art and material culture and examines how this relates to the diaspora, though this part is more thoroughly covered in other chapters.

The final essay in part two is Akíntúndé Akínyemí's «The Ambivalent Representations of Sàngó in Yoruba Literature». This is perhaps the clearest discussion in the book about Sàngó origin stories, that is, the debate over whether Sàngó was a god that descended from heaven (mythical origin), the fourth king of Oyo who was deified upon his death (historical origin) or a literary figure (constructed through oral narratives commenting on human nature). The author argues that some of this debate may be the result of manipulation and/or misunderstandings by Christian missionaries in attempt to dissuade òrìsà worship. Akínyemí demonstrates part of the multiplicity of interpretations is also based on poor literal and cultural translation. For instance, he argues that, while it is common for aláàfín (kings) to commit suicide, it is highly unlikely that they would commit suicide by hanging (the root of the historical origin story). Likewise, Akínyemí shows how the belief that followers of the fourth aláàfín of Oyo hid his suicide and then deified him is also a poor interpretation. The followers did not need to manipulate a historical event to support deification, as all aláàfín of Oyo are deified following death, and most have died of suicide. It would be more logical to interpret the fourth aláàfín of Oyo as a follower of the mythical Sàngó that preceded him, and who then adopted his name and attributes, thus leading to a conflation of ideas and a further strengthening of Sàngó's powers into contemporary life. Some of the historical narratives examined in this chapter are closely tied to Dúró Ládipô's play *Oba Kòso* (Sàngó didn't

hang). As such this chapter works particularly well with Adéléké's essay (chapter seven).

Part three, "Sàngó in the African Diaspora" is in many ways the most useful section for western folklorists, those of us who are not so concerned with the origins of Sàngó, but rather who are struggling to understand the role of Sàngó within North American and Caribbean communities (of course, I refer to my own confusions and frustration here in dealing with multiple conflicting stories about Sàngó in Cuba). Kamari Maxine Clarke's "The Cultural Aesthetics of Sàngó Africanization" (chapter ten) provides an excellent opening to this section as she moves well beyond Sàngó himself, but rather focuses on the spread of òrisà worship in general. Clarke identifies four categories of practitioners: 1) those in Nigeria, Benin and surrounding West African countries, who embrace òrisà as a continuing but declining tradition; 2) those across the Americas, who form the largest group and who accept to varying degrees the hybridization of òrisà; 3) post-1960s revivalists, mostly Yorùbán, who seek to return to a more orthodox practice which often includes purging whiteness from the religion; and 4) post-1980s modernists, led primarily by white Americans and Europeans who seek to transcend racial membership emphasized by ancestral lineage in the religion. The surprising observation here is that West African practitioners are a minority when we look at the global spread of òrisà practices. Clarke uses these categories to then examine the diversity of interpretations and practices associated with Sàngó.

Stephen D. Glazier, "Whither Sàngó? An Inquiry into Sàngó's *Authenticity* and Prominence in the Caribbean" (chapter eleven), outlines research on Sàngó shrines in the English-speaking Caribbean, namely the work of Melville J. Herskovits, George Eaton Simpson, William Bascom and Frances Henry. Each anthropologist's contributions and influences (positive and negative) to Sàngó scholarship are analyzed. Glazier gives particular attention to the role of gender in these studies, and by incorporating his own fieldwork develops an argument for the increasing importance of Sàngó across the region. I particularly appreciate his much needed critique of Melville Herskovits' 1947 concept of syncretism, a term that was used uncritically, and thus problematically by Akíntúndé Akínyemí in chapter two. Likewise, I see greater discussion here to the multi-

gendered nature of Sàngó, something that I've observed during fieldwork in Cuba, but which has received little mention thus far in this book. Glazier notes that all òrisá's have the potential to be male and female, black and white, and young and old (243), and that Sàngó in the Caribbean is frequently presented as the epitome of maleness, yet dressed in female clothes. He even notes a question raised by Erika Bourguignon, a student of Herskovits, to the effect that the lack of discussion by Herskovits of transvestitism and homosexuality in African-based rituals may be related to the problems that this would have created for the cause of blacks in the United States. The question is left open and thus allows us to question transgressive aspects of gender and sexuality of this machismo figure as something that was written out of early ethnographies. It is an idea that deserves additional exploration.

In studying the power of Sàngó in Brazil, Luis Nicolau Parés, "Xangô in Afro-Brazilian Religion: "Aristocracy" and "Syncretic" Interactions" (chapter twelve), gives special interest to the role of Xangô as a king, and, within enslaved communities, a figure of resistance and justice. He finds that the structure of Candomblé is largely rooted in the ritual and political structure of Yorùbá government. In other words, Xangô's ritual power overlaps with political and social power in the Afro-Brazilian society. The role of "Xangô in Brazilian society and everyday life is likewise explored by Laura Edmunds in her detailed analysis of Esmeralda Ribeiro's 'A procure de uma borboleta preta' (chapter thirteen: "In Search of a Black Butterfly"). While there is little on the surface of this story to indicate attachment to Xangô or other òrisàs, there is a wealth of symbols embedded in the work that, as Edmunds argues, allows it to be read as a moral tale, targeted targeting women, that grows out of Yorùbá mythology. A dream sequence about a miscarried child, described as a black butterfly, is a signifier of Xangô himself.

According to Henry B. Lovejoy, "Drums of Sàngó: Bâtá Drum and the Symbolic Reestablishment of Òyó in Colonial Cuba, 1817-1867" (chapter fourteen), of an estimated 80-85,000 enslaved Yorùbá in Cuba, approximately 65,500 are thought to have been brought there between 1825 and 1850. The high number of Yorùbá slaves is framed as a result of the collapse of Òyó, due to the Muslim uprising (1817) and the Òwu War (c. 1820-25). Lovejoy begins with these

numbers and a description of *bàtá* drums (sacred drums which belong to *Changó/Sàngó*). He uses the distribution of these drums, which are unique to *Yorùbá*, to argue that the majority of Cuban slaves originated in *Òyó* (which as we've already seen is closely associated with *Sàngó*). This chapter concludes the diaspora section, discussing an instrument that is essential to any *Sàngó/Changó* ritual.

Part four, "The Voices of *Sàngó* Devotees" provides a relaxing shift from the theoretical to the practical, i.e., this is how we celebrate and understand *Sàngó*, as defined by those who are spiritually responsible for him. It is a move toward reflexive ethnography, as these two final essays present insider reactions to the scholarship that has been largely driven by non-initiates. As a priestess of *Ifá* and *Sàngó*, *Olóyè Àiná Olomo*, "*Sàngó* beyond Male and Female" (chapter fifteen), gives a direct and concise synopsis of who *Sàngó* is, how s/he came to be, and how s/he gets misinterpreted. Much of her discussion hinges on nature and the fact that *òrisàs* are not just historical-mythological characters, but that in reality they are forces of nature that give us the tools to link the natural world to social constructs. *Olomo* likewise looks closely at gender and sexuality, noting that because *Sàngó* is about the union and balance of dualisms, it is wrong to interpret him/her purely as a male figure. S/he is most frequently presented as male with machismo, but his/her power is drawn from the union of male and female, thus transgressing Western forms of gender identity. Additional commentary on gender theory would be appreciated in this chapter; I see a great opportunity here for melding critical and vernacular theories within *Sàngó's* example.

The concluding chapter, "Searching for Thunder: A Conversation about *Changó*," is an interview between Michael Atwood Mason and his godfather in *Lucumí/Santería*, Ernesto Pichardo. As a young child in Cuba, Pichardo was identified as a son of *Changó*. Because of the revolution, his family moved to Miami where, at age sixteen, he became *santero*. His involvement with Afro-Cuba religion led to his expulsion from high school. In 1974, he founded the Church of *Lukumí Babalú Ayé*, which the city of Hialeah (suburban Miami) attempted to shut down through the banning of animal sacrifice. Pichardo successfully brought the case to the U.S. Supreme court. In this interview, he explains some of the characteristics of *changó* with particular reference to how his *oricha's* attributes are manifest in

his own life. As an essay that melds theoretical and practical aspects of the religion, along with politics and migration, all led by a son of Changó, it is a fitting conclusion for this dense, yet rewarding collection.

My only true critiques for this text are: 1) the need for a glossary of Yorùbá terms to aid non-initiates and novices; and 2) the need for greater attention to the role of Sàngó in popular culture. Yorùbá dictionaries are not widely available or necessarily standardized. The editors have taken great care to guarantee that Yorùbá terms are properly presented, and properly spelled according to the vernacular context, yet they have provided little to help readers negotiate this complex territory. While we are given exceedingly detailed histories of Sàngó and largely comprehensive discussions of ritual and function of Sàngó for his followers, the references to his influence on popular culture are mostly skimmed over. As implied in these essays, the power of Sàngó influences the lives of many who are not directly involved with his worship. Throughout much of Nigeria and the diaspora, Sàngó continues to be experienced through a variety of forms of popular culture as well as through non-religious everyday life.

Gerald W. Creed. Masquerade and Postsocialism: Ritual and Cultural Dispossession in Bulgaria

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A nation subject to much change following the end of communism in 1989, Bulgaria is a complex nation, with multiple ethnicities and a vast cultural heritage that has attracted international attention. Its push to join the European Union (which it successfully did, in 2007) and become part of contemporary Western society brings to