DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

Egbe Onisin Eledumare - 40 Years of African Resistance and Re-Definition in the Caribbean Diaspora.

Religion, Politics and Identity of a Pan-African organisation in Trinidad & Tobago

Verfasser

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Content

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III. Terminology

Throughout the work there is a couple of terms that I am using simultaneously, therefore I would like to explain them before:

Ifa or Orisha religion: Usually the scientific literature about Trinidad and it's African religion refers to the Orisha religion. During my fieldwork I encountered more commonly the term Ifa, whereby Orisha religion was seen as an outdated description. I can not argue for the whole community of practitioners, but inside the Pan-African community - that I participated during my stay on Trinidad - I encountered two different descriptions for the religion: Ifa and Yoruba Sacred Science (as it is used by Chief Oranfe and his organisation Egbe Onisin Eledumare). Further the term Ifa does not only refer to the religion, but also to the divination system as it is practiced in the Yoruba homeland and to a deity (like Oya, Orunmila, Ogun, Shango or Yemanja - all are orishas/deities that are worshipped in the Yoruba homeland in Africa and the Caribbean)

Olakela Massetungi; Chief Oranfe; Oloye Orawale Oranfe - all these names refer to the same person, but have different 'functions'. Oloye Orawale Oranfe is the chief title of Olakela Massetungi, being his official title as a spiritual head in the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago. Throughout the work I will refer to him as 'Chief Oranfe' (the term 'Oloye' means 'Chief'), as a kind of abbreviation for 'Oloye Orawale Oranfe'. Further he is also mentioned differently in the scientific literature as 'Brother Oludari' by Frances Henry 2003, or Oludari Massetungi by Kment 2005 - both descriptions are outdated because they simply refer to a title (Oludari Agbaiye) that had moved on to another person.

Egbe Onisin Eledumare or EOE - Egbe Onisin Eledumare is the organisation that was founded by Chief Oranfe (Olakela Massetungi) and others in the year 1971. Most Chapters in this work will be focused on the organisation as it is seen an example for the Africanization process in the Orisha religion/Ifa/Yoruba Sacred Science. EOE is a simple abbreviation for Egbe Onisin Eledumare.

<u>Africanization/Pan-Africanism/Re-Africanization</u> - To put it simple, in this work I am looking primarily at the process of Africanization (seen as the orientation towards the African roots) in the Orisha religion (as the common term in the literature) through the perspective of the organisation Egbe Onisin Eledumare (EOE) and their founder Chief Oranfe (Oloye Orawale Oranfe). The terms Africanization, Pan-Africanism and Re-Africanization refer basically to the same process in the Orisha religion, while having slightly different meanings. They are explained in Chapter 2.8 and in the beginning of Chapter 7. Further the ideological perspective of those who pursue this process of Africanization is described as Afrocentric, African-centred or Pan-African - as a reference to the before mentioned.

<u>Pan-African community/field</u> - In this work I am speaking primarily of the Pan-African field, to summarize the people that are Pan-African/African-centred in their ideology and practice of the Orisha/Ifa religion. Basically I am speaking further about the people that I met and accompanied during my stay on Trinidad, who are a part of the Africanization of the Orisha religion. The 'Pan-African field' is a term that I am using in this work to summarize these people and their most commonly shared perspectives and motivations. 'Field' refers hereby to the theories of Pierre Bourdieu (explained in Chapter 2.5), to describe a group of people that is connected through mutually shared interests. Alternatively it could also be called 'Pan-African community', but throughout the work I mostly prefer 'Pan-African field' (Kment 2005 observes the transformation of the 'Orisha community'). Again, it is a term that I created during the process of writing, to describe those people that I encountered on Trinidad, neither does it proclaim to stand for all practitioners of the Ifa/Orisha religion, nor does it occur as a usual term on Trinidad.

The further terminology of 'identity', 'identification', 'post-colonialism', 'post-modern', 'in-between', 'sites of memory' or 'commemoration' is explained in more or less detail throughout Chapter 2 "Theoretical Framework".

Chapter 1. Introduction

It's the 24th October 2010, I am standing at the shore at Dein's Bay located in the northwest of Trinidad's capital Port-of-Spain. It's shortly before midday and the sun is burning hot, while the sparkling surface of the ocean intensifies the solar energy that turns my skin red. Drums are playing, people are singing, reciting prayers in Yoruba. Suddenly a woman starts shaking, she's no longer in control of her body, others try to stabilize her. A young girl among the participants starts to scream loudly and intensely. The drums are still playing, others try to calm her down. The whole procedure goes on, other people start getting manifestations, they are now something else, slowly they start to wander off into the ocean where they move around, other participants join them to receive their blessings.

They are now Yoruba deities of the sea – it is the same sea that witnessed the fear and death of those who were caged like cattle "between shit and piss"[1] in the slave traders ships a few centuries ago. Offerings are made, mostly fruits and money, molasses[2] is poured over it, it's a beautiful offering that is given to the sea piece by piece. A participant asks for help, his brother got lost on the sea a few days ago.

It's hard to describe this mixture of feelings that are present throughout all these various happenings that are centred in place and time. After the ritual procedure food and drinks are shared among the participants – quickly the whole atmosphere gets much more relaxed. Quietly I am looking out onto the sea, where so many memories are buried and so many fates have been changed and challenged.

I was participating in Olokun Festival on this 24th October, one of the main festivals of the Pan-African organisation Egbe Onisin Eledumare (EOE). It was already nearly the end of my stay in Trinidad, many of the people who were present, I had already met before, some of them had become friends. They are part of the Pan-African field in Trinidad, their identification[3] is foremost African. Many of my perspectives had changed during my stay in Trinidad, I had met several strong personalities, whose attitudes had impressed me deeply.

Back in Austria, there is one question that lingers on my mind. Why are they defining themselves foremost as Africans, although they have been living in the Caribbean for generations? Their friends and families are in Trinidad, but nevertheless there are people feeling a strong call to go back to Africa. One of them is Chief Oranfe, the epicentre of Egbe Onisin Eledumare and my long-term interview partner.

This question has become a long-lasting companion that followed me throughout the process of writing. Therefore this work is not only about the Caribbean, about Trini-

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[1] Chief Oranfe used a similar description for the slave trade during a lecture in Austria in Winter 2011

[2] The thick liquid is a by-product of the sugar cane production

[3] Identification refers to the post-modern/post-colonial understanding of 'identity' that is explained in more detail below.

dad, it is also about Africa and the constant space of negotiation that lies "in-between"[4]. The question of identification is closely connected to the change of identity that African descendants underwent in the Caribbean, the place where they are mostly seen as the sons and daughters of former slaves.

The social stereotype of the "black- or negro-slave" that is still reproduced after the period of emancipation, is challenged by an alternative view. This view introduces a positive image of black identity and puts a strong emphasis on the African heritage of those living in the diaspora. Furthermore it includes the commemoration of history, turning the matters of the past into a matter of the present and the coming future.

As a state with a huge multicultural heritage, Trinidad comprises a multitude of communal identities that call for "an equal place"[5]. The participants of the Pan-African field are no exception in this respect. As their primal focus of identification and belonging - among a pluralism of ethnic and cultural heritage - rests on their African ancestors.

The political process which results from this complex situation goes beyond the political arena and reaches into religious and cultural domains and vice versa.

1.1 Aims of this work

Basically the aim of this work is to look on the one hand at the descriptive empirical data concerning the development and ongoing activities of the Pan-African organisation Egbe Onisin Eledumare in Trinidad, as well as the historical and cosmological background of the Pan-African field in Trinidad and its setting.

On the other hand this work is looking at the issue of identity as a central part of the positioning of the Pan-African field in Trinidad and its relation to the world. The topic of identity is hereby seen from a postcolonial/postmodern theoretical perspective that observes the transformation of identity from the "negro slave" in the colonial situation as the split and negated image of the colonial masters, to the image of "the African" as a descendant of continental African kingdoms, as part of the African diaspora with a positive self-awareness of their African heritage.

This transformation of identity has a continuous impact on the Orisha religion, as 'the' African religion on Trinidad, with various eclectic elements. Further it also influences the political landscape of Trinidad. The effect of this is reflected in the call for public holidays dedicated to the Pan-African community in Trinidad and the Africanization of the Orisha religion. Behind this lies a complex situation of identification and commemoration that shall be examined in more detail throughout the paper. Insofar the aim of this work is also to look at the issues of political legitimation and the contested authenticity debate as it is raised by Frances Henry. However, the aim is not to define what is "true" or "false" authenticity/identity, it is about showing the processes of legitimation inside the field of the Orisha/Ifa religion (by drawing on the

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[4] Homi K. Bhabha uses the term 'in-between' in his postcolonial studies to refer to the space of identification processes, around which the different identities are being writing.

[5] "Here every creed and race find an equal place" is part of the national anthem of Trinidad & Tobago.

available literature) and especially the position of EOE inside this field (as Yoruba Sacred Science). The reason for this perspective is that it would go beyond the reach of this work simultaneously with a misunderstanding of the local situation to define what is authentic "African" and what is not. The designation of authenticity or the legitimation of identity are ongoing subjects of debate inside the field. They are important parts of this field, not external guidelines. The aim of this work is to show that these issues of legitimation are crucial questions for the progress/process of development inside the religion. Insofar it would be misleading to search for easy answers to these questions, or to use the term 'identity', without a critical perspective on it's essentializing and normalizing notions.

To introduce different perspectives on the topic, this paper also includes examinations of the personal spiritual motivation and the plans for the future. Although this work is largely focused on EOE, there are still a lot of stories untold. But it's a step forward to point out the importance that EOE played in the establishment of African-centred philosophy and spirituality in Trinidad, a topic that is still of importance, which - I am quite certain - will further increase in the near future. It is surprising that nearly no scientific publications can be found that are dealing with EOE, although they have been a crucial factor in the development of the Orisha religion. It is about time to change that situation.

It would be inspiring to encourage initiated members of the religion to write about similar issues or their perspective on the Ifa religion, through the perspective of a devotee, that will clearly be different from mine. As a person who became aware of his secular and atheistic attitude during fieldwork I still have a lot of respect and hopefully empathy for the work with the orishas and the belief system, although I can't share compared with initiated members their level of concreteness of the spiritual.

1.2 The fieldwork situation and conditions in Trinidad & Methodology

My fieldwork in Trinidad was conducted from 18th September 2010 until 28th October 2010. The relatively short period of 6 weeks for an anthropological fieldwork was possible through the personal experience and social networks of my supervisor Dr. Patric Kment. I lived in Barataria, east of the capital city of Port-of-Spain in the private household of Abasewolu Khalabi. During my fieldwork my main interview partners were Chief Oranfe (Olakela Massetungi) and other members of the organisation Egbe Onisin Eledumare. While being in Trinidad I solely moved in what I would call the Pan-African field. Part of this field were African-centred shrine heads, Ifa-devotees, Yoruba sacred science practitioners and other African-centred devotees.

Although my work is also based on historical data, my most significant material is the empirical data I collected in the course of my stay by attending several events, joining interesting conversations - both inside and outside interview situations.

Even though not all the information I received was written down or recorded, it has greatly contributed to my level of understanding, influencing the structure and the course of this work. With regard to these circumstances my work can be understood

as an initial rather than a comprehensive exploration of this particular topic. When coming to Trinidad, I had plans of documenting all of the activities that EOE had done in the 40 years of its existence. But soon I realized that the range of activities that EOE has done since 1970 are far too numerous.

My methodology in the field consisted mainly of unstructured and semistructured interviews. Participant observation as the most prominent of all methodologies in anthropology I would not consider a part of my field methodology. I will explain this decision in more detail below.

> **Unstructured interviewing** goes on all time and just about anywhere – in homes, while walking along a road, while weeding a millet field, while hanging out in bars, or while waiting for a bus. **Semistructured**, or **in-depth**, **interviewing** is a scheduled activity. A semistructured interview is open ended, but follows a general script and covers a list of topics (Bernard 2002: 203).

In contrast to informal interviews where the person that is interviewed should not be aware of it, unstructured interviews are only possible through the mutual commitment to participate.

> There is nothing "informal" about unstructured interviewing, and nothing deceptive, either. You sit down with another person and hold an interview. Period. Both of you know what you're doing, and there is no shared feeling that you're just engaged in pleasant chitchat (Bernard 2002: 204-205).

Although it's a formal process it's not necessarily an impersonal one. My personal experience showed that the interview situation is greatly influenced by the level of mutual sympathy, trust, sincerity and the visibility of the aims of the fieldwork and the thesis. Of course this level of openness concerning the scientific agenda is not possible in all fieldwork projects that are conducted in anthropology. But I consciously chose a fieldwork situation in which all these points could be fulfilled. This may sound a bit pathetic, but I vividly remember my first interview situation with Chief Oranfe, when he performed a divination to ask about the sincerity of my personal and scientific aims, and if my work would be for the benefit of his organisation or could cause harm. Although I entered the field with all my best intentions it was still a quite dramatic situation for myself.

> Unstructured interviews are based on a clear plan that you keep constantly in mind, but are also characterized by a minimum of control over people's responses. The idea is to get people to open up and let them express themselves in their own terms, at their own pace. A lot of what is called **ethnographic interviewing** is unstructured. Unstructured interviewing is used in situations where you have lots and lots of time – like when you are doing longterm fieldwork and can interview people on many separate occasions (Bernard 2002: 205).

Most of my interviews were not fully unstructured, quite aware of the short period of my fieldwork I focused straight from the beginning on the activities of the organisa-

tion EOE, its contemporary position and importance as well as its historical development which originated in the Black Power Movement of 1970. Most times I used loosely structured interview guides, to incorporate the idea of unstructured interviews, in which the person that is interviewed has enough space to speak freely, while still having a certain direction.

> In situations where you won't get more than one chance to interview someone, **semistructured interviewing** is best. It has much of the freewheeling quality of unstructured interviewing and requires all the same skills, but semistructured interviewing is based on the use of an **interview guide**. This is a written list of questions and topics that need to be covered in a particular order (Bernard 2002: 205).

During the fieldwork a certain pattern of interviews established itself. Every Tuesday and Thursday EOE opened its doors (metaphorically speaking, because there are no physical doors to the compound) to offer the classes of initiation for all those who were interested in joining the organisation. I always participated in these classes, which was no problem, because they were not limited by membership. Moreover, I regularly interviewed Chief Oranfe before them.

Most times I thought about the questions I would like to ask a few days before the interview. Beside this dynamic set of questions that resulted from my actual field situation and the current state of knowledge that I had acquired I also had a separate list of questions whose content was of more general interest.

During this rhythm of interviews I always had a certain interview guide, which, however was not consistent throughout the whole field work period. During fieldwork I regularly had to adapt my interview guideline to the current fieldwork situation and the accessible information.

> Semistructured interviewing works very well in projects where you are dealing with high-level bureaucrats and elite members of a community – people who are accustomed to efficient use of their time. It demonstrates that you are fully in control of what you want from an interview but leaves both you and your respondent free to follow new leads. It shows that you are prepared and competent but that you are not trying to exercise excessive control (Bernard 2002: 205).

I would regard all my interview partners as experts with different positions. Beside Chief Oranfe I interviewed other members of EOE, as well as members or shrine heads of other African-centred shrines.

During these interview situations competence was quite important to avoid dumb questions, which are not really helpful for the fieldwork situation. But simultaneously, out of my personal experience, it's also important to avoid being over prepared, giving your interview partner the feeling that you already know everything, may result in a lack of additional information.

During the interviews I used a digital audio recorder whenever I was allowed to, as the central instrument of documentation. I always asked for the permission to record,

while also giving my interview partners the possibility to end the recording whenever they asked to.

Bernard notes that other researchers choose similar interview styles with audio recorders. "*Charles Kadushin hands people a microphone with a shutoff switch. Rarely, he says, do respondents actually use the switch, but giving people control over the interview shows that you take them very seriously* "(Bernard 2002: 221).

For this work I mostly used the material which I had recorded during the interviews, while all the other empirical knowledge that I had received during my fieldwork mostly helped me to understand the context and to back up the knowledge that I had received through the interviews.

After reflecting on my interview styles it's about time to explain the limited importance of participant observation in my field research. For most of the young students of anthropology participant observation is a glorified fieldwork situation. It's filled with notions of mutual respect and understanding. Insofar it resembles more a sociopolitical commitment than a research method. During a prior, shorter fieldwork in West Hungary (that was conducted during the course of a lecture) I soon realized that I wasn't really feeling comfortable with the method of participant observation or systemized observation (as a more systemized participant observation).

> Participant Observation fieldwork is the foundation of cultural anthropology. It involves getting close to people and making them feel comfortable with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives. If this sounds a bit blunt, I mean it to come out that way. Only by confronting the truth about participant observation – that it involves deception and impression management – can we hope to conduct ourselves ethically in fieldwork (Bernard 2002: 322).

During this prior fieldwork I encountered personal moral contradictions with this research method and slipped into a personal dilemma. I partly resolved this crisis by finding a research topic that could be mostly explored through semistructured interviews and without the use of participant observation.

> If you are a successful participant observer, you will know when to laugh at what people think is funny; and when people laugh at what you say, it will be because you *meant* it to be a joke ... Participant observation involves immersing yourself in a culture and learning to remove yourself every day from that immersion so you can intellectualize what you've seen and heard, put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly. When it's done right, participant observation turns field workers into instruments of data collection and data analysis (Bernard 2002: 324).

A further step to resolve the crisis was to conceptualize a future fieldwork situation in which I could conduct fieldwork without the necessary use of participant observation. A situation in which I would not enter the field as a collector of data, but as a researcher who would like to write about a certain topic through the assistance of his interview partners.

> The implication is that *better* field workers are *better* data collectors and *better* data analyzers. And the implication of *that* is that participant observation is not an attitude or an epistemological commitment or a way of life. It's a craft. As with all crafts, becoming a skilled artisan at participant observation takes practice (Bernard 2002: 324).

Insofar the foundation for this work was laid by my personal moral convictions and my interest in Afro-Caribbean religions. Straight from the beginning I entered the field as a researcher who was interested in the history, position, importance and activities of the Pan-African organisation EOE in Trinidad and its context, while my interview partners were interested in a scientific work that would focus on EOE, or in general on the Ifa religion, which is not equal with the Orisha religion as it can be found in the existing literature on Afro-Caribbean religions in Trinidad.

Most anthropologists I know who conducted participant observation entered the field openly as anthropologists who were interested in the social relations of their environment, further they had a personal interest in their field, and didn't have to fake their role in the field. Many anthropologists are doing a good job in balancing and reflecting their role in the field, which is already a difficult task itself in most field situations. Insofar my critique is not directed at my fellow colleagues, but at the field methodology of participant observation and its moral and ethical difficulties. For me, it was important to limit the role of the scientist in the field. When I had private talks with people, went to the beach etc., I was so to say, not in active duty as a scientist. I was interested in a certain topic, but did not feel the need to collect as much information as I could, if it was not really important for the topic. Of course, it is important to know as much as possible about the context of a specific issue, but for me it was more important to be there as a person, not necessarily as a collector of data, so I didn't take any notes of private talks. Most times I tried to cover up important information that I had gained during private talks through interviews afterwards.

For me the crucial difference to have not conducted participant observation on Trinidad is, that I had the possibility to be both, private and scientific. All the personal relations and friendships that built up during the fieldwork, haven't been part of my activity as a scientist, but have been relations with me as the scientist who conducted fieldwork on Trinidad. And for me, this is an important difference.

1.4 Structure of the work

This work consists basically of two different parts. The first part examines the theoretical and historical background, including the Chapters 2, 3 and 4, while the second part concentrates mainly on the organisation of EOE and the situation of the Pan-African field on Trinidad, including the Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Chapter 2 explains the theoretical perspective through which I am engaging with the later chapters. It includes the postcolonial/postmodern perspectives on identity/identification as it is done by Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall, the theories of " *lieux de mémoire* " from Pierre Nora and the theoretical system of Pierre Bourdieu consisting of habitus, field and capital. Furthermore, there are explanations of different defi-

definitions that are used throughout the work, as also the combination of the before mentioned theories and their divergent views.

Chapter 3 shall help to understand the historical background of Trinidad and the historical consciousness of the Pan-African field.

Chapter 4 gives a short overview of the cosmology and mythology of the Yoruba in southwest Nigeria, as it is also practised increasingly in the Pan-African field in Trinidad.

As the first of Part II, Chapter 5 focuses on the historical circumstances and choices that led to the establishment of EOE, while Chapter 6 examines the contemporary organisation of EOE and its activities, being the most descriptive chapter of this work.

Chapter 7 is the main chapter of the whole work and combines the theoretical perspectives on identity/identification with the political discourses of national and communal identities on Trinidad, in this case foremost the Pan-African identity and the Orisha religion or Ifa religion.

Chapter 8 focuses mainly on the spiritual and religious motivation of the before mentioned process, like personal spiritual guidance, divination and sacred sites.

Finally Chapter 9 gives an outlook on the future, including the plan to resettle in Africa, while Chapter 10 is the conclusion of the work.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this work is mostly centred upon the topic of identity, perceived from a postcolonial/postmodern perspective through the theories of Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall on identity or identification.

This theoretical framework is expanded through the concept of "sites of memory", shaped through the history studies of Pierre Nora and his comparative long term project on the French Nation.[6]

The importance of the concept of "sites of memory" for this work lies in the overlapping space of identity and commemoration, which is focusing on the process and dynamics of commemoration, as it is established in the studies of Pierre Nora and his colleagues.

To round up the two theoretical hot spots of postcolonial identity and sites of memory, also Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical system consisting of field, habitus and capital is included. Of importance is not only his prominent system of theoretical tools, but also especially the relational model, which is being envisioned/introduced by his concepts.

In addition to the issues of identity, commemoration and relational models the engagement with syncretism, imagined communities and Re-Africanization/Pan-Africanization is of crucial importance.

At first all concepts stand for themselves, separated from each other, but it's the purpose of this work to connect these different approaches to achieve a common meaningful framework that is centred upon the concept of identity and later on connected with the empirical data shown throughout the work. Most crucial is hereby the chapter dealing with "political legitimation", where it is of utmost importance to concentrate on the political dimension of identity and its use.

All concepts shall help to work with a differentiated, non-essentialist understanding of identity that includes history as a constitutive element, by putting emphasis on its relations and use.

2.1 Identity from a postcolonial/postmodern perspective (Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall)

The topic of identity is a far more complex one than might be anticipated in general. During the last decades the issue of identity has been widely discussed in the aca-

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[6] Personally I started with a new German publication of Pierre Nora's studies: *Pierre Nora (ed.) (2005) Erinnerungsorte Frankreichs. München, Verlag C.H. Beck*

demia, reaching such high intensity in the academic discourses, that some researchers do not want to hear the term identity at all.[7]

Stuart Hall begins his publication "Questions of Cultural Identity" with the phrase "*Who Needs 'Identity'?".*

> There has been a veritable discursive explosion in recent years around the concept of 'identity', at the same moment as it has been subjected to a searching critique. How is this paradoxical development to be explained? ... Within the anti-essentialist critique ... some adventurous theoretical conceptions have been sketched in their most grounded forms. What then, is the need for a further debate about 'identity' Who needs it? (Hall 1996: 1).

15 years later, the "question of identity" hasn't vanished, on the contrary, the emergence of the 'new' media, the internet, has further enhanced the topic. Insofar it is of importance to acknowledge a fragmented, decentred, de-conceptualized and relocated concept of 'identity', and to further on re-conceptualize the use and implications of identity.[8]

Hall turns to the concept of identification, instead of identity, to handle the critique associated with the essentialist use of identity.[9]

Foremost the definition of identity/identification has been drastically challenged through the extensive discursive engagement with the concept of identity. The centre of critique rests on the essentialist understanding of identity, the naturalization of identity.

> In common sense language, identification is constructed on the back or a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation (Hall 1996: 2).

This practical link to other persons, including the maintenance of common interests, is achieved through the bounded 'nature' of the group, the closure of belonging, this closure of 'being' is repeated through the perception of identification/identity through its simplification, ignoring the inconstant, ambivalent and re-created attributes of identity, which are highlighted through a discursive perspective.

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[7] Right in the middle of my studies one of the most influential professors at our department in Vienna complained about all the master thesis dealing with the topic of identity,

[8] "However, I believe that what this decentring requires ... is not an abandonment of 'the subject' [of identity] but a reconceptualization – thinking it in its new, displaced or decentred position within the paradigm"(Hall 1996: 1) (my remarks).

[9] "Identification turns out to be one of the least well-understood concepts – almost as tricky as, though preferable to, 'identity' itself; and certainly no guarantee against the conceptual difficulties which have beset the latter. It is drawing meanings from both the discursive and the psychoanalytic repertoire, without being limited to either. This semantic field is too complex to unravel here ..." (Stuart Hall 1996: 2).

> In contrast with the 'naturalism' of this definition [of identity/identification], the discursive approach sees identification as a construct, a process never completed – always 'in process'. It is not determined in the sense that it can always be 'won' or 'lost' sustained or abandoned (Hall 1996: 2) (my remarks).

"*A construct, a process never completed – always 'in process'* ", this perception of the concept of identity is radically different from a naturalizing one. Dealing with a discursive understanding of identity, with the difficult approach of how to handle identity, raises new questions.

> Though they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves (Hall 1996: 4).

It's important to imagine the discursive understanding of identity differently, through a wider relational perspective.

> The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white ... the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities ... the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (Bhabha 2004: 5).

Inspired by Reneé Green, Bhabha envisions the architectural model of the stairwell to introduce the space in which identity is constituted. Of importance is the understanding of identity as a connective gate, not as an unmoveable point, not as an opposed duality, or a determination into fixed spots. As mentioned before, it is important to understand identity as a process, a process that cannot be reduced into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

With reference to the coming chapters, dealing with the question of the legitimation of an African identity, with the legitimation to be an African, it's important to include these perspectives on the issues of identity. Therefore it is important to be conscious of the remains of colonial hegemony in the society of a post-colonial[10] age as well as the difficulties of difference, which are inherent in daily life/day to day routines.

'Post' – as it is used in 'postcolonialism' or 'postmodernism' is no chronological order, but a reminder of their discursive, non-chronological and processural characteris-

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[10] "Postcoloniality, for its part, is a salutary reminder of the persistent 'neo-colonial' relations within the 'new' world order and the multinational division of labour. Such a perspective enables the authentication of histories of exploitation and the evolution of strategies of resistance" (Bhabha 2004: 9).

tics.[11]

Concerning the colonial situation in the Caribbean it's insightful to see the 'white' creation and definition of 'black identity' as it was established in the diaspora, as a double-headed white-black identity, a split image.[12]

"Black Skin, White Masks" by Frantz Fanon is an intriguing exploration of this relation of identification. First published in 1952, his work is written from a psychoanalytic perspective. Although psychoanalysis is not to be seen uncontroversial, Fanon's book is a fascinating example of the space 'in-between', which is proposed by Bhabha, the interwoven connection of identities.[13]

"*Fanon's demand for a psychoanalytic explanation emerges from the perverse reflections of civil virtue in the alienating acts of colonial governance*" (Bhabha 2004: 62).

Bhabha explains the process of identification through the analysis of desire, which is constituted by three conditions:

At first the relation to the place of the other, the relation to an otherness (cf. Bhabha 2004: 63) - the desire for another place.

Second the 'in-between' location of identification, between the fixed spots, which are supposed. "*It's not the colonialist Self or the colonized other, but the disturbing distance in-between that constitute the figure of colonial otherness*" (Bhabha 2004: 64) -the desire to handle the space of difference.

Third, identification is a dynamic process, reaching out for a certain image of identification that can not be applied directly. It is never "*a self-fulfilling prophecy – it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image*" (Bhabha 2004: 64) - the desire to realize the imagined.

As a result the black-white identity-complex can also be described as an antagonistic one. Blacks were constructed as 'the Others' for white colonizers, they were the negated self, white identity included the inversion of the black identity, and this happened also vice versa. The issue of identity is a doubling one, not an analogical resemblance. Whites enhanced their imagined status as more civilized through their negation, the 'primitive/savage black man'.

'Blacks' emerged in the diaspora in societies in which they were, so to say, the

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[11] post- "... These terms that insistently gesture to the beyond, only embody its restless and reversionary energy if they transform the present into an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment" (Bhabha 2004: 6).

[12] "These interpositions, indeed collaborations of political and psychic violence within civic virtue, alienation within identity, drive Fanon to describe the splitting of the colonial space of consciousness and society as marked by a 'Manichaean delirium'. The representative figure of such a perversion, I want to suggest, is the image of post-Enlightenment man tethered to, not confronted by, his dark reflection, that shadow of colonized man, that splits his presence ... repeats his action at a distance, disturbs and divides the very time of his being" (Bhabha 2004: 62).

[13] "The ambivalent identification of the racist world ... turns on the idea of man as his alienated image; not Self and Other but the otherness of the Self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity. And it is that bizarre figure of desire, which splits along the axis on which it turns, that compels Fanon to put the psychoanalytic question of desire of the subject to the historic condition of colonial man" (Bhabha 2004: 62-63).

counter-image of white self-imagination, of white supremacy. But Self and Other are more than opposites of each other, they are parts of an identity of desire, that is split or doubled.[14]

> If, as I have suggested, the subject of desire is never simply a Myself, then the Other is never simply an It-self, a front of identity, truth or mis-recognition (Bhabha 2004: 74).

Beside a rehabilitation of subordinated identities the post-colonial perspective of identity can also help to gain a perspective of identity as an act of negotiation. Identity as a process that is constantly negotiated between the parties involved, whereby the involvement is determined by the possibility of participation, as it is inscribed in the power-relations. In this regard the colonial situation of the Caribbean reveals an extreme form of unbalanced power-relations, where the economic and political imbalance is the most obvious one.

2.2 Stereotypes and the Subaltern. The Need for Different Representations

The process of otherness refers to the situation of the subaltern and the creation/use of stereotypes, both definitions being strongly connected with the issues of power/hegemony and representation.

Hall distinguishes between 'types' and 'stereotypes', whereby 'types' or the process of 'typing' "*is essential to the production of meaning… Our picture of who the person 'is' is built up out of the information we accumulate from positioning him/her within these different orders of typification. In broad terms, then 'a type is any simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized characterization in which a few traits are foregrounded and change or "development" is kept to a minimum'* " (Hall 1997: 257).

Stereotypes are pushing this notion of typing further into the direction of simplification and fixation.[15] Often these simplified representations are used as tools of suppression. Their power to represent lies in the essentialization and naturalization of 'difference', which at the same is drastically reduced. Mostly they are used in situations where the power relations are unbalanced, resulting in a splitting of the normal and abnormal, to preserve the social and symbolic regime (cf. Hall 1997:258).

Although stereotypes are sometimes blunt and hostile, their recognition and especially their rejection can be a difficult and complex approach. Hall mentions the situa-

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[14] "The place of the Other must not be imaged as Fanon sometimes suggests as a fixed phenomenological point opposed to the self, that represents a culturally alien consciousness. The Other must be seen as the necessary negation of primordial identity – cultural or psychic – that introduces the system of differentiation ...." (Bhabha 2004: 74).

[15] "What, then is the difference between a *type* and a *stereotype*? *Stereotypes* get hold of the few 'simple' vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized' characteristics about a person, *reduce* everything about the person to those traits, *exaggerate* and *simplify* them, and fix them without change or development to eternity" (Hall 1997: 258).

tion of the "infantilisation" of blacks in the United States, where they were treated like children, marginalized, excluded from the institutions of power, refused the right to take responsibility for themselves. Especially black males often challenged this image of inferiority through the exaggeration of a "sexual and aggressive" adult-male image. Caught in a 'binary structure' of representation, whether 'child' or 'exaggerated adult', or sometimes both, the stereotypes inherent in these representations are repeated (cf. Hall 2004: 150).

The power of stereotypes is to dictate as 'how to define' and 'how to represent', somebody or something, through the use of symbolic power and violence (cf. Hall 2004: 145-146). But stereotypes are not simply tools of power with which the powerful can act upon the other, they also imply fantasy and imagination, through which the stereotype can also be the splitting of its user. This can be done to cover desire and projection, in order to maintain the integrity of its user, but at the same time the user is also entangled in his representations (cf. Hall 2004: 151).

As mentioned before, the Self and the Other cannot be fully separated from each other, the point of focus is their relation - the 'in-between'.

A postcolonial term for this relation is the subaltern, a term deriving from the works of Antonio Gramsci, referring in general to marginalized groups and lower classes. Although the exact meaning of the subaltern is a subject of dispute, it is broadly used in postcolonial theories, for example to emphasize the importance of social power relations, like Homi Bhabha does.[16]

> ... implicit in both concepts of the subaltern, as I read it, is a strategy of ambivalence in the structure of identification that occurs precisely in the elliptical *in-between*, where the shadow of the other falls upon the self (Bhabha 2004: 85).

> The subaltern or metonymic are neither empty nor full, neither part nor whole (Bhabha 2004: 92).

As said before stereotypes and the subaltern refer to asymmetrical power relations that are also placed at the symbolical level of representations. Hall shows different strategies to reverse or overthrow these stereotypes. One could be the simple reversal of the negative stereotype with a positive connotation. A popular representative of this strategy in the media landscape of the 60's would be Shaft, or Sweet Sweetback's Baadass Song, whose protagonists were a positive interpretation of the 'black stereotype', including disrespect towards the law or towards whites. Most importantly they were successful in the end, contrary to the former appearance of blacks in supporting roles in Hollywood movies, where they were respectful servants, or the good-hearted loser (cf. Hall 2004: 159).

Another strategy would be the rejection of stereotypes through pictures which undermine the stereotype through their content, like the work of David A. Bailey. Often this strategy can put additional difference to the stereotype, but cannot reverse it strongly enough (cf. Hall 2004: 162-163).

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[16] cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subaltern_(postcolonialism) (27-6-2012)

The third strategy focuses on the creation of forms of representation, to change the shape of commonly known representations, in order to show the unstable character of meaning and representation, without having a lasting impression through time (cf. Hall 2004: 163).

Hall gives a revealing overview of possible methods of revision, but of course there are far more strategies of how to handle prejudices or stereotypes. In this work I tried to examine the process of 'redefinition' as a possible strategy of identification and reversal of former prejudices. After all these definitions and examinations about identity, stereotypes and the subaltern, I would like to reflect on this topic shortly through the process of redefinition of Africans in the diaspora, respectively Trinidad.

Due to the emergence of Black Power, a new set of images and positions became available, aiming to reject the concept of the "Negro", with all it's political and economic limitations, compared to the "white" hegemony. As shown in the work of Fanon and Bhabha, black people's inferiority and dependence on external rule was written deeply into the psychic pattern of "blackness", the designation to be a Negro.[17]

> ... themselves 'signified upon': they are the victims of projected fear, anxieties and dominations that do not originate within the oppressed and will not fix them in the circle of pain (Bhabha 2004: 23).

It becomes easily understandable why Black Power was seen as a crucial chance. At first, the negative stereotype of "blackness", the "Negro" had to be rejected or inverted. In this respect Négritude[18] - where black intellectuals inverted the negative image Europeans had attached to them into a positive interpretation - was a predecessor of the Black Power Movement. The mental barriers of inferiority and destined subordination to others, especially the white world, had to fall, and their fall was celebrated through a renewal or so to say a rediscovery.

> Underlying these objectives, however, is, I believe, the need to reassert African ethnic identity as an African-derived people, even while living in multi-ethnic Trinidad (Henry 2003: 134).

One possibility to describe this process of redefinition could be a model designating the different perspectives of identity as Negro, Black and African.

> Negro – suppressed in slaveholder society, marginalized identity, inferior status
>
> Black – break out from white classification system, beginning of black as a positive image, opposing white oppression (Black Power)

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[17] "The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is wicked, the Negro is ugly; look, a Negro; the Negro is trembling, the Negro is trembling because he's cold, the small boy is trembling because he's afraid of the Negro, the Negro is trembling with cold, the cold that chills the bones, the lovely little boy is trembling because he things the Negro is trembling with rage, the little white boy runs to his mother's arms: "*Maman*, the Negro's going to eat me" (Fanon 2008: 93).

[18] Négritude is further explained in Chapter 2.8

> African – positive self-image, beyond the period of slavery, emphasising the history and continuity with the African continent, also having plans of establishing a future in Africa (cf. Interviews with Chief Oranfe)

It's important to emphasize that this is just a general classification I did during the process of writing, it is a model which cannot fit the complexity of perspectives inside the field, but shall help to give a quick overview of the differences between the self-perceptions.

2.3 The importance of history – as sites of memory (Pierre Nora)

The concept of *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory[19] originated in Pierre Nora's studies in the discipline of history on the French Nation. Since then the concept has gained in popularity and spread into other disciplines in academia. *Lieux de mémoire* reinvents the relation between memory and history, whereby the latter refers to its academic use and meaning as an act of interpretation and critical investigation.[20]

> Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objectives; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative (Nora 1989: 8-9).

Nora points out the importance of history and its opposition to memory as something that is based on interpretation, contrary to the function of memory as something concrete which can be used, as I would like to show, to fix and legitimate identity.

But the interwoven connection of memory and history[21], which in a further step reinvents memory from a critical historical perspective, is undermining the opposition between history and memory. It emphasizes the historical importance of memory simultaneously with a critical consciousness about the use of memory and its fixation to certain objects or symbols.

> *Lieux de mémoire* are created by a play of memory and history, an interaction of two factors that results in their reciprocal overdetermination. To

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[19] In this work I use the English translation "sites of memory", another possibility would be "memory sites" or "realms of memory", according to my lack of French language skills, I am not fully aware if "sites of memory", although I am using it throughout the work, is the best translation, to grasp the meaning of *lieux de mémoire*. Other possibilities found throughout the English literature on the topic are "memorial sites", used by Tai in her article Remembered Realms and "realms of memory", naming an English publication in 1998 on the issue. Remembered Realms by Tai: http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/106.3/ah000906.html (1-11-2011)

[20] "At the heart of history is a critical discourse that is antithetical to spontaneous memory. History is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it" (Nora 1989: 9).

[21] "Every history is by nature critical, and all historians have sought to denounce the hypocritical mythologies of their predecessors. But something fundamentally unsettling happens when history begins to write its own history. A historiographical anxiety arises when history assigns itself the task of tracing alien impulses within itself and discovers that it is the victim of memories which it has sought to master" (Nora 1989: 10).

begin with, there must be a will to remember. If we were to abandon this criterion, we would quickly drift into admitting virtually everything as worthy of remembrance. ... On the other hand, it is clear that without the intervention of history, time, and change, we would content ourselves with simply a schematic outline of the objects of memory (Nora 1989: 19).

Sites of memory need a will to remember - which excludes in the view of Nora ancient monuments[22] - and can be material, symbolic and functional. Insofar they do not need to be physical sites like war memorials, but can also be ideas, or also the symbolic layer of different material objects.

> *lieux de mémoire* are simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration. Indeed, they are *lieux* in three senses of the word – material, symbolic, and functional. Even an apparently purely material site, like an archive, becomes a *lieu de mémoire* only of the imagination invests it with a symbolic aura. ... Moreover, the three aspects always coexist (Nora 1989: 18-19).

The importance here for this work lies in the use of memory, which is also often based on its symbolic, non-material function. Therefore it's important to focus upon the organisation of history through memory.

> One simple but decisive trait of *lieux de mémoire* sets them apart from every type of history to which we have become accustomed, ancient or modern. Every previous historical or scientific approach to memory, whether national or social, has concerned itself with *realia*, with things in themselves and in their immediate reality. Contrary to historical objects, however, *lieux de mémoire* have no referent in reality; or, rather, they are their own referent: pure, exclusively self-referential signs. this is not to say that they are without content, physical presence, or history; it is to suggest that what makes them *lieux de mémoire* is precisely that by which the escape from history. In this sense, the *lieux de mémoire* is double: a site of excess closed upon itself, concentrated in its own name, but also forever open to the full range of its possible significations (Nora 1989: 23-24).

The significance of Sites of Memory lies in their immaterial function as signifiers, which can be linked to certain physical spaces and places, but are never equal to it. This understanding of *lieux de mémoire* draws the bridge towards post-modern/colonial concepts of identity.

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[22] Although Nora's exclusion of ancient monuments as "sites of memory" is to be questioned, it relates to Nora's distinction between modern societies and non-modern societies, which are also separated through memory (non-modern societies) and history (modern societies). From my perspective this opposition is also to be questioned deeply, but simultaneously the concept of "sites of memory" moved beyond this determinism, that may have been an influential force for Nora to conceptualize "sites of memory".

2.4 Identity and History

As explained through the postcolonial theories on identity, it's important to reflect on the essentializing notions of identity and confront them with a decentred and dynamic understanding. But this understanding is also more complex and unfamiliar than the naturalization of identity.

In a similar vein as the virtually natural fixation of identity is the treatment of history, often perceived in common knowledge as a static description of the past, a finished process located in a specific time and space.

From another viewpoint it is insightful to understand identity also as a historical process. From this perspective, identity constructs itself primarily through the structuring of the past or the structuring of memory, as it is found in the "*influential formulation on personal identity in the English empiricist tradition*" by John Locke (Bhabha 2004: 69).

> 'as far as this consciousness can be extended *backwards* to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person ... that same consciousness uniting those distant actions into the same person, *whatever substances contributed to their production*' (Locke 1969 in: Homi Bhabha 2004: 69) (emphasis by Homi Bhabha).[23]

As a historical process, the specific identity ought to be seen in the context of its historical conditions of emergence.

> Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical naturally-constituted unity (Hall 1996: 4).

Stuart Hall does not only point out the historical structure of identity, but also the issues of power related to the use of identity, the essentializing of group-identity, and the marginalization of those bearing the mark of difference, in the worst case discrimination or even eradication.

Against the notion of essentialist concepts of identity, it is helpful to remember the theories of Pierre Nora's "sites of memory". Sites of memory when they are seen as fixed places are a useful foundation for collective identity/memory, as also essentialist concepts of identity, through their virtually enclosed significance or the view of events in the past, as total and finished.

The theory of sites of memory reflects especially this notion of history, memory and past events. One of its aims is to show the transformation and change that these sites of memory undergo through the course of time, respectively the change of view

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[23] John Locke (1969) An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. London, Fontana, pp 212-213

on historic events, which is often forgotten or ignored.

This notion of sites of memory still correlates with Bhabha's post-modern/post-structural understanding of identity, which criticises as Bhabha calls it '*the perspective of depth*' or the '*depth in the representation of a unified image of the self*' (Bhabha 2004: 68-69), by which he means that the relation between the symbol and that what it symbolizes, is overdetermined by the latter. Concerning the relation between identity and memory, Lock's statement on identity implies that identity is solely filled and constituted by its experience, by its memory. "Who we are" is inevitably the result of what we have been, "I am" simply the sum of the biographical events of my life. What is profoundly missing in this perspective is the active engagement of the signifier to function as an image of myself. If I am simply the sum, how can it be that I still remember certain events that happened several years ago, while I can hardly remember what I ate yesterday. And why are some things forgotten that are not actual anymore, erased from my memory, without knowing if they will return.

 I am hereby not speaking about traumas or other extreme states of the mind, I am simply speaking about the active engagement of the self, of the signifier, choosing what and how something is remembered or represented, and what is not, "*Shifting the frame of identity from the field of vision to the space of writing* "(Bhabha 2004: 69).

> What is profoundly unresolved, even erased, in the discourses of post-structuralism is that *perspective of depth* through which the authenticity of identity comes to be reflected in the glassy metaphorics of the mirror and its mimetic or realist narratives. Shifting the frame of identity from the field of vision to the space of writing interrogates the third dimension that gives profundity to the representation of Self and Other – that dept of perspective that cineastes call the forth wall; literary theorists describe it as the transparency of realist metanarratives (Bhabha 2004: 69).

Furthermore, the critique on the depth of identity also criticises the relation between form and content, the relation between the signifier and the signified. Or in other words, it makes this relation their focal point of interest, as the process of it's creation and re-creation. "*My purpose here is to define the space of inscription or writing of identity*"(Bhabha 2004: 70). According to Locke a person is what it remembers, it is the sum of their experience, or at least what they are able to commemorate.

I am not rejecting this notion of identity entirely, on the contrary, it is an important point of reference, if we do not acknowledge the relation between identity and memory, without questions, as it could happen through an essentializing perspective. This relation can be the place of dynamic, of breaking commonly anticipated barriers, (e.g. the fourth wall, when the audience is addressed from the screen). The focus is on the character of the relation, and how it is constantly re-established. Bhabha speaks of desire as the character of the connection, the doubling into Self and Other. But in this case, this work, I think it is better applicable to focus on the relation itself, asking for the connection itself.

Although the concept of sites of memory is strongly connected to French history, the history of the French nation, or in general the examination of national bodies and their relation to their historic existence through commemoration, the concept is quite

useful to examine the relation between a group or a person and it's commemoration of history, as part of its identification.

What is commemorated, what is emphasised, in which period of time, what political relevance or implication has the commemorated?

The concept of 'Sites of memory' helps to understand this dynamic relation of commemoration that is connected to the contemporary dynamics of the actors. In this sense history is no finished process, it can be a source of contemporary relevance, through its commemoration. The concept of 'Sites of memory' gives an awareness for this relation, e.g. through the emphasis of historic processes (that are nearly forgotten), for actual situations (e.g. the French Revolution and it's Republic Ideals) or in general to show the dynamic of commemoration and its use/interpretation of history.

The intention to remember is fundamental for the understanding of Pierre Nora's concept of "sites of memory", describing the relation between history and memory, the importance and dynamic of commemoration of a past that is threatened by time as a force of forgetting. In a broader revisioned context, sites of memory can be used to designate the relation between identity and history/memory(as a source of identity) through the focus on the structuring of memory and it's re-creation.[24]

2.5 Relational Models and the perception of the field (Pierre Bourdieu)

My understanding of Pierre Bourdieu's concepts, which I am using in this work, is primarily influenced by a later publication called "Reflexive Anthroplogie".[25] The French original called "Réponses pour une anthropologie réflexive" was published in 1992. Due to the later date of publication compared with his most influential publications in academia[26], this later work gives a reflexive comprehension of Bourdieu's theoretical system, which is easier to understand than in other publications.

Bourdieu's three concepts of habitus, field and capital together form a theoretical system. At the heart of this theoretical system lies the mutual relevance of field, capital and habitus, or illusio as he also calls it. All three terms comprise the logic of the theoretical system of which they are a part of. Using them alone would tend to ignore it (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 2006: 125).

The field is characteristically a system of relations (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 2006: 138). It can be a certain institution or a social space that is taken for granted, like the academic field, the working class, or a village somewhere in the countryside, and

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[24] "Kurz: Es geht weder um Wiederauferstehung noch um Rekonstruktion, nicht einmal um Darstellung, sondern um *Wiedererinnerung*, wobei Erinnerung nicht einen einfachen Rückruf der Vergangenheit, sondern deren Einfügung in die Gegenwart meint" (Nora 2005: 16).

[25] An English version of this publication is available under the name "An Introduction to reflexive Sociology", which does only approximately resemble the German title, called "Reflexive Anthropology".

[26] Those are "Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste"(French original 1979, English translation 1984) and "Outline of a Theory of Practice"(French original 1972, English translation 1977), which became the most prominent publication of Pierre Bourdieu in anthropology/ethnology.

so on. The size of the field is determined by its range of relevance, meaning the range of the specific forces working inside the specific field (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 2006: 130-131).

The general importance of the field is generated through the different positions inside the field that different persons can acquire, whereby every position inside the field gathers its importance through the different forms of capital related to it (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 2006: 131-132).

It can be compared with a game, in which the players are contesting for certain positions inside the game, e.g. to fulfil the requirements for victory, but the crucial difference lies in the ongoing repetition of the field, which is not established through victory, but through the ongoing interest of its players, their will to continue, although this doesn't mean that all players benefit from the game in the same way.

In short, a field is a game that nobody has invented, being more complex and dynamic than any recognizable game (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 2006: 135).

Another important aspect of the field is that its positions and capitals, are not to be equated with an economic struggle over limited resources. On the contrary, the logic of the field is much more complex and often not experienced entirely conscious, especially the interest of the participant to participate.

The different sorts of capital can be social, cultural and economic, but of importance is not only the possession of capital but especially its ability to be converted. Without going into further detail, the following short overview shall help to gain insight in a far more complex topic.

> Depending on the field in which it functions, and at the cost of the more or less expensive transformations which are the precondition for its efficacy in the field in question, capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of a title of nobility.[27]

Additional to these three sorts of capital is a fourth, the symbolic capital, which is easiest to convert into any of the other sorts of capital. "*Symbolic capital, that is to say, capital – in whatever form – insofar as it is represented, i.e., apprehended symbolically, in a relationship of knowledge or, more precisely, of misrecognition and recognition*"[28]

Symbolic capital works through a specific logic that is misrecognizing the arbitrariness of its possession and accumulation inside the specific field in which it occurs (cf.

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[27] http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm (21-11-2011)

[28] Ibid.

Bourdieu and Wacquant 2006: 151). Symbolic capital can be bound very strictly to a certain field, when its logic doesn't work outside the field, e.g. the possession of children's toys most likely loses its importance for social interaction with other children, when their owner's reach a certain age.

The logic and connection between field, capitals and positions is established and constantly re-established through the habitus. In short, the habitus could be described as the internalisation of the field, its positions and rules as well as the acknowledgement of the participant to participate the field. The habitus is hereby locating the personal interests inside the field's interests.

This interest, called illusio, is a prerequisite for the functioning of a field and its reproduction, without reducing the praxis into a mere economic interest (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 2006: 148).

Human action is not to be reduced to an immediate reaction to certain actions or stimuli. Focusing only on action and reaction without recognizing the specific field in which this action is placed, the history of the field and its participants, gives little insight into the mechanisms of the habitus. It is the habitus which influences the choice we make in a given situation, placing the action within the accumulated history of the field (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 2006: 157).

This understanding of habitus recognizes the social actors neither as fully influenced by external forces, nor as completely independent rational beings, only driven by their own rational course (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 2006: 169-170).

Concerning the internalisation of the field, it is interesting to understand that what we regard as quite personal, isn't that much personal at all. Habitus is the socialized subjectivity, saying that what is seen as personal, as subjective, is more likely social, something collective (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 2006: 159). Bourdieu concludes that the personal is quite impersonal, that many of the inner tragedies that humans are suffering from, are rooted in the objective ambiguities of the different field structures, like the labour market or the education system. He calls that double binds, meaning ambiguous obligations (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 2006: 237).

Is the understanding of habitus to be equated with post-modern understandings of identity?

Not in a strict comparison, because both understandings have a different focus. Bourdieu's theoretical system emphasizes the continuity of certain social practices through the interplay of field and habitus. Both are mutually interwoven, placing the personal action inside social relational systems. Bhabha focuses on the creation of the self-image, on the act of writing, which is influenced through its relations of difference. Insofar both are emphasising relational systems, on the one hand the focus is on continuity, while on the other it is on deconstruction and reconstruction.

But this simple distinction becomes less prevalent when Bourdieu's theoretical system is seen from a reflexive perspective. As mentioned before Bourdieu recognizes the possibility of ambiguities in the structure of the field, tensions that can hardly be resolved. Similar to that is the topic of symbolic violence, being a specific kind of violence which is forced upon an actor as also reinforced by his participation. Although the actor is in a disadvantaged position, he contributes to the re-creation of this

structure because it also fits in his structure of perception (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 2006: 204).

The significance of the title "Reflexive Anthropology" becomes important again when Bourdieu sees the possibility in his theoretical system for a reflexive engagement with the habitus/field and its re-creation, which could lay open the mechanisms of the habitus/field and insofar making them more likely accessible for change, but he acknowledges this reflexive capacity primarily to the scientists doing research, not to the actors in the field (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 2006: 230). As a result of my experience in the field I cannot share this exclusive perspective.

2.6 The Problem of Syncretism – Anti-Syncretism (Stewart & Shaw)

The topic of syncretism is widely used in contemporary studies (including the last decades) of religions or religious belief systems. Among studies of Afro-Caribbean or Afro-American religions like e.g. Umbanda, Candomble, Santeria, Vodun and Orisha the issue of syncretism is a central one, taking into account the strategies of assimilation and the asymmetrical social/cultural systems in which they have been historically placed. But the topic of syncretism is not a solely academic one, also the practitioners of the different African religions in the Caribbean are contesting each other sometimes over these issues of syncretism, most probably as a reaction of being labelled as 'syncretistic'.

The general definition of syncretism - meaning the mixing of different religious ideas into a new one - is basically unconcerned about the comparison of a 'syncretic' religion with other 'unmixed' religions. But most commonly the term 'syncretism' is equated with an 'impure' religion, entangled with other religious traditions which have corrupted its original spiritual unity.[29]

Steward and Shaw help to deconstruct and revision this inherent tension of religious 'authenticity' First of all they claim that all religions are basically 'syncretic', insofar they are of "*composite origins and continually reconstructed through ongoing processes of synthesis and erasure*" (Stewart and Shaw 1994: 6). This also includes all major Christian confessions and other established world religions. Out of this perspective the accusation of 'syncretism' becomes obsolete, because historically it is no special characteristic of any religion. As a conclusion Steward and Shaw introduce the term of 'anti-syncretism' referring to the politics of religions, e.g. to present themselves as 'authentic' and 'original', emphasizing the integrity of their religious unity and boundaries, or contrary to accuse others as 'inauthentic', as inferior in their religious belief.

> 'Syncretism', then, is not a determinate term with a fixed meaning, but one which has been historically constituted and reconstituted. Of what use is it now? Simply identifying a ritual or tradition as 'syncretic' tells us very little and gets us practically nowhere, since all religions have composite

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[29] cf. http://www.lateinamerika-studien.at/content/kultur/ethnologie/ethnologie-1144.html (22-11-2011)

origins and continually reconstructed through ongoing processes of synthesis and erasure. Thus rather than treating syncretism as a category – an 'ism' – we wish to focus upon *processes* of religious synthesis and upon *discourses* of syncretism. This necessarily involves attending to the workings of power and agency.

If we recast the study of syncretism as the politics of religious synthesis, one of the first issues which needs to be confronted is what we have termed 'anti-syncretism': the antagonism to religious synthesis shown by agents concerned with the defence of religious boundaries. Anti-syncretism is frequently bound up with the construction of 'authenticity', which is in turn often linked to notions of 'purity'. In Western religious discourses and scholarship in particular, the implicit belief remains that assertions of purity speak out naturally and transcendentally as assertions of authenticity.

Yet 'authenticity' or 'originality' do not necessarily depend on purity. They are claimable as 'uniqueness', and both pure and mixed traditions can be unique. What makes them 'authentic' and valuable is a separate issue, a discourse matter involving power, rhetoric and persuasion. Thus both putatively pure and putatively syncretic traditions can be 'authentic' if people claim that these traditions are unique and uniquely their (historical) possession. It could be argued, in fact, that syncretic blends are more unique because historically unrepeatable (Stewart and Shaw 1994: 6-7).

The focus of 'syncretism' shifts towards two different aspects, on the one hand a different understanding of 'authenticity' as a unique historical moment of religious synthesis and transformation, or reconstitution. 'Authenticity' describes a certain historiographical understanding of religious genesis and continuity. On the other hand religions are not perceived as static systems that have to preserve their ancient spiritual truth, but as "processes" with different discourses, of which syncretism is one.

This use of "syncretism" or "anti-syncretism" focuses on the strategies of religious agency. Especially the call of a religion for 'authenticity' is often motivated by discourses of "national, ethnic or regional identity", aiming to get rid of religious elements that are viewed as hostile.

The premise that 'pure=authentic', however, tends to be the dominant reading in discourses of nationalist, ethnic or regional identity, as well as those of religious movements which are categorized as 'fundamentalist' or 'nativist'. Such discourses are commonly antisyncretic, involving the erasure of elements deemed alien from particular religious and ritual forms. Selected forms may be identified as foreign and extirpated, or alternatively recast and retained through the claims that they have really always been 'ours'. Thereby deleting former religious syntheses from authorized cultural memory (Stewart and Shaw 1994: 7).

In Trinidad the contemporary issue of "Syncretism" refers mostly to the rejection of Christian elements inside the Orisha religion by Afrocentrists/Pan-African practitioners. The importance of this policy, and the different perspectives on this process, is explained throughout the following chapters.

2.7 Imagined Communities(Benedict Anderson)

The popular concept of "imagined communities" by Benedict Anderson is strongly connected to the concept of nations and nationalisms. In this regard the publication "Imagined Communities" focuses on the different historical circumstances that influenced the different nation-building processes throughout specific places and periods of time.

> In an anthropological spirit then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign (Anderson 2006: 5-6).

Anderson primarily uses the concept of imagined community to describe nations as shared experiences that are taken for granted and that mainly emerge through their imagined meaning.

Of basic interest is hereby the formation of group interests and group identity, especially when all its members most probably will never meet face-to-face or even know of each other, insofar their common group belonging results not from the sum of its parts, but as a shared imaginative process.

> It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 2006: 6).

Anderson sees the nation as an imagined community that is neither to be doomed nor to be taken for granted, he sees it as a creative process. This creative process is a general quality of imagined communities.

> 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.' [Ernest Gellner] The drawback to this formulation, however, is that Gellner is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that he assimilates 'invention' to 'fabrication' and 'falsity', rather than to 'imagining' and 'creation'. In this way he implies that 'true' communities exist which can be advantageously juxtaposed to nations (Anderson 2006: 6) (my remarks).

Anderson avoids creating a distinction between "real" communities and imagined ones, through the focus on the creation of "community", or as I would call it the process/creation of group identity.

> In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be dis-

tinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined (Anderson 2006: 6).

Anderson states vaguely that all forms of community are imagined, maybe even a village of 15 or 20 people. In reference to the post-colonial perspectives of identity and also my own personal experience I tend to agree with this statement, arguing that all forms of community have to be filled with a certain meaning that is not inscribed into their very nature.

When Anderson describes the imagination of the nation as a limited, sovereign community, his understanding for "limited" and "sovereign community" is also crucial for the whole concept of group identity.

> The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human being, has infinite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind.

> It is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely- ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. Coming to maturity at a stage of human history when even the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living *pluralism* of such religions, ...

> Finally, it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings (Anderson 2006: 7).

When people are willing to die for their understanding of the concept of nation or community, it also becomes clear that these processes of identity are not marking simple borders, but are deeply entangled with the motivation of its members.

The concept of "imagined communities" offers a way to deal with the creation, the style of the group imagination, without diminishing its meaning as irrelevant, for not being "real", more precisely it points towards a general quality of identity/community, that is to be examined. I also understand the use of the post-colonial perspective on identity in a similar way, respectively the concept of "imagined communities" helped me to further understand the concept of "identity" and vice versa.

2.8 Processes of Re-/Africanization

The whole issue of Re-Africanization as it is explained e.g. by Kment (2005) in his study on the transformation processes in the Orisha religion in Trinidad, relates to a range of various terms that are focused on "African agency".

In short I shall describe the following: Africanize, Afrocentrism/Afrocentricity and Pan-Africanism.

Africanize or Africanizm refers to processes whose aim is to make something African, e.g. to introduce African culture, put legitimation into African political structures, or engage an African identity.[30] Africanization is thereby a process that is characteristic of its emphasis on a certain "Africanness" of its subject.

Afrocentrism or Afrocentricity(used by Molefi Kete Asante) is commonly associated with a cultural ideology that originated in the United States, tracing back its roots to the works of black intellectuals in the late nineteenth century, who challenged the cultural and historical marginalisation of Africans/blacks in the diaspora. Important was e.g. the revision of history, Africa was now seen as a cultural and ideological centre.[31]

> Afrocentricity deals primarily with self-determination and African agency
> and is an Pan-African ideology in culture, philosophy, and history.[32]

The concept of Afrocentrism is controversially discussed, ranging from the accusation of being a naive perspective, to doubtful interpretations of history, e.g. the focus on ancient Egypt and its historical importance as a black culture, out of a black ideology.[33]

Gilroy for example criticises the centrality of Africa as a minimising of the slave experience through a historical perspective that is "*frozen at the point where blacks boarded the ships that would carry them into the woes and horrors of the middle passage*" (Gilroy 1993 in: Frances Henry 2003: 135).[34]

It can also happen that Afrocentrism is challenging the western-educational bias, through the centrality and emphasis on an African history.[35] In many of these cases it is hard to adopt an objective or neutral position, no matter whether Afrocentrism is seen as too radical in its perspective, unspecific in its argumentation from a scientific perspective, or as a legitimate counter-action to "western" biases and "western" cultural and economic hegemony.

The issue of Afrocentrism is also located inside the academia, e.g. black intellectuals in the 19th and 20th century as well as contemporary international supporters of Afrocentrism like Molefi Asante. Asante systematizes the complex and controversial term "Afrocentricity" as following:

> One of the key assumptions of the Afrocentrist is that all relationships are
> based on centers and margins and the distances from either the center or the

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[30] cf. www.thefreedictionary.com/Africanize (23-11-2011)

[31] cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrocentrism (23-11-2011)

[32] Ibid.

[33] cf. www. skepdic.com/afrocent.html (23-11-2011)

[34] Paul Gilroy (1993) The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness. Cambridge, Harvard University Press

[35] cf. https://pup.princeton.edu/chapters/s7430.html (23-11-2011)

margin. What is any better than operating and acting out of our own collective interest? What is any greater than seeing the world through our eyes? What resonates more with people than understanding that we are central to our history, not someone else's? If we can, in the process of materializing our consciousness, claim space as agents of progressive change, then we can change our condition and change the world. Afrocentricity maintains that one can claim this space only if one knows the general characteristics of Afrocentricity as well as the practical applications of the field (Asante 2009).

Asante sees the concept of Afrocentricity as a tool for critique and psychological recovery. Although I mostly agree with the general aims of Afrocentrism, namely to question existing power relations, to overcome stereotypes of racial and intellectual inferiority, and to emphasize black/African identity and agency, there are some arguments I can't agree with.

Asante (2009) proclaims that

> The Afrocentrist asks the question, **"What would African people do if there were no white people?"** In other words, what natural responses would occur in the relationships, attitudes toward the environment, kinship patterns, preferences for colors, type of religion, and historical referent points for African people if there had not been any intervention of colonialism or enslavement? (my emphasis).

From my perspective this statement is quite problematic. How can a face-to-face encounter with "white" people be established, if "Africans" attempt to build a countercosmos? When the establishment of Africa as a centre of consciousness is related to the cure of a psychological trauma of oppression, to a situation of forced inferiority and to the perception of '*black people as an historically oppressed population*', the concept of Afrocentricity is bound and limited by a specific historical perspective that has been fuelled by centuries of exploitation and slavery, as also ongoing imbalances in the world economy, but it is unable to go beyond this set of images, unable to envision a future that aims to overcome this situation of ethnical prejudices.

A similar problem is the assumption that "*On the other hand, the Afrocentrist does not question the fact that there is a collective sense of Africanity revealed in the common experiences of the African world*" (Asante 2009).

Concerning this statement, I would like to ask: How is this Africanity constituted, who writes this Africanity and where does this Africanity begin and where does it end?

Kwame Anthony Appiah offers a more differentiated statement about the African community. He "*thinks in terms of a "network of points of affinity" that create multiple identities that will be different, however slightly, for every person. Given the nature of the African diaspora to North and South America, the Caribbean, parts of Europe and elsewhere, it is highly unlikely that a single African identity can be shared across such vast historical and cultural differences*" (Henry 2003: 135).

Pan-Africanism like Afrocentricity refers to an "African community", proposing a "*pan-Africanist perspective that people of color are all "African people" or "diasporic Africans" … all parts of the "global African community*".[36]

Pan-Africansim can be described as "*a movement that seeks to unify African people or people living in Africa, into a "one African Community". Differing types of Pan-Africanism seek different levels of economic, racial, social, or political unity*".[37]

Historical examples of this Pan-Africanism are Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association or the concept of Négritude by Senghor[38].

Most commonly "*Pan-Africanists have invariably fought against racial discrimination and for the political rights of Africans and descendants of Africans, have tended to be anti-imperialist, and often espoused a metaphorical or symbolic (if not literal) "return" to Africa*".[39]

But due to different political backgrounds it is difficult to conceptualize "the Pan-Africanism". "*Because it refers neither to a single political ideology nor a clearly discernible philosophical tradition, Pan-Africanism is difficult to define. Many scholars avoid defining it, noting that black internationalism has varied drastically according to time and place. Indeed, various conceptions of Pan-Africanism have been aligned with disparate political and theoretical positions, from largely religious to communist to even, Paul Gilroy suggests, fascist forms*".[40]

Throughout this work I will not offer a unified term of reference for the different processes of African discourse, whether it may be in a political, social, or religious landscape. Trying to cover up a certain range of definitions shall help to understand their different perspectives, but also to see the similar cosmos or worldview which connects them with each other.

Similar to the above mentioned process of "syncretism", I think it is useful to understand these theories on African identity or agency also as processes that are located in a particular setting, trying to deal with different problems and difficulties. Insofar I am not willing to condemn these concepts in general, although the corpus of literature and ideology around the topic is not without political and scientific controversial perspectives.

I personally understand the need for perspectives that are Afro-centric, especially with regard to the topic of identity, but their logical argumentation can also include the risks of being kept stuck in a situation of racial antagonisms. Insofar I am again

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[36] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrocentrism (23-11-2011)

[37] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-Africanism (23-11-2011)

[38] Basically Senghor's notion of Négritude reinforced an opposition between the emotionality of the black man and the ability of reason of the white man, whereby the emotionality of the black man was favoured over reason. Today such perspectives seem a bit limited, and indeed the concept was heavily criticised for its limitations, but in their period of time they were a step forward towards a renewed black consciousness (cf. Kment 2005: 74-75). A philosophical examination of Négritude can be found here: plato.stanford.edu/entries/negritude/ (22-4-2012)

[39] http://science.jrank.org/pages/7943/Pan-Africanism.html (23-11-2011)

[40] Ibid.

of the opinion that it's important to include post-colonial perspectives in the argumentation, in order to avoid enhancing racial barriers that are sometimes hard to overcome.

Additionally, it is important to be aware of the fact that a concept is not to be equated with a person, neither a contemporary, nor a historical one. Designating a person as an Afrocentrist or Pan-Africanist, might enforce the notion that a person can primarily be explained through the concept they are associated with. This doesn't mean that these concepts cannot help to understand the "field" in which a certain person is positioned and therefore also influenced and structured by it, but out of my personal experience, I can argue that a person is more complex than any concept.

Chapter 3. Historical Environmental Developments

It is always important to be conscious of the perspective from which history is told, which parts of history are shown or emphasised. What is commemorated and where does the given history begin?

In this regard the history I am going to discuss is based and centred upon important points of commemoration for the African population in Trinidad, especially the Pan-African field. This history begins on the African continent and is continued with the slave trade and the plantation system in Trinidad until independence, the Black Power movement and the contemporary situation, or recent past of the Orisha community. This historical narration is surely based on the African population and some of their most important historical events, whereby it is not meant to diminish the history and importance of the meanwhile biggest population group, namely the Indians, as well as other groups in Trinidad. It is meant to give a historical foundation for the ongoing topic of this work that is focused on those Africans that identify themselves foremost as Africans. This specific perspective on the past is crucial for the contemporary development that is taking place.

3.1 The situation in West Africa and the Slave Trade

Of particular interest for many people of African descent in Trinidad are the West African kingdoms that seized control of the region and especially the coast.

> The expansion of these states was based on their many advantages, the most obvious of which was that each had a well organized and heavily equipped army, using a highly developed iron technology and, in a few cases, a mounted cavalry. The states included the Edo Kingdom of Benin, the Fon Kingdom of Dahomey and a series of Yoruba kingdoms, the largest of which was Oyo ... All of these states owed their political dominance to a policy of aggressive militarism (Barnes 1997: 39).

The spread of ironworking techniques can be seen as an influential factor for the development of these early states. The earliest known iron smelting site in West Africa is believed to be Taruga in 600 B.C., while the general spread of iron production is estimated between 500 B.C to A.D 300 for the sub-Saharan continent (cf. Barnes 1997: 42). There are many examples of early achievements in state-building and the creation of urban centres that, together with the progress in iron production, challenge the picture of Africa in Europe as a 'chronically underdeveloped and backward continent'. As Chief Oranfe notes in his presentation, "*when the European Invaders arrived on the West Coast of the Continent of Africa, they met a well organized, structured, progressive society*" (Oranfe 2010: 10).

State-building in West Africa was also influenced by the abilities "*to organize and support large armies. Thus, in our view, iron, organization, and wealth were interdependent conditions, all necessary to the building of states*" (Barnes 1997: 43).

The kingdom of Oyo for example is believed to have been founded in the thirteenth century, while it's military importance began around 1600, reaching its greatest size in 1780 as the greatest coastal African state of its time (cf. Barnes 1997: 46). As one of the greatest military powers in the region, Oyo, like other kingdoms, was engaged in the slave trade. It received tribute from the defeated kingdom Dahomey, a part of this tribute was paid in slaves. Around 1827 Oyo got involved in the Ilorin wars, insofar the military conflict was directed inside the Yoruba-kingdom itself. More and more Yoruba were getting enslaved in this period, which is followed by the fall of Oyo and the increasing strength of Dahomey, resulting in a further increase of Yoruban slaves (cf. Bascom 1969: 12-13, Barnes 1997: 47, Wolf 1997: 212-215).

Furthermore, this period of time coincides with the biggest wave of African slave imports in Trinidad - also including freed slaves (cf. Kment 2005: 61, Houk 1995: 51).

The Slave Trade "*combined European initiative with African supply. Europeans financed and organized the trade. Capture, delivery, and control and maintenance of captives while waiting for ocean transport remained mostly in African hands. Ocean transport, "seasoning" – the process of habituating the captives to their new conditions – and sale at the point of arrival, in turn, were carried out by Europeans*" (Wolf 1997: 204).

Through the slave trade most Africans that had formerly been cut off their lineage through punishment or mostly slave raids, were sold like a "commodity" across the Atlantic, "the infamous Middle Passage", to the colonies in the Caribbean, North and South America. The profit of this business is disputed, but seems to have been lucrative (cf. Wolf 1997: 198). It is difficult to discuss the African participation in the slave trade from a Pan-African perspective as it is examined throughout the work. But Wolf's perspective on history as a matter of connections and mutual participations is, in my opinion, more helpful in the engagement with history than a perspective of Europe and the Rest, which is also a central motif of colonial hegemony. The initiative of the trade was launched by the Europeans. However, both Africans and Europeans participated in the developing network of the slave trade, while the obvious victims of this system were those that were killed during the slave raids or sold into the 'New World'.

Between 1701 and 1810, tragically called 'the golden age of slaving', 6 million people were 'exported'. In this period England exported over 2 million slaves from West Africa (cf. Wolf 1997: 198), other areas of supply were central Africa and southeastern Africa[41].

In 1807 Britain abolished the slave trade and started hunting slave ships of other nations that ignored the new Slave Trade Act that was passed by Britain without the consensus of the other European naval empires like France, Portugal, Spain and the

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[41] "60 percent of the slaves exported by Portuguese, English and French traders were drawn from West Africa (some 3,234,000), while 40 percent (2,228,000 people) came from central Africa and southeastern Africa" (Wolf 1997: 200).

Dutch. The slaves that were freed through these actions where taken to Liberia as freed slaves, or more commonly, due to the lack of workers, to the Caribbean colonies of the British Empire.

In 1834 Britain further abolished slavery throughout the British Empire, which had not been ended by the Slave Trade Act of 1807. However, the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 did not bring an immediate emancipation of the slaves, they received the designation of "apprentices" for those few years of the transitional period. In Trinidad this "apprenticeship" ended in the year 1838, with the legal emancipation of the former slaves (cf. Kment 2005: 45,61; Houk 1995: 52).

3.2 The Situation in Trinidad

Trinidad was spotted by Columbus on his third voyage to the Americas in 1498. The native population consisted of Arawaks, mostly in the south and southeastern part of the island, and Caribs mostly in the north and northwestern part of the island (cf. Houk 1995: 27, Kment 2005: 42).

It soon became a colony of the Spanish crown, but the colonial development and economic viability of the island remained low under Spanish rule. In 1532 the first governor was installed, while the first permanent settlement was not established before 1592. Throughout the centuries Trinidad failed to develop a profitable cash-crop, and European settlement was scarce (cf. Houk 1995: 27-28, Kment 2005: 43). At the end of the eighteenth century the important sugar cane industry began to develop, shortly before the Spanish Crown, due to the lack of economic success and settlers[42], opened the island for foreign settlers in 1776, more precisely for Catholic European settlers from other parts of the Caribbean (cf. Houk 1995: 28).

Attracted by the promise of land and a pro-Catholic government, increasing numbers of French planters arrived in Trinidad, also bringing with them the first African slaves. Insofar 1783 "*marks the beginning of African slave labor on the island*", at this point of time the local Amerindian population had been largely diminished through disease, malnutrition, or the absorption into the general Creole population (cf. Houk 1995: 28-29). After the emancipation of the African slaves in 1838, who largely refused to continue the work on the plantations, East Indian and Chinese "indenture workers" arrived in Trinidad in the 1840s and 1850s "*to fill the consequent labor shortage in the productive sugar industry*" (Houk 1995: 29).

The Spanish rule was ended in 1797 by the British Admiral Sir Ralph Abercromby, who defeated "*an outmanned and outgunned Spanish force and took the island without hardly a fight*" (Houk 1995: 29). In 1802 Trinidad became part of the British empire, through the Treaty of Amiens, which did not attempt to challenge the influential Catholic French Creole community in Trinidad immediately. Approximately 40 years later the British began with the Anglicization of the island, "*becoming Anglicized and English was becoming soon the language of instruction*". From now on the

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[42] "In the later half of the eighteenth century Spain decided that Trinidad had more become of a burden than an asset" (Houk 1995: 28).

French Creole hegemony was threatened and began slowly to wane (cf. Houk 1995: 29).

The biggest wave of Yoruba (approximately 9.000 people over a period of 30 years) entered Trinidad around the beginning of the Post-Emancipation period, after the abolishment of the slave trade. As explained before they entered Trinidad often as freed slaves that had been liberated from slave ships of other European empires who ignored the abolishment of the slave trade proclaimed by Britain (cf. Kment 2005: 61). Together with the challenged position of the Catholic Church that was threatened by the Anglicans, Yoruba people that arrived in Trinidad during this period of time, possessed more freedom than other Africans before them. Kment sees this combination of circumstances as an influential factor for the survival of so many religious and cultural elements of the Yoruba on Trinidad.

Most of the Africans chose or were forced to become Christians, but this did not result in the loss or rejection of their former religious knowledge and practice. What was created through this situation is or was an important characteristic of the African religions throughout the Caribbean. Other prominent examples are Cuba (Santeria) and Haiti (Vodoun). African divinities were paired with Christian saints as their Catholic equivalent, through this strategy Africans were able to continue their ritual practice under the cover of a Christian appearance[43].

Although Africans were free after Emancipation, they were still subjected to an unequal social structure and legal restrictions of which the Anti-Drumming-Ordinance of 1883 that forbid playing the drum, was probably the most prominent one.

Beside the historical development of Trinidad & Tobago, it is important to note that the state, unlike other Caribbean islands, is rich of natural resources, especially oil deposits, which give Trinidad until today an important economic advantage. But as in many other countries, possessing rich natural resources does not necessarily mean a rich population, or fair distribution of wealth.

After World War I Africans that served in the war began to rebel against the unequal conditions of society. Uriah Butler, as the most prominent name among them, together with the TWA (Trinidad's Workingman Association), aimed to represent the interests of the black working class. He fought for their rights in public and in this way laid the foundation for the Black Power movement of the 1970ies (cf. Kment 2005: 48).

In 1962 Trinidad received its independence, with Eric Williams as its first prime minister, over the decades he received the status of "father of the nation".[44] He inherited an ethnically divided state that was composed mainly by Africans and Indians, as the two biggest groups among many. In 1970 the Black Power movement caused thousands of people to demonstrate against their government, leading to a coup attempt

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[43] A popular example of this pairing is Shango and St. Barbara, although Shango is a seen as a very male divinity, his Christian equivalent is the holy St. Barbara, the most obvious reason for this pairing is the association of Shango with thunder, which can be found in the story of St. Barbara. Today this pairing of African divinities and Christian saints is highly criticized and rejected by the pan-African field, which sees both divinities as separate entities.

[44] The political situation of Trinidad since 1962 is shown in Chapter 7.

that failed. But the political and social ideas of this period surpassed their time, as a political commitment which is still evident among current leaders and members of the Pan-African field.

3.3 Civil Rights Movement and Black Power

During and after the middle of the 20th century the continuity of racism and a policy of segregation led to a series of civil turmoil among the black population of the US. Especially in the south of the US, cases of killings and murders of people of African descent were still present. The brutality of these acts of racism did not only shock the black population, it also alerted the white population about the current situation. Historically placed in a time of various kinds of social unrest – e.g. the peace movement that opposed the war in Vietnam – the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement became an influential factor in the pursuit of justice and equality among US citizens. Leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X or Stokely Carmichael became central figures for the black struggle against discrimination and racism until today.

On August 28th 1963, Martin Luther King delivered his famous "I have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. His plea against injustice, including the vision of brotherhood between black and white people, became part of the collective memory of a whole generation.[45]

Almost a year later on the 2nd of July 1964, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibiting "*discrimination of all kinds based on race, color, religion, or national origin. The law also provides the federal government with the power to enforce desegregation*".[46]

On August 4th 1964, three civil rights workers – two white and one black – were found murdered in Mississippi. The investigation later revealed that they had been arrested by the local police forces and handed over to the Ku Klux Clan, who murdered them.

On February 21st 1965, Malcolm X was shot to death.

In October 1966 the Black Panther Party was founded, which has been remembered for its militant ideals, as well as the brutal police forces that countered their actions, resulting in the execution of Black Panther party members.[47]

On April 4th 1968, Martin Luther King was shot on the balcony of his hotel room.[48]

During this period of time Stokely Carmichael, later known as Kwame Ture, promoted the phrase "Black Power" through his speeches as the spokesperson of the SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee).

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[45] Link with audio recording: www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihaveadream.htm (20-4-2012)

[46] www.infoplease.com/spot/civilrightstimeline1.html (20-4-2012)

[47] cf. http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/history/A0807795.html (20-4-2012)

[48] cf. www.infoplease.com/spot/civilrightstimeline1.html (20-4-2012)

Drawing on the available data it is difficult to clearly define what "Black Power" means exactly, most certainly it describes a political consciousness/motivation that focuses on the needs of the black population, but the question how to achieve these needs is not so clear.

The following outtakes of Carmichaels Speech in Berkeley in October 1966 shall give insight in his understanding and use of "Black Power".[49]

> Who has power? Who has power to make his or her acts legitimate? That is all. And that this country, that power is invested in the hands of white people, and they make their acts legitimate. It is now, therefore, for black people to make our acts legitimate.

> We gonna use the word "Black Power" – and let them address themselves to that; but that we are not going to wait for white people to sanction Black Power. We're tired waiting; every time black people move in this country, they're forced to defend their position before they move. It's time that the people who are supposed to be defending their position do that. That's white people. They ought to start defending themselves as to why they have oppressed and exploited us.

On the other side the Civil Rights Movement emphasized the desegregation of the nation, which was supposed to be achieved through nonviolent civil disobedience. King's dream of a state that has removed the injustices of discrimination and racism, was based on a non-violence moral, that was seen as necessary for the success of the whole process.

> He [Carmichael] defines it [Black Power] as an assertion of black pride and "the coming together of black people to fight for their liberation by any means necessary." The term's radicalism alarms many who believe the civil rights movement's effectiveness and moral authority crucially depend on nonviolent civil disobedience[50] (my remarks).

The public association of "Black Power" with violence, is based in Carmichael's opinion on the association with the word black, contrary to the word 'negro' – *"it is the word "black" that bothers people in this country, and that's their problem, not mine – they're problem, they're problem"*.[51]

Beside the Civil Rights Movement that aimed for a desegregation and the phrase Black Power, there were also other concepts like Black Nationalism, which inverted the concepts of White Supremacy to aim for a Black Nation. Insofar it can be argued that racism was used on both sides of the racial dispute, deeply dividing the "black" movement in their motivations and perspectives on the issue of "color". Carmichael

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[49] www.americanrhetoric.com/ speeches/carmichaelblackpower.html (20-4-2012)

[50] www. infoplease.com/spot/civilrightstimeline1.html (20-4-2012)

[51] www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/carmichaelblackpower.html (20-4-2012)

argues in his speech mostly on the basis of "color", "color" as the basis of the conflict. Apart from the issue of "color" the development of the Black Power Movement in Trinidad was largely influenced by a Marxist understanding of classes.

3.4 Black Power in Trinidad – The Black Power Uprisings / Revolution

As mentioned before, the period of the 60/70's was a time of social, religious and political change. The Black Power Movement which did not originate in the Caribbean found great reception among the educated black population of Trinidad, the black middle class. Black Power enforced the creation of African organisations and movements, it was especially prominent among the educated youth, which hoped to change their desperate situation in Trinidad. The "black" government of Williams, succeeding the British colonial government, had partly lost the trust of the population. The education, that was promoted and increased, resulted in a generation that was more conscious of their environment and at the same time excluded from many of the public positions in their country. Blacks were, for example, not allowed to work in the front of a bank, they were not allowed to be associated with the public face of the company.

In this situation of ongoing "color" discrimination and economic inequality, where most of the economic capital was still shared by a small group that was identified as "white", Black Power was not just a change of perspective, not just an issue of identity, it was a call for political change that reached across the borders of the African population (cf. Pasley 2001; Interview Abasewolu, A1, 00:46:31-5). The Black Power Revolution of 1970, or "disturbances" as they were called by the government, were led/coordinated by NJAC (National Joint Action Committee), who provided the leadership during the demonstrations and "*created a bridge between the African and the east Indian population, both of which were at the bottom of the social, political, economic circles ...*"(Interview Abasewolu, A1, 00:49:46-8).

In Trinidad "Black Power" did not only refer to the African population, but the non-white population in general (cf. Pasley 2001).

> "Whatever the black power uprising was – its aim was to empower the black man or the African man, but in Trinidad and Tobago, and at the time of the black power uprising, it's rarely the black mean, meaning the non-white person, that would have included African, Indian and Chinese, right. But since the dominant racial groups in the country were African and Indian, it would be to empower that person, to see himself in positive images, right, and to see himself in positive images across the wide spectrum of life activities. So it was contended and perhaps still is contended" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O32, 00:04:15-9).

After the repression of the Black Power demonstrations with brutal police force, other organisations were founded like the NUFF (National Union of Freedom Fighters), which already focused on a Marxist-socialist line of thought, at an early stage of the Black Power Movement in Trinidad, that emphasized class as the main problem and not race. Furthermore, they saw the necessity of an armed struggle to change the

situation, which they also executed (cf. Pasley 2001). The Black Power Revolution of 1970 failed with its coup attempt. Supported mostly by the youth, the goals for an immediate political change were without success. But in the long run the movement influenced the consciousness of many people, so its ideas and motivations have lived on.

Along with the political upheavals people also began to criticise the participation of the church in the slave system, as well as its doctrines that were seen as a "white man's" projection. Inspired by Marcus Garvey's[52] call to reimage god after oneself, people began to see god as a black person, thus also Jesus was seen from a black perspective.[53]

> "You shall worship no God but me, the God of My image, of My like-ness." ... So it is natural for me to believe that I am man, spiritual and physical, and God the Creator, my God[,] physical and spiritual, must look like me. And when we start to worship anything other than ourselves, in the image of our God, we only place ourselves worshiping a strange ideal-ism (Convention Addresses by Marcus Garvey on 3. August 1924 in: Garvey 1986: 647).

> "I hardly know a place in the world where white people bow before a black god, me, I hardly know that, but I know many places in the world where black people bow before images that reflect a white personality, and therefore they – the protagonists of the black power uprising - where contesting that ... and therefore I suspect [they acted] to reimage your godlike images, from Caucasoid European to black. (Interview Chief Oranfe, O32, 00:04:15-9)

This newly awakened religious consciousness from an African self-perspective also led to the increased interest and participation in the Orisha religion, as a central part of the African heritage that was still practised in Trinidad.

3.5 The Orisha religion on Trinidad in the second half of the 20th Century

What I am going to present here is a short explanation of what I would call the Or-isha religion in Trinidad in the second half of the 20th century. This specific period of time has been chosen because the religion has already changed significantly since. This timeframe was studied in detail by Kment 2005, Houk 1995 and Henry 2003. All three researchers gained a lot of empirical data through their long-term participation

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[52] Marcus Garvey and his early attempts for the empowerment of black people are very important for the whole process of black consciousness.

[53] "Never admit that Jesus Christ was a white man, otherwise he could not be the Son of God and God to redeem all mankind. Jesus Christ had the blood of all races in his veins, and tracing the Jewish race back to Abraham and to Moses, from which Jesus sprang through the line of Jesse, you will find Negro blood everywhere, so Jesus had much of Negro blood in him" (www.international.ucla.edu/africa/mgpp/lifesam.asp) (23-4-2012).

in the field.

After the Black Power Revolution in 1970 the interest of the population for the Orisha religion increased. Kment discovered that a lot of the later shrine heads were initiated around 1970 (cf. Kment 2005: 124). Some shrines like Chief Oranfe's started right from the beginning as 'straight'-African, but most shrines performed what Houk calls "*a highly eclectic religious system characterized by mechanisms that serve both to engender variability and to oppose it*" (Houk 1995: 207).

Characteristic of the Orisha religion is the practice of a multiethnic and multicultural range of religious elements that brings together an African belief system with Christian, Hindu and also Kabbalistic elements. Beside the African orishas there are also Hindu deities that are seen as equilibriums of the African deities similar to the association of orishas with certain Christian saints. Furthermore, Orisha religion includes Christian paraphernalia and songs as well as the practices and cosmology of the Kabbalah with its banquets and calling of powerful spirits, which are not be equated with the orishas. Many Orisha practitioners are also Spiritual Baptists, who can be described as the more Christianized African religion in Trinidad (Of course the whole situation of the Spiritual Baptists is much more complex).

The number of Orisha shrines, as the centre of worship and practice, is estimated by Houk and Kment to be around 150, whereby the real number of shrines could be around 200 (cf. Kment 2005: 129-132, Houk 1995: 125). Most priests and priestesses, called mongba and iya, have their own shrines, which represent their spiritual lifework and power. The religion is mostly based on the individualistic engagement of the shrine heads, because there is no commonly shared standardized theoretical or ritual framework. The epicentre of the spiritual activities throughout the year is the ebo (feast). During a ritual activity lasting for several days the orishas are called to share power with the participants. This is done through prayers, songs, drum rhythms, dance and of course through the correct offerings that are shared between the participants and the orishas.

During the ritual activity it is common that different orishas mount some of the practitioners. This situation is called manifestation - the orishas manifest in the body of a practitioner and control it for a certain period of time (The whole ritual process is examined in detail by Kment 2005). The ebo is also one of the few occasions where larger groups of Orisha devotees come together, Kment counts between 45 and 68 people per evening at the ebos he participated. His estimated number of Orisha devotees in Trinidad is around 10.000 (cf. 2005: 137).

At the centre of the spiritual activities is the invocation and handling of the different orishas that manifest during the ebo, insofar the direct experience of the orishas and their powers is an important aspect of the religious life. The orishas are embedded in a complex cosmology and mythology. Many elements of this knowledge that had been partly lost through the long-term repression of Africans in Trinidad are complemented through the exchange with Nigeria. This exchange is intensified constantly. Simultaneously, the Africanization of the religion increases. As a result of this process more and more shrines concentrate only on the orishas and their cosmological and mythological background.

4. Yoruba Mythology and Cosmology

After 1970 the interest in Trinidad for African history and religions has increased, in this regard people like Chief Oranfe has made use of the available literature on these topics. Together with the intensification of exchange with Nigeria through mutual visits, the reconstruction of the Yoruba belief system was accomplished through literature and personal experience.

This process can be seen as a cultural transfer that should not be equated with a notion of "authentication", the reconstruction of the Yoruba belief system was based mostly on information about the Orisha religion, or, as it is called in Nigeria, the Ifa religion, of the 20th century. Insofar the Ifa religion has also changed since the moment of departure of those who were sold as slaves into the New World.

A significant difference between the religion in the Caribbean and on the African continent is the importance of the Supreme Being that is often overshadowed in the Afro-Caribbean context by the orishas. Organisations like EOE have begun to re-establish the importance of the Supreme Being in Trinidad, as it can be found in the Nigerian context.

4.1 The Supreme Being/Divine Intelligence

The importance of the Supreme Being, the creator of heaven and earth, should not be underestimated. Awolalu notes that the belief in the Supreme Being is widespread among the Yoruba (cf. Awolalu 1979: 3).

As the absolute creator 'He' is the highest authority of all that exists, insofar "*the Yoruba have never, strictly speaking, really thought further back than Olodumare* [the Supreme Being]" (Awolalu 1979: 8) (my remarks).

From my perspective the conception of the Supreme Being is comparable with the Christian and Muslim conceptions of God/Allah, especially because Awolalu rejects the perspective on the Supreme Being, saying that 'He' once created the universe, but has since been uninterested and distant from it and it's daily affairs, Awolalu emphasizes that quite the contrary is the case (cf. 1979: 16).

> ... an indigenous Yorùbá has a belief in the existence of a self-evident being who is believed to be responsible for the creation and maintenance of heaven and earth, of men and woman, and who also has brought into being divinities and spirits who are believed to be his functionaries in the theocratic world as well as intermediaries between mankind and the self-existing being (Awolalu 1979: 3).

Most commonly the Supreme Being is called Olodumare or Olorun[54]. In Yoruba nearly every name is a complete sentence (cf. Awolalu 1979: 10). Further the given name "*depicts a significant character as well as the circumstances of the birth of the bearer of the name*" (Awolalu 1979: 10).

4.2 Structure and functioning of the Cosmos

The creation of the earth was conceptualized and ordered by Olodumare. Before that it existed as a "*watery, marshy waste*" that served as a hunting ground for the divinities that lived up in heaven. Obatala (Orisa-nla) executed Olodumare's orders and began to create solid ground on the earth, using a "*leaf packet of loose earth ... a five-toed hen and a pigeon*".[55]

It was also Obatala who was assigned with the creation of the human body, therefore he is known as the sculptor of the human shape, whereby his ability to perform this duty is questioned by some traditions, who state that he was too drunk, resulting in misshaped human beings. However, as Obatala is responsible for the creation of the human shape, it is the breath of Olodumare which brings them to life, "*the principle of life was given only by the Supreme Being*" (cf. Awolalu 1979: 13).

The sacred place where the creation of earth began by Orisa-nla was called Ife - "That which is wide". Much later the prefix 'Ile' was added (Ile-Ife) to emphasize that it is the place of the creation of all human beings worldwide (cf. Idowu 1962: 20).

> Ile-Ife is the origin and centre, not only of the Yoruba world but also of the whole world of nations and peoples (Idowu 1962: 14).

Until today Ile-Ife has represented the spiritual and mythical centre of the Yoruba religion as well as the seat of political power, whereby political and religious power are not to be separated.

> There is traditional evidence that in the ancient days, the priest-king of Ile-Ife was the one in whom resided all authority, religious and secular, and that he held a pontifical sway over all (Idowu 1962: 15).

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[54] Olorun – "owner of (orun) the heaven above or the Lord whose abode is in the heaven above". Olodumare – "cannot easily be determined, the name connotes one who has the fullness or superlative greatness; the everlasting majesty upon whom man can depend" (Awolalu 1979: 11).

[55] "What is now our earth was once a watery, marshy waste. Up above was the skyey heaven which was the abode of Olódùmarè and the divinities, with some other beings. The watery waste constituted, in a way, the sporting place for those dwellers above. Upon it they used to descend by strands of spider's web which also formed bridges by which they walked over it. Some of them came down from time to time for the purpose of hunting. What moved Olódùmarè to think of creating the solid earth, no one knows. However, He conceived the idea and at once carried it into effect. He summoned Orìsà-nlá the arch-divinity, to His presence and charged him with the duty: for material, He gave him a leaf packet of loose earth (some say that the loose earth was in a snail's shell), and for tools a five-toed hen and a pigeon. When Orìsà-nlá arrived, he threw the loose earth on a suitable spot on the watery waste. Then he let loose the hen and the pigeon, and these immediately began the work of scattering and spreading the loose earth. This they did until a great portion of the waste was covered. When enough of it had been covered, Orìsà-nlá went back and reported to Olódùmarè that the work had been accomplished" (Idowu 1962: 19).

Of significance is the belief that in the beginning of the earth, "*everyone could travel to heaven and back as he wished and that all could have immediate, direct contact with Olódùmarè*" (Idowu 1962: 21). But over time heaven and earth grew ever distant from each other[56], which also put greater importance on those beings that were able to travel between the worlds.

To re-establish the connection between heaven and earth is one of the important functions of the Orisha religion. Kment explains the communication between Orun, the world of the orishas, and Aye, the earth on which we humans live, through the structure and function of the compound as it can be found in Trinidad.

The compound as the lifework of its shrine-head, includes different stools (altars) for the specific orishas, which can manifest during a ritual procedure in the palais (part of the compound where rituals are commonly performed). The orishas are believed to enter through their stools and manifest themselves through one of the participants of the ritual. Similarly, the orishas also leave the earth again through their stools, when their participation in the ritual is finished.

All of these activities are possible through the flow of ase, which is explained by Kment, as the divine energy of Olodumare which flows through the universe (cf. Kment 2005: 55), or "*the divine power with which Olodumare created the Universe and maintained its physical law*" (Bulletin 3: Creation And Orisas in: Egbe Orisa Ile Wa 1983). Very important for this flow of ase is the orisa Esu, who is also a kind of divine messenger, functioning to ensure the communication between Orun and Aye.
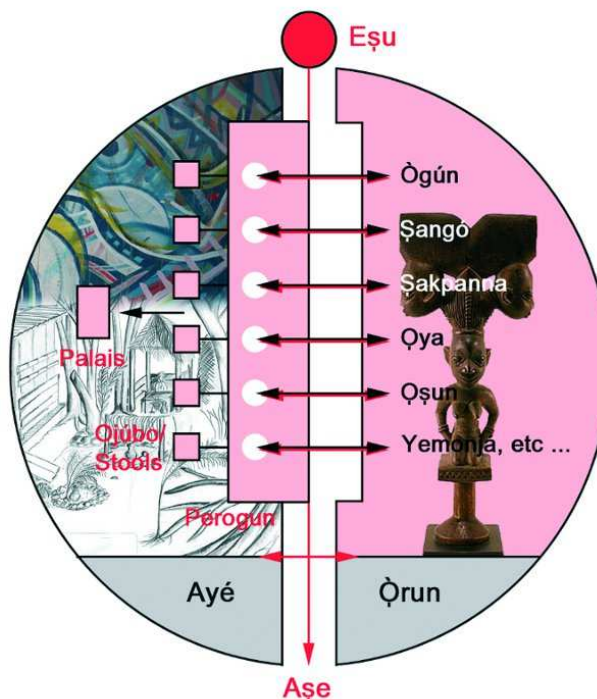
© Patric Kment 2000 (Òrìsà woldview and its correlation with the Compound)

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[56] Idowu notes different explanations which state the misbehaviour of men as the reason for this split with heaven, from my perspective this sounds quite similar to the Christian myth of "Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden". Could this also be a result of the Christian influence in the Yorubaland?

As we can see, the orishas are functioning as intermediaries between the Supreme Being and human beings, mainly to give helpful assistance to their devotees. But before turning to the orishas in more detail, there is another concept of the Supreme Being that has to be discussed as it is highly important for the individual fate, namely the concept of ori.

4.3 Ori

The concept of ori is deeply connected with Olodumare, but should not be fully equated with Olodumare. It is best described as a guardian spirit or also as a different personality – an over-soul, "*that is capable of warding off evils, guiding and guarding a person and retaliating where need be*" (Awolalu 1979: 10). Insofar it is a kind of alter ego, but also more than that, especially through its relation with Olodumare.

> Ori is a complex concept. It is the physical head as well as that force that is responsible for controlling one's being. The physical head represents the inner head or inner person and has its correlation with Olódùmarè because it derives from Olódùmarè and is kept in being and wholeness by maintaining its correlation. But it can not be made identical with Olódùmarè. At best, it is only a part which cannot be equal to the whole ... referring to the personality-soul which is believed to be capable of ruling, controlling and guiding the life and activities of man (Awolalu 1979: 9).

The ori is crucial for success or mischief/failure, insofar someone can also become the victim of the ori of someone else, e.g. when someone is not able to escape from their pursuer, it is said that the pursuer's ori caught the other. In contrast, if someone is able to escape or the plan of an enemy fails, it is said that *"his ori does not compromise with the evil one; that is, his Ori wards off evil"* (cf. Awolalu 1979: 9). Similar to the concept of ori also the orishas can have great impact on the fate and life course of the people.

4.4 The Divinities

> The Yorùbá hold the belief that the Supreme Being created heaven and earth and all the inhabitants, so also did He bring into being the divinities and spirits ... to serve His theocratic world (Awolalu 1979: 20).

Awolalu states three categories of divinities, whereby some divinities can also fit into more than one category, those categories are: Primordial Divinities, Deified Ancestors and natural forces and phenomena.[57]

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[57] "The divinities an spirits are best considered together because the Yorùbá do not make too clear a distinction between them. They are both divine and are both in the spirit-world. These divine beings are of complex nature. Some of them are believed to have been with the Supreme Being long before the creation of earth and human beings, and can aptly be called 'Primordial Divinities'. Others are historical figures – kings, culture heroes and heroines, war champions, founders of cities,

The divinities I will discuss are only a small but important sample of the wide range of divinities that are estimated between 200 and 1.700 or even more (cf. Awolalu 1979: 20). Furthermore, only those divinities will be explained that will appear later throughout the work (through the activities of EOE), while other divinities that are also quite prominent throughout the Caribbean are not mentioned, like Soponna, Yemonja, Osayin, Oya, Osun.

Primordial Divinities

As Primordial Divinities are those divinities categorized that existed with Olodumare before the creation of the earth.

Obatala (Orisa-nla) is the arch-divinity of the Yoruba. In the oral tradition he is seen as the image or symbol of Olodumare on earth. As mentioned before he was assigned with the task to make the world habitable and to form the human figure. Therefore he is known as the sculptor divinity. His cult is widely acknowledged all over the Yorubaland, he stands for purity. White is the most acceptable colour for his worshippers and his chief taboo is wine from the oil palm (cf. Awolalu 1979: 21-22; Bulletin 3: Creation And Orisas in: Egbe Orisa Ile Wa 1983).

Orunmila (connected with Ifa) is believed to be specially gifted with knowledge and wisdom. He can also be seen as a counsellor, because he decided to move freely between heaven and earth to give advice. He accompanied Obatala when he made the world solid and is believed to know the fate of all human beings, which is sealed by Olodumare. When the humans come to earth, their fate is immediately forgotten by them. Orunmila can therefore be called for advice to rectify the course.

One of his most important functions is his ability to speak on behalf of the other divinities, also including the Supreme Being, when he enables communication between divine and human beings through divination.

There is a myth about Orunmila speaking about a period of time when the orishas were weak and limited and depended on the offerings of men. In this situation Esu taught Orunmila the Ifa divination system which is based on sixteen palm nuts. In return for this knowledge he demanded a piece of every offering that was given at every single divination being conducted. Until today Orunmila is called through the Ifa divination system. Without explaining the system in detail, it's important to know that through the diviner and his divination board Orunmila can be addressed and he responds to the call. The whole communication is done through the patterns of the palm nuts, which function as the signifier in the divination process. Offerings are of course also very important for the whole process.

There is a dispute concerning the relation between Orunmila and Ifa. Awolalu describes Ifa simply as the divination system, others see Orunmila and Ifa as two distinct divinities (so does Egbe Onisin Eledumare) while others see Orunmila and Ifa as one divinity.

Like Obatala, Orunmila is widely worshipped in Yorubaland, his priests are called Babalawo (Father of mysteries). The Babalawo "*is ranked as the highest of all Yoruba*

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etc. who have been deified; and yet others represent personification of natural forces and phenomena – earth, wind, tress, river, lagoon, sea, rock, hill and mountains" (Awolalu 1979: 20).

priests, and he is approached on every important event, private as well as public" (cf. Awolalu 1979: 23-25, Bulletin 3: Creation And Orisas in: Egbe Orisa Ile Wa 1983).

Esu is another important principal divinity. He is to be seen as the 'special' relations official between heaven and earth. His chief function is to run errands, both for men and divinities, including reports on their deeds to the Supreme Being. Hereby he does not discriminate between good or evil errands, so that he can also be used as an instrument of retaliation.

Through the eyes of the Christians he was equated with the concept of Satan, the Devil, but this comparison only demonstrates the misunderstanding of this complex character (cf. Awolalu 1979: 28-29).

> The Yoruba world does not know of totally opposing forces – one representing evil and the other good. Esu is not the personal embodiment of evil standing in opposition to goodness. As one of the functionaries of Olodumare in His theocratic world, he is to be seen as 'that part of the divine which tests and tries out people. He tempts people, but that does not mean that he is against the human race or will do only harm. He is one who loves to try out what is in people's hearts and what their real character is' (Awolalu 1979: 28; citation in: N.Q. King (1970) Religions of Africa, Harper and Row, p19).

Through his controversial character he is also the universal policeman and keeper of ase, the divine power of Olodumare that fills the universe. In this function as the 'in-spector-general' he can be *"found in the marked-place, at road junctions and at the thresholds of houses"*.

He is very prominent in the Yoruba mythology, and his cult transcends the limits of any group or lineage that is commonly dedicated to a specific orisha, and this orisha only. No devotee of any other divinity would dare to refuse Esu the first offering before offerings are made to the divinity being worshipped. It is hoped that in return he will co-operate so that the ritual can be properly performed, or more general, "*without Esu the dynamic of ritual would not exist*" (cf. Awolalu 1979: 28-30, Bulletin 3: Creation And Orisas in: Egbe Orisa Ile Wa 1983).

Ogun clears the path, it is believed that he smoothened the path, so that the other orishas could enter the earth without problems. Ogun is called when someone encounters difficulties or barriers and needs help to clear his path.[58]

He is seen as the chief among the divinities, and is also believed to stand for absolute justice. In addition, he is seen as the divinity of iron and war. In this function he is "*the tutelary divinity of hunters, the blacksmiths, the goldsmiths, the barbers, the butchers, (in modern times) the mechanics, the lorry and taxi-drivers – indeed, all workers in iron and steel*" (cf. Awolalu 1979: 31-33, Bulletin 3: Creation And Orisas in: Egbe Orisa Ile Wa 1983).

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[58] "Because Ogun is associated with clearing the way or removing barriers, the Yorùbá hold the belief that when one's path is not clear or when one encounters difficulties, appeal must be made to Ogun to help in making the path smooth in the same way as he did for the divinities in the beginning of days" (Awolalu 1979: 31).

Deified Ancestors

Deified Ancestors were extraordinary people during their lifetime, including cultural heroes and heroines as well as war champions, who became divinities after their death. *"Instead of saying that such heroes or heroines died … they have metamorphosed themselves into stone or iron"* (Awolalu 1979: 33).

Sango is certainly the most prominent orisha of this group, especially in the Caribbean, where the Orisha religion was formerly named Sango cult. Sango reigned as the fourth Alaaafin of Oyo, he was known as a tyrannical king that possessed tremendous power. The tales about the cause of his death, where he becomes a divinity are slightly different in their content, mostly they point out suicide as the cause of his death. As a divinity the controversial character of Sango seems to be mostly forgotten or ignored. His devotees do not seem to "*remember Sango for his tyranny or magical displays; rather they remember and revere him as standing for justice and fair play"* (cf. Awolalu 1979: 35).

He is also associated with lightning and thunder, further Sango is connected with the solar divinity Jakuta. In Ile-Ife he is known as Oramfe, which helps to understand the title Chief Oranfe (Oloye Orawale Oranfe) (cf. Awolalu 1979: 38). Awolalu concludes that "*both Oramfe [Sango] and Jakuta … are one and the same divinity and performing the same function: bringing down the wrath of Olodumare on the evil people in the community"*(1979: 38) (my remarks).

Sango's function as the divinity of justice (similar to Ogun) can also help to explain his importance in the colonial situation, keeping alive the call for justice while living in a society that was overshadowed by physical, mental and structural violence (cf. Kment 2005: 70).

Natural forces and phenomena (Spirits of Nature)

In addition to the distinctively characterised divinities that have been mentioned before, the Yoruba also believe in spirits that are associated with natural phenomena. The earth is believed to be inhabited by a spirit, as it is also believed that spirits dwell in mountains, hills, rivers, lagoons, the sea and in certain trees that are seen as extraordinary. The worship e.g. of these mountain or hill spirits shall bring fertility "*in both the farm crops and in human beings*". The air is not believed to be inhabited by a spirit, but by innumerable spirits (cf. Awolalu 1979: 45- 49). Many orishas like Sango are also associated with natural phenomena.

Olokun, who is also worshipped by Egbe Onisin Eledumare, is seen as "*the lord of the sea or the divinity that is in the sea … because the sea strikes some terror into the people, there is the belief that a wonderful spirit dwells therein. It is also generally believed that wealth and prosperity come from the sea*" (Awolalu 1979: 47).

All of these different aspects of the Yoruba belief system shall help to understand how complex this whole theology, cosmology and mythology is and how disrespectful it was of the colonial authorities to forbid the practice of this belief system. I don't know if their reason was ignorance or fear, or maybe both. However, people of African descent in the diaspora today, can draw on a rich traditional and spiritual corpus of knowledge that can help them to navigate through their life.

Chapter 5. Becoming EOE (period of the 70ties)

To begin with the realization of Egbe Onisin Eledumare, means to look at the period of the Sixties and Seventies of the 20th century, when a whole generation was questioning the status quo and exploring new ways of life and identity.

The purpose of this chapter is to have a look at the period itself which set the preconditions for many Black Power organisations and the later developments that took place in Trinidad. The central focus lies on the biographical context of my main interview partner Chief Oranfe (Olakela Massetungi), his path of "redefinition of self", his biographical way through school and various organisations, until the founding of Egbe Onisin Eledumare with others in the year 1970. This chapter shows central elements of change concerning the formation of self-consciousness/identity as it was established by Chief Oranfe and other EOE members. It should be possible throughout the chapter to ask: "What is regarded as important? What decisions were made? What possibilities were available?" To sum up: "Why are we here where we are?"

The Black Power movement shaped much of what we encounter today in the growing Pan-African or African-centred sector of the Orisha religion, it also impacted on the African identity in general. At the same time and later on the scientific perspective on African culture and spirituality throughout the Caribbean began to shift. The paradigm of a syncretistic religion that was performed by Africans through the coupling of African deities and Christian saints as a result of subordination to a low status inside the white world of a slave-holding plantation system, was replaced by the understanding of an active African self. This African self was performing an active form of resistance, through the cover of the Christian saints for the African deities, while simultaneously keeping specific knowledge in secrecy in order to maintain African knowledge, spirituality and culture. The African heritage was therefore used as a tool of resistance against the oppressing forces.

Altogether this chapter shall reflect on the social conditions in which Black Power emerged, to further on understand and reflect upon the social conditions it creates and the positive African identity which it supported.

5.1 The situation in the 60/70ies period

The period of the 60/70ies created many quite popular images - that are still commemorated in the media today, ranging from the wide spread experimentation with LSD and many other substances enhancing the common consciousness, to the horrors of the Vietnam war, the spread of student protests, the emerging of a new music culture, the strong orientation towards eastern philosophy in popular culture and new forms of sexual self-confidence as opposed to the decades before. And nearly all of those images originated in the United States of America

Another very popular image out of this time of social unrest and redefinition is also placed in the United States, the Black Power movement, circling around the definition of "Black".

> The American-centered black power uprising began to define "black", and this may have been in response to white peoples definition of who black is, and what black is, as anybody that was non-white, right. And therefore in the context of America, many people like myself, socially we would be defined as black (Interview Chief Oranfe, O21, 00:17:45-7).

Together with many political claims this period also made use of many spiritual sources outside Christianity, although these sources were not completely new to the western world, their popularity reached new heights in mainstream society. But the new spiritual focus was still ignoring Africa, "*since it is difficult to accept that Africa contributed to world science, civilisation and spirituality at that point of time ...*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O21, 00:37:07-0). It was the time for eastern philosophy to enter the Eurocentric stage, "*the oldest scriptures in the world where from India. Wise man came from the Himalayas, right. And people started to look to eastern philosophies for enlightenment ... Jimi Hendrix and these brothers, you know, people started to utilize the medium of music to bring about spiritual transformation and Beatles perhaps did it most openly as a European middle class group - by singing Hare Krishna, you know, it became an international hit, I think it must have remain number 1 for quite some weeks on the international record, right*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O21, 00:40:33-9).

Another popular person became Carlos Castaneda, who is nowadays strongly criticised regarding the correctness of his ethnographic data, but nevertheless he had a strong impact far beyond the period of the 70ties.

> So Castaneda became a big thing, ... look at a leave and see a god, you know what I mean. So you know that paradigm-shift began to make people realize that this was not the sole reality - which is the basis of the capitalistic system, that matter matters, you know what I mean, and therefore it was a dangerous paradigm (Interview Chief Oranfe, O21, 00:41:56-0).

Beyond all these different perspectives and opinions of this specific time, also including the Black Power movement, Chief Oranfe sees a bigger picture, a global development that changed the relation between the self and the environment, "a global redefinition of self"

> I teached history at one point. I think it was European history at that, and I taught English, right. But in writing about – what people call African – I don't really see a thing called African history so much, you know, I think it had just have world history, but sometimes you might focus on principal areas and players in history, and I see what people call as this black power thing here. So sometimes people disagree with Makandal Daaga when he say that the 1970 was not about black consciousness, you know, some people think he just – but to another extent he might be quite sure in that – my definition of what was taking place is that – My definition is

that the world itself - human beings were at a state of redefining their relationship with themselves and their environment (Interview Chief Oranfe, O21, <u>00:26:59-3</u>).

5.2 Pre-Definition of Self – Redefinition of self – From 'Negro' to 'African'

Basically I say that the world social environment was going to a state of redefinition of itself (Interview Chief Oranfe, O21, <u>00:01:00-8</u>).

Embedded in a time of change, inherited structures of self had to make place for other forms of self-consciousness. The transition that some people of African descent in Trinidad underwent in their identification was from "Negro" to "African", a crucial shift that was still overshadowed by the remains of the British colonial system[59], which ended officially in 1962, through the granting of independence.

Although Trinidad is nowadays strongly influenced by America, the British system is still present. Cars are driving on the left side of the road. The traffic signs show the speed limit in kilometers, but *"even tho the speedometer says kilometers, he[the driver] still thinks of miles per hour"* (Interview Chief Oranfe, O21, <u>00:04:28-1</u>) (my remarks). Weight is measured in pounds, "*So, while officially the pan might mark two kilos, he still ask for two pounds of sugar. Two pounds of flower. When people buy cloth, while it's metric, people don't ask for 16 meters, no, they ask for three yards of cloth* " (Interview Chief Oranfe, O21, <u>00:03:52-8</u>).

It's interesting to see that the material surrounding has changed since Independence, but people are still thinking in "British" terms of classification. The British structure seems to be rooted quite deeply inside the pattern of thinking, or the habitus, in this case long standing historical dispositions that are reproduced over time, as it is seen through Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and capital.[60]

The British colonial structure strongly influenced people's attitudes and consciousness in Trinidad..

So, you know, we inherited a British structure, it's not always evident today ... even proverbs in Trinidad – some of them have not changed to reflect the new currency[dollar, cent], people still say ... "pennywise", "pound-foolish". In fact there is a business place in town called Pennywise. Right. So it still reflects, the British mode of functioning ... there is still our Westminster parliamentary democracy system, and the judicial system is still, even tho they have now established a Caribbean court of justice ... people still appeal to the privy council, right, in England. ... So all of these still show the allegiance to the British mode in operating, even our education system, as much as we are Americas backyard, our system is struc-

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[59] "That definition or redefinition of self would include the African self. The structure that we inherited, prior to 1970, but even from the time of your independence, was the British colonial system, right" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O 21, <u>00:01:35-3</u>).

[60] See Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework

> tured on the British school system, rather than the American school system – and I'm not saying anything wrong with that, or it's bad or anything, but that's what we inherited (Interview Chief Oranfe, O21, 00:07:30-6).

After the granting of independence the British political structure was not overthrown, it was to be continued, by a Creole government. Additionally, another remnant of the British influence, the school system, wields a primal impact on the defining of self. During school time, Chief Oranfe reports that it was necessary to fill out forms concerning "racial"/"cultural" belonging.

> I was told to tick negro, now my first recall is that there was never anything called mixed, right. Then later on as I grew up, there had this thing called mixed, and I was advised to tick mixed, right, and then by the time I became conscious I had more accepted myself as negro than mixed (Interview Chief Oranfe, O21, 00:32:49-1).

Chief Oranfe's preference of "Negro" rather than "Mixed" is an important choice, it is a choice of cultural belonging inside the multiethnic environment of the Caribbean. Nonetheless, the term "negro" also recreates the social inferiority associated with it, while on the other hand mixed signifies an identity without any significant history or cultural heritage, except for the Caribbean background of interracial contact which had been enforced through the colonial structure.

This kind of classification has constantly been challenged since Black Power emerged, it influenced the construct of self, which had been maintained through the remains of the colonial British slave system and the ongoing structuring through school[61]. The rise of new ideas concerning the new black/African consciousness, carried by the Black Power movement[62], changed the construct of identity radically. The image of the "Negro", often used for racial discrimination, was replaced with the image of the "African", a positive image of self.[63]

This was an important change, because Africans had been imagined as inferior people through white supremacy for centuries, "negro" implied inferiority and backwardness compared to the ruling class of white people. Black people also adopted this perspective, partially in their conception of self, caused by their unfortunate position in the society, or rather, because of the asymmetrical environment they were living in. Barry Chevannes shows a good example of this case referring to Jamaica.

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[61] "I'm a young child growing up, I don't know who I am. Let's call that, people define for me, my teachers and my elders tell me, well whenever you see this – say negro, so negro, then I was told to say mixed, because mixed with Chinese – I'm mixed with so many things, but to them I was mixed with Chinese and African, right" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O21, 00:16:21-6).

[62] "... so having been taught to define myself as negro, when 1970 came I'd recognize that there was no negro" (Ibid. 00:15:21-8).

[63] "So I fitted into that category [BLACK], but the black power uprising in Trinidad and Tobago sought to redefine by the word African. So we moved from negro to African, and I accepted myself as African, even tho I'm conscious that I have Amerindian blood in me - heritage, I have Chinese heritage in me" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O21, 00:17:45-7) (my remarks).

> Being black is regarded as a curse going back to Ham, the biblical figure who looked upon the nakedness of his father. Black people are the children of Ham. We are the worst set of people – no solidarity, no unity, only dissension and infighting with every other race, particularly the white race, ... (Chevannes 1983: 22).

During the 19th and 20th century, black intellectuals started to deconstruct the image of the "Negro". Prominent names with different perspectives in this context are Césaire, Senghor, Fanon, Soyinka, du Bois and of course Marcus Garvey (cf. Kment 2005: 72 – 79). For Chief Oranfe Marcus Garvey was especially influential for his understanding of African identity, as also for his self-perception in general.

> I just looked around here - and I was a ["]Garveyied["] - and I was impressed by Garvey's philosophy, and Garvey said, that he looked around him, for his man of vision and greatness, and he saw none, and he determined within himself, that I will be the man of vision and greatness. I was impressed by that thought of honourable Marcus Mosiah Garvey, and in this world I thought, okay, if there isn't any, I'm going to create me, somebody is going to be like that, and I selected myself, you know. And I engaged with other people, who was also searching, and defining for themselves (Interview Chief Oranfe, O5, 00:26:05-9) (my remarks).

5.3 African/Black Consciousness in Trinidad - the mushrooming of Pan-African bodies

It is reported throughout the Caribbean that African culture and religion survived the oppressive times of slavery, often as a way of resistance, through coded messages in songs and narrations. This kind of knowledge was kept in secrecy from outsiders, and passed on inside the African group (cf. Allen 1995: 68).[64]

In the case of Trinidad, African culture and religion could be passed on in a hostile environment, mostly hidden from the public. Through the ongoing rituals of the Orisha practice, African heritage was maintained and preserved, including ritual and mythological knowledge, Yoruba songs and phrases. In the phase of the 70ties the new positive evaluation of African cultural heritage and spirituality in society, enforced by the Black Power movement in Trinidad, brought new actors and perspectives into "the belief", the Orisha religion. This is important because from an outside perspective the Orisha practice is merely continued, but it is continued with a different orientation, with a different motivation and intellectual background.

At the first appearance the ideas of Black Power entered a fertile soil in Trinidad among those who are willing to listen. First as political and cultural programmes, later they expanded into the spiritual field. In those times of change, lies the formation of EOE, as an organisation/movement. The following perspective on this period of time is focused on those organisations that are related to EOE through it's biogra-

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[64] Rose Mary Allen (1995) studied the "Resistance as a Creative Factor in Curaçaoan Culture"

phy. Furthermore it should help to explain the situation that EOE was born into and to show the basic decisions of its founders for forming an organisation.

> In other words what we have in the 1970 period is the mushrooming of Pan-African bodies - African cultural heritage groups - and Ujamaa Village is one that originated in this community (Interview Chief Oranfe, O31, 00:01:25-6).

Ujamaa Village[65] was the first "Pan-African entity" that Chief Oranfe joined, he describes it as "reblish", meaning the young age of its members and its non-conformist attitude. It was located in Diego Martin northwest of Port-of-Spain.[66]

> It was African-centered, and it was based on building African consciousness, African awareness, and African social growth and development, and the mechanism for doing so was primarily lectures ... in other words there was a period of time when whatever Ujamaa Village was doing, was running concurrently with the liberation struggles in Zimbabwe and South Africa (Interview Chief Oranfe, O4, 00:01:41-5).

Like several other "*independent African units*" Ujamaa Village "*merged together to form something called the triple A*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O4, 00:03:04-6). The newly formed African Advancement Association that Chief Oranfe joined, after the fusion of Ujamaa Village, is described by him "*as a cultural group*" offering "*very different facets of the culture. So some rituals would have been reclaimed but not in depth, so for example during the time of the 1970 ... people began to remarry in African tradition, but there were no people who where spiritually authorized to do these things*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O31, 00:02:18-8). The political project that was envisioned by the triple A raised the demand for cultural reclamation, concerning the long-term suppression of African cultural expression in the Caribbean environment. Those cultural aspects of the African self also included spiritual functions like marriage. In other words, the culture was incomplete without its spiritual functions.

At this point of time is the decision located to form the spiritual organisation EOE, but also as the spiritual body it will become, the organisation will not lose its political spirit.

> That's what to be done, we get it done, right. ... showing that those things as are done, are done properly" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O31, 00:03:39-1).

While still being part of the triple A, the engagement of some members shifted. "*A small group of people here take it upon themselves to form a spiritual – what we call a spiritual foundation ... So we are still members here at that point of time , but we are serving the spiritual functions of marriages, naming babies, doing things for lands, houses and so on*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O31, 00:04:28-1). The triple A later split

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[65] The name is inspired by the Arusha Declaration (5. February 1967) of the Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere (information from Chief Oranfe).

[66] The shrine of Chief Oranfe is located in Petit Valley near Diego Martin

up into two different organisations, while on the other hand "*that spiritual foundation emerges or developed, or transformed, or transmuted into Egbe Onisin Eledumare*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O31, 00:03:39-1).

In the following years EOE, "*then known as Olodumare Movement went to the kpaales[leaders/heads] throughout the length and breadth of the country, exposing it's "new" found information on traditional Yoruba theology ...*" (Oranfe 2010: 7) (my remarks). The Olodumare movement finally became Egbe Onisin Eledumare.

Few years after these developments, changes were also taking place on the national level. The official acceptance of the Orisha religion slowly began to increase, a national body for Orisha religions was announced. Under the leadership of Iyalorisha Melvina Rodney, Egbe Orisa Ile Wa[67] became the umbrella organisation for the different Orisha shrines. It "*was the first state-recognized body by an act of parliament, in other words the state itself began to have an interest in having African spirituality organized - maybe for administrative purpose for themselves - they more or less try to stimulate from outside this move, and some people from inside*" agreed, because they had a similar opinion (cf. Interview Chief Oranfe, O31, 00:06:07-3). Because Egbe Orisa Ile Wa functioned as an umbrella organisation, EOE became a member, but as an independent organisation and shrine. "*I don't know if there was a registration form, but you know, membership is not like how perhaps structured European type organisation*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O31, 00:06:22-4).

In 1981 Egbe Orisa Ile Wa, with the support of former EOE, published quite an interesting programme under the name "The Orisha Movement", including language courses in Yoruba, training in Culinary Arts, accounting courses, Yoruba theology and cosmology, handicraft activities, the creation of a credit-union co-operative and an annual pilgrimage to the Niger. This programme shows clearly that the influence of Black Power on Trinidadian society and the results of it merged into something more complex than just political, cultural and religious claims. At the same time the programme partly resembled some of the activities and visions of EOE.

In 1989 the visit of the Ooni of Ife, the political head of the Yoruba-Nation, marks a significant date. His visit increased the political legitimation of the Orisha religion in general, and led to the attempts of a stronger institutionalisation of it. He also confirmed Iyalorisha Rodney's position as the head of the Orisha religion (in Trinidad), provoking accusations of preferential treatment from the other dominant Orisha group Opa Shango led by Molly Ahye (cf. Henry 81). In the same sequence of events Olakela(Chief Oranfe) was appointed by the Ooni to function in the umbrella organisation Egbe Orisa Ile Wa, therefore he also pointed out Chief Oranfe's importance for the Orisha religion in Trinidad. It can be seen as an act of confirmation of Chief Oranfe's path that was formed in the Black Power upheavals of 1970, that also led to the need for spirituality.

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[67] Egbe Orisa Ile Wa "*was registered as a religion in 1981 and officially incorporated in 1991*" (Henry 2003: 80), detailed information about Egbe Orisa Ile Wa and Melvina Rodney can be found in Frances Henry 2003.

5.4 The need for spirituality of the African self – the path of Chief Oranfe and the first steps of EOE

> And while we were as this body[Triple A], some of us in doing, you know, research on ourselves so to speak, began to find that there is a need for African spirituality as part of the wholeness of the African person (Interview Chief Oranfe, O31, 00:02:13-9) (my remarks).

It is important to mention that people's interest in the Orisha religion increased considerably after the Black Power movement reached Trinidad (cf. Houk 1995: 188). Insofar the ideas of Black Power created a new interest in the Orisha religion and many of the shrines which can be found today in Trinidad were formed around this period of time and after.[68] EOE is a special example of this process, because it is one of the few shrines who started as "straight-forward African", without the inclusion of Christian or other religious paraphernalia (cf. Interview Chief Oranfe, O4, 00:08:19-6).

In general, out of a politically motivated field spiritual issues gained more and more importance. The path of the African identity/consciousness expanded beyond the political arena and led to the inclusion of Yoruba ritual practice/sacred science. The following interview part with Chief Oranfe clearly shows this progress, out of his "Garveyied"-context.

> Did I have ambitions to make my own community? I'm not sure, you know, basically I was part of a ["]garveyied["] group, and perhaps different people focus on different words of Garvey, right. But three keywords that honourable Marcus Mosiah Garvey used was "One God, One Aim, One Destiny", right. So probably the words god and destiny – probably tickled my brain, but part of that Pan-African group - that ["]garveyied["] group – when we looked at the African self, having collectively embraced the African self, we came to the conclusion that the African self is not only a political self. We were highly political in response to the oppression to the current moment. That politicisation took a form of in a sense anti-imperialist struggle, and that would mean in a sense pro-working-class positions, even nationalist positions - nationalist one. But having looked at some countries in Africa - that had overcome some stages of colonial domination - they also would have overcome with a negation of their African cultural self. So some people outlawed certain religious practices that were traditional practices, they would deem it as witchcraft, devilish, pagan, fetish, voodoo, whatever, and so those of us in the diaspora, who perhaps had a more idealistic mindset, tell our self well, we going to embrace that ugly side of our self ... (Interview Chief Oranfe, O22, 00:03:05-4) (my remarks).

Of great significance for Chief Oranfe was the publication "Sixteen great poems of Ifa" by Wande Abimbola[69], which he discovered during a stay in New York.[70] He

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[68] to be seen in Kment 2005: 124; dates of the different shrines and initiation of the leaders

[69] Wande Abimbola (1975) Sixteen great poems of Ifá. UNESCO

made use of the available literature and today he describes his 6 months stay in New York as an experience of Africa, "it *was as tho I had lived in Africa when I was in New York*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O22, 00:06:09-6).

During his education Chief Oranfe was also inspired by political and intellectual publications like "Consciencism" and "the Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare" by Kwame Nkrumah. The significance of an intellectual approach in the biography of Chief Oranfe also becomes obvious in the engagement with spiritual and ritual matters.[71] Unlike "usual modes of initiation", like spirit possession and/or illness at an early age or difficult period of lifetime, more or less forced by a greater power, the biography of Chief Oranfe points out a "free will" or conscious choice of engagement.

> I think I'm in a odd position, a odd position in the sense that most people were moved by some phenomena to embrace orisha. The phenomena I was moved by was my intelligence. Whatever I did was by conscious choice, I wasn't controlled, or threatened to do anything. If I did it, I would be rewarded, and if I didn't do it, I wouldn't be punished (Interview Chief Oranfe, O5, 00:24:24-9).

Another important aspect is his early initiation into an Orisha shrine that also influenced the development of EOE in the beginning of the 1970ties and the realisation of the African self, while other politically motivated Africans around him did not have this important access.

> I became initiated in 1971, right. So by the time we started to move to formularize some things. I had the advantage of being initiated, while others where still looking for initiation, even those who were older than me. Some took many, many years to become initiated, we still have founding members of this organisation who sometimes come in our midst, and they have not yet taken the step of initiation, right (Interview Chief Oranfe, O5, 00:26:37-4).

Although at that time it was unusual for an educated person to be interested in an Orisha shrine, Iyalorisha Louisa Catherine Toussaint became Chief Oranfe's matriarch, as also the matriarch of EOE, providing roots of the Oyo lineage.[72] Chief Oranfe and the other members of EOE were able to found this Pan-African organisation through the access and importance of initiation: "*because now that we about to assume*

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[70] "I got it in a Harlem Book store and I made an intense study of the verses of Ifa" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O22, 00:06:09-6).

[71] "We began research, we began going to the houses of the gods - of the African traditions - remnant in our land, we began to learn the rituals – the ritual language. We began to become familiar with that world, and some of us were actually advancing in those worlds ... I may have been a vehicle of one of those things" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O22, 00:04:44-2).

[72] "We have a matriarch, who is an initiate, and who has a lineage history, she overlooks us, she guides us. But we are going to all the spaces, to see what is taking place, to study our environment ... in my opinion she was an excellent tactician, and strategist, in promoting the calls of African and Yoruba sacred science ... a strategy that still impacted upon how I engage the current moment" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O5, 00:29:17-1).

leadership ... the only people who could sit down that leadership on themselves properly, are those who are initiated, and that was my advantage " (Interview Chief Oranfe, O5, <u>00:32:23-3</u>).

Concluding this chapter I would like to emphasise again the new face of practitioners who began to enter the Orisha religion in the 70ies. Young educated "blacks" who were ignited by the ideas of the Black Power movement and proud of their African heritage, were willing to reclaim their African mother tongue, their African culture and African spirituality. Chief Oranfe was among the first people in Trinidad who were undergoing this specific process of transformation based on the political-intellectual confidence of Black Power. He and the beginnings of EOE are positioned in an influential time which has shaped the appearance of African consciousness in Trinidad until today. As it can be seen in the chapter the political motivations of the Black Power movement enforced the spiritual activity and the acquisition of ritual knowledge, thus it would not make much sense to separate the political and spiritual motivations/activities of EOE from each other. At the forefront of the Pan-African shrines/spiritual organisations in Trinidad, EOE possesses a long history of Pan-Africanism that covers exactly 40 years.

Chapter 6. Contemporary EOE - a Pan-African organisation since 1970

The following pages shall give a short overview of the structure, concepts and activities of Egbe Onisin Eledumare. Despite the efforts of bringing together a representative batch of information about EOE, it still remains an incomplete task. There is far more information about EOE that could not be included in this work.

6.1 The Compound/Shrine/Ile – connection to Africa

The compound is the visible lifework of a priest/priestess/shrine head which represents his/her power and position. It is the spiritual centre and often the place of residence, too. As a bounded area, it is entered through the shrine of Esu. Generally it consists of a palais (a hut without walls in which groups of people can sit together and where rituals are performed), the peregun (a collection of shrines, dedicated to the different orishas), a chapelle in which different religious paraphernalia are stored, and sometimes living quarters for the members or the shrine head himself (cf. Kment 2005: 125-128).

The power of the shrine head is generally shown through the number of deities he/she can command, and the services offered. Vividly shown in Hook 1995 and Kment 2005, the Orisha religion of Trinidad is characterized by its pluralism of religions, the inclusion of Christian saints and symbols, Hindu deities, and Kabbalah spirits. [73] African-centred compounds like the one of EOE or other Ifa-shrines/compounds have excluded these non-African elements, or never had any of these, as a result of the Africanization or Re-Africanization of the religion. The pairing of Christian saints and African deities which is common among Afro-Caribbean religions is not practiced anymore either in the African-centred segment of the Orisha religion. They are aiming to establish an African identity that is reconnected with the practice and belief systems of their historical homeland. From the beginning the shrine of EOE was African-centred, "*We start as directly straight on*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O4, 00:08:19-6). The popular pluralism with Christian, Hindu and Kabbalah elements was not part of the African-centred understanding of EOE that was also politically motivated.

The shrine/compound is much more than just a place to come together and to get into contact with the deities. It establishes a strong connection to Africa and it is a place of transformation. Through the ritual context and actions the state of the place can change, relocating it out of its physical position in the Caribbean into a spiritual bridge/journey with/to Africa.

The shrine/compound of EOE is located in Petit Valley, north-west of the urban cen-

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[73] Kabbalah is a very special topic, because even inside the Orisha community it's strongly stigmatized as devlish, or in general not recommended to be performed.

tre of Port-of-Spain, about 20 min with the public maxis. It was founded in 1972 (cf. Kment 2005: 154) when spiritual elders from several centres established Ogun as the principal orisha of the compound, also being the principal orisha of shrine head Chief Oranfe. [74] There is no fence or any entry gate around the compound. People who are not too cautious like myself, have to learn where to enter the compound and where its exact borders are. This knowledge is useful because certain behaviour like smoking is forbidden inside the ritual/divine/sacred compound.

The compound is entered through the shrine of Esu, the process of entering and leaving the compound is very similar, consisting of salutations to Esu, the pouring of water and the phrasing/verbalisation of one's intentions, as well as asking for protection (as in my case). Right behind the shrine of Esu lies the shrine of Ogun, as the primal power of the place, then there are the shrines of Shango and Olukun, which were established after Ogun. The palais is located at the centre of the compound, a wooden construct with a corrugated iron roof, the closed part of the walls is one meter high, the rest is open, altogether the palais can be described as an open construct.[75] Inside the palais are benches and drums hanging on a beam, as well as another shrine for Ogun, which is located at the head of the palais.

Right beside the palais is the residence of Chief Oranfe and his wife. Altogether the compound is a place of spiritual activities and domestic functions. In addition, the compound/shrine in Petit Valley is also the international headquarter of EOE and is open throughout the year.

6.2 The philosophy of EOE

Among the Pan-African shrines in Trinidad that focus mainly on African deities, EOE has a unique position. The primal power of the orisha Ogun and the establishment of Shango and Olokun, as it is visible through the structure of the stools in the compound, is expanded through the direct link to Eledumare, the supreme intelligence. In contrast to other African-centred compounds like in Santa Cruz, EOE does not focus on Ifa and does not offer Ifa-initiation. EOE calls its practice 'Yoruba Sacred Science' to signify also the focus on academic approaches of learning. EOE's perspective and philosophy is centred on the orisha Ogun, whose viewpoint differs significantly from those of the other orishas, or Ifa-centred perspectives.[76]

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[74] "I'm not able to go on with details but I can tell you that this several spiritual elders came, and they establish Ogun, as a principal orisha in the compound ... yeah a compound would usually have a principal orisha, and it would usually be the orisha of the person on the compound" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O4, 00:06:58-4).

[75] Kment explains the reason for these open walls with the entering and leaving of the deities during the ritual process, as well as the ability for bystanders to watch the actions inside the palais (cf. 2005: 127).

[76] "Okay, but this compound is basically ruled, maintained, guarded and protected by Ogun and Oranfe, so, even where there is not an explicit attempt at defining the universe through their eyes, plenty times we speak here, it will be through their eyes and their perspective, as different from an Ifa perspective, as different from an Oshun perspective, as different from an Obatala perspective, which may all be dealing with the same essence and ingredients called truth, but being seen from different certain locations. And the Ogun certain location is not the same as the Oranfe, Shango or

Above all stands Eledumare as the central system of EOE's philosophy, represented through the name Egbe Onisin Eledumare, and the slogan "A sin Eledumare A bo Orisha"[77]. Egbe Onisin Eledumare can be translated as "Club (**Egbe**) having devotion (**Oni-sin**) of the supreme Being (**Eledumare**); which is further explained through "**A** (We) **sin** (worship/devotion) **Eledumare** (creator, supreme Being), **A** (We) **bo** (offer) **Orisha** (the divine beings)". Chief Oranfe explains it as follows: "*we will bow only before supreme intelligence and we will give respect to all other forces in the universe ...* " (Interview Chief Oranfe, O92, 00:02:15-3).

Eledumare as the primal principle of the universe, as the source of all the different orishas and all beings, expands the focus on the Orisha pantheon into to a wider philosophy and cosmology. As explained by Awolalu the orishas are Eledumare's intermediaries. He is the creator of the universe and as the highest being is not comparable with anything else.

> So while we acknowledge that there is a multiverse and a multiforce, we also recognize at the very same time, there is a universe and a single force, a single intelligence or entity or integrity. Right. And that is supreme in its being everywhere in time and space throughout eternity, but we also recognize that the way humans interface with this ... is through bites or bits of tuned down energy ... some of tuned or tuned down bites of energy might fall in the category called orisha, and we pay respects to them, usually as ... representatives of the supreme command (Interview Chief Oranfe, O92, 00:04:03-5).

EOE sees itself as an elite group of devotees - referring to Eledumare - a group of specialists that can help when the circumstances become catastrophic.

> What I'm going to say, when there were difficulties in the lives of human being, they were expected to go in a particular manner to particular orisha, to resolve their difficulties. When the difficulties become catastrophic and mashes up all that normal structure, than people go to an elite group of people, who they say, please go, speak to the Eledumare for us ... (Interview Chief Oranfe, O4, 00:18:04-4)

As a result EOE has not changed its focus on Ifa, which is becoming more and more

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Ifa locations, verses – some verses of Ifa say that Ogun was … sometimes aggressive in his dealing with human beings, and they Ifa story, tell of Ifa using wit and wisdom in preference to force, right ... Yeah, so, those are two different approaches for solving life's problems" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O4, 00:11:45-4).

[77] " 'Sin' is Yoruba word to worship, Eledumare is supreme being, supreme intelligence, supreme course, first course, primordial course, the celestial cosmic infinite womb, the generator of all life, all of that exist, of all being, of all essences, right. 'A' is plural and therefore we worship supreme, all of the designation that we give for Eledumare, and sometimes to make it very simply, we say, we bow ... before supreme intelligence, 'bo' – Yoruba word for offering, ebo – either the actor which could either be a group or none, depended how it is used - to make an ebo is to make offering, and an ebo could be also an item of individual offering" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O92, 00:02:15-3).

popular in Trinidad[78], insofar EOE exists as a smaller but influential group in the spiritual landscape of African religions in Trinidad.

6.3 Membership/Initiation

Egbe Onisin Eledumare can be understood as a club[79], insofar membership is quite limited and exclusive. Access to the various benefits of the organisation and the solidarity of the other members is granted through membership.

> Because once you become an adopted member, then all the members - whether they are criminals, or non-criminals - we are brothers and sisters, and we stand in the defence of each other (Interview Chief Oranfe, O91, 00:04:38-5).

There are basically three different ways to become a member of EOE, or 3 categories of new members. Initiated members, who passed through the crucial ritual of the determination of their main orisha and finished all 3 cycles of initiation. Adopted members, who went through an initial ritual, comparable with formally accepted members, being able to become an initiated member when permission is given. The third group consists of appointed members, who are appointed by spirit beings or human authorities.

All these forms of membership are accompanied by readings, a divination process, and the consultation of the orishas. Initiated members are granted full membership, whereby adopted and appointed members need further confirmation to remain a member of the organisation.

Membership also has to be seen from a different perspective. Belonging to a shrine is not necessarily a permanent decision, the Ifa/Orisha religion in Trinidad has a high fluctuation. There are people on a spiritual search, going from shrine to shrine, searching for power or self-fulfilment[80], people who move because they are not accepted for initiation at a certain shrine, who have to go to another one, or high-ranking members who are establishing their own shrines and so on. But such movements can also create strong ties between two shrines, through mutual support, as for example the shrine of Ogunrinola, north of San Juan, who had been a former member of EOE.

The Ifa/Orisha religion in Trinidad is still a decentralized religion, although a central body exists. At the same time the focus of African-centred spirituality shifts towards

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[78] "[Speaking of Ifa-shrines -] because that's were you will get the knowledge and the information on Ifa, and therefore people transferred from one point to the next, because Ifa is where their attention is currently" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O4, 00:10:20-1) (my remarks).

[79] "Egbe would mean club too, you know, association, or lodge or even a credit union, or cooperative society" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O91, 00:03:28-4).

[80] "I have had people in this shrine, who have come from there, some of them have moved on, and some are still here, but you find that on the time, people come and they go, you know ... they might never find it, but they still looking, you know, so they have to look here, in this spot, go somewhere else ..." (Interview Ifa Oshun-Obatala, IOO1, 00:04:29-8).

Ifa, which is not supported by EOE through an Ifa-initiation.[81]

During my stay I attended the "classes of initiation", lectures that were taking place every Tuesday and Thursday, over a couple of weeks. Those kind of classes take place in spring(vernal equinox) and autumn every year. They are open to all people that are interested in becoming members of EOE and they are free of any costs.

The people interested in becoming members at the class I attended consisted of adopted members of which one had already been initiated at another shrines, two young boys that were more or less forced/directed by their grandmother, and one devotee who already was a member of EOE.

During the rituals I visited(Ogun festival/Olukun festival), the adopted members were treated as full members, they sat side by side with the initiated members, joined the singing and performed ritual functions. They had access to all the rituals that are not accessible for the public, e.g. certain animal sacrifices and other rituals that are held before and after the public festivals.

I attended the first level of these classes which ended with a consultation of the orisha, asking to open the way for level two and the further process of the initiation. When the reading at the end of the first class was taking place, I was already sitting on my plane back to Austria, thrilled by the heavy thunderstorms over St. Lucia. Afterwards I received the information that two of the adopted members had made it to level two.

As an initiated member there are also higher ranks to gain over a long period of time. The training inside the organisation ranges from neophyte to master, in a 21 year long education, consisting of three 7 years cycles (cf. Interview Chief Oranfe, O91, 00:10:11-6). Due to the high level of requirement EOE lacks members in the upper ranks. Parallel to that kind of membership there also are various administrative positions that are representing the structure of the organisation.

6.4 The structure of EOE

EOE is a complex of different groups or egbes, based on democratic principles, including the vote of the orishas through divination.[82] The best way to explain the

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[81] "[Asking: If all the members who started with Chief Oranfe Egbe Onisin Eledumare are still members to this day] Yeah, most of them, so they may not be directly functional members here, there have been people, who have gone on to form ... auxiliary shrines, right, because they are rarely autonomous shrines. There have people are gone and to form autonomous shrines, or egbes or Iles, right, and the development of Orisha Sacred Science over the last few years, I have allow some people to switch shrines – meaning that there has been a strong emphasis on Ifa and Ifa-initiation, that this space don't give, this space here doesn't give Ifa-initiation, my organisation" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O4, 00:09:17-4) (my remarks).

[82] "We have tried to develop a democratic approach, although we understand it, our democracy – human beings might vote something, and orisha might decide something else. ... So there is accommodation for that understanding, but as much as we can get people to determine through a participatory process the policies of the organisation. We do that ... [when planning] the New Yam Festival, which is the next festival we go into, people are asked to write down their vision and their skills and all those things, for the next 4 years, because the administrators operates on a 4 year cycle" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O91, 00:13:20-9) (my remarks).

structure of EOE is through its administrative offices, which are primarily the local/national leaders named Alaga, and the international coordinator the Oludari Agbaiye, who also has the same rights as the national administrators[83], both are mundane titles.

Alaga means chairperson, and succeeds the term Olori.[84] There are several Alagas inside EOE who are the heads of their egbes(groups), these egbes can be described as sub-groups of EOE which are still part of the organisation, but have their own autonomous activities.[85] One of those Alagas is for example, Victor Rubidiri. As the head of the Egbe omo orisha Olukun, he planned and organised the Olukun festival, which I was able to attend a few days before my departure. Another one is Sangode, as the head of the Egbe omo orisha Oranfe Jakuta Sango, she is simultaneously also the current Oludari Agbaiye.

For many years/decades Chief Oranfe/Olakela Massetungi was the Oludari Agbaiye of EOE. Today many people are still calling him Oludari because they got used to it, in the literature he is sometimes mentioned as Brother Oludari, by Frances Henry, or Oludari Massetungi, by Patric Kment. About 4 years ago the orishas decided in an election that it was no longer his duty to carry this title and so it passed to Sangode.

Another special position is Balogun, connected to the word Ogun, the Balogun can be described as the public relations officer, although a better description would be Minister of Self-Defence. "*But civil society does not like to hear, civil organisations have departments related to their Self-Defence*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O91, 00:16:59-8). This position is filled by Chief Oranfe himself, as one of his titles.

The compound in Petit Valley is the Caribbean Headquarter of EOE[86] and its worldwide vision, including the possibility of relocating/centring the whole organisation to/in Africa. There were attempts to settle in new locations throughout the Caribbean, especially in Tobago and the United States, but they failed by the lack of people who would have been qualified.[87]

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[83] "... the Oludari is the international administrator, who has co-equal rights, with the national administrator of these territory, but he must be guided by the experience and be informed by the national leader of that territory" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O91, 00:13:53-4).

[84] "Olori means head of - ori is head - the olori is either at the top of or the head of ... Now over the years we moved from Olori as the national head title to a less powerful title in some ways, which is Alaga, right. So Aga is chair, Alaga the owner of the chair, the chairperson, the chair man, the chair women, so we have moved to Alaga" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O91, 00:16:15-8).

[85] "... so I was the Olori of the organisation, but we have several Oloris as you would recognize in the organisation ... Sangode posted a question to me: "When will be the next eshu feeding" ... And I explained to the population at large, that we have autonomous egbes and the head of the egbe in consultation with their membership and their orisha will determine when the next festival is" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O91, 00:15:11-7).

[86] "... the constitution of the organisation envisions a world-wide organisation of which this is the international center, or headquarters, right. But we have tried to make it very flexible by calling it Caribbean headquarters, because we might want to center the home of the whole thing in Africa" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O91, 00:07:15-0).

[87] "... we had trained a small core of people for that kind of leadership, we were specifically thinking of Tobago at the time, and people didn't qualify by the constitution, the constitution requires that at least 14 years should have been engaged" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O91, 00:10:07-4).

In addition to the before mentioned titles there is also the chief title of Chief Oranfe, which is highly interesting, but it is outside of the structure of the organisation, therefore the special meaning of this title is described in Chapter 7.

6.5 The ritual calendar(festivals) and finance

The ritual/festival calendar of EOE consists of 3 main events: New Yam, Sango and Olukun Festival. Those 3 festivals are organised and executed directly by EOE, or also by the different egbes (groups) of EOE, like Egbe Omo Orisa Olukun or Sango.

The ritual calendar begins with New Yam Festival, whose date is determined by the lunar circle between the 13 and 14 moon. In 2011 EOE celebrated New Yam Festival in the second half of December. The next one is Sango festival in summer. In 2011 it was celebrated from July the 23rd until the 29th. Olukun festival usually takes place in autumn. In 2010 it was on the 24th of October, in the following year 2011 it was celebrated on the 24th of September.

The exact date of the festivals is usually determined by divination, therefore it shifts from year to year, resulting in slightly different days in a mostly predetermined period of time. For Olukun festival the place of celebration is also determined through divination. Due to its connection to the ocean, it would be difficult to perform the offering at EOE's headquarter/shrine. Beside these fixed festivals EOE participates in numerous other festivals of other shrines and in national celebrations like Emancipation Day. Moreover, other shrines also visit the festivals of EOE.

When speaking with Chief Oranfe about the ritual calendar I was surprised that a shrine whose primal orisha is Ogun, as said before, does not celebrate an Ogun festival itself. Ogun festival is organised by Ile Isokan, whose shrine head Chief Ogunrinola is a former member of EOE. Both shrines still have strong ties with each other. Insofar the celebration of Ogun festival is achieved through a close cooperation between EOE and Ile Isokan, during the festival the members of EOE were quite numerous and had a special segment of seats that was located around the central point of activities, additional Chief Oranfe assisted and also led many songs and invocations during the festival.

Concerning the organisation of the festivals finance is a crucial aspect, offerings for the orishas have to be paid, as also the drinks and food for the participants.[88] Financial compensation is achieved through the help of other members or people outside the organisation. Furthermore there can be entry tickets.

Another way of the organisation to finance itself is through the annual membership fee, which can be split up into monthly payments, for those who are not in permanent employment, like most of EOE's members (cf. Interview Chief Oranfe, O92,

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[88] "... we have an event coming up and we need to decorate the place and we don't have a budget for it, the Egbe Omo orisha Sango, the members of that Egbe will put all the things together to make it happen. It need cloth, palm oil, obi, to buy those things and they make it function" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O92, 00:06:50-1).

00:06:03-3). The egbes also give their contribution of financial support[89], but all in all the financial situation of EOE cannot be described as stable, "*so currently it is on the compassion of the universe that Egbe Onisin Eledumare functions. Right*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O92, 00:07:47-3).

An interesting development is the Orisha Devotees Credit Union, which was founded at the beginning of the 90ies. Open for all Orisha devotees in Trinidad, it is a child of EOE, functioning as a "grass-root savings mechanism". Current political develop-ments threaten to change the requirements of such small credit unions[90]. Further the credit union is limited by the small number of members and the lack of technically trained employees or organisation members. The credit union still has some chal-lenges to overcome, to function effectively, therefore it will be of interest to see how it will develop in the future.

> It's slow, it's slow, it has done some interesting things, you know, but it has been very slow, it has been slow. So hopefully within the next two years it might be able to rejuvenate itself ... perspective was blown out in the uni-verse ... let's have some mass development around here, let it begin to spin on it's own, and then find it's part, where it's going (Interview Chief Oranfe, O8, 00:52:56-4).

6.6 Orisha conferences

EOE has organized two Orisha conferences by itself, and participated in numerous others.

The first international Orisha conference organized by EOE was held in 1987 from 16th to 19th August at the Valsayn Teachers Training College, the title was "The Im-pact of Orisa Tradition in the Caribbean Diaspora ". The principal speaker at the con-ference was Chief/Dr. Osemwegie Ebohon, who was engaged in psychiatric remedies utilizing traditional African pharmacopeia and pharmacology (cf. Oranfe 2010: 14-15).

> This conference was attended by only a few devotees and participants and members of the Diplomatic Corps here in Republic Trinidad & Tobago. The Conveners however considered the outcome a grand success (Oranfe 2010: 15).

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[89] "So there is a idealistic propose structure of how we could have money on incoming bases, which is, every egbe will generate its own finances and contribute different quantum of their raise money to various kinds of funds ... some of it may be fund in a supplemental document to the constitution of the organisation, right, that deals with finance in a financial running of the organisation ..." (Inter-view Chief Oranfe, O92, 00:07:47-3).

[90] "However over the last few years in Trinidad and Tobago, this has – there have been – there has been an attempt to categorize this organisations as financial houses, that would make them – have to fall under the stringent discipline and methodologies of banks. You know, and if that – in fact I where present at several of the national consultation and the general fear of several small credit unions was that they will die. In fact, one of the suggestions by the central bank was that some or-ganisations should fuse, they should join together, so your identity would be lost, and all of those things ... If this things really manifest in my opinion, it would be to the further enslavement of working class people, if not necessarily African people now, just working class people in general, right" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O8, 00:50:30-5).

The disappointment about the missing of the Ministry of Health that had been invited and the financial debt in which the conference ended up was compensated by the knowledge and experience of Dr. Ebohon and the re-introduction of the orisha Olu-kun. This re-introduction was achieved through the establishment and activation of an Olukun-shrine, the first one in Trinidad (cf. Oranfe 2010: 15).

The second Orisha conference was held in 1995 at the Royal Palm Suite, titled "Towards a common Yoruba Theology – Orisa Tradition in the Old/New World before and after Slavery".[91] Chief Oranfe remembers that it received much more attention than the conference before. In contrast to other previous Orisha conferences, both were solely hosted by Orisha devotees, and not by Academic Institutions, or through their support.

Beside those two conferences EOE presented at and participated in many other conferences, e.g. in Cuba, and recently in 2010 again in Trinidad, at the "First World International Ifa Orisha practitioners conference" at the NAPA building, where Chief Oranfe presented his organisation EOE and its vision. For this occasion he composed the presentation which I have been using as an important source throughout this work.

Further Frances Henry offers information about the "Sixth World Orisha Conference"[92] that took place in Trinidad, for the first time, in the year 1999 at the Holiday Inn., one of the high-class hotels. This conference was organized and coordinated by Patricia McCleod (Shangowummi), it was attended mainly by participants from abroad, because the registration fee of the conference was too high for most of the local working-class Orisha devotees. Of great public interest was the opening ceremony on the first day, which included a prayer and invocation spoken primarily in Yoruba by Brother Oludari/Chief Oranfe (cf. Henry 2003: 146-150).

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[91] Its objectives were the following ones:

    1. To examine several facets of African sacred science, commonly termed the "Orisa belief system" with a view to unifying theology and practice.

    2. To contribute to the growing documentation and information data bases on African/Orisa Tradition and Culture. (Oranfe 2010: 17)

[92] "The idea for an international Orisha organisation was apparently developed in New York City by the Caribbean Cultural Centre – a group dedicated to the study of African and African-derived traditions. The first conference took place in Ife, Nigeria, in 1981 and subsequent ones were held in Brazil and the United States" (Frances Henry 2003: 146).

Chapter 7. Issues of political legitimation and African Identity

The question of "the political legitimation and African Identity" of Egbe Onisin Eledumare and other Pan-African groups is a complex one, embedded in a larger context. It involves multiple questions that are correlating with each other:

- How legitimate is the identity of being African as a citizen of the Caribbean nation-state of Trinidad & Tobago
- How is the legitimation of African officials of the political and religious domain in the African motherland achieved
- How is the legitimation of practicing "authentic" African knowledge in the domain of African spirituality (more general the Orisha religion, more specific the Ifa religion) in Trinidad achieved and maintained.

This complex of questions should not lead to a static explanation, it can only be examined through its dynamics. Insofar it is also important to be conscious of the constant change that is taking place in the Orisha religion or the Ifa religion or the Pan-African Field. The influence and change that EOE has also caused in this process of Africanization helps to understand it from a specific perspective inside this situation/field.

Since the 1970ies, through the impact of the Black Power Revolution, descendents of Africans in Trinidad have defined themselves publicly as Africans. As a result of this change the interest in activities and knowledge associated with Africa has increased. Africans have emphasized their continental heritage simultaneously with their Caribbean situation, perceiving themselves as a group of Africans living in the Caribbean and as a part of the African diaspora. Central for this change was the demand for cultural and later also religious festivities that are known from continental Africa. Many of the prominent "big" names inside the Orisha community/religion have been influenced by this period of time, and share common roots and worldviews of this era.

Reclaiming an African identity in Trinidad is a political and a spiritual act. Concerning the national ideology: *"There is no Mother Africa, There is no Mother India ... There is only mother T&T"* [93]*,* Africans as a communal group are subsumed into the amalgam called Trinidadian. The concept of the "African" becomes therefore important in the ongoing Africanization or Re-Africanization of the "Orisha religion" as also for political acts aiming for the recognition of the "African heritage" in Trinidad, including cultural and spiritual dimensions that are to be established on a legal level.

Is the following a process of Africanization or Re-Africanization? The difference between the term Africanization and Re-Africanization depends on the point of reference. While Africanization states that something is to be made "African", Re-Africanization includes the assumption that something that had been African before,

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[93] Inauguration speech of Eric Williams as the first prime minister of the Independent Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in 1962.

is about to be made African again. Concerning the Re-Africanization of the Orisha religion in Trinidad, this perspective quite likely fits, because knowledge and experience from the African continent is again embedded in an African context. My personal preference to use the term "Africanization" is based on the post-colonial understanding of identity, whereby identity does not refer to a real point of origin, but to a process of identification, including the meaning of identity not as a fixed object, but as a point of challenged interpretation and positioning. In a further step identity can be understood as a process of imagination, a process of symbolic relations that is accepted or not, through its degree of shared legitimation. Therefore I do not wish to neglect the position and notion of Re-Africanization, but to relocate it inside this whole process of identification. Insofar the re-establishment of a former African self that has been alienated by the colonial situation, marks an important position inside the process of identification and political legitimation.

Frances Henry calls Chief Oranfe an "innovator"[94], denoting the group of people in Trinidad, who are pushing forward the issues of Africanization of the Orisha religion. In contrast, James Houk criticises exactly those people, because of the Afrocentristic notions they are bringing into the eclectic, multicultural, heterogeneous Orisha religion, as he describes it[95]. Both views are of importance through their different perspectives, which are insightful for the engagement with the topic.

7.1 Who are the innovators? Introduction into the Pan-African-Field in Trinidad – reference to Frances Henry

"Reclaiming African Religions in Trinidad" by Frances Henry (2003) shows detailed information about the process of Africanization of the Orisha religion in Trinidad - including also a political perspective. She examines the changes that are taking place inside the Orisha religion, through the processes of Africanization or Yorubanization, the attempts for political legitimation as well as the introduction of secular celebrations. Therefore she designates a small group of innovators, who represents the state-of-the-art of the Africanization inside the heterogeneous Orisha religion in Trinidad.

> There is a small sub-set of innovators also somewhat involved with administrative matters, but their primary objective in Africanizing the Orisha movement comes from spiritual or sacred base rather than a secular one. The most important of these are probably Patricia McCleod (Iya Sangowummi), Valerie Stephenson Lee Chee and Brother Oludari. They are driven by the need to bring back what they construct as the true and authentic Yoruba source religion to the Orisha worship. For example, Valerie Stephenson Lee Chee has been working on the restoration of the Egungun ancestors festivals. Patricia McCleod has brought back the rain festival devoted to Shango, Brother Oludari is bringing back festivals and Orisha who

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[94] In Frances Henrys book "Reclaiming African Religions in Trinidad" Chief Oranfe is mentioned as Brother Oludari

[95] "[The Orisha religion is] a highly eclectic religious system characterized by mechanisms that serve both to engender variability and to oppose it" (Houk 1995: 207) (my remarks).

had not been worshipped previously in the Trinidadian form of the religion. They are directly involved in Yorubanising the practices in Trinidad. What is interesting about this group is that they are not satisfied with current Orisha practice although they revere the elders who managed to keep aspects of the religion alive during times of slavery and colonial oppression (Henry 2003: 132).

Of course there is also a group of "innovators", that *" are primarily motivated by political ideology, and their main interest appears to be getting the religion to a point where it is accepted by the mainstream and particularly by government*" (Henry 2003: 132). In addition to this political group of "innovators"[96] Henry also mentions the prominent Cyrus shrine in Enterprise as a third group. (cf. Henry 2003: 133)

Out of my perspective it is a bit problematic to categorize the political or secular innovators separate from the spiritual ones, EOE and especially Chief Oranfe are theoretically and practically involved with political and spiritual issues. But Frances Henry also points to a common historical background, the Black Power Movement, including a common political basis.

> The innovating group as a whole share a common history of participation in the Black Power movement that swept through the Caribbean and created what has been termed as "revolution" in Trinidad (Henry 2003: 133).

> At the heart of their dedication to Orisha is a political commitment to the philosophy of Afrocentricity and its valorization of African identity (Henry 2003: 134).

The black power movement of 1970 is a crucial historical event for the ongoing process of Africanization. It marks a change of ideology and identity for many people to Afrocentristic or Pan-African concepts.

> This political ideology is still evident among the leaders of the Africanization movement in the Orisha religion but, as in other areas, Black Power as a radical or militant movement has gradually become identified with the more intellectual ideology of Afrocentricity (Henry 2003: 134).

This Afrocentricity is expressed through the introduction of new rituals/festivals, extensive use of the Yoruba language in the ritual context, increased use of African dress and a change/broadening of cosmologic perspectives. Of interest for the development of this processes are also the questions of legitimation and authenticity, which can be raised as a competitive and challenging issue, also with regard to spiritual knowledge and leadership. The afrocentristic concepts of the Orisha religion are strongly contesting the syncretism of the religious practice, especially Christian ele-

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[96] "Members of this group include Eintou Springer, Professor Rawle Gibbons, Khafra Kambon and many others currently working in administrative positions with the Council of Elders. Although these innovators are also religious and believe fully in the spiritual values of the Orisha religion, their primary objectives can [be] described as secular rather than sacred" (Henry 2003: 132) (my remarks).

ments are excluded from ritual procedures (the church is viewed as part of the oppression in the colonial period). Interestingly this change didn't result in a split of the Orisha religion, one reason could be its spatial/individual organization, or also the circumstance that the Africanization of the religion was not necessarily seen as an offensive act. Chief Oranfe speaks of a general acceptance of the introduction of new African elements into the religion.[97] Nevertheless these afrocentristic developments are not uncontested, not without ambiguous perspectives.

7.2 Afrocentrism !? Introduction into the Identity debate of Otherness

A critical question about the Afrocentrism of the Orisha religion in Trinidad is raised by James Houk, mainly focusing on African-Indian polemics[98] which are enforced through Orisha shrines, who are excluding non-African elements (in this case Hindu-elements) from their ritual procedures and spiritual compounds.

> This attempted expurgation of all the non-African-derived components from the Orisha religion can be interpreted, in part, as a response to the influx of Indians into the religion. ... During the last 30 or so years, however the hegemony and self-determination of Afro-Trinidadians in the Orisha religion has been seriously threatened. This recent attempt at Africanisation is, no doubt, a revitalistic response to that threat (Houk 1993: 177).

To explain afrocentric shrines as a response to Indian influence inside the Orisha religion, ignores the cooperation between Indians and Africans during the Black Power Movement, as well as the Marxist orientation of many Pan-Africanists, who focus more likely on class than "race" or "color". Furthermore the attempts for a positive African self-image aiming to free itself from the colonial master-slave system through the negation of the concept of the 'Negro' is also not considered. Shrines like EOE, who started from the beginning as African-centred shrines, without the inclusion of Christian, Hindu or Kaballah elements, are misjudged by this model of explanation, because they already started with a different framework in the 70/80ies, that was "straight African". Furthermore the focus of Afrocentrism inside the Orisha religion is directed primarily towards its Christian elements and not against Hindu. "*Thus, their mission became not only the rediscovery of original Yoruba ritual but also the rejection and removal of Christian elements*" (Henry 2003: 134).

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[97] "Well, I could give you an example of my own case, because I belonged also to a shrine and there was several of us – like Andrew Tanka, a popular musician here in Trinidad – but he was also in the Mau-Mau-School, like plenty of other younger brothers and sisters, and when they went abroad for drumming or with the Steelband – when they returned and approached the Elders with African images – it was not offensive to them. I think, it was the general mood and atmosphere – the time and space – so once we brought in the images – or whatever – so it really did not matter much to them. Because in their own opinion, they were dealing with a Spirit, and so – no color, no form- that is how they saw it ... eventually some of them begun to move forward either African imagery in some cases art called 'Black Unity', like people of Port-of-Spain selling some posters of a black Christ" (Interview with Oludari Massetungi [today Chief Oranfe] in: Kment 2005: 91-92).

[98] Meanwhile Indians have become the biggest population in Trinidad, succeeding the majority of the African population.

On the other hand I cannot quote an empirical study concerning the question of Anti-Indian motivation inside the also differing Pan-African field. Therefore I can argue primarily through my own experience of entering this field as someone who does not fit into the Pan-African concept. When I began doing research on and with EOE, I was at first labelled as an "European", connected with the image of one-sided interests and suspicions about the emerging influence of Europe in the world. After settling formal procedures, proving my solely scientific interests, while at the same time being aware of the unequal economic and political conditions world-wide, I was fully accepted.

After that initial phase, I didn't encounter any accusations or exclusion by the people I was working with. To be honest, I was surprised by the friendly and open kind/nature of many encounters I had during my stay in the field, and I am not speaking here about the acting of friendly and open-minded behaviour towards tourists. While moving mostly in circles of African-centred people, I didn't encounter the exclusion of otherness, or any discriminations for being "white" or a "European", or any bad talk about Indians. Of course, this is just my perspective, quite personal through the experiences I made, but as a result I don't see the need to cry out: "Be aware of Afrocentrism". I met people, who were conscious about their actions, concerned about their identity and spirituality, but not aggressive towards those who are different.

On the national level the whole African-Indian situation in Trinidad, is a rather difficult one, with predominantly economic and political tensions between the African and Indian population of Trinidad. But again the influence of Black Power in Trinidad was not Anti-Indian, on the contrary, there was mutual support between Indians and Africans[99], who where suffering under unequal conditions, especially those of the lower and middle classes.

> ... and while there may have been some antagonism between the East Indian and African community, there seems to have been a general acceptance, that the both people are in a disadvantage position. (Interview Chief Oranfe, O33, 00:02:36-0).

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[99] "And when black power arouse, in fact there would have been several interviews on our local television by East Indians who said that Indians became conscious of themselves as a result of black power, so it could be the other way around, because what – since we were now defining themselves and sometimes they themselves were made to feel shame of Roti, the name ... They began to look at themselves, as a distinct component of the society and take pride in their specialness, and several of their early attempts of holiday making and different thing was in response or as a parallel move to an African move in that direction, where the African was in the forefront of it" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O33, 00:11:24-4).

"In fact I have a direct report from a women who was a leader in an African movement, who went soliciting funds in an East Indian community for African people, and she said - well in those days a dollar was a big amount of money - and she said, people were giving her a dollar, 50 cents – I mean 25 cents, 50 cents and some – and she arrives at the home of an old Indian men, and he gave her 5 dollars, that was a big thing, so she wanted to find out, why he gave her 5 dollars, and he said: "Mother, I would give you anything to see you all succeed, but if you succeed, our children will become better" .... You understand what I am saying" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O33, 00:12:23-8).

> ... but people generally lived in harmony with each other, and I'm not say-ing that there may not have been abuses between both people, misunder-standings between both people, but since there were both of working class stock - not the owners of means of production - there was a certain sense of unity between them, you know (Interview Chief Oranfe, O33, <u>00:08:58-4</u>).

From the perspective of Chief Oranfe it is a matter of class rather than ethnicity. In-sofar I can't agree to accuse Pan-African movements, like EOE, of raising Anti-Indian sentiments, but I also have to admit, that a Pan-African philosophy can cause various perspectives on these relations, ranging from the empowerment of other marginal-ized groups, to the preoccupation with one's own group interests, which won't help to decrease the tensions that exist. Racial debates can be very emotional, therefore it is difficult to balance ethnical tensions and the own group interests.[100]

The African-Indian tensions in Trinidad are a complex issue that can only be men-tioned in this work[101]. But like many antagonisms it is also based on the concept of identity and its various issues. Therefore I would like to examine these issues of otherness, included in this Trinidadian case, also from a theoretical perspective, ask-ing about the process of identity and identification through the theories of post-colonial studies. The relevance of these theories goes beyond the issue of Afrocen-trism, the African-Indian relation, or the white-black colonial discourse. These post-colonial theories are influential because they question the very base of identity, which is often taken for granted.

7.3 Issues of Identity. Identity as an ongoing Issue from a theoreti-cal and practical perspective

The issue of identity is seen here from a postcolonial/postmodern perspective refer-ring to a processual and decentred understanding of identity which focuses on the writing of identity. Identity in this context is connected to processes of imagination[102] and difference, as also to issues of otherness. This perception of identity is contrary to a notion of identity that is essentializing and naturalizing, and insofar writing cul-tural or political differences into the nature of the difference itself. The background for these theories on identity, mainly based on Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall, is given in Chapter 2 "Theoretical Framework".

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[100] An example for this debate can be found in an article about Selwyn Cudjoe and his statements about ethnical majorities in Trinidad. *Link:* http://www.allvoices.com/contributed-news/3822914-prof-selwyn-cudjoe-warns-of-negative-future-for-people-of-african-origin-in-tt (23-11-2011)

[101] A more detailed description of the African-Indian difficulties in the political landscape of T&T can be found in Chapter 7.4

[102] "They arise from the narrativization of the self, but the necessarily fictional nature of this process in no way undermines its discursive material or political effectivity, even if the belongingness, the 'suturing into the story' through which identities arise is, partly, in the imaginary (as well as the symbolic) and therefore, always, partly constructed in fantasy, or at least within a fantasmatic field" (Hall 1996: 4).

Although the before mentioned polarity, dealing with the issue of Afrocentrism, was seen between African and Indian, the emergence of 'the African' as a positive identity in the Caribbean Diaspora rises inside a worldview that was constituted through the colonial discourse of white-black polarity. People in the Caribbean of African descent (and also others who were not regarded as 'white' or 'European') found themselves in a space/place that was already defined by others, marking those who were different with a relation of inferiority.

A good example of this situation is exemplified in the publication "Black Skin, White Masks" by Frantz Fanon. Despite the fact that his experience is located in the French colonial space on Martinique in the Antilles, later in France and finally in Algeria, and therefore not exactly comparable with the situation in Trinidad, it is of importance because he gives a disturbing insight into the period of the first half of the twentieth century and the perspective on 'Blacks'. From a historical perspective he is in line with many other black intellectuals who argued against the paralyses of their colonial situation. In this respect Fanon describes vividly his (desperate) attempt to be recognized as a 'man equal among men', while he is constantly rejected for being a 'BLACK MAN'.

> I wanted quite simply to be a man among men. I would have liked to enter our world young and sleek, a world we could built together (Fanon 2008: 91-92).

The following arrangement of quotations shall show directly his struggle, which is basically located beyond black and white, or in other words "in-between" them, nether Black nor White.

> (Citations in Fanon 2008)

> The white world, the only decent one, was preventing me from participating. It demanded that a man behave like a man. It demanded of me that I behave like a black man – or at least like a Negro. I hailed the world, and the world amputated my enthusiasm. I was expected to stay in line and make myself scarce (94).

> I made up my mind, since it was impossible to rid myself of an *innate complex*, to assert myself as a BLACK MAN. Since the Other was reluctant to recognize me, there was only one answer: to make myself known" (95).

> I' m not given a second chance. I am overdetermined from the outside. I am a slave not to the "idea" other have of me, but to my appearance (95).

> My blackness was there, dense and undeniable. And it tormented me, pursued me, made me uneasy, and exasperated me (96).

> I was rescued from the civilizing deluge. I moved forward. Too late. Everything had been predicted, discovered, proved, and exploited (100).

> You have come to late, much too late. There will always be a world – a white world – between you and us: that impossibility on either side to obliterate the past once and for all (101).

> I had rationalized the world, and the world had rejected me in the name of color prejudice. Since there was no way we could agree on the basis of reason, I resorted to irrationality. It was up to the white world to be more irrational than I. For the sake of the cause, I had adopted the process of regression, but the fact remained that it was an unfamiliar weapon; here I am home; I am made of the irrational; I wade in the irrational. Irrational up to my neck (102).

In the following pages of "Black Skin, White Masks" Fanon goes on to sarcastically acknowledge the perspectives of Négritude, in which black intellectuals inverted the negative image Europeans had attached to them into a positive interpretation.[103]

It would be anachronistic to describe Fanon as a Black Power activist, although his writings were influential for the later Black Power movement. He did not want to emphasize his blackness, he wanted to be recognized as 'man'. He wanders between the space of the covered idea of 'man' and the uncovered prejudices towards colored people, uncovering the white definition of 'man'. The colonial situation of inequality/inferiority/inhumanity demonstrates for Bhabha the rupture of the proposed enlightenment idea of 'man'.

> The analysis of colonial depersonalization not only alienates the Enlightenment Idea of 'Man', but challenges the transparency of social reality, as a pre-given image of human knowledge. If the order of Western historicism is disturbed in the colonial state of emergency, even more deeply disturbed is the social and psychic representation of the human subject (Bhabha 2004: 59).

When Fanon writes "*it was impossible to rid myself of an innate complex, to assert myself as a BLACK MAN* " (2008: 95), he reveals the image associated with 'man', the unmarked image of 'man', which is 'naturally' associated with it, the 'white man'. Deviations from this image have to be labelled as being different or even antagonistic.

> Forms of social and psychic alienation and aggression ... can never be acknowledged as determinate an constitutive conditions of civil authority ... They are always explained away as alien presences, occlusions of historical progress, the ultimate misrecognition of Man (Bhabha 2004: 62).

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[103] "I embrace the world! I am the world! The white man has never understood this magical substitution. The white man wants the world; he wants it for himself. He discovers he is the predestined master of the world. He enslaves it. His relationship with the world is on of appropriation. But then there are values that can be served only with my sauce. As a magician I stole from the white man a "certain world," lost to him and his kind. When that happened the white man must have felt an aftershock he was unable to identify, being unused to such reactions. The reason was that above the objective world of plantations and banana and rubber trees, I had subtly established a real world. The essence of the world was my property. Between the world and me there was a relation of co-existence. I had rediscovered the primordial One" (Fanon 2008: 107).

Insofar Bhabha sees through Fanon the failed concept of humanism, "*It is as if Fanon is fearful of his most radical insights: that the politics of race will not be entirely contained within the humanist myth of man or economic necessity or historical progress, for it's psychic affects question such forms of determinism; that social sovereignty and human subjectivity are only realizable in the order of otherness*" (Bhabha 2004: 87). Fanon still believes in the humanistic ideals, where the conflict between 'black' and 'white' can be solved through the humanistic dream, which is described poetically by Bhabha as "*an existentialist humanism that is as banal as it is beatific*"(Bhabha 2004: 87).

In other words the 'modern' is alienating itself, it opens the gate for a post-modern world, which is not happening after, but is located in a space and time that can be described as 'in-between', as a space that is no space, because it is located through the relations, not through a fixed place. The search for identity of those who were absent from the "general will" revealed the limits of its idea. But in the colonial situation whites did not only enslave black people through their images of how black and white people have to be, they also enslaved themselves.

> The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation (Fanon 1969 in: Bhabha 2004: 62).[104]

But of course this situation of mutual enslavement is carried out with an unequal balance of weight, because it is the "other" who has to bear his "Otherness". Fanon describes this situation of forced self-recognition when dealing with the 'white' world, as a tripling of his body – "*I was no longer enjoying myself … I was responsible not only for my body but also for my race and my ancestors*" (Fanon 2008: 92).

Concerning Otherness, Bhabha speaks primarily of desire as the character of the connection, the doubling into Self and Other. Another possible relation of otherness is also described by Fanon, namely fear or the need for protection, which can be achieved through the image of the mask *"a thrown-off skin, thrown off to cover the frame of a shield*" for "*the play of combat in the form of intimidation*" (Fanon 1986: 150 in: Bhabha 2004: 91).[105] In this regard otherness can also become a weapon and a shield for symbolic combat or warfare that can also be executed by those who are over-determined by it. In this sense it becomes a protective act, which in my opinion is also quite common, or in other words happening simultaneously with desire. Concerning the Pan-African field in Trinidad it is more appropriate to see a certain complexity in the whole matter of identification.

In "Black Skin, White Masks" Fanon describes the dense atmosphere and narrow space of racial prejudices, in which Blacks could integrate into the "white" world as inferior members, or dance to the rhythms of Négritude, to celebrate their image as irrational and musically gifted people. This situation began to change in the following years when the voices of those black intellectuals calling out the importance of blacks in world history and for Africa as a central concept, hauled together with a genera-

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[104] Fanon (1969) The Wretched of the Earth. Harmondsworth, Penguin

[105] Fanon (1986) Black Skin, White Masks. London, Pluto

tion of young people, revolting against their contemporary world.

The "African" emerged as a kind of new concept of self-recognition that attempted to free itself from former racial subordination. "The African" opened a process of re-location in the environmental perception, or in other words as Chief Oranfe would say, a redefinition in the cosmic space. The concept of Africa and its meaning became more central for the consciousness of those in the diaspora, insofar choosing to be African, among a wider array of cultural heritage, due to the colonial situation of mixture, also included the centrality of Africa for the process of identification. But this process is not to be equated in general with a systematisation of Afrocentrism, or Afrocentricity. It is not a simple erasure of the diasporic situation, but more a relocation inside this situation, shifting the historical consciousness beyond the transatlantic slave trade, onto the African continent. Connected with this shift is also a strengthening of one's own political voice as a descendent of continental empires and kings. Chief Oranfe explains this process of redefinition out of his biographical choices, including the engagement with spiritual matters, as a further step on his path.

> And so having accepted that negro identity and I became conscious that - and I understand already that there is not a negro, and the person who you call a negro is an African, and I accepted my African identity. And then in having accepted this construct called African I recognized that whatever is called African is incomplete or empty without spirituality, and therefore to complete this definition of self, I accepted African spirituality. And while I may have had choice, I was also impacted on by my environment, and the environment permitted me to choose Yoruba Sacred Science practice, at this time it wasn't defined that way, or called that way, right, and it was called Shango in Trinidad and Tobago (Interview Chief Oranfe, O21, 00:33:47-6).

The redefinition of self also led to a re-evaluation of Africa on the international map, further encouraging the practice with the available African culture and spirituality.

> The 'Black-Power-uprising' put an international focus on the identity of an African role that Africa and the Africans played in contribute into World civilization and culture. Some of the younger priests and people that were not necessarily priests at this time – like me: guided by an elder, guided by their own information, their own knowledge and their own memory of the tradition, so we were able to move into a direction where we were able to reconstruct the image associated with the faith, so basically that was the principal stimulus (Interview with Oludari Massetungi in: Kment 2005: 90).

This process of identity or redefinition rejected the stereotype of the Negro and established a different concept of self, the creation or redefinition to be an African. Since the 70ies the public expression of being African became more common in Trinidad, it was not anymore something that had to be done hidden or in secret, but was pursued openly on the street, or on public occasions. In this connection the Orisha religion is of special interest, it was re-evaluated through the Black Power influ-

ence. The process of redefinition also included a spiritual dimension in the case of Chief Oranfe and others.

Considering all the before mentioned aspects of identity, how is this pursuit of being African to be categorized or seen. Is "the African" a successful rejection of colonial discourse or an essentializing notion of Re-Africanization? How are these questions to be dealt with?

First of all, it is my opinion that a person should not be equated with a concept, whether or not they identify themselves with the concept of Afrocentrism. This cannot be the only explanation for the whole range of activities and worldviews a person incorporates, it is one factor among many. Secondly the problem with identity is its notion to naturalize and essentialize, the power relations of different groups or persons are also naturalized and insofar excluded from the space of negotiation. The issue of identity is of as much importance as it is related to the topic of power. The question of power is based on its legitimacy to be executed, insofar the whole process is again embedded in a situation of negotiation of power relations.

Frances Henry handles the critique raised against controversial conceptions of Afrocentrism as by Molefi Asante[106] through a re-location of the perspectives. She emphasizes that many Afrocentrists are not in conflict with their Caribbean hybrid situation, contrary to the criticism of Paul Gilroy. Gilroy is concerned about the minimizing of the slave experience, which he sees as a crucial part for the Caribbean identity, being exemplified through his concept of the "Black Atlantic"[107] (cf. Henry 2003: 134).

Frances Henry goes on to note that "*many people on Trinidad, emphasizing Afrocentrism, are also "clearly grounded as Afro-Trinidadians but their view of the world is informed, first and foremost, by their being the descendants of African slaves ... African origins, in both cultural and individual identity terms, are highly regarded and, in fact eagerly sought after, but there is also full acceptance of the hybridization brought by Trinidadian time and place"* (Henry 2003: 135-136).

Henry's findings reveal that the interest in Afrocentrism is not necessarily opposed to the Caribbean situation of cultural mixture, it is more likely placed inside this situation. Furthermore the interest in African culture and spirituality does has attracted not only people of African descent, but also other population groups.

> Orisa has in fact experienced a revival following the 1970 'Black Power' impact on the consciousness of Trinidadians, and it now attracting young people not associated with these rites. Furthermore, its practitioners now include not only people of African, but of Spanish origin ... It was a politi-

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[106] "... The Afrocentrist will not question the idea of the centrality of African ideals and values. The Afrocentrist seeks to uncover and use codes ... that reinforce the centrality of African ideals and values ..." (Asante (1990) Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge, p6, in: Henry 2003: 134).

[107] "Gilroy suggests that African identities are composed of different strains and variants, depending on historical and local cultural influences. He describes the cultures and ethnic identities of the many diasporic places as hybrids, since they are all the result of the historical discontinuities that occurred after the middle passage, or as he metaphorically terms it, "the Black Atlantic". For Gilroy, the Black Atlantic, culminating in the experience of slavery, becomes the locus of identity formation, but it is influenced and changed by local influences, producing a variant or hybrid" (Henry 2003: 135).

> cal decision on my part. I came out of the 70's movement (Interview with
> Pearl Eintou Springer in: Kment 2005: 89).

To my knowledge, based on various conversations, all the people I met from the Pan-African field, expressed a similar view of identity that does not reject the Caribbean situation. Therefore it would be a misinterpretation to see a contradiction between the Trinidadian and African identity that a Pan-African person inhabits. But I cannot speak for the whole Pan-African field, so it would require a study of its own to evaluate the different relationships between ideology and citizenship in the Pan-African field in Trinidad (I met a PhD student from Nigeria researching on similar issues in Trinidad). In my opinion the relevance of this post-colonial engagement with identity becomes most important and urgent when viewed through the different/various use in political discourse.

> ... beyond the shadow of a doubt that the question, and the theorization,
> of identity is a matter of considerable political significance, and there is
> only likely to be advanced when both the necessity and the 'impossibility'
> of identities, and the suturing of the psychic and the discursive in their
> constitution, are fully unambiguously acknowledged. (Hall 1996: 16)

7.4 National Identity – The Politics of Group/Communal Identities in Trinidad – "Here Every Creed and Race find an equal Place" versus "There is no Mother Africa"

Asking about the African identity of Trinidadians also includes asking for the national identity and its relation to the African identity, or communal identities in general. When Eric Williams was inaugurated on the 31st August 1962 as the first Prime Minister of the independent republic of Trinidad and Tobago, he inherited an ethnically divided state from his British predecessors. According to my level of information he and his party the PNM (People's National Movement) didn't attempt to change much about it, despite their official multi-national message they established a monopoly of power in a democratic parliamentary system for the following 30 years (cf. Premdas 1993: 141-144).

Inside the multicultural framework of Trinidad are two great ethnical blocs that comprise the majority of Trinidadians – Indians and Africans. Enforced through the long-term political landscape[108] of ethnical competition the power structure and especially the power relations of the state are constituted through the balance or imbalance of these two blocs. In this segmented political environment the call for a national identity, the establishment of a united national civil society, is a challenging one. Despite the before mentioned antagonism, the awareness of multiculturalism is great among Trinidadians, but also overshadowed by its political difficulties.

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[108] The PNM is generally associated with the African segment inside Trinidad's population, while the UNC (United National Congress) , as a leading member of the currently governing People's Partnership(a multi-ethnic coalition) , is the contemporary party representing the Indian Population.

To raise the complexity of this matter of segmented or communal identity and national identity, it is important to note that the process of Africanization I examine is not placed in opposition to Indians. It is more likely placed in a critical distance towards the Christian African mainstream or also in opposition to unequal economic and political situations like the exploitation of the working class. Insofar I am talking about Africans who are criticising their "as black-labelled" government, with the intention to be recognized as descendents of Africans. This includes to recognize their African heritage, to call for cultural/religious activities and festivities to express the connection with Africa, as also a re-distribution of economic and political power. **"Power to the People" (Chief Oranfe).**

In this respect African-centred Africans did not feel represented by their government, or even felt humiliated by it, because of the marginalisation of Africa as a historical context that is still influential for the identity of contemporary descendants. Of most prominence is hereby the speech of Williams at his before mentioned inauguration.

"There can be no Mother India, for those whose ancestors came from India, there can be no Mother Africa, for those of African origin, and there can be no Mother Syria or no Mother Lebanon. A nation, like an individual, can have only one mother. The only mother we recognize is Mother T&T and mother cannot discriminate between her children" (Guardian, 31 August 2006 in: Kwame Nantambu 2006).

In favour of a national identity, Williams decreased the importance of the different origins, but through his line of argumentation he also split the multicultural identity of Trinidad that is influenced and constituted through its different origins. He created a contradiction by proposing a multicultural identity while at the same time cutting off the roots which are constitutive for it.

Nantambu criticizes Williams for being in line with the psychological trauma of slavery. "*In the specific case of TnT, Afrikan-Trinbagonians have not yet recovered from and overcome the detrimental and self-destructive psychological impact of Dr. Williams' 1962 independence message*" (Nantambu 2006). He notes that *"The fact of the matter is that TnT cannot claim to be a polyglot, multiracial/ethnic/cultural/religious society if Afrikans didn't come from Mother Afrika, Indians didn't come from Mother India, Chinese did not come from Mother China, Syrians did not come from Mother Syria, Lebanese did not come from Lebanon etc."* (Nantambu 2006).

According to the national anthem, including the line "*Here every creed and race find an equal place*" written by Pat Castagne, Nantambu concludes that this central line of the national anthem wouldn't be of importance if there were not "*a Mother Afrika, Mother India, Mother China, Mother Syria, Mother Lebanon, Mother Portugal, Mother Corsica etc. ... Mother Afrika's emigrants became Afrikan-Trinbagonians, Mother India's emigrants became Indian-Trinbagonians, Mother Syria's emigrants have become Syrian-Trinbagonians ...*"(Nantambu 2006).

In this regard ethical or communal interests and identities are not necessarily in contradiction with the national level. Nantambu sums up that "*The alternative, historically correct Afrika centered message to Dr. Williams is: Mother Afrika is our home, Mother TnT is our destination; Mother India is our home, Mother TnT is our destination and so on*" (Nantambu 2006). Being African does not excludes being Trinidadian,

and vice versa, of interest is hereby more likely the balance of communal interests and national ones.

There are some important questions as e.g. "How to handle multiculturalism?" or "How to establish and maintain a multicultural identity that is able to handle the different group interests and group relations with the overlaying common interests?"

When I introduced this chapter with the line "Here Every Creed and Race find an equal Place" versus "There is no Mother Africa", I intended to ask about the attempts for a national identity. Is the pursuit of a national identity achieved through the costs of the suppression of the communal ones, or not? Interestingly, my question seem to be heading partly in the wrong direction, because on the political level the process for a common basis that is not divided by ethnical differences is still to be achieved. Premdas for example accuses the PNM government between 1956 and 1986 for following predominantly its own group interests, excluding especially Hindus from the public and governmental sectors, while at the same time officially promoting the commitment to a common Trinidadian identity (cf. Premdas 1993: 141-142). Between 1986 and 1991 a multi-ethnical party - the NAR (National Act for Reconstruction) - embodied the hope for a fair distribution of political power, but the party broke apart, due to internal strife. After that period of time the PNM and the UNC switched governmental power until 2010, when a new multi-racial/ethnic party named the People's Partnership won the election. The result of this governmental period is at this contemporary moment of writing(2012) yet to be seen.

The collapse of the NAR is observed in detail by Premdas (1993: 93), who sees its limited success in the lack of characteristics that are necessary for power-sharing governments. Premdas applies hereby the consociational theory of Lijphart to evaluate the political era of the NAR (cf. Premdas 1993: 137-139).

The needed characteristics are a "*coalition structure ... mutual veto, proportionality, and decentralisation*" (Premdas 1993: 156). In short they can be described as the balance of power through coalition structures, consultative relationships between its leaders together with joint decision-making, a proportional distribution of resources and also the granting of more autonomous space for the different communities through an increased decentralisation (cf. Premdas 1993: 156-157). Premdas explains the collapse of the NAR due to the lack of all characteristics, except the coalition structure.

To handle the gaps in Trinidadian society is an ongoing political challenge, while at the same time the common interest for a multi-ethnical coexistence continues. Of further interest for the African-centred actors in Trinidad could be Premdas' statement about the politics of communal interests, concerning the characteristic of decentralisation.

> What would have made more sense and had more bearing on decentralisation was cultural autonomy functionally and associationally expressed. That is, a policy which provided state funds and subsidies to permit each of the ethnic groups to celebrate its own festivals and rituals. Under the Creole-dominated PNM government that preceded the NAR regime, large sums of state funds had been allocated for carnival and calypso festivals (Premdas 1993: 158).

African-centred activities and philosophies are not generally suppressed in Trinidad, nor are they supported, due to the lack of political programmes to engage actively with the different groups/communities in Trinidad and their demand for celebrations and rituals. For the Orisha community the pursuit for Shango-Day as a national holiday – which has not yet been achieved – is exemplary for this problematic situation. Simultaneously the political perspective on consensual systems of governance, based on power-sharing together with the autonomy of group interests, remains important not only for the African-centred community on Trinidad, but also for the relations between the different communities altogether.

7.5 Spiritual Identity and Politics. Acts of Political recognition of the Orisha religion

In order to look at the contemporary process of Africanization – Pan-Africanism – African identification – it is insightful to focus on significant historical events in the process of legalisation and governance of the Orisha religion (and its Africanization in Trinidad) that impacted on the process itself and its environment. The historical turning point for this process in Trinidad was most obviously the Black Power Movement of the 1970ies, but as this historical incidence has already been explained in several chapters throughout this work, I would like to focus on the events that took place after the period of the 70ies.

7.5.1 The Ooni of Ife

When tracing back the steps of the legalisation and governance of the Orisha religion, 1989 marks an important date. The Ooni of Ife, the king of the traditional Yoruba state Ife, in Nigeria, was invited to Trinidad[109]. Through his position he also represented the highest authority of the Orisha religion worldwide. The Ooni's stay marked the starting point of many legal processes to follow, Henry calls it "*the MOST SIGNIFICANT EVENT in the restructuring and secularization of the Orisha religion ...*" (Henry 2003: 78). The celebration of his official visit was accompanied by the presence of the government, who placed themselves in line with him. "*The event was marked by the presence of the then prime minister, the president of the republic and many other members of government. They all sat along with the Ooni and his Nigerian entourage on a raised dais shielded by umbrellas*" (Henry 2003: 79). During his stay in Trinidad he visited Lopinot, a historical site that is believed to be an ancestral African land and burial ground. Of further importance for the Orisha community was his advice to create a national body for the Orisha religion in Trinidad and his anointment of Melvina Rodney, the leader of Egbe Orisa Ile Wa, as the spiritual head of the Orisha religion on Trinidad (cf. Henry 2003: 78-79).

> In addition to the public celebrations that honoured his visit, the Ooni played a strong role in advocating for a united administrative structure for the religion. He suggested that a National Council of Elders be formed, consisting of the major shrine heads in the country. This was subsequently

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[109] Who initially arranged the invitation of the Ooni of Ifa to Trinidad is a contested issue (cf. Henry 2003: 81).

done. Despite earlier attempts at secularization and centralization, this visit marks the real starting point in the process of building an administrative infrastructure for the highly individualistic Orisha religion (Henry 2003: 80).

In this regard the Ooni of Ife, as an undisputed authority, directed the ongoing process of the religion that was known for its individualistic characteristics, also his anointment of Rodney as the spiritual head was an act that pushed the religion into a specific direction. Chief Oranfe suspects that a possible reason for his decision to favour Melvina Rodney over Molly Ahye, the head of the other Orisha organisation Opa Shango, could be Rodney's more distant position to syncretism in the religion compared to Ahye's.[110]

In the same sequence of events Chief Oranfe was also confirmed as a spiritual head/major shrine head. "*So Orisa Ile Wa, was kind of – in my opinion - favoured and I was appointed a member by the Ooni, in that organ ...*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O8, 00:13:36-9). Egbe Orisa Ile Wa functioned as an umbrella organisation for the different Orisha shrines, insofar it was also the predecessor of the Council of Elders.

7.5.2 The Council of Elders

The Council of Orisha Elders was established as a national body of the Orisha religion, and thus a direct spokesperson for the government. Two different Orisha organizations had already existed before, based on the cooperation of different shrines. The first was Egbe Orisa Ile Wa, which had been registered as a religion in 1981. At the same time the second Opa Shango was founded as an organisation. The incorporation of both organisations happened almost at the same period of time, too. Opa Shango was incorporated in 1990, while Egbe Orisa Ile Wa's incorporation took place in 1991. In 2000 both organisations merged together, under the leadership of Rodney and Forde, guided by the National Council of Orisha Elders (cf. Henry 2003: 80-83).

Henry reports that the Council of Orisha Elders was "*lawfully appointed and installed*" on the 6th of August 1988, under the supervision of the Ooni of Ife. From my perspective the date 1988 creates some contradiction, because the most appropriate period of time for this process should be placed in 1989 during the visit of the Ooni, but maybe important decisions had already been made before. In 1994 the Council called for a meeting "*in order to rejuvenate the council, which had not worked well*". In 1998 followed the "*establishment of a formally incorporated Council of Elders*", whose main tasks was "*to held an annual convention that included an overview of the year's events and a discussion of new ideas and plans ... to plan the programme of activities for its annual Family Day celebrations and any other public events*

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[110] "Ooni in his wisdom selected to - in a sense favour Orisa Ile Wa - and I suspect he favoured Orisa Ile Wa, because in its descriptions of itself Orisa Ile Wa was seeming to want to shed the syncretisms while Opa Orisha was claiming that the syncretism was a valid part of the diaspora experience. That may have been one reason that would have may have influenced the Ooni, but the Ooni is still alive and maybe interviews with the Ooni might even dispel all that I am saying here" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O8, 00:11:57-2).

planned" (Henry 2003: 84). Among the members of the council were also Melvina Rodney and Sam Phills as the chairperson (cf. Henry 2003: 84).

> It's executive committee consists of a general secretary, a public relations officer and an administrator. The council's formal programme of activities includes economic development, educational development and publications. Each programme is assigned to an administrative officer (Henry 2003: 84).

Henry reports further that the council created a standardization of the shrines, a list of the existing ones as well as a certificate of registration in 2000.[111] The council started a central structuring of the religion, as an authoritative body. In this chain of events EOE was also registered and certificated in 2000 by the Council.

CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION
Council of Orisha Elders
Trinidad and Tobago

This certifies that

Egbe Onisin Eledumare

of

Simeon Road, Petit Valley

is registered with the Council of Orisha Elders and is granted all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto. Given this

_20th_ day of _May_ , _2000_

Chairman   General Secretary   Spiritual Head

Source: Oranfe 2010 (presentation papers)

However, in 2001 Chief Oranfe, who had also been in office as officer of education for one year in the Council, was expelled from it as well as his organisation EOE. The reason for this schism was Chief Oranfe's participation in the carnival celebrations with a mas band, displaying various orishas.[112] Controversially the following year an-

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[111] "One recent activity of the council has been to certify the authenticity of the many Orisha shrines throughout the country. Each shrine was visited a few years ago on behalf of the council in order to develop a list of shrines and their addresses. In 2000 the council created a certificate of registration in the name of the shrine leaders ... Such centralized authority had never before occurred in the faith, largely because there has not been an administrative structure until recently" (Henry 2003: 85).

[112] This incident will be shown in more detail below.

other Orisha shrine that participated in the mas, was not excluded from the Council. Until now the whole issue has not been resolved, so Chief Oranfe and EOE have not been re-invited to the council. It might be suspected that Chief Oranfe is holding a grudge against the council, but he mentions that his relationships with the actual members of the council are good. But he also notes that the council is not a very "*functional group at the current moment. [It's not a kind of organisation where] you can go to, a registered headquarter like here [EOE], every Thursday or Tuesday, or once a month - and see - where activities are taking place, it's not that type of organisation*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O8, 00:32:46-9) (my remarks).

> Given the historical growth and development of Orisha autonomy, I respect that for what it is, but I also would like to see it quickly move away from that and become better structured, right, and when I say better structured, while I would want it to be better africanwise structured, I want it to be also better structured to engage civil society, as it is at the current moment. You understand what I saying to you (Interview Chief Oranfe, O8, 00:33:22-8).

To sum up, the National Council of Orisha Elders can function as a central point of organisation and structuring of the Orisha religion, even though it seems that the Council lacks the possibilities to execute its functions, it still remains a focal point that could wield this responsibility. In the long term it will become clear how the shift of practitioners in the religion towards Ifa, will impact on central structures of organisation.

7.5.3 The Orisha marriage act

Another milestone in the legal process of the Orisha religion is the Orisha marriage act[113], although Chief Oranfe notes that it could have been structured more like African-concepts of marriage and insofar supporting the Africanization process.

> One of the announcements made by the prime minister when he first began creating legislation specifically designed to bring the African religions into the mainstream was the development of a marriage act that would allow Orisha priests to perform rites of marriage, death and any other rituals requiring the services of a legitimized priest. This had long been requested by Orisha members, who whished to marry under their rites rather than accept a civil ceremony or a marriage performed in a traditional church (Henry 2003: 74).

Inside the Orisha community the reaction was controversial, because no requirements were stated for the license as marriage officer, thus creating fear that unquali-

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[113] "Entitled the Orisha Marriage Act, 1999, it came into law that year. Its purpose is to give legal status to marriages performed according to Orisha rites" (Henry 2003: 75).

fied persons could abuse the reputation of the Orisha religion.[114] The act was put into effect for the first time around two years later in March 2001 (cf. Henry 2003: 75).

The Orisha marriage act definitely marks the development of the legal process of the Orisha religion, thus giving it more autonomy. But when I asked Chief Oranfe about it – as a success of the Orisha community – he claimed that "*it's not different from Christianity ... because all we did was borrow the peoples legislation and made adjustments from those legislations so that we would fit the criteria of a marriage act. ... it is the normal civil concept, a contractual relationship between a man and a woman*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O7, 00:33:29-3). Chief Oranfe's critique - out of a Pan-African position - points at important aspects that are missing in the marriage act.

> I am not even sure if it pays attention to all these issues of lineage and extended family (Interview Chief Oranfe, O7, 00:35:02-0).

7.5.4 Shango Day

The Orisha marriage act has already created a certain amount of controversies, but in my opinion one of the most vivid examples of the difficulties of the central organisation concerning the Orisha religion – as well as the challenges of the legal process – is the pursuit of Shango Day.

The whole issue of Shango Day circles around its recognition as a national holiday, and, implicitly, the national recognition and acknowledgement of the Orisha community. At the moment Shango Day is only recognized as a festival day. At the same time – the pursuit of Shango Day – is embedded in a larger context of dispute about national holidays (cf. Henry 2003: 65).

At the centre of the dispute was the issue of Indian Arrival Day as well as a national holiday for Spiritual Baptists, whereby the discussion was overshadowed by a political agenda of decreasing the national holidays, or at least not to increase them. The Indian community called for "Indian Arrival Day", dated on 30th May, the arrival of the first Indian indenture workers in Trinidad, as a national holiday, while the "Christian-African" labelled PNM government pledged for "Arrival Day" as a celebration of the common arrival of the different ethnic groups in Trinidad.[115]

The PNM put into effect their concept of "Arrival Day". But in 1995 the PNM government was succeeded by the UNC, which established as on of it's first actions the "Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day" as a national holiday and the re-naming of "Arrival Day" back into "Indian Arrival Day".[116] Henry sees this action of granting the Spiritual

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[114] "The act merely stated that "any Orisha priest or priestess who desires to be licensed as a marriage officer shall make an application in writing to the Minister" ... Some Orisha members fear that unqualified and untried "priests" will set themselves up as marriage officers, ..." (Henry 2003: 75).

[115] "The theory was that "arrival" would celebrate the arrival of the many ethnic groups into the country. It could therefore refer not only to the arrival of Indians but also to all other groups as well, and would thus function as a all-purpose multicultural holiday. The problem with this, as critics were quick to point out, was that 30 May does indeed mark the arrival of the first group of Indians to the country" (Henry 2003: 72).

[116] "By the end of 1995 the PNM government was defeated and the UNC, led by Basdeo Panday, was elected into power. In one of his very first actions in Parliament, on 26 January 1996, Mr Panday

Baptists a national holiday as a larger politically motivated move by the UNC to balance the renaming of "Arrival Day", as it has been established through the PNM, into "Indian Arrival Day".

> Thus, it seems apparent that the granting of the Baptist holiday, while motivated by the desire to bring about religious equity in the country, was also related to the ethnically divided nature of this society. By granting an African group a national holiday, the UNC was also able to restore the ethnic designation "Indian" to Arrival Day, thereby unequivocally marking it as an ethnic holiday honouring the East Indian-derived community (Henry 2003: 74).

Around the same time there was also a discussion about Shango Day as a national holiday. Before the change of power between the UNC and the PNM, the PNM established its own vision of how to handle the problem of ethnic disparity and to minimize the national holidays. This vision consisted of the establishment of "Arrival Day" as a common celebration, and the granting of a festival day (not a national holiday) for the Orisha community and the Spiritual Baptists. While the vision of the PNM was rejected meanwhile in favour of national communal interests, the Orisha community somehow missed their chance in this period of time, to achieve the establishment of Shango Day as a national holiday.

In an interview with Chief Oranfe about the reasons for this outcome, structural difficulties of the Orisha community when dealing with the government were revealed. To Chief Oranfe's knowledge the parliament had already voted with a majority for Shango Day as a national holiday, but "*the vote was taken over and it wasn't granted, as a public holiday. So what we got – right, the legal term to call it – it was granted festival day status, so it was recognized as a festival day*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O7, 00:19:41-4).

Simultaneously through the back door the government inquired different persons about their opinion on Shango Day. What happened could be described in Chief Oranfes opinion as a clash of classes and a disrespectful treatment of the Orisha religion. When the government asked for counsel it most apparently ignored the existing structure and organisation of the Orisha religion. As far as I understood Chief Oranfe the government asked well-known educated upper class persons about their opinion on Shango Day. But none of these persons supported the pursuit of Shango Day. Chief Oranfe notes that the interest for Shango Day seems to be determined by class differences, whereby the upper class favours the establishment of Shango Day less than the working class.

> But the more grass-root and working class of that batch of people, where those who favoured Shango Day, the more socially sophisticated didn't necessarily favour Shango Day, and in fact the state would have utilized this difference to sometimes go to the socially recognized and say "What do you think about the Shango Day", and utilized their wording or their

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called for the establishment of a public holiday for the Spiritual Baptists to be held on 30 March, ... the Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day ... in order to create room for it, Whit Monday was removed from the holiday calendar" (Henry 2003: 73).

> voicing, or their opinion on that. To say, "Well not everybody in favour of it" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O7, 00:22:36-3).

Chief Oranfe not only raises the issue of class, but also points out the disrespect of the government when dealing with the Orisha religion in comparison with other religions. Although the Orisha religion is characteristically individualistic, with a more or less successful process of central organisation, there are central spiritual authorities inside the field, as for example the different shrine heads throughout the country, who are legitimated through their community and the other leaders. None of these spiritual authorities were asked, which compared to other religions like the Roman Catholic Church would be an improper protocol of engagement.

> ... you wouldn't go the catholic church and leave out the administrator and the spiritual heads, no, it's disrespect. So as disrespect on the part of the state - who knows that they are engineering this - but it is also disrespect whether conscious or unconscious, by [the person] or who ever cooperated with the status here. "Well, no, I don't think those people know what they are doing". You understand what I am saying, so the disrespect – I am blaming the state only, I am laying this blame on all parties involved in the act of disrespect. (Interview Chief Oranfe, O7, 00:26:30-7) (my remarks).

Centralising the relations with the government through a central structure of authority could help to increase the level of governmental respect and recognition, but on the other hand it could also create difficulties when dealing with the differences and dynamics inside the religion. Insofar the issue of central authority will most probably have to be settled again in the near future, which could be favourable for the increasing Ifa orientation. Maybe also the call for Shango Day, which has disappeared in recent years, will become relevant again, involving EOE, whose members had also been at the forefront for Shango Day in earlier times. But at the moment the chances for Shango Day to become a public holiday are marginal.

> I don't thing any government of the day will just go and say: "Here is Shango Day as a public holiday", in fact, any wise government of the day right now, would seek to minimize the granting of additional public holidays in Trinidad and Tobago, unless it was in exchange for one already there. That's how I see it. (Interview Chief Oranfe, O7, 00:20:51-3).

7.5.5 Acceptance of the Orisha religion by the IRO

A national organisation for the recognition of religions is the IRO, the Inter-Religious Organization, formed by leaders of the biggest religious communities: Hinduism, Islam, the Roman Catholic Church and Anglican Churches. Its constitution was incorporated by an act of parliament in 1973 (cf. Henry 2003: 86).[117]

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[117] The Constitution of the IRO: http://irotrinidadandtobago.weebly.com/constitution-of-the-iro.html (27-1-2012)

> The IRO is an umbrella group that brings together representatives of the main religions in the country ... It is government supported, and one of the main functions is to provide leaders and prayers for the opening of official functions, of which the opening of Parliament is one of the most significant. According to the representation made by the Orisha, the IRO is seen as a powerful body to which members of government and politicians turn for advice. Without representation in that organization, members of a religion are never invited to functions or to lead prayers, and cannot receive ecclesiastical grants and other benefits (Henry 2003: 86).

For a long period of time the Orisha religion was not officially excluded from the IRO, but all attempts to become a member failed due to bureaucratic difficulties. In 2000 the Orisha community was supported by the "*Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabe, one of the country's leading Hindu organisation*", who invited them to their festival to demonstrate "*a show of non-Christian unity – non-Christian religions joining forces in the face of continuing non-Christian disrespect*" (Henry 2003: 86). After it became public that the IRO did not support the attempt of the Orisha religion to become a member, the matter was soon settled and "*The Orisha faith was finally welcomed into IRO membership in 2001* " (Henry 2003: 89), with the assistance of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabe.

Also of importance are the Orisha conferences that took place in Trinidad and brought together the African community of Trinidad with Nigerian representatives and members of the T&T government. Insofar these occasions offered a good chance to gather legitimacy for the religion and to establish or strengthen links with predominantly Nigerian representatives as well as various African-oriented groups throughout the Caribbean – the African diaspora.

7.5.6 Council of Traditional Afrikan Chiefs

One of the more recent events in this process of Africanization and legal recognition, as far as I know, was the establishment of the Council of Traditional Afrikan Chiefs on 4. August 2007. On that day the council was put in office through the confirmation of spiritual authority and until the present day the council has not been recognized by the state of T&T. The divination process to prove its legitimacy was conducted by spiritual representatives from Nigeria, among them was the president of the International Council of Ifa Religions -who is also Balogun – Awo Agbaye of Ife Prof. Idowu Odeyemi. Other names to mention are Chief Famusan Akere, Chief Fakayode Olanipekun and Prince Adewale Oso. Chief Oranfe was confirmed and authorised as the head of the council by the delegation from Nigeria. The ritual was also accompanied by other shrine heads of T&T, who paid their respect to him.[118]

In 2011 Chief Oranfe explained the following issues and plans of the Council of Chiefs on his blog:

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[118] Interested in how the Council of Orisha Elders reacted on the establishment of the Council of Traditional African Chiefs, Chief Oranfe let me know that he informed the Council of Orisha Elders about the Council of Chiefs, but both organisations are not related to each other.

> The council has been formed some time now but has been engaging the issues of legal standing, registration and placing itself appropriately for legal recognition and status. The Council hopes that once it has byebassed[sic] these teething issues to address itself to the many relevant and pertinent issues at hand in Trinidad & Tobago society and world wide ... The Council of Afrikan Traditional Chiefs is hoping to have discussion with relevant Authorities in Republic Trinidad and Tobago to ensure fair and broad based representation of African organizations from Republic Trinidad & Tobago at the International gathering.[119]

Consequently, the general aim of the Council is to bring forward an effective organisation, which is difficult, because the council is not yet registered by the state. The Constitution of the Council is still a preliminary one. I had already discussed this situation of missing support from the government in an earlier interview with Chief Oranfe, which I would like to include directly from my interview transcriptions in the most direct form as possible. I am of the opinion that the whole argumentation of the interview is of importance.

> (Interview Chief Oranfe, O4: on the hostile environment and disadvantage position for/of the Orisha religion, 00:24:00-7 - 00:30:00-4)

> O: A hostile environment, a non-friendly environment, this environment here is not very friendly towards Orisha devotees developing to their full potential, you know, as much as people say, every creed and race find an equal place, this is still Euroasiatic-Arabic dominated place in terms of view. So if you are under scrutiny of Arabs you would be pagan and non-believer, and if you where under Christian scrutiny you would still be pagan and a non-believer, so nobody wishes for you to develop, because in their both worldviews, whatever you are doing is some king of thing that is outside the god construct.

> I: Okay.

> O: Yeah.

> I: So even tho Orisha is now an official religion in Trinidad it is still suppressed?

> O: It's officially recognized, yeah, well I don't know if the word might be suppressed, but it doesn't have equal footing

> I: Okay.

> O: And neither does it have equal opportunities, as any of the others, yeah, and in fact I think the only way to do that - which is a statement if been making in this country for years - but perhaps not strong enough. Sometimes people either pretend or perhaps want to give you an equal position, but they tell you, okay,

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[119] http://yorubasacredsciencecentre.wordpress.com/trinidad-tobago-orisa-scenes/949-2/ (27-1-2012)

so you tell them, I want to go up there, they say okay, walk up the road and come through here, right, but I'm disabled, I need a wheelchair, don't tell me to walk up, no, I have no foot to walk.

I: Okay

O: So I need disabled treatment, and until they begin to make provisions, so that I may arrive at the place, where I can attach my feet again, they may not helping me, if you tell me to walk the same road as everybody, you already oppressing me, coz I can't with looking equal to you, but might something is wrong with my leg, I can't stand on my – I have no foundation.

I: Okay.

O: So if you put rams and rails and wheels – you give me assistance – as just as you would do to the disabled, or the disadvantaged in mundane society, than I would feel comfortable, because I am in the position called disadvantaged, oppressed and not yet fully recognized ...

O: Well, there must be an acceptance by the powers that be, all the social powers that be, and spiritual powers that be, that the current arrangement is an unbalanced and advantageous one, right. ...

O: And if all these people are as egalitarian in their outlook as they claim, then they would ensure that I'm sitting in a comfortable position ... with equality to them, I am the weak, so don't demand of me, you are the strong. If I am the weak and you are the strong, than I am – you are the one who has to make some adjustments, while I am strengthening myself. So one of the mechanisms that I see, is first of all the acceptance on recognition the – on equal certain arrangements, and the need to take pro-action by those, who have been sitting in that advantageous position as a result of exploitation of my weakness.

I: Mhm.

O: Yeah, so those are things that I would recommend, to do those things, there are several mechanisms that can be used from international – yeah, from international conventions ... from international conventions and international organisations on protocols to – protocols including United Nations and some of their specialized agencies UNESCO and so on. For several years international Pan-Africanists have been speaking of the issue of reparations ... In other words the way that people who had been advantage, have to be brought back on path, it must be under none conditional grants, and that's one of the ways I see that we can address that problem as well.

In other words, the Orisha religion, or in a more general term the African religions in Trinidad, which trace themselves back to continental Africa, in the Trinidadian case predominantly Yoruba, are still confronted by infrastructural disadvantages. They are placed in a structural position that hardly allows them to face the Christian religions eye-to-eye. The UN declared 2011 as the "International Year for People of African

Descent". But still, international organisations like the UN or UNESCO are lacking funded programmes for cases of repatriation[120]. In the African-Trinidadian case such programmes could help to raise the national awareness for the economic exploitation of African slaves (and workers) and the ethnic racism that forbid Africans to practise their culture and religion in a free manner. In addition, the whole matter of repatriation is not simply of historical importance there is also the need to focus on the historical situation of subordination and its relation to ongoing structural inequalities that are recreated.

After several decades the Orisha religion has achieved at last a certain level of national recognition, but as seen in the case of the Council of Traditional African Chiefs, the more African-centred wing of practitioners are still facing fundamental problems of recognition.

7.6 Towards Africa – The ongoing Road of Africanization (in the Orisha/Ifa religion) on Trinidad

Although the whole work circles around the topic of Africanization it's time to focus further on specific examples of this process of Africanization. Along with this process it is important to question if "Orisha religion" is still an appropriate term for the whole belief system. When I arrived in Trinidad and asked about the Orisha religion, I soon got the answer, "Orisha religion?", ah, you mean "Ifa". I began to think about the terminology and understood that a term referring to a "pantheon of deities" is really not at all appropriate for a whole cosmology in which the orishas are only a part of. In the current field of practicioners I encountered two possible terms for the religion. The first was "Ifa religion" or simply "Ifa", which also relates to the Nigerian understanding and terminology of the religion, e.g. "The International Council for Ifa Religions" from Nigeria. The other term is offered by Chief Oranfe, who calls it "Yoruba Sacred Science", also in relation to Nigeria, but including an academic approach, as illustrated in Sacred Science, which also refers to the long education of priests in the religion. I will use both terms when speaking about the ongoing process of Africanization inside the religion, whereby a lot of the information is based on the importance and influence of EOE, as the central empirical hotspot of my work.

The process of Africanization manifests itself through the introduction of African elements, or in general new elements that were not common in Trinidad in past decades. All in all the field is more and more shaped through the increase of contact and exchange with Nigeria. Both the visits of priests from Nigeria in Trinidad and the visits of devotees – especially Ifa-devotees – to Nigeria are increasing. During my stays at the shrine of Shangowummi in Santa Cruz with Abasewolu, my host, friend and a devotee at Shangowummi's shrine, I met a priest from Nigeria who was spending a considerable period of time at her shrine. Iya Oshun-Obatala, a shrine head in Petit Valley near the headquarters of EOE, had been introduced into the religion through a

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[120] These problem of missing programmes that are adequately funded and promotioned seems to be applicable to the whole situation of the African diaspora, whose hot spots are North and South America, as also the Caribbean (cf. http://destee.com/index.php?threads/2011-a-year-dedicated-to-people-of-african-descent.69446/ (29-1-2012).

prominent priest from Nigeria, who helped her to establish the shrine. Also Shangowummi mostly traces her spiritual influence back to Nigeria. Chief Oranfe conducted several visits to Nigeria and was well received. Thus he was granted a Chief Title, became a member of "The International Council Of Ifa Religion", got a pilgrim certificate from Oke Itase (World Ifa Temple) in Ile-Ife and in 2007 was confirmed through a delegation from Nigeria as the head of the "Council of Traditional Afrikan Chiefs" in Trinidad.
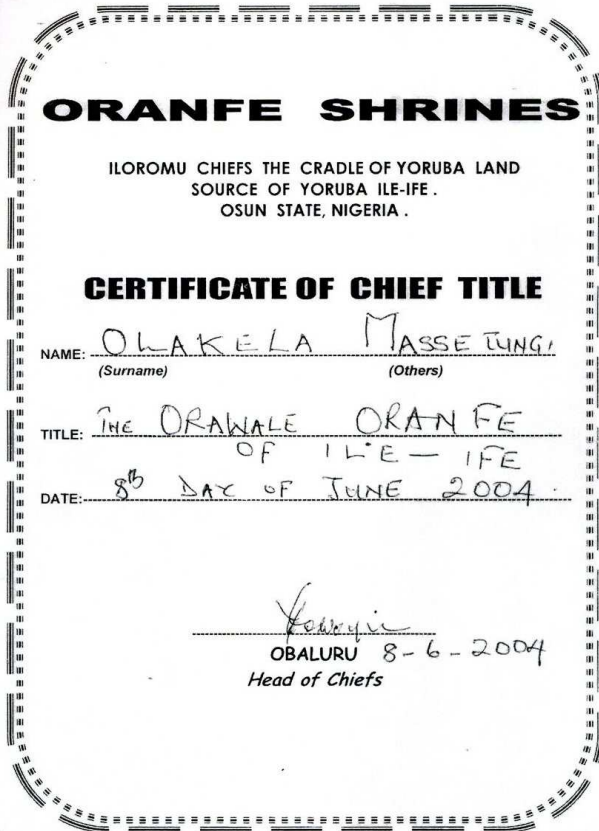
Source: Oranfe 2010 (presentation papers)

One of the most obvious examples of the Africanization of the religion is the change in the ritual procedures and the ritual context. Classical Ebos (feasts) as they are vividly described by Kment (2005: 145-152;192-200) are nowadays more commonly arranged as public festivals. Although the classical ebos were not standardized they usually took between 5 or 6 days, lasting from Tuesday to Saturday or Sunday. Most of the ritual actions (singing, offering, dance, manifestation) were executed between 6 PM and 6 AM. The place of the ritual was usually the palais (part of the com-

pound/shrine) of the shrine head, insofar the ritual was more or less public.

Already in his period of fieldwork Kment observed significant changes in the rituals, predominantly the exclusion of Christian elements, especially the reduction of Christian songs during the ritual procedures. At some ebos they are merely performed for the elderly devotees who are still accustomed to the Christian aspects of the Orisha religion.[121] Concerning the festivals I attended, Christian songs were not performed at all, most of the songs were performed in Yoruba, the shrine-members and other devotees wore African dress (this increase of people dressed in African clothes is also observed by Frances Henry 2005: 117).[122]

The Africanization of the rituals has further increased and the outcome of this ongoing process does not only affect the ritual itself, but also the context of practice. The classical ebos are increasingly succeeded by festivals which are differently organised concerning their timing. As far as I experienced, festivals are publicly performed either on a single day or more. During my fieldwork I attended two different festivals, the first was in San Juan called Ogun festival, which took place from Friday the 8. October 2010 to Sunday.
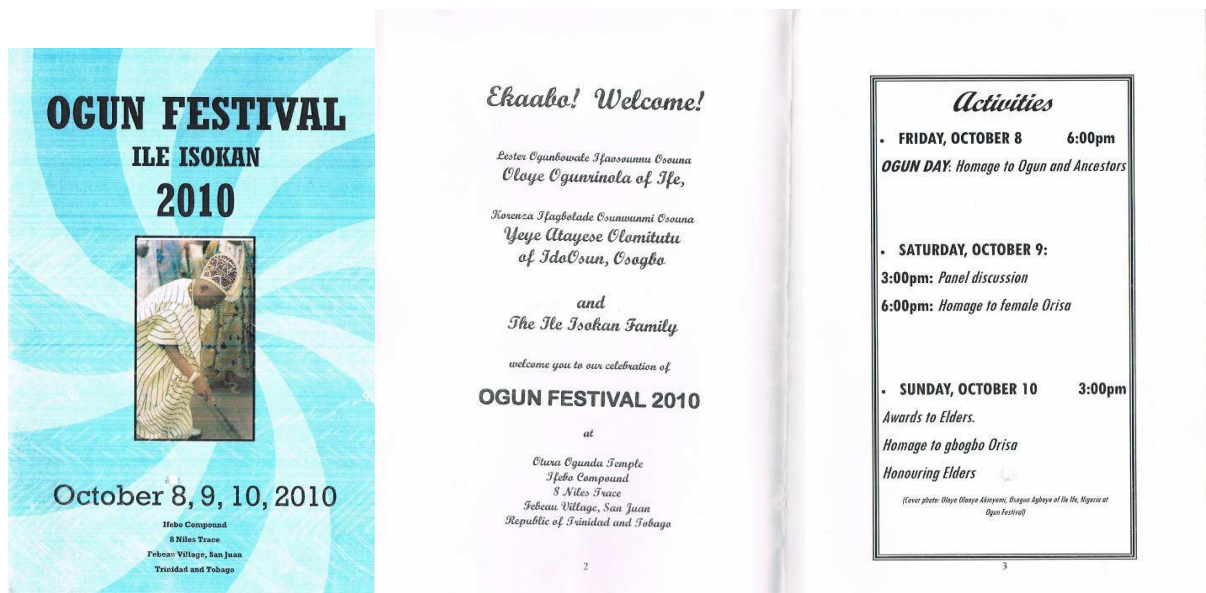
Source: Ile Isokan (Personal field material)

The other was Olokun Festival at Dean's Bay, Carenage on Sunday, 24th October 2010. Both festivals had in common that the activities usually took place during the day or at night until approximately 12 o'clock. Each day had a certain timeframe of several hours that differed from the classical rhythm of 6 PM to 6 AM on 5 or 6 following days, insofar the new timeframe is far more compatible with working hours and other day activities.

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[121] A short overview of the Orisha religion and it's syncretistic elements as they are observed by Kment and Houk, can be found in Chapter 3

[122] Only non-devotees like myself and some relatives of the devotees wore "western" clothes

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO:
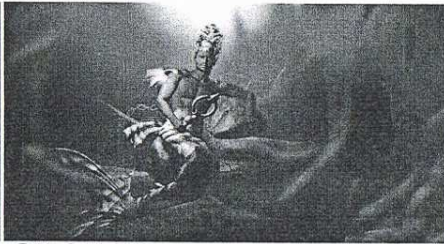
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ORISHA OLOKUN FESTIVAL 2010
HOSTED BY: EGBE ONISIN ELEDUMARE
DATE: SUNDAY 24TH OCTOBER 2010
TIME OF CEREMONY: 10 AM
PLACE: DEAN'S BAY, CARENAGE
PICK-UP POINT: LIGHTHOUSE, POS @ 8 AM
WEAR: WHITE OR SHRINE OR PATRON'S COLOURS
OFFERINGS: FRUITS, PEAS, YAM, CORN, COINS
PRICE OF EXCURSION: $50.
ODU: OGBE IRETE

NOTES ON OLOKUN:

Olokun is the deity of the deep ocean, marshes and wetlands, and is protector of the African Diaspora. The theme for this year's Festival is 'Rejuvenating the old and building new African Institutions'. As island people Olokun is especially important to Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean. Earth is the blue planet. It is our Ocean and its water system that sustains and has made possible all life on Planet Earth. Mankind pollutes the Ocean at his peril. Olokun's Festival is where we celebrate and communicate with the primordial force that is our Ocean.

For bookings and further information you can call: Oludari Sangode 727-3712; Oloye Orawale Oranfe 380-9382; or Rubadiri 797-0949. Also one can visit: http://yorubasacredsciencecentre.wordpress.com

Source: Egbe Onisin Eledumare (Personal field material)

Another interesting aspect of change is the inclusion of literature in the ritual context, song texts as well as literature on mythology and cosmology are used during the rituals or before to start an open discussion on certain topics. This use of books would have been quite uncommon in earlier times, where the only book during a ritual was the bible, which functioned merely as a sacred object.

In many aspects EOE plays a leading role in these processes of Africanization, e.g. the use of books in the ritual, the transfer of ritual knowledge and practice from Nigeria as it happened through the introduction of Olukun in Trinidad, or the creation/organisation of a temple/shrine that is open throughout the year. In comparison with other/former Orisha shrines, whose main public activity is the ebo, once a year, EOE offers a wide range of activities and festivals throughout the year, one of these activities are the classes of initiation for those who are interested in joining the organisation.

Another innovative act in Trinidad by EOE was their participation in carnival in 2001 with an Orisha mas band called "401 meets 2001"[123], which created major controversies with the Council of Elders, ending with the exclusion of Chief Oranfe and EOE from the Council of Elders. The participation in carnival was a successful undertaking and got a certain amount of attention from the media, concerning also the contradiction with the Council of Orisha Elders, who displayed their disgust openly right from the beginning. They argued that carnival had lost its spiritual implications, so that the participation of an Orisha mas band was seen as an insult towards the orishas.[124] Exactly this loss of spiritual meaning in the carnival motivated Chief Oranfe to participate in it and to ease the strict distinction between sacred and secular.

> Oludari himself believes that it is important to bring the cosmic and spiritual energy of the Orisha into a Carnival that has become too secularized. It was an attempt, in his view, to regenerate Carnival and bring it back to what it was in earlier times. He believes that the distinction between the sacred and secular are too rigid and that the Orisha and their energy are part of nature and permeate all of social life. ... Oludari and his members emphasize that their decision was sanctioned through the divination processes of Ifa (Henry 2005: 187).

It is interesting to see that the matter of sacredness and spiritual legitimacy/authority is perceived from two different perspectives. While the Council of Elders claimed that the presentation of orishas in carnival was "*an attack on the sacredness of the religion*", Chief Oranfe received the spiritual permission to participate through the process of divination, as a direct negotiation with spiritual powers (Ifa, other orishas, Eledumare).

In the same year as Chief Oranfe, Shangowummi also received the spiritual permission through divination to participate with an Orisha mas band in carnival, but she participated the year after, without being excluded from the Council of Elders (cf. Henry 2005: 190). The significance of this situation has to be seen in a historical context, too, because Orisha or Shango mas bands existed in earlier times but disappeared.[125]

The controversies that the Orisha mas band created and its consequences are hardly

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[123] "Oludari has, for a number of years, thought about bringing out a mas band for Carnival, but his efforts only came to fruition in 2001. Beginning the planning as late as December 2000, the shrine its active members nevertheless managed to design, developed and organize a Carnival presentation in time for 26-27 February 2001. It was entitled "401 meets 2001"; 401 signifies the number of Orisha deities in the traditional Yoruba pantheon" (Henry 2005: 186).

[124] "The Council of Orisa Elders wishes to advise it is viewing with grave concern the developing trend of disrespect for the religion in the Carnival arena. ... the Council of Orisa Elders now invokes the wrath of all the Orisa on all who dare feature any Carnival characters named after the Orisa. It views any incorporation of the Orisa into Carnival as an attack on the sacredness of the religion ... The present Carnival no longer includes the elements of African spirituality, with which it was imbued in its earlier years" (Express newspaper in: Henry 2005: 186).

[125] "The decision to play an Orisha mas in Carnival is not really new. Orisha, or Shango bands as they were once known, paraded through the streets of southeast Port of Spain in earlier times" (Henry 2005: 187).

comprehensible, as well as the unequal treatment of the different groups. The incident clearly shows the dispute over the development/change of the Orisha religion, as well as the importance that EOE played in the ongoing process. The ongoing process of Africanization is strongly connected to the legitimacy and recognition from Nigeria which represents the source of spiritual knowledge. That is the reason why Yoruba is used instead of English, not only in the rituals but also in daily life, e.g. when greeting each other, or referring to different items like honey or alcohol, which are also used in rituals. Similarly items and ritual knowledge are transferred to Trinidad, e.g. Ifa divination, divination tools and icons of the orishas.

Chief Oranfe was well received in Nigeria, he built up personal relations and became a recognized part of his historical homeland through the Chief Title he was granted. His full title is Oloye Orawale Oranfe, certificated in 2004 through the Chiefs of Oloromu in Osun state of the federal republic of Nigeria.

> Well, that's a – it is not an organisational title [concerning EOE], right. I am an Oloye, right, O L O Y E, and a Oloye is a chief, but a chief that is also a priest. So he is a chief/priest, not a chief-priest, you know what I mean. So they had a political as well as spiritual function, and so today that is still very vibrant in Ile-Ife, I don't know further parts of Yorubaland, but from what I have seen it appears to be vibrant (Interview Chief Oranfe, O91, 00:19:32-4) (my remarks).

In contemporary multi-ethnic Nigeria chief titles are mostly honorary titles, but especially in some rural areas they are still of political importance, to mediate difficulties or also engage in local governance structures.[126]

> Lots of the chieftaincies today and titles to me, they could be real but they usually engage in a kind of superficial almost honorary manner. Right. But ... I think our titles were seriously given, and what may make it not a serious is distance in time and space. Coz as those chiefs used to pose - to be a regular meeting, like a council and in the local government elections - you know listening to people's fears, taking responsibilities for ensuring their well being and so on ...
>
> So as Oloye Orawale Oranfe, I belong to one of the 13 original states of Yoruba land, and it's one called Iloromu, right. And it's a historical title, to my understanding and knowledge from what the elders say, since the beginning of time, nobody who was not from Iloromu ever carried that title, say I am the first non-inhabitant, non-native of – in time and history that has bore this title (Interview Chief Oranfe, O91, 00:22:04-1).

Beside the legitimacy for Chief Oranfe and his political and spiritual engagement of the last 40 years by local representatives of the Yoruba-homeland, the title is also part of the realization to be an African - in Chief Oranfe's understanding. It is the

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[126] cf. http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politisches_System_Nigerias (14-2-2012)

continuous effort of the construct of African identity to conduct practical engagement with the Yoruba-homeland, this is also represented through the aim to settle there, noted in the aims for 2045. In this context it is of importance for Chief Oranfe that he participated in a local meeting, to not only carry his title, but also to fulfil its socio-political meaning, whenever possible.

> I was afforded the opportunity to actually sit in a council meeting, dealing with the administration and the community was happy, because there was a sad feeling that I had this title and I was nowhere around ... And here I was (Interview Chief Oranfe, O91, 00:23:13-8).

An important bridge between Trinidad and Africa was established through the intro-duction of the orisha Olokun in Trinidad – the importance of Olokun emphasizes the ocean that separates and connects. During the first Orisha conference in 1987, which EOE organized, Dr. Osemwegie Ebohon from Nigeria who had been invited as the principal speaker, re-introduced the orisha divinity Olokun on Trinidad (cf. Oranfe 2010: 15). The visible result of this event was the creation of a permanent shrine at the headquarter in Petit Valley, the formation of an omo (group) of devotees inside EOE that is centred around Olukun and the annual Olukun festival that is organised by this group. Olokun as the divinity of the ocean reminds and also helps to cope with the traumatic rupture caused through the Transatlantic Slave trade. Once a physical separation, it now becomes the road for transformation, re-location and also re-unity, while at the same time remembering those who died under the inhumane conditions of their deportation.

In his opening prayers of the Olokun festival in 2010 Chief Oranfe refers to Olokun as the patron of those africans who had been forced to live in the diaspora.

> Chiefs, awon Babalawo, awon Babalorisa, awon omo orisa, friends,supporters. politicians, adults, children, Mothers, Fathers ,animals all gathered at Dhein's Bay, Carenage, to once again celebrate the primor-dial divinity – orisa of the Atlantic Ocean, memory of the planet, Patron of Africans who crossed the Atlantic during the infamous and abhorable " ATLANTIC SLAVE EXPERIENCE " – OLOKUN. [127]

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[127] The whole description of 2010 Olokun festival can be found on Chief Oranfes blog: http://yorubasacredsciencecentre.wordpress.com/festivals/ase-odun-olokun/ase-odun-olokun-held-at-dheins-bay-carenage-a-grand-success/ (27-1-2012)

Olokun Festival 2010[128]

Another interesting aspect of Olokun is her position as the "*primordial ruler and Governor(ness) of Planet Earth*" (Oranfe 2010: 51), representing the ecological responsibility of humankind when dealing with their natural environment. In this regard EOE also functions as a reminder of ecological issues in Trinidad, also forming a meaningful part of their spiritual understanding.

During my fieldwork I learned not to underestimate ecological considerations for practical decisions. When Chief Oranfe told me about his plans to settle in Africa, I saw it solely through the process of Africanization. It was a huge surprise for me when he started to argue that in the case of climatic changes and rising water levels the continent offered more safety than an island. Spirituality and personal guidance, as it can be seen in the next chapter, is not only hardly explainable solely through the concept of Afrocentrism or Pan-Africanism, but it is also embedded in larger context of personal decisions/perspectives and the way of interacting with life in general.

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[128] Source:
http://yorubasacredsciencecentre.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/73697_1536252939126_1618923417_
1248509_5794651_n.jpg (4-9-2012)

Chapter 8. The Divine Entrepreneur

After discussing the political processes and their legitimation in detail, I want to shift the focus towards the spiritual meaning of the Africanization process in Trinidad. It is not the purpose of my work to clearly distinguish the spiritual/religious function of this Africanziation process from its political function. Throughout the work I have constantly tried to show the interconnection of the political and spiritual projects, to undermine the strict distinction between politics and religion. But as a result of structuring this work, it is useful to focus on the whole process of Africanziation through its spiritual implications in a separate chapter. Therefore I would like to show the personal meaning of the Orisha religion, its importance in daily life – also including divination – and the commemoration of Africa through the compound/shrine/Ile. Concerning this whole chapter I would like to point out that this level of information being presented is quite limited, limited by my own awareness of spirituality, limited by the access to information concerning ritual procedures and also limited by the capacity of science to deal with spiritual matters.[129]

I think it is fair to say that political and spiritual intentions are running parallel to each other, through mutual influences. When the Black Power Movement with its relocation of Africa in history and society changed or expanded the worldview of many Afrotrinidadians, a different need for identity and engagement with society emerged. The commemoration of the own African descent became a central point of identification, Africa as the origin included also a political, social and spiritual/religious meaning.

8.1 The meaning of the orishas/ori in daily life

The meaning of the orishas, the personal ori or the odus (the different verses of Ifa) in daily life emerge from the need for spiritual self-awareness and guidance. Christianity as the dominant religion and spiritual institution in Trinidad is mostly rejected by the Pan-African field in Trinidad – at least concerning their own spiritual orientation. Christian spirituality is not negated in general, or viewed as a false belief, but it is rejected as something that feels uncomfortable with regard to people's personal experiences, or as Oludari/Sangode points out clearly, rejected because of its historical role in the oppression of people of African descent.

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[129] There are many influential and insightful theories in science about religion and spirituality, which also accompanied me through my time as a student. But in my opinion most scientific theories dealing with spirituality and religion are not able to examine the complexity of spirituality and its importance for practitioners, therefore I simply want to remind of the limits of this work to deal with spirituality, while at the same time trying to present as much of the information that I was able to get access to.

> Christ may have been there, and do what the bible say he did, and so on. But the whole thing, this is one of the things I used to tell people to - that when I came out of Christianity - I cannot follow a religion that did the things - that they did to my people. Right. So all of that, I went through in my thought, "How can I be a Christian, knowing that slavery was actually sanctioned by the church", you know all these kind of things. And they sought of brainwashing that still goes an with Christianity, I cannot be a part of it. So that's why I became an Ifa devotee. It was all a process, and I am still going through the process of learning and understanding what Ifa is (Interview Oludari/Sangode, OL1, 00:18:58-7).

Christianity functions no longer as a valid belief system, when seen through the eyes of those who had never been asked if they would like to choose it as their religion. From this perspective the ongoing situation of historical oppression is refused through the contemporary choice of Ifa/Yoruba Sacred Science as the personal religion.

Another important aspect is the change of perception in daily life through the awareness and guidance of ori[130]. I do not want to translate this phenomenon – as part of the Africanization process – into social or political acts of agency as I have done in the chapter before, because the empirical material that I have obtained through interviews, daily situations and conversations, shall stand for themselves, open to different ways of interpretation. Furthermore they should help to give a feeling for the transformation and Africansisation that is pursued by the people I worked and lived with in Trinidad.

> So, I came into the religion and it has broaden me, it has awaken my consciousness about life in general, I look at life differently, I respond to people – I respond to situations differently, right. It has – I like to tell people - it has taken away the fear. You know, when you live a life, you afraid, you insecure, you wonder about this, you worry about that, simple things you make a big problem out of it. I have learned that you don't have to do that. I mean that could be for any religion, once you know, how to source the spirituality in the religion, but Orisha has worked for me ...

> Spiritually, mentally, emotionally, everything, you know, I am no longer afraid of saying the wrong things, doing the wrong things, because I realize that if you let your ori guide you - most of the time you use that thing that is wrong, is not wrong, it's just another step in stone to getting to somewhere. Because life is about learning, experiences, you could make mistakes, but that is all part of life. You don't have to be afraid of making mistakes then. Right (Interview Oludari/Sangode, OL1 00:06:19-9).

> You know, ori is your consciousness then, right, and your consciousness could never led you wrong ... Because I always rely on my ori, my ori is this what I am supposed to be doing, at this point in time, just how I fol-

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[130] The concept of Ori is explained in Chapter 4

low my ori is, I will be walking down here and suddenly my ori tells me: "Go up that street", I will go up that street, I will not continue walking down there. That is how I – that's the kind of – the kind of thing I do – when, you know, because I say, my ori is the one to guide me, into all stages of my life and if my ori tells me: "Don't do this", I will not do it, even if I have to go to my shells[divination], to confirm it, I do that, but I follow my ori first (Interview Oludari/Sangode, OL1, <u>00:28:02-4</u>) (my remarks).

In this sense the ori can be understood as an extension of the common consciousness, in secular societies we may speak in a similar way about intuition – to know what to do in the given time and space. It is a certain awareness that helps to cope with life and the environment. It is difficult to include this kind of awareness in the theoretical framework I have set throughout the work. Neither Bourdieu's theoretical framework of field, habitus/illusio and capital, that emphasizes the interconnection between the individual and society/groups, nor the post-colonial theories about identity, focusing on the processual relation between different "as fixed" imagined positions of communal identity, can really help to theorize this kind of consciousness, because they are written from a different point of perspective that is rather dealing with social relations. The interesting aspect of this special awareness is the degree of independence of external factors like the influence that other people may have upon decision-making. It creates a personal sense of confidence for one's own decisions and actions.

> That - all of that is getting rid of that fear, okay if I listen to my teacher, or I listen to the prime minister, or I listen to the priest, what he is telling me, that is the correct thing, but that isn't always the correct thing for you, and the only person who could know the correct thing for you is your own ori, your own consciousness, it takes a lot – it takes a lot to bring a person to the point where they have confidence in themselves to follow their ori.

> So that's I tell you, you follow – this consciousness of ori, you have to meditate ... to build it up, to build it up and knowing that sometimes you may hear something, but you know it's not your ori talking, that's just, you know, sometimes you may hear voice that, you know.

> Okay, I disobey my ori, because my ori tell me: "Don't smoke". Every time I lighting a cigarette my ori tell me: "Don't smoke", and I disobey my ori, right. So and you know, you are disobeying your ori, but you still ... God, let me smoke just one more now, you know. So you have to know, when it actually is your ori.

> Okay, you may be sitting, like if – when they sharing sweetbread in the palais or something, and your mind tell you: "Take another piece", that is not the ori talking, that is just you wanting another piece of sweetbread, so you have to discern, when your ori speaks, and when it's just something happening (Interview Oludari/Sangode, OL1, <u>00:32:37-6</u>).

The ori can be understood as a personal guideline that is not to be equated with a philosophy saying, "Do and take whatever you like, if you want to". It is more likely to be equated with the own life course, but not as an autocratic ruler who punishes all deviations from this path, as seen in Oludari's negotiation to continue smoking. It is a road that unfolds while walking on it.

Another interesting information that Oludari provided me with is the importance of the ancestors, as an additional guideline or source of advice.

> I really, I have learned so much, you know, especially where ancestor veneration is concerned, I rely more on the advice of Ifa and the ancestors. I pay particularly interest to the ancestors, because I know, they are still – they may not be within physically, but the more I read upon what, you know, what their role is as an ancestor, the more I am leaning towards their purpose in my life. (Interview Oludari/Sangode, OL1, 00:12:06-2).

Throughout my field visit I encountered different ways of spiritual understanding and knowledge in the Pan-African field, insofar Oludari's spiritual understanding and conceptualisation is not the only one, but a very informative and vivid one.[131]

The process of Africanization as it has been analyzed throughout the work should not be limited to an intellectual and political view. These perspectives are of importance, but it should not be forgotten that one of the strongest sources of motivation are emotions that are sometimes difficult to define by scientific classifications. To understand this side of the whole process it is maybe not the best way to look into books, but at the own experience of life. Spiritual knowledge guides a person through life. It is not only present in ritual procedures like festivals or ebos, it is an every day activity that does not only arise from its belief but also from its embodiment, to see and feel the world differently. Neither are the orishas only present during the ritual through the manifestation in a human host, but their influence goes beyond that space. Nevertheless, the manifestation in the ritual is probably the most visible and intense presence of the orishas for those who are not a part of the religion.

My argumentation throughout this paper is based on post-colonial perspectives on identity and other theories from the social sciences as well as history, but these theories are also just one part of a quite more complex situation, in which feelings of belonging and comfort, as well as fulfilment should not be underestimated in their subjective importance. The black power period happened quite some time ago and it is a crucial question to ask "What kind of motivation people have to continue their path as an Orisha/Ifa devotee?"

> Yeah, so that is were I am right now, I really, I could not see myself in [an]other spirituality but this, right. I don't want to go into the things that drove me out of Christianity or where I became disillusioned with it, that is

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[131] In an interview Victor emphasized the importance of the orishas in his creative work as a musician, to be receptive to this source of inspiration. Abasewolu explained in countless talks that I had with him the importance of the different taboos, regarding drinks and foods that are forbidden for the different orisas as also their devotees, which are an important source of spiritual growth and understanding on his path.

part of my past, I will not go back there, but just some – now I am Orisha devotee, I can not see myself into any other spirituality, I don't know. As I am talking to you now - what thought came to me - because I came into this spirituality when I was about 40 years, so it's not that I was young and not knowing and you know, so I went through all that time searching for something (Interview Oludari/Sangode, OL1, 00:34:15-1) (my remarks).

Yes, when I became aware of this tradition it – I was always African-oriented, even when I was a Christian, I always was conscious of something, you know, I was interested in African, anything African I was interested in it, I used to wear a lot of African clothes, even before I even got into this tradition and little African objects and drawings and paintings and all that, I was always interested in ... when I got into this tradition at 65, I used to say, why I had to wait until, why so old, why I didn't know about it before, but nothing happens to it before it's time, nothing happen before it is time, and beside that I was fulfilling my destiny in my own way. You know, being were I was at one time, so it has to be carried on and there would have been people carrying it on, energy is even before me, and than it would pass from me to somebody else. (Interview Ifa Oshun-Obatala, IOO1, 00:24:02-4).

Throughout my interviews and different conversations with people from the Pan-African field, I noted that the common motivation to practice the religion, was a matter of personal choice. Whatever may have been the sources of influence, their choice to participate openly in the Orisha/Ifa religion, was not part of the mainstream culture of their socialisation. Black Power created a community that offered shared aims and interests, but this does not mean that all people engaged with this process became Orisha/Ifa devotees, or that all people of African descent in Trinidad were influenced by it. Some decided decades later to join, while others remained sympathizers without being actively engaged. There is a crucial difference between people who grow in a family or small community in which they are raised as Ifa devotees and people who choose to become an Ifa devotee by changing their life completely. This significant change could make a difference between current adult Orisha/Ifa devotees and coming generations of devotees, priests and priestesses who have grown up in this community/family.

Beside the personal guidance by ori, there are the methods and practices of divination that run across the Pan-African organisations in Trinidad – as one of the most important acts for legitimacy processes.

8.2 Divination and its importance in the ongoing process

At the beginning of the first session that I had with Chief Oranfe in Trinidad, in which I presented the concept of my thesis, he checked the sincerity of my interests through divination. Although I was introduced to Chief Oranfe with the recommendations of Dr. Patric Kment via e-mail, who had worked with him (former Oludari) for

many years during his numerous field stays, I was lacking specific documents from the university to prove my scientific interests when I arrived in Trinidad. Only several days later did I receive the documents from my supervisor and the formal difficulties were settled, resulting in a more relaxed working atmosphere. Until then our sessions always began with a divination process to prove again my interests and to check the acceptance of the orishas for taking notes or to use my recorder. The formal protocols which were not fulfilled because of the lack of specific documents, were reasserted through the consultation of divine intelligence. I still remember the moment when I sat together with Chief Oranfe to discuss my work for the first time. I was of the opinion that everything was fine and that I was already accepted through the support by Dr. Patric Kment. But instead of beginning to do an interview, Chief Oranfe assembled his divination tools to validate if my research project would be accepted and supported. Entering the field totally unprepared, naive and partly misinformed, I was a bit paralysed by fear, when Chief Oranfe began with the divination, just hoping that everything would work out well.

So my first direct experience with divination was in a situation where I was not expecting it and throughout my field work I never really got used to it, but tried to. I learned to understand it as a form of communication/conversation with the orishas or other spiritual beings, that can be done through a small amount of offerings and proper tools for divination like nuts, shells, or divination boards.

In the Pan-African field that I have encountered, divination is quite common, especially in its Yoruban form with a divination board. But nevertheless, divination did not emerge with the Yorubanization of the religion, it was already present before. Frances Henry reports that Papa Neezer, the spiritual head of the first half of the twentieth century, extensively used divination in all his activities (cf. Henry 2005: 206).

What has changed in the last decades is the transfer of ritual/divinatory knowledge from Nigeria to Trinidad that brought back the Ifa divination system of the 256 odus and the use of sacred Yoruba items like the divination board and stick, as well as other items of divination that are associated with Ifa. Insofar the practice of divination has changed, but it is not a new phenomenon that has entered the Caribbean space.

As mentioned in other chapters, divination is crucial in the process of decision making, especially with important decisions concerning ritual procedures, the organisation or initiations. Insofar the legitimacy and development/change of the religion is also largely influenced by the orishas. Divination offers a direct contact to the orishas and brings their vote into the process of decision making, while exercising a higher veto than their human equilibrium. Concerning EOE, the organisational structure is a hierarchical one, consisting of the different heads and other marked positions, but this structure is not only legitimated and maintained/recreated through human actors, it is accompanied also by the will of the orishas. The influence and consultation of the orishas guides all major decisions that the organisations undertake, the last word during the process of decision-making is theirs, e.g. when assigning people for available positions. In this sense the organisation also has to negotiate with the orishas.

This higher importance of the orisha's permission compared with the human one creates interesting developments and changes of the religion, foremost by activities that are not accepted or recognized by human authorities. As seen in the incident with

the carnival band, when the Council of Orisha Elders gave no permission for EOE's band, calling the wrath of the orishas upon those who would cross the line, EOE had already obtained permission through divination from Ifa, being higher authorities than any human being.

Similarly, some years later when the Council of Traditional Afrikan Chiefs was established in Trinidad, its rightful existence was proved by the confirmation of spiritual authorities in the process of divination. Until today it has not been recognized by the state, but this does not mean that it does not exist, or that it is not legitimate. It is there, but its functionality is limited by the lack of legal support.

To sum up, the importance of the orishas in the processes of the Pan-African field should not be under estimated. I personally believe in the correctness and honesty of the divinatory procedure, resulting from the divinations I had participated in. The importance of negotiation that I concluded with the concept of identity – as something that is always in becoming – can also be extended to the relationship between spiritual and human beings and their interaction in daily life.

Interestingly this interaction with spiritual beings does not have to be rooted in a Pan-African worldview. When Chief Oranfe visited Vienna in winter 2011 he called the local line of ancestors to ask them for permission to enter the land and grant his visit. Therefore his view is not limited by a Pan-African world-view/perception, it is influenced by the interaction with spiritual beings in general. In this regard he usually invokes Africa as his line of ancestors, as his place of power and origin, similar to many other Orisha/Ifa devotees in Trinidad.

8.3 Commemoration – The Compound as a Site of Memory / as a portal to Africa

> It is memory that dictates while history writes; this is why both history books and historical events merit special attention (Nora 1989: 21).

More than half a year after my field work in Trinidad I began to think about the "curiosity" that people expanded their commemoration onto a period of several centuries. The important verbalisation for this extension of people's personal memories into a historical period that has never been experienced directly is expressed through the phrase "We", "We are from continental Africa", "We were enslaved and forced under inhumane conditions into the Caribbean". It expresses the strong connection to all these historical events and periods. It was during Olukun festival when I realized that the transatlantic slave trade was not just a part of history which is viewed from a distance, but a traumatic experience that is repeated over and over throughout the generations. During the festival the ritual procedures included the commemoration of the slave trade, the rupture that was created and the countless lives that found their bitter graves in the transatlantic passage. At this point the whole atmosphere became very emotional and sad.

It is also through this commemoration that the process of Africanization is legitimized. In this sense Trinidad or the Caribbean is viewed as the contemporary moment of a much larger history that is commemorated back to the Yoruba culture in southwest-

ern Nigeria.[132] In this process of commemoration the compound, as the spiritual centre and residence of the shrine head, is the most visible object. Pierre Nora enforced the concept of lieux de mémoire – sites of memory – to describe places, or also ideas, that are filled with historical importance, places through which history is shaped through the commemoration of historical events. A history that cannot only be interpreted differently but also commemorated differently throughout time.

The compound as the most obvious material realisation of the African-centred project, is accompanied by the ritual procedures, also including divination and African clothes – worn by some of the members (but definitely by the Chief and the Oludari). As mentioned in Chapter 6 the compound of EOE is focused mainly on African elements, and exclusively on African deities. Insofar it represents the African identification and the historical origin of its owner/creator. But it would be misleading to only consider the appearance of the shrine. It is also crucial to include the use and activities that are performed inside this exactly defined space. Similar to the spiritual centres in the Yoruba-homeland, the shrine/compound of EOE is treated as a temple, a sacred space, that exists throughout the year, contrary to other shrines that are mostly used during ebos.

At the beginning and at the end of the classes of initiation that I attended, Chief Oranfe led the prayers to call African spirits, ancestors and natural spirits like Kilimanjaro or the Niger river. Most of the prayers were spoken in Yoruba and answered by the participants. The compound itself is the commemoration of Africa, because it can only be understood through the reference to Africa. When the compound represents the lifework of the shrine head, those compounds, like the one of EOE, Shangowummi or Ifa Oshun-Obatala, represent the process of Africanization - or to better say the commitment to the own grounding in the Yoruba belief system - as the central point of spiritual knowledge and practice. The whole process of Africanization is also achieved through the process of commemoration. At the centre of the shrine of Ogun inside the palais of EOE is a wooden sculpture showing two hands that are holding Africa[133].

The compound functions through its structure and the ritual performances as a site of memory, as a place of commemoration, but most probably it also goes beyond that when it becomes a portal to Africa. The commemoration of the continental African past, the African ancestors and the African kingdoms, resembles more likely an activity of reconnection. The rupture of the transatlantic slave trade is no insurmountable historical barrier, what was before is not a lost past, but something that can again be re-established. Through the commemoration of the African roots and the ritual transformation, it becomes present in contemporary African identity.

Through the ritual process the physical location or state of the compound can change. It becomes a place of transformation that goes beyond its material location. This transformation is signified through various small actions, like birds that are suddenly

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[132] Sometimes it is also commemorated back to the ancient Egyptians, who are viewed as important sources of the latter Christendom.

[133] Unfortunately I don't have any picture of it. When asking for permission to take pictures of the shrine, through the sacrificing of cola-nuts and obi seeds (which 4 parts – when put apart – are used for divination), I didn't receive any, contrary to the other shrines on the compound.

flying through the palais, or a soft breeze that occurs after the invocation of the ritual creation/transformation of the place. The deities themselves, especially Olukun, are also bridges or connections to Africa, as their origin of power. What gives hope and energy are the African roots that are remembered and lived throughout life.

Chapter 9. Perspectives for the future

As one of the last chapters of this work it will focus on EOE's plans for the future and the possible development of the Orisha/Ifa religion. As a/an re-searcher/anthropologist in the field I was often completely entangled with the con-temporary moment of research and the information about the past. I would have forgotten most probably to ask about the future and the expectations connected with it. But during my fieldwork I encountered in a presentation of EOE goals for the year 2045. I got curious about the importance of the date 2045 and the included informa-tion about the plans of the organisation to settle in Africa. This long-term vision and the plan of a permanent physical return to Africa, somehow changed my perception of the field in which Africa was a strong and influential concept – but still mostly symbolical.

9.1 The 2045 goals of EOE and their practical basis

> Well, we basically on a spiritual plan towards the year 2045, that includes [the] return to the African continent, but not only pilgrimage or sacred journey return, right. It envisions that some of us would actually be – I don't know the correct word but reintroduce into the social matrix of the continent ... It does not target a specific African country, the aim at one point of time was to write several heads of government for the purpose of trying to receive their favour in a project of that nature (Interview Chief Oranfe, O7, 00:01:05-3) (my remarks).

The goals for 2045 have as their main objectives – that are yet to be done – the re-settlement or relocation onto Africa, as also the relocation or reassertion of the the-ology and cosmology of the belief system and practice in accordance with the Yoruba-homeland.[134]

> So that was one aim, another aim - looking at it from the diaspora point of view was to – and I don't like to use the word authenticate, right, but to verify the then current position of the theology and cosmology of Yoruba and African Sacred Science practice, as [it] was found in the diaspora. So that we could more or less have a compatible theology and cosmology with what takes place on the African continent ... We know that there was displacement and with that displacement in many instances there was distortion of the theology as [it] was practiced on the continent (Interview Chief Oranfe, O7, 00:04:57-6) (my remarks).

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[134] The reassertion of the theology and cosmology is already vividly in process through the increased networking, exchange of knowledge and mutual visits with Africa.

Concerning the long-term vision of EOE two important aims have already been accomplished, the visit of the homeland by some members of EOE, and the granting of land, as a crucial foundation for the establishment of future projects in Africa.

> And as two of the aims - to that extend from towards the year 2045, two of those, I just spoke about have been met, we have gone to the African continent, we have had offers of land, I have land personally outside of the gift of land to people of the diaspora – in some states in Nigeria once you become a chief, it is law that you have to have land as a chief, right (Interview Chief Oranfe, O7, 00:07:02-9).

The property that EOE possesses in Africa consists of the land that Chief Oranfe got granted through his chief title as well as additional land from an oba (in Nigeria) who was very generous.

> ... ways were open for me to go to the African continent and coming out of that - we have met with one particular oba per se who has been very favourable to having Africans from the diaspora return and rehabilitated and re-emerged into the African continent (Interview Chief Oranfe, O7, 00:02:24-2).

Viewed from a global perspective, there is a very complex situation of economic liabilities between Africa and its diaspora, many Caribbeans are welcome in Africa, because the local people believe they are bringing prosperity and capital along with them. In the case of Chief Oranfe this perspective does not seem to fit, after all the information I received, the relation is more likely on a spiritual/theological and personal level. This does not mean that there are no plans to build an economic foundation in Africa, exactly for that reason, land – as a base for economic activities like agriculture or handicraft – is quite essential. But Chief Oranfe did not appear as an business investor, he came to Africa, as someone who is coming home. At the moment there is still a lot to be done to realize these visions, but vital steps towards their achievement have already been accomplished.

An interesting background information is how Chief Oranfe conceptualized the goals for 2045, namely through a vision.

> Well it was something that was given to me "in spirit", but after – you know, there are like so many things in my life, I am given something I don't quite understand what it is all about – I accept it and then two or three years later, 5 years later, 15 years later I discover that there is something along the line ... I mean, consciously I didn't sit down and think this things, if you understand what I am saying, I am given this thing, I work with it, I try to see a significance, I see that other African leaders were projecting down in the future, at least as far as 2025, certainly Martin Luther King had a 2025 plan, and I tried to make sense of it, on the political-social front if you want to call it that. Mechanising all the geological fragility in this part – and as a Pan-Africanist we usually say, "we wouldn't give up a continent, for an island" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O7, 00:13:50-8).

Beside this spiritual aspect of the goals for 2045, it is also important to consider ecological reasons, "*We wouldn't give up a continent, for an island*",   is a strong political and similar ecological statement. "*given the fragile nature of the planet, I am convinced that the continent is the best place for us, rather than the island*" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O7, 00:12:13-3). Chief Oranfe is well established as a spiritual head in Trinidad, his choice to go permanently to Africa, and insofar enter a new field, is not a recent decision. Since his youth his heart has been beating for Africa, as his home/spiritual centre of choice. Africa – also as a physical destination – has been guiding Chief Oranfe through his spiritual becoming/career in Trinidad, while Trinidad has remained the centre of his life.

> Well emotionally as a young person I visioned myself - I am doing most of my work in Africa, that's not what elders told me tho, right. Very early they made it clear to me that I had work to do here, but I never tried to limit myself to that. And I had many opportunities to have been already emerged in Africa, I didn't take the opportunities because I thought the actions would have been irresponsible in other areas of my life ... but I have always felt in my life, if I had – if the choice was mine only to make as tho where I would have made my contribution, I would have made it in Africa because I thought – I think in my mind, it would have been, it may not have been more appreciated, perhaps it's more appreciated here, but it may have been more practically forward in, if I had done some of the same on the continent, you know, because the work would not have manifested like this, it would have manifested differently, you know (Interview Chief Oranfe, O7, 00:14:47-5).

To sum up, I want to point out that Africa and the process of Africanization should not bee seen only symbolical. Of course, identity/identification remains something that is in progress, as the image of what it represents without being equal to it. What does "Africa" mean? Does an African feel primarily as an "Ifa devotee", "Christian", "Muslim", "Nigerian", "Oshun-state resident", "Egyptian", "Ethiopian", "South African" ... or first of all as an "African". The "Africa" in Pan-Africansim, Afrocentrism or Africanization is a symbolical one because it describes a vision, or the personal or communal identity, a feeling of community or a historical relocation. In these concepts of "Africa", it is not handled with all its multiple differences, cultures, languages, historical backgrounds, conflicts, economic dependencies, positive and negative images that are associated with it, but as a destination, as the point of orientation, as the road, one is walking on. But all of this does not mean that Africa does not exist as a physical reality, although its perception or meaning remains an open process that can be experienced and therefore reshaped through the process of identification.

First of all the concept of "Africa" remains a point of orientation and engagement/motivation, a symbolical and practical one, the centre of one's own lifework, with all its different ways of agency. It is not only by the emotional value of "*Africa is our motherland*", but for developing Africa in the current mode and time in which we now exist ... So I am pleased with the accomplishment and I would – I feel once we here on the human plane and we struggling, we always feel we could do more. It could be better, you know, and it could be better. right. But sometimes when we

wait against no achievement at all, we give thanks for what we have achieved. Yeah, so that's where that is" (Interview Chief Oranfe, O7, 00:17:27-1).

9.2 Further Development of Ifa Religions/ Yoruba Sacred Science

It is difficult to estimate the further development of the Ifa religion/Yoruba Sacred Science/Orisha religion for the next years. There are certain trends that will most probably be continued, the question is, to which extent. The empirical observations of Dr. Patric Kment - that represented the largest part of my foreknowledge - ended around the year 2000. My own observations in the field revealed significant changes in a period of 10 years. Although I am using "Orisha religion" or "Orisha community" throughout my work, it represents – at least in the Pan-African field I was moving around – an outdated terminology. My decision to keep using it in this work is based on the literature I use for reference. Concerning the contemporary terminology "Ifa" is succeeding the term "Orisha religion". [135] Also the terms of Africanization or Yorubanization that I am using could be succeeded in the near future by the term Ifaism, representing the increasing importance of Ifa in the religion, but it also describes the religion in general. Regarding the influence that the orientation towards Ifa has caused in the development of the religion in the last decade, it is quite likely that this process will continue in the following years. As the Ifaism/Africanization/Yorubanization of the religion goes hand in hand with the increased visits of Nigerians in Trinidad as well as the visits of Trinidadians to Nigeria, it is very obvious to me – not focusing hereby on the change of the terminology – that the ongoing development of the religion will be largely determined by two different factors.

The first one as mentioned before is the extent of contact and exchange with Nigeria. The development of the religion is not only influenced by Trinidadians, it is embedded in the context of exchange and contact with Nigerians, who are often seen as spiritual authorities or more knowledgeable persons. The Nigerians may help to bring back the knowledge that was lost or improvised during the slave period. It depends on this relation between Trinidadians and Nigerians, to determine what kind of knowledge and ritual practice will be passed on to the next generation of Ifa-devotees.

The second factor could change the organisation of the religion, it's the topic of standardisation. The religion is still influenced by its characteristic individualism that is described vividly in the academic literature, but there are ideas of standardisation that could be enforced through the increasing influence of Ifa. Standardisation would mean a commonly shared corpus of prayers, rituals and literature that could be represented through a central structure of organisation, until today only attempts for an organisational centralisation have been established, like Egbe Orisa Ila Wa, the Council of Orisha Elders and the Council of Traditional Afrikan Chiefs. A step like this could help to reduce the difficulties of representation and formalisation with the government through a central structure of authority, as mentioned in Chapter 7, but it would also break, e.g. with the variety of ritual practice and the personalized com-

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[135] In this sense, Ifa is referring to the divination system, an orisha and the religion altogether.

pounds. Personally, I know where my sympathies are, but lets see what will happen in the future. Until now it has been possible to compare the religion with a grass-roots movement or organisation, as it could also be found in the period of the Black Power Movement, which impacted on many of the current shrine heads.

The group of people who are currently devotees and spiritual authorities/shrine heads/elders share a similar historical as well as biographical background that is constituted through the engagement with the Black Power Movement and a specific political orientation that aimed for the participation of all social classes in politics. It is especially this combination of the spiritual and political background that constitutes the consciousness of this influential group of practitioners. Insofar the next generations of Ifa/African sacred science devotees and shrine heads will share a different set of experiences that do not necessarily include this kind of political world-view.

Concerning the future this prognosis will become itself a point for commemoration, representing a past projection that is based on its contemporary context. Time will tell if the Ifa religion will become centralized, or remain predominantly individualized. Maybe both developments will happen and continue to exist side by side. Will the religion spread across the borders of Trinidad and find new grounds in the Americas or Europe?. Will the religion help those who seek to resettle in Africa, to find a new physical home?. And when it does, what will happen to its Caribbean implications and background?

Whatever may come or happen will be decided at the crossroads, a place of becoming, a place of negotiation, of identification and commemoration, a place of return and a place of departure. Where all the things that once got lost, may find together or get lost again.

Chapter 10. Identity, Politics, Religion and Africans – A conclusion

"The African" – a similarly vague as well as concrete concept. It manifests itself through rituals, festivals, prayers, songs, music, language-use, dress, food, objects, names, worldviews, divinities and many more. At the same time the concept that connects all these aspects remains a dynamic one, with various perspectives, different meanings and common references.

The spiritual centre of the current Africanization process in Trinidad is seen in the Yoruba-homeland in southwest Nigeria, Ile-Ife. Insofar the religious organisations and representatives from these areas are of great importance for the ongoing Africanization in Trinidad. But the impact of this Africanization does not only affect the engagement with the Orisha religion – mostly a part-time and individual engagement – it also creates a new young generation of devotees being educated as priests or priestesses (of Ifa). During my fieldwork I got the chance to experience the importance that both Chief Oranfe and his organisation as well as Shangowummi with her shrine in Santa Cruz have on this process of Africanization, that is to be honest not one process, but several.

At the same time the Africanization in Trinidad is not to be understood as a copy of Nigeria, which could easily be mistaken as an undisputed authority. Many inside the Pan-African field are highly critical towards Christianity, resulting in the exclusion of Christian elements in the rituals and compounds. Christianity is associated with the colonial oppressors, as an active part of the repressive system.

Others started to question their Christian belief when they tried to actively live it, during one of my stays at Chief Oranfes shrine, a young man with this background came to him because he had seen him on television and was eager to learn more about African belief systems and spirituality. Many of the Nigerians who are engaged with Ifa (to name the religion) as priests (I don't recall any priestesses) are mostly Christians at the same time.[136] During an interview with Oludari/Sangode she made a remark on the speech of the Nigerian priest at Ogun festival in San Juan, questioning his notes on sin that she associated with Christianity.[137] Chief Oranfe is influenced by the grass-root movements that 'mushroomed' after the impact of Black Power in Trinidad, a political perception of social classes and his own spiritual guidance.

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[136] Islam and Christianity are still spreading in Africa, furthermore Nigeria also was a British colony, but of course the historical situation is quite a different one.

[137] "Yeah, you know when a lot of the babalawos that come here - come from a Christian background, and to me don't teach me about African Sacred Science. They – because in Africa Christianity is very dominant, so you will find that a lot of them went through the Christianity and some – they still think in that paradigm I do not want to think, as I tell people" (Interview Oludari/Sangode, OL1, 00:17:53-4).

At the end my work I have to say that there is not one source of power, not a single legitimate way of Africanization, further the complexity of these processes cannot be properly explained without its dynamic. Throughout this work I engaged with these processes of Africanization through the post-colonial theories of identity/identification and the dynamic commemoration of the past. Out of this perspective I merely tried to map out the past and current transformation of the religion towards a Pan-African identity. I wanted to show central points of identification and commemoration of the Pan-African field, through the perspective of Chief Oranfe/EOE and the available literature. The Africanization process is examined on the basis of the case study of the organisation EOE, to show how a specific organisation managed the issue of identification and its recreation. Of course, EOE's orientation is not necessarily comparable to other organisations or shrines, but it is an influential one in the field.

The issue of legitimation is a continuous one – throughout all these processes – but this issue of legitimation is not necessarily to be equated with a notion of 'authenticity'. Out of my experience it should rather be seen as the activity of an entrepreneur who functions out of his own moral, ethical and spiritual convictions. Simultaneously this individual engagement is embedded in a larger context of communal commemoration. As explained by Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities' – that more or less all kinds of community are imagined – I would argue that the identification of the Pan-African community in Trinidad is largely based on the commemoration of certain historical events ranging back to continental Africa. Insofar the processes of Africanization can also be explained as processes towards a still unknown future, through the implementation of the past.

The Pan-African community in Trinidad is not fully recognized as a partly autonomous community. Organisations like EOE and persons like Chief Oranfe are giving this call to be recognized as an 'African' inside the multicultural framework of Trinidad an important voice. This call for a communal identity is also related to the issue of representation, and the question, "Who has the authority to represent?", leading again, of course, to the issues of political, social and religious legitimation. Altogether I wanted to show the interconnections between these various processes and the dynamics that are inherent in the Pan-African field.

From a scientific perspective I also tried to show the dynamics inside the field without pressing them into a static description, therefore it is difficult to propose general assumptions. There is no single Africanization process, there is not 'a' Orisha or Ifa religion, most probably there is not even 'a' Pan-African field, as I proclaimed it throughout the work. What we are facing are multiple viewpoints, motivations and interests inside a specific field that are continuously unified to a certain degree, but these common interests are also part of the constant change that the field undergoes slowly or rapidly. The shared interest into the field is also constituted and changed through the interplay of the various positions and interests, it is not an absolute authority, but also part of the game. Therefore I would argue that the specific field like the concept of identity/identification is also continuously in the process of becoming, and that it is not necessarily dictated but resulting out of the constant interplay of its dynamics.

Identity "A construct, a process never completed – always 'in process' "(Hall). Identity as a constant act of negotiation, negotiations of belonging, of political recognition, of social equality, of spiritual understanding and guidance, of finding a place called 'home'.

And so what people have to remember and what mistake - biggest mistake people are making is judging people by religion and it would have nothing to do with that. When the time comes religion will be completely out of it, it will - you will be judged by who you are, what you have been, what you have done, what example you have shown, what kind of person you have been in the community, what - how best you have carried out God's laws, being honest, faithful, truthful, kind, compassionate, sharing, those are the aspects in your life that you will be judged by. Ase (Interview Ifa Oshun-Obatala, IOO2, <u>00:00:40-4</u>).

O: And I don't intent to be apologetic about the road, I'm not even sure that this is the right road, I'm not even sure if it is the correct road. It could be probably be leading to whatever people call hell and damnation, (break) I don't care. (laughs) You know.

I: Yeah, there always different perspectives?

O: Yeah, yeah, and I'm saying what ever the perspective it doesn't matter to me. I have made a choice, and I stand by the consequences of my choice.

(Interview Chief Oranfe, O21, <u>00:44:25-1</u>)

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http://yorubasacredsciencecentre.wordpress.com/festivals/ase-odun-olokun/ase-odun-olokun-held-at-dheins-bay-carenage-a-grand-success/ (27-1-2012)

IV. Attachment A: Abstract

(German Version)

Im Rahmen dieser Arbeit möchte ich die Afrikanisierungsprozesse in Trinidad näher beleuchten. Ausgangspunkt ist hierbei die Organisation Egbe Onisin Eledumare, die seit 1970, inspiriert durch das Black Power Movement, kontinuierlich die Afrikanisierung der Orisha-Religion mitgestaltet. Zentraler Dreh- und Angelpunkt für die Auseinandersetzung mit diesen Afrikanisierungsprozessen ist das Konzept von 'Identität'. 'Identität' wird hierbei aus einer post-kolonialen/post-strukturalen Perspektive als ein fortwährender Prozess angesehen der gleichzeitig die Verdinglichung einer immateriellen Projektionsfläche anstrebt. Ergänzt durch die Theorien der 'Erinnerungsorte' von Pierre Nora und den Konzepten von Pierre Bourdieu (Habitus(illusio), Feld, Kapital) eröffnet sich ein Spektrum an theoretischen Perspektiven, die dabei helfen sollen eben jene zuvor angesprochenen Prozesse besser zu verstehen. In der Praxis finden sich diese Prozesse in der Entstehungsgeschichte der Organisation Egbe Onisin Eledumare und ihrer gegenwärtigen Beschäftigungsfelder, weitere Beispiele sind die Bemühungen um eine politische Anerkennung der Orisha-Religion und ihrer Förderung als Zeichen der Anerkennung der Pan-Afrikanischen Community auf Trinidad, sowie die Realisierung der Pläne für die weitere Zukunft, die auch eine Rückkehr/Rücksiedlung auf den afrikanischen Kontinent anstreben. Das Zusammenspiel des empirischen Materials, das ich während meines Feldaufenthaltes erhob, mit der zur Verfügung stehenden wissenschaftlichen Literatur, sowie den zuvor genannten theoretischen Perspektiven, ergibt letztendlich einen Ausblick auf einen Prozess, der sich selbst immer gerade in seiner 'Werdung' befindet.

(English Version)

Within the scope of this work I would like to focus on the Africanization processes in Trinidad. The initial point is hereby the organisation Egbe Onisin Eledumare, whose since 1970 - inspired through the Black Power Movement - continuously engaged with the Africanization of the Orisha religion. Central for the engagement with this Africanization process is the concept of 'identity'. 'Identity' is hereby seen - out of a post-colonial/post-structural perspective - as a continuous process who simultaneously tries to realize a immaterial projection. Further the theories of 'sites of memory' of Pierre Nora and the concepts of Pierre Bourdieu (habitus(illusio), field, capital) shall help to gain a better understanding of the before mentioned processes. In the praxis this processes can be seen in the development of the organisation Egbe Onisin Eledumare and their contemporary activities. Further examples are the efforts for a political recognition of the Orisha religion - including also their support - which represents the recognition of the Pan-African community on Trinidad. Another example is the realisation of the plans for the future, that aims also to return/resettle to the African continent. The interplay of the empirical material, that I have obtained during my fieldwork, together with the available scientific literature, as also the before mentioned theoretical perspectives, comprise eventually a view on a process, who is always in 'becoming'.

V. Attachment B: Curriculum Vitae

Name: Bernd Staudenbauer

Geburtsdatum: 27.12.1985

Staatsbürgerschaft: Österreich

Schulausbildung

9/1992 – 7/1996 Volksschule in Rohrbrunn

9/1996 – 7/2000 Hauptschule in Rudersdorf

9/2000 - 5/2005 HTBLA Pinkafeld, Abteilung EDVO in Pinkafeld

Berufstätigkeit, berufsbezogene Praktika und Zivildienst

07/2000 – 08/2000 Ferialpraktikum bei SAP, Wien

07/2001 – 08/2001 Ferialpraktikum bei Büro Schweighofer, Wien

10/2005 – 11/2005 Zivildienst beim Landesfeuerwehrkommando Eisenstadt

1/2006 – 7/2006 Zivildienst Behindertenpflegeheim Haus Gabriel in Riedlingsdorf

4/2010 – 7/2010 Werkvertrag bei Univ.-Prof. Dr. Wolfram Reiss, Institut für Systematische Theologie und Religionswissenschaft der Evangelisch-Theologischen Fakultät, Universität Wien

Studienverlauf

seit 10/2006   A 307 Diplomstudium Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie

09/2008 1. Diplomprüfungszeugnis

Schwerpunkte: -INGORAPS (Anthropologische Friedensforschung)

-Afrikanische Diaspora

-Ritualforschung

-religiöse Weltbilder

-Beforschung von Organisationen

-materielle Kultur

Auslandsaufenthalte zu Studienzwecken

02/2010 Auslandsexkursion nach Jerusalem, Israel

04/2010 – 05/2010 Feldpraktikum in Köszeg, Ungarn

9/2010 -10/2010 Feldforschung in Trinidad & Tobago im Rahmen der Diplomarbeit

Weitere Qualifikationen

Fremdsprache: Englisch