

much space in her discussion. Who were these donors? Only in the epilogue (212) is the Ford Foundation named as a donor for one of the NGOs studied by Murdock and another brief reference in the text mentions an unidentified European donor (24). Politics probably prohibited more openness. Throughout the book the flow of discussion is somewhat slowed down by repetition and by overuse of jargon.

The book is rich in information and detail. Descriptions of women's personal backgrounds and experiences liven up the discussion of historical background and policy- and process-issues. In conclusion, this book will find its place in the literature on Latin American feminist struggle. It goes beyond public declarations and actually shows us how women, in the face of considerable odds, are organizing and working for a better life.

Maria-Barbara Watson-Franke

**Olupona, Jacob K., and Terry Rey** (eds.): *Òrìṣà Devotion as World Religion. The Globalization of Yorùbá Religious Culture*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008. 609 pp. ISBN 978-0-299-22464-6. Price: \$ 34.95

This large volume of more than 600 pages is the result of a conference held at Florida International University in 1999 entitled "From Local to Global: Rethinking Yorùbá Religion for the next Millennium." Twenty-six of the original forty-three presentations are included in this volume. Both African-based scholars and practitioners as well as those living and working in North America, the Caribbean, and Europe participated in the conference. The book is divided into two sections. Part I deals with Yorùbá religious culture in Africa and Part II with its religious culture "beyond Africa." The main focus of this review will be on the second part as it corresponds more closely to my own interests and expertise.

Of particular note is the choice of the term "religious culture" rather than just "religion" to describe the globalization of this phenomenon. The original Yorùbá religion stems from Nigeria but it has over time spread and influenced many other countries in West Africa. It has encountered both Islam since the 14th century and Christianity more recently through missionization and colonialism. The transatlantic slave trade brought Yorùbá and their descendants to many areas of North and South America, and to the Caribbean, where their Òrìṣà religion has been combined with other religious systems including those derived from Europe, Native American, and other African spiritual communities. The deities and spirits known as the Òrìṣà and the centrality of their Ifá divination rituals and practices have stimulated important cultural and artistic development among inspiring artists, poets, and musicians. Increasingly, younger generations of African-American and Caribbean people are turning towards their ancestral form of religious culture.

Migration from Africa in the late 20th century – which continues in significant numbers today – has seen

Yorùbá people settling in many areas of the world and they have brought their Òrìṣà spiritual beliefs, values norms, and practices with them. This has led to a resurgence of Yorùbá religious culture throughout the world and has led many scholars to conclude that it can now be considered to be a worldwide globalized religious movement. The conference and the present volume attempt to critically explore the scholarly and popular interest in "Yorùbá-derived religious traditions, a 'transnational,' 'diasporic,' and 'global' religious-cultural ensemble" that the editors call "Yorùbá religious culture" (4). Moreover, since the devotees of this religious culture can now be found all over the world, this "religious culture" like Christianity, "should now be considered a world religion" (3).

Distinguished literary doyen Wole Soyinka sets the tone of the volume in chapter 1 appropriately titled "The Tolerant Gods" by suggesting that the very beauty of the religion combined with its power and tolerance and the "accommodative spirit of the Yorùbá gods" can lead to harmony and the promotion of international peace. Other themes in Part I of the volume include chapters on language, philosophy, the sacred icons of Yorùbá deities, a critical discussion of the role of Benin, and other significant sociocultural and historical issues. It concludes with a provocative chapter by philosopher Barry Hallen who discusses the role of the "epistemic, moral, and aesthetic" values of the Òrìṣà religious culture and the impact of these values on the cultural life of the people.

Part II shifts attention to the diaspora. Cuba and Brazil were, and continue to be important countries in which many Yorùbá epistemological and ritual elements flourished despite the oppressiveness of slavery and later colonialism. Various known as Santería, Lucumí, Ocha in the former; Candomblé and Macumba in the latter, the Òrìṣà religious culture merged with elements of Catholicism and became the primary means of worship for large numbers of people in these two countries. Modified forms of Òrìṣà worship are also found in other areas of the Caribbean and Central America.

From the 1940s onwards, Cuban migration to the United States has played a critical role in disseminating Yorùbá-derived Òrìṣà religious culture. Santería and Lucumí flourish in Cuban communities especially in Florida, but of even greater significance is that these traditions have been brought to African Americans who have found a new strength and identity in their relationship to Africa. Òrìṣà religion provides them with a form of worship that is fundamental to their African origins.

Yorùbá religious culture in the diaspora demonstrates the important role of Cuban migration to the US from the early 1940s to late 1950s. Forms of Santería and Lucumí flourish not only among the migrants themselves; but their Òrìṣà traditions have been taught to African Americans who find strength and a sense of renewed identity by worshipping African deities, learning traditional forms of ritual and ceremony, and integrating these with knowledge gained from travel and the study

of written texts. Thus, as Hucks notes in chapter 17, “this emerging religious consciousness bestowed new agency, authenticity, and authority to North America’s black citizens . . .” (339). The Òrìṣà religion, therefore, provides a religious and a sociopolitical sense of identity for African Americans and other African descended people.

The importance of the Yorùbá religion in the United States is illustrated by the creation of Òyótúnjì, a Yorùbá village recreated by Black nationalists in South Carolina in 1970. Clarke’s valuable chapter 15 concentrates on the role and function of divination in this “transformed space.” She notes that divination is an interpretive practice by which agents “interpret, consult, and hold symbolic power” which are however, embedded in “particular relations of power.” She demonstrates how the priests of Òyótúnjì, in particular, used their powers to change ritual and map new identities. In fact, priests and leaders everywhere in the diaspora where Yorùbá-derived religions are found can use traditional forms such as divination to change, transform, and reinterpret the many realities of life.

Clark argues that the realm of exclusion or the real life that was and is lived in the new world by Africans through slavery, colonialism, poverty, and marginality becomes transformed among those who are reviving, reinterpreting, and even reinventing Yorùbá traditions. This process “overturns the social order” by recasting new forms of knowledge. By focusing on how religious rituals can be used to both remember and forget the past, she provides important insights into the processes of social change and shows how religion performs critical ideological work which reflects particular historical and political conditions.

One of the most intriguing controversies that figures prominently in this book is the contestation over the role of gender in Yorùbá Òrìṣà religion both in Africa as well as in the diaspora. The gender controversy highlights an old debate in social anthropology – the familiar distinction between insiders and outsiders who have “qualitatively and quantitatively different knowledge of that culture or tradition” and are, therefore, differently affected by the “authoritative ‘truths’ that the academy exports” (513). The conference featured these differences of opinion between insider Oyèrónké Oyewumi, author of “The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses” published in 1997 with that of Harvard professor J. Lorand Matory’s “Sex and the Empire That Is No More: Gender and the Politics of Metaphor in Òyó Yorùbá Religion” (1994 and 2005). Oyewumi, a Yorùbá princess, along with her large family, grew up in a palace and was immersed in Yorùbá culture and religion. Her book critically examines the existing historical and ethnographic materials of the 19th century in the light of her own intimate knowledge of her culture. She concludes that gender did not exist before colonialism and furthermore that it does not exist in present-day Yorùbá culture either. Matory, on the other hand, has spent substantial time in field and archival research in Ìgbòhò, a former capital of the Òyó royal

empire as well as seven years with Afro-Cuban Ocha in the United States, eight months studying Candomblé in Brazil and often and repeated interactions with Òrìṣà worshippers in many areas of Nigeria. He concludes that Òyó-Yorùbá life “is full of gender-related vocabulary, practices, social processes, iconography, and moral expectations” (519). His intriguing chapter outlines the differences in background, methods, theories, motives, and facts that have led two Yorùbá scholars to profoundly different conclusions. Oyewumi was invited to contribute to this volume but apparently chose not to do so. This debate extends far beyond the two scholars and has led to scores of public lectures, roundtable discussions, dozens of scholarly articles, and several books. Among the many intriguing questions raised in this chapter is “what does this debate between an Òyó-Yorùbá princess and an African American – both scholars in the Western mold – teach us not only about Yorùbá society but also about the social dynamics of authoritative truth making in the academy”? (517).

Other chapters in this part of the book discuss various dimensions of retention including myth and memory, funeral rites, music, and even the role of the internet and digitalization in disseminating Yorùbá religious traditions. There is also a moving personal “Postscript” written by John Pemberton III to whom this volume is dedicated in recognition of his pioneering work on Yorùbá religion and art.

In sum, this book provides detailed and very comprehensive coverage of many aspects of Yorùbá religious culture both at source and in the multifaceted diaspora. It will be an invaluable resource for scholars and students alike. Its focus on one African cultural tradition, albeit an extremely complex one, and how it has transformed into a globalized worldwide spiritual movement may very well provide a model for further work in this field. I recommend it not only to specialists in Yorùbá and African studies but to anyone interested in the study of comparative and transnational religious systems.

Frances Henry

**Perrin, Michel :** Voir les yeux fermés. Arts, chamanismes et thérapies. Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 2007. 200 pp., photos. ISBN 978-2-02-020777-5.

In our researches on shamanism, visual documentation has always been a highly valuable component. To actually see what the shaman looks like, dressed in full regalia, swirling in an ornamented cloak, with masks and batons, presents an image of shamanism and shamanic healing that no mere words can describe. Even better if these elements are captured in movement and sound. Moreover, in terms of cultural and historical documentation, this evidence is invaluable in preserving our understanding and knowledge of shamanic manifestations, methods, and material objects employed at a particular moment in time, shamanism being in many ways a moving, even fleeting phenomenon. Fixing the moment, not only in words, gives us an innate, sensate knowledge that no mere verbal description can impart.