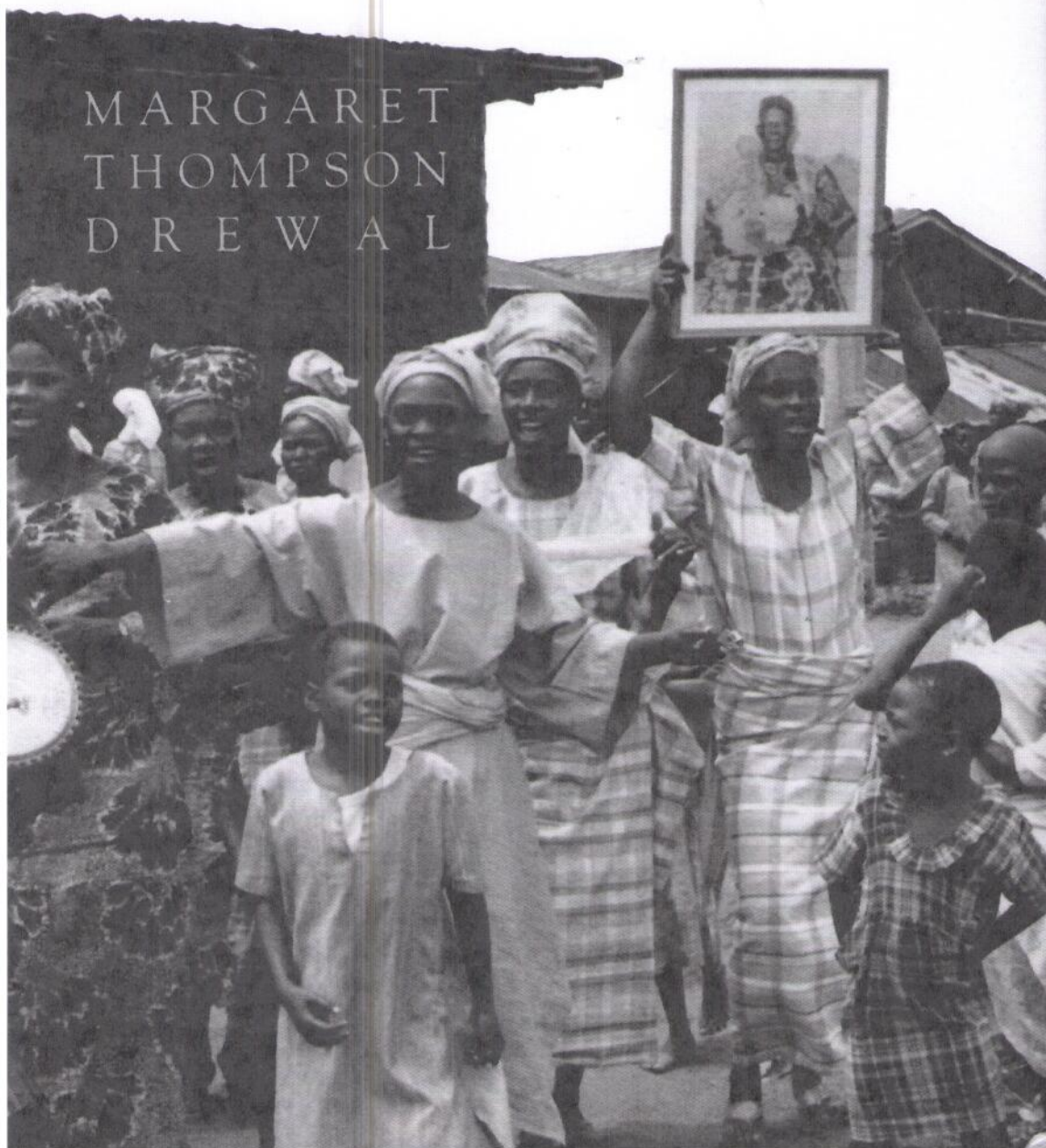


# YORUBA

## RITUAL

PERFORMERS, PLAY, AGENCY

MARGARET  
THOMPSON  
DREWAL



AFRICAN SYSTEMS OF THOUGHT

# YORUBA RITUAL

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PERFORMERS,  
PLAY, AGENCY



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# CONTENTS



<i>List of Illustrations</i>	vii
<i>A Companion Video</i>	xi
<i>Reader's Road Map</i>	xiii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xxi

1. Theory and Method in the Study of Ritual Performance	1
2. Yoruba Play and the Transformation of Ritual	12
3. The Ontological Journey	29
4. New Beginnings	51
5. Establishing the Self	63
6. Ritual Play about Play: Performing Miracles in Honor of the Ancestors	89
7. The Collective in Conflict, or, the Play of Personalities	113
8. From Militarism to Dandyism: The Shaping of Performance	135
9. Reinventing Ritual: The Imewuro Annual Rally	160
10. Gender Play	172
Envoi	197

Glossary	201
Notes	205
Sources Cited	221

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## 10. Gender Play



The issues of sex and gender are deeply embedded in all of the rituals I have considered thus far. In funerals, in Ifa divination rituals, and in the various types of spectacles, including masking, men have formally dominated. It is they who have taken the key roles in organizing and directing the ritual performances treated here. Indeed, men are the organizers of most large public displays. Furthermore, in funerals when men manifest the deceased's spirit voice, or when diviners initiate novices inside Odu's sacred bush (*igbodu*) during Itẹfa, or when Agẹmọ priests pilgrimage on public roads or encamp in Agẹmọ groves—in all these cases women are excluded, and at times even confined. Women organize spectacles too, but they tend to be more localized within individual compounds and do not attract men like men's spectacles seem to attract women. By the same token, there are more restrictions placed on women in performances organized by men than there seem to be on men in women's performances. Why?

I have pursued this question with male ritual specialists in Egbado, Oḡori, and Ijebu Yoruba areas. They invariably have told me that women are much more secretive and exclusive than men are. Women, however, do not seem to be as preoccupied with the idea of secrecy as are men, and in a curious way this makes women appear all the more secretive. I have sensed this attitude strongly on occasion when I would deny that women are secretive. And yet to agree that women are secretive is, ironically, to demystify and trivialize the idea. Men believe women's animating spirits (*emi*) leave their bodies and transform into birds or animals. When priestesses are possessed by their deities and go into trance, for example, their spirits are temporarily displaced. Men say these displaced spirits transform into birds and use this opportunity to gather and hold secret meetings in the treetops.

These beliefs and practices have important implications for understanding the power relationships of men and women in Yoruba society. As Gayle Rubin has argued (1975:178), divisions of roles by sex are in effect taboos that divide sex into two mutually exclusive categories that exacerbate biological differences and thereby create gender, which is a socially imposed construction. Sex role divisions are as highly formalized and exclusive in the Yoruba practice of everyday life as they are in ritual. The media artists work in, for example, are divided by sex. Thus women work in clay, while men specialize in wood, metal, and beads. Gender-specific rules dictate the use of media, but there are no compara-

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ble rules dictating representations, so that, theoretically, women can choose to represent any role they wish. Even so, women as artists tend to focus on images of mothers and priestesses; men, on the other hand, represent a much greater range of subject matter.

The reason most often given for such divisions of labor involve perceived differences in the natures of men and women. It is considered more fitting for men to work in hard materials and for women to use soft ones. By extension, men work with iron tools that require direct, forceful action—striking, slashing, hammering, or even “beating,” as in the process of palm-nut divination. Women, on the other hand, work directly on their material—clay—firmly molding and shaping it with more indirect gestures.

Then again, there are always exceptions. Adefowora Onabanjo, an elderly woman artist living in the Ijebu town of Imodi, carves twin figures. The granddaughter of a carver, she made figures for Oṣitola's parents in the early 1940s. Only one among the many, she nevertheless contravened normal practice; she had the power to “act otherwise” (Giddens 1986:14). Yoruba women on horseback cross-dressed as men during the Islamic 'Id al-Kabir festival, as I understand they do elsewhere in Africa. A female chief riding in Ijebu-Ode, 1986, settled way back in her saddle, moving her rib cage side to side like a mother hen nestling her eggs, swaying her shoulders and waving a fly whisk over her head with large sweeps of the arm. Such examples may be rare in the whole scheme of things, but what seems most important is that the rules are susceptible to negotiation. I am reminded of the Yoruba adage “concede to each person her or his own character.”

The formalization of sex roles lends itself easily to deconstruction, not only by ethnographers, but by the performers themselves. In this way, performers use the structure of ritual to reflect on gender and sex role divisions. This is what Iya Sango in effect accomplished in aggressively commandeering an Apidan performance ordinarily dominated by men, inserting herself into the action, turning their show into her own, transforming caricatures of undesirables into ironic objects of her own desire (chapter 6).

The rules, such as they are, relate directly to Yoruba concepts of power in the construction of gender. In the Imori ritual performed to determine the nature of a child's inner head (chapter 4), the husband brought a bush rat to represent the energetic, agile action of males, according to Oṣitola, while the wife brought a mudfish, alluding to the coolness and easiness ordinarily associated with females. These items then come to stand for each side of the family broadly, composed of both men and women. Culling relevant material on gender from earlier chapters, I have analyzed the relative positions of men and women in both male and female dominated performance and examine the ways in which each constructs gender in those contexts, adding a further dimension to issues of identity, individuality, play and power, and the multiple discourses of spectacles.

Actors as agents not only shape roles that become models for future performances, but they shape, and reinforce, analogous roles in everyday life. This is

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derives meaning in relation to the other in time and space. The dominant themes of maleness depicted in sculpture are hunter/warrior, herbalist/diviner, drummer, king, bush animal, and woman's partner. In contrast, females are typically shown as mother, priestess, bird, and man's partner. The depiction of motherhood, I will argue, has ritual significance even though it is not often a ritual role *per se*.

Allusions to motherhood in ritual construct women as nurturers of the deities and the community broadly. In their roles as mothers, women are usually depicted in sculpture either breast-feeding or carrying a child on their backs, the traditional method of portage (fig. 10.1). *Q̣sitōla* invoked this image explicitly through incantations during *Itēfa* ritual as a woman danced with a calabash containing the male initiate's divination palm nuts (chapter 5). In this way, diviners appealed to women for their support on behalf of male initiates.

In sculpture, the role of priestess is often combined with motherhood, a reality of everyday life. Thus, a woman in priest's regalia is often—though not always—shown breast-feeding or carrying a baby on her back. An extension of this idea is the image of a woman offering her breasts, that is, giving of herself to nurture another. This image speaks of the mother/child bond, the pact between them that is invoked during *Itēfa* rituals. The physical bond implies spiritual support. The image of woman as gift giver—usually kneeling or sitting holding a bowl—is a further development of the idea of sacrifice, giving freely of oneself to nurture another. The analogous male act of nurturing is the blood sacrifice, which involves a death. Additionally, the images of man as bush animal, as Gorilla or Patas Monkey, and woman as Bird among other things hint at another dimension of performance—the power of transformation.

In paired brass objects known as "the-owners-of-the-house" (*onile*) and smaller ones known as *edan*—both emblems of the *Oşugbo* society (chapter 3)—males and females are presented as equals (fig. 10.2). A chain at the top often links the castings together and evokes the importance of the bond between males and females, both within the judiciary and in the larger society. As the custodian of a pair of these figures, *Q̣sitōla* commented, "they have joined them together to make one couple. It's for [the] oneness of *Oşugbo* [the judiciary]." Both types of objects are prepared with "medicine." The smaller ones are portable; the larger figures reportedly are cast at the founding of a town and are enshrined permanently. Except for certain priests, nobody should see them once they have been installed inside the inner sanctum in the enclosed meeting house (*iledii*).<sup>5</sup>

Myth relates how the paired images were originally human beings, progenitors who established communities and governments. Whenever communities are founded, the elders either migrate with the paired figures to their new site or, in some cases, they commission a brasscaster to create them anew. All those concerned gather before the figures to swear an oath (*ibura*) of truthfulness and secrecy. As *Q̣sitōla* explained, "it has the most *aşē* [generative power] because it is the thing that combines all of them together. [ . . . ] It is a symbol of unity."

The male and female figures reflect the makeup of the traditional judiciary,

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which includes both men and women, although males are in the majority. The head female title, *Iya Abiye*, senior among the *Erelus*, is in many cases a relative of the king. The paired brass figures signify the union of men and women, the founding of a community, which represents their progeny, and the oaths of truth and secrecy sworn by the members of the town's judiciary in the witnessing presence of earth, the abode of spirits and the ancestors.

The smaller brass staffs modeled on the larger figures have a variety of other important functions. Being portable, they are carried publicly as insignia of membership and as messages. S. O. Biobaku (1956:259-260) has noted that an appointed male messenger holds the staves in his two hands and strikes them on his forehead and chest before a summoned individual. The recipient in turn holds the staves, strikes them on his or her own forehead and chest to acknowledge the society's authority. Reportedly, to receive the male of the pair signifies "wrath," while receiving the female conveys "friendly greetings."<sup>6</sup> A titled elder, or his surrogate, may also place the staffs across the path or at the entrance of disputed farm land to prevent either party from entering while the case is under discussion. Violation of this sanction may bring a stiff fine or supernatural retribution (Lloyd 1962:20). In other civil or criminal matters, the traditional judiciary can impose a form of house arrest, or injunction, by placing the staves across the compound entrance of the accused; the person cannot leave, nor supporters enter, without permission from the judiciary.

The paired representations of males and females—cast in brass by men—portray a symmetrical power relationship. One figure mirrors the other except in the depiction of breasts and genitalia, in which they are sexually differentiated. In a few instances the two are hermaphroditic. In both cases, the figures command equal visual attention, offsetting and balancing each other. Neither dominates visually. In performance, equality is expressed in the sequentially ordered solo dances of women and men.

The representation of symmetrical power relationships in *Eṣu* staffs for the trickster deity, also carved by men, frequently draw visual analogies between the male's medicine gourds and the female's breasts, both in their shape and in their positioning in relation to the body (fig. 10.3). Such symmetry is particularly revealing when compared with Yoruba parodies of European couples, such as in the *Egungun* skit described in chapter 1 in which the European female laid her head on the shoulder of her male counterpart as he chuckled her under the chin and clutched the sides of her neck with his hands, pulling her forward to kiss her on the lips (see fig. 1.1). For Yoruba, the public display of affection was the essence of the joke. The dominant/submissive relationship was encoded. The frozen wooden face mask each wore made kissing itself an absurdity, calling attention to the parodic intent.

In ritual, men portray spirits in masks, such as *Egungun*, *Agemọ*, and *Jigbo*, that represent both males and females. In contrast, women as priests and mediums of the deities portray female as well as male deities, often carrying carved weapons, or staffs, as insignia of office while dancing in states of possession trance (M. Drewal 1989). Sometimes women possessed by the divine mediator

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Eşu become tricksters wearing a carved wooden penis and testicles (fig. 10.4); at a Geleşẹ festival in Ketu, 1971, one with a deadpan face went up to other women seductively pulling her wrapper back to reveal her equipment. Their renditions turn the male organ into a toy, a plaything for comic display.

In addition to these roles, there is also some cross-dressing by both men and women during public festivals (figs. 7.3, 10.5). The Agẹmọ priest Adie is supposed to wear his hair plaited in female style throughout his life (fig. 7.2). Not only that, each time I saw him on various festival occasions, he always had a different hairdo that had been wrapped or plaited by his wives. During the annual festival, only Adie and Ẹwujagbori reportedly entered the inner shrine of Agẹmọ, and they did so dressed as women. Unlike the transvestites with padded breasts and buttocks who stormed into the Agẹmọ grove as the women cheered, these Agẹmọ priests were not engaged in comic parody.

Similarly, I have seen women dance what are technically classified as men's dances (*ijo akọ*). During Egungun's day at the Imewuro Annual Rally (chapter 9), a woman suddenly started dancing with large, forceful gestures that included high kicking and rapid spinning. As soon as she began, a man rushed forth and gave her his own outer garment to wear. As another male observer explained to me later, he gave her his garment "to make the dance look fine." The large, strong gestures characteristic of male dancing were thought to look best aesthetically in a large, loose-fitting, male-style garment. In the same vein, women at the Ileya festival parades dressed in their fathers' garments, supposedly to be more physically active in dashing about.

As a medium of the tough, hot, male warrior deity, Iya Şango literally becomes male on certain ritual occasions through possession trance. She can also turn Şango himself into a comic lecher by enacting fucking with other men. Is she a woman constructing men as her objects as if she were male, or is she a man playing to other men as if they were women? Iya Şango "came to the world" through Şango, rather than from her mother's or father's side of the family, according to her "Knowing the Head" ritual. Not insignificantly, her father was a Şango drummer; her mother a dancer. She thus grew up performing the songs and dances in the Şango tradition, although she was not formally initiated as a priest until the mid-1960s (*Iya Şango* #75.6b). Her identification with Şango guides and licenses her behavior. Most people would call this her destiny.<sup>7</sup> Although interpretations of divination parables are intended to provide people models for further reflection and behavior, ultimately what they do is out of the diviner's hands, a matter left to the parents and child.

According to Yoruba belief, the concentration of vital force in women, their *aşẹ*, their power to bring things into existence, to make things happen, creates extraordinary potential that can manifest itself in both positive and negative ways. Phrases such as "one with two faces" (*oloju meji*), "one with two bodies" (*abara meji*), and "one of two colors" (*alawọ meji*) aptly express this duality and allude to their alleged powers of transformation. The Yoruba word for these special powers and a woman possessing them is *aje*, which has been translated in the literature as "witchcraft" or "witch." All elderly women are *aje*, as are priest-



esses of the deities, wealthy marketwomen, and female title-holders in prestigious organizations. Collectively, such women are affectionately called "our mothers" (*awon iya wa*). The positions they have attained, it is felt, are evidence of their power. One day in the traditional Yoruba week is devoted to them.<sup>8</sup> It was on this day that I first met *Q̣ṣitola*; he took that to be significant. From then on, he always reserved Our Mothers' day for our discussions, never budging from that schedule the entire time we worked together, except when my time grew short.

*Q̣ṣitola* told me Ifa speaks of three categories of powerful women—referred to euphemistically as *ẹlẹye*, "owners of birds," to allude to their powers of transformation—white, red, and black (*ẹlẹye funfun, pupa, ati dudu*) (*Q̣ṣitola* #82.46). White *ẹlẹye* are beneficial; they bring prosperity and the good things in life. Red *ẹlẹye*, on the other hand, bring suffering (*iponju*), while black *ẹlẹye* cause death. It is the nature of human action, rather than the person, that is color-classified in this way. Therefore a powerful woman may bring prosperity on one occasion, but suffering or death on another.

Unlike the predominantly negative connotations of the English word "witch," elderly women and female priests are not necessarily either antisocial or the personification of evil. Rather, they form an important segment of the population in any town and are given respect, affection, and deference. Because of their special power, they are thought to have greater access to Yoruba deities. They occupy a position subordinate to the supreme deity, *Olodumare*, who is genderless, and to *Orunmila*, the deity of divination, but equal, or even superior, to the deities. In their roles as mediums, they are thought to exert a certain amount of control over the deities.

When angered, the mothers operate surreptitiously in seeking and destroying their victims. Their attacks are believed to result in stillbirth and conditions such as elephantiasis, impotency, infertility, and false pregnancies that "turn to water," or in debilitating diseases that destroy slowly and silently with no visible signs. In contrast to destructive images of males that express overt aggression in representations of radical male sexuality and themes of war and hunting, female images of the transformed bird stress secrecy, elusiveness, and covertness.

Genitalia become metaphors for the two kinds of power. As the invocations below suggest, males and females are both portrayed as sexual beings and both can be intensely creative or destructive.

Honor, honor, honor today, honor to the deities  
Honor to Ogun, my husband  
Ogun the brave one in firing, in firing  
Ogun killed his wife in the bathroom  
Ogun killed the swordsmen  
He destroyed them with one blow  
Ogun, I asked you to chase them, not to lick their bones  
Honor to the one whose penis stood up to father a child in the room  
He made his penis lengthen to father a child in the house of *Ijana*

We heard how t  
Ogun, the one v  
[ . . . ]

Honor, ooooo, t  
I honor you tod  
Old bird did no  
Sick bird did no  
Something secre  
A secret pact wi  
Honor, honor to  
Honor to my m  
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We heard how the penis struck those in the market  
Ogun, the one who saw the king's mother and did not cover his penis.  
[ . . . ]  
Honor, ooooo, honor today, ooooo  
I honor you today  
Old bird did not warm herself in the fire  
Sick bird did not warm herself in the sun  
Something secret was buried in the mother's house  
A secret pact with a wizard  
Honor, honor today, ooooo  
Honor to my mother  
Mother whose vagina causes fear to all  
Mother whose pubic hair bundles up in knots  
Mother who set a trap, set a trap  
Mother who has meat at home in lumps  
(recorded in Emado Quarter, Ayetoro, 1971).

Yoruba concepts of female and male power to a large extent derive from shared cultural values in the interpretation of biological factors, expressed as binary opposites.

As indicated in the invocations above, anatomical features are metaphors for spiritual power. The male is portrayed as overtly aggressive; he destroys with one blow. His penis is at once destructive and creative, a weapon and a procreative tool. Because male power is overt and expressed physically, men are at the peak of their power in their forties. In contrast, women are thought to become even more powerful after menopause, when menstrual blood ceases to flow.<sup>9</sup>

According to Ọ̀ṣitọ́lẹ̀ (#82.107),

you see, men and women, they all came to the world at the same time.  
There has never been a time when we have men and we don't have women.  
And there has never been a time when we have women and we don't have men. So everybody comes to play his role successfully. If you leave men, then the role of the women cannot be played successfully. If you leave women, then the role of the men cannot be played successfully. That's how they have been mixing every issue, and everyone has his own secrets, too. Men have the secret and women have the secret, just to trouble each other, just to add more spice to the world.

By oral tradition, it was the wife of the deity of divination who taught her husband how to perform *Itẹ́fa* ritual (chapter 5). Through her he fathered sixteen children, that is, the sixteen major sets of divination texts. Thus "she is the most significant among Ọ̀runmìlẹ̀' s wives. Ọ̀runmìlẹ̀ has no power besides her. She is the backbone for Ọ̀runmìlẹ̀ in all his endeavors."<sup>10</sup>

The female deity *Odu* is represented in *Itẹ́fa* rituals by a closed calabash placed inside a larger container (fig. 5.3). Always carried by a woman, I am



told—this container is a primary symbol of female power; in Itẹfa ritual this was represented both literally and metaphorically. As I have said, both the male and his mother, or wife, performed most of the ritual acts together up until the time the initiate entered the restricted sacred grove to learn the divination texts that brought him into the world. Couples also participated in a similar fashion after leaving the grove on the third, seventh, and fourteenth days, often exchanging positions in relation to each other as dancer/spectator or diviner/client.

Women are prohibited from entering Odu's grove, and there is a well-known story that Odu made Ọrunmila promise to keep Odu away from other women, for she is thought to be harsh and vindictive. Not only that, but women cannot be initiated through Itẹfa rituals. Nor can they participate in the rituals of rebirth that take place on the inside, even though they can interpret Ifa and, in other contexts, they can divine. When I asked diviners how it was possible for men to give birth to children without women, they quickly pointed out to me that Odu is a woman, and it is her power they were using inside the grove.

Whenever women were physically excluded from ritual, men tended to appropriate female gender to construct representations of them. In Agẹmọ, for example, it was only two male transvestite priests who were allowed to enter the main shrine in the Imọsan grove. Curiously, the majority of the Agẹmọ priests were also excluded from this shrine. Women were present symbolically in this way, if not physically. That is, female gender was present even when women were not. And indeed men believe that powerful women always gain access to men's secrets in spite of it all. Women's spirits (*ẹmi*) are believed capable of going where their bodies fear to tread at risk of being discovered and punished.

One of the underlying purposes of Itẹfa was to prepare the male initiate's personal set of divination palm nuts, which would be used initially to divine the texts that "brought him to the world" and then throughout his life whenever he should consult a diviner. This personal set of divination palm nuts represents the male client's rebirth, his personal destiny, and, by extension, the deity of divination.

During the *iyi ifa* ritual segment when a woman danced holding the palm nuts in a calabash, the diviners invoked the spiritual support of women through a series of songs and incantations. To demonstrate respect for women broadly, one of the diviners prostrated himself before the dancer. Throughout the processes of Itẹfa, either the mother or the wife, as the case may be, provided all the various containers to hold the palm nuts. There was a contiguity between the palm nuts in the calabash and the unborn child in his mother's womb. The ritual privileged the association of the palm nuts with men and their destinies.

#### THE CONTAINER AND THE CONTAINED

*The symbolic relationship of the male initiate's palm nuts to their containers sets up a structural relationship of woman as container, man as contained. This construction precludes any identification of women with the palm nuts other than as container. Generally speaking, ritual containers in Yorubaland are a*

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primary symbol for female power. The notion of woman as container is based on cultural interpretations of biological factors, for women possess the secret knowledge of life itself.

In contrast to the types of containers that hold a man's or boy's personal set of palm nuts, those containers used by diviners on behalf of their clients reportedly must live in a carved wooden container known as *agerę* in order to be proper. According to a legend told to me by *Qşitęla*, *Agęre* was once upon a time another one of the divination deity's wives, who hid her husband inside her stomach to save him. She was so industrious that he always worked with her. Thus, the *agerę* (a carved wooden caryatid container that holds the palm nuts) is female wood and serves two purposes: it works very hard (i.e., it is prepared with medicines), and it contains the divination deity (i.e., the sacred palm nuts), just as the deity's wife of the same name had done according to the story. For this reason, images carved on *agerę*, according to *Qşitęla*, should be female, although sculptors have flexibility in what they choose to carve, often depicting men on horseback, or other animals, so that there is a discontinuity of meaning. When an *agerę* begins to deteriorate, it should be buried in the sacred grove like the other containers, and like the birth caul, because "it is a delicate thing which should not be burned, [be] used as a toy, or otherwise."

Both males and females perform "Stepping into the World" and "Knowing the Head" rituals (chapter 4). After that, males and females go their separate ways, ritually speaking. According to *Qşitęla*, in the past girls performed a ritual called "Tying the Bracelet" (*Isodeę*) in which they were "married" to a diviner's palm nuts. This ritual supposedly put the girl under the protection of the diviner until her actual marriage, when the diviner performed "Breaking the Bracelet," or bond (*Itudeę*). A woman is then "married" to her new husband's palm nuts, but not until Ifa has agreed that their destinies, or their inner heads, are compatible. Ever after, whatever the palm nuts say as a result of the divination process applies equally to both of them.<sup>11</sup>

What is particularly interesting to me is that, today, *Isodeę* and *Itudeę* are performed rarely, if ever. I have yet to witness or even hear of one. *Itęfa* rituals, on the other hand, are quite common both for youngsters and adults. Men who have performed *Itęfa* rituals often display on their walls photographs of themselves all in white after just leaving *Odu's* grove. Perhaps women are somehow not as susceptible to shattered, scattered lives as men are. Woman's role as mother is rather clear-cut, although it does not prohibit her from other activities such as trading. Or, perhaps it is that there are other institutionalized ways for women to deal with shattered lives, for example, by becoming priests of deities. I met a priest of *Are* in *Ilaro* in 1975 who explained that she was initiated after the birth of her first child, when she was drawn inexplicably to *Are's* shrine in another town. Before then, she had been sitting for days on end in silence, and she had no interest in feeding or caring for her baby. From her description, it sounded as though she might have been experiencing postpartum depression. Her initiation would have reoriented her, providing a model for action in some ways similar to *Itęfa*.



The spiritual powers attributed to women make them the primary candidates for priesthoods in Yoruba society. The only categories of women eligible to carry the concealed shrine of Odu on their heads are diviners' wives and priestesses. The fundamental role of a Yoruba priest is that of a medium between the world and the spirit realm. As a medium, the priest becomes possessed by her deity. She thus becomes that deity's physical representation in the world. To acquire such a spiritual role, women go through elaborate initiations during which the deity is installed on their heads. During this period, devotees are prepared for spirit mediumship. Like the Itẹfa initiates, they metaphorically die and are reborn. Their clothes are taken away, their heads are shaved, and they are secluded in a dark shrine where they must remain quiet and still for some weeks. During this time, the head is bathed and painted regularly in an amalgam of leaves, animal blood, and pulverized minerals, which signify the vital force of the deity (fig. 10.6) (Verger 1954:324 and 1969:65 note 2). It is also rubbed into incisions made in the shaven head. This is thought to fix the power of the deity in the head of the devotee and to stimulate possession trance. Like their roles as nurturers, women then become the caretakers and nurturers of the gods. Indeed, in these initiations, in contrast to Itẹfa, women retain control of the rebirth.

The initiate is now known as *adoṣu*, one who has received, in her head, the ball of medicine, or *oṣu*, that signifies the deity. Later, special hairdos are often worn by the newly initiated to identify them with their particular god and to show that this is a head endowed with power (fig. 10.7). Iya Ṣango's hair was shaven clean to the crown and then braided from that point back. Her receding hairline had the visual effect of expanding her forehead, thereby creating the illusion of swelling, a reference to the state of possession trance in which the head is said to swell or expand (*wu*). Finally, the initiated receives a special new name, which suggests the deity's hold or claim on the initiate, such as *Odakusin*, "The-one-who-fainted-while-worshipping," implying that the devotee bearing this name fell into trance, signaling the deity's strong influence.

With the deity's power inserted into the head of the priest during rites of initiation, she becomes the deity's medium, his or her conduit into the world. Even in cases where Yoruba men become possession priests, they are referred to as the "wives" of the deity and often dress in female garb and hairstyles. The male Ṣango priests from the town of Ede plaited their hair in two different female styles (fig. 10.8)—the three priests on the left wore the *ṣuku* style, which refers to the round basket in which marketwomen carry their wares on their heads, and the two on the right had the traditional Yoruba bridal hairstyle known as *agogo*.<sup>12</sup>

Just as women receive the spirit of the gods in possession trance, they at the same time master that spirit through training and turn its power to their own advantage. This is analogous to the power relationship between mother and child. The mother sustains the child, who in turn gives the mother power and support throughout the rest of her life. Mothers have influence with their children in a way that is not possible for fathers in the polygamous household. By the same token, possession priests are perceived to have influence on their

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deities. They are providers, and they are receptive. They are indeed receptacles, or containers for the deity. This is conveyed in ritual sculpture depicting kneeling females supporting bowls on their heads, which serve to contain a representation of the deity's power. During the 1971 Şango festival in Ila Orangun, an Igbomina Yoruba town, Şango priests sacrificed a cock, pouring its blood over a neolithic thunderbolt placed inside the bowl depicted on top of the kneeling female's head (fig. 10.9). On one level, head loading reflects actual behavior. But in this case it also alluded to the idea of receptivity, that priests' heads contain the power of the deity. I believe it is not by chance that these caryatids almost without exception depict women.

Through dance, spiritual forces materialize in the phenomenal world. The god is said to mount the devotee and, for a time, that devotee becomes the god. Temporarily, then, the animating spirit of the deity (*emi orişa*) displaces the *emi* of the individual being mounted. Whatever the priest does from the moment she enters the trance state is thought to represent the deity's own actions. Possession trance states are most often expressed through the medium of dance.

Spirit mediumship is the most significant role of a priest. The uniting of devotee and deity into one image often causes some confusion for researchers who try to establish the identity of figures represented in Yoruba sculpture. Sculpture represents the union of the priest and deity by depicting the former with accoutrements associated with the latter. It is through dance, however, that the priest brings the active deity into the phenomenal world for other devotees. To become possessed by one's deity is the primary role of the medium.

Chanting and drumming performed prior to the onset of possession trance invoke the deity, bringing him or her into contact with the priests. In a festival for the deity of smallpox and contagious diseases known as Omolu, which took place in the Egbado town of Igbogila in 1978, a medium of Ogun, the god of war and iron, gazed downward; her dance movements diminished (see M. Drewal 1989). There was a transformation of her attitude: from outgoing and playful to concentrated, serious, and inwardly focused. As if bound to the spot, she stopped moving her feet; her upper torso veered to the side; her head dropped; and her left knee quivered, causing the entire body to tremble. A priest in this state is called the "horse of the god" (*eşin orişa*). Attendants rushed to straighten the clothes of those becoming possessed, binding their waists and breasts tightly in much the same way a rider saddles a horse, pulling the straps tightly to secure the saddle in place, for the deity "mounts" (*gun*) and rides the medium. The Ogun medium became fully transformed into the deity, repeatedly licking her lips in an agitated fashion. Her upper torso dropped forward, her head fell back, and her eyes rolled upward into the sockets. Attendants quickly closed the eyelids and brought the head forward.

Finally Ogun signaled his presence when the medium emitted a deep guttural yell. Leading with the whole left side of her body, the possessed medium took giant steps to make her way to the gathered crowd. Now the deity, he placed his hands on his hips and lifted his knees and feet, extending each one in turn forward as he walked in a stylized fashion. After greeting the entire assem-



blage with "È ku o!," Ogun sang, danced, and prayed, all the while directing the drummers.

In these kinds of performances, spectators give money to the deity and the drummers. The amount in 1978 ranged from several cents to one dollar with an average of about twenty cents. By "spending money" (*nina'wo*) for the deity, spectators receive his special recognition and blessing. In a sense they invest in his dynamic power and in return receive its benefit. In dance, possessed mediums express particular deities' powers in the dynamic qualities of movement (M. Drewal 1989). What a medium does in the dance is not as crucial as *how* she does it. Meanwhile the head remains calm in contrast to an active body.

When Iya Sango went into trance in 1975, she performed large, angular, asymmetrical, forceful gestures that evoked Sango's stormy manner (fig. 10.10). A small dance staff (*oṣe*) carried in her hand depicting paired thundercelts added its own statement to the intensity of her actions. She also danced with knees flexed and torso pitched forward from the hips. Iya Sango commented that hers was "a dance performed *kikan kikan* with forcefulness" (*ijo kikan kikan to l'agbara*) (Taiwo #75.6b). The word *kikan* is idiophonic and simulates orally the effort quality of Sango's dance, that is, one in which a dominant motif is raising (*ki*) and then percussively dropping (*kan*) the shoulders, or the torso, repetitively, i.e., *kikan kikan*. *Ki* is quick, sharp, and high (or up) in tone; *kan* is forceful, full, and heavy, dropping in tone in a manner analogous to the way Iya Sango plunged her body forward in her dance, thrusting her dance staff of paired thundercelts, fan, and medicine horn toward the earth.

According to Rowland Abiodun, *kikan* connotes a forceful release of energy as if under pressure (personal communication, 1981). When Iya Sango danced, she evoked this in her speed and thrust, playing on the dynamics of lightning and thunder—in that order—that is associated with Sango. Indeed, the force of lightning and thunder is felt in its actual dynamic qualities, qualities which in turn reflect the nature of his own power as Iya Sango expressed it in dance. When Sango left Iya Sango's head, he withdrew suddenly. Her body tensed up, and an attendant ran to grab her, holding her to prevent her falling.

Once a deity leaves the head, attendants take measures to clear the medium's head and return her to normalcy either by pouring gin over the head and rubbing it in, or by blowing into the ears and onto the top of the head. Attendants also press their hands on the base of the medium's neck or press their foreheads to the medium's forehead and tap the back of her head. Sometimes they stretch her arms up and place them on her knees and then pull her legs out straight and forward by the big toes—all the while calling the medium's name. The medium finally comes to, as if having just awakened from a deep sleep, and sits silently gazing into space.

Whereas it is primarily women who nurture the gods, men in Yoruba society mask. Yoruba construct performance roles like they construct gender, that is, based on the anatomical and biological features involved specifically in procreation. This is consistent with the stress in Yoruba society on progeny and the perpetuation of the lineage through the reincarnation of the souls of forebears.

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In masking, men cover and conceal their exteriors. But when women are "mounted" by a deity in possession trance, the spirit of that deity enters her "inner head," her interior.

Men, in becoming possession priests, are therefore like women in their relationship to the deity; they are receptacles. Crossing gender boundaries, male priests cross-dress as women, and priestesses possessed by male deities select out forceful, direct dynamic movement qualities ordinarily associated with men.

Here again the sexual metaphor comes into play. The male is contained during intercourse, just as he is by the spirit's cloth in masking and just as his palm nuts are by the calabash or bowl. In contrast, the female contains during intercourse and pregnancy, just as she does the spirit of the deity at the onset of possession trance and just as the container holds the male initiate's palm nuts. What is represented in both cases is the union of spirit and devotee, in each instance by the corresponding metaphor that plays on the binary oppositions of inside/outside.

The metaphoric contiguity between the conditions of pregnancy and possession trance was revealed most clearly in the personal history of a little girl named Tinusin, literally "From the Inside Worshiping." According to the child's grandmother, the mother went into labor and gave birth to her child while in a state of possession trance. The child thus came to the world "worshiping," and so at a very early age was initiated as a priestess of her mother's deity. Only three years old in 1978 when I met her, she was already a confident dancer, and I observed her imitating her mother's gestures as if she were entering a trance state.

In a sense, the child in the mother's womb is the ultimate masker. Men play on this idea in Apidan performance, masking as pregnant females, a kind of mask times two (fig. 6.12). The play on the idea of mask as womb and womb as mask is the primary theme in performances of miracle worker masks (figs. 6.7–6.11), whose form and performance allude simultaneously to a pregnant womb that "gives birth" and to the dress of Muslim women in *Purdah*.

The pregnant woman in a sense becomes a mask, and indeed when a child is born in the birth caul, it is often taken by Yoruba as a sign that he should perform in a mask, if male, or become a member of a masking society, if female. Phenomenologically speaking, to mask is to conceal something. At the basis of the taboo against women wearing masks may be a tacit understanding of what Christopher Crocker (1977:59) calls the contagious power of metonymic conjunction. That is, there is an analogical relationship between a pregnant woman and a full body mask. This metonymic conjunction may explain the prevalence of African myths that attribute the very origins of masking to women (Cole 1985:15). Metaphorically speaking, woman was the original mask.

The same kind of idea may be the basis for excluding women from certain portions of ritual. I have never known a Yoruba women to mask, nor have I ever seen one make a blood sacrifice. And although women menstruate, the phenomenon is associated with conception. The threat of metonymic conjunction would have been even more problematic during the historical period before 1892 when the Agemo, Oro, and Oşugbo societies reportedly executed



criminals and made human sacrifices. It is significant that women were excluded precisely from those portions of ritual that in the past reportedly contained such sacrifices. Not only were they prohibited access, but they protected the illusion that they did not know what was going on. The seriousness of these practices in Yoruba thought, it seems to me, is directly related to the precariousness of human spirits as expressed in rituals of birth (*Ikosẹ w'aye* and *Imori*) and death (*Isinku*).

Even with the sexual divisions between masking and possession trance, both men and women have institutionalized opportunities to take on the attributes of the opposite gender temporarily, either glorifying it or satirizing it, in either case engaging in a ongoing dialectic on gender. In figure 10.11, a priestess possessed by the hot male warrior deity *Ogun*, wearing a man's hunting outfit, rears back with hands on her hips as devotees prostrate themselves before her. In contrast, a male priest of the river goddess *Oya* displays in his house a photograph of himself dressed as a woman with plaited hair, flanked on either side by his two wives (fig. 10.12).

That Yoruba shift back and forth between gender roles in ritual situations, and are not necessarily construed as either comical or horrendous, is in and of itself significant. It suggests that Yoruba are conscious that gender is a construction dividing sex into two mutually exclusive categories to underscore biological difference. What this does in effect is to channel human behavior that is not biologically determined. Why? By constructing gender to underscore sexual difference, Yoruba place primary value on procreation.

Implicit in funerals and the divination rituals for children was the participants' concern with the continuity of the human spirit from birth and death to reincarnation. This is at the basis of Yoruba ontology and being. Continuity can be accomplished only through progeny, what Yoruba perhaps value most in life. It is from the reference point of the fixed role of woman as childbearer and nurturer that Yoruba construct female gender. This role becomes the dominant representation of women in the visual arts. It suggests the strategic location of male and female artists in relation to the role they are representing, which evokes the mother/child bond even when the child is physically absent, as when women are portrayed holding their breasts or offering containers.

The ontology of the human spirit's journey between the otherworld and earth and the value Yoruba place on progeny also explain why homosexuality as a way of life is absent in Yorubaland. Although homosexual relations are known to exist, it would be inconceivable for Yoruba not to perpetuate the spirits of their forebears. Both men's and women's significance in life is judged by the number of children they bring into the world. To have no children is regarded as a great human tragedy.

#### SEX AND POWER RELATIONSHIPS

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idence of women during their childbearing years is a means of establishing and verifying their own paternity. This is reinforced legally by giving the father rights to the children. Even then, women often return to their own family compounds to give birth. Because of the importance of establishing paternity, women during their childbearing years are usually subordinated domestically in the patrilocal compound. The strong bond between mother and child that is sustained throughout life poses an additional threat to husband/wife relations as well as to father/children relations. This bond also gives mothers a significant amount of power with their children that extends more broadly to younger generations. Both Balogun Kuku and Otun Balogun Şotẹ considered their mothers the greatest influences in their lives (chapter 8).

The literature often stresses that the Yoruba family is patrilineal and patrilocal, although reality does not always bear out this assertion. In fact, Yoruba sociologist N. A. Fadipe (1970:134), who was trained in the British system, began his discussion of Yoruba descent by stating: "Although the patrilineal form of organization prevails, the Yoruba reckon descent bilaterally." Women inherit property from their parents.<sup>13</sup> When a man dies his property is distributed among his wives and their children; when a woman dies her property is distributed only to her children. It cannot go to the husband or his family. If she has no children, her property goes to the children of her brothers and sisters. Although women own property, they do not often farm. This task would be left to their male children or to hired labor.<sup>14</sup>

In the traditional Yoruba system, children were betrothed by their families at a young age (Lloyd 1963). There was no concept of romantic love. During the betrothal, a young man had certain obligations to his future wife's family. The family of the husband paid a "bride price" to the family of the wife. Part of the money went to the mother to buy her daughter goods and supplies to help her set up her new household. The remainder was distributed equally among the rest of the family members, including females, as a symbolic compensation for their loss. The wife, however, remained a full member of her own lineage.

The bride price in theory also gave the husband rights to the children born to the wife, and sole sexual access. In practice, women have sole rights to a child until it is weaned, and strong allegiances between mother and child often mean that, when children are old enough to choose, they opt to be with the mother. This is the major cause of lineage segmentation (Lloyd 1963:36). As Lloyd notes (1962:281), "the Yoruba always state that their emotional ties with the mother are much stronger than those with the father." This sentiment is expressed in the Yoruba adage "Mother is gold, father is glass" (*Iya ni wura, baba ni digi*). By middle age, women's domestic roles shift from mother to grandmother. And, if a woman is residing in her husband's compound up until the time her own child bears a child, she may return to the compound of her own parents or, if she is financially able, may build her own house. She is under no obligation to remain in the husband's compound.

Seniority is also a factor, since men normally marry younger women. Even so, I did not get the feeling that Şotẹ's young wife was all that subordinate to him as



I watched them engaged in horseplay in front of the VCR. Each wife in the patrilocal compound has her own room. Wives cook for themselves and for their children, and often take turns cooking for the husband. More senior wives also delegate domestic duties to junior ones. A wife's rank in relation to other wives depends upon how long she has been married. Yoruba women who value the polygamous system argue that it gives them freedom and more time for independent activities because they share domestic responsibilities. The system is also highly competitive, although a husband is ideally supposed to treat each of his wives and her children equally. Whereas a woman shares what she has with her children alone, a man who has multiple wives must share what he has among all his wives and their children equally. This appears to be one of the dominant sources of disputes within households. This theme was expressed in Egungun by the "miracles" representing the husband and his three well-dressed wives who got into a fight.

During a long nursing period—up to three years—a woman's menstruation is suppressed and women practice sexual abstinence (Jelliffe 1953; Caldwell and Caldwell 1977; Adekun 1983). At such times she is considered ritually pure, perhaps one reason that nursing priestesses are often depicted in Yoruba art. Oṣitola's junior brother once told me:

It is our belief that if you give birth to a child, and you don't breast-feed him or her, in the long run he may not like you, because he doesn't get served from your own breast. In our area here, if you give birth to a child and within the next year you give birth to another, we call you "prostitute" because you never allowed the first child to be well fed. (I. Oṣitola #82.28)

The close physical and emotional bond that develops between mother and child during the first three years of a child's life creates an image of woman as soothing, indulgent, and enduring (Abiodun 1976; in press).

Concepts of female power to a large extent seem to derive from these cultural practices. Thus women are said to possess patience (*suuru*), gentleness (*ero*), coolness (*itutu*), and endurance (*iroju*). Breast-feeding sets up an unequal power relationship between mother and child. It then becomes a metaphor for spiritual power. Thus during the *iyi ifa* segment of Itẹfa, Oṣitola prayed: "You see mother, you are my mother, and we have the belief that through your power you can make all these sacrifices, all these ceremonies we have been doing efficacious. We are begging you because remember the day that you delivered us, and the breast-feeding. Come and help this ceremony be efficacious. Put all your powers into it so that it will come true, by the grace of the songs." The idea is that the mother has an unspoken pact with her child. The metaphor applies equally to adult males.

From a Western perspective, it would be tempting to view Yoruba women as restricted; quite the contrary, they have a great deal of flexibility and independence. Once a woman ceases to give birth, usually around age forty, whether she returns to her own family compound or builds her own house, she becomes even

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Husbands are expected money but, beyond that with the expectation of the husband wants to get he would from anyone necessarily specialize in other hand, may enlist that men can be more (Sudarkasa 1973:120).

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more independent and indeed has significant influence over the men in her household. Furthermore, Yoruba have a very high divorce rate, but there is little or no stigma attached to being divorced. Divorce appears to be a traditional practice, for verses from the oral divination literature speak of man's fear of desertion by his wife or of her seduction by another man (Lloyd 1963:37).

Perhaps most significant of all is that women in Yoruba society are economically independent from their husbands. Trading is their most common profession. Women control the central market; its administrative head holds a position on the king's council of chiefs. In this sphere, there is clear asymmetry, the power residing solely in the female domain, which is public rather than private or domestic.<sup>15</sup> Since a woman is economically independent from her husband, she often provides greater economic support for their children than he does. Farmers wholesale their perishable produce to middlewomen, who turn around and resell it to other marketwoman. In this system, farmers are totally at the mercy of marketwomen, who can manipulate and control commodities and prices either by hoarding or flooding the market with goods.<sup>16</sup>

Husbands are expected to help their wives establish trades by giving them money but, beyond this, husbands and wives borrow money from each other with the expectation of paying it back. If a wife is a food seller, for example, and the husband wants to partake of her wares, he must purchase them from her as he would from anyone else. And if the husband is a farmer, the wife does not necessarily specialize in selling the crop her husband raises. A husband, on the other hand, may enlist his wife's assistance in selling, because it is generally felt that men can be more easily cheated in the bargaining process than women (Sudarkasa 1973:120).

A woman's status therefore derives largely from her own reputation as a trader, or a craftsperson, and from her wealth rather than from her husband's social importance. Trading gives women economic as well as spatial mobility. In 1826, British explorer Hugh Clapperton (1829:21) observed wives of the king of Oyo "in every place trading" and "like other women of the common class, carrying large loads on their heads from town to town." Through trading women can acquire greater wealth and higher social statuses than their husbands (Lloyd 1963:39). It is thus possible for him to be a nonentity in the town by comparison.

If a woman is a successful trader, which gives her autonomy, her status within her husband's compound grows stronger in relation. A woman also acquires status in the patrilocal compound by the number of children she brings into the world. If Yoruba women are subordinated within the context of the patrilocal compound during their childbearing years, in the public sphere they are economically independent, dominate the marketing system, and hold important chieftaincy titles, such as Erelu in Oṣugbo, Iya Agan in Egungun, Iyalasẹ in Gẹlẹde. This public sphere is reflected in the balanced presentation of male/female relationships in the sculptures that embody the power of Oṣugbo, the traditional Yoruba judiciary. It is also reflected in ancestral Egungun masks that honor women, even though they are performed by men. While women dominate



Yoruba markets, their roles as businesswomen are seldom represented except in the context of *Gelede* spectacle, which explicitly celebrates female power (H. Drewal and M. Drewal 1983).

Women also dominate the sphere of the deities, a fact that is evident in Yoruba art. Thus women and men each dominate different spheres at different times in their lives. There is, however, an egalitarian ideal built into the system, and this—accompanied by a great deal of economic independence and mobility and a need on the part of men to establish paternity—results in intense competition for power. But, to a large extent that power is negotiable, depending on the personalities involved. This is what *Oṣitola* really meant when he said, “men have the secret, and women have the secret—just to trouble each other, just to add more spice to the world.”

Equally significant is that in ritual there is some amount of cross-dressing by both men and women, and in possession trance there are more literally gender transformations. So even with rigidly structured gender roles, both men and women in Yoruba society have institutionalized opportunities within ritual contexts to cross gender boundaries and to express the traits assigned to the opposite gender. Just as Yoruba construct gender, they also deconstruct it. *Iya Ṣango* becomes *Ṣango* himself in possession trance realigning sex and gender. Her representation is not a structural reversal that merely reinforces an asymmetrical system; rather, she achieves a new synthesis. *Iya Ṣango* partakes of her deity's masculine character even in her daily life. She is never merely not herself, not not *Ṣango*. Rather, she is a third term, a trickster shifting positions. It is the nature of her “inner head.” Unlike cross-dressing and female or male impersonations in the West, her results are true reversals—temporary gender transformations, opposite and symmetrical.



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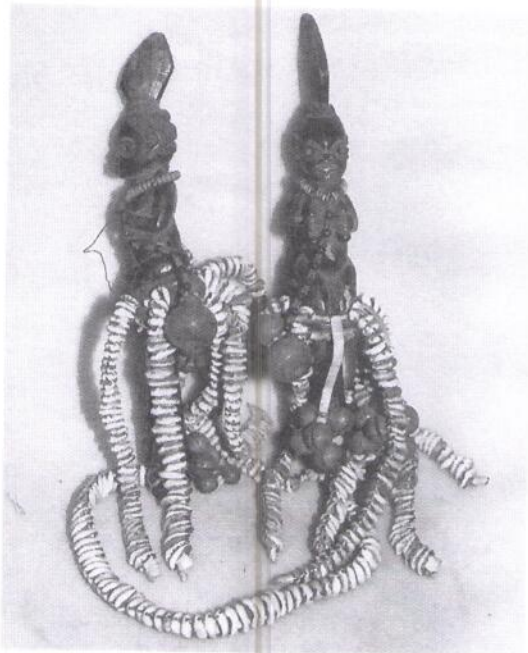


10.1 Detail of a pot depicting a nursing child holding the mother's breast. 37 cm. Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, #69.8.

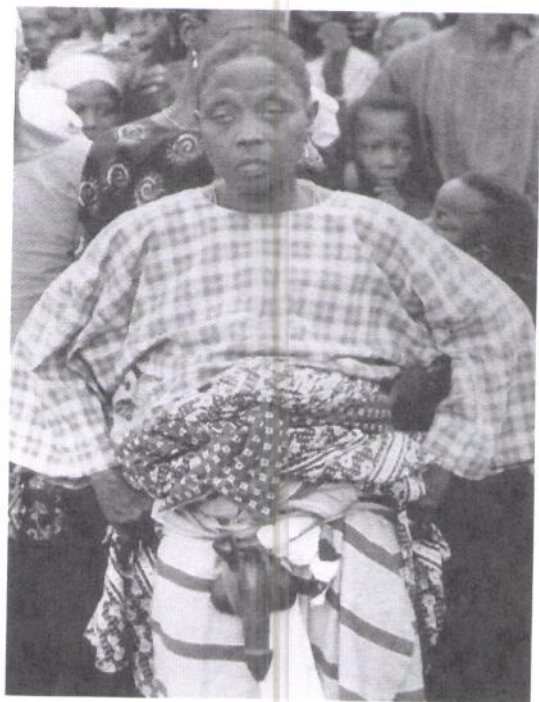


10.2 Pair of brass Onile figures—male left, female right. Ijebu area, Imodi, 22 April 1982.





10.3 Pair of Eṣu staffs. The female on the left holds her breasts, while the male on the right holds medicine gourds. Musée de l'Homme, Paris, #31.21.11.

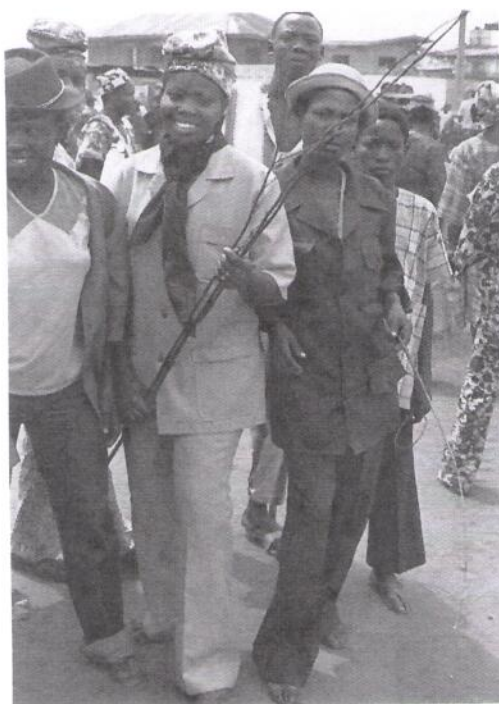


10.4 Woman possessed by the trickster deity Eṣu, wearing a carved penis and testicles under her wrapper. Ketu area, village of Idayin, 8 June 1971.



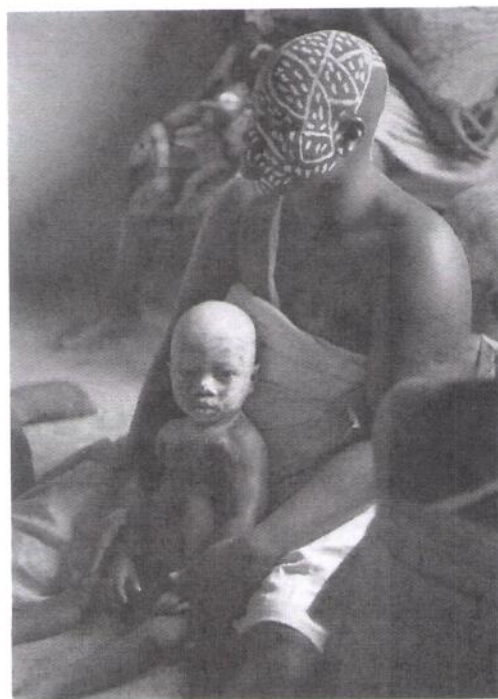


Pair of Eṣu staffs. The female on the left holds her breasts, while the male on the right holds medicine gourds. Musée de l'Homme, Paris, #31.21.11.



10.5 Women crossdress as men during an Ebibi festival. Ijebu area, Ikija, 28 February 1982.

Woman possessed by the trickster deity Eṣu, wearing a carved penis and testicles under her wrapper. Ketu area, village of Idayin, 8 June 1971.

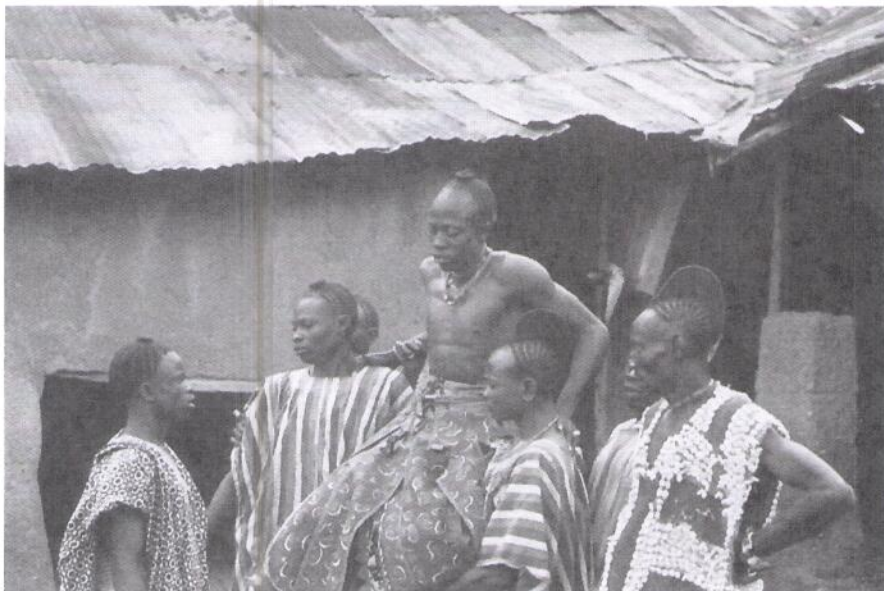


10.6 A female initiate, with head shaved and painted, is being prepared for Şango. Ijebu area, village of Iparinla, via Imope, 6 August 1986.





10.7 Iya Sango dances in possession trance. The crown of her head has been shaved, giving an illusion of a swollen head to evoke the state of possession. Egbado area, Ilaro, 14 November 1975.



10.8 Male Sango priests perform with their hair plaited in female styles. Oyo area, town of Ede, 13 October 1970. Photograph by Henry J. Drewal.





Iya Sango dances in possession trance. The crown of her head has been shaved, giving an illusion of a swollen head to evoke the state of possession. Egbado area, Ilaro, 14 November 1975.



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10.9 A caryatid bowl contains a neolithic thundercelt representing Sango's power. Over it, a priest pours the sacrificial blood of a cock. Igbomina area, town of Ila-Orangun, 11 February 1971. Photograph by Henry J. Drewal.



10.10 Iya Sango performs a strong, angular style dance associated with thunder and lightning. Egbado area, Ilaro, 14 November 1975.





10.11 A female priestess possessed by Ogun (right) wears men's hunting garments and carries a rifle. Egbadò area, Igbogila, 6 February 1978.



10.12 Detail of a framed photograph of a male priest of Oya, goddess of the whirlwind and wife of Šango, who dresses in women's clothes and plaits his hair in female style. He is flanked by his two wives. Ijebu Remo area, town of Iṣara, 16 March 1982.

## Envoi



The rituals I examined were neither unidimensional nor authoritarian, that is, no more so than any other kind of performance. Instead, they were multidimensional, indeed, multifocal and heterological, with participants' shifting their perspectives as well as their operating assumptions. Much Yoruba ritual involved a great amassing of participants, layers upon layers of highly charged sensory stimuli, an aggrandizing ethos, intense competition, and multiple and simultaneous channels of interaction so that the word dialogic cannot even begin to convey the dynamics of what went on. Graphic writing does not lend itself easily to evoking this kind of ritual, what Yoruba at the same time refer to as "spectacle."

Ritual is for experiencing and contemplating, according to *Ọṣitọla*. Thus even ritual specialists themselves, in his words, become "new to the world." Specialists and others "played" ritual, intervening in ordered segments called *aito* to surprise and be surprised, to disorient and be disoriented, to turn one condition into another through a series of exchanges that brought revelations, altered perceptions, or even a reorientation of the participants. Through playful improvisation, through what Afro-Americans might call "signifyin(g)," meanings slipped and slid and got transformed into others; they remained unfixed. Recall white man's bush spirit, the rite for the founder of British authority, playing *ayo* as a ritual act, the bobbies' helmets—symbols of British authority—carnivalized by young boys in *Šoṭe*'s parade, and the bicycle with the police siren in the lead, Iya *Šango*'s nonverbal discourse with the Hausa meat-seller masker and the lead drummer.

The rules, such as they were, were often averted and broken; new ones were invented. Contention over rules was part of *Agemo* practice, but the very histories of Ijebu-Ode's 'Id al-Kabir festival and the Imewuro Annual Rally were ones of rule-making, breaking, and reinventing. This process is not only evident in the performances themselves, as well as in the consciousness of participants like *Šoṭe* and Rennaiye, it is also embedded in oral tradition. The Kuku tales are exemplary. Practices changed, along with the very principles on which they were based.

Individuals inserted themselves into ritual at their whims; they elaborated and embellished, deleted, and even impeded or disrupted the action; they also recontextualized, transposed, and transformed its elements. In this way, the rituals accommodated diverse and competing interests as well as different points