SANTERÍA DISCOURSE: GENDERING IN PÁTÁKÍ

Neusa Rodríguez Montemoño

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Department of English
College of Humanities
University of Puerto Rico

Approved by:

Dr. Almá Simounet
Reader

Dr. Robert Duprey
Reader

Dr. Nicholas Farclas
Thesis Director
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Abstract

SANTERÍA DISCOURSE: GENDERING IN PÀTÀKÌ

The source of motivation for this dissertation is my religious experience as a santera and priestess of the Òrìṣá Argayú (Ọránṣàn; an Òrìṣá, deity) which has led me to study Yorùbá religious discourse in Yorùbá land, and to compare it with the discourse of Òrìṣá religion in Trinidad, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and their Diasporas. As a feminist, I wanted to investigate the degree to which the original Yorùbá patakís (historias, moral tales which accompany a divination ritual) have been modified to incorporate the discourse of patriarchal gendering in the Americas. The evidence provided in this dissertation demonstrates how the leadership roles and responsibilities accessible to women, and their agency in traditional Yorùbá religious texts were curtailed in the Caribbean to accommodate the gender order of patriarchal European colonial society in the worship of the Òrìṣá in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and their Diasporas. Their access has been undervalued and, in many instances, denied. The following methodologies were used in this dissertation: 1) Documentary research on various texts on history, religion, Yorùbá language and culture, Santería in Cuba, gendering, archeology, and sociology by authorities such as William Bascome, Marija Gimbutas, Maureen Warner-Lewis, Oyèrónké Oyewùmí, Ifi Amadiume, Cheikh Anta Diop, Robin Tomalch Lakoff, Penelope Eckert & Sally McConnell-Ginet, Evelyn Reed, Maria Mies, Nicholas Farclas, and Frances Henry among others; 2) Interviews with authorities on Yorùbá religious practices; 3) My thirty-one years of personal experiences as a priestess.
Keywords:  Patriarchy  Matricentric

_Yorùbá_  _Iyánifá_

Caribbean  Sociolinguistics
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to Muñeca Geigel and Chiqui Valdés (Yrmino Valdés) que iba e. Muñeca gave me the knowledge, strength, and loving care so that I could be able to reason that a loving God could never take pleasure in punishment and could never be the source of suffering and injustice in our lives. Chiqui Valdés, a Bàbáloṣa, had the courage to go beyond what he had been taught. He decided to go to Yorùbá land in search of the roots of what is called Santería. Chiqui had the audacity to teach us that women could perform any ritual or ceremony in Yorùbá land and to emphasize that since slavery had been abolished, syncretism was no longer necessary to worship the Òrìṣá. I would be forever in your debt because both of you helped me recognize the love and fairness of the divine forces that surround every living creature on Earth.
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Foremost, I would like to thank my dissertation committee Professor Nicholas Faraclas, Ph.D., Professor Robert Dupey Ph.D., and Professor Alma Simounet Ph.D. for their continuous guidance and support. Thanks to Professor Kuwabong Ph. D. for guiding me into Cheik Anta Diop Ph. D., and Ifi Amadiume Ph.D., who provided invaluable historical and anthropological data. To Barry Green who was always willing to provide computerized technical assistance. Thank you, Barry, for being patient with me. Patricia Watson Cap de Ville, you helped a perfect stranger find room and board, and non-expensive plane tickets to Trinidad which is of the utmost importance for a student. There are no words to express my gratitude for your continued support. To Aida Avergne Ph.D. thanks for giving me pointers about writing in advance the dedication, acknowledgements, abstract, and table of contents. It really helped. Ángel Rivera, you were heaven sent. Thanks for helping me with APA and with the final steps to be able to publish the dissertation. Saying thank you cannot express my gratitude to the Trinidadian people who in one way or another helped me during my field study in Trinidad special thanks to Avery, Garnet, Tempu and the sisters of Tobinrin Lase, Valerie, and Veronica. I am deeply grateful to the priestesses and priests of the Spiritual Baptists religion and Òrìṣá religion, and to the devotees of both religions who without hesitation opened their homes, shrines, palais, and hearts to provide me with the information I was seeking about African-descendant religions in Trinidad.
Biographical Information

Neusa Rodríguez Montemoño has a master’s degree in ESL from Framingham College in the USA. She completed her doctorate degree from the Caribbean Linguistics Program at University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus. Ms. Rodríguez Montemoño has participated in various occasions at El Simposio Caribe Plurilingüe at the University of Puerto Rico. nrodm6@gmail.com
Yemonja [Yemonja] is one of the most misunderstood Orisa [Òrîṣá] energies. It is not some passive mother figure; it is an enormously powerful energy matrix controlling a host of attributes …. In Africa, women are accepted as strong, equal partners to men. Women, for the most part, ran the stores and the marketplace …. This view of “Mother” is quite different from the Diaspora view. As a result of the Middle Passage, the energy of Yemonja changed dramatically in this hemisphere. It lost its powerful aspect as a result of the secondary place of women in Christianity. The Catholic slave masters’ world view began to prevail. The pataki [pàtàki] that have evolved over the years have concentrated more on the nurturing aspects, than the strong protective ones … Nothing could be further from the truth. Of all the energies of the pantheon of Orisa, Yemonja’s wrath can be the most ferocious, the most devastating …. The destructiveness of Yemonja/Olokun [Olókun] in protecting its children … is overwhelming and extensive …. Yet in the modern Diaspora interpretation, Yemonja
is the smiling homebody … And, horrifyingly, children of Yemonja/Olokun have allowed themselves to be conditioned and molded by these perceptions. Indeed, the separation of the nurturing aspect of Yemonja, from the assertive energy of Olokun … has been the result of this misinterpretation … or desire.

-Oluwo (santero turned Babalawo) Philip John Neimark (2012, pp 32-33)

1.0 Introduction

Throughout patriarchal history women have been denied rightful agency in economic, religious, artistic, and academic endeavors. This has left decision making almost exclusively to men. Patriarchal religious doctrines have disallowed women’s agency in rituals and access to hierarchical positions of power since the beginning of patriarchy, especially since the consolidation of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as global religions. As a woman born in the twentieth century where there has been more access to alternate forms of spirituality, I have sought the wisdom of traditional African religions, more specifically in what is called Santería, which in its present form, can be traced back in large part to the island of Cuba in the Spanish Caribbean.

Although at least some of its roots can probably be found in the spiritual traditions of African descended peoples in Puerto Rico since the beginnings of the 16th century, Santería is normally considered to have arrived in Puerto Rico in the 1960s, when various Cuban citizens fleeing the Cuban Revolution and aided by the United States government, chose our country as their new home. Since it was a new form of
spirituality to almost all Puerto Ricans, several of us were initially apprehensive of this religion which many Puerto Ricans readily began to practice, just as they had previously adopted the practice of *espiritismo* [spiritism] (all translations in this work were done by the author, unless specified otherwise) as taught by Allan Kardec. *Santería* and spiritism seemed to offer Puerto Rican women a religious life where they could be equal to men in gaining access to positions of ritualistic and hierarchical power. Or so many women thought.

As *Santería* became a significant part of Puerto Rican religious practice, feminists and feminist-inclined women discovered many of the same patriarchal, gendered, misogynistic, and capitalist discourses of Christianity in this new religious discourse, as articulated for example, through ritualistic argot and morality stories, known in *Santería* as *historias* or *pàtàkì*. As a *santera* and feminist myself, I refused to accept this injustice. The discourse of the Òrìṣá (the deities in *Santería* and *Yorùbá* traditional religion) when rightly and properly channeled through *santeras* and *santeros* is not gendered, misogynistic, or patriarchal. Their discourse is tender, egalitarian, compassionate, and Òrìṣá will put forth information and propose win–win solutions to any difficult situation that the listener might be confronting.

The motivation for this dissertation is my religious experience as a *santera* and priestess of the Òrìṣá Argayú (*Qrânyàn*) which has led me to study *Yorùbá* religious discourse in *Yorùbá* land, and to compare it with the discourse of Òrìṣá religion in Trinidad, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and their diasporas in New York City. As a feminist, I want to investigate the degree to which the original *Yorùbá* versions of the *pàtàkì* (moral tales
which accompany a divination ritual) have been modified to incorporate the discourse of patriarchal gendering in the Americas to limit women’s power within Santería.

1.1 Hypothesis

Based on my religious experience as a santera, I have formulated the following hypothesis and sub-hypotheses to test in this dissertation:

H1: The agency of women in Yorùbá religious practices was curtailed in the Caribbean to accommodate the gender order of patriarchal European colonial society.

H1A: The leadership roles and responsibilities accessible to women in Yorùbá religion were curtailed in the Caribbean to accommodate the gender order of patriarchal European colonial society.

H1B: The agency of women in traditional Yorùbá religious texts was curtailed in the Caribbean to accommodate the gender order of patriarchal European colonial society.

1.2 Methodology

To test my hypothesis, I used the following methodologies:

1) Documentary research on various texts on history, religion, Yorùbá language and culture, Santería in Cuba, Marxism, feminism, gendering, archeology, sociology, and African-descended religions in Trinidad by authorities such as William Bascome, Marija Gimbutas, Maureen Warner-Lewis, Oyèrónké Oyewùmí, Ifi Amadiume, Cheikh Anta Diop, Robin Tomalch Lakoff, Penelope Eckert & Sally
McConnell-Ginet, Evelyn Reed, Maria Mies, Nicholas Faroelas, and Frances Henry among others.

2) Interviews with authorities on Yorùbá religious practices, including those carried out as part of a field study to Trinidad during which I was able to interview the following religious authorities: 1) Iya Eintou Pearl Springer, a respected elder and ex-director of the Trinidad National Library; 2) Rawle Gibbons, a retired Lecturer from The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine Campus and priest of the Òrìṣá religion in Trinidad, 3) Baba Funso Lecturer at UWI, St. Augustine and devotee of the Òrìṣá religion since his childhood in Nigeria, 4) and 5) Tempu Nefertari-Ogunsola and her cousin Avery Ammon, both devotees and activists in the struggle to preserve Yorùbá religious traditions in Trinidad; 6) Burton Sankeralli, and devotee and participant in conferences about Òrìṣá religion in Trinidad; 7) and 8) Mother Lisa and Sister Mary, both Spiritual Baptist priestesses; 9) Sister Agnes, a Spiritual Baptist devotee and 10) Baba Michael, a priest and second leader at Mother Lisa’s shrine.

3) My personal experiences as a priestess of the Òrìṣá Argayú [Ǫráñyàn]: In my thirty-one years as a priestess of Argayú [Ǫráñyàn] I have confronted instances of patriarchal mentality among my fellow santeras and santeros, and in some cases full blown misogyny. However, these attitudes have never deterred my commitment to unearthing the roots of Yorùbá religion to be able to advocate for the reestablishment of less gendered and largely forgotten Yorùbá religious principles in Santería.
1.3 Definitions

1.3.1 Gendering

As members of patriarchal societies, social constructs of gender are ingrained in our social environment. Labor distribution, family responsibilities and values, social and government functions are distributed asymmetrically between humans whose gender is constructed as feminine versus those whose gender is constructed as masculine.

Since the publication of Robin Tomalch Lakoff’s groundbreaking book *Language and Woman’s Place* (2004), thousands of studies have been published on what is now called gendering. Lakoff’s (2004) work demonstrated how women in USA society are raised to be non-assertive and polite; for example, in their speech they avoid expressing direct orders, (2004, p. 50). She notes that women use tag questions to begin a conversation, “Sure is hot here, isn’t it?” (p.49) or to solicit approval for an opinion, “The way prices are rising is horrendous, isn’t it?” (p.49)

Lakoff (2004) points out that, “women’s speech sounds much more “polite” than men’s. One aspect of politeness is as we have just described: leaving a decision open, not imposing your mind, or views, or claims on anyone else” (p. 50). Furthermore, “… while men carelessly blurt out whatever they are thinking, women are supposed to be particularly careful to say “please” and “thank you” …” (p. 80). Men are expected to give direct orders. Women are more likely to choose adjectives like ‘divine’, ‘adorable’, or neutral adjectives like ‘great’, ‘cool’ (p. 45); most heterosexual men will not choose adjectives like ‘adorable’ or divine’. A man, “…generally [is] expected to know how to swear and how to tell and appreciate the telling of dirty jokes, and certainly must never
giggle when he hears them” (p. 84). The language of a woman is often regarded as unprecise because of the indirectness and avoidance required by the gendered construction of a woman, “Because of the way she speaks, the little girl – now grown to womanhood – will be accused of being unable to speak precisely or to express herself forcefully” (p. 41) … “…[she is be treated] as an object –sexual or otherwise – but never a serious person with individual views”. (p. 42).

Unless a woman appropriates the language normally assigned to the gendered construction of maleness by becoming more assertive, confronting difficult situations head on, and transmitting direct orders, it is difficult for her to succeed in the professional arena, because she is not taken seriously. Meanwhile, the same woman is still expected to perform the household duties that her feminine gendered upbringing demands such as doing the laundry, washing the dishes, and cooking. If she has children, she is responsible for her children’s academic performance, their school work, and on top of all of these chores and responsibilities, she needs to be polite, non-assertive, and most of the time defer to her father’s, husband’s or partner’s decisions.

As a Latina, it has been my experience that in traditional society throughout Latin America, women are expected to follow many of the same gendered language patterns Lakoff (2004) identified in her study of women in the United States. Women in Latin America converse uttering polite words in a soft tone of voice: Te ves bien. [You look nice.], Qué bonito te queda. [How nice you look.], Por favor [Please], Gracias [Thank you], ¿Te molestaría abrir la puerta? [Would you please open the door?] In my career as an elementary school teacher, I found myself constantly obliged to find the most subservient ways to express my ideas, so that my ideas would not be rejected outright. In
order to be taken seriously as professionals, women need to be as assertive as men, while at the same time, their assertiveness must be expressed with a neutral, steady tone of voice. Just as is the case for women in the United States, Latin American women, professional or not, are expected to be polite, non-assertive, and defer to men as well as to carry out their feminine gendered chores and responsibilities. While I was in Mexico, I overheard an indigenous woman refer to her husband as, *mi señor* [my lord]. In Latin America, men’s speech is generally prestigious, while women’s speech is inferior not to be taken seriously. From my own Catholic upbringing, I can affirm that Catholicism reinforces women’s subservient position in society since all positions of prestige and power in the Catholic church are occupied by men. For example, girls and women are asked to use the Virgin Mary as a model to guide their actions in life. This is called in Spanish *Marianismo*.

According to linguistic anthropologist Zdenek Salzmann (2007), “…[in] the relationship between language (speech behavior) on the one hand and gender on the other… gender is a social construct that is likely to vary from one society to the next or even from one social group to another within an embracing society or culture” (p. 218). The patriarchally constructed relationship between language and gender has undergone changes since the women’s movement in the 1970s and there has been an effort towards degendering the English language. Words like policeman, fireman, mailman, salesman, and chairman have been replaced by police officer, firefighter, mail carrier, salesperson, and chairperson. Regrettably, as an English teacher in Puerto Rico, I have heard many students still using the gendered nouns listed above. The use of Ms. referring to both married and unmarried women instead of Mrs. or Miss has become very common in
every day conversation or as a social title; still, in the mind of many it has become another form for Miss. Ron Cowan (2008) explains in his grammar reference guide that there is a tendency to use third person plural form instead of using singular masculine or feminine third person pronouns as a way to construct a gender-free language: “If a person masters these techniques, he can defend himself in all situations” can be rephrased as, “People who master these techniques, can defend themselves in all situations” (p. 280).

For sociolinguists Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet (2003), gender is a social construction and “…the means by which society jointly accomplishes the differentiation that constitutes the gender order. While we recognize that biology imposes certain physiological constraints on the average male and female, we treat the elaboration and magnification of these differences as entirely social” (p. 14). It can be concluded that socially constructed gender is the assignment to each biological sex of certain behavioral and family roles, class and economic statuses, ways of dressing, voice tones and inflections, turn taking behaviors, etc. This gendering can occur differently in different societies or communities of practice.

1.3.2 Santería

Santería is a religion with significant input from Yorùbá spiritual traditions practiced in Cuba and other parts of the Caribbean. Barnet (2001) defines Santería as “… a system of beliefs and rituals centered around the worship of the orishas’s of the Nigerian Yoruba pantheon and their Catholic saint counterparts” (p. 18). Many of the Yorùbá people from Western Nigeria and adjoining regions, like millions of other West Africans, were
brought to the Americas by means of the slave trade. This inhumane system attempted to prevent them from practicing their culture, language, and religion. In order to continue worshiping their Orisha (Ọrịsá, deities) clandestinely, the Yorùbá, their descendants, and other enslaved peoples of African descent opted for syncretizing the Ọrịsá’s life stories and attributes with those of Catholic saints, which is interpreted by Barnet (2001) as, “…the equation of Yorùbá divinities with Roman Catholic saints” (p. 18). In a continuation of the relatively nongendered norms of Yorùbá language and culture, Yorùbá slaves were not obsessed with establishing a strict correspondence between the gendering of Catholic saints with the gender commonly attributed to Ọrịsá in Yorùbá land, which in any case was often vague or changeable. Clark (2005) explains, “When early Afro-Cubans were setting up the correspondences between the Orishas and the Catholic saints, they were concerned about correspondences between the iconography of the saints and the Orisha, but, apparently less concerned about keeping the gender consistent” (p. 26).

As enumerated by González-Whippler (1984), the most common syncretizing equivalences made in Santería between Ọrịsá on the one hand and Catholic saints on the other are Eleguá (Ẹlegbara or Èsù) with Saint Anthony of Padua, Ogún (Ọgún) with Saint Peter, Ibeji (Ibeji) with Saints Cosme and Damian, Yemayá (Yemọnja) with Our Lady of Regla, Ochún (Ọṣun) with Our Lady of la Caridad del Cobre, Babalú Ayé (Ọbalúwayé or Ọṣọpọnnà) with Saint Lazarus, Argayú (Ọràyàn) with Saint Christopher, and Oyá (Ọyá) with Our Lady of la Candelaria (pp. 13 to 41).

This syncretism was not always obviously gender based, at least according to a strict gender order such as that found in colonial society. For example, Obatalá
(Ọbàtálá) - the embodiment of justice, patience, purity, and creation who is usually male-identified in Cuba - is syncretized with the female-identified Virgen de las Mercedes or Our Lady of Mercy. The logic here seems to have more to do with matters of justice, especially for the enslaved, than to do with gender. Our Lady of Mercy comes to the aid of prisoners and people in captivity. It is said that she appeared to Pedro Nolasco in 1218 asking him to be the founder of a religious order to help “los que eran llevados cautivos a sitios lejanos.” [those who were taken as captives to faraway places]. (Nuestra Señora de Las Mercedes, n.d.). The Virgin of Mercy is depicted dressed in white, a color which is associated in Yorùbá land with Ọbátálá. Neimark (2012) explains the meaning of the color white in Yorùbá traditional religion:

White is also viewed as a sign of purity, but, too often, thanks to the pernicious Christian Missionary influence on our philosophy [Yorùbá], this idea of purity has religious or moral implications. Instead, purity is another aspect of Clarity for this energy is unblemished, pure in its ability to discern. The moral judgment of Obatala is not based on this sense of Christian purity, but rather on this energies [sic] absolute ability to see clearly the total spectrum of energies or issues involved (pp. 37, 38).

It is also worth noting that, as a legacy of a non-gendered African tradition, Ọbátálá has eight male paths (manifestations) and eight female paths in Cuba. Barnet (2001) relates two historias [pàtàkì] told in Cuba in which Obatalá [Ọbátálá] is female gendered. The first historia is a common pàtàkì which narrates the origin of Changó [Shangó]. It describes how Obatalá took care of Changó after Yemayá [Yemọnja] abandoned him: “… and it was Obatalá who took him [Changó] in and raised him.
Claiming him as her son, … She said that he would be king of the world and she built him a castle” (p. 8). The second pàtìkì narrates how Changó almost had an incestuous relationship with Yemayá. It tells how Obatalá explained to Yemayá the true nature of her relationship with Changó. Obatalá then pleads with Yemayá to prevent Changó from drowning:

At that moment [when Şàngó was drowning] Obatalá appeared, borne on the back of a majá-snake – [“majá! Cuba Culebra que alcanza hasta 4 m de longitud, … no es venenosa” (Es. Oxford Dictionary, 2019)] [in Cuba – a non-poisonous snake that can measure up to 4 meters]. She said, “Adayaguá Orissa” (Yemayá do not let your son die) [sic] … He [Şàngó] then asked the two saints: “Which one of you brought me into the world?” “Yemayá” answered the Merciful Virgin. “I looked after you, but she gave birth to you.” … [Changó] [Şàngó] … humbles himself before both his mothers. (p. 9,10)

Another case where gender seems to be superseded by other factors is that of Changó (Şàngó), who is the embodiment of the energy of thunder and warring prowess. Despite the fact that Şàngó is normally male-identified in Cuba, he is syncretized with female Santa Bárbara who is the patron saint of artillerymen and is invoked during thunderstorms. It is said that, “Dioscorus [St. Barbara’s father] himself performed the execution [on his daughter by decapitation] and, upon his return home, was struck by lightning and reduced to ashes” (Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.) Pictures of Saint Barbara usually include lightning striking the tower where legend says she was imprisoned, and portray her carrying a sword and dressed in red, which is also the color associated with Şàngó in Yorùbá land.
1.3.3 Traditional *Yorùbá* Religion

The numerous, diverse and sometimes contradictory ancient *Yorùbá* spiritual practices that involve the worship of the Orisha (*Ọrìṣá*) provide much of the basis for *Santería* in Cuba. These are usually founded upon the interconnections among *Olódùmarè* (Supreme Deity, all loving and pure energy), the *Ọrìṣá* as *Olódùmarè*’s messengers, humankind, and everything on Earth. Everything and everyone on Earth have a spark of light from *Olódùmarè* which binds them all together. Neimark (2012) describes how *Olódùmarè* brings joy to the world; so therefore,

> Joy cannot be self-centered, self-absorbed, immediate gratification that has come to exemplify the Western culture view of it. True joy must come from the exaltation that we feel in recognizing the beauty and symbiotic relationship we have to our loved ones, our community and the planet we live on (p. 17).

Modupẹ Oduyọye (1972) explains and defines the word *Olódùmarè* as follows:

> “the component -màrè indicates shining, splendour the same that is symbolized in Christian art as a halo… *Edìmàrè* is the splendid, the glorious, full and whole. *Olódùmarè* is the one who has the wholeness of splendor” (p. 31). Relatively rarely mentioned in *Santería* text and speech, *Olódùmarè* is all-encompassing and omnipresent. Oduyọye provides another meaning for *Olódùmarè* formulated by Professor Ayo Bambose: “The immensity of heaven” (p. 34). Even with the grammatical constraints of translating *Yorùbá* into English, *Olódùmarè* cannot be assigned a male gender as is the case with God in Christianity. The worshippers of the *Ọrìṣá* believe in reincarnation as a reward for having lived a dutiful and honest life (Clark, 2005) without obsessing about
personal gain. Human beings are here on Earth to respectfully enjoy life remembering that everything is spiritually interrelated.

The Òrìṣá, both in Santería and in Yorùbá traditional religion, represent the forces of nature and nature itself. Kuyebi (2015) describe Òrìṣá as divinities that, “…function and serve as Olodumare’s emissaries” (p. 19). This statement indicates that Òrìṣá are not the exact equivalent of Goddesses and Gods in the Greco-Roman tradition.

Since the Òrìṣá represent forces of nature and natural processes, throughout Yorùbá land the same Òrìṣá can be gendered male in one village or town, and gendered female in another. Oyèrónké Oyewùmí (1997) author of Invention of Women states, “anatomical distinctions did not play any part whether in the world of humans or that of the gods” (p. 140). Clark (2005) rephrases Oyewùmí:

   gender was not a category, and the roles of Orishas, priests, and ancestors were not gender dependent … [among the examples she includes are]: … Olodumare, the great god, had no gender identity; … Although Orishas were both male and female … “this distinction was inconsequential” since male and female Orisha could have similar attributes and the gender of the Orisha was rather fluid with an Orisha sometimes being gendered male in one location and female in another; … [and] the priesthood of the various gods was open to both male and females (p.35).

mujer” (p. 5). [This is an androgynous deity in Cuban tradition. Sometimes Olokun is referred to as a man and other times as a woman.]

Fatunmbi (1992) explains that, “In some regions of Africa Oníle, who is the Owner of Earth, is considered the female aspect of Ògún” (p.17). Ògún, the blacksmith warrior, would never be considered female in the Caribbean. The following are two other examples to be considered: Òrísá Oko, which is gendered as male in Santería, is referred to as ‘Goddess of Agriculture’ by Lucy Charles (a.k.a. Títí) in Maureen Warner-Lewis (2015, p.127). Oluwo Philip John (2012) describes Esù as having breasts, “…it is no contradiction that this warrior figures [sic] can also be represented with a female aspect with full breasts ready to feed and provide opportunities for children” (p. 21). In the same line, Oyewùmí (2001) referring to the work of Ayodele Ogundipe states that Esù is worshiped as a female Òrísá in Ibadan. Both Eṣu and Òrísá Oko are male gendered Òrísá in Santería.

Oyewùmí (1997) points out that reference to biological sex usually made in Yorùbá discourse only when talking about reproduction. Tishken, Fálolá, and Ákinyemí (2009) state that the noun ádósù is used in Yorùbá land to refer to a priestess or priest of Śàngó (p, 48). Clark (2005) explains the meaning of the word iyawo [iyawo]- which means “wife, [or] younger than the speaker” (p.26). Ìyawo is a title given to all the newly initiated as a priestess or priest of an Òrísá. During the entire first year after the initiation the new priestess or priest is called the iyawo or ‘wife’ of their Òrísá. The term oyubona names a priestess or priest who is responsible in Santería, in conjunction with the madrina [godmother] or padrino [godfather] for teaching the ways of the Òrísá to the
iyawo. *Yorùbá* language is used in religious rituals and in chants to the Òrìṣá in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and their Diasporas.

There are more than twenty Òrìṣá worshiped traditionally in *Yorùbá* land as well as in *Santería* in the Americas, including the following:

- *Abbata* [Àbàtà] who lives in a soup pot with *Inle* the fisherman.

- *Argayú* [Ǫrányà] who is the father of Ṣàngó in *Santería*.

- *Ainá* [Àìná] who is the Òrìṣá of fire, lava. In Fama (2006) this name is mentioned as the one used in *Yorùbá* land for a girl, “*que nace lastimada alrededor de su cuello por el cordón umbilical*” (p. 256). [whose neck was hurt during birth by the umbilical cord that was wrapped around her neck].

- *Babalú Ayé* [Ọbalúwayé also Ṣọpọna] who is “*la divinidad de epidemias, de la viruela y de las enfermedades contagiosas*” (De Souza Hernández, 1999, p. 256) [the deity of epidemics, small pox, and contagious diseases].

- *Changó* [Ṣàngó]: who is the Òrìṣá of lightning, he is also a warrior. Kuyebi (2015) writes, “One myth indicates that Sango’s mother came from Nupe and conquered the Oyo Empire where he possibly met Osun” (p. 26). This could signify that *Changó* was not an Òrìṣá originally from Oyo.

- *Dadá* [Dàda] who is said by some in Cuba to be Ṣàngó’s older brother, and by others to be Ṣàngó’s crown. Oba Ecun (1990) refers to *Dadá* using female grammatical gender: “… poco conocida en Cuba, pero si muy conocida en *Yorubá* … se le atribuye ser la controladora de cuanto músculo y visera hay en el cuerpo humano … por ser ella el cerebro que guía al cuerpo …” (p.29) […] less known in Cuba, but she is widely known in *Yorùbá* land … One of her attributes
is the control of all human entrails and muscles … because she is the brain that guides the human body].

- **Eleguá [Elegbara or Esu]** who protects the household and, along with Ògún and Òṣọsi, is a member of a group of Òrìṣá called the Warriors.

- **Ibeji [Ibeji]** who, according to Cuban tradition, are twins that defeat negative energies and attract good fortune. In Barnet (1995, 2001) they are referred to as “they patrons of children and are themselves children” (p. 65).

- **Inle [Erinle - Eilẹ]** who is “the land itself; a bush doctor and expert healer. He can be a peasant or a fisherman” (Barnet, 2001, p. 65).

- **Naná Burukú** who is the Òrìṣá associated with the moon. “… se le conoce en Dahomey, donde tiene el mismo título que Yembó en Yorubá que es el de ser la creadora de la raza humana” (Oba Ecun, 1990, p. 21). (She is known in Dahomey [Republic of Benin] with the same title as Yembó [Yemoọ] in Yorùbá land: the creator of the human race”).

- **Obá [Oba]** who is the wife of Šàngó. For some, who have adopted the Judeo-Christian worldview, she faithfully and patiently waits for Changó to be with her (Barnet, 2001). She is also described as “el espíritu de la enseñanza … es guerrera como Oyá, … no temiéndole a nada ni a nadie …” (Oba Ecun, 1990, p. 31) [the spirit of the art of teaching … a warrior as Oyá [Ọya] is, … she is afraid of nothing and of no one …] Oba Ecun asserts that Oba’s attributes are “maestra de la guerra, la cultura, navegante, escritora, cazadora, jueza y el amor” (p. 49) [mistress of war, culture, sailors, writers, hunters, judges, and love].
• Obatalá [Obàtàlà] who is the Òrìṣá of justice, patience, and creation. In Oduyòye (1972) he is also known as Òrìṣá nlá (p. 29).

• Ochosi [Ọṣòṣì] who is a hunter and the epitome of justice.

• Ochún [Ọṣùn] who is the Òrìṣá of the river and also has a path as a warrior. According to Kuyebi (2015), Ọṣùn “cure[s] infertility in men and women” (p. 114); “Osun … rules and protects the people from danger and war” (p. 21).

• Odudúa [Oddúwà] who is “el señor que vive en el castillo .. el primer rey … y la divinidad hembra jefa … [the lord that lives in a castle … the first king … and the chief female divinity]” (Souza Hernández, 1999, p. 293, 294).

• Ogún [Ọgún] who is a warrior and blacksmith.

• Oke [Ọkè] who is the Òrìṣá who lives in all mountains (Souza Hernández, 1999, p. 350).


• Olofin [Ọlofin]who is, according to González-Wippler (2002), the “dios personal de la humanidad; un aspecto de Olodumare” (p. xxvi) [personal divinity for humanity; an aspect of Olodumare (Olódùmarè)]. According to Kuyebi (2015), Olófin is “another African goddess” (p. 120).

• Olorun [Ọlọrun] who is, according to Oba Ecun (1990), the sun; in Oduyòye (1972), Olórun is “the owner of heaven” (p. 32).
• **Onilé [Onile]** who is, according to Fatunmbi (1992), “[i]n some regions of Africa … the Owner of the Earth, [and] is considered the female aspect of Ògún” (p.17).

• **Orí [Orí]** who is the head; and in Feraudy Espino (1994), “el dios personal del individuo” (p. 205); [personal deity of an individual], while in Oduyóye (1972) Orí “is the essence of being”, (p. 13).

• **Oricha Oko [Orisha Oko]** who is the Òrìṣá in charge of agriculture. This Òrìṣá is male gendered in Cuban tradition, but elsewhere, such as in Warner-Lewis (2015), “Orisha Oko, [is the] goddess of agriculture” (p. 182).

• **Orúmílà or Orula [Òrùmílà]** who is the Òrìṣá of the Ìfá system of divination. Ìyánífá and Babálawo are Òrùmílà’s priestesses and priests. Òrùmílà is also known as Ìfá.

• **Osaín [Osanyin]** who is the Òrìṣá in charge of ceremonial and healing plants. In Warner-Lewis (2015), one of Osanyin attributes is “abédò kíni- kíni ‘one whose mind is free of rancor’ (p.131).

• **Oyá [Qya]** who is the Òrìṣá of strong winds. In Barnet (2001), “Oyá is the rainbow and is represented by its even colors … [and] arrives [to drumming] with forceful, haughty, and violent gestures … when she gets angry she also breathes flames from her mouth” (p. 55).

• **Yeguá [spelled Jeggua in Oba Ecun (1990)],** who is “… la muerte en persona … a ella no le gusta el olor del hombre …” (Oba Ecun, 1990, p. 30), [“…the embodiment of death … she dislikes the smell of men …”].

1.3.4 The Òrìṣá in Santería

Although they have already been mentioned above, below we discuss in more detail ten of the most commonly worshiped Òrìṣá in Santería, as it is practiced in Cuba and the rest of the Caribbean.

• Argayú [Ǫrányàn] represents, according to Barnet (2001), “the desert or firmament” (p.48) and “He represents the globe … He has the gift of strength, which is why he is the patron of dock workers” (pp. 65, 66). This Òrìṣá lives by the river to calm its flaming nature since Argayú is also said to be the volcano. In Warner-Lewis (2015), “Ǫrányàn [Argayú] the son of Oduduwa, founder of the Yoruba people …. was once ruler of Ife and is reputed to have been Shango’s father …” (p. 182).

• Changó [Ṣàngó] is according to Tishken, Fáṣọlá, and Ákinyemí (2009) a warrior Òrìṣá whose weapons are stones. Lightning and thunder are also its weapons. Fire comes out of the mouth of this fearless warrior. This Òrìṣá enjoys music, parties, and all the pleasures of life. Warner-Lewis (2015) lists the following attributes of Ṣàngó: “Ọbakòso ‘King of Koso’ and Ọbalúfè ‘King of Ife’” (p. 130).

• Eleguá [Ẹlegbara] is a trickster and the Òrìṣá of commerce, communication, and cross roads. It is through Eleguá that cowry divination, one of the processes of divination in Yorùbá religion and Santería, occurs. Eleguá facilitates the

- Obatalá [Ọbàtálá], who has eight male and eight female ways or paths, was appointed by Olódùmarè to create everything on Earth. Ọbàtálá represents purity, wisdom, reasoning, justice, and patience. Warner-Lewis (2015) mentions the following attributes in relation to Obatalá [Ọbàtálá]: “ònífìn ‘carver’ … agúnlóyín ‘moulder [of the child] in the womb’ …[and] òmọnífín ‘creator of albinos’” (p. 133).

- Ochosi [Ọṣọ] is a male gendered hunter in Santería Ochosi, even though Warner-Lewis (1996) asserts that in Yorùbá land Ọṣọ is “a hunter deity; as huntress deity, Ogun’s wife” (p. 89).

- Ochún [Ọṣun] is the Òrìṣá of fresh waters. This shrewd, hardworking, sensuous, sweet Òrìṣá loves music, dancing, and all the pleasures life has to offer. Neimark (2012) explains how the concept of sensuality in Yorùbá culture is personified in Ọṣun: “Osun is generally conceded to be the essence of sensuality. Do not confuse this with sexuality. Sexuality is a Western “ideal” for women, and implies an expertise and unfettered willingness to participate in sexual activities. In the Yoruba concept, sensuality is a deep understanding and relationship with all things that provide pleasure or joy” (p.14). Therefore, “In every respect, this creation of Olodumare allows us to access the joy of life” (p. 16). As Ibú Colé she is a strong warrior figure. Other remarks made about of Ọṣun include the following: “without her ase (power of life force), their [other male Òrìṣá] mission
could not succeed…” (Abiodun, 2001); and “Osun is subservient to no male authority” (Deidre, 1995).

- **Ogún [Ògún]** is the owner of iron and a member of a group of Òrìṣà called the Warriors, which includes Elegúá and Ochosi [Ọṣosí]. Warner-Lewis (2015) mentions the following as attributes of Ogun [Ògún]: “Ǫmòríró Expert in the art of smithing; Ògún fayà tímúná Ogun faces the tongs of the forge” (p. 129).

- **Orúmila or Orula [Òrùmílà]** is the Òrìṣà in charge of the divine oracle of Ifá. In the Americas, it is the Babaláwo, priests of Orúmila, who are allowed to communicate the advice of Orúmílà. According to Professor Oyeronke Olademo (2009), the Iyanífà, priestess of Orúmílà, is the counterpart of the Babaláwo in traditional Yorùbá religion. Warner-Lewis (2015) mentions “ikọ kà ‘the originator of reading’” as an attribute of Orúmílà (p. 133).

- **Oyá or Yansa [Ọyá]** is a warrior Òrìṣà who fights side by side with Šàngó. Oyá commands strong winds and thunder without neglecting trading in the market place. The market place has been traditionally the stronghold of women and their business activities. In Warner-Lewis (2015), Oyá is called “olina ‘possessor of fire/speed’ … abuké ‘the humped buffalo’ epitomizes her ferocity” (pp. 130, 131).

- **Yemayá [Yemọnja]**, who is the Òrìṣà of salt waters, is a hard worker in the fields or at a partner’s place of work. She is wise, astute, and the epitome of motherhood. As Yemayá Ocutí she is also a strong warrior figure. The town of Abeokuta won its fair amount of battles in the Yoruba wars with the help of Yemọnja their patron Òrìṣà (Kuyebi, 2015).
1.4 Rituals in Yorùbá Traditional Religion and Santería

Religion and culture are entwined with language in Yorùbá society as well as in Santería. Language is a way of transmitting the moral values of a society as well as its philosophical view of life. This transmission of values includes gendering. When Yorùbá people were captured and forced into slavery, they brought with them the worship of the Òrìṣá by means of their oral tradition. This oral tradition reflected their cultural values, religious beliefs, and language structure. The task of recreating their cultural practices in the Americas was not an easy one. Both the brutal system of chattel slavery and the Judeo-Christian religion required the complete suppression of African culture in order to subjugate the enslaved and prevent rebellion. Against these odds, the Yorùbá slaves, the enslaved from other parts of West Africa and beyond, and their descendants found resourceful and creative ways to preserve many of the principles related to their traditional religion.

The ceremony which initiates a devotee into the priesthood of an Òrìṣá in Santería and in traditional Yorùbá religion has remained basically the same, but the time designated for the performance of the ceremony varies: in Yorùbá land the ceremony begins at midnight while in Santería the ceremony begins early in the morning. My initiation ceremony as priestess of Argayú followed the traditions of Yorùbá land. Other aspects of the religion also remain the same. Badejo (1995) states that “… spirit possession and consulting divinations are common practices in African religion both in the Old and the New World” (p. 13). Kuyebi (2015) also states the same concerning “African myths [pàtàkì], folktales and proverbs” (p. 120). While in Santería, parents cannot initiate a daughter or son into priesthood, in Yorùbá land parents initiate a
daughter or a son into priesthood if the mother or father is a priestess or priest of the Òrìṣá by whom her or his child is called. In Santería parents cannot be oyubona which is the priestess or priest who is second in charge of an initiate’s religious path.

Many Cuban and Puerto Rican women, those who are still in their countries and those who are part of the Diaspora, are attracted to the practice of Santería. Many become petitioners, and later some will become priestesses. Murphy (1994) analyses this tendency: “Women comprise about 80 percent of the membership [in each unit of worship] … The plurality of women members and initiates may stem from the increased opportunities for leadership which santería offers when it is compared with European-derived Christian institutions” (p. 86). Nonetheless, patriarchy sets a limit as to how far up the hierarchical religious structure a woman can climb. Patriarchy is also vigilant of how prominent women are allowed to become.

Murphy (1994) states how the casas de santo of men seem to become more prestigious than the casas de santo of women. A casa de santo is a ‘house’, the place where an Ìyáloṣa [madrina (godmother)] or Bàbáloṣa [padrino (godfather)] lives and where all their ahijados (godchildren) go to visit them. It is the place where ahijados pay their respects to the Òrìṣá represented in the home of the madrina or padrino. It is also the place/temple where all of them together perform ceremonies and enjoy drumming to thanks the Òrìṣá, or just to ask the Òrìṣá to come and celebrate with them. Murphy gives a possible explanation why, despite the fact that there are a substantial number of women in Santería, they are normally barred from achieving religious prominence: “Yet, despite women’s relatively unrestrictive paths for leadership, the large ilés [casas de santo], and the leaders with the wider repute, seem to be men. Again this may have something to do
with pressures against women rising as the scale and public nature of the ilé grows,” (p. 87). Below, I demonstrate how several key differences between santeras’ [priestesses’] and santeros’ [priests’] access to: 1) the rituals of conveying messages from the Òrìṣá; 2) the ceremony of ‘giving’ the Warriors, and 3) the opportunity to become Oriaté or Babálawo attest to such “pressures against women”.

In traditional Yorùbá religion, both men and women can equally convey the messages of the Òrìṣá (deities) and serve as the Òrìṣá’s voices on Earth either by being diviners or by channeling the Òrìṣá in drumming; and both may also initiate a petitioner into priesthood. However, in Cuba and Puerto Rico, while iyalochas [iyáloṣa] (mother of Òrìṣá or santeras) ask the ancestors for their blessing over upcoming ceremonies or festivities, santeras are not allowed to view or convey the response of the ancestors. This rule appears to be a compromise with gendered Judeo-Christian values. In Yorùbá land iyalochas [iyáloṣa] ask and convey the message, and no one questions its veracity.

In Santería, priestesses can participate and be madrinas [godmothers; iyalocha (iyáloṣa)] in the initiation process of a petitioner who seeks to become a priestess or a priest of Eleguá [Èlegbara], Ogún [Ògún], or Ochosi [Ọṣọsi]. Nonetheless, they are not permitted to perform the ceremony that will give petitioners the blessing of having the Warriors (the collective term for Eleguá [Èlegbara], Ogún [Ògún], and Ochosi [Ọṣọsi] taken together) protect their homes. The reason stated is that the Warriors are “too strong” for a woman to muster. Here we find more compromises with gendered Eurocentric values. Even though the initiation ceremonies for becoming a priestess or a priest of Eleguá [Èlegbara], Ogún [Ògún], or Ochosi [Ọṣọsi] are more extensive and complicated than the ceremony bestowing the Warriors’ protection on a household,
priestesses are permitted to direct the former, but not the latter. Kuyebi (2015) narrates a pàtàkì that tells of a time when male gendered Òrìṣá were losing a war. He explains the reason for the setback was that “… they [male gendered Òrìṣá] did not invite [female gendered] Osun [Ọṣun]. They intentionally violated the principle of equality that Olodumare [Olódùmarè] required of them all” (p. 23).

The Oritaté is the santero [priest] in charge of performing the ceremony of initiation into priesthood. Murphy (1993) explains the meaning and describes the position of the Oritaté:

The oriaté (the head “orí” of everything taking place on the mat, “até”) … [an Oritaté is] also called italero after the Itá divination reading he performs on the third day of initiation … This figure of the Lucumí [Santería] religion developed in Cuba as part of the transformation process that took place at the turn of the twentieth century (p. 60).

The Oritaté is in charge of performing the ceremony every time a santera [priestess] or santero [priest] needs to receive another Òrìṣá into her or his household. He needs to know all the steps and herbs needed for ‘making’ and ‘giving’ each Òrìṣá. “The oriaté officiates in initiations and is the chief authority in the asiento initiation [the ceremony to become a priestess or a priest], with a complete knowledge of procedure, songs, herbs, plants, and divination – the secrets of making all the different orishas” (p. 60). This is a position of prestige that exists in Cuba and Puerto Rico. To my knowledge there are a few, if any, santeras who are Oritaté.
A Babálawo is a priest of Òrùmílà. Òrùmílà is the Òriṣá who heads the Ifá system of divination. In Santería only men are members in the priesthood of Òrùmílà in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and their Diasporas. Many Babálawo from Yorùbá land have come to the Americas reaffirming that only men can be Babálawo. However, the Yorùbá scholar Olademo (2009) asserts that in matters of religion women and men can be at the service of the Ifá system of divination: women are called Ìyánifá and men Babálawo. There is a movement nowadays in Yorùbá land which confirms the assertion made by Olademo: women are being initiated as Babálawo [Ìyánifá] (Clark, 2005).

This development does not sit well with Babálawo in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and their Diasporas. Fernández Olmos & Paravisini-Gebert (2011) comment on who has access to the position of Babálawo in Cuba, “While many women hold important positions as priests in Regla de Ocha with their own house-temples [casa de santo], the babalao [Babálawo] priesthood is only open to men, “sons of Orula” (p. 61). Murphy (1994) recognizes that the initiation of women as priestesses of Òrùmílà have taken place in Nigeria: “although there seem to be instances of women babalawos in Nigeria, in the New World the office is to be held solely by men” (p. 89). Chief/Sra. Fama Àainá Adéwálé –Somadhi is one of those women. Her initiation as a priestess of Òrùmílà is an example of such initiations taking place in Yorùbá land.

Chief/Sra. Fama Àainá Adéwálé –Somadhi (2006) is a petitioner born in 1953 (p. ii) who was initiated, “… in November 1988 by Chief Òjó Àlàbí, the Araba, Ègbádò and the Olúwo (high priest) of the town of Ayétòrò in the state of Ôgùn, Nigeria [my translation]” (p. ii) as a priestess to Òrùmílà by the time that she was approximately 35 years old; “… five of her children which include a daughter have also been initiated into
the priesthood of Òrùmílà [my translation]” (p. ii). Her words quoted below express her surprise at being designated ‘chief’. Her words are also a testimony of the respect and devotion of the Babálawo who conveyed the advice of Òrùmílà. He showed compliance to the message of the Òrìṣá without trying to impose any gender biases that he might have had.

[The first time someone told me that I should have my own Ifá [physical representation of the Òrìṣá Òrùmílà which would make her a priestess of Òrùmílà] was in 1985, when I went to see a highly respected Babaláwo, Chief Òkémúyìíwá Akínyòmilò, for my routine Ifá consultation (reading). During the reading Bàbá Òkémúyìíwá told me that Òrùmílà wanted me to become a priestess of Ifá. This advice from Ifá did not sound reasonable because before I was told this message, my religious beliefs had taught me that a woman was not allowed to have Ifá or to become a priestess of Òrùmílà. I realized that I needed to analyze this message deeply to find out what it really meant … [Later] I thought that since
Bàbá [the Babaláwo] was a wiseman he would know better, and if a woman could not be initiated as a priestess of Ifá he would not have told me in the first place to become a priestess” (p. 21).

She includes the word Ìyánífá as part of her title as a priestess of Ifá.

In Yorùbá land, both priests and priestesses of Šàngó or Argayú [Ǫrányàn] can be called Ilari Oba [Ìlari Ọba] which the Dictionary of the Yoruba Language (1913) defines as “king’s messenger; herald” (p. 133). Some other examples of other non-gendered names in Yorùbá traditional religion are the following, that Fama (2006) lists as both male and female:

- Related to Ifá (divination system): Awódélé, Ariwoólá, Awóyêmí, among 17 names
- Related to Òbàtálá: Efúyalé, Efúnyêmí, Òríṣá-là’ṣe
- Related to Ògún: Ògúnódádégbé
- Related to Òyá: Òyágbêmí
- Related to Šàngó: Šàngóbùnmí, Šàngódèyí,
- Other names not related directly to Òrìṣá: Àlábá, Ìdòwú, Ìgè or Àdùbí, among 13 names. (pp. 243 to 257)

On both sides of the Atlantic, however, some non-gendered traditions persist. In Yorùbá land and the Caribbean, a man can channel a female gendered Òrìṣá and a woman can channel a male gendered Òrìṣá.
1.5 Òrìṣá Religion in Trinidad

The phenomenon of gendering in African-descended religions in their movement from West Africa to the Americas is found not only in Santería in the Hispanophone Caribbean, but also in the Òrìṣà Religion in the Anglophone Caribbean. To demonstrate this, the case of Trinidad is considered in this section, where I discuss the results of the fieldwork that I did on that island in from May to June of 2016. In this part of my research, I have focused on the Òrìṣà religious practices found on the island of Trinidad, rather than on those found in Trinidad and Tobago as a country. I would like to express once more my gratitude to the friendly, caring, and hardworking Òrìṣà worshipers of Trinidad who did not hesitate in taking time from their busy schedules to help me with my research.

1.5.1 Brief History of the Island of Trinidad

My main source of historical data in my research on Trinidad is the History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago by Dr. Eric Williams., one of the architects of the independence of Trinidad and Tobago. Other sources that I used include commonwealth.org and localhistories.org/trinidad.

Christopher Columbus arrived on the island “named Iere (probably meaning ‘humming bird’) by the Arawak inhabitants”, now the island of Trinidad, on July 31, 1498 (Trinidad and Tobago: History, 2015). As with other islands of the Caribbean, Columbus claimed Iere for the Spanish crown; Trinidad remained under the Spanish crown until 1797 when it officially became part of the British empire (Williams, 1964). The Arawakan speaking Amerindians living in Trinidad at the time, were mostly
agricultural people. They fished and planted common crops of the Caribbean such as cassava, guava, chili pepper, mamey, and star apple. As in many other indigenous cultures of the Americas, they wore ornaments and made pottery (Williams, 1964).

Regarding gendering, “…there appeared to be some sexual differentiation of labour. Possibly for religious motives, Arawak men alone could collect gold. The women prepared the cassava, cared for the poultry, brought water from the river, wove cloth and mats, and shared in the agricultural work … [using] the digging stick” (Williams, 1964, pp. 2,3).

Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to corroborate if this division of labor by sex meant that men’s labor was more prestigious than women’s labor. However, the fact that women had more chores than men is consistent with the division of labor of Indigenous cultures of the Pacific and West Africa. Reed (2014) asserts,

> It is commonly believed that because men are the principal producers in modern societies this has always been the case. In fact, the opposite was true in the earlier and longer epoch before civilization [sic]; the larger share of work devolved upon women … a Kurnai aborigine in Australia, … said that man’s work was to hunt, spear fish, fight, and then “sit down.” Woman’s work was to “do all else.” (p. 152)

Reed explains what is implied by “do all else”

> From the beginning there is a continuous record of the work of women in procuring and developing the food supply, discovering new sources and kinds of foods, and gaining knowledge about its preservation. The prime tool in this work
was the digging stick, a long stick with a pointed end used by the women to dig up roots and vegetables from the ground. (p. 153)

Meeting the same fate as the rest of the Amerindians in the Americas, the Arawaks experienced a demographic collapse due to the inhuman labor conditions imposed by the Spanish conquerors and due to European illnesses such as smallpox (Williams, 1964). Enslaved people, mainly from West and Central Africa, were brought to Trinidad to work on plantations, and in 1797 the British transformed the sugar plantation system on the island into a full capitalist agro-industrial enterprise (Williams, 1964).

By that time, however, emancipation was looming on the horizon, inducing plantation owners to abuse and exploit their slaves to maximize profits before chattel slavery was finally abolished in August of 1834. Under the pretense of ‘teaching’ former slaves a new ‘trade’, the infamous system of ‘apprenticeship’ was put into effect, whereby emancipated slaves were to remain eight extra years with their former masters (Williams, 1964). Emancipated slaves protested continuously, and after four years of unrelenting protest, apprenticeship was repealed (Williams, 1964). After the failure of apprenticeship, indentured workers from India were brought to toil on the sugar plantations (Williams, 1964). These workers had to work for a term of seven years under unsanitary and unsafe conditions (Williams, 1964). Indian workers were pitted against African descended workers in accordance with the imperialist policy of divide and conquer (Williams, 1964).

By the beginning of the 20th Century the cane industry in Cuba and the beet industry in Germany had taken first place worldwide in the production of sugar
Sugar production in Trinidad declined because it could not compete with the modern systems of production and processing used in Cuba and Germany (Williams, 1964). Cuba had modern machinery and Germany was extracting sugar from beets, which reduced costs (Williams, 1964). Other cash crops were introduced in Trinidad at this time in an effort to save agricultural commerce (Williams, 1964).

The new century also witnessed protests against unfair taxes, “The government's attempts to impose new taxes on water caused the Water Riots of 1903” (History of Trinidad, 2015). The discovery of oil in 1910 gave rise to a petroleum industry in Trinidad, and a new form of factory worker emerged on the island, whose militancy spawned movements for independence (Williams, 1964).

The drive to independence was led by politicians and leaders such as Arthur Cipriani, Uriah Butler and Dr. Patrick Solomon (Williams, 1964). Cipriani and Butler gave voice to the urban and oilfield workers (Williams, 1964). By the 1930s workers had already begun to form unions to demand better working conditions and better pay (Williams, 1964). In an effort to stop the organization of workers, the police provoked people attending a peaceful meeting in which Uriah Butler was the speaker (Williams, 1964). The police wanted to arrest Butler, but the crowd refused, leading to the Revolt of 1937; he was never arrested even though a $500 reward was offered to anyone who would provide information leading to his capture (Williams, 1964). Dr. Patrick Solomon, a physician and former member of Cipriani’s Socialist Party, wrote a document expressing the importance of the establishment of harmonious relations among the races in Trinidad (Williams, 1964).
In January 1956, the People’s National Movement (PNM) was formed, led by Dr. Eric Williams who ultimately guided Trinidad and Tobago to independence (Williams, 1964). The two islands became an independent country on August 31, 1962. Improvements in the political and legal position of women were included in the constitution drawn up by the PNM: “One of the outstanding achievements of the People’s National Movement was the emancipation of the women of the country and their incorporation with equal rights on an equal footing with men in the political life of the country” (Williams, 1964, p. 243).

1.5.2 Brief History of African-descended Religions in Trinidad.

As in the rest of the Americas, slaves in Trinidad had to practice the religion of their ancestors clandestinely. Torture and death were inflicted upon them if they were caught practicing their traditional religious beliefs. In order to practice their religions while minimizing the chances of punishment for doing so, the enslaved in Trinidad and elsewhere opted for syncretizing traditional worship of the Òrìṣá with Christian forms of worship. Despite their efforts to make their religious practices more palatable to the colonial authorities, peoples of African descent continued to be persecuted for practicing aspects of their ancestral religions until very recently in Trinidad. As Frances Henry (2003) states,

…an … ordinance in 1869 cited any “African” form of religion as obeah or black magic, and practitioners were subject to imprisonment and flogging. Playing drums or any musical instruments between 10:00 pm and 6:00 am was made illegal, and even bongo and drum dances could not be held without official
permission. Although this ordinance was withdrawn, the “music bill” of 1883 prohibited drum playing of any kind. (p. 34).

Henry adds that the Summary Offences Act, “Dating from 1921, … prevents the use of drums at night, faith, and spiritual healing, and the practice of obeah…” (2003, p. 75).

After Trinidad achieved independence in 1962, the government of the new republic sought the public acknowledgement of African-descended religions. However, by 2003 the Summary Offences Act had not been repealed, and Parliament was still deliberating its nullification (2003, p.76). While the nullification of the Summary Offences Act was in slow motion at Parliament, the Orisha Marriage Act of 1999 (2003, p.50) went into effect on March 2001. The revised act allowed Òrìṣá priestesses and priests, “… to perform rites of marriage, death and any other rituals requiring the services of a legitimized priest” (2003, p.74).

At this time, the Òrìṣá religion was also undergoing internal restructuring. After formal meetings, the Council of Elders was established in 1998 to succeed the previous Orisha Council of August 6, 1988 (2003, p.84). This Council of Elders, “held an annual convention that included an overview of the year’s events and a discussion of new ideas and plans. Decisions affecting the religion as a whole were made by the council” (2003, p.84). The council pressed the government, “to remove sections 17 and 43 of the Summary Complains Act, chapter 21, 1921… One of the most aggravating sections is 59.1 that states,

The Governor may … prohibits during periods specified … or any of the following things in any street, highway of public place: a) the carrying of any lighted torch;
b) the beating of any drum, the blowing of any horn or the use of any other noisy instrument; c) any dance or procession …etc.” (2003, p.85).

There are two main religions derived from the Yorùbá religion in Trinidad: Spiritual Baptist and Òrìṣá Religion. Both religions have elements of Christianity in their practice since it was imperative to give the colonial authorities the impression that the enslaved had renounced their “devilish” rituals to become devout Christians.

1.5.2.1 Spiritual Baptist Religion in Trinidad

During my stay in Trinidad I was able to visit a Spiritual Baptist shrine [place of worship] to observe a ceremony. I visited the shrine of Mother Vera François, a distinguished Spiritual Baptist priestess. At the entrance to the shrine we paid our respects to the Òrìṣá worshiped by her late husband Babalorisha Sam Phillips.

We entered the palais, the area where the ceremonies to honor the Òrìṣá and Christian saints take place. There was a thick brown pole at the center of the palais displaying a series of flags. Each flag had a different color or combination of colors; and represented a different Òrìṣá. Looking toward the back of the palais we could see the Mourning Room. As explained by Sister Agnes, a Spiritual Baptist devotee, the Mourning Room is a room where devotees stay and fast for between 2 to 21 days to receive messages from their spiritual guides and ancestors. Sister Agnes also explained that most of the Spiritual Baptist shrines have a woman as their spiritual leader and there is also a woman as the second person in charge. Sister Agnes introduced me to Sister Tiffany who is Mother Vera’s daughter. She told me that the beige Òrìṣá flag was the symbol for Ata which is Mother Earth.
Sister Mary came to converse with me while both Sister Agnes and Sister Tiffany went to help with last minute details before the beginning of the ceremony. Sister Mary was initiated in New York City as an Iyalorisha [Ìyálórisà] (priestess) of Şàngó. She explained to me that during the process of various readings/consultations in New York City before becoming an Iyalorisha [Ìyálórisà], Òrìṣà told her that she needed to return to Trinidad to get attuned with her ancestors. Sister Mary followed the advice of the Òrìṣà and returned to Trinidad. She underwent the ritual of Mourning six different times for seven days each time. She then returned to New York City to become an Iyalorisha [Ìyálórisà] of Şàngó.

There was a ritual before the main ceremony began around 3:00pm. A brother began to pour a libation of water, olive oil, and Florida Water (a sort of perfume) around the center of the shrine where the thick brown pole stood. The pole’s extended from the ceiling to the floor. Various arrangement of plants and flowers surrounded the pole. Both a brother and a sister rang two big hand bells at different times: first facing the back entrance to the shrine, then facing the Mourning Room, then facing the east and finally facing the west. Most of us were barefooted, including Mother Vera. All women were wearing a skirt and a blouse, or a dress. The colors chosen were navy and royal blue, white, pink, red, brown, dark brown, beige, forest green, and plaid fabrics with red, green, and orange stripes. All of us women wore turbans which did not necessarily match the colors of our outfits. There were 25 people in attendance, and out of those 7 were men and 18 were women. Mother Vera, an older woman, sat in the place of honor. We all proceeded to pay our respects to her before the ceremony began. I had never
observed such a display of respect in any Santeria ceremony or ritual that I had attended in Puerto Rico or in New York City.

A sister rang hand bells to begin the service and continued to ring the bells and make offerings to the Òrìṣá on various occasions. Three brothers played the drums and one brother recited prayers. The congregation began the ceremony by singing hymns to praise Jesus, the saints, and the Òrìṣá while dancing in a circle around the palais to the beat of the drums. The Òrìṣá Ọya, the wind, manifested through a young female devotee. The service ended in a similar way to that in which it had started, by offering prayers to Christ, but this time also by offering prayers to Saint Anthony.

I was able to conclude after both observing this ceremony and hearing the testimony of devotees that women have a prominent place in the Spiritual Baptist religion in Trinidad. The leader of this shrine is the revered elder Mother Vera, and the rituals before beginning the ceremony were performed mostly by a woman. Three sisters were in charged with providing me with any information I could ask for about the ceremony or the shrine. I wasn’t able to have a divinatory reading or consultation to find out if the ritual words used during such readings manifest any patterns of gendering not found in Yorùbá land.

According to Burton Sankeralli, an Òrìṣá religion devotee, Spiritual Baptists should have a female leader and a male leader, or, what can be locally referred to as a Mother and a leader. Nonetheless, I did not see a male leader in the ceremony at Mother Vera’s shrine. Mr. Sankeralli took me to visit Mother Lisa, who is younger than Mother Vera, at her shrine. At Mother Lisa’s shrine, her husband Baba Michael is the leader.
Mother Lisa explained that this shrine was her Ōṣun priestess mother’s shrine. Mother Lisa then proceeded to describe some of the different manifestations of Ōṣun that she had seen when Ōṣun had used her mother’s body as a vehicle for Ōṣun to manifest through during ceremonies. Since Mother Lisa’s mother was ill, she was now taking care of the shrine. Mother Lisa neglected to tell me if there was a male leader when her mother was in charge. After all of us sat down to converse, Mother Lisa showed me the palais area and showed me the chapelle (the room where the receptacles and the paraphernalia of the Òrìṣá are found).

During the conversation, we discussed several passages of the bible and exchanged stories about why Šàngó once wore Oya’s clothes. Baba Michael explained, in a version which is different from the Cuban version, that Oya didn’t want Šàngó to leave her house. Since Šàngó is afraid of spirits, she decided to ask Ikú [death] to stay by the gate. Šàngó wore Oya’s clothes including long braids, and told Ikú [death], “You can leave now”. In that way Šàngó was able to leave without passing by Ikú [death]. The pàtàkì told by Baba Michael is a gendered version of the one told by Cubans because in Baba Michael’s version Oya is forcing Šàngó to stay with her. This is the same attitude displayed by a wife who is forced to stay at home day in and day out. The only work she can do is household work and take care of the children. The patriarchal ideology coerces a wife into being house bound, and refraining from having a job and from using her talents and skills to earn a living. In the Cuban version Šàngó is not ashamed to dress as a woman to escape peril. Both Šàngó and Oya agree on a way to save Šàngó from his enemies that lay siege to Oya’s home. It is not disgraceful for him as a warrior to dress as a woman to avoid being captured or put to death.
One interesting recent development is that since the government eliminated criminal charges against open display and practice of African-descended religions, patriarchal pressure is increasing on the religious structure of the Spiritual Baptists, and women seem to be losing prominence. This is exemplified in the noticeable difference in the level of female leadership displayed in older Mother Vera’s versus younger Mother Lisa’s shrines.

1.5.2.2 Òrìṣá Religion in Trinidad

Òrìṣá Religion is a testimony to the deeply rooted religious convictions of enslaved Africans who managed to keep the principles of the Yorùbá religion alive in Trinidad and the rest of the Americas. According to Henry (2003), “The chief deity is Oludumare [Olórùmarè], the supreme being, who is thought as “everything”, while the rest of the Orisha [Ôrìṣá] are deities who control and protect aspects of the environment and, at the same time, are able to influence the lives of people” (p.7). Òrìṣá, also called ‘powers’, are worshiped in shrines [places of worship] at the house of an Iyalorisha [Ìyálórìṣà] (priestess) or a Babalorisha [Bàbálórìṣà] (priest).

During the time of slavery, worshipers of Òrìṣá Religion in Trinidad, as was the case for worshipers of Santería and other African descended religions in the Americas, used syncretism in order to worship Òrìṣá clandestinely. Up to the present day, Òrìṣá are still worshiped in some shrines in Trinidad through syncretism with Christian saints. Here are some of the Orisha [Ôrìṣá] syncretized with Christian saints, as listed in Henry (2003),
Ogun (Ọgùn) [with] St. Michael … Osain (Osanyìn) [with] St. Francis … Shakpana (Ṣonpònná) [with] St. Jerome … Shango (Ṣàngó) [with] St. John the Baptist … Aba Lofa or Elofa [with] Eternal Father or “God Himself” [whose characteristics are similar to Obatalá (Ọbàtálá) in Santería.] … Omira [with] St. Raphael [whose characteristics are similar to Ochosi (Ọṣọsi) in Santería.] … Ebejee [with] St. Peter [whose characteristics are similar to Inle (Erinlẹ) in Santería.] … Yemaja (Amanja, Manja) (Yemọnja) [with] St. Anne … Oya (Ọya) [with] St. Catherine … Oshun (Ọšun) [with] St. Philomen … (pp. 22-27)

Since the 1980s, there has been a movement advocating the worship Òrìṣà using their African names (Henry, 2003), reflecting a growing desire among African descended people to be proud of and to display elements of their African ancestry. At this time, many worshippers began to spell the religious names given to them at the time of initiation as priestesses or priests in Yorùbá language. As Eintou Pearl Springer, who is a renowned Iyalorisha (Ìyálórìṣà) (priestess) and advocate of women’s rights says, “Slavery is not here.”

My conversations with the following well-known Yorùbá religion priestesses, priests, and petitioners provided me with a deeper understanding of the structure, rituals, and concepts of Yorùbá religion in Trinidad.

Professor Rawle Gibbons, who was initiated as Babálawo in Yorùbá land and who is a retired professor from University of West Indies (UWI), provided me with some unexpected information. He asserted that:
• *Irúnmolè*, as *Ọriṣá* are called in *Yorùbá* land, have no gender, since they are energy.
• Men and women are also energy.
• Essential principles are put in human terms.
• Even when men and women are gendered, they complement each other.
• Sometimes men are described in a negative way; sometimes women are described in a negative way.
• *Odù* are not free of bias.
• Man and wife together do not necessarily mean that men have male energy and that women have female energy. It is the energy that matters.

Professor Gibbons’ assertions open new dimensions of discussion and analysis. As beings who are energy, *Imale* do not have gender; it is illogical to think otherwise. As a way of teaching religious principles, traditional *Yorùbá* religion uses *pataki* [*pàtàkì*], morality tales, the same way that Christianity uses parables to transmit in human terms important religious lessons. In *Yorùbá* land, *pataki* [*pàtàkì*] do not attribute a position of privilege to either gender. *Yorùbá Pataki* [*Pàtàkì*], as recorded in William Bascom’s work, provide the same advice to men and women when they err, and the same blessings: money, children, long life, etc, as blessings. Both women and men are described as having sexual desires and enjoying sexual relations.

Gibbons’ statement that “Man and wife together do not necessarily mean that men have male energy and that females have female energy. It is the energy that matters” means that a man may have, and use when needed, female energy within him, and that a
woman may have, and use when needed, male energy within her. No man is one hundred percent male gendered all the time, and no woman is one hundred percent female gendered all the time. Energy can behave in any way the laws of physic permit. This revolutionary proposition provides another reason why the position of women in historias [pàtákì] had to be undermined when they reached the Americas. Judeo-Christian, patriarchal, classist ideology cannot permit any religious teachings to so profoundly challenge the privileged position of men and the oppression of women in Western society.

**Baba Funso** is a Nigerian-born professor, who is now retired from UWI’s Trinidad and Tobago campus in St. Augustine where he taught literature and creative writing. Baba Funso confirmed to me that in Yorùbá land any message conveyed by women during any ritual or ceremony is not questioned. Women are in charge of conveying the blessing of Egungun [Égún] (the spirit of the ancestors) to begin a festival, ceremony, or ritual. No one doubts a message from Egungun [Égún] conveyed by women.

**Burton Sankeralli** is the editor of *At the Crossroads – African Caribbean Religion & Christianity* (1995). Mr. Sankeralli was initiated into the Òrìṣá religion by Ìyá (mother) Rodney. Ìyá Rodney is a beloved Iyalorisha [Ìyáló́ríṣà] and founding member of the Council of Elders, who is now with Olódùmàrè. Sankeralli is an omo (child; member of a shrine of worship) in the house of a spiritual descendant of Afolabi A. Epega. Afolabi A. Epega is a renowned Babaláwo who descends from an Ijá lineage in Yorùbá land. The Òrìṣá religious principle that appeals most to Sankeralli is the bond this religion has with nature, and its strong connection with the female aspect of life. He
also believes in the balance of the female and male forces or aspects which participants are able to observe in ceremonies or festivities.

According to Burton women are the most prominent Òrîṣá religion leaders in Trinidad. He also affirms that:

- Spiritual work in Trinidad is readily seen as a woman’s work.
- Ìyá Rodney performed her own feasts and ceremonies, but now men are performing them.
- Prominent leaders in some of Ifá shrines are women. In Òrîṣá religion, which is the original form of African descended worship in Trinidad, up to ten years ago the most prominent leaders were women.

As was the case with the Spiritual Baptists, it seems that the more acceptance and contact with main stream society a former peripheral religion has, the more the position of women becomes restrained and subservient to male domination. Patriarchal society needs to keep women subjugated in order to survive.

**Ms. Eintou Pearl Springer** was initiated into Òrîṣá tradition by Ìyá (mother) Rodney. Ms. Pearl Springer’s family has had an Òrîṣá shrine for over 140 years. Ìyá Eintou was the director of the National Library; she is a playwright, and she is a popular speaker on cultural, religious, and women’s issues throughout the English-speaking Caribbean. Ms. Pearl Springer was instrumental in petitioning the government of Trinidad to repeal laws against the free expression of Òrîṣá religion and in strengthening the Council of Elders.
Ìyá Eintou asserted the following about Òrìṣá Religion:

- The principle of complementary balance between women and men as practiced in Yorùbá land is fundamental in Òrìṣá religion, since many powerful women are part of the movement.

- Women can perform the roles as can men in Òrìṣá tradition. Women can do divination, initiate (Crowning), hold ẹbọ (offering/s required to prevent a perilous or unwanted situation), perform healings, get rid of negative energies, and perform marriage ceremonies which are accepted by the government since the laws penalizing the worship of the Òrìṣá were repealed.

- There are no Ìyánifá in Trinidad.

- There are no differences in prestige between the functions performed by men and women.

- “… spirituality helped us survive slavery; it was crucial.”

- She advocates for the elimination of the mask of syncretism from Òrìṣá, “Slavery is not here.”

Ms. Pearl Springer’s statement that “… spirituality helped us survive slavery; it was crucial.” Applies equally to the struggle of slaves for their liberation in Trinidad, Haiti, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. It is unfortunate that in Santería the survival of the religion involved the distortion of the image of women in its historias (pàtàkì). This calculated misrepresentation of women has made many of them submissive.
In a 2015 email correspondence, Ìyá (mother) Eintou explained that *Orisha* religion in Trinidad uses the *Obi Abata* (kola nuts) for divination. The use of kola nuts as a form of divination is implied in some of the *pàtàkì* from *Yorùbá* land analyzed in this dissertation. Ìyá Eintou clarified that *pàtàkì* as such are not part of *Orisha* religion in Trinidad. Furthermore, she commented that some stories (*pàtàkì*) remained in the collective memory of African descended people in Trinidad in the form of sayings and proverbs.

*Throughout this chapter and the rest of this work, whenever possible, I specify both the traditional *Yorùbá* names of Òrìṣá as well as the names given to them in *Santería*. Names spelled in *Yorùbá* language have been taken from the following sources: Bascom (1980), Fama (1994, 2006; 2006), Modupọ Oduyọye (1972), and Warner -Lewis (1996; 1991, 2015).*
Chapter Two

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:

MATRICENTRIC SOCIETIES, PATRIARCHY AND DOMINATION

They were women of strong character and charisma, articulate women who could speak without fear on behalf of those who they represented. (Amadiume, 2015)

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the literature on patriarchy and domination in relation to language, society, history and religion. It also highlights the resistance to patriarchy and domination on the part of African and African descended women in the societies of the Afro-Atlantic, especially in West Africa and the Caribbean.

2.1 Patriarchy, Domination and Language

Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholt-Thomsen, Claudia Von Werlhof in Women the Last Colony (1991) put forward a theory of how women’s work and women’s bodies have been plundered and how women’s agency has been made invisible by the colonizing impetus of patriarchal, ethnocentric and economically exploitative systems of domination. Their “three colonies” framework, which is based on feminist, anti-imperialist and Marxist theory, is a very useful one for understanding and critically analyzing how hierarchical patriarchal relations of power have gradually replaced the egalitarian relations that predominated the in pre-patriarchal, pre-ethnocentric and pre-accumulative societies in which all of humanity lived for all but the past 7,000 years or so of the hundreds of thousands of years that we have inhabited the Earth.
Gimbutas (1991) uses archaeological evidence to demonstrate how the transition from societies of egalitarian subsistence to societies of domination began in the area of the Middle East around 5000 B.C. This transition has been a gradual process, but it is marked by several periods of rapid acceleration, one of which corresponds to the era of European colonization of the Americas, during which thousands of non-patriarchal, non-accumulative indigenous societies were extinguished and their peoples massacred and/or enslaved.

2.1.1 European Standardized Languages: From Coercive Domination to Discursive Domination

Military conquest and other forms of coercive force have been, and still are, used to impose domination, but discursive force, whereby the conquered are convinced to accept domination, has proved to be much more effective in replacing egalitarian relations of power with hierarchical ones. As its name suggests, discursive domination depends on the use of language. Mesthrie (2000, p. 317 in Troike, 2003, p. 254) asserts that, “language creates, sustains, and replicates fundamental inequalities in society.” Fowler (1985, p. 61 in Troike, 2003, p. 254) adds, “[Language is] an instrument for consolidating and manipulating concepts and relationships in the area of power and control.”

Patriarchal domination, for example, depends crucially on language to keep women in a subordinate position in relation to men. The work of Dale Spender (1980, 1985) on the gendered use of nominals in English illustrates how patriarchal domination is imposed by the ways that we use language. By tracking the usage of gendered
pronouns such as “he/she”, and other gendered nominals such as “brother/sister” from the 16th to the 19th centuries in England, she shows how the pre-eminence and scope of male gendered nominals increased over time.

She begins her archaeology of discourse with the writing of Wilson in 1553, who insisted that it was more in accordance with “natural order” to mention male nominals before female ones. She then moves on to the work of grammarian Joshua Poole, who almost a century later in 1646 argued that “… it was not only natural that the male should take ‘pride of place’ it was also proper because, in his line of reasoning, the male gender was the worthier gender” (1980, p. 147). This tendency to prioritize the male over the female in language was further consolidated in 1746 when,

… John Kirkby formulated his ‘Eighty Eight Grammatical Rules’. These rules, the product of Mr. Kirkby’s own imagination, contained one that indicated the esteem in which he held females: Rule Number Twenty One stated that the male gender was more comprehensive than the female.

(1980, p. 148)

By the 1700s, the production of prescriptive grammars had become an important component in the promotion of standardized languages and other modalities for the imposition of discursive domination. The rules formulated in these grammars were set up as artificial norms designed to make the thought and speech of all members of society conform to the ways of thinking and speaking of the ruling classes, so that the images and interests advanced by the dominant classes would become the images and interests unconsciously advanced by all. The patriarchal force behind Wilson and Poole’s
insistence on male gendered nominals taking priority of place over female gendered nominals (“he” before “she”, “brother” before “sister”) was intensified when Kirkby insisted that the male gendered pronouns “he/him/his” can refer to both male and female gendered entities (e.g., “To each his own.”), while their female gendered counterparts “she/her/her” can only refer to entities gendered as female.

Spender points out that, up until the 19th century, these prescriptive patriarchal norms had only a modest effect on the ways in which the average person actually spoke and wrote English. Over the course of the 1800s, however, this would change because of the expansion of universal education, whereby teachers began to enforce these rules in the classroom and because of the elevation of the status of these rules to that of the law of the land. An example provided by Spender of these previously academically imposed rules becoming legally imposed legislation is an 1850 Act of Parliament that gave legal sanction and force to the use of “he” to represent “she” in official documents. In this dissertation, I have made a conscious decision to give increased priority and scope to female gendered nominals, in an effort to begin to correct this biased misogynist abuse of discursive power.

In English, gendering has been largely reduced to the use of suffixes such as -ess to denote feminine gender as is actress, and in third person singular pronouns, such as she, he (subject pronouns), her, him (object pronouns), her, his, hers (possessive pronouns), and herself, himself (reflexive pronouns). In Romance languages such as Spanish, however, grammatical gender, which is not always related to biological sex, plays a major role in every form of discourse, where reference to humans as well as reference to most other entities must be made using either feminine or masculine
grammatical gender. Gender is an obligatory morphological feature in the Spanish language. Although there are a dwindling number of relics of neuter gender inherited from Latin, the overwhelming majority of Spanish nouns, adjectives, and determiners must be assigned either masculine or feminine gender, and show agreement in terms of that gender. In the authoritative Nueva gramática de la lengua española issued by the Real Academia Española (2010) gender is described as “…una propiedad gramatical de los sustantivos y de algunos pronombres que incide en la concordancia con los determinantes, los cuantificadores … y los adjetivos o participios.” (p. 23) […] a grammatical property of nouns and some pronouns that affects the[ir] agreement with determiners, quantifiers … and adjectives or participles.]

As has been demonstrated above for English, the influence of patriarchal ideology over Spanish allows masculine forms to be used in a more inclusive and generic way than their corresponding feminine forms. For example, in the sentence *Los maestros son profesionales mal remunerados* [Teachers are underpaid professionals.] the use of *los maestros* [teachers (masculine gender as generic form)] also includes *las maestras* [female teachers], but not vice versa. Correspondingly in the sentence *El perro es el mejor amigo del hombre, el perro* [male dog (masculine gender as generic form)] also includes *la perra* [female dog] and *el hombre* [man (masculine gender as generic form)] includes *la mujer* [woman]. (Examples from Real Academia Española 2010)

2.1.2 Lack of Gendering in West African Languages

Clark (2005) refers to Oyèrónké Oyewùmí (1997, p.32-33) with regard to nongendered nature of the *Yorùbá* language when she states,
Oyewùmí suggests that the only time the Yoruba distinguish between anatomical males and anatomical females is in respect to reproduction; the terms *okùnrin* and *obìnrin*, which are generally translated “male” and “female” are used only when issues of procreation and intercourse are being discussed and they indicate only those physiological differences, not differences of social prestige (p. 36).

Most West African language have this same grammatical feature (Ifi Amadiume, 1987, 2015) making it difficult to translate some key African concepts into a Western language (p. 2). Oyewùmí (in Clark, 2005) observes that *Yorùbá* language does not have gendering pronouns and also lists seven names that can be used by females or males.

According Chief Isaac O. Delançô (1963), “There is no gender in Yoruba. The pronoun *o* means “he, she, it”, while “him, her, it’ are indicated by repeating after a verb the vowel of the verb, e.g. *o ri i* means “he, she, it saw him, her it”” (p. xiii). Alleyne (2008) elaborates, “… this is not remarkable in human languages. Finnish, Persian, and Yoruba (to name a few) do not mark gender in their pronouns” (p. 142).

Oyewùmí (in Clark, 2005) observes that, “there were no … strictly gendered norms in [traditional *Yorùbá* society …[and that] the concept ‘woman’ as it is used and as it is invoked in the scholarship is derived from western experience” (p.35). She prefers to translate *oko* as insider/owner referring to women or men who are members by birth of the patrilineal household, rather than as ‘husband’ as it is usually translated. She also claims that in *Yorùbá* “anatomical distinctions did not play any part, whether in the world of humans or that of the gods… *Orishas* sometimes being gendered male in one location and female in another” (p. 35).
Names of deities are not gendered in *Yorùbá* language. Crowther (1852) shows how the non-gendered prefix *o-* is combined with “… *lorun*, to have or possess heaven” to form the name *Ọlorun*, “the [nongendered] owner of heaven, …” (p. 8). Michelena and Marrero (2010) translate the name of some *Ọrìṣà* into Spanish, and in the process, end up with a gendered translation, due to Spanish grammatical gender rules. It is notable, however, that these names in most cases do not necessarily reflect biological gender, but instead reflect the grammatical gender assigned to a particular quality or attribute in Spanish:

Argayú: *Vehículo de vencer* [Instrument to overcome obstacles]  
Olokun: *Misericordioso del mar* [Merciful from the sea]  
Eleguà: *Fuerza que siempre llega* [Strength that always reaches you]  
Babalú Ayé: *Padre Santo que toca al mundo* [Holy father who touches the world]  
Oyà: *Verdad profunda* [Deep truth]  
Orishaoko: *Santa inteligencia en los campos* [Holy essence in the fields]  
Shangó: *Furia escondida* [Hidden strength]  
Osain: *Vigilante misterioso* [Mysterious guard]  
Olorun: *Amparo del sol* [The sun’s protection]  
Olofi: *Bendición indispensable* [Indispensable blessing] (pp. 111, 112)
The use of grammatical gender, which is obligatory in some contexts in English and nearly all contexts in Spanish, therefore posed an illogical linguistic challenge to the Yorùbá people who were brought to the Americas in chains. European grammatical gendering features forced the Yorùbá people to divide the world into feminine and masculine almost every time they attempted to speak a European language, especially a Romance language such as Spanish, French or Portuguese. In their attempts to transfer their religious practices from West Africa to the vastly more hostile and patriarchal Americas, the Yorùbá people had to use gendered European languages to recreate their traditional narratives. In this process, they were obliged to conform to new linguistic and social systems that not only insisted on gendering, but also on the subjugation of one gender to another.

2.2 Patriarchy, Domination and Society

2.2.1 Pacific, Distributive Matricentric Societies vs. Warlike, Accumulative Patriarchy

Anthropological field studies over the past few centuries have provided ample evidence that matrifocal systems have been the norm among many indigenous peoples across the globe from North American to Oceania. Even in China, where one of the first transitions to patriarchy occurred, Luca Locatteli (in Shaitly 2010) has documented matrifocal lifeways among the indigenous Mosuo (The Guardian, 2010). All of this suggests that patriarchy is a relatively recent phenomenon, and that for most of human history and in most human cultures, matrifocality has prevailed, and Africa appears to be no exception to this rule.
Gimbutas (1991) shows how matrifocal culture was also the norm in European societies up until as late as 4500 B.C. According to Gimbutas (1991), Old European society included towns and villages of considerable size: “The Late Cucuteni culture, c. 4000-3500 B.C., reached an urban stage with towns of up to 10,000 inhabitants at the center of a district surrounded by medium and smaller size villages…” (p. vii). This was a matrilineal, matrifocal society where the prominence of women did not imply the subjugation of men, the aggression of warfare, or a hierarchically structured society divided into classes:

It is a gross misunderstanding to imagine warfare as endemic to the human condition …this was not the case in the Paleolithic and Neolithic…. From some hundred and fifty paintings that survive at Çatal Hüyük there is not one depicting a scene of conflict or fighting, or of war or torture…. The Old European society lacked the centralized structure of a chiefdom of the Indo-European type…. (p. vii).

Marxist theory sheds light on issues such as class and war-driven accumulation of wealth and capital, when it demonstrates how, through their control of the means of production (machinery, tools, materials needed for production), the propertied classes and the corporations that they own and control have forced workers into accepting a wage that only represents a small fraction of the actual value of their labor. The difference between the true value added by a given worker to a given product and the unfairly low wage paid to that worker for their labor become the profit that corporations and other owners of the means of production accumulate in what Marx calls ‘surplus value’, which
is the basis for the accumulation of wealth or capital in the hands of fewer and fewer owners at the expense of more and more workers in capitalist societies.

This legalized and state sanctioned system of theft from the poor by the rich depends crucially on convincing workers that the interests of the propertied classes coincide with the interests of the workers. This deceptive abuse of language and power is the essence of discursive domination. For example, many members of the working classes have been convinced that the propertied classes are “wealth creators” or “job creators” even though: 1) wealth is only created by the workers themselves; and 2) the low wages paid by the owners to the workers depends on maintaining high levels of unemployment. So, in spite of what the dominant discourses want us to believe, the propertied classes do not create wealth, but instead steal it, and they do not create jobs, but instead make employment as scarce as possible. As asserted by Ifi Amadiume (1997): “Marxist theory presents ideology as a state apparatus or an instrument of the state, the state being synonymous with the ruling classes and its means of accumulation or control of capital. It is through the alienation of the worker that appropriation by capital takes place.” (p.48)

Capitalism and the accumulation of wealth by the few at the expense of the many also crucially depends on other systems of domination and exclusion such as ethnocentrism (racism, anti-immigrant sentiment, etc.) and patriarchy. Throughout history, there has never been an intensification in accumulation of wealth without an intensification in ethnocentrism and patriarchy. It is no accident, for example, that the birth of capitalism (an intensification in the accumulation of wealth) in the 16th and 17th centuries coincided with the establishment of racialized slavery (an intensification of
ethnocentrism) and the burning of millions of women at the stake as ‘witches’ (an intensification of patriarchy).

While they do not negate the ethnocentric aspects of colonialism that are privileged in most traditional anti-imperialistic and anti-colonial discourse, Mies, Bennholt-Thomsen, and Von Werlhof (1991) expand our understanding of ‘colony’ from peoples of non-European descent to include nature and women as well. They do so by demonstrating that the “global capitalist-patriarchal model of accumulation” depends on “sexism and patriarchy … [as] central ideological and institutional props” (pp. 1,2) to achieve its goal of continuous accumulation of wealth. The authors further explain that, for this accumulation to take place, it was [and is] imperative to subdue women and their possible allies in colonized countries in Africa, Asia, [and the Americas]:

Control over women, [religious beliefs], and land [as well as the inhabitants of those lands] is, therefore, the foundation to any system based on exploitation …. [We recognize] that capitalism always has combined process of ‘ongoing primitive accumulation’ based on direct violence, robbery, and overexploitation with its process of so-called ‘capitalist accumulation’, based on its ‘scientific’ exploitation of the wage worker, by ‘economic coercion’. Women, colonies, and nature were [and are] the main targets of this process of ongoing primitive accumulation” (pp. 5-6).

Not all division of labor by sex is sexist. Agricultural and domestic labor, hunting, and the selling of goods in the market place were divided between women and men in traditional Yorùbá society. According to Warner-Lewis (1996),
Male work specialization included weaving, iron work, brass casting, wood and calabash carving, bead and leather working, drum making, drumming, circumcision, divination [Iyanifas are priestess of Òrùmilà, and women also use the cowry system of divination], and practice of herbal medicine. Female specialization included midwifery, weaving of certain cloths, dyeing, pottery, and batik printing. Other female activities included cooking, hair plaiting, folktale narration, specialized areas of song performance and musical accompaniment, the preparation of palm oil [needed in religious rituals and ceremonies] and palm kernels, and soap making (p.19)

Reed (1975) cites Otis Tufton Mason’s (1894) account of women’s chores in African history in this way: “Long before the days of discoveries and explorers …women in…Africa… were farmers and had learned to use the digging stick, the hoe, and a rude plough” (1975, p. 155). The fact that Òrìṣá Oko, the Òrìṣá of agriculture is considered either a female or male Òrìṣá could be attributed at least in part to the shared responsibilities of women and men in traditional farming, as well as to the relative lack of gendering in Yorùbá culture in general.

Though Warner-Lewis (1996) mentions herbal medicine as a male occupation in Yorùbá land, in other parts of Africa, it is considered a female occupation. Briffault (1927) states that

The connection of women with the cultivation of soil …. [is the reason why they] became acquainted with the properties of herbs, and were thus the first doctors …

In the Congo it is noted that woman doctors specialize in the use of drugs and
herbal pharmacy. In Ashanti the medicine women are “generally preferred for medical aid, as they possess a thorough knowledge of barks and herbs” (1927, p. 486).

2.2.2 Matricentric Society vs. ‘Matriarchy’

Cheikh Anta Diop (1989) posits “matriarchy” as the unifying force in all of Africa. He asserts that the incursion of patriarchy on the continent has been a consequence of the gradual invasion of Africa first by Arabs and then by Europeans. Though Diop uses the word “matriarchy” to name the original system in which women have had a prominent and honored place in religion, economy and politics, I follow Gimbutas (1991) in my preference for the words matrifocal and matricentric. For this reason, when I refer to Diop’s ideas about the topic in the present work, I use quotation marks around the term matriarchy.

According to Diop “matriarchy” originated when peoples became sedentary due to the favorable climatic conditions for agriculture on most of the African continent. “… Southern regions of the globe and in particular Africa [are] favourable to agriculture and a sedentary way of life” (p. 21), which, according to him, made Africa the Southern cradle of matriarchy (pp. 22). He further contends that “… humanity has since the beginning been divided into two geographically distinct ‘cradles’ the Southern cradle [that found among sedentary peoples in Africa] was favourable to the flourishing of “matriarchy” and the Northern cradle [that found among nomadic peoples] to that of “patriarchy.” (p. 19)
Diop (1963, 1989) writes about women’s role in the domestication of food crops, cattle, sheep, and pigs during Neolithic times (p. 116). He posits a “matriarchal” organization of society during Neolithic times based on the assumption of a continuation of customs practiced by indigenous societies up to the 1960s (Diop, 1989). The following passage in Diop, was mentioned by Turel, who was quoting the work of Menghin and Kern:

… the predominant role of the woman in the labor of digging was the source of “matriarchy” [my quotation marks] … The woman, possessing the means of cultivation, acquires social predominance. The succession goes from mother to daughter and the mate enters the family of his wife … (p. 116)

It is important to note that Menghin and Kern erroneously equate patriarchy with what they called “matriarchy”. They infer that “possessing the means of cultivation” automatically entails dynamics of domination in prehistoric society, whereby men were subservient to women. Gimbutas’ (1991), however, contests this assumption:

… religion and myth mirror the social structure of Old Europe: prehistoric and historic evidence strongly supports the existence of a matrilineal structure. The image of the Goddess and her council that guided the life of a community reflects the role of an honored elder, the great clan mother, who was assisted by a council of women. Although these sisterhoods or communities of women were endowed with great power, they seem to have functioned as collective entities, not as autocracies…
the brother of the queen (or priestess as representative of the Goddess), rather than her consort, played a major role. In Neolithic times, the queen priestess presided over agriculture and religious life. Her brother may have assumed leadership responsibilities, (but not dominating control) over public works, craft organization and trade. (p. 343)

2.3 Patriarchy, Domination and History

Mies (1991) partially attributes the advent of patriarchy to the development by men of technologies of death over the past 7,000 years, whereby the tools that men formerly used for hunting were transformed into weapons of war and plunder, leading to the gradual overthrow of the peaceful matrifocal societies which had previously been the norm, and the establishment of warlike patriarchal societies in their place. Mies asserts that,

[men’s] relationship to women, to nature and also to their own bodies, [changed] from one of co-operation and reciprocity to a one-sided relationship of exploitation and predation … This predatory mode of appropriation – because it was not a mode of production – proved to be ‘more successful’ than the productive and the cooperative interaction with nature that women had established, in the sense that robbery and warfare became the quickest ways of accumulating wealth and ‘surplus’ without work (1991, p.8)

2.3.1 Matricentric Societies and Prehistory

Based on her archeological research, Gimbutas (1991) demonstrates how these new patriarchal societies based on plunder, exploitation and the accumulation of wealth
replaced more egalitarian matrifocal societies in what she calls ‘Old Europe’ and the ‘Old World’ since about 5,000 B.C. She and other feminists who write about this transition are careful to avoid the term ‘matriarchal’ to refer to the more female oriented societies displaced by patriarchy, because ‘matriarchy’ might give false impression that, just as men dominate in patriarchal societies, the societies that preceded patriarchy were dominated by women. Gimbutas states that: “Indeed, we do not find in Old Europe nor in all of the Old World, a system of autocratic rule by women with an equivalent suppression of men.” (p.324)

According to Gimbutas (1991) the Kurgan warriors, a group of patriarchal Indo-European “seminomadic pastoralists,” domesticated the horse and using the speed and mobility thus acquired, were able to expand vast distances, spreading from [their homeland on] the Dnieper-Volga steppe to the west coast of the Black Sea (p.352). Being a warlike group, they were able to impose their rule on the pre-patriarchal and thus unarmed peoples whom they encountered on the way. In just two millennia from 4500 to 2500 B.C. the Kurgan warriors changed the matrifocal, pacifist, non-sexist society of Old Europe into the warlike, patriarchal, classist society that has predominated in that region ever since. Gimbutas states that: “… evidence … suggests a clash of two ideologies, social structures and economies perpetrated by trauma-inducing institutions” (p. 352) such as the domestication of the horse for the purpose of plunder and conquest. She notes that: “From the middle of the 5th millennium B.C. the swift horse became a carrier of unrest…we see how violence, abetted by the rise of the swift horse, became a dominant aspect of life” (p. 354).
Gimbutas has amassed impressive evidence indicating that the societies that predominated on the Black Sea coast and in the rest of southeastern Europe before Kurgan conquest in 4500 B.C. were matristic and matrilineal (Gimbutas, 1991, p. 338). Her archaeological findings in the region reveal that up until 4500 B.C. women had prominent burials which included jewelry, chisels and other crafting tools. These graves also contained vases full of red ochre which were decorated with symbols of the Goddess as part of a life and death cycle, red being symbolic of blood and femininity (pp. 281, 333-334). This symbolism of red is perhaps similar to that found in Santería where a red dye is used during the ceremony that initiates a priestess or priest into the service of an Òríṣá.

Gimbutas (1991) describes male burials in Old Europe as unelaborated. Men’s graves did not contain vases, but instead contained evidence of their role as hunters, craftsmen, or traders: “… the best handworkers, especially wood craftsmen, and house builders, as well as spondylus traders were honored … flint tools for wood working were found in the graves of older men” (p. 333). This evidence of the absence of patriarchy in Old Europe is paralleled by evidence for the absence of class hierarchies. Gimbutas observes that in Old Europe, “… cemeteries could not be divided into rich or poor grave categories, … since grave goods do not represent the wealth of an individual; they are essentially symbolic, expressing either religious symbols or personal qualities” (p. 336). These “grave goods” were symbols of the deceased’s achievements as members of the community.

Gimbutas (1991) contends that the “absence of weapons of war and hill forts [in Old Europe] over two millennia, from c. 6500-4500 B.C. argues for an absence of
territorial aggression” (p. 331). She also posits that the supreme divinity in Europe’s Upper Paleolithic and Neolithic times was a Goddess, as indicated by the archaeological evidence found in Çatal Hüyük and Hacilar in Turkey, stating that

The earliest civilizations of the world – in China, Tibet, Egypt, the Near East and Europe – were, in all probability “Goddess civilizations” based on the matriclan with collective principles…. There is no evidence in all of Old Europe of a patriarchal chieftainate of the Indo-European type. There are no male royal tombs, and no residences in megarons on hill forts … (p.324)

Anthropologists such as Reed (1975) maintain that “The early investigators of savage [sic] society, to their own surprise, came upon a social structure totally different from ours. … tribal system[s] based on maternal kinship and in which women played a leading role” (p. 12). She asserts that “Different kinds of society produced different kinds of men, and the men of the matriarchy were conditioned by the communal egalitarian society that has been established by the women” (p. 211). Bennet (1993) describes a similar situation in West and Central Africa, when he notes that: “Contemptuous of the concept of private property, West-Africans believed that the land belonged to the community and could not be alienated … The old, the sick, the infirm were cared for. Spinsters were rare; prostitution was unknown. …. Some nations, incidentally, were acquainted with the allegedly modern practice of birth control. Bantu people said that it was not good for a woman to give birth to more than one child in a three-year period.” (p. 23)
Reed (1975) cites Lewis H. Morgan’s study of the Iroquois as an example of how a woman centered vision yields an egalitarian society:

All members of Iroquois gens were personally free, and they were bound to defend each other’s freedom; they were equal in privileges and in personal rights. …chiefs claiming no superiority … Liberty, equality, and fraternity, … were cardinal principles of the gens (1975, p. 211).

She also makes reference to “W. Powell’s report on the Wyandot government …[which] showed that the tribal councils were “composed of one-fifth of men and four-fifths of women” (p.214). Reed rephrases Powell in this way:

The chief was chosen by women councilors who consulted with the other women and the men of the community; he was installed by the women and held accountable to the women for his actions and behavior. These were not small “domestic” chores but important social and political functions that were in the hands of the women. (p. 214)

These findings from other traditional societies support Gimbutas’ (1991) assertion that Old Europe was a matristic society, with:

[Findings from] throughout the Neolithic, Copper Age, and Minoan Bronze Age suggesting the existence of permanent councils of priestesses … [which] implies … the existence of a matrilineal structure … reflect [ed by] the role of an honored elder, the great clan mother, who was assisted by a council of women. (p. 343)
Gimbutas (1991) suggests that in Old Europe, women were high priestesses, priestesses, and heads of governing councils. This matrilineal, matrifocal society was probably responsible for the domestication of livestock and grain and the emergence of life-sustaining technologies, while the emergence of weapons and the domestication of the horse as a delivery system for these and other technologies of death, plunder and conquest were unknown to the Near East and east-central Europe before the end of the 5th millennium B.C. (p. 2).

2.3.2 The Patriarchal Conquest of Matricentric Societies

Gimbutas (1991) explains that their first encounter with the domesticated horse came when the communities of Old Europe were invaded by the pastoralist patriarchal Kurgan warriors around 4500 B.C. Her archeological findings indicate that the matrifocal society of Old Europe did not evolve into patriarchy, but instead that it was brutally suppressed and replaced by the Kurgan invaders. Diop (1989) also rejects the possibility that patriarchal societies such as that of the Kurgans evolved from earlier matricentric societies. Amadiume (1997) states that, “Diop disputed this theory arguing that the Kurgan Indo-European[s] … had been patriarchal right from the beginning, as a result of their specific [nomadic, rather than settled] ecological and material conditions … generating the sort of belief system or moral philosophy that would justify their consequent violent sociocultural formation” (p. 55). Amadiume then cites Diop, who says that “it was a patriarchal nomadic group that surprised a sedentary society and introduced patriarchy and all its corollary practices by force … and it is inconceivable to project a matriarchal past onto to the very people who were the vehicles of patriarchy” (p. 55). These scholars thus critically challenge long established theories in anthropology which
assert that more ‘primitive’ matricentric societies eventually ‘evolve’ into more ‘advanced’ patriarchal societies.

After 4500 B.C., Gimbutas (1991) finds evidence in her archeological digs along the Black Sea coast for the gradual rise of patriarchal and class society. Out of 190 graves, five graves of men showed signs of accumulated wealth and weaponry, not found in any graves before this time. For example, in one grave she found “a copper spear, a flint spearhead, a 55 cm flint knife, [and] large copper shaft-hole axes …. [Findings in] three [other] adult male graves [included] copper and gold while female graves had no gold items.” (p. 338) These artefacts suggest a new importance placed on weapons, as well as the existence of hierarchies of wealth and position in which these men had prominence, at the expense of women.

Gimbutas concludes that these findings represent “incipient patriarchal tendencies” (p. 338). She considers the change in male graves to be a consequence of a, “rapidly rising trade …. [between the] inhabitants of the Black Sea coast …[and ] … the Dnieper-Volga steppe population … [and to the fact that the Kurgan] were wedging their way into territories west of the Black Sea” (p.338). Through this trade, the Kurgan became aware of the non-aggressive behavior of the societies in Old Europe, who would become ‘easy pickings’ in their quest for plunder and domination, since, as Gimbutas (1991) establishes, they did not have domesticated horses or weapons to resist and retaliate against Kurgan raids (p. 2). Patriarchy was thus able to spread.

The indigenous peoples of Oceania and the rest of the world live by many of the same principles that Gimbutas describes for Old Europe. According to Margaret Mead
(1935), the Arapesh of Papua New Guinea hunt for others and not for themselves even if it is, “a tiny bird, hardly a mouthful in all” (in Reed, 1975, 2014, p. 280). For the Arapesh a man who does not hunt for others is “The lowest man in the community, the man who is believed to be so far outside the moral pale that there is no use reasoning with him….” (p.280). In this way, the Arapesh prevent the emergence of attitudes among men that might eventually lead to the replacement of egalitarian society by a patriarchal society of accumulation, plunder and conquest via what Mies (1991) characterizes as a “predatory mode of appropriation” (p.8) such as that adopted by the patriarchal Kurgan warriors who destroyed Old European society, as well as that adopted by the ruling classes of Europe and the rest of the non-indigenous world today.

Bennholt-Thomsen (1991) explains the inevitability of the use of violence as a means to establish a sexist division of labor as a strategy for the accumulation of wealth, when she states that: “Capitalist division of labor is in itself sexist… As in slavery or bonded labor its continuity is guaranteed by means of violence. Open and hidden, direct and structural violence has forced women into an oppressed social position” (p. 9). This sexist division extends to positions of religious authority, from which women are systematically excluded, often with brutal force. A paradigmatic example of such violence is the burning of millions of women as witches during the years when capitalism was emerging as an economic system. Social and sometimes physical coercion are used to force women to perform labor essential to the regeneration of the labor force which is unacknowledged and uncompensated because it is seen as part of ‘nature’. Bennholt-Thomsen, Mies and Von Werlhof (1991) remind us, however that this labor “… is work, a social activity, not just nature” (p. 74).
Gimbutas (1991) describes a similar process of violent subjugation carried out by the Kurgan warriors in their conquest of Old Europe, which is attested to by the replacement of burial rites indicating the prominent position of women and honored position of men in society by graves that honor warriors, their weapons and their plundered possessions, such as “… lugged axe[s] … flint points … daggers, stone adzes, … bone harpoon[s] … boar’s tusks, long flint daggers, arrowheads and points” (p. 356). She sees this as evidence of “…a complicated transformative process leading to a drastic cultural change reminiscent of the conquest of the American continent” (p. 352). A similar process is unfolding at present through the invasion of indigenous lands which is being sponsored by such agencies and the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and which has resulted in the deaths of thousands of indigenous people.

2.4 Patriarchy, Domination and Religion

2.4.1 Prehistoric Matricentric Societies and Religion

Religious beliefs reflect how a given society views the creation of nature and humanity and how members of a given community believe they should relate to one another. They describe physical and mystical attributes of main and secondary deities, where these are believed to exist, and determine who in the community should work in the service of those deities. Religious beliefs also determine the types of offerings deities will accept, and which ceremonies should be performed to placate them.

While a single Goddess is identified by Gimbutas (1991) as being worshipped in Paleolithic Old Europe, she identifies three aspects of the religious worship of an all-encompassing Goddess in the Neolithic period: 1) a Generative Goddess; 2) a Goddess of
Death; and 3) a Goddess of Death and Regeneration (p. 223), each of which in practice overlaps somewhat with the others. Though there were male deities, the sculptures found of these male deities, “… make up only three to five percent of the corpus of Neolithic sculpture,” (p. 223). Furthermore, “… there are no images that have been found of a Father God throughout the prehistoric record” (p. vii) … Male deities have not been found inside houses or in temples, perhaps linking them instead “with wild nature and vegetation. …” (pp. 51, 249).

The Paleolithic Goddess symbolizes birth. She is the source of life, and she is also the source of her own life, similar to the Judeo-Christian God, as well as to Olódùmarè, the Supreme Deity in Yorùbá traditional religion. According to Oduyọye (1972) Olódùmarè is “… the one who has the wholeness of splendor” (p. 31). Olódùmarè differs from the Goddess and the Judeo-Christian God because Olódùmarè is not gendered. Gimbutas (1991) enumerates the symbols of the Paleolithic Goddess which are the parts of the female body linked to reproduction, “vulva, pubic triangle, buttocks, and breasts…” (p. 222). In “el Juyo, in northern Spain east of Altamira, a deer was buried fourteen thousand years ago in a hole shaped like an egg [an egg being the Goddess’ symbol of reproduction] covered with red ochre [symbolic of menstrual blood]…” (p. 223).

The Goddess’ symbolic animals are deer, elk, and bear. A possible reason for using the elk and deer heads as symbols for the Goddess is perhaps their resemblance in shape to a uterus (p. 244) “In northern Asia it is believed to this day that the pregnant deer is the birthing Mother Goddess…” (p.225). Gimbutas continues: “The ancient Goddess is also shown among male animals, as in the Çatal Hüyük images of the
Goddess between two leopards” (p.226). There is a similarity in the religious symbolism of the leopard between worship of the Goddess in Old Europe and Santería. During the initiation ceremony to become an Òrìṣá priestess or priest, there is a chant asking the leopard to come and protect the person being initiated.

Gimbutas (1991) explains that the Goddess had been worshiped as bringer of crops since the Paleolithic, “… symbols appear representing the Goddess’s fertility. She is portrayed as a naturalistic nude with hands placed on her enlarged belly…” (p.228). By the beginning of the Neolithic, “… this already ancient deity was transformed into the agricultural goddess” (p.228). Òrìṣá Oko, the non-gendered Òrìṣá of agriculture in Yorùbá traditional religion, is male gendered in Santería. Òrìṣá Oko and other Òrìṣá in Yorùbá land can vary in terms of the gender assigned to them in a particular place or situation.

Wagner (1996) mentions Ṭbàtálá, Olókun, and Ṫọsọsi as examples of Òrìṣá who can be female or male gendered in Yorùbá land (p. 89). Oyewùmí’s (in Castelli, 2001) critique of Ayodele Ogundipe’s work presents Ëlẹgbára as being female gendered in Ibadan and male gendered in Lagos. Curiously, though Şàngó is said to have been the fourth king of Ọjọ́ some in Santería say that he has a female and a male aspect or path (Changó hembra y Changó macho). The only reasonable explanation for the male gendering of Olókun, Ṭọsọsi, Ëlẹgbára, and Òrìṣá Oko in Santería is the influence of patriarchy. Titi, a Trinidadian Iyalosha [Ìyáloṣa] (Warner-Lewis 1991, 2005) describes Òrìṣá Oko as feminine, “Other minor orisha include Orisha Oko, goddess of agriculture,” and for Titi “mistress of the stars,” no doubt because the agricultural cycle is linked with planetary movement…” (p. 182).
when Òrìṣá Oko is given to protect a petitioner, is to place part of Òrìṣá Oko’s paraphernalia on top of the roof throughout the night to receive radiance from the moon and the stars.

The “enlarged belly” of the Goddess in the Paleolithic evolved into the Pregnant Regenerative Goddess of the Neolithic. Gimbutas (1991) continues the references to the Goddess of Agriculture and Regeneration, when she states that the: “Pregnant Goddess was decorated with symbols of vital energy: … snakes, … and four-corner signs. Especially characteristic was the sign of the four corners, which is akin to the custom of sowing grain to the four corners of the earth” (p.228). In Santería, when initiating the process of divination by reading with cowries, water should be sprinkled as libation to the four corners while praying to summon the blessing and acknowledgement of the ancestors and Òrìṣá.

In Gimbutas (1991) the Goddess of Regeneration is represented as a bird having breasts, and the Goddess of Death is also represented as a bird, when she observes that:

The Bird Goddess … [has] … female breasts…, wings or winglike projections, and protruding female buttocks … [and she] sometimes has … a crown …. The Bird Goddess has a dual nature. She was the giver of life, well-being, and nourishment. On the other hand, she appears as Death in the guise of a vulture, owl, or other bird of prey or carrion eater … (the Hacilar vases from central Anatolia are a good example). This motif [breast] also occurs alternately with triangles. … repeated from Portugal to
Romania and Bulgaria to cave drawings and ceramic decorations. …

over no less than twenty thousand years. (p. 230)

In Spain, “… She is at once a bird of prey, a woman, and a bee – a manifestation of death and regeneration.” (pp. 247, 248) The Goddess of Regeneration’s sacred animal was the ram which is also the sacrificial four-legged animal for Şàngó. The Goddess of Regeneration is represented by a bull as well, since the bull’s head resembles a uterus (p. 244).

Although in *Santería Eleguá* [Éshù, Èlegbara] is male gendered, Éshù/Èlegbara is worshiped as a female Òrìṣá in Ibadan, Nigeria. Though Oyewùmí in Castelli (2001) criticizes gender bias by Ayodele Ogundipe in her study of two groups of devotees of Êṣú, male gendered in Lagos and female gendered in Ibadan, still Oyewùmí acknowledges that Ogundipe’s “contribution is to go beyond gender assignation and show that in the indigenous construction of Êṣú, the divinity is as often represented as female as male. She convincingly demolished the idea that Êṣú is a phallic divinity” (p. 86). Oyewùmí quotes Ogundipe describing sculptures of Éshù, “As a male or female sculpture, … as a female, the female breasts are prominent …” (p. 90).

This data highlights once more the hegemonic ideology that forces the female or male gendering of Òrìṣá when they are worshipped in the Caribbean. Enslaved *Yorùbá* people were forced to adhere to this ideology for the survival of *Yorùbá* traditional religion in this new and dangerous setting. The fact that Êṣú is male in Lagos – a westernized metropolis, capital of Nigeria – and female in Ibadan, capital of the state of Qyọ in *Yorùbá* land in southwest Nigeria (Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.) –
shows how the ancestral nongendered culture of the Yorùbá still survives amidst the Western gendered ideology imposed on them since the period of colonization. People worship Òṣù, and her/his gender is irrelevant.

According to Gimbutas (1991), the worship of the snake begins in the Paleolithic:

“shedding of old skin represents a kind of immortality, a continuum of life … in a yogic pose … A snake with horns or a moon crescent appears in Paleolithic cave drawings, and from the Neolithic, snakes with horns or a moon crescent are found represented in relief on vases … In prehistoric times, sculptures of the crowned Snake Goddess are found starting with the 7th and 6th millennia B.C. in Crete, the Aegean area and in the Balkans. On her crown is sometimes found a whole nest of snakes.” (p. 236)

Gimbutas (1991) emphasizes that, “The snake of Old Europe … assures the well-being and continuity of life through intimate identification and harmony with the cycles of nature” (p. 236). This positive image of the snake is opposed to that of Judeo-Cristian mythology which demonizes the snake making it and Eve, and therefore all women, the root of all hardship for humankind. In Judeo-Christian ideology, human suffering is the consequence of the defiance and questioning by women and snakes of the rules set by the male Sky God.

The snake has also been revered by peoples in West-Africa. Jackson (1974) asserts that the official religion of the Ghanaian empire in the eleventh century was, “… the worship of the serpent-spirit Ouagadou-Bida” (p. 206). Amadiume’s (2015)
anthropological study of the people of Nnobi town in the Igbo area of southeast Nigeria (p. 17) describes their worship of the stream goddess Idemili, who is their “… all-powerful goddess” (p. 99). One of the epithets of Idemili is, “…Eze Nwanyi – female king …” (p. 100). Amadiume points out in her study the sacredness of the python as a creature associated with Idemili:

As the stream was considered sacred, all creatures in it were considered sacred and taboo for the community. The python was personally associated with the goddess and was taboo among the communities settled along the holy stream. It was a totemic symbol and was referred to as mother just as the maternal role of the goddess was stressed. (pp. 53.54)

Gimbutas (1991) indicates that the Goddess as a manifestation of death is symbolized by a poisonous snake (p. 236). Different birds of prey – owls, crows, and hawks are also her symbols; white, the color of bones, is the color that represents her (p. 238). There is similar symbolism for death to be found in Santería: one of the meanings of white clothes in Santería is mourning. Because of the imposition of Judeo-Christian ideology on Yorùbá religious practices as they endured the Middle Passage to the Americas, in Santería snakes are a symbol of evil. In Santería, the word ‘snake’ is not even pronounced, and is referred to instead as “veintuna” (twenty-one).

Gimbutas (1991) describes how the Goddess of Death is represented differently in German tales for the season of winter, “She is the ugly Old Hag with a long nose, large teeth, and disheveled hair as Frau Holla … Her strength lingers in her teeth and air, and
she controls the making of snow, the appearance of the sun, and the regeneration of
nature.” (p. 243) This Goddess had a dual function. Even though because of her, life was
harsh and cold during winter, she also, in due time, would restore warmth, the means for
nourishment and would renew life.

After its conquest of the matrifocal system, patriarchy was unable to eradicate
rituals to the Goddess of Death, and instead co-opted them. An example of this can be
found in Cartwright’s (2016) description of the Roman of Saturnalia festival, which later
became Christmas:

The Saturnalia was an enduring Roman festival dedicated to the
agricultural god Saturn which was held between the 17th and 23rd of
December each year during the winter solstice. Originating from archaic
agricultural rituals the Roman festivities came to include a general round
of gift-giving, merrymaking, and role-reversals so that it became one of
the most popular celebrations in the calendar and certainly the jolliest….

(Ancient History Encyclopedia, 2016)

Thus, the divine aspect of the Goddess of Agriculture was usurped by male gendered
Roman god Saturn and the divine aspect of Goddess of Death became the “ugly Old
Hag” a feared witch-like figure.

Gimbutas (1991) found that the civilization of the Goddess built clay models of
temples before building the temples themselves (p. 256). The entrance to clay model
temples have icons portraying different aspects of the Goddess (pp. 258, 260). The actual
temples were up to two-stories high and were not at the center of the towns or villages (p.
The measurements of two temples excavated in Romania were 12.4 by 7m and 11.6 by 6m (p. 262). The temples’ “columns stood spaces out.” (p. 262), and “[a]t the side … a crescent moon was moulded in relief” (p. 262). It seems that columns were not created by patriarchal society in Greece. Another important excavation pertaining to the civilization of the Goddess, conducted by “James Mellaart in 1961-62 and 1965” (p. 7) is that of Çatal Hüyük:

Çatal Hüyük consists of two riverside mounds situated on a dry plateau 1000 meters above the sea level on the Konya plain in south-central Turkey. The larger mound occupies about 32 acres (16 hectares) one acre of which was excavated … [T]hirteen buildings levels [were discovered] with houses, temples, murals, reliefs, sculptures, trade items, and other finds [which are] an eye-opener to the level of Neolithic culture that existed in the 7th millennium B.C…. The town that developed there and continued for more than a thousand years is dated in calibrated chronology to c. 7250-6165 B.C. (p.7). … The rich display of religious symbolism which flowered in central Anatolia and in Old Europe is part of an unbroken continuity from Upper Paleolithic times (p. vii).

The Pre-Pottery Neolithic A level contained a temple model, figurines, loom weights, limestone plaquettes, with a rich decoration, and fragments of polychrome wall painting…. Religious objects, models of temples, and figurines found here continue throughout the whole Neolithic sequence (p.7).
Religious artifacts, paintings, and reliefs found in Çatal Hüyük, “… represent the Goddess in two aspects … Death in the form of vultures and Regeneration in the shape of frogs … with birth-giving posture. … the Goddess rites of regeneration were followed in the temples, indicated by the reliefs and paintings of the Birth-giving Goddess and bull heads …” (p. 255)

Gimbutas (1991) asserts that the use of the symbol of the womb throughout Old Europe for shaping graves is a form of veneration for the Goddess of Regeneration (p. 286). She exhorts scholars to consider the relationship between symbols of the womb and religion, “Those skeptical of ancient “wombs symbolism” are reminded here that Delphi, which is the most famous of the Greek oracle sites, derives its name from the Greek word delphys meaning “womb” (p. 286).

In Old European society, “…social structure and religion were intertwined [as they are in Yorùbá society] and were reflection of each other” (p. vii). For example, temples were not at the center of towns or villages; they were built beside houses,

In the early Neolithic village of Nea Nikomedeia in Macedonia of c. 6300-6100 B.C. a larger temple of about 12 meters wide was found surrounded by six houses about eight meters wide clustered within two to five meters from each other …: there is a significant pattern which repeats throughout the millennia in which there are no acropolises, no heavy fortifications, and no outstanding central buildings. The temples are always integrated with the everyday life…. (p. 326)
Gimbutas (1991) continues: “[In] East-Central Europe, 5500-3500 B.C …. [l]arge houses were not separated from the rest, there was no clear distinction between large and medium size dwellings….’” (p. 326). This and other evidence suggest a relative lack of class hierarchy: “In Trușești, Habașești, and other Classical Cucuteni villages, dwellings that would indicate hierarchical “big man’s” rank cannot be seen” (p. 328). “There is no evidence for chief’s or “big man’s” house … in the entire region of Neolithic Old Europe…. [and] cemetery analysis … speaks for prominent men in crafts and trade, not in chieftainship” (p. 330).

The imposition of patriarchal lifeways that accompanied the Kurgan invasion of Old Europe also occurred in the European invasion of Africa and the Americas. In this process, African religions and African women suffered similar indignities. To make matters worse, a racist dimension was added to this toxic mix. Jackson (1974) cites W. E. B. Dubois’ assertion that,

… The old religion was held up to ridicule, the old culture and ethical standards were degraded or disappeared, and gradually all over Africa spread the inferiority complex, the fear of color, the worship of white skin, the imitation of white ways of doing and thinking, whether good, bad, or indifferent … (p. 315).

2.4.2 West African Religious Traditions vs. a Patriarchal Judeo-Christian Tradition

In the era of plantation slavery in the Americas, the owners of the enslaved appropriated the labor, skills and deep-rooted wisdom of West and Central Africans. This appropriation included their demand for access to traditional Yorùbá cowrie divination to
deal with their emotional and existential problems and to the traditional *Yorùbá* herbal apothecary to deal with their physical problems. Despite their insistence on free access to these and other aspects of *Yorùbá* wisdom and knowledge, the European descended propertied classes also identified traditional African beliefs and religious practices as a threat to their discursive control over society, which depended to a great extent on the absolute adherence of the enslaved and other working classes to the teachings of Christianity, which placed belief in, and obedience to, the “Lord and Master” (names used to refer to both the Judeo-Christian male God and the plantation owner) above all else.

*Yorùbá* religious traditions are radically different from the Judeo-Christian tradition. One of the differences between the two is that *Yorùbá* religious traditions are pluralistic and inclusive, embrace many deities, while the Judeo-Christian tradition insists on the exclusive worship of a single deity. This obsession with one God, one way of worshiping and one dogmatic set of beliefs corresponds with the imposition of one standardized language, one official culture and one national identity that was taking place in Europe during the colonial era. This clash between African heterodoxy and inclusivity on the one hand and European fundamentalist orthodoxy and exclusivity on the other made the eradication of African religions and other African lifeways an urgent necessity in the eyes of the colonial ruling classes.

Another major, but related, difference between *Yorùbá* religious traditions and the Judeo-Christian tradition centers around gender. The one god of the Judeo-Christian tradition is clearly gendered as male and in most Christian denominations male priests and pastors have a complete monopoly over all significant interactions between the one
male god and the believers. In addition to being completely subservient to men in Judeo-Christian teachings, belief and practice, women are also stigmatized as the source of all evil and sin. In Yorùbá religious traditions, however, the pantheon consists of female gendered, male gendered, variably gendered, ambiguously gendered and non-gendered deities. In Yorùbá land, priestesses can perform virtually all of the functions performed by priests and there is no consistent association made between women and evil. This means that Yorùbá religious traditions challenge and unsettle the patriarchal foundations upon which the entire edifice of Judeo-Christian religion has been constructed, making it an even greater threat to colonial society and the rule of the propertied class of plantation owners.

*Olódùmarè*, who is the Supreme Deity in Yorùbá traditional religion, is not gendered. It could be inferred that since female and male beings are the two components of animal and human life on Earth, *Olódùmarè* could not be defined as one or the other. In fact, Kuyebi (2015) asserts that “Olodumare is the father and mother of the divinities” (p. 19). By not gendering *Olódùmarè*, Yorùbá traditional religion does not proclaim the superiority of one gender over the other since both are necessary for procreation. In Fernández Olmos & Paravisini-Gebert (2011) “Chango’s [Ṣàngó] aspects include both male and female …” (p. 45). Ṣàngó is described as a warrior and a king, having Ṣàngó portrayed with a female and male aspect means that women and men have the same possibilities to fulfill duties and responsibilities as warriors or ọba [queen, king] in Yorùbá traditional society.

In the Santería pantheon, there are three female gendered Ṙíṣá who are worshipped the most: Ọṣùn, Ọya, and Yemọ́nja. I argue here that, even though these
*Ọrịşá* were gendered more extremely in the Americas than they originally were in *Yorùbá* land, the independent, strong and powerful female spirituality that is embodied in them is in no small part a retention of the respect for women and goddess-like figures in traditional West African society.

*Ọşun* in *Santería* is the *Ọrịşá* of music, sensuality, and fertility as well as being the provider of economic prosperity. As *Ibú Colé* she is a strong warrior figure. This characteristic of *Ọşun* is confirmed by Kuyebi (2015) when he indicates that “There was a series of wars in 1840. Osun assisted the citizens of Osogbo in winning the wars (p.43). Kuyebi (2015) quotes Deidre (1995) in this way: “Osun is subservient to no male authority” (p. 95). According to Kuyebi “Osun is one of the sources of power for the Yoruba people. They use this power for religious and political gain in the community. Osun has enormous political power to share with her devotees …” (p. 30). As a matricentric *Ọrịşá, Ọşun* does not keep all the power to herself to be seen as superior to all. Kuyebi also asserts that “Osun is one of the early divinities known in Yoruba language (p. 22) … Osun also had more than one husband …” (p. 28). Because she is “one of the early divinities” her attributes and *pàtàkì* (morality tales) where she is a character could be considered to be a source of information about the position of women from the early times of the *Yorùbá* people. Kuyebi defines *Ọşun* as a mother: “Osun is a hard-working mother” (p. 32). He rephrases Bascome’s (1942:41) listing of the attributes of *Ọşun* as an *Ọrịşá* of fertility: “Osun’s invaluable role in the production, reproduction, and protection of children is cherished by the Yoruba …” (p. 32).

These accounts of the attributes and powers of *Ọşun* reflect the position of West-African women since antiquity. In *Yorùbá* land *Ọşun*’s power is sought out by *Yorùbá*
people in general not just in her hometown of Òṣogbo. This means that no one is intimidat
ed by her independence and power. Independence and power are expected from women; traditional Yorùbá people to this day have no intention of curtailing or extinguishing these traits of her character. West-African women are strong women who take care of their children and defend them fiercely. They control the market economy, which makes them economically independent from men. Just like Ṫun, they can be brave warriors when necessary. Kuyebi affirms that, “One myth indicates that Sango’s mother came from Nupe and conquered Oyo Empire …” (p. 26). Cheikh Anta Diop (1989) narrates how during the war against the Yorùbá the king of Dahomey had units of women warriors: “The king of Dahomey, Ghezo (1818-1858) … was forced to create companies of female cavalry, who fought with such energy that modern historians have likened them to the Amazons” (p. 108).

Yemonja is worshiped in the Caribbean mostly as a mother figure whose patience is equivalent to the legendary patience which is a defining characteristic of Ṭbàtálá. In Santería Yemonja Ocuti is the name given to Yemonja in her path as a warrior. Yemonja as the patron Òrìṣà of Abegókúta, helped the people of that city win many wars (Kuyebi 2015). Neimark (2012) emphasizes that: “Yemonja is in charge, and the Santeria/Lukumi view of passivity for this energy is something that must be discarded” (p. 34). Neimark insists that Yemonja is strong and could be as destructive as a hurricane (2012, p. 32). Yemonja as a mother loves her children, but also understands the necessity of discipline, administering: “… stern punishment for moral or physical wrong doing. One cannot properly raise and nurture one’s children without teaching, and insisting on, the moral behavior and respect they must learn” (p. 34).
During the course of my research, I had the opportunity to observe first-hand strong willed and nurturing spiritual leaders in Trinidad. Mother Vera, a spiritual Baptist leader in the town of Sangre Grande, is cherished and honored by her congregation. They respect her position of leadership, and follow her instructions, no questions asked. Ms. Eintou Pearl Springer receives the same loyalty and respect from the followers of Òrìṣá religion. The first time Ms. Eintou helped me in my research was when she asked Avery Ammon, a petitioner in Òrìṣá religion, to take me to see a few Òrìṣá shrines in Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad and Tobago. When we arrived at a shrine, Avery explained why we were there at night, “Ms. Eintou asked me to help her. And whatever she asks, we do.” There was no resentment in his remark; she was happy to do so.

This description of the attributes of Yemonja provides insights into the influence that African women have commanded in their communities since antiquity. Women are strong and determined, and their opinions and instructions are valued and followed. This tradition lives on until today in Trinidad, where priestesses of African descended religions are cherished, honored, and are persons of influence in their religious communities.

Ọya completes the trilogy of most worshipped female gendered Òrìṣá in the Caribbean. She is known in Santería as a warrior who fights side by side with Šàngó. Neimark (2012) refers to Ọya as the Òrìṣá who guides and is responsible for the market place, “… in the literal view, we see the matriarchal figure presiding … over the market place” (p. 50). He denounces the male dominant form of describing Ọya,
... when we describe Oya as a beautiful bearded warrior allowed to fight alongside the male Orisa warriors, we are simply describing the chauvinistic view of too many male Babalawos and Priests that felt that this female energy was so undeniably powerful, it had to be somewhat male!” (p.51).

These descriptions of the characteristics of female gendered Òrìṣá depict them as strong, determined, self-sufficient West-African women.

The Yorùbá are not the only people to have powerful female gendered deities. Some of the religious traditions of the Igbo in southeast Nigeria is centered, up to present times, on female goddesses, such as Idemili. In her anthropological study of Nnobi town in Igbo land, Amadiume (2015) narrates the origin of the worship of Idemili and of the Nnobi people:

[There were three men who were hunters.] The one at Nnobi, known as Aho-bi-na-agu – Aho who lives in the wild (nature) – met a miraculous woman named Idemili (supernatural) near the Oji Iyi stream in Nnobi. They married and had a daughter called Edo. As she was very beautiful and highly industrious (culture), other hunters began to compete to marry her. The influence of Idemili was stronger than that of her husband Aho … When her daughter set off to Nnewi to join her husband … she [Idemili]…gave her ite uba, the pot of prosperity. So when Edo got to Nnewi, her popularity and influence, like her mother rapidly spread. While Idemili established her shrines and influence all over the land of
Idemili, her daughter Edo established hers all over the land of Edo, called Nnewi. (pp. 28,29)

Idemili and her daughter Edo are strong, determined female gendered goddesses. Idemili brings divinity and is the source of water in the dry area of the Nnobi people. Idemili and Edo spread their influence and in doing so, they unify the people into one system of beliefs (Amadiume,p. 29). Amadiume explains the history of the worship of the Goddess Idemili,

“There are … strong indications that Nnobi was an independent ritual centre and the seat of the Idemili religion. This was based on the worship of the goddess Idemili which was superior to the cult of ancestors and common to all the towns along the Idemili River. There is strong evidence, too, that Nnobi was a matriarchal settlement …” (p. 19)

Idemili established the religious principles of peaceful living; hence, bloodshed was not permitted:

…the female gender had the more prominent place in myth and indigenous religious and cultural concepts – the supernatural, a goddess, is female … The result of the mediation of the natural (Aho, the hunter from the wild) and the supernatural (the goddess Idemili from the sacred stream) is a hardworking woman, Edo. Thus, both Nnobi and Nnewi inherit industriousness from females …” (p. 29).
2.4.3 *Santería* and the Gendering of *Yorùbá* religious traditions in the Americas

After their forced transportation to the Americas, the enslaved realized that it was not only their labor and the fruits of their labor that was to be taken away from them, but also their languages, cultures, identities and religions. In the face of this onslaught, they used their agency, creativity and resourcefulness to resist and subvert colonial domination. With respect to African linguistic traditions, the enslaved created creolized languages, through which they were able to perpetuate their African language practices by using words derived from European languages as a veneer to shield their continued use of typically African grammatical features from the gaze of the colonial ruling classes. In the case of African religious traditions, the enslaved created creolized religions, such as *Santería*, through which they were able to perpetuate their African religious practices by using religious forms derived from Christianity once more as a veneer to shield their continued celebration of African spirituality from the gaze of the colonial ruling classes.

The process of religious creolization that resulted in the emergence of *Santería*, however, sometimes came at a high price, which included the exclusive gendering of *Yorùbá* deities, the exclusion of women from religious rites such as the *Ijá* in divination system, and the association of women with evil and sin. Barnet (2001) observes that “Every African myth in circulation in Cuba has been adapted to fit its new environment. Elements necessary for integration into Cuban society and the western world are introduced, and the myths are noticeably influenced by the environment” (p. 7). Once the process of gendering occurs, the door is opened to the process of erasure of all things associated with feminine agency.
Therefore, much of the visibility, positive influence, and in many occasions, protagonist presence of women that is in evidence in the \textit{pàtàkì} in Yorùbá land were either erased from the \textit{pàtàkì} in \textit{Santería}, or were replaced by tales of voiceless and nameless women being raped, battered, or even buried alive. Many of these newly reconfigured \textit{pàtàkì} in \textit{Santería} have been gendered to such a point, that they have lost a significant degree of their resemblance to the corresponding \textit{pàtàkì} in Yorùbá land. The strong patriarchal bias of Judeo-Christian ideology which is largely responsible for the gendering of \textit{pàtàkì} in \textit{Santería} has been responsible, not only for the elimination of the depiction of strong women from official discourse, but also for the physical elimination of strong women from their existence on this planet. Jackson (1974, pp. 297-299), retells the events in the life of Hypatia, a female teacher of philosophy and science in Alexandria during the fifth century A.D., which is emblematic of the fate of women at the hands of Christianity from its inception until today. He cites Draper (1874) when he describes her fate at the hands of the Christians in this way:

Bishop Cyril decided that … [the] knowledge [that Hypatia was sharing] must be suppressed … [and so] she was assaulted by Cyril’s mob – a mob of monks. Stripped naked in the street, she [Hypatia] was dragged into the church, and there killed by the club of Peter the Reader. The corpse was cut to pieces, flesh was scrapped from the bones by shells, and the remnants cast into a fire. For this frightful crime Cyril was never called to account … . (55-56)

African descended and other male \textit{Santeros} have been complacent in the elimination of African descended and other female \textit{Santeras} from roles of leadership and
authority in religious ceremonies, in exchange for the meager advantage that it has given them in terms of power and social status by a Eurocentric system which has relegated them to the lowest ranks. Amadiume (1997) observes that:

It is not that the abused and oppressed do not know right from wrong, but the fact that there is something to be gained at the expense of others. In conditions of oppression everyone is not usually in acquiescence with the oppressive system … [The oppressive system] creates division within the oppressed, as for example, more oppressed and less oppressed, and ambitious aspirants. Class and gender work like that; they can create new categories of collaborators …. (p. 50)

The usurpation of the prominent position of women in what would become Santería began under the patriarchal system of chattel slavery and has continued under the patriarchal system of wage slavery.

As enslaved peoples in the Americas, Yorùbá women and men confronted direct structural violence. For women, this violence came in many forms as Digna Castañeda (2000) says, “… [They] shar[ed] the harsh tasks of the plantation with male partners … they were also the victims of the most cruel and outrageous punishments like lashing, being sent to the stock, [and] being whipped with their faces downward, even during pregnancy” (p.685). Slave owners thought that the rape of slave women was their right, and they did not have a second thought about it. Most of the time the offspring of such encounters were taken away from their mothers, killed before their eyes, or sold into
slavery not to be seen again. According to Beckles (2000) slave women in Barbados were subject to unspeakably cruel punishments,

The commonest form of punishment inflected on field women in Barbados, until the late 1820s, was for drivers to tie their hands to a pole or tree above their heads and flog them upon the back … When, for example, a field woman was accused and convicted for participation in the murder of a white overseer on a St. Phillip cotton plantation, although, according to Dickson, her guilt was not fully proven, she was chained to the gallows in a public place and starved to death; she died within four days. (p. 39)

Adding to the despair of these women was the initial prohibition by the colonial authorities of their worship of the Òrìṣá and the eventual cooptation of African spirituality by colonial ideologies of patriarchy, which in many ways turned worship of the Òrìṣá against them. This cooptation was responsible not only for new prohibitions against African descended women from performing certain ceremonies and rituals, but also for the rewriting of the pàtàkì (moral stories said during religious divination) to accommodate a Judeo-Christian, misogynistic, slave-owner ideology. This ideology has forced African descended women, even after manumission or emancipation, to conform to European norms. As will be amply demonstrated by the data presented later on in this thesis, the Caribbean versions of the pàtàkì (also known as historias in Santería) have undergone a radical transformation from the original Yorùbá texts, where women’s agency is acknowledged and honored, to texts where women are described as nagging, illogical, the cause of distress for men, and/or untrustworthy, where women are
condemned to death for adultery, or where men are mocked for being faithful to their wives.

2.5 Patriarchy, Domination and Africa

Despite the ever increasing encroachment across Africa of patriarchal ideologies emanating from Europe since beginning of the colonization in the 19th and 20th centuries, African women still maintain long traditions of being strong, hardworking, assertive and prominent members of society, as Neimark (2012) affirms:

In Africa, women are accepted as strong, equal partners to men. Women for the most part, ran the store of the marketplace. They ran the household, and the senior wife had total control over what other wives would be allowed into the home. (p. 32)

While anthropologists have demonstrated that matrifocality survives to one extent or another until the present in the thousands of cultures to be found in Africa, the written record shows that even in largely patriarchal societies of domination and conquest, such as Ancient Egypt and Mali, African women had positions of prestige (Bennet, 1993).

2.5.1 Women in African History

Diop (1989) asserts that a matrifocal system has played an important role in African societies since antiquity, observing that: “… it is worthy of note that during the first thousand years before our times, that is to say [sic] at a time situated between the Trojan War and Homer, the Southern lands could still be ruled by women” (p. 48). During the time of Augustus Caesar, Queen Candance of Ethiopia fought and defeated
Roman legions: “This heroic resistance made a great impression in all classic antiquity, not because the Queen was Black, but because she was a woman …” (p. 49). Augustus Caesar accepted the demands made by the Queen after her troops won the battle (Diop, 1989). Her deeds are still remembered by the Sudanese: “… the prestige of Candance was such that all later queens have born the same generic name” (p. 49).

There is more socio-historical data from Egypt than from any other African nation. Besides written history, religious narratives and rituals can help us to understand the nature of ancient and prehistoric societies along the lower Nile. Diop (1989) quotes Frazer (1926) in relation to the ancient Egyptian goddess Isis, who “… according to Frazer, was originally the goddess of fertility … She is the great and bountiful Mother-Goddess whose influence and love ruled everywhere … She is, … the goddess of corn, the cultivation of which she is said to have invented” (p. 51). Diop also explains that “… the historian Manethos, attributes to Isis the discovery of … barley; stalks of this cereal were carried in procession on her feast days to commemorate the gift she gave to mankind” (p. 52). Diop suggests that, “There is here to be found some confirmation, by legend, of the tradition that attributes to women the active role in the discovery of agriculture” (p. 52). Isis is praised as “… the creator of all green things, the Lady of bread, the Lady of beer, the Mistress of abundance, …” (p. 52).

This religious belief that represents Isis as mistress of fertility, loving mother, and provider of crops is consonant with the religion of the Goddess in Old Europe during prehistoric times. The impetus behind the eventual equivalency made in Egypt between the male god Osiris and Isis as sources of fertility and corn suggests the usurpation of the attributes of the Goddess by a patriarchal system, which is also evident in Osiris.
eventually assuming the role previously assigned to Goddesses of Regeneration, when it is said that Osiris, “…[as a personification of corn] dies and returns to life each year” (p. 51).

In Diop’s (1989) understanding of ancient Egyptian society, women enjoy: “…all rights political, and otherwise, [which] are transmitted by her, for she is the stable element … On marriage, the man brought the dowry to the woman” (p. 53). Since women were not the property of men, “No evidence can be found in literature or historical records – Egyptian or otherwise – relating to the ill-treatment of Egyptian women by their men” (p. 54). Diop concludes:

In Africa: including Egypt and Ethiopia, the woman enjoyed a liberty equal to that of a man, had a legal individuality and could occupy any function …. She was already emancipated and no public act was alien to her. (p. 127)

Diop (1989) affirms that, as is the case in many parts of present day Africa, when a man goes to live with the woman he marries in the compound of her family it signifies the presence of what he calls a “matriarchal régime.” This regime could only be achieved in a “sedentary agricultural way of life” (p. 27). He elaborates, “…among sedentary people descent is matrilineal because it is the man who is the stranger, whom the woman can at any moment repudiate if he does not perform all his conjugal duties satisfactorily” (p. 28). Diop explains that in a “matriarchal” system “… All political rights are transmitted by the mother, … The importance of the uncle in the mother’s side lies in the fact that it is he who aids his sister, is her representative everywhere and, if need be, takes
her defense” (p. 29). Diop summarizes the meaning and range of “matriarchy” in this way:

Matriarchy is not an absolute and cynical triumph of woman over man; it is a harmonious dualism, an association accepted by both sexes, the better to build a sedentary society where each and every one could fully develop … A matriarchal régime, far from being imposed on man by circumstances independent of his will is accepted and defended by him.

(p. 108)

Diop (1989) asserts that “Among Southern societies [the matricentric societies of Africa] all that relates to the mother is sacred; her authority is so to speak, unlimited” (p. 30). Women are not the property of their husbands,

In reality, nowhere among the black peoples is the woman considered to belong to the husband’s family; she continues to belong to her own family after marriage, … This is the custom universally acknowledged in Black Africa … There is no purchase of the woman by her husband, … (p. 30)

Over the course of European invasion and eventual colonization of the African continent from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, a confrontation between patriarchal and matricentric society took place, just as had occurred when Kurgan invaders conquered Old Europe. Jackson (1974) suggests that:

The African people were vulnerable to conquest by European invaders on account of a profound difference in cultural outlook. Among Africans, society has a matriarchal [matricentric] basis. The cultivation of peaceful
pursuits is a way of life; egalitarianism between the sexes is practiced; the fundamental approach to life is hedonistic; religious beliefs are idealistic in form; and the concept of sin is conspicuous by its absence.” (pp. 312, 313)

Amadiume (1997) essentially concurs with Diop’s (1989) identification of a matrifocal tradition in Africa when she asserts that

Diop marshalled an array of empresses and queens from as far as the fifteenth century B. C. … He argued that in precolonial Africa there was no transition from matriarchy to patriarchy since the social structure was essentially matriarchal in the sense of female rule, female transmission of property and descent, and man being the mobile element in marriage or sexual union. (pp. 73, 74)

Amadiume (1997) attacks nineteenth century anthropological theory on the basis that “African data were left out” (p. 73), because such data would have upset prevailing notions about the evolution of matriarchal relationships into patriarchal relationships (1997, p. 73). Although government, religion, and economy are centered around women and motherhood among matrifocal peoples, the use of the phrase ‘female rule’ could be misinterpreted as a female authoritarian control based on the suppression of the agency of men, when in fact matrifocal societies are based on egalitarian and pacifist principles.

It is important to pause at this moment to reiterate the conceptualization of women and men in traditional Yorùbá society. Yorùbá language and religious expressions are non-gendered. For example, there are no masculine-feminine distinctions
in pronouns in *Yorùbá* language and other areas of *Yorùbá* grammar. As explained above, Clark (2005) citing Oyewùmí observes that gendering is irrelevant in *Yorùbá* language, society, and religion. Therefore, though labor is divided between women and men in *Yorùbá* land, “[a] sexual division of labor, in itself, does not necessarily imply hierarchy and inequality, rather, these are the product of particular forms of sexual division of labor” (Mies, Bennholdt-Thomsen, & Von Werhoff, 1991, p.120).

Jackson (1974) states that the Empire of Ghana “… had its beginning about the year 300 of the Christian era” (p. 200). He notes that line of succession to the throne was matrilineal, so that:

On the death of the monarch, his successor was not his own son, but the son of his sister …. [L]ike most African peoples, [they] possessed a matriarchal system of social organization, and hence adhered to the matrilineal principle of succession, which even to this day is a prominent feature of West African society.” (p. 201)

Jackson explains that the trade of salt and gold were the source of wealth and prosperity for the Empire of Ghana (p. 202) and that everyone had access to wealth through the trade in gold. This policy of having equal access to wealth is a characteristic of matricentric systems in which the priority of the community is the well-being of its members.

The sacred *Yorùbá* city of *Ilé Ifé* is said to have been founded between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries CE, but Oliver and Atmore (2001) contest this notion, stating that: “… the trend of recent archeological research has been to show that the
origins of town building at both Ife and Benin are older by several centuries …” (p. 88). Based on the political and social structure of independent towns in modern times Nigeria, Jackson asserts that in the Ilé Ifè of around 800 CE, “… primacy [was on] … wealth and culture rather than dominion” (p. 89). By the thirteenth century skilled metal workers were to be found in Yorùbá cities (Oliver and Atmore, 2001). Archeological findings show that a similar process took place in Benin: “… the main city walls are but the nucleus of a vast system of defensive walling … encompassing a number of small, closely neighbouring towns, reflecting growth of population around a successful industrial center, rather than an expansion by military conquest” (p. 89), perhaps reflecting an ideology that was more matricentric than patriarchal.

Jackson’s (1974) findings regarding the society of the Empire of Mali in the fourteenth century CE also suggests strong matricentric characteristics and distribution, rather than accumulation of wealth: “Everything in Mali seemed to be abundant. The food supply existed in plentitude, and was of such a variety as to assure a balanced diet to all” (p. 211). Bennett (1993) relates Ibn-Batuta’s observations about women’s behavior and men’s attitudes toward women during his fourteenth century CE visit to the Malian cities of Jenna and Timbuktu as follows: “They were neither downtrodden nor meek, these women… [They were] shown more respect than the men… The men show no sign of jealousy whatsoever” (p.16). Suggesting relative equality between men and women, Ibn-Batuta notes that: “[Women] show no bashfulness before men and do not veil themselves” (p. 16).
2.5.2 Women in Africa Today

Amadiume’s (2015) study of past and present day social relations in her father’s native town of Nnobi in the Igbo area of southeastern Nigeria reveals that many of the matricentric traditions found throughout African history have persisted until today, even after European invasion and colonization and the abduction of millions of people from West and Central Africa during the slave trade. Amadiume reports that, according to the 1963 census, Nnobi, which is a part of the Idemili South local government area, had a “population … of 150, 388 for 1976” (2015, p. 17). By 2016, that population was projected to rise to 273,600 (National Population Commission of Nigeria in citypopulation.de - 2017).

Using her father’s language, Amadiume interviewed Nnobi elders in the 1980s as part of her anthropological work there. She asked them specifically about the position and status of women around the turn of the 20th century, when they were in their youth. Her findings indicate that, despite the incursions of patriarchy, which have diminished some of the power of women that her respondents witnessed a century ago, much of the prominence of women that they observed then is still attested in present-day West African societies. She notes that in Nnobi, as is also the case in Yorùbá land and most of the rest of West Africa, the market economy has remained under the leadership of women.

Nnobi remains a rural area … participates in the modern economy through trade and commerce … Afo Nnobi, the central market-place, is basically controlled by market women (Ezeani, 1980). Apart from the
exclusively female central section of the market, the peripheral areas, especially the major roads, are marketed by open stalls and lock-up shops run by both men and women. (p. 20)

Amadiume (2015) explains that for the Nnobi people, the growing of yam which is used as food and in ritual ceremonies, is the responsibility of men, while women grow cocoyam, cassava, and plantain. Amadiume adds: “Yet, in reality, the role played by men in yam production in the Igbo areas where less food was produced was minimal” (p. 29). Religious tradition holds that: “Cocoyam… grew out of the female head” (p. 29). Cocoyam, cassava, and plantain, “… compensated for the shortage of yam for staple food. Nnobi, therefore, depended heavily on female labor in agriculture” (p. 30). In the words of Amadiume,

One begins to see a system of prescribed achievements and rewards.
From it women of Nnobi might be expected to derive prestige and power from their control and successful management of, and effective organization around, the subsistence economy. (p. 30)

Amadiume (2015) observes that a woman who deserves praise in Nnobi is an industrious woman, and this industriousness and the ability to generate prosperity are seen as a legacy of the Goddess Idemili. Idemili gives women the “pot of prosperity” (p. 27) and is the patron Goddess of the town, as the name of the local government area indicates. Nnobi people are organized into matricentric and patricentric household groups, “… mother and children formed distinct, economically self-sufficient sub-compound units classified as female in relation to the male front section of the
compound” (p. 27). The industriousness of Nnobi women allows them to become wealthy in their own right. Women take care of their own gardens where they plant cassava, cocoyam, and plantain among other corps. Amadiume points out that since:

[Women had a] monopoly of the market place… most of the cash passed through female hands from the sale of either their own or their husband’s goods … women kept their own profit and what was considered theirs; nothing considered as female and nothing belonging to women were sold by men … This accorded with the Nnobi ideology of female industriousness, economic self-help, and self-sufficiency of the matricentric unit … (p. 39)

Besides the money women earned from selling cassava, cocoyam, and plantain, women have other income: “Money derived from any food trees planted by a wife, however, belonged to her, as did money from the fruits of the palm tree pointed out to a daughter by her father, or to a wife by her husband” (p. 39).

An industrious Nnobi woman, explains Amadiume (2015), could become as wealthy as her business savvy would allow her to become. As shocking for the Western mentality as this may be, a Nnobi woman would not be stigmatized for becoming wealthy: “… extremely powerful and assertive women were able to dominate their husbands and not be stigmatized for it” (p. 45). Amadiume records an example of a financially powerful Nnobi woman who is still talked about in the town.

Feyinwa Olinke, a very wealthy woman who died in the first decade of this century [twentieth century], is an example of a wife who became so
rich and popular that she completely overshadowed her husband … she presumably died around this time [1909]… Ifeyinwa had so much overshadowed her husband that little is remembered about him … her praise name … [was] ‘one who has full control over her husband’s property’ … It was important for a woman herself to be industrious and self-sufficient … there were both enough social and political rewards for economically successful women. (pp. 48, 49)

One prestigious title granted to rich women, as well as rich men, is awarded after having the opportunity to participate in the *oke opi* dance as part of “a festival where a cow is slaughtered by rich men and women for the goddess Idemili” (p. 19).

Nnobi women not only produce most of the basic crops needed for subsistence, but they also have equal opportunities for becoming wealthy and financially powerful. The ultimate acknowledgement of the respected agency of Nnobi women is their membership in the council of women. Amadiume (2015) explains that all the different situations that might arise pertaining women are dealt by “*Inyom Nnobi, Women of Nnobi, the Women’s Council*” (p. 65). This council of women is responsible for providing solutions to different challenges facing Nnobi women such as disputes at the market place. The council also arbitrates to establish civility in the relationships of women with husbands.

They were women of strong character and charisma, articulate women who could speak without fear on behalf of those who they represented … A woman’s council was said to be more like a magistrate’s court than an
ordinary meeting. Above all the rest of the [council] women were those who took the title of *Ekwe* [“a title taken by women and associated with the goddess Idemili” (p. 218)] … [the council had] … its own rules and regulations …[including ] policing Nnobi markets … they fined those who fought in public, or stole, gossiped, spread scandals, were treacherous or indulged in bad sorcery … [They also assured that] rules to safeguard and protect women against physical abuse were obeyed, for example, the ban of sexual intercourse with a nursing mother, and the two-year spacing of children … Those who urinated in the market place were fined. Anyone who left her goat to wander into and damage another’s woman garden paid a double fine … (p. 66)

The council of women is also concerned with the safety of the town: “In times of great epidemic or great unrest women consulted diviners for the well-being of Nnobi” (p. 66).

Nnobi men do not venture into affairs pertaining women:

The women were aware of their strong communication network and took full advantage of it, and were consequently feared and respected by the menfolk. Traditional leaders dare not meet to discuss matters concerning women without women representatives being present” … What the men feared most was the council power of strike action … When ordered to strike, women refused to perform their expected duties and roles including all domestic, sexual and maternal services. They would leave the town *en*
masse carrying only suckling babies … [Even with this power to generate change] their demands were never unreasonable …. (pp. 66, 67)

The head of the Council of Women is the “Agba Ekwe … she is the favoured one of the goddess Idemili and her earthly manifestation” (p. 67). Therefore, “The Women’s Council appears to have been answerable to no one, for at the head was the Agba Ekwe, who held the most honoured title in Nnobi” (p. 67).

The demands voiced by women in Nnobi reflect their concern about situations relating to women and to fairness in making decisions for the whole community: “Disrespect by the men, such as making laws binding to women, or deciding levies for the whole town without the knowledge or consent of women, were all matters dealt with the Women’s Council” (p.67). Fairness and participation in government decisions are assured, since male leaders cannot make unilateral decisions.

Amadiume’s (2015) account of the agency of Nnobi women exemplifies the agency of West-African women up to the present day. West African women are strong, determined, independent women who can become wealthy through their dominance of the market economy. Women sell in the market place, and they do not need to report to male relatives about the amount of profits earned there. They are used to being heard in matters of government, and they can become leaders in their own right and assume responsibility for the administration of justice in affairs relating to women. No man dares to intervene in such matters. These are among the many powerful matricentric lifeways that enslaved African women brought in chains to the Americas.
2.6 Patriarchy, Domination and the Afro-Caribbean

West-African women brought in bondage to the Americas tried to reassume and recreate the social, economic and political agency that they enjoyed in Africa. In West Africa, women have always been responsible for most aspects of the production of food in the fields as well as for the distribution of food and other goods in the markets. This has made them economically independent. Women have been accustomed to having their voices heard and to have their voices heeded when they demand retribution for a wrong committed against them as a group or as individuals. They also expect to be treated fairly and for their bodies to be respected. Castañeda (2000) asserts that enslaved women taught their daughters and sons the African lifeways that they needed to survive, even under the most inhumane of circumstances:

The African women, despite the great suffering they endured, managed to keep in their minds their native land and part of their culture. As a consequence, they not only fed and protected their offspring, but also taught them about Africa, life, freedom and survival. (p. 683)

Faraclas (2012) contends that the agency of African and indigenous descended women in the Americas played a decisive role in the colonial history of the region. During the first two centuries of European expansion, European women were largely absent. This meant that most European men found themselves in reproductive and domestic relationships with women of African or indigenous descent. Most of those European men who managed to survive in the Caribbean owed their very lives to the knowledge that these women, whose traditional lifeways equipped them much more
effectively to survive and thrive in a tropical environment than the European lifeways of their male partners. Although these women were the targets of sexual violence, they used their position as mothers to Africanize and indigenize the lifeways of their children, thus subverting the bloodlines, cultures and languages of the Spanish empire. Their agency was so effective, that by the 17th century, the Spanish colonial project was considered by the English, Dutch and French to have failed miserably, because the Spanish had lost their European character by cohabiting with non-European peoples.

The response of the Northern Europeans to this subversion of Spanish colonialism was to impose a racialized social order where European descended people lived in strict separation from non-European descended people. This new regime became the norm in the English and Dutch colonies by 1650, in the French colonies by 1700, and finally in the Spanish colonies themselves by 1800, just as the number of enslaved women arriving from Yorùbá land and the rest of West and Central Africa to Cuba was increasing. Few enslaved women were brought to Cuba before the nineteenth century; obtaining men from the coasts of Africa to be brought as slaves was less problematic for slaveowners (Castañeda, 2000). Dorsey (2000) provides another reason for the short supply of slave women:

African kings, paramount chiefs, and prime merchants habitually undersupplied European and American buyers with female captives because of their higher value in local markets [which attests to their status and importance in traditional African society]. Furthermore, for reasons related to the trauma of captivity, the rigors of the Atlantic crossing, and the emotional impact of permanent dislocation and marginalization,
African-born slave women in the Americas were consistently less fertile than their Creole sisters and progeny. (p. 635)

Due to the increasing restrictions that were placed on slave trade by the beginning of the 19th century, however, the demand for female slaves increased among plantation owners, who were finding it ever more necessary to depend on local reproduction rather than purchase to replenish their enslaved workforce (Castañeda, 2000). In Cuba, for example, owners attempted to assure that at least one-third of the slaves that they purchased were women (Castañeda, 2000). In confirmation of Castañeda’s assertion above, Dorsey (2000) states, “… once Britain began striding efforts to free its black subjects, the Spanish bureaucracy proved to be fairly liberal toward certain male slaves, but utterly inflexible toward female slaves and their offspring, regardless of age or sex” (p. 635).

That said, there was another reason for greater demand for enslaved women: women had proven to be hard workers.

The fulfillment of the assignments given to black female slaves was done with such effectiveness that some foremen could say, ‘black female slaves are hardier and more consistent than males …’ … This assertion was based on the fact that the duties of female slaves were not limited to agricultural tasks, but consisted also of others both in the city and in the county side … wet nurses … dressmakers … domestic chores, such as ironing and cooking … midwives … Most of these tasks, especially being midwives, helped enslaved women to acquire their freedom … .(p. 685)
The same character traits, such as a keen sense of independence and inner strength that made enslaved West-African women hard workers, also made them unafraid to demand redress for injustice. Castañeda (2000) describes the relentless determination of enslaved women in their demands for justice for themselves and for their relatives:

Within the slave colonial context, the role of the black female, whether enslaved or free, was outstanding. In accordance with her possibilities, she fought boldly with all the means at her disposal, including legal ones, to protect her relatives; she helped them to obtain their freedom or get it back, and to keep them united … generally [it was not the males, but instead] the female relatives, mothers, wives, and daughters [who] went to the court room to seek justice … (p. 686-687)

Cited below are several of many examples of enslaved women who demanded that they be granted the freedom that had been promised them by the master (Castañeda, 2000). First, we consider the case of Florencia Rodríguez or Hernández:

Don Ramón Saíz from Havana … promised his 14-year-old female slave, the mulatto Florencia Rodríguez or Hernandez to grant her freedom if she had sexual relations with him. Once his goal was achieved, he withheld her freedom and more than that, he punished her very often and forced her to work in the blacksmith’s shop and even according to the slave’s own words, ‘he tried to place silver rings in the most secret parts of her nature’ …. in October 1834, she complained to the mayor … the accuser answered no, but that her master had tried to put the rings on her, …
Despite these facts, the mayor did not do a thing except to offer to talk to the master ... she continued arguing her claims by other petitions as nobody paid attention to her in the village … (p. 685)

Masters not willing to follow Spanish colonial laws protecting slaves and their family unit would hide urban slaves by sending them to the countryside (Castañeda, 2000). Nonetheless, slave women such as María Dolores Fría were not deterred and often lodged complaints about this practice:

… a document of the Superior Government Secretariat of the island of Cuba (12 September 1837) revealed, based on the story of the plaintiff, María Dolores Fría, that her daughter Ana María, slave of Marco Podrón, came to her 15 days before and complained that her master habitually ill-treated her. She therefore asked the síndico [trustee, (Oxford Spanish Dictionary)] for a license to find a new master. But when a potential purchaser turned up … he sent the slave to Alquizar [a municipality in Cuba (online, EcuRed)] … when in 1838 the master, Podrón, was commanded to allow the slave to go to the capital because there was a potential buyer, he said that she had already been sold … (p.686)

Dorsey (2000) relates two cases, among other cases, of enslaved women who fought to assure the manumission of their daughters: “María Candida Mejía of Puerto Rico and Gabriela Arencibia of Cuba sued for the liberty of their daughters, Paula and Tomasa, whose masters took them on visits to Spain, where slavery was abolished in 1836 … Mejía and Arencibia won their suits” (p. 639).
Enslaved West-African women fought side-by-side with enslaved women born in the Americas for the right to reclaim an important part of their African matricentric heritage by growing crops for their subsistence and that of their families. Faraclas (2012) posits, “The struggle for house plots and provision grounds allowed female autonomous spaces at the margins and in the interstices of plantation system for autonomous economic agency” (p. 69). Enslaved African women and their descendants put into practice traditions that they brought with them from Africa, as observed by Faraclas when he echoes Bennholdt-Thomsen & Mies (1999) by stating that: “House plots and provision grounds gave slaves an opportunity to re-establish their traditional subsistence economies and collective work practices …” (p. 69).

Faraclas (2012) asserts that the power of these enslaved women and their African traditions was such that, despite the fact that they were given the least fertile ground for their subsistence plots, and the fact that they could only work in their gardens during their very limited free time, they yielded an abundance of produce. This abundance was so great that it was enough to feed the entire enslaved population as well as to provide a surplus that these women could sell each weekend in markets that they established according to their traditional African matricentric practices. These markets rapidly became the main source of food for the entire local population, including the masters. These markets also served as one of the main venues where the enslaved from all of the local plantations could meet one another as well as with maroons to plan the rebellions and other organized forms of resistance that eventually brought the system of chattel slavery to an end.
Despite the odds stacked against them in the Americas, African women’s traditions of determination, independence and resilience provided the foundation upon which these women struggled and eventually won emancipation for themselves and their children.
Chapter Three

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GENDERING OF PÀTÀKÌ IN TRADITIONAL YORÙBÁ RELIGION AND SANTERÍA

3.0 Introduction: Cowrie Divination and pàtàkì in Traditional Yorùbá Religion and Santería

Divination by cowries in Santería and in traditional Yorùbá religion have different procedures for identifying the Odù, which is the place in time where the person who consults the oracle is. The Odù is the gateway way to a number of pàtàkì, among which one explains best the difficulty the person confronts and how to overcome it. The diviner throws sixteen cowry shells who ‘tell’ the diviner which Odù applies, according to the number of ‘mouths’ which are facing up after the throw, that is, according to what in Yorùbá land would be termed the number of mouths of the elders which are speaking after the throw. The ‘mouth’ is the slot on one side of each cowry which slightly resembles an open mouth showing its teeth. The cowries ‘speak’ when they are thrown on the divination table, by way of those of their ‘mouths’ which are facing up.

In traditional Yorùbá religion, the throwing of the cowries is done just once. For example, if after the throwing, eight ‘mouths’ are facing up, it means that the Odù that will be recited is the one that corresponds to the number eight Èjì Ogbè, which consists, as do all Odù, of a number of pàtàkì. The priestess or priest begins to recite all of the Èjì Ogbè Pàtàkì that they know until the person for whom the reading is cast tells the priestess or priest to stop because they recognize that particular story as the one that corresponds best to the situation she or he is confronting (Bascom, 1980, p. 5).
In *Santería*, the casting of the cowries is done twice, instead of once. That combination refers to a particular combined *Odù* referred to by the numbers that make up the combination (for example *Odù* 8-11) which corresponds both to one or more *refranes* or sayings and also to one or more *historias* or *Pàtàkì*. In some cases the *santera* or *santero* will just say the *refrán(es)* that correspond to the combined *Odù*, but in other cases, they will also say the one *pàtàkì* of the combined *Odù* that the diviner thinks best corresponds to the situation of the person who has come to consult the cowries. This is the reason why in this work, the *Santería* versions of each set of *pàtàkì* (historias) has two combined *Odù* names, one for each numerical element that resulted from the two throws of the cowry shells, while in the traditional *Yorùbá* religion version there is only one *Odù* name for each set of *pàtàkì*, that corresponds to the single throw of the cowry shells.

While in Europe and the non-indigenous Americas, people defer to priests and other symbolic elites to determine what is ‘good’ and thus determine the norms by which they live their lives, this is not the case in West Africa. In *Yorùbá* land, once the throw reveals the number of cowry shell mouths are speaking, the priestess or priest begins to recite all of the *pàtàkì* that they know until the person for whom the reading is cast tells the priestess or priest to stop because they recognize that particular story as the one that corresponds best to the situation she or he is confronting. The person who is consulting the cowries thus has a role in co-determining the results of the consultation. In the Americas, however, the *santera* or *santero* has much more control over the results, since they themselves select the one *pàtàkì* of the combined *Odù* that the diviner thinks best
corresponds to the situation of the person who has come to consult the cowries, without mentioning any of the other pàtàkì that correspond to the same combined Odù.

At the point in the cowry conversation/divination with the Òrîṣá where it has already been determined which pàtàkì best describes the petitioner’s situation, an additional procedure is followed in order to determine whether the path forward of the person for whom the reading is cast is unobstructed or obstructed. This is done by asking the petitioner to shake a pair of ritual objects in their closed joined hands and then to separate these objects into their two individual hands without either the diviner or the consultant being able to see which object ends up in which hand. Then, the diviner asks the person for whom the consultation is made to open a hand to reveal which object it contains. In this process, the conclusions reached based on objects that appear in the left hand, which, according to Warner-Lewis (1991, 2015) citing Williams (1974, p. 174) is associated with femininity in Yoruba culture, are taken as final, while conclusions suggested by objects that appear in the masculine-associated right hand, are only tentative and must be further confirmed.

An important consequence of forced transit to the Americas was the creation of a number of new patakí to fill in the gap of forgotten or partially remembered pàtàkì from Yorùbá land. Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert (2011) present an example of a pàtàkì which is, “Clearly a New World creation…” (p.55). Such new pàtàkì also served as a tool to signal the conformity of Santería to the patriarchal, Eurocentric and classist norms that prevailed under colonialism in the Americas. Highlighting the Eurocentrism in these new Pâtàkì, they cite the image of the Òrîṣá Ọṣun, who is presented as light-skinned in Cuban Santería. One of the pàtàkì that they quote in this connection ends
with Ḟṣun saying: “Please make my hair straighter and my skin lighter so that all Cubans can see some of themselves in me.” Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert conclude that: “… [h]er wish was granted and Ochún [Ḟṣun] became Cuba’s beloved patron saint” (p. 55).

Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert (2011) also assert that the relationships among the Òrìṣá were transformed when Yorùbá religion was faced with the patriarchal order in the Americas: “The mythology of the orishas [Ôrìṣá] changed in the course of their travels to Cuba: the family of the orishas [Ôrìṣá] was transformed in the syncretic processes which created kinship relationships among them – father, mother, sister, husbands, wives, children – that did not exist in African mythology” (p. 47). In this way, the patriarchal nuclear family, which played a negligible role among the Òrìṣá in Yorùbá land becomes a salient element in Santería in the Americas. Another case in point is the fact that while in Africa there are some pàtákì where the protagonists are strong, level-headed, independent women, such strong female figures are absent from the corresponding pàtákì in Santería.

3.1 Comparative Analysis of Gendering of Pàtákì in Traditional Yorùbá Religion and Santería

In this chapter, some of the pàtákì (commonly called historias) recited in Santería which have corresponding pàtákì in Yorùbá land are included in the original Spanish followed by their translation into English. These are then juxtaposed to the English translation of the corresponding Yorùbá pàtákì, some of which were found in Bascom’s collection of 210 pàtákì from Yorùbá land (1980). Names spelled in Yorùbá language
have been taken from Bascom (1980), Fama (1994; 2006), Modupẹ Oduyọye (1972), and Warner -Lewis (1996). Whenever a Spanish or English term derived from *Yorùbá* appears in the text, it is immediately followed by the original *Yorùbá* spelling in square brackets (example: orishas [Ọrìṣà]). In this work, the *pàtàkì* (normally called ‘*historias*’ in *Santería*) are arranged in increasing order of cowry mouths facing up during divination, that is, the *pàtàkì* used in cases of the Èjì Òkò cowry configuration (two cowry mouths facing up) appear before the *pàtàkì* used in the cases of the Îròsùn cowry configuration (four cowry mouths facing up).

### 3.1.1 First Historia de Ejioco [Èjì Òkò] (two cowry mouths facing up during the divination) [Èjì Òkò Pàtàkì] in *Santería*

*Odé era un cazador que vivía con su mujer y todo lo que cazaba lo ponía al pie de un árbol, y Olofi [Ọlọfin] venía y se tomaba la sangre. Un día su mujer le preguntó porque él traía los animales sin sangre y él contestó que eso no le importaba. Ella se quedó callada pero un día cogió el saco donde Odé echaba la cacería le echó ceniza, en el fondo le hizo 3 agujeros para que la ceniza se fuera regando y así poder seguir el rastro, ya que quería averiguar cómo y por qué los animales venían sin sangre. Odé cogió el saco de la caza y su arma, saliendo como de costumbre, de lo que [sic] perseguían. Cuando llegó a donde estaba Olofi [Ọlọfin], éste le preguntó que con quién había ido y él le contestó que con nadie. Olofi [Ọlọfin] le contestó que quién era esa mujer que estaba escondida detrás de una mata y Odé dijo que no sabía. Entonces, Olofi [Ọlọfin] dijo: “Oiga, curiosa, si sangre quieres ver, sangre tendrás para siempre”. Ahi*

[Odé was a hunter who lived with his wife. He placed everything that he hunted under a tree, and Olofi [Ǫlofin] (described in González-Wippler (2002) as a personal aspect of Oloddumare [Olórùmarè] for humanity (p. xxvi)) would come and drink its blood. One day his wife asked him why all the animals Odé brought home arrived with their blood drained; to which he replied that it was none of her business. She remained quiet, but one day she poured ashes into his hunting bag; she made three holes at the bottom of the bag, so the ashes would leave a trail for her to follow. She wanted to know why he brought the animals with their blood drained. Odé took his hunting bag and his weapon and went about his business as usual without realizing that he was being followed. When he arrived at the place where Olofi [Ǫlofin] was waiting for him, Olofi [Ǫlofin] asked him if he knew the person who was there with him. Odé replied that he was there alone. Olofi [Ǫlofin] asked Odé if he knew the woman who was hiding behind a plant. Odé replied that he did not know who she was. Then Olofi [Ǫlofin] said, “Listen, you curious woman, if blood is what you wanted to see, blood is what you will have from now on. From this moment onward, women began to have their menstrual period.”

This first Èjì Èkò Pàtàkì is consistent with patriarchal and misogynist attitudes toward women. The first step leading to scientific discovery is curiosity. The scientific mind needs to ask questions such as: Why does it happen? How does it work? However, in this historia [pàtàkì] curiosity causes a woman to be punished and to be embarrassed
by Olofi [Ǫlǫfin], a manifestation of Oloddumare [Olórùmarè], the ultimate religious authority figure in Yorùbá traditional religion. For her curiosity, Olofi [Ǫlǫfin] imposes a sentence upon her and her descendants, menstruation, which is supposed to serve as a form of humiliation and punishment. This is irrational, not only because curiosity is often praised when it is evidenced in men’s behavior, but also because humankind would not be able to reproduce without the menstrual function of the female body.

Although menstruation is demeaned and considered to be a taboo in Judeo-Christian patriarchal ideology, Gimbutas contends that it was praised and considered sacred in Old Europe over the course of more than two millennia, “[Concerning the] placing of ochre in graves … red was the color of life, of blood, which was necessary to secure regeneration” (1991, p. 281). In Yorùbá land as well as in Santería, red dye is used to represent blood as an essential part of the initiation ceremony to become an Orisha [Ọrịsà] priestess or priest. Although the patriarchal association of menstrual blood with punishment and humiliation is clear in Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández’versión of the Èjì Òkò Pàtàkì narrated above, it becomes even more obvious in Obá Ecún’s (1988) version of the same Èjì Òkò Pàtàkì, where Odé’s wife’s punishment is openly referred to as a curse, “… pero Olofi [Ǫlǫfin] la vió [sic] y la hizo salir, diciéndole, por curiosa: ¡Maldita seas! Y por supuesto, desde ese día, todas las mujeres tienen periodo todos los meses” [… but Olofi [Ǫlǫfin] saw her and made her come out from hiding, telling her [in a menacing way]: You are cursed for being so curious! And of course, from that day on all women have their monthly period.]
3.1.2 Second Historia de Ejioco [Èjì Òkò] (two cowry mouths facing up during the divination) [Èjì Òkò Pàtàkì] in Santería

El diablo vivía en una montaña, tenía una hija que era muy hermosa.

Había en las cercanías otro diablo que era tan poderoso como él, que le había declarado la guerra, el cual al no poder vencerlo le raptó la hija y la violó; por lo que obligó al diablo de la montaña a bajar al llano para discutir con él y poder salvar a su hija. (Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández, 1995, p. 112)

[The devil lived on a mountain, and he had a beautiful daughter. There was a second devil that was just as powerful as he was who had declared war on this first devil. Since the second devil had been unable to defeat the first devil, the second devil decided to kidnap and rape the daughter of first devil. Therefore, the first devil was forced to go down to the valley to negotiate with the second devil, so he could save his daughter.]

The Historia de Ejioco-Unle [Èjì Òkò-Èjì Ogbe Pàtàkì] is clearly a historia (pàtàkì) which originated in Cuba since the devil is a Judeo-Christian construct. This historia (pàtàkì) illustrates the patriarchal military use of the rape of women to drive an enemy into submission and ensure victory. The father of the raped woman was forced into an agreement with the devil who raped his daughter. This strategy also serves as a weapon to subdue women and keep them in line by instilling fear and rendering them powerless and voiceless. The woman has no say in the events that happen to her nor does she express her wishes.
3.1.3 Èjì Òkò Pàtàkì E1 from Yorùbá land

The examples above demonstrate how two of the seven Historias de Ejìócò [Èjì Òkò Pàtàkì] in Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández (1995) insult the dignity of women: women are cursed in one historia (pàtàkì) and raped in another. None of the seven Èjì Òkò Pàtàkì narrated in Bascom recount the rape or the intention of raping a woman. In the following Èjì Òkò Pàtàkì from Yorùbá land, which Bascom (1980) labels E1 and E4, women have economic independence and a voice in matters of government.

**E1**

“Kindness is not unrewarded;

“Wickedness is not unrewarded;

“Doing kindness with evil intentions,

“Causes kindness to be unrewarded;

“What they do for a chicken is not unrewarded.

“After a little while we make broth with it for them to eat”

Cast for Aganna when he was going to become chief of Oko.

There was Aganna, he was a stranger in Oko.

When Aganna arrived at Oko

He went and made a farm by the side of the road.

If a woman passed by, he gave her something,
Like corn, or like yams.

If a man passed by, it was the same;

And on and on, Aganna was doing this.

Whatever he gained

He gave away as a gift.

If someone was in need of money,

Aganna gave it to him.

Only elderly people took titles

When existence began.

When the chief of Oko died,

They said, “who is left to succeed him?”

They said, “What about Aganna?”

“Ha!” the women said, “Aganna is the one who should be made king.”

And they made Aganna the chief of Oko.

Aganna became wealthy, he was rich;

Aganna became a person who called others to serve him.

Aganna was dancing, he was rejoicing;
He was praising the diviners,

And the diviners were praising Orisha

That their diviners had spoken the truth. …

Orishas says that blessings are what he predicts for this person,

Where we see Two Elders on the tray.

Orishas says, “All blessings,

“A blessing of money, a blessing of children, a blessing of long life”

Is what he predicts.

This person should not stop doing kindness;

Kindness is what he should be doing. (Bascom, 1980, pp. 297, 299)

The patriarchal system of rule is based on the use of physical or mental coercion instead of kindness and fairness, and it is men who determine who will rule in an almost exclusively male line of succession. Giving goods away without placing a price tag on them is seen as a preposterous act under the classist system, which prioritizes the accumulation of goods above all else. However, the E1 pàtàkì contradicts this classist logic. A man named Aganna is elevated to kingship because he was a kind and fair man who refused to accumulate wealth.

When Aganna arrived at Oko

He went and made a farm by the side of the road.
If a woman passed by, he gave her something,

Like corn, or like yams.

If a man passed by, it was the same; (p. 297)

Women in this *pâtâki* have the power to decide who will be chief of the town, which is anathema under patriarchy. It is the voice of women who seal Aganna’s fate and proclaim his blessing.

When the chief of Oko died,

They said, “who is left to succeed him?”

They said, “What about Aganna?”

“Ha!” the women said, “Aganna is the one who should be made king.”

And they made Aganna the chief of Oko (p. 299).

3.1.4 *Èjì Òkò Pâtâki* E4 from *Yorùbá* land

**E4**

Orisha says a blessing is what he predicts.

“He ate at Kiko, he drank at Kiko;

“He reached the market of Kiko;

“He leaned his back against the akoko tree.”

Cast for Abijo, Oko ’Rese
When she derived sweetness from suffering.

Orisha says that this is an Abijo.

Orisha says that where we cast this figure,

Orisha says that this person should not avoid suffering.

Orisha says that she will see suffering;

Orisha says that there is sweetness behind it;

The sweetness, it will continue until the end of her life.

She should offer a sacrifice.

What should she offer?

They said she should offer 24,000 cowries;

They said she should offer a cock;

She should offer a pigeon.

Oko, they said she should go and sacrifice food to her divination set;

They said she should sacrifice drinks to it.

This person should go and sacrifice to her head;

She should find a pot and she should sacrifice to her head.

When Abijo had finished doing so,
She began to have children.

Her life was good,

And no suffering could reach her anymore.

She was dancing, she was rejoicing;

She was praising the diviners,

And the diviners were praising Orisha

That the diviners had spoken the truth.

“He ate at Kiko, he drank at Kiko;

“He reached the market of Kiko;

“He leaned his back against the akoko tree.”

Cast for Abijo, Oko ’Rese

When she derived sweetness from suffering.

“Abijo, Oko ’Rese, gently, oh!

“Child of ‘One who derives sweetness from suffering’ ”

How do we know Abijo?

She is the one we are calling She-Goat.

Orisha says so,
The deities ordain it,

Where we see two Elderly Deities

On the tray. (Bascom, 1980, pp. 307, 309)

Abijo is a woman who seeks remedy for her suffering. The Orisha [Ọrịsá] tells her that her suffering will end, and so it does: “She began to have children. Her life was good, And no suffering could reach her anymore.” This pàtákì does not condemn women to a life of suffering, instead they are empowered with the divination tool of reading cowries to be able to improve their lives. As a diviner, Abijo uses this tool to take charge and change the course of her life. In Europe and the non-indigenous Americas, the rule of patriarchy in societies defined by the accumulation of wealth and property, renders women powerless when compared with Abijo in Yorùbá land. A woman living in a patriarchal classist society depends on a man, be it her priest, father, husband, or son, to alleviate her sufferings. Abijo herself is a priestess/diviner since she has a divination set, “they said she should go and sacrifice food to her divination set.” Abijo is a self-sufficient woman who has a way to earn her living through the use of her divination set.

In every one of the pàtákì, part of the offering made to resolve the situation that led to the consultation is to offer cowries, which were used as currency in Yorùbá land before the advent of European money. In none of the seven Historias de Ejioco [Èjì Òkò Pàtàkì] of Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández (1995) are women portrayed as diviners with access to the cowry currency that was the reward for their work.

3.1.5 Iroso [Irọsùn] (four cowry mouths facing up during the divination) [Irọsùn Pàtàkì] in Santería
Había una vez un rey que tenía una hija soltera y se fue a mirar con Orula [Órùmîlà], éste le dijo que para que su hija fuera feliz tenía que casarla con un Awó [“General term for believers of Yorubá religion (Ôrìṣá worship).” (Fama, 2006, p. 148)]. Él le contestó: “No, cómo una princesa se va a casar con un Awó”; a lo que Orula [Órùmîlà] le respondió: “De todas formas cuando usted muera ella no es la que va a gobernar, sino una de sus mujercitas.” (Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández, 1995, p. 119).

[Once upon a time, there was a king who had an unmarried daughter. He decided to go to Orula [Órùmîlà] for a reading (divination), and Orula [Órùmîlà] told him that if he wanted his daughter to be happy he would need to marry her to an Awó. The king replied, “I will not. Why should I marry a princess with an Awó?” to which Orula [Órùmîlà] replied. “Either way, when you die she will not be the one to succeed you. One of your silly vain wives will succeed you.”

3.1.6 Ìròsùn F11 from Yorùbá land

The following Ìròsùn Pàtàkì from Yorùbá land which Bascom (1980) labels F11 and F12 tell of how one woman becomes queen, and another becomes rich.

F11

“Do you live life in a hurry”

The diviner of the house of the king of Ara.
“Do not take a title impatiently”

The diviner of Ijero Hill.

“There is another life afterward:

“It is very sweet,

“Like a person licking honey”

Cast for Gruel Seller of Idere,

Who was a child of the people of Oyo.

Gruel Seller of Idere, what should she do

So that she could have honor, so that she could be important?

They said she should offer a sacrifice.

What should she offer?

They said she should offer 28,000 cowries;

They said she should offer four pigeons;

They said she should offer four cocks;

They said she should offer the gown she was wearing.

Gruel Seller of Idere collected the sacrifice, she offered the sacrifice;

She appeased the gods.
When she finished doing so,

Her life began to be pleasant;

She became king of Oyo

She was dancing, she was rejoicing;

She was praising the diviners,

And the diviners were praising Orisha

That their diviners had spoken the truth.

“Do not live life in a hurry”

The diviner of the house of the king of Ara.

“Do not take a title impatiently”

The diviner of Ijero Hill.

“There is another life afterwards;

“It is very sweet,

“Like a person eating honey.”

Cast for Gruel Seller of Idere,

Who was a child of the people of Oyo.

She said, “We heard and offered the sacrifice;
“We appeased the gods;

“It won’t be long, it’s not far away,

“You will see me in an abundance of blessings.”

Orisha says so,

The deities ordain it. (Bascom, 1980, pp. 351, 353)

In connection with this passage, Bascom notes that: “The sex of the principal character [the Gruel Seller of Idere] is in doubt. Yoruba women have occasionally become kings, but a gown is a man’s garment, and selling cooked food is a woman’s occupation.” (Bascom, 1980, pp. 351, 353). But the gender of the Gruel Seller of Idere can hardly be in doubt given what follows immediately in F12.

3.1.7 Ìròsùn F12 from Yorùbá land

F12

Orisha says so,

The deities ordain it.

Orisha says that where we cast this figure,

Orisha says he predicts a blessing of money;

Orisha says he predicts a blessing of children;

Orisha says he predicts a blessing of long life.
“What about Cutlass?

“Cutlass went to the farm.

“What about Cutlass?

“Cutlass went to the river.

“Cutlass became wealthy, child of cooperative work.

“I cooked guinea corn gruel;

“I did not cook maize”

Cast for Gruel Seller of Idere

Who had riches in the evening of her life.

There was Gruel Seller of Idere,

They said she should offer a sacrifice;

They said she should offer a sacrifice.

What should she offer?

They said she should offer 28,000 cowries;

They said she should offer a cock;

They said she should offer a hen;

They said she should offer a pigeon.
They said that Gruel Seller of Idere

Should go and sacrifice to her head with food;

They said she should sacrifice to it with drink.

Gruel Seller of Idere collected the sacrifice, she offered the sacrifice.

They said she should offer a stool.

She sacrificed to her head with food, she sacrificed to it with drink.

Gruel Seller of Idere began to have money;

She began to have money,

And the money was uncountable.

Gruel Seller of Idere became wealthy, she was rich.

She was dancing, she was rejoicing;

She was praising the diviners,

And the diviners were praising Orisha

That their diviners had spoken the truth.

“What about Cutlass?

“Cutlass went to the farm.

“What about Cutlass?
“Cutlass went to the river.

“Cutlass became wealthy, child of cooperative work.

“I cooked guinea corn gruel;

“I did not cook maize.

“Maize gruel, which has grey hair on its head,

“Guinea corn gruel, which has a beard on its chin”

Cast for Gruel Seller of Idere

Who had riches on the evening of her life

Gruel Seller of Idere, what did you do to become wealthy?

She put on a black cloth;

She put on a white cloth;

She sat on a stool;

She was dignified.

Gruel Seller of Idere, what did you do to make a profit?

Gruel Seller of Idere, what did you do to become wealthy?

Orisha says that he predicts a blessing of money for this person.

As Orisha has spoken,
Where we see Four Elders. (Bascom, 1980, pp. 353, 355, 357)

The Historia de Iroso-Oddí [Ìròsùn-Ôdí Pàtàkì] narrates a decision making moment in the life of a patriarchal king who decides to marry his daughter to someone who is not recommended by Orula [Òrùmílà] (the Òrìṣá of the Ifá divination system). It is not evident if his daughter will rule as a queen in her own right or if it is her husband who will rule in her place. The pàtàkì also does not indicate clearly if the king has many mistresses, or a wife and mistresses, “una de sus mujercitas.” Under either interpretation, however, their value as human beings and their capacity to rule is trivialized by referring to them as ‘mujercitas’.

There are seven Historias de Iroso [Ìròsùn Pàtàkì] in Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández (1995) and eight Historias de Iroso [Ìròsùn Pàtàkì] in Obá Ecún (1988) two of which also appear in Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández (1995). Even though the corresponding pàtàkì in Yorùbá land depicts self-made and economically and politically powerful women, none of the Santería historias [pàtàkì] depicts a woman as powerful or economically independent, nor do any of them portray a woman in such a way that her ambitions are rewarded.

Whenever a pàtàkì recited in Yorùbá land presents a woman in a position of strength, leadership, or in command of her destiny, that pàtàkì is altered or eliminated in Santería to accommodate a misogynist, Judeo-Christian, patriarchal ideology. The Ìròsùn Pàtàkì F11 recounts the story of a woman who is in a position to become queen; she wants to be honored and to be an important person. No one is appalled by her desire,
not even the Òrìṣá, to the contrary, the verses state: “Orisha says so, The deities ordain it.”

Despite the overwhelming evidence from F12, Bascom claims that there is the possibility that F11 could refer to a man, since the main character according to Bascom wears a gown, a garment normally worn by men. Yorùbá is a non-gendered language, so that the same pronoun can mean ‘he’, ‘she’ or ‘it’. A title for both a woman or a man who rules a kingdom is ọba. Verse 4 of F11 reads in Yorùbá as follows, “L’ọ ba j’ọba l’de Ṭọyọ” (p.352). Another example is verse 8 of Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì G15 which reads in Yorùbá as follows, “Ti ọṣ’ọba.” (p. 444). Bascom translates the verse as, “Like a queen.” (p.445) Throughout F11 and F12 in their entirety the main character, the Gruel Seller of Idere, is gendered as a woman by Bascom. Neither her gender nor the economic condition of being a gruel seller should be a deterring factor in her becoming a queen since in Èjì Òkò Pàtàkì (E1) a farmer becomes the king of a town which was not his place of birth. F12 states that: “Gruel Seller of Idere began to have money; … And the money was uncountable. Gruel Seller of Idere became wealthy, she was rich.” Contrary to the position of women in the patriarchal societies of the Americas during the colonial era whose wealth was automatically appropriated by their husbands, women in Yorùbá land were and still are allowed with the blessing of Òrìṣá to earn a living and become independently rich, “As Orisha has spoken…”
3.1.8 First Historia de Oché Melli (repeated combined Odù of five cowry mouths open)

[Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì] in Santería

Había en un pequeño pueblo una muchacha que se llamaba
Cosita, la cual vivía cerca de un río que separaba ese pueblo de
otro cercano. En este último vivía un agricultor que la
enamoraba, y un día, cuando iba a verla notó que el río estaba
muy crecido y no podía pasar. Entonces empezó a hacerle
ofrecimientos al río diciéndole que le iba a llevar una cosita si lo
dejaba pasar, quedó sorprendido al ver que el río al oírlo, bajó de
tal manera que pudo pasar a pie. Eso sucedió en muchas
ocasiones, hasta un día en que el agricultor invitó a su amiga a ver
la siembra de hortaliza, y al llegar a la orilla del río pronunció el
nombre de ella, y el río al oírlo pensó que era la cosita que el
agricultor siempre le ofrecía y se tragó a la muchacha. Detrás de
ella se tiró él también gritando “Cosita” y el río se lo tragó

[There was a girl named Little Thing that lived in a small town by the river that divided her town from another town. In that other
town lived a farmer who was wooing Little Thing, and one day
when he was going to see her, the farmer noticed that the water
level had risen, and he could not go through. The farmer began to
make offerings to the river telling the river that he would bring a
little thing to the river if it let him pass; he was surprised when the
river, after hearing him, lowered the water level so he could wade through the river and pass across it. This happened many times; until one day the farmer invited his girlfriend (Little Thing) to see his vegetable garden, and when they reached the river he said Little Thing out loud. When the river heard her name, it thought that it was the little thing the farmer always brought as an offering, and it swallowed the girl. He jumped into the river trying to rescue her shouting “Little Thing,” and the river also swallowed him.]

Though there are 15 Yorùbá Òṣẹ Pàtàkì in Bascom (1980) not even one of them treats women as things. The patriarchal nullification of women and their voice and agency is present in this patakì. The female character’s name is Cosita [Little Thing] which is an odd name or nickname for a woman in the Spanish language because a human being cannot be a thing. Cosita never speaks; she does not even scream when she is drowning in the river. We do not know her feelings toward the farmer nor do we know if she wanted to cross the river. Conversely, the male character is named by his trade: farmer. He is a recognizable productive member of society. The woman on the other hand, is seen as a part of nature and is therefore nameless and dehumanized.

3.1.9 Òṣẹ Pàtàkì G9 from Yorùbá land

In the following Òṣẹ Pàtàkì from Yorùbá land which Bascom (1980) labeled G9 and G10 women are not nameless or dehumanized.

The Òṣẹ Pàtàkì from Yorùbá land labeled G9 narrates that there was a war against the Town of Women. Şàngó (Ọrìṣá of thunder who is also a warrior), Şọ̀npọ̀nná (Ọrìṣá of
smallpox and other contagious diseases), Égún (the spirits of ancestors), and Ògún (Órìṣá owner of iron who is also warrior) were not able to win the war against the Town of Women. They called Ọṣun (Órìṣá of good fortune and sensuality, who also has a manifestation as a warrior), Yemọnja (Órìṣá owner of salty waters, who is a motherly figure and also has a manifestation as a warrior), and Ọyá (Órìṣá owner of the winds, who is also a warrior) to win the war. Ọyá was defeated and Yemọnja suggested that they should let Ọṣun go first. The pàtàkì continues as follows:

Oshun said she should go,

And Oshun went.

Oshun said, “This war that I’m going to,

“What should I do to be able to win it?”

They said that Oshun,

They said that she should offer

10,000 cowries on the right side;

She should offer 10,000 cowries on the left side;

They said she should offer a pigeon;

She should offer a cock;

Oshun should offer a calabash;

She should offer a skein of thread.
Oshun collected the sacrifice, she offered the sacrifice;

She appeased the gods.

They took the thread,

They tied it to the neck of the calabash.

They said this thing was what Oshun should beat,

And that Oshun should sing

As she entered the town.

Oshun started on her way;

She carried the calabash in her hand.

Oshun was going

And she was singing, “Sewele,sewele,

“Oshun is coming to play;

“Oshun does not know how to fight

“Sewele,sewele,”

The Town of Women was on top of a hill.

Far away, they saw Oshun.

“Ha!” They said, “This one is a woman!”
“This one does not come to fight.

“She is beating a drum;

“She is drumming on something.”

They approached her, and she approached them,

And they heard what she was saying.

As she was singing they joined in the chorus,

“Sewele, sewele,

“Oshun is coming to play;

“Oshun does not know how to fight.”

They took up the song, and they began to dance.

All the stirring sticks with which they fought

They dropped on the ground.

The whole Town of Women,

They followed Oshun,

And Oshun started to walk back.

She had told the men

That they should hide in the forest outside the town wall. So she led them on
and on,

She led them into the city of Ojogbomekun.

As she took them into the city,

She was singing, “I have brought them;

“Long, long rope,

“I have brought them, long.”

This is how the whole town began serving Oshun;

Oshun was the one who brought them.

When Oshun had brought them,

She was dancing, she was rejoicing;

She was praising the diviners,

And the diviners were praising Orisha

That her diviners had spoken the truth.

“Diviners are the ones who behave

“Like cowards, like cowards;

“Medicine men are the ones who behave

“Like those who do not heed advice, like those who do no heed advice;
“If war enters a town,

“Wise men are the ones we consult”

Cast for the Sixteen Deities.

They were making war on the Town of Women,

An unsuccessful war that they could not win.

“Diviners are the ones who behave

“Like cowards, like cowards;

“Medicine men are the ones who behave

“Like those who do not heed advice, like those who do no heed advice”

Cast for mother Otolo Efon.

Oshun was making war on the Town of Women.

She sang, “We have brought them,

“Long, long, long rope.”

This is how they took power

And gave it to women until today;

And that women became the husbands,

And have more power than men
In the presence of the king,

Since a woman won the war for him,

They are

The ones who live with him.

This is why men must stay away from the wives of the king,

And his wives must not approach them$^1$,

As Orisha has spoken (Bascom, 1980, pp. 413, 415, 417, 419)

In connection with this passage, Bascom notes “To commit adultery with a wife of a king was tantamount to treason and was punishable by death,” (p. 419).

In the above Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì from Yorùbá land, Ọṣùn’s wise decision to consult the Òrìṣás before engaging in war allows her to win the war, without killing anyone, against a foe who no one else had been able to defeat: the Town of Women. Afterwards, the women followed Ọṣùn “into the city of Ojogbomekun” where the women along with the inhabitants of the city began to worship Ọṣùn. Women of the Town of Women were not really defeated since they followed Ọṣùn willingly into another town, and they remained powerful even as a part of this new community:

This is how they took power

And gave it to women until today;

And that women became the husbands,
And have more power than men

In the presence of the king,

Since a woman won the war for him, …

3.1.10 Qṣe Pàtàkì G10 from Yorùbá land

None of the ten historias (pàtàkì) about Ochê [Qṣe] narrated in Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández (1995) portray a woman as powerful, wise, or kind (all attributes used in Yorùbá land to describe both women and men) in any way similar to portrayal of women in Bascom’s G9 and G10 Qṣe Pàtàkì.

G10

Where we see Five Elders,

Orisha says that we should go and offer sacrifice.

Orisha says that he would not allow

Kindness to bring trouble for someone,

Where we see Five Elders.

Yes!

“Vulture did a kindness,

“Vulture’s head is bald;

“Hornbill did a kindness,
“He grew a goiter;

“So that another day, another day,

“One should not do a kindness again”

Cast for my mother, Otolo Efon

When she was doing a kindness for the people of the town of Oshogbo.

There were the people of Oshogbo;

Children, they were unhappy without children;

All the time they were complaining;

What should they do?

They said they should rely on a woman.

Which woman should they rely on?

They asked and asked, until they said it was Oshun … (Bascom, 1980, p. 421)

In G10 Ṣe Pàtàkì from Yorùbá land, the advice is presented in the form of a casting, reading or divination, casted for a woman. She has a name which is Otolo Efon, and she is a kind woman. Contrary to the dehumanizing Historia de Oche Melli [Ọṣe-Ọṣe Pàtàkì] where Cosita is a voiceless character, the Yorùbá land patakì tells the consultant that the solution to her or his problem is to rely on a woman who in the pàtàkì
turns out to be Ṣun. Ṣun is referred to in two different ways: as a woman, but also as the Òrìṣá Ṣun. She has a name as a woman and as an Òrìṣá.

3.1.11 Second Historia de Oché Melli (repeated combined Odù of five cowry mouths open) [Ọṣẹ- Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì] in Santería

Había una vez un hombre muy rico que tenía un esclavo, el cual trabajaba para él. Un día este hombre, que era un potente hacendado, fue de recorrido por sus instalaciones en el campo para ver cómo marchaban sus negocios, y cual no sería su sorpresa al encontrar a su esclavo adivinándole a las gentes que lo rodeaban. El potentado lo regañó, preguntándole si era así como el trabajaba y cumplía con sus obligaciones; acto seguido, castigó al esclavo con un bofetón y lo obligó a que le adivinara a él también, para comprobar si era verdad que era adivino. El esclavo le dijo que él tenía tres mujeres y la tres estaban embarazadas, que tenían que hacerles ebbó [ebbọ] a las tres para que parieran sin dificultad, se salvaran y salieran bien del parto. Y, efectivamente, así era. Desde ese día lo tuvieron como adivinador, cambió totalmente su suerte y le vino la tranquilidad y la felicidad al esclavo.


[Once there was a very rich man who owned a slave. One day this man, who was a powerful landowner, was traveling through his vast expanse of land to observe how his agriculture business was doing. Imagine his surprise when he found that his slave was performing divination for the people that were surrounding him. The landowner scolded him, asking the slave if this was the way he worked to fulfill his duties as a slave. There and then, the landowner slapped the slave and forced the slave to do a reading for him to prove that the slave was really a diviner. The slave told him that he had three mistresses and the three of them were pregnant, and that the landowner needed to do an ebbó [èbọ] (an offering to any one of the Òrîṣà to avoid an unwanted or perilous situation) for the three of them, so that they could all give birth safely and be unharmed after the delivery. And so, it was; the slave was speaking the truth. From that day forward, the slave became officially a diviner; he had a complete reversal of fortune, and the slave enjoyed peace and happiness for evermore.

In Historia de Oché Melli [Ọṣẹ-Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì] the person for whom the reading is done, needs to become a priestess or priest of an Òrîṣà [hacerse Santo]; she or he is a medium, a natural born diviner. If that person is a man, he could become a babalawo. This person is a child of Ochún [Ọṣun] and of St. Lazarus [Ọbalúwayé].

3.1.12 Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì G3 from Yorùbá land

The following Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì from Yorùbá land which Bascom (1980) labeled G3 is related to the second Historia de Oché Melli [Ọṣẹ-Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì].
Orisha says he says, “A blessing of money;

Orisha says he says, “A blessing of children;

Orisha says he says, “A blessing of long life.”

Do you see the way that Orisha says that this is so?

“An old slave does not go free;

“A destitute king does not have to serve as a pawn;

“No pawn, however old he may be,

“Can refuse to work for his creditor”

Was the one who cast for “Fall down for them to see”

When he was going to Ojogbomekun [sic] market.

There was “Fall down for them to see,”

All the work he was doing came to nothing.

Orisha says that it is through a friend that he will become wealthy,

As Orisha has spoken.

So “Fall down for them to see,” what should he do to be wealthy?

His friend said he should go to a kola nut farm;
They should go and buy kola nuts.

He said he did not have money.

His friend said he would buy kola nuts for him.

His friend took him there;

He bought 10,000 cowries worth of kola nuts for him;

And “Fall down for them to see” carried them.

He was crippled;

He had only one foot.

As “Fall down for them to see” reached the road,

He fell down.

All his kola nuts split open.

The king was consulting his divination set.

The diviners said they should go to Ojobomekun [sic] market;

The person who carries kola nuts

And whose kola nuts are split,

All the kola nuts he has

The king should buy.
Whatever price he asks

Is the price that they should pay.

When they reached the market

And they unpacked the kola nuts of “Fall down for them to see.”

All of them were split.

So people were laughing at him

Until they reached the market of Ojobomekun [sic].

People whose kola nuts were not split

Saw no one to sell them to,

To say nothing of one whose kola nuts were split

When “Fall down for them to see” unpacked his kola nuts

The king’s messengers said they should tie them up again;

They said the king said he should come.

His friend said they would go together.

So they went there,

They went to the king.

He said, “How much are your kola nuts?”
His friend gave a price.

His friend said, “Each section of the kola nut ‘Is 10,000 cowries for each one.”

So they counted them;

The money was increasing and increasing.

They said he should go;

They took “Fall down for them to see” to the back yard;

His friend went with them.

They shaved his head;

They prepared the sacrifice;

They dressed him in rags.

They said he should carry the sacrifice to the base of Eshu.

He carried the sacrifice to the base of Eshu

When “Fall down for them to see” came back,

They took him to the back yard.

They bathed him;

They put a gown on him;
They put on trousers;

They put him on a horse^3

They said, “Good.”

His friend was with him;

He said, “It is good.

He said, “Let us go.”

They said, “Where are you going?

What place do you know?

He said he knew them all now.

This is the one we now call Mole

“He fell down for them to see” was dancing, he was rejoicing;

He was praising the diviners,

And the diviners were praising Orisha.

He said his diviners had spoken the truth.

“An old slave does not go free;

“A destitute king does not have to serve as a pawn;

“No pawn, however old he may be,
“Can refuse to work for his creditor”

Cast for “Fall down for them to see”

When he was going to Ojobomekun [sic] market.

He said, “We heard and offered the sacrifice;

“We appeased the gods;

“It won’t be long, it’s not far away,

“You will see me in an abundance of blessings.”

How do we know “Fall down for them to see”?

We call him, “One who has the horse’s rope” (Bascom, 1980, pp. 393, 395, 397, 399).

Although the Second Historia de Oché Melli [Ọṣẹ- Ọṣẹ Pàtákì] is the most widely known Historia [Pàtákì] used to tell a devotee that she or he could become the priestess or priest of the Òrìṣá with whom they are attuned, this historia (pàtákì) does not convey the message that only if you are a man you could become a priest of the Òrìṣá Òrùmílà, who is responsible for the Ifá system of divination. The Ifá system of divination is the highest form and most sacred of all the systems of divination in Yorùbá traditional religion. In Santería’s patriarchal, misogynist, classist point of view, only men, as Babálawos, are allowed to be in the service of Òrùmílà. Though many santeras and santeros, and devotees of Santería know about the existence of Ìyánífá as priestesses of
Orùmilà, they deny their rightful place as priestesses of Orùmilà. In addition, Historia de Ochê Melli [Qṣe- Qṣe Pàtàki] narrates that the slave, grammatically gendered as masculine in Spanish (el esclavo), was a diviner. This could also mean, as the comment at the end of the historia (pàtàki) states, that the slave could have also been a medium [espiritista], which is a person who practices Allan Kardec’s teachings. This French educator’s teachings are posited in The Spirit’s Book first published in 1857 (Centre barcelonès de cultura espiritã, 2018).

Moreover, this historia (pàtàki) does not describe how the slave is doing the reading: it could be with the cowries used by santeras and santeros, with ikinnes (Fama, 2006, p.301) - known as inkines in Santería-, or with the ópêlè (Fama, 2006, p.301) - known as ecuele in Santería. There are two means of divination used in the Ifá system of divination: ikinnes and ópêlè. Ikinnes are medium-size quasi round nuts that are always inside the container where Orùmilà resides. The qmò (child, children) of Orùmilà - qmò is used in this chapter as an encompassing name to refer to an Ìyànífà or Babálawo - grabs ikinnes with the hand during the divination process to find out the Odù that will describe the problematic situation which the consultant is experiencing at that moment in time. The other means of Ifá divination is the ópêlè which is a chain with eight medium-size shards of coconut attached to it in a straight line, four at the beginning of the chain, four at the end of the chain. The way the shards face up or face down on a round tray after the qmò Orùmilà swings and drops the ópêlè on the tray indicates the combination of Odù that will describe the problematic situation which the consultant is experiencing at that moment in time. It is therefore an arbitrary assumption to say that Historia de Ochê
Melli [Ọṣẹ- Ọṣẹ (Pàtàkì) states that the person for whom the reading is cast should become a Babálawo if the person is man.

The Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì verses in Yorùbá land give us more information to guide the petitioner. First, the verses in Yorùbá language do not specify if the devotee is a man or a woman since according to Warner-Lewis (2007) pronouns are non-gendered in Yorùbá language; given that “West African language does not make a distinction between the pronoun for he and the pronoun for she” (TriniView.com, 2007).

Ó l’ón ọ l’ówó       He said he did not have money (G3, second verse, pp. 394, 395)

Oṣa p’ ón pè ire ọmọ;  Osha says he says, “A blessing of children; (Ọṣẹ 3 - second verse, pp. 392, 393)

Ó ní , È kí yèyè o,    She sang, “Praise mother, oh, (G2- ninth verse, pp. 392, 393)

Ó k’ érù ó tū       She appeased the gods (Ọṣẹ 2 – nineteenth verse, pp. 390, 391)

Hence, the Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì is telling the person that she or he could become and Ìyánífá or a Babálawo.

Additionally, the Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì is also indicating that the devotee for whom the cowries were cast should become a priestess or a priest of the Òrìṣá with whom they are attuned. This is achieved by explaining some of the steps in the ceremony leading to the initiation of a devotee as an Òrìṣá priestess or priest. The main character’s name “Fall
down for them to see” represents both forms of divination: with the cowries or with the ọpèlè. However, as explained by Awódélé Ifáyemí (2009) offering sacrifices to Echu [Éṣù] is a part of the Ifá initiation ceremony (Initiation and Post-Initition…, n.d.).

Though the main character wears trousers, the pàtǎkì does not explain or warn that this initiation is exclusively for men.

“They took “Fall down for them to see” to the back yard;

They shaved his head;

They prepared the sacrifice;

They dressed him in rags. …

They said he should carry the sacrifice to the base of Eshu.

He carried the sacrifice to the base of Eshu

When “Fall down for them to see” came back,

They took him to the back yard.

They bathed him;

They put a gown on him;

They put on trousers; …” (Bascom, 1980, p. 397).

Finally, this Ọṣẹ Pàtǎkì relates that the main character named “Fall down for them to see” will receive many blessings – money, children, long life – if he buys and sells kola nuts. A friend lends “Fall down for them to see” money to buy the kola nuts when
“Fall down for them to see” goes to buy them. Afterwards, when “Fall down for them to see” was taking the kola nuts to sell them at the market, he falls, and the kola nuts split open. This section of the pàtàkì continues to support the notion that “Fall down for them to see” is a diviner because split kola nuts are used in a form of divination called Obi Abata in Yorùbá land which is rarely employed in Santería. Afolabi A. Epega (1985), Yorùbá Babálawo and grandchild of Rev. D. Onadele Epega who is a reference in Bascom (1980), describes the Obi Abata Oracle as follows,

The Obi Abata Oracle can be performed by either a man or a woman. Yoruba traditional customs indicate that the Obi Abata is favored among women as a means of consulting, and [sic] assisting in the Ifa system of divination. This Obi Obata oracle is best done on a divining board called the Opon-Ifa, which is the same divining board used by the Babalawo in the Ifa system of divination. (p. 9)

Therefore, when kola nuts are mentioned in Òṣẹ Pàtàkì (G3) reference is being made to a divination system that may be used by either a woman or a man; hence, it does not imply that this pàtàkì is directed at men only. Furthermore, Bascome notes that Mole, the friend of “Fall down for them to see,” is “probably … Ọna-ile-моле the Ifa priest of the king of Oyo.” (397) which does not necessarily imply that “Fall down for them to see” is destined to become an Ịjà priest. Mole was there merely to help “Fall down for them to see” fulfill his destiny as a diviner and as a priest to any Ọrịṣà.

The structure of the pataki in Yorùbá land contrasts with the structure of the historia (pàtàkì) in Santería. In Yorùbá land there is usually a question at the
beginning of the pàtàkì whose purpose is to smoothly guide the consultant into understanding how the blessings will come to pass. The question reads: “Do you see the way that Orisha says that this is so?” and it is included as a structural part of the pàtàkì.

By the end of each Qšè Pàtàkì praise is given to Òrìṣá along with the lesson, trait, or way to solve the situation which is repeated in the form of a chorus, “We heard and offered the sacrifice; We appeased the gods; It won’t be long, it’s not far away, You will see me in an abundance of blessings.” A pàtàkì in Yorùbá land is an invitation to act, to heed advice, contrary to its counterpart in Santería. The historia (pàtàkì) in Santería goes straight to the point, no rhythm, no rhyme. It is a story that most of the time serves as a warning which coerces people to act because if people do not follow the instructions given, there will be unpleasant consequences. People are induced to act because of fear

3.1.13 Third Historia de Oché Melli (repeated combined Odù of five cowry mouths open) [Qšè- Qšè Pàtàkì] in Santería

Olofin [Ọlọfin] iba a hacer un concurso y dijo que todos los animales de plumas podían participar y el más bonito e interesante ganaría el premio.

Todos los animales del pueblo empezaron a prepararse para dicho evento y el loro que siempre fue un animal de bonitas y finas plumas empezó a alardear de su belleza y a darse importancia; las demás aves le cogieron roña y pensaban que si Olofin [Ọlọfin] lo veía le daría el premio, y fueron a casa de un brujo que vivía en las montañas y el viejo les preparó un afocché de polvo para que se lo soplaran al loro cuando llegara al concurso.
Ya venía el loro en camino sin darse cuenta que [sic] algunas aves estaban escondidas en la maleza y cuando el loro pasó cerca le soplaron el polvo; éste sintió que la cabeza le daba vueltas y empezó a girar como un trompo y como había dado tantas vueltas se mareó y cogió por un camino que no era. Pero más adelante se encontró con Eleguá [Elegbara] y al contarle lo sucedido, Eleguá [Elegbara] se dio cuenta de todo y lo guió por otro camino atravesado; cortaron camino y llegaron a donde estaba Olofi [Olofin]. Eleguá [Elegbara] le contó todo lo que había sucedido y Olofi [Olofin] dijo que como le habían hecho daño para echarle sus plumas a perder, esas plumas servirían de armas para contrarrestar esos mismos polvos que le habían echado. El loro se ganó el premio y sus plumas quedaron sagradas para muchas cosas. (Obá Ecún, 1988, p. 88)

[Olofin [Olofin] announced that there would be a competition. The contest would be opened to all feathered animals. The most beautiful and interesting of them would win first prize. All the town’s feathered animals began to get ready to participate in the contest. The parrot who had always been a bird with fine and beautiful feathers began to boast about his beauty telling everyone how important he was. The other birds became angry at him. They thought that Olofin [Olofin] would give first prize to the parrot the moment Olofin [Olofin] saw him. The angry, envious birds went to see a wizard who lived in the mountains. The old man prepared a malevolently enchanted powder, so the birds could blow it at the parrot when he arrived at the contest.
The parrot was already on his way to the contest without realizing that there were a few birds hiding in the grass. When the parrot was passing closely by them, they blew the powder on him. The parrot felt that his head was spinning. He began to twirl like a spinning top, and because he had spun for so long, the parrot ended up on the wrong road to the contest. Further down the road the parrot saw Eleguá [Ẹlẹgbara]. When the parrot told Eleguá [Ẹlẹgbara] about his mishap, Eleguá [Ẹlẹgbara] realized what had happened. He then guided parrot over another crossroad which was a shortcut. When they reached the place where Olofin [Ọlọfin] was, Eleguá [Ẹlẹgbara] told him the whole story. Olofin [Ọlọfin] said that since other birds had tried to harm parrot and spoil his feathers, from now on his feathers will be weapons that will be used against the same malevolently enchanted powders that the other birds had blown at parrot. The parrot won the contest. His feathers became sacred and have been used since that day on to fight malevolent energies.

3.1.14 Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì G11 from Yorùbá land

The following Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì is the Yorùbá land version for the third Historia de Oché Melli [Ọṣẹ- Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì] which Bascom labeled as G11.

G11

Orisha says we should offer a sacrifice;

Orisha says we should offer a sacrifice.

Orisha says we will conquer our enemies.
Do you see the way that Orisha

Says that this is so?

“Spoilers are not as rare,

“As rare as improvers;

“Improvers are not as many as spoilers.”

They were the ones who cast for Parrot

Who was the favorite wife of the king.

There was Parrot, she was the favorite wife of the king.

What should she do that her life would be pleasant?

They said that Parrot should offer a sacrifice.

What should she offer?

They said she should offer 10,000 cowries on the left side;

She should offer 10,000 cowries on the right side;

They said Parrot should

Offer the stool she sat on;

They said, because of a disease of the buttocks.

They said she should offer a dish of pounded yams;
She should offer a dish of yam porridge.

Orisha says that we should offer a sacrifice

So that our friend, the one who can reach us,

May not be able to harm us.

Parrot gathered the sacrifice, she offered the sacrifice;

She appeased the gods.

After a while,

Surely, they put medicine

On top of her stool.

As Parrot sat down,

She sat on the medicine

And her tail feathers became red.

She was sad.

The king said, “What is this?

“Why is this making you sad?

“This is glorious!”

So it went on and on.
When the annual festival was approaching,

Her co-wives said

They should make the festival in the nude.

This annual festival that they would make,

They would make it in the nude.

She said, “All right.”

Parrot was sad

The king said, “Why are you sad?”

He said, “Is it because your tail is red?

He said, “Is it because people will be able to see it?

He said, “You will dance first.

He said, “I said that in my eyes you are glorious.”

When the day came as they started to drum,

“How!” they said “No!”

They said they were going to dance in the nude;

In the nude they would do it.

The drummers began to drum “In the nude.”
The king said, “The time has come.” He said, “We’re ready

He said, “You, child, are the one who will dance first.”

When Parrot loosened her cloth,

Her red tail was revealed.

So Orumila said, “Ha!

“King, what is the meaning of this?”

The cloth of sixteen worlds that Orumila wore, [The cloth of sixteen worlds refers to the 16 Odù used in the cowrie and in Orumila systems of divination.] He covered her with it.

He said, “This is something the king of Ara never saw,

“And his life is not in order;

“That the king of Ijero never saw,

“And his life is not in order.

“All the kings,

“They never saw this and their lives are not in order;

“But here it is in your house.

“Are you going to be selling this to them?
“If you cannot give it to them, will you sell it?

“How much will you sell it for?”

He said he would sell each feather for 10,000 cowries,

And he was selling it for 10,000 cowries.

As he was selling them at 10,000 cowries,

Parrot became wealthy,

And the king became rich.

It seems as if

All the others

Wanted to have them.

Parrot was dancing, she was rejoicing;

She was praising the diviners,

And the diviners were praising Orisha

That their diviners had spoken the truth.

“Spoilers are not as rare,

“As rare as improvers;

“Improvers are not as many as spoilers.”
Cast for Parrot

Who was the favorite wife of the king.

Well then, Parrot’s blemish became her beauty.

They said, “Those who wanted to spoil me,

“They improved me.

“Parrot’s blemish became her beauty.”

Orisha says he will not let

People to be able to harm you,

Where we see five Elders.

As Orisha has spoken. (Bascom, 1980, pp. 425, 427, 429)

In the Judeo-Christian system of patriarchal and economically exploitative domination, women have become voiceless objects used mainly for the procreation of humans and for the regeneration of male workers, who women are tasked with caring for, so that they can continue to toil in the capitalist system. The third Historia de Oché Melli [Ọṣẹ-Ọṣẹ Pàtàki] related above presents a male gendered character who overcomes malevolent wishes and actions in order to achieve his goal. By achieving his goal, glory and perhaps fortune is bestowed upon him: “from now on his feathers will be weapons that will be used against [enemies] … The parrot won the contest; his feathers became sacred and have been since used from that day on to fight malevolent energies.” Physical and psychological violence are the main weapons used to establish patriarchal and
economically exploitative domination; therefore, parrot’s red feathers are considered to be weapons to be used against others.

There are clear differences between the third Historia de Oché Melli [Ọṣẹ-Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì] and the corresponding Yorùbá land Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì (G11). In Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì (G11) the main character is gendered female, and her name is Parrot. Parrot is surrounded by people who envy her and want to damage her image, but her enemies are not able to do it. However, there is a side effect of a medicine Parrot was using, and her tail becomes red. This blemish to her tail, that saddened her at first, became a source of wealth and glory. Orumila [Ọrùmílà] claims that Parrot is special because she has a coveted possession in the form of her red tail. This red tail can reinstate order in the lives of kings, “All the kings, They never saw this and their lives are not in order; But here it is in your house…” Parrot becomes rich because this possession can be sold, “[Orumila (Ọrùmílà) says] How much will you sell it for?” … “Parrot became wealthy…” Parrot was the wife of a king who also became rich after they sold Parrot’s possession, And the king became rich.” Most importantly, the king always supported Parrot in a loving manner during her time of anguish for what she saw as an unbearable blemish, “Why is this making you sad? “This is glorious!”

There is no talk of weapons, wars or enemies in Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì (G11). This is consistent with the peace oriented matrifocal mentally that Ifi Amadiume (1997) describes in West African traditions, and Gimbutas (1991) posits for Old Europe. It is also important to notice the fact that the name Parrot is capitalized as the name of the main female gendered character. The word ‘king’ is never capitalized nor do we know
his given name, which indicates that the female character is the main focus of attention.

3.1.15 Historia de Oché-Ofún (combined Odù of five cowry mouths open and ten cowry mouths open) [Ọṣẹ-Ọfún Pàtàkì] in Santería

Cuando los santos [Ọrìṣà] estaban separados, cada uno vivía en su territorio. En aquel tiempo, nadie podía saber más que el rey o la reina que gobernaba, pero la muerte traficaba de noche y se vestía de negro confundiéndose con la oscuridad y llevándose al que ella quería. Los únicos territorios que la muerte no visitaba eran los de Oshún [Ọṣún] y Oggún [Ọgún].

Tanto llamó esto la atención de los demás Orishas [Ọrìṣà], que un día se reunieron y tomaron la decisión de ir a casa de un Sabio, que vivía en la tierra de Ifá.

Al llegar allí ven que el Sabio usaba para adivinar unas semillas enganchadas a una cadena que ellos no conocían. También usaba un collar de semillas verdes y otro de semillas amarillas; pero ellos desconocían el uso que el Sabio les daba. No obstante, sabían que eran parecidas a la misma identidad de Oggún [Ọgún] y de Ozún (Ọsùn) y que la muerte las utilizaba para amarrar a sus víctimas.

Ninguno de los representantes de sus pueblos se atrevían [sic] a denunciar esa prueba por temor al Sabio y a que este [sic] fuera amigo de la muerte y del territorio Ará Iyechá [Tierra de Iyechá]. En ese llegó
Obatalá, [Ọbàtálá] y se dio a conocer y dijo: “No creo que he llegado tarde; soy la presentación de Olofin [Ọlọfin] y conforme yo descubro todo lo bueno, así lo hago con todo lo malo. Ustedes no se atreven a decir todo lo que sienten, ni lo que saben, por temor que este Sabio sea amigo de la muerte y en especial de Oggún [Ọgún] y de Ozún [Ọsùn], pero esto tenía que suceder de este modo. Ustedes creían que viviendo desintegrados podían conseguir algo, pues no es así.” Obatalá [Ọbàtálá] miró para el cielo y dijo: “Yo tengo los dieciséis (16) los Rayos del Sol en mi poder. Olofi [Ọlọfin] me los entregó para buscar la unidad de todos ustedes en la tierra. Miren el resultado que obtuvieron por tanto tiempo por no tener comprensión y creerse unos más poderosos que otros. Esta casa donde estamos, es la Casa Sagrada de Ifá, aquí vive Olofi [Ọlọfin]. Este es un lugar que ustedes no querían reconocer, porque el Sabio que ustedes creían no tiene [sic] nombre de reyescomo ustedes. Este Sabio predica, este Sabio que ustedes ven es el portavoz directo de Olofi [Ọlọfin], para predicar los Mandatos y poderes de él. Este viejo sabio se llama Awó Orúmila [Ọrùmílà], es el único que tiene el control y descontrol de la muerte en la tierra. Orúmila [Ọrùmílà] saludó de nuevo a Obatalá [Ọbàtálá] y enseguida miró y salió ese signo de Oché-Ofún [Ọché-Ọfún]. Inmediatamente mandó a unificar las semillas verdes con las amarillas y poner una bandera blanca en la casa. Explicó que el verde era su identificación y el amarillo la de Oshún [Ọṣun] que representa la mitad del Mundo de Oro y la sangre, vida. La semilla negra con la cadena es
Oggún [Ògún], que es el matador por mandato de Olofi [Ọlofin], es el Dios de la Muerte... (Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández, 1995, pp. 126, 127)

[Once upon a time, the Saints [Ọrìṣá] lived apart in their own territories. At that time, no one could have more knowledge than the queen or king who ruled. However, death, dressed in black, ran at nighttime blending in with darkness and taking with her anyone she wished. The only territories that death would not visit were the territory of Oshún [Ọṣun] and the territory of Oggún [Ọgún]. The other Orisha [Ọrìṣá] took notice, and they decided to visit a Wiseman who lived in the land of Ijá.

When they arrived at the land of Ijá, they saw that the Wiseman used seeds hooked to a chain for divination. They had not seen this before. The Wiseman was wearing a necklace with green beads, and another necklace with yellow beads; they also did not know what the use for those necklaces was. However, they did know that they were similar to paraphernalia used by Oggún [Ọgún] and Ozún [Ọṣùn] [According to FAMA (2006), “In Cuba, Ozún [Ọṣùn] is both a deity and a staff carried by Òrùmílà (p. 34). Oba Ecun (1990) states: “standing firmly on your feet, Ozún [Ọṣùn] informs Odudúa [Oddúwà] during his absence of events that occurred in his kingdom” (p. 43)]. They also knew that death used that same paraphernalia to tie up her victims. None of the representatives of each town dared to point out to that evidence. They were afraid of the Wiseman because they thought he could be a friend of death. The Wiseman could also be related to the territory of Ará Iyeché [Land of Iyeché].
Then Obatalá [Ọbàtálá] arrived and spoke out after letting them know who he was, “I don’t think that I have arrived late. I am the representation of Olofi [Ọlọfin] here on Earth. In the same way I let everyone see what is correct, so I also let everyone see what is wrong. You don’t dare to say how you feel or what you know. You are afraid that his Wiseman might be a friend of death, and especially with Oggún [Ọgún] and Ozún [Ọṣùn]. This is the way the past events had to happen. You thought that if you lived apart, you would be able to obtain everything you wanted. This is not the correct way to get what you want.” Obatalá [Ọbàtálá] looked up at the sky and said, “I have the sixteen (16) Rays of the Sun (the 16 Odu in Ifá and in the cowrie systems of divination) in my power. Olofi [Ọlọfin] gave the Rays of the Sun to me, so there will be unity on Earth among yourselves. Look what you have lost because you were unable to put yourselves in the shoes of your fellow human beings and thought that you were more powerful that the person next to you. This house is the Sacred House of Ifá where Olofi [Ọlọfin] lives. You did not want to acknowledge the sanctity of this house because you thought that the Wiseman did not have the title of ‘king’ as you all bear. This Wiseman is a preacher. This Wiseman has the authority to preach about how powerful Olofi [Ọlọfin] is, and about all the Commandments set by Olofi [Ọlọfin]. He can preach about Olofi’s [Ọlọfin’s] Commandments and powers in the name of Olofi [Ọlọfin]. This old Wiseman is called Awó Orúmila [Ọrùmílà]. He is the only one on earth with power over life and death.
Orúmila [Òrùmílà] greeted Obatalá [Ọbàtálá] again. Orúmila [Òrùmílà] then did a reading/consultation, and the Oddum [Odú] was Ochê-Ofún [Ọṣẹ- Òfún]. Orúmila [Òrùmílà] immediately gave the order to join the green and yellow seeds necklaces into one necklace and to place a white flag in front of the house. He explained that green was the color that represented him, and yellow was the color that represented Oshún [Ọṣun] which represents half of the Golden World and blood, life. The black seed in a chain is Oggún [Ọgún] who is the killer as ordered by Olofi [Ọlọfin]. He is the Orisha [Ọrìṣà] who rules Death.

3.1.16 Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì G15 from Yorùbá land

The following is an Ọṣẹ Pàtàkì from Yorùbá land which Bascom labeled G15. The main characters are Ọṣun and Òrùmílà who are also characters in the Historia de Oché-Ofún [Ọṣẹ- Òfún Pàtàkì].

G15

Orisha says that we should offer a sacrifice;

Orisha says that we should offer a sacrifice.

Orisha says that we should go and sacrifice to Oshun.

Where we cast Five Elders.

Do you see the way that Orisha

Says that this is so?
“The chain dangles and touches the ground”¹

Cast for Orumila.

Ifa was going to splash guinea corn beer on Oshun.

Orumila was in poverty.

What should he do to become wealthy?

They said he should give Oshun her tabu to eat.

“Ha! This woman, how can I give it to her?

“She does not have any tabus

“That are greater than guinea corn.

“How can I give it to her to eat?

“She just does not drink

Bascom notes that, “¹This is probably a reference to the way the Ifa divining chain is manipulated. Cf. Bascom, 1969: plate 6” (p.443).

“And she does not eat guinea corn.”

They said Orumila should offer a sacrifice;

And Orumila offered the sacrifice.

Eshu said, “You, Orumila,

He said, “Go and hide above the ceiling;
He said, “Take guinea corn beer there.

He said, “When you get on the ceiling,

“And when she sits on her throne,

He said, “Then let go of it

He said, “So that it splashes on her.

He said, “You will see,” he said, “You will see.

“If you will be wealthy, or if you will not be wealthy.”

Orumila climbed on top of the ceiling in the night;

He took guinea corn beer with him.

He sat there through the night.

They cleaned Oshun’s room;

They set out her throne for her.

And she came out and sat on the throne

Like a queen.

Orumila was looking at her.

When she was in full splendor,

Orumila let go the guinea corn beer;
It sounded gbamu-u-u.

It spilled all over her throne;

It spilled all over her body,

On her eyes, on her mouth, on her body.

Oshun shouted,

“Who is that?”

He sang, “Ladekoju,

“I tripped on something, oh;

“Éri lele, I tripped on something, oh.”

She said, “How did you get up there?”

He sang, “Ladekoju, “I tripped on something, oh;

“Éri lele, I tripped on something, oh.”

“What are you doing up there?”

“Ladekoju, where is my child?

Éri lele, where is my child?

“Oladekoju, where is my money?

“Éri lele, I tripped on something, oh.”
Orumila, why did you go up there?”

Eshu came. He said, “You, Oshun,

He said, “If you don’t give him children

“And give him money,

He said, “He will not let you hear

“What you want to hear.

He said, “Every morning

“He will come and do the same thing.”

So Oshun opened the door to money;

She said Orumila should take any amount that he wished.

She opened the door to children;

She said he should take any number that he wished.

So Orumila begat children;

He became wealthy, he had money.

Orumila was dancing, he was rejoicing;

He was praising the diviners,

And the diviners were praising Orishas
That his diviners had spoken the truth.

“The chain dangles and touches the ground”

Cast for Orumila

He was going to splash guinea corn beer on Oshun,

He was singing, “Ladekoju, “I tripped on something, oh;

“E ri lele, I tripped on something, oh.”

“Ladekoju, take wild lettuce;

“E ri lele, take wild lettuce, oh,

“E ri lele.

“Ladekoju, take kola nuts to eat;

“E ri lele, take kola nuts to eat, oh,

“E ri lele.

“Ladekoju, take a chicken;

“E ri lele, take a chicken, oh,

“E ri lele.

Orishas says that where we cast this figure,

Orisha says that this person should
Go and give Oshun her tabu to eat;
And that after he has given her the tabu
He should get wild lettuce,
He should get kola nuts,
He should get fritters,
He should get her a chicken,
And he should give them to Oshun.
Orisha says that the blessing this person is asking for,
Orisha says that Oshun will give it to him.

Five Elders. (Bascom, 1980, pp. 443, 445, 447)

In *Historia de Oché-Ofún* [Ọṣẹ́-Ọfún Pàtàkì] women continue to be denied a protagonist role as in other Santeria *historias* (patakí). The *Historia de Oché-Ofún* [Ọṣẹ́-Ọfún Pàtàkì] acknowledges at the beginning of the *historia* (patakí) that in ancient times there were queens who ruled by their own right, “At that time, no one could have more knowledge than the queen or king who ruled.” It even explains that death did not claim anyone from the territories of [generally male gendered] *Oggún* [Ọgún] as well as from the territories of [generally female gendered] *Oshún* [Ọṣun]. Nonetheless, in the end, Ọṣun’s voice vanishes from *Historia de Oché-Ofún* [Ọṣẹ́-Ọfún Pàtàkì]. She is positioned as powerless before a male gendered figure represented by Ọrùmílà [Ọrùmílà]. He gives
the order to make one necklace by joining the beads in Oshún’s [Ọṣun’s] necklace with the beads in his own necklace,

Orúmila [Òrùmílà] immediately gave the order to join the green and yellow seeds into one necklace … He explained that green was the color that represented him, and yellow was the color that represented Oshún [Ọṣun] which represents half of the Golden World and blood, life. (p. 127)

The fact that there can be no life without blood is of no consequence. Even though the historia (patakí) explains that Oshún [Ọṣun] is, “…half of the Golden World and blood, life.” Ọṣun has no input into Orúmila’s decision. Her consent is deemed unnecessary, unimportant. Ọṣun is eliminated in Castillo’s (1976) version of Historia de Oché-Ofún [Ọṣẹ- Ófún Pàtāki]. She goes from not being taken into consideration in Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández’ version to being completely erased from Castillo’s version:

La muerte estaba velando a Orula que este estuviera más fuerte y gordo y dijo: dentro de tres días ya me lo puedo llevar y cuando fué a buscarlo la muerte resbaló con la baba del quimbombó que Orula había echado en la puerta después de haber hecho erbó con eso, cadena y machete, tan pronto la muerte se cayó, Echu, Chango y Orgun la agarraron y le preguntaron tú no sabes que quien vive aquí es Orula y la muerte le contestó que no lo sabía y que ella vivía de todo lo que encontraba, entonces Echu la metió dentro de un saco pero Orgun le suplicó que no le hiciera nada porque ella no conocía a Orula, y acordaron hacer un pacto donde la muerte se comprometía a no llevarse a nadie que tuviera la
marca de Orula que es el Idefa a menos que Orula fuese quien se lo entregara. (p.382)

[Death was waiting for Orula [Òrùmílà] to be strong and fat. She said, “I can take him in three more days.” When death went to look for Orula [Òrùmílà], she slipped on the slime from the okra that he had used as erbo [èbò].

[Òrùmílà has also used a chain and a machete for the ëbò]. As soon as death fell Echu [Éšú], Changó [Ṣàngó] and Orgun [Ògún] grabbed her. They asked death: do you know that Orula [Òrùmílà] lives here? Death answered that she did not know, but she lived on anything that she could find. Echu [Éšú] then threw death into a bag. Orgun [Ògún] pleaded with Echu [Éšú] not to hurt death because she did not know who Orula [Òrùmílà] was. They all made a pact. Death agreed not to take anyone who had the mark of Orula [Òrùmílà] which is the Idefa (a bracelet made of yellow and green beads). Death would only take this person if Orula [Òrùmílà] handed her or him to death.]

In Castillo’s (1976) version Orúmila [Òrùmílà] and Oggún [Ògún] are still present. Òrùmílà using a chain and a machete stops death from doing what comes natural to her. A machete represents Ògún and chains are symbols of both Òrùmílà and Ògún. Ògún asks Òrùmílà to forgive death’s transgression because she did not know who Òrùmílà was (p.382) while in Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández’ version no one died in the territory of Ògún. Not knowing the relationship between death and Òrùmílà confuses the Òrísá in the version of Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández (1995).
Conversely, the Ọṣẹ-Ọfún Pàtákì (G15) describes Oshun [Ọṣun] as a queen who sits on her throne. It also describes an Orumila [Ọrùmílà] who does not dare to confront her, “They said he should give Oshun [Ọṣun] her tabu to eat. “Ha! This woman, how can I give it to her?” Orumila [Ọrùmílà] wanted to be wealthy and to have children. However, to have both, and as part of the offerings, he needed to give Oshun [Ọṣun] what she disliked most (her tabu food). Eshu [Éṣú] explained to Orumila [Ọrùmílà] a ruse that Eshu [Éṣú] had elaborated to help Orumila [Ọrùmílà], because Orumila [Ọrùmílà] did not dare to confront her. By using this ruse, Ọrùmílà would be able to give Oshun [Ọṣun] her tabu food without confronting her. Orumila [Ọrùmílà] will tell Oshun [Ọṣun] that he tripped and dropped Oshun’s [Ọṣun’s] tabu food on her, “Ladekoju, “I tripped on something, oh;” It is noticeable that Eshu [Éṣú] addresses both in the same way. No differentiating titles or any special phrase expressing deference is used with either one when Eshu [Éṣú] explains to Orumila [Ọrùmílà] what to do or when he tries to convince Oshun [Ọṣun] to give Orumila [Ọrùmílà] what he wanted: “Eshu said, “You, Orumila, … Eshu came. He said, “You, Oshun,” These two verses render Oshun [Ọṣun] and Orumila [Ọrùmílà] as equals in the eyes of Eshu [Éṣú]. He does not command them; he convinces them.

In Yorùbá land Ọṣun is an influential and powerful Ọrìṣá. Kuyebi (2015) explains that Ọṣun, “…rules and protects the people from danger and war” (p.21). He further states that: “…There was a series of wars in 1840. Osun assisted the citizens of Osogbo [Ọṣun is the patron Ọrìṣá of the town of Ṫoṣogbo] in winning the wars.” (p. 43) Oshun’s influence is acknowledged by “… all the people of Osogbo, including the kings, recognize the authority of Osun…. Osun’s authority is widely recognized among the
Yoruba…” (p.22). According to Deidre (1995) the name Òṣun derives from, “the word orisun, meaning “the primary source” in the Yoruba language” (p. 53 in Kuyebi, 2015, p. 20).

_Pàtàkì in Yorùbá land are poems. The lesson that should be learned or the solution to a problem is presented to the consultant/devotee through the poem’s lyric structure. Food and other objects that should be offered to resolve the situation are also part of the poem, “He should get wild lettuce, He should get kola nuts, He should get fritters, He should get her a chicken, And he should give them to Oshun…” The poem guides the consultant/devotee into understanding what she or he needs to do, “Do you see the way that Orisha Says that this is so?” The ‘opposite occurs in the _Santería pàtàkís_. In _Santería_ the advice is expressed in a narrative form. The consultant/devotee is compelled to follow the given advice through the use of intimidation. The _historias_ (pataki) notify the consultant/devotee about the dire consequences that will befall her or him if the advice is not obeyed. For example, consultant/devotees are told in no uncertain terms that if they do not follow the advice given in _Historia de Ochê-Ofún [Ọṣẹ-Ọfún Pàtàkì]_ they will surely die.

3.1.17 Historia de Obara-Melli (repeated combined _Odù_ of six cowry mouths open)

_Qbàrà Qbàrà Pàtàkì_ in _Santería_

_En una ocasión Olofi [Ọlọfin] invitó a los 16 Babalawos que eran reyes para una comida en palacio, pero Obaramelli estaba muy mal de situación y sólo se encontraba cubierto con una sábana. Todos cuantos pasaban le decían: “¿Obaramelli, tú no vas a la fiesta?”_. Él les
contestaba que no podía ir, pero que cuando se terminara la fiesta pasaran por su casa que los invitaba a comer dulces. Cuando Olofi [Ǫlǫfin] preguntó por Obaramelli, los 15 Babalawos le dijeron que no lo habían visto. Entonces Olofi [Ǫlǫfin] le regaló una calabaza a cada uno. Al acabarse la fiesta todos fueron a casa de Obaramelli, y éste les brindó bebidas, al poco rato se emborracharon y se quedaron dormidos, cuando despertaron le regalaron las calabazas y se marcharon. La esposa de Obaramelli le decía que gastaba el dinero en bebidas y no tenían comida, entonces Obaramelli le respondió: “Sí, tenemos 15 calabazas”. Cuando la señora fue a abrir las calabazas se encontró la sorpresa de que todas estaban llenas de oro y Obaramelli fue el rey más rico de todos. (Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández, 1995, p. 132)

[On one occasion Olofi [Ǫlǫfin] invited 16 Babalawo (priests of Òrùmílà; Òrùmílà is the Òrìṣá in charge of the Ifá divination system) who were kings to a gathering at his palace, but Ṣbàràmèlli was passing through a rough economic situation and the only piece of clothing he had was a blanket. Everyone who was passing by his house asked Ṣbàràmèlli, “Are you coming to the gathering?” He answered that he would not be able to go, but he asked them to come by his house after the gathering that they were invited to eat sweets. When Olofi [Ǫlǫfin] asked for Ṣbàràmèlli, all 15 Babalawo told him that they had not seen Ṣbàràmèlli. Then Olofi [Ǫlǫfin] gave a pumpkin to each one of them. After the gathering, they all went to Ṣbàràmèlli’s home, and he offered drinks to all of them; they got drunk soon after and fell asleep; when they woke up they gave him
the pumpkins and went their way. Òbàràmèlì’s wife told him that he was wasting money in drinks, and they did not have any food to put on their table, to which Òbàràmèlì replied, “Yes, we do; we have 15 pumpkins.” When his wife went to cut open the pumpkins, she was surprised when she found out that they were full of gold, and then Òbàràmèlì became the richest king.]

3.1.18 Òbàrà Pàtàkì I1 from Yorùbá land

The following Òbàrà Pàtàkì is the Yorùbá land version of the Historia de Obara Melli [Òbàrà Òbàrà Pàtàkì] which Bascom labeled I1.

I1

“We should build a store house for money in advance;

“We should build a verandah for riches in advance;

“We should buy new clothes for next year’s child in advance”

Cast for Obara

When he was going for his year-round farm.

Orisha says that he says, “A blessing of money;

He says, “A blessing of children”

Where we cast Six Elders

On the tray.

There was Obara, this year-round farm that he was going to,
What should he do that it would please him?

They said he would offer 12,000 cowries;

They said he would offer six chickens;

He would offer six pigeons;

He should offer a black cloth.

Obara collected the sacrifice, he offered the sacrificed;

He appeased the gods.

He went to the year-round farm;

He began to hoe the farm.

He began to hoe the farm.

He planted sweet potatoes;

He planted water yams;

He planted bitter yams.

As he wanted to roast some sweet potatoes,

He searched and searched one day, but he did not find any.

So he went and took corn

And toasted it,
And he was eating it.

He was toasting beans and eating them.

A hunter went to the forest;

The hunter met the King of the Forest there.

When he met the King of the Forest,

The King of the Forest said, “You, hunter, what are you looking for?”

The hunter said he was in poverty.

He said, “All right. Wait for me.”

And he took six pumpkins.

He cleaned up five and filled them with beads;

He gave them to the hunter.

When the hunter met Obara

Where he was eating beans,

Obara said the hunter should sit down.

The hunter sat down

And they ate beans together.

When they had finished eating the beans,
They drank water.

Both of them lay down in the shade,

And they slept under a tree.

When the hunter awoke,

The hunter said, “Elderly Father.”

Obara said, “Yes.”

He said, “Put these things in the farm hut

“So that you can eat them some other day.”

Obara said, “Good.”

Obara did not take it as anything

For six days.

Afterwards, one day

When he did not find anything to eat,

The things that the hunter gave him,

“Should I not look at them?

“Just look at them?”

When he looked at them,
He tried to open the first but

It was full of beads.

The second was the same;

The third was the same;

The fourth was the same;

The fifth was the same.

Only one was a real pumpkin,

He took the seed of this one

And planted them near his hut.

And Obara became wealthy, Obara was rich;

And Obara became wealthy, he was rich.

This hunter went again.

The King of the Forest said, “What do you want now?”

He said, “I’m looking for wealth;

“I’m in poverty.”

He said, “What about what I gave you the other day?”

He said, “Father who has a farm over there,
“He is the one to whom I gave them.”

“Ha!” he said, “You will never be rich again.”

This is why hunters who hunt in the forest are never rich anymore,

Unless they farm.

Obara became wealthy;

He was dancing, he was rejoicing;

He was praising the diviners,

And the diviners were praising Orisha.

He said the diviners had spoken the truth.

“We should build a storehouse for money in advance;

“We should build a verandah for riches in advance;

“We should buy new clothes for next year’s child in advance”

Cast for Obara

When he was going for his year-round farm.

He said, “What did you sell to have money?

“A magical pumpkin,

A magical, magical pumpkin.”
This where Orisha speaks of a blessing in the farm
For this person.
If they should give him something,
Or if they buy goods for him,
He should not say they are no good;
He should not give them away.
And if they buy goods for him,
He should not refuse them in anger,
Lest the person whom he refuses
Should benefit from them.
As Orisha has spoken,
Where we see Two Obara
On the tray
Obara says so,
The deities ordain it. (Bascom, 1980, pp. 495, 497, 499, 501)

In *Historia de Obara-Melli* [Ọbàrà Ọbàrà Pàtàkì] women are depicted as complainers and unwise for not believing in Ọrìṣá as merciful providers of the basic human needs for their ọmọ [devotee/s; child/children]. The woman in the story also did
not follow the rules of hospitality by criticizing her husband for offering refreshments to their guests. Ọbàràmelli is the voice of reason when he says, “Yes, we do; we have 15 pumpkins.” in reply to his wife, a nameless woman, who complains about not having enough food for Ọbàràmelli and herself. The gendering morale of this Pàtàkì is that women love to complain, and they are unreliable; therefore, do not listen to them, or, as a man, you will be convinced by them to fail in your duties as a host. Such a man is likely also to miss the opportunities that may come his way if he follows the advice of a woman. However, in the Ọbàrà Pàtàkì (I1) in Yorùbá land - a (presumably male) hunter is the foolish unwise person while in the gendered version in Santería, the foolish unwise person is a woman. The hunter proves to be more foolish than the gendered woman figure, since he actually gives away the present given to him after he had asked for a blessing of riches. In Yorùbá religious tradition “King of the Forest” would mean an Òrìṣá that inhabits the forest. Kuyebi (2015) while narrating the traditional story which describes the establishment of Òṣogbo – town of which Ọṣun is the patron Òrìṣá - explains the meaning of the word Òṣogbo, “…Osogbo is the contracted form of “Oso Igbo” (Spirit of the Forest)” (p.35). It is a foolish decision of the hunter not to believe that the Òrìṣá he encountered in the forest would give him the blessing of riches. The blessing is in the form of pumpkins, so the hunter can plant the seeds and earn money after the harvest. Though the “King of the Forest” tells the hunter that he will never again have the opportunity to become rich, this is not said in a violent or demeaning manner. This pàtàkì also explains why hunting alone can not make a hunter rich,

“This is why hunters who hunt in the forest are never rich anymore,

Unless they farm” (p.499).
In terms of the messages that each version of this pàtàkì conveys, the Santería version is quite simple and quite gendered at the same time, advising the person who is requesting the divination not to listen to the advice of women. The Yorùbá version, however, conveys a complex and multidimensional set of messages, none of which are gendered, including but not limited to the following: ‘Be prepared to receive blessings.’; ‘Make sure to fully acknowledge and value that which you are given.’; ‘The land will always provide to those who work it.’ ‘Money (beads) are dead wealth, but seeds are living wealth.’; etc.

The following Historias de Obara [Ọbàrà Pàtàkì] in Santería do not present women as powerless beings. In Historia de Obbara-Ejioco [Ọbàrà- Èjì Ìkò Pàtàkì] a woman defends herself against sexual harassment. In Historia de Obbara-Oddí [Ọbàrà - Odí Pàtàkì] a woman (Yemayá [Yemonja]) becomes a queen, the ruler of a town.

3.1.19 Historia de Obbara-Ejioco [Ọbàrà- Èjì Ìkò Pàtàkì] in Santería

_Había un rey que tenía un campesino empleado el cual tenía una mujer muy bonita, la cual el rey enamoraba a espaldas de su esposo, pero ella lo rechazaba. Un día el Obá [rey] le mandó una carta a la obiní [mujer], en la cual le decía que por la noche iría a vivir con ella; la mujer le devolvió la carta con el mismo mensajero, poniéndole detrás al sobre que si se atrevía a ir, ella lo mataría. Al mensajero, sin darse cuenta, se le cayó [la carta] en el fango del camino, cuando el campesino pasó por allí camino de su casa la encontró, abrió el sobre y la leyó. La respuesta de la mujer estaba escrita por detrás, por donde el sobre estaba enfangado y el hombre no la vio, sólo leyó la misiva del rey, volviéndose loco entonces_
cogió un machete y se escondió detrás de una mata de palma que había cerca del camino que llevaba a su casa. Cuando el rey pasó, el campesino lo mató a machetazos y después se dirigió a su casa para matar a su mujer. Como estaba furioso, al entrar, no avisó que era él y en la oscuridad de la noche la mujer lo confundió con el rey, enterrándole un cuchillo. Al oír los gritos, la mujer lo reconoció y se dio cuenta de que era su marido; éste le dijo que pensaba matarla porque la creía infiel y le contó acerca de la carta que había encontrado en el camino; a lo cual ella le respondió: “No leíste mi respuesta en la parte de atrás del sobre, donde lo amenazaba con matarlo si se atrevía venir”. Él le dijo: “No vi esa respuesta, porque el sobre estaba enfangado”. Ella se echó a llorar, pero el esposo le dijo: “No llores, porque muero feliz, porque sé que me quieres de verdad, eso me pasó por no hacerle caso a Orula que me registró y me dijo: “Las apariencias engañan y no te ciegues, y yo no lo obedecí”. (Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández, 1995, p. 129)

[There was once a peasant who worked for a king. The peasant had a very pretty wife who the king was trying to seduce. However, the wife always rejected the king’s harassment. One day the Obá [king] sent a letter to the obini [woman] telling her that he was going to be with her that night. She wrote on the back of the envelope that she would kill him if he dared to go to her house. She returned the letter with the same messenger. Unfortunately, the messenger lost the letter on the muddy road on his way back. When the peasant was going down the same road on his way home he found the letter,
opened it, and read it. The back of the envelope, where the woman had written the king what she was going to do, was muddied when it fell on the road. Her husband was thus only able to read the king’s letter. He became enraged, got hold of a machete, and waited behind the bushes for the king to pass by on the way to meet his wife. When the king passed by, he killed the king and went to his home to kill his wife. He was so furious that he forgot to announce that he was home. His wife thought in the darkness of night that he was the king, and she stabbed him. She recognized her husband’s voice when she heard him screaming. Her husband told her that he was trying to kill her because he thought she was being unfaithful. He then told her about the letter he had found on the muddy road. She replied, “You did not read my answer on the back of the envelope where I threatened to kill him if he dared to come.” He said, “I did not read your answer because the envelope was muddy.” His wife began to cry, but he said, “Don’t cry because I die a happy man. I know that you love me. This all happened because I did not follow the advice of Orula [Òrùmílà] when I went to a reading/divination. Orula [Òrùmílà] told me that, “Appearances can be deceiving. Do not be blinded by anger.” But I did not obey him.”

In the Historia de Obbara-Ejioco [Ọbàrà Èjì Èkò Pàtàki] the female character has a voice. She defends herself against sexual harassment without telling her husband about it. First, she threatens to kill the king when he informed her of his decision to have sexual relations with her. She threatens him bravely and defiantly. Second, she kills the person who she thinks is the king, as she had threatened to do. Unfortunately, she stabs
her jealous husband. Nonetheless, all the actions taken by the wife are accepted forms of
self-defense expected of a married woman.

The motivation for the wife’s defiant and assertive actions is based on her desire
to defend her husband’s honor and her honor as a married woman. In the Judeo-Christian
patriarchal system a married woman is allowed to use any means necessary to prevent
any sexual relations with a man that is not her husband. By stopping this disgrace, she
will not become damaged goods and will keep her husband’s honor unblemished.

Conversely, if an unmarried woman denounces sexual harassment or happens to
kill in self-defense a rapist or would be rapist, she would have to prove well beyond any
reasonable doubt that she did not consent to either aggression. During the September
2018 hearings in the United States Senate to confirm Judge Brett Kavanaugh as Justice of
the Supreme Court, the testimony of Dr. Christine Blasey Ford was dismissed as
unreliable. Dr. Blasey Ford described the sexual assault perpetrated by Judge Kavanaugh
when they were both in college, but her statement was not taken as being accurate or
reliable. She was even mocked by the President of the United States. The United States
Senate’s patriarchal, misogynist attitude is reminiscent of the proceedings during
Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas’ confirmation hearings in 1991 when Anita Hill
testified before the Senate to accuse Thomas of sexual harassment. Anita Hill worked “at
the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights [in 1981, were she] served as
legal adviser to Thomas, who was [the] assistant secretary” (Tikkanen, 2019). Tikkanen
continues “The hearings …created a media circus [which] propelled Hill into the
spotlight … a number of senators accused her of lying and raised doubts about her
sanity” (2019, 4th paragraph). Women who demand respect as professionals, who
demand respect for their bodies, and who demand the right to decide with whom to have sexual relations must be insane.

Another important aspect of this historia (pàtâkì) is that the man admits that he willingly disobeyed and disregarded the advice of Orula [Ôrùmîlà] which led to his death. This acknowledgement of the negative consequences of a man’s decision is rarely seen in the patriarchal, Judeo-Christian system. A man’s decisions are not questioned; he always does what he thinks is best. It does not matter if any of his decisions have negative or fatal consequences. Despite this departure from the usual gendering approaches adopted in Santería pàtâkì, the fear of dire consequences is used here as elsewhere as the main strategy to make people obey to the advice given in the historias (pàtâkì).

3.1.20 Historia de Obbara-Oddí [Qbàrà-Ôdí Pàtàkì]in Santería

Cierta vez Yemayá [Yemonja] estaba atravesando por una situación difícil y fue a “registrarse”, y le salió este Oddum, [Odù] donde le dijeron: “Si quieres salir airosa de los problemas que te agobian y de los que se te van a presentar, no puedes renegar, ni protestar”. Y le marcaron ebbó [èbò] (an offering to any one of the Orisha [Ôrìsà] to avoid an unwanted or perilous situation), lo cual ella hizo. Salió de la consulta advertida de que iba a tener tropiezos, pero que no renegara.

Cuando Yemayá [Yemonja] iba por un camino que conducía a un monte, a la entrada de éste se encontró a un niño que le dijo: “Mi madre, ayúdeme con esta canasta”. Ella lo ayudó y se le manchó su ropa de epó (aceite
rojo de palma). Iba a renegar pero se acordó de la recomendación que le habían hecho y siguió su camino a pesar de haberse ensuciado el vestido y no tener otro. A poco de andar se encontró con un señor apoyado en un bastón, éste le pidió ayuda y, al hacerlo, el viejo le viró encima el contenido del saco, después de lo cual salió corriendo, riéndose de ella, el viejo era Eshu [Éšú] otra vez. Siguió Yemayá [Yemónja] su camino y volvió a encontrarse con otro personaje y le sucedió lo mismo, pero tampoco protestó. Cuando ya estaba cansada de caminar vio un claro en el bosque, y cuál no sería su sorpresa al llegar a él y ver que a poca distancia se distinguía una hermosa ciudad, llena de hermosos edificios. Se encaminó a ella y llegó a las puertas de un hermoso palacio, quiso entrar, pero los guardias que estaban en la puerta, cruzando sus lanzas, le negaron la entrada.

Al ocurrir esto, Yemayá [Yemónja] se sentó allí mismo y se echó a llorar desconsoladamente, pensando que su sacrificio había sido en vano, llorando se quedó dormida. Al despertar, notó que en esos momentos, no había nadie en la puerta, debido al cambio de guardias; y aprovechó la ocasión para entrar al palacio. Unos instantes después el soberano de aquel Reino, que a su vez era el guía espiritual de los demás reinos, al ver a aquella mujer, se levantó de su silla y fue a su encuentro arrodillándose delante de ella y diciendo: “Mi madre, écheme su bendición”. Después de ser bendecido, le dijo: “Arrodillese” y quitándose la corona se la puso a ella.

[There was a time when Yemayá [Yemonja] was going through a difficult situation, so she went for a divinatory reading. The Oddum[Odú] that came out in the reading was Obbara-Odidi [Ọbàrà-Òdí Odú]; it said, “If you want to solve the problems that afflict you right now and also be able to solve the problems that are coming your way, you should not get angry or complain.” Yemayá [Yemonja] did the ebbó [ebbó] (an offering to any one of the Orisha [Ọrịṣá] to avoid an unwanted or perilous situation) that was requested of her. She left the site of the reading knowing that more troubles were coming her way. She also knew that she should remember not to complain about them.

On her way to a road leading to a mountain, Yemayá [Yemonja] saw a child at the head of the road. The child said, “Mother, please help me with this basket.” She helped the boy, but her clothes were stained with epó (red palm oil). The child was a manifestation of the Orisha Eshu [Ọrịṣá Éshú] (the trickster). She was going to get angry and complain, but she remembered the advice the oracle gave her. So, Yemayá [Yemonja] continued her way without complaining even though, the epó [red palm oil] stained her dress, and she did not have an extra
one. As she continued her way, *Yemayá* [Yemonja] saw an old man walking with a cane. The old man asked her to help him, but when she helped him, he poured the contents of a sack he was carrying on her. The old man started to laugh at her; it was *Eshu* [Éšú] again. *Yemayá* [Yemonja] continued her way, and another person came her way. The same thing happened all over again, but she did not get angry or complained. When she was tired of walking, she saw a clearing in the forest. She was pleasantly surprised when she saw a beautiful city with beautiful buildings not far away from where she was. *Yemayá* [Yemonja] walked towards the city. When she was in the city, she arrived at the door of a beautiful palace. *Yemayá* [Yemonja] tried to get in, but the guards at the door crossed their spears in front of the door to deny her entrance to the palace.

When the guards denied her entrance to the palace, *Yemayá* [Yemonja] sat by the door and began to cry from heartbreak, thinking that all her hard work had been in vain. Then she fell asleep. When *Yemayá* [Yemonja] woke up, she realized that the guards were not at the door because it was time for the change of guard. She took this opportunity to get into the palace. Moments later, the sovereign of that Kingdom, who was at the same time the spiritual guide of the other kingdoms, saw her. The sovereign stood up from his chair and went to meet *Yemayá* [Yemonja]. He knelt before her and said, “Mother, please bless me.” After she blessed him, he said, “Please kneel.” Then the sovereign took off his crown and crowned *Yemayá* [Yemonja]. Everyone was astounded when they saw what had just happened, and they all knelt before *Yemayá* [Yemonja]. The people paid *Moforibale* [homage] to her. From that day on she became the
queen of that country. In that court the king was not allowed to walk anywhere he wanted to go. People would carry him on their shoulders, so he would not have to walk. When Yemayá [Yemonja] was crowned she became the queen of that land. Shangó [Şàngó] was the king who crowned her.]

Because it does not demean women, the Historia de Obbara-Oddí [Ọbàrà-Ọdí Pàtàki] is different from most of the other pàtàki in the Americas, and instead is similar to many of the pàtàki in Yorùbá land. This historia (pàtàki), where a woman is empowered, teaches its lesson in a non-violent way. Fear does not drive Yemayá [Yemonja] to follow the oracle’s advice. The difficulties confronted by Yemayá [Yemonja] are meant to build character, not as punishment for wrong doing. Yemayá [Yemonja] becomes queen when Shangó [Şàngó] recognizes in her better attributes than his own, making him conclude that she should therefore be the queen. No one in town questions Shangó’s [Şàngó’s] decision to make Yemayá [Yemonja], a woman, the new queen of the town. This historia (pàtàki) is similar to Èjì Òkò Pàtàki (E1). In Èjì Òkò Pàtàki (E1) Aganna becomes king of a foreign town because he was equally kind to women and men. In Historia de Obbara-Oddí [Ọbàrà-Ọdí Pàtàki i] Yemayá [Yemonja] becomes queen of a foreign town because she shows restraint.

3.1.21 Historia de Oddí-Obara (combined Odù of seven cowry mouths open and six cowry mouths open) [Ọdí - Ọbàrà Pàtàki] in Santería

Hubo un tiempo en que las mujeres vivían separadas de los hombres, cada cual en su tierra, pero cuando a los hombres les hacía falta hacer uso de ellas las iban a buscar y después regresaban cada cual para sus
respectivos lugares. Un día los hombres pensaron hacerle [sic] la guerra a las mujeres y aprovecharse de ellas; así fue que les declararon la guerra. Los hombres antes de empezar fueron a casa de Obatalá [Ọbàtálá], y este les dijo que tenían que hacer ebbó [ębọ] (an offering to any one of the Orisha [Ọrìṣá] to avoid an unwanted or perilous situation) si querían ganarle [sic] la guerra a las mujeres, con 6 jícaras de oñí, 6 de epó, 6 animales diferentes y owó lamegua. Pero ellos le dijeron: “¿Tener que hacer ebbó [ębọ] por tan poca cosa?, ¡si para ganarle la guerra a las mujeres no tenemos más que darles una bofetada y con eso las venceremos!” Y no hicieron la rogación. En ese [sic] se enteraron las mujeres de la guerra que les querían hacer los hombres y se prepararon, fueron a Ewure melli, adié, oñí, acodie y owó Meridilogun. Todas hicieron la rogación que Obatalá [Ọbàtálá] les marcó. Cuando los hombres llegaron al pueblo de las mujeres era de noche y empezó a llover de tal manera que todos los atributos de guerra que llevaban se mojaron y no pudieron hacer uso de ellos. En eso empezaron a sentir un frío intenso y tuvieron que pedirle [sic] a gritos auxilio a las mujeres; estas [sic] que los oyeron salieron a socorrerlos y en cada casa de una mujer se quedó un hombre. Al otro día, Olofi [Ọlofin] ordenó que cada hombre que se había quedado en casa de una mujer recibiría a ésta como su esposa. Y aquí nace el matrimonio. (Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández, 1995, p. 141)
[There was a time in which women lived apart from men, each group lived in their own territory, but when men needed to use them for sex, they went to seek them out. Afterwards, each man went back to his own home. One day, men decided to make war on women, and take advantage of [rape] them; therefore, the men declared war on the women. The men went to see Obatalá [Ọbàtálá] before going to war, and Obatalá [Ọbàtálá] told them that they needed to do ebbó [ẹbọ] (an offering to any one of the Orisha [Ọrìṣà] to avoid an unwanted or perilous situation) if they wanted to win the war. They needed 6 bowls of honey [ọní], 6 bowls of red palm oil [ẹpọ], 6 different types of animals, and money [ówó lamegua]. But the men said, “Why should we do ebbó [ẹbọ] for such an insignificant task?” To win the war we only need to slap the women and we will be able to defeat them! And they did do the rogación [sic]. The women heard that the men were planning a war against them, and they got ready. They went to double Ewure, hen [adié], honey [ọní], rooster [acodié], and money [ówọ] Meridilogun [the Odù where 16 cowry mouths are facing up]. Each one of the women did the rogación [sic] that Obatalá [Ọbàtálá] asked to be done. It was night time by the time the men arrived at the town of the women; and their weapons became useless because rain was pouring that night. Then they began to feel extremely cold, and they had to scream to beg the women for their help. The women came to their aid when they heard them scream, and there was a man in each woman’s house throughout the night. The next day Olofi [Ọlọfin] commanded that from that day on, each man who had stayed in the house of a
woman would receive that woman as his wife. This is how the institution of matrimony began.]

### 3.1.22 Òdí Pàtàkì J1 from Yorùbá land

The following Òdí Pàtàkì from Yorùbá land which Bascom (1980) labels J1 explains marriage.

**J1**

Orisha says, “A blessing of money,

“A blessing of wealth,

“A blessing of children;

Orisha says, “A blessing of long life,"

Where we see Seven Elders.

Orisha says that we should offer a sacrifice;

Orisha says we should offer a sacrifice.

“*Idi gbere, idi gbere, idi gbere, arinna ko*”

Cast for Lagbonpala when he was going to marry an old woman.

Lagbonpala, what could he do to have children in this life?

They said he should offer a sacrifice.
The old woman, what could she do to have children in her life?

They said she should offer a sacrifice.

What should they offer?

They said they should offer 14,000 cowries each;

That each should offer a cock;

They said they should have seven cymbals.

Lagbonpala, they collected the sacrifice, they offered the sacrifice;

They appeased the gods.

They said Lagbonpala should buy a hen

And he should sacrifice it to his head;

He should buy a brass cymbal and sacrifice it to his head.

And the old woman should buy a hen,

And she should buy a brass cymbal and sacrifice them to her head.

They went to the Ojobomekun market.

The old woman reached the market first.

The traders had brought only one chicken [sic] to market,

And they had brought only one cymbal.
The old woman bought both.

When Lagbonpala arrived

He tried to take them from the old woman;

He said he would buy them.

“You’ll buy them?”

He said he would buy them.

“What?” They were about to fight.

“When I bought them to use

“And you want to take them from me,

“Did I say I want to sell them?”

They were fighting.

Eshu came;

Eshu said, “What is the matter?”

The old woman stated her case,

And Lagbonpala stated his case;

The old woman said, “Because I want to sacrifice to my head.

She said, “When I have no husband
“And they said I would bear children,

“For whom will I bear children?”

Eshu said, “What about you, Lagbonpala?”

He said, “When I offer a sacrifice

“And they said I would bear children

“And I have no wife,

“Who will bear children for me?”

“They said I should sacrifice to my head

“And they said I should buy a chicken,

“And the chicken they said I should buy,

“This Mother says she will not sell to me.

“Ha!” Eshu said, “Orisha is greater than both of you.

“You, old woman, you see your husband.

“You, Lagbonpala, you see your wife.

“Come with me.”

He took them to Old Father (Orishala [Ọbàtálá]).

He said they should sit down.
He took a kola nut and touched it to their heads;

He touched the cymbal to their heads.

He killed the chicken,

And sacrificed it to their heads.

He said, “Children,

He said, “Go and sleep;

“Go sleep on the same mat.

“You are the husband,

“You are the wife.”

Like a game, like a joke,

The old woman came home, she began to bear children.

When she gave birth, she bore seven children;

When she defecated, she bore seven children.

The house was full, the road received them.

The old woman was dancing, Lagbonpala was rejoicing;

They were praising the diviners, and the diviners were praising the Orishas

That their diviners had spoken the truth.
“Idi gbere, idi gbere, idi gbere, arinna ko” [“Hail odi, hail odi, hail odi, travelers meet” (www.freelang.net)]

Cast for Lagbonpala when he was going to marry an old woman.

He offered the sacrifice.

“It won’t be long, it’s not far away,

“You will see me in an abundance of blessings.”

Orisha says we should offer a sacrifice for children,

When you see Seven Elders. (Bascom, 1980, pp. 583, 585, 587)

Although the oracle explains matrimony in both Historia de Òddí – Òbara as well as in Òdí - Qbàrà Pàtàkì (J1), and despite the fact that in both narrations Òbàtálá presents a possible solution to the conflict, the similarities end there. The Historia de Òddí – Òbara [Òdí - Qbàrà Pàtàkì] is a full-frontal assault on women: women’s dignity, women’s sexuality, women’s voice, and women’s ability to make decisions. The historia (pàtàkì) is narrated from a male perspective. It is assumed that women always want to have sex with men since the men go whenever they want to the town of the women to have sex with them. However, this agreement is not enough for the men, and they decide to wage war on the women. Men want to, “take advantage of [rape] them”, since they believe that they, “only need to slap the women and we [men] will be able to defeat them!” Therefore, it is not necessary to worry, “for such an insignificant task.” Violence, the most efficient weapon of patriarchy which translates into fear for lives and safety, will keep women in their assigned place in society and will render them
submissive to the will of men. The only decision women are allowed to make in this
historia (pàtàkì) is to go for a reading /divination to be able to defend themselves; women
are voiceless before and after they decide to go for the reading. Corresponding to Judeo-
Christian patriarchal beliefs, the will of men prevails despite the fact that they did not win
the war, and that they were also forced to ask for the help of women to protect themselves
from the elements. Men’s greed and disrespect, which led them to go to war is eventually
rewarded, because in the end, each man ends up with a woman. Conveniently, nothing is
said to determine if each woman wanted to end up with a man. As a reward for their
kindness, women are forced by Olofi [Ọlọfín] (Supreme Deity) to live with the man they
saved from the cold rainy night. Women have no say in a decision that will affect their
lives forever. This injustice establishes matrimony as a patriarchal institution where
women are powerless, voiceless, and the property of men.

Conversely, Odí Pàtàkì (J1) in Yorùbá land narrates the desire of a man and a
woman who are both looking for the same blessing: a spouse and children. Both the man,
Lagbonpala, and the woman, who is described as an old woman, are strong and
determined persons. Neither is afraid of asking for or of keeping what they think is
rightfully theirs. They do not hesitate to do what they think is necessary to make their
dreams come true,

“He [Lagbonpala] tried to take them from the old woman;

He said he would buy them.

“You’ll buy them?” …

“What?” They were about to fight.
“When I bought them to use

“And you want to take them from me,

“Did I say I want to sell them?”

They were fighting.” (p.585)

This is a quarrel among equals. It is not a war where one side wants to subdue the other. Obatalá [Ọbàtálá] and Eshu [Éṣú] help them understand that they will find in each other what each has been looking for. Obatalá [Ọbàtálá] then suggests, “Go sleep on the same mat.” There is no violence in this pàtàkì. There is no desire to force anyone’s will. Each character expresses her and his point of view; each one is doing everything in their power to make their dreams come true. No assault takes place when Lagbonpala and this woman meet. They are both poetically described as travelers in life. The pàtàkì refers to their encounter as, “Like a game, like a joke, …” The woman was finally where she wanted to be and doing what she wanted to do, “The old woman came home, she began to bear children.” As with all other patakì included in Bascom (1980) the rhythm and the structure of the lines create a peaceful sensation in the reader, who is invited, rather than ordered, to act and to heed advice. There are no ominous warnings, and the male protagonist is not trying to hurt, mutilate, or destroy the body of a woman.

3.1.23 Historia de Oddí Melli (repeated combined Odù of seven cowry mouths open and seven cowry mouths open) [Ọdí - Òdí Pàtàkì] in Santería”

_Era en el tiempo en que no se enterraba ningún cadáver en Oddi [Ọdí], nunca se había abierto un hoyo; los cadáveres se amortajaban y después_
se los llevaba al pie de una Ceiba Acaraba. Aconteció que Mofá tenía su señora, éste decía que la quería mucho, que no sabía que se haría sin él que era todo para ella. Tenían un hijo, pero a ella no les gustaban los muchachos y maltrataba a su hijo a menudo mientras que Mofá lo acariciaba y le daba buen trato. Esto lo hacía la mujer de Mofá porque tenía otro hombre que no le daba nada, que no la atendía y lo que ella decía sentir por Mofá no era cierto, pues hasta su hijo le estorbaba. Cuando se encontraba con el otro hombre decía: “¡Qué aburrida y qué cansada estoy de Mofá!”, y cuando estaba al lado de Mofá: “¡Cuánto te quiero!” Ya era tanto lo que le había repetido al otro hombre de que estaba aburrida de Mofá, que un día él le dijo: “¿Quieres deshacerte de Mofá?”. Y ella le respondió: “Sí, ¿cómo?”. Él le contestó: “Tú sabes que aquí todos los cadáveres se amarran y se llevan al pie de la Ceiba; te haces la muerta esta noche, todos vendrán a verte y creerán que es cierto, te amarrarán y te llevarán al pie de una Ceiba, yo iré a ese lugar de madrugada y te llevaré para mi casa”. Así lo hizo la mujer de Mofá y sucedió como habían planeado. Pasaron varios días, el hombre vendía quimbombó en la Plaza, entonces pensó que teniendo a la mujer en la casa ella se podría dedicar a ese negocio y él a trabajar en otra cosa. Como Mofá quedó viudo, tenía que cocinar para él y su hijo, mandó un día al muchacho a la Plaza a comprar quimbombó y el único lugar donde se vendía era en la casa de la nueva mercader. Fue un asombro para el muchacho al llegar a ese lugar y ver que quién le iba a despachar era su
mamá. Cuando el muchacho asombrado la llamó “mamá”, ella le respondió fríamente: “No soy tu mamá”. Al llegar el muchacho donde estaba su papá, le contó lo sucedido en la Plaza; pero éste no le creyó, pues su esposa estaba muerta. Al día siguiente Mofá mandó nuevamente a su hijo a comprar lo mismo al Mercado. Esta vez el muchacho compró el mandado, pero no le dijo nada a su mamá, regresó a la casa y le dijo a su padre: “Papá, yo estoy seguro que [sic] la que me despachó era mi mamá”. “Hijo, dijo el padre – tu mamá está muerta”. “Ve tú, papá, y te convencerás”. Al tercer día el padre se dirigió a la Plaza al lugar donde vendían quimbombó. La mujer de Mofá estaba entretenida arreglando algo y no pudo ver la llegada de éste. Mofá aunque de espaldas, reconoció a su mujer. Inmediatamente la agarró; la mujer gritaba y Mofá también, todos los que por allí transitaban se pararon por la bulla. Cuando hubo bastante público, Mofá explicó la traición de su mujer y el público pidió que la matara. El propuso una muerte distinta a todas las que habían dado en es, [sic] pueblo temiendo una segunda traición. Preguntáronle cuál era la muerte que él le daría, respondió que abriría un hoyo hondo y la enterraría viva. El pueblo aceptó puesto que en aquel lugar no se acostumbraba que una mujer traicionara a su marido.

Después de contársele esta historia al que se está registrando dígale que quiera mucho a su marido (si es mujer) y viceversa (si es hombre), que ella nunca tenga dos hombres a la vez. O de lo contrario, si es hombre,
que se lleven bien los dos conyugues, que traten bien a sus muchachos, que no sean viciosos, que no averigüen chismes, ni permitan que se los traigan, que no sean curiosos, porque Oddi- Melli [Òdí-Òdí Pàtàkì] es enfermedad, muerte y traición.

Refrán africano: Muchacho y quimbombó, delante de ellos me agacho yo.

(Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández, 1995, pp. 141, 142)

[At a time [in the past] in Oddi [Òdí] corpses were not buried because graves had never been dug; corpses were embalmed, and later they were placed by an Acaraba Ceiba tree. A villager named Mofá was married. He said that he was deeply in love with his wife and that he could not imagine what she would do without him. He also said that he was all that his wife would ever want. They had a son, but Mofá’s wife did not like children, and she constantly mistreated her son. On the other hand, Mofá treated their son well and cared for him. Mofá’s wife behaved in such manner because she was seeing another man who did not provide for her and did not take care of her. Mofá’s wife was not in love with Mofá; this was evident by her emotional detachment from their son. During Mofá’s wife’s trysts with this other man she would say, “How bored I am, and how sick and tired I am of Mofá.” When she was with Mofá she would say, “I love you so much!” After telling the other man over and over again how bored she was of Mofá, the other man said, “Do you want to get rid of Mofá?” She replied, “Yes. How can I do it?” He answered, “You know that corpses are embalmed, tied up, and placed under a ceiba tree. You will pretend to be dead tonight; everyone will come, and they will believe that you have died. They will
then tie you up and place you under a ceiba tree. I will go to that ceiba tree before dawn and I will take you home.” Mofá’s wife followed their plan, and everything worked out as they had foreseen it. Many days went by. The man continued to sell okra at the market place. He then thought that since the woman was home with him, she could take care of this business, and he would find another way to earn money. Mofá had to cook for himself and his son since he had become a widower. One day he sent his child to the market place to buy okra, and the only place where they sold okra was the stand of the new seller in the market. The boy was shocked when he got there and recognized that the seller was his mother. The boy in amazement called out, “Mother”, but she coldly replied, “I am not your mother.” When the boy arrived home, he told his father about the events that took place at the market place. The father did not believe him because his wife was dead. The next day Mofá sent his son again to buy okra at the market place. This time the boy bought what he was asked to buy, but he did not say anything to his mother. When he returned home he told his father, “Father, I am sure that the seller was my mother.” “Son, – said the father – your mother is dead.” “You should go, and you will be convinced that she is my mother.” The third time, Mofá went himself to the stand at the market place where they sold okra. Mofá’s wife was so busy organizing the stand that she did not see him coming in. Mofá recognized his wife even though she was not facing him. He immediately grabbed her; the woman was screaming and so was Mofá. Every one that was passing by stopped to see what the disturbance was about. When the crowd was big enough, Mofá explained his wife’s betrayal, and the
crowd demanded of him to kill her. He proposed a different type of death, one that had not been seen before, because he was afraid that his wife might betray him again. When the crowd asked which type of death he was proposing, Mofá explained that he would make a deep hole, and he would bury her alive. The crowd agreed because in that town it was not the custom for women to betray their husbands.

After this historia (pàtàkì) has been related to the consultant/devotee you should tell a woman to love her husband very much and vice versa to a man. Tell a woman that she should never be with two men at the same time. Tell a man that both spouses should get along and children should be treated well. Spouses should not listen to gossip and should never allow people to come to their home to tell gossip. Do not be nosy because Oddi- Melli [Ôdi-Ôdí Pàtàkì] signifies that fright, sickness, death, or treason can come your way. African saying: I will bow before a child and okra.]

_Historia de Oddi- Melli [Ôdi-Ôdí Pàtàkì] is constructed to convey a very powerful and intimidating message to all women who do not conform to patriarchal norms: any woman caught in a sexual relationship outside of wedlock will be punished by death. This penalty is reaffirmed by the crowd at the end of the historia (pàtàkì) when they agree to a horrific, cruel death to punish the woman’s transgression, “Mofá explained that he will make a deep hole, and he will bury her alive. The crowd agreed because in that town it was not the custom for women to betray their husbands.” It was necessary to do something that has never been done before (open a hole in the ground) to punish the heinous crime against patriarchy committed by a woman: adultery._
This *historia* (*pàtàkì*) depicts the female character as a callous, ungrateful liar who is devoid of motherly love, which is an appalling crime for a woman in Judeo-Christian, patriarchal society. Mofá’s wife does not yield to her husband’s authority. Instead, she follows another man’s plan to help her escape a loveless marriage; this solution denies her power as a woman to make decisions on her own. The characterization of Mofá’s wife as being devoid of motherly love is another reason to condemn her to death. This condemnation serves as an example to keep her gender under male control. Her death is necessary because this woman is only capable of loving children if she bears them with a man she cares for, “Mofá’s wife was not in love with Mofá; this was evident by her emotional detachment from their son.” At the same time, it portrays Mofá as a caring husband, a good provider who deeply loves his wife and their son. This noble man does not remarry after the “death” of his wife and takes care of his son all by himself. Even without the financial support of the father of their children, women have been taking care of the welfare of their daughters and sons for centuries. However, this man is praised indirectly for taking the same responsibility upon himself.

Once more there is no similar *pàtàkì* found in any of the 18 *Òdí Pàtàkì* recorded by Bascom (1980) nor is adultery, or a punishment for adultery, included in any of them. In *The Cultural Unity of Black Africa*, Cheikh Anta Diop (1989) asserts that, “No evidence can be found either in literature or in historical records – Egyptian or otherwise – relating to the systematic ill-treatment of Egyptian women by their men” (p. 54). Such a horrific death for a woman is not a cultural trait in Black Africa. This *Historia de Oddi- Melli* [*Òdí - Òdí Pàtàkì*] warns women to refrain from extramarital sexual relationships because if they do not, they will pay the ultimate price in the most horrific
way. It is designed to keep women subservient to men. Though it is the only historia (pàtàkì) in which a woman expresses her feelings and wishes, her discourse is converted into a weapon against all women to subdue them. Her own words condemn her and all of her gender forevermore to an unspeakable death for transgressing patriarchal mandates.

3.1.24 Historia de Eyeúnle-Iroso (combined Odù of eight cowry mouths open and four cowry mouths open) [Êjì Ogbè - Ìròṣùn Pàtàkì] in Santería

Un matrimonio fue a “mirarse” porque la mujer estaba enferma y el Santo [Órìṣá] le marcó rogación. Hicieron el ebbó [èbọ] (an offering to any of the Orisha [Órìṣá] to avoid an unwanted or perilous situation) pero no lo hicieron completo y dejaron los animales. Al poco tiempo, el hombre desconfiado volvió a verse y le dijo a la persona que lo consultó que su mujer no había tenido ninguna mejoría, por lo que el hombre creía que el Santo [Órìṣá] lo había engañado y le había pedido los animales para cogérselos. El Santo [Órìṣá] le dijo que tuviera paciencia y así fue, hasta que el hombre volvió de nuevo y le dijo que él no había visto nada, que venía para que le devolviera el dinero junto con los animales. El Santo [Órìṣá] no tuvo inconvenientes, le dijo que sí, pero que para podérselos devolver tenía que traer a la mujer, [sic] porque él se los había entregado en presencia de ella. El hombre fue a buscar a la mujer, pero esta [sic] se negó a ir y el hombre tuvo que obligarla. Cuando llegaron a casa del Santo [Órìṣá], éste cogió los animales [sic] el dinero y los mandó a ellos a que se arrodillaran, cuando les fue a hacer entrega de los mismos, se abrió la tierra delante de él y los animales y el dinero cayeron
dentro del hueco. El hombre, al ver esto, se tiró dentro del hueco para sacarlos, en esto se cerró la tierra, dejándolo sepultado. (El que duda de la palabra del Santo [Ôrîṣá], recibe un castigo. (Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández, 1995, pp. 147, 148)

[A married couple went for a reading/consultation and the Saint [Ôrîṣá] said that they needed to do an ebbó [ẹbọ]. They did only part of the ebbó [ẹbọ] because they forgot to offer the animals. Sometime later the man, who suspected foul play, went for another reading. He told the diviner that his wife’s health had not improved. Therefore, he thought that he had been fooled, and that the diviner had taken the animals for her or himself. The Saint [Ôrîṣá] told him to be patient, and so it was for a while. The man returned and told the diviner that his wife’s condition was still unchanged. He was there to ask her/him to return the money and the animals. The Saint [Ôrîṣá] did not object. However, [the Saint added] his wife needed to be present because the objects and animals for the ebbó [ẹbọ] were given in her presence. The man went to look for his wife, but she refused to return. The man had to force her to go back. When they reached the house of the Saint [Ôrîṣá] the diviner took the money and the animals and asked the man and his wife to kneel. When he was going to give their money and their animals back to them, the ground split open before the man. The animals and the money fell into the hole. When the man saw what was happening, he threw himself into the hole to get them out. The ground closed again while the man was inside the hole burying him alive. (Punishment will befall the person who doubts what the Saint [Ôrîṣá] has promised.)
3.1.25 Èjì Ogbè Pàtàkì A5 from Yorùbá land

The following Èjì Ogbè Pàtàkì from Yorùbá land which Bascom (1980) labels A5 narrates what happens to a woman who mocks a diviner because, according to this woman, promises made to her had not been fulfilled.

A5

“A drizzle drives the child home;

“A torrent of rain water shakes the walls violently”

Cast for “One who has small children.”

She said her earthly blessings were late;

She said her heavenly blessings were late.

She did not know her head chose a destiny of beads, her head chose a destiny of brass,

Her head chose a great abundance of money.

“One who has a deity to worship, the diviner of the king,

“One who grows to a very old age.”

This person will become so old that her children will use her excrement to make a farm.
Yes. There was “One who has small children.”

What would she do to bear children on earth?

They said she should bear children.

She offered goats, she offered cows;

There was nothing that she did not sacrifice.

“One who has small children” of heaven did not bear children.

Her friend said, “There is another diviner we can go to.”

She said, “Which diviner?”

Her friend said, “What about Drizzle?”

When she left,

She went to Drizzle.

He said, “You will offer one basket of star apples;

“You will offer 32,000 cowries.

He said, “You will offer two hens;

He said, “You will offer the head-tie you are wearing.”

“One who has small children” collected the sacrifice, she offered the sacrifice,

She finished the sacrifice.
When she finished sacrificing,

“One who has small children” began mocking the diviner:

“I have offered cows;

“I have offered she-goats;

“I have offered,

“But I have not born children.

“And now you tell me a basket of star apples is what I should offer

“So that I will bear children?”

She took one of the star apples and ate it,

And she swallowed one of the seeds.

When she swallowed it, on the next day when she went to defecate,

She went to the back yard and voided the seed.

On the evening of the next day

Rain came, and it fell on the star apple seed.

The seed spouted,

And it began to grow.

“One who has small children” said, “Ha!
“The star apple that I sacrificed,

“Its seed is spouting.”

She took a pot with a broken bottom

And covered the seedling (to shade it from the sun).

Eshu’s star apple was growing quickly;

It was growing quickly,

After a while “One who has small children” became pregnant.

When she gave birth, she bore twins the first time;

She bore twins the second time;

She bore twins the third time;

And she bore twins the fourth time;

The star apple began to bear fruit;

It was bearing fruit,

A breeze came and blew the fruit to the ground.

When they fell on the ground

Her children,

When they would pick them up,
Some picked up two;

Some picked up three;

Some picked up four, …

She was dancing, she was rejoicing;

She was praising the diviners,

And the diviners were praising Orisha

That their diviners were speaking the truth.

“A drizzle drives the child home;

“A torrent of rain water shakes the walls violently”

This one did not know that her head chose a destiny of beads,

Her head chose a destiny of brass,

Her head chose a destiny of great wealth.

“One who has a deity to worship, the diviner of the king,

“One who grows to a very old age.’

This person will become so old that her children will use her excrement to grow food.

This person will go and sacrifice to twins [Ōriṣá named as Ìbejì],

Where we cast Eji Ogbe, both Ogbe. (Bascom, 1980, pp. 61, 63, 65)
In *Historia de Eyeúnle-Iroso* [Èjì Ogbè - Ìròsun Pàtàkì] a horrific death is the punishment for the man who doubted the word of the Saint [Ôrìṣá]. The cruel and horrible sentence in the *historia* (pàtàkì) reproduces the main weapons used by the capitalist system, and the feudal system before it, to keep people in line: cruelty and fear. In a manner similar to the gods in Greek and Roman mythology as well as to the Judeo-Christian god, the Saint [Ôrìṣá] behaves in a cruel and vindictive way, “Punishment will befall the person who doubts what the Saint [Ôrìṣá] has promised.” The Saint [Ôrìṣá] did not take into account that the man thought that he had already offered the animals to restore the health of his wife. His decision to throw himself into the open hole is due to his anger at having been fooled, rather than due to greed.

As in other *historias* (pàtàkì), the woman is voiceless and powerless. Her husband forces her to return with him to the diviner’s place. She has no right to make any decision on her own. This female character can be easily replaced by a horse, a cow, a pig, or any other farm animal, and the *historia* (pàtàkì) would still make sense. Fear for one’s life, contempt, and cruelty are an intrinsic part of discourses of domination, such as those of patriarchy, that are designed to keep people submissive.

On the other hand, the main character in *Èjì Ogbè Pàtàkì* (A5) from *Yorùbá* land is a woman named “One who has small children.” She is irritated because, “She said her earthly blessings were late; She said her heavenly blessings were late.” “One who has small children” is not afraid to demand good fortune here on earth nor is she afraid of expressing her indignation because her blessings have not yet materialized. The pàtàkì explains that, “abundance of money” and “very old age” have been ordained for her. She has a wealthy and long path on earth. All this wealth and long life becomes a reality for
“One who has small children” even though she expresses her anger, disbelief, and she dares to eat one of the star apples she had to offer to the Orisha [Ọrịṣá]

“I have offered cows;

“I have offered she-goats;

“I have offered ewes,

“But I have not born children.

“And now you tell me a basket of star apples is what I should offer

“So that I will bear children?”

She took one of the star apples and ate it, …” (p. 61)

Compassion, understanding, and self-worth are the intrinsic concepts that constitute the lesson to be learned in Ėjì Ogbè Pàtàkì (A5) as well as in other pàtàkì recited in Yorùbá land.

3.1.26 Historia de Eyeúnele-Oddì (combined Odù of eight cowry mouths open and seven cowry mouths open) [Ējì Ogbè - Ódí Pàtàkì] in Santería

_Era un tiempo en que Orishaoko [Ọrịṣá Oko] no tenía mujer y se encontraba solo, en unión solamente de su caballo y de su carretón, con los cuales se buscaba el sostén..._

_En ese tiempo la tierra era invadida por el mar, ... Se internaba en los dominios de Orishaoko [Ọrịṣá Oko], que era la tierra, y todo lo invadía._
Cierto día en que Orishaoko [Ôrìṣá Oko] caminaba por la orilla del mar, vio a una mujer extremadamente bella, quedándose profundamente enamorado de ella... Entonces ella le dijo: “Está bien, pero vamos a hacer un pacto, y es que usted nunca me diga mi defecto, porque si lo hace, nos separaremos”.

La mujer era muy linda de cara (Olokun [Olókun]), pero su cuerpo era completamente deformé: tenía una pierna flaca y otra gruesa; le faltaba un seno, tenía varias pelotas en el vientre, en fin, su cuerpo era una verdadera ruina.

Olofi [Ọlofin] venía observando muy de cerca esas relaciones y un día mandó a buscar a Orishaoko [Ôrìṣá Oko] y a Olokun [Olókun], y les dijo: “Ustedes tienen que casarse, por cuanto tú, Orishaoko [Ôrìṣá Oko], te has enamorado de esta mujer que es mi esposa en la Tierra; para que ella no tuviera que pasar penas ni sacrificios, yo le construí un reino en la Tierra. Debido todo a su defecto [sic] y para que nadie la abochornara ni la humillara le di su reino en las profundidades del mar, por tanto, promete no echarle en cara esto que te cuento”.

Orishaoko [Ôrìṣá Oko] no puso ningún reparo y juró ante Olofi [Ọlofin] nunca echarle en cara a Olokun [Olókun] sus defectos corporales...

Prósperos y felices, decidieron poner un negocio en la Plaza, donde Orishaoko [Ôrìṣá Oko] trabajaba la tierra sembrando Aguaddó y Erés
(maíz y frijoles) y se los llevaba a Olokun [Olókun], la cual durante el día los vendía en la Plaza.

Cierta vez... Orishaoko [Órişá Oko] sostuvo una discusión con Olokun [Olókun] durante la cual le echó en cara todos sus defectos, quedando roto el Pacto que había hecho ante Olofi [Ọlofìn].

Fue tan grande el bochorno que ella pasó que se transformó su rostro en el de una muerta, con las huellas del profundo dolor y pena que le hacía pasar el hombre que ella había escogido por marido; ... Le dijo:

“Orishaoko [Órişá Oko], mientras el mundo sea mundo, te detestaré y vivirá separado lejos de mí. Y cada vez que tenga deseos me pasearé por tus dominios, penetraré en ellos, nunca mencionaré palabra alguna, todos tendrán que rogarme y pagarme todas las contribuciones. Salvaré a todos mis hijos, nombraré un portero para que reciba a los hijos de la Tierra, y a ti, Orishaoko [Órişá Oko], te castigaré con tu propia arma: tus animales te atacarán, tu tierra se volverá hostil, tus hijos no serán tuyos, no podrás recoger el fruto que cultivas y pisarán tu tierra”. Entonces Olofi [Ọlofìn] desató una gran sequía [frutos y animales morían]... Ante esta situación Orishaoko [Órişá Oko] fue a ver a Orula [Ọrùmílá] y éste le dijo:

“Recolecta [los frutos y animales que produce la tierra] construye una barcaza y pagándole derecho al portero de Olokun [Olókun], échalo todo en el mar. Después recoge sobrantes de comida, desperdicios, y basura de la Plaza y con dos Akukós (gallos), se los da al pozo; y de los dos...”
bueyes que tienes, ofrécele uno a Olofi [Ọlọfin], para que puedas evitar una gran epidemia que viene sobre la Tierra.

Orishaoko [Órìṣá Oko] lo hizo todo al pie de la letra. Al recibir Olofi [Ọlọfin] el buey, se acordó de Orishaoko [Órìṣá Oko], mandándolo a buscar, lo perdonó por su falta y le dijo; “Desde hoy tú serás el dueño de las siembras y de los aperos de labranza, pero la tierra siempre vivirá separada del mar.” (Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández, 1995, pp. 149-151)

[There was a time when Orishaoko [Órìṣá Oko] did not have a woman. He only had for company his horse and his cart which he used to earn a living. At that time, the sea flooded the land… It would go deep into the domain of Orishaoko [Órìṣá Oko] who was the land, and the sea encroached upon the land. One day when Orishaoko [Órìṣá Oko] was strolling by the sea shore, he saw a beautiful woman with whom he fell deeply in love… Then she told him, “Fine, but let’s make a deal. The deal is that you will never talk about the defects of my body. If you do so, I will leave you. The woman had a beautiful face, but her body was deformed: she had one thin leg and the other was fat, and she was missing a breast. There were numerous growths in her belly; in any case, her body was a mess.

Olofi [Ọlọfin] had been watching this relationship closely, and one day he sent for Orishaoko [Órìṣá Oko] and Olokun [Olókun]. He told them, “You need to get married because you, Orishaoko [Órìṣá Oko], have fallen in love with this woman
who is my wife on Earth. I created a kingdom for her on earth, so she would have everything she could wish for. Due to all the defects on her body, I gave her a kingdom deep in the sea, so no one would embarrass or humiliate her. Promise me that you will not throw this information in her face, I’m telling you.

Orishaoko [Ọrìṣá Oko] accepted Olofi’s [Ọlofin’s] proposal. He swore before Olofi [Ọlofin] never to throw the defects of her body in Olokun’s [Olókun] face….

Orishaoko [Ọrìṣá Oko] and Olokun [Olókun] were wealthy and happy. They then decided to build a stand in the market place. Orishaoko [Ọrìṣá Oko] worked the land planting Aguaddó and Erés (corn and beans). He would then take them to Olokun [Olókun], and she would sell them at the market place during the daytime.

One day … Orishaoko [Ọrìṣá Oko] and Olokun [Olókun] quarreled, and he threw in her face the defects of her body. By doing so, he broke the pact he had made to Olofi [Ọlofin]. Her embarrassment and humiliation were so great that Olokun’s [Olókun] face changed into the face of a dead woman. Her face reflected all the pain and suffering caused by the man she had chosen as husband. … She said, “Orishaoko [Ọrìṣá Oko], as long as there is a world, I will despise you, and I will live far from you. Every time I wish, I will flood your domains; I will pierce into your domains without saying a word. Everyone will beg me to stop, and they will pay me tribute. I will save my children. I will name a gate keeper to receive the children of the Land (crops and animals). I will punish you, Orishaoko [Ọrìṣá Oko], with your own weapons: your own animals will attack you, your land will become hostile, your children will not be yours, and people will stomp on your land.” Olofi [Ọlofin] then unleashed a huge drought …[fruits and animals] were
dying. … Because of this devastation, Orishaoko [Ọrìṣá Oko] went to see Orula [Ọrùmílà]. Orula [Ọrùmílà] said, “Gather all the fruits produced by the land, and all the animals that live on the land. Build a barge; pay tribute to Olokun’s [Olókun’s] gate keeper and throw everything into the sea. Afterwards, pick up all the food crumbs, wastes, and garbage on the floor of the market place, add two akukó (cocks), and offer everything to the well. Offer Olofi [Ọlọfin] one of the two oxen that you own to prevent an epidemic that is coming upon Earth.

Orishaoko [Ọrìṣá Oko] followed the instructions as advised. When Olofi [Ọlọfin] received the ox, Orishaoko [Ọrìṣá Oko] came to mind, and he sent for him. Olofi [Ọlọfin] forgave Orishaoko [Ọrìṣá Oko] for breaking his pact with him. Olofi [Ọlọfin] said, “From this day forward you will be the owner of planting and farming tools. I also decree that the land and the sea will always remain apart.”

3.1.27 Èjì Ogbè Pàtàkì A47 from Yorùbá land

The following Èjì Ogbè Pàtàkì from Yorùbá land which Bascom (1980) labels A47 advises Olokun [Olókun] about how to deal with insults and suffering, “refuse to be daunted by suffering; … refuse to be daunted by insults.” (p. 179)

A47

Where we cast Eji Ogbe,

Orisha says that this person should offer a sacrifice.

Orisha says that we should refuse to be daunted by suffering;

Orisha says that we should refuse to be daunted by insults.
Orisha says that after the insults,

And after the suffering,

Orisha says that blessings are coming,

As Orisha has spoken.

Do you see the way that Orisha says that this is so?

“Soggy muck, soggy mud”

Was the one who cast for Olokun Isemaide

There was Olokun, what should she do to be able to surpass all other waters?

They said that Olokun should refuse to be daunted by insults;

They said that Olokun should refuse to be daunted by suffering.

Well! Olokun, what should she sacrifice?

They said she should offer 32,000 cowries;

They said she should offer four pigeons;

She should offer four chickens;

They said she should offer a white cloth.

Olokun collected the sacrifice,

She offered the sacrifice;
She appeased the gods.

When a torrent collects a rubbish\(^1\) of calabashes

And the rubbish of plates, and brings them,

It is into the sea that it throws them.

When it finished doing this

Olokun accepts the rubbish

On and on until no river can equal the sea;

No river can equal Sea again.

She became the king.

Sea was dancing, she was rejoicing;

She was praising the diviners,

And the diviners were praising Orisha

That her diviners had spoken the truth.

“Soggy muck, soggy mud”

In connection with this passage, Bascom notes that, “\(^1\) There is a play on words here involving the two meanings of the word \(\text{ègbin}\): rubbish or filth and insult or contempt.

Cast for Olokun Isemaide.

He said, “All you waters, report to Olokun;
“Olokun Mesi is the senior.

He said, “All you waters, report to Olokun;

“Olokun Mesi is the senior.

This is how Olokun became king of all the waters.

Orisha says so, the deities ordain it. (Bascom, 1980, pp. 177, 179, 181)

*Historia de Eyeúnle-Oddí [Èjì Ogbè - Ôdí Pàtàkì]* is meant to explain how and why the waters of the sea remain apart from the land. One of the functions of *Santería* in the Americas as well as in *Yorùbá* land is to explain why nature behaves the way it does. Duranti (1997) posits that, “[Culture as communication] … is a representation of the world, a way of making sense of reality by objectifying it in stories, myths, descriptions …” (p.33). *Santería* religion, as an element of culture, often explains the world in a way that promotes the classist and misogynist ideologies that have formed the basis for colonial and neo-colonial rule. *Historias* (*pàtàkì*) in *Santería* explain laws and occurrences in nature through the narrow, gendered view of patriarchy and capital accumulation.

In *Historia de Eyeúnle-Oddí [Èjì Ogbè - Ôdí Pàtàkì]* Olokun’s [*Olókun*] sense of worth depends on her being considered beautiful according to the standards established by patriarchal society. She commands the waters of the sea, but in her eyes, this is not significant because her body does not fit the patriarchal ideal of beauty. *Olofi* (*Olofin*), who is gendered male in *Santería*, pities her and creates a kingdom for her deep in the sea. When *Olokun* [*Olókun*] becomes irate and determines to avenge *Orishaoko*’s [*Ôriṣá*
Oko], her anger is negated by Olofi [Olọfin], who nullifies the drought she set upon Orishaoko [Ọrịsá Oko]. Though Olokun’s [Olókun] curse had already mandated the separation of land and sea, it is Olofi’s [Olọfin] decree that seals that separation. Orishaoko [Ọrịsá Oko] makes an offering to Olofi [Olọfin] to alleviate the consequences of breaking the pact that he had made with Olofi [Olọfin], “Promise you will not throw in her face this information I’m telling you. Orishaoko [Ọrịsá Oko] accepted Olofi’s [Olọfin’s] proposal.” Among men, for the right price, a transgression is forgiven and forgotten.

In both pàtàkì wishes are realized by making offerings which include rubbish. Èjì Ogbè Pàtàkì (A47) explains why rivers are smaller than the sea. Offerings placed in rivers, whose waters flow into the sea, make Olokun [Olókun] Isemaide, “… surpass all other waters”. While there are two main characters in Historia de Eýeúnle-Oddí, Olokun [Olókun] who is gendered female in both pàtàkì is the sole character in Èjì Ogbè Pàtàkì (A47). Olokun Isemaide is advised on how to behave when she confronts suffering and insult. As with many other female or male characters in pàtàkì recited in Yorùbá land, Olokun Isemaide is ambitious and wants, “to surpass all other waters.” Her wish is granted because, “Orisha says so, the deities ordain it.” Women are not punished for being ambitious, and their wishes are granted, “This is how Olokun [Olókun] became king of all the waters.” No male figure decides what she will become, on the contrary it is the will of Orisha [Ọrịsá] in general, “Orisha says so, the deities ordain it.” Bascom translates ọba as ‘king’ in Èjì Ogbè Pàtàkì (A47) even when throughout the pàtàkì he has gendered Olokun [Olókun] as female, reflecting the traditional lack of gendering in West Africa, when compared to that found in the colonial and neo-colonial Caribbean.
3.1.28 Historia de Eyeúnle - Ojuani (combined Odù of eight cowry mouths open and eleven cowry mouths open) [Éjì Ogbè - Owònrin Pàtàki] in Santería

La gallina vivía siempre encaramada en una mata a la orilla del río y allí mismo ponía sus huevos, por lo que se le caían y no podía procrear. Una vez Eleguá [Ělegbara] la ayudó para que pudiera tener familia, pero la gallina entró en faltas con Eleguá [Ělegbara], por lo que éste se enfureció, la cogió, y le dijo a Oshún [Qsun]: “Te voy a dar a comer una cosa que nunca has comido y que va a ser de tu agrado”, Y Eleguá [Ělegbara] le dio a comer la gallina. Desde entonces Oshún [Qsun] come gallina (Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández, 1995, p. 154).

[Hen used to live on top of a plant by the river where she laid her eggs. This is the reason why her eggs fell to the ground, and she could not have offspring. Eleguá [Ělegbara] helped her once so could have offspring, but Hen was disrespectful toward Eleguá [Ělegbara] who became enraged, seized Hen, and he said to Oshun [Qsun], “I’m going to give you something you’ve never eaten before, and it will be to your liking.” And Eleguá [Ělegbara] gave Oshun [Qsun] the hen, so she could eat it. From that moment on, Oshun [Qsun] eats hen.]

3.1.29 Èjì Ogbè Pàtàki A15 from Yorùbá land

The following Èjì Ogbè Pàtàki is the Yorùbá land version of the Historia de Eyeúnle - Ojuani [Èjì Ogbè - Owònrin Pàtàki] which Bascom labeled as A15
“A heavy wind does not let me live in the tree tops;

“A torrent does not let me live on the ground”

They were the ones who cast for Pigeon and shared with Dove.

Both of them were weeping because they had no place to live.

This is where this person should offer a sacrifice for a place to live.

Both of them were children of the same mother.

And they were best friends.

Both of them should offer a sacrifice for a place to live.

There was Pigeon, there was Dove;

The same mother has born them.

What should they do so that their lives should be pleasant?

They said they should offer a sacrifice.

What should they offer?

They said they should offer 32,000 cowries each;

Each should offer a sacrifice;

They should offer their mats;
They should offer the cloths they were wearing

So that they could bear children,

And so that they could have a place to live.

Dove said, “Ha! Ha!”

“I will offer only a sacrifice for children.

“How will I bear children and not have a place to live?”

Pigeon said, “My luck is not good.

“Even if I bear only one child,

“When I don’t have a place to live

“How will I give birth to my child?”

Pigeon collected the sacrifice for children, she offered the sacrifice,

And with it she offered a sacrifice for a place to live.

Dove offered only the sacrifice for children.

And both were going on,

They were going on.

Eshu did not let Pigeon fly,

But Dove flew up to the tree top.
When they caught Pigeon

And examined her, “Ha! Ha!

“This one is good to raise.”

They began to raise her as a pet.

They fed her crumbled corn, they carried her to a calabash.

After a little while

Pigeon bore two children;

And then afterwards,

Like two days later, Pigeon bore about sixteen more.

“Ha! Ha! This calabash is too small for her.

“Take her out;

“She is not a bird of the farm.”

So they took her and brought her home.

She was called “One who arrives and is respected.”

They took her and brought her home.

And they fed her guinea corn,¹ and corn, and water.

“One who arrives and is respected” wanted for nothing there;
She wanted for nothing at all.

When Dove laid her eggs

And Eshu saw them,

He said, “You farmers, do you see them?”

Those that hatched, the farmer took.

Then would go to the top of another tree

And lay eggs there.

Those that she laid

Where the farmers could not see them,

Eshu would say, “You, Oya, do you see them?”

And Oya would shake the tree

And Dove’s eggs would fall to the ground.

When Dove arrived

And did not find her eggs,

She went to the top of another tree.

Yes. She did not find a place to live.²

Pigeon was dancing; she was rejoicing;
She was praising the diviners, and the diviners were praising Orishas

That their diviners were speaking the truth.

“A heavy wind does not let me live in the tree tops;

“A torrent does not let me live on the ground.”

They were the ones who cast for Pigeon and shared with Dove.

Both of them were weeping because they had no place to live.

Pigeon said, “We heard and offered the sacrifice;

“We appeased the gods;

‘It won’t be long, it’s not far away,

“You will see me in an abundance of all blessings.’

This is how Pigeon came to enjoy life,

And Dove does not have a place to live.

Orisha says this person should offer a sacrifice for a place to live.

Eji Ogbe (Bascom, 1980, pp. 91, 93, 95)

In the *Historia de Eyeúnle-Ojuani Pàtàkì [Èjì Ogbè - Òwònrin Pàtàkì]* as told in Cuba, the words ‘enraged’ [se enfureció] and ‘seized’ [cogió] attributed to Eleguá [Èlegbara], who is male gendered in Santería, in reaction the hen’s disrespectful behavior, expresses violence. The imposition of Eleguá’s [Èlegbara’s] will upon female
gendered Oshun [Oṣun] to accept the hen as an offering can be construed as patriarchal since the deity Eleguá [Ẹlegbara] is male gendered in the Americas. Conversely, in the Yorùbá version of this historia (pàtàkì), no violent words are aimed at any female character. Both Pigeon and Dove are said to have the same mother, establishing matrilineality and matrifocality, which are among the West African traditions that have been eroded in the Americas. Eleguá [Ẹlegbara] engages the aid of Oyá [Ọyá] to help provide farmers with food (eggs) which can be interpreted as the acquiescence to Eleguá [Ẹlegbara’s] actions by the Orisha [Ôrìṣá]; it is not a punitive decision by Eleguá [Ẹlegbara’s], but a shared decision with another Orisha [Ôrìṣá]. The Yorùbá land version of Historia de Eyeúnle-Ojuani Patakí [Èjì Ogbè - Qọwnrín Pàtàkì] exalts Pigeon by stating that thereafter Pigeon will be called “One who arrives and is respected” (p.95). She will be praised from then on because of Pigeon’s wise decision to follow the advice of Orisha [Ôrìṣá]. Thus, a female gendered character is praised and respected for her wisdom when she follows Orisha’s [Ôrìṣá’s] advice.

The fate of the hen in the Caribbean version conveys a very powerful and intimidating message to all women who do not conform to patriarchal norms. The hen not only suffers the ultimate punishment – death- for her disrespect of or disobedience toward a male figure, her punishment is collective and in perpetuity, so that all hens living at the time and all hens living in the future are subject to the same punishment. The punishment meted out to Hen incorporates elements of Judeo-Christian patriarchal notions of collective punishment and the “sins of the parents being visited on their children” by the terrorizing, violent, capricious, vengeful male god of the Old Testament.

The Caribbean story in the end pits the Hen against Oshun [Qṣun]. This is a typical dynamic of internalized oppression where one female figure punishes another female figure in the interests of, or at the behest of a male figure. It is Oshun [Qṣun] who will become the cause of the death of countless Hens sacrificed to her. The Èjì Ogbè - Òwọnrín Pàtàkì portrays a very different relationship between its two main female characters who are best of friends, and even when Dove does not do all that she should to achieve her goals while Pigeon does, Pigeon never criticizes Dove.

3.1.30 Historia de Osá -Obbara (combined Odù of nine cowry mouths open and six cowry mouths open) [Osá - Obbara Pàtàkì] in Santería

Osá - Osá (nine cowries’ mouths facing up during divination)

Osá [sic] Obbara era un hombre muy orgulloso y altanero debido a su suerte en los negocios y con las mujeres. No obedecía nunca a sus mayores, decía que lo que Dios le había dado nadie se lo podía quitar.

Un día se encontró con una hija de Oyá [Oya] y quiso hacer de las suyas,
abusando y maltratándola mucho. Osa Bara [otra forma de decir Osa [sic] Obbara] era muy celoso y peleaba hasta por gusto e incluso había momentos en que le pegaba a su mujer. Un día soñó que se encontraba en el espacio, que el viento se lo llevaba para otro mundo que él no conocía y en medio del sueño comenzó a gritar asustado; su mamá, al escucharlo, vino corriendo a ver lo que pasaba. Ésta presintió que algo muy malo estaba sucediendo y -como madre al fin– le pidió a su Ángel Guardián [Òrìṣá] para que nada le sucediera a su hijo, el cual ella sabía que era muy desobediente. Resultó que el Ángel de la Guarda era Yemayá [Yemonja]. Entonces le llamó por otro nombre y éste se despertó de la pesadilla, contándole todo a su mamá, y ella le dijo, “¿Tú me concedes una cosa? Yo quiero llevarte a registrar al pie del Santo [Òrìṣá]. Y el hijo le contestó muy asustado que sí. Llegaron a casa de un señor – que resultó ser Orula [Òrùmílà] – y al comenzar la vista le salió este Oddum [Odù] y le dijeron: “Usted es hijo de Shangó [Şàngó] pero Yemayá [Yemonja] lo ampara mucho, así como Obatalá [Ọbàtálá] pero toda su suerte está a los pies de una hija de Oyá [Ọya], ya que esta [sic] es su señora, y él vela por los hijos de ella. Por lo tanto los hijos de Shangó [Şàngó] - como usted – nunca pueden maltratar a las hijas de Oyá [Ọya], porque se fatalizan y pueden hasta perder su propia vida, porque Oyá [Ọya] es el viento y se lo puede llevar, dejar sordo o inválido a causa de una mala corriente. A usted le puede comenzar como un calambre o
reuma, hasta quedarse paralítico. (Pérez Medina and Herrera Hernández, 1995, pp. 155, 156)

[Osa Obara was a proud and haughty man because he was lucky in business and with women. He did not obey his elders arguing that what God had giving him, no one could take away from him. One day he met a daughter of Oyá [Oya]. When he saw her, he wanted to have his way with her, abuse her, and mistreat her. Osa Bara was a jealous man who loved to fight, and he would even beat his wife sometimes. One day he dreamt that he was in space, and the wind was taking him to another world. He did not know this new world, and while he was dreaming, he was scared and began to scream. His mother heard him screaming and went to see what was wrong because being a mother, she sensed that something was wrong. She asked her son’s Guardian Angel [Ọrịsá] to protect him even though she was aware that her son did not like to heed advice. They found out that Yemayá [Yemọnja] was his Guardian Angel [Ọrịsá]. His mother then called him by another name, and he woke up from his nightmare. Osa Bara described his nightmare to his mother, and she said, “Would you do me a favor? I would like to take you before the Saint [Ọrịsá].” Her son was so scared that he said he would go. They arrived at the house of a man who happened to be Orula [Ọrùmílà]. When they began the reading with Orula [Ọrùmílà] the Oddum [Odù] was Oṣá-Obbara [Ọsá – Ọbàrà]. They told him, “You are a child of Shangó [Ṣàngó], but Yemayá [Yemọnja] protects you. Obatalá [Ọbàtálá] also protects you, but your good fortune is in the hands of a daughter of Oyá [Oya]. Since Oyá [Oya] is the wife of Shangó [Ṣàngó], he watches over her children. Therefore, the
children of \textit{Shangó} [Şàngó] should never abuse or batter any daughter of \textit{Oyá} [Ọya]. It could be fatal for any children of \textit{Shangó} [Şàngó]. They could even lose their life because \textit{Oyá} [Ọya] is the wind, and she can take you away. You could become deaf or even be crippled by a wind current that could hurt. It could begin as a cramp or a rheumatism, and you could even become handicapped.]

3.1.31 \textit{Ọsá Pàtàkì} C9 from Yorùbá land

The following \textit{Ọsá Pàtàkì} is the Yorùbá land version for the \textit{Historia de Ọsá -Obbara} [Ọsá - Ọbhàrà Pàtàkì] which Bascom labeled C9.

C9

“Enemies outside are not as bad as those at home;

“Those at home are the ones who harm you.”

Cast for Afala.

He said he could wash a black cloth and it would turn white.

Afala, as soon as he awoke,

He said, “I can wash dyed cloth, I can wash white cloth;

“I can wash a black cloth and it will turn white.”

The people of his house, they thought about it.

They went to the town chief;

When they left the town chief, they went to the king.
They came to the king.

“What!” he said, “That can’t be done.

He said, “Give him 2,000 cowries and give him this black cloth;¹

“Oh have him wash it.”

And they gave him the 2,000 cowries, and they gave him the black cloth.

He went to the river.

Afala’s mother said, “Ha!

“Have I ever seen anyone wash a black cloth white before?”

She took two cowries plus three cowries,²

She went to the house of the diviner.

They cast, and Nine Elders is what they saw.

They said she should offer a rat;

She should offer 18, 000 cowries

She should offer a cock;

She should offer a white cloth.

Afala’s mother made the sacrifice, she offered the sacrifice;

And they took the rat, they put it on the sacrifice,
And they took the white cloth, they put it on the top.

As Afala’s mother was carrying the sacrifice to the river,

She knew that she was near the king’s messengers,³

But they did not look back.

She went back a little

And put the sacrifice down.

In connection with this passage, Bascom notes that, “² An idiom meaning whatever money she had.” and ³ I.e. the witnesses that had been sent to watch Afala wash the cloth” (p.227)

At once the rat jumped out;

The rat collided with the head messenger;

They all began to chase the rat.

When she looked inside the calabash,

The cloth was there.

She took the white cloth and gave it to her son;

She took the black cloth that he was washing,

And put it in the calabash and left.

When the others came back
They found him with the white cloth.

They said, “This is enough.”

They reported to the king.

And the king gave Afala a reward.

Afala became prosperous.

He was dancing, he was rejoicing;

He was praising the diviners, and the diviners were praising Orisha

That his diviners had spoken the truth.

“Enemies outside are not as bad as those at home;

“Those at home are the ones who harm you.”

Cast for Afala.

When he said he could wash a black cloth and it would turn white.

He sang, “Greet me on danger,

“The danger of fire does not kill Kite.

“Afala, Greetings on danger.”

Orisha says we will escape danger.

Yes, as Orisha has spoken. (Bascom, 1980, pp. 243, 247, 249)
As in many historias (pàtàkì) in Santería, a woman is mistreated, abused, and battered in Historia de Ọsá-Obbara [Ọsá-Ọbàrà Pàtàkì]. Osa Obbara, a womanizer, is described as “proud and haughty” one who took pleasure in having his way, abusing, and mistreating a daughter of Oyá [Ọya] (p. 155). Later on, it is even said that he would sometimes beat his woman (p. 155). In accordance with patriarchal ideology, Osá Obbara is not criticized for such behavior. It is a man’s prerogative to act as he wishes with women. By the end of the historia (pàtàkì) he is told that he should not act in this way because he is a son of Shangó [Ṣàngó]. It is not wise to behave in such manner with any daughter of Oyá [Ọya] because Oyá [Ọya] could make him deaf or cripple him (p. 156). One can infer that it is acceptable to mistreat, abuse, and batter the daughter of any other Orisha (Ọrìṣá).

The solution to his nightmare, in which Oyá [Ọya] presents to him her possible punishment, comes from his mother. His mother suggests in a submissive way, that Osá Obbara should go for a reading at a diviner’s place: “Would you do me a favor? I would like to take you before the Saint [Ọrìṣá].” For his mother his only misbehavior is that, “… her son did not like to heed advice” (p. 155). Women are conditioned in the patriarchal system to never confront a man for his behavior. It is only through the actions and decisions enacted by men that women can fulfill their own dreams and ambitions.

There is a dream in both historias (pàtàkì), there is also the need to see a diviner, and the mother is an important character in finding the solution. However, a different turn of events is described in Ọsá Pàtàkì (C9). In Ọsá Pàtàkì (C9) Afala, the main male character, had a dream about the impossible: he would be able to turn a black cloth into a white cloth just by washing the black cloth. This dream evidences the way of thinking of
a cocky, impetuous young person. It takes a determined, astute mother, empowered by
the advice given by the Orisha [Ôrisá] to save her son from his foolishness. She is not a
submissive mother. This mother does what she needs to do to save her son from his
arrogance. She resembles the astute character in a trickster tale. There are 19 Òsá Pàtàkì
related in Bascom (1980). No woman is mistreated, abused, or battered in any one of the
19 pàtàkì nor is any form of mistreatment, abuse, or battering sanctioned in any way.

3.1.32 Òsá Pàtàkì C2 from Yorùbá land

The following is another Òsá Pàtàkì from Yorùbá land which Bascom labeled C2. This
pàtàkì acknowledges that both women and men have sexual desires.

C2

“Cat’s eye and thorn,

“Panther and leopard,

“Greed and theft seem equal”

Cast for Wisdom and shared with Knowledge.²

In connection with this passage, Bascom notes that, “² As becomes apparent later
on the verse, Wisdom is Orumila and Knowledge is Oshun (p.227).

There was Wisdom and there was Knowledge.

When existence began,

It was with kola nuts that they received blessings from Orisha.
They took the same kola nut.

Wisdom spoke to it,

But he did not tell Knowledge what he said.

There was Wisdom, a man,

And Knowledge, a woman.

When Wisdom took the kola nut,

“What should I do to this woman so that I can sleep with her?”

He whispered.

When Knowledge took the kola nut she said,

“This man, what should I do so I may see him naked,

“So that I may get what he has?”

They did not tell each other.

They put the kola nut down,

And they met Oshosi.

Just Ikudefu waits at the house of the king of Oyo,

So Oshosi waits at the house of Orishala.

They took the kola nut, and they put it down.
They said, “Is Father resting?” He said, “Yes.”

They said, “Well, then, this kola nut, we want to receive its reply.”

When they came, what then?

Oshosi said, “Father is not nearby.”

And Father was hearing what they were saying.

After a while they left, and they walked a little away.

He called them to come back,

And they returned.

He said, “Wisdom.” Wisdom said, “Yes.”

He said, “Bring me the rope in your hand,”

And he put it down.

He said, “Knowledge.” Knowledge said, “Yes.”

He said, “Bring me the rope in your hand,”

And she put it down. Yes.

He said, “What you said, Wisdom,

“The woman you want to do things with, you will take her;

“And that which you said, Knowledge,
“The man you want to do things with, you will take him.

“You must not take anyone else;

“I have your ropes,”

“Wisdom said, “If they ask me to do something,

“I will do it.”

This is why Ifa cannot take a woman

Unless the diviners send her, even until today.

And Ifa said that if a woman should refuse,

The diviners are the ones who send her.

They are asking for his help;

It is not that Ifa takes her himself.

That is how Oshun and Orumila

Began to see each other’s nakedness

They came to earth, and they enjoyed life.

Oshun was good to Orumila,

And Orumila was good to Oshun.
In connection with this passage, Bascom notes that, “In a second recording, Orumila admits that he used his rope to tie up men and women who commit adultery. and 5 “I. e were married” (p.229).

And so they went on together;

They reached an agreement

And their home was fine.

They were dancing, and they were rejoicing;

They were praising the diviners,

And the diviners were praising Orisha

That their diviners had spoken the truth.

“Cat’s eye and thorn,

“Panther and leopard,

“Greed and theft seem equal”

Cast for Wisdom and shared with Knowledge.

Wisdom and Knowledge,

Their lives were as tasty as salt.

Orisha says there is a blessing in the matter for which we cast this figure

(Bascom, 1980, pp. 227, 229, 231).
Òsá Pàtàkì (C2) celebrates sexual behavior where Judeo-Christian patriarchy condemns it. First, this pàtàkì acknowledges that both women and men have sexual desires: “He said, “What you said, Wisdom [Òrùmîlà], “The woman you want to do things with, you will take her; “And that which you said, Knowledge [Qšun], “The man you want to do things with, you will take him.” (p. 229) Knowledge [Qšun] even expresses that she wants Wisdom’s [Òrùmîlà’s] genitalia, “When Knowledge took the kola nut she said, “This man, what should I do so I may see him naked, “So that I may get what he has?” (p. 227) Second, as noted by Bascom, adultery is proscribed for both women and men, “

In a second recording, Orumila admits that he used his rope to tie up men and women who commit adultery” (p. 229). The pàtàkì narrates, “He said, “Wisdom.” Wisdom said, “Yes.” He said, “Bring me the rope in your hand,” He said, “Knowledge.” Knowledge said, “Yes.” He said, “Bring me the rope in your hand,” (p. 229) Sexual relations and intimacy as a couple are an essential part of a joyous life, “Their lives were as tasty as salt” (p.231).

Òsá Pàtàkì (C2) also challenges the patriarchal principle that men and God set the rules, and women must follow them. Wisdom and Knowledge decide together how they are going to live their lives as a couple, “And so they went on together; They reached an agreement, And their home was fine” (p. 229). It also establishes that a woman may refuse any advice of the Orisha [Ôrîṣà], “And Ifa said that if a woman should refuse, The diviners are the one who send her” (p. 229). Women have a voice and are empowered in Òsá Pàtàkì (C2) as well as in the other pàtàkì from Yorùbá land cited in this work.
CONCLUSION

4.1 Patriarchal gendering and the Middle Passage from Africa to the Americas

_Yorùbá_ and other West-African peoples were brought in chains to the Americas where they were forced into a lifetime of exploitation as slaves. Life in bondage meant having to navigate new cultural and linguistic topographies where relatively non-gendered West African cultural and linguistic forms had to compete with heavily gendered European cultural and linguistic forms. This was especially true in colonies where Romance languages, such as French, Portuguese, and Spanish were spoken, because Romance languages generally require morphological and/or semantic gender to be marked on most elements of the noun phrase. While all of the languages of the European powers required gender marking in third person singular pronouns, no such marking is required in _Yorùbá_ and most other West African languages, where reference to biological gender is only used when the topic of procreation is being discussed (Oyewùmí, in Clark 2005).

In this dissertation, I have demonstrated how enslaved Africans had to adjust their traditional cultural values and practices, which were based on social balance between women and men, to the new cultural values and practices of their masters, which had been heavily impacted both by several thousand years of patriarchal invasion, plunder and domination, as well as by the patriarchal ideological and religious traditions that
accompanied that invasion, such as the Judeo-Christian tradition. In the colonial culture of the master, women were considered to be inferior, evil, untrustworthy and witless, and therefore had to be subservient to men. This must have come as quite a shock to enslaved West Africans, who were accustomed to thinking of women as strong, determined, intelligent, economically independent, and subservient to no one.

In West Africa, women and their councils traditionally formulated and enforced laws protecting women, but enslaved women in the Americas found themselves with neither an individual or collective voice in colonial governments which were usually dominated by men who owned slaves whose only interest was imposing complete subservience on the enslaved, especially on enslaved women. Nonetheless, West-African enslaved women and their descendants did not passively accept this state of affairs. They played a major role in subverting the Spanish colonial enterprise during the 16th and 17th centuries, while creating and consolidating institutions for autonomous economic and political activity such as subsistence plots and weekend markets, which played a major role in completely overturning the system of racialized chattel slavery by the end of 19th century.

African descended enslaved women fought relentlessly to defend themselves and their offspring from the abuses of slavery. They were not afraid to plead their cases in the colonial courts, mobilizing all of the legal and economic resources available to them. African and African descended women are still fighting against the colonial and neo-colonial encroachments of patriarchy. In the Foreword to Amadiume (1987, 2015), Pat Caplan states “Amadiume considers [that] the post-colonial period, … has seen an
increase in what the author terms ‘women’s new poverty’ and ‘men’s new wealth’. But women have not passively accepted this situation …” (p. IX).

As mentioned throughout this work, one of the most important, if not the most important, mechanisms for the penetration and propagation of patriarchal ideology in the colonies was the Judeo-Christian religion of the masters. Under penalty of torture or death, all of the enslaved were forced to accept Christianity as the one and only true religion, its male gendered God as the one and only true god. Contrary to Yorùbá traditional religious practices where they could assume the role of priestesses and most of the other roles played by men, women were not allowed to occupy any position of importance or leadership in the colonial churches.

While enslaved Yorùbá people, as well as other enslaved West-Africans, had to openly renounce their traditional religions on their arrival to the Americas, many continued to worship their traditional African deities in secrecy. In order to do so, however, they had to modify their traditional religious practices in such a way as to make them acceptable to the colonial order. For example, in the Caribbean Yorùbá people began to syncretize the Òrìṣá (deities) with Christian saints who had similar attributes or paraphernalia to those of their Òrìṣá. In this process, the enslaved felt the need to assign a more or less exclusive gender to each of the Òrìṣá, most of whom were not gendered or ambiguously gendered in Yorùbá land.

While the gendering of the Òrìṣá in the Americas was quite extensive, some elements of the original ambiguous or contradictory gendering found in Yorùbá land managed to survive in some colonies. In Cuba, for example, syncretism generally implied
strict gendering, but a few male gendered Òrìṣá were syncretized with female gendered Christian saints; male gendered Ọbàtálá was equated to the virgin (Virgen de las Mercedes [Our Lady of Mercy]) and Ṣàngó was syncretized with a female saint (Santa Bárbara [Saint Barbara]). In Trinidad there was a more consistent correspondence between the gendering of the Òrìṣá and the gender of the corresponding saint, with Shango (Ṣàngó), for example, being identified with St. John the Baptist.

In this dissertation, I have shown how this tendency toward patriarchal gendering played a key role in the transfer of traditional Yorùbá religious practices to the Americas. I have argued that this patriarchal gendering process extended well beyond the gendering of the Òrìṣá themselves to the gendering of the pàtákì or moral tales used in divination over the course of their passage from Africa to the Caribbean. I have also provided evidence as to how this transatlantic patriarchal gendering process has substantially reduced the acknowledgement and valorization of women as religious leaders in the worship of the Òrìṣá in the Americas. I have structured my arguments according to the following hypothesis and sub-hypotheses:

H1: The agency of women in Yorùbá religious practices was curtailed in the Caribbean to accommodate the gender order of patriarchal European colonial society.

H1A: The leadership roles and responsibilities accessible to women in Yorùbá religion were curtailed in the Caribbean to accommodate the gender order of patriarchal European colonial society.
H1B: The agency of women in traditional Yorùbá religious texts was curtailed in the Caribbean to accommodate the gender order of patriarchal European colonial society.

The extent to which each of these has been proved or disproved by my research will be considered below.

4.2 Hypothesis 1: The agency of women in Yorùbá religious practices was curtailed in the Caribbean to accommodate the gender order of patriarchal European colonial society.

The evidence provided in this dissertation demonstrates how the considerable agency of women in traditional Yorùbá religious practices in West Africa has been systematically undervalued and denied in the worship of the Òrìṣá in the Americas. Using the work of Murphy (1994) I show how the power of women was undermined in Santería, as female-led casas de santo [houses of saints; temples of the Òrìṣá] were either infiltrated and taken over by men, or eclipsed by male dominated casas de santo.

A pattern emerges in Santería whereby any opportunity for prestige and prominence is made inaccessible to women. For example, santeras [priestesses] are not permitted to ‘give’ Guerreros ([Warriors] the collective term for Eleguá [Ẹlegbara], Ogún [Ọgún], and Ochosi [Ọṣọsi] taken together) to protect the household of a petitioner from negative energies. No such prohibition exists in Yorùbá land. The justification put forward by santeros [priests] in the Caribbean for this patriarchally gendered restriction is that the Warriors are “too strong” and that there is a need to “protect” women from the
“strong accumulation of energy” generated when the Warriors manifest during the ceremony.

Enslaved West African women and their female descendants formed the majority of the field gangs who cut the cane on the sugar plantations. They also constituted the majority of domestic servants who had to do the most back breaking chores, such as washing clothes, while male slaves were allowed to assume more specialized positions such as carpenter, metal worker, etc. In no uncertain terms, it was the female slaves who usually performed the most strenuous work on the plantations. These women were meted out the same types of punishments as were inflicted on male slaves, and they were the ones who took the initiative to walk miles to an urban area to seek legal protection for themselves and their families.

After emancipation, formerly enslaved women experienced little in the way of reduction of their workload or in the way of relief from the arduous nature of the tasks that they were expected to perform, including house work, childcare, and tending a garden, while holding down a poorly paid job as a field hand or domestic servant. Little has changed for most African descended women in the Caribbean until the present day. There is nothing about these women that suggests that they are not “strong” enough to handle the energy of the Warriors, just as their female counterparts in Yorùbá land routinely do. In my consideration of the sub-hypotheses below, such justifications for the systematic erasure of female agency are revealed to be nothing more than an attempt to license patriarchal gendering in the worship of the Òrìṣá in the Americas.
4.2.1 Sub-hypothesis H1A: The leadership roles and responsibilities accessible to women in Yorùbá religion were curtailed in the Caribbean to accommodate the gender order of patriarchal European colonial society.

In this dissertation, I have argued that perhaps the most noticeable patriarchally gendered limitation imposed on women in terms of holding positions of leadership in the worship of the Òrìṣá in Santería in the Americas is the restriction on their becoming priestesses of the Òrìṣá Òrùmílè who heads the Ifá system of divination. In Yorùbá land, both Babálawo, or male priests of Òrùmílè, and Ìyánífà, or female priestesses of Òrùmílè, are allowed to assume this powerful role, in accordance with nongendered Yorùbá cultural values, whereby any member of Yorùbá society has equal access to any position deemed of benefit to the community. As practiced in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and their Diasporas, however, Santería generally only recognizes the male gendered position of Babálawo.

I have also demonstrated that the list of patriarchal prohibitions which do not exist in Yorùbá land on women’s role in the worship of the Òrìṣá in the Americas is much more extensive. For example, in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and their Diasporas women are normally not allowed to assume the position of Oriaté, who is in charge of performing both the ceremony of initiation into priesthood, as well as the ceremony which allows a santera [priestess] or santero [priest] to receive a given Òrìṣá into her or his household. In Yorùbá land both female Ìyánífà and male Babálawo are allowed to perform these ceremonies. In Cuba and Puerto Rico, while santeras (priestesses) are allowed to ask the ancestors (the spirits of relatives, or priestesses and priests of Yorùbá religion) for their blessing over upcoming ceremonies or festivities, they are not allowed to view or convey the responses of those ancestors, while in Yorùbá land, iyáloṣa [priestesses] are allowed
not only to ask for the ancestors’ blessings, but also to view and convey the ancestors’ responses, and no one questions veracity of what the iyáloṣa reports.

4.2.2 Sub-hypothesis H1B: The agency of women in traditional Yorùbá religious texts was curtailed in the Caribbean to accommodate the gender order of patriarchal European colonial society.

In this dissertation, I have paid particular attention to the process of patriarchal gendering in the transfer of traditional Yorùbá religious texts to the Americas. In particular, I have provided copious evidence of how pàtàkì, the morality tales which accompany the Ifá and cowry divination systems in Yorùbá land, have been saturated with patriarchal discourse in Santería. My comparative analysis of the non-patriarchally gendered discourse that prevails in the pàtàkì found in Yorùbá land versus the patriarchal discourse that prevails in the corresponding pàtàkì (more commonly called historias) in the Caribbean demonstrates how women and their agency have been demeaned and trivialized in transit across the Atlantic.

The depiction of women in the historias (pàtàkì) of Santería differs strikingly from their depiction in the pàtàkì of Yorùbá land. Women in the historias of Santería are characterized as witless, voiceless, economically dependent, weak, and at the mercy of men. They are nameless, objectified objects. Their ability to be self-sufficient, to access positions of leadership, or to express feelings, wishes, and aspirations is denied. The image of the strong, independent, determined West-African woman which typifies the pàtàkì of Yorùbá land has been erased. In each Oddun [set] of historias in Santería examined in this dissertation, at least one of the historias describes how a woman is
beaten, raped, harassed, or killed, phenomena that are virtually absent from the pàtákì of Yorùbá land.

Among the many examples cited in this dissertation, I summarize a few here:

While In the Ṭọ̀ṣẹ́ Pàtàkì in Yorùbá land, the protagonist is a a female gendered parrot who overcomes the ill-will of others to become wealthy, in the corresponding Historia de Oché Melli in Santería the protagonist is a male gendered parrot who overcomes malevolent wishes to achieve his goals. While the Ṣèràn Pàtàkì in Yorùbá land recounts the folly of a man who does not value a gift of pumpkins with hidden wealth inside with no reference to his wife or any other woman, the corresponding Historia de Obara Melli in Santería tells the story of a man who becomes wealthy by ignoring the advice of his wife to avoid a situation in which he is given a seemingly useless heap of pumpkins which in reality are full of money. While in the Òdí Pàtàkì from Yorùbá land, marriage comes as the fulfillment of the desire to be married and to have children on the part of both a woman and a man, in the corresponding Historia de Oddí-Obara in Santería marriage is the result of rape and domination. While in Èjì Ogbè Pàtàkì in Yorùbá land, women are symbolized as birds and Pigeon is praised and respected for her wisdom when she follows the advice of the Òrìṣá in the corresponding Historia de Eyeünle-Ojuani in Santería, all women are symbolized by a Hen, who is subject to the wrath of Éṣù, a male gendered Òrìṣá in the Caribbean, who imposes his will even upon the female gendered Òrìṣá Oṣun by telling her that from then on hens would be her sacrificial animal.
4.3 Final Remarks

As shown in this dissertation, the worship of the Òrìṣá in Yorùbá land varies substantially from one community to another, with a given Òrìṣá being assigned a male gender in one area, a female gender in another, both in another, and neither in yet another. My research has attempted to begin to address this healthy and non-patriarchally gendered diversity, but I cannot pretend to have gone very far in this daunting task, which will require much more work on my part as well as on the part of others. That said, the worship of the Òrìṣá is just one of thousands of other non-patriarchally gendered West African spiritual and religious traditions which also need further scholarly attention. Similarly, my study of the worship of the Òrìṣá in the Americas has centered on only two traditions, that of Santería in Cuba, Puerto Rico and their Diasporas, and that of Orisha in Trinidad. There are many more traditions of the worship of the Òrìṣá in the Americas that, because of my own limitations in terms of time and resources, I was not able to consider. My wish is that this dissertation will serve to encourage other researchers to give all of these long-neglected areas of research the attention that they deserve.

Yorùbá traditional religion manifests the traditional values of West African peoples. In West African culture, members of society have equal access to prestige, prominence, wealth, and positions of leadership; therefore, the agency of women is not suppressed. Traditional Yorùbá pàtàkì portray women who defend their position before men when necessary. They are not afraid to go to battle, and their voice alone can make an ordinary person become an ǫba (queen, king). These women demand control over their lives and do not accept submission. Women in Western patriarchal societies have suffered a different fate, as reflected in the disastrous situations in which the female
characters in the historias in Santería routinely find themselves. It is no accident, then, that Santería is among the dwindling number of religions where women are still denied equal access to positions of leadership.

It is my hope that this dissertation will contribute to a process whereby the dawn of this new millennium will also be a new dawn for the worship of the Òrìṣá in the Americas. We, as santeras and santeros, should not subscribe to the patriarchal, classist and racial ideologies which were responsible for enslaving our African ancestors. Equal and just partnerships and access to decision-making will be key elements in any viable solution to the economic, political, social and environmental challenges facing humanity today. More than ever, we need to re-center ourselves in our traditional West African matricentric values, and allow their vision of justice and a good life for all to inspire us in the creation of a Santería that adheres to the basic principles which have guided the traditional worship of the Òrìṣá in West Africa, and which have assured the well-being of its peoples for thousands of years.
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